



The Sister Wife

Diane Noble

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An unlikely shipboard romance occurs in 1840 between a wealthy young Mormon convert from England, Mary Rose Ashley, traveling with her family from England to America, and Gabriel MacKay, one of the builders and designers of the new Cunard line who is evaluating the clipper ship's performance. Married on board, the newlyweds make their way to the new Mormon settlement in Nauvoo, Illinois and are just settling in when Prophet Joseph Smith receives a revelation from God about polygamy. As one of their close friends from the voyage is suddenly widowed during anti-Mormon riots, Gabriel announces he will marry the beautiful Bronwyn and raise her baby as his own.

Mary Rose loves Bronwyn like a sister, but cannot imagine sharing her husband. Assuming that the relationship will remain platonic, she agrees, and Bronwyn and Mary Rose begin to come to terms with what plural marriage truly entails. Is this really what God wants for them?

The Sister Wife Details

Date : Published June 22nd 2010 by Avon Inspire

ISBN : 9780061962226

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Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Christian Fiction, Religion, Polyamory, Polygamy, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit

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From Reader Review The Sister Wife for online ebook

Geri Reads says

I don't know how to rate this one, honestly. I wasn't supposed to read this but it was available on Scribd, so I started browsing. Surprisingly, I got hooked and finished it in 5 hours or so.

The writing is definitely 5 stars but the subject matter was altogether uncomfortable for me. I did appreciate the historical context this book was framed on. Polygamy is such a fascinating topic, and this book gave a stark portrayal of polygamy during the early days of Mormonism.

Camille says

The Sister Wife by Diane Noble

This is the first book in Diane Noble's new series, the Brides of Gabriel.

The Sister Wife is a historical fiction novel, set in the late 1800s at the time that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon church) was being founded. In fact, some of the characters include Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

I was drawn to this book because: (1) I did my undergrad work in Utah, and consequently learned much about the religion, and (2) I find polygamy fascinating and have read quite a few memoirs of women who escaped modern-day polygamous cults.

To be clear, while the roots are the same, current polygamists are NOT part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that we think of when we think of Utah. Instead, they are part of a variety of other break-off churches such as the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The LDS Church does not accept polygamy. The FLDS church believes it is required for salvation.

Anyway, this book was recommended to me as a good series to try as it is fiction about polygamy.

The book follows the story of Mary Rose whose grandfather converted to the LDS church in England, and decided to move himself and his family (including her) to the United States where the LDS church was founded a few years earlier by Joseph Smith. Mary Rose, though baptized, is a bit unsure about the church and if it is true. On the ship she meets Gabriel, a man who has always had no interest in being religious. However, when they witness a miracle performed by a church elder, they both begin to believe that this new church represents the true way, and they are married to one another before the ship reaches the United States.

On the ship Mary Rose becomes best friends with Bronwyn, who has also converted to the church and is traveling with Mary Rose to help care for Mary Rose's nieces and nephew. Bronwyn and her husband have their first child while on the ship on the way to the United States, and Bronwyn becomes Mary Rose's best friend, rather than her servant.

Mary Rose and Gabriel are madly in love with each other, but when they have been in the United States for a while begin to see problems unfolding in the church. Gabriel and Bronwyn's husband are quickly moving up in the church hierarchy, and Mary Rose finds it very upsetting that there are certain things that the men in the church are allowed to know, but not the women. Furthermore, the LDS colony is constantly on guard because of the risk of neighboring people who hate the LDS coming to burn down their homes.

During one such attack, Bronwyn's husband and Mary Rose's husband go out to fight off the outsiders invading their colonies, and that night Joseph Young is killed by the angry mob, as well as Bronwyn's husband...

There had long been rumors floating around that the elders in the church were taking on multiple wives, something that Mary Rose finds hard to believe and knows she could never accept. However, when Bronwyn is left widowed, Gabriel is told he must take Bronwyn as his wife, he is given no choice in the matter.

Mary Rose's life begins to fall apart. She must share her husband with her best friend, not only in name, but also she must let him go to her bed, something that makes her ill to even think about. Losing her son during her pregnancy only makes it harder on Mary Rose to deal with the loss of her husband to another woman...

Mary Rose is torn, can she be faithful to God and share her husband? Or is it simply too much and will she walk away? Will she be able to be friends with Bronwyn or is their friendship forever destroyed because of the complicated relationship between the three.

Read The Sister Wife to find out!

The Sister Wife is a great historical fiction book. It is definitely rated G, so it is appropriate for all audiences as though you know that Gabriel shares the beds of two women, there is no detail given beyond that.

I think that it is fairly accurate concerning what the LDS colony was going through at the time of its start when Joseph Young was killed and Brigham was helping to find new converts and bring them over from Britain. Certainly the colony was under attack and as the rumors of multiple wives began to emerge I do not find it hard to believe that the current wives of the elders did not take kindly to the idea.

I also think it portrays that how, especially at that time, the church really subjugated women, not allowing them access to a lot of information, and teaching them that they must blindly follow their husband, their priesthood head, without question. Mary Rose, who had always had a free spirit, did not take well to suddenly having to give full authority to her husband in all decision, and follow his commands without question. When she married him, she never expected him to become a man who would command her as a subordinate, rather she expected the marriage to continue as it was when it began, a commitment between two equals.

I think it is a fascinating read, and I look forward to the next book in the series when it comes out!

4 out of 5 stars only because it was slow to get into.

Abigail says

I had a hard time rating this book. There were some things I didn't like about it. I felt the courtship/conversion between Gabriel and Mary Rose was kind of abrupt and not really believable. But I thought the author did a good job capturing some of the thoughts and emotions that might be going on when a woman is put into the situation of having to share her husband. She also did a good job of showing how women of the time were essentially trapped in certain situations.

This definitely wasn't a pro-Mormon book, as I originally thought it would be, but I didn't feel it was particularly anti-Mormon either. The ending felt a little rushed and the last part of the book felt like the author was trying to cram a bunch of things in all at once. I understand time skipping and not putting in all the details, but I feel like it was at the sacrifice of some character development.

Also, one thing funny to me is at one point the book cuts to a character on Prince Edward Island. The first sentences talk about being on white sandy beaches and my first thought was "Wrong. PEI has red dirt." I mean, maybe there's white sandy beaches somewhere on that island, but not at the location where the character was. I've been there.

Anyway, this book made me walk away with a deep sense of sadness and tragedy for the characters.

Janna Ryan says

The subject behind this book really intrigued me, "What if the man you loved told you God wanted him to take another wife? What if that woman was your best friend?" Diane has definitely done her research in this book about the Mormon practice of polygamy. The prologue snatched me from the beginning, then we went back in time about a year and met the characters as they were meeting. The story weaves its way back to the prologue and then we follow through to a time in the future. Along the way we meet Gabe who falls in love with Mary Rose on a voyage from England to America in the 1840's. They get married before even reaching Boston and join the Mormon church (Brigham Young was on board the ship too). Eventually through different circumstances Gabe is told he has to take another wife, it happens to be Mary Rose's best friend. Can they remain members of a church that tells them to do this? Can their love withstand it? Can Mary Rose and Bronwyn's friendship withstand it? I found it fascinating how a religion and a mere man who says that he heard from God could basically do what he wanted with no repercussions. That so many people would follow blindly. A fascinating perspective and a good story.

Lynn says

I got pulled in at the beginning but then I lost interest in the middle. Towards the end it started picking up again but then WHAM last page. Left so many unanswered questions and no closure to any of the characters. Doubt I will read the 2nd one in the series.

Elizabeth says

I felt like it took a while for this book to get going, but once it did it was a solid read. I think the prologue may have revealed too much, as the beginning of the book seemed to lack a sense of urgency or intrigue.

Julie says

I picked this book up on a recent book splurge. I have always been intrigued by the Mormon lifestyle, although I do not believe in it. I have watched the popular TV show "Sister Wives" and when I saw this book, I knew I wanted to read it.

Lady Mary Rose is aboard a ship bound for America. Accompanying her is her grandfather, the Earl, and several small children. The Earl has learned from Brigham Young of this new religion that is meant to restore the Church. The Earl jumps at the chance to join this religion and learn all of its ways. While aboard, Mary Rose befriends a young woman named Bronwyn. One fateful evening, Mary Rose is forced to assist Bronwyn in the delivery of her and Griffin's child. That one night changed EVERYTHING.

Gabe is really proud of this ship that he has designed. By all appearances, this ship is the fastest and best there is. His best friend and captain Hosea agrees. These two men have been through everything together, yet there are secrets that neither one knows about that is bound to destroy their friendship. After Hosea marries Gabe and Mary Rose at sea, many things begin to change.

Life in Nauvoo, IL is entirely different than Mary Rose would have thought. The Prophet's teachings are not aligning with what Mary Rose remembers her mother teaching her from the Bible. Men and women are separated during worship service, each sitting on different sides. One day, Prophet demands that all women leave so that he can give new revelations to the men. The men are not allowed to talk of the revelation and only a few will be chosen to serve the Lord in such a manner. It's then that Mary Rose's life takes a turn that she's not sure she can handle.

What would you do if your spouse left you for another? Or wanted to include another in your relationship? For some, this has already happened. I know that I would never agree to my husband taking another wife. If my husband were to ever be unfaithful, that would end our marriage. That is the ONLY way our marriage would end as well. Husbands are to treat their wives as Christ does the Church (Ephesians 6). The only way Christ leaves us is if we leave Him first. The same in a marriage. I know that my husband will never stray because it has happened to him. He knows and values the marriage vows and I know that our marriage vows will be forever honored. Sure, we have tough times and want to call it quits. However, our faith and trust in the Lord get us through those times and we come out the other side loving each other even more than before. As a matter of a personal note, I met my husband online. His chat name was (and still is) Faithfulman. We met in a christian chatroom and I was Irishrose. After marrying my Faithfulman, I have been Faithfulgirl. Thought I'd throw that in there for all those of you wondering! :)

I was angry at Gabe for even suggesting that he take another wife. I can imagine how Mary Rose must have felt...she wasn't pretty enough...wasn't good enough...all the things a person who's being rejected thinks about. She compares herself to Bronwyn, wondering why Gabe would choose her over his first love (or so he said about Mary Rose). Bronwyn, on the other hand, seemed to only be thinking of herself and her needs, not so much that of her best friend. I was extremely disappointed when Bronwyn broke the trust of Mary Rose.

Gabe himself, was also very selfish. After all, he still hasn't revealed his deepest, darkest secret to Mary Rose. His life, in my opinion, is a lie with her. I lost all respect for him along when Hosea did.

I do look forward to reading the next book in this series as the title alludes to some changes. I'll be purchasing that book on my next book shopping trip!

Amydeanne says

I wasn't going to read it at all when I was offered it as a review, but when I saw a few of my favorite authors had glowing reviews of it I thought I could give it a try. I normally wouldn't review a book that wasn't from a Christian publisher, but the story was far too intriguing not to give it a whirl. (at least I wasn't aware that Avon was inclusively Christian? I don't believe it is.. just inspirational romance. Please correct me if I'm wrong there, anyhow...)

The Sister Wife by Diane Noble goes into the early life of pioneer mormons and how the whole polygamy got brought into it. It was interesting to watch how Mary, the main character was drawn into it and her journey and attitude through it. And while it was fiction I do sense a lot of history in this book to create it's authentic feel.

I half didn't want to read the book - mostly of whether or not it would go off kilter towards Christianity, but in the other half I'm glad I did. **It was so heart wrenching** that I was just horrified with the main characters situation -- how people can get sucked into the lifestyle of it, but Mary; **her personality was so inviting that I felt like she was my friend** -- or perhaps eavesdropping into her private world.

Diane Noble did an amazing job with this book. I could see truth in this book without it being obvious. I could sense the underlying theme and have a feeling the sequel will hold even more! So now, I will be looking for the next book in this series, **Brides of Gabriel**, even though I know I will have heartache going on in my mind over it. It was powerful. And I couldn't put it down! A truly suspenseful and heartbreaking book.

If you are looking for a dramatic historical read this one is worth a try. **You may love it, or hate it, but you won't be able to put it down!**

**review copy provided by Harper Collins

?Shannon? says

The first half almost read like Mormon lit but there were 2 differences. Mormon lit would have made the story about their conversion, not their romance and would have given Brigham Young a bigger part.

Being exmormon I've read stories about polygamy before but this is the first one that was about a romance, not the polygamy. The last third of the book actually started reading like a romance set in the 19th century.

Elizabeth says

I thought the book was good. It has high intrigue factor b/c of Mormon history. I really enjoy historical fiction anyway, but when it covers something this significant, I enjoy it even more.

I thought the writing itself was good and Mary Rose was likable though super naive...I think this is intentional b/c of the situation she finds herself in. Bronwyn is a great character also...though I was shocked w/ how quickly she seemed ready to jump into this marriage when she just lost her husband...again, I think that's the culture of the early Mormon church. The children were very well-written and clearly showed how once you surround your kids with a certain standard of beliefs...right or wrong...they will follow. In this instance...scary. Noble did a great job with this. I really enjoyed the kids. I wasn't super keen on Gabe...maybe b/c he marries 2 women...and a 3rd is also in love with him! The nerve of this guy! haha Anyway, Gabe I think could be a little more compelling...I wasn't sure I was convinced he was worth being desired by 3 men???? but that might just be me b/c I couldn't imagine being married to a man who is also married to another. ;-/

I also could really appreciate the persecution scenes. I know that the Mormons did undergo great persecution to pursue their religion. Though I don't agree with their beliefs whatsoever this country was founded on religious freedom and the Mormons were not given that so easily. In the Author's note she mentioned that certain portions of the dialog were from documented sources showing exactly what Joseph Smith said about the start of plural marriage. Very interesting...

To be honest...plural marriage was obviously the main topic of this book and drew me in a lot. Completely fascinates me. The author did a great job with writing these scenes and emotions. Mary Rose feeling betrayed & I felt betrayed along with her. Bronwyn (great name, by the way) and Gabe feeling like they have no choice. The deception that goes into convincing all 3 of these main characters into this is super-scary & well done. Who doesn't want to spend eternity with their loved ones. Completely a deception...a chocolate covered lie. Noble did a great job with that.

I was so mad about their situation & my emotions heightened the more Gabe desired Bronwyn and the more Bronwyn desired him back. Why? Why? I kept asking myself. Noble definitely got an emotional reaction out of me. But, of course, Noble explains why...Celestial kingdom, that's why! My one HUGE question that the book did not go into...wasn't Bronwyn already "sealed" to Griffen her first husband? So, how does that work with remarriage and be sealed to another husband? I was very curious about that but the book did not go into these details.

Overall, a great book. Not all my questions were answered...but they might be throughout the series and I'll definitely keep reading...great job Noble.

Katie Kenig says

Right off the top I'm going to confess something: I did not finish reading this book. Life is too short for boring books that also make you really angry. Reading the "whole thing" would not have changed my opinions on what happened early on in this book. It would only have prolonged my agony.

The Sister Wife is a tale of early Mormonism. I'm kind of fascinated by the history of the Moromons as well as their current lifestyles with plural marriage. It started with watching Big Love, progressed into memoirs of former Mormons who have left the church, and is now a guilty pleasure (Sister Wives) of reality tv and sensational novels. I thought this was going to be one of the latter.

It was not.

I have this pact I've made with myself. I require myself to put in at least 100 pages toward a book before I give up. I found myself dragging through the first 100 pages of this book. I just didn't care about the characters, I was bored by their experiences, I wasn't interested in their futures. I pressed on, because there have been times that once I gave a book a chance I wound up really enjoying it. Some books start slow. So I gave it 100 pages.

And when I got just past that part, I still was considering giving up on it, but then they put the one character I did like - Bronwyn, the nanny - in some peril. She's sort of a minor character but I had started to like her, so I kept reading. And it got kind of exciting. She had gone into pre-term labor below decks in a clipper ship during a horrible storm. And the baby was breach. I thought she might die. I thought they might not find a midwife aboard ship. I thought perhaps the baby was in danger. I read on.

And the midwife did all she could, and the situation was bleak. Then the leader of the mormons came in, and they prayed over her. And everyone could see the baby move into proper position and Bronwyn was better, because prayer fixes everything.

No. I threw the book across the room. It hit the wall - I'm not usually so mean to library books. But I was *livid*.

You want to know why? Because it's these kinds of books that encourage the tactless people who say things like "If you had prayed more, maybe your daughter would have lived." I lost my daughter. Praying wasn't going to fix her. It wasn't going to fix me. And people read garbage like this in fictional novels and then blame people for the loss of their children, because clearly if they'd been better, or prayed harder, or been higher in God's esteem, they and their child would have been fine.

No. It doesn't work that way.

I'm not saying I don't believe in the power of prayer, positive thoughts, or other influences in the universe, but I'm saying that this kind of writing pisses me off. It makes it look like some people have a hotline to Jesus, and if you're good enough he listens. If not, it's clearly your own fault.

Screw that, and screw this book. It did nothing but bore me, then tick me off more than I thought a book could.

Rebecca says

(Brides of Gabriel, #1) Plural marriage... difficult subject for me. As a one-man-to-one-women advocate, I was upset most of the book, especially after reading the prologue! I think the constant questioning of whether it was right or wrong would have been my red flag, and I would have left before experiencing all the pain Mary Rose went through! Interesting glimpse into Mormon history, but I will not be reading this one a

second time.

Jamie Hedge says

Reading the first chapter and and then the rest of the story....as the characters and relationships grow, knowing what is going to happen is almost cruel. I wanted to not read it, wanted it go by faster so I could get to the end, and now I am sad that it is over. I can not wait to get my hands on the other book.

Nancy says

So many possibilities with such an interesting historical time and story. I really liked the concept of writing a book using protagonists from the early Mormon pioneer perspective. Unfortunately, I never really learned to care about any of the characters in the novel. They seemed one dimensional to me. Similar to Harlequin Romances I read when I was a teenager but cleaner (which I appreciated). It seemed like the story jumped from experience to conclusion far too quickly. For instance, Mary Rose and Gabe meet on a ship. Within a couple of days, they witness a contrived miracle and, without knowing the church doctrine, Gabe is ready to convert and the couple are declaring their undying love for one another and are married within days.

The book is not without merit. It has historical value and, I believe, the author has promise. I'd probably wait to buy it on sale.

My thanks to Harper-Collins publishing for providing me with a review copy in exchange for an honest review.

Michelle says

I found this story fascinating on a number of levels. For one, I love historical fiction of any kind, and the closer it is to real life events, the more I enjoy reading it. Second, my husband is an ex-Mormon and his ancestors date back to Brigham Young's bodyguards, so we're talking a lot of family history there that parallels the story. The only difference is that in my husband's ancestry there are no plural wives, but then again, they weren't high ranking church members, either. Almost all of his family members are still involved in the church. I've learned that Mormonism is a unique culture that has many issues, all of which are strongly rooted in the teachings of Joseph Smith. The author showed that in a convincing, yet unbiased manner. That was no easy task.

Diane Noble clearly knows how to capture readers heart and make them care about the characters. I loved how real everything felt from the ship voyage to Gabe and Mary Rose falling in love. I also loved how the author portrayed several situations as they really were, including how people were pulled into the teaching of the Saints at that time despite it going against what they were taught to believe as children. It showed how intelligent people could set aside what they were taught in order to have faith in something that didn't have any foundation or that could be verified.

My emotions got really involved in the story when Gabe took his second wife. Mary Rose was so trapped at that point, as was Bronwyn. Their conflict was well portrayed and captured every tedious angle, from the

petty jealousies, to the need for affirmation and love from Gabe. Simply put, wives were never intended to share their husbands. This story just brings that fact to life when it's demonstrated through the characters' lives. It was never God's plan (plural marriage) even if it had a verifiable basis in history. I also found the persecution scenes to be believable, and I was afraid for Gabe and Mary Rose. The whole story was so compelling! I can't wait for the sequel, especially since it hits even closer to home because of history and location. My husband's ancestors arrived in Salt Lake about six months before the Mountain Meadows massacre. I'm sure the sequel will bring me back in time as effectively as this book did.
