



Carla Kelly's Christmas Collection

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Come explore Regency London with Carla Kelly! This collection features four stories that will warm your heart with Christmas cheer: “The Christmas Ornament,” “Make a Joyful Noise,” “An Object of Charity,” and “The Three Kings.” Filled with romance and a touch of humor, these stories are sure to find a place in your heart and remind you that Christmas is a time for love.

Carla Kelly's Christmas Collection Details

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From Reader Review Carla Kelly's Christmas Collection for online ebook

Jacob Proffitt says

As always, rating an anthology is problematic for me. I'll include my story notes below, but with one stand-out and the rest average-ish I think I'll go with three stars.

The Christmas Ornament – 3

Charming, but neither were that engaging (not my type). James was too wishy-washy and I wanted him to gain a backbone. Olivia was better, but a bit too willing to withdraw, as well. I get the feeling that both are the type to shrink from a challenge and that bodes ill for their future family. I did like his growth arc and seeing himself in the odious Peter taught him a lesson I doubt he'll soon forget.

Make a Joyful Noise – 4

Chard is sweet and honorable and faithful. Indeed, we see that his faith penetrates his soul and that he is a good and Christlike man. We don't have a very good read on Rose because she isn't terribly present. What we do see of her shows a kind and caring woman doing her best with a rotten hand. They'll make a great match of things and this story would have been truly outstanding if Chard hadn't gone so passive in the last quarter. His reluctance to act was weak and undermined all the rest telling us he was good and kind and thoughtful. Rose's situation is dire and she needs help and safety sooner than later. Every day he wastes getting her out of that "home" is a blight on his soul. And he takes *months*.

An Object of Charity – 3½

A lot of internal dialogue by a man damaged by war make this a slow, introspective read. And Kelly crams in themes of forgiveness and charity and a couple moral lessons about rich and poor and overcoming adversity through cheerfulness and determination—which is a lot of ground to cover. I wish we had had more with Sally because all we really have here is a paragon in need of charity. I do like how Kelly turns it around to illustrate that Michael is the one with the greater need and the attempt at showing the universal need for charity we all have. But in the end, it only kind of works, mainly because Sally is too perfect and I felt that too many details were left dangling in the end.

The Three Kings – 2

Too-short a time-frame and too much going on and war-torn Spain is depressing. If you like your romance with a heaping helping of death, hunger, desperate soldiers, and more death, then this might be your jam.

Rosario (<http://rosario.blogspot.com/>) says

This anthology contains two stories I'd already read (Make A Joyful Noise and The Three Kings), but a) I read them many years ago, b) I've no idea where the physical books have gone, and c) the e-version of the anthology was about 2 pounds, so I didn't mind. Well, I didn't mind until I finished the book and realised I'd liked the two stories I'd already read and disliked the two I hadn't!

The first story is The Christmas Ornament, originally published in A Regency Christmas.

James and Olivia have known each other for years, but after Olivia's brother, who was James' best friend,

died in the war, the families have grown apart. Olivia is now about to come out in society, and her loving father is worried about her. She's an intelligent, studious girl, and he fears she won't take (or worse, that she'll end up with a man who'll want to quash her intellect). Who better than James, who's an Oxford don by now, to give her the life she deserves?

James is actually quite taken by the idea, and determines to go back to the old home over Christmas and court Olivia. But his shyness, combined with his intellectual arrogance, makes it harder than expected.

James was sweet, but the story lacked tension. I didn't really feel he loved Olivia. He just seemed to like the idea of a wife, and the idea of Olivia (by the time the story started he hadn't seen Olivia since she was really young). To be honest, I found the thing pretty boring.

MY GRADE: A C.

Then came *Make a Joyful Noise* (originally in *Regency Christmas Carol*), one of the ones I'd already read.

Peter, the Marquess of Chard (he gets called Chard, mainly, and all I could think of was green leafy vegetables) is a widower and a farmer, raising his children peacefully in his Northumbria estate. He's lonely, but he had a pretty bad marriage, so he's a bit wary of women. Until Rosie comes to live with his neighbours. Rosie is the daughter of a Welsh colour sergeant (not quite sure what that means, really, but it sounds pretty cool), whom one of the sons of the house married while soldiering in Portugal. He was a bit of a blockhead and died only a few days later. Her new in-laws are making Rosie's life hell, and under the excuse of recruiting her for the local church choir, Chard tries to help her.

This is a cute story. Chard is an honourable, decent man, and I felt his loneliness. The romance is nice, although we don't really get to know Rosie that well, because the story is all told from Chard's point of view. I liked what I saw of her, though. She's not a pushover, which is hard to pull off when she's in a situation where her in-laws have all the power and are being jackasses. She doesn't just roll over, but there's really not much she can do. The one thing I didn't like in the romance and characterisation was the demonisation of the first wife. That was pretty mild, actually, but Kelly seems to do it much too often, and I've become violently allergic to it.

I quite liked the choir element. See, there's this supposedly benign choir competition between neighbouring parishes that is actually really cutthroat, and Chard "cheats" by getting a load of Welsh workers on his estate just so he can induct them into the choir (that felt dangerously close to stereotype, but hey, I'll be charitable and give this a pass). I wish I'd been able to hear what they sounded like!

MY GRADE: This was a B.

After that came *An Object of Charity*, first published in *A Regency Christmas Present*.

Captain Michael Lynch has had to come home from the blockade after an accident that took the life of his first mate, who was also a good friend, and damaged his ship. As soon as he's back on land he meets the Purslows, niece and nephew of that first mate, who are there to meet him after their own father died and they were left broke. The news that their uncle is dead is a huge blow, as they are completely penniless and were counting on his help. Michael feels he can't leave them on their own with no money, so he takes them home to his mother for Christmas, even though he hasn't been there for over 20 years, since he was thrown out.

I did not get on with this story at all. The romance was a bust, because I saw absolutely no chemistry

between Michael and Sally Purslow, and the family drama was overly dramatic. I did not believe any of it for a minute, not the original fight between Michael and his brother, not the interactions between them in the present-day scenes. I was tempted to skim.

MY GRADE: This one was a D.

The book ends with The Three Kings, from the A Regency Christmas II anthology, the other story I'd already read.

Lady Sarah Comstock came to Spain with her scholar brother, who was seeking access to some really important papers and travelled in the wake of the British army to get to them. In Salamanca, however, disaster strikes, and Sarah is left alone in a French-controlled town after her brother gets killed. She manages to get to relative safety with one of the straggling groups of the retreating army, and Colonel Luis Sotomayor agrees to escort her to safety, with the French army hot in pursuit.

I liked this all right, although the romance didn't particularly work for me (it wasn't bad, I just wasn't invested in it). I liked the less saccharine tone. I liked that we got to see the effects of war on Spain and regular Spanish people -so often it's only a background for British aristocrats' adventures. I liked the characters individually (although in this one, it was all narrated from the heroine's point of view). In short, it was good, but not great.

MY GRADE: A B-.

So, not a huge success, I'm afraid, with even the stories I'd already read and liked were only ok.

MY OVERALL GRADE: A C.

Katie W says

I love Christmas stories, especially those that have a little romance thrown in. I really enjoyed these historical short stories.

My favorite was The Christmas Ornament. I loved the way Lord Crandall would stick his foot in his mouth. He was so tongue-tied and the things he came up with to say to these pretty girl were hilarious. I could just picture him cringing and beating himself up over it, yet he'd do it again in the next moment.

The second story was so sweet. It seemed that the Marquis was going to extraordinary lengths to keep the choir together, yet he had ulterior reasons--reasons that involved a certain woman. I loved the ending and the way he treated his children, Rosie, and her baby.

I enjoyed how different the stories were and the messages that were given. They were great little snippets and I didn't feel cheated that they weren't full-length.

Content: Clean.

Carolyn F. says

"The Christmas Ornament". Very cute story about childhood friends who love each other as-is. 4 stars.

"An Object of Charity." Another sweet story of love and reconciliation. 5 stars

I'm finding this author's books/stories to really be a nice, sweet change to what I usually read.

Heidi Robbins (Heidi Reads...) says

Carla Kelly is one of my favorite Regency authors because of the unique perspective she offers by focusing on the lower/middle class and military instead of the more popular ton. She has a subtle and sometimes dry sense of humor that brings a lightness to the often desperate circumstances of her characters. The romance stands out because of the little details and mannerisms that make it endearing and so sweet. I loved this collection of Christmas-themed stories and will definitely be reading it again!

Aimee (Getting Your Read On) says

I am a Carla Kelly fan. It's true. In this book, you will find several short stories with a Regency setting. I loved them all. They were perfect little romantic stories that can be read straight through or one at a time if you are the kind of person that likes to draw things out to make them last. (Kind of like sucking on a piece of candy verses chomping them right away. Guess what kind of candy eater I am?! Chomper.)

I'll admit, I didn't take time to savor these. I read one story after another, almost straight through. They were so sweet. I just couldn't help myself. The characters, the settings, and the Christmas feel all make these short stories feel so good. I think my favorites were "The Three Kings" and "An Object of Charity". I think what I love about collections of short romance stories is that I get multiple happily ever after endings. What's not to love about that?!

This would be the perfect holiday gift idea for Regency romance lovers. Or clean romance lovers. Or it would be the perfect way to give yourself a little indulgence. (think of your cozy reading place, with your favorite cold weather beverage...)

You have the chance to win an ebook copy of this book on my blog, thanks to the awesomeness of Cedar Fort. :)

<http://gettingyourreadonaimeebrown.blogspot.com/2013/10/giveaway.html> Giveaway ends 10/31/2013

kate says

Typical Carla Kelly. Not a dog in the bunch. All better then good reading.

Melanie says

These are great Regency Christmas stories and I enjoyed them all! My favorite story was *Make a Joyful Noise*. Peter's mother made the mistake of asking about the Christmas choir and she was drafted into recruiting members. Every year, three parishes had a friendly competition which has now turned into a monster and their choir is lacking. I felt his mother's pain as I have been in the position of recruiting choir members and it's so difficult. She was also fearful that people would run from her (yep). Peter's sister, Bella, suddenly needs their mother's help as her children have the chicken pox, so she asks Peter to take over choir recruitment duties and leaves. He's not thrilled but the opportunity to recruit just might help his social life. I loved Peter's kindness to everyone--his children, his mother and Rosie and her baby. He's accepting of others and willing to help however he can, whether he wants to do it or not.

This is also the first Carla Kelly novel I've read and I'm wanting to read more! These stories felt so authentic that I took my time reading them so I could enjoy her writing. This is a great addition to my Christmas collection and I look forward to reading it again. If you enjoy clean Christmas Regency romantic short stories and are ready to get in the Christmas Spirit, then this is the book for you!

Mel's Shelves

Froggie says

The usual Cara Kelly's in petite bites. I had a soft spot for the hero of "Make a Joyful Noise" and wished the story were longer. "The Three Kings" was the most enjoyable to me, mainly because of the plot and the adventure spirit.

Felicia J. says

Oh dear. It's happened already. After reading just three books from her rather extensive backlist, I've become a Carla Kelly fangirl.

She has such a marvelous way of creating heroes and heroines who are fully human - people who are flawed, who struggle to comprehend their emotions, but who are basically good and decent people doing the best they can in life. As I read each one of the four novellas in this collection, I became completely absorbed in their fates, as well as the everyday, small details of their lives. I put off other tasks (including going to sleep) for "just a few more pages." I slowed my pace to savor Kelly's writing and the richness of the emotions evoked by her stories, and at the end of each tale, I sighed with happiness, content with the hopeful, heartfelt ending.

Somehow Kelly does all that to me without ever becoming trite or overly sentimental.

These four romances, previously printed in Signet Regency Christmas anthologies, offer a little something for everyone, with varying degrees of light and shade. "The Christmas Ornament," a tale of two awkward,

studious individuals who fall in love, is funny, playful and heartfelt. With humor and insight, Kelly examines the plight of a young woman denied the education she so passionately desires, and explores whether a young man steeped in the prejudices of his times could ever accept a female as an intellectual equal.

"Make a Joyful Noise" starts with a humorous premise: A widowed marquis gets stuck with the task of recruiting a Christmas choir from a neighborhood of people who cannot carry a tune. From that beginning, Kelly weaves a tale of two people hurt, then abandoned, in love, who through their growing feelings for one another find the courage to love again. When Peter Chard hears Rosie Weatherby, a lovely Welshwoman, sing in church, he remembers the talents of the Welsh Fusiliers he served with in battle in India. He recruits Welsh servants and farmhands to his estate to join the choir, while growing more attached to Rosie, newly widowed, heavily pregnant and rejected by her husband's family.

A darker, more brooding story, "An Object of Charity" follows Captain Michael Lynch as he returns home for his first Christmas visit in 22 years. His family turned him out at age 14 after a hotheaded youthful indiscretion, leaving him to make his own way up the ranks of the British Navy. During those years, Lynch gained both esteem and riches, but he can neither forgive nor forget his family's cruelty. He takes with him the niece and nephew of his ship's first mate, recently killed in action. Sally and Thomas are homeless and destitute, and Sally chafes at, but must accept, her status as an object of charity. The determined, open-hearted young woman helps Lynch realize how his grudge blights his own existence, and prompts him to view his past in a new light as he ponders his life going forward.

The final story, "The Three Kings," takes an unflinching look at the privations of war and the ability of people to do good even in the bleakest of circumstances. After her brother is murdered by French troops advancing into Spain, Sarah Comstock must seek safety with the British Army in Portugal. She finds a camp of British stragglers and Army followers, but after a French attack, she falls under the protection of Colonel Luis Sotomayor, a battle-weary Spanish soldier. With very little to eat, in a countryside crawling with French enemies and suspicious Spanish villagers, the two make their way toward the border, forming an intense bond along the way. Sarah not only finds the strength to face her own privations, she summons compassion for those even hungrier and weaker than she.

I could say so much more about each of these stories, which all packed at least a novel's worth of passion, emotion and insight between their pages. But it's best to let new readers discover these gems for themselves. Enjoy.

Jenna Thatcher says

Fun style and a reminder of what to do with those leftover great idea that just don't fit into a full-sized book.

RaeAnne Thayne says

I love Carla's books. They're filled with emotion, tenderness and joy.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

I was digging around in the depths of my Kindle last night for something Christmas-themed and not too demanding of my brain, which was recuperating from hosting a luncheon and book club discussion at my house yesterday. I landed on this set of four short Christmas novellas from Carla Kelly, one of the more thoughtful and realistic writers of Regency era romances. I read these about 4 years ago but didn't remember much at all about them, so it was almost like reading them brand new. Yay for bad memories?

This set is only \$3.03 on Amazon Kindle and worth picking up if you like the more thought-provoking type of historical romances. Carla Kelly writes heartfelt stories about realistic people, those who have gone through trials in life. She's more interested in naval captains, doctors, soldiers, women who wish for the right to go to universities, women who don't fit into high society or are poor relations, than the Incomparables at Almacks or dukes. And she has a nice sense of humor:

The sound of incredible, perfect harmony exploded in the church, booming from wall to wall with all the majesty the hymnist must have intended but which had never before been even remotely achieved at St. Phil's. By the end of the first stanza, the choirmaster was gripping the lectern, his knuckles white. At the completion of the chorus, he waved the choir to a halt and staggered to a seat.

Or, on a more romantic note:

He knew what to do after that, and he did it, without any demur from the object of his admiration. He would like to have done more, but the winged harpy of good manners clattered into the room and flopped down to roost on his shoulder.

The four novellas in this collection:

“The Christmas Ornament” - Two fathers decide to try to make a match between their shy, studious children. The son, James Enders, is definitely interested, but he manages to put his foot in his mouth with Olivia Hannaford several times. When Olivia's brother brings a suave diplomat friend (who wants an “intelligent wife”) home for Christmas to meet Olivia, James despairs of his chances. I really enjoyed reading the entire story from James' point of view, and seeing how his view of Olivia evolves as he grows to understand her better.

“Make a Joyful Noise” - Lord Peter Chard, a widower with two young children, gets entangled with his mother's efforts to help put together a choir for the three local churches' annual Christmas choir competition. The problem is that their congregation's choir is terrible, the despair of all. Then Chard meets a young Welsh widow, pregnant and living with her despicable in-laws, with a lovely voice ... but she's not at all in the class of ladies that he's supposed to be looking to marry from. Chard's delightful children and his steadiness and kind heart are big pluses in this story.

“An Object of Charity” - Captain Michael Lynch's ship is in repairs for several months. While he's in Portsmouth, trying to figure out what to do with himself, he meets the destitute niece and nephew of his former first officer, who died in a battle, and ends up taking them with him to visit his long-estranged family. Lynch is a man with a good heart but damaged in his soul by his life's disappointments, and he has a tendency to bark at people like an impatient captain and then regret his hasty words later. This story has some good points to make about forgiveness.

“The Three Kings” - Lady Sarah Comstock is in trouble: she's in Spain during the Napoleonic wars, in the front of the battles between the British and the French. She and her brother are scholars researching Christopher Columbus' old papers, and he's been unexpectedly killed. Now it's up to Sarah to get Columbus' papers home. She's given safe-conduct papers by the French, but somehow the journey ends up far more dangerous than she expected.

The first two stories were my favorites, but they're all worth reading.

willaful says

3 1/2 stars. This is what I wrote about "The Christmas Ornament" when I originally read it in an anthology: "Kelly's stories are always the jewel in any collection. This was an unique tale about a shy intellectual who finds his perfect match but keeps cocking it up. Eventually he realizes that the way to his lady's heart is through appreciating and understanding her as a person. The entire story is told from his point of view."

Kelly's stories don't shine quite as much when collected together, where their similarities stand out more. The first three of these four stories are all about men falling in love and screwing it up at first, all told entirely from their points of view. The quirkiness of her style also starts to seem a little repetitive. There's still much to enjoy: likable characters, sweet romance, original plots, and a sense of the period.

Estara says

If you like Carla Kelly's usual regencies, you'll like these fifty page novelettes taken from various Christmas anthologies and republished here as well.

She always has the gift of interesting characters and situations and you can see this here as well. I also totally love the design for the cover - Kelly really got a gifted designer for her re-releases - vis Marian's Christmas Wish, a standalone novel re-release for Kindle.

“*The Christmas Ornament*” - we have a truly bright woman who - most realistically for the times - has no chance of finding a suitor who will accept her opinions and brightness (except if he can mold her like Pygmalion) and a very shy, very bookish young aristocrat at Oxford who has never dared think about a family but would like to please his father and an old family friend. The question is - will he be able to seriously please the girl and manage to overcome his own preconceptions?

“*Make a Joyful Noise*” - this was just lovely and warm. There's a marquis returned from war, always earnest he has been working side by side with his tenants, taking care of the crops and his two children. His mother would like this year's choir competition to be decided in favour of their parish, but there are no good singers in the local flock.

When an urgent call to her daughter's family leaves the choir competition in the hands of her son, he uses his systematic approach to heavily salt the local parish with great singers, acquiring further helpers for his lands (how fortunate the Welsh fusiliers are mostly unemployed now the war is over) - and save a lovely and incredibly pregnant young widow from utter negligence by her dead husband's uppity family. The hero is humble. It totally works.

An Object of Charity is probably the darkest story in the anthology, both hero and heroine are at the emotional end of their ropes, and the way the hero got there makes him deeply suspicious of his family at Christmas time, too.

There is a happy end for both, of course, but not an unqualified one. They - and the heroine's younger brother - will move to the USA, maybe taking one other of the family along...

"The Three Kings" is more of an escape caper across enemy lines in the Napoleonic Wars than anything else, clearly showing the desperation of the times and the problem of negligence and prejudice among the soldiers. A nice twist is that the Spanish are the heroes in this book, and with the trial by fire heroine and hero go through it is believable that the two find a deep understanding and respect and tenderness for one another, with the possibility to develop into more - the heroine certainly takes the gamble of returning to the hero in the midst of the war again after having reached safety herself.
