



Rebecca Forster

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SECRET RELATIONS

They're illegal. They're undocumented. They're disappearing. The last thing Finn O'Brien wants is to come between his partner and her daughter, but Amber Anderson new boyfriend, an undocumented immigrant, is missing. Uneasy about keeping a secret from his partner and hindered by prejudice and politics, Finn is tempted to turn a deaf ear to the girl's plea —until the first body is found. To track a serial killer with a gruesome secret Finn must navigate a shadowy world where life is cheap - even his own.

1. Romeo and Juliet is universal, but...

Forbidden love is a wonderful dramatic device, but in **Secret Relations** it isn't social or economic barriers that keep lovers apart, it is the law. If you were Amber's mother/father, what would be your first reaction to such an affair? Would you ever see a future in such a union and where would you expect such a couple to live - in the shadows in the US for one young person or across the border in exile for the other. Would happiness ever be possible?

2. Where did it all go wrong?

Secrets and lying by omission are all a part of this story, but I believe they are also part of human nature. We do these things to protect ourselves, make other people happy, or evade consequences. Where did it all go wrong for these characters? From the moment Amber turned to Finn for help and not her mother? Finn's ability to convince himself he was only doing what a good cop would do? Did he betray Cori? Did Amber? Who could have stopped the dominoes falling? More importantly, who should have?

3. Then again...

What are the moral and ethical implications of such intrigue? A man is missing. Refusal to even look for him is as good as saying his life and death meant nothing. Could Finn have turned his back given his oath to protect and serve? Were secrets justified in pursuit of the higher good.

4. Does love trump everything else?

Amber is working but she is a single teenage mother dependent on Cori for a roof, food, and care of Tucker, the baby. Was it heroic for her to set this investigation in motion and put herself in danger? Was it reckless? By doing so, did she elevate her missing lover above the son she is responsible for and the mother who has sacrificed so much for her. Was Amber reckless or praiseworthy. Would you have done what she did?

5. Who would you defend?

Cori, Amber, and Finn each had reasons for their actions. Amber for rushing headlong into danger, Cori for wanting to protect her daughter, Finn for wanting to champion immigrants because he was one himself. Whose side would you have taken?

6. Cori and Thomas Lapinski finally get together.

Finn and Cori love each other – but Finn has his own romantic baggage. Is Cori settling for Lapinski or being realistic about her future with Finn? Would you wait or move on? Is Lapinski a good bet? Where do you see their relationship going?

7. The end

Was this the appropriate ending? Do you find something hopeful about it or were you disappointed?