

Title: Lily of the Valley (working title)
Author: Véronique J. Morais
Genre: Historical Romance (1897) /Drama
Audience: Young Adult (15+), Adult
Status: Completed (ready to review)
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Premise:

Primrose Nightingale had her whole life planned for her. She was to marry her childhood friend, Mr. De Bordeaux in an arranged marriage. But meanwhile, Primrose only had eyes for her closest friend, Sophie Rousseau. On her 19th birthday, the arranged marriage became increasingly real, but a sudden surprise confession from Sophie caused her to freeze in fear. What to do? What is the right thing to do when you harm someone regardless of what you choose?

Comparable Titles:

- Portrait of a Lady on Fire (similar themes).
- Last Night at the Telegraph Club (character introspection).
- Fingersmith (genre match).
- Anne of Green Gables (atmosphere and prose)

Key Selling Points:

- Highly immersive prose and evocative scene-setting.
- Character-driven, coming-of-age story that includes romance, drama, and psychological suspense.
- Rich cast of memorable and intriguing characters.
- Haute Gaspésie was portrayed with historical and cultural accuracy.
- Includes poems, illustrations, and letters that deepen immersion.

Highlights:

- The descriptions of the Haute-Gaspésie region are well researched and offer a view of this region many people are not familiar with. The story also contains references to the Acadian culture and French Canada.
- The story is inspired by the queer experience of woman from the time; personal experiences also color the realism of the story.
- Although the genre is historical fiction, the writing style was purposefully toned down to be accessible to readers who are not familiar with the genre.
- The story first addresses internalized homophobia and the courage to be who you are when society won't let you, depicted with high emotional realism.
- As the story progresses, the tension builds, transforming a romantic tale into a gripping drama. The narrative leads to a high stake ending, that is hopeful, yet bitter-sweet.

Full Synopsis:

- Primrose internalizes her attraction to Sophie and hides it at all costs. Meanwhile, her family expects her to marry Charles de Bordeaux, whom she was introduced to at a young age. This is a role she's determined to fill, just to appear normal.
- On her birthday, a surprise confession from her friend destabilizes her and she's now unsure of what to do. Then, Charles de Bordeaux gets down on one knee to propose to her. In panic, she rejects him, saying that she needs more time to decide.
- As the pressure from her family intensifies, Primrose finds herself overwhelmed and runs away from home. Sophie pursues her, and tries to convince her to follow her heart.
- A series of events causes an escalation, and her family tightens the grip on an increasingly rebellious daughter. Because she eventually rejected her first suitor, they also presented her to a new suitor, who is far more controlling and domineering.

- Meanwhile the relationship between Primrose and Sophie intensifies and they promise to escape and live together. When Primrose attempts to run away, she fails, and is locked in her room by her father, who is now suspecting she might have gone insane.
- The story ends when, through the help of her mother, friends, and allies, Primrose eventually escapes, but not without hurdles. After a traumatic experience, Primrose leaves to the east, living in hiding to start a new life with Sophie.

Series Potential:

- The sequel would be a drama/thriller, and follow Primrose and Sophie, now in their 30s, discovering Women's Societies. The story would take place during the suffrage movement occurring at the start of the Edwardian era (~1905) in Montréal. It would mostly centre around the fight for women's rights and the women's only societies that formed around that time to fight for women's rights.
- Additionally, some side stories are already written, and I'm planning to write a few more about other characters, such as Lily Hill, who is a maid with selective mutism. It could be sold as a short story collection.