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Told through the eyes of 10-year old Kerry ("spelled with a K and an E and not with a C and an A"), "The Joyous Season" is a witty and irreverent look at marriage and family life by the bestselling author of "Auntie Mame."

The Joyous Season Details

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Author : Patrick Dennis (Pseudonym) , Edward Everett Tanner III

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Stacey says

My grandmother loaned this to me when I was staying with her when I was maybe 10 years old, about the age of the narrator. It's a story of two childrens' suffering through their parents' divorce, but it is really a poke at upper-crust NY society during the 1960's, written from the perspective of a very precocious boy. I laughed until I cried (though I often didn't know why, as it's definitely a book for adults) and have probably reread it a dozen times since then. My original copy is still on my shelf and though a bit worse for wear, an all-time favorite.

Claire says

I am not one who re reads books very often. However I have read this book more times than any other single book I have ever read.

Those who love Auntie Mame will thoroughly enjoy the adventures of Kerry and Missy (told through Kerry's eyes) beginning with a horrendous Christmas morning and rolling downhill from there.

Kerry is sharp, witty and just a bit bitchy; his little sister is an absolute hoot and both of them are way smarter than the adults (with exception of the housekeeper)

Basic story: On Christmas Day, events ensue which result in Kerry and Missy's parents decision to separate.

Which of course results in new relationships for each parent, hilarious scenes with the children on their visitations with Dad, cat spitting fights between the two grandmothers who clearly despise one another from way back, all of which give the narrator ample opportunity to smart off about all of them.

The little side story of their mother's pompous older brother H. A. (which Kerry says stands for Horse's A**) and his romantic conquests is hilarious.

Everything culminates around the potential remarriages of the parents and I will not reveal more here. Just read it, please.

I dearly wish this book would be made into a movie just for the physical humor alone; but the characters would all be great fun for any actor to portray. I have spent many an hour casting the production in my head.

Maybe before I die.

Antoinette says

" Daddy always said that Christmas is a joyous season when suicides and holdups and shoplifting and like reach a new high and that the best place to spend the whole thing is a Moslem country. Mom says he is right about that, if about nothing else. After last Christmas, I guess I kind of agree".

Something happens on that last Christmas to prove it is not a joyous season. Kerry, the ten year old son, is

our narrator, as he and his sister Missy deal with the fallout of that auspicious day. The book is hilarious at first, but this hilarity started to become tedious and wear on me as it lost its appeal.

Overall, not an overly Christmas book, but a book about family and coping with change. Patrick Dennis definitely has a biting humour to his storytelling, but it did feel like one slapstick routine after another. So many people loved this book, but it just didn't mesmerize me. I gave it 3 stars as it is still a readable book.

Amy Thompson says

I first read this book by the author of *Auntie Mame* when I was about 12 years old. I pick it up and re-read it at least once a year. Simply hilarious.

V. Briceland says

The divorce of popular author Pat Tanner and his wife Louise in the early nineteen-sixties was something of a surprise to their friends; though it was no secret (least of all to Louise) that he was gay and had been in extensive psychiatric care because of the stress of it, the pair were amicable and naturally suited to each other's idiosyncrasies.

It was very much a disappointment to the pair's young son and daughter, however. It was for them that Tanner, under his pseudonym of Patrick Dennis, dedicated and wrote *The Joyous Season*. A hilarious, sharp, and beautiful jewelry-box of a novel, it addresses the follies of adulthood and divorce from a child's point of view.

Structurally, *The Joyous Season* shares much in common with Tanner's *The Loving Couple*, one of his Virginia Rowans novels—a husband and wife quarrel over trivial matters, find themselves railroaded by close-minded in-laws into divorce, take up with social climbers, and (barely) escape with their sanities intact. Along the way, in a fireworks scene in a summer home, there are echoes the climax of another Rowans novel, *House Party*. And as in *Little Me*, *The Joyous Season* features a naive and somewhat unreliable narrator.

But by telling the tale with the voice of ten-year-old Kerrington, whose understanding of the adult world is both untested yet often startlingly on point, the book achieves a true sweetness unparalleled by any other Patrick Dennis novel, while still remaining sharp, incisive, and devastatingly critical of adult absurdity—including the author's own.

The Joyous Season is definitely among the very best of the Patrick Dennis canon.

Sherwood Smith says

This book is not even remotely great literature--it shows all Dennis's prejudices--but it's cinematic in pacing, very funny in scenes, but mostly, it gave me intense comfort when my own folks were divorcing. In the story, the parents reunite, and I knew my parents wouldn't (I had begun to perceive they never should have married first, in fact they wouldn't have, but for me) but somehow laughing through this story eased the emotional transition to the cold hard fact that there was not even a semblance of a home to go to (especially as LAX condemned our house around that time)--no fallback, ever again.

Margaret says

Patrick Dennis is mostly known these days for the sparkling Auntie Mame, but I think my very favorite of his novels is actually this one, which is about a family whose mother and father decide to divorce, from the point of view of the children. It's narrated by Kerry, who introduces himself like this: "My name is Kerry, which is short for Kerrington, for cripes sake, spelled with a K and an E and not with a C and an A and is a very big name somewhere back in Gran's family. Like I told you, I'm ten years old -- practically eleven. I go to St. Barnaby's School because I have to be kept off the streets until I'm sixteen."

Like all of Dennis's books, *The Joyous Season* is frequently hilarious, yet the subject matter and choice of narrator give the book more emotional substance than most of his others. Kerry is precocious and funny, yet frequently naive and obviously much affected by his parents' breakup; he has an adversarial, yet protective relationship to his show-offy little sister Missy which is an important emotional keynote of the story. Many of the other characters are more caricature than character, but Kerry grounds the book in a reality that makes it touching as well as hilarious.

Bonnieb says

"For Cripes Sakes..." is just one of 11 year old Kerry's favorite phrases as he tells us the story of six months in the life of his family in 1960s NYC. Written by the author of Auntie Mame, Dennis' book is a joy to read and a model of good story-telling. This is my second reading and I still laughed out loud many times throughout this wandering through upper class NYC through the eyes of this bright, funny, observant young man. The family is wealthy and incredibly dysfunctional; characters include Kerry's 6 year old sister, Missy, and his mother and dad. The journey includes divorce, potential new step-parents, wealthy, old-money grandmother, alcoholic uncle, a gad-about second grandmother, and Lulu, their 'nurse'. "We need a nurse like need a case of mumps", Kerry informs the reader almost immediately. Misused words and one liners abound, i.e., "Gran is so religious that she might be Catholic if she didn't keep saying that Catholics are common."...and "Everybody's always talking about how terrible divorce is for kids, but let me tell you right her and now that the most terrible part is trying to cheer up the people who are trying to cheer you up..."

Carol says

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas and that's my time to read a least one holiday story. *Joyous Season* was suggested by a librarian in a list of Bah Humbug Books. Her description that is was not quite that but "*a hilarious book about how things can fall apart at the holidays*" grabbed my attention. Written by Patrick Dennis of *Auntie Mame* fame, I figured it was worth a read.

I'm not certain I would consider it a Christmas story even though a large green Christmas ornament graces the cover and the mayhem does begin on Christmas Day. The male narrator, Kerrington, a young man in his early teens is just too funny as he describes the trials and tribulations of the adults around him, including his parents. A nostalgic trip down memory lane of the language and humor of the sixties. Gadzeeks!

John says

Usually, when folks say they guessed the ending early on, I didn't; here, however, I did.

My main issue with the story was that I didn't find it consistently funny, but in parts sad. Also, I could not buy Kerry as ten *at all*. At best, he sounded more like late teens, or an adult looking back trying to channel a young Kerry of the time. The occasional comments on adult male ... endowments was way off as well. I found the parents the most realistic characters, with the others being largely overdone. Growing up in the New York suburbs in a slightly less rarified atmosphere not long after the book was published, I was able to relate to his world well enough.

So, I'd recommend it less as a comedy than a "period piece" instead.

Susan says

"The Joyous Season" by Patrick Dennis was written the year of my birth, 1964, and the best way to describe it is truly a trip into the past, the past being New York of the 1950s. It's the tale of Kerry, age 10, who tells the story, and his family. His parents get divorced, each finds a new love interest, plans a new wedding, and finally ... well, I won't spoil the ending for you. What stuck out to me was that this book was pretty much the definition of a "period piece." You see women in pink furs, households with "colored" servants, a big emphasis on society and one's place in it that we just don't seem to emphasize (or at least mention out loud) nowadays. Even the writing style took me back ... lots of italicized words and over-the-top, campy humor. It wasn't really my style of book, but it was an interesting look at a bygone time period.

Rebekah says

[
reconciliation (hide spoiler)]

Kerry says

Life is so much better with a Patrick Dennis book in hand. Written from the perspective [?] of a 10-year-old boy, the book parodies the hilarious, tragic, and downright baffling actions of adults trying to do the right thing for themselves and their children. The humor is so sophisticated--it's impossible to miss the most blatant jokes, but at other times you may blink and miss one more subtle. But Dennis doesn't ever bore, and so even if you're used to skimming over slow parts of other books, you'll want to read every word for fear of passing up a chance to to whoop like a crazy person when you come across phrases such as "hung like a donut."

Bill says

This is my favorite of Patrick Dennis' novels. It's a scream and a marvel of hilarious character development. The funny novel should never go out of vogue and neither should Dennis' work!

Nicole says

“Do you know how babies get born?”

“Well, sure. Yeah. Kind of.” Well, to level with you, I do and I don’t.’

An utterly charming take on a Parent Trap story featuring Patrick Dennis’s signature wit. Slides back and forth through time like a game of chutes and ladders, with lots of fun kid misunderstandings and a winning protagonist in ten-year-old Kerry and the sister he begrudgingly loves, Missy. A romp on a par with Auntie Mame. Does feature a few old timey slurs that take you out of it for a moment.
