



The Accidental Highwayman: Being the Tale of Kit Bristol, His Horse Midnight, a Mysterious Princess, and Sundry Magical Persons Besides

Ben Tripp

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The Accidental Highwayman is the first swashbuckling adventure for young adults by talented author and illustrator, Ben Tripp.

In eighteenth-century England, young Christopher "Kit" Bristol is the unwitting servant of notorious highwayman Whistling Jack. One dark night, Kit finds his master bleeding from a mortal wound, dons the man's riding cloak to seek help, and changes the course of his life forever. Mistaken for Whistling Jack and on the run from redcoats, Kit is catapulted into a world of magic and wonders he thought the stuff of fairy tales.

Bound by magical law, Kit takes up his master's quest to rescue a rebellious fairy princess from an arranged marriage to King George III of England. But his task is not an easy one, for Kit must contend with the feisty Princess Morgana, goblin attacks, and a magical map that portends his destiny: as a hanged man upon the gallows....

Fans of classic fairy-tale fantasies will find much to love in this irresistible YA debut by Ben Tripp, the son of one of America's most beloved illustrators, Wallace Tripp (*Amelia Bedelia*). Following in his father's footsteps, Ben has woven illustrations throughout the story.

"Delightful and charming. A swashbuckling adventure in the vein of Robert Louis Stevenson." —#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Brandon Sanderson

The Accidental Highwayman: Being the Tale of Kit Bristol, His Horse Midnight, a Mysterious Princess, and Sundry Magical Persons Besides Details

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From Reader Review *The Accidental Highwayman: Being the Tale of Kit Bristol, His Horse Midnight, a Mysterious Princess, and Sundry Magical Persons Besides* for online ebook

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

This is the story of Kit, a half-fairy princess, a highwayman, a tightrope walker, a man who's lost his memory and more.

The Accidental Highwayman is not a "swashbuckler." I listened to the digital audiobook and didn't see that description of this story until I came to its Goodread page. That's a positive thing because I may have felt cheated otherwise.

Though it has a large cast of characters, the pace is quite slow. This is a book that can be savored but I see how it could just as easily be put aside.

I confess, I nearly gave it up when I went nearly four chapters in a row with nothing happening other than the wagon moving onwards. But, I stuck with it to the end.

The style of storytelling feels more like a Victorian era book rather than a modern fairytale. I believe this was a purposeful choice on the part of Ben Tripp- to give it a faux-classic feel.

I feel like *The Princess Bride* could be an apt comparison if you slowed *Bride's* pacing way down and remove almost half of the adventure. *The Accidental Highwayman* has charm in my opinion, but not a lot of substance.

That being said, it contains one of the most over-the-top romantic lines I've ever heard in an audiobook: "*If I don't kiss you, I shall perish.*" pg 269. If you like that kind of thing, you might enjoy this book very much. Think "slow burning wick" of a romance. Very slow. And not graphic but sweet.

Actually, *The Accidental Highwayman* was sort of like *The Night Circus* but with more goblins and less immersive descriptions. In that book, as in this, I felt like the story was reaching for more but never quite made it.

In conclusion, I recommend this book for readers with buckets of patience and a penchant for the fantastical and overly dramatic.

Brandon Sanderson says

(Note: For an explanation of my Goodreads policy, please see [here](#).)

I blurb'd a book! I know, I know. That doesn't happen very often these days, but Susan, my YA editor at Tor, approached me with a project she is very excited and passionate about: *The Accidental Highwayman* by Ben Tripp. And after reading it, I have to highly recommend it—Susan has discovered a gem.

From the back of the book:

In eighteenth-century England, young Christopher “Kit” Bristol is the unwitting servant of notorious highwayman Whistling Jack. One dark night, Kit finds his master bleeding from a mortal wound, dons the man’s riding cloak to seek help, and changes the course of his life forever. Mistaken for Whistling Jack and on the run from redcoats, Kit is catapulted into a world of magic and wonders he thought the stuff of fairy tales.

We’ve seen the story of the servant taking up the master’s mantle before. But the twist caught my attention. Kind of like becoming the Dread Pirate Roberts, only you didn’t mean to, and now all England is looking to put you in prison for the crimes your master committed. Something in between *The Princess Bride* and *The Fugitive* with the charm of *Stardust* and the snark of Terry Pratchett—if he wrote Robert Louis Stevenson fan fiction. *The Accidental Highwayman* should be judged on its own merits, of course, but comparing it to those books and authors is the best way to give you the feel of this novel in a way that will catch the attention of those readers who will enjoy it the most.

At the beginning of the book, author Ben Tripp purports only to be the editor of notes he found in a chest belonging to one of his ancestors. The story begins in an affected voice meant to sound like something from the eighteenth century, but laced with enough humor and snark that you feel the author is subtly looking at you from behind the words and shooting you an anachronistic wink. Tripp has mastered the balancing act of making the prose sound archaic while at the same time being palatable to modern readers. Take a gander at Tripp’s website—you can tell he’s something of a character.

So, yes, I recommend this book. Like I said to my editor, *The Accidental Highwayman* is “Delightful and charming. A swashbuckling adventure in the vein of Robert Louis Stevenson.”

Take a look at what other reviewers have said:

“Readers will root for star-crossed lovers, Kit and Morgana, and delight in their ‘opposites attract’ romance, drawn onward by a rollicking plot.... Fantasy readers, especially fans of Catherynne Valente’s work, will enjoy the author’s elegant turns of phrase. A first purchase for all fantasy collections.” —*School Library Journal*, Starred Review

“Spells, wishes and fantastical creatures aside, this rollicking yarn owes more to R.L. Stevenson than J.K. Rowling. Kit’s wry voice provides a fine pastiche of old-fashioned tale-telling... enlivened by breakneck pacing, colorful similes and a sly wit aimed at modern sensibilities.... Kit himself is as brave, clever and good-natured an orphan lad as ever buckled a swash. The promise of more adventures to come provides happily-ever-after enough. They can still write ’em like they used to; hurrah!” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“While the journey isn’t quick, it never grows tedious—danger, magic, and intrigue wait at every turn. Tripp infuses his story with whimsy, humor, and derring-do, and his miniature spot illustrations and handful of lovely full-page pieces add to the overall charm.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Tripp builds a richly imagined fantasy world, captured both in Kit’s dry, witty first-person narrative and Tripp’s detailed illustrations. The complex political machinations... make for a compelling and quietly sinister background thrum that builds until the exciting concluding battle, which handily leaves room for more adventures in the planned trilogy. Fans of classic adventure will find plenty to like here.” —*Booklist*

Want to check out an excerpt? The first two chapters are on Amazon's "Look Inside" feature, and you can read chapters three through eight on Tor.com

Desinka says

This was a very underwhelming book. Not sure I'll bother with a review. Perfect for 13-year-olds but I wouldn't recommend it to anyone older! A simplistic poet and characters and oh so boringly told.

I loved the narration though.

Rating:2.5 stars.

Jacob Proffitt says

My opinion of this book wavered greatly while reading it. It started off amusing, but sank almost to boredom around a third through. Indeed, I let it sit for nearly a week and only cracked it open to retrieve my bookmark. That point happened to be particularly engaging, though, with a few laugh-out-loud moments that pulled me back into the story.

Indeed, that middle third is fantastic—a great deal of fun, lots of good humor, and a kind of light absurdity you find in the best YA. I lost myself fully in the motley crew, but particularly in Morgana and Kit's friendship. Their growing trust amidst their insecurities and fundamentally different natures was delightful and rewarding.

Come to think of it, that first third and the last third have them mostly apart. Kit on his own is alright, I suppose, but the real warmth, the real engagement (for me) was them together. Which is a shame because Ben Tripp is a talented author with a great feel for the place and history and for making those things fit snugly into his tale of adventure. So this may be my idiosyncratic reaction that I latched onto what little romance there was as my entre into the story...

Ashley says

This was cute and well-written, but I don't think I was in the right mood for it. I'm not sure I will be reading on in the series, but if I do, it will probably be by audiobook. If you like whimsical fairy-tales of a historical nature, this might work better for you than it did for me.

Ann says

I quite enjoyed this book and the main characters. It's a little bit fantasy, a little bit adventure, a little bit action, and a little historical. Author Ben Tripp melding the tone of all these different genres so seamlessly -- I was thoroughly impressed! (There are a few chapters in the third act that felt a little darker, I think because they dealt with more true aspects of history so the events had a bit of a somber/disturbing tone. Nothing too bad, but just a warning for sensitive readers. Here are a few warnings (though with spoilers):

(view spoiler)

The adventure kept me guessing and several "reveals" did surprise me. I thought the characters worked well together and I wanted to know more about them all. That said, I that was what kept me from giving this book five stars: I wanted more. I wanted to know more about Kit, about the fairy world and rules and realms. There seems such a rich world and I felt like the backstory existed (that the author had created it all) but that it never made it onto the page. I wanted to follow along with the fairy revolution and magical rules, but I never felt like I had enough information to do so or feel totally emotionally invested because of it. And the information we did get sometimes left me more confused.

That said, the book keeps up at a pretty quick pace and I was curious how it would end. I adored Midnight (the horse) and absolutely loved Kit's obvious connection with, not only Midnight, but his master's dog Demon. As an animal lover myself, I felt all this rang very true and honest.

If there's a sequel I will likely seek it out :)

Aylee says

Great narrative reminiscent of The Princess Bride. A little tedious though.

Rashika (is tired) says

You, like me, might scoff and roll your eyes at how this book is being compared to The Princess Bride. It's understandable to be wary considering what a masterpiece The Princess Bride was, but that said, don't be. This book isn't The Princess Bride but it's definitely written in the fashion of it and that's why I adored it so much. This book isn't, at least to me, trying to be The Princess Bride but it instead is trying to invoke the same humor and the same fun adventurous feeling.

Obviously, they aren't wrong in making that comparison because this book lived up to what you would expect when a book gets compared to a beloved book. It was funny, it had witty comments and it had fantastic characters.

Kit is a great main character and someone you cannot help but root for. He is also a bit of a stereotype but that ties back into the whole fact that this book may or may not be a satirization of a typical fantasy. That said, Kit isn't really annoying, his fascination with a certain princess can be but that aside, he is a fun hero who is loyal to those he cares about and will fight for what he believes in. What else can you want from a hero?

Princess Morgana is fun too. She is a typical princess but with all her princessiness, she also manages to grow and become someone who thinks not just of herself and her selfish reasons for doing things but also thinks about the rest of her kingdom and what she could be doing to help them win this war.

What I really loved about this book was the secondary characters. They really did add to the story and made the already fun adventure a lot funnier, I do mean funnier and not funner since the adventure was already

fun. You cannot imagine how many times I burst into laughter just by the actions of these bizarre secondary characters. My favorite character was in fact Lily's uncle. His cluelessness always did me in. He had a way of messing things up but at the same time, if it weren't for him, they wouldn't have gotten as far as they had.

The romance was alright. I say alright because even though I know that there is a bit of satire involved in the book, instalove in this case wasn't done as well as it could have. Remember the romance in *The Princess Bride*? That was fantastic. The romance here? Not so much. I loved some of the moments involving the two but other mushy ones did not work for me.

The plot on the other hand did. It was so all over the place and so exciting! It was definitely an adventure and there was a circus involved! CIRCUSES ARE AWESOME. There, that's a selling point. A circus, one the characters formed. Why must I be so vague you ask? 'tis because I am trying to sell this amazingly fun book and if I were to take away the mystery of what actually happens in the book, it wouldn't be as intriguing would it?

What really works for the book is its quiriness. I love the way the narrator inserts random tid bits in the notes as he tries to define the meanings of certain words that are 'beyond our understanding' and also manages to contribute to the world building aspect of the novel. It makes the book original and it also manages to separate it from *The Princess Bride* so that while it is written in the fashion of the great novel, it isn't trying to copy it.

I am incredibly excited to see where Tripp will take us with the sequel and I only hope it's to better places since there are two more books left in the trilogy.

I'd definitely recommend this book to lovers of *The Princess Bride* and really anyone who just wants to read a fun fantasy that involves the fae. If that isn't reason enough, here is another one, the author is the son of the illustrator for *Amelia Bedelia*! That worked for me, I hope it'll be enough to convince you to pick up this fabulously fun book.

Angela says

Do you know why this will be one of the most important YA books of fall 2014? Because...it represents both a nod to literature and stories of days past and a wonderful example of breaking the mold of YA fiction.

A must-have for all YA collections and a great crossover for adults who've not lost the taste for a well-crafted adventure story with lots of magical creatures. Also recommended for AP literature (vocabulary) and teens in search of the contemporary classic.

The cumbersome title will ease you into this archaic and fresh adventure. Being this is the *First Tale of Kit Bristol, His Various Accompaniments and Their Fantastical Adventures* readers will be looking for book 2 soon enough.

I hope you've started writing it Ben, and not just "theoretically" planning it all out in a Disney-schemed plan-o-gram. No one likes to wait for a sequel (and then final book in a trilogy). Especially not one where the pauper vows to break the rule of law to seek his love and continue his life of accidental swashbuckling!

"'Destroy the phantoloroum' she wailed, and fell back, unconscious." (pg 185 of the unfinished proof)

Lindsay says

2.5. I'm torn on this one. Basically: good writing, but bogged down in an annoying romance that becomes more and more central to the plot as the book goes on. The author cannot write women interestingly at all, and the plot is sadly more about bland fairy rebellions than highwaymen. It operates as total wish-fulfilment fantasy on the part of the unremarkable main character who nonetheless does everything important ever, thinks of every plan, saves everybody, is the only active character, and serves as de-facto leader despite everyone being older and more experienced than him in various realms of life. There's very little input from other characters in this way, which robs the book of a fun roadtrip with friends feel, and forces Kit's main character status down your throat constantly. He has a few endearing traits, particularly his awfulness with love, which is rendered ineffective by the fact that all pertinent female characters nonetheless fall for him.

His fascination with Morgana is entirely about her beauty; he even admits being irritated by her and they both confess they have literally nothing in common, but they're in love because he's the main and she's beautiful (he talks about this trait of hers far, far more than anything else about her). The romance, as a result, is SO well-trod and unearned, so insistent on boring, old-fashioned gendered stereotypes that involve the beautiful girl being frequently saved by a "good guy" man who is then constantly validated by her emotional investment in him, while he just keeps going on about her beauty. It's tedious and frustrating because there's no chemistry between them, and I was so conscious of the fact that they were only in love because it's a rule that a man and a woman, when brought together, must fall in love, especially if they're attractive.

The book is self-conscious about the sexism of the time period it's working in, while simultaneously constantly referring to the female characters as emotional and representing them as fainting, or easily offended, or a number of tiresome tropes. Morgana's personality is "beautiful and high-born" and while she has a few moments of awkwardness that were endearing, she also exists solely to validate Kit, as a plot device to further the fairy rebellion plot. I did like her friendship with Lily, and appreciated that there were no jealous-women-fighting-over-man subplots. Lily herself I also liked, but I felt, again, like her romantic interest in Kit was totally arbitrary, and while I think her journey to self-confidence has potential, it also comes to us through Kit's unobservant eyes, so it feels really vague and background-y.

This book has excellent writing, but the most frustrating characters in terms of how evident the flattery of Kit is. I didn't dislike Kit, but I did feel like the entire book revolves around him to the detriment of literally everyone else in the novel. It's a funny criticism in a way, to complain that the main character has too much focus, but when everything seems designed to flatter him, and when he seems to be the only character capable of productive action at all times, it really takes me out of the book and reminds me of the author's machinations behind the scenes. Which is jarring. So: I found this book had gads of potential but found it really underdeveloped in key areas (mainly, in the romance and character department). But I think that someone less fussy about characters might be able to more readily overlook these things, so 2.5.

Kathryn says

Overall, I really liked the book. I liked Kit and I liked that he remained honorable and all throughout the book. I don't feel that we got to know a lot of the things that made him really unique, but I did like him and think of him fondly. I felt that the story could have been developed a lot more in certain places, especially as regarded the details of the fairy revolution and magical realms and rules, but I enjoyed reading it and feel it

was a good yarn with a fine tone for the time period while striking a fitting balance between gravity and humor. I was concerned it might be too dark or violent, but I didn't think it was either (well, I had to skip over the parts on the prison ship but that might not bother most people--I'm just really sensitive and find such things disturbing)

The blend of history and faerie magic was great -- and I really loved that Tripp created a fairy story that males (or anyone not into the typical Tinkerbell fairy types) could enjoy. I would consider reading more of the series and was sorry to see that the sequel hasn't been released.

Taylor Knight says

I'd seen this book in a little indie book store sometime last year and I thought the cover (mine is black not red) was so beautiful. I loved the font and the title. I loved everything about it. So I had to get it right away. And even though it sat on my shelf for months, I never really forgot about it.

A few months ago I read Rise Again by Ben Tripp and I really enjoyed so I had fairly high hopes for this book. I assumed the writing style was going to be the same because why wouldn't I. However, I was extremely surprised to find that The Accidental Highwayman and Rise Again are nothing alike. Both books have vastly different styles. But, because of that, Ben Tripp is now one of my favorite authors. Each book had a writing style that fit perfectly with the main character. I'm not going to go into Rise Again but style of The Accidental Highwayman fit the main character really well and that's something that I never noticed or thought about until now. But Ben Tripp really showcases how each main character of a book needs their own writing style.

I don't know how Tripp did it, but he's such an amazing writer.

The concept of this book is really original and fun. I really liked how different it was. I did find it a little boring at times and I felt like if I had read this book in one sitting, I could have gotten into a lot more. I've seen that this book is compared to The Princess Bride but I've never seen that movie so I can't say if the comparison is accurate or not.

I felt like the world building could have been spread out a little more. At times I felt like as the reader, I was getting a lot of info all at once. This book is only 304 pages so maybe if it was a little longer, there could have been more times to spread out all the world building.

Overall, I really enjoyed The Accidental Highwayman. It was a fun, quick read. There were a few flaws for me but nothing major. I wish I could have sat down and read this book in one sitting because I think I would have liked it a lot more.

If you're looking for a quick fantasy read and that's different and original, I'd recommend The Accidental Highwayman.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

I'm not rating it. So just calm down. I promised myself that I would move on from books that just don't cut it for me.

So....

I can only take so much info dumping-world building and I nut up.

I received an arc copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Gavin says

I'll keep this brief as I do not want to waste any more of my time on this book. It was a total bore. I did not care for either the characters or the happenings. Even the humor fell flat. I'm very disappointed as the synopsis and the title both made this sound like it would be a very fun read. It was a book that I fail to see appealing to either adults or younger young adults.

Rating: 2 stars.

Audio Note: This was narrated by Steve West. I was not really a fan. I'm not quite sure why as his accents were fairly accurate and his reading was competent.

Corinna says

What a conundrum of a little gem! What was this? Who writes like this anymore?

Collecting thoughts in 3...2...1...

Okay. This book was essentially *Stardust* if the fantasy elements had tumbled over the wall.

So many of the book's elements were incredibly appealing. The premise was fantastic. The writing style was astounding. Like I said, who writes like this anymore? The vernacular does slow down the reading pace a bit, but the style is absolutely adorable. It's a blend of old English, nonsense, Eldritch, and almost a C.S. Lewis vibe. And some of the wording is laugh-out-loud rubbish in the best way possible (a few uses of "thee," "thou," and "gaol" instead of "jail"). Also, no big deal, but the use of words like "slubberdegullion," "kippage," and "tatterdemalion." Thank the stars above they were complete with a little *definition* at the bottom of the page, because dang...I can't say I've ever used them thar fancy words in a Scrabble game. But you better bet your sweet cheeks I will now.

I LOVED Willum and Gruntle. Their banter was hysterically precious.

"Why would a doctor hang a fellow? What sort of doctor would he be?"

"A Hippocratic oaf," said Gruntle. "I made a joke!"

To which I promptly spit out my water. Also...

"Oo's got it!" Lily shouted.

"Got what?" Uncle Cornelious asked.

"My comb! My good tortoise comb!"

"You can't comb a tortoise," Gruntle said. "Bain't got no hairs on 'em."

"The manlings have a very famous story about a tortoise and hair," Willum pointed out.

To which I promptly choked on my Twizzler.

This kind of wit and dialogue made the whole book very endearing.

Also, the treasure trove of fantastic pictures was just delightful. I mean, come on, even us cold, calloused adults like pictures in books sometimes.

But I also had a few drawbacks. Earlier I said this book was like *Stardust* if the magical elements tumbled over the wall. But only a tad bit of the fantasy elements. Like...I wish, much like Jericho, the walls came tumbling down. Because it took a bit for me to even realize this was going to be a book with magic elements. And then they came slow at first. Eventually, it picked up speed a bit, but I really hope Ben Tripp capitalizes on this even more in the next book. Also, because of the writing style, the reading pace was slowed just a bit. A lot of people complained about the heavy romance element. I guess to me, it was what it was. It wasn't obnoxiously overdone in my opinion, but definitely a "get-the-girl" kind of story. My biggest drawback with this book was having a bit of difficulty getting into it, but to be totally fair to the author, this might have been due to me being pulled to night shift several times recently and being pretty tired.

I'll probably read the next book. I really appreciate an original, unique story and this was definitely different from anything I've read for a long time.

I'd rate this book a PG. Even the violence and moments of peril were mild enough I don't think a child would have issue with it. Although a good portion of the humor would go over a child's head, I believe.
