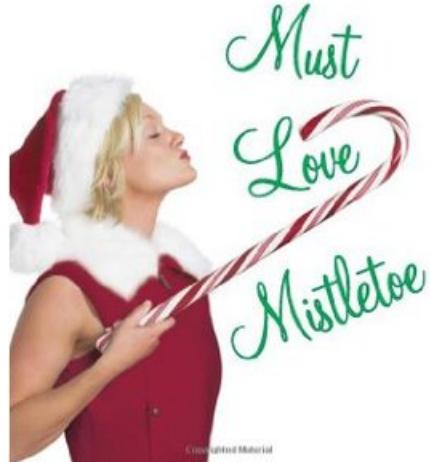


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"Christie Ridgway is delightful." Rachel Gibson

Christie
RIDGWAY

USA Today bestselling author of
The Care and Feeding of Unmarried Men



Must Love Mistletoe

Christie Ridgway

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Must Love Mistletoe Christie Ridgway

Bailey Sullivan can't stand Christmas, even though her family's business is a store specializing in the perfect holiday. But now her hometown's chief supplier of rooftop Rudolphs and treetop angels is in danger of going under--it's up to Bailey to save the shop.

She has it all planned: She'll arrive on December 1 and be gone by Christmas. Plus there's always spiked eggnog to ease the pain. But "Humbug" Bailey's not the only one home for the holidays. Finn Jacobson--legendary local bad boy-turned-Secret Service agent "and" Bailey's long-lost high-school sweetheart--is once again the boy next door. Only this time he's "all grown up," and the sparks are flying faster and hotter than ever!

Bailey believes in true love about as much as she believes in Santa Claus. But as the holiday draws closer, she's starting to think about one thing she'd like to find under her tree . . .

Must Love Mistletoe Details

Date : Published December 1st 2006 by Avon Books (first published November 28th 2006)

ISBN : 9780061140204

Author : Christie Ridgway

Format : Paperback 358 pages

Genre : Romance, Holiday, Christmas, Contemporary Romance, Contemporary, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit

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From Reader Review Must Love Mistletoe for online ebook

Laura says

Bailey returns to her hometown to help out at her family's Christmas store. While home she runs into her high school boyfriend Finn. He is still bitter about her leaving for college without saying goodbye. Seriously? It was a high school fling and he acts like she left him at the altar. He was crazy. He ran hot and cold, and Bailey didn't call him on it. He acted like a 16 year old girl. I could not relate to him. The side story of Bailey's mom and her recent separation from her husband and her depression with dealing with her youngest son going off to college was more interesting, even though it seemed out of place. This book dealt with death, divorce, empty nest syndrome, and unrequited love. I was looking for a feel good holiday story and this wasn't it. 1 1/2 stars.

Mary Lou Hoffman says

Title: MUST LOVE MISTLETOE

Series: Holiday Duets #1

Category /Genre: Contemporary Romance, Holiday Romance

Recommended for: 18+ due to sexual content

Grammar/editing: A – near perfect

Received from: Amazon purchase

“God, bless us, every one!” (Tiny Tim, A CHRISTMAS CAROL, Charles Dickens)

“Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings.” (Susie, IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, Philip VanDoren Stern)

“She believed in him, them, magic. How else... would the girl next door get the bad boy of her dreams?”
(Bailey, MUST LOVE MISTLETOE, Christie Ridgway)

MUST LOVE MISTLETOE is the first book in the Holiday Duets series. Each is to be a stand-alone story of one couple's path to happiness.

It is no secret that I love second chance romance stories, especially Christmas romances. Bailey and Finn are the epitome of a holiday romance done right. They are reunited when family obligations return them each to the small vacation-resort town where they had first met. Her bad boy is all grown up..... his GND (girl next door) is all grown up....and together, the steam is as thick as the California fog at the beach.

This was the first book I have read from Ms. Ridgway. I definitely want to read more.

One final note: Hallmark Channel has had ten years to discover this book. I think we need to help them! This would make an amazing addition to the Hallmark Channel's Holiday movie selection. I would even include the Christmas facts – on pretty cards like in silent movies.

? Kimberly says

The novel centers on Bailey Sullivan who left her hometown of Coronado the second she graduated. Despite the fact that she had plans with her neighbor's bad-boy grandson Finn. Bailey and Finn spent every summer together, had a steamy teen romance and talked about plans after graduation. Bailey decided to run before things got ugly.

Bailey is a bright, hard working lawyer who drops everything to come home for the month of December. Her Mom and stepfather have separated and someone needs to run the family Christmas shop. Imagine her surprise, when she sees the only man she has ever loved (not that she would ever admit it), all grown up and even sexier. Just looking at him, is giving her flashbacks of their summers together. She is determined to stay as far away from Finn as possible. He got to close once and she can't take that risk with her heart. If only he didn't look so smoking hot in his jeans.

After an injury, Finn has taken time off from work to help his ailing grandmother. He never thought he'd run into Bailey. He's determined to keep his distance. Bailey broke his heart and he's never letting anyone get that close again. She made him believe in magic, then left without a word. Keeping away is going to be a problem, because the sight of all grown up Bailey is making him crazy.

The tale that unfolds is humorous and touching. The chemistry between Bailey and Finn is steamy, romantic and heart-breaking. I loved their witty banter and the nicknames they gave each other. Ridgway had me flipping the pages hoping one of these idiots would open up and confess their true feelings. For the delicate reader, I must warn you some of the love scenes were very detailed.

-you can see my complete review at <http://kimbathecaffinatedbookreviewer...>

Jessika says

This was one of those books that just wasn't for me, unfortunately. Honestly, I wish I liked it more than I did. I loved the general idea of the story, but for me, the execution just fell through. I stress that this is just my own opinion because I really didn't think this was a bad book. I just thought it was okay.

I think part of the problem was that I found myself unable to really connect to the characters. Objectively, I knew that it was the bad boy/good girl, both with trust issues, thing between Bailey & Finn, but I thought how it actually played out was lacking. Half the time, I got the impression that they didn't even like each other, it was just about sex, so the "falling in love" wasn't believable.

My biggest issue was Bailey's lack of character development. She had a chip on her shoulder for the entire story & I get it--she has HUGE trust issues. But she doesn't change throughout the whole novel & yet has this epiphany right at the end? I'm sorry, but I didn't buy it. Also, minor annoyance--I really, really, really did not like the nickname GND. I don't really know why that bothered me so much, but it did.

I hate to sound so negative. There were some things I did like. As I said before, I really did like the premise. It was cute & romantic enough to put you in the holiday mood with some naughty bits on the side. I adored The Perfect Christmas, and it made me nostalgic for the days I spent working in a a "'Tis the Season Shoppe." Plus, the occasional humor really helped to lighten up some of the more dramatic parts.

Overall, for me this turned out to be an "okay" read. A few issues, mostly lack of connection, kept me from loving this. But if you are looking for a simply entertaining story with some angst to put you in a Christmas mood, this might be the book for you.

This review can also be found on my blog: <http://tinyurl.com/ydzhz3wgs>

Samantha says

3.5 stars. The secondary romance with Bailey's mom and Dan took up too much time. Plus they got the first love scene which threw me. I don't think the author dedicated that much time to Bailey and Finn. The characters acted immature at times. However, I did love Finn. I just wish the characters were more developed.

Linda says

3.5 stars. I liked this romance set at the Perfect Christmas (a landmark store).

Shawna says

4 stars – Contemporary Romance

Tammy says

I am a sucker for a good reunion romance, so when "Must Love Mistletoe" was recommended to me I had high expectations. I was not disappointed.

Bailey Sullivan is the original Christmas Scrooge having spent several years working behind the scenes at "The Perfect Christmas", a business owned and operated by her family.

Bailey is forced to leave behind her life in LA and return home for the holidays to save the family business from going under after her parents separate. When she runs into her long-lost teenage sweetheart (and boy next door), Finn Jacobson, white-hot sparks fly! Finn is home on "sick leave" from the Secret Service after an assassination attempt gone wrong that left a peer dead and Finn wearing an eye patch. Neither Finn nor Bailey are interested in rekindling their old flame.

This is the first Christie Ridgway novel that I have read and I enjoyed it thoroughly. Her characters were very likable, the plot was fun, the supporting characters were interesting and the back-stories of Bailey and Finn's relationship were well-written. This is a fun, romantic read after a long day of Christmas shopping.

Julianna says

Reviewed for www.thcreviews.com

I somehow got the mistaken impression that *Must Love Mistletoe* would be a lighthearted, witty romantic comedy, but it seemed that the author couldn't decide whether the story was supposed to be a comedy or a drama. While there were some humorous scenes that made me smile, there were others that I think were meant to be humorous, but to me, came off seeming rather silly and childish. The book also dealt with several heavier topics such as marital strife and death, but not in the deeply emotional yet heartwarming manner that I prefer. I also felt that there were weakness in the plot. I just never fully bought into the idea of Finn and Bailey being separated for ten years without contact in our electronic age. I realize that Bailey was purposely trying to run away and avoid Finn, but since his grandmother lived next door to her mother, it seems like it would have been an easy thing for him to simply inquire after her whereabouts. Since it was obvious that he loved her very deeply, it just never entirely made sense to me that Finn wouldn't at least try to find Bailey to get some answers, but I suppose that he may have simply been too broken-hearted to try. I also like a strong happily-ever-after ending that leaves me feeling like the protagonists will be together for a long time after the last page is turned, but unfortunately, I did not feel like I got this in *Must Love Mistletoe*. While Finn's Christmas gift to Bailey was beautiful and romantic, the ending was surrounded by sad events and a great deal of ambiguity that left me with no clear picture of where these two might end up down the road.

While I have had personal life experiences that bear some similarity to those of Bailey, I had a difficult time relating to her. She was a popular girl in high school, while I never was. She hates Christmas, while I tend to enjoy it. She doesn't believe in true love any more than she believes in Santa Claus, while I have always been a hopeless romantic. Still, if all these things had been played in the lighthearted manner in which I had expected, I think Bailey would have been a more relateable character, but as she was written, I felt that she took herself and life way too seriously. I think her character would also have been better if she had shown a bit more vulnerability instead of being an island unto herself. While Bailey had been very deeply affected by her parent's divorce and her father's abandonment, I just couldn't fully understand her teenage cynicism about relationships, since her mother had been remarried presumably happily for at least a decade at that point, to a man who Bailey herself admitted was a good man. However, I realize that children and teenagers can be very impressionable, so I could have perhaps bought into the idea that Bailey would run away from her relationship with Finn the first time, but when she was prepared to do it again as a supposedly intelligent adult, I started to loose respect for her and just wanted to shake some sense into her. I also thought it was rather cruel for Bailey to have thrown away her wonderful friendship with Trin when she left the first time. For her to continue to allow her parents divorce and her father's ill-conceived advice affect her relationships more than twenty years later, to me showed a distinct lack of growth and maturity. In my opinion, it even showed weakness, because Bailey seemed unwilling to take a chance on anyone or anything simply for fear of it turning out badly. I'm sorry to say that I was just never able to fully grasp why Finn fell in love with her.

I could also not bring myself to care much about the secondary romance between Bailey's mother, Tracy, and stepfather, Dan. After twenty years of marriage, I felt that they should have been able to weather empty-nest syndrome without resorting to what was in my opinion petty, childish bickering that could have been easily cleared up with a little more communication. It also didn't seem quite fair that a pair of secondary characters got the first major love scene in the book. In addition, Tracy's actions in taking a crowbar to her ex-husband's car, which I believe was meant to be empowering, I unfortunately found rather disturbing instead. As with Bailey, I felt that she should have grown more in the last twenty years than to be so affected by his presence as to take such drastic measures. Nearly every time there was a long scene or an entire chapter devoted to

Tracy and/or Dan, I started zoning out and was eager to get back to Finn and Bailey's story. I was somewhat disappointed though with the love scenes between Finn and Bailey, because while they were full of hot, steamy sensuality, they generally seemed like little more than lust gone wild. I really like to feel that the characters are in love, and while I could sense this to some extent on Finn's part, Bailey was always so closed off, that it never truly seemed like her heart was in their lovemaking.

In spite of my negative comments up to this point, I actually did find several things to like about *Must Love Mistletoe*. First and foremost, I really liked the hero, Finn. Although the author didn't delve quite deep enough into his character to suit my taste, he was still very intriguing. The persona of a former bad boy who cared for Bailey enough to stay out of trouble and clean up his act in order to impress her was very appealing. In spite of his outer tough guy, there were several times that the author allowed a sensitive and vulnerable side to show through, creating an all-too-human and well-rounded character that was enjoyable to read. Also, any guy who loves and respects his grandmother as much as Finn did is a winner in my book. Finn's grandmother was a joy to read as well. Even though she didn't directly play a large part in the story, it was fun to imagine the kind of sweet little old lady she must have been to command Finn's respect. She seemed to be the only person besides Bailey who was able to keep him on the straight and narrow. I also liked Bailey's straight-talking, sassy best friend, Trin, who infused Bailey's life with a much needed dose of reality. I also thought she was a very forgiving person to so easily allow Bailey back into her life after Bailey had left without so much as a good-bye and hadn't even communicated with her in over a decade. The Perfect Christmas was a neat little store with a lovely ambiance, which if it really existed, would have had me agreeing with everyone else in town about it being a "landmark" and an "institution". The store was really a character in its own right and I found myself rather disappointed at the author's choice of an ending for it. In addition, I had never read a contemporary story set in suburban Southern California, so I was able to appreciate a uniqueness in the setting. Lastly, I really enjoyed Bailey Sullivan's Vintage Facts & Fun Calender, little trivial tidbits about Christmas that were at the beginning of each chapter. I found these to be pretty entertaining and educational.

Must Love Mistletoe started out fairly strong, hooking me in with the appealing idea of the story of two former sweethearts reunited after many years apart, but unfortunately it veered off in some strange and unexpected directions that I did not find entirely appealing. While it had a number of weaknesses and was not the best book I have ever read, neither did I find it to be a complete chore to finish as has been the case with some other stories. While I have not seen an official series designation, *Must Love Mistletoe* has another holiday-themed sequel titled, *Not Another New Year's*, in which secondary character and Finn's fellow ex-Secret Service agent, Tanner Hart becomes the hero. This was the first book I had read by Ms. Ridgway, and while she didn't completely wow me this time, she has a reasonably good writing style that leaves me open to the possibility of reading other books by her in the future.

Nancy Brady says

A contemporary romance that features not just one, but two, second-chance romances is this offering from Christie Ridgway.

This is the first of her novels this reader has read (and full disclosure: this e-book may have been gifted to me (along with several others) by the author for joining her website), but it won't be the last. As an aside, I have read Christie Ridgway's Romance column in Book Page for quite a few years without realizing she was an author in her own right. Once I realized this, I decided I wanted to read at least one of her books. Her insights into the romance genre (and her monthly picks of the Best Romance of the Month) are worth reading.

Bailey (yes, like George!), who claims to hate Christmas, is drawn home to take over the family store, The Christmas Present, when her mother Tracey goes off the rails after the breakdown of her second marriage to Dan. Bailey is not happy with the situation, and she is convinced she will get her mom back managing the store so that she can return to her safe, corporate life in LA.

She is not the only returnee to the city of Coronado. Her first love, bad boy Finn, is home taking care of his beloved Gram, who is gravely ill. When they meet again after ten years apart, sparks ignite despite Bailey's fear of love and commitment. Will they stay together permanently, or is it just a quick fling to fill the days until the 25th? Until Bailey returns to her safe life; until Finn returns to his life as a cleaned-up, respectable bad boy-turned-pirate?

All the while, Tracey is in the throes of depression based on an 'empty nest' situation. She is sure that her husband Dan is cheating on her, just like her first husband (and father to Bailey) did. But can they reconcile and find common ground based on new interests? What about the store? Will they once again work together? Or will it close its doors forever?

Two romances in one make this a unique novel, and there are few WTT trends seen (at least one hair-tucking incident, a few smirks, but NO green-eyed characters noted!). There are some spicy scenes, but they are not overly graphic in this Christmas-themed tale. Loved Ridgway's breezy (language) style throughout (perhaps it echoes my thoughts), but here is an example written from Bailey's perspective:

"At thirty, Finn had developed a taste for tall fat women with hair the improbable color of a tequila sunrise. That was the problem with men--they never once realized that no real female had breasts the big or hair that red." (page 26)

Emmie says

It is the first time I read a book by the author. I must admit, I was quite impressed. Christie Ridgway has the ability to engage the reader and keep the storyline flowing.

I will be reading more of her books

Victoria says

2.5 stars

There's a bit of a pattern with the amazon/nook reads that I have where the characters aren't the most fleshed out but the plot is interesting enough to have me stick it through.

I do, however, have a weakness for all things Christmas. It's ridiculous really, I'm already freaking out for this Christmas and it's not even October. This sentiment seems not to be alive with Bailey which ironically is

stuck running a Christmas store for her mother for the holiday.

Overall, it was an easy read. I was not sold on the romance but I liked the little bit of depth we got for her love interest (who's name is escaping me right now) and how Bailey was hurt by her dad's departure so early in her life. I also liked her mom's POV.

The ending was also, again, abrupt and I didn't like the two mc's lack of communication.

Wouldn't reread.

Caryn says

Sex, more sex, story

I am someone who isn't really interested in reading explicit sex scenes, so there was a lot of skimming for me. I almost quit reading the book a couple of times because all the main characters in the book were so emotionally immature and prone to expressing that through aggressive sexuality, which to me in a turn off. I realize there are many who find this "steamy" and exciting, though, so I expect this explains the predominantly very positive reviews. I thought the relationship between the supposedly mature parents of adult children was particularly objectionable. The husband walks out on his wife because he suddenly feels ignored, and he's the good guy who is supposedly trying to reach her/teach her by this? And their reconciliation starts with sex that sounds like spousal rape? Gag.

I finally came to appreciate that the story was, indeed, about people who were immature and were supposed to be growing up through the type of intense emotionality that is heightened during the holidays, families and homecoming. I would have probably liked the book better if the main characters weren't so stereotypically "beautiful, but flawed" ... extra pretty, extra handsome, extra smart, extra brave and hunky, extra successful, extra tragic, etc. I guess that's what some people want in fantasy, though, so be it.

Andrea says

I really liked the beginning of the book: Christmas-hating lawyer returns to home town to take care of her parents' Christmas store and is reunited with her first love, the bad-boy-next-door. It quickly became less interesting for me when the two of them starting screwing around again (there were repeated mentions of her "sweet, delicious flower" or her "inner sex fiend"...) and a lot of drama was thrown in to complicate things last minute and then not resolved, which I didn't care for. (view spoiler). I also didn't care much for the secondary romance between the heroine's mother and her estranged husband who were incredibly immature (there was even a "taking a crowbar to the ex's car" incident that I thought was really pointless). I thought it was a nice enough Christmas story with a lot of potential, but I didn't really love it.

Elena Johansen says

I don't think this story knew what it wanted to be. Sure, it's primarily a romance, but the tone shifted often and wildly from super-serious (Finn's Secret Service past and recently acquired disability) to super-silly (the excessive Christmas spirit of the town and everything that happened at the shop) to super-irritating (Bailey, all the time.)

And how reasonable is it, even given Bailey's history, for her to simply vanish on Finn with no explanation or contact--*and* for him never to try to contact her? She didn't change her identity or go into space, he could have tried. But that doesn't make for as much drama, even if it doesn't make any sense. No, young Finn just accepted that Bailey left him and never did a thing about it.

On that footing, it makes their reunion less believable, and I found the ending anti-climactic. I also didn't care for the subplot involving the fading marriage between her mother and stepfather, which was underdeveloped and not thematically tied to anything else in the story. Plus, I found it vaguely uncomfortable to be reading Bailey's mother's dramatic sex scene, both because it was poorly written--noticeably more so than the other sex scenes--and because I JUST READ ABOUT YOUR DAUGHTER HAVING SEX. Why did any of that need to be in the story?
