



## Treasured (Secrets of the Loch Book 1)

By Candace Camp

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Love is in the cards for a young Scottish heiress in the first book of a delicious new trilogy of historical romances, *Secrets of the Loch*, from *New York Times* bestselling author Candace Camp.

A family legend of hidden treasure mingles with the mist over the shores of Loch Baille... But it's not the cache of gold dating back to Culloden that Jack Kensington claims when he arrives in the Highlands; it's the house he won in a London card game from a luckless Scotsman.

Stunned to learn that her wastrel brother wagered their family estate, Isobel Rose must find a way to save her home and the people she loves...even if it means accepting a loveless marriage. Or perhaps not so loveless? Isobel unlocks the secrets of desire in the arms of the mysterious and handsome Englishman, but a series of "accidents" makes her fear that she will soon be a widow instead of a wife. As their hunt for lost riches turns into the search for a killer, Isobel fights her attraction to the man who stole her birthright...but can Jack convince Isobel that he can provide a home for her heart, and a love to treasure?

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## Treasured (Secrets of the Loch Book 1) By Candace Camp Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #67830 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-06-17
- Released on: 2014-06-17
- Format: Kindle eBook

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## Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

*\*Starred Review\** Isobel Rose's profligate brother, Andrew, has lost their ancestral Scottish estate, Baillannan, in a card game. Jack Kensington, the Englishman who won their home, intends to sell it. But Isobel has a proposition. If Jack will marry her, she'll continue to manage their holdings and send the profits to him in London. The marriage will, she tells him, be strictly a business arrangement. Jack is quite taken with the spunky beauty and agrees to her terms. He's determined to make it a marriage in fact, however, not one of convenience. Unfortunately, there's someone who'd rather see Jack dead than wed, and no one knows who that is. Camp's witty historical romance is set during the Highland Clearances, a period when tenants were "cleared" or evicted from their homes by their rich landlords to make room for the more profitable venture of sheep farming. Camp deftly weaves together the enticing elements of her novel—suspense, family relations, the mystery of an old murder, a hidden treasure, and, of course, an unlikely romance. There's something for everyone in the first book of the Secrets of the Loch trilogy. --Shelley Mosley

### About the Author

Candace Camp is a *New York Times* and *USA TODAY* bestselling author of more than sixty novels of contemporary and historical romance, including the bestselling Regency romances *Enraptured*, *Treasured*, and *The Marrying Season*. She grew up in Texas in a newspaper family, which explains her love of writing, but she earned a law degree and practiced law before making the decision to write full time. She has received several writing awards, including the *RT Book Reviews* Career Achievement Award. Visit her at [Candace-Camp.com](http://Candace-Camp.com).

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Treasured



APRIL 1807

It was raining. It had been doing so, Jack thought in disgust, ever since he set foot in this benighted land. Sometimes the water fell in slanted sheets, lashing him like bits of iron; other times, it subsided into a steady, miserable drizzle. But even when the rain stopped briefly, mist still hung over everything, as if the very air were so laden with moisture it could not hold it.

A cold drop of water slid between cloth and skin, trickling down his back, and Jack turned up the collar of his greatcoat as he gazed out across the bleak landscape. The road—if this rutted, narrow path could be termed that—cut across thick mats of heather and disappeared into the distance. There were few trees between him and the gray curtain of mist, only the brown and green land and a few scrubby bushes. Off to his right, a trench had been dug into the ground, exposing a straight wall of black earth. Rocks of all sizes dotted the lumpy, irregular ground, adding to the image of desolation.

What had possessed him to come to Scotland?

He had asked himself that question last night as he'd lain on the thin straw mattress in the grim little inn in Kinclannoch—indeed he'd asked it almost nightly for the past week, and had still not come up with a satisfactory answer. There was no reason to see the house that was now his or to talk to the people who worked on the estate. His only desire was to sell the place, which fortune had dropped in his lap like an

overripe plum. Whatever little tickle of proprietary instinct had made him want to see it, whatever odd pull he'd felt at the thought of being a landed gentleman, the truth was his impulsive journey up here to claim the estate made him as big a fool as the bird-witted Scotsman who had wagered his home on the turn of a card.

Still, it made even less sense to turn back now, when he had drawn so close to his destination. If he had understood the innkeeper's thick brogue, the house could not be much farther.

His horse whickered and shifted as a gust of wind whipped through them, driving the rain into Jack's face and nearly taking his hat with it. He grabbed the once elegant, now sodden hat, jamming it more firmly down on his head, and leaned over to stroke a soothing hand down the horse's neck. "Steady on, Pharaoh."

Now, blown by the wind, the mist receded, and he could see the narrow loch and, at last, the house. It lay on a shelf of rock beside the water, a long, straight line of stone unbroken by curve or ornamentation. As gray and dreary as the loch and the sky above it, the house might have been formed out of this bleak landscape itself.

Baillannan.

If Jack had harbored some hope that the sight of his new home would lighten his mood, he knew now he was doomed to disappointment. Nothing could have looked less welcoming. Suppressing a sigh, he dug in his heels and started forward.



Isobel was carefully pulling out the last few stitches in her embroidery when her aunt startled her by exclaiming, "We have a visitor! How nice! Barbara, did you know someone was coming?"

"Isobel," she corrected automatically, and her aunt nodded vaguely.

"Yes, dear, of course."

"Who is it?" Isobel set aside her needlework and stood up, suddenly hopeful. "Is it Andrew?"

Aunt Elizabeth squinted down at the courtyard below. "I don't think it's anyone I recognize."

"A stranger?" Isobel joined her aunt at the window, but their visitor had already disappeared, and she saw nothing but the groom leading off an unfamiliar bay horse.

"He looked soaked, poor man," Elizabeth went on sympathetically. "Perhaps he's a traveler seeking shelter from the rain."

"A traveler to where?" Isobel asked pragmatically. "It's my guess he's gone astray. No doubt Hamish will set him straight."

"It would have been nice to have a visitor," her aunt said wistfully. "So many people have left, one hardly sees anyone anymore."

"Yes, since the Clearances began, our closest neighbors are now sheep," Isobel agreed tartly.

“The MacKenzies would not have sold if Ronald was still alive. Poor Agnes; she will not enjoy living in Edinburgh, however much her son may have profited.”

Agnes MacKenzie had been Elizabeth’s closest friend, and Isobel’s aunt had been lonely with her gone. Isobel could not help but feel that the loss had affected Aunt Elizabeth’s mind as well as her spirits; she had grown more forgetful the last few months.

Isobel murmured a vague agreement, not wanting to set her aunt off on that unpleasant path. She returned to the sofa and picked up her embroidery hoop, saying, “I fear I’ve made a shambles of my stitches. What do you think I should do?”

Elizabeth was distracted by Isobel’s plea for help, and she started toward her niece. But she had scarcely taken a step when the quiet was interrupted by the sound of a voice rising in agitation downstairs. Surprised, both women glanced toward the door. A moment later, there was the clatter of feet on the stairs, and one of the maids burst into the room.

“Miss Isobel!” The girl’s face was flushed and her voice trembled with excitement. “Hamish says come quick. There’s a man here, claiming Baillannan is his!”

“What?” Isobel stared at the girl. Her words were so absurd that Isobel thought she must not have heard the maid correctly.

“A man, miss, at the door. An Englishman. He says he owns Baillannan. Then Hamish says he maun be daft, but the man says, ‘Nae, it’s mine,’ and shows him a paper, and Hamish sends me to fetch you.”

“Isobel . . .” Aunt Elizabeth turned toward her, frowning. “I don’t understand. An Englishman, here? Who is he? What does he mean?”

“I have no idea. It’s nonsense, of course.” Isobel started toward the hall. “Don’t worry, Auntie, I will straighten it out.”

At the foot of the staircase Isobel was met by the sight of Hamish, the man who had been the Rose family butler all her life, standing, arms crossed, as if he would bar the man from the stairs physically. His weathered face, usually set in stoic, even grim, lines, was red as a beet, bushy brows drawn together, dark eyes glittering with dislike.

Opposite him stood a stranger, tall and dark-haired, his face creased in frustration. He would have been a handsome man, she thought, if he had not been soaked to the skin, his cravat a soggy lump around his neck, starched collar points utterly wilted, and his fine wool jacket stretched out of shape by the weight of the water it had absorbed. He held a waterlogged hat in one hand and a many-caped, gray greatcoat hung over the same arm, both of them puddling water on the stone floor beneath him. His boots were caked with mud, and between the sides of his open jacket, his wet shirt clung to his chest. It was made of fine lawn and the water had turned it almost transparent, so that she could see every line and curve of his chest and stomach. As she watched, he reached up and shoved the mop of hair back from his face, stripping water from it. His hair was thick, and slicked back as it now was, it left his face in sharp relief, emphasizing the square set of his jaw and the high slant of his cheekbones. An errant drop of water trickled from his temple, sliding down his cheek and curving over his jaw to disappear in the cloth of his cravat.

Isobel realized that she was staring, and she quickly averted her eyes, a faint flush rising in her cheeks.

“Hamish? Is there a problem?”

The stranger looked up at her, relief flooding his face, and burst out, “Ma’am! Thank heavens, you speak English.”

Isobel raised her brows, her voice faintly amused. “I do indeed, sir. I believe you will find that most of us do.”

“Not so I could tell,” he responded with a dark look at the butler.

“I canna help it if you dinna understand clear speech.” Hamish set his jaw mulishly.

The stranger ignored his retort, addressing his words to Isobel. “If I might be so bold as to introduce myself, I am Jack Kensington, ma’am, at your service.” He swept her a polite bow, elegant in spite of his drenched condition.

He was clearly a gentleman, his speech and manners as refined as those of her brother or cousin—perhaps more so—and she suspected that his clothes were equally sophisticated when not soaked by the rain.

Isobel was as intrigued as she was puzzled, and she came down the last few steps and held out her hand to him. “I am Isobel Rose, sir. I’m pleased to make your acquaintance.”

Mr. Kensington looked taken aback, but he recovered quickly and took her hand, bending over it politely. “Mrs. Rose. An apt name for such a lovely woman.”

“Miss Rose,” Isobel corrected him, pulling her hand back. His words were too forward and no doubt meaningless flattery, but she could not deny the lift of pleasure at his compliment.

“Dinna trust him, Miss Isobel,” the butler warned, taking a step toward her protectively. “This Englishman is trying to swick you. Or he’s daft. He says he owns Baillannan.”

“I’m sure his intent is not to swindle us,” Isobel replied. “Perhaps he has been misled.” She turned to Kensington. “I am sorry, sir, but you are mistaken. Baillannan belongs to the Rose family.”

“It did,” Kensington responded tersely, his courteous manner giving way to irritation. “But it is mine now. I have it from Sir Andrew Rose.”

“No!” Isobel stared at him in astonishment. “Andrew would never have sold Baillannan.”

“He did not sell it, ma’am. He wagered it on a game of whist. And lost.”

“No,” she repeated, but the blood drained from her face, and for an instant she thought she might faint. “I don’t believe you.”

“Then believe this.” He shoved a piece of paper into her hand. “It is Sir Andrew’s chit.”

Isobel stared at the familiar writing, the bold swoop of the A, and this time she did have to reach for the newel to stay upright.

“Miss Isobel?” Hamish stepped forward anxiously and took her arm to support her. “What is it? The young laird never—”

“Yes.” Isobel kept her gaze on the words, now swimming before her eyes. “I fear he did. ’Tis Andrew’s hand. He waghered Baillannan,” she finished bitterly.

“I have the deed, as well,” the Englishman added mildly.

“No doubt.” Her stomach was roiling. She wanted to scream and shred the note, to toss it back in the stranger’s face and tell her men to toss him back out into the rain. But she was a Rose, and so she must put iron into her spine. Isobel blinked back her tears—she refused to let him see her cry.

He was holding out the deed to her, and she took it, running her eyes down it as if she were reading it, when in truth she could not take in any of the words, her mind overwhelmed by something close to terror. She had no idea what to do, so she clung to the behavior that one expected from the lady of Baillannan, a stoicism that hid the turmoil inside.

“Welcome to Baillannan, Mr. Kensington,” she said tightly as she handed him back the papers, though she could not manage to look him in the face. “Hamish, show Mr. Kensington to a room. I am sure he would like to get dry. And no doubt he would appreciate a cup of tea, as well.”

“Miss Izzy!” Hamish went an even deeper shade of red, and his eyes bulged. “You canna mean to give him your home! Your father . . . your grandfather . . .”

“Hamish,” Isobel said firmly. “I cannot undo what Andrew has done. Baillannan apparently belongs to Mr. Kensington now.”

Hamish set his face mutinously, but finally he bobbed his head. “Aye, miss.”

He seized Kensington’s coat and hat, grabbed up the satchel at his feet, then went to speak to the servants, shooing them toward the kitchen.

Isobel turned back to their visitor in awkward silence, then rushed to speak. “I apologize that your room is not ready.”

“No, no need to apologize. Indeed, I should do so for the shock I have given you. I thought Sir Andrew would have written, but no doubt his letter has not had time to reach you.”

“No doubt. If you will excuse me . . .” She gave him as close to a smile as she could muster and turned away.

“No, wait.” He followed her to the foot of the staircase. “Please.”

Isobel stopped on the stairs and turned reluctantly to face him. He was a step below her, so that his head was level with hers, only inches away. His eyes, she realized, were not black or brown as she had thought, but a dark blue, shadowed by thick black lashes. The odd color, combined with the high slash of his cheekbones, gave his face a faintly exotic look. She found it unsettling.

“Are you—I’m not entirely sure I understood what that fellow said, but it seemed—are you related in some way to Sir Andrew?”

“I am his sister.”

“His sister!” His eyes widened. “I’m sorry. Sir Andrew never mentioned . . . I didn’t know . . .”

“There is no reason you should.” This time she could not manage even an attempt at a smile. Whirling, she ran up the stairs.

“Isobel?” Her aunt stood outside the door of the sitting room, looking a trifle lost.

Isobel pulled up short, barely suppressing a groan. Aunt Elizabeth’s memory had been growing hazier the last few months, and Isobel had found that any unexpected occurrence tended to make her condition worse. But Isobel was not sure she could explain the situation calmly when she felt as if she might shatter into a storm of tears herself.

“Isobel, who was that man? Was he talking about Andrew?” Her aunt’s face brightened. “Is Andrew here?”

“No. Andrew is in London. Or at least I suppose he is, since he has not bothered to write.”

“He is so careless that way.” Aunt Elizabeth smiled indulgently. “Of course, young men have better things to do than write home.”

“He might have thought of something besides himself for once.”

“Isobel? Are you angry with Andrew?”

“Yes, I am.” She added, softening her tone, “A bit.” She couldn’t give in to her feelings in front of Elizabeth.

“But why was Hamish upset? Who is that man?”

“He knows Andrew. I—he is staying here for a time.”

“Oh. How nice—a visitor. He was quite a handsome young man, I thought.” Elizabeth’s eyes gleamed speculatively, and for a moment she seemed like her old self. “It will be good for you to have someone your own age here.”

“Don’t.” Isobel felt as if she might choke. “Please, don’t try to matchmake. It’s impossible.”

“Nonsense. Now come in and sit down and tell me all about him.”

“I cannot.” Isobel pulled away, ignoring the faint hurt in her aunt’s eyes. “I will come back later and tell you everything I know. But right now I must go. I—I have to fetch something. From Meg.”

Her aunt frowned. “Meg?”

“Meg Munro, Auntie; you know Meg. Coll’s sister. Their mother Janet was Andy’s wet nurse.”

“Of course I know Meg.”

The vagueness in Elizabeth’s gray eyes made Isobel doubt her aunt’s words. I cannot bear it, she thought.



“I must go,” she repeated, and fled down the hall without looking back.

Inside her bedroom, Isobel closed the door and sagged against it. She wasn't sure how she had gotten through it without breaking down. Her knees were jelly, her hands trembling. She heard the sound of footsteps and voices in the hall outside her door as Hamish and the Englishman walked past, a bitter reminder that her home was gone.

Not just the house she had grown up in, but the loch, the earth, the rocks and caves, every inch of this land and its wild, harsh beauty. Her very life was tumbling down around her, ripped away by her young brother's folly. Even her beloved aunt was being taken from her bit by bit each day, her mind retreating.

She could not hold back a sob. Grabbing up her cloak, she ran from the room, tearing down the stairs and out into the yard as if pursued by devils.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Douglas Dossett:**

The actual book *Treasured (Secrets of the Loch Book 1)* will bring that you the new experience of reading the book. The author style to describe the idea is very unique. In the event you try to find new book to study, this book very suited to you. The book *Treasured (Secrets of the Loch Book 1)* is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book through the official web site, so you can quicker to read the book.

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#### **Daniel Starnes:**

Why? Because this *Treasured (Secrets of the Loch Book 1)* is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap this but latter it will jolt you with the secret it inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such awesome way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have got such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I had been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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