



Secrets

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Val Randall](#) [3]

Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Briony's step-father Colin beats her mother - and Briony, too, on occasion. Paralysed by fear and torn by loyalty to her mother and a desire to live her own life, she remains silent - increasingly withdrawn from her friends and unable to confide in her boyfriend Ian. When Colin's attacks finally hospitalise her mother, Briony visits an interactive web site devoted to domestic violence to get the advice she so desperately needs. She finds the courage to confide in her closest friend and to persuade her mother to consider leaving her home and Colin. The book ends with Briony and her mother about to make a new and uncertain beginning. The power of this novel lies in its characterisation and utterly believable dialogue. Briony's inner turmoil - her anger, guilt, despair and loneliness - is captured accurately and with conviction. Bully and victim are chillingly credible, perfectly realising the tension between unreasonable behaviour and excessive appeasement. *Secrets* provides both advice and warning: secrecy can only protect the abuser but abandoning it is complex and dangerous. The courage needed to leave a violent domestic situation is almost greater than that needed to endure it - but it is the only commodity which will buy a better emotional place and a chance of rebuilding the self-esteem which victims of abuse so often lack.

Running Order:

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