

THE
TATTERED
QUILT

Return of the
Half-Stitched *Amis* QUILTING CLUB

THE
TATTERED
QUILT

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER

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Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.



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DEDICATION

In memory of my mother, Thelma Cumby,
who many years ago gave me her mother's
tattered quilt.

*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us,
and his love is perfected in us.*

1 JOHN 4:12

PROLOGUE

Shipshewana, Indiana

Emma Miller's husband, Lamar, plunked a bottle of suntan lotion on the kitchen table in front of her and said, "How'd you like to take a little *feierdaag* and get away from these chilly days we've been having this fall?"

Her eyes widened. "You want us to go on a holiday?"

"That's right. I was thinking we could go down to Florida for a while. We can rent a place in Pinecraft." Lamar's green eyes sparkled as he drew his fingers through the ends of his full gray beard. "Just think how nice it would be to spend a little time on the beach."

Emma patted Lamar's hand affectionately. "That's a nice idea, but have you forgotten that I recently placed an ad for another six-week quilting class?"

"Jah, I know, but no one's answered the ad yet, so maybe you won't have any students this time."

Emma took a sip of hot tea. "I suppose that's a possibility, but I was looking forward to us teaching another class together. Weren't you, Lamar?"

"Of course; all the classes we've taught for the past year and a half have been great." Lamar leaned closer

to Emma and touched her arm. "If no one signs up by the end of the week, will you go to Florida with me?"

Emma mulled things over, then finally nodded. "I suppose it would be nice to get a little sunshine and take some long walks on the beach, but we can't go until we get our roof fixed," she quickly added. "With all the rain we've had so far this fall, it could start to leak at any time if we don't get a new roof put on."

Plink! Plunk! Plink! Three drops of water landed in Emma's cup. She looked up at the ceiling and groaned. "Oh dear, I spoke too soon. I'm afraid it's already leaking."

"Not to worry." Lamar gave Emma a wide smile. "I called your roofer friend, Jan Sweet, and he and his coworker will start in on it next week."

Emma reached for her husband's calloused hand and gave his long fingers a tender squeeze. "Is it any wonder I said *jah* when you asked me to marry you? You're such a *schmaert* man."

"And you, Emma dear, are the best wife any man could want." Lamar leaned over and kissed Emma, causing her cheeks to warm. Even after more than a year of marriage, he could still make her blush.

CHAPTER I

Middlebury, Indiana

Anna Lambright wanted her freedom. She'd turned eighteen a week ago, but her parents were holding her back. Most of the young people she knew had at least started their *rumschpringe*, but not Anna. Her folks held a tight rein and had forbidden Anna to do any of the things other kids did during their running-around years.

"What are they worried about? Do they think I'll get into trouble?" Anna mumbled as she tromped through the damp grass toward the barn to feed the cats. It wasn't fair that she couldn't have the freedom most of her friends had to experience some of the things English teenagers did.

When Anna entered the barn, the pungent odor of hay mixed with horse manure made her sneeze. *If I weren't Amish, what would I be doing right now?* she wondered, rubbing her eyes as they began to itch and water.

To make matters worse, Anna's mother thought Anna should do everything expected of an Amish woman. Anna didn't enjoy cooking or sewing. They just weren't her thing. She'd tried sewing a dress and had made a mess of it. She couldn't even manage to sew something as simple as a pair of pillowcases

without making stupid mistakes. Mom had tried teaching Anna to quilt, but Anna was all thumbs. Her stitches were uneven and much too big.

Anna felt like a misfit. She hadn't been baptized or joined the church yet, so she was free to leave if she wanted to. Only trouble was, where would she go, and how would she support herself? If she left, she'd have to stop working at Dad's window shop, because she was sure he wouldn't let her stay on.

Inside the barn, Anna spotted three cats—one white, one black, and one gray with white paws, sleeping on a bale of straw. As soon as they sensed her presence, they leaped off the bale and zipped across the room to their empty dishes.

"Are you *hungrich*?" Anna asked, reaching for the bag of cat food on a shelf near the door.

Meow! Fluffy, the all-white cat, stuck her nose in one of the empty dishes. The other two cats pawed at Anna's legs.

"Okay, okay, don't be in such a hurry." Anna filled the dishes and then set the food back on the shelf.

While the cats ate, Anna wandered over to the horses' stalls and stopped to watch Cindy, Mom's honey-colored horse, eat the oats Anna's fourteen-year-old brother, Dan, had given the mare a short time ago.

Anna didn't have a horse of her own. She borrowed Mom's whenever she had somewhere to go that was too far to walk or ride her bike. Anna actually preferred riding her bike. It was easier than trying to manage the horse. Even a horse as gentle and easy-going as Cindy could be unpredictable.

One time when Anna had gone to Shipshewana

to run some errands for Mom, a motorcycle had spooked Cindy, and Anna had struggled to get the horse back under control. Her mouth went dry just thinking about what could have happened if she hadn't been able to get Cindy settled down. The nervous horse could have crossed into the other lane of traffic, run off the road into someone's fence, or taken off down the road.

Just last month a woman from their community had died in a buggy accident that happened between Middlebury and Shipshewana. Anna figured she'd be safer in a car, although even then there were no guarantees.

"Do you ever feel like breaking out of here and running away?" Anna murmured as the horse finished up with her oats.

Cindy's ears twitched as though in response; then she ambled across the stall and stuck her head over the gate.

Anna scratched behind the mare's ears. "What do you say, girl? Should we escape together?"

"Who are you talking to?" Dan asked, surprising Anna when he came out of nowhere.

"I was talking to Mom's *gaul*, and you shouldn't sneak up on me like that. Where were you anyway?" she asked, turning to look at her blond-haired brother.

"I was up in the hayloft." Dan's blue eyes twinkled, and he grinned at Anna like he'd been doing something special. "I like to go up there to think."

"What were you thinking about?"

He shrugged his broad shoulders. "Nothing really. Just pondering a few things."

Anna tipped her head. "Such as?"

"Wondering what I'll be doing next year, when I graduate from eighth grade."

"I thought you were gonna work for Dad in the window shop."

"I might, but I'm not sure yet. There could be something else I'd enjoy doing more."

Anna could certainly relate to that. Mom and Dad expected her to help out in the shop, answering the phone and taking orders from customers. The only part of the job she enjoyed was being able to use the computer. Because they had to order a lot of things online, they'd been given permission from the church leaders to have a computer in their shop. Of course, they'd never have one in their home. That was against the rules of their Amish church, and Mom and Dad were not about to knowingly break any rules. Anna enjoyed having access to the internet. When things were slow at the shop, she would take a few moments to explore different websites showing places to visit. She knew without a doubt that spending a good deal of the day on the computer would have been no problem for her, if it were allowed. Anna couldn't believe all the information out there, available by just the click of a mouse.

"Have you ever thought about what it would be like if you didn't join the Amish church?" Anna asked her brother.

Dan shook his head vigorously. "No way! Where would I go? What would I do?" He reached out and stroked Cindy's neck. "Don't think I could be happy if I left our way of life."

Anna didn't say anything. If she told Dan the

way she felt, he'd probably blab it to their folks. It was better if she kept her thoughts to herself, at least until she'd made a decision.

"I'd better get back in the house and help Mom with breakfast," Anna said.

"Okay, see ya inside. I've still got a couple of chores I need to do." Dan ambled away.

Anna shook her head. If her brother had chores to do, what was he doing up in the hayloft thinking about his future? She gave Cindy a goodbye pat and hurried out of the barn.

When Anna stepped into the kitchen, she found Mom in front of their propane stove, stirring a pot of oatmeal. Anna wrinkled her nose. Oatmeal was not one of her favorite breakfast foods.

Anna studied her mother. She was only forty-seven years old but seemed to be aging fast. Maybe it was the fine wrinkles across her forehead, or it could be the dark circles beneath her pale blue eyes. Mom's hair was a mousy brown, and some telltale gray was showing through. Anna hoped she wouldn't look as haggard as Mom when she was in her forties. She hoped her light brown eyes wouldn't lose their sparkle, and that her auburn hair would keep the depth of its color well into her senior years.

"Did you get the cats fed?" Mom asked, breaking into Anna's musings.

Anna nodded. "They were as desperate as usual." She removed her jacket and the woolen scarf she'd worn over her stiff white covering. After hanging them on a wall peg, Anna picked off some cat hairs she noticed clinging to her dress and threw them in the garbage can under the kitchen sink.

“Did you notice how chilly our *wedder* is getting?” Mom questioned.

“Jah, and I don’t like cold weather,” Anna mumbled as she began setting the table. “Summer doesn’t last long enough for me.”

“Some chilly or rainy days are what we can expect during the fall. Winter will be here before we know it.” Mom flashed Anna a smile. “Before you start setting the table, there’s something I want to tell you.”

“Oh? What’s that?”

“Emma Miller will be starting another six-week quilting class next Saturday, and I signed you up.” Mom’s smile widened.

Anna’s mouth dropped open. “What? Why would you do that? You know I don’t sew.”

“That’s true, and since I haven’t been successful at teaching you, I thought maybe Emma would have better luck.”

Anna frowned. “But Mom. . .”

“No arguments now. Your *daed* and I talked this over last night, and we think it’s what you need. I went out to the phone shack earlier this morning and left Emma a message, letting her know that you’ll be taking part in her next class.” Mom patted Anna’s shoulder. “If you give yourself a chance, I’m sure you’ll learn a lot from Emma. From what I hear, she’s a very good teacher. And who knows? You may even enjoy the class.”

“Right,” Anna muttered under her breath. She’d heard about Emma’s quilting classes, and the last thing she wanted to do was sit in a room with a bunch of strangers.

Los Angeles, California

Carmen Lopez had only been out of bed a few minutes, when her telephone rang. She glanced at the clock on her bedside table, wondering who would be calling her at 5:00 a.m. The only reason she was up this early was because she had a story to cover in Santa Monica and wanted to get an early start before the freeway traffic reached its peak during rush hour. There was nothing worse than sitting in a traffic jam with irritated drivers honking their horns and hollering at each other. Carmen always wondered why they did that. Did those people think it would make the vehicles miraculously start moving? Being a reporter, she'd learned very quickly that people liked making statements in any way, shape, or form. Truth was, being engulfed in traffic made her nervous, bringing back the memory of the tragic way her precious sister, Lorinda, had died.

The phone rang a few more times, and Carmen finally picked up the receiver. "Hello," she said, stifling a yawn.

"Carmen, are you awake?"

"Oh Mr. Lawrence. Yes, I'm up. I'll be heading to Santa Monica soon to cover that story about the recently opened homeless shelter."

"Forget about that. I put Eddie Simpson on it."

Carmen's brows lifted. "You gave my story away?"

"That's right. You don't have time to go to Santa Monica today."

"Yes I do. I got up plenty early, and—"

"I just booked a flight for you to South Bend,

Indiana, and you need to pack. Your plane leaves in four hours.”

Carmen frowned. Andrew Lawrence could be a difficult boss at times, and he was a little overbearing, but he'd never pulled her off an assignment and sent another reporter in her place. And he'd never expected her to fly somewhere without giving her advanced notice. “Why are you sending me to Indiana?” she questioned.

“There's been a lot of media hype about the Amish lately, especially with some of the reality shows on TV about Amish kids who've left their families and gone wild,” he said. “Since you have connections in Indiana, I figured you'd be the best person to get the lowdown on this. You know—find out why these kids go wild and why their folks look the other way.”

“Get the lowdown?” Carmen's eyebrows puckered. “I have no connections in Indiana, sir. And what makes you think I can learn anything firsthand about Amish kids going wild?”

“Your brother-in-law lives there, doesn't he?”

“Well, yes, Paul lives in Elkhart, but—”

“Didn't you mention once that he knew some Amish people?”

“Not in Elkhart, but in Shipshewana,” she explained. “Paul took some quilting classes from an Amish woman, but that was over a year ago.”

“That's perfect! You can pick the man's brain, nose around the place, ask a lot of questions, and maybe get into a few Amish homes. I'm expecting you to write a good story that'll shed some light on why all Amish kids go wild during their days of running-around. . . .” His voice trailed off. “What is the Pennsylvania Dutch

word for it. . . *rumschpringe*?”

“I think that’s it, but I’m not sure if Paul has stayed in contact with the Amish woman who taught him to quilt. Also it could take some time to get that kind of information.”

“No problem. Take all the time you need.”

Carmen blew out her breath. “Mr. Lawrence, I really don’t think. . .”

“It’s all set, Carmen. Your flight leaves at nine, so you’d better get packed and hustle yourself to the airport. Give me a call when you get there. Oh, and keep me posted as you gather information. I think this will be a great story. It could even win you a promotion if it’s done well, so you’d better not let me down.” Mr. Lawrence hung up before Carmen could say anything more.

Carmen sank to the edge of her bed and groaned. She had to admit she was intrigued by this assignment, and if a promotion came from doing it, that would be great. There was just one problem: Even if Paul was still friends with the Amish woman who’d taught him to quilt, there were no guarantees that he would tell Carmen anything. Things had been strained between her and Paul since Lorinda had been killed. For several months after the accident, Carmen had blamed Paul, thinking he could have done something to prevent it. And even though she’d gone to Elkhart once since Lorinda’s funeral to see Paul’s daughter, Sophia, she and Paul had never really resolved the issue.

It was ironic that Carmen had been thinking about Paul lately. In fact, she couldn’t seem to get him out of her mind, no matter how hard she tried. Even before her boss called with this new assignment, her

conscience had been bothering her about the strained relationship. Was it right to blame Paul for her sister's death? Was she using him in order to have someone to blame? Could her anger against him just be a cover-up for her own grief? Maybe the best thing to do was apologize to Paul for having blamed him and then ease into the request for him to introduce her to his Amish friend.

Dark brown eyes stared back at Carmen as she smiled at her twenty-four-year-old reflection in the mirror above her dresser. Her hair looked pretty good, even in its tangled state. Just like her sister, Carmen had long, black, lustrous hair she could style any way she wanted. As she pulled her thick locks into a ponytail, her plans seemed to fall right into place. She would apologize to Paul. This trip might work right in with the new assignment she'd been given and ease her guilt at the same time. At least it was a step in the right direction.

CHAPTER 2

Mishawaka, Indiana

Blaine Vickers hated his job. Well, maybe not all of it—just when he was asked to do something he didn't feel comfortable with. Like only moments ago when his boss, Stuart Johnston, had asked Blaine to give a demonstration on fly-fishing to a group of wannabe fishermen who'd be visiting the sporting goods store tomorrow afternoon.

"Can't someone else do it?" Blaine asked as he and Stuart entered the break room together.

Stuart shook his head. "None of the other employees knows fly-fishing as well as you, my friend."

Blaine grunted. "But you know I'm not comfortable talking to people."

Stuart gave Blaine's shoulder a quick thump. "What are you talking about? You're a salesman, right? You talk to people every day."

"That's different. I talk to people one-on-one, not in a group setting where all eyes are on me." Blaine had never mentioned it to Stuart, but he hoped to someday own his own fishing tackle store. It wouldn't be a big place like the sporting goods store—just a small place where he'd sell only things fishermen needed. It was probably nothing but a pipe dream, but it was nice to have a goal and something to focus on

rather than thinking he'd be stuck working here for the rest of his life. Not that working for Stuart was bad; Blaine just wanted to do his own thing.

Stuart raked his fingers through the back of his curly dark hair. "You'll do fine talking to those people. Don't sell yourself short."

Blaine meandered over to the coffeepot. What choice did he have? Stuart was his boss, and even though they were friends, if he wanted to keep his job he'd have to do what he was told, like it or not.

"Say, Blaine," Stuart said, joining him at the coffeepot, "I'm going fishing at Lake Shipshewana on Saturday. Since you're not scheduled to work that day, why don't you go with me? Unless you're gonna be busy doing something with your lady friend, that is."

Blaine shook his head. "Sue and I broke up a few weeks ago. I thought I'd mentioned it."

"If you did, I must've forgotten. Between staying busy here at the store, going to my kids' games, and trying to keep Pam happy, I can only focus on one thing at a time." Stuart added a spoonful of sugar to his coffee and took a sip. "How come you and Sue broke up? I mean, you've been going out for a few years now, right?"

Blaine sighed. "It's complicated."

"It or Sue?"

"Both." Blaine pulled out a chair and took a seat at the table. He was glad he and Stuart were the only ones in the room, because he wasn't about to spill his guts in front of anyone else. "It's like this—I'm ready to get married, but Sue says she's not. I made the mistake of pushing the issue, and she broke up

with me.” As Blaine recalled the painful conversation, he rubbed his finger over the small scar on his chin, which had been there since he’d fallen off his bike as a child. “Things were going along fine between Sue and me, but I guess she thought it would mess up our relationship if we made a more serious commitment. For some reason, I think she’s afraid of marriage.”

“You’re right about marriage being a commitment. It takes a lot of work to keep the fires burning.” Stuart rubbed the side of his head. “Just ask me. It took months of marital counseling, not to mention six weeks in Emma’s quilting classes, for Pam and me to get our act together and put our marriage back on track. But it was worth the effort. Our relationship is a lot stronger now than it was before all that, and we’re communicating in a more civilized way.”

“You two do seem to be getting along pretty well these days. Maybe it’s for the best that Sue and I have gone our separate ways, since we don’t see eye to eye on the merits of marriage.”

“Yeah, it’s better to break things off now than have her decide to bail after you’re married.”

Blaine sat quietly, drinking his coffee. He was thirty years old and still single. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to get married, because he did. What really bothered him was when his family got together for holidays and other special events. His two brothers were both married and living in Canada. Seeing how happy Darin and Steve were and watching how their wives looked at them with love and respect, made Blaine envious. He wished he had a wife who’d look at him that way. His sister-in-law, Sandy, adored her

husband, not to mention her and Stephen's little boy, Chad, who was four years old, and a miniature replica of his daddy. Even at his young age, Chad seemed to idolize his father, often looking at him like there was no other man on earth. The last time Blaine's family got together for Easter, Darin and his wife, Michelle, had announced that they were expecting their first child.

Blaine was happy for his brothers, but he couldn't help wondering what it would be like to meet the right person and know she was the one for him. That was what he thought he'd found in Sue, but he'd obviously been wrong. Since their breakup, Blaine had spent a lot of time asking himself if he and Sue had ever been right for each other, or if he had so wanted what his brothers had that he'd been trying to force the relationship to work. Maybe it was best that he'd found out now how Sue felt about marriage. If Sue had agreed to marry him, they might have ended up needing counseling like Stuart and Pam. One thing was for sure: Blaine was tired of going home every night to an empty condo and having a one-way conversation with the fish in his aquarium.

"You know, Stuart," Blaine said, shaking off his thoughts, "I think a day of fishing sounds pretty nice, so if the offer's still open, then yeah, I'd be happy to go with you this Saturday."

"That's great." Stuart thumped Blaine's back. "Say, how about we have a contest to see who can catch the biggest fish?"

"Sure, why not," Blaine said with a shrug. He'd always had good luck fishing, so he was confident that

he would catch the biggest fish. "Is there a prize for the winner of this bet?"

"I don't know. Guess there could be. Better yet, let's make the loser pay a consequence."

"What kind of consequence?"

Stuart snapped his fingers. "I've got it! If you catch the biggest fish, I have to buy you a new fishing pole."

Blaine grinned. "That sounds good to me."

"But if I catch the biggest fish, you have to take Emma's next six-week quilting class."

Blaine's mouth opened wide. "You're kidding, right?"

"Nope. You gave me a hard time when Pam forced me to take that class, so it'll be your turn to eat crow."

Blaine chuckled. "I'm not gonna be eating any crow, 'cause I'll catch the biggest fish."

"Does that mean you're agreeing to the bet?"

"Sure, why not?" Blaine smiled to himself. *After all, I'll never have to take those quilting classes.*

Goshen, Indiana

Cheryl Halverson glanced at the calendar on her desk. In two months her grandmother would be celebrating her eighty-eighth birthday, and Cheryl wanted to give Grandma something special. But she couldn't decide what. Grandma didn't need much, not since Cheryl's mother had put her in a nursing home. When Cheryl asked Mom why Grandma couldn't live with her and Dad, Mom said due to the demands of her bank manager job, there was no way she could take care of her aging mother, who needed round the clock care.

Cheryl's mother, Katherine, was fifty-five years old and wasn't ready to give up her job. Cheryl couldn't blame her for that. She didn't know what she'd do without her job as a secretary for an attorney in town. When Cheryl and her boyfriend, Lance, broke up six months ago, moving to Indiana to take this position was what had kept Cheryl going.

"Lance is a creep," she mumbled under her breath. "Wish I'd never met him!" Cheryl and Lance had dated two years, and just when she was sure he would ask her to marry him, she caught him cheating—with her best friend, April Roberts. To add insult to injury, since their breakup, Lance had called Cheryl several times to talk about April and ask her advice about a few things. *Talk about weird*, Cheryl thought, tapping her newly manicured fingernails on her desk. *Who but Lance would be unfeeling enough to call his ex-girlfriend and ask stuff like that? If I ever get involved with another man, I'll need to know I can trust him.*

Glancing once more at the calendar, Cheryl thought about Grandma's birthday. She remembered that her pastor's wife, Ruby Lee Williams, had taken some quilting classes awhile back. *Maybe I could take Grandma's tattered old quilt to Ruby Lee's Amish friend and have it repaired.* For as long as Cheryl could remember, that quilt had been as much a part of her grandmother as the warm smiles and comforting hugs Grandma had always given her.

When Cheryl moved to Indiana, Grandma had given her the quilt to remind her of all the fun times they'd had together. The more Cheryl thought about it, the more she realized it might offer Grandma some

comfort to have the quilt now that she was doing so poorly.

Shipshewana

“Where we headed next?” Terry Cooley asked his boss, Jan Sweet. They’d finished tearing the roof off a house in LaGrange that morning and had just entered Shipshewana.

“We need to get started tearing off Emma and Lamar Miller’s old roof,” Jan replied. “After talking to Lamar the other day, I think he’d like to have it done soon, because if no one signs up for their next quilting class, he’s taking Emma on a vacation.”

“Where they going?”

“Florida, I think.”

“Sounds like a good place to be. Nice, warm sunny beaches. . . Wouldn’t mind going there myself for a few weeks.” Terry took a drag on his cigarette and flicked the ashes out the driver-side window of his truck.

Jan grunted. “Sure wish you’d give up that nasty habit. It ain’t good for your health, ya know.”

Terry gripped the steering wheel tightly and kept his focus straight ahead. Jan was not only his boss, but they were good friends, even though Terry was twenty-nine and Jan forty-one. Terry supposed for that reason, Jan thought he could lecture him about his smoking habit, but he wished he’d quit bugging him. Terry was surprised that Jan didn’t smoke too. He had other bad habits though. He used to drink, not to mention riding his motorcycle too fast. Of course, those days were behind him now. Ever since Jan had been reunited with his daughter, Star, he’d cleaned up