



Bachelor Girl (Little House Sequel)

By Roger Lea MacBride

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In this eighth and final book of the Rose Years series, Rose has become an independent young woman. She leaves RockyRidge Farm, first for Kansas City to learn how to be a telegrapher, then for San Francisco. Her dream is to work for a year or two, save a little money, and then marry Paul Cooley, her childhood sweetheart. But the big city has all sorts of surprises in store for Rose, and she finds that she's destined to travel a road she never even imagined.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The story centers on Rose's adventures and scrapes, and like its models, pays tribute to the strength and security of a close family." -- "Publishes Weekly" "A fine continuation of the beloved chronicle, in similar attractive format (including quietly evocative soft-pencil illustrations of places and things). . . . Peaceful, wholesome fare." -- "The Kirkus Reviews" "Wilder fans will eagerly absorb this latest offering, and a few of the chapters will make terrific read-alouds."-- "ALA Booklist" "A worthy continuation of [the Little House] series."-- "School Library Journal"

About the Author

Roger Lea MacBride, a close friend of Rose Wilder Lane's, was the author of the Rose Years novels.

Dan Andreasen has illustrated many well-loved books for children, including *River Boy: The Story of Mark Twain* and *Pioneer Girl: The Story of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, both by William Anderson, as well as many titles in the Little House series. He lives with his family in Medina, Ohio.

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Chapter One

Back Home

On a sweltering June afternoon, soon after she had returned home from Louisiana, Rose paused in the shade of the post-office doorway, leaned against the jamb, and sighed. Her eyes swept Mansfield's main street, drowsing in the hazy midday sun. She prayed to see something new, something different—anything that would catch her interest.

She looked, as she had a thousand times before, upon the rickety wooden awnings over the sidewalks. The usual loafers sat in tipped-back chairs on the porch of the Mansfield Hotel, spitting tobacco juice into the dust. A group of boys clamored like a flock of crows as they pitched horseshoes under the oak tree in front of the blacksmith's shop. Those same boys, it seemed, had been doing that since Rose could remember. A whiff of manure floated over from the livery stable.

The grass in the park across the street was mangy, in need of mowing. The paint on the gazebo, fresh and snowy white when Rose had celebrated the start of the new century four years before, had cracked and peeled. A broken spindle leaned out from the balustrade like a loose tooth. With shingles missing from the roof, the once-proud gazebo put her in mind of a forgotten, battered old doll. She sighed again. Nothing of importance had happened in Mansfield for years. She would be glad, she thought, to never see the town again. She did not want to stand there looking at it. But she also did not want to follow the stale road home to the old farmhouse, which had somehow shrunk since she was little.

Rose was only seventeen years old, yet already she felt her life was wasting away. She knew she should be doing something. But the weight of the slow, uneventful days stole her will. It was the same feeling she had when she stayed in bed too late, knowing she should get up yet not having the energy.

She had to do something with her life, but she did not know what. Rose had been home just two weeks from

her fall and winter in Crowley, Louisiana. Those had been the best months of her life. She had lived with her dear aunt Eliza Jane; she had graduated high school with high honors; she had worked for the causes of socialism and women's rights; she had shaken the hand of the great Eugene V. Debs and heard him speak; and she had learned new languages and new cultures. She had even been courted by a handsome, dashing college man from Chicago.

Still, when graduation was over, she was ready to return to the little town in the Ozarks. She had missed the comforts of home: the sound of Mama's voice, the smell of Papa's pipe, the cozy rhythms of the everyday life she'd known since the day she was born.

When she'd first stepped off the train, Rose had fallen into the arms of Mama and Papa, so happy and grateful to be back that she'd burst into tears. Until she'd set eyes on them, she hadn't known how much she'd missed them.

Mama had written to Rose that she and Papa had moved back onto Rocky Ridge Farm, a mile outside town. For many years-Rose had lost count-the family had lived in town because the farm couldn't support them. They had lived in a house in town, where Mama took in boarders. Papa had worked as a drayman. He still delivered coal oil for Mr. Waters, but now he spent more of his time tending the apple orchard, the fields, and the livestock.

It had been a thrill to return to the little house she had lived in when the family had first emigrated to Missouri from South Dakota in 1894. Of course, the house was grown up now, with a second-floor attic bedroom and real windows and a drain in the sink so Mama didn't have to carry her dirty dishwater outside. But it was still in the same spot, just on the edge of the ravine where the ever-flowing spring ran.

Rose took to her old chores gratefully, glad for the freedom from having to fuss every day with her hair and dresses. She could even go barefoot. What a joy to feel the earth under her feet again! In Crowley, a big bustling city of 5,000 souls, she hadn't dared step out of Aunt Eliza's house without a clean shirtwaist and polished shoes.

On the farm it was just the three of them, as it had been all those years before, and a hired man who came in several times a week to help Papa with the heavy work.

It was also a comfort, at first, to be back among the farm animals. Feeding the chickens and having them jostle eagerly at her feet for their mash made her feel like some great, indulgent mother hen. It was good to be back milking the cow and spilling a little for the kittens. Brushing the horses, fetching wood for the stove, even sweeping the floor-all were small acts of love for the simple life of her past.

Users Review

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