

What People Are Saying About Laura V. Hilton and *Married to a Stranger...*

Married to a Stranger. How does that happen in modern times among a closely connected Amish community? Author Laura Hilton works out the circumstances believably, and left me wishing her characters the best possible future together.

—Heidi Dru Kortman
Devotional writer

Married to a Stranger hooked me right from the beginning and held me till the end. What are two strangers who suddenly find themselves married going to do? Laura Hilton does a wonderful job putting the reader inside the minds and hearts of her characters. I highly recommend this book.

—Linda Hoover
Author, *Mountain Prophecy* and *Lighter Than Air*

Married to a Stranger is an engaging story—deeply moving and heartwarming, artfully plotted to keep the reader turning the pages.

—Marie E. Bast
Publishers Weekly bestselling author, *The Amish Baker*

“You can’t ride in all directions at the same time.”—wisdom from Bishop Miah

Married to a Stranger by Laura V. Hilton is a mesmerizing and creatively penned story with dimensional characters with strong traits and flaws. It was with pleasure and honor to read this captivating story to catch up with characters and the events in the Mackinac County, Michigan, Amish community. A forced marriage, hidden wisdom from Bishop Miah, hidden secrets, an encounter with a stranger, and hospital visits, along with other intense scenes, brought this story to life, where I was right in the midst of each trauma and victory, whether a gentle kindness or a dangerous situation. Bethel

and Gideon had a lot to overcome, but with their resilient spirit, faith, fortitude, tenacity, friends, and family who cared, maybe their marriage had been lovingly orchestrated by God, even though it had been forced. *Married to a Stranger* is filled with picturesque scenes, compelling characters, love, faith, and Scriptural references that make this a shiny, winsome story. I look forward to reading each new release by Laura V. Hilton, knowing I'll be reading a golden nugget story with a strong faith message.

—Marilyn Ridgway
Book reviewer

An inconvenient marriage of convenience—can love eventually bloom? Laura Hilton's Amish stories touch the heart with realistic characters and captivating plots. I love this story!

—Kathleen Friesen
Author, *Hearts Unfolding*

Once again, Laura V. Hilton takes an impossible situation, adds sparks between the hero and heroine, characters to root for, and an Amish community that could either help, or share secrets that could destroy everything. *Married to a Stranger* is another page-turner where everything else takes a back seat.

—Julie Arduini
Author, *Match Made in Heaven*

I found the story insightful in how the truth can set us free, how trust can be restored and achieved with small steps and acts of kindness and faith. The characters in *Married to a Stranger* are very likeable and the read is sweet and engaging.

—Linda Maran
Author, *The Stranger*, White Rose Publishing

I was caught up in this story. The characters in *Married to a Stranger* became so real to me, I wanted to whisper advice.

—Debi Parm
Retired librarian

Laura V. Hilton has done it again. Her new novel, *Married to a Stranger*, is so captivating, you will not want to put it down. It's filled with spiritual inspiration, romance, and drama. Her characters come to life, as if they were your neighbors or friends across the field. You'll imagine yourself wanting to encourage, comfort, and give advice to this young couple trying so hard to make things work.

—Jackie Pruett
Retired librarian

I was engrossed in reading *Married to a Stranger* till the end. Powerful detailed words describing how some grieving humans can struggle with dealing with multiple emotions at the same time.

—Tina Watson
Amish Book Previews

As becoming the “norm,” Laura V. Hilton catches your attention from the very first page of her new novel, *Married to a Stranger*, and holds your attention throughout with many unexpected twists and turns. You will find her characters come to life through her use of descriptive words and real-to-life experiences that they are confronted with. While reading this latest novel, you will find that you are experiencing tears of both sadness and joy, having feelings of mental anguish and a warm feeling of newfound love. Laura V. Hilton is very effective in incorporating unexpected twists and turns into her stories that are thought-provoking and trending with current topics of today.

Married to a Stranger is the third book in the Mackinac County Series, the first two being *Firestorm* and *The Amish Candymaker*. In *Married to a Stranger*, you will meet Gideon Kaiser and his family,

Bethel Eicher and her dad, and other members of Mackinac County. You will follow their lives for about six weeks through both sad and happy times.

—*Lucy Nix*
Reader review

When I realized we were visiting to learn more about Gideon's story, I stopped and grabbed my tissues. The little peek we had before [in *The Amish Candymaker*], I immediately recognized and started tearing up; however, if this is your first book by Laura Hilton, you will be fine as you will be all caught up quickly. I love that if you happen to miss one or are just now finding Laura's books, it will be fine...except you are now hunting for more and longing for another when you finish the last page. We visit with characters previously introduced and pick up in their lives like you do when having a family reunion. You may not have seen them yesterday, but within minutes, everyone is all caught up and making new memories.

—*Christine Bronner*
Book reviewer

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.

MARRIED TO A STRANGER

Laura V. Hilton

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Dedication

*To the God who loved me enough to die for me because
He loved me first.*

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>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>dawdi-haus:</i>	a home constructed for the grandparents to live in once they retire
<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>Gott:</i>	God
<i>grossdaadi:</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>maidal</i> :	young woman
<i>mamm</i> :	mom
<i>mammi</i> :	grandmother
<i>maud</i> :	an older unmarried woman (old maid/spinster)
<i>morgen</i> :	morning
<i>nacht</i> :	night
<i>nein</i> :	no
<i>“off in den kopf”</i>	“off in the head”; crazy
<i>onkel</i> :	uncle
<i>Ordnung</i> :	the rules by which an Amish community lives
<i>ser gut</i> :	very good
<i>sohn</i> :	son
<i>welkum</i> :	welcome
<i>wunderbaar</i> :	wonderful
<i>youngies</i> :	young unmarried individuals in the Amish community

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Today's the day! Adrenaline and excitement surged through Gideon Kaiser as he parked his buggy next to the midwife's buggy. He couldn't wait to hold his first boppli—and just after Thanksgiving! An extra blessing to give thanks for.

He jumped down onto the ground, which was covered with an inch of snow. After quickly tethering his horse, he raced inside the three-story haus he shared with his parents, his sister, and his frau, Lizzie. He pounded up the half-flight of stairs from the landing to the main floor, then turned to run upstairs to the bedrooms.

Lizzie had awakened that morgen with mildly painful contractions. He'd wanted to stay home with her, but Lizzie had assured him that the first boppli often took hours to be born and he would be better off occupying himself elsewhere rather than hovering over her. So, he'd reluctantly gone to work at the grocery he owned with his daed. When a customer had reported seeing the midwife's buggy at his haus, though, Gideon had informed Daed that he was leaving. Hovering or not, he would be there when his boppli was born.

Mamm came out of the kitchen and hobbled toward him, clutching the four-footed cane with one hand, her prayer book in the other. Her mouth dropped open, as if she had something to say,

but movement on the landing midway up the stairs caught Gideon's attention.

The midwife, Emma, stood there talking frantically on her cell phone. When she ended the call, she looked at Gideon...and something in her expression chilled his excitement. "I called for an ambulance."

He stared at her, his jaw dropping. His heart stopped. Restarted with a painful lurch. "What? Why? Nein. Lizzie wants our boppli born here." And he would do anything to make sure Lizzie got what she wanted.

Emma reached out a hand and held it up as if telling him to hush. "Don't worry. Everything will be fine. I just have some concerns about how long her labor is taking and I think she'd better get to the hospital. I'll go along, of course."

"The first boppli always takes a while." Gideon set his jaw and shook off his sense of alarm. "Lizzie told me that just this morgen."

"Jah, but..." Emma frowned. "This is just a precaution. Everything will be fine."

"Everything will be fine," Gideon repeated. "May I see her?"

"Briefly. I'm going to call a driver."

Gideon nodded before taking the rest of the stairs two at a time and dashing into the bedroom he shared with Lizzie. She sat on the edge of the bed, cradling her stomach. Pain had etched lines on her face. So had fear. Annoyance.

He dropped to his knees in front of her and peered up. "It'll be fine, sweetheart. It's just a precaution, she said."

Lizzie put a hand on his shoulder.

Something in her expression scared him. "What's wrong?" He turned his head and kissed her hand, then leaned forward to bury his face in her lap. Her belly tightened against his forehead. "How can I help—"

"Get. Off. Of. Me." Lizzie's hand tightened on his shoulder, her nails digging into the skin, before she pushed him away and concentrated on breathing.

He dismissed her gesture of rejection and tried to think of a way to help ease her pain. Somehow he'd make this better and take care of his frau as he vowed before Gott just over a year ago. Maybe a massage? He reached for her swollen belly.

Lizzie held up her arm. "Don't. Touch. Me."

Emma entered the room. "Let's get you downstairs. The ambulance is on its way." She nudged Gideon's leg with her foot, indicating he should move.

He shifted to the side and stood as Emma grasped Lizzie under one arm and pulled her to her feet.

Lizzie groaned, clutching her stomach again.

"Breathe through it," Emma encouraged her. She supported Lizzie as she panted.

If only Gideon could take the pain from his frau. Carry this burden.

A loud knock sounded on the door downstairs and then someone called up, "First responders!"

Lizzie would never manage the stairs in this much pain. Besides, the sooner they got her downstairs, the sooner they would get to the hospital and her pain would go away.

Gideon scooped up Lizzie in his arms. She moaned but wrapped one arm around his neck, the other arm still cradling her stomach. "Don't drop me."

"Don't worry, honey. I won't. Relax. Everything's going to be okay." He strode out of the room and carried her downstairs. It felt gut to be able to do something to help.

The first responders met them on the landing but backed out of the way as Gideon carried her past them and out the door.

He set her down beside the ambulance, her black socks sinking into the snow. He should've thought to grab her shoes. Her coat. What would she need at the hospital? A nacht-gown? An extra dress?

Lizzie screamed and grabbed the arm of one of the first responders.

Ach, it hurt to see her holding on to another man. He wanted to be her hero. He shook off his jealousy by reminding himself that she was in great pain and probably couldn't think or act rationally right now. Lizzie was getting help from professionals, so it was up to him to make sure everything else was taken care of. He forced himself to look away and glanced at the midwife. "I'll go get a suitcase ready for her."

"Don't forget something for the boppli to wear," Emma told him. "And a blanket. A boppli blanket."

Gideon nodded and went back inside.

Mamm still stood where he'd left her, limbs shaking, peering down the stairs as if she wanted to go along, too.

Gideon touched her arm. "It'll be okay. Emma said so. Go sit down. We're taking Lizzie to the hospital. Naomi will be home shortly to stay with you."

Mamm nodded. "I'll be praying. All this pain will be forgotten when Lizzie holds her boppli. Remind her of that. Ich liebe dich, Sohn."

Gideon leaned in and kissed her cheek. "I need to pack a suitcase for Lizzie and the boppli. And then I'm headed to the hospital with Emma." He ran upstairs.

When he returned, the ambulance had left, but a driver was waiting.

When they reached the hospital, Emma charged inside and hurried down a hall to the labor and delivery ward, Gideon on her heels. "I'm her midwife and you're her ehemann, so we'll be allowed in unless they do a C-section," she explained over her shoulder.

Panic seized his heart at the thought of a knife cutting into his frau. "Do you think they will?" Lizzie had wanted to deliver naturally, at home. "She'll be disappointed."

"I'm sure it'll be the last resort. Leave the suitcase out here." Emma pushed through the swinging doors. "But I think she has labor dystocia. It's basically an obstruction that occurs if the mamm's pelvis is too narrow or the boppli is too big."

Gideon dropped the suitcase next to the wall and felt his eyes start to glaze over. A fresh wave of panic shook him.

“And—”

“Stop!” A nurse in scrubs held up a hand.

“Midwife and husband,” Emma told her

Gideon peered over the nurse’s head. Lizzie lay on a bed, a blanket over her lower half, a strange-looking yellow thing on her upper body. Her face was flushed. A host of wires attached her to some sort of machine that had lights flashing all around.

The nurse sighed, then grabbed two facemasks and two sets of shoe covers. “You can stay for a little while. The baby’s crowning, but we’re waiting for the doctor, because—”

Lizzie screamed and bore down.

Hadn’t they given her something for the pain?

The nurse rushed back over to Lizzie. “There, there, honey. Don’t push now. You need to wait for the doctor.”

How was she supposed to resist the urge to push if the boppli was ready? Gideon pressed his lips together to mask his ignorance about childbirth as he quickly yanked the mask over his face and then shoved his feet into the slippers. He hurried to his wife’s side and smoothed his hand over her soft, black hair. They’d taken off her kapp. “Ich liebe dich, Lizzie. You can do this.” He kissed her cheek.

She looked at him, her eyes brimming with tears. Silently asking, pleading, begging him to help.

He turned to the nurse. “Why haven’t you given her anything for the pain?”

“I will as soon as the doctor approves it. The doctor and the anesthetist will be here in a moment. Don’t push, honey.”

Lizzie bore down again. Screaming. Again. Agony filled her eyes.

“The baby’s coming.” Emma stood at the foot of the bed, the blanket that covered Lizzie partially hiding her and completely obscuring what she was reaching for.

An alarm sounded, an awful squeal that hurt Gideon's ears. "Can't you turn that off?"

The nurse spun away from what she'd been doing, checked the screaming machine, and then reached beneath the blanket for a button. "We need a doctor in here, stat."

"Her name is Elizabeth," Lizzie ground out, then gave a big push.

The midwife gasped, but with the blanket covering Lizzie's lower half, Gideon couldn't see why.

Gideon smoothed Lizzie's hair. "It'll be okay, it'll be—"

"It's a boy." Emma held up the boppli.

The boppli screamed, his face bright red, as if he were angry at the world.

Gideon kissed Lizzie's cheek again. Smoothed a tear away. "It's a bu, sweetheart."

"Gideon, choose love. Not loss." Lizzie gave a quiet sigh and then her eyes rolled back in her head.

"Lizzie? Lizzie?" He rubbed her forehead and shook her shoulder slightly. "Liz?"

"Lizzie?" The midwife echoed him. "Nurse, something's wrong. She's gushing blood."

Gideon transferred his wide-eyed gaze to the foot of the bed. He stopped breathing as the door was shoved open. Someone took his child away.

Emma tried dragging him away from his unresponsive frau.

The door swung open again and a doctor rushed in, tugging on scrubs.

"We need to leave the room, Gideon." Emma's tone was urgent as she dragged him toward the door. "We need to stay out of the way."

Gideon collapsed against the wall beside the doorway to the room, his ears straining to hear what was going on. The doctor spoke tersely to the nurse. Another long wail from an alarm made

Gideon's skin crawl. He stared at the closed door. A voice on a loud-speaker called out some sort of code.

Gideon straightened. What was taking so long? He moved toward the door.

Emma grabbed his arm, jerking him to a stop. "Nein. Stay here."

Nurses rushed past with a cart and went into the room he'd just left.

And then, finally, the door opened and the sober-faced doctor exited, his scrubs saturated with blood. "I'm sorry. We did all we could, but we couldn't revive her."

"Nein!" A horrible scream ripped out of Gideon's throat. He slid down the wall, hands over his face, and wept.