

The Wonder of Your Love

Beth Wiseman



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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To Sherry Gregg



Glossary

ab im kopp – crazy, off in the head

ach – oh

amenti – aunt

boppli – baby or babies

bruder – brother

daed – dad

danki – thank you

Deitsch – Dutch

dochder – daughter

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

Englisch – non-Amish person

fraa – wife

grossmamma – grandmother

guder mariye – good morning

gut – good

haus – hause

kaffi – coffee

kapp – prayer covering or cap

BETH WISEMAN

kinner – children or grandchildren

lieb – love

maedel – girl

mamm – mom

mariyefrieh – tomorrow morning

mei – my

mudder – mother

nee – no

onkel – uncle

roascht – roast

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

schee – pretty

sohn – son

Wie bischt? – How are you?

wunderbaar – wonderful

ya – yes



One

KATIE ANN REACHED INTO THE DRAWER OF THE end table next to the couch and pulled out the letter she'd received two weeks ago. She knew it would upset her stomach to read it—as it had a dozen times already—but she unfolded it anyway. She couldn't imagine why her husband's mistress, Lucy Turner, was planning to travel all the way to Colorado to see her. She took a deep breath and read the letter again.

Dear Katie Ann,

I hope this letter finds you well. I heard from some of our mutual acquaintances here in Lancaster County that you had a healthy baby boy and named him Jonas. Congratulations to you. A baby is such a miracle from God.

Katie Ann rolled her eyes, the way she always did at Lucy's mention of God. *A good, godly woman wouldn't get involved with another woman's husband.* Although she knew good and well that it took two for such deception. She let out a heavy sigh and continued reading.

I'm sure that I am the last person you want to hear from, and I'm sorry to bother you, but I need to meet with you. I know it is awkward, but I have something important to discuss, and it's too much to say in a letter, or even over the phone. As soon as I can arrange to be off work, I will be traveling to Colorado. I hope that you can find time to meet with me to discuss this urgent matter. I thought it might be easiest for you if you knew in advance that I'm coming.

All the best to you and your new little one,
Lucy Turner

Katie Ann folded the piece of paper and put it back in the drawer, determined not to let thoughts of Lucy ruin this day. But as she crossed through the living room toward the kitchen, she couldn't help but wonder exactly when Lucy was going to show up on her doorstep. And what she wanted.

Katie Ann poured a large bag of M&M's into a Tupperware bowl, then put the container next to the other food she would be carting to the Detweilers' house. Both the candy and container were a gift for the bride and groom. It was traditional to place a fun and edible gift on the *eck*, something that held special meaning between the giver and the recipient. Katie Ann guessed that lots of people would choose M&M's, though. It was no secret that the candy was Emily's favorite.

She couldn't believe that the wedding was tomorrow. It seemed like just yesterday her husband's nephew David was a young boy, but tomorrow he would marry Emily in front of a hundred friends and family. A small crowd for an Amish wedding. She recalled the nearly four hundred guests at her own wedding, but she quickly brushed the memory aside as she snapped the lid closed on the bowl.

“Martha! Are you ready? Is the baby ready?” She walked back through the living room, turned the corner, and strolled into little Jonas’s bedroom. It was a beautiful room, painted in powder blue and trimmed with a lively, multicolored border of dancing ponies. Matching curtains covered the two windows facing the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The fancy décor would be frowned upon by the bishop if he were to visit, but it was all Martha’s doing, and Katie Ann didn’t have the heart to change it. Martha was a widow and didn’t have any children of her own.

“This little one needs a real nursery,” her *Englisch* friend had said with a huff before Jonas was even born.

Martha would be upset if she knew that Katie Ann had heard from Lucy.

Katie Ann stood quietly in the doorway for a moment, savoring the view of her little miracle in Martha’s arms and the contented expression on the older woman’s face. Martha was as much a grandmother to Jonas as Katie Ann’s own mother would have been if she were still living. Katie Ann smiled as Martha gently cradled Jonas in her arms, pushing the oak rocking chair into motion with her foot.

“Why don’t you let me stay with the baby while you go on over to the Detweilers’ house? No need to drag this young one into the cold, plus he’s finally stopped crying and is sleeping soundly.” Martha touched her finger to Jonas’s cheek as her lips curved into a smile. After a moment, she looked back up at Katie Ann. “Unless it’s too cold for you to take the buggy. We can bundle him up real good and take my car.”

Katie Ann shook her head. “No, no, I don’t mind the buggy ride. It’s crisp outside, but sunny. It would be *gut* if you could stay with Jonas. Are you sure you don’t mind?”

Katie Ann had been up more than usual during the night with Jonas. He just wouldn't stop crying, and nothing she did seemed to calm him.

Martha looked up at her and scowled. "Now where else on the planet do you think I'd rather be than with this baby?" She raised one hand out from under Jonas and tucked a piece of brownish-gray hair behind her ear, a strand that had fallen from beneath the butterfly clip on the top of her head.

Katie Ann pushed a loose tendril of her own hair beneath her *kapp* as she moved toward the rocker. "Just checking." She leaned down and kissed her precious bundle on the cheek. "See you soon, my darling."

Martha raised her chin as she spoke in a whisper. "You tell Vera Detweiler that I'm expecting creamed celery tomorrow. Lots of it."

Katie Ann nodded as she moved toward the door. "You know there's always lots of celery at weddings." She pulled her heavy black coat, gloves, and bonnet on. Once she was bundled up, she came back to the bedroom door and glanced in at Martha. "I'll be back soon. You'll check on him often, right?"

Martha nodded. "Yes, I will. Now, you go." She waved a hand at Katie Ann.

Martha hadn't missed a day since Jonas was born. Sometimes she stayed for hours, and she often spent the night. Katie Ann was grateful to have the older woman in her life. Being a single mother was challenging.

As she closed the door behind her, she thought about Ivan. Despite her husband's infidelity, she was sorry that he would never see his son. She still mourned Ivan's untimely death, but with each passing day, her sorrow became less as her anger grew

stronger. She was thankful to God for blessing her with Jonas so late in life, but even her relationship with Him had suffered. Maybe it was all the sleepless nights she'd been up with Jonas, too tired even to pray. That's what she kept telling herself.

She climbed into the buggy and turned on the battery-operated heater on the seat next to her. The thermometer outside her window showed thirty-three degrees, but as was usually the case here in the San Luis Valley, the sun shone brightly, making it seem much warmer than it was. Clicking her tongue, she set the buggy in motion and breathed in the fresh country air, wondering if it would snow later. She'd read in the newspaper that morning that there might be a flurry, but no hard weather was forecast. She wondered if the Detweilers' relatives had arrived safely. Vera was doubtless beside herself, busy with preparations for her daughter's wedding. Katie Ann was disappointed that the weather back in Lancaster County would prevent Ivan's side of the family from attending. She'd always been close to her in-laws, and she was sure David must be disappointed as well.

Once again, recollections of her own wedding swirled in Katie Ann's head, and her eyes filled with tears as she thought about the good years she'd had with Ivan. And the bad. But she never could have predicted that Ivan would leave her—for the likes of Lucy Turner—and take up residence with the *Englisch* woman back in Lancaster County. She still struggled to forgive her dead husband's choices . . . and Lucy Turner.

ELI DETWEILER THANKED the cabdriver and whistled a tune as he walked across the snow to his cousin's house. He

blocked the sun's glare with his hand; he'd never seen a more beautiful day. His spirits were high, and he felt like he had his entire life ahead of him—even though he'd already lived at least half of it. But at forty-three he had a new sense of freedom, the kind that comes from being a new empty-nester, as the *Englisch* called it. He'd married off the youngest of his *kinner* two weeks ago, and with Maureen out of the house, he was on his own. After Sarah died, he'd managed to raise six young children by himself, and he couldn't recall a moment's peace.

Five of the six were girls, and he never could have predicted the challenges of raising daughters. Thankfully, he had one ally in Jake, his only son and the oldest of the bunch. He grinned as he knocked on the door, knowing he wouldn't have changed anything about his children or his life—except for that one dreary day in November seventeen years ago, the day he lost his beloved Sarah. She'd been his one and only true love, and not a day went by that he didn't think about her. No woman had even sparked his interest since then, despite the many attempts by family and friends to fix him up. It was the Amish way to remarry quickly following the death of a spouse, and he had to admit he could have used the help. He'd had a few random dates, but there hadn't been anyone who could hold a candle to his Sarah.

"Eli! It's so *gut* to see you." His cousin's wife wrapped her arms around his neck.

"*Gut* to be here, Vera," he said as he returned her embrace. "Hard to believe it's been over a year."

Vera stepped aside so he could enter, and the warmth of a glowing fire met him as he stepped into their living room. His

eyes scanned the room. He saw his cousin Elam and two of their four children, Betsy and Levi. He knew Elam and Vera's third child, Jacob, had married last fall and was living in his own home with his wife, Beth Ann. Eli regretted not being able to attend the boy's wedding, but the weather had kept his family away last year. After he said his hellos to all of them, they all turned their attention to the stairs and watched Emily come down. A year had made quite a difference. Elam and Vera's daughter looked . . . happy. And as her face lit up, Eli recalled everything that the girl had been through. It was a true blessing to be here for her wedding.

"You look so *schee*, Emily," he said as he hugged her.

"*Danki* so much for coming, *Onkel* Eli."

Elam's *kinner* had always called him uncle, even though he was really their cousin.

"I wouldn't have missed it, *mei maedel*." He eased away and found Vera. "Now, Vera, don't let me be in the way. I remember with *mei dochders'* weddings, it's a busy time. So you just put me to work wherever I'm needed."

Vera dismissed his comment with a wave of her hand. "You must be tired from your travels, and really, I think everything is about ready. We've had people helping us all day. We'll be up early in the morning to start warming food and to finish setting up the chairs. You can help then."

She sat down in one of the rocking chairs facing a tan couch on the opposite wall, motioning for him to sit as well. "Everyone else from Middlefield is staying at the local bed-and-breakfasts since this house isn't nearly as big as we were used to back home. They were all here earlier helping, but you probably won't see them all until *mariyefrieh*."

Tomorrow morning was fine by Eli. He was weary from travel, and just chatting with his cousin's family would be plenty for this evening. He nodded, and a moment later Betsy walked up to him, toting a book under her arm. "Hello, Betsy. You've turned eight years old since moving here, haven't you?"

A strand of curly blond hair fell from beneath her *kapp* as she nodded. "Ya." She cocked her head to one side and stared at him.

Eli knew from past experience that there was no telling what might come out of Betsy's mouth. He braced himself.

"*Mamm* doesn't understand why a handsome man like you doesn't have a *fraa*."

"Betsy!" Vera covered her eyes with her hand as a rosy blush filled her cheeks. "Excuse Betsy, Eli." Then she glared at her daughter, but Eli just grinned.

"Because I just haven't found anyone as pretty as you," he said. Then he tickled her, and she squealed until he released her.

When someone knocked at the door, Vera stood up and eased her way across the living room. Cousin Elam moseyed to the fireplace and stoked the dwindling fire until orange sparks shimmied upward, then he gave the logs a few more pokes until the flames stretched high.

Eli leaned back against the couch and crossed one ankle over his knee. He stroked his beard as he thought about how long he might stay in Colorado. This was his first trip, there'd be much to see, and he didn't have to rush home to tend to one single thing. *A vacation*. His daughters had all married fine men who took good care of them and the five grandchildren they'd given him, and his son's wife was expecting number seven, the second for the couple. Yes, all was well

in Eli's world. Freedom to do as he pleased. He stroked his beard, feeling giddy as a young man in his *rumschpringe*. His musings were interrupted by the return of Vera and another woman.

"Eli, this is Katie Ann. She's soon to be Emily's *aenti*." Vera motioned toward the woman on her right. "She's David's *aenti* on his father's side."

Eli uncrossed his ankle from atop his knee, stood up, and extended his hand to the woman. "Nice to meet you."

She latched onto his hand, nodded, then followed Vera to the kitchen.

Elam waited until the ladies were out of the room before he spoke in a whisper. "Pretty, isn't she?"

Eli narrowed his brows, wondering why his cousin would make the comment about another man's wife, and not sure how to respond. "Ya, I suppose so." He tried to sound casual. "What's her name again?"

"Katie Ann." Elam told Betsy to go help in the kitchen, and his young cousin pouted a bit before padding out of the room. "And she is a widow." He kept his voice low. "But she hasn't been a widow for long. Her husband was killed only a few months ago in a car accident." Elam stepped closer and lowered his voice even more. "He'd left her before that, though, for an *Englisch* woman. He'd moved back to Lancaster County and was living with that woman when he died."

Eli glanced toward the kitchen for a moment before he looked back at Elam. "That's terrible."

"Ya." Elam shook his head. "A real shame."

Eli stroked his beard again, and the two men were quiet as the ladies reentered the room.

“It was nice to meet you, Eli.” Katie Ann waved briefly in Eli’s direction as she moved toward the door. “See you all tomorrow.”

Eli returned the gesture, watching her as she crossed the threshold. As the door closed behind her, Eli scratched his chest. Not that it itched. He just wasn’t sure why his heart was beating so fast.

KATIE ANN DROVE home and tethered her buggy, then waved to Lillian as she walked toward her own house. She was blessed to have Ivan’s brother and sister-in-law living right next door on the same property. The two households shared a barn and phone, and Samuel and Lillian were as much her family as they were before Ivan left her.

She slipped quietly into her living room, where Martha was sitting on the couch reading a magazine, bare feet propped up on the coffee table.

“Did Jonas sleep the whole time I was gone?”

“Yep. I kept checking on him, but the little fella is sleeping soundly.” Martha didn’t look up as she flipped a page.

“When did you last check on him?” Without waiting for an answer, Katie Ann hurried to Jonas’s room. She stared down into his crib. As his tiny chest rose and fell, she breathed a sigh of relief.

After a few moments, she walked back into the living room. Martha’s arms were folded across her chest, and Katie Ann quickly pulled her eyes from the older woman’s glare.

“I told you that I have been checking on him. He’s just fine, isn’t he?”

Katie Ann fluffed a throw pillow on the couch beside Martha and slowly sat down. “*Ya*. He is.” She crossed one leg over the other and nervously kicked her foot into motion. It had taken her a long time to leave Jonas with anyone, and the only ones she trusted with her baby were Martha and Lillian. And that hadn’t come easily.

They were quiet for a few moments, and Martha resumed turning the pages of her magazine.

“I’m doing better,” Katie Ann finally said as she fingered the string on her prayer covering. “You know, about checking on him.”

Martha twisted her mouth to one side and grunted. “How many times did you get up to check on him last night?”

Katie Ann thought about all the nights she’d just watched Jonas sleeping. Martha would be shocked if she knew the real amount of sleep Katie Ann had lost hovering over the baby, fear consuming every inch of her being. “Not that many.”

Martha faced her. “How many, Katie Ann? Once to feed him? Three times? A dozen times?”

The last was probably most accurate, but Katie Ann just shrugged. “I don’t know. But he has been crying during the night, and I don’t know what’s wrong with him.”

It was true. The past week she’d been up with him even more than usual. And not just to watch him breathe. He would wail, and Katie Ann wasn’t sure what was wrong, which just added to the fear that he would die before he reached his first birthday. The way Annie did.

“You’re a good mother, Katie Ann, and Jonas is a healthy little bundle.” Martha patted Katie Ann on the knee and returned to her reading. “Babies cry sometimes.”

Katie Ann had never told anyone but Ivan about Annie. It happened so long ago . . .

They were quiet again, and after a few moments Katie Ann glanced at Martha and frowned. “I don’t know why you read that garbage. It has nothing to do with us or our community.”

“I’m not Amish. It’s allowed.” Martha didn’t look up this time.

Katie Ann gently elbowed her. “I think you should be baptized and become one of us.” She’d had this conversation with Martha many times, and the answer was always the same. “You attend worship with us every other Sunday, you love the Lord, and you are always doing for folks in our community.”

Katie Ann thought back almost a year, to when she’d become close to Martha. It was an unlikely friendship—a pregnant Amish woman whose husband had left her . . . and an older *Englisch* widow who was gruff, outspoken, and set in her ways. But it didn’t take Katie Ann long to realize that beneath Martha’s crotchety temperament was a woman who just wanted to love and be loved—to have a family. And that’s what Katie Ann, Jonas, and Martha had become. Family.

Martha closed the magazine slowly, pressed her lips together, and squinted her eyes as she glared at Katie Ann. “I’ll tell ya *again* . . . I’m not wearing those clothes of yours, and especially not those prayer coverings. Anything on my head makes my scalp itch. And I am not giving up my television.” She tossed her head back, grunted, and went back to her magazine.

Katie Ann took note of Martha’s red-and-white-striped pants outfit, her mismanaged curls beneath the butterfly clip, and her bright red fingernails, and grinned. Converting would indeed require a large makeover for Martha. But

Martha often visited the bishop, and Katie Ann wondered what they talked about.

All of a sudden Martha gasped, slammed the magazine closed, and twisted to face Katie Ann. Her eyes were round as saucers. “Did you meet *him*?”

“Who?” She leaned her head back against the couch as she yawned.

“Eli Detweiler, Elam’s cousin.”

Katie Ann uncrossed her legs and shifted her weight. “As a matter of fact, yes. Why do you ask?”

Martha pinched her face together until her wrinkles looked like they were all connected. “Is he as handsome as Vera says?”

“What?” Katie Ann turned her head to face her.

Martha cackled. “Vera’s got good taste. That Elam of hers is quite a looker. If she says Eli is handsome, I bet he’s a hunk.”

Katie Ann shrugged. “I didn’t notice.”

“Did she tell you that he’s a single man? Lost his wife seventeen years ago, and—”

Katie Ann bolted from the couch, slammed her hands to her hips, and glared at her friend. “I am in mourning, Martha. My husband has only been gone for a few months. How could you possibly think—”

“Oh, stop it.” Martha stood up. “That scoundrel cheated on you and left you for another woman. I’d get to know that handsome Eli Detweiler while he’s in town.”

Katie Ann blinked back tears, determined that there would be no more crying where Ivan was concerned. “You are being inappropriate, Martha.”

Martha placed her hands on Katie Ann’s arms. “Katie Ann,

I couldn't love you any more if you were my own daughter. It's your people's way to marry soon after a spouse dies, and Vera said that Eli is a fine fellow."

"If he's such a fine fellow, then why has he been single for the past seventeen years?" She freed herself of Martha's hold and walked to the fireplace. She poked the glowing embers several times until a spark eased up between the logs.

"Apparently he's been raising six kids, and the last one just got married. Maybe he was dedicated to his family? An admirable quality, wouldn'tcha say?"

Katie Ann didn't look up as she gave the fire another poke. "Maybe."

Martha chuckled. "Or maybe he's just been waiting for *you* for the past seventeen years."

Katie Ann put the fire tool in its holder and faced off with Martha. "Ya. I'm sure that's it." She rolled her eyes.

Martha clomped across the wooden floor, grabbed her red purse from the couch, and slipped on her black slippers by the door. "I'm heading to my house. I need a nap."

Katie Ann followed and wondered if she'd have time for a little shut-eye before Jonas woke up. "Martha, why do you wear your slippers when there is snow on the ground?"

Martha raised her foot and flashed the sole of her shoe upward, giving it a pat. "These aren't regular slippers, dear. I ordered these on the Internet, and they weren't cheap. They're water resistant and easy on my corns." She put her foot down before she lost her balance. Her brows shifted upward. "Another thing I couldn't give up to join your people. My Internet!" She pulled Katie Ann into a hug. "You get some rest. Gonna be a long day tomorrow." Then she winked.

Katie Ann stepped onto the porch as Martha eased her way down the porch steps. “Martha?”

Martha looked over her shoulder. “What?”

Katie Ann wagged a finger in her direction, recalling the time Martha tried to fix her up with an Amish fellow at the hardware store barely a month after Ivan died. “No funny business tomorrow. No matchmaking. Do you hear me?”

Martha flashed a broad toothy smile. “Of course, dear.”

Katie Ann closed the door and went to check on her precious baby. She tiptoed into his room, lightly touched his head, and spoke to him in a whisper. “You are all that I need, my little miracle.”

She and Ivan had tried to have a baby for most of their twenty years of marriage. It was bittersweet the way it all turned out, and again she wished Ivan could have held his child. He died three months before Jonas arrived, and never even knew Katie Ann was pregnant. She wondered if she’d done right by Ivan not to tell him, but at the time she hadn’t wanted him returning to her out of obligation, and she wasn’t sure he even deserved to know.

It was quiet in the house. She considered taking a nap, but sure as she laid her head down, her baby boy would wake up. Instead, she let her mind drift to a place she often went during quiet times. As visions of her early years with Ivan danced in her head, she tried to stay focused on those happy memories, but as usual, it wasn’t long before images of Ivan and Lucy bombarded her thoughts. She shook her head and anger wrapped around her heart in the familiar way.

In the beginning she’d blamed herself for not being a better wife. Later she’d faulted Lucy for seducing her husband

away from her. Most recently she'd decided that Ivan was a weak, dishonest coward—and he was the one responsible for ruining her life.

How could Martha even suggest that she open her heart to another man? *Even good Amish men lie and leave their wives.*