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Spotlight on

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Quintessential, modern love stories that are romance at its finest.

See the next page to enjoy a sneak peek from the Harlequin® Romance series. coming to my rescue."

He tensed. Neighbor? What neighbor kisses you like I did? "That's me, just the full-service landlord," he said, trying to keep the sarcasm out of his voice. He started to leave, but she put her hand on his arm.

"Jarrett, what I meant was you went beyond helping me." Her eyes searched his face. "I've asked far too much of you."

"Did you hear me complain?"

She shook her head. "You should. I feel like I've taken advantage."

"Like I said, I haven't minded."

"And I'm grateful for everything..."

Grasping her hand on his arm, Jarrett leaned forward. The memory of last night's kiss had him aching for another. "I didn't do it for your gratitude, Mia."

Gorgeous tycoon Jarrett McKane has never believed in Christmas—but he can't help being drawn to soon-to-be-mom Mia Saunders! Christmases past were spent alone...and now Jarrett may just have a fairy-tale ending for all his Christmases future!

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This November, Harlequin® Romance invites you to celebrate

A Fairytale Christmas

Meet the McKenzie sisters twins who couldn't be more different if they tried!

Dreamy single mom Gwen secretly longs for a happy-ever-after for herself and her adorable buy Claire, but can she ever learn to trust again? High-powered Gill craves professional success, and has liven up waiting for Prince Charming to sweep her off her stilettos. Ekcept this year, does rate have a surprise in store...?

With some Christmas magic, these sisters are about to meet the men of their dreams!

Find out how in two fabulous linked stories
by popular author

Susan Meier
and introducing brand-new author

Barbara Wallace!

SUSAN MEIER Barbara Wallace

A Fairytale Christmas



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A FAIRYTALE CHRISTMAS

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SUSAN MEIER Baby Beneath the Christmas Tree

Dear Reader,

When I was offered the opportunity to write this anthology, and was asked if there was a newer writer I'd like to work with, I didn't even hesitate. I instantly said Barbara Wallace!

I met Barbara at the Romance Writers of America national conference. Not only was she pretty, but she was also sweet and kind. I knew those qualities would translate into a great story. And they did. Barbara created a wonderful twin sister for my heroine, and put Gill in a romance readers will long remember.

It's always fun to write about Christmas. I believe it's a magical time of the year. I got a chance to really expand on that theme by setting "Baby Beneath the Christmas Tree" on a Christmas tree farm. Gwen and Drew are made for each other, but neither sees that because there are too many complications in their lives. Gwen is a young single mom, desperate to finish her degree and be able to support her child. CEO Drew is an absentee dad, getting a second chance with the sixteen-year-old son he barely knows.

They have an age difference, a class difference and even a totally different outlook on life. So it's more than magic when they realize each can solve the other's problem. But solving problems is one thing. Getting the courage to take another chance on love when each has been hurt before is quite another. And maybe, just maybe, they'll get some extra-special help from the spirit that permeates Teaberry Farms.

I hope you enjoy "Baby Beneath the Christmas Tree" as much as I enjoyed writing it! To an author every book is special, but for me this one truly is magic.

Susan Meier

* * *

To my friend Denise, who listens to every incarnation of every story long before I write it!

CHAPTER ONE

For as long as Gwendolyn McKenzie could remember the old timers in the tiny town of Towering Pines, West Virginia, had whispered that Teaberry Farms was enchanted. The rumor was that if you touched one of the Teaberry Christmas trees while wishing, your wish would come true.

Driving up the fir-lined mountain road that took her to the farm, Gwen glanced around in amazement, understanding why the legend had formed. Majestic evergreens punched into a vast indigo sky. Fat, fluffy white snowflakes pirouetted around the green pine branches, falling heavily, like frosting on sugar cookies, creating a magical world.

But when she reached the Teaberry mansion, Gwen's mouth dropped open in dismay. Two rows of tall windows with thin black shutters dominated the huge redbrick home, but the shutters tilted drunkenly from age and neglect. The Teaberry family hadn't even visited for at least a decade, so it didn't surprise her that the house was in disrepair. But she'd thought Andrew Teaberry, her new boss, would have called ahead to have the place prepared to be used. If the house was this bad on the outside, she feared it would be worse on the inside.

Still, a wisp of smoke rose from the redbrick chimney, disappearing into the inky sky, proof that the caretaker must have started a fire in preparation for the owner's return. At least she and her daughter wouldn't spend their time shivering while they waited for Andrew to arrive.

She got out of her beat-up little red car, opened the back door and reached in to unbuckle the car seat of her three-month-old baby. When she'd gotten pregnant by a boyfriend who'd bolted the very second she'd told him, Gwen and her twin sister Gill had both worried that she might fall into the same trap their mom had. Ginger McKenzie had married the man who had gotten *her* pregnant. But when twins were born he'd panicked, saying one baby was difficult enough to handle, two was impossible. He left town, leaving Ginger to raise the girls alone, watching out the window, longing for him to come home.

Six months after her mom's sudden death, finding herself in a position very close to Ginger's, Gwen had quickly shaped up. She didn't want to be one of those women who wasted her entire life pining after a man who didn't want her. She'd stopped believing in miracles. She'd stopped believing wishes came true. She'd packed away her dreamy side. And she now only dealt in facts.

Which was why she was at this rundown old house, about to start a job as the assistant to a man she'd never met. She had to pay her own way, support a child and finish her degree. This job might be temporary, but it paid enough money that if she watched how she spent she could keep herself and Claire through her last semester of university.

"Hey, Claire-bear," she said, lifting the little girl and rubbing noses. Bundled in her thick pink snowsuit, with the white fur of the hood framing her face, chubby, happy Claire really did look something like a stuffed pink bear.

Using the key sent to her by Andrew Teaberry, Gwen unlocked the front door and stepped inside. A huge curving ma-

hogany staircase greeted her and Claire. But so did cobwebs. A layer of dust coated the banister and the stairs.

"Wow. We could be in big trouble, Claire-bear."

Walking from room to room, she felt her dismay grow. Though the lights worked, the sinks had water and the kitchen appliances had been plugged into electrical outlets and hummed with life, the house was filthy. Her boss might have instructed the caretaker to get the utilities turned on and the furnace working, but he'd forgotten about cleaning.

Discovering a suite in the back that had probably at one time been the maid's quarters, Gwen set Claire's baby carrier on the dusty bare mattress of the single bed, but then lifted it up again. She'd arrived an hour early, hoping to make a good impression, but Andrew hadn't yet arrived. If she hurried, she could race home for a vacuum cleaner, mop, broom, soap and dustcloths, and still have time to clean this suite enough that Claire could sleep here.

Two hours later, Andrew Teaberry pulled his shiny black SUV into the circular driveway in front of his family's old homestead and his face fell in disgust. Pressed for time on this spur-of-the-moment trip, he'd thought ahead enough to hire an assistant and have the caretaker open the place, but he hadn't considered that the Teaberry mansion might not be habitable.

"So this is the fabulous Teaberry Farms." In the passenger's seat of the SUV, Drew's sixteen-year-old son Brody glanced around and snorted with derision. "Looks like a rat-hole to me."

Drew nearly squeezed his eyes shut in frustration. As if it wasn't bad enough that he had to move into this old monstrosity while he negotiated the purchase of a local manufacturing company, his ex-wife had decided to get remarried, forcing