



Dailies: Saving Sarah Cain

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Sarah Cain is not quite at the top of her game. She is, in fact, a journalist in danger of losing her column to a particularly bad case of writer's block. Her harried, high maintenance lifestyle is interrupted one evening with a phone call from her niece Lyddie informing her that her sister has died, leaving Lyddie and four siblings orphans with only one living relative—Sarah.

Those who have read Beverly Lewis's novel *The Redemption of Sarah Cain* need not have any trepidation about slight plot changes from the print version, as the movie is an entirely different experience. Directed by Michael Landon, Jr. and with a screenplay by Brian Bird (*Touched by an Angel*) and Cindy Kelley, any deviations from the novel in making *Saving Sarah Cain* were good ones.

The film gets off to a slow start, but picks up when, rather than have her new charges split up and sent into foster care, Sarah transports them to her large, very modern Portland apartment. The following morning, she awakes to the children singing a beautiful early morning liturgy. While she is clearly no Maria, the kids do warm up to her—just not her way of life. Lyddie (Abigail Mason) is adamant that her siblings remain "plain" and sends them to school in their Amish habits. In addition to their outfits, the children speak with German accents and are natural targets for teasing. When Caleb turns a heckling into a compliment with a simple "danke," the offending classmate spouts, "Did he just diss me in Pilgrim?"

While Lisa Pepper's performance as Sarah lacked emotion at times, Abigail Mason and the other children were true stars in this film. The ever-graceful Tess Harper makes a brief appearance as the orphans' Amish alternative guardian, but the award for best actress belongs to little Bailee Madison, who gave a spunky, endearing performance as the "baby" of the mismatched family. When Madison flashes a smile and delivers even simple lines like "God be with you," you get that warm and fuzzy Tiny Tim feeling.

But the main reason this film is worth watching is for what it's not. It's not offensive, preachy or over-the-top, and it's not a story that has been told a dozen times and in a dozen different ways. As one character says, "Five 19th century kids in the big city with a 21st century single woman. You couldn't ask for a better premise than that."

Saving Sarah Cain will be available on DVD in January. Check local listings for television times.

