

POST CARD



Glasgow Grace
MARION UECKERMANN

Glasgow Grace

Marion Ueckermann

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

Glasgow Grace

COPYRIGHT 2016 by Marion Ueckermann

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the author or Pelican Ventures, LLC except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

eBook editions are licensed for your personal enjoyment only. eBooks may not be re-sold, copied or given to other people. If you would like to share an eBook edition, please purchase an additional copy for each person you share it with.

Contact Information: titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version^(R), NIV^(R). Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.TM Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Cover Art by Nicola Martinez

White Rose Publishing, a division of Pelican Ventures, LLC
www.pelicanbookgroup.com PO Box 1738 *Aztec, NM * 87410

White Rose Publishing Circle and Rosebud logo is a trademark of Pelican Ventures, LLC

Publishing History

First White Rose Edition, 2016

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-521-0

Published in the United States of America

Dedication

For Noel...

Every day with you is another twenty-four hours
basking in the grace of Ephesians 5:25.

What People are Saying

Swoon-worthy romance set against the backdrop of breathtaking Scotland, combined with a powerful reminder of God's relentless grace makes this an inspiring, satisfying read.

~ Heidi McCahan, Author of *Unraveled*

Callum and Skye drew me into their lives as they faced problems, old and new, trying to discover if love transcends distance and time. *Glasgow Grace* is a delightful excursion into the atmosphere and brogues of Scotland. Marion Ueckermann charmed me again with her characters, setting, and voice.

~ Judith Robl, Author of *As Grandma Says*

Once again, Marion Ueckermann's writing transported me to another place. A magical bittersweet story with a truly beautiful ending, reminding me that our Creator is always in control.

~ Sarah Rowling, Reader

I fell in love with Callum and Skye right away. After reading *Glasgow Grace*, I wanted to pack my dancing shoes and head to Scotland for music and a shepherd's pie at McGuire's.

~ Janet Ferguson, Author, *Faith, Humor, Romance—Southern Style*

Glasgow Grace is another must read from Marion Ueckermann!

~ Diane Tatum, Author of *Gold Earrings*

1

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” ~ 2 Corinthians 12:9

That she'd miss spending a warm Christmas and New Year with family and friends this year mattered little to Skye Hunter. Even though she wasn't home, she was home. She could've sung an aria right there in the middle of Glasgow International Airport and let the myriad of holiday travelers know exactly how she felt about being back in bonnie Scotland.

Sixteen years. A lifetime.

She caught her breath. Surely, everything would be different. Everyone. People would've moved on with their lives...to other cities, maybe even other countries as she had. Not that she'd been given a choice in that matter. Nevertheless, her life had turned out well for the change.

But, she wasn't here to rekindle friendships.

Pushing a trolley laden with her baggage, she stepped outside to a gray monochrome sky. One thing had remained the same—the weather. Sheltered beneath the roof overhang, she hailed a taxi. She had so missed these black London-style vehicles.

Once she reached her hotel room, she'd need to call her mother—let her know her precious cargo, marked fragile, had arrived in one piece.

The fact that Rita Robinson hadn't followed Skye across the globe was a miracle. At least her stepfather's ill-health had one upside—it kept Mother home where she belonged.

How Skye would enjoy these months of freedom out from under her mother's thumb.

Snowflakes fell on the taxi driver's dark jacket as he hopped out of the vehicle. He groaned. "Awnaw-snaw."

Amused at his protest, her lips curved. She'd forgotten how Glaswegians lowered the pitch of their voices and strung their words together in one sentence.

As he loaded her suitcases into the back of the vehicle, he chatted non-stop. All unintelligible to Skye. But hearing the patter again was good—it had been so long. Adjusting to this dialect would take time, however.

His accent made her think of her Da. She swallowed, blinking away moistness as she brushed the snow from her coat and slid onto the back seat. "Crowne Plaza Hotel, Congress Road," she instructed as she sank against the worn leather and stared out the window, drinking in both familiar and unfamiliar sights.

They were in the city center within minutes. The armadillo-shaped Clyde Auditorium came into view, reminding Skye of her own Sydney Opera House back home where she'd wooed audiences during the past year. At least that's what the tabloids reported.

But this was her big break into the global operatic scene. *Phantom of the Opera*. She had finally arrived. Star of the show, her name in lights. First Glasgow, then Edinburgh. Finally, the Royal Albert Hall in London. This would be her year. It wasn't every day a

girl got the opportunity to portray Christine Daaé and sing with her angel of music.

She released a sigh. Once she'd had an angel of music, too. Her mind tumbled back to another world filled with song. Callum McGuire. What had become of him?

A smile touched her mouth as forgotten feelings filled her, warming her like a mug of hot chocolate. She savored the sweetness they left on her lips.

"That wullbi twenty quid." The driver turned in his seat and pushed up his thick glasses.

Her reverie short-lived, Skye opened her handbag and pulled two ten pound notes from her purse. She hadn't even noticed the taxi pull up in front of the hotel under the covered drive. The Crowne Plaza. This would be great. The spoils of hotel life and a short holiday, compliments of Mr. Boyd. She'd enjoy it while it lasted. Come January 1, Duncan Boyd, General Director of Opera Scotland, had an apartment rented for her and three other sopranos. Once rehearsals commenced in just under two weeks, she could count on nothing but hard work.

"Huv a nice day." The driver unloaded her suitcases onto the sidewalk and jumped back into his vehicle. A bellhop rushed to help with her luggage.

Mr. Boyd had arranged an early check-in for Skye. If he hadn't been away with family in London for Christmas, he would've collected her from the airport himself.

After checking in, Skye headed up to her room, taking in the view from the glass elevator that clung to the side of the building. She searched for her childhood home on the ground below. Nothing. Perhaps she'd see it from her hotel window.

The ride to the fourteenth floor, and the walk down the corridor to her room, afforded her time to think of how much she'd love a full Scottish breakfast now. A rasher of bacon, a banger, black pudding, and haggis. On the side, half a tomato broiled with cheese on top, sautéed mushrooms, baked beans, and a potato—or tattie scone, as she fondly remembered it being called. Finally, a slice of toast and an egg fixed just the way she liked it—sunnyside up. All this mouth-watering goodness washed down with piping hot tea, milk in first.

Sadly, it was already lunchtime. Breakfast would have to wait until tomorrow. She set her handbag down on the bed and told the bellhop where to place her luggage. After tipping him, she closed the suite door and ambled toward the window. She stopped beside the writing desk where the room service menu lay open. Running her finger down the contents, Skye settled for a smoked turkey and Stilton sandwich and a pot of tea. She dialed room service.

The view from so high was inspiring—Millennium Bridge on her right, Clyde Arc to her left. Both structures had been built in the time she'd been gone. In front of the hotel—Bell's Bridge. She smiled. Bell's held so many special memories. If that bridge could talk... Anderston Quay, too.

A knock at the door interrupted her trip down memory lane. Brunch.

Skye thanked the room service attendant, poured a cup of tea, and moved back to the window. She sipped the warm liquid and nibbled her sandwich as she watched the River Clyde ferries amble along their wet path. She and Callum used to sit for hours watching the construction of the pedestrian overpass. In their

teens, they'd crossed it hand-in-hand, walking between his home and hers. They, too, had managed to bridge the watery divide between their worlds.

Gazing at the way the River Clyde mirrored the gray heavens, Skye shivered. She needed a hot bath and a nap once she had finished her tea and the sandwich.

After hanging a "Please Do Not Disturb" sign outside the door, Skye ran a bath and soon soaked in hot water and bubbles. She closed her eyes and allowed the memories—of Da and of Callum—to wash over her.

When her skin was wrinkled and her mind spent, Skye stepped out of the bath, dried, and put on a soft white robe. She walked to the bedroom, her long hair wrapped in a matching towel.

The velvet furnishings radiated warmth, banishing thoughts of the cold outside. These warm, fuzzy feelings, combined with the heat clinging to her skin, threatened to put her to sleep before she could crawl between the sheets. She was exhausted. Had been for weeks.

She'd just finished a long season at the Sydney Opera House—probably the reason for her exhaustion and sore throat. Was there such a thing as too much singing? Perhaps. That's why she'd insisted on coming to Glasgow ten days early. She needed a break—on her own—and what better place to do that than where she'd grown up.

Skye closed the curtains and set the phone on the desk to "Do Not Disturb" before she moved to the bed. Pulling back the covers, she brushed her hand over the sheets. Egyptian cotton. She would sleep well—until tomorrow morning for sure. She drew a deep breath as

her head sank into the scented feather pillows. Lavender. But despite having the makings of dreamland Utopia, sleep eluded Skye.

~*~

Callum McGuire sat on a wooden stool and plucked at the guitar strings. After a hard day at work, there was nothing like getting up on a chair in his father's pub, strumming his guitar, and singing his favorite Scottish ballads and jigs. Especially the Skye Boat Song.

He strummed. The twelve silvery lines created a fullness of sound that could never be obtained by six. His smooth tenor filled the rustic pub. "Sing me a song of a lad that is gone. Say, could that lad be I? Merry of soul, he sailed on a day, over the sea to Skye."

How often he'd wished he could sail across the seas to his Skye. But Australia was far away. And she had never written.

"What a dreich day." Mary McGuire pulled back the lace curtain and stared outside. She shook her head. "Dreich." She let the fabric fall back in place, and then wiped the table just below the window. "It's puir baltic oot there."

Callum's voice trailed off. His strumming slowed. "Ma. It's winter. It's to be expected."

"Och, dinnae mind me." She waved her rag. "Yi carry oan an play. Ah love that tune."

Callum strummed the guitar strings again.

"So, daeyi think she'll cum tae visit?" his mother interrupted once more.

He stopped playing and stood, placing the guitar back on its stand beside the stool. "Who?"

“Awa’wi’yi. Yi knaw verra well who.”

Callum gave her a blank stare, calling her bluff.

Mary dropped the cloth on the table and shoved her hands on her plump hips, her freckles seeming to darken as her face reddened. “Dinnae think ah didnae knaw yi’ve funn oot she’s noo a fancy opera singer.” She snatched up the cloth and moved to the next table. “Skye Hunter, is who.”

Callum knew better than to pull one over on this small, fiery woman. “Ma, she’s probably forgotten all about us a long time ago.”

“Aye, mibbe. But yi haven’t, though God knaws how hard yi’ve tried. Buried yirself in yir studies, yir work.” She lifted a glass ashtray and wiped beneath. “Ah’ll wager yi’ve already bought yirself tickets tae that Phantom oh the Opera. An let me guess—they’ll be right in the middle a the front row.”

He wouldn’t get out of this conversation so easy. Maybe if he just kept quiet, she would, too.

“Ah’ve seen the posters, tae, at the Clyde. Did a double-take when ah seen hur name an face. Mightn’t be the face oh a sixteen-year old lassie enymair, but ah’d knaw hur enywherr. Spent enuff time ’tween these walls, she did.”

No. Keeping quiet would not get him out of this.

“We’ll just have to wait and see, won’t we, Ma? I’m guessing she won’t be here until the New Year when their rehearsals start.”

Mary gave Callum the how-do-you-know look.

He wrapped his arm around his mother’s shoulder, dwarfing her. “I asked at the Armadillo.”

“Humph.” She elbowed him out of her way and headed for the next table. “Ah’ll bet it wis when yi bought yir tickets.” She turned and eyed him. “Just

dinnae go gettin' yir heart broken agin. Not noo that yiv finally started tae build a life fur yirself. Dinnae mess things up, Callum Robert McGuire."

Whenever she used his full name and surname, Callum knew he'd be in serious trouble if he didn't listen. Even at age thirty-three.

"Ma, you've nothing to worry about."

Mary pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes. She shook her head then continued with her chores.

She didn't believe him. Not for one second.

~*~

With the theatrics of a true prima donna, Skye threw back the covers. She'd tossed and turned long enough. Might as well get up and do something—she'd get her beauty sleep tonight.

She should call home. Caught up earlier in her memories and the wonder of her surroundings, then bathing and trying to sleep, she'd forgotten all about her mother.

Skye padded across to the desk and retrieved her cellphone from her handbag, realizing as she unlocked the screen that calling home wasn't the only thing she'd forgotten. She changed the phone from silent, and then viewed the long list of missed calls. All from Mother.

Clenching her jaw, she pressed redial. As she paced the floor, the phone buzzed in her ear. Once. Twice.

"Skye," her mother's anxious voice boomed. Skye held the instrument away from her ear. "Why have you taken so long to call? I've been trying to get you for hours. You had me beyond worried."

She rolled her eyes. “No need to notify the Coast Guard yet, Mother. I’m sorry I haven’t called. The flight was exhausting. As soon as I checked in, I had a bath and climbed into bed.” No way would she confess to sleeplessness.

“Well, at least one of us is getting some sleep.”

Shoot. “What time is it there?”

“Three-thirty in the morning. So you see, Skye, I’ve been unable to sleep for hours. I called the hotel, but they said you had a ‘Do Not Disturb’ alert on your room phone and on the door.”

“I’m so sorry. I should’ve remembered the time difference before calling.”

“If you’d called when you got in, you wouldn’t have had to worry about the time difference.”

“You’re right. Wait a minute...you sent them up to my room to check on me? Really, you have to stop babying me, Mother. I’m thirty-two—I can take care of myself.” Skye cleared her throat, then coughed, hoping the wretched frog that had been lodged there for weeks would jump right out.

“Are you ill? Why are you coughing? Why do you sound hoarse? How many times have I told you that you have to take care of your voice? You can’t afford to get sick. Probably that ghastly Glasgow weather getting its hooks into you already.”

Her throat did hurt.

“Mother, stop it. Except for getting in and out of a taxi, I haven’t been outside since I arrived.” If Mother had her way, she’d have Skye wrapped in cotton wool and hibernating until rehearsals began. “I’m not coming down with anything. Even if I was, I do know how to doctor myself.” She’d been doing it secretly for weeks. It hadn’t seemed to help to rid her throat of the

soreness. If her mother knew, it would've been just the excuse she needed to come with Skye to Scotland.

"Have you eaten yet, Skye? Airplane food is not substantial enough. You need a balanced diet. You know that. I never should have let you travel clear across the globe without me. I should've come with you."

I rest my case. Any excuse.

A low sound warbled from Skye's stomach. The mention of food made her realize how hungry she was. She glanced at the time on her phone as she opened the hotel room's curtains. Four-thirty. Hard to believe with the darkness outside that it was still afternoon. She should get an early dinner. And she knew just the place.

McGuire's.

"Mother, you have to be with Ted. He needs you far more than I do." Truth was, she didn't need her mother, at least, not in the manner that Rita Robinson availed herself. Not that she'd wished any ill on her stepfather, but Ted's illness was the only reason she'd enjoy those cotton sheets in a room of her own.

A twinge of guilt joined forces with the hunger prickling her insides. "I have to go. I need to get ready for dinner. Give Ted a kiss from me."

Without waiting for her mother to launch into another diatribe of reasons why she should have come with her, Skye aimed two pecks at the phone and cut the call. She dropped the device into her bag and licked her lips. She could almost taste Mary McGuire's shepherd's pie—a home-style stew of meat and root vegetables simmered in a rich stock, topped with a browned layer of mashed, redskin potatoes. Her father had loved to take her there. He, too, believed there was

nothing quite like Mary McGuire's shepherd's pie. Mother never joined them. If Mother only knew what she'd missed out on all those years.

Skye hurried into her clothes. Brown boots hid her denim skinny jeans to the knees, while a white Aran sweater with a vertical cable pattern covered her from neck to thighs. She ran her fingers through her hair and fluffed the thick strands across her shoulder. Her flaming tresses stood in stark contrast to the soft white wool. Fire and ice.

After applying light makeup and a spray of perfume, Skye wrapped her father's tartan scarf around her neck, the Hunter plaid of red, blue, green, and white deepening her feelings of being home. She donned her coat and headed out the door, her mind alive with anticipation of what waited.

Outside the hotel, she hailed a taxi.

"McGuire's, please." Wouldn't her mother just have a fit if she knew where Skye planned to have dinner?

The driver turned around. "On Anderston Quay?"

"That's the one." She smiled. "I would've walked, but the weather..."

"It's dreich."

"Aye, that it is." She laughed, surprised at how easily she'd slipped into the old ways. She hadn't said "aye" in years.

As they drove, the words of her opening song drifted into her mind, and she hummed: "Think of Me." Did Callum ever? Did he remember her at least once in a while? For a long time she used to dream of him, could sense him when she sang. But the memory of him faded with time.

"Yiva awfy fine voice furra chantin'." The driver

pulled up in front of McGuire's.

"Thank you."

Skye paid the fare and the taxi pulled away, leaving her alone on the snow-covered sidewalk. She stepped up to the familiar wooden door and stood rooted beneath the black awning. Would Callum still be there?

~*~

After the brush with his mother, Callum had returned to his guitar. Soon a steady stream of patrons drifted into McGuire's—some for a drink after work, others for an early dinner. Friday nights were always crazy at their pub. Tonight, the night before Christmas Eve, promised to be worse.

The place reverberated with chatter and laughter. Callum sat on the edge of the stool—one leg stretched out, the other bent—his guitar resting on his thigh. He felt a little delinquent not waiting on tables. The staff seemed stretched tonight. But he'd done his time at the tables—it was how he'd paid for his studies in Edinburgh. He was here purely to entertain. Voluntarily. What he did tonight at McGuire's was for enjoyment alone, not recompense. Dr. McGuire no longer had need of small change. But he did need to be among his kind, his family.

Callum played a combination of lively jigs, and slow, soothing ballads, easing from "Gypsy Rover," to "Donald, Where's Your Trousers?" to "Coorie Doon," to "Skye Boat Song." His mind returned to the girl who'd stolen his heart a lifetime ago. If he ever saw her again, he'd hold her tight and never let her go.

When Skye's father was alive, their relationship

had stood a chance. That chance died along with Dr. Hunter. What would happen now that she was a grown woman, able to make her own choices? Skye's father had liked him, but her mother...the woman had treated him with disdain his entire life, determined to come between him and the girl he'd loved—and won. Would she still stand so vehemently in the way now that his life was different?