

the
JOURNEY

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER



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DEDICATION/ACKNOWLEDGMENT

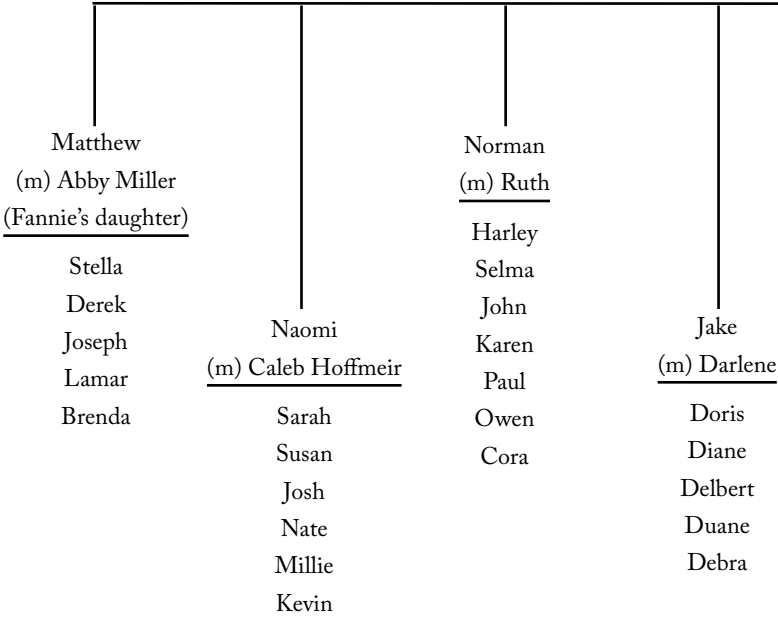
To Joe Thompson, who first introduced me to the Kentucky Amish and shared helpful information. To Lida Conkle and Patricia Thompson, who have also told me interesting facts about the area and answered many of my questions. And to our new Amish and Mennonite friends, whom we've enjoyed visiting during our trips to Kentucky.

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

PHILIPPIANS 4:11

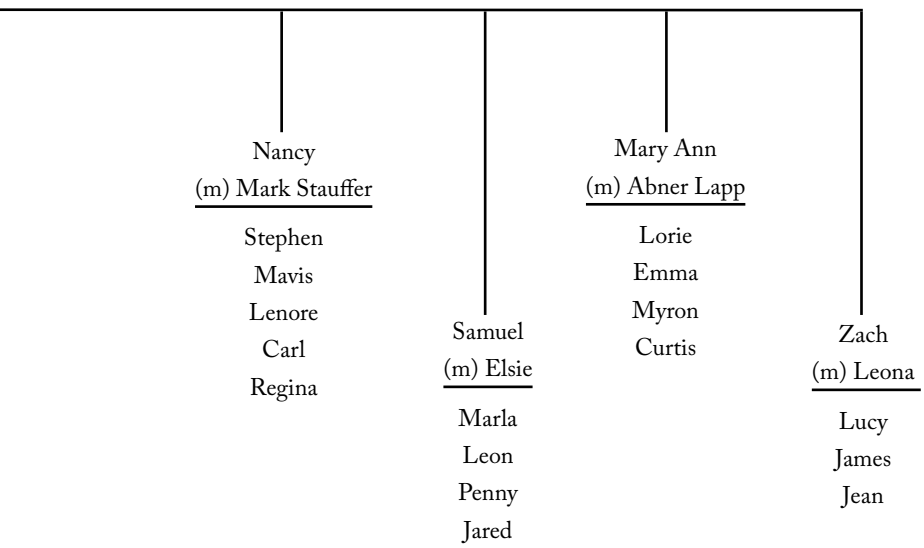
Fisher Family Tree

Abraham and Sarah Fisher's Children

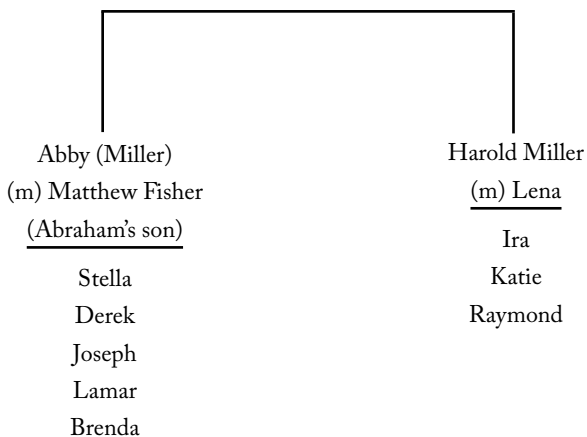


Abraham and Fannie Fisher's Children





Fannie's Children from her First Marriage



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CHAPTER I

Paradise, Pennsylvania

Titus Fisher liked horses, dogs, and shoofly pie. What he didn't like was a cat that scratched, and a woman he couldn't trust. Today he'd dealt with both.

Gritting his teeth, he grabbed his horse's bridle and led him into the barn, wishing he hadn't gotten out of bed that morning. The day had started on a sour note when Titus had come to the barn to feed the horses and accidentally stepped on one of Mom's cats. Five of the irksome critters lived in the barn, and every one of them liked to bite and scratch. Whiskers, the smallest of the five, was the most aggressive. The crazy cat had been so miffed when Titus stepped on her tail that she'd clawed her way right up his leg, hissing and yowling as she went. When Titus had tried to push Whiskers off, she'd let him have it—leaving a nasty scratch on his leg.

Titus pulled up his pant leg and stared at the wound, still red and swollen. It reminded him of the time when he and his twin brother, Timothy, were six years old and had found a wild cat in the woodpile behind their barn. The mangy critter had bitten Titus's hand, and when the bite became infected, he'd started

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running a fever. Mom had taken him to the doctor's, where he'd been given a tetanus shot and an antibiotic. Ever since then, he'd had an aversion to cats.

"In my opinion, except for catching mice, cats are pretty much worthless," Titus mumbled as he guided his horse into one of the stalls. When he patted the horse's ebony-colored flanks, the gelding whinnied and flipped his head around to nuzzle Titus's hand. "Not like you, Lightning. You're worth every dollar I paid for you. You're dependable and trustworthy." He grimaced. "Wish I could say the same for Phoebe Stoltzfus."

Titus poured some oats into a bucket, and as his horse ate, he replayed the conversation he'd had with Phoebe on his way home from work that afternoon. . . .

"I'm not ready to join the church yet, and I'm too young to get married." Phoebe flipped the strings of her head covering over her shoulders and blinked her blue eyes. "Why do you have to put so much pressure on me, Titus?"

"I—I'm not," he stammered, "but I've been waiting a long time for you, and I'd thought that when I joined the church two years ago, you'd join, too."

"I wasn't ready then. I was only sixteen and had other things on my mind."

"How well I know that. You were too busy runnin' around with your friends and tryin' out all sorts of worldly things." Titus groaned. "Figured you'd have all that out of your system by now and would be ready to settle down."

She shook her head. "Maybe in a few years I'll be ready."

"You said that two years ago."

"Things have changed." She placed her hand gently on his arm. "My friend Darlene Mast is planning a trip to

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Los Angeles, and she's leaving in a few days, so—

He held up his hand. "Please don't tell me you want to go with her."

"I think it would be fun, and I've always wanted to see the Pacific Ocean." She looked up at him and smiled. "You're full of adventure and like to try new things. Wouldn't you like to see California?"

He shrugged. "Maybe someday, but not right now. What I want is for you to join the church this fall so we can get married."

She shook her head. "I just told you—I'm not ready for that."

"Will you ever be ready?"

"I don't know." She pushed a wisp of soft, auburn hair under her white organdy head covering and turned her gaze away from him. "I—I might not join the church. I might decide to go English."

"Are you kidding?"

"No, I'm not. I don't know if I want to be Amish."

Titus's jaw tightened as the reality of the situation set in. If Phoebe went to California, she might never come back. If she didn't join the church, they couldn't get married. Titus had been in love with Phoebe since he was seventeen years old, but she'd been four years younger than him, and their parents had disapproved. He'd waited patiently until Phoebe turned sixteen. Even then, his folks had been opposed to him courting her because she seemed so unsettled and ran with a wild bunch of kids.

Now Titus, at the age of twenty-two, still wasn't sure he and Phoebe would ever get married. If she did go English, the only way they could marry would be if he broke his vow to the Amish church, which he did not want to do.

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“Can we talk about this later?” he asked. “After you’ve had a chance to think about this some more?”

“There’s nothing to think about. I’m going to California.” She tipped her head and stared up at him. “If you don’t want to come, then I guess it’s over between us.”

“You can’t do this, Phoebe. Are you just going to give up on us like this?”

She shrugged.

“Don’t you love me anymore?”

“I—I’m not sure. Maybe we’re not meant to be together.”

Titus flinched. He felt like he’d been kicked in the stomach by one of his dad’s stubborn mules. He had a sinking feeling that once Phoebe left home she’d never come back. All his years of waiting for her had been for nothing.

Titus’s horse whinnied and nudged his hand, pulling his thoughts back to the present.

“Stop it, Lightning. I’m not in the mood.” Titus kicked at a bale of straw and winced when Lightning whipped his head around and bumped his sore leg.

Lightning whinnied again and stomped his hoof. Then he moved to the other end of his stall and turned his backside toward Titus.

“It’s all right, boy. I’m not mad at you.” Titus stepped up to the horse and reached out his hand. “I’m upset with Phoebe, that’s all.”

As though accepting his apology, Lightning nuzzled Titus’s neck.

Horses and dogs—that’s about all that ever held my interest until Phoebe came along, Titus thought. If there was only some way to get her out of my system. If I could just tell myself that I don’t care anymore.

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Pembroke, Kentucky

As Suzanne Yoder stared out the living room window, a sense of discontentment welled in her soul. She enjoyed living in Christian County, especially in the spring when the flowers and trees began to bloom.

I wish I could be outside right now, tilling the garden or even mowing the lawn, she thought with regret. It was too nice to be stuck indoors, yet she knew she needed to work on the quilt she'd started several months ago for her friend Esther Beiler's twenty-fourth birthday, which was less than a month away.

Suzanne's gaze shifted from the garden to the woodshop, where her grandfather and twenty-year-old brother, Nelson, worked. Due to painful arthritis, Grandpa's fingers didn't work well anymore, so he'd recently decided to look for someone else to help Nelson in the shop. Someone younger and more able-bodied. Someone who knew the woodworking trade.

Grandpa wasn't one to sit around or take life easy while others did all the work, but Mom had convinced him that he could still have a hand in the business by ordering supplies, waiting on customers, and keeping the books. Grandpa wasn't happy about it, but at least he wouldn't be sitting on the porch in his rocking chair all day, wishing he could be in the shop.

"I thought you were supposed to be working on Esther's birthday present," Mom said when she joined Suzanne in the living room.

"I was, but my eyes needed a break. I was thinking about going out to the woodshop to see if there's anything I can do to help out."

Mom's dark eyebrows furrowed as she slowly shook her head. "You'll never get that quilt done if you keep procrastinating, and

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there's no need for you to run out to the woodshop, because I'm sure you and Nelson would only end up in a disagreement. You know how he feels about you hanging around the shop."

Suzanne frowned. No one in the family understood her desire to be in the woodshop, where she could enjoy the distinctive odors of wood being cut, sanded, or stained. It was a shame nobody took her interest in woodworking seriously. Not long ago, Suzanne had borrowed some of Grandpa's tools so she could make a few birdhouses and feeders to put in their yard. She'd never gotten any encouragement in making them, though. She guessed compared to the cabinets, doors, and storage sheds Grandpa and Nelson made, the birdhouses and feeders were insignificant.

Mom touched Suzanne's shoulder. "I'm going to plant some peas and lettuce this afternoon, so if you think you've worked long enough on the quilt today, I could use your help."

Suzanne didn't have to be asked twice. Any chore she could do outdoors would be better than being inside, where it was warm and stuffy. "I'll meet you outside as soon as I put away my quilting supplies," she said.

"That'll be fine." Mom gave Suzanne's arm a light tap and disappeared into the kitchen.

Suzanne glanced out the window once more and sighed as her gaze came to rest on the woodshop. "Guess I won't make it out there today—except to take the men their lunch."



Paradise, Pennsylvania

Titus left the barn and was about to head for the house, when a dark blue pickup rumbled up the driveway. He didn't recognize the vehicle or the young English man with dark curly hair who opened the cab door and stepped out.

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“Is this where Zach Fisher lives?” the man asked as he approached Titus.

“Sort of. My dad owns this place, and Zach and his family live in the house behind ours.” Titus pointed in that direction.

“Oh, I see. Is Zach at home?”

“Nope, not yet. He’s up in Blue Ball, painting the outside of the bowling alley. Probably won’t be home till sometime after six.”

The man extended his hand. “I’m Allen Walters. I knew Zach when he lived in Puyallup, Washington.”

“That was when he thought his name was Jimmy Scott, huh?”

“That’s right.”

“Zach’s my half brother. My twin brother, Timothy, and I were born during the time Zach was missing. He was about six or seven then, I think.”

“My mother and the woman Zach thought was his mother became good friends, so Zach and I kind of grew up together.”

“Zach’s mentioned that,” Titus said. “Sure is somethin’ the way he was kidnapped when he was a baby and never located his real family until he was twenty-one.”

“I really missed Zach after he left Washington, but I’m glad he found his way home.” Allen folded his arms and leaned against the side of his truck. “The last time I saw Zach was before he got married, and that was seven years ago. We’ve kept in touch through letters and phone calls, though.”

“Did Zach know you were coming?”

Allen shook his head. “He doesn’t know I’ve moved from Washington State to Kentucky either.”

“You’re welcome to hang around here until he gets home, because I’m sure he’ll be pleased to see you.”

“Thanks, I’ll do that.”

Just then, Titus’s mother stepped out of the house and

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started across the yard toward them, her slightly plump figure shuffling through the grass.

“This is my mother, Fannie Fisher.” Titus motioned to Allen. “Mom, this is Zach’s old friend, Allen Walters. He used to live in Washington.”

Mom’s brown eyes brightened as she shook Allen’s hand. “It’s nice to finally meet you. Zach’s told us a lot about you and your family.”

“He’s talked to me about his family here, too.”

“I explained to Allen that Zach’s still at work and said he’s welcome to stay here until Zach gets home.”

Mom bobbed her head. “Why don’t you stay for supper? I’ll invite Zach and his family to join us. I think it would be nice for you to meet his wife and children.”

“I’d like that,” Allen said with an enthusiastic nod.

“If you need a place to spend the night, you’re more than welcome to stay here.” Mom smiled. “Since Titus is our only son still living at home, we have more than enough room to accommodate guests.”

“I appreciate the offer, but I’ve already reserved a room at a hotel in Bird-in-Hand.”

“That’s fine, but the offer’s open if you change your mind.” Mom turned toward the house. “I’d better go back inside and get supper going.”

As Mom headed to the house, Titus motioned to a couple of wooden chairs sitting beneath the maple tree on their lawn. “Why don’t we take a seat?” he said to Allen. “I’m real interested in hearing why you moved to Kentucky.”