



It's Always Been You

Victoria Dahl

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Once She Slipped Through His Fingers...

Aidan York has spent ten years mourning the woman he once loved and lost. He's filled the void in the only way he knows-by distracting himself with wild behavior and scandalous trysts. It's a hollow existence, but it dulls the pain. Until the day he encounters a ghost: the woman he thought drowned at sea, alive and as enchanting as ever...

Now He'll Keep Her In His Arms...

When Kate Hamilton sees the man she once hoped to spend her life with, she is hit with a storm of memories and longing. But though resisting Aidan's passion proves impossible, Kate must try not to love him all over again. For her seemingly quiet London life shields a dangerous secret, one that will catch up to her the moment she lets herself fall...

Praise for A Little Bit Wild

"The classic Beauty and the Beast tale is twisted into something new... funny and unlike the others."
-*Publishers Weekly*

"A sharp and sassy romance, with a unique blend of an original, quick story and romantic characters." --*RT Book Reviews*

It's Always Been You Details

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Author : Victoria Dahl

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From Reader Review It's Always Been You for online ebook

Feminista says

Rating: 2 out of 5.

Another historical romance I am disappointed with.

I am disappointed that the hero in this book professes to love the heroine he thinks is dead, but within a month after he thinks she is dead, he sleeps with another woman. He doesn't just stop there, he proceeds to sleep with a disgusting amount of women.

Even near the end, when he finds out that the heroine might be leaving to Ceylon, he thinks to himself that he will get drunk and find some barmaid to bed...

Let me be quite clear, I have said this before and I'll say this again. If this is what it means to be loved, then I never want to be loved.

It's sickening that promiscuous men are fashionable. It's sickening because if it were the woman, she would have been called fickle-hearted and worse names. It's sickening because these historical romances have exactly these two traits when it comes to second-chance-loves:

- i) women, if they have any sexual experience, it has to be forced whether by situation or physically;
- ii) men, they almost always have sexual experience, but they blame it on being forced emotionally.

It's sickening to consider that those two things might even be compared with one another. Because they are never comparable. Rape, in this story, is not at all comparable to the hero's promiscuousness.

He is weak, pathetic and an asshole. I hope I never read about men like this ever again, but I know how fruitless that wish is.

Nevertheless, I gave this book 2 stars because I felt for the heroine and her plight. But if I were her, I wouldn't have married the hero even if he were the last man on Earth.

Bookaholics says

It's Always Been You by Victoria Dahl

Historical Romance –Aug. 2nd, 2011

3 ½ stars

This is a realistic historical about love lost and second chances.

Aidan is haunted by his past. Although he is now wealthy and successful he mourns the loss of his first love and he is ashamed of his wild behavior after her death. But while on the streets England he spies a woman that looks eerily familiar and follows her. Only to discover to his shock it is his lost love Katie! However, she is married. But Aidan isn't going let a little thing like marriage get in the way of what he wants!

Katie is fleeing her past and hoping for a bright future in her coffee store. But her newfound peacefulness is shattered by her first love. A man who never came for her and caused her life untold misery. Although she is still attracted to Aidan she is determined to forget those memories and keep him out of her life. But will she be able to keep her resolve or will their past keep them apart yet again?

This story made me wish that these two characters had been able to marry when they were young. There is a feeling of sadness for the time they lost when they were cruelly separated. It is a well-written story, but for some reason I was never quite able to become fully engaged in the main characters as much as I hoped. I liked how the author demonstrates how fragile a woman's position in society was and in many cases they had no power over themselves. I especially liked how she demonstrated how women were easily threatened in the male dominated society such that it 'diminished' their dreams and spirits. But she also shows the strength that women have to recover. The story also has some drama that includes Katie's missing years that seemed a bit tacked on to add tension to the story.

A strong and enduring heroine and a thoughtful story make for an original read.

Reviewed by Steph from the Bookaholics Romance Book Club

Tytti says

For some reason I love the cover of this book, it's so colourful, sweet and romantic... (yes, I know it's pretty much the same with every other historical romance cover, where there's a couple nearly hump-*cough...cough*.... embracing each other).

So, the story goes: Aidan and Kate fell in love ten years ago and he asked her father her hand in marriage. Her father refused because Aidan's lack of wealth and decided to send her away, all the way to Ceylon and told Aidan she was dead. Crushed, heartbroken and numb, Aidan drowns his sorrow in liquor...and women. At the same time Kate is forced to marry a stranger....

Ten years later, Aidan, now successful and rich businessman, suddenly sees a familiar face. A face that belongs to the love of his life and who he thought was dead. But here she is, changed and full of secrets...but so is he.

The feelings they used to have for each other are still there, maybe stronger than ever...

The story sounded interesting and it was, but the ending felt really long. But all in all, very good book, this was my first book from this author and heard that she'd written also contemporaries, so I'll check them out, too... whenever I get them ;)

Lover of Romance says

This is the first that I have read from this author. I have heard some amazing things about her books. I wasn't sure if I wanted to try out her contemporaries, but when I read the synopsis of *Its Always Been You*, I was intrigued. I knew I had to try this author out, and as a plus the cover is so pretty, and is what drew me to the book in the first place. I was thrilled to find that I truly enjoyed Dahl's style. It was fun to see how this certain conflict plays out.

Aidan still feels the loss of the one woman who held his heart, ten years ago. But they were unable to marry, and despite his determination, her family sent her on a ship, and she died on route. At first he didn't know how to deal with her deal, but found a way to cope. He has just existed for years, until one morning while taking a walk through the village in the countryside where he is concluding some business; he sees Katie once again and he feels like he is seeing a ghost. He is bewildered why she never contacted him if she has been alive all of this time. Kate thought that Aiden no longer cared for her, and was using her, and then her parents forced her to marry a stranger, and she has come back to England, to have a fresh start, and to live out her life in her homeland. However she never thought that she would encounter Aiden. She knows that she must not reveal to anyone her secrets or that she is in England. She fears what Aiden will do if he were to ever find out the truth. Aiden is relentless in his pursuit of her, and Katie finds herself aching to open herself up to him again and wonders if they could ever have a future together.

Aiden is a very stimulating character. He is overly stubborn, and on the surface seems almost perfect, but he does have flaws. I loved how these flaws made him seem so much more human and vividly real to me. Aiden is beyond sexiness and I found myself almost drooling whenever he asserted himself. I enjoyed how this characters, didn't shy away from his feelings. He didn't deny his love for Katie, but ended up pursuing her until he learned the truth about her. I loved seeing how sweet and devoted he was to her, but still had Alpha attributes to make you feel weak in the knees. Katie is a tormented heroine, she has some flaws, but you understand why she does the things she does. I felt that she was justified in what she did, and when you find out the truth, you understand her motivations. It was a ball of fun to see these two interact, fireworks exploding....sums it up!!

After reading *Its Always Been You*, I fell in love with Victoria Dahl. She is just amazing. I can't believe I haven't read her other books before, especially since she has written some other historical's. I found that her writing is the style that arouses your senses and plays with your emotions. A full fledged romance that gets your heart to pick up the tempo. A story line that is always one step ahead of the reader. A fun and sweet romance that will entice you for more!!

Minna says

Frankly, I read this because of the fairly good review on Likesbooks.com. And this is (I guess) one of those rare instances when I beg to differ from the reviewer. For a very good, very detailed review of this book that articulates **EVERYTHING** (literally, everything, it's spooky) I felt about this book, check out Karen's review from August 2011.

In a nutshell: this, in my opinion, was a joyless book that was difficult to pull through. The hero - set up to be tortured and angst. I get that. However, (view spoiler) Aidan came across as a man-slut and a doormat. Kat(i)e came across as a self-righteous, hypocritical, martyr. As for romance... what romance? There was no romance, nor love, just lust. The relationship was nonexistent. The plot line started off well, quickly

devolved into repeated sex episodes, and ended with a whimper. The motivations for many of the background characters - Aidan's mom, Katie's parents - were fuzzy. The much-dreaded meeting with the stepbrother (I expected some kind of serial killer-ish character) was a complete letdown. The ending seemed rushed and showed no growth on the part of the characters. A romance should uplift you, not drag you down... this one was joyless, dispirited, and depressing.

I hate to give a book one star, but really, there was nothing about this book I cared for.

Joan Swan says

Victoria Dahl's **IT'S ALWAYS BEEN YOU**, her historical romance August release, is one of those books with instant intrigue. Victoria crafts a suspenseful read with characters I rooted for and story questions that made me turn the pages in search for their answers.

I'm a fan of tortured heroes and crafty, independent heroines, and **IT'S ALWAYS BEEN YOU** has both. The hero, Aidan, believes the love of his life, Kate, the heroine, is dead. Has been dead for a decade. When this novel begins, he is haunted by the resemblance of a random stranger to the woman he could never cast from his heart. And when he confronts the stranger, simply to prove to himself she isn't the woman he thinks she is, he's shocked to discover Kate is in fact alive.

Kate has many secrets and has told many lies in an effort to keep herself safe. She believes Aidan cast her aside so many years ago and now is determined to remain unknown, unhindered and undiscovered.

The black moment in this book was riveting and heart-rending. The suspense kept the pace fast and the storyline intriguing. The resolution pushed me to read to the very last page in the novel—not something I often do.

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN YOU is a tale woven from the strongest of human emotions, the harshness of life's often random circumstances and the double-edged sword of endless love.

Laura says

I'm a recent fan of Victoria Dahl's contemporary work, having just read the entire **Donovan Brothers Brewery Series**. I was anxious to read some of her historical and was pleased to walk right into my local library and have her latest title available for me!!

Kate and Aidan met when they were young teenagers, growing up in London. Kate's family was quite influential in the ton and Aidan's father was a Baron. What started out as a close friendship quickly turned into something much more scandalous.

Aidan, being a proper gentleman, went to Kate's father and asked for permission to marry her. When Kate's father refused to let Aidan have her hand, he begged and pleaded for a chance to wed her to no avail. Shortly thereafter, unbeknownst to Aidan, Kate's father shipped her off to Ceylon to marry a governor there. Shortly after, her horrible family started the rumor that Kate had gone overboard on her ship and had died.

Aidan is distraught beyond measure. The only place he can find true solace, is to bed numerous women that mean nothing to him. It's the only time that his mind is able to escape the love of his life, Kate.

Several years later, Aidan comes into the town of Hull on business and is startled to see that his Kate lives and he wants answers now. Even though he is furious with her disappearance, he still cannot deny the unbearable want he still has for her.

Kate cannot believe that Aidan has found her after all these years. Old feelings for him immediately come to the surface and she's left wanting him in ways she cannot describe. She remains careful and on her guard as to not expose herself in full honesty to him. An honesty, that will likely drive Aidan away.

This book was highly enjoyable. It had some wonderfully touching moments and some blistering hot moments as well. Towards the end of the story, the reader is left wondering what's going to happen, and Ms. Dahl ties it all up beautifully into a heartwarming HEA. Four stars!!

Cecilia says

There's a lot going on in this book. Suspense about what really happened to the heroine's dead husband, when secrets will come to light, tortured love-hate stuff between reunited lovers. Generally, I enjoy those things. This book was nevertheless kind of a dull read. I didn't ever find myself all that interested in the characters. Some of the foreshadowing (along the lines of "he didn't know what she'd think if she ever found out... no she can't find out, she'll never know!") left a bruise it hit me over the head so hard. There were attitudes that just felt inauthentic, anachronistic - the heroine balks at wearing a feminine and colourful gown, for example, because she so strongly identifies herself as a businesswoman. Even now just thinking of it, my face is screwing up into a deeply skeptical expression. Which kind of sums up what a lot of the book felt like to me. Disengaging.

However, I have read maybe 2 or 3 other books by this author, and none worked very well for me. So, maybe serious Dahl fans would love this.

Karen says

I love Victoria Dahl's books and I really wanted to like this one, but... sigh. I did stick it out to the end (although I put it down several times-- it took me more than a week to finish, with several time-outs), and I'm glad I did. The last 15 pages or so were definitely up to the Dahl standard. The rest of the book, however, made me deeply uncomfortable; rakes and scandal are one thing, but the relationship between these two bordered on sordid.

Katie Hamilton was Aidan York's one, lost love. They had a brief affair ten years ago, but her father refused then-penniless Aidan's suit. To Aidan's knowledge, Katie sailed off to marry another in Ceylon after having argued with him, and her ship sank en route. The tearing loss turned him into a grim, ruthless businessman (determined never to be "too poor" again) and a womanizing rake, unable to find comfort in another's arms. He has not stopped mourning his Katie, has never stopped seeing her in every dark-haired woman that passes by. And when he sees a familiar, dark-haired woman go into a shop in Hull named "Hamilton Coffees," he cannot help but follow her.

The truth, however, was somewhat different (not that Kate actually TELLS HIM THE TRUTH). Her father, never telling her that Aidan had asked for her hand, bundled her off the Ceylon to marry a cold, hard, much older man purely for profit. As it might damage his reputation if it were known that he'd essentially sold his blue-blooded daughter, he put about that she had died. Hope daily fading that Aidan might one day come for

her, Kate existed for years in a barren and loveless marriage (her husband loved a native woman), with the added burden of an angry, disturbed stepson (by previous marriage) who was nearly her age, and who not-so-secretly lusted after his stepmother. She escaped Ceylon under a cloud of suspicion after her husband died under mysterious circumstances and her stepson tried to force himself on her.

Now that she has returned to England, she is living quietly in Hull as a coffee retailer under the assumed name of Mrs. Hamilton, pretending she has a husband in India who sent her ahead to expand their business. She wants nothing to do ever again with her family, and is doing her best to erase her past. As far as she knows, Aidan rejected her and sent her away, and she has no idea that those who knew her believe her to be dead. She lives in fear that her stepson may one day find her, because she does *not* want to go back. And when Aidan York walks into her shop, the first thing she wants to do is send him away, and run as far as she can in the other direction.

As I said, this plot REALLY bothered me. There's no lightness or humor to it at all-- it's all disappointed nostalgia and (on Kate's part) grim fear, waiting for the other shoe to drop and her flimsy veil of secrets to be torn apart, and her life with them. The reason I call it "sordid" is that, even though Aidan insists Kate's not like the others, she's different, she's finer and purer, he treasures her, he wants to make her his wife, blah, blah, blah... as far as he knows for MOST of the book, SHE'S MARRIED TO SOMEONE ELSE. And despite mouthing that he pretends to care about that, he seduces her the same way he's seduced every bored, married lady of the Ton. There is no way to pretty up what he's doing: he basically rides roughshod over her objections and takes what he wants as if it's his due for having diddled after her for ten years.

It is OBVIOUS there's a lot more going on with her. There's got to be a reason she's so nervous-- at the least, she deserves to have a care about her reputation, but he pretty much plays fast and loose with that. (There's a lascivious neighbor pretty much staked out with a spyglass at her front door-- and he's NOT going to notice Aidan coming in the back? PLEASE.) Does he take time to get to know her again? Does he give her some space, try to find out what's really going on with her? No. It takes him about a day to worm his way into her bed. THIS BOTHERED ME A LOT, and (even though she permitted it) I found his behavior unforgivable. Rakes don't make good heroes-- *reformed* rakes do, and he's not acting at all "reformed" here.

It also annoyed me that, after all the buildup with Kate's fear of her stepson, that aspect of the plot got faced and resolved in all of 20 pages (out of a 343 page book). (Oh, well, so much for that major plot element.) I just... mrf. This book was NOT up to Victoria Dahl's standard. The ending was good, but that didn't save the rest of the book.

Audrey says

3+ stars. A good read with a hefty dose of angst.

I didn't really understand the heroine and her motives (both present day and 10 years ago), so she really annoyed me for about the first half to two-thirds of the book, which is how long it took to get the FULL story of her background in all its gory details. After that, she became a much more sympathetic character. While I recognize this is what Dahl did to build the overall plot and suspense, I thought it would have been much more effective from a romance POV for us to know a little more about the heroine so that she'd seem worthy of our hero and his interminable heartache.

Aidan is a wonderful, heart-wrenching hero, and it would've been nice to see that the woman over whom he tortured himself was worthy of those emotions. Aidan's love and passion burned with the fire of a thousand suns - yes, really. He ached for Katie, and when he discovered she was not dead, it was like he was reborn. I really liked him, and although I'm usually not on board with cheating, I didn't feel like he seduced her at all in the first place - if anything, she was the one to make the first moves on him. (Never mind the fact that it's not actually cheating because she isn't still married and is a widow at this point - don't freak out, that's not a spoiler and you find out almost right away in the story.) Beyond that, I could also glean from the narrative that his love, his physical passion, and his motivation for his relationship with Katie carried an authenticity to them that left behind the crudeness and baseness of his couplings with innumerable married women in his past. He's tortured over what Katie will think of him when/if she discovered how promiscuous and undiscerning he has been since they last parted. I truly felt for him and his resurrected love.

This was a good story with writing that packed an emotional punch, and I'll likely seek out more from this new-to-me author.

Robin says

Nothing really stands out about this book that makes it excessively good or exceedingly bad. You of course want the Heroine (Kate, Katie, Katherine) to trust the Hero (Aidan) from the beginning but of course they both feel betrayed and lied to by the other one. And of course when they learn the truth they realized that they were not betrayed by each other but by others such as Katie's family. The guy that can be considered the villain is also a victim but his behavior tends to prevent you from feeling sorry for him. Although, I can't think of a lot to say about this book in terms of what its about other than what's on the back of the book I'm glad I read it and its definitely worth a read. Oh, this is the 2nd book in the York Family Series (I think its actually a trilogy) the first is called and is about Marissa, the youngest and only daughter of the York's. I actually liked her story better.

Romancing the Book says

Reviewed by Valerie

Review copy provided by publisher

Oh, the lost love of youth! This book had me hooked from the very beginning...I wondered to myself...was it because it started with Aidan's glimpse of a woman that reminded him of someone he lost or was it because both Aidan and Kate were fated to be together? Regardless, this is one I devoured in a few hours.

Aidan and Kate were young lovers but when she told her father she wanted to marry him, and could marry no one else since she was ruined, a horrible hand was dealt to them both. She was sent away to a tropical island, sold to a man who didn't want her so her father could collect her dowry. Aidan spent his days and nights mourning her death since her family shared the story of how she died tragically at such a young age. Ten years later (be still, my beating heart), he STILL stops each and every time he thinks he might be spotting someone that reminds him of Kate...

Kate's version is a tad bit different than her family's. She was sold to a man who didn't want her but also tormented by his stepson who did want her, badly. Trying to make a new life for herself, yet stay safe and

away from anyone who might know her, she has opened up a coffee shop using her knowledge from the decade she spent on the island.

Watching these two characters reconnect was sizzling and incredibly heartbreaking. While she feels that he betrayed her by never rescuing her, he can't believe she's alive. The biggest twist of all though is that both are hiding a secret. Once the secrets are exposed, how they work through the repercussions kept me flipping the pages as quickly as I could read.

Julieop says

I love a good tortured hero story, and Aidan is definitely troubled. But it was Kate who really captured me. She's strong yet has plenty of self doubts. It was her struggle for independence that fascinated me. The story is a great reminder about how far women have come. She is suspected of improper behavior simply because she lives without her "husband." I was cheering for Kate to find love with a worthy man throughout the story. Luckily Aidan is there with a love for her so deep that you can feel it coming off the pages. I found the language captivating, the conflict solid and the passion seductive. I didn't read the first book in the series, but now I have to go find it.

Catherine says

It's Always Been You felt quite different than most, if not *all*, of **Victoria Dahl's** other works. It has such an air of sadness to it. It wasn't exactly agnsty, but there was a lingering sense of melancholy as I read. Perhaps it was just me, unable to see a way for them to forgive each other and forgive themselves, but I really don't think so. I don't expect all of her book books to have hilarious scenes, but there's usually a sense of fun somewhere, even in relationships with issues. I really missed that aspect of her writing style. I think it would have helped add a little levity to a relationship that at times left me feeling glum and hopeless.

I enjoy second-chance-romances and stories where the characters were childhood lovers or friends, but sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. It's takes a fine balance to write a believable reason for the characters to have parted, yet still make it seem possible to overcome. I'm left feeling a little lost, even though I enjoyed the book. I'm just not sure I feel satisfied with how it all resolved. I can see that they love each other, especially on Aidan's part, but a lot of things have happened in the past ten years. At times I felt the driving force in their relationship really was nostalgia, just as Kate occasionally suspected.

Kate never allowed Aidan to see what she had been through and the woman she had become, and Aidan didn't want to let her know the man he was before he saw her again because he was ashamed and frightened of her reaction. There wasn't enough truth in their relationship to really satisfy me. All was revealed eventually, but too close to the end for my comfort they were still so angry and hurt that at times they hated each other, even while they were still desperately in love. I was completely convinced of the sentiment and their emotional intensity together, but I needed more time watching them work through their issues. So much time was spent drawing out them coming together, while balancing lies and omissions, that I wanted more of a focus on the resolution.

Dahl did a great job of creating characters and situations that didn't have any clear cut right or wrong answer. Both of them were wrong at times and could have done things differently, but it's hard to blame

them for any of it. I could see both sides of the story clearly, and I think that's why I ended up so sad instead of taking a side and being angry. How could Aidan not be angry that she didn't fight and that she didn't try to come to him for help? And how could she not be angry that he found it so easy to replace her again and again while she was trapped in misery? Sure, both were fooled and lied to, but that's cold comfort for ten years worth of hurt and blame.

I had a hard time really sinking into this story. I found the emotion of it moving, but I became frustrated by the lies and wished the characters would have just sat down and talked. There wasn't enough of that. They were always hiding from each other and it was hard to feel completely sympathetic after a while.

Favorite Quote:

"Goddamn you," he ground out between clenched teeth. "If I'd known you were alive, I would never have done any of it."

He expected anger, outrage in response. The calm that came over her body frightened him.

Pale as the white silk wallpaper that glowed behind her, she nodded and dropped the hand from her mouth. "That is something between us then. If I had known I was still alive, I'd have done things differently too."

Katie(babs) says

Aidan York has loved deeply. Ten years ago he found the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. Katie Tremont owned his heart and soul, but because he felt he didn't have enough to offer her, he let her go. After a horrible fight between the two, where he broke her heart, she left and boarded a ship to Ceylon. Aidan planned on chasing Katie and bringing her back, but he was told by the people he trusted that her ship was wrecked at sea and she died. Aidan is haunted daily by Katie's memory. Over the past decade he has jumped in and out of the beds of many married women, never finding true relief and happiness. The only way he can be complete is to have his Katie back. Then one day he spots a woman who looks exactly like his Katie. When he confronts her, he's shocked to see that it's indeed Katie and she's alive and well but married.

Kate Hamilton isn't dead. Her parents told Aidan that she was to her dismay. She never forgets Aidan although she moved on and married an older man, taking care of his plantation and learning about coffee beans. Kate is now back in England and has started her own coffee shop. When Aidan walks into her shop, she is just as shocked as he is. He wants answers, which she's not willing to give because of a dark secret she's hiding. She a widow in truth, although she lets the world think she's still married. Aidan figures out she's keeping something from him, but he doesn't want to lose her by forcing her to tell him. Instead he asks to be her friend, which she accepts. But their passion for one another can't be denied and soon they're having an illicit affair. Aidan wants Katie as his wife and for her to divorce her husband. Katie refuses. She thinks she's just one of many women Aidan has seduced. And then someone from Katie's past arrives in London claiming to be Mr. Hamilton, who can ruin all of Katie's plans and freedom. Aidan won't let Katie go without a fight even if it means her own downfall and possibly life in prison for murdering her actual husband.

It's Always Been You is a passionate romance about former lovers reuniting. Both Kate and Aidan love each

other deeply, but I felt the reasons for their separation weak, including the mystery surrounding Kate and her marriage. I also found the love scenes pretty mundane, which may be my own problem because I expect so much more when it comes to a Victoria Dahl romance. This is a pretty run of the mill historical romance that may be soon forgotten once you finish reading. Overall a ho-hum and at times tepid reading, but otherwise should give readers a few hours of enjoyment, but nothing more.
