

A young man and woman in Amish-style clothing are holding hands in a rural landscape. The woman is wearing a blue dress and a white bonnet, and the man is wearing a light blue shirt, dark pants, and a straw hat. They are standing in a grassy field with a stone wall in the foreground and a large tree on the left. The background shows rolling hills under a blue sky with clouds.

# The Stone Wall

*New York Times* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

BEVERLY  
LEWIS



# The Stone Wall

BEVERLY  
LEWIS



BETHANYHOUSE

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

© 2020 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 978-0-7642-3308-1

ISBN 978-0-7642-3327-2 (cloth)

ISBN 978-0-7642-3328-9 (large print)

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

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



To  
Cousin Lois,  
with love and gratitude  
for sharing this joyful journey.

As for God, his way is perfect. . . .

—Psalm 18:30



## Prologue

*T*is a waste of time to look back with regret,” Mammi Eliza Slaubaugh once told me. “*Though we might fret and stew, the past simply can’t be changed,*” she’d added, leaning closer, as if to share a secret. “*Besides, if we could change our past, Anna, would we want to?*”

Mammi’s last question so *ferhoodled* me, I was unable to grasp her meaning. And yet I’d never forgotten her words of wisdom. Truth be told, I was still grappling with that very idea while I picked strawberries with my mother on this exceptionally bright June sixth morning, the one-year anniversary of my breakup with Atley Brenneman, my first beau.

“Do you have any past regrets, *Mamm?*” I asked as I set my bucket on the ground.

Mamm tilted her blond head and smiled quizzically. “Aren’t ya a bit young to think about regrets, Anna? You’re only twenty.”

I sighed, recalling Atley’s decision to leave our Beachy Amish community to train to become a pilot. Why hadn’t I seen it coming? Atley had done his best to persuade me to leave with him, his arguments sharp as a blade. But with the Lord’s help, I

stood firm in my upbringing, despite my deep care for him. Even so, our breakup still brought a sense of what-could-have-been.

Mamm flapped her long apron at a bird eyeing a cluster of ripe strawberries. “*Ach*, Anna dear, I can tell where that sigh’s coming from. And it’s no wonder: Losing your beau to the world was awful hard on you. One of my regrets is how you had to suffer through all of that.”

I nodded, remembering how, at the time, I’d taken to writing down my prayers as a way to ease my sadness. At day’s end, I would go out to the edge of the woods near our farmhouse and lie in the tall grasses, hoping no one but the critters would notice me there in the fading light. After months of this much-needed solitude, my heart had begun to open to God through His handiwork: the majestic canopy of trees turning red and gold, and the abundance of woodland creatures—red squirrels gathering nuts, deer feeding on underbrush, and birds darting here and there in the rustling branches. And I had known that my heavenly Father was with me, comforting me.

“You feeling all right?” Mamm asked just now, reaching low for more plump red berries.

“*Jah*, but I do wish I’d never gone out with Atley,” I admitted, aware of the old pain of disappointment as we finished picking the ripe fruit.

“Your mind’s in a whirl today, ain’t so?” Mamm gave me a faint smile, her blue eyes discerning. “But you couldn’t have known about Atley. Not even his parents suspected anything was amiss.” She glanced up at a flock of birds.

Though I hadn’t allowed myself to voice it then, the fact was I’d been angry with myself—and him—for allowing us to remain a couple as long as we had. And for the first three months after our breakup, I was downright disgruntled about that, as well as my romantic prospects here in Mifflinburg.

Sadly, Atley hadn't been the only fellow to drift away. On the heels of Atley's exit, the behavior of a handful of other fellows became worrisome, as well, betraying how they were raised. Most shockingly, one of the boys I'd gone to junior high with had decided to join the army, turning his back on the non-resistance our Anabaptist church embraced.

It was around then that I came across God's words in the Bible about looking ahead to the good things He had planned for me. It seemed that the Lord had something better in mind for me than my rehashing the past. I also recognized it wasn't my place to judge Atley, so I'd confessed my resentment and begun to pray for a potential mate who would share my Plain values and way of life, one who had yielded his life to the Savior. Even so, I wasn't sure of the way forward.

Reaching now to take my mother's filled bucket, I carried it and mine as we walked together toward the house. "I wasted nearly a year of my life."

Mamm nodded sagely. "I'm sure it feels that way, but try not to be hard on yourself."

I gave her a smile and realized anew how easy it was to get stuck in the past—all the should-haves and what-ifs.

Mamm and I made our way up the wide back porch steps and into the house.

"It still seems like I should've sensed something was off beam with Atley, though."

"Sometimes it's just not possible, Anna."

"Well, maybe I should prepare for the future, so it never happens again."

Mamm stopped and gave me a look. "How?"

"Honestly, I've been pondering what to do with my life—the next few years, anyhow," I admitted as I followed her into the kitchen with the buckets.



Mamm's eyes widened into soft blue moons as she turned to look at me. "What do you mean?"

Shrugging, I set the brimming buckets on the counter without a word, suddenly unsure of myself. I needed to have a specific plan before I broached the topic, but right now, I didn't have one beyond a desire to do something—*anything*—other than to keep living life as it was in Mifflinburg.

"Well then." Mamm studied me. "Maybe just take some time to think of what that might be."

I nodded and went to wash my hands at the deep double sink, preparing to make a nice hot breakfast of scrambled eggs and bacon for my parents and me. All seven of my older siblings were married and had their own families, so it was quite simple to make meals for just the three of us. I also looked forward to helping Mamm prepare the fresh-picked strawberries for jam making later . . . and a pie, too. The highlights of today's tasks.

Once, Mammi Eliza would have been right here with us, laughing and telling stories of her childhood as we worked side by side. Sharing tales of "*snappin', shellin', picklin', and cannin'*," as she liked to describe women's summertime work. I wished her memory weren't so poor now. How expressive she had always been, prior to her illness. So animated and full of life. It broke my heart to think of her suffering from Alzheimer's at eighty-six, and I wished I could communicate to her how much I appreciated her being such a wonderful role model to me and to all who knew her. *I hope she understands the love and admiration I feel*, I thought, remembering again our long-ago conversations. Just maybe she, too, had once struggled with regrets, and maybe that's why she'd seemed so wise.

For certain I had a few regrets about Mammi Eliza. I missed her smile and missed being able to talk like we used to. And I regretted not being able to share with her my deepest dreams

and feelings. *If only I could tell her about my desire to start a brand-new chapter in my life.* A few nights ago, I had even gone so far as to whisper such a prayer before falling asleep.

*When I'm Mammi's age, I don't want to regret not heeding this stirring in my heart. . . .*

# Chapter 1

---



**A**nna Beachy, a direct descendant of the founder of the Beachy Amish church, had been up for only three hours the next morning when she completed her indoor chores, including cooking and cleaning up after breakfast, as well as washing the kitchen and mudroom's large vinyl floor with Mamm's string mop.

That afternoon, Anna set out to hoe the annoying weeds from the family vegetable garden, the sound of bird calls all around. And as she worked, she whispered a prayer of gratitude for her family's many blessings.

When the mail truck arrived in the distance, she observed Mamm walk down the driveway toward the road and return with some letters, waving one in the air and calling to Anna, who put down the hoe and went to meet her halfway. Anna immediately noticed the Strasburg, Pennsylvania, return address of Mamm's Old Order Amish cousins, Glen and Sadie Flaud, whom she had visited with her family a number of times through

the years. Glancing at Mamm, Anna frowned, then stared again at the envelope clearly addressed to Miss Anna Ruth Beachy. Since she'd never written to the Flauds, she found it very curious that these distant cousins should be writing to *her*.

"Go ahead—see what it says," Mamm urged, standing there with her own look of surprise.

It turned out that Cousin Sadie was writing about a job opening for a tour guide at the Mennonite Information Center in Lancaster County. Anna relayed this to Mamm, then added, puzzled, "I wonder why she thought of me."

"Read on, dear." Mamm clutched the other letters as she and Anna walked barefoot to the back porch.

There, they sat and Anna finished reading Sadie's letter. After refolding it, she looked across the backyard to *Dat's* pony stable, a dark line of birds perched along its peak. Anna pondered this unexpected invitation, clear out of the blue. "Cousin Sadie believes God prompted her to tell me about the tour guide position there." Anna filled her mother in on the particulars.

"Sounds just like Sadie, always thinking of others."

Anna told of the Flauds' offer for her to stay with them in their *Dawdi Haus*. "With my experience at the Mifflinburg Buggy Museum, Sadie thinks the job is something I might be cut out for. She's already talked to the director, Evelyn Leaman, about me."

"You'd really quit your job here?" Mamma asked.

"Well, I've already thought of that, itchin' to try something new." *Somewhere else*, she thought.

Mamm's eyebrows rose slightly. "Wasn't sure you were serious yesterday."

Anna didn't comment that the timing of this offer seemed providential, at least to her. "I'd really like to consider this

invitation . . . with your and Dat's blessing, of course. I've always enjoyed the Flauds' company, and Strasburg itself is such a charming village."

Mamm looked thoughtful and said it would be a good idea to talk with her father about this.

"Oh, I certainly will." Anna thought about how she'd recently prayed for something new to happen in her life, though she'd never imagined something as consequential as a move away from Mifflinburg.

"If you *were* to go to Lancaster County, you'd have to make some temporary adjustments—my mother's side of the family originally came from traditional Amish, you know," Mamm said. "A much more conservative environment."

Anna had certainly never considered staying in an Amish farmhouse without electricity. Here in their small Beachy Amish settlement, they enjoyed electricity, phones, and other modern conveniences, even cars if they chose, though a few folk still drove horse and buggy on Sunday to the meetinghouse. In other ways, though, like their simple style of dress, their lives were like those of their Old Order relatives, though many of Anna's ancestors had broken away from that group in 1927.

"It wouldn't be easy," Anna acknowledged.

Mamm breathed out a long sigh and glanced out the window. "Your Mammi Eliza spent a summer there in Strasburg when she was a teenager, working for her Old Order Amish great-aunt Joanna Beiler. It was a difficult time for Eliza and my grandparents, having her so far away."

Anna remembered hearing about that long-ago summer. *Seventy years ago now*, she thought, wondering if Mammi Eliza could possibly have any recollection of that time, considering her severe memory loss. *I'll mention it when I visit her*, Anna decided, suddenly curious.

She was also eager to give Cousin Sadie a call to ask her a few questions and to thank her for the surprising invitation.

*Could this be my answer to finding a fresh start?*



The next day, after Friday morning chores, Anna drove her car the two miles to her older sister's home, where Mammi Eliza had been residing comfortably since *Dawdi* John passed away.

The two-story white clapboard house had nine large rooms and an enormous pantry at the far end of the spacious kitchen, which was a good thing, considering that Anna's twenty-eight-year-old sister, Wanita, and husband, Conrad Yoder, currently had nine children under their roof—five biological, including a boy and girl who were twins, and four foster children.

Anna didn't pause to knock at the back door. Like everyone else in her Plain community, she simply announced herself by calling as she opened it and stepped inside.

Instantly, three of the youngest girls came running toward her, all of them wrapping their pudgy arms around her long mint green dress. "Aendi Anna's here," five-year-old Bonnie said, grinning up at Anna. Her four-year-old sister, Bethie, beamed happily as she let out a little squeal.

Leaning down, Anna patted each of the girls' cheeks before picking up the smallest of Wanita's foster children—golden-blond Rogene. "Looks like you're wearing breakfast on your face," Anna said as she carried the eighteen-month-old over to the sink to wash the pancake syrup off her chubby face just as Wanita exited the walk-in pantry.

"I didn't hear you arrive," Wanita said, coming to greet Anna after setting two quart jars of tomato sauce on the counter. A blue bandanna covered her dark blond hair bun. "I see you have your arms full of sweetness." Wanita reached out to stroke

Rogene's dimpled arm. "Who's got ya, huh?" she murmured, her deep blue eyes twinkling at the tot.

"Aendi Anna!" the two older girls said in unison from where they still stood nearby.

Anna smiled back at the girls, aware of their fondness for her. She adored children and loved spending time with all of her nieces and nephews. Sometimes Wanita's girls called her their favorite Aendi, which Anna tried to play down—they had plenty of other aunts in Conrad's family to dote on them, too.

Wanita went to the toy chest at the far end of the kitchen and took out some plastic blocks and several little dolls and clothes, then placed them on the floor near the screen door. "Yous can play quietly for a while," she said, telling Anna that the rest of the children were at VBS for the morning. "The oldest ones are helping out."

Anna put Rogene down, and she toddled over to Bonnie and Bethie, who were now talking softly and rocking their dolls.

"Mammi's in the next room," Wanita added in a whisper. "Not having the best of mornings."

Anna frowned, hoping her presence might make a difference. Sometimes it did; other times not. "I'll try to cheer her up."

Wanita nodded, her solemn expression indicating that might be a challenge, then headed back to the kitchen counter.

Having previously experienced a number of Mammi Eliza's not-so-good mornings, Anna had no expectations for this visit. She just wanted to be with her, let her know she was dearly loved and always would be.

Entering the sitting room, Anna saw that Mammi's reading glasses had slid down toward the point of her nose, and a magnifying glass lay on the small table next to her. She didn't look up from her black leather *Biewel* when Anna gently touched her right hand, nor did she respond when Anna took a seat in

the nearby chair. Without speaking, Anna observed Mammi's wrinkled hands slowly turning the thin pages of her well-worn *Biewel*. Some pages were marked with homemade bookmarks from her children, grands, and greats, and a whole passage was underlined where the verses must have spoken to Mammi Eliza in a precious way.

Anna's thoughts drifted back to the years when her grandmother was verbally expressive and even at times considered the life of the party, laughing and trading recipes, or engaging the great-grandchildren with her finger puppets made from scraps of leftover fabric. Always, Mammi Eliza had been the family encourager, as cheerful and bright as morning birdsong, and quick to share a Scripture verse that had touched her heart. Never had Anna dreamed that she and her family would lose their beloved matriarch to this dreaded disease.

Sometimes it could be difficult to see how much Mammi had changed, but every so often, Anna saw glimpses of that same lively person in the frail woman before her. "I'm happy to see you again, Mammi," she said softly now. "The sun's shining brightly . . . it's another beautiful day."

Mammi's white hair was pulled back in a bun beneath her white organdy *Kapp*, and she whispered to herself but kept turning the pages, some of their gilded edges worn away from decades of repeated reading. A few pages were even coming loose from the binding.

"I'm thinking of making a trip to Lancaster County," Anna said, aware of the familiar lilac scent of the homemade soap her grandmother had made for years before Wanita took over the task. "Mamm reminded me that you spent a summer in Strasburg, too, many, many years ago."

Mammi's head lifted just then. "Strasburg?"

"*Jah!*" Anna paused, holding her breath. "Do you remember?"



Mammi's glassy gray eyes seemed to clear, but her gaze looked beyond Anna. "I'll wait for ya there," she said breathily, as if talking to someone unseen, a faint smile on her face. "By the light of the moon." Then Mammi slowly lowered her head to look at her tattered German Bible and began to turn the pages once again, murmuring to herself as her usual confusion seemed to descend.

The strange momentary response startled Anna. It was almost as if Mammi had actually remembered something from that time decades ago. *What came to her mind?*

Anna went on to talk about her plans to apply for a job there as though she and Mammi Eliza were having a real conversation.

After a while, when it appeared that Mammi was starting to drop off, Anna encouraged her to lean back in the recliner for some rest. It was only a matter of moments before she was fast asleep, her hands resting lightly on the old Bible.

Touched by the endearing sight, Anna leaned down to kiss her damp forehead as if she were a child. *Like Mammi tucked me in when I spent the night with her and Dawdi John*, Anna thought fondly. And glancing again at the ragged Bible, she realized it was the same one Mammi had read aloud to her during those very visits. Sometimes, Dawdi would also come in with her to say good-night and place his soothing hand on Anna's forehead. Both of them had showed such tenderness toward her.

Reluctant to leave Mammi's side, Anna stood there gazing at the sweet wrinkled face, wanting to share more about her hopes and prayers. Eventually, she tiptoed into the kitchen to find Wanita chopping garlic to make a batch of spaghetti sauce.

Wanita looked up. "How's she now?"

"Dozing." Anna didn't mention that Mammi had possibly

remembered her months in Strasburg. *And something about waiting in the moonlight . . .*

“She lives for your visits, you know.”

“I love seeing her, too,” Anna said, retying Wanita’s work apron for her where it had loosened in the back. “And you, sister.” She told Wanita about Cousin Sadie Flaud’s letter and the possible opportunity awaiting her in Lancaster County. “If it’s the Lord’s will for me to live and work there, I trust it’ll be obvious and that I’ll know without a doubt.”

Wanita’s eyes grew serious. “I would hate to see ya go, *Schweschder*.” She sighed. “What if you meet someone there—fall in love? How often would we see you then?”

“Well, I’m looking forward to what the Lord has planned for me. To be completely honest, I’m actually hoping to settle down somewhere other than Mifflinburg.”

Wanita smiled, but her eyes looked pained, so the effect was more sad than happy. “You’re a sensible young woman, Anna. And it may be time to expand your horizons and see where this prospect leads. Must it be so far from home, though?”

Anna grimaced. “I know it won’t be easy. I really just need a change—I’ve felt this way for a while now.”

“You’ll keep in touch, I hope.” Wanita’s expression was forlorn.

“No need to get ahead of yourself,” Anna said, glancing toward the doorway that led into the next room. “It’s not like I’ve got the job yet. And if I do end up moving there, I’ll definitely stay in touch with all of you . . . Mammi, too.”

“You’d come home weekends?”

“I’d miss you too much not to.”

Wanita gave the pot in front of her a good stir as she poured in the last of the chopped tomatoes. “We don’t know how long Mammi might have.”

“But she’s in fairly *gut* health other than her memory, ain’t so?” Even as Anna said the words, she realized she couldn’t bear the thought of losing her.

“Seems to be, *jah*. And I’m thankful for every minute of clarity she has.” Wanita washed and dried her hands. “Like those times when she can quote long passages of Scripture or sing hymns without being prompted. Moments like those are blessings.” She walked with Anna to the rear screen door, where Bonnie and Bethie looked up from their play and blew little kisses.

“*Kumme* again soon,” Bonnie said, eyes pleading.

Anna promised she would and blew a kiss back. Then, heading down the steps to the car, she prayed, *Dear Lord, please watch over Mammi Eliza with Thy tender loving care.*

During the short drive home, Anna passed the deacon’s familiar chair shop and a small country store run by one of their two preachers, as well as an Amish quilt shop she and Mamm frequented, owned by Dat’s cousins. Rounding the bend, Anna also spotted Atley Brenneman’s parents’ farmhouse and felt a renewed sense of relief, knowing that if she moved to Lancaster County, the steady stream of updates about his life wouldn’t reach her ears via the grapevine.

*If Dat and Mamm agree to let me go*, she thought, eager to see new places and new people.