



It Must Be Christmas: Three Holiday Stories

Jennifer Crusie , Donna Alward , Mandy Baxter

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It's the most wonderful time of the year, when love is in the cold and frosty air—and desire reaches the boiling point. . .

Hot Toy

From *New York Times* bestselling author Jennifer Crusie comes a hilarious, sexy story about a determined shopper who grabs the last action figure off the shelf, only to find herself plunged into the arms of a sexy secret agent. Mayhem under the mistletoe ensues. Business as usual this Christmas season...right?

Christmas with the Billionaire Rancher

Nate wants to stay away from all the women who want his money in Mandy Baxter's story set deep in the heart of Texas. But when gorgeous do-gooder Chloe Benson comes knocking at his door—in search of funds for her charity—Nate can't ignore the passion he feels for her. Maybe love is priceless after all?

Christmas at Seashell Cottage

'Tis the season in Jewell Cove when local doctor Charlie Yang finds her quiet, steady life disrupted by both an abandoned baby in the nativity manger and ex-SEAL Dave Ricker. Are these turn of events too good to be true? Or is Christmas working its magic—for real— Donna Alward's heartwarming holiday story?

It Must Be Christmas: Three Holiday Stories Details

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From Reader Review It Must Be Christmas: Three Holiday Stories for online ebook

Dana Blazsek says

This book is three short novellas that are all set around Christmas time.

The first was about a woman trying to get a toy for her nephew, while his dad was off with his girlfriend and the mom (her sister) was home getting hammered. She sees a man who she went on a date with previously and turns out he is a secret agent. The plot were far fetched, but it was ok.

The second was about a woman who meets a man and they find a baby in the manger. They obviously fall in love. I mean who wouldn't?

The third is about a man who recently inherited a ton of money and a woman who originally wants to ask him for a donation. But she never asks. Instead they have continuously raunchy sex that is dramatically described in the story.

I gave it two stars for the entertainment factor.

Janet says

I won a copy of This Must Be Christmas via a Goodreads giveaway. It includes three short novellas by authors Jennifer Crusie, Donna Alward, and Mandy Baxter. Two of the stories were pure romance, and the final story included some spice. All three stories were light-hearted romps that romance readers would enjoy to put them in the holiday spirit. Unfortunately, I realized that, for me, pure romance simply isn't my cup of tea.

booksofallkinds says

Whether it is a sweet and crazy story about a determined Aunt who will go to any lengths to make her nephew happy, even if it means she is embroiled in a conspiracy with a sexy agent, a heartfelt tale of a lonely Doctor who desperately wants to let go of her ordered, controlled life and take a chance on love, or a seriously sexy story of finding lust and love in the most unexpected of places, then IT MUST BE CHRISTMAS is the perfect collection for you. Each story is wonderfully unique and quirky, with the magic of Christmas connecting them together, but I must choose Christmas with the Billionaire Rancher as my favourite - there was just something extra special about Nate and Chloe's story. With plenty of laughter, soul-searching, and steamy encounters, IT MUST BE CHRISTMAS by Jennifer Crusie, Donna Alward and Mandy Baxter, is packed with holiday magic and a must-read this festive season.

*Book received from Netgalley.com

Carol [Goodreads Addict] says

RATING 4.5 STARS

It Must Be Christmas: Three Holiday Stories is an anthology of stories by Jennifer Crusie, Donna Alward and Mandy Baxter. These are three very different stories, ranging from hilarious and crazy to sweet to sexy that are sure to put you in the holiday mood. I received this book in exchange for an honest review from St. Martin's Press.

Hot Toy by Jennifer Crusie

It's Christmas Eve and Trudy Maxwell is in the toy store in a last ditch effort to get her five year old nephew the Major MacGuffin doll he wants for Christmas. It HAS to be the brand new Major MacGuffin doll that spits toxic waste.

It's here that Trudy runs in to Nolan Mitchell, a man that she went on three dates with and really liked. She thought it might be the start of something good but then he never called. Now he's here and won't leave her alone.

This starts a night of crazy mayhem and a Christmas that Trudy will never forget. She finds herself thrust right in to the middle of a spy thriller, complete with double agents, hidden information, and yes, even guns. You are kept guessing who is the bad guy and who is the good guy. Are any of them really who they say they are?

I loved this one. It kept me smiling and on the edge of my seat.

Christmas at Seashell Cottage by Donna Alward

Dr. Charlie Yang has moved to Jewell Cove, Maine to try to find happiness. Growing up she was forced to live a certain way. Now she just wants to belong. It's almost Christmas and Charlie finds herself face to face with the man she has been ogling for several weeks now from afar. A shocking surprise brings Charlie and Dave, together but each has serious issues stemming from past experiences.

This was a sweet Christmas story about two people looking for something missing from their lives but each of them has trouble opening their heart for fear of being hurt. As they deal with the situation they found themselves thrust into, they try to find a way to also be together. It's been a slow process but in her time of need, Charlie finally realizes that she's not as alone as she thought in Jewel Cove when the townspeople reach out to help her.

"Sometimes the best things happened when you least expected them."

Christmas With the Billionaire Rancher by Mandy Baxter

Nate Christensen and his three brothers' father had money, lots and lots of money and power. But he believed his sons needed to make their own way. So he gave them nothing to help them along as they grew up. He was a powerful man and ran his Petroleum empire right up until he dropped dead of a heart attack. Now his sons are told that he has left his entire fortune to them. What he wouldn't share with them in life, he gave to them in death. Nate, though, has nothing but anger and resentment towards his father. He is now an ex-Navy Seal and didn't even let his father know he was back from having served. Now that his father is

gone, he wants nothing to do with the money that scarred him throughout his life.

Chloe Benson needs money and lots of it. She runs a foundation that provides sports and equipment to underprivileged kids. If it weren't for her, these kids would be on the streets. But her funding has run out. If she doesn't find a new source of support by Christmas Eve, her doors will close. She had every intention of asking Nate for a chunk of the inheritance he just received. But one word, one touch from him, and all thoughts of her intentions were out the door. All she could think of was him.

“Chloe had never been the sort of woman to get weak in the knees over a good looking guy, but holy crap. She wobbled on her stilettos as if the shock of his gorgeousness had temporarily disrupted her motor skills.”

Nate had so much anger, resentment and pain built up inside. He used sex to quiet his mind. But there was something about Chloe. He didn't think one night was going to be enough.

“In letting Chloe distract him from his past, Nate feared that he was developing a far more debilitating addiction. Because after tonight, he didn't think he'd be able to let her go.”

These two together set the pages on fire. They were that hot together. They equaled each other in their passion. Chloe knows she can never ask Nate for the money for the foundation now. It would look like she was using him for his money. Will she have to choose, let the foundation go in order to hang on to the possibility of something with Nate?

“I didn't like watching you walk away from me, Chloe.”

Nate's biggest fear is that Chloe might just be into him for his money. Can he trust her? Is it possible that happiness might finally be within his grasp?

I enjoyed all three of these stories, each unique in their own way, each appealing to something different. I hope you'll give them a try.

Ann says

Three short stories that are love stories set around the Christmas holiday. Three authors are all well known for their great characters and beautiful settings. From a secret agent, a lonely doctor and a grumpy SEAL these stories are all perfect reads for the holiday season. They are short enough to let you finish in one sitting and long enough to develop an enjoyable romance.

bookaholic ge says

Jennifer Crusie Hot Toy

Trudy is on a mission to find a toy soldier for her nephew and will stop at nothing to get it. After hitting up

store after store she bumps into Nolan, a guy she dated that disappeared with out a word but now for some reason can't seem to stay away.

What starts as a mission to save her nephews Christmas turns into a mission to save the world and possibly find a little romance. Can Nolan convince Trudy to give him a second chance or will Trudy refuse to be fooled again? Read and find out!

This book was filled with laughs, romance and moments where poor Trudy had a string of bad luck that would rival my craziest of nights. I don't know where Jennifer Cruise got the inspiration for this Christmas romance but she did a great job creating this book.

This is book is short, funny, sweet and well worth your time. Great job Jennifer Cruise this is a great example of bringing the fun back to romance!

Sheila Melo says

This is an anthology of three previously released novels/novellas all themed around Christmas.

HOT TOY by Jennifer Crusie

The story is cute and sweet. There is only the beginning of a romance since the story is so short, but it is a nice Christmas treat. Trudy Maxwell, college librarian, is on the hunt for the hot Christmas toy for her nephew when she encounters Nolan Mitchell. Trudy had thought that Nolan was "the One" until after three dates, he didn't call her again. Now Nolan wants another chance, but Trudy doesn't want to risk herself again. This is a cute and sweet Christmas romance with some twists. When the story started, I didn't expect where the story would go, but it kept the plot interesting. The romance was cute and funny as Nolan followed Trudy around trying to convince her to give him another chance. The weakness was that the story was so short that there wasn't much to the characters and the plot dominated. Rating: 3.5 Stars

CHRISTMAS AT SEASHELL COTTAGE by Donna Alward

Dr. Charlie Yang gets some surprises for Christmas. First, the man who she has been watching from afar ends up at the same church as her preparing for the Christmas season. Charlie has been attracted to the ex-SEAL Dave Ricker but it is easier to imagine at a distance than risk her heart with a man who seems her opposite. Second, Charlie and Dave find an infant left in the manger and Charlie finds herself unable to turn away from the little Christmas miracle. The story had such promise. There were several stories that could have been explored: uptight doctor versus free thinking man, second families, the found baby. Unfortunately, I don't think that any of these stories were truly explored. Instead, I kept waiting for something to happen in the book. I don't mind slow, thoughtful stories, but I want some payoff. The first half of the book was Charlie saying this guy can't be right for me; the second half was Dave saying, I don't think want the same things. I never really got any connection with these characters; I never truly felt that we explored the characters emotional foibles. I just ended up with a "eh" feeling at the end. Rating: 2 stars.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE BILLIONAIRE RANCHER by Mandy Baxter

Nate Christensen has an inheritance from a father he could barely stand. He doesn't want the inheritance or all that goes with it. Chloe Benson comes to the memorial intending to ask for money for her charity. Instead, she ends up hooking up with Nate. This is a sexy, sexy book. I loved how the two first have an

instantaneous attraction that moves to emotional connection and love. For such a short length, this story has energy with characters that I really connected with. I ended up just wanting to read more about these two. It is a tricky proposition to make sex so central to the beginning of a relationship and yet allow the characters to develop an emotional connection that feels deep and real. Baxter walks that line very well. I liked this book so much that I ended up buying to stories of Nate's brothers as well. Rating: 4 stars. This review was originally posted on Top10RomanceBooks.com

Deb says

If you are a holiday romance lover these three heart warming stories all with different styles will warm your soul from the inside out.

Read More. . . <http://www.romanceswithalittlekick.co...>

Ann Lorz says

I don't know about you but I love Christmas stories. From now till the end of the year is my favorite time. I mean, who doesn't like watching kids trick-or-treat? Or how about stuffing your face with all the wonderful Thanksgiving food? Let's not forget about Christmas with all the twinkling lights and cookie baking.

Or gifts...shhhh!

I even don't mind the snow, when it happens on Christmas eve and stops on the day after Christmas. This is my fantasy I can have it snow when I want it.

Back to Christmas, oh...did I mention my love of Christmas movies too? LOVE THEM!!!! If you haven't yet read It Must be Christmas you really should. It's very good. I enjoyed all three stories. Here's a little bit about each of them.

Hot Toy by Jennifer Crusie I've read before but because I enjoy Christmas stories so I read it again. Its very fast paced and at times it drew a chuckle from me. It kind of reminded me of the movie Jingle All the Way. It's not my favorite of the three stories but I still really liked it.

Christmas at Seashell Cottage by Donna Alward, I must admit I've never read Alward before but after reading this I will be trying her. This story is very sweet and heartwarming. I liked the whole idea of it and found it to be well written.

Christmas With the Billionaire Rancher by Mandy Baxter, who wouldn't want to spend time with a billionaire? Add a rancher to the mix and you've got one hot story. I liked both Nate & Chloe. Nate has a few things he really needs to work through and does with the help of Chloe.

Do yourself a favor and add It Must be Christmas to you list of books to read this holiday.

Reviewed for Romancing the Readers Blog:
<http://romancingthereaders.blogspot.c...>

Romancing the Readers Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/RomancingThe...>

ARC received for a honest review

Julie says

It Must Be Christmas: Three Holiday Stories by Jennifer Crusie, Donna Alward, and Mandy Baxter is a 2016 St. Martin's Press publication.

This collection of holiday tales is an eclectic mix of contemporary short stories with something for nearly every taste.

The anthology starts off with 'Hot Toy' by Jennifer Crusie.

Despite that suggestive title, this story is cute and funny, with just a dash of emotion.

Trudy Maxwell needs a toy for her nephew. Not just any toy, of course, but the hottest toy of the holiday season, but she's not having much luck. In one of the biggest toy stores, she winds up becoming inadvertently involved in a covert operation with a guy who had once disappointed her, but there may be more to him than she originally thought.

I had read this story as a stand alone last year, but it was so short and easy to read, I didn't mind giving it a second look.

This story is a madcap adventure, and is a little bit silly, but it was cute and fun.

3 stars

The second book in the trifecta is a heartwarming story by Donna Alward – 'Christmas at Seashell Cottage'.

This story centers around Charlie Yang, a doctor whose life is built around her career. Although she's lonely, she has no plans to get involved with anyone, especially on a temporary basis.

But, then she meets Dave Ricker, an ex-SEAL, who is new to the area, at the local Christmas tree lighting. But, both their lives are disrupted when someone abandons an infant the nativity scene manger.

I loved the story about the baby and Charlie is an amazing example, as helps people so selflessly.

Dave, on the other hand, gave me some big problems. I felt like I needed to pull him aside and issue a stern warning not to hurt Charlie or I would have to kick his butt.

But, of course the magic of the holiday season brings about a wonderful and heartfelt happily ever after for one and all.

This was the strongest story in the group, in my opinion and gets a 4 star rating.

The third and final story, is 'Christmas with the Billionaire Rancher by Mandy Baxter.

This story is for those who like a little bit of extra steam with their holiday romances.

When Nate's father dies, he becomes the executor of the will and a billionaire, something he's not really all

that thrilled over. Of course he becomes very popular with money seeking gold diggers, and Chloe Baxter definitely wants his money...

But not for the reason you might think.

Chloe needs money for her charity and with Nate's huge windfall, he's seems like the best bet for a charitable donation.

Naturally, the couple finds money is not the only thing their relationship is built on.

Nate and Chloe go back and forth, as Nate struggles with a past betrayal which causes him to make a few mistakes, but between the charity work and Chloe's patience, Nate makes some serious progress.

I love stories set in Texas, so I was happy to see this one included in the collection. I was a little concerned with Chloe's motives and how far she was willing to go, had me wondering, but the chemistry is sizzling hot right from the start with no build up required.

This is a nice mixed bag of holiday themed short stories with steamy passion, touching drama, and a few laughs, to balance everything out. So, no matter what mood you are in, one of these stories will have just what you are looking for.

The anthology as a whole is 3.5 stars, rounded to 4

Toni FGMAMTC says

FGMAMTC Blog Review

Hot Toy

I had the best time reading this romantic comedy novella. The laughs started almost immediately and played out like a holiday family movie. All that can go wrong does, but it also goes very right.

While last minute insanity shopping for the most popular toy of the season for her nephew, Trudy gets caught up in a battle between government agents. The dialogue is truly great. The cast is made up of an ex, cougar bait, a drunken sister and other crazies. The one goal in Trudy's mind is to get that toy no matter what.

This is a great light read for getting into the Christmas spirit while tickling your funny bone. It left me with a good feeling.

Christmas at Seashell Cottage

This story is about two people who didn't really know what they were missing until they found each other. Actually, both felt that something was lacking in their lives, but they weren't sure how to find what they needed. It's a serious storyline that deals with everyday difficulties in life and love.

Charlie is a doctor who moved to Jewell Cove to get away from the city. She still doesn't quite feel like a local though. Dave is an ex SEAL who is also new to town. They go through some grown up problems and have a realistic romance.

Christmas at Seashell Cottage is for those looking for a small town Christmas read with some depth, some ups and downs and a happy ending.

Christmas With the Billionaire Rancher

Nate's father hasn't treated him well. Now, after his father's death, Nate inherits most of his father's wealth. He can't think of a worse fate than having to schmooze with the rich or entertain the social climbers.

Chloe isn't one of the usual goldiggers. Yes, she first approaches him for money for her charity, but all intentions are soon thrown out the window. These two go at it hot and heavy right away, sending Christmas with the Billionaire Rancher into the naughty holiday reads category.

Things get turned around and misunderstandings happen, but love and great sex help to mend the hurts. The overall theme of family is quite strong also. And what a family with all those hot brothers! I recommend this to someone looking for some sexy fun.

Copy given in exchange for an honest review

Fangirl Moments and My Two Cents

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Katherina says

I really enjoyed Jennifer Cruise's story, funny and quick moving. Many Baxter's story was nice and sweet, but I couldn't get into the last story. Overall, three stars. For more romance reviews, check out my website: <https://katherinasbooks.wordpress.com>

Char (1RadReader59) says

Hot Toy

Trudy Maxwell is a woman who has been wronged by several men along the way and disappointed by even more. Most of all her father. She doesn't let it keep her down she keeps on going. This librarian is not your simple minded manner gal. No she is bubbly and outspoken.

That is exactly why Nolan Mitchell had asked her out. But when he had taken her on a grand total of three dates she was soft spoken and quiet. Nothing like at work. Where he is a Chinese Literature Professor. So, by the third he just never called after that.

On Christmas eve she bumps into him while shopping for her nephew Leroy. You see her sister, Courtney, is going through divorce since her ex-husband ran off with the nanny. Which is really not surprising since he originally ran off with Courtney being he was originally Trudy's boyfriend. Well, before he left he promised him Santa would bring him the hot toy, Major Mac Gruffin. So, Aunt Trudy's the one out looking for it since Leroy just mentioned it.

So there in the store with her is Nolan. She is not happy. He wants to let bygones be bygones. She says NOT. He says he's sorry he never called but could she blame him because she was nothing like herself on the dates. Which really pissed her off and she wanted to blow but they were in public. She said well he took her to two faculty functions that behavior matters she should know her father is a professor so she was trying to help his career. The last date if he could recall she said is that awful Chinese foreign film he took her to.

Which by the way was a total downer which he would not know about since he had gotten a call soon after it started and left to take it. Leaving her with a theater of weeping depressed people. So, no she didn't want to be friends.

Then this this turns into a whole cat and mouse game of chase with a third party that just never fit right for me. I just never got totally engaged with the story. It was cute though just not engaging for me. I give this 3 stars.

Christmas at Seashell Cottage

What a fun story. This couple had you from the beginning. Their chemistry is fun, sassy, and serious all rolled up into one.

This is about Dr. Charlie Yang. Who has been lusting over a guy on the docks during her lunch hours. After a year of living in Jewel Cove, Maine, she decides it's time to start becoming an active part of the community. Until now only a select few would dare address her as Charlie.

So she signed up to help with the Christmas festivities. Her job was setting up the statues and hay for the manger and untangling the lights. She was pretty well set but the lights were giving her trouble and she just couldn't put the baby Jesus on the hard hay with no cover on it. So, until she could find something she had him in a box and was talking to him since there was no one else and it had been a while.

She started telling him about the injustice of having to work out in the freezing cold and then about her fantasy boyfriend that she sees at lunch. Then she tells him that he works on the docks and that he has to be new to town since he has not shown up as one of her patients. Which works for dating purposes.

When someone with a deep smooth voice asks her who she is talking to? Scaring the heck out of her. When she turns she doesn't even realize that picked up the baby doll and secured it like a football. When she turns around...her lustful dream man had come to life. Dave Ricker as he introduced himself. Ex-Navy SEAL. Who now works on the docks on boats. He is even bigger and sexier in person so it throws Charlie. So much it throws her off her game and makes her speechless. Not to mention she is not sure she knows if he heard what she told the doll so she is heating up from the inside out.

He finds out she's the doc all the guys on the dock call "pit bull." They say she is all business. She seems shy and soft spoken to him. He can't get over how beautiful she is and how tiny and petite. She lets him know about a tree lighting the next night they kind of make plans to both be there. After the lighting they decide to go to the bar with friends for drinks. As they are walking past the church with the manger Dave sees something out of corner of his eye. He walks to the manger and finds a baby and walks back to Charlie on the sidewalk and says, "We have a problem." She goes into "pit bull" mode. Which turns him on. It shows her confidence, concern, giftedness, and love for children.

See how they resolve the issue with the abandon baby. Will this make or break a new relationship? What secret will be revealed to Charlie on this night that Dave hadn't told? You will get totally invested with this couple and the community as I did I am sure. You won't want to see how they work through it all. I give this 5 stars.

Christmas with the Billionaire Rancher

I had read this before in a review and had given it 5 stars.

<http://www.1rad-readerreviews.com/201...>

Overall I give this 5 stars. Provided by netgalley.com. Follow us at: www.1rad-readerreviews.com.

Dawnie says

3.75 stars.

this book is a nice mixture of three romance stories that are based during christmas time. They are cheesy and cute and short and basically everything one can love about a typical holiday story.

I have had read "Hot Toy" by Cruise before reading this book so i already knew that i enjoyed that story, and i still found it cute and entertaining during the re-read. Its mostly very silly and very overdone but i do love that its the crazy aunt that has the problems with the gifts and i do love the idea of one of those over done christmas stories that you read and then look at your own christmas chaos and can say "at least my christmas doesn't involve that!". I always enjoy Cruise's writing and her specific kind of humour and that she has this way of making her characters snarky and sarcastic but not mean. Its a cute story and its defiantly worth a read if you want something funny and overdone christmas-y.

The story that really stood out to me and i loved was "Christmas at Seashell Cottage" by Cove. Her writing was beautiful, her characters wonderfully fleshed out -especially for such a short story!- i got a real feel for the town the story took place in, the characters and what they were going through. I loved that the story wasn't just a romance book and that the sex wasn't the main thing of this story, but a different event was what the story was based around. I also loved that the two characters didn't meet and fell in into bed, but it took a bit any romance to happen. I will defiantly see if i can find something else by this author and can't wait to read and hear more from her! Defiantly recommend this specific story!

And now to the last story....

"Christmas with the Billionaire Rancher" by Baxter.... that story didn't really work for me. It is very insta-lovey for me. The two main character have sex basically three seconds after meeting -and i am not even kidding! And then the typical drama ensues that always happens in that kind of story line where the characters get mad at each other because - surprise surprise!- they didn't know anything about each other before hand and so when they learn about each other something doesn't sit well with either or both of them so drama ensues.

As you can clearly hear from my tone of writing i wasn't the biggest fan of this. But that is because of personal reasons. I don't enjoy stories where the characters see each other and fall into.... - put appropriate word here (for this story "Bed" would be the one).

I don't mind a fast building romance or even if characters have sex very fast in a story. Especially in short story you don't have 150 pages to build up a relationship if you don't even have 150 pages total! So i get the fast part. But can i at least get a real introduction before the guy says he wants to see "the girls pussy"? As i said, personal preference but since its my review i get to rant a little about the stuff i didn't love in this particular story.

BUT if you are are someone that loves the fast and hard romance stories? I am sure you will enjoy this.

All in all this book is nicely done.

It has a very nice mixture of stories: A funny one, a cutesy one and a sex/porn-y one. So basically every type of romance lover covered!

I would defiantly recommend it for any romance holiday book lover, even if i personally enjoyed "just" two of the stories. Just for those two i think it is worth reading this book for.

And who knows? Maybe you will love the story i didn't enjoy the best? You never know until you try, right?

Thanks to NetGalley, St. martin's Press and the authors for providing me with the e-arc of this book in exchange for a honest review

Georgie says

Read this for the tongue-in-cheek Crusie short. Only take in the other two stories if you're actively looking for seasonal schmaltz.
