

The Courtship Of Sarah McLean

Chapter One

Sarah glanced absently out of the window as she stirred the cookie dough. It was such a beautiful, warm morning and, with the windows open wide, she was able to hear the bluebirds singing sweetly in the lilac bush outside. Spring. Sarah loved all of the seasons because they brought such different things to do and see. But spring had always awakened something in her that she couldn't quite explain. It was as if the world was coming alive again.

Rachel, her little five-year-old sister who was helping make the cookies, broke Sarah's train of thought: "Did you remember to add that white stuff out of the big can? Once Mommy forgot and the cookies didn't taste right."

Sarah looked over at her little sister and smiled. Rachel's sparkling blue eyes and sweet, chubby cheeks made her the joy of the family. Her spirit was as joyful as her face, and she was a pleasure to have around when one was doing any task. Today, Sarah was extra glad for her happy chatter and eager questions.

Sarah had been feeling a little sad the last few days, without really knowing why. It seemed that she could say with Paul the apostle that she was perplexed but not in despair. But why did she even feel downcast? Why should she? Her loving family supplied plenty of activity and laughter. With three brothers and three sisters, what more could she want?

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Becky, her three-year-old sister, was known for her easy laughter and little acts of kindness. Why, just this morning Becky had surprised her by making Sarah's bed and putting her clothes away. Of course the fact that the clothes were actually dirty and should have been put in the hamper instead of Sarah's drawer didn't matter. And the bed . . . well, the bed didn't look made, but Becky sure thought it did!

Then there was Steve, a fireball of a brother at eight years of age. Steve never stopped. He played hard, worked hard, ran hard, and slept hard. Sarah felt so blessed to have a little brother who loved to run and fetch things for her. She knew it made him feel grown up when she asked for his help or advice. A couple of days ago she had asked his opinion about a new dress she had just finished making. You could tell by his smile that he felt so grown-up to be giving his nineteen-year-old sister advice. "I think you've done a fine job," he said, trying his best to sound like Dad.

Of course Ben was also a part of Sarah's loving family. Ben was her quiet, almost shy brother who was ten and a half years-old. He seemed to live for being in the outdoors, usually playing with his BB gun. Although he was never unkind, he was noticeably reserved. When most people in the family were just sitting around talking or playing games, if anyone was missing, it was usually Ben. It was hard for people to know what Ben was thinking or feeling, and Sarah was no better at figuring him out than anyone else.

Fourteen-year-old Janet was the member of the family who most enjoyed being with other families.

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All the neighbors appreciated Janet, who was always willing to help out when needed. The negative side of this was that Janet tended to think more highly of other families than she did of her own. She was often heard to say something like, “Well, I wish we could . . . like the John’s do . . .”

Jeff, the oldest boy in the family, had just turned seventeen three weeks ago. Although he was almost an adult, he still enjoyed playing with his brothers and sisters. Sarah especially enjoyed taking walks with him. Their walks had resulted in many interesting talks over the years, about what they believed and about their future. Jeff was just sure he was going to be a farmer and loved to share his dreams with his oldest sister. He never had to preface his conversations with “Now, don’t tell anyone this . . .” because he obviously considered Sarah his closest confidant.

Mom was a helpful, quiet friend who always had time for Sarah and her questions. While some of the other girls Sarah’s age had talked disrespectfully about their mothers at times, Sarah had never done so about Mom. She just couldn’t. Everyone, even people outside her family, knew Mom to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ. Sure, she wasn’t perfect. But Mom was willing to admit her mistakes and ask forgiveness of whomever she had hurt. She was certainly a role model for Sarah!

And then there was Dad. The man who had taught her so much about living a Christian life. He seemed to always know when to be funny, or when to be serious. Dad was kind to both man and beast. He didn’t want to hurt anyone or anything. Yet he had

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certainly taken his responsibility in discipline seriously. When Dad had to punish one of the children, it was obvious that he did so with love and firmness. Hugs and smiles always followed these episodes.

Little Rachel broke into Sarah's thoughts again, and she realized her sister had been chattering about the Larson's new baby. "Mrs. Larson let me hold baby Matt on my lap after church yesterday. He is so sweet and tiny and new. Babies are special, aren't they Sarah? Why is that?"

Sarah smiled down at Rachel's upturned eyes, so filled with questioning wonder. "God made them that way, Rachel. Maybe it is to remind us to take good care of them for Him. And maybe it helps us remember that Jesus said we must be like little children to enter the kingdom of Heaven."

Rachel was suddenly quiet for a minute, thinking over what her big sister had said. "Well, I sure love babies. I can hardly wait until I'm a mommy. Sarah, when will you be a mommy?"

Sarah paused for a moment, her spoon suspended in mid-air. Suddenly she knew the cause of her inner discontent. She was happy at home, and trusted her parents' decisions. She had been delighted when her parents decided that courtship was God's will for their children instead of dating. But now . . . well, now she had just turned nineteen. And no one had asked to court her yet. She didn't know if anyone was even interested in her. How Sarah longed for the day when she could have a husband, home, and children of her own. How eagerly she looked forward to the day when a tiny, sweet, new baby in her arms would be

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her own.

Sarah was ready in so many ways. Dad simply raved when she cooked the evening meal. That couldn't be just Dad being nice, because even Ben commented on how good her cooking was! After years of struggling with a touch of laziness in her cleaning, Sarah felt that she had finally learned to accept cleaning the house as something she should do well - "as unto the Lord." Although she was too humble to speak of it, her sewing skills were also excellent. She could make just about anything with a pattern, and even many things without a pattern. As for taking care of children and even small babies, hadn't she been helping Mom for the last ten years or so? Why, she had changed diapers, helped potty train toddlers, rocked sick children, bandaged cuts and scrapes, and helped resolve disputes more times than she could count. Yes, she felt that she was ready to be married in so many ways. But was there more for her to learn before God said she was ready? Was there some reason she had no young man courting her?