



Beginner's Luck

Kate Clayborn

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When three friends impulsively buy a lottery ticket, they never suspect the many ways their lives will change—or that for each of them, love will be the biggest win of all.

Kit Averin is anything but a gambler. A scientist with a quiet, steady job at a university, Kit's focus has always been maintaining the acceptable status quo. A sudden windfall doesn't change that, with one exception: the fixer-upper she plans to buy, her first and only real home. It's more than enough to keep her busy, until an unsettlingly handsome, charming, and determined corporate recruiter shows up in her lab—and manages to work his way into her heart...

Ben Tucker is surprised to find that the scientist he wants for Beaumont Materials is a young woman—and a beautiful, sharp-witted one at that. Talking her into a big-money position with his firm is harder than he expects, but he's willing to put in the time, especially when sticking around for the summer gives him a chance to reconnect with his dad. But the longer he stays, the more questions he has about his own future—and who might be in it.

What begins as a chilly rebuff soon heats up into an attraction neither Kit nor Ben can deny—and finding themselves lucky in love might just be priceless...

Beginner's Luck Details

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From Reader Review Beginner's Luck for online ebook

Blackjack says

Such a pleasant surprise to read a debut novel from a promising new author and at the very end of the year too. I liked so much about this first book in Clayborn's series, but as a heroine-centric reader I was surprised by how much I enjoyed the hero in this book more than anything else. In the wrong hands Ben Tucker could have been a smooth operator in the worst sense as he has many of the accoutrements, including a corporate job as a headhunter, a handsome face and body decked out in expensive suits, and a history of brief liaisons with numerous women who are purposely chosen for their willingness to walk away with no strings attached. When Ben returns to his hometown to care for his father and to make a rather uncharacteristically clumsy career pitch to a quiet university research scientist to come join the corporate world for profit and status, first appearances confirm the brief details we have about Ben. However, he is slowly revealed to us through small encounters with family, friends, and the heroine as a much deeper and caring person, and all of the traits that are initially attached to him are indeed paper thin. Ben is in some ways two people for much of the novel. On the one hand he is a devoted son of a single dad who raised him after a divorce, a man who embraces a hands-on craft trade of antique restoration and home repair, and he is a person recovering from a troubled youth for which he feels enormous regret about his childhood actions. He was, in other words, an at-risk boy, and there are hints too that there are underlying issues that could be labeled as ADHD. On the other hand, Ben has tried to leave his past behind him by embracing a high flying corporate job that is presented as the novel progresses to be sterile and superficial even though it has provided him with much-needed stability and focus. Ben's attempts to straddle two worlds as he embarks on an unexpected romance with Kit is doomed to fail, but which way he decides is open to speculation even though as a romance we are assured somehow Kit and Ben will find a way.

The romance is sweet and I appreciate the way the author allows it to unfold slowly to build a sustainable foundation for the couple. Kit and Ben are convincingly friends before and after they are lovers. The restoration of Kit's old home is a nice factor too in the book for those who enjoy home projects. I definitely felt the excitement of Kit's hunt for door knobs and hinges and the Salvage yard is a great and unusual setting for a novel. I could envision it so clearly from the descriptions. Kit's home restoration work also allows Ben to tap back into his roots and engage in humane and meaningful labor, which presents a helpful and clear contrast to his alienated life as a corporate headhunter. I have to say too that in a subtle and convincing way, this is a book that includes a number of people with disabilities in a way that few romances do and in the process offers a loving picture of a different kind of American culture that deserves to be embraced. Betty, who owns the local pub, has only one eye from a childhood accident, River is a young hearing-impaired teen with a penchant for getting into trouble, Henry is aging and recovering from an accident and in a wheelchair for much of the story, and Alex, Kit and Ben all suffer from childhood emotional traumas that shape their choices as adults. The closest thing to a family for Kit is her Indian-American mentor and family rather than her own biological one. Henry and Sharon are an older couple who constitute a fun secondary romance. How wonderful to read about all of these complex characters who feel so real and valued.

I have to say though that I did not love Kit nearly as much as I loved Ben. She is a sympathetic figure for her struggles to find stability given the lack of roots she experienced as the child of an absentee mother and an alcoholic mother. And she is also an admirable figure too as a woman excelling in a predominantly male world of science and research. A number of times in the book, however, she cuts people off without allowing them a chance to defend themselves, including her brother and Ben on more than one occasion, so I had trouble warming up to her. I also felt a little annoyed with the conflict that briefly separates Ben and her at the end of the book because it relies heavily on a misunderstanding and one that precludes constructive

dialogue.

Kit's two girlfriends, Zoe and Greer, are depicted clearly here and I have every intention of reading their upcoming books. I love the town created in this series and look forward to returning to these characters in 2018. The writing is strong in this book and I am eager to see how Clayborn develops as an author.

2ReadingBulgarians says

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Hollis says

Quick and dirty review because it's midnight and I am le tired.

This book has been highly rec'd in my feed for a while now and did it measure up in giving me a well-written romance, from a debut author!, that was both smart, sexy, sweet, and engaging? Yes on pretty much all counts. I'll admit that I struggled with Kit basically throughout the whole story but could appreciate that Clayborn created this kind of heroine; a woman who is all brains and a little (lot) emotionally bruised. I liked that about her. I liked that she was hesitant, yet unapologetically intelligent, but also confused about ambition, longing for stability. But she was also snappish, and jumped to conclusions, and standoffish and it's like everything I liked about her had an opposite that made me dislike her.

As for Ben.. yes, all aboard the Ben train, I am. He wasn't perfect but I felt for him in a completely different way. I respected how self-aware he was, even when he didn't say the right thing at the right time, or open up, and that made me forgive him more than I could forgive Kit.

Combined they were their best selves, I think, and I absolutely adored that despite the insta-attraction these two had, there was a solid foundation of friendship that was built up first.

The supporting cast really won me over, too, and helped keep this read enjoyable when one half of the main characters made it less so. I loved every additional personality included in BEGINNER'S LUCK, except maybe Jasper, and all the dynamics that made up the story; especially the tender and hilariously delightful relationship between Ben and his dad. Beyond the writing and well-drawn hero, it's those personas that have me excited for more from this series.

Taryn says

4/5

This review was originally posted here.

I'm kind of kicking myself for putting off reading this for so long because I *really* enjoyed myself while reading this! This has been highly recommended on my twitter feed lately and that definitely pushed me to

pick it up sooner than I would have otherwise! Plus, the sequel has also just come out so I thought it was the perfect time to jump in. For the first 50-60% of the book, I totally thought this would be a new fave, that's how much I was loving it. Unfortunately, it didn't quite make it to my new faves list, but I certainly still liked it.

I absolutely adored Kit and Ben. As individual characters they were both fleshed out and so realistic. I loved their relationship with each other, with their family and friends. Kit and Ben's relationship development felt really real and authentic, and I loved seeing them get to know each other and ultimately fall in love. I loved that Kit stood her ground for what she believed was the right thing for her future and I liked Ben for respecting that. I appreciated that Clayborn explored gender bias in science, even if my eyes glazed over when Kit started nerding out.

I thought the family relationships in this were really interesting and well explored. Kit grew up with an absent mother and an addict father, so her elder brother was her guardian growing up. Learning about Kit moving from home to home and more of her family history really made me connect and understand her need to stay rooted in one place. I think once Alex's book comes around, it'll be interesting to see how their upbringing affected both characters so differently! For Ben, the divorce between his parents is what impacted his relationship with them. The divorce ended up with Ben staying with his father, and while he sees his mother and her new husband semi-regularly, his relationship with his father was much stronger. I loved Ben and Henry's relationship and adored seeing them work in the salvage yard together. Again, I loved that his relationship with his parents really impacted parts of his personality and thought it was all well-developed.

Also can we talk about the fact this has an awesome, non-toxic female friendship because Y E S. Soooo many romance books have such toxic female friendships and it was so refreshing to see not just a healthy one, but one where they were so supportive and loving of each other. I thought Greer and Zoe could have done with some more character development, but knowing they have their own books coming up, I wasn't too mad about it.

There were only a couple things I wasn't a fan of with this book. **1) I didn't like the conflict at the end.** I am not a fan of assumptions and miscommunication in romance novels, and that's exactly why the conflict happened. Kit was *so* stubborn, and whilst I understand why she thought what she did, she was too stubborn to even talk to Ben to try to understand his side of things. If they'd just had a conversation and Kit let him explain, she would've understood that it was all a misunderstanding & that Ben didn't do what she thought he had. **2) On a related note, I thought the ending was kind of rushed.** Like, I knew they'd get back together and get their HEA because it's a romance novel, but it literally all happened in one chapter???? I would've liked to have seen them talking things over more, but once they see each other again everything is all forgiven and forgotten in like two seconds so it seemed like the weeks they spent apart were a waste.

Overall, *Beginner's Luck* is a sweet, smart, sexy romance with great writing and lovely relationship development. Whilst the conflict at the end annoyed me, overwhelmingly I enjoyed myself while reading this and very much look forward to continuing the series!

Xan West says

A copy was provided by the publisher through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review

4.5 stars

I really liked this romance. It had some lovely twists and a whole lot of heart. I found it well paced and deeply engaging. It was a really satisfying romance.

I fell hard for both the main characters, and was rooting for them as a couple throughout the story. I also fell really hard for some of the secondary characters, especially Kit's BFFs, River, Sharon, and Ben's father. I really liked how much it was about family, and home, the ways those aspects of the story were layered and complex. I loved Kit's chosen family so much.

Kit's relationship with her addict father, and how that impacted her in huge and small ways, was very well done, felt like it captured some important things about being an adult child of an alcoholic and an addict that I rarely see depicted with such complexity and depth. I loved how we got to see her practice different ways to cope with the trauma she has from that experience, to care for herself when she gets triggered. As a reader, I really got to appreciate how much Kit was protecting herself, taking care of herself, and going after the life she wanted. It made for a lovely reading experience. Her characterization was beautiful to read, and resonated strongly for me as an adult child of an alcoholic.

I read Ben as neuroatypical, though it was not explicitly named on the page. It comes through in the way he stims while under stress, the way it describes him being in hyperfocus, and the ways he describes needing to move, not being able to be still, especially under stress. I wished for a deeper characterization around this, it felt under the surface a bit. There was a painful moment where his mother tells him to stop tapping that just gutted me as a neuroatypical reader. I did appreciate how supportive his dad was in letting him be; it was a good balance. (Note 11/29/17: Per the author, Ben has ADHD.)

There is a secondary character who is hearing impaired, and another secondary character who is mobility impaired. I was glad to find a story that had so many disabled characters of all sorts. It felt good to read about the ways these characters supported each other, understood each other, and created interdependence.

I enjoyed all the details of the salvage yard, the workday stuff at the university, the home improvement arc. It was wonderful to sink into those details, to soak them up. It made for a balance of comfort amidst some of the intensity of Kit's arc.

I really liked the way Kit was so deeply respected as a scientist, and also how much of the story was about her career choices and figuring out what was right for her. I also appreciated the way that resolved for her, and was a bit in awe of how the romance conflicts could resolve. The ending worked for me; I found it really satisfying. I look forward to book 2 in the series!

Trigger Warnings: (view spoiler)

ambsreads says

MY REVIEW FOR BEGINNERS LUCK WAS ORIGINALLY POSTED ON MY BLOG, [CLICK HERE TO SEE IT](#)

I think everyone can agree that winning the lottery is everyone's dream come true. I know for a fact it's my literal dream because easy money is always great. Added on to this is the fact my mum almost bloody won the lottery one time! I was 8 and I remember sitting outside while she got her ticket checked, we were one (1) number off. But, we did end up with almost three grand and my mum bought my sister and I all new

furniture.

Moving on from my tale of the lottery, Beginner's Luck is the story of Kit. Kit and her two best friends won the lottery. Kit is a scientist; I can't really speak too much on this part because I understood exactly 0% of the discussions that revolved around Kit's job. I literally am just so bad at science. Anyway, Kit didn't have the easiest life. Her mum left when she was young and her father's an alcoholic gambler. Her older brother is basically the one that kept her grounded and tried to make every house they lived in a home. I moved a lot as a kid so this was something that I related to with Kit. The other perspective in this book, aka the love interest, is Ben. Ben has returned home in order to take care of his father who has had a fall. He works for a company that recruits scientists to help with their work and while he's helping his father his best friend rings and wants him to recruit Kit. It's a bit of a mess honestly, the pair bicker a lot as Ben struggles to recruit Kit.

On top of Ben and Kit's struggles to get to know each other, but struggling with the work side, Kit has bought an old historical home to renovate and put down roots in the town. I absolutely love house renovations so I absolutely adored this inclusion in the plot.

The overall message of this book is doing things for you. You have to make yourself happy and to allow yourself to say no.

Anyway, I should jump into my detailed likes and dislikes of Beginners Luck.

L I K E S

✕ KIT & BEN ARE SO CUTE!!

They were so sweet, their chemistry and back and forth had me giggling. Individually they were both great characters as well, they were very fleshed out and both their perspectives throughout the novel brought something different, which I appreciated greatly. The relationship between the pair of them was very organic and naturally coming as well. There were moments where I was a little bit uncomfortable due to some weird dialogue but I feel that happens in all books for me.

✕ KIT'S PAST WAS SO FAMILIAR AND WELL DONE

Kit's past was a bit of an intense one. She grew up with an absent mother and a father who wasn't the best at any given time. Her brother was the only one who was there for her and now that she is older she wants to settle down. I definitely related to the brother more in this situation, as he was someone who didn't want to settle down, but overall Kit's past was one that I know well and was able to connect to. Moving a lot was apart of my childhood. One year we moved schools four times. It was hard, never easy, and it was something I have yearned to see in a book for a while and I am beyond happy to finally have it, especially with it being executed so well in this particular novel.

✕ FAMILY FIGHTS ACCURATELY DONE

Sibling fights are messy. Especially when the siblings are extremely different. I know this for a fact because my sister and I struggle so badly. Kit and her brother had one of the most realistic arguments I have seen. Both incredibly stubborn and refusing to relent, it made me beyond happy to see something like that represented throughout the text.

On top of his, Ben and his father fight quite a lot. The pair of them butting heads as Henry, the father, wants to refuse help and be back to his old self. It was an interesting dynamic I feel isn't common enough in any genre of books that I read, fights between the male characters and their parents. It was an insight I haven't

gotten before.

X CLOSE FEMALE FRIENDSHIPS MAKE MY CROPS GROW

If I had crops they would be thriving after reading the friendship in this book. I adore non-toxic female friendships where there is no competitiveness and everyone just supports one another. This book has that perfectly. Kit and her two best friends are so different but come together and have the most beautiful friendship that dreams are made of. I know I'm being dramatic but it was just so incredible. If you pick up this book for any reason, do it for that. Or pick it up because it explores the gender bias in science.

D I S L I K E S

X STORY GOT A BIT SLOPPY AT THE END

Miscommunication is the bane of my existence. I will die from it. It made the end of this book incredibly sloppy. At times it felt like it had completely fallen apart and I even wanted to DNF due to it. It just wasn't necessary honestly. We don't need the dramatic break up to make the HEA even sweeter, it just is a waste of time honestly. Plus, the complication coming so close to the end just kind of gave the book a strange format.

X LOTS OF TIME JUMPS

I hate time jumps, honestly. I want all the nitty-gritty details and to see every relationship form. I don't want to jump periods of time and have the book tell me what happened rather than show me. It gets annoying and at times feels as if I missed something really important.

X TOO MANY WORDS

This one is pretty simple, at times this book was very wordy and I was annoyed by it. I feel it could have been shorter if some things had been cut down quite a bit.

Overall, Beginner's Luck was on the way to becoming a new favourite of mine. The ending was just unfortunately what let it down and dropped it to a three star for me. I do still recommend this book, I think it explores a lot of important topics. While simultaneously being a smart and sexy romance with a lovely couple that you will be rooting for. I am very excited to read the following books in this series!

Maria Rose says

The idea behind the Chance of a Lifetime series by Kate Clayborn caught my attention. It's about three female friends who win the lottery and decide what's best for them in how to deal with the money. I took a chance on this new to me author and got lucky indeed with the first novel in the series, Beginner's Luck, as it turns out that this one is definitely going on my top ten books for this year!

Kit Averin is a materials scientist, with the money in her pocket to fund any number of new adventures. But what she really wants is stability, including maintaining her lab tech position even though she's overqualified. When Ben Tucker, a recruiter for Beaumont Materials comes knocking, she turns him down flat. She has no interest in leaving her job and her friends to move away to Texas to work in the industry. Plus, she's just bought a fixer-upper home that she's excited to start renovating.

Ben knows he made a mistake with his approach to Kit, including assuming she'd be a man (ouch). But he's got time to soften her up because he's not going anywhere. His dad had an accident, and Ben is staying with him for the foreseeable future, helping him get better and working at their family's salvage business – a place that just so happens to have some of the antique fixtures Kit is looking for to renovate her new house. Getting to know 'jeans and Henley' Ben is a lot different than 'suit and tie' Ben, and Kit finds herself reciprocating his honest friendship and eventually giving in to the attraction between them. But Ben's home is back in Texas, and his future will be impacted by whether or not Kit takes the job. Will they find a compromise that will let them get the happy ending they both want?

There are so many things to like about this story that I found myself slowing down as I was reading it because I didn't want it to end! Family, friends, co-workers – all the major relationships in one's life play a part in this story. Both Ben and Kit have some positive and negative family relationships. Kit grew up with a gambling-addicted father and a brother who was her main caregiver. After spending years hopping from place to place, she's determined to stay put in a home of her choice. For Ben, a divorce between his parents ended with him staying with his dad, and though he has contact with his mother and her new husband periodically, he doesn't have a strong bond with her. But he does have a very strong relationship with his dad and didn't hesitate to come home to help him with his shop and be his caregiver while he recuperates. Seeing Ben with his dad is a whole different side of him than he presents to Kit at the beginning, and as the story progresses the strong, confident, businessman shows both his flaws and his sweet side to Kit (and the reader).

Kit's two best friends with whom she won the lottery, Zoe and Greer, play a significant role in this story. They are her sounding board for any and all things that she needs to talk to someone about, including Ben and his job offer. I loved the conversations that they have, how Zoe and Greer interact with Ben when they meet him, and the strong affection they have for each other. They've gone different routes with their money (and I am excited to read Zoe and Greer's stories too!) but it hasn't changed their friendship.

This is a slow burn romance since Ben and Kit get off on the wrong foot and work their way towards friendship before getting in any deeper. But their first kiss (swoon-worthy!) leads to an understanding that they'll keep business out of the mix as they explore a more physical relationship. There are some sexy scenes between them and soon it's clear that they're going to want to find a way to make things work for them in the long term, but not without some ups and downs and soul searching first. The end result is a lovely happy ending for them and a delightful epilogue to tie things together. On another positive note, Kit's enthusiasm for her scientific field is delightful to see. The scenes involving her job, and the scientific discussions that ensue are interesting and believable. As much as I didn't want this story to end, I'm excited to see where the series will go next! *Beginner's Luck* is a rare gem, a debut novel that will have the reader impatiently waiting for more.

This review also appears at: <https://straightshootinbookreviews.co...>

A copy of this story was provided by the publisher via NetGalley for review.

Jacob Proffitt says

Well crap. I finished this and forgot to review it for a week or so. Fortunately, the couple stands out and the situation was unique enough that I retain at least *some* details.

I liked the main couple very much throughout most of the novel. Ben's conflict of interest was interesting because he had some big career plans riding on convincing Kit to join his company—an act that would require major changes for her, including upsetting the comfy little nest that had been years in the making. Which means that Kit's motivation *should have been* a huge pile of negative*. It wasn't, and this book could stand as a textbook for how a subtle shift can alter negative motivation into positive impulses that drive plot. You see, it isn't *just* that she doesn't want to do things and just wants everything to stay the same. Rather, Kit is motivated by the need for stability and safety that she lacked growing up. She wants a steady home and is loyal to her employer because she needs that security. In other words, her comfort is carefully crafted and guarded and is a result of both thought and effort. Even better, because her motivation isn't based on "no", she is capable of considering Ben's offer through the lens of her motivational need and (view spoiler) arises naturally out of who she is and doesn't require either breaking out of a rut or falling back into one. Because she isn't in a rut at all.

And I'll admit this is a subtle read of a phenomenon that is already subtle to begin with. But I think it holds. At any rate, Clayborn does a fantastic job with the characterization for this story. Until the end. Where she loses a ton sympathy and drops a star or more.

Actually, Clayborn sets up Ben's broken response relatively well because we can see him making choices that put a subtle barrier between himself and Kit that eventually blows up in his face. And I hated the hints even more than I hated the great misunderstanding that it eventually lead to. And I really, *really* hated the decision by everybody not to talk to anybody else. They had done so unstereotypically well with communication to that point. They had reached a level of understanding that I practically wallowed in. So having that yanked out from under me at the last moment kind of sucked. A lot.

So this ends with a really weak 3½ stars that I'm rounding down even though Kit(!) pulls off an excellent grand gesture . . . eventually.

A note about Steamy: While I remember the details about stuff I wanted to mention in a review, I forget how much steam this actually had. I remember thinking it was the middle of my steam tolerance. So a couple explicit sex scenes of moderate length? Maybe?

* **Negative Motivations:** I kind of hate that the term "negative motivation" isn't widespread, yet. Since it isn't, I'm going to save off this little jag to append to my reviews that feature the term. Jennifer Crusie blogged about it a bit back and it changed how I understand story. The problem with the term is that if you've never heard it before, you'd assume it meant motivations that are harmful or immoral. Not so. What it refers to is motivations *not to do something*. The thing is that many of us are motivated to not do things for a lot of different, perfectly valid and reasonable, reasons. The problem is that *in a story* motivations to not do things are a huge drag on the plot—particularly considering the fact that most negative motivations are overcome by the character simply deciding they don't care any more (or, rather, that they *do care* and are now motivated to do the thing). So not only do you have a counter to action but you also have a situation where to overcome it, all a character has to do is change their mind. Which means eventually, the reader is rooting for the character to get over him/herself already and do the thing we want them to do. Conflict drives story. Conflict between a reader and a main character drives readers away from story.

Amanda says

I freaking ADORED this book from beginning to end. ADORED!

Honestly it's the kind of book I probably would've overlooked if it hadn't gotten some buzz online from friends. The blurb didn't really grab me at all. But it's such a wonderful debut. I love the author's writing style- generally I'm not a fan of first person present tense, but it works here, and I really enjoyed both Kit's and Ben's "voices." This book is funny (definitely laughed out loud several times reading it), charming, and so sweet. I squealed at the romantic parts. Despite Kit and Ben starting off on the wrong foot, this is not enemies-to-lovers at all. The romance builds slowly and Kit and Ben are just allowed to crush on each other and then become friends before they finally get together. I loved it. No rush. And I thought their obstacles to being together were handled well and not dragged out.

I really liked the secondary characters as well. I can't wait for Kit's best friends to get their own books, too. I know book 2 is about Zoe. But it's Greer's book I really want because she is shy and I love a shy heroine.

nick says

Why did I wait so long to read *Beginner's Luck*? My brain does not compute! This was just the perfect sweet romance story for me. Shout out to my co-blogger, Lisa, for putting this book my radar, because I know have yet another romance author on my auto-read list.

Beginner's Luck tells the story of Kit, who has just won a big lottery with her friends. I really really liked Kit's character. She's a research scientist – wohoo another STEM girl – who works as a lab tech at a university. She's quiet, happy with her life, and doesn't care much for change. Seriously, was Kit based off of me, because that describes me to a T. She's got a quiet strength to her that I loved seeing emerge throughout *Beginner's Luck*. I loved her passion for her job and her research, and I loved how kind and gentle she was. Then, there was Ben, who tries his best to recruit Kit to come work at the company he works at. I looooved Ben so much. I have a thing for soft heroes, and Ben was definitely one of those. He is such a sweetheart throughout *Beginner's Luck*, and I loved how kind he was to Kit as well. His interactions with his dad had me melting in a corner. I'm always up for reading about heroes like Ben because they have the qualities that I would want in a real life partner.

The romance between the two develops slowly. They become friends first, and there's a lot of great chemistry between the two. I loved watching their romance evolve into something so cute and shippy. What I loved best about the two of them together is just how much they complemented each other. They support each other, and are always each other's number one fan-club, and it was absolutely endearing to read about. I will say that if you're looking for explicit sex scenes, you won't find them here, but I didn't think they were necessary to this book. *Beginner's Luck* is another book that had some great family dynamics – I loved Kit's complicated bond with her brother, Alex – and some equally great female friendships. Kit's best friends will also be getting their books, and I will most certainly be devouring them.

Beginner's Luck was a great debut for Kate Clayborn. If you like romances that will leave your heart happy, add this to your TBR right now!

Stephanie says

I was honestly taken aback by just HOW much I ended up loving this book. It is so warm-hearted,

compassionate and funny, with really lovable flawed characters - and I LOVED that the heroine, Kit, is a nerdy scientist who wears Doctor Who T-shirts! But most of all, I just loved Kit and also Ben, the hero, who are both so deeply lovable and so fantastic together, and who both feel so real, kind and smart and emotionally complex, with bad moods and blinders and fears but also really good intentions and the ability to build something wonderful as a partnership. This book is all about different kinds of community and what they mean, and I love that their romantic partnership is only part of the big, rich network of community that they build together with their friends and families.

I bought this book based on its reviews; even before I'd finished reading this book, I'd already requested Book 2 (about one of Kit's friends) on Netgalley; and when I finished this one (after intentionally dragging out my reading because I couldn't bear to leave these characters behind - I was loving their company too much!), I immediately preordered Book 2 (even though I'd been OK'd for an ARC already) because I fully expect to want to own my own copy of that one too.

This was a really lovely comfort read - and hooray for geeky smart heroines!

Ami says

3.5 stars

I appreciated A LOT about Kit being a woman in STEM field -- and one who is really competent in her job, despite Kit's unwillingness to, well, *challenge* herself more. I was wholeheartedly in love with how Ben *loves* Kit's brain. Yep, her smarts, not just her physical appearance. Them connecting over finding the right items for her new house is wonderful to read.

I loved the *layers* in this romance -- especially in Kit's case. I think it's easy to think that Kit is being stubborn, that Ben only wants to see Kit excels, and getting credits for what she can actually does for herself, not having to share spotlight. I too, kind of wish Kit to not describe herself only as *lab tech* when she clearly is more than that.

BUT at the same time, I can put myself in Kit's position. I have never been an ambitious girl. I can say that I had good grades during my school years. Sometimes I also get that question, "*I know you can do better, why don't you give it a try?*". They don't understand that for me, I don't *need* that. I like my life as it is, my happiness doesn't depend on proving myself and my ability.

I understand that for Kit, at the moment, what's important for her is to finally can call a place her home... being with her friends, renovating her house, getting familiar with her neighbors... putting down roots. She doesn't want to have to move again to another city, to start again even if that gives her more opportunities. At that point, Kit as a character really resonates with me.

On top of that, I LOVED Ben's relationship with his father, as well as Kit's friendship with the other two women. I must say that Ben's father steals every scenes he's in. I loved that man. The other secondary characters from Ben's father's *beau*, Kit's older brother, and this teenager, River, whom Ben's father seems to practically *adopt* to work on their salvage yard are also wonderful characters.

Having said that, this book did feel way too long. At times I lost my focus and had to try getting back again. I was also a bit frustrated because let's face it, with Ben working for the Big Business, and Kit so determined

to not accepting, the HUGE conflict will be about that.

Ben and Kit have good rapport before that, they actually talked about things, and somehow this book STILL ended up with misunderstanding made me want to knock my head to the table. PLUS, the whole winning the lottery thing didn't feel like adding something significant to the plot somehow.

Beginner's Luck is a good start of the series (and a lovely debut from Kate Clayborn). I look forward reading about the love stories from the other two women.

Sam (AMNReader) says

Well...yay!

This feels like it belongs on that shelf with *Act Like It* or *The Hating Game* (if anything belongs on that shelf with the *Hating Game*) in terms of contemporary debuts. There were so many many great things about this book.

The heroine and her relationships: I'm including her relationship to her job, her friends, her town, her brother (they had me tearing up-sibling relationships are so crazy deep and this was well done IMO). What was wonderful is this all gave us a great idea of who Kit is. And who she wanted to be. And girl, I'm all for comfort zones and an ambition of having a stable, content life. That said, it was truly wonderful how this STEM heroine was portrayed, for that piece wasn't at all glossed over and I even noticed subtle and wonderful things by the author--For example, there was no assumption by the hero that a doctor was male--and then the heroine describes her-things like this make me giddy. It is a sign of a wonderful feminist author. I lamented a few weeks ago about someone telling us how competent a STEM heroine was (again!) and how a book tried to have such a feminist feel that it actually weakened this point for me. This was not the case in *Beginner's Luck*. Our heroine is competent, and they continually show us.

So the secondary characters were all wonderful and I want to befriend every one of them. I cannot wait to read on for the next installment of (or maybe the one after that as I have high hopes for Greer)

And then there's the hero. And the hero's dad. And the hero's, well everything felt very purposeful here too. He had me when he told her upon first meeting "I like you." And that first kiss..whew...He's not perfect. He holds his hopes and wants close, but it is clear from the outset that he begins to care deeply about Kit. He humors and even adores her friends for being who they are to her, he LISTENS. I kept finding myself thinking how adored that makes people feel to have someone who pays such careful attention to them. And there's that heartbreaking fuck-up (view spoiler)

Maybe I should've come down from this book a bit, it was such a delightful surprise (despite two reviewers I follow closely adoring it as well!). My review feels unfocused and gushy, but it just makes me so happy to read a great book with excellent secondary characters and a love story that feels totally fresh.

Ivy Deluca says

Where do I start? I saw the love for this book from various bloggers I trust, so I decided to add it to the Mountain (aka my TBR). There it sat, waiting for the day. My loss, because I could have loved this sooner. But no matter. I love it now, so let's dive in. Oh and you might want to get comfortable, this will take awhile.

When the story begins, Kit and her two best friends went in together to buy a lottery ticket, and holy heavenly windfall, they won! They never imagined the changes it could wreak in their lives, especially Kit, who abhors change. She's fought for all she's had in her life and she's made her place in her little college town with her job as a lab technician at the College of Engineering. She does not handle change well, so she's not about to pick up and move stakes anywhere because of anything.

Enter Ben, who is a headhunter for Beaumont Materials, looking for E.R. Averin, a brilliant experimental scientist that will be a big feather in his cap if he can recruit him for his company. He's and his best friend are trying to branch off on their own, and they need every thing to line up perfectly so they can finally be their own bosses. Guess what happens when he realizes E.R. Averin is actually Ekaterina "Kit" Averin? Yes, to all awkward thoughts you're having right now. But along the way, hell to the yes, romance happens.

The Good

I'm in love with the hero AND the heroine. I've certainly had my own moments when reading many a romance where I've loved one half of a couple more than the other. But not with Kit and Ben. They each have such good character arcs, and their scenes were just as strong on their own as they were together.

Ben, on paper, could be deemed the perfect hero. He's (of course) gorgeous, kind, considerate, and taking care of his injured and elderly father. He could have been the second coming (heh), but thankfully, he's a well rounded character, not just a prop to the romance. Frankly, perfection is boredom to me. That he stumbles at times, struggles with his own recklessness, and he has his own past mistakes to regret and learn from is sexy AF. His journey is just as nuanced as Kit's and the way he loved, made me mushy. So, gorgeous well rounded hero? Check.

Now, Kit was a struggle. Not to read, but to write about. Let's talk about the stereotypically high and unforgiving standards that readers can impose on their heroines. The need for her to not be challenging, to not give the hero a hard time, to automatically forgive and to be "there" for the perfect hero. Y'all KNOW what I'm talking about. Kit, isn't that and I loved her for it.

She's not always easy in manner nor in tone. She's fierce, loyal and protective, and she's also she's difficult at times, judgmental, inflexible and scared as hell at change. She's the type of heroine that I see getting shyte on all the time. She's used to working in a male-dominated field, dealing with condescending, mansplaining scientists who see her as a lab tech, not a brilliant metallurgist. But she's the best to me because she's so complicated and flawed, yet loving and when the time comes, she steps UP. She learns and grows without changing who she is at her core, and her path is strong and clear.

The Bad

Welp. Can't think of anything I didn't love, so...nothing. Um, ok, I say this - this book is a true character-driven romance, so it's not fast paced, and it's not about the twists and turns and the excitement of plot. It doesn't start off with a bang, so if that's more your cuppa, this may not be the book for you.

I, on the other hand, am a HUGE lover of all things character-driven, so

Everything in Between

From Ben and Kit, to their friends, his father, River, Betty, River's family, even Kit's neighbors, all of the characters play their part to make this 'verse come to life. When it would have been easy to go for the stereotypical, Ms. Clayborn was determined to do anything but. That's the mark of a great story.

Just in case you were wondering after my War & Peace length review, yes, I LOVED Kit and Ben's romance. Ms. Clayborn has managed to take a fairly fantastical premise (what if you and your friends decided to buy a lottery ticket....and you won?) and ground it in a realistic core group of characters, lead and supporting. That's something to be applauded. As a reader, I saw glimpses of each character's inner journey in their little part in this 'verse and I wanted to know more about them. I cannot wait to visit it again. If you love character driven romances, I would definitely recommend this to you.

For more reviews, visit

Jess says

Things I liked about this:

- 1) Scientist heroine.
- 2) The devoted friends group between Kit, Greer, and Zoe.
- 3) The complicated families, with underlying affection, however badly displayed. And the things that were hard to forgive, and impossible to forget.
- 4) How much Ben liked Kit's brain and his form of woo.
- 5) Home restoration, ftw.

Things that momentarily made me want to tear my hair out:

- 1) The major conflict at the end. TALK TO EACH OTHER, YOU WERE ALREADY DOING THAT, WHY DID YOU STOP. I mean, I did get it, Kit has lots of very justifiable issues, but man it was disappointing.

Thing that made me insane:

1) My ebook was/is defective. I had to page through it backwards and it was really frustrating and hard to remember and I don't understand because I have downloaded books since and they worked like normal, so it was JUST THIS ONE and I bought it and I was so mad. So if the publisher sees this, fix your book as sold on amazon!!!!!!

But in sum, I really liked this and have already pre-ordered book two.
