



# A Prior Engagement

*Karina Bliss*

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**“I can’t let you get over me...because I’m never going to get over you.”**

After eighteen months as a POW presumed dead, SAS soldier Lee Davis is finally going home. Back to his family, friends and...fiancée? Except the night before his last deployment Juliet Browne *rejected* his proposal. Which makes the sight of her playing the grieving almost-wife beyond infuriating. Feigning amnesia, Lee puts Jules's commitment to the test.

Yet tormenting her conscience isn't as easy as he thought it would be. She's still the woman whose memory got him through the worst of his captivity and her actions now prove she cares—a lot. And despite her betrayal, he needs her more than ever. Because Lee is beginning to realize that for him, Jules *is* home.

**First published in 2013 by Harlequin Enterprises.**

**RUBY Finalist (Romantic Book of the Year Australia) 2014.**

## A Prior Engagement Details

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Author : Karina Bliss

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# From Reader Review A Prior Engagement for online ebook

## Saly says

Coming back from the dead can be brutal process, having to deal with the changes that happened when you left, dealing with the reality of what being a captive of the Taliban did to you and for SAS soldier Lee Davis, this is his new reality.

A Prior Engagement is the fourth installment in Karina Bliss's Special Forces series and this is the book I had been waiting for. My expectations were high because my experience with the previous books had been phenomenal. So, maybe the burden of why the book fell short falls on me.

Lee, was presumed dead in an ambush eighteen months ago. His friends grieved, dealt with their messy emotions and managed to find happiness. Juliet Browne was the woman Lee was seeing and in love with after six weeks of whirlwind dating and all his friends knew he planned to propose, so when he died, they gave the ring to Juliet, not knowing that Lee had already proposed and had been rejected.

Juliet is a lawyer, a career woman but she is also a cynical woman, having grown up seeing her mother's pursuit of men, so despite the fact she felt strongly for Lee, their short time together, led to her rejection, a rejection Lee didn't take really well. She doesn't regret her actions but when Lee's friends give her the ring, she accepts more for their sake and somehow she ends up becoming close with them, her deception a burden. A burden that grows, when she is in bed with another man, her attempt to move on and she gets a call that changes everything.

Now, when Lee wakes up in the hospital and learns of his so called fiancée and how close she was with his father, her relationship with his friends, he feels angry and furious and this emotion makes him pretend that he doesn't remember her having rejected him and Juliet plays along for his mental health, all the while knowing that she would have to confess.

Lee's actions after his captivity could be justified and I liked how Juliet was so principled, she went about trying to re-pay the money Lee's dad had left her immediately. My problem with the book was a lack of connection. Do I feel Lee's struggles were depicted really well? Yes, but I couldn't make myself fall in love with the characters.

The level of angst in the book was high, Juliet is hurt when she learns what Lee did and isn't willing to give them a shot, but Lee wants another chance. For me, the romance just didn't pull me in. But I would fully recommend Karina Bliss as an author.

*ARC provided by publisher through Netgalley.*

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## Nancy Crocker says

A Prior Engagement by Karina Bliss: This is the fourth book in the series, and I must state I have not read the three previous books. The first three books are as follows:

Here Comes The Groom  
Stand-In Wife  
Bring Him Home

In *A Prior Engagement*: Lee Davis was serving in Afghanistan when his team was ambushed. For almost two years he has been a POW, 14 months of that time he was held by the Taliban. He has been beaten, tortured and suffered more than one person ever should. American Forces raided the camp where he was being held and freed him. He is about to return to everyone he loves including his fiancée. But hold the press, we are talking about the same woman who rejected his proposal. The same woman that he could not forget, and the same one that got him through the hell he lived through the last 19 months.

Juliet Browne " Jules " had rejected Lee's proposal just before he left for Afghanistan. As you read further into the story you learn her reasoning behind the rejection. It was never a question of love, more a case of caution and being sure. Believing Lee is suffering from Amnesia, she goes along with the lies. And when he proposes she accepts, what she is unaware of is, Lee remembers everything. And he is planning to make her pay dearly.

This book is so much more than surviving being a prisoner of war. And overcoming the beatings and torture. It is also about true friendship between military friends. And dealing with PTSD and yes finding the true love that was always there. The author does a great job of describing the hell that POW's must go through, without being too graphic. This is also a very rocky road back to love. But still a great story.

5/5 stars

I received an ARC of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Beth says**

Lee Davis is considered the modern day Lazarus. He was thought killed in action but has spent a over a year as a tortured POW. Returning home, he discovers that his ex-girlfriend is playing his grieving almost wife. He never told his friends that his girl friend rejected his proposal right before he was taken. Now she has infiltrated his life, family and core group of friends. Faking amnesia, Lee decides he is going to pay Juliet back for her deceit.

With a difficult past it is hard for Juliet to trust love so when Lee asks her to marry him only after 6 weeks of dating she asks for more time...angered by her request, Lee storms out of Juliet's life and to his "death". Heart broken by the loss of Lee, Juliet didn't know what to do when his army buddies gave her the engagement ring she wasn't ready to accept.

Unsure how to deal with Lee's PTSD Juliet devotes herself to Lee's recovery. Lee quickly realizes that he needs Juliet in his life but once the deception is uncovered can their tenuous trust survive?

*A Prior Engagement* is an emotionally moving story of two people torn apart by tragedy fighting their way back to each other through severe emotional damage. My heart hurt for their struggles! Gripping, psychologically captivating and so real, I couldn't help but be pulled into the lives of Karina Bliss's characters.

This ARC copy of *A Prior Engagement* was given to me by Harlequin Superromance in exchange for a honest review. This book is set for publication on May 7, 2013.

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### **Kim says**

I like this author. I'm mixed about this book, though. It was kind of anxiety-inducing for a long time and once they came clean with each other and had the next crisis, there was very little happiness. I've only read one other book in the series, so I'm wondering if I've missed some backstory between this hero and heroine that would've helped me understand why they're so set on each other despite all the unhappiness and conflict in this story.

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### **Susan says**

Fantastic book. Lee is back home after being presumed dead and is confronted by a lot of changes, not the least of which is Juliet's presence in his friends' lives as his fiancée. She turned down his proposal the night before he left so how dare she be playing the part? Lee decides to fake amnesia and see if he can guilt her into a confession.

Jules had a lot of emotional baggage. She had grown up watching her mother jump into emotional relationships after knowing men for a very short time. She swore she would not do that herself. When Lee proposed after only six weeks she asked for more time for them to get to know each other but he stormed away in anger, not contacting her again. When his friends gave her the engagement ring after Lee's "death" she couldn't bear to disappoint them by telling them the truth. She spent the next year and a half getting involved with Lee's friends and family, suffering from terrible guilt but unable to figure a way out of it. Lee's return only made it worse because he apparently didn't remember the proposal. She wanted to tell him the truth but was afraid of what it might do to his recovery and kept up the deception. When she finally told him the truth about what happened and her feelings it was obvious that she was still trying to protect him. She offered to get out of his life and was surprised when he didn't take her up on it. Her actions showed how much she still loved him and wanted to help him. There is an incredibly intense scene toward the end that shows just how much she loves and trust him and really opens Lee's eyes to how much he has to work through.

Lee had spent almost two years as a captive not knowing that everyone thought he was dead. In spite of Jules's refusal he spent those months thinking about her and what he could do to win her back. My impression of the pre-captivity Lee is that he was the kind of guy that things came easy to. He loved Jules and didn't understand her refusal even though she explained that she just needed more time for them to know each other. I thought he behaved like a jerk when he walked away from her. When he returned and heard about her being his fiancée he was angry and decided to work on some revenge. His actions weren't very nice. I liked the fact that as angry as he was he realized that he actually still cared for her. When his amnesia story started to fall apart he finally confronted her and was stunned by some of the things she told him. I liked the way that he began to realize that he had changed and was never going to be like his old self. I liked

the new Lee once he stopped the revenge thing. He and Jules began to develop a real relationship that actually had a chance of surviving.

This is an incredibly emotional book as Lee deals with the after effects of his captivity. He has a hard time talking about what happened and mostly tries to ignore it. He also has to deal with his friends and the way that their lives have changed and the decisions they have made. I loved the realism in all four books and how the issues and problems they had to work through were dealt with. Nothing has been minimized or given an easy solution. There is a really emotional scene when they all sit down together to talk about the explosion and its effects on all their lives. Even at the end of the book Lee isn't magically healed but he is on the right track with Jules's love and support.

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### **Kate Vale says**

This tale captured me almost from the first page. Imagine a military guy proposing before he's deployed and the woman in his life turning him down? That's what spins this tale quickly into conflict that becomes more complicated as we learn more of Lee's and Jule's back story and her intertwining relationships with his friends. This soldier comes back to life--literally and figuratively, thereby forcing Jules to consider selling her house OR her partnership and her job (!) to pay him back for what she thinks she owes him.

While all ends well, getting there is no walk in the park.

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### **Kathy says**

An interesting story of a on again off again engagement. A man coming back from the dead finds out the woman who rejected his proposal has been posing as his fiancée for 18 months. He plotting revenge. She's trying to find a time to tell him without hurting him.

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### **Lyuda says**

Powerful story that nicely concluded the military romance series. The book evoked such a rollercoaster of emotions, I just couldn't put it down. The characters, their emotions, behavior felt so real. The cynic in me wants to dismiss the story as fiction. The dreamer wants to believe that such a brotherhood, selfishness and love still exists in the world as torn apart as ours.

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### **coriannmcgroary says**

Couldn't put it down

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### **Sonya Heaney says**

Originally posted **HERE** .

I didn't know this book was ever going to be written, but am happy there was some closure given to unfinished business from past books. Karina Bliss' series about returned NZ Special Forces soldiers has made for some great reading, but I'd recommend reading them in order, because by the time we reach this one, there're a lot of characters with a lot of tough backstories.

The reason this book surprised me is because it is about a character everyone thought had died in the Middle East.

Is the setup for this story a little farfetched? Of course it is. However, there's something appealing about '*back from the dead*' stories, and I'm willing to forgive an author for improbabilities as long as they can draw me in. I think Bliss managed that here.

Really, really, don't read this one first or you'll miss out on a lot of the emotional impact. In addition to Lee Davis, our *returned from the dead* hero, we have Jules Browne, the woman he loved. Nobody knows she actually turned down Lee's marriage proposal immediately before he was deployed; everyone thinks they were happy together until the end. Now he's back, and things aren't going to be easy to work out.

Because of the situations they have been thrown into, neither character is as immediately likeable as most others in the series, but by the end of the book you'll be able to see where they're coming from and how past events have shaped who they are.

There's a lot of involvement of previous characters in this book, so I would recommend giving yourself a quick refresher of past plotlines before diving in.

Harlequin still commits the crime of removing most things that make this book distinctly Kiwi (metric system, British English etc.). For example, you can't just replace kilograms with pounds and have it mean the same thing. 20 pounds (9.07 kilograms) does not equal 20 kilograms (44.09 pounds). We're supposed to be shocked by Lee's weight loss in captivity, but because the number wasn't changed along with the system of measurement, it just... wasn't... shocking...

However I really enjoyed the use of distinctly Kiwi words in some places. Maori terminology that was somehow allowed to be kept in added to the New Zealand flavour of the book. Now, if only editors would allow us non-Americans to use the word *arse*!

I'm glad Bliss wrote this book. It had a lot of themes I enjoy reading, and made for an enjoyable – if emotionally difficult – read.

*Review copy provided by NetGalley.*

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## **Elle (Ligia) says**

It seems as if Harlequin novels are taking a lot of my reading list this year, huh? Can't say I regret it ;)

I realize that maybe I should have read the previous three books in the series first, but I wouldn't be me if I started a series the way it was meant to be started, right? So yes, I know I might have missed (and it seems I

did from some reviews I've been reading) important parts of these character's backstories, but this one caught my eye and I was not about to wait to finish three books before reading it, like hell I would!

In *A Prior Engagement* soldier Lee Davis comes back from the dead. Almost two years after being presumed dead everyone in his life is slowly trying to move on, and so is Juliet Browne... his *fiancée*?

Lee comes back home to find that the woman he loved has been lying to his family and friends for nineteen months, wearing his engagement ring and pretending their last conversation didn't happen, a conversation in which he asked her to marry him and she refused.

It was strange how this book made me feel because at the beginning I felt bad for Jules because well, she felt terrible, because losing him in the first place had really hurt her, she loved him. But I couldn't help but cheer for Lee a little, I couldn't help but feel he had a right however wrong it might sound, because he was presumably dead and she still accepted the ring that when he asked her she had refused. It irked me.

But then...

Then when everything he did kind of backfired on him I couldn't really feel bad... much. He had it coming. As a matter of fact the longer he kept going with his '*making her pay*' scheme the more I started disliking him. Seriously, what an asshole!

***"Revenge wasn't sweet, it was corrosive, and he needed to rebuild his life. The games had to end."***

I have warring feelings towards this book. The first half I was all with Lee, because I felt his betrayal just as much as he did, but there's a point that you say: '*that's enough*', and the longer he kept going the worse I started to feel, my apprehension for Jules grew as I read on, it was breaking my heart.

The second half, however, did change for the better, but not much better, I still felt like I was being pulled from one side to the other... which is good, I assume, it is how they felt after all.

***"All you have to do is take a breath and then another one." Because life was that simple. And that complicated.***

All in all, *A Prior Engagement* is an amazing story. It will have you pinning for these characters badly. It will have you fighting the urge to scream when you find out everything Lee went through when in captivity. It will have you crying, for him, for her. But it will also make you swoon and laugh out loud, and that's what makes it worth it, in the end you learn to deal with the bad and appreciate the good.

***"Dying in the dark you hear a voice say that giving up isn't an option (...) It was your voice, Jules," he whispered.***

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## Alison says

This was the surprise book for me. The series is about a group of four New Zealand SAS buddies who were all affected by an ambush in Afghanistan. The original premise was that Lee had been killed in action and the three surviving friends had to deal with variously: killing the fifth member of the team to prevent him from being tortured by the Taliban; being badly wounded and unable to return to the SAS; and feeling guilty for not being on the mission because of toothache.

Anyway, before he went on the fatal mission Lee had bought an engagement ring for the woman he had been dating for six weeks, Juliet (Jules) Browne. After his 'death' his friends gave Jules the ring, not knowing that she had rejected his proposal. In the 19 months since Lee's death Jules has become part of the group of friends, so much so that the guys persuaded her to go on a date with one of the local guys!

Lee can't believe that the guys consider Jules to be one of the family, how could she possibly have accepted that ring after rejecting him so brutally? Then he finds out that she has also cozied up to his late father and siblings, even holidaying in far flung destinations with his father and he is incensed to find that Jules has inherited money from his father. Clearly this woman is a scheming gold-digger who has lied to Lee's friends and family. So he pretends amnesia to see whether Jules will come clean when they meet face-to-face.

Jules has spent the last 19 months wishing she had told the truth when Lee's friends gave her the ridiculous engagement ring but they seemed to need it as much as she did. Now she wants to tell him the truth but she doesn't want to upset him when he is clearly suffering PTSD and has lots of other issues, including amnesia. Even worse, she invested the money she inherited in a partnership in the legal practice where she works, in order to pay Lee back all his money she will need to sell her house or the share in the partnership.

I really enjoyed this, despite having wished that strait-laced Jules would tame the rockstar that Nate has been bodyguarding in Hollywood. I love a pretend amnesia plot and this didn't disappoint, although I did think it floundered a little bit in the middle. I'm sorry to have reached the end of this series as I enjoyed the trials and tribulations that these guys have endured.

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## Janga says

In *Here Comes the Groom* (January 2011), Bliss uses a friends-to-lovers plot and pushes it to the limit to give Dan Jansen and Jocelyn Swann their HEA. In *Stand-in Wife* (August 2011), she takes the overused twin switch and gives it a fresh twist, uniting Dan's free-spirited sister Vivienne and Ross Coltrane, the coolest, most controlled of the SF team. There's nothing new about a widow's second time to fall in love or a hero with survivor's guilt, but Bliss gives new dimensions to both in *Bring Him Home* (June 2012), the story of Claire Langford and Nathan Wyatt.

The Lazarus soldier is not new in romance either, but there is nothing trite in *A Prior Engagement*. Bliss shows us the process and the pain of Lee's resurrection. The reader sees the scars left by the manacles Lee's captors used to chain him. She winces at the missing digit on one finger and the uneven nails growing back, sickened by the suffering to which they testify. Each detail--from Lee's embracing the rain on his trip home to the obsessive shopping trip with the ill-fitting clothes that remind him of how he has changed--reveals the

price this soldier paid. Sympathy for Jules is strong too as she struggles with her guilt and with doing what's best for Lee, all while trying to protect her own heart. My heart cracked a bit at her reaction when she first sees Lee after his return:

*A minute ago if she'd been asked to describe him in one word she would have used dazzling. His smile, his looks, his charming personality. He reminded her of summer. Except there was nothing of summer about him now. If she'd seen him on the street she wouldn't have recognized him.*

Some fans of contemporary romance avoid category romances. Trust me, some of the best writing in the subgenre is being written by Superromance authors, and Karina Bliss is among the most gifted. I highly recommend the Special Forces series, but if you only read one of the quartet, make it *A Prior Engagement*.

And next year Bliss will give us a book that features as hero rock star Zander Freedman from *What the Librarian Did* (and with small parts in *Bring Him Home* and *A Prior Engagement*). Talk about redeeming the irredeemable! How cool is that?

See full review at The Romance Dish:  
<http://www.theromancedish.com/2013/05...>

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## Lea's Audiobooks Hensley says

After reading Bliss' **What the Librarian Did**, I was hoping for another enjoyable read. More than that, I was hoping new narrator Tess Masters would prove to be a narrator to watch. Neither happened. I'll admit that I gave up on this one before I was finished.

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## ShoSho says

Woohooooo another ARC from Netgalley !!!!!!!!!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

I finished this last night but I can't stop thinking about it. I love the series because it's not just fluff, I can't just read them as another Harlequin romance I get involved with the story. The characters are believable and real. They are not all perfect people, they make mistakes, they judge each other and they hurt each other but at the end they make everything work and it doesn't mean they become perfect people, they start making amends and building or rebuilding their lives.

What I loved most about this book was Lee's struggles and mistakes. After nineteen months of captivity he was broken but didn't heal overnight and by the end of the book he wasn't healed but was on the right track which made the whole thing more believable.

(view spoiler)

Overall a really great book.

