



Aunt Dimity's Christmas

Nancy Atherton

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The fifth installment in the bestselling and beloved Aunt Dimity series. Watch out for Nancy Atherton's latest, *Aunt Dimity and the King's Ransom*, coming in July 2018 from Viking!

Lori can hardly wait for Christmas this year: lean times are over, the cottage Aunt Dimity willed her is more beautiful than ever, her nine-month-old twins, Will and Rob, are thriving, and she and husband Bill have never been happier. Determined to make this Christmas the best ever, Lori embarks on a round of shopping, holly-cutting, angel-cookie making, and more. When fat snow flakes begin drifting down outside of the window, Lori feels all her holiday wishes are about to come true. But the next day, beneath the lilac bushes now covered by freshly fallen snow, Lori makes a disturbing discovery: the body of a mysterious stranger--a tramp--barely alive.

While the nearby village of Finch continues with its seasonal preparations, including rehearsals for the Christmas Eve Nativity play, Lori puts her plans on hold and teams up with Julian Bright--a devilishly attractive Roman Catholic priest--to search out the stranger's identity. Their journey takes them from abandoned World War II airfields to homeless shelters, places where the Christmas star shines dimly, if at all. As Lori unveils the tragic secret that led the stranger to her door, she confronts painful truths about herself and discovers the real meaning of a perfect family Christmas.

Aunt Dimity's Christmas Details

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From Reader Review Aunt Dimity's Christmas for online ebook

Joy H. says

The story was fair, but the author intersperses boring details about her family and domestic life which I find boring and annoying. At least I managed to finish the book, drawn on by the hook of the mystery.

I had hoped that Atherton's cozy mysteries might entertain me as much as Dorothy Gilman's "Mrs. Pollifax" cozy mysteries did but alas, Gilman is a hard act to follow.

The Flooze says

All of the Dimity stories involve digging up past secrets - usually involving WWII - and learning how to let love and kindness rule. This story is no different.

What *is* different unfortunately is that I felt rather **beaten about the head with Christmas spirit**. Yes, it's a *Christmas book*, so of course I expected Peace and Goodwill to claim the spotlight. But I didn't anticipate the overwhelming insistence of it. It's as if every other page contained a reminder to tend to the less fortunate. A worthy command, no doubt, but the **sentiment quickly felt forced**.

I also didn't anticipate Lori going gaga over every man sporting kind eyes or a bit of muscle. It's her Gerald fascination all over again (times two), despite Lori's insistence that she's quite happy in her marriage. I'm all for people engaging in light, harmless flirting - it boosts the confidence and reinvigorates the soul - but Lori's fascination with these men crosses some indescribable line for me. One of her new friends claims it's merely loneliness in Bill's absence. Ahem. *Her husband is barely gone two weeks!!* **I hardly think that's long enough to justify her panting over a new man, longing for him to call, and telling him she can't trust herself in his presence. For fuck's sake...**

AND she keeps all the vital clues to herself, relegating Dimity to the infrequently-consulted sidelines.

Sigh. Infuriating.

The one good thing to come out of this is the **widening cast of characters. Let's hope they play more prominent roles in the rest of the series because Lori very desperately needs someone to rein her in.**

The Rad Books says

Pros:

- I loved the Christmas theme throughout the story. It was enough to remind you of the season but not too much. You can easily enjoy this book during the summer just as easily.
- The characters Lori meets were quite the characters.
- I love the concept of Aunt Dimity being a spirit that communicates through a journal. And Reginald, the stuffed rabbit.

Cons:

- Now that I'm reading these books in order, I am getting kinda tired of the "Wandering eye" trope that seems to be in every book. It wasn't as noticeable when I was reading this series out of order and with a year, or so, in between each one.
- This book honestly made me feel a bit guilty for not being more charitable; it had very strong themes of charity, acceptance, and caring for all. Which is great, but it felt like too much for a quick, fluffy read.

Final Thoughts:

- This was a solid read; it definitely was not my favorite book of the series, but worth a read if you already are familiar with the characters. It just felt like it was missing the mark compared to the others.
-

Rage says

some of this book was truly beautiful. I can be a sucker for schmaltz, and the book actually touched on the true horrors of war. I enjoy Aunt Dimity, who communicates with a pink rabbit and a blue notebook - I don't mind the touch of supernatural in an otherwise entirely mundane world. the stories of Kit and Lori's father touched on something more transcendent than cozy mysteries often venture towards (for example, the complicated feelings people have about death and murder), which was especially interesting in a book where the mystery was simply someone's identity.

there was a heavy religious element, from Father Bright and his sad tramps to the nativity play, but I can understand and accept that in my Christmas cozies. the bits about giving being a better blessing than receiving were welcome, honestly, it's an important lesson to learn.

HOWEVER, sometimes books stress me out, and this book stressed me out with how casually Lori kept leaving her family alone to pursue some kind of compulsion (going to the hospital; going to see Julian Bright), and the best explanation the narrative could give us was that she had kind of fallen in love (other reviewers have delightfully decried Lori's "wandering eyes"). it made Lori seem like she was out of control in an unhealthy way, and it stressed me out, ok? like she was incapable of recognizing and honoring the commitments she had made towards others, or her responsibilities as a mother/caring for an elderly man. I think it could have been framed or presented in a slightly different way - maybe by making less of a big deal about all of the things she had to do that she wasn't doing? I don't know. (view spoiler)

so, mixed feelings. something I really enjoyed and some things I didn't. but I've been reading this series on and off for years - I think I read the first book when I was quite young, didn't entirely understand it, and I had some vague memory (a ghost... a cottage... pink rabbit) that held a strange power over me, so I was rather pleased when I rediscovered the series.

Kristen says

Christmas with Aunt Dimity was just as heart-warming as you'd expect!

Shortly before the first Christmas Lori Shepard is planning to enjoy with her twin sons, her beloved husband, and her dear father-in-law in their cozy cottage in England, a very upsetting surprise throws a monkey-wrench into everything.

An unknown "tramp" is discovered collapsed outside the cottage, frozen, unconscious and apparently desperate to get to Lori's - previously, Dimity's - cottage for unknown reasons.

After having the man air-lifted to the nearest hospital for treatment, Lori at first wants to forget the whole thing and move ahead with her big plans for a happy family Christmas. Unfortunately, fate has other plans.

Before she knows it, Lori is up to her eyeballs in investigating the history and the motivations of the tramp, who she comes to know as Kit. Aided and abetted by Catholic priest Father Julian Bright, Lori goes on a holiday journey that ultimately reminds her, and the entire village about the real meaning of Christmas.

This was a wonderful, happy, heart-warming holiday story. A fast, easy entertaining read that is perfect for the holiday season.

Joan says

Sappy as anything, but I'm in the mood for sappy. Lori is determined to make the twins' first Christmas perfect and is driving everyone nuts while she tries for her dream Xmas. But then a tramp is discovered in their driveway partly covered up by snow and Lori gets swept up into an adventure that tells her as much about herself as about the vagrant, maybe more. She is shocked to discover that her vagrant apparently had a stay at a mental asylum, and has a charge of murdering his father but discovers that all in not as it seems. Of course, the message of the Christmas story is to remember our humanity and do unto others what ye wants done onto ye, but it is delivered in a very non preachy way, even as Lori's journey is guided by an incredibly sexy priest as well as by Aunt Dimity. Recommended, more than the prior couple of stories in the series! Now, to go reserve the next one...

Kathy says

Sometimes you need a series that you can go to that is predictably comforting. Such is the Aunt Dimity series by Nancy Atherton. Having just finished some rather heavy reading material, my mind and soul needed something that would soothe me and let me relax into a safe world of hope and light. Aunt Dimity's Christmas was just the ticket. Not that the book is devoid of sadness. It's just that the sadness overwhelmed by joy and positive self-discovery. I usually race through a mystery series without stopping to catch my breath, but I'm approaching this series a little differently, using a modicum of self-restraint. I am interspersing the delightful novels into my other reading, in two or three at a time, especially where I need pick-me-up and a relax-my-mind read. Of course, the setting being England, the main residence being a charming cottage, and, in this case, a snowy Christmas help to ensconce me into a world of pure magic.

The storyline starts two weeks before Christmas when Lori Shepherd is planning her first perfect Christmas, with her husband, two twin boys, her father-in-law, and a host of villagers and friends. Of course, nothing goes according to plan after a stranger is found unconscious in Lori's driveway the morning after her much-wished-for snow has arrived. Viewing this discovery as a most inconvenient interruption in her plans, Lori hopes that his hospitalization in an Oxford hospital will conclude her involvement in the matter. Enter Father Julian Bright, who draws Lori into the puzzling identity of the stranger known only as Smitty to him. The search provides much more than identity information, as Lori learns just how far from perfect her plan for Christmas was and how much more Christmas and life can mean.

Amy says

I gave this a 2 instead of 3 for the mere fact that Lori's roving eye strikes again. It's becoming tiresome.

Megan says

Humble Lori Shepherd finally replaces her years-old ratty wardrobe by buying nice things she can now afford. As punishment for her greed, a poor, tattered Jesus-lookalike collapses in yard. She is guilted into looking in on him and he bestows His Gaze upon her, which makes her go batty for him and take up his mission of praying for all of the poor airmen who died in WWII. As we learned in book 4, everyone in Finch is still affected by WWII. Also, everyone is still hung up on WWII. (Got it?) In the course of Lori's obsession with the Mystery Man, she meets a *Catholic* priest (scandalous!), and she pities the discrimination he faces on a daily basis, because everyone is scared of Catholics (???)

I don't know. This series has always toed the edge of being nearly unbearable, and this one may be the end of it for me.

Cathy Daniel says

What a sweet book! Perfect Christmas read. The only part that was odd to me was married Lori lusting over a comatose man and a priest. It seems from other reviews this is usual for her which will get old quickly. But I'll definitely read another book in this series and see how it goes!

Luann says

This is a nice, cozy Christmas mystery with a message about the real meaning of a perfect Christmas. While I did enjoy this for the most part, I kept asking myself why Lori always has to fall in "love" with someone other than her husband. Of course Lori is never unfaithful, but she does seem to form attachments very quickly. In this book, she is attracted to two other men - one of whom is even in a coma. And why is Bill always called away for an extended trip somewhere? One of the things I liked so much about the first book in the series was their budding relationship and the interaction of their personalities. We haven't had much of that in the past few books so I would like to have Bill around a bit more.

Lindsey says

Aunt Dimity's Christmas by Nancy Atherton has been on my shelf for years. So long in fact that I have no recollection of where it came from. So I thought, "it's the Christmas season; it's finally time to read that book". In it, Kit Smith shows up outside of the house of Lori, a wealthy woman. He is nearly dead and Lori has him transported to the hospital and then goes on a mission to learn his story to help him. Overall, this

book had a good message. But, I cannot say I enjoyed it. Lori's character was uneven, nothing more annoying than when she would describe her expensive clothes or talk about how much money she had, but she also cared enough about this "undesirable" man to try to find help for him. There was also the magic journal that she used to talk to Aunt Dimity, which I just have no patience for when the rest of the book is set in reality and this book is not fantasy or set in a magical world like Harry Potter. And there were multiple rather abrupt and silly scenes that I don't feel are necessary to highlight dragging this review in much longer, but just know they're there and they led me to this less than complimentary review. Overall, the writing just felt inauthentic and cheesy.

Avid Series Reader says

Aunt Dimity's Christmas is book 5 of the Aunt Dimity cozy mystery series set in contemporary England. Lori Shepherd dreams of restoring the family Christmas traditions she remembers from her childhood. By great good fortune, she is now quite wealthy, and lives in a charming cottage with a loving husband and twin babies to add to her joy. She starts her winter celebration by treating herself to all new luxurious clothing, from outerwear to lingerie. Her holiday plans are shaping up nicely, with even Mother Nature cooperating by dumping snow on the village. Her busy holiday party schedule is interrupted by the discovery of a body outside her door: a tramp, nearly frozen to death. Lori's father-in-law arranges for the tramp to be airlifted to a hospital. Aunt Dimity urges Lori to find out who the tramp is, and why he came to the cottage. Lori is reluctant, feeling repelled by the unkempt filthy stranger, but she complies. One look into the tramp's eyes is all it takes for Lori to become obsessed with finding out about him. She asks friends and family to shoulder all the holiday planning tasks, and in addition do research for her, while she travels around the countryside with a priest from a homeless shelter, to whom she is physically attracted. This plot strains credibility...until it clearly becomes a morality lesson on the true meaning of Christmas and "Christian charity". Almost all the villagers are similarly repelled by the tramp - until the sermon that teaches them otherwise. Then all pitch in to a rollicking happy ending. Of course the tramp isn't really a tramp.... he turns out to be gentry, with a connection to Aunt Dimity. Recipes included for the Angel cookies Lori bakes as gifts for everyone.

Julie says

If you think these books are silly, think again. This one wasn't a murder mystery, but about a mystery about a stranger that shows up and teaches a community the spirit of giving and sharing, and helping those in need.

Lorraine says

As I read this heart warming Christmas story, tears of understanding, tears of compassion, and tears of joy, were shed by me more than once. This is truly a Christmas story that shows the reader what Christmas should mean to everyone! Nancy Atherton's Aunt Dimity's Christmas is most definitely a true Christmas classic! This book I shall reread every Christmas Season especially if I am in a 'Bah, Humbug' type of mood. I shall reread this book to remind myself and those around me what the true meaning of Christmas is!! Highly recommended! 5+ stars!!
