

## The End of All Fear

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# **The End of All Fear**

by [Tarlan](#)

## Summary

Following the revelation that Methos was once known as Death, Duncan MacLeod wants Methos to live... but why?

As the echo of Cassandra's steps died away the only sound left was the hard breathing of one man and the harsh sobbing of another. Duncan MacLeod leaned heavily on the chain rail as his dark eyes followed the receding back of the woman then he stared across at the five thousand year old Immortal. His words reverberated around his skull as if they were still echoing around the vast underground chamber. MacLeod sank back to his knees and lowered his head

"I want him to live", he repeated softly to himself.

His breath caught in his throat as he felt the sting of tears behind his eyes but he refused to give in to the emotions that were churning within him. Feelings of anger and betrayal warring with guilt and something else that could not be released. With a surge of determination he forced himself back onto his feet and turned away from the sobbing Immortal, wanting to put some distance between them so he could work his way through the rush of emotions that had flowed into him as part of the dual quickening. Yet, even as he took that first step he hesitated, part of him wanting to reach out to Methos, to gather the sobbing man into his arms and cradle him until the storm had passed. The other part of him was afraid; afraid that the simple need to touch and hold would deteriorate into something far deeper and more complicated. He shivered and forced his feet to carry him on and away.

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The barge seemed strangely quiet. Too quiet, too untouched by all the madness of the past few weeks. MacLeod knew he needed time to sort through the four millennia of information that had seared through his mind from Kronos but found he could barely concentrate on his own memories of the last few hours. He grabbed a bottle of wine from the refrigerator, uncorked it and poured a generous amount into a glass then swallowed the contents of the glass in one go. He poured another and lifted it to his lips, pausing as the silence closed in around him uncomfortably until it was dispelled suddenly by a rap on the door. The unexpected sound caused MacLeod's hand to jump and the wine spilled over.

"Shit." he exclaimed under his breath then louder. "Who is it?"

"It's Joe."

Relief flooded the dark features as MacLeod bade his friend enter.

"I heard about Kronos and the others... and wanted to check you were okay."

MacLeod sank into the sofa, grateful for some company and indicated towards the opened bottle. Without hesitation Joe Dawson grabbed hold of the bottle and another glass, limped over and sank onto the sofa by his friend's side. They spent the rest of the night sometimes talking, sometimes quietly reflecting on each other's words. Eventually, Dawson broached the subject that both had skirted around.

"Tell me about the Quickening."

MacLeod smiled, knowing Dawson referred to this latest event rather than a generalization. Joe Dawson knew what a Quickening was. The Dark Quickening had proved to both of them that it was more than just the life force of the other Immortal that was transferred. During that terrible time MacLeod had been filled with horrific memories that he had never experienced and sadistic thoughts that could not have come from his own mind. Somehow, the mechanism in his brain that shunted the personality and memories of the defeated Immortal into a safe almost inaccessible part of his mind had broken down and he was left like a schizophrenic, jumping from one personality to another with his own basic memories acting as a shell. That event had also proven to him that the Quickening contained the personality and memory of every Immortal taken by the one he had defeated, explaining why some Quickening were weak and others so powerful that they destroyed practically everything around them.

His memory drifted back to that previous late night session....

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The Past:

Joe Dawson paused, his voice dropping to an awed whisper.

"If there can be only one then the last Immortal would have the combined memories and personalities of every Immortal that ever lived. One heck of a Quickening"

"Can you think of a greater prize?"

"If you could access all those memories, the result would be devastating."

"Which is why someone like Kronos could not be allowed to be the last of our kind."

"There's one problem. A flaw in the logic. If there is meant to be 'only one' then why are there new Immortals turning up each year? Where are they coming from? And who said there can be only one?"

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Those questions had haunted Duncan MacLeod, and not even Methos had been able to answer them in spite of his five millennia of life, however, the reality was that Kronos was now a part of him along with all the Immortals that Kronos had taken throughout his long life. When combined with the life energy released when Methos took Silas... As Dawson had said - one heck of a Quickening.

MacLeod looked up into the caring eyes of his mortal friend. If Darius had been alive MacLeod would have been pouring out his heart by now but Dawson, although a close and valued friend, was no Darius. There were limits to what they could discuss and part of his problem lay far beyond those boundaries. However, their friendship and shared experiences would carry MacLeod part of the way towards the answers he was seeking so he began, haltingly.

"It was like nothing I've ever experienced before. No," MacLeod held up a hand to forestall his friend, "not a Dark Quickening but a shared one."

Dawson listened intently as MacLeod explained how he had come to take the head of Kronos just as Methos had finished his own duel with Silas. The Quickening of those two ancient Immortals had locked together joining MacLeod and Methos in a bond that still reverberated through his entire being. He could sense the existence of Methos even though he knew the older Immortal was many miles away and he knew that this link could not be broken even by the death of one or the other. Instinctively, MacLeod knew that death would not harm the remaining Immortal but how could he explain to Joe Dawson that losing Methos would drive him insane with grief. Kronos had loved Methos, had made love to Methos, so how could he talk about his own feelings of love without Joe believing it was a dark memory from Kronos that caused them.

Yes, Darius would have understood.

After Joe had left, MacLeod allowed his thoughts to move back to the dark-haired man that had come into his life so recently. He smiled as he remembered their first meeting when he believed Methos was the Watcher, Adam Pierson.

MacLeod closed his eyes as other memories crowded in; the way Methos had risked his own head to help him overcome the Dark Quickening, the time he tried to force MacLeod to take his head rather than lose it to another, the way those dark eyes danced when he successfully managed to tease someone, the way he looked after they had made lo...

His eyes snapped open, his heart pounding in his chest as a memory belonging to Kronos slipped into his mind with frightening ease. MacLeod closed his eyes, forcing his breathing to come back under his control, sorely tempted to seek out that memory but afraid of what it would lead to.

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Some Time Later  
Methos' Apartment

As his eyes traveled around the small almost impersonal apartment Methos could not help but sigh as he realized that most of his five thousand years were spent in such places. Of course there was the odd artifact collected down the millennia that shared both the same dusty memories and this apartment, but most of his collection was in the form of modern art, jewelery and precious metals stored in secret caches across the world. The stockpiling of ancient artwork, ceramics and similar items was of no use to an Immortal, except for pleasure or memories, as the opportunity to sell these was reduced to a highly lucrative and dangerous black market. 'Modern' works were less likely to cause a stir. Over the years he had become adept at buying or collecting small pieces and selling them on to support his continued existence once they had appreciated an acceptable value. In Duncan MacLeod he had found an Immortal of equal intelligence; someone who had learned the necessary skill of seeming to live moderately yet who could lay his hands on a large sum of whatever currency was needed with little notice.

Methos sighed deeply. The meeting with MacLeod had been hard to endure. He had insisted they meet on Holy Ground, still afraid of MacLeod's anger despite hearing the Highlander plead Cassandra for his life. As they talked he could hear the hurt in his friend's voice. How did it go so wrong? Why did Kronos have to turn up like a bad penny and ruin everything.

Methos slumped onto the bed, his head falling into his hands as the realization hit him. Kronos was dead and with him went four millennia of fear. Over the years he had forgotten so many things yet some memories had affected him too deeply to be lost in time. How easily he had recalled Cassandra. Yes, he had his regrets, not for an opportunity lost but for the years of silent humiliation he had endured for his part in letting her escape....

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The Past:

Kronos glared across at his fellow horseman. "You let her get away."

"She was too fast..."

"You *let* her get away."

Methos looked into the other's eyes and his breath caught in his throat as he recognized the insanity held within. Why had he never noticed it before? He sneered at himself mentally. He had known from the earliest days but he had never been on the wrong side of that psychotic mind until now; he had been too busy feeding his own blood-lust. Methos realized how serious this could be if he did not manage to assuage the killing anger that was rising in those penetrating eyes. There was no doubt that Kronos could take his head if they fought. Kronos was a far superior swordsman.

"She'd lost that fire; lost that wild spirit. If I wanted a pet then I would have trained one of Silas's dogs."

"If she had become so useless to you then why did you let her go? Why not take her head?"

"I... didn't want her dead. Our paths might cross again in a century or two. It might be very rewarding."

"I wanted her"

"There are plenty more where she came from. We can pick or choose..."

"I chose her." The eyes narrowed in speculation. "Or perhaps you were jealous. Is that it, Methos? Perhaps you wanted to take her place."

Methos stared into eyes that had replaced insanity with a coldness that sent a shiver through his soul.

"I don't know what you mean..."

"Oh yes you do, and if you want to keep your head then you'd better be a good replacement."

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His thoughts returned to the present. Yes, he had cause to remember that day. Kronos had taken him for the first time that night and after a while he had even come to enjoy some aspects of their union. That was the right word, for it could never be described as 'lovmaking' although he suspected that Kronos did love him in some twisted fashion. Over the centuries that followed the demands on him became less, especially if Methos managed to divert Kronos's attention to some other willing - or unwilling - body but, eventually, the silent summons would come and Methos would climb into Kronos's bed.

Sometimes he would find a gentle lover waiting for him and, at those times, he could almost believe he was loved. At other times he was no more than a body for Kronos to slake his carnal desires, for when he was in one of those psychopathic moods, Kronos would cause as much pain as he could.

Methos remembered one time when he had felt Kronos's hands around his throat. He recalled the panic he felt as his lungs cried out for oxygen only to be denied. When his body had kick-started some time later he realized, with horror, that Kronos had killed him; had strangled him and then used his dead body. Kronos had held him, tears streaming down his face as he whispered apologies and promises that it would never happen again. Several months later it had and then again - and again. Decades turned to centuries and then to a millennia. The Era of the Horsemen passed and, gradually, Methos managed to slip away from the others, only crossing paths a few times down the ages.

Whenever Kronos came into his life, Methos submitted to the other man's demands and then slipped away again after a few decades. He spent the remaining time watching over his shoulder and keeping himself to himself, only tackling other Immortals if there was no other choice, fearing that any involvement would lead Kronos back into his life yet knowing Kronos would seek him out eventually. When he heard about the Watchers it was as if the Sun had burst out from behind the clouds after a lifetime of rain. By infiltrating them he was able to keep tabs on Kronos and ensure that no-one could give away his current location. Over the passed four centuries he had joined several different branches of the Watchers in various countries then left before they could become suspicious of a young man who never seemed to age.

He had seen Duncan MacLeod's name mentioned often over the years and had formed a high opinion of the young Immortal from the impressive list of heads taken but, more importantly, from the names belonging to those heads. Duncan MacLeod, like his clan-brother, Connor, did not take heads for pleasure, sport or in the quest of being 'the only one'. The Immortals killed deserved to die.

It was his fascination with Duncan MacLeod that led Methos to re-invent Adam Pierson and station him in Paris yet he had never expected to come face to face with the dark-haired Highlander, let alone be considered a friend.

Methos squeezed his eyes tight to stem the tears that threatened to fall. Over such a ridiculously short period of time Methos had allowed his feelings for MacLeod to deepen and when Kronos reappeared all he could think about was how he was going to keep Duncan alive without losing his own self-respect - or his head.

In his fear that the Highlander would be no match for Kronos, he had managed to bring the first fight to a halt only to see too late that MacLeod was at least an equal, perhaps better. The final battle was inevitable but Methos had other problems to occupy his mind. He owed it to MacLeod to set Cassandra free even if it meant going through Silas. The dual Quickening had been frightening in its intensity and Methos could still feel MacLeod's presence as if the man was standing in the next room.

Methos stopped in front of the mirror and looked at his own reflection. That he had been crying was obvious; the red-rimmed eyes looked as if they had not been dry since the fight with Kronos and Silas.

"Was it worth it?"

His own voice reverberated around the small apartment. He had gained his freedom from Kronos but at what price. What did he have to look forward to now ? Another thousand years of loneliness?

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The time that followed seemed a blur. Somehow Methos had regained a small measure of what he had lost only to see everything fall apart with the death of Richie Ryan. Following MacLeod's disappearance he had remained to help Joe Dawson bury the young man but as the months passed by, with no sign of MacLeod, Methos knew it was time to move on. He had discovered very early on that too many Immortals were attracted to the Highlander and he feared another would turn up and decide to take his head instead.

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A year later:

MacLeod sank down onto his haunches and lowered his head in exhaustion. Sweat poured into his eyes and he brushed it away angrily. The heavy schedule of exercise and meditation he had imposed upon himself had done little to soften the memory of his blade slicing through the neck of his friend and pupil. His breath caught in a sob as the young man's face floated before him. Richie. Yet, as the months passed, MacLeod allowed his thoughts to dwell on the events leading up to Richie's death more logically. Eventually he realized that there were only two things that could have caused the death. One: An outside force had been influencing him or, Two: the Quickening he had taken from Kronos was not as clean as he had believed.

With some trepidation he prepared himself for a confrontation with his acquired memories from Kronos. He slowed his breathing, closed his eyes and looked deep into his own mind, prodding carefully at the locks that held the past at bay. His eyes opened as the first memory of a well-known face flowed into his mind; flickering torch light illuminated the swollen lips, the tousled hair. A slow laconic smile spread across the sharp features and the hazel eyes opened. The memory was the same one that had leaked into his mind all those months ago after he first took Kronos's head but this time MacLeod let the memory flow on. The hazel eyes opened, focused on the face above and then widened in fear. The smile disappeared, the body tensed. Kronos/MacLeod leaned forward and the face below flinched then melted under



the onslaught of a kiss. As Kronos/MacLeod moved back the eyes took on a new look - wariness mixed with hope. The memory dissolved leaving MacLeod puzzled. Why had Methos been so afraid of the man lying with him? What had he expected to happen?

Many more memories passed through MacLeod's mind before he found an answer, and what he saw brought him back to the present with a shock.

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Methos felt the presence of another Immortal moments before he heard the knock. He stood staring at the door then glanced back at the window and had half-turned towards it when a well-known voice reached him.

"Methos, it's Duncan."

Methos drew in a deep breath. His contacts had let him know that MacLeod had resurfaced but he had not expected the Highlander to seek him out.

"What do you want?"

"I want to talk."

It took only a few seconds for Methos to realize that he would rather lose his head to Duncan MacLeod than live without him, so he stepped forward and opened the door.

MacLeod looked him square in the face and then moved into the room. He sank onto the bed, eyes still fixed on the tall, dark-haired Immortal. He waited for Methos to close the door and turn to face him. As he waited MacLeod pondered over the sight that met his eyes. Was it possible for an Immortal to look unwell?

"Coffee? Or something stronger."

"Definitely something stronger."

Methos threw a can of beer which was deftly caught and opened in a single smooth movement.

*Where to begin.* MacLeod decided to be blunt. "I know all about Kronos. What he did to you."

Methos glanced up with an expression that bordered on horror before it was quickly concealed.

"I should have guessed you'd be able to see his memories, especially after that Dark Quickening. If you've come here out of pity..."

"No. Not pity. **Never** pity. I came to let you know I understand. When you stopped the fight, that first time, I didn't believe it was for my benefit. I thought you and Kronos were blood-brothers, that you were hoping I would find another way to stop him that didn't end with his headless corpse. I was wrong."

MacLeod watched the other man carefully as MacLeod tried to find the right words.

"Kronos *did* love you, believe it or not. He just couldn't control the beast inside himself. You *must* have realized he would never have taken your head. That's why he never hunted you down each time you slipped away from him. He kept hoping that the next time you met he would be able to offer you only the good times - but you and I know that would never have happened."

Methos slumped onto the bed beside MacLeod.

"Pretty sick, isn't it?"

"Cassandra never knew..."

Methos stiffened beside him.

"Don't ever tell..."

"It's okay. This is between you and me. I just wanted to tell you that she never knew about all this. If she had then she would have acted differently. If I had known before... then..."

"Then you would have gone after him anyway. You've got a cavalier streak a mile wide..."

"I love you."

Methos stopped in mid-flow as the softly spoken words reached him. Seconds passed by like hours before Methos could stutter a response.

"I... don't know..."

"Sshh. It's alright. I know how you feel about me. I can sense it through this strange joining. I wanted you to know that I fell in love with you long before Kronos entered the picture, and what I have seen has only made me love you more, not less."

"I can't love any..."

"But you do. I know you do, but I won't ask you to say the words - not until you're ready. We've got plenty of time to take it slow. To learn about each other - although I'm disadvantaged only having 406 years to your five thousand..."

Methos found himself smiling and turned away in embarrassment only to find his chin taken by a strong hand and turned back. The hand moved to stroke his cheek gently before moving to the back of his head where a little pressure brought his face forward to meet a sensuous mouth. The lips touched his forehead, his nose, his cheek before lighting on his mouth. A soft gentle kiss brushed his own lips before pulling away.

MacLeod smiled. Wariness mixed with hope had filled the dark eyes and MacLeod knew that, from this time onwards, Methos would have no reason to fear.

THE END



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