

BOOK
CLUB KIT

*"A hopeful, heartwarming, uplifting story about the power
of chosen family."—Laurie Frankel, New York Times bestselling
author of This Is How It Always Is*

THE
MUSIC
OF
BEEES
a novel

EILEEN GARVIN



DUTTON



Discussion Questions

1.

At the beginning of the book, we're introduced to three main characters who couldn't be more different from one another, yet they are bonded together through a shared experience—in this case, grief. Do you have a group of friends like that, and if so, how did your group form?

2.

In the book, each character experiences emotional growth despite negative experiences in their pasts. In what ways do they each overcome their challenges? How does each character change throughout the book?

3.

In life, we all face obstacles—but the important question is how we go about facing them and dealing with them. Do you relate to any of the obstacles these characters face? How have you dealt with some of your own personal obstacles?

4.

It takes a great deal of courage to rely on other people. What do Jake, Harry, and Alice learn about the importance of community in times of hardship? What does your local community mean to you?

5.

Themes in this book include acceptance, loss, standing up for what is right, coming together, hope, and the importance of community. As a reader, how did you relate to these themes while reading?

6.

Alice's love for beekeeping is so important to her that it becomes one of the main elements that defines her character. Do you have a similar interest or calling that you feel defines you?

7.

The beauty of nature is a strong theme throughout the story. What role does nature play in the lives of the characters? How does it shape their mind-set and growth?

8.

What did you think about Jake, Alice, and Harry's involvement with the SupraGro protest movement? What issues are most important to you in your community?

9.

The author's ability to weave a story that is built on perseverance and second chances leaves us with a feeling of hopefulness. What do you feel hopeful for?

10.

Alice's, Jake's, and Harry's stories make many readers laugh, cry, or feel a range of other emotions. How did *The Music of Bees* make you feel?

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up my debut novel, *The Music of Bees*. This story grew out of my own experience as a backyard beekeeper during a season of unexpected grief.

One recent spring, I watched the slow decline of my beloved sixteen-year-old dog, Dizzy. She'd seen me through so many milestones: the loss of loved ones, graduate school, a house fire, and the publication of my first book. The idea of life without her broke my heart, but I was also grieving the loss of my youth and confronting the challenges of my midlife—aging parents, ailing siblings, and the bewildering experience of being childless in a world of young families.

I spent quiet days caring for Dizzy as spring unfolded. It occurred to me then that it might be comforting to have something else to tend to when she died. The idea of a new puppy made me too sad. Inspired by a friend who'd recently begun beekeeping, I bought a beehive.

Over a period of weeks, I constructed frames and painted brood boxes and honey supers. I positioned the hive in my yard and planted bee-friendly flowers. These tasks were a calming distraction as Dizzy weakened. One day, I stood in my driveway with a buzzing crate of 10,000 bees ready to be relocated into their new home. As the beekeeper who sold them to me waved good-bye, I was left with the terrifying realization that I was on my own managing my new hive and my new life. Soon I bid farewell to my sweet old dog too.

I made many mistakes that first season but eventually improved as I slowed down and paid attention to what was right in front of me. I became fascinated by the intricacies of hive life as I watched the worker bees build comb, raise brood, and pack in honey for winter. The following summer, I experienced the joy of harvesting my first sweet, thick honey.

The methodical practice of beekeeping grounded me and I found my footing again. I returned to writing, and one day the idea for this story flew into my mind like a bee through an open window. My characters appeared, each uniquely wounded by life. Alice had unexpectedly lost her husband, Harry was frozen by anxiety, and Jake faced life in a wheelchair. But each was also uniquely equipped to find their way to a better place.

Writing and beekeeping continue to offer me comfort when life becomes upended. In January, I lost my father suddenly. Then came the pandemic. These days, I watch the youngest bees in my hive take short, exploratory flights as they learn to navigate away from home and back again. As I watch them zipping through the sunlit garden, I know I will find my way too. I hope *The Music of Bees* will leave you and other readers feeling optimistic and that the stories of Alice, Jake, and Harry will inspire people to find beauty in a broken world.

Thank you for taking the time to read my work.

WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE,

Eileen Garvin



BLUEBERRY-HONEY FIZZ

I look forward to blueberry season as a highlight of Oregon's summer. I always buy a flat from a farmer friend to keep some stashed in the freezer. You can make this drink with fresh berries in the summer or with frozen berries when you're dreaming of sunny days ahead.

INGREDIENTS

1½ ounces hot water
1 heaping tablespoon honey
Juice of one lemon
½ heaping cup blueberries
Pinch of sea salt
1 tablespoon fresh mint and
more to garnish
Soda water

STEPS

Blend the hot water, honey, and lemon juice in a blender on low speed.

Add blueberries, salt, and mint, and blend thoroughly.

Pour over ice in a glass with a salted rim.

Add soda water to taste and garnish with mint. Cheers!

