



Reluctantly Charmed

Ellie O'Neill

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Kate McDaid is listing her new-year's resolutions hoping to kick-start her rather stagnant love life and career when she gets some very strange news. To her surprise, she is the sole benefactor of a great great-great-great aunt and self-proclaimed witch also called Kate McDaid, who died over 130 years ago. As if that isn't strange enough, the will instructs that, in order to receive the inheritance, Kate must publish seven letters, one by one, week by week.

Burning with curiosity, Kate agrees and opens the first letter – and finds that it's a passionate plea to reconnect with the long-forgotten fairies of Irish folklore. Almost instantaneously, Kate's life is turned upside down. Her romantic life takes a surprising turn and she is catapulted into the public eye.

As events become stranger and stranger – and she discovers things about herself she's never known before – Kate must decide whether she can fulfil her great-aunt's final, devastating request ... and whether she can face the consequences if she doesn't.

Witty, enchanting and utterly addictive, Reluctantly Charmed is about what happens when life in the fast lane collides with the legacy of family, love and its possibilities ... and a little bit of magic.

Reluctantly Charmed Details

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From Reader Review Reluctantly Charmed for online ebook

Virginia says

Ellie O'Neill is a very clever writer with a light touch. Reluctantly Charmed is fast-paced quirky and funny. There are literally dozens of characters and we never get them confused because the characterisation is so strong. The premise at first appears a bit shallow but don't be deceived – there's unexpected depth lurking beneath what seems to be a great romp down the well-trodden chick-lit path. I do think at times the handling of Irish folklore was a little too tongue-in-cheek – and the Irish culture might have been a little too parodied – but the 'reluctant charm' of the main character Kate carries us through.

I was really impressed by the quality of the writing and I've given the book four stars because I had two big disappointments.

The first one is down to O'Neill's editor. It's the author's job to write the most detailed and richly realised book they can. It's the editor's job to nip and tuck anything that's unnecessary, over-written and slows down the pace. About half-way through, my heart sank when I saw how long the book was. Too long for this story, for this reader. I found great slabs of unnecessary description, particularly where details of the media frenzy were repeated over and over, becoming tiresome. And other places where the detailed descriptions of events needed to be cut to keep the story moving. I do worry sometimes that publishers go for longer books because they sell well, but risk the pace of the story.

My other disappointment is a personal thing. Kate has to publish seven poems (called steps) from her long-lost witchy aunt to get a secret inheritance and the whole book is gearing up for the big finish – Step 7. I won't give any spoilers but I didn't like the way O'Neill chose to end it. It was clever in its way but for me that was the problem. It was clever but not inspiring.

Despite these disappointments I'd recommend Reluctantly Charmed as a great beach or curl-up-by-the-fire read. (And I prefer the original cover.)

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

Reluctantly Charmed is a bewitching novel from debut author Ellie O'Neill.

Kate McDaid is curious when she is summoned on her 26th birthday to a lawyer's office to hear the reading of a will written 130 years ago. The will, penned by Kate's great-great-great-great aunt, requires her to agree to publish a series of letters over seven weeks in exchange for her inheritance. Kate, a modern Dubliner and junior copywriter, is bemused to discover the letters contain Seven Steps that her aunt, a self-proclaimed witch, claims will reunite humanity with the near forgotten world of fairy. Not seeing the harm in fulfilling the eccentric request, Kate publishes the first letter online but within days her life is turned completely upside down.

Entertaining and light, Reluctantly Charmed is a fanciful story about self discovery, modern day malaise, and magic, with appealing touches of humour, intrigue and romance.

An ordinary young woman, with a 9-5 job in advertising to which she rides her bike everyday, a crush on a

gorgeous pub singer, and a tiny flat in Dublin, Kate is a likeable character who is easy to relate to. She is naturally skeptical of her aunt's claim that she was a witch who communed with the fairies, and that Kate too has powers. Even as Kate instinctively offers 'spells' to her girlfriends to improve their love life or help their children sleep or chats with the flowers on her desk, she remains doubtful of the existence of magic, more concerned with attracting the attention of 'rock god' Jim, lining up 'The Hoff' to star in a client's campaign and getting to the corner store without being accosted by the Anorak gang. Kate is astonished by the snowballing interest in the 'Steps', fueled by social media, which bestows on her an unwelcome celebrity status.

Ireland is an ideal setting for the novel, given the country's traditional association with the 'wee folk'. Despite the modern pace of Irish life, belief in fairy folklore still lingers and O'Neill's story invites the reader to imagine the possibilities. The 'Seven Steps', which urges people to reconnect with nature and promise a revelatory reward, is an irresistible lure for those, from the earnest Simon the Anorak to the sinister journalist, Maura Ni Ghaora, looking for the potential of magic.

With well drawn, engaging characters, a delightful premise and effortless style, fans of magical realism are sure to be enchanted by the whimsy of Reluctantly Charmed.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

DNF at 24%! This book is supposed to be funny and charming, but actually, for me, it was more silly, without being funny and it seems to be taking a romantic turn that I just wasn't that interested to read about. The whole 7 letter thing and the fairie thing just didn't work for. I read some review to see if it was worth continue reading, but apparently the ending is a big let-down so I decided to not go on since there are better books out there in the world just waiting to be read...with great endings.

I want to thank the publisher and NetGalley for providing me with a free copy for an honest review.

Kathryn says

Irish folklore, fairies and modern day Dublin come together in this brilliant, funny debut by Irish-Australian author Ellie O'Neill. Reluctantly Charmed is a story about fairies. It's also a romance. Most importantly, it is also a great deal of fun with a loveable heroine and a lot of self-deprecating humour.

Kate McDaid is working in an advertising agency in Dublin and believes that her career prospects are going nowhere. She is also a little, well, concerned about her love life which seems to be going about as well as her career is. Then something completely unexpected happens, in the form of an inheritance from a great aunt who died 130 years ago. This aunt, who was also named by Kate McDaid, was a witch. In order for Kate to receive her inheritance, she must publish a series of seven poems each week. The poems each contain a surprising request--that people reconnect with the fairies of Irish Folklore. Kate publishes the first letter on an obscure website. Hilarity--and calamity--ensure when the poems spark a revival of interest in fairies. From there, Kate finds her life change in a number of unexpected ways.

As I stated at the beginning of this review, Reluctantly Charmed is a lot of fun. Each of the poems changes Kate's life in surprising and unexpected ways, sometimes for the better and well, sometimes not. Author Ellie O'Neill's ability to mix folklore with a modern-day Ireland is commendable. I also loved the romantic

subplot--initially, Hugh seems like an unlikely possible love interest for Kate, but as the book wore on, I found myself hoping that the two would eventually pair off. The ending is bittersweet, though fitting for the novel.

Recommended reading for all fans of chick-lit and women's fiction.

This review also appears on my blog, Kathryn's Inbox.

Kate says

If there was every a book which made me want to run away to Ireland and play among the fae - it would be Reluctantly Charmed by Ellie O'Neill.

Kate McDaid's life so far has been fairly normal. She has a job as a copywriter and hopes for career progression. Her parents are loving and she has a great group of friends. On her twenty-sixth birthday, Kate gets a letter which changes her life from her great great-great-great aunt Kate McDaid, a self-proclaimed witch who has been dead for 130 years. The letter seems harmless enough. Post a bunch of letters, one per week for seven weeks, to earn her inheritance. But Kate couldn't have predicted the impact the letters would have on the world.

Reluctantly Charmed is a delightful novel full of adventure and magic. Kate was a great character to follow was she set off on a journey she never expected to take. Not really believing in magic, following her great-aunt's instructions seems harmless. But releasing the letters to the public causes Kate to become an instant celebrity. Dealing with fame whilst trying to prove she's good at her job, find a suitable life-mate and live her life is hard - especially when she achieves almost an almost cult-like status.

But throughout it all, despite the drama and complications following her great-aunt's instructions, Kate remains a charming character. She's likeable and her problems at the beginning of the novel are entirely relatable. Her enduring crush on a singer, trivial office politics and general day-to-day dramas render Kate as incredibly down to earth. When her world gets a little more magical, Kate remains practical and is amazingly level-headed despite the presence of paparazzi and fan clubs hanging out on her front lawn. The magical realism incorporated in this novel worked wonderfully. And the romance was delivered perfectly. The interactions between Kate and her leading man are a great combination of romance, comedy and misunderstanding. I loved it.

The setting is perfect for this book. Ireland shines throughout Kate's journey from the city to the country. And what I liked most about the Irish setting is it didn't feel overly stereotypical nor token. This is a book which could not have worked anywhere else and the country is integral to the story.

I was charmed by Reluctantly Charmed and adored this debut novel by Irish-Aussie Ellie O'Neill. The story was fun and interesting with well written, endearing characters. Perfect for fans of fun contemporary romance stories with just a dash of magic.

Thanks to Simon and Schuster Australia for the review copy.

Rochelle says

What a fun read! Reluctantly Charmed was everything it promised on the front cover 'witty, enchanting and utterly addictive.' Ellie O'Neill has produced a magical debut that is sure to charm many readers. (I couldn't help but think the whole time I was reading it that adult readers of YA will love this one, especially if you like magical realism/Fairies.)

What a wonderful character Kate McDaid was. She finds herself with a mysterious inheritance, one she won't be able to get her hands on unless she agrees to publishes seven letters, one every week for seven weeks. Curious to know what this inheritance is, Kate agrees. She had no idea what she was getting herself into.

The letters encourage people to remember the fairies of the Irish Folklore. Kate is an average, down to earth girl who works in advertising as a copywriter and thinks the letters are nothing more than the ramblings of a mad old woman. That they are harmless. She publishes them online and the unexpected happens – the letters become really popular and people start actually believing in them.

Kate is labelled a witch and thrust into the spotlight. Her life starts spiraling out of control. She can't go anywhere without being followed, she has to come up with a campaign for a hard to please client and the man she thought she loved becomes less and less lovable, while the man she thought she'd never love becomes more so.

But as more and more strange things happen around her, Kate can't help but start to believe, reluctantly, that there might be something more to the letters than she first thought.

Funny, magical and romantic, Reluctantly Charmed is a delightful read. I loved the Dublin setting, I felt like I had been transported to Ireland while I was reading it. I was held captivated by Kate, her friends, family and the letters, and was eagerly turning the pages to see how it was going to end. If you like your contemporaries with a bit of magic, Reluctantly Charmed is the perfect choice. I highly recommend it.

Dana Al-Basha ????? ?????? says

[Tuesday, November 3, 2015] This cover is gorgeous. I just ordered the book, I can't wait to read it.

In my last visit home, a couple of months ago, I got a dozen of new books and one of them was this charming book by Ellie O'Neill titled "Reluctantly Charmed", nothing about me was reluctant while this book charmed me.

I just finished this book, a few hours ago, so the charm of a new favorite story still lingers with me. I remember searching for new books a few months ago, and while entering from one book to the next on Amazon I found this astonishingly beautiful cover and I ordered it on the spot. I have a thing for redheads but not all redheads, I have standers! The girl on the cover is mesmerizing, buying this book for the cover in first place was a gamble, but I won a great story with it!

The story revolves around Kate McDaid who inherited 7 letters from her great aunt from 130 years ago, her aunt was a wicked witch, and they not only shared a name, but looks and power as well. The story takes place in modern Ireland but brings out all the folklore charm of the fair folk.

Reading this book awakened two parts in me, first I was heartbroken reading passages about Ireland, because it reminded me of Palestine, and how much Ireland lost because of the British occupation. England should apologize to many people they hurt along history in the name of power. But history is history, it does affect the present BUT we choose to let go or embrace our heritage. It would break my heart if Palestinian let go.

The second part is a bit personal, BUT books can do that to you, remind you of things you forgot. I too had a fairy friend as a kid, and so many things mentioned in the book gave me goosebumps and awakened a sleeping memory in the back of my mind that I thought of as fiction. As I googled I found many people from different cultures, spoke different languages, had different religions, and were from different times experience the same experiences I went through, which confirmed my old beliefs, some things are unexplainable but are real like you and me. But unlike other people I have proof. It's such a great book!

The book is magical, funny, thrilling, it could get creepy, and charming; and the author knows Omar Al-Sharif!! But I wanted more of the ending. Not the ending I expected from all the buildup as the story moved forward.

Sally906 says

RELUCTANTLY CHARMED is not just contemporary fiction, it has history, drama, laughter, tears, romance and a little bit of magic. The story starts off with just a tiny hint of the mayhem that is about to start "...A year ago no one had heard of me..." This opening line just begged for the question – why has everyone heard of you now? Kate has a dead-end job in an advertising company, with clients that are too hard to please so have been handed to Kate. Her love life is non-existent and her general life is going nowhere, which is why she decides to publish the letters – for a break in the monotony. It doesn't take long for Kate's life to be anything but boring, in fact her parents are being interviewed on TV, the paparazzi are chasing Kate and she has a pack of weird anorak-wearing groupies camped out in her front garden. Suddenly everyone is fairy obsessed and researching their fairy name, talking to nature and hugging trees – including Kate. Well it can't hurt can it? Soon Kate's life is out of control and she finds she's doing spells to help her friends, and discovering that unbelievers are being cursed through the letters. Welcome to the dark side of magic, Kate decides to find out more about her ancestor and what is happening to her and heads off to the small Irish village where it all began. RELUCTANTLY CHARMED gets serious and part of the ending is quite tragic in one sense, not quite the completely happy ending I was expecting, more bitter-sweet with a final twist really surprised me. A belief in fairies is not required to enjoy RELUCTANTLY CHARMED, and rest assured that while there is a lot of humour, it is not all fluff and there is a very dark undertone as fairies are not nice creatures when they don't get their own way. Kate is a very believable character who certainly

grows in character as the story progresses. She starts off as doing it for a bit of a laugh and then has to grapple with a very serious choice by week seven. The tension as she made her choice and mulled the pros and cons kept me on edge and certainly rescued the book for me as it took me a while to settle into the story. I will certainly look out for future books from Ellie O'Neill.

C – Above average. Was very readable and I really liked it but was easily able to put it down and walk away for a while.

With thanks to Simon and Schuster and the author for my copy to read and review.

Alana says

First of all, I know the title is an 'Adult' read. And I know us YA bloggers tend to shy away from such books. But this has to be one of the most YA-y 'Adult' books I've read in a long time. It definitely doesn't have the normal adult vibe... apart from the fact that yes, the character is a little bit older than a teenager, it's a quirky and interesting 'fluffy' read that's perfect for a lazy Sunday afternoon.

The novel follows Kate McDaid, a young Irish woman who's in desperate need of a promotion, a love life and something to take her away from her boring routine. Fortunately, this something comes in the form of a previously unknown inheritance granted to her on 26th birthday. But the inheritance comes with a catch, her great-great-great (there's more great's but you get the hint) aunt included a clause in the paperwork. Kate can only get what is entitled to her after she publishes seven letters, one each week, to the general public.

But these aren't just ordinary letters, they're strict steps to reconnect with the long forgotten (and who knew they existed?) fairies of the Irish folklore. As each week passes, things around her get weird and downright odd as Ireland, and the world at large, start to question the existence of these fairies, and wonder what the final step will reveal. As the public becomes desperate to reconnect with their Irish folklore, Kate begins to learn more about herself, her past and the motivations of those around her.

I was utterly charmed by this novel. (Get it? Alana made a funny :P) Kate McDaid was a lovely main character and I had a ton of fun following the journey of the 'steps' along with the other characters in the novel. I'm going to be completely honest and admit that I have a limited knowledge of Irish folklore, but I found the fairy concept in a real life setting incredibly cute although often a tad unrealistic. Then again, not being Irish-born, I have no clue how ingrained this type of folklore is in the culture... So for them this could have been very realistic. Who knows?

Kate's parents were hysterical. Honestly, their hijinks made the book for me. From going on every kind of talk show to milk their newfound fame to hiring an agent and attempting fake tan... there wasn't anything they didn't do. And they that had me smiling to myself or laughing out loud in all of their scenes. Kate's constant exasperation with them just made it better, I'm sure we can all relate... I know I can.

The magical twist while interesting and unique for such a genre...just didn't sit well with me. Like Kate in the novel, I was incredibly skeptical about how the 'fairies' and these steps suddenly became increasing popular to the point where Kate herself becomes a celebrity. I think I'm just being nitpicky

though...Probably because I'm not used to such a magical twist in a chick-lit novel. I'm the girl that will read a book about a cyborg Cinderella but I'm nitpicking at a few fairies? I feel like I'm being a bit of a hypocrite here :P

I found the friendships in the novel solid... although the romantic sub-plot was a tad unusual, albeit rather cute. I was more inclined to it towards the end... it's just there was so few interactions or sane interactions... it had a very 'Pride and Prejudice' vibe to it. (If that makes any sense at all..)

I will say that the ending was not my favourite. Although I didn't see it coming, kudos to O'Neill for a rather unpredictable finish, I thought it was rather abrupt and a little bit far-fetched. I closed the book and was left with a WTF kind of feeling... and not really in a good way. This was such a shame because I really did enjoy the book until the last 100 pages, so I was left feeling a little bit let down.

Overall, I did enjoy Reluctantly Charmed for its quirky plot, lovable characters and general 'fluffy-ness'. This is a perfect light-hearted read for a night in with a glass (or bottle) of wine and a blanket or chocolate (always chocolate). I'd recommend giving it a try even if you aren't a fan of adult books because this one is definitely not your average chick lit read.

Thank you to Simon & Schuster Australia for providing an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Carmen Blankenship says

I adored every line of this book. Ellie O'Neill is a fresh new voice and I cannot wait to read what's next from her. If she is to be compared to anyone I would Sarah Addison Allen. This is magic realism at its finest. From the lush and rich Irish history, to the possibilities of Fairies, I guarantee you will giggle at times and be mesmerized at others. Grab your tea and tuck in. You'll be reading awhile.

Thank you Netgalley for the copy in exchange for a review.

Catherine Heloise says

I was given a copy of this book as part of the Australia Day Book Giveaway Blog Hop, and it was so much fun to read.

Kate McDaid discovers on her 26th birthday that her long-dead great-great-great aunt left her a legacy, with conditions on it. Seven letters have also been bequeathed to her, and she must receive one every week, and publish it the day she receives it. The letters, it turns out, are about bringing the fairies back to Ireland, and to everyone's surprise, they become a massive hit. Kate is hounded by paparazzi, her parents are having a fantastic time on all the local talk shows (Kate's parents are one of the joys of this book - I love the way that they aren't taking any of this very seriously, but are cheerfully milking the situation for all its worth), a well-known journalist is trying to persuade Kate to help her with a mysterious agenda, and Kate herself might just possibly be developing magical powers.

This was quite simply a delightful, light read, that did exactly what it was trying to do. The plot bounces along merrily, but it's the characters and setting who really make the book. Kate's friendships are lovely and refreshingly non-bitchy and supportive (all too rare in books that flirt with the chick-lit genre - why is that, anyway?), Kate herself is pleasingly sane and normal despite the bizarre circumstances she finds herself in,

and I have to say, while I saw a couple of the plot twists coming, I did not expect the story to end as it did, and yet it was absolutely the right ending.

One thing that really sprang out for me in this book was the way Dublin, Ireland, and the Irish were portrayed. I don't think I've read any novel set in Ireland post-Troubles, and Ms O'Neill introduced her country and countrymen and women in a way that I can only describe as welcoming. It's the sort of book that makes me want to spend time in Ireland, actually.

I'll be re-reading this one with pleasure, and look forward with anticipation to more of Ellie O'Neill's work.

Nomes says

Did you read that blurb? lovelove. First the cover (and title) snatched me and then the blurb had me hooked. I love finding books that I've heard nothing about and taking them home with me along with the promise of finding something special.

This Irish chick-lit(ish) tale has small elements of magical realism and a fun vibe that's a smidgen reminiscent of Sophie Kinsella/Meg Cabot (that's the best I can think to describe the style, with it's humour and quirky protag and her family and friends, but it's still not quite the perfect descriptor as O'Neill has her own distinct flavour going on).

Reluctantly Charmed is whimsical with a plot that is wild in it's vision and escalating drama. I loved that about it (the unharnessed charm, marching along to it's own Irish beat). The setting is charming (Dublin! and then countryside Ireland!).

I loved the off-beat vibe that felt distinctly Irish (and otherworldly to this Aussie girl here) ~ from it's rowdy pubs to it's superstitious folklore of eras gone by. Who wouldn't want to be charmed by the possibility of fairies. But not all fairies are good, or are they even real? There's an element of the unknown with foreshadowing on certain characters and there's also manic momentum as each successive letter is published, bringing with them more bedlam, uncertainty and promise.

There is a hot Irish-charm-swoon guy (which I would have welcomed more pages devoted to him, haha). He's a little elusive but brings all that sexual tension and leaves it in his wake.

My one criticism, for me as a reader, is even though the plot was always moving forward and all elements/scenes felt essential, there was just so many threads going on that it really cluttered things up towards the end and seemed to make the ending drag out a little and events take forever to finally unfold. Although, this could have been reader's anxiety ~ desperate to power through and see how the climax explodes all over the place and how the resolution would tie up (you will not guess it, guys).

I love how unexpected the whole book is and it's effortless smiley, breezy style with a wholly original premise (although some elements touched on chick-lit tropes). And that wicked ending! Woah ~ beautiful mix of surreal and real, perfect and painful, sexy and surprising. One minute I was grinning away, smashing through the pages and the next I was startled and genuinely touched...

I liked it, truly, a lot. When I wasn't reading it, I was thinking about getting back to reading it. And when I was reading it, often post-midnight and drowsy in bed, I was forcing my eyelids open to keep going in true book-addict-just-one-more-page style. Pumped to see what Ellie O'Neill has next and so glad to have found a new fave author <3

Christina (Confessions of a Book Addict) says

Kate McDaid lives a seemingly normal life in Dublin. She works at an advertisement agency and like any normal twenty-six year old, she spends a lot of time with her girlfriends as they all try to tread the waters of dating in the big city. One day she receives a letter from a lawyer saying that she has inherited something from one of her ancestors. Surprisingly enough, her parents have no clue who this ancestor is and to make matters even weirder, the ancestor shares her name and lived in the 1800s. But this isn't any normal ancestor. Kate McDaid from the 1800s was known for her "second sight" and leaves Kate a series of poems that deal with the faeries. If Kate publishes a poem a week, she will then earn whatever it is that she has inherited. Kate thinks this is some bizarre joke, but as more people find out about Kate's inheritance and the faeries' poems, she becomes a bit of a celebrity in the media. *Reluctantly Charmed* by Ellie O'Neill is a whimsical debut that's a fun read for St. Patrick's Day or fans of Irish folklore.

Read the rest of my review here:

<http://www.confessionsofabookaddict.c...>

Brenda says

Kate McDaid was a copy-writer – she'd been a copy-writer ever since she had joined Frank and Preston five and a half years previously. F & P were a multi-national advertising agency; their office where Kate worked was located in Dublin where she had lived all her life. She was looking down the barrel of her career as forever being a copy-writer and she couldn't work out how to secure the promotion she so desperately wanted. The day of her twenty sixth birthday was the same as any other – cringing away from the birthday wishes of her colleagues, wanting to get back to her desk and hide. So the unexpected letter from an unknown solicitor's office, summoning her to the reading of the will of Kate McDaid the following day had her reeling in shock. And when she discovered that she was the recipient of an inheritance, left to her by a relative who died 130 years ago, she had no idea that her life was about to change in a startling and unexpected way...

As Kate began to follow the step by step instructions, she was shocked by the instant following of her journey; the Irish fairies of long ago seemed to be sending messages – but she wasn't sure if she was enjoying this notoriety she had suddenly gained. With events becoming more and more mysterious, the passion of the people becoming stronger, the walls seemed to be closing in around Kate. What was she going to do? She knew her life would never be the same again; did she even have any control over it anymore? Or was there really fairy magic afoot?

I absolutely loved this delightful and dare I say it – charming – debut novel by Irish-Australian author Ellie O'Neill. With a little bit of magic, this lyrical and endearing story made me laugh out loud, smile with delight and keep turning the pages to find out more; I closed the book with a smile and a sigh of intense pleasure. With a touch of romance, an element of fantasy, and the love of family and friends, I would have to say O'Neill is definitely a wonderful story teller and I'll be looking out for her next book. Highly recommended.

With thanks to Simon and Schuster for my ARC copy to read and review.

MarciaB - Book Muster Down Under says

Reluctantly Charmed is a light-hearted, feel good novel with Kate McDaid offering us a lesson in life – what if we just said “bugger it” and went with the flow instead of living our everyday stressed out lives! Well, Kate goes out of her way to show us exactly how she did it, even though it took her some much needing convincing in the beginning!

An only child from a very long line of only children, Kate is a junior copywriter and has worked for the same advertising agency for five and a half years. When the story opens we see her plans to make her new year’s resolutions – which is always on her birthday – but is then startled, after a birthday celebration in the office, when she receives a formal letter requesting her presence at the reading of her great-great-great-great-aunt Kate McDaid’s will.

Lured by the promise of her aunt’s estate, Kate “conjures up images of tweed jackets, springer spaniels at the heel and hunts on horses that finished quaffing champagne” but soon discovers that there are conditions to her inheritance - she has to publish one letter plus seven Steps every week over the following seven weeks.

What follows is a frolicking good read full of laugh out loud moments, breathtaking scenery as well as celtic folklore and spirituality which all lend authenticity to the Irish setting and kinfolk.

I was absolutely delighted when I received a copy of this novel with an invitation by Simon & Schuster to participate in a “competition” against various well-known book bloggers around Australia, for the cover reveal.

All in all, their publicity department have done a great job of promoting Ellie O’Neill’s debut in what I can only describe as one of the most rigorous social media marketing campaigns I have ever seen – you just have to look at #reluctantlycharmed on Twitter to realise the impact it made.

When the cover was finally revealed on the 8th August by Monique at Write Note Reviews I was, as Kate would say, “astonished”, at how it so aptly represented the story within but even more so that the image of her was so perfectly rendered.

Ellie O’Neill has given us an endearing character in Kate. A normal, down-to-earth person with a messy flat and a jar of marmalade in her fridge which only gets opened when her Mam visits, she is also vibrant, funny and kind-hearted and she sucks us into her life as it slowly changes over the following seven weeks. From a static dead-end job (to which she rides a pushbike every day, until it gets stolen and advertised on eBay), to this person who suddenly “awakens”, Kate casts her spell on us and takes us on an adventure of self-discovery as she realises she is worth more than she ever gave herself credit for.

Whilst she remains skeptical about the fairies, she does find herself talking to the plants and is further astounded when her knowledge of things unknown to her before, such as medicinal cures for cold sores, restless babies and jock itch, come to the fore and it becomes quite obvious that she’s onto something when her advice actually works. She even has a name, a weird, possibly fairy name!

But she’s also just human, and eventually the celebrity status which has been thrust upon her makes her feel alone and annoyed that she was the one chosen to have her life fall apart. While she begins to feel removed from her friends she also understands that they can’t comprehend what she is going through when even she doesn’t.

The secondary characters are equally well done, from the egotistical musician Jim, her lovable best friend Matthew, Mam and Dad who jump on the bandwagon to wallow in her unwanted celebrity status, the indomitable Maura with her mysterious aura and fancy gloves, the Annoraks who become her faithful followers to the handsome but enigmatic Hugh and, while they lend some fabulous Irish humour and a supernatural element to the mix, they also enhance Kate's journey.

Along with these fine characters and her deftly structured narrative, Ellie's cracking turn of phrase and scenic descriptions are something to be savoured, and I'd like to share a few of my favourites with you:

"What? Have I died and nobody told me?"

"You had to chew the air on arrival to get it into your lungs"

"The fire was crackling easily in the corner, the pints were slipping down smoothly"

"The melody was heartbreaking. Her voice channeled death and misery, and mothers' tears and broken hearts"

"the main street meandered like a peeled orange skin curling back on itself"

"peppered on its curves were cosy thatched cottages some hosting creaking iron signs swaying lazily"

"majestic sweeping mountains draped in green velvet, which guarded the place like a mother's protective hands".

Set against the lush backdrop of Ireland, this is a delightfully bubbly, warm and easy read, packed with good ol' Irish charm, lots of tea and perhaps a little bit of love and I have no hesitation in recommending it to a wide readership who, once the last page is turned, will "stop, pause and appreciate" the great yarn that Ellie O'Neill has given us.
