



# Plain and Simple: A Woman's Journey to the Amish

*Sue Bender*

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*"I had an obsession with the Amish. Plan and simple. Objectively it made no sense. I, who worked hard at being special, fell in love with a people who valued being ordinary."*

So begins Sue Bender's story, the captivating and inspiring true story of a harried urban Californian moved by the beauty of a display of quilts to seek out and live with the Amish. Discovering lives shaped by unfamiliar yet comforting ideas about time, work, and community, Bender is gently coaxed to consider, "Is there another way to lead a good life?"

Her journey begins in a New York men's clothing store. There she is spellbound by the vibrant colors and stunning geometric simplicity of the Amish quilts "spoke directly to me," writes Bender. Somehow, "they went straight to my heart."

Heeding a persistent inner voice, Bender searches for Amish families willing to allow her to visit and share in their daily lives. *Plain and Simple* vividly recounts sojourns with two Amish families, visits during which Bender enters a world without television, telephone, electric light, or refrigerators; a world where clutter and hurry are replaced with inner quiet and calm ritual; a world where a sunny kitchen "glows" and "no distinction was made between the sacred and the everyday."

In nine interrelated chapters--as simple and elegant as a classic nine-patch Amish quilt--Bender shares the quiet power she found reflected in lives of joyful simplicity, humanity, and clarity. The fast-paced, opinionated, often frazzled Bender returns home and reworks her "crazy-quilt" life, integrating the soul-soothing qualities she has observed in the Amish, and celebrating the patterns in the Amish, and celebrating the patterns formed by the distinctive "patches" of her own life.

Charmingly illustrated and refreshingly spare, *Plain and Simple* speaks to the seeker in each of us.

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