Interview: Mimi Matthews, author of 'The Lost Letter'

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By: **Joyce Lamb** | *September 19, 2017 12:01 am*

Mimi Matthews

Joyce: Welcome to HEA, Mimi! Please tell us a bit about your new release, *The Lost Letter*.

Mimi: Hi, Joyce! My new novel, *The Lost Letter*, is a *Beauty and the Beast*-inspired Victorian love story. Set in England in 1860, it features an impoverished governess who is unexpectedly reunited with the now disfigured earl who broke her heart three years before. Both have been tragically altered by time and circumstance. And both believe they have lost their chance at a happily-ever-after. At its core, it's a story of hardship, resiliency and a love that endured when all hope was gone.

Joyce: What inspires your book ideas?

Mimi: Anything and everything. However, the biggest source of inspiration for me comes from my research. It's while researching for my non-fiction history projects that I discover interesting tidbits about things that happened in the Victorian era, many of which find their way into my stories. I also draw inspiration from 19th-century novels by authors like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters. For *The Lost Letter* in particular, classic Victorian literature definitely played a role in shaping the flow and style of the story.

Joyce: Do you write by the seat of your pants, or do you carefully plot your stories?

Mimi: Unfortunately, I am more of a pantster than a plotter. My story ideas often start with a disconnected scene around which I end up building the rest of the novel. I'm not

always sure where the story will end up. It's usually the characters who show me the way. That said, I do try to plot just enough so that critical scenes happen at regular intervals in the story.

Joyce: Would you like to share a favorite moment from your writing career?

Mimi: I wrote my first book when I was just a teenager. It was a YA novel that ended up landing me an agent — the late, great Helen McGrath. I was only 18 when I signed the contract for her to represent me. It was one of the most exciting things that had ever happened to me. As a young person with no experience in the book industry (or with boilerplate language), the contract clause about film rights nearly sent me into a swoon. In the end, that YA novel didn't sell, but Helen kept me under contract until the time of her death, many years later. After finishing college and law school, I finally wrote my next novel, but by that time, she was gone and I had to sign on with a new literary agent. That was exciting, too, but nothing could ever replicate the pulse-pounding feeling I had when I signed that first contract!

Joyce: What activity interferes with your writing schedule?

Mimi: Research is probably the biggest time suck when I'm writing. I may stop to research a particular fact for a novel and, next thing I know, it's hours later and I'm immersed in some obscure corner of Victorian history. I also spend far too much time reading the news, reading my e-mails, reading tweets and — on occasion — even stopping to read a book.

Joyce: Do you have a pet that hangs out with you while you're working?

Mimi's cats and dogs are always supportive of her writing … well, some of them.

Mimi: Always! I have two Shelties, two Siamese cats and an Andalusian horse. My horse doesn't live in the house, thank goodness, but my dogs and cats are my constant companions while I'm writing. My elderly blue-point Siamese, Sapphire, often sleeps on my lap while I type, and my elderly Sheltie, Ash, usually sleeps at my feet. My younger

cat, Marzipan, and my 7-month-old Sheltie puppy, Stella, are somewhat less supportive. They have better things to do than watch me write (or so they tell me).

Joyce: What would be your dream vacation?

Mimi: Reading a book on the beach at Hanalei Bay in Hawaii sounds pretty great right about now. It's one of the most beautiful places on earth. England is another top vacation pick of mine. I was in Somerset many years ago to do some cross-country horseback riding. There was a little village there with a stone church and a shop that sold Cornish pasties. It was like falling through a time portal into the 19th century. For someone who loves Victorian history, it doesn't get much better.

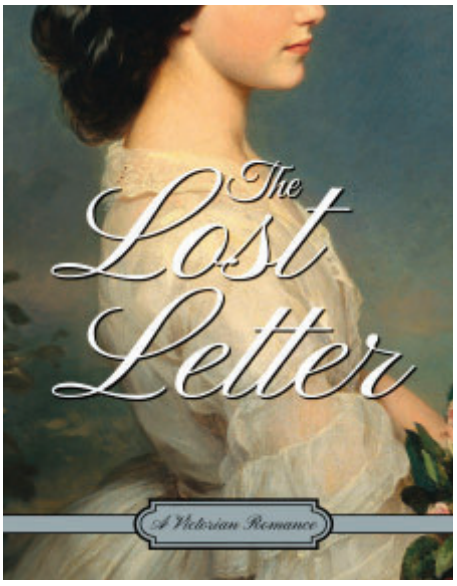
Joyce: What are you working on now?

Mimi: I write both historical non-fiction and Victorian romance, so I'm always working on something. I currently have three books coming out in quick succession. The first one is a non-fiction history book titled *The Pug Who Bit Napoleon: Animal Tales of the 18th & 19th Centuries*. It will be released by Pen & Sword Books (U.K.) on Nov. 30. My next non-fiction book, *A Victorian Lady's Guide to Fashion and Beauty*, will be released by Pen & Sword in July of 2018. As for fiction, I'm very excited about my next Victorian romance novel, *The Viscount and the Vicar's Daughter*. It should be released in early 2018.

Joyce: Do you have anything to add?

Mimi: Only a huge thank you to you for having me as a guest on the HEA blog! It's been a real pleasure to stop by for a visit.

Joyce: Thanks, Mimi!



About *The Lost Letter*:

A Proud Beauty

Society beauty Sylvia Stafford is far too pragmatic to pine. When the tragic death of her gamester father leaves her destitute and alone, she finds work as a governess in a merchant's household in Cheapside. Isolated from the fashionable acquaintance of her youth, she resigns herself to lonely spinsterhood…until a mysterious visitor convinces her to temporarily return to her former life—and her former love.

A Scarred Beast

Colonel Sebastian Conrad is no longer the dashing cavalry officer Sylvia once fell in love with. Badly scarred during the Sepoy Rebellion, he has withdrawn to his estate in rural Hertfordshire where he lives in near complete seclusion. Brooding and tormented, he cares nothing for the earldom he has inherited—and even less for the faithless beauty who rejected him three years before.

A Second Chance

A week together in the remote Victorian countryside is the last thing either of them ever wanted. But when fate intervenes to reunite them, will a beastly earl and an impoverished beauty finally find their happily ever after? Or are some fairy-tale endings simply not meant to be?

About Mimi

Mimi Matthews writes both historical non-fiction and traditional historical romances set in Victorian England. Her articles on nineteenth century history have been published on various academic and history sites, including the Victorian Web and the Journal of Victorian Culture, and are also syndicated weekly at BUST Magazine. In her other life, Mimi is an attorney with both a Juris Doctor and a bachelor of arts in English literature. She resides in California with her family, which includes an Andalusian dressage horse, two Shelties and two Siamese cats.

Find out more at www.mimimatthews.com.

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