



Clara's Soldier: A Retelling of the Nutcracker

Brittany Fichter

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A bride-to-be without answers.

A soldier who never came home.

A nutcracker that might hold one last Christmas wish...

World War II has been over for three months, but Clara can't join in the Christmas festivities with her friends and family. The fiance she sent off to Europe three years ago never returned. But just as she's about to give up hope, her godfather might just have one last miracle up his sleeve.

And it all begins with a nutcracker.

Clara's Soldier: A Retelling of the Nutcracker Details

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From Reader Review Clara's Soldier: A Retelling of the Nutcracker for online ebook

Steffani says

Amazing

Loved it, such a sweet story , perfect combination of fairytale and real life struggle. Now we just need this to be a lifetime movie.

Karoline Baldwin says

I loved this retelling! Admittedly I haven't read too many Nutcracker retellings but I thought this one was just charming!

Set a few years after the end of WWII, Clara's waiting still for her soldier James to come home. Enter sweet godfather Drosselmeyer and a little Christmas magic and you've got a story you'll want to curl up and read by the fire!

I loved Clara and James' journey, her character growth, and especially the ending. This book wasn't anything like I guessed it would be and I was so happy and pleased with the result! Brittany hit another book out of the park! I can't wait for her next one!

I received an ARC for my honest review.

Samantha says

I was so intrigued by this book at first. Brittany Fichter is a wonderful author, the snippets that she gave on her update emails were fascinatingly beautiful, and IT'S ABOUT THE NUTCRACKER. But while this was a hauntingly beautiful story, I still wanted more of the magic. (And more of the story - this is a short book.) I wanted more of that lighthearted Candyland glory that made the book and ballet so stunning. Granted, though, this book is magic in of itself. The writing is superb, the characters realistic and lovable, and the theme heartbreakingly yet hopeful. I love that this story handles such a complex and difficult theme with grace, love, and determination. It's a wonderful piece that captures a little bit of Christmas and a whole lot of love. Overall, it's a wonderful read, but I wanted more. Guess I'm gonna have to go buy more of Mrs. Fichter's books, now, which is never a bad thing. ;)<3

Ariel Masters says

Beta Reader Review (my honest opinion)

I loved, loved, loved this story. It was full of romance, suspense, action, bewilderment, and true love -the

truest of the true. Plus, I sang Christmas carols for a week after. LOL!

The message of this story hit home for me as well. I was crying by the time it was over as I have a dear family member suffering what the male lead suffers. I won't say more as I'm afraid to spoil anything.

Another must read from Brittany Fichter!

Jasmine says

I've read a lot of fairy tale retellings and this one has definitely just become one of my favorites. The setting is after WWII. I was so curious about how this story would play out and match up with the Nutcracker. Brittany Fichter keeps you guessing the whole story, and there is just enough magic to make me happy. I'm ready to recommend it to anyone who isn't looking for an easy, simple love story---look for the darkness and twists.

This book is also very clean and lovely. I can recommend it to my teenage nieces to read for sure.

*I was able to read this story from a free advance copy in exchange for an honest review. It's also on Kindle Unlimited!

Pixie Angel says

[Moving on from your childhood sweetheart is extremely hard for Clara, and only a few in her family support her decision to keep waiting for

Elizabeth Mock says

This was one of the most unique, original retellings of a classic, well-known story I've ever read. It had all the familiar, well-loved elements of the classic Nutcracker story, but twisted and changed in an unconventional, imaginative, and beautifully creative way. The story was nothing like I expected it to be, but in a good way! It's a very emotional, raw, unapologetically real and passionate love story that gripped my heart! The writing was suspenseful and had me not wanting to put it down before I found out what happened next! And it was so descriptive that I felt like I was in the magical story myself! You'll find yourself, like I did, rooting for these precious characters and praying along with them that they get their happy ending! I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to read an exciting, emotional, but beautiful, one-of-a-kind retelling of a classic tale!

*Disclaimer: I was given an advanced copy of the book for the purpose of reviewing it, but all opinions and thoughts in this review are 100% my own.

Rachel Hogan says

This is a great story! I love how many more stories we are getting now about real things that people go through like shell shock, disabilities, and mental health. It makes the reading experience better than it already was before.

I also saw Bandstand Broadway in theaters over the summer which also talks about the idea of shell shock and how hard it can be for soldiers to come home. So some of those songs were playing in my head as I read, especially "Welcome Home Finale".

I had read Brittany Fichter's short story version of Clara's Solider last winter through her go fund me campaign and really enjoyed it. However, I love it even more as a full book. She was able to delve so much deeper into what was happening with James and also develop the relationship between James and Clara better. I feel like the characters were very well written but also very real. I really related to Clara with not wanting to give up on James or her dreams from childhood so easily even though everyone made it seem like she was being ridiculous.

This was a great book!

Allison says

This is a fantastic retelling of the Nutcracker, moved to 1945. Small-town North Carolinian Clara's childhood sweetheart, James, left to fight in World War II and disappeared not long after Normandy. It has been a long, lonely wait for news of him, and as Christmas approaches Clara starts to wonder if she should try to move on as well-meaning friends and family are suggesting she do. But then her godfather offers her the gift of a nutcracker doll carved with James's face, and that night Clara has a very strange dream in which she and James are being pursued by rats...

The story of the Nutcracker embeds itself well into this new set of circumstances, made real and heartbreakingly by the horrors of war.

Lisa Dawn says

I wasn't sure what to expect from Clara's Soldier because many of the previous books I've read by Brittany Fichter were dark and depressing. She's the type of writer that loves to torture her characters. With its World War II setting, her usual dark tone fit perfectly with this story. I enjoyed it a lot more than the other princess book I read that takes place during the same time period because it was very romantic and brought magic and hope to an otherwise hopeless and terrible part of history. No longer a little girl who plays with dolls, Clara was aged up to 21 in this version of the story and is engaged to a soldier named James whose status after the war is unknown. She waits for him for over a year with unwavering faith, refusing to believe that he died in action without hard evidence. Her godfather, Drosselmeyer, works up some magic after presenting Clara with a Nutcracker resembling James that allows Clara to finally learn the truth about her beloved.

This book was about half the length of most of Brittany Fichter's novels, which worked in its favor. The perils of war would have been unpleasant to read about in any more detail than it had, and it added a ticking clock to the romantic reunion between the two lovers. The subtle nods to the original "Nutcracker" story

never felt out of place. Clara's younger brother Fritz played a minor role by accidentally breaking her Nutcracker just like in the fairy tale. James refers to the Nazis as "rats," as a subtle nod to the Mouse King. Finally, a small child who hints at the truth about what happened to James takes on the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy. The only major detail from the original story that wasn't referenced in the novel was James' connection to Drosselmeyer. In E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale and likely the upcoming Disney version, the Nutcracker is revealed to be Drosselmeyer's nephew. Brittany's version had no mention of this, most likely because James was an ordinary man in the context of the story, while Drosselmeyer had a connection to the supernatural. Therefore, being related would alter what they are each capable of.

Even though Brittany's writing tends to be on the macabre side, she excels at love stories, and that is exactly what makes *Clara's Soldier* an outstanding novel. Clara and James are established as life-long sweethearts ever since they knew each other as children. Their unwavering faith that they will one day see each other again carries the story along beautifully leading up to the book's Christmas miracle. Both characters are in a very dark place at the beginning of the story. Everyone in Clara's life wants her to give up on James and move on, but she instead allows herself to continue suffering for an uncertain future that she has no idea if she still can attain. James is trapped in the midst of the war and its effects on him both mentally and physically. Both characters need each other to become whole again and end their sadness.

Clara's Soldier is a beautiful tale of faith, love, and recovery that pays tribute to "The Nutcracker" while still offering something new to its audience. Clara and James were unique enough characters to hold my interest in the story, and I didn't know what to expect by the end. It was a powerful and emotional journey and dealt with issues that many soldiers in real life have had to face. I recommend this book to anyone who loves romance and fantasy.

Raquel Evans says

This was beautiful and sad and sweet. Also, this makes the second story by this author that I've really loved, which makes me think I should go try again on the story by her that I thought I didn't like and gave up on.

This story has a fair amount of hugging, face touching, and such, but nothing beyond that, and without any excessive amounts of description. There are quite a few creepy, sad and stressful elements, but as long as a younger child was ready to handle those emotionally there's nothing concerning about the content here.

Edited to add: I shelved this as 'infertility' even though that's not strictly accurate, because there is a situation that brings up a lot of the same emotions.

Coralie says

Oh. My. Heart.

Okay, y'all. I have a soft spot for the *Nutcracker* as it is, but that also means I have kind of high expectations for anything claiming association with it. Let me tell you, this was far from disappointing. *Clara's Solider* is absolutely precious, a stunning rendition of the classic tale. A heart-wrenching tale full of bravery and hope. Simply enchanting. Heart-warming, through and through.

The book was well-written, as is usual for Mrs. Fichter's works. I only found two boo-boos that I can recall and two paragraphs with minor issues (both dialogue formatting issues), but I did have an unedited copy of the story, so that was to be expected, and I'm sure they've each been addressed. The story is beautifully written and so well-thought out. The story was very well-balanced, well-paced, and just over all well-done. The mixture of reality and fantasy, of traditional *Nutcracker* and Brittany Fichter flare was like a deliciously baked good. Soft, moist, subtle, and it leaves a good taste in your mouth. It smelled amazing when I picked it up and was warm on the way down! The whole thing felt truly seamless. There was just the right balance of that Christmas magic we all love and the bittersweet touch of reality that gives Fichter's works the meat and weight I've come to appreciate so much from her.

The setting was phenomenal! There were so many little touches here and there that brought the setting to life. And, again, the balance between reality (historical fiction) and fantasy was just so very well-done. I loved the historical subtleties. The town itself felt like a place I could open my door and walk into. I'm partly from NC, so it was like I could see the town itself in my memory. Then the fantastical happens and we're whisked away to a few different settings, each equally realistic and tangible. I felt firmly established in the time and place, despite the transportation to and from.

The characters were persistent and they never gave up, even when everyone around them pressured them to. They came close a few times; they even entertained the idea more than once, but those doubts and fears only made them more human. Clara was a total doll. She chose to fight through her storm instead of running from it. She was a hero in her own right. And James. Oh, James. My heart...it hurts for him. The reality that is threaded into this beautiful story (I won't spoil) is something I care very deeply about, personally. I am a patriot through and through and there have been amazing men and women who have sacrificed *everything* for us to live the lives we do. I have the utmost respect for the people James stands for. The side characters made the story what it is and I very much enjoyed getting to glimpse into their lives too. Course, I loved Fitz too, little of him though we saw. Oh! And Drosselmeyer!! I could read a whole book on him alone! Fichter *completely* brought him to life and I was purely enchanted by him!

The plot alluded to the *Nutcracker* in so many beautiful ways that make the true nerds like me smile. But it still maintained its own integrity and originality too. I can't say enough about how seamlessly this story blended everything together. We follow Clara, whose heart yearns for her love, a MIA soldier from the recently ended WWII. She deals with the pressure of her town, her family, her friends. She deals with the choice to move on or hold out hope, even though everyone says she's ridiculous for it. The story was shorter than Fichter's works normally are, but that didn't detract from the plot. I felt like all elements were still there and rightly addressed. Not a single thread hung loose. It felt complete and I loved every minute of it!

There is no foul language, no even true violence. Although it's a WWII story, there are only allusions to the war. There was a scene with a fight, but the reader was only exposed to the aftermath of the fight. One very brief battle scene held less violence than the street fight. There is no explicit romance, though there is some kissing and holding and even a minor appreciation of physical fitness at a point or two. Very clean, appropriate. There are, however, some minor thematic elements that are subtly woven in and may lead to an opportunity for additional discussion, should you choose. They deal with the affects of war, but the story is written so that mostly, it's all a giant metaphor, and could pretty easily be missed by younger readers for the most part.

Whew, prepare for an emotional ride, y'all. But it's a good one. Totally worth it! Ahhh, I could just read this one again and again. It will sit, prized, on my self. Fichter truly captured that spirit of Christmas. I cannot recommend this more highly (and right in time for Christmas, too!).

Note: Although I did receive an advanced copy from the very generous author, the above review is completely voluntary and in no way affected by her generosity.

Kendra Ardnek says

My Nutcracker retelling for 2018.

Those last couple pages were kinda hard to read, though. Oddly blurry for some reason.

coughcoughcouldn'tbetearsnowcoulditcoughcough

Lynda Sliger says

I have always enjoyed the retellings of fairytales, though this one is up there with my favorites.

Clara is having a difficult time moving past James not being home yet. There has been no notice that he had died and no news about where he might be even though the war has been over for 3 years. She really can't get into the Christmas spirit when her own family is telling her it is time to move on, though her heart isn't ready to do so. Only one person supports her decision to wait for news and that is her godfather Drosselmeyer. He encourages her to not give up hope yet, that there may just be a christmas miracle left for her.

The further elements of the book would lead to too many spoilers, but if you like retellings this one is one to pick up. All of Brittany Fichter's books are worth reading.

J.M. Stengl says

CLARA'S SOLDIER is a fascinating blend of history and fantasy set in NC at the end of WWII.

Clara's childhood sweetheart and fiance, James, has been MIA for many months, and her family urges her to leave her memories and loss behind and move on with life--as in, marry another eager suitor.

How does this story connect with The Nutcracker? Clara's next-door-neighbor, Mr. Drosselmeier, has magic . . . and Clara's dreams connect her with James, her soldier, who is lost inside his own head, tormented by "rats," or Nazi soldiers--he is a victim of PTSD or shell shock. Clara's desire yet inability to help, the deep love between her and James, their mutual confusion and fear, and the urgency of his condition all blend to make this a powerful, poignant, and beautiful tale. There are no easy answers, yet love and courage are key.

Seriously, you don't want to miss this beautiful Christmas story!
