The book cover features a central illustration of a whimsical, multi-story house made of various colored fabric patches. The house has a purple roof with a gold finial, yellow trim, and blue siding. It has a red door with a wooden plank across it, and a window with a wooden plank across it. The house is surrounded by green hills, trees, and bushes, all rendered in a patchwork style. The background is a light blue sky with swirling patterns. The entire illustration is framed by a dark purple border with a white dashed line. The title 'FAMILY PATTERNS' is written in a purple, serif font, with a small green leaf on either side. The text 'PATCHWORK MYSTERIES' is written in a white, serif font at the bottom of the cover. The background of the cover is a dark blue quilted fabric with a pattern of yellow and white stripes.

FAMILY PATTERNS

PATCHWORK MYSTERIES



Buy Now

PROLOGUE

Maple Hill, Massachusetts

December 1920

Molly Drayton rose silently from her warm bed, the frigid night air biting into her bare feet as she crept across the wooden floor. She hadn't taken the time to slip a robe over her long flannel nightgown, afraid she might awaken her young husband. She couldn't let Noah discover her.

Not if she wanted to survive the night.

Shivering, Molly stepped into the front parlor before lighting a candle. The flickering flame cut through the darkness and illuminated the small quilt crumpled on the settee. She picked it up and wrapped it tightly around her shoulders as the frightful howl of the wind drew her to the front window.

She parted the heavy drapes just far enough to see through the frosted windowpane. A light snow had begun to fall, swirling around the bare tree branches and dusting the front walk with a fine white powder. There were footprints in the snow. Molly let the drapes drop from her hand, hastened toward the long staircase, and began her quiet ascent. Her six-year-old son, William, slept on the second floor of the house.

When she reached the top of the stairs, Molly paused by William's bedroom to make sure his door was tightly closed, then she walked to the room at the end of the hall. She turned the glass doorknob, wincing at the loud creak of the door. Molly sucked in a deep breath, listening closely for any movement from her husband in the bedroom below.

She hurried over to the mahogany desk and opened the top drawer, lifting the candle higher. She pulled out a sheet of notepaper and a pencil, her hand shaking as she began to write.

That's when she heard it. The sound of a footstep on the stairs.

Then another. A heavy, deliberate step.

She blew out the candle. The darkness only amplified the sound of the approaching footsteps. He was at the top of the stairs now, and moving toward her. She backed into the far corner of the room, clutching the quilt tightly around her shoulders, praying for a miracle.

CHAPTER ONE

Maple Hill, Massachusetts

Present Day

Sarah Hart had been twelve years old the last time she'd set foot in the rambling Victorian house on Bristol Street. Familiar scents of cedar and cinnamon lingered in the air. They brought back memories of her grandfather, whose blue eyes would twinkle with delight whenever she came tumbling through the front door.

"Hey, Mom," Jason said as he entered the front parlor. "You're right on time."

"Hope you don't mind that I let myself in." She leaned up to kiss his clean-shaven cheek. Jason was a handsome man, with a square jaw and short, dark hair. "The door was wide open."

"That's Maggie's doing." He smiled. "She already loves living in such a safe town."

Jason and Maggie had recently purchased the old family home and moved here from Los Angeles. Sarah was still pinching herself.

"Just be sure and lock the house up at night," she said, setting her purse on the parlor table. She probably worried too much, but something still unsettled her about this house, even after all these years.

"We'll be fine, Mom."

Footsteps sounded in the hall and a moment later Jason's wife Maggie appeared in the arched doorway. Her auburn hair was swept back into a messy ponytail and there was a spot of white paint on her chin.

“Hi, Sarah.” Maggie walked over to give her a hug. “Isn’t it a gorgeous day? I’ve been painting the back porch.”

“I can tell.” Sarah pointed to her chin. “Looks like you missed a spot.”

“Oh, dear.” Maggie’s eyes flashed as she reached up to rub her chin. “I seem to get more paint on myself than on the porch rails.” She looked up at her husband. “Maybe I should go upstairs and freshen up before we leave.”

“No time, Maggie,” he said. “We don’t want to be late.”

“All right.” Maggie smoothed back her hair as best she could and turned to Sarah. “I’m not sure what time we’ll get back from our meeting with the contractor. We’ll try not to be gone too long, but as you can see”—she pointed at the strips of water-stained wallpaper on the ceiling—“there’s a lot to go over.”

Jason and Maggie were in the process of restoring the old Victorian. Jason and Maggie had a huge task in front of them, but they seemed excited about bringing Grandpa Noah’s house back to life and were working hard to restore it faithfully.

“I can stay until six,” Sarah told them. “Then I’ve got to interview a new boarder. She called just this morning and sounded desperate to find a place.”

“We should be home well before then,” Maggie slipped her purse over her shoulder. “Thank you for doing this. I hope it’s not too much bother.”

“Of course not.” Didn’t Maggie realize how much she relished the time with her granddaughters? For so many years she had hardly seen them at all, and now she intended to savor every moment.

“The girls are upstairs,” Jason said. “They’re a little homesick today, so they might not be very good company.”

Sarah assured him that they’d manage. “Good luck with the contractor.”

“Thanks.” Maggie sighed as she looked up at the ceiling. “We’re going to need it.”

Sarah went in search of her twelve-year-old twin granddaughters and found Audrey upstairs, sprawled on top of her bed, her sandy blonde hair spread out around her. The charcoal pencil in her hand

moved slowly over the sketch pad in front of her.

“Hello there.”

Audrey didn’t look up from her drawing. “Hi Grandma.”

Sarah approached the bed. “What are you drawing?”

“Me and my best friend.”

Sarah looked down at the small photograph next to the sketch pad. A ginger-haired girl with a wide smile had her arm wrapped around Audrey’s shoulder. “You’re doing a wonderful job.”

“No, I’m not.” Audrey scribbled over the page. “I can’t even draw here. I can’t do anything here. It’s so boring.”

“Where’s your sister?” Sarah asked. She would ignore Audrey’s attitude for now.

“I’m right here, Grandma,” said a muffled voice behind her.

Sarah turned around, but she didn’t see anyone. “Amy?”

“Yes,” a voice answered, but from the corner of the room now.

Audrey sat up on the bed. “Hey, where are you?”

Sarah was wondering the same thing. She looked around, hoping to catch a glimpse of Amy’s freckled face.

“Here I am.” Amy replied. Her voice was now coming from a spot near the bed.

Audrey hopped off the bed with a squeal. “Are you in the wall or something?”

Amy’s giggles filled the room. “Hold on, I’ll be there in a minute.”

A few moments later, Amy appeared in the doorway, her cheeks flushed. “Hey, Grandma.”

“Hello, dear.” Sarah reached out to pull a cobweb from Amy’s T-shirt. “So tell us the secret to your vanishing act.”

Amy grinned. “I’m not sure I want to tell. It could come in handy if I want to do a little spying.”

“Oh, come on,” Audrey peered past Amy. “This is like the only interesting thing that’s happened since we moved here. You can’t keep it to yourself.”

“Okay.” A mischievous twinkle gleamed in her blue eyes. “I found a secret passageway.”



Sarah gasped—as a child, she’d explored over her grandfather’s house, but she’d never found anything like that. “Where is it?”

“In the weirdest place.” Amy moved out the door. “Come on, I’ll show you.”

The twins raced out of the room and Sarah followed a step behind. It couldn’t really be . . . could it? A secret passageway?

“It’s in here.” Amy led them to the walk-in closet. “I was hanging up some of my clothes”—she gestured toward the half-full boxes on the floor—“when I noticed one of the floorboards was loose.”

Amy knelt down to demonstrate, removing the loose floorboard to reveal a small metal wheel underneath. When she turned the wheel, a creaking noise sounded beside them.

Sarah turned to see a narrow panel in the closet wall slide open to reveal a dark passageway behind it.

“Cool,” Audrey said, stepping inside the passageway.

“Wait a minute, girls,” Sarah said, reaching for Audrey’s arm. “You never know what could be in here. It could be dangerous.”

But the girls didn’t stop, and, if Sarah was honest, she was as curious as they were about what lay hidden behind the wall. Hesitantly, she took a step into the passageway.

Amy led the way with a flashlight, the beam stretching just far enough ahead to light their way. Dust tickled Sarah’s nose, and she inhaled a faint, musty odor. The passageway was still and dark, almost smothered in darkness except for the narrow beam of the flashlight, which revealed glimpses of bare wood walls and a thick layer of dust on the floor.

“How far does this thing go?”

Sarah wondered the same thing. The passageway seemed narrower now, and she reached out one hand to feel her way along the rough-hewn wall.

“I don’t know,” Amy replied. “I was exploring it when I heard you and Grandma talking in the bedroom.”

“Maybe we should go back.” Audrey halted in her tracks. “What if we get lost in here?”

“Don’t be such a baby.” Amy turned and plucked the flashlight out of her hand. “There’s nothing here that can hurt us, right, Grandma?”

“That’s right,” Sarah said. She tried to sound confident, but a part of her wondered if Audrey was right. An odd chill filled the small passageway.

The flashlight beam illuminated something by the wall. Sarah crept closer to the spot. “Hey, shine the light over here again.”

Audrey aimed the flashlight at her as Sarah cautiously reached out to pick up what looked like an old blanket. “What is it, Grandma?”

Sarah’s heart began to pound as she looked down at the bundle in her arms. It was a quilt. She moved it closer to the light.

It couldn’t be . . . She’d heard about the small quilt that has disappeared the same night that Sarah’s grandmother, Molly, had vanished, but . . . “It’s an old quilt.”

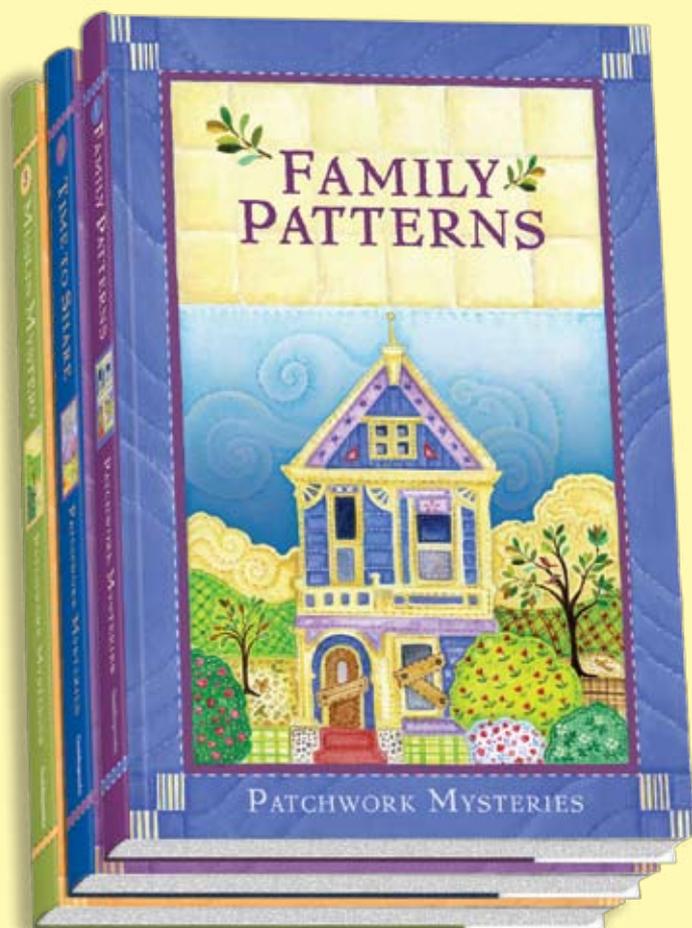
Sarah smoothed her fingers over the vintage fabrics. Dampness had stained some of the fabrics, and there were a few small holes here and there. It had been up here a long time. She noticed something sticking out of a small opening in the seam between two square patches. She eased one finger into the opening, then slid out a brittle, yellowed piece of paper.

Audrey leaned over her shoulder, shining the light on the slip of paper. “What’s that?”

“Something I’ve never dreamed existed,” Sarah breathed, as she read the faded, handwritten scrawl. “It’s a clue. The only clue to the disappearance of Molly Drayton.”



A
Guideposts Original
Series



Guideposts



LEARN MORE