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The Truest Heart
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"A Good Villain and other Necessary Evils"

I'm delighted for the chance to chat about my newest release, *The Truest Heart* . . . and of course, my newest hero. Like many writers, I'm often asked how I come up with the idea for a particular book. Muse is a funny thing, and I suspect it's different for all writers. For me, it's different for every book, and often a combination of several things.

I wouldn't be a writer if I didn't love being carried away to another place, another time. I love reading. I love poking around in history books. And movies . . . When I was younger, I was captivated by swashbuckling pirates. I lost my heart to the daring hero played by Gary Cooper in the movie *Unconquered*—one of the best love stories ever . . . talk about rescuing damsels in distress! Just as

Braveheart proved the inspiration for one of my previous books, *A Promise Given*, I must credit the classic tale *The Lion in Winter* for rekindling my interest in 13th century England and firing my muse once more.

By the end of the film, Gareth, lord of Sommerfield, had stepped forward, a living, breathing human being, alive in my heart. So had the villain—John, the youngest son of King Henry and Eleanor of Aquitaine, first seen as a youthful prince in the film. I love dropping characters into the pages of history—the more tumultuous the period, the better. And quite often, it's an instinctive feeling that fuels a story. A sense of knowing it's time to write this particular story—about this particular hero.

That's what happened with *The Truest Heart*. I'd occasionally toyed with the idea of writing about a character who'd lost his memory. One moment it was just an idle thought in my mind, but the next, I knew that Gareth was the one. I asked myself the question every writer asks . . . what if? What if John was now king? What if he blackmailed Gareth into undertaking a dark task, a task spawned by vengeance and spite? So it is that Gareth is a man with a mission . . . but it's a mission he can't remember.

While King John may be the ultimate villain, Gareth of Sommerfield is the ultimate hero. Of course, he wouldn't be a hero if he wasn't intelligent. Clever and handsome. A man who will go to any lengths to protect those he loves. Especially the woman he loves.

As a writer, my goal is to entertain you. To make you laugh and cry and feel every emotion that comes with the magic of falling in love. I believe Gareth is one of the most compelling characters I've created. He's a hero I won't soon forget. I hope you won't either.