



True Highland Spirit

Amanda Forester

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A HEATED RIVALRY...

Morrigan McNab is a Highland lady, robbed of her birthright and with no choice but to fight alongside her brothers to protect their impoverished clan. When she encounters Sir Jacques Dragonet, she discovers her fiercest opponent...

IS GETTING EVEN HOTTER...

Sir Jacques Dragonet will give his life to defend Scotland from the English. He can't stop himself from admiring the beautiful Highland lass who wields her weapons as skillfully as he does, and endangers his heart even more than his life...

True Highland Spirit Details

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From Reader Review True Highland Spirit for online ebook

Zoe says

Another warrior princess...

Heather Book Savvy Babe says

Amanda Forester scores another highlander hit with True Highland Spirit. Morrigan McNab is no lady, she is a warrior and leader of her clan. Ever since she was young, Morrigan was good with a sword and better suited to the life of a warrior than a lady. Morrigan trained as a warrior and helped her brother organize raids to steal provisions for their struggling clan. Dressing and acting as a boy, Morrigan never thought herself a lady, until a certain minstrel stole a kiss. Morrigan does not see the minstrel again until her brothers are both gone and she is acting as the laird of the clan. That is when Morrigan learns the minstrel is no minstrel, he is a french knight seeking a hidden templar treasure, and he needs Morrigan's help.

I was happily surprised by this story, in book 2, The Highlander's Heart, Morrigan is mentioned, but not in a good way. Morrigan is a woman who had a tough life, and no women to really raise her. Her older brother was her leader, and he needed help with the clan. There is more to Morrigan than fighting, she just never had opportunity or need to act in a womanly manner. When Sir Jaques Dragonet (the minstrel who is no minstrel) appears in Morrigan's life, Morrigan actually begins to feel like a woman.

Jaques Dragonet is a wonderful hero in this book, he is a great fit for Morrigan, even though he has a very difficult time believing that. The bastard child of a Bishop, Jaques Dragonet was raised as a monk and his purpose in life was to find the templar treasure and make his father proud. When Jaques gets to know Morrigan, his vows are put to the test, and the motivations of his father are called into question. The relationship between Dragonet and Morrigan is very sweet because both of them are so foreign to romance and attraction. They are a good fit, and I am happy about how their story unfolded.

Amanda Forester combines true history with the fictional story, making True Highland Spirit a believable tale. There is a war going on between England and Scotland, and the French are involved. In history, many clans are involved in the fighting. So, it makes sense when Morrigan, her clan, and Dragonet are apart of the fighting. There is a mysterious element to the story as well. Dragonet is just one of the people searching for the hidden Templar treasure. Throughout the story, this treasure plays a key role in motivations for various characters.

With the appeal of an unlikely laird, mysteries of the templar knights, and the romantic and fierce setting of the Scottish Highlands, True Highland Spirit proves to be a resounding success. Historical romance readers, I recommend reading True Highland Spirit, as well as Amanda Forester's other books in the series. There is intrigue, romance, and the drama of the Scottish highlands to enjoy in the series. I am looking forward to more books by Amanda Forester.

I received this book for review

Michele says

Oh-I love when the heroines are strong (but have a hidden soft side)-and the hero's even stronger!!

Tracy says

Spirited Morrigan Steals The Show

Sister of the Laird McNab, Morrigan McNab would do anything to support and protect her impoverished clan. Eschewing feminine trappings since she was a child, she straps on a sword...and other deadly accoutrements...and fights like a man. With her brother and a small group of their men, she raids other clans and ambushes travelers for additional coin and supplies. The dishonorable activity weighs her heart, but helping her clan survive makes that weight at least bearable.

Times are desperate, and when - in her brother's absence - she receives deadly orders from a man who holds the clan's future in his hand, she has little choice but to follow through. Conflicted and torn, her life on the line, she hesitates to complete the task, and in that moment of hesitation, comes face to face with a destiny far beyond that which she could ever have dreamed.

His life is cloaked in secret and ruled by obligation, his mission a many-headed serpent. Hospitaller Knight Sir Jacques Dragonet is in Scotland on a quest for a holy relic. As a cover for his clandestine activities, he's allied himself with a French Duke who is gathering Scottish warriors to join the war against the encroaching English. It is while Dragonet is traveling through the Highlands as a minstrel, gathering intelligence for the Duke, that his path first crosses Morrigan's. It won't be the last.

The intensity of his feelings for the fierce, proud woman is like nothing Dragonet has ever known. Staying away from her is unthinkable. Making her his, impossible. And when Morrigan finds out the truth about him and the full scope of his mission, the incomparable warrior woman could very well end him for his perfidy.

~*~

I wish I had known before I started this book that it's part of a series with two books preceding it. Not because it didn't read perfectly fine as a stand-alone novel. It did, aside from a couple of issues that may be related to previous books, but I'll get back to that. The reason I wish I had known that this is the third book is that I would have loved to know if the main characters in those were as awesome and fun as they were in this one, and if the earlier books had the same enchanting and wry touches of humor so liberally laced throughout this one.

It's true...I'm a sucker for the humor. Especially the sort found on the pages of True Highland Spirit. It's self-effacing, unreserved, and unapologetic social and emotional awkwardness at its best. Perhaps it's not an out loud, guffaw-inducing kind, but it's set in the 14th century Scottish Highlands and there's a lot of serious stuff going on. Not exactly a comedic hot spot. Instead it's a quirky, warm, endearing humor that made me fall completely in love with Morrigan and her refreshing lack of all artifice and guile.

The story that surrounds the Highland warrior lass and the Frenchman who comes to love her is rich with historical tidbits tweaked around a layered and expansive plot. I enjoyed the feeling of authenticity in the historical setting, for while I'm no historian, nor terribly finicky about that sort of thing, there was an air of

genuine history about the book that I enjoyed.

There were a lot of separate plot points and story elements, and quite a lot going on with and around the main characters at all times. Dragonet's quest, the political climate and subsequent battles against the English, the Abbot's corruption, the clan's struggles, and the growing relationship between Morrigan and Dragonet - all of that and more made for a lot to absorb. The pacing of the book occasionally bogged down for me because of the overload.

The beginning of the book started slow for me and included a rather odd six-month gap in which a large amount of ancillary development surrounding Morrigan's brothers took place. Once I learned this book is third in a series, I assumed those developments were featured in one of the previous books, but as I was reading, I found it all rather abrupt and jerky. I would have preferred a more streamlined narrative with a few less major plot points (never thought I'd say *that*) and a different starting point in the timeline to trim off some of the weight and smooth out some of the edges of it all.

Just so long as not one single word of any scene with Dragonet and Morrigan was touched. I lived for each and every moment they were together in the book. They were absolutely the best part of the read for me. And when Morrigan turned her hand towards seduction...inexperienced warrior-woman style, I had moments of sublime book-reading bliss. Loved it.

I adored them together. Not only is Morrigan possibly my new favorite historical romance heroine for every single one of her quirks, foibles, strengths, and sins, but the pair of them together just swept me away. Combining Morrigan's earthy, plain-spoken, kick-ass fighter, helpless-in-a-dress character with the delightful contradictions in Dragonet's own honorable, refined, knighted-warrior-with-the-monkish-innocence character was simply a brilliant, brilliant stroke of genius.

There isn't a thing I would change about them or about their interactions with each other. They were, for me, perfect.

This was a lovely read with a solid story and some truly spectacular moments that made me chuckle and grin. It's made me very interested in seeing what else Forester has created for historical romance fans. If there are more characters like Morrigan and Dragonet, and the humor is on par, I would say I've found a new favored author for Highland historical romance.

Disclosure: An ARC of this book was provided to me by Sourcebooks Casablanca publisher Sourcebooks via NetGalley. This rating, review, and all included thoughts and comments are my own.

~*~*~*~

Reviewed for One Good Book Deserves Another.

Suzan Tisdale says

This is book three in the series. I absolutely LOVED this book! It was nice to have a heroine who could kick booty but still remain lovable and female.

Sweet, funny and exciting! I give this book five stars.

Morrigan (our heroine) is strong and at first, one might come away thinking she is uncaring. But she is far

from that! She loves her family and her clan, it is just difficult for her to show it as she has spent most of her adult life trying to keep them from the brink of starvation.

Dragonet is our hero and he is a wonderful one at that. Like Morrigan, he's had many obstacles to overcome in his life. Forced to take his vows as a monk at the young age of twelve, he grows into a very honorable knight--despite who his father is and how cruel the man is.

I absolutely loved this story and I think you will too!

Rachel says

[Near the end and sure enough Dragonet is a virgin. Im not fond of how Morrigan is the dominate one. It may be cool in real life, but im my fantasy romance books, I want the man all strong and

Bj Gaskill says

What can I say? It was sweet to read a historical that the woman wasn't some romantic ditz for a change. Now don't get me wrong I do like my ditzes, but in this book the woman, Morrigan was a sword welding bad a\$\$\$. I LOVED IT!

Action packed....never a dull moment...from robbing, loving, to attempted murder to being left for dead....heck I really haven't got one clue what this book didn't have in it!

Just thinking what a person would go through for family OMG!!!

Oh...and the Templar's treasure...did I forget the mention that??? Ahhhh yes....we all know how they keep their secrets, but really one that freakin big!!!

I'm so glad I can still like Sir Dragonet!

(That's the only clue you all get....LOL)

Amanda Forester does a wonderful job of bringing her characters to life and adding the reader to the story. I totally look forward to her next book.....Lets hope it comes VERY SOON!!!!

Michelle Curtis says

Enjoyable

The author may have done this story as a historic story. I have really liked it. If I didn't know any better I wouldn't of known that this a historic story.

It was that good! Thanks I was able to learn a few new things, or this has helped remind me of something that I had learned or heard of awhile ago.

Thanks!

Mariana says

4.5 stars

This is a story about Redemption. In this case, redemption of the heroine. She is the thief and her clan outcasts.

Dragonet has a good heart, but he has not been provided any love while growing up. He has multiple disguises and cannot be honest with others to protect his quest.

Morrigan is a warrior, daughter of a laird. Her parents died when she was only 10, and she rejected being married off to an old and fat man when she was only 12. Instead, she decided to be a tough outlaw. She portrays an image of being heartless, but she really simply disguises her feelings.

These two find each other but cannot marry because Dragonet is a monk. It bothered me a bit that he was more willing to break his vow of chastity than to find a way to marry, but I don't understand the Catholic rules or what that would entail. Fortunately, it all works out in the end.

Unlike other Amanda Forester books, the villains are pure evil. Their defeat is that much sweeter.

Dawn says

Morrigan McNab is a woman on a mission to save her clan from starvation. She dresses as a man and participates in raids with her brother to keep food on the table for her people. To do this Morrigan has believed herself to be unworthy of anything. She no longer thinks of herself as a lady and while she wishes for a home with a husband and children Morrigan believes that her past will cloud any decent man's judgment. Sir Jaques Dragonet is a French man on a mission in Scotland. The Dragons secrets are dark and run deep so deep that they seem insurmountable to any possible relationship with Morrigan.

There was a lot of things to like about this book. To begin with I love the fact the clan was not so honorable that was a fantastic change of pace. I also enjoyed the religious Templar piece perhaps it is me but it seems like medieval history and Christianity would have been deeply intertwined and I really enjoyed how it played out here as something political but with the under currant of faith. Both Morrigan and Dragonet are great characters both are relatively innocent and it was a lot of fun to watch them struggle through what the world says they are vs. who they think they are.

Great book I really enjoyed all of it.

Dawn says

Clearly I am the oddball in my opinion of this book.

Why oh why would the author create a perfect hero and give him such an angry, manly, foul mouthed heroine?

I admit, at first I liked the heroine (Morrigan), she was strong and an excellent warrior. She also showed to have intelligence when it came to war strategy, then as I continued reading, she became so unlikeable. I found it impossible to believe the hero would have fallen in love with her. She, was entirely too loud mouthed and insulting (especially for that time period warrior or not), it was just over done. She's described as having no soul, no heart but I didn't get that. I felt no pity for her, felt no pain for her. What I saw was an angry, self pitying, arrogant woman who had no manners, no compassion, and was rude, uncaring and selfish. I hated how she treated the hero (Dragonet) and how she spoke to him. So condenscending. She truly deserved to be slapped.

Dragonet was the perfect hero. The problem with him was he was too saintly. Too kind to Morrigan. SHE had little redeeming qualities, yet he put up with her verbal abuse. Why? Cause she was beautiful? Maybe he liked her because she was so manly? It really felt like Dragonet was the woman and Morrigan the man. I didnt care for it. He was too wishy washy and she too brutal. I guess I kept on reading in hopes Morrigan would change, soften, but nope..doesn't happen.

The secondary characters were meh. Her oldest brother was the better written one of the bunch.

The story..

It started out pretty good then declined. If I had to read one more time about Morrigan's craving gingerbread I was going to rip my hair out. Then the constant repeating of how they had to get medicine to Andrew. OK I got it! No need to beat us over the head with it. I did like that there was some humor, but I think the author's attempt at humor on most occassions did more harm than good.

The sex..

The most horribly written sex scenes I have ever read. Again Morrigan was the cause. I mean here is a beautiful man, whispering words of love to her in french and she's yelling at him to basically shut up and do your job. Pitiful.

The romance was nonexistant. Nothing sweet nothing tender.

I am glad to be done with it.

I give my 3 stars all to Dragonet and the fact I liked that the hero was just as chaste as the heroine(her only good quality)

Denise says

The series can easily be read independent of each other. While the story involves the same people in the prior 2 books and history goes on you do not have the feeling you missed something or are lost not having a full back story. I wasn't crazy about reading this book because it was about Morrigan McNab and I didn't really like her from the other books and I the McNab's are pretty much the crazybad guy clan in the other 2 books. Chaumont the Frenchman from the other books is also this one. He is one of my favorites. I liked the story line in this book and Dragnet is a different kind of Knight and Morrigan is the highlander. Having a French/monks background made him an entertaining hero in the book. Even though you know the English win in the end you can't help root for the highlanders in the battles. It has evil bishops and ancient Templar artifacts. I liked this book the best of the series and give it 4.5, very entertaining.

Chandra says

AUTHOR: Amanda Forester is a Romance, Historical Fiction author. This is the third book in her Highlander's series. The series is full of adventure, romance and the right balance of sexy but tasteful passion. She knows how to write an action and adventure filled, romantic and passionate book that includes hilarity and humor in many sections of her book.

SYNOPSIS

He is disguised as a minstrel traveling through Scotland in order to bring the silver chest to his father in France. He has never met such a challenge on his level as this woman. She dresses like a man and could best anyone in her clan including her older brother, the clan leader. Deep inside all she has ever wanted was to be in love, married and with children.

ROMANCE: "Ma chérie. Mon petit trésor." "Je t'adore. Je t'aime!" He cried out, uncontrollably expressing his adoration and love.

PASSION: "Your hands are cold, but do not stop, I beg you." The fact that he noticed her cold hands meant he was warming. She replaced her hands with her mouth and he gasped again. This time she did not stop.

HUMOR: He moved forward again and discovered what intense pleasure he had denied himself. It was good, very, very good. Oh, what a loving God who created this.

FAVORITE PART: Revealing their stash of weapons concealed on their bodies (hilarious) AND gingerbread AND cave passion AND whenever he spoke words of love in French (ahhh so caring and loving, so c'est magnifique) and she did not know what he was saying..

LEAST FAVORITE PART: Actually I do not have a least favorite part. I loved it all.

YOU WILL LIKE THIS BOOK IF YOU LIKE: Scotland, Church clergy, Clans, Hidden Treasure, Knights, 14th century, Scotland battles against England rule.

April Broussard says

Another win by Amanda Forester

This is the third book by Amanda Forester I've read. I love her character development and how she incorporates spiritual truths throughout the story. Historical fiction is my favorite genre because it brings history to life. Well done!

Katelynn says

Originally posted on Books & Bottles.

Actual Rating: 0 Stars for the 300 pages I did read - I couldn't finish this.

I can't do it. I didn't enjoy this book, I couldn't read the supposedly strong Scottish accents as anything but gargly pirate drawl, I hated almost everything about the main girl, I found nothing at all remotely romantic, and I couldn't bring myself to read the last 100 pages (I tried, I really did!).

Nothing about a monk-knight, traipsing around Scotland looking for a treasure of the Knights Templar is **in any way interesting to me, let alone a turn-on**. If I had known the secondary plot-line was a religious scavenger hunt I would never have picked it up. After getting to the end of chapter twenty-five, aka page 300, I come to this line:

Her cheeks were flushed red from the cold and the exertion. Her hair was completely wrapped in a long, brown stocking cap. It could be an attractive look for no one, but still... he only had eyes for her.

Which, considering he was still a monk and had a relic to steal back, was a bit of a problem.

More relic hunting? Nope, nuh uh. Fuck it all I'm done.

I'm going to give Forester props - I'm sure there was a lot of fact hunting that needed to be done to write about this. The adventure in the cave with the clues and letters and all that stuff was well thought out and planned (regardless whether I cared for it as much as I do a loose tooth), and sounded very Templar-esque.

I'm not a historian or well-read in Christianity/Catholicism/what-have-you and I don't even know if the blanket of dying Jesus is a thing and was found (not even going to google it), but props for making it sound impressive and important.

As for the rest of this book, I have no sympathy. Morrigan is the Scottish "lass" who stomps around Scotland in her pants and boots pretending to be a man, fighting wars and doing a fine attempt at being "bad-ass." She has a sharp tongue, a strong accent (that was written in such a splendid pirate drawl I kept picturing her in a kilt with an eye-patch), and an overall horrible attitude about just about anything she laid her eyes on. Her raging temper and lack of substantial thoughts other than Dragonet's seductive body and alluring black hair and blue eyes, how much she wants to knock everyone else senseless, and how much she hates other women because "they're women and I'm not" had me putting the book down several times and trying my hardest not to rip out a page or two. There was a contradiction with every thought she had and her

ridiculous habit of asking someone a question, receiving an answer, and then scolding them for giving her information she "didn't want" was grating. Examples:

"Well ye offered yer advice, now what do ye want?" demanded Morrigan.

"You mentioned a room?"

"So ye dinna wish to bed one o' those wenches?"

"I am greatly tired. All I want is to sleep."

"Have them come for ye in the morn. They can service ye after ye're rested."

"I do not wish to be... serviced."

Morrigan shrugged and continued up the stairs, skirts in hand. "'Tis no concern o' mine. I dinna ken why ye should tell me about it."

Also (pre-text: he has one of them wrist-knives that snap open with a *levi-OH-sa* wrist flick; Morrigan has never seen one; they're flirting while relieving the other of their hidden weapons and it's becoming too hot to handle.. supposedly):

"I have ne'er seen the like. Did ye make it yerself?" Morrigan tried to focus on the knife, but her hands ran over the leather harness, the steel and leather hilt, his warm hand with well-worn calluses on his palm and fingers. The marks of a swordsman.

"Y-yes." The French knight's voice wavered. His eyes were wide and black in the dim light.

"'Tis well done," she said softly. "But how do ye draw it?"

With a quick flick of his wrist the knife was in his hand.

Morrigan froze. The blade was pointed toward her. With cold insight she realized she had gotten too close. Her life may be the cost.

"Do ye mean to kill me, knight?" Morrigan quietly placed her hand on her sword hilt.

*"Oh how wonderfully interesting this knife blade on your wrist is, but it would be inconvenient to pull out with the other hand while in the middle of a fight - how ever do you wield it?!" *show her how it's drawn* "GASP! Don't kill me with the knife I just asked you to show me how to pull it out!"*

Am I the only one that wanted to "pull out" with that statement?

I lost track and stopped marking the other moments Morrigan does this stupid dance of hers. It was irritating and pointless. She's hot then she's cold, she's attacking and then she's begging, and yes - she's even yes and then she's no, up and then down (but no kissing because *he's a monk*). The only thing I agree with her on is her stance on bribery via. carbs before dresses:

"Come now," said Alys standing up, her eyes shining. "Let us get ye in yer gown."

"Bring the gingerbread."

To avoid continuing on a rant about Morrigan, I'll finish off with Dragonet (which Morrigan only did *one time* in 75% of the book because ***spoiler*** they were both about to die of hypothermia after falling into a river in the middle of the winter because they fought on the unstable planks *above* said river when Morrigan threw another tantrum):

First, what kind of a name is Dragonet? Secondly, a **monk?? Really?** How many women get hot and

bothered over *a monk*. I'm sorry, but no amount of muscles or knight-in-shining-armour or serenades from the garden below change the fact that he's a monk and no matter what you do, you're condemning the poor fucker to hell by sleeping with him. Unless *Dragonet* grows a backbone by the end of the book, I found he had more of the monk attitude than that of a knight - timid, graceful, loyal, and forgiving. Though not bad qualities in general, when you read from his perspective and he's a grown man trying to gain the approval from his father while fighting for his religious virtue, they just make him into a whiny man-child who flips between wants and needs as often as Morrigan asks and un-asks questions. I had to wonder if he is really just a masochist as he tries to deny how much he wants to sack up with his wild Scottish lass (that of course, only he can see is truly beautiful and womanly under the pants, flat bound chest, and demonic attitude), and continues to look for the artifact that will make his asshole father happy who still thinks he's a bastard and couldn't care less if he died.

Okay, that's enough. This book has taken more of my time than it deserves.

TL;DR

True Highland Spirit is about an obnoxious Scottish woman who's good with a sword and shouts, "**Ye dinna know me!**" like a spoiled brat at anyone who will listen, and a French monk-knight with a dreamy physique and an accursed responsibility to maintain celibate as he hunts for a priceless religious artifact in Scotland.

Nothing about this book was romantic or intriguing and I don't give a rat's ass about any of the characters or whether they finally end up sleeping together for a reason other than to not die of cold. I couldn't finish this book and the only thing good about it is the cover (who has a man wearing a kilt even though it stars a Frenchman? Probably foreshadowing to the end that I'm *not* going to reach).

Check the blog post for a "sexy" scene preview that I couldn't get past.
