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DON'T YOU  
MARRY  
THE  
MORMON  
BOYS



*a novel*

JANET KAY  
JENSEN

Don't You Marry  
the Mormon Boys





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JANET KAY JENSEN

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## D e d i c a t i o n

To my husband, my sons, their wives, and the next generation:  
Miles, Kevin, Emily, Benjamin, Marica, Jeff, and Paige . . .

And to my mother, who married a Mormon boy.



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## Chapter One



*Gather round, girls, and listen to my noise,  
Don't you marry the Mormon boys.  
If you do your fortune it will be,  
Johnnycake and babies is all you'll see.*

Dr. Andy McBride hummed the old Mormon folk song as he consulted the crumpled map. If his Eagle Scout training and instinctive sense of direction hadn't failed him, this large log home with the friendly wraparound porch and wooden rocking chairs would be his for the next two years.

He had one basic impression of Kentucky as he drove across the state: it was green. In contrast to his native Utah, a mountain desert region dependent on irrigation and careful water management, Kentucky's lush meadows and gentle rounded hills might have been the Garden of Eden.

He glanced at the map again, stepped out of his new red Jeep Cherokee, and stretched his travel-weary body. Holding the door open and slipping his backpack over one shoulder, he said, "Come on, Eliza, let's check out our new place." The dog leaped out, tail wagging, and began to sniff the unfamiliar turf.

Andy climbed the three steps to the porch and fished a key

from his pocket. With one click the door opened. He was greeted by a collection of smells: fresh paint, varnish, lemon oil, beef soup or stew, and—another sniff—lilacs.

“Anybody home?” he called, feeling foolish as his voice bounced off empty walls.

A stone fireplace filled with logs and kindling dominated the living room, while empty bookcases lined the opposite wall. The broad-paneled pine floor was freshly oiled and scattered with braided rugs.

He dropped his backpack by the door and followed his nose to the kitchen, searching for what smelled like his mother’s homemade soup. He lifted the lid of the slow cooker and smiled. Vegetable beef. A pan of fresh cornbread sat on the counter, still warm. The cupboards bulged with bottled preserves, and the refrigerator was well stocked. A vase of pungent lilacs sat on the kitchen table.

He walked down the hall, exploring. Five bedrooms. A sizeable family must have lived here. He pictured them eating dinner at the long oak table, the children doing their homework afterward, and popping corn over the embers of the fire when their homework was done. Patchwork quilts piled high on wrought iron bedsteads reminded him of his grandmother’s handiwork. He inspected the bathroom, clean and functional, supplied with towels and homemade pear-scented soap.

Each window in the home offered its own view: the meadow and hills from the front, the gravel road and the woods beyond it from the side, and the barn, pump, and outhouse in the back. A ring of mountains called the Knots surrounded the valley, but they were hills in comparison to the Rockies where Andy had camped, hiked, and skied since boyhood.

Eliza padded over. He stroked her head. “Wonder how old this house is.”

“About a hundred, near’s we can figure,” a deep voice boomed.

Eliza gave a sharp bark. Andy bent and grabbed her collar. “Eliza! Sit.” He looked up at the imposing figure of a man who smiled as he stooped to enter the doorway.

The stranger appeared to be nearly seven feet tall and held a

pie in his hands. "Blackberry," he said in a deep booming voice as he set it on the table. "Saw your Jeep in the driveway. We been watching for you. You'd be the new doc."

"I am. Andy McBride. And thank you for the pie. It smells wonderful." He extended his hand and almost winced at the strength of the man's grip.

"Too Tall Jones," the visitor gave a bashful grin. Andy wondered if he sang bass in the choir.

"Good to meet you, Mr. Jones."

The giant of a man grinned. "Heck, nobody calls me Mr. Jones. You can use my real name. Obadiah. Obadiah Too Tall Jones."

"Obadiah for short?"

"Short? Good one," the man chuckled. "Obadiah's from the Bible, of course."

"So is Andrew. But I was also named after my grandfather." Andy smiled back at the dark-haired visitor, clad in flannel shirt, threadbare denim overalls, and heavy work boots. He liked Obadiah already.

"I hear you're from Utah."

Andy nodded.

"Me and the missus, we listen to your Mormon Tabernacle Choir every Sunday morning. Fine music."

"Really? My mother sings with the choir."

"No kidding?"

"She loves it." A sudden image flashed in his mind: his mother standing with the other sopranos in a long blue dress, the stage lights catching the strands of silver in her hair, her eyes intent as she blended her voice with three hundred fifty others. It was a dream she'd had all her life, to sing with the choir.

"They call 'em America's Choir, don't they?" Obadiah said. "I have some of their albums. Well, now, that makes you kind of famous in my book."

Andy smiled. Eliza nudged his leg. "Oh, this is my dog, Eliza R. Snow. Eliza, show your manners and shake hands."

Obadiah squatted, his knees making sharp popping sounds,

and took the dog's paw, gently, Andy noticed. "She looks like a border collie."

Andy nodded.

"Well, she's a beauty. Now, that's right unusual for a dog to have a last name and a middle initial, too."

"I know. When I chose her from the litter, she just looked like an Eliza. Then, when her first winter came, and I'd throw her ball, she'd dive into the snow for it, no matter how deep. She'd shake her head back and forth, and use her nose to clear the snow away. There was a famous poet in Utah named Eliza R. Snow, and before I knew it, that's what I was calling my puppy. I hope her namesake doesn't mind," he said with an upward glance toward where he assumed heaven and Sister Snow might be.

"She's a lovely mutt." Eliza was on her back now, inviting a belly rub. "A real fierce one, I can see," Obadiah said. "What's the red coat for? She's not a seeing eye dog, is she?"

"No. She's a—a service dog. In training. She's . . . sort of a hobby."

"One of them helper dogs? I saw a program on TV about what they can do for people. Pretty amazing."

"Yeah." Andy jammed his hands in his back pockets and rocked back and forth on his heels. That innocuous question always caught him off guard, even though he had rehearsed a little speech just for occasions like this. "She's trained to anticipate my seizures," he'd imagine himself saying in a casual voice, "to give me warning so I can find a safe place and some privacy when one's coming on. But I've been seizure-free for three years, and I've been off medication for eighteen months now, so I really don't need her anymore." He had yet to deliver that speech.

The red vest still allowed Eliza to accompany him nearly everywhere. She liked being on duty, Andy was convinced, and he was too attached to her to think of ever giving her up.

"She must be right smart then." Obadiah stroked the velvet-soft hair in front of Eliza's ears, "But then most collies are, so I've seen."

"Eliza, shall we show Mr. Jones a few things you can do?" Following a series of commands, Eliza demonstrated her ability to

open cupboards and doors, turn lights on and off, walk backwards, give a gentle bark in her “inside voice,” and to search for the cell phone in his pocket and place it in his hand. She sat at his feet and did not budge when he offered distractions such as dog biscuits, a tennis ball, a squeaky toy, and her favorite tug-of-war rope.

“All right, Eliza, you’re off duty now,” Andy said as he untied her vest. “Good girl.”

“Well, I’ll be durned,” Obadiah said.

Andy nodded toward the dog biscuit on the floor and Eliza pounced on it, disposing of the treat in a few seconds. Then she trotted over to Andy’s backpack, nosed in an outer compartment, and retrieved a worn yellow tennis ball. She returned to Obadiah, ball in mouth, an entreating look in her eyes. Obadiah laughed, opened the door, and tossed the ball outside. Her nails scrabbling on the wood floor, the dog was a flash of black and white as she dashed after her toy.

“She’ll chase that ball for hours,” Andy said.

“Just give me a holler and I’ll send the kids over to play with her. They can work off some of their energy. Does she ever herd anything?”

“Oh, yeah,” Andy smiled, thinking of the last McBride family reunion, when Eliza had been in her element among the younger cousins. “She’ll round up kids and march them wherever she thinks they should go.”

“My brood could use a bit of herding now and then. Well, glad you’re here, Andy. Hope the place suits you.”

“It’s great. But it’s much more than I need.”

Obadiah cleared his throat and studied a nail in the floor. Then he looked up. “Well, we figured as you was a Mormon.”

Question Number One.

Andy nodded.

Eliza dashed in with the ball and skidded to a stop in front of Obadiah, who tossed it outside again. “And we thought you might be bringing a wife with you.” He coughed and gave a sideways glance at Andy. “Maybe two or three.”

Question Number Two.

“*Ab!*” Andy smacked himself on the side of the head. “I *knew* I’d forgotten something! LaVera! LaRue! LaDawn! LaVon! How *could* I have left them behind?”

Obadiah blinked, open-mouthed.

Andy grinned. “Nope, I’m single, Obadiah, and there’s been no polygamy in my family for over a hundred years.”

“But don’t some Mormons still—”

Andy shook his head. “No. Not for more than a century. There are some polygamist groups in the West and in other states, but they don’t have any connection with the LDS Church.” Andy felt a familiar pang. Louisa would be home in Gabriel’s Landing by now, probably promised to a man twice her age, a man with half a dozen other wives and a house bursting with children.

“They’re not real Mormons, you say?”

“No.”

Obadiah appeared to digest that information for a moment. “Was you ever one of them missionaries in a white shirt and a tie, riding around on a bike?”

Question Number Three.

“I spent two years in Finland.”

“Finland! Mighty cold there, isn’t it?”

Andy nodded, remembering frostbitten knees after a long day on his bicycle, and the warmth of the people who had invited them into their homes.

“Well, now, Finland must’ve been pretty exciting. Far as I’ve ever been from home is Lexington.”

“It’s beautiful here,” said Andy, happy to change the subject from polygamy and his own often-misunderstood religion. “Tell me about the Jones clan.”

He learned that Obadiah Too Tall Jones was his nearest neighbor, and that the man’s great-grandfather had built a dozen homes in Hawthorn Valley, including this one, and with his wife he had enjoyed the sunsets from the front porch for almost sixty-two years. Obadiah and his missus had six children, a couple of whom promised to be taller than their father, and “if they’re smart they’ll practice a lot of basketball.”

Obadiah was a carpenter. He told Andy he'd spent a little time at the house to "freshen it up," but other neighbors had helped, too, by donating rugs, quilts, furniture, and food. Wanted to make him feel welcome; it had been two years since a regular doc had lived right here in Hawthorn Valley. "Even had the phone company come over and wire this place for the Inner Net. You got a computer?"

Andy nodded.

Obadiah's kids had been begging for a computer, he said; they'd learned to use them at school. For himself, he couldn't imagine why he'd ever need one.

For Andy it was a link to friends, family, news, and a reliable source for medical updates. He'd rather be without a television than a computer, though he was such a fan of the Utah Jazz that when he was away during his residencies his father would record their TV games for him.

Obadiah had come to offer a proper welcome, he said, and to bring a pie from the missus, and did Andy need anything lugged in from that handsome red Jeep?

Andy knew that accepting Obadiah's offer was the neighborly thing to do. As they unloaded boxes of clothes, dishes, and books, he explained he'd always planned to keep his perfectly sound six-year-old Honda Accord when he moved to Kentucky, but his grandfather had insisted on buying him the Cherokee "with all the extras," including a sophisticated sound system. He would sleep well at night, he said, knowing his namesake was driving a reliable vehicle, where he could "hunker down" if he was caught in bad weather. It drove, the Navy veteran said, "straight and sure."

Obadiah assured Andy that he would appreciate four-wheel-drive when bad weather and worse roads made driving an adventure. And he'd best keep the lantern and flashlights handy for storms, too, when the power was "more'n likely to go out." He told Andy the name of the enormous trees in the front yard with large locust-like leaves and deeply furrowed trunk. "Kentucky Coffee Trees. The early settlers used to roast the pods and seeds when they didn't have real coffee. Bitter stuff. Poisonous if you

eat them raw. You'll want to make sure your dog don't chew on them. Most dogs won't because they taste nasty. You play this?" he gestured toward Andy's guitar case.

"Uh-huh."

"Do you sing?"

"Some."

Obadiah gave him a speculating look. "Tenor?"

Andy stretched to his full height of 5'7". "Yeah."

"Well, now, glad I got to you first. We need a singer and picker in our band. Had to retire our last one. I think his cheese has slid off his cracker. Old-Timer's Disease. Started to get real forgetful." Obadiah shrugged. "He's a Tuttle. Runs in the family."

"Oh."

"So are you interested?"

"Well . . ."

"Good. We practice tomorrow night at the high school gym."

"What do you play? Bluegrass?"

"Mostly. And old songs from the hills. They say the first hill people brought them here from Scotland and Ireland more'n two hundred years ago. Some of 'em are supposed to be more authentic than the versions the other folks sing today. I play bass. And I sing bass. You gotta meet Mel Daniels. He plays one mean banjo. And Harm Collins plays a fine fiddle. Bo Rawlins, he can play most anything you put in his hand—fiddle, hammered dulcimer, spoons, tin whistle."

"I like bluegrass. I like most kinds of music. I guess I could give it a try, and see if I can keep up with you guys."

"Fair enough. Mind if I try this out?" Obadiah ran a broad finger along the curve of the guitar case.

"Go ahead."

Obadiah took the instrument out of the case and quickly tuned the strings. His large hands flew over the guitar, nimble and skilled, and a familiar melody floated through the room.

Andy did a double take. "That's Bach."

"Yep." Obadiah continued to play. "Heard it on the radio. I play by ear."

Andy sat on a box and listened to the strains of “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring.” Louisa would have loved this, all of it—Kentucky, this home, and the exquisite music Obadiah was coaxing from his guitar.

The last note hung in the air for a long moment. Obadiah gently set the guitar back in the case and flipped the latches closed with a soft click. “So you’ll join the band?”

Andy blinked. “All right. But I don’t play like that. I mean Bach.”

“Neither do the others,” Obadiah grinned. “You won’t tell them, now?”

Andy shook his head. “No, but you’ll play for me again sometime, won’t you?”

“Sure. Now, tomorrow,” Obadiah promised, “I’ll show you around town.” He left with another bruising handshake, ducking as he passed under the doorway.

Andy surveyed his new home. Boxes littered the floor. They could wait. Evening was approaching and he was too tired to unpack tonight. Despite this comfortable home, its beautiful surroundings, and the friendly welcome from his neighbor who played classical guitar by ear, a sudden wave of homesickness and uncertainty washed over him. Forgetting about the tempting soup and cornbread waiting in the kitchen, he plopped into a large armchair, sinking deep into the cushion. Elbows planted on his knees, chin in hands, he formed a slumped triangle as he thought of home and family and the life he’d left behind.



His mind wandered to an April day at the University of Utah campus, where the broad leaves of venerable old Horse-chestnut trees formed cool green umbrellas of shade. Trying to concentrate on organic chemistry and ignore the signs of spring around him, he heard rustling in the grass. He looked up and there she stood, two dripping ice cream cones in her hands.

Every encounter with Louisa Martin felt like seeing her for the first time. She was a vibrant, lovely woman with masses of

waist-length auburn hair falling over her shoulders, her eyes hazel or green depending on her mood, the weather, or the color she wore, a few light freckles dusting her nose and cheeks.

“Mint chocolate chip,” she said with a wry smile. “My treat.”

He’d scored one point higher than Louisa on the last neurology exam. Their running bet assured several ice cream cones a week, but Andy usually had to buy them. Louisa wasn’t easy to beat. Not that he needed to compete with her. He just wanted to study with her, share a laugh, or take her for a hike in the canyon. Eliza would come too, and when he took off her vest, she would take a swim in the creek, scramble to the bank, and spray them with a vigorous shake of her coat.

He wanted a life with Louisa Martin.

But graduation from med school put an end to hikes in the canyon, impromptu ski lessons, free concerts on campus, and conversations late into the night. Since graduation they’d had no contact at all. Residencies in other states had sent them in opposite directions for four years, and casual communications would have been too painful for both of them. After residency he had packed his truck and headed for Appalachia. He assumed Louisa had returned home to Gabriel’s Landing, as promised.

Of course, now that their training was completed, nothing compelled them to stay apart. Nothing except the rigid traditions of Gabriel’s Landing, a community founded on the practice of polygamy, a way of life Andy could not live and Louisa could not escape. It was as simple, as complicated, and as heartbreaking as that.



A moist prompt from Eliza’s nose roused Andy from his memories. He gave her a vague pat, sighed, and gazed around at the boxes piled on the floor. The evening shadows were deepening and the hills loomed in the distance, dark, mystifying, filled with a compelling presence he could sense but could not name.

He had never felt so lonely in his life.

He glared at Eliza. “Whose idea was this, anyway?”

WHEN ANDY MCBRIDE meets Louisa Martin, he knows he has found the girl for him. There is only one problem: polygamy—a lifestyle that Louisa cannot escape and Andy will not embrace.

AS MEDICAL STUDENTS at the University of Utah, Andy and Louisa fall in love—but can a boy from mainstream Mormon life and a girl raised in polygamy overcome the cultural barriers between them? Both realize that their choices will not only affect their own lives but will also impact their family, friends, and even their communities. Fearing that the sacrifices required of them will be too great, they go their separate ways.

YET FOR ANDY IN KENTUCKY and Louisa in Utah, life does not go as they'd planned. While Andy is serving as a country doctor and trying to bury his pain, Louisa is coming to terms with the fact that all is not as perfect in her tight-knit community as she'd always believed. As doctors, each will have to choose between keeping the peace in their communities or doing what they know is right. Someday, both will have to face their past and decide if they can make the sacrifices to be together.

SET IN THE RED HILLS OF SOUTHERN UTAH, the cosmopolitan center of Salt Lake City, the Smoky Mountains of Kentucky, and the lake-studded country of Finland, *Don't You Marry the Mormon Boys* is the heartfelt and engaging story about the power of love and acceptance in an ever-changing and often surprising world.

*A thoroughly captivating story with unusual characters. Janet Kay Jensen shows us that truth and love can triumph over anything life might throw our way.*

—RACHEL ANN NUNES, BEST-SELLING LDS AUTHOR



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