

# **PreView**

(2019)

## Tartan and Steel [Narrative Screenplay]

Adaptation of the original Seanachaidh's Tale  
The Golden Thistle  
The Legend of Duncan MacGregor  
Donald Knight Beman  
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## **Manuscript Formatting Note**

Based on reader and reviewer feedback, and current eBook formatting requirements, traditional screenplay manuscript format and style have been replaced with the following, and hopefully reader-friendly, format and style.

## **Evening ... 12 February**

Dr. Caithlin 'Cate' Sutherland ... scholar of British history, author of *Mary Queen of Scots: A Woman's View*, recently married to novelist Iain Charles Sutherland, and expecting their first child ... falls asleep at her husband's side after making love.

Startled awake in the middle of the night by the muted sounds of an angry argument between her husband and a male stranger, speaking Old English, Cate bolts out of bed, races down the second-floor hallway, barges into Iain's study, into a blinding wall of swirling blowing snow and a brutal beating.

## **Dawn ... 13 February**

Cate regains consciousness. Snow is blowing into the room through the open French doors to the balcony. Lifting her head, Cate sees Iain kneeling in the center of the room, slumped back on his heels, his head bowed as if in prayer. Driven into the floor in front of him is his claymore. The massive five-foot long two-handed Scottish sword with its broad hilt creates the eerie image of a cross in a snowy Highland cemetery.

Cate struggles to her knees. Her nightgown is blood-soaked below her waist. She tries to stand, cries out in pain and falls to her hands and knees. Crawling to Iain, Cate kneels beside him and cradles him in her arms. He falls limp against her. Dead. Cate's primordial scream shatters the cathedral quiet of dawn. Outside, as if in refrain, a man's hideous laugh is heard, knifing deep into Cate's heart, before fading into the wind.

Widowed, childless from her savage beating, her storybook life now shards of broken dreams, Iain's comment after they made love that winters night ... "Pray for a bonnie daughter, lass, for she will be free of the wind as no son of ours can ever be" ... echoes in Cate's mind like the refrain of a prophetic curse.

## **Late May**

Unable to forget what happened that night in February, Cate resigns her tenured faculty position ... hands the keys to the house Iain built for them overlooking the Hudson Highlands to a young colleague and his pregnant wife ... and travels to Scotland in search of answers to why Iain and her unborn son were murdered. And to see that whoever was responsible will pay ... 'measure for measure'.

FADE IN:

EXT: NIGHT - WINTER - SNOWING - 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY VICTORIAN HOUSE  
Mountain top facing west overlooking the northern gate of the Hudson River Highlands.  
Catskill Mountains in far background.

INT: MASTER BEDROOM - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT  
Windows cracked open, snow drifting in onto the sills and floor. CAITHLIN 'CATE'  
SUTHERLAND is asleep in a four-poster. The blankets are topped with a large Clan  
Murray Tartan throw. The covers beside Cate have been pulled.

OC: We HEAR faint distant sounds: hushed orders spoken in Old English; heavy booted  
footsteps; doors being kicked open; sleepy questions asked in Scots Gaelic and broken  
English; angry replies spoken in Old English; clash of swords; flintlock pistol gunshots;  
women pleading and screaming; children crying. (BEAT). Silence.

Cate BOLTS upright in bed, wide-eyed, listening. She slips out of bed: six feet tall; long  
black hair; nightgown reveals early pregnancy. Cate closes windows: listens; anxious.

OC: We HEAR muted sounds of two men arguing in ancient Scots Gaelic and Old  
English. Startled, Cate dashes out of the bedroom.

INT: LONG DIMLY-LIT SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY  
Cate stops and listens.

OC: We HEAR a man's muffled angry threatening voice.

MAN  
(Old English dialect)  
You will join them in the edge of the  
wind, MacDonald, not in it! Not ever!

CATE  
(confused, whispers)  
MacDonald?

Cate RACES down the hallway and BLOCKS OPEN the shut door.

INT: STUDY - UNLIT - BALCONY DOUBLE DOORS OPEN - SNOW BLOWING IN  
We SEE the shadowy figure of Cate burst into the room and into a blinding wall of  
swirling snow. We SEE her see her stumble to a stop.

CATE  
Iain?  
(BEAT)  
Where are you?  
(BEAT)  
Iain!

We SEE a tall heavysset cloaked figure rush Cate and strike her in the stomach and again. Cate doubles over and drops to her knees, breathless, arms wrapped around her belly. The figure grabs her hair, yanks her head back, and raises a clenched fist.

CATE  
No!

We SEE the figure pull Cate's arms open. She bites him. He roars and sets her free. Cate bends over, her arms around her stomach. We SEE the glint of a sword blade in the air above Cate. We SEE and HEAR it strike We SEE and HEAR Cate hit the floor.

INT: STUDY - EARLY LIGHT OF DAWN

We SEE a snowy mist hanging in the dead calm air. We SEE Cate lying face down on the floor partially buried in snow. We SEE Cate slowly raise her head.

CATE  
Iain?

INT: SHADOWY SILHOUETTE OF A MAN KNEELING IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM  
The MAN is kneeling, slumped back onto on heels, his head bowed, his arms at his sides. Driven into the floor in front of him we SEE a Scottish claymore, almost five feet tall, creating the mystical image of a Celtic cross in a snowy cemetery.

CATE  
(cries out)  
Dear God! Please! No!

We SEE Cate struggle to her knees. Her nightgown is bloodied from her waist to her thighs. She tries to stand, cries out in pain and falls to her hands and knees. We SEE Cate crawl to Iain, kneel beside him and slip her arm around him. He falls limp. Dead.

CATE  
Screams.

OC: We HEAR a man's hideous laugh slowly fade into the wind.

INT: MORVEN - SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - SPRING - DAY

We SEE Cate wearing a tattered man's work shirt, jeans, her hair streaked with gray, carrying a basket of unopened mail. Sunlight is falling from open doorways on one side of the hallway, creating the image of a fiery gauntlet. At the far end of the hallway we SEE yellow crime scene ribbons covering the doorway. Cate slips into the first doorway.

INT: MASTER BEDROOM

We SEE a large walk-in closet half-gutted. Kilt and fly plaid are hanging on the wall. Drawers in a large chest are pulled open, half-emptied. A Tartan covers the bed.

OC: We HEAR a woman call out.

WOMAN

Cate?

(BEAT)

Caithlin! You up there?

CATE

(raised voice)

In my bedroom, Patty.

INT: MASTER BEDROOM

PATTY MURRAY - petite, perky, a foot shy of Cate's six-foot plus height, crenulated red hair, green eyes - enters the bedroom.

PATTY

You up to this, sis?

CATE

(sighs)

No. But I've put it off for too long already.

Patty opens the windows, turns back, surveys the room, tidies-up the Tartan throw.

PATTY

I thought nana would give this Ancient Murray of Atholl Tartan throw to me. After all, I am the eldest daughter in our Clan!

CATE

You're right.

(hugs Patty)

Take it. It's yours.

PATTY

I was teasing! You deserve it. You got dad's Highland genes, his brains and his height. I got mom's Irish genes, five-foot height, emerald green eyes and her fiery temper.

Cate gives a 'whatever you want' shrug of her shoulders

PATTY

I'll take care of this mess here. You go deal with Iain's study. Do you want your things from the sunroom downstairs, so you can stop sleeping on that noisy wicker sofa?

CATE

I'll take squeaking over nightmares.

Patty turns Cate around and ushers her out of the room.

INT: LONG VICTORIAN HALLWAY

Cate passes one doorway, then another, but cannot slip past the next doorway. Bracing herself, she steps into the doorway and stops.

INT: NURSERY - BRIGHT AND SUNNY

WE SEE recently refinished wood floor, antique Victorian cradle and a high-back rocker buried beneath dusty plastic drop clothes.

INT: DOORWAY - CATE

WE SEE Cate's eyes fill with tears and rage. She spins away.

INT: END OF HALLWAY - CRIME SCENE RIBBONS BLOCKING DOORWAY ENTRANCE

We SEE Cate rip down the crime scene ribbons and enter the room.

INT: IAIN'S STUDY

NOTE: Going forward CAPITALIZED scene and setting syntax will be modified. The room is a mess from the police investigators and forensic team. On the wall over an oak desk topped with papers, books and computer stuff is a four-foot long empty leather scabbard draped with a tattered bolt of Tartan. The books on the bookcases bracketing the patio doors are a mess. In the center of room is a Scottish claymore stuck into the floor. Cate sets the basket of mail on the floor and starts tidying up.

INT: IAIN'S STUDY - LATE AFTERNOON

Patty enters the study and rests her hands on the guard of the claymore.

PATTY

How come this is here?

CATE

Because no one could pull it out.

Patty tries pulling up the massive sword but fails.

PATTY

C'mon, sis. Let's try together.

CATE

Leave it! It's going to stay there until  
I find out who murdered Iain.

PATTY

Then what? Pull the sword from the stone, lop off  
the bastard's head and hang it on the front porch?

CATE

(laughing)  
I like that idea.

Patty begins to try freeing the claymore again.

CATE

I said leave it!

PATTY

You're serious aren't you?

CATE

Dad's Highland genes. Eye for an eye.

Patty smiles, nods knowingly, affectionately kisses Cate's cheek and EXITS room.

INT: STUDY - FADING TWILIGHT STREAMING INTO THE ROOM

The study is cleaned-up. Cate is sitting on the floor, leaning up against the claymore, a pile of garish never-opened men's shirts in a plastic bag on floor beside her. In front of her are orderly stacks of unopened envelopes, opened letters and empty envelopes. Cate opens an envelope and pulls out an airline ticket and handwritten note.



CATE  
(reads ticket and note)  
This has got to be a mistake?

Cate slips ticket and note back into the envelope and sets it aside. She starts sorting through the others and stops to read the handwritten address on one envelope.

CATE  
(irritated)  
It's Caithlin, Miss Park Avenue, not Kathleen.  
You never did get it right.  
(tosses envelope into basket)  
Or do you do it because I won and you lost?

OC: We HEAR soft knocking on wood. Cate looks up.

INT: DOORWAY

JANE ANDREWS - short, petite, shapely, frosted blond hair, blue eyes, expensively-dressed - is in the hallway. She glances at envelopes, then at Cate and smiles sweetly.

JANE  
Hello ...  
(pauses)  
'Caithlin'.

Cate stands and starts primping herself but quickly stops.

CATE  
Can't knock on the front door, Jane?  
Hand broken? Or is it simply bad manners?

JANE  
(shrugs off comment)  
When no one answered my knocking on the front door, I went around back and let myself in. Iain always left the back door unlocked for me, when he was writing.

CATE  
(irritated)  
What do you want?

Jane glances down at her feet, then back up at Cate.

JANE  
Simon says may I please come in?

Cate shrugs. Jane enters and slowly circles the room like a cat. She stops at the unopened bag of shirts on the floor and nudges them with her foot.

JANE  
(whispers to herself)  
He never even opened them.

CATE  
Guess he didn't like them.

Jane shrugs 'whatever' and locks her gaze on Cate.

JANE  
Did you finish it?

CATE  
Finish what?

JANE  
Editing the manuscript.

CATE  
You should have checked with Perry, before driving up from the City. I sent it back to him two weeks ago, edited and proofread.

JANE  
(smugly)  
Iain didn't tell you, did he?

CATE  
(irritated)  
Tell me what?

JANE  
Listen, *Caithlin*, be a good wife and.....

CATE  
(angry ... points to doorway)  
Out! Now!

Cate takes a menacing step forward and points to the doorway.

CATE  
And don't come back.

JANE  
Wait! Please. I didn't mean too.....

CATE  
Yes you did.  
(BEAT)  
You have ten seconds to tell me why you're here.

JANE  
Well! I never.....

CATE  
Ten.....nine.....

JANE  
(spoken in a single hurried breath)  
Based on the strong response I got to Iain's  
unfinished manuscript, I want to put the book  
up for auction and it will help if I have the rest  
of the manuscript, even if it's 'rough'!

CATE  
Why do I get the feeling you have an offer?

Jane clams up.

CATE  
Eight.....seven.....six.....

JANE  
Yes! I have an offer from a major publisher.

CATE  
And how much is that offer for?

Jane hesitates.

CATE  
Five.....four.....

JANE  
One hundred and fifty thousand. But since.....

CATE  
The author is dead, you can't negotiate  
without my approval and signature.  
(folds her arms and scowls)  
Why didn't Iain send you the  
completed manuscript?

Jane, anxious, turns away and slips out onto the balcony, her back to Cate.

JANE  
(speaks softly)  
He told me the story wasn't over yet.

CATE  
What?  
(BEAT)  
Not over or not finished?

JANE  
(turns back and faces Cate)  
Over.

CATE  
That doesn't make sense.

JANE  
(serious)  
I know.  
(hesitates ... concerned)  
When I asked Iain what he meant, he told me  
.....and these are his exact words, I wrote  
them in my journal.....Tis Caithlin's story to  
finish now, and with a sword not a pen. I only  
hope that I have taught her well'.

EXT: MORVEN - FRONT LAWN - HUDSON HIGHLANDS IN B.G. - SUNSET  
We SEE Cate standing on a large millstone lying on its side in the center of an  
expansive garden surrounded by poppies and season appropriate flowers. In FAR B.G.  
beyond the Hudson Highlands are the Catskill Mountains beneath the setting sun. In  
NEAR B.G. a Mercedes roadster, top down, is speeding away, kicking up dust.

EXT: LAWN - GARDEN IN NEAR B.G. - SUNSET  
We SEE Cate, barefoot, lazily walking through an uncut lawn spotted with crocuses.  
Patty ENTERS the scene carrying an overnight bag.

PATTY

(hugs Cate)

Will my baby sister be okay alone here?

CATE

Alone? Iain is everywhere.

(Cate spreads her arms as she turns full circle)  
In his gardens. The house he restored for us.  
And this Highland-like setting. Complete with  
his mythical wind. Alone? No. Lonely? Yes.

EXT: FRONT LAWN - MORVEN IN NEAR B.G.

Cate is slowly ambling back toward Morven, lazily scuffing her bare feet through the grass. She jumps. Kneeling, she feels around and comes up with a hair clip. Clutching it to her, Cate sits back and stares into space, sunset reflected in her watery eyes.

EXT: FLASHBACK IN TIME - SUMMER - MORVEN - FRONT LAWN - LATE AFTERNOON

Cate is lying on her back, a claymore beside her, barefoot, wearing jeans, sweat-stained denim shirt, hair pinned up. IAIN, bare-chested, bare-footed, is wearing only a kilt and lording over Cate, holding an oak staff planted between her legs.

IAIN

(speaks with a soft Scottish brogue)

Never lower your blade. Keep it up and moving.

Force your enemy to watch it, not you.

Iain offers Cate his hand. Cate slaps his hand away, grabs the claymore and stands up.

CATE

When you said you wanted to teach me to use  
the claymore, I don't remember trained killer  
part of the bargain. I'm not your enemy, my  
dear husband, I'm your wife.

IAIN

Better a bruised ego than the deadly bite of  
Sassenach steel. But we can stop if you want.

CATE

No!

(BEAT)

I will take my pound of flesh from you!

Brandishing the claymore, Cate starts for Iain. Laughing, Iain circles Cate, jabbing and poking at her with his staff. Cate parries his thrusts, hesitantly at first, then steadily more aggressively and confidently with each parried exchange.

IAIN

I see revenge in those lovely blue eyes of yours, M 'Lady. Remember what I told you. Never show your feelings or your opponent will turn them against you.

With a blood-curdling cry, Iain jabs his staff past Cate's frozen defense, poking her in the stomach. She doubles over.

CATE

Iain!

Iain, upset, concerned, rushes to Cate.

IAIN

Cate! I'm sorry! I didn't.....

With a wild screeching cry, Cate spins around and halves Iain's staff with the claymore. On her return sweep, she grazes his chest with the tip of the sword blade, cutting him and drawing blood. Startled, Cate tosses the claymore aside and rushes to Iain, only to be swept off her feet and laid on her back, gasping for air. Iain straddles and sits on her. Wincing, she looks down to see Iain holding a wooden dagger to her stomach.

CATE

You sneaky bastard! I thought.....

IAIN

(covers Cate's mouth with his hand.)

You let your feelings get the best of you, my dear bride. You're dead. I win.

Iain jumps up, hands on hips, lording over Cate. Blood from the two-foot-long cut on his chest is mixing with his sweat. Cate peeks under Iain's kilt, smiles, then looks up.

CATE

(offers Iain her hand)

I give up. Have your way with me.

Iain takes Cate's hand. Cate jerks him off balance. He falls onto his back. Cate rolls over, sits on top of him, pins him down and kisses his wound. She sits up, removes a hair clip, tosses it aside, shakes out her long black hair and starts to unbutton her shirt.

IAIN

(grinning)

Is this how you treat your enemies?

Laughing, Cate continues unbuttoning her shirt, revealing no bra.

CATE

Now, my crazy Highland husband, I  
am going to give you a lesson or two.

Cate bends down and passionately kisses Iain.

EXT: PRESENT - GARRISON COLLEGE - EARLY MAY - DAY

We SEE a cluster of restored 19<sup>th</sup> century stone block buildings amongst a heavily wooded college campus overlooking the Hudson River In F.G. work crews are on the common setting up for graduation.

INT: NEWBURGH HALL - SECOND FLOOR - STONE-WALLED OFFICE

Typical tenured professor's office in pricy private women's college. Cate, facing away, is standing at an open window, fluffing her hair. MARGO PETERS - 40-ish, plump, tie-dyed skirt, peasant blouse - is sitting on a small sofa and reading a manuscript.

CATE

I can't remember it having been  
this hot so early in May, do you?

MARGO

No. My thighs don't usually stick  
together like this until late June.

They both laugh as Margo joins Cate in front of the open window. Lifting her skirt and facing the window, she starts waving it to cool herself off.

CATE

Margo! What are you doing?

MARGO

Drying my chubby legs, so I don't squeak  
like a rubber duck when I walk in the halls.

Cate flops onto the window seat. Margo pulls out her blouse and starts blowing into it. She then spreads her arms and starts spinning around, sending her skirt flaring out.

CATE

What will you say if a student walks in and sees the college president acting like she's high on something?

MARGO

I'll tell them to bugger off.

CATE

You're starting to sound like the campus Brit-Wit you've been seeing ..... Jeffrey whatever his hyphenated-English-name is.

Margo unwinds to a stop, teetering, dizzy.

MARGO

The Brit-Wit is history.

CATE

What happened to this one?

MARGO

He said I was too 'plump'. And if I *really* cared about him, I would lose weight.

CATE

Jerk.

Margo flops down onto the window seat opposite Cate.

MARGO

Okay, truth or dare.  
(glowers at Cate)

Why am I reading that unfinished manuscript?

Cate retrieves the manuscript from the sofa, tosses it over to Margo, and settles into the opposite corner of the wide window seat.

CATE

Iain's agent sent it to me. I didn't know Iain was writing this.

(becomes animated as she talks)

That woman had the nerve to walk into 'my' house and come upstairs as if she owned the place. When I said something, she snipped, Iain always left the door open for me!



MARGO

I don't understand why you're jealous of her?  
You're taller, smarter, better educated and far  
more attractive .... hello!

CATE

I've always had a thing about petite '*five-foot-  
two-eyes-of-blue*' women with Scarlet O'Hara  
wastes and Playmate of the Month boobs.

(BEAT)

I feel like a giraffe next to her!

MARGO

You think Iain slept with her, don't you?

CATE

How should I know?

MARGO

Ever ask him?

CATE

Of course not!

MARGO

You never told him did you?

CATE

Told him what?

MARGO

That he was the first man you slept with.

CATE

I was thirty when we were married.  
He would have laughed at me.

(BEAT)

You did!

MARGO

I thought you were joking!

CATE

See! You still think it's funny!  
(Cate turns serious)  
Do 'you' think he slept with her?

MARGO  
Get real. She wasn't Iain's type.

OC: We HEAR a soft-spoken woman's voice.

WOMAN  
Doctor Peters? Got a minute?

INT: OFFICE DOORWAY  
ANN THOMPSON - Margo's secretary - is standing in the doorway.

ANN  
Sorry to interrupt. But that new trustee is on  
the phone again and he said it's urgent.

MARGO  
(wags finger at Cate)  
Ten minutes. Don't disappear on me again.

CATE  
Ten minutes for you is an hour for us mortals.

MARGO  
Take a nap. You look like you could use the sleep.  
(laughing)  
Actually, Cate, you look like shit.

ANN  
Oops! That's my cue. Exit stage right.

INT: CATE'S OFFICE - SUNSET  
Cate is on the window seat, back to Margo, shirt unbuttoned and pulled down to her waist, revealing a long thick and ugly scar across her upper back from side-to-side.

MARGO  
Did they say it could be removed?

Cate gives a 'whatever' shrug, pulls up her shirt and buttons it closed.

MARGO  
Did it hurt much?

CATE

The first time he hit me it hurt like hell. When he punched me in the stomach a second time, I was knocked unconscious by the pain.

(Cate peers outside then turns back)

The real pain is the loss of our son. My gynecologist said that based on the MRI, it will take a miracle for me to ever conceive again. Not that it makes any difference now.

MARGO

(speaking in a whisper)

Cate ... did he ... were you....

CATE

Raped? No. At least not that way.

(shrugs)

As for the 'souvenir' on my back, the medical examiner ... who examined me as if I were a cadaver ... told me that I was probably struck with the flat of the blade of Iain's claymore.

MARGO

What if he had struck you with the full edge?

CATE

(making light of it all)

My ashes would now be scattered over the Highlands with Iain's.

(BEAT)

Wait! According to my 'pagan' husband, we would now be 'living in the wind'.

(BEAT)

Which may not be such a bad idea.

MARGO

That bastard!

CATE

Margo!

MARGO

(waving off Cate's startled gaze)

Not Iain! The man who attacked you.

CATE

Man? Try ghost. According to the crime scene forensic report, there was no evidence of anyone else in the study. Based on that and the fact that Iain's autopsy did not find any evidence to explain his cause death, the M.E. ruled that Iain's heart simply stopped beating.

MARGO

What about what happened to you?

CATE

The M.E. thinks ... and without any medical evidence to back up his 'thinking' ... that Iain did this to me and I'm protecting his memory.

Margo is speechless.

CATE

(suddenly enraged)

That bastard took everything I cherished in this world, when he murdered Iain and killed our son. And left me with a nightmare that won't stop replaying! I was kneeling and bent over, trying to protect my baby. How the hell could he miss my neck! Or should I ask 'why'? And why did he use the flat of the blade?

(BEAT)

I do not think it was an accident!

Cate sits in silence staring outside. A breeze kicks up. Margo fluffs her skirt and blouse, then snatches up the manuscript.

MARGO

Do you think Iain wrote this?

CATE

(shrugs)

I don't know, Margo. I'm a historian, not a novelist. I deal with facts not fiction.

MARGO

As smart as you are, 'Doctor Sutherland', sometimes you can be 'dumb as a rock'.

Margo waves the manuscript she's holding.

MARGO

This is a screenplay, Cate, not a novel.

CATE

What are you talking about? Jane sent me two manuscripts. I gave you one copy and I kept the other copy.

Margo tosses Cate the manuscript. She fields it, fans the pages, frowns, starts reading. Cate, her face suddenly GHOST WHITE, claps the script closed.

CATE

I'm going to Scotland.

MARGO

You what!

(snatches script away from Cate and fans pages)  
What did you find in here that I missed?

CATE

A nightmare. Which I had before Iain was murdered. It woke me up. No images, just horrible sounds of fighting and people ... men, women and children ... screaming and crying. I can't get them out of my head. That's when I heard them shouting in Iain's study.

MARGO

What does that have to do with Scotland?

Cate walks over to her desk, grabs an envelope, walks back and hands it to Margo. Margo pulls out a note and airline ticket.

MARGO

Why is your Gaelic maiden name on this ticket?  
And why is it only one-way?

CATE

I don't know. It was buried in the mail I was hiding from. I called the travel agency. They told me Iain booked the flight three months before he was murdered.

MARGO

What!

CATE

There's also something Miss Park Avenue claims Iain told her, when she asked him to send her the rest of his manuscript.

(waves screenplay)

I now know that she was talking about this screenplay and the companion manuscript for the novel and not what I was editing.

Cate drifts back to the window and stares outside in silence.

MARGO

What are you thinking?

CATE

Jane also claimed that told her that it's '*my* story to finish and '*with a sword not a pen*'.

And that '*he hoped he taught me well*'.

(turns back to face Margo)

But taught me 'what' and 'why'?

MARGO

I hope in God's name you know what what you're doing, Cate.

CATE

I don't think your 'God' can help me here.

MARGO

'My' God? Have you gone 'over the wall'?

CATE

(amused)

You sound like my Roman Catholic mother. She warned me about my '*Pagan Highlander*'.

Margo walks over and turns Cate around to face her.

MARGO

If Iain's screenplay has anything to do with why he wanted you to go to Scotland, you will need that God of mine. But you're not going anywhere, Professor Sutherland, until the semester is over.

(Cate begins to object)

Hello! This is your 'boss' speaking.

INT: BRITISH AIRWAYS 747 - FIRST CLASS CABIN - NIGHT

Cate is in a window seat. The aisle seat vacant. She's staring out the window, script in her lap, envelope sticking out like a bookmark. She grabs the envelope and looks at it.

CATE

(VO = Voice Over)

*'Kathleen'? Slow learner? Bad manners? Or is Margo right, and you really are jealous?*

Cate opens the envelope and withdraws a handwritten note. As she silently reads it to herself, we HEAR Jane Andrew's VO.

JANE

(VO)

*Acquisitions editor at William Morrow upped offer by fifty percent. I told her you went to Scotland to do some research and fact-checking. Need your okay to ink the deal.*

Cate tucks the note into the envelope and slips the envelope into the pages of the screenplay. She then turns to look out the window, winces at the sunlight peeking over the horizon, closes the shade and nods off. We SEE evidence of turbulence and HEAR the captain's announcement for passengers to return to their seats. Flight attendants scurry about, passengers dash for seats. Cate looks as if she's being rocked to sleep.

INT: 747 FIRST CLASS CABIN - PRE-DAWN

A flight attendant, tall, crenelated red hair - wearing a too-small uniform for her height and no name badge - is standing in the aisle beside Cate, holding a book. She checks the back of the book, eyes Cate, nods, and secrets the book behind her back.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(thick Scottish Brogue)

Doctor Murray ... Caithlin!

Cate half-opens her eyes, blinks sleepily, looks up.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Care for a wee bit of breakfast, Doctor Murray?

CATE

How did you know my maiden name?

(BEAT)

Wait! I know. The ticket. Right?

ATTENDANT holds up book revealing title: *Mary Queen of Scots: A Modern Woman's View*. She turns the book around to reveal the photo of a young Caithlin Murray.

CATE

(soft laugh)

I'm surprised you recognized me, with my wrinkles and all of this gray hair of mine.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

'Tis a blessing, lass. Early to gray late to stay.

CATE

(glances away, then back)

My husband used to say that to make me feel good about my graying hair.

(turns away and looks out window)

Maybe if he had been early to gray, he might still be here.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I think not, lass.

Cate spins around and eyes the attendant suspiciously.

CATE

Knowing that Gaelic expression and the fact that you speak English as if it is a foreign language, would I be right to assume that you were raised speaking Gaelic?

ATTENDANT smiles and nods.

CATE

Would I also be right in guessing you were raised well north of the Highland line?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Aye. Kinbrace. A day's ride from Morven.

CATE

'Morven'?

(Cate sits up - wide awake)

My husband named our house Morven. He even wrote a novel with a castle Morven in it. But there's no evidence the castle existed.



FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Not so. We all know the story of Morven. 'Tis a tale every Highland child learns by heart, never to be forgotten.

CATE

(doubtful, changes subject)  
Did I sleep through breakfast?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Aye. And a fitful sleep it was, too.  
Were you fighting with someone, lass?

CATE

(exasperated, nodding)  
Every night for the last five months!  
Which I guess is why I look like hell.

Cate stands up, stretches, yawns and steps into the aisle. Cate and the FLIGHT ATTENDANT are the same six-foot plus height.

CATE

About that breakfast, Miss.....

Cate looks but cannot find a nameplate on the FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S uniform.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

My Gaelic name is 'Fionnghal'. My taken married name is 'MacIain'. But I'm a Moireach by blood and birth, as are you.

CATE

MacIain?  
(BEAT)

My husband's given name was Iain.  
And your husband?

FIONA

Domhnall.

CATE

So your husband is Donald MacIain?

FIONA

Was. He's in the wind now.  
My Domhnall was murdered.

CATE  
Really! My Iain was murdered.

Cate's emotions well up. Fiona watches, expressionless.

CATE  
I wonder how long it takes for the pain, and  
anger, to go away?

FIONA  
Forever and never.

Fiona looks away as if to hide her feelings.

CATE  
You okay?

INT: GALLEY  
Fiona is holding a coffee pot and watching Cate drain her cup.

FIONA  
Why do you think he did not take your life?

CATE  
I really don't know.

Fiona taps Cate's book lying on the counter and smiles.

FIONA  
Mary stood eighteen hands.

CATE  
'Mary'? As in 'Mary Queen of Scots'?

FIONA  
Is there another 'Mary' in your book?

CATE  
You speak of Queen Mary's height as if she  
were a horse. And as if you knew her.

FIONA  
She was my Queen.

Cate is taken back by Fiona's confident matter-of-fact reply.

CATE

How do you know Mary Tudor's height?

Fiona stands up straight and pats the top of her head.

FIONA

A wee shorter than me, and you, she was.

CATE

To the best of my knowledge, and I've read all of the primary sources, there's no formal record of her 'exact' height.

FIONA

'Sources' written by the English?  
The same English who murdered her?

CATE

(caught off guard)  
Yes.

FIONA

And you believe all of the lies your Sassenach  
have written about us?

CATE

You sound like my husband.  
(shakes her head)  
Anyway, how do you know they're lies?

As Fiona speaks, her thick brogue suffocates her English.

FIONA

Come, thou beam that art lonely, from watching  
the night. Red, over my hundred streams, are the  
light-covered paths of the dead.

Cate is momentarily speechless.

CATE

('professorial')

I don't see what those lines from *Cathlin of Clutha* in *The Poems of Ossian* have anything to do with what you call 'English lies'. If anything, they contradict you, since MacPherson's work is now seen by scholars as

CATE

(continued)

a masterful literary deception. Creative? Yes.  
But there's no hard evidence to....

FIONA

(controlled anger)

'Evidence'! What about your bible and its  
stories about your god of the wooden cross?  
Can you prove what he did or said? I think not.  
You claim what Sassenach scholars write is fact  
though it's faith mixed with lies and you know  
it. Yet you are quick to tell us that what we  
Highland Scots believe is folklore. Myth!

CATE

(overcome with emotion)

This reminds me of my arguments with Iain. I  
was doing fine until you recited lines from the  
Poems of Ossian. My father knew them by  
heart and in Gaelic. It's where he got my  
name. He told me that I was just like her.

(mimics her father's brogue)

You are Cathlin of Clutha, my wee lass.  
(abruptly changes her mood and manner)

I don't know why the hell I'm here!

Margo was right. I should just let it  
all be and get on with my life.

FIONA

If you don't have the heart or the metal,  
Caithlin, 'tis best you turn and run away.

CATE

(erupts in anger)

Who the hell do you think you are!

Fiona starts laughing.

CATE

What's so damn funny?

FIONA

Your father was right. You do favor her.

CATE  
How the hell ... Wait!  
(shakes her head)  
Cathlin of Clutha is a mythical figure just like  
Iain's *Children of the Mist*. And even if she had  
been real, she would have lived four hundred  
years ago. How in the world could you know  
what she looked like?

Fiona places her hand over Cate's heart. Cate cannot remove it. The plane begins  
bouncing up and down. Fiona cocks her head as if she's listening to something or  
someone. She then nods.

FIONA  
You have the heart, Caithlin. I can  
feel it. Please do not run away from us.

OC: we HEAR the CAPTAIN'S voice over a loudspeaker.

CAPTAIN  
(VO)  
This is the captain speaking. We are  
encountering unexpected turbulence.  
Please return to your seats and fasten  
your seat belts.

FIONA  
I must go back now.

Fiona turns to leave. Cate grabs her arm and holds her back.

CATE  
Go back? Where? How?  
(BEAT)  
Who are you?

Fiona tries but cannot break free of Cate's hold.

FIONA  
Don't test me, Caithlin.

Fiona glances at Cate's hand, then takes on Cate's demanding gaze.

FIONA  
Staying? Or running away?

CATE

You think you know everything about me?  
You tell me whether or not I'm staying.

Fiona a leather packet from inside the waistband of her skirt.

FIONA

(hands packet to Cate)

Inside you will find a key and a folded sheet of deerskin. On one side is a map to my cottage. On the other side is a map from my cottage to Morven. They are not on any Sassenach maps. The key is for the cottage door. It is old and rusted, so be gentle with it.

(BEAT)

Cousin Magaidh will help you settle in and learn the ways of the Highlands.

CATE

Map? Cottage? Cousin? I don't understand?

FIONA

Patience, Caithlin. You will. And when you do, you will know who you are and also know your destiny.

CATE

Who are you?

Fiona, confident, powerful, gazes deep into Cate's eyes.

FIONA

I am you and you are me.

(BEAT)

We are one in blood and spirit.

CATE

What?

Fiona gives Cate a hug, startling her, and EXITS the galley.

INT: FIRST CLASS CABIN - MORNING

Deplaning passengers shuffle past a sleeping Cate, followed by a flight attendant, who stops and gently taps Cate's shoulder.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Miss?  
Wake up. We've landed.

Cate jumps up and excitedly glances around the cabin.

CATE  
Where's Fiona?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Who?

CATE  
Fiona MacIain. She's a flight attendant.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
(confused)  
There is no *Fiona MacIain* on the crew.

CATE  
Yes, there is!  
(Cate places her hand on top of her head)  
She's my height, has rusty red hair, and a thick  
Highland brogue.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
(smiling)  
Perhaps you were dreaming.....

PreView

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