

*L*OVE
BEARS ALL
*T*HINGS

ALSO BY BETH WISEMAN

THE AMISH SECRETS NOVELS

Her Brother's Keeper

THE DAUGHTERS OF THE PROMISE NOVELS

Plain Perfect

Plain Pursuit

Plain Promise

Plain Paradise

Plain Proposal

Plain Peace

THE LAND OF CANAAN NOVELS

Seek Me with All Your Heart

The Wonder of Your Love

His Love Endures Forever

OTHER NOVELS

Need You Now

The House That Love Built

The Promise

LOVE
BEARS ALL
THINGS

AN AMISH SECRETS NOVEL

BETH
WISEMAN



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH GLOSSARY



ab im kopp—off in the head; crazy

ach—oh

aenti—aunt

boppli—baby or babies

bruder—brother

daed—dad

danki—thank you

die Botschaft—an Amish newspaper; translated, it means “the Message”

Englisch—a non-Amish person

fraa—wife

gut—good

haus—house

kapp—prayer covering or cap

kinner—children

maedel—girl

mamm—mom

PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH GLOSSARY

mei—my

mudder—mother

nee—no

onkel—uncle

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

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

sohn—son

Wie bischt—How are you? or Hi there.

ya—yes

One



Charlotte leaned her head against the high-back chair in Dr. Levin's office. She closed her eyes, breathed in the familiar scent of lavender, and forced herself to relax the way Dr. Levin had taught her. She wondered why relaxation should take so much effort.

"Tell me again about this vision you keep having." Maureen Levin was good at peeling back the layers of Charlotte's psyche, and most of the counseling sessions had been helpful. But one thing continued to niggle at Charlotte. She slowly exhaled, then opened her eyes.

"I've told you everything I can remember. And it's not really a vision. More like a secret. A secret that I'm hiding from myself." She shrugged. "Maybe I dreamed it and just can't shake the images."

"Do you think you dreamed it?" Dr. Levin took off

a pair of red reading glasses and rested her hands on a stack of files.

“No. But every time I try to focus on it, I get a headache and my chest hurts.”

Dr. Levin gazed across her desk at Charlotte. “Do you think the child in the vision is a younger version of yourself?”

Charlotte had already put herself through a vigorous round of diagnostics without success. “Maybe.”

“What do you think younger Charlotte may be trying to tell you?”

Sighing, Charlotte searched her mind, trying to bring forth something that might help her understand why a midnight trip to the store for ice cream had left her with such an unsettled, anxious feeling the past few weeks. She’d already told Dr. Levin all this, but she suspected her therapist was hoping she’d recall something else by retelling it. “I was still upset about the breakup with Ryan, and I couldn’t sleep, so I went to get some ice cream.” She paused as the weight of the vision, memory—whatever it was—settled into her chest, sending waves of thunder to her temples. “I saw the little girl and the woman.”

“And you said the woman resembled your mother?”

Charlotte nodded. “Yeah. Maybe. From what I remember of her.” She cringed, wanting to stop but knowing Dr. Levin would keep pushing. “I just don’t know if remembering is good. Maybe I should work at forgetting instead.”

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Dr. Levin put her glasses back on and stared down at a yellow pad in her lap. “You told me a couple of weeks ago that this woman and child at the store reminded you of something, but that you didn’t know what. You also said that the woman was wearing a dark green dress and the little girl was wearing a purple dress, correct?”

Charlotte took another deep breath. “I hate the color purple.” Her bottom lip trembled as a chill ran up her spine.

Dr. Levin lifted her eyes to Charlotte’s. “This is the first time you’ve mentioned this, that you dislike the color purple. Perhaps you associate that color with something unpleasant that happened when you were young, and seeing those people triggered a memory.”

“I think I would like to stuff that memory back where it came from if it’s going to cause me this much aggravation.”

“What upsets you more, the recollection itself or the frustration that you can’t remember the details?”

Charlotte wanted to curse Ryan for setting up these sessions with his aunt, but she had to admit she liked Dr. Levin. A lot more than she liked Ryan these days. “Both,” she finally said. “It scares me that something I don’t even remember has this kind of effect on me.”

“Charlotte, you’ve been through a lot. Your brother’s suicide, the breakup with Ryan, and . . . didn’t you say money was an issue right now?”

Charlotte felt her cheeks flush, wishing she hadn’t

mentioned her finances during a prior visit. “I lost some clients, and several are behind paying me. But I feel like it will get better soon.”

“I know that your situation with Ryan has changed, but he offered to keep paying for you to come see me weekly.” Dr. Levin was writing on the pad in her lap. Charlotte wondered what level of crazy Dr. Levin had assigned her. “And I hope you know, his being my nephew has no bearing on anything,” she added without looking up.

“I know.” Charlotte believed her, but she didn’t want Ryan’s charity. She’d already decided that this would be her last session, but she nodded anyway. Dr. Levin had served her purpose. She’d helped Charlotte work through some straggling issues about her childhood and her brother’s death. This recent and unexpected recollection had come out of nowhere, and Charlotte hoped it would scurry back to where it came from soon. “I remember something else.” Charlotte’s voice hitched in her throat as she recalled another detail. “They—the lady and the girl—were barefoot.”

Dr. Levin continued to write for a few moments before she looked up at Charlotte. “Okay. To summarize, you’ve said that you ran into a woman and child while on a random trip to the convenience store for ice cream. The woman looked like your mother, from what you can recall, and she was wearing a dark green dress. The little girl had on a purple dress with white trim. And

they weren't wearing any shoes." Dr. Levin glanced at her pad. "And this scene was somehow familiar to you and has left you feeling unsettled since then."

"We've been through all this," Charlotte said softly. "Maybe it means nothing. It's just a vague memory or something that isn't pertinent to my life."

Dr. Levin stared long and hard at Charlotte, even though her eyes shown with a kindness Charlotte had noticed on her first visit. "Do you believe that?"

Not for a minute. She thought about the promise she'd made to herself—and God—awhile back. That she would never tell another lie. But as much as she'd meant to keep that promise, she looked directly at Dr. Levin and said, "Yes, I do." Maybe if she convinced herself that the memory was unimportant, that would trump a potential lie.

Dr. Levin locked eyes with Charlotte, and in that moment, she could see the resemblance between her and Ryan. Those seemingly transparent, grayish-blue eyes that blazed the distance between two people, searching, wondering, trying to understand Charlotte.

"You told me you spent time with the Amish people in Pennsylvania not too long ago." Dr. Levin lightly tapped her pen against the pad of paper. "Don't the Amish people go barefoot a lot? Have you associated this recollection with your time in Pennsylvania in any way?"

Charlotte let the thought swim around for a few moments. "No."

Not until now.



Following a Sonic drive-through lunch, Charlotte couldn't shrug the feeling that maybe her session with Dr. Levin had peeled back another layer. She'd blocked out so many things about her parents and her time in foster care. In her effort to be normal, maybe she'd dreamed up this woman and child in Amish clothes as a way of self-comfort—a way to live the peaceful life she'd never had, where a loving mother and daughter step out for ice cream. *But at midnight?*

She slurped the last of her chocolate shake as she walked the long corridor to her apartment, slowing her steps when she noticed an envelope taped to the door. It was the third one this month. The first two were warnings that her rent was past due, which she was acutely aware of. She stuffed it in her purse and hurried back to her mailbox downstairs, disappointed that the only thing inside was an electric bill. On her way back up to her apartment, she called the client she'd done the big editing project for—the lady who owed Charlotte the most. No answer—again.

She'd barely opened her front door when Buddy made his way across the living room and squatted on all fours next to her. "Hi, baby." She scratched the Chihuahua's ears as she slipped out of her flip-flops, tossing her purse

on the couch. Then she padded across the carpet to her bedroom, returning with a shoe box tucked under one arm. She set it right inside the entryway and stared at it on the floor.

After a few moments, she held her left hand at arm's length and admired the two-carat tennis bracelet Ryan had given her. It would be the last time she'd see the gorgeous piece of jewelry. A token of his love for her, he'd said.

Recoiling her hand, she unhooked the latch and put the bracelet in the shiny white container it had come in, then placed it into the box with Ryan's other things—a striped tie and three dollars in change he'd left on her kitchen counter.

I will not cry. I will not cry. I will not cry.

Buddy laid his head on one of Charlotte's bare feet. Her sweet pup's droopy eyes stared up at her as his tongue swept gently across her toes. Even her faithful companion was sad.

Her cell phone rang three times before she scooped Buddy into her arms and forced herself to walk across the living room. Maybe Ryan was calling to say he wasn't coming over after all. Charlotte took her cell phone out of her purse, but when she saw the caller ID, she just stared at the number. *Hannah.*

As much as she loved Hannah and her family, just hearing her Amish friend's voice would bring a river of tears, and now was not the time for crying. She wanted

Ryan to see that her life would go on just fine without him. *Which, of course, it wouldn't.* Charlotte didn't think her eyes had been dry for more than an hour over the past week.

She eyed her phone and watched it vibrate with a new voice mail. Hannah rarely called. Cell phones in Amish families were mostly for emergencies—at least that's the way it was supposed to be. She put a hand to her chest and sucked in a big gulp of air when there was a knock at the door. *God, give me strength.* She'd been praying, but the Lord must have deemed her unworthy of a life with Ryan.

Charlotte set Buddy on the couch and shuffled across the living room, stopping short of the front door. She released her breath, picked up the small box, and reached for the doorknob.

As she stared at the man she'd hoped to marry someday, she fought the urge to rush into his arms and beg for forgiveness. Again. But somewhere deep in her soul, she knew that it was over between them. Everything that could be said had been said, and there was no recovering what they'd once had. But it was a reality she didn't want to face, so she clung to the tiniest bit of hope in an effort to stay sane.

Ryan looked past Charlotte when Buddy scurried across the floor toward them. "Hey, Buddy." He picked up the dog as a smile lit his face. It wasn't so long ago that Ryan greeted her with the same enthusiasm. He nuzzled

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Buddy for a few moments before he set him down, then he found Charlotte's gaze and held it for a long while before he said, "Did you find a letter from the landlord taped to your door?"

"Um . . ." She turned toward the couch where her purse was. "Yeah, just a few minutes ago, but I haven't opened it yet. I know I'm late on my rent. I've already gotten two notices, but I'm waiting on a check."

Ryan held his position just inside the front door as he sighed. "You've been evicted, Charlotte."

"What?" she answered in a squeaky voice, her heart rate soaring.

"What did you think would happen if you didn't pay your rent or communicate with the apartment manager?" He spoke in a tone that made Charlotte feel like a child. "They've tried to call you and also serve you with papers twice, and that's all that's required by law. And since I'm listed as your emergency contact, they were knocking at my door this afternoon. I just happened to be working from home today."

"They probably called the number for my landline, the one I gave them when I moved in. But I don't have it anymore. I just have my cell phone." She lowered her eyes as a knot built in her throat. "I thought I had more time, and—"

"Charlotte, I want only good things for you, but you need to figure out a way to get off this financial hamster wheel you've been riding." He took a deep breath and let

it out slowly. "As much as I'd like to help you, I can't this time."

"I'll be okay. Really." She blinked back tears and lifted her chin as she tried to maintain a tiny bit of pride. "When my checks finally arrive, I'll be fine." She picked up the box with Ryan's things and held it out, trying hard to smile, but trying even harder not to cry.

"I told you I don't really need that stuff." He scooped Buddy into his arms again and scratched behind the dog's ears, not even looking at Charlotte, as if shattering her life had no lasting effect on him.

Charlotte shrugged. "Well, what am I going to do with a tie?" She pushed the box at him until he finally put Buddy down and took it. "The bracelet's in there too."

"Charlotte . . ." Ryan sighed and finally looked her in the eye. "It doesn't have to be this way. We were friends for a long time before this. I still want you in my life."

"Are you kidding me?" She regretted the outburst right away. Her plan had been not to react, no matter what, to remain detached. But tears gathered in the corners of her eyes, and as she attempted to blink them away, she added, "I don't want to be your *friend*."

Ryan lifted the lid from the box, pulled out the small white jewelry box, and eyed the bracelet. "I told you to keep this. If you don't want to wear it, you should sell it."

Charlotte bit her bottom lip and shook her head, even though she suspected the bracelet would bring in enough money to catch her up on rent. It didn't feel right.

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Ryan sighed again as he snapped the white box closed and put everything back as it was, tucking the shoe box under his arm. He eyed the dog at his feet, and Charlotte wondered who Ryan was going to miss the most—her or Buddy. Ryan probably deserved joint custody of Buddy. They'd picked him out at the shelter together, and Ryan loved the dog as much as Charlotte did. Ryan had paid for all of Buddy's shots and medications at the vet's office. She wished he didn't know her financial situation. It just added another layer of humiliation.

"Anyway, it doesn't have to be like this," he repeated, ignoring her comment about not wanting to be just friends.

"How should it be, Ryan?" She bit her bottom lip again as she recalled the scene in his living room two weeks ago; her screaming as he tried to defend himself. Charlotte knew she'd gone too far when she heaved a candy bowl at the fireplace, shattering it to pieces while Hershey's kisses rolled across the floor amid shards of glass.

"I don't know how it should be, honestly. I just know that I want you in my life in some capacity." He said the words as if he were giving a presentation for work.

"Just go," she said as a tear slipped down her cheek. *Plan foiled.* This was not how she wanted to present herself, as the pitiful girl who got dumped, whose heart was broken. But that's exactly who she was, and she was starting to think that's who she'd always be. The girl with a

broken heart who was abused as a child, whose brother had killed himself, whose parents were MIA—and now the one man she'd pinned all her hopes and dreams on had kicked her to the curb.

He turned to leave but hadn't gotten far when Charlotte said, "Ryan?" He slowly turned around.

Don't do it. Stay quiet. Maintain a little dignity.

"Is there any . . . any way that . . ." The dam broke, and tears poured down her face. ". . . that maybe we could try . . . to . . ." She held her breath, feeling a sliver of optimism when Ryan's eyes filled with tears too. That should have made her happy, to see him hurting. But it didn't.

He shook his head, and without saying anything, he turned and walked away.

Charlotte closed the door and stared at it, the scent of Ryan's cologne lingering. After a few moments, she shuffled back across the living room and threw herself onto the couch so she could continue her meltdown. But her eyes went back to the door, where Buddy was still standing, staring the same way Charlotte had.

"He's not coming back, Buddy," she said softly as she straightened her dog's favorite blue blanket, patting it until she finally got his attention. With his head hung and his tail between his legs, Buddy made his way to her. Even though she and Ryan hadn't lived together, he'd been at her house a lot. As she stroked Buddy's back, she wondered how much an animal felt such a loss. "It's my

fault, not yours,” she said as she continued to love on him. *Apparently, I have trust issues.*

After a few minutes, she dragged herself off the couch, picked up her cell phone from the kitchen bar, and pushed the voice mail button. When she heard Hannah’s voice, more tears came. She hadn’t told her friend about the breakup yet, and she longed for the comfort her Amish family would offer her. Maybe her self-analysis about the woman and little girl had been correct after all.

But when Charlotte heard Hannah sniffle, she stifled her own cries to listen to the message. “Jacob left. He left us. He doesn’t want to be Amish.” *What?* There was a long pause. “*Mamm* is frantic. We found a note two days ago, but we thought he’d be back. We haven’t heard anything and now we’re really worried. Why would he do this? He and Annie were supposed to get married in the fall.” Hannah sniffled again. “Please call me when you can.”

Charlotte hit redial on the phone and walked to the couch to sit by Buddy, wondering why life had a way of throwing curve balls that plunked you in the face when you least expected it.

“Hannah, it’s me. I got your message. What in the world do you think made Jacob leave?” Charlotte slouched into the white cushions next to Buddy. “Were he and Annie fighting?”

“*Nee*. Annie says they weren’t squabbling or anything.” Hannah exhaled. “*Mamm* went to Annie’s house

this morning and showed her the letter. Jacob didn't really give a reason, just that he couldn't stay in Lancaster County. He asked everyone to forgive his choice, and he said to tell Annie that he loves her—and us—very much. But he didn't even say where he was going."

"I can't believe he left." Charlotte wasn't as surprised as she let on, recalling her time in Lancaster County at the end of last year. Jacob had always been much more worldly than the others. He loved anything to do with space and the universe, and he even owned a telescope. He'd always been preoccupied with things happening outside of their community. And if Charlotte's experiences were any example, men were generally fickle, unsure of what they wanted. But she knew enough about the Amish to know that leaving the community was rare. Most kids stayed, even after having a chance to explore the outside world through their *rumschpringe*, which begins at sixteen. Jacob wasn't even eighteen yet.

"I bet he'll come back," Charlotte offered, trying to stay afloat amid her own troubles. She lay back on the couch next to Buddy, crossed one ankle over the other, and settled her head against the armrest of the couch. Occasionally she glanced toward the front door, willing Ryan to return, to say he'd made a horrible mistake, that he loved her no matter what.

"I don't know, Charlotte. Jacob has always been . . . different. *Mamm* has always worried this might happen someday. She actually cried joyful tears when she found

out Jacob wanted to marry Annie. She took that as a sure sign that Jacob wouldn't leave. But *Mamm* and *Daed* are so upset now that he's gone. We all are. But we have to believe that Jacob will think about what he's doing and choose to come back. We hope he will make that choice sooner instead of later, but he will always be welcome home."

Home. Charlotte wondered where her home was going to be. She probably only had until the end of the month to be out of her apartment. Her mind was swirling, and she was having trouble staying focused on the conversation, but she wanted to be reassuring to her friend.

"Maybe Jacob just needs some time away from everyone to think about things." Charlotte wasn't sure Jacob had ever been out of Lancaster County. "Then he'll be back."

Hannah's family would forgive Jacob for most anything. That was the Amish way. Charlotte recalled all the lies she'd told Hannah and her family a few months ago, all in an attempt to find out why her only brother had committed suicide in their Amish community. Hannah, her mother Lena, and Jacob had forgiven Charlotte, but she wasn't sure about Hannah's father. Amos was a quiet man, but Charlotte could still recall the anger etched across the older man's face when he'd learned the truth.

Following her cancer diagnosis, Lena had needed chemo at MD Anderson, and she'd stayed with Charlotte in Houston. They'd formed a bond that Charlotte had

never known with her own mother, and Amos always sent his regards to Charlotte. But Charlotte wasn't sure if she'd ever be completely back in Amos's good graces.

Looking back, she was still surprised that it took Hannah and her family as long as it did to figure out that Charlotte wasn't really their cousin from Beeville, that she wasn't even Amish. But Charlotte would have eventually told them. The lies had been suffocating her. She had a lot of memories from her time in Lancaster County—good and bad. But it was the good ones she held tightly to, recalling them when she needed to feel loved. Like now. She sniffled and quietly blew her nose.

“What's wrong, Charlotte? You sound like you're crying.” Hannah said it with such tenderness that moisture pooled in Charlotte's eyes. She squeezed her eyes closed and allowed the tears to spill down her cheeks.

“You have enough to worry about with Jacob and—” Her voice cracked before she could finish.

“Tell me. What is it?” Hannah's sweet voice only made Charlotte cry harder.

“Ryan broke up with me.”

There was a long silence before Hannah responded. “I'm so sorry. What happened?”

Charlotte wiped her eyes and sat up, moving to sit Indian style. “It's a long story, but I thought Ryan was cheating on me with a woman named Shelley, someone he works with. I became so obsessed about it that I, uh . . . checked his text messages.” She squeezed her eyes closed

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again for a few moments. “He caught me, and things just sort of blew up.” Sniffing, she decided not to mention the candy bowl. “As it turns out, he wasn’t involved with her in a romantic way. I’m ashamed that I stooped to that level, to check his messages. And now I’m just sad.”

Sad was an understatement. She thought about Ethan and wondered how low he must have felt to think that suicide was his only option. Charlotte was a survivor and would never do anything to hurt herself, but she wondered why God had shown her how true love could feel, only to take it away from her.

“I can hear how much you’re hurting, Charlotte. But you mustn’t feel shame. We all do things we regret, but God forgives us, and to hold on to shame doesn’t honor God. We love you and will be praying for your heart to heal.”

Hannah always helped Charlotte to see things from a spiritual perspective, even at a time when her own family is in crisis. “Thank you. I love all of you too.” She reached for the box of tissues as Buddy snored on the couch next to her. She dabbed at her eyes, wondering how she was going to get enough money for a deposit on another apartment. She didn’t have any blood relatives to turn to. She’d gotten detached from most of her girlfriends since she’d been spending so much time with Ryan. And even though sadness had taken hold of her, fear of being homeless was starting to take a front seat. No one but Ryan and Dr. Levin knew about her financial troubles.

She was going to be truthful with Hannah, but she wasn't up to sharing the entire truth right now.

She squeezed her eyes closed and grimaced. "I'm having a little trouble with some of my clients paying me. I'm going to move at the end of the month, hopefully somewhere a little cheaper." She took a deep breath and blew it out slowly. "And it's my fault too. I've lost my focus on work during this whole breakup with Ryan."

Hannah waited to respond, then said, "You should move here."

"Huh?"

"You've said that the nature of your job will let you work from anywhere, and you own a house free and clear right here in Lancaster County."

The house. Ethan's house that he'd left to her. "Yeah, I own a house that doesn't have electricity."

Hannah chuckled. "Ya, well . . . it's not so bad. You managed while you were staying with us before. But you could always have electricity installed."

That takes money. "And I don't know if I could live there, Hannah. I mean, because that's where Ethan lived, and—"

"I understand."

"But if I could get it sold, that would certainly help my financial situation. Didn't you say that Isaac was done with all the repairs and painting?" Charlotte had barely squeaked out the money for that, and she suspected

Hannah's fiancé hadn't charged her for his time, just the supplies. "If so, I should probably get it listed to sell."

"Ya. He's done." Hannah huffed. "It would sure be fun if you lived nearby."

Charlotte let the thought wander around in her head, but it wasn't long before the woman and little girl flashed in her mind again. She wondered if her brother had felt drawn to Amish country because of some distant memory. She wished she could ask him. But if anyone might know, it would be Hannah, since her friend had been engaged to her brother before he died.

"Hannah, I'm so sorry to be dumping my problems on you while all this is going on with Jacob, but I need to ask you something, then I'll let you go."

"Ya, okay. What is it?"

Charlotte took a deep breath. "I know Ethan talked to you about our childhood and the couple of years we both spent in foster care, but did he ever mention anything . . ." Charlotte paused. She wasn't even sure how to explain this odd recollection she seemed to be having.

"Did he mention what?"

Charlotte did her best to explain to Hannah, then shrugged. "If the woman and the little girl were dressed like the Amish, it seems odd that I'd see myself as the child and my mother as the adult. My counselor suggested that, but I don't know. And if I was going to have some weird memory pop up like that, you'd think it would have happened last time I was in Amish country."

She shook her head. “I’m just going to try not to think about it. I have enough on my plate.”

“Did the woman or child have on a *kapp*?”

Charlotte’s heart pounded as her head started to hurt. Dr. Levin hadn’t thought to ask that question. She brought a hand to her chest. “The woman and little girl at the convenience store didn’t have on any type of prayer covering.” Her heart seemed to skip a beat as a memory flashed from somewhere deep in her mind. “But when I see a woman and child in my head, the woman in the green dress *does* have a *kapp* on. What does that mean?” Her voice was louder than normal as she tried to remember more. “I don’t know. But if you can’t move here, maybe a visit here will help you recall whatever it is that’s bothering you.”

“Hannah, I’d love nothing more than to come for a visit, but now probably isn’t the best time, with Jacob having left. And I need to save all of my money to get moved.” *Assuming any comes in the mail.* Charlotte dug in her purse for the envelope that had been taped to her door. She ripped it open, scanned through some legal stuff, and landed on the part where she had to be out by the end of the month. In two and a half weeks.

She lifted herself off the couch and walked to the mirror in the entryway of her apartment—dark circles under swollen eyes, flushed cheeks from crying, and hair that hadn’t seen a brush in a while. “Why is it that I keep

trying to live a good life, and God keeps challenging me at every turn?”

“Sweet Charlotte. I know it’s hard to understand God’s will, and even harder to accept it sometimes. After Ethan died, I was sure I would never be happy again. But I am happy with Isaac, very happy. And you will find happiness too. I’m sorry about you and Ryan, and I’m sorry you feel like you must move. But I’m also feeling selfish, too, about the possibility that maybe you could live here.”

“I’ll think about it.” In truth, Charlotte wasn’t ready to be that far away from Ryan, just in case he changed his mind. “Right now, I just hope you hear from Jacob.”

“Ya, I hope so. Annie is beside herself distraught. She cried the whole time *Mamm* was at her house. *Daed* isn’t saying much, but you know how quiet he is most of the time.”

Charlotte agreed. Again, she wondered if Hannah’s father had truly forgiven her.

After they’d ended the conversation, Charlotte took a long hot bath, then snuggled into her covers. Sleep was her only relief since there was no cure for a broken heart. Logically, she knew that time would heal. But at the moment, the pain seemed unbearable, so she tried to focus on Jacob, pondering how he could leave Annie and his family. Across the miles, Charlotte’s heart hurt for Annie, a young woman Charlotte had only met a couple of times during her stay in Lancaster County.

But her thoughts drifted away from Ryan, Jacob, Annie, and her financial issues, replaced by thoughts of the woman and child. She was almost asleep when she bolted up in bed and grabbed her chest. Gasping, she took deep breaths to calm herself as she recalled something else.

She'd heard squealing tires.