

I love.

written and illustrated

by

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Mpulse Studio | Charlotte St. Charles
A Narrative from the Adventurous Heart Literature Collection
Dallas | New Orleans | San Pedro



This is a work of fiction.
Names, characters, businesses, places,
events and incidents are either the products
of the author's imagination or used in a
fictitious manner.

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This book is dedicated to the recipients and the supporters of
The Love Necklace Campaign.

Trigger Warning

Sometimes abuse disguises itself as love, and things get confusing...

INTRODUCTION

I started writing this book several years before I knew I was writing a book. I was writing literary vignettes, or musings, as I often refer to them, about love and romance in the Caribbean. Inspired by the trade winds and the endless sapphire waters, reflections of moonlight on the midnight water and lustful vibrations fueling passion drenched nights.

San Pedro is infused with inspiration and I started breathing it all in and letting it flow through my words. But I didn't want the book to be solely romantic poetry. I wanted to peel back layers and illustrate the realities of *love* on a small Caribbean island. It's sexy, but it's also deep and dark and sordid. It's easy to get lost in fantasies, but the tide may turn if you decide to dive into the sea of vulnerability.

I chose to write this book from the perspective of Mona Lamar, an alter ego that I created for my first novel, *Sketches from the Heart of a Texas Artist*. She's this super visceral character—I created her at a time when I needed to live vicariously through her. . . and. . . I still do, sometimes. She is unapologetically—messy, but her passion is unwavering.

She's an artist, raised as Texas royalty: strong and resilient, but it's her passion that is her Achilles heel. It's a double edged sword because it is where her creativity lies, but it is also what sometimes leads her into darkness.

I moved to San Pedro around the same time that *Sketches* was published and I began authoring a series of short stories illustrating Mona's life with her love interest, Antoine, whom she met in *Sketches*.

Writing from her perspective allows me to reach beyond my personal experiences and weave in stories I've gathered from countless women whom I've met on the island, whether they reside full time, visited for an extended vacation, or were just passing through.

This book is fiction. Mona's thoughts and actions and fantasies belong to her. This is her story, illustrating love and intimacy in the Caribbean.

A SAMPLE CHAPTER

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The sun began to set on the lagoon and the sky faded from azure to hues of violet and candy pink.

I hadn't heard from him.

The blood orange moon began to rise from behind the eastern horizon and I still hadn't heard from him.

You okay? I texted as anxiety ensued.

nothing—

The moon, now sitting a quarter from the midnight sky, no longer orange, cast a golden glow that glittered in the black night waters of the sea.

I'm getting worried. . . please let me know you're okay.

nothing—

I scanned the streets and the other men who worked on the water gathered in nearby bars, well into their third or fourth beer after a day on the sea, and I still hadn't heard from him.

I started calling—voicemail.

I called again—voicemail again. . . straight to voicemail.

I called his deck hand. No answer.

I called again. I got an answer. I was told a story about how they were repairing the bilge pump on his boat.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

“Okay, cool.” I thought. Except every other time he works on boat maintenance, I got a phone call that he would be running late. And if his phone had lost charge, then he would use his deck hand’s phone to call me.

But not tonight.

He was distracted by something.

Under the starlit sky, in the soft island breeze, I breathed in what I understood was really happening.

The next day I stepped into a cabin on his boat and that’s when I saw it. The evidence that he had been with another woman, tossed away in a waste basket that I had cleaned out the night before, and no excuse in the world was going to convince me that it wasn’t his.

I love you, Allie
He finally texted me.

*But, I responded—
my name is. . . Mona
Who is Allie?*

*Chaw, I don’t know anyone named Allie.
It was auto correct*

???
*You just texted me
‘I love you, Allie.’
Who is Allie?*

*Gyal, you lost.
There is no one named Allie.*

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

It's the same story,
different season.
We go through highs and lows
down here—
ebbs and flows—
as the tide rises and falls
and we feast
then we're mawga.

It's the same story,
different season.
It started with me,
but it really didn't
because it started
with another woman.

Season after season—

and I'm not special
and neither was she
and neither are you.

This is temptation island
and the devil is laughing
at
the expense of
our souls
our tears
our pain
our jealousy
our arrogance
our desire for that

passion soaked kiss
on a moonlit night.

There is a saying in Belize—
'If you don't listen,
You're going to feel.'

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The wind was heavy
and the sky
and the sea
were
void of color
—black.
The horizon didn't
seem to
exist
and
I brushed my hair from my face
and tied it back
because
the wind was heavy
and I sat alone
and listened to
the reef roar
and I reminisced on
the days before
the island
became a part
of my soul.

The days when
the island was a fantasy,
a tropical vibration,
a vacation
a photoshoot,
a story to tell my friends in the
city.

I reminisced on the days
when the island was a novelty

—on the days
when I was a novelty.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END