



Not Just For Christmas

Annabelle Jacobs

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Ben has Christmas, cats, and mistletoe on his side.... Jason doesn't stand a chance

For Ben Slater, moving back to Bristol means being closer to his family, living with his best mate, and volunteering at the local animal shelter. But there's also Jason, his best mate's eldest brother. Ben's had a crush on Jason for as long as he can remember, but the eleven-year age gap has always seemed insurmountable.

Jason Armitage works as a vet at his uncle's practice. He owns a cute cottage on the outskirts of the city, and a loving dog. The one thing missing is someone to share it all with. His brother's best friend seems a bad choice, but Jason can't help taking a second look. Ben's changed a lot since Jason last saw him; both in appearance and attitude. Gone is the shy young boy, replaced with a confident, twenty-four-year-old man.

In the run up to Christmas, the festive period gives Ben the ideal opportunity to show Jason what he has to offer. But concerns for his brother's feelings hold Jason back. If they have any chance of making this work, Ben must convince Jason that he's old enough to know what he wants, and Jason needs to believe that a relationship with his brother's best friend won't ruin their friendship.

Approx 48000 words

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From Reader Review Not Just For Christmas for online ebook

Tess says

4 stars

Sweet, uncomplicated, low-angst ... and lots of cute animals!

Cadiva says

Everything I want to read in a Christmas story from one of my favourite writers.

This book is as gorgeous as its cover and as cute as the cat it depicts. I loved everything about this "best friend's brother" romance, from its wonderfully British setting in Bristol, to the animals, to the gentle humour and sense of family.

Both Ben and Jason were fully fleshed out, as was the setting and the secondary characters, and the overall feeling of warmth and happiness just oozed out from this one.

I loved the age gap, not a huge one at 11 years, I loved the banter between the brothers, I loved both families, I loved that they took time and talked about what getting together would mean and I loved the smexy time, which was a nice surprise.

#ARC received from the author in return for an honest and unbiased review.

Ami says

3.5 stars

Ben Slater crushed on his best friend's older brother, Jason, for years! Now, at the age of 24 years old, he moved back to Bristol after finishing university and planned to take new job near his family and best friend. And apparently his crush over Jason hasn't subsided a little bit. But Jason, eleven years older, has never really seen Ben like potential lover. Probably because he used to babysit Ben, for God's sake. So what's a guy to do, right?

I'm going to be honest, the cat on the cover is what sold the book for me *lol*. But overall, I thought the story itself is pretty cute!! One thing I liked was how supportive Ben's best friend, Liam, was (Liam is also Jason's youngest brother). Also Jason didn't really agonizing about the age-gap between him and Ben, although he did think about the fact that Ben was Liam's best mate.

Often times when I read stories about two characters with age gap, one of the biggest obstacle will be the older guy making a big fuss over the age difference. But Jason is only mid-thirties, and I always become frustrated if characters in their thirties think they're already over the hill. So I appreciate that the author doesn't take that path.

The progress of Jason finally accepting potential relationship with Ben feels natural and not rushed. Plus the animals have a lot of screen time (!). Especially because Jason is a vet and Ben volunteering at local animal

shelter. So I'm pretty happy throughout.

The ARC is provided by the author for an exchange of fair and honest review. No high rating is required for any ARC received.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

3.5 stars

A sweet holiday story, even if it might not stand out in a sea of Christmas reads.

I liked Not Just For Christmas. I mean, who doesn't love a childhood-crush-to-lovers story?! I could read about a BFF's hunky older brother noticing a guy for the first time any day of the week. All. Day. Long.

The story was a slower-paced one, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it doesn't grab you and force you to read all night. The romance was like that too: just sweet and *there*, but more comfortable than passionate. It was a nice matchup, but I didn't get that explosion of tension and chemistry that I was hoping for.

If you like British stories of unrequited loves turning into requited loves (score!) with lots of cute animals to boot, then pick this one up.

Copy provided in exchange for an honest review

Anne Boleyn's Ghost says

Well-written and, while slower-paced, with entertaining moments. Who doesn't enjoy the falling-for-your-best-friend's-brother trope? I know that I do. But it didn't work that well for me here. Jason and Ben don't spend much quality time together, and while I'm admittedly in the "together time is necessary in novels" camp, I find it even more necessary in novellas. Yes, they had known each other for years, but I never really felt a tangible chemistry or connection between them. It seemed like both men had more page time with Liam than they had with each other.

That said, it was a cute enough tail. See what I did there? Wink, wink. The animals were my favorite part of the story.

Rachel says

4.5 stars

What a lovely story! This one just ticked all my boxes:

- Friends to lovers
- Fur kids galore
- Slice-of-life moments
- Age gap
- Slow burn romance

This story is so sweet and comforting. I think that I'll have to buy a copy (read via KU) and make it one of my annual holiday re-reads. I adored the inclusion of all the beloved fur kids. I am smitten.

Denise H. says

*** Enjoy this mild, Christmassy, low angst, lovely British romance. It's an easy going tale of Ben, 24, Liam's best friend.

Ben has crushed on Liam's older brother, Jason, 35, Veterinarian.

They've know each other since school days, and so they do know each other quite well. Ben is just back from school in Nottingham, before moving back to his home town of Bristol. He and Liam are sharing an apartment. We see an injured cat, a sweet beagle mix, an abandon cat, and more.

These friends and families get along, have big hearts, and everyone wants what 's best for the other. Ben talks to Liam about dating his older brother. Jason talks to Liam about dating Ben. Jason and Ben are both willing and able to have this relationship.

Emotions are strong, and the two sex scenes meld their bond.

It's a simple, sweet, holiday romance without being too mushy. I loved these two together.

ENJOY !

=====

R * A Reader Obsessed * says

4 Hearts!! - Co-review with Lori!

This is just the kind of holiday fare I love, and it surely didn't hurt that this featured one of my favorite tropes of falling for your best friend's brother!

Ben has been crushing on Jacob for almost a decade. After being away for college, he returns home to move in with his bestie. Not surprisingly, Ben's crush is still just as strong as it was before he left home.

Jason never wanted to think too much on Ben's infatuation. The situation at best was awkward, but now?? It's very difficult to ignore Ben, seeing as how he's all grown up. *Very* grown up.

The UST had quite the nice buildup, and these two can only resist the other for so long. Toss in a mild age gap, men who adore animals, and a lot of low angst, sweet sexy. So enjoyable! More please!

Thank you to the author/publisher for a copy in exchange for an honest review

For Lori's thoughts, please check out the blog!

Len Evans Jr says

I loved this story... while it was a bit of slow burn as far as the relationship goes I think it was appropriate since this was a friends to lovers story and also had an 11 year age difference. I thought the issues raised by these two things were dealt with in a very realistic and believable way. And in the end the payoff was worth the wait. Both Ben and Jason are adorable, but if I had to choose Jason is my favorite by a nose. Overall, this book was a very enjoyable read and lots of fun!

Meags says

4 Star

This has been a December of firsts for me. I've been trying all sorts of Christmas stories from M/M authors I've never gotten around to reading before, and I must say that my first Annabelle Jacobs experience has been a raging success!

Not Just For Christmas is a sweet, drama-free friends-to-lovers story, set over the holiday period, featuring a delicious slow-burn and plenty of men-with-pets action for those, like myself, who completely melt over hot men with fur babies.

ahem

Ben has harbored a crush on his best buddy Liam's older brother Jason for as long as he can remember. Now that Ben is finally moving back home into a new flat with Liam, after years away at university and later for work, Ben (now 24) is hoping to catch 35 year old Jason's attention, in some way other than just as his little brother's shy friend.

Ben needs not worry because Jason sure does notice him now. The once shy and blushing kid with an innocent crush has turned into a gorgeous man with an exceedingly kind heart and a surprising level of maturity for his young age, leaving Jason feeling confused and guilty over his sudden attraction. As Ben and Jason grow closer, Jason struggles to do what's best. His family means the world to him and the last thing he wants to do is rock the boat by romantically pursuing his little brother's best friend, but Ben might just prove too appealing to deny.

I utterly adored this story. The falling-for-my-best-friends-brother trope is an absolute favourite of mine and I really appreciated the way it was executed here. The fact the developing romance between Ben and Jason was somewhat of a slow-burn definitely helped, but my favourite aspect of the story was how their families knew of Ben's crush for years, and even though they occasionally teased Jason and Ben about it, each and

everyone of them, including best friend/brother Liam, were all completely open to the idea of the two men being together, especially if that's what made them happy. I truly loved that complete, unquestioning show of support and acceptance.

Best of all were all the animals featured in the story. I'm a sucker for a good book fur baby, but sometimes I feel animals are just thrown into the mix in an attempt to win cute points – which often works, you manipulative bastards! But here, all the featured animals were integral to the story as a whole. Plus, they were super fricken cute and pulled on my heart-strings more than once.

This story is certainly a win in this season's holiday offerings and I eagerly look forward to exploring Jacobs' work further in the future!

Chris, the Dalek King says

Pet owners be ready to get your cuddles on...because Annabelle Jacobs' new holiday story is full of the fluffy.

Christmas time is probably my second favorite time of year, especially in bookland, because it is when all the sweet and wonderful comes out to play. *Not Just For Christmas*—despite what is on the tin—is a great example of why this time of year is loved by so many.

I so easily feel in love with this story and the MCs, Ben Slater and Jason Armitage. Ben has just moved back to town, and is going to share his best friend's new apartment. They have been close since their childhoods and are really looking forward to being near each other again. But it is his best friend's older brother, Jason, that sets Ben's heart spinning. Again—since Ben has long harbored a crush for the man, even though their decade age difference meant that Jason was never going to see Ben as anything other than a younger brother back in the day. But Ben is an adult now, and he fully intends on making Jason see that.

In between bouts of kitten cuddles. So many kitty cuddles.

This is a sweet story that embraces its slow burn romance. You never really mind that it is taking them a bit to get around to that romance, though, because the secondary characters are entertaining, and the pets keep you *awwwing* at the page. And honestly the time spent building up to their relationship makes sense because Jason needs to shake the image of Ben he had for so long, and finally see the man in front of him.

And I know I keep mentioning the animals—especially the cats—in this story, but they actually take up a considerable portion of the story and they are so gosh darn adorable that I had to keep reminding myself that my two furballs would be most put out if I started adding to their numbers.

Love might not be just for Christmas, but if you looking for another book to keep you company for the holidays, well this one is a great bet. Especially if you are as big of an animal lover as I am.

This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.

~☆~Danni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~☆~ says

~3.5~

Ben has been in love with his best friend Liam's older brother, Jason, for ages. Jason is eleven years Ben's senior and used to babysit him and Liam; he's cleaned up Ben's vomit and watched him screwing around like the kid he was.

But Ben is 24 now, done with university, and no longer a child. He has muscles in all the right places, a good heart, and just one wish for Christmas.

A sprig of mistletoe leads the way! Ben's kiss sends Jason into a tailspin. He worries Liam will mind. He worries things will be awkward.

What can Ben do to convince Jason there's nothing to worry about because they belong together?

I really liked the beginning of this story but didn't feel a strong passion between Jason and Ben. They seemed more like friends, and I had more fun watching Ben interact with Liam than watching him with Jason.

Both sets of family were great, and the critters in the story—a beagle mix named Daisy, a ginger cat named Tom, a three-legged black cat with white paws named Socks—absolutely stole the show.

There is so much sweetness and puppy (and kitty!) love in this story, which made me very happy.

Recommended for a light, easy holiday read!

Judith says

4 Stars.

Ben has been crushing on his best friend Liam's older brother, Jason, for years. His infatuation was put on hold while he was away at University but now he's back in his home town and is bound to run into the object of his desires as he's moving into a flat with Liam.....

Jason was aware of Ben's interest in him but only saw him as his younger brother's best friend. But now Ben is back, all grown up and Jason definitely starts to see him in a different way!

A sneaky kiss under the mistletoe and when Jason sees Ben fresh from the shower, wearing only a towel...all bets are definitely off.

Add into the mix some adorable animals, some great family members and you have a sweet Christmas story.

An Arc of Not Just for Christmas was kindly provided to DirtyBooksObsession in exchange for an honest review.

My reviews are posted on DirtyBooksObsession

Elsa Bravante says

2.5, la historia es bonita, pero le ha faltado mucha chicha y se ha quedado en el meh. Pasable.

Sheri says

It's not much of a secret that I'm a huge fan of any and everything Jacobs pens. Her writing concoction is dependable and consistently full of happiness. There are times she adjusts the potency of her trademark story elements but I can always count on her to deliver them. This holiday tale involves two (well more like three but only two in the bed) great guys, an adolescence crush come to life and a couple of cute pussycats. The burn is slow but steady. The affection is both apprehensive and confident. And the ending left my heart full and bright.

Ben and Liam have been best mates since they ran around in their nappies (don't you just love the British influence?!) and Ben is coming back...home. He's moving in with Liam and looking forward to recharging his bestie batteries. He has missed family time; both his own and Liam's. His pulse is kicked into overdrive thinking about one particular brother of Liam's...Jason. He has drooled over Jason for years and his fascinations never wavered. He graduated from University and he's ready to embrace adulthood. If only he can show Jason he's not just his kid brothers' sidekick anymore, he might just have a chance with him. Dating someone so deeply integrated in the family has its risks and Jason has never been much of a risk taker. He can't jeopardize his relationship with his brother. It's not worth it, is it? This Christmas is full of surprises and he's grappling with control. His life is just fine the way it is. No need to complicate things. But then he didn't count on Ben returning as a sexy self-assured man either. When passion consumes them they need to decide, is this a one-off, a casual thing for Christmas or maybe more?

What's to like: As I said before, the writing is a sure thing. I enjoyed the Bristol setting. I have yet to visit (someday!!) but I feel as though I can clearly see it behind my eyelids thanks to Jacobs vivid descriptions. Then we have the charming and endearing characters. I enjoyed every single one of them. That's a rarity in itself! There isn't a bad guy or any major angst. Simply two guys, sweeping each other off their feet. There

are times you just need a relaxing and carefree story such as this. Top it off with lovely holiday traditions and adorable furry friends and it becomes a winning Christmas story. And did you check out the adorable cover? Top notch!

What's to love: Jason is older, established in his professional life and lonely. He is surrounded by family and friends but he's not found someone to share the intimacies of everyday life with. To be honest, he's not really looking. But then...Ben returns. He's known Ben most of his life but always viewed him as his little brother's friend. He was fully aware that Ben was attracted to him but their age difference was a roadblock Jason felt comfortable leaving be. However, this new mature Ben ignites something in Jason. He's lively spirit and sexy determination rattles his resolve. After one night of fiery passion, he panics. However, it doesn't take long for him to realize and accept he wants Ben in his bed and by his side. And...Not Just For Christmas.

Beware of: The relationship begins unbalanced. Ben has had the hots for Jason for more than a decade. He knows what he wants. Jason never thought of Ben that way....before. Once he's positive everyone is cool with it he quickly catches up. But plan on a shaky start. Ben has been willing to wait for Jason, so follow his example and harness some patience, it will be worth it!

This book is for: If you adore Jacobs as I do, you will want to check out this tender tale. Animal lovers will especially enjoy this holiday sweet treat.

Book UNfunk
