



The Mistletoe Kiss

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"Plain and mousy"—that was how Emmy Foster saw herself. A receptionist in London's St. Luke's Hospital, Emmy couldn't imagine why the very handsome Professor Ruerd ter Mennolt would take an interest in a girl like her. Ruerd couldn't figure out why, with a beautiful fiancée, he troubled himself with Emmy. Even more puzzling was why he invited her home for Christmas with him in Holland. But after he did, Ruerd couldn't help but wonder—was he engaged to the right girl?

The Mistletoe Kiss Details

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From Reader Review The Mistletoe Kiss for online ebook

Kathleen says

A heartwarming holiday romance by Betty Neels, the beloved British Dame of Hospital Harlequins. She wrote this one in 1997, when she was 88 years old!! (Yes, I double-checked the math). I guess she could write them in her sleep by then. (Not suggesting they're formulaic, but for a *slightly* similar read, check out A Christmas to Remember, A Christmas Proposal / A Christmas Romance, The Fifth Day of Christmas, Roses for Christmas, The Silver Thaw, etc. etc.)

THIS is one of my faves, though. It's Christmas in the Netherlands, complete with ice skating and mistletoe.

Christmas, with a gift from fate in the form of a bedraggled kitten (totally amazing, yes?):

"She was taking a short cut through a narrow lane where most of the houses were boarded up or just plain derelict, when she saw the kitten. It was very small and very wet, sitting by a boarded-up door, and when she went nearer she saw that it had been tied by a piece of string to the door handle. It looked at her and shivered, opened its tiny mouth and mewed..."

But wait! This Christmas, Betty placed **a bomb** in the book (so you know it will be über-intense). Nobody bombs London like this dame, probably cuz she lived through the Nazi Blitz. Betty employs her bombs to shake up a clueless hero and portray the heroine as a damsel-in-distress-but-valiant. (See Visiting Consultant for one of the best bomb scenes.)

So....who are the main players? You'll never guess!! This time we have a...doctor! Surprise!! But he's engaged (grrr!). Professor Ruerd ter Mennolt, a neurologist, consulting in London. This abrupt and grumpy Dutchman is falling hard for the lowly hospital receptionist, Ermentrude Foster, age 23 (Emmy). He's probably grumpy cuz he's engaged to a spiteful stick figure, the anorexic Annaliese.

But Emmy's got some loving handfuls! And she may be plain, but she's also plain spoken — even outspoken — and doesn't put up with His Royal Grumpiness or take any of his guff. Bemused and amused, Ruerd finds himself thinking about Emmy a lot.

"The next morning as the professor made his way through the hospital he looked, as had become his habit, to where Ermentrude sat."

We get so much of the male POV in this book, which makes it a hit for me. Ruerd talks to his dog about Emmy, he strives to stop thinking about Emmy, he surreptitiously takes care of her, he ponders why his glamorous fiancée does nothing for him, while in contrast plain old Emmy holds all his attention. This rich, handsome dude even wonders if Emmy will have him.... He's got it bad. :)

He even invites her to his home for the holidays (while still engaged to that skinny little snit, which is odd). They go ice skating. (You know it's a Neels when there's ice skating.) But the wicked fiancée Annaliese doesn't like this development at all, and must cause mischief.

Bottom line: This is one of Bett's best holiday romances. I loved the scene at the end, at the breezy cold beach.

By the way, nobody portrays the setting like Neels. Note this opening paragraph:

It was a blustery October evening, and the mean little wind was blowing old newspapers, tin cans and empty wrapping papers to and fro along the narrow, shabby streets of London's East End. It had blown these through the wide entrance to the massive old hospital towering over the rows of houses and shops around it, but its doors were shut against them..."

Ps. See the clever review written by the Betty Bloggers at The Uncrushable Jersey Dress

Aayesha Khatri says

A marvellous book about a 'plain, mousy' receptionist who works at a hospital and comes toe to toe with a tall, wide, fair-haired Dutch neurosurgeon. Emmy likes him from their first meeting, and Ruerd, despite being engaged, can't get her out of his mind. The story is about how they both run circles taking a wide berth around each other and how he slowly comes to realise how much he cares for her.

As usual, Betty delivers a wonderful love story with the small, everyday life details that make her stories so charming. It never fails to surprise me how much depth her main characters have, despite doing the same plotline over and over again. Each book is a different tale, a different world, a different story. Each character is so very different from the next. The small details she adds, like Emmy being outspoken, but in a funny, fistpump way, these I absolutely love.

I absolutely loved the hero in this one, loved how he slowly fell for Emmy and couldn't stop spending time with her, and how he never realised how much she loved him, and thought he was too old for her, and how he cared for her so much and did so much for her, despite knowing he'd never see her again. Ruerd has to be on my top 5 most favourite BN heroes list, he was wonderful.

Emmy (I refuse to call her *cringe* Ermentrude) was splendid. She wasn't a doormat like most other BN heroines, she gave back as good as she got, even better, in fact.

She stayed strong, kind, forgiving and nice throughout the story. Yes, she was outspoken, but I loved that about her! (Which is actually not very often.)

I loved how much angst and pain both of them trying not to show the other their feelings caused. Emmy trying to be all professional and objective while talking to him, and Ruerd being cool and aloof. Ohh, the beautiful angst it makes one feel.

That was mainly why I loved this book so much.

Caro says

Adoro las novelas de Betty. Son una caricia al alma y no miento, es como tomar algo caliente luego de un día frío y triste, reconfortan y te hacen sentir mejor.

No sé por qué, sinceramente, me gustan tanto sus historias; será que tengo el paladar un poco hastiado después de leer más de dos décadas novelas románticas, pero pienso que sus protagonistas enseñan además de entretenerte.

Me encantó esta historia, Ermentrude es una heroína trabajadora, sin pretensiones, Ruerd es un héroe encantador y más abierto que otros que he leído de Betty.

Susan in NC says

Had to get in a quick reread of one of my favorite Betty's! This one never disappoints, I'm always touched by how the hero (Ruerd) quietly and inevitably falls in love with Emmy (short for Ermintrude, as God is my witness), despite her being "plain, mousy and badly dressed" (which is beaten into the reader at regular intervals).

Thoughts from previous rereads during Christmases past:

I love Betty's Christmas stories and this one doesn't disappoint; I agree with Barbara and Leona, the heroine's name, Ermintrude, is horrid but thankfully she is Emmy to almost everyone, so phew! I also agree with you ladies that the Rich Dutch Doctor is delightfully thoughtful, kind and clearly into Emmy, and I like that they get the "I'm a mousy, plain, bad dresser and your beeyatch fiancée is not" out of the way early on...what drives me kind of nuts, and it's a couple of silly minor points but they stick out for me after countless rereads: first, Emmy's dumpy little London family home is "not on the phone" - WTF?! What year is this? I'm used to the values and morals being old-fashioned, which I love as part of Betty's charm, but this is ridiculous; Emmy's father lost his job and they inherited the house and moved there out of necessity, but her dad is a schoolmaster and has a job, albeit not a great one, as does Emmy - and they don't get a phone installed? Is it that difficult or expensive? It just seems very jarring, especially when Emmy gets hurt and the neighbor guy who rescues her has to call an ambulance and says, "let me get my phone!" Which implies a mobile, and Emmy doesn't even have a house phone, yikes - small point but bugs me every time! Especially because that's how she justifies staying alone in the house, which is for sale, because potential buyers could show at any time without warning because they are not "on the phone"...

My second beef, and this is more substantial because it's a big plot point for the last quarter or so of the book: the "mousy brown velvet dress"! Now, I just found it ridiculous that this girl, whose father was formerly a schoolmaster with a lovely house with a garden in the country had one lousy ugly dress that had to be worn repeatedly - she and her mom couldn't cobble together a few shared outfits? Nothing left from their formerly comfortable years? It just seems ridiculous, usually Betty's heroines have older, well-made clothes that are out of date but perfectly acceptable (I always picture old lady clothes that would look good

on some country matron, but that our RDD would still dig because it "couldn't disguise her pretty figure" as opposed to the usual skinny, snobby fiancée's stick figure)...Anyway, despite those two points (and that's what we Betty fans look for!) this is one of my favorite Christmas Bettys! Highly recommended.

Poonam says

I love Betty Neels and her stories are my ultimate comfort read. Lately I have been reading a lot of Betty Neels this being the first in a series of her other books that I have read.

This book is a love story about a mousy receptionist and a dashing doctor.

A clean romance even though Ruerd (our hero) is engaged to someone else throughout the book, the relation between Ruerd and Emmy (our heroine) does not feel cheap at all.

To be frank there no relation per se but more of an attraction and gradual growing of feelings on both the ends.

Emmy is so plain looking that Ruerd does not even think that he can ever be really interested in her but he does go a lot out of his way to make her life easier.

'No. At least partly.' She frowned. 'It was the bomb which...' she sought for the right words'... was the reason for you speaking to me. In such circumstances that was natural. There is no need--'
He said silyly, 'My dear Emmy, you do not for one moment imagine that you are a serious rival to Anneliese? For God's sake, all I have asked of you is to help me choose a dog.'

Even though Ruerd is at times rude to Emmy, Emmy handles the situations really well and I really loved the simplicity of her thoughts. She is the kind of person I will want to be friends with in real life.

Overall I liked the- romance, how the story progressed and the ending.

Pamela Shropshire says

Ermentrude Foster, thankfully nicknamed Emmy, is 23, of artistic temperament, and lives in London with her parents. She wants to attend a fancy needlework class and then open a small shop. But in the meantime, she is a switchboard operator at a hospital, where she meets

Ruerd ter Mennolt, standard-issue RDD. Rude to Araminta, not-quite-blind to Veronica's antics, but foolish enough to think that she will change after the marriage. He notices Emmy, can't stop thinking of her, and tries to think of excuses to be with her. However, he is engaged to

Anneliese van Moule, thin, gorgeous and a socialite looking for a rich, successful husband to boost her status. Even ballsier than the usual Veronica: she flatly tells the Professor that she will discharge Beaker the butler as soon as they are married. She is strangely concerned about this nobody-girl at the hospital that Ruerd mentioned and goes out of her way to meet her and not-so-politely warn her off Ruerd.

Her parents like Ruerd on sight; Mr. Foster and Ruerd share intellectual interests. Ruerd's family dislike Annaliese intensely and immediately recognize that Emmy is the perfect girl for him. Ruerd has a delightful and large family, including two sisters who see Emmy as "the answer to their prayers." One of the sisters is named Joke, pronounced like egg yolk, she and Emmy become good friends immediately.

Aunt Beatrix issues a smack down to Annaliese for acting like she's already mistress of Huis ter Mennolt, and almost in the same breath, comments about Emmy:

"'There goes a girl with pretty manners. I approve of her.' A remark tantamount, in the eyes of her family, to receiving a medal."

A very charming love story with well-drawn characters. Annaliese is deliciously evil but not criminal - no children or pets are harmed.

And there are a plethora of pets - Emmy and her family have a cat, Snoodles, a dog, George, joined by a ginger kitten Emmy finds in the street who is christened Enoch. Ruerd has Humphrey the cat in his Chelsea house, and he and Emmy go to Battersea Dogs Home where he adopts a dog that she names Charlie; plus he has a Jack Russell, Tip, and Solly the wolfhound at his Dutch home.

On this reread, I especially noticed a few things that, IMO, help this one stand out from the usual TGB offering.

Two things that we Betties love about these otherwise admittedly formulaic novels (or to use the euphemism of "comfort read" if you prefer) are the details and the lovely prose. Here are some examples:

"IT WAS a blustery October evening, and the mean little wind was blowing old newspapers, tin cans and empty wrapping papers to and fro along the narrow, shabby streets of London's East End. It had blown these through the wide entrance to the massive old hospital towering over the rows of houses and shops around it, but its doors were shut against them, and inside the building it was quiet, very clean and tidy."

Can't you hear the tins clattering and the papers flapping? This descriptive opening passage paints a picture that almost makes me feel the chilly wind, not wholly unlike how I feel when I read one of my favorite bits from T.S. Elliot, the Prelude I.

I always learn something when I read; even when I reread a book, I notice something new. In this one, the heroine is interested in needlework: "'I want to embroider—really complicated embroidery, you know? Tapestry work and smocking on babies' dresses and drawn thread work.'"

I've never even heard of drawn thread work, so off to Google I went. It was fascinating!

<http://www.lynxlace.com/images/oth279...>

Anne says

This did it for me. My ultimate favorite Neels novel. I've read a few before this one, and I have to say, she

has her moods. I loved the part when she was describing them as an old married couple--drinking tea, eating toast, and meandering conversation.

Barb in Maryland says

La Betty is in fine form in this book from late in her career. Our heroine has to have just about the most pathetic name--Ermentrude. Good lord, what were her parents thinking?! But sweet Emmy, though plain and poor, is definitely plucky and perky. She works as a hospital switchboard operator, which is how she comes in contact with our RDD(Rich Dutch Doctor)Ruerd ter Mennolt, a visiting Professor and lecturer.

And of course our RDD has the requisite beautiful and snooty fiancee, Annelise.

Our Emmy is, in turns, intrigued by and annoyed with the RDD. He finds himself thinking about her a lot and becoming more irritated with Annelise. Annelise feels herself threatened by Emmy, so does her nasty best to run her off.

But not to fear, of course there's a happy ending (after much angst, of course).

I enjoyed seeing the developing relationship from the RDD's POV as well as Emmy's. Our RDD isn't unduly cold or remote or arrogant(hurray) and Emmy definitely isn't a doormat. And Annelise is around often enough to be a real threat.

This one goes on the keeper shelf.

ETA: 12/20/18 Just finished my 5th?6th? re-read. This book is in my top 5 list of TGB's books because it consistently delivers the emotional goods. Happy sighs all around...

Laura says

This book is by Betty Neels, so you should know what your getting into. Girl with silly name and loveable parents fallen on hard times. She looks mousy but has great eyes, enjoys fashion and style but knows she can't afford it. Loves animals. Works in a hospital, and crosses paths with a rich, dutch doctor.

Betty Neels obviously lived in a steampunk-esque alternate world than I lived in, a 1997 where a house might still not have a proper phone in it, much less people carrying around cell phones. This one happens to be charming, but often I wish she would set her books in the 1960s even when she wrote them later.

ANYWAY. So you know it is a Betty Neels and you will get that same old, same old that you either love (and this is why you even picked this book up) or you hate (in which case, don't bother reading anything else by her). There are some differences this time around, though, and that's what makes this one special and up there with as one of my faves. The heroine (Emmy) is of the not shy variety, she can't help but call the Professor out all of the time, but she also isn't bitchy, as one or two Neels heroines have been before. She holds her tongue around the Professor's awful fiancee not because Emmy can't hold her own, but because she loves the Professor and doesn't start sh*t for his sake. The Professor kisses Emmy at one point, and Emmy (falsely) realizes he didn't mean it because it was only under the mistletoe. For once, this makes sense to me. The very 1960s ones have the hero just kissing her willy-nilly because that's what happened in the 1960s? (Mad men and Betty Neels are my only history lessons here, so I don't know)

I adore ones where the hero and heroine are friends, like Cassandra by Chance, the heroine accepts some of the charity the Professor gives her because they are friends, not strangers, and on behalf of her parents. They

joke and tease and go out and look forward to chatting every morning. This is also the most I've seen us get into the hero's head. He talks to his dog, he forces himself to try to not think of Emmy, he ponders why his gorgeous fiancee does nothing for him, but Emmy in regular or even messy clothes gets his heart beating faster. At one point, he wonders if he confesses his love, will Emmy have him? And what will he do if she won't? He decides that in that case, he will just have to remain a bachelor all of his days. That's so much more swoon-worthy than the usual stoic Neels dude!

Bitchy fiance character is delightfully bitchy, I just wish that she could have gotten more of a comeuppance, but they never really do. It was funny how many times and how openly the Dutch family talked about not liking her.

Anyway, I really liked it and it is a keeper, even if I didn't already use Neels as my comfort food, bad day books.

Cecilia says

Nice and sweet, with the hero eventually figuring out his feelings for the mousy but good-hearted heroine. I like this kind of heroine - the ones who blurt out things that annoy the hero, but don't seem to be crushed by mortification. I wish the heroine's name didn't remind me of "ermahgerd" but there's nothing we can do about that.

NovelReaction says

photo_3280_20090106

Ermentrude Foster has always known that she was plain, looking in the mirror attested to that fact. So why was Dr. Rued ter Mennolt unable to keep her out of his mind. Emmy worked as a telephone operator to help support her parents and Dr. ter Mennolt was a visiting consultant from Holland. But fate kept throwing them together and Ruerd found himself thinking more and more of Emmy, despite the fact he was engaged to be married to the beautiful and sophisticated Anneliese. When disaster strikes Emmy, Ruerd steps in to help her and takes her to Holland to spend the holidays with his family.

I realize I seem to be saying that everyone is my favorite author but I have to admit that Betty Neels is one of my favorites. (Of course, this is my website so most of the time I am posting about authors I enjoy.) Most of her novels take place in both England and Holland, with fabulous descriptions of both locations that really make me want to visit. Emmy is plain and doesn't love her job but she has a loving relationship with her parents and is willing to work to help support them. I love Emmy's love and dedication to her family. Ruerd's inability to get Emmy out of his mind despite her plainness warms my heart and how long it takes him to realize why he wants to assist her so much makes me smile. I have yet to read a Betty Neels that I haven't loved and I highly recommend it.

Tonya Warner says

Ermentrude Foster is doing a job that she does not enjoy, in a city she does not like, but the family

circumstances are such that she has put her dreams on hold to help her parents. Running in to Professor Ruerd ter Mennolt sets her life in to a tailspin.

Ruerd is already engaged to a suitable, beautiful woman, but the plain little Emmy gets under his skin.

Very sweet.

Franny says

This book was great, especially if you've always had a heart for the underdog. We see a mean-spirited beauty engaged to a rich and famous doctor, who is slowly falling in love with the hospital receptionist. What a delightful book. The story takes place in London and Holland. It is quite contemporary, as we have a bomb going off near the hospital, and WWII is long over. You don't learn much about the medical world, but you do learn about the scenery and customs of both areas. A light romance, enjoyable by all. You can't help but love the plain Jane receptionist, Emmy, with her dull brown dress and her cheerful, optimistic, good-natured outlook on life. Her good manners and kind heart make her loved by all. Have fun!

Leona says

The only thing I did not like about this book was the heroine's name "Ermentrude". However, since she was mostly always called Emmy, I got past it pretty quickly!

Betty has a wonderful way of "spinning the yarn" and she rarely disappoints her fans. For me this one was pure magic.

This was a very understated book that packed a powerful punch. I actually think the character of Emmy is one of Betty's more enjoyable heroines. Emmy has been handed a tough life. She's plain and mousy. She and her family have fallen on very hard times, and she really doesn't have any marketable skills. Yet, she has spunk, she is kind, she has great empathy for others, and people just love her. (I did too) Which is why our good RDD (Rich, Dutch Doctor) falls like a ton of bricks. I also think Ruerd is one of Betty's better written heroes. Though again in a very understated way. He didn't jump out at me like other hero's (Aldrick, Tyco, Marius), but when I turned that last page, I just loved him. Though he's a little rough around the edges, he is solid gold and a perfect match for Emmy. She will have years of fun and laughter buffing his edges out!

This is one for the keeper shelf.

Linda says

3.5 Stars

Who knew that I could tolerate the *other woman* in The Mistletoe Kiss? But was it Ermentrude aka Emmy, or Anneliese, the fiancee?

At the start, Professor Ruerd ter Mennolt was engaged to the svelte and glitteringly gorgeous Anneliese. Except there were two problems.

#1 They had never loved each other.

#2 Anneliese's brittle personality needed a brobdingnagian overhaul. Besides her parents, I think the only person who loved Anneliese was Anneliese. The Prof needed a trophy wife and Anneliese wanted lots of money and clout.

Along came plain Emmy With A Sparkling Essence. Her clothes were dowdy and she was not the sharpest tool in the shed but kindness was her motto. Something the RDD (Rich Dutch Doctor) was seriously lacking in his life. I also enjoyed that Emmy had two *loving* if not clueless parents: a rarity in her romances.

What set this story a notch above better was the RDD kept coming up with excuses to see Emmy one more time. Innocently, of course. I welcomed his internal conflict.
