

Introduction



Still holding down the fort in New Hampshire, Christina is near her wit's end. Most of her friends have traveled back in time, and now it seems she might be next. How else can it be when she not only dreams about Robert the Bruce but he dreams of her too? A fact she learns when she makes contact with Lindsay at Mystery Hill via some sort of time flux. If that isn't enough, she ends up walking straight through a MacLomain Scotsman that makes her head spin in more ways than one. Though they vanished and she remains in the twenty-first century, she's bracing for a whole lot of trouble. And so the story goes...

Chapter One

North Salem, New Hampshire
Autumn 2017

SHE SHOULD JUST move back to Virginia. Life would be so much simpler. Or would it?

Because, Lord above, life had *never* been all that simple down south. But this? What she had been experiencing since Milly vanished? This was just pure batshit crazy.

Christina propped her hip against the side of the barn, not sure which way she wanted to go. Certainly not back into the woods or into the house. Back the way she had come, most specifically, Mystery Hill and what she discovered there, was a bit too much for anyone. And the house? Well, that either had Jim and Blair playing their games or Jessie being a royal pain in the butt.

“Ye look as thrilled to be here as me, lass.”

She about jumped out of her skin when a woman with long flaming red hair appeared at the barn door.

Christina frowned. “Who the *heck* are you?”

“Rona MacLomain,” she responded as she eyed Christina. “Daughter of Niall and Nicole MacLomain.” She perked her brows as though her next words would make it that much clearer. “Sister to *Graham* MacLomain.”

“Graham?” Christina shook her head, not overly daunted that a strange woman had appeared out of nowhere dressed in medieval clothing. “You say that like it’s supposed to ring some bells, but it doesn’t, sweetheart.”

Yet she had a feeling where Rona might be going with this, so Christina kept talking. “You’ve been sent here from medieval Scotland, haven’t you?” Oh yeah, she was becoming damn good at taking all of this in stride. “And my bet is, though you look nothing like him, you’re talking about the man I just ran into at Mystery Hill.”

The larger issue, among many, was that she literally ran *through* him not *into* him, which was half the reason for her fed-up attitude right now. Then there was the astounding news that Milly had traveled back in time and hooked up with some highlander. If that wasn’t enough, one of his relatives showed up here a few days ago. Better yet, appeared out of thin air with Jim.

Then let’s not forget her dream or what just happened this morning. First, seeing Lindsay in a place that was *clearly* not the stone dwellings at Mystery Hill before sort of merging with a man then shooting out the other side of him.

Way too much. All of it.

Hence her debate about heading south.

“Aye, ‘twas my brother ye ran into,” Rona said. “And if I heard correctly, ye also ran into Lindsay, and she caught ye up on what was happening.”

Right. Lindsay. *Another* friend who had apparently traveled back in time.

"And how is Linds since the last time we spoke?" Christina asked, rather nonplussed about all this though she should be freaking out. "Did she find her one true love like Milly did?"

Say no.

Say this was all some sort of mistake and the ring Christina now wore was part of an elaborate hoax. That the Claddagh ring that had mysteriously appeared on her finger a few days ago was one big joke.

"Aye, Lindsay *did* find her true love," Rona conceded, her eyes never leaving Christina. "My best friend and cousin, Laird Conall Hamilton."

Well, *shit*.

If Lindsay, who swore off men years ago, had hooked up with a man, then that was that.

It wasn't looking good for Christina.

She sighed and shook her head. About the last thing she needed was for any of this to be true but pretty much figured it must be at this point. Now she just had to continue remaining calm like she had all along. More than that? She needed to make sense of her dream.

"So." She tried to sound like she wasn't all that concerned. "Lindsay and Milly have met both William Wallace *and* Robert the Bruce?"

"They have."

Rona kept eying Christina, and it was starting to get on her last nerve. About to say as much, she bit her tongue when Blair appeared at the front door of the house, shaded her eyes from the sun and called out, "Bloody hell, is that ye, Rona?"

"Aye." Rona grinned and headed in her direction. "'Tis good to see ye, Cousin."

Right on time and riding Blair's wake, Jim appeared at the door as Rona and Blair embraced. Christina met his eyes and shook her head before she headed into the barn, content to let him deal with yet another time-traveler.

She should have known better though. The minute she settled in a chair toward the back, ready to pretend to hide in a good book, he joined her. Quiet the whole time, he plunked down on a stool and eyed her in that annoying way he'd adopted over the last few days.

"What?" She frowned and shook her head. "I know what Rona's here for, and I don't need a pep talk."

As it turned out, Jim had already traveled back in time with Milly. That, of course, was where he met Adlin's cousin, Blair. Adlin, naturally, was the *wizard* Milly was in love with now. So in love, she hadn't returned.

"It's not like you to hide away in a corner when yet another interesting character shows up." Jim eyed her e-reader and shook his head. "Not the best prop of avoidance you've ever used either." The corner of his mouth shot up in amusement. "But I suppose Blair and Rona don't know that, eh?"

"That I don't like to read?" She winked. "Nope."

"We both know you like to read." He gestured at her device. "Just not on that thing."

She shrugged, not much in the mood to talk about her reading preferences when there were bigger fish to fry. "So we know why *I'm* hiding out here." There was no stopping her grin. "Question is why are *you* hiding?"

Jim didn't bother denying it but leaned back against the stall, crossed his long legs out in front of him and scowled in the direction of the house. "That woman drives me crazy."

That woman being Blair.

Christina shook her head and snorted. "Yeah, in more ways than one."

Jim didn't quite meet her eyes. "Do you blame me?"

“Seeing how I’m not into women, I can’t really comment.” She rolled her eyes. “One thing’s for sure though, you two need to decide if you’re in love or hate because listening to you guys is gettin’ old fast, honey.”

Jim was Milly’s ex and best friend and had from time to time crushed on Lindsay and Christina. What sparked between him and Blair, however, was another whole brand of something.

Something annoying mostly.

“I’m just not used to dealing with medieval women,” he muttered. “Especially one like her.”

“You mean one that knows she can kick a man’s butt anytime she pleases?” Christina gave him a pointed look. “Or one who lost her brother and is courageous enough to want to avenge his death?”

Christina might not entirely know what to make of Blair, but she knew one thing. She was her kind of woman.

Jim gave her a look that said all she needed to know.

“Ah, so you weren’t referring to any of those things. No, I’d say you were getting at the endless push and pull between you.” She shook her head. “Why don’t you just sleep together and get it over with already? It’d make life easier for everyone in the immediate vicinity.” Her brows shot up. “Namely *me*.”

“We’re not that bad,” he argued.

“You are and need to figure things out one way or another.” She set aside her tablet and stood. “Meanwhile, I better get back to watching Jessie seeing how you’re in here.”

“Blair won’t let her go anywhere.” He stood and caught her elbow before she got too far. “Hey, what happened this morning anyway?”

Following his example, she didn’t quite meet his eyes. “Not sure what you mean.”

“The hell you don’t.” He sighed and tugged at her arm a little until she looked at him. “I’ve never seen you act so strangely. Out of it. Like you’d seen a ghost or I don’t know...something. What happened?” His eyes narrowed. “You’ve been pretty laid back through everything that’s been going on, but you weren’t this morning. Care to share?”

“My guess is she was dreaming of a famous Scottish king,” Rona said as she leaned against the entrance to the barn yet again, this time facing inward as she raised a brow at Christina. “Or am I wrong?”

Though by now it shouldn’t seem bizarre that a perfect stranger knew what she had just shared with Lindsay at Mystery Hill, it was. She might be trying to convince herself otherwise, but there was no getting used to what was happening around here. It was something out of anyone’s wildest imagination. Even so, she supposed she better deal with things sooner rather than later.

So she brushed by Rona, saying over her shoulder, “C’mon then, let’s go inside, have a drink and talk about why you’re really here.”

Christina winked at Blair in passing. The Scotswoman nodded as she leaned against the old oak tree out front sharpening a dagger, likely to get a rise out of Jim. He had been telling her since she arrived she didn’t need weapons, but she kept them visible and sharp at all times regardless.

As usual, Jessie was sitting in the living room with a small, ancient looking book in her hand as she stared at the fire. A fire that Christina had kept going for nearly five days now. Since the night she, Milly, Lindsay, and Jessie had come together here to celebrate Milly’s new home.

A house, it seemed, that had been with Milly for several lifetimes.

“Hey there, sweet pea,” she said softly, plastering on her warmest smile as she crouched in front of Jessie. “You need anything? Tea? Something to munch on?”

“No, I’m fine.” As always, Jessie’s face remained emotion free as her eyes met Christina’s. “You heard from Lindsay, didn’t you?”

An herbalist recluse from upstate Maine, Jessie was a recently declared empath and one of the strangest people she had ever met. Yet like Christina, she had Broun heritage, and that was the tie that had brought them together online a few years ago. A forum, as it happened, that was created by Cassie, a woman who had already traveled back in time to medieval Scotland and found her one true MacLomain love. Blair, as she recently discovered, was their daughter.

“I *did* hear from Lindsay,” Christina acknowledged as she squeezed Jessie’s hand. She was more worried about her friend than she would admit. “How’d you know that, honey?”

Jessie gave her the same look she always did. One that hinted at a far more rational mind than she typically displayed. No offense to her but she was remarkably different from most people with her distant nature and voodoo-like way of living.

“My gifts might be quite different than yours,” Jessie said softly, her eyes all-knowing as they held Christina’s. “But that doesn’t mean I don’t know when things are happening to you.” She squeezed her hand right back. “Intense things that are overwhelming you.”

“Not sure what you’re talking about,” Christina began before Jessie cut her off.

“I’m talking about you dreaming about Robert the Bruce.” She cocked her head. “Then running into a man that made your head spin.”

That’s pretty much how it went too.

Christina hid behind a warm chuckle and shook her head. “You’re reading too much into it.”

“No,” Jessie said calmly. “As you well know, I’m a witch just like you and can see things. Especially things that affect my closest friends.”

Christina could deny it all she wanted but why bother? She had known for a long time she was different. When she came here, and a label was finally put on it, she didn’t argue. There were worse things to be called in life.

“I’m gonna make you some fresh tea then whip up some comfort food.” Christina patted Jessie’s hand. “How’s that sound?”

She kissed her cheek and headed for the kitchen, pretending like she didn’t hear Jessie say, “It sounds like you’re avoiding one too many men.”

Christina loved Jessie to death, but she would do just about anything to have Milly and Lindsay here right now. They would make sense of everything going on in a way that didn’t set her on edge. Yet she suspected if her friends were here, they would be just as blunt. Especially in light of everything happening. Trying to keep that in mind, she set to doing what she did best in times of crisis.

Cooked.

It helped clear her mind.

So she clipped up her hair, washed her hands, and put a cute frilly apron on that she’d dug out of one of Milly’s moving boxes. Then she got busy. First off, she pulled up Pandora on her cell and made sure she labored in style to some upbeat music. That meant anything that’d make her hips swing. Next, she poured herself a glass of chilled white wine, be damned the early hour.

Humming along with the music, she pulled spices out of the cabinet, meats, and vegetables out of the refrigerator and put water on to boil. Though slightly frustrated that Rona hadn’t followed her in when they had a lot to talk about, she figured it was for the best. At least right now.

She seared stew meat and added it to a crock pot before she started on gravy. Once that was finished, she set it aside and started scrubbing potatoes, all the while mulling over what she had dreamt about last night.

A man.

One heck of a man for that matter.

He called himself Robert the Bruce and shockingly enough, claimed to be promised to her. Or she was promised to him. She couldn't quite remember.

What she *did* recall were his good looks.

Not for the first time, it hit her who he actually *was*. A famous Scottish king from the distant past. A man who seemed to be reaching across the centuries trying to find her. Trying to be with her. She shook her head as she began cutting potatoes a few minutes later. The connection between them had felt so strong. So unavoidable. As if they were always meant to be together and they both knew it.

"You're out of your mind, Christina," she muttered as she set aside the potatoes and started washing carrots. It was obviously just a dream. It *had* to be. It better be. What a dream though. It was so intense that she shot up in bed hours before the sun came up and started researching Robert the Bruce online.

Sure, she had watched the movie *Braveheart* because she loved all things Scottish, but beyond that, she hadn't done nearly as much research about the country as Milly. They all descended from the Scottish Brouns, and that was enough for her.

"Brouns that are meant for medieval MacLomains," she muttered. "Who knew?" She perked her brows at nobody and chopped away. "No MacLomains for me, though." She shook her head. "Nope, I'm too damn busy dreaming about famous Scottish kings I couldn't even *imagine* traveling back in time and meeting." She added the carrots to the potatoes. "But then stranger things have happened. I mean what southern girl in her right mind resorts to making homemade New England beef stew this often?"

She took a few sips of wine and swung her hips as she cut up some onions, tossed all the veggies in with the meat then added the gravy and turned the pot on high. As far as she could see out the window, Blair and Rona had vanished. Good, she supposed. At least for the moment.

She might need answers from Rona, but the truth was she wasn't all that eager to answer any questions the Scotswoman might have for her. Namely, about her brother.

"Graham," she whispered, still dancing as she added a few extra spices to the stew before she covered it. "What were you doing there?"

She had been asking herself that since her run earlier. A run she barely recalled setting out on. But then, like Jim had said, she was pretty out of it. Nevertheless, her dazed sprint brought her to Mystery Hill, Salem's little Stonehenge through the woods. That's where she found, of all people, Lindsay. Not Lindsay in the common sense but more a ghost of her. Bizarrely unfazed by it all, they chatted for a while, and Lindsay caught her up on everything. A truly wild tale from start to finish.

A shiver went through her as she recalled what happened next.

Not a bad shiver by any means. More the sort of shiver a woman might have when remembering a pleasurable sensation. An unanticipated but very welcome intimacy. She stared out the window as she recalled darting after Lindsay only to pass right through someone else.

"Now your sister's here," she muttered, talking to the memory of that *someone else* as she made Jessie's tea. "I can't help but find that curious, Graham."

Though she only caught a glimpse of him, he was hard to forget. Those super dark, thickly lashed eyes, chiseled cheekbones, and strong jaw. That rich, black hair, five o'clock shadow, and tanned skin. He had the sort of swarthy good looks that must make women trip over themselves to get near him.

She was so lost in thought about not only his utter hotness but how it felt to pass through him that she was oblivious to anything else. That is until she turned around for a spoon and ran smack into a hard body. For a split second, she thought she was still in her own head as her eyes crawled upward and landed on the very face she was just thinking about.

"My sister *is* here," he rumbled, his brogue thick as hell as he responded to her private mutterings. "But I dinnae think ye find it all that curious, Christina."

"Hot *damn*," she whispered, staggering back a few steps until she bumped into the countertop. "Is it happening again?" Unable to drag her eyes from his handsome face, she patted herself to see if she was really here. "Are we doing that crossover thing again?"

"Nay," he murmured, his voice so deep and sexy she felt it down to places that had been off limits to men for a while. "I am really here, lass. Like my sister, I've traveled through time to find ye."

"Ye," she whispered, so caught up in his wicked eyes that she sounded like a dumbass. "Like me?"

"Aye." He nodded. "Ye."

"So not me but you," she whispered.

"Nay, ye." The corner of his mouth curled up, and a dimple appeared on his cheek. "Not me."

Now it was her turn to grin. "I mean *you* when you say *ye*."

"Laughter is not something I embrace," Jessie said softly. "But if I did it would happen now listening to you two."

Startled that her friend had actually left that chair, Christina finally managed to drag her eyes from Graham to look at Jessie. "Hey there, sweetie." She blinked several times, trying to get her thoughts straight. "Your tea's almost ready."

Jessie nodded, her eyes never leaving Graham.

He, in turn, was clearly uncomfortable beneath her intense appraisal. Unlike any woman in her right mind, Jessie wasn't checking him out but almost studying him.

So Christina made introductions to try to break the ice then set the tea on the counter in front of Jessie, all the while overly aware of Graham. "There ya go, honey. Can I get you something else? Hungry?"

"No." Jessie's eyes never left Graham. "He's coming, isn't he?"

Graham's brows edged together. "Who, lass?"

"Tell him not to come." Jessie shook her head. "He's not welcome here."

Christina frowned, baffled more than usual by Jessie's behavior. "*Who's* not welcome here?"

"Everyone knows very well who," Jessie replied softly. "The dragon." Her eyes narrowed on Graham. "You should go."

"Jessie," Christina exclaimed, apologizing to Graham before she ushered her friend out of the kitchen and repositioned her in front of the fire. She crouched in front of her and tilted her head in question. "What's going on? Were you talking about his cousin Bryce? Because we both know he's a dragon shifter."

“But is he the only one?” Jessie's eyes met Christina's, her tone not quite right. “Or is another coming that will destroy all hope for Scotland's history? More so, destroy all hope of any of us surviving?”

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