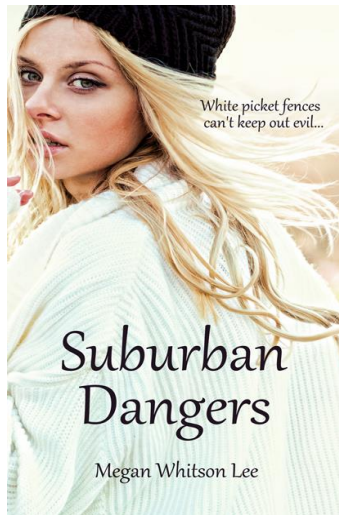


Discussion Questions



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SUBURBAN DANGERS

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About the Book

Sixteen-year-old Kaki Jones lives a normal life in suburbia. She's a straight A student, runs on the cross country track team, and exemplifies the all-around great kid. Her younger brother Brandon is the one they all worry about. Parties, fights at school, photos of naked girls on his cell phone. Brandon is the one in trouble with the police. No one ever worries about Kaki.

But Kaki harbors a secret. After meeting cool girl Sydney Diaz, Kaki's life is forever changed. Now, she's a sophomore by day and a commodity sold at the hands of gang members by night. Living a double life and controlled by threats of violence against her family, Kaki sees no chance of escape.

Suburban Dangers is the story of what happens when parents look the other way; when a stranger offers more affection than a father; when God's deliverance is the only answer.

TITLE: Suburban Dangers

Discussion:

Question 1: 1. Kaki was an average girl with decent grades who ran track and hung out with “the good kids” before meeting Sydney Diaz. What do you think draws Kaki to Sydney?

Answer 1: Kaki is drawn to Sydney’s rebellious vibe and “cool girl” status. Sydney is so different from her that Kaki is flattered by her attention.

Question 2: Lana hides her drinking habits from her husband and children; even so, many of her hiding places are “out in plain sight.” How do you think Tyler misses the clues? Additionally, Kaki chooses not to tell her father about her discovery that Brandon is using pornography. Why do you think she chooses not to say anything?

Answer 2: Tyler is probably aware of what is going on, but his own addiction keeps him from prying too much into his wife’s (or his children’s issues) for that matter. Kaki is all too aware that her dad and Brandon have been fighting, and in order to keep some semblance of peace in her life, it’s easier to ignore and move on.

Question 3: The appeal of the bad boy is an age-old story. Kaki is immediately drawn to Damien Rosas-Diego, even though she senses that he is a dangerous guy. What is it about our human nature that draws us to the dark even though we know it’s bad for us?

Answer 3: The Bible tells us that the human heart is deceptive above all things—no one can understand or trust it. We are often drawn to those things we are told not to do, seek, or desire, just like a rebellious child often does what they are not supposed to do.

Question 4: Once she begins seeing Damien, Kaki’s relationships with her friends fade. She loses interest in her favorite activities like track, and her grades slip. These are all warning signs. What early interventions might have prevented Kaki from being trafficked?

Answer 4: Early intervention is imperative to protect young girls from traffickers. Helping kids to understand the dangers and how to ward off potential exploiters is an important component to prevention. Asking questions, listening, and watching for early warning signs all play a part. To learn more about prevention, visit www.justaskprevention.com.

Question 5: Tyler’s commitment to his faith has faded over the years, and God seems far away. Have you ever felt like this?

Answer 5: Answers will vary.

Question 6: Although Tyler has had a pornography addiction for some time, he now dabbles with the idea of an office infidelity. What drives him to take that next step and consider having an affair?

Answer 6: Although his marriage has hit a plateau and Tara Pickard is flirting hard, Tyler is in a spiritual crisis and his distance from God makes him vulnerable. Men who have used pornography for a long time often need a bigger high. Sometimes looking at images graduates to acting on impulses.

Question 7: In your opinion, what is the biggest wake-up call for Tyler?

Answer 7: Answers will vary.

Question 8: Once Kaki is entrenched in the gang, Damien begins to show his true colors as he abuses and exploits her. At what point do you think Kaki realizes she can't get out, and why do you think she never tells anyone?

Answer 8: Many suburban girls who are trafficked live double lives. Their traffickers often use them in the afternoons once they're home from school when the parents are still at work. Many, if not most, of these girls never tell anyone because they're too afraid. They're families, friends, and pets are threatened, and in their minds it's easier to maintain the status quo rather than risk the lives of their loved ones.

Question 9: Names are important in this story. Kaki is short for Katherine, an affectionate nickname her father once called her. She confesses to Molly that her boyfriend (trafficker) doesn't call her by any name at all. What is so important about names and what people call us?

Answer 9: Answers will vary. Our name is directly related to our identity and even our existence. In the Bible, names had meaning, and God often asked people to give their children specific names.

Question 10: What is the significance of the stray dog, Trixie, and her puppies?

Answer 10: Trixie is a physical representation of redemption. She is a dog that is "thrown away" yet saved by someone showing her mercy and grace. Later, she gives birth to the blessings shared with Kaki. For Kaki, the dog represents something that shows unconditional love, much like God. She understands that the puppies may be the only living things in her life she can truly protect and keep safe.

