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Sue-Ellen's Thoughts on Strong Heroines

I love strong heroines.

Courageous and resourceful women with enough fire in their blood and steel in their backbone to use wits and wiles to win a hero's heart and also make a difference in the world they lived in.

My **new Highland Warriors trilogy** features my strongest ever heroines. In **Sins of a Highland Devil**, book one, Catriona MacDonald knows bloodshed alone won't stop the feuding between her family and the two other clans who share a glen. The men see things differently, so this book has more fierce battle scenes than any story I've yet written.

Catriona couldn't keep me from writing these sword fights. But even as the blood was seeping into the heather, she decided she'd had enough.

She didn't care that a king had ordered champions from each warring clan to fight to the death to determine who would hold the glen. As she walked about the carnage after the battle, she only knew something needed to be done to ensure that such a tragedy never visited her beloved home again. And she saw her resolve mirrored on the faces of the trilogy's other two heroines.

Something magical happened then.

Something wonderfully female and that every woman should recognize: Catriona bonded with the other heroines, high-born daughters of the other two clans.

Together, these three determined young women enter a sacred pact, vowing to end the centuries-long strife and ensure peace reigns in the glen by each wedding a hero from one of the other feuding clans.

They're certain their plan will work. And it does, the books being romances. But Catriona and her two friends must still pursue their heroes across many pages before the unsuspecting men surrender to love, thinking that they did the chasing.

Women are clever that way.

And I love writing women who refuse to be doormats and shrinking violets. Heroines who never say surrender, don't burst into tears, but rather are spirited enough to do everything in their power to make their dreams come true. Catriona MacDonald and her two friends are shining examples as they embark on a journey to safeguard kith, kin, and the glen they cherish so deeply. They are women of my own heart and – some might be surprised – they are reflections of the many medieval women who were indeed strong.

Popular conception is that women of these times were only brides, wives, and widows.

Powerless chattel ruled by fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons, sometimes churchmen and overlords.

While this is true to a large degree, anyone researching medieval history will soon meet a cast of remarkably bold women who were intelligent, clever, resilient, and incredibly brave. One of my favorites is Christine de Pisan, born in the mid-1300s. She was the first woman writer of note, and the first published by Caxton. Her quotes are wonderful and full of insight even today. Here are two I always have in mind when creating my strong heroines:

“Just as women’s bodies are softer than men’s, so their understanding is sharper.”

Here she warns women against “...collapsing into tears and sobs.”

The caution against tears refers to the many times medieval noblewomen were left alone to administrate vast estates when their husbands had to be absent. Yet the warning could also apply to the numerous medieval townswomen who worked alongside their husbands – or on their own - in various trades. Or even medieval peasant women who toiled harder than any man, yet were known to sing as they carried heavy creels of peat or herring on their backs.

All these women were strong and resourceful and, like modern women, they surely understood how to make the best of their lot.

Like today, some will have been bolder than others, while some will have been timid.

Times change, human nature doesn't.

Space won't allow me to note the many strong medieval women I admire. But they existed. If they lived today, they'd be leaving a mark in the world, just as they did so many centuries ago.

My strong heroines, like Catriona MacDonald in **Sins of a Highland Devil**, are my personal tribute to these bold women.

They shouldn't be forgotten.

Visit my other titles to meet more of my spirited heroines.

**This essay was originally written at the request of RT who wished to spotlight my strong Highland Warriors heroines on their website.*