

AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

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Stimulated Outlet Book Reviews

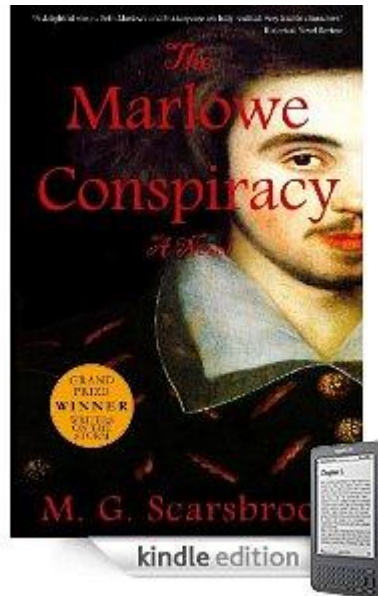
The Hot Author Report

Alaine – Queen Of Happy Endings

Enchanted By Josephine

TWO ENDS OF THE PEN -- 2/15/11

Interview with M.G. Scarsbrook



Briefly describe your journey in writing your first book. How long did it take you to finish that manuscript?

THE MARLOWE CONSPIRACY is my first novel. The actual writing of the book took me approximately 6 months, although I had a long planning period before that, and many months of research, too. I stumbled across the subject of Christopher Marlowe while researching one of his plays. As I started reading biographies about his dramatic life and death, I realized it was an excellent story for a novel. Not only was Marlowe a famous playwright, but he was most probably a spy, and a criminal, too. The murder-mystery surrounding his untimely death is fascinating (he was stabbed in a tavern while in the company of several espionage operatives).

Did you try the traditional route to publishing, i.e. querying agents/publishers?

Yes, I queried many agents, and after a few months I received three offers for representation. I chose an agent from a medium-sized agency in New York who had numerous NYT Bestsellers on her list. Over a period of about 6 months she approached most of the major houses, and came close to reaching a deal a several times, but ultimately nothing happened.

What factors influenced your decision to self-publish to Amazon?

I like the freedom it offers for both my writing and my career - it allows me to be fully responsible for my life as a writer. I chose to publish with Amazon because it is currently the largest market for eBooks.

What is the biggest thing you've learned during your self-publishing journey?

More than anything else, I've learned how much work actually goes into the production of a book (beyond the writing). For example, since deciding to self-publish, I have gained experience at designing book covers, at properly formatting and typesetting a manuscript, converting a novel into various eBook formats, editing a proof copy of a novel, designing an author website, and publicizing / marketing a novel! Phew!

Besides Amazon, are there any other sites where your books are for sale?

THE MARLOWE CONSPIRACY is currently available at the Apple iBookstore, [Barnes & Noble](#), [Sony Reader Store](#), [Kobo](#), [Diesel eBookstore](#), [Smashwords](#), and the [Scribd Store](#).

What kinds of social media [twitter, facebook, webpage, blog, forums] are you involved with for promoting your book(s)?

I have an [author website](#) and a [Facebook page](#) and I try to maintain a presence at various discussion forums for writers and readers, such as KindleBoards.com and goodreads.com. I'm also in contact with various blogs and historical societies for the purpose of gaining reviews.

What's next for you?

I will shortly release my second novel [POISON IN THE BLOOD: THE MEMOIRS OF LUCREZIA BORGIA](#), an historical mystery-thriller set in renaissance Rome during the scandalous reign of the Borgia family. It will be available as both a paperback and eBook. After that, I have plans to venture into a new genre - contemporary detective fiction, and will be writing the first novel of a ground-breaking new detective series set in London. Exciting stuff!

STIMULATED OUTLET BOOK REVIEWS

Author Interview: MG Scarsbrook

Friday, March 25, 2011



Hello my lovelies! I got up a little early today and thought, "Why not post that interview with MG Scarsbrook?" This talented author has written historical novels [The Marlowe Conspiracy](#) and [Poison in the Blood](#), in addition to multiple screenplays. He is currently in the midst of writing a detective series, though mum is apparently the word when it comes to details!

Let's jump right in. Both The Marlowe Conspiracy and Poison In The Blood involve real historical figures. With so many to choose from, how do you decide whose stories to tell?

It helps to select the historical era first. I'm a great fan of the renaissance period — it was such an exciting time, so full of new ideas, new confidence, and individual creativity — so I chose to set my novels in that era. Then I generally search for a figure whose life contained at least one dramatic event or turning point, something to hinge a story around. I also prefer people who might have been overlooked a little by history, or marginalized — I like outsiders, people with darker reputations.

With my first novel, The Marlowe Conspiracy, I actually stumbled across the subject of Christopher Marlowe while researching one of his plays. As I started reading biographies about his dramatic life and death, I realized it was an excellent material for a novel. Not only was Marlowe a famous playwright, but he was most probably a spy, and a criminal, too. The murder-mystery surrounding his untimely death is fascinating (he was stabbed in a tavern while in the company of several espionage operatives) and I knew immediately that I had to write a story about it.

Sounds like a perfect set-up. I hear that you recently wrote a screenplay version of The Marlowe Conspiracy. What was the experience like? Any difficulties in translating a novel to a script?

I really enjoyed adapting my novel. In fact, I'm not a stranger to the screenplay format and have adapted novels before — I have an MA in screenwriting, and some of my scripts have won or placed highly in competitions. The biggest difference between novels and screenplays, and the greatest challenge I found as a writer, is that screenplays are a highly condensed form of storytelling. The constraints of the form mean you have to be extremely economical with word usage and eliminate everything from the story except the most important scenes, plot sequences, or lines of dialogue. At times, this has meant cutting out some of my favorite moments or sentences from The Marlowe Conspiracy, which definitely requires some discipline! But as Faulkner once said, good writing sometimes means you must 'kill all your darlings'.

Morbid, but true. How do you get into the mindset of someone who lived hundreds of years ago? Any major pitfalls you try to avoid?

It's really no more or less difficult than getting into the mindset of a person in your own time period. As individuals, we ultimately can only know what it is like to be ourselves — I have no special, innate insight into what it is like to be another person, whether it's a man or a woman, a medieval Pope or a modern-day police officer. But as an artist, it's my job to bring to life diverse characters, in different situations, in different areas of the world, and even in different time periods. I need to use my imagination to sympathize and understand every character's point of view that I write. So, while I can't know what it's like to be a historical figure, I can imagine myself as an historical figure. The most important aid to the imagination is facts and concrete detail, so research is obviously crucial to this. I generally spend about 6 months researching and planning my stories. I need to thoroughly immerse myself in all elements of the historical time period, the language, the architecture, the art, the food and drink, the politics and social environment.

I'd say the only real pitfall to avoid, as with writing any character in any era, is not being empathetic enough with another person's values and beliefs. You might not agree with how other historical figures behaved, but you must try to understand their motivation. If you don't, the character will lack depth, the reader won't connect with them, and your writing will lack credibility.

A common mistake, unfortunately. What are your favorite and least favorite parts of the writing process?

I really enjoy every aspect of writing — I love hunting about for new story ideas, researching new worlds and new people, the excitement of putting together a story structure for the first time, and the challenge of choosing the right word at the right moment. As far as the actual writing process itself goes, I'm fairly regimented in my routine and work from 9 to 6 every day. I find that I have to limit the hours I spend writing, or it could take over my whole life completely! The only thing I loathe about it all, is coping with outside distractions that disrupt me creatively, i.e.,

think the 'man from Porlock' who interrupted Coleridge. I really do need total silence when I'm writing a novel and I can't work with any distractions at all. In fact, when things get a little too loud, I even have a pair of industrial standard earmuffs to block out the noise (I'm not joking!).

Life is such a noisy thing, isn't it? Shifting gears, do tell me more about this detective series you are developing. What is the main character like?

Unlike my previous work, this novel will have a contemporary setting and will be very modern in style. However, it still has an historical angle too: the story is inspired by one of the most notorious and perplexing unsolved murders in English legal history. The detective character is himself also based on a very famous literary hero, but for now I can't tell you who - it's a mystery, after all! What I can say is that the detective will have a personal unsolved crime of his own to investigate in the novel, aside from the main murder plot, and I plan for him to gradually solve this mystery in each book in the series. I also have a very unique idea for the general setting, but again it's top secret for now. If I told you, I'd have to kill you... which is rather fitting for a crime novel!

Ah, but if you kill me, this review will never get posted. I'll take that as my cue to wrap this up with the usual question: If you could be any character from any book for a day, who would it be, and why?

Interesting... I'd actually chose to be Cesare Borgia, the brother of Lucrezia Borgia. He's one of the main characters in my novel Poison In The Blood. Cesare was famously handsome, but notoriously a shrewd and merciless, too, and served not only as the Captain-General of the Papal army, but also became the inspiration for Machiavelli's 'The Prince'. I think it might be fun to be someone so evil, in such an exciting place as renaissance Rome, just as long as it's only for a day! After all, villains are always more interesting, aren't they (or am I the only one who thinks that)? Despite some of the undesirable traits of his character, though, I do also admire Cesare's confidence and absolute dedication to achieving all his goals. However, in all honesty, the character that I probably most resemble from Poison In The Blood is Lucrezia's advisor, Niccolò Machiavelli — a poor and struggling writer!

Without reading the book, I'm not sure how to feel about that! Thanks for interviewing with me today!

Thank you for giving a new writer like me this great opportunity!

For more information about MG Scarsbrook, visit [his website](#).

Other Links:

[Book Review: The Marlowe Conspiracy](#)

Posted by Alice at [2:48 AM](#) Labels: [Author Interviews](#)

THE HOT AUTHOR REPORT



March 30th, 2011 at 12:00 am

Interview with M. G. Scarsbrook – Author of Poison in the Blood: The Memoirs of Lucrezia Borgia

in: [Historical Fiction](#), [interviews](#), [Young Adult](#)

M. G. Scarsbrook is a prize-winning screenwriter and novelist. He is the author of two historical suspense novels, THE MARLOWE CONSPIRACY and POISON IN THE BLOOD. He recently adapted THE MARLOWE CONSPIRACY into a screenplay and won the nationwide Writers On The Storm Screenwriting Contest, placing first out of 1000 entries. Matthew currently lives in Southern California and is now at work on a new detective series. To learn more, please visit his website at: <http://www.mgscarsbrook.com>

Q: What compelled you to write your first book?

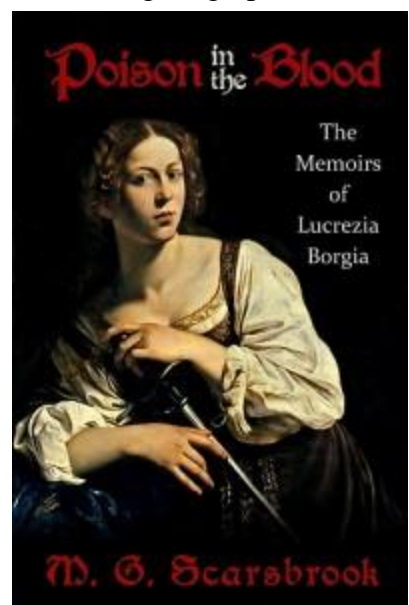
A: THE MARLOWE CONSPIRACY is my first novel. I stumbled across the subject of Christopher Marlowe while researching one of his plays. As I started reading biographies about his dramatic life and death, I realized it was an excellent story for a novel. Not only was Marlowe a famous playwright, but he was most probably a spy, and a criminal, too. The murder-mystery surrounding his untimely death is fascinating (he was stabbed in a tavern while in the company of several espionage operatives).

Q: Have you always wanted to be a writer?

A: Yes, ever since I was very young I've written stories both for school work and for my own enjoyment. In fact, one of my first school memories is of a teacher reading out to the class a short story that I'd written. A born novelist, I suppose!

Q: Tell us briefly about your book.

A: My latest novel is Poison In The Blood: The Memoirs Of



Lucrezia Borgia. The story is set in 1497, Renaissance Rome, featuring Lucrezia Borgia struggling to escape the city and save her new husband from assassination by her powerful family. But as tragedy looms ever closer, and her plans gradually fail, she finds herself confronting an enemy far more sinister than she ever imagined...

Q: What are you working on at the moment?

A: A new detective series. Unlike my previous work, this novel will have a contemporary setting, although it has an historical basis too: the story is inspired by one of the most notorious and perplexing unsolved murders in English legal history. I also have a very unique idea for the main detective and the general setting, but it's top secret for now. If I told you, I'd have to kill you... which is rather fitting for a murder mystery!

Q: What type of music, if any, do you listen to while you write? Do you need the noise or the silence?

A: I need total silence when I'm writing a novel. I can't work with any distractions at all. In fact, when things get a little too loud, I have a pair of industrial standard earmuffs to block out the noise (I'm not joking!). I'm sure it looks a little strange to see me sitting at a computer wearing the type of earmuffs you'd normally find on someone with a jackhammer, but it works for me!

Q: If you could live in one of your books, which one would you live in? (If you're promoting your first publication, feel free to talk about an unpublished piece.)

A: I'd probably chose Tudor London, from my novel THE MARLOWE CONSPIRACY. The English renaissance was such an exciting time, so full of color, danger, and spectacle. The world of playwrights and actors living at the rebirth of modern western theatre really appeals to me. I'd love to have met Marlowe and Shakespeare, or visited the original Rose theatre at Bankside – who wouldn't?

Q: When growing up, did you have a favorite author, book series, or book?

A: When I was very young, I used to read a lot of Enid Blyton, particularly her Famous Five series. I think this was my first introduction to the mystery genre.

Q: What about now: who is your favorite author and what is your favorite genre to read?

A: There are many authors I admire, but if pushed to chose just one it would be George Orwell. It doesn't matter whether I read his nonfiction essays (e.g., Politics and The English Language), his memoirs (Down and Out In Paris and London, Homage To Catalonia), or his famous novels (Animal Farm and 1984) – I'm never disappointed. The way he blends political insight with a clear, robust style and a commitment to always engage the reader with every sentence is very inspiring to me.

Q: Is there anyone who has inspired, motivated, encouraged or supported your writing?

A: My mother, father, and sister have given me all the encouragement and support that I could ever wish for. My first two books are dedicated to them.

Q: Now that you are a published author, does it feel differently than you had imagined?

A: It's just as exciting and satisfying as I thought to finally see my work in print, and to know that people are finally reading my work. But the struggle is only half over. It's one thing to be published, and quite another thing to be successful and widely read. As a new writer, there's a lot of hard work ahead for me to gain attention I need for my books. I value each and every sale of my novels, and every time someone spreads the word about my work I feel truly grateful.

Use this space to tell us more about who you. Anything you want your readers to know. Include information on where to find your books, any blogs you may have, or how a reader can learn more about you and writing.

To learn more about me or my writing, please visit my website <http://www.mgscarsbrook.com> where you can read samples of my novels, see professional reviews of my work, and find all the latest news. You can also follow me on facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/authormgscarsbrook>, or visit my author page at goodreads: http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/4447495.M_G_Scarsbrook.

All my novels are available as paperbacks and eBooks from most major bookstores online, including:

Amazon, Amazon UK, Apple iBookstore, Barnes and Noble, Borders, Sony, and Kobo.

Anyway, thanks a lot for reading this. And thank-you to The Hot Author Report for giving a new writer like me such a great opportunity!

ALAINE – QUEEN OF HAPPY ENDINGS

April 8th 2011

Interview With M. G. Scarsbrook, Author Of Poison In The Blood: The Memoirs of Lucrezia Borgia

Synopsis:

1497, Renaissance Rome: As the teenage daughter of Pope Alexander VI, Lucrezia Borgia is a young noblewoman immersed in all the glamor of the Vatican Palace. Yet after a brutal killing shocks the city, Lucrezia learns that a dark truth lies beneath the surface of the Papal Court: in their ruthless quest for power, her father and brother are willing to poison their enemies.

Her family are murderers.

After discovering that her new husband is next to die, Lucrezia struggles to help him escape from Rome before the assassins strike. Against a barrage of political intrigues, papal spies, and diabolical tricks, Lucrezia uses all her wits to defy her family and save her husband from assassination.

But as tragedy looms ever closer, and her plans gradually fail, she finds herself confronting an enemy far more sinister than she ever imagined...

1. What was the inspiration for this book and why did you choose to write Historical Fiction?

Lucrezia Borgia was my inspiration. She was once described as the 'greatest whore there ever was in Rome', and many artists and writers have portrayed her as a poisoner, an evil seductress, or a femme fatale. But I was interested in the fact that, despite living in the most scandalous era of papal history, very few people in her own time accused Lucrezia of any crimes. Her powerful father, Pope Alexander VI, and her ruthless brother Cesare Borgia, may have been guilty of assassinations, murder, unbridled extravagance, and general debauchery, but there is no historical evidence to link Lucrezia to the plots and killings attributed to her family. So, I was inspired by this lesser-told story about Lucrezia's life - the story of how a young, relatively powerless noblewoman gained the strength to break away from the clutches of her family and took control over her own life.

2. What do you think will make your story different or unique to others in the market?

Most books about Lucrezia Borgia tend to narrate her entire life story as a sprawling drama. My novel is unique. It's the first to fictionalize her story as a psychological thriller, focused on the most crucial and dangerous period in her life - the true and scandalous events of her marriage to Alfonso of Aragon in Rome.

3. Is this book going to be a series and if so, how many are planned for the series? If the answer is no, then the question is will you write in this era again?

*Both the historical works that I've written - *The Marlowe Conspiracy* and *Poison In The Blood* - are standalone novels set in the renaissance era, and I'd definitely consider writing about this period of history again. The Renaissance was such an exciting time, so full of color, danger, and spectacle. However, for a change, the next historical novel I plan to write will actually be set in the 17th century and will also be the start of a new series.*

4. How long did it take you to research and write this book?

I love to do extensive research for my novels. Generally, I spend about 6 months researching and planning before I start to write. My novels are often based around dramatic historical figures, such as Christopher Marlowe or Lucrezia Borgia, so I need to thoroughly understand their lives before I can tackle them as fictional characters. After so much preparation, the initial writing of the story can then be very quick, usually only 3-4 months, with another few months of rewriting and polishing. I generally produce one novel a year, although this may speed up when I start writing a series.

5. What does a typical writing day include for you?

I'm fairly regimented in my writing routine and work from 9 to 6 every day. I find that I have to limit the hours I spend writing, or it could take over my whole life completely! I also need total silence when I'm writing a novel. I can't work with any distractions at all. In fact, when things get a little too loud, I have a pair of industrial standard earmuffs to block out the noise (I'm not joking!).

6. Do you plan your books out or do you let inspiration take you where it will?

I'm the type of writer who needs everything planned in detail before the words hit the page. I prefer to let the inspiration come in the planning stage, when I can fully devote myself to the story and characters without having to worry about composition. This way, by the time I start the actual writing, I can devote my energy where it needs to be: in choosing the most vivid words, and crafting the most effective sentences, description, and dialogue, etc.

7. If you could be a character in this book, who would you be and why?

Interesting... I'd probably be Lucrezia's brother Cesare. Despite some of the undesirable traits of his character, I admire his confidence and absolute dedication to achieving all his goals. However, the character that I probably most resemble is Lucrezia's advisor, Niccolò Machiavelli - a poor and struggling writer!

8. If there was a movie made from this book who would you chose to play the major characters?

I think Marlon Brando would be a good match for Lucrezia's father, Pope Alexander VI. Cesare would need to be someone physically imposing and intelligent, an actor like Mark Strong or Clive Owen. Lucrezia is harder... but I was impressed with Haley Atwell in the 'Pillars of The Earth' miniseries and could see her in the role. Interestingly, there's a new miniseries on Showtime about the Borgias that's just started - they have an entirely different cast than I had in mind, but it should be interesting to see how top class actors like Jeremy Irons tackle the roles.

9. Do you plan on writing any other genres in the future?

I'm just about to start a new detective series. Unlike my previous work, this novel will have a contemporary setting and be very modern in style. However, it does have an historical basis too: the story is inspired by one of the most notorious and perplexing unsolved murders in English legal history.

10. If you had a \$50 Amazon voucher, what books would you buy with it?

Probably a lot of classic novels - particularly books from the 18th century. I think writers like Robert Louis Stevenson and Wilkie Collins did an unsurpassed job of creating stories with intriguing plots, rich characters, and an intelligent style. I also like to deluxe editions with leather binding, gilt edging, and illustrations, etc. Maybe I wouldn't be able to stretch that \$50 very far, after all!

ENCHANTED BY JOSEPHINE

Monday, May 9, 2011

Lucrezia Borgia WEEK: Author Interview- Book Reviews and GIVEAWAYS!!!!

Today begins the week here at Enchanted by Josephine with a fantastic Author Interview.

What if I were to tell you that I have come across a most talented new author who's written about that most outrageously decadent family-the Borgias; their full history like never written before...including a twist to the history involving poison? Wouldn't you want to learn more? Would you be interested in reading his work...duh??

Today I have the immense pleasure of introducing to you, [Matthew G. Scarsbrook](#), author of [Poison in The Blood; the Memoirs of Lucrezia Borgia](#) - and [The Life and Times of Lucrezia Borgia](#) .



Scarsbrook has agreed to answer some of my questions in today's interview. Please welcome this wonderful author!

1) A Canadian first, but a true expert on British history and culture - For this novel you've had to switch to Italian history (and the Borgias!) What was the fascination? Why the Borgias or this particular period in history-place?

Firstly, I love the renaissance era - it was such an exciting time, so full of new ideas, new

confidence, creativity, color, danger and spectacle. After writing about the English renaissance, I was keen to explore this fascinating time in another country - and what better than Italy, the birthplace of the entire movement?

As for the Borgia family, they were simply the most dramatic set of individuals in a very dramatic time. Lucrezia's father, Pope Alexander VI, was notorious for keeping a herd of courtesans roaming about the Vatican, and was rumored to dispatch many of his enemies with a custom-made poison called 'Cantarella'. Lucrezia's brother, Cesare Borgia, was a shrewd and merciless Captain-General of the Papal army, and served as the inspiration for Machiavelli's 'The Prince'. Even Lucrezia herself was said to possess a ring with a tiny poison capsule which she used to secretly empty venom into drinks at banquets. The reign of the Borgias was the most scandalous era in papal history, marked by constant wars, assassinations, murder, unbridled extravagance, debauchery and allegations of incest. If that isn't the stuff of stories, then I don't know what is!

2) About Lucrezia...Do you think history in general was rather fair; or too hard on her? Please share with us one thing about Lucrezia that my readers might not know and would love to learn.

Although modern historians have tried to rehabilitate her reputation, I think history on the whole has treated Lucrezia fairly unjustly. She was once described as the 'greatest whore there ever was in Rome', and many artists and writers have portrayed her as a poisoner, an evil seductress, or a femme fatale. But I was interested in the fact that, despite living in the most scandalous era of papal history, very few people in her own time accused Lucrezia of any crimes. Her powerful father and her ruthless brother may have been guilty of assassinations, murder, and general debauchery, etc., but there is no historical evidence to link Lucrezia to the plots and killings attributed to her family. So, I was inspired by this lesser-told story about Lucrezia's life - the story of how a young, relatively powerless noblewoman gained the strength to break away from the clutches of her family and took control over her own life.

A lesser known fact about Lucrezia? Despite being less than 20 years of age, she was a capable leader and was given the governorship of several cities within papal control. And for a few short periods, while Pope Alexander VI was away from the city, she was even placed in charge of the Vatican. To this day, she is the only woman to officially preside over the Holy See!

3) It isn't always typical for male authors to write in the female voice. What is your opinion and experience regarding this? (advantages - drawbacks if any?)

It may not be common, but there's certainly a long history of male authors writing as women, dating back to Daniel Defoe in the 17th century, to Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins in the 18th century, to modern authors like Nick Hornby and Kazuo Ishiguro. It's really not as difficult as many people might think. As individuals, we ultimately only know what it is like to be ourselves - I have no special, innate insight into what it is like to be another person, whether it's a man or a woman, a Pope or a peasant. But as an artist, it's my job to bring to life diverse characters, to use my imagination to sympathize and understand every character's point of view that I write. So, while I can't know what it's like to be another person, I can imagine myself as

another person. Gustav Flaubert was once asked how he managed to write so well as a woman in 'Madame Bovary', and he simply replied "Madame Bovary, c'est moi" - ("Madame Bovary, it's me"). I think that answer is my own, too: I am Lucrezia Borgia, just as I am every other character in my novel.

4)What type of research was needed to write your book? How long did it take? The challenges?

I love to do extensive research for my novels. Generally, I spend about 6 months researching and planning before I start to write. My novels are often based around dramatic historical figures, such as Christopher Marlowe or Lucrezia Borgia, so I need to thoroughly understand their lives before I can tackle them as fictional characters. After so much preparation, the initial writing of the story can then be very quick, usually only 3-4 months, with another few months of rewriting and polishing. I generally produce one novel a year, although this may speed up when I start writing a series.

5)What is in your future writing plans? Shall we expect more historical novels from you?

I'm just about to start a new detective series. Unlike my previous work, this novel will have a contemporary setting, although it has an historical basis too: the story is inspired by one of the most notorious and perplexing unsolved murders in English legal history. I also have a very unique idea for the main detective and the general setting, but it's top secret for now. If I told you, I'd have to kill you... which is rather fitting for a murder mystery!

6) Where can readers learn more about you and your books (blogs, sites, where to purchase...)

To learn more about me or my writing, please visit my website <http://www.mgscarsbrook.com> where you can read samples of my novels, see professional reviews of my work, and find all the latest news. You can also follow me on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/authormgscarsbrook>, or visit my author page at goodreads: http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/4447495.M_G_Scarsbrook.

All my novels are available as paperbacks and eBooks from most major bookstores online, including: Amazon, Amazon UK, Barnes and Noble, Apple iBookstore, Sony, Kobo.

Anyway, thanks a lot for reading this. And thank-you to Enchanted By Josephine for giving a new writer like me such a great opportunity!

Thank You so much Matthew Scarsbrook!!!