

My Sister, the Serial Killer by Oyinkan Braithwaite

4 stars

Love and loyalty – the ties that bind

Set in Nigeria, this novel centres on the relationship between two sisters, Korede, the elder, and Ayoola. From a good and prosperous family, Korede is a dedicated nurse, while Ayoola has her own fashion business. Ayoola is also achingly beautiful, where her sister is larger, darker and has harder features.

When Ayoola phones Korede with the words 'I killed him', Korede has no option but to act to sort out her sister's mess and to protect her from the consequences of her crime. Again. Together they clean up and then dump the body in the river.

Somehow, with this being Nigeria, their actions do not seem as dangerous as if the novel were set in Italy, say; in our Western eyes, Nigeria is a dangerous and corrupt place, and such behaviour seems less shocking.

While Ayoola sails through life, mostly untouched by what she has done, Korede has a conscience and confesses her worries to an unconscious patient whom she visits. He is unlikely to wake up and so she feels the sanctuary of the confessional. She also harbours the fact that she is in love with Dr Tade Otumu, who does not seem to return the feelings.

As the novel continues the body count rises, but Ayoola is a picture of innocence. I did wonder quite why Korede was so willing to protect her sister, but of course, she has been pulled in and is now complicit.

There is not a lot of suspense in this novel which seems to unfurl in a matter of fact fashion. Korede fears there will be more victims but is unable to bring herself to do anything about it.

The conclusion is surprising, and reveals more of the sisters' backstory, giving the reader a very different take on what has gone before.

An intriguing read and impressive first novel.

Pashtpaws

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.