

10 Questions with Nicole Evelina
About her novel *Camelot's Queen*

1. What makes *Camelot's Queen* different from all the other Arthurian stories out there?

It covers the same ground as the traditional tales (Guinevere's marriage to Arthur, their lives together as king and queen, her affair, the Holy Grail, the beginnings of the fall of Camelot), but as in the first book, I've given the circumstances and motivations my own twist. For example, Morgan is a disrupting influence, but not in the way you expect. Guinevere's reasons for her affair are very logical and not the love-sickness or lust we typically associate with it (although she does love and lust after Lancelot). *Camelot's Queen* also deals with some of the darker aspects of Arthurian legend, such as abuse and violence, which could turn some people off. But because it is part of the legend, I didn't feel right leaving it out just because it can be unpleasant.

This book is also only one part of a larger tale, so I'm hoping people will read all of the books and take the story in context. I have a fear that those who skip the first book will misunderstand some of the relationships and motivations in the second book. But I guess that's the risk every series author takes.

2. How long did it take you to write *Camelot's Queen*?

About four years, but there was a lot of down time in there. If you don't count the time I was waiting between finishing the main draft and getting it ready for publication, it was more like a year and a half.

3. Who are some new characters in this book?

Of the traditional Arthurian characters, we see much more of Arthur and Lancelot, who really didn't get a lot of page time in the first book. New, too, are Arthur's knights, especially mysterious Malegant, sexist Bors, and Arthur's son Mordred. We also see Nimue grow to adulthood. Alle and Octha are Arthur's Saxon adversaries.

New characters who are my own creation include a pirate-turned-assassin-and-spy named Sobian, a woman from Arthur's past, and Elga and Mayda, Saxon sisters, one of whom saves Arthur and Guinevere and the other of whom vows to destroy them.

4. What's the hardest thing about writing the second book in a series?

Many books suffer from what's called "second book syndrome" in which the plot lags because the second book is really just a bridge from the first to the third. I had the opposite problem. This book is so packed with action that I had to cut much of the storyline with Isolde in order to keep the book from getting too long. (Don't worry, it's going in its own novel about her.) There were also some of the knight's adventures and details about Arthur's conversion to Christianity that didn't make it into the final draft.

For me, the hardest thing was meeting my own expectations. So much happens in this book and I wanted it to be a strong follow up to the first book. I didn't want to let anyone down. And I think I achieved that. I'm quite proud of this book.

I was lucky that I wrote this book before the first one came out, so I didn't have any idea of what my audience expectations might be. Now, as we approach it's publication, I'm sensing topics/themes/scenes that people may have strong reactions to and it's making me nervous. But I made the choices I did for a reason, so I have to trust that readers will understand that and forgive me if what I've written doesn't match their personal views of Camelot and this storyline.

5. Your books in this series have won several awards and garnered national praise. What is that like?

In a word, crazy! The first one was *Daughter of Destiny* being selected for *Library Journal's* SELF-e Select program, which only happens for a small number of self-published books. Then *Library Journal* gave the book a glowing review.

I was shocked when *Daughter of Destiny* was short-listed for the Chaucer Award for Historical Fiction. In the judging process, they moved it into the Chatelaine Awards for Women's Fiction/Romantic Fiction, where it took first place in the legacy/legend category.

For a debut indie author, that kind of national recognition is astounding. I am still in awe and I feel so blessed!

6. What has your interaction with readers been like so far?

I haven't had any public signings yet, so all my interaction has been online. Getting my first fan mail was the most surreal experience. I'm used to being the one writing those gushing notes (I've written quite a few), not receiving them. It is such an honor when people reach out and express their love of what you've put your heart and soul into. There's nothing in the world like it.

7. Why do you write?

Because I have to. I know that's a clichéd answer, but it's true. For me, writing is like breathing. I have these characters in my head who talk and demand their stories be told and I think if I didn't write, I'd be crazy. I know when I don't, I get cranky and irritable. Even if I never become a bestseller, I'll be happy because I'm doing what I was put on this earth to do.

8. Do you have another project in the works? If so, what is it?

I always have another project in the works! Right now I'm gearing up to release my first romantic comedy, *Been Searching for You*, on May 10. I'm also doing final edits on a historical fiction I'll release on July 25 called *Madame Presidentess*. It's the story of Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to run for President in 1872. I'm very excited to get her story out, especially with the tie-ins to this year's election.

After that I will finish *Mistress of Legend*, the final book in the Guinevere's Tale trilogy, which I hope to release either late this year or early next year. I'm not sure if I'll write Isolde's story next or take a break from Arthurian legend to explore another woman's story. Right now it's between a relatively unknown WWII heroine and a 19th century woman who is kidnapped by Indians.

9. What made you decide to be an indie author?

It was a combination of things, and a decision that I took a long time in coming to. One of the main factors was that it was time for me to get my work out there. It had been four and a half years – and six books – since I started querying agents. My work was just stacking up with no place to go, even though I had people telling me through my blog and social media that they wanted to read it. I wanted to be able to learn from it, which I can't do unless others can read it. That, combined with wanting to have *Madame Presidentess* published before the November 2016 Presidential election (which was by then impossible to do traditionally because of the time it takes to produce a book), and a desire to have more control over my career, led me to start my own publishing company. However, I am open the possibility of traditional publishing in the future. I haven't ruled anything out.

10. Who is part of your publishing team?

I have a fabulous editor in Cassie Cox of Joy Editing. She is constantly pushing me to dig deeper into the why behind what I write, which makes the books so much stronger. Her proofreader, Devon, is amazingly talented as well. Her eagle eye has prevented a few embarrassing mistakes.

I use Jenny Quinlan of Historical Editorial as my cover and social media designer. I love working with her. She has great vision (pardon the pun) and can manage to summarize the entire book in single image.

Liz and Morganna at The Editorial Department handle my interior layout, for which I am immensely grateful. Not only to they make the books look eloquent, they have a strong attention to detail and have save me from making mistakes on more than one occasion.

And there's also my audio book narrator, Serena Scott Thomas. She is signed on to record all three of the Guinevere books, and I hope she'll be available for Morgan and Isolde's stories in the future. She has an uncanny knack to breathe life into these characters exactly (if not better) than they sound in head. And she's fun!