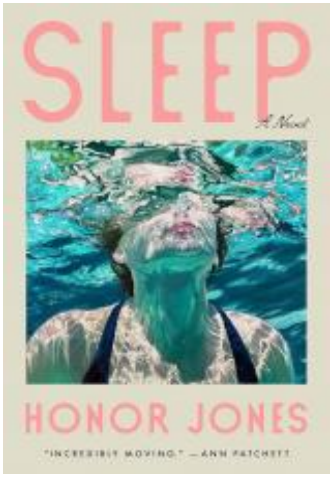
Sleep

by Honor Jones



About the Book

From a dazzling new talent, the story of a newly divorced young mother forced to reckon with the secrets of her own childhood when she brings her daughters back to the big house where she was raised.

Every parent exists inside of two families simultaneously --- the one she was born into, and the one she has made.

Ten-year-old Margaret hides beneath a blackberry bush in her family?s verdant backyard while her brother hunts for her in a game of flashlight tag. Hers is a childhood of sunlit swimming pools and Saturday morning pancakes and a devoted best friend, but her family life requires careful maintenance. Her mother can be as brittle and exacting as she is loving, and her father and brother assume familiar, if uncomfortable, models of masculinity. Then late one summer, everything changes. After a series of confusing transgressions, the simple pleasures of girlhood slip away.

Twenty-five years later, Margaret hides under her parents? bed, waiting for her young daughters to find her in a game of hide and seek. She?s newly divorced and navigating her life as a co-parent, while discovering the pleasures of a new lover. But some part of her is still under the blackberry bush, punched out of time. Called upon to be a mother to her daughters, and a daughter to her mother, she must reckon with the echoes and refractions between the past and the present, what it means to keep a child safe, and how much of our lives are our own, alone.

Warm and generous, unflinchingly human, and ultimately joyful and empowering, SLEEP is about the cycles of motherhood and childhood, the cost of secrets and the burden of love, and what?s on the other side of silence: the world, rich in possibility.

Discussion Guide

1. In Honor Jones? debut novel, SLEEP, a newly divorced young mother is forced to reckon with the secrets of her own

childhood when she brings her daughters to visit the house where she grew up. How does Honor Jones show the events of Margaret?s childhood reverberating and refracting through time when she becomes an adult and a mother? Where do you see Margaret?s past directly informing the way she engages with the people around her, especially her family?

2. How are the choices that Margaret makes as an adult linked to her experiences as a child? Consider the decisions she makes in how she parents her children. How does she balance choice --- the things she does because she wants to --- and the obligations of adult and family life?

3. Discuss Margaret and Ezra?s relationship, and their post-divorce family dynamic. How do you view their prior relationship versus their current one? How does this differ from other depictions of divorce in contemporary literature?

4. Why is the novel called SLEEP? What are the myriad meanings of sleep for Margaret? What does it mean to be awoken, and what does Margaret discover about herself in the quiet of the night?

5. What is Margaret?s experience of daughterhood like? Does Margaret parent differently from the way that Elizabeth parented her? What is the novel saying about responsibility for the safety of children and the way it has changed from one generation to another?

6. As a young girl, how does Margaret experience her body? How does her perception of her body shift over the course of her youth? What accounts for these changes?

7. As children, Margaret and Biddy are inseparable, though as they get older, their relationship shifts. What are the factors that lead to these changes? What is the significance of Biddy appearing in the first and last scenes of the novel? What is the novel saying about adult friendships more broadly?

8. Discuss Duncan and Margaret?s relationship. How does Margaret build him into her life, and does that change through the novel? How do sex, safety and control factor into their dynamic? What does Margaret learn or unlearn through this budding relationship?

9. As an editor at a newspaper, Margaret is responsible for editing a number of articles about the treatment of women during the early days of the #MeToo movement. How does SLEEP approach these issues? What does it say about how they are handled in both public and private spheres? Do you think it?s easier for women to talk openly about their experiences now than it was a few years ago? Are there still limits to that?

10. What is the role of secrets in the novel? Who gets to keep them and why? What is the cost or payoff for different characters of choosing to divulge or keep secrets?

11. Discuss the sense of place in the novel. What are the differences between how the suburbs, the city and the beach are portrayed? How does Margaret move differently through these spaces?

12. Anaya becomes a big part of Ezra?s life. How does Margaret negotiate her new relationship with Anaya? What are Margaret?s assumptions about Anaya before they meet, and what does this say about how women judge each other or resist judgment? Why do you think Margaret is relieved to find that Anaya is nothing like her?

13. SLEEP is full of lyrical language and striking metaphors. How does the writing style affect your sense of the book? How does the focus on language serve the themes of the novel?

14. Do you see the ending of the novel as hopeful? What is the final scene saying about independence in adulthood and parenthood? What does Margaret mean when she says the Rockaways are ?the edge of everything,? and what does her proximity to the edge in this scene reveal about her? Has Margaret changed by the end of the novel? If so, how?

Author Bio

Honor Jones is a senior editor at *The Atlantic* and previously at *The New York Times*. She lives in Brooklyn with her three children.

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