



Abandon the Dark (Watcher in the Dark Book 3)

By Marta Perry

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Lawyer Jake Evans gave up a high-powered job to build a quieter life in the small Pennsylvania town. So when a beautiful stranger appears after twenty years gone, he naturally questions her motives. Still, he is drawn to Lainey. But no amount of attraction will matter if he can't keep her safe from a mysterious threat....

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Editorial Review

Review

Perry's story hooks you immediately. Her uncanny ability to seamlessly blend the mystery element with contemporary themes makes this one intriguing read.-RT Book Reviews on Home by Dark

"Perry skillfully continues her chilling, deceptively charming romantic suspense series with a dark, puzzling mystery that features a sweet romance and a nice sprinkling of Amish culture."-Library Journal on Vanish in Plain Sight

"Marta Perry illuminates the differences between the Amish community and the larger society with an obvious care and respect for ways and beliefs....She weaves these differences into the story with a deft hand, drawing the reader into a suspenseful, continually moving plot."-Fresh Fiction on Murder in Plain Sight

"Leah's Choice is a knowing and careful look into Amish culture and faith. A truly enjoyable reading experience." -Angela Hunt, New York Times bestselling author of Let Darkness Come

"Leah's Choice is a story of grace and servitude as well as a story of difficult choices and heartbreaking realities. It touched my heart. I think the world of Amish fiction has found a new champion."

-Lenora Worth, author of Code of Honor

Marta Perry delivers a strong story of tension, fear and trepidation... An excellent mystery that's certain to keep you in constant suspense. While love is a powerful entity in this story, danger is never too far behind. - RT Book Reviews, Top Pick, on Season of Secrets

About the Author

Marta Perry realized she wanted to be a writer at age eight, when she read her first Nancy Drew novel. A lifetime spent in rural Pennsylvania and her own Pennsylvania Dutch roots led Marta to the books she writes now about the Amish. When she's not writing, Marta is active in the life of her church and enjoys traveling and spending time with her three children and six beautiful grandchildren. Visit her online at www.martaperry.com.

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Lainey Colton jolted awake, her heart pounding in her ears. She stared into darkness so intense she couldn't make out anything beyond the outlines of the strange bed. She sat upright, turning. A pale rectangle marked the window, and her panic waned.

How stupid. She was in Great-aunt Rebecca's house, in tiny Deer Run, Pennsylvania. She'd fallen asleep, exhausted after the flight and drive and the stress of the past few weeks, in the bed that had been hers the summer she was ten.

That had been twenty years ago, but the room felt intimately familiar now that she was awake. She rubbed the gooseflesh on her bare arms. The dream that woke her must have been something out of a horror movie. Odd, that she couldn't remember anything about it.

But maybe just as well, since she had no desire to slip back into nightmares. Lainey plumped the pillows, straightened the hand-stitched quilt, and settled herself to sleep.

Sleep seemed to have fled. As her eyes grew accustomed to the dark, she made out the shapes of the chest of drawers, the rocking chair, and the bookshelf that still held the complete set of Laura Ingalls Wilder books she'd devoured as a ten-year-old. Her Amish great-aunt probably wouldn't have approved of most of Lainey's reading choices, but she'd been happy to see her *Englisch* great-niece reading the Little House books.

Twenty years. Lainey moved restlessly on the pillow. She hadn't been back in all that time, at first because of her mother's habit of jumping from husband to husband, and later because of her own gypsy tendencies.

Guilt flickered. Aunt Rebecca had been kind to her during one of the most difficult parts of a troubled childhood. Lainey should have managed to come back, instead of being content with the weekly letters they exchanged. Being Amish, Aunt Rebecca didn't have a phone. Or electricity, a fact brought home to Lainey earlier when she'd fumbled for nonexistent light switches in the dark kitchen.

But now she was here, summoned by an abrupt phone call from her great-aunt's lawyer. Rebecca had had a fall and suffered a stroke. She'd asked for Lainey. The attorney, one Jacob Evans, hadn't sounded particularly approving. Well, Lainey would deal with him in the morning.

She'd planned to get a motel near the airport in Pittsburgh and drive up tomorrow morning, but once she'd picked up a rental car, worry and tension had impelled her onto the road to Deer Run. What difference did it make if she arrived after midnight? She knew where the house key was kept, though if she'd thought about the absence of electricity, she might have opted for a motel.

Aunt Rebecca would laugh at Lainey, coming to visit an Amish home equipped with her smartphone, her computer, her hair dryer, and all the other devices she thought she couldn't do without.

But the laughter would be gentle. Aunt Rebecca never judged, never made a person feel stupid or guilty or unwanted. Her love had been a balm to a lost child whose familiar world had slipped from her grasp one too many times. Even when the details of that summer visit had slipped away, Lainey had still been aware of that solid sense of being loved without condition.

Now it was Lainey's chance to repay that kindness. In the morning she'd touch base with the attorney and then head for the hospital to find out how bad Aunt Rebecca's condition was and what needed to be done. Lainey's mind ran up against a blank wall of ignorance when it came to helping someone who'd had a stroke, but she'd figure it out. She owed Aunt Rebecca far more than that.

If this trip had happened to coincide with an excellent time for her to leave St. Louis—well, no one here need ever know that, although if the task of helping her great-aunt was as difficult as the attorney's tone had suggested, she might have jumped from the proverbial frying pan into the fire.

In any event, she was clearly not going to drift back to sleep. Lainey swung her legs out from under the covers. She'd go downstairs and brew a cup of Aunt Rebecca's herbal tea. But first she'd pull on some sweats. The house had grown cold, and she hadn't the faintest idea how the furnace worked.

Thanks to her aunt's habit of leaving a flashlight on the nightstand, Lainey was able to light her way to the stairs. She started down, her heavy socks making no sound on the treads. The beam of the flashlight picked up the hooked rug in the living room, the rocker that had always been her aunt's favorite chair, the—

She stopped, gripping the banister. A noise, faint and indefinable, came from the kitchen. Maybe the gas refrigerator made noises.

Another step, and Lainey froze again. This time there had been a soft but definite thud. Someone...or something...was in the kitchen.

She held her breath, afraid the intruder would hear the slightest sound. The whole town probably knew that the homeowner was hospitalized, making the house an easy target for a break-in. Could she get back to the bedroom and her cell phone without being heard?

She eased back a step. And heard a loud meow. Lainey's tension dissolved into a shaky laugh. Not someone. A cat. She hadn't known Aunt Rebecca had a cat.

Sweeping the flashlight beam ahead of her, Lainey went quickly to the kitchen, pushing open the swinging door. The flashlight beam reflected shining green eyes, eerily suspended in the air, it seemed. The large black cat sat on the counter next to the stove, looking at her accusingly.

"Well, so who are you?" She reached out a hand tentatively, having a respect for pointed teeth and sharp claws.

The cat sniffed at her hand, apparently found it acceptable, and rubbed its head against her fingers.

"You are a handsome creature." She stroked the shining length of his back, and it arched under her hand. "What's your name?"

He didn't answer, of course, but he butted her hand again and then jumped lightly to the floor, where he pawed at the cabinet door.

"Is that where the cat food is kept?" Silly, to be talking to a cat, but the house was so deadly silent that it was a relief to make some noise. She opened the door and had a look.

No cat food, but there were several cans of tuna. Her visitor seemed to know what that was, because he hooked a paw over one can.

"All right, all right, I get the message. But I can't believe that one of the neighbors isn't feeding you while Aunt Rebecca is in the hospital."

The hand can opener was in the top drawer, and in a few minutes she'd dumped the contents of the can into a bowl and set it down in front of the animal. The cat took one sniff and then began eating.

"I'm not sure what to do with you," she muttered. "Are you supposed to stay inside or go out at night?" She searched the neat, sparsely furnished downstairs to the living room, finding no sign of a litter box. "Out, I guess."

The front windows of the living room looked out on the main road that ran through the village, becoming Main Street on its way. Nothing moved outside. Even when she craned her neck to look down toward the center of town, the streets and sidewalks were empty. Apparently at 3:00 a.m. the citizens of Deer Run were safe in their beds.

A small town would undoubtedly seem even smaller and deader when seen through the eyes of a thirty-year-old, rather than the ten-year-old she'd been when last in Deer Run. But she was here to see to Aunt Rebecca's care, not to socialize.

And afterward? Afterward would have to take care of itself for the moment.

A loud meow interrupted her reverie. She returned to the kitchen to find that the cat had polished the bowl and now stood at the back door, looking fixedly at the knob as if he could turn it with the force of his gaze.

"Okay, I get the message. You want out." She opened the door. The cat spurted through it, disappearing into the shadows as if part of an illusionist's trick.

Lainey stood for a moment in the doorway, looking out. Beyond a large shed, a stretch of weeds and brush led to the woods. There was a stream back that way someplace, as she recalled, and on the other side some Amish farms. That probably wouldn't have changed since.

She lost her train of thought as she caught movement from the corner of her eye. Near the shed, was it? She stared, trying to make out what it was, but nothing stirred.

Her imagination? Lainey frowned. She had plenty of that, certainly. But this had been real enough, she felt sure. If it had been an animal, it was a large one.

A shiver went down her spine. *It's nothing*, she told herself. An overactive imagination and an overtired body made a bad combination. But she locked the door carefully, just the same.

Punctuality had never been Lainey's strong suit, but she arrived at the attorney's office a few minutes before nine the next morning, eager to get this meeting over with and go to the hospital. Why was it necessary, anyway? Jake Evans surely had fulfilled his duty by letting her know about her great-aunt's condition, but he had insisted she stop by.

She wouldn't find out without asking, she supposed. The lawyer's office was in the ground floor of a square, solid brick building right on Main Street. *Evans and Son, Attorneys-at-Law*, the sign read.

Lainey pulled open the door and found herself in a wide entryway, bare except for a mounted moose head that stared down at her rather sourly. She hustled through a second door into a conventional receptionist's space. Four or five padded chairs sat empty against the wall. Two identical doors apparently led to the offices of Evans Senior and Evans Junior.

The receptionist, a gray-haired female with an unrelentingly stern face, turned from watering the philodendron that overflowed from the corner of her desk.

"Ms. Colton?" Her gaze swept Lainey from top to toe, and a faintly pained expression formed as she took in jeans, boots and tucked turquoise shirt topped with a fringed suede jacket.

"That's right." Lainey forced herself not to fidget. Deer Run must really be behind the times if the woman found this outfit inappropriate. It was probably the most businesslike thing Lainey owned. "I'm supposed to meet Jacob Evans at nine." She brushed her hair back, setting the dangling silver-and-turquoise earrings she'd made jingle.

"I'll let Mr. Evans know you're here." The woman leaned across the desk to press a button on the phone.

In an instant, the right-hand door swung open. The man who emerged was so unlike the image she'd formed from their brief conversation on the phone that Lainey had to stare.

She had expected old, stuffy, businesslike and disapproving. The reality was tall, lanky and probably early thirties, with thick, reddish-brown hair, a long jaw, straight nose and a mobile mouth that looked as if it smiled readily.

It wasn't smiling now. The disapproval, at least, was as she'd imagined.

"Ms. Colton, please come in. I'm Jake Evans, your great-aunt's attorney."

She gave him a cool nod and walked past him into the inner office. There were plenty of reasons why a solid citizen like Jacob Evans would disapprove of her, but she couldn't imagine how he'd know any of them. Maybe he just disapproved of outsiders on general principle. With the quick toss that sent her unruly mane behind her shoulders for a few moments, at least, she took what was obviously the visitor's chair.

"You must have made an early start to get here by nine," Evans said, sliding into the leather executive chair behind the desk. He leaned back, looking for a moment as if he'd prop his foot up on a conveniently open drawer, and then seemed to think the better of it.

"My flight reached Pittsburgh at nine last night. I rented a car and drove straight through, so I got in around midnight."

He blinked. "I didn't expect... Well, that's fine. You stayed at a motel out on the highway, then?"

"I stayed at my great-aunt's house, of course. Why not?"

"No reason." He straightened his tie, drawing her attention to his tie clip. The engraved lion gave him away as a Penn State graduate. "I just thought the lack of electricity might be a problem for you." His lips quirked, making him suddenly more likable.

"I did keep reaching for a switch, I admit." She returned the smile, liking the way his face warmed when he forgot to be stiff and legal. "But the cat and I got along all right."

"Cat?" He looked at her blankly.

"Aunt Rebecca's cat. Big, black, furry, with green eyes?" *Like yours*, she thought.

He frowned slightly. "Your aunt doesn't have a cat."

"She doesn't?" It *was* odd that Aunt Rebecca hadn't mentioned a cat in her letters, since she talked about everything in her life. "Well, I guess I gave the neighbor's cat a middle-of-the-night tuna treat, then."

Although in that case, how had the cat gotten into the house? It couldn't have come in with her. She'd been tired, yes, but not so tired she wouldn't notice a large cat.

Lainey gave herself a mental shake. Not important now. She'd shelve that question until later. Unfortunately

that thought reminded her of Phillip, telling her that she must be related to Scarlett O'Hara, with her tendency to worry about things tomorrow.

He'd been more right than she knew. If she'd spent a little more time thinking about where their relationship was headed—

"I don't suppose the neighbors will mind," Jake said, his thoughts obviously still on the cat.

"I'd like to see my great-aunt," she said abruptly. "Can you give me directions to the hospital?"

"Before you head over there, I thought we ought to clarify your position." His tone had shifted back to being formal.

"My position?" she echoed, not sure what he was driving at.

His green eyes narrowed, much like the cat's had. "Didn't your great-aunt speak to you about her arrangements?"

"Arrangements?" She sounded like a demented parrot, echoing everything he said, but she honestly had no idea what the man was talking about.

Evans rotated a pen slowly in his hand for a moment, and then tried to balance it on its tip. It fell over. "I was afraid of that. You see, your great-aunt has given you power of attorney. Do you know what that means?"

"I know what power of attorney means." He didn't need to sound as if she were a dimwit. "But I'm not sure what effect it has in this situation."

"She should have talked to you," he murmured, half to himself, she suspected. "Basically, it gives you the authority to make any decisions that are necessary in regard to her medical care or finances in the event that she can't make them herself."

"But...she can, can't she? I mean, you said she asked for me, so that must mean she's able to talk and make decisions."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gerard Brand:

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Richard Horgan:

The particular book Abandon the Dark (Watcher in the Dark Book 3) has a lot of information on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was authored by the very famous author. The author makes some research just before write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you can find the point easily after scanning this book.

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George Williams:

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