

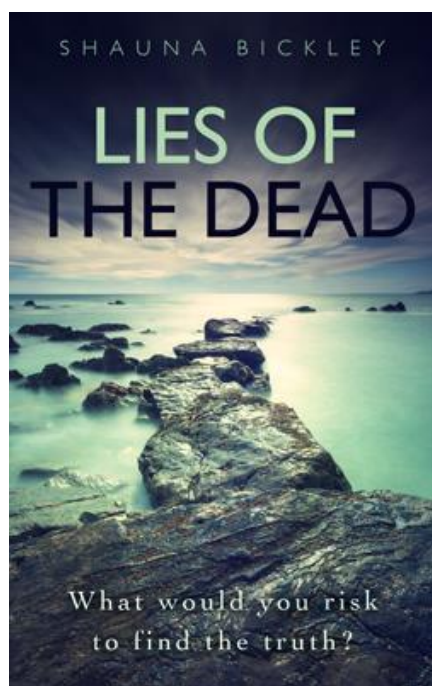
# Lies of the Dead – Reading Club Notes

## Spoiler Alert

Please note these questions and notes **DO** contain spoilers.

**It is recommended you don't read these notes until you have read the book as it will spoil the gradual unfolding of the plot.**

## Summary



How well do we know those closest to us? When the police accept Liam Trethowan's disappearance as suicide, his brother Tom is driven to finding out why his vibrant, charismatic younger brother would want to kill himself.

*Lies of the Dead* is a mystery/suspense novel that explores family dynamics and sibling rivalry.

Tom is the stable, 'always there' eldest son. He earns a living by taking tourists on sightseeing and fishing expeditions from the Cornish village where he was born. The middle sibling is Andi, she is fond of Tom but has an awkward relationship with her younger brother Liam perceiving him as the favoured and spoiled youngest child. Andi has teenage twin daughters and has recently separated from her husband, which also causes frictions.

When Tom decides to find out more about Liam's life, Andi is drawn into the mystery. What they find out about Liam's life impacts both of them, changing their view of the world. Liam has left behind a legacy of lies and deceit which becomes dangerous for Tom, and especially so for Andi and her twin daughters.

What would you risk to find the truth?

## Discussion Points

1. Family dynamics and relationships underpin many of the motivations in this novel.
  - How has Andi's perception of Liam as the favoured and spoiled youngest child impacted her life and relationships?
  - How does Tom's view of himself as the responsible older brother add to his guilt over Liam's suspected suicide?
2. Initially, Tom is reluctant to believe Liam killed himself. This is partially due to the lack of a body, but also to what he knows of Liam's character. Andi doesn't have a problem believing that Liam would commit suicide and sees it as Liam once again being selfish. What do these different opinions show us of Tom and Andi's characters? Are both opinions realistic?
3. Andi has recently separated from her husband Steven and is worried he wants to take their twin daughters away from her. How does this concern colour her relationship with Steven, and with Sophie and Kristen?

4. Early in the novel, Andi's friend Erin tells her that if she still loves Steven and wants to get back together she shouldn't let her pride stand in the way. When Andi contemplates dating Vincent, Erin's advice is that it's probably a good thing as it will help crystallise how Andi feels about Steven. Is this conflicting advice?
5. When Andi points out the painting she likes, Vincent describes her as, 'A woman who deals in absolutes, but with a romantic centre.' Is this a good description of Andi? Why, or why not?
6. What do Andi's memories of Saul and her need to get away at that time show us about the teenage Andi and her home life? How much does Andi and Steven's separation impact the twins and how is this shown?
7. Kristen's shoplifting could be partially blamed on Steven and Andi's separation. Why do you think Kristen also took small family items?
8. Was Andi's decision to confront the man who'd been following her a sensible one? How much of her decision was influenced by the *look* of the man?
9. Tom doesn't go to the police because of Dave and Mickey's threats of harming Andi and the twins. Was this the right decision? What other options were open to him?
10. When Tom discovers what Liam has been doing, he feels guilty and partly responsible as he has covered for Liam in the past. Is he responsible?
11. When Andi knows about the threats to Sophie and Kristen, she and Steven go to stay with relatives. What other actions could they take? Should they have gone to the police?
12. Ultimately Liam has the solution for the problems he created, but does this and Vivienne's perspective of Liam change your opinion of him?

## Author Details

Shauna Bickley works as a technical writer, and also develops workshops and training courses for corporate organisations.

She writes short stories and novels. Her short stories have been published in magazines, and *Recipe for a Dinner Party* was selected for the Awesome Indies anthology, *Awesome Allshorts: Last Days, Lost Ways*.

Her novels include:

**Still Death** – mystery/thriller

**Lies of the Dead** - mystery/thriller

**Lives Interrupted** - contemporary women's fiction

**Driftwood** - romantic suspense

Shauna was born in England and has lived in various countries around the world as her husband was in the military. She now calls Auckland home.

## Interview Q&A

### **Q. What is the greatest joy of writing for you?**

**A.** When someone writes or tells me how much they enjoyed one of my books, how they were drawn to the characters and the emotion of the story, or that they couldn't turn the pages fast enough but didn't want to miss a word. That's magic!

I love losing myself in a wonderful story and I've always wanted to be able to create that for other people. It means so much to me when someone tells me I've succeeded.

### **Q. Who are your favorite authors?**

**A.** That is such a difficult question to answer.

I try to read widely and look at different styles as well as different genres. Since I've been writing seriously I've found that I read differently and am constantly looking at why something works (or doesn't).

I enjoy mystery/suspense novels and books that make me think, and I'm in awe of writers who make me laugh.

### **Q. When you're not writing, how do you spend your time?**

**A.** As I live close to the beach that plays a big part in my spare time. I find walking a great way to inspire ideas for scenes in current and future projects.

I guess I'm not that much different to many other people in that meeting friends (especially in cafes and restaurants) is a favourite pastime, and when work and cash allows then travel is on the list.

### **Q. What is your writing process?**

People talk about being a planner or a pantsier (writing by the seat of your pants not knowing where the story is going). I tend to think of it as more of a continuum rather than being one or the other.

My books are character rather than plot driven, and usually start in much the same way. A character comes to mind and over a period of weeks or months they take shape as I find out more about them and their situation. At some point I start to plan in general terms, usually a paragraph or so of the main plot points for the first half of the novel. I also note down any particular background, habits or quirks for the main characters that I feel are important.

By that time, I'm eager to start writing. I've usually worked out my opening scenes and so those first few thousand words come quickly. Once I reach the half-way point (up to where I've plotted) I usually know the main points for the rest, and finish sketching out my plan, together with any changes that have happened on the way.

### **Q. What's the story behind *Lies of the Dead*?**

**A.** When I was planning *Lies of the Dead* I wanted to write it as a dual-strand type narrative - think *Sliding Doors* or *Mapping the Edge* - with Liam as the narrator. However, when I started writing it was Tom's voice that came through. I started several times but it was always in Tom's words and so eventually I gave in and let Tom tell the story.

Around the time I was planning *Lies of the Dead* I saw a TV programme on how your position in the family (only child, oldest, middle, youngest) can influence your character and personality. This interested me and helped with the family dynamics of the characters.

The other big influence for *Lies of the Dead* is Cornwall, England. It's a place I love, and the contrast of the wild coast and countryside with the enduring nature of the village and people seemed to fit well with the contrasting nature of the main characters.