

[PDF] Home In Time For Christmas

Angela Dawe, Heather Graham - pdf download free book



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Description:

About the Author New York Times and USA Today bestselling author Heather Graham has written more than one hundred novels, many of which have been featured by the Doubleday Book Club and the Literary Guild. An avid scuba diver, ballroom dancer and mother of five, she still enjoys her south Florida home, but loves to travel as well, from locations such as Cairo, Egypt, to her own backyard, the Florida Keys. Reading, however, is the pastime she still loves best, and she is a member of many writing groups. She's currently the vice president of the Horror Writers' Association, and she's also an active member of International Thriller Writers. She is very proud to be a Killerette in the Killer Thriller Band, along with many fellow novelists she greatly admires.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Christmas.

Ho, ho, ho. Merry, merry.

Yeah, *Merry Christmas*.

The road was a slip and slide.

Peace on earth.

Even when she had left New York City that morning, Melody Tarleton thought, people were practically trampling one another to get into Macy's, make the next subway or beat everyone else out for one of the cabs slip-sliding all over the street. The stores were advertising that they were open Christmas Eve and some even on Christmas morning, just so that the jerks who couldn't remember to buy gifts all year long could rush out last minute and buy some stupid thing that no one would really want anyway. But they'd realize they were going to grandma's for dinner, and hadn't even thought to buy the woman who had loved them their whole lives so much as a bouquet of flowers. Got to keep stores open for that. And God forbid, someone should forget they had another little niece or nephew. The children of the world definitely needed more stupid plastic toys! And, surely, the forgotten infant needed another bib that was embroidered with Spit Happens! or some other inane sentiment.

The car started to spin. Melody gripped the wheel and took her foot off the gas. It righted itself.

She let out a sigh of relief, and then winced. What in God's name was the matter with her?

What had become of her usual joy of the holiday season? She wished that her mood would lighten, and that she would pay heed to a few of the Christmas carols resounding from her car-stereo system. She had a million things for which she should be thankful; healthy, living parents who loved her, a wonderful brother who was just about her best friend now— even though they had fought wretchedly growing up. She loved what she did for a living....

Ah, there was the problem!

Mark.

In a few days, he would be there. Her mother had asked him to come for Christmas. Which, of course, he had expected. He wasn't taking a thing that she said seriously.

I can't do it, Mark. I can't marry you, or be engaged to you. I can't even be your girlfriend. I thought I knew you, but then you began to talk about our future. You're a fine man, just not for me.

Well, she had known him. Most of her life. They'd gone to middle school and high school together, gone off to different colleges, and then met again at a book fair. It had seemed perfect at first; they'd been old friends, reconnecting. She drew pictures, he wrote words. They both loved illustrated novels. They'd both hailed from Gloucester, and moved to New York. So much to talk about, so much of the past to relive!

And they were friends. She was so happy to be his friend.

Then they'd been more. She thought she could see a wonderful future with him until he shared what he saw for the two of them.

She was just amazed at his vision of the future. He would take care of her. She wouldn't work—oh, well, of course, she could draw little pictures for their children. They'd have ten.

It was so odd how things had changed. She'd found him charming and attractive.

And now...

She was afraid of mistletoe.

There was no way out. As it had become clear that they were each seeking a different future, and the harder she struggled to escape, the more he had set the tethers upon her, it had all happened too late to salvage Christmas.

Her mother had already given him the invitation to come up. So, for Christmas, he'd keep insisting that she loved him and didn't understand that he just loved her and wanted the world for her. She'd be avoiding him, and no one would understand.

Ho, ho, ho. It was going to be great.

Stop feeling sorry for yourself

So, okay, Mark was the one with the publisher and he would probably see that she was fired off the project she had been hired to work on with him.

No, she had a contract.

Contracts could be broken.

Good God, she wasn't going to lead a man on because of a contract!

She believed in herself. Even if he didn't. And that was the point.

She'd just start pounding the pavement all over again if need be.

Think positive.

Christmas had always been her favorite time of year, maybe because her folks had loved the holiday so very much. Her mom went all out. Massive, overstuffed stockings for the entire family and whatever friends happened to be with them. A tree that was so heavily decorated, it almost sank into the floor.

House lights that might have been a cause of global warming— the only non-earth-friendly concession her mother ever made.

Be thankful for my family, she told herself.

And she was really.

Oh, Lord, she would have to face her father. He was such a good soul. He'd be confused at first when she tried to explain what had happened with Mark—that she didn't want a relationship in which she was basically *owned*. He wouldn't understand a man like Mark—actually, she wasn't sure many people would. Mark gave new meaning to old-fashioned.

Her parents had met in college. Her mom had become a nurse, and her dad had become a professor.

They had shared child rearing. In this day and age, she thought, they were truly adorable. Somehow, through thick and thin, they had made marriage a two-way street.

There—she could blame it on her folks. She just wanted the same kind of love and respect in a relationship. Support and belief. It really wasn't a dream—she had seen it work.

Okay, so her mother often shook her head over her father, but she did it with affection. "He's tinkering in his office," she would say, and roll her eyes. Her dad had been a professor at Worcester Poly-Tech once, and he was still always trying to tweak an old invention—or master a new one. Puffs of smoke arose from the building out back upon occasion, but he'd never burned anything down. And despite her protests to the contrary, Melody knew that this was exactly the man her mother had fallen in love with all those years ago.

Oh, her mother would hate the news of her relationship with Mark. Mona would be all indignant when she tried to explain the truth. How dare he think he was better than she was, or more worthy of expressing creativity! Or, it could be worse. Her mother believed that she came from a long line of mystics, or healers. She could trace her family back to Saxon England, and she was convinced that she could grow herbs and create medicinal drinks that actually had magical strength. She just might decide that Mark could imbibe enough herbal tea laced with God-knew-exactly-what that he would see the error of his ways.

The thought made her groan aloud.

Mark! she thought, feeling ill, don't you see, we can't make it. And trying to pretend that everything is all right just because it's Christmas is not going to work.

And if all that wasn't enough stress for this trip home, there was her brother. As much as she loved her brother, Keith...

God only knew who or *what* he'd have found to come home with him.

Though he'd never played football, Keith looked like a fullback. He was tall, charming, and very good-looking, but he was their father in all aspects of geek. He was attending his father's alma mater, learning electronics and physics and so on, and when he wasn't busy studying, he was finding someone or some creature who needed help.

One year, he'd brought home a stripper.

Another year, it had been a wounded raccoon.

He had a great heart. She loved him to death.

She just hoped that they wouldn't have to share Christmas with Mark and a stripper.

Hmm. Maybe that wouldn't be such a bad thing....

No, it would probably be another animal this year. Like the blind Persian cat he had found last year, the basset with the little roller now to replace the hind legs a driver had crushed the year before, or Jimmy, the big old sheepdog mix he had found three years ago, starved and left to die in a crate on a trash pile. If Keith hadn't found a wounded animal, he would decide that Melody *was* one. Maybe, she was. Human beings were, after all, animals. Usually, it was events like Christmas that lifted man above the beasts.

Christmas. How she had once loved it. How she dreaded it now. And this feeling of dread was wrong, so wrong! Because no matter how uncomfortable the festivities proved to be for her, she *had* to remember that it was Christmas.

She frowned suddenly, slowing the car. The day had been bright and beautiful, despite the ice on the ground and roads. But out of the blue, there was suddenly darkness, as if a cloud had passed the sun. The darkest cloud ever known to man.

And in the midst of it...

Good God, there was a figure in the middle of the road, a dark form....

Melody slammed hard on the brakes, even though she knew better. There was just so much ice on the road. Before the car fishtailed, she saw the figure more fully in the glare of her headlights.

It was a man.

A man dressed as if he were a refugee from the past. He was hatless in the snow, and wearing a white muslin shirt and tight-fitting pants. Tall black boots. He wasn't in a wig, but his long dark hair was queued back. He was staring at her with pure amazement.

As if the idiot had never seen a car before.

Then, the car started to spin. She had hit black ice. She knew better than to try to stop the way she had. But hell, it had been that, or...

She felt a bump; she'd hit the figure.

Hopefully not as badly as she would have, had she not tried so hard to stop!

She came to a halt against a snowbank. Incredibly, her air bag did not go off. Her lights streamed against the gray color the day had become and the snow, coming down now in a fresh swirling round of flurries. Stunned, she sat still for long seconds, thanking God that she was alive.

Then she remembered the soft thumping sound against the car. She tried to open her door, but she was against the snowbank. She maneuvered across the car to the passenger side and managed to get out.

He was there, lying in the snow. He was clad only in eighteenth-century attire, often enough seen around Salem, but ridiculous in this weather. His shirt and pants were simple cotton, no barrier... -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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