

Never the Bride

✖ By Cheryl McKay and Rene Gutteridge | WaterBrook Press | softcover | 320 pages | \$

It's no secret that many women dream their whole lives of falling in love, getting the perfect proposal and having the most beautiful wedding they—or anyone—could ever imagine. Jessie Stone is one such woman. Ever since she was a little girl, she has kept a journal dreaming of creative proposals, romance and wedding dresses. But Jessie's romance story has not come true. The man she thought she was going to marry betrayed her. She now has a crush on her best friend, Blake, who sees her merely as a friend. And speed dating has left her with only awkward moments.

When God shows up—she can really see Him—Jessie doesn't know what to think. He's real, but He doesn't reveal Himself to everyone. Jessie thinks she's going crazy and wonders if her childhood imaginary friend has returned. But she feels peace when He's around. He challenges her to give Him control of her life—especially in the romance department. It is not easy and she fights Him all the way. When Jessie finally surrenders, her dreams are fulfilled beyond her wildest imagination and she has a clearer understanding of who God is.

The plot is ingenious. The writing is clever and funny (a little bit like *Bridget Jones Diary*). The romance is, well, romantic. But what makes this novel special is that we get a glimpse of God. When He is visible to Jessie, she feels safe, secure, loved and adored. He is always a gentleman; He is kind and respectful—how she had always thought a man should treat her. And even when it seems like He isn't writing her love story, He is working behind the scenes. Only when Jessie tucks in close to God does she recognize and see Him in the world around her.

Although this is fiction, it contains undeniable truths: God is relatable. He wants to know us. He's constantly pursuing us but He isn't pushy. Single women, who this will especially appeal to, will enjoy this romantic tale. They'll relate to Jessie (they will laugh and cry with her). But even more so, they will have a renewed sense that God cares. He hears their cries. He knows their desires. He can be trusted.

Life is no fairy tale and there are no guarantees that everyone will have an earthly love story. But *Never the Bride* is a wonderful reminder that God satisfies the emptiness of our hearts, and He creates and fulfills dreams beyond our wildest imaginations—and journal entries.

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