

~\*\*~

*Searching For Sara* | Heart Of The Blessed, Book 1

By Nona King

Published by Nona King [Angel Breath Books]

Kindle Edition

2005 - First Printing

2012 - Second Printing

2013 - Third Printing

**The Library of Congress Copyright Office**

*Searching for Sara*/Johnson, N.M.

TXu1 - 131 - 355

ISBN:

2005 - 0-9755796-0-6

2012 - 1-4404872-0-0 | EAN-13: 978-14404872-0-0

Other Kindle Editions by [Nona King](#):

[My Fair Princess](#)

[Soul of the Mago](#)

[To Save a Soul](#)

**Kindle Edition, License Notes**

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return to Amazon.com and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and events are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, locales or events is entirely coincidental.

~\*\*~

**Searching for Sara**  
**Heart of the Blessed, Book One**

**The Beatitudes**

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

*- Matthew 5:3-10 (NKJV)*

## One

Freedom's Whisper

February, 1892 | London

Sara's heart thudded in her chest as she crammed her scant possessions into the worn valise. A shout echoed through the hall. She cast a furtive glance over her shoulder. Her trembling hands clutched the black frock to her chest. The door to her cell-sized room remained shut, but the bellowing from the floor below escalated. A door slammed.

Sara latched her valise. The finality rang in her ears and beat in her heart. No more. Tonight would be the last day she cowered. She rushed for the door and peeked out. Reverberating steps hurried her from the room and into the back hall. Would she make it free in time? *Dear Lord, please help me!*

Her friend Beth stepped from the kitchen and beckoned her. The scullery maid's lank black hair escaped in wisps from her white mob cap. Sara rushed through the kitchen and into the chill February air. Big Ben chimed the midnight hour.

Beth tucked an old pair of gloves into Sara's hands. "You get thee gone, Sara. Do no' look back. Do no' even think on us. You be done with the servant's life here and get thee to America like you promised."

Sara clutched the young woman to her, tears burning her dark blue eyes. "Beth . . . I wish you would come with me."

Beth pushed back, her brown eyes red-rimmed. "I wish too, Sara, but—get thee gone," she cried. Then she fled and bolted the door closed behind her.

Sara stifled a sob and rushed through the cobbled streets toward the old church from her childhood. If the old priest, Amicus, did not remember her, God would provide another way. How could she believe anything less? The first step for freedom would be her responsibility.

All else would rest in the good Lord's hands.

~§~

*March, 1892*

Sara stared beyond the plain teacup. When she ventured to the docks that morning, the fear of being seen by someone from Mr. Brockle's household dogged her every step. But now there rose a much more daunting obstacle. How long would it take to save such a sum as she needed for but a third class fare? There was also spending money she would need in America: food, lodging, cab fare, clothes . . . . She hid her face in her hands. Why had she not waited to leave? Two more days and she would have secured her past wages.

She forced her back to straightened, clasping hands in her lap as her cooling tea once more drew her stare. No, she would not give up hope. Despair was not of the Lord. He could be trusted with this as well, and He would fulfill His promises.

A step behind her drew her gaze. An older woman with raven locks and silver eyes stood at the doorway. She exuded regal grace, her satin brocade walking dress immaculate. The hat upon her raven tresses alight with various shades of blue, two doves perched upon the brim and arranged in such a way as to seem the wings of angels shielding her from the sun.

Sara bobbed a curtsy. "Good morning, mum."

The woman inclined her head. "I noticed the light and expected the priest."

"I'm sorry, mum. He stepped away until the morrow." Nervous tension set her knees to trembling. She indicated the tea service. "Would you care to take tea, mum?"

"Thank you, dear. That would be grand."

The woman slipped from her kid gloves and lowered herself with noble poise to the straight-back chair across from her. Sara readied another cup.

"Are you kin, dear?"

"No, mum. He was a close friend of my mum before she passed." He had given her a first Bible, long since lost.

“Will you be visiting long?” She accepted the tea, the tone of her question courtesy rather than interest.

“I . . . I do no’ know, mum.”

“Well, regardless, I am certain he is pleased to have the company.” She sipped her tea and perused her surroundings with a slight smile. “I also knew him as a child. It will be good to reminisce over better days.” The woman focused those silver blue eyes on Sara. “I wonder if you are the young woman he discussed in his letter?”

Sara’s teacup chinked upon its saucer.

“Do you journey for America?”

“M-mum?” Did the household know? Why would he betray her?

“My daughter is to be wed in little more than half-a-year. She is in need of a few items yet for her trousseau.” The woman paused to sip her tea, those sharp eyes of blue never wandering their scrutiny. “Should you accept the duty of the design and creation, I shall pay handsomely. In addition, I will pass the knowledge of your skill to my friends. You should accumulate wealth enough to pay for your passage before the storms of the next season.”

Speechless wonder fogged Sara’s mind, her eyes unable to retreat from the older woman’s unflinching gaze.

The woman smiled, set aside her cup, and stood. She extended a card. “This is where I can be reached. I will forward my daughter’s measurements to you. Should you require anything more, send a note however you wish. Discretion is my intent. Good day, dear.”

Sara blinked after her, even after the closure of the sturdy cedar door. Then she lowered her head and whispered a blessing, silent tears wet her clasped hands.

~§~

*September, 1893*

“You have a letter.”

Sara's head snapped up, the pencil slipping from her trembling fingers to clatter upon the hardwood floor. Her hands clutched her sketchbook. The priest's smile did nothing to soothe her nerves as he presented her an envelope. "Is it . . . ?"

"From America? Indeed, Miss Sara. From a Mr. Christopher Lake. Virginia."

Her hands couldn't release their hold on the sketchbook as she stared at the elegant handwriting. How many months slipped away since her letter requesting instructions? Almost long enough to quench her remaining embers of hope. But each day a whisper greeted her in the quiet hours of the morning as she read the scriptures. To be still and trust in her Lord's provision. Now, when faced with the realization of all her dreams . . . . "I-I can no'. Please, sir. Could you . . . could you read it to me?"

"Of course, my dear." The elderly priest sat in the straight-back chair across from her in the quiet living quarters behind the small church's main room. He set his spectacles upon his bulbous nose and peered at the writing, his head tilted to allow better focus.

*Miss Sara Little,*

*I hope this letter finds you well.*

*In answer to your request for travel instructions, please find the following information. I hope this is helpful to you.*

*Firstly, find the passenger vessel 'Dawn's Angel' captained by a gentleman by the name of Robert Cowell. Mention the names Carla and Christopher Lake and he will book you passage at a discounted rate. If this letter finds you in time, he will be leaving the port nearest you on September 20th, 1893, at eight in the evening.*

*Secondly, once the ship arrives in New York, there should be an almost immediate departure of a passenger train for Richmond, Virginia. If Capt. Cowell arrives on time (he is generally a day or so early), you should have plenty of time to purchase a ticket. Should you not have enough to cover the cost of passage, again, explain your situation and mention my name and the ticket-master will take care of the rest. The train is due to depart on January 3rd, 1894, at one in the afternoon. Depending upon how early Capt. Cowell arrives in port, he will be responsible for arranging your stay in a hotel.*

*According to the schedule I've enclosed with this letter, the train is due to arrive at or before noon the following day; someone will be waiting for you at the station.*

*Good luck and safe traveling.*

*Christopher Lake*

The priest lowered the letter. "Well. Now that is fine. What a blessing the Lord has brought upon you, my dear."

Eyes closed and lips trembling, Sara clasped her hands to her chest. A prayer of thanksgiving warmed her heart, the anxiety subsiding to a stronger glow of hope. Tomorrow . . . . Blessed tomorrow would find her journeying to America!

## Two

### Journeys

3 January 1894 | New York

The passenger car of *The New York Central* beckoned Sara with its sharp whistle. Her gloved hand clasped her valise. In London the days bled into months as she scraped and saved for this journey. But each morning the Amicus offered encouragements from the scriptures. Each morning those whispered in the quiet hours as she sat by herself. Be still. Trust the Lord's provision.

Now . . . . Could she truly be faced with the realization of her dreams? Did freedom from every belittling bark now linger at the next station in Richmond, Virginia?

She squashed down her charcoal bonnet as a sharp breeze tugged the ribbons.

"All aboard, miss?" The conductor's wrinkled face drew her gaze. He broke into a kind smile. "We're about to get underway."

"Oh! Yes, thank you." Her English lilt drew glances from the other passengers as he helped her ascend the steep steps.

Sara paused on the outer platform of the passenger car, eagerness battling with the anxiety of the unknown. *No more fear*, she promised herself. Her chin rose and she clutched the heavy shawl tighter around her before pushing inside. She settled into the first empty seat as the locomotive lurched forward.

She set her valise onto the seat beside her and retrieved a faded journal, a snub-nosed pencil, and a worn leather portfolio of yellowed paper. Together they stood as the compilation of her adventure to date. A visual and verbal representation of every struggle from the time her mother passed until today, her moment of freedom from scorn and cruelty.

The journal rasped in welcome as she revealed its dog-eared pages, skimming those entries leading to the day she penned her first, blessed letter to America. How many years since that communication? Two? Almost three? Sara freed the worn response from the journal's grasp, unfolding the pages with care. Her lips trembled upward as she again read those words which invited her to hope.

*Dear Sara,*

*I felt such relief at the receipt of your letter! A mutual friend wrote of you, but she did not feel certain you would respond. For truth, she and her husband are of the mind your employer treats you with a harsh hand. She has insisted, and I agree, that you deserve a place better suited to your sensitive nature.*

*My husband and I have long held a passion for providing people with opportunities for greatness. I feel the Lord's hand upon my heart and I brim with concern. Please accept my invitation to come and choose your possible future. My husband and I will fully support you, whatever your chosen path.*

*Please write back with any questions you might have, Sara. We are eager to assist you however you need.*

*In Christ,*

*Carla Thiesen Lake*

Sara's eyes burned as she returned the letter to its place, smoothing its slight creases with quaking fingers. *Thank You for this blessing.* Tears dripped from her chin to her clasped hands.

"Excuse me, miss?"

She startled and looked up, fumbling for the kerchief at her cuff. "Yes, sir?"

"Ticket?"

"Oh! Yes. It is here in my bag." Her search of the usual pocket for such items resulted in nothing. "This is odd."

"Where are you traveling from, miss?"

"London." Frustration stung in her eyes. "Dear me. It should be just here."

“London you say, miss?” The conductor whistled through his teeth and set his cap back upon his head. “You’ve been on quite the journey!”

Sara paused in her search to both gather her wits and offer him a smile. “I have, sir, but it has been a dream of mine for such a long time.”

“You haven’t been this way before?”

“No, sir.” But she would not allow herself to worry. Directions were, even now, in her journal waiting for the last leg of her journey.

“Where are you headed to, miss? Washington or Richmond hereafter?”

“Richmond. I . . . is there a transfer?”

“No, miss. At Washington we wait for a bit to board up and unload, and then we’re off the rest of the way. But you seek me out should you have any question. Anything at all.”

“Thank you, sir. I will.” Sara’s focus dove once more into the depths of her valise. “There is a pocket specifically for that ticket – Mercy! Here it is. I must have died a thousand deaths just now,” she said, laughing.

He punched the appropriate corner of the ticket. Then he read the specifics of her itinerary, nodding along as if a voice explained their meaning. He offered her back the item and motioned forward. “Come this way, miss, and I’ll show you your berth for the night.”

Shock and confusion pulled at her smile. “M-my berth?”

“Aye, miss. You will be here in the coach during the day trip, right enough, but you will have a berth for tonight. In the sleeper car, and that be just up here a bit.”

Sara mutely rose, following the conductor as he continued on his way, punching tickets from those scattered passengers on his way through the car.

“It’s nothing fancy, of course, but you’ll have your own space and the people that’re above and below usually do a right fine job of keeping themselves quiet.”

She didn’t trust her voice to offer much more than a quiet acknowledgement. When she stood in the warm and narrow hall of the sleeper car, he pulled aside the heavy

curtain to a small compartment with a mattress and pillow within. As mentioned, there were similar compartments above and below.

“There you have it.” He stowed her valise into the compartment. “I don’t know much about how they do things across the water, miss, but you should be comfortable enough here, right?”

“I . . . Thank you so much, sir. It is certainly more than I expected.”

“Miss?”

“I thought I would sleep in the coach. I did not know the price of the ticket meant . . .”

The conductor chuckled. “Ah no, miss. There will also be coffee and tea in the dining car just through there. Also included in the cost of the ticket.” He tipped his cap. “You remember what I said, miss. Let me know if you need anything.”

“Thank you, sir.”

He continued on.

Sara lowered her gaze to her journal, caressing the front of it as she retrieved her pencil and portfolio from her valise and made her way once more to the coach. The scenes from her adventure played in her imagination, speaking to her with an intense urge to put her gratitude onto paper.

She sat in the seat nearest the door, again turning the pages of her journal with absent deliberation. Her fingers paused and she stared upon the elegant script of the letter within. It fluttered into her fingers, quivering in the slight breeze of the passenger car.

What waited for her in Richmond? A companion position? Seamstress? Nanny? If possibilities were endless, what dream would she seek out first? Mr. and Mrs. Lake wrote of a common goal, to set people less fortunate onto a better destiny. What a blessing to their spirit to help those in need!

A prayer of thanksgiving warmed her heart, the anxiety subsiding to a stronger glow of hope. She retrieved her small pencil and balanced the journal upon the leather

portfolio as she sorted the collection of thoughts flitting through her mind. How could she harness so many wonders and make sense enough to put it down into words?

A smile caressed her rose lips as she lifted her pencil to the journal pages.

*My mind will not be still for the thinking of all that is left behind. The sorrow. The loneliness. The fear. But I have promised to start over, and You whisper to my heart to look forward. I see now that You used each "yesterday" to ready me for this journey. As this train carries me closer to my destination, I know there is so much more to discover. About myself and what I offer this new place. Please Lord, let this new life be everything I dreamt of having.*

Sara tucked the pencil away, and her fingers drifted yet again to that last letter. Its edges peeked just outside the journal's cover. She had freed herself from the oppressive past known since birth. An open future lay before her, waiting for her first step.

She had come to America!

~§~

4 January 1894

"Now disembarking at Richmond, ladies and gentlemen. Fifteen minutes until departure."

Sara stepped from the passenger car, her blue eyes wide as she surveyed the hustle and bustle to and from the platform.

The conductor tipped his cap toward her. "You take care, miss, and remember what I said about needing a place to stay. The missus would love to have you."

"Thank you, sir. In his letter, Mr. Lake said someone would meet me."

"Very good, miss, but I'll keep watch just the same." The conductor touched the brim of his cap and then tended to the other passengers.

Sara smiled after him. The locomotive blasted a warning call, and Sara's breath caught at a sudden tremor of excitement. When in her memory did she experience such an adventure? She laughed and stepped forward, navigating the icy train platform with care.

Once inside, Sara settled herself upon an oak and iron bench in the corner near the door. The warmth of the crowded station served as a pleasant change from the winter's chill. Luggage dollies clacked about, and the shouts of porters offered a comforting sense of similarity with England. That, when paired with the people bustling to and fro, would act as a perfect addition to her collection of sketches.

Sara pulled free her sheaf of papers and half-used pencil. Only a scarce few pages remained for scenes such as this. She hadn't decided yet if she dared sacrifice her last coins to purchase another handful. She guided the bit of pencil across the page with a deft whisper and tried to soothe her anxiety. Both Mr. and Mrs. Lake wrote of an opportunity here. How could she then begrudge the spending of a few meager coins when surrounded with such possibilities? Yet not knowing the details steeled her against the impulsive desire.

Her brows furrowed, her gaze flicking from the developing sketch to her valise and the letters. *'My husband and I will fully support you whatever your chosen path might be.'* Those words resonated in her heart.

"Miss Sara Little?"

The baritone voice caused a hiccup within as she lifted her gaze. An attractive gentleman in a tailored gray suit drew her attention. His brown curls and straight nose bore an uncanny resemblance to the lady who referred her.

She tucked the portfolio into her valise while whispering a prayer for strength and courage. "I am Sara Little."

He navigated through the crowd with ease, begging their pardon at any jostle. It served as a delightful change from the arrogance of men in past experience.

"A pleasure to meet you, Miss Little. I am Christopher Lake. I wrote in response to your last letter?" He enfolded her hand in a friendly grip.

“Mr. Lake.” Sara curtsied. It amazed her the master himself would have come to fetch her, though he did not seem miffed at the duty. “You should no’ have troubled yourself with me, sir.”

“Nonsense. No trouble. I apologize for my tardiness. Today has been a rash of the unexpected.” He motioned to the bench just vacated. “Please.”

“Thank you, sir.” His brow furrowed and Sara’s breath caught. “Something amiss, sir?”

“Miss Little, I . . .” He cleared his throat, his hazel eyes the dark of a spring storm. Hope began to mold. Had she misunderstood the invitation? “Y-yes, sir?”

“My wife passed on before I received your request for travel instructions.”

A chill tightened her spine.

“Now, I do not tell you in order to send you from whence you came. It is but, well, we did not hear from you for such a space of time that my late wife and I thought perhaps you experienced a change of heart.”

“N-no, sir, I am sorry, sir.” She bit her lip to prevent a further rush of words.

“Just as I am sorry you were required to seek my help rather than I volunteering it forward. As Carla – as my wife mentioned in her letter, and as the lady who referred you knows, we feel it a call upon our lives to help those who may not necessarily have the ability to help themselves.”

Mr. Lake’s hazel eyes held her gaze as if awaiting a response. “Th-thank you, sir.”

“Hm? Oh. Quite welcome.” His regard of her didn’t waver. The hairs on her neck stood at attention. “What do you do?”

“Sir?”

“What do you do?”

“I . . . I do what needs to be done, sir.” Servitude had been the way of her life since she could remember. How else could she answer a question like that?

He smiled, and the action lightened the darkness of his eyes. “No, Miss Little, not how are you employed. My mistake. What is it that you do as a creative outlet? Neither

Dix nor Paul confessed a knowledge of your interests, so I am at a loss where my focus should begin.”

“Oh.” She considered the question, her fingers knit together to prevent a nervous flutter. “I sew well enough, selling gowns to pay for my passage.”

“That rings with promise.” He motioned to her valise and the papers peeking forth. “Do you have a portfolio of the designs?”

“N-no, sir.” She tucked the pages deeper within, her gaze downcast. “They were lost.”

“Ah. No matter. Considering your presence in America, I believe I will take you at your word. Have you tried your hand at any other type of craft?”

“I can sketch a bit.” Her heart raced with the rush of confession. “My mum said I have quite a way with a pencil.”

“Ah! Now we come to something I understand.” He stood and took up her valise. “Come along. Let us talk more about your ‘way with a pencil’.”

Sara tightened the shawl around her shoulders as she followed him from the station. Outside, he led her to the waiting carriage. She gaped at the golden lettering, *The Richmond Gallery of Art*.

“Neither of us mentioned the gallery? Odd. I hope it does not pose a problem.”

“No, sir. I never . . . .” She never considered herself appropriate staff for a gallery.

“I can see you have questions.” He opened the carriage door. “You may ask as many as you like once we escape this wind. Much longer and we’ll catch our death.”

He steadied Sara’s ascent into the carriage and then sat across from her. The carriage lurched forward. “We have always been eager to take someone less fortunate under our wing. It added excitement to our own lives, the adventure of creating an artist’s opportunity.”

A darkness shadowed his countenance while he spoke. Then he forced a smile. It didn’t quite reach the hazel of his eyes. “Now, a question, and that strictly out of curiosity. Please don’t think me impertinent, but what delayed your journey?”

Sara blinked at him. “P-pardon?”

Mr. Lake cleared his throat. "Well, I understood from your letter – That is, you first contacted us some time ago, so I wonder now if you experienced difficulties due to family concerns. Would you need me to contact them and set them at ease? They shouldn't believe we take advantage."

She stared at him, baffled. "Y-you would do that, sir?"

"Contact your family? Certainly! I feel it stands as my responsibility since my wife and I set you on this path. Now, tell me what kept you. If there is a lingering doubt, I shall put it to rest."

"B-but there is nothing to tell, sir. I only had to save for my passage. That is why –" Her gaze fell to her white-knuckled hands. They began to throb. "That's why I stitched the gowns."

"An entire wardrobe on your own? It is a wonder you arrived at all." He withdrew a gold pocket-watch from his vest pocket to toy with it in his palm.

A quick examination from beneath her lashes discerned a trace of gauntness to his cheeks. It teased a sense of recollection in the back of Sara's mind. But that fell away when the carriage drew up in front of an immense, single-story brick building.

"Ah! Here we are."

Mr. Lake retrieved Sara's valise and steadied her descent. She whispered her thanks, her cheeks burning as she followed in his wake up the gallery's marble steps.

"Being from England you will find our gallery somewhat modest in size and scope to your own. However, I must assure you it provides an adequate introduction point for local talent."

"It seems quite grand, sir." The charming simplicity to the red brick and white shutters invited entry. The museums of her limited experience loomed with an almost dour outlook. How could one appreciate the wonders of art when overpowered by the expectations of silence and reserve?

He held the door for her, the warmth and brightness inviting her deeper into the front hallway. "We are here to have you sketch my daughter. To her dismay, I would

not allow her to tag along with me to the station. My daughter finds the Richmond Station the most adventurous of places, especially for hiding.”

Sara laughed, the quiet sound echoing as a whisper of welcome. She flushed and lowered her gaze. The feeling of comfort and safety hadn’t been expected.

“This way, Miss Little. Gwyn’s favorite room is just down this hall.”

At the end of the main hall they came upon a pair of overstuffed green brocade chairs setup beyond a picture window. It encouraged comfort, a place to chat and observe. She felt certain that served its express purpose during art forums.

A cozy library stood beyond the picture window, and a young girl dressed in velvet and satin sprawled upon the floor flipping through the pages of a picture book.

“Such a darling,” Sara whispered.

“That she is. Gwynnie is five years young, precocious, and forever brimming with questions.” He offered Sara the nearest chair and then presented her a pencil and sketchbook. “Take as much time as you need. While engrossed in a storybook, the dear forgets there is a world outside this room. I will wait in the office, the first door on the left just before the exit.”

“Yes, sir.”

He inclined his head, cast his daughter a fond glance, and then proceeded from whence they came. Sara stared after him. Mr. Lake bore such a striking contrast to her last employer. He showed compassion, demonstrating a kindness and understanding that seemed a facet of his persona. *I would not mind working for a gentleman like him, Lord.*

Sara lowered her focus to the pencils and paper and began outlining the different parts and positions of the child and objects in the room. Mr. Lake’s attitude encouraged conversation while giving her a feeling of welcome. The only welcome received before was that of inappropriate innuendo.

Her eyebrows dipped into a frown as her pencil glided with deft motions across the paper. *Here will be different, she promised. This is America. A land of dreams and promises.* While Sara didn’t understand yet what that fully meant, she recognized these past months as the first when she hadn’t dreaded the morning.

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

