

The Postcard was a wonderful story of love and salvation. I truly enjoyed the storyline from David's point of view and was smitten from the beginning with his whole story. I was excited to see Josh reappear in this story. Laura Hilton just keeps providing wonderfully crafted stories for us, her fans.

—Cindy Loven

Coauthor, *Swept Away* (Quilts of Love series)

Author, *Dianna's Wings: The Parables of Trevor Turtle*

I have read all of Laura V. Hilton's Amish fiction books. She is one of my very favorite authors. She has a way of telling a story that, when it comes to an end, leaves me wanting more. Her books are filled with God, Scriptures, prayers, and faith. That is important to me. I also love that she writes clean romance. I would never be ashamed to pass her books along to a friend or church member.

—Judy Burgi

Reviewer, ChristianFictionBookReviews.org

The Postcard by Laura V. Hilton transported me away to Jamesport, Missouri, with the first two words, "Kiss me..." I was immersed into the lives of Rachel, David, and their families. Rachel seems to have her head in the English world with her books, but seems happy in her Amish community. Who among us have not dreamed of traveling and seeing those far off places? Rachel takes her trips through the postcards she receives in the mail. I immediately sensed that she was a kind and caring person. Who else would read the paper to find people who need encouragement? David is a mystery and often referred to as "a stray." He is far from home and I could sense hurt in his past and confusion as to his future. The story did not get old; there were surprises I did not expect. I love the fact that Laura keeps writing believable stories that never once seem silly. She makes her characters come alive, as if the reader is allowed to take a peek into their world. Are you ready to meet some new friends? Then get your copy of *The Postcard* as soon as you can.

—Christine Bronner

Reader

From David and Rachel's first face-to-face meeting, I was engrossed in this story. The characters are easy to relate to. The story progressed at a nice, steady pace, and provided surprises and food for thought along the way. I finished it in one day but hated to see it end. I hope we haven't heard the last of these two characters and their families. Thank you, Laura, for another Amish story that shows less of how we differ and more of how we are all human.

—Carol J. Written
Pastor's wife and reader

Laura V. Hilton conjures fresh, unusual Amish plots. A *gut* Amish author, a fun series. *The Postcard* contains adversity contrasting sharply with *Gott's* calling in a love story quite distinctive, yet believable.

—Alan Daugherty
Columnist, Angelkeep Journals, Bluffton (IN) News-Banner

The Postcard is a story of redemption, forgiveness, new beginnings, faith, and love, with a little humor thrown in for good measure. The author captures your attention from the first page. Once you pick it up, you won't be able to put it down until you've reached the end. The characters are real people facing real issues, so much so, that the reader can easily put him or herself in their place and feel what they are feeling and experiencing. The ability to immediately grab your attention and to create authentic and relatable characters is the mark of a great writer—and Laura V. Hilton is just that. She is a master at hitting that mark, and she definitely hits it with *The Postcard*.

—Dali Castillo
Reviewer, Goodreads

The Amish of Jamesport

the
PostCard

LAURA V.
HILTON



WHITAKER
HOUSE

Publisher's Note:

This novel is a work of fiction. References to real events, organizations, or places are used in a fictional context. Any resemblances to actual persons, living or dead, are entirely coincidental.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

THE POSTCARD
The Amish of Jamesport ~ Book Two

Laura V. Hilton
<http://lighthouse-academy.blogspot.com>

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Dedication

To Aunt Marcia. Thanks so much for sharing my books with all your friends and our relatives.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Lisa Lutz for telling me the real-life story of a race-horse. And to Barbara Ann Beers for picking out the name of the horse.

Thanks to Whitaker House and their amazing team for taking a chance on me and publishing my stories, and to my readers for buying my books! I couldn't write them without you.

Thanks to Tamela Hancock Murray, my hardworking agent, for believing in me all these years.

Thanks also to my husband, Steve, and daughter Jenna, for being my first editors, and to all my amazing critique partners for pointing out helpful suggestions for rewording, for asking questions to make the story better, and for telling me when something didn't work. Special thanks to Kate, Michele, Barbara, B J, and Kathleen. And to Candee for making me look deeper.

And, as always, to God be the glory for the things He has done.

Glossary of Amish Terms and Phrases

<i>ach</i>	oh
<i>aent(i)</i>	aunt(ie)
<i>“Ain’t so?”</i>	a phrase commonly used at the end of a sentence to invite agreement
<i>boppli</i>	baby or babies
<i>bu</i>	boy
<i>buwe</i>	boys
<i>daed</i>	dad
<i>danki</i>	thank you
<i>dawdi-haus</i>	a home built for grandparents to live in once they retire
<i>der Herr</i>	the Lord
<i>dochter</i>	daughter
<i>dummchen</i>	a ninny; a silly person
<i>ehemann</i>	husband
<i>Englisch</i>	non-Amish
<i>Englischer</i>	a non-Amish person
<i>frau</i>	wife
<i>Gott</i>	God
<i>grossdaedi</i>	grandfather
<i>grosskinner</i>	grandchildren
<i>grossmammi</i>	grandmother
<i>gross-sohn</i>	grandson
<i>gut</i>	good
<i>“Gut morgen”</i>	“Good morning”
<i>“Gut nacht”</i>	“Good night”
<i>hallo</i>	hello
<i>haus</i>	house

<i>“Ich liebe dich”</i>	“I love you”
<i>jah</i>	yes
<i>kapp</i>	prayer covering or cap
<i>kinner</i>	children
<i>kum</i>	come
<i>maidal</i>	an unmarried woman
<i>mamm</i>	mom
<i>maud</i>	maid/housekeeper
<i>morgen</i>	morning
<i>nacht</i>	night
<i>nein</i>	no
<i>onkel</i>	uncle
<i>Ordnung</i>	the rules by which an Amish community lives
<i>porcupine jelly</i>	the Amish term for jelly made from wild grapes
<i>rumschpringe</i>	“running around time,” a period of adolescence after which Amish teens choose either to be baptized in the Amish church or to leave the community
<i>sohn</i>	son
<i>süße</i>	sweetie
<i>to-nacht</i>	tonight
<i>welkum</i>	welcome
<i>wunderbaar</i>	wonderful

Chapter 1

Awareness darkened his eyes.
“Kiss me...”

Rachel Miller read the words near the end of the novel with a sigh. If only some man would gaze at her with awareness. Of course, she wasn't sure what that would even look like, but she didn't think Obadiah ever had. Not even when he proposed. But he was much too practical for that.

So was she, for that matter.

Might as well just enjoy the rest of the story. Nein point in entertaining silly daydreams. She turned the page as heavy steps clomped across the wooden floor outside the employee break room in the discount grocery and bulk food store where she worked. She bolted to her feet, slid the bookmark in place, and quickly exchanged the romance for her notebook from her black bag, tossing her coat over the top to hide it. The steps passed by.

She was on her fifteen-minute break, but the manager—a rather strict Amish man named Joel Lehman—would be unhappy catching her reading an English novel. It was historical, set in the dream-inspiring countryside of northern Michigan. The descriptions of the landscape were so detailed, she could almost see the blowing snow, the pillowy drifts, the ice-covered lake. The handsome hero.

The draw was too great. She started to reach for her bag again, but the footsteps returned, pausing outside the door. Instead, she snagged her pen—pink—and opened her notebook to a blank page. Joel might frown at a pink pen, but he couldn't fault her for writing a letter. Round-robin letters were encouraged, and she quite possibly could be writing one of those.

Except she wasn't.

She glanced at the door as he entered the break room. He set the windup alarm clock on the table for fourteen minutes, so she would

know when her break was over. The fifteenth minute was for putting her things away. Joel was strict about making sure his employees didn't break for a single second longer than allowed. And Rachel tended to lose track of time.

Should she mention that she'd gone on break a bit early—early enough to read a chapter in her book?

Was Joel this big of a control freak with his frau and kinner?

She smiled. He was so predictable with the alarm clock. He quirked an eyebrow at her and left the room, carrying something. She hadn't seen what he'd picked up. But that didn't matter. Her book was safe.

The store owner, an Englisch woman, didn't care. She'd even taught Rachel how to use the computer in the small office at the back of the store. Encouraged her to use it so that she could order books online, anytime she wanted to. If only she had an unlimited income, she'd buy boxfuls of paperback entertainment. Enough to last a month or two.

Rachel shook her head. She was wasting her break with silly thoughts. Joel avoided the office—and he would frown on her sneaking in there. He left the computer work for Billie Jo. A funny name for a woman.

Rachel uncapped her pink pen and began to write.

Dear David,

Everything is changing—except my life. Sometimes I wonder if it'll always be the same old, same old for me. Even though I'm marrying Obadiah next fall, I know that little will change. He wants me to continue working. Sometimes I wish something would happen to shake up my life just a bit. But that is just wishful thinking.

My cousin Esther eloped with Viktor Petersheim this summer. I never dreamed that would happen. He whisked her off to Florida for a belated honeymoon. Can you imagine? She's going wading in the ocean—Viktor said "Swimming" with a chuckle and a rakish grin—but here the autumn chill is already

in the air. I begged them to take me. I've always wanted to go to Florida. Well, anyplace, actually. But it doesn't matter. Esther's in Florida. I'm not. At least she promised to bring back some postcards.

Have you ever lived anywhere other than the outskirts of Seymour, Missouri? Do you ever think of seeing something new? I think I asked you this before—or maybe I just meant to—but I don't remember if you answered.

She couldn't keep from smiling as she wrote. Funny how a man she'd never met managed to stir her heart in such a manner. If only she and Obadiah could communicate like this. She would miss writing David when they were married. But since they both were promised to someone else, their correspondence would kum to an end sooner or later.

The alarm rang. She jumped, her pen leaving a pink squiggly line on the page.

Rachel replaced the cap on her pen, closed the lined notebook, and returned it to her tote bag. The book snagged her attention again, and she started to reach for it, wanting to read about *the kiss*, but she forced herself to put it back. Break was over. She could read to-nacht after she finished her chores. She needed to get back to work so her cousin Greta could take her break.

Leaving the small room marked "Employees Only," she went into the main area of the store. She waved at Greta to let her know she was back. Joel wasn't anywhere in sight. There weren't any customers waiting at the lone cash register, so she started "fronting" the aisles, making sure everything was arranged neatly and within easy reach of customers—Amish and Englisch alike. She crouched down to rearrange jars of peanut butter on the bottom shelf, sorting them by brand and size.

The chimes on the door rang as it opened. Rachel looked over her shoulder. An Amish man entered. Nein beard, so he wasn't married. But she'd never seen him before. Odd, considering almost everyone

in these parts made it to the Amish Country Store sooner or later. Not to mention, the unmarried ones usually attended singings and frolics—especially those where they could meet maidals from other districts. It expanded the dating pool considerably. That was how Rachel had met Obadiah, two years ago. He lived in a different district than she.

The stranger pulled off his straw hat, revealing light brown hair and dark brown eyes. He glanced at her, and a slight smile formed as his gaze skimmed over her. Something inside her jumped to life. Her stomach fluttered.

Wait. She shouldn't be so excited about a stranger. She was already taken. But there was nothing wrong with appreciating a customer. A tall, handsome customer with a nice body. Strong-looking. Except for his eyes, there was nothing dark about him.

His smile widened, and he slowed to a stop. It was then that she noticed the wooden cane he carried but didn't use.

What had happened that he needed one of those? An accident of some sort?

Rachel stared at the cane, then blinked. She was being rude. She looked away and resumed straightening the bottom shelf. But his presence loomed behind her, making her more aware of him than she wanted to be. She really shouldn't fill her mind with romance if this was how it would affect her. Her imagination worked overtime.

The floor creaked behind her. "I'm looking for Rachel Miller. I was told she works here." The stranger's voice broke the silence.

Rachel's heart stuttered. He knew her? Well, obviously not, or he would've recognized her. But he knew her name? And the way he said it...mmm. Like fresh butter melting on a hot biscuit right out of the oven. She smiled, enjoying the warm, husky sound of her name sliding off his tongue. She glanced over her shoulder.

"Do you know her?" he asked. "Is she here today?" He moved in her direction again, and this time she noticed his limp.

Who did she know who limped? Nobody came to mind. Ugh. She hated when someone knew her and she couldn't think who he

might be. It made conversation so awkward. Except, he obviously didn't know her....

Rachel rose to her feet and wiped her sweaty palms on her apron. "I'm Rachel Miller."

The man's face lit up. His brown eyes—no, this close, they appeared to be a greenish, golden brown—twinkled with his smile. Something undefined flashed between the two of them, making her heart thud. Awareness flickered in his eyes—just like in her novel. Or maybe that was her imagination at work again.

"You're even more beautiful than I imagined." His smile faded as red crept up his neck and colored his cheeks. "I didn't mean to say that. I'm sorry."

She stared at him, ignoring her increased heart rate and the flutter in her stomach.

And you're more handsome than I imagined, even though I don't know who you are.

Nobody had ever called her "beautiful" before. Nor had a man ever acted so flustered around her.

"I'm David Lapp."

He said it as if it meant something. It didn't.

The only David Lapp she knew lived in southern Missouri. The other side of the state. He was the one she'd started writing to during her break. Never mind that she'd just written him yesterday. And the day before. And the day before that. Almost daily for the past two months. And he wrote her just as often, usually including a postcard. Feeding her desires for a change of scenery.

He was her special pen pal. But she'd imagined him as being plain and ordinary, maybe even looking like a monster due to all the injuries he'd suffered from a buggy accident. She hadn't pictured him as being attractive, by any means.

This man definitely wasn't the David Lapp from Seymour.

"From Seymour." A concerned look crossed his face, as if he'd begun to wonder about her sanity. Or as if he suspected there were two girls by the name of Rachel Miller who worked here.

Her eyes widened, and she barely controlled her gasp as her hands grasped her apron, twisting it tightly. "What?" The room swayed. She released the fabric and grabbed at the shelving. "It's *you*?"

Her dream man had just walked into the store, and he was everything Obadiah wasn't. Only he was two years too late.

He moved even nearer. "I came to meet you. I fell in— Uh, I mean.... Well, closed buggies appealed to me, and...."



David stammered to a stop when Rachel's face turned an alarming shade of red, then faded as white as Mamm's freshly bleached pillowcases. He looked away, his gaze going to the other young Amish woman who'd kum up behind Rachel and now stood at the end of the aisle. The wide, frantic look in her eyes, like a startled deer, mirrored Rachel's. But this woman appeared ready to bolt. Unlike Rachel, who held on to a shelf with a white-knuckled grip.

He frowned. He should've warned her that he was coming. Asked her if it was okay. What he'd done was chase a pipe dream to the rolling hills of northern Missouri. He'd fallen in love with the heart of the woman with whom he had corresponded for the past year, their letters having become increasingly personal, not to mention more frequent, as he'd shared his life with her on paper and, in turn, read about hers.

And with the woman he'd courted since before his near-fatal accident pressing him to pick a wedding date, all the while scolding him because of his irrational fears and lingering disabilities, it was time to admit the truth: He didn't love Cathy. He loved a woman he'd never met.

It was time to leave home. Time to embrace the future. A future that stared at him like he was out of his mind.

And maybe he was.

Rachel's lips parted. "It's you," she whispered again, only this time it wasn't a question. Color began to return to her cheeks, just enough to take away the whiteness.

At least he'd stopped shy of blurting out his declaration of love for her two seconds after discovering her identity.

"You're too late," she said, still whispering.

Too late?

A pipe dream.

But he'd burned his bridges behind him, both in Pennsylvania and in southern Missouri. He had nothing to return to—nothing he cared to return to. He couldn't be too late. Because everything he ever wanted stood right in front of him.

Rachel was beautiful. Even with her modest maroon dress, he could tell that she had a great figure, with curves that— He stopped that train of thought from traveling any further. Medium blonde hair, hazel eyes—eyes that looked rather terrified at the moment. As if he was a stalker.

Kum right down to it, he was.

"I'm sorry," he said again. "I shouldn't have..." David cringed as he backed away. He needed to make his exit and seriously think about looking for somewhere else to live. He didn't have a job here or anyplace to stay. Only enough money to last him a matter of days.

He'd hoped to find a job quickly. The local bishop, Joe Weiss, had offered him the hayloft of his barn until he found someplace suitable to stay. And he had indicated that maybe, just maybe, if David's references checked out, there might be an opening at the schoolhaus for a teacher—on a temporary basis, since the regular teacher had fallen from a barn loft and broken her ankle as well as her arm.

But he'd probably ruined his chances by stalking a local girl. Especially since the bishop's comments were so ambiguous to start with. Using words like "might," "possibly," "maybe," and stressing the temporary nature of the position.

Rachel shook her head and glanced around, as if she looked for someone who might kum to her rescue.

David scowled as he took another step back. He'd killed any chances he might've had by frightening this strange girl. A beautiful

girl, but a stranger nonetheless. Even if he did know her heart from her letters. Or *thought* he knew her heart.

He certainly hadn't expected her response to be virtually mute, other than the whisper of "It's you."

He eyed her as she released the shelving and wiped her hands on her apron again. Uncertainty crossed her face. She took a step toward him, the beginnings of a smile forming on her mouth. The bell on the door rang, and she hesitated, her gaze darting past him.

He shook his head. "I'm sorrier than you know," he muttered to the two girls standing there, wide-eyed and silent, then turned away. He almost ran into the barrel-chested Amish man with a full beard who'd just entered the store. The bishop.

David shut his eyes.

Could this day get any worse?



David Lapp. Rachel hadn't dreamed he'd be someone who made her heart pitter-patter like a toddler running barefoot across a wooden floor. She wasn't supposed to have this reaction to him. They were just friends. Best friends, via the U.S. Postal Service, but still just friends.

Not lovers.

Obadiah filled that slot. Except that he'd gone out East a year ago to live with relatives in Ohio and apprentice for a trade to support them once they married. They planned for Rachel to continue working until the kinner came or his business was built—whichever came first. He was learning cabinetry, and the Englisch seemed to always want their kitchens remodeled, so they anticipated that his business would thrive.

But Obadiah never caused these strange flutters in her stomach. Not even when he kissed her after singings or held her hand in the darkness during the buggy ride home afterward.

David hadn't even touched her. Yet his mere presence....

She couldn't even think. Couldn't focus on anything. Not when he was there, in front of her, too handsome for words. And too late.

Much too late.

He shifted, the wooden cane sliding forward a bit. His head bowed, his shoulders slumped, as he faced Bishop Joe's stern expression. Rachel could sympathize. She'd been on the receiving end of his frown a time or two, such as when she and Greta had gone to confront the bishop about his unfair treatment of Esther Beachy. And to tell him about the erratic bouts of temper exhibited by Esther's ex-fiancé, Henry Beiler.

"Bothering these two girls, are you?" The bishop glared at David. "I had a feeling you were up to nein gut. That's why I followed you. You'll state your purposes for coming here—truthfully now, ain't so?"

Rachel turned to glance back at Greta, hoping for some emotional support, but she'd fled the scene. *Figured*. Her cousin didn't handle drama well.

Rachel firmed her shoulders and looked back at the men. Bishop Joe tapped his foot as he waited for a response. David muttered something she couldn't understand. Whatever it was made the bishop's eyes widen, and he glanced her way. Then he grasped David by the arm and steered him outside.

With nothing to do, unless she wanted to stare out the window at the two men talking—and Joel would frown at that—she needed to get busy.

But he—the man of her dreams—was right outside. She moved closer to the front doors, tempted to find her voice, go out there, and tell the bishop that David could stay. That she wanted him around. That....

Joel wandered by and cleared his throat.

Rachel spun around and started straightening the nearest shelf. Except this one was higher and closer to the door, allowing her to keep an eye on the two men talking outside.

What had David said to the bishop? Her imagination worked overtime trying to kum up with possibilities. Maybe he had declared

his love for her. Requested permission to court her. To eventually marry her.... She felt her heart leap.

Ugh. She shouldn't have read those few pages in her romance novel. Now she had marriage on her mind. Not a gut thing when her beau was a couple of states away. Not when a stranger produced more flutters than her intended did.

Romance wasn't—shouldn't be—based on feelings. Love was a decision. And she'd made a decision to love Obadiah. To wait for him.

Which meant David couldn't stay here. Writing a man she didn't know—really—in order to encourage him during his recovery from an almost fatal accident was vastly different from encouraging a friendship with him in person.

Especially when he was handsome and obviously unmarried, and thought she was beautiful.

She glanced out the window again. Two buggies pulled away from the parking lot—one closed, the other open, driven by the bishop.

Did David feel safer in a closed buggy? She should've asked. Should've cared enough to thank him for coming all this way to meet her. Shouldn't have stared at him in utter astonishment. He'd probably misinterpreted her response for fear, or even repulsion, due to his limp and the cane.

She owed him a lot more than she'd given. Her behavior had bordered on downright rude.

Why hadn't he mentioned that he was coming? Why show up without warning? She could've mentally prepared herself. Made arrangements to have him over for a meal, maybe play a game or two at the table, before he returned home to Seymour.

Nein. That would have fed her infatuation.

He had to go back. He couldn't stay here.

Her heart lurched.

He simply had to go.