



Dark Secret Love

Alison Tyler

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Dark Secret Love is a modern-day *Story of O*, a 9 1/2 Weeks-style journey fueled by lust, longing and the search for true love. Inspired by her BDSM lifestyle and based on her private diaries, Tyler draws on her twenty-five years' experience penning sultry stories to create a scorchingly hot work of autobiographical fiction, a meta-novel with reality at the core.

Take a deep breath and get your *safe word* handy. Alison Tyler will push your boundaries to their limits—and have you begging for more.

Dark Secret Love Details

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Author : Alison Tyler

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From Reader Review Dark Secret Love for online ebook

Laila Blake says

Dark Secret Love is a book I wanted to read ever since Alison posted the cover on her blog for the first time and described the project. It's not only the most beautiful cover I've ever seen in the genre, the premise made me a little giddy, too. I read most of the classic bdsm novels when I was still a teenager – I stole Justine from my grandparent's library, found the Story of O in tatters in a box of old paperbacks. I don't know where I got the others, what secrecy was involved but I always wanted to find out about this, needed to read. That doesn't mean I loved them all, the truth is I didn't find what I was looking for in any of them – but each of them had a strong voice that pulled me through anyway.

It's that voice that I often miss in contemporary erotica, why I actually read in the genre pretty rarely, especially when it comes to longer works. Dark Secret Love has that voice – a different one really, a brand new one. When I tried to sort it into my goodreads shelves I didn't even know where to put it at first – erotica? romance? contemporary lit? It has elements of all of those and that's what makes it so good – it breaks some rules, it emerges out of the sea of slightly stale sexy stories as something different.

Dark Secret Love, like the tag line suggests, is a story about submission, but it's also – and I think more so, a story about submissives, about the long and difficult emotional journey of that particular sexual orientation. It's a story about a young woman searching and trying, about her failing and trying again. And it doesn't matter that what I personally was ultimately looking for was very different from the heroine's – it's the struggle that resonated.

Alison Tyler doesn't gloss over the difficult parts, she doesn't start the story where the heroine meets the man of her dreams – hell, even when she finds him, it's a complicated thing. Because being sub is sometimes really complicated, and there is communication involved and a lot of contemplation and experimentation until it feels all right to be who you are. I loved how Dark Secret Love captured this.

For me, it wasn't erotica or romance – it didn't feel like genre, much like Alison expressed in the interview above – it just a story of a woman. And due to the nature of her story, it contained a lot of beautifully written sex and submission, but it has a lot more to offer. In fact, I thought this would have still been a great and compelling story without any adult material in it at all. That was just a bonus, made it more real, even more tangible.

There was a beautiful authenticity to her voice, that made reading almost an act of voyeurism rather than the idea of taking the place of the heroine, like it is so often the case in erotica. This is not a shell of a character I could project myself on, it's a very much alive and loud person of her own who tells me her story. And I loved every minute of it.

Especially as an author myself, I don't want to finish this review without praising Cleis Press for the cover design and formatting. It's so gorgeous, understated and sweet – it gives me exactly the right feeling to read this novel and the chapter headings, the font, everything was just perfectly designed and made the reading experience that much nicer.

Sommer Marsden says

This book is a little bit of magic. It's everything BDSM fiction should be. I remember reading installments years ago as they were being written, and being fixated. It's such a joy to have them all in novel form to be devoured as a whole. I'm very much looking forward to the coming books and the continuation of the tale!

Kathleen Tudor says

Told in a confessional style that makes you lean in close and keep flipping pages to see what secrets Alison/Sam will reveal next, this is a story of a woman out to find herself. Samantha is a deep submissive masochist who yearns for a man who can meet her sexual desires, even as she is ashamed of them. Because she is afraid to admit to something as horrible as WANTING pain and humiliation, she thinks in terms of failure and needing to be punished.

Various men fulfill these needs to varying degrees, but it's not until the last one that she is forced to confront the truth of her desires and allowed to fully luxuriate in the experience of an intense Master/slave relationship.

I didn't particularly care for the ultimate dom, because even though he forced her into a healthier mindset in some ways, he was also controlling and extremely jealous in less-than-acceptable ways for me. (view spoiler)

Ultimately, this was an intense and incredibly hot read with a peek into what it's really like to come into your sexuality as a sexual submissive.

Cara Sutra says

I only have one problem with Alison Tyler and her book, Dark Secret Love. She's far too modest. Even though the accolades pour in from the likes of Violet Blue, Rachel Kramer Bussel, The Guardian and many more, Alison herself seems to be a modest girl who just enjoys documenting her saucy anecdotes, polished with some writer's prerogative flair. Perhaps this is what makes Dark Secret Love such a refreshing read. Unpredictable, honest and raw. Perhaps this is why I was in tears on a couple of occasions before I hit the last page.

Curious? You should be.

Evidently popular from the many positive reviews in the erotica reviewing and blogging scene, Dark Secret Love is the tale of submission from Alison Tyler herself. Although the prologue admits that certain characters, names and scenes have been changed slightly, Alison assures us, as readers, that her past is there between the lines, between the pages.

Taking this book to bed with me has been an enjoyable experience as I discovered more about Alison Tyler and her submission tale. Her take on BDSM much reflects my own, that romance can and regularly is found in the darkest corners of the BDSM and Fetish world. The understanding between those in the scene, the etiquette and reassuring codes of conduct. The healthy respect for people's particular kink tastes, wherever

they are on the spectrum. As well as, of course, a healthy sprinkling of some of the hottest, raunchiest spanking and BDSM scenes you will ever have the privilege of reading.

The journey through our protagonist's love and kink life enables us to discover rich characters along the way. Sex partners, vanilla partners, play partners, Dominants and Masters. Club scenes are atmospheric and rich, making us taut with the nerves our main character herself feels. Bedroom scenes are emotional and moving, spiced with edgy kink, relevant mentality and sensations.

Those in the BDSM scene will not be disappointed with *Dark Secret Love*, it's an honest and moving tale with a satisfying conclusion to the book, if not the story. Our appetite (and other places) remain wet for more. Those who are considering dabbling in BDSM and Kink, whether with play partners or a romantic partner, will learn the highs and lows that they may encounter. Just as there are highs and lows to vanilla sex and romance encounters too.

This is a highly recommended read. I have already mentioned in my Blogasm 500 challenge and other erotic posts at my *Cara Sutra* blog the effect reading this book had on me, mostly thoroughly enjoyable masturbation and even inciting anal sex. That's a powerful book.

Get this book now!

- Cara Sutra

Ariel says

All the guys (who she goes through one after the other with little time for a breather) seemed to blend together into one for me. There just weren't enough distinguishing characteristics about them included. No physical details about them stuck with me; I think because there were very few. You'd think she'd have at least described their cocks, but I think she only does that like, once, and very vaguely. I know it's an erotic novel but it feels very tame, though maybe reading so much smutty fanfiction has ruined me a little.

The story also starts to get very repetitive. For example, she's always encountering guys who just somehow "know" that she's a sub on sight (don't even get me started on the unlikelihood of this being the case with EVERY attractive man she meets) after which she'll leave the man she was with for the new one. Later in the story, she gets whipped no matter what she does. She'll misbehave, then get whipped as punishment. She'll behave, and get whipped anyway because she "needs" it. I found that terribly boring; it gives the story no tension because the outcome is always the same. I'm also not into painplay and find no aspect of that sexy. Getting a glimpse into her mindset is intriguing and easily understood after a couple times of her explaining it, but annoyingly she keeps rehashing it, as if she's never comfortable with her identity or desires. I would've liked her to come to a point where she's totally accepted herself, but that never seems to happen.

I liked that she described outfits she wore at the end. Details like that can really add to a scene and are often overlooked. I also enjoyed the club scenes, probably because they broke up the monotony of the whippings.

I kind of wish we'd seen Nate come back in some way, shape, or form after she leaves him the note. Maybe by trying to prove he's the right Dom for her? I could see him challenging James or something, a public scene in the club where they take turns being her master. It might have made the story more interesting.

Lastly, I like the author's writing style. It's quick and easy to read, but does become bland and repetitive after awhile. I had to force myself through quite a bit once I reached the halfway point. Maybe this could have been solved by shortening the book since so much of it is repetitive punishments.

All in all, not a bad experience, but not a great one either.

Eva says

Alison Tyler's writing speaks to me on so many levels, I'm not sure where to start. How about the gorgeous prose, the dark-chocolate-dipped sentences that make it physically impossible to put down the book? I've sustained a few tripping-induced injuries because of this, but I don't hold it against her.

Dark Secret Love is taut, sex-drenched (of course), and the most accurate depiction of BDSM dynamics that I've ever read. Samantha's thoughts and desires mirrored my own in such a scarily accurate way that I could swear Alison has been peeking into my dreams.

The worst thing about this book is that it ended. If you've never read Alison Tyler before, do yourself a favor and get a copy right now. Yes, now!

Victoria Rainey says

Cocktails and Books Review

****4 1/2 stars****

Original Review Published here: <http://www.cocktailsandbooks.com/gues...>

Dark Secret Love: A Story of Submission is not a story but a journey. I was expecting a story and was blown completely away. It's not a happy journey but what is striking is how realistic it is. This is a journey where we see Samantha figure out what she wants in her life and how to make everything work. We get to see Samantha grow and learn from every relationship she was in good and bad. We are also reminded how complicated relationships are even in the best of times.

The author does a wonderful job of making you feel the characters emotions. Samantha does not know what is "wrong" with her but feels complete relief when she finds someone that understands what she cannot even voice. What I loved the most is the author does not just show the good part but also shows the bad parts as well. Also she does not gloss over them. I loved how communication was an important part of this book as well as experimentation.

The sex scenes in this book are hot. This book is filled with all different kinds of scenes. There is bondage, caning, anal sex, public display, and so much more. I loved the verity but was also struck how truthful it was. It's very easy to see that this book was written by someone that not just knows the lifestyle but also understands the lifestyle.

This is a book that blurs the lines between what we normally think of romance, and erotica because this book does not really fit either. This book is not just well written but the ring of authenticity is striking. The main and secondary characters are realistic, intense, and intriguing. Overall, this is a great book.

Annabeth Leong says

I wish I'd had Alison Tyler's book, *Dark Secret Love*, when I was young. This is the sort of fiction that can save a person—wise about the world, unashamed, unafraid of truth, full of voice and strength.

Something like this might have saved me from years of self-imposed sexual denial, the marriage based on pretending not to like the things I like, the visits to the therapist who tried to teach me how to fantasize about something "nice."

Tyler had me from word one of this book—the book starts hard and moves fast. She really captured me, however, when she wrote about the big mistake her main character Samantha makes—"depriving me of any sexual pleasure for three lonely years." That mistake turns out to be getting involved with a man who forces her to be someone she's not, and a lot of *Dark Secret Love* is about Samantha escaping from that terrible, soul-crushing sort of emotional bondage and finding freedom in the wild, sexy sort of bondage that she craves.

I've read plenty of books about doms and subs, pleasure and pain, but it's so rare and special to find one so raw and powerful. Samantha, the main character, seeks her own pleasure. She's no passive toy. She explores, makes mistakes, gets lucky, and slowly claims her own needs and desires.

I love the way Cleis Press designed the covers for this series, because even the covers of the books say this to me. They're girly and hard-core at the same time. Just looking at the cover of this book (and of the sequel, *The Delicious Torment*), I can see that what's being written about is a woman's pleasure.

There is a love story, a very important romance, but it takes its time arriving. I liked that. Every time a new man appeared, I wasn't sure how significant he would be or how long he would stay around, and that reflects life. Tyler knows the reader is expecting the happily ever after, and she makes a tease out of the reveal. It's a fun game.

Samantha's journey is also very hot. It's filled with delicious scenes of spanking, bondage, public display, anal sex, and the testing of limits, and all of them ring with authenticity.

When Tyler writes about her main character being caned, she talks about getting six strokes (more eventually, because the count inevitably starts over, but the amount she and her top are talking about her taking is six). I appreciated this because, for anyone who has any idea of how much caning can hurt, six is the sort of number that ought to be getting talked about. As soon as I read "six," I knew this book was written by someone who knows the deal.

I read it in a delicious buzz of arousal. It's the sort of book that screws up plans—plans of starting work on time, of going to bed, or of going anywhere. But I found that what I appreciated most, even more than the heat of it, was having Tyler's strong voice as a companion. It healed me to read about Samantha admitting what she needed. I have so often wondered why I couldn't just have "normal sex," so I was moved when

Samantha also wonders why. I felt her relief every time she found a man who understood those needs in any way. I felt her appreciation for those men and her enjoyment of them.

Samantha's insights often seared me or stunned me. Tyler's prose is clean and clear, presenting her character's revelations as nakedly as the character so often presents herself.

I will admit that I sometimes am bored these days by reading about what I think of as basic BDSM—some handcuffs here, a whipping there. Tyler's writing reminded me that when a person lives it, needs it, and does it with connection, there's nothing boring or basic about any of it. It was refreshing to be turned on as hell over things I sometimes now find run of the mill. It made me wonder how it could ever be boring to me. It made me remember what it was like to want it so badly and be afraid to even whisper about what I wanted.

Late in the book, Samantha says, "Good-girl sex, the type I always imagine other people to be having in their dark bedrooms every night, with minty breath and cooing dove talk, that sort of sex isn't meant for me."

I've had similar thoughts, but I don't think I ever put it so boldly to myself. The most important books I've read are the ones that manage to say what I need to say but can't quite articulate. The author says her piece and somehow in the process also gives me a lost piece of myself.

(This review originally appeared on Robot Lovers Prey on the Lonely. I participated in the official blog tour but bought my own copy of the book).

Anastasia says

I had a really really mixed feelings about this book after I finished it. I read it and I was just thinking "What the hell am I feeling right now??" I don't regret reading this book because this is a refreshing idea and a new perspective on BDSM. Alison Tyler is a beautiful writer, her writing will keep you up all night. I can't compare this book to any other, not just because I haven't read a lot of bdsm books, but because I don't think there is another book similar and as powerful as this. I read that this story is not 100% fiction, there is an authors life right between those pages. Which made the book so much better, because it felt real. So sexual and raw. Punishing for pleasure and pleasure some with pain. The man character Samantha really captured me. I admit I couldn't really understand the need that Samantha had, the need for pain. But after finishing it, I understood. I can say that some dark parts of the book even turned me on, which was a surprise. I can honestly say that I did enjoy reading it. There were some things that were bothering me about this book, that is why I can't say that Dark Secret Love is amazing, but what I can say is that you should give it a chance. I feel like a lot of people will find this refreshing, especially if you like bdsm in your romance(;

Jillyn says

Alison Tyler is one of my favorite erotic writers. I've read a fair number of her anthologies, but never an independent story/novel until I got a hold of this trilogy. Her excellent writing shines even more when she is given more pages to work with. She has a gift for pulling her readers (at least, for pulling) me into her stories, and this one is no exception. I was drawn into Dark Secret Love from the prologue. Tyler's writing ensured that I was with Samantha for every scene, every emotion, and every pain that she felt, and I loved it.

Part of this attachment is probably because this book is a blend of nonfiction and fiction, as Tyler explains in the introduction. I think this gives the book a more personal feel, a raw honesty that I don't often find in BDSM-related books. Maybe that's why I like Samantha so much. I related to this main character so much. The desire for pain, the silent "know" that some people just have about those into the scene. These are all things I've experienced, so I felt for Samantha all the stronger. She was my favorite character. I wasn't always the biggest fan of some of her Dom's decisions, so I wasn't as connected to him.

This is a book about exploration into a dark, sexual place. It was fascinating to see Samantha and her emotions and relationships shape over the course of the novel, and I think that it's something that a lot of people in the BDSM scene will relate to. While I can't speak for everyone, I can certainly say that this sub did.

The sex scenes are well written to say the least. They're detailed, dirty, and I'm sure other D words that I've forgotten. There's plenty of them, and they're sure to arouse you. Even some of the darker scenes- and this book is definitely dark- will tug at people and take them by surprise. That said there is more to sex in this book. It's a blend of romance and erotica and nonfiction and fantasy all with a haunting dark tone lying underneath. It sounds like it has a lot of things put into one, but somehow it works. It works really well.

A quick note on the cover: I think it's perfect. It's feminine and almost innocent looking, but blended with the cuffs it perfectly symbolizes the journey it holds between the covers.

This is one of the few full length novels featuring BDSM themes that I've ever read, and I'm glad that I gave it a try. This is the first book in a trilogy, and I will definitely be continuing on with the series. This is an adult book with adult themes: explicit sex, BDSM, profanity, and things of that nature. If you're a reader over 18+ who have an interest in erotica, bondage, BDSM, or sex in general, I definitely recommend that you check this book out.

I was provided a copy by Cleis Press in exchange for my honest review. This review can also be found on my blog, Bitches n Prose.

Karen says

This book touched me, in some secret place. She takes us all over her beginnings. Introducing the characters, setting the scene, and then pushing boundaries. It's just sex and then it really isn't. This book is about a woman coming into her own. It isn't typical falling in love and one girl, one guy. This felt real, this felt like an admission. Her intro was perfect. It is a whirlwind of pleasure and pain. I would have made the same choices and suffered the same. Alison Tyler gives us her story, as much as she was able to give. The writing is stellar. Alison Tyler is able to re-create a scene making you feel like you are right there, inside her head. The details surround you as she describes her intro into BDSM and her beginnings as a writer. I fell for every trick right along with Samantha. I swooned when Samantha said she was ready for Jack. I couldn't put this book down. I devoured this book and then went back for more. Is this real? I sure hope so. It is, in a word.. perfect.

Lisa Creane says

I often read a book and realize it's got a clear tug of a connection to the last book I read, mostly because my brain is making the connections. But Alison's books *really is* similar to Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe because in both stories, the protagonist is a loosely fictionalized story of the author's personal journey, one that's confused, and obsessive, and miserable, and alternately joyous, and hinged on someone older and wiser letting the younger protagonist know they understand who they are and what they need. Who they love. What love is.

Alison's book is neither romance nor, in my view, erotica, even though I shelved it there because that's where her stuff lives. Those who say it's super-hot? I don't totally understand. Yes, she relates her relationships from her first lover to her last, the one she's been with for decades and with whom we know she's found the answers for what she seeks. There's detail. There's graphic sex. But she's a mess, unable to tell anyone with anything but her body what she desires, how sex and pain are woven together in a jumble in her autonomic nervous system.

Like Aristotle, this book is ultimately about being accepted for who you are, as weird and unpalatable as that seems even to you. As such, I thought the book was great. She doesn't muddle the issue with lots of context. We don't know about her family, we see little of her jobs or daily life. What we're told is she's on a journey, with her sexual satisfaction linked so closely to her life satisfaction that we have to go through the sex to see where she ends up as a writer.

And it's fascinating, but also sad. There's a lot of pain and suffering, not just the willing beatings she needs to be satisfied but the rejection she feels, the shame at her secret desires previously channeled only into her fantasy fiction.

Deeply personal doesn't begin to describe what this trilogy is for her. But when people say "this is what Fifty Shades should have been," I think they're missing the point. This is an incredible memoir, not a pop fantasy. She has a wicked sense of humor so it's fun and bearable, but it's emotional and frequently harsh. Not for the weak of heart, which will never include Alison Tyler.

O Rose, though art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm,

He has found they bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy
--William Blake (1757-1827)

This poem is often interpreted as a sensual woman offering herself to a possessive man who ruins the pleasure she takes in her bed, so it's interesting Tyler used the key phrase as her title. She's taking back the night, so to speak, and saying you can offer yourself to a possessive man and increase the crimson joy, where pain can be pleasure and possession can be salvation. I like it. Tyler's a smart, honest writer and her struggle--being autonomous and self-respecting enough to seek what she needs sexually until she's satisfied and satisfies the partner she loves--is an interesting twist on feminism and a brain (and body) teaser for modern women.

Steelwhisper says

1.5* rounded down for a consistent lack of consent and negotiation while propagating to be BDSM and for being - ultimately - very boring...

Cocktails and Books says

4.5 Cocktails

Dark Secret Love: A Story of Submission is not a story but a journey. I was expecting a story and was blown completely away. It's not a happy journey but what is striking is how realistic it is. This is a journey where we see Samantha figure out what she wants in her life and how to make everything work. We get to see Samantha grow and learn from every relationship she was in good and bad. We are also reminded how complicated relationships are even in the best of times.

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Reviewed by Victoria for Cocktails and Books

Betty says

I only wish I could give this book SIX stars! I expected a run of the mill bondage and S&M book, but I got Oh, so much more! Our heroine was a frustrated young woman who knew that she should be satisfied with vanilla sex. But she had deep dark secrets that she didn't want to share with anyone. Even when guys she met would say that they knew what she wanted she was afraid to admit what her fantasies really were. She felt shame and embarrassment.

The author takes us through several of Samantha's early relationships and shows us how she is growing sexually. Samantha is learning that she has to be true to herself first. She is still frustrated although as there is

still something outside of her reach. AND then she is re-introduced to Jack, the Dom that she knew would be just too much for her.

The author has a wonderful way of presenting her character's needs and desires and the emotions that go along with it. It seemed easy to relate to Samantha and the frustration that was so much a part of her life for so long. I found this to be an easy read. I also was very impressed with the range of emotions and the impressive ending. I will definitely be reading more from the talented author.

I won this book through Library Thing for an honest review. I honestly loved it and recommend it to anyone interested in romantic erotica.
