



## Love's First Bloom

*Delia Parr*

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## **Love's First Bloom** Delia Parr

Ruth Livingstone's life changes drastically the day her father puts a young child in her arms and sends her to a small village in New Jersey under an assumed name. There Ruth pretends to be a widow and quietly secludes herself until her father is acquitted of a crime. But with the emergence of the penny press, the imagination of the reading public is stirred, and her father's trial stands center stage. Asher Tripp is the brash newspaperman who determines that this case is the event he can use to redeem himself as a journalist.

Ruth finds solace tending a garden along the banks of the Toms River--a place where she can find a measure of peace in the midst of the sorrow that continues to build. It is also here that Asher Tripp finds a temporary residence, all in an attempt to discover if the lovely creature known as Widow Malloy is truly Ruth Livingstone, the woman every newspaper has been looking for. Love begins to slowly bloom...but is the affection they share strong enough to withstand the secrets that separate them?

## **Love's First Bloom Details**

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Author : Delia Parr

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## From Reader Review Love's First Bloom for online ebook

### Yiya says

Ruth, a minister's daughter, sees her life changing when, without explanation, her father puts her in a carriage, hands her a baby and sends her to live with a family, part of the net supporting his ministry - relocating prostitutes in new areas, so that they can begin a new life after making a decision for Christ, without a tinted reputation. She has always been a good daughter and a godly woman, but now, she is just another prostitute needing a new beginning. Only after getting to her new house, does she realize that her beloved father was just trying to keep her safe; he is thought to be involved in a woman's death, and is even blamed for her "disappearance." Ruth must go on without him and become a mother to little L; her life is not easy anymore, but she finds strength and hope in her faith.

To make things more complicated, and because of the kind of ministry her father had, journalists from all the known papers are sent out to find her. Asher is one of them. He is coming back to business after a two-year hiatus; he needs his reputation back and prove he is worthy of writing for the family paper. He is the first to find Ruth, and decides to impersonate a sick man, ready to help when needed, in order to move her to compassion and have his story.

This one of the books I personally classify as good for spending an evening with, and is very easy to read; despite an interesting twist that reveals a secret in Ruth's family, the ending is highly predictable - this is why I decided not to include more information about the book itself in this review. However, it is founded on good Christian principles, like the unconditional love that would accept any one, despite the kind of life or hardships people have gone through. Ruth and Asher learn that true love only flourishes in truth, understanding that "the path chooses for each of us to follow isn't always an easy one, but we all have to decide whether or not we're willing to trust in His wisdom and embrace His will." The way Delia Parr describes their changes is so descriptive that it becomes personal and invites the reader to see people from a different perspective and challenges to not forget that being a Christian is being a server whose life flourishes in obedience to God.

A highly recommendable book for anyone who likes romantic novels.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from Bethany House Publishers in exchange for a review. This has not influenced my opinion on the book nor on the author.

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### Loretta says

Well, this was definitely a roller-coaster of emotions. Grief of losing a loved one is no small matter. It is even harder when there isn't anyone to share that burden with. This tale of a good man charged with the murder of a Lady of the Evening is tragic and tugs at the heart strings. I think that Ruth was very brave to take on the burden while holding on to her faith. While the ending was wrapped up way too neatly for the flow of the rest of the book, I am very pleased with this tale of good people working towards saving those that society has turned their backs on. Definitely a story of hope. :)

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## April says

LOVE'S FIRST BLOOM by Delia Parr is a inspirational historical fiction set in 1838 New York City. It is well written with depth, details and the characters are enchanting, and enduring. It has romance, forgiveness, hope, faith, love, heartache, secrets, tragedy, turbulent times, injustice, web of deception, false identity, and the danger of media coverage. The characters are engaging, timid, learning to trust, and moving along with their lives ever through tragedy. The hero, Jake, is a newspaperman, trying to redeem himself with his brother, knows the true identity of the Widow Malloy and finds himself falling in love with her and her child. The heroine, Ruth, is the daughter of the Rev. Livingstone, who is charged with the death of a prostitute. She is sent away by her father with the young child of the prostitute with a false identity to protect her and the child. She is accepted into a network of believers of Rev. Livingstone's work with prostitutes. There she assumes the identity of the Widow Malloy with her child, Lily. She meets Jake, who is also leading a false identity. He is calming to be a carpenter. He soon becomes attached to Ruth and Lily. He will do what he has to to protect her and her secret. But when the truth comes to light, will she truly believe he loves her or will he betray her? This is a heart felt story of how the newspaper twists things to their own use, to sale more paper. Not really caring who is hurt or why. Along the way Ruth will learn secrets of her father she never knew of him, but she keeps her faith. Will new love survive the betrayal? This is a story to read it is heartwarming to know true love can prevail. This book was received for the purpose of review from the publisher and details can be found at Bethany House Publishers and My Book Addiction and More.

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## Renee says

Having loved Hearts Awakening I was so excited to read Delia's next book. I'm sorry to say that, for me, it didn't live up to my expectations despite it's beautiful cover. I really enjoy a good love story but it just wasn't there for me in this book. Sure, the characters were nice but I just did not feel the connection between Ruth and Jake. For one thing their entire relationship was based on secrets, both constantly had to hide their pasts. I did like that the characters learned to forgive one another and take it to the next level so to speak but it did all seem to come together too quickly. I almost felt like this book needed 100 more pages just to make Jake and Ruth's love more authentic. I can't say much more about that part of the story so I'll go on to the other characters in the book!

The secondary characters in Love's First Bloom were terrific! I loved little Lily, she was so precocious, always wanting to bath and in pursuit of that "bath" getting into a few scrapes. I do like stories where kids have a part in bringing couple's together and we get a little bit of that with this book. Phanaby and Elias were terrific too, they were so caring and helpful to Lily and Ruth despite what they thought they knew about Ruth's past.

I do enjoy Ms. Parr's writing style and I look forward to her next book. If you give this book a chance hopefully you will like it. With it's beautiful pink and purple themed cover it definitely reminds one of a spring day in the garden and fits very well with the setting of the book!

\*I received my complimentary review copy through Bethany House's Book Review Program in exchange for posting my honest review.\*

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## **Kathryn says**

A slower moving story line gives way to the truth revealing the love of his daughters and his sacrifices to endure those daughter safety.

Rev. Livingston does with his ministry what most would consider a lost cause...he preaches to the soiled doves of the brothels in the city of New York. His efforts to help these women gets him accused of the murder of one such woman that he was teaching...Rosalie Peale when she turns up dead. In an attempt to spare his daughter the trial, he sends her secretly to Toms River, New Jersey to a with a trusted alliance member, Capt. Grant to another trusted Disgraced daughter and her husband the Gardners, but under an assumed name Widow Malloy along with Lily, an infant of 18 months. He instructs her to stay with the Gardners till he sends her word, but to tell no one of her true identity.

The trial finds the Rev. acquitted of the crime, but the newspapers are relentless in their pursuit of scandal and think with Ruth's disappearance, she must have proof of her father's guilt.

Lily is frightened of being discovered as reporters are trying to find her whereabouts. She trusts Jake, a newcomer and then finds out he is a reporter with a purpose to find her and the story behind her and Lily or give his portion of the ownership of the "galaxy" paper to his brother. Jake's principles and belief of right and wrong win when he admits his love for Lily and Ruth and his desire to make them a family and his last article for the paper leading the readers in another direction other than Ruth and Lily.

SPOILER: Ruth finds out that her father's first love had a hidden child and that child was Rosalie. Rosalie's child, Lily is actually his grandchild and Ruth promises to protect her blood relation to her niece.

Captain Grant is one of the people who help locate the soiled doves to new life and a new faith.

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## **Gerrie says**

3.5 out of 5 stars

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## **Christy Lockstein says**

Love's First Bloom by Delia Parr is a historical romance filled with many twists. Ruth Livingstone's father is a pastor in New York, well-known for his work getting prostitutes to turn to Jesus. When he is accused of murdering one of them, he forces Ruth to take the prostitute's secret toddler daughter, Lily, and take on the identity of a woman in his program to protect the child while he is tried for the crime. Ruth moves to New Jersey and lives with a family who takes in former prostitutes trying to make a new life for themselves, but not long after she disappears, the press takes note of her absence and accuses her father of murdering her as well. The hunt is on by all of the major newspapers to find Ruth, including Jake Tripp who wants to redeem himself as a journalist after making a terrible mistake two years ago and nearly destroying the newspaper he owns with his brother, Clifford. Clifford gives Jake an assignment that will give him redemption: find Ruth Livingstone and get the real story behind the prostitute's murder. He moves to the same small New Jersey town Ruth is staying in and takes on a false identity to gain her trust but instead finds himself falling for the young woman who has been forced to live away from her father and pretend to be something she's not. I had a hard time believing that a pastor would do this to his daughter, it just seemed unbelievable to me, but when I swallowed my disbelief, other events continued to be forced by the plot: an unexpected death, a letter from beyond exposing a long-lost child, and the identity of the killer both made me go "what??" Parr's previous

book, Heart's Awakening was a beautiful and poignant historical romance. This one had some great characters, but they were at the mercy of a far-fetched plot that did them no favors.

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### **Laura says**

New York City 1838. Ruth Livingstone is sent away in hiding by her father, Reverend Livingstone, while he awaits acquittal from the accusation that he killed a prostitute named Rosalie Peale. Rev Livingstone has spent most of his life helping prostitutes regain their faith and relocating them where they could start anew. Rosalie also had a secret child—Lily, an 18-month old—that no one knows about and Ruth takes her away with her to protect her.

The newspapers are having a field day and news of this case spreads far. Ruth is staying with friends of her father in the small town of New Jersey under an assumed name, but she fears she will be discovered by the hungry journalists who are trying to find her whereabouts since it is believed she is hiding evidence that will incriminate her father. Jake Spencer is a journalist who made a mistake years ago and now wants to redeem himself in his brother's eyes, proving he has what it takes to be a good partner to their newspaper. He is sent on an assignment to find Ruth and get the story before the other reporters. Jake finds her immediately and gradually falls for Ruth. Ultimately, he chooses to redeem himself in God's eyes rather than his brother's.

Although this is a heartwarming and sweet story, it was slow-going for me. I wasn't too crazy about Jake and there was no spark between him and Ruth. The whole time he was there was to try to get evidence from Ruth, deceiving her into believing he had an injured back and was seeking solitude. This book is filled with characters who proclaim faith in God, yet they are liars and justify this for a good cause. For this reason I had a hard time accepting the preaching in the book (there is much about putting trust and faith in God) when it is clear in the Bible that God does not approve of lying. (Col 3:9, Rev 22:15) I don't have anything against flawed characters, actually they are more realistic, but to relay the message that God rewards lying as a means to do good was not what I expected. If the message is to trust in God, then why should one have to disobey and rely on lying and deception?

Throughout the account, I wondered about Ruth. Although she had lived in New York all her life she had been sheltered. She was in her early twenties, yet I wondered what she had done with her life prior to her life in hiding. The book does not say. Had she no friends? No prospects of marriage? She was not involved in her father's work, so what did she do? And since she went missing, were not the authorities looking for her, especially considering the serious case with her father? It was also hard to believe that the other reporters did not find her and Jake did so easily. There were a few plot holes, and I was frustrated and bored with this story at some points. It could have been more exciting, what with her father being accused of murder, and his clandestine activity to help “fallen angels”. Ruth spends a lot of time crying, which was understandable under her circumstances, but there was too much of it for me.

Although predictable, I was happy with the ending, and Jake's choice was honourable. If you like sweet Christian romances, this one fits the bill, but don't expect anything too exciting.

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### **Giovanni Gelati says**

Delia Parr writes historical romance. Her previous novel, *Hearts Awakening*, was a Romantic Times Top Pick. I am sure that this novel will find its way there also. I am relatively new at reading this type of novel and it was fun; a nice break from the other stuff I usually read. Let me set this up by starting with the synopsis from the back page: "Life changes drastically for Ruth Livingstone the day her father puts a young child in her arms and sends her under an assumed name to a small village in New Jersey. There she dutifully awaits his acquittal, certain that her father, Reverend Livingstone, soon will be cleared of the outrageous accusations against him.

When tragic events transpire, Ruth finds solace tending a garden along the banks of the Toms River- a place where she can find a measure of peace amid her growing heartache. It is also here that she meets Jake Spencer, a man who both frustrates and intrigues her. Fearful of the newspapermen intent on tracking her down and unsure of whom to trust, Ruth knows she must carefully maintain her identity as widow Malloy. But as love begins to slowly bloom, can the tenuous affection growing between Ruth and Jake withstand the secrets that separate them?"

I enjoyed the plotline and the way that Parr ramped up the tension between Ruth and Jake. I was definitely a sucker for the back drop as I used to fish and crab with my father in Toms River when I was a kid. The simplicity of the actions and the characters' emotional needs were well developed and did not come at a cost of any of the storyline. It enhanced rather than detracted from it. I have read one novel too many where this was injected into the plotline and it was sticking out like a sore thumb. Delia Parr mixed her historical information with the character development and plotline every well. I enjoyed the pacing as well as the polite manner in which the story was told, *Love's First Bloom* has class and taste.

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<http://www.gelatisscoop.blogspot.com>

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## **Hannah says**

If you're looking for heart-pounding romance, this isn't it. If you're looking for a fast, easy read, this isn't it. It's a drama with unexpected depths and some parts that just make you hurt for the heroine. It took a while to get into the story, but once I was hooked it was hard to put down, and the last half of the book is excellent. The romance is mostly on the side and Ruth tries to make a new life for herself and her adopted daughter in a small town that may or may not reject her when they hear the whispers about her supposed past.

I felt sympathy for Jake from the beginning, but I certainly can't say I liked him right away. He's been a ruthless fellow in the past and has lots of room for growth, but what lies ahead will test him to the fullest. He comes under false pretenses but soon feels pricked in his conscience.

I love seeing characters grow and blossom in stories. And Parr makes it quite clear that their growth is because of their faith.

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## **Cindy says**

Set in the 1830's, Ruth Livingstone finds herself in a position she never would have imagined. Her father, controversial minister who ministers to the prostitutes in New York City, is being tried for the murder of one of the "fallen angels" he has managed to lead to the Lord. Rosalie Peale, a young prostitute was found murdered and he has been accused of being her murderer. He is greatly concerned for his daughter Ruth, and for Rosalie's sweet baby girl Lily, he makes plans to send her away, to the network of friends who help him save the young women from the streets of New York.

Ruth, finds herself living with a couple she doesn't know, and posing as a young widow who has been rescued by the minister. Unable to share her true identity with anyone, she watches closely as the newspapers report the details of the trial of her father. Breathing a sigh of relief at his acquittal, she is sure all will be fine and she can return home soon. But that would not happen, as the public outcry against her father only grew, instead of quieting. And then the sad news of his sudden death, Ruth finds herself an orphan taking care of an orphan. What will happen to Ruth and baby Lily?

Asher Tripp, wants to prove to his brother that he is a good reporter and that he can bring a story to the paper that will make a difference. His brother knowing that the public outcry in Reverend Livingston's case is crying for his daughter to be found, sends Asher off on a search for Ruth Livingston. Will Asher be able to tell the story of where Ruth has been, and what she has been doing, without destroying the friendship and feelings that have grown between them?

A wonderful story, I truly enjoyed the story of Ruth and Lily and Asher. I particularly identified with Ruth as she would become overwhelmed, forgetting that her help and strength comes from the Lord. However she would remember and lean on Him and calm her fears. Definitely a book to read this fall!! 316 pages US \$14.99 4 stars.

This book was provided for review purposes only, no payment was received for this review.

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## **Karen says**

Ruth Livingstone is on a mission, but not one she's chosen. Her father, Reverend Livingstone, is accused of murdering a prostitute in New York City. He sends Ruth to Toms River, New Jersey with a small package. The package is eighteen month old Lily, the prostitute's daughter. Few people know that the child exists; the Reverend wishes to keep her out of harm's way. Ruth is the solution.

The Garners take Ruth and Lily in, assuming that Ruth is a reformed prostitute in need of shelter. Ruth hates staying with them under false pretenses, especially ones that cast a shadow on her character. Lily is an unruly child, and it takes every ounce of stamina Ruth has to keep up with her. In addition, Ruth anxiously awaits news of her father's trial, fearing the worst but hoping for the best. Even in 1838, the media has all but convicted the Reverend prior to his trial.

Ashton "Jake" Tripp returns to New York City to make amends with his brother Clifford. Prior to their separation, Jake and Clifford worked together at their father's newspaper. Ego and bad judgment placed Jake in a scandalous situation and he fled the city, leaving Clifford to pick up the pieces and salvage the business. In an effort to win his brother's trust and a position at the paper, Jake agrees to locate the daughter of



Reverend Livingstone. Local papers report her disappearance and speculate that the Reverend murdered her as well.

Ruth and Jake's paths intersect in an interesting manner. Does Jake know who she really is? Ruth is wary of this reporter; can she trust him? How long will she deny her growing feelings for him? Will the good Reverend be acquitted and restore his reputation? Assorted events, interesting twists, and action provide the answers; you must read the book if you want to know what happens!

Ms. Parr's characters in previous books were real and engaging, and I expected the same with Love's First Bloom. I was not disappointed. Ms. Parr writes a lovely story that enables the reader to share Ruth's journey. If you like historical fiction of any sort, I think you might like this one.

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### **Sandy A Devlin says**

#### **When love finds you**

This was a very fascinating book. I found it hard to put it down. The mysterious happenings kept me hooked. The characters in the story come alive and you find yourself rooting for more. There were a few twists and turns that captivate you.

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### **ANNETTE says**

Was rather slow for me , I Think Delia Parr has better books.

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### **Sonya says**

Ruth Livingstone, daughter of a minister involved in helping the soiled doves, finds herself alone, with a toddler and pursued by the press for a story, true or not, about her father's involvement in a murder. She must stay under the guise of being a soiled dove in order to keep from being found.

Her struggles with her father's ministry, his innocence and her lies to remain protect from those around her make her question her faith and her God.

Spiritual lessons are incorporated into life's events.

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