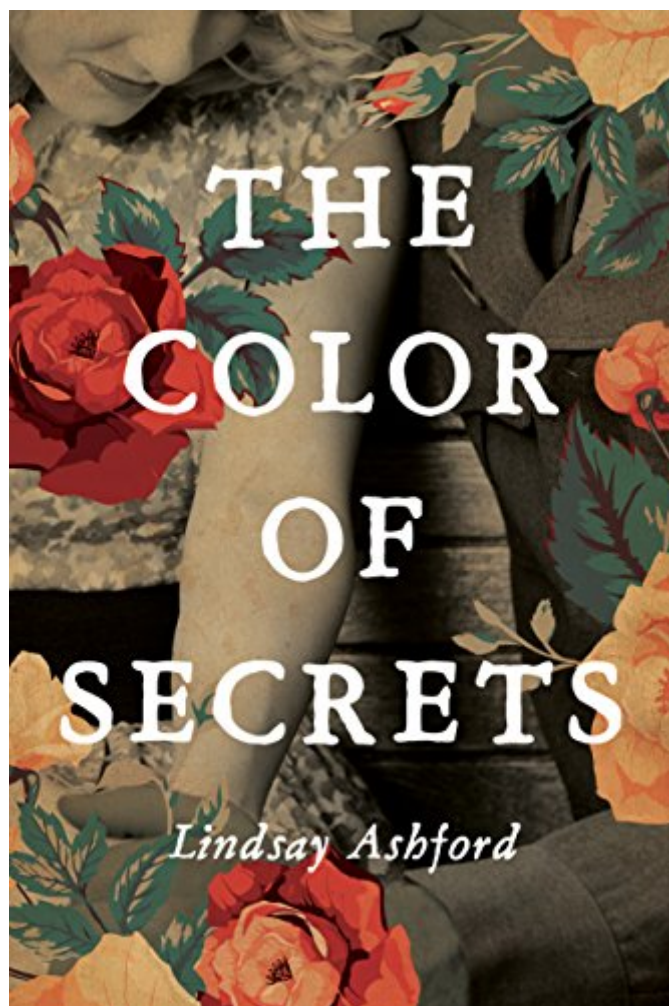


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# The Color Of Secrets



## Synopsis

Everyone has secrets, but some can change your life forever. In the midst of the Second World War, Eva receives the devastating news that her husband is missing and presumed dead. Neither wife nor widow, she lives in a numb state of limbo until, in the heat of an English summer, she meets Bill, a black American GI. Despite their vastly different backgrounds, neither can deny the love that overcomes them in the frantic weeks that follow, when every day could be their last. After Eva discovers she's pregnant, Bill is shipped off to join the D-day fight, leaving her alone in a bigoted world. As her mixed-race daughter, Louisa, grows up, how far will Eva go to keep her safe and bury the past? And how far will Louisa go to uncover the truth? Revised edition: Previously published as *With Love and Crocodiles: The Untold Story of a War Bride*, this edition of *The Color of Secrets* includes editorial revisions.

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## Customer Reviews

This is the story of three generations of women beginning with a young woman with a toddler whose husband has been lost at sea and presumed dead. It is wartime in England and the young women are working on the railroad repairing and relaying the ties that have been bombed. Due to the

severe shortages of food, the women are often ill and starving. Trains loaded with allied soldiers are sent to the end of the line, not to help, but to possibly guard the shoreline nearby. A dance is held and the protagonist meets a young handsome African American man from Louisiana. They fall in love and begin a secret affair which is forbidden by the Armed Forces and the racial prejudices of the day. She becomes pregnant and the secret of her biracial baby tears the family apart for many generations, spanning Great Britain, America and Wales. It is a story of love, misunderstandings, abandonment, betrayal, friendships, the death of a child and husbands, suicide and most of all: prejudice. This epic novel tells of forgiveness and redemption through the eyes of children who demand that the secrets are lifted to preserve their own sanity. JudiSocialWorker

The brown babies of Europe have largely been ignored. Ms Ashford does an excellent job of discussing this issue. She brings to light the prejudice that exists in England and the isolation felt both by the children and those left to raise them. This could have easily been a tirade against intolerance. Instead Ms Ashford gives us a realistic portrayal of what it must have been like to grow up in such circumstances. Happily, she gives us both the good and bad side - showing us that these children were indeed loved. A highly informative and emotional book.

I really tried to like it more..... but really, this is the sad story of a sad family of almost Greek tragic proportions.... - Bad things getting always worse. At times it was boring and even though the author tries (and it certainly looks like - she can not hide it) to surprise you, after a moment a tragic existence became more tragic, and more tragic.... and so on.... The plot in itself is good. The possible intention of overwhelming the reader with the fact that racism is a terrible thing, gave the book another connotation. And did not contribute to the quality of the book.

I was recommended this book by , based on previous selections of books I have read. What a disappointment! Never again! Several times I almost quit reading it, but I kept plugging along. I kept thinking it has to get better, but it never did. The only thing I learned from reading this book was if it doesn't "grab" in the first 20/30 pages, don't waste your time!

I had never read anything about the implications of race in the 2nd WW, especially not in the British Isles. Because their husbands have been conscripted, Eva and her friend are doing jobs are doing men's jobs to support their households. After a contingent of American soldiers are stationed nearby, Eva meets and falls for Bill, the first person of color she's ever known. The resulting

pregnancy changes the lives of three generations. The characters were believable and likeable. I enjoyed the story, although some of it was predictable. I really enjoyed it.

I didn't finish reading this book. Maybe it would have gotten better, but I just didn't believe the plot. Why the protagonist would risk so much with no more attraction than she exhibited for the father of her child? She needed the attention but surely somebody else would have asked her to dance? For its time, hers was a risky choice for no apparent reason.

This is an amazing family saga that spans three decades. In 1942-45 about one million U.S. Servicemen were stationed in England, in preparation for the invasion of Europe, in June 1944. Thirteen percent, around 130,000 were African American Servicemen. The story spans three decades. It involves Eva Melrose, an English woman, and Bill Willis, an African American Serviceman who met during the summer of 1943, in Wolverhampton, England, their daughter, Louisa Ann, born in 1944, and Eva's husband, Eddie. Eva and Bill's meeting happened by chance when Eva, with reluctance, attended a dance with her best friend, Kathy. Eva's husband, Eddie, had been missing in action for two years when his boat was torpedoed in the China Seas. Most suspected Eddie might be dead. Eva expressed uncertainty concerning her feelings for Eddie and their brief marriage. She had prepared to accept widowhood, therefore, her life revolved around her young son, David, and her work. Work involved laying railroad tracks with other Englishwomen, whose husbands were away at war or killed in action. With food and commodities scarce, families managed with the means at hand. American Servicemen were popular; they offered women chocolates, silk stockings, and money. English women were enamored with African American servicemen, and other minority troops, which vexed white G.I.s. A white G.I. assaulted Bill for dancing with Eva the first night they met. Bill, of course, bared the brunt good humoredly without malice. At that time, the U.S. Armed Forces were segregated. Black men held menial service jobs, and were considered not equipped for fighting. However this changed with the inception of the Tuskegee Airmen and Black troops fighting in the European Theatre. But Eva was color blind. She fell hard for Bill, fascinated by the tall, dark, extremely good looking man. Although Bill grew to love Eva, he had no delusions about their bond continuing across the Atlantic. Bill hailed from New Orleans, Louisiana, a state like all southern states, rife with racism and violence toward Blacks and other minorities. Out of their affair, their daughter, Louisa Ann, was conceived. Only then did Eva reveal the secret of her marriage to a husband considered MIA, and being the mother of a son. This caused minor tension, with Bill feeling a thread of deception until

Eva explained her fear of losing him. Bill's outfit was transported from England in preparation for the allied invasion of France. Therefore, he did not witness the birth of their child, nor know its sex. He appeared very transparent in his love for their unborn baby. Most Brits didn't appear xenophobic, but fearing their child would not be treated fairly in Europe, Bill suggested the baby be sent to Chicago to live with his aunt via the Red Cross, until his tour of duty ended. Eva was puzzled by Bill's suggestion, which did not include her. During her pregnancy, Eva's mother, Mary, becomes enraged at the discovery. She chased Eva down the street, and died after being struck by a car. A lot of surprises and disappointments befall Eva after the birth of Louisa. Two years later, Eva's son dies unexpectedly of typhus. Shattered, she falls into an abyss of guilt, hopelessness, and despair. The once fiery, assertive Eva had diminished. Family had to handle Eva with kid gloves. During the book, there was no mention of her ever recovering or coping with the loss of David. I believe Eva grieved for her son, and the loss of Bill. With loss of motivation, Eva barely went through the motions of her daily living activities. She loved Louisa, but sealed off spending quality time with her daughter during formative, adolescence and young adulthood years, as well as other family members. There were traumatic scenes in Louisa's young life that required a mother's love and understanding. Yet, because of Eva's delicacy, and chronic mournful state, Louisa refused to share her ordeals with her. Louisa knew nothing of her father because Eva denied her access to her former life with Bill. Louisa had no concept of pride concerning her ancestry. It's saddening that from childhood, she became an expert at concealing her racial identity against bigotry and insults. Most friends believed her Hispanic or Italian. A lot of surprising twists and turns take place in this novel. They happen at the right moment for maximum effect. There is foreshadowing, which provided subtle hints about situations, or clues to events yet to happen. I liked the author's exposition concerning the scents and sounds of nature, and the odor of someone you love and how the memory of their fragrance can affect your psyche. The plot is great. The emotional impact heartfelt. This story is well written and believable. Thousands of "Brown Babies" were born during World War II and reside today in Europe or the U. S. This is a fabulous saga of a family fractured by loss, grief, sadness, and shame, but mended with hope, love, discovery, and self-esteem.

The book starts off well, I however after the main character and her love interest meet it fails to develop these characters and the plot along realistic lines in a cogent manner. There's so much tragedy that just happens by coincidence. It reads like a bad romance novel.

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