

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER

A Cousin's
PROMISE

INDIANA COUSINS | BOOK 1



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DEDICATION/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my dear friends Arlene and Wayne Randolph. Thank you for introducing me to so many wonderful Amish people who live in northern Indiana. To my new friend Dale Burnet. Thank you for your willingness to share the experience of losing a leg with me.

*Delight thyself also in the LORD:
and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

PSALM 37:4

CHAPTER 1

*A*ch, there's a bee in the van! Somebody, get it out of here before I get stung!"

Lorraine Miller looked over her shoulder. Her cousin Katie's face was as pale as goat's milk, and her eyes were wide with fear. Ever since they'd been children and Katie had been trapped in the schoolhouse with a swarm of angry bees, she had panicked whenever a bee got too close. Poor Katie had been pelted with so many stings that day, much of her body had looked swollen. The doctor had said it was a good thing Katie wasn't allergic to bee stings or she would have probably gone into shock.

"Get it! Get it!" Katie screamed. She sucked in a deep breath and ducked her head.

The bee flew past Lorraine's shoulder, buzzing noisily.

"Open your window, *schnell!*" Lorraine said to her fiancé, Wayne Lambright. "We need to get that bee out before Katie hyperventilates."

Wayne quickly opened the window and shooed the bee with his hand.

"Did. . .did it go out?" Katie's chin trembled as she lifted her head. Her vivid green eyes glistened with unshed tears. Lorraine found it hard to believe anyone could be so afraid of a bee, even though she knew the source of her cousin's fear.

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“*Jab*, I’m sure it’s out. At least, I don’t see it anymore,” Loraine said, hoping to reassure her cousin.

“It’s gone, Katie, so you can relax.” Wayne closed the window and nudged Loraine’s arm. “You know what I’m thinking?”

“What’s that?”

“I’m thinking I can hardly wait to get you on the Side Winder I’ve heard so much about!”

She grimaced. “It would be just like you to try and talk me into going on the scariest ride at Hershey Park.”

Wayne’s eyes twinkled. “Do you really think I’d twist your arm and make you do that?”

“She doesn’t think it; she knows it,” Loraine’s cousin Ella spoke up from the back of the van.

Jolene, Loraine’s other cousin, giggled behind her hand, while Katie’s boyfriend, Timothy, snorted like one of his father’s pigs.

“Remember, Loraine, you’re the one who suggested we take this trip to Hershey Park,” Jolene’s brother Andrew said. “So I would think you’d be looking forward to going on all the scary rides.”

“That’s right,” Ella’s brother Raymond chimed in. “Getting scared out of your wits is the whole reason for going to an amusement park.”

Wayne nudged Loraine’s arm again. “Don’t you remember how much fun we had when we went to the Fun Spot last Labor Day weekend?”

Loraine nodded. It had been fun to visit their local amusement park, but those rides weren’t nearly as frightening as the ones she’d heard about at Hershey Park. Even so, she was excited to take this trip. Ever since she was a little girl, she’d wanted to visit Hershey Park and Hershey’s Chocolate World. She loved chocolate and had heard there was a ride inside Chocolate World that showed visitors how the various kinds of Hershey candy were made. Their plans were to travel through the night, arrive in Hershey around 2:00 a.m., and check into the hotel their driver, Paul Crawford, had reserved for them. Then they would sleep a few hours and spend all day Saturday at the park. They planned to rest awhile

on Sunday, and then maybe take a drive around the surrounding area. Early Monday morning, they would head for home. Loraine figured this trip could turn out to be more fun than if her parents had taken her when she was a girl.

Even though the Amish didn't celebrate Labor Day, Timothy, Raymond, and Andrew worked at the trailer factory in Middlebury and had Monday off, as did Loraine, who worked at the hardware store in Shipshewana. Since neither Katie nor Ella had full-time jobs, being gone for three days wasn't a problem. The same held true for Wayne, who farmed with his father. Only Jolene, a teacher at the local Amish schoolhouse, was scheduled to work, but she'd been able to get a substitute for Monday.

"I don't know about anyone else, but I'm more anxious to eat some of that *wunderbaar* chocolate than go on any of the rides at Hershey Park." Katie smiled and relaxed against the seat, obviously feeling better now that the bee was gone.

"Listen to you. . . talking about food already, and we're not even to Ashley yet." Timothy bumped Katie's arm. "Can't you at least wait until we leave the state of Indiana to talk about food?"

Katie muffled her snicker.

Loraine smiled. It was good to see everyone in such good spirits. Paul had been laughing and telling jokes since he'd picked them up at Jolene and Andrew's house in Topeka.

"Hey, Paul," Timothy called, "Katie's hungry, so we may have to stop soon and see that she's fed."

"I'll be stopping before we get to Highway 69," Paul said over his shoulder. "Will that be soon enough?"

Timothy needled Katie in the ribs. "What do you say? Can you hold out till then?"

She wrinkled her nose. "If you don't stop teasing, I won't go on any of the rides at Hershey Park with you."

"Is that a threat?"

"It's a promise."

Loraine looked over at Wayne and rolled her eyes. Katie was her youngest cousin, and she'd recently turned nineteen. Sometimes,

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like now, Katie still acted like an immature adolescent. Timothy, who was twenty, wasn't much better, always goofing around, mimicking others, and making all sorts of weird sounds. But the two of them seemed happy together and planned to be married in the fall of next year. Maybe by then, they'd both have grown up some.

"I wish people would quit cutting me off and tailgating," Paul complained as he merged the van into heavier traffic. "Seems like everyone and his brother is headed somewhere for Labor Day weekend. If it's this bad now, I can only imagine how it will be on the trip home."

"Hershey Park will probably be crowded, too," Andrew put in.

Wayne gave Loraine's fingers a gentle squeeze. "This will be our last chance for an outing with our single friends before we become an old married couple, so we'd better enjoy every moment," he whispered in her ear.

He looked at her so sweetly she wanted to tousle his thick auburn curls, the way she sometimes did when they were alone. In just a little over a month, she and Wayne would get married, and then she could tousle his hair to her heart's content. By this time next year, they might even have a baby, and their lives would take a new direction—one that wouldn't include weekend trips to amusement parks. A baby would mean changing dirty diapers, getting up in the middle of the night for feedings, and so many new, exciting things. Loraine could hardly wait to make a home and raise a family with Wayne. It would be a dream come true.

She leaned her head against Wayne's shoulder and let her eyelids close. She felt safe and secure when she was with Wayne—enjoying his company and happy to know she'd soon be his wife. *I wonder what our kinner will look like. Will they have my brown hair and brown eyes, or will they resemble Wayne with his curly auburn hair and hazel eyes? Will they be easygoing and even-tempered like Wayne? Will they have a servant's heart—generous in spirit and sensitive to others in need?*

In her mind's eye, Loraine could see a sweet baby with curly

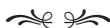
auburn hair, gurgling and reaching chubby hands out to his father.

The van lurched suddenly, and Loraine's eyes snapped open. "Wh-what happened?"

"We're stopping for those snacks I promised you could get," Paul said as he pulled off the road and into a gas station. "If anyone wants anything, you'd better get it now, because I won't be stopping again until I need more gas."

Loraine climbed out of the van ahead of her cousins and turned to smile at Katie. "Since you're the one who said you were hungry, I guess you'd better make sure you stock up on plenty of snacks."

Katie snickered. "I plan to do just that."



With a sack full of snack foods, Loraine crawled back into the van and released a noisy yawn. "Someone wake me when we get there, would you?" She leaned her head on Wayne's broad shoulder again. "I hope you don't mind me using you for a pillow."

He nuzzled the top of her stiff, white head covering with his nose. "I don't mind at all."

Loraine's eyelids fluttered closed once more. She was almost asleep when Katie let out an ear-piercing yelp. "Ach! Another bee's in the van!"

Loraine sat up straight. Sure enough, a bee buzzed irritatingly overhead.

Timothy and Raymond swatted at the troublesome bee with their hats.

"Ella, roll down your window!" Timothy shouted. "Maybe the critter will fly out like the last one did."

Ella quickly did as he requested, but the bee kept buzzing and zipping all around.

Katie screamed when it buzzed past her face. "Get it! Get it! Get it!"

"What's going on back there?" Paul called over his shoulder. "What's all the ruckus about?"

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“There’s a bee on the loose, and—”

“Paul, look out!”

At the sound of Ella’s shrill scream, Loraine’s gaze darted to the front window. A semi-truck headed straight for them!

Paul jerked the wheel, and the van lurched to the right. As the semi roared past, it slammed into the side of their vehicle. The van skidded off the road and smacked a telephone pole. It flipped onto its side and spun around. Metal crunching! Breaking glass! Screaming voices! Deafening silence. Loraine was sure everyone was dead.