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The Wedding Diary

Written by Margaret James

Published by Choc Lit

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The Wedding Diary

Margaret James

First and second chapter



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Saturday, 23 April

Where's the silver lining?

All chocolate is medicinal. It's a well known fact. When taken in sufficient quantities, it mends a broken heart.

As Cat lay on the sofa she and Jack had bought together – she'd chosen it, of course, while he had stood there looking bored and saying yeah, whatever – eating her way through a big block of highest-possible cocoa content, premium-grade dark chocolate, she thought, whatever happened? How did I end up like this, alone on Easter Saturday and wondering if I should get a dog?

Why does the man I love behave so badly? Or do I have something wrong with me and could I get it fixed? Do I need some therapy? Do I need to get my aura sorted?

Then the landline rang.

Maybe it was Tess? Perhaps she didn't have a date tonight and maybe she and Bex were coming round with bottles of something alcoholic and a giant pizza?

Or had Tess mentioned going to a gig?

She could have changed her mind.

Or maybe, maybe Jack—

'Hello?' she said and crossed her fingers.

'Good evening!' chirped a woman. 'May I speak to Catherine Aston, please?'

'You're speaking to her now,' said Cat. But then of course she wished she hadn't, and braced herself for the inevitable. Did she want home/contents/motor/travel/pet insurance, faster broadband, double glazing, a timeshare in Barbados, a new conservatory?

'Your mobile isn't on,' said Chirpy Woman.

'Oh, isn't it?' Cat rummaged through the rubbish at the bottom of her bag, found her BlackBerry and saw that it was dead. 'You're right,' she said. 'I'm sorry, do I know you?'

'We haven't met, Miss Aston,' admitted Chirpy Woman. 'But I hope we will, and very soon!'

Then Chirpy Woman switched to alien-life-form-trapped-inside-a-GPS-receiver mode. 'I am delighted to announce that you, Miss Catherine Aston, are the lucky winner of the glittering first prize in our exciting national competition. You have won a luxury wedding package for up to fifty guests at the prestigious Melbury Court Hotel. You and your fiancé have been chosen from among six thousand other couples to receive—'

This is surreal, thought Cat, as Chirpy Woman burbled on. This is like the opening of a movie starring Jennifer Aniston or Sarah Whatsit Parker. This isn't like my life.

'So,' continued Chirpy Woman, segueing into human mode again, 'you have a choice of almost any date between October and next March, except for Christmas Day and Boxing Day and New Year's Eve. Well, Catherine – may I call you Catherine? – what do you think of that?'

'No one calls me Catherine. I'm always known as Cat. I don't know what I think.'

'You're probably in shock. So why don't you and Jack – it is Jack, isn't it? I don't have your entry form in front of me right now – snuggle up together and have a little private celebration. Next week, you'll be getting the official confirmation in the post. We'll send you all the brochures, menus, DVDs of wedding packages and of actual weddings at the gorgeous Melbury Court Hotel – everything you'll need to know, in fact.'

'I see.'

Although Cat could just about remember filling in the entry form in *Bridal* magazine, bought so she and Tess and Bex could have a lunchtime drool over wedding gowns and wedding favours, over wedding flowers and wedding venues, and although she vaguely recollected writing fifty words about what made a perfect wedding and sending off some photographs of herself and Jack, she was certain this must be a wind-up.

Someone must have got her details from her Facebook page, found her landline number and be having a laugh at her expense. It was – what – half past eight on Saturday night? Only mates and mothers rang up on Saturday night.

'You do wish to accept the prize?' demanded Chirpy Woman just a little bit impatiently.

'I—'

'Well, of course you do, my sweet, provided nothing's changed? Oh, don't worry, angel, that was just my little joke. Later on this month, or maybe next, when you and Jack have read the brochures and had a little think, we'll be setting up a formal meeting and a photo opportunity.'

'A photo opportunity?' repeated Cat. This is all ridiculous, she thought. Why don't I hang up now?

'Yes, we'll want lots of pix of you and Jack,' said Chirpy Woman. 'Larking around and having fun, but also being serious and soulful. Gazing adoringly into each other's eyes and looking like you're blissfully in love. We'll need a lot of that.'

'Oh – right.'

'We'll have you indoors, outdoors, formal poses, casual stuff, him kissing you, perhaps you tickling him. You know the sort of thing? We're hoping we can get you in *Hello*. We loved the shots you sent us. They were fabulous. Everyone at Supadoop Promotions is really looking forward to meeting you and your delicious Jack.'

Jack, reflected Cat.

As Chirpy Woman talked about receptions, bridesmaids, flowers and wedding gowns, she thought – meeting Jack is going to be a problem.

Last month, Jack had gone to find himself. Since then, she hadn't heard from him, his phone was never on, and there'd been no activity on Facebook or on Twitter.

He had disappeared, disapparated like flipping Harry Potter, he'd dematerialised. He'd also stabbed and slashed and shredded

the canvas of her life so it was all in tatters and could never be repaired.

She was assuming he'd be doing stuff in various pubs and clubs. Open mic and stand-up, he'd be hoping for a break, that he'd be talent-scouted and on his way to stardom at long last.

Or perhaps he'd joined the Foreign Legion or the SAS?

She couldn't ask his family. Jack didn't have a family – not a single brother, sister, maiden aunt in Macclesfield or cousin in Australia. There was nobody at all. Or that was what he'd said.

As for his friends, Jack's friends were all like him.

They came, they borrowed tenners, ate the contents of your fridge, left empty beer cans in your kitchen and curry cartons underneath your sofa, then they went. No one ever heard of them again, and—

'Cat, are you still there?' demanded Chirpy Woman. She sounded somewhat irritable now. 'I said we're looking forward to meeting you and Jack. I'll be in touch. So don't forget to charge your phone.'

'Yes, of course,' said Cat. She was about to add *but there's a little problem and who are you, anyway, you didn't give your name* when she realised she was listening to the dialling tone.

Adam Lawley took one long step back and then threw overarm with all his might.

There was too much background noise of traffic, not to mention the ceaseless hum of London, for him to hear the splash, although he knew it must have hit the water. So now it was at the bottom of the Thames. This wasn't entirely good because it wasn't paid for yet.

But he still felt better – just a bit.

He sat down in the middle of a bench, loosened his tie and undid the top button of his shirt. He stared across the river, wondering how long it took to drown. People said that drowning in cold water was a peaceful death. But how did they know?

They hadn't tried it, had they?

If he did decide to drown himself, maybe he should find a more salubrious place to do it than the Thames at Millbank? It wouldn't be poetic or romantic, would it, being fished from the water with a condom in his mouth?

'You can't sit there,' said someone in a smoker's rasping growl.

'Why not?' demanded Adam, still staring straight ahead.

'S'my bench, that's why not.'

Adam glanced round and saw a stooped old man, laden down with splitting carrier bags and grubby holdalls. The brindled dog that stood beside him was looking very narked to find a stranger on his patch.

'Sorry, mate,' said Adam, standing up.

'S'all right, no harm done. You can sit at the end there, if you like.' The man sat down himself and started sorting through a very tattered plastic bag, pulling out old newspapers and bits of grubby blanket. 'You got the money for a cup of something?' he enquired. 'Some change to buy some biscuits for the dog?'

Adam shoved one hand into a trouser pocket, pulled out everything he found there. 'Here,' he said and pushed a crumpled mess of screwed-up paper at the man.

'You sure, mate?' said the tramp. He stared down at the money in astonishment. 'I mean, there must be fifty quid 'ere. No, I tell a lie, there's more'n fifty, there's seventy, eighty, ninety—'

'You're welcome to it. Go and have lunch at Claridge's, why don't you? Get some Harrods biscuits for your dog?'

'What?'

'You heard.'

'Aha, I know what's goin' on.' The man eyed Adam shrewdly. 'You've just 'ad a bust-up with some lady.'

'Yeah?'

'I'd stake my life on it. Listen to me, son – you're not yourself tonight. But you'll be better in the morning. So I'll take twenty, get meself and Taser here some grub, an' thank you, you're a

gentleman.'

'I told you, keep it,' Adam said.

'All right, but let me give you some advice.'

'What's that?'

'When you're dealin' with the ladies, don't make no assumptions, an' don't think you understand 'em. If you're a normal, ordinary bloke, you don't – you never will, an' that's a fact. You 'ave a bust-up with a lady, you need to give her time, and she'll come round. That's all they need, a bit of time.'

'Oh,' said Adam.

Thanks for nothing, he thought bitterly as he walked off down Millbank.

It must have been an hour, two hours – he wasn't counting – since the killer punch had landed. But he still had the feeling he'd just done ten rounds with … he didn't follow boxing, but with some big geezer who had really hammered him.

He'd planned the evening with such care, right down to the last detail, starting with the play.

Maddy had wanted to see the play for ages, so she'd said, because it was significant and important. So he had got them tickets in the stalls, and booked the biodynamic fusion vegetarian restaurant for after they came out.

She'd been looking ravishing tonight, in a pale green skirt he didn't think he'd seen before, golden high-heeled sandals and a flowery top with pretty ruffles round the neck.

He could have sat and gazed at her all night. He didn't need a play.

But he'd got a play, and very tedious it had been, full of earnest stuff about the need to save the rainforests, the tigers and the pandas, and to recycle all the earth's resources.

Adam understood that this was vital in itself. But it was not exactly gripping when two actors dressed in black were standing on a stage accusing him of crimes and misdemeanours.

Or so it had seemed.

He'd never shot a tiger or moved on any pandas to make way for a factory or motorway and knew he never would. He recycled everything – he sorted paper, cardboard, bottles, plastic, cans and put them in the big green boxes in the local Tesco car park – bought most of his Christmas presents from fund-raising catalogues supporting various charities, wasn't into gadgets made in China, and his mobile phone was coming up to four years old. A mugger with any self-respect would throw it back at him.

In the interval, they'd had a drink. Then, when the bell had rung to warn the audience to go back to their seats, Maddy had walked the fingers of one hand along his arm, her perfume had caressed him and her lips had brushed his face.

'I tell you what,' she'd whispered, 'why don't we give the rest of this a miss and get a taxi back to yours? Then we can go to bed.'

'Give me a moment, sweetheart.'

He'd taken out the little purple velvet box which contained the gorgeous antique ring and put it on the table in the now-empty bar.

'Maddy,' he had said, 'my dearest, darling Maddy, will you marry me?'

'You what?' She'd stared for ten, for twenty seconds and then she'd burst out laughing. 'Oh, don't be ridiculous.'

'I'm serious, Mads!' he'd cried.

'You can't be.' She had grimaced then. 'What is this, some stupid joke?'

'No, it's absolutely not a joke! I—'

'Omigod, don't tell me! There's a single perfect rose stuffed up your trouser leg and that's why you've been fidgeting all evening? You're going to pull it out when I say yes?'

'So is it yes?' Adam was painfully aware the barman had stopped polishing a glass. In fact, it seemed the whole world held its breath.

'Of course it isn't yes,' Maddy had snapped. 'You know I'll soon

be going to Uruguay.'

'But you'll be coming back.'

'No, Adam, I might not. I might find I like it there, that I can do some good and I can help with some campaigns. The indigenous people there, you know, they need support from activists in the developed world.'

She had fiddled with her empty glass. She wouldn't look at him. 'Anyway,' she'd added, 'we hardly know each other.'

'We've been going out for months! We've been on holiday together. Maddy, we've had sex—'

'Adam, this is not the Middle Ages. It's what normal people do.'

'But I thought you liked me?'

'Yes, of course I like you! I think you're very sweet and I don't deny you're great in bed. But that doesn't mean I want to marry you, do all that boring, cosy couples stuff. You'll be saying you want to look at horrid little starter homes and put down a deposit on one next.'

Then she'd picked up her bag, a woven raffia folk art thing she'd bought for almost nothing from some poor desperate trader at a local Sunday market. 'This is getting difficult,' she'd muttered. 'I think I'd better leave.'

'No, hang on, Maddy,' he had pleaded as the barman stared. 'I shouldn't have sprung it on you. I should have—Maddy, wait!'

But she hadn't waited and, as she'd walked through the door, the barman suddenly started polishing hard and whistling something and gazing at the cherubs on the ceiling, at anything but him.

This was not surprising, Adam thought, since he'd just made the most pathetic, stupid exhibition of himself.

What should he do now?

Go home to the first floor flat above the jeweller's shop in Camden Town, the place he shared with Jules and Gwennie, who would be agog to know how things had gone tonight?

They would be dying to open the champagne. They'd already told him Maddy could move in, it would be fine, until she and Adam found a place.

After all, she practically lived there, anyway.

It seemed she didn't live there any more.

He walked all night, head down, along Whitehall, along the Strand, into the City which smelled of deals and money even in the small hours, round and round the Barbican. Then he strode down Aldersgate and, as the dawn was breaking, he finally ended up outside St Paul's.

He stared up at the round, white dome, ethereal in the early morning light. It seemed to be inviting him to make some kind of gesture, but he didn't know what.

Then, as he stood there looking at this huge extravagance of a cathedral, the wedding cake to end all wedding cakes, he made a solemn vow.

I shall never fall in love again.

Tuesday, 26 April

Must life go on?

It had to be Tuesday morning now.

Or Cat supposed it must be Tuesday, because her diary said so, and it must be morning, although she wasn't absolutely sure. Since Jack had gone the days and nights had blurred into a never-ending twilight of misery and despair and everything was permanently grey.

But, if it was Tuesday, she ought to go to work. She had the payments on the sofa to keep up, the rent to pay, she had to eat from time to time and so she couldn't afford to lose her job.

She got up, had a shower, drank a mug of instant coffee, dressed in she-was-not-sure-what and took herself to work in Walthamstow.

Look straight ahead, she told herself as she walked along familiar streets – no glancing right or left in case the hounds of melancholy see you, get you, drag you down into the pit of hell.

Just as she had done since Jack had left.

Since Jack had said that, 'Actually, Cat'—who actually said *actually* these days? Why did Jack say *actually*? Who was he trying to sound like?—'Actually, Cat, this being engaged, this buying sofas, this looking at matching towels and tablecloths and duvets stuff, I'm not sure if we should be doing it.'

Of course it wasn't down to Cat, he'd added graciously. She had done nothing wrong. She was sweet and beautiful and lovely. But just recently he'd come to realise that he wasn't ready to get married, settle down. He needed to put things on hold a while, sort himself out.

But could they see each other in the meantime, meet up for a drink or something, could they still be friends?

She supposed he meant that when he wanted it, could he still come and get it?

No, she'd thought, he couldn't – *actually*.

But when she didn't hear from him at all, she started feeling she'd give anything, do anything, to see his face again.

'Good afternoon,' said Tess.

Cat was a couple of minutes late and Tess was already in the office at Chapman's Architectural Salvage, feet up on the desk and flicking through *heat* magazine. 'Good Easter? Get some eggs? You went to see your parents, didn't you?'

'No, I stayed in Leyton.'

'Oh, honey pie!' cried Tess. 'You were all by yourself? I thought you were going home to Sussex – isn't that what you said?'

'I thought about it, yes,' admitted Cat. 'But if I had gone home, my mother would have realised straight away that everything was wrong. I could have told her Jack was working and we were doing fine. But she's got this spooky way of knowing when I'm lying. I didn't want Mum droning on and sobbing over me and my father saying Jack was obviously a scoundrel – yes, my dad still uses words like scoundrel – and if he were twenty-five again …'

'I suppose not.' Tess put down her magazine. 'But you could have texted me, you saddo. We could have had a takeaway and watched some DVDs. Do you know your top's on inside out, or is this a hot new fashion trend of which I'm tragically unaware?'

'Did you and Bex go to that gig?' asked Cat, pulling off her top and turning it the right side out and thinking it was time she learned to dress herself again.

She wasn't six years old.

'Yes, but if you'd called me you could have come as well,' said Tess. 'Or we would have settled for a girls' night in with you. So anyway, coming out with us this evening?'

'Why, where are you going?'

'This place in Dagenham Bex's brother goes. They've got a sixties night. It's miniskirts, white lipstick, Dusty Springfield eyelashes – that means seriously gunked-up, in case you didn't

know – and diamond-patterned tights.'

'Getting off with John Travoltalikes?'

'I wouldn't rule it out.'

'Sorry, I'm not interested,' said Cat.

'Oh, go on, come out with us!' begged Tess. 'You can't stay in forever and cry all by yourself. It's been God knows how long, I've lost count. He hasn't called, he hasn't e-mailed, he hasn't even texted. You have to face it some time, girl – Jack Benson was bad news.'

'Speaking of news, I have something to tell you.'

By the time Cat had finished telling Tess about the wedding competition, Tess's eyes were bigger than her face.

'You've won?' she kept repeating, obviously unable to believe what Cat had said. 'You've won this fabulous dream wedding – ceremony, reception, all the trimmings?'

'Yes, that's what the woman told me.'

'So – confetti, wedding invitations, limousines, expensive little chocolates in pretty silver boxes, magnums of champagne and Pimms and posh designer nibbles, they're all in? This company, they'll do the wedmin, organise the wedsite, advise you on the wediquette, get you and the bridesmaids to the tanning salon, pay for all the nail art? They'll commission special wedding cupcakes, sort out readings, get some swish couturier to make your wedding gown?'

'So it would seem.'

'What are you going to do, then?'

'You mean about the prize?'

'No, about the getting married, dope.'

'I'm not getting married.'

'Of course you're getting married! Look, you've got a – what's it worth? What does a wedding in a country house hotel cost nowadays? It must be twenty thousand at the very least. Or maybe even thirty. This Melbury Court Hotel, where is it?'

'Dorset,' Cat replied.

'Brilliant, you've got yourself a bridesmaid.'

'You've forgotten something.'

'Yeah, I know. You need a man. So find one.'

'Where do you suggest I start to look?'

'Oh, they're everywhere. You must have noticed them. They come in various shapes and sizes. But if I were you I'd go for tall and dark and handsome, maybe thirty, thirty-five.'

'Tess, this isn't funny—'

'They sometimes smell disgusting. You should avoid the ones who smell disgusting. Or I would, anyway. Honey, it's not going to be a problem. All he'll have to do is hire a suit and find the place and wait until the evening to get drunk.'

'Tess, stop mocking me.'

'I'm not mocking you.' Tess looked earnestly at Cat. 'You've got the wedding sorted, haven't you? So all you need to do is sort the bridegroom. You're young, you're pretty and you're solvent, so how hard will it be?'

'I'm not over Jack.'

'You ought to be,' said Tess. 'I've told you fifty, sixty, seventy times, that scumbag isn't worth your tears.'

'I wish it was that simple.' Cat looked miserably at Tess. 'I know Jack's vain and sometimes selfish. But I love him, and you can't control these things. We don't choose who we love.'

'This isn't about love,' retorted Tess.

'Oh, isn't it?'

'Of course it's not!' Tess grinned. 'This is about a sumptuous dream wedding we'll talk about for years!'

'But, Tess, I don't—'

'I tell you what,' continued Tess as she fizzed and buzzed and sparkled with extreme excitement and googled frantically. 'We'll do some wedding fairs. See what's on offer. Okay, here's a nice big wedsite, so let's have a look. Do you fancy being a demure Victorian bride? Or a saucy, sassy rock 'n' roll one? Or perhaps a

mediaeval princess, Disney style?'

'None of those,' said Cat.

'What about a fifties bride in paper nylon petticoats and sticky-out full skirts and beehive hair? Or is beehive hair a sixties look? I think it might be early sixties. I'll have to ask my mother. Or my granny, she'll remember. What about burlesque? I think you'd look great in black and red and corsets and suspenders.'

'I'm not doing wedding fairs.'

'Oh, go on – why not?'

'I just don't fancy it.'

'You've only got one life, you know,' said Tess. 'So you're coming out with us this evening.'

'No I'm not.'

'You want to bet?'

'I'm not going to talk about it, right?'

'You will, you know,' said Tess. 'When you get the brochures and the DVDs and stuff, you won't be able to resist.'

'We'll see.' Cat looked up from her keyboard. 'I just heard Barry pulling up. So we'd better get on with some work.'

To be continued. …

ebook available April, paperback released 7th May 2013.

About the Author

Margaret James was born and brought up in Hereford. She studied English at London University, and has written many short stories, articles and serials for magazines. She is the author of sixteen published novels.

Margaret is a long-standing contributor to *Writing Magazine* for which she writes the Fiction Focus column and an author interview for each issue. She's also a creative writing tutor for the London School of Journalism and wrote two of its distance-learning courses. She is the co-author with Cathie Hartigan of *The Creative Writing Student's Handbook*.

An active member of the Romantic Novelists' Association, she contributed to the 50th anniversary anthology *Loves Me, Loves Me Not*.

For more information on Margaret visit:
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www.twitter.com/majanovelist
and www.facebook.com/margaret.james.5268

More Choc Lit

From Margaret James



The Silver Locket

Winner of 2010 Reviewers' Choice Award for Single Titles

If life is cheap, how much is love worth?

It's 1914 and young Rose Courtenay has a decision to make. Please her wealthy parents by marrying the man of their choice – or play her part in the war effort?

The chance to escape proves irresistible and Rose becomes a nurse. Working in France, she meets Lieutenant Alex Denham, a dark figure from her past. He's the last man in the world she'd get involved with – especially now he's married.

But in wartime nothing is as it seems. Alex's marriage is a sham and Rose is the only woman he's ever wanted. As he recovers from his wounds, he sets out to win her trust. His gift of a silver locket is a far cry from the luxuries she's left behind.

What value will she put on his love?

First novel in the trilogy.

Visit www.choc-lit.com for more details including the first two chapters and reviews.



The Golden Chain

Can first love last forever?

1931 is the year that changes everything for Daisy Denham. Her family has not long swapped life in India for Dorset, England when she uncovers an old secret.

At the same time, she meets Ewan Fraser – a handsome dreamer who wants nothing more than to entertain the world and for Daisy to play his leading lady.

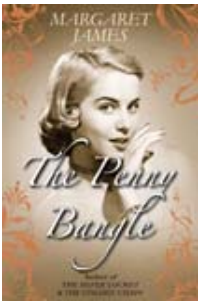
Ewan offers love and a chance to escape with a touring theatre company. As they grow closer, he gives her a golden chain and Daisy gives him a promise – that she will always keep him in her heart.

But life on tour is not as they'd hoped. Ewan is tempted away by his career and Daisy is dazzled by the older, charismatic figure of Jesse Trent. She breaks Ewan's heart and sets off for a life in London with Jesse.

Only time will tell whether some promises are easier to make than keep …

Second novel in the trilogy.

Visit www.choc-lit.com for more details including the first two chapters and reviews.



The Penny Bangle

When should you trust your heart?

It's 1942 when Cassie Taylor reluctantly leaves Birmingham to become a land girl on a farm in Dorset.

There she meets Robert and Stephen Denham, twins recovering from injuries sustained at Dunkirk. Cassie is instantly drawn to Stephen, but is wary of the more complex Robert – who doesn't seem to like Cassie one little bit.

At first, Robert wants to sack the inexperienced city girl. But Cassie soon learns, and Robert comes to admire her courage, finding himself deeply attracted to Cassie. Just as their romance blossoms, he's called back into active service.

Anxious to have adventures herself, Cassie joins the ATS. In Egypt, she meets up with Robert, and they become engaged. However, war separates them again as Robert is sent to Italy and Cassie back to the UK.

Robert is reported missing, presumed dead. Stephen wants to take Robert's place in Cassie's heart. But will Cassie stay true to the memory of her first love, and will Robert come home again?

Third novel in the trilogy.

Visit www.choc-lit.com for more details including the first two chapters and reviews.

More from Choc Lit

If you loved Margaret's story, you'll enjoy
the rest of our selection.
Here's a sample:



Please don't stop the music

Jane Lovering

Winner of the 2012 Best Romantic Comedy Novel of the year

Winner of the 2012 Romantic Novel of the year

How much can you hide?

Jemima Hutton is determined to build a successful new life and keep her past a dark secret. Trouble is, her jewellery business looks set to fail – until enigmatic Ben Davies offers to stock her handmade belt buckles in his guitar shop and things start looking up, on all fronts.

But Ben has secrets too. When Jemima finds out he used to be the front man of hugely successful Indie rock band Willow Down, she wants to know more. Why did he desert the band on their US tour? Why is he now a semi-recluse?

And the curiosity is mutual – which means that her own secret is no longer safe …

Visit www.choc-lit.com for more details including the first two chapters and reviews.



Never Coming Home

Evonne Wareham

Winner of the Joan Hessayon New Writers' Award

All she has left is hope.

When Kaz Elmore is told her five-year-old daughter Jamie has died in a car crash, she struggles to accept that she'll never see her little girl again. Then a stranger comes into her life offering the most dangerous substance in the world: hope.

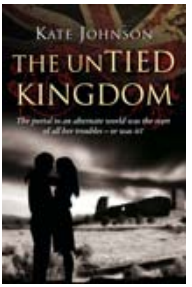
Devlin, a security consultant and witness to the terrible accident scene, inadvertently reveals that Kaz's daughter might not have been the girl in the car after all.

What if Jamie is still alive? With no evidence, the police aren't interested, so Devlin and Kaz have little choice but to investigate themselves.

Devlin never gets involved with a client. Never. But the more time he spends with Kaz, the more he desires her – and the more his carefully constructed ice-man persona starts to unravel.

The desperate search for Jamie leads down dangerous paths – to a murderous acquaintance from Devlin's dark past, and all across Europe, to Italy, where deadly secrets await. But as long as Kaz has hope, she can't stop looking …

Visit www.choc-lit.com for more details including the first two chapters and reviews.



The UnTied Kingdom

Kate Johnson

Shortlisted for the 2012 RoNA Contemporary Romantic Novel Category Award

The portal to an alternate world was the start of all her troubles – or was it?

When Eve Carpenter lands with a splash in the Thames, it's not the London or England she's used to. No one has a telephone or knows what a computer is. England's a third-world country and Princess Di is still alive. But worst of all, everyone thinks Eve's a spy.

Including Major Harker who has his own problems. His sworn enemy is looking for a promotion. The General wants him to undertake some ridiculous mission to capture a computer, which Harker vaguely envisions running wild somewhere in Yorkshire. Turns out the best person to help him is Eve.

She claims to be a popstar. Harker doesn't know what a popstar is, although he suspects it's a fancy foreign word for 'spy'. Eve knows all about computers, and electricity. Eve is dangerous. There's every possibility she's mad.

And Harker is falling in love with her.

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