



The Christmas Cuckoo

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Major Jack Howard, a weary veteran of the Peninsular Wars, has just returned to England and intends to return to an unwelcoming family home for Christmas. But when a pompous secretary gives him too many orders, Jack hops on the next stagecoach leaving London inn, not caring where it's going. Too much whisky to stave off freezing leaves him sleeping it off in a different inn, and when an attractive young woman asks if he's Jack Howard he happily goes home with her.

Despite vile weather, Meg Lambert drives to the local inn to collect her brother's friend Jack Howard, but since she's never met the man, she doesn't realize that she's brought home the wrong Jack Howard. Jack realizes her mistake when he awakes the next morning with an aching head—but he finds a warmth and welcome with Meg and her family that he's yearned for all his life. He can't bring himself to admit that he's a cuckoo in her nest—but what will happen when Meg's brother and the right Jack Howard turn up for Christmas???

The Christmas Cuckoo Details

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From Reader Review The Christmas Cuckoo for online ebook

Mum says

It's amazing what a good author can do with a simple plot! An enjoyable fluffy read!

Molly McGinn says

A lovely short story with a warm happy feeling. Also snuck in some unpretentious human understanding. I really enjoyed it!

Patricia says

MERRY CHRISTMAS! CUCKOO! CUCKOO!

Mistaken identities, lowered circumstances, and the joy of innocence combine to create a wonderful holiday two of love and mayhem, followed by a promise of peace on earth and eventual joy to all.

The author takes a relatively common name, and tossed the two characters together. She puts one into the story alone. Then she blends in a family living in lowered circumstances, most likely due to fraud, but maybe because the father was not at all sophisticated. A brother who could clear things up travels with the second man, but arrives late (but in time?)

The entire story twists beautifully and ends perfectly. An epilogue with the dark bringing his counters home would have been great, but I quite enjoyed the story. Especially the special chickens...

Heidi says

Fast and easy to read. The mix up was a bit predictable as well as the solution to the family's problem but all in all when fighting a cold, this was a fast book that didn't require a lot of thinking.

Ernestine Ranson says

I truly love this story, though I wish it were longer. I see definite possibility for a cinematic version, probably with some filled-in details.

Doreen says

Meg goes to collect Captain Jack Howard, who is coming to stay for Christmas. By chance she gets Major Jack Howard instead. A lovely Christmas story.

(Edit) 'Tis the season, and I read this book every year because it's a great Christmas story.

Melanie says

If there ever was an author to ever get you in a Christmas mood, then Mary Jo Putney and this short story is IT!

I'm hoping if the title alone would be intriguing enough for you to want to read it and find out the meaning of the word 'cuckoo'.

Everything in this story just sparkled, from the characterization of the main characters, to the plot and pace of the story.

If you like your romance to involve a mistaken identity, plenty of Christmas cheer and two people who are truly brought together by Serendipity, this story will have you laugh out loud and wishing upon that falling star for Jack of your own.

Melanie for b2b

Book provided by the publisher through NetGalley

Linda McLaughlin says

A charming Regency holiday story that revolves around a mistaken identity by a mistress of her craft.

Newly minted earl, Major Jack Howard has just sold out of the Army and returned to London only to find his aunt, the dowager countess, determined to control his every move. In a moment of rebelliousness, he boards a stagecoach bound for Bristol. Too much whiskey to stave off the cold leaves him in a drunken stupor at an inn in Chippenham.

Meg Lambert arrives at the inn looking for her brother's friend Captain Jack Howard, and find the major instead. Not realizing he's the wrong man, she takes him home for the holidays. Once he sobers up, Jack realizes he's been mistaken for someone else, but the Lambert home is so warm and welcoming, he puts off confessing his true identity. He knows he's a cuckoo in another bird's nest, but has no wish to leave, especially since he's falling in love with Meg.

Marcia says

A lovely Regency holiday story. I wanted to visit with this family for the holidays!

Caught up in the holiday mood, Jack had felt as much anticipation as the little girls. After doing the farm chores, he and Philip had brought in the Yule log. Then they all sat in the kitchen and turned the evergreens

they had collected into yards and yards of garlands while Meg produced more delicacies for the Christmas feast.

Goddess says

After the Halloween Anthologies (which have now morphed into the year-long Paranormal genre) I always looked forward to the Christmas Anthologies. Why? What other time of the year can bring people together, especially single people who aren't looking for true love, but find it anyway...perhaps right under a Christmas tree?

When "Christmas Cuckoo" begins, all we know is that Major Jack Howard is exhausted. He's been travelling 8 weeks to meet a stuffy secretary by the name of Mr. Weezle who is in possession of a long list of chores. We don't know why, but Jack gets frustrated by the mere mention of Mr. Weezle's employer, the mysterious 'Countess', and bolts out of the stage inn and right onto the next available stage coach.

I liked this bit of mystery. Readers don't know why Jack has left Mr. Weezle and a future with 'the Countess', but we get the impression that it must be something truly dreadful if a Major of the 51st regiment is retreating to the country. But the only available seat on the coach is on the outside, and while he's freezing, he imbibes some 'homebrew/moonshine' of the English variety to stay warm.

The liquor keep him warm and lands him inebriated at a stage coach, where he's left to sleep it off. Enter (stage left), one Meg Lambert who arrives at the Coach Inn to pick up a friend of her brothers, Captain Jack Howard. Thus, begins the Christmas Cuckoo.

I loved this story about two people, perhaps older than the average Regency hero/heroine, both set in their ways, but needing each other to move forward with their lives. Meg has donned the mantle of 'mother' for her family with her parents dead, but needs Jack to find a future as a wife and mother. Jack is an orphan and retired soldier, but needs Meg to fulfill his future as a newly minted aristocrat. I also admired Ms. Putney's skill in maintaining the mystery of Jack Howard – where he was supposed to be for the holidays and who the Countess is to him – right up till the end of the story. The minor characters were used brilliantly to draw out nuances of Jack and Meg and revealed the essences of their personality and why they were meant to be together. For example, Meg's younger brother seemed enamored of war, fighting for a cause, and proving their bravery, but Jack reveals the harshness of war to him, revealing a maturity to Meg she didn't expect to find in a war hero.

Miranda Davis says

This was a sweet but too short Christmas-wishes-do-come-true story involving mistaken identity, a plugged up cuckoo clock and a spinster meeting the man of her dreams who turns out not to be who she thought he was but so much more.

If it'd been a full-length novel, it might've been 4-5 stars for me, as it was, it's a 3 star read. It's brief, predictable but charming, kind of like the message in a Christmas card.

Kathleen says

4.5 stars. This one single story, about 60 pages, was originally published in Putney's anthologies Christmas Revels and Christmas Mischief: 3 Novellas. It's short but complete. Well done, Putney! Heartwarming. Humorous. A little smexy, too. In addition, there is a twisty surprise at the end.

This title fits the plot. Our imperfect hero Major Jack Howard has been recalled from the Napoleonic War to inherit an earldom. Through a series of events, the "spirited" (sotted) soldier is surprised to find himself spending a humble holiday with strangers. An adorable family, with a valiant elder sister tending her orphaned siblings. He loves it like crazy, and never wants to leave. Good thing, too, because he can't -- they are nearly snowbound, cozy in the cottage.

All he wants for Christmas is Meg. (And her energetic siblings.)

Happy holidays!

Preeti ♥? (Romance She Reads) says

Another one of my late Christmas reads. Had I read more *then*, my 2018 reading challenge would be complete! :D

Anyways, a lovely short story about chance meetings, mistaken identities and taking advantage of them. All leading to finding shelter, solace *and* love and a joyful expectation of the future.

B says

This wonderful story is also published in A Regency Christmas III by Signet.

Linda says

I first read this brief story in 2011 in A Regency Christmas III. It was one of five novellas originally published in 1991. I read it again in 2013 and once more this month. Told through dual POVs, the H/h were older. Major Jack Howard was a soldier, recently retired. It was assumed he would visit his extended family for Christmas. *Relatives with little in common*.

Instead, he found himself an unforeseen guest of Miss Meg Lambert and a hodgepodge of her kinsfolk in addition to various animals. They believed he was CAPTAIN Jack Howard, a discomfiture he tried to correct on several occasions. Over a period of a few days that led up to Christmas, he found warmth, generosity and a HEA. **4.5 stars**

