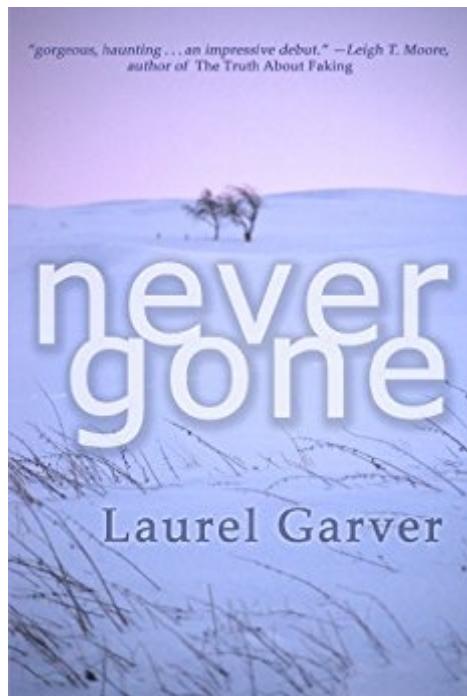


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# Never Gone



## Synopsis

Fifteen-year-old artist Dani Deane feels like the universe has imploded when her father dies. Days after his death, she sees him leafing through sketches in her room, roaming the halls at church, wandering his own wake. Is grief making her crazy? Or is her dad adrift between this world and the next, trying to contact her? Dani longs for his help as she tries and fails to communicate with her workaholic mother. Her pain only deepens when astonishing secrets about her family history come to light. But Dani finds a surprising ally in Theo, the quiet guy lingering in the backstage of her life. He persistently reaches out as Dani's faith falters, her family relationships unravel, and she withdraws into a dangerous obsession with her father's ghostly appearances. Will she let her broken, prodigal heart find reason to hope again? From the skyscrapers of New York to the sheep-dotted English countryside, *Never Gone* explores life after loss with emotional honesty, humor, and a touch of romance.

## Book Information

File Size: 637 KB

Print Length: 241 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publication Date: September 4, 2012

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0096DWVSG

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,449,713 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #56 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Family #146 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Social Issues #1104 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Literature & Fiction > Religious

## Customer Reviews

An excellent read. Great characters (especially Dani), intriguing plot, nice pacing, and lots of rich

thematic development woven throughout - grief & coping; remembrance; sacrificial love; addiction/idolatry; misunderstanding; friendship; grace; consequences (good and bad); transformation; a teenager's coming-of-age awakening to previously hidden realities of adult life. Through her protagonist (Dani), Garver gives voice to a teen's experience of loss, love, angst, and faith, aptly portraying the complex interrelation of these forces in the life of an adolescent. One of the more refreshing features of this novel is the way Garver explores some of the deeper dynamics of personal faith (Dani's Christian faith is a significant aspect of her character) without pushing some sort of proselytizing agenda. In the vast, vacuous landscape of faith-oriented literature that is dominated by superficial kitsch and thinly-veiled evangelistic ploys, Garver's work is a breath of fresh air. This novel is smart, edgy, complicated, and dark. Further, it is mature literature, replete with imagery and allusions that draw upon classic texts (like Hamlet, or the biblical Jonah), which Garver employs in probing the relationship between human wisdom and the life-orienting stories by which we live. *Never Gone* is well-written, provocative, thoughtful literature - and highly enjoyable too!

*Never Gone* is a beautifully written book about loss, grief, redemption, and long-buried secrets. It's a metaphorical ghost story, which is my favorite kind. Going into the book, I thought it would mostly be about Dani trying to overcome her father's unexpected death, but it's about so much more than that--it's about art, family relationships and the misunderstandings and miscommunications that can rupture them, faith, sanity, and forgiveness. I loved the vividly rendered settings of both New York City and small-town England. The main characters were all multilayered, rich and complex, but I was most impressed that even some of the smaller characters turned out to be much more than they first appeared. Dani's uncle Philip and Hugh, the sort-of resident lunatic in the British town, were my favorite characters of all. Despite being about grief and death, *Never Gone* is a very hopeful book; at the same time, I appreciated that the author was willing to go to some very dark places. Dani's disturbing dreams, in which she sort of constructs a new, healthier body for herself, were especially powerful. The descriptions of art were also very well done, particularly the breathtaking scene when Dani works with color rather than her usual pencils at the end. Overall, *Never Gone* is a moving look at one girl discovering that she can survive the deepest loss, and that the people she thinks she knows best just might surprise her. Favorite Quotes: "...I search for a tender, new heart. I know it will have the honeyed scent of snowdrops that fight to bloom through ice." "Something in my mind, like an eye behind my eye, sees angel shapes in shadows of our lamp-lit street."

I just finished reading Laurel Garver's "Never Gone." It was a sensitive story about Dani Deane's tragic loss of her father and her journey to find him, and in the process, her mother and ultimately herself. The story successfully mixes up tasty a brew of family, friendship, faith and hope, served up with a helping of mystery and tension. There's a nice sense of time and place and the characters are portrayed with sincerity and confidence. As an artist, I enjoyed the artistic references and colorful descriptions of the creative process. As a former teenager, I could relate to the tension between Dani and Theo and the strength of faith shared between them. The settings and situations seemed very real. I enjoyed the story very much and had to pull out a hanky in the end.

I really enjoyed Never Gone. It was beautifully written--the language and pacing flowed beautifully. The grief and loss that Dani experienced were so realistic and deftly shown that I felt as if I were experiencing it with her. And because the story was so grounded, I was wonderfully surprised by the metaphors--you don't often find such symbolic meaning in young adult fiction. The characters were real and fun. I loved Theo. Even the secondary characters grabbed me, especially Hugh. Finally, I appreciated the honest way Ms. Garver dealt with loss, anger, doubt, and faith. She never took any shortcuts or easy answers. I'd definitely recommend it!

Dani Deane is grieving. Losing her father was bad enough, but now her already-tense relationship with her mother is strained to the breaking point when her mom decides not to accompany Dani to her dad's hometown for his burial service. Dani's grief and longing for her father are so intense that she starts seeing and hearing her dad everywhere. Is he a ghost? A vision? Are his cryptic messages really clues? In Never Gone, Laurel Garver explores the aftermath of a family tragedy and its consequences for family relationships, friends, and faith. As Dani pursues the mystery hinted at in her dad's messages, she learns some surprising truths about herself, her parents, and what she's really looking for in life.

Good wholesome read especially for Christian teens. Good questions to use as discussion points at end. Sound Bible references. Went on a little longer than it should have, I feel. Some situations were quite predictable, but I am an adult so maybe it wasn't that predictable for it's intended audience.

I love the book, as I was going through the same situation in life. But I glad that my grief and understanding of someone so close can be relatable. I didn't like the flip flopping of scenes, but over

all I really enjoyed the book.

Never Gone is beautifully written and a thoroughly enjoyable read. Through the teen character, Dani, Laurel Garver explores the profound themes of grace and mercy, and the beauty that exists in the midst of real life struggles. I highly recommend this book for adults and teens alike!

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