

Plain Pursuit

A Daughters of the Promise Novel

BETH WISEMAN



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO BEIJING

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Scriptures taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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.

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To my mother, Pat Isley

Glossary

acb: oh

Aemen: Amen

baremlich: terrible

boppli: baby or babies

bruder: brother

daadi: grandfather

daed: dad

danki: thanks

die weibslait gwilde bis in die nacht: the women quilt long into the night

Deitschi wege: Dutch ways

dippy eggs: eggs cooked over easy

Englisch or *Englischer*: a non-Amish person

es dutt mir leed: I am sorry

fraa: wife

guder mariye: good morning

gut: good

batt: hard

baus: house

in lieb: in love

kaffi: coffee

Kapp: prayer covering or cap

katzbaarich: short-haired

kinner: child

maeds: girls

make wet: rain

mamm: mom

manmi: grandmother

mei: my

naerfich: nervous

onkel: uncle

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

outten the lights: turn off the lights

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

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

schnuppich: snooty

schtinkich: smelly

sell is es bescht vun allem: that is the best of all

streng meiding: strong shunning

ummieglich: impossible

wunderbaar: wonderful

ya: yes

LUNCH WITH HER EDITOR USUALLY MEANT ONE THING. Trouble.

Carley couldn't think of anything she'd done to warrant the meeting. Granted, she hadn't written any award-winning stories for the newspaper lately, but she'd held her own. Every deadline had been met. The stories had been newsworthy. But something was clearly on Matt's mind. His forehead creased with concern as they took their seats at a small deli near the office.

"They have good burgers here," Matt said, scanning the menu.

He was stalling.

"I'm just going to have a salad." Closing the menu, she folded her hands and waited. It was straight-up noon, and the harried waitress was taking orders several tables over. Carley was glad to see her favorite sandwich shop back in business and full of hungry patrons. It had taken months for Houston to recover from the devastating effects of the hurricane, but life had obviously returned to normal.

Normal. Such a loose term, she thought, waiting for Matt to drop whatever news had prompted the lunch.

Matt finally closed his menu and sighed. "Carley, you're a good reporter . . ." The lines above his bushy brows became more

prominent. She waited for the *but*. He cleared his throat instead, and she took the opportunity to remind him of her tenure.

"I've been with the paper four years. I'd like to think I've done a good job." He nodded his agreement, although his expression remained solemn. "What's wrong, Matt?"

She searched his face, her heart rate kicking up. Matt had been her editor at the paper since she started, and they'd been to lunch only twice. Once as a celebration of sorts when she won a prestigious award, and once when Matt felt an article she wrote had crossed the journalistic line.

She hadn't won any awards lately.

"Carley, you've got plenty of unused vacation. Why haven't you taken any?" His eyes cut to the jagged scar spanning three inches across her left forearm. Instinctively, her right hand covered the evidence of the event that had forever altered her life.

"I took two weeks off when Mom died." *Where is he going with this? It's been six months since the accident.*

"Carley," he grumbled, "that wasn't a vacation, and part of that time you were in the hospital yourself." He shook his head as the waitress approached.

"I'll have the grilled chicken salad," Carley said after Matt ordered his burger and fries. She immediately regretted her decision. What was the point? You couldn't live forever. She bet her mother would have loaded up with an extra helping of pie on Christmas Day if she'd known it was her last day on earth.

"No, wait. I change my mind. I'll have a burger and fries too."

"Good girl," Matt said after the waitress scurried away. "You're too thin as it is."

“Now what were you saying, Matt?” She’d rather get this over with and salvage her appetite.

“I want you to take some vacation time.”

Although his tone left little room for argument, she quickly countered. “I don’t need a vacation.”

“If you don’t see it, then I’ll just come out and say it: you aren’t at the top of your game. You’re a far cry from it, Carley. Your stories lack the zing they used to have. The facts are there, but they’re lacking . . . What’s the word I’m looking for?”

“I have no idea.” She folded her arms across her chest.

“Emotional capacity,” he continued. “You used to weave emotion into your stories—just enough to spruce up the article.” He shrugged, and she saw the pity in his eyes as they locked with hers. “The intensity of your writing just isn’t there anymore.”

“I—I didn’t realize that.” She fought the sudden tremor in her voice. “I’ll work harder.”

When it appeared Matt was going to argue, she dug deep for the truth. “I need to work, Matt. It’s all I have.”

She dropped her gaze, hating the vulnerability she knew her expression revealed. *Matt has to understand. I can’t take any time off. What would I do?* Until six months ago, her leisure time had been divided among her mother, her boyfriend, and her friends. Now her mom was gone, and Dalton had broken off their three-year relationship. And after one too many declines, her few girlfriends quit asking her to participate in their activities.

She had nothing but work.

“That’s what I mean, Carley,” Matt urged. “You are a beautiful woman with no relationships or interests outside of work.”

You're slowly withdrawing from life, and it's noticeable in your writing." He leaned over the table. "Carley, on a personal note, we're worried about you."

"Who is *we*?" She knew the answer. "Katrina?"

Her reporting rival had bumped up a notch to assistant editor awhile back and now latched onto every opportunity to remind Carley of her position.

"Yes, Katrina and I discussed it, Carley, but—"

"She doesn't like me, Matt."

Right away she realized the comment sounded childish.

"Not true." Matt shook his head and pushed an envelope in Carley's direction. "This is a month's vacation pay. You've accumulated a lot more than that. Take a month off, Carley. Come back refreshed. You should have taken more time off after the accident."

Carley peered at the envelope on the table as the waitress returned with their lunches and offers of ketchup and extra napkins. "I'm not taking a vacation, Matt. Why should I be forced to use my time right now?"

"Because you wouldn't like the alternative." He wrapped his mouth around his burger.

Carley wasn't hungry for anything except Katrina Peighton's hide. This was her doing, not Matt's.

"So let me get this straight. Either I go on vacation or I'm fired?"

"Don't look at it that way, Carley," Matt said between bites. "Take advantage of this. I would."

Her thoughts churned. *What will I do? Sit around my big empty house?*

No. Too much time to think.

She bargained. "I'll take a week off."

"A month, Carley. We will welcome you back with open arms in one month."

By the end of the meal, she'd reluctantly accepted the envelope. Not that she had any choice in the matter. Matt made it quite clear her vacation started directly after lunch.