



The Rock

Monica McCarty

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New York Times bestselling author Monica McCarty continues her Highland Guard series in this eleventh steamy historical romance set against the sweeping backdrop of the Scottish Highlands.

The first time he caught sight of Elizabeth Douglas, Thomas MacGowan thought she was a princess. To the son of the castle blacksmith, the daughter of the powerful Lord of Douglas might as well be. When it becomes clear that his childhood companion will never see him as a man she could love, Thom joins Edward Bruce's army as a man-at-arms to try to change his lot. If he's harbored a secret hope that he could close the gap between them, he faces the cold, hard truth when Elizabeth comes to him for help. She might need the boy who used to climb cliffs to rescue her brother from the hands of the English, but she would never see the son of a smith as a man worthy of her hand.

The Rock Details

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From Reader Review The Rock for online ebook

Marta Cox says

Well this the latest addition to Ms McCarty's Highland Guard series took me on a journey that at times had me not really liking the two lead characters. I will go further and say there is a supporting character who really should know better too after he nearly royally messed up his own life ! Alas no these far too stubborn Scots just keep hurting each other and you know what? Sometimes ostriches and the act of burying their heads in the sand was the thought that dominated my thoughts!

Thom is the most caring and noble male I think this author has ever written and trust me that is saying an awful lot! He may be low born but has aspirations and ambition that truly rival that of the most noble in the land. He has always loved the Laird's daughter Elizabeth but she just never saw him as he really is. Well that's not quite true as Thom is her best friend, most faithful ally and fervent confident but life and war pulls the young friends apart.

Fast forward a few years and Thom is making a name for himself in Bruce's army, determined to become a knight. Thom is so close to fulfilling his ambitions in spite of prejudice when who should return to his life but the one lassie with the power to send him to his knees. Elizabeth remembers all of Thom's strengths and his remarkable climbing skills could help save someone she loves but will he want to help without incentive? Plus what will he do when he learns that not only does Elizabeth not see him as a suitor but she just might see someone else as far more worthy!

Elizabeth was so blinkered that I really wanted to shake her at times. I do understand that this is written about a time when class and alliances meant everything. Yes Elizabeth has a duty to her clan but she felt weak and materialistic at times. Afraid of poverty and yet unafraid to face anything else, yes a completely bewildering character. Thom from the start realises and accepts his feelings but as the story unfolds he doesn't half let her feel cornered and trapped by her station. One minute Thom loves Elizabeth and then the next he raises barriers that push her far far away. Such burning passion between them (sorry no way could I describe it as simmering!) and yet the author doesn't rush the couple but let's them make mistakes until their choices finally catch up with them.

It was fun seeing this side of the Douglas clan and just how they fit around the Highland Guard. Of course Thom impresses with his natural abilities and seeing him come into his own was a heartwarming journey. A surprising turn from Bruce's nephew who really has hidden depths but sorry I can say no more about his role! Fans of history will enjoy the unique spin this author puts on it but those seeking a story rife with romance and adventure will not be disappointed either. I've really enjoyed this series and can't wait to see what happens next

I was gifted a copy in exchange for an honest review

GONZA says

Sorry to say that, but this book is unreadable: the story is boring, she is awful and mean and he is stupid, sometimes I thought too stupid to live.

Dispiace dirlo ma questo libro è proprio illegibile: lei è una stronza micidiale e lui è troppo stupido per vivere.

THANKS TO NETGALLEY AND Gallery, Threshold, Pocket Books FOR THE PREVIEW!

Zoe says

Monica McCarty has to be my favorite writer in the genre. Her books take me at least 4-5 hours to read (very engrossed reading too) and I always want to read every word. A great writer with superb storytelling talents. Her probes at the human condition, desires and regrets, I am again and again surprised by the poignancy in her observations of human interactions, romantic or not.

The review below concerns ONLY the story itself. It is not a reflection of the quality of the book. It is a personal reflection on the characters and their decisions.

When I was reading this book, I tried very very hard to understand Elizabeth Douglas. For one reason: I did something very similar to what Elizabeth did and I desperately wanted to make sense of her selfish behaviors.

Elizabeth and Thom went way back. They grew up together, the laird's daughter and the smithy's son. It started innocently enough and I could see it before me: guy met girl. They became friends. Guy liked girl but was waiting for the right moment to tell her. Girl was oblivious to guy's feelings, thinking the entire time that they were friends. And one day hell broke loose and they couldn't hide behind friendship anymore.

Either Monica McCarty is just that good at observing human interactions or she was writing from personal experience, I completely understood Elizabeth's confusion and denial. If a guy likes you, you kind of know, don't you? But you also kind of know whether it is going to work, or rather, how likely the relationship will succeed. So you weigh between giving it a shot and losing a dear friend, you decide: well, I'd rather have the friend.

So that was Elizabeth's decision, too. All happening on the subconscious level, of course.

Now also imagine, a guy likes you. He doesn't want to be your friend (God I wish I knew). It is either he is THE friend or nothing at all. The entire friendship has a chance because he is hoping that one day it would go to the next level. It is never his goal to maintain the status quo.

So now Elizabeth and Thom were at an impasse. What to do.....what to do.....

Reading about Thom's reaction to Elizabeth's first rejection was like revisiting a rather ugly place in time for me. Now I understand what I didn't back then: He felt rejected and acted out of pride. He waited so long, biding his time and was served the "you are my friend" card. The way Thom flipped out on Elizabeth was exactly what I had experienced in my own "episode". I was shocked at how real those scenes were to me. In the fictional world, I actually respected Thom for flipping out on Elizabeth. I thought it good that he didn't mope around Elizabeth waiting for her.

But in real life, I was first confused, then I tried to diffuse the situation by joking then I got really pissed off, which incidentally, is exactly what Elizabeth did. It was like reading a page from my own book, if one was ever written. Like Elizabeth receiving an insulting retort from Thom, I was also told that "I don't have to wait on you hand and foot and entertain you whenever you want." (And this is what he said to me, verbatim.) Oh the nerves he had, I thought. Everything was twisted around in his mind. When did I ever expect such a thing from him?

Up until that point, I thought exactly what Elizabeth was thinking: why did you have to go around saying things like this and destroy everything we have?

Now we get the premise of the story. Thom was rejected. Elizabeth was mourning the loss of a dear friend, who never actually wanted to be her friend. And I get that. I really do. I had the exact same thoughts: it was never going to work. I did not want to lose him so I would rather not have him at all. I would wish him well, listen to his girl trouble and attend the wedding, taking comfort in that by giving up a relationship, I saved a friendship. And of course, it blew up in my face as it did Elizabeth.

Before I started reading this book, I mentally prepared myself. I have read reviews from GR friends and thought: oh God I think I would hate Elizabeth with a passion. And it sucks to hate the characters.

After I finished the book last night I started thinking. I love Monica McCarty's writing and storytelling. I did not hate Elizabeth as much as I thought I would. But I cannot say that I love the story. And I think I know why.

Elizabeth.

It has nothing to do with her turning down Thom, who was nothing but wonderful in the story. Thom was so in love with Elizabeth, but I thank the God that he wasn't pathetically so. He left and turned down the chance to further impress Elizabeth. Guy had backbones and wasn't led by his penis. Thank you Monica McCarty for writing Thom this way. And I didn't think it was so bad that she turned Thom down. As I said, I understand what Elizabeth did, when she believed that there was no chance

I don't dislike her, but I don't like her. While I understand her actions, I do not like the reasons why she felt that it was not to be for Thom and her. She was basically afraid of being poor. I actually commend Monica McCarty for writing a "immature" heroine. I think it was reasonable to not want to be poor, in Elizabeth's position. It was not that surprising and definitely not wrong. But it is just not attractive.

We live in a cynical, cynical world (points for anyone who knows who I am quoting?). I think that is why some of us read fiction. We are looking to identify ourselves with characters who we would like to be, whose adventures and love stories we yearn to experience. Elizabeth is not someone I would like to be, not because of what she did, but because of why she did it. It was immature and not exactly commendable. I cannot fault her though, because what she did was only human. But at the same time, I cannot say that I like her. In short, she did not have me at hello. Hell, she did not even have me at goodbye. (I should think that it is now clear who I am quoting?)

And because of the above reason, I had trouble with Thom and Elizabeth's relationship. I am not convinced that Elizabeth loved Thom. And the chemistry lost its allures because of that. I could see that Elizabeth loved Thom as a person, that she truly believed Thom to be a great human being. Someone with integrity and honor. But I am not convinced that Elizabeth loved Thom as a man. I think her feelings are not explored enough or appropriately for that purpose. Elizabeth spent too much time thinking about marrying a powerful lord and all the merriments of a glamorous political marriage. Her character suffered because of that and seemed really shallow.

Now we are almost at the end of the series. I hope with my poor romantic heart that Sir Alex Seton and Joan Comyn have one hell of a love story to blow me away in The Ghost.

Lisa says

3 Stars!

The Rock is the eleventh 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 in battle 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 **Thomas MacGowan**, a son of a castle blacksmith, and **Lady Elizabeth Douglas**, the daughter of the very influential and powerful Lord Douglas. Since Thom first laid eyes on the fair Elizabeth, his heart has always been in her hands. As childhood companions and friends, Thom was always there for Elizabeth and as children their social status did not matter to either one of them. As they grew older Thom always held on to the hope that he would somehow be good enough to marry Elizabeth one day. However, Elizabeth, even though she cares for Thom, cannot imagine marrying someone that is not in her social class. The thought of being disowned by her family is enough to deter her.

Eventually Thom leaves and joins Edward Bruce's army and begins to make a name for himself always harboring a secret hope that one day Elizabeth would accept him as a husband. However, no matter how many times he declares his love for Elizabeth, she is too afraid to take a risk with Thom. Elizabeth has a duty to her clan and can't see beyond what her life would be like if she were to marry Thom. Can Elizabeth and Thom find their way to a happy forever in a time where social class means everything and marrying someone outside of your social standing was vehemently opposed?

If I am to be honest in my review of this book, I must admit that I did have a hard time getting through this story. It had nothing to do with the writing as this entire series (including this book) is extremely well written. The overall story arc had me engrossed despite the fact that Thom is a relatively new character in the series and not one of the original Highland Guard members. I absolutely loved Thom and think that he is one of the more endearing and honourable protagonists that Ms. McCarty has written to date. It was nice to see him flourish in the army which eventually leads him to working with the infamous Highland Guard. My difficulty with this book lies entirely with the female lead. I disliked Elizabeth right from the start and despite the valiant efforts made by the author to redeem her character, I simply could not muster up any affection for the lass. My heart broke so many times for Thom. I do understand what Ms. McCarty was trying to achieve with this love story. I really do. She explains in her author's note at the end of the book that it was difficult to portray the rigid social structure during that time and how marrying down was something that was simply not done. In the end, I just could not deal with Elizabeth. Her way of thinking was just too hard to grasp and the frustrations I had with her were something I could not let go.

All in all, *The Rock* may not be my favorite book in this series but I do stand behind my earlier statement about how much I love and adore this series. This Highland Guard series is a must read for all historical

romance lovers. It is passionate, raw, gripping and simply magical. I am so excited for the final book in the series, *The Ghost*, which is due next. I have no idea what Ms. McCarty has in store for us with the last book in this series but I am sure it will be epic!

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

Julie says

The Rock by Monica McCarty is a 2015 Ballantine publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher as an XOXpert, the official street team of XOXO After Dark.
(<http://xoxoafterdark.com/>)

This eleventh installment in the Highland Guard series starts off like a sweet fairy tale when Thomas McGowan becomes friends with Jamie and Elizabeth Douglas as children. Although Elizabeth was only six years old, she proclaimed that one day she was going to marry Thom. But, as they grew up, Thom's feelings toward Elizabeth became clear to her brother. The two men argued and Elizabeth was sent away.

Why? Well, Thom is the son of a blacksmith and Elizabeth is a princess. The class distinctions were too great to overcome. But, Thom always believed in Elizabeth, always knew she would return and they would have their happily ever after.

Well, Elizabeth does return, but his plans and hers couldn't be more different. Bitter, and angry, Thomas sets out to become a Knight and better himself. His goal is to show Elizabeth he is worthy of her. But, is she worthy of him?

The Highland Guard series is one the very best Historical Highlander series in my opinion. As I have stated countless times, the attention to detail is next to none. It's as historically accurate as is possible, is well written and researched. I have yet to read a book from this series that didn't wow me.

But, I have to confess, I struggled with this one quite a bit. Elizabeth is the most obtuse protagonist I've encountered in a long while. I do understand the girl knew her lot in life and can even see how it was possible she never thought of Thom in a romantic way. She even admitted she was not the romantic type, and of course, she knew all along a marriage with him was impossible, so she never entertained such notions.

But, surely she knew he was in love with her! I know young women in those days were sheltered and naïve, but I felt she toyed with his feelings, led him on, and used him. Why else would Thom be so very positive she returned his feelings?

After Elizabeth stomps all over Thom's heart, in almost the same breath, she actually has the nerve to ask if they can go back to being the best of friends, like they were before, as though people can turn their feelings on and off like a light switch. That's the type of thing that made it hard to warm up to her. I was outraged by her insensitivity to Thom's feelings.

Thom on the other hand is a romantic, but maybe he was deluding himself a little too, and was partly responsible, by setting himself up for a fall. He was aware she was a princess and to believe that when push came to shove she would disobey her brother, shirk her duty as a princess, and risk poverty to marry for love, was just asking for heartbreak. Yes, it sounds romantic, but logically, it seemed impossible. Still, of the two, I admired Thom the most. The man has principles, believes in himself, in love, in right and wrong, and well, if I had been Elizabeth, and found out Thom loved me, I would go weak in the knees, and I think being poor with Thom would be a much better fate than being rich, a trophy, and never knowing real love or passion. But, that's just me and of course times were very, very different in medieval Scotland.

So, this couple puts us on an emotional roller coaster. Elizabeth puts Thom through the ringer, constantly drawing him into her snare, then pulling back, then begging to be forgiven, making Thom love her, then hate her.

So, does Elizabeth ever redeem herself and prove she is worthy of Thom? Well, for Thom's sake, I will give her the benefit of the doubt. She does finally wake up and the course she takes is indeed very risky and could come at a very high cost to her, and is all done in the name of love.

I have to be completely honest and say this was not my favorite book in the series, and it did take me a long time to warm up to Elizabeth, and even then it was grudgingly, but the writing and historical details are top notch as always, and I was engaged in the story, and although Thom is kind of the new kid on the block, he saved the day, and the story for me. I really liked him and am happy I got to meet him and was happy he got his happily ever after.

3.5 rounded to 4

XxTainaxX says

I've gotta say that my stars are mostly for Thom. He was an awesome MC with a big heart and eyes only for one woman. Elizabeth was blind to what was right in front of her and did not appreciate her good fortune until it was almost too late. She is one of my least favored heroines and while I see the author's point in that "those were the times" where social status was everything, it seems that Elizabeth took a hell of a long time to grow. Not my fave of the series, but I'm still glad I read it.

ARC received in exchange for an honest review.

Sarah98 says

got a copy thru netgalley

didn't like it sorry :(the heroine was really stupid and the ending kinda rushed :(

Jessica *The Lovely Books* says

When I first started the book, I felt like it was going to be one I loved. The beginning started off very charming when we meet the two leads as they are children. Then they grow up and Thom, who's been in love with Elizabeth his whole stinkin' life, is finally ready to have a future with the woman he loves. Just one tiny problem, she doesn't love him and never did. All those times she said she wanted to marry him, we're all silly games. Say what?

I can't tell you how much I HATED Elizabeth. I full on hated her insensitive and annoying ass. Why in the ever living hell would Thom ever want to be with someone so materialistic and dumb. Yeah, she's stupid as hell, and is basically a walking disaster. Always needing to be saved by yours truly, Thom.

These books are well written and entertaining but if you don't want to read a book about a heartless bitch, then I suggest passing this one up. Never have I ever felt such a strong reaction to a hero not picking a heroine. But I guess there's a first for everything.

Jonetta says

Originally posted on The Book Nympho

Thom MacGowan and Elizabeth Douglas became friends as young children. What made it unusual was the difference in their status: she's the daughter of the Lord of Douglas and he's the son of the Castle's blacksmith. When Thom becomes of age and his feelings transform to something deeper, Elizabeth doesn't see things the same way and his friendship with her brother, James (The Black) Douglas fractures. Thom decides to pursue his dream of becoming a Knight, creating a path for his worthiness to ask for Elizabeth's hand.

You may remember Thom and James from *The Knight* where their animosity was pretty clear. I didn't like James then and it didn't get any better here. Thom continued to be so admirable, steadfast in his goals and love for Elizabeth, despite her lack of worthiness for him. If you can't tell, I wasn't a fan of Elizabeth's either.

It is historically accurate that people of different stations rarely married and that is just a fact. However, I thought Elizabeth lacked empathy for a man she'd adored as a child. And, James was just hypocritical given his marriage to Jo, a woman in a similar status as Thom.

I liked the story primarily due to my affection for Thom and his extraordinary skills. There was very little Highland Guard action here so everything fell to the romance, which came up short for me. One other wonderful highlight was the narration by Antony Ferguson. He made an average story a really good listening experience on every level. 3.5 stars

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

Elfina Renee says

Will review soon!

Didi says

2.5 stars

Sadly this book doesn't work for me. I had no issue with MacGowan most of the story; but the heroine here, Lady Elizabeth Douglas, felt like typical brainless blonde personified. Their ***not-romance-only-friends*** back and forth dragged on over three hundred fifty pages of the book that had me grit my teeth the whole time.

Monica McCarty's writing, as always, is great. She has a knack to twist a historical or legendary tale and figures into interesting fictions. She wrote the story in two POVs and each expressed inner thoughts of Thom and Elizabeth. **My HUGE problem laid with the character.**

Those of you have read the complete Highland Guard series must have read The Knight, featuring Elizabeth's brother James Douglas and Joanna Dicson. I didn't like that particular book, I thought Douglas was a snobbish cur. I wasn't surprised he was still a snobbish cur here. At least Douglas's story was a novella; not three times longer, full novel length as this book.

From The Knight and blurb of this book, I had an inkling of how Elizabeth and Thomas's romance might reveal - and I thought I was prepared for them. Man, I couldn't be more wrong.

I had no sympathy for Elizabeth. At all. She impressed me as a dense, naive and thoughtless lass. Yes, her background of what happened to her father and the effect were told. Still, the way she acted and spoke... truly exasperating. At least the heroine in Douglas's novella knew her own mind (though I didn't really like her). Elizabeth was... confused. And she was not exactly very young for that time (when teen girls could wed and bear child). A late-bloomer perhaps.

For me the only good point here was Thom MacGowan, who faced his former friend hostility and others's lack of regard to raise from his humble origin into a pinnacle point of his life. For a *peasant* he showed truer core as a knight and nobleman than most of the *highborns*. I HATED how Elizabeth hurt him again. And again. And again. And again.

Unintentionally my foot!!! /cue the growling sound/

Frankly, I thought Thom deserved way better than Elizabeth, and should've found other love interest instead.

Having said that, I'm still looking forward to Highland Guard series last installment, The Ghost, which would be released sometime next year. I shall just consider this the downside of the series.

ARC is kindly provided by the publisher via NetGalley for the exchange of a fair and honest review.

Monique says

2 'irritating' stars

I'm really pissed. I barely finished The Rock, because it was so annoying. I love this author and I love this series, but this book - NOPE!!! I've not been that pissed since I've read The Duke of Sin. Ok, let's start at the beginning. It's quite hard to find good medieval romance. Middle Ages is not an exactly romantic era, so it's understandable that a lot of medieval romances are usually written more like fairy-tales with knights in shining armor etc. At least that's how I see them. And the reason why I like Highland Guard so much is that McCarty is not afraid to show the dark side of Middle Ages. The main theme of the series is the war between Scotland and England. Of course all these brave and lethal warriors are also very romantic and kind of soft on the inside, but it is a romance series after all. That's not what bothered me. Suddenly, in the eleventh book of the series, all the good stuff - like battles, spying, dramatic relationships, betrayals... you get the feeling - all those amazing things are replaced with a long and dragging non-relationship between the main couple. Also, this series has twelve books, each book for one member of the Highland Guard. However, the eleventh book introduces a new leading character. Only two books before the end and I'm supposed to be interesting in a new member of the Guard? I'm anticipating Seton's story (the last one) since book 4 and I truly don't give a shit about some new guy.

I'm gonna introduce the stars of this annoying drama.

Let's meet Elizabeth Douglas. The most spoiled and pampered lady in the history of historical romances. She is also the most clumsy woman I've ever read about. I understand how it is like if you're clumsy. I'm one of those unfortunate people who can stumble on a completely level ground. But I swear that she tripped over every single stone, branch, and hole in Scotland. It was painful to read. Anyway, Elizabeth has a childhood friend. A smith's son who is in love with her. But she just wants to be friends with him. Wtf!!!! The story is set in the year of our Lord 1311. Back then aristocratic ladies and peasant boys were not friends. Social classes didn't mingle with each other. **screaming out loud in my head** I just couldn't stand this. Every few pages she is repeating that they are just friends. Seriously, I wanted to slap her so hard.

And that's her monologue: Thommy is my friend. Why doesn't he want to speak with me? We are friends after all. He said he loves me and now he destroyed everything. I'm gonna marry king's nephew. But Thom looks so hot. He's such a good kisser. Why does he want to marry me? I don't love him. Love is for peasants. He'll marry a rich widow. He can't do that. He loves me. But I don't love him. He is confusing me all the time. Why is he angry that I'm gonna marry someone else? But truly I'm so hot for him. It's just lust, not love. I'm engaged. But, I think I love Thom. Omg, I love him, I love him! I'm gonna force him to marry me. The End.

Charming right?

But Thom is unfortunately not much different: She is beautiful like a princess and she is so high above me. But I love her and I'm gonna marry her. She doesn't love me, yet I still love her. I want her. She doesn't want me. But she won't be happy with anyone else except me. She refused me, I don't want her anymore. She looks so beautiful naked. Of course, I love her. The End.

This storyline would be manageable on 200 or 150 pages. But the book has a little over 400 pages and I was skimming before I've even reached the half. The only good thing in the book was the appearance of the members of the Guard (too little screen time though) and Randolph and Izzy. I was not expecting that I'm gonna like them because honestly, Randolph is an asshole. But they are really sweet together. So not fair that they have just a novella. But like I said, Highland Guard is still one of my favorite series and I won't stop when there's only one book to go. So pretty please that the last book will make up for this dragging disaster

of a (supposed) romance.

Daniella says

An ARC was given in exchange for an honest review. Thank you to the writer and the publisher for the opportunity to read this.

The Rock has got to be the biggest letdown of the century.

Yes, it was brilliantly written, I'll give it that. But it had very little going for it in terms of the plot and the characters. The *supposed* main conflict—the one that centred on Elizabeth's brother—was weakly executed and resolved very early on in the story, leaving us with the one that focused on Elizabeth and Thom's relationship. Thus, I was forced to spend a significant portion of the book watching people—led by the stupid and annoying heroine, might I add—**fuck up a genuinely good guy.**

This is basically the entire story:

(view spoiler)

Repeat that last scene for around 1000000000000000 times, and you've basically read about 80% of the story. And oh, how could I forget Elizabeth's memorable quotes?

Only peasants thought of things like "want" and "love"...

"And the fact that you like it when I touch you? Does that have nothing to do with him either?"

His voice was huskier than he intended... But the warm sensations fired by her senses were quickly banished by her next words.

"Why should it? **I'm certain I shall like it when he touches me as well.**"

And of course, her favourite tag line, which she often used throughout the story:

"Why are you trying to confuse me and make this so difficult?"

(Oh, so you have the balls to say that when you're the one who's running after him whenever he avoids you? **You don't want him to move on, but you don't want him to love you, too?** Make up your mind, you fucking dimwit!)

Isn't Elizabeth charming? **Charming enough to cut open and feed to Satan's pet dogs, I mean.**

GAH. I never hated a heroine as much as I hated Elizabeth. By the time I finished the book, I'd already conjured up a thousand ways of killing her in my mind. And it sucked because Monica McCarty really gave a valiant effort to try and justify her, but **Elizabeth was too much of a whiny shit to be justified.** Oh, let's not forget that she was **TOO STUPID TO LIVE.** She kept on falling into ravines and shit, and Thom had to save her every single time.

And it sucked even more because Thom was really loved her sooooooooo much. **My heart bled for him everytime he was rejected by the bitch.** (view spoiler).

Ugh. I think I ranted enough. **Overall, this just had a weak plot, bad execution and little to no character development.** And yes, I hated this book. I only added an additional star in honour of Thom's character. Aside from Thom, his family and Jo, the rest of the people in this novel could go to hell.

P.S. Jamie Douglas was such a fucking bastard in this story. I haven't read his novella, and not even a million dollars would tempt me to do so. He could rot in hell for all I care.

Esther says

ARC from Netgalley/Gallery Books for honest review. Thank you!!!

Monica McCarty is one of my favorite author's and there have only been a few times that she's disappointed me. I can't say enough of how much I have enjoyed the Highland Guard series and am sad to know that there is only one more book to go, The Ghost.

So here are my thought's on The Rock. First I'll start with something I really wish that the author had done to clarify and help establish the actions of the heroine in this story at the beginning of the book. I read her Author's Note, which is at the end of the book, and she does a wonderful job of giving us a back ground on the history and other tidbits of information. McCarty shared that one of the most difficult things to write about was trying to import the rigid social structure and stigma against marrying down to modern sensibility. She tried to really stress and impart the thinking of society and how that was "not done".

I'm saying all this because I think if we had this somehow put forth in the beginning of the book we might have had more of a glimpse of what the author was trying to convey about the heroines thinking.

We start the story with the two main characters as children. Elizabeth is the daughter of a Lord and Thom a son of a castle blacksmith. These two as children knew no distinction of their status and grew to be best of friends. Thom loved Elizabeth and believed he would marry her someday. Elizabeth really only sees Thom as a dear friend and believes she will marry someday within her social standing.

The story is pretty much the difference of how each sees the relationship. We have Thom declaring his love to Elizabeth and trying to convince her to marry him. And Elizabeth who cares for Thom and sees him just as a friend. And knowing that she couldn't marry him because of the difference in their status and her brother wouldn't allow it (I didn't like her brother too much in this book). We witness Thom again and again declaring his love and doing anything and everything in his power to become good enough for Elizabeth. Thom works with the Highland guards in hopes to become one of them. He assists them with Edinburgh Castle in climbing the "Castle Rock". His thinking and hope is he would gain some status among the men and acceptance, anything he can in hopes of winning Elizabeth. He just broke my heart at times. And then there is Elizabeth, who couldn't understand Thom's love, was confused, a lot and kept repeating what was wrong with them just being good friends. Her issue of marrying down and being excommunicated was a major fear also. Unfortunately I never came to like Elizabeth. I kept reading with hopes that would change, but sadly never transpired.

I liked all the secondary characters and pacing was good. Well written, excellent history and kept me engaged even with my issue with Elizabeth. I would really, really like to see a novel with Izzie and Randolph. I'm thinking those two would make a great romance together!!!

Now just a few thoughts on the last novel, *The Ghost*. I believe we will have an epic (I know high expectations, but I do believe Monica McCarty will do the last book justice) final Highland Guard book. Guessing it will be Alex as the hero and *The Ghost* I'm thinking is a women. I'm hoping it will be Joan, Bella's daughter. Alex always deserved his story and I never thought he was a traitor. Plus his attraction to Joan and her's to him in the Viper just jumped off the pages, so yes that story I knew needed to be told.

Chris C - A Midlife Wife says

You know the feeling when you fall in love with a series. You cannot wait for the next installment to come out. You may even pre-purchase it so you never miss a book. That is the feeling I am getting with the *Highlander Guard* series by Monica McCarty.

The author has a gift with her highly researched historical settings and fine details in this series. *The Rock* is no different in that you are taken away to another time and place to be thrust into a world that we cannot imagine living in. The descriptions of the times and her creation of amazing characters stand out with the riveting storytelling technique that the author has developed. I was enthralled and sucked in starting with the first page.

The story is loaded with sizzle and burning passion. You can just feel the pages simmering the further you

delve into the story. I love how the author crafted Thom. Honorable and so in love with Elizabeth, he tries to stay away as he sees the truth in their relationship. She is frustrating, blind and naive. All in all, you get the HEA but they go through so much! I just could not stop reading!

I am in love with this series. The author has a magical concoction of passion, history, romance, raw power, artfully crafted characters, and unwavering skill to tell a tale that will leave you wanting more and more. Why should we resist??
