

PREVIEW LADY MYSTERY SERIES: BOOK 1

CONSPIRACY AT SEA CLASSIC
EDITION

GIGI KINGSTON

GIGI KINGSTON MYSTERIES

Copyright © [2025] by [GIGI KINGSTON]

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher.

It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission.

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

Gigi Kingston asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

First edition

This book was professionally typeset on Atticus.

Content Advisory

Classic 18+: This edition contains mature themes, strong attraction, and fade-to-black intimacy.

Your Invitation to Lady Mystery

In invitation to Lady Mystery

Mystery writer Bethany Blake is ready for sunny skies and stunning destinations aboard a themed whodunit cruise. She's not expecting Detective Mike Monroe—a man whose loyalty and passion match her quick thinking, and who proves that romance can be just as surprising as any mystery. When playful clues take a serious turn, Bethany, Mike, and a group of fellow passengers find themselves in the middle of an adventure that will change them all.

This first voyage launches the Lady Mystery series—interactive romantic mysteries where hidden clues unlock exclusive photos, music, sneak peeks, and bonus content. Each book delivers a complete case—from cozy puzzles to suspenseful thrillers—while the deeper story of love, friendship, and found family continues to grow across the series.

And the best part? Readers help decide what's next. Online polls will shape future books—choosing which characters return, what mysteries unfold, and even how relationships evolve. Every choice makes the Lady Mystery world more personal, more engaging, and more rewarding for those who follow from the beginning.

The Lady Mystery series is available in **multiple editions, allowing** you to choose the version that best suits your reading style. Some readers even opt for both. Although some of the Classic could be rated PG-13 because of the adult nature and mature themes, she has labeled them all 18+.

20% of all sales from the Lady Mystery series are donated to helping animals in need.

Chapter 1 A Voyage Like no Other

As the Lady Mystery departed Boston Harbor, the choppy water stretched out below, waves striking the ship's bow that echoed in the cool night air. The scent of salt carried on the breeze, tinged with traces of seaweed and distant diesel from the docks. This was destined to be a voyage like no other. The sun had nearly disappeared, leaving only a sliver behind. A low hum vibrated through the deck beneath her shoes—steady and alive, like the ship was waking up.

Bethany Blake, 27, a mystery writer who thrived on the thrill of suspense, felt a faint wave of unease wash over her. She quickly brushed it off, thinking it was just her imagination running wild with anticipation. Almost two weeks of solving mysteries on a themed cruise lay ahead—complete with stunning destinations, intriguing excursions, incredible food, and the company of her closest friend and her brother. This was her long-awaited escape into a world of adventure.

Mesmerized by the moonlight dancing on the waves, Bethany didn't notice Jason calling her name at first. The wind tugged at her sleeves, and the wooden railing under her hands felt damp from sea spray.

“Bethany!”

Jason, her 29-year-old brother and an adventurous park ranger, sat at a nearby table with her best friend, Jules, and three handsome men Bethany had never met before. The table was one of many scattered along the upper deck, where small lanterns gave off a soft glow and passengers sipped drinks from slender glasses that caught the low light as the ship cut through the harbor.

Jules, petite and sweet with dirty blonde hair cascading past her shoulders, wore it down as always. Her innocent, thoughtful expression rarely changed, but there was always something observant behind her quiet demeanor. She was gently swaying to the distant notes of music playing near the back of the ship.

Jason called again, his voice carrying over the soft murmur of the crowd and the steady churn of the water.

Snapped out of her thoughts, Bethany turned and approached the table. Jason gestured at the men with his usual enthusiasm.

“Bethany, meet my friends. This is Detective Mike Monroe, Dustin Urban—he’s a Coast Guard engineer—and Private Investigator Matt Ramirez.”

Bethany didn’t miss the athletic build shared by all three men. Their confident postures and easy smiles hinted at discipline, strength, and comfort under pressure. A faint breeze ruffled the collar of Mike’s shirt, and she caught a hint of clean soap and one of her very favorite cologne scents in the air as she stepped closer.

Her gaze lingered a moment longer on Mike. There was something steady and grounded about him—an intensity in his eyes that spoke of experience, maybe even loss. She wasn’t sure why it struck her, only that it did. She looked away quickly before anyone could notice.

“I’ve seen Matt before at the precinct,” Bethany said, easing back into the conversation.

Matt turned to her with a polite smile. “Yes, I thought you looked familiar. I didn’t know you were Jason’s sister.”

“Good to actually meet you, Matt,” she replied.

“You as well.

Matt turned his attention toward the rest of the group. Bethany took the opportunity to sneak one more glance at Mike. He hadn’t said much, but something about the way he carried himself told her he didn’t miss a thing.

Before the introductions could go any further, a sharp scream cut through the air.

“My purse! Somebody stole my purse!”

Chairs scraped back in a rush. Bethany and Mike were already moving, weaving through the crowd toward the woman’s voice. The hum of the engines underscored the rising chaos—startled voices overlapping, feet thudding hard against the deck. Somewhere near the railing, a flash of movement caught Mike’s eye, and he picked up speed.

Mike approached her calmly but confidently. “Hi, I’m Mike Monroe. I’m an off-duty detective on vacation,” he said, flashing a disarming smile. “And this is my friend, Bethany. May we sit?”

“Yes.”, her face was pale and her breathing rapid. The glass in her hand rattled slightly against the metal table. Mike lowered himself into the chair beside her. “May I hold your hand until the ship’s officers arrive?” he asked gently.

His steady demeanor seemed to have an immediate grounding effect. She took a shaky breath

“My name is Abigail Stanton,” her voice trembled.

Mike leaned in slightly. “Are you okay, Abigail?”

“Yes”, eyes glistening. “I got up to go to the ladies’ room with my sister, Madison. We ended up chatting with some passengers we saw

in the hall. Then, I remembered I had left my purse at the table. When I came back, it was gone.”

Bethany stood slightly behind them, watching the interaction unfold. A faint breeze caught the ends of her hair as she listened. She was quietly impressed by how effortlessly Mike balanced calm authority and warmth. For all her skill at writing mysteries, she couldn’t help but feel a spark of admiration for the way he was handling the situation. His tone was solid, his presence steady—he didn’t just fill space; he owned it.

“Would you like something to drink while we wait?” Mike offered.

Abigail shook her head. “Thank you, but I still have my water here.” Her fingers rested lightly on the glass, the condensation from it dampening her skin.

Mike strongly suggested. “We should get you a fresh one.”

Bethany subtly signaled a nearby waiter, who returned moments later with a new glass. As the waiter reached for the old one, Mike raised a hand.

“No,” he said firmly. “Let’s leave this one here.”

Abigail’s voice grew steadier. “Danielle and Michael—an older couple sitting across from Madison and me—said they saw someone in my seat while I was gone.”

Michael, his voice apologetic. “A woman came over, said her feet hurt, and asked if we minded her sitting just for a minute. She seemed friendly. Talked about how excited she was for the cruise. She mentioned the mystery game.”

Then, just as suddenly as she had appeared, she stood up, said she’d lost track of time, grabbed a purse, and left.

The couple hadn’t thought much of it at the time. They couldn’t recall if she had arrived with a purse or not, and they now felt terrible for not paying closer attention.

Bethany's mind raced. *Natalia had been charming. She'd entered and exited the scene like a ghost. Too perfect. Too smooth. Too clean.*

Her instincts screamed that *it wasn't random*. Still, she kept her thoughts to herself, retreating into the background to observe. In her books, she often said it was better to watch the pieces fall into place before speaking—and now, she followed her own advice. The warmth of the deck lights washed over the group, but Bethany felt none of it. Her focus was sharp, trained.

Just then, two uniformed female security officers arrived.

Mike introduced himself again, this time more formally, and gave the names of Abigail, Danielle, Michael, and “my friend Bethany.”

Bethany took another quiet step back. No one seemed to notice her presence, and that was exactly how she liked it. Sharp-eyed and silent, she catalogued every detail.

The officers introduced themselves as Officer Kathy Freeman and Officer Bella McGreggor. They moved with the swift efficiency of women accustomed to order, even amid chaos. Their belts clinked quietly as they walked, and their pens were out before the questions started.

They took statements from Abigail Stanton and Danielle and Michael Darnell. Mike pointed to the water glass, suggesting it might have fingerprints. Bethany noticed how his gestures carried a quiet efficiency—like a man used to orchestrating chaotic moments into manageable tasks.

She had the sudden realization that Mike wasn't just another man on this cruise. He was different.

The faint scent of lemon cleaner still hung near the table. A criminalist arrived without fanfare, gloved and quiet. He collected the glass, dusted the chair's armrests, and gathered everything on the table. Metal clinked faintly as tools touched the table.

Officer Bella stepped aside to speak with Madison Stanton, who had just returned. Madison looked confused at first, then concerned. Officer Kathy moved through the surrounding passengers, checking for anyone who might've seen a flash of blonde hair or a direction—but all they got were half-formed memories and shaken heads.

No one had seen the purse leave. No one had noticed where the woman went.

Madison turned to her sister, her voice light, the contrast jarring against the weight still hanging in the air. "I leave you alone, and you lose your purse and find this hottie."

Mike smiled, caught off guard. His cheeks turned a little red. Bethany could see Madison was clearly the feistier of the two.

Bethany smiled. Mike, who hadn't flinched during chaos, was now visibly uncomfortable under playful teasing. It made him real. Human. Charming.

Mike quietly stepped back now that Abigail had her sister beside her.

Bethany didn't follow. She hovered near the edge of the conversation, out of the way but within earshot. The ship creaked faintly beneath them. One of the officers—Officer Kathy—leaned toward Officer Bella and spoke low, but not low enough.

Natalia wasn't on the passenger list.

Bethany didn't react outwardly, just kept still. Let the pieces come to her.

The purser, Ethan Williams, was called over. His shirt sleeves were neatly rolled. He explained to Officer Bella that a blonde woman had bumped into him as she was leaving the grand room. Said she was in a rush, all smiles, gone before he thought to question it. He didn't notice a purse.

Mike returned to the table. Bethany followed a few moments later, sliding into her seat like she'd never left.

"Where did you go?" Mike asked, looking over at her.

"I was there, listening in the background," Bethany replied, a teasing glint in her eye.

"I thought you left after the officers arrived."

Bethany smiled. "No, not on your life."

They both laughed. It wasn't forced. It felt earned—relief bubbling up from the moment's earlier tension.

"I saw Madison flirting with you," Bethany said, her tone edged with mischief. Mike looked down, adjusted his watch. "No, not really. She's just... feisty."

Bethany leaned forward just enough. "Why are you blushing, Detective Mike?"

He gave her a smile. His balance, usually so locked in, changed just slightly—and Bethany noticed.

The others leaned closer, waiting. Mike filled them in, voices steady again, the center of the table like it was second nature.

Bethany waited for her moment, then dropped it in casually as anything: Natalia's name wasn't on the passenger list.

"How did you find that out?" Mike was surprised and asked, eyes locked on hers now. Something behind them sharpened.

Bethany smiled, unbothered. "I have my ways."

Jason let out a short laugh. "Trust me, Mike, she does."

Laughter broke the tension again, the table warm with curiosity and energy. Bethany shot her brother a look—part amused, part warning.

Then she leaned forward, voice even. "No one else really noticed the blonde woman, except for the ship's purser, Ethan."

She didn't raise her voice. She didn't need to. Her words landed. Clean. Sharp. Observant. Mike's expression changed—not just interest. Respect. Maybe something else, too.

"Seriously, you got all that information?" Mike asked, leaning toward her ever so slightly. There was genuine curiosity in his voice, mixed with something softer she couldn't quite place. The low light from the deck lanterns caught the side of his face, and she could see he wasn't joking—he really wanted to know.

"I told you, I was there in the background, listening," Bethany replied.

"Yes, indeed you were," Mike said, shaking his head in disbelief, though his smile lingered. A passing breeze stirred the corner of the white linen napkin on the table, but neither of them moved to fix it.

Bethany started to say, "I'm not sure—"

—but Mike finished her sentence, "—if this is real or part of the game."

Their shared laughter cut through the mild tension of the evening. A few nearby guests glanced over, briefly curious, then turned back to their own conversations.

"Yes, exactly," Bethany said, A smile crept across her face. She could feel the release of it, something tight letting go.

The whole table joined in, their laughter was infectious. Silverware clinked gently as drinks were lifted and plates moved. The light hum of music carried over from the upper deck, subtle but just loud enough to feel like part of the atmosphere.

Matt, who had been silently watching the exchange with amusement, took the moment to speak. "Already, you two are finishing each other's sentences."

Bethany gave a small laugh, though it felt a little awkward. "I don't know why—it's not like we've really had a chance to talk."

Mike's tone was gentle, almost too soft. "We think alike."

The comment hung in the air. A few chuckles came from around the table, but there was something quieter underneath. Something that didn't quite move on.

Mike and Bethany exchanged a look—subtle, quiet—but it was enough. The kind of look that asked a question neither of them said aloud.

Bethany, for her part, felt her defenses slipping—something she hadn't anticipated on this trip. The polished wood under her palm felt warm from the sun it had soaked in earlier, but it was her own reaction that made her heart race.

I didn't come here to fall for anyone, she thought, half-frustrated with herself. I came here to have fun with my friends and solve an exciting whodunit mystery.

Her thoughts drifted back to Mike: his confident walk, wavy brown hair, warm brown eyes, muscular build. A faint dusting of scruff shadowed his jaw, softening the sharp lines of his face, and that deep voice—the kind that lingered in the air even after he stopped speaking. But it wasn't just his looks.

What struck her most was his kindness. The way he had steadied Abigail with just his presence. It stayed with her. It was rare, she thought, to meet someone so magnetic yet so genuine.

With a sigh, she reminded herself, I need to focus on the game. I'll probably never see him again after this cruise anyway. Maybe through my brother Jason sometime, but unfortunately, I've never met Mike before this.

Mike's thoughts mirrored hers in an uncanny way. *This woman is not only beautiful, he thought, but also smart and funny. We share the same interests.*

His gaze flickered to Bethany again, lingering for just a moment too long before he pulled himself back to the present. He smiled to himself—there was something about her that made everything feel just a little brighter.

The celebration carried on late into the night. Clusters of guests mingled under strands of warm deck lights strung between the railings, the soft glow catching on dresses, polished shoes, and half-filled wine glasses. Waitstaff moved quietly between tables, offering plates and clearing empties with practiced ease. The scent of grilled seafood from dinner still hung in the air, now mingling with the sweetness of the fresh fruit on display. Some guests danced near a roped-off space along the side deck, their footsteps soft on the wood. Others leaned back in cushioned chairs, the ocean behind them black and endless, its sound steady beneath the low music playing nearby.

At midnight, a gorgeous buffet was brought out onto the deck, adorned with intricate fruit sculptures.

The display included beautiful arrangements of flowers, animals, and even a replica of the captain's head. They had humorously placed his hat on the fruit sculpture, along with a tie around its neck.

A woman nearby remarked with a chuckle, "He's always wearing that tie. They got him a duplicate for his fruit head."

Bethany, caught off guard by the humor, burst into laughter along with the woman. Her laugh rang out, a full, unguarded sound that seemed to float above the rest.

The elegant older lady extended her hand and introduced herself. "I'm Liz Jacobson."

"Any relation to the captain?" Bethany asked, a smile tugging at her lips.

Liz replied warmly, "Yes, he's my husband."

Bethany smiled, her eyes lighting with amusement. “Is your head hanging around here too?”

Both women dissolved into laughter, their giggles rising above the soft hum of conversation around them. The breeze changed direction and the scent of crushed melon swept past.

“No,” Liz chuckled, “my head is where it belongs.”

Their laughter echoed, drawing Mike’s attention as he approached. His pace was easy, but there was a quiet awareness in the way he stepped closer, tuned in even while smiling.

Bethany introduced him with a playful tone. “This is Detective Mike.”

Teasingly, Mike protested, holding his hands up in mock surrender. “Stop calling me ‘Detective.’ I’m on vacation.”

The two women laughed again, and Bethany caught a glimpse of the faint color that spread across Mike’s cheeks. He looked away for just a second, trying to shake it off.

“Does anybody actually eat those sculptured fruits?” she asked Liz, her curiosity genuine.

Liz, smiling. “Yes, they do,” she replied.

“Can you imagine eating my husband’s head?” Liz said, unable to resist.

Bethany nearly spit out her drink, pressing her hand to her mouth, trying desperately to stifle the laugh that broke loose anyway. “No, no, I can’t,” she managed between laughs, which only set them both off into another bout of laughter. A few guests glanced over, smiling as the sound carried.

★ Do you want to see the fruit table with the captain’s head everyone’s talking about? Go to gigikingstonmysteries.com Find the Gallery, and check it out! (or use QR code on the back cover) ★

Liz's humor and approachable nature struck both Bethany and Mike as delightful.

For someone who could easily be snooty as the captain's wife, Liz was refreshingly down-to-earth, and Bethany found herself immediately drawn to her warmth.

Soon after, the captain himself approached their group, his stride confident without feeling rigid. His uniform was crisp, his tone casual but aware—like someone who knew how to manage a crowd without making it feel like a performance.

"Is everyone doing okay?" he asked, his tone genuine as he introduced himself.

Trying not to laugh, Bethany said, "Your wife is hysterical."

The captain chuckled, his smile full of affection. "Yes, she is. She's been making me laugh for forty years."

He then turned to Mike and Bethany with gratitude in his eyes. "Thank you for your kindness in befriending my wife."

Mike and Bethany responded together, "It was our pleasure."

"She's a very lovely lady," Mike added sincerely.

"Yes, she is," the captain agreed, his smile softening.

With a playful glint, he asked, "How long have you two been together?"

Bethany felt her cheeks warm under the teasing question, while Mike answered easily, "Two hours."

Their laughter joined the captain's, filling the air with ease and friendship.

The captain's expression grew serious for a moment, the weight of his position settling back over him. "I can't believe someone's purse was stolen. The officers mentioned that you helped calm Miss Stanton down. Thank you, Detective."

"It's just Mike, sir," Mike replied, his voice warm yet firm.

The captain smiled. “Okay, Mike. “Just call me Mel—that’s what my friends call me.”

“It’s unsettling to have a crime occur so early on the trip.”

Liz reached over and rested a hand on her husband’s arm, her gentle touch reassuring. “Hun, I’m sure it will work itself out soon.” Her fingers rested lightly against the fabric of his jacket, a small, steady gesture beneath the buzz of laughter and music around them.

Mike then whisked Bethany away to the dance floor. The deck underfoot was smooth and warm from the day’s sun, and faint vibrations from the engines hummed beneath their steps. Overhead, strings of soft white lights swayed gently with the ship’s motion, casting a warm glow over couples circling the dance area. Music drifted from the live trio in the corner, their instruments filling the space with soft jazz that melted into the sound of the sea just beyond the railing.

As they danced, both found themselves pondering the events of the evening.

Was the crime really just part of the game, or did it hint at something more sinister lurking aboard the ship?

The thought hung between them like an unspoken question as they moved to the rhythm of the music. The air held a mix of ocean breeze and the faint citrus scent from the nearby buffet, and still, neither one said the words aloud. They didn’t need to.

After several dances, they stopped at the food bar to grab a drink. The bar area was bright with cut glass and chilled bottles arranged in neat rows, condensation running down the sides of pitchers. Staff moved efficiently behind the counter, refilling trays and sliding clean glasses across the polished surface.

Mike noticed Liz nearby and, with his easy charm, asked if she’d like to join them.

Liz thought for a minute, her graceful demeanor momentarily faltering. She looked out over the party—strangers laughing, clinking glasses, music weaving through every movement. “I feel a bit awkward sometimes, not knowing where I fit in at first. I don’t come on the ship often. I only know a few of the crew members and none of the passengers.”

Bethany, quick to reassure her, said warmly, “You’re about to have a bunch of friends in a few minutes.”

Liz’s lips curved into a genuine smile, her posture relaxing as she reached for her glass. “You’re very kind,” she said. “I’m so grateful to have met such lovely people.”

Liz joined the table, her presence adding an effortless elegance to the group’s lively conversation. The lanterns overhead flickered softly in the breeze, casting shadows over the group. Someone nearby dropped a fork and chuckled as it clattered onto the wooden floor. The hum of conversation surrounded them like a soft wall of sound.

Shortly afterward, the captain approached again, his steady demeanor commanding attention. His walk was deliberate, confident, but there was nothing forced about it.

A waiter promptly brought him a chair, and the captain sat with them for a few minutes before heading back to his rounds.

“This was very enjoyable,” he said with a smile. “Thank you. I’m leaving my wife in good hands.”

The atmosphere at the table grew even livelier. A gust of warm air passed through the open deck, fluttering napkins and tugging gently at loose hair.

Matt was on the dance floor, spinning a pretty blonde woman in time to the upbeat music. The lights shimmered over the polished deck as she twirled, her skirt catching air just enough to draw atten-

tion. Matt's laughter rang out once—sharp, amused—as he guided her through the next turn, clearly enjoying the moment.

Meanwhile, Jules and Jason were finally getting close—a connection that had lingered between them for years but had yet to be fully realized. They stood near one of the railings, tucked into a quieter space just beyond the glow of the main deck. They weren't dancing exactly, more swaying to the rhythm, their conversation low, heads tipped slightly toward each other.

Jason had liked Jules since the day they met—when she was in kindergarten and he was in second grade.

Jules had been his first crush, though at the time, her opinion of boys had been decidedly less favorable.

Things changed in third grade, during a class nature walk. Jules wandered away from her group and got lost. Jason, who had been outside at recess, noticed her absence and instinctively left his track area to find her.

He discovered her near the pond behind the school, tears streaking her face as she hugged herself tightly. The air had been damp that day, and the smell of wet grass clung to her clothes. Jules jumped up and hugged Jason as soon as she saw him.

"I was watching the frogs," Jules sobbed when she saw him, "and when I turned around, everyone was gone."

Jason walked her back to school, both of them muddy and silent. He earned himself a stern lecture for leaving the designated area.

When confronted by the teacher, Jason's response had been simple and unwavering: "I had to find my sister's best friend."

Over the years, Jules and Jason began to flirt, though both were convinced their feelings were unreciprocated.

Jules assumed Jason saw her as a pesky little sister, while Jason thought Jules considered him an overprotective big brother.

Yet Bethany had always known the truth.

She remembered the day Jason met Jules—the way his eyes sparkled when he looked at her, and the way Jules, in her innocence, accidentally punched him in the face. The memory played in Bethany’s mind like it had just happened—Jason doubled over in surprise, Jules frozen with horror, the sweatshirt that got tangled and caused the whole thing.

Watching them dance together now, Bethany smiled to herself. The deck lights shimmered above them, casting soft halos over the moving crowd. Music played gently from the corner trio, the occasional burst of laughter cutting through the melody.

When would they finally realize they were soulmates?

Mike approached Bethany once more, asking her to dance again. With an apologetic gesture to the table, he excused her and himself as they made their way back to the dance floor. The ship rocked gently beneath their steps, barely noticeable unless you were paying attention. The captain had returned as well, taking his wife’s hand as they joined the crowd. Liz’s laughter carried across the deck.

It was a lovely sight—friends and strangers alike moving in harmony under the gentle glow of the ship’s lights. The soft creak of wood, the breeze off the ocean, the faint scent of citrus still drifting from the buffet—it all blended into the kind of evening people remembered long after the trip was over.

After a few dances, the group decided to call it a night, knowing that the mystery game would begin the next day.

Jules, her curiosity always sharp, remarked as they left the floor, “We don’t have any information on when it’s going to start. They said it would be announced during dinner, but the stolen purse was such a distraction.”

Just then, an announcement came over the speaker, inviting everyone to attend breakfast—even if they weren't eating. There would be important information about the game, and it wouldn't take much of their time.

Bethany and Jules returned to their room, still buzzing from the evening's events. Their shoes clicked softly down the hallway, the corridor quieter now, lit only by low night lights and the faint hum of the ship moving through the water.

After they cleaned up for bed, they lay in their respective beds, chatting across the room. The covers were cool and crisp, and the sound of the ocean filled the silence between words.

They talked about how much fun they'd had, and Bethany found herself admitting something she'd been holding back.

"I'm undeniably attracted to Mike," she confessed with a sigh. "But I worry I'll probably never see him again after this cruise. And yet... there's something between us I can't deny."

Jules teased her immediately, her tone playful. "Yes, his muscles—they're huge!"

The two women dissolved into laughter, the sound echoing warmly through their room. It filled the space with the comfort of old friendship and a shared secret or two.

Bethany wasn't one to let Jules off the hook easily. She playfully flipped the topic on her.

"Are you finally going to tell my brother how you feel about him?" she asked, her tone both gentle and mischievous.

Jules confused said. "What do you mean?"

Bethany rolled her eyes. “Seriously, Jules, are you still denying it?”

Jules let out a small laugh, but her voice softened. “No, not really,” she admitted. “I just always thought he considered me his little sister.”

Bethany groaned, her frustration laced with affection. “Really? You too? You’re both smart, educated people, yet you can’t see what’s right in front of your noses.”

Jules paused before asking, “Why didn’t you ever say anything?”

Bethany smiled—the kind that comes with years of knowing someone deeply. “It’s not my place to meddle in your lives. Plus, you have a heck of a left hook.”

Both women burst into laughter again, giggling like schoolgirls until they finally drifted off to sleep.

The next morning, Bethany and Jules woke up early and decided to stretch their legs with a walk around the ship. The hallway outside their stateroom was quiet at this hour, lit by warm sconces along the wall. The soft sway of the ship beneath their feet was more noticeable in the stillness, and the low hum of the engines echoed faintly through the floor.

They also joined a workout session led by the fitness instructor, Chasity. The open deck space had been cleared for mats and towels, with sunlight filtering through the white canopy above. A few passengers were already stretching as ocean air moved lazily through the space. The soft slap of waves against the ship provided a calming backdrop against the beat of energetic workout music.

Bethany noticed immediately how striking Chasity was—her toned frame and quiet confidence impossible to miss. Her voice carried with

calm authority as she moved through the session. It didn't escape Bethany's attention how adorable Chasity and Dustin had looked together the night before.

Dustin had barely been at their table, instead spending most of the evening either dancing with or talking to Chasity. The connection between them was obvious to Bethany—it was clear Dustin was smitten, and it seemed Chasity felt the same way.

"That was a hard workout," Jules said to Chasity as the session wrapped up.

The three women introduced themselves, and Bethany added, "I think you were dancing with my brother's friend, Dustin, last night."

Just as she spoke, Dustin appeared—as if summoned by the mention of his name.

Bethany smiled. "We'll catch you later."

She and Jules offered warm smiles to him before walking off, leaving Chasity and Dustin to their own moment.

Back at their stateroom, Bethany and Jules showered and got ready for breakfast. The room was cozy, clean, and sunlit, with pale cream walls and smooth wood accents around the mirror and dresser. The faint scent of lavender still lingered from the bath products, and the floor was cool beneath their bare feet as they moved around, gathering clothes and pulling open drawers.

Once dressed, they made their way to the dining area, where Jason, Dustin, and Matt were already seated. The restaurant-style room was busy now, filled with the sound of clinking cutlery, quiet chatter, and the scent of fresh coffee and pastries. Servers moved in a calm rhythm between tables, and the floor-to-ceiling windows bathed everything in soft morning light.

“Where’s Mike?” Jules asked.

Matt shrugged casually. “Oh, he’ll be here in a minute. He was in the shower when we left.”

Sure enough, Mike appeared moments later, his confident walk drawing Bethany’s attention immediately.

She couldn’t help but notice *how handsome he looked—even better in jeans. I have to get a grip*, she thought, willing herself to focus on anything else.

Bethany and Mike shared a warm smile, and for a brief moment, it felt as if the rest of the room had faded away.

Mike greeted everyone before sitting down, but as he reached for a napkin, it slipped to the floor. Both he and Bethany reached for it at the same time, bumping heads in the process.

The table erupted into laughter as Bethany and Mike checked to see if each other were okay.

Mike, unable to resist, leaned in and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead. “I’ll fix your boo-boo,” he said softly.

“Aww,” the whole table cooed together.

Bethany couldn’t help but laugh. “It worked! My boo-boo’s all better,” she teased.

Mike chuckled, his warm gaze meeting hers, and soon the entire table was roaring with laughter.

An announcement interrupted the laughter. Courtney, the concierge, informed everyone that the mystery would begin after lunch at 2 PM in the grand hall on Level 3.

With the news out, the group finished breakfast before setting out to explore the ship.

Bethany and Jules strolled through the decks, eventually making their way to the stairs leading to Level 3. The halls were livelier now, sunlight pouring through the upper deck windows as passengers milled about, some with maps in hand, others snapping photos of the ocean views.

As they walked, they spotted Mike and Jason heading down the hall in the opposite direction. The carpet beneath their feet cushioned each step, and the air carried a subtle scent of lemon polish and clean linen from the nearby steward carts.

The men joined them, and the four walked together, their conversation easy and light.

Jason reached over and took Jules's hand. Jules instinctively started to pull away, but then she stopped, gripping his hand tightly instead.

Bethany's heart soared as she watched the moment unfold. She had always known these two were meant to be together, and now it seemed they were finally figuring it out.

When Jules glanced back at Bethany, she received a big, encouraging smile in return.

Jason, in a teasing but stern tone, asked, "Bethany, you have any issues with this?" as he held up his and Jules's joined hands.

Bethany smiled, her voice playful. "It took you long enough, both of you."

The group laughed, and as if taking a cue, Mike reached out to take Bethany's hand. Her heart fluttered as she intertwined her fingers with his.

They approached the mystery game area, now transformed into an elegant theater with a stage at its center. The lights overhead had been dimmed just slightly, and rows of chairs fanned out before the stage in neat arcs. To the right, clusters of tables accompanied by matching chairs added a lounge-like charm to the space... Plush red carpeting softened the area, and gold trim lined the columns and edges of the walls.

Chasity arrived with Dustin, clearly off duty but every bit as striking as she had been during the workout. The two walked side by side with an easy rhythm, heads tilted close in conversation.

Matt entered the room accompanied by two women.

"This is Taylor," he said, gesturing to the first woman with a warm smile, "and this is Jessica. Jessica's fiancé couldn't make it last minute, so Taylor joined her instead."

The two women stood near the side entrance, framed by the light coming in from the hallway. Taylor had long, blonde-brown hair cascading nearly to her waist, while Jessica carried herself with undeniable poise. She wore a soft lavender blouse and dark slacks, understated but elegant. Bethany noted how calm and composed Jessica seemed—her quiet confidence giving her a striking presence.

The room itself was set up like a private theater—tiered rows of comfortable chairs facing the small stage at the front, where warm lighting bathed the curtains in a soft amber glow. A few low tables lined the walls, holding drinks, game envelopes, and polished silver nameplates labeled "Character Assignments." Conversation buzzed lightly throughout the room, but there was a subtle edge of curiosity threading through it.

Liz wandered in, scanning the rows as if searching for someone familiar. The light caught in her blonde hair, and her silk scarf fluttered slightly as she moved.

Bethany waved her over, and Mike quickly stood to pull out a chair for her.

“Such a gentleman, Mike,” Liz said with a smile.

Mike said, “You’re welcome, Liz.”

As Bethany glanced around at their growing circle of old and new friends, she felt a warmth in her chest—this was turning into something truly special. The space around her, filled with soft music and the low murmur of voices, felt more like a gathering of family than a group of strangers on a ship.

Courtney stepped forward to remind everyone of safety procedures before officially kicking off the whodunit game. Her voice carried clearly through the room without needing a microphone.

Just then, a woman emerged from the bathroom, her heels clicking sharply on the tile just past the hallway doors.

“There’s a pocketbook on the floor in there!” she called out.

The room tensed slightly. Security immediately sprang into action. Two officers near the back moved swiftly but calmly toward the hallway. Mike instinctively started to rise, shoulders already angling toward the aisle.

Bethany placed a hand on his arm.

“Detective Mike, you’re going to have to let me handle this one,” she said with a sly smile.

Mike sat back down, secretly charmed by her playful use of his title.

Abigail joined Bethany in the aisle, her expression tight with nerves. Together, they walked to the bathroom door, the hallway lights cooler and brighter than the theater-style glow of the main room.

“That’s my purse!” Abigail exclaimed to Officer Bella, her voice unsteady.

Officer Bella, asked, “May I lay out the contents of the purse on the counter?”

Abigail agreed.

The bathroom was clean, its marble countertops reflecting the overhead light. As the contents were carefully spread out, it seemed that everything was still there—even her money. A few passengers in the hallway slowed their steps, trying not to stare.

But when Abigail’s eyes fell on three unfamiliar items, she stiffened and pointed: a piece of a weathered, ripped map, an old skeleton key, and a book titled *Bermuda Triangle and Its Hidden Island*.

Teaser

Would you like to join us for a teaser of the next Book???

* Teaser Territory Ahead *

Top off your drinks, darlings—and buckle up.

It's mystery time. — Liz

What you're about to read?

Just a flicker. A whisper of something bigger.

A breadcrumb trail with no guarantee of where it leads.

**If you're not ready to be teased— emotionally, mentally,
maybe even existentially—**

You've just entered a world where clues are in the details.

Come along with us... and solve this mystery.

This is your off-ramp. Still here? Good.

Welcome to the Lady Mystery Series

I'm Gigi Kingston, author of a layered mystery series that blends suspense, romance, found family, psychological twists, light mythology, humor—and a deep love for animals.

The first book, *Lady Mystery: Conspiracy at Sea*, starts with a whodunit on a cruise ship. But beneath the mystery are stories of survival, healing, and unexpected connection: from characters finding each other to rescue dogs getting second chances.

As the series unfolds, so do the deeper threats—manipulation, obsession, and blurred identity. But there's heart, too. A chosen family

grows around shared wounds, humor keeps them grounded, and the animals they protect become part of the healing journey.

20% of all book sales are donated to helping animals in need.

If you love mysteries with heart, character-driven suspense, emotional depth, and animals who matter—this series was made for you.

Follow along on gigikingstonmysteries.com for updates

Gigi Kingston Mysteries

This first book is the full voyage — over 121,000 words of layered mystery and adventure

introducing the people and places at the heart of the Lady Mystery series.

From here, the stories shift into shorter, **fast-paced thrillers (40–60,000 words)**

released regularly, each one a complete case you can read on its own.

Some will cut deep, pulling you into gut-wrenching suspense, while others bring lighter intrigue — from a Christmas caper to wedding-day mysteries that keep the celebration going.

While there may be an occasional return to the sea,

most cases unfold in Boston and the surrounding areas.

Start anywhere, but Book One gives you the full foundation that makes every story ahead even more addictive. gigikingstonmysteries.com or the QR code on the back cover

Lady Mystery Series Book 2 - Law Without Order (Exclusive Info for readers only online Case Files HQ enter all small letters natalie)

Bethany and Mike have survived the impossible together, their bond forged by fate and sharpened by trust. As they stand on the threshold of a new life, an unknown threat emerges: Natalie Greer, undercover officer and master manipulator, whose obsession with Mike knows no boundaries. With cyber secrets at her fingertips, Natalie launches a campaign of psychological and legal warfare—beginning with shaking down a vulnerable boy from Mike’s old neighborhood, extracting Mike’s new address under pressure, and securing a place in the middle of their moving day. Nobody can understand how Natalie managed to get herself invited, but her motives are darker than anyone suspects.

For Bethany, surrender is not an option. Steadfast and sharp, she quickly steps into the fight—not only to protect what she loves, but to match wits with Natalie on every front. As bizarre threats and shadowy schemes escalate, Bethany realizes she isn’t alone: an unlikely ally steps out of the chaos, joining her against Natalie’s relentless game.

Through tangled loyalties, exposed secrets, and the high-wire tension of being hunted where law offers little protection, Bethany must decode every clue, anticipate every move, and trust in her own power. Because this time, she is not only fighting for love—she’s outsmarting an enemy who underestimates her at every turn.

In *Lady Mystery Series: Law Without Order*, trust is currency, betrayal is everywhere...and only those who dare fight back will survive.