

Christmas Miracle

A MacLomain Tale

By

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"YOU'RE TRULY STAYING then?" she murmured between kisses.

"Aye, lass." Aidan lifted Keara onto a stone wall. The meager remnants of what was once MacLomain Castle. "I don't belong in medieval Scotland anymore but with you."

"Won't you miss your family, though?"

"I'm a time traveler," he reminded as he came between her thighs. "I can always return to visit. We both can. And will. After we finish writing the book about my clan's later years."

"Right. My warrior turned author." Her head fell back as he nibbled his way up her delicate neck and pressed his arousal against her damp center.

"It's a tale worth telling." His lips brushed over hers. "The love found between our clans across time." Her breathing increased as he stroked her breast. "Your Broun heritage."

"And your MacLomains," she gasped when he squeezed her nipple.

Her thickly lashed eyes went soft, and her full lips fell open when he dug his hand into her silky brown hair. He'd never wanted a woman so much. Never needed her to the point he could barely think.

"Aidan," she whispered when their eyes locked.

He knew what she wanted. Needed. They were both desperate.

"I love you, lass," he said softly. "Marry me."

Their eyes held and seconds felt like days as he waited. Would she say yes or no? Was it too soon?

"Yes," she whispered then cleared her throat and nodded before answering again. "God, yes."

Happiness surged through him. Untouchable, unequivocal, all-encompassing happiness.

They groaned against each other's lips as he thrust and filled her.

"It seems we'll be experiencing some turbulence. Please fasten your seatbelts."

Ripped from his dream, Aidan jolted awake at the pilot's words and glanced out the airplane window. Sweeping, black-bellied clouds bubbled ahead. A dark and ominous caldron filled with flashes of white lightning.

"Well, that doesn't look too good," came a gruff voice.

Aidan glanced at the old man next to him. Had he been there when they took off? He could've sworn the seat was empty.

The man nodded at Aidan's hand. "That's a fine ring you've got there."

His eyes dropped to the Claddagh ring in his hand, and he closed his fist. When did he take it out of his pocket?

"Is it for a lass then?"

Aidan might've been in the twenty-first century for months now, but he was from a time when strangers weren't to be trusted. So he only offered a nod and stared out the window, remembering the day he had the ring made.

It was the day he met Keara.

She'd been leaning against a massive oak tree that stood beside where his clan's castle once was. All he could see was her profile. Though her hair was tied back, wind blew loose tendrils

around her shoulders as she wrote furiously in a journal. Every once in a while she'd stop and stare out over the choppy loch. Lost in thought, she never saw him lean against the opposite side of the tree. Notepad in hand, he jotted down notes. Random things that made no sense because he was so wrapped up in thoughts of the woman behind him.

"It's a beautiful day to write," he eventually said.

"It is, isn't it?" she responded.

That's all it took. Having never seen one another's face they began to chat. First about the weather then their surroundings. Then far more. Two perfect strangers content to meet through words alone. She was American. He was Scottish. They loved to write. In fact, they were both doing research for a book. The only difference? He'd lived through what she was researching.

Thirteenth century Scotland.

But those conversations came much later.

"So I have a feeling you already know what I look like," she finally said. "But I wonder what you look like."

Aidan shrugged and smiled. "Likely not your type."

"I dunno," she said softly. "I like the things you've said so I'd say you're pretty hot."

"The things I've said give you the impression I'm hot?"

"Sure. You sound like a good guy." He heard the smile in her voice. "And I can't imagine that deep voice not belonging to..."

When she trailed off, he moved around and leaned against the tree, inches from her.

"Not belonging to?" he prompted.

"You," she whispered as her beautiful eyes met his. That was it. He knew in that singular moment that she was meant for him. A love found across time just like so many Brouns and MacLomains before. After that, it was a romantic whirlwind. Non-stop. Passionate. Sleepless nights making love.

The pilot's words crackled through the speaker and tore him from his thoughts. "It's going to get a little bumpier than expected folks."

Aidan frowned at the flashing seatbelt sign. Though he could've easily traveled to Keara via the Standing Stones, he was determined to fly at least once. Maybe that had been a big mistake.

His eyes fell to the ring again, and he wished he'd given it to her sooner. But he wanted to wait until tonight. Christmas Eve. A means to seal their betrothal, not in Scotland but where they would start their life together. America.

"Mind if I take a closer look at your ring?" the old man asked.

When their eyes met, the man shrugged. "It reminds me of a family heirloom." Blue eyes twinkling, he smiled. "I promise it will only be for a moment."

Something about the guy reminded him of his clan's former patriarch. A wizard named Adlin. But that was impossible. He died years ago.

Though cautious, Aidan found himself handing it over.

The man studied it, murmuring, "It's similar, indeed." Then he winked at Aidan. "All it needs is a gem in the middle of the hand-held heart."

Aidan narrowed his eyes. Because of his clan's Irish ancestry, many Claddagh rings had brought together true love between Brouns and MacLomains. All had gems at their centers. But not this one. Having been born to Shane, a man from this era who traveled back in time, Aidan possessed no magic like his Scottish kin. Those that the rings were meant for. So when he met Keara, his heart spoke to him, and he hired a jeweler to create the ring to his specifications.

The old man tucked the ring back in Aidan's hand and met his eyes. "Might the wearer of this ring forever hold your heart, laddie."

He was about to respond when the plane lurched. Everything outside was inky and sinister. Again, he felt like a fool for not traveling through the Standing Stones. But he'd wanted to do things the normal twenty-first century way. He wanted to have that moment at the airport when he swung Keara around then kissed her soundly.

The pilot's broken voice came through again. "Seatbelts...oxygen mask...you first, then your child."

His eyes shot to the old man only to find him gone. He looked up and down the aisle. Nothing. There was no way the guy could've made it to the bathroom so quickly.

The plane jumped a few times then lurched. Lights flickered. Oxygen masks fell. The cabin went wild. A little girl raced down the aisle. *Bloody hell*. He might not possess magic, but he'd always been a protector of the innocent.

By the time he reached her, the plane was going down fast. The lights flickered off. It took years of training in battle to keep his balance as he struggled against the force of gravity. Yet he managed to get the girl belted into the nearest seat seconds before the plane started to nosedive.

It felt as if they dropped ten thousand feet in an instant.

This couldn't be happening. He banked fear and tried to remain calm, tried to make sense of his surroundings. But it all happened too fast, too tragically. He clutched the ring and made one last wish as the plane careened and reality blew away.

He wanted to hold Keara one more time.

One Year Later

New Hampshire

"Last but not least," Keara murmured as she stood on her tip-toes and placed the angel carefully atop the Christmas tree. It wobbled, but she kept her hand steady. This topper wasn't going anywhere. Not if she could help it. And it didn't.

But she did.

Unfortunately, when she leaned back to admire her work, the step stool gave way. Instead of crashing to the hardwood floor, she landed gently.

"Are you okay, lass?"

Keara froze as she stared up at the glittering tree. Her chest tightened. She knew that deep, rumbling voice.

The radio played, "Do you hear what I hear?" How ironic.

"God, you're bloody beautiful."

She jumped up, spun and scanned her small house. Totally empty. Of course, it was. Who had she expected to see? Him? A man that couldn't possibly be here? Turning down the radio, she held her breath and eyed the room again. Just to be sure.

Still empty.

Keara picked up the step stool and quelled a wave of sadness. Decorating this year had been super tough. But she refused to let grief win. A normal person who had suffered her loss would likely shun Christmas. Not her. Routine was everything. It was the only way to keep going. To remain sane.

As always, she had three blue candles burning in the bay window beside the tree. One for the day she met the love of her life. The second for day he proposed. The third? For the day she lost him.

"I've missed you so much, Keara."

This time, she spun three times and studied everything carefully. No one loomed within the corners. What the heck? Oddly enough, she didn't panic.

"Why do you look so confused?"

His voice. That brogue.

"Aidan?" she whispered and stared at the Christmas tree. His voice came from that direction. Didn't it? Maybe she hit her head when she fell after all. She blinked, praying that this was somehow real. Let him appear. Let the past year have been one long nightmare.

Then it happened. A flicker. A glimmer. Then more. Her knees nearly buckled when a hazy form shimmered near the candles.

"You knew I was coming," he said softly.

Her mouth fell open. It couldn't be. Could it? Instead of falling weak-limbed to the floor, she took a step forward. Then another and another. Was she dreaming? Was he real?

The form shifted, became even clearer. Tall. Broad. Black hair. She didn't know what to think. He was dead. Fear should cripple. But it didn't. "Aidan, is that you?"

He faltered for a moment, confused. "Aye, last time I checked." Then he smiled that slow, sexy smile she never thought she'd see again. "I've missed the hell out of you, sweetheart."

Keara moved closer, eager to touch the man almost fully formed. How was this possible? She didn't dare close her eyes lest he vanish. His features became more distinguishable. Those sensual lips. That strong jaw. His deep-set, piercing blue eyes.

"You can't be here," she whispered. "You're dead."

"Dead?" he said, clearly perplexed.

He still wasn't...whole. She clenched her fists and swallowed. "Are you haunting me?"

"Haunting you?" His brows drew together. "I don't understand."

"Neither do I," she murmured. All she knew was that she didn't want him to vanish. Not for a second. Any amount of time with him, no matter how insane, meant the world. Oh, but to touch him again.

"I look forward to reading what you've written so far," he said. "Have you gotten a hold of the Brouns on that ancestry website you found?"

"No," she whispered. It had been the information she found on that site that led her to pursue the clan connections to begin with. The reason she'd gone to Scotland. After she met Aidan and struggled through the astounding fact that he was from another century, she no longer sought out her bloodline.

No, she was far too busy falling in love.

"Actually, I've barely started writing," she murmured.

"I'm here now." Concern flickered in his eyes. "We'll write together."

She nodded, remembering the tales he spun, the fantastical history. Time travel. Romance. Magic. All revolving around the endless connection between their clans.

"Have you outlined the characters? Do they face the same difficulties as your brother?" he asked.

Her brother had gone blind. The very reason she'd sought her family lineage to begin with. Interestingly enough, Aidan's tales told of amazing women from this century that faced the same sort of life-altering disabilities. Women who'd traveled back in time to medieval Scotland and

found love. In his own way, Aidan had helped her cope with what her brother faced as he shared their incredible tales.

"Yeah, I've outlined everything." She nodded. "What the Broun heroines faced and how their MacLomains helped them through it."

"Good." He reached out. "Come here, lass. I need to touch you." Though the air only grew colder, her blood heated when he murmured, "It feels like it's been such a long time."

If he only knew.

As of today, it had been a solid year since she lost him. Fresh pain gripped when she remembered hearing the news. His plane had gone down over the Atlantic.

There had been no survivors.

Now he hovered before her, not quite a full man, but still the Aidan she remembered.

"Why do you look so baffled, Keara? You knew I was coming."

Tears sprang to her eyes, but she blinked them away. It was obvious he didn't know he was dead. "Yes," she whispered. "I knew you were coming, Aidan."

He moved forward a fraction. "Why won't you let me touch you?"

Though his family apparently possessed magic, he did not. But maybe something had happened on that plane. Maybe they'd somehow saved him. She had always hoped. That's why she lit the candles every night. So he could find her. When they melted down, she bought more. Sure, it sounded silly but heck, if you were going to believe in time travel, why not believe that...

His soft words interrupted her thoughts. "You carried on the tradition we started in my flat with the candles."

"Yes." She nodded and blinked away more tears.

Because she had to fly home a few weeks before Christmas, they'd celebrated their own little yuletide beforehand. She baked him her grandma's homemade cookies. He fashioned a circle of evergreens for her to wear on her head like they did in his era at Christmastide.

The cookies became part of festive bed play and the evergreens? Well, they ended up crushed beneath their entwined, nude bodies.

Later that night he woke her and nodded outside. It was snowing. He rummaged through a drawer until he found three blue candles that he lit and placed in the window beside his angel topped tree. Then he sat against the wall with her cuddled on her lap. His voice was gentle and his eyes adoring as he looked at her.

"One of those candles is for the day we met. One is for the day you agreed to be my wife."

"And the third?" she murmured, trailing an interested finger up his muscular bicep.

"The third is for the day we begin our life in America."

Her eyes shot back to him as his words from the past became his present words.

"And now I'm here," he said softly, his eyes as intense, lustful and loving as they had been before.

Keara felt no fear. She didn't care what made sense. Having him here was more than she could've ever hoped for.

So she ran into his arms...

Only to roll back in time mere minutes.

Once more, she was trying to steady the angel tree topper, and once more she fell off the step stool. This time, she hit the hardwood floor pretty hard. This time, "Do you hear what I hear?" played louder.

No. No. No. She sat up, and her eyes swept around the room.

Nothing.

Nobody was here.

Keara clutched her stomach as pain rolled through her. Soul deep, unavoidable pain. This was too much. Too devastating. Her throat thickened. Breathing became impossible. While she tried to fight it, she could no longer escape.

She cried.

For the first time since he died.

Lost, on auto-pilot, she moved at some point. Mindless, she sat on the couch with an untouched glass of red wine on the table beside her as she stared blankly at the television. *I need him back. This can't be happening*. He came to her somehow. From beyond. And though he didn't seem to know it, she took it as a sign. Jaw set, she did something that most might think crazy.

She played a recording of the news coverage following Aidan's plane going down. The reporter in her black suit. The eagerness and excitement in her eyes as she shared something that had rocked Keara's world.

Flight 222 went down.

No survivors.

A hum came from the Christmas tree, but she ignored it, lost in misery she'd never allowed herself. The hum increased, became more determined. *Damn it*. She growled, turned off the television and stood. The hum ceased, and the wind whipped up outside, caking snow higher on the windowpanes.

The foyer that hosted the tree and candles was as empty as before. Still, her eager eyes scanned everything. Maybe he would appear again. Maybe she wasn't certifiable.

But no. All remained as it was. Tired of loss, tired of a holiday that she could no longer handle, she blew out the candles and turned off the Christmas tree lights only to have the angel on top stay lit. Keara stared up at the plastic figure and wiped away a fresh round of tears. Why did it stay on? She needed it off. So she went around the back of the tree and yanked all the cords from the wall.

Still, the angel remained lit.

And the candles flickered back to life.

Beyond upset, done with the idea that she'd connected with the dead, she blew out the candles and glared up at the angel. "Turn off! He died. They all died. Unless you can undo that, don't shine!"

Yet the angel shone.

And the candles flickered back to life.

What the hell? This was too much. Way too much.

She fell to her knees and groaned. Why was this happening? The pain was too intense. Aidan was gone. It had been a cruel reminder tonight, imagining she'd seen his ghost. She stared at the angel through tears and ended up crying not only for Aidan but all of them, for an innocent flight of people.

The angel flickered and the tree lights turned on. Then the radio.

"Do you hear what I hear?" blared again then quieted before continuing. "Way up in the sky, little lamb, do you see what I see? A star, a star, dancing in the night."

Keara raised her head when the candles spit.

"What the?" she whispered and came to her feet. A ring with two hands holding a crowned heart sat at the base of one of the candles. She picked it up and narrowed her eyes on the stone at the center. It was a striking shade of blue. Just like Aidan's eyes.

"Where did you come from?" she murmured as she slid it on. Her eyes widened when the stone glowed.

The television came on, and she turned. The same woman who had originally reported the crash appeared, just as frazzled, just as intense as the first time. "There are more survivors than anyone could have anticipated! They were floating in the water on...well, folks, what I'm hearing is that they were floating on large, glowing rafts. So many alive!"

Keara staggered and gripped the edge of the sofa. This couldn't be real. But it was based on the date. Not a year ago but...today. The reporter went on saying how what looked to be the whole plane had somehow, through the grace of God, survived.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

Her eyes flew to the front door.

As if seeking some sort of supernatural certainty, she looked to the angel. It glowed brightly. As did the candles. The knock came again. Legs wobbly, she made her way to the door and leaned her head against it. There was no way she was going to open it and find him. That would make no sense. She breathed deeply and prayed. *Just open the door and find out who's there*. Courage rallied, she flung it open.

And there he was.

Just like she remembered him.

Aidan MacLomain.

Gorgeous, perfect and not transparent in the least.

They stared at each other for several long moments.

"I dreamt of you," he whispered. "The plane went down then I dreamt I was here. I could see the candles in your window." He strode in as though eager to return yet he didn't look around. He only had eyes for her. "Why am I here? I feel like I've been dreaming a thousand dreams and every one of you."

Keara tried to speak, but nothing came out. So she tried again. "You were here, then you weren't. I don't know." She went to touch him but stopped and whispered, "I wished for you to be here. I prayed for a miracle and now..."

Aidan's expression remained locked in confusion, disbelief, a moment before his eyes fell to her ring. "How?" he started, his words fading away.

She looked at the ring and shook her head.

"That ring." He took her hand and reeled her closer. "I had it made for you. How did you get it?"

Before she could respond, he shook his head and put a finger to her lips. "It doesn't matter. It found its way to the right lass." He pulled her even closer. "Somehow I've been here before. With you. After my plane went down. We talked about your brother and writing." Pain flickered across his face as he cupped her cheek and the medieval brogue he rarely used erupted. "I never thought I would see ye again, my wee lass. I thought I'd met my end."

"Me too." A tear rolled down her cheek as the stone in the ring blazed between them. "But now I'm thinking..."

When her voice broke on a sob, he pressed his forehead against hers and whispered, "Dinnae think a moment longer. You're here. I'm here. We've been given a second chance. The life we thought lost to us."

They should talk. They should try to understand. But none of that happened. Instead, when his lips brushed over hers, desire erupted. There were a million things she needed to make sense of, but the feel of his long lost kiss tore them all away. Was he real? She clutched him. Heaven above, he *was* real.

"Hell, I've missed you so bloody much," he muttered as he walked her backward until they landed on the sofa. This...them, shouldn't exist. But she knew without question that he was truly here. This time, she didn't question his solidity. How could she? Too many hard, chiseled muscles were being revealed as they yanked at each other's clothing, desperate to touch skin. She pulled off his shirt. He tore off her robe. She worked at his fly. He ripped away her bra and panties.

When their flesh met, they groaned.

He smelled the same. Masculine. Spicy. Delicious.

Their tongues tangled as their kisses intensified. Frenzied, determined, they groped and stroked. Fired, impassioned, he growled as he made his way down her body. Nothing went untouched. He might've only been in the twenty-first century for six months before his plane went down, but his fingers were still rough from wielding weapons. So wonderfully rough, abrasive and arousing as they skimmed her soft skin.

Yet they couldn't touch the talent of his mouth when he held down her hips and devoured the long-abandoned area between her legs. She arched and cried out when he made her remember just how much he enjoyed the taste of her.

"Aidan," she gasped and arched, trying to squirm away from overwhelming sensations.

But he locked her down and had his fill. She might've been screaming, but his groans of pleasure far outdid hers. The vibrations coming from him intensified the sensations whiplashing through her, and she squirmed some more, eager to embrace yet escape the pinnacle he drove her toward.

Too late.

Everything exploded and her body locked up. Yet still he meant to torture. He came up fast, grabbed the arm of the couch over her head and wrapped an arm beneath one knee. Then he watched her, the desire in his eyes palpable. The pure, unabashed need.

She understood.

He wanted her to enjoy her release.

"No. Please. Now," she managed to gasp.

Aidan understood and thrust, plunging deep.

Caught in the thralls of release, she bucked. But his body was a cage and she was his prisoner. Every muscle throbbed and fluttered as he drove home and made her his.

Their eyes again connected. Everything they'd lost, the long year that separated them, vanished. They'd found one another again. Nothing else mattered.

Then his hips began to move.

Just a fraction at first. Just enough that her trembling legs slowly rose. Inch by inch as her climax didn't quite fade but slowly rekindled. Bit by bit, more and more. A spiking fever rushed through her. Owned her. Just like him. It thrummed and rolled through them so strongly they clutched at each other.

"Keara," he groaned close to her ear.

He was eager. She was desperate. They were relentless.

"Aidan," she groaned back, relishing the heat burning between them, the slickening of their taxed bodies.

Then it was all growls, moans and pants as they didn't just move but writhed and thrust against each other. She wrapped her legs around his waist and scraped her nails down his back. The air felt a zillion degrees above normal.

In. Out. Better and better.

His hips moved and ground and circled. Close. Closer. So close. Then bam...

Keara grabbed his ass and screamed, "Aidan!" before everything exploded. She burst wide open. With a savage roar and a final thrust, he followed, the heavy throbs of his release following her right into oblivion.

For a long time, they held one another as they slowly relaxed. Drifted down. Relished being close. Sunk into the feeling of holding each other.

"Like I said, this is truly amazing, folks."

Label that an understatement. But the voice wasn't hers. It was the reporter on television. Keara frowned and sat up. When she reached for the remote to shut it off, Aidan shook his head. "Wait."

Eyes on the annoying woman that had ruined her life a year earlier, she grunted reluctantly as he sat up and pulled her onto his lap.

"We don't need to watch this anymore—" she started.

The volume on the television increased and the reporter cut off Keara's words. "What makes this truly amazing is that this flight vanished a year ago, but all the survivors are surfacing. No one knows how this is possible!"

"Bloody hell," Aidan whispered, eyes on the screen.

"What?" she said.

"That man holding the little girl." He nodded at the screen. "He sat next to me on the plane, and she was the girl I tried to save..."

"Really?"

The old man handed the girl over to someone, looked directly at the camera and winked.

Almost as if he winked at them.

"We've been given a gift, lass." Aidan's gaze fell to her ring before he met her eyes. "Maybe from God. Maybe even from my MacLomains."

"We have." She nodded and whispered, "An amazing gift."

"Do you know how much I love you?" he said softly.

Keara couldn't stop the curl of her lips. "As much as I love you."

"Aye." He kissed the back of her hand, eyes locked on hers. "So are you ready to pick up where we left off? Will you marry me and write a series of books with me?"

"A series?"

"Aye." He smiled. "The MacLomain's later years require a few tales. Grand adventures with wizards, witches, dragon-shifters and multiple bad guys. Stories of triumph that should be shared with the world."

Her muse flared at the possibilities. "That sounds complicated."

"Och," he whispered, peppering kisses along her jaw. "We MacLomains are complicated."

"And we Brouns?"

He pulled back, met her eyes and cupped the side of her neck, so much affection in his gaze she nearly melted. "Tis easy that. You're the love of our bloody lives."

Keara searched for breath but only found Aidan's eyes. Love lost but found.

Her Christmas miracle.

The electricity snuffed out but the angel and candles still glowed.

A reminder that their love still burned brightly. Now, tomorrow and every day to follow.

The End

Read what Aidan and Keara wrote when they penned <u>The MacLomain Series: Later Years</u>. Or start at the beginning of the MacLomain saga in <u>The MacLomain Series: Early Years</u>. Eager to catch a glimpse of Aidan before he found true love in modern day America? Visit him in <u>The MacLomain Series: Next Generation</u>.

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Highland Muse

About the Author

Sky Purington is the bestselling author of over twenty-five novels and several novellas. A New Englander born and bred, Sky was raised hearing stories of folklore, myth and legend. When combined with a love for nature, romance and time-travel, elements from the stories of her youth found release in her books.

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