

"So much more than a thriller... Breathtaking."

—JOSH MALERMAN,

*New York Times* bestselling author  
of *Bird Box* and *Malorie*

# JUST GET HOME

A NOVEL

BRIDGET FOLEY



**BOOK CLUB  
KIT**

# Discussion Guide

## A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader:

This novel, ***Just Get Home***, is the result of an idea that refused to go away. It banged on the doors and the windows of my writer's heart, insisting that a particular set of questions must be answered:

*In the wake of a disaster, what is the extent of our responsibility to other people? Is it better simply to take care of ourselves? What if, in extending our hands to others, we end up making a bad situation worse? Would it then be better not to have helped at all?*

These were not easy questions, but they were potent ones. They were the driving force behind every part of the story from character history to plot.

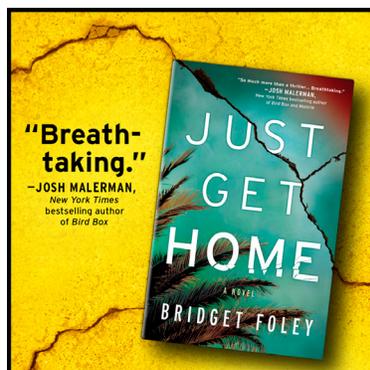
Early on in my process, I had a sheet with each action taken by the central characters Beegie and Dessa plotted on an x/y graph. Actions which I felt were evidence for a thesis of "We should be responsible for others" were placed above the X axis at a numerical value I assigned depending on how strong I felt the evidence was. Similarly, actions which supported a counter thesis of "It is better to take care of ourselves" were graphed below the X axis.

The line of the plot swung wildly from one quadrant of the graph to the other as scenes and character choices made the case for each thesis. Fittingly enough the "sine curve" of my plot about two people surviving an earthquake ended up looking an awful lot like a seismograph.

It is my hope that Beegie and Dessa's journey seizes you and holds you like it held me, unable to put the questions it poses away.

With respect,

*Bridget Foley*



# Discussion Guide

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**“A flat-out thriller [that is] also smart and insightful on timely, important ideas.... Heartbreaking and complicated in the best way... This is addictive reading that changes you as you turn the pages and stays with you long after you’ve finished.”**

**—LAURIE FRANKEL, *New York Times* bestselling author of *This Is How It Always Is***

*When a devastating earthquake—the Big One—hits Los Angeles, two strangers are brought together by an act of violence and must help each other survive the wrecked city.*

Beegie is riding the bus when the quake hits. The teenager was heading back to her unhappy foster home, but then she’s thrown into a broken world. Roads crumble, storefronts shatter and people run wild.

Dessa, a single mom, is enjoying a rare night out when it strikes. Cell towers are down, so without even knowing if her three-year-old daughter is dead or alive, she races to get back across town.

As danger escalates in the chaotic streets, Beegie and Dessa meet by a twist of fate. The two form a fragile partnership, relying on each other in ways they never thought possible, and learn who they really are when there’s only one goal: just get home.



# Discussion Guide

## Q&A WITH BRIDGET FOLEY



### How much research do you do before beginning to write a book?

It depends on the story—research is one of my favorite parts of writing! For *Just Get Home*, I'd lived in Los Angeles for over a decade so I was pretty familiar with the locations... but I needed to do a lot of research into the foster care system as well as first-hand accounts of earthquakes.

### What hobbies do you enjoy?

Weightlifting, Walking and Water coloring—probably because they're all things I can do while listening to audio books!

### Do you have pets?

My dear sweet dog passed away at the age of 14 at the end of 2019. I was advised to wait a month for every year we had her before getting a new companion. It's odd, because while I missed her I didn't long for another pet at all for that time...and then suddenly after 14 months I went dog crazy. It got to the point where I was slowing the car down to tell people walking their dogs how cute and fluffy their pups were. My children were mortified. So, no, we don't have a new pup yet, but I feel sure it will happen soon.

### What's your favorite part of writing suspense?

I'm an outliner, which I prefer because it means I get to use an entirely different part of my brain once I get to the drafting process. Since by then the heavy lifting of plot is done, I can fully immerse myself in the experience of the characters—which means I spend a lot of time holding my breath and sweating in my writing chair.

### Do you prefer reading and/or writing suspense with elements of romance? Why or why not?

I adore a good love story... but I haven't cracked my version of one yet. My first novel, *Hugo & Rose*, was a subversion of the "man of your dreams" trope, so I suppose there were elements of romance in the book but not in the expected ways. *Just Get Home* is filled with desperate, aching love, but none of it is the romantic kind.

### From the books you've written or read, who has been your favorite villain and why?

I've found in life that most people are their own villains. There is usually no shadowy figure pulling the strings or arch enemy subverting plans—for many of us, when our lives go awry, we ourselves are personally responsible for whatever choices that led us there. Obviously that's not always the case in life or in fiction, but as a writer I'm most creatively interested in characters who are grappling with their internal villains rather than an externalized source. So I suppose the answer is that my favorite villains are also my favorite heroes.

# Discussion Guide

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



- 1) Have you ever experienced a natural disaster? If yes, what was the experience like? How did it make you feel? If no, how do you think you would react? Are you prepared for one?
- 2) There are a lot of intense events in the story. Which scene stuck with you the most? Was there anything that stood out for you?
- 3) What about each character did you most relate to? Dessa's maternal instincts? Beegie's longing to belong?
- 4) Did your opinion on the characters change throughout the book? What about their choices influenced your view of Dessa and Beegie?
- 5) Have you ever been in a scenario when your fight/flight/freeze response kicked in? Were you surprised at how you reacted? If you've never experienced this, do you think you have an idea about how you might react to danger?
- 6) Dessa felt she owed Beegie a strong debt for not acting when she might have. Do you think that's right? Did Dessa owe Beegie anything more than the obligation we all have to help a fellow person in distress?
- 7) Do you think it was important for the story to depict the assaults? Do you think it would have had the same impact for the reader without experiencing these things alongside Beegie?
- 8) Beegie's resilience, and her support of Dessa, allows both of them to get through the night. Do you think Dessa would have made it home without Beegie's help? Do you think Beegie would have made it home without Dessa?
- 9) In the aftermath of the earthquake, the novel saw the absolute worst of humanity come to the forefront. Do you think that's accurate? Or do you believe that there would have been more helpful people?
- 10) Both Beegie and Dessa are quite stubborn in their own ways. Do you think this helped them or hindered them in their challenge to survive the night? What about during their everyday lives?
- 11) What do you think will happen with Beegie and Dessa in their futures?

# Discussion Guide

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Originally from Colorado, Bridget Foley attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and UCLA's School of Theater, Film & Television. She worked as an actor and screenwriter before becoming a novelist. Her first book, *Hugo & Rose*, was published in 2015.

**Follow Bridget Foley on Instagram @bridgetfoleywriter**