

Table of Contents

[Dedication](#)

[A Note on the Second Edition](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

The Kiss of Death by Sarah Natale

*For Jerry Thiel,
whose commitment to and enthusiasm for teaching
made this story possible.*

A Note on the Second Edition

When my publisher announced the company would be switching printers and updating files to fit the new format, I knew it was the perfect time to give my first book an update. As I often say during public speaking engagements, I've come a long way from the shy 17-year-old sitting in class, quietly penning a love story during the tragedy of the medieval plague outbreak. I have learned a great deal since that time about writing, publishing, and life. Now a college graduate, there are some things I would have done differently in the publication of this book. One of them is the addition of a Dedication page and an Acknowledgements page, which this edition now includes. I am grateful to the many people who helped make this book a reality and sincerely wish to give them the enduring recognition they deserve. I learn something new every day, and this experience has definitely been one for the books. For those of you who were wondering—yes, I have plans for a sequel. Thank you for reading, and enjoy Elizabeth's and Matthias's journey!

Sarah Natale
January 2019

Acknowledgements

There are many people who helped make this book a reality. First and foremost, I would like to thank Jerry Thiel, my Creative Writing teacher during my senior year at Crystal Lake Central High School (CLC). I was 17 years old when you assigned the project that became this story, which you called a “docu-drama.” You required the story to be historical fiction, a genre I wouldn’t have chosen on my own but soon realized I enjoyed given the research element. I’m thankful for your challenging class because the rigor of the assignment required me to use a detailed outline (which helped so much!) and pushed me to blend fact with fiction. You accepted my story submission even though it greatly exceeded the required length, and your encouraging feedback showed me it had potential for publication. I’m also grateful for your sharp editing skills that prepared this story for the next stage.

Thank you to the librarians at CLC—Lori Harold, Diana Nelson, and Kathy Podlesak—for always taking an interest in students and for your vast knowledge of life-changing books. I spent many blissful hours in the CLC library as a student. I’m grateful to all of you for recommending sources on the bubonic plague and medieval life to incorporate into this story.

I’m grateful to Cassie Nelson for peer editing one of my early drafts. Thank you for taking it home with you during Thanksgiving Break so you would have extra time to dive into its bulk! I appreciate your helpful feedback. Your honest reaction was the first time I realized my words could have emotional impact.

The Kiss of Death by Sarah Natale

Thank you also to Zac Stebelton for those first rounds of peer edits. I still remember how I felt when you shared with me that this story made you cry. Your reaction gave me further confidence.

I'm also thankful to the lovely ladies at the Woodstock Fine Arts Association (WFAA), especially Kristine Hall, for believing in my story while it was still a young manuscript. You helped launch both my writing and college careers when you deemed my story worthy of a literary award scholarship. It was a dream come true to give my first reading on the historic Woodstock Opera House stage at the Woodstock Square during the scholarship award ceremony. I'm thankful to audience members who approached me at the reception, asking what happens next. I jokingly told them they would have to wait until it became a published book, but little did I know that I would soon be on the path to publication a few months later. I had tried approaching publishers with manuscripts before, but this feedback gave me the motivation I needed to try again with this story.

It was truly a blessing to connect with California-based small press Kellan Publishing. Thank you for believing in the work of an enthusiastic teenager and offering me my first contract on Christmas Eve. I couldn't have asked for a finer Christmas gift.

The Kiss of Death by Sarah Natale

Many thanks to talented artist Peg Pappa, my grade school art teacher at St. Thomas the Apostle School. I'm so glad you believed in the message of this story enough to bring it to life with detailed cover illustrations. I enjoyed every minute of those squeezed-in meetings at Panera while I was on break from college, pouring over your careful sketches. You worked so diligently to make sure your art captured my story. It was a beautiful meeting of creative minds. I'm fortunate my publisher provided the opportunity to oversee my cover design so I could commission such a fine artist.

To my parents, thank you for giving me the gift of reading at a young age and encouraging me to follow my dreams. You made sure my childhood was surrounded with books and believed in me when I decided to be a writer when I grew up. Your continued love and support encourages me every day. Thanks to you, I'm a lifelong reader and writer.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the libraries, bookstores, book clubs, and countless schools who have invited me to speak about my journey at their events. Thank you for believing that my story has educational and inspirational value and that this book has merits in the classroom as a curriculum resource. Every time I stand up in front of an audience to talk about writing and publishing, I'm humbly reminded of that first time with the WFAA and how far I've come. It is both exciting and terrifying, and I enjoy every moment.

Finally, thank you to everyone who picks up this book. Whether it makes you laugh or cry, I am grateful for the chance to share Elizabeth's story with you.