

Books to make the Yuletide gay



Finally! Queer festive romcoms are having the moment they deserve **BY LIZZIE HUXLEY-JONES**

I've always loved romantic comedies. And even though I'm an author, cinema is my heart's home. I fell in love as a teenager, thanks to my beloved VHS tapes and DVDs I'd sourced from the big Woolworths – *When Harry Met Sally*, *Strictly Ballroom* and *Three To Tango*. All m/f romances, though there's a scene in *Three To Tango* where Neve Campbell tells Matthew Perry about sleeping with her female college roommate, while naked in the free-standing bathtub. That part of the VHS tape got a bit worn out over time. You know, because of science. This tiny moment of sexual fluidity in the love interest in a hetero romcom was like a drop of water in the desert to this closeted kid growing up in Wales. I've been chasing that feeling ever since, through movies and books, which I eventually began to write.

Over time, queer relationships showed up in more and more books and films. But there was one aggressively straight area of the romcom canon where we could still only be a sassy best friend. The holiday season.

Gays? At Christmas!? Absolutely not. *Love Actually* originally featured a lesbian romance, but these scenes were cut from the final edit (though given its tragic ending, maybe for the best?) Given the sheer volume of giant scarves in *Imagine Me And You*, I'm pretty sure it was set in winter.

Photo: James Drew

“Gays? At Christmas!? Absolutely not”

Carol has Christmas, but the vibe wasn't quite right. Then *The Happiest Season* happened.



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It got me thinking: could the sapphics really sit at the festive romcom Christmas dinner table? And what if neither love interest had to explain their queerness (or destroy anyone's art). After all, the straights have loads of that. Yes, there are usually Christmas tree farms to save, or festive deaths, but no one wrestles with declaring their heterosexuality.

And that's where writing *Make You Mine This Christmas* came from: a love story between two women, Haf and Kit, complicated by a chaotic fake-dating scheme between Haf and Christopher, Kit's brother. Other authors were bitten by the same gay bug. Christmas romance books gave me what I'd been looking for all along, so I'll tell you some faves. *Kiss Her Once For Me* by Alison Cochran and *The Christmas Swap* by Talia Samuels also feature the gloriously messy fake-date-the-brother-love-the-sister trope. There are Christmas tree farms to save in Courtney Kae's *In The Event Of Love*, and festive baking galore in Adriana Herrera's *Mangos And Mistletoe*, and *Honeymoon For One* by Rachel Bowdler.

More cinematic sapphics have arrived too, but I fell in love with these books. And I hope together, we're just the beginning. Here's to more queer joyful stories, for all seasons. **D**



Make You Mine This Christmas is out now