

## **Author Interview – Samantha Mattocks**

### **Tell us a bit about you**

I was born in Norfolk and apart from three years at university on the gorgeous Yorkshire coast, I have lived here all my life. In 2004, I began *The Arabian Magazine*, an international publication all about the Arabian horse, and in 2021, I began *nourish* magazine, a food and drink magazine for East Anglia.

That sums up my passions, really – horses and food. I appeared on *MasterChef* in 2019, I have my own foodie website, *The Delicate Diner*, and we have bred Arabian horses for most of my life. Just add in cats and a good book, and you have me in a perfectly-shaped non-pigeon pigeon hole!

### **Is this your first book?**

It is my second published book, and my first novel. In 2009, I published a collection of poetry, written from teens to early 20s and matched with my photography taken around the world with *The Arabian Magazine*. *progress* sold out within six hours of publishing, and has been reprinted many times and can be found in homes around the world.

At university, I wrote a collection of short stories, and in my 20s, a couple of novellas. At school, I wrote plays that were performed. I have just always been a writer – it is impossible for me not to.

### **What inspired your writing?**

So many things! It can be tune I hear on the radio, a turn of phrase, the way the light catches my eye – nature is a wonderful inspiration.

As for *Sandstorm*, it was developed out of many hours sat in airports and on planes, travelling solo around the world. There is something wonderful about sitting down with a blank page and creating something from nothing, and I would take some of the moments I had experienced – a drive through Florida, for example, with the Old Man's Beard hanging from the trees – and turn it into a scene in the book.

Music also plays a huge part in my writing. I am friends with an amazing group called *Tinderbox* – we were at university together. On their first album, they had a song called *Walk Away*. I knew I wanted to write a scene based on that piece of music, and I finally did so. For *Sandstormers* reading this, it is the scene in Menton with Alejandro and Sienna, when they are on the beach together!

### **Do you have a favourite character in the book? (and why?)**

I love all of them so much – they come to life as I write, and I often find myself thinking 'what would X do in this situation?'. However, if I had to pick one, it would be Rin. I find her journey fascinating, and while she was never my favourite character when I began *Sandstorm*, I particularly love the evolution of her character and the way she and Sienna interact together.

### **Are any characters in the book based on real people?**

Ha ha, no! I think anyone who has been in the equine world will recognise certain types of characters, but they are just that – characters and fiction. A reviewer in Dublin said that some of the people reminded her of people on the dressage circuit; when I shared that, it stopped friends trying to guess who was who in the Arabian horse world! All that said, there is one scene in the book that is real, just one. And it is in there with the blessing of both characters. But I will say no more!

### **Do horses play a big part in your life?**

Yes, very much so. My mum was breeding Arabian horses before I was born, so I grew up with them. I always say that I was born with a horse in my heart and a pen in my hand, and that has remained true throughout my life. Add in *The Arabian Magazine*, and all the travelling I have done through the magazine – although I cannot omit own very adventurous drive to Verona in 1999 with our homebred mare - that has enabled me to meet amazing horses who have reduced me to tears

just by looking into their eyes, and the Arabian is ever-present. They always say that the horse's eye is its window to the soul, and that is especially true with the Arabian.

**And romance?**

I haven't been very lucky in love! Maybe one day, my own Alejandro or Paul will come along and whisk me away!

**Will there be a follow up book?**

Yes, I have already started the sequel, Firestorm. I always planned two books, but who knows what the future will hold there – I would hate to limit myself, and the characters, to something I decided a decade ago. Books have a habit of writing themselves, so we shall see what happens.

**Do you have other writing projects?**

Yes, I am currently working on a children's book. I love cats, and I was heartbroken when I lost my beautiful black cat Merlin earlier this year. I now have a fluffy ginger kitten called Mishkins and the night before he arrived, he inspired a book within me. I am having fun with doing something different.

I also write a lot about food, for both The Delicate Diner and nourish, and I am a food and drink columnist for Norfolk Online. I have several other book ideas inside me; there are just never enough hours in the days!

**Where can people find you/contact you?**

E-mail is always the best way – [write@samanthamattocks.com](mailto:write@samanthamattocks.com)