

The Poet's Secret

Kenneth Zak

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Both a thrilling romance and tender story of love, this lyrical tour de force is for anyone who's ever been moved by poetry.

An evocative tale of underwater trysts, Aztec treasure hunts, and one woman's quest to unlock the mystery of timeless love, *The Poet's Secret*, from Kenneth Zak, is a lyrical tour de force.

Elia Aloundra has never experienced an all-consuming passion or grand love of any kind until the words of poet Cameron Beck call to her. Inspired to seek out the hermit-like loner to discover his muse, Elia travels from the austere halls of graduate life to the steamy West Indies, but the secrets revealed by the broken man she finds there span decades and surpass even her wildest expectations.

The verses of Cameron Beck, the titular poet, play a key role in the narrative. Several poems, some complete and others only partial, from Beck's single published volume, the extremely well received but mysterious *Secrets of Odysseus*, are spread throughout and are of such quality that fans of the genre may wish that *Secrets* was more than a fictional tome. The lines of each poem, when accompanied by flashbacks into Beck's relationship with the elusive muse, will appeal to even non-poetry lovers.

A sensory delight, *The Poet's Secret* manages to paint a vivid picture while avoiding long-winded descriptions and unnecessary extrapolation. As Elia arrives on the well-hidden island of Matakai, the setting seems to come alive with sights and sounds, textures, and scents. Each detail, from the pure Caribbean waters to the spicy étouffées and the soft cadence of island accents, is given new life when seen through Elia's eyes and stands in stark contrast with the dark and often stormy action found off-island, surrounding Matakai with a surreal, almost magical ambiance.

A total bibliophile, Elia is a serious reader and student of all things literature. While love is an overarching theme, this is also a story of courage, independence, and finding inner peace. The triangle of Elia, Beck, and the enigmatic source of his passionate poetry adds an element of mystery and suspense to an already intriguing romance.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (Winter 2016)

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