



This Fierce Splendor

Iris Johansen

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In a classic historical romance from #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Iris Johansen, a bookish beauty and her rogue guide go in search of a city lost to the sands of time—and find a burning passion.

Ever since she was a little girl, Elspeth MacGregor has dreamed of completing her father's quest to find the legendary lost city of Kantalan. After poring over textbooks, atlases, and tribal legends, Elspeth knows everything there is to know about the ancient metropolis—except how to reach it. Now she's made the journey to Hell's Bluff, Arizona, in search of the man who may be her last hope of reaching Kantalan, despite his dangerous reputation . . . or maybe because of it.

The last thing Dominic Delaney needs is to lead some stubborn scholar around on a wild goose chase. A wanted man, Dominic has never had time for fairy tales. But there's something about Elspeth's fiery determination that has him willing to suspend disbelief . . . and something about Dominic that has Elspeth falling for the wrong man. Now, to reach the magnificent riches of Kantalan, the mismatched pair must first conquer the dark mysteries of desire.

Includes a special message from the editor, as well as excerpts from these Loveswept titles: *Remember the Time, The Vow, The Baron, Lightning That Lingers, Tall, Dark, and Lonesome, Dream Lover, and Legends.*

This Fierce Splendor Details

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From Reader Review This Fierce Splendor for online ebook

Lady Jaye says

2.5 stars

Elspeth comes in search of Dominic Delaney, seeking his assistance to find the fabled city Kantalan. This is the story of the journey which Elspeth and Dominic undertake, assisted by a cast of characters. And oh yes, it's also the story of their love.

This is my first Loveswept romance, and I must say I wanted to like this book, I truly did. But I did not. There were so many things wrong with it that I felt it never realized its full potential.

For one, I felt the prologue was overwrought. The rest of the book was like a roller coaster - great moments, then dull moments, then moments where you're like WTH?, and then the cycle starts all over again. Inconsistent, that's the word I want - it was inconsistent. I didn't enjoy that.

The characters were also a roller coaster for me. One moment I empathized with them, the next moment I was annoyed with them, the next moment I was disgusted; and then straight back to empathy. That also didn't work for me either.

In the end I came to dislike them, especially Silver. I found her hateful and rude and not endearing at all. And rather prejudiced. You know, being prejudiced does not gain a character empathy even when she's being prejudiced against people who were prejudiced against her.

This book had all the makings of a good story, and it could have been one, but the characters were not very likable and the story was not always engaging. I did end up skimming major portions of the book just because I could not resonate with the writing or the characters - I guess that counts as DNF territory. Womp.

I received this book from Netgalley

Michele bookloverforever says

wonderful story. read it many years ago but purchased it recently for my kindle fire and reread it.

Barbara says

loved this book, brought out so many emotions. I laughed, I got angry, I laughed again, I cried, it was just great. One of my favorites of Iris's. I absolutely loved the character Patrick and Silver and if they weren't cousins and such an age difference they would have been perfect together.

Kristen says

In this early classic historical romance from Iris Johansen, This Fierce Splendor, it came from the Loveswept

Historical Romance series from Harlequin and the 7th book in the Delaney series, too. We were introduced to young Elspeth MacGregor, who wanted to follow her late father's quest to go to the lost legendary city of Katalan. She studied everything about it, except how to get there. That's when she met Dominic Delaney in Hell's Bluff, Arkansas--the only man who knew how to get there. Although he was a wanted man, there was something about Elspeth that intrigued her with her wild determination. Before they would reach the end of their journey, they would have to control their wildest heartfelt desires for each other.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

This was a great book, with many reasons to love it. The adventure was really cool, as they search for an ancient treasure. When I started reading romances, it was because of the adventure stories, so this was right up my alley. It's part western but they go to Latin America as well. The hero is Dominic Delaney, a bad boy and not a little like Indiana Jones. He totally sweeps the sedate, spinsterish heroine Elspeth off her feet and into a crazy adventure and seduces her along the way. This book is the start of the Delaney dynasty, which included both historicals and contemporaries. I read this book several times growing up. There's a love scene on a horse that never failed to make me blush every read.

Missy says

A sweet read.

One gutsy woman + one dangerous man + a quest of myth + some passion and danger = one very entertaining read.

Elspeth is brave and bold but also totally outside her comfort zone as she journeys into the untamed west. She tries not to show any fear as she proves she is tough enough and determined enough to handle Dominic and the untamed land.

Dominic is tough and sexy but living on the outskirts of his family as he is being hunted for venegance. Meeting Elspeth opens his eyes and heart but still determined to resist her, he ends up hurting her instead. He can't help but admire her bravery and determination to reach her goal.

They will go on the adventure of a lifetime and encounter danger, death, passion, and love. A wonderful magical read.

CarolJean cooper says

This was a really good book that ended too soon! I wanted to read more!

Jolene says

Elspeth MacGregor has come to Hell's Bluff in the Arizona Territory in search of Dominic Delaney, the

infamous gunslinger. Convinced that Dominic can help her find the lost city of Katalan, the hidden city and lost civilization that she had dreamed about since she was a little girl. Elspeth will go out of her way to convince Dominic to take her to Katalan. What she never expected was the few friendships to be made, discovering just how strong and brave she could be and maybe, an unexpected love.

This is my second Love-swept book and my first time reading anything by Iris Johansen. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, but really struggled with the prologue. It left me feeling a little confused as if I just stepped into the middle of a story with characters and a very old city that I needed to know more about. Though it left me scratching my head, it all came together toward the end where I was finally able to make sense of those first few pages. If anyone comes across that same feeling as I did in the prologue, hold on and keep reading. The puzzle pieces fit together nicely.

This book was originally published in 1988 and I am so glad it was republished and put in front of my face. I get so caught up in the many books that are being released currently, that I'm missing out on older published books that contain great stories I cannot wait to pick up some more Love-swept romances.

Elspeth was a great character. Shy, timid and very insecure. She did a lot of growing in this book and I loved watching her become more comfortable with herself. She was determined to be strong and brave and after enduring the emotional abuse of a father who never respected her or thought much of her, it was easy to see why she thought of herself as plain and unlovable.

Dominic Delaney on the other hand, saw something in Elspeth upon first meeting. She was stubborn and he had a spark of admiration for her. Dominic first comes off as harsh and mean and at times, I was at war with myself on whether or not I even liked his character. I liked hearing his thoughts and feelings on Elspeth, but then he would open his mouth and say something that made me want to hit him over the head, or his actions didn't feel right. When it came down to it, Dominic was fighting his feelings and trying to keep her at bay. His heart was in war with his conscious and his body was at war with both. He wanted something he didn't think he deserved. Dominic had a bad boy image and reputation, but he was also a very loving and sensitive man and it was easy to see when we had a glimpse of the real Dominic. It showed in the sacrifices he made to protect his family and the love he had for Killara and the family homestead. He feels an instant attraction to Elspeth and fights it for fear he will ruin her. Dominic Delaney has had a price on his head for 10 years, for killing a man in a fair fight. The man's father had set out hired mercenaries to revenge his son. After being careless not long before, Dominic lost a Friend whose death was used to draw him out. He is now convinced anyone he loves could be in danger, which is why Dominic is so guarded.

I loved seeing how Elspeth affected Dominic and because of the way Elspeth was raised in thinking herself unattractive and not pleasing to a man's eye, she is innocent in the ways of a young woman and really knows nothing of love and sex. I thought it was funny a few times, just how inexperienced she was and not even aware of the things her body was trying to tell her. I loved watching her struggle with her attraction to Dominic as she was trying to sort through very strange emotional and physical feelings her brought out in her and all the while, unaware that Dominic is fighting his own feelings. Of course, some of that was due to some harsh words Dominic had said earlier in the story, that was at one point where I really wanted to reach into the book and smack him :) The author did a great job in giving these two some great chemistry. From the beginning, I was holding my breath every time I thought they were ready to give in, just to realize they were only little teases I was given to what was to come when these two finally came together. When they finally gave in, I was relieved and happy. The foreplay, the chemistry, the barbing and arguing all led up to a

really great love story.

I must mention that the secondary characters really rounded this story out. Each time they stepped onto the page, even if just for a few lines, you stopped to take notice. The Delaney family dynamic was amazing and I really didn't want to let them go when the story ended. So many possibilities for follow up stories. I have no idea if there is more of the Delaney clan, but I plan to find out.

This is a great story of love, sacrifice, treasure hunting and a little bit of suspense thrown in. A frontier novel set in the wild west where life was hard and unforgiving. There is death, love, drama and a family that grieves loss all the while dealing with an outside culture that not only caused some of that loss, but is now a part of that family dynamic. There are also some myth's thrown into this story as the search for Katalan is linked to the lost city of Atlantis. Really gave it an Indiana Jones Esq. feel to this book. Though the search for katalan didn't really happen till close to the end of the book. Elspeth's character talked about Katalan quite a bit and at one point, I thought it wasn't going to happen. The story really revolved around Dominic and Elspeth's romance, but when Katalan finally came into the picture, everything really fell into place.

Overall, this was a really great read and these characters will most likely prompt me for a re-read down the road. The only issue I had was a handful of mixed up sentences.

"The Delaney's wouldn't do things in the ordinary looked at shoulder. "I way, of course." She Patrick over Elspeth's suppose I should of

No, I didn't do that on accident, that's an actual sentence from my copy. I came across several of these through out the book, it didn't take away from the story, just made me stop and go "Whaaaat?????" Took me a few seconds to understand what I was seeing and move things around till I could make sense of them. I was given a PDF copy of this book that I had converted, so I'm not sure if this is in all copies or just something that happened with mine. I'm interested to know if anyone else who has read this book also came across this in an e-copy

Shannon says

It started out kinda slow but it got a lot better. The only thing is there's a lot of Delaney's to keep track of but the connections between the family members aren't always clear, i.e. who's Patrick and Brianne's father?

Melanie says

How in the world did I ever miss this book by Iris Johansen?! And not just this story, but all the Delaney stories. I always loved Ms. Johansen's writing but it has been quite awhile since I've read any of her books, and now that I've been reintroduced to her, I'll make sure to hunt down her back list.

This book has been originally printed by Bantam Books in 1988 and it is being offered to us by Loveswept from August 8 (sold by Random House Digital, Inc.) and I couldn't have been gladder about it. I am hoping they'll offer us the series in Kindle format.

Our heroine of this story is Elspeth MacGregor, bookish girl who grew up with her father, the scholar. For

the longest time she's helped her father with his discoveries, notably the discovery of the lost city of Kantalan. After her father's passing she decides to leave her home in Scotland and embark on an adventure an ocean away and a quest to prove the existence of this long forgotten city. In order for her to succeed in this attempt she needs and is in a search of one man who can guide her to it and his name is Dominic Delaney.

Dominic Delaney knows he is a hunted man. Years ago, he killed a young man in a fair gunfight, but family of that man, he knows, will never let him be. And because of that, Dom, even after the pardon he receives from the Law, he knows that he must stay away from everything and everyone that is dear to him. Hell's Bluff, Arizona, is his home now, and life spent drinking, whoring and playing cards is all he knows of late.

The story of how this hard, cynical and at times brutish man falls in love with a plain, yet very passionate woman is one not to be missed. The author spares us nothing by taking us on an adventure of epic proportions. She takes her time in drawing us a picture of a Wild West that is brutal, unforgiving and uncivilized, yet we can't help but see the humanity of all those people we come in contact with.

We are aware of everyone around our hero and heroine, and as we come to know them, we can't help but accept them, flaws and all. Ms. Johansen introduces a slew of second characters that will live with us for a long time. I'll never be able to forget Count Andre Marzanoff, Patrick and Silver Dove, Rising Star and Josh, Brianne and William, and especially Malvina and Shamus Delaney, the matriarch and patriarch of this very intriguing family.

The author had created a world of complex main and secondary characters with depth, so that when we met them they seemed real and three-dimensional. Ms. Johansen knows her craft and she knows her audience as well, and she went all out in creating a world in which all are welcome to partake. Regardless of what your genre is, you'll enjoy it. There's a treasure hunt, romance and real friendship and as always with this author, plenty of historical accuracy. Now, if only I could find a happily ever after of Dominic's nephew Patrick, I'd be a happy camper!

If you like epic saga's, Western or just plain old romance that is truly breathtaking in its scope and telling, you will be happy to read this story and once you do, you'll be tracking the rest of the series down, just as I did.

Melanie

Rhonda says

I now want to go read all of the delaney's stories again. I enjoyed most of the book to many sex scenes for me but love the rest of it.

Elspeth is on a stage comming to the town Hell's Bluff from Ireland. She has come to try and get Dominic Delaney to guide her to fable lost city Kantalan in south america. She knows he had a map telling how to get there, she wants to study and find greater knowledge of atlantis.

Dominic is a gun fighter, gambler and has some stake in some claims around the gold rush of Hell's Bluff. He does not believe the city is really there. He told her father he was not interested in taking them.

Elspeth follows into a cathouse to show him that she was determined. When that did not work she stood across the street till he came out and followed him till dark. Then she went into the saloon and told him she was not giving up.

Dominic kidnapped her and took her to a cabin outside of town with the idea of taking her innocence. But she got away and was badly injured. Dominic was afraid she would never come back. His cousin Silver was brought to take care of her.

Eventually he took her back to his family home and married her and right after someone tried to kill him. So they went to see if the lost city was really there.

Along the way they realized that they loved each other. There were gunfights, hanging and adventure along the way.

I have read lots of her books and really read more of them. I was given this ebook in exchange for honest review.

Chitra *CJ* says

“This Fierce Splendor” is the story of Dominic and Elspeth.. and wow.

This is the journey of Elspeth, a scholar who wants to find the lost city of Kantalan, something her father has always spoken about and how goes on it, with the unwilling help of Dominic.

What starts as an unlikely courtship between the stubborn Elspeth and the angry Dominic, later becomes an unlikely love story- filled with angst, trauma, past reincarnations, mysticism, heartbreak and oh so much passion.

I loved the fact that

-We were given every characters POV

-The heroine remained strong throughout

-The hero learned his lesson

-The Story was above average length

-The Love was strong

I honestly cried over the whole Silver and Morning Star/ Patrick situation and their end left me wailing in tears, so did the whole snake situation amongst many. Also there were MANY characters that were easy to hate (ie the shitty Delaney clan), but the Indians made the book easy to bear.

So much pain at the end but overall things work out.

What a great journey! Can't wait to see what happens with Silver (and maybe Brianna)- as this had no epilogue.

Unsafe

3.75/5

Ps. Trigger for the semi consensual forced seduction scene even if the heroine eventually wants it.

Laurla2 says

"you never learn to ignore it. you do learn to accept and to deal with it. in many ways you are luckier than i, because you can go away and no one will know what happened here. i am what i am wherever i go."(indian)

"do you think they will love you more because you give them a half-breed baby? you are blind. they will treat your child as they treat me."

"i do not understand a love that makes you grow quieter and sadder with every year."

"you were too full of your own guilt and hurt to feel mine. why? i could feel your pain as much as my own."

"i love you."

"i know you love me but it is not enough. you cannot love my body or my soul and hate what created both."

"thank you."

"for telling the truth?"

"for making me believe it was the truth."

"my son."

"rising star's son, not yours. you didn't want him, remember? if you'd followed her when she left you'd have found out she never intended to go back to her people. she had no people. we delaneys took that away from her too. what the hell did you expect her to do? you told her you didn't want the child."

-this book hurt my soul a little at the way the indian girls were treated. i know its based on true history, but it still hurts to read.

Tracy says

~* 4.5 Stars *~

Fiercely Splendid

Elspeth MacGregor has dreamed of the lost city of Kantalan since she was a girl, the years her scholarly but emotionally abusive father spent trying to verify its existence leaving a mark on her from a young age. Where her father had doubts, however, Elspeth had none, and when her father died, freeing her from a life of little more than studious servitude, she gathered up her meager funds, screwed up her courage, and left her home in Scotland to traverse an ocean and cross a country. From civilization to the grim practicality and dusty lawlessness that defines the Arizona Territory in 1870, Elspeth traveled, intent on her dream, intent on finding Kantalan...and intent on convincing Dominic Delaney, a rogue of questionable recent history but the one man her father thought knew of Kantalan, to take her there.

Hunted by hired mercenaries for years after a gunfight that left a vengeful man's son dead, regardless of the fairness of the fight or the son's instigation, gunman Dominic Delaney has given up everything of value in his life, including his beloved family home, Killara, to keep his family safe. He eschews the homestead, residing instead in a whorehouse in Hell's Bluff, Arizona, making a living playing cards and spending his nights enjoying female companionship. Always looking over his shoulder. Always expecting a bullet in his chest. It's a hard life that's left him jaded and cynical, but when Elspeth shows up in town, doggedly persistent in her attempts to get him to do her bidding, Dominic's normal laconic nature gets a rude slap.

Queerly captivated by the obviously innocent young woman, Dominic has no intention of leading her anywhere but to his bed, yet he's quick to realize one painful but salient truth: for all her innocence, Elspeth is a force to be reckoned with, and her stubborn intensity about the fabled city and dreams of the treasure of history is a juggernaut that not even his self preservation can withstand. But leading her to Kantalan could very well be a suicide mission. If the mercenaries don't find and kill them, the ancient prophecy of a city lost to the ages and guarded by a pernicious god just might.

For years I've read and enjoyed Iris Johansen's suspense novels with absolutely no clue that she'd started out with romance years earlier. Shame on me; good on Loveswept for resurrecting this fantastic historical

romance originally published in 1988. What a treat this sweeping saga of romance, treasure hunting, and frontier life turned out to be!

It's no surprise just how excellent Johansen is at the craft of writing, what did surprise is how completely captivated I became by the characters here and the story told. There were plenty of issues stacked against the book because of my reading preferences. I'm not a huge fan of historical novels, I don't particularly care for the landscape of the Southwest as a book setting, and I can pretty much take or leave frontier novels set in the Wild West. I was drawn to this book solely because I enjoy a good archaeological adventure *a la* Indiana Jones.

What I got instead was a breathless novel that shined a harsh but grimly accurate view on life in a place and at a time that was hard, sometimes cruel, and utterly unforgiving, with characters that were complex, layered, and only as good, most of the time, as they had to be to survive. Unless being bad paid better. I fell in love with Elspeth, whose feisty determination and courage despite the unimaginable dangers was as inspiring as it was exciting to experience, even when she was being a bit of a termagant. It took me a bit longer to warm up to Dominic, the boozing, whoring discontent who at one point set out to abscond with and rape Elspeth in punishment for some manly slight. He wasn't always a very nice guy, and while I appreciated the feel of historical accuracy and believability given his backstory, he didn't satisfy me as the romantic male lead until well into the book.

I was also surprised at how little of the novel actually included the archaeological adventure and search for Kantalan. Especially after the prologue of the book. That was my one genuine complaint with the novel, actually. Getting to the point of Elspeth and Dominic's journey to Kantalan seemed to take an awfully long time, with a tremendous amount of character development and world building preceding it.

I can't really complain too much about that, though, as one of the facets of the novel that made it truly shine for me was the vibrancy and depth awarded the secondary characters. Dominic's nephew Patrick and Patrick's unacknowledged cousin Silver, in particular, added so much to the story and were such fascinating characters that no sooner did I finish this book than I immediately wished I had another with them featured in it. Their stories practically begged to be told and continued even as their lives mixed and mingled - often painfully - with those of main characters Dominic and Elspeth.

Still, as much as I adored them, and admired the realistic touches of historical accuracy that the racial tensions evidenced, I was perplexed at how long it took to get to really deal with Kantalan and the too-expeditious manner in which it was done. And as the progression of a genuine romantic relationship between Dom and Elspeth didn't really dig in until just before that trip, a little too much of the book felt more like a battle of wills between two powerful contenders than a historical romance.

Of course, when the romance did kick into high gear I was swept away again by the sensual intensity and chemistry between the characters and loved every moment of their time together.

There was so very much to appreciate in this layered, detailed, authentic-feeling historical romance. I'm so annoyed with myself that I had no idea these books existed before I became a fan of the Eve Duncan series. I'm dying to read more about this complex and sometimes tragic clan of Delaneys, and can only hope Loveswept takes pity on this new but rabid fan and continues to release the rest of the Johansen books that feature this proud but flawed family. Hey, I'm willing to beg. Dignity is so overrated.

Disclosure: An ARC of this book was provided to me by Loveswept, an imprint of Random House Publishing Group, via NetGalley. This rating, review, and all included thoughts and comments are my own.

~*~*~*~

Reviewed for One Good Book Deserves Another.

Judy says

This Fierce Splendor by Iris Johansen e ISBN: 978-0-307-79894-7

The story starts out in Kantalan, Mexico 1517 A.D. A colony of people living there worshiped the god, Ra. Sayan was a clairana and she had angered the priest by not keeping herself pure, she had fallen in love with Dalkar. But she had seen that Kantalan was going to be destroyed so she tried to send the people away but instead they were heading towards Sun Child, a volcano, with their sacrifices. Sayan had Cadra away. He ended up with an Apache tribe and later became the medicine man. Through Cadra the story of Sayan & Dalkar was passed along.

Elspeth MacGregor has traveled across the sea from Edinburgh on a mission and only one man could help her with it, Dominic Delaney. It's now 1870 and she has arrived in Hell's Bluff, Arizona Territory. She has dreamed of finding Kantalan since she was a young girl, Dominic was suppose to know how to get there. Only he refused to help her. Dressed in black mourning clothes since her father's death, Elspeth follows Dom around until everyone is calling her his shadow. With the help of Patrick Delaney, Dom's nephew, she has entered the brothel he rents a room in, she has sat outside of it waiting for him and than following him and finally when she enters the Nugget Saloon, he has had enough.

Dominic Delaney loves his home at Killara but ever since he killed a man ten years ago he won't go live there. Even though it was a fair fight the boys father has a price on Dom's head. His father has paid for a pardon so he no longer runs from the law but he can't trust that the men out to kill him won't hurt anyone he loves. After an incident with Elspeth, he ends up bringing her to the family home and eventually to Kantalan.

Their relationship is up and down. Dominic finds himself drawn to this Scottish woman even though he don't want to. His parents use her to entice him to stay on the ranch. Many other interesting characters are in the book and other side stories as well.

**Language & sexual situations

Received through NetGalley for review.
