

## Book 1 Preview: A Simple Hope

The quilting circle was held at the Lapp farm that week, and the main room was a sea of color and quiet chatter. Sarah sat between her mother and her future mother-in-law, her needle flying, her stitches small and perfect. It was a scene of peaceful, ordered community, the life she had always known and expected. Jacob Stoltzfus, her fiancé, was there, helping the men with some repair work on the barn. He would occasionally glance over at her, his look proprietary and proud, a look that should have made her heart swell with contentment. Instead, it felt like a cage slowly closing around her.

Her eyes kept drifting to the far corner of the room, where Daniel Fisher was quietly replacing a broken windowpane, a task he had offered to do for her father. He worked with a quiet, focused intensity, his movements economical and sure. He had been in their valley for two months, a man with a shadowed past from Ohio, and in those two months, he had completely upended Sarah's carefully ordered world. They had barely spoken more than a dozen words to each other, but the connection between them was a silent, powerful current that seemed to arc across the crowded room.

Suddenly, a small cry of pain broke the calm. Sarah had pricked her finger, a deep, sharp jab from her needle. A single, bright drop of red blood welled up and fell onto the pure white fabric of the quilt block she was working on, a stark and shocking stain.

"Sarah, are you alright?" her mother asked, her voice sharp with concern.

Before she could answer, two men were at her side. Jacob was there first, his face a mask of annoyed concern. "You must be more careful," he said, his tone more of a reprimand than a comfort. "You've stained the fabric."

But it was Daniel who moved. He took her hand gently, his touch sending a jolt through her that was far more potent than the sting of the needle. He inspected the wound with a practiced eye. "It is a deep prick, but clean," he said, his voice a low, calming rumble meant only for her. He pulled a clean handkerchief from his pocket and pressed it firmly against her fingertip, his gaze meeting hers for a just a moment. In his eyes, she saw not concern for the stained fabric, but for her.

The moment was broken by Jacob clearing his throat, his displeasure obvious. "Thank you for your help, Fisher," he said, his voice clipped. "I can tend to my fiancée."

Daniel released her hand, gave a slight nod, and retreated to his work, leaving Sarah with a burning finger and a heart that was beating with a wild, treacherous rhythm. The small, white quilt block now bore a single, indelible red stain. It was a blemish, a mistake. But as she looked at it, she felt a strange, thrilling thought: perhaps it was not a stain, but a promise of a passion her simple, plain life had never known.