

the
Bishop's
Daughter

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



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*To Arie, Sue, Betty, and Ada Nancy—
four special women who have taught Amish children.*

*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not:
for of such is the kingdom of God.*

LUKE 18:16 KJV

PROLOGUE

I—I want you to promise me something.”

Jim cringed when he thought of all the times he had reneged on a promise he'd made to his wife. “What do you want me to promise, Linda?”

“Would you see that—” Her voice faltered. “I—I want to be sure Jimmy continues to go to church—after I'm gone. Will you take him?”

A knot formed in the pit of Jim's stomach, and he nodded.

“I'm glad we adopted Jimmy. He's brought such joy into my life.” Linda fingered the edge of the Amish quilt tucked around her frail form. “I—I know we agreed not to tell him that he's adopted while he's too young to understand.” She paused. “But I want you to tell him about the adoption when he's older. He needs to know the truth. It—it wouldn't be right to keep it from him.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“And you won't tell him until he's old enough to handle it?”

“I promise I won't.” Jim gritted his teeth. *Should I tell her the details of Jimmy's adoption? Would it be wrong to let Linda die without revealing the truth? He dropped his head forward into his open palms. It would be cruel to tell her what I did when I know she's dying. The news in itself might kill her, and it would certainly add to her agony. And for what purpose? Just to ease my guilty conscience? I did what I did because I loved her and wanted to give her a child, so I can't let her die with the truth of my betrayal on her mind.*

“What is it, Jim? Are you all right?”

He lifted his head and reached for her hand. “I will tell Jimmy about his adoption when I think he's old enough.”

“Thank you.” Tears matted Linda's lashes, speckling her pale cheeks. “I love you and Jimmy so much, and—and I pray you'll find comfort in knowing that I'm going home soon—to be with my Lord.”

Jim's only response was a brief nod. The motion was all he could manage. He knew Linda believed in God and thought she would go to heaven, but he'd never been sure about all that religious mumbo jumbo. He only went to church when he felt forced to go—whenever Jimmy was in some special program. Even then, he always felt uncomfortable. Linda had said many times that she thought God had an answer for everything. But where was God when Linda had been diagnosed with breast cancer five years ago? And where was God when the cancer came back and spread quickly throughout her body?

Linda drew in a raspy breath. “Will you and Jimmy be able to manage on your own—after I’m gone?”

Jim groaned. He didn't need these reminders that she was dying or that their son would be left with only one parent. “We'll get along. I'll raise him the best I can.”

“I know you will.”

He leaned over and kissed her cheek. *If it were within my power, I would move heaven and earth to keep you from dying.*

CHAPTER 1

Tears welled in Leona Weaver's eyes as she glanced around the one-room schoolhouse where she'd been teaching the last four years. Her days of teaching would have been over in two weeks, when the school year ended. The school board would have then selected a new teacher to take Leona's place in the fall, due to her plans to marry.

"But that won't be happening now," she murmured. "I'll be teaching in the fall again—not getting married."

Leona closed her eyes as she relived the shocking moment when she had been told that Ezra Yoder, the man she was supposed to marry, had been kicked in the head while shoeing a horse and had died.



"Uh—Leona, I've got something to tell you."

"What's that, Papa?"

"The thing is—"

"You seem kind of naerfich. Is there something wrong to make you so nervous?"

Papa pulled in a deep breath as he motioned for Leona to take a seat on the sofa. "There's been an accident, daughter. Ezra is—"

"Ezra? Has Ezra been hurt?"

He nodded soberly. "I'm sorry to be the one havin' to tell you this, but Ezra is dead."

Dead. Ezra is dead. Leona sank to the sofa as her daed's words echoed in her head.

Papa took a seat beside her, and Mom, who'd just come into the room, did the same.

“How did it happen, Jacob?” Mom asked, reaching over to take Leona’s hand.

“Ezra was shoeing a skittish horse and got kicked in the head. His brother, Mose, saw it happen.”

The tightness in Leona’s chest interfered with her ability to breathe. “Ezra can’t be dead. I just spoke to him last night. We were making plans for our wedding, and—” Her voice trailed off, and she gulped on a sob.

Papa kept his head down, obviously unable to meet her gaze. “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. It must have been Ezra’s time to go.”

Her daed’s last words resounded in Leona’s head. The Lord taketh away. It must have been Ezra’s time to go. She gripped the edge of the sofa and squeezed her eyes shut. No, no, it can’t be! I love Ezra. Ezra loves me. We are going to be married in the fall!

When Leona opened her eyes, she saw a look of pity in her mamm’s eyes.

“You’ll get through this, daughter. With the help of your family and friends, God will see you through.”

As the reality of the situation began to fully register, Leona’s body trembled. “The Lord giveth. The Lord taketh away,” she murmured. “Never again will I allow myself to fall in love with another man.”



Bringing her thoughts back to the present, Leona pushed her chair away from her desk and stood. She saw no point in grieving over what couldn’t be changed. Ezra had been gone for almost three months, and he wouldn’t be coming back. Leona would never become a wife or mother. She must now accept a new calling, a new purpose for living, a new sense of mission. She would give all of her efforts to being the best schoolteacher she could be.

“Maybe a few minutes in the fresh spring air might clear my head before it’s time to call the scholars into the schoolhouse from their morning recess,” she murmured. “Maybe I’ll even join their game of baseball.”

As a young girl, Leona had always enjoyed playing ball. Even now, with her twenty-fourth birthday just a few months away, she could still outrun most of her pupils and catch a fly ball with little effort.

She opened the door, stepped onto the porch, and hurried across

the lawn. She stepped up to home plate just as Silas, Matthew Fisher's ten-year-old boy, dropped his bat and darted for first base. Sprinting like a buggy horse given the signal to trot, Silas's feet skimmed the base, and he kept on running. His teammates cheered, and the opposing team booed as the boy made his way around the bases.

When Naomi Hoffmeir's eleven-year-old son, Josh, nearly tagged Silas with the ball, the exuberant child skidded to a stop and slid into third base. Sweat rolled down the boy's forehead as he huffed and puffed, but his smile stretched ear to ear.

"It's my turn," Leona called to Emanuel Lapp, the pitcher. She grabbed the bat, bent her knees slightly, and planted both feet with toes pointing outward. "Get ready, Silas, 'cause I'm bringing you home!"

"And she can do it, too," Leona's niece, Fern, shouted from the sidelines.

Leona glanced at Fern, her older brother's eleven-year-old daughter. Several wisps of the girl's golden blond hair had come loose from her white *kapp*, and it curled around her ears. *She reminds me so much of her daed*, Leona thought. *Ever since Arthur started working for Papa, he's always said exactly what he thinks. Truth be told, Arthur probably can't wait for Papa to retire from painting so he can take over the business.*

Fern lifted her hand in a wave, and Leona waved back. *She's so sweet. I'd hoped to have a child like her someday.*

Her thoughts went to Ezra again. *But there will be no kinner for me. Ezra's gone, and I'll never know what our children would have looked like. I'll never. . ."*

Forcing her thoughts back to the game, Leona gripped the bat and readied herself for Emanuel's first pitch. She knew the twelve-year-old had a steady hand and could throw straight as an arrow. He was also known to pitch a good curve ball, which she would have to watch out for. If the Amish schoolteacher got anything less than a good hit, she would never live it down. *Keep your eye on the ball*, she reminded herself. *Don't give Emanuel an edge, and don't think about anything except playing this game.*

The pitch came fast and hard, but it was too far to the right. Leona held on to the bat but didn't swing.

"Ball one!" Harley Fisher hollered from the place where he crouched behind her, ready to catch the ball.

She shifted uneasily as her metal-framed glasses slipped to the middle of her nose. She mostly needed them for reading or close-up work and should have left them on her desk. But it was too late to worry about that. She had a ball to hit.

Leona took one hand off the bat and pushed her glasses back in place. *Whish!* The ball came quickly, catching her off guard.

“Strike one!” Harley shouted.

Leona pursed her lips in concentration. *If I hadn’t tried to right my glasses, I could have hit that one. Might have planted it clear out in left field.*

Setting her jaw as firmly as her determination, she gripped the bat tighter, resolved to smack the next one over the fielders’ heads and bring Silas home.

Emanuel pulled his arm way back, and a sly smile spread across his face.

“Teacher, Mary’s bein’ mean to me!”

Leona’s gaze darted quickly to the left. When she saw it was only a skirmish over the swings, she turned back. But before she could react, the oncoming sphere of white hit her full in the face, sending her glasses flying and causing her vision to blur. She swallowed as a metallic taste filled her mouth. When she cupped her hand over her throbbing nose, warm blood oozed between her fingers. The ground swayed beneath her feet, and the last thing Leona remembered was someone calling her name.



“How come you wanted to go out for lunch instead of dinner tonight?” Jimmy Scott asked his dad. They had taken seats in front of the window at a restaurant overlooking Commencement Bay and given the waitress their orders.

“I thought it would be easier to get a table with a view of the water when they aren’t so busy.” Jimmy’s dad pulled his fingers through one side of his dark hair, which over the last couple of years had become sprinkled with gray. “Maybe after lunch we can take a ride to Point Defiance Park, or would you rather do something else to celebrate your birthday?”

Jimmy chuckled. "I won't turn twenty-one until Sunday, Dad. I had hoped the two of us could attend church together and then maybe play a round of golf in the afternoon."

His dad's dark eyebrows furrowed, causing the wrinkles in his forehead to become more pronounced. "I planned it so we could take today off, figuring you'd want to spend Sunday with your friend, Allen, or some of the young people from your church."

Jimmy stared out the window as disappointment rose in his chest. Dad had never gone to church that often, not even when Mom was alive. Since her death nine years ago, all his dad had ever done was drop Jimmy off at church, and he'd even stopped attending the special holiday programs. What would it take to make the stubborn man see his need for Christ, and why hadn't Mom been able to get through to him? She'd tried plenty of times; Jimmy had heard her almost beg Dad to accept the Lord as his Savior. But Dad always said he didn't need church or anything God had to offer.

Jimmy studied a passing sailboat, which glided through the bay with ease and perfect rhythm. *If only life could be as serene and easy to handle as a boat skimming along the water on a calm spring day.* He thought about his mother's untimely death and how sad he had been when the ravages of cancer had taken her from them. *Still, it was because of Mom that I found a personal relationship with Christ. She set a Christian example, saw that I went to church every Sunday, and read me Bible stories when I was a boy.* He reached for his glass of water and took a drink. *At least Mom was set free of her pain, and I'm sure I'll see her in heaven someday.*

"So, have you made any plans with Allen for Sunday?"

Dad's question drove Jimmy out of his musings. "Uh—no, not really. I guess if you want to celebrate my birthday today and don't plan to go to church with me on Sunday I'll do something with Allen and his family."

"That's a good idea. I've got a lot of paperwork to do, and it'll take me most of the weekend to get it finished."

Sure, Dad, if this weekend is like so many others, you'll probably be camped out in some bar instead of at home doing paperwork. "Yeah, okay. I understand," Jimmy mumbled.

Dad reached across the table and handed Jimmy a small box wrapped in white tissue paper. "Happy birthday, son."

Jimmy took the gift and tore off the wrapping paper. When he opened the lid, he discovered an expensive-looking gold watch.

“So you’re always on time for work,” his dad said with a grin.

“Thanks. Even though I already own a watch, it’ll be nice to have a new one I can wear when I’m not working and don’t want to get paint all over it.” Jimmy had started working part-time for his dad when he was a teenager, and he’d continued painting after he’d graduated from high school. The only time he hadn’t worked for his dad was when he’d taken a couple of classes at the community college in Tacoma.

“The watch belonged to my father, and I thought you might like to have it,” Dad said.

Jimmy studied the heirloom. If it had been Grandpa Scott’s, then he felt proud to own it, even though he’d barely known his dad’s father. Mom’s parents came to visit often, and Jimmy’s folks had driven to Boise to see them several times over the years. But Grandma and Grandpa Scott lived in Ohio, and the only times Jimmy remembered going there was when Grandpa had been in the hospital having open-heart surgery and again five years ago when Grandpa died. Jimmy’s grandparents had come to Washington a few times for short visits, but after Grandpa’s health began to fail, their trips to the West Coast stopped; he hadn’t seen Grandma since Grandpa’s funeral.

“Do you like the watch?” Dad asked, breaking into Jimmy’s thoughts.

“Sure. It’s a beauty. I’ll take good care of it.”

Their waitress approached, bringing champagne for Dad and lemonade for Jimmy.

“To your health and to many more birthdays,” Dad said, lifting his glass in a toast.

Jimmy cringed as their glasses clinked, leaving him with a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. “I wish you wouldn’t use my birthday as a reason to drink.”

“Can’t think of a better reason.” His dad gulped down the whole drink and smacked his lips. “That wasn’t the best champagne I’ve ever tasted, but it’s good for what ails you.”

Jimmy made no comment, just turned his gaze to the window again. There would have been harsh words on both their parts if he had reminded Dad that he drank too much or mentioned that if Mom were

still alive, she would have gotten on to him about ordering champagne in the middle of the day. When Jimmy was a boy, he'd known that his dad drank some, but after Mom died, it had gotten much worse. Jimmy thought his dad might be using her death as an excuse to drown his sorrows or bury the past, but he also knew the way to deal with one's pain wasn't found in a bottle. Dad needed the Lord.

"Oh, I almost forgot," Dad said, halting Jimmy's thoughts. "This came in the mail for you this morning. It has a Boise postmark on it, and I'm guessing it's a birthday card from your grandparents."

Jimmy reached across the table and took the envelope, stuffing it inside his jacket pocket.

"Aren't you going to open it?"

"Naw. I think I'll wait until Sunday, so I have something to open on my actual birthday."



Abraham Fisher had just entered the barn when he heard a horse and buggy pull into the yard. He glanced through the open doorway and smiled. His friend Jacob Weaver had come to pay him a visit.

"*Wie geht's?*" Abraham asked, extending his hand when Jacob joined him inside the barn a few minutes later.

Jacob offered Abraham a strong handshake and grinned, causing the skin around Jacob's hazel-colored eyes to crinkle. "I can't complain. How are you this warm April afternoon?"

Abraham nodded toward the bales of straw piled along one side of the barn. "I was about to clean the horses' stalls and spread some of that on the floor."

"By yourself? Where are those able-bodied *buwe* of yours?"

"Norman, Jake, and Samuel went home to their families for the day, and I sent the twins inside to wash up." Abraham shook his head. "Titus pulled one of his pranks, and he and Timothy ended up with manure all over their clothes."

"*Phew!* Sure am glad I missed seeing those two." Jacob removed his straw hat and fanned his face with the brim. "Can we sit and talk a spell, or would ya rather work while we gab?"

Abraham gave his nearly gray beard a quick pull. "Me and the *buwe*

worked hard in the fields all morning, so I think I deserve a little break.” He motioned to a couple of wooden barrels. “Let’s have a seat.”

Jacob lowered himself to one of the barrels and groaned. “You oughta get some padding for these if you’re gonna keep using ’em for chairs.”

Abraham snickered. “*Jah*, well, if I got too comfortable out here in the barn, I might not appreciate my old rockin’ chair in the house.”

“You’ve got a point.”

“How come you’re not working on some paint job this afternoon, and what brings you out our way?” Abraham asked his friend.

“I’m headed to Bird-in-Hand to bid on a paint job for the bank there, and I thought I’d drop by to see you first.” Jacob’s fingers traced the side of his prominent nose. “I know today is Zach’s twenty-first birthday, and I figured you might be feeling kind of down.”

Abraham leaned his head against the wooden planks behind him. It always amazed him how Jacob seemed to know when he needed to talk, and his friend’s memory for dates was even more astonishing. Ever since Abraham had known Jacob Weaver, he’d been impressed by the man’s wisdom and ability to offer godly counsel. When Jacob had been chosen as their new bishop some fourteen years ago, he’d become even more knowledgeable and helpful during times of need. Everyone in the community seemed to admire, respect, and appreciate the way Bishop Jacob Weaver led his flock.

“You’re right,” Abraham admitted. “I did feel a pang of regret when I got up this morning and looked at the calendar.” He drew in a deep breath and expelled it with a huff. “For many years, I prayed that my son would be returned to us, but after a time, I came to accept the fact that Zach’s not comin’ home. Even though I don’t talk about him much anymore, I’ve never forgotten my boy or quit praying that God would protect Zach and use his life for good.”

Jacob reached over and touched Abraham’s arm. “I’ve prayed for your missing son all these many years, too.”

“*Jah*, I know.” Abraham cleared his throat. “Truth is, even if Zach were to come home now, he wouldn’t know us, and we wouldn’t know him. We’d be like strangers.” He gave his beard another good tug. “Just wish I knew how he was gettin’ along out there in the English world. It would have helped if we’d have gotten more than one message in *The*

Budget from the man who stole Zach—something that would have let us know he was still doin' all right.”

“You must remember that God’s ways are not our ways. He has His hand on Zach,” Jacob reminded.

“I realize that, and rather than dwelling on what can’t be changed, some time ago I made up my mind to get on with the business of livin’ and enjoy the family I have right now.”

“That’s good thinking.” Jacob thumped Abraham on the back and stood. “Guess I should be on my way.”

Abraham walked his friend out to his buggy, and Jacob was about to climb in when another horse and buggy rolled into the yard. Abraham’s grandson Harley was the driver, and as soon as the horse came to a stop, he jumped down from the buggy and dashed over to the men.

“What are you doin’ out of school?” Abraham asked, placing his hand on the boy’s shoulder.

Rivulets of sweat trickled off Harley’s forehead and onto his flushed cheeks. “I went by Jacob’s place, but nobody was at home, so I decided to come over here, hopin’ you might know where Jacob was.”

“And so you found me,” Jacob said. “What can I do for you, Harley?”

“It—it’s Leona,” the boy panted. “She got hit with a baseball and has been taken to the hospital.”