



Happy Birthday, Dear Beany

Lenora Mattingly Weber

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Beany looks forward to turning seventeen on St. Patrick's Day and longs for a reunion with her childhood friend, Miggs Carmody (who shares her birthday.) Her dreams are shattered as Miggs, now the daughter of a rich Texas oilman, appears cold and distant. A new beau offers support to Beany as she struggles with the Carmody's new social position. . . but does this young man have a hidden agenda?

Happy Birthday, Dear Beany Details

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Audrey says

Yay! Dulcie's back! Glad to see some secondary-character continuity. Really, though, the theme of helping/saving a teenage girl is getting a trifle old. It's been a plot device in nearly every book. I DO still enjoy these, though.

However, I found this one to be marred greatly by the presence of Hank Willison. Wow, what a jerk. Whereas Norbett was moody and Andy was easy-going, Hank is abusive! I couldn't believe my eyes when I read the part where he shakes Beany, leaving her shoulders black and blue from bruises and her neck stiff for days. It would be acceptable if Beany learned a lesson from this and ditched Hank, but she doesn't. She comes crawling back to him...even when he says that he should've paddled her instead and that he probably shouldn't accept her apology! But he does, and suddenly all is rosy again. Really, even if she did jump to conclusions that hurt him, that is no way to treat or talk to a lady—or anybody—ever! Beany is so much better than that and I wish she could see through him. Plus, he basically lied to her and made her think those things, so I don't see why he was mad. Okay, sorry about the rant. I just found that part of the story really unsettling and infuriating. I only hope that in subsequent books Beany will realize what kind of a person Hank really is.

There were some other things that surprised me as a modern day reader of this book—that Beanie has no qualms about accepting a ride from Hank after she just met him (would not be safe today), that Carlton smokes and that Beany (just a teenager!) occasionally does so, and that Mr. Kern would “have blistered” his son for running away (p. 165). Does this mean he would beat him? This surprised me even though I knew many parents did that back then. I also wondered how Johnny and Miggs were able to go to the Bunny Ball (that name!) if they didn't currently attend the school. Speaking of the Bunny Ball, I'm pretty sure Harkness High has the most dances of any school I've ever heard of. There is one in just about every book so far!

As for the rest of the story, the plot was just okay--pretty predictable and not as good as some of the other books in the series. This isn't to say I found it unenjoyable; it just wasn't anything too impressive. I definitely plan on reading the rest of the series. Despite my criticism, I do find these books very fun and the series as a whole has been delightful escapist reading. I just had a problem with the abusive angle of this one.

Wendy says

The date-violence issue is troubling and poorly resolved, but otherwise this is classic, painful Beany.

Theresa Pollara says

This book is a low point in the series. The main character a 16 year old girl is dating a much older man in his 20s. This man physically abuses her, 2 times, leaving bruises, which she hides from her family. He then forces her to apologize to him for her name calling. Wow, the good old d days in the 1950s weren't so great. This book made me feel dirty. And I love this author's work. The only thing that saves it is the plot and the interaction between Beany and Miggs.

Margaret says

Another captivating book with Beany Malone. The usual storyline where Beany makes her blunders and you suffer with her until they dissolve at the end of the book. My biggest issue was the part where Hank shakes Beany till she has bruises and then she apologizes which is kinda of frightening. Sure she jumped to conclusions (which she did one other time in the book) but he really needn't have acted the way he did. So I really missed Andy Kern and did NOT like Hank Willison.

Daisy says

I guess boyfriend violence was....acceptable in this universe? Ew.

Mary M says

When I mentally would remember this series, this book and the reunion of Miggs and Beany was something I clearly remembered. The actual execution seemed a bit off but that just took a few pages, really, then the book seemed to flow. Enjoyed it!

Alexandra says

No, Beany, YOU DON'T NEED TO APOLOGIZE TO THE GUY WHO GAVE YOU BRUISES.

Hank and Norbett aside, I liked the storyline with Miggs and their old farm quite a lot.

Robert Beveridge says

Lenora Mattingly Weber, **Happy Birthday, Dear Beany!** (Thomas Y. Crowell, 1957)

Ah, the wonders of bucolic Denver in the fifties. Weber has finally ditched the last traces of overt McCarthyism, hopefully for good (remember, we're only halfway through the series at this point). Beany has finally ditched the last traces of her Norbettism and can finally view him as simply a friend. But with Andy gone off to the Marines, that leaves Beany without a beau. Well, a new one pops up almost as soon as the book begins, with that weird disjunct common to the Beany books, in Hank, who is, in contemporary terms, an investigative journalist. Hank's helping Beany's dad Martie on an expose of uranium land scams. (The series dug into this, if you'll recall, back in the previous book, *Make a Wish for Me.*) Meanwhile, Beany's seventeenth birthday is approaching, and while she and Mary Fred are cleaning out the old window seat looking for something for Johnny, Beany comes across an old, unopened letter from Miggs Carmody, her closest childhood friend, sent right around the time Mrs. Malone died. Last anyone in the family heard, the Carmody family were transient, so Beany sets herself to the task of hunting Miggs down so the two of them can celebrate their birthdays together like they did when they were kids. But Beany learns the meaning of "be careful what you wish for"...

The book does have some scenes that are shocking today that may well have been par for the course back in 1957 (in at least one scene, Hank's behavior crosses well over into the "domestic violence" arena, and Weber gets a mention of the lingering bruises in at least once per chapter for the rest of the book). Be aware. Otherwise, though, it's your typical Beany Malone novel, which means it is at once not a real standout and miles better than *Beany Has a Secret Life*. A decent entry in the series. *** ½

Ariel says

These are getting to be a little bit too much the same. Though still a refreshing escape from the modern world. There is a character who is phony or selfish or has a chip on his or her shoulder and by the end of the book, has been reformed by the integrity and genuineness of the Malone family.

Stephanie says

I realize this is an extremely petty criticism, but...what's with the cover of this book?!? Don't get me wrong...I love the fact that Image Cascade went with the original covers for its reprints. But Beany's hat is downright bizarre, and that guy she's facing looks like a red-faced sneak from another dimension! Creeeeepy!

This isn't my favorite book in the Beany Malone series -- the plot's a bit contrived. But as far as I'm concerned, even mediocre Weber is far superior than most YA fiction.

Lori says

Loved this book and am looking for a copy. Brough up things from my childhood.
