



ROSAMUNDE
PILCHER
Winter Solstice

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When she leaves London for the pretty Hampshire village that she describes as 'my geriatric bolt-hole', Elfrida Phipps quickly feels at home. She has a tiny cottage, her faithful dog Horace and the friendship of the neighbouring Blundells - particularly Oscar - to ensure that her days include companionship as well as independence.

But an unforeseen tragedy upsets Elfrida's tranquility. She takes refuge in a rambling house in Scotland, which becomes a magnet for various waifs and strays. It sounds a recipe for disaster. But somehow the group becomes greater than the sum of its ill-assorted parts and Elfrida finds herself at the centre of a very magical Christmas.

Winter Solstice Details

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From Reader Review Winter Solstice for online ebook

Relyn says

I just finished listening to this book again. I have it on my iPod. I bet I listen to it at least once a year. Probably more than that. I adore Rosamunde Pilcher's world, and I think this is her very best book. I could go on and on about Pilcher. I have read everything she's written. At least, that I know about. I mourned when I found out that she doesn't intend to write another book. This is my favorite author. She is full of warmth. She writes of the comforts of home. A warm fire, comfy chairs, tea and a friend to share it with. She writes of people with understanding and acceptance. Her world is one I'd visit gladly. Without a doubt, Rosamunde Pilcher is one of my favorite authors. Except for *Winter Solstice*, my favorite of her books are the short story collections and tiny novels. The other novels are worth reading, but not my favorite. If you haven't read her, give yourself a treat. Run. Go buy her stuff and read a cold winter day away.

Read again - November 2009

12/5/13 - I finished this again. Loved it just as much this time.

12/12/14 - Listened again. Still love it.

Beth says

What a lovely, feel-good book to read during the holiday season!

Julie Durnell says

I read this shortly after it was published and don't really remember the story so am so glad I decided to re-read. It was absolutely delightful and the perfect time to pick it up! I could see where this was headed early on but it was the slow ride to get there that made it so special. The cast of characters, mis-matched and thrown together, works so well that I really would enjoy a sequel but know that is not going to happen.

Holly (2 Kids and Tired) says

I love Rosamunde Pilcher. I love everything she's written. Most people rave about *The Shell Seekers*, and while I love that book as well, it's not my most favorite.

Winter Solstice is delightful and thought-provoking. Pilcher's narratives are pure prose. You find yourself immersed in the world of Scottish tweeds and cottages and hospitality. She captures the intense feelings of grief, and the hope that comes when you learn to love again.

Lynne Wald says

This is one of my favourite books of all time. The writing is fantastic, the characters so well penned that I came to care about them, and when I put the book down, I wanted to continue to know these people, which to me is a good indication that the book is top notch. Scotland came to life for me here, and I really wanted to go there at christmas time and experience Scotland at that period. I have read it several times and will continue to pick it up on occasions.

Laura says

This fluctuates between heartwarming and trashy. A group of loosely connected people wind up together at an estate house in some small Highland town, where they make friends and heal their wounded souls, all in time for Christmas. Parts of it are very sweet, and I'm yearning now to spend a Christmas in the snowy north of Scotland, but the author's lack of moral clarity was so off-putting that it spoiled the book. It's as though she couldn't possibly be so judgmental as to condemn the stupid choices (like adultery and drunk driving) that cause much of the misery in the book. One of the characters is suffering a broken heart because her married lover wouldn't abandon his wife and children to be with her, so obviously what she needs is to find a handsome man who's heartbroken because *his* wife was unfaithful . . . right? They'd make a perfect pair! After all, she's beautiful, he's rich, and they're both sad. The solutions to everyone else's problems are almost as pat (though not so ridiculous), and the prose occasionally reads like a bad script for a "WE" television drama. "He ran after her, caught her by the shoulders, and turned her around to face him. He tilted her chin up and removed her sunglasses to reveal eyes sparkling with tears" or some such drivel. I mean, really — have you ever had someone turn you around by the shoulders? How would that even work with normal length arms?? Not all of it is that bad, but it's still a waste of a great setting and some really charming characters, a few of whom I'd come to care about in spite of the mediocre writing.

SheriC (PM) says

I was a little impatient with this slow-moving story at first, but in the end was glad that I stayed with it. It's a warm, comfortable story of people who adrift at the end of a relationship, who find one another and begin anew. It's not a Romance, but it is a story of love in its many forms. It was a little like a book form of those sweet, staid BBC and PBS shows that seem to mostly feature nice people sitting and talking, or walking and talking, with just enough offscreen drama to keep it interesting. I can see why so many people enjoy this story as an annual holiday comfort read.

Audiobook, via Audible. Lynn Redgrave provides an okay performance – it's possible that this book needed someone a little more lively to spark it up.

I read this for The 16 Tasks of the Festive Season, and I will be using it as the Book Joker for Square 9 December 21st: Winter Solstice is the longest night of the year in the northern hemisphere, also known as Yald? Night in Iran. The same day is the summer solstice in the southern hemisphere, giving them the longest day of the year. This book takes place during the weeks leading up to the Christmas holiday, but the key turning point takes place on the evening of the winter solstice.

Julie Barrett says

This is the third Pilcher book I have read. I very begrudgingly read the first one (Coming Home) at recommendation of a good friend. All the covers of Pilcher's books are so hokey and romance novel looking - I was definitely (negatively) judging a book by its cover and was rather appalled that my friend had thought I would like a book apparently written for my grandmother. But I read it & greatly enjoyed it. Now whenever I need a break from non-fiction or bloody murder mysteries or arty intellectual novels I turn to Pilcher.

She has perfected the art of the cozy book. I adore her descriptions of places and people. Others might think it too much, but I ascribe more to the Proust style of writing than to the Hemingway style and so find her detailed descriptions of rooms and meals and gardens quite nice. I can't bear cold weather and yet after I read of one her books I find myself wishing to spend time in a snowy Scottish village. I also find myself getting hungry after her description of a meal or a shopping expedition.

As for the characters, I think she has a true knack for creating upper middle class and wealthy English characters. Pilcher is not the author you want to read if you want to read about serial killers or rock stars or tortured artists or evil businessmen. All her characters, even the mean ones, aren't too bad. She writes from the perspective of several characters so by the end of the book you feel you know all of them.

One of the nicest things about her books is the way she neatly wraps up the story to make a happy ending for everyone. I get enough unhappy endings when I read current events. Sometimes I just want the happy ending. Her books remind me of Hollywood movies from the 30s-50s; one is pretty much guaranteed a neat resolution to the story. Now I don't want every single book I read to end so tidily, but sometimes it is just what the doctor ordered. At the end of this book (& the other two I have read), I was left with a feeling of satisfaction and yes, I admit it, a bit of weepy joy at the way the story ends. Pilcher's books are not for the cynical - if I was in the mood I could easily pick apart her book and make fun of it. But I don't want to. I enjoy the occasional dose of sentimental, old fashioned stories.

Roneice says

There is a limited number of books that I have read and reread many times. Re-reading this book as the Christmas Season begins every year has become part of My Christmas Traditions. Love the locations chosen and the images they stir up in my mind. Scotland, trains, older heroine. Have it on my iPhone and iPad. Want to know it is always at my fingertips,

Lorna says

This is basically a great big warm hug of a book! It gives you that warm fuzzy feeling inside. I read it every year on the run up to Christmas and every time I open its pages it's like revisiting old friends. It just gets better and better.

Oscar Blundell tragically loses his wife and young daughter in a car crash and retreats to a house in Scotland that he owns half of, intending to spend a subdued Christmas with the support of his dear friend Elfrida.

However it just so happens that there are a few people who end up taking up residence in the spare rooms of the big house over Christmas and it's a far cry from Oscar's original plans. However, now that he cannot hide himself away in his cocoon of grief the healing process truly starts to begin.

This really is a heart warming tale. One of the things I like about it is that all the tension is beneath the surface. Every character has their own story to tell but it's not steeped in high drama. You get the feeling that these are real people and they behave like real people would. There are no villains, just real genuinely likeable characters, and the author's done a very clever job of connecting them seamlessly until the threads of their stories are all picked up in one place.

It's rare for me to actually look forward to being able to read a book again and Winter Solstice is the perfect book to get you into the festive spirit.

A truly beautiful book.

Kathie says

Second read 2018: Found the ending much more emotionally sweet than the first time I read it. Seemed a little redundant in places this time but didn't affect how much I enjoyed Elfrida's and Oscar's lovely story. Note: Pilcher paints these two people as very old. They're 62 and 68. That's my age. That's not old!

First read 2011: I must give Rosamund Pilcher's books a 5 star rating. They are set in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland) so that immediately makes it a favorite read. Having been to England twice I can return there in her books. Her character development is bar-none. She paints pictures with words: the weather, the landscape, the person, their clothes, the event. I am drawn in so easily and find myself planted in Creagan, Scotland, looking up the lane at a mansion, feeling the cold wind across the sea, or crossing the square past the church to the market, and setting the kettle to boil for a cup of tea. She wrote Shell Seekers and I just re-read September earlier this year. This book is another wonderful story of Elfrida and her friend Oscar and all the drop-in guests they get for Christmas. I LOVED it!! NOTE: My sister Lona tells me this genre could be considered romance because the definition of a romance novel is a story of the way we would like to see the world or our lives OR the story of a Hero. I would love to live in Rosamund Pilcher's world.

Carrie says

This is probably my all time favorite Pilcher book. I love her writing and regularly return to reread old favorites, but Winter Solstice had become a yearly ritual for me. Like most of Pilcher's other novels, this is not an action packed book, but instead is a sweetly told story of people who come together to form an unlikely family.

Carolyn Agosta says

Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year. A brief time, when darkness predominates. Yet in this brief time, Rosamund Pilcher has set a story filled with light and warmth.

The book is classic Pilcher, full of detail and texture, housed in quirky old buildings and peopled with obliging neighbors, wet dogs, unexpected guests and a cast of characters we can grow to love.

This is not a book to be rushed through. Don't read it in bits and pieces, wedged into stolen moments during

lunch breaks or while waiting for your 11-year-old to finish soccer practice. Savor it. Sit in a comfy chair with a good reading light, have a nice restoring cup of tea and some biscuits at hand. (Okay, so here in the States we don't really have those kinds of biscuits - a good butter cookie will do.) Pace be damned. In fact, that's the whole thrust of the book - that these people are thrown together in a place and time that's out of their everyday world. They're forced to slow down, to wait, to exist in the here and now. And, by consequence, the few days they spend together make all the difference in their lives.

There is more than a story here. It's not just a collection of lovely descriptions, unique characters, and a touch of romance. There are so many things to enjoy - Elfrida, the aging actress who's not too old to fall in love, the unspoiled 14-year-old Lucy, gentle Oscar with whom you just begin to get a bit irritated until he finally takes action. That's the thing - there's a philosophy here, about living. About what makes every life and each day worthwhile. They will come on you unexpectedly, those moments in the book, and they are what makes this book, and others by Ms. Pilcher, the books you remember, and reread, and leave you wishing you could know what these characters, these people, will be doing the rest of their lives.

Winter Solstice, no matter what time of year you read it, is a true Christmas gift from Ms. Pilcher, to all her fans. And it is a treasure.

Mo says

I needed a go-to book, and I remembered that my GR friend Claude had recently read a few books by Rosamunde Pilcher, and had enjoyed them very much. Since our reading tastes are usually very similar, I thought I would try one. I'm glad I did!

I love how all of these characters treated each other with such civility. I miss such courtesy in this day and age.

This was a feel-good story all the way. It would be an excellent choice to read at Christmastime... or any other time for that matter. Thank you Claude, for reminding me about this author.

Katie Ziegler (Life Between Words) says

This was the PERFECT book to read during the holiday season. It was cozy and heartfelt and poignant! To me it felt like Kate Morton without the mystery. It was atmospheric and the descriptions of place and time (and food!) were so rich. And I fell in love with the characters (perhaps minus Carrie who I did not find to be as sympathetic as she was meant to be). I felt like I was spending my Christmas with this group of battered, but big-hearted people. It was a wonderful Christmas-time story.
