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Set in Regency England and America, here are five Christmas love stories that are at once humorous, deeply romantic, and full of holiday lore. Authors include Mary Balogh, Jo Beverly, Sandra Heath, Edith Layton, and Laura Matthews.

A Regency Christmas VI Details

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QNPoohBear says

In *Christmas Magic* by Emma Lange, Lady Rebecca Trevor, a young widow, spends Christmas with friends and comes face to face with an old flame.

This is a nice, heartwarming story set at Christmas. The only real problem I had with the story is that all the information about Rebecca's backstory is dumped right in the middle of the story. The only other complaint I had was one little make-out scene with a bared breast. There's also a bared breast in the context of breast feeding which didn't bother me at all.

Dinner at Grillons features a heartbroken Guy Fitzallen, Lord Lanham who is seeking a divorce from his runaway wife so he can marry his aunt's companion, Imogen. Lady Lanham, the former Fleur Barrymore, fled to her native Philadelphia after learning something shocking about her husband. She misses him terribly and harbors a secret that could change his plans if he ever bothered to write to her.

This story is completely ridiculous. I hate miscommunication in relationships. If the characters bothered to talk to each other instead of having sex all the time, they wouldn't have broken up in the first place. The villain is not meant to be sympathetic, but I did feel some empathy for them. Their motivation was worthy but their methods all wrong. This is the worst story of them all.

Warning: semi-graphic love scenes

The Best Gift by Mary Balough is about the magic of Christmas, family and the joys of a childlike heart. Miss Jane Craggs, of Miss Philpott's school for young ladies has nowhere to go for Christmas. She has no family, no friends - her whole life has been spent either at an orphanage or the school. No one remembers or cares to call her by name and not quite a servant but not a teacher, she doesn't fit in. She's never been farther away from the school than she can travel by foot and she's never celebrated Christmas before. That doesn't stop her from dreaming though. When she's asked to accompany one of the students, Deborah Latimer, to her uncle's home for Christmas, Jane is delighted. Deborah and her uncle Warren, Viscount Buckley, are not so excited. He hates Christmas and never celebrates. He doesn't know what to do with his teenage niece and plans to leave her to the care of Miss Craggs. Deborah is mad because her parents went away without her because she's not old enough to be considered an adult. Neither is she a child, grateful to spend Christmas in the nursery. When an unexpected surprise shows up at Warren's home, he is at loose ends again. Jane understands perfectly and knows just what to do to make Christmas merry for the lost souls.

This is a really nice, sweet story. It even made me tear up in parts. I felt really bad for Jane. Like Harriet Smith (Emma), she's likely the natural daughter of somebody wealthy who cared enough only to pay for her keep until she reached adulthood. I can relate to her secret dream world where everything is perfect and light. I also felt bad for Deborah because the teen years are tough. Teens long to be thought of as grown up but secretly dread giving up the simple joys of childhood. This story brings out the child in all the characters as they discover the magic of Christmas. The Christmas season in Regency England is so magical and charming, it's hard not to get caught up in the characters' excitement.

The one thing really lacking in this story is the romance. I get Warren's attraction to Jane and her growing feelings for him, but the way it's played out doesn't work. There's not much wooing or courtship here. The romance comes fast and concludes quickly. There's one minor make-out scene that doesn't feel believable given Jane's lack of experience with men. I should have liked an epilogue to share what happens to the

characters the following Christmas.

In *Christmas Knight* Alisandra Perry dreams of a knight in shining armor to come and sweep her off her feet and take her away- but only if he will include her sister Joan and take them to a warmer climate. Baron Perry prefers to live life according to ancient traditions and customs, including insisting his daughters wear old-fashioned clothing and refusing them a season in London. When their brother Thomas returns home from Oxford with his old pal Max and a new friend, Sir William, the girls are thrilled. Finally, a gentleman who can marry Alisandra and take them away. The girls want to ensure Sir William proposes so they plan a special Christmas surprise for him. The plan backfires and it's old pal Max who courts Alisandra! She's worried his courtship is not sincere and he is not her knight of old-or is he?

This is such a sweet, charming story. It's light, without any real substance but a nice holiday tale. The Christmas customs are described in great detail and I got caught up in the fun and excitement of it, as well as in the romance. I think it's ironic the Baron romanticizes the past and his daughters are wearing styles of two centuries earlier! I'm sure the author was deliberately making a statement.

The Perry family seem like a loving, close-knit group, despite missing Mama who "went aloft" a few years earlier. The sisters are very close and I liked that relationship. Alisandra wants to help her sister and only when her suitor agrees to her demands, will she give up her independence and marry. Like any teenage girl, she dreams of romance though and she gets more than she bargained for when she tries to force nature. I liked her a lot and wanted her to be happy. Joan seems a happy, cheerful young lady, along the lines of Jane Bennet, but with a bit more intelligence and awareness.

The young men seem very kind and fun as well. Sir William doesn't have much of a personality. Max is a rogue and romantic at heart. He knows Alisandra and Joan from childhood so they are comfortable with each other. Thomas is a bit of an idiot to fall for cousin Charlotte's pretty face and affected manners but if he's at Oxford still, he's quite young and he can't be more than a year or two older than Alisandra. The age difference seemed greater when Alisandra reflected on her childhood but it can't be that great unless Max is a lot older than Thomas. That was unclear in the story.

The only character I didn't like was Charlotte because she was the stereotypical "mean girl" character who thinks every man should naturally be in love with her. I actually liked Aunt Phoebe's spaniels. I felt bad for them that no one liked them because they weren't trained well. It's not their faults. Aunt Phoebe is not such a bad person, she's just blind to the faults of her children (Charlotte and the dogs).

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear has nothing to do with the Christmas carol of the same name. This story pays homage to Georgette Heyer's Friday's Child in using the name of her hero for the villain and referencing Nemesis. The cynical Mr. Tremaine is commandeered by his friend, Sir Timothy, to visit Timothy's sister for the holidays. Sir Timothy has a plan to rescue Mercedes, the lovely young daughter of the weaselly Viscomte de la Roche, from marriage to the much older, dastardly Lord Sheringham. When Vyvian Tremain sees Mercedes, he is quite taken with the girl's unaffected nature and fragile countenance. He's determined to help her no matter what. Mercedes feels compelled to help the mysterious woman by the side of the road... a woman no one else can see.

My heart stopped a minute when I thought Sherry was the much older man engaged to a teenage girl following the death of his wife. How tragic that would be! However, this Lord Sheringham is quite a nasty villain. He is not at all like Heyer's Sherry and would never treat a girl the way this Lord Sheringham did. There's a gothic/paranormal mystery element to the plot that kept me reading long past when I should have been asleep on a work night. The conclusion wasn't a total surprise yet how it happened was a bit of a

surprise and quite shocking.

Vyvian is an enigmatic hero. He doesn't have a backstory, he doesn't have much personality. All we really know is that chivalry isn't his line, until he meets Mercedes. He's one of those bored, cynical types. Mercedes is a good foil for him because she is so innocent and youthful. She does have a spark of mischief inside her though which saved her from being a total stereotype. Her father also defies the stereotype. He has a brief backstory. He is a weak man. I feel sorry for Mercedes that her father isn't stronger and I even feel a bit bad for the Viscomte that he's easy to take advantage of.

This is an average collection of stories set around Christmas in the fantasy Regency world perpetuated by Georgette Heyer wannabes.

Agnes says

Enjoy the Balogh story "The Best Gift" (reprinted in the Balogh collection Under The Mistletoe)

Frances says

Lange, 2. Heath, 2, Balogh, already read. Henrickson, 2. Walsh. 1. Sigh.

Linda says

A REGENCY CHRISTMAS VI contained five short holiday stories of various caliber. IMHO, the only one worth spending time reading is Mary Balogh's 'The Best Gift'. Unlike the others, Mrs. Balogh expounded on the true meaning of Christmas.

A young woman whom has never had a family or spent Christmas anywhere is hired by a lonely young nobleman to chaperone his fifteen-year-old niece over the holidays. Her parents decided to spend the season in Italy at the last minute....without her. Then, upon their arrival at his estate, he finds the illegitimate daughter he had financially supported for four years but had never met dropped off at his home. His former mistress, the little girl's mother, has died.

This is a heartwarming story of what it means to help others spread joy. At the same time, two lonely people find out they have more in common then they originally thought. If you are looking for something to forget the 90 degree heat outside, as I was, give this sparkling little romance a try.

Katie says

yes, jenny, i finally finished it. lol

Ilze says

I read three of the stories in the book - Mary Balogh's, which is delightful (4 stars), Emma Lange's and Sheila Walsh's (2 stars each). Emma Lange's and Sheila Walsh's stories don't come close to Mary Balogh's story in terms of characterization, plot, and even the feeling of Christmas. Mary Balogh makes Christmas in the early 19th century come alive, and the story couldn't happen at any other time of the year. The other 2 stories happen to take place around Christmas but they could just as well have taken place at some other time of year.

Rebecca says

Mary Balogh's story was, as usual, the best, and Emma Lange's was also very good. I always enjoy a good Xmas story around the holidays!

Ana T. says

In Emma Lange's CHRISTMAS MAGIC the widow of an older man joins a Christmas house party and encounters the rake who once tempted her to betray her marriage vows. It was a very sweet story about an attraction not forgotten and I enjoyed both characters very much. A B+

In Sandra Heath's DINNER AT GRILLON'S we have a marriage in trouble story. I was looking forward to it because I love the theme but the end was a bit of a let down. A Lord intends to divorce his wife and remarry as he believes she deserted him one year ago. I thought they fell easily in the lies of another woman and there's no real confrontation in the end with the villainess. A B-

Mary Balogh's THE BEST GIFT is an old favorite! I loooove this cinderella story about a young teacher, presumably an illegitimate child and how she brings love into the life of a lonely viscount who is planning to give up on his own illegitimate child. An A.

In Emily Hendrickson's CHRISTMAS KNIGHT we have another sweet story about 2 sisters waiting for their prince charming to save them from a lonely existence in the country. They dress like the 15th century to please their father and their adventures with a love potion to gain the attention of one of her brother's friends will lead to some funny scenes. A B+

In Sheila Walsh's II CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR we have a gothic story with a delicate heroine, a mysterious villain and a ruined Abbey. It was not very original but it was a nice story. A B-

Grade: B+
