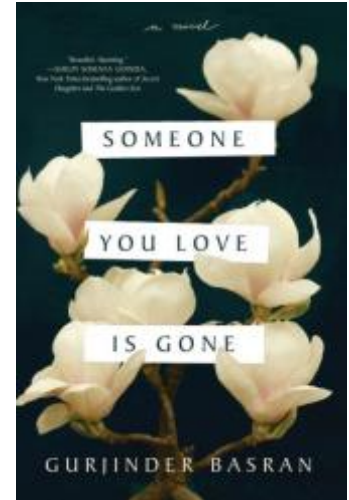


## Someone You Love Is Gone

Harper Perennial

By Gurjinder Basran

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### Introduction

Perfect for readers of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anne Tyler, *Someone You Love Is Gone* is a beautifully rendered, multi-generational story of secrets and ghosts that haunt a family.

*I sit at the table and forget myself for a moment and the past steps forward. The house is as it was before Father died, and even before that, before Diwa left and before Jyoti was born. The house had a different light then or perhaps that's just memory casting a glow on everything, candlelight and sunset, everything only slightly visible. Mother is in the kitchen, washing the dinner dishes. Steam is rising and the window in front of her fogs over her reflection. Even here, she is a ghost.*

Simran's mother has died but is not gone. Haunted by her mother's spirit and memories of the past, she struggles to make sense of her world. Faced with disillusion in her marriage, growing distance from her daughter and sister, and the return of her long-estranged brother, she is troubled by questions to which she has no answers. As the life Simran has carefully constructed unravels, she must confront the truth of why her brother was separated from the family at a young age, and in doing so she uncovers an ancestral inheritance that changes everything. She allows her grief to transform her life, but in ways that ultimately give her the deep sense of self she has been craving, discovering along the way family secrets that cross continents, generations, and even lifetimes.

Gurjinder Basran's mesmerizingly beautiful novel, *Someone You Love Is Gone*, is a powerful exploration of loss and love, memory and history, family ties and family secrets, and the thin veil between this life and the next.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Simran's mother is dead, but not gone, and she continues to counsel her daughter throughout the novel. Do you believe she appears as a ghost or as Simran's subconscious projection? Do you believe that people can communicate with the dead?
2. Simran has a great deal of difficulty coping with her grief. Even attempts at therapy fall short. Why is she unable to move on?

3. Basran has structured the book in three narrative sections: “Before,” “Then,” and “Now.” Why do you think she did this? What role does time play in the novel?
4. How did you interpret Diwa’s “remembering” or “episodes”? Do you believe in past lives, and if so, what are the implications for those that remember them?
5. Manohor cannot accept Diwa’s condition, and because of this, Diwa is sent away to live with a family member. Why do you think he could not accept his son?
6. Amrita once tells her daughter that in her time, “you did as you were told. You didn’t think whether you liked it or not.” How did this idea shape Amrita’s life, and eventually, Simran’s life?
7. Remembering and forgetting are recurring themes in the novel. Amrita says, “Sometimes forgetting is the only thing that gets you through this life.” Why do you believe she said this? What are some of the other instances in this novel that connect with this idea? Drawing on your own experiences, have you had instances where forgetting helped you move on?
8. As a child, Diwa recalls his past and recites a Rumi poem that ends in the phrase, “When was I less by dying?” Consider this phrase in relation to the novel.
9. Many of the relationships in the novel are strained, including Simran’s marriage. By all accounts, though, Raj is a good husband. What reasons does Simran have for leaving him? Why does she return?
10. What role does absence play in this novel?
11. Amrita is aware of Diwa’s whereabouts for years. Why do you think she does not bring him home sooner?
12. Integrating grief into our lives and accepting death are central themes in the novel. Discuss the ways in which Simran’s family deals, and does not deal, with their grief.
13. Reflect on the role that poetry plays in this novel.
14. What characters in the novel did you feel most drawn to, and why?
15. Simran never shares her knowledge of Diwa’s past with her siblings, nor does she openly discuss it with her mother. Why do you think she does not share the details with anyone?