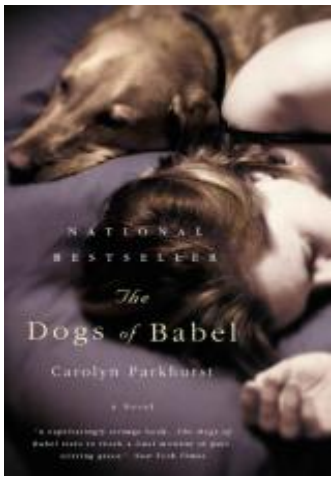
The Dogs of Babel

by Carolyn Parkhurst



About the Book

When his wife dies in a fall from a tree in their backyard, linguist Paul Iverson is wild with despair. In the days that follow, Paul becomes certain that Lexy's death was no accident. Strange clues have been left behind: unique, personal messages that only she could have left and that he is determined to decipher.

So begins Paul's fantastic and even perilous search for the truth, as he abandons his everyday life to embark on a series of experiments designed to teach his dog Lorelei to communicate. Is this the project of a madman? Or does Lorelei really have something to tell him about the last afternoon of a woman he only thought he knew?

At the same time, Paul obsessively recalls the early days of his love for Lexy and the ups and downs of life with the brilliant, sometimes unsettling woman who became his wife.

Discussion Guide

1. Paul is a college professor -a man of reason-yet he is determined he can teach his dog Lorelei to talk. What accounts for his strange conviction? Has grief driven him mad, or do his actions have a rational explanation?

2. Paul and Lexy seem to have extremely different personalities. What characteristics in Paul might have drawn Lexy to him? What, for Paul, were the irresistible elements of Lexy's character? Were there early indications that she had a darker side?

3. What do you make of Paul and Lexy's whirlwind romance and courtship? Do they rush into the relationship too quickly, or does the intensity of their feelings for each other indicate a powerful bond?

4. What kind of clues does Paul find to indicate that Lexy's death had more to it than it seemed? Do you think Lexy

deliberately left him a puzzle to piece together?

5. How does making death masks affect Lexy? Despite Paul's fears that it is too morbid a pursuit for her, why does she tell Paul she wants to continue?

6. Lexy creates a death mask for a young girl named Jennifer, who committed suicide. Why do Jennifer's parents reject the first mask Lexy makes? What kind of significance does the mask take on for Lexy?

7. Paul's obsession with the Cerberus Society leads him and Lorelei into a dangerous situation. Why is he so fascinated with this strange group? Is he responsible for Lorelei's abduction?

8. During Paul and Lexy's vacation in New Orleans, Lexy is convinced that she has met the ghost of Blue Marie. Why is this meeting so important to her? What happens when she is led to believe that the woman was not, after all, Blue Marie?

9. Lexy faithfully records her dreams in a dream journal. After her death, Paul hunts through this book searching desperately for answers. What role do dreams play in the book? Do you think they offer a window into a person's psyche? How do Paul's dreams about Lexy reflect how his own grieving process progresses?

10. What is the significance of the verses from Tam Lin that Lexy teaches Paul on pp. 60-1? How does their meaning transform throughout the novel?

Author Bio

Carolyn Parkhurst is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels THE DOGS OF BABEL, LOST AND FOUND and THE NOBODIES ALBUM. She lives in Washington, DC with her husband and two children.

Critical Praise

"Try a novel you can't put down: **THE DOGS OF BABEL** by Carolyn Parkhurst....This tightly woven tale has all the right stuff: romance, suspense, fantasy, and an ending that does not disappoint."

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