



When Love Must Wait (Hope of the South Book 3)

Sherri Wilson Johnson

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Will a marriage of convenience quiet God's call or will a former love interest's homecoming only revive it?

Annabelle's heart is as drought-stricken as the creek beds of Marietta, Georgia. After a devastating loss, she turns her back on missions work and forges ahead to a marriage of convenience. She'll do whatever God wants and whatever her betrothed allows—as long as it's from the safety of her community. Marriage to Jarrett MacKaye, the town's copper supplier, is her perfect escape. Until Luke Cavanaugh comes home...

Leaving behind a tragic past, Luke returns home for a respite after four years out West. His feelings rekindle for Annabelle, whom he let go of years before, but she belongs to someone else now. Although he'll never win her love, he challenges her to embrace all that her life can be. He wants to help her unearth the secrets of her heart—yet keep his own secrets buried deep.

Annabelle is afraid to leave the safety of her community. Luke is too restless to stay. When storms hit Marietta and its surrounding cities, they must embrace their faith in God and trust each other in order to revive their struggling town and their withered hearts.

This Christian Romance is set in historic Marietta, Georgia and the small town of Elizabeth outside of the city. Unlike Sherri's other Victorian Romances, most of this story takes place on the homestead and not in town. Annabelle helps her father raise hunting dogs, so she spends her time tending to them and to the farm and not at galas or fancy parties, like the characters in *To Dance Once More* and *To Laugh Once More*. Sherri was born and raised in Marietta so she knows the setting well, and you'll feel like you're right there with the characters in this Inspirational novel.

*** EXCERPT ***

Chapter One

Elizabeth Community

Outside of Marietta, Georgia

June 1896

"Mama is going to kill me unless I fall to my death first!" Annabelle Bucaloo gripped the weathered stones at the top of Mr. Mitchell's dam on Noses Creek. Blanketed by her yellow calico skirt, her legs dangled beneath her. Her feet begged to find a foothold. If she didn't find one in a matter of seconds, she'd lose her life because of her refusal to heed Papa's warnings about the shortcut through the woods.

Water trickled over the top of the dam. Annabelle's blood pounded through her veins. Why hadn't she walked along the water's edge instead of cutting across by way of the dam? Sweat dripped into her eyes, as mist sprayed in her face, but she blinked them away.

She peered over her right shoulder to the rocks and creek below. She fought the vision of her body at the bottom of a dam, spread out on the rocks. Her life couldn't end that way. Except it'd be a less embarrassing way out of her upcoming marriage to Jarrett MacKaye.

"Shame on you!" She gripped the jagged stacked-stone wall. Her fingers lost all sensation, and she searched for a place to position her feet before her hands failed her. If Jarrett could see his fiancé now, he'd chastise

her for her unladylike and uncultured position.

She raked her bottom lip with her teeth and groaned until she managed to lift her body a fraction of an inch, enough to shove her right boot into a moss-covered crevice in the wall. She found another nearby crevice for her left foot and released her breath in a harsh exhale. If she could rest for a brief moment, maybe her heart would cease its hammering and she'd gather the strength to climb up the wall to the top. Maybe her good deeds wouldn't be canceled out by her sense of adventure.

"Lord, please give me the strength to climb this wall. I'm but a weakling and You are mighty and strong."

Annabelle stretched her legs until they trembled. She slid her right hand along the top of the wall and found a new cranny in which to anchor her fingers. Tears mixed with perspiration, but she pressed onward to her goal....

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