



7-21 September, 2017

Letter from the Author

Once Lost by Ber Carroll

Dear Reader,

I am truly delighted to participate in this year's Together We Read program. You may be interested to know that *Once Lost* was part inspired by a magazine article about missing mothers. The article talked about three separate cases, three ordinary mothers who had vanished without explanation, leaving behind a plethora of unanswered questions and the shattered lives of those who had loved them. I felt quite overwhelmed by the scale of the tragedy, for the mothers themselves and everything they had missed out on – birthdays, graduations, weddings, grandchildren – and for their family and friends and the debilitating uncertainty that they were still living with, years later.

I read the article again, and again, trawling for clues as to what might have really happened to these women. One of the cases in particular seemed to have so much conflicting evidence. I tried to rationalise the woman's odd behaviour before she went missing, and to find some explanation for why she might want to escape, or not be totally honest with her family. The most disturbing thing was that I couldn't quite shake the deep-down feeling that this particular woman was alive, and there was a reason – a vital clue that her family and the police had missed – for her disappearance.

Experts say that family members experience trauma (as opposed to grief) when confronted with unresolved loss and I tried to convey that sense of trauma, as well as the ongoing torment of not knowing what happened, or how to feel about it. It seems fitting that I wrote most of the novel in a state of uncertainty myself: I didn't know where the story was leading or how it would end. After many months, I eventually arrived at a resolution, a degree of closure for the characters involved, something that has been denied to the families of those three beautiful women who smiled at me from the pages of that magazine.

I hope that you enjoy *Once Lost*. It was such an emotional book to write and has a special place in my heart.

Warmest wishes,
Ber Carroll