

Mrs. McPhealy's American: A Novel



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BY CLAIRE R. McDOUGALL

FICTION

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Hollywood director Steve McNaught is drinking heavily and on the brink of a midlife crisis. Although he has had commercial hits, his more creative talents lie unexplored. With guilt over two failed marriages and his role as near-absent father, he buys a one-way ticket to Scotland, hoping to find solace in his grandfather's ancestral home.

Soon the entire town is abuzz with the news of Steve's impending arrival at his aunt's Mrs. McPhealy's. The ladies exchange glances; the men in the only pub wonder if there might be some cash advantage. Bent over the bins in the alley behind the shops, the three tinker brothers barely register the goings-on. They know they are related to this Hollywood character. Everyone knows. It is only Steve McNaught who is in the dark.

But from the outset, Steve is a misfit in the small town of Locharbert. Georgiana (George) MacBrayne, the local midwife, suffers no fools, and this is exactly what she expects to find in Steve McNaught. When Steve buys the dilapidated cottage by the shore where George grew up and which she has always hoped to restore, the tension between them increases. As these things go, so does the attraction.

George lets her guard down long enough to let Steve in, but when he starts making a film called *As it is in Heaven* starring Locharbert's local characters, she throws him out. He takes his film reels and heads back to California. And then, one day close to Hogmanay, Steve reappears in Locharbert, months sober, and brandishing his newly edited film.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire R. McDougall was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, her family settling in rural Argyll's wild and rugged countryside, with its ancient ruins and standing stones. She studied philosophy for four years at Edinburgh University. After earning her MA, she spent four years on a Haldane scholarship to gain a Master of Letters at Christ Church, Oxford, studying Nietzsche. After moving to the United States, Claire worked as a journalist, before opting to pursue creative writing full time. She has written eight novels and their attendant screenplays. She is the author of four published books: *Veil of Time* (Simon and Schuster 2104) *Druid Hill*, *Iona*, and *Hazel and the Chessmen*.



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