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An Amish Wedding



KELLY LONG
KATHLEEN FULLER
BETH WISEMAN



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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Publisher's Note: This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. All characters are fictional, and any similarity to people living or dead is purely coincidental.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Long, Kelly.

An Amish wedding / Kelly Long, Kathleen Fuller, Beth Wiseman.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-59554-921-1 (trade paper)

1. Amish—Fiction. 2. Christian fiction, American. 3. Love stories, American.

I. Fuller, Kathleen. II. Wiseman, Beth, 1962- III. Title.

PS648.A45L68 2011

813'.6—dc23

2011035347

Printed in the United States of America

11 12 13 14 15 QG 5 4 3 2 1

KELLY: For my girl, Gracie

KATHLEEN: To my family

BETH: To Pat Mackey, my fabulous mother-in-law

GLOSSARY

ab im kopp—off in the head, crazy

ach—oh

aenti—aunt

appetitlich—delicious

bensel—hard to handle; a handful

bruder—brother

daadi haus—a small house built onto or near the main house
for grandparents to live in

daag—day

daed—dad

danki—thanks

Derr Herr—God

dochder—daughter

dumm—dumb

dummkopf—dummy

eck—special place for bride and groom at the corner of the
wedding table

Englisch—non-Amish

Englischer—a non-Amish person

familye—family

frau—wife

freind—friend

geh—go

gut—good
haus—house
hiya—hello
kaffee—coffee
kapp—prayer covering or cap
kinn, kinner—child, children
kumme—come
lieb—love
maedel or *maed*—girl or girls
mamm—mom
mann—man, men
mei—my
milch—milk
mudder—mother
narrisch—crazy
nee—no
nix—nothing
onkel—uncle
roascht—bread stuffing and chicken baked in a casserole
rumschpringe—running-around period when a teenager
turns sixteen years old
schee—handsome
schwester—sister
seltsam—weird
sohn—son
was in der welt—what in the world
wunderbaar—wonderful
ya—yes
Yankee—non-Amish person, term used in Middlefield, Ohio

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A PERFECT PLAN



BETH WISEMAN

Prologue



PRISCILLA GLANCED AROUND THE YARD AT ALL THE guests. Warm August temperatures allowed for an outside celebration, and it never rained on her special day. *Mamm* went all out for birthdays, but this year was the biggest yet. In addition to a beautiful pineapple layered cake that her oldest sister, Naomi, made, there was a ham, barbecued string beans, scalloped potatoes, creamed celery, homemade breads, jams, jellies, chowchow, and a variety of pies and cookies. She smiled as she turned away from the main food table.

Ten oblong tables spanned the front yard, topped with simple white coverings. On each table, *Mamm's* blue Tupperware party bowls were filled with peanuts and chips, with a platter of pickles and olives in the center. Everything was perfect, right down to the decorations. Her sister Hannah had been put in charge of filling the balloons with helium, and yellow and blue bundles were tied

to the head chair at each table. Priscilla's place setting had double the balloons from every color in the rainbow.

"I think everything turned out lovely." Naomi waved her arm around the yard. "And look how many guests showed up. There must be a hundred people here."

Priscilla took another look around the crowd and was happy to see that some of the folks were starting a game of volleyball on the far side of the yard. Then her eyes landed on someone. "What is Chester Lapp doing here?"

Chester Lapp was handsome and well-respected in the community. He was a fine carpenter. Her father had purchased two rockers from Chester for the front porch. But he was nineteen. Why would he want to come to her sixteenth birthday party?

"Why shouldn't he be here?" Naomi folded her arms across her chest and grinned. "Our family has known his family forever. We even share a phone shanty."

"I know that." Priscilla rolled her eyes. "I'm just surprised he's here. I mean, I rarely see him socially. Just at worship, and he hardly ever goes to Sunday singings. I wonder who invited him."

Naomi scratched her cheek as she took a deep breath and looked away.

"You did, didn't you? *Why?*" Priscilla narrowed her eyebrows at her sister. Naomi was twenty-two and always playing matchmaker for someone. "I barely know him."

"Maybe you should get to know him better." Naomi breezed across the yard, turning back once to wink at her sister.

Priscilla sprinted a few steps to catch up with her. "Why do you say that? Has he said something? Tell me, Naomi."

Naomi stopped alongside Priscilla and whispered, "Let's just say he has asked about you more than once."

"When?" She tried not to get too excited as her eyes drifted in Chester's direction.

"Once when I saw him in town, a couple of months ago. Then I ran into him last week at the hardware store in Bird-in-Hand. He asked about you then too." Naomi shrugged. "So I invited him to your birthday party."

Priscilla twisted her mouth from side to side as she studied the tall, handsome man. "I'm still surprised that he came."

"I'm not." Naomi grinned, then walked away.

Priscilla kept her eyes on Chester, but jumped when he turned around and caught her staring. She quickly looked away and began straightening one of the paper tablecloths that had blown up in the wind, but she could see him moving toward her out of the corner of her eye.

"Happy birthday."

She looked up and smiled. "*Danki*." Then she began to line up the bowls and pickle tray so that everything was evenly spaced on the table. She could feel Chester's piercing blue eyes on her, and slowly she lifted her eyes to his again. An easy smile played at the corner of his mouth as he looped his thumbs beneath his suspenders. If it weren't for his traditional clothing, Chester wouldn't look much like an Amish man. Most men kept their hair in a bobbed haircut, bangs in the front, straight on the sides. Chester's hair was dark and curly above his brows and ears; his wavy locks didn't resemble much of a bob. Priscilla wondered if his beard would be curly as well someday, after he was married.

"It's a great party."

Priscilla pulled her eyes from his and went back to the task at hand. “*Ya*, it is. *Danki* for coming.” She pushed one of the blue bowls an inch or so to the right, making sure it was the same distance from the pickle tray as the other bowl.

“What are you doing?” Chester folded his arms across his chest, still grinning.

“What?”

“You’ve been moving those bowls not even a quarter-inch back and forth. I think they are perfectly spaced now.”

Priscilla felt the heat rush from her neck to her cheeks. “I wasn’t doing that.”

“*Ya*, you were.”

“No.” She folded her arms across her chest, mirroring his stance. “I wasn’t.” She pulled her eyes from his and kicked at the grass with her bare foot.

He was right. She needed things to be in perfect order, but she wasn’t going to apologize for it. She enjoyed organizing things. She’d recently alphabetized recipe cards for Naomi, and her mother was thrilled when Priscilla organized her sewing supplies, grouping her thread colors together and sorting material by color and fabric. Other people appreciated her need for things to be in order—but Chester was making fun of her for arranging a couple of bowls.

“Are you gonna be at the singing on Sunday?”

Priscilla found his eyes and wanted to look away, but couldn’t. “Uh, *ya*. I usually go.”

“How about going with me?”

She opened her mouth to speak, but nothing came out. Chester Lapp was older, handsome, and asking her to be his date

for a Sunday singing. She'd be wound up like a top in preparation for it. Finally she took a breath and spoke. "I can't. But *danki* for asking me." She turned and darted off before he could say anything more.



CHESTER TIPPED BACK HIS HAT AND WATCHED PRISCILLA hurry across the grass. Even in her haste, she was as graceful as a snowflake riding the breeze on a winter morning. He pulled off his hat, scratched his head, then replaced the hat, all the while keeping his eyes on her.

He didn't know that much about her. Beautiful, yes. She was petite with strawberry blond hair, and her blue eyes gleamed when she talked. It seemed like she'd blossomed into a young woman overnight, and she was old enough for him to ask out now. He'd accepted Naomi's invitation to the party hoping to get to know Priscilla a little better. Maybe asking her to a Sunday singing was too forward. But Chester knew that he had more in common with Priscilla than she realized.

While Chester was talking with Naomi, he'd casually mentioned that he planned to go skydiving before he was baptized into the faith. Naomi had burst into laughter. When she came up for air she said, "My sister has always wanted to do that. We think she's *ab im kopp*, but she says she will do it before she's baptized."

Chester didn't know any other young Amish woman who would consider such an endeavor, though it was perfectly allowable prior to baptism. This Priscilla King intrigued him.



PRISCILLA BALANCED HER YOUNGEST SISTER, SARAH MAE, on her hip as she chatted with her guests. Her best friend, Rose, walked up and whispered in her ear, “I need to talk to you.”

Priscilla excused herself, and she and Rose eased away from the crowd.

“I just overheard Chester Lapp telling Naomi that he asked you to a Sunday singing.” Rose thrust her hands onto her hips. “And you said no! Why?”

“I don’t know him.” She thought about the way Chester made her uncomfortable earlier, teasing her about the bowls.

Naomi walked up to them then, her lips pinched together in a frown. “Did you really decline an offer from Chester?”

“Why are you trying to fix me up with him? We barely know each other.” Priscilla set Sarah Mae down in the grass beside her. “Good looks aren’t everything.” She raised her chin, not wanting to admit that Chester made her nervous.

“Too bad.” Naomi tucked a strand of loose hair beneath her prayer covering. “Because the two of you have a common goal.”

Priscilla rolled her eyes. “What might that be?”

“You both want to go skydiving. I don’t know of any other two people in our district who share such a crazy goal.” She shrugged. “I just thought it might be worth a mention.” Naomi picked up Sarah Mae, grinned, and walked away.

Rose’s eyes grew round. “You’ve wanted to go skydiving ever since Barbie and Elam’s wedding.”

“That doesn’t mean that I should go on a date with Chester

Lapp.” Although she had to admit, he’d suddenly grown more interesting.

Priscilla had tried and tried to find someone who would jump out of a plane with her. Ever since she’d attended her *Englisch* friend’s outdoor wedding, where a man jumped from a plane and right into the reception area, she’d dreamed of doing that herself. To freefall through the air, soar like a bird . . . such freedom. Priscilla had talked to the man with the parachute for nearly an hour—and she’d left with a business card and phone number to call if she ever wanted to jump.

“I gotta go.” Rose gave her a quick hug, wished her happy birthday again, and headed to her buggy. Priscilla stayed where she was, watching Chester talk with her parents across the yard. When he walked away from them, Priscilla hurried toward him.

“Chester! Wait!”

Chapter One



THREE YEARS LATER

HICCUP . . .

Priscilla covered her mouth with her hand—not so much to stifle the intermittent spasms in her diaphragm, but to keep from exploding at her five-year-old sister. She took a deep breath as she studied the scene before her, then closed her eyes and blew the air from her lungs in an effort to calm herself. It didn’t work.

“What have you *done*, Sarah Mae?” She stepped forward to where the little girl was sitting in the middle of the sewing room.

Hiccup . . .

Sarah Mae’s big brown eyes filled with tears. “What’s wrong?” She blinked a few times, her bottom lip quivering. “Why are you using your mean voice?”

Priscilla took another deep breath, hiccuped again, then rubbed her tired eyes. “I’m not using a ‘mean’ voice, Sarah Mae.”

“*Mamm* said I could have these scraps to make a dress for Lizzie Lou.” Sarah Mae lifted up the finely sewn blue material for Priscilla to see.

It was the left arm of Priscilla’s wedding dress, perfectly stitched and ready to attach to the body of the outfit she planned to be married in. In all her nineteen years, she’d never crafted a finer long sleeve.

“See, I made armholes for Lizzie Lou.” Sarah Mae nodded toward her doll, which was propped up against a chair to the left. The rag doll with flowing brown hair went everywhere Sarah Mae went. And Lizzie Lou had many outfits—dresses for working in the fields and going to church service, along with brown, black, and white aprons. Lizzie Lou also had two *kapps* and a black jacket.

Priscilla cringed as Sarah Mae pushed her small fingers through slits on either side of the sleeve. “Sarah Mae . . .” *Hiccup* . . . She clutched her chest and tried to control her voice. Then she pointed with one hand toward a pile of scraps to her right. “Those are the scraps *Mamm* meant for you to use.” She glanced about at the pieces of material scattered around Sarah Mae until she spotted her other sleeve. She squatted down next to her sister, picked it up, and poked her fingers through the holes on either side.

“That’s Lizzie Lou’s Sunday dress.” Sarah Mae tucked her chin, then lifted her watery eyes to Priscilla’s.

Priscilla handed what used to be the sleeves of her wedding dress back to her sister. She scanned the area around Sarah Mae, hoping and praying that the body of her dress was still intact.

“Sarah Mae,” she said softly, following another hiccup, “there was another piece of sewn material, a much larger piece. Where is it?”

Sarah Mae stood up, tucked her chin again, then walked across the room. “Lizzie Lou wanted a hammock and a blanket.”

“Sarah Mae! No!”

The dress was cut in half, one piece tied between two chairs, the other piece on the floor below the “hammock.”

“How could you do this? That was my wedding dress, Sarah Mae! Not scraps!”

“I’m sorry, Sissy! I’m sorry!” Sarah Mae threw her little arms around Priscilla’s legs and looked up, tears pouring down her face. “I’ll make you a new dress for your wedding.”

Priscilla patted Sarah Mae on the back as she thought about the time she’d spent on her wedding dress. “It’s all right. I’ll make an even better dress.” She forced a smile for Sarah Mae. Four weeks until the wedding. It was doable. It might not be as finely stitched as the one that now served as two dresses, a hammock, and a blanket for Lizzie Lou, but it could be done. “Maybe Lizzie Lou needs to get married in her new dress,” she mumbled under her breath.

“Sissy?” Sarah Mae pulled her arms from around Priscilla’s legs and stared up at her sister. “I’m sorry.”

“I know you are, Sarah Mae.” She realized her hiccups were gone. She leaned down and kissed the little girl on the cheek. “You stay here and play. I’m going to go help *Mamm* with supper.”

And after the meal and cleanup, Priscilla would go meet Chester at the phone shanty that bordered both their homesteads—as she always did on Tuesdays and Thursdays. She

smiled. She was the luckiest girl in the world to be marrying Chester Lapp. If this was the worst thing that happened to disrupt the wedding she'd been planning for the past few months, she could live with it.



CHESTER ARRIVED AT THE SHANTY ABOUT TEN MINUTES early, anxious to hold Priscilla in his arms. In only a month she'd be his *frau*, and there'd be no more sneaking off to the shanty.

He leaned up against the structure, which resembled an old outhouse—a tall, wooden boxlike building that housed a telephone and a small stool. Most families had phones in the barns these days, but his father, along with Priscilla's father and the Dienners and the Petersheims, chose to keep with tradition, holding on to the shanty they had shared for years.

As he leaned against the weathered wood, he looped his thumbs beneath his suspenders and watched the sun setting in the west, leaving a warm glow atop the fields stretched before him as far as he could see. Tall green grass speckled with brown was evidence of the recent first frost and seemed a prelude for a hard winter.

Chester closed his eyes and imagined curling up on the couch beside Priscilla in front of a warm fire this winter. He was close to finishing the house he was building for them. The building inspector was coming tomorrow to check the electrical wiring. Installing electricity was required, even though they would never turn it on. And should they decide to sell, the resale value would be better if it was wired for electricity. But Chester was counting on spending the rest of his life in that house with Priscilla. He'd

worked hard to make it everything they'd dreamed of. Four bedrooms would be enough room for the *kinner* they planned to have.

He heard movement and turned to his left to see Priscilla moving through the field like a beautiful butterfly, her arms swinging back and forth as she lifted her legs high through the pasture, a pallet of orange dusk behind her.

My sweet Priscilla.

Chester had loved Priscilla since she was sixteen. That was when he started courting her, carrying her home from Sunday singings and making plans for their future. But since he was three years older than she, he waited until she was nineteen to propose. As he watched her hurrying toward him in a dark green dress and black apron, his heart skipped a beat, the way it always did when he first saw her.

She came to a stop right in front of him, breathless and beautiful. "How long have you been waiting?"

"Not long." He cupped her cheeks in his hands and gently kissed her on the mouth, lingering for much longer than he should.

She pulled back and smiled at him. "We'll be married soon enough, and you can kiss me like that all the time."

Chester would be lying to himself if he denied the fact that her looks had drawn him to her initially. She stood out among their people with her strawberry blond hair and stunning blue eyes. A natural blush filled her cheeks atop her ivory complexion.

Despite her comment, Chester kissed her again. She giggled and pushed him away. "Chester Lapp, you better behave yourself."

She was small and flowerlike, but Chester knew better than to be misled by her dainty appearance. Priscilla was as strong a

woman as he'd ever met—inside and out. He recalled the day not long after her sixteenth birthday when they held hands and jumped out of a perfectly good airplane together.

His future wife could also swing a baseball bat like no woman he'd seen and outrun most of her teammates. She spoke her mind when necessary, yet was the most compassionate person he knew. She was organized and punctual, and expected others to be. She could obsess on details sometimes, that was true, but in Chester's eyes . . . she was perfect.

“Have I told you lately how much I love you?”

She tapped her finger to her chin and twisted her mouth to one side. “Hmm . . . I can't recall.”

He cupped her cheek in his hand. “I love you with all my heart. Forever.”

Priscilla put her hand atop his, then pulled his hand to her mouth and kissed it tenderly. “I love you too, and I can't wait to be your *frau*.” Then she let go of his hand, stepped back a bit, and frowned.

“What is it?”

“Something happened today. With my wedding dress.” She let out a heavy sigh. “Sarah Mae used it to make doll clothes, along with a hammock and blanket for her doll's enjoyment.”

It wasn't funny, but Chester stifled a grin just the same. Priscilla came from a family of girls. Naomi—the oldest at twenty-five and still unmarried—lived in the *daadi haus* on the family's property where she ran a bakery business. Then there was Priscilla's married sister, Hannah, who was twenty-two. Then Priscilla, and then Sarah Mae—her parents' little surprise.

Priscilla folded her arms across her chest. “Chester, are you laughing?” She tried to make her voice sound stern.

“No. Not laughing at all.” He held his palms toward her. “Besides, you’ll be beautiful on our wedding day no matter what you’re wearing.” He reached for her hand, then squeezed.

“I can make a new dress.” She scowled a bit, then her eyes brightened. “The inspectors come tomorrow to look at the house, no?”

“*Ya*. I think everything will be fine, then I can move forward with the finishing touches for my bride-to-be.” He hoped that everything would in fact be fine. With his father’s help, they had done most of the wiring themselves. It would be a huge setback if something was wrong. He wanted to whisk Priscilla into their new home as soon as possible.

“Do your parents know you meet me here on Tuesdays and Thursdays?” Priscilla bit her bottom lip, then grinned.

“I think so. Do yours?”

She giggled. “*Ya*. We don’t speak of it, but they know I’m not just going for a walk.” She hugged herself and shivered. “I forgot my sweater.”

Chester wasted no time taking off his black jacket, regretful he hadn’t done it as soon as she arrived. He draped it around her shoulders.

“*Danki*.” Priscilla settled into the jacket, smiling. “I hope the weather is nice for our wedding day. It might be a little cold, but I’m hoping there won’t be any rain. I want everyone to be able to gather in the barn or outdoors following the ceremony.”

“It will be a perfect day.” Chester latched on to the collar on both sides of his jacket and pulled it snug around her. “You warm enough?”

“*Ya*. I’m *gut*.”

Then she hiccuped, and he laughed. It was the cutest little sound he'd ever heard, and her eyes widened as she cupped her hand over her mouth.

"This is the second time this has happened today." Her cheeks flushed a bright pink. "How embarrassing."

"It's cute," he said as another hiccup escaped. "*Daed* always tells us to eat a spoonful of sugar when we get the hiccups."

Chester's family was small by comparison to others in the district—only Chester and his brother, Abraham.

"Abe used to get the hiccups a lot."

"*Nee*, I don't know how cute it . . . *hiccup* . . . is."

They both laughed again, but jumped when the telephone in the shanty rang.

On the third ring, Chester stepped inside the booth and picked up the receiver. He said hello, then his smile faded and he tightened his grip on the receiver.