**Q & A with Christian Author M. A. Malcolm**

* **Where did you get the idea for your first book?**

*His Last Hope* was born out of my experiences with pregnancy loss. Although the book is not itself *about* pregnancy loss, the message I really wanted to share — my whole reason for writing a novel in the first place — is voiced by one of its minor characters as she speaks about her own experience.

* **What traits and other tidbits do you share with the main character of your first book?**

The main character – Hope – is a figment of my imagination. She and I both love reading, and my favourite author, Gabriel García Márquez, becomes hers, as well, but I think that’s where the similarities end. I actually have more in common with her friend Jasmine, who shares my stage fright and a couple of life experiences. Incidentally, I named Jasmine after my beloved dog, Jazz!

* **You also wrote a children’s book; how did that happen?**

I published *So very…Max!*in 2016 as a direct response to my son’s demands that I write him a book. *So very…Max!* tells the story of a foal who is different from all the others on the horse farm. Eventually, Max begins to see that the things that make him different also make him special. The book was written to help children understand that we are all special in our own way.

* **Why did you decide to write *His Last Resort?****His Last Resort*is the prequel to my debut novel, the award-winning *His Last Hope.*I never intended to write another book after *His Last Hope*, but the readers demanded it and I ended up with a prequel. I would have to say *His Last Resort* was definitely a “Spirit” thing. I was reading my Bible one day and came across the scripture from 1 Peter 3, in which Peter speaks about genuine beauty coming from within. I wondered how this scripture would be interpreted by someone who makes their living catering to external looks. I’m not sure exactly when this plot began to develop in my mind. I’m not even sure how long it took to write, since I’ve been working on several manuscripts at the same time. All of this is, for me, further evidence that the Holy Spirit has been the “Holy Ghostwriter” of this story.
* **What made you decide to self-publish?**

I’m not the most patient of persons, and after working on *His Last Hope* for over five years, once I thought the manuscript was acceptable, I wanted it out of my hands as soon as possible. I didn’t want to engage in such time-consuming pursuits as finding an agent or convincing a local or international publisher to believe in the project. As a certified copy editor, I work with mostly self-published authors, and with them as my inspiration, I never considered traditional publishing for one moment. It was more of the same when it came to *So very… Max!* – a children’s book I published in 2016 – and *His Last Resort*.

* **Are there any specific authors whose writing styles or subject matter inspired your book?**

Not that I can think of. My favourite author is Gabriel García Márquez, but his writing style is very different from mine; he is known for his use of magical realism. I like to think that my writing is mostly inspired by that of my friend and mentor, Dr. Lal Narinesingh, who taught me Spanish Literature as an undergraduate. He encouraged me to write my essays in a way that reflected my personality, including my sense of humor, even though my style wasn’t necessarily ‘academic.’ My writing really flourished in his classes.

* **Do you have another project in the works? If so, what is it?**

I’m working on two manuscripts in the *His Last Hope Series*. I hope to have them both ready in 2018.

* **When you self publish, do you do it all yourself?**

I could not have produced any of my three books without the input of my writing consultant, Terri Whitmire of The Writer’s Tablet (writerstablet.org) and FunCreativeWriting.com. Although I am a certified copy editor, I engaged the services of Amy Vanhorn to catch those errors I missed in my novels. I also worked very closely with graphic designer Helen Evans for the covers of both novels, and I’m very proud of the results. Nina Palumbo illustrated my children’s book, *So very… Max!* and I created the cover myself using one of her illustrations.

I have enjoyed self-publishing so much that I now offer consultancy services in this area. I work closely with authors, holding their hand to guide them through the process.

* **You refer to yourself as a Christian Author; why have you limited yourself in this way?**

Writing was never on my agenda. Writing a novel was on my “bucket list” in the same abstract way that preaching a sermon was… something I added to the list because it seemed like something to add, rather than something to actually **do**.

My training is in education, and I worked in that field for 15 years. Even so, once I began to work as a freelance copy editor in my spare time, I couldn’t imagine a better way to earn a living. Writing was something that came because I had something to say and I had too much stage fright to actually talk about it in a public way. I therefore decided to put pen to paper – finger to keyboard, really – and share what I thought people needed to know. I could never have imagined that people would fall in love with my writing and demand more; I’m still amazed by that! I therefore believe that writing is a gift the Lord has given me to use for His glory, and that’s what makes me a *Christian* author. I write to encourage His people.

* **What do you want readers to learn from your life?**I want readers to understand that when we yield to the Lord and ask Him to use us for His glory, He can set us on a path we never anticipated for ourselves. Professionally speaking, I was satisfied with my job as an assistant college professor who worked as a copy editor “on the side”; writing fiction was never a big dream of mine, so when I hear myself referred to as an award-winning, bestselling Christian author, it really blows my mind.