



Between Ghosts

Garrett Leigh

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WINNER of the 2017 EPIC Award for Contemporary Romance

In 2003, journalist Connor Regan marched through London to add his voice to a million others, decrying the imminent invasion of Iraq. Eight months later, his brother, James, was killed in action in Mosul.

Three years on, Connor finds himself bound for Iraq to embed with an elite SAS team. He sets his boots on the ground looking for closure and solace—anything to ease the pain of his brother's death. Instead he finds Sergeant Nathan Thompson.

Nat Thompson is a veteran commander, hardened by years of combat and haunted by the loss of his best friend. Being lumbered with a civilian is a hassle Nat doesn't need, and he vows to do nothing more than keep the hapless hack from harm's way.

But Connor proves far from hapless, and too compelling to ignore for long. He walks straight through the steel wall Nat's built around his heart, and when their mission puts him in mortal danger, Nat must lay old ghosts to rest and fight to the death for the only man he's ever truly loved.

Between Ghosts Details

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Author : Garrett Leigh

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From Reader Review Between Ghosts for online ebook

Cadiva says

Superbly researched, brutal and complex romance

This book is a brutal depiction of the frustrations and realities of war - in this case the 2003 and onwards invasion of Iraq as part of the so called War of Terror.

A mindless conflict which achieved nothing but cost so many British, and other countries, lives both military and civilian, Garrett Leigh places her two MCs firmly in the centre of Special Forces operations three years later in 2006, as SAS patrol CO Nat and journalist Connor meet in the heat of the desert.

This book is a masterpiece of tension, the romance is an important part, but much more than that is the friendship and camaraderie between the men Connor gets embedded in with to report from the front lines.

I think, unless you've had military family members and friends, it's difficult to get your head round just how close soldiers get when their lives are literally in someone else's hands. This book gets it perfectly.

My heart broke more the longer the story went on, those coffins being sent back home through Royal Wootton Bassett were a familiar sight and once included a lad from my home town and another time, a colleague of my cousin's husband, so the pain was real each time this story drove home the true and personal cost of war.

The romance between Nat and Connor was powerful. (view spoiler)

The hastily snatched times together were visibly changing both men emotionally and it was hard to read the longer the story went on and the more the shit hit the fan.

I did guess the big reveal fairly early on but it still came as a huge surprise when the why of it all came out.

This is a romance but it's not your traditional one and I loved every thing about it.

Simone says

"You all must have been through so much before you even came here. It's scary, really."

"Don't let our ghosts scare you. Most of them aren't worth it."

"Every ghost means something, Nat."

Somehow I always have a bit of a guilty conscience when I *love* a story that deals with the cruelties of war. With the senselessness and intractability. With hopelessness and exhaustion. With loss and grief. Especially if the war is *real*, like in this story.

Of course, the love story between Nat and Connor is fiction, but leave it to Garrett Leigh to give it an

element of truth, to make it feel *authentic* with everything else what is happening. Yes, it has a touch of insta-love, but given the circumstances it did not bother me this time.

The beginning confused me a bit, because it started with first person narrative, before it switched to third person, but it all makes sense later.

As for me, the author found the perfect balance between daily war routine (even if this sounds weird), action and romance and great characters. Her conveyance of the 'band of brothers' element gave me goose bumps and without sugarcoating anything it was sometimes tough to read, but tangible.

Moments like this are rare and precious in war, but they do exist and that gives at least a bit of hope:

In my last status update I said, that this was maybe my favorite book by this author so far. Even one day after finishing this book, I can't get it out of my head, so scratch the 'maybe'.

Highly recommended!

Tanja ~ T's Book ~ KT Book Reviews says

Between Ghosts is a thought-out, well-rounded military read with a side of sexy. Connor Regan, brother to the deceased soldier James, has decided to rearrange his life. No longer a kid with certain ideals, he is now a reporter working within an elite team in the military to get the real story of war.

Nat Thompson has lost one of his best friends to the day-to-day grind that is war. He has no time or inclination to deal with bureaucracy and risk any more of his team to drag an untrained civilian along.

What transpires within this read is a real look at the life of a military soldier. More so than the romance, the war plays a massive role in Between Ghosts. The action outweighs the romance and with some creative twists and turns the story stays fresh and keeps the reader invested till the end.

It's a great read for action fans with enough heat to keep the romantics enthralled!

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Gigi says

Hurt/Healing/Comfort between military men? **SIGN ME UP!**

Connor Regan is a journalist who lost his brother, James, when he was killed in combat during a mission in Mosul, Iraq. Conner's brother was part of an elite and very secretive team in the British Army called SAS, Special Air Reserve. (As a side note, when I searched for images to make my pretty cast collage above, almost all pictures of *real* SAS members have their faces blurred out.) Because of the secret nature of the mission, Conner never found out how or why his brother died.

Determined to get to the bottom of his brother's death, Conner spends a year preparing himself physically and emotionally to join the SAS unit as a member of the media. He joins the current SAS unit headed by Sergeant Nathan Thompson in Iraq after his year-long preparation.

Battle-worn veteran Nat is also in mourning, after having lost his best friend, Pogo, in the war. He blames himself for Pogo's death and feels dead inside. When Connor shows up, his emotions start to come alive again.

The chemistry and connection between Nat and Connor is wonderful. I am happy to report that the military mission, while being the main subject of the book, is littered with an emotional connection between these men. A lot of time with military themed M/M romances, you only get one. There wasn't a huge amount of sex here, but when these men were able to secret themselves away from the unit, it was hot and passionate.

I do have to say that the ending got a little soap-opera and unrealistic.

(view spoiler)

The ending didn't really match the mood of the first part of the book, but I totally rolled with it and was happy for the boys and their HEA.

M/M Military romance fans, this one is for you! **Recommended!**

Galley copy of Between Ghosts provided by Riptide Publishing in exchange of an honest review.

This review is also posted at Gay Book Reviews

Adam says

My ratings for Garrett Leigh are all over the place - I've given her 5 stars, 4, 3, and also just 2. I rate based on my enjoyment of the plot and romance, but what always remains consistent is this author's writing. 'Between Ghosts' is poignant and emotional. I could very clearly feel the regrets and sadness that Connor and Nat lived with. I could also easily immerse myself in the dangerous environment of Basra, Iraq.

The relationship development was well paced. Connor and Nat go from strangers, to wary friends, to secret lovers over the weeks that Connor spends with Nat's team. Given how alone both of the MCs were, I was

rooting for them from the beginning. I could even ignore Nat's dickish behaviour, though perhaps only because I got to read his POV and see who he really was.

Nat and Connor help each other through their mourning - Connor for his brother, and Nat for a team member. I loved reading their cuddle sessions on the roof, how the two became each other's calm in the middle of the storm.

'Between Ghosts' is light on the sex and I didn't mind that, which is something I wouldn't usually say. Connor and Nat are in the middle of a war zone, so opportunities to get some nooky are rare, and a lot of the focus is on the military operations. Though that's not to say that the sex isn't hot, because when the two *do* find time to get away they're on fire.

Now this is the part where I get preachy, so feel free to skip it. (view spoiler)

While I thought that the drama at the end was predictable, I still enjoyed the ride. The HEA was well-deserved and left me wanting more! Fans of MM military romance will enjoy 'Between Ghosts'.

Review copy provided through NetGalley.

Giedre says

A really interesting idea, but a mediocre execution at best: the pacing was off, characterisation was flimsy, the plot was both disappointing and predictable, and the romance wasn't much better either.

Jewel says

I'm beginning to think that Garrett Leigh can do little wrong. I love military stories. Especially when we get to see the vulnerability of the soldiers. While Connor was with Charlie-3, we see them through his eyes and they felt so real. The laughter, the gruffness, and just how they all carried themselves. These men are dedicated. And they're also human.

Connor Regan is a journalist who used to do fairly fluffy pieces about current entertainment. But after his brother James is killed in action, Connor decides to take a different path in an effort to understand why his brother died. It takes years, and a whole lot of training but finally he is approved to tag along with a SAS regiment and write about their humanitarian efforts. For Connor, though, it's about more than just his column. Hopefully, he'll even be able to finish grieving and maybe even understand a bit.

Nat Thompson is the leader of Charlie-3. He's seen more than his fair share of death. So much that he feels numb with it. All except for one - his best friend and second in command who died three years prior. He feels responsible, even though he isn't. Nat just carries everything with him but he tries to not let it show to

anyone. He fails with Connor, though. Connor sees straight through to the caring, compassionate man Nat is. Nat says he just doesn't have it in him to feel anymore. The truth is, he feels everything.

When they meet, both Connor and Nat are trapped between the ghosts of the past and an uncertain future. But their chemistry was palpable. Nat fully expected to have to babysit Connor, and instead, Connor was an intelligent, resourceful, insightful man who had the skills to take care of himself. And in Nat, Connor finds a man who has seen too much and lived through it all.

There was surprisingly little angst in *Between Ghosts* considering they're in the middle of a war zone. It's there, but it wasn't overdone. My only real niggle with the story is I wanted *more* in the epilogue. More feelings, more sex, just more. After everything they had been through together, I guess I wanted something bigger. Instead, it felt just a touch awkward. Everything else, though - perfection.

*ARC of **Between Ghosts** was generously provided by the publisher, via Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review*

Ele says

It was ok but there was a lot of military stuff for me. And I'm not sure I buy the coincidence. But still a decent read because Garrett Leigh.

Sheziss says

I love Garrett Leigh and I liked the book. But I wasn't feeling this.

I read it with pleasure because I love her style and her writing, her characters are interesting and more than they seem at first sight. She's engaging and that's why I kept reading. But the love story lacked passion, IMO.

Connor is a journalist, or a hack, as people keep calling him. His brother James died during service three years ago and he still has questions. He knows little to nothing about how James died, but what eats him away is whether he had been supporting enough, whether his brother knew that Connor loved him and worried about him. Because he's been fearing he didn't pay enough attention to James as he should have. He applies to a time with some SAS soldiers in Middle East. To see how he lived, what he thought about, and why he did all he did.

Nat is a SAS soldier and a veteran one. He has seen too many people die, too many mates die. He claims he doesn't feel anything, that he doesn't care about what happens around him. But Connor notices it's all a

façade, and soon he's head over heels for him, wondering what he is thinking, what he is doing, worrying about his well-being and obsessing over him and his sex-appeal.

At this point I feared it would be the typical don't-stick-your-nose-in-our-business relationship. Because if you get a secretive soldier and a journalists who inquires about everything he's doing and how and why and when, the normal result would be in exasperation from both sides. That happened for a short while, but Nat soon discovers that Connor is in fact a nice person, and he develops a fondness that turns into friendship, and from the chemistry there is only one step to form a deeper and more significative bond.

But are they ready for that?

My problem here is that I didn't feel any chemistry, nor sexual nor any other kind. There was not any thought about "wow, this could completely work, I wanna see it happening" in me. I must say their friendship is believable, but I just couldn't understand what they saw in each other romantically speaking. The first half of the book I was reading it all with a little sense of resignation. I was the whole way comparing it to Slide and Rare, my favorite books of this author, and that's not fair. They are completely different stories but I still resented I couldn't perceive any spark from Nat and Connor.

Don't get me wrong, the plot is solid and very well-built. I was very invested in getting to know their day-to-day routine and the conflicts they have to solve during their stay in Iraq and the hunt on one of the most wanted terrorists in the country. It's a perspective I don't get to see often in the books I read, and I have no background to say whether it reflects a reality or not, but it rang true to me, and that's enough for me to get fully into a story.

Somewhere along the point I could connect with the characters, but it was very deep into the story when I felt a real feeling between them. It was quiet and I almost didn't realize something was different in the air. It just came and I felt ansty about their love to last forever. The end is beautiful and gives a decent closure. But I must add that I could see it coming, that about(view spoiler). Not a big surprise and I a little disappointed because the author could have known this and decided to be less obvious, but she didn't. In spite of it all, it was a good book, and it was worthy of my time.

Copy provided by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Al ***the semi serial series skipper*** says

War romance, so sad yet so good.

Vanessa North says

This was an absolutely gripping military romance between an embedded journalist and the CO of the squad with which he's embedded.

There's a sense of grim fatalism, of taking comfort and passion in a moment because it could be gone tomorrow. It's raw and ruthless, and it made me cry more than once.

I want to give a shout out to Leigh's handling of Nat's bisexuality. It was treated as a matter-of-fact aspect of his character, mentioned a few times in passing. There was no casual misogyny, no dismissing of exes as inferior for not being THE ONE TRUE LOVE. The treatment of his character was bi-friendly, sex-positive, and deeply appreciated by me.

Still on Nat: He came across as very human and kind in spite of the sense of foreboding that seemed to dog his steps. He was more than a gruff leader, he was a complicated and caring man.

And Connor? Well, Connor was sweet and funny and haunted and determined.

The two of them together were hot and sweet AF.

Highly recommended!

Lelyana says

***** 5 stars! *****

OMG ! I was so happy when I've got this book, it's Garrett frickin' Leigh !

But then I realised this is a war story. In Iraq. Dammit !

I have a hate - love - hate - relationship about this one.

I lost my loved one in the same country .

That's why I felt giddy and chicken out before I started this. But like almost all of you guys, I'm a masochist, and I read.

Yeah, fuckin' awesome. I read and I was right *'there'* with Connor and Nat.

I hate that they're lost someone they loved. I hate that they have to experienced the unforgettable moments together. And I think I know what it feels to be in the waiting end for them to come home. Or not.

This story has became personal to me . And 'seeing' what Nat and Connor had been through, hurts me. I love their connection, they have that strong chemistry from the first time they met. All the denials are bullshit. They're attracted to each other right from the start.

I loved how Garrett Leigh didn't make it as a mushy fluffy story. There's no 'romantic' moments between Connor and Nat, at least not in a sweet romantic way.

They're all hard, and all that macho stuff with their relationship. Happened that I liked it so much.

The ending..OMG..the ending was '*PERFECT!*', and I'm not complaining. Not at all, mate.

It was what I want to be. A perfect HEA for two wounded soul.

I bet James smiles up there :)

Note : D, I was thinking about you when I read this story. May your soul rest in peace up there.

ARC was given through Netgalley

My favorite quotes...

"Nat shivered, exposed and laid bare, but for the first time in his life he didn't give a shit. "I'm okay. It's just being with you, like this, I can't hide . . . from you, from anything.""

"Common sense—and the rockets lighting the night sky—told him whatever was brewing between them was a bad idea—a bad idea with no future, except a shit-ton of heartache—but Connor's eyes drew him in, like they always did. Life was too short to ignore a moment as perfect as this."

Lisa Arbitrary - AttentionIsArbitrary M/M Blog says

3.5 Stars

This is my portion of a co-review (Gay Guy / St8 Girl). On the blog OJ and I go into a more in-depth discussion with a back and forth Q & A session. Click the link below to see the whole review and more.

INITIAL THOUGHTS

I enjoyed the read, but it lacked the teeth I had expected. I was surprised to find this so...romantic. I know, I know, this is male-male romance, but the setting led me to believe there would be more impact, more grit. To be fair there are a few action scenes, but it was the sex and tender words that were the focus here.

And maybe I've been reading these things too long, but I saw "it" coming from the beginning.

THE CHARACTERS

Connor Regan - Young reporter embedded with a British Special Forces team, SAS, during the second Iraq

war. He's as green as they come, but he holds his own with the team.

Nathan (Nat) Thompson - A tough, terse leader battling ghosts. Nat's unflappable, ice-cool persona was legendary.

The rest of the SAS team are pretty well developed too, and I can see some of these guys needing their own stories. Definitely some good guys to discover here. I actually enjoyed them more than the main characters.

THE STORY

Nat is living his life day to day without outward feeling or emotion. He gets the job done, but has forgotten there is life outside the warzone. His persona is of a closed off, serious leader, but he's suppressing grief and loss.

Nat hadn't had a bloke turn his head in years, and now the hottest dude he'd ever seen was embedding with his crew for the foreseeable future? [...] Life just wasn't fair.

Embedded Connor is on two missions: One to "get the story". And two to find out what happened to his brother who was lost in battle—no info is shared for SAS operators—and that leaves Connor unable to come to terms with his brother's loss.

THE WRITING

There's a line – Nat's touch had always had that effect on him...

They'd only been together a few weeks at this point. A lot of the timing just felt off to me. I also felt there were awkward emotional and sentimental transitions. Christ, he didn't even know if Nat had a home. You know he can fuck, though...

I had a tough time "getting" Nat's character. We're told how tough he is, but I just didn't ever feel it. However, the author does a great job with the rest of the team and I felt their connection and their personalities jump off the page. If the series continues I would love to know more about them.

Ultimately I was left underwhelmed. The lingering surprise didn't surprise me. In fact, I made a note about one third of the way in saying that I hoped the author would shock me and take a different path. She didn't.

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We would like to thank Riptide Publishing for providing us with a review copy via Netgalley.com in exchange for my honest review.

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Take a look at my Male/Male Romance Book Blog:

<http://www.attentionisarbitrary.com>

Alisa says

I freely admit I'm a big fan girl of this author. I like everything's she ever written. But that being said I think this was her best work. This is gorgeous. Unlike some, I have no desire to be a writer. I like reading and I'm happy with that. But every once in awhile I read something so good though that I think "If I could write I would want it to be this book". That's how I felt when I finished this book.

Connor is a journalist who has been an anti-war protester in the past. After his soldier brother dies Connor feels that he never really knew James and he fears James didn't know how much he loved and respected him. Trying to find some peace in regards to his feelings about his brother Connor finds himself on a mission to Iraq with a SAS team. He's going to do a series of articles showcasing what it is that the soldiers do and how they feel about their jobs.

Nat is the leader of that team and he's been in war zones for years. He's lost a lot of friends, as well as big pieces of his heart. He's not happy about being stuck with a journalist but he quickly finds himself drawn to Connor and he's challenged to start opening up the emotional parts of himself that he thought were long gone. Nat's lost men in his command before that he feels responsible for and he's consumed with fear that something might happen to Connor on his watch and that's something he can't live with.

The story is mostly set in Iraq so there is fighting and bloodshed. I didn't find especially violent though and I do not think it will be an issue for most. There are some social and political issues raised but nothing that makes it preachy in either pro or con views. The war as a back drop to a budding romance just served to highlight the beauty of these two men's relationship.

The highlight of this book are the relationships. Not just between Connor and Nat but between each of them and the other men in the group. Also important are the "ghosts" in their pasts. The brother that Connor lost and the best friend who's death Nat feels responsible for. I loved both Connor and Nat and found them to be great MC's. I empathized with what both of them were going through in the course of the story.

Again.....I loved this book. I don't think my review is remotely doing this book justice. All I can really say is run and grab this the moment it comes out.

****ARC provided by the publisher though Netgalley****

***J* Too Many Books Too Little Time says**

4.5 Stars!

Military books can be hit or miss for me. Especially if they are too heavy on the military and too light on the romance. And while I think this one was a bit more focused on the military aspect, there was a enough romance to keep me satisfied.

I found the depiction of the military aspect to be very realistic. Or at least what I imagine being on a tour would be like. Needless to say, this wasn't a "sweet" romance. It was intense, it was gritty, it was at times bloody.

After the death of his brother, journalist Connor finds himself in Iraq with an elite SAS team. Nat is the leader of that team. Nat's a hardened soldier. He's seen a lot and experienced a lot in his time.

I enjoyed the development of Connor and Nat's relationship. The stolen moments. The intensity of the environment and the situation they are in. The camaraderie between the team.

This was different from what I usually read, which I think made me appreciate it more.

It's light on the steam, which I suppose is to be expected given the setting. Their moments together are quick, at times rough, yet full of emotion.

This was a good one. Recommend.

ARC kindly provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review
