

# Romance's Historical Tattle Tale

**SARAH MacLEAN** STARTS A SCANDALOUS NEW SERIES

By Jennifer Peters

**T**HERE AREN'T MANY authors like Sarah MacLean out there. The historical romance novelist has degrees from Smith and Harvard Universities, a beloved romance review column in the Washington Post, is a New York Times, Washington Post and USA Today bestseller, has won back-to-back RITA Awards from the RWA, and she won RT's first ever Seal of Excellence award. And she just keeps getting better. This month, she's back at it with her new Scandal & Scoundrel series, which opens with *The Rogue Not Taken* (Avon). We talked to her about what it's like to be at the top of her game, and what keeps her going so that she stays there.

**You're a much-loved author — and a multiple best-seller. When you started out, did you ever imagine your books holding such important spots on readers' shelves?** I cried when I met Linda Howard. Over the summer I sat next to Jude Deveraux at a signing and I barely survived the hyperventilation. And I'm fairly certain that I terrified Lisa Kleypas with my page-by-page analysis of the magic that is *Dreaming of You*. So, yeah. I pinch myself. Daily. This is an incredible job no matter how you cut it, but when you turn up at a conference or find your book on a bookshelf next to someone you've idolized for decades? Forget it. The feeling is indescribably amazing.

**A lot of people belittle the romance genre, and historical romance in particular gets a bad rap as being all cheesy bodice-rippers. How do you react to that charge?** I think romance is misunderstood because love is so ubiquitous. We've all experienced it (or the desire for it) in one way or another, and it's all around us — used to sell us shampoo and chewing gum and car insurance. So, it seems as though a romance novel should be an easy thing to write and a tepid thing to read. Of course, we know that's not true. We know that harnessing such a deceptively common emotion in a way that echoes its breathlessness and keeps readers turning pages isn't easy. And we know that when it's done well, there's nothing that makes us feel more than a romance. So, to those who disdain the books, I say, read one. And then we'll talk.

**You pitched your new Scandal & Scoundrel series as "old-school TMZ." Can you explain that?** Our modern-day obsession with celebrity gossip isn't new. Sure, we have the Internet, so celebrity scandal is available 24 hours a day, but the truth is that our obsession with celebrity is almost identical to the scandal-mongering of the past — particularly that of the 1800s. Gossip rags were everywhere, and the aristocracy was watched and whispered and written about without quarter. So, why not marry the two? While modern-day celebrity gossip-lovers will be able to play "Spot the Scandal" with this series — it's packed with characters and scenarios that will be familiar — those who don't read Defamer.com as regularly as I do will have no trouble following the stories.



**The Rogue Not Taken is a play on the Beyoncé/Jay-Z/Solange elevator incident, but in your story the scuffle starts at a ball and then leads to a very uncomfortable carriage ride. So, we need to know: Do you think Beyoncé would be a fan of your work?**

Considering she's modern-day royalty with a dash of feminism and a happily ever after . . . I sure hope Beyoncé would enjoy my books, particularly because this series in particular is designed to ask big questions about the role of scandal and celebrity in society. Too often, the general public is quick to judge based on a photograph or an anonymous source, and I had a great time making heroes and heroines out of those whom we might not instantly adore. Surprisingly, the translations wrote themselves: an elevator at the Met Gala becomes a greenhouse at a garden party; a certain K-named sisterhood became the Soiled S's, exceedingly wealthy, unafraid of scandal and deeply loyal to each other; stolen cellphone pictures become nude paintings; and clamoring obsession from the media stays the same. The question is, who are the real people behind all these stories?

**Can you tell us a little bit about what you have planned for the upcoming Scandal & Scoundrel books? Will we see more of the Dangerous Daughters down the line?** If you've read *The Rogue Not Taken*, you've already met the hero of the next book, *A Scot In the Dark*. Much to his dismay, the Duke of Warnick inherits an unwanted dukedom and with it, an unwelcome 22-year-old ward who has allegedly sat for a nude painting and caused a scandal that makes it impossible for the duke to shirk his duties. He returns to London, furious and vowing to get her married. We all know where that plan ends up. And, if we're talking about scandal in London in 1833, of course the Dangerous Daughters return! ♦

*For more scandal, go to Sarah's website at [SarahMacLean.net](http://SarahMacLean.net).*