

Minor Characters: Sisi

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in **Purple Hibiscus** contributes to the flow of the plot by including the actions of a number of minor characters. An example of such characters is **Sisi**. For most of the novel, Sisi is the live-in help and cook of the Achikes. She was responsible for most of domestic tasks in the Achike home. She cooked, served meals, ironed and did laundry. **She is usually referred to as 'that girl' by Chief Eugene. Mrs. Achike confessed that it was Sisi that provided her the poison with which she poisoned Chief Eugene.**

Description of Sisi's physical appearance and smell

Quotes:

'Sisi's cheekbones were so high they gave her an angular, eerily amused expression, as if she was mocking you, laughing at you, and you would never know why.'

'I could smell the thyme and curry that clung to her. Even after she had a bath, she still smelled like that.'

- **Kambili reveals that Mrs. Achike constantly had to direct Sisi on how to administer spices.**

Quote:

'I was still at the window when Mama came into my room. Every Sunday before lunch, in between telling Sisi to put a little more palm oil in the soup, a little less curry in the coconut rice,'

- **But according to Kambili, Sisi usually pounds excellent fufu.**

Quote:

'The fufu was smooth and fluffy. Sisi made it well; she pounded the yam energetically, adding drops of water into the mortar, her cheeks contracting with the thump- thump-thump of the pestle.'

- **Sisi also assists Mrs Achike cook for the women of her prayer group.**

Quote:

'Sisi and I are cooking moi-moi for the sisters.'

Sisi's relationship with Chief Eugene

Sisi was generally treated poorly by Chief Eugene. Evidence of his mistreatment of her includes;

Evidence 1:

She held a bowl of water that could have been placed on the table for Chief Eugene to wash his hands.

Quote:

'Papa was washing his hands in the bowl of water Sisi held before him.'

The fact that she held the bowl of water rather than place it on the table shows how lowly Chief thought of her.

Evidence 2:

Chief Eugene usually referred to Sisi as 'that girl.'

Quote:

'Ask that girl to bring it," Papa said.

Evidence 3:

Although she had a generally efficient demeanour, she appeared to be afraid of Chief Eugene. When he asked her to bring the new juice produced by his company, she brought it to him very quickly.

Quote:

'Sisi was back shortly and placed the bottles next to Papa.'

- **Sisi also did the laundry of the Achikes except Kambili and Jaja's school uniforms.**

Quote:

'Jaja and I washed our school uniforms while Sisi washed the rest of our clothes.'

- She also irons their clothes;

Quote:

'Sisi would get them for ironing.'

- **She serves the Achikes and their visitors their meals.**

Quotes:

'When Sisi started to bring in the platters of moi-moi and jollof rice and fried chicken...'

'When he came back, we drank the mango juice, which Sisi served in tall glasses, while he talked about the coup.'

'Sisi had Papa's tea set out, in the china teapot with a tiny, ornate handle.'

- When Mrs Achike returned from church but was sick because of her pregnancy, Jaja remarked: **'Maybe Sisi can cook lunch by herself today,'**

Sisi brings the water with which Mrs Achike cleans her etagere and figurines whenever she is abused by Chief Eugene.

Quotes:

"Sisi, not now. Get me water and a towel."

'Sisi brought a plastic bowl of water and a kitchen towel.'

- **Sisi was responsible for the preparation of meals.**

Quotes:

'Sisi cooked coconut rice.'

'When we got home, Sisi brought up our lunch, rice and fried beef, on fawn-colored elegant plates, and Jaja and I ate alone.'

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- **When Kambili and Jaja went to Nsukka, Mrs. Achike informed Kambili that Sisi mistakenly cooked for four because she forgot that Kambili and Jaja were away.**

Quote:

'She told me Sisi had forgotten we were away and cooked lunch for four.'

- **Sisi's actions also stands as one of the occurrences that marked a change in the Achike home after Chief Eugene flung his missal and broke the glass etagere.**

Quote:

'Sisi broke a full set of Mama's china.'

- Sisi was the only one in the house that cried after the death of Chief Eugene.

Quote:

'It was only Sisi who had cried in the household, loud sobs that had quickly quieted in the face of our bewildered silence.'

- **It was Sisi who provided the poison with which Mrs. Achike murdered Chief Eugene.**

Quote:

'I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor.'

- **After Chief Eugene's death, Mrs Achike became unresponsive when spoken to. Kambili tried to have Sisi hold discussions with her mother.**

Quote:

'I used to ask Sisi to talk to her, because she would sit with Sisi in the living room for long hours, but she said Mama would not reply to her, that Mama simply sat and stared.'

- Although Sisi left the Achike home after her wedding, she occasionally visited to keep Mrs. Achike company and direct the new cook, Okon.

Quote:

'When Sisi got married last year, Mama gave her cartons and cartons of china and Sisi sat on the floor of the kitchen, crying loudly, while Mama watched her. Sisi comes in now, once in a while, to instruct our new steward, Okon, and to ask if Mama needs anything.'