**An Interview with Chris Aslan about Mosaic**

*Q: Mosaic is set in a mountainous village. How easy was it to create the sense of place?*

A: I lived in the mountains of Badakhshan in Tajikistan and then in the Fergana Mountain Range in Kyrgyzstan. Both experiences helped me understand some of the insularity and suspicion of mountain communities, but also how precarious they can be – at the mercies of avalanches, or mudslides – and how tough the people are who live there. So, I drew on those life experiences. However, Tabi’s village isn’t in Central Asia, so I remembered back to my childhood, growing up in Beirut, but escaping the big city at weekends on family drives up to the mountains, and tried to remember what the flora and fauna of the mountains of Lebanon were like as Tabi lives on the southern tip of this range.

*Q: How easy was it to find Tabi’s voice?*

A: I tried to capture the way in which Tabi grows up in within the period of the novel, as it’s a coming-of-age story. I really enjoyed writing about the shifting power dynamics that take place amongst a group of children who are stuck together – in this case as the only children of their age in the village – as puberty kicks in and often creates new winners and losers. I think that a lot of young teens have toxic friendships to whom they are doomed to play second fiddle. I loved writing Tabi’s flaws. She can be cruel and unforgiving, including after she’s encountered Jesus. I wanted to ensure that she didn’t become angelic at this point, as that’s certainly not been my own experience! I also loved writing the breadth of other characters, as there is a strong ensemble cast, with a nice mix of different characters. I particularly loved writing the Hand, and the changing family dynamics around Tabi.

*Q: With Alabaster, the twist for many readers was that they didn’t realise that the story was set in New Testament times. It’s not a trick you can play twice.*

A: Well, each of the books in the *Alabaster* series (and there are more planned) are written as stand-alone novels within the same anthology. So, if someone starts with *Mosaic*, they may well have the same experience. What I enjoyed with this novel was interlinking several unconnected New Testament stories, and for many readers familiar with these stories, the twist, if you can call it that, was the sudden recognition of, ‘Oh, so we’re here’, as the narrative unfolded.

*Q: You mentioned that you have more stories planned, can you tell us more?*

A: I’ve written a fourth instalment, called *Frankincense,* which is about a spoilt boy who is told to accompany his grandfather on a long journey to right a previous wrong. The narrative then splits into two timelines and explores aspects of the Nativity story and the trauma and repercussions of what happened in Bethlehem. My previous publishers went bust, so I’m currently looking for alternatives. I’d also like to write a fifth book, where the entire novel takes place over just one week, and would be told from multiple points of view. It would be called *Passion,* so I’ll leave you to figure out which week we’re talking about!