

GRACE

Mark Stewart

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Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

Edited by: Rosemary Cantala

Other novels Mark Stewart has written

The Kendal chronicles (crime)

Fire games

Heart of a spider is the second book in the series

I know your secret is third in the series

Romance

Kiss on the bridge (series)

Kiss on the bridge (2)

Kiss on the bridge (3)

The perfect gift

Blood red rose (Vampire romance adventure)

Blood red rose two

Blood red rose three

Legendary Blue Diamond

Legendary Blue Diamond two

Legendary Blue Diamond three

Planet X91 the beginning (series)

(Plus fifty more)

GRACE

Melbourne Australia 1934

THE SOUND of someone chopping wood interrupted Grace's piano practice. She exhaled as she stood. Using the back of her knees she pushed the narrow stool which had been recently re-covered in a dull red cloth. Slamming the piano lid shut, she marched to the window in the dining room to investigate.

The wood shed, forty feet from the house, resembled a bee hive of activity. Grace's father, Percy McKenzie, known as Macca down at the local pub, was helping her two brothers stack wood.

Grace focused on a tall, tanned muscular man wielding the axe. She seemed lost in a fantasy watching the axe time and again rise above his head then come crashing down on the log. The man's tight skin covering his back and shoulder muscles glistened with sweat in the warm April sun. Turning from the window, a widening mischievous grin swept her young womanly face.

"Mother," she called in a thick Irish accent.

"I'm in the kitchen."

Grace ran into the room. Her long red hair flowed behind her. She yelped in excitement. "Who is the stranger?"

A tall woman stopped peeling potatoes to look over her shoulder. Wiping her hands on the front of her apron she spoke in a friendly voice.

"The man walked over the cattle-grid this morning. He talked to your father at length. He must've offered the man a job. I believe three square meals for one day's work is the going rate. Your father mentioned to me last night after dinner the depression seems to be biting. Don't be too concerned about the man, I'm sure the stranger will be walking off our land at first light tomorrow."

"Surely this horrid depression will be over next year, or at the most, 1936," suggested Grace.

Her mother, Eloise, turned back to the window. She stared at the rolling hills in the foreground. A tear rolled down her cheek. "I hope so," she whispered.

Grace walked to the table, fingering the dumpling mixture.

"Can't the stranger stay for a little longer? He doesn't look dangerous."

"Grace McKenzie, I will not have you talk like that in this house," Eloise barked. She whirled around, facing her daughter. "Go to your room. I've no time to quarrel. I must hurry to finish preparing the evening meal."

Grace pushed her hands onto her hips in a show of protest. Her eyes widened in rage.

"Mother, I'm not a child. I turned sixteen last spring. How am I ever going to meet a potential husband if father keeps sending them away and you order me into my room at a drop of a hat?"

"Hush, your father will hear," scoffed Eloise, pointing to the door. "Go."

Instead of complying, Grace flashed her mother a disgusted look. She turned and ran to the dining room window. Twisting an escaping curl around her finger, she watched the stranger. She even struck up fantasy in her mind the stranger and her were walking along the creek holding his hand. Somehow, she knew they had to meet.

Grace crept through the kitchen doorway, grabbing a full water bucket. She walked quickly to the wood shed. When she arrived, her brothers and her father were nowhere to be seen.

Grace boldly stepped towards the stranger. "Hello there."

The man placed the wood splitter on the ground and focused on Grace.

"G'day, you must be Macca's daughter." He wiped the sweat from his hand, stepping closer. "I'm Bill Smith."

Grace shook his hand at the same time her cheeks flushed red. "I've not heard your accent. Where are you from?" she asked.

"Australia."

Grace pulled her hand away, stepping back. "I thought you might have been of Irish descent."

"Is there a problem with me being Australian?"

Grace shook her head. The expression on her face gave away too much of what she had been thinking. She took a large back step.

"Wow little darling, I didn't mean to scare ya."

"You didn't scare me. I came from the house. I thought you might be thirsty?"

"I'm as thirsty as a salty croc," chuckled Bill.

Grace caught the humor and stepped closer, wondering if the man had lived through twenty summers.

Small talk and laughing echoed throughout the wood shed.

Grace could feel love had germinated and in fact was beginning to mushroom.

"Care for a walk along the creek?" asked Bill, taking hold of Grace by the hand.

"I'd love to."

"I agree with your father. You're better looking than Morning Glory herself."

"Excuse me, why has my father spoken to you so intimately?"

Bill swiped his wide-brimmed hat from his head. He lowered his gaze, kicking at a clump of clay into the slow-moving creek water.

"I have to confess. There I was drinkin' at the local pub. Me dad and yours came up, putting forward an idea I couldn't refuse."

Grace looked away. She spied her father eavesdropping from behind a large willow tree. She flicked him a green stare. "Excuse me for one moment, Bill." She folded her arms tight across her chest, marching over to the tree. "Father, may I have a word?"

Not wanting her brothers to hear, her father whispered. "I can explain."

"What is going on?"

"I told your mother Bill will be gone by sunup, but in fact, I offered Bill the overseer's job, hoping you and he might like each other. He's handsome, don't you think? Forty thousand acres and ten thousand head of cattle is a lot to look after. Too much for two men."

Grace rushed at her father, giving him a bear hug. "Thank you."

"Go, don't keep Bill waiting. It's up to you how you two will get along."

Grace's father watched his daughter walk along the creek bed holding Bill's hand. He sighed. "Ah! young love isn't it wonderful."

Dear reader,

thank you for reading my short story: Grace. I do hope you enjoyed it. Any feedback is gratefully accepted. The information you, the reader give, helps me to become a more professional author.

My stories are based on the Australian culture. Some of the spelling is Australian. Thanks for your understanding.

Again, thank you for your support, for without you, the reader, I wouldn't have anyone to read my work.

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Other novels I have written in the way of romance are: Kiss on the bridge. The perfect gift: Legendary blue diamond. Don't tell my secret.

A vampire adventure is The Blood Red Rose: Blood Red Rose Two:

Planet X91 series (There is over fifty novels in the series)

Crime novels: The Kendal Chronicles.

Fire Games: Heart of a spider: I know your secret.

Children: A Troglian knows and Luke's cubby house: Malcolm's cubby house.

Smashwords has various short stories.

Below is the opening page of my novels in order that I have listed them:

Synopsis: Kiss on the bridge. Adventure romance.

How would you react if a tall handsome stranger came up to you on new-years-eve and asked for a kiss?

Kiss on the bridge is set in the year 1974. Cyclone Tracy made land fall in Darwin on 25th December 1974 at 9:55am desecrating Darwin. After Tracy had swept the state there was nothing left except this story? Out of the ruins love sparked and mushroomed between Anneli and Wade. They were destined to meet and tell their story for decades to come.

Kiss on the bridge two: Set in Australia in 1977. Meredith wakes in a coffin. She has no idea her hero is on the way. They meet and fall in love, but will the emotion be strong enough to keep them together?

The Perfect Gift. Adventure romance. Available Smashwords.

Naomi is twenty-six and doesn't like the way all men mistreat her. She decides a change is needed and applies to be a jillaroo on a cattle station named the Oasis. Its location is in outback Australia. She meets a cowboy, Trent, who is a rodeo champion. They agree on a bet. Eventually both want out, but neither wants to be first.

Through a series of adventures that stretch from the city, to a fast flowing river in the outback where Trent must save Naomi from drowning, love germinates in the middle of a storm.

In her heart, Naomi is a woman who adores the city's nightlife, but as the sun sets on each day, the Australian outback is enticing and the excitement of the city fades. Then she inadvertently saves the Oasis.

Love is growing, then Brandt; Naomi's obsessive ex-boyfriend tracks her down. Can Trent save her one last time?

Synopsis: Legendary Blue Diamond. Adventure romance. Available April 10th 2012

HISTORIANS AND researchers say the birth of the legendary blue diamond originated when the earth was being born. Some say the legend commenced at the union between a man who had skin, the colour of the night sky and a woman who had skin the colour of the sun. Rumour has it that the diamond was no larger than a single carrot. Lately there have been whispers that the deep blue coloured diamond was reported to be in excess of nine carrots possibly even ten or higher. What I believe isn't important, though I assume it lays somewhere in between. There's been bush talk from the Australian Kimberley's to Melbourne; whosoever touches the blue stone will die, for it is cursed by God. I believe it is due to man's greed and the blood that drips from his hands is the truth behind the cursed stone.

I have extensively researched a great number of books on the subject looking for a start date to the authenticity of the legend. I think I may have uncovered the actual events, but I have no way of proving if the facts are correct. I have been able to ascertain the legend was born around the mid 1800's AD when the State bank of Victoria was in its infancy. A gold prospector unearthed the diamond. In days he had sold it. The buyer was a man in charge of the bank. The diamond was indeed dark blue in colour, but definitely a one off, stroke of luck find. One cold dark night a bushranger, his brother and a third man came into a small town searching for the blue diamond. They never found it. The banker was tortured for the information of the stone's where-a-bouts. He took the knowledge of its existence to his grave. Of late a possible theory has been circulating that the man's wife has it in her possession. How she escaped from being murdered was any one's guess.

If you ask me, do I believe in the story, I'll answer you truthfully. I know it only to be a legend.

Synopsis: Blood Red Rose. Vampire adventure romance. Available on Smashwords.

"You can't force me to drink that, I'm innocent," yelled Haleton. "Rose-a-lee what have you done?"

There was no reply.

William Haleton is a normal man looking for love and the good life then the council of four modifies his DNA and uses him as a guinea pig. They transform him into a vampire. Pleading his innocence falls on deaf ears.

Haleton is hungry for the next evil soul, but deep down he has a burning desire for the love of a girl. Her blood is sweet and hypnotic. Her genetic makeup is his perfect match.

Being transported again through time is not an option.

The clock is ticking.

Haleton will do anything to stay by Amber's side, but is it possible for her to love him? Can Craig Benyon, Amber's close friend, be trusted? After all he loves her as much as William Haleton.

If an antidote to the vampire's curse is found in time, will it be successful, or is everything Haleton going through part of the vampire curse?

Synopsis: Fire Games. Crime. First book in the series.

Detective Alan Kendal puts his life on the line to outplay the psychotic arsonist known as Patrick.

Detective Kendal is ordered to team up with Detective Claire Ambroso, whom he's known since school, but she carries a secret and he has a grey past. Which one will come forward to haunt first? Kendal grows suspicious of his new partner when she aims her gun directly at him and pulls the trigger. What's her motive? Is she Patrick's accomplice? If not, who is?

How can Patrick always be one step ahead? Does Kendal have enough time to rescue his kidnapped twelve-year-old daughter, Tegan, before Patrick's fiery finale?

Synopsis: Heart of a spider. Crime. Second book in the series. Available Smashwords.

Detective Kendal is on the trail of a patient who has escaped the mental institution and wants to sever Kendal's life line. The chase is complicated by the visitation of a ghost and the appearance of a supposed vigilante.

Kendal doesn't believe in ghosts, but finds himself having a conversation as he stares at one. His partner, Claire Ambroso has to fight for her life when Kendal is told to meet GP at the wharf when the moon is at the highest point in the night sky.

Confusion sets in at a local supermarket when a robbery goes wrong and someone in Kendal's family is shot.

The trap is set for the person who masterminded the escape and a final shoot out at the hospital reveals amazing results that astounds even Kendal.

Synopsis: I know your secret. Crime. Third book in the series. Available Smashwords.

Everyone has a secret. Some people take theirs to the grave. Some hold their desires inside for a lifetime. Some stew on their secret all their life, and then they get revenge.

I know your secret is a suspenseful crime novel. Melbourne homicide detective Alan James Kendal and his partner Detective Claire Ambroso have to locate a missing teenage girl. The case hots up when he is introduced to a medium. She seems to hold all the knowledge of the case except a few minor details, like, why did Kendal find an empty bullet shell that had a note inside that read, 'I was paid to miss.'