



The Veiled Heart

Elsa Holland

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Lady Miriam Rothbury has never known desireAnd Lord Maxwell Worthington, well even from afar, he's always burned for her ...

After a cold and cruel Victorian marriage, Miriam rejects the foibles of her class and is determined to help London's fallen women. A fleeting brush with a handsome stranger at the scandalous Velvet Basement creates a chance encounter to sin. Surrendering once could be forgiven, but what happens when this dangerous game promises to extend beyond one unforgettable encounter to a passion that threatens the very foundation of her world?

Max, is delighted at the invitation by the veiled visitor to the decadent Velvet Basement. But the flammable seduction turns world-shaking when the veil is torn and reveals the woman who has always haunted him. Can he play a dangerous game and win the heart of the woman he wants? Or will discovering his true identity push Miriam far out of reach forever?

The Veiled Heart Details

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Author : Elsa Holland

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From Reader Review The Veiled Heart for online ebook

Ella Reese says

If Jane Austen wrote a dark erotica novel, it would probably closely resemble this story. This was remarkably good for a freebie – well-written, depth, not so prim and proper nookie in a carriage or a dark alley.

I really liked it! Part of a series but can be read as a standalone.

4.5 stars

Debee says

I really enjoyed this book and thought "Lily" was a strong and resourceful woman, who had not only overcome the trauma of a very abusive marriage, but gone on to try and help other women, turning her experience into something positive for herself and fellow women - in a time when it was very hard for women, especially women of the lower classes, to find help or a place of refuge. I enjoyed this aspect of the book.

However, really the book is a love story and a beautiful one. Some of it, particularly, the opening chapters, have a poetic quality, which is beautifully written and I found myself delighting in the re-blossoming of Lily, and her growth back into letting herself trust again, and thereby finding herself and her true potential. Max was wonderful, loving her, but also not wrapping her in cotton wool, but pushing her to overcome her past and her fears with support and belief.

I look forward to reading more of Elsa's books in the future.

Hopelessly Devoted says

My Review

The very first thing that struck me about this novel was the cover! It's absolutely stunning and evokes images of an early Victorian erotica, mixed with a twinge of gothicka! beautiful and alluring...your eyes are naturally drawn to the models lips in the cloud of netted veil.

From the very first page I was like a fish chasing the bait! My lip was nibbled and my interest was well and truly piqued. But by the second chapter, I was hooked, caught, hook line and sinker!

This story is very unlike anything else on the market at the moment! Yes, it's certainly erotic, and yes, it's a historical romance...but it's so much more than either of those things! This is a story that worms its way into your heart.

Miriam is a deeply hurt and confused character, she longs for some excitement and for her womanly sensuality to finally be recognised.

Lord Worthington is a kind but overly confident gentleman. He has far too many faucets to his character to even attempt to sum him up really....but I defy you not to fall a little in love with the rogue.

Elsa Holland has written a thoroughly thrilling and sensual romance that will warm your heart and give you hope, hope that you can always be more than your "lot" in life, hope that you can find someone who will see past your past and a hope that the future can be whatever the hell you want it to be!

Thoroughly enchanting! Ms Holland, you have a new fan!

4.5 very well deserved stars!

Michelle Carlson says

What the author was thinking when she wrote this book is beyond me. There are so many ways that this story could have gone, but it took the one route that proves that some people just need to stop writing.

We have a woman who was raped, beaten, sodomized, and every other vile thing you can imagine by her late husband (so the author says, but she could have gone into more detail) and yet her character doesn't read like an abused woman. A scared woman, yes.... but not the sort of woman who went through the amount of torture that she did. Her character and story line held so much potential, but the author dropped the ball in order to get as much sex into the book as she could.

All the other characters were simply secondary. Even Max, **ANOTHER MAIN CHARACTER** didn't reach me as anything but secondary. I can break it down for you easily:

Max = The charming hero who helps our heroine see the true nature of things

Maurice and Cynthia = The brother and sister in law we have to hate

Aunt D = The clueless older woman who is more interested in society than her niece

Freddy = The Villain

Cliche, cliche, cliche. The more I read, the more I skimmed, and the more I just wanted to hear "Lily's" back story from Freddy.

Martha says

This was one of the best books I've read in a long time. It was full of emotion and a little dark at times but it was very well written. I was captivated until the end and what a great ending, everyone came full circle and had their happy ever after, some on the other hand just got what karma had in store for them. Plan to pick up some more of this Authors books in the near future.

Jane says

This book definitely has a spot on my best ever Top 10 romance novel list. Simply put, it was just beautifully written. Poignant, heartbreak, yet exhilarating.

We first meet Miriam as she's trying to buy boatloads of condoms. Her new project is to promote safe sex among prostitutes. While attempting to purchase the condoms, she runs into this really handsome guy with eyes as blue as the Mediterranean. He, too, is buying condoms, but Miriam wrests all of them away from him and leaves. While sorting through the condoms in her carriage, Miriam discovers, to her dismay, that the

boxes do not come with instructions and she has no idea how they work, much less how she's going to educate prostitutes on the proper use of same. While despairing over her lack of knowledge, a carriage wheel breaks and guess who just happens to be around and who just HAPPENS to be able to fix it? Yup, Mr. Blue-Eyes, who says that he'll fix the wheel if he can get a ride. Miriam agrees, but adds an additional caveat: she'll give him a ride if he'll teach her ALL ABOUT using condoms...like, an actual hands on tutorial and not just a quick 2 minute explanation. Mr. Blue-Eyes is intrigued by this lady behind a veil who may or may not be really attractive...and he goes for it. Sex in a carriage. Yes. It happens. And it happens a lot in this book. Just as Mr. Blue-Eyes gets out of the carriage, he takes off Miriam's veil and there is a moment of euphoric shock as he gives her one last, lingering kiss before leaving.

Yeah. Can you blame me for not being able to put this book down? Seriously.

Mr. Blue-Eyes (who Lily refers to as Max) just can't stay away from Miriam (who he refers to as Lily), and basically follows her everywhere until she agrees to let him tag along. They become lovers as Lily discovers her long dormant sexuality, which was repressed by an evil and abusive (dead) husband who was, frankly, a sociopath. We learn that the two lovers met as children who shared their first kiss and were separated until that fateful condom purchasing spree. Max, it turns out, was actually Lily's husband's purported friend, confidante, and roommate. Lily tells Max that she hates all men of her husband's station because of their ability to "get away" with crimes, especially those committed against their wives. Upon hearing this, Max is afraid to reveal his true identity in fear that Lily will shun him (despite his dislike for Lily's husband). You see, he's been in love with her since their first kiss but wasn't allowed to marry her because he wasn't rich enough. He is constantly reminded of her hatred for these "men" who left her to suffer under her husband's abuse, and because of that hatred, Max feels that he has to prove himself to her in order to strengthen their bond and gain her love. Elsa Holland aptly describes this constant struggle, writing, "That cord he'd always felt connected them was now as fragile as a spider thread floating in the breeze."

You can guess where this story goes, but it's so much more complicated and layered than the average historical romance. The writing is beautiful and lush, and I don't think I've read anything comparable these past couple of months. Ultimately, Max realizes that he, too, is to blame for Lily's suffering, even though there really wasn't much he could do to stop it (I mean, the guy tried to marry her and tried to stop her wedding, and was basically kept out of the wedding by her brother's henchmen for crying out loud!). Nevertheless, he takes responsibility, and admits that "She had every right to reject him. Even if she didn't realize she rejected him for not being there for her. That was the real sin." Not only does Lily have to come to grips and overcome the abuse she was subjected to, but she also has to acknowledge the underlying anger at Max for his failure (or rather, inability) to help her.

Ugh. So good. I loved this story. Can you tell? I think it's safe to say I give it a resounding 5 stars. Sigh. This sure was one good love story.

Dawn says

The story was great, my one criticism is that the editor should be shot. But I cannot lower a books rating due to poor editing.

This is a delicious and erotic story. The characters are pretty well developed and likable. Bottom line, it was a VERY entertaining read, never a lull in action, passion or drama.

I would certainly recommend to others and look for more by this author.

I am back to edit my review. Why? Well I just want to say I keep thinking about this story, the writing etc.. and very few books have ever kept me thinking after reading them. I can name a few, The Maiden and the Monster is one and The madness of Ian MacKenzie also Rescued by a Highlander and a few others, The Fire Lords Lover..

ANd now I can add this one to that list. I don't like to give away a lot about the book in my review, I don't like spoiling things too much but I will say, this book is very good, well thought out very steamy, doesn't drag.. certainly hard to put down.

Jennifer Guffey says

The Veiled Heart (Velvet Basement #1)

By: Elsa Holland

5/5 stars

Put aside what you think you know about Victorian England era novels and GET this book NOW! This book grabbed me from the beginning and never let me go! I was enthralled and loved it!

There are some stereotypes of the Victorian England era and the romance novels written during that time period. One is that the women were long-suffering and because of their lack of rights during that time, they are bound to suffer a loveless marriage where they must remain monogamous even though the man does not. (I've watched several movies with this same theme.) Another stereotype is the almost sickly-sweet over the top romances that are predictable and just boring. A major stereotype (and usually combined with the previous one) is that the heroine is a damsel in distress, or a delicate, fainting flower who is prone to swooning. The author didn't allow any of these stereotypes in this book! Hallelujah!!!

I love historical romances, but a lot of the time, they are sweet and any love scenes are glossed over or fade to black. But this book doesn't disappoint in this area! The sex is not gratuitously overdone. Historically, there was a lot of sex during this time period because of the aristocratic class needing to have male heirs and then all of the affairs that occurred because of the loveless (oft politically advantageous) arranged marriages. I felt that this book showed a truer depiction.

In 1898, Lady Miriam Rothbury is a young widow, and has spent years recovering at a country estate, and has recently returned to London, but not to society. It was believed that she had an ideal marriage & love for the ages. But immediately it is hinted at, that the marriage was nothing like it was portrayed in the society gossip column of the newspaper. We are given small glimpses at a time of what their marriage was really like. The scenes were "remembering" scenes, but were described or at least the aftermath was, but not disturbingly graphically so.

Now as a wealthy widow, she doesn't plan on ever being owned by another husband in her life. She wants to be the captain of her own life and seeks to remain independent. She wants to change the lives of women and be a champion of their rights and be on the front lines of helping women. But she must hide her true identity since she is a woman of station and thus becomes "Lily." But her excursions become transformational for her

as well. Lily was on a path to discover the idealistic girl that she was before marriage & reconcile her with the woman she became from having survived her marriage.

Lord Maxwell Worthington wasn't the most direct offspring in line for the title and so he was in society, but not as a future title-holder. He's had a long-time crush on Lily, but failed to win her hand in marriage. After her wedding, he traveled the globe, learning about cultures, and built his businesses in Canada & the United States to become independently wealthy. Even after he was granted the title & properties, he was reluctant to return to London and society in general.

A chance meeting with Lily leaves him craving more and more of her. But because of his station in life, he must keep his true identity a secret since Lily refuses to have anything to do with men of the aristocratic class. He must become creative in how they meet and how he needs to dress in order to fool Lily. He means to tell her the truth in order to build a real, solid foundation for a lasting relationship, but there hasn't been a good time. Especially not after she confides in him that she does hate certain people even more, ones like himself, who knew her husband and what he was truly capable of he did and she paints them all with the same brush. Of course, everything will come to a head and secrets will be spilled, leaving destruction in its wake. But it will be up to them to put together the broken pieces and to see if they can overcome. What they have to lose is more precious and worth more than anything either of them have ever had.

I loved how much author Elsa Holland paid attention to the details. I truly felt like I was able to see London at the turn of the 20th century. The reader can get a feel for the horse drawn cabs & how they looked, how they were lit, how the street lamps were lit and great ballrooms. I loved that Lily was brutally honest & truthful about the reality of life and how society just ignores it, in favor of having a perfect memory. I could hear the sounds of everyday life and how that changed into London night life, both in slums and at society events. Some authors don't spend enough time on researching what it would have truly been like to live during that time period in favor of just telling a love story. But Elsa Holland transported me not only to a different time period, but also to a different country & aristocratic culture.

This book was a breath of fresh air simply because it didn't follow the stereotypes and that is also what made this book impossible to put down and made me a fan of this author. The second book in this series sounds like it has the ability to top this book, which I think will not be an easy task to accomplish.

Kirke says

3.5 stars

I don't often read historical romances, certainly not the Victorian age, as I'm not really into the way women were treated back then. Which was also the case for Miriam, but Elsa Holland has put some great twists in here to keep it very interesting.

A woman back then, trying to save other woman, it's not an easy feat. When on her first night out, she meets Max, she has no idea who he is. Though there is this immediate attraction between them, that they fully explore. While things might seem to move fast, there is always a part they hold back from each other.

Together they explore, and we get a sensual and intriguing love story. The focus is very much on what is growing between Max and Miriam, and the time set is excellent for how their relationship develops.

The Veiled Heart was a remarkable story, that to me was a nice in-between story, if you want something different than what you are used to. Even if you're not really into historical novels, but you do like romance and plenty of sensuous scenes, give this one a try.

Debra Martin says

I was first drawn to this book by its beautiful cover and was immediately pulled into the story by the shocking first scene. It isn't something one usually reads about in a Victorian romance. I found it engaging how the author teased out the back story, but the more she revealed about Miriam/Lily, the harder it was to keep reading. Spousal abuse is not usually a plot device and this abuse was horrific. I liked Max in the beginning and I definitely understood his motivations, but he was also your typical controlling male who wanted what he wanted when he wanted it. "Don't go out at night without me, Lily" on the surface seems caring, but Max was not above ordering Lily about. He was tender with her when he wasn't ordering to do this or that. That part of his character I didn't much care for. I also began skipping over the numerous graphic sex scenes. Once or twice was certainly enough to get the point across, more than that just meant I was fast forwarding past the scene.

Ms. Holland has a rich and engaging writing style and I did read the book to the end to find out what happened. In my opinion, the book could have been less graphic in both the remembered abuse and the sex scenes and it would have been a stellar book. That is why I've only ranked it 3 stars.

Hardly says

Please be aware that this book contains frequent and explicit scenes of a woman being tormented and humiliated for the jollies of her husband and, presumably, people who enjoy reading about such things. If you are not one of them, and will end up nauseated the rest of the day after encountering it, please do not read it.

Overall, this book was reasonably well-written, though it could use a vigorous editing with an eye toward punctuation (in particular, commas: they are omitted when needed and inserted when not). Also, despite the modern lexicon, "invite" is now and was then a verb and not used as a noun: the word "invitation" is correct for the period (and indeed is best practice today as well) and this repeated lapse of grammar is irritating. Alas, it is not a singular instance, and various other errors are present as well.

I had initially thought Miriam/Lily's recovery from her past with her abusive husband a moving and interesting plot device. It wasn't until I'd finished the book and looked at the blurbs for her other works that I realized that the themes of sadism, violence, degradation, and humiliation, especially with women as the target, are frequent in the author's work. They are mentioned as a fetish, intended to titillate the reader, instead of to create a complex background for the protagonists to cope with and move past.

This exploitation and enjoyment of a woman's suffering, while pretending to treat it as problematic, is repulsive to me and actually made me queasy. This story contains many explicit mentions of how a woman is tortured, with the lip-service pretense at condemnation that it was a terrible thing that happened to her, and an underlying thread of enjoyment (if one is inclined to enjoy when others are made to suffer terribly, which I am not).

Katie(babs) says

The Veiled Heart (The Velvet Basement #1) by new-to-me author, Elsa Holland is a steamy and hot Victorian romance that has a slight comparison to Robin Schone, but it's not as dark and disturbing as Schone's historical romances tended to be. The heroine has endured a marriage to a sadistic and psychotic man who enjoyed hurting her just for his pleasure. The hero is the complete opposite of her dead evil husband, who shows the heroine that sex can be very pleasurable and enjoyable. Elsa Holland can sure write some uber hot love scenes! *fans self*

Miriam has been a widow for three years. Society believed she had a fairy tale marriage and an incredible love match with her husband, Freddy. Her marriage was a nightmare. Freddy was abusive and cruel toward her. His sadism almost destroyed her. Miriam had no one to turn to for help, not even her brother who we find out blackmailed Freddy into marrying Miriam in order to have access to his fortune. Freddy might be dead, but Miriam is still not free. It's expected for her to remarry, and she feels she will never enjoy sex because of the horrendous things Freddy did to her. Miriam helps other unfortunate women- prostitutes who have no choice but to have sex without protection. Miriam is on a mission to give the prostitutes in the brothels, and on the streets, condoms, aka sheaths. She ends up at a store that sells them including other sexual items. There she comes in contact with a man who wants one of the sheaths in the box she buys. This mysterious handsome stranger has signaled her out specifically. He is Max, who once offered for Miriam before Freddy (she had no idea). He was also friends with Freddy as a boy and in school (or so society believes). He has targeted Miriam because he wants to claim Miriam as his own.

Miriam is wary of this handsome well dressed stranger who says he's a mechanic. She allows him in her carriage and will give him one of the sheaths if he shows her how he uses it. It's a blatant proposition from Miriam because she wants to experience sex so she doesn't feel empty inside. Her mechanic, who eventually tells her he is Max (he calls her Lily because she's doesn't tell him her name right away) gives Miriam the best sexual experience she has ever had. From then on she seeks Max out, and they have a secret torrid affair. Max becomes her protector as he helps her meet with prostitutes in the underbelly of London. But Max wants much more. He wants to marry Miriam and cherish and love her as she deserves. But that means telling her the truth. The problem is that Miriam hates his alter-ego, a respected peer of the realm who was close friends with Freddy. She assumes Max is as sadistic as Freddy was. Max has to gain Miriam's trust and hopefully her love, so when she finds out the truth about him, she won't hate him.

The Veiled Heart packs quite the punch in terms of emotion and character dimension. Miriam is the tortured soul here, but a survivor. Max is a dream of a hero, a gentleman in public, but a tiger under the sheets. He gives Miriam everything she wants, offering his heart to her, knowing she may reject him forever because of his association with Freddy. There's also another twist in their relationship that's very sweet. The way Max avenges Miriam is wonderful.

If you like steamy historical romances with a great couple, and heavy subject matter that will make your heart skip in your throat, do pick up The Veiled Heart. It's one of my favorite historical romances I've read this year.

Louise Cusack says

I'm not normally a historical romance reader, but this book totally swept me away. Elsa Holland's writing is so evocative, I felt as if I could smell and taste and touch every detail of the story. And the sensuality is smoking hot! You ache for these two to get together, but can't imagine how they can. The Veiled Heart ticks all the boxes for me: sexy, romantic, great characters that I cared about, bastard villains to hate, gorgeous gowns, and some of the best sex scenes I've ever read. Seriously, download this book. You won't be disappointed.

Kim says

Although I enjoyed this book I had several problems with it. There were so many mistakes and inconsistencies in the story line and with the grammar. For example Maurice calling Miriam, Lily, when he is supposed to be unaware of Max's pet name for her. Words being left out, misspelled or simply the wrong word being used. The editing was very poorly done, which made it distracting to the reader. Also, I had a hard time getting into the book initially because it just felt wrong. The characters and plot did not seem to go with the setting. They were both too modern for the time and place in which the story took place. This made everything feel too manufactured and not very authentic, unrealistic if you will. However, I pushed myself to keep reading and was eventually caught up in Max and Lily's emotional tale. The sex scenes were certainly steamy and the emotionally charged chemistry between the two main characters are what made this novel enjoyable. All in all, a mixed review and a book that was just okay.

Bubu says

3.5 Stars.

I guess this is what one would call Romantica? Not sure though, so I'll be careful to label it.

That being said, the story is quite good. Miriam is probably one of the most tortured heroines I've come across lately and the book isn't an easy ride to HEA at all. Some parts of the book were difficult to read, mainly those which told us about her first marriage. Maxwell was a wonderful hero. The sex scenes were plenty and hot!
