

# AN AMISH LOVE



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THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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Scripture quotations taken from the King James Version.

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*Kelly: For my husband, Scott, the husband of my youth and now,  
still, twenty-four years later, my love of all time*

*Kathy: To my daughter, Sydney, I love you!*

*Beth: To my sisters—Laurie, Valarie, Melody, and Dawn*



# GLOSSARY

*ab im kopp:* off in the head, crazy  
*aenti:* aunt  
*aldi:* girlfriend  
*appeditlich:* delicious  
*bruder:* brother  
*bu:* boy  
*daadi:* grandfather  
*daag:* day  
*daed:* dad  
*danki:* thanks  
*Derr Herr:* God  
*dochder:* daughter  
*dumm:* dumb  
*dummkopf:* dummy  
*Englisch:* a non-Amish person  
*familye:* family  
*frau:* wife, Mrs.  
*freind:* friend  
*geh:* go  
*grosskinner:* grandchildren  
*guder mariye:* good morning  
*gut:* good  
*hatt:* hard  
*haus:* house  
*kapp:* prayer covering or cap  
*kinn, kinner:* child, children

*kumme*: come

*lieb*: love

*maed, maedel*: girls, girl

*mami, mamm*: mom

*mammi*: grandmother

*mann*: man

*mei*: my

*meiding*: shunning

*mutter*: mother

*narrisch*: crazy

*nee*: no

*nix*: nothing

*Ordnung*: the written and unwritten rules of the Amish; the understood behavior by which the Amish are expected to live, passed down from generation to generation. Most Amish know the rules by heart.

Pennsylvania *Deitsch*: Pennsylvania German, the language most commonly used by the Amish

*rumschpringe*: running-around period when a teenager turns sixteen years old

*schwester*: sister

*sehr gut*: very good

*sohn*: son

*vatter*: father

*ya*: yes

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# HEALING HEARTS



*by* BETH WISEMAN



## CHAPTER ONE

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LEVINA LAPP PEERED THROUGH HER KITCHEN WINDOW, past the red begonias on the sill, across the plush green grass that tickled her toes earlier in the day, to the end of her driveway. Her husband of thirty-one years stepped out of a yellow taxi, closed the door, and headed up the driveway toward his home. A home he hadn't stepped foot in for almost a year.

As Naaman approached, toting the same dingy red suitcase he'd left with last summer, he walked with a limp. Levina knew from his last letter that he'd injured himself during a barn raising while he was visiting cousins in Ohio. He'd downplayed his ten-foot fall, but Levina knew her husband well enough to recognize the pain in his expression as he eased his way up the concrete drive, taking each step slowly and deliberately.

"I'm going to visit Levi," he'd said eleven months ago. But they both knew that his trip was more than a visit. It was a reevaluation of their lives. At least for Naaman it was. Levina was an unwilling participant in his venture, with little more than a brief consultation before he abandoned their marriage in pursuit of . . . what? She had no idea.

When the youngest of their five children married, she and Naaman were left alone. "Empty nesters," as the *Englisch* called it. It took a grand total of nine weeks before the silent life they led lured Naaman out the door and away from Lancaster County—away from their home and everything they'd ever known.

Now he was back, heading up the driveway, after asking if he could come home and work to heal their marriage.

Lavina smoothed the wrinkles from her dark blue dress and tried to calm her rapid heartbeat as Naaman struggled up the porch steps. She pulled the door open just as he was about to knock, which seemed strange yet respectful.

“Hello, Naaman.” Levina held the door wide so he could enter. He was barely over the threshold when he set his suitcase down and pulled her into a hug.

“I’ve missed you.” Naaman clung to her tightly, but Levina eased away and forced a smile.

Her husband looked exactly the same as he always had. Levina wondered how that could be, since she’d examined herself in the mirror just this morning and studied the tiny lines that feathered from the corners of her eyes—evidence that she’d recently celebrated her forty-ninth birthday. Her brown hair had more streaks of gray these days as well.

Naaman’s beard was longer than it used to be, but he didn’t have a speck of gray in his dark hair or in his beard. His face was weathered by sun and hard work, but the tiny age lines about his mouth and eyes seemed the same as when he’d left.

“I made lunch. Nothing fancy. I’m afraid I haven’t cooked much lately.” She stepped away from him. “I’ve been eating at Yoder’s Pantry, since cooking for one just—” She shrugged, hearing self-pity in her comment. “Anyway, I made some chicken salad, and everything is on the table.” Levina motioned toward the bowl of chicken salad, bread, pickled red beets, and snitz pie in the middle of the table.

“It looks *gut*, Levina.” Naaman smiled as he eyed the offerings, and Levina took time to inspect him further.

His shoes looked new, but the clothes he wore could have been the same ones he’d left in—black trousers, a dark blue shirt, suspenders, straw hat. Of course, he still towered over her, but his shoulders looked broader. Or maybe they just seemed that way.

“Sit down. I’ll pour you some meadow tea.” Levina moved

toward the refrigerator as Naaman took his seat at the head of the wooden table. She glanced over her shoulder to see him wipe sweat from his forehead. It was unseasonably hot for May.

“*Danki*,” he said when she placed the glass of iced tea in front of him.

She slid onto one of the backless benches to Naaman’s right. They bowed their heads in silent prayer, then she waited until he made his sandwich before she scooped chicken salad onto a slice of bread.

“You’ve lost weight,” he said after swallowing his first bite.

“Maybe a little.” She took a bite of her sandwich and thought about all the laborious tasks she’d done around the farm since Naaman had left. Even with the children coming over to help, she had done much more physical labor than she was used to. It was no wonder she’d lost weight.

“Things will be easier on you now.”

Naaman spoke without looking at her, but Levina heard the regret in his tone.

“Your trip from Ohio was *gut*, no?” Levina picked at her red beets with her fork and hoped the small-talk phase of Naaman’s return wouldn’t last long.

“*Ya*. It was a long bus ride, but uneventful.” He looked up and smiled. “I’m just glad to be home.” Naaman made himself another sandwich. “Mary couldn’t make chicken salad like you do.”

Levina forced another smile. He obviously intended the comment as a compliment. She fought the urge to scream, *Well, you wouldn’t have been eating Levi’s frau’s cooking if you hadn’t deserted your family here!*

Naaman ate a hearty helping of everything on the table, including two large slices of snitz pie. When he was done, he stood from the table and picked up his suitcase. “Guess I’ll go unpack?” He waited, brows raised.

Levina nodded an acknowledgment and watched him walk

across the den toward their bedroom. She started picking up the plates from the table and turned on the water in the sink. She ran her hand under the cool flow, waiting for it to get hot, then changed her mind and turned the faucet off. She made her way across the den.

When she reached the bedroom, Naaman had already opened his suitcase and was putting his clothes in the dresser. She stiffened as a strange sense of intrusion engulfed her.

He pressed his undergarments into the second drawer, where they'd always been, and turned to face her. "Everything looks different in here." He glanced around the room, clearly noticing the new quilt on the bed, rug on the floor, and a vase full of freshly cut flowers. She'd never put flowers in their bedroom before.

"*Ya*. I spruced it up a bit." Levina bit her bottom lip and wondered if she should tell Naaman about the other things that had changed while he was gone. She should probably warn him before tomorrow when the children would arrive for a visit, but his presence at home—and in their bedroom—was enough to conquer for today. Tomorrow's problems would arrive soon enough.

LEVINA HEADED BACK TO THE KITCHEN, AND NAAMAN FINISHED unpacking his suitcase. He planned to spend the rest of his life making things up to his wife. *What kind of man abandons his family for almost a year?*

He sat down on the bed and ran his hand along the green ivy tendrils that connected tiny blue and yellow flowers. Naaman wondered how long ago Levina had swapped the old quilt for the new one. Did the new quilt represent a new beginning for his homecoming, or had she replaced it the minute he left, representing a new beginning for herself?

Not a fair thought, he knew. Levina was never included in the decision-making when he left for Ohio.

He pulled off his hat and ran a hand through his hair, then gave a heavy sigh. Faith and prayer had taught him not to shoulder the burdens of the past, but his choice to leave his wife and home had been a mistake. Once he'd been gone for a while and realized the bad choice he'd made, he hadn't known how to get back home where he belonged.

Yet here he was. In his home, in his bedroom, with his wife cleaning the dinner dishes on the other side of the house as if nothing had changed.

But Naaman knew that everything had changed, and despite Levina's politeness, he could see resentment in her eyes, feel it in her touch, even hear it in her voice. He was here in person, but the road back to his wife had yet to be traveled.

Tomorrow he would see his children for the first time in eleven months. He'd written all five of them, and he knew which ones were less than accepting about his return—his two oldest children, Rosemary and Adam. Rosemary's third child was born while Naaman was away, and she'd let him know how she felt about that. And Adam had actually said he thought Naaman should be shunned for what he'd done.

He and Levina had raised their children in accordance with the *Ordnung*, so Adam was right to have that opinion, but even the bishop, who had written Naaman several times, had held out hope that Naaman would come home prior to such a drastic action.

Somehow he would find a way to make things right again.

LEVINA DRESSED FOR BED IN THE BATHROOM. NAAMAN HAD bathed first, after working in the barn all afternoon, and he was lying in their bed reading the Bible. Levina ran a brush through her hair. Although it was streaked with gray, she was pleased that it was still full and silky like it was in her youth.

She recalled the first time Naaman saw her with her hair to her waist and without her *kapp* on—their wedding night. Tonight some of those same anxious feelings swept through her, a combination of longing and fear. It was different, though. Thirty-one years ago she was an eighteen-year-old girl who feared the unknown and hoped to please her husband. Now her fear was that she would never trust him the way she once had.

“Levina, are you all right in there?”

She stopped brushing and sighed. “*Ya*, I’m fine.” She began applying lotion to her hands, eyed her toothbrush, and realized that she didn’t need to brush her teeth a second time. There was nothing left to do except go to bed. She couldn’t stall forever.

Naaman closed the Bible when she walked in. He sat taller in the bed, already tucked beneath the covers. Only the lantern on his bedside table was illuminated, but she could see his features clearly. His extraordinary blue eyes brimmed with tenderness and passion as they roamed the length of her body, a muscle quivering at his jaw.

Levina thought about all the times she’d dreamed of this moment, when Naaman would come home and love her the way a husband loves his wife. She ran her hands down the sides of her white gown, then she looked toward the wooden floor. She took a deep breath and looked back up at him.

“*Mei lieb* . . . you look as beautiful as the day I married you.”

Levina wanted to run to him, but her lack of trust and confusion melded together and she just stood there. How could he come back into her life after all this time and act as if nothing had changed? She’d slept alone for almost a year, wondering if she would spend the rest of her life without her husband by her side. Now here he was, all tucked in and waiting for her to resume their life together as husband and wife.

She took a slow pensive step backward, then two more, as the hopeful light in Naaman’s eyes began to fade.