



# THE ACCIDENTAL HIGHWAYMAN

*BEING THE TALE OF KIT BRISTOL, HIS HORSE MIDNIGHT, A MYSTERIOUS PRINCESS, AND SUNDRY MAGICAL PERSONS BESIDES*

Written and Illustrated by

**BEN TRIPP**

“They can still write ‘em like they used to; hurrah!”

- *Kirkus Reviews*

“Fantasy readers, especially fans of Cathrynne Valente’s work, will enjoy the author’s elegant turns of phrase.”

- ★ *School Library Journal* Starred Review

“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*

In the tradition of classic fantasy fairy tales such as *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman and *Stardust* by Neil Gaiman comes this irresistible YA Debut by Ben Tripp, (*The Accidental Highwayman*; A Tor Teen Hardcover; October 14, 2014) the son of one of America’s most beloved illustrators, Wallace Tripp (*Amelia Bedelia*). Following in his father’s footsteps, Ben has woven 25 illustrations throughout the story.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century England, young Christopher “Kit” Bristol is the unwitting servant of notorious highwayman, Whistlin’ Jack. One dark night, Kit finds his master bleeding from a mortal wound, dons his master’s riding cloak to seek help, and changes the course of his life forever. Mistaken for Whistlin’ 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, he is sent on a 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....

Of the princess the author says, “I wanted to give the young people a proper princess to get to know-not one of these sparkling ball gown debutantes waiting for Mr. Right, nor a tangle-haired tomboy rejecting her femininity (the two current models available). I wanted to meet somebody with spirit and independence, but meshed in on every side by customs and tradition. A girl who doesn’t necessarily know what she wants or how to get it, but who knows she must shake things up if she’s going to find out.”



“Morgana is deeply traditional-more in the Faerie way than the human way-and believes in the ancient order of things in her world. She only dares to reach for liberation when her father attempts to distort the old ways for his very modern purposes. There will be more of this in upcoming volumes. But in *Highwayman* I wanted to set up her dilemma and show her first efforts at solving the problem. This leads, of course, to a whole new set of problems, and by the end of it she’s leading what amounts to a revolution, although all she wanted in the first place was the right to marry someone suitable, not just someone useful to her father.”

**Tripp’s unique life story** - including decades as an experiential designer working on theme parks, resorts and even urban development - coupled with his intriguing childhood and extensive world travel, have made Tripp an expert in world-building. As he tells it:

“*The Accidental Highwayman* is based on a true story. Or at least, it was true for me. As a boy in rural southern England, I was surrounded by magical beings. My mates and I had the run of the countryside, which was marked by gentle streams, rolling pastures cloudy with sheep, winding lanes, little thatched cottages with their hair down over their eyes. When I was alone, Action Man and I would venture deep into the woods or far away among the fields, invisible to the world, lost in it.

And in that solitude, other folk would turn up. They were daydreams based on pictures I’d seen in books and stories I’d been told. Fey folk: winged fairies, trolls, goblins, and enchanted animals lived in the shade of the trees. If they ventured into the sunlight, all anyone would see was a dragonfly or a lumbering badger hastening along. But *I* knew. I could hear their voices and see the traces of their adventures.

**I wrote the first draft in a little less than one month, typing furiously for fourteen hours a day. I don’t tell many people this, because this creates the impression that it must be a hastily-written book. But the fact is, it took me forty years to write this novel. I’ve been working on it since I was a boy.”**

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ben Tripp has led a fantastical life. Born in the US, Tripp grew up in a creative household of travelers and artists, spending a year in England at age seven, followed by a year of roaming throughout Europe in a VW camper van. He learned to draw as a toddler, created animated movies on super 8 film and got heavily into special effects makeup setting up a workshop in his basement. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design for illustration and at the age of 22, became the youngest show designer ever recruited by Disney to work at Walt Disney Imagineering, their theme park design division, working at every park except Euro Disneyland. He continued work as an experiential designer for over twenty years, creating theme parks resorts, museums, historical sites and attractions worldwide. He also made a living as a screenwriter for over a decade before publishing his first book, an adult zombie thriller titled *Rise Again* (Pocket, 2010), earning a starred review from *Library Journal*, and which *Booklist* called “a thrilling page-turner.” *THE ACCIDENTAL HIGHWAYMAN* is his first project for young adults.

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