

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LISA GARDNER

**KISS HER
GOODBYE**

**Reading
Group Guide**

A NOVEL



Dear Reader,

I started writing thrillers because I was obsessed with why serial killers kill. Except for my latest, *KISS HER GOODBYE*, which for the first time is not based on the worst people can do, but inspired by an act of charity.

While visiting Baja California, I met a couple from Tucson, who volunteer with resettlement of Afghan refugees. The more they described the challenges facing their latest family, the more I knew I had my next Frankie Elkin novel. "Refugee" is an official legal status. There are forty million in the world. Of those, less than one percent will obtain permanent placement. If you're a family, say a couple with a small child escaping from Afghanistan after the fall of Kabul, receiving permission to settle in the United States feels akin to winning a high stakes lottery.

In the past, most of my book research has involved such things as how to train as a sniper or disappear in this age of technology. Writing *KISS HER GOODBYE*, however, was a study in the human experience. I spoke to volunteers dedicated to helping families resettle, talked to doctors who'd worked in refugee camps, and of course, conversed with many new immigrants themselves.

My most pivotal conversation in the making of *KISS HER GOODBYE*: talking to a young woman who'd worked with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and had just helped pass groundbreaking anti-harassment legislation. The day Kabul fell, she'd been in the office to catch up on paperwork, sitting in her cubicle, checking Facebook, when she got the call to turn on the news. In a matter of hours, her work, her family, her country were gone.

Welcome to *KISS HER GOODBYE*, a novel of unbearable loss, unimaginable resilience, and incredible heroism. Mostly, however, it's a tale of how far any of us would go for those we love.

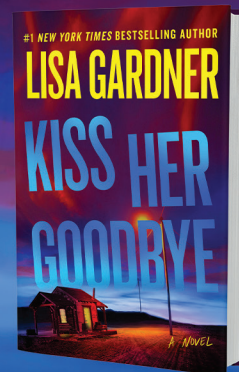
I hope these pages thrill you but also haunt you a little. Because certainly, I will remember the people I met and the stories they told, forever.

Lisa Gardner

LISA GARDNER



CCP
GRAND
CENTRAL



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Frankie Elkin isn't law enforcement, but she is often investigating dangerous missing persons cases. What do you think drives her to be persistent in her search for answers?
2. Frankie lives a nomadic life but manages to make connections. Why do you think Frankie keeps things close to her chest? Does it help her?
3. Zahra's ability to remember everything she sees is both extraordinary and burdensome. Would you consider such a memory a strength or a vulnerability?
4. Setting is always an important element of stories. What is it about the desert setting that makes it a good location for thrillers?
5. War, displacement, and trauma are explored through the refugee experience. What surprised you most about Sabera's life after escaping the Taliban?
6. If you read the author's acknowledgments (and we recommend you do!) did you come away with a different perception of the systems meant to protect these vulnerable displaced wartime allies?

FIRNI CUSTARD

BASED ON A RECIPE FROM KABUL CORNER, TUCSON, AZ

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups cold whole milk
1/3 cup cornstarch
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground cardamom pod
1-2 tsp Rosewater
1/4 cup slivered almonds
ground pistachio for garnish



DIRECTIONS:

Pour about 1/2 cup of the milk into a small bowl, and the rest into a medium saucepan. Whisk the cornstarch with the 1/2 cup milk until smooth, then add it to the milk in the saucepan. Whisk in the sugar, cardamom and rosewater. Cook over medium-high heat, whisking constantly to avoid lumps and it sticking to the bottom, until it's gently bubbling and thick like cream of wheat, for 4 to 6 minutes. Stir in the almonds. Continue to whisk for 2 more minutes. Take off the heat and pour into a totally dry 9-inch diameter and 3 1/2-inch deep serving bowl (it fills halfway). Let cool for about 30 minutes at room temperature. Then put in the refrigerator and chill until soft but firm, about 1 1/2 hours.

Sprinkle with ground pistachios and serve.



NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

Dedicated to evacuating, resettling, and advocating for our wartime allies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond who have been displaced from their homes due to their support for the U.S. mission.

No One Left Behind was co-founded by Janis Shinwari, an Afghan interpreter for U.S. forces who saved the lives of five American soldiers in combat. When donors raised \$35,000 to support his family's resettlement in 2013, he instead used the funds to co-found No One Left Behind. Ever since, Janis and No One Left Behind have paid his gratitude forward to new Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients starting their lives in the United States.



WHAT WE DO



EVACUATION

NOLB provides case support for allies going through the Special Immigrant Visa process, including housing and visa support for those in third countries.

In 2025, following an Executive Order that paused flights to the U.S., No One Left Behind started booking flights for SIV holders. As of June 30, 2025, NOLB booked 2,100+ flights and continues to book flights for travel ready SIV holders.



RESETTLEMENT

NOLB's team of ambassadors and resettlement staff are dedicated to delivering comprehensive support for resettlement, which includes mentorship, financial resources (including zero interest loans), and educational opportunities.

In 2025, following an Executive Order that paused critical Reception & Placement services, NOLB established two resettlement hubs and created a network of sponsor groups to resettle newly arriving Afghan + Iraqi allies.



ADVOCACY

NOLB conducts advocacy work in support of the SIV program, to include both annual authorizations for new SIVs and efforts to ensure existing visa processing is fair and consistent with Congress' intent. No One Left Behind is nonpartisan and works with administrations and members of Congress of both parties. It also advises federal agencies on how to execute and improve the SIV program.



NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

Dedicated to evacuating, resettling, and advocating for our wartime allies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond who have been displaced from their homes due to their support for the U.S. mission.

WHAT IS A SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA?

The Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) is a pathway to permanent legal status that allows eligible wartime allies to immigrate to the United States. SIVs are available to those who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. military and diplomatic mission in Iraq or Afghanistan. There are strict eligibility criteria and an extensive vetting process to receive an SIV. It often takes several years for eligible allies to go through the application process and receive an SIV.

WHY IS THE SIV PROGRAM IMPORTANT?

Afghan and Iraqi nationals were critical to the U.S. and NATO military and diplomatic mission in Afghanistan and Iraq, serving as interpreters, guides, logistics support, and other critical roles at great personal risk. Due to their support for U.S. and Western forces, Afghan and Iraqi nationals and their family members faced reprisal attacks by the Taliban, and other armed groups.

In Afghanistan, threats have greatly intensified since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. The Afghan SIV program has historically enjoyed bipartisan support as an important pathway to safety for America's Afghan allies.

ARE ALLIES STILL ABLE TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES?

As of June 30, 2025, the Special Immigrant Visa program is active and visas are still being issued. While the travel ban includes Afghanistan, there was an exemption for SIV holders. That means, Afghan allies who have a Special Immigrant Visa are still able to enter, live, and work in the United States. The SIV program is also active, though limited, in Iraq.

However, access to flights is a significant barrier as the U.S. government-provided flights remain on pause. No One Left Behind will continue to provide flights for as long as we are able to, based on available resources.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

As No One Left Behind continues to work on behalf of our allies, we ask you to join us and

- **GIVE.** Your financial support allows us to provide critical services, including flights to the United States and support in rebuilding allies' lives. Every dollar makes a difference.
<https://give.nooneleft.org/KissHerGoodbye>
- **ADVOCATE.** Partners in the Promise is our advocacy network. Sign up to receive updates, tools, and resources to support your outreach.
www.nooneleft.org/PartnersInThePromise



**Join us in our life-changing work at
No One Left Behind! Thank you!**