



## I Can't Begin to Tell You

*Elizabeth Buchan*

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**I Can't Begin to Tell You** Elizabeth Buchan  
Denmark, 1940.

War has come and everyone must choose a side.

For British-born Kay Eberstern, living on her husband Bror's country estate, the Nazi invasion and occupation of her adopted country is a time of terrible uncertainty and inner conflict.

With Bror desperate to preserve the legacy of his family home, even if it means co-existing with the enemy, Kay knows she cannot do the same. Lured by British Intelligence into a covert world of resistance and sabotage, her betrayal of Bror is complete as she puts her family in danger. Tasked with protecting an enigmatic SOE agent, a man who cannot even tell her his name, Kay learns the art of subterfuge. From this moment on, she must risk everything for the sake of this stranger - a stranger who becomes entangled in her world in ways she never expected. Caught on opposing sides of a war that has ripped apart a continent, will Kay and Bror ever find their way back to one another?

## I Can't Begin to Tell You Details

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Author : Elizabeth Buchan

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## From Reader Review I Can't Begin to Tell You for online ebook

### Caroline Mills says

This has to be Elizabeth Buchan's best book. I recommend it highly. Not only is there a good story of friends and lovers (actually two good stories) but there is a wealth of historical information about the Resistance in London and Denmark during WW2. An excellent read.

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### Laura says

I Can't Begin To Tell You by Elizabeth Buchan tells the story of various characters during the Second World War as they try to come to terms with wartime existence and, each in their own ways, fight for freedom and hope. It touches upon relationships between family members and how these are tested when allegiances between the Germans and the allies were brought into question, and also the contribution, no matter how small, that so many different people had towards the war effort. Without giving too much away, it is really refreshing to read a novel that centres on military intelligence and espionage and in which the majority of the protagonists are women – and strong women at that, who may in some ways be flawed but are all the more admirable for it! Let me hear a cheer for strong women!

The novel completely drew me in from the moment I picked it up, and Elizabeth Buchan's fantastic writing immersed me completely in wartime life, with its ups and many downs. I felt that the novel flows really well and the language she uses fits the tone of the novel really well.

I always find books about life during the war really interesting, particularly when it focuses on narratives that are a little different. Life for Kay, Tanne, Mary and the many other characters fits into this category as a book that offers something different, particularly as it takes the reader outside of the usual London setting (although part of the novel is based there, and it's still very interesting) to Denmark. It made me consider what life was like for those in a Nazi-occupied country, as well as for those in Britain.

Though at times the pace slowed a little, and some parts I had to re-read to make sure I understood what I'd read properly, the narrative continued to engage and interest me. Buchan includes interesting, believable characters and really opened my eyes to the undercover, understated fights against dictatorship and repression by ordinary (and not so ordinary) people during the Second World War.

I hugely enjoyed reading the wonderfully written I Can't Begin to Tell You, particularly as it addresses the choices women were forced to make during wartime, both in England and Denmark. It was really interesting to be read about the way war affects relationships, both romantic and familial.

I'd definitely recommend this novel, and am looking forward to reading more of Buchan's novels as a result of this!

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## **Clair Sharpe says**

This book tells the story of the German occupation of Denmark during World War 2 and looks at the role of British Intelligence during that time, looking at the code breakers who were working in London and the resistance fighters on the ground in Denmark.,

The story centres around Kay, a middle aged British woman living in Denmark. When the Nazis invade Denmark she is shocked that her husband of 25 years, collaborates with the enemy to preserve the legacy of the family home.

Kay is soon lured into a covert world of resistance putting both her life and the lives of her husband and grown up children in danger. Soon she is working with an Special Operations Executive (SOE) operative known as Felix, helping him send and receive messages to the code breakers in London.

As well as Kay we get to know some of the code breakers in London including Mary whose job it is to record the Morse code messages that arrive and send out new ones and Ruby whose job as a cipher clerk means she has to encrypt and decode the messages.

I was intrigued by this book as I do enjoy books set in World War 2, especially those told from different perspectives. This one primarily is very female led and many of the women featured are brave and intelligent.

I did enjoy it for the most part but wasn't that keen on the writing style - it didn't flow for me and I didn't feel emotionally invested in the characters. I was trying to think why, and I think it's because the author was trying to focus on the lives of too many characters. I also think it maybe could have been a little shorter which would have kept the pacing better. However, I did enjoy learning more about the special operatives who operated as part of the resistance and the code breakers - it was made me want to read more around the subject.

Many thanks to the author for sending me a copy of this book.

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## **Doris says**

I was lucky enough to receive a copy from Netgalley and just loved it. It's very good story telling, beautifully written and keeps flowing from beginning to end. It is focussed on Denmark in WW2 and the role of the resistance fighters but also explores the devastating role war can have on relationships. However, very cleverly it also shows how war empowered women to find so much more within themselves than had ever been possible in peacetime. Thoroughly recommended on all levels.

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## **Eileen says**

I Can't Begin to Tell You was a marvelous page turner! The plot revolved around the action of the Resistance in Denmark during WWII. Heroine Kay Eberstern was a British woman happily married to a wealthy Dane, with two grown children. Witnessing with horror the cruelty of the occupying Germans, she was unable to turn her back and was drawn into the Resistance movement. It was all there, familiar, and yet fascinating – the parachute jumps into blackness, the isolation, the insecurity of never knowing who could be trusted, the sheer terror, the short life expectancy, heartbreak, and quiet heroism, the incredible selflessness. Part of the action takes place in the Special Operations Executive headquarters in London, and so the reader glimpses the pressures and challenges of those supporting the Resistance from afar. Engrossing, well written and carefully researched, this was a splendid novel! I remember liking Elizabeth Buchan's earlier work, Revenge of the Middle-Aged woman, and was motivated to track this one down after seeing many glowing

reviews by my Goodreads friends!

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### **Janel says**

I'm drawn to historical fiction set during WWII, especially when it centres around the role women played during the war. And I haven't read a novel focusing on the Danish resistance before, so that was the appeal.

However, I struggled with this one, really struggled to finish the book (but I did)! I couldn't get on board with the writing style at all, it wasn't engaging enough, to be brutally honest, it bored me at times, making this an incredibly slow read. There was just no momentum to propel me on.

And I struggled to believe in the characters. This lack of authenticity really made it hard to become invested in their plight. I found it hard to believe spies would love and trust so easily in time's of war ????? And if you've read this one, everything about Tanne had me rolling my eyes.

I did find the information on Morse code interesting. And I liked the idea of there being a divide between husband (collaborating) and the wife (resisting), even though the tension I was hoping for didn't manifest.

Overall, this novel just didn't work for me but I am incredibly grateful to the author for sending me a copy to read.

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### **A says**

It took me a while to get into this book, but once I did, I didn't want to put it away. The story is gripping and the ending is one I did not necessarily anticipate. One thing that rather bothers me is how one-dimensional Bror stays. His role is such an important one, yet I never really felt anything for him. The relationship between him and Kay is so strong, but the reader doesn't get enough of it to really feel with them.

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### **Grace J Reviewerlady says**

I Can't Begin to Tell You is one of the best books I have read in a long time.

Set during WWII, it tells the story of Kay, an Englishwoman who married a Dane many years before and they now have two grown up children. Her husband's family have relatives in Germany and when the Nazis occupy Denmark, his sympathies - in the interest of preservation of self and their estate - most definitely lie with them. Kay is put in the very uncomfortable position of entertaining a German General and his wife at their home, Rosenlund.

Not all Danes think in this way though, and there is an underground movement beginning to get set up, but slowly - very slowly. Kay has no intentions of becoming involved even though she admires their courage greatly, but her conscience leads her to do one small kindness to an agent and from there she gets slowly sucked in. But who can she trust? And what will be the cost to her marriage?

Where this book is different to most set during this period is that we also follow the staff in London who are at the other end of the wireless sets which the undercover agents use to send messages and the reader really gets the feeling of no one person knowing what happens with anyone else in the chain. You really become involved in every character's job, the frustrations and the successes ... and the stress and strain of being only

one link.

This book is an excellent tale, well told with compelling characters. It draws you in and you are rewarded with a terrific read. I would recommend this book very highly to anyone who enjoys books set during the second world war.

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### **Melanie says**

I got to read a pre-publication proof copy of this title for my book group. Interesting story told from the different perspective of WW2 in Denmark, but the book is let down by poor editing, sometimes clumsy writing and a rushed conclusion after nearly 500 pages.

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### **Jane says**

My thoughts. A great story. I chose this book because it was partly set in Denmark, a country that I love. Kay, an English lady is married to Bror, a Dane. They live on a country estate on Zealand and have invaluable help both inside and outside the house. Their two children are older and live in Copenhagen. Set in the time of WWII and the Danish resistance is fighting to bring down the Germans who are invading their small country. With the help of Britain and their coding experts these brave Danes do what they can to defeat their enemy. Kay becomes involved causing turmoil and distrust within her family relationships.

We are given a glimpse into life in Britain for the women who tirelessly worked on the messages being sent from the agents in Europe. Ruby, a very bright young lady whose talent is recognised becomes a key player in recognising discrepancies in the agents skeds. However, she has to fight the male bureaucracy to become heard. Fortunately, there is one man who does listen.

This is fiction interwoven with fact and it makes for a great story which I loved from beginning to end. Betrayal, love, it has it all.

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### **drk says**

Excellent, riveting read. A departure from her previous genre and one I don't personally enjoy. So this was a very pleasant and enjoyable surprise.

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### **sue says**

This is not your usual type of book from Elizabeth Buchan, she has traveled into the market of historical fiction here which is something I gave up reading years ago. I thought I would try to carry on reading it though as I do love this authors books.

Its time zone is based around Denmark in the 1940's

Kay is a born British citizen living in her husbands country estate.

The time of Nazi invasion, life is uncertain to say the least.

They need to secure and maintain their legacy.

A stranger comes her way and she risks ALL.

Its a well written book, and on the whole is was OK. I would say, if you love historical fiction and war time stories, this is the book for you.

Thanks go to Penguin Books (UK) via Net galley for my copy to read and review

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### **Andrea says**

Got this book from the world book night,its a great spy war time story.well written book.

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### **Angela says**

Just could not get into this book!

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### **Girl with her Head in a Book says**

Elizabeth Buchan takes a step into historical fiction with this stunning and powerful novel set in 1940s Denmark. Buchan is an established name in romance and 'chick lit' but I Can't Begin To Tell You marks a major departure. Tales of derring-do from World War Two are hardly new, even while the conflict was still being fought films such as Went The Day Well were being released, allowing those on the sidelines to imagine themselves at the heart of the drama. I Can't Begin To Tell You takes a more subtle approach however; it is a very feminine approach to espionage and rather than gunfights and high-jinx, Buchan considers the personal cost of involvement with wartime surveillance. While contemporary stories such as Agatha Christie's nauseating Tommy and Tuppence in N or M might make light of intelligence work, I Can't Begin To Tell You has a more mournful tone and from the very beginning, the reader feels braced for devastating consequences.

It was an interesting choice to set the action in Denmark. While we are used to tales of the French resistance, Denmark has always been slightly forgotten. Even during the war itself, the Allies tended to ignore it except as a tool for diversion tactics. The Germans used Danish factories during World War II to make their uniforms, so the Danish and German soldiers even looked rather similar. Initially this led to a great deal of distrust for the inmates of Colditz who were not sure what to make of their Danish fellow-residents but later

it became a real advantage when making costumes for escape. Its geographical closeness to Germany and cultural similarities meant that many Danes felt a sympathy for the German expansion mission. *I Can't Begin To Tell You* is a novel about strong women, the main character is Kay Eberstern, a British woman who married into the Danish gentry twenty-five years before. As the novel opens, she waits anxiously in the woods of her husband's estate, promising herself that it will be the only time, almost hoping that the agent she has been asked to wait for will never arrive.

Kay Eberstern is a woman who has enjoyed her life so far. She is happily married to Bror, she has her two grown-up children Tanne and Nils, she enjoys her flirtatious lunches out with her husband's cousin Anton and takes pleasure in dressing and looking her best. She is comfortable with her life, in her position, in her marriage. She has everything she wants, there is no itching foot to be satisfied, she has no sense of lacking fulfilment. Still, Buchan captures perfectly Kay's horror as her husband Bror begins to collaborate willingly with the Nazis. Kay is a British woman, her husband is a Danish man with a host German relatives. Despite over twenty years of marriage, the two are cast suddenly at odds. A key question in the novel becomes how can one maintain a relationship where one partner has to deceive the other. Fra Eberstern may be physically faithful to her husband but her politics are another matter and it heartbreaks as she is slowly ripped from him by the barrier of diverging ideologies.

Fiction set in World War Two often invites the reader to speculate how they themselves might behave were they to be transplanted into these situations. Although it has been seventy years, World War Two still seems like recent history. Buchan's novel takes this as a particularly strong theme as the main characters hope and pray that they will have the courage to remain steadfast during interrogation should they be caught. It is that sense that we cannot truly know ourselves and we are capable of that adds an extra layer of fear. One character goes through training to be an agent and is given a mock interrogation, although she knows that it is not real it is nonetheless a horrific scene. Kay may have only meant to dabble her toe in the waters of espionage but Buchan makes clear that there is no middle-ground; once you have said yes once, you are as culpable as the rest.

#### Mavis Lever

As Kay tries to protect the young agent Felix from prying eyes, back in Britain there are a host of secret listeners working to take down and analyse transmissions. Mary Voss and her colleagues come to know and recognise the 'fists' of the agents who are signalling to them and the young Ruby Ingram has a creative eye for increasing security. Ruby was a particularly well-drawn character with more than a passing resemblance to the celebrated Mavis Lever. Again, there is a nurturing feel to *I Can't Begin To Tell You* which is absent from the majority of spy fiction as Mary remarks on how she cares for and worries about her agents, longing to send them some kind of sign of encouragement. Ruby frets that the 'poem code' system which the agents have to follow is open to abuse but all struggle to have their voices heard in the male-dominated environment.

The novel is based on the unspoken, on that which cannot be said out loud. Ruby and her love interest Major Martin ponder whether or not one of their agents has been broken and how he might begin to let them know if this were the case. Mary feels adrift, alone and unmarried and unable to tell anybody about the work she is doing. Kay is forced to create distance between herself and her family both because she is unsure who can be trusted and also as she does not want to endanger them. Men and women fall in love but are unable to ask each other the most simple questions. Relationships wither as secrets bloom. The British secret service was legendary for its successes but its insistence on the separation of different departments here makes it almost impossible to find out the truth when nobody who knows anything will be allowed to speak.

For my full review - <http://girlwithherheadinabook.blogspot.com>...

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