

Luke's First Bride

Love Multiplied, Book Three

By

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Published by Blushing Books®,
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ABCD Graphics and Design
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901

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Jamison, Rayanna
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eBook ISBN: 978-1-68259-442-1
Cover Design by ABCD Graphics & Design

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Chapter 1

Green Valley, Utah
2 years prior

Rosa awoke from a deep sleep and sat up in bed. A cold sweat matted her bangs to her forehead and her heart was beating fast in a rhythm that seemed to scream his name. *Lucas. Aaron. Miller. Lucas. Aaron. Miller. Lucas. Aaron. Miller.* Over and over, the words rang through her head as her heart beat in with them. It was as if her brain had shut off and was now incapable of thinking any other coherent thoughts. Lucas Aaron Miller. Lucas Aaron Miller. Lucas Aaron Miller.

Rosa drew in a deep shuddering breath and tried to slow her racing heart. Was this it? Was this her vision, her word from God, the name of her future husband? Was she really one of the lucky few that found out the name of her intended before she was even old enough to do anything about it? Rosa had just had her sixteenth birthday last May. She was days away from starting her junior year at Green Valley High School. That meant she had at least two years of knowing her future husband's name before they could even begin courting. Rosa groaned. No one could tell her God didn't have a sense of humor. How in the world was she supposed to keep a secret this big for two whole years? She had trouble keeping a secret for two whole minutes!

But rules were rules. In the small, polygamist town of Green Valley, they believed that a woman got a vision, or a word from God, which told her who she was supposed to marry. Normally, upon receiving this word, if the woman felt ready, she would take the name to the bishop, who would inform the intended husband and a short courtship—usually about a month—would take place before the wedding.

However, there was a catch. It didn't happen often that Rosa knew of, but every once in a while, a young lady would receive her name before she turned eighteen. When that happened, they could do nothing. They had to basically just sit on the information and pray for that person, until their eighteenth birthday. After that, they could take the proper steps at any time they felt inclined and ready. There was no obligation to rush, although most women in Green Valley married in their early twenties or younger. Young women, such as herself, who found their intended early, were required to keep the secret. To do anything else had caused so many problems in the past, that Bishop Miller had decided years ago it was in their best interest to keep it to themselves until they were of age, imploring them to keep the secret even from their parents. She understood why—it was just, oh, heck—her brain started to wake up and she began to realize the implications of her situation. Bishop Miller. Lucas Aaron Miller. Luke Miller—she was supposed to marry the Bishop's son? It couldn't be!

Rosa sat frozen in bed as the truth set in. Lucas—Luke as she knew him from school—was to be her future husband. How had she gotten so lucky? She was just Rosa, daughter of a

grocer and a housewife. She was nothing special. In her family, she was not the prettiest, that was her sister Laura. Nor was she the smartest, that honor belonged to Margaret. She wasn't the most athletic, either. Everyone knew that title most certainly went to Jean Marie. Beth Anne of course was the kindest, and Josie was the funniest. And then of course, there was Emily who was just all around amazing, a total golden child.

What was Rosa? All her life she had just been the token middle child, mediocre through and through. And now she was to wed the bishop's son?

Luke was everything she was not. Tall, with honey colored hair and deep green eyes, Luke excelled at everything he did. He had graduated last spring as valedictorian. He had been class president, and captain of the lacrosse team. When he wasn't doing those things he had tutored grade school students, and helped his dad in church.

Rosa was fully awake now, and her mind was racing. She woke up more each passing minute, and as she did, she began to have more and more panic inducing thoughts.

These were the last few days of summer before school started. They were supposed to be full of barbeques and picnics and other celebrations within her small community. One of which was a party at Bishop Miller's house. Tonight. And it was a party that Rosa and her family would be attending. It was, she recalled, a goodbye party for Luke. In two days, he would leave for seminary school.

Rosa felt the dread fill her heart as she remembered the conversation with her mother about the party. Luke was heading off to seminary school. When he returned in two years, Bishop Miller would retire and Luke would take his place as the bishop of Green Valley.

And Rosa would be eighteen.

Rosa glanced at the clock and groaned. Four-thirty. And she knew she would never be able to get back to sleep now. Getting out of bed, she donned her favorite fluffy robe over her nightdress and went down to the kitchen to fix a pot of tea.

She was still sitting at the kitchen table an hour later when her mother came down, tying her robe as she walked.

"Oh good, you've put the tea on," her mother exclaimed, picking up the pot to pour herself a cup. "Why, Rosa, this tea is barely warm! How long have you been sitting down here? I was expecting you girls to sleep in today, and take advantage of these last few days before school starts. Why are you up so early and looking so troubled? Couldn't you sleep?"

"No, mama," Rosa said with a sigh. In her exhaustion, she wanted nothing more than to pour out all her troubles, curl up in her mama's arms, and have a good cry. She knew she would feel better for it. But, she also knew her mama, and how she would feel about her daughter marrying a bishop. She would have her wed the minute she turned eighteen, and the whole town would know her secret by the end of the party tonight.

No, it was imperative that she follow the rules set in place and keep her secret. Even if doing so nearly killed her. "I just had a bad dream," Rosa lied.

"Well, since you're up, why don't you go get dressed, and then help me make a few pies and pasta salads for the party tonight. Later on, when Sue and I take your sisters to get their

haircuts, you can take a nap if you want. You'll have the house to yourself, and you can rest up before this evening. It should be a mighty fine party, yes indeed."

Rosa smiled at her mother's country expressions. Mary Rose was from the south, originally, though she tried to keep it hidden most of the time. But it always came out if she was either extremely pleased about something or really angry. For whatever reason, Rosa guess that she was be very excited about the party.

Rosa however was dreading it. How would she look Luke, or his father, in the eye knowing what she knew? She considered herself a total tool around boys as it was. She had no idea how she would get through tonight without making a complete fool out of herself in front of her future husband.

The only good news was, after tonight, he wouldn't be around much over the next two years, so all she had to do was make it through the party without any mishaps, and she would be good. Perhaps she could play sick and get out of going. Rosa shook her head and dismissed the thought. As tempting as it was, she really *did* want to go. This was the last chance she would have to get to know Luke at all for the next two years. She would just have to make sure she was ready for this.

Her mother was staring at her quizzically now, as she had not moved from the table yet or acknowledged her mother's request. She really had to pull herself together, or she was never going to make it through the next two years with a secret like this one.

"Okay, Mama," she said, getting up from the table with a yawn. "What kind of pies are we making?"

* * * * *

Lucas scanned the sprawling field in his backyard with a groan. His parents were really making a big deal out of this. He didn't recall any of his sibilings getting such a sendoff when they left for college. Of course, as the youngest in his family by many years, he had been quite young when his sibilings, who were all close in age, had left for college. Perhaps his memories were fuzzy.

Whatever the case, this was going to be quite the shindig he could tell. Dozens of picnic tables lined the field and paper lanterns hung from the trees. The deck was rigged with twinkle lights. You would think he was getting married instead of just leaving for seminary school. His mother, the town's unofficial cake baker, had whipped up a cake worthy of a wedding celebration that was for sure. The three tier cake was his favorite spice cake, and it was square instead of the traditional round that she used for wedding cakes, but the differences stopped there. It was quite embarrassing. But nearly the whole town would be coming tonight, so the cake had to be quite large. Still, he wished she could have gone with a few simple sheet cakes, or even just cupcakes. Cupcakes would have been good. A three tier cake was so ridiculous.

He knew the big deal was being made simply because he was chosen to succeed his father as bishop, a title he wasn't sure he wanted. Yes, he had made the decision to go to seminary school on his own. Religion fascinated him, and he had always loved learning about its theology and customs. He loved being in the church with his dad, and feeling like he made a

difference in people's lives. Bishop was a path he had considered, but his parents had taken it for granted once he announced his acceptance into his father's Alma matter. He had planned on taking the next two years to soul search and really consider his options.

But now, it seemed as if the decision had been made for him. His parents were already planning for his father's retirement, and his mother would finally open the bakery she had always dreamed of having. It was something her duties as a bishop's wife hadn't allowed her time for. Now he felt like doing *anything* else but taking over as bishop would be putting a damper on her dreams. It was a lot of pressure.

Luke turned from his bedroom window, just as his mother, Nancy, knocked on his door. "It's open," he yelled, and she poked her head in. He took in her outfit and shook his head. She was wearing one of her favorite Sunday dresses, which was, in his opinion, a bit much for a summer barbeque.

"Is that what you're wearing?" she asked, obviously trying to conceal her disdain at his choice in wardrobe.

He had kept it simple, and comfortable, opting for new jeans, and an open button-down over a college T-shirt. He looked nice, but not fancy. "Is that what *you* are wearing?" he countered pointedly.

His mother said nothing, just pursed her lips, and frowned at him. He could tell she was biting her tongue. He could see she was trying not to be overbearing, but sometimes she just couldn't help herself.

Luke gave her a quick kiss on the cheek and brushed past her, on his way down to the kitchen. He would help her carry the cake and the trays of food out to the yard, right after he snagged a few bites for himself. There was less than an hour before the party started, and if he knew his mother, she was about to start stressing big time.

"You really went all out, Mom," he asked as he snagged a few stuffed mushrooms off a tray and popped them unceremoniously in his mouth. "I think you guys are making way too big a deal out of this. It's just college. Lots of kids are doing it," he joked.

She swatted his hand as he made a move to reach for another mushroom, and glared at him, unconvincingly. "It's not just about you leaving for seminary, Lucas. Your father and I are sending our last child out on his own. We will officially be empty nesters. It's about celebrating new beginnings for our family. Not everything has to be all about you, you know?" she teased with a wink.

"It doesn't?" Lucas gasped, feigning shock. He loved moments like this, when his mom lightened up and joked around. She really could be a lot of fun. It was just sometimes, it was too easy for her to get wrapped up in the pressure of being a bishop's wife.

This was yet another reason he wasn't sure that he was cut out for the role as bishop. When he married, he wanted his wife (or wives, for that matter) to be able to just be herself. He didn't want them to get caught up in anybody's expectations but their own. Well, and maybe his. When Lucas married, he knew he wanted a traditional domestic discipline marriage, like most of the members of his community. It's what his parents had and it just worked.

Plus, this past year in the church, he had gotten to sit in as his dad did some counseling with couples who were utilizing the lifestyle in their marriage, so Luke had a better understanding of it than most his age. He knew it was more about making an easier path past the obstacles that creep up in a marriage and that when practiced correctly, it could build up both the husband and wife into becoming their best selves. For him, the plural lifestyle was still up in the air. He could go either way, as he had no deep feelings for or against it.

Technically, most of his life he had been raised in a monogamous polygamous marriage, meaning that when he was five years old, his father's first wife, and the mother of most of his siblings had passed away in a tragic accident. For most of his life, it had been just him and his parents. It was an odd situation for the bishop of a polygamous community to live an essentially monogamous lifestyle, but that was just the way things had worked out. The community had loved Cordelia, just as they loved his mother Nancy, and supported his father completely. After all, it wasn't his fault Cordelia had been taken from him, or that his father had never been called into another marriage.

It was however the reason Lucas had no major leanings toward either polygamy or monogamy. He saw benefits and downsides to both lifestyles, and planned on letting God make that decision for him. He was open either way. What he wasn't open on, however, was the idea of domestic discipline with his marriage. He would be the head of his home. Anything less would be a deal breaker.