

FOUR

The next week, Mary accompanied Erik when he went to her younger brother's house to offer some computer help.

After they ate supper, Ted and Dan took Erik to the computer room with Ted and Emily's two-year-old daughter. Pregnant Emily went to lie down on the couch while Mary made her some tea, but by the time she brought it, her sister-in-law was sleeping peacefully. Emily may be nauseous and exhausted, but she seemed happy and was hoping for a boy this time. Ted was fortunate to have found her. They had the things Mary hoped were in her future—a home, children, a loving spouse. *Are they in my future, Lord?*

Dan walked into the room.

She put her finger to her lips and accompanied her older brother into the kitchen. "How's it going with the computer?"

Dan grabbed a soda from the fridge, popped it open, and took a swig. "Erik's running some programs to clean off the Spyware and other junk that sneaks in over the Net. Then he's going to run a defrag on the hard drive. You know, all that mucho computer geek stuff."

"I told you, he's not a geek."

"Oh, sister, you have no idea. Have you heard him talk about that thing? I like computers as well as the next guy. They are a necessity of life these days, but this guy can tell you what kind of hardware and programs are in the Hubble telescope. He's got Ted hooked."

Maybe he was a geek. Phoebe had said as much, but so far, he hadn't overwhelmed her with any technical talk. "But you don't like him?"

"It's not that I don't like him, he's very nice and helpful and knows his stuff."

"But . . ."

He took another drink. "But I don't think he's right for you. Could you really be happy with geekazoid for the rest of your life?"

"I wish you would stop calling him that." But it was nice to see that Dan cared—in a Dan sort of way.

After a moment of silence, Dan said, "That wasn't a rhetorical question. Could you be happy with someone like Erik for the rest of your life?"

"What exactly do you mean by 'someone like Erik'?"

"You have always been a people person. Your job is to help people. Erik's head is inside microchips and processing boards."

"Erik may be knowledgeable about computers and technical things, but he can hold a normal conversation with someone who doesn't speak fluent Computereze."

Dan faced her and pinned her with his stare. "Stop avoiding my question. Is Erik your dream man?"

"I don't know, Dan. We've only been going out a short time."

"I still think you should give Craig a shot. I'm going to tell him to give you a call."

"Dan, please don't. Let me see how things work out with Erik first."

Dan studied her a moment. "All right. But don't throw away Craig's picture."

She agreed. "You shouldn't be so eager to find me someone."

"Why's that?"

“Because if I find someone and get married, then all of the family’s attention will be focused on finding you the perfect wife.” Her mouth spread into a gloating grin. But Dan had brought up a good question—one she couldn’t shake during the ride home with Erik. Was he the kind of guy she could fall in love and spend the rest of her life with? What kind of guy was her “dream man”? Did such a guy even exist?