



*The
Timepiece*

New York Times BESTSELLING AUTHOR

BEVERLY
LEWIS

*The
Timepiece*



BEVERLY
LEWIS



BETHANYHOUSE

a division of Baker Publishing Group

Minneapolis, Minnesota

© 2019 by Beverly M. Lewis, Inc.

Published by Bethany House Publishers
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

ISBN 978-0-7642-3307-4 (trade paper)
ISBN 978-0-7642-3325-8 (cloth)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019942020

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, incidents, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to any person, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Cover design by Dan Thornberg, Design Source Creative Services
Art direction by Paul Higdon

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To
Jeanette Buckner,
encouraging reader-friend and prayer partner.

And
in fond memory of
Louis Hagel,
“Uncle Louie,”
watchmaker and longtime family friend.

Time ripens the substance of a life as the seasons
mellow and perfect its fruits. The best apples fall
latest and keep longest.

—Amos Bronson Alcott, *Table Talk*

Prologue

*I*t was the last day of July, a sweltering Friday evening, and I took my sweet time heading back from the meadow where I had been walking, trying to make sense of the day. A day like no other.

Out of nowhere, a young blue-eyed woman had shown up in her sleek red car at our farmhouse, declaring to be *Dat's* daughter. The shock of it still had my head spinning, but my heart was with dearest *Mamma*, wondering how she was holding up back at the house with my father and the *Englischer* named Adeline Pelham.

The neighbors' watchdog to the west of us had been barking so long and so loudly, the poor thing sounded nearly hoarse. What with that and a multitude of crickets chirruping in the background and birds calling high in the trees, I could scarcely make out what my younger brothers were saying as I approached the stable door. Inside, the four of them were freshening bedding straw for the mules and horses. Stepping closer, I leaned into the doorway and heard the voice of my youngest brother, eight-year-old Tommy.

“We’ve got us another sister, then?” he asked.

Thirteen-year-old Adam shook his head. “*Puh!* That fancy woman ain’t my sister!”

Calvin, eleven, shot back, “But she has a birth certificate and pictures to prove it.”

“You don’t have to remind us—I heard what Dat said,” Adam replied, sounding peeved.

“Boys.” I stepped inside, making myself clearly visible, the strong, sweet smell of fresh hay hitting my nose. “*Was is letz do?*”

“I’ll tell ya what’s wrong.” Fifteen-year-old Ernie, next oldest after me, leaned on his hay fork. “This whole sister thing’s a little farfetched, ain’t it?”

Tommy was nodding, wide-eyed, his broadfall trousers grubby with dust from the straw bedding. “And Mamma seemed real *ferhoodled*, to tell the truth,” he said.

“Well, if ya stop and think ’bout it,” I told them, “Adeline herself looked *ferhoodled*. I doubt such a fancy woman expected to discover she has an Amish father.” I paused and looked at my younger brothers, wishing to ease their confused astonishment, my heart full of love for them.

Ernie adjusted his straw hat. “Then I guess we’re all *ferhoodled*.”

My bare feet grimy from the unswept cement floor, I glanced out the stable window, toward the house. “Are Dat and Mamma still in the kitchen with her?” I asked.

“*Nee*,” Adam said as he scattered the new straw around the stall. “They’re over at Dat’s clock shop, prob’ly showing her round. A customer brought in a specialty clock to be repaired. It’s really somethin’—it has a miniature clock shop inside the working clock. There’s even a tiny clockmaker, holding a pocket watch.”

Calvin nodded. "You should go an' see it, Sylvie."

So many emotions were washing over me that I shivered. The last thing I wanted to do was look at clocks right now.

"Did ya come out to help, Sylvie?" Tommy asked, his eyes hopeful.

"I really oughta finish up some mending," I said, though I knew it was a poor excuse.

"What're ya doin' here, then?" Adam asked, his black suspenders dusty. "Eavesdroppin'?"

"S'pose so," I admitted, still worried about them. "Actually, I was wondering how you boys felt 'bout Adeline spending the night. You was all so quiet during supper with her . . . wasn't like ya."

"Honestly, I wouldn't have been as welcoming as Mamma." Calvin fluffed up the straw in the stall of our older driving horse, Lily.

"Mamma is awful nice," Ernie said, carrying water, then dumping it into the watering trough. "She didn't have to invite her."

"*Nee*, but Mamma's always kind," I replied. *By her very nature . . .*

"Adeline's stayin' just one night," Ernie said with a glance at Adam, who still wore a deep frown.

"I sure hope so!" Adam wiped his sweaty brow with his forearm.

"Me too," Calvin replied, saying out loud just what I was thinking.

I looked toward the clock showroom, where I sometimes enjoyed helping my clockmaker father with his many customers—Amish and English alike. Mamma was standing in the doorway now, and by her stance, it looked as if she was about to turn and leave Dat and Adeline alone to talk.

“How do ya think poor Mamma feels?” young Tommy asked quietly.

I shook my head. “Ach, can’t imagine.”

Then, walking out of the stable, I made a beeline for the house, running through the backyard, the grass still warm on my bare feet from the heat of the day. I half hoped I wouldn’t have to talk further to Adeline this evening. Her sudden arrival was overwhelming when I was still coming to grips with my father’s first marriage—until recently, something he’d kept secret for all the years since he’d come to Hickory Hollow as a seeker and met Mamma.

Oddly, it seemed Adeline’s mother had kept a secret of her own.

CHAPTER

One

Adeline Pelham was impressed by the row after row of beautiful clocks in Earnest Miller's showroom—a sight to behold. Clocks old and new and of all styles and woods were each set to chime a few seconds apart, according to Earnest. Despite his strange haircut and simple way of dress, the man was well-spoken. It was a mystery to her why he had ever decided to become Amish. She was also surprised at how talkative he was now—much more so than upon their first meeting that afternoon, when she had parked at the end of the driveway, near the family's roadside vegetable stand.

At present, Earnest was describing his woodworking equipment, a wide range of tools that included saws and lathes run by air compressors powered by a diesel engine.

No need for electricity? she thought, marveling at the variety of tools—from large to miniature—some of which she had never known existed. “Did you always want to do this?” she asked in the stillness of the narrow woodworking shop.

“Make clocks?” Earnest tugged on his wavy brown beard

and motioned for her to have a seat on the comfortable swivel chair near his workbench, which held a long, neat stack of tiger maple planks. Quickly, he pulled up another chair for himself. “I’ve always been curious about what made clocks tick.” He chuckled a little at his pun. “But no, making clocks wasn’t my plan. It was something I was fortunate enough to stumble onto . . . after I came here.”

She flinched. The significance of his words wasn’t lost on her. *After things ended with Mom, he means.*

“It’s been a *wunnerbaar-gut* profession,” he added.

She noticed again the way he spoke sometimes, slipping foreign words in here and there—half English, half something else she somewhat recognized. *Possibly a German dialect*, she thought, having taken two years of German in high school.

Earnest’s gaze was steady and penetrating as he inhaled sharply. “I guess even the birth certificate you brought hasn’t fully convinced you that we’re related,” he said.

Adeline gave a little shrug and looked away. “It’s just that Mom never even hinted you were Amish.”

“Well, she couldn’t have known.” He paused a moment. “Actually, no one knew where I disappeared to.” He went on to explain his desire to turn over a new leaf once the divorce was final, and that the opportunity to acquire the previous clockmaker’s business had fallen into his lap around that time. “I was already staying in the home of some Old Order friends I’d met, and I decided to seek counsel from the bishop here. He suggested I begin a Proving time to show I was serious about becoming a part of this community. A year later, I officially joined the Hickory Hollow Amish church.”

Sought counsel from a bishop? Adeline puzzled over this, hav-

ing never considered turning to a religious figure for advice of any kind. *A bishop must certainly be high up in the church hierarchy.*

“Eventually I fell in love with Rhoda.” Earnest quickly added that he had originally planned to remain single for the rest of his life.

So was it Mom’s idea to end the marriage? Adeline wondered.

Sighing, she wished her mother were alive to fill in the unexpected blanks, because many more questions were coming to mind. Her mom had told her so little, yet Adeline wouldn’t press Earnest Miller for these answers when she had known him only a few hours.

“I understand wanting to turn over a new leaf,” she said, then bit her lip. “But I’m still trying to wrap my brain around this. Forgive me for saying so.” She hesitated, unsure how to ask her next question without offending him.

Earnest’s face broke into an encouraging smile.

“Sorry.” Her cheeks warmed. “We’re basically strangers.”

“I don’t blame you for having questions.” He paused and ran his callused hands through his dark brown hair, cut as bluntly as if a large bowl had been set on his head as a guide.

Adeline held her breath, genuinely baffled that her sophisticated, occasionally elitist mother would have taken a second glance at such a man. *He must have been completely different back when they met in college.* She tried to imagine his youthful appearance all those years ago, dressed in normal clothes. Yet Adeline could not keep from stealing glances at his gray shirt and black suspenders . . . or the baggy trousers minus a belt. Sawdust stuck to Earnest’s black work shoes following the short stroll through the woodworking area.

Suddenly ill at ease, Adeline wished she had not agreed

to stay the night. It was impossible to reconcile the natural father she had imagined with this man. Her long search had ended in a part of the globe where things were still done the old-fashioned way, as they had been done for generations.

Can this man really be my father?

Earnest steepled long, slender fingers beneath his lips. He broke the silence. “You seem distressed.”

More so now than when she had first entered the shop, she was aware of the rhythmic ticking of the many clocks—a veritable symphony took place every hour on the hour. “Why Amish?” she blurted out.

Earnest shifted in his chair, nodding his head as if he’d anticipated this. “It’s simple, really,” he said. “My mother’s parents were Old Order Mennonite—horse-and-buggy people. Guess I must have acquired an attraction to the Plain life while spending time with them at Christmas and during the summer . . . a fondness that came back to me when I was doing an internship near here after my sophomore year of college.”

Adeline tried to process this. “So you’re saying your family heritage convinced you to make a life here?”

Earnest nodded thoughtfully. “It’s *your* heritage, too.”

She was taken aback. *Mine?*

“Otherwise, it’s unlikely that I would’ve ended up Amish.” Earnest pushed a sigh through his tight lips. “It takes a lot—well, it *took* a lot to release my grasp on the modern world I’d grown up in. But I felt like I needed that sort of drastic change in my life.”

This was all still so hard to believe. “Did my mother know about your Mennonite roots?”

Earnest shook his head somewhat apologetically. “I mentioned it in passing, but we scarcely knew each other, I’m

afraid. Ours was an impulsive marriage, and that's an understatement." He told her how he and Rosalind had gone to the justice of the peace and shocked her parents at Christmas by announcing they had eloped. "We rushed headlong into it."

"Grandpa and Grandy Ellison couldn't have wanted that for my mother. . . . I understand why they were shocked," Adeline said, then quickly realized how rude that must have sounded. "I mean, they're very traditional."

"No need to explain." Earnest gave her an understanding smile.

Adeline was interested to know if her grandparents had eventually accepted the marriage, but she had already stuck her foot in her mouth.

"Would you like to see some photos of my younger sister?" Earnest asked, going on to explain that Charlene had died at age thirteen of a rare form of cancer.

"How very sad," she said, then acknowledged her interest in seeing his photos.

"Actually, you remind me of Charlie," Earnest said as he pulled a small brass box the size of a cigar box out of a cupboard. He opened it and fumbled through it, then held up several pictures. "Here are a few of her school photos." He handed them to Adeline. "What do you think?"

Looking at the pretty young girl, Adeline felt a jolt of surprise. "I do see a resemblance. Almost like a sister." She didn't reveal it, but she had always wished for a sister. "Thanks for showing me," she said, handing them back.

Earnest looked over at her. "You even wear your hair similarly."

Smiling at that, Adeline wondered if her aunt Charlie would have approved of her big brother's becoming Amish.

Daylight was fading quickly, and Adeline noticed there were

no lights inside the shop, other than a large lantern on the floor near the open door. “I’m afraid I’m keeping you from your family.”

“It is nearly time for our evening prayers,” Earnest said, rising just then. “Would you like to join us?”

Evening prayers? She had little experience with praying but decided to accept since she was his guest. “Sure,” she said, getting up from her chair, too. “I know I said it earlier . . . but I don’t want to be a nuisance.”

“Oh, don’t fret about that,” Earnest replied obligingly.

Is he really comfortable with my staying? She walked with him across to the back porch of the main house, where several rocking chairs sat empty. Gazing at the rustic red barn and connecting stable, the tall white silo and picturesque woodshed and windmill to the east, as well as the two horses and four mules grazing in the misty green meadow, she felt as if she had been transported to a different era. *Like a character in a novel plucked from one book and pasted into another*, she thought.

If not for Mom’s urging all those months ago, I would never have come here, she acknowledged, still wondering if she wouldn’t have been better off not knowing the truth.



Sylvia took a clean bath towel and washcloth into the spare room and placed them on the blanket chest at the foot of the double bed. She glanced around the room, making sure everything was in order, even though Adeline had already taken over the place somewhat—her overnight case lay open on the floor near the windows, and a light bathrobe was flung haphazardly across the bed.

Checking the small closet for extra hangers, Sylvia saw only two and hurried upstairs to her own room to find another hanger in her closet. Spotting her best blue dress and white organdy apron—her church clothes—she thought of her fiancé, Titus Kauffman. She had worn that very dress and apron the last time she'd seen him, at the baptismal instruction class before Preaching service nearly a week ago. And even though they hadn't spoken in a while, having agreed to take some time apart, she wondered every day how he was doing.

Downstairs again, once she had touched up the spare room sufficiently, Sylvia went to the kitchen to see how much home-made ice cream was left in the freezer. In so doing, she recalled Titus's favorite flavor, chocolate almond, and remembered how they had ordered the exact same kind at Lapp Valley Farm the last time they were there. She caught herself smiling at the memory.

How soon will he want to talk things over? she wondered, missing him.

Adeline gathered with Earnest and Rhoda and their children in what they referred to as “the front room,” an insufferably warm space without air conditioning or even a fan. Adeline sat near an open window in a straight-backed wooden chair with a needlepoint seat. The occasional breeze blew even more hot, humid air into the room, and perspiring profusely, she wished she'd had the nerve to change into shorts and a tank top. But everyone else in the room was so covered up. The hems of Rhoda's and Sylvia's dresses fell nearly to their ankles when they stood, and each wore a full black apron, as well. *They must be roasting!*

She observed the boys—precise images of their father,

except for Earnest's untrimmed beard. There was something fascinating about their uniformity, and Adeline realized that she never wanted to blend in with a group any more than she wanted to go along with the crowd. No, she, like her mom before her, wanted to make her individual mark on the world and be unique, not look or dress like everyone else.

One of the younger boys had carried a black leather Bible into the room and placed it gently, even reverently, on Earnest's lap, in the glow of the nearby gas lamp.

Adeline had been raised with minimal religious instruction: Christmas Eve candlelight services, an occasional Easter Sunday at church, but little else. Until the months prior to her stepdad's death, when he'd sometimes asked her mother to read to him from the Bible, neither of her parents had ever even mentioned it. Adeline had no other recollection of "the Lord God," as Earnest described Him now when introducing the passage he was about to read.

Her stomach clenched, she was so ill at ease. She eyed her presumed half siblings as if all of this were a surreal dream.

I'll be on my way first thing tomorrow, she thought as she wiped her moist forehead with her hand, *and everything will be normal again*. She tried to envision what her fiancé would say about this backwoods setting.

Adeline smiled thinly. *Yes, that's exactly how Brendon would describe it!*

Sylvia sat in a cane-backed chair near her mother, eyes trained on her brothers so as not to gawk at Adeline. Ernie's and Adam's hair was damp with sweat as they sat near the black heat stove, which would not be in use for another three months. Her two youngest brothers, Calvin and Tommy,

perched themselves on the wide windowsill near Ernie and Adam, all of them feigning disinterest and casting only furtive glances toward Adeline.

Shadows from the setting sun skimmed across the far wall, and Sylvia couldn't help noticing how strained and uncomfortable Adeline appeared. She crossed her long legs at the knees, then a few moments later, quickly recrossed them at the ankles, her white jeans looking utterly out of place there in the large room, where the People gathered for worship once a year.

Sylvia glanced at Dat and hoped he wouldn't pass the Good Book around to each of them, as he sometimes did to make sure they were all paying attention. *Surely not tonight*, she thought, relieved when he looked at Mamma and smiled thoughtfully before turning to chapter fifteen in the Gospel of John. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him," he began to read, "the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Her father continued, and Sylvia's gaze drifted back to Adeline, who stared at Dat skeptically, her frown still evident, although now there was an inquisitive look in her striking blue eyes. She seemed to be studying him, and Sylvia wished she knew what the young woman was thinking.

She probably can't wait to return home. . . .