

THE
HEALING
QUILT

Return of the

Half-Stitched *Amish* QUILTING CLUB

THE
HEALING
QUILT

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER

New York Times Bestselling Author

SHILOH RUN  PRESS

© 2014 by Wanda E. Brunstetter

Print ISBN 978-1-61626-087-3

eBook Editions:

Adobe Digital Edition (.epub) 978-1-63058-552-5

Kindle and MobiPocket Edition (.prc) 978-1-63058-553-2

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purposes, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without written permission of the publisher.

All scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

All German-Dutch words are taken from the *Revised Pennsylvania German Dictionary* found in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, and/or events is purely coincidental.

Cover photography: Bandon Hill Photos

For more information about Wanda E. Brunstetter, please access the author's website at the following Internet address: www.wandabrunstetter.com

Published by Shiloh Run Press, an imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 719, Uhrichsville, Ohio 44683, www.shilohrunpress.com.

Our mission is to publish and distribute inspirational products offering exceptional value and biblical encouragement to the masses.



Printed in the United States of America.

DEDICATION

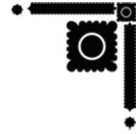
To my husband, Richard Sr., who shares my love for combing the beach, and to my son, Richard Jr., who enjoys being on his boat and gave me the idea for one of the characters in this book.

*I will seek that which was lost,
and bring again that which was driven away,
and will bind up that which was broken,
and will strengthen that which was sick,
saith the LORD God.*

EZEKIEL 34:16



CHAPTER I



Sarasota, Florida

Seating herself on a weathered, wooden bench, Emma Miller gazed at the waves lapping gently against the shore. The soothing scene almost lulled her to sleep. Lido Beach was peaceful on this early January morning, and there weren't many people milling about yet. It almost felt as if she and Lamar had the whole beach to themselves. This morning after breakfast, Lamar had talked her into catching the bus and coming here so they could enjoy the beach before it got too crowded.

Wiggling her bare toes in the sand, Emma watched as her husband rolled his trousers up to his knees and waded into the crystal-clear, turquoise water. Lamar seemed happy and contented, and thanks to the balmy weather, his arthritis didn't bother him nearly so much.

Lamar was definitely getting around more easily, and that made it worth moving down here for the winter.

Unfortunately, after only two weeks of living in their newly purchased vacation home inside the village of Pinecraft, Emma was bored. Sure,

WANDA C. BRUNSTETTER

there was plenty to do. They could visit other Amish and Mennonites; spend time on the beach looking for shells; or ride their three-wheeler bikes to the park or one of the many stores and restaurants in the area, since horse and buggies were not allowed. But Emma wanted more. She needed something meaningful and constructive to do.

“Come join me,” Lamar called, looking eagerly at Emma. “The water’s warm, and there are lots of shells!” His thick gray hair and matching beard stood in stark contrast to the turquoise-blue water behind him.

Emma smiled and waved in response. She wasn’t in the mood to get her dress wet this morning. For that matter, she wasn’t in the mood for much of anything just now. Emma missed her family and friends in Shippshewana, Indiana. She even missed the cold, wintry days, sitting by the fire with a cup of hot coffee while she worked on one of her quilting projects. Fortunately, Emma’s daughter, Mary, and her family lived next door and were keeping an eye on Emma and Lamar’s Indiana home, as well as feeding and caring for Emma’s goats.

Emma’s sister, Rachel, had planned to come down for a few weeks, but one of Rachel’s daughters was sick, and she’d gone to her house to help out while she recuperated, so she might not make it, after all. Emma couldn’t help feeling disappointed.

Maybe I should call Mary and ask her to send me some of my quilting supplies, Emma thought. *It would be good to have something productive to do while we are here.*

“Emma, aren’t you going to join me?” Lamar hollered, holding up a large shell he’d found. “You oughta come and take a look at this one. It’s the best shell yet!”

“Maybe later,” she called in response.

Lamar waded out of the water and plodded across the white sand,

THE HEALING QUILT

stopping in front of Emma. “Is something wrong? You usually enjoy looking for shells with me.”

Making circles in the sand with her big toe, Emma sighed. “I do, Lamar, and don’t take this wrong, but I wish there was more for me to do than come here to the beach or bike around Pinecraft, where I end up talking to people about family back home. I need something meaningful to do with my time.”

He took a seat on the bench beside her and placed the colorful shell in her lap. “Why don’t you teach some quilting classes? We talked about that before we left Indiana.”

She gave a slow nod. “*Jah*, that idea was mentioned, but I’m not sure there would be enough interest in quilting here in Florida. At home where so many tourists come to learn about the Amish, people are eager to learn how to quilt. Here where it’s warm and sunny most of the winter, people are probably more interested in spending time on the beach and being involved in other outdoor activities.”

“You won’t know if you don’t try.” He patted her arm affectionately. “Why don’t we run an ad in the local newspaper and put some flyers up around the area? Maybe you could talk to the owner of the quilt shop on Bahia Vista Street and see if you could teach your classes there.”

Emma shook her head. “If I’m going to teach quilting, I prefer that it be done in our own home, where it’s less formal and people will feel more relaxed.”

“I understand,” Lamar said. “And if it’s meant for you to have another six-week quilting class, then people will come.”

Emma pursed her lips as she mulled over the idea. “If I did hold some quilting classes, would you be willing to help me again?”

“Of course. I can explain the history of quilts at the introductory class and be there to help out whenever I’m needed. It’ll be a little different

WANDA C. BRUNSTETTER

in our new surroundings. I'm sure I'll enjoy it as much as I have all the other times I've helped you teach back home." Lamar smiled, his green eyes twinkling like fireflies on a summer's night. "It will be interesting to see who God sends to our classes this time around."

Emma nodded, anticipation welling in her soul. "Okay then. Let's start advertising right away."

Chicago, Illinois

Bruce "B.J." Jensen stood in front of the easel he'd set up near the window in his studio. He tipped his head, scrutinizing his most recent painting—ocean waves lapping against the shore as the sun began to set.

B.J. frowned. He hadn't been to the ocean since his wife, Brenda, died five years ago. For that matter, he hadn't been anywhere outside of Chicago since then. At first his responsibilities as an art teacher had kept him tied to home. After he retired a year ago, freelance jobs kept him too busy to travel. But he was running out of time. Pretty soon, if he didn't see some of the things he'd been wanting to, it would be too late.

He stared out the window at the fresh-fallen snow. B.J. had always loved winter and appreciated that he lived where all four seasons could be enjoyed. But this year for the first time, the snow and bitter cold winds Chicago was known for really bothered B.J., and he was ready for a change.

If only I had more time, he thought with regret. Time to see all the things I've missed and time to spend with my family and friends.

B.J. had been diagnosed with cancer two years ago—just a few days after his sixtieth birthday. Recently, he'd found out that the cancer had spread from his throat to other parts of his body. But he hadn't told his daughters, Robyn and Jill; they both had busy lives of their own, and he didn't want them to worry. They thought the cancer surgery had been successful and that he was in remission. He didn't have the heart

THE HEALING QUILT

to tell them the truth. Knowing his daughters, they'd set everything aside to take care of him. B.J. didn't want that. He didn't want their sympathy, either. Maybe when he reached the final stages he would tell them. Until then, he planned to live each day to its fullest, while seeing and doing some of the things he'd always wanted to do. First off would be a trip to Sarasota, Florida, to see the Gulf of Mexico and paint some beautiful scenes on the beach.

Sarasota

Kyle Wilson stopped near the living-room couch. His fifteen-year-old daughter, Erika, sat in her wheelchair in front of the window facing the bay. She seemed so forlorn, with head down and shoulders slumped. But then, that was nothing new for her these days. Once full of life and unafraid, Erika was a different person now. She'd been despondent for more than a year—ever since her accident.

Kyle reflected on the event that had left his only child paralyzed from the waist down. Erika had invited two of her friends over to swim in their pool. They'd had a great time, laughing, splashing each other, and taking turns competing on the diving board.

Erika had learned to swim when she was a young girl. Kyle and his wife, Gayle, had nicknamed her "tadpole" because she loved the water so much. Last year when Erika turned fourteen, her interest turned to diving and trying different techniques off the springboard. Kyle was truly amazed at how fearless his daughter had been. She'd seemed to be good at everything, no matter what she attempted.

Kyle's throat constricted as he recalled how the accident happened. . . .

"Come on, Erika, it's getting late, and you're tired. I think you'd better get out of the pool."

WANDA E. BRUNSTETTER

"In a few minutes, Dad. I just wanna do one more dive," Erika protested. "It's called a forward reverse."

Kyle could almost feel her eagerness as she climbed out of the pool and clambered up the diving-board ladder, so he let it go. He watched as Erika stood forward on the board, staring down at the pool's blue depth, her honey-blond hair pulled back in a ponytail, with water still dripping off the ends. As she leaped into the air, her body arching backward, it was like watching in slow-motion as her head and shoulders cleared the board.

Kyle held his breath. His daughter's fluid motion seemed to go perfectly. But instead of Erika's body straightening out after clearing the board, she made a wrong move. Her body came out of the arc at an odd angle, throwing her off-balance.

Kyle stared in horror as Erika's back and legs hit the board with a terrible crack. He watched helplessly as she bounced off the board and let out a scream as she fell into the water. Something had gone terribly wrong.

He leaped out of his chair, knowing he had to get his precious daughter help as quickly as possible.

Sweat beaded on Kyle's forehead as his mind snapped back to the present. *It's my fault she's crippled*, he berated himself for the umpteenth time. *If only I'd insisted she quit for the day, before she did that stupid dive. If I'd known what Erika had in mind, I would have stopped her before it was too late. I'm a doctor who treats many children every year, but I couldn't help my own daughter because the damage to her spine could not be fixed.*

Kyle clenched his fingers until his nails dug into the palms of his hands. Erika's accident had been the second traumatic event he'd faced in a relatively short time. Kyle's beautiful wife had died a year earlier from injuries she'd sustained when her car was broadsided by a truck. Truth was, Kyle felt guilty about Gayle's accident, too. She'd asked him

THE HEALING QUILT

to run to the store that rainy evening to pick up some baking soda she'd forgotten when she'd gone shopping earlier in the day. Gayle had all the other ingredients she needed to make a batch of chocolate chip cookies, Kyle's favorite. But Kyle had said he was too tired after a long day at the hospital to run to the store. So Gayle had gone out on her own. If Kyle had been driving the car, he might have avoided the accident. Even if he'd been the one killed, Erika would at least still have her mother.

Kyle rubbed a pulsating spot on his forehead. He knew all the *if onlys* and *what ifs* wouldn't change the facts, but it was hard not to be consumed by guilt—especially when he'd had to watch his daughter struggle with her disability. Erika needed something to look forward to each day—something meaningful to do with her time. He'd tried to interest her in some creative projects she could do from her wheelchair—like making beaded jewelry and painting—but she'd flatly refused. She wasn't even interested in playing her violin anymore. Gone was her dream of becoming a high school cheerleader, swimming, and going to dances. Erika seemed to think her life was over, and that grieved him immensely.

Should I force the issue and hire someone to come in and teach Erika something despite her objections? he wondered. *Would she cooperate if I did?*

The phone rang, startling Kyle out of his musings.

"I'll get it, Dad," Erika said, seeming to notice him for the first time. "At least answering the phone is something I can manage."

Kyle couldn't help noticing her sarcastic tone. Did she really feel that she wasn't capable of doing anything more than answering the telephone?

Dear Lord, he silently prayed. Please help me find something beneficial for my daughter to do.

"Come here, girl!" Kim Morris called as her dog frolicked on the beach,

WANDA C. BRUNSTETTER

kicking up sand. The black-and-tan German shepherd ignored her and chased after a seagull.

Kim clapped her hands. "Stop that, Maddie, right now!"

Apparently tired of chasing the gull, Maddie darted in the direction of a young boy playing in the sand with his bucket and shovel. Thinking the child might be frightened by the dog, Kim picked up a stick and called Maddie again. "Come on, girl, let's play fetch!"

Woof! Woof! Maddie raced to Kim's side, eagerly wagging her tail.

Kim flung the stick into the water and laughed as Maddie darted in after it. The dog might be six years old, but she had the energy of a pup.

Coming out of the water and bounding across the sand, Maddie dropped the stick a few inches from Kim's bare toes. Kim grunted and picked it up. She would toss it a few more times, and then it would be time to get off the beach. It wouldn't be good if she were late to work her first day on the job. Being fairly new to the area, Kim was glad she'd been hired as a waitress at a restaurant a short distance from the small community known as Pinecraft. A lot of Amish and Mennonites lived in Pinecraft, either full- or part-time, and she'd been told that the restaurant business during the winter months was always the best because of so many visitors.

I just hope I don't lose this job because of my klutziness, Kim thought as she gave the stick another good toss, and Maddie tore after it. *I can't live on unemployment forever, and I need this job if I'm gonna start a new life for myself.*

Kim had moved from her home state of North Carolina to Sarasota a few months ago, hoping to start a new life with her boyfriend, Darrell. But things hadn't worked out, and they'd broken up. Rather than moving back home and admitting to her folks that she'd lost another boyfriend, Kim had decided to stay in Florida and make the best of the situation.

THE HEALING QUILT

Since she loved the beach and enjoyed year-round warmer weather, she thought she could be happy living here, even without Darrell. Kim's track record with men wasn't that good, and she was beginning to doubt whether she'd ever find the right one. For now, though, she needed to settle into her new job, make a few friends, and find something creative to do in her spare time. Hopefully, this would give her life more meaning. Making friends shouldn't be that difficult, as she'd always been a people person. Finding something creative to do shouldn't be that hard, either. The thing Kim worried about most was keeping her job, but with determination to do her best, she was sure that would work out, too. At least she hoped it would. If it didn't, she might be forced to return to North Carolina, and that would mean admitting to her folks that she'd failed again.