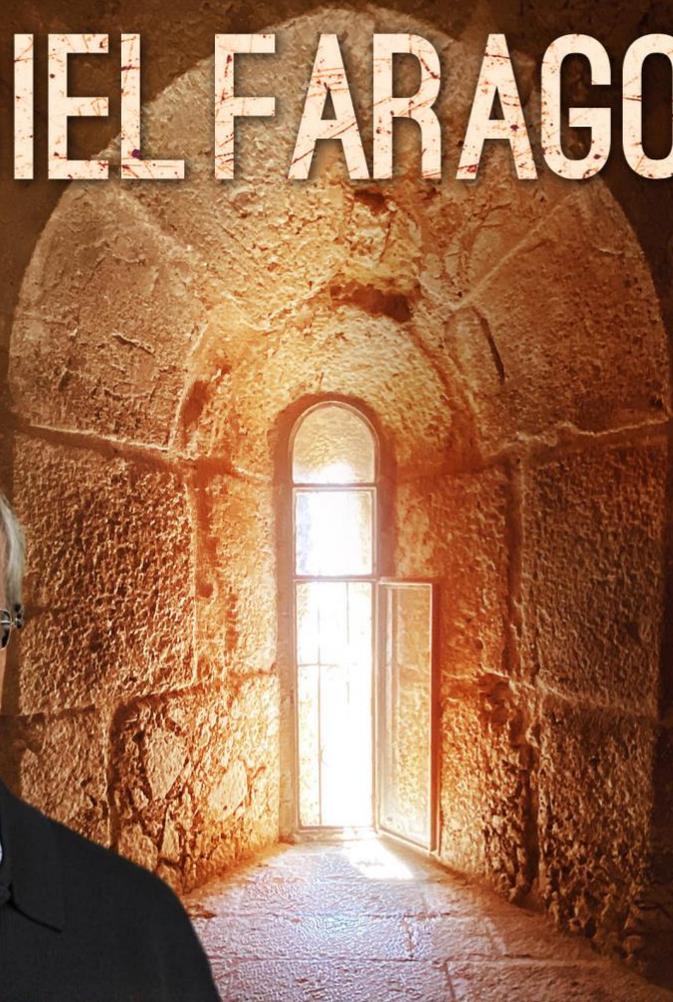


USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE JACK ROGAN  
MYSTERIES  
LITERARY COMPANION**

# The Jack Rogan Mysteries Literary Companion

Gabriel Farago

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# Table of Contents

## **Before You Begin: Author's Note**

### **Part 1: Meet The Author**

Introduction

My 'Little Book of Inspiration'

Grumpy and the Chateaubriand

Neptune and the Bombe Alaska

Winston and the Fire Warden

The Globetrotting Author

The Woodcutter, the Bear, and the King

### **Part 2: Heroes & Villains**

Heroes and Villains: A Profile Study

The Villains

The Good Guys

### **Part 3: Behind The Scenes & Main Characters Profile**

#### **THE EMPRESS HOLDS THE KEY**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

#### **THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANNA POPOV**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

#### **THE HIDDEN GENES OF PROFESSOR K**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

## **PROFESSOR K: THE FINAL QUEST**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

## **THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE MISSING HEAD**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

## **THE LOST SYMPHONY**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

## **THE DEATH MASK MURDERS**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

## **THE STOLEN ALTARPIECE**

Behind The Scenes

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

A Parting Note from the Author

**An Exclusive Invitation from Gabriel Farago**

**Connect with the Author**

# Before You Begin: Author's Note

The Jack Rogan Mysteries Literary Companion

“Unveiling the Secrets of the Jack Rogan Mysteries:

A Glimpse Beyond the Pages.”

## **A Literary Companion**

Creating a free ‘companion’ to the Jack Rogan Mysteries Series came about this way: As more books were added to the series, dedicated readers wanted to know more about what inspired the multi-layered storylines, fascinating characters, and exotic locations featured in the books. As the series now consists of eight novels and four novellas – more than 4500 paperback pages and 450 characters – readers have asked for assistance navigating this vast literary landscape.

After giving these requests a lot of thought, my publishing team and I came up with an idea: why not create a literary companion that would address all these issues? The result? *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Literary Companion*.

While each of the books and novellas in the series stands alone and can be read as such, readers familiar with some, or all of the books in the series, will be rewarded with a richer reading experience as all the books are connected in subtle ways through the characters and storylines which will only be apparent and meaningful to readers who are familiar with all the books, and have read them in sequence.

Therefore, the best way to use this Companion is as a *guide*, and the best way to use that guide is as follows:

### **How to Navigate Your Companion:**

For your convenience, we've structured the Companion into three distinct parts:

**Part One: Meet the Author** - An intimate glimpse into my world, my inspirations, and the challenges of crafting these tales.

**Part Two: Heroes and Villains** – An entertaining journey exploring the colourful heroes and villains featured in the Jack Rogan Mysteries series.

### **Part Three: Behind the Scenes and Main Characters**

**Behind the Scenes-** Step into the hidden corridors of the storytelling process, exploring the nuances and secrets that shape the narratives.

**Main Characters** - A deep dive into the lives and minds of the characters who inhabit the Jack Rogan universe, many of whom echo the enigmas and heroics of our world.

One of the main things to keep in mind when navigating your Literary Companion is this: **it is NOT a book to be read cover to cover** like one of my novels. It is a guide to be used as required.

Yes, there are engaging back stories to entertain you along the way which will make reading the guide interesting, but it is still a TOOL to be used to help existing readers navigate the series, and introduce new readers to the Jack Rogan mysteries and adventures by showcasing the writing and featuring some of the key characters along the way.

So, what to do?

May I suggest that you read the *Meet the Author* and *Heroes and Villains* segments in full as this will provide you with entertaining backstories that will enhance your literary journey and understanding of the series.

After that, simply choose the book or books and the characters you are interested in, and let your exploration begin. Each section is designed to offer insights that will not only elevate your reading experience but also provide a unique perspective on following the storylines and understanding the characters' motivations and challenges.

Have you ever pondered the mysteries hidden within history's untold stories? Or wondered about the creative alchemy that transforms real-life events into captivating fiction? This Companion is your key to unlocking these secrets. You'll journey with me from the initial spark of an idea to the final, thrilling conclusion of each book, uncovering

the real-life events that inspired the tales, the unforeseen twists in the writing process, and the hidden secrets that never made it to print.

But this is just the beginning. The *Jack Rogan Mysteries Literary Companion* offers you a window into a world where history and imagination intertwine, where mysteries that brush against the fabric of history come alive in ways you never thought possible. It is a treasure trove for those who revel in the dance of storytelling, where the magic of fiction meets the mysteries of the past.

With anticipation and excitement,

***Gabriel Farago***

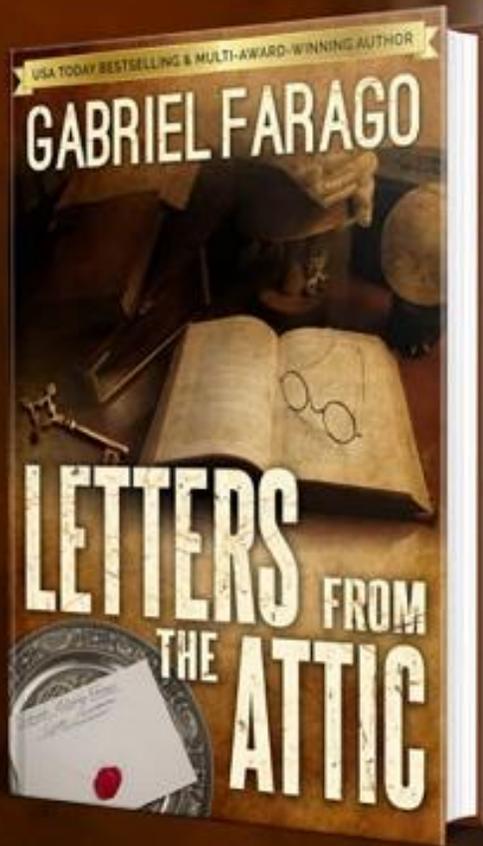
*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia*

# Part 1: Meet The Author

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

# GABRIEL FARAGO



# MEET THE AUTHOR

# Introduction

*'If you want something you've never had,  
You must be willing to do something you've never done.'*

Thomas Jefferson

The internet – social media in particular – has radically transformed the relationship between author and reader. Because writing is such a solitary endeavour, contact with readers is, in my view, hugely important and rewarding.

However, this relationship is a two-way street. I believe it is equally rewarding for readers to get to know the author of books they have enjoyed.

In a way, I have been fortunate to start my writing path a little later in life after a long and, dare I say, colourful legal career. Mine is a mature voice that speaks in several tongues and draws on diverse cultures, all of which is, of course, reflected in my writing.

Due to extraordinary possibilities opened up by the internet that would have been unheard of only a few years ago, it has been possible to connect with my readers from the very beginning and forge a special relationship that has greatly assisted me in my writing generally, and enriched my journey as a writer. And what a journey it's been! Social media has allowed me to stay in touch with my worldwide readership and explore how my work is received and resonates in various countries.

Because I travel extensively – both for research and for book launches around the globe – I like to keep my readers informed of where I am planning to go, and arrange book signings and other publicity engagements accordingly. Another effective way to do this is through my monthly newsletter, which has become very popular over the years and presently has more than 20,000 subscribers. My blogs are also widely read and have further enhanced the author–reader relationship. You can find all my newsletters and blogs on my website at <https://gabrielfarago.com.au/category/newsletter/>

But now it is definitely time for introductions:



Gabriel Farago is the USA Today Bestselling and Multi-Award-Winning Australian Author of *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* for the thinking reader and culturally curious.

As a lawyer with a passion for history and archaeology, Gabriel Farago had to wait many years before being able to pursue another passion – writing – in earnest. However, his love of books and storytelling started long before that.

‘I remember as a young boy reading biographies and history books with a torch under the bed covers,’ he recalls, ‘and then writing stories about archaeologists and explorers the next day, instead of doing homework. Whilst I regularly got into trouble for this, I believe we can only do well in our endeavours if we are passionate about the things we love; for me, writing has become a passion.’

Born in Budapest, Gabriel grew up in post-war Europe, and after fleeing Hungary with his parents during the Revolution in '56, he went to school in Austria before arriving in Australia as a teenager. This allowed him to become multi-lingual and feel ‘at home’ in different countries and diverse cultures.

Shaped by a long legal career and experiences spanning several decades and continents, his is a mature voice that speaks in many tongues. Gabriel holds degrees in literature and law, speaks several languages, and takes research and authenticity very seriously. Inquisitive by nature, he studied Egyptology and learned to read the hieroglyphs. He travels extensively and visits most of the locations mentioned in his books.

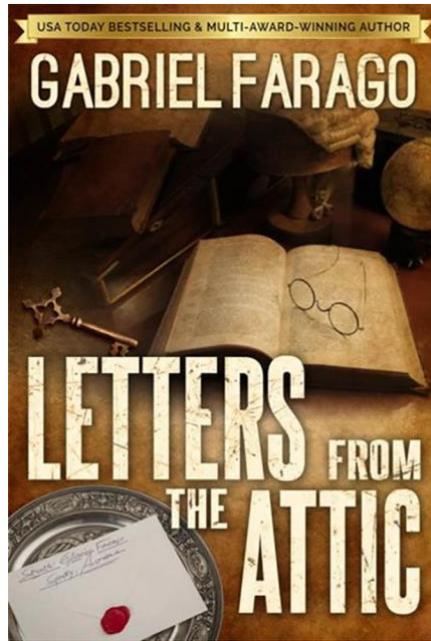
‘I try to weave fact and fiction into a seamless storyline,’ he explains. ‘By blurring the boundaries between the two, the reader is never quite sure where one ends and the other begins. This is, of course, quite deliberate as it creates the illusion of authenticity and reality in a work that is pure fiction. A successful work of fiction is a balancing act: reality must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is both entertaining and plausible.’

Gabriel lives in the Blue Mountains in Australia just outside Sydney, surrounded by a World Heritage national park. ‘The beauty and solitude of this unique environment,’ he points out, ‘give me inspiration and the energy to weave my thoughts and ideas into stories, which will in turn, I sincerely hope, entertain and inspire my readers.’

\* \* \*

Ask a violinist to tell you about his work, and he will play you something to show off his skill. Ask a storyteller about what inspires him, and he will tell you a story. In essence, I am a storyteller, and there’s no better introduction into the world of a storyteller than to read a story, or two, and that is precisely what I’m about to suggest.

The stories I would like to share with you here are all part of a collection of biographical short stories (*Letters from the Attic*, published in 2016), which provide a glimpse into my world and the creative process that shapes my work.



## My ‘Little Book of Inspiration’

My Little Book of Inspiration has been with me for a long time. I bought it in the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul many years ago. What is it? Well, it’s a little leather-bound notebook with replaceable pages. It’s a cross between a diary, notepad, and sketchbook, I suppose. But it’s a lot more than that: it’s a companion; a trusted friend who guards valuable information for me. I use it to jot down ideas, impressions, names, and places, even words or phrases I come across in the most unexpected ways.

Early in my career as a young barrister, my mentor – an eminent QC – taught me something important that I’ve never forgotten: ‘If you want to remember things later, write them down straight away,’ I can still hear him lecture me, ‘because your memory will play tricks on you. And when that happens, it’s gone forever.’ For an inquisitive author like me who relies on interesting little snippets, that would be tragic.

I’ve lost the little book several times, but somehow it found its way back to me on each occasion. I remember once leaving it in a felucca after sailing down the Nile. I was doing research for *The Empress Holds the Key* in Egypt. I thought it had gone for good that time, but a young deckhand tracked me down, brought it to our camp the next day, and returned it to me with great flourish.

And then there was this unforgettable occasion in the Kimberley in Western Australia a couple of years ago. I was writing *The Disappearance of Anna Popov* (Book 2 in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*). My Aboriginal guide had taken me to a remote cave to look at some ancient rock art, when the little book slipped out of my backpack and fell straight down into a deep gorge below. Fortunately, it didn't fall into the water, but landed on a sandbank full of crocodiles sunning themselves. My guide had to retrieve the little book with a long stick while I distracted the curious reptiles by throwing pebbles at them from above.

Over the years, the little book has been soaked countless times, spat on by a camel, chewed by a donkey, singed around the edges in a campfire, and run over by a bus. But somehow, it seems indestructible and doesn't want to leave me. We've become inseparable, and now I couldn't be without it.

## Grumpy and the Chateaubriand

I often sit up in my attic leafing through one of my early little books of inspiration. I've kept them all, you see, and they've served me well. Not only are they a treasure trove of memories, they've also provided valuable inspiration and material for my books and characters.

The need to write comes from within. It starts early – it did so with me – and never leaves you. I also learned very early on to write things down straight away and make a note of an idea or an observation that one day could be turned into a story.

As it happens, the entry in front of me reaches back to my early student days. It's a short sketch of a wonderful incident that I developed many years later into a short story.

I had just left school and was looking for a casual job before university started. The obvious choice was hospitality. A new five-star hotel had just opened in Sydney and was hiring casual staff. I applied. Start at the top, I thought; nothing to lose. To my surprise, despite my lack of experience and tender age – I had left school only two weeks before – I was accepted and placed into the care of a senior waiter for 'training'. His name was Albert, but everyone called him 'Grumpy'. Why that was so, I was soon to find out.

Grumpy wasn't really grumpy. Well, most of the time he wasn't. He was only grumpy when he was sober, which wasn't often. A feisty Scot in his late 50s, with a striking shock of white hair neatly parted in the middle, Grumpy was a waiter of the old school and a tough taskmaster; everything had to be perfect. He was head waiter in the exclusive, fine dining room of the hotel, and I became his assistant.

During my first week in the job, I wasn't allowed to even set foot in the dining room. I was in training. I had lessons in napkin folding, glass polishing, table setting, and most challenging of all, silver service. Picking up grapes with the tips of a spoon and a fork delicately held in one hand wasn't exactly my forte, but I was determined to make a fist of it. I learned how to clear tables, carry half a dozen plates and assorted cutlery neatly stacked up one arm, and juggle coffee cups without spilling a drop. We had daily uniform inspections, and I was shown how to tie my bow tie the old-fashioned way. I became the sorcerer's apprentice learning the ropes, and I was enjoying it. Then came that fateful

evening neither Grumpy nor I, nor anyone else who was present for that matter, would ever forget.

‘You’re doing well, lad,’ said Grumpy, obviously pleased with my progress. ‘Tonight, you’ll come into the dining room with me. It’s a good night because it will be very quiet.’ With that I followed Grumpy into the magnificent dining room and he took me on a tour of his domain.

The ambiance was elegant and classy. Discreet lighting, soft colours, potted palms, and crisp white tablecloths gave the room intimacy and warmth. A trio was playing smooth jazz, and only a handful of tables were still occupied. The experienced floor staff were quietly going about their business, and Grumpy explained the layout of the dining room, pointed out the table numbers, and explained where the plates and cutlery were kept and so on. Soon the dining room was empty, and the waiters were beginning to reset the tables for lunch the next day.

‘We can relax now,’ said Grumpy, loosening his bow tie. He winked at the barman, who handed him a large glass of what looked like Coke. As I was to find out later, this was a nightly ritual, only it wasn’t Coke, but a water glass full of whisky with a dash of Coke. Like most seasoned alcoholics, Grumpy hid his little demons well. He never looked drunk or slurred his speech. His hand was always steady and his manners impeccable. Yet he consumed amazing quantities of liquor every night, but only after the last diner had left the room.

‘You can start folding napkins,’ said Grumpy, pointing to the cupboard where the linen was kept. He put his empty glass on the bar and gave the bartender a nod; the glass was immediately refilled.

I had carefully folded a dozen or so napkins under the watchful eye of my mentor enjoying himself at the bar, when the lift doors opened and a group of noisy, elderly American tourists burst into the empty dining room. They had just arrived from LA and were obviously after some dinner.

Technically, the dining room was still open. Grumpy slid off the bar stool, adjusted his bowtie, and turned instantly into the consummate host. Seating his unexpected guests, and quietly barking orders at the disappointed staff, who saw an early night turning into a late

one, he handed out menus, took drink orders, and joked with the guests asking for dinner recommendations. In short, Grumpy was in full flight. He even took one of the larger tables next to the bar under his wing, because suddenly, we were short-staffed. Groups of 30 unexpected guests arriving all at once without a reservation just didn't happen in Grumpy's fine dining room.

'You stand over there,' he said, hurrying past me. 'Hold your hands behind your back and watch what I'm doing. Don't say anything, don't touch anything; just watch and learn.' I did as I was told.

Grumpy served the entrees and then cleared the table with great flair. He was a pleasure to watch. 'This is excellent experience for you,' he said next time he walked past. 'They've all ordered Chateaubriand. I'll carve it at the table. Get the trolley!'

I had something to do. I was part of the team! I hurried to the kitchen, got the carving trolley with the wooden chopping block on top, and parked it next to the table. 'Now step back and watch,' said Grumpy. 'I'm getting the steak.' I returned to my place by the bar – hands behind my back – and watched. Moments later, Grumpy arrived carrying a large silver platter with a magnificent piece of beef in the middle. The guests ahh-ed in admiration and watched Grumpy go to work with the carving knife. He carved the steak on the chopping block with great dexterity perfected by decades of practice, and then carefully placed the slices of beef in the middle of the silver platter next to the vegetables. Looking in my direction, he winked at me, reached for the serving spoon and fork and, balancing the large platter on his left arm, began to serve.

'Always serve from the left,' I remembered him telling me. 'And go around the table anticlockwise. Start with the meat, then the vegetables. Not too much, mind you, and keep an eye on colour; beans, carrots, then the spuds with a little parsley on top to make the plate look appetising and interesting. And work quickly, to keep the food warm.'

With years of experience behind every well-practiced move, Grumpy performed like a well-oiled machine. *One day, I'll be like him*, I thought, watching in admiration as Grumpy quickly worked his way around the table of six.

At first, I didn't see it because he had his back turned to me and the lights had been dimmed. Suddenly, however, all the diners sitting at Grumpy's table had fallen silent and

were staring at something in front of them. Grumpy had just finished serving his last customer and was facing my direction. That's when I saw it.

Even the most hardened alcoholic can't completely control the effect two water glasses full of Chivas Regal have on an empty stomach. Whilst Grumpy's body was functioning perfectly on autopilot, his brain had temporarily retired from making rational decisions. Grumpy had done everything by the book, except for one thing: he forgot to put the dinner plates on the table before serving the splendid fare!

A large hotel is like a village, full of gossip and quite unforgiving. The story of Grumpy's spectacular disaster and astronomical dry-cleaning bill went around the hotel corridors faster than the fire alarm. Chateaubriand à la tablecloth became the toast of the kitchen and was spoken of for years. Sadly, Grumpy left the hotel soon thereafter. Finger-pointing, ridicule, and sniggering behind his back had made it impossible for him to hold his head up high. The hotel lost a marvellous character, and I lost my mentor and a friend.

## Neptune and the Bombe Alaska

Working in swish hotels and restaurants during my university years turned out well for me. During the day, I was a full-time student haunting lecture theatres and libraries. In the evening, I transformed myself. I exchanged my T-shirt, joggers, and jeans for black trousers, polished shoes, and a tailored waistcoat, and entered the world of culinary delights for the well-heeled.

The hours were good, the tips not bad, and the meals free. What more could a student want? This was fine, except for the long university holidays. I got itchy feet then and wanted to travel. If only I could find a way to combine my night job with a little globetrotting. The opportunity to do just that came along quite unexpectedly one evening; a bit like a bolt out of the blue.

One of the regulars in the restaurant I was working in at the time turned out to be an executive with P&O. He was very interested in my studies, and somehow the travel dilemma came up in conversation. He solved it with one phone call. The solution? Cruise ships. I was offered a job as a steward during the university holidays.

Two days later, I presented myself to the purser on one of the luxury liners docking in Sydney. I was going to sea! It was the beginning of an exciting adventure that lasted several years and provided wonderful material for my stories and books. As they say, truth is often stranger than fiction, and life on board a large cruise ship can be just that, and a lot more.

The adventure started the moment I stepped on board. As I was soon to find out, I had entered a very different world. The purser, a very busy man, spent less than three minutes with me. ‘This is your cabin,’ he said pointing to a cross on a confusing floor plan. ‘Collect your uniform from the laundry – here;’ another cross. ‘You start work at five-thirty pm in the dining room – here;’ a large cross. ‘Report to the head steward; Tony Bonnici. Any questions?’ I could think of a few, but decided, wisely, that this wasn’t a good time to ask. ‘Welcome on board,’ said the purser, obviously pleased by my submissive silence, as he patted me on the back. ‘Good luck!’ The way he said ‘good luck’ definitely sounded like I could do with some. I was right.

I had no idea that the ship had so many decks below water. I’m sure my allocated cabin was just above the propellers somewhere deep down in the bowels of the ship. It took me

ages to find, but I had finally made it down to the right deck and was looking for cabin 42—my new home – when I saw it.

The shock of white hair and the swagger were unmistakable. The man walking along the corridor in front of me dressed in a stunning crisp white uniform with heavy gold braiding and epaulets was none other than Grumpy, my long-lost friend and mentor from my first job in hospitality. ‘Excuse me, sir, I’m looking for cabin 42,’ I said from behind.

The little man stopped, turned around, and looked at me with eyes widening in disbelief. ‘What are you doing here, laddie?’ he said in his heavy Scottish accent.

‘Just signed up and about to report for duty to a Mr. Bonnici,’ I replied, ‘if I can find this bloody cabin of mine.’ Grumpy put his arms around me and patted me on the back. It was a spontaneous gesture of affection by a man I had once held in high regard, but who had been humiliated by a silly mistake. Ridicule can ruin a reputation faster than a rape conviction.

‘You’re coming with me, laddie,’ he said. ‘I need chaps like you.’ ‘Are you the captain?’ I joked.

‘Something like that; in my domain.’

‘And what might that be?’

‘The first-class dining room, of course; come.’

Half an hour later, I was settling into my new cabin – four decks higher up – and was admiring my splendid new uniform in the mirror. *Working in first class*, I thought. *You beauty!* I could hardly wait to start my shift. Grumpy, my old-new boss, had arranged it all with a click of his fingers. It felt like old times and I couldn’t believe my luck. However, it was the lull before the storm, literally speaking.

There’s only one word to describe sailing out of Sydney Harbour at sunset: spectacular!

While the passengers lining the decks outside watched the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House glide past, I was preparing my new workstation in the splendid dining room. Grumpy had given me an excellent table of well-heeled VIPs to look after.

He ruled his domain like an emperor. Barking orders in all directions, he was obviously used to being obeyed. There were so many staff that the dining room looked full even without the guests.

‘You look after your table, laddie, and they’ll look after you,’ he said to me. ‘They are all millionaires on a trip around the world; more money than sense. I know you can do silver service perfectly. After all, you had good training – right? And you won’t let me down, which is more than I can say about the Italians over there. Never get into a fight with them, laddie,’ he said, lowering his voice. ‘One of them got beaten up badly last night; you are taking his place. Over there, next to the Captain’s table.’

*Oh shit*, I thought, but it was too late to protest. Grumpy had already turned away.

Many new passengers had joined the ship in Sydney and we were preparing for a special gala dinner to welcome them on board. The menu was mind-boggling and the selection of wines unbelievable. I was too busy to feel nervous. However, Grumpy had warned me about the American actress sitting next to the purser on my table. ‘She’s very demanding, laddie. Used to being fussed over, and quite prickly,’ he said. ‘Always serve her first, call her Madam, and give her your best smile. Here she comes now – look.’

Well past her prime and dressed in a tight-fitting black evening gown that should only have been worn by a woman half her age, the lady in question swept into the packed dining room. Turning heads for all the wrong reasons, and followed by her much older, short, bald and beaming billionaire husband, she slowly made her way to the table. Tall and very skinny – obviously the result of years of strategic starvation – she looked more like a well-dressed scarecrow than a diva commanding adulation. Her stunning hairdo was a work of art held together by copious quantities of hairspray that made it look like a bleached blonde halo made of polished concrete. She wore so much jewellery that one had to wonder how such slender wrists and a swan-like neck could possibly cope with so many gems and so much gold. However, most disconcerting of all – at least for me having to lean over to serve her – was her cleavage ...

Leaving little to the imagination, her huge, surgically enhanced breasts almost burst out of her dress. She ate very little, but drank a lot – martinis mostly – and smiled all the time. It was one of those permanent one-facelift-too-many smiles that made me cringe every time she beamed in my direction. She was without doubt the most amazing-looking 60something I had ever come across. Yet fate would soon bring us a little closer together in a way I could never have imagined. And I can blame it all on Neptune ...

The seas between Australia and New Zealand are notorious; they can be very rough. Neptune must have had a serious disagreement with the mermaids that evening because the sea began to boil soon after we had cleared away the main course and were preparing for the highlight of the evening – dessert.

Despite excellent stabilisers, the ship began to roll quite heavily. Some of the diners actually became ill and had to leave the table, but not my actress. She never stopped talking – mostly about films nobody had ever heard of – and her rasping, southern drawl dominated the conversation at the table.

‘Now listen carefully,’ said Grumpy, addressing us in the kitchen. ‘The dessert is Bombe Alaska,’ he announced, ‘and will be served in a special way. This is how we’ll do it ...’

I must pause here and explain what this spectacular dessert is made of. Essentially, it’s a gooey ball of meringue with an ice cream-and-sponge centre. It is decorated with raspberries and has sparklers on top for effect, which are lit before serving, one huge platter per table.

Grumpy was in his element. He was arranging the dessert presentation with military precision. The lights were dimmed, the sparklers lit and the orchestra gave us a dramatic drum-roll entry. We were on our way.

My silver tray was so heavy that I had to rest it on my shoulders to be able carry it with one hand. By now, the ship was rolling alarmingly and it was quite difficult to walk in a straight line. I had almost reached my table and was about to lean over and put down the tray when suddenly the ship lurched sideways. My Bombe Alaska didn’t like this and continued to move stubbornly forward. It became airborne and for an instant it turned into the real thing – a projectile. It missed the actress’s concrete halo by a whisker before landing on the table directly in front of her. Then it did what every good bomb is supposed to do: it exploded. Spectacularly!

For a moment there was stunned silence, then the lights went back on revealing the full extent of the disaster. At first, I couldn’t believe my eyes. How one dish could cause so much havoc was difficult to comprehend.

Meringue and ice cream appeared to have reached every corner of the table. None of the diners had been spared, but somehow, the actress seemed to have borne the full brunt

of the explosion. A large chunk of meringue with the sparkler still going strongly had embedded itself in her hairdo, making it sag in the middle. Melting ice cream was sliding down her neck and disappeared into her cleavage on a happy journey to God knows where. The whole left side of her face was a sticky mess of goo with strands of hair plastered across her forehead. That's when she began to scream hysterically. Unfortunately, devoted hubby sitting next to her was unable to come to her rescue, but at least he was no longer bald. He now wore a toupee of raspberry-covered sponge. Unable to see, he was furiously wiping his face in a vain attempt to dig the squashed raspberries out of his burning eyes.

Still in shock, I looked around: barely a table had been spared. The extent of the mess was unbelievable. The elegant dining room had turned into a disaster zone. Needless to say, this made me feel a little better; at least I wasn't alone ...

So ended my first day at sea. It was the beginning of a wonderful adventure with many memorable experiences to come.

## Winston and the Fire Warden

To have your case adjourned on Monday morning after having worked through the entire weekend with little or no sleep, is every barrister's nightmare. Sadly, that was exactly what happened to me on this occasion. I was staring down the barrel of a week without work.

Bugger! Disappointed, I walked back to my chambers.

When I opened the door to my room, I noticed that the small portable TV that I kept on top of my drinks cabinet to watch the cricket was switched on. That's strange, I thought, walking over to the cabinet to turn off the TV. Before I could reach for the switch, I heard a strange growl. Looking over my shoulder, I saw a small dog, eyes bulging with disapproval, staring at me. At first I didn't trust my eyes, but when I turned around to face the strange visitor, there was no denying it: there was a dog sitting on my Chesterfield, watching television. Quite small but feisty, with a head that was a little too big, tiny ears, and a squashed nose that suggested he liked to chase parked cars, he was snorting and making other obviously hostile noises. When I tried to reach for the switch again to turn off the TV, the growl became louder, and the hairs on his back began to bristle. Realising that confrontation wasn't an option, I began to slowly back away towards the door.

Tom-Tom was busy as usual. She excelled at multitasking. I waited until she came up for air after answering several calls at the same time, before stating my case.

'There's a dog in my room watching television,' I said calmly. Tom-Tom stared at me, just as the dog had done moments before.

'What are you doing here?' she asked. 'You're supposed to be in court!'

'I wish I was; adjournment.'

'Shit! Come with me and not a word to anyone.' With that, Tom-Tom got up, and hurried down the corridor towards my room. 'Cyril's wife came in half an hour ago with that wretched dog, Winston. She was on her way to the dentist and wanted to leave Winston with Cyril for an hour. He's in court, so she left him with me!'

'And you parked him in my room and turned on the TV to entertain him. Is that it?' I said.

Tom-Tom looked at me sheepishly and shrugged. 'He likes television. You've got to keep him in there until she gets back.'

‘You’re kidding!’

‘Name your price.’

‘I should be in court running a case; instead, I’m back in my room doggy-sitting?’

‘What’s that?’ said Tom-Tom, pointing to the open door of my room. ‘You left your door open? Jesus!’

Winston was gone.

Tom-Tom was becoming hysterical. ‘You let him out!’ she shouted.

‘Calm down; he couldn’t have gone far. Let’s find him. You go that way; I’ll try the other side.’

A barrister’s floor on Monday morning is pandemonium. The reception area was full of instructing solicitors and their anxious clients – standing room only – and the floor clerk was trying to answer a dozen questions at the same time. Thankfully, the dog wasn’t there. Relieved, I hurried past. As I turned the corner, I just caught a glimpse of a curly tail disappearing into one of the rooms to my left.

Looking frantic, Tom-Tom came running towards me from the opposite direction.

‘Have you seen him?’ she asked.

‘He’s just gone into Clive’s room,’ I said, pointing to an open door. Coming closer, we could hear voices.

‘My God. Lady Ashburton is in there with her solicitor; important conference. Do something!’

‘What exactly did you have in mind?’

‘You’re the barrister; *improvise!*’

‘It’s not my dog.’

‘It’s our problem.’

‘Oh no. It’s *your* problem.’

‘You owe me.’

That was true. Tom-Tom surely knew when to call in favours. I went down on one knee, pretending to tie my shoelaces and, keeping my head down, I peered around the corner through the open door into the room. What I saw wasn’t encouraging.

Lady Ashburton sat on a chair facing Clive’s desk with her back turned towards me.

Her solicitor sat next to her. Clive sat behind his desk, facing the door. Thankfully, he was reading something and didn't look in my direction. The really disturbing bit, however, was lurking under Lady Ashburton's chair directly in front of me.

'Can you see him?' whispered Tom-Tom anxiously.

'I can, but it's not looking good,' I said, standing up.

'What's he doing?'

He's chewing the strap of Lady Ashburton's handbag.'

'Oh my God! No one noticed?'

'No. Not yet.'

'What are we going to do?'

'I have an idea; come.' I mainly said that to comfort Tom-Tom. However, something had crossed my mind, but I needed a little more time to work out the details. It was a daring plan.

'You're the fire warden-right?' I asked.

'I am,' said Tom-Tom.

'Get your helmet and a blanket. I'll give Clive a call. We'll meet in my room. Hurry!'

I picked up the phone and called Clive. 'It's Gabriel, Clive. Don't hang up!' I said. 'I know you're in conference, but this is urgent; trust me. We have a crisis ...' I explained the situation to Clive the best I could. To his credit, he didn't panic, nor did he lose his cool. After all, barristers are supposed to be able to deal with pressure, and Clive rose to the occasion.

'Can you see him?' I asked.

'Yes,' he mumbled, 'it's just as you said.'

'Still chewing?'

'Yes, I think so. He looks happy.'

'Good. Now, listen carefully, this is what we are going to do ...'

'So far so good,' I said to Tom-Tom as she burst into my room with a blanket and fire helmet under her arm. 'Put your helmet on and come with me. I've just spoken to Clive; he knows.'

'What are we going to do?'

‘Improvise. We’ll pretend the fire alarm’s gone off somewhere in the building, and we have to assemble at the lifts as a precaution. I’ll distract Lady Ashburton and the solicitor and usher them out of the room with Clive, and you throw the blanket over the dog and subdue the beast; easy.’

‘You’re out of your mind!’

‘You have a better idea? Let’s hear it.’

‘Clive’s in on this?’

‘Sort of.’

‘Here goes my job!’

‘Bullshit! Just think of it as a fire drill; piece of cake.’

‘How can you joke at a time like this?’

‘Let’s go.’

Tom-Tom’s red cashmere jumper certainly looked the part, but the fire helmet, which was several sizes too big, gave her an almost comical look. *The stilettos are a bit of a worry*, I thought, watching Tom-Tom strut down the corridor like a starlet in some crazy Broadway show.

‘Here we go,’ I said, taking a deep breath. ‘Let the show begin.’ With that, we burst into Clive’s room.

‘Sorry to interrupt,’ I said, ‘we have an emergency!’

‘Fire alarm,’ said Tom-Tom, bending down looking for Winston.

‘We must leave the room at once,’ I said, pulling Lady Ashburton out of the chair. She was a frail creature in her late seventies, and I almost lifted her off her feet.

‘How exciting,’ said Lady Ashburton, holding onto my arm.

Lady Ashburton’s solicitor, an elderly, reserved man I had met before, just looked at us in amazement, but didn’t move.

‘Clive, take Mr Barlow to the lifts; we may have to evacuate. Quickly!’

I was almost at the door with Lady Ashburton in tow, when I heard it; a muffled growl. Looking over my shoulder I saw Tom-Tom kneeling on the floor. She had thrown the blanket over Winston and was trying to pull the strap of Lady Ashburton’s handbag out of his locked jaws. Not surprisingly, Winston refused to cooperate and put up a fight.

‘What’s that?’ said Barlow pointing to Tom-Tom, who was trying to subdue Winston as he struggled like crazy under the blanket.

‘A firebug? She’s the fire warden,’ said Clive calmly. ‘Let’s get out of here.’

I thought we had almost made it, when Lady Ashburton stopped in her tracks and began to panic. ‘My handbag; where’s my handbag?’ she shouted. ‘I don’t go anywhere without my handbag!’

‘Don’t you worry, I’ll go back and get it,’ said Clive. He winked at me, turned on his heels, and saved the day.

‘He’s such a lovely young man,’ said Lady Ashburton, linking arms with me. ‘Do you think the firemen are on their way?’

Moments later, Tom-Tom appeared. Breathless and a little worse for wear, but otherwise in control, she declared the emergency over. When she turned around, I noticed a long tear on the right sleeve of her jumper. ‘False alarm,’ she said, patting Lady Ashburton reassuringly on the arm.

‘No firemen?’ said Lady Ashburton, obviously disappointed.

‘I’m afraid not.’

‘What a pity.’

‘Where is he?’ I asked, taking Tom-Tom aside.

‘Your mate Winston?’ she said, a mischievous sparkle in her eyes.

‘He’s not my mate.’

‘Back in your room, of course, watching television. Silly question.’

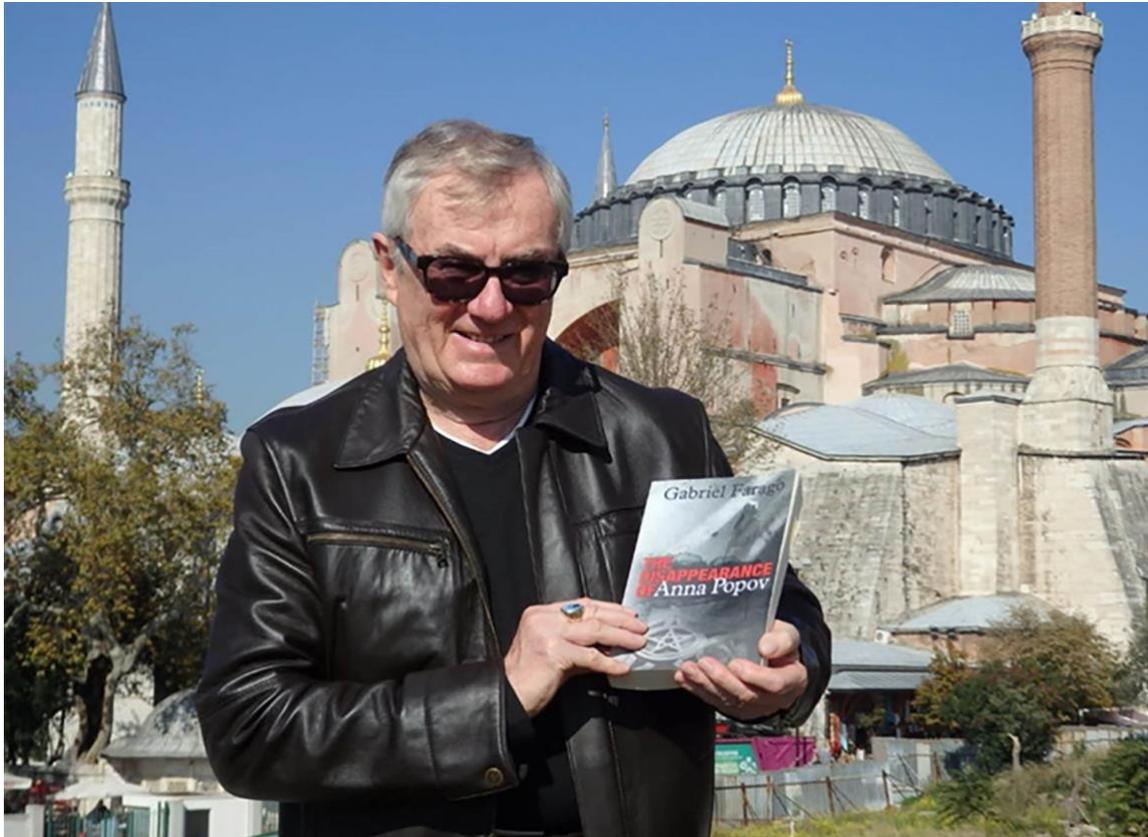
Barristers are supposed to be in the business of making speeches. However, one of the most difficult speeches I remember having to make was a eulogy a few years later.

After a short but devastating illness, Tom-Tom passed away, and her partner asked me to give the eulogy. Instead of following the traditional path, I decided to tell the story of Winston and the fire warden, because it allowed me to talk about Tom-Tom the way I remembered her: intelligent, vivacious, generous to a fault, and with a sense of humour that never deserted her. As tears of sadness were banished by laughter and the funeral turned into a celebration of her short but brilliant life, I knew that I had chosen the right path.

A good barrister never asks a question without knowing the answer. Being a good writer is all about choices. I’ve struggled for years to reconcile the two.

## The Globetrotting Author

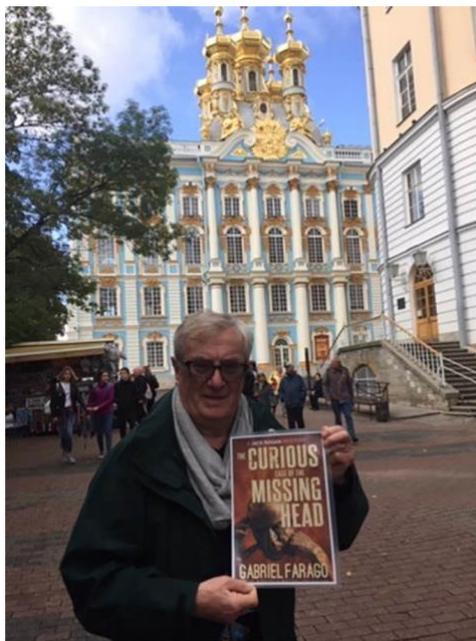
As I've mentioned before, I travel a lot. Book launches and signings in particular, are very important to me as they give me an opportunity to meet readers personally, and promote my work in various countries. Here are a few examples:



Book launch, *The Disappearance of Anna Popov*, Book 2 in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, Istanbul, 2014.

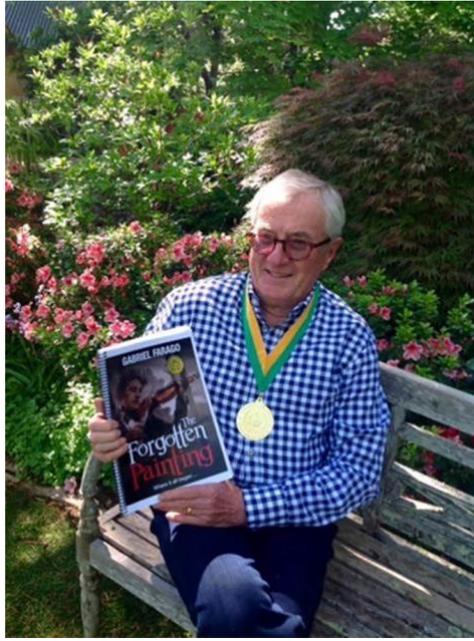


Book launch, *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, Book 3 in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, Rome, 2016.

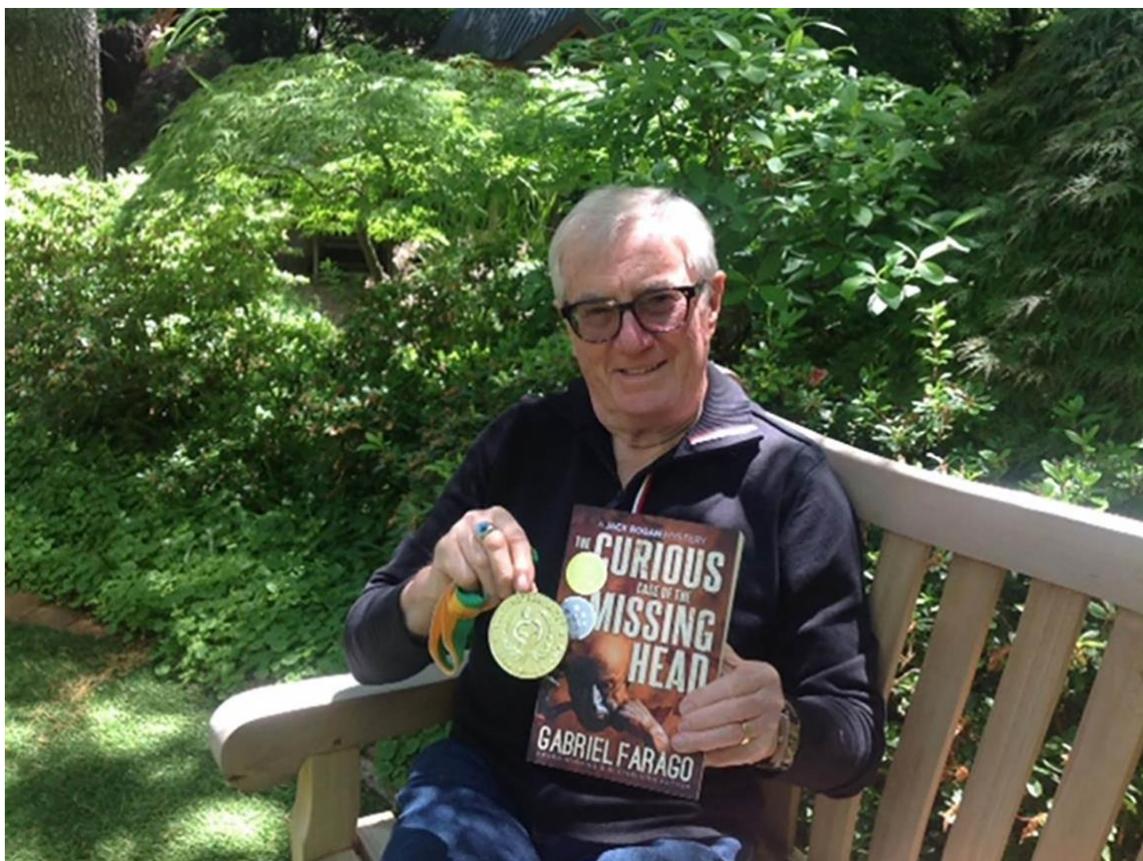


Book launch, *The Curious Case of the Missing Head*, Book 5 in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, St Petersburg, 2019.

Apart from the internet, my monthly newsletters are the perfect vehicle to share important events with my readers. Literary awards, in particular, are such events that mean a lot to my readership. Here are a few examples:



*The Forgotten Painting*, Readers' Favorite Gold Medal Winner, 2018.



*The Curious Case of the Missing Head*, Book 5 in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*,  
Readers' Favorite Gold Medal Winner 2019.



*The Lost Symphony*, Book 6 in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, Readers' Favorite Gold Medal Winner 2021.

I firmly believe there has never been a better time to be a fiction writer than right now. Why? Because the publishing industry has recently undergone extraordinary changes that have empowered writers like me to an extent that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago.

What this has meant for me is independence and control. Six years ago, I set up my own publishing company - *Bear & King Publishing* – which publishes and promotes all my work.



# Bear & King Publishing

Because of the recent transformation of the publishing industry, it has been possible to assemble an outstanding team of publishing and marketing professionals, designers, and IT experts, whose invaluable input and advice have made the success of *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* possible.

Without the expertise and dedication of this team, the worldwide readership, the hundreds of reviews, and many literary awards, just would not have been possible. Writing may be a solitary endeavour, but publishing definitely isn't. It is a team effort, and any acclaim, or success my work enjoys, belong not to me alone, but to the team of which I am a part.

As a storyteller, I cannot resist concluding this little journey into my world with another story I know you will find interesting and enjoyable. This little story – *The Woodcutter, the*

*Bear, and the King* - provides a glimpse into my family history and explains the crest on the spine of all of my books.

## The Woodcutter, the Bear, and the King



I'm often asked: 'What's the meaning of that crest on the cover of your books?' Well, it's my family crest, and it has quite a history. Let me tell you about it.

The exact year has been lost in the mists of time, but it was around the 1460s. Hungary was a wild and dangerous place in the fifteenth century. Matthias Corvinus – Hungary's young king – was in a lot of trouble; his kingdom was under attack. The Turks were expanding their empire by pushing relentlessly westward into Europe.

During one of his campaigns against marauding Turks, the king became separated from his retainers in the heat of battle. Thirsty and exhausted, he stopped by a stream in a dense forest to rest. He dismounted, took off his armour, and knelt to drink. That's when a bear attacked him from behind. Taken by surprise, the king was unable to reach for his sword. Vulnerable and defenseless, he was certain he was about to be torn apart by the ferocious beast. Fate, however, had something else in mind ...

A woodcutter working nearby heard the commotion and ran towards the stream. He found a man pinned to the ground by a bear towering above him. Before the bear could deliver the fatal blow, the woodcutter picked up the king's sword and killed the bear.

As a reward for saving the king's life, he was granted land and was eventually elevated into the nobility. The crest commemorates this: it shows the woodcutter – my ancestor – sword drawn, standing on a dead bear. This wonderful story has been handed down in our family from generation to generation together with a signet ring, which I wear.

Traditionally, the seal was attached to documents – especially title deeds and correspondence – by way of authentication, just like a signature. It's now part of my books.

We all yearn to know who we are and where we come from. Exploring our past helps us to answer these questions.

\* \* \*

There are journey people, and there are destination people. I'm a journeyman who listens to the lessons of the past, keeps a firm eye on the destination, but enjoys the journey.

The past is just a memory, the future but an expectation; the only thing real is the present.

Enjoy the journey!

Gabriel Farago



**Part 2: Heroes & Villains**  
The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
JACK ROGAN MYSTERIES  
HEROES  
AND VILLAINS**

## Heroes and Villains: A Profile Study

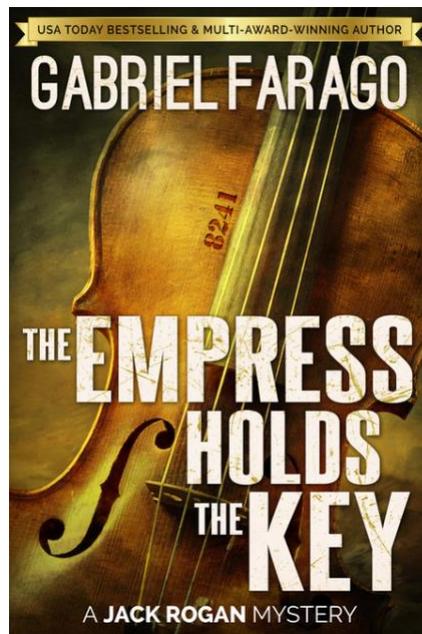
As every storyteller knows, characters are the lifeblood of a good story. Therefore, I take character development very seriously and devote a lot of care and attention to this absolutely essential subject. A good story alone is not enough. To bring it alive, characters are needed who can ‘connect’ with readers, and the best way to do that is through characters who are not only interesting, true-to-life personalities anchored in reality, but are people my readers can relate to.

‘Character building’ is an art. It takes a lot of imagination and ingenuity to create a character profile that does all that. I have found the best way to approach this complex, challenging subject, is to ‘reveal’ the character gradually, step by step. By giving the reader little ‘glimpses’ into the lives, personalities and backgrounds of the characters, it is possible to make this process interesting and engaging. The best way to illustrate this is by way of examples which are set out below.

## The Villains

No thrillers worth reading would be complete without dark, exciting villains. As you can imagine, during my long legal career in criminal law I came across some extraordinary characters and gained rare insights into their lives and their minds, which I can now draw upon for inspiration. Therefore, many of my ‘villains’ are anchored in real life and based on actual people I have met and interacted with over the years.

Take Sir Eric Newman, for instance (*The Empress Holds the Key*).



I recall a war crimes trial early in my career with a similar accused, and certain aspects of this character have therefore been inspired by a real person. The court scenes featured in the book are an accurate reflection of what happens in a court of law, how cross-examination works, and how witnesses and barristers behave under pressure. In a way, all of this forms part of authenticity that is, in my view, critically important in making a story plausible and ‘real’.

For this to work, the characters must be believable and true to life. I therefore like to portray them in context, in their own ‘space’ so to speak, and let the scenes and the dialogue do the heavy lifting in bringing the characters to life in an interesting, believable way.

Here's a brief excerpt from *The Empress Holds the Key*, when Inspector Jana Gonski first meets Sir Eric at his home:

“And I am Eric Newman,” Jana heard someone call out from behind. A tall, lean man with a striking head of white hair – neatly parted in the middle – walked slowly towards her. “You are obviously interested in art, Inspector. I noticed your eyes went straight to my friend over here. Right?” he asked, running his hand playfully over the top of a large stone bust on a pedestal. “A little frightening, isn't he?” he continued without waiting for an answer. “And so he should be. He is a demon after all; the Hebrew demon, Asmodeus.”

‘How fascinating.’

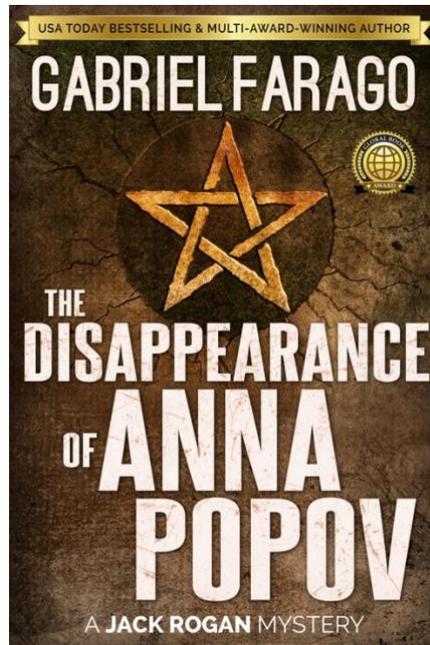
‘Do you know who he is?’

‘No,’ replied Jana, shaking her head.

‘Protector of secrets and minder of hidden treasure.’ Newman motioned casually towards a mahogany sideboard. ‘Please, do sit down. A cool drink perhaps?’

*How extraordinary*, thought Jana. *He's totally at ease and in complete control. And he's trying to put me off balance.* Within moments, Newman had taken over. As he came closer, Jana noticed that his eyes, behind a pair of small, gold-rimmed glasses, were still clear and ice-blue. *Quite remarkable for a man of eighty-seven*, she thought. He shook her hand with a grip that was both firm and gentle. His hand was cold and dry and she found his touch unnerving. He spoke perfect English, with only the slightest hint of an accent occasionally betraying his foreign origin. Jana tried to resist his obvious charm. She did not want to be distracted by the easy, polished manner of this urbane man, or to be side-tracked by pleasantries or trivia.”

Another good example is the ‘Wizard’ in *The Disappearance of Anna Popov*.



This extraordinary character is in fact loosely based on a frightening, larger-than-life leader of a bikie gang I came across many years ago, who is currently serving a life sentence for murder.

The best way to describe a scary character like that is by meeting him in his own, personal space, to get a ‘feel’ for the milieu of the character through the eyes of others. An excellent example of this approach is when Jack and Rebecca Armstrong go to meet the Wizard for the first time at the Wolf’s Lair, an abandoned church used as a clubhouse by the *Wizards of Oz*, a notorious Australian bikie gang:

“Inside, the music was deafening. In the middle of the church where rows of pews had once faced the altar, a group of girls were dancing with each other. Wearing skin-tight leather pants and high-heeled boots – their long black hair streaked with red – they looked like witches waiting for a date with the devil. Some wore glittering dog-collars, others had multiple studs in their ears and noses. One of the girls spun around as Rebecca walked past. Staring at her with unseeing eyes, she leaned forward and stuck out her tongue like a snake searching for its prey.

Standing on a dais in front of the altar, a heavily tattooed transvestite was operating a pair of turntables, cranking out audio-poison. Perched on stools along a bar fashioned out

of wooden confessionals, their backs turned indifferently to the dancing girls, a couple of middle-aged bikies were drinking beer. Pungent smoke – unmistakably marijuana – curled slowly around the coloured fingers of light reaching through the stained glass windows from above.

‘Down this way,’ grunted the man who had frisked Jack. He pointed to a narrow set of stairs cut into the stone floor behind the altar.

‘I don’t like this,’ whispered Rebecca, holding onto Jack’s arm.

‘Too late. Come on.’

Lit entirely by candles, the vaulted crypt below the altar was surprisingly cool. Except for a large round wooden table and twelve chairs, the crypt was empty. ‘Look at this,’ said Jack, pointing to a row of pictures hanging on the sandstone wall. ‘Exquisite.’ There were twenty-four pictures in all. ‘Do you know what this is?’ Rebecca shook her head.

‘Come over here, I’ll show you. You start with this one, the Fool, and then you go anticlockwise to the next one, the Magician. Then comes the Priestess, see?’

‘You’re well informed. What is it?’

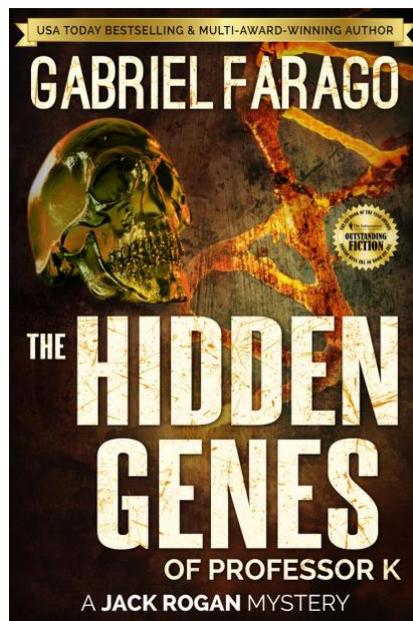
‘The twenty-four Major Arcana of the restored Tarot ...’

‘Exactly,’ said a deep, gravelly voice from behind. Jack spun around. Slowly, a dark shape separated from one of the pillars, moved a little to one side, and floated into a pool of candlelight. The Wizard was much taller than Jack had expected. Lit up from below, his face looked quite different from the police mug shot. The long hair, now streaked with grey, was pulled back and tied into a ponytail, accentuating the slanted eyes and prominent cheekbones. ‘You look like you’ve seen a ghost, Mr Rogan,’ said the Wizard, his voice echoing through the chamber. ‘Perhaps you have.’ He began to laugh. ‘You obviously know a bit about the Tarot. That’s a good start. Welcome to Wolf’s Lair. This is our round table where everyone is equal, but lies and deception are costly ...’

The candlelight lent the Wizard’s features a sinister sheen, as he pointed to the oak table. ‘I’m curious, Mr. Rogan’, continued the Wizard. ‘Why would a famous writer like you want to meet someone like me? Please, sit down.’ The Wizard gestured towards the table. ‘You can have the Alchemist’s chair, right here, and your friend ...’ he nodded, acknowledging Rebecca for the first time, ‘can have Cassandra’s, over there. Cassandra’s the only female on our council.’ Looking wistfully at Rebecca, he asked, ‘Can you see into the future? I

think not’, he continued. ‘Cassandra can, she has the gift ...’ The Wizard sat down opposite them and rested his huge fists on the table. Unbuttoned to the waist, his black leather vest barely covered his hairy chest. The broad shoulders and bulging biceps were the result of years of pumping iron in jail. Even in middle age, the Wizard radiated brute strength. He looked like a man who could easily crush a human skull with his bare hands.”

Another chilling, but quite different villain, is Hamish Macbeth in *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, Book 3 in the series.



This is an excerpt from the scene where Dr Alexandra Delacroix meets Hamish Macbeth on his yacht:

“It was well past midnight when Carlotta opened the door to Macbeth’s stateroom. ‘Dr Delacroix,’ she announced, letting Alexandra walk into the cabin in front of her.

‘Please leave us, Carlotta, and close the door,’ said Macbeth, looking at Alexandra standing in front of him. ‘You are much younger than I imagined,’ he said. ‘Your career and your reputation suggest someone older. Please take a seat.’

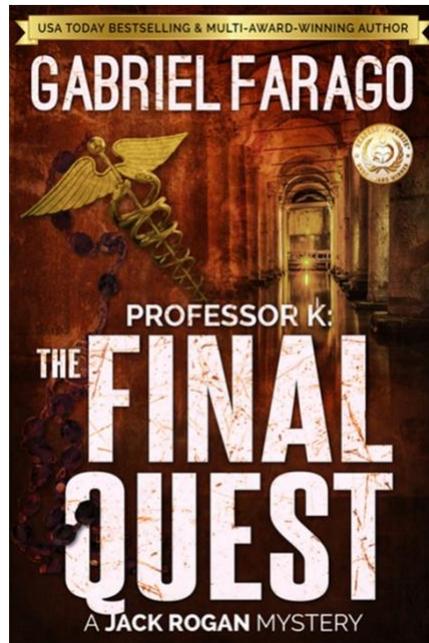
Alexandra tried to see the face of the man addressing her, but his wheelchair was in the shadows, the lamp on his desk the only source of light in the room. She had the impression that this was quite deliberate. Alexandra sat down in the chair facing the desk and crossed her legs.

*She's very composed*, thought Macbeth, admiring the young woman's self-control, *and quite attractive. Brains and beauty*. For a while, Macbeth let the silence speak, the soft throb of the ship's powerful engines the only sound. 'I'm Alistair Macbeth,' said the man in the wheelchair after a while, 'chairman of Blackburn Pharmaceuticals, I'm sure you've heard of us. And in case you were wondering, you are on Calypso, the company's research vessel.'

Alexandra looked up, surprised. So, that's the connection, she thought. There wasn't a research scientist alive who hadn't heard of Blackburn Pharmaceuticals. The whole industry was in awe of Alistair Macbeth, its charismatic founder, and man at the helm of the international juggernaut."

All of my villains are very different. Because each of the books in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries* series 'stands alone' and can be read as such, each story is self-contained; the villains rarely 'carry over.' Other characters like Jack Rogan, of course, and Countess Kuragin, Dr Alexandra Delacroix, and Tristan, for example, feature in several of my books. They are the links between the stories that make the series interesting, without presenting the books strictly as 'sequels'. That said, readers who are familiar with all of my books in the series and have read them in order, will of course get a little more out of each book because there are of necessity certain links and nuances that will only become apparent if the reader is au fait with the earlier stories. However, I hasten to add that this is definitely not essential for the understanding and enjoyment of each of the books, regardless of the order in which they are read.

In book 4 of the series – *Professor K: The Final Quest* – there are several colourful villains in the storyline.



“The deadly ‘spider’ in the middle of the net is Salvatore Gambio, a notorious Mafioso operating in Florence. Once again, I reveal this chilling character gradually, and the full extent of his evil, ruthless nature only becomes apparent through the way he operates and how he manipulates others to do his deadly bidding. Here’s an example:

“Gambio’s affable manner was deceptive. He liked to appear casual, easy-going and friendly. This was quite intentional and designed to put everyone at ease and make them lower their guard. But his eyes never smiled. They *observed*, radiating ruthlessness, cunning and danger. Especially danger.

‘You are looking swell, buddy,’ said Gambio, patting Bahadir on the back, the familiar, rasping voice of his former boss bringing a smile to Bahadir’s face. While they had stayed in contact and done business together since leaving the US three years before, they hadn’t met in person. This was by no means unusual, as Gambio preferred to do business that way. He was paranoid about security.

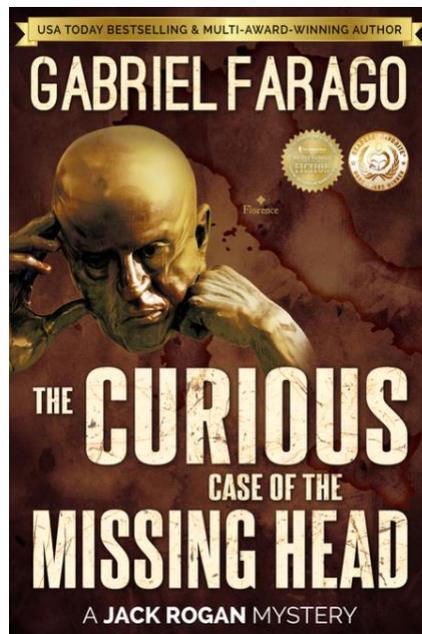
‘It’s been what, three years?’ he said. ‘Let’s go into my study and watch the show.’ Shortish, a little overweight, especially around the waist and thighs, with thinning black hair brushed straight back and a pencil-thin moustache that gave his pudgy face an almost

comical appearance, he looked more like an Italian greengrocer than the head of one of the most feared Mafia families in Tuscany.”

Gambio is a master manipulator, who knows how to surround himself with people he can dominate by manoeuvring them into positions where they have nowhere else to go, and will do everything he asks. He does this with great skill by exposing their weaknesses and secret fears, ambitions and desires, and using this insight to bend them to his will. Luigi Belmonte is such a personality:

“Luigi Belmonte made sure he looked like all the other tourists enjoying the sunshine. Casually dressed in a pair of jeans, polo shirt and a linen jacket and wearing a straw hat and dark glasses, he certainly blended in well. But his appearance was deceptive. In his forties, shortish with a barrel chest and broad shoulders, he radiated strength and moved with surprising agility for a man with such a powerful physique. Belmonte looked at his watch, reached for his Campari and smiled. The location, a busy restaurant opposite the Palazzo Vecchio in the heart of Florence, was perfect – and so was the time.”

This brings me to *The Curious Case of the Missing Head* – Book 5 in the series.



There are several particularly interesting characters in the storyline, and I spent a lot of time delving into the chilling character of Professor Fabry, a gifted surgeon with a murky past. Once again, I reveal this character step by step, to create curiosity, and show the different, fascinating aspects of this complex man. One of the most effective ways to do this is to present the character through the eyes of someone else, preferably someone who is meeting this character for the first time.

Here's an example: Tristan is meeting Professor Fabry for the first time in Malta:

“Tristan nodded and stepped forward to shake Fabry’s hand. As he looked briefly into Fabry’s eyes, a strange feeling came over him, like he was looking into a murky, bottomless pool full of dark promises, drawing him in. *A well of accusing souls*, thought Tristan, recognising the unsettling feeling he had experienced before, usually in situations of acute danger. The feeling became stronger as he touched Fabry’s cold hand. *This man has killed, many times. We have to be careful!* On this occasion, Tristan, who could hear the whisper of angels and glimpse eternity, glimpsed only misery and horrible death.”

Another colourful villain is Hernando Cordoba, a ruthless drug baron and head of the notorious H Cartel in Bogota. I decided to portray this character in a different way by presenting him in his environment. Because this environment – a fortress-like compound in Bogota – is quite unique, it tells a great deal about the man and his character:

“Rodrigo looked at his client, who was staring out of one of the bulletproof windows. Ignoring the armed guards patrolling the grounds and the tall razor-wire fences behind the exotic, manicured gardens surrounding the compound, it was a beautiful, peaceful view down to Bogota, covered in morning mist. Protected by thick concrete walls, state-of-the-art security systems and massive steel gates, most of the large fortified building was underground. The Cordoba compound on the outskirts of Bogota was more like a fortress than a villa. In Colombia this wasn’t unusual, but to be expected of the headquarters of the notorious H Cartel, one of the most powerful and ruthless cartels in the country.

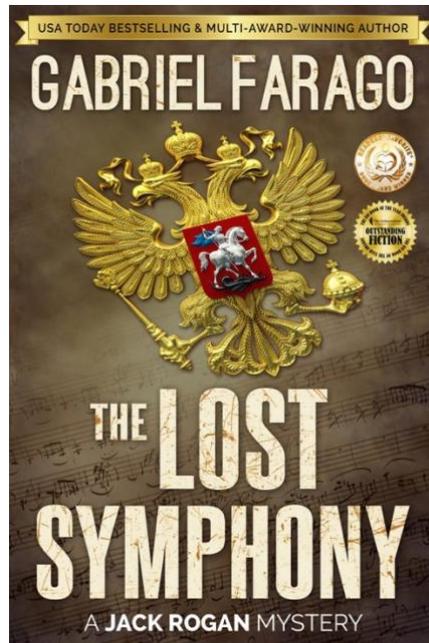
Named after Huitzilopochtli, the bloody Aztec god of war, sun and human sacrifice, the Cartel had the Xiuhcoatl, the fire serpent that the god wielded as a weapon, as its emblem. With influence, money and power came powerful enemies. As head of the H Cartel, Hernando Cordoba was still alive only because he understood that very well.

Cordoba rarely left the compound and conducted most of his business from his ‘observation room’ as he liked to call it, overlooking his beloved garden and the city in the distance below.

When he did leave – usually to inspect secret drug manufacturing sites hidden deep in the jungle – he did so by helicopter, which was more like a gunship than a civilian aircraft. Sourced from the Venezuelan Air Force and modified to suit his needs, it was equipped with the latest weapons systems, which gave it awesome firepower. Cordoba lived in a constant state of war and he liked it that way. It kept him sharp and alert, and a step or two ahead of his enemies and competitors.

‘We are cutting it fine,’ said Cordoba, turning to face his lawyer sitting at a desk behind him. ‘If the execution goes to plan, the boy will be dead in less than forty-five minutes.’”

In *The Lost Symphony*, book 6 of the Jack Rogan Mysteries series, I have introduced villains of a slightly different kind.



A great deal of research has gone into creating a plausible, true-to-life psychological profile of a chilling criminal mind my readers will find both fascinating and frightening. Her name? *Anielka*.

Exploring the dark side of human nature is always fraught with danger. It is a balancing act because nothing is black and white or clear-cut when it comes to portraying a complex character without moral compass in a believable, and realistic way.

This is particularly the case with Anielka, a terrifying psychopath who is one of the central characters in the book. To understand how her disturbed mind works, we have to first learn something about her background, the milieu she moves in, and the forces that have shaped her:

“Anielka had spent several years in a psychiatric prison hospital in Paris after she had savagely attacked a fellow inmate with a kitchen knife in the juvenile detention centre where she was serving time for assault. Before that, she had almost killed a man she claimed had tried to rape her. Because she was only seventeen at the time, the prosecutor reduced the more serious charge of attempted murder to common assault, and she was sent to an institution for rehabilitation.

For the first three months, she was a model prisoner, then something happened in the kitchen that set her off. It had taken three guards to restrain her and take the knife out of her hand. Hysterical and screaming, she was sent for psychiatric assessment and ended up in hospital under the care of a psychiatrist Malenkova knew well.”

Now that we’ve had a brief introduction into the twisted world of her early years, it is time to delve a little deeper into her chilling mind:

“Anielka’s mind was a strange place. Exceptionally bright, charming, and vivacious, she was a pathological liar who concealed her psychopathic inclinations and behaviour in incredibly imaginative ways that could fool even the most critical observer. In many ways, she was an artist of mind games and deception.

Devoid of any feelings of remorse or guilt, she was capable of violent acts – including self-harm – so extreme, they would have shocked even the most seasoned homicide investigator. If caught, she could lie her way out of a compromising situation in ways that could convince a jury and even a trial judge. Her stunning looks – especially her almost angelic face – were of great help here, as her appearance and manner seemed at odds with what she was supposed to have done.

Because of those looks, she attracted the attention of men wherever she went and she exploited this attraction ruthlessly because deep down, she hated men. She liked sex, often coupled with violence, because of the power it gave her over others. Without inhibitions or moral compass of any kind, she was prepared to engage in sexual activities that would have taught a debauched pervert a lesson or two. Her promiscuous sexual behaviour had been one of the main problems since her release that had caused some hesitation in Zuzanna about using Anielka for certain assignments. However, as she got to know her better and Anielka became more and more trusting and dependent on her, Zuzanna realised that this very inclination could be used to great advantage in certain situations.”

A complex personality like Anielka doesn't exist in isolation. In the book, she is closely linked to Zuzanna, her 'handler,' and Frieda Malenkova, the 'mastermind.' The three form separate manifestations of the criminal mind. Each one is pursuing separate goals, but using the others in ingenious ways to achieve them. This forms a fascinating interaction between these characters, adding intrigue tension and a new dimension to the storyline to keep the reader speculating, and guessing through the many unexpected twists and turns of the complex, multi-layered plot. Here's a brief glimpse into Malenkova's background and personality:

“As a seasoned veteran of many challenging projects, she had developed a sixth sense that rarely let her down when it came to following the trail of long-forgotten secrets and hidden treasure. And the key to following such trails and finding that treasure always came down to two simple things: information, and people.

Malenkova's father had been very resourceful when it came to obtaining information in imaginative ways, and Frieda had been an attentive pupil. Many would say, she had

surpassed her father in tenacity and ruthlessness which were often the key to success. She never hesitated to go where others feared to tread and was prepared to take risks that would have made a fearless tightrope walker pale.

Just like her father, Malenkova was a master manipulator who knew how to use people and bend them to her will. How she did this was both subtle and clever. Based on instinct and an extraordinary understanding of human nature, behaviour, and emotions, she carefully tailored her tactics and approach in ways that would have impressed even the most experienced psychiatrist. She also believed in destiny, and followed her instincts with the certainty of a somnambulist.”

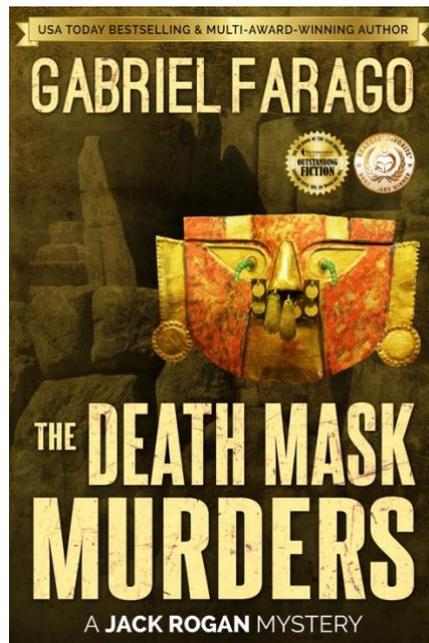
It would be a mistake to portray villains only as main characters. In real life, some of the most brutal and ingenious villains stand in the shadows, support the main players, and make it possible for them to function and carry out their evil plans. Dimitri Aldar, a former KGB agent in his sixties who works for Sokolov, a Russian billionaire kleptocrat, is a good example. We meet him in Sokolov’s Scottish castle and find out some historical material about his past which provides some background and context for this dangerous, complex man:

“The disintegration of the Soviet Union had also brought about the dissolution of the notorious KGB, and Aldar found himself adrift, without the career he had thrived on. A few years later, he made contact with his old friend Sokolov, who offered him a job. Aldar became the young tycoon’s trusted right-hand man in charge of security and ‘sensitive’ projects. Aldar’s KGB experience and many contacts among USSR officials and former KGB operatives were invaluable and had accelerated Sokolov’s meteoric rise as one of the most successful and ruthless ‘kleptocrats’ of his day.

One of Aldar’s greatest assets was his appearance, which he had carefully cultivated. Diminutive in stature, quietly spoken, with thinning hair and a deceptively disarming manner and charm, it was easy to be lulled into complacency and underestimate him. Yet under this almost mundane and ordinary facade resided not only a razor-sharp mind, but also one of the most ruthless tacticians who would stop at nothing to achieve his objectives, however brutal or devious.

In many ways, Sokolov and Aldar complemented each other and were the perfect combination: a brilliant entrepreneur, and a ruthless tactician and enforcer to back him up, remove obstacles and pave the way.”

In **The Death Mask Murders**, book 7 in the series, I have introduced a new kind of villain: Ronan O’Hara, a master manipulator and ‘cybercriminal’ who remains in the shadows and ‘manipulates’ his victims from a distance by using the internet.



To understand a fascinating man like that, we have to first become familiar with the environment in which he operates, in this case, a picturesque Bavarian farmhouse set in stunning Alpine scenery. This is the milieu where O’Hara feels relaxed and at home and hatches some of his most diabolical plans:

“Deep in thought, Ronan O’Hara sat at his workstation facing the wide, floor-to-ceiling window overlooking the stunning Bavarian mountain panorama. The morning fog had just lifted, revealing snow-covered peaks glistening in the bright sunlight like massive, timeless columns of rock pointing towards heaven. It was his favourite place of contemplation in the converted old farmhouse, where he did most of his creative thinking.

Looking like a command centre, the powerful computer with its three large, suspended monitors, and a communications system that would have been the envy of an aircraft carrier crew, gave him access to almost every corner of the globe with the click of his mouse. With this, O'Hara had everything he needed at his fingertips. For a man like O'Hara, who thrived on power but craved anonymity and preferred to remain in the shadows, it was the perfect place from which to run his dark empire."

I have intentionally chosen a notorious, well-known location for O'Hara's 'cyber fortress': the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden where Hitler spent a lot of time during the war, and came up with some of the most evil ideas ever conceived by a dictator responsible for the death of millions. Step by step we find out a little more about O'Hara and his modus operandi:

"The spacious, three-hundred-year-old alpine farmhouse he had purchased almost thirty years earlier from a distant relative – an old aunt – and now rarely left, was the perfect domain. In his early seventies, diminutive in stature, completely bald and wearing thick glasses, O'Hara looked more like a retired headmaster than the secretive and shy billionaire businessman behind the *Dark Net Bazaar*.

The DNB, as it was known to the initiated, was an illegal, banned underground site pursued by almost every major security organisation around the world, trying in vain to shut it down. It was a marketplace where it was possible to buy just about anything imaginable, for a price. From a teenage slave girl in Kenya to a state-of-the-art rocket launcher, a jet fighter aircraft, or parts to build a nuclear power station, this site had something for everyone. It was also a place where it was possible to indulge one's deepest and darkest desires, from every drug imaginable, to snuff movies, real-time murder scenes, and the most perverse live pornography."

O'Hara's complex personality and strange mind are closely intertwined with the stunning environment in which he operates. The parallels between O'Hara and Hitler who also thrived in this Alpine setting are of course intentional and serve as an 'indirect' illustration of how beauty and evil can interact, and thrive in the most unlikely places:

“Looking at the picture-postcard farmhouse surrounded by dense forest – mainly tall, gnarled fir trees that had weathered many a harsh alpine winter – no-one would have guessed that these idyllic surroundings were hiding a dark, sophisticated operation below ground, directly under the hoofs of a herd of contented cows grazing peacefully in the lush meadows.

Located just a kilometre from the Obersalzberg – Hitler’s alpine fortress where the Fuehrer had spent a lot of time during the war and planned some of his most ambitious campaigns and diabolical ‘solutions’ – O’Hara’s complex had become the HQ of a different empire. A cyber empire with elements of potent evil that would have rivalled the Nazis, and in many ways made their concentration camps look tame by comparison. In fact, O’Hara’s converted farmhouse and the neighbouring properties he had bought up over the years didn’t look all that different from Hitler’s beloved ‘Berghof’ complex. Of course, nothing remained of that or of any of the other buildings on the Obersalzberg except for an extensive, fortified, underground bunker network that still criss-crossed the area like a maze. Everything else had been destroyed after the war.”

In **The Stolen Altarpiece**, the latest addition to the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* which, in a conceptual sense, is a ‘sequel’ to *The Death Mask Murders*, O’Hara continues to feature as one of the main villains and protagonists.

Bearing in mind that each book stands alone and can be read as such, we do of course learn more about characters featured in previous books. That is certainly the case with O’Hara. We meet him again in chapter 6, and learn a little more about his character and appearance:

“Ronan O’Hara was at his most dangerous when his back was against the wall. After the destruction of his sophisticated command centre under the idyllic farmhouse on the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden the year before, he had managed to pull off a breathtaking last-minute-escape that took the authorities by surprise. By staging his death in a spectacular helicopter crash at Lake Koenigssee, he was able to escape into Belarus where he had extensive contacts, and was effectively out of reach of the European authorities pursuing him.

The dank cellar under the modest house on the outskirts of Minsk was a far cry from his previous residence with the stunning views over the Alps. Yet, the powerful computer with the three large monitors and a complex communications system that gave him access to almost every corner of the globe with a click of his mouse, O'Hara had everything he needed to rebuild his dark empire.

No one who saw the diminutive, bald man in his seventies who seemed to be hiding behind thick glasses walk into the village to buy groceries, would have suspected that behind this deceptive facade was one of the most powerful cyber-criminals worth billions on the most wanted list of law enforcement agencies around the globe. But with access to virtually unlimited funds, almost everything was possible in a country like Belarus where corruption was rife, bribes oiled the wheels of almost every level of government and just about everything was for sale; at a price. This was precisely the environment O'Hara needed to make his enterprise flourish. As a master-manipulator who understood human weaknesses and knew how to exploit them and bend people to his will, O'Hara was once again in his element.”

Another sinister villain and key protagonist in the book is **Joseph Ilych Palin**, President of the Russian Federation. We are introduced to him in Chapter 12. There are obvious similarities between O'Hara and Palin. This becomes clear when we consider their appearance and how they are portrayed:

“Anyone looking at the short, balding man approaching seventy with the prominent cheekbones and heavy, Slavic facial features would have walked past him in the street without giving him a second look. But looks can be deceptive. Sitting behind the desk was one of the most ruthless and powerful men on the planet who, in a career spanning more than forty years, had clawed his way to the top, from KGB intelligence officer to director of the FSB, to prime minister, and then president of Russia.

A meteoric rise like that didn't just happen by chance. It required burning ambition, hunger for power and a determination to succeed at all cost, regardless of the wreckage left behind; personal, or otherwise. And luck of course, and being in the right place at the right time.”

\* \* \*

The dark side of human nature, the struggle between good and evil that manifests itself in moral shades of right and wrong in the character of man, are all around us. This ancient, timeless contest cannot be ignored, or cast aside, but must form part of every true-to-life storyline that is anchored in reality. Without these elements, the characters will never genuinely connect with readers and make a book into a nail-biting page-turner.

That said, these matters are always a delicate balancing act that requires a great deal of thought and planning that must resonate with readers because they mirror real-life situations and challenges that touch us all.

## The Good Guys

Each book in the series has been carefully structured as far as the characters are concerned. Of course, Jack Rogan features in all of them. However, there are other main characters in the series such as Countess Kuragin, Tristan, Isis, Jana Gonski, and Dr Delacroix, for example, who feature in several, but not all, of the books.

These characters are thoughtfully ‘woven’ into the storyline to provide a loose ‘link’ knitting the fabric of the series seamlessly together. These characters have already been dealt with in ‘*Main Characters*’, a free aid memoire that accompanies each book in the series and also includes a glossary which assists in navigating and placing the hundreds of characters featured in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries* series.

Connecting with my readers is a very important way of finding out how various characters resonate with them. In fact, I have often been asked if a particular, obviously popular character, would return and feature in future books. This has been the case with Jana Gonski, Dr Rosen, and Inspector Haddad. Jana returned in *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, and Inspector Haddad and Dr Rosen feature quite prominently in *Professor K: The Final Quest*.

Another endearing character is Mademoiselle Darrieux who appears for the first time in *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, but returns in a more prominent role in *The Lost Symphony*.

Then we have Lorenza da Baggio, a new character and one of the main personalities in *Professor K: The Final Quest*. We meet her for the first time in Florence. This character is inextricably intertwined with a *location*, and we see her through the lens of that place and through the eyes of other characters, creating mystery and anticipation:

“Lorenza da Baggio listened to the bells and was counting the hours. Time passes slowly when you are desperately trying to sleep, but can’t. Her amazing victory the day before that had made her a finalist in Top Chef Europe was keeping her awake. Watched by millions, Top Chef Europe was Europe’s most prestigious cooking competition. At twenty, Lorenza was not only the youngest competitor, but her cooking skills had stunned the judges and she had quickly become the darling of the program.

Instead of feeling elated, her unexpected victory against Kemal Bahadir from Istanbul, one of Europe's most celebrated chefs, filled her with dread. It wasn't winning that bothered her, but what had come later. When a smiling Bahadir embraced her after the judges had pronounced her the winner, he had whispered something in her ear she couldn't get out of her mind. What did he mean when he said 'you will regret this; you are not as good as you may think?' she asked herself over and over. Perhaps I misunderstood?

Covered in sweat, Lorenza opened her eyes and stared at the open balcony door as the first light of the new day crept hesitantly across the marble floor and began to banish the darkness. Feeling better, she got up, stepped out onto the terrace on the first floor of Villa Laurentius and looked down into Florence shrouded in morning mist. The familiar sight of Santa Maria del Fiore – the Duomo, with Brunelleschi's spectacular dome – seemed to calm her, bringing back memories of school holidays and lazy shopping afternoons with her grandmother. A smile creased the corners of her mouth as memories of her late mother flooded back with alarming clarity.

Lorenza realised that she had to prepare herself for the biggest challenge of her life: the grand finale in the evening. Now that her dream was within reach, nothing else mattered; she knew that any distraction could be disastrous. With that, she dismissed the disturbing thoughts, closed her eyes, turned her face towards the rising sun and dreamed of victory.”

What makes a thriller a page-turner, impossible to put down? Nail-biting action, suspense, exotic locations and a well-constructed storyline with unexpected twists, turns and surprises undoubtedly play an important part. However, most critical of all are the characters. They bring the story to life and engage the reader.

In a way, therefore, it's all about characters. Characters draw readers into the story. They turn readers from curious bystanders, into attentive participants who become emotionally involved, and ultimately view the characters as 'real' people. Cesaria Borroni and Chief Prosecutor Grimaldi in *Professor K: The Final Quest* are good examples:

“Cesaria Borroni, her face flushed with excitement, hurried towards the restaurant. News about the shooting had spread like a sex scandal through police headquarters, abuzz with speculation. But that wasn't the reason for her excitement. It was the phone call from the

commissioner that had left her speechless – and a little scared. It wasn't often the commissioner called a junior officer and gave instructions for a sensitive assignment of great urgency and importance.

Cesaria found the chief prosecutor bent over the bloody corpse of the bodyguard in front of the men's toilet. He was examining the gunshot wounds with one of the men from Forensics.

Cesaria waited for Grimaldi to finish. As soon as he stood up, she walked over to him. 'The commissioner asked me to report to you, sir,' she said.

Grimaldi looked at her, surprised. He had expected someone older, not a strikingly attractive young woman in her twenties. Grimaldi knew the commissioner well. She had to be something special, otherwise he wouldn't have sent her. 'Come with me,' said Grimaldi, and quickly walked through the open side door out into the lane behind the restaurant. He lit a small cigar and looked at the young woman standing demurely by the door, watching him. 'Tell me about yourself,' he said. 'There isn't much time.'

'What would you like to know, sir?' asked Cesaria, surprised. It wasn't the question she had expected from the man with such a fierce reputation.

As a survivor of two assassination attempts, Grimaldi was a legend. He was known as a demanding taskmaster, a perfectionist and relentless workaholic. Fearless, and almost fanatical in the pursuit of truth and justice, he left no stone unturned in tracking down the culprits and sending them to trial. 'How long have you been in the police force?' he asked.

'Two years.'

'Education?'

'Apart from my training?'

'Yes.'

'I have a law degree.'

'Good.' *That explains the intelligence radiating from the girl,* thought Grimaldi, enjoying the tobacco rush, and why he sent her. Like the commissioner, Grimaldi knew that integrity and dedication to the job were far more likely to be found in the young, before temptation, intimidation and disillusionment could do their dirty work. And what he had in mind required both: unconditional trust and dedication – plenty of it. And besides, a

woman's touch could in fact be quite useful, he thought. 'I would like you to do something for me,' he said. 'Something urgent and very important.'

'Yes?'

'I want you to persuade a man to do something he has vowed never to do again.'

Cesaria looked at Grimaldi, surprised. 'Oh?'

Grimaldi held up his hand. 'I'll explain later,' he said. 'You will have to drop everything and travel, straight away. Would that be a problem?'

'No. Travel where?'

'Palermo.'

'When?'

'Tonight.'"

Another good illustration of character development is the meeting between Cesaria and Fabio Conti, a pivotal character in *Professor K: The Final Quest*, book four in the series.

"Cesaria walked over to the bar at the far end of the dimly lit room. 'I am looking for Fabio Conti,' she said, addressing the barman.

The old man looked at her with undisguised curiosity. 'Who?' he asked, cupping his ear with his hand.

'Fabio Conti,' shouted Cesaria, trying to make herself heard. Suddenly, the room went silent, all eyes on Cesaria standing at the bar. 'Fabio Conti?' repeated the barman. Cesaria nodded.

'Come,' he said. Cesaria followed the barman into another crowded, smoke-filled room behind the bar. The barman pointed to a man sitting on a wooden stool in the corner. The man was leaning against a barrel – eyes closed, his mouth wide open – obviously asleep. His crumpled, red wine-stained shirt was unbuttoned to the waist and a cigarette between his fingers had turned into a column of ash.

*Good God*, thought Cesaria, assessing the situation. The man in front of her in no way resembled the man described by Chief Prosecutor Grimaldi as a hero and one of the most fearless Mafia hunters in the country. Cesaria turned to the barman standing next to her. 'Do you know where he lives?' she asked.

‘Right here, upstairs,’ replied the barman and pointed to the ceiling.

‘Could you please make us some coffee, and could someone help me take him to his room?’

‘Sure,’ said the barman, impressed. ‘I’ll help you. I do this almost every night. Pasquale, give me a hand!’ he shouted. A young man came out of the kitchen and helped the barman take Conti upstairs.

Smelling of vomit and stale cigarette smoke, the tiny room above the bar was a total mess. The wooden floor was littered with crumpled clothes, empty bottles and newspapers. An unmade bed with dirty sheets and a torn blanket, an open wardrobe full of empty coat hangers – some of them broken – and a small table and chair were the only furniture in the room. A cracked washbasin with a cracked mirror above it, the tap dripping, was filled with underwear waiting in vain to be washed.

‘He wasn’t always like this,’ said the barman, and lifted Conti onto the bed. ‘Relative of yours?’

Cesaria shook her head.

‘I’ll send up some coffee.’

As soon as she was alone with Conti, Cesaria opened the window, picked up a towel from the floor and held it under the tap.

What could make a man sink this low? she asked herself and began to wipe Conti’s flushed face with the wet towel and a tenderness that surprised her. Well-built, in his late forties with a shock of unkempt black hair badly in need of a haircut and a face that may have seen a little too much of the dark side of life, Conti was, even in this sorry state, an impressive man. Cesaria put the towel aside and began to massage Conti’s temples.

After a while Conti began to groan as Cesaria’s strong, practised fingers began to penetrate the stubborn alcohol fog numbing his brain. Conti opened his eyes and stared straight-ahead, his gaze blank. Then slowly, as his bloodshot eyes began to focus, Cesaria’s face swam into view. ‘Who are you?’ he whispered, his speech slurred.

‘I’m Cesaria Borroni from Florence ... police,’ replied Cesaria without interrupting the massage.

‘What are you doing here?’

‘Chief Prosecutor Grimaldi sent me.’

Conti sat up with a jolt and looked at Cesaria sitting on the edge of the bed next to him. ‘Why?’

‘To remind you of something ...’

‘He sent you all this way to remind me of something? Remind me of what?’ demanded Conti.

‘A date.’

‘I don’t understand,’ said Conti, looking confused. ‘What date?’

‘The seventh of January 2014,’ said Cesaria quietly.’

Mystery and suspense are very effective ways to arouse curiosity, and curiosity, by definition, is the desire to find out more. In short, curiosity makes the reader turn the pages. Another effective way to ignite curiosity is through unusual, fascinating characters my readers are unlikely to meet in real life. Cardinal O’Brien – another important, charismatic personality in *Professor K: The Final Quest* – is an excellent example:

“Alexandra stood up as soon as the cardinal and the CEO entered the room. The CEO made the introductions and withdrew. Alexandra pointed to a chair, but the cardinal waited for her to sit down first before taking a seat.

‘Firstly, allow me to congratulate you, Professor Delacroix. The Nobel Prize, what a wonderful achievement,’ said the cardinal, ‘and a great credit to the institute.’

‘Thank you, Eminence.’ *He’s much younger ...* thought Alexandra, watching the cardinal with interest. She had expected someone much older. Tall, athletic, in his late fifties with greying hair around the temples and a tanned, youthful face that had seen a little too much sun, he looked more like a former tennis star keeping in shape than a prince of the Church. However, his most striking feature by far was his eyes: penetrating, ice-blue, and smiling. *Classic Celtic looks*, thought Alexandra, impressed.

Dressed in a simple black suit and shiny black shoes, the white dog collar and pectoral cross the only clues hinting at his high office, he looked totally at ease sitting in his chair with his long legs crossed, and filled the room with his presence. A balanced blend of modesty, authority and charisma, impossible to ignore.

*What an impressive man*, thought Alexandra, feeling completely relaxed.

‘You must be wondering what this is all about,’ began the cardinal, leaning back in his chair.

Alexandra smiled, but didn’t reply.

‘I am not exaggerating,’ said the cardinal, speaking quite softly, ‘when I tell you that I am here on one of the most important missions of my ecclesiastical career.’ The cardinal, a skilled negotiator, paused to let this sink in.

‘That’s quite a statement, Eminence,’ said Alexandra, her curiosity aroused even further. ‘And what may that be?’

‘To persuade you to help save a life.’”

Needless to say, new characters are introduced in each one of my books and woven into the storyline to interact with personalities my readers are already familiar with. This can create tension, excitement, and intrigue. Detective Chief Superintendent Lapointe is an excellent illustration of this. We meet him for the first time in **The Lost Symphony**:

“‘You are expected,’ said the officer and opened the door after the countess had told him who she was.

Dupree and another man in his fifties sat at the kitchen table. ‘Good morning, Countess, thank you for coming,’ said Dupree. He nodded to Jack and stood up. The other man stood up as well. ‘This is Detective Chief Superintendent Lapointe,’ continued Dupree making the introductions.

Jack looked at the man in front of him with interest. Shortish, powerfully built and wearing a heavy overcoat, he reminded Jack of Maigret, the legendary fictional Paris detective who featured in more than seventy novels by Georges Simenon, a Belgian writer, and became an iconic character and the subject of countless films and TV dramas. But most striking of all was the man’s face. Radiating intelligence but also sadness and compassion, the eyes had seen a little too much brutality and violence, and the deep lines around the mouth and prominent chin, suggested a determination to do something about it. *The only thing missing is the bowler hat and the pipe*, thought Jack. Then he saw the slouch hat and the pipe on the table, and smiled.”

Once again, with a few ‘literary brush strokes’ we have been introduced to another fascinating personality who may only play a brief role in the overall story, but nevertheless adds considerable character and appeal to the plot. By referring to Maigret, a legendary literary French detective who is no doubt well known to many of my readers, it is possible to visualise Lapointe through certain endearing idiosyncrasies explored by Georges Simenon in his wonderful novels. References to literature can be another useful tool in character building and ‘visualisation’ which I take very seriously, as it adds another important dimension to the reading experience.

A character of a very different kind, but another good illustration of how new personalities interact with old, and familiar ones, also featured in *The Lost Symphony*, is Avigdor Stein, a rabbi. Jack meets him in the Jewish Cemetery in Prague on a cold winter’s morning:

“Jack stopped at the walled entrance, looked at the plan of the cemetery he had downloaded earlier, and began to orientate himself. He could feel a cold chill racing down the back of his neck as he walked along the solemn rows of silent graves. He was looking for a large, ornate sand-coloured headstone decorated with a lion, belonging to the sixteenth century rabbi of Prague. A morning mist hovered above the headstones like a shroud, making the long-forgotten reminders of generations past and lives long forgotten, look monotonous and confusing.

*I’ll never find this*, thought Jack when suddenly he could see a tall dark shape melting out of the mist. As he came closer, the shape morphed into a man standing motionless next to a headstone at the end of the row. Wearing a long black coat and black hat, the man looked like a Hebrew sentinel guarding the domain of the dead.

‘You are much younger than I expected,’ said Avigdor Stein in perfect English, his long white beard, sidelocks, and prominent nose, giving him an almost biblical look. ‘But then, you are from Australia, I hear.’

‘Please don’t hold it against me,’ said Jack, giving Stein his best smile.”

In *The Death Mask Murders*, book 7 in the series, several new fascinating characters are introduced to give the storyline a realistic glow and add structure and excitement to the plot.

One such character is Professor Francesca Bartolli, an Italian criminal psychologist and well-known profiler. Jack travels to Rome to make her acquaintance and has shrewdly chosen a delightful Italian restaurant for their first meeting because he has been told that ‘she loves to eat.’ Once again, the setting is used to illustrate the personality of this new character:

“Jack crossed the Piazza della Minerva in front of his hotel next to the Pantheon, stopped briefly at Bernini’s Elephant and Obelisk – one of his favourite statues in Rome – and then turned into a small side street leading to Armando al Pantheon, a Roman institution popular with locals, serving traditional Roman and Lazio fare. The reason Jack had chosen this small, intimate family restaurant for his meeting with Professor Bartolli was a comment made by Lapointe after he had arranged the meeting: ‘Remember, like all good Italians, Professor Bartolli loves to eat. Make sure you take her to a nice restaurant. I told her all about you ...’

As soon as Jack stepped into the crowded, wood-panelled room and was shown to his table, he felt instantly at ease. Run by the Gargioli family since the sixties, the restaurant radiated wellbeing and Roman charm, and the mouth-watering cooking aroma drifting out of the kitchen promised outstanding food for which the establishment was well known. Jack could understand why reservations had to be made weeks in advance to get a table.

Jack ordered some olives and a bottle of 2007 Illuminati Ilico Riserva Montepulciano d’Abruzzo, which he hoped his guest would enjoy, and then sat back soaking up the bustling, rustic atmosphere. He had almost finished his second glass of wine when Professor Bartolli walked in and looked around. Jack recognised her at once from the photos on her website and held up his hand to attract her attention.

Carrying a battered violin case under her arm and looking somewhat flustered in her tight-fitting leather jacket – her long, curly dark-blonde hair a little dishevelled – Bartolli didn’t quite fit the image Jack had formed in his mind of the sophisticated criminal psychologist with a fearsome reputation, whose court appearances were legendary and performances under cross-examination formidable, instilling fear in those brave enough to question her opinions and findings.

‘I am so sorry for being late,’ said Bartolli, shaking Jack’s hand, ‘but despite my best efforts to leave the rehearsal before we finished, I was unable to do so. I play in a small chamber orchestra.’ Bartolli bent down and pushed the violin case under the table as there was nowhere else to put it. ‘But the conductor would have none of it. “How would Vivaldi feel,” he said, “if suddenly a number of key phrases in the concerto went missing?” I had nowhere to go after that. That’s why I’m late; sorry. The last Friday of the month is practice night, only to be missed at the risk of being pilloried or, God forbid, *expelled*,’ Bartolli prattled on. ‘But Lapointe insisted we had to meet tonight. He said it was urgent. So, here I am.’

‘You are a musician as well?’ said Jack, trying hard to look serious as he watched the fascinating woman take off her jacket and scarf, tie back her hair and sit down. Tall and slim, in her early forties, with a prominent Roman nose and wide-set green eyes that didn’t seem to stop smiling, she had an aristocratic look that reminded Jack of a painting by Bartolomeo Veneto of Lucrezia Borgia. He reached for the bottle and poured some wine into her glass. ‘Looks like you could do with some wine.’

‘Is it that obvious?’ asked Bartolli.

‘It is,’ replied Jack, ‘but no-one’s looking.’ They both burst out laughing. ‘Salute!’”

In **The Stolen Altarpiece**, my most recent book, numerous new characters have been introduced who fall under the broad classification of ‘good guys.’ Anatoly Novotny, Russian opposition leader, pro-democracy activist, and vocal critic and opponent of President Palin, is one of them. We meet him during a rally in front of the Winter Palace in St Petersburg on a cold winter’s day:

“Anatoly Novotny had been a thorn in Palin’s side for years. Tall, in his early forties, well-educated – he held degrees in political science and economics from Oxford and Yale – he was a brilliant public speaker who could beguile his audience with an infectious passion that was difficult to resist. A patriot who loved his country deeply, he had made it his mission to expose the monstrous corruption that had dominated the Kremlin for years and had drained much needed resources from a country that needed them desperately. With a huge following both, in Russia, and abroad, he had skillfully used the internet to reach a

huge audience and build a following that would have been the envy of many a president or business tycoon around the world.”

When introducing a new character who will play an important role in the storyline, it is important to engage with the reader and create curiosity and intrigue from the very beginning. Characters are the essential pieces on the literary chessboard that make up the fabric of a gripping thriller that will hold the reader’s attention from the very first page to the last. For these reasons the first appearance of a new character is critically important and great care must be taken in how this is to be approached.

Such an introduction must never be clumsy or superficial. On the contrary, in order to hook the reader, information is key. After all, this is an introduction, and an introduction requires a certain amount of detail that is both relevant, and intriguing.

On the other hand, when a character who has already featured prominently in a previous book is re-introduced into the storyline, an entirely different approach is needed. What has to be kept in mind here is that not every reader will be familiar with the previous book or books, and therefore recall what had taken place before. The re-introduction must take this into account and make sense to readers old, and new, without lengthy, tedious repetitious explanations.

Abbot Serapion who has featured prominently in *The Lost Symphony* and is a key character in this book as well, is a good example. He is one of those ‘links’ that connect various storylines in the series and creates curiosity and surprise when he, as is the case here, reappears unexpectedly:

“Jack looked at the tall man standing motionless near the windows like a statue, and gasped.

Tristan turned to Bartolli standing next to him. ‘Watch,’ he said softly.

‘Abbot Serapion? *You? Here?* How is this possible?’ said Jack.

‘Is it any stranger than last time we met in Yekaterinburg?’ said Serapion, smiling.

‘Destiny and fate brought us together then. Destiny and fate seem to be doing so again.’

Seeing Serapion standing there conjured up images of a meeting five years earlier in dramatic circumstances. Jack had been searching for Kazanskaya Bogomater, a famous lost Russian icon at the time. The fateful meeting had been arranged by Rabbi Stein. Jack could

still hear the eerie chanting of the monks he had met that day in a hidden underground chamber below a deserted church.

‘That’s what Rabbi Stein would have said—’

Bartolli watched the fascinating man with the long white beard walk over to Jack and embrace him. He looked like a Russian saint in his black cassock and conical fur hat, about to bless the faithful.

‘How true. I spoke to him after your meeting in Prague in November, and again just a few days before he was murdered. That’s when he told me about you and *Golgotha*,’ said Serapion, sadness in his voice.

*Ah. That’s how he knows*, thought Jack, desperately trying to make sense of the unexpected encounter. ‘Is that what this is all about?’

‘It is in a way, but it’s more complicated than that. This is all about David Herzl – the Postmaster of Treblinka – and his diary. I read your novella. We all did ...’

‘That diary again,’ said Jack, shaking his head. ‘My novella seems to have caused quite a stir in unexpected places.’

‘Your books always do. Just like Empress Alexandra’s letter to her friend, Countess Bezukhova showed you the way to Kazanskaya Bogomater, we believe that the Herzl diary will show you the way to something even more precious, and important. Especially when we consider the times we live in and the dangers Russia is facing—’

‘*We believe?*’ said Jack. ‘Who’s we?’

‘The Seeker and the Guardians.’

‘They too are involved?’

‘They are, because this is all about Russia.’”

Linking characters, old and new, and weaving them into the fabric of the storyline in meaningful ways is always a challenge. The meeting in Gorky Park in Moscow between Abbot Serapion, and a new character, Boris Karlov, a senior FSB agent and one of President Palin’s closest advisers, is an excellent example:

‘Thanks for coming at such short notice,’ said Karlov, stamping his feet to keep warm, and shook hands with Serapion. ‘Let’s walk.’

The expression on Karlov's face told Serapion all he had to know: something was wrong; very wrong. A man of Karlov's standing wouldn't have arranged an urgent meeting with all its risks attached without good reason.

Karlov and Serapion had met in Gorky Park before. The reason for this was as obvious as it was simple: they couldn't be overheard. While the FSB was well aware of the connection between Karlov – one of Palin's closest advisers and confidants – and Serapion, the enigmatic abbot from Yekaterinburg, it had no idea of the true nature of their relationship and collaboration. That was a closely guarded secret only known to the two men which, if discovered, would certainly have cost them their lives.”

\* \* \*

Connecting with my readers has always been a main part of my journey as a writer. The internet – social media in particular – has opened extraordinary possibilities of communication that allow contact with a worldwide readership in ways that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

This line of communication has created a valuable dialogue that has made it possible to reach out to my readers and involve them in the creative process of writing a thriller series like *The Jack Rogan Mysteries* in unique ways.

My monthly newsletters with thousands of subscribers from all over the world, and my Book Launch Team of dedicated readers who form the inner circle of my readership and have become my ‘literary ambassadors,’ have added a human dimension to the solitary task of writing that has become one of the most rewarding aspects of being a writer.

The very fact that you are reading this right now is testimony of this. Why? Because by reading these lines you are giving me something of great value; *your time*. And for that, I thank you because it is a precious gift, and hope that I have been able to enrich your journey as a reader and made stepping into the world of my imagination rewarding, and most important of all, *entertaining!*

Part 3:  
Behind The Scenes & Main Characters Profile

The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series

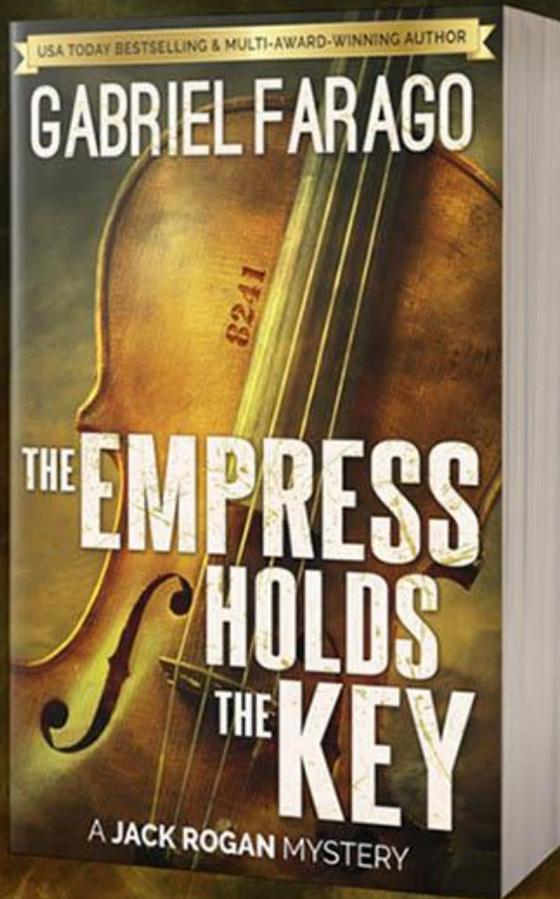
**THE EMPRESS HOLDS THE KEY**  
**The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 1**

**Behind The Scenes**

Gabriel Farago

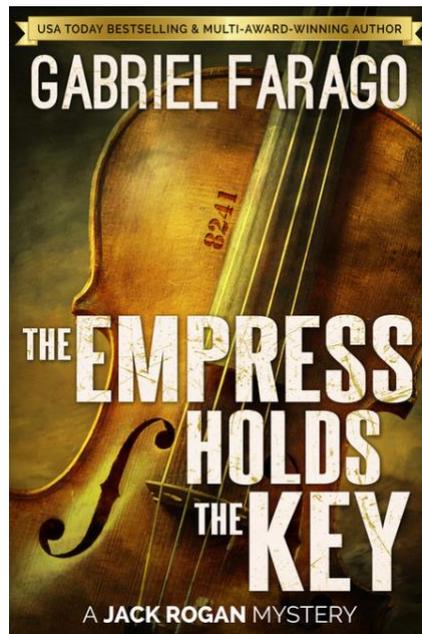
USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

# GABRIEL FARAGO



# BEHIND THE SCENES

## The Empress Holds the Key



Jack Rogan’s discovery of a disturbing old photograph in the ashes of a rural Australian cottage draws the journalist into a dangerous hunt with the ultimate stakes.

The tangled web of clues – including hoards of Nazi gold, hidden Swiss bank accounts, and a long-forgotten mass grave – implicate wealthy banker Sir Eric Newman and lead to a trial with shocking revelations.

A holy relic mysteriously erased from the pages of history is suddenly up for grabs to those willing to sacrifice everything to find it.

Rogan and his companions must follow historical leads through ancient Egypt, to the Crusades and the Knights Templar, to uncover a secret that could destroy the foundations of the Catholic Church and challenge the history of Christianity itself.

Will Rogan succeed in bringing the dark mystery into the light, or will the powers desperately working against him ensure the ancient truths remain buried forever?

## Inspiration: From Budapest to the Blue Mountains; a writer's journey



Becoming a writer doesn't happen in a vacuum. It is a journey in itself that provides the material and inspiration for the stories, and the rich tapestry of characters and settings that bring those stories so vividly to life.

*The Empress Holds the Key* is my first published novel. It took almost ten years and a huge amount of research to write, and was inspired by events and circumstances reaching back to my childhood.

In order to help you understand the journey of this book, I would like to share a few delightful little stories with you that I hope will provide a glimpse into my world and the creative process that shapes my work. These stories will explain how an old diary found by accident provided the material for this book and how that diary, many years later, inspired me to learn to read the hieroglyphs, travel to Egypt, and investigate the fascinating questions and theories raised by an extraordinary man: Father Lucius, a Franciscan monk.

## The key to the attic

I can still remember my tenth birthday most vividly. It was the day I was given the key to my grandfather's attic. The key was certainly impressive: heavy, intricate and huge, like the key of a castle gate, I thought at the time. And in some ways it was just that. It opened the door to a magic world.

The attic in my grandfather's hunting lodge in Austria was a wonderland; especially for a young boy. Just to get to it was an adventure. You could only reach it by way of a narrow set of winding stairs that always creaked.

Once you made it to the top, you were met by a low, wood-panelled door with solid, wrought-iron hinges. The door was usually locked, and the huge key resided in grandpa's study, in the bottom drawer of his beloved desk; until it became mine, that is.

The attic, a narrow, rectangular room at the very top of the spacious house where a maze of massive exposed wooden beams held up a steep roof, became my secret world. It was a place where I could dream and let my imagination run free. And there was certainly a lot to stimulate my imagination – books mainly, hundreds of them – and a few fascinating objects to enchant a curious boy. Welcome to my grandfather's private world.

There were no shelves or bookcases; the books were all in old trunks covered in cobwebs. As a career soldier – a high-ranking officer in the Austro-Hungarian army – my grandfather travelled a lot. He was stationed in various parts of the Empire, often for years, and his most treasured possessions travelled with him in those trunks.

A leather chair – armrests worn and faded – faced a dormer window with a splendid view down into the garden. Next to it was a wooden table with intricately carved legs. On its polished top lived two very special objects: my grandfather's wonderful old typewriter, and a gramophone. And, I almost forgot, his reading glasses in a flat metal case and a silver pocket-watch.

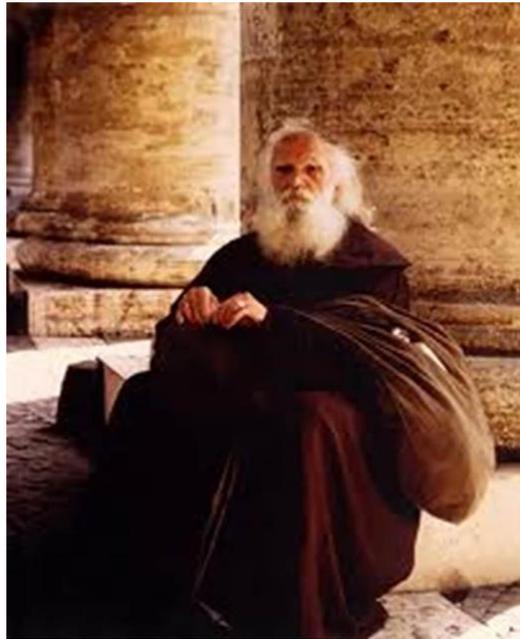
The typewriter, with its many moving parts, became an item of great fascination. I experimented for hours, pressing the keys, watching the ribbon move and the spools turn, always waiting for the little bell to ring, until one of my aunts took pity on me and actually showed me how it worked.

Sadly, I never met my grandfather – he died many years before I was born – but in that attic, I believe I got to know him through his books and his music. I became a voracious reader. After school, I headed straight to the attic. Not to do homework, but to read. It was my introduction to the wonderful world of books, a passion that has never left me, and which today, more than ever, guides my life. I believe this was my grandfather’s legacy; a gift to the grandson he never met: literature and music.

I still have that typewriter and that gramophone, and I still have the key to my grandfather’s attic, his reading glasses, and his watch. Memory links us to the past. Without memory, we are rudderless, adrift in the turbulent sea of life without compass or anchor. Special objects are little memory triggers that can conjure up thoughts and ideas hidden in the recesses of our minds. They are little souvenirs of life’s stops along the journey.

I am surrounded by memories up here in my own attic in the Blue Mountains on the other side of the world. I still type the occasional page on that typewriter, and listen to an old, scratched Caruso record or two on the gramophone. They give me a great sense of peace and joy and, most importantly, inspiration to do what I love most: writing.

## The officer and the monk



Buried deep down in one of my grandfather's old army trunks – covered in cobwebs and almost hidden behind wooden beams in the back of the attic – I made a surprising discovery. I found his journals, a little mouldy and difficult to read, but otherwise intact. The tiny, spidery handwriting, the faded ink, and the badly creased pages made them almost illegible. Not surprisingly, I pushed them aside. They were of little interest to a ten-year-old boy. It would be many years before I opened them again and began to delve into my grandfather's hidden world.

However, at the very bottom of the trunk I found something else, which turned out to be far more interesting to me at the time. At first, I didn't pay any attention to the rusty tin, the size of a shoebox. But when I opened it, I discovered something extraordinary: postcards, dozens of them, neatly tied together with string.

All the postcards were addressed to my grandfather and had been sent from Egypt by someone called Lucius. I spent the next couple of hours sitting on the dusty floor looking at the pictures – mainly drawings – of temple ruins, colossal statues of strange gods, and boats with triangular sails crossing the Nile. There were also pictures of camels, palm trees, hippos, crocodiles, and turbaned men in long flowing robes. Images of a different, distant,

exotic place – Egypt. These postcards were my first contact with an ancient culture that has fascinated me ever since.

After the excitement of my discovery had died down a little, I carried my new find down to the kitchen to show his daughters – my great aunts – who lived with us at the time. The kitchen was their domain and these two fabulous cooks ruled it with iron-fisted military precision. I was responsible for the firewood and lighting the fire in the huge stove every morning at first light.

I put the tin on the kitchen table, opened it, and said, ‘Look what I found in Grandpa’s trunk.’ Aunt Frieda came over and looked inside the tin. ‘You found his postcards,’ she said, smiling. ‘From Egypt. I had no idea he had kept them.’

‘Who is Lucius?’ I asked, holding up one of the postcards and pointing to the signature on the back.

‘Father Lucius was your grandfather’s closest friend,’ said Aunt Rosa. She opened the oven door and looked inside. There are certain things you never forget. The mouth-watering aroma of freshly baked bread that filled our kitchen every time Aunt Rosa baked bread was one of them. ‘He was a Franciscan monk,’ she said.

‘He lived in Egypt for many years. Your grandfather visited him there once. They spent a few months together exploring the monuments of ancient Egypt. Come to think of it, your grandfather brought back many exotic things from that trip,’ said Aunt Frieda. ‘Perhaps they too are in those trunks?’

I ran up the stairs back to the attic and began to rummage through the other trunks. At first I found only books; many of them about Egypt. But then I found the real treasure – strange artefacts: scarabs, small stone statues and many etchings and lithographs. It soon became apparent that my grandfather had been quite a scholar with some surprising interests, especially for a career soldier serving in the Austro-Hungarian Army.

When I eventually opened his journals again many years later, most of what I read made no sense. The concepts and ideas, the many references and quotes, simply just went over my head. The breakthrough came when I discovered that a particular set of quotes was in fact an extract from a book in his library right here in the attic! It was like opening a window to let in sunshine and fresh air. After that, everything began to fall into place.

The book in question was a history of a fascinating order of notorious warrior-monks, the Knights Templar. As I was soon to discover, the Templars and their secrets was one of the three main topics addressed in the journals. The other two dealt with the pharaoh Akhenaten – the heretic king of Ancient Egypt – and a French priest who lived in the nineteenth century.

At first, these topics appeared unrelated. However, as I began to delve deeper into the journals, I discovered that this was far from so. What brought them all together was another extraordinary discovery. One of the leather-bound journals at the bottom of the trunk, which I had assumed belonged to my grandfather, didn't belong to him at all. It was the diary of his best friend, Father Lucius! The two learned friends had collaborated for years to unravel an extraordinary mystery.

This mystery involving the Templars, the pharaoh Akhenaten and a French priest inspired me to write *The Empress Holds the Key*. However, to prepare the way, I needed to learn more about the Templars and Akhenaten.

## Warrior monks, a heretic king and a French priest



As I immersed myself into my grandfather's writings, it soon became apparent that he and his close friend Father Lucius collaborated for years trying to solve a great mystery; the sudden disappearance of a significant religious artefact from the pages of history.

It all began with the Knights Templar. In 1119, nine French knights, the founding fathers of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon – the Templars – travelled to Jerusalem. They were welcomed by King Baldwin, who used the Al-Aqsa Mosque as his own palace, and had given permission to establish their headquarters on the Temple Mount. The knights also asked the king for permission to occupy part of the mosque for their own use.

Curiously, this extraordinary request was granted. For the next seven years, the knights remained in Jerusalem and rarely left the mosque. What were they doing there? Father Lucius, a biblical scholar and amateur archaeologist, was intrigued by this. He was convinced that the Templars were looking for something by literally digging up the past. Did they find what they were looking for? Apparently not. Why? Because according to Father Lucius, they were looking for something that was no longer there.

This was one of the two reasons Father Lucius was so interested in the Templars. The second was their sudden demise. The order only lasted for just under two hundred years. During that time, the Templars had become incredibly wealthy and influential. However, in 1307, King Philip the Fair of France ordered the mass arrest of the Templars. Torture, imprisonment and executions on a large scale followed. This was sanctioned by the Pope himself, who took a personal interest in the destruction of the order.

Why this sudden fall from grace? What were the true reasons behind this extraordinary campaign by church and state to discredit and eradicate such a powerful and prestigious order? Over the years, many theories have been advanced to explain these events. However, Father Lucius had his own theory, and it had nothing to do with mainstream scholarship.

Father Lucius spent many years in Egypt. During this time, my grandfather and his friend corresponded regularly, and dealt with this subject in detail. Their theories and conclusions were astonishing to say the least, and it was a wonderful joy to work with these theories and my own imagination when crafting *The Empress Holds the Key*.

## The Lucius Diaries; Akhenaten, Moses, and the Exodus



Help to unravel my grandfather's journals came from an unexpected quarter: the Lucius Diaries. I found these diaries tucked away in the corner of one of my grandfather's campaign chests. At first, I didn't realise their importance because they were written in Latin. However, a number of years later, my Jesuit education came to the rescue – years of Latin drudgery finally paid off! I was able to translate the text, and what I discovered was quite extraordinary! In fact, the diaries provided the key to understanding the many – often perplexing – topics and ideas jotted down in my grandfather's journals.

The main subject of interest to Father Lucius was Akhenaten, the heretic king of ancient Egypt who lived in the fourteenth century BC. Akhenaten was also known as the pharaoh Amenhotep IV. He was the father of Tutankhamun and the husband of Queen Nefertiti, the most beautiful woman in ancient Egypt. He later changed his name to Akhenaten, abandoned the old capital, Thebes, and built a new one: Akhetaten. His heresy? Abolishing the gods. How, and why?

Legend has it that it all began with a vision. Apparently, the god Aten revealed himself to the pharaoh as light; the sun disk between two mountains. Akhenaten interpreted this as a sign from god, Aten, to bring about change, change of a most fundamental kind. For the

first time in recorded history, Akhenaten declared that there was only one god – Aten – thereby introducing something quite radical, alien, frightening even: monotheism – the concept of a single, all-powerful god.

Father Lucius was fascinated by this and the fact that Akhenaten lived just before the time of Moses and the Exodus. He was convinced that there was a connection between Akhenaten and Moses, and he spent several years in Egypt investigating this and gathering evidence. Slowly, the pieces of an extraordinary puzzle began to fall into place. Apparently, my grandfather and his friend corresponded for years dealing with this subject, but unfortunately, only a few letters survived. It wasn't until I was able to decipher the diaries that it all began to make sense.

After Akhenaten died, he was erased from the pages of history. Images of the heretic king were destroyed, his name was chiselled out of all inscriptions, his capital, Akhetaten, abandoned. The priests returned to power and restored the ancient gods to their rightful place. In their world there was no place for monotheism.

Aten was toppled and disappeared, or did he? Father Lucius was convinced that the cult of Aten survived by going underground, and that there was an important link between this cult, Moses, and the Exodus. This was a fascinating idea with far-reaching implications. The 'what if' questions in the Lucius diaries and my grandfather's journals were tantalising, the theories challenging, and the conclusions quite breathtaking. Years later, they inspired me to study Egyptology, learn to read the hieroglyphs and travel to Egypt.

A serious writer needs a good story before he can begin writing a book. A good story has to be inspirational and unique. It has to be able to ignite curiosity and spark the imagination. Fact and fiction must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is so convincing that the reader is never quite sure where one ends and the other begins. To me, the Lucius diaries and my grandfather's journals did just that. The result? *The Empress Holds the Key*.

## The Empress Hold the Key: Author's Note

We carefully removed the last stone blocking the entry to the burial chamber, and held our breath. Peering inside, we saw a large sarcophagus partially covered with sand. No other treasures – tomb robbers had probably seen to that centuries ago.

Silent, we entered and approached the stone chest, its exquisite hieroglyphs whispering to us from the distant past. Our professor pointed to the inscriptions on top of the broken lid, his hand shaking with excitement. Barely able to speak, he said they told stories of great battles, conquered lands and glory. It appeared the tomb belonged to a general close to the pharaoh. Our spirits soared; a discovery like this only comes along once. After the excitement had died down, the Professor cleared his throat, a smile on his face.

‘This isn’t bad, guys, but don’t get too carried away,’ he said, pulling us back down to earth. ‘What do you think would be the ultimate find?’ he asked, throwing us a challenge. I’m sure he was only teasing, but a heated debate erupted at once, the ensuing discussion continuing well into the evening as we waited for the boat to take us back across the Nile to Cairo.

At first there were many suggestions, but then, quite unexpectedly, we all agreed that one particular artefact, which had mysteriously disappeared from the pages of history a long time ago, would qualify for that distinction. This was remarkable, because scholars from different parts of the world rarely agree on matters like this. However, on this occasion, all of us – Christians, Muslims, and Jews – had somehow come to share the same view. It was an unforgettable moment; it turned into a moment of destiny and became the inspiration for this book.

Gabriel Farago  
Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia



I am often asked what motivates a writer to spend countless, solitary hours thinking about plot structure and storylines, about characters and dialogue and then create a page-turning story that is both plausible and realistic. A tall order indeed. And that's just the beginning. In order to make this work, and before writing can begin, comes the research.

Because authenticity is the cornerstone of my writing that underpins everything, research is crucial. Without authenticity, there is no realistic structure that holds everything together, brings characters to life, and makes an ordinary read into a page-turning one.

In order to achieve this, I try to weave fact and fiction into a seamless storyline. By blurring the boundaries between the two, the reader is never quite sure where one ends and the other begins. This is, of course, quite deliberate as it creates the illusion of authenticity and reality in a work that is pure fiction. A successful work of fiction is a balancing act: reality must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is both entertaining and plausible.

## It was all Dan Brown's fault ...

Now that the *The Empress Holds the Key* has been published, friends keep asking me why I hadn't released the book earlier. Well, there's quite a story behind this that I would like to share with you.

As you now know, the ideas that have inspired the book reach all the way back to my childhood days and an early fascination with the Templars, the Vatican and Egypt. I've spoken about the treasures in my grandfather's attic before. At first, the many ideas and questions addressed in his journals didn't make much sense to me, and I put them aside for many years. And then, as often happens in life, I returned to those journals many years later as an adult with an inquisitive mind and began to look at them through very different eyes. I travelled to Egypt, began to study Egyptology, and learned to read the hieroglyphs.

*The Empress Holds the Key*, a big book, took more than ten years to write. I was still practising law at the time and writing was strictly confined to the midnight hour. Not an easy task when you have to be in court in the morning arguing complex cases and addressing juries.

Finally, the manuscript was submitted to a high-profile publishing house and, to my great delight, the publisher expressed serious interest in the book. Rigorous editing followed and I thought, rather naively as it turned out, that publication was just around the corner. I was wrong. Editing and negotiating dragged on for months, and when I finally decided to bring matters to a head, I was told that the publisher had changed his mind and no longer wanted to proceed! Why? 'Blame it on Dan Brown and the *Da Vinci Code*,' I was told.

Needless to say, not only was I terribly disappointed, but I was also totally perplexed; I didn't understand! I think after my many phone calls, the editor I had worked with for months took pity on me and, over a cup of coffee, explained the situation: Dan Brown's phenomenal success with the *Da Vinci Code* – which had just been released at the time – had made the publication of my book very risky.

'How so?' I asked.

'Because *The Empress Holds the Key* also touches on some of the big questions and topics Dan Brown has addressed in his book,' explained the editor.

‘But my book is very different, and I started to write it many years ago ... long before the *Da Vinci Code* began to annoy the Vatican,’ I argued.

I was getting nowhere. Simply put, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. So, my story was put back on the shelf for a number of years, and I went on to write other books.

However, encouraged by my literary friends, I decided to revisit *The Empress Holds the Key* and have another look at it. I liked what I found. Finally, *The Empress Holds the Key* was published in 2013 and became Book 1 in *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*.

I hope you have found this brief journey ‘behind the scenes’ of *The Empress Holds the Key* informative, and it has ignited a spark of curiosity that will entice you to step into the world of my imagination and read the book. And that, my friends, is what every writer strives for.

**THE EMPRESS HOLDS THE KEY**  
**The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 1**

**Main Characters Profile and Glossary**

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
EMPRESS HOLDS THE KEY  
MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

## The Main Characters: A Profile Study and Glossary

As every storyteller knows, characters are the lifeblood of a good story. Therefore, I take character development very seriously and devote a lot of care and attention to this absolutely essential subject. A good story alone is not enough. To bring it alive, characters are needed who can ‘connect’ with readers, and the best way to do that is through creating characters who are not only interesting, true-to-life personalities anchored in reality, but are also people my readers can relate to.

‘Character building’ is an art. It takes imagination and ingenuity to create a character profile that does all that. I have found the best way to approach this complex, challenging subject, is to ‘reveal’ the character gradually, step by step. By giving the reader little glimpses into the lives, personalities and backgrounds of the characters, it is possible to make this process interesting and engaging. The best way to illustrate this is by way of examples, which are set out below.

# Profile Study

## Jack Rogan

Journalist, celebrated author, hopeless romantic and adventurer. In short, a very likeable, but far from perfect, ‘incorrigible rascal’ with a great Aussie sense of humour.

Obviously, Jack Rogan is the central character (I don’t like the term ‘hero’) in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, and therefore features in all of my books. I have approached his character gradually, by revealing ‘snippets’ of relevant information about him, his background, habits, strengths and weaknesses, etc. in each of my books. I do this by weaving relevant information into the storyline, particular scenes, dialogue and, of course, the relationships and interplay between Jack and other characters.

With each step, my readers learn a little more about Jack. They find out why he acts the way he does, what motivates him, and what frightens him. They learn about his dreams and his nightmares, his strengths and, of course, his weaknesses and vulnerabilities, until a clear picture emerges that my readers can relate to and, in Jack’s case, begin to love. Needless to say, this is critically important, as the central character sets the tone for the entire series.

Here’s an example taken from *The Disappearance of Anna Popov* (Book 2 in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*), when Rebecca Armstrong asks Jack about his past:

‘What was it like? Growing up on a cattle station?’

Jack took his time before replying and looked pensively at Rebecca. ‘Lonely and harsh,’ he said. ‘I learned to ride before I could walk and helped around the house as soon as I could stand. Our closest neighbour was fifty miles away, and it took three hours on a good day to reach town in the old ute. I used to ride in the back with Bonny and Clyde—’

‘I thought you had no siblings,’ interrupted Rebecca.

Jack began to chuckle. ‘Bonny and Clyde were our cattle dogs. Sharp as tacks. They were my friends. Our enemy was the drought. It was never far away,’ said Jack, turning serious, ‘and when it came, it lasted for years. That’s when the land became a dustbowl, the cattle began to die, and the bank manager came knocking.’ Jack looked away. ‘Mum hated

it with a passion. She was a country girl from Wales. She married my father when she was just eighteen ...’

Realising that she had opened old wounds, Rebecca reached across and put her hand on Jack’s. ‘What happened to your parents?’ she asked.

‘Mum left. One day, she couldn’t take it anymore and ran off with the publican in town. We never saw her again. And then I ran away too,’ Jack said, the sadness in his voice reflecting the heartache of painful memories. ‘Dad eked out a living on the cattle station with three Aboriginal stockmen until he got sick ...’

‘What happened to him?’

‘He lost the farm and died a broken man in a boarding house in Townsville a few years ago.’

‘I’m sorry.’

‘Such is life,’ said Jack, reaching for his wine glass. ‘We all have to follow our own path. Often barefoot, and some of it is treacherous and paved with nails.’

With a few, brief ‘literary brush strokes’ seen through the eyes of Rebecca, we have already learned a great deal about Jack and his past.

Another very important aspect of character building is to listen to your readership. I receive valuable feedback about my characters in that way. They appear to ‘grow’ into real people as far as many of my readers are concerned. When that happens, I know I am on the right track.

This has certainly happened with Jack. So much so that my readers wanted to know more about Jack’s background and early life before he first appeared in *The Empress Holds The Key*, Book 1 in the series.

I thought a lot about how best to address this issue in a meaningful, engaging way. The answer? Write an introductory novella to the series. I did this quite recently in my novella *The Kimberley Secret*, which is available on [Amazon](#).

In addition, my previous novella *The Forgotten Painting* also delves into Jack’s past, and reveals interesting aspects of his personality and earlier life not addressed in the series proper. This novella is also available and can be downloaded right now on [Amazon](#) as well.

Also, I'm delighted to tell you that *The Forgotten Painting* has received a major literary award in the US. It was awarded a gold medal by Reader's Favorite in the Short Stories and Novellas category.

So, how can I best describe the central character of the series in a few short sentences? Not easy, but here we go:

Jack is in his forties when he first appears. We follow his story from there. As a country boy who grew up on a remote cattle station in outback Australia, he has known hardship and heartache from an early age. (This and other interesting aspects of Jack's childhood are dealt with in *The Kimberley Secret*.)

Without giving too much away, Jack is resourceful, full of curiosity and charm, but always a little reckless, and the adventures and exciting stories always seem to find HIM. A strong believer in destiny and fate, Jack never hesitates to 'dive in' and have a go. However, perhaps the most important aspect of his personality is that he is *likeable*. To be likeable isn't something you can learn or acquire. You either are, or you are not. This is Jack's greatest, most endearing asset that shines through everything he does.

Here's a brief illustration taken from *The Empress Holds The Key*, when we meet Jack for the first time:

"Jana was just about to leave when the door opened and a man in faded jeans, torn at the knees, and a striped pyjama top unbuttoned to the waist, squinted out at her.

'I can't stand getting up this early in the morning. What do you want?' he demanded, running his fingers through unkempt hair.

'Still chasing that big story, Jack?'

'Jana?' said Jack, shielding his eyes from the sun. 'Well, what a surprise! What have I done wrong this time?'

Jana laughed. 'You've done nothing wrong except not return my calls,' she said. 'I've left several messages on your answering machine.'

'Is that a federal offence now?'

‘Seriously, Jack, I want to talk to you about a dead firefighter, a newspaper article, and a photograph.’

‘You’d better come in,’ he said. ‘But I have to warn you, my cleaning lady took the week off ...’

‘I can see ...’ said Jana, smiling.

The tiny lounge room on the ground floor looked like it hadn’t seen a cleaner for at least a year. A scratched coffee table was covered in empty beer cans, bottles and crushed milk cartons, and the sofa in front of the fireplace was barely visible under layers of old newspapers, magazines and various items of crumpled clothing. A lonely ironing board stood in the middle of the room with a basket full of limp washing nearby. Newspaper cuttings littered the floor.”

Perhaps the most telling remark that describes Jack’s personality most accurately can be found in a brief exchange between two old friends: Countess Kuragin and Leonardo da Baggio in *The Death Mask Murders*, Book 7 in the series:

“Despite the significant time difference – Venice was seven hours ahead of Cajamarca – Countess Kuragin and Leonardo were watching the Cajamarca transmission on TV in the palazzo salon.

‘I don’t know how he does it,’ said the countess, ‘but the stories certainly seem to find Jack wherever he goes. Just look at this!’

‘I know why.’

‘You do?’

‘He’s something very rare and special,’ said Leonardo.

‘What’s that?’

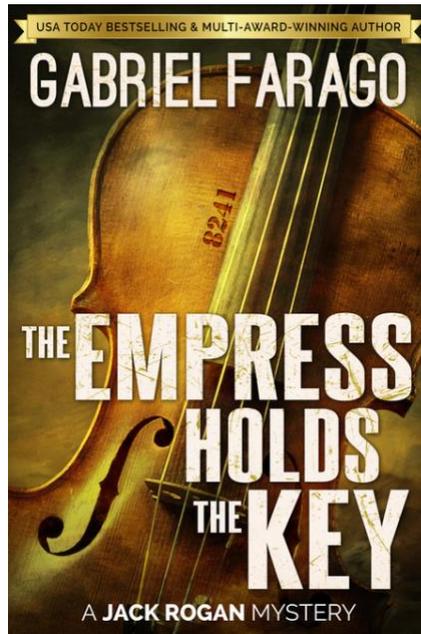
‘A just man.’

The countess looked at Leonardo, surprised. ‘You put it very well,’ she said. ‘That’s exactly what he is.’”

Women find Jack very attractive and are drawn to him. However, he is a ‘rolling stone’ when it comes to serious relationships and has difficulty making commitments. He therefore

drifts from one relationship to another in his charming, easygoing way, but without creating acrimony or offending his temporary partners. So much so that several of them stay friends long after the relationship has ended. This too, is part of the great charm of the man.

## Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines



### **Dark secrets. A holy relic. An ancient quest reignited.**

Jack Rogan’s discovery of a disturbing old photograph in the ashes of a rural Australian cottage draws the journalist into a dangerous hunt, with the ultimate stakes.

The tangled web of clues – including hoards of Nazi gold, hidden Swiss bank accounts, and a long-forgotten mass grave – implicate wealthy banker Sir Eric Newman and lead to a trial with shocking revelations.

A holy relic mysteriously erased from the pages of history is suddenly up for grabs to those willing to sacrifice everything to find it.

Rogan and his companions must follow historical leads through ancient Egypt, to the Crusades and the Knights Templar, to uncover a secret that could destroy the foundations of the Catholic Church and challenge the history of Christianity itself.

Will Rogan succeed in bringing the dark mystery into the light, or will the powers desperately working against him ensure the ancient truths remain buried forever?

## Timeline

**Benjamin Krakowski escapes: Nov 1944**

**Main plot: 2007**

## Characters

Lena **Abramowitz**

Polish Holocaust survivor (Auschwitz). Twin sister of Miriam

**Akhenaten**

1334 BC Heretic pharaoh of Egypt

Cyril **Archibald QC**

Sir Eric Newman's defence counsel

Fra. **Armand**

Templar knight; commander

Lord **Ashburton**

English lord living in Hamilton Park, England. Sole trustee of the Ashburton Foundation

Ahmad **Babar**

Egyptian excavation team leader. Worked for Dr Hudson

Professor **Bernadini**

Director of the American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers Inc. and expert witness in Sir Eric Newman's trial.

Fra. **Bernard**

Templar knight

Robert **Blackburn**

Australian Attorney-General

Armand de **Blanquefort**

Thirteenth-century Templar knight active in Ethiopia and Egypt

Cardinal **Brandauer**

Head of the Vatican Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, and Dean of the College of Cardinals. Confidant of Pope Julius

Elizabeth **Carrington**

Wife of Marcus Carrington QC

Marcus **Carrington** QC

Eminent Australian barrister and amateur archaeologist, specialising in ancient Egyptian history

Gebra **Christos**

Ethiopian monk and 'Protector of Secrets'

Abbe Berenger **Diderot**

Controversial French cleric in conflict with the Vatican over secret Templar archives

Abdullah **Farim**

Egyptian businessman representing an Egyptian terrorist organisation

Jakob **Finkelstein**

Holocaust survivor. Watchmaker living in Warsaw

Monsignor **Frumentius** Mariam Selassie, known as Brother Frumentius

Ethiopian priest

Jana **Gonski**

Australian Federal Police officer

Sam **Greenberg**

American attorney conducting a class action against Swiss banks

Dr Otto **Gruber**

Austrian civil servant in charge of the Department for the Preservation of Monuments

Father **Habakkuk** aka The Black Dominican

Ethiopian cleric working for Cardinal Brandauer

Chief Inspector Naguib **Haddad**

Senior Egyptian police officer based in Cairo

Anton **Hoffmeister**, known as Don Antonio in Buenos Aires

Night club owner living in Buenos Aires.

Dr Reuben **Hudson**

Archaeologist from Chicago. Excavated in Egypt

Pope **Julius**

Resides in the Vatican

Professor Fatima **Khalil**

Director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo

Professor Benjamin **Krakowski**

Polish Holocaust survivor, violin virtuoso, celebrated conductor and composer. Lives in London

**Berenger Krakowski**

Benjamin and David Krakowski's father. Polish musician and prisoner at Auschwitz

**David Krakowski**

Brother of Benjamin. Prisoner at Auschwitz

**Menelik**

Son of King Solomon and the Queen of **Sheba**

Jacques de **Molay**

Last Grand Master of The Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon

Sir Eric **Newman**

Successful Australian businessman of German descent, and head of Newman's Colonial Bank. Father of Horst and Heinrich

Sheikh **Omar** (also referred to as 'The Chosen One' and 'Defender of the Faith')

Founder and spiritual leader of the Islamic Brotherhood for the Liberation of Holy Places

Jack **Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator. Jack is the central character of the series and features in every book

Dr Bettany **Rosen**

Daughter of Sir Eric Newman. Doctor working in third-world countries, and head of the Rosen Foundation, a charity

Athanasius Mariam **Selassie**

Ethiopian priest, brother of Monsignor Frumentius Mariam Selassie and Guardian of the Ark of the Covenant at the Church of Saint Mary of Zion at Axum, Ethiopia

Queen of **Sheba**

African queen

King **Solomon**

King of Israel

Colonel **Sorokin**, alias Gregori **Molotov**

Russian Mafiya boss

Sturmbannfuehrer Wolfgang **Steinberger**

SS Major active in Auschwitz during WWII

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the Glossary helpful in finding, identifying, and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive. I view all my characters as 'real' personalities, anchored in real life. After all, what links us to people we've *actually* known in the past? Memories, of course. A well-written book can create such memories, and if I've done my job as a writer properly, you will hopefully view my characters in that way too. Happy reading!

*Gabriel Farago*

*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia, 2022*



### **Are You Ready to Unlock the Secret That Could Change the World?**

Embark with Jack Rogan on a quest that weaves through time and spans continents and centuries. *The Empress Holds the Key* is your entrance into a world where the line between history and myth blurs.

Unearth the secrets on [Amazon](#) today. You can access the book with one click right now.

# THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANNA POPOV

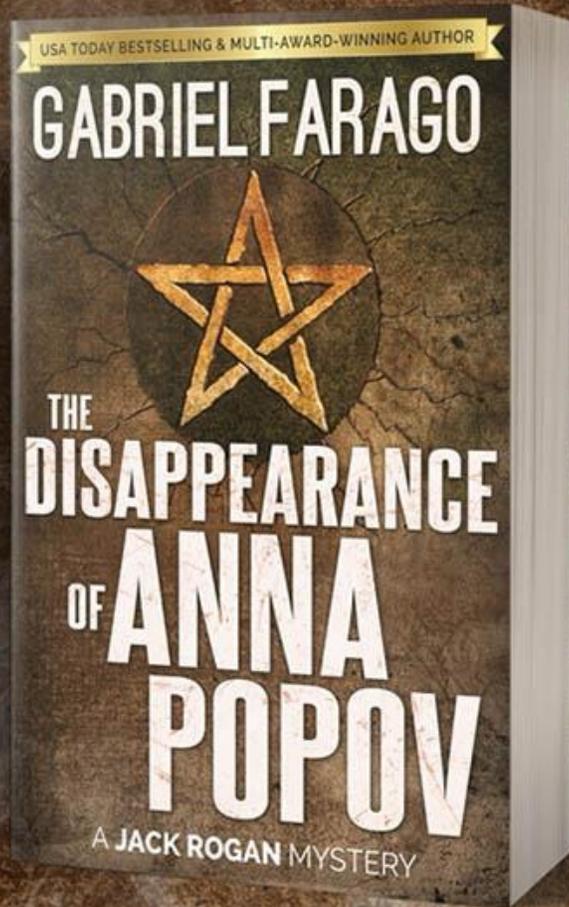
## The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 2

### Behind The Scenes

Gabriel Farago

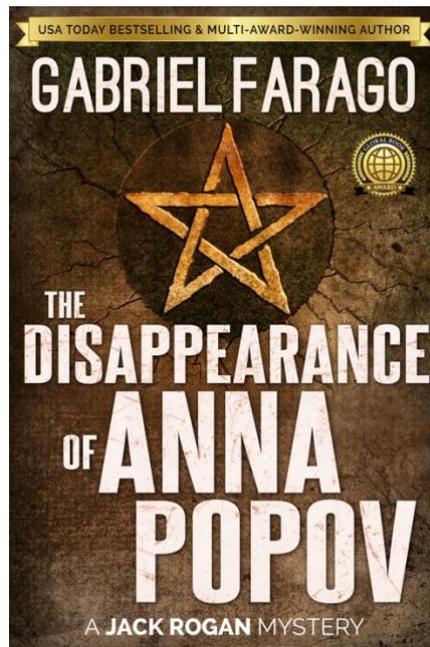
USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**BEHIND THE SCENES**

## The Disappearance of Anna Popov



When Jack Rogan, celebrated author and journalist, stumbles on a mysterious clue pointing to the tragic disappearance of two girls from Alice Springs, he can't resist investigating.

Rogan is joined by friends Rebecca Armstrong, his New York literary agent; Andrew Simpson, a retired Aboriginal police officer; and Cassandra, an enigmatic psychic, as he follows the trail of the missing girls into the remote Dreamtime-wilderness of outback Australia.

Soon past the point of no return, they enter a dark web of superstition and are drawn into the upside-down-world of an outlaw bikie gang, where the ruler is an evil master, outcasts are heroes, and cruelty and violence are admired and rewarded.

Cassandra, though, has a secret agenda of her own. Using her occult powers to avenge an old, deep wrong, she sets the scene for an epic showdown where the stakes are high, and the loser faces death and oblivion.

Will Rogan succeed? Will a desperate mother's prayers be answered? Will a lost daughter be found? Or will the forces of evil crush all their hopes and dreams?

## Inspiration

Encouraged by the reception of my first novel, *The Empress Hold the Key*, in 2013, the idea of a ‘series’ with Jack Rogan as the central character began to take shape. However, what became clear from the very beginning was this: a series needed a core of engaging key characters, who had to be introduced gradually into the storylines in a way that was both plausible and realistic.

Not only did these characters have to appeal to the readers, but they also had to be part of relationships that could be developed and incorporated into storylines going forward. The interactions between those characters was therefore critically important, and for this to work, the characters had to be anchored in real life. This posed a certain literary challenge that I had to master from the very beginning, because interesting characters are the very lifeblood of a thriller and can, if approached in the correct way, make an ordinary book into a page-turner.

I have been very fortunate in that regard because my long and varied legal career gave me access to some extraordinary characters and situations that have become the inspiration for my books.

This process began very early in my career. In fact, my first big criminal case became the inspiration for my second novel, *The Disappearance of Anna Popov*. How this came about is an interesting little story in itself, which I would like to share with you now. What follows are two short extracts taken from *Letters from the Attic*, a small collection of biographical background stories I published in 2013 to show that successful writing does not happen in a vacuum, but has to be based on real-life experiences.

## The bar fridge, Grimm Friday, and my first brief

Finishing my law degree was merely the first step in climbing that challenging mountain that was to become my legal career. After countless applications, tedious interviews by imperious floor clerks and intimidating silks who left you wait for hours, I finally received the phone call I had been dreaming about for weeks: I had been accepted to work on a ‘good’ floor of criminal specialists!

The day a young barrister moves into chambers is a day they never forget. I certainly remember mine. It was chaotic. The removalists were late, they scratched the lift, swore at the floor clerk, and if that wasn’t enough, the furniture didn’t fit into the room. But somehow, after a lot of imaginative jiggling, we managed to cram it all in. Just. To get to my desk, I had to squeeze past the old Chesterfield and the two matching leather chairs I had bought at auction. The lot I had bid on included a carved cocktail cabinet I really didn’t want, but had to take because it was a job lot. *The cabinet’s the problem*, I thought, looking at my crowded room. *I’ll get rid of it*. Unbeknown to me at the time was that this cocktail cabinet, which contained a small bar fridge, would shape my future legal career.

I don’t quite remember how it got out, but soon after I settled into my chambers, word spread that I had a bar fridge in my room. This was quite a rarity at the time, and mine was the only one on the floor apart from the fridge in the floor kitchen, which was strictly off limits. Then, one afternoon, our head of chambers – a senior QC with a fearsome reputation – came to see me.

‘They tell me you have a fridge in your room; is that correct?’ he asked, a stern look on his face. At first I thought I had done something wrong and broken some unwritten rule. Perhaps fridges were not allowed in rooms. I opened my cocktail cabinet and timidly showed him my empty fridge.

‘Splendid! You don’t mind if I keep a couple of bottles in here, do you?’

‘Of course not,’ I replied, relieved.

‘Nice furniture,’ said the QC, running his hand along the studded back of my faded green Chesterfield on his way out.

The next day, a case of French champagne was delivered to my room. The floor clerk put two bottles into my fridge, and wrote the QC’s name on the case, which he then placed

on the bottom shelf of my almost-empty bookcase. When I returned from court a few days later, I found a further case of champagne and two cases of wine with different names scribbled on top. By now my bookcase was rapidly filling up with grog.

The real surprise, however, came at the end of the week. I had spent the whole day in a Magistrate's Court in the suburbs with a hopeless bail application, which was refused, and didn't make it back to chambers until late in the afternoon. As I walked towards my room, tired and disappointed, I noticed that the door to my room was wide open. Coming closer, I could hear raucous laughter and saw clouds of cigarette smoke drifting out of my room into the corridor.

'What's going on in there?' I asked the floor clerk standing in the doorway.

'Grimm Friday.'

'What?'

Ignoring my question, which obviously didn't warrant an answer, the clerk turned and hurried away.

When I walked into my room, I was greeted by three rather jovial senior members of the floor – all silks – in a state of advanced inebriation. Two of them were sitting on the Chesterfield, and one sat in my chair with his feet on my desk; solicitors I had met before occupied the two leather armchairs.

'Where've you been? Get a glass,' said our fearsome head of chambers, pointing to a half-empty bottle of champagne on my desk. 'We've decided to have Grimm Friday in your room; you don't mind, do you?'

*What the hell is he talking about?* I wondered, but wisely held my tongue. 'Of course not,' I said instead, trying to appear nonchalant, and poured myself a glass of bubbly.

After the last of my self-invited guests finally staggered a little unsteadily out of my room two hours later and I began to clean up, I found my desk diary underneath two empty bottles. The diary was open, and something had been scribbled on next week's entry page in a tiny, spidery handwriting, which I recognised as that of our head of chambers:

*My junior is jammed. Trial starts on Tuesday; estimate, two weeks. Private brief. Noticed you are free; instructing solicitor happy with my recommendation. Conference arranged for Monday morning, 8 am. See you then. Marcus.*



“Going into court to run my first major criminal case”

I had to read the entry three times before it began to sink in. A brief, I thought. A two-week trial! Real work! Money! I began to laugh. ‘Noticed you are free’; what a joke. My diary was empty!

As for Grimm Friday ... read on ...

## Charlotte and the Brothers Grimm

Charlotte had attitude and flair. Discreetly gay but highly intelligent, with a wicked sense of humour and a unique dress sense that made eyebrows rise in astonishment and admiration, she was ideally suited to work on our floor. Few young women in her position would have lasted more than a week in our stressful environment dominated by eccentric, demanding males, working under pressure in almost monastic isolation.

As I was soon to find out, everyone called her Tom-Tom. Why? She was the bush telegraph of the floor. If you wanted to know the inside story about something, or someone, you asked Tom-Tom. The accuracy of the information she came up with was astonishing, her network of informers formidable, and her uncanny insights amazing. So, when I wanted to get to the bottom of Grimm Friday, I knew exactly what to do. The opportunity presented itself soon enough.

I arrived quite early on that Monday morning, but Tom-Tom was already at her desk. As the personal assistant of our head of chambers and two other senior barristers, she had her work cut out.

‘You’re early; good,’ she said, reaching under her desk. ‘Came in this morning. Your brief; here. Conference in Marcus’s room, eight am sharp.’ With that, she pushed a large ring binder across her desk towards me. ‘Better get stuck into it.’

‘By the way, I wanted to ask you something, Charlotte ...’ I said.

‘Call me Tom-Tom; I hate Charlotte. Fucking terrible name.’

‘What’s Grimm Friday?’

Shaking her head, Tom-Tom just looked at me with her huge eyes accentuated by breathtaking green eye shadow and almost theatrical makeup. ‘*You don’t know?*’

‘No idea.’

‘Buy me lunch and I’ll tell you.’

‘You’re on.’

Like any good PA, Tom-Tom was well organised. She had booked a table in a small bistro nearby. Looking stunning in her tight-fitting black dress, pink designer scarf and dazzlingly high red stilettos, she was waiting for me at the lift at 12:45 pm sharp, as arranged.

‘Champagne?’ I asked, after the waiter – who appeared to know her well – had shown us to a table by the window. I suspected that Tom-Tom liked to be seen. Fortunately for me, I remembered that she was partial to champagne: lots of it.

‘I like your style,’ she said. ‘Not bad for a baby barrister.’

I’d ordered a bottle of the good stuff. We were off to an excellent start.

‘Grimm Friday. Everyone seems to know what it means, except me. And having apparently hosted one in my room last week – albeit in absentia – I would really like to know too. Reasonable, don’t you think?’ I said, coming straight to the point.

‘Tradition,’ said Tom-Tom, taking a sip of champagne.

‘I don’t follow.’

‘You’ve heard of the Brothers Grimm?’

‘Sure. German storytellers; eighteenth century. Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty ...’

‘Correct. Grimm Friday has quite a story of its own ...’

‘Tell me.’

Tom-Tom held up her empty glass. She was obviously enjoying herself.

‘I see, you want me to suffer a little longer,’ I said, reaching for the bottle.

‘Not at all. Just teasing the new boy on the block.’

‘Doing a great job ...’ I mumbled.

‘Did you say something?’

I shook my head.

‘Well, here it goes. Once upon a time, there were these three friends.’

To do this story justice, I must pause here. It’s very late, and I’m sitting in my attic thinking about Tom-Tom. It must be the music; I’m listening to jazz. Tom-Tom loved jazz. She was without doubt one of the most complex and fascinating women I’ve met. Not only did she help me in my legal career, but she also knew about my writing aspirations— this was almost thirty years ago. I used to experiment with short stories at the time, which I used to show her. She never made fun of this. On the contrary, she became my best critic, supporter and, years later, fan. I owe her a lot.

Strange how music, more than almost anything else, can trigger memories of people long gone, and bridge the yawning gap of time.

But back to the lunch.

‘Once upon a time, there were these three friends,’ she said, leaning back in her chair. ‘Thick as thieves they were, and all three considered themselves raconteurs par excellence. Then one evening, after copious quantities of wine had been consumed, a question arose: Who was the best?’

‘Like in mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?’ I interrupted.

‘A bit like that. It was agreed there was only one way to settle this – a competition. And that is exactly what happened. A dinner was arranged in an exclusive club not far from here. As you would have guessed by now, the three friends were barristers on our floor.’

‘When did all this happen?’ I asked.

‘About twenty years ago. The idea was that each of the competitors would tell a story after dinner, which would then be voted on.’

‘By whom?’

‘Their peers, of course. The whole floor was invited, and a couple of judges too.’

‘What happened?’

Tom-Tom held up her empty glass again, which I quickly refilled.

‘Well, with the passage of time, things have become a little murky, but apparently it all ended in a draw.’

‘How come?’

‘Because each of the stories was so good, it was impossible to declare a winner.’

‘That was it?’

‘Not quite. A floor tradition was born. From then on, the three competitors became known as the Brothers Grimm, and because such a good time was had by all, it was decided to have a storytelling dinner on the first Friday of every month and call it – you guessed it – Grimm Friday.’

‘You’re kidding.’

‘No. Tradition, remember? There are always three Brothers Grimm on the floor. They hold their positions for one year. After that, the positions are declared vacant, and a competition is held to elect three new ones. Anyone can apply. Over the years, things have become a bit more relaxed. Grimm Friday can be a casual lunch, or a get-together in one of the rooms, or impromptu drinks in a bar, but always on a Friday.’

‘You’re not serious. This sounds like boarding school stuff!’

‘You know what barristers are like; you’re one of them!’ she said, giving me a reproachful look. I knew she had me there.

‘Who are the current three?’ I asked, changing direction.

‘Marcus, Cyril and Edgar.’

‘The barristers you’re working for. They were in my room on Friday. I see ...’

‘Yes. They’ve held their positions for the last four years.’

‘No challengers? Are they that good?’

Tom-Tom shrugged, a mischievous smile creasing the corners of her mouth. ‘You’ll find out ...’

Grimm Friday was a great tradition. It became part of my life for many years, and certainly spurred me on to become a better storyteller and writer. It has been the source of some wonderful material, which I’ve used extensively in my books. Whenever we told a Grimm Friday story, we would introduce it like this: ‘Once upon a Friday ...’

Over the years, Tom-Tom and I became good mates. She was full of surprises. Her sparkling personality, quirky friends – mainly theatre types – and inquisitive mind, made being with her always fun and entertaining. Sadly, a great tragedy cut short her young life.

Tom-Tom became the inspiration for one of the central characters in my second book – *The Disappearance of Anna Popov*.

## Research

For many years this is where the matter rested. It was safely locked away in my memory castle together with that extraordinary criminal trial that had thrown me in at the deep end.

The trial turned out to be sensational with a great deal of media attention, because it involved the prosecution of several members of a notorious outlaw motorcycle gang involved in a brutal gang war involving a number of murders. As there were several co-accused involved, the trial lasted for many months and gave me a unique insight into a different, dangerous, upside-down world, where the villains were the heroes, revered by their peers, where fear and unimaginable violence ruled, and the code of silence protected a way of life lived outside the law and the values of civilised society.

Because one of the accused, the president of the outlaw motorcycle club, was obsessed with the occult – especially the tarot – and Aboriginal Dreamtime stories, this provided an opportunity to introduce these fascinating subjects into the storyline and shape the characters featured in the book accordingly.



As I began to delve deeper into these complex subjects – especially the Aboriginal Dreamtime stories and legends – it soon became clear that ‘armchair research’ alone would

not be enough. Authenticity demanded more. In order to portray outback Australia convincingly, one has to experience it, and the only way to do this properly was to visit these wild and remote places, preferably with an Aboriginal guide familiar not only with the land, but also the stories and legends associated with it.

As part of the research, I embarked on several trips to the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia over the years, and explored many places of cultural significance that are featured in the book. This included outback missions, remote cattle stations and especially ancient rock art and burial sites, many of them tens of thousands of years old.





I hope you have found this brief journey ‘behind the scenes’ of *The Disappearance of Anna Popov* informative, and it has ignited a spark of curiosity that will entice you to step into the world of my imagination and read the book. And that, my friends, is what every writer strives for.

# THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANNA POPOV

## The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 2

### Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
DISAPPEARANCE OF ANNA POPOV**

**MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

## Profile Study

### [Jack Rogan](#)

Click on this [link](#) for the full character description.

## Countess Katerina Kuragin

Countess Katerina Kuragin is another key character who features in several of my books. However, she first appears in a scene in *The Disappearance of Anna Popov*. First impressions count; they define a character from the very beginning. Here's an example:

“The dining room was lit entirely by candles, making the large room appear intimate and warm. Countess Kuragin knew that the difference between a memorable entrance and a flat one was timing. Wearing a simple black evening dress, but jewellery fit for a tsarina, she swept into the room just as her guests were being seated. No-one would have believed that the tall, elegant woman with the youthful face and regal bearing was in her forties.”

Countess Kuragin features prominently once again in *The Lost Symphony*:

“At twelve noon sharp, François pulled up in the old Bentley outside. He had gone to the retirement home earlier that morning to make the necessary arrangements for what was to come.

‘Wow!’ said Jack, as he held the back door open for the countess. Wearing a stunning, full-length fur coat that had belonged to her mother, and a matching Russian fur hat, the countess looked like a celebrity who was about to attend a reception at the tsar’s Winter Palace in St Petersburg. The only things missing were the horse-drawn sleigh and uniformed guards.

‘You make me feel decidedly underdressed.’ Jack pointed to his well-worn leather bomber jacket and thick woolen scarf he had wound around his neck in a hurry before stepping outside. ‘You look absolutely stunning!’

‘I rarely get to wear this stuff. So I thought, why not send the old lady off in style? She would certainly have liked that, don’t you think?’

‘Absolutely! Let’s go.’”

Once again, a few ‘literary brush strokes’ have delivered a great deal of information about the countess.

## Madame Petrova

Character development must by no means be restricted to the main characters alone. To do that, or to focus only on the principal ‘players’ would be a big mistake. Often, minor characters who only make a brief appearance can greatly enhance the story and add important elements to the overall structure of the plot.

Madame Petrova, an elderly Russian ballerina, is an excellent example. Here’s a brief extract from my novella *The Kimberley Secret*. Jack and Countess Kuragin visit Madame Petrova in a retirement home:

“Anastasia Petrova was already famous in her early teens,’ said the countess as they drove through the ornate wrought-iron gates. The exclusive retirement home, a converted chateau, was popular with well-heeled aristocrats and celebrities. ‘She was one of the baby ballerinas of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and later became a film star. She was also one of my mother’s closest friends.’

‘I can’t wait.’

‘You won’t be disappointed.’

‘And we are going to meet her because ...?’

‘She lived at the Ritz during the war.’

‘Wow!’

A nurse in a crisp uniform, who seemed to know the countess well, welcomed them in the entry foyer and showed them to Madame Petrova’s room on the ground floor. ‘She’s expecting you,’ said the nurse and opened the door to a large room overlooking the manicured grounds.

Madame Petrova sat in a chair facing the open window. Elegantly dressed in a tight-fitting black dress and wearing a priceless string of baroque pearls and a pair of beautiful earrings that whispered ‘Tiffany’, she certainly had presence, even in her nineties. ‘Elegance and style are timeless’, was her motto, and she lived by it. Her snow-white hair was pulled back and tied in a neat bun, exposing a long, swan-like neck. Impeccable makeup accentuated her prominent cheekbones and made her almond-shaped, slightly slanted eyes look large, giving her an exotic, almost feline look.

‘How wonderful of you to come, my dear,’ said Madame Petrova in French, struggling to stand up with the aid of a walking stick she hated.

‘I saw you arrive.’

The countess walked over to her friend and kissed her on both cheeks. ‘I’ve brought someone who wants to meet you,’ she said in English.

‘A young man, how exciting,’ said Madame Petrova, switching to perfect English. ‘Please come a little closer so I can see you.’ She refused to wear glasses ‘in public’.

‘He’s a writer,’ said the countess, lowering her voice. She knew that would excite her friend even more. She had a soft spot for writers.”

Once again, a few ‘literary brush strokes’ make all the difference, and introduce a delightful character full of personality and charm, who adds depth and another dimension to the storyline.

## Tristan Te Papatahi

Tristan is another key character in the series. He first appears in *The Disappearance of Anna Popov* – Book 2 in the series – and we follow him closely after that and watch him ‘grow up’ and develop. This happens gradually as more detail about his extraordinary background and psychic gifts are revealed, and the relationship between him and Jack is explored and developed. Once again, I believe the best way to demonstrate how this is done, is to provide a few short extracts. This one is taken from *The Disappearance of Anna Popov* and describes the first meeting between Jack and Tristan arranged by Tristan’s mother, Cassandra, at the nursing home where her son had spent several years in a coma:

“At the top of the landing Cassandra stopped. ‘Please wait here,’ she said.

Jack looked around: naked light globes dangled from the ceiling, the light fittings a distant memory. Most of the ornate cornices had fallen off long ago and the wallpaper was barely recognisable under the rising damp and grime of neglect. But worst of all was the stench: a nauseating mixture of urine and cleaning fluids.

‘Quick, Jack. In here,’ said Cassandra, opening one of the doors.

There was only one bed inside the large room. The boy lying propped up in the bed – motionless and with his eyes closed – looked like a corpse. It was impossible to tell his age, other than to know he was still a child.

Various tubes and monitoring devices were attached to him and a complicated-looking piece of machinery stood next to the bed. Jack guessed that he was on life support. A woman in a nurse’s uniform stood up and left the room. Cassandra closed the door, walked over to the boy and kissed him tenderly on the forehead.

‘Thank you for coming, Jack. I owe you an explanation. We must talk, but there isn’t much time. My escort will arrive shortly and no-one must know that we’ve met here. Do you understand?’”

Tristan features as a central character in the next book, *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, as we follow the relationship between Jack and Tristan, which turns into a close bond and friendship.

“Jack knocked softly on Tristan’s door, unsure if he was still awake. ‘Come in, Jack,’ Tristan called out from inside. Tristan was sitting at his desk, his copy of *The Disappearance of Anna Popov* open in front of him. ‘I’m mentioned in the acknowledgments,’ Tristan said excitedly.

‘Well deserved. You’ve helped me with the book in more ways than you know,’ said Jack. ‘And you were very brave in allowing everything to go in; even the scary, personal bits.’

‘Thanks, Jack. I have something for you, too. Here, have a look.’ Tristan switched on his computer and turned the screen towards Jack. ‘Watch.’

‘What on earth is that?’ asked Jack. Five half-naked, heavily tattooed men and a woman – obviously the singer, looking like a bird in a crazy costume – were performing on a huge stage. The music was deafening. ‘Turn it down before the paying guests complain and leave.’ As the camera swung around, a stadium filled with thousands of adoring fans – hands held up high – came into view.

‘You mean you don’t recognise them?’ asked Tristan, shaking his head.

‘I’m afraid this isn’t exactly my ...’

‘That’s Isis and The Time Machine, the greatest rock band of our time, and you don’t know?’

Jack shrugged. ‘I have heard of them, of course ...’ he lied. ‘Why are you showing me this?’

‘Because you and Isis are destined to meet. Your fate lines are intersecting,’ said Tristan, turning off the computer. ‘You have to prepare yourself.’ Tristan took the DVD out of the slot and handed it to Jack. ‘Listen to the music and try to understand it before it’s too late,’ he said, turning serious.

‘All right,’ said Jack, slipping the DVD into his pocket. ‘And when will this meeting take place?’ he asked, smiling incredulously.

‘Soon, very soon. You don’t believe me, do you?’

‘It seems a little far-fetched, don’t you think?’

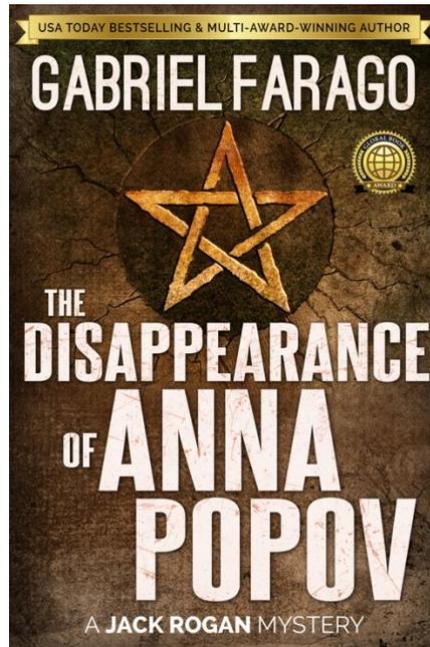
‘It’s not what I think that matters; it’s what I see ...’ retorted Tristan, looking at Jack with his large, dark, almond-shaped eyes.

*The Māori in him is becoming more prominent as he gets older,* thought Jack. *He's very good looking.* Jack felt something ice-cold move slowly down his spine. Tristan's words reminded him of Cassandra, Tristan's Māori mother, a gifted psychic. *He's much better than I,* he remembered her saying. *He can glimpse eternity.* 'It's getting late,' said Jack, trying to shake off the disturbing memories.

'Be careful, Jack. There's real danger here,' warned Tristan. 'And remember, I can help you when the time comes. I always will.'

'I know that. Thanks,' said Jack, giving the boy a hug. 'Good night, mate. I'll see you in the morning before I leave.'"

## Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines



When Jack Rogan, celebrated author and journalist, stumbles on a mysterious clue pointing to the tragic disappearance of two girls from Alice Springs, he can't resist investigating.

Rogan is joined by friends Rebecca Armstrong, his New York literary agent; Andrew Simpson, a retired Aboriginal police officer; and Cassandra, an enigmatic psychic, as he follows the trail of the missing girls into the remote Dreamtime-wilderness of outback Australia.

Soon past the point of no return, they enter a dark web of superstition and are drawn into the upside-down-world of an outlaw bkie gang, where the ruler is an evil master, outcasts are heroes, and cruelty and violence are admired and rewarded.

Cassandra, though, has a secret agenda of her own. Using her occult powers to avenge an old, deep wrong, she sets the scene for an epic showdown where the stakes are high and the loser faces death and oblivion.

Will Rogan succeed? Will a desperate mother's prayers be answered? Will a lost daughter be found? Or will the forces of evil crush all their hopes and dreams?

### Timeline

Anna Popov and her friend disappear in **January 2005**

**Main plot: 2010**

## Characters

**Rebecca Armstrong**

Jack Rogan's publishing consultant

**Captain Thunderbolt**

Boxing champion in Australian outback

**Cassandra**

Tristan's mother; prominent psychic

**Will Elliot**

Volunteer firefighter and antiques dealer. Jack Rogan's close friend

**'Fisticuffs' Jim O'Grady**

Boxing tent operator in Australian outback

**Jandamarra**

Billy Woorunmurra aka Pigeon

Aboriginal freedom fighter in the Kimberley during the 1890s. Leader of the Bunuba Resistance

Countess Katerina **Kuragin**

Anna Popov's mother. Owns the Kuragin Chateau, an exclusive boutique hotel close to Paris. Jack's close friend and confidante

**Zac Markovich**

Zoran's brother. Runs the Drover's Retreat, a pub in Alice Springs owned by the Wizards of Oz

**Zoran Markovich**

The Wizard's close friend and founding member of the Wizards of Oz

**Anna Popov**

French backpacker lost in Australia. Daughter of Countess Kuragin and Nicolai Popov

**Professor Nicolai Popov**

Anna Popov's adoptive father

**Jack Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator. Jack is the central character and protagonist of the series and features in every book.

**Andrew Simpson**

Aboriginal elder and retired police officer. Runs an art gallery in Alice Springs selling Aboriginal art

**Sladko**

The Wizard's close friend and founding member of the Wizards of Oz

**Tristan te Papatahi**

Cassandra's son, with extraordinary psychic powers

**The Wizard**

President of the *Wizards of Oz* outlaw motorcycle club

**Wizards of Oz**

Australian outlaw motorcycle club

**Zoltan**

Anna Popov's biological father

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the Glossary helpful in finding, identifying, and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive.

*Gabriel Farago*

*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia, 2022*



### **Can You Solve a Mystery Decades in the Making?**

Dive into the heart of Australia's dark past with Jack Rogan to unravel *The Disappearance of Anna Popov*. A story of intrigue and redemption awaits.

Explore the shadows on [Amazon](#). You can access the book with one click right now.

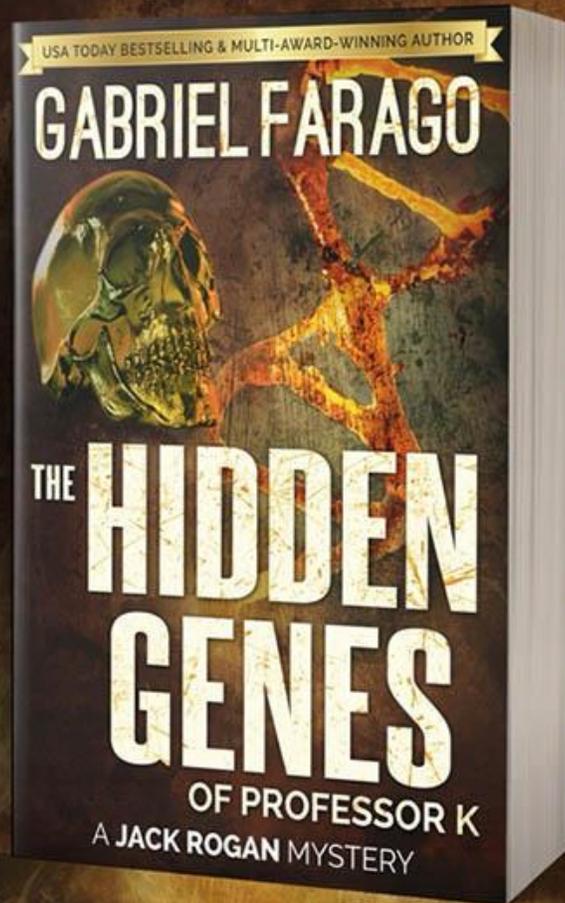
THE HIDDEN GENES OF PROFESSOR K  
The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 3

Behind The Scenes

Gabriel Farago

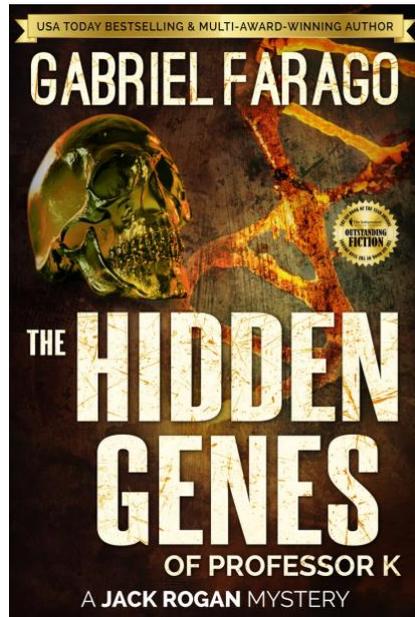
USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

# GABRIEL FARAGO



# BEHIND THE SCENES

## The Hidden Genes of Professor K



World-renowned scientist Professor K knows he's close to a ground-breaking discovery. He also knows he's dying. With his last breath he anoints Dr Alexandra Delacroix as his successor and pleads with her to carry on his work. Unwittingly, Delacroix enters a dangerous world of unbridled ambition and greed that threatens to destroy her. Desperate and alone, she turns to Jack Rogan – celebrated author and journalist – for help.

Alistair Macbeth – self-made billionaire and enigmatic founder of Blackburn Pharmaceuticals – has a murky past. He knows he must secure Professor K's discovery for his empire, or perish. Powerful and ruthless, he will stop at nothing to achieve his dark and deep desires.

Meanwhile, when the parents of famous rock star Isis are brutally murdered, Jack Rogan is asked to investigate.

On a perilous journey of discovery that takes them around the globe, Jack and Lola Rodriguez – Isis's resourceful PA – join forces with Jana Gonski, a former police officer; Dr Bettany Rosen, a tireless campaigner for the destitute and forgotten; and Tristan, a gifted boy with psychic powers. Together, they expose a complex web of fiercely guarded secrets and heinous crimes of the past that can ruin them all and change history.

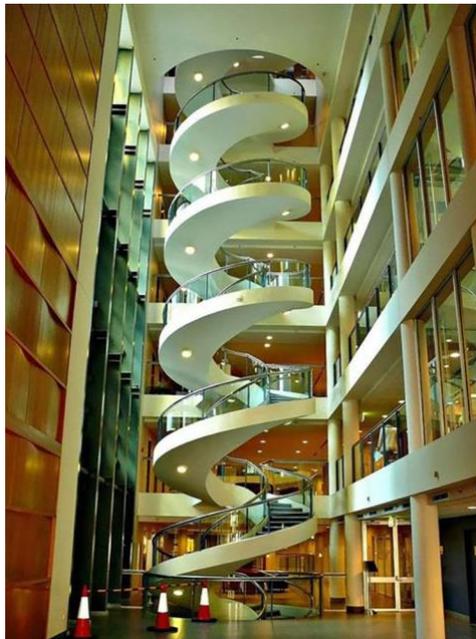
Will Rogan succeed? Will the dreams of a visionary scientist with the power to change the future of medicine fall into the wrong hands, or will his genius benefit mankind and prevent untold misery and suffering for generations to come?

Watch the official trailer on [Youtube](#)



# Inspiration

This book was inspired by, and is dedicated to, the many talented scientists who work at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, in Sydney. In awe of nature, but not seduced by its beauty or cowed by its terror, they are always on the lookout for inspired ideas to improve the journey of man.



To learn more about Garvan, what it stands for and what it does, please visit

[www.garvan.org.au](http://www.garvan.org.au)

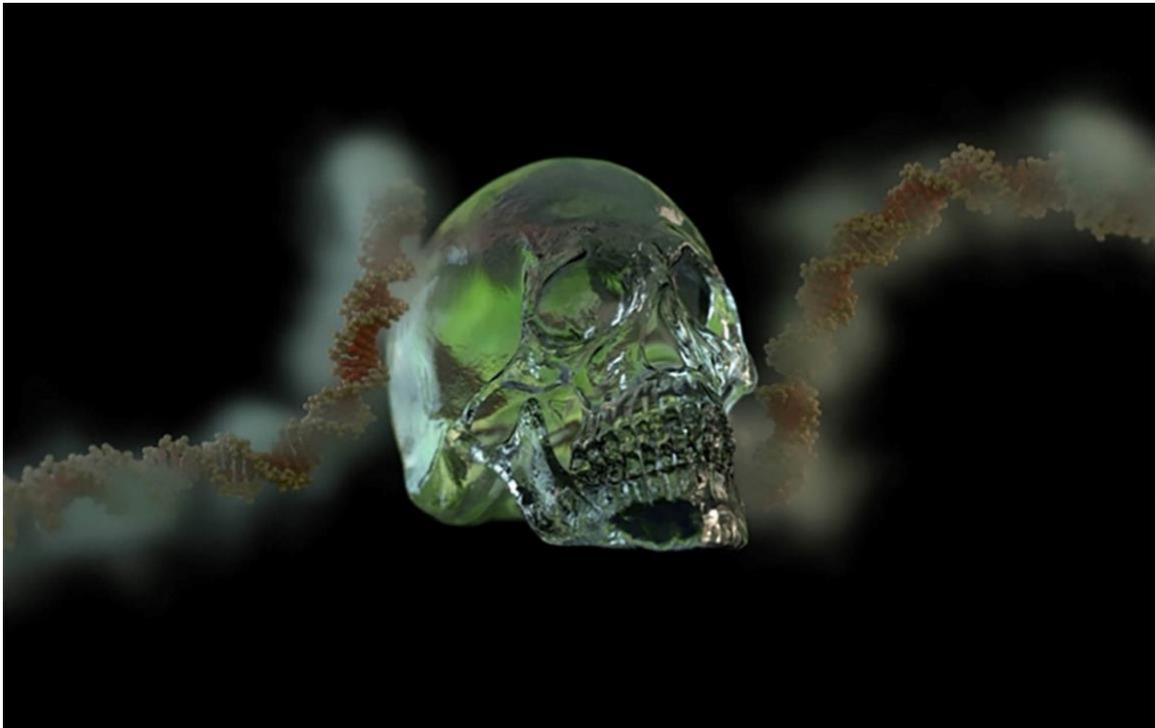
What makes up a human being? What are the parts? How are they connected, and how do they work? Complex, age-old questions that until quite recently didn't have any sound, scientific answers. Then along came the Human Genome Project, which changed all that.

My fascination with the human genome goes back many years. I have been following the Human Genome Project – without doubt the most ambitious and the world's largest collaborative research project – since it was launched in 1990. The aim of the project was to determine the DNA sequence of the entire euchromatic human genome.

It was expected that the project would cost about US\$3 billion and take 15 years. Leading scientists and institutions from around the world joined forces and in 2000, a rough

draft of the genome was completed with the help of massive advances in computing technology. On 26 June 2000 – a momentous day for science and mankind – President Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair jointly announced this outstanding achievement. However, it wasn't until 2003 that a complete genome was finalised by geneticists at the University of California. A milestone in human history, and the beginning of a new chapter in medicine that would transform how we look at, and treat, diseases in the future.

In essence, that was the spark that ignited a keen interest in medical research that has stayed with me ever since and years later became the inspiration for this book, and then a sequel – *Professor K; The Final Quest*.



An extraordinary opportunity to expand this interest in unexpected ways came years later. I was invited to join the board of the Garvan Research Foundation as a director. The Garvan is a world-renowned research institute located in Sydney, with over 700 dedicated scientists, students and support staff carrying out amazing medical research. It is Australia's largest medical research institution, and in 2014 became one of only three organisations in the world outside the US, capable of sequencing the human genome.

## The writing

This appointment, which lasted for ten years, gave me extraordinary insights into various aspects of medical research that would not have been possible without access to cutting-edge research projects and the talented scientists standing behind them.

With that, the scene was set. I decided to write a medical thriller that would delve into the fascinating world of medical research, and explore the latest cutting-edge subjects like genome sequencing and genomics, which had only become possible recently because of the Human Genome Project referred to above.

But that wasn't all. Because I was approaching this complex body of new knowledge within the framework of thriller-fiction, this gave me huge scope to expand the storyline considerably. I did that by delving into medical history as far back as the pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, and by weaving fact and fiction into a seamless literary structure where the reader is never quite sure where one ends and the other begins, it has been possible to create a reading experience where entertainment rubs shoulders with learning in a way that is exciting, engaging and, hopefully, never boring! In short, it's all about nail-biting entertainment, and the joy of learning.

## Foreword

We all stare into the darkness. There are things, many things, that we do not know about the world, or about ourselves. What makes us different from other animals, and sets us apart from each other, is the genetic material we inherit from our ancestors. Amazingly, however, the number and repertoire of conventional protein coding genes is similar across the animal kingdom. The rest of our genome was once dismissed as junk – a graveyard of evolutionary debris for which scientists could not attribute any purpose. However, it now appears that this DNA is in fact alive, transmitting. It is the cryptic code that orchestrates human development, empowers our thoughts, and perhaps even holds memories of experiences from generations past.

*The Hidden Genes of Professor K* combines imagination, history, and knowledge of the leading edge of medical science to weave an epic tale of greed and intrigue. It takes the reader into the recesses of the human psyche, the hidden corners of history, and the dark matter of the human genome. The secrets are all there.

*Professor John Mattick AO FAA,  
Executive Director of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Sydney  
(<http://www.garvan.org.au>)*



Professor Mattick and the author at the book launch at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Sydney.

## Author's note

I first came across the Edwin Smith Papyrus – arguably one of the oldest medical texts in the world – some twenty years ago. I was studying Egyptology at the time, attending lectures at night, because during the day I was a practising barrister. Archaeology was my passion and has remained so to this very day.

Our professor used this unique text as an illustration of the extraordinary achievements of the Ancient Egyptians. The 4.6-metre-long papyrus is written right to left in hieratic, a cursive form of hieroglyphs. Experts believe that it was written in about 1500 BC. However, what is particularly fascinating about it is the fact that it is believed to be a copy of a much earlier text dating back to the Old Kingdom, more than a thousand years earlier. And it doesn't stop there. Some experts also believe that the true author of the text is none other than Imhotep, a remarkable renaissance man of the Old Kingdom. Imhotep, who lived in around 2600 BC, rose to high office under the pharaoh Djoser, and was a gifted architect, engineer, high priest and physician.

What makes this text so unique is that it describes forty-eight case histories based on rational anatomical, physiological and pathological observation, and does not look at them through the eyes of magic, which was the accepted way to deal with disease, injury and trauma at the time.

Fascinated by the text, I immersed myself in the papyrus, translated by Breasted, an eminent Egyptologist, in 1930. That was how I came across case 46.

Case 46 deals with 'bulging tumours of the breast ... large, spreading and hard...' A more accurate description of breast cancer is difficult to imagine. For the first time in human history, the emperor of all maladies – cancer – had made its appearance in literature.

Every case study in the papyrus is followed by a discussion of its treatment except for case 46, for which, according to Imhotep, there was none.

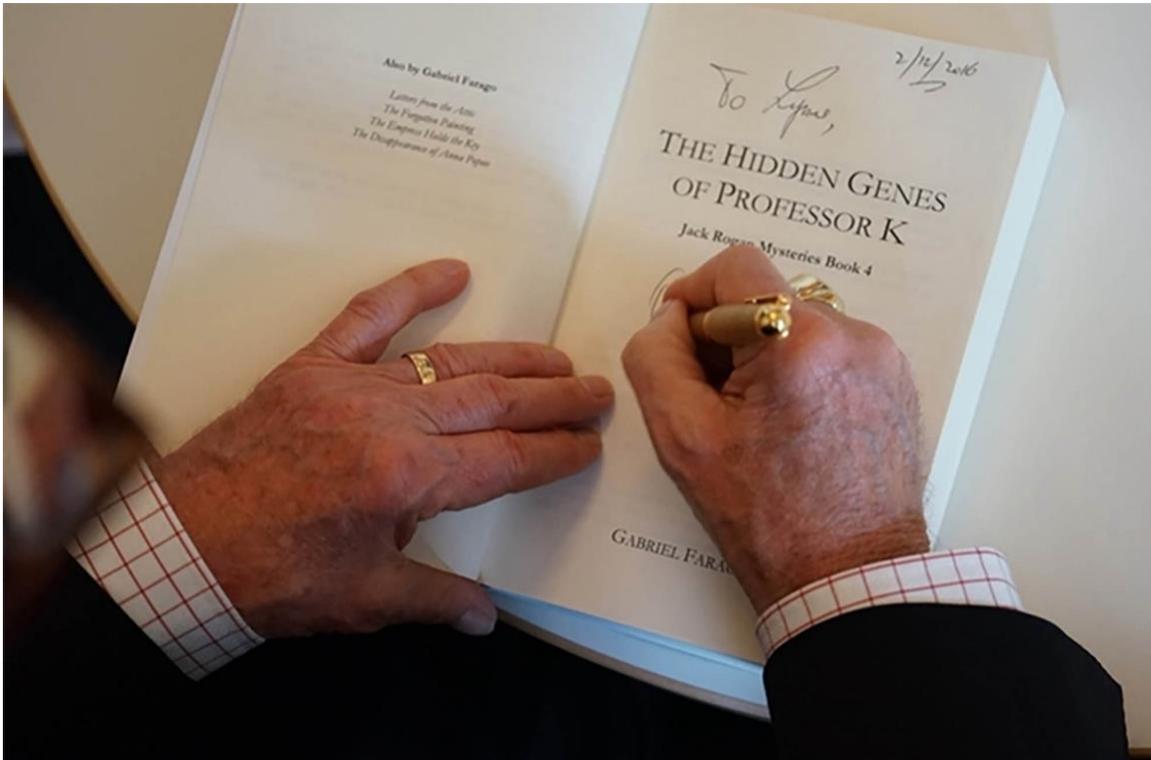
Cancer is an ancient disease that has been with us for a very long time. Progress in medical research, especially during the last few years, has been staggering. We have come a long way, but have we come any closer to conquering this powerful, malevolent disease, or do we have to agree with Imhotep when talking about a cure for cancer; that in many cases, there is none?

This question has been asked countless times through the ages and has plagued the medical profession for centuries. The search for an answer has become the inspiration for this book.

*Gabriel Farago*  
*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia*

## The Book Launch

Because *The Hidden Genes of Professor K* had such a close connection to the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and the inspirational scientists working there, the Institute became the obvious choice for the book launch.





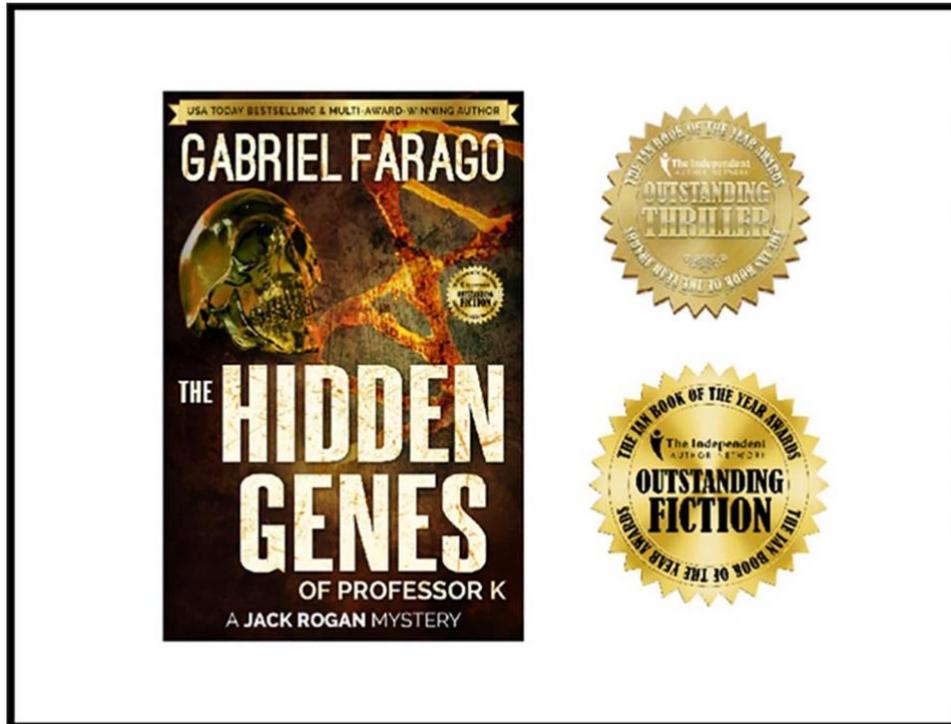
The book was very well received, not only in Australia, but especially in the US, Europe and the UK, with excellent reviews right from the start. Here's one of them:

**A review by Sefina Hawke for Readers' Favorite.**

*The Hidden Genes of Professor K* by Gabriel Farago was one of those books that had me captivated right from the very beginning. The number of different characters and stories that take place in the book might be confusing to some people, but it reminded me of the style used by the *Game of Thrones* TV show. I personally really liked the way Gabriel Farago had so many different story and plot elements woven together in one mystery. I have to say that I found Jack Rogan to be my favorite character; I liked how he was determined to solve the mysteries in front of him and that he was willing to accept help. I have really gotten bored with the whole lone wolf detective thing that has been overdone in mystery books and shows, which made this book a real breath of fresh air!

~ [Reviewed by Sefina Hawke for Readers' Favorite](#)

In November 2017, the book was voted ‘Outstanding Thriller of the Year’ by the Independent Authors’ Network (IAN) in the US. This gave the book unprecedented publicity worldwide, which resulted in more literary awards and international recognition.



I would like to conclude with a video that was recorded at the Garvan shortly after the book launch. I sincerely hope that you enjoy *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, and if I've piqued your interest, may I invite you to read the sequel – *Professor K; The Final Quest*, which is available right now. You're in for quite a ride; promise! Happy Reading!



*The Hidden Genes of Professor K: A future to look forward to ...*

Watch the video on [Youtube](#)



THE HIDDEN GENES OF PROFESSOR K  
The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 3

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
HIDDEN GENES  
OF PROFESSOR K**

**MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

## Profile Study

### Jack Rogan

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Countess Katerina Kuragin

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Madame Petrova

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Tristan Te Papatahi

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Isis

In my view, one of the most fascinating characters in the series is Isis, the transgender rock star who appears in several books. I have taken great care and a lot of time to develop this complex character, as it allowed me to introduce difficult and often controversial subjects, and illuminate them from a unique point of view. In addition, I have developed a close relationship between Jack, the principal character in the series, and Isis, which may at first appear implausible and a little contrived. However, as the story unfolds, I believe this is definitely not the case. What I have tried to highlight in this somewhat unusual relationship is that true friendship transcends all, and stands above stereotypes one would expect to find in action-packed thrillers.

Isis does not appear until *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, Book 3 in the series.

At first, I wasn't sure how this unusual character would be received by my readers. I needn't have worried. Isis became very popular from the start, and enthusiastic feedback from my readers made it clear to me that Isis was definitely here to stay and could be safely incorporated into the storylines going forward.

The best way to illustrate how this character was introduced is by way of examples taken from the text:

This is an encounter between Isis and Sir Charles Huntley, her solicitor, in *The Hidden Genes of Professor K* shortly after her parents are murdered:

“Sir Charles turned to his client. ‘What do you think you’re doing, Georgie? Do you want to end up in the back of a police van under arrest? The press would have a ball! You look terrible, by the way.’

‘Thanks, Charles,’ said Isis, relieved to see her friend and confidant.

‘What on earth has happened?’ asked Sir Charles.

‘My father was shot dead in the house and my mother died in hospital less than an hour ago.’

‘Jesus! I’m so sorry! Anything else?’

‘That’s about all I know.’

‘Then, let’s fill in the gaps, shall we?’ Isis nodded. ‘And please let me do the talking – okay?’

‘Okay.’

‘And one more thing, George; you are *legally* a man – clear?’ said Sir Charles.

‘Yes, yes ... we’ve been through this before; it’s tedious.’

‘It may be tedious to you, but people do get a little confused,’ Sir Charles prattled on, trying to distract his obviously distressed client. ‘You may be one of the highest paid rock stars on the planet, but you still have to live in the real world occasionally.’

‘Yes, Charles.’

‘This is one of those occasions; are you with me?’ Isis nodded. ‘Let’s try and stick to the facts – okay? Isis is your stage name. You dress like a woman, you look like a woman, you *consider* yourself a woman, but you are George, Edward, Elms, *a man*. You do understand that, don’t you?’

‘I’m a woman trapped in a man’s body, that’s all. I can’t help it if I was born with a dick ...’

Sir Charles tried hard not to show his exasperation. ‘Please, Georgie, not now! Do it for me?’

‘Sure.’

‘My God, you do lead a complicated life!’

‘That’s why I have chaps like you – to simplify things for me,’ said Isis.”

Another telling encounter that reveals a little more about Isis’s unique character, is the first meeting between her and Jack. The dialogue is particularly significant as it illustrates their very different personalities and how they interact with one another. This sets the tone for the many scenes to come and introduces a complex relationship that appears to have entertained my readers from the very beginning:

“‘Superb,’ said Isis, holding up an elaborate, helmet-like headdress made entirely out of multi-coloured feathers.

‘Here, let me help you,’ said her elderly French dress designer, hovering like a protective crow over his creation. It was a perfect fit. Isis looked at herself in the mirror and nodded. *‘Magnifique!’*

Dressed head to toe in a tight-fitting costume inspired by the elaborate ceremonial cloaks and headdresses worn by Aztec priests, Isis looked like a goddess. Following the contours of her athletic body, the feathers and glass beads shimmered like precious stones in the candlelight.

Lola hurried across to Isis and kissed her on both cheeks. *‘He’s here,’* she whispered.

Isis took off her headdress, handed it to her designer fussing next to her and walked slowly towards Jack. *‘She’s much older,’* thought Jack, watching the tall woman come closer. The woman stopped in front of him and, for what seemed an eternity, just looked at him dreamily.

*‘He’s much younger,’* thought Isis, holding out her hand, *and very good looking.* ‘Thank you for coming. Do you like the costume?’ They shook hands.

‘It’s spectacular,’ said Jack, a little taken aback by the unexpected question. ‘Dress rehearsal?’

Isis smiled. ‘Something like that. We are preparing for the highlight of our tour. Spectacular, you say? Good. You are the first one to see my new stage attire.’

‘You like Bach? This is one of his solo cantatas – ‘Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen’ – if I’m not mistaken.’

*This guy’s good*, thought Isis. ‘This may surprise you, but a lot of my music is based on classical principles,’ she said. ‘I listen to classical music all the time and try to learn from the masters.’

‘It reminds me of Huitzilopochtli.’

‘What does?’

‘Your costume.’

It was Isis’s turn to look surprised. ‘Did you hear that, Jean-Paul?’ said Isis, looking over her shoulder at her dress designer. ‘Right again; that’s exactly what it’s modelled on. The Aztec god of war, sun and human sacrifice. And he was also the patron of Tenochtitlan, the ruins of which are all around us. And you, Mr Rogan are full of surprises.’

*She wants to play cat and mouse*, thought Jack. *All right by me*. ‘And so are you,’ he retorted, enjoying himself.

*More than you can possibly imagine*, thought Isis. ‘Music, art and history all in one breath? I can already see we’ll get on famously,’ said Isis. ‘Come, let’s sit, and I’ll tell you why I’ve invited you to come here.’ Isis looked at Lola and shook her head. ‘But only you,’ she added quietly.

Realising they had been dismissed, Lola, Hanna and the ageing dress designer discreetly left the chamber.”

Isis features again prominently in *The Curious Case of the Missing Head*. In one delightful scene, Isis makes a memorable entry in her own spectacular apartment in London to meet Jack. Once again, this encounter is a good illustration of the character and the interaction between her and others in the storyline:

“Isis’s spectacular apartment – a cube-like architectural steel-and-glass marvel oozing industrial chic, constructed on top of a converted warehouse – was more like an art gallery than the home of a retired billionaire rock star turned philanthropist.

‘Where’s Isis?’ asked Jack, looking around.

‘Right here,’ said a voice from the top of the stairs.

As usual, Isis, the consummate performer, couldn’t resist making an imposing entry, even when close friends were involved. Her full name was George Edward Elms – Lord Elms, since her father’s tragic death in 2011 – but millions of fans around the world knew her as Isis, the legendary, transgender rock star and lead singer of Time Machine. Dressed in an impossibly tight black bodysuit by one of her favourite Paris designers that showed off her hourglass figure and wearing impeccable, if a little too theatrical makeup, Isis came slowly down the stairs. ‘What a wonderful surprise,’ she said, blowing kisses to her friends seated in the lounge below. ‘All of us together again. How wonderful!’

Jack walked over to the stairs and held out his hand. Isis took his arm and, walking side by side, they swept into the room. ‘Do you like my short hair?’ asked Isis, frowning.

‘You look ten years younger,’ said Jack, smiling.

‘Not too radical?’

‘Not at all; just stylish.’

‘That’s what Lola said. Growing old is such a bitch, don’t you think; and staying slim such a bore?’

‘Can’t say I’ve thought too much about it. Champagne?’

‘Absolutely! I’m parched, darling.’”

The most effective way to bring a character to life is through dialogue. Clever use of dialogue gives a character a voice that readers can recognise and relate to. Habits and idiosyncrasies are other useful tools to ‘flesh out’ a character and give it personality. I use all of these and take great care to structure scenes accordingly, and weave them into the storyline in believable and true-to-life ways.

## Mademoiselle Darrieux

In Mademoiselle Darrieux, we meet a very different yet nevertheless fascinating and endearing character: a Paris socialite with a difference. She makes her first appearance in *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*:

“Over the years, Mademoiselle Darrieux had perfected the art of being noticed. To ignore her was almost impossible. The fact that many laughed behind her back didn’t seem to bother her. A flamboyant dresser in her late fifties – she admitted only to forty-something – she liked to show off her figure and considerable bosom by wearing daring dresses only worn by the reckless or the very brave, twenty or so years younger. She had never married; her relationships never lasted long, and she went through men faster than birthdays. However, her lovers became younger as she got older. Despite all this, she was well liked and respected as a serious and talented writer. Paris society embraced likeable eccentrics, and Mademoiselle Darrieux passed with flying colours – literally.”

Highly intelligent, feisty, and full of unexpected surprises with a past that will shock many, Darrieux forms a close relationship with both Countess Kuragin and Jack, and represents a character I decided to develop further in *The Lost Symphony*, and give her more prominence.

Developing a character is one of the main challenges of writing fiction, and at the same time satisfying rewards if you get it right. This is the process that brings a story to life and gives it depth because it reflects the real world and makes fiction exciting and believable.

Once again, the best way to illustrate this is by turning to a brief extract from the book. Here, Jack and Countess Kuragin meet Darrieux in an exclusive Paris restaurant:

“‘There she is,’ said Jack as the maître d’ showed them to the table. ‘Wow!’

‘Look cheerful,’ said the countess, ‘and try to ignore the dress and don’t let your eyes fall into her décolleté. They might get stuck!’

‘I’ll do my best,’ hissed Jack, ‘but it won’t be easy.’

Aware that all eyes in the crowded dining room were upon them, the countess and Jack approached Darrieux’ table.

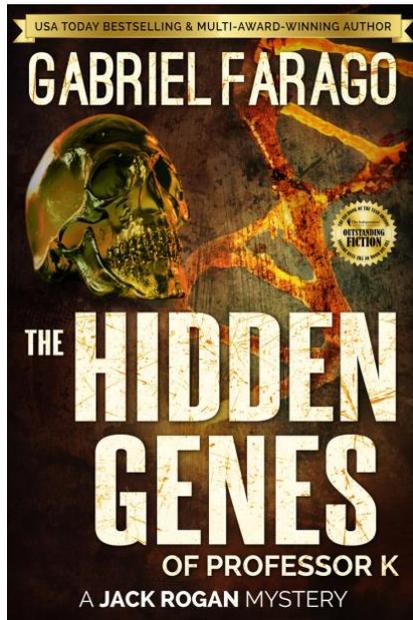
‘How wonderful to see you, Adrienne,’ said Jack, and obediently kissed Darrieux on both cheeks as he had been instructed to do. More difficult by far, however, was to ignore the formidable bosom bursting out of a designer dress several sizes too small for a lady of her generous proportions, pressing against his chest.

‘And you, Jack. I’ve heard so much about your escapades in Istanbul last year, it’s a wonder you made it out in one piece. It was all over the papers.’

‘I often wonder myself,’ said Jack and ordered champagne. He realised that alcohol was the best medicine in situations like this.’

By introducing a colourful character like Darrieux, it is possible to manipulate the dialogue in certain entertaining ways that reflect the personality involved. This gives the storyline a new dimension and provides the reader with a new perspective, or lens, through which to view and experience the plot.

## Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines



Professor K – world-renowned scientist – knows he’s close to a ground-breaking discovery. He also knows he’s dying. With his last breath he anoints Dr Alexandra Delacroix as his successor and pleads with her to carry on his work. Unwittingly, Delacroix enters a dangerous world of unbridled ambition and greed that threatens to destroy her. Desperate and alone, she turns to Jack Rogan – celebrated author and journalist – for help.

Alistair Macbeth – self-made billionaire and enigmatic founder of Blackburn Pharmaceuticals – has a murky past. He knows he must secure Professor K’s discovery for his empire, or perish. Powerful and ruthless, he will stop at nothing to achieve his dark and deep desires.

Meanwhile, when the parents of famous rock star Isis are brutally murdered, Jack Rogan is asked to investigate.

On a perilous journey of discovery that takes them around the globe, Jack and Lola Rodriguez – Isis’s resourceful PA – join forces with Jana Gonski, a former police officer; Dr Bettany Rosen, a tireless campaigner for the destitute and forgotten; and Tristan, a gifted boy with psychic powers. Together, they expose a complex web of fiercely guarded secrets and heinous crimes of the past that can ruin them all and change history.

Will Rogan succeed? Will the dreams of a visionary scientist with the power to change the future of medicine fall into the wrong hands, or will his genius benefit mankind and prevent untold misery and suffering for generations to come?

## Timeline

**Professor K dies in September 2011**

**Main plot: 2011/12**

## Characters

Lena and Miriam **Abramowitz**

Twins used for medical experiments at Auschwitz. Miriam dies in the concentration camp, but Lena becomes a Holocaust survivor and ends up in Australia

**Abuukar**

Senior member of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group

**Akhil Achari**

Dr Delacroix's assistant at the Gordon Institute

Cyril **Archibald QC**

Sydney barrister who defended Sir Eric Newman

Rebecca **Armstrong**

Jack Rogan's publishing consultant

**Boris**

Isis's bodyguard and former wrestling champion

**Carlotta**

Macbeth's PA

**Marcus Carrington QC**

Eminent Australian barrister and amateur archaeologist, specialising in ancient Egyptian history

**Adrian Cavendish**

Medical research scientist working with Professor K at the Gordon Institute

**Daniel Cross**

MI5 agent. Officer in charge of the Elms murder investigation

**George Cunningham**

Australian Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions

**Mademoiselle Adrienne Darrieux**

Author and Paris socialite

**Dr Alexandra Delacroix**

Medical research scientist following in Professor K's footsteps

**Franz Elminger**

Manager of the Paris Ritz during the World War II Nazi occupation of Paris

**Lord and Lady (Mercedes) Elms**

Isis's deceased parents

**François**

Countess Kuragin's butler cum chauffeur

**Dr Gaal**

Somali doctor

**Reichsmarschall Herrmann Goring**

Hitler's second-in-command

**Jana Gonski**

Australian Federal Police officer

**Dolores Gonzales**

Isis's grandmother. Mother of the late Lady Elms

**Jose Gonzales**

Isis's grandfather. Mexican art dealer. Husband of Dolores

**Professor David Greenberg**

One of the most gifted and sought-after surgeons in the US

**Hanna**

Lola's assistant

**Anton Hoffmeister**

Former SS officer living in exile in Argentina and known as 'Don Antonio'

**Sir Reginald Holloway**

High-ranking MI5 official. Daniel Cross's boss

**Sir Humphrey**

Isis's personal physician

**David Huntington**

British (Labor) Leader of the Opposition

Sir Charles **Huntley**

Isis's solicitor and adviser

**Isis**

Billionaire rock star. Lead singer of *The Time Machine*

**Johannes**

South African mercenary working for Macbeth

**Kobo**

African aid worker with Médecins Sans Frontières

Paulus **Koenig**

South African businessman living in Sydney. Owner of Universal Security

Professor Kasper **Kozakievicz**

Professor K to colleagues because his name was almost impossible to pronounce.

Celebrated medical research scientist at the Gordon Institute in Sydney

Dr Simon **Kozakievicz**

Polish doctor. Professor K's father. Prisoner at Auschwitz

Countess Katerina **Kuragin**

Anna Popov's mother. Owns the Kuragin Chateau, an exclusive boutique hotel close to Paris. Jack's close friend and confidante

Alistair **Macbeth**

Founder and managing director of *Blackburn Pharmaceuticals*, and international pharmaceutical giant

**Dr Mengele**

Infamous Nazi doctor conducting secret medical experiments at Auschwitz

Detective Sergeant Pasquale **Moretti**

Australian police officer working in Sydney

Patrick **O'Mara**

Sydney publican of the Hero of Waterloo in The Rocks.

George **Papadoulis**

Professor K's accountant and executor

Madame **Petrova**

Retired Russian ballerina. Close friend of Countess Kuragin

Anna **Popov**

Countess Kuragin's daughter

Nikolai **Popov**

Countess Kuragin's former husband. Anna's father

**Rahim**

Kobo's cousin. A senior police officer and author working in Nairobi, Kenya

Dr **Ritter**

Sydney pathologist working on the Cavendish case (Blowhole case)

Lola **Rodriguez**

Isis's personal assistant

**Jack Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator. Jack is the central character and protagonist of the series and features in every book

**Dr Bettany Rosen**

Daughter of Sir Eric Newman. Doctor working in third-world countries, and head of the Rosen Foundation, a charity

**Sharif**

Somali fighter hunting down local terrorists (Al-Shabaab)

**Dr Erwin Steinberger**

Goring's personal physician who conducted secret medical experiments in the Nazi concentration camps

**Sturmbannfuehrer Wolfgang Steinberger**

SS officer active in Auschwitz. Brother of Dr Erwin Steinberger

**Tristan te Papatahi**

Cassandra's son with extraordinary psychic powers. He can hear the whisper of angels, and glimpse eternity.

**The Time Machine**

Famous British heavy metal rock band

**Tlacatecuhtli**

Aztec warrior-priest, astrologer, healer and 'chief of men'

**Jan Van Cleef**

Personal bodyguard and security chief working for Macbeth

**Erwin Van Der Hoofen**

Kenyan farmer with extensive land holdings. Owner of Mukuyu Lodge. Father of Siegfried

**Greta Van Der Hoofen**

Siegfried's mother. Married to Erwin, who was killed by the Mau Mau

**Siegfried Van Der Hoofen**

Safari guide operating in Kenya. Son of Erwin and Greta

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the Glossary helpful in finding, identifying, and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive.

*Gabriel Farago*



### **Are You Ready to Discover a Breakthrough That Could Save Millions?**

Embark on a journey with Jack Rogan in *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, where science and suspense collide. The future of medicine is in your hands.

Uncover the breakthrough on [Amazon](#) today. You can access the book with one click right now.

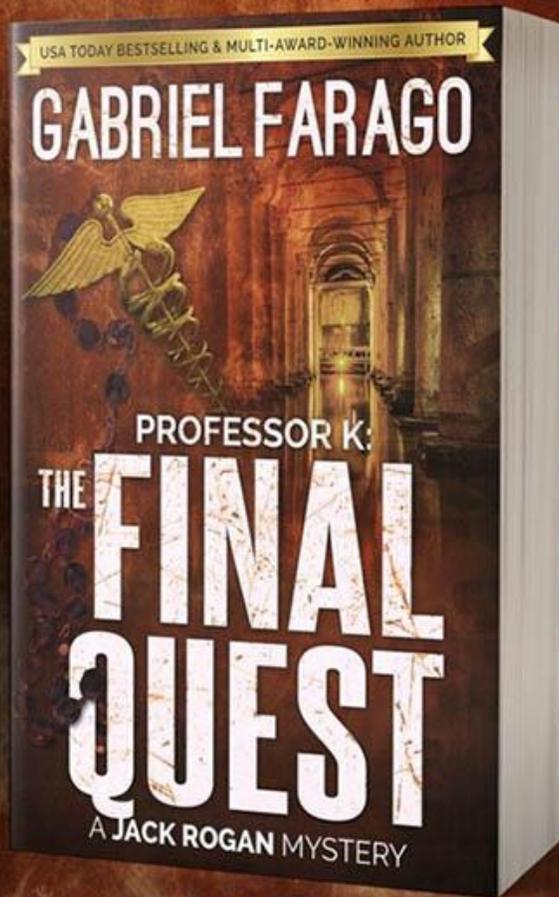
PROFESSOR K: THE FINAL QUEST  
The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 4

Behind The Scenes

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

# GABRIEL FARAGO



# BEHIND THE SCENES

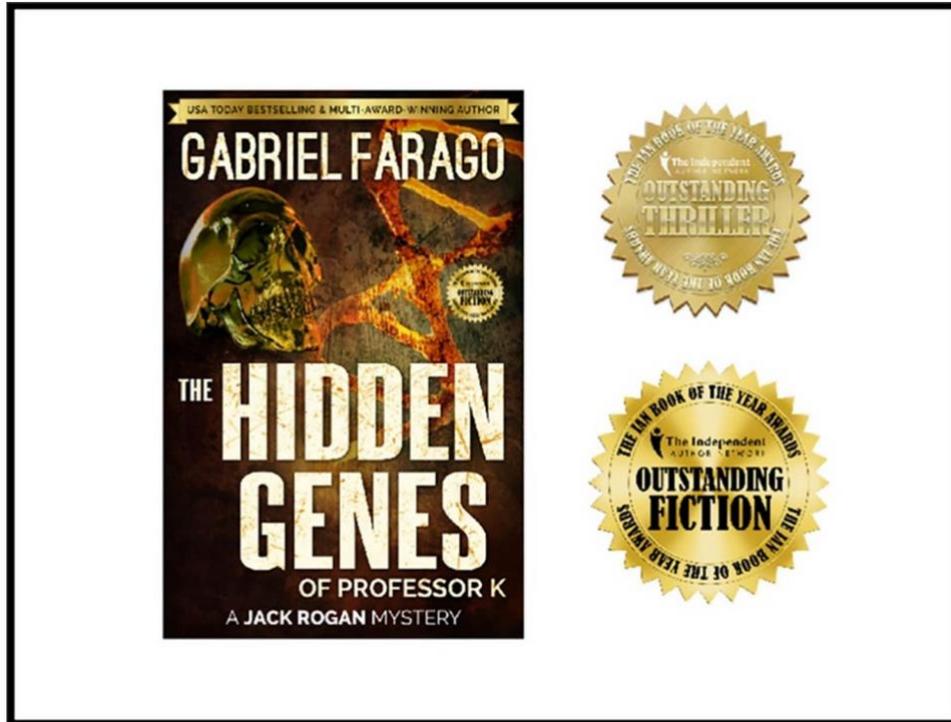
## Introduction

Writing *Professor K: The Final Quest* wasn't planned at all. In fact, after releasing *The Hidden Genes of Professor K* – a medical thriller – in 2016, I had a completely different book in mind. I wanted a change because delving into complex science and cutting-edge medical research had been exhausting, with a learning curve so steep that my head still spins just thinking about it. My professional background is in law, not science. However, I soon became a victim of my own curiosity and, I suppose, success. How? Let me tell you.

One of my main aims in writing a medical thriller was to create awareness of medical research, what it stands for and how it works, by embedding complex science into an action-packed, fast-moving thriller full of exotic locations and fascinating characters.

With the generous help of several leading research scientists working at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, where I was a director at the time, I was able to successfully tackle this challenging project. I did that by presenting difficult subjects that would normally only feature in science publications written for experts, in an interesting, engaging and easy-to-understand way. For this reason, the book became very popular in medical circles as well, as it was seen as a novel way (forgive the pun) of training the spotlight on the breathtaking progress and changes in medical research that are transforming the future of medicine right now.

*The Hidden Genes of Professor K* was very well received, especially in the US, Europe and Australia, with excellent reviews right from the start, and in November 2017, it was voted 'Outstanding Thriller of the Year' by the Independent Authors Network (IAN) in the US. This gave the book unprecedented publicity, especially on social media.



But why write another medical thriller, following in the footsteps of Professor K? The note from the author that appears at the beginning of the book explains it best:

## A Note from the Author

After the release of *The Hidden Genes of Professor K* – Book 3 in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* – in 2016, I was somewhat overwhelmed by the reception of the book, especially in the US, Europe and Australia. The book, a medical thriller, resonated with my readers so strongly, especially in medical research circles, that it was suggested I consider writing a sequel.

Encouraged by several prominent scientists who had assisted me with the science before, and after speaking with many of my readers, I was persuaded to go ahead with the project. However, this turned out to be a much bigger challenge than I thought at the time.

Because all the books in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* are ‘stand alone’ and not sequels as such, it soon became apparent that something was needed to link *The Hidden Genes of Professor K* to a sequel. I was working on a short novella at the time – *The Forgotten Painting* – which was intended as a free giveaway to my readers as a small token of my appreciation for their encouragement and support.

As it turned out, the novella became the perfect vehicle to connect *The Hidden Genes of Professor K* to the sequel – *Professor K: The Final Quest*.

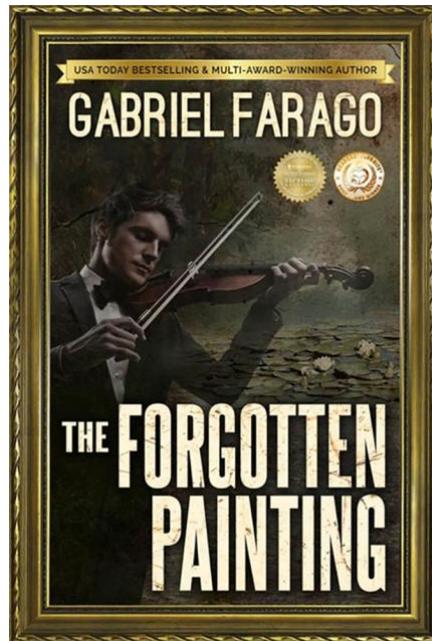
For those of you who are not already familiar with the novella, or my previous books, I have included a synopsis of *The Forgotten Painting*, which I hope you will find entertaining and an interesting introduction not only to this book, but also my work generally. Others may find it a helpful ‘refresher’, preparing the way for Jack Rogan’s next adventure.

However, please note that this book – like all my others – does ‘stand alone’ in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* and can therefore be read as such.

Many of you would have already read my novella *The Forgotten Painting* which is available on Amazon. However, those of you who may for some reason have missed reading it can do so now by obtaining a copy on [Amazon](#).

I would encourage you all to read *The Forgotten Painting* before you read the new book, as this will give you some exciting background and prepare the way for what’s to come.

And besides, I'm sure you'll find it an interesting and entertaining read. Here's a brief summary of what you can expect:



When celebrated author Jack Rogan stumbles upon a hidden diary, he can't resist investigating. Honouring the last wish of a dying friend, he embarks on an exciting quest to right a great wrong.

Joining forces with Celia Crawford, a glamorous New York journalist, Jack soon finds himself on a journey of discovery pointing to dark secrets of a distant, violent time, where life was cheap and cruelty ruled without mercy. Soon past the point of no return, Jack and Celia follow cryptic clues buried in unexpected places that lead them to an enigmatic Swiss banker with a murky past who threatens to foil their hopes and plans.

Will Rogan succeed? Will he find the forgotten treasure he has been searching for and return it to where it belongs? Or will it be lost forever, depriving the world of a masterpiece belonging to mankind?

Have I managed to arouse your curiosity? I hope so! You won't be disappointed.

## The inspiration

The amazing research being carried out at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney inspired me to write another medical thriller about the fascinating world of genomics.

The book is dedicated to the many talented scientists who work there, to improve how we diagnose, treat and, ultimately, prevent some of the major diseases of our time.

Writing *Professor K: The Final Quest* was an ambitious project. For a layman like me, exploring subjects touching on cutting-edge medical research and complex science is never easy, and would not have been possible without the guiding hand and generous help of leading experts like Professor Chris Goodnow FAA FRS, Executive Director of the Garvan.

There has probably never been a more exciting time to be a research scientist than right now. Progress is breathtaking, the possibilities endless, breakthroughs come almost daily, and the speed of progress is head-spinning. Advances in technology are making the unthinkable possible, and what would once have taken two scientists several years of painstaking work, can now be done by a machine – overnight!

I firmly believe that we are about to open a treasure trove of knowledge buried in our genomes right here, inside us all, which will transform the future of medicine and the journey of man. It was this realisation that aroused my curiosity and motivated me to dig deeper into the fascinating world of genomics.

What came next was an extraordinary statement by Professor John Mattick AO FAA, who was Executive Director of the Garvan at the time I wrote *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, and is one of the leading scientists in Australia. He said this: ‘I firmly believe that we are the last generation to die *of* cancer. Those coming after us, will not die of cancer, but *with* cancer.’

I thought a lot about this inspirational sentence and what it was intended to convey, and would like to add this to it: As we stare into the darkness, something extraordinary is now happening. A shaft of light is slowly banishing the darkness and lifting the curtain of ignorance.

What is that light? It is the dawn of a new era of medicine as we explore that treasure trove of evolution hidden in our genes. The secrets are all there for us to find, and with the

help of dedicated scientists like Professor Mattick and Professor Goodnow, and institutes like the Garvan, we will find the answers.

These are incredibly exciting times. I wanted to be part of this revolution and, if at all possible, contribute in some small way to Professor Mattick's vision. Writing medical thrillers like *The Hidden Genes of Professor K* and *Professor K: the Final Quest* became my way to do just that.

The good news is that you, too, will become part of this adventure when you read *Professor K: The Final Quest*, and discover how thriller fiction is rapidly becoming science reality. Creating awareness can make a real difference!

## The writing

I am often asked about my writing habits. This may be a good place to tell you a little about that.

To create a seamless storyline, I try to weave fact and fiction together by blurring the boundaries between the two, so that the reader is never quite sure where one ends, and the other begins. This is, of course, quite deliberate, as it creates the illusion of authenticity and reality in a work that is pure fiction. A successful work of fiction is a balancing act: reality must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is both entertaining and plausible.

Writing is a solitary, time-consuming pursuit that requires discipline and focus. I approach each book as a separate project, and plan my approach accordingly. Needless to say, research comes first, followed by visits to all the places mentioned in the book. I believe authenticity demands this, and getting a real ‘feel’ for a particular location rewards you with insights and details that are only possible through firsthand experience.

Capturing smells, sounds, colours and atmospheres, for instance, is just not possible through imagination alone. They transcend the merely factual, and enter the subjective realm of feelings and emotions. Yet all these elements are absolutely essential if you want to reach out and engage with your readers. It’s the difference between an ordinary book, and a special one readers just can’t put down! Nothing else comes close.

Once I begin writing a book, I write every day. In fact, my conscious hours are consumed with the subject matter, and even if I don’t sit at my computer, I think about my characters, dialogue, storyline, etc. I even have a notepad next to my bed to jot down ideas, should I wake up during the night inspired with an answer to something I have been wrestling with during the day.

I take frequent breaks during the day and go for long walks in the rainforest just beyond our house, or do some work in our garden. Even then, I have a notepad in my pocket because ideas flow in unexpected ways, and must be captured at once before distractions make them disappear forever.

Because I do all my own research, writing can be exhausting and draining, often making almost impossible demands on your time, emotions and memory. Translating ideas and emotions into text can be very challenging and frustrating if the written word doesn’t do the

subject matter justice, or just doesn't look and feel like what you intended to say. When that happens, there's only one answer: rewrite, rewrite, rewrite, then polish and rewrite again, until you get it right. Not easy, but absolutely necessary.

Most of my writing is done in my attic at home in the Blue Mountains just outside Sydney, where I live most of the time. I am surrounded by a unique World Heritage national park, and have a wonderful garden full of exotic plants and trees where native birds like parrots, cockatoos and kookaburras are frequent visitors. During the warmer months, I spend a lot of time outside and actually write in the garden. If this sounds idyllic, I suppose in a way it is. I draw inspiration from my surroundings, and the beauty and solitude of this unique environment give me the energy to weave my thoughts and ideas into stories that will in turn, I sincerely hope, entertain and inspire my readers.



## History and exotic locations

As you know, I take authenticity very seriously and visit all the places mentioned in my books. Obviously, this involves a lot of travel. I travel for about two months every year to do research and explore exotic locations.

Istanbul is one of my favourite cities. For a writer like me, inspiration is at the very centre of the creative process, and there are few cities in the world that can inspire like Istanbul. I find my inspiration in history and historical, places and try to shape my stories and characters around actual events and real people.



One of the central characters in *Professor K: The Final Quest* – Osman da Baggio – is linked to an extraordinary event that took place in the Topkapi Palace in December 1574, the night the sultan, Murad III, died.

I first came across this shocking event and the amazing story behind it during one of my recent visits to Istanbul. Our guide – a Turkish archaeologist – showed us a fascinating, but

little-known pavilion next to the Hagia Sophia: the tomb of Selim II. What I found there and the impact it had on me became the inspiration for the historical aspects of the book.

I have tried to capture this moment in the Introduction, which appears at the beginning of the book and is reproduced below by way of illustration:

“Istanbul. Sparkling gem on the Bosphorus, where East and West collide and Europe meets Asia. I can think of no other metropolis where diverse cultures, religions, and thousands of years of history intersect in such a dramatic way. The name alone conjures up images of bloody conquests, fallen empires, armies marching into battle and stupendous buildings reaching to the heavens, where the muezzin’s haunting call echoes through ancient squares, calling the faithful to prayer.

Our guide – a Turkish archaeologist – had just taken us through the Topkapi Palace and the Hagia Sophia, one the most awe-inspiring edifices on the planet.

‘There’s one more thing you have to see,’ he said, pointing to a beautiful small pavilion next to the basilica. ‘It’s a *turbe*; a tomb. The tomb of Selim II. What I’m about to show you is a reminder of barbaric times, absolute power, and murder. Not just any murder, but the most horrific mass murder imaginable. It’s a sad part of our history that’s often overlooked and rarely talked about. Even the historians here would like to forget all about it.’

My curiosity aroused, I took off my shoes and followed the professor inside. Designed by the famous Ottoman architect Sinan and built in 1577, the stunning building, decorated with colourful Iznik tiles and marble that reflected the bright morning sun, hides a dark secret. Expecting to find the tomb of Selim II, son of Suleiman the Magnificent and sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1566 until his death in 1574, I was surprised to find many additional graves.

Silently, we followed our guide along the solemn rows of sarcophagi covered in green cloth, some of them quite small. ‘I can see you are a little confused,’ said our guide. ‘If you think this looks more like a cemetery than a tomb, you are right. It is. As you can see, Selim is not alone. There are many others buried in here with him. That may be curious enough, but who they are, and how and why many of them died, is far more intriguing and will shock you.’ Our guide paused, no doubt to let the tension grow.

‘To begin with,’ he continued, ‘we have five of Selim’s sons buried next to him over there. They were all murdered on the night he died in December 1574. Why? To ensure that his eldest son, Murad III, would succeed him peacefully and without being challenged.’

‘By silencing possible rivals?’ I asked.

‘Precisely.’

‘And who are the others?’

‘Nineteen of them are sons of Murad III, who were murdered on the night he died in January 1595. They were all strangled with a silk chord by deaf-mutes.

‘Are you suggesting that by murdering all of his half-brothers, the eldest son secured his succession and became the next sultan?’

‘Yes.’

During the stunned silence that followed, I looked along the rows of solemn graves, each a sad reminder of a life cut short by naked ambition, lust for power, and fear. Momentarily overcome by the sadness of the moment, my mind began to wander. *What if one of them had somehow been spared?* I asked myself. *What if one of them had managed to escape, and survived? What if ...?*

For some reason, I couldn’t get these haunting questions out of my mind. They stayed with me and became the inspiration for this book.”



Credit: Author Mogadir @ Wikipedia Licence Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported

During a recent interview I was asked to explain how the creative process works, and how an ‘idea’ ends up on a page and turns into a book.

Inspiration is a good start, but inspiration alone is not enough. Once an idea takes hold, it has to be developed and expanded. How? Through painstaking research, of course, and that can take many forms.

To begin with, I had to delve into hidden corners of Ottoman history to start the process of constructing the historical framework of the story. However, what was also needed was an intimate familiarity with the settings to be introduced into the storyline. In this case, the vast Topkapi Palace complex as it was in sixteenth-century Constantinople.

I visited the Topkapi Palace on several occasions and fortunately, it is virtually completely intact, and therefore just as it was during the times of Selim II. Needless to say this was very helpful, because it made it possible for me to get a real ‘feel’ for the place by

walking the very corridors, exploring the actual chambers and sitting in the same palace courtyards the sultan and his retainers had frequented all those centuries ago, and where those dreadful murders I was looking into had been committed.

There was something else that was very opportune at the time I visited the palace. The huge kitchen complex had just been restored and was open to the public. As the kitchens play an important part in the story, being able to visit them provided me with firsthand information I was able to draw upon and incorporate into the book, giving the plot an air of authenticity that imagination alone cannot deliver.

The next step was to develop the central character – Osman da Baggio – and build the story around him. This was a complex exercise that required not only historical accuracy, but a detailed knowledge of Ottoman court life and customs practised at the time. These were only some of the essential steps that had to be followed before an inspired idea could turn into a story with sufficient substance and depth to grow into a book.

It was therefore quite a long journey from the moment I looked along the solemn graves of the sultan's murdered half-brothers and wondered: *What if one of them had somehow been spared? What if one of them had managed to escape, and survived?* The best way to illustrate how this moment of inspiration was transformed into a story worth telling, is to provide an example:

**Topkapi Palace, Constantinople: 16 January 1595, 2:00 am**

“Fear and apprehension had spread like a deadly poison through the silent corridors of Topkapi Palace during the night. Murad III, grandson of Suleiman the Magnificent, Caliph of Islam, Amir al-Mu-minim, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, was dying.

Safiye Sultan, Murad's favourite consort and mother of Mehmed, his eldest son and heir, knew it was time. To secure her son's accession, all possible rivals had to be silenced, swiftly and permanently. Her own future and position at the palace depended on it. Upon Murad's death she would become *valide* sultan – the powerful ‘mother’ sultan – and Safiye was determined to make sure nothing stood in her way.

Safiye summoned Gazanfer Ağa, chief of the white eunuchs and head of the Enderun – the Imperial Seraglio – to her chambers. ‘Murad will not see the sun come up,’ she said. ‘As soon as he ascends to paradise you must act, without mercy. *You know what to do.*’

Gazanfer Ağa smiled, bowed, and took his leave. He knew that once he had carried out Safiye’s deadly orders, she would be forever in his debt. This would not only consolidate his already considerable power, but also elevate his position to dizzying heights. Gazanfer Ağa had carefully prepared for this moment. Everything was ready and in place. He knew the feared deaf-mutes were standing by and waiting for his orders.

Fatma Hatun, Murad’s youngest consort, lay awake in her bedchamber. Gripped with fear and worry for her only son, Osman, who had just turned 16, she realised the dreaded event she had feared since the boy’s birth, had arrived. Carefully, she removed the beautiful tile behind her bed and reached into a hole in the wall. This was her secret hiding place that contained the precious gems – gifts from a besotted Murad – that could save her son’s life. It also contained other treasures that she was about to give to him.

Legs crossed and looking tense, Osman sat on a cushion in front of his mother, watching. Blessed with striking good looks and an agile, inquisitive mind that thrived on curiosity and learning, Osman had been groomed for this moment all his life. He knew exactly what he had to do. His mother had gone over every step a thousand times before, except one.

‘This is for you, my son,’ she said, and handed Osman a small silver cylinder. ‘Keep it on your person at all times and guard it with your life.’

‘What is it?’ asked Osman.

‘Your future; open it.’

Osman opened the container and emptied its contents onto the carpet. First, a heavy little leather pouch filled with a small fortune in gold coins and gems slid out. Next, he pulled out a tightly rolled-up little canvas and several sheets of paper. When he unfurled the canvas, he saw that it was a stunning portrait of his mother, which he had never seen before. Surprised, he pointed to the painting spread out on the carpet in front of him.

‘This was painted by Marco Vecellio, Titian’s pupil. Your father commissioned the painting soon after I was given to him as a present by one of his sisters. I was sixteen, the same age as you.’

‘And these?’ asked Osman, holding up a few sheets of paper covered in beautiful calligraphy and decorated with exquisite miniature paintings at the top.’

Fatma smiled as she remembered the passionate nights spent with Murad. She had succeeded where others had failed. She had managed to reignite the sultan’s appetite for carnal pleasures. ‘These are recipes of the sultan’s favourite dishes,’ she said. ‘I copied them myself from the originals that belonged to your great-grandfather, Suleiman the Magnificent, and are still kept here at the palace. These dishes are the best in the empire and the reason you exist. They are treasures ...’

‘I don’t understand,’ said Osman, looking puzzled.

‘You will. One day. Now, however, it is time; come.’

Fatma handed Osman a small porcelain cup and kissed him tenderly on the forehead. ‘Drink it,’ she said, tears in her eyes. ‘For a short while you will sink into a deep sleep. When you wake up, you will be safe ... You know what to do?’

‘Yes,’ said Osman, and drained the cup.

‘There is one more thing,’ said Fatma. She took off the beautiful signet ring she wore on her right index finger – her only remaining contact with a happier past – and handed it to Osman. ‘This was given to me by my father in Venice just before I was captured by pirates and became a slave. It now belongs to you. It will open many doors and show who you are, and where you come from. Keep it safe.’

‘I will,’ said Osman, his speech slurred by the powerful drug.

‘*Goodbye, my son,*’ whispered the distraught mother. ‘We shall never meet again in this life. Perhaps in heaven? Who knows ...?’ Fatma, a Venetian Christian, fell to her knees and began to pray.

Murad looked at his favourite dwarfs and buffoons sitting on the carpet in front of his divan one last time, their colourful costumes a cheerful reminder of the fun times he had shared with them in the palace gardens. Then, with his eyesight fading, he turned his face slowly towards Mecca, and died.

Gazanfer Ağa walked over to the divan to make sure that the sultan was dead. Satisfied, he gave the signal. The deaf-mute standing at the door nodded and quickly left the room.

The three Nubian deaf-mutes hurried through the corridors of the inner palace like black angels of death, their excited, sweat-covered faces glistening in the moonlight. Purchased as young, castrated boys, they had been brought to the palace as special slaves to be trained as eunuchs. Later, they had their tongues split to prevent them from speaking, and their eardrums burst with hot needles to make them deaf.

First, they dispatched the babies and toddlers. Strangling them quickly with the silk cords used for executions was easy, and took only a few minutes. The teenagers were more difficult to deal with. The assassins had to work as a team to kill them swiftly, and placate their hysterical mothers.

Bribery and corruption in the palace were rife, and greed was a powerful tool used by the ambitious and the ruthless to hatch conspiracies and forge alliances. Because Topkapi Palace was built like a fortress, surrounded by high walls and guarded by an army of fierce janissaries, it had become a confined hotbed of power, where deadly rivals were often separated by only a corridor, a small courtyard or a thin wall. The eyes and ears of spies and traitors were never far away, and trust was as precious and as rare as diamonds.

When the assassins entered Osman's room, they saw Fatma standing in front of her drugged son lying on the carpet. This was a deliberate and prearranged ploy, making him appear lifeless and limp and therefore easier to handle without arousing suspicion.

One of the deaf-mutes pointed to Osman. Fatma nodded, handed him a fistful of precious gems wrapped in a silk handkerchief, and stepped aside. The tall Nubian stuffed the handkerchief into his pocket, lifted the boy off the floor and carried him outside.

It took the deaf-mutes less than an hour to kill all of Murad's nineteen other sons, put the bodies into sacks and have them removed from the harem by trusted slaves before the household woke to the news that the sultan was dead, and had been succeeded by his eldest son, Mehmed. When the sacks containing the bodies were lined up in a row in a secret underground chamber, awaiting burial, no-one appeared to have noticed that one of them wasn't dead."

Istanbul isn't the only fascinating location featured in the book that I had to visit and explore. Florence and Venice are the two other cities where some of the most dramatic scenes are set, and a lot of the 'action' takes place.

I visited both cities on several occasions and ‘immersed’ myself in the rhythm and atmosphere of these exciting destinations. I did this as both a tourist and an observer, viewing the places I visited through the lens of a writer exploring possible settings for specific ‘scenes’ in the book. I must admit, this is always a most enjoyable and satisfying task, as it allows me to imagine my characters in the actual places I visit, and develop the plot accordingly. Once again, this considerably enhances authenticity as it opens up possibilities that would just not have been feasible sitting in my armchair at home in my attic.

I’m often told that my writing style is very ‘visual’ and my books ‘read like a movie’. I take this as a great compliment, as I try to stimulate imagination through powerful, ‘graphic’ descriptions and imagery that allow me to emotionally connect with my readers.

I have always believed that if I succeed in that regard, the reading experience will be considerably enhanced by making my characters more believable, engaging, and ‘real’. And that, after all, is what every serious writer strives for.

I have found that taking the time to actually visit the key places mentioned in my books, and using that firsthand experience to shape my characters and writing style, makes this possible.

## Science and Research

*Professor K: The Final Quest* is a medical thriller, and consequently features a great deal of cutting-edge science, and that science is all about genomics. What exactly is genomics; why is it so important today and the source of so many of the major breakthroughs and discoveries that are transforming medicine? Two of my major characters who feature in both of my medical thrillers – Jack Rogan and Dr Alexandra Delacroix – can answer that. Here’s a short excerpt from *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, which deals with this subject:

“All right. Have you heard of the Human Genome Project?” asked Dr Delacroix.

‘I have, actually,’ replied Jack.

‘What do you know about it?’

‘It was a monumental international undertaking. It began in 1990, lasted thirteen years and cost three billion dollars.’

‘And the aim was?’

‘To discover all of the twenty to twenty-five thousand human genes.’

‘And?’

‘To determine the complete sequence of the three billion DNA sub-units?’

‘You’re right,’ Alexandra replied, surprised. ‘You seem to know a lot about this. The project was a great success and resulted in the first full reading of a human genome.’

‘It was hailed as one of the greatest achievements in the history of science and a milestone in the history of mankind.’

‘And the results were announced jointly by President Clinton and the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in 2000,’ Jack cut in.

‘Not bad for an old bloke,’ teased Alexandra, nodding appreciatively. ‘The human DNA code has three billion letters. As researchers began to take a closer look at these letters in 2003, they found to their surprise that only one point five per cent of them actually carried instructions for genes. And inside this modest bundle, they identified twenty-five thousand genes. This was an extraordinary finding. What this meant was that man had the same set of genes as a *Caenorhabditis elegans*.’

‘A what?’

‘A humble, millimetre-long, one-thousand-cell roundworm.’

‘I’m related to a roundworm? Great!’

‘Don’t despair. It soon became apparent that if this were so, then instructions for creating a human being must be encoded somewhere else within the DNA, which as you know is the physical substance that makes up a gene,’ said Alexandra, becoming quite excited. ‘Your genome is a code. It has three billion DNA letters, there two copies of that code, one from mum and one from dad; that’s the unique you. And this is when things become really interesting—’

‘Is that why you became involved in all this?’ interrupted Jack.

‘In a way, yes. I was a PhD student in Paris at the time. That’s when I became Professor K’s assistant. He was an extraordinary man and a close friend of my mother’s. He was an iconoclast; an intellectual rebel who took nothing for granted and thought the answer in science was often to be found in the weird and the outrageous. He was right. To an impressionable, starry-eyed young student like me, he was like a god. He became my hero. He taught me how to think.’

‘In what way?’

‘Keep an open mind at all times, think laterally and don’t be afraid to challenge dogma and be different ...’”

This short passage is a good illustration of how I approach complex subjects in the book and try to explain the science in, hopefully, an engaging and easy-to-understand way. To do this in a thriller isn’t easy, and I had to be careful not to become too technical or, God forbid, bore my readers. I hope I’ve succeeded.

On a lighter note, medical research can be a lot of fun, too. There is one particular incident I recall during my research into avatar mice at the Garvan Institute in Sydney, which I would like to share with you. But first, a brief word about avatar mice.

Avatar mice are without doubt the most exciting development in personalised medicine today. By replicating a patient’s disease – like cancer, for instance – in an avatar mouse (by pairing patients with mice), it is now possible to determine the best treatment available that works for the individual patient by first trying it on the mouse to examine its efficacy, before

administering it to the patient. In essence, the mice are stand-ins for the patient. Extraordinary, isn't it?

Because avatar mice are so important in cutting-edge medical research today, I wanted to see for myself how it all worked. I received permission to visit the realm of the little four-legged avatars deep in the bowels of the Institute. This was the domain of a charming young scientist, Debbie Burnett, who introduced me to her little charges during a most memorable visit. I will let this little snapshot taken during that visit do the talking here. You know what they say: a picture tells ...



## The Team Acknowledgements

Just like writing *The Hidden Genes of Professor K*, researching and writing *Professor K: The Final Quest* was an ambitious project. Once again, the learning curve was both challenging and steep, because for a layman like me, exploring subjects touching on cutting-edge medical research and complex science is never easy and would not have been possible without the guiding hand and encouragement of experts.

I am particularly indebted to Professor Chris Goodnow FAA FRS, Executive Director of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, for helping me to get my mind around the rapidly changing science, and patiently reviewing the relevant chapters to make sure I didn't stray too far from what is realistic and possible in light of what we know today. For me, factual accuracy in my writing is paramount. Great care has therefore been taken to ensure that all matters touching on science and medical research are based on fact.

A special thank you must also go to Professor John Mattick AO FAA FTSC, for his encouragement and support in getting this project off the ground. Several of his ideas and suggestions have been incorporated into this book, and have become part of the storyline.

It would be remiss of me to leave out someone special who also works at the Garvan: Debbie Burnett BVSc, BSc. Debbie patiently explained what an avatar mouse is, how it is created, and what it can do for research. But that wasn't all. She took me on an exciting tour of her domain, located deep in the bowels of the Garvan, to induct me into the mysterious realm of avatar mice. A fascinating experience I will never forget.

Preparing a book for publication requires many skills; it is a team effort. I've once again been very fortunate to have a group of talented and dedicated specialists to help me deal with the many challenges of a rapidly changing publishing landscape. Without their professional support and advice, this book would not have seen the light of day. There are too many to mention, but a few definitely stand out.

First, Sally Asnicar, my editor. Her exceptional attention to detail and insights into the characters, the science and the multi-layered storyline, have been invaluable in bringing this project to fruition.

Who says we don't judge a book by its cover? In a way we all do, especially when surfing the Net for inspiration of what to read. The talented Vivien Valk has once again designed a captivating cover that is true to the storyline, and reflects the spirit of the book.

Then there is Lama Jabr, my publishing and marketing consultant, whose steady hand has patiently guided this project through the many challenges of a treacherous publishing jungle. Her insights and expertise, especially when dealing with social media and complex publishing platforms, have been invaluable, because just writing your book is not enough. You have to get it out there, to connect with the market and your readers.

And finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention my wife, Joan, literary critic, researcher, patient sounding board and cheerful travel companion – together, we visit all the places mentioned in my books.

I think this is probably an appropriate point to complete our little tour, which has taken us behind the scenes of *Professor K: The Final Quest*.

I hope you've enjoyed this brief glimpse into what it takes to write a book like this, and what is involved in preparing it for publication.

Finally, I would like to leave you with this thought:

When you are reading my books, you are actually giving me something very precious. Something that belongs to you, and you alone: *your time*. By spending that time to read what I've created, you enter the world of my imagination and allow me, for a little while at least, to reach into yours, and entertain you.

As a writer, I view this as a humbling compliment and a generous gift from one human being to another.

This very point was beautifully expressed by a moving note I received from one of my readers just as I was writing this:

*Mr. Farago,*

*I will submit a review for all your works I've read.*

*I'm writing you first to let you know a little bit of what you've done for me.*

*As a Brain aneurysm survivor, now fighting a small bleed (more like a tide pool actually) I haven't been able to read for years. Life filled with surgery upon surgery with complications just the same.*

*My vision has diminished to the point I pretty much had given up.*

*With my tbi comes their own set of challenges. Reading being one of its casualties.*

*Until my Fiancée, who is an avid reader... gave me the gift of reading again, with a tablet. Large font has become my best friend!!! 😊*

*I've enjoyed every word, every image conjured. Every journey. At times my short-term memory leaves me in my own world. Your writings have begun to fill that empty space. Thank you.*

*Sincere regards,*

*Beckie*

*It's readers like Beckie who make it all worthwhile!*

*Gabriel Farago*

*Leura, Blue Mountains,*

*Australia*

# PROFESSOR K: THE FINAL QUEST

The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 4

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**PROFESSOR K:  
THE FINAL QUEST  
MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

# The Main Characters: A Profile Study and Glossary

## Profile Study

### Jack Rogan

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Countess Katerina Kuragin

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Madame Petrova

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

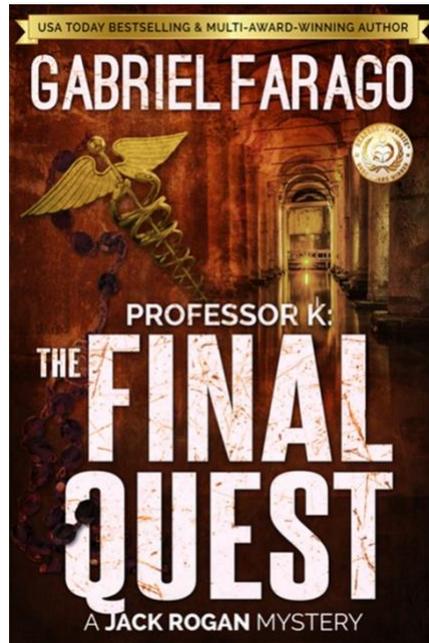
### Tristan Te Papatahi

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Isis

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

## Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines



Cardinal Borromeo knows the pope is dying. In a desperate attempt to save the pontiff, he asks Nobel laureate Professor Alexandra Delacroix for help. Following clues left by her mentor and friend, the late Professor K, Delacroix embarks on a breathtaking search to find a cure for the pope's mystery illness. Soon, her search takes her back to Ottoman times, and the cruel court of the sultans in Istanbul with all its deadly secrets.

When *Top Chef Europe* winner Lorenza da Baggio is kidnapped in Venice, her distraught family turns to celebrated author and journalist, Jack Rogan. On a perilous journey to find Lorenza, Jack and his young friend Tristan, a gifted psychic, join forces with Fabio Conti, head of the notorious Squadra Mobile in Florence; his assistant Cesaria Borroni, a fearless young police officer; and Naguib Haddad, an enigmatic Egyptian detective, on the hunt for a notorious IS terrorist, to defeat the forces of evil threatening to destroy them.

Together, they cross swords with Salvatore Gambio, the head of a powerful Mafia family in Florence, and uncover a network of corruption and heinous crimes reaching to the very top. Ruthless and ambitious, Gambio will stop at nothing to eliminate his rivals and

expand his dark empire. Only one man stands in his way – Chief Prosecutor Antonio Grimaldi, who leaves no stone unturned to bring his old foe to justice.

Will Rogan and his friends succeed in finding Lorenza and reuniting her with her family? Does Grimaldi carry the day and crush the Mafia in Florence? Can Professor Delacroix find a way to cure the pope and allow him to fulfil his destiny to bring peace to the Middle East, and save countless lives?

## Timeline

**Nobel Banquet Speech: December 2015**

**Main plot: 2016 (March to June 2016)**

## Characters

Dr Amena **Algafari**

Syrian doctor from Aleppo

**Al-Gharib**, ‘the Stranger’

IS commander

Kemal **Bahadir**

Turkish chef from Istanbul. *Top Chef Europe* contender

Raffaele **Bangarella**

Mafia assassin

Luigi **Belmonte**

Mafia hitman

**Boris**

Former wrestling champion. Isis’s bodyguard and chauffeur

Cardinal **Borromeo**

Dean of the College of Cardinals

Cesaria **Borroni**

Police officer working at the *Squadra Mobile* in Florence

Marcus **Carrington** QC

Barrister living in Sydney

Father **Connor**

Biblical scholar and Cardinal O'Brien's secretary

Fabio **Conti**

Retired Italian police officer and famous Mafia hunter

Cosimo **da Baggio**

Osman's grandfather

Leonardo **da Baggio**

Lorenza's father

Lorenza **da Baggio**

Venetian chef; *Top Chef Europe* finalist

Osman **da Baggio**

Son of Murad III and Fatma. Grandson and heir of **Cosimo** da Baggio. Famous healer known as *Medicus*.

Dr Alexandra **Delacroix**

Medical research scientist and Nobel laureate

**Ibrahim el-Masri**

Lebanese jihadist. Sheikh Omar's former bodyguard

**Fatma Hatun**

Murad's youngest consort

Louis **Fontaine**

Producer of *Top Chef Europe* contest

Salvatore **Gambio**

Head of the powerful Gambio Mafia family in Florence

**Gazanfer** Aga

Chief of the white eunuchs and head of the Enderun – the Imperial Seraglio

Mario **Giordano**

Eldest son of Riccardo Giordano

Riccardo **Giordano**

Head of the powerful Giordano Mafia family in Florence

Alfonso **Giuliani**

Salvatore Gambio's lawyer

Chief Prosecutor Antonio **Grimaldi**

Chief prosecutor and famous Mafia hunter working in Florence

**Habakkuk**

Ethiopian priest

Naguib **Haddad**

Former Chief Inspector of the Cairo police force

**Ibn Sina** (970–1037)

Persian physician, astronomer and thinker, known in the West as Avicenna

**Isis**

Billionaire rock star. Lead singer of *The Time Machine*

Mrs **Kelly**

Cardinal O'Brien's housekeeper

Prince **Khalid**

Arab prince

Countess Katerina **Kuragin**

Anna Popov's mother. Owner of the Kuragin Chateau, an exclusive boutique hotel close to Paris. Jack's close friend and confidante

**Lombardo** family

Powerful Mafia family in Florence

**Mehmed**

Murad's eldest son

Professor **Montessori**

The pope's personal physician

**Murad III**

Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, grandson of Suleiman the Magnificent, Caliph of Islam

**Nazir Al-Kafri**

Dr Rosen's assistant

**Cardinal O'Brien**

Australian cardinal residing in Sydney

**Sheikh Omar**

The "Chosen One;" Egyptian jihadist

**Francesca Ottoboni**

Prostitute working in Florence

**Pope Pius XIII**

Bishop of Rome, head of the Roman Catholic Church

**Colonel Ali Riza**

Senior officer working for the *Jandarma*, the Turkish Gendarmerie in Istanbul

**Jack Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator.

Jack is the central character and protagonist of the series and features in every book

**Dr Bettany Rosen**

Founder of the Rosen Foundation. Working in the Kilis Oncupinar refugee camp in Turkey

**Safiye Sultan**

Murad's favourite consort. Mother of Murad's eldest son Mehmet

**Dr Clara Samartini**

Member of Squadra Mobile's Forensics team in Florence

**Tristan te Papatahi**

Cassandra's son with extraordinary psychic powers. He can hear the whisper of angels, and glimpse eternity.

**Vimal**

Dr Alexandra Delacroix's assistant

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the Glossary helpful in finding, identifying, and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive.

*Gabriel Farago*

*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia, 2022*



### **Will You Stand at the Crossroads of Destiny and Duty?**

Join Jack Rogan in *Professor K: The Final Quest*, where ancient secrets and moral dilemmas challenge the very fabric of our beliefs. A quest for truth that spans the globe awaits. Are you ready to face the ultimate test?

Your passage to nail-biting adventure is waiting on [Amazon](#). You can access the book with one click right now.

# THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE MISSING HEAD

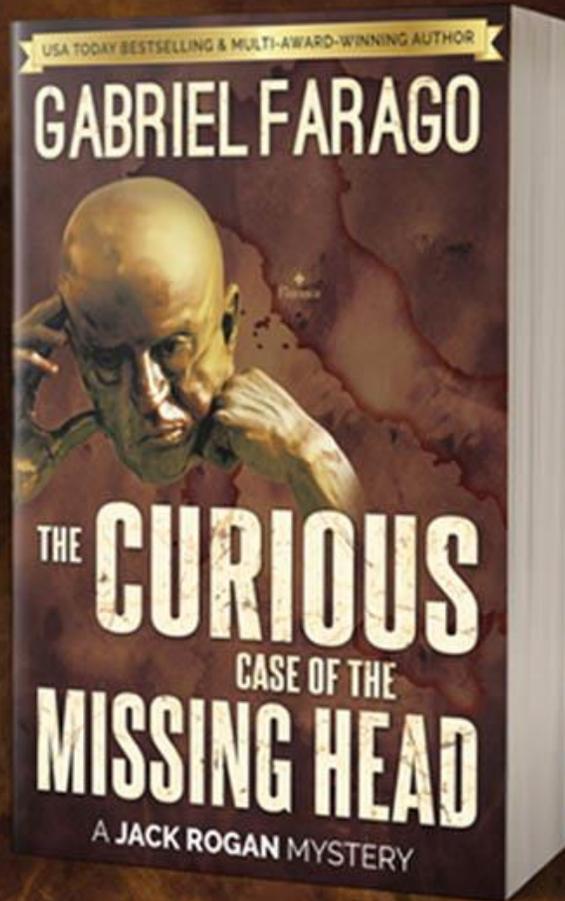
The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 5

## Behind The Scenes

Gabriel Farago

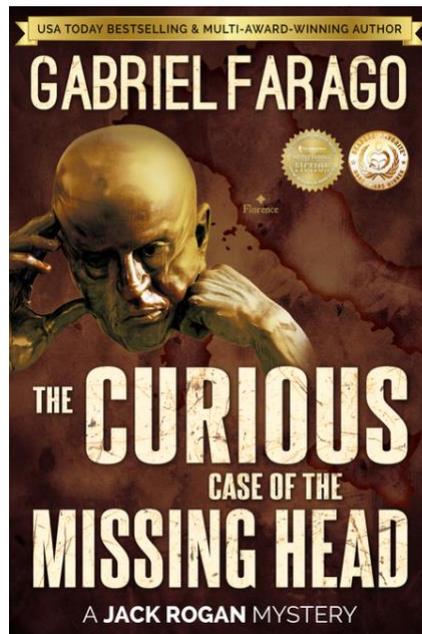
USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

# GABRIEL FARAGO



# BEHIND THE SCENES

## The Curious Case of the Missing Head



**A headless body on a boat. An international conspiracy. Can he survive a controversial scientific discovery?**

Esteemed Australian journalist Jack Rogan is on a mission to solve the disappearance of his mother in the '70s. But when a friend needs help rescuing a kidnapped world-renowned astrophysicist, he doesn't hesitate. Struggling with more questions than answers, his investigation leads them aboard a hellish hospital ship, where instead of finding the kidnap victim, he's confronted with a decapitated corpse.

As the search intensifies, Jack bumps up against diabolical cartels with hidden agendas. And when his research reveals dubious experiments, a criminal on death row, and a shocking revelation about his mother's fate, he must uncover how it's all linked.

Can Jack unravel the twisted connections and catch the scientist's killer, or will the next obituary published be his own?

*The Curious Case of the Missing Head* is the fifth standalone novel in the page-turning *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*. If you like meticulous theoretical science, exponentially increasing intensity, and astonishing surprises, then you'll love Gabriel Farago's hair-raising medical thriller.

## Authenticity

I am frequently asked by my readers how ideas for a new book emerge and are shaped into a storyline with interesting characters who captivate, fascinating places that ignite the imagination, and subject matter that both teases the intellect and entertains at the same time. A tall order for sure, but certainly possible if certain principles are carefully followed.

The very cornerstone of a successful thriller that becomes a ‘page-turner’ are authenticity and the element of surprise. The storyline and the characters must be anchored in reality, and readers have to be able to relate to situations and characters they find both plausible and interesting. To do this successfully is only possible if the subject matter – in this case astrophysics, cosmology and cutting-edge medical science – is presented in the right way. And what exactly is that right way? Once again, we come back to authenticity.

I encourage and greatly value feedback from my readers. This not only tells me how my books are received, but also helps me understand how they resonate with readers. What is important to point out here is that every reader will see a book differently and therefore find different aspects appealing, or not. In short, it is impossible to please everybody and cater for all tastes and expectations. However, certain trends appear, and as my readership grows, certain aspects of my books become important and are the very features of my writing that appeal, captivate my readers and create anticipation, and makes them stay with me and look forward to the next book. And to find out what that is can only be done through communication. In short, if I listen to what my readers have to say. And that, my friends, is exactly what I try to do, and why I believe it is important to tell you a little about what lies ‘behind the scenes’ of a book, especially one with subject matters that are complex and therefore quite difficult to incorporate into an action-packed thriller.

As you are obviously all aware, The *Jack Rogan Mysteries* are a series, and therefore presented as such. However, I hasten to add that each of my books can be read as a standalone work without having to be familiar with all the books in the order in which they have been released. That said, reading the books in chronological order will, of course, add to the enjoyment and understanding of the overall concepts and ideas that have inspired the

series, and help the reader follow the journey of the key characters. Especially Jack Rogan, who is, of course, at the very centre of the stories as they unfold.

Now that we've reached Book 5 in the series, I believe it is both meaningful and appropriate to briefly talk about something important that stands behind the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* and underpins all of my writing. The subject matters introduced in each book are by no means arbitrary, but part of an overall, carefully structured plan and design. It is an intellectual journey through history and subjects that are linked, have fascinated me for years, and I want to explore and share with my readers.

In order to be able to do this successfully, a 'vehicle' was needed that would allow me to introduce such diverse subjects as theology, philosophy, the occult, archaeology and cosmology, and deal with complex science, cutting-edge medical research, genomics, astrophysics and mathematics to name but a few, in a way that makes these often quite complex and esoteric subjects both interesting and easy to understand.

The 'vehicle' I have chosen to achieve this, is the *thriller*. The reason behind this decision is as simple as it is effective. It is based on two things I believe are in all of us: curiosity, and the joy of learning. These are certainly what motivate and inspire me to write. However, the real challenge here is how to make learning fun and entertaining, and how to make complex subjects interesting and 'palatable'. That's where the action-packed thriller comes into play.

By carefully weaving these subjects into a captivating, page-turning storyline with fascinating characters, exotic locations, and often linked to current affairs, it is, in my view, possible to make the joy of learning part of the reading experience in a way that is both subtle and effective. In short, the reader isn't really aware that he or she is 'learning' about genomics and complex surgical procedures, how black holes work and how theoretical physics explains the laws of nature and the beginning of the universe, but is captivated by characters and a storyline that entertain and make the pages turn, irresistibly.

## Passion

To create a successful thriller is only possible if the author is passionate about the subject matter he or she has decided to write about and is in total command of it. Why? Because this passion will shine through every line, and either draw in the reader from the very beginning or, if this passion is not genuine, or the author's knowledge of the subjects superficial, turn the reader away. It sounds simple, but let me assure you, it's not easy to do. To begin with, this passion has to be real. Without that, the enormous research to make such a book feasible just wouldn't be possible. And research is the very cornerstone of authenticity, especially if we are dealing with complex subjects.

## Inspiration

Those of you who have read my previous books would have noticed that I briefly explain at the very beginning of each book what has inspired me to write it. The idea for this book was triggered by a certain event: the death of Steven Hawking, who passed away in March 2018. I have dealt with this in the Introduction:

## Introduction

Westminster Abbey. Iconic final resting place of kings and queens, composers, statesmen, explorers and scientists, where every stone has a story to tell about the journey of man. Not only is it a spectacular reminder of extraordinary people and great achievements, but at the same time, every stone whispers of mortality and the certainty of death. As a repository of history, Westminster Abbey is unparalleled.

I will never forget 15 June 2018. On that day, one of the greatest minds of our time, Stephen Hawking – who died in March that year after decades suffering from motor neurone disease – had his ashes interred close to the graves of Newton and Darwin in the Scientists' Corner of the Abbey.

And how appropriate it was, I thought. Hawking was born exactly three hundred years after Newton. It was Newton who formulated the laws of motion and universal gravitation, and it was Hawking's genius that took astrophysics to new heights. The inscription on his memorial stone is a translation of the Latin text on Newton's gravestone: 'Here lies what was mortal of Stephen Hawking 1942–2018'. In addition, the stone is inscribed with one of Hawking's most famous equations:

$$T = \frac{hc^3}{8\pi G M k}$$

But that wasn't all. The Greek composer Vangelis set Hawking's inspirational message to the world, to music, which according to Hawking's daughter was beamed into space that day from a European Space Agency satellite dish, aimed at the nearest black hole, 1A 0620-00.

I have followed Hawking and his inspired, ground-breaking ideas for over thirty years. A keen interest in mathematics and physics inspired me to read all his books, especially *A Brief History of Time* (1988 Bantam London), which explains complex, revolutionary ideas in ways a layman like me can relate to and understand.

The service was attended by luminaries from around the world. Martin Rees, the Astronomer Royal, made a moving speech; actor Benedict Cumberbatch, who played Hawking in a BBC drama, delivered a reading; and Nobel laureate Kip Thorne paid tribute to his remarkable colleague and friend.

As the sound of Richard Wagner's stirring 'Ride of the Valkyries' rose, heralding the end of the service, and the bells of the Abbey began to toll, conjuring up images of man's futile quest for immortality, my mind began to wander ...

How tragic, I thought, that such a gifted mind capable of solving some of the greatest and most challenging mysteries of the cosmos, was cut down by a terrible disease in the middle, if not at the very beginning, of what he might have been capable of, thereby preventing him from reaching his full potential, and depriving mankind of precious knowledge.

However, was this any more regrettable than Beethoven going deaf and unable to hear some of his greatest works, or Mozart dying as a young man of only thirty-five? One can only speculate what might have been possible if these gifted minds could have stayed around for longer, allowing their creative genius to blossom and reach new heights.

And then something occurred to me. What if we could somehow change all that and *make* it possible? Turn a vision into reality today, right now? Recent ground-breaking advances in medical research and technology – especially in surgery and surgical techniques and procedures – have led to some breathtaking discoveries and results, placing some concepts that only a few short years ago would have been considered science fiction, into the realm of realistic possibilities. What if a gifted mind like that of Stephen Hawking's could somehow be liberated from a terribly disabled body, and manage to live on for some more time, allowing it to continue its ground-breaking work and reach for the stars, literally? What if ...?

That was the thought I took away with me from this moving service. It was a thought inspired by optimism and hope for the future that stayed with me and became the inspiration for this book.

## The research

Authenticity, especially in a book of this scope and complexity, can only be achieved through meticulous research. I carry out all the required research myself and, whenever possible, turn to experts in the field for assistance and advice. I never cease to be amazed by the generosity of those experts who, when asked for assistance, freely give of their time and patiently explain complex subjects to a curious amateur like me, and then review what I have written to make sure I haven't fallen into error.

I briefly deal with research in 'A parting note from the author' at the end of the book, relevant extracts of which are set out below:

## A Parting Note from the Author

Because a lot of cutting-edge science and medical subjects have been incorporated into the multi-layered storylines of this book, a few observations are definitely warranted to put that material into its proper context.

For me as a writer, authenticity and accuracy are paramount. Without that, it isn't possible to create a seamless storyline where the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred, so that the reader is never quite sure where one ends and the other begins. This is quite deliberate, as it creates the illusion of truth and reality in a work that is pure fiction. In my view, a successful work of fiction is a balancing act: reality must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is both entertaining and plausible, and this can only be achieved through meticulous research and attention to detail.

All the material touching on physics, cosmology, technology and science generally, has been carefully researched and is, to the best of my knowledge, based on the latest findings and theories accepted by scientists today. The same can be said about the cutting-edge medical subjects, especially surgery, dealt with in the text. That said, please keep in mind that I am not a scientist, nor a doctor, but a fiction writer with a legal background whose aim is to entertain and tease your intellect and imagination with questions and scenarios that are both realistic and plausible, but are, of course, pure fiction ...

Finally, all the concepts, theories and ideas relating to theoretical physics and cosmology featured in the book are based on the work of the late Professor Steven Hawking, who passed away in March 2018. I have followed the work of Professor Hawking for the past thirty years, and have admired his extraordinary insights and discoveries that have elevated theoretical physics to an entirely new level, and became the inspiration for this book.

# THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE MISSING HEAD

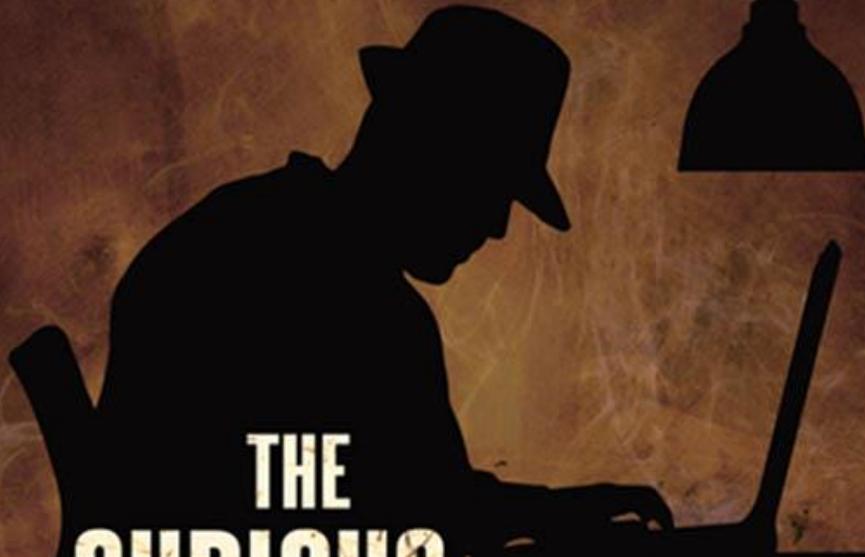
The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 5

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
CURIOUS CASE OF THE  
MISSING HEAD  
MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

# The Main Characters: A Profile Study and Glossary

## Profile Study

### Jack Rogan

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

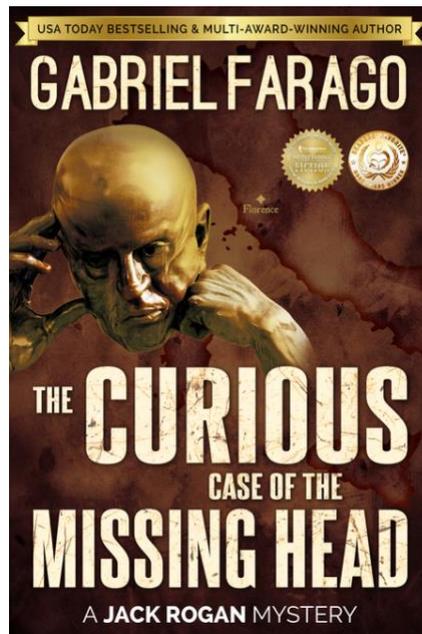
### Tristan Te Papatahi

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Isis

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

## Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines



When celebrated astrophysicist Zachariah Stolfus attends a memorial service for a famous colleague in Westminster Abbey, he unwittingly becomes a pawn in a deadly game that will radically change his life and how mankind sees the mysteries of the universe forever.

Alonso Cordoba, convicted murderer and drug smuggler, is on death row in Arizona, awaiting execution. His father, Hernando, head of the notorious Colombian H Cartel, will stop at nothing to save his son. With the help of his New York lawyer, Hernando hatches a plan so daring that it will send law enforcement agencies around the world into a panic, desperately searching for answers. With the stakes so high, Hernando makes powerful enemies who are determined to crush his evil empire, and destroy him and his son.

When Rebecca Armstrong – Stolfus’s sister – discovers that her brother has disappeared under mysterious circumstances, she turns to her friend, Jack Rogan, for help. Joining forces with Tristan, a gifted young psychic, and Cesaria Borroni, a police officer in Florence, Rogan decides to investigate. Following hidden clues, he soon uncovers a dark web of corruption, greed and ambition, pointing to the Mafia in Florence and a hotbed of heinous crimes in Malta.

On a perilous journey to find out what happened to Stolfus, Rogan is drawn into cataclysmic events beyond his control that threaten his life, and everything he holds dear.

Will Rogan and his friends succeed? Will the inspired ideas of a visionary scientist flourish and unlock the secrets of the universe, or will the spark of his genius be lost forever?

## Timeline

**Main Plot: March 2018 – July 2018**

## Characters

**Dr Agabe**

African doctor. Member of Professor Fabry's team that operated on Stolfus in Malta

**Aladdin**

Romany gypsy. Member of Spiridon 4; brother of Silvanus

Father Christos **Alexopoulos**

Eastern Orthodox priest attending the Hawking memorial service in Westminster Abbey

Major **Anderson**

CIA operative in charge of Stolfus's security during his London trip

Rebecca **Armstrong**

Jack Rogan's publicist based in New York. Professor Stolfus's sister

Joselito **Barrera**

Chief of Bogota's secret police

**Boris**

Former wrestling champion; Isis's bodyguard

Cesaria **Borroni**

Acting chief superintendent of the Squadra Mobile in Florence

Alonso **Cordoba**

Son of Hernando Cordoba, notorious Colombian drug lord and head of the Huitzilopochtli or H Cartel

Hernando **Cordoba**

Notorious Colombian drug lord and head of the Huitzilopochtli or H Cartel

Rahima **Cordoba**

Wife of Hernando Cordoba and mother of Alonso

Giacomo **Cornale**

Captain of the *Nike*

Celia **Crawford**

Journalist working for the *New York Times*

Daniel **Cross**

MI5 officer in London

Lorenza **da Baggio**

Venetian chef; *Top Chef Europe* finalist

Professor Ambert **Fabry**

Surgeon. Owner of private hospital in Malta

Vice Admiral Laura **Fratelli**

Commander of the US Sixth Fleet based in Naples

Alessandro **Giordano**

Son of Riccardo Giordano, involved in drug trafficking

Riccardo **Giordano**

Head of prominent Mafia family in Florence, involved in drug trafficking

**Gizmo**

Professor Stolfus's dog

Chuck **Goldberger**

Director of the Marshall Space Center

Professor **Greenberg**

American surgeon

Chief Prosecutor **Grimaldi**

Mafia 'hunter' working in Florence

Professor Steven **Hawking**

Theoretical physicist and cosmologist

Dr Rosalind **Hubert**

Director of the CIA

Sir Charles **Huntley**

Isis's lawyer

**Isis**

Billionaire rock star. Lead singer of The Time Machine

**Izabel**

Former Victoria's Secret Angel and Alessandro Giordano's girlfriend

**Fernando Mancilla**

Colombian secret police official assassinated by a drug cartel

Read Admiral Andrew **McBride**

Commander of the USS *Endeavour* a giant nuclear-powered Nimitz-class aircraft carrier

**Nadia**

Daughter of Serbian farmer Bogodan Petrovic, twin sister of Teodora. Member of Spiridon

4

**Omda**

Chief of Fungor village in the Nuba Mountains

Bogodan **Petrovic**

Serbian farmer, father of Nadia and Teodora

Captain Tom **Roberts**

Commander US Task Force 65

Raul **Rodrigo**

Personal lawyer of Hernando Cordoba representing the H Cartel

Lola **Rodriguez**

Isis's PA and personal pilot

Jack **Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator.

Jack is the central character and protagonist of the series, and features in every book

**Natasha Rostova**

Photographer working for National Geographic

**Dr Dritan Shehu**

Kosovar Albanian surgeon

**Silvanus**

Romany gypsy. Member of Spiridon 4; brother of Aladdin

**Professor Zachariah Stolfus**

Theoretical physicist and cosmologist

**Tristan te Papatahi**

Cassandra's son with extraordinary psychic powers. He can hear the whisper of angels, and glimpse eternity

**Teodora**

Daughter of Serbian farmer Bogodan Petrovic, twin sister of Nadia. Member of Spiridon

**Tukamil**

Nuba

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the Glossary helpful in finding, identifying, and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive.

*Gabriel Farago*

*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia, 2022*



### **Are You Brave Enough to Explore the Edge of Science and Sanity?**

*The Curious Case of the Missing Head* takes Jack Rogan into the heart of a mystery where brilliance meets madness. A chilling expedition awaits, threading through the unknown.

Reveal the unthinkable on [Amazon](#) today. You can access the book with one click right now.

# THE LOST SYMPHONY

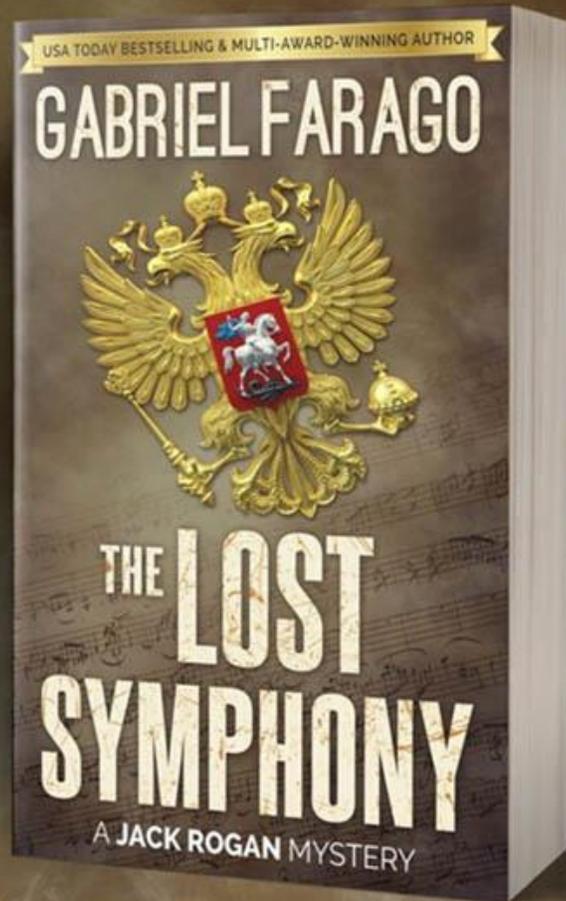
The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 6

Behind The Scenes

Gabriel Farago

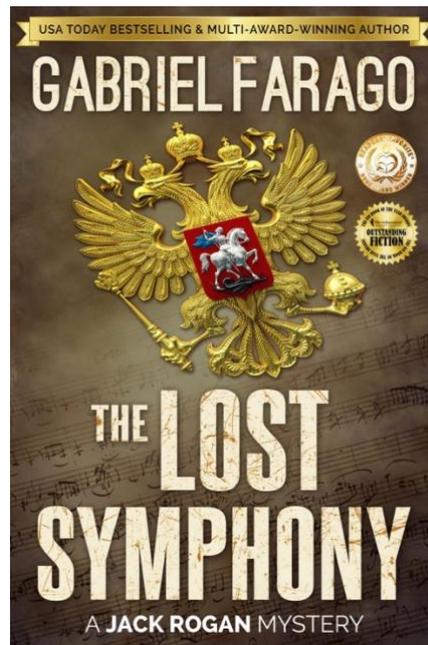
USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

# GABRIEL FARAGO



# BEHIND THE SCENES

## The Lost Symphony



**A murdered tsarina. A lost musical masterpiece. A stolen Russian icon. Can Jack honour a promise made a long time ago, and solve an age-old mystery?**

When acclaimed Australian journalist and author Jack Rogan inherits an old music box with a curious letter hidden inside, he decides to investigate. As he delves deeper into a murky past of secrets and violence, he soon discovers that he's not the only one interested in solving the puzzle:

Frieda Malenkova, a ruthless art dealer, and Victor Sokolov, a Russian billionaire with a dark past, will stop at nothing to achieve their deep desires and foil Jack's valiant struggle to uncover the truth.

Joining forces with Mademoiselle Darrieux, a flamboyant Paris socialite, and Claude Dupree, a retired French police officer, Jack enters a dangerous world of unbridled ambition, murder and greed that threatens to destroy him.

On a perilous journey that takes him deep into Russia, Jack follows a tortuous path of discovery, disappointment and betrayal that brings him face to face with his destiny.

Will Jack unravel the hidden clues left behind by a desperate empress? Can he save the precious legacy of a genius before it's too late, and return a holy icon revered by generations to where it belongs?

## Inspiration

Those of you who have read some of my previous books would have noticed that I briefly explain at the very beginning of each book what has inspired me to write it.

The ideas for the storylines developed in this book took shape during a visit to St Petersburg in September 2019, and were triggered by three separate events: A concert, a visit to the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul where the Romanovs are buried, and a visit to the fabulous Peterhof Palace.

I have referred to these events in the Author's Note:

## Author's note

Very few cities in the world today have as tortured a soul as St Petersburg. The wheel of history has been particularly cruel to this extraordinary place. Bloody revolutions, uprisings and assassinations, resulting in untold misery and devastating wars causing the death of millions have shaped this city, and can still be felt today by visitors who are prepared to observe and listen to the echoes of a painful past.

Inspired by Venice and Amsterdam, this spectacular Versailles on the Neva, Peter the Great's 'window into Europe', became the capital of Russia in 1712. I visited this fascinating city in September 2019 to prepare the way for the release of *The Curious Case of the Missing Head*, Book 5 in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, and to continue my research for a novella, *The Lost Symphony*, which I've had in the back of my mind for some time. But things don't always turn out as planned.



Actually visiting this jewel on the Baltic and being surrounded by its extraordinary history had a profound effect. It is important to mention this here at the very beginning, as it has a bearing on how the storylines unfolded, and how the many fascinating characters who shape this book came to life.

Initially, *The Lost Symphony* was planned as a short novella about a tormented genius – Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky – one of my favourite composers, who visited St Petersburg often and died there in 1893. I have referred to this in chapter 62 of *The Curious Case of the Missing Head*, part of which has been incorporated into the Prologue as an opening scene that explains how the storylines of this book fit into the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, which doesn't always follow Jack's life chronologically.

I thought at the time of my visit that St Petersburg and its turbulent history would provide a most suitable backdrop and setting for the novella. Then several things happened that changed all that:

The first was a wonderful concert. One of my readers, an eminent Russian musicologist whom I had corresponded with for years, knew that I was planning to delve into Tchaikovsky's life and times, and kindly arranged tickets for a concert showcasing Tchaikovsky's sublime music. During the stirring fourth movement of Symphony No. 6,

the Pathétique, with its sense of gloom and foreboding, my mind began to wander, and the first shoots of a new, much wider storyline began to take shape. I have no doubt this was all due to the spell of this extraordinary city that was soon to captivate me and hold me in its grip. I also recalled the words of my friend at the beginning of the concert: ‘If you want to get to know the soul of Russia, listen to its music.’

The next event that had a bearing on all this was a visit to the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul, where the Romanovs are buried.



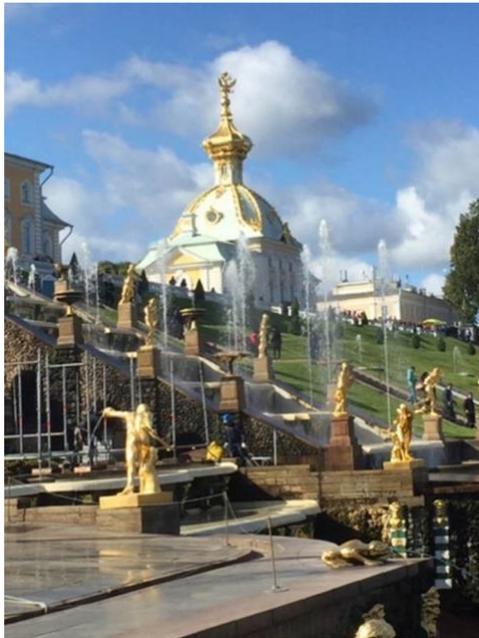
In addition to the Tchaikovsky research, I also wanted to explore the tragic history of Tsar Nicholas II, and Rasputin, that enigmatic evil genius who contributed so much to his downfall. The tsar and his entire family were brutally slaughtered by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg in July 1918, two and a half years after Rasputin himself had been murdered in the Yusupov Palace in St Petersburg. I have been fascinated by these cataclysmic events and what followed for years, and had planned to make them the centrepiece of the next book in the series. But first, I was going to write the novella about Tchaikovsky.

However, all of these plans evaporated as I stood in the crypt where Tsar Nicholas II was finally laid to rest on 17 July 1998, eighty years to the day after his murder. It was a deeply moving moment. For some reason I still can't explain, I kept hearing the sombre

notes of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, my eyes firmly fixed on the last tsar's modest sarcophagus in front of me, wondering...

A flash of inspiration often lasts for only a millisecond as an idea appears, but can have a profound influence on the creative process that shapes an entire book and ignites the passion needed to write it. And that is exactly what happened during that moment of reflection in that solemn place that day. The idea was simple enough: why not combine the storylines of the novella and the next book and create a Russian epic worthy not only of a great composer, but also of a tragic chapter in Russian history that has changed the modern world?

The next day, my Russian friend took me to the Peterhof Palace, and it was there while strolling through the stunning palace gardens with their spectacular fountains, golden statues and waterfalls that the ideas and story-threads all came together, forming the inspiration for this book. It was like opening a window to let in the sunshine. Once that window was opened, there was no turning back. I pulled the little notebook I always carry with me out of my pocket, sat down on a bench overlooking the fountains, and began to jot down an outline for this book.



That was how it all began. What is contained in the pages that follow, is the product of an inspired idea that floated into my mind's eye in the Romanov crypt on that grey autumn afternoon as a whisper, and then turned into a literary symphony that I hope you will enjoy.

## The Research

Authenticity, especially in a book of this scope and complexity, can only be achieved through meticulous research. I carry out all the necessary research myself, and whenever possible, visit all the places mentioned in the book, and try to view the original works of art and other key objects dealt with in the storylines.

In that regard, this book was one of my most ambitious projects by far. I spent two months in Europe in 2019, especially Russia, to carry out the research. For me, visiting the actual places where various scenes in the book are set and the action takes place, is of critical importance, because only then am I able to write about them convincingly, and with confidence.

Getting a ‘feel’ for a place is a complex process, and involves many things, and not just the obvious ones. Smells, sounds – especially of the languages spoken – the climate and so on, all play a significant part in bringing a story, and the all-important characters, convincingly to life in a way that draws the reader into the world of my imagination. This process allows me to make an emotional connection with my readers that is essential if the book is to have meaning and result in an enjoyable and satisfying read.

Nothing can replace the feeling of standing in front of Tchaikovsky’s grave in the Tikhvin Cemetery in St Petersburg, or listening to one of his symphonies in the Bolshoi Zal, or being enthralled by *Swan Lake* in the stunning Mariinsky Theatre. I have done all that, and tried to capture the essence of these places and experiences later, when I was actually writing the relevant chapters back home in Australia, up in my attic in the Blue Mountains.

Imagination and creativity work in ways that are very personal and difficult to describe. These things cannot be learned. They have to be nurtured and listened to, and actually visiting the various places featured in the book helps me to do just that.

As part of the research I visited not only Russia, but also travelled to Paris, London, Berlin and Budapest. I walked through the Jewish Cemetery in Prague, visited countless museums and went up to the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden to Hitler’s former mountain fortress, and many other places that form part of the tapestry of the multi-layered storylines,

and the many complex and fascinating characters that bring *The Lost Symphony*, Book 6 in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, to life.

Looking back, I was very fortunate to be able to complete my travels in late 2019, and make it back to Australia just before COVID-19 hit, and the world changed. Because of the dramatic shutdown that followed, it was possible to write this lengthy and complex book in record time. There's no ill wind ...

I hope you have found this brief journey 'behind the scenes' of *The Lost Symphony* informative, and it has ignited a spark of curiosity that will entice you to step into the world of my imagination and read the book. And that, my friends, is what every writer strives for.

# THE LOST SYMPHONY

The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 6

Main Characters Profile and Glossary

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
LOST SYMPHONY  
MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

# The Main Characters: A Profile Study and Glossary

## Profile Study

### Jack Rogan

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Countess Katerina Kuragin

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Madame Petrova

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Tristan Te Papatahi

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

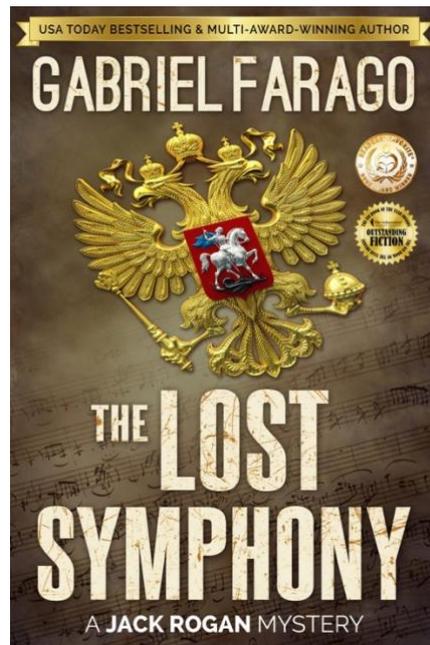
### Isis

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Mademoiselle Darrieux

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

# Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines



## Timeline

**Main Plot: December 2016 – August 2017**

**Final part of the book: Easter 2018**

## Characters

**Dimitri Aldar**

Former KGB agent working for Sokolov

**Empress Alexandra**

Tsarina, wife of Nicholas II, mother of Alexei, Anastasia, Olga, Tatiana and Marie

**Anielka (aka Alina)**

Polish orphan and convicted juvenile psychopath who spent time in a psychiatric hospital in Paris

Louis **Aubert**

Manager of the Paris Ritz

Professor Gero von **Babenberg**

Zuzanna's father. University lecturer teaching modern history in Leipzig

Countess Marya **Bezukhova**

Close friend of Empress Alexandra. Madame Petrova's mother and wife of Count Vasily Bezukhov

Countess **Bolkonskaya**

Close friend of the tsarina, Alexandra

Igor **Borodin**

Russian clairvoyant calling himself the 'Prophet of Salvation'

Cardinal **Borromeo**

Dean of the College of Cardinals in Rome

Dr Eugene **Botkin**

Romanov family physician

**Celine**

Former cat burglar working for Malenkova, known as **Le Fantome**

Martin **Charpentier**

Faberge expert

Father **Colgan**

Founder of The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, established in 1946

Celia **Crawford**

*New York Times* correspondent and close friend of Jack

Lorenza **da Baggio**

Venetian chef; *Top Chef Europe* finalist

Mademoiselle Adrienne **Darrieux**

Paris socialite and author

Louiz **da Silva**

Member of the International Secretariat running Fatima

Vladimir 'Bob' **Davydov**

Tchaikovsky's nephew

Professor Alexandra **Delacroix**

Medical research scientist and Nobel laureate working at the Gordon Institute in Sydney

**Demidova**

Empress Alexandra's maid

Claude **Dupree**

Retired French police officer and watchmaker

Philippe **Dupree**

Claude Dupree's son

Renee **Duval** aka **Quasimodo**

French forger living in Montmartre

Hans **Elmiger**

Manager of the Paris Ritz during World War II (German occupation)

Carl **Fabergé**

Master jeweller, head of the House of Fabergé in St Petersburg

Emile **Fabron**

Retired French safebreaker

**Fatima**

Moorish princess

**François**

Countess Kuragin's butler-cum-gardener and chauffeur

The **Guardians**

Members of the *Brotherhood of the Weeping Madonna of Kazan*. A group of scholar-monks in the Novo-Yikhvinsky Convent searching for Kazanskaya Bogomater, the lost holy icon

Goncalo **Hermigues**

Portuguese knight in love with Fatima

David **Herzl**

Jewish master forger living in the Warsaw Ghetto

Ilona **Herzl**

David Herzl's wife

Adolf **Hitler** (1889 – 1945)

Dictator of Germany and leader of the Nazi Party

**Isis**

Billionaire rock star. Lead singer of The Time Machine

**Benjamin Krakowski**

Holocaust survivor and Polish composer and violin virtuoso

**Sandor Kun**

Hungarian author living in Budapest

**Countess Katerina Kuragin**

Anna Popov's mother. Owner of the Kuragin Chateau, an exclusive boutique hotel close to Paris. Jack's close friend and confidante

**Detective Chief Superintendent Marcel Lapointe**

Senior commissaire of the Paris Brigade Criminelle

**Dr Stanislav Lazovert**

Polish physician

**Frieda Malenkova**

Art collector and fence living in Paris

**Lola Rodriguez**

Isis's PA and personal pilot

**Jack Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator. Jack is the central character and protagonist of the series and features in every book

Sister **Natalya**

Nun residing in the Novo-Tikhvinsky Convent in Yekaterinburg

Patriarch **Nicodemus**

Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus and Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church

Tsar **Nicolas II**

Last Tsar of Russia

**Olga**

Borodin's assistant and medium

Grand Duke Dimitri **Pavlovich**

Russian noble related to Tsar Nicholas II

Madame **Petrova**

Retired Russian ballerina. Close friend of Countess Kuragin

**Pope Pius XIII**

Vladimir **Purishkevich**

Russian politician and outspoken critic of Rasputin and the tsarina

**Rahima**

Jack's mother

Grigori **Rasputin**

Russian mystic and Empress Alexandra's confidant

Tsarevich Alexei **Romanov**

Son of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra

Grand duchess Anastasia **Romanov**

Youngest daughter of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra

Grand duchess Marie **Romanov**

Daughter of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra

Grand duchess Olga **Romanov**

Daughter of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra

Grand duchess Tatiana **Romanov**

Daughter of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra

The **Seeker**

Looking for the return of Kazanskaya Bogomater, Our Lady of Kazan, a holy icon

Abbot **Serapion**

Abbott of the Novo-Tikhvinsky Convent in Yekaterinburg

Victor **Sokolov**

Russian oligarch, billionaire, and art collector

Avigdor **Stein**

Curator of the Jewish Museum in Prague

Sergei **Sukhotin**

Russian officer in the Life Guard Infantry Regiment

Modest **Tchaikovsky**

Brother of Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky

Pyotr Ilych **Tchaikovsky**

Russian composer

Tristan **te Papatahi**

Cassandra's son with extraordinary psychic powers. He can hear the whisper of angels, and glimpse eternity

Pavel **Ustinov** aka the Golem of Treblinka

Trawniki guard at Treblinka

Konstantin **Vasiliev**

Romanov family historian, and handwriting specialist

SS Major Axel **Wolfbauer** aka Adolphus

Scholar and acclaimed expert on esotericism and the paranormal working for Hitler

**Yurovsky**

Guard at the Ipatiev House in Yekaterinburg in charge of the execution of the Imperial Family

Prince Felix **Yusupov**

Russian noble married to the tsar's niece

**Zuzanna** Badowski

Frieda Malenkova's PA

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the Glossary helpful in finding, identifying, and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive.

*Gabriel Farago*

*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia, 2022*



### **Can You Help Save a Masterpiece Lost in Time before it's too late?**

A rollercoaster of suspense and history awaits your discovery. Unveil the secrets of The Lost Symphony on [Amazon](#) today. You can access the book with one click right now.

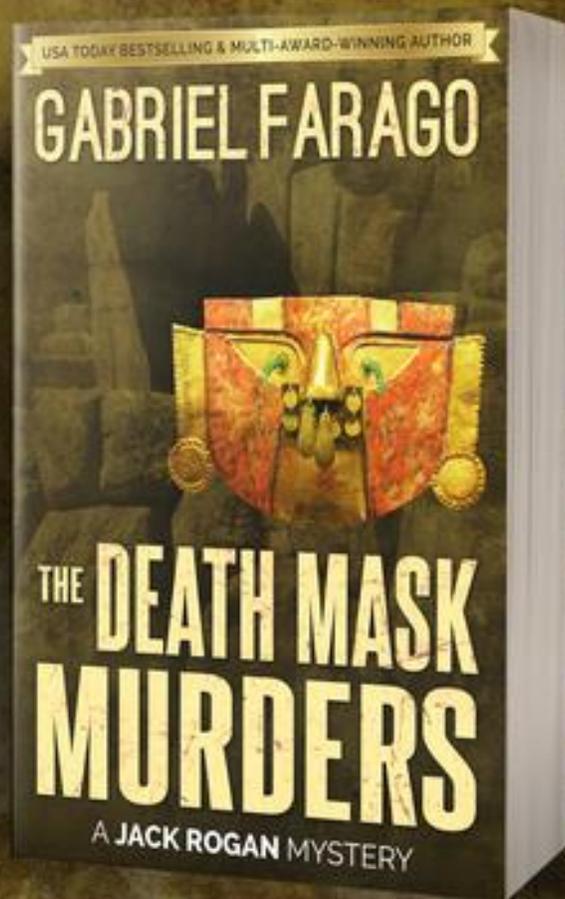
**THE DEATH MASK MURDERS**  
**Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 7**

**Behind The Scenes**

Gabriel Farago

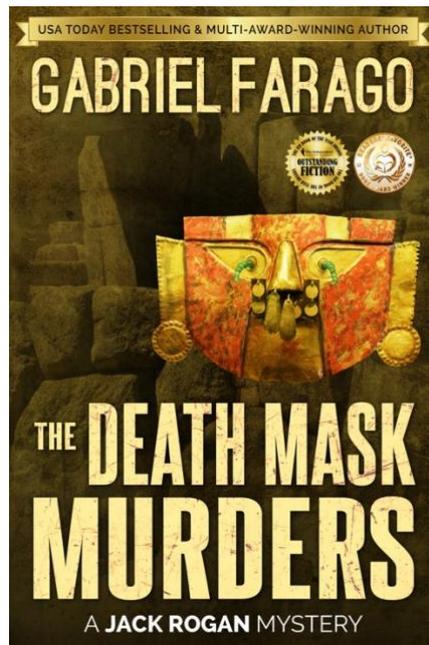
USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**BEHIND THE SCENES**

## The Death Mask Murders



**Seven brutal murders. A cursed Inca burial mask. A lost treasure. One deadly game.**

Drawn into a web of hidden clues pointing to an ancient mystery, celebrated author Jack Rogan decides to investigate.

When convicted killer Maurice Landru reaches out from a Paris prison and asks for help to prove his innocence, Jack cannot resist. Joining forces with Francesca Bartolli, a glamorous criminal profiler; Mademoiselle Darrieux, an eccentric Paris socialite; and Claude Dupree, a retired French police officer, Jack enters a dangerous world of depraved cyber-gambling where the stakes are high, and the players will stop at nothing to satisfy their dark desires.

Following his ‘breadcrumbs of destiny’, Jack soon comes up against an evil genius who terminates his enemies without mercy and is prepared to risk all to win.

On a perilous journey littered with violence and death, Jack uncovers dark secrets of a murky past of ruthless conquistadors, bloodthirsty pirates and shipwrecked priests, all pointing to a fabulous Inca treasure, waiting to be discovered.

Can Jack expose the mastermind behind the horrific murders and retrieve the legendary burial mask before it falls into the wrong hands, or will the forces of darkness overwhelm him and destroy everything he believes in?

## Inspiration

Those of you who have read some of my previous books would have noticed that I briefly explain at the very beginning of each book what has inspired me to write it.

I refer to these events in the Author's Note:

### Author's note

Memories are the little gems that link us to our past. They can appear in surprising ways when we least expect them, and have a profound effect on the present.

I can still remember the fascinating little book very well. It was hidden beneath a set of dusty novels by Alexandre Dumas. Faded pages stained around the edges whispered 'Open me. Come inside and discover my secrets'. I found it by accident one afternoon after school, up in the attic of my grandfather's hunting lodge in Austria. I must have been about twelve or thirteen at the time, and the attic was a wonderland – especially for a young boy. Just to get to it was an adventure. I could only reach it by way of a narrow set of winding stairs, which always creaked.

Once I made it to the top, I was met by a low, wood-panelled door with solid, wrought-iron hinges. The attic, a narrow rectangular room at the very top of the spacious house, where a maze of massive exposed wooden beams held up a steep roof, became my secret world. It was a place where I could dream and let my imagination run free. And there was certainly a lot to stimulate the imagination – books mainly, hundreds of them – and a few fascinating, exotic artefacts from Africa and Asia to enchant a curious boy.

There were no shelves or bookcases; the books were all in old trunks covered in cobwebs. As a career soldier – a high-ranking officer in the Austro-Hungarian army – my grandfather travelled a lot. He was stationed in various parts of the Empire, often for years, and his most treasured possessions travelled with him in those trunks.

Sadly, I never met my grandfather – he died many years before I was born – but in that attic I believe I got to know him through his books. I became a voracious reader. After school, I headed straight to the attic. Not to do homework, but to read. It was my

introduction to the wonderful world of books, a passion that has never left me and which today, more than ever, guides my life. I believe this was my grandfather's legacy; a gift to the grandson he never met: literature.

The most memorable feature of the little book in question was the picture on its faded cover. It was a picture of a striking golden Inca burial mask in the Prado in Madrid. I cannot remember the title of the book, but it mentioned a lost treasure and Inca gold. I can still recall sitting in my grandfather's leather chair, devouring the faded pages of this intriguing book telling the story of Atahualpa, the Inca king captured by Pizarro in Cajamarca, and the legend of a fabulous treasure hidden by Ruminahui, the Inca general who came to rescue his king, only to find that Atahualpa had been murdered.

Many years later I visited the Prado, and there in one of the glass display cases, I saw the golden mask. It was just as I remembered it. Surprised, I kept staring at it as memories of that little book I read up in my grandfather's attic all those years ago came flooding back, and my mind began to wander. What if that fabulous treasure hidden by Ruminahui did in fact exist and was still waiting somewhere to be discovered? What if ...?

These tantalising questions stayed with me and became the inspiration for this book.

*Gabriel Farago, Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia*



## The Research

Authenticity, especially in a book of this scope and complexity, can only be achieved through meticulous research. I carry out all the necessary research myself, and whenever possible, visit all the places mentioned in the book, and try to view the original works of art and other key objects dealt with in the storylines.



Most of the historical material I relied on in connection with the Spanish conquest of Peru was found in the Archivo General de Indias de Sevilla. It houses the most comprehensive collection of documents about Spanish colonial history in the world – ‘Las Indias’ from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The collection, with its ten kilometres of bookshelves, is stupendous, and to carry out any kind of research there is an adventure by itself.



In addition to delving into history and research to develop the storylines of the book, I turn to current affairs and events of interest to underpin the plot with material that is both relevant and topical, and anchored in real life.

As far as this book is concerned, there were four specific topics that fall into this category, namely Zodiac, Anom, Italy's largest Mafia trial, and certain fascinating information I was able to find about Amaro Pargo, a notorious pirate. I refer to this at the end of the book in a parting note:

## A Parting Note from the Author

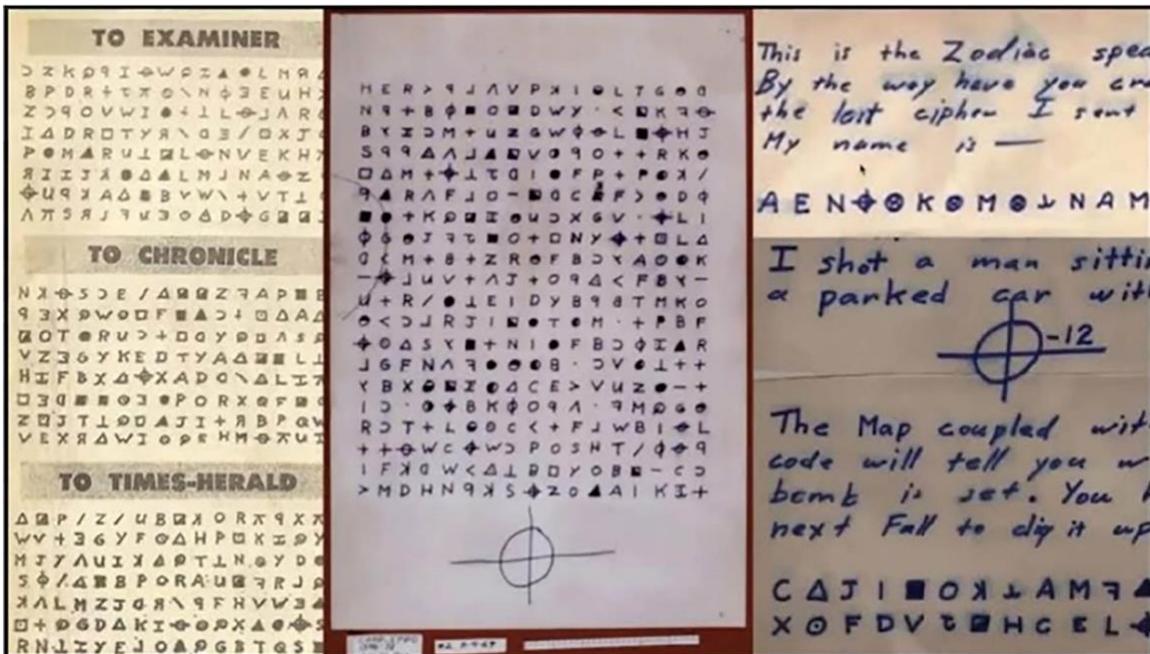
For me as a writer, authenticity and accuracy are paramount. Without that, it isn't possible to create a seamless storyline where the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred, so that the reader is never quite sure where one ends and the other begins. This is quite deliberate, as it creates the illusion of truth and reality in a work that is pure fiction. In my view, a successful work of fiction is a balancing act: reality must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is both entertaining and plausible, and this can only be achieved through meticulous research and attention to detail.

Interpreting the past is never easy and is often fraught with danger. However, all the historical material dealt with in the storylines has been carefully researched and is, to the best of my knowledge, based on primary sources like original letters, court documents and accepted academic texts, articles and related source material.

In addition, I draw quite heavily on current affairs and events that have some relevance to the storylines and characters featured in the book. This gives a further dimension of 'reality' to my work, as these often well-known and documented events further underpin the illusion of reality in a work of fiction. To put it another way, the story must appear plausible and have the 'ring' of truth.

The best way to illustrate this is by way of a few examples:

ZODIAC



An unnamed serial killer known only as ‘the Zodiac’, who had killed at least five people in the 1960s, sent letters to newspapers in San Francisco providing evidence of his crimes, including a code known as the 340 cipher that apparently would reveal his name. For more than fifty years some of the best cryptologists in the world had tried in vain to solve the encrypted message. This code – considered one of the holy grails of cryptography – has recently been cracked by Australian cryptologist Dr Blake, and two others, on a Melbourne supercomputer known as ‘Spartan’. While the decoded cipher revealed a lot about the killer’s state of mind, it did not reveal his name.

This fascinating story has become the inspiration for the cipher sent to Landru in prison that, once cracked, would reveal the address of that house of horrors at the beginning of the storyline and reignite the quest for the lost Llanganates treasure.

ANOM



ANOM is an encrypted messaging app developed by law enforcement agencies, which was covertly distributed by the FBI among the criminal underworld via informants with links to the Mafia. So successful was this operation, which allowed police around the world to monitor conversations among senior crime figures, that it was described by Europol as the ‘biggest law enforcement operation against encrypted communication’ ever. This ingenious sting, which was made public in June 2021, involved eight thousand police officers, resulted in countless arrests in more than sixteen countries, and the confiscation of tonnes of drugs and millions of dollars of proceeds of crime.

ANOM was the inspiration for the app Omerta, used in the book by Clara Samartini and the Squadra Mobile in Florence to expose Lorenza’s killer and lead them to O’Hara. It was also instrumental in convicting Riccardo Giordano and many others at the Calabrian Mafia mega-trial that effectively wiped out the notorious ’Ndrangheta.

## ITALY’S LARGEST MAFIA TRIAL



In January 2021, the largest Mafia trial in decades against members of the feared 'Ndrangheta, involving more than nine hundred witnesses and three hundred and fifty high-profile accused, began in Lamezia Terme in Calabria in a purpose-built courtroom with cages to hold the defendants, and room for four hundred lawyers. This historic trial and its far-reaching ramifications features in the book and introduces the concept of *'Vedo, Sento, Parlo'*, 'I see, I hear, I speak', a movement by Mafia women who had had enough. This extraordinary trial has been the inspiration for such characters as Giuseppina, Riccardo Giordano's wife, who gave evidence at his trial, and prosecutor Donizetti, who was injured in an assassination attempt at the airport in Catanzaro after Jack and Cesaria visited Giuseppina in a Calabrian safe house.

## AMARO PARGO



Amaro Rodriguez-Felipe y Tejera Machado, known as Amaro Pargo, was a famous Spanish corsair who features prominently in the book. As a historical figure, a great deal is known about him, and all the historical material used in the book is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and based on the most reliable historical records. This includes the famous winking skull and crossbones on his tombstone in the Church of Santo Domingo in San Cristóbal de la Laguna, Tenerife.



These records reveal that he was buried next to his parents and a black servant. However, in November 2013, forensic scientists and archaeologists carried out a detailed study on the notorious pirate, including DNA tests and even a reconstruction of his face. This study resulted in an exhumation, during which it was discovered that Pargo was laid to rest next to six additional people, some of them thought to be nephews of Amaro Pargo.

What is interesting to note is that the exhumation was funded by a French video game company and used to promote its famous *Assassin's Creed* video game. All of this factual material served as further inspiration for various twists and layers in the storyline, and in particular O'Hara's involvement in sophisticated video games on the dark net.



Finally, please keep in mind that I am neither a historian nor an academic, but a thriller writer with a legal background, whose aim is to entertain and tease your intellect and imagination with questions, interpretations and scenarios that are both realistic and plausible, but are, of course, pure fiction intended for the thinking reader and culturally curious.

I hope you have found this brief journey ‘behind the scenes’ of *The Death Mask Murders* informative, and it has ignited a spark of curiosity that will entice you to step into the world of my imagination and read the book. And that, my friends, is what every writer strives for.

Gabriel Farago  
Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia  
November 2021

**THE DEATH MASK MURDERS**  
**The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 7**

**Main Characters Profile and Glossary**

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
DEATH MASK MURDERS  
MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

The Main Characters:  
A Profile Study and Glossary

Profile Study

[Jack Rogan](#)

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

[Countess Katerina Kuragin](#)

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

[Madame Petrova](#)

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

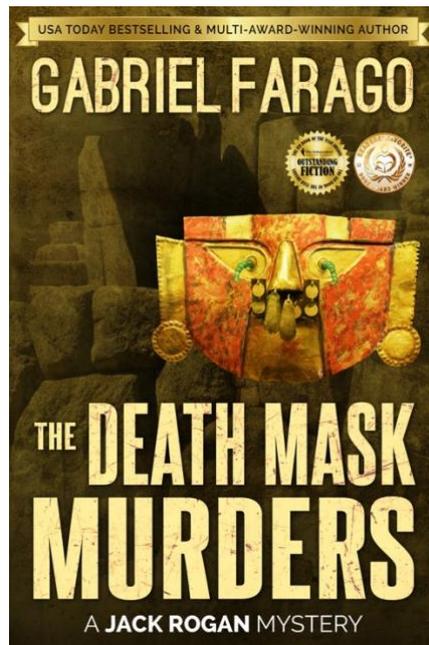
[Tristan Te Papatahi](#)

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

[Mademoiselle Darrieux](#)

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

## Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines



### Timeline

**Main Plot: September 2018 – November 2018**

**Two months later: January 2019**

**Final part of the book: Cajamarca July 2019**

### Characters

#### **Aladdin**

Member of Spiridon 4

#### **Diego de Almagro**

Spanish conquistador and governor of Peru

#### **Atahualpa**

Sapa Inca. Last king of Cusco

**Barrera**

Mayor of Tenerife. Local historian (Fourth Death Mask murder victim)

Professor Francesca **Bartoli**

Italian forensic psychologist and freelance criminal profiler

Elfriede **Berghofer** (buried in Berchtesgaden)

Wife of Johann Berghofer and mother of Heinrich and Franz Berghofer

Franz **Berghofer**

Brother of Heinrich

Heinrich **Berghofer**

Son of Johann and Elfriede Berghofer

Johann **Berghofer** (buried in Berchtesgaden)

Husband of Elfriede Berghofer and father of Franz and Heinrich Berghofer

Gerhard **Blumenthal**

German anthropologist (expert on deciphering khipus) working in Berlin. (Second Death Mask murder victim).

**Bobby**

Anna Popov's son. Countess Kuragin's grandson

Cardinal **Borromeo**

Dean of the College of Cardinals

Cesaria **Borroni**

Acting chief superintendent of the Squadra Mobile in Florence

Professor Marcos **Chavero**

Marine archaeologist working at the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in Mexico City

Captain **Cordoba**

Seventeenth century Spanish Captain of the *Santo Cristo de Tobar*, a Spanish man of war

Celia **Crawford**

Senior correspondent at the *New York Times*

Leonardo **da Baggio**

Lorenza's father

Lorenza **da Baggio**

Venetian chef; *Top Chef Europe* finalist

Mademoiselle Adrienne **Darrieux**

Author and Paris socialite

**Dragan M**

Bulgarian hitman

Lucien **Doumer**

French lawyer representing Landru

Claude **Dupree**

Retired French police officer and watchmaker

Alessandro **Giordano**

Son of Riccardo and Giuseppina Giordano

Giuseppina **Giordano**

Wife of Riccardo Giordano

**Riccardo Giordano**

Senior Mafia boss living in Florence. Father of Mario and Alessandro. Husband of Giuseppina

**Dolores Gonzales**

Isis's grandmother

**Chief Prosecutor Grimaldi**

Mafia 'hunter' working in Florence

**Oberregierungsrat Dr Otto Gruber**

Austrian civil servant in charge of a department for the preservation of monuments

**Anton Hoffmeister** aka Don Antonio

SS officer

**Sir Charles Huntley**

Isis's lawyer

**Izabel**

Teodora's lover

**Countess Katerina Kuragin**

Anna Popov's mother. Owner of the Kuragin Chateau, an exclusive boutique hotel close to Paris. Jack's close friend and confidante

**Maurice Landru**

French history professor and convicted murderer

Detective Chief Superintendent Marcel **Lapointe**  
Senior commissaire of the Paris Brigade Criminelle

Captain Diego de **Medina**  
Seventeenth century Spanish captain of the *San Cristobal*, a Spanish galleon carrying treasure back to Spain as part of the Flota de Indias

Father Ignazio **Morales**  
Seventeenth century Spanish Jesuit priest who lived in Peru

**Nadia**  
Deceased member of Spiridon 4

Father Sebastian **Navarro**  
Seventeenth-century Spanish Jesuit living in Peru

Ronan **O'Hara** aka **Tobias Berghofer**  
Mathematics genius, and billionaire businessman running the Dark Net Bazaar

Brother Acrivos **Papadoulis**  
Greek psychic consulted by the French police. Monk living on Mount Athos

Bohdan **Petrinko**  
Ukrainian hitman

Madame **Petrova**  
Retired Russian ballerina. Close friend of Countess Kuragin

Francisco **Pizarro**  
Spanish adventurer, conquistador,

Anna **Popov**

Countess Kuragin's daughter

**Rahima** aka Nadia Rostova

Jack's mother

'Mad Dog **Regan**'

Caribbean pirate and captain of *The Templar's Revenge*

Frau **Reiter**

Local historian living in Berchtesgaden in Bavaria

Louis **Rodriguez**

Librarian working in Seville.

(First Death Mask Murder victim)

Jack **Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator.

Jack is the central character and protagonist of the series and features in every book

**Ruminahui**

Inca general and commander of Atahualpa's armies

Dr Clara **Samartini**

Member of Squadra Mobile's Forensics team in Florence

**Silvanus**

Member of Spiridon 4

**Spiridon 4**

Group of assassins for hire who work for the Mafia

Dr Erwin **Steinberger**

SS officer. Brother of Wolfgang Steinberger

Wolfgang **Steinberger**

SS officer. Brother of Dr Erwin Steinberger

**Teodora**

Deceased member of Spiridon 4

Tristan **te Papatahi**

Cassandra's son with extraordinary psychic powers. He can hear the whisper of angels, and glimpse eternity

**Villaq Umm**

Inca high priest

Leopold **Wagner**

Local historian in charge of Dokumentation Obersalzberg in Berchtesgaden

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the Glossary helpful in finding, identifying, and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive.

*Gabriel Farago*

*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia, 2023*



### **Are You Brave Enough to Face the Curse of the Inca?**

In *The Death Mask Murders*, Jack Rogan confronts a deadly legacy. A tale of murder, mystery, and ancient curses unfolds.

Break the curse on [Amazon](#) today. You can access the book with one click right now.

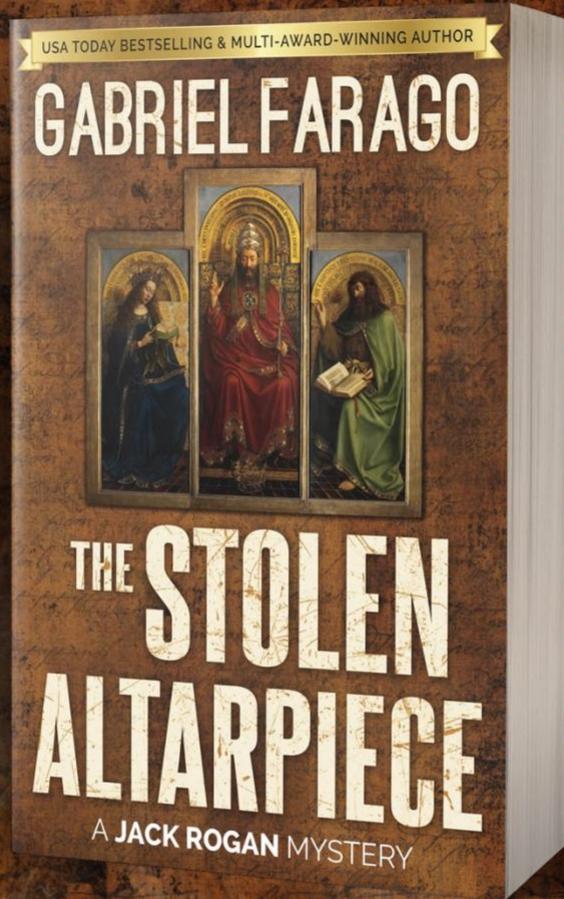
**THE STOLEN ALTARPIECE**  
**Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 8**

**Behind The Scenes**

Gabriel Farago

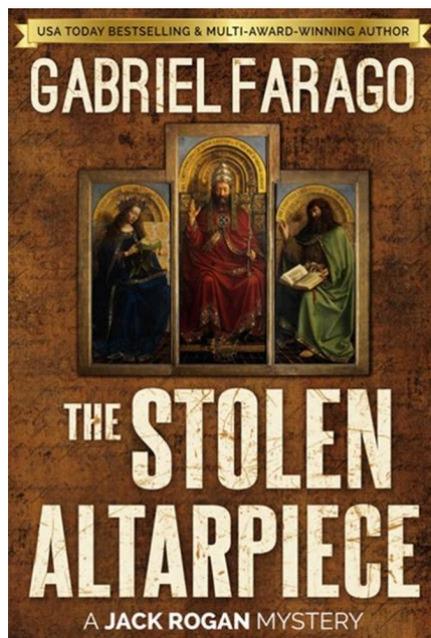
USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

# GABRIEL FARAGO



# BEHIND THE SCENES

## The Stolen Altarpiece



**A long-forgotten amulet. A holy relic. A stolen painting. One deadly geopolitical power-play.**

When celebrated journalist and author Jack Rogan discovers a hidden letter reaching out of the past, he unwittingly embarks on a quest to find a holy relic that has the power to fight evil.

On a perilous journey to the Middle East, Rogan soon crosses swords with an old adversary, who is determined to destroy him and those he holds dear.

Soon, a web of intriguing clues buried in a famous stolen painting point to Russia and the threat of war in Ukraine. Joining forces with Tristan, a gifted psychic; Abbot Serapion, a Russian monk; and Sasha, the daughter of a Russian billionaire, Jack enters a dangerous geopolitical arena ruled by a deranged, corrupt man consumed by unbridled ambition and lust for power, who threatens to enslave a nation and destroy an entire country to satisfy his misguided vision of greatness.

Can Jack find a way to defeat the dark forces of evil and turn the tide of history before it's too late, or will the horrors of war continue, and consume a people who dare to stand against tyranny and dream of freedom?

## Dedication

This book was inspired by, and is dedicated to, the people of Ukraine for their courage, bravery and resolve. Not afraid of sacrifice, hardship, even death, they are determined to fight the forces of evil, defend their freedom and win.

‘True evil never dies, it just finds a new home.’

*The Stolen Altarpiece*

**Gabriel Farago**

## Stepping Behind the Scenes

While I was preparing an outline and character study for the next book in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, something unexpected happened on 24 February 2022: Russia invaded Ukraine and started a war. During the days and weeks that followed, the war escalated rapidly with death and destruction on a scale not seen in Europe since the Second World War.

Like millions of people around the world, I watched the daily news reports with a sense of disbelief and horror difficult to articulate. The atrocities in Bucha, in particular, where hundreds of innocent Ukrainian civilians were brutally tortured and murdered by Russian troops, affected me deeply because they conjured up memories of my childhood in Hungary: the Revolution of 1956, with Russian tanks in the streets of Budapest rolling over the dead bodies of freedom fighters who dared to dream of freedom, and lost.

(My parents and I left Hungary in 1956, just before the revolution was crushed and the Iron Curtain descended once more, closing the borders and making escape impossible.)

As the dreadful war in Ukraine escalated and the desperate pleas for help began to dominate the daily news, I began to ask myself if there was perhaps something I could do as a writer to contribute to the war effort in Ukraine that would make a difference. After due reflection, the answer was a resounding *Yes, there is!* Harness the power of the written word to *create awareness*.

But how? Simple, really, once I gave it some thought. Write a thriller showcasing Ukraine's history to draw attention to the desperate plight of a nation fighting for freedom. By using my influence and reputation as an international thriller writer with a world-wide readership and large social media following, I had a unique opportunity to contribute something worthwhile in a way that politicians, reporters and even generals couldn't. I could use a book to enter the hearts and minds of readers to create awareness and understanding of what's actually happening in Ukraine right now.

With understanding comes empathy, which paves the way for action. And action can save lives and bring about change. With that in mind, I began to alter the original storyline of the book to give it a different focus, and a new purpose and direction.

As I began to delve deeper into Ukrainian history as part of my research for the book, it soon became apparent that people in the West are not familiar with the turbulent history of that country, especially the horrendous 1932–33 Holodomor, the Terror-Famine and related issues concerning Russia. This all has a direct bearing on the bitter fighting, destruction and suffering unfolding in Ukraine that is almost impossible to imagine.

This realisation became the inspiration for *The Stolen Altarpiece*, book 8 in the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, because I saw in this book an opportunity to create something that had the potential to make a real difference. Have I succeeded? Only my readers can answer that.

That said, it is my sincere hope that the book will – at least in a small way – assist Ukraine in its epic struggle for national survival, and contribute to the ultimate victory it deserves.

## Acknowledgements

Writing a book of this scope and complexity is always a challenge, especially for someone like me who insists on doing his own research, and does not believe in delegating that vital task. Because this book was inspired by the extraordinary spirit and resilience of Ukraine and its people, something more than just research was required to give this demanding project the authenticity it deserved.

While it was, of course, possible to research all the necessary historical material, including current affairs, through the internet, one cannot get a real ‘feel’ for what is happening ‘on the ground’ right now in a country at war. Let’s not forget, what is happening in Ukraine is a most brutal war, with suffering and destruction on a scale that is difficult to imagine.

In order to describe certain events like a missile strike on a school, the obliteration of a block of residential apartments, the massacre of civilians in Bucha, or the bombing of a theatre in Mariupol, where hundreds of women and children perished, in a realistic way, a different approach was needed. That approach required access to eyewitness accounts. In short, I had to somehow talk to people who had actually been exposed to those war crimes and experienced the tragedies and atrocities involved, firsthand. Only then would it be possible to capture the horror and pain involved, and convey those emotions to the reader in a realistic and meaningful way.

I thought long and hard about how to address this challenge and, once again, the answer was right there in front of me. All I had to do was turn to my dedicated readers and ask for help. And that was precisely what I did, with results that were simply astonishing.

With so many Ukrainians living in exile, mainly in Poland and other European countries with access to the internet – social media, in particular – the response was almost overwhelming. Once I explained that one of the main aims of writing this novel was to create awareness of Ukrainian history – especially the devastating 1932–33 Terror-Famine, the Holodomor – to draw attention to what is happening in Ukraine today, the information floodgates opened and I was given the key to many a memory castle with hidden treasures I was allowed to use.

Suddenly, I had access to eyewitness accounts and stories, many of them heartbreaking, I could draw upon to create a storyline that mirrored true events, with characters that were both realistic and believable.

Ukrainian refugees living all over Europe came forward and shared their experiences in an open and honest way that allowed me to give certain scenes a raw eyewitness quality and emotional authenticity that armchair research alone could never have achieved.

Because many of those voices remained anonymous and wanted to stay that way, I cannot acknowledge them by name. However, what I can do, is thank them all for their generosity and honesty in sharing their stories and confronting subjects that were often tragic, personal and very painful.

Writing a book dealing with sensitive issues like this requires inspiration, and inspiration that has real meaning must come directly from people who were exposed to this tragic part of history sweeping across Ukraine with devastating effect right now.

*This book was inspired by, and is dedicated to, the people of Ukraine for their courage, bravery and resolve. Not afraid of sacrifice, hardship, even death, they are determined to fight the forces of evil, defend their freedom and win.*

It is my sincere hope that this book will, at least in some small way, help them achieve that. If it can, it would be the biggest reward a writer like me can strive for.

***Slava Ukraini! Glory to Ukraine!***

To become passionate about the atrocities committed in Ukraine during this dreadful war wasn't difficult. However, to find a way to do something about it that was effective and meaningful, was. I hope that with this book I have found the right path to achieve both.

## Inspiration

Those of you who have read some, or all of my previous books would have noticed I briefly explain at the very beginning of each book what inspired me to write it.

I have referred to these events in the Author's Note:

## Author's Note

I still remember the evening my aunt took me to see Goethe's play *Faust* – arguably one of the greatest works in German literature – most vividly. It was a balmy summer evening in Salzburg, and the old city and stunning castle on the other side of the river were lit up like a stage. A perfect setting for a timeless play that not only made a huge impression on a fourteen-year-old boy, but also raised questions that stayed with me for years to come.

The legend of *Doctor Faustus* – a disillusioned fifteenth-century German necromancer who sold his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge, pleasure, and power – is one of those enduring legends that have inspired poets, musicians and playwrights over the ages. I always knew that one day I would incorporate this story into one of my books and introduce Faustian characters into the storyline.

That day came on Thursday 24 February 2022, when Russian forces invaded Ukraine. I was already working on a sequel to *The Death Mask Murders* and was in the final stages of developing the characters and structure of the novel, when the extraordinary events in Ukraine changed all that. Childhood memories of that dramatic play I saw as a teenager in Salzburg came flooding back with a compelling clarity that was difficult to explain and impossible to silence.

Instead of fading away, these memories became stronger and even haunted me in my sleep until it became clear to me this was the time to incorporate the Faustian legend into the *Jack Rogan Mysteries*. Real events had intersected imagination and provided a unique opportunity to weave fact and fiction into a seamless storyline where the reader is never quite sure where one ends, and the other begins, but without losing focus or relevance.

The shocking events in Ukraine, with their unspeakable brutality and atrocities that are difficult to comprehend, provided the perfect setting and subject matter to explore the dark side of human nature that is never too far away and cannot be ignored.

But it didn't stop there. I had closely followed the controversial presidential elections in Belarus in 2020 and was fascinated by the term 'Slipper Revolution', also known as the 'Anti-Cockroach Revolution', coined by Sergei Tikhanovsky, an antigovernment blogger who referred to the incumbent president Lukashenko as the cockroach.

Intrigued by these terms, I did some digging. What I found was astonishing. What Tikhanovsky had been alluding to was a popular Russian children's poem, *The Monster Cockroach* by Korney Chukovsky (1882–1969), a famous poet, literary critic and essayist. In the poem an overgrown, arrogant cockroach begins a reign of terror over mankind and animals through bullying and threats, only to be devoured by a sparrow.

Tikhanovsky compared Lukashenko to the monster cockroach and called for a slipper revolution to crush the corrupt, power-hungry insect with a slipper and bring its reign of terror to an end.

On reflection, the timeless Faustian legend and the popular children's poem – although centuries apart – were an excellent literary fit for the tragic events unfolding in Ukraine, reminding us of the corrupting temptations of power and greed, and the often desperate, bloody struggle to resist these evil forces.

It therefore made perfect sense to incorporate these ideas and potent symbolism in the storyline of the book.

A successful work of fiction is a balancing act: reality must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is both entertaining and plausible. To this, I would like to add one more thing: in creating such a work, the author has a unique opportunity to explore historical material that is often buried deep in forgotten pages of history or the psyche of a nation that has suffered much and is therefore not generally known, yet is hugely important if certain current events – however painful – are to be understood. If this is done skilfully and based on meticulous research, it is possible to create an awareness that can have profound consequences. It can bring about change, and even shape the future.

It is this last point that became the inspiration for *The Stolen Altarpiece*. A book without passion and genuine inspiration is just words on a page. Inspiration can transform those words into something immensely powerful that has the potential to change the course of history.

Because of the striking similarities between the current war in Ukraine and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which had such a dramatic impact on my childhood and in many ways shaped my future, I thought it would be appropriate to conclude with a small biographical short story. All of us are the sum total of our experiences we encounter along our journey through life. I have never forgotten what happened on Christmas Eve in 1956.

### **Coming Home for Christmas; 24 December 1956**

*This will be a sad Christmas*, thought the young woman, watching her son play in the snow outside. *At least he's safe*. She hadn't heard from her husband, nor did she know if he was still alive. The horror stories that had leaked out through the Red Cross spoke of summary executions, chaos, hunger and despair; the wages of defeat of a humbled nation that had dared to demand freedom, and lost.

The little boy was pushing the wooden shovel along the path at the bottom of the garden when something caught his eye: a dark shape at the gate.



Squinting through the snow falling all around him like sparkling tufts of cottonwool, he could see a man wearing an old hat and a long coat watching him, motionless and silent. The boy dropped the shovel and walked slowly towards the gate. With each step came recognition, hesitantly at first, but growing stronger and more certain.

‘Daddy?’ whispered the boy, his eyes wide with disbelief and wonder. The man put down his little brown suitcase and took off his hat.

‘Daddy!’ shrieked the boy as he flew into his father’s outstretched arms. It was an embrace neither of them would forget.

Of course, the little boy in the story was me. It had taken my father three weeks to walk from the smoking ruins of Budapest to my grandparents’ home in Austria. Hiding in abandoned stables and chicken coops along the way, and living off the kindness of farmers prepared to risk all to help a fugitive, he finally crossed the border into Austria at night during a snowstorm. I remember his swollen feet looked terrible and he was frightfully thin and very weak. But none of that mattered; he had come home for Christmas.

A couple of years later, in high school, we were asked to write a short story about an event that changed our lives. This was my story. The teacher entered it in a little competition run by the local paper. The story won a prize. It was my first step towards becoming a writer.

**Gabriel Farago**

*Letters from the Attic*; Bear & King Publishing, 2016

\* \* \*

We must never remain silent and ignore the suffering of others. Only that way can we defeat bigotry and overcome the iron grip of tyranny and evil. That was true then, and is just as true today. Freedom cannot be taken for granted. It is a treasure beyond price.

Those of you familiar with my books would have noticed that these ideas run through the storylines like a little silver thread, showing us the light and making sure we never lose our way.

## A Parting Note from the Author

Because the multi-layered storylines that have been woven into the fabric of this book often explore remote and hidden corners of history, a few observations are warranted here that will add further insight into how I approach the many diverse, and often quite sensitive subjects explored in my work.

The amount of research involved in meshing the various story-strands featured in *The Stolen Altarpiece* seamlessly together has been particularly complex and demanding. For me as a writer, authenticity and accuracy are paramount. Without that, it isn't possible to create believable characters and stories where the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred, so that the reader is never quite sure where one ends, and the other begins.

This is of course quite deliberate and one of the hallmarks of my books my readers have come to expect, and look forward to. Why? Because it creates the illusion of reality in a work that is pure fiction. In my view, a successful work of fiction is a balancing act: reality must rub shoulders with imagination in a way that is both entertaining and plausible, and this can only be achieved through meticulous research and painstaking attention to detail.

In addition to all this, I often draw on events and current affairs that define our times to give the story and the characters contemporary meaning and relevance. In this book, I have turned to the devastating, bloody conflict between Russia and Ukraine to give the book a raw authenticity that I hope will resonate with my readers and create awareness of what is happening right now, and the reasons behind it.

While all the characters in the book are of course fictitious, the historical aspects and issues dealt with are not. For example, the atrocities in Bucha and Mariupol have, to the best of my knowledge, been described accurately, based on the most reliable eyewitness reports I could find.

The same applies to the horrendous Holodomor, the devastating Ukrainian Terror-Famine of 1932–33 that explains the loathing of Russia by Ukraine and its people that is as relevant today, as it was then. However, to my surprise, little is known about these events outside Ukraine. It is my sincere hope that this book will, at least in some small way, change that and create awareness of the historical facts that drive this dreadful conflict. With awareness comes understanding, and once that happens real change is possible. This

dreadful war has to be stopped before it spirals out of control and destroys not only a nation, but draws the rest of the world into its orbit with consequences that are too horrible to contemplate.

*Gabriel Farago M.A., LL.B.*  
*Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia*  
*April 2023*

**THE STOLEN ALTARPIECE**  
**The Jack Rogan Mysteries Series Book 8**

**Main Characters Profile and Glossary**

Gabriel Farago

USA TODAY BESTSELLING & MULTI-AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**GABRIEL FARAGO**



**THE  
STOLEN ALTARPIECE  
MAIN  
CHARACTERS**

# The Main Characters: A Profile Study and Glossary

## Profile Study

### Jack Rogan

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Countess Katerina Kuragin

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Tristan Te Papatahi

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Isis

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

### Mademoiselle Darrieux

Click on this [link](#) for full character description.

## Glossary of Principal Characters and General Timelines

With eight books, three novellas and associated publications comprising almost 4500 paperback pages (and growing), the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series* is a complex body of work with many characters of diverse nationalities and backgrounds. Interrelated, multi-layered storylines span decades and generations, and leave traces and subtle ‘footprints’ in a number of books along the way. This is, of course, intentional, as it creates echoes of reality in a work that is pure fiction.

While all my books in the series have been carefully crafted to ‘stand alone’ and can be read individually without having to be familiar with the series and the books that have been released earlier, readers who have read the series ‘chronologically’ will get a lot more out of the characters and storylines, as they will pick up subtle nuances, details and connections embedded in the books.

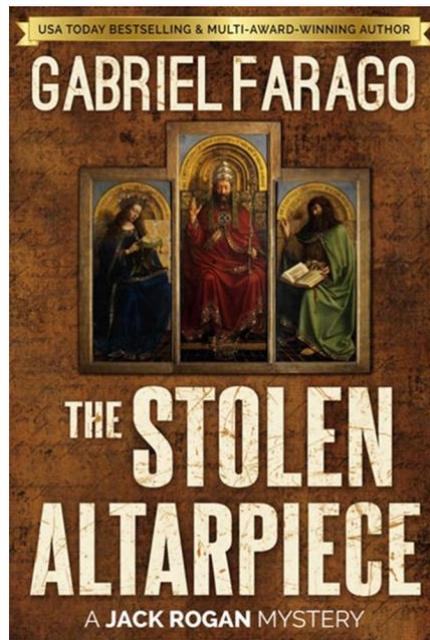
That said, doing this successfully in a large body of work like this series, is by no means easy. As more books are added to the *Jack Rogan Mysteries Series*, it becomes more and more difficult to remember the characters featured in previous books, and therefore follow and navigate the evolving storylines.

Many of my readers have pointed this out and indicated that a ‘glossary’ of characters – preferably presented book by book – would be most helpful in navigating and understanding the series, as such a glossary would significantly add to the enjoyment of reading and appreciating the evolving storylines carefully woven into the books.

After giving this careful consideration, I totally agreed.

For that reason, I have now prepared a book-by-book ‘glossary’ of characters that can act as a guide and aide memoire, especially when a new book is added to the series. This glossary is easy to use, and can serve as a reference point and ‘companion’ that will further enhance the reading experience. At a glance, readers are now able to ‘refresh’ their memory and understanding of where the characters fit into the storylines, allowing them to seamlessly follow the action without confusion or distraction.

# The Stolen Altarpiece



## Timeline

**Main Plot: December 2021–April 2022**

**Four Weeks Later (May 2022)**

**Nine Months Later (February 2023)**

## Characters

**Dr Haji Abdulla**

Muslim scholar living in Doha

**Dr Agabe**

African doctor in charge of the mercy ship *Caritas* stationed in Malta

**Claudio Alberti**

Head of the Alberti family, Venetian merchants

Francesco **Alberti**

Venetian merchant and friend of Osman da Baggio

**Anna** Popov

Countess Kuragin's daughter. Mother of Billy

Professor Francesca **Bartoli**

Italian criminal profiler living in Rome

Countess Marya **Bezukhova**

Close friend of Empress Alexandra. Madame Petrova's mother and wife of Count Vasily Bezukhov

Henry **Blackstone**

English lawyer working for Oleg Ivanov and Sasha Kovalenko

**Blondel**

Medieval troubadour. Friend of Richard the Lionheart

**Bohdan**

Ukrainian soldier and bodyguard who evacuates Jack from Ukraine

Alberto **Bonato**

Housekeeper working for the Alberti family in Venice

**Boris**

Isis's chauffeur and bodyguard. Former wrestling champion

**Cesaria** Borroni

Acting chief superintendent of the Squadra Mobile in Florence

Father **Chernenko**

Ukrainian priest active during the 1932–33 Terror-Famine, the Holodomor

Korney **Chukowsy** (1882-1969)

Popular Russian children's poet best known for *The Monster Cockroach*

Gillaume de **Craon**

Grand master of the Templars. Crusader fiend of Richard the Lionheart

Mademoiselle **Darrieux**

Paris socialite and author

Professor **Doncaster**

English art expert working for Sheikh Mohammed in Oman

Prosecutor Nicola **Donizetti**

Italian prosecutor and 'Mafia hunter' operating in Calabria

Claude **Dupree**

Retired French police officer living at the Kuragin Chateau

Fabio **Falcone**

Calabrian Mafia hitman

Alfonso **Falcone**

Calabrian Mafia hitman. Fabio's brother

**Fatma** Hatun

Murad's youngest consort. Mother of Osman

Brother **Frederick**

Carmelite monk living in Ghent

Emil **Fuchs**

Swiss banker and prominent art collector

**Gazanfer** Aga

Chief of the white eunuchs and the head of the Enderun, the Imperial Seraglio

Alessandro **Giordano**

Mafia drug dealer. Son of Riccardo Giordano

Riccardo **Giordano**

Head of prominent Mafia family in Florence. Father of Alessandro and husband of Giuseppina

**Giuseppina** Giordano

Wife of Riccardo Giordano, head of prominent mafia family in Florence

Chief Prosecutor **Grimaldi**

Prominent Italian Mafia 'hunter' working in Florence

Senora **Gonzales**

Isis's Mexican grandmother

David **Herzl**

Jewish master forger active during the Holocaust in Poland, also known as the Postmaster of Treblinka

Albert **Hoffmeister**

Austrian author of *The Ghent Altarpiece*. *The most frequently stolen painting in history*.

**Isis**

Billionaire rock star living in London. Lead singer of *The Time Machine*, a world-famous rock band

Oleg **Ivanov**

Russian billionaire oligarch living in London

**Jack Rogan**

Australian war correspondent and celebrated author, adventurer and private investigator. Jack is the central character of the series and features in every book

Brigadefuehrer **Jurgen Stoop**

German SS commander serving as Police Leader in occupied Poland. Best known for the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943

Colonel Boris **Karlov**

Senior FSB officer and close advisor of President Palin

Sheikh **Khalid** bin Ahmed

Wealthy Omani Sheikh residing in London. Son of Sheikh Mohammed

Ali **Khan**

Omani events coordinator working for Sheikh Mohammed in Muscat

Sasha **Kovalenko**

Daughter of Russian oligarch billionaire Oleg Ivanov. Russian pro-democracy activist and vocal critic of Putin. Partner of Anatoly Novotny

Benjamin **Krakowski**

Holocaust survivor and Polish composer and violin virtuoso

Sandor **Kun**

Hungarian author living in Budapest. Son of David Herzl

Countess Katerina **Kuragin**

Anna Popov's mother. Owner of the Kuragin Chateau in France. Jack's close friend and confidante

Maurice **Landru**

French history professor and convicted serial killer

Detective Chief Superintendent Marcel **Lapointe**

Senior commissaire of the Paris Brigade Criminelle

**Leonardo** da Baggio

Lorenza's father

Rabbi **Loev** aka as the *Maharal of Prague* (1520–1609)

Talmudic scholar, Jewish mystic and philosopher, creator of the *Golem of Prague*

**Lola** Rodriguez

Isis's PA and personal pilot

**Lorenza** da Baggio

Tristan's deceased Venetian wife. Daughter of Leonardo da Baggio

Alexander **Lukashenko**

President of Belarus

Sister **Magosia** Kaminski

Polish historian and former Carmelite nun living in Warsaw

Jacques de **Molay** (1245–1314)

Last grand master of the Templars

Dr Anton **Moser**

Swiss lawyer representing Emil Fuch's estate

Anatoly **Novotny**

Russian opposition leader, pro-democracy activist, and vocal critic and opponent of President Palin

Ronan **O'Hara** aka Tobias Berghofer

Mathematics genius and billionaire businessman running the Dark Net Bazaar. Wanted by law enforcement agencies all over Europe

Saint **Olga of Kyiv** (890–969)

Ukrainian patron saint of defiance and vengeance

**Osman** da Baggio

Son of Murad III and Fatma. Grandson and heir of Cosimo da Baggio. Famous healer known as *Medicus*

Joseph Ilych **Palin**

President of the Russian Federation

Bishop **Peeters**

Bishop of Ghent

**Petro**

Ukrainian soldier and bodyguard who evacuates Jack from Ukraine

Madame **Petrova**

Retired Russian ballerina. Close friend of Countess Kuragin

**Rahima** Cordoba

Jack Rogan's mother

**Richard the Lionheart** (1157–1199)

King of England

**Safiye** Sultan

Murad III's favourite consort. Mother of Murad's eldest son, Mehmet

Dr Clara **Samartini**

IT expert. Member of the Squadra Mobile in Florence

Abbot **Serapion**

Abbot of the Novo-Tikhvinsky Convent in Yekaterinburg

**Sheikh Mohammed** bin Ahmed

Omani Sheikh and prominent billionaire art collector living in Muscat. Father of Sheikh Kalid

Jan III **Sobieski** (1629–1696)

King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Successful military leader famous for the victory over the Turks at the *Battle of Vienna* in 1683

Rabbi Avigdor **Stein**

Talmudic scholar and curator of the Jewish Museum in Prague

Veronika **Strasser**

Art dealer living in Salzburg. Granddaughter of Erwin Strasser

Erwin **Strasser** aka the Cyclops

Austrian art dealer

Count **Suvorov** (1730–1800)

Prince of the Russian Empire and famous general and military tactician

Major **Svoboda**

Czech police officer investigating the murder of Rabbi Stein in Prague

Sergei **Tikhanovsky**

Belarusian opposition leader, video blogger, dissident and pro-democracy activist

**Timur** aka Tamerlaine (1336–1405)

Turco-Mongol conqueror and founder of the Timurid Empire

**Tippu Tip** (1837–1905)

Afro-Omani slave trader

**Tristan** Te Papatahi

Cassandra's son, with extraordinary psychic powers. He can hear *the whisper of angels and glimpse eternity*

Jan **van Eyck** (1390–1441)

Netherlandish painter best known for his *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432), also known as *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, the most frequently stolen painting in history

Konstantin **Vasiliev**

Romanov family historian and handwriting expert living in St Petersburg

**Ivanna Vasylenko**

Ukrainian historian and poet. Sister of Vira Zubenska, the Ukrainian president's wife

**Irina Zarubina**

Former FSB agent working for Oleg Ivanov

**Vira Zubenska**

Wife of President Zubenskyy, sister of Ivanna Vasylenko

**President Zubenskyy**

President of Ukraine

## A Parting Note from the Author

I hope you've found this little insight into the creative process that shapes my characters interesting and informative, and the glossary helpful in finding, identifying and placing the many characters who bring the stories alive. I view all my characters as 'real' personalities, anchored in real life. After all, what links us to people we've *actually* known in the past? Memory of course. A well-written book can create such memories, and if I've done my job as a writer properly, you too will, hopefully, view my characters in that way. Happy reading!

**Gabriel Farago**

Leura, Blue Mountains, Australia

April 2023



### **Will You help Recover the Art That Could Alter History?**

*The Stolen Altarpiece* leads Jack Rogan into a world of art theft and geopolitical intrigue. Unravel the mystery and become part of the adventure.

A reading experience like no other awaits on [Amazon](#) right now. You can access the book with one click, and enjoy the journey.

## An Exclusive Invitation from Gabriel Farago



Greetings from my attic in the Blue Mountains!

As you delve into the pages of *The Jack Rogan Mysteries Literary Companion*, I extend to you a special invitation to deepen your journey with early access to unique and special stories. I am inviting you to become an integral part of my creative process by joining The Gabriel Farago Book Launch Team.

This offer isn't just about early access to my books; it's about stepping into the heart of the creative process. By reading my work, you traverse into a world where each narrative is a journey we embark on together.

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A simple email confirmation after joining will bring more information to your inbox. And, as always, I'm just a message away, be it through email or on Facebook.

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Happy reading and welcome aboard!

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