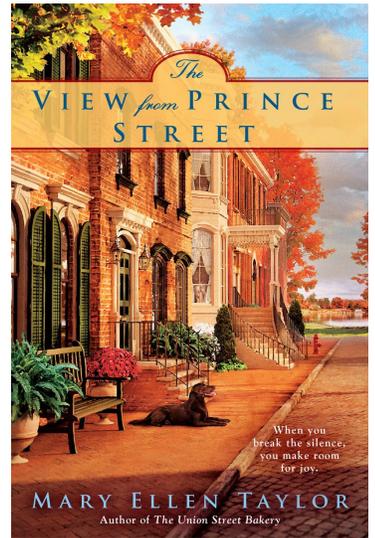


A Q&A: Mary Ellen Taylor Talks About Secrets, Family, Superstitions and the Courage to Love

Welcome, Mary Ellen!

So happy to be sharing news of **THE VIEW FROM PRINCE STREET!** Please tell us a little about it.

My pleasure. The book takes readers back to Alexandria, Virginia's Old Town, past and present, as I introduce Rae McDonald and Lisa Symth. Each is haunted by events from her past and there's something unsettled and incomplete in their lives. Both have yet to acknowledge the possibility of missing pieces, let alone begun to understand what they're searching for and where to look for it. Their shared history includes the loss of a beloved sister and friend and, as they discover, the ties that bind them are much more complicated than they imagine, involving family secrets, legends and people from Old Town's earliest days.



I've enjoyed how earlier novels have shared welcomed updates on Old Town Alexandria characters we've already met. Do we visit with any "old friends" in your latest?

Indeed! Resident archaeologist and researcher Margaret McCrae, who was hot on the trail of the witch bottles in At the Corner of King Street, plays a large part in the story. She's now partners with Addie Morgan in Shire Architectural Salvage. It's their work for "Prince Street's" troubled main protagonists, Rae McDonald and Lisa Symth, and the continued mysteries behind the witch bottles that bring revelations affecting both women's lives. She finds and puts together the puzzle of historical links that explain a great deal about several characters'

pasts. We also have some cameo moments with Daisy and Rachel McCrae and Aunt Grace and learn a bit about what's going on with them.

Your books so far—The Union Street Bakery, Sweet Expectations and At the Corner of King Street—bring us characters facing contemporary challenges interwoven with glimpses and people from the past. What can we expect in **THE VIEW FROM PRINCE STREET?**

You'll find some new mysteries to explore as we share Rae, Lisa and others' backgrounds. Also some topics touched upon previously are amplified, with unexpected twists and new viewpoints as the story unfolds. I've dealt with issues of adoption in the past—an adult struggling to define her identity within her adopted family, a woman unexpectedly in the position of choosing to become mother to her sister's newborn, and a woman, herself adopted, who's pregnant and single and struggling with the idea of parenthood. Adoption plays a role in this new book when the now teenage son Rae gave away as an infant wants to meet her. And an elderly woman, who long believed she was adopted, incites a search for answers about her heritage.

I also continue to be fascinated by relationships, by how family is defined, by how people who have difficulty loving themselves can or can't find love with another, and by how what we want and expect from others isn't always what we need. Rae, Lisa, and in her own way, Amelia, constantly surprised me with their strength,

—continued—

What connects Rae and Lisa besides Addie and Margaret?

Sadly, the shared loss of Jennifer, Rae's older sister and Lisa's best friend, is the strongest thing binding them. Jennifer, was a teenager when she died in a car accident. Rae believes the accident wouldn't have happened if only she told their mother that Jennifer was going out. Lisa, who was in the car, still holds herself responsible for her friend's death. Each moves through life blaming herself. Lisa, already abusing alcohol as a teen, became addicted and has been spending her life moving from place to place. For Rae, it first meant taking risks, one of which led to pregnancy. Believing there were no other viable choices, she gave up her child. From that point she steadily closed herself off emotionally and distanced herself from love and friendships, afraid to face further hurt.

Their pasts also link them in other ways. They both loved Jennifer, their families knew each other and Rae remains close to Lisa's Aunt Amelia, who suffers from Alzheimers and must give up her historic home.

So Lisa only returns home in order to take care of her aunt?

Primarily, yes. And I'm not sure she'd have come otherwise. But it is more than that. She also wants to somehow make amends to Jennifer and, in a way, to Rae. However, it's Aunt Amelia who compels Lisa to begin searching for answers in their family tree. She gives Lisa an old scrapbook she discovered when she was thirty and which she's kept to herself for decades. It tells the story of a long ago love triangle and holds the secrets to Amelia's birth. Soon, Rae is reluctantly involved with the revelations in the scrapbook when her extensive cache of family papers going back to Alexandria's founding come under scrutiny. It's hoped they'll shed light not only on the mysteries surrounding Amelia, but those raised by the discovery of letters written more than 250 years ago.

Does that mean the secrets lie in Alexandria's earliest days?

*Yes and no. I don't think I'm giving away anything to say that there are family secrets going back that far, but that there's much more, closer to present day that affects the characters in **THE VIEW FROM PRINCE STREET**. And we learn still more about the witch bottles discovered in [At the Corner of King Street](#) and the superstition and desire that brought them into being.*

Thanks for sharing your latest with us. What's the best way to keep up with you and news of upcoming books?

I post updates, photos and recipes and check in often on Facebook ([facebook.com/maryellentaylorfanpage](https://www.facebook.com/maryellentaylorfanpage)) and other social media so there's lots of info there. And my site is always open for business at maryellentaylor.com. Plus, as my calendar continues to shape up for 2016, I expect to have a number of opportunities to visit with readers and other writers. Event listings can be found at <http://maryellentaylor.com/events>.

Thanks for having me!

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THE VIEW FROM PRINCE STREET

Mary Ellen Taylor

A Berkley Books Trade Paperback Original/Fiction

On Sale 1-5-16/\$16.00 (\$21.00 Canada)

9780425278260 • 0425278263 • e: 9780698183391

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