



# A Keeper of Bees: Notes on Hive and Home

*Allison Wallace*

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I was hooked. Call it adrenaline surge, call it honeybee venom in my veins—whatever the explanation, henceforth I would need these funky little critters in my life. Givers of sweet, thick honey, bringers forth of the fruits from trees and bushes and who knew what else, they also gave more food for thought than a body could know what to do with.

—from *A Keeper of Bees*

Allison Wallace's devotion to honeybees and their amazing, intensely lived lives started years ago, when she was living in a cabin in the North Carolina woods. Ever since then, wherever she has called home, Wallace has kept company with bees. Now she gives us the honeybee in all its glory, dancing "the great, never fully knowable ecological dance," striving like other creatures and plants to be all it can be in its short life. With a philosopher's perception and a scientist's knowledge, Wallace interweaves the facts of honeybee biology with reflections on desire, intimacy, work, evolution, memory, and home. She shares the thrill of intimately observing thousands of busy bees cozily ensconced in their brilliantly designed, perfectly weatherproofed hive. She muses on the female workers' unceasing activity, and on the male drones' idleness as each awaits his acrobatic midair mating with the queen, followed by his instant death. She marvels at the cosseted queen, upon whom the future of the hive depends.

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