

It is my turn to spin a tale. The one that I will tell you now is about a handsome, young Englishman who has traveled to the highlands of Scotland. His main agenda here is to talk to, or persuade actually the leader of the McCabe clan to stop the raids he has planned for the English settlers in the lowlands. The king of England had been getting numerous reports of men dressed in skirts up to their knees running through the settlements destroying everything they found in their path. The king was getting tired of the complaints so he send his best man to deal with the people he considered savages.

The man he sent was Marcus Douglas. Born to one of the old aristocrat families of England, Marcus as well known not because of his way of life but by the way he came by that life. He has been working for the king since he was seventeen. He was raised by the king's household after the death of his parents when he was still very young. Marcus had a rebellious spirit and because of it, he was always sent away for schooling.

Marcus grew into a very handsome young man, well loved by the girls of society. But Marcus only interest was where he would be sent to for his next adventure. That's one thing he was admired for, the stories that he told about his adventures away at school. And like all the other time Marcus was ready for this new quest.

He traveled to Scotland by ship and he thought it was the most beautiful country he had ever seen. The green mountains against the clear blue sky and he

could see openings that glowed in the sun, which showed where the rivers ran.

The air of this country seemed cleaner than the one over England and the place seemed almost peaceful. But this was what he saw from the ship. As he got closer he could see smokes rising from burning buildings and people rushing back and forth trying to put the fires out.

When the ship docked the men on board rushed off to help the others. Without thinking Marcus followed the men to help. They were able to put out the fires before any great damage was done or anyone got hurt. It turned out that the McCabes as most of the people called them, came down from out of the mountains and started burning the settlement. When they saw the ship coming in with the English flag flying high and proud, they fled.

Marcus was given a *decent* welcome, due to the circumstances. He was asked by the settlement leader to stay at his house for the night. Marcus was planning on spending the night aboard the ship, so he figured anything would've been better than spending another night in the close quarters of his cabin on the ship. When Marcus told the leader, Patrick Spencer why he was in Scotland they became immediate friends. Patrick told Marcus about the problems they've been having with the McCabes and why it started. He told Marcus about different occasions on which people were attacked while traveling from another settlement to his. "It seems like we are the only ones being

attacked. We have heard of no other settlement who are having problems with the highlanders”

“Why do you think that they would target one set of people more than another?”

“I don’t know but most of the people are planning to move somewhere else. You see, we settled here because it seemed like a good place to have a port and we all wanted somewhere for our own but after year of working hard and trying to survive it seem impossible to live here when every time we build something, someone comes and tears it down.”

They talked for a long time and then Marcus bid his host and friend good night, so that he could be up early in the morning for his journey to the highlands. When he awoke in the morning his horse was saddled and his thing packed and ready to go. Holding the horse’s reins was a young man, no older than fifteen and an older man sitting in his saddle. The older man introduced them as, “Peter and Paul, at your service sir.” They told him that they were to accompany him on his trip to the highlands. Peter, the older of the two was to be the guide and cook, while Paul; his little brother took care of the camp chores.

The journey was long and mostly up hill but Marcus didn’t complain neither did his companions. They traveled for days across wide green meadows, around narrow cliff hangs, crossing beautiful streams and through the forest with its high canopy trees in which animals lived.

One day when they left the forest to enter another meadow they met a strange group of men. The men were taller than average sitting on mounts that made them look like gods. Their hairs were unkempt and hung just below their shoulder blades. They wore strange clothes if that's what you could call it. A piece of cloth that went around their waist and over their shoulder with a very beautiful shining pin that kept it in place. They wore no shirt and their arm muscles bulged. The linen stopped just below their knees and exposed strong legs. They wore boots and a belt around their waist.

They all had bows and arrows, a very large sword and a knife that showed just above their boots. The leader rode up to Marcus and said his name was Robert McCabe; they were all men of the McCabe clan. "The scouts saw you coming in the distance so we decided to ride out and meet you. What are you doing this far from the lowlands and on McCabes' land at that?"

"I have traveled from England by the king's order to talk to the leader of the McCabe's clan," said Marcus.

They all looked at each other but said nothing. Marcus and his companions were escorted through the settlement just outside of a large castle surrounded by even larger walls. But what Marcus found strange was that no one was guarding the walls. They crossed the draw bridge and entered into a massive courtyard where children were playing. When they saw the men of the clan returning they ran up to the riders' horses laughing and shouting loudly.

But when they saw Marcus, they went silent. Robert dismounted and gave his reins to one of the children then instructed Marcus and his men to do the same.

They were led into the castle but had to move faster than their normal pace to keep up with the man's lengthy strides. Inside, the walls of the castle were bare and cold as if no one lived there. They went through the grand hall, where two huge tables were set with chairs on either side. Marcus then found himself at the back of the castle leading up to a slight slope, where he received the shock of his life. In the valley below were hundreds of men practicing with various weapons. Robert kept walking but Marcus didn't follow, he was so caught up in the view that he stood their eyes wide, mouth open, looking like an idiot.

Robert was talking to a man with silver hair that shone in the sun. They looked at Marcus once then continued their conversation. The men in the field were all built like giants. Muscles bulging everywhere and they all wore the knee length skirts. Marcus was so caught up with the scene that he didn't see Robert appear with the elderly man at his side. Up close he didn't look old at all, except for his silver hair; he was just like the others. Long, flowing hair, body like a rock, tan skin and he was also wearing that stupid skirt.

He introduced himself as Eric McCabe, leader of the McCabe's clan. "Shall we go inside and talk Mr . . . .?"

"Douglas. Marcus Douglas."

“Well Mr. Douglas shall we?” Marcus followed the Eric back down the slope, inside the castle and up a flight of stairs into yet another naked room. They sat by the fire as if they were old friends being reunited after a long time apart. Marcus spoke first, “I was sent by my king to discuss a very important matter. My king has received numerous complaints from the people in the settlement by the sea about the amount of raids they were experiencing. Nothing was ever stolen but buildings were burnt and whoever got in their way was killed.”

“How are you so sure that they are men from my clan? There are a lot of clans in these highlands.”

“I witness one of the raids when I first got here, I wasn’t close enough to see any of the men but they were all big men and wore your colors, and your name was the one that the people at the settlement mentioned.”

“Are you aware that most of the kilts here are alike and one color could be the only thing that tells us apart? But enough of this nonsense, how did you find us?”

“Peter and Paul brought me here.”

“Aye, ‘Peter and Paul at your service,’ they are good men, often bring us things from the settlements. I’m sure you didn’t tell Peter why you were coming here or else he would have laughed at you and called you stupid. He knows that we never attack settlements. You didn’t tell him the reason for your quest here, did you?”

Eric chuckled when Marcus shook his head no.

That night there was a grand celebration in Marcus' honor. He was presented with gifts and was entertained with music and dances. The people dined at the large tables but not in the manner that Marcus was use to. He watched them for a while, seeing how they dug into their food, they way that they talked with food in their mouth and they never let go of their mug which was always filled with ale. Everything was new to Marcus and so he saw everything.

He was introduced to Eric's children, a beautiful little angel for a daughter and the devil himself for her twin brother. They were complete opposites but always together. Eric had a bigger daughter but she was away with her mother, visiting her mother's clan. She, he would meet in the morning.

Marcus was wakening by the sound of someone moving around in his room. He looked up to see an old woman struggling to fill a huge tub with water. He got up to help her but fell back in his bed when the door open and young lady strolled in followed by and older woman scolding her. Her long midnight black hair, which flowed down her back, shone in the light coming in through the window making it look almost blue. It cupped her lovely heart shaped face which held her small straight nose, full lips and her which looked to be grey but at this moment was turning black like a storm in the night.

She strode to the bed, looked down at him, nodded then left the room. The older woman did not follow her out. She also came to the bed and stared at him. She smiled then started to talk. "My name is Margot McCabe, she is Louise and the grumpy girl that just left is my daughter Andra. Welcome to our home. Sorry I wasn't here to last night to give you a proper welcome, so today you get a warm bath."

"Thank you and a pleasure to meet you Mrs. . . ."

"Oh no child, it's just Margot. I shall leave you now to your bath and meet you down stairs when you are ready." With that she left, followed closely by Louise.

Marcus took his shower, and then hunted around the room for his clothes but he couldn't find them. Louise returned carrying a long colorful plaid across her arm. She was humming to herself while she laid the plaid out on the bed. She then turned to Marcus and started dressing him. He stood there while she dressed him, he looked at himself when she was done and laughed. He felt naked from the waist down but didn't complain because it was all an adventure for him.

When he finally went down stairs he was greeted by Margot, who led him into the grand hall. They were served breakfast by Louise and ate in silence. After the meal he went out back to watch the men in the field. Robert greeted him then with a smile that he tried to hide. Marcus had forgotten that he



was dressed in the skirt he despised so much. They went down to the field where all the men stop to stare at him with the same silly smile on their face.

At the other end of the field, Eric stood by the young lady who had bust into his room this morning. Marcus walked towards them, with his back straight because he could hear some of the men who could contain themselves any longer laughing. When he got to them, he could see that the young lady called Andra looked even more deadly than they did this morning. She stood there for a while then turned and walked away.

“That is my daughter, Andra,” Eric said with a bit of humor in his voice, “but it seems like you two have already met. I must say that look very dashing in your outfit” with that he started to laugh along with all the men on the field.

Marcus had just return from his daily ride, when he saw the men riding in at break neck speed. When they got closer he realized that Robert was carrying someone across the front of his saddle. It was Paul. Next to them Peter’s faced was drawn taunt and he look like he could fall out of his saddle at any moment. Marcus went beside just as he swayed and fell. Robert took Paul inside, while Marcus and man called Ian carried Peter.

Peter and Paul slept for three days with Peter waking up regularly but not for long. They had both lost a lot of blood and were fighting for their life. When Peter was finally able to stay awake, he asked Marcus to get Eric and

return as soon as he could, it was important. Marcus found Eric out in field as usual. He told him that Peter was awake and was asking for him. Both men walked to Peter's room in lengthy strides.

"It's good to see that you're finally awake Peter. How do you feel?"

"Like I was trampled by a horse." He said wearily. "You have problem Eric."

"What kind of problem?"

"Imposters my friend. They wear your colors and attack the settlements. They attacked the settlement again and then they attacked Paul and me on our way here. We got a few wounds before I got away. We managed to ride as far as to where I knew the scouts were stationed. Robert met us just as Paul fell from his horse."

"How many?"

"Three attacked us but I saw about twelve of them in the settlement."

Eric finished his conversation with Peter, checked on Paul then told Marcus to follow him. They left room and walked down the huge hallway. Eric stopped at the top of the stairs to tell a young led to summon Robert and Ian to his office, the he continued his journey.

"I guess you were right about the attacks but I don't believe it was any of my men else Peter would have recognized them." He paced in front of the fire place until the men entered, then he turned to face them. Both men had seen him

leave the training field and was wondering if something had gone wrong with Peter or Paul.

“I told you why Marcus was here and we all had a good laugh out of it but it turns out that he was right. There have been attacks on the settlements and then men who did it were wearing our plaid. The same men attacked Peter and Paul.” Ian’s face lost its color while Robert’s turned a bright red. Ian was the first to say something.

“If I ever catch one of them, his death will be worst than anything the English king can come up with. How could they?” no one spoke. Every man was with his own thought.

Andra came into the room at that moment. “Father, how is Peter and Paul?”

“Peter is awake but Paul is still sleeping. They’re both doing fine. How was your ride, did you meet anyone along the way?”

“No, why?” Eric told his daughter, how Peter and Paul came to be injured and her comment on how to kill them was worst than Ian’s.

Men rode out the next day in groups to search the area. Andra was left in charge of the clan. She still hated Marcus but he had no idea why. She never spoke to him except for the one time that she told him that he looked like scrawny mangy mutt and if it was up to her he would not be wearing the clan’s plaid. He

never understood her because everyone seemed to like him just fine, especially the young maidens.

A week later Robert's and Eric's group returned except Eric was not there.

"Where is father?" Andra asked as soon as Robert was in the courtyard.

Robert looked as if someone had just shot his favorite horse.

"I'm sorry Andra, he's with Ian." Andra let out the breath she was holding with a loud whoosh.

"You don't understand Andra," Robert continued, "Ian is the leader of the rebels who are terrorizing the settlements."

"What? So why is father out there with him? Why didn't you bring them back? Why . . ."

"Ian has an army. We met by the stream south of here to plan our next move. We had just settled down when the scouts gave us the signal that we had company, what they didn't know was that we were surrounded. They came in from all direction and that when Ian knocked your father out and threaten to kill him if we made another move. We sat there until your father came through and Ian gave his demand. So he let us go but said he would keep your father until . . ." he stopped talking. Andra and her mother who had come outside when the men rode in were both standing paled faced.

"Until what?" Marcus asked. Robert looked at him as if just realizing that he was standing there.

“Until I bring Andra to him.” Robert said without looking at any of them.

“No, no, you are not taking my daughter!” Margot yelled running to Andra’s side.

“Mother, I have to go, he has dad. Don’t worry I’ll be fine, the men will be riding with me.”

“That the other part, only one other man can go with you other than me.” Robert looked even worst than he did before.

“You can not be serious!” Andra exploded.

“He said that if he saw anyone else he would kill your father and everyone one else then he would turn to the rest of the clan.”

“Okay let’s ride, Marcus get your horse ready, you’re riding with us.”

“Andra you’re not seriously planning on going alone, are you?”

“No, you and Robert are coming with me”

“Is she always like this?” Marcus asked Margot.

“Just like her father brave.”

“And stupid.”

The three of them rode away from the castle, heading south towards the settlements. They rode way into the night until they couldn’t see anymore. None of them wanted to sleep but it made no sense putting their horses in danger of a broken leg. Early the next morning they were more than anxious to get going. They had no plan as to how they were going to rescue Eric and come away alive.

That they stopped to make plans, not wanting to walk blind into a trap.  
But it was no use because Ian' men met them their as soon as they got settled.  
They stayed there for the night and were escorted to Ian in the morning.

What they found was a small settlement. The people wore different plaids but they all seem to have a piece of the McCabe's plaid on them. They were led through the settlement towards what seemed to be the biggest house there. As soon as they got to the house, Ian stepped out. When he saw Andra ha smiled so wide his face might have splitting half if it went any wider.

"Welcome o my home, soon to be yours too Andra."

"Your home?"

"Yes, this is my clan, my people, my home'

"You're a McCabe, you belong on McCabe's land" he loud so loud the horses started prancing about.

"My dear, your dad was always so good at keeping secretes, I can't believe he never told you,"

"Tell me what?"

"I am not a McCabe; I am a McLaren, the last one actually. I was at your father's clan training to become a warrior and leader of my clan, when we got the news that there was a massacre and everyone in my clan was killed. I stayed with your father but now I think it's time for the McLarens to rise again. We are all outcast here. Exiled from their clan, abandoned, the last of their clan or

wanted. But you, my dear Andra, will give me my son the first of the true McLarens.”

“I would rather die a thousand deaths than have your child, Ian.”

“You might think differently after this Andra. You, your father and Robert is here. There is no one the lead your men incase of an attack. You are in my territory now, surrounded by men I could simple have you killed.”

“You bastard!”

‘You also might want to watch your tongue, seeing that I can make your life a living hell from now on.”

The wedding ceremony was suppose to take place that night and Eric was to attend so that he could not say his daughter was not married and attack them. The ceremony went without any problems, the celebration was wonderful, and then the bride and groom retired for the night.

“How about a toast to our new life, and an even more wonderful future?”

Andra said sweetly to Ian

“Aye, a toast, to you my beautiful Andra, may you be the most obedient wife that will give me as many sons as I need.” Then he drank down his wine. When he was done he dropped the glass, held his throat and stared wide eyed at Andra.

“What have you done to me?” he wheezed between coughs.

“I told you I would rather die than having your children but since you are dying that works too”

“You witch!” he yelled coming at her but she side stepped him and he fell on his face. He didn’t have the strength to get up, so he just lied there staring at her.

“You have betrayed the people who took care of you, you have used the clans plaid to give us a bad name and you will never have Me.” with that she walked from the tent and ran straight into Marcus.

“What are you doing here?” she asked so startled she was shaking.

“I came to get you” he said

“Well you are a little late”

“Is that so?”

“Yep, let’s go home.”

Marcus, Andra, Robert, Eric and the people of the settlement returned to the McCabe’s land together. Ian’s body was burnt and his ashes spread. That night the celebration went way into the night for the safe return of their chief, future chief, a great warrior and he English man; also for the new addition to the clan.