



Marian's Christmas Wish - Just a simple Christmas Wish -- but not simple when Love is at Stake

Carla Kelly

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Miss Marian Wynswitch is a rather unconventional young lady. She plays chess, reads Greek, and is as educated as any young man. And she's certain falling in love is a ridiculous endeavor and vows never to do such a thing. But everything changes when she receives a Christmas visit from someone unexpected--a young and handsome English lord.

Marian's Christmas Wish - Just a simple Christmas Wish -- but not simple when Love is at Stake Details

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From Reader Review Marian's Christmas Wish - Just a simple Christmas Wish -- but not simple when Love is at Stake for online ebook

Caz says

This is a thoroughly charming and heartwarming story. Marian Wynswich is sixteen-going-on-seventeen, but nonetheless has shouldered much of the responsibility for her household since the death of her profligate father the year before.

She loves her family dearly, but they don't make life all that easy for Marian or for themselves. Her younger brother Alistair is sent down from Eton and her elder brother Percy is often away. Her sister Ariadne, though beautiful, will not say 'boo' to a goose and her mother is often self-absorbed and critical of Marian to the point of unkindness.

Marian is educated rather than accomplished; she frequently speaks without thinking and displays hoydenish tendencies – but for all that, she is devoted to her family and wants only to secure their happiness. Unfortunately however, the death of her father has left the family in straightened circumstances, and they will have to sell their home in order to clear the debts he left behind. This will therefore be the last Christmas they have in the house, and Marian is determined to ensure that it is their best ever.

I would normally have difficulty in empathising with a heroine who is so young, but Marian is so well written that her youth is never an issue. She is naturally lively, intelligent and caring; and if there are times when she does act rather immaturely, those are more than compensated for by the depth of her compassion and love for her family. And as the novel progresses, we see her starting to make the journey from girlhood to womanhood as she becomes more circumspect while losing none of the qualities which make her so likeable.

The impetus for the move towards a greater maturity comes largely from Marian's association with Gilbert Collinwood, Lord Ingraham (who is just gorgeous), who has returned to England with her brother Percy. Marian and Ingraham very quickly strike up a friendship and he begins to show an understanding and sympathy towards her that she has not so far received from any of her family.

It is quickly clear to the reader (if not to Marian) that Gil is attracted to her, although he does nothing overtly to take things in a more romantic direction between them. I really liked the way their relationship developed; their friendship was very easy and there was lots of hand-holding and touching (probably more than the conventions of the time would have permitted, to be honest), which all added to the gradual build up of the romantic tension between them.

In the second half of the book, we discover that there is a lot more to Gil than meets the eye, and through him, Marian becomes embroiled in a scheme to expose an English plot to supply weapons to Napoleon. She is disappointed to discover the secret life Gil has been leading, and tells him so in no uncertain terms. That is not enough for him to want to discontinue it however – he knows that someone has to do what he does and thinks it might as well be him – but what he can't see is the toll it has taken on him, and the effect it could have on the people around him. Marian, however, sees this clearly, and following a terrible experience, takes a rather extreme step in order to force Gil to stop and think.

Gil and Marian are extremely well-drawn, likeable characters who are clearly very well suited and Marian is refreshingly level-headed for the heroine of a romance novel. Even after Gil does something seemingly unforgiveable, and despite her own feelings of hurt and despair, Marian finds it in herself to wait and find out what might really be going on rather than running away or having a missish hissy fit.

This is a story about hope, kindness and compassion; about the importance of family and of love. And yes, Marian's Christmas wish *does* ultimately come true – and in the best possible way.

TJ says

Awwwww... Sweet and clean and Christmas! What a nice diversion during a hectic season. While the situations were a little far fetched and hurdling an amazingly grown-up sixteen year old heroine was a stretch, one couldn't help but love the indomitable spirit of Marian, nor the long-suffering sweetness of Gil. This is a story that teenage girls will gobble up and women can relax, escape and giggle at.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Marian's Christmas Wish was an enjoyable Regency read with a holiday setting. The main character, Marian, is a spunky 16 year old girl who has shouldered a lot of the burden of taking care of her family. Her family is in severe financial straits since their profligate father died a year ago.

In the hope that Marian's older sister, Ariadne, will marry well and save the family home, their brother Percy brings home two friends for Christmas: Sir William and Gilbert Collinwood, Lord Ingraham. Unfortunately for Percy's plans, Ariadne is already in love with the (also poor) local vicar, but Marian begins to fall for Gil. Gil, though very attracted to Marian, holds back not just because of the age difference between them (he's 28!!) but because his life is dangerous and complicated. But Marian refuses to let things go and ends up getting embroiled in a dangerous scheme as a result, and Gil discovers he has to rethink his notions of how he's living his life.

This was a great Regency romance and normally I'd put it at 4 to 4 1/2 stars, but one single thing is dragging the rating down: the age difference between the characters (28 and 16) was just too much for me to stomach. To make matters worse, it's hard to forget that Marian is 16 because, although in many ways she is the heart of her family, she's also impulsive and often immature. Gil is in the habit of calling her "Brat," which makes it even harder to forget and forgive the age difference. It just bugs me that at the end of the story, Marian is not quite 17 but is (view spoiler).

I'd guess that this kind of age gap happened often in Regency times, and maybe that was the author's point, but sorry/notsorry, I was unable to get over the "eww" factor here. Gil was a great hero; I just wanted someone a bit older and more mature for him.

Katie W says

Marian is a young woman (16 years old) who is quite full of spunk. Her family is almost ruined financially,

since her father's death a year earlier, and their only hope is for the oldest sister, Ariadne, to marry well. Unfortunately, Ariadne is in love with the poor vicar, which won't help their case at all. Her brother brings home two friends for Christmas--Sir William (hoping to become engaged to Ariadne) and Lord Ingraham, whom Marian finds herself falling for.

This story is a sweet, regency, holiday story filled with intrigue, romance, and humor. Marian is such a fun, witty character and Gil is great! I completely enjoyed their banter.

Cindy says

This was such a charming Christmas story. I curled up in bed and was swept away with Marian and her wishing story. Marian and her family are on the verge of ruination, due to her father's untimely death, gambling habits amongst other things. Percy her eldest brother has kept them afloat for so long but the end is drawing near for them. Percy and his mother Lady Wynswitch decide it is time to marry off Ariadne the oldest daughter to the richest man. However her heart belongs to another and she wants no part of this plan, but is willing to sacrifice for her family. Percy brings home two gentleman friends for the Christmas holiday, one is Lord William Clinghorn who is to be Ariadne's fiance if all goes well.... and Lord Ingram who is a government diplomat.

From here we have a delightful story that unfolds with endearing characters. I loved Marian she was so witty and spunky, spoke her mind, naive, and boy could she get herself into some of the craziest predicaments. Ariadne is the very proper Lady of the time, willing to sacrifice, and a little boring. Alistair is Marian's brother and he was so funny, he thought up some of the craziest plotting, great sense of humor and a really good brother. Lord Ingram was witty, humorous, chivalrous, sweet, flawed and endearing. I really liked him. I liked all the banter between this family and their friends they were quite a lively bunch. I thought this story was really well written and a lot of fun. A perfectly sweet Christmas romance to get caught up in this time of year.

Clean language

Clean romance

Copy provided by netgalley and Cedar Fort publishing. Thank you!

Wollstonecrafthomegirl says

I am feeling, as my Mother always says, tired and emotional, so have turned to super CK for comfort and to keep me feeling Christmassy for a bit longer. This did the job, or at least the first 75% did.

This very Christmassy and twee and sweet and adorbs [yep, going with that word]. We have Christmas pudding and wishing over the pudding [is this a thing? It's a mystery to me that anyone is eating Christmas pudding ever]. There are carolers and muffs [no tittering at the back, I am, of course talking about the hand warmers] and lighting of the Yule log [again, lost on me, but it seemed Christmassy]. All we were missing was the Doctor Who Christmas Special. I jest, because I love. It was all very endearing and just stayed the right side of saccharine for me. I suspect, however, that won't be the case for everyone.

Before the plot takes its lurch at 75% the story and the writing is fun and frothy and has an element of farce

which was well done.

Marian is wonderful. Young (16) and allowed to be young. She cares for everyone else before herself. Like so many of CK's heroines she's a fixer, a yes woman. She's also prodigiously clever and because she's the younger daughter she was educated in 'male' pursuits by her father (chess, greek, Latin, rather than singing, drawing and French) which makes her a very unusual woman. She's also witty and prone to speak her mind. Look, she rocked.

Gilbert (yes, Gilbert) our hero, was less well done. No chapters come from his perspective so it's unsurprising I took to him a little less. He's older (29) and injured (catnip), a diplomat and it's apparent that Marian's whimsy and care and her brains do it for him pretty much straight away.

What didn't work for me was the turn the plot took at the 75% mark. If it had been telegraphed a bit more that might have worked but it seemed entirely incongruous to have (view spoiler) tacked on to the end of this cutesy Christmas novel. It seemed to me there was drama aplenty - the age gap, the difference in stations and so on - to build a credible roadblock to the romance. It's not that the plot-swerve was done badly, it wasn't. It was just way too much of a swerve.

This ending drags down the rating for me, but this was still a wonderful, very festive, read.

Colette says

This book surprised me! I was expecting a nice love story with a Christmas backdrop, and I ended up enjoying rich characters, fun dialogue, and even a little intrigue. Set in the Regency time period, Marian is a spunky girl whose family is nearing financial ruin. Their only hopeful prospect is marrying off her elder sister (who is madly in love with the poor but kind vicar) to a wealthy suitor. Without spoiling anything, I will just say that fans of the Janes (Jane Austen and Jane Eyre) will love this fun and romantic story. Highly recommend it to all clean readers looking for an enjoyable holiday read.

Melissa says

Wow, I haven't enjoyed a book this much in a while! I think I have another favorite author! This was a clean, sweet, English romance and I fell in love with each character! I was worried that it wouldn't be well developed cause it's a short story but I got everything I wanted with this little book! This will be one I look to buy! I wanted to note that anyone could read this book it has no religion attached to it, I wouldn't even call it Christian fiction. Just a good CLEAN romance! 16 and up.

Sandy says

4.5 out of 5 stars

I love a spunky heroine. I love a girl who will get in and out of scrapes, volley some witty banter at the handsome man we're dying for her to kiss, and beat him at chess to boot. And you know what else I love?

Carla Kelly's writing. I read *Marian's Christmas Wish* not knowing what to expect and ended up spending the next three days reading three Carla Kelly books because I couldn't get enough of her writing. I immediately bought my own copy of *Marian's Christmas Wish* as soon as I finished my ARC because I know I'm going to want to read this book every Christmas.

Marian's Christmas Wish begins as a sweet, light-hearted holiday tale with lots of silly escapades and laughs, but the second half transforms the story into something completely different, fraught with intrigue, heartbreak, and danger. While I did feel a bit of a jolt between the two halves, as the tone is quite different, I still reveled in this story. The romance is the hold-your-breath kind that builds throughout the book, and that kept me reading way past my bedtime. These endearing characters had latched onto my heart, and I wanted to see everyone get a happy ending before I closed my eyes.

Fans of Georgette Heyer looking for a clean Regency romance full of heart-aflutter kisses, humorous dialogue, and a bit of danger will enjoy this Christmas tale...and that ending was so gooey and sweet...just the way I like my romances. (Although I could do without Gilbert lovingly calling Marian "brat" all the time...I know Georgette does it, too, but it made me cringe.)

Carla Kelly, keep the "Greatest Hits List" coming! I can't wait to read more re-releases from Cedar Fort of Carla Kelly's early works. I need more!

Melissa says

A delightful, funny, romantic story, with a wonderful heroine and hero, and a few surprising and angst-filled twists and turns. I laughed, I cried, I genuinely cared about these characters. A lovely and touching holiday read. 4.5 stars

Fani *loves angst* says

Marian's Christmas Wish is a sweet and tender book, that shows how the life of two families changed during Christmas holidays. Marian's family has been struggling ever since the passing of her father who left them in debt. The only solution to their problems seems to be a marriage with a rich man for Marian's elder and beautiful sister, Ariadne. Ariadne though is in love with the village's priest and detests the idea. A few days before Christmas, Percy, their elder brother who works for the diplomatic corps, comes to visit with not one, but two guests: one is a rich man intended to marry Amelia and the other is Gilbert Collinwood, a titled, wealthy but also scarred young man. Marian and Gil swiftly become friends, since clever and loving Marian is immediately able to see the aches inside Gil's heart and her caring nature prompts her to help him. Gil is enchanted by her warm spirit, her quick mind and deep devotion to those she loves and quickly finds himself falling for her, though she's barely seventeen, a good ten years younger than him. But it takes quite a bit longer for Marian to realise that what she feels for Gil is more than friendship and when at last she does, it may already be too late.

The first half was a sweet Christmas love story, with some very humorous scenes as Marian is quite prone to getting in trouble. Both she and Gil are likable characters and easy to connect to, even if I found her young age a little annoying at times and their closeness, much more than society would permit without raised eyebrows. In the second part the humor was replaced with a bit more heartache and a touch of adventure that

really raised the rythm and made the story move out of the lull it had fallen; there was a part after the middle where the sweetness was starting to get too much for my taste.

This is nice and sweet Christmas story. If you like nice and sweet you'll probably enjoy it, but I need a bit more 'oomph' in my stories to make them memorable and hard to put down. I liked Kelly's writing style however and will like to try another book of hers, preferably with two grown up heroes this time.

ARC provided by NetGalley

Kathy * Bookworm Nation says

This was just okay for me, I wanted to like it more than I did. I liked the idea of the story and the mystery thrown in at the end. I didn't care for the age differences between Marian and Gilbert (she's 16 and he's 28). I thought he treated her like a little kid a lot of the time, and I don't like mean nicknames like "brat", which he called her a lot. I'm sure he meant it as a term of endearment, but I like nice names. The story takes place during Christmas and it had a nice holiday feel to it. If you enjoy the regency setting and holiday stories then you will probably enjoy this.

RaeAnne Thayne says

A book I re-read every year. Always puts me in the holiday spirit!

Rane says

For me Carla Kelly is The Queen of Regency Romance, she doesn't use Dukes, tons of balls or the everyday like of the ton read so much about in this period. Her characters are just your avenge everyday person, with everyday problems. Marian's Christmas Wish is one of Carla Kelly's gems.

Miss Marian Wynswich is not your everyday miss. Taught by her father to use her smarts and the glue that holds her family together after her father's death leaves a huge debt amount behind causing the family no end of grief with the huge chance of losing the only home they've only known. If this will be the last Christmas at their family home, Marian make this the best for her family, even with a few major bumps in the road- the biggest is the stranger her brother brings home, Gilbert Collinwood. Marian sees Gil as someone whose scared of going home due to the scars he carries on his face, little does she know there's more to Gil then meets the eye and this will be the most memorable Christmas ever.

Carla Kelly's novels never feel stale or unmoving, with the plot flying by as Marian and Gil starts to learn about one another, while trying not to get into to much trouble along the way. The whole cast from Marian's family and friend's weren't just background characters or cardboard cutouts, but just as living and breathing as both main leads

I love all of Kelly's female leads, they have a great personalities along with hidden strengths were women weren't meant to have, only look pretty. Marian is not only smart, clever, but deeply caring about everyone (well those that deserve it!) you feel deeply connected to her, laugh along with her and hurt along with her as well. In trouble Marian keeps her head, even when her heart is breaking. Marian wasn't perfect by any means, but that only makes her more believable as a strong character, as her imperfections make her only that more understandable and relatable to the reader.

Gil for me had me on a see-saw of emotions, from loving him, to hating him, to wanting to beat him up. I thought like Marian he was a Prince Charming in need of rescue, a soul scarred by the events he's seen. That's only part of the story that is Gil. There's a lot going on that isn't seen and the surprises Kelly gives the reader, not only make scary sense but shake us at the same time as we never saw it coming. Gil was open to all, but narrow in his own views, which causes much heartache later for Marian and his family. Gil needed a major wake-up call. What Marian did wasn't just for her, but for him more than anything and the family who love him. I agreed for the actions Marian took, and did forgive Gil for his actions as she saw the heartbreakingly change he undertook for the better.

This is one of Carla Kelly's early books and was very rare at one time and thankfully re-issued by Cedar Fort, it's a truly classic Regency Christmas gem.

Ruth says

I have a confession to make. I really love Carla Kelly romances. I fell in love with her style when I read *Marrying the Captain*, and the other two books in her Channel Fleet trilogy, *The Surgeon's Lady* and *Marrying the Royal Marine*. There is something really simple about how she just tells a story, with minimal stylistic flourishes or silly misunderstandings, and how she writes about men and women and their relationships, that I just really enjoy. Other authors may have me sighing or crying, and may rate higher in my reviews, but I know when I read a Carla Kelly book, I'll get a good read.

This one is a re-issued traditional Regency romance from earlier in her career, originally published in 1989, and it has the same feeling of a storyline which really moves, interesting, but accessible characters and pure entertainment, in common with those of her early books I've actually been able to get my hands on. I'd read all her backlist if I could actually get my hands on them, since it is notoriously difficult to do so. And therein lies the reason for the re-issue of this one. My understanding is that this is somewhat experimental for this author - she is selectively allowing ebook publication of those books which exchange hands on ebay for ridiculously over-inflated prices, so that she can actually benefit from her work, and also more people can enjoy it. I really hope this works out!

Now, to the book itself:

- The heroine is a well-educated, but rather unique individual, who is prone to getting into scrapes by accident. But that's too simple, since I just felt there was more to her. I really liked how she is the correct age for this period in history, when daughters of the nobility and gentry would have married young by our standards, and would have acquired the skills to be the mistresses of households by that age. And yet, for all her intelligence and perceptiveness, this heroine really does act and behave as a 16 year-old would. She

doesn't have the emotional maturity a heroine aged, say 28, would have, and, yet, she doesn't come across as an irritating teenager, but as a fascinating and invigorating individual. I really liked that.

- We don't learn so much about the hero really, and he remains rather too much of an enigma for my liking. I'm never really completely happy when a book focuses too much on the heroine or the hero to the detriment of the other. I got the impression he is a rather unhappy individual, and spending time with the heroine and her family is something of a rude awakening for him, to what life can be like. I did wonder whether it was possible for him to have achieved all he had, and have the position and respect he had acquired, and still be under 30. He probably could have been older, and even with the age difference, the romance would still have worked IMO.

- The plot MOVES. There is very little lying around on sofas and contemplating dresses in this one, and this is very much like the other older romances by this author. Comparing it to romances written now, there is perhaps too much going on, but I honestly didn't get confused by it or annoyed with the change in pace. It was fine for me.

So, if you want a nice entertaining traditional romance, with no real smut (although the minor physical stuff is absolutely charmingly written in a nice earthy style I wish more authors would use), and a moderately cheesy, but very satisfying ending, then choose this one. It isn't really comparable to the Channel Fleet trilogy, which were more complex and less fluffy, with a whole lot more historical accuracy and detail that I have to admit I absolutely LOVED, but I did really enjoy it nonetheless, and will keep it.

4 stars. I really like it.

Forgot to mention. I received this one through netgalley.
