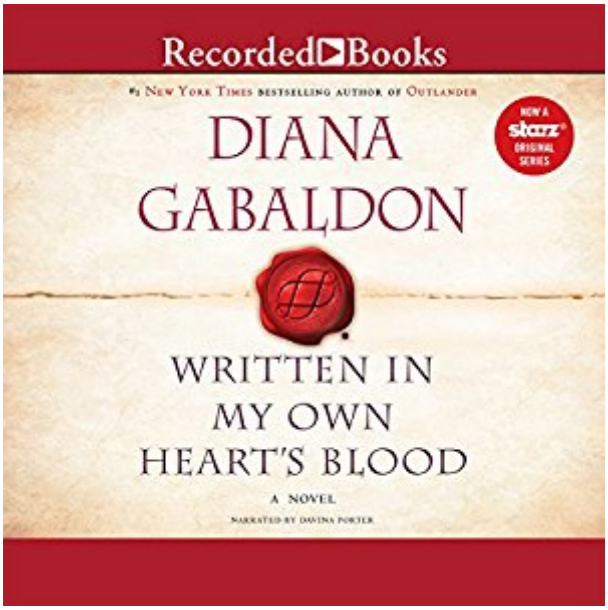
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Written In My Own Heart's Blood: Outlander, Book 8



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Synopsis

In her now classic novel Outlander, Diana Gabaldon told the story of Claire Randall, an English ex-combat nurse who walks through a stone circle in the Scottish Highlands in 1946, and disappears... into 1743. The story unfolded from there in seven best-selling novels, and CNN has called it "a grand adventure written on a canvas that probes the heart, weighs the soul and measures the human spirit across [centuries]." Now the story continues in Written in My Own Heart’s Blood. It is 1778: France declares war on Great Britain, the British army leaves Philadelphia, and George Washington’s troops leave Valley Forge in pursuit. At this moment, Jamie Fraser returns from a presumed watery grave to discover that his best friend has married his wife; his illegitimate son has discovered (to his horror) who his father really is; and his beloved nephew, Ian, wants to marry a Quaker. Meanwhile, Jamie’s wife, Claire, and his sister, Jenny, are busy picking up the pieces. The Frasers can only be thankful that their daughter Brianna and her family are safe in 20th-century Scotland. Or not. In fact, Brianna is searching for her own son, who was kidnapped by a man determined to learn her family’s secrets. Her husband, Roger, has ventured into the past in search of the missing boy - never suspecting that the object of his quest has not left the present. Now, with Roger out of the way, the kidnapper can focus on his true target: Brianna herself. Written in My Own Heart’s Blood is the brilliant next chapter in a masterpiece of the imagination unlike any other.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

**** I received an advance review copy of the book from the publisher ******* No MOBY Spoilers. I promise. But there are spoilers of other books in the Outlander series! ***When we left these characters after `An Echo in the Bone', way back in 2009 (and 1980, and 1778, respectively) the Fraser clan were spread far and wide and swimming in various levels of hot water.Believing Jamie to be dead and lost at sea, along with his sister Jenny, Claire married Lord John Grey after rumblings in the British Army had her targeted for arrest on account of being a spy. Not, in fact, being dead and lost Jamie returned to find Claire at Lord John's house in Philadelphia where he was at once confronted with the fact that his wife was married to his dear friend, and his son William (Ninth Earl of Ellesmere) was confronted with the world's worst kept secret - that he is in fact the illegitimate son of James Alexander Malcolm MacKenzie Fraser - a rebel Highlander.Elsewhere in 1778 - young Ian, Jamie's turned-Mohawk nephew was laying his heart at the feet of Quaker woman, Rachel Hunter, and making plans to wed her.Meanwhile, in 1980, Claire and Jamie's time-travelling daughter Brianna was in her own pickle. Confronted by her colleague Rob Cameron, who claimed to have kidnapped her son Jem and taken him through the Craigh na Dun stone circle (to when?) Brianna's husband, Roger, went after his son unknowingly leaving Brianna and daughter Mandy in the clutches of Rob Cameron and unknown accomplices whose scheme for buried treasure is coming to a fore.Jem, meanwhile, was trying to remain calm inside the deep, dark hydroelectric tunnel where Cameron had stashed him.Are we all caught up then? Good, because it's been five years waiting for this much-anticipated 814-page eighth book in Diana Gabaldon's epic `Outlander' series. She does not disappoint.*** Jamie & Claire ***I said in my review of `An Echo in the Bone' how nice it was to have so many more narrators in the series now. The first few books of `Outlander' were told from Claire's first-person perspective, but as she and Jamie have expanded their family so too have the players increased (along with word-count!) and now we have alternating chapters following Brianna, Roger, Jem, Ian, Lord John Grey, William and Jamie. With `Written in my Own Heart's Blood' the sense of family encapsulates the reader, even as these players are cast so far and wide from one another (and separated by time). But it's a testament to Diana Gabaldon and the two who started us on this odyssey, that Jamie and Claire are still the pivot point and grounding force of this series.In `Written in my Own Heart's Blood' (or, `MOBY' as Gabaldon has been referring to it on social media for the last five years - for My Own Heart's Blood = MOHB = MOH-B = Moby) Jamie and Claire have obstacles placed before them from the get-go. Claire has believed Jamie dead and perished for the last few months, during which time she has been teetering on the edge of suicide. But upon his return from the dead, Jamie finds Claire married to Lord John Grey and the secret of his being father to William Ransom exposed - and this is our

introduction back into the world of `Outlander' and the Fraser's ever complicated romance (even assuredly soul-mates as they are, these obstacles do keep readers on emotional edge).As always, Gabaldon honours Jamie and Claire as the beating-heart centre of the `Outlander' universe and gives fans exactly what they want for Himself and Herself. There's heat and tenderness between them, as always, but as the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) intensifies so too do the memories of past horrors they've lived through, together and apart. For Claire she is sifting through memories of WWII and the Jacobite Rising, for Jamie (a lifelong soldier) he is forever haunted by memories of war - the Battle of Culloden amongst his worst, as well as remembered violence at the hands of Black Jack Randall. MOBY is very much a book of reflection for them, and there is a sense of foreshadows gathering as Gabaldon careens readers towards heightened violence during the Revolutionary War.Another great pleasure is in Gabaldon's meticulous descriptions of Claire's surgical and medicinal work. Among the best (worst?) is the reading-equivalent of watching the famous eyeball clip in 1929 silent surrealist `Un Chien Andalou' when Claire must operate on Lord John Grey's eye that Jamie bruised. You'll be blinking in sympathy, trust me.*** Roger & Buck ***Intent on following his kidnapped son through the stones, Roger finds himself out of time along with his ancestor, William Buccleigh `Buck' MacKenzie (son of Geillis Duncan and Dougal MacKenzie). I don't want to give a huge spoiler away; save to say when Roger and Buck land is a very interesting point in the `Outlander' timeline and a lovely intersection of characters emerge on the stage.*** Brianna, Jem & Mandy ***At first when I saw a chapter set in 1980, taking me away from the action brewing in 1778, I was a bit peeved. But Gabaldon makes up for the timewarp in spades: offering readers a truly wonderful gift in Roger and Buck's time-travel, and heart-palpitating action in Bree's "present-day". Readers who have been keenly following Gabaldon's story extracts on Facebook would know that she assured readers of Jem's safety - albeit, his being trapped in a deep, dark tunnel - so it shouldn't come as too much of a surprise that Brianna and the children's storyline goes careening into far more dangerous territory as the motives of their tormentors is made known.I didn't think I'd have a lot of patience for these chapters, but Gabaldon threads them beautifully and well before the 400-page midway point, I was as eager to be in 1980's Lallybroch as 1700's America.*** Ian & Rachel ***Young Ian Murray - Highlander and Mohawk Indian - is hands down my favourite character. I just love him, and my heart breaks for all his up's and down's (from being forced to leave his Scottish heritage behind to join the Mohawk, to being put out of his newfound family after his Indian wife miscarried too many times and decided to leave him). My favourite part of `An Echo in the Bone' was undoubtedly the introduction of Quaker, Rachel Hunter - whom Ian describes as a "nut-brown maiden" and who he falls hard and fast in love with. In

anticipating MOBY, I've probably been most excited about catching up with Ian and Rachel - who returned Ian's affections by the end of `Echo'.So excited was I for this particular thread of story, that I wished for more Ian and Rachel page-time. Though I loved reading Ian actually have a romance (and with a most worthy, bull-headed and kind woman in Ms Hunter) I just loved them so much that I wanted more! Especially since there were a few scenes that readers weren't privy to that I would have liked - Rachel officially being introduced to Jenny, for one. And, without giving too much away, the final scene of the book is one many readers will be both delighted and frustrated by - but especially delighted, for its promise of more adventures to come in the `Outlander' series.I also wanted more scenes between Ian, Rachel and William - Jamie's son who actually met Rachel and her brother, Denny, before Ian did and who fancies himself half in love with Ms Hunter (even while grumbling that she has indeed given her heart to his Mohawk cousin). A few times it's hinted that William is indeed harbouring deep affection for Rachel, but it's only known to readers through his interiority and I would have liked to observe them interacting a bit more to make up my own mind - particularly interactions between the three of them to know how Ian feels about his cousin's affections. I do hope these three have more opportunities in the future to share scenes and bounce off one another - I'd love to see their relationship become even more complicated and intensified.*** William ***Speaking of William, he does have an increased role in this book. He's coming into his own - though fans shouldn't be expecting too much father/son time so soon, as William is still a soldier in the British Army (technically serving or not) while Jamie is a Rebel. Instead, William has a rather long and complicated shared journey with a prostitute called Jane who he meets shortly after fleeing Lord John's house after learning of his paternity.I was glad to see William on his way to becoming a more established character with his own arc and motives, instead of someone just on the periphery - but the plot with Jane was quite convoluted and never felt substantial enough. Regardless, William really takes shape as an emerging player in the series, and I can't wait to see him grow and prosper in forthcoming books.*** John & Hal Grey ***Lord John Grey and his brother, Harold, Duke of Pardloe are given somewhat substantial roles in this book. Happily so - since the Grey brothers are a wonderful addition to the plot. Not only because they have the insider perspective from the British side, but they actually bring many moments of levity; "So you've not only somehow married Fraser's wife, but you've accidentally been raising his illegitimate son for the last fifteen years?"They are given so much more spotlight in this book too because the central `whodunnit' story revolves around the Grey family, and by extension implicates the Fraser clan. I will say that Gabaldon usually writes thrilling and heartbreaking central whodunnit's that run as a constant in each book. I enjoyed the Malva Christie conspiracy in `A Breath of Snow and Ashes',

and the pirate Stephen Bonnet was a great new villain to appear in `Drums of Autumn'.
The`whodunnit' in MOBY didn't feel substantial or threatening enough and was in no way concluded, which didn't feel quite right but I'll be happy to read it teased out in the future, making for a bigger conspiracy.*** STARZ ***`Written in my Own Heart's Blood' marks a fever-pitch in the `Outlander' series. One of the longest waits between books (five years!) and released the same year as first book in the `Outlander' series is coming to the small-screen - there was a lot resting on the release of MOBY, and I'm happy to say that Diana Gabaldon delivers ten-fold with this, the eighth book in a series that doesn't appear to be wrapping up anytime soon.As usual, I charged through this book (all 814-pages) but by the midway point I was heartsick to think that I'd have to wait another four+ years to be reunited with these characters. I'm committed to this series and these players, as so many in the fandom are - and it's no light commitment either, not when each book is 800+ pages and the wait between instalments are years-long. But by the last page I found myself grateful again - that Diana Gabaldon has remained such a steady and true author, consistently delivering epic instalments in Jamie and Claire's odyssey and that I have had the great reading privilege of watching these characters grow and evolve. Whatever the wait, I'll always follow Diana Gabaldon and make the trek back to the `Outlander' universe, happily so.

Spoilers - please don't read if you want to avoid me giving away some narrative points in this novelI love this Outlander series and enjoyed being with the characters through this telling, but I agree that it was a disappointing read for these reasons:1) Rape as the go-to tension builder/plot point. I was starting to feel this before this novel, but WiMOHB takes it to a new level. Look, I get that there are lots of rapists in the world, but when every bad guy tries to rape every main female character in the story, it does't just get old, it diminishes the impact of the violence and violation of rape. Jamie was violently tortured and raped. Claire was sexually assaulted in France and watched as her companion was violently raped on a street, then she was forced to barter sex with the King to save Jamie's life after he attacked his male rapist in France. Fergus was forced to prostitute himself as a poor urchin in France. Brianna was raped, then she had some kind of weird relationship with her rapist, which I never understood, and led to her being put in danger and almost being sold into slavery (where she was again physically assaulted as a potential buyer "assessed" her person). Claire was beaten, sexually assaulted by multiple men and then raped by a complete stranger. And in this novel, Brianna is forced to strip and be touched by Rob Cameron, who intends to rape her, but she grabs him by the balls (literally) and disables him before he can finish the deed (it's still a sexual assault...if this was supposed to be cathartic, like, look she can fight back and defend herself

now, it was not). A new character, Jane, who was sold into sexual slavery as a 10 year old, was violated again and again as a whore, forced to endure anal rape by a British Captain who she finally kills when he pays to rape and assault her 11 year old sister. And finally, upon returning to the Ridge, Claire miraculously encounters the apparent sole survivor of her gang assault and the one man who technically "fully" raped her, and decides to try to forgive him for his crimes, only to have Jamie find out and presumably kill him (it happens "off screen" as it were and is only discussed after the fact by Jamie and Claire). I find this excessive use of rape and sexual assault disturbing, and frankly, lazy. It diminishes my enjoyment of the books, and the impact the stories have on the reader. If you have a series and one person gets cancer, it's powerful and devastating. If every freaking character in the novel gets cancer, it's ridiculous.2) Meandering and disjointed plot. It's fine to have multiple threads or stories going on in a novel, as long as the author is sure to wrap each one up by the end of the book and tie them into a common theme/structure. It's not okay to leave major plot threads hanging in between books, especially when said books come about 1/2 decade apart. And nothing really happens in this book. It ties up previously loose ends, it describes a few battles. Some couples who were already together get married. Some women get pregnant. A lot of main characters are gravely injured, but miraculously survive without much ill effect (I'm getting tired of this go to tension builder as well - someone who is shot, stabbed or otherwise wounded in that time period doesn't recover to 100% like these people do. And let's not forget how old Jamie and Claire are - it's ridiculous how often DG hurts them and then brushes them off like it's nothing). But, there is no main thread or cohesive storyline pulling the action forward. We're on a timeline now. Here's what happens between Jamie coming back from Scotland and when he and Claire make it back to the Ridge. It's like an 800 page Christmas letter ("here's what's been going on in our year").

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