



## The Noble Hearts Newsletter

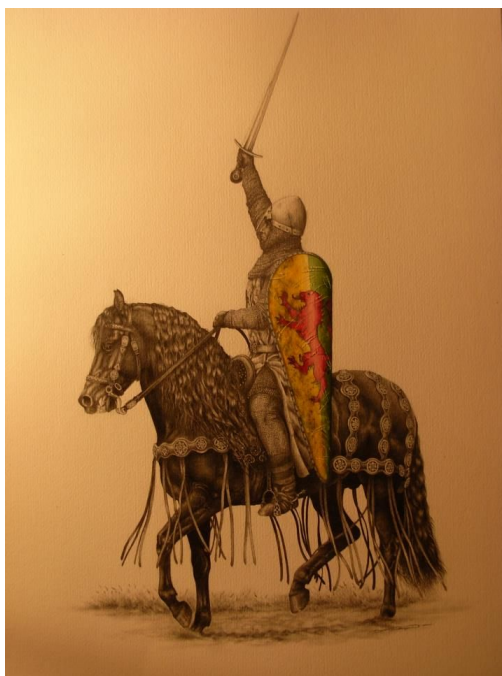


March, 2023

**Happy spring!** I hope the new year has been kind to all of you. We've had a lot going on here with moving from our home of many years where we raised our family to a new location across town. We're finally settled in, and I've begun work on the next volume of my Noble Hearts series, tentatively called *The Scarlet Blade*. I'm not sure if that title will stick, but it beats calling the book NH3. Ever since I read *Captain Lightfoot* by W. R. Burnett way back in middle school,

I've had a serious weakness for reckless, handsome highwaymen with a cause—at least the ones I've met in novels! While I get busy with the *Scarlet Blade*, I'll be sharing some fun facts of life in medieval England. In this issue of the newsletter, I hope you will hang with me through my longer-than-usual article on William Marshal, the real-life knight who inspired the hero of my medieval romantic adventure, *Of Mist and Shadow*. Marshal was seriously amazing, and the more I read about him, the more I wanted to share his exploits with you. If you have questions about William Marshal or medieval life in general, please write to me at [luerickson.author@gmail.com](mailto:luerickson.author@gmail.com), and I'll do my best to answer them.

## William Marshall – Medieval GOAT?



Fourth son of a minor baron, William Marshal (born about 1144) rose from his relatively humble beginnings to become the most celebrated knight and warrior of all time. He inherited no wealth, yet through his skill, honor, and loyalty became indispensable to five Plantagenet kings, serving as counselor, defender, mediator and friend to England's royal house. He lived for seventy years, unheard of for a medieval warrior, accomplishing this by employing his gifts of raw athleticism, daring, a shrewd mind for strategy and, I'm sure, a healthy dose of luck. He was a striking figure, over six feet tall, towering over most men of his time. He was known as a master of weaponry and horsemanship. Although not documented in the research, my guess is that he left a trail of swooning ladies wherever he passed.

William Marshal's amazing life could have ended before it had barely begun. In 1152, King Stephen besieged Newbury Castle (built by William's father, John Marshall, without the king's permission) and took five-year-old William hostage to ensure that John kept his promise not to conspire or take up arms against him. John, never one to be trusted, broke his promise, and King Stephen threatened to hang the boy before his father's eyes. Upon hearing Stephen's intentions, John callously told him to get on with it, adding that he had "the anvils and hammer with which to forge still finer sons!" Consequently, a pretense was made to launch the boy from a trebuchet towards the castle, and when that had no effect, to use him as a human shield. Still John would not yield. Fortunately, moved by William's innocence, Stephen could not bring himself to carry out his threat.

At the age of twelve, William began his training as a knight in the household of William de Tancarville in Normandy. At the beginning of the reign of Henry II, without land or a title, William engaged in brutal tournaments to make his living. Instead of the organized jousting tournaments we now see depicted in movies, 12th Century tournaments (or melees) consisted of two sides knocking each other senseless for spoils, either in the form of captured horses, arms, and

armor, or taking the vanquished hostage and ransoming them. Even though weapons were supposedly blunted and the participants did not aim to kill, the lack of rules, the close nature of combat, and general disorder on the field resulted in many injuries, some of them fatal.

Yet, our man survived! He rose in prominence not only due to his prowess on the battle field, but to his reputation as a fair and generous man. His skill as a warrior and strategist brought him to the attention of Henry II, who enlisted him as protector and mentor to the king's rather spoiled fifteen-year-old son, also named Henry. After a short life of battling with his father and brothers, the younger Henry died at age 28 of dysentery while on one of his many campaigns to seize power from his father. The young man had previously taken the Crusader's vow, but had never quite found the time to make the journey. On his death bed he asked William to take up the cross in his stead and fight in the Holy Land.

Ever the good guy, William honored young Henry's dying wish, and fought for two years in the Third Crusade before returning to the court of Henry II and entering into his service. Recognizing William's gifts for diplomacy, Henry bestowed on him lands in Lancashire in return for William's guidance in his dealings with King Phillip II of France and Henry's son, Richard the Lionheart, a persistent threat to Henry's throne. Henry was so pleased with William's counsel that he promised him the hand of a young heiress, Isabel de Clare. With control of Isabel's lands, William would become one of the most powerful barons in England.

But before the promise could be fulfilled, Henry II died and his son, Richard, succeeded him to the throne. Although William had fought against Richard while in Henry's service, even unhorsing the prince at one point and killing the ill-fated beast--Richard recognized William's loyalty and courage and welcomed him into his inner circle. He confirmed his father's gift of Lady Isabel and her inheritance.

William, now in his early forties, was a baron of great wealth and importance. Following Richard's ten-year reign, the crown passed to his younger brother John. William became King John's most trusted counselor and captain, aiding in his succession to the throne and remaining loyal during the challenges of the English barons that led to the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215. A year later, John died, leaving William to serve as regent for John's son, the young Henry III. William continued to serve the crown until his death in 1219.

What a life! I think it's safe to say that William takes the title of Greatest Knight of All Time, but, hey, let me know if you've got someone else in mind.



Thank you for joining me on this journey to medieval England! Happy reading!

## Lu Erickson Books



### **Of Mist and Shadow, Volume I of the Noble Hearts Series, a medieval romantic adventure**

***Of Mist and Shadow*** is the first volume of my Noble Hearts Series.

Gwendolyn Greyson's life is about to change in unimaginable ways. Her beloved father has recently died, and rebel knights threaten her home. Into this confusion rides the dashing Aidan Blakeslee, who informs her that, by order of the king, her land now belongs to him.

England is in great turmoil, and the king has gifted Aidan, his most able and trusted knight, with the small estate of Lockshire to root out rebel spies. With their fates joined, Aidan and Gwen will face danger at every turn as past rivalries turn deadly, and Gwen will discover that the true threat Aidan poses is not to her property but to her heart.

[Buy Now](#)

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## **The Arrangement, Volume II of the Noble Hearts series, a medieval romantic adventure**

**The Arrangement**, the second volume of my Nobel Hearts Series, continues the story of the exuberant Blakeslee family. Kevin, no longer in his older brother's shadow, is perfectly content with his life as the second son, free from the responsibility of managing an estate and producing an heir.

Fiercely loyal to his King, Kevin has sworn to fight any battle, storm any castle, take any risk, no matter the danger. But to his utter dismay, Kevin

learns that it's not his prowess on the battlefield his King now requires but his skills as an accomplished lover.

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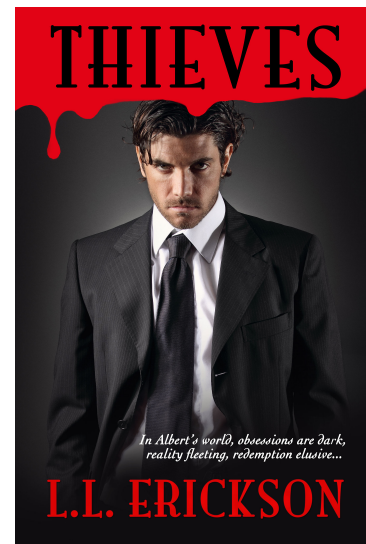
## **Thieves - A compelling psychological thriller of madness and salvation...**

To the Sacramento art community, Albert Metzer is the handsome, successful owner of a cutting-edge gallery. But Albert has secrets he dare not tell.

Beneath the floorboards of his gallery lies a hidden room. Albert clandestinely converts the space into his private gallery and enlists Jerry, a homeless veteran, to help fulfill a deathbed promise made to his father. Together, they steal thirteen masterpieces, including one painting that depicts a captivating young man to whom Albert finds himself inexplicably drawn.

As Albert's perfect plan crumbles, so does his grasp on reality. The young man startlingly comes to life, stepping from the confines of the painting to invade Albert's carefully managed life.

Can Albert's fragile mental state withstand the trauma of a shattered love affair, his growing doubts about Jerry's loyalty, the dogged pursuit of a criminal investigator, and most importantly, the malevolent power of the mesmerizing young man from the painting?



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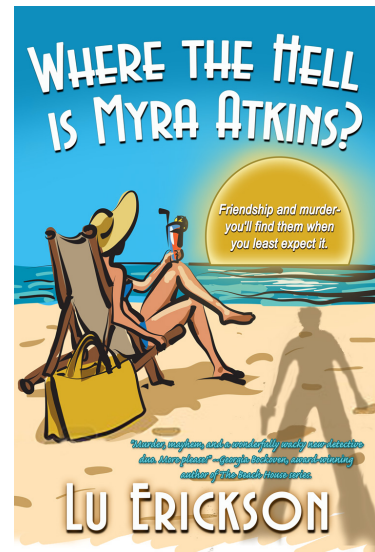
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## A missing boss, a murdered client, and two improbable friends to the rescue!

When Myra Atkins, a life-hardened, aging vamp of a detective, goes missing, her secretary, proper English import Esther Humperstone is panic-stricken. She enlists new-hire Henry, an earnest yet slightly off-center twenty-two-year-old, to help find her beloved boss.

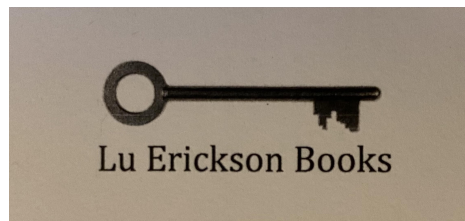
What Henry and Esther don't know is that while they're taking a crash course in private detecting, Myra, caught up in a mid-life melt-down, has actually escaped to Maui with smooth-talker Ray Garnetti for a little sun and romance—and a *lot* of vodka martinis. The stakes are raised when Gordon Winston, a prominent Sacramento businessman, and the last person Myra saw before she disappeared, turns up dead.

In the process of seeking answers to their boss's disappearance, Esther and Henry will unwittingly solve the mystery of who murdered Gordon Winston, take giant steps outside of their respective comfort zones, and discover that life's a richer journey when you're in good company.



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