

"The Liars Society is all action and adrenaline. Surprising and absorbing." —E. LOCKHART, bestselling author of *We Were Liars*

THE
LIARS
SOCIETY
A SECRET ESCAPE



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
ALYSON GERBER

Praise for *The Liars Society*

“This twisty tale will keep kids guessing from beginning to end!” —Margaret Haddix, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Greystone Secrets series

“No spoilers! *The Liars Society* kept me guessing until the final twist!” —Gordon Korman, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Slugfest* and *Mixed Up*

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THE
LIARS
SOCIETY

The logo for 'THE LIARS SOCIETY' features the words in a serif font. The letter 'I' in 'LIARS' and the letter 'O' in 'SOCIETY' are replaced by a keyhole graphic. The keyhole is oriented vertically, with the keyhole opening at the top and the keyhole pin at the bottom. The keyhole is rendered in a dark, metallic color with a slight shadow, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The background is a light, textured grey.

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Braced

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Taking Up Space

The Liars Society series

The Liars Society

A Risky Game

THE
LIARS
SOCIETY



A SECRET
ESCAPE

ALYSON GERBER



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*For Joan Rivers (z) and Molly Ringwald,
who said I could shine. Your words guided me through the
darkness. Thank you.*



*Last Heir requests
the pleasure of your company*

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
Seventy-Second la Victoire

AT THE ALPINE BUNKER OF
Last Heir in St. Moritz, Switzerland

Dress: Evening dress with decorations

—CHAPTER 1—

JACK

We all have secrets. Everyone invited to this party is a liar.

When I step inside the secret society bunker, I know I'll do whatever it takes to win. Winning is power. I need power to keep the people I care about safe.

Axton nudges me. "Jack-O," he says in a proper British accent, adjusting his navy dinner jacket. Even before he opens his mouth, I know he's about to turn something arbitrary into a game. There's no one who loves to win more than my new roommate, Axton Lambert—aside from me. "Bet you a quid I can get a bubbly drink before you."

I shake my head, then push my hair out of my face. "Five quid, mate."

Axton smirks. He glances at his gold watch, which looks

sharp against his light brown skin. “You’re on.” In a flash, he takes off.

I glance around the ballroom, with its gilded ceilings and chandeliers, looking for my older brother, Ford, in the fancy crowd. He’s also studying abroad in the Alps this term at Le Institute, the same boarding school as me, my cousin Weatherby, and our friends from the Liars Society: Pres, Iris, and Harper. We’re a team. A secret society within Last Heir—the oldest, most powerful secret society in the world, which my family, the Hunts, founded.

LAST HEIR is an anagram, or words rearranged to conceal their true meaning. When you scramble the letters in LAST HEIR, you get THE LIARS. But we’re different. We’re liars who tell the truth. Or we will be as soon as we know what the truth is.

Just then a firm hand grips my shoulder.

My breath hitches. I don’t have to look up to know who’s standing over me. Ice-blue eyes. Puffed-out chest. Pockets full of magic. “We need to talk, son,” Dad says.

I grit my teeth and swallow hard against that word, *son*. It burns all the way down.

My dad, Charles Hunt, who, despite the family motto—*You are who you say you are*—is not who he says he is.

A server hands me a bubbly drink. My eyes flit across the room to Axton. He's still making his way through the crowd, empty-handed. *I won*, I think, but then I look back at Dad and my throat goes dry with fear. I hesitate before taking a sip. I wouldn't put it past someone here to poison me. It's happened before. When my dad was trying to stop Weatherby from getting into Last Heir and I accidentally drank from her water bottle.

My dad and Weatherby's dad—Charles and Yates Hunt—might hate each other, but they're working together, hiding a big secret about our family from the society, the secret to end all secrets, even though that's not allowed. If you get caught betraying Last Heir, you're dead.

I need to know what our dads are hiding—the truth about my family. It's a secret so big it's kept them both stuck together, trapped in the Hunt legacy. That secret is the reason I'm in Switzerland. The answers are hidden here. This is the only place the truth still exists. It says so in the letter we found from Grier Bishop, my dad's cousin.

Grier uncovered the big secret, locked the proof away in a Swiss safety deposit box, and came up with a plan to tell the world the truth. But before she could, she was poisoned by my grandfather—Kingman.

Grier's letter said to find CRESSIDA A. HELD at ILES DE CHARADS, and then open the Swiss safety deposit box. CRESSIDA A. HELD and ILES DE CHARADS are anagrams. Rearrange the letters and you get: CHARLES IS DEAD.

We think the real Charles Hunt died at age twelve, right before Grier, and for some reason, he was replaced with an impostor—who is my dad.

Grier made it seem like Cressida would help us learn the truth about our family. So, ever since we got here, four days ago, we've been looking for her.

Out of the corner of my eye, I spot Weatherby standing tall, her head held high and decorated with a gold headband. She's talking to her best friend from back home, Teddie, and Teddie's new roommate, HRH Princess Lola. Behind them, Axton is double-fisting ginger ales with a wide grin plastered across his face. When his eyes meet mine, I raise my fizzy glass a little higher to make sure he can see I've already won the bet. I watch his face fall in defeat.

Dad rakes his gaze over me. "When were you planning to tell me that your roommate is the Baron of Lambert?"

I frown. *He is?* "Axton is the What of What?" I ask.

"They're saying Axton is going to be the youngest

member ever appointed by the King of England to the House of Lords,” Dad explains.

I bark out a laugh. “Did you just say the House of Lords?”

“He’s royalty,” Dad chides. *He doesn’t act like it.* But I don’t say that out loud. I need Dad to think I’m on his side. It’s safer for Weatherby, Ford, and me that way. Dad will do whatever it takes to protect our family’s reputation, even if that means splitting us apart. We can’t let him. We can’t end up hating each other and trapped in a web of lies, like our dads. “A very useful contact just fell into your lap. Get to know him better.”

Axton is my friend. So, no, I’m not going to manipulate him to help Dad get what he wants. But I don’t say that out loud. Instead, I nod obediently.

Dad says, “International chemical companies run on connections with people like Axton.”

“What do you mean? Like Axton?” I ask, confused.

“He’s British rich.” Dad lowers his voice. “Too much land. Lots of access. Some power. Never enough cash. They’re always up for a trade. We love deals.” Dad slaps me hard on the back and says, “*We’re winners. We’re Hunts. We get to the top, Jack.*” A classic Hunt-ism to remind me who I am expected to be, as if I could ever forget.

“Got it.” I don’t mention that Axton and I are already friends, or at least we’re sneak-out-to-the-golf-course-for-late-night-pitch-and-putt roommates.

Axton is cool. I’m not going to use him. I won’t do anything to hurt Axton, or anyone ever. I refuse to act like Dad or the Hunts who came before me, even though I’m afraid I might be inherently like them. I’m going to escape my family legacy by making better choices.

Being a Hunt is a constant trap. Sure, *You are who you say you are*. But what that really means is: You are who *they* say you are. I’m going to be who *I* say I am.

“Now, make it happen.” Dad’s razor-sharp words slice through me.

No. Never. But before I have to respond, Dad turns away. “Cricket Lodge, my man,” he says, all buddy-buddy. *Lodge*. The Lodges are powerful. They’re competitive too. The feud between our families goes way back. I’m not sure how the rivalry started, but Hunts have always been better. We’ve always won. Dad smiles wide as he slaps the back of a half-bald guy in crumpled tails standing in front of him. “You handsome devil. Looking good for an old man. Let’s get another round of Shirley Temples and talk refrigeration.”

A moment later, the music stops. A woman in a dress the

color of snow with diamonds scattered like sparkling stars across her brown skin appears on an elevated platform in the center of the room. I can tell right away that she's important.

Everyone stops and turns to listen to her.

A gray-haired white man in a uniform who looks like a cartoon prince steps up onto the platform and stands by her side. Everything about him is out of place. He commands no respect. At best, he looks like her mascot.

"In the two-hundred-year history of Last Heir, la Victoire has been played seventy-one times. The game is how we select new members of the voting council, known as the inner circle. For the last ten years, there has been no game and no new leadership—that changes tonight."

The ballroom erupts with a wild mix of emotions that echoes off the high ceilings.

"I, Countess Barrington, have resigned my position as a member of the inner circle and in doing so reserve the right to sponsor the Seventy-Second la Victoire. There are eighteen new Heirs in our society this year. You've been invited here tonight by my request to play la Victoire. If you win the game, you'll be granted a position in the inner circle. You'll lead Last Heir," the countess says with a smile that sends

adrenaline coursing through my veins. *Like Dad*, I think. Dad is in the inner circle. “Only one of you can win, and you will win big.”

Every nerve in my body is alive and ready. If I win, I’ll have the same power as Dad. I’ll be on the inside of Last Heir. I’ll be strong enough to put a stop to Dad’s way of doing things. This game is the chance of a lifetime. I need to do whatever it takes to win.

“La Victoire is a series of clues. A scavenger hunt. The player who solves the last puzzle at the end of the game is the winner,” the countess says, as if it’s that simple. “In Last Heir, our oath, *Trust Before Truth. Truth Before Tradition*, always comes first. But during la Victoire, be careful who you trust.” Her brown eyes scan the crowd. “In addition to a voting position in Last Heir, the winner of la Victoire will receive—” I hold my breath. It’s not just me. Everyone is suddenly still and silent in anticipation. “An annual, endowed payment of five million Swiss francs—”

That’s a lot of money. Life-changing money.

There’s a low hum of murmurs all around me.

“A private jet,” she adds.

More buzzing.

The countess clears her throat, like she's not quite finished.

"There's *more*," I hear someone mutter behind me in confusion. "It's usually just the position and the money."

"Finally," the countess says, "the winner of la Victoire will be gifted the private island of ILES DE CHARADS."

I feel my pulse leap into my throat. My heart pounds all over my body, beating like a drum, a warning, because out of nowhere, Îles de Charads—the very place where Grier wrote that we could find CRESSIDA A. HELD and the answers we need—is being given away. It's up for grabs. Why now? What does this mean?

A strange feeling washes over me: This isn't a coincidence.

The cartoon prince shuffles forward. "At the end of the evening, a gong will chime, and the game will officially begin," he says. "I'd like to take a moment to thank the Countess of Barrington for giving our newest Heirs the chance to lead us."

From a few feet away, I hear frustrated grunts and scoffs from a group a year or two older than Ford. "What makes them so special?" One of them huffs.

I get why they're mad. I'd be upset too if I'd missed the chance to win.

The cartoon prince shifts uncomfortably. “This game is an important reminder of the great power and endless possibility that comes with being in Last Heir.”

“Last Heir!” most of the crowd cheers.

“Here’s to the countess.” The cartoon prince raises his crystal champagne coupe. “To Cressida Held.”

My stomach drops out from under me.

“To Cressida Held.” Everyone claps.

Adrenaline floods my body like a tidal wave, threatening to pull me under. *Cressida A. Held is here.* The person we’ve been looking for everywhere is in Last Heir. She’s standing right in front of us. She’s sponsoring la Victoire, giving away the island we were meant to find. This feels like our game to lose.

I pick hard at my nails as my eyes dart around the room, looking for the Liars Society.

I spot Pres first, towering over everyone in a hunter-green dinner jacket, snacking on what looks like a hunk of cheese. Iris stands next to him. She blinks deliberately, biting down on her red-stained lips, but I can see the wheels in her brain are already spinning. I can’t help how much I like that about her. Harper is with them too, slowly twirling a strand of her shiny caramel hair in a tight coil

around her finger. Her tell that she's freaking out.

When I look up, Ford is walking toward me, eyes wide and glowing. I follow his gaze and shift my attention to Weatherby. For the first time since my dad tried to have her killed, a hopeful smile flashes across her face. I can tell by the alert look in her eyes that she's determined to win. She'll get to the top. She's a Hunt. For better or worse, Weatherby, Ford, and I all are.

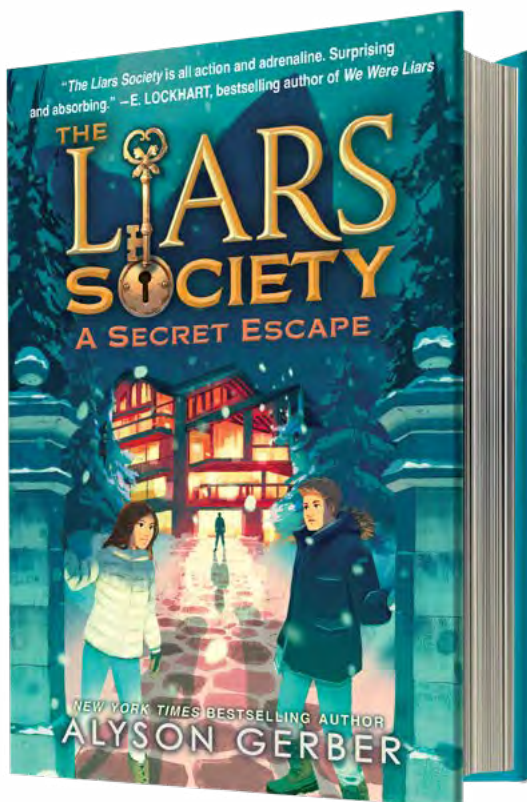
This is our chance to find out the truth about our family and change our legacy.

Before I realize it, I'm smiling back at Weatherby.

We're beaming at the possibility of winning big—of winning everything.

Except this time only one of us can win.

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