

# *Plain Peace*

BETH WISEMAN



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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Summary: "Anna's grandfather seems determined to ruin her Rumspringa and any hopes she has of finding a husband. Anna Byler should be enjoying her Rumspringa as allowed by her faith. But because of the strict rules enforced by her grandfather, the available suitors in town are afraid to court her. Even Anna's grandmother is keeping a big secret from Anna's grandfather in an effort to keep the peace. Under her grandfather's oppressive watch, Anna begins to feel her faith slipping and wonders if God has forsaken her. Jacob Hostetler and his family have relocated to Lancaster County following a family tragedy in Ohio. As his family struggles to rebuild their lives, Jacob is forced to act as head of the household when his father is unable to cope with recent events. It's been a long time since Jacob has felt any joy. Until he meets Anna Byler. But will Anna's grandfather succeed at keeping them apart? And can Jacob put the past behind him and open his heart?"— Provided by publisher.

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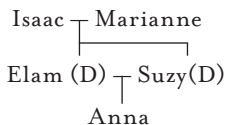
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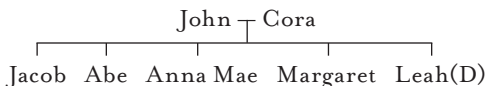
To Richard Gabler

# Daughters of the Promise Community Tree

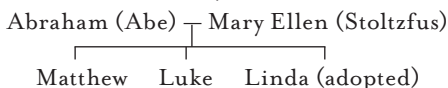
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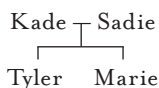
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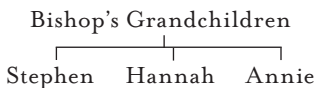
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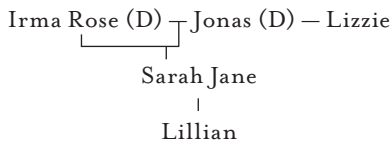
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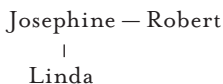
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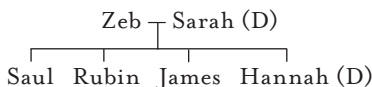
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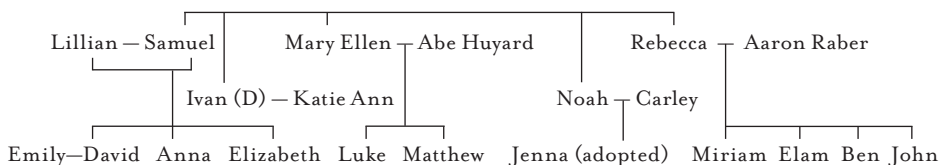
## Barbie Beiler

Bed & Breakfast

## Fishers



## Stoltzfuses



# *Pennsylvania Dutch* *Glossary*

*Aamen*—Amen

*ach*—oh

*boppli*—baby or babies

*bruder/brieder*—brother/brothers

*daadi*—grandfather

*daed*—dad

*danki*—thank you

*dochder*—daughter

*Englisch*—a non-Amish person (in Lancaster County)

*fraa*—wife

*gut*—good

*haus*—house

*kaffi*—coffee

*kapp*—prayer covering or cap

*kinner*—child, children or grandchildren

*lieb*—love

*maedel*—girl

*mamm*—mom

*mammi*—grandmother

*mei*—my

*mudder*—mother

*Nee*—no

*onkel*—uncle

*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*—the language most commonly used by the Amish. Although commonly known as Pennsylvania Dutch, the language is actually a form of German (*Deutsch*).

*rumschprunge*—running-around period when a teenager turns sixteen years old

*schweschder/schweschdere*—sister/sisters

*sohn*—son

*Wie bischt?*—How are you?

*wunderbaar*—wonderful

*ya*—yes

*Yankee*—a non-Amish person (in Middlefield, Ohio)

ANNA WATCHED OUT THE WINDOW AND WAITED UNTIL her grandfather's buggy rounded the corner before she pulled the bottle of pills from her apron pocket. She handed the prescription to her grandmother, resolved that she would never live the way her grandparents did—keeping secrets from each other. Even if her future husband did end up being the bishop like her grandfather.

“*Danki*, Anna.” Marianne Byler popped two pills in her mouth and followed them down with a glass of water, then stashed the pills in her own apron pocket. Anna knew she wouldn't see the bottle again until it was empty and time for more, and she'd often wondered where her grandmother hid the bottle.

“The pharmacist said you've been out of refills for a few months, but Dr. Noah kept approving it. He won't fill it again, though, until you come for an office visit, and this isn't the full prescription.” Anna began gathering up the dirty dinner dishes, glancing at her *mammi* a couple of times before adding, “So what will you do?” She piled the plates on the counter next to the sink and folded her arms across her chest.

*Mammi* dipped a dishrag into the soapy water and looked over her shoulder. “The Lord will provide.”

“I sure hope so.” *Mammi* never got worked up about anything, but sometimes Anna thought maybe she should.

It had been eight months since her grandfather had forbidden everyone in their district to visit Dr. Noah Stoltzfus’s clinic. Anna wondered if *Daadi* would have made such a decision if he’d known that his own wife was so dependent on Dr. Noah, a secret *Mammi* had been keeping since way before the official ban. Anna glanced at the clock on the wall.

“Can I go now?” She tucked a strand of loose brown hair beneath her *kapp*, then smoothed the wrinkles from her black apron. “The volleyball game at the Lapps’ *haus* started at one.”

*Mammi* turned around, dried her hands on a kitchen towel, and leaned against the counter. “*Ya*, but be home in time to help with supper.” She smiled, defining the lines around her tiny mouth and those feathering from the corners of her eyes. “And have fun.”

Anna nodded, then hurried through the living room to the front door.

The Lapp farm was in walking distance. By the time she arrived, the court was filled with players.

“Come be on our side, Anna!” Emma Lapp waved, and once Anna was in place, she stared through the net at an unfamiliar face. She gawked long enough to almost get hit in the head with the ball but awkwardly bounced it away with her elbow instead. Luckily Emma got underneath it and made the point.

“That’s Jacob Hostetler,” Emma whispered in Anna’s ear. “His family just moved here. They bought the old Zook place.” Emma struggled to catch her breath as she brushed her palm against a sweaty forehead. “Hard to keep focused with him on the other



side of the net, *ya?*” Emma grinned before she got back in place a few feet to Anna’s right.

Anna tried to keep her eyes on the other team’s server, but her gaze kept shifting back to Jacob Hostetler. Like most of the men this time of year, Jacob’s face was bronzed by the summer sun, and his shoulders and arms looked like those of a man who’d been chopping wood since he was born—nineteen or twenty years ago, she guessed. If his tall and muscular physique wasn’t enough to set any girl’s heart to racing, he also had brown hair streaked with gold, his cropped bangs resting just above piercing blue eyes. When he looked at her, tiny dimples formed on either side of a flawless mouth.

She forced herself to look away from his perfectness and watched the volleyball coming in her direction. “Got it!” She wasn’t as tall as most of the players on the team, so she had to jump really high to slam the ball over the net. And slam it she did—right into the side of Jacob’s face.

“Are you okay?” She peered through the net. One side of Jacob’s face was bright red. But he waved her off.

“*Ya, ya.* I’m fine.”

The game went on for another forty-five minutes before Emma’s *mamm* set refreshments on a nearby picnic table. Emma looped her arm through Anna’s as they walked to the table, leaning over to whisper in her ear again. “Well, he’s a looker, but have you ever seen a worse volleyball player in your life?”

Anna had been thinking the same thing. If Jacob did happen to make contact with the ball, it went flying wildly out of bounds every time. “Maybe they didn’t play volleyball where he comes from.” She paused. “Where does he come from? Do you know?”

“Somewhere in Ohio. Middlefield, I think.”

Emma was tall with auburn hair, bright green eyes, and a figure with exactly the right amount of curves. She could have her pick of any guy in Paradise, Pennsylvania. Anna wondered if Jacob would add himself to Emma’s list of suitors. Would he be the one Emma finally latched onto? Both Emma and Anna would be nineteen in February, so they were looking for that special someone.

Although Anna didn’t have a single prospect on the horizon.

Once everyone was gathered around the table, they all bowed their heads for a silent prayer, then dug into the chips, dips, cookies, and punch. Anna was thankful for the shade of the tree above them and the gentle breeze. It was fiercely hot for June.

“*Danki* for inviting me today.” Jacob reached for a chip as he glanced around at the seven other people snacking. His voice was deep even though he spoke softly, the hint of a blush in his cheeks.

Anna knew that pride was a sin, that looks were not supposed to be important, but this fellow had been abundantly blessed just the same. Apparently Anna herself had not. Otherwise, surely at least one member of their district would have wanted to date her.

Ben Raber introduced everyone and spoke up on behalf of the group. “*Gut* to have you.” He paused as he reached for a cookie. “So tell us about you. About your family.”

Anna held her breath as she waited for Jacob to answer, assuming he probably had a perfect family with wonderful parents and a herd of brothers and sisters. Doubtful that both his parents had been killed in a buggy accident when he was three and that he’d been raised by his grandparents, as she had.

“It’s *mei mamm* and *daed*, and I have two *schweschdere* and two *brieder*.”

*Of course you do.* Anna took a large bite out of a chocolate chip cookie.

“And one of *mei schweschiere* is named Anna,” Jacob added, winking at her. “But we call her Anna Mae.”

Anna felt sure the earth was shifting beneath her feet, but with her cheeks packed with cookie, all she could do was attempt to smile and nod. She didn’t recall ever feeling so weak in the knees.

A short while later Anna helped Emma and her mother clean up while the older males—those in their *rumschpringe*—went to the barn and the two younger children went home.

“I think the new fellow took a liking to Anna.” Emma smiled as she handed her mother an empty bowl.

“I’m not surprised.” Sarah Lapp put the bowl in the sink as she turned to Anna. “You’re a beautiful young woman.”

*Compared to your dochder? Are you kidding me?* Anna forced a smile, knowing both Emma and her mother were mistaken, but proud of the fact that she could honestly say she’d never been jealous of Emma. Her best friend was as beautiful on the inside as she was on the outside, and she’d never been anything but wonderful to Anna. “But you’re wrong,” she said to Emma after her mother had excused herself.

“Hmm. We’ll see.” Emma giggled.



Jacob listened to Ben Raber and Rubin Fisher talking about what a hard winter they’d had last year, and he nodded when the conversation seemed to call for it, but all he could think about was what might be waiting for him at home. Playing volleyball had been a great distraction—even though he was lousy at it. Spending a few

hours with people his age who didn't know about his past almost made him feel like a normal person again, and it was nice to have a Saturday off from work. But reality loomed about six miles down the road, and he didn't think that moving would fix anything. They were a messed-up family, and geography wasn't going to change that.

Despite his worries, Jacob's ears perked up when he heard Ben mention Anna Byler. Watching her through the volleyball net had been the highlight of the day. Several ringlets of light brown hair had fallen from beneath her *kapp* during the games, enough to make him wonder if she had long wavy curls that cascaded to her waist when it wasn't wound in a bun beneath her prayer covering. He'd tried to hold her gaze for more than a few seconds, but she'd kept pulling her deep brown eyes away from his. She was by far the prettiest girl there.

"What?" Jacob interrupted Ben, who by now had turned the conversation to fishing. "What did you say before about Anna Byler?"

Ben grinned. "I said I think Anna gets prettier every time I see her." He paused and scratched his chin. "But I also said it's too bad she's undateable."

Jacob leaned back against the wall of the barn and looped his thumbs beneath his suspenders. "What do you mean, undateable?" *If anyone's not fit to date, it's me.*

Rubin chuckled as he sat down on a square bale of hay. "I thought I saw you giving Anna the eye." He shook his head. "Don't even waste your time. I don't think that girl has been on one date." He looked at Ben. "Do you think anyone has ever even taken her home from a singing?"

Ben shook his head from where he was standing a few feet away. "*Nee.*"

Jacob frowned, wondering what could be so wrong with her.

"It's her grandfather." Ben pulled a cigar from his pocket and ran it beneath his nose, breathing in the aroma. "She lives with her grandparents, and no one will go near her because of him." He lit the cigar, took a few puffs, then passed it to Rubin. "Anna's *daadi* had been a minister for years, and he was a scary man in that role. Last October he became bishop, and it's gotten worse. He's changing everything around here, and not for the *gut*."

Jacob shook his head when Rubin passed the cigar to him. People in his district didn't smoke. "Is this allowed?" He nodded toward Rubin as Rubin took another puff.

"*Ach*, it used to be." Rubin gave the cigar back to Ben. "The men have always gathered in the barn, especially after a meal, to share stories and smoke cigars. But Bishop Byler put an end to all smoking. And cell phones. And a whole bunch of other stuff."

Jacob automatically reached for the cell phone in his pocket, glad that it hadn't rung since yesterday. He held it up. "Guess I better get rid of this." That would give him a good excuse to distance himself a little more from his past. Without the cell phone, no one could find him.

"We had a strict bishop in Ohio too." Jacob paused, reaching for the cigar, then coughed after he took a puff. "How bad can he be?"

Ben raised his eyebrows and laughed. "*Ach*, you'll see. He's as mean a man as I've ever known, and I bet he keeps Anna locked in her room half the time."

Jacob scowled. "What? I doubt that. And how'd he get to be bishop if he's so mean?"

"You know how it works—all done by the lot," Rubin said.

“And I’m guessing back when he was first nominated to be a deacon or minister, he must have had everyone tricked into believing he was a *gut* guy.”

Jacob knew exactly how it worked. A man must receive three nominations to be considered for a role as deacon or minister, then all candidates would walk into a room with hymnals laid out before them. One of the books contained a piece of paper with a scripture reading on it. Whoever picked that particular book was God’s chosen one to minister. The same process was used to pick a bishop. These were sacred callings.

“What about the deacons and ministers? Do they agree with him? In Ohio, some things were put to a vote before anything could be changed in the *Ordnung*.” Jacob took another drag from the cigar and coughed again, thinking he wouldn’t miss this particular ban.

“But that’s the problem,” Ben said. “Our *Ordnung* has never been changed, upgraded, or whatever you call it. Bishop Byler and the ministers and deacons are just enforcing what’s already in the *Ordnung*. Our parents say things have just been kind of overlooked for years, but now Bishop Byler is taking everything back to the old ways.”

“Do your parents agree with him?”

“Not really. But no one wants to stand up to him and face being shunned—or even if not shunned, shamed.” Rubin stubbed out the cigar and put it back in his pocket.

Jacob pushed back the rim of his straw hat. “That doesn’t sound *mean*, just strict.”

Ben chuckled. “*Ach*, well . . . then you go right on over there and ask Anna Byler on a date or to a Sunday singing.”

“I never said I wanted to ask her out.” Jacob thought she was beautiful, and she seemed to have a playful spirit, something he found attractive in a woman. But he wasn’t planning on dating anyone, despite his mother’s encouragement to do so. “I doubt a man of God like the bishop would lock his granddaughter in her room or willingly be mean to anyone. He probably just doesn’t want his district changing with the times. Lots of bishops are that way.”

Rubin took off his hat and ran his forearm across his forehead. “Well, I’d sure ask her out if it weren’t for her grandfather. The bishop we used to have was strict, but nothing like this. Bishop Ebersol was a wise old man. He knew when it was okay to bend the rules. Bishop Byler doesn’t bend on anything, but we’re stuck with him until he dies.”



Anna kept one hand tightly over her mouth as tears streamed down her cheeks. She’d come to tell the men that Emma’s mother had dessert and coffee set out for them in the kitchen, but she’d stopped outside the barn door when she heard her name. *Is this really what they think of Daadi?*

She knew her grandfather was strict. Too strict. Her grandmother was proof of that, hiding prescriptions from her own husband because he preferred her treatment to come from the homeopathic doctor in town. And those herbal remedies had worked . . . at first. But when the symptoms grew worse, he had refused to back down, so *Mammi* had gone to Dr. Noah behind his back. Anna suspected she hid more than just medications. Maybe all married couples lived like that—keeping things from one another just to keep the peace. Anna would never want to do that.

But she also knew that her grandfather loved her and her grandmother and all the people in his district. *Stuck with him until he dies? These jerks don't know him as a person, don't know what his motivations are.* The only one who seemed to get it—maybe—was the new guy, Jacob. Trembling, she kept her hand over her mouth and listened.

“The biggest thing folks are upset about is not being able to go to Dr. Noah’s clinic.”

Anna leaned an ear closer and recognized Rubin as the one speaking.

“Noah Stoltzfus was shunned by the community a really long time ago. He wrote a book or something.” Rubin paused. “Anyway, he came back and wanted to make up for the way he’d acted by opening a clinic. He’d gotten him a doctoring degree, and he opened a clinic within buggy distance for most of the Amish folks here. It was his way of giving back to the community, he used to say. And his wife, Carley, used to work at the front desk. *Gut* people and related to some of the families here in our district. At first our old bishop—Bishop Ebersol—wouldn’t let anyone go to Dr. Noah’s clinic, but eventually he gave in because he knew it was the best thing for the community. The hospital is too far to reach by buggy. Most of us could get to Dr. Noah’s clinic by buggy, and lots of times he drove to our *haus* if it was an emergency.”

“Not anymore.” Anna heard Ben jump in. “Almost all of Dr. Noah’s patients were Amish. I heard he might even close down his clinic now. A real shame.” He paused, and Anna could hear rustling, as if someone had stood up or moved around. “And I know it’s Bishop Byler’s fault that Lizzie Miller died a couple of months ago. Sarah Jane begged Bishop Byler to let Dr. Noah treat her step-mother, saying the distance to Lancaster was too far for the old



woman, even by car. I was young when Lizzie's husband died, but Jonas was somewhat of a legend around here, and I doubt he'd be too happy that Bishop Byler practically killed his wife."

Anna gasped before she rushed into the barn, not even attempting to hide the tears rolling down her cheeks. "Liar! You're a liar, Ben!" Anna turned and pointed a finger at Rubin. "And I wouldn't go out with you, Rubin Fisher, if you were the last man on the planet!"

Ben moved toward her, but Anna backed up and held a palm out in front of her. "You're so wrong about him, about *Daadi!* About everything!" Anna knew for sure that her grandfather had nothing to do with Lizzie Miller's death. He'd gone to their house several times and offered to have a driver take Lizzie to the hospital. Anna and her grandparents had always included Lizzie in their prayers. This was a nasty rumor—one of many, Anna was sure.

"We're sorry, Anna." Rubin was walking closer to her too. "We didn't know you were out there listening." He raised one eyebrow. "Eavesdropping?"

"Shut up, Rubin! Just shut up!"

Then before she said things that went against her upbringing, she ran out the door, across the yard, and toward the road. Once she got to Black Horse Road, she crossed the street and ran as fast as she could through the field toward home. She hadn't gotten very far when she heard footsteps rustling in the high weeds behind her. She looked back to see Jacob Hostetler.

She turned around, tried to catch her breath, then yelled, "Don't follow me, Jacob. I want to be left alone."

When he kept on running toward her, Anna spun back around and ran faster until she couldn't hear Jacob behind her anymore.

Still in the field, she fell to her hands and knees and sobbed. She loved her *daadi*. She loved both her grandparents. They were the only parents she'd ever known. They'd been strict, no doubt, but she'd never felt unloved and had certainly never been locked in her room. *Jerks*.

She cried harder as anger at the men pressed down on her.

But even worse was having to admit to herself that some of what Ben and Rubin said was the truth.