

[PDF] A Home For Hannah (Love Inspired Larger Print)

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Author: Patricia Davids

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Description:

About the Author Patricia Davids was born and raised in central Kansas. Her career as a nurse spanned 40 years, most of that in the NICU, a place of miracles. Now, she's a full time writer. She enjoys traveling, but she loves spending time with her daughter, her grandchildren and one overgrown yellow Lab named Sadie, who thinks fetch is a game to be played day and night. When not on the road or throwing a ball, Pat is happily dreaming up new stories.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. "Bella, what's wrong with you?" Miriam Kauffman pulled her arm from beneath the quilt to squint at her watch. The glow-in-the-dark numbers read one forty-five in the morning. Her dog continued scratching frantically at the door to her bedroom.

Miriam slipped her arm back under the covers. "I'm not taking you out in the middle of the night. Forget it."

Her yellow Labrador-pointer mix had other ideas. Bella began whining and yipping as she scratched with renewed vigor.

Miriam was tempted to pull her pillow over her ears, but she wasn't the only person in the house. "Be quiet. You're going to wake Mother."

Bella's whining changed to a deep-throated bark. At eighty-five pounds, what Bella wanted Bella usually got. Giving up in exasperation. Miriam threw back her quilt.

Now that Bella had her owner's attention, she plopped on her haunches and waited, tongue lolling with doggy happiness. In the silence that followed. Miriam heard a new sound, the clip-clop of hoofbeats.

Miriam moved to her second-story bedroom window. In the bright moonlight, she saw an Amish buggy disappearing down the lane.

When she was at home in Medina, such a late-night visit would mean only one thing—a new Amish runaway had come seeking her help to transition into the outside world. But how would anyone know to find her in Hope Springs? Who in the area knew of her endeavors? She hadn't told anyone, and she was positive her mother wouldn't mention the fact.

Miriam pulled a warm cotton robe over her nightgown and grabbed a flashlight from the top of her dresser. She patted Bella's head. "Good girl. Good watchdog."

Guided by the bright circle of light, she made her way downstairs in the dark farmhouse to the front door. Bella came close on her heels. The second Miriam pulled open the door, the dog was out like a shot. Bella didn't have a mean bone in her body, but her exuberance and size could scare someone who didn't know her.

"Don't be frightened—she won't hurt you." Miriam called out quickly as she opened the door farther. She expected to find a terrified Amish teenager standing on her stoop, but the porch was empty. Bella was nosing a large basket on the bottom step.

Miriam swung her light in a wide arc. The farmyard was empty. Perhaps the runaway had changed his or her mind and returned home. If so. Miriam was glad. It was one thing to aid young Amish people who wanted to leave their unsympathetic families when she'd lived in another part of the state. It was an entirely different thing now that she was living under her Amish mother's roof. The last thing she wanted to do while she was in Hope Springs was to cause her mother further distress.

Bella lay down beside the basket and began whining. Miriam descended the steps. "What have you got there?"

Pushing the big dog aside. Miriam realized the basket held a quilt. Perhaps it was meant as a gift for her mother. The middle of the night was certainly an odd time to deliver a package. She started to pick it up, but a tiny mewling sound made her stop. It sounded like a baby.

Miriam straightened. *There's no way someone left a baby on my doorstep.*

Bella licked Miriam's bare toes, sending a chill up her leg. She definitely wasn't dreaming.

She took a few steps away from the porch to carefully scan the yard with her light. "If this is someone's idea of a prank. I'm not laughing."

Silence was the only reply. She waited, hoping it was indeed a joke and someone would step forward to fess up.

The full moon hung directly overhead, bathing the landscape in pale silvery light. A cool breeze swept past Miriam's cheeks carrying the loamy scent of spring. The grass beneath her bare feet was wet with dew and her toes grew colder by the second. She rested one bare foot on top of the other. No snickering prankster stepped out of the black shadows to claim credit for such an outrageous joke.

Turning back to the porch, she lifted the edge of the quilt and looked into the basket. Her hopes that the sounds came from a tape recorder or a kitten vanished when her light revealed the soft round face of an infant.

She gazed down the lane. The buggy was already out of sight. There was no way of knowing which direction the driver had taken when he or she reached the highway.

Why would they leave a baby with her? A chill that had nothing to do with the cold morning slipped down her spine. She didn't want to be responsible for this baby or any other infant. She refused to let her mind go to that dark place.

A simple phone call would bring a slew of people to look after this child. It was, after all, a crime to abandon a baby. As a nurse, she was required by law to report this.

But that would mean facing Sheriff Nick Bradley.

"Miriam, what are you doing out there?" Her mother's frail voice came from inside the house.

Picking up the basket. Miriam carried it into the house and gently set it in the middle of the kitchen table. "Someone left a baby on our doorstep."

Her mother, dressed in a white flannel nightgown, shuffled over, leaning heavily on her cane. "A *boppli!* Are you joking?"

"*Nee, Mamm*, I'm not. It's a baby."

Miriam's first thought had been to call 9-1-1. until she remembered who the law was in Hope Springs. She'd cut off her right arm before she asked for his help. Who could she call?

Ada Kauffman came closer to the basket. "Did you see who left the child?"

"All I saw was a buggy driving away."

Ada's eyes widened with shock. "You think this is an Amish child?"

"I don't know what else to think."

Ada shook her head. "*Nee*, an Amish family would welcome a babe even if the mother was not married."

"Maybe the mother was too afraid or ashamed to tell her parents." Miriam suggested.

"If that is so, we must forgive her sins against *Gott* and against her child."

That was the Amish way—always forgive first—even before all the details were known. It was the one part of the Amish faith that Miriam couldn't comply with. Some things were unforgivable.

Miriam examined the basket. It was made of split wood woven into an oval shape with a flat bottom and handles on both sides. The wood was stained a pale fruitwood color with a band of dark green around the top for decoration. She'd seen similar ones for sale in shops that carried Amish handmade goods. The baby started to fuss. Miriam stared at her.

Her mother said. "Pick the child up. Miriam. They don't bite."

"I know that." Miriam scooped the little girl from the folds of the quilt and softly patted her back. The poor thing didn't even have a diaper to wear. Miriam's heart went out to their tiny, unexpected guest. Not everyone was ready to be a parent, but how would it feel to be the child who grew up knowing she'd been tossed away in a laundry basket?

Stroking the infant's soft, downy cap of hair, she felt the stirrings of maternal attachment. She couldn't imagine leaving her child like this, alone in the darkness, depending on the kindness of strangers to care for it. Children were not to be discarded like unwanted trash.

Old shame and guilt flared in her heart. One child had been lost because of her inaction. This baby deserved better.

Putting aside her personal feelings, she called up the objective role she assumed when she was working. Carefully she laid the baby on the quilt again to examine it. As a nurse, her field of expertise was adult critical care, but she remembered enough of her maternal-child training to make sure the baby wasn't in distress.

Without a stethoscope to aid her, it was a cursory exam at best. The little girl had a lusty set of lungs and objected to being returned to her makeshift bed. Who could blame her?

Ada started toward the stairs. "A little sugar water may satisfy her until you can go to town when the store opens and stock up on formula and bottles. I have your baby things put away in the attic. I'll go get them. It's wonderful to have a child in the house again."

Miriam stared after her mother. "We can't keep her."

Ada turned back in surprise. "Of course we can. She was left with us."

"No! We need to find out who her mother is. She has made a terrible mistake. We need to help her see that. We need to make this right."

Ada lifted one hand. "How will you do that?"

"I . . . I don't know. Maybe they left a note." Miriam quickly checked inside the basket, but found nothing.

"*Vel*, until someone return for her, this *boppli* needs a crib and diapers."

Miriam quickly tucked a corner of the quilt around the baby. "*Mamm*, come back here. You shouldn't go climbing around in the attic. You've only been out of the hospital a week."

A stormy frown creased her mother's brow but quickly vanished. "I'm stronger than you think."

That was a big part of her mother's problem. She didn't realize how sick she was. Miriam tried a different approach. "You have much more experience with babies than I do. You take her, and I'll go hunt for the stuff."

Her mother's frown changed into a smile. "*Ja*, it has been far too long since I've held such a tiny one. Why don't you bring me a clean towel to wrap her in first."

Miriam did as her mother asked. After swaddling the babe, Ada settled into the rocker in the corner of the kitchen with the infant in her arms. Softly she began humming an Amish lullaby. It was the first time in ages that Miriam had seen her mother look content, almost happy. Miriam knew her mother longed for grandchildren. She also knew it was unlikely she would ever have any.

Ada smiled. "I remember the night you and Mark were born. Oh, what a snowstorm there was. Your *daed* took so long to come with the midwife that I was afraid she would be too late....

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