



Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds

Saloma Miller Furlong , David Furlong

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At age twenty, Saloma Miller left behind her Amish community in Burton, Ohio, and boarded a night train for Vermont, where she knew no one.

In this poignant coming-of-age memoir, Saloma's new life of freedom includes work as a waitress and plans to continue her education. Romance also blossoms with a Yankee toymaker. Soon, however, a vanload of people from her community, including the Amish bishop, arrive to take her back into the fold. Saloma's freedom comes to an abrupt end when she goes back home to Ohio with them.

Thus begins a years-long struggle of feeling torn between two worlds: will she remain Amish and embrace the sense of belonging and community her Amish life offers, or will she return to the newfound freedom she tasted in Vermont?

Saloma settles into teaching in an Amish school and does her best to fit back into Amish ways, but a legacy of childhood abuse, struggles with an eating disorder, and questions of identity plague her. Her ties to the outside world remain, mostly through the quiet perseverance of the toymaker from Vermont. He keeps sending her cards, never giving up hope that their love could survive the strain of living in two different worlds.

Bonnet Strings by Saloma Miller Furlong offers a universal story of overcoming adversity and a rare look inside an Amish community. Readers of Amish fiction and viewers of the PBS documentaries such as *The Amish* and *The Amish: Shunned* will find in it a true story: of woundedness and healing, of doubt and faith, and of the often competing desires for freedom and belonging.

Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds Details

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From Reader Review *Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds* for online ebook

Amber says

Not generally my kind of book, but well-written and an interesting look into a conflicted life. I will be using it as a textbook for my Women Around the World class this fall.

Eden says

Saloma was twenty when she left the Amish for a life of freedom in Vermont. Four months later Saloma's brother Joe showed along with other people she knew to bring her back. Saloma knew she couldn't fight going back, especially if Joe was there.

She was thrust back into Amish life. Saloma tried to fit in, tried to be Amish and forget all about her four months in Vermont and her time spent with David. But, as much as she tried, Saloma couldn't forget about any of it.

It was a hard decision, but when Saloma was twenty-three, she left the Amish for good.

I read Saloma Miller Furlong's first book *Why I Left the Amish* in 2012. I found it after looking at the website of one of the libraries I go to. She had been doing a talk, but I had missed it. I decided to read her book and I couldn't put it down. Saloma has had one interesting life.

I did get to see her speak in 2013 at another library. She is a great speaker and a very nice person. She signed my book and I got a picture with her.

It was when I went to see her that she said she was writing a second book. I'm not sure if she had a title for it yet or not, but I knew I was definitely going to read it.

Bonnet Strings continues Saloma's story of the first time she left the Amish and her three years back in the community. I found myself tearing up different times because of the struggles she went through, how she felt she didn't belong, but yet didn't want to hurt or disappoint her family.

Bonnet Strings is about Saloma being torn between two worlds; her Amish life and the life she started in Vermont. She knew there were certain aspects of Amish life she would miss, but knew that life wasn't really for her. She didn't fit in, she questioned things and had a curious nature.

This book is about Saloma's struggling with finding out who she really is and she really wanted. It is a great and inspiring story about a woman who became she was meant to be. It was a journey, there were struggles, but Saloma made the choice that was right for her.

I think *Bonnet Strings* and *Why I Left the Amish* are both inspiring books about a woman who took care control of her life and lived the way she wanted to.

I recommend both books by Saloma Miller Furlong. And if she ever does a speaking event near you, I'd

recommend going.

Lori says

I won this book as a giveaway. I already wrote a review. I accidentally wrote it on the "kindle" version of the book. if you want to read my review it is there. I did write a review for the book I won.

Lori says

I was a goodreads first reads winner of the book "Bonnet Strings, an Amish woman's ties to two Worlds" I have an interest in other religions and beliefs. my family used to have a place on a lake in MONTCALM county. There was a group of Amish families that lived there. This is a good memoir by Saloma Miller Furlong. At 20 she decided to leave her Amish family in Ohio and go to Vermont to start a new life. In Vermont she changed her name to Linda and started a new life made new friends. including man named David. four months later a van of Amish relatives came to take her back to Ohio. she stayed in Ohio with her family and other Amish families. for a couple more years but battled with her longings to go back to Vermont. It would be a brave and tough decision for Saloma to leave the life she knew as Amish to start a new life in Vermont. I found this very interesting read. I was glad i got the chance to learn more about the Amish and the customs and way of life they lead. I know that must have been a courageous decision for her to make.

Linda says

Yes, Yes, Yes... A First Reads Winner Book and Thank you Good Reads, and Saloma Miller Furlong with her awesome husband, David.

This is an exceptional memoir and I encourage those who are interested in the journey a woman takes when she stands at the crossroad. Saloma's crossroad was to remain Amish, be with family, friends and community but "stuff" her real self. Saloma is a curious,questioning woman and wants to experience more of life. She, also, does not have an easy family or community life.

For those seeking an expose on the Amish, this is not one in its truest sense. However, I learned some very interesting facts about Amish life and while I am not well versed in Amish, I think I had more of a "romanticized ideal" about them rather than any focus on their religious beliefs or the strictness of community church life.

I cheered Saloma on her first leaving of the Amish community to her beloved Vermont. You will learn that she had a subscription and a deep love for the Green Mountain State.

This is "everywoman's story" in some part... you will read of family abuse, eating disorders and how a woman struggles to become the self she senses of who she really is.

As she starts a life in Vermont, finds a job and she is thrilled at being a waitress, we see how quickly she adapts to becoming more and more her true self. She rooms at the local Y, makes friends with the women and eventually meets David. This is truly the pivotal turning point in her journey as she grows into the

woman she believes herself to be, is supported by friends and David and her life begins to turnaround. Yes, she misses family and friends in her community and the struggle of standing at a crossroads becomes reality when the Amish community come to Vermont to bring her home.

From this point on in the memoir, we read and learn of commonplace struggles and we become inspired that we all, women and men, face life-changing situations. Do we follow our heart, our intellect or our upbringing?

Read Saloma's journey and consider an answer for yourself.

Melanie Springer Mock says

A compelling story about one woman's decision to leave the Amish. Offers an unalloyed view of the Amish apart from the romanticized views often provided by the fictionalized accounts of the Amish.

Shari Larsen says

This is the true story of a young Amish woman, Saloma Miller, who left behind her Amish community and her family in November 1977, at the age of 20, and boarded a train to Vermont, where she knew no one. Just as she was getting settled into a new life, a vanload of people from her community, including 2 of her siblings, arrived to bring her back to the fold. That was the beginning of an almost 3 year struggle of feeling torn between two worlds; should she remain Amish and stay in the community that she was use to, or return to the newfound freedom she had a taste of in Vermont?

While struggling to make a decision, she also has to deal with a legacy of childhood abuse, an eating disorder, and trying to decide whether or not she had a future within the Amish community.

This was a very fascinating read, and it is the sequel to her first book, *Why I Left the Amish*, which covers her childhood and teenage years, and what led up to her decision to leave her community for the first time. *Bonnet Strings* can be read as a stand alone story, but I highly recommend reading the *Why I Left the Amish* first, to have a better understanding of how her past affected the decisions she made when she was older.

Saloma's story was also featured in two PBS American Experience documentaries; *The Amish*, and *The Amish: Shunned*. If you are interested in the Amish, I recommend that you watch these documentaries if you ever get the chance.

Kathleen Pooler says

When I read *Bonnet Strings*, I felt as if I'd been invited into the world of a young woman who was deeply conflicted about where she belonged. Saloma Miller was born into an Amish community in Ohio. As long as

she could remember, she felt mismatched to the conservative, rigid practices of her community. She was labeled rebellious and stubborn.

The story begins when twenty-year-old Saloma prepares to find her place in the world. Her decision to leave her community is precipitated by her constant fear of her violent father. When her attempts to help her mother deal with an abusive situation and her mother refuses help and her community offers no support, Saloma makes a final decision to leave Ohio and start a new life in Burlington , Vermont.

As she journeys through her new life in a non-Amish world, she finds herself enjoying her hard-earned freedom and making new friends. She begins dating and meets a young man named David who becomes a trusted friend. But the pull to return to the Amish and her family eventually outweighs her desire to follow her heart and she ends up returning to the community on the condition that she not have to live with her parents.

Furlong's writing is honest, engaging and refreshing. As a reader, I feel her inner turmoil as she grapples with her faith, her family, her friends and where she feels at home. I also admire her ability to persist in her efforts to know her own heart and follow her dreams.

Her decision to return to the community the second time ends up validating which direction she needs to take. She reaches a place of peace about who she is and where she belongs in the world.

I highly recommend Bonnet Strings as an enjoyable and enlightening read about a young woman's struggle to find home. It is a heartwarming love story.

Catherine says

This review is based on an ARC that I received through a Goodreads giveaway.

Bonnet Strings is a memoir written by Saloma Miller Furlong, who was born and raised in an Amish community in Ohio. The book primarily deals with the period in her life when she struggles to come to a decision about remaining a member of the Amish community or being true to her unique self and leaving the Amish to pursue her own individual dreams. It is also a moving love story, as Saloma meets and falls in love with the man destined to become her husband during the time she was struggling to come to a decision about her future in the Amish community.

I really enjoyed this book. Ms Furlong writes with a very comfortable voice, as if she is sitting across the table from you and sharing her story. She provides a great deal of information and insight into, the Amish way of life.

She also authored another memoir prior to this which I look forward to reading.

Jessica says

I won this copy as an ARC in a Goodreads giveaway. I wasn't expecting this to be a memoir, and when it

came in the mail I was pleasantly surprised. Furlong conveys the struggle of being torn between her own desires and the desires of her community very effectively. While at times I wish she would have wrote less about the letters, I do see that mentioning them was necessary in order to convey how the Amish are cut off from the rest of the world's constant and quick communication. There were also some things I learned that were surprising. I always thought Amish communities to be very strict in areas such as dating. And while in some ways they are, the practice of bed dating baffled me. My parents would never allow that in our house!

Kay says

Less coherent than her first book (in some places, not all), this was a good continuation and elaboration on Furlong's story of leaving (and subsequently returning to, then leaving again) the Amish community in which she had grown up. I wasn't so interested in her journey to marrying a Catholic, which seemed to fuel her crisis of faith, but rather in the descriptions of a community that pressured her to return even as they made her an outcast within said community.

Shirley Showalter says

I prefer real-life romance to the kind in pulp novels. If you're the same and want to learn about a couple who overcame obstacles of distance -- geographically, religiously, culturally -- not once but many times, you have found the right book. Here are the characters: Saloma, the young woman who left her dysfunctional Amish family in Ohio to find her dream landscape in Vermont and her dream job as a waitress at Pizza Hut. In Vermont she meets David, who grew up in a New England Catholic family and is a "Yankee peddler," a maker of handcrafts. They are deeply attracted to each other, and Saloma is happy in her new life.

Enter the van-load of Amish from Ohio.

Saloma was whisked back again to Ohio by the influence of her Mother and the bishop and the whole group of others who came for her. She was talked into trying, once again, to become a good Amish woman.

I heard Saloma and David give a talk recently based on this book. Everyone in the audience was spellbound as they described how hard it was to bridge their two worlds after that van-load of powerful Amish leaders took Saloma back home. Lesser men than David would have given up and assumed that a woman who flatly refused him meant what she said. But David was attuned to the subtext of Saloma's words and came back, not once, but twice, to reclaim her.

After the second time, Saloma found the courage to leave for good and to marry David.

This is a love story that not only conquered great odds to begin with, but continues to sustain the couple through marriage, parenthood (they have two adult sons), higher education (Saloma is a graduate of Smith College and an author and speaker who has been featured by two PBS programs on the Amish), and through their shared love of travel and learning.

I was pleased to share the platform with Saloma to talk about prayer coverings in her Amish and my Mennonite past. The audience at Mt. Joy Mennonite Church grew very quiet when Saloma placed her Amish "kopp" on her head and tied the strings that appear on the cover of this book.

Not only is this book a love story in the sense of a romance between a man and a woman, but it is also a love story to the best of her Amish past and forgiveness for the worst. You can't read this story without being moved and without thinking about the loves of your own life.

Marnie says

Enjoyed this book very much.

Donna Davis says

A few years ago I read and reviewed this author's first memoir, *Why I Left the Amish*. Her reasons were compelling, some of them inherent in the Amish tradition, others atypical of most Amish families, but all together they provided a powerful impetus, that little voice inside all but the dullest that cries out, "Man the life boats! Save yourself!" I understood, having read it, why Furlong would choose to bail, but I was left with other questions, mostly regarding a gap between the end of the book and the author's biographical blurb. Happily, I heard from her a couple of months ago; she had written a sequel, and this is it. She volunteered kindly to send it in my direction for a chance to read and review, and it is just as riveting as the first.

The first volume dealt with the horrifying domestic abuse within her family, and the failure of the church to deal with it. Furlong wondered whether she might have remained Amish had she not dreaded her home life, or at least many aspects of it, so tremendously.

It also dealt with her independent nature and intellectual curiosity (my own terms, not hers). Why would the Amish so persistently seek to stamp out the desire of some of its own members to seek higher education, I had to wonder. Would they not want Amish nurses, professors, plumbers, electricians?

The e-mail I received from the author mentioned a PBS miniseries in which she was featured, *The Amish* followed by *The Amish: Shunned*. Once I finished reading *Bonnet Strings*, I decided to hold my review until I could view these productions, some four hours all told. Between what she tells us in this second memoir and what is said in the miniseries, I understand. Not that I know what it is like to be Amish; far from it. But I see now why they set such strict parameters in order to preserve their culture.

The rest is at:

<http://seattlebookmamablog.org/2015/1...>

Kris says

Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds is a riveting memoir by Saloma Miller Furlong. The book outlines the difficult decision she made when she chose to leave her Amish community. The author explains how difficult it was to initially leave her Ohio home and move to Vermont, where she knew no one and had to quickly acclimatize to a non-Amish way of life. She then explains how equally difficult it was to move back to her home when a van load of family and Amish church elders came to collect her and bring her home. Throughout the book Saloma explains what she was feeling at the time, the difficulties she was

experiencing, either in Ohio or Vermont, and why it was so hard for her to leave the community she had been raised in. Throughout the telling of her story, Saloma introduces her future husband David. The reader will be amazed at the level of love between Saloma and David. David continued to pursue Saloma across state lines, religious lines, and outright refusals of Saloma's to see him. Ultimately, Saloma learned to recognize what and whom she truly wanted in life and made the decision to leave her Amish family and begin a new life with David in Vermont.

The book is very well written and the reader can not help but be bound to both Saloma and David. I am extremely happy I won a copy of this book through Goodreads!
