



## The MacGregor Grooms (The Macgregors)

By *Nora Roberts*

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

The eagerly anticipated sequel to *The MacGregor Brides* is here! And this time family patriarch Daniel MacGregor has his sights set on his three grandsons, cousins D.C., Duncan, and Ian, each of whom is very aware of Daniel's matchmaking machinations, and each equally determined to avoid the tender trap known as matrimony. *The MacGregor Grooms* comprises three extraordinary stories about the inexplicable attraction of opposites: D.C., the passionate, temperamental artist, and Layna, the coolly beautiful businesswoman; Duncan, the riverboat gambler with the impeccable pedigree, and Cat, the tempting torch singer from the mean streets of Chicago's South Side; and Ian, the worldly, self-confident lawyer, and Naomi, the bookish butterfly just emerging from her chrysalis. Nobody sets the scene for steamy, sensitive loving better than *New York Times* bestselling author Nora Roberts, who continues her unmatched string of successes with *The MacGregor Grooms!* --Alison Trinkle

#### About the Author

Nora Roberts is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of more than 200 novels. She is also the author of the bestselling In Death series written under the pen name J. D. Robb. There are more than 400 million copies of her books in print.

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The light poured through the tall windows and splashed on the violent slashes of sapphire and ruby. It washed over the man who stood before the canvas like a warrior at battle, wielding a paintbrush like a claymore.

He had the face of a warrior—tough, intense, with knife-edged cheekbones adding hollows, a mouth that was full but firmed in concentration. Eyes brilliant blue and icy cold beneath knitted brows the color of old mahogany.

His hair waved over his ears, curled over the collar of the splattered denim shirt he wore in lieu of a smock. He'd rolled the sleeves up, and the well-toned muscles of his arms rippled as he slashed the brush on canvas.

He was built like a warrior—broad of shoulder, narrow of hip and long of leg. His feet were bare, his wide and clever hands smeared with paint.

In his mind he saw explosions of emotion—passion and lust, greed and hunger. And all of this he fought onto the canvas while mean-edged rock pumped out of the stereo and thumped against the air.

Painting was a war to him—one he was determined to win, battle after battle. When the mood was on him he would work until his arms ached and his fingers cramped. When his mood was otherwise, he could and did ignore his canvases for days, even weeks.

There were those who said D. C. MacGregor lacked discipline. To those, he said who the devil wanted it?

As he clamped the brush between his teeth, switched to a palette knife to smear on a bold emerald, his eyes glittered in triumph.

He had it now. The hours of waging this battle were nearly done. A thin line of sweat slid down the center of his back. The sun beating through the windows was fierce now, and the studio was viciously hot because he'd forgotten to turn on the air-conditioning or open a window to the warm spring air.

He'd forgotten to eat as well, or check his mail, answer the phone or so much as glance out any of the wonderfully tall windows in his apartment. The energy swirled through him, as potent, as primitive as John Mellencamp's edgy, streetwise vocals blasting through the room.

When D.C. stepped back, the brush still clenched like a pirate's blade in his teeth, the palette knife like a dagger in his hand, that firm, somewhat forbidding mouth curved.

"That's it," he murmured. He put the brush in a jar of solution, began to absently clean the knife as he studied his work. "Need," he decided. He would call it simply *Need*.

For the first time in hours he realized the room was stuffy, the clashing and familiar scents of turpentine and paint thick in the air. He crossed the unpolished hardwood floor and shoved open one of the tall windows, took a deep gulp of fresh air.

It had been the windows, and this view of the C & O Canal, that had sold him on this apartment when he'd decided to come back to Washington. He'd grown up here, with eight years of his life spent in the White House as first son.

For a space of time he'd lived and worked in New York, and enjoyed it. He'd also lived and worked in San Francisco, and enjoyed that as well. But all through his restless twenties something had tugged at him. He'd finally given in to it.

This was home.

He stood by the window with his hands shoved in the back pockets of ragged jeans. The cherry blossoms were in full, glorious bloom; the canal sparkled in the afternoon light. Joggers plugged away along the towpath.

D.C. wondered idly what day it was.

Then, realizing he was starving to death, he left the music blaring and headed to the kitchen.

The penthouse was two levels, with the top designed for a master bedroom suite. D.C. had made it his studio and slept on a mattress tossed on the floor in the spare room. He hadn't gotten around to dealing with bed frames.

Most of his clothes were still in the packing boxes they'd been shipped in nearly two months before. He figured they worked efficiently enough as dressers until he found time to buy the real thing.

The main floor had a spacious living area ringed by more windows, still undraped. In it, there was a single sofa—the tags still on—a glorious Duncan Phyfe table with a half inch of dust coating its surface, and a floor lamp with a dented metal shade. The random-width pine floor was bare and desperately needed vacuuming.

The dining alcove off the kitchen was empty, the kitchen itself in shambles. What dishes and pots weren't heaped in the sink were still in boxes. He went directly to the refrigerator and was bitterly surprised to find it

empty but for three beers, a bottle of white wine and two eggs.

He could have sworn he'd gone shopping.

Rummaging through the cupboards, he came up with a few slices of very moldy bread, a bag of coffee, six boxes of cornflakes and a single can of soup.

Resigned, he ripped open a box of cereal and ate a handful while debating which he wanted more, coffee or a shower. He'd just decided to make the coffee and take it with him into the shower when the phone rang.

He noted without much interest that his message light was blinking, and, munching dry cereal, he answered.

"Hello."

"There's my boy."

And those ice blue eyes went warm, that hard mouth went soft. D.C. leaned against the counter and grinned. "Hey, Grandpa, what are you up to?"

"Some would say no good." Daniel's voice boomed out. "Don't you return your messages? I've talked to your bloody machine half a dozen times in the last few days. Your grandmother wanted to fly down to make sure you weren't dead in your bed."

D.C. only lifted a brow. It was well known that Daniel used his serene wife whenever he wanted to nag the children.

"I've been working."

"Good. That's good, but you can take a breath now and then, can't you?"

"I'm taking one now."

"I've a favor to ask you, D.C. I don't like to do it." Daniel let out a heavy sigh and had his grandson's brow knitting.

"What do you need?"

"You won't like it—God knows I can't blame you. But I'm in a bit of a fix. Your aunt Myra—"

"Is she all right?" D.C. straightened from the counter. Myra Dittmeyer was his grandmother's oldest and dearest friend, his own godmother and an honorary member of the Clan MacGregor. D.C. adored her, and remembered guiltily that he hadn't been to see her since he returned to Washington six weeks before.

"Oh, she's fit and fine, boy. Don't you worry about that. The woman's just as feisty as ever. But, well, she has another godchild. I doubt you remember the girl. You'd have met her a time or two when you were a lad. Layna Drake?"

Concentrating, D.C. got a vague image of a spindly little girl with hair like dandelion fluff. "What about her?"

"She's back in Washington. You know Drake's—the department stores. That's her family. She's working in their flagship store there now, and Myra... Well, I'm just going to say it straight out. There's a charity ball tomorrow night, and Myra's fussing because the girl doesn't have an escort. She's been at me to ask you—"

"Damn it, Grandpa."

"I know, I know." Daniel used his most long-suffering sigh. "Women, boy—what else can I say? They'll peck away at us like ducks until we just give in. I told her I would ask you. It would be a big favor to me if you'd see your way clear for this one night."

"If you and Aunt Myra are trying to set me up—"

Daniel interrupted with a hearty laugh that had D.C. frowning. "Not this time, boy. This girl isn't for you, take my word. She's pretty enough, and well mannered, but she'd never do for you. Too cool, to my way of thinking, and a bit of the nose-in-the-air sort. No, no, I wouldn't like to see you looking in that direction. And if you can't spare the evening, I'll just tell Myra I reached you too late and you already had plans."

"Tomorrow night?" D.C. scooped his fingers through his hair. He hated charity functions. "Is it black tie?"

"I'm afraid so." At the muttered oath in response, Daniel made sympathetic noises. "Tell you what, I'll just call Myra back and tell her you can't make it. No use wasting your evening with a girl who's likely to bore you to tears, is there? I doubt the two of you have a single thing in common. Better you start looking for a wife. It's time you were married and settled, Daniel Campbell. Past time. Your grandmother worries you'll end up starving in your studio, a lonely old man without a single chick or child. I've got another girl in mind. She's—"

"I'll do it," D.C. interrupted, purely in reflex. If Daniel didn't think much of Myra's goddaughter, it meant he wouldn't be on the phone constantly asking for relationship updates. Perhaps after this favor, his grandfather might ease off his relentless dynasty building—and though D.C. didn't hold out much hope for that outcome, it was worth a try. "What time tomorrow, and where do I pick what's-her-name up?"

"Oh, bless you. I owe you for this one. The affair's at eight, at the Shoreham Hotel. Layna's taken over her parents' town house on O Street." Examining his nails, Daniel rattled off the address. "I appreciate you getting me out of this little fix, D.C."

D.C. shrugged, upending the cereal box into his mouth as he traded family gossip with Daniel. And he wondered fleetingly where the hell he might have packed his tux.

## Users Review

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