

The Love Note

Joanna Davidson Politano

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In Joanna Davidson Politano's *The Love Note*, an aspiring nurse finds a love letter and is drawn toward a painful family secret.

In the summer of 1865, Willa turns down her fourth marriage proposal. Knowing that unmarried women are often considered failures and outcasts, Willa continues to pursue a career in medicine with unmatched enthusiasm and determination. She attempts to assuage her father with a last-minute contract: she will accept her father's choice of her future husband, should she fail to complete her nursing assignment.

Then Willa finds a love letter hidden in her writing desk and is pulled into a gothic mystery. She hopes to find the intended recipient of the letter, leading her to Crestwicke Manor and its ailing matriarch, Golda, under the cover of a nursing assignment.

Willa's arrival at Crestwicke sends ripples throughout the estate when the letter goes missing. As each member of the household encounters the letter, the heady romance it suggests leeches into their lives and threatens the terms of Willa's contract. A lifelong friend, Gabe, offers some respite, though their undeniable bond draws Golda's ire. Willa's steadfast Christian faith and determination to be her own person push her to solve the mystery and to help to heal Golda.

Crestwicke and its surroundings are rendered as picturesque, but its flawed occupants make its atmosphere darker because of their secrets and hidden selves. Willa's presence urges the members of Golda's family to confront their secrets, helping to shift Crestwicke back to a site of life and love, making *The Love Note* a passionate, faith-driven novel that incorporates a beguiling tale of loss and redemption.

JOHN M. MURRAY (November / December 2020)

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