

Lady of Bohemia

Book Club Kit



A Novel by
Sara R. Turnquist

About Sara R. Turquist

Sara is a coffee lovin', word slinging, clean Historical Romance author whose super power is converting caffeine into novels. She loves those odd little tidbits of history that are stranger than fiction. That's what inspires her. Well, that and a good love story.



But of all the love stories she knows, hers is her favorite. She lives happily with her own Prince Charming and their gaggle of minions. Three to be exact. They sure know how to distract a writer! But, alas, the stories must be written, even if it must happen in the wee hours of the morning.

Sara is an avid reader and also enjoys reading clean Historical Romances when she's not traveling. Her books range from the Czech lands to the American Wild West and from ancient Egypt to the early 1900s. Some of her titles include *The Lady Bornekova*, *Hope in Cripple Creek*, *The General's Wife*, *Trail of Fears*, and the Convenient Risk Series.

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Q&A With Sara Turnquist

Who are the main romantic leads, and how do their backgrounds (faith, social status, etc.) complicate their relationship?

Pavel and Karin are the main couple in this story. Karin comes from a somewhat sheltered background of faith, but she has been exposed to the teachings of Jan Hus (think Martin Luther before that time). Hus had challenges with some of the (old) practices of the Catholic Church. He was, in the end, martyred for his beliefs. But Karin is new to his teachings. Pavel, having lived in a home that was more open to Hus's ideas, has a firm foundation in these teachings. They are in a time and place, however, where tensions were mounting and trouble brewed for Hus's followers as the prevailing power was the Pope and the Catholic Church.

What made you fall in love with the medieval era for your story?

When I was in the Czech Republic, I visited many historic sites (including the chateau that inspired the setting). The story just kind of wrote itself in broad strokes while I toured the landscapes and structures around Hradek Kralove and Prague.

How do you make romance from the 1300s feel real for today's readers?

There are many things common to the human experience...across the world and across time. Love and having to overcome obstacles and struggles to be together is one of them. Also, for many, so is experiencing persecution (on some level) for our beliefs.

Which character was your absolute favorite to write?

I was inspired by people I met in the Czech Republic and so it was like visiting with them again to write these characters. It's difficult to pick a favorite, but know that they are all dear to me for different reasons.

If you could visit the medieval period for one week, what would you want to see first?

I would love to visit a functioning castle during that time. I would love to visit a cathedral and witness worship in one of these ornate buildings. It would get old, though...not having modern conveniences and luxuries like toilet paper.

Which modern convenience would you miss the most in the medieval world?

Probably the washroom...running water, bath, toilet, you name it...those are pretty regular needs and, while castle folk had it easier, it wasn't as...luxurious as it is today with our modern technology. I would also miss air conditioning...especially in those weighty gowns.

Q&A With Sara Turnquist

How do you incorporate historical details—clothing, food, language—without overwhelming the story?

Funny you should ask...I was very detail-heavy in the first draft of this story when I was early in my writing career (and understanding of writing craft). My publisher recommended I cut out some of the details that didn't move the story forward. Historical Fiction generally has a lot of description. But Historical Romance focuses more on the story. So, for me, I had to learn to tell the details to set the scene or help the reader "see" the character without overwhelming them and bogging down the scene.

How do you approach writing romantic scenes that feel authentic to the era but still appeal to modern readers?

I kind of visualize the scene in my head like a movie. When I am doing research, I am placing myself in that time/place. So that I can "see" it more easily. Then the characters move and interact and talk in my imagination in that place and time. I also have to recognize that, while I have to be sensitive to modern sentiments, it is important not to place on historical periods and people things that would be foreign to them. Such as feminism. So, while I write strong female characters, and I don't want to offend any of the amazing women reading my books...but the idea of, like, women in leadership roles was not really heard of or considered (except in very isolated cases).

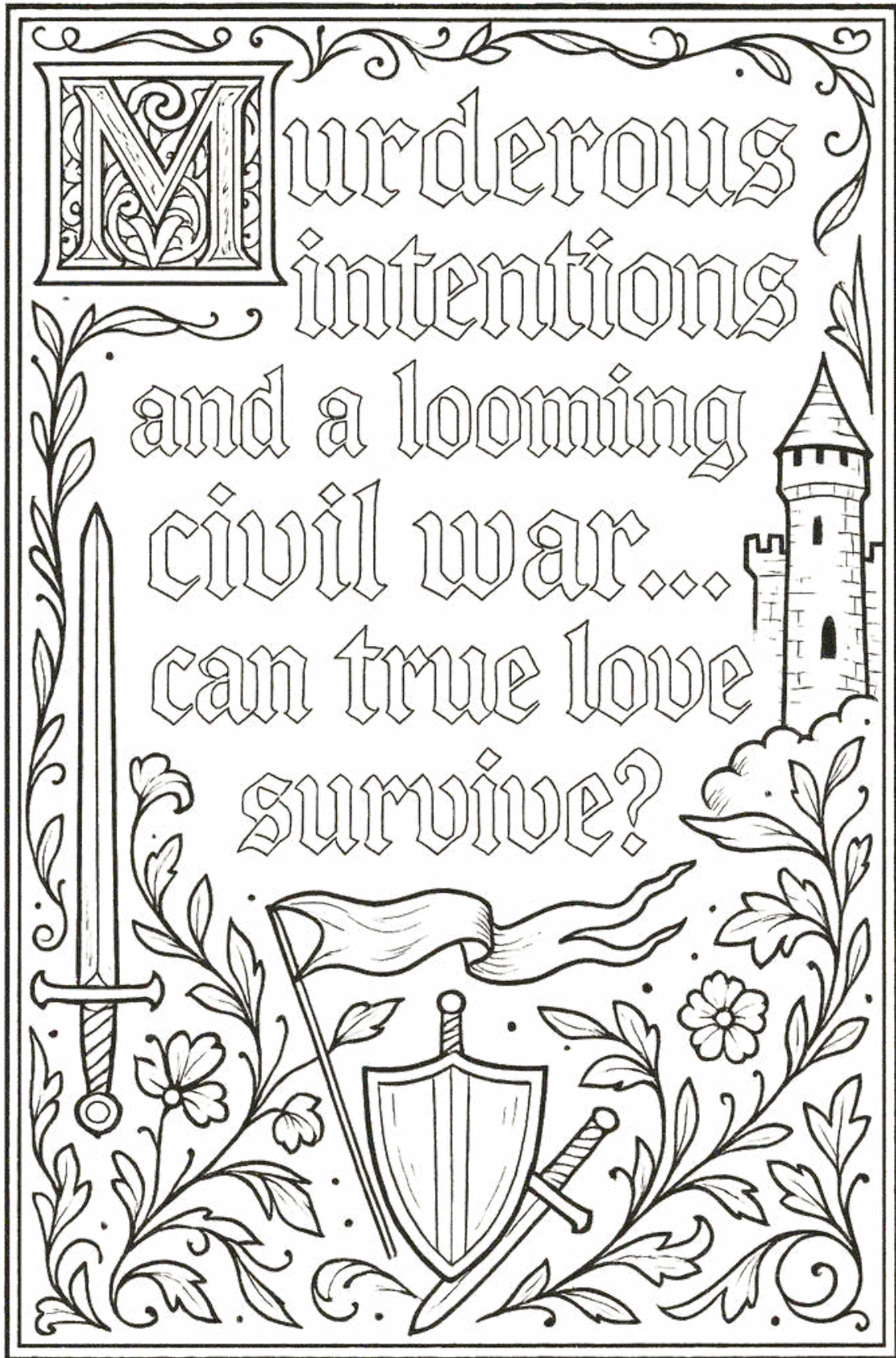
What advice would you give aspiring authors who want to write in this genre?

Do your research. Let it be the foundation of your writing. After you have a solid place to work from (research and understanding wise), let your creative side take over. Keep in mind the conventions of the period and of the genre. But serve the story first.

If your main characters could send you one thank-you gift for writing their story, what would it be?

I think they would send me some of the wedding cookies. And I would definitely say thanks. Czech sweets are delicious and actually not as sweet as the American palate tends to prefer.

Coloring Page



Discussion Questions

Read these questions in your book club and talk about your answers.

- Did the historical customs and societal rules feel authentic? Were any surprising to you?
- How do the personalities of the hero and heroine complement—or challenge—each other?
- Was their first meeting memorable? Why or why not?
- How do secondary characters (family, friends, or rivals) influence the romance?
- Did you feel the romance grew naturally over time, or was it more of a love-at-first-sight story?
- How do the characters balance love with loyalty, honor, or duty?
- What were the main obstacles to the romance—social class, politics, war, family expectations—and how were they resolved?
- Were the stakes (personal, political, or both) high enough to keep you invested?
- How did the author weave in moral or faith-based values without feeling forced?
- If you were living in this time period, would you make the same romantic choices as the heroine/hero?

Dear Reader

This book is an important one for me. Not only does it take place in the Czech lands, which hold my heart, but also it is the first book of mine that was published. And the characters were visits to friends I knew there. But this was my first foray into completing a book, honing a book, and becoming published. There were some things I would do differently, but it is an honest picture of where my skill as a writer was at the time. And, while I hope I improve my craft with each manuscript, I will ever love this book for opening a new world to me.

I also love Karin and Pavel's story of overcoming. Karin's depression is a piece of me in her character, as I have struggled with a mood disorder much of my adult life. I loved putting a piece of that reality into the character. The characters authors write are reflections of ourselves, our loved ones, people we have observed, and a reflection of real life.

My hope is that seeing a character walk through something helps someone feel seen. And may encourage them to push through and overcome.

So, thank you for your time with Karin and Pavel's story. I pray you will find the rest of the series to be inspiring as well.

Happy Reading!

Warmly,

Sara



Book Club Menu



Pavel's Potato Pancakes

- 6 raw potatoes medium, yellow, e.g. Yukon gold
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup hot milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 egg
- 5 cloves pressed garlic
- 1 Tablespoon dried marjoram
- 1 teaspoon salt
- pork lard for frying; or Canola/sunflower oil

Directions

- Peel 6 raw potatoes and shred them finely with a box grater.
- Transfer the shredded potatoes to a colander and squeeze out excess water they have released.
- Put the squeezed potatoes in a bowl and pour $\frac{2}{3}$ cup hot milk over them. Add 1 egg, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour, 5 cloves pressed garlic, 1 Tablespoon dried marjoram, and 1 teaspoon salt. Stir until combined. The potato batter should have a semi-fluid consistency.
- Heat the fat in a non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat (about 2 tablespoons per pancake). Quickly stir the potato batter before frying, scoop up a ladleful, and carefully pour it into the center of the pan. Using the flat side of the spoon, spread the batter into a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (5-6 mm) thick pancake about 6-8 inches (15-20 cm) in diameter.
- Fry each potato pancake for about 2-3 minutes on both sides. Once the edges start to turn golden, flip the pancake with a flat spatula.
- Arrange the finished Bramboráky pancakes on a plate. If you want to save calories and make the pancakes healthier, line them with paper towels to soak up excess fat.

Notes

- **SERVING:** Serve the Bramboraky pancakes immediately while still warm, when they are beautifully crispy around the edges. The colder the potato pancake, the chewier it will be. Serve on its own as a snack or dinner.
- The basic recipe makes about 5 Bramboráky pancakes in an 8-inch size.
- I highly recommend you fry one small sample of Bramborák first, taste it, and, if necessary, season the batter to your liking

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/czech-bramborak-potato-pancake/#recipe>



Karin's Fried Rosettes

- Batter for rosettes
- 2 cups milk lukewarm
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 Tablespoon Canola oil (or sunflower oil)
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Frying and finishing

- 2 cups Canola oil (or sunflower oil)
- 1 cup powdered sugar for coating

Directions

- In a bowl, whisk together 2 cups milk, 2 cups all-purpose flour, 2 eggs, 2 teaspoons granulated sugar, 1 Tablespoon Canola oil, and ¼ teaspoon salt until smooth. Let it rest for about 30 minutes to allow the gluten to develop.
- Pour 2 cups Canola oil into a saucepan and heat it to 380 °F. Place the metal mold in the hot oil for about 5-10 seconds to heat it up.
- Remove the mold from the oil, then dip it about three-quarters of the way into the batter (do not submerge it completely, or the rosette will not release after frying). Immediately return the mold to the hot oil, in this time, fully submerging it into the oil.
- The rosette will cook in 30-45 seconds. Once golden, lift it over a plate lined with paper towels and carefully remove it from the mold using a fork.
- Coat each rosette on both sides with powdered sugar. For a quicker method, arrange the rosettes on a plate and dust them generously. Then flip them and coat the other side as well.

Notes

- The basic recipe makes 30-40 rosettes.
- Rosettes are crispiest when fresh but tend to soften over time. To store, keep them in an airtight container at room temperature for up to five days. They are not ideal for freezing.
- You can also prepare the batter in advance—just cover and refrigerate it for 1-2 days, stirring well before using.
- Do not dip the mold too deep! The batter should only coat the edges of the mold—if it covers the top, the rosette will be difficult to remove after frying.
- For extra crispy rosettes, make sure the batter is the right consistency and the oil is hot enough. If they turn out too soft, try adding a bit more milk or/and increasing the oil temperature slightly.
- Give the batter a quick stir before each dipping. The flour tends to settle at the bottom, so mixing it lightly helps keep the consistency even

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/crispy-fried-rosettes/#recipe>



Lenka's Cold Strawberry Soup

- 1 cup strawberries fresh, well-ripened, with hulls removed
- 1 cup milk
- 1 Tablespoon sugar

Directions

- Drain and rinse **1 cup strawberries** to remove any small bits of dirt or stones.
- Whisk **1 Tablespoon sugar** in **1 cup milk**.
- Put the strawberries on a plate and mash them gently until they release their juices. A great way to do this is to use a simple fork. Ripe strawberries are easy to mash and contain a lot of juice, which gives the soup a true strawberry flavor.
- Pour sweetened milk over, and serve immediately.

- **Notes**

- The basic recipe makes 1 portion.
- Adjust the sugar amount according to the sweetness of the strawberries and your taste preferences. Ripe fruit requires less sugar.
- Add a few chopped fresh mint leaves to the soup. Strawberries and mint make a perfect combination!

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/strawberry-soup/#recipe>



Viscount's Favorite Biscuits and Cheese

Shortcrust pastry

- 4 ounces semi-hard cheese shredded
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 stick unsalted butter cold out of the fridge
- 3 Tablespoons whole milk cold
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Topping

- 1 small egg for egg wash
- 1 Tablespoon poppy seeds
- 1 Tablespoon caraway seeds
- 1 teaspoon coarse salt

Directions

- Finely shred 4 ounces semi-hard cheese using the small holes on a box grater. In a large bowl, mix the dry ingredients: 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour with 1 teaspoon baking powder, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Add the shredded cheese and 1 stick unsalted butter, cut into small pieces. Pour in 3 Tablespoons whole milk and mix everything into a soft dough using your hands or a pastry blender.
- Divide the dough in half and chill both halves in the fridge for two hours or in the freezer for 30 minutes. Roll out one half into a rectangle, approximately ⅛ inch (0.3-0.4 mm) thick. Cut the dough into desired shapes using a knife or cookie cutter. Keep the remaining half of the dough in the fridge until ready to use.
- Transfer the cut-out shapes to a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, whisk 1 small egg and brush the tops of the biscuits with it. Sprinkle with poppy seeds, caraway seeds, and a few grains of coarse salt.
- Preheat the oven to 340 °F (upper and lower heat). Place the cookie sheet on a wire rack in the middle of the preheated oven and bake for 16 minutes, or until the biscuits are golden brown.
- Notes
- The basic recipe makes about 50-60 biscuits, depending on their size.
- Be mindful of the amount of salt you add to the dough. Adjust the salt based on the type and saltiness of the cheese you use.
- If you didn't let the dough set in the fridge, the dough would tear and stick to the rolling pin as you rolled it out. Let the dough harden just enough to work with. The properly chilled dough does not need floured surface when rolled out.
- Roll out the dough between two sheets of baking paper. It will be easier to handle!
- EXPERT'S TIP: To ensure the parchment paper sticks well to the baking sheet, lightly grease the sheet with a few strokes of butter, lard, or another solid fat. This will help the paper adhere to the bottom, preventing it from curling or sliding.
- STORAGE: Store the baked biscuits in an airtight container. Keep them cool and dry. They will last for 2-3 weeks if stored well.

<https://www.cooklikeczechs.com/shredded-cheese-biscuits/#recipe>

Thank you so much for reading
The Lady Bornekova

Would you like for Sara to visit
your book club? She can visit
in person or virtually. If you
are interested please
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