

# LIKE CATS AND DOGS

By Kate McMurray

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



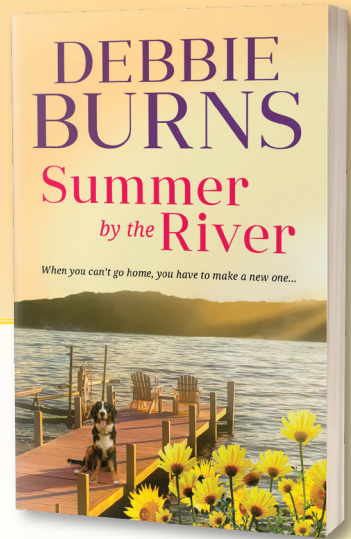
1. Why do Lauren and Caleb get off on the wrong foot?
2. When the novel begins, Lauren's ex has just gotten married. How does this affect how she approaches relationships now?
3. How does Caleb feel after his divorce, and how does it affect how he approaches Lauren?
4. Have you ever been to a cat café? What do you think of the Whitman Street Cat Café's approach to finding forever homes for the feline residents?
5. How do the supporting characters (Evan, Paige, and Lindsay, especially) help Lauren navigate her job and her personal life?
6. How does Caleb's job affect the way he deals with both animals and people? Do you agree with Caleb that he's better with his patients than he is with people? Why or why not?
7. How do Lauren and Caleb change over the course of the book? Does one change more than the other? Are the changes necessary for them to be happy together?
8. What role does Diane play in the café and in relation to the people who work there? Does Diane's perspective and advice help Lauren?
9. People in their twenties move to or settle in New York City for all kinds of reasons, and often, being far from their biological families inspires them to find their own families in the city. What role do Lauren, Evan, Paige, and Lindsay play for one another?
10. What role does Brooklyn play in the story? How is the community around the Cat Café like a small town? How is it different?



# Summer *by the* River

BY DEBBIE BURNS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



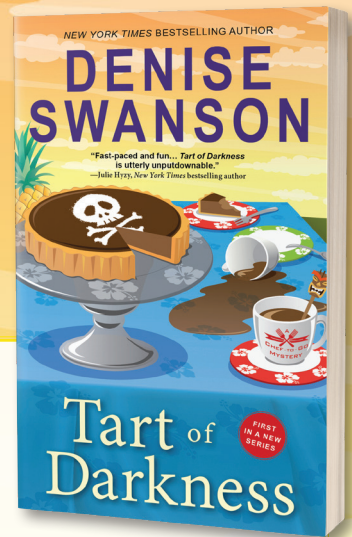
1. Often we think of bygone decades as simpler times, yet in the early part of the twentieth century, our ancestors dealt with two world wars, an economic depression, and a plague. What parts of Myron and Abigail's story did you most relate to? What parts stood out as indications that times have changed?
2. Rivers are often symbolic of the passage of time and the constant flow of life. In what ways does the Galena River help connect Myron and Abigail's love story with Josie and Carter's?
3. Which characters did you relate to best and why? Were there any characters in which you found it a challenge to relate to? Why?
4. Buttercup's arrival in the house causes a stir for dog-fearing Josie. How do the different household members' reactions to Buttercup reflect their ability to trust in general? How are our relationships with animals symbolic of our relationships as a whole?
5. Neither Josie nor her brother had an easy start. Their relationship with their mother was tumultuous and sometimes left them in harm's way. By the story's end, do you feel Josie has successfully made peace with her past, or will she continue to struggle with it and how?
6. Once you learn why Josie is so adamant to keep her past hidden, did you view her relationship with Zoe differently? Did this awareness change anything about the way you identified with Josie? If you were Josie, what might you have done with Zoe?
7. While most plotlines wrap up at the close of the story, Myra's fate is left open. Did you find yourself wanting a clean answer as to whether she went into remission? Does this relate to your comfort level in regard to what can be controlled in life and what can't?
8. From the ever-present Galena River to Abigail's letter, Myron's photograph, the Colt 1911 handgun, and the old mansion itself, there are many ways in which the characters connect with Myron and Abigail's story. What items do you have that help keep your ancestors' stories alive?
9. Have you ever set out to solve a family mystery from generations past? Did you learn something new about your family history in the process? Have you used DNA testing or ancestry research to aid you? If you were Myra, how would you feel about her newfound knowledge?



# Tart of Darkness

BY DENISE SWANSON

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



**Warning! These questions contain MANY spoilers.**

1. In *Tart of Darkness*, Dani is presented with a wonderful opportunity for a fresh start.
  - a) Did she make the right decision?
  - b) Would she have been better off opening the mansion as a bed and breakfast like her benefactor intended?
  - c) Has she bitten off more than she can chew by agreeing to allow the college girls to live at the mansion and work for her?
2. Father/daughter relationships.
  - a) Does Dani need to stop trying to gain her father's approval?
  - b) Mr. Sloan is obviously a neglectful and hurtful parent. Should Dani continue to seek a relationship with him or cut him off completely?
  - c) What role does her father's neglect play in Dani's personal relationships with men? Will her past influence how she and Spencer move forward?
3. *Tart of Darkness* begins Dani's new career as a chef, but all of that is threatened when a murder occurs during her first big catering job, and because of her past, she quickly becomes the prime suspect of a corrupt detective. Even with a fresh start, can Dani ever truly get over the things she's done in her past?
4. The victim in *Tart of Darkness* doesn't have many redeeming characteristics. Did the "tart" deserve to die?
5. Many characters in *Tart of Darkness* face the task of starting over; do you think it's possible to make a fresh start?
6. *Tart of Darkness* features crossover characters from the Scumble River series. Do you enjoy seeing old familiar faces pop up where you don't expect them, or should they stay in their own series?