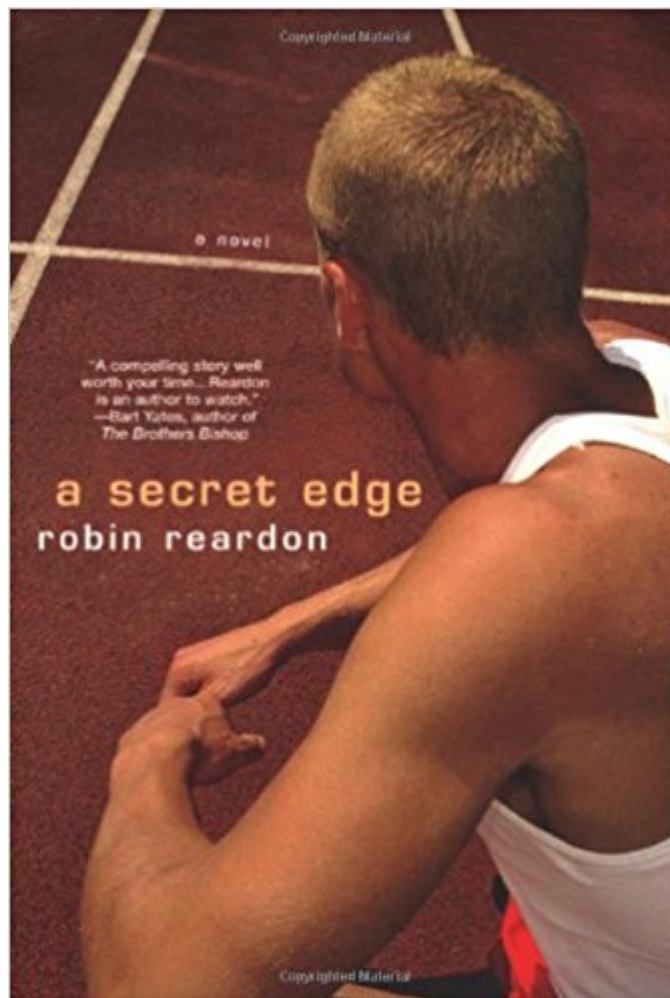


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A Secret Edge



Synopsis

I love the long distance run, when you feel like you're about to die. . .and then you reach this place where you feel like there are no boundaries for you anywhere. . .In many ways, Jason Peele is like any other teenager. He hits the books, hangs with his friends, flirts with girls, and omits the full truth of his life from his Aunt Audrey and Uncle Steve, who have raised him since his parents died. But there's one way that Jason Peele is very different: when he dreams at night, it isn't about girls; it's about David Bowie. At sixteen-years-old, Jason is just beginning to understand that he might be gay. The one place Jason feels comfortable is on the track where he can run fast and hard. He loves the feel of the wind at his back, of his legs propelling him furiously around, the roar of the crowd in his ears. But now, even his sanctuary feels threatening. It isn't just the jerks who call him "faggot" in the locker room. A new guy has joined the team, and everything about him will challenge the way Jason sees life. From late-night showings of "La Cage Aux Folles" to reading Gandhi, he's running a new race on an uncertain course, and only one thing's for sure--his senior year is going to be unforgettable. With *A Secret Edge*, Robin Reardon delivers a sexy, sensitive coming-of-age novel about identity and courage, love and honor, anger and hope, and the many ways the truth can really set you free. "As sexy as it is surprising. *A Secret Edge* is a refreshing spin on the coming out story as well as a memorable new love story for the new millennium." --Brian Sloan, author of *A Tale of Two Summers*

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Customer Reviews

Robin Reardon is an inveterate observer of human nature, and her primary writing goal is to create

stories about all kinds of people, some of whom happen to be gay or transgender--people whose destinies are not determined solely by their sexual orientation or identity. Interests outside of writing include singing, nature photography, and the study of comparative religion. Robin writes in a butter yellow study with a view of the Boston, Massachusetts skyline.

I don't remember honestly the POV this was written in, but I really love Robin Readon's writing I have almost all of her books (there's one coming out soon!). The characters in this book are from two separate worlds. The mystery behind one of them and their love of track is what draws them together. It takes a look not only at gay relationships, but also different values within common and different cultures. I definitely recommend this read.

Boy, if I had this type of parental support when growing up it would have been less of an adjustment. It's amazing to read a story where you had adults acting in a mature, loving and open manner. I didn't have this experience as a teenager and was unable to talk as openly about personal issues. I suppose it does exist. I did feel a bit smothered by Jason's aunt and uncle reminding a sixteen year old when it's time for bed. You would think Jason knows discipline from his track interest. Yet, I do understand the growing process at that age is not exactly predictable. This book was not overdramatic. It kept my interest showing the development of accepting one's nature leading to courageous choices. I did like the book and have no objections to recommending it. I do have one reservation. I found it a bit dry at times. I did not have the eagerness to turn back to the pages after taking a break. For some reason I just couldn't develop any strong emotions or a direct connection with our main characters. For example, Brian Sloan's *TALE OF TWO SUMMERS* immediately gave me an identification with both characters. I mean I liked the storyline in *A SECRET EDGE*, the message was clear but the characters didn't deeply touch me.

Overall, this is a good story and mostly well written. I marked it down a star because sometimes when you pick up a book, it just does not resonate with you. I know this is subjective, but this was one of those. In this case, it is no reflection of the writer. I liked the characters and the situations were realistic, but it did not completely click with me for some reason.

Even before gay liberation took hold after the Stonewall Riots in NYC in 1969, I can recall reading at least one magnificent gay male love story, James Baldwin's *GIOVANNI'S ROOM* when I was in college. More recent memorable gay male love stories include Andre Aciman's *CALL ME BY YOUR*

NAME and in many ways as a love story for friends lost to AIDS, Allan Gurganus' PLAYS WELL WITH OTHERS is one of the best love stories ever written. And amazingly enough, I can think of at least four excellent gay male love stories written by women. I say amazingly only in the sense that if you read them, you won't believe how expertly they emerge themselves into the gay male psyche. First, there was Patricia Nell Warren's THE FRONT RUNNER, then Annie Proulx wrote her unforgettable short story, BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN that became the unforgettable motion picture. In 2006, NancyKay Shapiro wrote an excellent first novel, WHAT LOVE MEANS TO YOU PEOPLE, and last night I finished a novel that I'm sure will be remembered as one of the best gay "coming out" love stories written in many years. Robin Reardon's, A SECRET EDGE will "grab" you from the beginning and hold on to you until you turn the last page and beyond. Jason Peele is a sixteen year old who for fourteen of those years has been an orphan. He lost his parents when he was two and is being raised by his father's brother, Uncle Steve and his wife, Aunt Audrey. The couple didn't have any children of their own, so this is something they took on with relish rather than out of a sense of begrudged obligation. They've done a good job with Jason and when we are first introduced to him, he seems like your typical average teenager. He's a good student and has a passion, track and field. His specialty is running both on the relay team and individual short distances. He seems to have a knack for talking with girls and even takes on the job of teaching a friend how to acquire that talent himself. But as the story progresses, we discover that Jason's ability to talk to girls stems from the fact that there is no sexual tension there to prevent his communication at least on his part, and when he dreams sexual dreams it always seems to involve David Bowie. Jason suspects that he may be gay, but he has no actual experiences yet to base it on. An ex-close friend suspects it too, because he along with one of his buddies are constantly accusing Jason of being a faggot. Jason doesn't want to be gay and he fights it with all of his might until he meets a fellow student, Raj, who is a teammate on the high school track and field team whose specialty is the high jump. Raj is a year older than Jason, seventeen, and when they meet there is an instant attraction between the two. Raj is from India, he is fun but serious and as the older of the two, he takes on the role of mentor for Jason. He teaches Jason about the nonviolence of Gandhi and instructs him in the virtues found in the musical, LA CAGE AUX FOLLES. It doesn't take Jason long to discover why his first double date with the opposite sex went so askew because in no time at all, he and Raj are head-over-heels in love with each other. Something happens, however, that threatens to thwart that love affair and suffice it to say that if you read this novel, you will be totally surprised to find out who experiences the most growth and maturity by this roadblock to happiness. A SECRET EDGE involves characters both adult and teenage alike who either learn and grow from the lessons that Jason and Raj learn in

this story, or refuse to learn from them. I'd like to think that as the reader, I've learned from them. I know that I'm glad I bought this book and that it will remain in my library, because I know without a doubt, I'll come back to this one to read it again.

I've been on a winning streak of late with coming-of-age novels, and this latest, "A Secret Edge," is yet another winner. Set in the present day, it's the tale of two high school track stars, both gay, one white and one Indian, who fall hard for each other and in the process must deal with awkwardness with their newfound feelings, as well as violence. Jason and Raj are in sharp contrast to one another, especially when it comes to one being raised in America and the other being raised in India. It's surprising how much the culture clash has to do with the nature of the relationship and the outcome of the book while at the same time race (as opposed to culture) is not even an issue for anyone (bar one very, very minor character) in the book. I hope that's an accurate reflection of how kids today feel. It certainly felt authentic, as did the plot, the characters and the ending. Everything unfolded at the perfect pace, with the action of the story starting out very early on (I hate waiting through a lot of set-up). And you are never quite sure where the violence aspect of the plot is going to go. In fact, I was a bit surprised at the ending, that the one lead, Jason, did not wind up giving up something he held of great importance (don't want to say and give things away)--a very welcome surprise as the author very easily could have, and many would say should have, gone the obvious route. And, perhaps most important, it vividly reminded me of the urgency of feelings during one's teenage years. That the author could pull this off with such clarity shows true talent. This is a great entry in the gay coming-of-age genre of fiction.

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