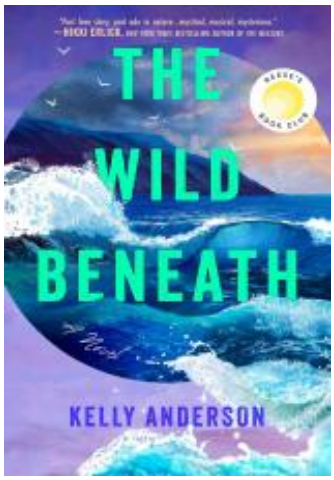
The Wild Beneath

by Kelly Anderson



About the Book

For readers of WILD DARK SHORE and THE TIME TRAVELER?S WIFE, a fierce, haunting story of one woman caught between her first love and a mysterious stranger who upends everything --- and the two worlds that won?t let her go.

Annie MacLeod always knew she was different, growing up on a sailboat in the Pacific Northwest, navigating by stars and swimming with sea creatures alongside her parents and best friend, Evan. But when a tsunami shatters her world, Annie is stranded on land and forced to confront how eccentric she is. In the wreckage, she rescues a wordless man named Walker, who emits a hum only she can hear.

Their connection is instant and electric. Walker?s touch gives Annie visions of the ocean?s hidden world, a life she?s never known but feels inexplicably drawn to. Yet even as she is pulled toward him, Evan --- the steadfast love who has always been there --- remains on dry land, offering the stability she may have to leave behind. Annie is torn between Evan?s grounding presence and Walker?s magnetic secrets. But then, Walker vanishes, along with the answers she needs about who she really is.

Six years later, Annie has left the sea and buried the past --- until Walker?s otherworldly sound returns, pulling her back toward the ocean and the life she abandoned. The truth under the water is more ancient than she ever could have known, and Annie must confront a choice that will test her heart and determine her future.

Discussion Guide

1. How did Annie?s upbringing on the sailboat *Amphitrite* shape who she is?
Annie spends almost her entire childhood at sea with her parents, living largely outside ?normal? human society. Discuss how this unconventional upbringing shapes her sense of identity, belonging and connection to the natural world. How

does being suddenly stranded on land deepen her grief and internal disconnection?

2. What makes Evan and Walker such different love interests?

Evan represents stability, shared history and the land, while Walker embodies mystery, self-discovery and the sea. Consider what each man offers Annie and what each would ask her to give up. Did you find yourself drawn to one over the other? Why or why not?

3. Could you hear Walker's hum?

Walker emits a sound that only Annie can hear --- one she feels deep in her body. What did you make of this mysterious connection? Discuss how Anderson uses Walker's hum to blur the line between the physical and the otherworldly.

4. How does the novel explore grief and loss?

The tsunami shatters Annie's world and takes her parents in an instant. Talk about the ways Annie, her grandmother Ruth, and the town of Hale's Landing process their collective and individual grief. How does grief change Annie over the six years that pass in the story?

5. What role does the natural world play in the story?

From humpback whales and tide pools to sea stars and ancient forests, nature is a living presence throughout the novel. Discuss how Anderson uses the natural world as more than just a setting. In what ways does it function almost as a character of its own?

6. Why do you think Kelly Anderson structured the book around the tides?

The novel is ordered by tidal phases: Low, Slack, Flood, High and Ebb, with shifts in time woven throughout. How did this structure affect your reading experience? What does it suggest about the rhythms of grief, love and life itself?

7. How does the theme of push and pull run through the novel?

Anderson fills the book with paired forces: land and sea, Evan and Walker, staying and leaving, Annie's two parents. Discuss how these opposing pulls mirror Annie's internal struggle. Which tension resonated with you most?

8. Is THE WILD BENEATH a story about self-discovery?

Beneath the love triangle, Annie is on a journey to understand who she is and what she truly wants. Talk about the choices she makes in pursuit of that freedom. How does her path toward self-discovery shape the woman she becomes?

9. How does the book blend science and magic?

Anderson weaves real-world details, like whale communication and tsunami science, with elements that feel distinctly magical. Discuss the line between the two. Do you agree with the idea that magic might simply be ?science we haven't discovered yet??

10. What did you think of Annie's parents and their relationship with the sea?

Through flashbacks, we learn that Annie's mother seemed preternaturally linked to the ocean, much like Walker. Discuss how Annie's upbringing represents a balance between her two parents' very different relationships with land and sea. How does understanding their story reframe Annie's own?

11. How did you feel about the ending?

Without spoiling it for those who haven't finished, talk about how the novel resolves Annie's central choice. Did the ending satisfy you? Did it feel earned, surprising or bittersweet? How did it sit with you after the final page? What will you take with you going forward?

12. Which quotes or moments stayed with you?

Anderson's prose has been described as ?ethereal? and ?crafted of language that rushes and recedes like a tide.? Share the passages, images or scenes that lingered long after you closed the book.

Author Bio

Dr. Kelly Anderson is a family physician with fellowships in HIV and emergency medicine. After completing the Bookends novel revision program, she trained in the Gateless Writing Academy and is a certified Gateless writing teacher. Kelly spent much of her childhood in British Columbia, and now lives in Guelph, Ontario with her family. THE WILD BENEATH is her first novel.

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