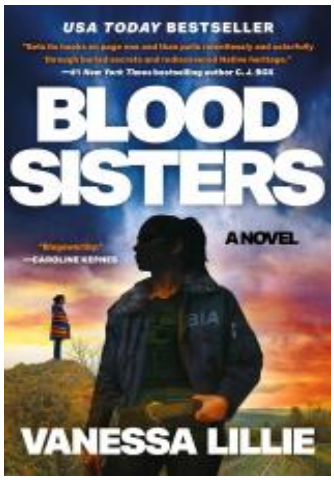
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# Blood Sisters

by Vanessa Lillie




## About the Book

**A visceral and compelling mystery about a Cherokee archaeologist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs who is summoned to rural Oklahoma to investigate the disappearance of two women?one of them her sister.**

*There are secrets in the land.*

As an archaeologist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Syd Walker spends her days in Rhode Island trying to protect the land's indigenous past, even as she?s escaping her own.

While Syd is dedicated to her job, she?s haunted by a night of violence she barely escaped in her Oklahoma hometown 15 years ago. Though she swore she?d never go back, the past comes calling.

When a skull is found near the crime scene of her youth, just as her sister, Emma Lou, vanishes, Syd knows she must return home. She refuses to let her sister's disappearance, or the remains, go ignored --- as so often happens in cases of missing Native women.

But not everyone is glad to have Syd home, and she can feel the crosshairs on her. Still, the deeper Syd digs, the more she uncovers about a string of missing indigenous women cases going back decades. To save her sister, she must expose a darkness in the town that no one wants to face --- not even Syd.

*The truth will be unearthed.*

## Discussion Guide

**1.** Syd has used distance (both emotional and literal) to create boundaries with her sister, Emma Lou, and to some degree

with her whole family. Do you think this approach is working for her, or is there an approach you think would have been better?

**2.** There?s a lot of research and discussion online and in the media about the concept of trauma living in our bodies and even in our DNA. Did you see such trauma in Syd, and in what ways did it manifest?

**3.** While Syd works for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the US government, there?s a long history of injustice toward Native people by those entities. How do you think Syd reconciles her job and her heritage?

**4.** Syd is trying to identify remains and find her sister, both cases echoing real issues of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S). What stood in Syd?s way of finding the truth, and does that resonate with what you know of current MMIWG2S cases?

**5.** Syd?s pursuit of justice at any cost put her into some dangerous situations. Were there moments you might have put yourself at similar risk? Do you think she was too influenced by her past trauma and connection to the cases? Did Jo make a mistake in sending her to Oklahoma?

**6.** Syd?s mother, June, and sister, Emma Lou, start to work for a local methadone and prescription business. These were the early days of what would be called ?pill mills,? but there are arguments that they kept some people from more dangerous drugs as well as provided jobs in communities that needed them. Did you see only Syd?s side of the argument, or was she too dismissive?

**7.** While Syd was born and raised in Northeast Oklahoma, there?s still a lot of history, Native and otherwise, she?s learning as she goes. Did her dig into the truth resonate with you? Have you investigated the history of the land you live on or on which you were born? What did you find, and does any of that echo Syd?s own journey?

**8.** While Syd is in Oklahoma, her wife, Mal, is giving them some space to see if motherhood is really something Syd wants. Did you see changes in Syd that indicate she is ready to be a parent, or was it more her fear of losing Mal that motivated her?

**9.** Cody is the father of Syd?s niece and Emma Lou?s partner, but from the beginning, Syd is dismissive of his capacity for change. But Syd eventually realizes that she and Cody have much more in common than she was willing to see. Did you notice this as well, and do you think it?s a fair assessment of their relationship? If she?d been more open or kinder to him earlier, could she have found her sister sooner?

**10.** Guilt toward and connection to Luna as demonstrated by being blood sisters haunts Syd (almost literally) throughout the story. How does the loss of Luna impact Syd?s relationships, and what could having her back mean?

## Author Bio

Vanessa Lillie is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation. She is the author of the *USA Today* bestseller BLOOD SISTERS and THE BONE THIEF; the suspense novels LITTLE VOICES and FOR THE BEST; and is the coauthor of

the *Young Rich Widows* series. Vanessa hosts an Instagram Live show with crime fiction authors and was a columnist for the *Providence Journal*. Originally from Northeast Oklahoma, she lives on Narragansett land in Rhode Island and is proudly Two-Spirit.

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