



Highland Awakening

Jennifer Haymore

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For fans of **Maya Banks, Monica McCarty, and Sabrina Jeffries**, the Highland Knights series continues as a tight-knit band of Scottish mercenaries make trouble on the mean streets of London . . . and under the sheets with England's proper young women.

As the secret author of racy romances, Lady Esme Hawkins goes to great lengths to protect her family's honor. Which is why she carefully disguises herself before entering a notorious bordello to do research. But when Esme comes face-to-face with a brooding Highland bodyguard, she can't easily refuse a harmless kiss . . . a kiss that inflames desires ripped from the pages of her novels. Acting on them, however, would risk revealing Esme's identity—and the fact that she's engaged to another man.

As a Highland Knight sworn to protect the crown, Camden McLeod never expected to follow his client into a bordello—nor could he anticipate meeting a bright, innocent lass with lush lips and eyes the color of the sea. Instantly, Cam knows he must possess her. But to do so, he'll need to give up his rakish ways, embrace his role as heir to his despised father, and snuff out a deadly threat to his brothers in arms. By comparison, winning Esme away from her insipid fiancé will be pure pleasure.

Includes a special message from the editor, as well as an excerpt from another Loveswept title.

Highland Awakening Details

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From Reader Review Highland Awakening for online ebook

Esther says

Netgalley for an honest review.

3.5 rating.

Cam, our hero is part of the Highland Knights, who are a elite mercenary group. He is a very strong Alpha hero in this story. Very determined at at times to a point I found off putting.

Lady Esme, our heroine is a very awkward and shy young spinster. Her brother, the Duke of Trent was one of the most influential men in England and Esme wanted to only make her brother proud and cause no scandal, especially after a past incident had tainted her and the family name.

We open with Cam at a high class brothel protecting Viscount Pinfield. Cam is standing guard by the door of Pinfield's bedroom when a couple women enter through the corridor. This is where Lady Esme comes in as she is doing research for her book. Lady Esme writes erotic stories and keeps it a well guarded secret as it would destroy her and her families good name. Cam and Esme meet and we have instant attraction and lust. The two share a kiss and both are strongly effected by the kiss. Cam is curious about the note book that Esme hold/guards, he asks what the contents are and she becomes fearful and runs.

The two meet again at a party her brother is throwing and Cam learns that Esme is engaged to Henry, a gentleman who he knew from his years at Eton. We have a very determined Cam who sets out to prove to Esme that she really desires and wants him not Henry. Cam goes to great lengths to make his desire for our heroine very clear.

The story progress from there as Cam goes about proving his point to Esme and I found some of his actions bothersome and a little over the top. We have a bit of a mystery and suspence interwoven through the story as someone one of the Highland Knights were murdered and the group is also being attacked.

The pacing was good. But I had problems with the two main characters. I didn't really care for the opening scene, it almost felt like I was dropped into the middle of a story and it was somewhat confusing. As for the characters, I'll start with Esme, she came across as weak and immature at times. As for Cam, he came across as more of a brute then alpha male, sorry but his actions at times just seemed off putting. The story and plot were okay. But I did at times I found myself, in some scenes, confused and puzzled by what just transpired.

I would have to say this was the least favorite of the series so far. Still like the author and have found past books enjoyable and will continue to read future book.

Jaci says

This is only the second book I have read by Jennifer and I will be buying the rest of "The Highland Knights" series to add to my TBR list. A wonderful story of adventure, romance, and true love.

Lady Esme is a socially awkward young lady who doesn't like the requirements of going out into Society and finding herself a husband. She has a secret that if it came out would ruin her and cause a scandal that would hurt her family. She is content and has no wish to venture out of her comfort zone. So she agrees to marry a nice man that she has known her whole life. They will have a normal Ton marriage, see each other occasionally at the dinner table and maybe once a month in bed, in the dark. Which is just fine with her. And then she meets Cam McLeod, a rough and tumble Scot who scares and attracts her at the same time. She doesn't know what to make of him. He is bold, brash, strong and very good looking. Cam is attracted to her but doesn't exactly know what to do about it. He has issues from his past that involve his whole family. He has sworn that he will never marry after seeing how his father treated his mother. But he really wants her in his bed and it seems Esme wants that too.

While they are trying to figure out how they feel about each other, there is someone trying to murder the Highland Knights. One of them is dead and another near death after being attacked. Who is trying to kill them and why?

A very good book with lots of passion, mystery and drama. If I had to have one criticism of the book it was that Esme was a little too wishy washy at times. But overall it is a good story that you will enjoy reading.

Received a complimentary copy from Netgalley for an honest review.

Al *the serial series skipper* says

I have been waiting to read Esme's book after meeting her in the 'House of Trent' series, and then pairing her up with a highland knight, that was double the fun.

As usual Jennifer Haymore has a technique that when you start reading one of her books you don't want to put it down. I really enjoyed seeing Trent and Sam also make an appearance in this book.

The one thing I disliked was that I had no idea about the passage of time in this book, for all I know the entire book might have happened in a day. I'm a little bit leary of instant love books so not knowing the passage of time in this book made it a bit off for me, other than that I enjoyed everything else.

Thanks to Netgallery and Random House Publishing for this advanced readers copy.

Tracy Emro says

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review

I haven't read the House of Trent series and felt like I would have liked this book much more if I had. I am not implying that the author didn't give enough backstory - because she did. I just think if I had read the other books, I would have understood Esme better. Because while I found Cam to be a bit overbearing, I still liked him. Esme on the other hand, came across as weak and somewhat spineless. She is constantly apologizing and it got tiresome. I really have a hard time imagining her as the author of romance novels. Maybe if I had read the other Trent books and gotten to know her, I would have felt differently.

I did enjoy the mystery of who is attacking the Highland Knights and thought that part of the story was very well done and more than a little surprising. The writing was great, the story flowed at a steady pace and the love scenes were steamy.

I am enjoying this series and would highly recommend it. If you have read the House of Trent Series, I am sure you will want to read this book - even if you haven't read the first two books in this series.

Ezinwanyi says

Lady Esme Hawkins was a socially awkward introvert who spends her time secretly writing novels. In order to do research for her next romantic novel, Esme decides to go to a brothel. While she was in disguise at the brothel, she met Camden McLeod, a Highland Knight, tasked with the protection of Viscount Pinfield.

Esme and Cam share a kiss right there outside the door where the Viscount is being pleasured and sparks flew between them. Then and there Cam decided that he would have her. A little later, Esme and Cam meet at a party and it is revealed that Esme is engaged to marry someone of her own class. Cam sets out to win Esme for himself.

Cam determination leads him to pull out all the stops. In fact, he was quite devious in his schemes. It didn't feel like love, more like an obsession. I mean if he loved her, why would he subject her to society scorn or humiliation? I didn't connect with Esme. For a writer of erotica, I would have thought her to be stronger in constitution. But she was meek, docile and soft. But she just didn't stand out to me. I like that she was doing something unconventional and perhaps her meek persona was to shield her brother from another scandal. I just wanted her to be a little stronger.

Cam and Esme's chemistry never felt authentic and I just didn't believe in their love. Coupled with the subplot mystery of the murdered Highland Knights, this story fell a little flat for me both in plot and in writing.

**Special Thanks to Random House Publishing Group - Loveswept via Netgalley for the book given in exchange for an honest review.*

Sissy's Romance Book Review says

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

This is book two in the "Highland Knights" series but also has as the heroine Lady Esme Hawkins who is the sister to the men in the "House of Trent" series by Jennifer Haymore. This also has from the first book in that series 'The Duchess Hunt ' Simon and Sarah in this book. Lady Esme is living with them. So besides continue the 'Highland Knight' series it also has the 'House of Trent'. With that said this is still a standalone book. You really don't have to read the other books to enjoy this one but I would say you are missing out on some great stories. I have fallen in love with this series "Highland Knights" and quickly read the books as they become available. This one was no different.. I had to read it in one setting!

Lady Esme Hawkins unknown to her family has been writing Romance Novels and getting them published. Esme knows her family has been through some tough times that the town has made in to bigger deals. So she knows her family does not want another scandal and she herself is so awkward with the town. To save them

from the latest talk of the town she has accepted a proposal from a family friend. But that doesn't stop Esme from doing research for her books or continuing them. On one of her outings to a whorehouse she meets Camden McLeod who is a Highland Knight guarding someone that he has been paid to protect. They both feel a fast attraction and cannot help but steal a kiss. A few days later Camden is at a dinner at the House of Trent given by Esme brother. Although Cam did not know who she was he now knows. Cam wants her and doesn't understand why she would be trying to marry such a boring man. Cam cannot stay away from her and starts to make changes into her life. I cannot say enough about this book...I truly loved it!!

Susan (susayq ~) says

Another good read by Jennifer Haymore. This one ties together this series and her House of Trent series by hooking Cam McLeod up with Lady Esme Hawkins.

I liked Esme. I even think I liked her in the books I've read that are part of the House of Trent series. She's shy and a little awkward, but not everyone can be a social butterfly. Esme would rather keep to herself and write. Yes, write. Esme writes romance novels under a pen name so she won't disgrace her family. Well, while Esme is doing "research" at a known brothel, she encounters Sir Cam McLeod, but she has no clue who he is except that his kisses make her loose all her senses.

Cam left society many years ago after a falling out with his father, even though he's still the heir to the Earl of Sutton. Cam is a war hero who has become a part of the Highland Knights. After kissing Esme, he knows he must have her.

Well, Cam is use to getting what he wants and he goes about getting Esme. BUT, he does it all the wrong way. Sure, things look like they're working in his favor, but Esme realizes she's being manipulated and things blow up.

Cam did some groveling. I liked it. I think he needed to do more. I love a good grovel scene. And when she finally did forgive him, I loved that she said she would marry him NEXT June. Make him wait! :)

Book received from the publisher via Netgalley

Patrice says

I received an uncorrected proof of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review. I found the story of Lady Esme Hawkins and Camden McLeod, and my introduction to the Highland Knights, so wonderfully entertaining. To London society and the Ton, Lady Esme is a nervous, awkward, young woman that constantly seems to be involved in situations that are fodder for the endless gossip mill. She is the youngest member of the House of Trent, a very old family of the aristocracy. Lady Esme does not like to be part of the usual society gatherings and tries to avoid them at all costs. She has a strong sense of family and tries her best to never draw the wrong kind of attention to herself that would reflect poorly on the rest of her family. Lady Esme isn't at all what she seems, she has some "deep, dark" secrets. Camden "Cam" McLeod is a Scot who fought for England in the Napoleonic wars, and was most recently at the battle of Waterloo. Now that the wars are over he is not longer enlisted in the army. He and a few other

“good men” are asked by the Crown to form a special task force called the Highland Knights. I guess you could say that Cam is a disillusioned person. It started with his father’s treatment and betrayal of his mother and escalated from there. While performing his duties as one of the Knights, he is at a brothel “protecting” one of the members of Parliament that has been receiving threats. To his surprise the mistress of the brothel brings a cloaked woman into the sitting room, where he is guarding his charge, and asked to watch the girl while the mistress attends to a situation. Cam’s curiosity is piqued by this new comer. He begins to talk with her and they have a conversation. Thus begins this tale...

I felt that the story was well written, grabbing my attention from the first few pages and it held my interest throughout. It was a very satisfying read. The characters play well off each other and I found them to be believable, in that this could have happened. Although, some of the actions of the heroine could be construed as a little far-fetched; but, it played well into the whole story.

Bambi Unbridled says

This review is way late! I managed to put it on my calendar for May instead of March. Oops. I'm letting it slip that I don't always have it perfectly together! So I apologize to Jennifer Haymore, Loveswept and NetGalley for being tardy. (I received an advanced copy of this book from Loveswept via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.) This was a nice quick romantic read that made my crack of dawn Southwest flight pass in the blink of an eye. So, yay!

The Highland Knights are a group of soldiers who have come home from Waterloo and banded together as a mercenary group to conduct special assignments for the Crown. In this installment, the Knights' assignment is to guard the odious Lord Pinfield, who has been receiving threats against his life. While performing his guarding assignment, Camden McLeod, our hero, keeps running across Lady Esme Hawkins, our heroine. I really liked Camden's character. Having shunned his father, and society, due to their questionable values, Cam is an honorable sort unlike the masses of male chauvinists and adulterers common for the time. I loved the way that he took care of his sister, Anna, and vowed to not treat women as his father, the Earl of Sutton, treated his mother. His somewhat gruff and bulldozing ways also endeared him to me, even though they sent Esme running the other way on occasion.

Our heroine, Esme Hawkins, is the youngest sibling of the House of Trent. So this book is kind of a spinoff from that series, because there is a lot of character crossover and detail mentioned about those books. I have yet to read them, so I felt I was lacking some backstory. But despite that, I still enjoyed this romance. Esme is a bit of a tortured heroine due to some events that have happened in her past (which I assume are detailed in the Trent books). She is shy and awkward and never says the right thing. She tends to be a bit of a klutz at societal events. But she has a hidden passionate side and has secretly authored a number of romance novels. I liked Esme and could totally relate to her klutzy social awkwardness. I just wish I had read the Trent books so that I was more informed about her history and family life.

I loved the relationship between Esme and Cam. He was a bit of a steamroller when it came to obtaining what he wanted, namely, Esme. The chemistry between the two was sweetly passionate... but the steam built to an explosive point quickly. I liked that these books have been more on the erotic side than mainstream historical romances. I loved that Cam's intimate preferences matched his demeanor and personality... and they certainly kept me riveted on the very early morning flight. I look forward to Colin's story next in Highland Temptation.

Full review posted at Bambi Unbridled

Christine Woinich says

I am enjoying the Highland Knights series. This is Cam's story. His determination to have what he wants gets him into trouble with Esme. The mysterious air surrounding Esme intrigues him, and he is drawn to find her. Esme's secrets could create problems for her family and she is desperate to keep them hidden. Their love grows quickly amidst the revelation of her secrets and more, including danger from an unexpected source. I truly loved this story and recommend it.

Vikki Vaught says

Vikki's Musings

I have been a fan of Jennifer Haymore's book ever since I read *A Hint of Wicked*. She is one of my auto-buy authors, and I have yet to read one of her books that I did not fall in love with her characters. While her stories are always well-developed, her characters are complex and steal the show. I accepted *Highland Awakening* from the publisher, via Net-Galley, in exchange for an honest review, and I am so glad I had the opportunity to read this remarkable book.

I have been waiting for Esme's story ever since she was introduced in *The Duchess Hunt*, another fabulous book, by the way. I fell in love with her character and have enjoyed her in each of the *House of Trent* books. Her story is as engaging, and her character as endearing as I expected.

Lady Esme writes racy romance novels, but her family does not know. Neither does her fiancée. When she meets Camden McLeod in a bordello where she is doing research for her books, her attraction to him has her questioning her decision to marry her betrothed.

Camden McLeod, a Highland Knight sworn to protect the crown, is immediately enchanted by the innocent young woman he meets in of all places, a bordello. To win her heart, he will have to change his rakish ways, but it will be worth.

Will Camden's manipulative ways ruin his chance to win the heart of sweet Esme, or will they keep them apart?

I fell in love with Camden's character from the start. He is everything I want in a hero. He is loyal to his brother in arms, a protector of the ones he loves, and he is a rugged highlander. While he never expected to fall in love, he is unable to resist Esme. His misguided ways of protecting her cause him problems, but his heart is in the right place. For me, that makes him an engaging, yet flawed character.

The attraction between the hero and heroine is combustible. Ms. Haymore is a master at building sexual tension, and this book is an excellent example of her talents. I truly wanted Esme and Camden to find their happy ending. While the love scenes are explicit, they focus on the emotions behind the act, making them enticing.

I enjoyed seeing a glimpse into Simon and Sarah's life. You can read about their love affair in The Duchess Hunt. I highly recommend Highland Awakening for all readers who love Regency romances with unforgettable characters and a well-developed story. You will love this wonderful novel as much as I. Happy reading!

Blodeuedd Finland says

You got lucky there Cam, I started this book on Thursday, but then the 4 day weekend came around and I forgot how much of an asshat Cam was ;)...just sayin'

Esme writes smexy novels, and sneaks out to brothels to talk to the ladies and get stories for her books. Wait! And no one notices? Her brother is a Duke. He should check his grounds better. And she could have been raped and killed just going there. She sure has drive, you can say that.

Cam is a part of the Highland Knights. Serve and protect the crown. His dad is a silly old fart, and his sister is disowned for some reason. He has family issues.

They meet *coughs* Aye they sure meet. He fancies her. She lets go of anything she has been told pretty fast.

He does some stalking...what? That is the part that softened over a long weekend when I did not read this book. He does do some creepy stalking. Or others would call it alpha male brings home the woman .

And then there is a suspense part because someone is after the knights. I did not guess who, my bad.

It was a nice historical romance. I do hope Cam's sister finds love. But Cam, you were a bit too alpha for me.

Cristina says

I really liked this one and I'm so happy I got to read it before the release time (THANK YOU NETGALLEY).

I'm still loving the 2nd book a little bit better but I can't wait for the fourth book in the series. I wouldn't recommend this series if it wasn't this good.

I kid you not, you will not want to fall asleep once you start. They're all pretty much standalone so you don't need to read in order.

Zoe says

Well.....

I started reading Ms Jennifer Haymore when I came across her A Highlander's Heart, book 0.5 of her

Highland Knights series. I really liked the book, so I have followed the series, including the novella so far. I have to say none of the later books appeals to me as much as book 0.5 did. I have been wondering why, but I think now I know.

But at any rate, Ms Haymore has a way of drawing you into her stories. Her characters are easy to like. Her stories have some kind of a tension in them that compels me to read on. But these positive feelings don't hold for long.

First of all she does insta-lust and/or insta-love often. After reading this book I am almost tempted to call her books "erotic" for the sexual nature of the books. She writes steamy sexy scenes and sometimes they are quite exciting. But other than the 0.5 book of the series, I never really did feel that the main characters are emotionally invested in each other. Like I said, she has a way with the characters so even if it is insta-lust, somehow I am not so put off by it, which surprises me because I despise an useless sex scene. In A Highlander's Heart, Robert and Claire were already married. So the sexual tension between them did not seem so out of the blue. They were an estranged couple and needed a second chance. I think that's why I liked that book much better, because the sexual tension had a reason and I had the impression that Robert and Claire were emotionally attached. In all the following books, I was always a little shocked by how quickly the characters jumped each other. Their "attachment" always seems to be building on how much they want a piece of each other. (Sorry it is a little crude. But it seems like that to me.)

Secondly, it is the unnatural conversations. For example Cam and Esme in this book had some "dirty talks". Mild ones, just a few sentences, nothing dramatic. Mostly Cam talking since he "is not a gentle lover" and "likes it rough and hard", his own words. Dirty talks don't bother me. But I did cringe a little because the conversations seemed forced. I mean I have to be able to imagine the scene in my head for the scene to be titillating. But I truly have trouble imagining anyone I know, including myself, saying most of the things she had her characters say in these conversations. The way these conversations were set up just didn't prepare me for those conversations.

Then it is the undeveloped plots and characters. I like Ms Haymore's ideas. Her characters have potentials. They could have had such depth but ended up being rather superficial. I cannot help but feel that the plots and characters would have been so much greater if they were properly explored.

Now to the story itself. Cam was kind of an ass. He had a manipulative way about him, rather ruthless in getting what he wanted, in this case, Esme. I think it made him an interesting character but like I said, he wasn't developed enough so he just seemed manipulative. I didn't feel that he was driven by a desperate need to be with Esme. He just seemed.....like an asshole. (view spoiler) I know, I was like: whaaaaaat?

But anyways, Cam met Esme in a brothel when Esme was doing "research" for her next fancy novel and immediately "wanted" her. Their first kiss happened in the first scene where Cam and Esme met each other. No prelude, no buildup, just Cam came, Cam saw, Cam conquered. He stared his ungrounded pursuit of Esme and became devoted out of the blue. I felt ambushed often reading this book. Cam would have been considered as a stalker in modern days. (view spoiler) He wasn't planning anything permanent either because you know, he was such a bad boy. At this point I wanted to ask him: Cam lad, what is the thought process here? You want to have sex with her....once and then? And for that, she should break off her engagement and run the risk of becoming pregnant because you told her so?

Esme our heroine, Cam's heart and desires, was a shy virgin but a sexually curious vixen. She obviously was very interested in sex but had no opportunity to explore it to her heart's desires. So when she met Cam, it was fire on fire. It was ok too, if Esme didn't go from the shy virgin to the slut (excuse my language) who begged

Cam to "be inside her" and "take her hard". Now you see why I cringed. I mean really it just didn't match the shy and socially awkward Esme, even if she was the author of a few racy romance novels. Their sexual relationship is a dominating one: Cam dominating Esme with Esme being the willing "vassel". I honestly do not mind such a theme but then please do it right and don't screw it up by having Cam say "Oh I love you so much" in the bedroom. I do not pretend to know a lot about such relationships but I feel that tenderness and affections have little place in a sexual relationship like that of Cam and Esme. Have them express their loves elsewhere and let them be the animals that they want in the bedroom. If that make sense at all?

Cam came around quickly enough and proposed marriage. This was quite a 180 degrees change but I had suspended reality for the story so whatever, I would work with it. Esme refused, so the rest of the story is Cam wanting to get married and Esme refusing so Cam pulled his second piece of crxp on Esme. Some Highland Knights mystery is thrown into the mix to make things interesting. The end.

The Highland Knights series might as well be a spy club in a regency series because other than some minor brogue, these knights were more knights than highlanders. I like Ms Haymore's style, but I have the impression that her characters need more authenticity (I am not talking about being authentic to the time period or as highlanders though. I am talking about being authentic as people.) The story is too much like a play on stage. The flow of the story appears disrupted and uneven. I feel that the writing could be more mature and the characters more authentic. It is an entertaining read but not an emotional read.

*I received an ARC for this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Lexxie (un)Conventional Bookworms says

This review was originally posted on (un)Conventional Bookviews

I loved the beginning of Highland Awakening, but after a while, it became almost too steamy for a historical romance, and that's really something I never thought I'd say!

Esme and Cam both intrigued me from the start of Highland Awakening, their first meeting happened in a whorehouse, where Cam was guarding a lord, and Esme was suddenly left alone with him in an antechamber... At first, I had no idea what Esme was doing there, and neither did Cam, but their chemistry flared from that first meeting, and hot kisses ensued. Their next meeting was at a dinner party at Esme's brother's - the Duke of Trent - house, and that was when Cam was well and truly hooked. Even the fact that Esme was engaged to another man could cool his attraction to her. Added to this intrigue was the fact that Esme writes erotic stories, even if she's an innocent herself! And I was well and truly hooked.

There is also a well done mystery in Highland Awakening, because the Highland Knights are under attack! One of them was killed, and another was ambushed and almost killed, all the while they were trying to guard their charge, and Cam was trying to woo Esme. However, the middle part fell a bit flat to me anyway, because Cam was extremely high-handed. He admired Esme and her unconventional pass time of writing erotic stories, but at the same time, he wanted to keep her to himself, and he was ready to deceive and let her think he betrayed her confidence to get what he wanted.

I usually love hot, steamy historical romances, but there was almost a bit much in Highland Awakening. This is not something I say often, but it actually took something away from the story rather than adding to it. I

loved how Esme was so open in her sexuality, but at the same time, both she and Cam were also pretty reckless. Overall, I still enjoyed the story, though, and I will definitely read more about these highland knights, and also possibly get glimpses of the characters I met when reading the House of Trent series.

Written in third person point of view, past tense and mostly from Esme's perspective, the pace is nice, speeding up when the action requires it, and slowing in other places. There is quite a bit of verbal sparring between Esme and Cam as well, and of course, a female heroine in a historical who actually writes naughty stories just had to be a character I enjoyed.

Without releasing the woman, Cam looked down at her for the first time. From beneath her hood, she peeked up at him with wide brown eyes that sparkled with amber flecks. Golden candlelight splashed over smooth olive skin colored faintly across the cheekbones with a blush.

He curved his lips, knowing his smile was a feral, hungry one. But he didn't care. "Do you think I'll be kissing you now, Esme?" She didn't break her gaze away from his. "I... I don't know."

Her stories! Gasping, she jerked back, wrenching herself from the lock of his arm. His hands fell from her breast. His lips parted from hers. Oh God.
