

THE GONE DEAD

A Novel

CHANELLE BENZ

Reading Group Guide

1. Lola mentions that the Delta is “small minded and broken, and everyone who could fix it leaves.” Do you think that people have an obligation to the place where they were raised, even if they have better opportunities elsewhere?
2. In *The Gone Dead*, people relate to each other not just person-to-person but also family-to-family. Do you think it’s possible to break free from a family legacy? Have you ever tried to distance yourself from family?
3. Early in the novel, Lola tells Billie, “White people have invented their fears about us and tried their damn best to make them true, but our fears about white people have always been real.” Do you agree that fear is a cause of racial tension in America? If so, do you think there is a way to alleviate those fears?
4. Billie’s family members are reluctant to tell her about her father or why she went missing on the day of his death. Do you think they have her best interests at heart? Have you ever been in a position where you chose to withhold the truth from someone you care about?
5. Do you think that Billie’s relationship with Harlan had a positive effect on her life? Is there any way it could have worked out in the long run?
6. Billie reads her father’s writing as she investigates his death. Do you think that reading his work is a source of comfort, or does it just remind her of what she’s lost? Is there anything you do in your own life to feel connected to previous generations of your family?
7. In *The Gone Dead*, many of the characters are searching for justice. When a crime has happened long ago, do you think there’s any way to set it right? Do you think justice is served at the end of the book?
8. Why do you think Billie decides to stay in the Delta, even with all the harmful events that took place there? Do you think she made the right choice in staying?

