

THE LAST BEEKEEPER

READING GROUP GUIDE



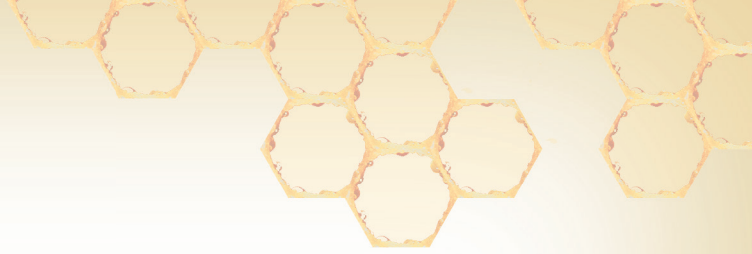
PHOTO BY SHARONA JACOBS


As a journalist, **JULIE CARRICK DALTON** has published more than a thousand articles in *The Boston Globe*, *Businessweek*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Orion Magazine*, *Electric Literature*, and other publications. A Tin House and Bread Loaf alum, and graduate of *GrubStreet's* Novel Incubator, Dalton holds a master's degree in literature and creative writing from Harvard Extension School. She is a frequent speaker on the topic of writing fiction in the age of climate crisis. A mom to four kids and two dogs, Dalton is an avid skier, hiker, and kayaker. A former beekeeper, she also farms a gorgeous tract of land in rural New Hampshire.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Sasha has made herself three promises: Find the research. Understand the truth. Rebuild a family. Why are these promises important to her? Given the state of the world at the beginning of the book, would you have the same priorities?
2. The extinction of bees creates a complete societal collapse. What did you learn about the significance of small things in nature from this book?
3. Sasha is drawn back to her childhood home, like a bee to the hive. How else do Sasha's life and actions mirror her beloved bees? What about the rest of her found family?



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4. When Sasha finds the asparagus that she shares with everyone, she's reminded that "dormant possibilities can fight their way toward the sunlight." What are other things in the book that give Sasha reasons to be hopeful for the future?
 5. Ian, Gino, Halle, and, eventually, Sasha form a strong bond in their time together at the farm. What role does each character play in their found family?
 6. Given his position in the government, Sasha's relationship with Chuck changes greatly from her childhood to her adulthood. Do you believe Chuck was on her side for her whole life? Or did he change perspective when he joined up with everyone on the farm? Why does he change his ways?
 7. How did your view of Sasha's father change once you learned that the US hastened the demise of the bees, leading to the Great Collapse?
 8. How would Sasha's life be different if she hadn't felt personally responsible to the demise of the bees? Would she be as motivated to discover the surviving bees if it hadn't impacted her so directly?
 9. Once it becomes clear that some bees survived, what are the possibilities for the future of the country? Do you think we would learn from our mistakes and become more environmentally responsible? For the world?
 10. In his letter to Sasha, her father writes: "Don't let grief over what we have lost blind you to the beauty in front of you." How does that inform Sasha's choices as she attempts to save the bees? How does this impact her budding relationship with Bassel?
 11. Do you feel hopeful at the end of the book? Do you think Bassel will find her so they can be "the first of their kind all over again?"



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