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Quilt Gossip

by Emmaline Bristow

Hours of talk are knitted
into every corner, crease,
and crevice strung together by a pure
white thread connecting each patch
like how Jimmy is related
to Tom and how he, Tom, dropped
out of school because the ball
team isn't taking C average
kids anymore, and how the dentist,
Dr. Johnson, is actually close friends
with the ball team's coach
and his wife bakes a terribly
good batch of shortbread
though you'd think her teeth
wouldn't be so yellow since
her husband works on them and all.
And isn't that Katie, Dr. Johnson's
sister's girl, in my grade? She always
was so sweet with her blonde
hair. She and you should have been friends
because her cheeks were rosy
and her long legs could ride
any boy she liked. She could choose,
Katie. She could decide whether
she liked the weather enough to go
to school, and choose if she
wanted to be prom queen
or homecoming queen
or maybe president of all the clubs—
not those clubs that they don't speak
of in those big cities with raving
lights that blind one of what
actually is going on in that black
misty smoke. Speaking of black, did anyone
meet that new black boy down the road?
His daddy don't seem too rough
compared to the rest of those boys—
the black ones—at your school.
They were always a little too rough
for an innocent girl like you. You couldn't
handle someone like that—which is your
job. To handle them boys. Teach'em

who's actually boss behind the scenes.
Teach'em through this quilt gossip.

Yeah. It's real
respectable, alright.