



## The Ghost

*Monica McCarty*

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An undercover warrior and her sworn enemy play a seductive game of cat-and-mouse in *New York Times* bestselling author Monica McCarty's sexy new Highland Guard novel.

Joan Comyn swore allegiance to Robert the Bruce the day she witnessed England's barbarous king torturing her famous mother, Scot patriot Bella MacDuff. Now the mysterious beauty slips into men's hearts like a specter and entices England's most illustrious barons to unwittingly divulge their secrets, then shares them with her king. Known only as the Ghost even among her Highland Guard brethren, Joan has become the most wanted traitor in England.

The man determined to uncover her identity poses her biggest threat yet. Alex Seton once stood with Bruce but now fights for the enemy. Though Joan knows she must avoid the handsome warrior or risk discovery, his knightly chivalry touches a place in her long since buried. When his suspicions grow apparent, Joan realizes she must do everything in her power to stop Alex from revealing her mission and convince the powerful fighter to join forces with the Highland Guard once more. But as the ultimate battle in the great war approaches, will Alex choose love or honor?

## The Ghost Details

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Author : Monica McCarty

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## From Reader Review The Ghost for online ebook

### Liana says

Update - 01/31/16

And I was right, and I know I wasn't the only one. Monica McCarty shared, via her FB page, the identity of the heroine we suspected was The Ghost, and I'm thrilled! I can't wait to read Joan and Alex's story, although I'll be sad to say goodbye to the Highland Guard.

April 2015

I had an epiphany about who "The Ghost" really is...and I'm ridiculously excited about the possibility that I'm right! OMG! And seeing as how MM hasn't even finished writing the book, I have a long time to wait until I can test my theory. \*sigh\*

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### Yomi M. says

It's LIVE!!!

Amazon

B&N

For me Joan was the star of this book. It was such a pleasure to read how a woman, during this period, was able to wield such power over these men by taking advantage of their own weaknesses. Her characterization was great and I was able to connect with her and really empathize during those tough moments. I'm not going to lie and say she was perfect because she was not. There were instances where I wanted to shake some sense into her, but I guess that's all part of being human.

I went into this book already not liking Alex Seton very much. The Raider was my favorite book of the series and for those that have read it know that Alex was not the best in that book. I just didn't agree with what he did in that book and I definitely didn't support some of his actions in his book either. As a character he wasn't the strongest and it frustrated me greatly how much he waffled with his decision to pick a side. It made him weak in my eyes, especially when his actions had an effect on Joan and her entire situation.

As a couple I think that Joan and Alex had great chemistry and I loved the scenes between them. Overall, it was an enjoyable read and I was so glad when we were able to see the other Phantoms and how they interacted with each other at the end. I have to admit that it was bittersweet because this is the last book but I can't wait to see what other things Monica McCarty has in store for us!

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### Melwasul says

C'est fini :( Nannn j'étais pas prête à les quitter !

Punaise on peut dire que je l'aurai attendu le tome sur Alex, depuis le premier, et il ne m'a absolument pas déçue. Alex aura été mon chouchou jusqu'au bout, mon chevalier, mon dragon. Et quel plaisir de retrouver

tous les autres, voir ce qu'ils sont devenus, ce lien qui les unit si fort. L'humour, les émotions, la qualité historique, une des meilleures séries du genre !

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## Daniella says

The fact that my friend Esther DNFed this is enough to make me extremely nervous about starting this book.

Oh, dear.

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## Aoi says

The conclusion of a tale six years in the making, *The Ghost* is the final chapter in Robert Bruce's fight for Scottish independence. So far, the Highland Guard have fought and won smaller, tactical skirmishes to strike at the heart of King Edward II's army and to spread fear. Now, the time is ripe for a decisive victory on the battlefield, to legitimize Robert Bruce's claim as rightful ruler.

*The Ghost* is thus set in the final days leading up to the Battle of Bannockburn, behind enemy lines. Joan Comyn (Isabella McDuff's daughter who insisted in staying back with her English cousins), has been acting as Robert Bruce's eyes and ears for all these years. Declared a bastard, her former position reduced to her cousin's companion; she makes use of this new found freedom to coax important information out of Edward's young lieutenants and passes it onto Robert.

She crosses paths with a man who she recognizes from the past, Alex Seton. Alex, once The Dragon of the Highland Guard, is now fighting on the side of the English. Disheartened and disillusioned by the never-ending War, under suspicion and alienated by Edward's commanders, Alex is a conflicted man. Vowing to clear his name, Alex volunteers to unearth the spy. Despite his chivalrous intentions, he is intrigued and drawn to Joan, reputed an infamous flirt by the Court.

With such a potentially explosive setup, and the protagonists who have been acting on the sidelines for the entire series, this final book could have been much, much more. *The Ghost* ultimately falls short of my expectations, by precisely not delivering what has been a trademark of this successful series.

With its past-proven ability to unflinchingly incorporate the brutality and realism of 13th century Scotland (The Viper), *The Ghost* is much tamer by comparison. Joan who uses tried-and-tested tactics of charming and seducing the truth out of her targets, cannot stomach being kissed or fondled by them. She relies of chance rather than cunning, takes stupid risks and leaves behind an obvious trail.

Alex - well, he was written all wrong. I can get on board with someone who clings onto the notion of honour and chivalry - but, who can harbour such fanciful notions after a stint with the Highland Guard. He *should have known too well* that the English were not aboveboard. It also didn't help that his loyalty and motivations were always in question. Hell, even Lachlan had an admirable motivation behind risking his life. Ms. McCarty could have done a better job as identifying himself to be a Borderlands' man, rather than dilly-dallying between the English and the Scots.

The romance too, I found to be lukewarm. I have been treated in the past to some scorching love scenes and

tender emotional moments, I felt a bit let down.

Faults apart, this has been one of my favorite series for all times. Ms. McCarty has got such a talent for effortlessly combining gritty historical detailing with passionate, unforgettable romances - I can't wait to see what she would try her hand at next.

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## **Zoe says**

How I waited 1.5 years to read this book is evidence of how I loved this series. I have read many historical romances. If I have to pick one series to be my favorite, this would be it. I didn't want to end. So I kept postponing reading this book. It makes me so sad that this is the last book.

Alas I cannot say that this series ended with a great story, at least not for me. Monica McCarty excels at storytelling. When she has the right characters, I am led on an emotional journey and cannot put the book down. But I did not love all books in the series, this is not about Monica McCarty. It is just me not always liking the characters.

And the final entry in this series is a disappointment for me in that regard. I was not impressed by Alex's gallantry, nor was I moved by Joan's resolve and courage. I am sure that there are people who could make connections to Alex and Joan. Much to my own disappointment, I couldn't and the book was done for for me because of that.

Alex, having left his highland guard brethren behind and joined the English in book 8, the Raider, gets his own story with Bella MacDuff's daughter Joan Comyn. I loved the book the Raider, and I wondered what was going to happen to Alex. When I realized that he would be with Joan, I thought oh that is smart. Both Alex and Joan were in the middle of this English and Scottish feud, both had connections to both sides, and both were wrestling with their loyalty. It was a great idea. But other than that the relationship development and plots were lackluster. Naturally there was danger and quite some possessiveness and protectiveness going on. But in the Raider I had this image of Prince on the white horse and Knight in the shining armor for Alex. It seemed somehow comical that Alex should become this fierce warrior when my mental image for him resembled Charming in one of the Shrek movies, sauntering in on his white horse with a rose in his mouth for the lady.

And Joan was a little too jaded for my taste. It makes perfect sense that she was written the way she was. She had witnessed and experienced atrocities in life that would make anyone take off their rosy glasses. I cannot fault her character. But that did not endear her to me. I respect this character but she isn't my kind of heroine.

And the relationship, or the lack thereof, I had to sigh when I read about their "attraction". I can only say that Monica McCarty has done much better in her other books when it comes to showing the chemistry between lead characters. Suffice it to say that I was not convinced and found their courtship wanting.

The best part of the story for me, was the history. Monica McCarty has gone to great length in incorporating historical elements into this series, and this is something that I greatly appreciate. I read the author's notes at the end of every story almost as eagerly as I gobbled down the stories. The Scottish fight for independence

and their way of life came to life under her pen. If you have a little knowledge about the period of Scottish history, you would find the historical elements she has woven in the characters and stories intriguing and imaginative. The real Robert the Bruce was just a man, with human failings and faults, like most historical figures. But this series gave this monumental figure in Scottish history an air of romance and this fictional band of brothers benefited from his pursuit of crown, each finding their own pieces of romance and heroism in this series. I enjoyed that as much I did the stories.

Since this story is close on the heels of the Raider in plot lines, we got to see quite a bit of Robert Boyd and his wife Rosalin Clifford, now Boyd. Since they are my favorite couple in the series, I loved it. Alex's unresolved loyalty conflict meant that we saw his return to his brethren and finally made peace with his sense of right and wrong. And since this is the last book in the series, all the characters made a brief appearance in the epilogue, with an aging Bruce, his end near. I did not like the romance in this book. But in a way I felt that this was a closure, the end of a journey, 6 years in the making. Monica McCarty has built these characters, some of them so authentic in their quest of love, their sufferings and losses, their struggles for doing the right things and their final triumphs in finding their hearts' desires. I am sad that this is the last we will be seeing of the highland guards, and that I didn't like the last story more than I do. But I have met some characters I know I will remember for a very long time. For a book lover, that is one precious thing.

And if I could humbly make one suggestion to this series or to Monica McCarty's future stories, the dialogues in her stories are sometimes too modern. This is the 13th and 14th centuries we are talking about. Monica McCarty was brilliant in incorporating historical details into her stories. But her characters sometimes sound too modern. For me, this is rather distracting. I wish their speech would be a little more, well, contemporary of their time period.

For the last time, in case you did not deduce from my long speech above, I loved the idea of this series. There are 2 - 3 books that I absolutely loved in this series. I have reread them many times. The Ghost is not one of them. That does not change my opinion of the series. I hope Monica McCarty returns to the Historical Romance genre soon and I look forward to being swept away into the past with her characters again.

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### **Chris C - A Midlife Wife says**

I was sad when I opened this book and read the forward from the author saying that this was going to be the final installment in this series. This author has a way of blending history into her stories that keeps you entertained, learning, involved, engaged, plus whatever other verb you want to use. She certainly was able to do that with me and I didn't even start from the beginning of the series.

This is the 12th book in the Highlander series and it's just as good if not the best of the stories. I have to say I fell in love with Alex. He is so sweet!! I love his gallantry, loyalty, and caring character. I don't think an author could have nailed this guy better.

The author has a beautiful way with words that allows you to get just sucked into the story and whisked away into the thirteen hundreds. With some suspense and intrigue, there's plenty going on on every single page and never a dull moment. You can honestly lose yourself for several hours at a time and enjoy every bit of the story.

I am sad to see the ending of this series but excited to see what else Monica McCarty will be bringing to us.

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## **Elfina Renee says**

The Ghost ended much like the rest of Monica McCarty's Highland Guard series. Me in tears with a profound appreciation of historical literature. No matter how you look at it, Alex Seton is a traitor!

I wanted his hide boiled in oil, good thing I don't always get what I want. Think the author was sending subliminal messages on forgiveness and maybe in times of war, when brother is turning against brother everything isn't so black and white.

Regardless this was a hell of a five star read and the perfect conclusion to one of the best stories ever told.

Monica I was with you from the beginning and can't wait to see where you take us next! Enjoy, happy reading

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## **Julie says**

The Ghost by Monica McCarty is a 2016 Pocket Books publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

I have had this book for a little while, but I've put off reading it because it is the final book in the "Highland Guard" series, and I really hate to see this series end.

This twelfth installment features Joan Cromyn, a spy for the Scots, living in England with her cousins after she is stripped of her inheritance. She does her job so well, she had been dubbed, "The Ghost."

Alex Seton was once in the guard, loyal to Bruce, but the war has dragged on for so long, he lost faith, believing that unless he could convince the English to work on a truce, the war would never end. To that end, Alex switches sides, hoping to find a way to end the war.

He has been commissioned to flush out the 'The Ghost', but he never anticipated running into Joan, Bella MacDuff's beautiful daughter. He is shocked at how he reacts to Joan, but of course the couple can never have a life together, because her step-father would never allow her to marry a traitor. Can Joan convince Alex to rejoin 'The Guard', and fight once more for his own country?

Alex is perhaps the gentlest member of 'The Guard', and melted my heart. He is known for his gallantry and is teasingly referred to as "Sir Galahad". What he tries to do here is something that has happened in all wars, when weariness settles in and no solution seems forthcoming. However, the English are just as mulish and he soon finds his heart and loyalties are torn more than ever before.

Joan, is an outstanding spy, and her boldness has only grown over time. But, it's possible she is being watched and could be in grave danger. But, falling in love with Alex was never her intention, and it certainly complicates matters for her. What will Alex think if he ever discovers the truth?

I really enjoyed this last installment as it has a sentimental tone to it. The story highlights the strain and long term agony of war, and the toll it takes, but was also one of the most romantic and sensual stories of the series. I think Joan helped Alex find his way back, and Alex proved to Joan that there really are good, honorable men in this world.

I will really will miss this series. It is one of the very few that actually incorporated authentic historical detail, proving that historical accuracy enhances the romantic elements, and paints a realistic depiction of medieval days, the harshness of war, the grand love affairs, and the intense passions of the Scottish people.

Overall, the series closes on a high note with a special happily ever after.

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## **Bubu says**

### **1.5 stars**

#### **Unpopular opinion alert. I'm really, really sorry.**

The end of a series that had an interesting premise, covering a part of history stupidly distorted by the film *Braveheart*, with enough background information provided by the author to give the reader not only romance stories but a broader picture of the difficult entanglements of the British and Scottish aristocracy that lead to the ever-changing loyalties during this long war.

I think I started losing interest after book 6 or 7 because the author, whilst setting up the scenes perfectly, was unable to create more than 2-3 stereotypical sets of heroines and heroes; not to forget the constant repetition of certain phrases ("Keep looking at me like that, and I won't last long." This came up in one form or the other in almost every book), and heroines who reminded me more of the *The Black Widow* or *Superwoman*. Of course I acknowledge that women played a role in the war, as they always do in any conflict, and not a minor one either. But please, pretty please, let them show reason in regards to the danger they put themselves in as well as in how they approach the men they love. And in many of the *Highland Guard* books that's what was missing for me. I have mentioned all this in a few reviews for previous books.

If an author sets up a story line that tries to be historically accurate, than she should also be able to create realistic characters, or at least attempt it. **I'm not reading a fluffy Regency novel here.** Sadly though, character development is not Ms McCarty's strongest talent.

Nonetheless, as this was Alex Seton's story who has always been the most interesting character to me, being the only Englishman in the Highland Guard, always conflicted, thoroughly chivalrous, I was hoping, I could finish this series on a positive note.

Alas, it was not meant to be and - oh wonder - the heroine, Joan, did a good job at giving me the hives. Joan's own story had so much potential and I was looking forward to seeing her paired with Alex. But knowing Ms. McCarty's shortcomings in the character department, I wasn't really surprised how disappointing *The Ghost* turned out to be.

What a waste of a good story and interesting characters.



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## **Marta Cox says**

This is sadly the last book in the Highland Guard series but what a way to end this remarkable look at what is an important piece of history. This author has researched and given her own romantic slant to actual events and in doing so has brought to life such fantastical characters. Now with this book everything converges until this reader feels like I've been along on this journey and we finally get to what's arguably the most important battle in Scottish history, the famed Battle of Bannockburn!

Yet I'm getting slightly ahead of myself and must admit I've often wondered what became of the daughter of Bella MacDuff who played such a large part in the fourth book Viper. Now we see first hand that Joan has grown up with hate in her heart and a fierce need to set the rightful King on Scotland's throne. Called the Ghost Joan seduces information out of besotted English suitors but there's one who she really needs to keep a much closer eye on.

Once Alex Seton was a member of Robert the Bruce's most trusted and secret Highland Guard but he sought a more peaceful ending to the conflict and returned to England to help those he previously considered the enemy. Now considered a traitor by the Scots and distrusted by his English allies he fervently hopes to discover just who is the spy amidst them. Yet increasingly Joan infuriates him with her coquettish ways, flirting outrageously but try as he might Alex cannot want but to try to protect her. As Joan grows more determined to get intel for Bruce she's in danger from the very man who just might have stolen her heart! This author writes such passionate romance stories. Such a rush as we watch her characters fight, squirm and ultimately fall deeply in love. Each book seems to have an intensity about it that plunges the reader headlong into the action. The fact that so much is based on actual characters and events is mind boggling. I love the interpretation, the twists and turns and its brought so much history to life. If you enjoy romance whether historical or not then this series is a must read and I cannot praise it highly enough. As for the epilogue it's everything this reader wanted and more besides. A sincere thank you Ms McCarty for this wonderful journey I was gifted a copy via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review

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## **Jonetta says**

When she witnessed the inhumane treatment of her mother at the hands of the English, Joan Comyn silently vowed her allegiance to the king of Scotland. As soon as she was old enough, she used her wiles to extract vital information from powerful men and delivered it to Robert Bruce and his Highland Guard. She became known only to them as the Ghost, her identity secreted. But she was infamous to all as the effect of her treachery was damaging. Alex Seaton, formerly a member of the Guard before her time, is now working on behalf of King Edward and is committed to squirreling out the spy. However, he's beguiled by Joan and she with him.

This series is ending on the highest note as the story returned to its roots in history. There's high intrigue, suspense and action with the developing romance as more of a backdrop. The war strategies of both sides were shared so I felt like I was part of the adventure. Alex's internal conflict regarding his ill-advised decision to leave the Guard made the story even more interesting as it illustrated the pertinent issues of the period.

I really enjoyed Antony Ferguson's narration as he mastered all of those Scottish names and words I have only guessed at in the past (who knew McKay was pronounced Ma-k?e). His performance was skillful even

if the female voices were a little strange as he captured the emotions perfectly for each scene.

I loved this story with the poignant twist of having the final member of the featured Guard be a woman. It has every element that drew me to the series and kept me coming back. I loved the ending and am satisfied with how the series concluded. Very well done. 4.5 stars

(I received an ARC from the publisher in exchange for an honest review)

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## **Lisa says**

But alas, all good things must come to an end.

The *Ghost* is the twelfth and final book in Monica McCarty's Highland Guard series. I have been a huge fan of this series right from the onset. This historically rich, gripping and fantastically written series is, in my opinion, one of the best historical highlander series out there. This author has the unique ability of providing her reader with a fascinating and moving love story set against the violent backdrop of when the Scots were fighting for their independence. The entire series spans a nine year period from when William Wallace met his demise to when the Scots, under Robert the Bruce, finally achieve a hard-earned victory against the English in 1314. Each book deals with one of the fictional elite warriors that make up Robert the Bruce's Highland Guard, the most feared men who were also known as Bruce's Phantoms.

This installment in the series focuses on **Joan Comyn**, the daughter of Bella MacDuff who we met in book 4 (*The Viper*), and **Alex Seton**, one of the former Highland Guard members who once stood with Bruce but now is back in England fighting for the enemy. Joan has aided Robert the Bruce for a number of years as his eyes and ears nestled right in amongst English society. There is nothing she would not do for his cause, including using her "womanly charms" to obtain important information. She is a woman with a mission and wants nothing more than to seek justice for the torture her mother suffered at the hands of the despicable English.

Alex once fought alongside the Highland Guard until he became disillusioned with all the fighting and destruction of lives. He's been back in England for two years now and is increasingly becoming more and more disheartened by the stubbornness of the English rulers who refuse to listen to reason. Alex wants peace and wants the carnage of war to simply end. He's determined to discover who the spy is passing along precious information to the Scottish. Alex can't help but be intrigued by Joan even though this chivalrous English knight is infuriated by her flirtatious ways. He wants to protect her even as Joan keeps finding more and more danger the more determined she becomes to reach her goal.

I really did enjoy the romance between Alex and Joan. I will admit that I was not the biggest fan of Joan's character and the choices she made as well as the risks she took in order to secure information for Robert the Bruce. I wish that she would have taken a safer and more credible path, one that did not put her in so much danger and would not damage her fragile reputation. Regardless, watching Joan and Alex succumb to the profound connection they shared was wonderful. And, as Ms. McCarty takes us on the final thrilling rides of this epic journey, I loved watching all the pieces come together for an amazing conclusion.

All in all, *The Ghost* was a somewhat bittersweet read knowing that this series that I love and adore has come to an end. This Highland Guard series is a must read for all historical romance lovers. It is passionate, raw,

gripping and simply magical. Chalk full of mystery, intrigue, unforgettable characters and heart-melting romances, this series will go down as one of the most memorable historical highlander series that I have ever read.

*\*\*\*An advance reading copy of **The Ghost** by Monica McCarty was generously provided to me via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.*

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### **Sissy's Romance Book Review says**

I received an eARC, from NetGalley and the publisher, in exchange for an honest review.

'The Ghost' by Monica McCarty is book 15 in the "Highland Guard" series. This is the story of Joan Comyn and Alex Seton. Joan is the daughter of Bella MacDuff who story was told in book 4 of 'Highland Guard' series called "The Viper". With that said I will say this can be a standalone book.

Joan's mother Bella was taken from her at a early age and her father was an harsh if not evil man. At the age of 14 she went to help with the cause that her mother had been fighting for. Joan is an undercover spy that is called the "Ghost" in the Highland Guard group.

Alex once was a Highland Guard but since he is half English he is able to go between the Scots and English. After fight with the Highland Guards for several years which had conflicted with his English Knight honor he decide to try to work with the English to try and stop the war.

Joan has made a name for herself as being somewhat loose with her self. Which when Alex meets her again he is great attracted to her but when he finds out she gives her self out he tries to stop his feelings. Alex wants a 'pure' women when he does take one just as high as his standards.

So we find Joan struggling to keep her emotions down as she had learn when she was younger but finding it hard now...but she has to for her cover.

Will Alex find out what Joan is up to? Will he change his mind about Joan? Will Joan every learn to trust someone?

Another great book in this series!!

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## **Esther says**

Not going to rate this. Wouldn't be fair.

DNF....Great writing and love this author...BUT....

I just couldn't finish due to a trigger issue and contradiction (from my viewpoint anyways) of what happened with the heroine and what she presented herself as a spy (acting a certain way to gain info).

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