

Aunty Lee's Chilled Revenge

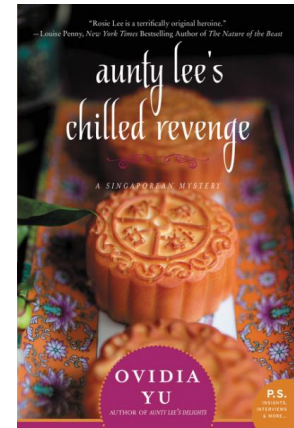
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Introduction

Slightly hobbled by a twisted ankle, crime-solving restaurateur Aunty Lee begrudgingly agrees to take a rest from running her famous café, Aunty Lee's Delights, and turns over operations to her friend and new business partner Cherril.



The café serves as a meeting place for an animal rescue society that Cherril once supported. They were forced to dissolve three years earlier after a British expat killed the puppy she'd adopted, sparking a firestorm of scandal. The expat, Allison Fitzgerald, left Singapore in disgrace, but has returned with an ax to grind (and a lawsuit). At the café one afternoon, Cherril receives word that Allison has been found dead in her hotel—and foul play is suspected. When a veterinarian, who was also involved in the scandal, is found dead, suspicion soon falls on the animal activists. What started with an internet witch hunt has ended in murder—and in a tightly knit, law-and-order society like Singapore, everyone is on edge.

Before anyone else gets hurt—and to save her business—Aunty Lee must get to the bottom of what really happened three years earlier, and figure out who is to be trusted in this tangled web of scandal and lies.

Questions for Discussion

1. At the start of the novel we learn that the victim, Allison Love, had been run out of town by animal activists. Was their outrage warranted? What does Allison (and furry Lola's) story say about social media and its powers? Are we meant to sympathize with Allison or the activists?
2. The narrator tells us: “[Inspector Salim] was aware his country's strength came from its ability to attract the best and brightest of foreign talent. Like he had learned as a boy breeding guppies, for the best colors you had to constantly add specimens caught in different canals to vary the gene pool.” Do you think this is an accurate description of Aunty Lee's Singapore? Are there pros and cons to its highly diverse society?
3. “As a foreign domestic worker, Nina was exposed to a lot more of the hidden underside of people. Nina had observed that people were generally worse than they appeared

socially. . . .” Do you agree? Which characters have a hidden underside? How are those undersides revealed?

4. Josephine de la Vega, a former Miss Singapore who feels increasingly washed up, has pinned her hopes on marrying expat Mike as a way to get out of a country where she increasingly feels trapped. Is she right to feel that way? Why does marriage seem like the only possible out to her?
5. “Life would be so much simpler if people said what they thought,” Aunty Lee reflects. True or untrue? Does Aunty Lee herself always say what she thinks?
6. Do you agree with Cherril’s decision to keep her abortion a secret, despite, as Aunty Lee points out, that it was perfectly legal? Was her mother-in-law right to hire a detective to discover Cherril’s secrets before she married the family’s only son?
7. How does Aunty Lee get to the truth about Vallerie’s identity? How did the infamous Allison Love manage to hide in plain sight for so long in a place where she was so infamous?
8. Who is Aunty Lee thinking of when she reflects: “The reason cold dishes were complicated was the multiple cooking methods involved. . . . A cold, savory mold called for design, execution and presentation. It was the same thing with creating the perfect revenge.”