



Sawdust and Mistletoe

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By December first, Ava Grisham is already sick of Christmas. Unfortunately, she has to survive decorating for her boss's wealthy clients so she can afford to quit after New Year's. Everything is on track for her to start her own design company until she hires a new handyman and all her meticulous plans fall apart. Not only is her future business in danger, but so is her heart. Hunter is talented, strong, and charming, but falling for such a free-and-easy man will only lead to heartbreak.

Hunter Newman loves his single life with no responsibilities, but he's always there for his family. When his brother loses his job, he drives across the country to help however he can. Then he meets Ava and realizes his brother isn't the only one who needs help. Ava captivates him with her determination and warm heart, but she's lost the joy of Christmas. He's determined to put the sparkle back in her eyes, even if it means risking his heart.

Somewhere between the twinkle lights and candy canes, they'll discover the magic of the season. But can they find a way to be together?

Sawdust and Mistletoe Details

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Author : Michelle Pennington

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From Reader Review Sawdust and Mistletoe for online ebook

Susan K says

Romance, clean

Clean, quick romance. Cute premise.

Katie W says

If my job was decorating other people's houses for Christmas, I would probably be tired of the holiday, too. Ava is kind of a scrooge and Hunter is determined to change that.

No two characters could be more different from each other than Ava and Hunter are, yet they have a connection and chemistry that is undeniable. Ava wants stability and Hunter is anything but stable, but he's such a good person, a good uncle, a hard worker, and too sweet for his own good. It was really hard not to swoon with these two because the more they fought it, the bigger the attraction seemed to be.

I also really enjoyed the designing aspects of the story. I don't have a creative bone in my body and I love to hear how other people manage to bring ideas to life in a way that is pure art. And I especially loved the doll house. The little girl in me was dying over that part (in a good, jealous way, of course).

This story is a real feel-good book--the stuff that Hallmark Christmas movies are made of--and I just couldn't get enough.

Content: mild, swoony romance

Beth says

I did not like this. (Sorry.) I thought the storyline was ridiculously predictable. It was obvious the business situation would play out and resolve the way it did; it was obvious the relationship would resolve the way it did; it was obvious Josh's job would resolve the way it did. And I felt like the author relied on those expectations to do the heavy lifting, and to allow their universal human aspects to take the place of actual development and earned emotion. I never felt invested - or invited to invest - in the story.

I also resented the way lines were blurred. There was behavior that was clearly over the line and acknowledged as such, but the innuendo and objectifying behavior were totally fine when expressed by the "good" characters? I didn't like that.

And the typos drove me crazy.

Melissa says

This was a cute little story. There wasn't much too it. I think it would have been funner to read at Christmas. It fits right along with a Hallmark movie and that is a good and a bad thing. A little too cheesy and insta love but a sweet clean story that was good.

Sherwood Smith says

There's a lot to like in this romance, though it also had some problems.

Likes: Ava, the heroine, whose genuine enthusiasm for her job teeters on the edge of burnout as she keeps trying to prove herself. How many women do we know in that same situation?

I liked her bestie Olivia, old Mrs. Trundell (sympathetically drawn, really, one of the best characters in the book, though she's only in a chapter or two). I enjoy seeing friendships among women, especially across generations.

I also really liked the handyman hero, whose quiet competence carries all through the story, though all the women (including the heroine) are objectifying him from the gitgo, which gets me to the problematical aspects. Almost from the first Ava and Olivia are watching his butt from the back, and commenting on his physical attributes. Maybe a dose of reverse sexism here?

Or maybe it was meant to demonstrate the intense attraction between Ava and Hunter, which pitchforks them despite themselves into love. Considering Hunter's proclivities (view spoiler) underscored by Ava's dad's history, the narrative voice telling us there will be a Happily Ever After isn't quite as convincing as I would have wished. I think another chapter or two was needed to show Hunter's evolution.

Other issues, which might not be issues for another reader:

The subplot with the evil boss was predictable, Marcia and Mrs. Garland pretty much cardboard. Much better delineated were Hunter's family, though again, the subplot with Hunter's brother needed more than the narrative voice telling us the very real problem was suddenly okay.

Finally, the many, many copyedit and proofing errors kept bouncing me out of the story.

Vonda Dastrup says

Five stars!

I never, I mean never, well, (wink) hardly ever give five stars. This story was just darling! I love the characters — they were real and easy to relate to. There were no awkward moments where as a reader you ask yourself why the author would take the story in that direction. I really enjoyed the delightful mixture between holiday glitz and homemade warmth — you know, the over-done twinkle lights and glitter that make us light up and fill us with delight at Christmas time that was blended with a healthy portion of home and family and the heartfelt feelings of real Christmas joy. Just a great balance!! A wonderful holiday read!

Kathy * Bookworm Nation says

I ended up really enjoying this one! This is my first book by Ms. Pennington and I'm so glad I gave it a try, I enjoyed the story and characters and look forward to reading more from this author.

I enjoyed the story of Ava and Hunter, they have fun chemistry and a believable romance. The setting and plot were also engaging, I loved the Christmas setting. Ava was a likable heroine, easy to relate to and root for. Hunter was charming and handsome, and just an all around nice guy. Overall, I thought it was a fun read and one I'd recommend to any fan of contemporary romance.

Content

Romance: Clean

Language: None

Violence: None

Religious: None

Series: Standalone

Source: Kindle Unlimited

Tabitha says

umor, emotions, and family interaction make this a delightful story to get into the Christmas spirit. Some funny awkward moments (Mrs. Garland) and some sweet friends make this feel all the more real. Definitely some hurdles to a happy ever after but what a great story to get there. Great supporting cast (love Molly and her family) and some fantastic villains. All it needed was a dog.... Kidding.

The title fits perfectly with the story. I enjoyed reading about all that goes into a designers job, too.

Clean romance, great people, real issues, wonderful Christmas read.

My2CentsBookReviews says

Smiles and sweet romance, watching a hallmark moving for that aww moment this is your story!

Ava in a competitive being used and abused by the boss is home designer. She maxed out and well liked by the clients. One client crosses the line with Hunter a temp employee and the owner fires Ava. Then savatoge Ava new business Hunter has to support Ava and teach her that to love Christmas again and to be happy. No violence to people, no sex clean contemporary romance. Just sweet.everyone's will fall for Hunter.

need more book reviews or opinions please check out my blog: my2centsbookreviews.com, Thanks!

B. D. Mann says

This was my first exposure to Michelle Pennington and I am pleased to say that I look forward to reading more works by this talented CLEAN romance author. The opening few pages pulled me in and held my attention to the last paragraph. This sweet story was easy to read with enough twists and turns to keep the pages turning. I was particularly impressed that the proofreaders and editors did a respectful job, something greatly lacking in many e-books. I found only one sentence that escaped their eagle eyes. It is towards the end of chapter five: "As this debate swirled through him as Ava and Mrs. Garland stepped outside." I suggest that one of the two "as" words be deleted, preferably the first. I was pleased to find that the instances of contention between the protagonists did not come across as contrived, but felt totally natural in their relationship. One reviewer mentioned missing Hallmark because of being overseas. If the Hallmark Channel is as cleaver as usual, they will arrange to produce this story as a Hallmark Christmas Movie for next season.

Kathy Jo says

By the time December 1st rolls around, Interior Designer Ava, turns into Scrooge. Bah Humbug. Can't she just fast forward to December 26th when all the Christmas stuff has to be put away? She's lost all joy when it comes to Christmas.

But sadly there is nothing she can do about it. She has to put on a happy face and deck the halls of her boss's high paying clients. With a deadline looming over her head and a sick carpenter/jack-of-all-trades, she has no choice but to hire a temporary employee. One look at the temp that gets hired and she knows she's in trouble.

Hunter is a travelling man. He never stays in one place too long. He goes wherever his heart desires. And since he's a carpenter/jack-of-all-trades, he can pretty much work anywhere. When he finds out that his brother has lost his job and his family is struggling, he packs up his stuff and heads to Arkansas to help out until his brother can get back on his feet. One look at his new boss and he knows he's in trouble.

A relationship is the furthest thing from Ava and Hunter's mind. But when you have chemistry like they do, it's hard to ignore. But Ava can't risk her heart on a travelling man. She's seen the hurt and anger it can cause. She refuses to allow that to happen so she builds the walls around her heart even higher.

But spending time with Ava and his brother's family has Hunter second guessing what he really wants out of life. He'll need to figure out what he wants before it's too late. With visions of love and a family in his head, he knows life just won't be complete without Ava. He's definitely got his work cut out for him. As I've said many times before. Never underestimate a man in love. You will lose every single time.

dreamy sigh

Oh how I adored Sawdust and Mistletoe! It was such a fun book! I was sucked in from the very beginning and I didn't want to put the book down! Ava and Hunter were perfect for each other! I loved seeing them go from friends to something more. Their relationship was definitely believable and had me cheering our hero and heroine on from the very beginning. I am so glad that this was on my Have Yourself a Very Swoony Christmas list because it was most definitely SWOONY! *dreamy sigh*

This is my very first book by Ms. Pennington and I was pleasantly surprised! I will definitely be reading

more books by her! In fact I've already added some of her other books to my TBR list! I can't wait to read them!

As for my casting... Oh. My. Gosh! Guys! I absolutely LOVE these two as Ava and Hunter! *dreamy sigh*

Pascale says

A sweet, clean romance about a carpenter/jack-of-all-trades and an interior designer/decorator. This book was well-written and fun to read. I recommend it.

Janeiowa says

A fun Christmas read.

Jaycee Weaver says

Great chemistry, fun couple

Sawdust and Mistletoe (great title, BTW!) put a nice twist on holiday/interior designer/contractor romance. After awhile those elements can seem overdone, but she's taken them and pulled a new story out that is sweet, fun, and *wow* the chemistry! It is a CLEAN romance, with some pretty great kissing scenes and a whole lot of holiday fun.

Jacob Proffitt says

I hate that I came to this so late that I'm only getting this review done on Christmas Eve. It's got great seasonal flavor and I'd have liked if more people could have a shot at enjoying it this season. Not that it would lose much impact in, say, summer, as it's a well-written romance at any time of year. Still, Christmas is a theme in the story and there's no better time of year to enjoy that than this time.

I came into this expecting much worse having bounced on a different book by the author earlier. I'm so glad to have that expectation overturned. I really enjoyed this story and not just because the main characters are so engaging. I mean, Ava may be a little bit uncertain of her success in breaking out on her own business but she tackles the challenges head-on and with (at least external) confidence and assurance. I particularly liked how much she cared about her clients, even the gauche and outrageous ones and how careful she was to do her best work married to their vision.

And don't get me started about Hunter. If you follow my reviews at all and I tell you he's that strong, capable guy who cares deeply about his family and works hard to make things better for them, then you probably

know he's everything swoony in my book. Seeing him engage with Ava was a great deal of fun and his mission to bring joy into her life was as heart warming as you could wish. Oh! And kudos to Pennington for a really great scene taking on sexual harassment so well. There's a part early on where an older (rich) woman feels free to take liberties with Hunter because he's the help and everybody treated that with the gravity it deserved. I was expecting it to be played for laughs, but no. I really loved how well this was handled on all sides. Yes, Hunter can absolutely take care of himself and was in no danger or anything. But that behavior is wrong and pervy even so and it was treated as such and I loved that it was handled so well narratively and in ways that absolutely illustrated the character of those involved.

The rest of the novel works pretty well, too. The secondary characters were good enough to support the solid story and the pacing and setting helped keep things flowing. Some of the events were kind of predictable, but I find I didn't mind. The one qualm I have with the story, and it's a small one, is that Hunter had such a large life change to make for them to be together that the weight of the conflict fell pretty heavily on him. And that has repercussions on the relationship as well because Ava pretty much just has to be her stellar self whereas he has some big things to take on for them to be together. I think Pennington managed to make that shift work so that I believe they'll be very happy together, but you can't deny that Ava is taking a gamble that I'd hesitate to see the women I care for engaging.

All of which adds up to a 4½ stars rating that I'll gladly round up.

A note about Chaste: There are some kisses and some snuggling, but nothing that comes close to steamy.

A note about Missing Faith: This almost made it without feeling awkward or weird. I was so bummed when it failed in the last stretch because it did an *outstanding* job of depicting a couple falling in love perfectly naturally and with perfectly reasonable grounds for avoiding physical intimacy. But Pennington blew that completely in the end. I mean, they make very explicit commitments to each other ((view spoiler)) and they're kissing the joy out of each other. And then they stop. For no reason. None. With realistic difficulty because they're in love. But nope. No discussion, just stopped. And that was just weird.
