

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin white lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from a deep purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and polygons. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

# The Secrets We Kept

Written by Lara Prescott

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Published by griefconvention

# Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Secrets We Kept .....               | 1  |
| The Secrets We Kept Book .....          | 2  |
| The Secrets We Keep .....               | 3  |
| The Secrets We Kept Review .....        | 4  |
| The Secrets We Kept Prescott .....      | 5  |
| The Secrets We Keep Book .....          | 6  |
| The Secrets We Keep Movie .....         | 7  |
| The Secrets We Bury .....               | 8  |
| The Secrets We Carried .....            | 9  |
| The Secrets We Bury By Debra Webb ..... | 10 |

# The Secrets We Kept

By Lara Prescott

## The Secrets We Kept

A thrilling tale of secretaries turned spies, of love and duty, and of sacrifice—inspired by the true story of the CIA plot to infiltrate the hearts and minds of Soviet Russia, not with propaganda, but with the greatest love story of the twentieth century: Doctor Zhivago.

## The Secrets We Kept Book

At the height of the Cold War, two secretaries are pulled out of the typing pool at the CIA and given the assignment of a lifetime. Their mission: to smuggle Doctor Zhivago out of the USSR, where no one dare publish it, and help Pasternak's magnum opus make its way into print around the world. Glamorous and sophisticated Sally Forrester is a seasoned spy who has honed her gift for deceit all over the world--using her magnetism and charm to pry secrets out of powerful men. Irina is a complete novice, and under Sally's tutelage quickly learns how to blend in, make drops, and invisibly ferry classified documents.

## The Secrets We Keep

The Secrets We Keep combines a legendary literary love story—the decades-long affair between Pasternak and his mistress and muse, Olga Ivinskaya, who was sent to the Gulag and inspired Zhivago's heroine, Lara—with a narrative about two women empowered to lead lives of extraordinary intrigue and risk. From Pasternak's country estate outside Moscow to the brutalities of the Gulag, from Washington, D.C. to Paris and Milan, The Secrets We Keep captures a watershed moment in the history of literature—told with soaring emotional intensity and captivating historical detail. And at the center of this unforgettable debut is the powerful belief that a piece of art can change the world.

\*\*\*NOW AVAILABLE\*\*\*

I am going to change my rating on this book to a 3.5 rounded up to a 4 star book. I love books about spies, particularly women spies so I had really high expectations for this book. I had some problems with the flow, back and forth between what was happening with the author of Dr. Zhivago, Boris Pasternak, in the East and what was going on in the West, centering on the CIA and how it planned to use the book as a “weapon” against the Soviets.

All in all I enjoyed this book, it \*\*\*NOW AVAILABLE\*\*\*

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All in all I enjoyed this book, it just took me a while to get through it. The novel starts during the time of the Cold War, four years after the end of WWII. Boris Pasternak was a renowned writer in Russia, short stories and poetry, and was well loved by the Russian government and the general population, that is until Russia became the USSR under Lenin and then Stalin. Boris saw many of his fellow artists, writers, musicians, painters, being taken away to labor camps or met with an even worse fate. Stalin tolerated Boris and he was allowed to live in a beautiful country home as well as his apartment in Moscow.

At the point when we enter the story, Boris is working on what he hopes will be his masterpiece. He is writing a novel about the way Russia used to be before communism and the truth about the revolution. It will tell of the opportunities and freedom that are no longer a part of life under communism. His lover and muse, Olga, will figure prominently in the book.

When the West gets wind of the novel they immediately start to set in motion plans to smuggle the novel out of the USSR, translate it for distribution in other countries and then ultimately smuggle the finished copies back into the hands of the people of Russia. The novel was banned from publication and

## The Secrets We Kept

distribution in Russia. One of my favorite quotes “Teddy rose to get another drink, returning with two martinis, an extra olive in his. “A toast?” Henry asked, to what? “The book, of course. May our literary weapon of mass destruction make the monster squeal.”

The sections on the typing pool in the West, comprised of well educated women, some who had completed covert operations during the war interesting and upsetting. Now these women are relegated to typing the notes of the men in charge of operations with no input into what goes on! One woman, Irina, is singled out as being useful for the tasks associated with smuggling the novel out of Russia. She was brought up speaking the language fluently as her mother was Russian. She is taught at length about covert operations first by her boss Teddy and then later by another agent, Sally, with whom there is an immediate connection.

The sections on the East deal not only with Boris but with Olga who suffered the fate of 3 years in a labor camp for her association with Pasternak. Boris has a wife and two children but we don’t really get to know much about her except that she allowed Boris to keep his mistress as long as he spent his “writing” time at the country house with her.

There is romance and love, family and commitments involving the characters in the US and in the East. There are also strong opinions on loyalty to one’s government but even more so, to the rights of an individual to speak, write and read whatever they want. Reminding me once again how fortunate I am to live in a free country.

I received an ARC of this novel from the publisher through NetGalley.

Publication date is set for September 3, 2019. ...more

## The Secrets We Kept Review

Taking place during the pinnacle of the Cold War, accomplished and well educated women were relegated to the typing pool at the CIA by the old boy network while their male counterparts began careers. Two unique women whom excel at keeping secrets become spies tasked with obtaining the manuscript of Dr. Zhivago for publication in the west since the Soviet State finds the content offensive and will not publish. Moving between the east and the west there are two love stories, dangerous missions and

Taking place during the pinnacle of the Cold War, accomplished and well educated women were relegated to the typing pool at the CIA by the old boy network while their male counterparts began careers. Two unique women whom excel at keeping secrets become spies tasked with obtaining the manuscript of Dr. Zhivago for publication in the west since the Soviet State finds the content offensive and will not publish. Moving between the east and the west there are two love stories, dangerous missions and much soul searching. Exciting doesn't begin to describe this meticulously researched and dramatic journey. I am astonished that a book this remarkable is a debut. Without a doubt it will be a best selling blockbuster. Prescott has quite a career ahead of her. ...more

the amount of books I want to read disproportionately outweighs the available space I have for books AND the amount of money I have in my bank account ðŸ˜©

## The Secrets We Kept Prescott

• Sometimes they'd refer to us not by name but by hair color or body type: Blondie, Red, Tits. We had our secret names for them, too: Grabber, Coffee Breath, Teeth.

• They would call us girls, but we were not.

• We came to the Agency by way of Radcliffe, Vassar, Smith. We were the first daughters of our families to earn degrees. Some of us spoke Mandarin. Some could fly planes. Some of us could handle a Colt 1873 better than John Wayne. But all we were asked when interviewed was "Can you type?"

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• Sometimes they'd refer to us not by name but by hair color or body type: Blondie, Red, Tits. We had our secret names for them, too: Grabber, Coffee Breath, Teeth.

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This begins four years after the end of World War II, and among these women were "leftovers" from the OSS, women who had been legends for their heroic and dangerous work during the war were also just women, after all, and were reduced to typing with the rest of the typing pool.

Still, one or two of these women seem to work their way into proving their worth to the agency, outside of typing, and soon they are tested to see how well they can keep secrets, and follow instructions, and they end up being spies for the agency. Eventually, the task that is revealed involves finding and acquiring the manuscript for Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, in order to make copies to be distributed to Russian readers, who will be attending an event on US soil, and will return with these books in hand to share. Since the novel was banned in Russia for its revolutionary, subversive content, they are hoping to sway the Russian people through the beauty and power of the compelling nature of this Nobel Prize winning literary legend.

And, as with *Dr. Zhivago*, there is a love story or two, but there is also a focus on loyalty and love, love in its many forms from romantic to familial, sacrifice and the cost of sacrifice over time to all involved. Perhaps what stood out the most to me was the emotional toll it took for these women to live in the shadows of these men, and in the shadows as spies, or seditious - and never to be thought worthy of voicing their opinion or objection to a course of action set by men.

This is one of those rare books, a historic and finely-crafted page-turner about the power of the written word that will leave you contemplating such topics as equality, sexuality, censorship, the freedom of the press and how books have the power to change lives " all topics that are still as relevant, if not more,



today. This is certainly destined to be a best seller.

Many thanks for the ARC provided by my Book Angel!

...more

Lara Prescott weaves a fascinating tale of espionage during the Cold War using Boris Pasternak's book *Dr Zhivago* as the basis for her debut thriller. *Dr Zhivago* is a book that was banned in Pasternak's homeland - the Soviet Union. People are willing to die for this book, but on the other side of the coin there are agents prepared to kill for it too!

Set both in the East and the West, our two main protagonists Sally Forrester and Irina Drozdov work in the CIA typing pool, a very male dominated environment. Lara Prescott weaves a fascinating tale of espionage during the Cold War using Boris Pasternak's book *Dr Zhivago* as the basis for her debut thriller. *Dr Zhivago* is a book that was banned in Pasternak's homeland - the Soviet Union. People are willing to die for this book, but on the other side of the coin there are agents prepared to kill for it too!

Set both in the East and the West, our two main protagonists Sally Forrester and Irina Drozdov work in the CIA typing pool, a very male dominated environment of former OSS operatives, (and indeed the typists were OSS operatives too, all heroines in their own right). However, our two protagonists are not merely typists, they're also spies!

A smuggled copy of Pasternak's novel finds its way to the West, and the CIA use this to their political advantage by sending reprints back to Russia, to manipulate public opinion, and turn the Cold War in their favour.

The author has captured the Cold War era in the West perfectly by means of the lifestyle of her characters, and also the political and sexual attitudes in the workplace, most of which would be frowned upon today.

In the East, we get more than a sense of how married Pasternak maintains a relationship of many years with his muse/lover Olga Ivinskaya, a woman who spent three years in a labor camp because of her association with him, and it captures so well the fear of being watched constantly by the State, and the dread that one day a government black car will turn up and they will never be seen again.

This is a compelling account of the suppression, publication and distribution of *Dr Zhivago* and all the controversy surrounding it, and it was such a pleasure to read. I expect it will be a great hit!

\*Thank you to Netgalley and Random House UK, Cornerstone for my ARC. I have given an honest unbiased review in exchange \*

...more

## The Secrets We Keep Book

Got a chance to read this one for a cover quote, and I will definitely be offering one. It's terrific!

Much has been said about this book, it has been "hyped" ( not a great word but its as it is ) and spoken about as "THE book of the year" and various other platitudes

The book is all about ( trying to keep this as simple as can ) Doctor Zhivago, the author of it, his lover, how the book was banned and how America managed to get the book published and into Russia ( all based on fact ) intermingled with fiction re the "spies" of the 1950s, the "typists" of the American Govt, who saw all and said no

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The book is all about ( trying to keep this as simple as can ) Doctor Zhivago, the author of it, his lover, how the book was banned and how America managed to get the book published and into Russia ( all based on fact ) intermingled with fiction re the "spies" of the 1950s, the "typists" of the American Govt, who saw all and said nothing and a forbidden love affair between a typist and a spy

That is the easiest way to explain it, the reality of the book is more complex

It was fascinating to read the "typists" take on working for the "spies" and I enjoyed that part of the book the most, the flowery romanticism of the author and his lover left me cold at times if I'm honest and the story of "forbidden love" although poignant was over before it really began and no one really enjoys chapters of a forsaken lover nattering on about lost love, do they??

The part at the World Fair where the "spies" distribute copies of the book to Russians was well done and you felt the urgency of the task

The "typists" characters were great, the rest "ok" and didn't really raise an emotion either way

Quite a bit of repeated story that "filled out the book"

I am sure many will love this book but it sets its stall out very high with its own praise ahead of publication and will be interesting to see how it is received

6/10

3 Stars ...more

## The Secrets We Keep Movie

There's no secret that the Secrets We Kept is going to be a big hit this fall. It's one of those books that I imagine publishers dream about – filled with true-to-life intrigue, touching upon little-known history, and presenting real-life and fictional characters that readers really care about.

Like most people, I've seen the movie Dr. Zhivago multiple times and it has never failed to captivate me (interestingly, I minored in Russian literature but never read the book). Although I was aware that There's no secret that the Secrets We Kept is going to be a big hit this fall. It's one of those books that I imagine publishers dream about – filled with true-to-life intrigue, touching upon little-known history, and presenting real-life and fictional characters that readers really care about.

Like most people, I've seen the movie Dr. Zhivago multiple times and it has never failed to captivate me (interestingly, I minored in Russian literature but never read the book). Although I was aware that the CIA has psych-ops units designed to change hearts and minds, I had no idea that this beloved classic was jokingly referred to as a "literary weapon of mass destruction." Nor was I aware of the back story of its publication.

This book alternates between the East and the West. In the East – the Soviet Union – we meet famed author Boris Pasternak, his lover and muse Olga (who was the inspiration for Lara), and his compulsion to write a masterpiece that would capture the truth about the revolution and stand the test of time. In the West, we meet the "girls" of the CIA typing pool, the secret-keepers, and the "swallows" – those who ascend to actual secretive work. The two focal points of this sorority-of-sorts are Irena and her mentor, Sally, who are unconventional and free-spirited yet tied down by the milieu which they must inhabit.

Typically, when a novel shifts from one story to the other, one of the two threads fades by comparison. But here, both stories are strong. There are fascinating insights into the CIA machinations of the ~50s and the way women were treated. And there are also great revelations about Boris Pasternak's life and his struggle to follow his literary muse even when it is in conflict with what his beloved land deems "correct."

It's a book I can confidently recommend to just about anyone – those who love NYT "Top Ten" books, literary readers, and readers who veer toward well-researched historical books. It's a winner, through and through.

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They had their satellites, but we had their books. Back then, we believed books could be weapons - that literature could change the course of history.

This is a fictionalised telling of a fascinating true story that pitched the CIA in a battle against the Soviet

## The Secrets We Kept

authorities over Pasternak's Dr Zhivago. Sadly, as I'd read some of the same sources as the author (The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle over a Forbidden Book, 'The Pasternak Affair', Anna Pasternak's Lara: The Untold Love Story and the Inspiration for Doctor Zhivago about Olga Ivinskaya) there was little new here and the fiction is inevitably less detailed, precise and specific than the original sources.

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What Prescott adds is a picture of the women who worked for the CIA in its early post-war days: they're mostly in the typing pool and speak with a collective voice ('we' - ironically, as they're representing the individualist west against the collective eastern bloc...) though some get selected for more dangerous, special work.

If you don't know about this episode of cultural wars, when the CIA's dodgy dealings were arguably more benign than they later became, this would be a very good introduction to 'the Zhivago affair'.

Thanks to Random House/Cornerstone for an ARC via NetGalley. ...more

## The Secrets We Bury

This is a well written, fictional account of the way a novel, "Dr Zhivago," became a political bombshell; used by the West as a propaganda tool. The novel begins with the arrest of Boris Pasternak's pregnant mistress, his muse and the inspiration for Lara, Olga Ivinskaya. As Pasternak, against threats and fears of retribution, continues work on what will become his masterpiece, the West are interested in rumours of this book.

To my mind, the parts of the novel which worked best, were the scenes featuring the typists, who worked for the CIA in the Soviet Russia Division in Washington. Many were women who had worked as agents in WWII and had returned to America, to find that their roles have been diminished. Others have completed university to find that a rather menial job as a typist, is all they can find. However, there are those who are approached to do more than just type and these secret lives, within the rather mundane setting of a typing pool, appealed to me.

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I have not read about these events before and, as such, found the book interesting and would now like to read a non-fiction account, such as, "The Zhivago Affair," by Peter Finn. However, this is a fascinating introduction to the battle over, "Dr Zhivago." I received a copy of this book from the publishers, via NetGalley, for review.

...more

I predict that Lara Prescott's debut novel will be a smash hit. From the first sentence, at "The Agency" in D.C. in the 1950s, with the clack of the typewriter keys, the typing pool women engage us. The Agency goals are to spin subversive words into gold to spread democratic ideals. That is where the role of Dr. Zhivago comes in, a book banned in the Eastern Bloc for its critiques of the State. Intellectuals, scholars, artists and writers and were used as propaganda tools to disseminate the ideology of the West to places behind the Iron Curtain in the East.

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## The Secrets We Kept

Prescott demonstrates the role of women to advance this objective, giving us an absorbing, scintillating, and exceptionally well-paced page-turner that will have you canceling dates and burning dinner to keep reading.

During the ten or so years that Pasternak was writing his masterpiece, word had come to the attention of the cultural heads of State that the content may contradict their dogma. Boris's lover, Olga, was Pasternak's muse for the character of Lara, Dr. Zhivago's love interest. She had already gone to the gulag once, so that the State could tap her for information on Pasternak's "heretical" novel-in-progress.

The narrative alternates between East and West--Olga and Boris in the East, and the typing pool women in the West. Among the women in D.C., the focus is on Irina and Sally, two very different women who become more than just typists. You can use Swallow or Carrier to describe them--"women who are talented at getting info from loose-lipped men that possess important information (Swallow), or who are trained and clever at dropping envelopes of top secret information to their appointed recipients.

Whether you are familiar (or uninformed) with Dr. Zhivago, the Cold War, or the 1950s, it won't matter. Prescott shines in installing the reader instantly and sustaining our interest. The words flow with the urgent but descriptive narrative, and the momentum is both fierce and sinuous. The women often work as "doubles" to obtain information. A double is a bit of a misnomer; one person doesn't become two. Rather, one loses a part of herself in order to exist in two worlds, never fully existing in either.

Well, I can tell you, the only world I existed in for the time I was reading this novel was Prescott's narrative creation. There isn't one false word or boring passage. I was gripped from the opening page to the hypnotic end. And, still, I can't get these women out of my head. ...more

## The Secrets We Carried

Picture Mad Men set in the early days of the CIA with an equal dose of historical fiction at the sunset of Stalin's reign over the Soviet Union. I found both sections highly engaging and couldn't flip the pages fast enough. I was a little unsure if I would like this book given that so much of it was focused on Dr. Zhivago (which I haven't read yet, but it's been on my shelf since my Russian History college days so now I will definitely read it soon), so I didn't know if a lot of it would go over my head since I wasn't familiar with the plot of that book. If you share the same concern there is nothing to worry about. I think my not having read it almost helped me because a lot of characters in the book readily admit not having read the book either until years and years after the operation.

I'm going to stick with my 4 star rating, but I was slightly disappointed in the ending. Things just kind of peter out, BUT and that's a big one - I'm not sure that assessment is totally fair either. There was so much build up and suspense with all the characters and as the book rounded down I could feel it simmering out. At the same time, I think it was true to life (now that I'm really reflecting properly in writing this review) since life always keeps going. Once operations happen and spies do their jobs, they don't sit around and talk about it for years. They move on to the next operation/mission and on and on. I guess my slight disappointment comes from wanting to have followed Sally and Irina a bit longer. Maybe most will disagree and think the author ended it appropriately, but I was hoping to stick around a little while longer.

Overall, this was a great read and one I plan to own in the future. I suspect this book will do very well and probably will be made into a series (which I will watch eagerly) - especially now with the Reese Witherspoon bump. I've been burned a bunch by her picks, but this is one I'm happy to say is a good one.

Thank you to Edelweiss, Knopf Publishing and Lara Prescott for the opportunity to read and provide an honest review of this book!

Review Date: 9/10/19

Publication Date: 09/03/19 ...more

This is a beautifully written novel unlike anything I've read for a long while. I'm so glad I decided to try this as it's not my usual type of read.

Female spies. The Cold War. Communism. Secrets. Double Agents. Forbidden Books. Forbidden Love.

The Secrets We Kept

Brilliantly put together, despite being fiction, a lot of this is based on fact of how the book Doctor Zhivago made it to being published when the Soviet Union had such issues with it that lives were at risk. This is the time that the country controlled it. This is a beautifully written novel unlike anything I've read for a long while. I'm so glad I decided to try this as it's not my usual type of read.

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Brilliantly put together, despite being fiction, a lot of this is based on fact of how the book Doctor Zhivago made it to being published when the Soviet Union had such issues with it that lives were at risk. This is the time that the country controlled its people, their minds and what freedom they had.

Some fantastic characters interweave in this incredible story. I fell in love with all of them. Lived vicariously as a female American spy on the Russians, the lover of a married author the world came to know, two women who found a friendship amidst state and personal secrets. It's addictive and engaging.

The pace is steady from start to finish. The plot and the fact so much is history fascinated me, so much that I'm now looking up facts around the secret and dangerous publication of Doctor Zhivago. Imagine being willing to be called a traitor because you had to write a story stuck inside you?

The author is an exceptional talent and by the end of the novel a world of thoughts and emotions were stirred up. Once all the pieces of the larger puzzle fit, it's an incredible story, told so well.

I picked up the book to read every moment I had and was truly enthralled. If you think this is not your thing, think again. A stunning, powerful and important novel. Now I must read Doctor Zhivago of course! Five stars.

Thank you to the publisher for my advance copy to review. All opinions and ratings are my own and unbiased. ...more



## The Secrets We Bury By Debra Webb

This novel took place during the Cold War and the release of the iconic novel Dr. Zhivago. Based on the true story of the author/poet Boris Pasternak and how the CIA was involved in creating unrest in the Soviet Union.

Makes me want to read Dr. Zhivago...

I didn't know anything about Boris Pasternak, so this was a great historical fiction pick for me. My favorite sections were those about the amazing women of the typing pool!