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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

My Sister, the Serial Killer by Oyinkan Braithwaite

Summary

Korede is bitter. How could she not be? Her sister, Ayoola, is many things: the favorite child, the beautiful one, possibly sociopathic. And now Ayoola's third boyfriend in a row is dead.

Korede's practicality is the sisters' saving grace.

She knows the best solutions for cleaning blood, the trunk of her car is big enough for a body, and she keeps Ayoola from posting pictures of her dinner to Instagram when she should be mourning her "missing" boyfriend. Not that she gets any credit.

Korede has long been in love with a kind, handsome doctor at the hospital where she works. She dreams of the day when he will realize that she's exactly what he needs. But when he asks Korede for Ayoola's phone number, she must reckon with what her sister has become and how far she's willing to go to protect her.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Korede continue cover up for her sister, to protect her? What are the justifications she uses to convince herself that Ayoola isn't a serial killer or a monster? Given the sisters' closeness, what would you do in Korede's place?
2. Why does Ayoola kill? Korede wonders whether the knife she carries has somehow cursed her with a violent streak. Is Ayoola cursed? Does she carry the knife for self-defense, as she claims, to protect her against the men to hurt her? Or are Ayoola's murders a product of something else entirely?
3. (Follow-up to Question 2) The girls' father was a violent man—it's his knife Ayoola carries. How might the knife stand as a symbol of the girls' family legacy of abuse and violence?
4. (Follow-up to Question 2 & 3) What are the family dynamics? To what extent have the girls' parents shaped their daughters' different behaviors?
5. How would you describe Korede? As she tells us, "There never seemed to be much point in masking my imperfections. It's as futile as using air freshener when you leave the toilet."

What does this comment suggest about Korede's self-identity: her sense of herself and her place in the world?

6. Korede, who lacks the beauty her sister possesses, believes that "love is only for the beautiful." What does the novel suggest about the power of beauty: the privileges and authority it commands, both on a personal level and in the wider society? How do you see the role of beauty in real life—our lives, our society?
7. Talk about the menace and corruption that permeates Lagos, as well as the daily humiliations or sense of entitlement to which its residents are subjected.
8. (Follow-up to Question 7) Consider the incident when the policeman bribes a frightened Korede; she knows that "Educated women anger men of his ilk." How would you describe the place of women in Nigerian society as depicted in the novel?
9. One of Ayoola's boyfriends challenges Korede about her sister: "There's something wrong with her, he says. "But you? What's your excuse?" What specifically prompts his query? And how does, or how should, Korede respond?
10. What was your overall experience reading *My Sister, the Serial Killer*? The book is considered by most critics/reviewers as "darkly humorous." Do you find it funny; if so, where do you find the humor??

Summary from the Publisher and Discussion Questions from www.litlovers.com