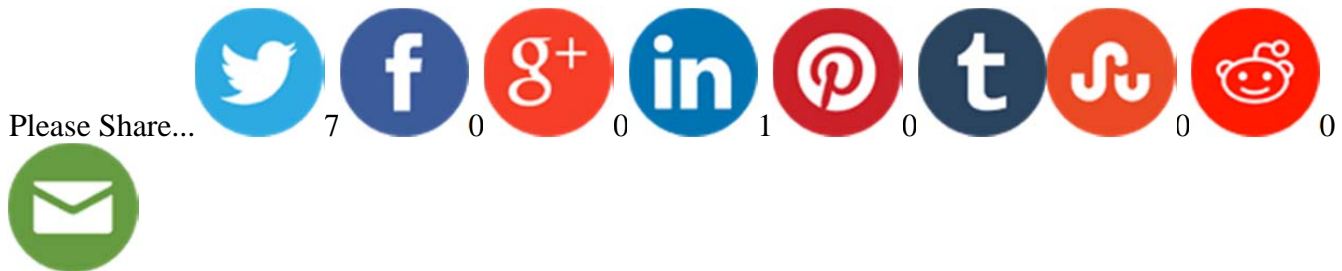




Book Review: 'Our First Christmas; A Holiday Anthology' by Lisa Jackson, Mary Burton, Mary Carter and Cathy Lamb

Posted by: [Suzanne Brazil](#) December 3, 2014 in [Book Reviews](#), [Books](#), [Romance](#)



The saying goes that the first gift of Christmas was love. The authors of *Our First Christmas* deliver romance and much more in their contemporary suspense anthology. From the mountains of Montana to the seaside town of Wilmington and the wide-open Texas range, these stories are infused with intrigue, humor and a dash of holiday magic. A history professor, writer, band manager and attorney face outside dangers and self-imposed obstacles as they struggle to find happiness. They must reconcile their choices and take risks if they hope to enjoy this and future Christmases.

In "A Ranger for Christmas" by [Mary Burton](#), Professor of History Marisa Thompson avoids Christmas and commitment equally. Grief over her mother's death and an intriguing discovery on a dig are enough of a distraction until Texas Ranger Lucas Cooper appears on the scene and asks for her help breaking a secret code. They've met before, and it didn't end well. Will she allow herself to trust Lucas and will he be able to protect her from whoever wants the code to remain unbroken? This is the most suspenseful of the four novellas that make up the collection, and Burton does a smooth job weaving holiday romance and danger throughout.

Next is my favorite of the group, [Mary Carter's](#) "A Southern Christmas." Evoking a lighthearted will-they-or-won't-they appeal, Carter has created two enjoyable characters in slightly self-absorbed reporter Danielle Bright and her infuriating but attractive co-worker Sawyer. He's a photographer from Texas, and Danielle tries to resist his charms as they travel south together to do a Christmas feature on her picturesque, seaside hometown. Danielle is a prickly southern writer making it in New York who fears she may have left behind the love of her life. Will she win back her ex-boyfriend whose proposal she declined in memorable fashion? Sawyer's mischievous jabbing irritates her and said ex-boyfriend may not cooperate in time for the holidays. Carter

heightens the conflict with an ear for dialogue and humorous banter in an entertaining read just right for the festive season.

[\(Click here for my interview with Mary Carter.\)](#)

“Christmas in Montana” by [Cathy Lamb](#) has the most traditional, winter wonderland setting and an almost too-good-to-be-true hero in Josh Reed. The main character Laurel Kelly is likeable and shares her home with some interesting characters in her liberated mother and aunt. Laurel’s extended family add energy and humor to the mix. On a serious note, an incident from the past has kept Laurel and Josh from re-connecting. She prepares for a crazy Christmas with her entire family but might miss out on the best present of all. You’ll find yourself pulling for the good guy in this one.

Bestselling author [Lisa Jackson](#) is the anthology headliner, and “Under the Mistletoe” is the most sober of the four Christmas stories. At the heart of Jackson’s tale is a marriage at a crossroads and a heroine unsure of what she wants for her future. The story is told mostly in flashback, and the beginning of Chris’s and Megan’s relationship reminds us of how time changes people and that nothing in life is guaranteed. By the time they reach Christmas present, you are invested in their marriage and hopeful that joy lost isn’t lost forever.

All four authors in this anthology have multiple novels to their credit and know how to deliver a good story. If you’re looking for a holiday read with interesting plots, likeable characters and satisfying conclusions, this is the collection for you. Pour some egg nog, turn on the Christmas tree lights, snuggle under a blanket with *Our First Christmas* and have fun choosing your favorite.

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About Suzanne Brazil



Suzanne M. Brazil is a freelance writer and editor living in a recently empty nest in the suburbs of Chicago. Her work has been featured in *Writer's Digest* and many local publications. She is a frequent blog contributor and recently finished her first novel.