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Kurland

Author of *The More I See You*



A Dance
Through Time

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Lynn Kurland

A Dance Through Time

Chapter 1

“COME TO ME.”

His deep voice echoed in the stillness of the great hall. He held out his hands, waiting.

She looked at the man standing before her, a warrior tall and powerfully fashioned. The firelight from the huge hearth played over the rugged features of his face, glinted off his long, dark hair, turned his eyes to a deep, fiery green. His gaze locked with hers, warming her, imprisoning her.

She walked to him, slowly. She reached out and put her hands in his. There were calluses on his skin, hard places where the sword had left its imprint. He ran his thumbs over her palms, caressing her hands before he took them and slipped them up around his neck. She caught her breath as his arms came around her and pulled her hard against him.

"Och, but you're a bonny thing, myElizabeth," he said, in a husky voice.

He lowered his head and covered her lips with his own. He plundered her mouth, ravaging it with kisses that made her knees buckle. She clung to him as waves of desire crashed over her, leaving her weak.

A ringing began, intruding on the sounds of wood crackling in the hearth and the harsh rasp of the man's breathing. She ignored the bell-like noise, but it continued, persistent.

She turned to see what it was, then felt herself falling. She looked back at the man in disbelief.

"Nay, do not leave me," he said, clutching her more tightly to him.

She stared up at him, mute, unable to stop the feeling of plunging into nothingness. She slid through his arms and felt a sharp pain ...

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Elizabeth Smith winced as her elbow connected with a solid wood floor. She opened her eyes and blinked a time or two.

Then she lay back and let out an anguished groan. Falling out of bed was not how that dream was supposed to end.

And that ringing had been the phone. She reached up and groped for the receiver on her nightstand. This had better be some kind of emergency, or she was going to kill whoever had ruined the best kiss of her life.

"Hello?" she croaked.

"Yeah, is this Eddie's Breakfast Pizza?"

Elizabeth lifted her chin and peered up at her clock, squint-ing to make sense of the glowing numbers.

Good grief, it was only nine A.M.

"Wrong number, buddy," she mumbled and hung up the phone. She had been snatched from possibly the most perfect dream of her life for some idiot wanting pizza for breakfast?

Hopefully it wasn't an omen.

She lay back on the floor and stared up at the ceiling, still wrapped in the remains of her dream. She could almost feel the man's arms around her, hear his rich voice washing over her, taste his lips on hers.

Her name from his lips had been a caress, a possessive touch that branded her. If he only could have been real! No more putting up with men who could take her or leave her. There was a man who would be more interested in her than TV or sports. How distressed he had sounded when she had started to slip away from him! Of course she'd found him in a dream. Somehow, it just figured.

Well, there was nothing she could do about it. She groaned as she forced herself to sit up and face reality.

It was enough to make her want to go back to bed.

Her apartment, furnished as it was in early starving writer,

was a sty. It was a minuscule Manhattan garret, and every available surface was covered with a stack of something. Her table, which served both as a place to eat and a place to write, was piled high with research books, drafts of her novel and a collection of soda cans. Dishes were piled in her sink. Clothes were strewn from one end of the place to another. It was a complete disaster, one she had put off dealing with for weeks.

Well, there was no sense in postponing the inevitable any longer. She hauled herself to her feet, then walked purposefully across three feet of floor to her table. To fortify herself, she took a gulp from the cola can she'd opened the night before, then sat and reached for the notebook that contained her list of things to do.

Finish cover letter for manuscript. She paused. Writing a novel was hard enough. Pitching it in three paragraphs or less was murder. Maybe she'd give herself another day to come up with something **Generated by ABC Amber LIT Converter, <http://www.processtext.com/abclit.html>**

brilliant. She crossed the item off her list with a quick swipe of her pen.

Exercise. Oh, definitely not. She squelched the small stab of guilt over crossing off that reminder.

Clean apartment was number three. She was fairly certain there were no unpaid bills lurking anywhere, so maybe there wasn't much sense in wasting time getting organized. She was sure she still had some clean underwear in her drawer, so what was the point in straightening up when the place would just get messy again anyway? Especially since she had much better things to do with her time this morning—mainly fantasize about that man from her dream. She tossed her notebook onto a handy pile of research materials, then sat back, ready to give her imagination free rein.

She closed her eyes and struggled to bring back his image. Tall, dark-haired, green-eyed. The feel of his arms around her was something she was certain she would never forget.

She opened her eyes suddenly, wondering why it hadn't occurred to her before. She would write a book about him. If she couldn't have him in the flesh, she could certainly have him in print. It made perfect sense, being that her passion was romance. Reading about it, writing about it, thinking about it: it didn't make a difference to her which way it came. As long as there was a love story and a happy ending involved, she was all for it.

It had all started innocently enough. She'd begun by rewriting in her head endings to all the great tragedies. After she'd seen Romeo and Juliet settled in a quaint little Italian villa with five kids, she'd moved on to tampering with Ophelia's head and Hamlet's timing. Somehow, all of that had led her to thinking perhaps she should start from scratch with her own characters.

Her first attempt had wound up as kitchen shelf liner. But the manuscript sitting on her table was different. She had agonized for months over it, putting her whole soul into the fashioning of the characters.

And now it was finally finished and ready to mail except for her letter of introduction. She paused and stared at it thoughtfully. Maybe she really should finish it up before she started on anything else.

Come to me.

Elizabeth froze. Her apartment was too small for anyone to have sneaked in without her knowing as much, unless they'd done it sometime during the night. Maybe they had, and they were just waiting for her to notice before they did her in. She took a deep breath. She might as well know now. She turned in her seat slowly, fully expecting to come face-to-face with the business end of a lethal weapon.

She came face to face with a month's worth of dirty laundry.

She shook her head, as if by so doing she could clear up her sudden hearing problem. Her apartment was empty, but she had heard a voice, just as surely

as she was sitting there.

Come to me. Wasn't that what the man from her dream had first said to her?

Chills went down her spine, and her skin erupted into goose-flesh. Either she was losing her mind, or somebody was trying to tell her something. Maybe that incredibly sexy man was call-ing to her. Did he really want his book written? She nodded to herself. That had to be it. She had a vivid imagination. Her characters were taking on a life of their own and demanding their due. That happened to other people. It could happen to her.

Make haste,Elizabeth.

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She squeaked in spite of herself. All right, either she was hearing things, or her apartment was haunted.

Whatever the case, it was obviously a sign; she had no qualms about taking it as such. If the man wanted his book written right away, who was she to say no?

She jumped up and began shuffling through her piles of pa-pers. Last week her fiancé had happened upon a few books he thought she might find useful. Though he was helpful and ac-commodating, he wasn't exactly thrilled by her choice of ca-reers. But since he wasn't exactly her fiancé, he really didn't have the right to say much about what she did.

Stanley Berkowitz worked at the New York Public Library. She'd been loitering in the reading room one day, poring over a lithograph of King Duncan's dining table whenStanleyhad seen her. He'd recommended more books to her, then, as time went on, smuggled others out to her. He'd wooed her with re-search materials and Godiva chocolate. How could she have re-sisted two of her favorite things?

When he'd presented her with a proposal and a diamond, she'd said yes to both. So he wasn't her dream man. He was nice. There was a lot to be said for

nice.

Or so she'd thought until last night. She'd begun to feel concerned that Stanley hadn't exactly committed to a wedding date. Pushing him about it over chicken marsala had revealed he wasn't all that interested in getting married any time soon, but he was interested in maintaining an engagement because it got his mother off his back. How she'd held onto her compromise through chocolate decadence pie was beyond her. She'd accepted Stanley's latest book offerings, but she hadn't accepted his offer to come in. It was all she could do not to club him over the head with the biography of Robert the Bruce he'd handed her.

That man from her dream certainly wouldn't have been so blasé about her, no sir. No phoney engagement for him.

Elizabeth sat down with a thump. She was losing it. How would she know what that man would or wouldn't do? She was taking her dreams way too seriously. It was a bad thing to start. Who knew where it could lead?

Elizabeth, now!

Like that, she nodded to herself. Not only was she starting to hallucinate in broad daylight; her hallucinations were starting to order her around. It was a very bad sign.

"All right," she said out loud. "Keep your pants on. I'm working on it."

She searched through the stacks, flinging papers, magazines, paper plates and red pens onto the floor, looking for those books Stanley had brought her the week before. They were on Scotland. Though her current novel was set in England, that wasn't where her passion lay. Aye, 'twas Scotland that fascinated her. She dreamed of Scottish moors and fields of heather, of gloomy keeps with fierce lairds—ruthless warriors the size of linebackers who wielded swords against their enemies and wooed their ladies with sweet words and gentle kisses. It wasn't that she didn't already have linebackers. She did, in the persons of her five brothers. There were times she was sure she'd scream if she had to sit through another college fourth-and-goal story. But that was where big ended and the rest of her current situation began.

She had come to New York, sure the city would inspire her to write wonderful books. She'd found inspiration, but she hadn't run into any ruthless warriors who had demanded she allow them to woo her.

She had, however, been approached by that balding librarian who wanted to use her ring finger.

Elizabeth, by all the saints . . .

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The hair on the back of her neck stood up without permission. Okay, so her hero was getting really impatient. She lifted up a collection of newspapers and hit the mother lode. She shoved the rest of the table-top contents onto the floor, then spread out the books in front of her and looked over the titles: Rulers of Scotland; Scotland: An Historical Perspective; Fact or Fiction: Scotland's Turbulent Past; Life in a Medieval Hall; Scottish Lairds and Their Clans. She picked up the one on medieval life and glanced through it.

The keep was definitely the place to be. At least a body got clothes and a meal now and then. Bathing, though, didn't seem to have been a priority. Elizabeth could only speculate as to the smell of not only the keep, but the unwashed bodies inside. Living on savings and the small amount she could bring herself to accept from her parents was tough, but at least she had her own bed, free from bugs and secure from men with rape on their minds. Nope, medieval life was not for her. She pitied the women who'd had to endure it.

The book on Scottish rulers caught her eye. She flipped through the centuries, from Kenneth MacAlpin to James IV. Robert Bruce? He had ruled from 1306 to 1329. For some reason, the dates appealed to her. Yes, this time period would surely suit the man from her dream. Now all that remained was to find a clan for him to rule over. Of course he would be a laird; a man of her warrior's stature would find himself nowhere if not at the head of a company of equally fierce warriors.

She reached for the volume on Scottish clans. It fell open to a page on the