



# Tall, Dark, and Deported

*Bru Baker*

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## **Tall, Dark, and Deported** Bru Baker

Crossing the border into love.

Snap decisions and misguided ideas bring Portuguese national Mateus Fontes and businessman Crawford Hargrave together at the Canadian border crossing.

Mateus is caught in a catch-22. With his almost-expired tourist visa, entrance to Canada is denied, but the US won't let him back in either. Crawford thinks he's solved things when he tells the border agent they're engaged, and it works—except now they have to actually get married before either of them can get back into the United States. But Crawford has been burned by marriage once, and he's determined not to make that mistake again.

Neither of them expects real feelings to bloom out of their fake marriage, but they do. And the two of them have to learn how to be honest with each other to make things work, which is especially hard when their entire marriage is based on lies.

## **Tall, Dark, and Deported Details**

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Author : Bru Baker

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# From Reader Review Tall, Dark, and Deported for online ebook

SheReadsALot says

A tag team review with Sara

**4.5 HEARTS**--And now I have another book to add to my top favorites Dreamspun Desires list!

I've been fluffed. Pour it all over my face, baby. Just watch me melt.

Mateus is a Portuguese botanist who is staying with his brother and pregnant sister-in-law on their orchard in Washington state. Mateus is helping with his family's failing orchard and wants to stay in America. Unfortunately, he has an expiring tourist visa and searched online for a scheme to stay in the country: go to Canada, get his visa stamped and reset and return to America for another 3 months. Sounds too good to be true?

It's because it is.

Luckily, older stoic boutique hotel auditor/ businessman Crawford is being forced to Canada for work. His boss is sending him to the chain's failing Vancouver hotel for the next two weeks... along with Crawford's ex-husband. The bitter divorce happened three years ago and he's still jaded from his cheating ex. He doesn't believe love exists.

Thanks to a plane delay in Seattle, love weary Crawford meets Mateus and the connection is imminent. They strike up a conversation and are just vibing off each other over Auntie Anne's pretzel nuggets out of all things. The delay becomes a cancelled flight and the new acquaintances are thrown together through a series of events. And events get crazier as an impromptu drive to the Canadian border becomes Mateus not being able to cross either side of the border.

Ring a ling ling, did someone call a knight in shining armor?

Crawford obviously heard the call and he rescues Mateus.

Older, jaded hero meets younger loyal family man who just wants to stay and help the orchard...

And then a fake marriage trope is added to help save the day.

Those tropes were a cracky fluff jackpot and I... ate... it... up!

Bru Baker wrote fleshed out main characters in Crawford and Mateus. She built a solid foundation by showcasing a glimpse of their daily lives. Crawford is a point where he's not exactly happy, his only family connection a brother and nephew he helped raise are going to move away. So there is nothing really holding him in Los Angeles. And Mateus wants to leave Portugal to help out with his only sibling's growing family. All the characters read like real people.

The cracky fluff button was engaged once the fake marriage to get a visa to stay in the USA came up. But reading how Crawford is, it worked. The two get married and thankfully the author showed the real side of marrying an immigrant...it's not as easy as they originally thought. The couple stays in Canada for two weeks due to Crawford's job. And we even get to experience his ex-husband, a good antagonist that didn't overtake the plot with obscene dramatics.

The bread and butter of the story is the undeniable, easy connection Crawford and Mateus have. The attraction is there and it's a slow burn. Crawford being a knight in shining armor tries to be noble and a gentleman. His heart is iced in the middle... good thing Mateus knows to make him melt.

There is only one sexy moment throughout the entire story. But the sexual tension was written strongly and was well paced. I lived for each kiss. **Were there times that I wanted to knock Crawford in the back of the head?** Yep... he's a stubborn one. And has bad Tim Hortons judgement. (I'm still trying not to hold it against him) Other than that, he's a dream guy, as is Mateus.

The story is split between Vancouver and Washington. And even when apart, they're still connected. And when the sexual tension finally comes to a melting point. Let's just say it was a swoon worthy moment.

And the last 5% of the story?

So damn romantic, I want to get drunk off the cracky fluff. \*swoons\* \*gulps\*

Recommended for fans of the Dreamspun Desires line, this is definitely not one to skip. Crawford and Mateus as a couple left a lasting impression from the Dreamspun Desires leading men I've read so far.

Not my first time reading this author, but I enjoy the way she writes her characters a lot. And if you're a fan of any of the tropes I mentioned, get ready for quality cracky fluff.

What a sweet treat!

*A copy provided for an honest review.*

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## **Pjm12 says**

Oh this was just swoon and fluff and sweet, and maybe its pacing was a little unbalanced, but I did like the way these two found each other.

Just what I needed when I read it.

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## **Morgan Skye says**

This is a very, very sweet book that fits the “trope” perfectly.

If you’ve been reading all or most of the books in the Dreamspun series – this reminds me a lot of Jacob Flores’ book Suddenly Yours. Crawford doesn’t want to muddy the waters with sex so they agree (although Mateus is reluctant) to be celibate while they remain married. In that sense, most of the relationship building is strictly platonic and it really gives the story that “Harlequin Romance” feel – where the two romantic leads pine for one another longingly for most of the book as they slowly get to know one another.

If you enjoyed Suddenly Yours, you’ll love this as much. The character development is well done and though I didn’t always like how Davis – the ex- played such a prominent role – I felt most of this was solid, character driven romance with a very, very light dash of sexual tension.

Highly enjoyable!

3.75 (rounded to 4 ) of 5 stars

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## **Ami says**

Well, I liked the first half -- I thought the meeting at the airport was cute, in that strangers-who-bonded-over-delayed-flight kind of way.

But after they got married and had to stay together while Crawford was working with his ex, it became rather mundane. Plus the ending felt rushed; some of the timelines were fast-forwarded that I felt like I missing important moments of them falling in love.

I did love Crawford's relationship with his older brother and nephew though :)

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## **Natalie says**

### **Sweet take on marriage of convenience.**

3.5 stars. I did end up enjoying this quite a bit, partly because it was also a group read. It was a little frustrating in parts but overall, was done well. Crawford and Mateus were very believable when the situation came up at the border, even though it seems quite outrageous. But Crawford had such a disastrous first marriage with Davis, he was certain it would really mean nothing. Mateus had a very different viewpoint on marriage but was willing to accept the help Crawford gave him, for the sake of his brother and sister in law.

I was rather disappointed that the situation between Davis and Crawford wasn't resolved better. Crawford's reactions and Mateus opinions about were emphasized quite a bit but never followed up on. On the other hand, I could appreciate that there was no OTT confrontation. So, I was satisfied with the direction until the last 20% or so. I felt the final resolutions were too abrupt. There was too much of the lack of communication cliché that I dislike. I wanted more connection and conversation between the couple prior to the conclusion.

They never discussed any of the truly important matters until the very end, especially when there had been such extensive planning leading up to the event.

I want to mention that it's quite low steam, since some people think that's a deal breaker. I really didn't miss it, although I certainly wouldn't have minded one more scene at the very end. With more dialogue first!

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## **Sandra says**

This is a really cute and sweet romance using the fake-marriage-for-reasons trope, by pairing a young, kind and hard-working immigrant to the US with a somewhat jaded, slightly older businessman with a heart of gold he has protected behind some massive walls.

Hoping to renew his tourist visa by making a quick dash into Canada, so he can stay and help his brother and sister-in-law with their orchard, Mateus is at the airport waiting for his flight, when he happens to meet Crawford, who's waiting for the same flight, having been sent to Vancouver by his boss to help a failing hotel.

When their flight is cancelled, Crawford offers to rent a car and drive the two of them across the border to Vancouver. Knowing his visa is about to expire, and not willing to lose any time, Mateus agrees.

At the border, Mateus is denied entry into Canada since his US visa is about to expire, and then cannot return to the US, because his visa is about to expire. Seeing the young man in limbo and looking so scared to be deported back to Portugal, Crawford impulsively lies and proclaims Mateus his fiancée, on their way to be married in Vancouver.

And now they're stuck. Obviously, for both of them to return to the US and not be in huge trouble, they have to get married. And they do. They even share a room, with one of them sleeping in the bed, and the other taking the couch, and the hotel's management giving them the best suite, and Crawford's asshole ex-husband a thorn in his side, and Mateus being ever so sweet and wonderful and supportive of his new husband, and... well, let it suffice to tell you that I had a blast reading this.

And there are some quieter, angstier moments too. Both Mateus and Crawford develop feelings rather quickly, but neither believes the other to return them, and neither has the guts to bring it up. Communication, they're a-lacking.

Of course, upon their return to the US as newlyweds, Immigration has a few questions, and oh don't you know, they're going to make sure that Mateus and Crawford aren't fake-married, but then kissing happens and the border agent is all swoony and happy (which, you know, in the current climate, bwahahahaha, yeah, right), but this is a Dreamspun Desires romance, and of course there's a HEA in which they both get exactly what they never knew they always wanted.

I really dig this author's writing style. Full of emotions, but not purple, and she can really write the UST. The longing. The wanting, the needing - it all comes across in her words. The backstories for both men were well-crafted and believable, and, considering most of the books in this series tend to be slightly OTT, also rather reasonable. I loved Mateus from the start, his strong convictions, and his humble and kind demeanor, and Crawford won me over too eventually.

This was lovely. Super cute, super fun, and super sweet. I just adore this series, and I adored this book.

Recommended.

\*\* I received a free copy of this book from its publisher. A positive review was not promised in return. \*\*

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### Anke says

Although the books I've read by this author were 2 or 3\*, this blurb sounds interesting, so I might give it a try.

Not full 4 stars, but more than the other 3\* reads by this author.

The blurb was interesting enough to want me to read it and even pre-order it. So, while knowing what this story was about, I was still astonished that everything was based on this visa problem, when in fact Mateus was from Lisbon, so from Europe and we Europeans are under this visa waiver thingy and therefore Mateus shouldn't have any problems entering Canada, at all.

Although having a hard time ignoring that, the story progressed very entertaining, until about 50% or so. Then somehow it lost its steam; the whole thing was told with glimpses, highlights, whatever you want to call it. I had the feeling as if the important things were missing. That got more disturbing when they got to the orchard. I totally missed some fleshing out, these bare bones weren't enough for me.

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### ~☆~Dœni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~☆~ says

I am infamous for craving the sweet & fluffy. I tend to shy away from serious angst because real life is angsty enough. But I also like substance in my stories, some kind of conflict, a well-earned HEA, and smokin' hot sex.

***Tall, Dark, and Deported* is seriously sweet, like WHOA, sugar-coma-inducing kind of sweet, but conflict? Substance? Sex? Not so much.**

Mateus's U.S. visa expires in two days. He's stuck in limbo between the Canadian and American borders and is about to be arrested and deported. Until Crawford, who met Mateus two eye blinks ago, steps in.

Crawford's marriage fell apart three years ago when his ex moved to Europe with nary a goodbye. Crawford doesn't believe in love and commitment, so he figures he might as well help Mateus out by marrying him. That's a hell of a good deed!

I suspended my disbelief though, because FICTION; it's a thing.

I enjoyed the first half of the story. Both Mateus and Crawford are close to their families, and they have some great conversations. **They are . . . well, they're CUTE together. But that SPARK of sexual curiosity was sadly lacking.**

I get that the Dreamspun Desires series is meant to be more nice than naughty, although Eli Easton's *Snowblind* was pretty damn hot. This book, however, is positively chaste. There are a couple kisses and one rub-off-on-each-other scene in a barn. And that's all she wrote.

At the very end, Crawford tells Mateus he can't wait to consummate the marriage. I was all, YES, bring IT, but the book ENDS like two sentences later.

Oh, come ON! These guys are ADULTS. I found it hard to believe they would be so virginal and innocent.

If you're looking for a cotton candy kind of story with ZERO angst and ZERO steam, you might like this one. It's an easy read with some seriously adorable moments and a nice cast of supporting characters (except Crawford's ex; he was OTT obnoxious). Unfortunately, I was underwhelmed.

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## **Tess says**

### **3.75 stars**

This was a sweet story and very much on par (in terms of tropey-ness) with other Dreamspun Desires books. The trope: fake marriage - and an age gap. The ex was a little OTT but, again, similar to other books in this series. I liked that this was set in Canada, but a little tip to the author: the Bay is not actually a high-end designer store!

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## **Leaundra says**

This was very sweet. I loved how they met and how they fell in love. I really love these books. It's always cool to read them because they always take me back.

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## **\*~\*~\*Hyperion & Interabang\*~\*~\* says**

Nope. Didn't like it. Wishy washy. Wasted potential. Absolutely NO chemistry; not where the MCs were concerned, and not where the book and I were concerned.

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## **Lissa says**

I'm kind of a sucker for fake relationships turning real, so let us just say that this book was right up my alley. ;)

Crawford is a stressed out, overworked internal auditor who is being sent to Vancouver to work with his slimy ex, Davis, who basically married him to get ahead in the company and left him after admitting that he'd cheated on Crawford pretty much every time he left town for a business trip. Hurt even three (I think?) years later, Crawford doesn't believe in love anymore. Mateus is a botanist who is originally from Portugal, but he came to the United States to help his brother, Duarte, and his pregnant sister-in-law, Bree, with their orchard. His passport is about to expire, so he plans on hopping over to Canada to trigger an automatic renewal and spend the next three months in the United States until his brother can officially afford to hire him, which will secure Mateus a work visa. Crawford and Mateus meet at the airport, and when their flight is canceled, they decide to drive to Vancouver instead. But things don't go as Mateus planned them at the border; stuck in legal limbo, he can't enter Canada or the United States without being deported - until Crawford lies and says that Mateus is his fiance, which sets up their fake marriage.

Okay, yes, it does take a bit of a leap of faith to buy into this story line - but to be honest, I am not reading these types of books for strict realism. ;) I am reading them because I find them enjoyable, and as I already said, I LOVE this trope, so I really liked the set up. Both Crawford and Mateus were great characters; I enjoyed them both equally. I could really relate to Crawford, the bitter and jaded one, who had been used and therefore had turned his back on allowing anyone else into his life. And Mateus was the perfect person for Crawford - kind and honest (except about the fake marriage thing when it came to the border agents, I guess, haha).

The ending did feel a bit rushed, and I felt like this was probably due to the word count limits for this line. Honestly, my biggest complaint about this book is that I want MOAR. More Mateus, more Crawford, and definitely more Mateus-and-Crawford. I want a sequel that shows them being all adorable and in love and happy. I want to see Mateus meet his niece and Crawford (view spoiler) and see the orchard really take off and be successful.

Damn it, Bru Baker; you made me feel. And that is not an easy undertaking. ;)

I loved this book, loved this story, loved this romance, and just felt super squishily happy while reading it. It's a great feel-good romance, and that was exactly what I was after when I picked it up. I believe that this is the first book I've read by this author, but it definitely won't be the last!

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## **Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says**

### **This is some extra dreamy Dreamspun Cracky Fluff!**

Fake to real relationships is one of my most favoritest tropes ever. I also really like when there's an element of kismet in my couples. Both were utilized in *Tall, Dark and Deported* which made for a happy Cupcake.

Crawford and Mateus meet at SeaTac airport when their flight to Vancouver is delayed. The sparks start flying over pretzel bites and when the flight gets cancelled they decide to just drive it. Only they get to the border and things don't go as planned. Of course they don't.

A quickie marriage later and they're staying at the swanky hotel Crawford has been sent to figure out why it's hemorrhaging money. And here comes the UST.

Crawford has been married before **TO A DICK!** It's a good thing I drive like the wind so I'm pretty sure no one saw me flipping and telling off his DICK of an ex. Did I mention the guy's a dick? And their boss is making them work together because they "make a good team". Dick.

It's entirely possible I narrowly missed a visit to a padded cell because there were some batshit antics happening inside my vehicle.

I digress.

Crawford was third degree burned by marriage and now is a card carrying member of #TeamLoveIsACrock. They don't fall in *instalove* but Mateus is hard to resist with his tall, dark and handsomeness not to mention his stupid sexy accent.

As attracted to each other as they are, and they are which is clear to see FROM SPACE or by way of having both of their perspectives (potato, potahto), but they cannot find an adult conversation with a GPS, a map and Alexa walking them through the process step by step. Could they not see the heart showers? Smell the sweet scent of romance in the air? How they could've missed that the cosmos is doing everything short of duct taping them together to see them that way forever-n-ever is beyond me. I couldn't believe how long this went on. They kiss, they frot, they get to know each other more and more, Crawford even buys the house next door and did I mention all the UST and longing? Still nothing! They never do! There is a grand gesture in the last chapter where they declare their feels for one another but nary a pow wow was had.

I hope they making working on using their words a priority in their marriage because Holy Communication Failure, Batman!

Dorian Bane did a great job with the voices, keeping the MCs distinct throughout and infusing them with feeling and emotion. Some of the secondary characters sounded alike but I wasn't bothered by that. And he's still got that rumble thing happening that I dig so all was well.

Despite the piss poor communication skills this was still highly enjoyable for me. I liked both the characters and how it all came out, thus I would recommend to fans of the series.

*A review copy was provided.*

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## Sara says

*A Tag Team Review with SRAL!*

### 5 Hearts

This book right here is what I love about romance and why I am hooked on the Dreamspun series. I adored this story, my first from the author and I am writing this with a perma grin on my face because I can't stop smiling. Goodness. This was delicious!

Crawford Hargrave is a serious man. He's serious about his job, his family and about being as far away from his cheating ex-husband, Davis that he possibly can be. But when his boss assigns Crawford to do an audit on a flagship hotel in Canada and to work with Davis, Crawford has to agree or lose his job. He hates the fact that he will be there for at least two weeks working with Davis and also that he will be away from his brother Adam and his nephew Brandon whom he is close with. When Adam drops a bomb on Crawford right before he leaves, Crawford heads into his assignment with basically, nothing to lose.

Mateus Fontes is a family man, a man who though has a degree in Botany and his own vineyard back in Portugal has been working on his brother's orchard in Washington on a tourist visa and plans to trick the immigration system so he can stay longer. Mateus' brother and sister in law love him staying and don't want him to get in trouble with the law but he assures them, a simple trip to Vancouver and back to Seattle in a day will reset his tourist visa and give them time to ready the orchard properly so they can hire Mateus. With nothing for him in Portugal and a life ahead of him in Washington, he heads to the airport for his round trip with nothing holding him back.

Told from the dual POV of our MC's the men meet as their shared flight to Vancouver is delayed and then canceled. Over coffee and pretzels, the men begin to get to know one another and on a whim, Crawford suggests they rent a car and drive up to Vancouver so that they can get Mateus to his flight on time and kill a few birds on the trip while showing Mateus a few touristy spots he's never seen.

Oh. Em. Gee. But this was freaking adorable. I am such a sucker for the fake marriage trope and when the men reach the border to Canada and the whole "Actually, we are engaged" deal happened I was giddy. When they men find out that they have to get married right away, I was stupidly happy and then, when they learn Mateus cannot return to the United States without Crawford meaning they would have to spend Crawford's work trip together, at the hotel, pretending to be married, I was falling off my chair because my knees were weak with all that was gonna happen.

To say this romance is a slow burn is putting it lightly but it burns with such an undertone of sensuality and UST that I would allow myself to be burned by it repeatedly.

Crawford and Mateus have an instant connection and amazing chemistry that their relationship from marriage to crush to friendship and more, came off the page with such emotions that I spend at least the last 50% of the book with my hand to my chest, sighing with tears in my eyes. These two want so much but with a relationship, a marriage based on a lie they tread the waters of want so carefully as to not take advantage of one another. But I kept telling them it was okay, go on and do it because we all want it to happen. Yes, I was that involved in the story that my opinion mattered regardless if the newlyweds were aware of it on the page.  
\*shrugs\*

Goodness but this was so good. It was gooey in the right places with the perfect amount of jealousy sprinkled in to allow the men to get possessive. Mateus and how he deals with Davis were a pure joy to read and Crawford's natural and spontaneous instinct when it comes to Mateus is swoon worthy. Even though there are road bumps these men face along the way, they come to a wonderful conclusion and connection that had me in happy tears at my desk.

That end? Perfect and swoon worthy and just cinematic and so damn romantic.

Yup, this one was so good and I am so happy I read it.

Let me go attempt to wipe this grin off my face now.

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### **Serena Yates says**

You've got to love a fake marriage that turns into more, right? I know, a lot depends on the reasons behind it, and they are more fun in fiction than they are in reality. But personally, I could understand Crawford's decision to tell the border agents he was engaged to Mateus, to save Mateus from being arrested and sent to an immigrant detention center, and instead enable him to get back into the US. Only – it isn't as easy as it looks. First, the border agents insist on the two men getting married before allowing them back into the US. Second, the last thing Crawford wants is to get married again; he's been there, has done it, and has the emotional scars to show for it. Quite a pickle these two have gotten themselves into, and that's after only about a quarter into the novel. I couldn't wait to see what the author would come up with for the remainder of the story and how Mateus and Crawford were going to deal with married life!

Crawford is a man with a past, and he is in trouble from the moment his boss decides to send him to Canada to solve the problems one of their resorts is having – forcing Crawford to work with his ex-husband who was promoted into the European division, a promotion that broke up their marriage. Crawford has no way of avoiding the assignment without endangering his career, so he reluctantly makes the trip. But nothing goes as he expects, from the canceled flight to meeting a gorgeous stranger, and, instead of a boring business trip, Crawford is in for the adventure of his life.

Mateus is in the Pacific Northwest to help out in his brother's orchard since his sister-in-law is pregnant. All he has is a tourist visa, he doesn't want to leave his brother in the lurch, and he thinks he can re-up his tourist visa by traveling to Canada, then return to the US with another three months to stay. He leaves it to the last moment, and with only two days to spare by the time he travels and a lack of understanding about Canadian visa requirements, I guess he is pretty much asking for trouble.

The two men meet before boarding the flight that ends up canceled, and they are interested in each other. I think that without the incident at the border that follows their renting a car so Mateus can make it on time, and Crawford's protectiveness taking over, their relationship might have developed along a more standard path. The fact that they have to get married in a rush interferes with all of that and creates sort of a pressure-cooker relationship-wise that I found fascinating to watch. Between that and the many interesting secondary

characters with their subplots, 'Tall, Dark, and Deported' is a great adventure as well as an unusual romance.

If you like men who fall in love despite the stressful circumstances they find themselves in, if you want to see a businessman who thinks his career is the most important thing in his life come to his senses, and if you're looking for an entertaining, sometimes suspenseful, and emotionally intense read, I can definitely recommend this novel.

NOTE: This book was provided by Dreamspinner Press for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

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