

“Laura V. Hilton continues to impress me with her fresh, original, and creative narratives, weaving the lives of her characters together with substance and sensitivity. *The Amish Firefighter* introduces family dynamics, betrayal, and misunderstanding, while revealing haunting secrets from the past that could influence the future. Forgiveness and redemption are imparted through unexpected circumstances. This book will leave you weak in the knees!”

—Nancee Marchinowski  
PerspectivesbyNancee.blogspot.com

“I seldom attain the depth of compassion for a book character as felt for Laura V. Hilton’s Abby in *The Amish Firefighter*. Fast page-turning only fans the flames of family deceit, arson investigations, and community secrecy; but this book is also doused liberally with romance and the struggles of living a godly lifestyle.”

—Alan Daugherty  
Weekly columnist, *Bluffton (IN) News-Banner*

“This book is on fire, wow! While it is about a firefighter and acts of arson are part of the story, the fire is in the romance between the main characters. Laura Hilton never disappoints with her complex stories that weave in and out of the character’s lives. Abigail and Sammy’s story make *The Amish Firefighter* come to life. You will be vested in this story by the end—truly a must-read for 2016.”

—Cindy Loven  
Co-author, *Dianna’s Wings*, *The Parables of Trevor Turtle*,  
and *Swept Away* (Quilts of Love series)

"*The Amish Firefighter* is a beautifully written, can't-put-it-down page turner with a perfectly woven mix of romance, mystery, humor, and inspiration. Laura V. Hilton has once again written a lovely story that will not only tug at your heartstrings, but will also have you doing some reflecting and discovering of your own."

—Dali Castillo

*This and That/Esto y Aquello* blog

"Laura Hilton's latest is heart-pumping, intense Amish fiction that will surely captivate you until the very end."

—Cheryl Baranski

Cherylbblog.wordpress.com

"This latest novel from award-winning author Laura V. Hilton ignites on the first page and burns bright to a smoldering end."

—Angela Arndt

Angelaarndt.com

"Of all the books I've read by Author Laura V. Hilton, *The Amish Firefighter* is my favorite. It is filled with misunderstandings and secrets but woven throughout, like a beautiful Amish quilt, with the emphasis on God's love and forgiveness. A definite five-star read!"

—Linda McFarland

Goodreads reviewer

"It is good to have Laura V. Hilton back among the Amish genre authors. She has outdone herself with *The Amish Firefighter*. It is easy flowing with very detailed storyline that keeps your attention to the very end."

—Tina Watson

Amish genre researcher

*"The Amish Firefighter* is one of the best Amish novels I've read! Laura Hilton has created a community with well-developed, easy-to-love characters, a strong plot, and enough twists and turns to keep the reader involved until the very end. Laura has written a perfect Amish story of faith, love, family, commitment. If you enjoy reading Amish fiction, you're going to love *The Amish Firefighter!*"

—Donna Mynatt

Author, *You Can Write 50,000 Words in 30 Days*

*Donna's Bookshelf* blog



THE  
AMISH  
FIREFIGHTER

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 AMISH FIREFIGHTER**

**Laura V. Hilton**

<http://lighthouse-academy.blogspot.com>

ISBN: 978-1-62911-685-3

eBook ISBN: 978-1-62911-686-0

Printed in the United States of America

© 2016 by Laura V. Hilton

Whitaker House

1030 Hunt Valley Circle

New Kensington, PA 15068

[www.whitakerhouse.com](http://www.whitakerhouse.com)

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data (Pending)**

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical—including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without permission in writing from the publisher. Please direct your inquiries to [permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com](mailto:permissionseditor@whitakerhouse.com).

# Dedication

*For the One who saved me:  
Jesus, who died, and is now glorified, King of all kings.*

# Acknowledgments

Special thanks to...

Candee Fick and Nancee Marchinowski, for reading through the entire manuscript and sharing their thoughts. I appreciate your gift of time.

My daughter Jenna, for reading over my shoulder as I wrote and catching typos as I made them.

My husband, Steve, for looking the manuscript over, as well, and giving me his thoughts.

My critique partners in Scribes 230 and 202.

Dr. Ronda Wells and Dr. Harry Kraus, for offering their expertise on knee injuries.

My son Michael, for his expertise as an EMT, first responder, and criminal justice major.

Josh Poole, Billy Edwards, and Michael's college instructor Sean Buttry, for assistance with the firefighting scenes.

The prayer warriors who always lift me and my writing up in their prayers. I couldn't do it without God's help.

Michael and Jenna, again, for brainstorming with me to decide who was behind the fires, and why.

My agent, Tamela Hancock Murray, for all she does.

Whitaker House, for taking a chance on me.

# Glossary of Amish Terms and Phrases

<i>ach:</i>	oh
<i>aent/aenti:</i>	aunt/auntie
<i>“ain’t so?”:</i>	a phrase commonly used at the end of a sentence to invite agreement
<i>Ausbund:</i>	Amish hymnal used in the worship services, containing lyrics only
<i>boppli:</i>	baby/babies
<i>bu:</i>	boy
<i>buwe:</i>	boys
<i>daed:</i>	dad
<i>“Danki”:</i>	“Thank you”
<i>der Herr:</i>	the Lord
<i>Gott:</i>	God
<i>großeltern:</i>	grandparents
<i>dochter:</i>	daughter
<i>ehemann:</i>	husband
<i>Englisch:</i>	non-Amish
<i>Englischer:</i>	a non-Amish person
<i>frau:</i>	wife
<i>gelassenheit:</i>	self-surrender
<i>großeltern:</i>	grandparents
<i>grossdaedi:</i>	grandfather
<i>grossmammi:</i>	grandmother
<i>gut:</i>	good

<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>koffee:</i>	coffee
<i>kum:</i>	come
<i>lieblich:</i>	a term of endearment meaning “darling” or “little love”
<i>maidal:</i>	young woman
<i>mamm:</i>	mom
<i>maud:</i>	maid/spinster
<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>rumschpringe:</i>	“running around time”; a period of freedom and experimentation during the late adolescence of Amish youth
<i>ser gut:</i>	very good
<i>schatz:</i>	sweetheart
<i>schnuckelchen:</i>	beautiful girl
<i>sohn:</i>	son
<i>to-nacht:</i>	tonight
<i>verboden:</i>	forbidden
<i>“Was ist letz?”:</i>	“What’s the matter?”
<i>welkum:</i>	welcome

# Chapter 1

**A**nd there she goes.” The man’s voice was a hushed, hoarse whisper.

The strong odor of gasoline filled the air.

*Gasoline?*

Abigail slowed as a black cat wove its way around her ankles. Her new friend, Miranda, continued toward a lantern-lit room in the back of the barn. She’d said they were meeting her boyfriend and a couple of his friends at the small engine repair shop. That probably explained the odor.

The cat purred as it wrapped itself around Abigail’s ankles again. She picked it up and cuddled it close to her chest, then hurried past the dark shadows of a buggy, in the direction Miranda had gone. She’d been eager to make friends here in Jamesport, even if they were English, like Miranda. It was nice to be wanted instead of thrown out. Rejected. Abandoned at the bus station.

Pain knifed her. She firmed her shoulders and forced a smile.

She’d almost reached the room where Miranda disappeared when several silhouettes darted past, heading out the big barn doors. Miranda snickered, then turned to chase after them. “Come on, Abby. Hurry!”

“Where are we going?”

Miranda didn’t answer. She just giggled again, more faintly this time, as she disappeared from sight.

“Wait!” Abigail didn’t want to be stranded in a dark, unfamiliar barn. She turned and started to follow Miranda and the others, scrunching her nose as the stench of gasoline burned her nostrils. She

tightened her grip on the cat. She wasn't sure whose barn this was, since she'd been in the area only a week.

Something crackled behind her. Abigail stopped and glanced over her shoulder. A dim light flickered in the small engine shop. Had a lantern been left burning? That'd be dangerous. It wouldn't take long to put it out. The last thing she wanted was for some poor farmer to lose his barn to a fire. Especially if she could prevent it.

She turned around and retraced her steps, stopping to peek in the room. The lantern was flickering on the table where it sat, but a separate fire flamed from some rectangular hay bales stacked alongside the opposite wall.

Abigail caught her breath, her heart pounding. Her fists curled into the cat's fur. *Ach, nein.* Had Miranda's friends done this? The glow burned brighter. A pail—she needed a pail. And water. She'd seen a pump earlier.

She whirled around. A fire would be a devastating loss for an Amish farmer. For anyone. She cringed. She should've listened to the inner voice that had warned her to stay home to-nacht. But, nein, she'd *had* to go along. And now...now...

Behind her, the barn wall whooshed into flame. A horse screamed. In the distance, a dog barked loudly, warning the family sleeping inside the haus.

The black cat clawed its way to Abigail's shoulder and jumped, disappearing into the darkness.

Abigail raced toward the barn doors. Maybe there was a pail on the pump behind the haus she could use to start fighting the fire. Or should she begin by releasing the animals?

Nein, the first step would be to ring the emergency bell to summon help.

She tripped over something in the darkness and went sprawling.



Sam Miller's car made a chugging sound as he drove down the dark road toward home. The vehicle shuddered, too, as if it were

having seizures. Tomorrow, he'd try to find some time to tinker under the hood and figure out what was wrong. The fuel filter might need to be replaced.

The schoolhaus came into view. It was dark, as on every Friday nacht. Nobody would be there over the weekend, and he considered taking his car there to work on, away from his brothers lurking around. But that would mean having to haul his tools across the road. And if a deacon or the bishop happened by...

Nein. He'd have to work on the car in the buggy shed, as much as it would bother Daed.

Sam activated his turn indicator out of habit, even though the dark road behind him was abandoned.

***Park at the school.***

Sam braked to a stop. Why would he park at the school instead of behind the barn? He could just as easily move the car in the morgen, and it'd save him a scolding from Daed for working on his "fancy" car at the schoolyard.

Not that the car was really fancy. But that was beside the point.

He pressed the gas pedal and turned the steering wheel to the right, preparing to drive past the barn so he could park behind it. Per usual.

***Park at the school.***

The command seemed more urgent this time.

His friends and new brother-in-law, David, often talked about the importance of surrendering to the leading of der Herr. But why would He care where Sam parked his car?

Still, it was the first time Sam had ever received what seemed to be a direct instruction.

He flipped the left turn signal on and stopped in front of the school.

Once he'd parked and turned off the car, he locked his textbooks and Tablet in the trunk before starting across the road.

The family dog, Jute, started barking. Sam wasn't sure how his little sister Mary had kum up with the name, but it sounded more like "Chute" when pronounced in their Deutsch dialect.

Jute continued to bark. Only this wasn't the normal "Welkum home, Sam" bark. It sounded urgent. Angry.

Then Sam noticed smoke. A red glow.

*Nein, not again.* He broke into a run.



Abigail pushed herself to her feet, ignoring the ache in her right leg. *Nein* time to waste. She would ring the emergency bell first. Then start releasing the animals.

Before she could move a step, an iron grip clamped her upper arm. Shock waves raced through her, radiating from the point of contact with the hand grasping her.

"How dare you?" growled a male voice.

She tried to wriggle her arm free. "*Nein, I...*"

The viselike grip tightened—probably enough to leave a bruise—and her captor dragged her toward the dark farmhaus. She tripped over her own feet in an effort to keep up. When they reached the porch, he grabbed the cord of the emergency bell and yanked, causing a loud clang that made her ears ring.

A lot more would be hurt than her hearing.

She hadn't started the fire. She was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Guilty by association. And she was the only one who'd gotten caught.

Four tugs and four clangs. Five. Six.

"I didn't do it," Abigail squeaked.

He turned to her, his eyes teeming with scorn and disgust. "Don't lie," he spat. Then he opened the door to the haus. "Go in and wait." He released her arm with a slight shove, then pivoted and sprinted toward the burning barn.

"*Go in and wait.*" *Right.* She remained on the porch and shut the door.

Where was Miranda? She needed to show up. Whoever had started the fire needed to turn themselves in. To clear Abigail's name.

*It's going to be okay.* Maybe the man who'd found her would forget. She could leave when the fire was out, and it would all be over. The chances of his identifying her were as good as those of her identifying him. Zero.

She scanned the yard. Would it be wrong to sneak away and blend in with all the people coming to help fight the fire?

On the other hand, if she was caught, she'd be sent home to Mamm and Mamm's new ehemann, Leo. Even if they didn't want her. At least then she could be with her boyfriend, Mark.

But she would be returning in shame. For burning a barn. And her stepdaed and Mark were farmers. Jah, that'd win them over, for sure and for certain. Her upper lip curled.

She wanted to go home. But not like this.

She spun around and surveyed the porch. There—a pail. Upside-down, almost hidden by the shadows.

Steps thundered just inside the haus. Seconds later, the door burst open. An older Amish man ran out, hoisting the straps of his suspenders as he did. He was illuminated by the headlights of a vehicle turning into the drive.

"Nice of you to ring the bell, young lady," he said as he dashed past Abigail.

She'd intended to ring the bell. Did that count?

An Englisch man climbed out of the pickup. "I called the fire department," he said to the older man.

The older man nodded. "Danki, Viktor."

Both men ran toward the barn.

Abigail was long past the point of escape. Already, there were two who would be able to identify her, if—no, *when* the first man accused her. Tears filled her eyes.

Someone shouted, and a shower of sparks lit the interior of the barn.

This would be a terrible loss for the family. And with the real culprits long gone, they'd blame her.

Her hands shook. She needed to try to make this right.

She hurried to retrieve the bucket as two teen buwe raced past toward the fire. One of them hopped along on one foot, yanking his shoes on as he went.

Abigail's adrenaline surged as she snatched the bucket and ran to the outside pump. Another pail hung there, so she dropped hers beneath it and started pumping. It seemed to take an eternity for the water to start to flow.

She heard another vehicle arrive. Then shouting, as the men released the animals from the barn. Soon, an older woman carrying three buckets joined her at the pump. She replaced the full bucket with an empty one as someone else grabbed the full bucket and ran off.

"How'd you kum to be here, kin?" the woman asked Abigail. "Did Sammy bring you home with him? I thought I heard his car right before the emergency bell clanged."

Who was Sammy?

The woman's shoulders slumped. "They were having a party in the barn, ain't so? Smoking cigarettes?"

Someone had been smoking—Abigail had seen the glow of his cigarette as he'd raced past—but none of Miranda's friends was called Sammy, as far as she knew. The fire probably wasn't from cigarettes, though. Just...gasoline. Maybe. She didn't know for sure. It might've been a party. She wasn't certain about that, either.

Abigail opened her mouth, ready to tell the woman she didn't know whether Sammy was there or not. That she didn't know what they were doing.

"I'm sorry. So sorry." Words she hadn't intended to say came out in a rush. Abigail kept pumping water.

The woman blinked as she handed the pail off to someone else. "Well then, I forgive you."

Forgiveness. For a crime she didn't commit. Why did this woman assume that she needed forgiving? Well, maybe she did. She hadn't tried to stop Miranda and her friends as they raced past. Hadn't tried to put out the fire by beating it with her apron. Instead, she'd stood

there like a dummchen, dismayed and horrified by the unexpected turn of events. Shocked into a stupor.

Buckets disappeared and reappeared faster than Abigail could get them filled.

In the distance, a fire truck's siren screeched, gradually growing louder. Anyone who'd managed to sleep through the deafening peal of the emergency bell was surely awake by now.

Abigail filled another bucket, and the woman replaced it with an empty one. Seconds later, several fire trucks tore into the gravel driveway, sirens wailing, as flames shot from the barn's roof.

Hopefully, all the animals had gotten out. All the men, too, for that matter.

The barn would surely be a total loss by the time the firefighters extinguished the flames. Any remaining feed would be saturated with water. All the hay they'd put up for the winter...gone. And in midwinter. This was beyond bad.

Abigail swiped at a tear and finished filling a pail. Before she could reach for an empty one, someone slid one toward her. As she accepted the pail, she looked up into the face of a handsome, clean-shaven Amish man. When their gazes caught, her heart tripped. *Odd*. She offered a tentative smile, not sure what else to do.

He glowered. "Go inside afterward." Then he grabbed the pail she'd just filled, and left.

*Ach, lovely*. Between the bright flames of the fire and the blinding beams of the English vehicles, the man who'd found her in the barn had gotten a clear view of her.

Now there was *nein* chance he would forget what she looked like.