



Kit

Marina Fiorato

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Dublin 1702...and Irish beauty Kit Kavanagh has everything she could want in life. Newly married, she runs a successful alehouse with her beloved husband Richard. The wars that rage in Europe over the Spanish throne seem a world away. But everything changes on the night that Richard simply disappears. Finding the Queen's shilling at the bottom of Richard's tankard, Kit realizes that her husband has been taken for a soldier. Kit follows Richard's trail across the battlefields of Italy in the Duke of Marlborough's regiment. Living as a man, risking her life in battle, she forms a close bond with her wry and handsome commanding officer Captain Ross. When she is forced to flee the regiment following a duel, she evades capture by dressing once more as a woman. But the war is not over for Kit. Her beauty catches the eye of the scheming Duke of Ormonde, who recruits her to spy upon the French. In her finery she meets Captain Ross once again, who seems just as drawn to the woman as he was to the soldier. Torn between Captain Ross and her loyalty to her husband, and under the orders of the English Crown, Kit finds that her life is in more danger now than on the battlefield. Of all the dangers that she faced, the greatest was discovery...

Kit Details

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Author : Marina Fiorato

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From Reader Review Kit for online ebook

Paula Dennan says

Kit Kavanagh is an extraordinary woman. When her husband “disappears” off to become a soldier, Kit, disguised as a man, enlists in order to follow him across war-torn Italy.

The Double Life of Mistress Kit Kavanagh* is based on a true story, with Fiorato obviously putting her own spin on these events.

As I watched Kit grow in strength and courage I was left feeling cold and detached. The story is intriguing, so why wasn't I connecting with it? Is it because it took me a couple of months to read? Or did it take me longer to read because I wasn't connecting with it? I don't know, but I found Fiorato's writing duller and slower moving than Kit Kavanagh deserves.

*I received an ARC, from the publisher, via Bookbridgr

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Beth says

The Double Life of Mistress Kit Kavanagh was an interesting read for me. I can see why the story appeals to many people who have read this. Intrigued by the premise, I thought it was going to be a tale about an Irish Mulan figure. I had no idea that Kit Kavanagh was a real woman and just as badass as she was described as in the story. It was clear to me that Marina Fiorato had done her research and I found the history of the wars and the ways that Kit disguised herself as a man (including having a silver penis) absolutely fascinating and I have certainly learnt something new. I also enjoyed the "training montages" in both parts because I really

enjoy the character developments these scenes create. Admittedly, it did take me a little while to read the book as I got into the second part of the book more than the first.

However, the book did cause some issues for me. I wouldn't particularly recommend it to anyone squeamish with gore. It is a book that doesn't glorify war and shows it as it is which is definitely important. There were some pretty grim moments where Marina Fiorato described the sounds created during the gory scenes which churned my stomach (admittedly I'm really squeamish when it comes to gore).

I also had an issue with a majority of the LGBT representation. I was surprised that there was representation in the book and at first, I was excited to see how Marina Fiorato would explore the theme especially within the army. Unfortunately, a majority of the representation fell into at least one of the categories creepy, manipulative or addicted to drugs. I understand that this was the 17th-18th century and that being LGBT+ was taboo but it did sadden me to see such a negative portrayal. I felt it impacted the characters in the story. For example, Dr Atticus Lambe was such a creepy character and I liked the idea he was a jealous lover of one of the male characters because usually this part is played by a female character. However, because most of the other portrayed gay men were described in such a negative light, it seemed almost the reason why he was "evil" was that he was gay. This was a notion I didn't particularly feel comfortable with.

Vicki says

Easiest five stars I've ever given! My love affair with Kit began the second I first saw the cover, it's just stunning! Then I read the blurb - it sounded like some kind of Irish Mulan and I was immediately intrigued. It's been a while since I've had time to read a book that I can fully immerse myself in, and this fitted the bill nicely. I don't know what it is about the book that grabbed me so - the plot, the settings and the characters all just had me hooked. The attention to detail is perfect, and you can easily picture the changing landscapes and characters of Kit's journey without being overwhelmed with information.

Kit is everything I wish I could be. She is brave with an unquenchable thirst for adventure (not to mention that fact that I'm jealous of her hair!) She drew me completely into her story, and while I didn't want it to end I was also anxious about whether she would get a happy ending, so much so that it was a real struggle not to read ahead! The novel is split into two parts, 'The Sword' and 'The Fan', each detailing one of Kit's identities - the soldier and the lady respectively. Despite all of the acting that each role requires, the costumes, the accents and the mannerisms, we as the reader never lose sight of the real Kit, the girl beneath it all.

As for Ross.. I knew from the minute that we first meet him that I was going to love him. I loved the moments between him and Kit at the fireside, how he drew maps on the ground to help bring the reader up to speed as much as Kit. I loved how he loved his men, how he was their comrade as much as their Captain. I just loved him. Sigh.

Action and dialogue are balanced just right, and thankfully for me the battle scenes, while realistic, aren't too graphic- I'm incredibly squeamish and gore can put me right off a book. The plot is full of twists and is unpredictable to the last - I couldn't put it down!

The ending was just perfect, and I have to admit that the epilogue almost had me in tears - which is a big admission for someone who has never cried at a book, ever! It was also a wonderful surprise to find the historical note at the end telling me that Kit was a real person. Granted, a little artistic license was taken with her story, but there were more similarities than I would have expected, and to know that she, and Ross,

actually existed just made the whole thing even more real to me. Fiorato also named the rest of the Dragoons after the men on her local war memorial which I just thought was such a lovely thing to do!

If you were to take everything that I love from historical romance and historical fiction and put it all in one book it would resemble something very much like this. Kit is the best book that I have read in a very long time, and is easily one of my all time favourite historical novels!

5/5 stars - and I'd give it more if I could!

Thanks to bookbridgr for bringing this book into my life in exchange for a review!

<http://lilmissvixreads.blogspot.com/2...>

Helen White says

Thoroughly enjoyed this gender bending soldier and spy caper. Kit disguises herself and enlists in the English army in order to find her husband who's gone off to war. Instead she finds comradeship and adventure. Based loosely on historical truth this is a fascinating travel through battle history. Kit is a resourceful heroine and extremely likeable, it's easy to follow her around Europe on her campaign. Well worth a read.

Jessica O'Toole says

Hm. Not quite the overwhelming tale of awesome I expected. It had its moments, but the pace and tone were pretty bland and hardly ever changed. No urgency, no deep, passionate fire, no raging exclamations - drama, damn it! It's about 150 pages too long and to be honest, from what I understand from a very short search on Google, and having now started the biography of her life, Kit Kavanagh was a damn sight more brutal than the rather sappy and dim girl of this piece (I found no great intellect or supreme resourcefulness) - she has stuck a metal bar through a sergeant's leg already as a girl. Not to mention she was almost a decade older and rather well educated at the time she joined the army.

Attempting to rate a fiction book whilst keeping the historical side out of it would be easier if the author hadn't put an historical note in the back detailing bits of Kit's life, which is an invite to go and confirm for yourselves just how much of Kit wasn't in this book. And of course, the author only detailed the bits of Kit's life that tied in with her version of Kit's life as far as I can tell. It was stated that she had read the biography.

However, keeping the historical side out of it, I'm not quite as disappointed as I was with Song of the Sea Maid, but where Dawnay was strong in the first half and a sop in the next, Kit was kind of placid the whole way through.

Missing pieces that are way more interesting:

-Kit was almost 30 years old when she joined the troops, not this 19-year-old of this version. I feel the author may have used her fictional youth to create more emphasis on Ross teaching her and being a mentor (so she'd fall for him) and to induce a feeling of innocence rather than a sexualised woman, who Kit seems to have been comfortable as. To be honest, it's a disservice to Kit, and there's no reason why a nigh-on-30-year-

old woman dressed as a man cannot be alluded to as the 'pretty dragoon', which actually happened. Maybe an adult with a strong grasp of herself was beyond the author's interest or skill, but I've no basis for comparison for this author's work, so maybe it's just a one-off.

- Upon finding her husband during the war with another woman, she bit the woman's nose off. In this version she gets all weepy and woe is me. She remarried him in the army before her comrades after being outed.

- She already had two children with Richard and was pregnant with the third when Richard disappeared. In this version she has no children, and actually loses the ability because of a musket wound. She really did suffer a musket wound (which eventually led to her exposure) which may have rendered her no longer able to bear children, but she was already a mother, thrice over. I feel the author probably didn't want to represent her as some kind of child deserter (she left her children with her mother and a nurse), but it actually takes away a hell of a lot of drama that could have been had. Instead the old cliché of 'woman loses ability to have children she didn't know she wanted' rears its ugly head on the great road of 'you cannot write about women without alluding to reproduction and the heartbreak of losing it'. Especially irritating when this was not the case, besides the fact that a woman addicted to warfare might actually not have wanted any children anyway.

- The woman who declared Kit was the father of her child seemed to have been a slighted woman (a woman whose advances didn't work on Kit) rather than some heiress and, though Kit did accept the paternity to conceal her sex (though she was friggin' unhappy about the lies), the child in question died within a month of birth. Again, the whole 'I really wanted a child' thing was tediously drawn out with this story. Though to be fair, Kit does die just after Bianca's child comes to visit her, because dead Captain Ross is calling - eventually she abandons her child. Priorities, love.

- She was actually a damn good looter and probably a pretty good brawler considering her taste for war and the respect of her comrades. In this version she's a bit flouncy with the more 'immoral' sides of the battle and always trying to do her best to be seen as generous and kind. Meh.

Not missing bits:

- She did in fact have a metal dick created. It's kind of odd as this character doesn't seem the type... The real Kit? Probably would have asked for a ten-incher.

I think it's a very tepid rendition of the life of this woman who sounds so marvellously more interesting in the biography, even though I'm only on page 17 or so, but who has had her most interesting and startling details, ones that would give us a fuller idea of her morals and ideals, removed and restricted, so she can ride into the distance with Captain Ross, because after Richard and Ross she went through two husbands (she died Christian Davies). Then again, I've not read the whole biography yet, maybe she gets mega boring.

I think the rule is if you're going to write about a character in history then use the history. There's no reason why all the points above could not have been included for a better story and no need to change what's actually recorded, because it hasn't made it more dramatic or inspiring. Otherwise, make that shit up and create a fictional heroine - Kit could have been the inspiration here rather than the subject. I'd be really feckin' irritated if someone took Michael Faraday's history, changed it so he had kids (because he and his wife couldn't) to show what a great father he'd have made. Don't use a name to sell a book unless you're true to who they were, it doesn't mean you have to copy every single detail, but when details are there... You can't 'perfect' a woman who was by no means perfect, but you can give us an extraordinary story of a courageous and persistent woman whose character wasn't faultless without us disliking her because of those faults. I believe those 'faults' are probably what the men in her life loved most. It's the toxic fairytale dream that

removes a woman's 'questionable' character for the sake of a soppy happy ending and a 'love me because I'm so sweet and kind and lovely' vibe. I'm not saying she wasn't, but it wasn't all she was. It seems to me Kit's ending was happy enough already without the dilution.

It seems this book irritated me more than I realised.

Veronica Barbara says

Fantastic book! I loved everything about it. The story is amazing and the way it is narrated really engaging. The descriptions are perfect, it's as if the reader is truly embarking on all Kit's adventures. To top it all the story revolves around a woman who kicks ass - one might think that her adventures are impossible but she is actually a historical figure and hers is a true story. Would give it 10 stars if I could! :D I read almost all of Marina Fiorato's books and I have to admit that this is her best ever.

Cora ? Tea Party Princess says

5 Words: Love, war, family, deception, strength.

BOOK HANGOVER ALERT

This book was absolutely amazing. I loved it in every way and at the end I was heartbroken and speechless.

Inspired by Mother Ross, this is a whirlwind of an adventure. Kit has so many identities, and she almost became a different character as her life turned from publican to soldier to spy and her name changed from Kit to Christian to Christiane. But right there, at the very heart of the narrative, she was still the same astounding young woman.

My favourite parts of the story were those set with the Dragoons. I loved Captain Ross and his relationship with his men. He was fair and just and an all round wonderful character.

I loved the exploration of forbidden relationships, and how thin the line between friendship-love and romance-love can be. I also loved how extenuating circumstances can change so much in such a very short time, and how thoughts are clouded by what someone wants to see.

I received a copy of this for free via the publisher for review purposes.

Before reading

I am just starting this, but when I heard about it I jumped at the chance to read it. It sounds so exciting. And the cover is beautiful (and I'm a magpie who likes pretty things)

From the blurb, it sounds like it's going to be a bit of an Irish Mulan-type story that escalates into espionage, with a dash of forbidden love and lots and lots of danger. It sounds so exciting!

Prestoni says

Now that is more like the other a Marina Fiorato books I have enjoyed. What a great story, gripping to the very end. One of those characters you would rather not leave behind.

Jane says

The War of the Spanish Succession?

I must confess that, for all the historical novels I've read over the years, I knew nothing of that particular conflict but the name. I know now; I learned a lot in the course of a wonderful adventure with a remarkable heroine.

In 1700 Charles II, king of Spain, died without an heir. He willed his throne to Philip of Anjou, and Philip's grandfather, Louis XIV of France, was quick to declare him king of Spain, and to declare that France and Spain would be united.

Neighbouring countries were unhappy at the prospect of France wielding so much power, and so a Grand Alliance of England, Holland, Prussia, and Austria was formed; their objective to put the Archduke Charles of Austria on the Spanish throne instead of Philip.

Kit Kavanagh knew nothing of that. She was happy; she was young, pretty and vivacious; she loved working in her aunt's Dublin inn; and she loved her handsome new husband.

She was devastated when he disappeared without warning; leaving without a word, leaving behind his 'Queen's shilling'; his reward for enlisting in the British army. Her father had been killed in battle and she knew that she had to do something to make sure that she didn't lose her husband too.

With her aunt's tacit encouragement, Kit disguised herself as boy and enlisted too.

Now, this may sound improbable, but I must tell you that Kit Kavanagh lived and breathed, and that Marina Fiorato has dressed the bones of a true story with some plausible, if unlikely, fiction.

The first half of the novel follows Kit's life with her regiment. She worked hard to keep up with the men, taking a great deal of trouble and fervently hoping that she would be able to catch up with her husband.

There were complications:

Kit could not bear to see injustices, and she would speak out and take action first and worry about the consequences later.

And she found herself falling in love with her captain, Captain Ross; and she knew that he cared about her too, but as a promising young man, not as the woman she really was.

I loved all of the twists and turns, all of the characters and relationships, in this part of the story. I loved Kit, but I worried about her. She had the best of hearts and the best of intentions, she had her wits about her; but

it seemed unlikely that she would find her husband and very probable that her secret would be discovered. And what then?

Well, luckily, when this chapter of Kit's life had to come to an end she tumbled into another story.

She fell into the hands of the Duke of Ormonde, and he was quick to see her potential. He made Kit his pupil, so that she could be sent into a very different kind of battle, as a spy.

I was less taken with this part of the story; it seemed a little too improbable, a little too unsubtle, but I still had a lovely time following Kit.

The various threads of the story came together to make a wonderfully exciting final act.

(I'd had an idea of how things would end up quite early on, but no idea quite how the story would get there.)

I was impressed with how well Marina Fioranto constructed her plot, how well she must have understood – and loved – the history, and how very well she told her story. She brought all of her characters and all of the different places they passed through so vividly to life.

Her prose is very easy to read – light rather than literary – and I found it very easy to keep turning pages.

An epilogue tied up all of the loose ends – it maybe tied them up a little too tightly, but it was nice to know what happened, and it was good to have the real history that underpinned the story acknowledged.

The fiction became a little too fanciful; but its heart was in the right place, it was never less than entertaining, and I am delighted to have been introduced to a wonderful woman from history.

Claudia Soylu says

Kit Kavanagh die 1702 in Dublin lebte, war eine schöne rothaarige Frau, die jeden Mann haben konnte. Sie entschied sich zum Leidwesen ihrer Tante für Richard, einem Schenker. Aber sie waren glücklich, bis Richard von einem Soldatentrupp zwangsrekrutiert wurde. Kits Tante konnte nicht sehen, wie sie litt und bot an die Schenke alleine zu führen. So begab Kit sich auf die Suche nach Richard. Sie verkleidete sich als Mann und ließ sich rekrutieren. Mit der neuen Soldatentruppe gelang sie auf den Seeweg nach Genua. Die Überfahrt stellte sich mit so vielen Männern als schwierig heraus. Kit fürchtete ständig, entdeckt zu werden. Auf dem Schiff gab es wenigstens einen abschließbaren Abtritt, aber auf dem Fußmarsch, über den Landweg blieb nur die Wiese.

Unter dem Regiment Captain Ross zogen sie in den Krieg. Obwohl Kit eine treue Ehefrau war, konnte sie es nicht verhindern sich in den Captain zu verlieben. Als Mann verkleidet, war es unmöglich ihm ihre Gefühle zu offenbaren.

Meine Meinung: Ich finde es fantastisch, wie Kit ihre wahre Identität als Frau geheim hielt. Alleine der Fußmarsch über Land, wie sie ihre Notdurft verrichtet hat, war brillant. Ständig habe ich mit Kit mitgefiebert und gefürchtet, dass sie entdeckt wird. Am liebsten würde ich so viel schreiben und mich darüber auslassen, was Kit auf dem Weg zu ihrem Richard erlebt hat, aber ohne zu Spoilern unmöglich. Ich finde jede

Einzelheit sollte der Leser selbst entdecken.

Auch den zweiten Abschnitt, wie Kit zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt Ross als Frau begegnet war, fand ich gut gelungen und spannend. Obwohl das Buch 576 Seiten hat, war die Geschichte viel zu schnell zu Ende. Das Buch ist mir nur durch das tolle Cover aufgefallen. Die roten Haare und das halbe Gesicht sahen geheimnisvoll aus. Zuerst dachte ich, es wäre eine Fantasy-Geschichte, da ich nur Fantasy lese. Nach dem Durchlesen des Klappentext wurde mir schnell klar, dass es sich um einen Historischen Roman handelte. Aber da hatte mich die Geschichte schon gepackt und ich musste unbedingt das Buch lesen und habe es nicht bereut.

Jo says

This was a novelised version of the life of an Irish woman who disguised herself as a man in order to join the army and follow her husband to war. I'd read bits about 'Mother Ross' in several non-fiction books so was quite excited to come across this novel in the library. It's a fantastic tale and Fiorato is a wonderful storyteller. Kit and her life came right off the page to absorb me in her adventures. Even without the fictional parts, this was one remarkable woman.

Babs says

I received a copy of this book from Hodder via BookBridgr in return for an honest review.

I have to say I loved this book. It follows the story of Kit Kavanagh, an Irish woman, who dresses up as a man to try and find her husband who has been "press ganged" into being a soldier. She embarks on a tremendous journey across Europe, fighting on the battlefields during the Spanish War of Succession. When she unearths the truth about what's happened to her husband, she is placed in even more danger by being brought into the circle of the scheming Duke of Ormonde, who recruits her as a spy.

The book is split into two halves. The first covering Kit's adventures on the battlefield, and the second covering her time with the Duke of Ormonde. I have to say the transition between the end of the first half and the start of the second wasn't exactly smooth, and I felt that the pace that had built up through the first half just disappeared at the start of the second. It took a little while for the pace to pick back up again. But this didn't remove from the overall enjoyment of the book.

It's even more astonishing when you realise this is based on a true story. It just goes to show that feminism was alive and well in the 1700's!!

As usual with historical fiction my main niggle is when historical facts get incorrectly reported. I've been known to have a wobbly over Philippa Gregory's premature introduction of the potato into Britain!! This book isn't perfect on that front (Kensington Palace, not Buckingham Palace, was the main seat of royalty in the 1700's!). But again, it didn't distract from the utterly fantastic storyline.

I'm not the biggest fan of historical fiction. It's a genre I like and enjoy to read now and again. But this was an absolutely brilliant book! I have to say it's the first book by *Fiorato* that I have read, but I'm sure it won't be the last!

Huge thanks to Hodder and BookBridgr for this fantastic book.

This review was originally posted on Babs' Bookshelf

Emma says

I'm not so familiar with regards to the history that's intertwined in this book, but I love hearing of a story that is in fact in relation to a true story and this book does just that. Set during the 1700s Dublin and Spain, a time of uncertainty of who was to rule over a large active empire that was Europe due to the loss of the childless Charles II.

I found this story a fun and interesting read, a perfect life for Kit and her husband Richard in the delights of their own pub in Dublin. Yet within hours Richard is enlisted to fight abroad, desperate to find her loving husband Kit makes a journey of her own of fighting amongst other men in the battlefields. If anything the story reminded me a bit of the Disney film Mulan, of posing as a man to fight for someone she loves.

It was lovely to come to the end of the novel where 'Historical Note' was added, informing me that Kit was a real person and a great amount of what happened in this book was actually true. Just a small fact, but Kit died in 1739 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, London. When a book has some historical truth it makes it even more fascinating to read, especially when you come to the end and it comes as a surprise that the story was loosely based on real life- simply brilliant!

At times I was a little disappointed with how Kit's path was forming, but I can't particularly fault this book. I wanted to connect with Kit more but I just didn't with some of the decisions that she made throughout the book. Yes, she was brave and kind and fought for what she believed in but I was uncertain as to how her journey was going to pan out. But that's not a bad thing, I like surprise and having myself proved wrong. The way the story was told I often felt I wasn't living in the moment with Kit, I didn't feel like I felt her emotions and therefore hard to show some empathy towards what happens to her.

A great historical fiction story, plenty of action and historical aspects that kept me glued all the way through. I now have Marina noted as an author to look out for so I can enjoy more of her books in the future. So thank you to the publisher and Marina for giving me the opportunity to read this book, I look forward to reading even more!

Joey Woolfardis says

Dublin 1702. Irish beauty Kit Kavanagh has everything she could want in life. Newly married, she runs a successful alehouse with her beloved husband Richard. The wars that rage in Europe over the Spanish throne seem a world away.

But everything changes on the night that Richard simply disappears. Finding the Queen's shilling at the bottom of Richard's tankard, Kit realises that her husband has been taken for a soldier.

[I reviewed another of Fiorato's books, Beatrice & Benedick, earlier in the year. I was almost impressed by it

and it had the distinction of being the first romance book that I almost enjoyed, too, so I thought I would give Marina Fiorato another chance as an author and see how she fared with a non-fan-fiction kind of book.]

My first problem is the term "Irish beauty". I know, I know, it's impossible for anyone to be interesting if they're not beautiful, right guys? The plot is basic: Kit dresses as a man and joins the army to find her husband Richard. I have no quarrel with this, I've read many books like it before and as it was based on a real-life story I was very intrigued. But those two words really hit me. I find it unnecessary to describe her as such and even a little far-fetched. I know men can look attractively like women, and vice versa, but the idea of an Irish "beauty" being able to disguise herself as a man successfully is ridiculous.

However, I pushed this to one side because I imagine it was more a marketing ploy than anything else and set to work. I read the back of the book first and learnt that Kit Kavanagh was a real person, which intrigued me. It's difficult to find out about women in history, mostly because I don't read a lot of history, and because most historians tend to be men who write about men, but they intrigue me no end. The plot follows her life in the general sense and, as I've said before, it really interested me. Having said that, the book itself was abysmal.

The writing was very dull. I will admit that I skimmed the last 200 pages or so of this book: it did not hold my attention and I felt that most of the words were add-ons: unnecessarily just there to up the word count. I also found that the dialogue was very flat and rarely added to the action at all. It didn't feel like a historical novel or indeed one set in any particular time as, even though they spoke about dates and wars and kings and so on, there was little else to give it any kind of world beyond Kit's own.

Now, the characters. Kit was fairly well-rounded, though she seemed to be that kind of feminist historical character who has been romanticised. I am in no doubt that our history is marked with extraordinary women who were fantastic whilst under the oppression of society, but in these books they always seem to be imbued with super-powers beyond which any human could obtain. There was also that odious hatred towards men: again, I'm sure some men in history were villainous, misogynist and narrow-minded, but we also know that they were not all like this. I am reminded of *The Silvered Heart*, where all the men who were not romantically linked to the main character were dastards, evil people who cared not for women at all. I am, to be frank, sick of man bashing.

Perhaps I am being harsh. I enjoyed the story for what it was and I'm glad I learnt about a spectacular woman in history who was not as taken by the oppressive society as most of them were. And I like the cover and the illustrations within. But I did not like the writing as I found it dull and slow, and I did not like the flat characters who were only there to support Kit on her journey. I am forever grateful to Marina for both introducing me to Christian Davies and for helping me to believe that I can enjoy romance, but sadly this is where we part. I will not be reading any more of her books, though you cannot say I did not try.