



A Holiday of Love

By Jude Deveraux, Arnette Lamb, Jill Barnett, Judith McNaught

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In New York City in the late 1800s, a beautiful but clumsy angel turns a lonely man's life around...In medieval Scotland, the intrigues of a Christmas Mass imperil two Highland lovers...In Regency London, a world-weary lord receives an outrageous proposal...In modern-day Colorado, a daring and clever twelve-year-old plays matchmaker for his bighearted but impractical mother...

Filled with drama, adventure, and sizzling romance, *A Holiday of Love* will transport you to a world where love always reigns supreme!

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jude Deveraux is the author of more than forty *New York Times* bestsellers, including *Moonlight in the Morning*, *The Scent of Jasmine*, *Scarlet Nights*, *Days of Gold*, *Lavender Morning*, *Return to Summerhouse*, and *Secrets*. To date, there are more than sixty million copies of her books in print worldwide. To learn more, visit JudeDeveraux.com.

Jill Barnett is the *New York Times* bestselling author of fifteen acclaimed novels and short stories. There are more than five million copies of her books in print in seventeen languages.

Judith McNaught is the *New York Times* bestselling author who first soared to stardom with her stunning bestseller *Whitney, My Love*. There are more than thirty million copies of her books in print. She lives in Houston.

Arnette Lamb (1947-1998) was the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Chieftain*, *Border Lord*, and other historical romance novels. She won multiple awards for her writing, including the *Romantic Times* Best New Historical Author award.

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Chapter 1 from "Change of Heart" by Jude Deveraux in *A Holiday of Love*

The man behind the desk looked at the boy across from him with a mixture of envy and admiration. Only twelve years old, yet the lad had a brain that people would kill to have. I mustn't appear too eager, he thought. Must keep calm. We want him at Princeton -- preferably chained to a computer and not allowed out for meals.

Ostensibly, he had been sent to Denver to interview several scholarship candidates, but the truth was, this boy was the only one who the admissions office was truly interested in, and the meeting had been set to the boy's convenience. The department dean had arranged with an old friend to borrow office space that was in a part of town close to the boy's very middle-class house so he could get there by bike.

"Ah hem," he said, clearing his throat and frowning at the papers. He deepened his voice. Better not let the kid know that he was only twenty-five and that if he messed up this assignment he could be in serious trouble with his advisers.

"You are quite young," the man said, trying to sound as old as possible, "and there will be difficulties, but I think we can handle your special circumstances. Princeton likes to help the young people of America. And --"

"What kind of equipment do you have? What will I have to work with? There are other schools making me offers."

As the man looked at the boy, he thought someone should have strangled him in his crib. Ungrateful little -- "I'm sure that you'll find what we have adequate, and if we do not have everything you need we can make it available."

The boy was tall for his age but thin, as though he were growing too fast for his weight to catch up with him. For all that he had one of the great brains of the century, he looked like something out of Tom Sawyer: sandy hair that no comb could tame, freckles across skin that would never tan, dark blue eyes behind glasses big enough to be used as a windshield on a Mack truck.

Elijah J. Harcourt, the file said. IQ over 200. Had made much progress on coming up with a computer that

could *think*. Artificial intelligence. You could tell the computer what you wanted to do and the machine could figure out how to do it. As far as anyone could tell, the boy was putting *his* prodigious brain inside a computer. The future uses of such an instrument were beyond comprehension.

Yet here the smug little brat sat, not grateful for, what was being offered to him but demanding more. The man knew he was risking his own career, but he couldn't stand the hesitancy of the boy. Standing, he shoved the papers back into his briefcase. "Maybe you should think over our offer," he said with barely controlled, anger. "We don't make offers like this very often. Shall we say that you're to make your decision by Christmas?"

As far as the man could tell, the boy showed no emotion. Cold little bugger, the man thought. Heart as cold as a computer chip. Maybe he wasn't real at all but one of his own creations. Somehow, putting the boy down made him feel better about his own IQ, which was a "mere" 122.

Quickly, he shook the boy's hand, and as he did so he realized that in another year the boy would be taller than he was. "I'll be in touch," he said and left the room.

Eli worked hard to control his inner shaking. Although he seemed so cool on the exterior, inside he was doing cartwheels. Princeton! he thought. Contact with *real* scientists! Talk with people who wanted to know more about life than the latest football scores!

Slowly, he walked out the door, giving the man time to get away. Eli knew that the man hadn't liked him, but he was used to that. A long time ago Eli had learned to be very, very cautious with people. Since he was three he had known he was "different" from other kids. At five his mother had taken him to school to be tested, to see whether he fit into the redbirds or the bluebirds reading group. Busy with other students and parents, the teacher had told Eli to get a book from the shelf and read it to her. She had meant one of the many pretty picture books. Her intention had been to find out which children had been read to by their and which had grown up glued to a TV.

Like all children, Eli had wanted to impress his teacher, so he'd climbed on a chair and pulled down a college textbook titled *Learning Disabilities* that the teacher kept on a top shelf, then quietly went to stand beside her and began softly to read from page one. Since Eli was a naturally solitary child and his mother did not push him to do what he didn't want to do, he had spent most of his life in near seclusion. He'd had no idea that reading from a college textbook when he was a mere five years old was unusual. All he'd wanted to do was to pass the reading test and get into the top reading group.

"That's fine, Eli," his mother had said after he'd read half a page. "I think Miss Wilson is going to put you with the redbirds. Aren't you, Miss Wilson?"

Even though he was only five, Eli had recognized the wide-eyed look of horror on the teacher's face. Her expression had said, *What do I do with this freak?*

Since his entry into school, Eli had learned about being "different." He'd learned about jealousy and being excluded and not fitting in with the other children. Only with his mother was he "normal." His mother didn't think he was unusual or strange; he was just *hers*.

Now, years later, when Eli left his meeting with the man from Princeton, he was still shaking, and when he saw Chelsea he gave her one of his rare smiles. When Eli was six he'd met Chelsea Hamilton, who was not as smart as he was, of course, but near enough that he could talk to her. In her way Chelsea was as much a freak as Eli was, for Chelsea was rich -- very, very rich -- and even by six she'd found that people wanted to know her for what they could get from her rather than her personality. At six the children had taken one look at each other, the two oddities in the boring little classroom, and they'd become eternal friends.

"Well!" Chelsea demanded, bending her head to look into Eli's face. She was six months older than he, and until this year she'd always been taller. But now Eli was rapidly overtaking her.

"What are you doing in this building?" Eli asked. "You aren't supposed to be here." Smugly, he was making her wait for his news.

"You're slipping, brain-o. My father owns this place." She tossed her long, dark, glossy hair. "And he's friends with the dean at Princeton. I've known about the meeting for two weeks." At twelve, Chelsea was already on the way to being a beauty. Her problems in life were going to be the stuff of dreams: too tall, too

thin, too smart, too rich. Their houses were only ten minutes apart, but in value, they were miles apart. Eli's house would fit into Chelsea's marble foyer.

When Eli didn't respond, she looked straight ahead. "Dad called last night and I cried so much at missing him that he's buying us a new CD-ROM. Maybe I'll let you see it."

Eli smiled again. Chelsea hadn't realized that she'd said "us," meaning the two of them. She was great at the emotional blackmail of her parents, who spent most of their lives traveling around the world, leaving the family business to Chelsea's older siblings. A few tears of anguish and her parents gave her anything money could buy.

"Princeton wants me," Eli said as they emerged into the almost constant sunshine of Denver, its clean streets stretching before them. The autumn air was crisp and clear.

"I *knew* it!" she said, throwing her head back in exultation. "When? For what?"

"I'm to go in the spring semester, just to get my feet wet, then a summer session. If my work is good enough I can enter full time next fall." For a moment he turned to look at her, and for just that second he let his guard down and Chelsea saw how very much he wanted this. Eli hated passionately the idea of high school, of having to sit through days of classes with a bunch of semiliterate louts who took great pride in their continuing ignorance. This program would give Eli the opportunity to skip all those grades and get on with something useful.

"That gives us the whole rest of the year to work," she said. "I'll get Dad to buy us -- "

"I can't go," Eli said.

It took a moment for those words to register with Chelsea. "You can't go to Princeton?" she whispered. "Why not?" Chelsea had never considered, if she wanted something -- whether to buy it or do it -- that she wouldn't be able to.

When Eli looked at her, his face was full of anguish. "Who's going to take care of Mom?" he asked softly. Chelsea opened her mouth to say that Eli had to think of himself first, but she closed it again. Eli's mom, Randy, *did* need taking care of. She had the softest heart in the world, and if anyone had a problem Randy always had room to listen and love. Chelsea never liked to think that she needed anything as soppy as a mother, but there had been many times over the years when she'd flung herself against the soft bosom of Eli's ever-welcoming mother.

However, it was because of Randy's sweetness that she needed looking after. His mother was like a lamb living in a world of hungry wolves. If it weren't for Eli's constant vigilance...Well, Chelsea didn't like to think what would have happened to his mother. Just look at the man she'd married, the horrid man who was Eli's father: a gambler, a con artist, a promiscuous liar.

"When do you have to give them your answer?" Chelsea asked softly.

"My birthday," Eli answered. It was one of his little vanities that he always referred to Christmas as his birthday. Eli's mom said that Eli was her Christmas gift from God, so she was never going to cheat Eli because she'd been lucky enough to have him on Christmas Day. So every Christmas, Eli had a pile of gifts under a tree and another pile on a table with a big, gaudy birthday cake, a cake that had no hint of anything to do with Christmas.

In silence, the two of them walked down Denver's downtown streets, forgoing the trolley that ran through the middle of town. Chelsea knew that Eli needed to think, and he did that best by walking or riding his bike. She knew without asking that Eli would never abandon his mother. If it came to a choice between Princeton and taking care of his mother, Eli would take care of the person he loved best. For all that Eli managed to appear cool and calculating, Chelsea knew that when it came to the two people he loved the most -- her and his mother -- inside, Eli was marshmallow cream.

"You know," Chelsea said brightly, "maybe you're overreacting. Maybe your mother can get along without you." "Without us," she almost said. "Who took care of her before you were born?"

Eli gave her a sideways look. "No one, and look what happened to her."

"Your father," Chelsea said heavily. She hesitated as she thought about the matter. "They've been divorced for two years now. Maybe your mother will remarry and her new husband will take care of her."

"Who will she marry? The last man she went out with ended up 'forgetting' his wallet, so Mom paid for dinner and a tank full of gas. A week later I found out he was married."

Unfortunately, Randy's generosity didn't just extend to children but to every living creature. Eli said that if it were left up to his mother, there wouldn't need to be a city animal shelter because all the unwanted animals in Denver would live with them. For a moment, Chelsea had an image of sweet Randy surrounded by wounded animals and uneducated men asking her for money. For Chelsea, "uneducated men" was the worst image she could conjure.

"Maybe if you tell her about the offer, she'll come up with a solution," Chelsea said helpfully.

Eli's face became fierce. "My mother would sacrifice her *life* for me. If she knew about this offer, she'd personally escort me to Princeton. My mother cares only about me and never about herself. My mother -- " Chelsea rolled her eyes skyward. In every other aspect of life Eli had the most purely scientific brain she'd ever encountered, but when it came to his mother there was no reasoning with him. Chelsea also thought Randy was a lovely woman, but she wasn't exactly ready for sainthood. For one thing, she was thoroughly undisciplined. She ate too much, read too many books that did not improve one's mind, and wasted too much time on frivolous things, like making Eli and Chelsea Halloween costumes. Of course, neither of them ever told her that they thought Halloween was a juvenile holiday. Instead of tramping the streets, asking for candy, they would go to Chelsea's house, work on their computers while dripping artificial blood, and send the butler out to purchase candy that they'd later show to Eli's mom so she'd think they were "normal" kids. Only once had Chelsea dared tell Eli that she thought it was a bit absurd for them to sit at their computers wearing uncomfortable and grotesque costumes while calculating logarithms. Eli had said, "My mother made these for us to wear," and that had been the *final* decree; the matter was never mentioned again.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Curt Roepke:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be up-date about what going on or info even knowledge to make these keep up with the era which is always change and advance. Some of you maybe may update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to you is you don't know which you should start with. This A Holiday of Love is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and need in this era.

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Robert Carroll:

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Luann Bowen:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them friends and family or their friend. Are you aware? Many a lot of people spent they will free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. If you want to try to find a new activity that's look different you can read some sort of book. It is really fun for yourself. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a publication. The book A Holiday of Love it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. We were holding enjoying reading this book. In case you did not have enough space to develop this book you can buy the particular e-book. You can m0ore effortlessly to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not to fund but this book provides high quality.

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