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Joanna Chambers

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Quin Flint is unimpressed when his gorgeous colleague, Rob Paget, asks for extra time off at Christmas. As far as Quin is concerned, Christmas is a giant waste of time. Quin's on the fast track to partnership, and the season of goodwill is just getting in the way of his next big project. But when Quin's boss, Marley, confiscates his phone and makes him take an unscheduled day off, Quin finds himself being forced to confront his regrets, past and present, and think about the sort of future he really wants...and who he wants it with.

Humbug Details

Date : Published November 17th 2015 by Joanna Chambers

ISBN :

Author : Joanna Chambers

Format : ebook 74 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Holiday, Christmas, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Humbug for online ebook

Ingie says

Written November 25, 2015

3 1/2 Stars - Sweet, romantic, thoughtful and you get that nice Christmas feel

Humbug (a tiny spin on *A Christmas Carol*) is my first *Christmas Romance* this year. A M/M novella by Joanna Chambers as stories I usually enjoy a lot. Let it be light, romanting and swooning sweet. I need that cozy holiday feeling after my last tougher read.

I got it all !

My Christmas feel is here.

Set in Manchester, Great Britain

Quin Flint is not the kind of character you love at once. The opposite actually, I disliked that nasty workaholic man in the first chapter who throw away that "Mince pie" Arrggg!! He better shape up.

”If I’d *wanted* to?

Fuck, if I’d ever dreamed someone like Rob could ever be interested in me, I’d never have offered him a job, except as my 24/7 sex slave maybe.

But wait.

I can’t believe I used to defend you.”

Yes, the main character Quin is actually to begin with a very snuffy, unpleasant, go-getter type. But everything changes the day before the "dip-day" (Christmas Eve here in Sweden), ie on 23 December.

They are all sent home from work and Quin are properly lectured by the gorgeous hunky dream guy, his colleague **Rob Paget**. The guy Quin later also meets after a terribly disappointing (supposed to be) pub-visit night with old friends.

A nicer more likeable Quin appears. Add a sweet little brother, evening tea in the kitchen, Cristmas joy and that sweet tender "love in the air" feel.

Never tasted yule log cake but it looks yummy...

‘It was a nice enough supermarket-bought cake, nothing special, but once I’d swallowed, I pronounced it to be the most delicious yule log I’d ever tasted and Tim grinned delightedly.’

Humbug is without doubt more than just another good enough M/M shorty. To short and light to really get you fully enchanted but nevertheless a very enjoying read. ~ Well done story, well written and with a lovely perfect end. I want more Christmas feel right away.

I LIKE - to be "moved" to the holiday joy

Jay Northcote says

I was lucky enough to proof this one, and it's lovely. I really enjoyed Joanna Chambers' modern take on A Christmas Carol, it worked wonderfully. She did a great job of keeping Quin likeable even when he was being a twat :)

Recommended for lovers of holiday stories, frenemies to lovers, and flawed characters <3

Ele says

2.5 stars

Ah...wow, I really expected to like this more. The writing is solid, but plotwise there just wasn't enough space and time.

Therefore, the MC's transition and change of behaviour didn't feel believable at all and the romance came out of the blue.

Then a blowjob and BAM...fast forward to one year later.

Sorry, not a big fan of this one:(

Tess says

4.5 stars

And the holiday book binge continues!

This was a lovely, heartwarming story of the modern day humbug - Quin - getting a chance to turn his life around and finding love at the same time. Lots of feels, especially when Quin fully realizes the kind of person he has become over the years. Even more feels (and some steam!) when he realizes he still has a chance with the gorgeous Rob.

***J* Too Many Books Too Little Time says**

Eh, I just never really warmed up to Quin!

Bah Humbug!

CrabbyPatty says

I *hate* Dicken's "Christmas Carol." Marley, Tiny Tim, the three ghosts yeah, I realize it's a classic (and the Guthrie Theatre here in Minneapolis has been doing it *forever*), but it's stupid, okay?

But Humbug? Loved it - loved how Chambers took the very core of the story and retold it so beautifully. Sure, Quin is a work-obsessed jackass who has alienated people left and right. He's destroyed a wonderful relationship with Ben, and is on the fast track to a sad and lonely life. I really *felt* his pain when the realization hits him that he has squandered time, he's thrown away love with both hands. And his eventual redemption, with the help of Rob? Touching and realistic, without being too coy or overly sentimental. For such a short story, this really packed a punch.

Reread on November 19, 2017 - 5 stars! I loved this story even more on the second read!

Elsbeth says

I really wanted to like this because MLE gave this too me as a gift, but I just couldn't. There wasn't enough time for me to get over how much an ass the main character was, and I just didn't buy the romance.

Bah Humbug!

MLE says

I really enjoyed this story. It has a very Christmas Carol theme to it, but without any of the supernatural elements. It made Quin's growth seem more authentic, and more sustainable. I liked I could see where Quin was an asshole, but I can also understand how he caught up in his work, and why he was the way he was. Quin and Rob together, and I thought the ending was the perfect touch. A very nice holiday story.

Ami says

I loved this -- clearly inspired (or tribute) to the beloved *Christmas Carol* and Chambers is able to write a compelling and convincing story of Quin Flint who realizes that he needs to change the way that he lives his life, without introducing a paranormal element out of it.

The plus point for me is that Chambers doesn't completely change who Quin's is in his *core*. There's nothing wrong with being single-minded and determined over something you are passionate about -- it can actually do good for others.

The ending is lovely (and again convincing). I can exactly see in my mind's eye how Quin and Rob's relationship is and how Rob fits in Quin's life. They way that Rob keeps Quin on track with his tenacity

without going back into the unsympathetic man that readers met at the beginning. So yes, even though the novella pretty much happens in one day, this is where I throw all of my cynicism out the window and believe in the magic of a holiday story.

Meags says

3.5 Stars

This was one of the more meaty Christmas reads I've read this holiday season - and it was all the more worthwhile for it.

I really didn't like grumpy-bum Quin at the beginning, but I loved the overall progression of this story, following Quin as he recognises the detrimental turn his life has taken and all the horrible ways he has been behaving and treating those around him. It was a harsh realisation, but Quin's guilt, despair and ultimate regret over his behaviour, along with his resolve to change his ways, made him not only redeemable, but likeable.

I really enjoyed some of the messages in this story - it's never too late to change things in your life you are unhappy with and the important people in your life should always come first.

Another M/M Christmas win!

Heather C says

My first Christmas story of the season!! I was sooooo looking forward to reading this story, but when I realized it was a spin on *A Christmas Carol*, I was even MORE excited!! *A Christmas Carol* is my all time favorite Christmas story...from reading different tellings to watching various film adaptations. Now I get to enjoy Joanna Chambers's version for years to come!

Quin Flint is on track to reach his five year goal of obtaining a big promotion, but what he's about to realize is that his workaholic ways are sucking all the joy that friends and relationships can bring to his life. To everyone else, Quin is a selfish *dick* and barely tolerated by those around him.

It's just another Christmas, and Quin is all set to make things difficult for his employees before he blows-off his best friend's celebration invitation. After all, work is more important than Christmas! After numerous asshole-ish displays (I don't want to spoil the details), Quin begins to recognize how others must see him...kicking off his journeys of Christmas past, present and future.

I really enjoyed the parallels between *Humbug* and the original. I had fun picking out which "pieces" were captured in this tale: a few of the life events experienced by Quin and several of the tiny twists on character names and relationships. Again, I don't want to spoil.

There is a little romance...and even a surprisingly intense sexy scene. Looks like Quin will find happiness at Christmas again...and someone to share it with...

Reviewed for The Blogger Girls

.Lili. says

Hate to be a Debbie Downer but this one missed the mark a bit for a few of reasons.

1. The main character Quin Flint. He just wasn't likeable and I never warmed up to him
2. The romance happened too quickly and didn't come across as believable.
3. The length of the story. This was probably what the book had going against it most. Problems 1 & 2 could've been prevented had the book been longer. It would've given the author more time develop Quin's about face and his romance with Rob.

Despite this Holiday novella not working for me I would give this author another try. The writing is good, this book was just too short. 2.5-3 Stars.

ARC kindly provided to Gay Book Reviews.

Rachel says

Quin Flint (aka "Skinflit" to his co-workers) is a jerk. He is demanding, derisive, and hardhearted. He is also the hero of the story, and since this is a modern-day adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, he is also a contemporary version of Ebenezer Scrooge.

Like Scrooge, Quin hates Christmas. He is a workaholic, who would prefer to spend the holidays holed up at work. Quin proclaims:

"You might not be ambitious but *I* want to get somewhere in life."

Quin isn't very keen on his co-workers wanting time off during the holidays. Similar to the Scrooge of old who begrudges his clerk, Bob Cratchit, a day off, Quin feels a reciprocal resentment toward his co-worker, Rob Paget, when he asks for time off.

Rob is the antithesis of Quin. He is described as a "sunny, smiley guy" who is "solid, dependable, good-natured, and unflappable." Rob is also gorgeous, and when he gives Quin a fierce set-down, Quin feels the first stirrings of emotion in his hitherto frozen heart.

Rob tells Quin:

"When I first met you, I really liked you...You were funny and quick and incredibly bright...and even though I could see you were a demanding sod, I thought you were a good guy...I figured that underneath the bark, there was a good heart to go with the pretty face...And then I started working with you...You don't care about anything except work."

This story works well on many levels. It is enjoyable on its own merits. It is also amusing as a complement

to “A Christmas Carol.” Having recently re-read Dickens’ version, I had fun comparing events in this story to the original. Like an Easter egg hunt, I kept searching out the ways this new retelling revisits its original counterpart.

(view spoiler)

Many reviewers have asserted that this story doesn’t work for them because Quin is such an asshole, and I can understand their frustration. For a romantic lead, Quin is definitely a deviation from the norm, but that is why I appreciate the story. Ms. Chambers does not shirk at creating a cantankerous, crabby, and difficult leading man (aka a true “Scrooge”), and that is what makes this adaptation so bang-on for me.

Like Scrooge, Quin’s growth from coldhearted sod to compassionate lad is a journey in self-discovery. Both men must come to the realization that wealth and business are poor substitutes for love and purpose in life.

The story is only seventy-four pages long, and Quin’s gradual self-discovery and self-transformation don’t begin in earnest until about 60% into the tale. If only the story had been a bit longer, and readers could have experienced Quin’s metamorphosis a tad more thoroughly, I believe that there would be more love for this tale. Also, since the focus was on Quin’s personal awakening, some of his relationship building with Rob moved a dash too quickly for me to truly see why they ultimately fell in love. They have a moment of quick lust, but it would have been lovely to experience their falling in love phase a smidgeon more.

That being said, this is a lovely holiday romance, with a redemption and second chance theme that warmed my own *bah humbug* heart.

Also, for those readers interested in “A Christmas Carol,” the story (and other Dickens’ tales) have reverted into public domain and are free to read. You can find Kindle friendly versions at Project Gutenberg

Adam says

How about some holiday cheer:

I'm actually surprised by my rating. So far, I've only given Joanna Chambers either 4 or 5 stars. Her holiday story 'Rest and Be Thankful' in last year's Comfort and Joy anthology was one of my favourite holiday reads in 2014. I was expecting 'Humbug' to be a repeat. But it definitely wasn't.

My main issue is that I never warmed up to the main character, Quin Flint. He's rude, mean-spirited, and thinks little of anyone but himself. He's a modern-day version of Ebenezer Scrooge. While Quin does have a change of heart, it's abrupt and not entirely believable.

The romance is likewise truncated. It comes out of left field, and then just jumps from one point to the next. We get a blowjob scene tacked on to the end, and then readers are just expected to accept that Quin and Rob love each other forever and ever. Again, it wasn't entirely believable.

However, I really liked the scene with Rob's family, and I liked Rob as the love interest. The critique of the cutthroat culture in the business world was also well done, without it becoming preachy.

Overall, this was an okay read. Had 'Humbug' been a longer book, I'm sure I would have loved it like I have all of Chambers' other MM books. As it was, the length was too short to make Quin a very likeable character.

Catherine says

*** 3.5 Stars ***

Hmmm...

This was a tough one for me.

Quin Flint is a rude, inconsiderate, miser of a man who spends all of his time pushing himself and everyone around him to be their best professionally. Drive is one thing, but Quin's obsession with work productivity and climbing the corporate ladder sailed past the point of healthy ambition years ago. When we're introduced to him, Quin has lost a serious relationship with a good man who loved him, he's unaware that his closest friendship is crumbling to pieces, total strangers dislike him on sight, and his lack of empathy and constant professional pressure has made him the Scrooge of his workplace.

And yet, his co-worker Rob has a crush on him.

I have to admit that the crush is sort of inexplicable. By all accounts, Rob is a warm, open, hardworking, well-liked man who cares for his family above everything; Quin is possibly the least empathetic and most unlikeable character I have read about in a long while.

What the **HELL** does Rob see in Quin?!

Chambers plays up the *A Christmas Carol* angle, sending Quin's boss Marley into the office on December 23rd with tragic news and showing Quin what his future could look like if he doesn't shape up. But when he goes to join in the merry-making at a local bar, Quin overhears his friends, ex-boyfriend, and acquaintances talking smack about him in the present. It is a rude awakening and Quin doesn't take it well.

Thankfully, Rob is there to save the day with his warm heart and his magical cock (it's a Christmas miracle!).

Ultimately, I liked this Christmas story. Maybe I shouldn't have. Quin never had enough time after he was smacked in the face with his truth bomb to *truly* change things around, and I felt like we didn't get nearly enough time to know and love Rob (although I desperately wanted to - he's the type of MC that would typically make me mush in a matter of minutes), yet I was still rooting for them to find their HEA. And when they did, it gave me all of the warm, Christmas fuzzies.

I know, I know! I can't explain it either. But I'm just going to roll with it.

