

SHE CAME BACK.  
IS IT A MIRACLE...OR A CURSE?

THE  
SHADOW  
SISTER

LILY MEADE

BOOK CLUB GUIDE

# THE SHADOW SISTER

LILY MEADE

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What would you do if something awful happened to someone you loved? What if you were angry with them when it happened?
2. Casey and Sutton both struggle with their biracial identity and what they believe is expected of them based on their parentage. Do you think these assumptions are fair?
3. Why do you think Sutton's disappearance is treated differently by the media than the other missing girls? Was Madison's "home again" narrative successful or necessary?
4. What are some of the different ways members of the Cureton family struggle with expressing their fears and insecurities? How do you think that impacts their relationships with each other?
5. Casey uses Ivy James and her music as a security blanket of sorts. Do you have a form of media you use as a source of comfort?
6. Sutton is often jealous of Ruth and Casey's sisterly friendship. How do you think that influenced her fractured relationship with Casey?
7. Ma Remy says that slaves brought to America had to "rebuild their concept of beloveds" after families were torn apart on the auction block. How do you feel the concept of chosen family has followed Black America to the modern day?
8. Isaiah cares deeply about legacy. Why do you think that is?
9. Sutton deliberately destroys her own property to hurt Casey. What is the cruelest thing you've ever done to a sibling or someone you are close to?
10. How do you think the Cureton family's class privilege helped or hindered them in the story?

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## PLAYLISTS

### SUTTON:

- “Bejeweled” by Taylor Swift
- “Sweetie Little Jean” by Cage The Elephant
- “Angel Of The Morning” by Juice Newton
- “My Tears Ricochet” by Taylor Swift
- “Black Like Me” by Mickey Guyton
- “From Eden” by Hozier
- “Cowboy Like Me” by Taylor Swift
- “In Case You Don’t Live Forever” by Ben Platt
- “Silhouettes” by Of Monsters & Men
- “Starlight” by The Wailin’ Jennys

LISTEN ON  
APPLE MUSIC



LISTEN ON  
SPOTIFY



### CASEY:

- “Tell Me Why” (Taylor’s Version) by Taylor Swift
- “Bury a Friend” by Billie Eilish
- “Requiem” by Laura Dreyfuss
- “Everybody’s Changing” by Keane
- “Hate That You Know Me” by Bleachers
- “Circle” by Edie Brickell & New Bohemians
- “First” by Cold War Kids
- “Prodigal Son” by Rationale
- “Looking Out” by Brandi Carlisle
- “Home” by Gabrielle Alpin

LISTEN ON  
APPLE MUSIC



LISTEN ON  
SPOTIFY



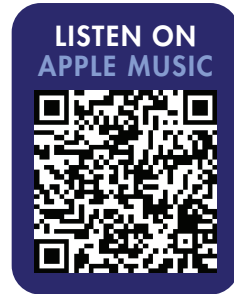
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### PLAYLISTS

#### Dad's Black Spirituals from Isaiah Cureton:

- **“Follow the Drinking Gourd” by Ritchie Havens**  
(This is the song Sutton hums throughout the book! The title is said to refer to the Big Dipper, telling enslaved people seeking the Underground Railroad to follow the North Star as well as other more regional directions in order to secure their freedom.)
- **“Down In the River To Pray” by the London Community Gospel Choir**
- **“John Brown’s Body” by Pete Seeger**
- **“Michael, Row the Boat Ashore”**  
(This song was sung by formerly enslaved people on an island abandoned by their former owner before the Union navy arrived. It’s about hope and impending freedom if you just keep your faith.)
- **“Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”**
- **“I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free” by Nina Simone**
- **“Wade In The Water”**  
(It is theorized that this song was used to warn escaping enslaved people to get off the trail and into water to help bloodhounds lose track of their scent.)
- **“We Shall Overcome”**
- **“A Change Is Gonna Come” by Sam Cooke**
- **“Swing Low Sweet Chariot”**  
(Probably the most well known spiritual, a call and response song that also has many theorized meanings and ties to slavery escape attempts and community faith. Any playlist of spirituals, even a short one like this, wouldn’t be complete without it.)



#### Isaiah's daughter Casey and her friend Ruth's modern song additions:

- **“Say My Name” by Destiny’s Child**
- **“It’s So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday” by Boyz II Men**
- **“I’ll Be Missing You” by Puff Daddy & Faith Evans**

# THE SHADOW SISTER

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### AUTHOR Q&A:



#### **What inspired you to write *The Shadow Sister*?**

I was inspired most by a real true crime story from the early 1900s that I can't tell anyone about because it spoils the plot!

After that initial seed though, I thought a lot about the way media interacts with victims and their families. I wrote this book during the media frenzy over Gabby Petito and the important conversations held then about how much attention her case got compared to many other missing people of color.

I also wondered what it must be like to be a sibling of a missing person. Interviews with friends and family always claim that a victim was "perfect" and "would never hurt a fly," but no one is ever that pristine. I thought it might be interesting to tell the story of a missing person's case and aftermath through the point of view of someone who didn't get along with the victim, but had to pretend otherwise.

#### **Sutton and Casey have a tumultuous relationship. Can you talk a little bit about their relationship and why it's so important to the story?**

I'm the second oldest of four and the only girl, so I have a lot of experience with frustrating sibling relationships. Most of Sutton and Casey's frustrations and resentments toward each other are pulled from my own childhood.

"I love you, but I don't like you" was a constant mood between me and the brother of mine closest in age to me. I got along better with my youngest and oldest brother because there was much more distance in our ages, but nowadays my relationship with my middle brother is flourishing because we're healing our past divide and learning how much we have in common after all.

I love found and chosen families and consider my best friend like a sister to me, but I also know that blood family relationships can be so beneficial when they aren't toxic. I wanted to write a story about the power of sibling and familial love and the promise that it can overcome, even if it feels broken right now.

#### **In *The Shadow Sister*, Casey learns a lot about her family history and how it's affected her family. Can you talk about how her family history plays a significant role in her decisions in *The Shadow Sister*?**

Casey comes from a well-researched and recorded lineage. It was important for me to give her the

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knowledge and power of her ancestry because it has always bothered me how little I know about certain parts of my family background and of the histories that died with people I never got to meet.

Her commitment to tolerating Sutton for her parent's sake, even while she spends the majority of the book trying to prove her sister a liar, stems from how deeply she respects the idea of family and togetherness. She doesn't want to be what breaks the good things left in her fractured family.

As she learns about her family's past, she discovers that suffering isn't exclusive to her modern issues (which of course is obvious given that her bloodline comes from slavery) but that there is also a through line of hope throughout the tragedies. It's hard to see a path forward when you're in the thick of deep pain, but I've found it very comforting to know how others have overcome and prospered.

### **What was your path to becoming a writer? Did you always want to write books?**

I've always been a storyteller, but I didn't realize I had a talent for storytelling until I was a teenager. Before that, I told stories through elaborate kidnapping schemes with my dolls and my toddler brothers as the forensics team to my detective. I was raised as the star of my foundational tales through bedtime storybooks my mother made herself with scrapbook photos and chew-proof contact paper.

As a teenager, I started writing fan fiction first, but quickly transitioned into developing my own stories. I've followed the young adult industry since I was fourteen years old and I'm overjoyed to finally count myself as one of its authors.

### **What is your writing process like? When and where do you write? Are you a plotter or a pantser?**

I'm an obscenely detailed plotter. I write a complete fifteen-thousand-word (or more) synopsis of my entire story before drafting a word. I have a chronic illness that limits my productive hours, so I cannot stomach the idea of wasting my writing time following a path that could lead me into a dead end. I still discover a lot of fun things on the journey, but I definitely prefer having a map.

### **What was your favorite scene to write?**

The reveal. If you've finished the book, you know what I'm taking about. The entire idea of the book was born from wanting to write that scene. The bathtub scene was also fun, just because it was so unsettling.

### **What's the most important thing you hope readers take from *The Shadow Sister*?**

I hope readers have a fun time! But if they take anything other than enjoyment from it, I hope they know that they are valuable and worthy. No person deserves something horrific to happen to them and everyone deserves justice.