



How to Abduct a Highland Lord (The MacLean Curse Book 1)

By Karen Hawkins

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In a delightfully sexy and witty new series, USA TODAY bestselling author Karen Hawkins creates an unforgettable couple locked in a marriage that begins with a desperate feud—and ends in seduction.

It's hardly the type of wedding Fiona MacLean dreamed of. No family, no guests, just a groom who's been dragged—literally—to the altar. But if marriage to Black Jack Kincaid, the handsome wastrel she'd sworn never to see again, will avert a bloody war between their clans, so be it. Surely she can share his bed without losing her heart...

Known throughout Scotland and London as a wild rogue, Jack is accustomed to waking in dire situations, but...*married*? Long ago, he and Fiona reveled in a youthful passion. Now, the fiery, sensual lass is his once more. And though their marriage is in name only, Jack is determined to win her forever—body and soul...

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Editorial Review

Review

"Fun, sexy, and delightful!"

-- Victoria Alexander

About the Author

Karen Hawkins is a *New York Times* and *USA TODAY* bestselling author of many wickedly funny historical romane novels set in Regency Scotland, including the wildly popular MacLean Curse series, the enchanting Hurst Amulet series, the funny and charming Duchess Diaries series, and now the romantic Oxenburg Princes series. Karen is also the author of two sassy contemporary romances set in the little town of Glory, North Carolina. Find out more at Facebook.com/AuthorKarenHawkins and KarenHawkins.com.

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Chapter One

The MacLeans are an ancient family, long of grace and fair of face. 'Tis a pity they know their own worth, fer it makes 'em difficult to bargain with. Shrewd they are; 'tis rare they come out on the bottom side of any bargain. Yer own pa says he'd rather be bit by a sheep than dicker with a MacLean.

Old Woman Nora of Loch Lomond to her three wee granddaughters one cold night

Gretna Green, Scotland

April 9, 1807

Fiona MacLean forced herself to smile. "Father MacCanney, we've come to be married."

The heavyset priest looked uncertainly from Fiona to the groom and then back. "B-but -- he's not -- I canna -- "

"Yes you can, Father," Fiona said in her calmest voice, her hands fiercely fisted in the strings of her reticule.

Come hell or high water, she was about to end the longest, most drawn-out, and most foolish feud in all Scotland. And thereby lose her freedom, her carefully planned future, and perhaps even a bit of her heart.

The thought made her stomach sink lower. But this marriage was necessary if she wished to keep her brothers safe from their own foolish tempers. *It's the only way. I cannot waver.*

"Fiona, lass," Father MacCanney said in an exasperated voice, "he's not fit to be a groom!"

"All the more reason for me to marry the fool." At the priest's blink of surprise, she quickly added, "'Tis a known fact that a good woman can turn even the most contrary, rotten, stubborn ne'er-do-well into a responsible man."

The priest glanced uneasily at her prospective groom. "Aye, but -- "

"Have no fear for me, Father. I know he's no prize, but he's the one I want."

"Fiona, I know the lad might benefit from the match. 'Tis just -- "

"I know," she said, sighing bravely. "He's a philanderer who's been with every woman from the North Sea to the fleshpots of London."

The priest flushed at the mention of fleshpots. "Yes, yes. So everyone knows, but -- "

"He is also a complete wastrel who has made no effort to embrace a useful life. I know he's not the best choice of groom, but -- "

"He's not even conscious!" the priest burst out. "He canna even say his own name!"

Fiona glanced down to where her man, Hamish, had dropped her groom on the cold flagstone at her feet. Muddy rivulets dripped onto the church floor from Kincaid's clothing. "I was afraid that was your problem." Even unconscious, Jack was a royal pain. Some things never changed.

"Lassie, ye canna drag an unconscious man to the altar."

"Why not?"

"Because -- because 'tis just not done, that's why!"

The priest eyed Hamish with suspicion. Fiona's massive guard stood silently behind her as he'd done since she was a child. A large sword hung at his side, three primed pistols were stuck into his wide leather belt, his bushy red beard bristled, and his fierce gaze pinned them all in place.

"How did the lad come to be unconscious and muddy?" Father MacCanney asked pointedly.

Fiona hated to lie. She really did. But the less the priest knew, the safer he'd be from retribution from her brothers. Torn in pain at the loss of their youngest brother, they raged through Castle MacLean, fists lifted to the sky, fury pouring from them.

The curse of the MacLeans had flowed then. Rain and thunder had flooded from the skies for days, threatening those who lived in the village below Castle MacLean. The river had already been swollen from early spring rains, and the danger of flooding was imminent.

Fiona could not let that happen. And she knew how to stop the feud. First, she'd had to find Jack Kincaid. Thank goodness Hamish had heard rumors of his dalliance with some woman in nearby Stirling; it was simple to find the wastrel then.

She could only hope that the rest of her plan would follow so easily. Somehow, she greatly doubted she'd be so blessed. She shrugged and said with as much cheerful indifference as she

could muster, "We found him."

"Unconscious?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the road. His horse must have bolted."

The priest did not look convinced. "How did the lad get so wet?" He eyed her with deep suspicion. "There's not been any rain in this part of Scotland in over three weeks."

Fiona had to distract him. "Hamish, can you awaken the lout? Father MacCanney will not marry us unless he's conscious."

Hamish grunted, then bent over, grabbed the unconscious Jack Kincaid by the hair, and lifted his head.

Fiona's gaze fell on his face, and her heart leapt. Even splashed with mud, his dark red hair plastered flat from the rain, Jack Kincaid was painfully handsome. Fine, firmly cut features with a strong jaw and masculine nose, deep auburn hair, and, had they been open, the blue, blue eyes of an angel.

But angel he was not.

In the distance, a faint rumble of thunder caused the priest to look toward the open windows. Outside, bright sunshine warmed the stone walls, nary a cloud in the blue sky.

Fiona's gaze remained on Kincaid. It took all of her moral strength not to kick him -- just a little -- while he was so conveniently at her feet.

Since that dark day fifteen years ago when she'd discovered Jack Kincaid's true nature, she'd kept her emotions and thoughts about him locked away. She'd thought they'd died, but apparently some anger and resentment remained.

Still grasping Jack's hair, Hamish shook his head, then looked at Fiona. "The jackass is not awakening."

"I can see that." Fiona sighed. "Let him be."

Hamish dropped his burden, ignoring the thud that made the priest wince.

Relief filled Father MacCanney's face. "Ye can't marry him, then."

"Yes, I can," Fiona said firmly. "He will awaken soon."

The priest sighed. "Ye are the most stubborn lass I ever met."

"Only when I must be. You cannot deny that 'twill be good for the lout to be in the care of a strong woman."

"No," Father MacCanney said in a constricted voice. "I canna deny that."

"I'll put up with neither drinking nor carousing. He will also be made to attend church regularly. Whether he knows it or not, Jack's wild days are over."

Something like pity flickered over the priest's face. "You canna make a person change, lassie. They have to *want* to change."

"Then I shall *make* him want to change."

The priest took her gloved hand in his. "Why do you wish to embark on this madness, lassie?"

"'Tis the only way to stop the feud. Callum's death must be the last," she said in a hard voice.

The priest's eyes had filled with tears. "I mourn your brother, too, lass."

"You cannot mourn Callum more than I. And as if his death is not enough to bear, my older brothers are calling out for vengeance. If someone does not stop this nonsense now -- " Her voice broke.

Callum, beautiful Callum. Her youngest brother, with his quicksilver grin and equally fast flashes of temper, was now lying six feet under, a stone marker the only reminder of his life. And all because of an idiotic feud that began hundreds of years ago.

The MacLeans and the Kincaids had been fighting for so long that no one remembered the true cause of their hatred. Now, because of Callum's stupid refusal to let a silly insult from a Kincaid slide, things had come to a head. Callum had pushed the argument, pushed the fight. And paid the price with his life.

One blow, the edge of the stone hearth...and that was it. Callum was dead, and the banked fires of the age-old feud had erupted into flames.

The priest pressed her hand. "I've heard that the Kincaids feel Callum's death was not their fault. That perhaps someone else -- "

"Please, Father. Do not."

The priest looked at her face. She knew what he was seeing: the circles under her eyes, the paleness of her skin, the tremor of her lips as she fought desperately to keep her tears at bay.

"Father," she said softly, "my brothers blame Eric Kincaid for Callum's death. Nothing I say can cool their thirst for vengeance. But if I marry Jack, he and his kin will be a part of our family. My brothers will be forced to let go of their plans." Her determined gaze locked with the priest's. "I will not lose another brother." Anger surged through her, raw and furious.

Outside, the ominous rumble of thunder darkened the otherwise clear day. Hamish nodded, as if agreeing with an unspoken thought. Father MacCanney, meanwhile, paled.

The priest was silent a long moment, and Fiona could see he was on the verge of agreeing. He just needed a little push.

"Besides, Father, if I make this sacrifice and marry to end the feud, it might break the curse."

Father MacCanney swallowed noisily and pulled his hand from her grasp. "Hsst, lass! I'll have none of that curse talk in this holy place."

That was because he believed it. According to the old tales, a white witch, disgusted with Fiona's great-grandfather's temper and self-serving ways, had declared that from then on, every member of the MacLean family would be given tenuous control over something as tempestuous as they were -- the weather.

Whenever a MacLean lost his or her temper, lightning caused thatched houses to catch afire and made the ground tremble. Hail tore away the leaves of every tree and greenery within sight. Floods roared through the valley, ruining harvests, washing away homes and, sometimes, people.

When the people of the village saw clouds gathering at Castle MacLean on the hill, they huddled in their houses in fear.

Fiona closed her eyes. They were her people. *Hers*. Just as Callum had been her brother. She could not fail in this. If she did not defuse the situation, her brothers' fury would unthinkingly destroy everything.

The only way to break the curse was for every member of a generation to perform a "deed of great good." So far, no generation had succeeded. Perhaps this would count as Fiona's deed.

Fiona looked at the priest from beneath her lashes. "The curse has been proven time and again, Father."

The priest shoo...

Users Review

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