

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY BURTON . . .

Mary, welcome! Thank you for joining us.

You've created homicide departments for both the Richmond and Alexandria police departments for your books. Why the switch to what seems to be a more formal "agency?" Aren't the Texas Rangers more like the FBI?

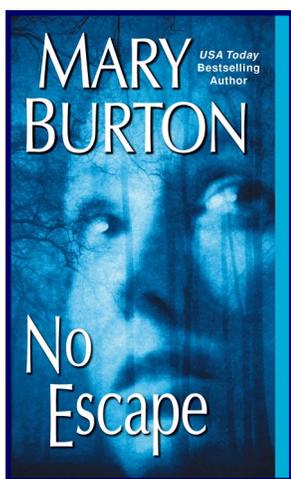
The Texas Rangers are an elite group of men and women within the Texas Department of Public Safety and have a lot more resources than most local Police Departments. I thought it would be interesting (for me and readers) to have more and quicker access to information and forensic data in the pursuit of this killer, especially considering the condensed time period in **NO ESCAPE**. I was also influenced by the reputation and history of the Rangers. They're the source of legends.

Often you hear the phrase 'One Riot, One Ranger,' associated with this elite group of lawmen. Created in 1823, the Rangers have state wide authority, which also opened up some plot opportunities.



THE SEVENTH VICTIM was the first time you set a book in Austin, the headquarters of the Texas Rangers. Now you're taking us back there in NO ESCAPE. What's happening now?

I'm betting you've already guessed there's trouble afoot. It begins with an old case, when serial killer Harvey Lee Smith insists on telling his deathbed confession to **THE SEVENTH VICTIM's** forensic psychologist Jo Granger. She wants to find out what Harvey has yet to share—the whereabouts of victims whose families hope for closure. She doesn't expect him to get inside her head. And she doesn't expect to encounter ex-husband Brody Winchester, who earned his Texas Ranger star arresting Harvey. And nobody expects a new killer, one that's mirroring Harvey's terrifying M.O. of burying his victims alive.



Harvey manages to "get inside" Jo's head by turning the conversation to her, asking her questions and telling her to "look inside herself." What makes her susceptible to his probing?

She's grown up with questions about her family. Her parents told her one story all her life and, for reasons she's never been able to explain, that story just never rang true. Harvey seems to understand that she has questions about her childhood.

Brody Winchester and Jo are suddenly thrust together because of Harvey. It's the first time they've seen each other since they divorced fourteen years ago, after a brief, painful marriage. They have a lot of baggage. What made you think they could ever get over their past?

They were young when they were first married and both have grown up over the last fourteen years. I had confidence that they'd realize it was okay to forgive each other for mistakes that they both regret.

Brody takes a lot of heat for his past behavior. How difficult was it to make him a character readers could root for?

How many of us have made mistakes in our youth? Brody is no different. However, he owns up to his mistakes and he wants to make amends. I thought he deserved a second chance and that readers would come to agree with me.

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So many characters in the book are keeping secrets. Harvey, the copy-cat killer, and Jo's mother keep people in the dark. What are Jo's secrets? Brody's?

Brody's secret is that he never believed he was good enough for Jo. That belief plagued him greatly when he was younger and may have contributed to some of his bad decisions. Now that he's older, confident, and a success in his own right, he can be the man Jo deserves. And Jo, well, I don't see her as having secrets. She's the one honest person in the book. She's always suspected her mother held secrets and she decided early in her life to be upfront and honest.

Suspense novels and romantic suspense are consistently popular with readers. Why is that?

In my mind romance and suspense are the perfect blend of genres. You've got the sizzle of romance and the smoke of the mystery. One offers the reader hope at the end and the other offers justice. And what I really love about the blend is that each creates such delightful conflict for the other.

What makes you return to the suspense genre again and again?

I love it. There are so many angles that I can use to approach romantic suspense that when I'm writing one I just never get tired of it.

What's next?

I'm calling upon the Texas Rangers again for **YOU'RE NOT SAFE**, which will be published in April. This time it's Ranger Tec Bragg and vineyard owner Greer Templeton. Though favorite characters will return to the story, this is the first time readers will meet Tec and Greer. And, as do **NO ESCAPE** and **THE SEVENTH VICTIM**, it takes place around Austin, this time on a vineyard in the Hill Country.

Where can readers find out more about your books and work-in-progress?

I post updates and photos and check in often on Facebook, so there's lots of info there. And my site is always open at www.maryburton.com. Now, with my calendar shaping up for 2014, I also expect to have lots of opportunities to visit with readers and other writers in person. Events are listed on my site at <http://www.maryburton.com/events>.

Thanks for having me!

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