

Waiting for Her Isaac

Chapter One

*B*eth! Beth! Wake up, Beth! You've overslept again!" Beth Grant drowsily opened her eyes as her mother continued to shake her shoulder.

Eyes still heavy with sleep, she mumbled, "I'm sorry, Mom. What time is it?"

"It's only 6:30 Beth, but today is Ski Day, remember? You wanted us to get there early, so you wouldn't have to stand so long in line for the lift ticket."

Suddenly Beth sat up. "Ski Day! Oh, how could I have forgotten? I'll be right down!"

"Well, that's more like it!" laughed her mother. "Breakfast will be ready in about ten minutes." Mom left the room as Beth hurriedly began dressing.

Beth's bedroom was light and spacious. Her favorite colors of blue and white were obvious in the patchwork comforter on her white four-poster bed, the soft blue carpet on her floor, and the white priscilla curtains at the window. The early February day also seemed dressed in blue and white. Outside the window, the pale blue sky reflected soft blue shadows in the hollows of snow. Beth's eyes shone as she thought of the fun that lay ahead today.

But why did she have to be such a heavy sleeper? As she hastened out the door of her room, she glanced into the bedrooms of her brothers. As usual, they were all up ahead of her, beds made. Her bed! Uh-oh. Better go back and make it up quickly before Mom asked if she had remembered. Beth hoped for no more delays.

Running down the steps to the kitchen, she nearly collided with her father. "Oops! I'm sorry, Dad," Beth apologized. "I guess I was in too much of a hurry."

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“Slow down a little, gal,” replied her dad. “We won’t leave for a while yet. I plan on having seconds on your mother’s waffles. Have to have strength to face those slopes today.” Dad grinned at Beth. “It’s hard enough for an old man like me to keep up with you young people. Can’t let myself faint with hunger halfway down the hill!”

Beth smiled back and gave Dad a hug. “You’re not old! And thanks for taking us today, Dad. Ski Day is always one of the best days of the year.”

“You’re welcome, honey. But Beth, fifty-five is no spring chicken you know. I suppose you children will be expecting me to ski with you when I have to use canes for poles,” Dad finished as they sat down.

After the blessing, everyone was too busy eating to do much talking, so Beth had time to observe her father closely and reflect a bit as she tried to finish her waffle. Dad probably was older than most of her friends’ fathers, but he didn’t seem old to Beth. He was such a happy, easygoing man. Small lines were etched at the outer corners of his eyes, crinkling frequently throughout the day. Beth had known instinctively what the phrase “laugh lines” meant the very first time she had read it. Dad’s hair was gray, but he still had a young outlook on life. He enjoyed his children and their friends immensely, and tried to make sure his schedule was free to participate in all the family activities of their homeschool group. One Saturday every other month was chosen for these special activities. Beth enjoyed them all, but Ski Day was her favorite. The lodge chosen this year was a forty minute drive away, so she hoped Mom wouldn’t insist that she finish her breakfast. Beth was much too excited to eat, and wished her family was already on the way.

Mom noticed her agitation and smiled at her daughter, who was staring forlornly at her half-filled plate. “Beth, try to calm down a little. It’s only a few minutes after seven, and

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the lift line doesn't even open until nine o'clock," Mom reminded her. "We still have the breakfast dishes to wash and lunches to pack before we leave. If you can't finish your breakfast, why don't you begin making the sandwiches?"

"Thanks, Mom," Beth smiled gratefully. "I really can't eat another bite."

"Well I sure can!" exclaimed ten-year-old Adam. "Are there anymore waffles, Mom?"

Beth held back a sigh. If Adam wanted another waffle, John was sure to want one too, and that would slow everything down. John was eight, and small for his age. He tried his best to eat everything Adam did, hoping to catch up to his brother.

"Adam, I'm sorry, but you've had two and I'm out of batter. We need to finish up anyway, because I think your father wanted to have family devotions before we leave. Is that right?" questioned Mom, turning to Dad.

Dad nodded. "Last year everyone was so exhausted from skiing that they could hardly stay awake for devotions after we got home. Let's read the Word now, if everyone has finished," suggested Dad. "Beth, come and sit down."

Dad opened his Bible and read, then each family member prayed aloud. Dad prayed last, asking the Lord to help each member of their family to represent Christ in their actions that day. Beth felt ashamed of herself for her impatient attitude and silently asked God's forgiveness. She felt much more at peace as she rose to help finish the kitchen work, and resolved to just enjoy the day as God brought it about.

Soon Dad and Michael, Beth's eighteen-year-old brother, had the van loaded and waiting at the front door. Everyone grabbed last-minute items and headed out the door, just as the clock struck eight. Beth relaxed. They would be there in plenty of time, and she had even remembered the playdough, for Katie's little sisters. "What's that blue stuff?" asked John

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as he looked at the plastic bag on the seat beside Beth.

“Just some playdough I made for the Myers’ little girls,” answered Beth. “Katie and Mrs. Myers have been so busy all week that I told them I’d make some.”

“I’m sure they wouldn’t have had time to make any themselves. That was thoughtful of you, Beth,” Mom commented.

“Their little girls are so cute,” said Beth. “I wish I had a little sister. It seems as though all my friends have someone small in their family. It would be so much fun,” finished Beth wistfully.

“I know, honey,” Mom sympathized. “I often wish we had little ones too. But that wasn’t God’s plan for our family, and He knows best. You know that the Lord didn’t have your father and I meet until we were a bit older, and we are just grateful for the four children that He blessed us with. Let’s be thankful that He has given all of us to each other.” Betty Grant was quiet a moment, then softly repeated, “Very thankful.” Beth saw Mom’s eyes take on a faraway look, and she wondered if her mother was thinking back eight years, to when they had almost lost John as a baby.

At two months of age, John’s kidneys had failed, while they had been living as missionaries in Brazil. Over rough and bumpy roads, the family had ridden in an unreliable Jeep for six hours to get to the hospital in Belem. Beth had only been eight years old at the time, but she still remembered the fear she had felt for her baby brother as he lay so still and feverish in his mother’s arms. The doctors in Belem had found the problem very quickly, and soon baby John was much better. Beth believed that was the result of prayers from many believers in the little village they had left behind. Weeks followed in which John had undergone many tests and treatments. Then the mission board had brought the Grant family back to the States, and Robert Grant had taken a job as

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assistant pastor in their present church. His heart was still the heart of a missionary, and Beth knew he was deeply saddened by the fact that he had never been able to return to Brazil. But Dad had accepted the move as God's will, and he always expressed his gratitude to the Lord for allowing John to live. At five years of age, John had received one of Dad's kidneys in a successful operation. Although John would always be a bit small for his age, he wasn't really much smaller than his friends. The medication he had to take regularly to prevent his body from rejecting the kidney, plus the need to be near good emergency care, would always require the Grants to live in the States. Dad kept in touch with many of his missionary friends, however, and the Grants often had them as visitors on furlough.

Michael had also missed missionary life when they returned to the States, but Beth had only dim memories of those years. She didn't remember much about Brazil, and couldn't imagine a happier life than what she had now. She loved living in their town, and all the like-minded friends she had there. Of course, not all the girls her age at church were like her, but a good many were. There was a large homeschooling group in town, mostly made up of families from their church and another large church. There were activities she could attend twice a month or so with her brothers and Mom, plus the six family days a year that the fathers tried to attend.

Beth's best friend was Katie Myers, who attended the same church as the Grants. Katie was sixteen, just Beth's age, and was the oldest of eight children. Katie certainly didn't have a bedroom of her own, but she didn't mind being a bit crowded. She was a cheerful, gentle sister who obviously enjoyed helping her mom care for the younger children in the family. Her three youngest sisters were only two, four, and six years old, and they were the little girls for

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whom Beth had made the playdough. Even though Beth didn't have small brothers or sisters of her own, Mom encouraged her to be a blessing to the other families they knew with little ones, by helping them any way she could.

Beth and Katie shared many of the same beliefs and hopes for the future. Both looked forward to the day when they would be wives and mothers themselves, "keepers at home," as they often reminded each other. They also encouraged each other in their wish for courtship, and several of the other girls in their homeschool group had the same convictions. Beth looked forward to spending today with these friends.

As they pulled into the parking lot of the ski lodge, Beth silently thanked God for His many blessings. How grateful she was for the life God had chosen to give her!