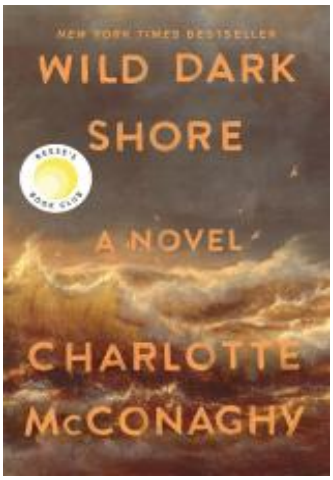
Wild Dark Shore

by Charlotte McConaghy



About the Book

An enthralling new novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of MIGRATIONS and ONCE THERE WERE WOLVES.

A family on a remote island. A mysterious woman washed ashore. A rising storm on the horizon.

Dominic Salt and his three children are caretakers of Shearwater, a tiny island not far from Antarctica. Home to the world?s largest seed bank, Shearwater was once full of researchers, but with sea levels rising, the Salts are now its final inhabitants. Until, during the worst storm the island has ever seen, a woman mysteriously washes ashore.

Isolation has taken its toll on the Salts, but as they nurse the woman, Rowan, back to strength, it begins to feel like she might be just what they need. Rowan, long accustomed to protecting herself, starts imagining a future where she could belong to someone again.

But Rowan isn?t telling the whole truth about why she set out for Shearwater. And when she discovers sabotaged radios and a freshly dug grave, she realizes that Dominic is keeping his own secrets. As the storms on Shearwater gather force, they all must decide if they can trust each other enough to protect the precious seeds in their care before it?s too late --- and if they finally can put the tragedies of the past behind them to create something new, together.

A novel of breathtaking twists, dizzying beauty and ferocious love, WILD DARK SHORE is about the impossible choices we make to protect the people we love, even as the world around us disappears.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel?s epigraph reads: ?There is a land of the living and a land of the dead / and the bridge is love, / the only

survival, the only meaning.? How do you interpret that line? How does it reverberate throughout the novel?

2. The narration rotates around the perspectives of the main characters. Discuss the different styles and formats those perspectives take, as well as the balance between them. Why do you think the author made those narrative choices? Was there a character you were especially drawn to or moved by, and why?

3. Discuss Dominic?s relationships with his three children. How do they evolve over the course of the novel? What role does Rowan play in that evolution?

4. Multiple characters are haunted in this novel: Dom by his wife, Claire; Orly by the voices of the animals killed on Shearwater over the centuries; Rowan by her little brother, River. How are their hauntings similar and different? Do you think this novel is a kind of ghost story?

5. How do you think the isolation of Shearwater affects the Salts? In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of living on the island?

6. Dom reflects, ?I never loved a place before we came here.? What does Shearwater mean to Dom? To his children? To Rowan? What is the importance of the setting to the story itself? How does that tie into the title of the book?

7. Rowan has very complicated reasons for coming to Shearwater. How do you understand her decision? Do you think it was the right thing to do?

8. Raff tells Rowan: ?Deep down, you know as well as we do, that everything Dom does is for his kids.? Do you think that justifies his actions in the novel, including the choice to imprison Hank in the seed bank? Why do you think Rowan, Dom and Orly all decide to try to go back and rescue Hank during the storm? In your view, is Hank at all redeemable or forgivable, given the pressure on him?

9. Rowan reflects: ?Loving a place is the same as having a child. They are both too much an act of hope, of defiance. And those are a fool?s weapons.? Why do you think she feels that way? Does her view change over the course of the novel? If so, how and why?

10. Discuss Raff?s description of whale song: ?He was born the day he first heard the song of a whale.... In one moment high and squeaking like the top note of a violin, in the next guttural, echoing, some space between the moan of a cow and the trumpet of an elephant. Sometimes joyous and playful, sometimes mournful and searching. Sometimes with a trill or a creak or a rumble. A question, a call, a love letter.? What do you think he means? What role do whales and their songs play in this novel?

11. Dom tells Hank: ?Maybe we will drown or burn or starve one day, but until then we get to choose if we?ll add to that destruction or if we will care for each other.? How do you interpret his words? How does this novel explore the climate crisis and our response to it?

12. Rowan tries to explain to Fen her marriage to Hank: ?I think it suited me to be with someone I knew would never look directly at me.? What do you think she means? How do you understand Rowan and Hank?s marriage? How is Rowan?s relationship with Dominic different?

13. Why do you think Fen decides to burn her mother?s possessions? Do you sympathize with her actions? How do the different characters in this novel relate to Claire?s memory? Even though she dies long before the novel begins, do you consider her to be a character in the story?

14. As the seed bank is closing, the Salts are supposed to be saving the seeds that could help protect humans in the future, including important crops. But Orly decides to go rogue and save instead the seeds that he finds the most beautiful and unusual. Do you think one approach is ?right?? Discuss.

15. Even though Rowan dies, do you consider this novel to have a happy or hopeful ending? Why or why not?

16. What do you think life will be like for the Salts, after Shearwater? How were their lives changed by knowing Rowan?

Author Bio

Charlotte McConaghy is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels WILD DARK SHORE, ONCE THERE WERE WOLVES and MIGRATIONS, which are being translated into more than 20 languages. She is based in Sydney, Australia.

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