

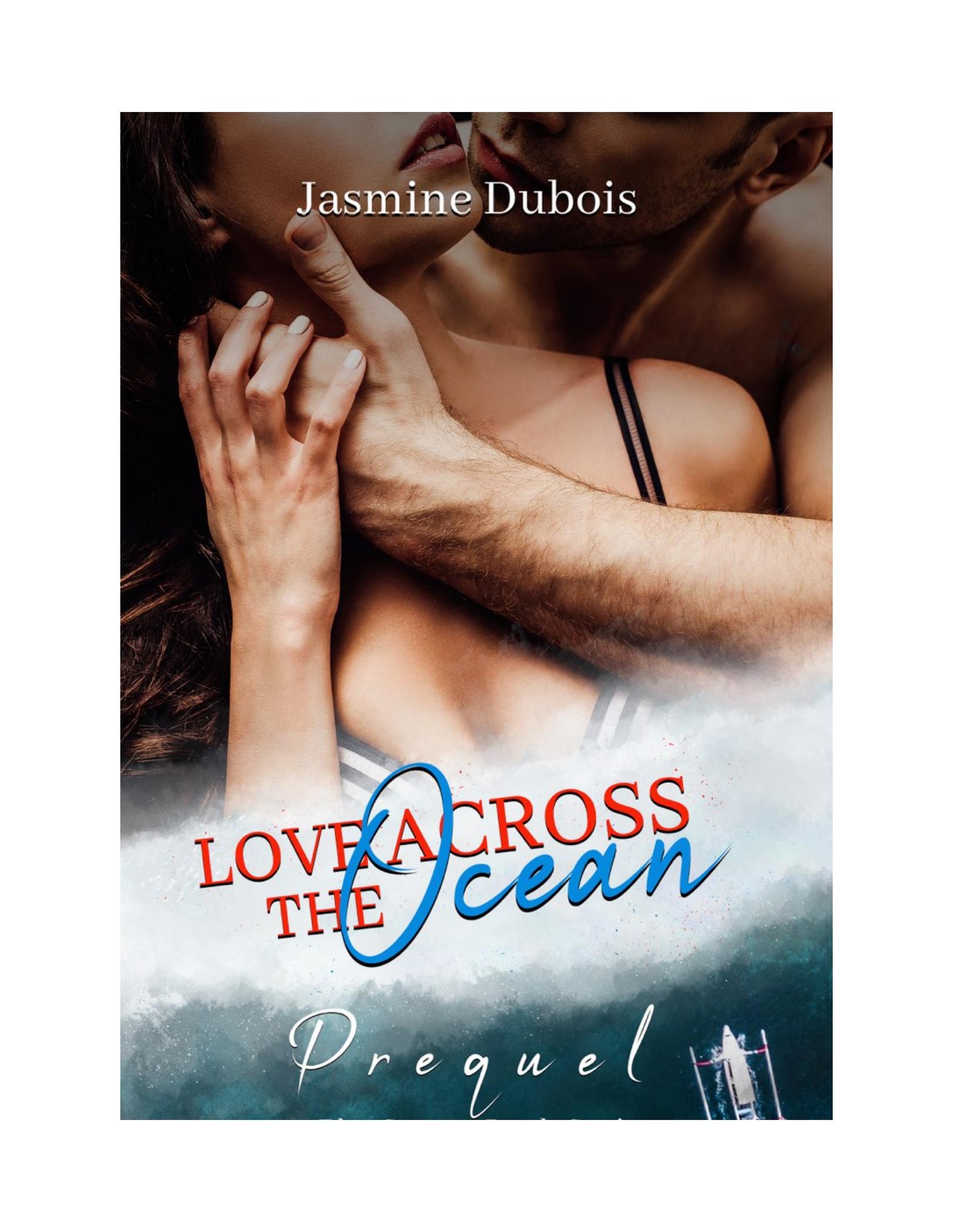


Jasmine Dubois

LOVE ACROSS
THE *Ocean*

Prequel
to The Secret Book Series



A romantic close-up of a man and a woman about to kiss. The woman is on the left, her face partially visible, and the man is on the right, his lips near hers. The woman's hand is resting on the man's chest. The background is a soft, hazy tropical scene with a boat on the water.

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LOVE ACROSS THE OCEAN

PREQUEL TO THE SECRET



JASMINE DUBOIS

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THE SECRET SERIES

Continue the Series:
A Medical Romance Story

The Secret Series Release Date

1. Letters From A Mistress 12/19/21
2. Love's Hatred 01/02/22
3. Shadows of Hope 01/16/22

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Jasmine Dubois
ROMANCE AUTHOR

Hello!

Welcome and thank you so much for taking the time to download 'Love Across The Ocean'.

I hope you'll enjoy this short read. As Alina a young woman from Moldova decides to her heart to find true love, amidst family pressure. In Alina's travel to America, will she reunite with with the man her heart deeps for and have the career of her dreams?

As an extra thank you, I've included a sneak peek of my Medical Romance Series, 'The Secret' at the end of this book!

I look forward to keeping you up-to-date with the upcoming release of my new series and all the other books I have planned.

Meanwhile, thanks again for being here and enjoy this time to yourself for a brief escape!

Warmest wishes
~Jasmine Dubois~

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CONTENTS

1. [Dreams](#)
2. [A Stranger's Support](#)
3. [Safety or Adventure](#)
4. [Weary Letters](#)
5. [Mama Knows Best](#)
6. [Oceans Away](#)
7. [Hidden Secrets](#)
8. [Blackmail](#)
9. [Mrs. Frost](#)
10. [True Love](#)

[Sneak Peak: The Secret Series](#)

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[The Secret Series](#)

[About the Author](#)

DREAMS



Clutching the surgical tray against my chest, I smile with satisfaction at yet another success in stitching up an injured soldier as my long brunette hair swept up in a ponytail sways side to side. The great feeling of contentment and joy that fills my heart is not unlike what I felt the moment I realized what my purpose in life is.

It had been a dreary Sunday evening and Mama had just finished cooking up dinner, so we all waited patiently for Papa to return. However, my strong father was rushed into our home by two of his friends who are also farmers, bleeding profusely as he lay unconscious in their arms.

Four hours felt like four years as the neighborhood nurse worked tirelessly in trying to heal Papa again but the moment those warm brown eyes we both share blinked open, everything felt right in the world again. It was the relief and delight on Mama and my two older sisters' face that made me decide to be a nurse, one determined on putting that look on every patients' families' face.

"Alina . . ." Doctor Trevor places a hand on my shoulder, stopping me from walking past him. "Great job today," he

praises with a warm, wrinkled smile I quickly return.

Shyly, I bow slightly to my mentor. "It is my honor, sir."

He nods, walking away and I continue towards the nurses' office where I drop the surgical tray before proceeding to the changing room.

I've barely made my way fully into the room when a shrill voice yells my name causing me to wince as I shut the door behind me.

"Hey Corinne," I smile indulgently at my colleague.

She rushes up to me and takes both my hands in hers. "Please tell me you're coming to the town fair tonight." Her large brown eyes shimmer with pleas as she juts out her lips in a pretty pout. It's a look I'm sure I wouldn't be able to resist if I didn't already have plans.

"Sorry Corinne, but today is dinner with the in-laws," I sigh woefully releasing my hands from her grip as I shrug out of my uniform.

Her face takes on a pitiful expression. "They're still insisting?"

I nod, taking my time in getting dressed so I don't have to arrive home early. I don't think I can handle arguing with my parents about my displeasure at been forced into an arranged marriage when my supposed groom and his family will be at the house a few minutes later.

"At least, he's good looking for a farmer," Corinne shrugs.

"I don't care that he's a farmer, Corinne." How could I when my parents are also farmers? Besides, there's absolutely nothing wrong with a man having an honest job.

“He’s just incredibly boring and we have nothing in common.”

“Oh, you poor thing,” she coos, squishing me in a hug.

“I hate my life,” I complain into her long dark hair. “How is it that your parents aren’t putting the same pressure on you?”

She pulls back with a mischievous smile on her face. “One of the perks of being the family delinquent. Besides, with the hunky soldiers trooping into the city after the war, I wouldn’t be caught dead with a farmer.” As if just realizing what she’s said, Corinne spares me a sheepish glance. “No offense,” she says.

I can’t help but chuckle. Corinne’s always liked the finer things life has to offer and being a farmer’s wife is the complete opposite of that.

“I should get going,” I tell her as I shrug on my brown, over-sized coat. “Have fun at the fair,” I plant a smacking kiss on her cheek before walking out with a slight wave at her.

It’s a little bit windy outside but I still refuse to board a taxi when my house is only a few blocks away and my transport fare could do some good as an addition to my family’s finances. Instead, I hold onto my swaying hat and run as fast as I can before the rain decides to descend on us all.

Luckily, I make it home in time but as soon as I sight mother’s elaborate cooking on our dining table, my stomach sinks.

Plastering on a fake smile, I walk up to Papa in the parlor and plant a kiss on his cheek before walking away and

leaving him to his newspaper.

“Mama, I’m home,” I yell as I enter the kitchen, almost reciting the reprimand that comes after my yelling word for word but it doesn’t come.

My mother turns, her hands deep in flour as her loosely tied brown hair falls around her face. “Oh wonderful, you are right on time dear. I have laid out the perfect gown on your bed; it is blue and Robert’s favorite color. I asked his mother,” she beams like she has done me a huge favor.

“Why should I care enough to wear his favorite color?” I grumble.

My mother’s smile stays in place despite the impatience I can see brewing in her eyes. “Because he’s your fiance silly”

I scoff. “We haven’t decided anything yet, Mama. Isn’t it a little too soon to start calling him my fiance?”

That smile drops and is quickly replaced with a frown. “We are not talking about this again, Alina. Robert is a good man who comes from a good home and he is willing to marry you despite your unimpressive dowry. We should be grateful to his family.”

“Why? We have nothing to be ashamed of, Mama. I don’t want a man who marries me out of pity, and there’s nothing wrong with being poor.”

The sound of Mama’s chattering teeth grates on my ears and despite the full blown anger on her red face, I stand my ground.

“I’m not marrying him, Mama. We know nothing about each other and he has made it perfectly clear that my desire to be a nurse isn’t something that will be allowed once we get married.”

“Of course, this is about your nursing obsession,” Mama pulls her hands out of the flour-filled bowl and grabs a napkin to wipe her hands. “Look at me, I’m a farmer’s wife and I’m perfectly happy.”

The hand on the strap of my bag tightens. “We want different things in life, Mama.”

“John, John, come talk to your daughter,” she yells for my father as I stare incredulously at her. “If I can’t talk some sense into you, then maybe your father can.” She drops the napkin. “For God’s sakes Alina, why can’t you be more like your sisters? They’re happily married to men your father and I chose for them. Janet’s pregnant with her second child.”

My rousing anger explodes at the mention of my two older sisters. “I am not my sisters, why must you compare us all the time?” I shout back angrily and walk briskly out of the kitchen, passing by my startled father.

“Get back here Alina, we are not done talking,” my mother calls for me.

“Where do you think you’re going? Dinner is in twenty minutes,” says my father.

“Enjoy dinner, I won’t be attending,” I growl and walk out the door, slamming it behind me.

I realize my mistake as soon as I step out of the house. However, rather than be discouraged by the heavy downpour of rain, I run right into it without stopping until I’m far away from the house and in the safety of my father’s barn.

Sighing, I walk up to our old, pregnant horse, stroking her soft, chestnut mane as gently as I can as to not startle her. Thankfully, the action relaxes me and my anger subsides.

I plop onto the floor, placing my bag carefully a few inches away from me so I can lay my head on it when suddenly the smell of smoke causes me to jolt back onto my feet.

Startled, I begin to walk around the barn, looking for the source of the smoke when I come around a pile of cautiously stacked hay. When seated on the window is a man fully dressed in a soldier's uniform and with a stick of cigarette between his fingers.

“Hello love,” he grins and I scream.

A STRANGER'S SUPPORT



“Who the hell are you?”

The grimace on the handsome stranger’s face at my piercing scream quickly smoothens out to give way to a cocky grin. “Lieutenant Michael Frost at your service, ma’am,” he says, walking up to me, hat in his other hand.

Watching dubiously, I take a step back and he immediately stops his approach. “You’re not supposed to be in here,” I admonish.

He raises a brow, a lock of his soft dark hair falling across his face. “It doesn’t seem like you are either,” he takes a long look at my disheveled face and releases a defeated sigh when he sees my expectant body language still waiting for an answer. “I had to come in here to wait out the rain. The door wasn’t locked.”

Did Papa forget to lock the door again?

“Oh,” I simply say, eyeing his cigarette.

“Would you like a smoke?” he offers the stick to me which causes me to blanch at his audacity.

“I’m a lady,” I blurt as if that should be answer enough.

His deep chuckle stirs something unfamiliar yet exciting deep within me. “It’s 1950, love, even ladies enjoy a smoke or two on occasion,” his stunning grin widens.

With pursed lips, I stare at him with disapproval, putting as much disgust in my tone as I can muster. “Well, I’m not interested in ruined organs just for a momentary enjoyment. Will you put it out, please?”

“Only because you asked nicely” - he takes another step forward before dropping the stick to the ground and squashing it beneath his heavy boots. “What is your name then, milady?” - he asks mockingly, peering into my eyes and I’m only five feet and some inches so his six feet stature easily towers above me.

I almost gasp at how striking his cobalt blue eyes are, and how they compliment his clear bronze skin and ink-black hair. My eager heart beats faster when my wandering gaze falls on his wide, full lips and I itch to trace a finger across it.

“Alina,” I mutter in an attempt to distract myself from fixating on the smooth skin peeking out of his slightly unbuttoned shirt. “Alina Porter.”

“A beautiful name for a beautiful lady,” he says, grabbing my hand before I can think and planting a soft kiss that makes me tingle all over. How is it that I can feel so much for a man I just met when two hours with the man I’m supposed to marry makes me want to scratch my eyes out from boredom?

Feeling confused, I hurriedly yank my hand out of his, wiping the back of my palm subtly against my coat as if that would stop me from feeling the tingling sensations traveling throughout my body, consuming me one inch at a time.

I walk back to my initial position beside our old horse, hoping my quiet dismissal of Michael will make him go away but he follows right behind me instead. When I plop back down, he doesn't hesitate to take a spot beside me, leaving nothing but a tiny space between us.

Everything I've ever heard about randy soldiers who haven't felt the touch of a woman for years and crave it as soon as war is done fills my mind. I know I should run back home but the thought of spending the entire evening with Robert and his family seems even worse in my head.

"What is going on in that pretty head of yours, I wonder?"

This time I gasp loudly at the feel of his breath in my ear, my face becomes heated and I have no doubt my pale skin proudly shows off its fresh redness. I swallow nervously but for some reason, I can't move away from him or maybe I just don't want to.

"Shouldn't you be on your way back to America? The war is over." I can tell from his accent that he is oceans away from his homeland yet as soon as I mention "America", his bright face is quickly overshadowed by an emotion I know all too well.

This is a man who seeks an escape from his home.

"My parents are forcing me into marriage with a man I have no desire to be with." I rush out, desperate to distract him from the evident sorrow written all over his face. "I'm supposed to be having dinner with his family now but I ran here."

Instead of laughing in my face or berating me for my decision like I expect, anger brews in his gorgeous eyes.

“They have no business forcing you into a life you don’t want. You are destined to soar, Alina, don’t let anyone stop you from doing just that.”

Just like that, my heart spreads wide open like a blossoming flower and Michael Frost’s essence floats right into it, making itself at home.

SAFETY OR ADVENTURE



I've never been one to believe in love at first sight and I always make sure to let my opinion known whenever someone makes mention of it.

However, it has taken only a week to have the cynical part of me believing in a gospel I have spent years preaching against.

There's just something about Michael Frost that makes every single part of my being come alive in a way that I never could imagine possible. We have spent every minute I can spare, which is starting to become a lot, with each other, taking walks across town together, visiting places and attending fairs and events together.

Although we've never particularly come out to say we're anything beyond friends, with the sizzling electricity between us and the heated, intense look we never seem to stop sharing, anyone with eyes could see that there's something there.

I myself have tried to deny my feelings on occasion for him but the fluttering of my stomach whenever Michael comes into view. The hot, searing jealousy that spikes

through me whenever I catch a fellow woman ogling his muscular build have done a good job in convincing me otherwise.

“Alina, are you even listening to me?”

I groan slightly at my mother’s insistence, slapping on a faux smile before turning to pay her attention which I’m sure wouldn’t last as soon as another wonderful memory I’ve shared with Michael flashes in my mind; especially that of our first kiss which had been sweet, unhurried and mind blowing at the same time in the dimly lit barn that has immediately become our secret location for much needed privacy.

“It is a lovely fabric, isn’t it? Absolutely perfect for an evening wedding; I’ll ask Pauline to get right on it.” My mother’s smile shines so bright, having absolutely no idea that her seamstress, much like Corinne and every other single lady in town, has occasionally commented on how Michael will make a better husband than Robert.

“Mama . . .”

She takes one long look at me and shouts a resounding “No.”

“Why? Why won’t you let me be happy?” I slam the cup of hot tea on the tiny table that sits between my mother and I on the balcony.

Mama clicks her tongue before reaching towards me to cup my face. “Of course you are going to be very happy being Robert’s wife. He’s a good man and he’s going to take very good care of you. Look at your sisters, Alina, they’re both living a contented life and they have wonderful families.”

I jump to my feet “Robert isn’t going to make me happy and I don’t want to live like my sisters. I want a man who supports my dreams, who pushes me to be better. I want a man whose mere presence makes my toes curl and my stomach erupt in butterflies. I want Michael; I’m in love with him, Mama.”

“Sit down, Alina,” she hisses and I know better than to disobey. I sit back down grumpily but the smile my mother had earlier on is no longer there. “You think you’re going to be happy with a foreign soldier? You think he loves you? Alina, men like that only fill your head with promises and never stability. He won’t stay here forever; he has a home to return to.”

I shake my head vehemently. “You don’t know him like I do, Mama. Besides, everyone else in town says we look so good together, everyone except you and Papa think he’ll make a better husband.”

She laughs wryly. “Society is fickle, dear. They all say that now but when problems arise, they go behind your back and say terrible things about you, and sometimes they do it to your face. These people won’t be in your marriage with you.” Her hands folds around mine on the table, gently nudging the teacups aside “Alina, I know your father and I are hard on you but it’s only because we want the best for you. We envision a secure future where you won’t have to worry about your husband being a good provider or a good father. With Robert, you can live a peaceful, happy life.”

“I don’t want a peaceful life, Mama. I want an exciting one, an unpredictable and thrilling life where I get to be who

I really am. I want a life filled with adventures and dreams and freedom, and I refuse to settle for anything less.”

Mama glares at me. “Nonsense,” she retracts her hand, a steely gaze now clouding her aging face. “You and Robert will be joined together in a month’s time and you’ll see that I’m right. In the mean time, you are to stop hanging around that . . . soldier; it’s disrespectful to both our family and Robert’s.” With that said, my mother goes right back to admiring the fabric spread out on her lap indicating the end of our conversation on that matter.

As the imposed wedding comes closer and closer, I realize more and more that my parents have no intention of supporting what I want; and so on the night before the wedding, I pack my things and elope in the dead of the night with Michael just as we’ve planned.

WEARY LETTERS



My happily-ever-after surely comes but I begin to find it hard to enjoy it when my husband and I begin to receive several letters from my parents threatening and at the same time begging for me to return back home.

Michael and I had tied the knot the very night I ran from home, in a church far from my hometown where no one knew who we were and with one of Michael's colleague as a witness. In holy matrimony we were bound, and contrary to what Mama said, I don't regret my decision one bit.

It has been a whole month since my husband and I started a new life in a small and quiet village called Moldova, just two towns away from my family and everything I've ever known. My job as a nurse is inevitably gone but I still try as much as possible to help the villagers with their health problems. However, I can't help but look forward to life in America after Michael promised we'd move there in a year and I'll work in a big hospital.

A wide smile spreads across my face when I feel two strong arms wrap around my waist while my husband lowers his head to kiss my neck in a way that makes my toes curl.

“You look so beautiful making dinner barefoot for your husband,” Michael croons.

I chuckle, feeling happier than I’ve ever felt in my lifetime. “Wouldn’t it be better if I was barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen?” My chuckle turns into a loud laughter when my husband’s face turns sheet-white. “Men!” I snort. “You’d think marriage will make you less scared and more expectant of fathering a child.”

“Maybe I just want you all to myself, love.”

I can’t help the blush that appears on my face. Somehow, Michael manages to turn me into a moon-eyed, blushing little girl every time. I know we’re still in what many refer to as the “honeymoon phase.” Michael and I will probably get into fights but I can’t help but enjoy our perfect marriage for now.

A knock on the door interrupts Michael’s wandering caresses and he reluctantly pulls away from me to answer. “It’s the mailman,” he calls from the door and saunters back in with a bundle of letters that immediately cause me to roll my eyes.

“It’s probably Mama and Papa again.” I dry my hands with a napkin. “It’s been a month, you’d think they’d have given up and accepted things the way they are by now.” I outstretch my hands to receive the letters.

As I go through the letter, I smile when I see one from Corrine, my former colleague whose last letter had expressively informed me of how proud of me she was and how she didn’t think I had it in me to elope. Since then, she has been sending me daily updates of what happens in town, including how outraged Robert and his family are.

My searching hands come to a stop when I find an unusual address on the next letter, "Michael?" I call to my husband who is currently lounging on the couch. "It's for you . . . from America," I say with confusion and watch as he leaps from the chair and quickly snatches out the letter from my hand.

I shrug, it's probably his family checking on him, and continue flipping through the letters. I find the one from my parents and toss the rest aside. Mama sounds even more desperate in this one and my heart aches at causing her and Papa this much pain at the expense of my own happiness

"... at least tell us where you are," she pleads in the letter.

I sigh, raising my head to seek my husband's comfort only to blanch at what I see in his face. A shadow of fear lingers in those striking blue eyes and he stands rigid as he holds on to the letter with shaky hands.

"Michael, what is it?" I rush to his side, searching his eyes for the man I've come to know and love. "Michael!" I tap his shoulder and he jolts back to reality. "Is something wrong?"

"No," he replies with a shake of his head. "It's nothing for you to be worried about," he assures me before folding back the letter and shoving it deep into his pocket. "Come here." Michael pulls me towards him and plants a long, deep kiss on my lips that leaves me wanting more.

My hands rise up to his toned body, his touch unfailingly warms me from inside out. "I love you, Michael, more than you could ever imagine."

"I love you too, Alina," he professes, and then lifts me into his arms and walks us into the bedroom.

Like always, Michael lays me onto the bed gently, revering my body with kisses. Making love to my husband has always been nothing short of passionate and riveting.

I have no idea how Michael has the energy but we make love all night and although I can tell something about that letter has him rattled, I hold him tighter than I ever have, letting my love soothe him as much as it can.

Whatever it is he might be dealing with, I want him to know I'm there for him and together we can conquer the world.

The following morning though, I wake up to a letter from my husband, and it isn't a good one.

MAMA KNOWS BEST



“My darling, Alina, it saddens me to write this letter but unfortunately it is the only way. I have to leave for America to fulfill family duties I cannot tell you about and I won’t be coming back, ever. I promise I’ll continue to take care of you in the best way that I can and if you ever decide to pursue your nursing dream even further, I promise to support you all the way. I know it’s hard to believe, Alina, but I do love you and I’m truly sorry.”

I’ve read the content of this letter more times than I can count, and it still doesn’t change the fact that Michael has left me whilst making it clear that he is never returning.

Amidst my sisters’ loud arguments between each other on what is next for me and how much of this is my fault, I break down into tears like I have been doing for the past two weeks and at the same time holding on to hope that my husband was coming back. It had taken every bit of strength left in me to make a call to my sisters, finally telling them where I live and begging them to not involve our parents.

Just thinking of the disappointment on Papa’s face and the look of pity on Mama’s is enough to render me

completely helpless.

“Do you at least know any of his family members?” My eldest sister, Annabelle, asks and I shake my head as my sobs increase more and more.

I realize how foolish I am now that I didn’t push Michael to talk more about his family and home. Anytime I brought it up, he always brushed it off so smoothly that I didn’t pay attention to how suspicious it was.

I had told Mama she didn’t know Michael as much as I do, but I was wrong. It turns out Mama knew him even better and I had refused to listen.

“You need to stop crying,” Annabelle snaps in her steely voice, leaving no room for pity for me at all. “You brought this all on yourself, now you need to figure out how to get yourself out of this mess rather than spending your days crying.”

The tears don’t stop falling and I’m grateful for the comfort I feel when my second older sister, Janet’s arms wraps around me in a warm hug. “Shouting at her won’t help, Annabelle. Our sister is distraught; we should comfort her at least.”

Annabelle snorts; she has always been the realistic one amongst us. “Coddling her is what got her into this mess in the first place. If our parents had treated her like the adult she is, we wouldn’t be here.” She slaps her hand on her lap. “Now, either you stop crying this minute or I walk out of that door and leave you to deal with this alone,” she barks at me and I immediately gulp, stopping the loud sobs coming out of my mouth.

I don't think I can handle any of this on my own, I already tried.

Suddenly, Annabelle snaps her finger at me, her face alight with a new idea. "You said you received a letter that was sent to him from America right?" I nod. "Did you memorize the address?"

"So what if she did? Alina can't go to America, it is oceans away," Janet argues.

"She could write letters to his family . . ."

"I already wrote a few . . ." I interject. "I still haven't received a letter."

"Of course you haven't, it's America. It'll take a while, we just have to keep trying" Annabelle says.

I sit up, wiping the dried tears off my face as best as I can and look both sisters in the eyes. "I want to go," I tell them. "I want to go to America and find my husband."

"Are you insane?"

"Absolutely not!"

I gape at my sisters, startled yet delighted at the outrage on their faces because it means they still care about me despite how much I've disappointed them all. "I'm sorry but I have to. I know Michael and he isn't the kind of man to do something like this without reason." I swallow. "He wrote here in his letter that there are some family issues and the letter he received from America had him looking so scared for a man who has seen worse things at war. Perhaps someone died . . . I need to be there with him."

Annabelle laughs mirthfully, "I can't believe you. After all this, you still choose to hope that the man isn't the scoundrel that he is. After convincing you to elope by feeding

you lies about himself and taking you away from a man that would have taken good care of you, he made you get married to him and left you all alone in a village where you know absolutely no one. That man's intention was to take advantage of a little girl like you and ridicule you, and he succeeded."

"You're wrong," I jump to my feet, upset at my sister's opinion of the man I love. "Michael never made me do anything. He loves me; I know it and I have made up my mind to go looking for my husband."

"Alina . . ." Janet starts but one look from me has her words dying on her lips. She sighs tiredly. "At least go to Mama and Papa before you leave. It will take about a month to find a ship going to America."

"Not if I board the ones meant for soldiers. I'm a soldier's wife, I'll be allowed on it."

"Are you insane?" Annabelle shouts again. "You alone with those randy men is not something that will happen."

"Try and stop me," I snap back, squaring off against her. "I know you two love me and are only worried about me, but I can take care of myself. I've been doing it since you both got married. I'll be fine I promise, and I'm going to write our parents before I leave, I promise."

However, it doesn't matter what I say to them, they'll always worry but I've made up my mind to go in search of my love even if I have to go all the way across the ocean.

OCEANS AWAY



Lost in the sea of hastening crowd, my eyes take in the world around me with clear astonishment. In so many ways, the vibrant city of New York is so much different from my hometown. I have never seen buildings as tall as the ones that currently tower above me before.

With a gulp, I hold on tighter to the small traveling bag I managed to fit most of my belongings into. My eyes are still wandering about when someone bumps into me but the polite “sorry” I’m used to doesn’t come.

I shuffle my feet from side-to-side on the sidewalk when I’m constantly bumped into by people who seem to all be rushing to get somewhere.

“Is everything okay? Do you need help?”

I turn to find the nice, curious voice and I come face to face with an averagely tall and older looking brunette woman with a toddler in her arms. She seems to have emerged from the clothing store I’m currently standing in front.

“I . . . uh . . . I want to hail a taxi but there are so many people,” I mutter beneath my breath in embarrassment that it’s a wonder she can hear me.

She nods with a knowing smile. “I understand. Judging from your accent and how clueless you are, you don’t seem to be from around here. So, what’s a young girl like you doing so far away from home?”

I debate whether telling her is the right decision but seeing as I have no idea how to navigate this city, I have no other choice. “I’m looking for my husband, Michael Frost?” I pull out the paper I’ve written my husband’s family address on and show it to her. “Do you, perhaps, know where I can find this address?”

I watch as her eyes take it in, widening with each word she reads and her mouth slackens as soon as she does.

“You’re going to the Frost mansion, and your husband is the second son, Michael Frost?! Unbelievable.”

I back away, insulted at her tone and proceed to yank out my marriage certificate, practically shoving it in her face. “Do you believe me now?”

“Dios mio!” she exclaims before staring at my raised brow. “You have no idea who your husband and his family are, do you? Oh! You poor, poor girl,” she tuts.

“What are you talking about?”

She laughs. “Alright then, dear girl. I’ll hail you a taxi straight to your destination. Let it not be said that Maria Lopez refused to come to the aid of a member of the Frost family.”

Despite my confused state and unrelenting questions, Maria shoos me off into the taxi she hails on my behalf and as soon as I reveal the address of my destination to the taxi driver, he gives the exact same reaction as Maria did.

By the time I set my eyes on the huge mansion that houses the Frost family, my reaction surpasses the two's even more.

Standing proud before me is a majestic building that no doubt showcases wealth and power in a way that's both classy and seasoned. It's about six stories, rising far above the black iron gate, with a crest at the top which displays the drawing of a snow white wolf, that dutifully protects the compound from the entrance of outsiders.

In front of the house is a beautiful water fountain which has the water flowing out of the hair of a brilliantly sculpted half-naked and sensual woman. Beautiful flowers erupt from sectioned parts of the concrete floor and it is clear how well nurtured the small gardens are.

I step out of the taxi in a daze and my anxiety skyrockets as soon as the driver zooms off. I wipe my sweaty palms on the skirt of my pink demure gown and summon enough courage to knock on the gate.

A guard peers at me. "How may I help you madam?" he asks and I don't even have the strength to correct him that I'm only a young woman.

"Is Michael Frost here?" I ask nervously and at his raised questioning brow, I begin to ramble. "You see, he's my husband but he left England a month ago due to some family issues and it . . . well he didn't return so I came looking for him. Just tell him Alina is here, Alina Porter." When he continues to stare at me with disbelief, I show him our marriage certificate and he raises his head at me in shock.

"I'm sorry ma'am, I didn't know," he stumbles in his apology. "Please, come right in." He opens the gate and

ushers me in, proceeding to take my bag and lead me towards the large black oak door which is no doubt the entrance into the Frost mansion.

How did Michael not mention his family's wealth? With the way everyone I've come in contact with since arriving this city seems to know their family, it is evident that the Frosts are quite prominent too.

A butler answers the guard's knock on the door. "What?" he snaps.

"She's Mr. Michael's wife," he says, holding up the certificate for the butler to see.

"Christ!" he mutters. "Wait here," he says before disappearing into the house, closing the door behind him.

A few seconds later, the door parts open to reveal the man I love followed by a man that looks just like him except there's something different, something mysterious about him and an equally dark-haired teenage girl. Behind them both are a gray haired couple I have no doubt are Michael's parents.

"Alina," my husband gasps, his surprise quite clear in those striking eyes I've come to love. "How? What are you doing here?"

I don't doubt the hurt his words evoke is clearly written on my face but I brush it off anyway. "What do you mean? I came to see you. It was so sudden how you left, and I was so worried . . ."

I'm interrupted by the beautiful woman that happens to be my mother-in-law. "How old are you, my dear?"

"Twenty, ma'am," I reply and catch the shock on the face of the man whose resemblance to my husband is striking.

“So young,” my father-in-law mutters before glaring at Michael.

Michael’s mother walks up to me, her hand palming my face as she speaks. “Dear girl, such lovely thing you are. It’s unfortunate really, but I’m afraid that certificate of yours is nothing but a sham as my son is already married.”

“What?!” I whisper.

“Mother, please . . .” Michael cuts in

“Darling” A woman with a large, round belly calls, walking out of the house and coming to stand right beside my husband. “What’s going on?” she directs the question to Michael.

“Ha, Theresa,” Michael’s mother says with a smile, pulling the pregnant woman towards me. “You should meet Theresa, Michael’s wife,” she croons.

My hands are already shaking and I’m starting to feel lightheaded. “Michael,” I call, ignoring everyone else. “Please, tell me this isn’t real. Tell me we are back in Moldova where everything is perfect, please,” I say through trembling lips and blurry eyes from the tears threatening to fall. “Michael, please . . .”

My husband walks to me, gently pushing the two women flanking me aside. He takes my hands in his, his head lowered in shame with vivid pain in his blue eyes. “I’m sorry, Alina, I swear . . . I didn’t want you to find out this way, it’s why I left. I’m so sorry, love, I really am.”

I don’t know when I start falling, I just know it all turns black and the last pair of eyes I see are blue, way deeper than my husband’s.

HIDDEN SECRETS



“You either sign these non-disclosure papers or you’ll be ousted to the government as an immigrant and be forcefully deported from the country with nothing but the clothes on your back, Miss Porter.”

A month ago, I had been Mrs. Alina Frost and now . . . now, everything I thought I knew is complete and utter lies.

Even my so-called husband didn’t come to see me at the hospital, no; the proud, wealthy family had sent their butler to dispose of me instead.

There’s nowhere for me to go, I can’t possibly go back home to the disappointment of my family and mockery of my friends, and I have nothing in America to help me survive past a month in this city.

After leaving the hospital, I use part the considerable sum of money Michael had left me alongside his damning letter to rent a room in an inn until I can set a plan into motion; a plan which becomes clearer and surer as each day passes.

I spend the larger part of my days doing my own research on the Frost family through newspapers and conversations with the innkeeper and her customers. If I wasn’t a woman

scorned by them, even I would be impressed by the wealth that family has amassed.

The Frosts are a reputable family in New York and one of the ten richest families in the whole of the continent. They wine and dine with people in the seat of power ranging from governors, senators, to kings and queens.

They had begun building generational wealth as far back as the First World War when people suffered from grave injuries with little to no medical amenities. The Frosts started with one large, well-equipped hospital before going ahead to own several lines of hospitals and other businesses on the side. Theirs is what people will no doubt refer to as “old money” in the future.

However, asides their envious accomplishments, rumors about the family spread like wildfire; all I have to do is mention the well-known Frost name.

Despite the picture perfect display of family the Frost parents try to put up, their sons constantly find a way of smudging that image.

A nasty rumor of Michael impregnating a lady from a poor home and refusing to take responsibility for it by paying off the girl’s family had spread so wildly that his parents immediately sent him off to the army shortly after.

The more I delve into my sham of a husband’s family, the more I realize I never truly knew him. I only know what Michael wanted me to see.

While Michael had caused his fair share of trouble, it’s quite clear who the family rogue truly is. Lucas Frost, eldest son and heir to the Frost Empire is a man who refuses to conform to the norm of society. While Michael had hidden

his own frivolities, Lucas flaunts his around without a care in the world.

Standing tall with lean, firm and well-toned body, deep blue eyes like the sea, inky dark hair that falls down to his shoulders and a face that reveals nothing but dark, sensual promises, it is no wonder ladies chase after him despite his desire to remain uncommitted.

Lucas Frost . . . I have studied his movements well enough to know that the seedy bar, far deep into the city, in which I'm currently standing in front of houses my target for revenge. It's all I have left and I will make sure I pay the Frosts back for humiliating me.

I saunter in and no one stops me, everyone so fully engrossed doing inexplicable things to each other that they barely notice me.

SOON, my wide, sharp eyes find the man I've come for snuggled up very closely together, fingers interlaced with Michael's wife. I watch them for an extended amount of time. Michael appears to have genuine concern on his as she speaks with him.

With a brazen smirk, I raise my camera and take a picture.

BLACKMAIL



Lucas Frost has kept his life in the open for eyes to see and lens to capture, except for one tiny aspect, an aspect that will no doubt make him lose everything.

Although I have no problem with him in particular, his pristine and conservative family will definitely has their own opinions of it, none of which will be favorable for their eldest son.

My scuffed shoe digs into the concrete floor as I lean against the fanciest car in the parking lot, patiently waiting for my ticket to revenge.

My eyes narrow as soon as I see the woman seated before Lucas Frost stand to her feet, followed by the exchange a firm handshake. I hurry into the establishment as soon as Michael's pregnant wife exits but I'm unable get close enough to Lucas' table before being hindered by two men in black coats who I recognize as his guards after weeks of following him.

"I want to see Mr. Frost," I tell them with a straightened form, eyeing the man behind them who is now busy flirting

with a lady who wastes no time joining him after the end of his meeting.

The men share a look before they both turn to me. “Do you have an appointment with him?” one of them asks, his eyes raking over my body. I’m dressed in my best clothes but it seems my best isn’t enough for people of the Frost caliber.

“No,” I mutter, shaking my head.

“I’m afraid you cannot be allowed to see Mr. Frost.”

“You don’t understand,” I push against them, making sure my voice is now loud enough to garner Lucas’ attention.

“It’s urgent,” I insist.

Luckily enough, as they contemplate bundling me out, Lucas Frost speaks up albeit irritated. “What is the matter?” His deep, baritone voice matches his physical appearance quite well and I feel myself shiver a little.

“Sorry sir, we’re taking care of it,” the second guard says and turns to grab my hand.

“It is in your best interest to let me through, Mr. Frost, trust me,” I say around the two guards, our eyes meeting as I watch his widen with recognition.

“Alina Porter?” he questions and I’m shocked at the fact that he remembers me at all and even more shocked that he called me by my name. “Let her through,” he orders before turning to whisper into the lady’s ear and she makes a show of her swinging hips as she walks away.

I take my seat before him and waste no time going straight to the point. “I’m here to blackmail you,” I say through folded arms.

He raises a brow, the corner of his luscious lips turning up in slight amusement. “Didn’t the butler deliver our

message, or was that not just enough money for you?”

Feeling insulted, I grit my teeth and lean towards him. “I don’t need your money; your family owes me something much bigger.”

When he leans back, I know I’ve captured his interest so I dig out the brown envelope from my bag and slide it across the table, over to him.

I watch as his amused face almost turns sheet-white when he pulls out the picture I have captured of him. “I wasn’t entirely sure that would bother you . . .” I start with a cocky smirk. “. . . but judging by that expression on your face, I know I’ve done something right.”

No longer is there a relaxed, amused man seated in front of me, instead a cold, brutal man who is no doubt capable of squashing me like a fly and burying me without a second thought sits before me. “What do you want?” he growls, shoving the picture back into the envelope and gripping it like his life depends on it.

“I want what you and your family owes me,” I tell him, placing both of my fisted hands on the table. “I was supposed to be married, building my own family and maybe someday have children and become a nurse, helping people. Your brother and your family took that away from me, and I want it back.”

“What are you . . .?”

“Marry me,” I blurt out. “I want to see the shock on Michael’s face when he realizes I’m his elder brother’s wife, I want to see your parents’ shoulders slump when they realize I’ve beaten them in their game and I want to be the

head nurse at your main hospital. I want my life back, even better as a wealthy heir's wife."

Lucas scoffs "You're crazy." When I don't blink and my glare doesn't falter, he bangs his fist on the table, momentarily calling other people's attention to us. "I can't do that, it's . . . it's impossible."

I nod, feigning mock understanding. "Then you wouldn't mind me sending out copies of that to the media. I wonder what your precious family will think of that, and let's not get started about the society you rule. I can see the headlines now, "Heir to the Frost Empire revealed as homosexual", it'll be everywhere." I sigh dramatically, pushing my seat back with effect before standing up. "Good day, Mr. Frost."

"Wait!" he hastily calls when I take my first step away. "We have a deal, okay? I'll set everything in motion, you have my word."

I don't hide the wide smile that blossoms on my face as I take my seat back. "I don't know about a Frost's word but I'll do my best in trusting you Lucas. We are going to have a blessed matrimony, you and I."

He stares straight into my eyes for several seconds before saying, "My brother is a damn fool for letting you go."

"We agree on one thing, then." I answer with delight. Perhaps, Lucas and I might become good friends.

"Also . . ." he begins, standing to come and sit right beside me. "I'm not a little angel, I very much enjoy the company of women and the pleasures they have to offer," he whispers into my ear, his hot breath against my skin, causing my heart to flutter.

"What?!" I yell with shock at his revelation.

What have I gotten myself into?

MRS. FROST



The look on Mrs. Abigail Frost's face when her son informs the family of our impending marriage is one I'll never forget till the day I die. As expected, every one of them had been opposed to Lucas' announcement, most especially Michael who begged and begged for me to return to Europe, breaking my heart even further. However, there had been nothing any of them could do to stop it.

On the last day of that very month, Lucas and I tied the knot in a small church with his bodyguards as witness, and this time, I made sure the marriage is real.

More-so, Lucas kept up his end of the deal by assigning me to the position of head nurse at the main hospital where he is the current CEO - after completing my nurse retraining course, and we've been "happily" married for months now.

I flip through the newspaper I found on his desk, seated across from him while he speaks into a phone. Much like every other newspapers, this one too has an enormous picture of Lucas and I on its cover, the heading a speculation of how I got the Frost playboy to be married to me.

My eyes flit to take in the man radiating power and courage before me and I can't help but feel pity for those who constantly misunderstand him even though the picture he paints doesn't really help either.

As soon as his call is over, his smoldering gaze finds me and his mouth curls up in a smile I like to think is only received by me. "You look absolutely gorgeous, dear wife," he compliments, leaning back into his chair, his eyes still on me.

I shyly pick at my carefully styled up-do. "Your beauty team did a fantastic job," I tell him. The ladies had me dressed in a long silver gown that befits a proper mogul's wife with a small fur coat draped casually around my neck. "Aren't you changing Lucas?" Not that I'm complaining, in his current suit, my husband is easily going to be the most handsome man at the event.

Okay, so maybe I am more attracted to Lucas Frost than I initially anticipated, but one look from him and I wonder through that errant zing of pleasure. If what I once felt for Michael could even be called attraction. With Lucas, it's like I'm aware of everything about him when he's around me.

Although we both haven't been intimate, with me giving Lucas free rein to do whatever he wishes with the exception of it being public and me being made a laughingstock, Lucas and I have become great friends. We share everything, from me telling him all about my hometown and family to him telling me about his business and life in general, whilst occasionally seeking advice from me. Our effortless banter is something I look forward to at the end of every day.

I shake the thought of Lucas with other women in that way because it hurts more than I want it to. How did I end up falling for a man I blackmailed to get married to for revenge on his own brother and family?

“You’re nervous, I can tell,” he deadpans, leaving no room for argument. “Come here,” he stretches a hand out and I rise to my feet and take it, letting him pull me into his laps. “We don’t have to go if you don’t want to.”

“You’re so considerate,” I release a small smile, closing my eyes momentarily while he kneads my shoulders. “How is it that you don’t allow people see this side of you?”

“And have them know I have a heart? God, no”

I chuckle beneath my breath. I have come to the realization for a while now that Lucas Frost isn’t just a pretty face. Not only is my husband extremely intelligent and smart, he is funny, charming, amazing and out-rightly caring. It’s a shame most people only see him as a devilish troublemaker.

“Do you think your mother will cause a scene?”

“In front of her socialite friends and acquaintances? I doubt it. Don’t worry, little angel, I’ll protect you. It’s my duty isn’t it?”

My heart melts at the mention of his nickname for me and it somehow puts my mind at ease so much so that I’m relaxed on our way to the charity ball. Even when we make our arrival known . . . and after seeing Michael and his pregnant wife, Theresa.

“Come, dance with me,” Lucas says, extending his hand to me and pulling me onto the dance floor, his sweet attempt at distracting me.

Lucas Frost is a smooth dancer, easily covering for my clumsiness with his expertise and being this close to him has me completely thoughtless and laid bare for his exploitation. However, the song ends after what feels like eternity with just the two of us in the large room when I am left alone while Lucas moves away to greet a business partner.

Feeling out of place, I start to move towards the tables to get a drink when I come to a skidding halt at a heartbreaking sight of Michael and his wife lost in each other. Their laughter fills my ear while he watches her with the same tender look he once directed at me.

I turn away quickly, feeling the tears about to start falling; especially when I see the cruel smirk on Abigael Frost's face. I pull up my gown, practically running to the restroom to have a good and pathetic cry alone.

Not fast enough before I'm cornered by Lucas.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" he snaps at me, grabbing onto my arm. I don't think I've ever seen him so angry before.

"Let me go," I pull.

He shakes his head in disappointment. "I thought you were done running, Alina. Even after what my bastard brother put you through, you are still in love with him."

"Let me go," I yell louder this time but he only pulls me closer, against his hard chest.

"When will you open your eyes, little angel? When will you see me?"

"What are you talking about?" My teary eyes meet his deep blue ones.

Lucas doesn't utter any more words; he simply places both hands on my cheeks, caressing my face with his thumbs before lowering his head and capturing my lips.

Stunned at first, it doesn't take long before I'm kissing him back and the world explodes in shimmering, colorful lights.

TRUE LOVE



I toss and turn restlessly on my bed, thinking about the staggering kiss that everyone in that ball room had no doubt been a witness of. Wondering how I managed to stay awake all through the night and into the morning.

I had insisted Lucas take me straight home as soon as we managed to pull away from each other and we both haven't spoken a word to one another since the kiss we shared except for occasional awkward glances.

I sigh loudly, unable to go another second without knowing what exactly the past few hours had meant and how it'll change our lives. I trudge along with my blanket still wrapped around me to the master bedroom where Lucas sleeps but I find his room empty.

"Lucas?" I call when I see a figure seated in the darkness on the couch in our living room. "What are you doing?" I ask and take a seat next to him.

"I couldn't sleep," he mutters, turning to face me. "Is what happened yesterday so bad that you won't even speak to me?"

"What? That's not . . ."

“I’ve been thinking about you, Alina, about us for a while now and I think . . . no, I know that you feel something for me. It’s here,” he gestures widely between us, his bloodshot eyes fixated solely on mine. “I know it might not be as strong or even sure as what you feel for my brother but I promise to spend the rest of my days making you fall in love with me.”

I gasp, “Lucas, where is this coming from?”

He pulls at his hair in frustration before sliding even closer towards me and taking my hands in his. “Do you know what I thought when I first laid eyes on you? I thought how can a person be so beautiful? Then I saw you falling and I felt my heart shatter into pieces at the thought of something causing you so much pain.”

“Lucas, you don’t . . .”

“I haven’t been with anyone else, not since the day you barged into my life declaring I was about to be blackmailed . . . and I thought I had more time to make you see me, make you feel what I feel,” he taps his chest. “But seeing you so torn up over Michael last night made me go crazy, just the thought of you still in . . .”

“I love you,” I blurt out.

“What?!”

I squeeze his hands, bracing myself for the confession I’m about to make. “I used to think love was about meeting someone, being insanely attracted to them and then declaring forever with them but I know what love is now. It’s what Mama had been trying to make me understand.” I swallow, drawing strength from my husband. “Love is friendship, love is being completely open and honest with

your partner, love is trusting them enough to let them know everything and anything, love is stability. I thought I had all that with Michael but I was wrong.”

“Alina,” he whispers.

“Yesterday, I wasn’t running because I was heartbroken or because I’m still in love with Michael. I was running because I was faced with my stupidity and it all dawned on me that I had only loved a false part of him. I never truly knew him so how could I love him; but you, Lucas, I know everything about you, I know how smart you are, how sweet, loyal and compassionate you are. I know how you struggle everyday to shoulder the responsibilities of your entire family and still come out unaffected. I know how funny, how brave and amazing you are, and each day I fall more and more in love with you that I can barely breathe when you’re not around me.”

“Christ, Alina, you mean so much to me and you have absolutely no idea. I love you more than I ever thought it possible to love someone. I sleep and I see you, I wake up and even when you are not around, I think of you. It’s driving me crazy, Alina, you are driving me crazy.”

I feel the wetness on my cheeks before I realize I’m crying. “What does this mean for us?” I ask in anticipation.

“It means if you’ll be willing to remain my wife, little angel, I want to start over, I want to make things right and treat you to the life you deserve.”

“I’d like that dear husband,” I say with a chuckle that turns quickly into a moan when his lips find mine and the kiss deepens.

A shrill tone interrupts us and Lucas groans before going to pick up the phone. I watch as his face takes on new expressions with each word that is spoken on the other end. Before I can ask what is wrong as soon as the call ends, Lucas beats me to it.

“Theresa went into labor last night.”

“Oh . . .”

“The baby isn’t Michael’s.” The babies richly melaninated skin readily apparent at first glance according to an angry Mother Frost.

“What?”

“She’s been lying this whole time.” Anger is clear on his face. “What do you feel Alina?” He asks and I know exactly what he means.

“If you’re worried I might want to go back to him, then I take back what I said about you being smart,” I say through pursed lips and dubious eyes and he chuckles. “I feel sorry for him, I don’t know if he can survive this.”

That’s when Lucas reveals that he has something tell me before we start the new phase of our life together. He continued to say that “prior to Michael hastily marrying his wife Theresa, he had met her first and the two has a one night encounter after a party.”

Lucas thinks nothing of that night again until one month later, when Michael brings her home to meet the family after just two weeks of knowing her. The delight in Michael’s face and the shock on Theresa’s, realizing that she was in the home of two brothers; keeps Lucas from mentioning that Lucas and Theresa had an encounter prior to them meeting.

Michael being so enamored with Theresa, marries her within six weeks of meeting her. Prior to the wedding day Lucas while walking through the garden, finds Theresa paled face and looking queasy. It was then that Theresa confesses she was with child, but was unsure which of the Frost men was possibly the father of her unborn child.

She ensures Lucas that she was in fact in love with Michael, so Lucas decides to show her compassion throughout her pregnancy. So, on occasion the two would meet just outside of town away from familiar eyes because Theresa was unsure of what the balance held for her as a future Mrs. Frost and the relationship of Michael and Lucas.

Even though the Lucas and Theresa had no further romantic interactions, they would continue to meet and give comfort to each other away from Mother Frost's prying eyes.

"We'll help him," Lucas assures me and I smile at his love for his family while thinking deep down that if I ever have children, I'll do everything in my power to make sure they don't end up with a man like Michael.

"I love you Mr. Frost and I can't wait to spend forever with you."

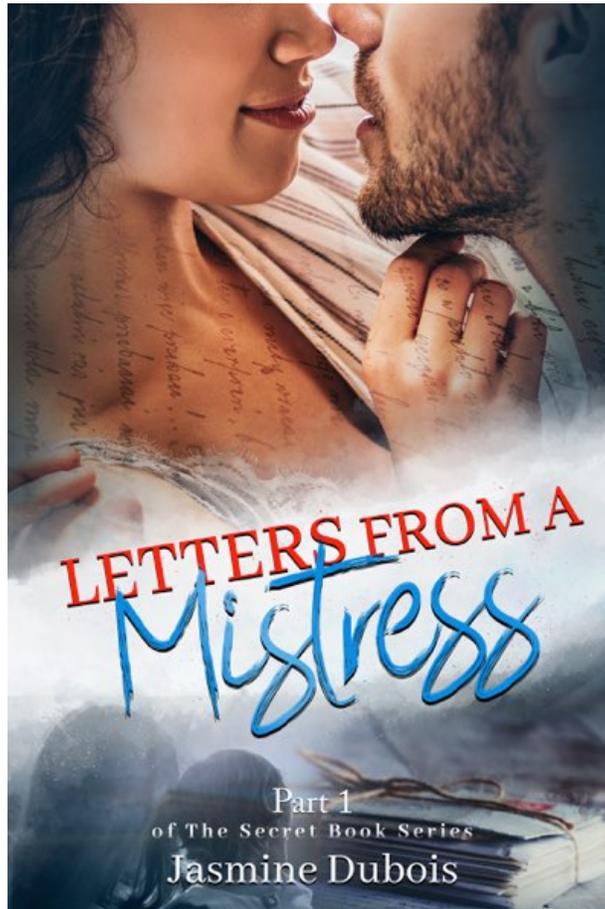
"Ditto, Mrs. Frost."

THE END

LETTERS FROM A MISTRESS

PART ONE

Series Overview



Click [HERE](#) or on the book to place your pre-order.

What would you do if you received an email from your husband's mistress?

Alina swore in the last novel that she would make sure her children would find a man such as Lucas, and ensure they had their happy ever afters. Now her only child is grown, and the series continues with her daughter, Violet.

Violet inherits the Frost empire hospitals—an empire built after World War Two by her grandparents. The bequeath would only make sense since Violet is a neurosurgeon, following her mother’s passion for healing the unwell. CEO of the company is James, Violet’s husband of fifteen years.

Violet is sure she has met her forever love in James. The couple marries, much to Alina’s dismay, and we begin this story fifteen years into their marriage.

James seems to be spending more time away from home, citing work, overseas meetings, and the like as an excuse. To an unsuspecting wife, that would seem plausible; he is responsible for a multitude of hospitals, and business meetings come with the territory.

While she is having lunch with her cousins, she is blindsided by an email his mistress wrote to her, announcing her presence.

Violet must do everything right to ensure a future for herself and her company. She consults a lawyer and starts divorce proceedings, realizing that the debt accumulated against the company was used by James to fund his mistress’s reality show.

Violet’s world is again rocked by the discovery of her pregnancy.

Is this baby what is needed to repair their marriage? How does James react to the news? Will Violet decide to go ahead with the divorce after another bomb is dropped on her world?

This story portrays the rollercoaster of emotions one goes through when everything one comes to believe in is

shattered. Sometimes we have to trust in our intuition when things seem to be off and listen to others who warn us ahead of time. Love can cloud the senses, but others not so close to the situation can sometimes see things that we cannot.

Click [HERE](#) to find it on Amazon!



SNEAK PEAK: THE SECRET SERIES

LETTER'S FROM A MISTRESS- PART ONE

Chapter One **Hope**

I wipe the sweat off my brows with the back of my arm before pulling off the bloodied synthetic gloves from my hands and washing them clean. One last look behind me, and I confirm that I had, indeed, saved my patient's life, rather than screwing things up.

I blow out a sigh of relief and released my ponytail, letting my hair flow freely past my shoulders. I've done the best that I can surgically, reviving a man that had been in a severe car accident; the others can handle the rest.

Pushing open the door that separates the operating room from the waiting room, I bury my shaky hands in my pocket and plaster a smile on my face.

I don't get far before the woman who was begging and crying profusely for her husband to be saved while running after the stretcher that her unconscious husband was placed on, scurries up to me.

She grabs my arm, her eyes red and swollen from the tears she's been shedding. "How is he? How is my husband?"

I keep the smile on my face, placing a reassuring hand on hers and squeezing. "Your husband is going to be fine, ma'am. I suggest you go home, freshen up, and be back just in time for him to awaken."

She swallows and nods, but I know she isn't about to do as I say; they never do, and who can blame them?

My strides continue without falter until I reach the office with my name on it.

"Ma'am, a call came through for you from Mr. Qing," Laura, my secretary, says, from her corner desk in front of my office door.

"Why?" I ask, through furrowed brows. The last time the Chinese businessman had called, I had been specific enough that my husband is the CEO of the Frost companies, never mind that it was my family name on the buildings, and all business transactions should go through him.

Laura's eager look is quickly replaced by discomfort, as she looks everywhere but at me. "Well, he said that, um . . . um . . . I . . ."

"Out with it, Laura," I snap, too tired to be kept waiting.

"Mr. Logan hasn't been answering his calls, and he's ordered everyone to refrain from disturbing him . . ."

"What? Where is he?"

She slowly points up, and I roll my eyes, before turning on my heel and taking the elevator to the uppermost floor, which is just above mine. I throw a glare in Scott's direction when he scrambles in an attempt to stop me from barging into my husband's office.

I push the door open and catch my breath. Even ruffled and worn out, the attraction I feel for James zings through me like electricity coursing through my veins. My mouth goes dry, and my skin suddenly feels clammy.

"Violet, what are you doing here?" he asks, in confusion. Years ago, he used to call me "honey." "What's wrong? Did

the operation go well?” he approaches me, peering into my eyes with concern.

I shake my momentary distraction off and purse my lips. “Laura says you haven’t been picking your calls, and you’ve forbidden anyone from seeing you. Mr. Qing isn’t happy about that.”

“Oh,” he simply says, like it’s not a big deal, running his fingers through his perfectly gelled-back hair. “I’ve been busy.” He waves a hand at the mess on his table.

“Need I remind you that this deal is important for the expansion project we’re trying to secure for our hospitals in China? We cannot afford to cross a man like Qing, James; if we don’t secure this deal, then we’re going to sink in further into debt.” I whisper, in a deadly tone.

“Give me a break, Violet—I’ll get to him when I’m less occupied,” he answers nonchalantly, taking a few steps away from me.

I scoff in disbelief. “Excuse me? I don’t think you understand the gravity of our predicament. If it wasn’t for you . . .”

“What?!” James’s dark eyes become stormy with anger. He yanks at his tie, looking even more disheveled, as he strides briskly to stand inches away from me. “If it wasn’t for me, we wouldn’t be in debt, right?” he bellows.

“James, that’s . . .”

“Isn’t that what you were going to say, Violet? Huh? I’m such a screw up; I’ve ruined everything your family left for you with my recklessness. Is that it?”

“I didn’t say that.”

“You’re thinking it,” he accuses, and I don’t bother denying it because he’s not wrong. He sighs, waves of frustration rolling off him. “I’m trying here, Vee, I really am trying to fix it, and if you can’t see that . . .”

My hand reaches out to his cheek unconsciously. “I can, James, and I’m proud of you. It’s just I— everything is crumbling, and there’s nothing I can do about it: it’s killing me. I’m sorry.” His arms go around me, and I lose myself in my husband’s embrace, his warmth taking me back to the years when we had been so in love we couldn’t go a day without being around each other. Now, everything just seems different.

“I love you, Vee, right up to the glittering stars and back,” he whispers, kissing my temple. A brief memory of him making this same declaration the first day I told him I was in love with him, fifteen years ago, flashes through my mind.

A instantly, a knot gathers in my throat, and I hold on to him tighter, determined not to lose the man I love. “I love you, James. I always will.”

A knock interrupts us, but not before James plants a sweet kiss on my lips. “I can’t ride home with you today, so I’ll see you back home for dinner tonight, okay?”

I nod, “Don’t be late,” I warn, hoping the knowledge that our anniversary is tonight will motivate him. “And pick up Mr. Qing’s call, please.”

“Sure, Vee.” For some reason, his assuring words do nothing to put me at ease, but I smile anyway, if only to give myself hope . . . hope that everything will be fine.



To Be Continued...

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jasmine Dubois is an international best selling author of Romance novels - **The Secret Series**.

Jasmine enjoys exploring the world through the eyes, heart and mind of her strong, independent, female lead characters who are yearning for love and dreaming of having their happily forever after, and the mysterious webs that emerges from the lives they lead.

When Jasmine isn't writing, publishing and connecting with her fans, she enjoys spending quality time with her family and their beloved four-legged golden lab-retriever- Sam, in the suburbs of New York. Jasmine's family also loves competing for the karaoke mic in their living room when they are not gathered under their gazebo with their neighbors and friends.

