

## Antonia Barclay and Her Scottish Claymore: A Rebellious Romantic Comedy

**Jane Carter Barrett**

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*Never taking itself too seriously, the narrative provides a refreshing take on a familiar tale.*

Jane Carter Barrett tackles the historical romance genre with comedic verve and charm in *Antonia Barclay and Her Scottish Claymore*. Set in sixteenth-century Scotland, an unconventional heroine seeks out her birth mother, launching into motion a series of melodramatic events that entangle her lover, her family, and her enemies alike.

Despite having reached marriageable age, Antonia Barclay wants nothing to do with matrimony, much to the despair of her highborn family. But when she meets a dashing highlander, her opinion on the matter soon changes. Their newfound bliss proves short-lived, however, upon the discovery of her true parentage, which drives Antonia to arrange a meeting with her birth mother and results in other would-be suitors striving to win her hand.

Anachronisms and sly pop-culture references pepper Antonia's romp through the Scottish countryside. Combined with the breezy tone, her irreverent adventures add a new dimension to a well-known tale of reconnecting with previously unknown family members and defending a beloved homeland from determined enemies desiring to usurp the crown. Throughout it all, Antonia retains her courageous heart, never succumbing to machinations that would make a less stalwart heroine falter.

Beyond the memorable encounters characterizing the narrative, *Antonia Barclay and Her Scottish Claymore* remains, most of all, a romance. It maintains the hope that there exists a perfect partner for each person in the world, one willing to face countless miles, royal relatives, murderous alchemists, and overprotective brothers for the sake of love. And to balance its portrayal of romantic love, Antonia's unwavering love for the Barclays reminds us that not all familial bonds are forged in blood.

Against the tumultuous backdrop of Scotland's political rivalry with England, *Antonia Barclay and Her Scottish Claymore* manages to avoid the heavy intrigue laden in its premise, opting to focus upon one feisty, determined heroine with no desire to rule. Never taking itself too seriously, the narrative provides a refreshing take on a familiar tale. And along the way, it proves that a person need not change to win another person's heart.

VERNIEDA VERGARA (Summer 2016)

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