

The *Ambition & Destiny* Newsletter
November 2016



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The *Ambition & Destiny* series was inspired by research into Family History. It is a story of love, loss and betrayal set in against a backdrop of Victorian England.

Hooks & Eyes: The Title for Part 1

Choosing the title for a book, never mind a series, is one of those things that's easier said than done. Not only do you need to find something that relates to the story and draws readers in, you also need to find something that hasn't been used before on Amazon. Given that there are approximately 3.5 million books on Amazon, that's no easy task! I've had a working title for Part 1 for years, but when it came to it, I realised it suggested the book (and by association, the series) was a romance. While there are periods of romance, by the time you get to Part 3, it has all but disappeared.

The idea for **Hook & Eyes** came from Mr Weatherby. As described in last month's Newsletter, he made his fortune making Hooks & Eyes, the clothes fastenings that are still in use today. The business runs in the background to the main story and so I put this, and four other titles, to a vote among people who had already read the book. Hooks & Eyes polled better than I expected and was a clear winner. Expect to see a lot more of the phrase as the publication date approaches.

The Short Story has a Title too!

I'm delighted to say that the Short Story, which was only conceived as an idea in August, is now almost ready for release! When I got the first set of comments back from the editor, I was a bit overwhelmed. Did it really need that much more work? After a period of reflection I took a deep breath, addressed the comments and sent it back - approximately five thousand words longer than it had been! I have just received it back again and I'm

delighted to say there's now very little left to do.

The title for the story will be **Condemned by Fate**. One of the reasons is that the word 'Fate' ties in with 'Destiny', which is part of the overarching header of the series. The other reason is that it reflects the irony of the story, something that should become apparent when you read it. I'm still experimenting with the synopsis, but the latest version is below. Let me know what you think:

Charles is young, handsome and in love. He has everything to live for until a foul conspiracy threatens to change his life forever ...

In the summer of 1839, when Charles accepts work as a farm labourer, his only concern is earning enough money to buy a few pints of beer. That's before he meets, and falls in love with, the farmer's daughter.

Imagining their future will be together; he plans to take her home as his bride. Within days of proposing marriage, however, his life is turned upside down and he fears he may never see her again.

Condemned by Fate is a short story prequel to The *Ambition & Destiny* Series, a compelling family saga of love, loss and betrayal set against the backdrop of Victorian England.

Publication Dates

Because I have taken time out from editing *Hooks & Eyes* to concentrate on *Condemned by Fate*, I have decided that I am going to push back the launch of the series until early 2017. In the meantime, I will put *Condemned by Fate* onto Amazon and also offer it as a free download via my website. As a subscriber to this Newsletter, you will automatically get your copy. If you know anyone else who might be interested, ask them to visit www.valmcbeath.com to let me know where to send it.

Cover Designs

Producing a cover for *Condemned by Fate* is likely to be the rate limiting step in finalising the book and sending it out. I have an idea of what I want, but finding someone to do it, for a realistic price, is proving a challenge. On the positive side, I am making progress with the covers for the other books, and hope to have all three drafted in the next week to or so. If I'm happy with them, I'll ask the same designer to work on the cover for *Condemned by Fate* ... if not, I'll be back to the drawing board!

Introducing the Characters - Sarah-Ann

Before I have excerpts of the books to share, I thought I'd take the opportunity to introduce some of the characters. I promise there'll be no spoilers!

When I started researching my family history, Sarah-Ann was little more than a background character. She was a sister of Mary's late husband and, along with five other sisters, I expected that the only time she would appear in the story was at events such as weddings and funerals. That was before I came across a bit of information that forced me to reconsider her role. Now, rather than being in the background, she plays a main role throughout the series. The only things I know about her early years are that as a teenager she moved to Birmingham and lived with her sister who was married to a brewer. At some point she returned to rural Staffordshire to be with her parents, but ultimately she returned to Birmingham and married a family acquaintance. Pretty much everything else about her in Part 1 of the series is fictional. In the early drafts, I didn't get the reaction to Sarah-Ann that I expected. I saw her as a likeable person, with a few flaws, but it seemed that the readers only saw her flaws and took a dislike to her. I have now amended the story and hope that she comes across as more of a victim than a villain.

If you know of anyone else who would be interested in the books, please ask them to visit valmcbeath.com and sign up for the newsletter
