



Miracle Baby

Laura Bradford

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Maggie Monroe stopped looking for magic ten months, twenty-two days and eight hours ago. Maybe it's his gift for fixing things. Or maybe it's because Rory's known Maggie is the woman for him since the day they met. But he seems intent on bringing the Christmas spirit back into the grieving widow's life...starting with a unique holiday surprise. Try as she might, Maggie's finding it awfully hard to resist a man as persistent—and appealing—as Rory. Hired to restore her uncle's century-old inn, the Michigan carpenter has taken her on as another task. With his faith and love, can she help along that special miracle only two can create?

Miracle Baby Details

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From Reader Review Miracle Baby for online ebook

Harlequin Books says

Miniseries: Baby To Be

Tracy (A Good Novel) says

Well, this is one of the first romances I've read that's just left me uncomfortable. I've got a lot of problems with it, and it just left me with a weird feeling. I'll explain those reasons further down. As I said before, spoiler warning on this one, but really, the title gives a hell of a lot away.

Maggie Monroe has fled to her uncle's Michigan inn in order to get away from her well-meaning but suffocating friends and family and to grieve the deaths of her husband and daughter alone. Ten months after their deaths, Maggie is still paralyzed by grief and isn't eating or sleeping.

She is met soon after her arrival by Rory O'Brien, the carpenter her uncle has hired to restore the inn to its former glory. Rory sees Maggie's grief and wants to try and help her, given that he also has a painful loss in his recent past. Maggie's uncle gives her, through Rory, the present of a "wishing ball," where a person can record their Christmas wishes and see if they come true in the next year. Maggie's wishes seem simple--to learn to knit, to remember her husband and daughter--but unobtainable to her. Rory begins to help her with them, giving her ways to achieve those wishes and future ones, and he finds himself attracted to the grieving widow. However, for every step they take, Maggie finds herself putting the brakes on any potential romance, afraid that any potential romance on her part would dishonor the memories of her husband and daughter. It's up to Rory and a few friends to get her to move past her grief and start a new life.

Okay. There's a lot that I felt was wrong with this book, but the general premise was one of them. I'll link here to a review of another book that was posted a few months ago over at Smart Bitches. That book also had a widowed person at its center, and Sarah (the reviewer) had a gripe with the fact that the heroine was pushing him to move on only five months after his wife's tragic death. Granted, Maggie in this book has been grieving for twice that, but I still felt that ten months was just taking far too many steps too fast, and it dampened my enjoyment of the book severely. I'll try and explain myself below.

I know the two schools of thought on this whole thing. On one hand, I've seen quite a few widowed people in my life, all of whom have waited at least a year or two before dating again. On the other, I've read plenty of Dear Abby columns where people have written in about the "appropriate" time frame for someone to start dating again after a death, and answers always vary. I've seen people say that after losing loved ones to long illnesses, the grieving is usually mostly done already, since there was a lot of time to cope with the death before it happened, but in the case of accidents or sudden deaths (as was the case with Maggie's husband and daughter here), it might take a little longer.

This was why I had issues with the premise--Maggie's husband and daughter were taken from her in a car crash, but ten months later, she is meeting and then sleeping with a man she's only met *a week before*. I'm not kidding. It's only been ten months, she's still grieving in a monumental way, and then she sleeps with a guy after knowing him for a week? Granted, she regrets it after, but... wow. The timeline really bugged me. There's also the fact that Maggie seems really fixated on grieving her daughter's loss, but that her husband

only gets a few mentions. I didn't doubt that she loved them, but something just seemed off. I think her husband deserved a lot more mentions than he was getting.

I think that's one thing that might ring false with me about seasonal romance in general--the timeline is so limited that the romance developed far too fast. Normally, a romance novel covers at least a few months; this one covered maybe six to eight weeks and I just thought that the insta-attraction was very hard to buy, especially when Maggie was in such a fragile state. The idea of the story--Rory helping Maggie find hope again and to move into a more manageable state of grieving--was great in theory, but the execution left me wincing.

Moving on from my problems with the timeline, I just had other issues with this book. The dialogue was painfully corny at times and just didn't ring true to me. It sounded too polished, like quotation marks were put around sentences that would've worked better as description. I just couldn't see people speaking like they did in this novel; it didn't work for me. As I've said before in my reviews, dialogue is the driving force for me, in both the writing I do myself and in the novels I read. I've always been told I have an ear for writing dialogue, so when it sounds "off" in novels, it usually hampers my enjoyment.

I also enjoy novels that show us plenty about the main characters' lives. All the romances I've read so far have shown family, friends, neighbors of the mains. Here, we had a grand total of five characters that we see on-screen: Maggie, Rory, Delilah (owner of a diner in town), Virginia (a waitress at said diner), and Iris (owner of a gift shop). Of all those, we see Virginia and Iris in only one or two scenes, so the only ones we really see are Maggie, Rory, and Delilah. Off-screen, we have Maggie's uncle (whose name only gets mentioned once or twice!), and Maggie's thoughts about Jack and Natalie. I really would have preferred a larger cast of characters; basically, all of Maggie and Rory's relatives are either dead or estranged, and aside from being depressing, it left the novel somewhat repetitive. Maggie going to see Rory. Rory going to see Maggie. Rory going to Delilah's diner. Maggie going to Delilah's diner. Rory *and* Maggie going to Delilah's diner. And... that's it. It would have been great to have a subplot of some kind, or to have trimmed down the repeated visits to each other's places and added in some interactions with other townsfolk or *something*. I just started feeling claustrophobic after a while and wanted the characters to go see other people.

There's also the "miracle baby" of the title... something that doesn't come about until perhaps the last twenty pages. And Rory is incredibly happy about conceiving a child with a woman he's known for a little over a month. Their whole attraction just felt far too rushed and I really don't know if I bought it in the end. The baby felt like a copout in order to see that Maggie got her happy ending and found something to believe in, but it just left me with a feeling that they were really rushing into something they probably weren't ready for.

Overall, I felt that this book could have done with a restructuring of the plot and a better timeline. The attraction was somewhat messily done and felt too forced for me to believe in it. The idea behind the book was great as an idea, but on paper, it fell incredibly flat. Not recommended.

Jeannie and Louis Rigod says

I wanted a good Christmas story and did I ever find it with *Miracle Baby* by Laura Bradford. I'm not a regular Harlequin reader but I do enjoy Ms. Bradford's work so...I went to Amazon and looked up her name. To my delight and I admit, some tears, I found this book.

Ms. Bradford has a way of reaching the reader as realistic. You could feel the profound loss and gains of

each character. In a way, I wish this was first in a series, because I want to know how Maggie, Rory, and even Delilah fare in the future.

I also felt these characters have depths not explored yet and so if Harlequin ever reads Goodreads...please sign Ms. Bradford for more books..soon!

So, if you want a wonderful reading experience, try these books. Then you will know what a Wishing Ball has to do with your life.

Ann says

Miracle Baby is a sweet story of the struggles of one woman, Maggie Monroe, who has suffered great loss in her life. She learns to accept her past and move on in order to give herself a hopeful future. I felt it was very true to life - with the main character fighting some bouts of depression over the losses she has experienced - but also ended with a message full of hope that is perfect for the holiday season. I would recommend this book for anyone looking for a feel good holiday story.
