

## Book Club Discussions



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### **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Traffic in downtown Los Angeles turns hellish when a woman hurtles from an overpass and crashes through the windshield of a car on the 110 Freeway. Narrowly escaping death in the epic pile up, Detective Finn O'Brien makes a desperate bid to save the woman. But survival is not an option. As the car explodes in a fireball, she dies in his arms. When her autopsy reveals a gruesome secret, Finn is determined to prove her death was no accident. Together with Cori, he follows a twisted trail that leads into the veiled and exotic world of L.A.'s exiled African community, the luxurious enclaves of Hollywood and finally to the doorstep of a third world despot whose cruelty knows no bounds and whose influence has a stranglehold on the City of the Angels.

#### **1) FOREIGN RELATIONS CAN MEAN MANY THINGS**

In the most basic concept, this novel is about human beings of different cultures clashing. But there are other relationships described in this book that feel foreign: Finn and Cori's reaction to the victim's genital mutilation, the political aspects of the story, the disconnect between Sharon and Matthew Stover. Are they all tragic? Understandable? Reconcilable?

#### **3) CHOICES, EVERYONE HAD THEM**

What choices led to the destruction of the relationships in this book? If Sharon had refused to do the stunt, she would not have intrigued her husband. If Takrit had not spoken out she and Aman could have lived safely in their country. What about Cori's choice to enter the restaurant? Did any of them really have a choice or were their actions predictable based on their character?

#### **4) WOMEN, OUTRAGE, HONESTY**

The torture Takrit endured outraged all the women in Foreign Relations - or did it? Was Sharon idealistic or was she opportunistic in her project to expose the torture of women? Is it possible to be both? Was Takrit's genital mutilation a symbol of Cori's own sense that her femininity was threatened by her circumstances?

#### **5) FINN, THOMAS LAPINSKI & DETECTIVE MORROW**

The men in this story are like satellites orbiting around a world of women that feels exotic and somehow threatening to them. What qualities tie these three men together? Do any of

them truly understand the importance of what happened to Takrit or is her death/torture? Was Aman's torture and survival somehow easier for them to understand? Why?

**6) THERE WAS ONE POWERFUL, OVERRIDING DESIRE IN FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Matthew Stover wanted to belong somewhere. Do you know children who have been marginalized by money, absentee parents or blended families? Was Matthew's reaction to Takrit understandable? What were - or should have been - Sharon's obligation to him? Do you believe feeling 'foreign' in your own home can be the most powerful motivator of all?

**7) WAS THE ENDING APPROPRIATE?**