



Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds

Saloma Miller Furlong

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At age twenty, Saloma Miller left behind her Amish community in Burton, Ohio, and boarded a night train for Vermont, where she knew no one.

In this poignant coming-of-age memoir, Saloma's new life of freedom includes work as a waitress and plans to continue her education. Romance also blossoms with a Yankee toymaker. Soon, however, a vanload of people from her community, including the Amish bishop, arrive to take her back into the fold. Saloma's freedom comes to an abrupt end when she goes back home to Ohio with them.

Thus begins a years-long struggle of feeling torn between two worlds: will she remain Amish and embrace the sense of belonging and community her Amish life offers, or will she return to the newfound freedom she tasted in Vermont?

Saloma settles into teaching in an Amish school and does her best to fit back into Amish ways, but a legacy of childhood abuse, struggles with an eating disorder, and questions of identity plague her. Her ties to the outside world remain, mostly through the quiet perseverance of the toymaker from Vermont. He keeps sending her cards, never giving up hope that their love could survive the strain of living in two different worlds.

Bonnet Strings by Saloma Miller Furlong offers a universal story of overcoming adversity and a rare look inside an Amish community. Readers of Amish fiction and viewers of the PBS documentaries such as *The Amish* and *The Amish: Shunned* will find in it a true story: of woundedness and healing, of doubt and faith, and of the often competing desires for freedom and belonging.

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