

THOSE WHO ARE GONE

LAURIE R KING

Reading Group Guide



1. Secrets are central to *Those Who Are Gone*: secrets kept, or revealed, or not even suspected. Do you think some secrets are better aired than allowed to stay hidden? If anyone has ever let your secret out, did you find it hard to forgive them?
2. What, to you, is “family”? Is it mostly blood relation, or is it the emotional bond formed over years and over shared hardships?
3. Have you ever sent in your DNA to an ancestry site? Did you learn things you sort of wish you hadn’t?
4. How do you think people get over—or perhaps, get past—having a loved one go missing, forever? How different would it be to having a loved one murdered and no arrest made?
5. Have you ever been to San Francisco? Did you feel its presence strongly in the book, or could the story have been set in any number of cities?
6. Many characters in the book—as with many of its readers—have suffered during their childhoods. Some people survive trauma better than others. In your experience, is there a common factor in those who find their strength? The love of an adult, a later stable home situation, a good therapist? Or does recovery depend more on the age of child at the time, or even their basic personality?
7. In the story, Raquel enjoys cooking, finding it a pleasurable mix of science and art—although Dee suggests that it is either displaced emotion and sensuality, or a fantasy re-creation of happier times. Do you like cooking? Is it meaningful to you, or just practical?
8. Had you met the idea of *desaparecidos* before—the men and women ‘disappeared’ by governments or drug cartels? Does it trouble you when an author brings in something that is by its nature hugely disturbing, then allows it to rest lightly on the story itself?
9. Dee Laing is “one of the best security professionals on the planet”—a woman with potentially scary computer skills, who does a lot of work with investigative groups such as Bellingcat. Have you ever come across the term OSINT, for open-source intelligence gathering? Do you know anyone who participates in amateur online investigations?
10. Jen Bachus is a cheerful, outdoorsy extrovert, while Raquel is...not. Can you see their relationship lasting?