



## Complicit

**Amy Rivers**

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*Complicit is an intense thriller whose strong women refuse to be bullied by bad men.*

In Amy Rivers's thriller *Complicit*, old friends are thrown together to solve the mystery of a disturbing death that reveals a long-hidden truth about their small town.

Kate and Roman were inseparable as teenagers, but their friendship ended when Kate left town with feelings still lingering between them. After years in the forensic psychology field, an incident with an inmate and her mother's death lands Kate back in her hometown as a high school psychologist. When one student winds up dead, and another comes to Kate after an attack, Kate and Roman are forced to reconcile their past.

The teenagers' story implicates powerful men in the town in rape and human trafficking. Following the trail means trouble for Kate and Roman, both in terms of their jobs and their safety, but it may also lead to a reestablished friendship and renewed hope for the girls of Alamogordo, New Mexico.

Kate's background story is intriguing. She puts on a strong front for her students and family, but she contends with anxiety and PTSD stemming from an incident that is revealed in a gradual manner. Both conditions manifest themselves in panic attacks. Her symptoms and attacks are written with realism, displaying the sensations that Kate feels before them, how she rides the feelings out, and the fatigue afterward.

Kate's estranged sister, Tilly, reemerges when their father is diagnosed with cancer. Tilly has been living with a secret of her own, and it's mirrored by the incidents in town, imparting how local corruption has been perpetuated by those willing to go to violent lengths to protect their power. Although Tilly is closed off at first, time with Kate and her family softens her defenses. Though their exploration of each other's boundaries often ends in fighting, Kate and Tilly bring out the best in each other, and their reunion has positive potentials.

Kate and Roman's reconnection leads to potent, enemies-to-lovers-style tension. Their past leads to conflict; at first, they have passionate outbursts that consume as much time as their work on the case. Roman's police ties don't help; the book's villains are entrenched in all aspects of the town's life. Small-town politics are rendered in threatening conversations and acts of revenge that put the lead characters at risk.

While it's full of surprises and progresses in a suspenseful manner, the book's ending is somewhat of a letdown. It involves some justice, but many of the town's deep issues linger. However, it leaves room for Kate and Roman's romance and work to continue, and imparts information on human trafficking to contextualize the story's events.

*Complicit* is an intense thriller that centers the story of human trafficking victims; its strong women refuse to be bullied by bad men.

DELIA STANLEY (February 25, 2021)

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