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TRIPP, Ben.

The Accidental Highwayman. illus. by Ben Tripp. 304p.

Tor Teen. 2014. Tr \$17.99.

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Gr 6 Up

Tripp explains that this story of Kit Bristol, accidental highwayman from the mid-18th century, turned up in his ancestor's sea chest. Orphan and trick rider, Kit works for James Rattle, whose mysterious nocturnal activities lead to a bloody death. Kit obeys his master's last instructions, pulling back the curtain on a magical world that lives alongside his own. Kit must help fairy princess Morgana defy her father and escape marriage to King George III of England. As they journey to Ireland's free Faerie state, they pick up a circus performer, a baboon, and a mildly delusional elderly gentleman to round out their motley crew. Fairy attacks from Morgana's enemies impede their progress until they decide to form a carnival show to hide in plain sight. Humorous mayhem ensues. It is difficult not to be entertained by Kit's first person narration that blends historical detail with the antics of the fairy kingdom. Tripp ably conveys the protagonist's subtle sense of the ridiculous through his many mishaps, and conversations between magical creatures and uninformed mortals add to the book's humor. Readers will root for star-crossed lovers, Kit and Morgana, and delight in their "opposites attract" romance, drawn onward by a rollicking plot. Informative footnotes occasionally pull readers out of the story, though they dwindle as the story progresses. Tripp's detailed black-and-white illustrations are worth a second look. Fantasy readers, especially fans of Cathrynne Valente's work, will enjoy the author's elegant turns of phrase. A first purchase for all fantasy collections.

-Caitlin Augusta,
Stratford Library Association, CT