

*Redemption from a
Dark Past*

By Kelli A. Wilkins

Redemption from a Dark Past

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ROMANCES BY KELLI A. WILKINS

*A Deceptive Match**
*A Secret Match**
*A Most Unusual Princess***
*A Most Intriguing Temptation***
*A Most Unfortunate Prince***
Beauty & the Bigfoot
Confessions of a Vampire's Lover
Dangerous Indenture
Four Days with Jack
Killer in Wolf's Clothing
Lies, Love & Redemption
Loving a Wild Stranger
*Midsummer Night's Delights****
*Midwinter Night's Delights****
Redemption from a Dark Past
Trust with Hearts
*Ultimate Night's Delights****
The Viking's Witch

* *A Deceptive Match* and *A Secret Match* are related titles with shared characters. However, each novel can be read separately.

** These titles make up the *Royal Desires* series. Although connected, each book stands alone as an individual read.

*** These novellas complete the *Naughty Nobles* trilogy.
It is recommended that they are read in sequence.

Visit Kelli's website: www.KelliWilkins.com for additional
titles as they become available.

PROLOGUE

Kingdom of Hungary, 1723

“Before you leave, Lukacs, I have one other order of business for you,” Lord Adrik said as he swigged down his drink.

Lukacs glanced around the study and shifted his weight from foot to foot. He had hoped that Lord Adrik would sign the papers he’d brought and send him on his way quickly. He had also hoped His Lordship would be in a good mood—or at least sober—but so far he’d been wrong on both counts.

“Yes, My Lord?” he asked, dreading the answer.

“I want you to find me a new companion.”

Lukacs closed his eyes as his stomach dropped. He’d been prepared for any other errand or task His Lordship requested, but not that. Ordinarily, he didn’t mind acting as Lord Adrik’s steward and conducting his official duties. It was a well-paid position, but when he asked for this...

He cleared his throat, praying he’d misunderstood.
“Pardon?”

“You heard me.” Lord Adrik refilled his glass with brandy and leaned back in his leather chair. “And I want a better one this time, one that isn’t a miserable disappointment.”

“My Lord, I—”

“Are you refusing?” Adrik snapped, furrowing his black brows.

His heart skipped a beat. The last thing he wanted was to make Lord Adrik angry. He took a calming breath, then chastised himself. There was no reason he should fear Lord Sebestyen Adrik. After all, he was a grown man, thirty-three years old, five years older than His Lordship. But yet, sometimes when Lord Adrik regarded him in just the right way, he reminded him of his father, Lord Kristof Adrik.

The elder Lord Adrik had been a tyrant, meticulous and demanding. Not many people had wept when he died. Serving as his steward had been no easy task, but he’d learned valuable information and gained enough experience to handle all the official responsibilities on his own. That knowledge had come in handy, because the current Lord Adrik had been shirking his duties ever since... the incident.

“No, My Lord, of course not. It’s...” How could he put it delicately, explain it in a way that Lord Adrik would understand—and not make him start shouting? “It’s difficult. *Exceedingly* difficult. I’m afraid your... reputation—”

“My reputation?” Lord Adrik chuckled and raised the glass to his lips. “My reputation? Which one? My reputation as a drunk? A madman? A devil worshipper? Or a murderer?”

Lukacs pursed his lips and stared down at his brown boots. Damn. It was bad enough that Lord Adrik was drunk, but dealing with him became a thousand times more

challenging when he was belligerent *and* drunk. “May I speak freely?”

“Certainly. I don’t think you can say anything that would offend me,” he said with a deep laugh. “I’ve heard it all.”

“My Lord, with all due respect, each time I ride into a village to look for a new companion I’m met with hostility and resistance. Word has spread about how I procured you several young ladies, and quite honestly, it’s harming my reputation and my good name.”

“How so? Because you’re associated with me, the Dark Lord?” he asked, his voice like ice.

Lukacs squirmed as sweat trickled down his back. He had to be careful about how he broached the subject. Lord Adrik was incredibly unpredictable and moody. One wrong word could send him into a rage. Experience had taught him to approach His Lordship cautiously, like one approached a dog that was known to bite without warning or provocation.

“You know I’m loyal to you, as I was to your father before you. I’m devoted in my duties.” He took a deep breath. “However, bringing you companions isn’t something I take any pleasure in, and lately I’m finding it to be nearly impossible.”

At first, it was somewhat easy to find young women to live as Lord Adrik’s companion for a month. Many farmers volunteered their daughters in return for payment and taxes waived for a year. Then word spread.

There were rumors about what Lord Adrik was doing to his companions; stories about blood drinking and human sacrifice. Some villagers were convinced that he was a vampire—or worse. As the dreadful rumors increased, the volunteers stopped.

Lord Adrik sat immobile, not saying a word. Lukacs cleared his throat and continued. “I’m looked down upon for bringing you these girls. When people learn who I work for, nobody will speak to me. The villagers run me off, no matter what enticement is offered. It’s become—”

“So?”

The question startled him. So? What did that mean? “Pardon?”

Lord Adrik sipped his drink. “Must I tell you how to do everything? If the larger villages are tapped, try the smaller ones,” he said, casually waving his hand.

He willed himself to be patient and keep his voice even. “I have, My Lord. Last time I had to go to seventeen villages before I found that girl—”

“*That girl* was a wretched failure.” Lord Adrik slammed his glass down on the dark walnut desk. “She was a simpering mouse and not worthy of my time or trouble.”

Lukacs stepped back. Now he’d done it. His Lordship was angry. Lately, he had started to wonder if the rumors about Lord Adrik being mad were true. He’d noticed that his drinking had doubled in the last two months. Thank heaven it

was nearly spring. His Lordship always behaved worse in the winter.

“Find me a girl. A decent one. And this time I want someone different. I want a girl with some sense in her head. A girl that’s not as dumb as dirt.”

“But My Lord, what you are asking will take—”

Lord Adrik leaned across his desk and glared up at him. “I don’t care if it takes you three months. Find me someone. And don’t try to trick me by buying me a whore like you did last year.”

Last year, he’d spent weeks riding from village to village, asking for volunteers to be Lord Adrik’s companion. The reward offered was great, but the villagers could not be swayed to give up a daughter.

Finally, in a desperate move, he’d gone to a brothel and explained his situation. A young “lady” had volunteered, and he thought his problem was solved. However, when Lord Adrik discovered his deception, he was furious.

“Do I make myself clear?” he growled.

“Yes, My Lord. I’ll leave tomorrow. If—I mean—*when* I find you a girl, I’ll send word so you can make the usual arrangements.”

“Fine. Don’t fail me. You’re dismissed.”

He bowed slightly. “Thank you, My Lord.”

Lukacs gathered the papers from the desk and tucked them into his leather valise as he left the study. How the hell was he going to find a girl willing to be Lord Adrik's next victim?

* * *

Katarina held her breath as she pressed closer to the wall. She knew it wasn't right to eavesdrop, but every night she crept to the wall and listened for a few minutes. Usually Mr. and Mrs. Gurka discussed the goat farm, gossiped about the people in the village, or made low grunting noises. Ugh. Whenever they did that, she returned to her pallet next to the fireplace and pretended to be asleep. But tonight was different. For the last ten minutes, she had been listening to them talk about her.

"Oleg Szvecska said he would take her in exchange for the money we owe him. It's a good arrangement. He knows I can't afford to pay for the repairs on the wagon, and nobody else in the village wants to marry her," Mr. Gurka said. "Everyone thinks she's strange. And she's nearly twenty. She should have been wed long before now."

Oleg Szvecska? She couldn't be hearing this right, could she? Mr. Gurka was marrying her off to Oleg? She hated Oleg, and now she was being given to him in exchange for repairing the wagon?

Oleg was a horrible pig of a man. He was at least fifty years old, with a big belly and greasy skin covered in red blotches. He smelled a hundred times worse than he looked, and he always leered at her breasts when he came to visit Mr.

Gurka or saw her on market day. He had already been married twice and had six obnoxious children.

“It’s a good exchange. We need the wagon repaired, and it’s only fitting since she’s the one who broke it,” Mr. Gurka added.

She glared at the wall. Liar! One snowy night, Mr. Gurka had come home drunk and ran the wagon into a ditch. The wheel and axle were cracked, and half of the right side was smashed up. Of course, he had blamed her for it. Too bad *he* hadn’t been smashed up in the wreck.

“Once she’s married off, who will do the chores? I’m not shoveling out the goat barn and lifting hay bales,” Mrs. Gurka replied.

“We’ll do like we did before, go to the orphanage and find someone to work here,” Mr. Gurka said. “This time, instead of a girl, we’ll get a boy or two, old enough to train but young enough not to protest when it comes time to work.”

Katarina bowed her head. When she was a little girl, the Gurkas had taken her from an orphanage and spared her the horrors of the workhouse. At first, she was happy to have parents, but before long she realized that they didn’t take her in because they longed for a child to love. They had only adopted her because they needed someone to work on the goat farm. She had never been treated as anything more than a servant.

“Did Oleg say when he’ll take her?”

“The wedding will be next Sunday. Oleg’s out of the village this week. He’s very excited about this proposition,” Mr. Gurka added. “He’s been looking to remarry, and Katarina is still young and supple enough to bear him more children.”

Supple? Bear him children? Katarina sneered and backed away from the wall. She’d heard enough. Part of her wanted to run into the room screaming that she would never marry Oleg. She’d sooner die than marry that beast. But another part of her knew better.

Protesting and fighting would do no good. Mr. Gurka might tie her up in the barn and hold her prisoner until Oleg returned. But she had one advantage—she had discovered their trickery. Somehow, she had to leave the village and get far away before next Sunday.

She crossed the tiny cottage and opened the front door as quietly as possible. Once outside, she ran across the yard and leaned against the goat barn, her heart racing. Over the years, she had often thought about running away, but never had the courage or a good enough reason—until now.

She had only left the village twice in her life. Both times were with the Gurkas when they went to a huge market in Otká. They were terrified to be away for a few hours and made sure to be home well before dark.

But she hadn’t been afraid. Even if they weren’t marrying her off to Oleg, she didn’t want to stay in this horrible little village. She wanted to explore other places, meet interesting people, and make her own way. She wasn’t afraid of new

things, in fact, she welcomed them. She longed for a different life; a life without goats, drudgery, or poverty.

She gazed into the night sky as she formed a plan. If she sold the goat cheese and milk at the market on Saturday like usual, she could steal all the money she earned and run away. But where would she go? She had no relatives and nobody to help her.

And what would happen to her if her plan failed?

* * *

“Dear God, look at that!”

Katarina turned from the display of goat cheese arranged on the pushcart and looked where Mrs. Bukovich pointed. A black carriage led by four black horses rumbled down the main street. A red and black banner attached to the front of the carriage waved in the breeze.

“Heaven help us,” Mrs. Torkos said. “It couldn’t be *him*, could it?”

“A carriage with that crest means only one thing. It’s like having the plague descend on us all,” Mrs. Bukovich replied, crossing herself.

Katarina glanced around and noticed that everyone in the crowded village market had stopped what they were doing. They all stood stock-still, staring at the carriage. “What’s wrong? Whose carriage is that?” she asked.

“It’s the Dark Lord’s,” Mrs. Bukovich answered, crossing herself again.

“Who?”

“See that banner? That’s Lord Adrik’s crest. It may as well belong to the devil himself,” Mrs. Torkos said, spitting on the ground.

Katarina watched as a driver descended from the front of the carriage and lowered a short flight of stairs. A minute later, the carriage door opened.

Mrs. Bukovich gasped and clutched the cross around her neck as a man stepped out. After a second, she exhaled loudly. “Thank the saints, we’re spared.”

“That’s not him?” Katarina looked at the man. He wore dark blue breeches, black boots, a white ruffled shirt, and a gray jacket. A black hat sat perched on his light blond hair.

“No. That’s his steward, Lukacs something,” Mrs. Bukovich replied. “Lord Adrik is a deformed madman who lives in total darkness.”

“True, and if his steward is here, you know what he’s after,” Mrs. Torkos commented.

“What? What’s he after?” Katarina asked. This was interesting. Life in the village was boring, and this stranger had added some excitement to her day. A fancy man in an expensive carriage was completely out of place in Vajda.

“You ignorant thing, don’t you know the stories? Lord Adrik—the Dark Lord—is a worshipper of the black arts. He takes innocent girls to his castle and sacrifices them in his evil practices.”

Katarina rolled her eyes. More superstitious nonsense. Everyone in Vajda was always telling ridiculous stories about demons, ghosts, and undead things wandering around the forest. She had never believed any of the silly stories. They were just tricks to scare people into going to church and never venturing outside the village.

Mr. Ziber moved close to them and sneered at the man standing near the carriage. “My cousin said this one came to his village and bought a girl from a farmer. The girl was never seen again. Everyone knows what the Dark Lord did to her. The filthy, murdering—”

“Good day, fine people of Vajda,” Lukacs said as he strode to the center of the market square and hopped onto a low stone wall. “My name is Lukacs—”

“We know who you are. Be gone with you,” Mr. Ziber said. “We’re decent church-going people with no need for the likes of you here.”

Lukacs cleared his throat. “My good man, I’m here on business—”

“You’re here on the devil’s business,” old Mr. Aranyi yelled from across the square. He hurled a potato at Lukacs. It missed him by a foot. “Go worship your devil elsewhere. We don’t—”

“Hear me out,” Lukacs pleaded as the villagers dispersed and began heading for the side streets. “Lord Adrik is looking for a new companion. He’s offering—”

“Death and damnation,” Mr. Abrovian, the butcher, shouted, then threw a rock. It hit Lukacs in the shoulder. “You’re poisoned. Cursed like that devil you serve. Leave, if you know what’s good for you.”

Lukacs jumped off the wall. “Fine! But the horses need to rest. I’m going to the tavern. Anyone who wishes to hear my offer can speak with me there.”

Katarina watched as the villagers gathered their goods and hustled off. The vendors began packing up their unsold wares. She clutched Mrs. Bukovich’s arm as the once-busy marketplace emptied out in minutes.

“Where is everyone going? It’s not even noon. The market’s open for another three hours.” She gestured at her pushcart filled with goat cheese and milk. “I need to sell this—”

“Not today. Nobody’s buying anything else today.” Mrs. Bukovich pointed at Lukacs. “That man rode into town, so nothing’s good today. He’s darkened our doorstep. Don’t worry, you can sell it next week,” she said as she walked off.

Next week? Next week would be too late. She had planned to sell everything today, take the money, and start walking to another village. She’d even packed her meager belongings in a cloth bag and hid it on the pushcart. Now what? She couldn’t go back to the goat farm.

As the villagers left the market, she sat on a tree stump and counted the handful of coins in her dress pocket. It wasn't enough to run away and live on; it was barely enough to buy a meal.

Within minutes, the marketplace was deserted. Her customers were gone, her plan to escape ruined. And why? All because some stupid fancy man had come into the village in that blasted carriage.

Her eyes flicked to the carriage. He had come to the village... in a *carriage*. An idea popped into her head, and she rose, smoothing her skirts as she headed to the tavern.

* * *

"Lord Adrik is offering... what?"

"What?" Lukacs looked up at the young woman standing near his table, his glass of beer halfway to his lips. He had paid double for the drink and he wanted to enjoy it without being bothered. The rude tavern keeper had originally refused him service, but a healthy stack of coins had changed his mind.

"Lord Adrik is offering... what? You never finished your speech."

"Shh! Be quiet," he admonished. "Do you think I'm mad? You saw the villagers. If I had continued, those superstitious gossipmongers would have stoned me to death or drawn and quartered me. I got the message. I'm not wanted here," he

grumbled. “Just mentioning *his* name anywhere I go is enough to—”

“But what is...” She didn’t repeat the name. “...*he* offering? Why are you here? Who are you?”

“You don’t know?” He leaned back in the rickety wooden chair. Of course the girl didn’t know, if she knew, she wouldn’t be standing in front of him. Was it possible she hadn’t heard the stories about His Lordship? He decided to test the waters. “My name is Lukacs Borysko. I’ve been sent to procure a companion for Lord Adrik.”

The girl furrowed her dark brows. “What’s procure?”

“Find, get, locate...” he explained.

“Oh. And a companion is like... a nursemaid?” she asked, cocking her head to one side. “This lord, is he old and feeble? He needs someone to look after him?”

“No, no, it’s nothing like that.” He flashed his best smile. “His Lordship is young and in good health.”

“Then why does he need a companion? What sort of things does a companion do?”

He straightened up. Was this girl considering his offer? Or was she merely curious? “The young lady would be a companion, someone to spend time with His Lordship. She would go riding on the estate, attend concerts in the village, play music, provide conversation, and perhaps do errands for him. Would that be of interest to you?”

The girl bit her bottom lip. “I’m not sure. Everyone in the village reacted so strangely to your arrival. I had to ask what the fuss was about. I saw them throw things at you, and I heard what they said. Why does everyone fear him?”

He sipped his beer and recited the speech he gave everyone who questioned him about Lord Adrik.

“It’s unfortunate, but Lord Adrik is the target of many nasty rumors and lies. The villagers are superstitious and imagine things about him that are not true. There are more than a few people who take delight in besmirching his reputation.”

The girl nodded, and he relaxed. Either she believed his excuses, or she didn’t fully understand. Most of these village girls were dumber than his horse.

“Yes, but why do they say he’s mad and practices the black arts?”

“Hush!” He scanned the deserted tavern. “You should not repeat those lies. If people in the church—”

“The church? Bah.” She waved her hand. “Everyone in the village is always carrying on about the church, pretending they’re so good and righteous. I know how they really behave,” she said, pulling out the chair opposite him and sitting down. “What happened to his other companions?”

He scratched his chin. This one was clever. “How do you know there were others?”

“You said he’s looking for a new companion. What happened to the last one?”

Lukacs sidestepped the question. “The companions are short-term. They stay for one month, then collect their payment and are free to—”

“Payment?” She leaned across the table. “There’s payment?”

“Of course.” He bit back a grin. The fish was on the hook. The girl was falling into his hands, no doubt about it. “In exchange for a month of companionship, His Lordship gives them a payment. Then they are free to go wherever they like. They can return home to their village or live elsewhere.”

“I see. This payment... is it for... would the girl have to... do *things*?”

“Things?” He shook his head. “I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Bedroom things. You know... *that*... with His Lordship.”

He drank his beer as he considered how to answer. Nobody had ever asked him that question before, and he never mentioned the subject to Lord Adrik. Truth be told, he didn’t *want* to know what went on between him and his companions.

“If a romance blossomed between the companion and His Lordship, it would be a private matter. But if you’re asking me if... *that*... is required, no.”

“Oh. I was wondering if that was what he wanted the girl for. If he’s a lord he could easily pay a certain type of woman for that.”

“Are you that certain type of woman? Is that why you ask?”

“No! Of course not,” she exclaimed and sat back. “Not at all. I merely asked for my own knowing. If I was interested I’d want to know about that ahead of time.”

“*If* you’re interested? Are you?”

“I wasn’t at first, but perhaps.” She shrugged.

“I need a definite answer. I’m expected in another village later this afternoon,” he lied. “I’ll be leaving this wretched place as soon as I finish this beer.”

He didn’t really want to ride to another village and start the search all over. He had been traveling for nearly three weeks and he was tired. Everywhere he went, he was spit on, cursed out, and had things thrown at him. Innkeepers in three villages had refused to serve him meals or rent him rooms. He’d had to go hungry and sleep in the carriage.

If he could get this girl to come along, it would solve his problem. But what about her? Was he putting her in danger? Lord Adrik had a temper, and he was drinking more than usual. Then there was the matter of the other girls... and the rumors about what had happened to them. Should he subject her to Lord Adrik’s—

“Well, if you’re leaving the village anyway, could I leave with you?”

Her question broke him from his thoughts. “What do you mean?”

“I need to go to another village. I have to leave here today, get as far away as I can,” she said, bending close to him across the table. “I was hoping I could go in the carriage with you and you could take me somewhere else, but now...” She paused. “Perhaps instead of going to a new village, I should come with you and be Lord Adrik’s companion.”

“It’s not that simple. You have to qualify.”

“Oh.” She bowed her head and bit her bottom lip. “What must I do?”

“Answer my questions,” he said, then repeated what he always told the girls—or their parents. “I can’t take you with me without knowing about you. I need to determine if you’re suitable. And even if I bring you back with me, if Lord Adrik isn’t pleased, he could dismiss you on the spot.”

“I see.” The girl folded her hands in her lap. “Then ask what you wish. I’ll do my best to give good answers.”

After Lord Adrik’s warning, he knew he had to screen the next girl carefully. If His Lordship was displeased with his choice, *he* would suffer the consequences.

Years ago, he’d been able to choose between four or five prospects from one village, and now he was lucky to find one girl in the entire countryside. The questions he asked were

more for his own interest, so he could write Lord Adrik and tell him all the wonderful qualities about the girl.

“Remove your bonnet. I need to see your hair. How old are you? What’s your name? Tell me about yourself. Where are your parents?”

The girl took off her dirty white bonnet and shook out her long brown-black hair. “Katarina. I’m twenty. I have no parents. I was an orphan raised by the Gurkas. I work on their goat farm and sell goat cheese on market day.”

He looked her over. Katarina was pretty, in a simple way, with a clear complexion, a heart-shaped face, and a small nose. A quick peek at her chest told him that Lord Adrik would probably approve.

“Do you play any musical instruments? Can you read or write?”

She shook her head.

“Then why should I consider you? What sort of companion would you be to a lord?” He watched her shoulders rise and fall once. Then she spoke.

“I like to be outside and go for walks. I could ride horses with His Lordship. And I’m eager to learn things. He could teach me how to read or play the piano. I’m not sure if that’s what His Lordship wants for a companion, but I’m willing to try for a month... if he’ll have me.”

Katarina was quiet for a second. “And I’m not superstitious, or concerned about the church, or believe what gossiping old women say about him,” she finished in a rush.

He nodded. “You come of your own free will? You’d make a mark on paper swearing this?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Good.” He sipped his beer. “Now all I need is for Mister Gurka to agree—”

“No! You can’t tell him!”

Her outburst shocked him, and he set his beer down. “Why not?”

“Because... you can’t. I have to leave the village, today. If I can’t be Lord Adrik’s companion, could you please take me to the next village?” she pleaded. “I need to run away. If Mister Gurka found out what I was planning, he’d stop me.”

He scowled. This was strange. Why was Katarina running off? Half the kingdom was deserted and poverty-stricken. She was lucky to have a roof over her head and a meal once a day. Why would she give that up?

“Why do you say that? Have you done something wrong? Did he... molest you?”

“No, it’s nothing like that. Please, take me away with you.” She gripped his hand. “If you don’t, I’ll leave anyway. I’ll walk to the next village if I have to. Wouldn’t you rather we help each other instead?” She fixed her blue eyes onto his.

“You need to find a companion. I need to leave. It’s a simple deal.”

Katarina was right. And she was clever. Very clever. Wasn’t that what Lord Adrik wanted? A young woman who could think and wasn’t a mouse? His Lordship might have his hands full with this one.

He’d be a fool to pass up this opportunity. Where else would he find a girl to come so willingly? And once he delivered Katarina to His Lordship, his role in the matter was finished.

“Yes, this would solve both of our problems.” He grinned. “How soon can you leave?”

WANT MORE HISTORICAL ROMANCE? DON'T MISS...

Lies, Love & Redemption

Shot and left for dead, Sam Hixton stumbles into a general store on the Nebraska prairie and collapses into the arms of Cassie Wilcox.

Cassie's world is turned upside down when the handsome stranger drops into her life. Sam is another complication she doesn't need: her business is dying and her trouble with the townspeople is escalating. Yet she's determined to keep the store open — no matter what the cost.

As Sam recovers from his injuries, he hides the truth about his identity and convinces Cassie to let him work in the store. He's attracted to her and admires her independent nature but quickly realizes Cassie's in way over her head.

They fight their growing attraction, and Cassie questions whether she can trust her fragile heart to a mysterious stranger. *Will he accept her once he knows about her troubled past?*

Cassie resists Sam's advances and represses her feelings until one fateful night when they give in to their fiery passion. Together, they work out a plan to save the store but find their efforts are thwarted—and their lives endangered—by the locals.

Sam's secret returns to haunt him and pulls him away just when Cassie needs him the most. *Will he regain her trust when she learns the truth?*

Cassie has everything invested in the store—can she save it and find true love with Sam before it's too late?

Loving a Wild Stranger

A woman running from her past... straight into the arms of an untamed man

In a moment of desperation, Kathleen Stanton flees her pampered life in Kingston, New York and ends up stranded in a small town in the Michigan Territory. Out of money and forced to rely on her instincts, she impersonates a handsome stranger's mail-order bride.

Committed to her deception, Kathleen calls herself Michelle and starts her new life with Luther in an isolated cabin in the wilderness. Luther can't believe his luck when his beautiful bride arrives, but something doesn't feel right about his new wife. Michelle has terrifying nightmares involving a man named Roger and is reluctant to talk about where she came from.

Luther's friend, Redfeather visits and tries to convince Luther to send Michelle back east. Distrusting Michelle, he warns Luther that his bride is not what she seems. But Luther is in

love with Michelle, and he is harboring a secret of his own—one that might force Michelle to reject him when she learns the truth.

Michelle falls in love with Luther and adapts to her new way of life. Together, they face off against brutal townspeople and overcome harsh living conditions.

When they finally give in to their desires and agree to become a proper man and wife, a dark figure from Michelle's past resurfaces and threatens to destroy everything.

The Viking's Witch

About to be burned at the stake by her fellow villagers, Odaria does what any betrayed witch facing certain death would do. She calls down a curse. Within seconds, rampaging Norsemen raid the village, capturing everyone except her.

But her reprieve is short-lived, and Odaria lands in the clutches of the Norse leader Rothgar. Can she remain true to herself and fight her growing attraction to this domineering man, or will she fall under his influence?

After Rothgar witnesses Odaria's powers firsthand, he strikes a bargain with her. The raven-haired beauty will use her magical abilities to help him with his quest in exchange for safe passage off the isle.

But can this cunning woman be trusted, or is she using him to exact vengeance on her village?

Together they must fight bloodthirsty villagers, battle a mutinous band of Norsemen, find a missing Norse ship, and learn to trust each other...before time is up.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelli A. Wilkins is an award-winning author who has published more than 100 short stories, 19 romance novels, and 5 non-fiction books.

Her romances span many genres and heat levels, and she's also been known to scare readers with her horror stories.

Kelli's Gothic historical romance, ***Redemption from a Dark Past*** was released in June 2018.

Her writing book, ***You Can Write—Really! A Beginner's Guide to Writing Fiction*** is a fun and informative guide filled with writing exercises and helpful tips all authors can use.

Look for more romances, horror stories, and an online writing class coming later in 2018!

Visit her website www.KelliWilkins.com and blog <http://kelliwilkinsauthor.blogspot.com/> to learn more about all of her writings.

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