

New York Times BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *When the Soul Mends*

When *the* Morning Comes

— A NOVEL —

Cindy
Woodsmall

SISTERS OF THE QUILT, BOOK TWO

Praise for
When the Morning Comes

“Cindy Woodsmall writes *real*—real people, real conflicts, real emotions. When you open her book, you enter her world and live the story with the characters. *When the Morning Comes* is a journey of discovering faith, of overcoming trauma, of learning to depend on God’s sustaining strength. I eagerly await installment three of the Sisters of the Quilt series!”

—KIM VOGEL SAWYER, author of *Bygones*
and *Where Willows Grow*

“Harness making and prayer Kapps meet cell phones and photography in this latest Cindy Woodsmall novel blending the old world with the new. Through Amish and Mennonite characters in tension with their contemporary world, Cindy weaves the fabric of all faith communities hoping to be relevant to the world around them—and each other—while not losing the strengths of their forefathers and foremothers. *When the Morning Comes* is a fine rendering of struggle and joy that resonates long after the last words are read.”

—JANE KIRKPATRICK, award-winning author of the Change
and Cherish Series, including *A Tendering in the Storm*

Praise for
When the Heart Cries

“Debut author Woodsmall’s free-flowing prose evokes emotion while exploring the relational dynamics of the Amish community and its long-treasured way of life.”

—*Christian Retailing*

“Hannah’s struggles and painful experiences as an outsider in her own home will touch the hearts of those familiar with Beverly Lewis’s Amish stories. Woodsmall’s style packs a powerful emotional punch.”

—*Library Journal*

“[Hannah’s] story is both touching and tragic, yet hope shines through every page-turning chapter. A moving and meaningful first novel.”

—LIZ CURTIS HIGGS, best-selling author
of *Grace in Thine Eyes*

“*When the Heart Cries* is a compelling and moving beginning to what promises to be a great new series.”

—DEBORAH RANEY, author of *A Vow to Cherish*
and *Remember to Forget*

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To my dear friend and amazing critique partner
Marci Burke

SISTERS OF THE QUILT SERIES

Main Characters from Book 1:
When the Heart Cries

Hannah Lapp—age seventeen, Old Order Amish. She left her family home in Owl's Perch, Pennsylvania, in disgrace to start a new life in Winding Creek, Ohio, with her shunned aunt Zabeth. She was secretly engaged to Paul Waddell for several months.

Zeb and Ruth Lapp—Hannah's Old Order Amish parents. In addition to Luke, Hannah, and Sarah, they have four other children: Levi, age nineteen; Esther, age twelve; Samuel, age seven; Rebecca, age four.

Luke Lapp—age twenty-one, Old Order Amish. He is Hannah's eldest brother and one-time close friend, who struggled to believe the truth about his sister's tragedy. He is engaged to Mary Yoder.

Sarah Lapp—age fifteen, Old Order Amish. She is a troubled person and generated rumors about her sister Hannah.

Matthew Esh—age twenty-one, Old Order Amish, and a loyal friend to Hannah. He's in love with Elle Leggett. His parents are Naomi and Raymond Esh, and he has two brothers: David, age thirteen, and Peter, age ten.

Elle Leggett—age twenty-two, not confirmed into the Amish church. She was born to Englisher parents, but Elle's mother died, and her father abandoned her during her childhood. Abigail and Hezekiah (Kiah) Zook—a childless, Old Order Amish couple—took her in and raised her Plain.

Dorcas Miller—age twenty-one, a Plain Mennonite. She is friends with Paul and his family and, before high-school graduation, attended the same Plain Mennonite school as Paul.

Paul Waddell—age twenty-one, a Plain Mennonite, and a college senior. For years he's dreamed of marrying Hannah and using his social-work degree to help families. Then he discovered his fiancée's secret.

Katie [Gram] Waddell—Paul's Plain Mennonite grandmother. She lives a mile from the Lapp home and had Hannah working as a helper until her attack. Paul lived at Gram's during his summer breaks.

Gram, Dorcas, and Paul's older sister, Carol—the only people in Paul's life who knew about his relationship with Hannah. Carol's husband is William, and they have two young sons.

Mary Yoder—age seventeen, Old Order Amish. Mary is Hannah's best friend and is engaged to Hannah's brother Luke. She is still recovering from a horse-and-buggy collision with a car. Mary's parents are Becky and John Yoder, and she has nine brothers.

Eli Hostetler—bishop to the Owl's Perch Old Order Amish families. He told the community to leave Hannah in solitude during a critical point in her pregnancy, attempting to force her to reconsider her account of her tragedy. His wife is Grace Hostetler.

Chapter 1

Hannah gripped the railing as the train squealed and moaned, coming to a halt. Her body ached from the absence of the life she'd carried inside her only days ago. When the conductor opened the door to the outside, a cold blast of night air stole her breath. He stepped off the train with her bag in hand and turned to help her onto the platform.

"It's bad out here tonight." The man glanced across the empty parking lot, then passed her the traveling bag. It weighed little in spite of carrying all she owned—all she'd begin this new life with. "You got somebody meeting you, young lady?"

Wishing she had a decent answer to that question, Hannah studied her surroundings. The old depot was dark and deserted. Not one sign of life anywhere, except on the train that was about to depart. She glanced the length of the train in both directions. There wasn't another soul getting off.

The conductor's face wrinkled with concern. "The building stays locked 24/7. It's no longer an operating depot, but we drop people off here anyway. When somebody lands in Alliance, they better have made plans."

A few hundred feet to her right stood a small blue sign with a white outline of a phone on it. "I've got plans," she whispered, hoping he wouldn't ask any other questions.

He nodded, grabbed the two-way radio off his hip, and said something into it. Of course he wouldn't ask anything else. He had a job to do—a train to catch.

As he stepped back onto the train, it slowly pulled away, its whistle sounding long and loud. For hours as she'd traveled from Owl's Perch, Pennsylvania, heading for Alliance, Ohio, the train whistle had stirred a sense of hope and well-being within her. But as her haven of shelter and food disappeared around a bend, a deep feeling of aloneness shrouded her.

She turned toward the sign with the emblem of the phone on it. Unsure whether she had enough information to get her aunt's phone number by calling 411, she began to realize how foolhardy she'd been not to make calls during the layover at Union Station in Pittsburgh. She'd been so afraid she would miss her next train that she had stayed on a seat, waiting.

Wrapping her woolen shawl even tighter around her, she made her way to the phone. But once she stood in front of the sign, she saw there wasn't a phone after all. She walked around the pole, searching. She spanned out a bit farther, circling the empty lot. The sign was wrong.

God, what have I done?

She'd freeze before morning.

Walking around the building again, Hannah searched for a nook to shelter her from the wind. Finding nothing, she crossed the graveled parking lot to the edge of the paved road. To her left was a hill with a sharp curve and no hint of what lay beyond it. To her right, down about half a mile, groups of lights shone from high atop poles.

Shivering, she set out for the lights, hoping they would lead her to shelter of some sort. Each step made her abdomen contract in pain.

In her great efforts to keep Paul, she'd lost everything.

Everything.

The word went round and round in her head, draining her will. In the distance to her left, she could make out the backsides of a few homes that looked dilapidated even under the cover of night. It appeared that Alliance, or at least this part of it, was every bit as poor as she was.

She approached the lighted area. Sidewalks and old-fashioned stores lined each side of the street. Most of the shops had glass fronts, and each was dark inside except for some sort of night-light. Desperate for warmth and too weary to worry about laws, she wondered if one of the doors might be unlocked. The door to each store sat back a good six to eight feet between two walls of storefront glass, like a deep hallway. The moment she stepped into one of the passageways, the harsh wind couldn't reach her. She knocked on the door before trying the knob. The place was locked.

She walked to the next store and tried again. It, too, was locked. Moving from doorway to doorway, she grew uncomfortably sleepy.

Too tired to try anything else, Hannah leaned back against the cold plate-glass window of the dime store and slid to a sitting position. She pulled out the two dresses she'd packed in her traveling bag and put one dress over her and scooted the other one under her, trying to get some distance between herself and the icy concrete. She removed her prayer *Kapp*, loosened her hair from its bun for added warmth, and tied her *Kapp* back on tight.

Sleep came in sporadic measures as her body fought to stay warm. Every time she nodded off, thoughts of the life she'd left behind startled her. Her family's gray stone farmhouse, set amid rolling acreage. The Amish heritage that had once meant roots and love. Memories of her mother teaching her how to sew, cook, and tend to infants. Mary, her dearest friend, standing by her even when it meant she'd lose her fiancé, Luke, Hannah's own brother.

Images of Paul filled her mind, making the thoughts of her family vanish. She chided herself for longing for him. But her inner chastisement did nothing to stop the memories of him from pelting her. She could hear his laughter as they played board games, see the strength that radiated from his hands and arms as they worked the garden side by side, and feel his joy on the day she accepted his proposal.

Stop.

Her body shook harder as cold from the concrete seeped through her clothes, and she wondered if she'd wake in the morning or freeze to death during the night.

From somewhere on the sidewalk came the sound of footsteps. Prying her eyes open, she glimpsed through the dark shadows of night and drowsiness to see the silhouette of a man at the end of the long, glass entryway. Her heart pounded, but waking to full consciousness seemed impossible. Maybe he wouldn't see her.

The next time she forced her eyes open, the broad shoulders and lanky body of a man were directly in front of her. Still unable to get fully awake, she couldn't see any more than his profile.

With no energy or place to run, Hannah waited—like an animal caught in a trap.

He removed something from around him and placed it over her. The miserable chills eased, and she could no longer control her eyelids as warmth spread over her.

Chapter 2

Perry County, Pennsylvania

Grumbling to herself, Sarah grabbed her winter shawl off the peg and headed out the back door to fetch a load of wood. Early morning sun gleamed against the fresh layer of snow. As she made her way to the lean-to, the strange events of yesterday weighed heavy.

She tracked snow onto the dirt floor of the covered shed as she crossed to the stacked woodpile. Placing a split log in the crook of one arm, she mumbled complaints about Samuel not getting his chores done last night. *Daed* would hear about this.

The sound of a horse and buggy approaching made her turn. Matthew Esh was driving, and his mother, Naomi, sat beside him. As Sarah stood under the lean-to, watching them get out of the buggy, Matthew spotted her.

He dipped his head to come under the low roof. "Sarah." He nodded his greeting rather coldly, then without another word proceeded to stack firewood in the crook of his arm.

Of course he has nothing to say to me.

He was Hannah's friend. And once a man saw the perfect beauty and poise of Sarah's older sister, he never glanced her way again.

Daed came out of the barn and spoke to Naomi for a moment before taking the horse by the lead. He motioned for her to go into the house. Through the open double doors to the barn, Sarah could see Levi still mucking it out after milking the cows and wondered where Luke was. Before she thought to ask Matthew what he and his mother were doing here, he strode down the hill toward her home. Sarah followed in silence.

When she entered, her three younger siblings were eating at the kitchen table.

Naomi stood in front of the wood stove, warming her hands. "It's awful bitter out there." Her voice sounded different today.

Matthew unloaded the wood and headed out the back door again.

"Yz, it is cold." Sarah dropped a couple of split logs into the woodbin and closed the lid. "The potbellied stove has been eating wood like it's candy, and the house is still a little cool."

A few minutes later Daed stalked into the kitchen from the coatroom, looking no one in the eye. Since he'd pulled off his mucky work boots, only his black woolen socks covered his feet. "Sarah, fix a pot of coffee while I fetch your mother."

Matthew came in the back door with wood piled so high in his arms he could barely see over it. Sarah moved to the woodbin and lifted the lid. Then she removed a few sticks off the top of his load.

"That's all right, Sarah. I got it." Matthew's words were void of his usual warmth.

Normally, from the moment Naomi and Matthew arrived, he and her father engaged in easy banter about horses, cows, and such. But this didn't have the feel of a normal conversation.

Sarah decided her best chance of being allowed to stay and hear a few bits of gossip was to get something into the oven as quickly as possible. After putting the coffee on to brew and filling the cups with hot tap water to warm them, she began kneading the batch of sourdough that Esther had made and set out to rise last night.

When *Mamm* and Daed came into the kitchen, they said nothing to her about leaving. But they told Esther, Rebecca, and Samuel to take their breakfast upstairs and stay there until someone called for them.

By the time Sarah returned from helping Esther get their two youngest siblings up the steps with their plates of food and drinks, the coffee was almost ready. She set the cream and sugar on the table before dumping the water from the cups down the drain and pouring the fresh brew. Placing a mug in front of each person, she was relieved that she seemed invisible to them. While they fixed their coffee, she placed a few leftover cinnamon rolls from breakfast on the table. The long, awkward silence in the room made her

wonder if any of them would say what was on their minds before she was banned to the upstairs with the others.

Daed tapped his spoon against the rim of his cup and focused on Naomi. “I suppose this visit is about Hannah.”

Watching everyone out of the corner of her eye, Sarah stood quietly at the counter, molding a handful of dough into a dinner roll. Her insides quivered. Just the thought of Hannah’s fall from on high made her feel guilty as well as triumphant.

Naomi cleared her throat. “I think the community was kept in the dark about the...about Hannah’s secret for far too long.”

Hannah’s secret? The wad of dough in Sarah’s hands plopped onto the floor. She grabbed it up.

“Sarah.” Her father’s voice vibrated the room.

She wheeled around. “Yes, Daed?”

“You shouldn’t be in here.”

She wanted to beg for permission to stay, but the look in Daed’s eyes kept her from asking.

Matthew pushed his coffee cup to the center of the table. “Zeb, there’s no keepin’ what’s taken place a secret. If ya don’t share it, your children will have to rely on the rumors they’ll hear to try to figure things out.” Matthew closed his eyes and drew a deep breath before opening them again. “But this is your home and your family.”

Her father clicked his tongue but gave a slight nod, letting Sarah know she could stay.

Naomi smoothed the front of her apron. “I’ve never seen our bishop so set in his mind against a body like he was Hannah. It was his and the preachers’ stand concerning anything she said that made them force her to stay alone...”

Sarah couldn’t catch a breath. She’d gone to the bishop and told him things about Hannah, but surely that wasn’t what had caused this trouble.

Daed pushed his coffee mug away. “What new actions by my eldest daughter have caused you to come see me?”

Naomi looked to her son briefly. “Zeb, Ruth.” She paused. “I hope you can find it within your hearts to forgive me.”

Mamm's eyes opened wide. "Forgive you? You've done nothing wrong."

Daed glanced at Sarah. "We all know the tricks Hannah pulls. Don't take on guilt for her."

Sarah turned her back as if she hadn't heard him and washed the dough off her hands, hoping this conversation wouldn't end up pointing a finger in her direction.

He continued. "If you've come here thinking something is your fault, you're wrong. No one can take blame for the birth except Hannah herself."

Sarah turned to face her mother. "Hannah has a baby?"

Her mother stared blankly at the table. "Don't repeat that, Sarah."

Matthew rose from his seat. "None of what's happened is gonna stay a secret." He pointed Sarah toward the bench seat. "I think ya should tell her."

Sarah sat, unable to accept what she was hearing. How could her unmarried sister have a baby?

Daed buried his head in his hands. "Okay, okay. Ruth, tell her, but make it brief. Clearly, Naomi and Matthew have something they need to talk about."

"I...I don't know what to say." Mamm shook her head. "Do I tell her what Hannah said is true or what you think is true or what the bishop says is true?" Her eyes misted. "Tell me, Zeb. What am I to say about Hannah and about my firstborn grandchild?"

"Ruth." Naomi's calm voice cut through the freshly loosened anger. "I was there after Hannah gave birth. I would stake my life, even my son's life, that the child Hannah gave birth to was indeed conceived the way she told you."

Mamm clamped her hands on the table and buried her face against them, wailing, "Oh, God, what have we done?" She looked up at her husband. "What have we done?"

Resentment carved Daed's face as he shook his head. "Naomi has the heart of a mother. Of course she believes what Hannah told her."

Naomi stood, facing the head of the household in his own home. Almost instantly the sadness etched across her face disappeared, and fury replaced it. Sarah had never seen any woman face a man with such anger.

Matthew wrapped his hand around his mother's arm and motioned for her to sit. When she did, he nodded his approval. "Mamm was in the room

and overheard Hannah praying about the attack. Hannah didn't even know she was there."

The room fell silent.

Hannah was attacked? Sarah dismissed that idea immediately. Her sister had made that up to cover her sin.

Zeb shoved the teaspoon into the sugar bowl, dumped a scoop into his coffee, and stirred it briskly. "More likely that you heard her repenting for telling us she was attacked when she wasn't."

Naomi rose, pointing a shaky finger at Daed. "Don't you dare spread lies about your daughter, Zeb Lapp, because you can't face the truth." She snapped her shawl tighter around her shoulders. "No wonder she didn't want you to know where she was going. She knew you'd never believe her; that you'd only condemn her." She turned to Matthew. "Get your coat. This man would rather listen to the sounds roaring inside his own head."

Mamm rose, looking horrified. "My Hannah's gone?"

Suddenly it became clear; this piece of information was the reason the Eshes had come here today.

Naomi placed her hand on Mamm's shoulder. "Matthew and I took her to the train station yesterday. She told no one where she was heading."

Daed looked to his wife. "But the rumors about her being out at night," he mumbled. "And I saw her with my own eyes in the arms of that *Englischer* doctor. The bishop saw her kissing that man she confessed to being engaged to—a young man who isn't even Amish. She was sneaking around behind our backs mailing letters and who knows what else."

Stiff and mute on the outside, Sarah was relieved there was a lot of evidence against Hannah that went way beyond the pot Sarah had stirred.

Mamm plunked into her chair, staring at Daed. "Is your list of wrongdoings against Hannah all you have to say about this?"

Her mother's look of disbelief at Daed rattled Sarah even more than this news.

Mamm reached across the table and grasped Sarah's hands. "The baby was born the night Mary came to stay here—" Mamm broke into sobs, unable to say anything else.

In spite of the years of frustration that had built between her and her sister, Sarah needed someone to admit that they were all pulling a meanspirited prank. But the grief in her parents' eyes told her this was no hoax.

A horrid scream banged against her temples, making her fight to hold on to her good sense. She looked to Matthew, hoping he had some words of comfort for her. But he seemed torn between anger and sympathy.

His eyes bored into her. "The church leaders had insisted Hannah spend a night alone to rethink her account of how she came to be pregnant. I went to check on her anyway and realized she was in labor and needed..."

His mother eased over to him and placed her hands on his shoulders. "Matthew and I tried to get help for her, but the phone lines were down because of a storm, and...the baby died within minutes of being born."

Matthew reached inside his shirt and pulled out a small stack of folded papers. "Hannah wrote these before she left."

He started to lay them on the table, but Daed took them.

Dazed, Sarah didn't budge. She hadn't liked it when the whole community put Hannah on an undeserved pedestal, but she hadn't wished for this either.

"Sarah," Matthew said, "don't you have something you need to say?"

Her skin felt as if it were being peeled off. Heat ran through her arms and chest. "N-no, of course not."

But God knew she did. Did Matthew know it too?



Luke waited outside the Yoder home for someone to respond to his knock. The hour was awful early to be making a call, but during the night a desire to apologize to his fiancée for their serious disagreement had nagged at him. He needed to share the conversation he'd had with Hannah yesterday before she left and hoped it would bring Mary some measure of peace.

The door swung open, and Mary's mother, Becky, stared back at him.

She didn't step back or open the door farther. "She doesn't want to see you."

Luke resisted the urge to push past her. “I’m sure of that, but I need to talk to her anyway.”

She shook her head. “This thing with Hannah is just too much for us to deal with.”

He inwardly winced at the lies people believed about his sister. Sadder still, until Hannah was about to board the train, he’d believed them too. “Mary has to be hurting because Hannah’s gone. Don’t you think it’d be best for Mary’s health if she and I talked things out?”

John Yoder came up behind his wife.

“Go home for today, Luke. Just go on home.” He shut the door.

Luke stared at the closed door. He knew it’d be a battle to win Mary back.

He moved to the steps of the porch, brushed snow off them with his boot, and sat down. He propped his elbows on his knees and stared out over the snow-covered land. Acknowledging his prejudice against Hannah hadn’t been easy. He was as good at pointing an accusing finger and deciding who was right and wrong as his father was.

The memory of his venom against his sister still haunted him, even in the wake of the forgiveness she’d offered him before she boarded the train. The horrid reality was, she’d been raped. And she had borne the trauma and the pregnancy in absolute isolation while rumors devastated her.

Luke groaned. “Father God, how could I have been so stupid? Please help Mary forgive me.”

The prayer crossed his lips, and he rose and walked to the buggy.

Before getting in, he looked toward the first story, where Mary slept these days since climbing steps was still difficult for her. She was standing at the window. He lifted his hand and held it there.

He saw her moving about, but she didn’t leave the window. A moment later a popping sound came from the window, and she lowered the top pane. She opened her mouth as if to say something, then stopped.

Luke lowered his hand. “I was wrong about Hannah.”

Her pale face didn’t change. She did that chin-tilting gesture, telling him that although her body still dealt with some frailties from their buggy

accident, her will was not as easily defeated. Mary had a bold spunk he'd only become aware of recently. His sister's influence, he was sure.

As he stood outside her home watching her, part of him wanted to speak up and let her know her place as his future wife. But without Mary's frustration with his behavior, Luke wouldn't have questioned whether he was right about Hannah. He would have pressed onward in his anger, blaming his sister for the horse-and-buggy accident and believing the scandal about her.

"Why, Luke?" Mary wiped a tear from her face. "Why couldn't you believe her, believe me, when it would have made such a difference?"

There was no way to explain things he didn't understand. There had been no proof of Hannah's innocence.

He walked to the window, glad to see Mary up close, even if she was furious with him. He studied her features, looking for signs of strength and health. He wasn't sure he saw any. "Hannah and I made our peace, and she forgave me before she left. Can you please consider forgiving me too?"

Mary shook her head. "Don't fool yourself, Luke. If you hated Hannah when you thought our accident was her fault, you'll hate me now that you see it was my fault." Pain filled her eyes, and Luke despised himself even more. "I'm the one who wrapped the horse's reins around the stob of the buggy. I was supposed to take the leads, but I let the horse meander onto that dirt road. Me, Luke, not Hannah."

"Mary, please. I was so wrong to—"

Mary raised her hand, interrupting him. "Yeah, you and Sarah both. I always knew that girl had problems, but I thought I understood who you were—a loving, forgiving, kind man. But now I see how quick you are to judge. You allowed your thoughts to twist the truth into lies just so you could blame someone." Mary closed the window and then the blinds.