

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a sleeveless, form-fitting dress with a vibrant rainbow gradient and a subtle starry pattern, is walking barefoot on a stone pier. She is smiling and looking down at her feet. The background features a bright blue body of water and distant mountains under a clear sky. The overall mood is serene and romantic.

THE  
MACDONALD FAMILY  
TRILOGY

RITA AWARD WINNER

Five Days  
in  
*Skyye*

CARLA LAUREANO

# Praise for Carla Laureano

## *THE SATURDAY NIGHT SUPPER CLUB*

“You don’t have to be a foodie to enjoy *The Saturday Night Supper Club*, but if you are, you’re in for an extra treat. Carla Laureano has written a delicious romance you’ll want to devour in one sitting. Filled with sugar and spice, *The Saturday Night Supper Club* will leave you hungry for more from this talented author.”

IRENE HANNON, bestselling author and three-time RITA Award winner

“Smart, funny, romantic, hopeful—the perfect starter for Laureano’s scrumptious new series.”

CANDACE CALVERT, bestselling author of *Maybe It’s You* and *The Recipe*

“*The Saturday Night Supper Club* is a riveting read, crafted with sophisticated characters, delicious settings, and a satisfying romance that will leave readers breathless and anxious for the next book in the series.”

JEN TURANO, *USA Today* bestselling author of *A Change of Fortune*

## *FIVE DAYS IN SKYE*

“Sweet and scathing, lush and intimate. . . . This story has guts and heart as well as the depth and heat necessary to satisfy any romance reader’s palate.”

*USA TODAY*

“From page one, *Five Days in Skye* captured my imagination and every minute of my pleasure-reading time. With enviable finesse, author Carla Laureano weaves romance, hope, healing, and faith into a spunky and sparkling tale that made me sorry to say good-bye to the characters and the alluring Isle of Skye. I look forward to reading more from this author.”

**TAMARA LEIGH**, author of *Splitting Harriet* and *The Unveiling*, book one in the Age of Faith series

“After reading *Five Days in Skye*, I wanted to pack my bags and catch the first flight to Scotland to discover Skye for myself. In her debut novel, Carla Laureano brought Skye alive with vivid detail, drew me into the main characters’ budding romance, and kept me turning the pages late into the night. I’m looking forward to more books from Carla!”

**BETH K. VOGT**, author of *Things I Never Told You* and *Moments We Forget*

“*Five Days in Skye* swept me away to Scotland! Against the craggy beauty of the Isle of Skye, author Carla Laureano weaves a story . . . of love between an American businesswoman and a Scottish celebrity chef. Fans of the movie *The Holiday* are sure to enjoy this contemporary romance. Laureano’s voice is deft, seamless, and wonderfully accomplished. An exciting newcomer to the world of Christian fiction!”

**BECKY WADE**, author of *My Stubborn Heart* and *Undeniably Yours*

## ***LONDON TIDES***

“In *London Tides*, Carla Laureano shows how fear and grief can hold us captive—unable to love ourselves and others. Yes, Laureano has written a beautiful reconciliation romance, but she also delves into deeper themes of identity and acceptance. The character of Grace Brennan, in spite of her unconventional life, speaks to all of us.”

**BETH K. VOGT**, author of *Things I Never Told You* and *Moments We Forget*

“Achieving an aching depth and a resounding trueness within a heated yet baggage-ridden romance, author Carla Laureano has proven herself a storyteller who is not afraid to take her characters into the darkest regions of their own hearts. An excellent follow-up to *Five Days in Skye*, *London Tides* tugs and churns every emotion . . . right up until the lovely, hope-buoying end.”

**SERENA CHASE**, *USA Today's* Happy Ever After blog

“At times lighthearted; at times heart wrenching. Laureano has penned a delightfully romantic tale about the importance of finding home. If readers weren’t already smitten with the MacDonald brothers, they will be after *London Tides!*”

**KATIE GANSHERT**, award-winning author of *The Art of Losing Yourself*

“Another captivating story! *London Tides* is as compelling and engaging as Laureano’s award-winning *Five Days in Skye*. It’s deliciously romantic and filled with tension, wonderful characters, and vivid scenery. A must-read this summer!”

KATHERINE REAY, author of *Lizzy and Jane*

“War photographer Grace Brennan is the kind of character I love to read about—she’s savvy, fearless, and damaged, yet is determined to carry on. Returning to London means making amends with Ian MacDonald, the fiancé she left behind, and author Carla Laureano knows how to make the most of their chemistry. But a chance at love for Grace also means facing the realities of PTSD, a subject Laureano handles with great sensitivity and care. Vividly written and deeply felt, *London Tides* will sweep readers away.”

HILLARY MANTON LODGE, author of *A Table by the Window*

### ***UNDER SCOTTISH STARS***

“In *Under Scottish Stars*, independent single mother Serena Stewart returns to the beautiful land of Skye, looking for stability for her two small children—not romance with Malcolm Blake, who manages the hotel that Serena owns with her two brothers. Their ‘this can’t be happening’ relationship is engaging, and Carla Laureano reveals both Serena’s and Malcolm’s vulnerabilities as they fall in love when they least expected it. *Under Scottish Stars* is a satisfying romance that reminds readers that love doesn’t always go according to our agendas—and that can be a very good thing.”

BETH K. VOGT, author of *Things I Never Told You* and *Moments We Forget*

*“Under Scottish Stars* is a fabulous read, filled with compelling characters, a delicious setting, and a romance that can only be described as . . . swoon-worthy. Carla Laureano’s third and final book in the MacDonald Family Trilogy exceeded all my expectations and truly shouldn’t be missed.”

**JEN TURANO**, *USA Today* bestselling author of *A Change of Fortune*

“Solid characters, brilliant dialogue, believable conflict, a setting you can taste—and, always, breath-stealing love scenes. No one writes a romantic hero like Laureano! *Under Scottish Stars* takes us back to Skye to explore poignant truths of single parenthood, family loyalty, the pursuit of dreams—and faith. A satisfying and stellar finish to the MacDonald Family Trilogy.”

**CANDACE CALVERT**, bestselling author of *Maybe It’s You* and *The Recipe*



## Five Days in Skye



THE  
MACDONALD FAMILY  
TRILOGY

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CARLA LAUREANO



*Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*  
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*Five Days in Skye*

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*For Rey, my hero and best friend. No fictional tale  
could ever compare to our real-life love story.*



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## CHAPTER ONE

AT LEAST THEY COULDN'T FIRE HER.

Andrea Sullivan propped her elbows on the bar and buried her head in her hands. How had things gone wrong so quickly? One minute she'd been on the verge of closing a half-million-dollar deal. The next, she'd nearly broken her hand on the jaw of a client who thought her company's offerings extended to favors she had no intention of delivering. Three years of working her way up the ranks toward VP of Sales all down the tubes because one man couldn't keep his hands to himself.

No, her company certainly wouldn't risk an ugly public legal battle. They didn't have to. Her boss had other, more subtle means of showing his displeasure.

As punishments went, Scotland was a big one.

“What’s so terrible about Scotland?”

Andrea jerked her head up and met the bartender’s gaze. Had she said that aloud?

The man’s eyes crinkled at the corners as he ran a towel along the polished mahogany surface of the bar, evidently amused by her slip. Round faced and topped with a thinning mop of dishwater-blond hair, he looked as stereotypically English as the London pub in which he tended bar.

She let out a long breath, her shoulders slumping. “Scotland’s cold, it’s miserable, and the food is horrible.”

“Oh, it’s not so bad as all that, is it?” His expression turned from amused to sympathetic. “Take in some countryside, tour a castle or two, maybe some high street shopping . . .”

“This is a business trip. Trust me. My dream vacation involves sunshine and umbrella drinks on the beach, not rain and fog in some backwater village.”

If she’d only managed to keep her temper in check, she’d have been spending the next week in the tropics with the promise of a fat commission and a guaranteed promotion, not serving time in Scotland babysitting a celebrity client who suddenly wanted to dabble in the hotel business.

James MacDonald.

She’d never heard of the man. Then again, she didn’t own a television. She spent so much time on the road, she wasn’t even sure why she owned an apartment. She seemed to be the only one on the planet, however, who hadn’t heard of the Scottish celebrity chef. Half a dozen restaurants, four cookbooks, his own television show. Even her taxi driver had been able to name MacDonald’s three London restaurants without hesitation.

Andrea toyed with her half-filled wineglass, watching the golden liquid slosh around the bowl. "I should be on my way to Tahiti right now, not sitting in a pub drinking a rather mediocre glass of wine."

"That's because you go to Paris to drink wine," a deep male voice said over her shoulder. "You come to London to drink ale."

Andrea straightened as a man leaned against the bar beside her. He was tall and broad-shouldered, dressed in a pair of dark slacks and a business shirt, the collar unbuttoned and sleeves rolled up to show off muscular forearms. Dark hair worn a little too long, brilliant blue eyes, handsome face. Handsome enough she took a second look and immediately wished she hadn't been so obvious about it. His grin made her heart do things it was certainly not intended to do.

She couldn't prevent the corners of her mouth from twitching up in a smile. "Now you tell me."

He glanced at the bartender. "Get me a 90 Shilling, and whatever light's on draft for the lady." He looked back at her. "We can't have you leaving London thinking that pathetic chardonnay is the best we have to offer."

"That's very thoughtful." She offered her hand. "I'm Andrea."

"Mac." He held her hand just a moment too long while he studied her face. Her stomach made a peculiar little leap. She quelled it ruthlessly and drew her fingers from his grasp while he slid onto the barstool beside her.

"Now tell me why you're sitting here instead of on what sounds like a brilliant holiday in the South Pacific."

*Because my temper finally got me into more trouble than I*

*could talk my way out of.* Aloud she said, "I'm doing research on the owner of this pub."

"Ah, the illustrious Mr. MacDonald. Brilliant chef, but not the full quid from what I hear." The sparkle returned to those devastating blue eyes, and she had the feeling she was the butt of a private joke.

Andrea couldn't pass up the opportunity to gather some local gossip. She plowed onward. "You know him?"

"That depends on why you're asking. Is it business, or is your enquiry of a personal nature?"

"Business. I'm supposed to meet him in Inverness tomorrow, and I'm looking for a little background."

"Are you always so unprepared for meetings?"

Andrea bristled. "Of course not. I only got the call from my office a few hours ago. I'm now fortifying myself for a long night of web browsing back at the hotel."

"I can see that. Well, I'd say this pub is a pretty good reflection of him. Comfortable, slightly sophisticated. Best selection of locally brewed beers in England and some truly inspired food."

Andrea looked around. Typical decor, lots of wood and brass, dim lighting. Stained glass and leather accents. Upscale but not uptight. Welcoming but not sloppy.

"Middle of the road," she murmured. "But that still doesn't tell me much about the man."

"And why do you need to know so much about him?"

The bartender returned with Andrea's drink and poured Mac's from the bottle into a glass, watching them as if they were his evening's entertainment.

"My job requires rapport," she said. "I can't convince someone we're right for the project if I don't know what he's

looking for. I can't win him over if I don't know which buttons to push."

"Hmm." He sipped his ale, his eyes dancing over the rim of the glass.

Was he laughing at her? "What?"

"I've just never heard a woman worry about which buttons to push when she's wearing a skirt that short and heels that high."

Heat crept up Andrea's neck and into her cheeks as she tugged down her suit skirt. It wasn't as if she were wearing a miniskirt. The length was perfectly modest when she wasn't sitting on a barstool. The heels were admittedly less conservative, but she wore them for height, not for looks. Then she realized he was watching her with a satisfied smile. She had taken the bait. Who exactly did he think he was?

She stilled her fidgeting and fixed him with a direct stare. "I could close a deal in jeans and tennis shoes. I just don't like being unprepared. Besides, I'm used to dealing with hotel groups with hundreds of properties, not celebrities with nothing better to do than play innkeeper."

"So MacDonald's a dilettante?" He swiveled on the stool and leaned back against the bar, arms crossed over his chest. Repressed laughter flashed in his expression.

"Frankly, I don't know the first thing about him. I've never seen his show, I certainly don't cook, and I can't fathom why anyone with a successful career in London would want to open a hotel on the Isle of Skye."

"Now that just sounds like bigotry. We Scots have an overabundance of national pride."

Andrea's cheeks heated again. How could she not have noticed? His accent, while refined, had a distinct Scottish

burr. She was really off her game if she had failed to pick up something that obvious. Still, he had needled her about both her clothing and her professionalism, and she had to pry the apology from her lips. "I didn't mean to be rude."

He waved a hand in dismissal. "You've got bigger problems if you know so little about your client. Though you'll do fine if you avoid the pejoratives about his native land. I do think you have one thing in common."

"What's that?"

"You both think work is a terrible reason to cancel a trip to Tahiti."

A reluctant smile crept onto her face. "I can drink to that."

"*Slàinte*, Andrea." He clinked his glass to hers, took a long pull of the ale, and hopped off the stool. "I should get going now. I would suggest you do the same, Ms. Sullivan. You've got a long day ahead of you tomorrow."

She blinked at him. "How did you—"

"Night, Ben. Her drinks are on the house."

"Night, James."

Mac—or the man pretending to be Mac—winked at her and sauntered out of the pub.

"That was . . . He was . . ."

Ben seemed to be fighting a smile. "Mr. MacDonald, yes. I daresay that's the first time not only has a woman *not* fallen all over him, she's actually insulted him to his face."

Andrea's heart sank to the soles of her Jimmy Choos. "I think I'm going to be sick."

"I wouldn't worry too much. I rather think he liked you."

Right. She glanced back at the door, but James MacDonald had already gone. Why, oh why, did this happen now? She had to hook this account if she had any hope of getting back

into her boss's good graces, and now she'd be spending the next few days trying to placate a celebrity ego.

She'd never been particularly proficient at groveling.

Andrea hopped off the stool and reached for her purse before she remembered Mr. MacDonald had taken care of her bill. She found a couple of one-pound coins in her change purse and set them on the bar as a tip, even though Ben had done nothing to signal her impending disaster. Would it really have been so difficult to give her a shake of the head, a raised eyebrow? But of course he'd stay out of the matter when his boss was involved.

"Thank you, Ben." *For nothing.*

"Good night, Andrea." He slipped the coins beneath the bar and added, "Don't think too badly of Mr. MacDonald. He's a good man, beneath it all."

Andrea forced a smile and hiked her handbag onto her shoulder, then escaped onto the dark London street. At nine o'clock on a Sunday evening, traffic had tapered off, and the usual haze of diesel fumes faded into the musty scent of damp concrete. She made a left and strode toward the Ladbroke Grove tube station, irritation speeding her steps.

How many times had she lectured her junior account managers on the importance of maintaining professionalism at all times? Every contact was a prospective client or referral. She'd just proved her own point in a particularly embarrassing manner.

Not that she excused James MacDonald for his role in this debacle. She knew his type. Wealthy, good-looking, famous. He expected women to fall at his feet, and God forbid one had a mind of her own. She'd probably be dodging his advances for the next three days while she tried to convince

him she was more than a pretty face. He was lucky she hadn't smacked him for commenting on her clothing in the bar.

Truthfully, she hadn't been in much shape to do anything but put her foot firmly in her mouth. It had been years since she'd let a man rattle her, and it had taken only a smile and a lingering handshake to do it. Heaven help her.

She only made it a few blocks from the pub before the stiletto pumps began to rub blisters on her heels. She gave up on her plans of an indignant walk to the tube station and raised a hand to the first black cab she saw. She climbed into the rear and gave the driver her destination.

She could salvage this. She'd spend the rest of her evening with her laptop, finding out everything she could about the man. From here on, she would act with the utmost professionalism. She hadn't gotten this close to VP through years of seven-day weeks and grueling round-the-clock hours to blow it now. Her boss may have given her this assignment as some backhanded punishment—after all, it had been years since he'd wasted her on a barely five-figure deal—but there had to be some sort of cachet to landing a celebrity client like James MacDonald. Surely she could turn it into bigger accounts. But first she had to repair the damage she'd done with her big mouth.

The cab pulled up beside the imposing Victorian brick edifice of the Kensington Court Hotel. Andrea paid the driver and climbed out with a wince, once again regretting her choice in footwear. She limped into the richly decorated lobby and rode the lift to her fourth-floor room.

The lush carpeting muffled her footsteps to a whisper when she let herself in. She certainly couldn't complain about her accommodations. She had stayed in the hotel

dozens of times over the years, and each room was impeccably decorated in its own style. Her current space featured an enormous tester bed, framed by blue silk brocade draperies that spilled from a gilded corona above the headboard. She gingerly eased off her shoes, sank onto the luxurious mattress, and heaved a sigh.

She was tired, and not the kind of tired a good night's sleep in a fluffy bed could solve.

She lay there for a long moment, then threw a glance at the clock and calculated back five hours. Her sister should just be getting supper ready in Ohio. She pulled her cell phone from her pocket and dialed.

Becky answered on the fifth ring. "Andy! Why are you calling me? Aren't you supposed to be on a plane right now?" Something sizzled in the background, punctuated by a child's scream.

"Did I call at a bad time?"

"No more than usual. I'm frying up some chicken for dinner—Hannah! Leave the cat alone!"

Andrea smiled. Becky was almost eight years older than Andrea, and she had three children: a nine-year-old son and three-year-old twins, a boy and a girl. "I can call back later—"

"David! Don't hit your sister! I'm sorry, what were you saying? Aren't you supposed to be on your way to Tahiti?"

"Change of plans. Michael booked me a consultation with some celebrity client while I'm here. I'm flying to Scotland tomorrow."

"And you're okay with that?"

"I'd rather be in Tahiti, for sure."

"No, I meant—"

“I know what you meant. I’m okay. What’s one more, right?”

“Oh, I don’t know, the difference between a luxury vacation and a padded room, maybe?”

Andrea chuckled despite herself. Even from Ohio, Becky couldn’t resist the urge to mother her. “It’s my job. What am I going to do, say no?”

“That’s exactly what you say. ‘Michael, I’ve planned this vacation for over a year. Find someone else to do it.’”

“I know.” The smile faded from Andrea’s face. Had it not been for the disastrous outcome of her last appointment in London, she would have said exactly that. She’d gotten away with plenty of attitude in the past based on her unmatched sales record, but in this business, she was only as good as her last deal. “I’ll be fine. Really. I’m meeting the client in Inverness tomorrow, and then we’re driving to Skye. I should be back in New York on Wednesday.”

“Maybe you should take a few days off while you’re in Scotland. Your vacation is blown anyway.”

“I don’t think that’s such a good idea. I’m staying at the client’s hotel.”

“Who’s the client?”

Andrea paused. “James MacDonald.”

The squeal that emanated from the speaker belonged to a teenage girl, not a thirty-eight-year-old mother of three. Andrea held the phone several inches from her ear until she was sure her eardrums were safe.

“And here I thought your job was completely boring!”

“Strictly business, Becks. I’ve got less than two days to put together a proposal, and he doesn’t seem like the easiest client to deal with. It’s going to be a long trip.”

“I bet you don’t even know who he is,” Becky said reprovingly.

“Oh, I know who he is.” *A self-absorbed celebrity with the sexiest smile I’ve ever seen.* She yanked her mind back from that precipice before she could slip over. “I need to do some research for my meeting now. I’ll call you from Skye.”

“All right, have fun,” Becky said in a singsong voice. Andrea could practically hear her grin from four thousand miles away. “I expect an autograph, by the way.”

*Not likely.* “Love you, Becks. Give the kids a kiss for me.”

Andrea clicked off the line and pressed her fingertips to her eyes, trying to calm the urgent thrumming of her heart. The last thing she needed was to think of her client in anything but a professional fashion. Men like MacDonald were predators—any sign of weakness and she’d never be able to shake him. She knew all too well what could happen if she succumbed to an ill-advised attraction. She’d been there once, and she wasn’t going back there again.

“Strictly business.” The steadiness of her voice in the quiet room reassured her. She took a deep breath and levered herself up off the bed. Enough procrastinating. She still had work to do.

Andrea slipped out of her suit jacket and skirt, hung them carefully in the closet, and ensconced herself in a luxurious hotel robe. Then she chose an obscure Dussek piano concerto from her phone as mood music and dragged her laptop onto her legs.

*James MacDonald chef*, she typed into the search box, and waited. Page after page of results appeared: restaurant reviews, interviews, television listings. Andrea clicked through to his official website first and quickly read through

his bio. Born in Portree, Isle of Skye, schooled in Scotland. Completed a degree in business at the University of Edinburgh, followed by culinary training at Leiths School of Food and Wine in London. A long list of assistant and sous-chef positions at some of London's most prestigious eateries culminated in his first restaurant, a gastropub in Notting Hill. That first location was quickly followed by smaller, more focused restaurants in Knightsbridge and Covent Garden, then Cardiff, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

Last year he had been invited to prepare his take on traditional English food for the prime minister. A few months ago he had been named a member of the Order of the British Empire for his philanthropic work with at-risk youth.

She blinked at the screen. Wonderful. She'd just insulted a member of a British chivalric order. That was a distinction not many women could claim.

Andrea moved on to the newspaper articles, all of which called him the standard-bearer for nouveau-British cuisine, then scanned a Wiki page listing each of his six restaurants. All of them had received starred reviews in the Michelin Red Guide. The Hart and the Hound, the flagship pub she'd just visited, received one of only a dozen two-star ratings in Britain.

She should have bypassed the wine and ordered dinner instead.

MacDonald couldn't have accomplished all that by age thirty-five without a sharp mind and plenty of talent. Somehow that just stirred up her irritation. She'd half-expected to find evidence he had simply ridden his looks and charm to success, but every detail pointed to hard work and sacrifice. For heaven's sake, the man had even established a vocational cooking program for secondary-school dropouts.

“The perfect man,” she muttered. “Just ask him.”

She scrolled through the search results until gossip sites began to appear. Photos of MacDonald with a string of beautiful women—models, actresses, dancers—at exclusive parties and club openings. So he was that sort. Never with the same woman twice.

Great. Her hand still hurt after the encounter with the last wannabe Don Juan. Now she had to spend the next three days trying to get James MacDonald’s signature on a contract while keeping things strictly professional. The fact he’d already turned her into a blithering idiot once didn’t bode well for her quick thinking.

But she’d manage. She had to. She hadn’t come this close to achieving her goals just to let a man get in her way.