

## A Reading Group Guide

*Basket Baby*

By: Kelli Donley

**About the book:** Macy and Ben Duncan are stunned by the stillborn loss of their first child. In a daze, the young husband accepts an international job, moving his fragile wife to colonial southern Bolivia. Desperate to evade the dizzying sorrow of post-partum depression, Macy soon ventures outside their new home, only to discover an abandoned, ailing infant at their doorstep.

A Bolivian mother has left her only child as a gift, with a scrawled note tucked carefully at the bottom of the basket:

*"Please help my wawa. Let her soar again."*

In this exploration of culture and relationships, the lives of the rich and poor are connected across continents to fight for the survival of a basket baby.

### Discussion guide:

1. What are the implications of the novel's title phrase, *Basket Baby*, in connection with the characters' lives and the novels' themes?
2. How does Donley create different voices among the women in the novel? Who is the protagonist? Who is the villain? Is there more than one?
3. What do we learn about cultural, social, religious, and other differences between America and Bolivia? How do these differences play out in Macy's discovery?
4. What religious metaphors did you notice in the story?
5. How does Donley portray the themes of loss, grieving, and recovery?
6. How is the importance of family and family history demonstrated in *Basket Baby*?

**Author bio:** Kelli Donley was born and raised in Arizona. She has been an avid reader and writer since childhood, which led to studying journalism in college. After volunteering in west Africa with the Peace Corps, she returned to school to study public health.

She is the author of four novels, *Under the Same Moon*, *Basket Baby*, *Counting Coup*, and *Desert Divide* (Fall, 2020). Inspiration was found working in the developing world in international health.

Kelli currently lives with her husband Jason in Mesa, Arizona. She continues to work in public health for the State of Arizona, and blogs at [www.africankelli.com](http://www.africankelli.com) and [www.kellidonley.com](http://www.kellidonley.com)

She can be found online on twitter: @arizonakelli and on Facebook: Kelli Donley, author

### Other books by Kelli Donley:

*Under the Same Moon:* Abena Udate was selling mangos on a humid market day in her Mozambican village when she caught the eye of a wandering foreigner. Kidnapped and brought to live in suburban America, the African teenager struggles with the glaring cultural and social differences of her new life. Abena is expected to play along with her kidnapper's story--she's just another hungry child plucked from a desolate country and saved by foreign adoption. As her younger brother Kupela searches for clues to explain her disappearance, Abena must decide whether to remain with a family she doesn't love for a life of luxury, or find a way home to those she loves in a world of despair.

*Counting Coup*: Happily consumed with her academic career, Professor Avery Wainwright never planned on becoming sole guardian of her octogenarian Aunt Birdie. Forced to move Birdie—and her failing memory—into her tiny apartment, Avery’s precariously balanced life loses its footing. Unearthed in the chaos is a stack of sixty-year-old letters. Written in 1951, the letters tell of a year Avery’s grandmother, Alma Jean, spent teaching in the Indian school system, in the high desert town of Winslow, Arizona. The letters are addressed to Birdie, who was teaching at the Phoenix Indian School. The ghostly yet familiar voices in the letters tell of a dark time in her grandmother’s life, a time no one has ever spoken of. Torn between caring for the old woman who cannot remember, and her very different memories of a grandmother no longer alive to explain, Avery searches for answers. But the scandal and loss she finds, the revelations about abuses, atrocities, and cover-ups at the Indian schools, threaten far more than she’s bargained for.

Desert Divide: