ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

The Sacrifice
Beverly Lewis
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The choices posed by the Amish religion and lifestyle lead to emotionally complex situations and sacrifices, especially for Leah, the adopted daughter of Abram. At the beginning of the story, Leah is recovering from the loss of her fiancé, Jonas, who supposedly ran off with her sister Sadie two years earlier. Sadie, shunned by the Amish, is refused visits, letters, or any other contact with her family or former friends, so Leah has no way of clarifying events or understanding the apparent betrayal.

Slowly recovering from her broken heart, she allows herself to fall in love with Smithy Gid and make wedding plans. But, when her mother lays dying from childbirth, she makes a request that Leah cannot refuse: to raise as her own the new baby, Abram's first son, and the youngest daughter, only two years old.

Leah promises, unwittingly making another unwanted sacrifice. Abram refuses to let Leah take his children from his house, and Gid refuses to set up housekeeping anywhere but in his own home. Leah chooses to honor her mother's request, giving up her hopes of marriage and a home of her own.

However, Leah is not the only one who is forced to make sacrifices because of the Amish beliefs and way of life. Leah's sister Mary Ruth must choose between her desire for a high-school education and her father's love and home. "Sadly she knew pursuing her dream would eventually lead her away from her parents' church… Losing Elias had uncovered the emptiness of her spirit, and the obvious lack on the part of Bishop Bontrager and the brethren to fill it."

The author was born in Pennsylvania Amish country and was both a schoolteacher and an accomplished musician before becoming an award-winning, best-selling author. This book is the third in her series called *Abram's Daughters.*

When Sadie unexpectedly returns home, Leah discovers that hidden motives and emotions had unnecessarily forced upon her the bitter sacrifice of her first love. Leah begins to find peace, contentment, and even reward in this sacrifice: "Lately I find myself staring far less

at the night sky, contemplating the number of stars, than I do counting the smiles on Lydiann's and Abe's faces, the dear ones Mamma gave to me. Providence, some might say. I call it love, plain and simple."

Lewis has previously written the best-selling trilogy, *The Heritage of Lancaster County*. She writes with the authority of the granddaughter of an Old Order Mennonite who grew up in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch country. Her writing is as simple and direct as the people she writes about, but the themes, stories, and emotions are as richly patterned as one of their quilts, and just as enjoyable to get wrapped up in.

Paula Scardamalia