

## MARY BURTON



Mary Burton enjoys the hunt. This New York Times and USA Today bestselling novelist, whose work has been compared to that of Steig Larson\*, Lisa Gardner\*\*, and Lisa Jackson\*\*\*, has been intrigued by investigative work and the people who do it since Virginia, her home state, was stung by a string of serial killings that spanned more than twenty years. Not surprisingly, many of her suspense novels are fueled by the acts of multiple killers and the people who pursue them, as is *NO ESCAPE*, Mary's latest novel and the second in a trio of stories set in and around Austin. There she calls upon the people and resources of the state's lead investigative team, the Texas Rangers.

*NO ESCAPE*'s predecessor, *THE SEVENTH VICTIM* quickly became a USA Today bestseller. It was praised by reviewers, including Publishers Weekly, which says it "delivers action-packed suspense" and calls it "compelling." Suspense Magazine hailed it as "an excellent thriller" and a "saga that readers will find unbelievably hard to put down."

Mary's admiration for the work of law enforcement and the skills, insights and tools necessary to do it, is evident even in her earliest forays into suspense, such as *In Dark Waters*, in which a romance evolves when the Sheriff's office is called upon to solve a murder in rural Virginia. Future plots explored arson investigation, flaws within a witness protection program, and the reopening of a cold case.

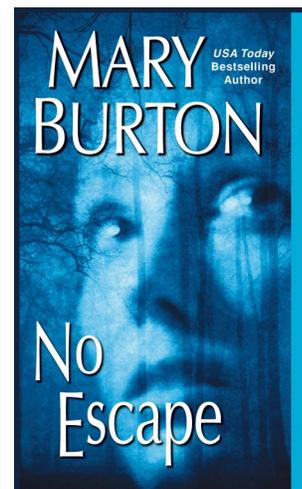
Beginning with her novel *I'm Watching You*, Mary started connecting several cases and characters within the same department or agency. For *I'm Watching You* she invented a homicide unit for her hometown of Richmond, defined its strengths, weaknesses and resources, and kept those characters and elements in place through two additional stand-alone, but related, books, *Dead Ringer* and *Dying Scream*.

The three-book arc provided numerous creative options, especially as regards character development. This larger canvas allowed her to incorporate more of the forensic and procedural detail that fascinates her and her readers, and created new opportunities to explore dynamics unique to investigators working together over time.

Her other "connected" novels are *Senseless*, *Merciless* and *Before She Dies*, all set in Alexandria, and *THE SEVENTH VICTIM*, *NO ESCAPE* and *YOU'RE NOT SAFE*, which is being published in April 2014.

Mary's research has led her to interview a wide range of law enforcement personnel, to attend forensic seminars and to handle weaponry at the firing range. She is a graduate of the Henrico County Citizens Police Academy and the Richmond FBI Citizen's Academy, and has attended Sisters in Crime's Forensic University program and the Writers Police Academy in Jamestown, North Carolina, where the focus was on undercover work, autopsies, and the theories behind why people kill.

Despite her emphasis on hard facts related to the crimes she writes about, Mary's approach to each new novel is psychological. She backs away from details, whether it's forensic research or a plot point she's already fixating upon. To begin her story she needs answers to three questions about her killers: why do they kill, what demons drive them, and how do they choose their victims. The answers are critical to her plot, she says, just as they are for detectives solving a murder.



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A Richmond native whose family roots run as deep as the nation's, Mary has lived there for most of her life. She graduated from Virginia's Hollins University and worked in marketing before deciding to write full time. Her first manuscript, a historical romance, was published in 2000.

Mary wrote several more romance novels and three novellas before embracing the dark world of suspense. She even managed to bring danger to her holiday novella, *Christmas Past*, which appears in the New York Times bestselling holiday anthology Silver Bells.

The author of twenty published novels and four novellas, Mary is a member of Thriller Writers of America, Mystery Writers of America, Romance Writers of America and Sisters in Crime, for which she is president of the Central Virginia chapter. She travels frequently for signings, speaking engagements and other appearances. She is a frequent speaker at conferences, book festivals, book stores and libraries regarding writing and genre fiction, and is frequently asked to present her "Unraveling Romantic Suspense" workshop or her day-long program "Writing Your Book...The First Step."

An avid baker and an accomplished cook, Mary's discovered that the creativity of the kitchen entwines with her professional routine in unanticipated ways. It's her ideal retreat when the writing hits a rough spot. Once there, she's working out dialogue, untangling plot lines and figuring out how to trap a killer before the oven has a chance to preheat.

When not committing murder, Mary pursues her Baking & Pastry Arts Certificate at the University of Richmond's Culinary Arts Program, and continues her involvement and appearances on behalf of Coordinators2inc, a lifetime adoption resource organization. She and her husband spend time alternately enjoying and lamenting their newly empty nest and spoiling their miniature dachshunds Buddy and Bella.

Mary is currently at work on her next novel, set in Nashville, and anticipating the November publication of her new *Union Street Bakery* novel, Sweet Expectations, written as Mary Ellen Taylor.

**\*Publishers Weekly, \*\*Library Journal, \*\*\*Library Journal**

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**NO ESCAPE**

**Mary Burton**

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