

A romantic couple is shown in a soft-focus, warm-toned photograph. The man, in a dark suit, is leaning in to kiss the woman on the cheek. She is wearing a light-colored dress and has her hair styled up with flowers. They are in a field with rolling hills in the background under a blue sky with light clouds.

DELIA LATHAM

A decorative flourish in a golden-brown color, featuring a central fleur-de-lis-like element with symmetrical scrollwork extending to the left and right.

*Solomon's  
Gate*

A small, arched window with a dark frame, set within a tan-colored panel. The window looks out onto a landscape with a blue sky and green fields.

*Book Two*

A wide-angle photograph of a vast field of white flowers, likely baby's breath, stretching to the horizon. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall tone is soft and romantic.

KYLIE'S  
KISS

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

## **Kylie's Kiss**

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## Praise for Destiny's Dream

In *Destiny's Dream*, Latham writes a story with a nice blend of humor and romance and a neat little thread of intrigue. You won't want to miss this first installment in the Solomon's Gate Series. Latham knows how to weave a wonderful story and balance it with biblical truths to inspire and challenge the reader. *Destiny's Dream* belongs on every reader's bookshelf.

~ Sharlene MacLaren ~ Bestselling Author

What fun! Delia Latham weaves a merry thread of humor through the mayhem of her characters' lives. *Destiny's Dream* will leave readers looking over their shoulders to catch a glimpse of their own guardian angel's wings.

~ Bonnie Winters, author of  
*Daughter of Lot* and *Daughter of Scarlet*

This book was a delightful read, with a cast of quirky secondary characters, a sweet romance, and snappy dialogue that kept me reading.

~ Lacy Williams, 2009 Genesis winner  
- Historical Romance

*Destiny's Dream* guides readers on a journey from tears to smiles, from longing to fulfillment, and from white-knuckled suspense to happy sighs of contentment. An engaging tale with all the elements of a satisfying story.

~ Virginia Smith, author of *Third Time's a Charm*



# 1

“Frowzy—that’s exactly what you are!”

Kylie Matthews sighed, her eyes fixed on the pine-framed mirror hanging in her mother’s entry hall.

“You’re twenty-four, not six, but someone forgot to tell your turned-up nose,” she informed her scowling reflection. “And that hair! Mousey, boring brown. It just hangs there and does nothing for you. How come it doesn’t shine like those girls on shampoo commercials—all gleamy-glowy with a man caught in every strand? I ask you!”

“Kylie? Who are you talking to?”

Her mother rounded the corner into the entry where Kylie stood gaping at herself in the mirror.

“Uh...no one, Mother. I guess I was thinking out loud.”

Elle Matthews’s classic beauty had won several envied titles in her younger days, including Miss California. Even now, her regal bearing, flawless skin, and impeccable style left Kylie feeling

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frumpy in comparison. Why couldn't she have inherited even a fraction of that grace and poise?

"Going somewhere?" Beneath a crown of silky hair the color of a raven's wing, critical turquoise eyes raked Kylie's outfit. "I wish you wouldn't wear that shade of pink, darling, it's not your color." She shuddered, eyeing the simple cotton top and matching capris. "I'm actually not sure petal pink is *anyone's* color." Raising a manicured hand, she fingered a strand of Kylie's hair, shaking her head. "Surely there's something more you can do with this."

Cheeks burning, Kylie spoke through gritted teeth.

"Next time, OK? I'm in a bit of a hurry."

"Well, it's *your* image, darling. Never mind me." She started off down the hall, but then turned, her lovely eyes wide with curiosity. "Oh! Have you spoken to Shay this week? She asked about you."

On a daily basis, thousands of adoring fans showered her sister with admiration. Must she demand Kylie's attention, as well? Instant guilt slammed her conscience at the unkind thought. Shay couldn't help being beautiful.

"No, I guess I haven't." Wrong answer, of course. She rushed to compensate. "But I will. I'll call her later today."

"She *is* your sister." One eyebrow quirked high on a smooth forehead, the familiar gesture berating Kylie's negligence so much better than words ever could.

"I know. I'll call her."

Delia Latham

Kylie waited until her mother disappeared around the corner, then turned back to her mocking reflection.

She lowered her voice in case the walls had ears, hissing into the silvered glass. “See? Even your own mother sees how far from perfect you are.” She scrunched her full lips, trying to see how she’d look if they were smaller, before continuing her tirade. “Your mouth is too big for even your moon face. And good heavens, just look at that body. Hey, here’s an idea! Why not just *bounce* to this stupid appointment and save some of that liquid gold in your gas tank?”

The lips she had criticized turned down into a pout. “Whatever possessed you to make an appointment with a dating service? Dayna knows you can’t resist a dare. She played you like a fool.”

Annoyance flashed in the smoky depths of eyes whose color she hardly knew how to describe. Brown one moment and green the next, with ridiculous little specks of gold. Unreliable, just like most of the people in her life.

Kylie stomped her foot. She couldn’t even trust her own eyes.

From the oak table under the mirror, she snatched up a small handbag that matched her yellow sandals. Sticking out her tongue at the offending reflection, she tossed in a sassy little head swagger that would have made Dayna proud. “I’m outta here, sister. For better or worse, you made this ridiculous appointment, and I’ve got to keep it.”

She marched to the door and yanked it open, but whirled around to toss one last comment back at the mirror, which now reflected nothing save the top petals of a large bouquet of tulips. “As if any

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man worth having will be interested.” With that, she shut the door with a jarring slam and headed for her car.

The sometimes fickle engine in her aging vehicle started promptly, and she grinned. Off to a good start. If she crossed her fingers just right, maybe her luck would hold through the rest of the day.

Or maybe not. Her dismayed gaze fell on a blinking icon on the display panel. Low fuel. That meant a stop for gasoline, and most likely arriving late for her appointment.

Fifteen minutes later, Kylie glared at a glowing red signal light, all but tapping her toes on the brake in frustrated impatience. How could she have stood there talking to herself and not realized time was getting away? She now had five minutes to make the ten-minute drive across town, and she reeked of *eau de petrol*, thanks to her usual clumsiness.

Annoyed, she picked up her right foot and stomped it down, a childish habit she kept promising herself to break. This time the offending extremity landed hard on the accelerator, and the car shot forward.

*Crrrrunch!* Her bumper rammed into the one in front of her, jolting the car hard enough to send her purse flying onto the floorboard amidst a shower of items—cell phone, lip gloss, ink pens, gum wrappers, and a cutesy notebook she'd purchased for Eva Kate, Dayna's four-year-old.

“Oh!” The strangled moan hurt her throat, which suddenly felt bone dry and rough as sandpaper. “Oh, no. No, no, no, no, *no!*”

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Her gaze flew to the signal light, which switched to green as she watched, as if the inanimate thing were taunting her. Whatever had possessed her to take her foot off the brake, much less to put it back down on the other pedal?

She only had a moment to berate herself. The door of the old truck in front of her swung open. The driver—a thirty-something model-perfect male—slid his six-foot-plus length out and onto the road, shiny cowboy boots first. He leveled a glare at Kylie before stomping in her direction.

A spring breeze dragged its fickle fingers through the straight black hair that grazed his collar. He stopped to examine the rear of his vehicle and the front of hers. By the time he strode to her window, Kylie’s entire body shook, and worst of all, a stream of despicable tears streaked her face.

Lowering her window, she looked up into eyes as green as her emerald birthstone, and icy as the pond out behind her parents’ house in mid-January.

“Are you all right?” Despite his annoyed frown, the man’s voice retained a pleasant resonance. Kylie thought she even detected some concern there. Her imagination playing tricks, of course.

“I’m fine.” She dashed the hateful, salty trickles off her face.

“Good. Then you won’t mind if I ask what in blazes made you try to hitch a ride in my pickup bed. You were already stopped.” He shook his head, clearly confused. “Why would you suddenly decide to drive through the light with a vehicle in front of you?”

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"I didn't decide—" She bit down on her trembling lip. *Get over it, mister!* His old rattletrap must have had its share of bangs and bumps before she bruised it—never mind that she couldn't see any. The truck looked downright sharp for such an oldie. Not that she was any kind of expert on vehicle makes and models, but she could imagine it in a parade of classic cars at one of those shows. "Look, I'm sorry, OK? I don't know how it happened."

She leaned over to fumble in the scattered contents of her purse. "Just let me give you my insurance information."

"You don't know how it happened?"

So much for getting on with it. She sat up and raised her reluctant gaze to his disbelieving one. From the look on his face, Kylie thought she might have just sprouted a big, fat wart in the middle of her forehead.

*Ugh!* Stomach roiling, she dragged her mind away from unsightly facial blemishes, and back to the biting tones of the glowering hunk outside her window.

Not that she'd missed anything. He must have thought she didn't hear him the first time, because he repeated himself word for word, different tone. "You...don't know...how it happened."

She decided she'd never really heard sarcasm before. He shook his head, and she found herself fascinated with a flexing muscle in his clenched jaw.

"You do have insurance, right?" He turned and lifted a placating hand to an irate driver who slowed to get around them, horn blaring.

The other hand he shoved into his hip pocket. Kylie's eyes followed the movement. Nice hip pockets.

While her cheeks grew hot as a firecracker on the Fourth—courtesy of one-quarter anger and a heaping three-quarters mortification—she scribbled her information into the little girl notebook she fished off the floor. He ripped the paper from her hand, raked his gaze over its butterfly-strewn surface, and rolled his eyes.

*At least I'm as humiliated as I can possibly be—it can't get any worse than this.*

“Thanks for making my day, Ms. Matthews. My agent will contact you.”

“OK. I'm—I'm really sorry.” What else could she say? He had a right to be angry. She'd made a stupid mistake.

“What's done is done.” His granite jawline softened a bit as he spared her a brief glance. “Stop and get yourself a cup of coffee. You shouldn't drive while you're this upset.” He jotted something on the back of a business card and flicked it into her lap. “My info. No one was hurt, so the police wouldn't come if we called, and we need to get out of the road.” Beeping horns played a discordant symphony around them. “As I said, someone will be in touch.”

He turned and hurried back to his truck while insistent tears obliterated Kylie's makeup. She picked up the card he'd all but thrown at her and dropped it into her purse, her swimming eyes on the man stalking away from her.

Another tall, dark, and handsome guy going the wrong direction.

## Kylie's Kiss

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She pulled into the parking lot of a fast-food restaurant down the block and looked for her cell phone on the floorboard. Maybe she could salvage the rest of the day.

One more hurried scabble through the miscellany of items on her floorboard unearthed an ivory business card. She punched the phone number into her cell phone, deciding for the third time that week that *Solomon's Gate* was an odd name for a dating agency.

The client scheduled directly after her had cancelled, so Kylie's appointment still stood. "But only if you're sure you're up to it." The friendly voice on the phone managed to convey genuine concern. "Even minor fender benders are nerve-wracking. We'll understand if you want to postpone."

"No. If I don't do this today, I probably won't be able to talk myself into it again." Good thing the perky receptionist couldn't know how literally she meant that.

She closed the cell phone and rushed into the restaurant to avail herself of their bathroom mirror. While her small purse didn't contain an arsenal of facial camouflage, she always carried a compact of loose powder, a tube of mascara, and a lip gloss. They would have to do for now.

Half an hour after trying to drive over an ancient, but apparently well-loved, jalopy and being treated like an errant child by its haughty owner, Kylie finally found herself at *Solomon's Gate*.

Delia Latham

She approached a pair of massive, polished oak doors. With each slow, hesitant step, her heart slammed harder against her chest. Her throat closed, making it impossible to draw a breath. Shyness and uncertainty washed over her in huge, overwhelming waves.

*No way.* Kylie closed her eyes and forced an insufficient amount of air into her lungs. She couldn't do this. Dayna would just have to win the ridiculous challenge.

“Hello, Kylie.”

Startled, the breath she'd been trying so hard to find suddenly filled her lungs to capacity. Her eyes popped open. Where had he come from? He hadn't been there a minute ago.

Next to those imposing doors stood a man—a man who was not made small by the eight-foot doors. Hair the color of sunshine hung to his shoulders and blew as if tossed by a slight breeze, though Kylie felt no movement of air against her own skin. He smiled, and her heart swelled in instant response. *Beautiful.* The word came to mind when she looked at him, though she'd never thought to describe a member of the male gender in that way before.

Kylie knew she should return some polite greeting, but her voice didn't work. Nor could she remove her gaze from his face, though she was aware that he wore a white toga-like garment, cinched at the waist with a gold sash that glittered in the sunshine. Eyes the color of a mid-summer sky. A smile that made her want to weep with pure joy.

“Welcome to *Solomon's Gate.*” The deep rumble of his voice echoed inside her head. “I've been waiting for you.”

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Still, she could not speak. Her voice seemed to have taken a hiatus she could only hope was temporary. She nodded instead, still unable to look away from the stranger's face.

“You are where you are meant to be on this day, in this moment, at this place.” He swung one hand, with its long, tapered fingers, in a graceful gesture to indicate the doors behind him. “These are the doors to your future, Kylie Matthews. Please...enter.” He touched the oak portal and it swung open.

She moved forward without knowing she planned to do so.

“Who—?” She moistened her lips, relieved to find she wasn't permanently mute. “Who are you?”

Another heart-stopping smile warmed his electric blue eyes. “I am Solomon. Come.”

Kylie stepped past him and into an airy lobby. The door closed behind her, and a tinkling bell announced her arrival. Cringing at the sound, she whirled to look at Solomon, but he had not followed her inside.

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