

Praise for Amy Clipston

“Fans of Amish fiction will love Amy Clipston’s latest, *The Bake Shop*. It’s filled with warm and cozy moments as Jeff and Christiana find their way from strangers to friendship to love.”

—Robin Lee Hatcher, bestselling author of
Who I Am with You and *Cross My Heart*

“Clipston closes out this heartrending series with a thoughtful consideration of how Amish rules can tear families apart, as well as a reminder that God’s path is not always what one might expect. Readers old and new will find the novel’s issues intriguing and its hard-won resolution reassuring.”

—*Hope by the Book*, BOOKMARKED
review, on *A Welcome at Our Door*

“A sweet romance with an endearing heroine, this is a good wrap up of the series.”

—*Parkersburg News & Sentinel* on *A Welcome at Our Door*

“*Seasons of an Amish Garden* follows the year through short stories as friends create a memorial garden to celebrate a life. Revealing the underbelly of main characters, a trademark talent of Amy Clipston, makes them relatable and endearing. One story slides into the next, woven together effortlessly with the author’s knowledge of the Amish life. Once started, you can’t put this book down.”

—Suzanne Woods Fisher, bestselling
author of *The Devoted*

“With endearing characters that readers will want to get a happily ever after, this is a story of romance and family to savor.”

—*Parkersburg News and Sentinel* on *A Seat by the Hearth*

“[*A Seat by the Hearth*] is a moving portrait of a disgraced woman attempting to reenter her childhood community . . . This will please Clipston’s fans and also win over newcomers to Lancaster County.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“This story shares the power of forgiveness and hope and, above all, faith in God’s Word and His promises.”

—*Hope by the Book*, BOOKMARKED
review, on *A Seat by the Hearth*

“This story of profound loss and deep friendship will leave readers with the certain knowledge that hope exists and love grows through faith in our God of second chances.”

—Kelly Irvin, author of *The Beekeeper’s Son* and *Upon a Spring Breeze*, on *Room on the Porch Swing*

“This heartbreaking series continues to take a fearlessly honest look at grief, as hopelessness threatens to steal what happiness Allen has treasured within his marriage and recent fatherhood. Clipston takes these feelings seriously without sugarcoating any aspect of the mourning process, allowing her characters to make their painful but ultimately joyous journey back to love and faith. Readers who have made this tough and ongoing pilgrimage themselves will appreciate the author’s realistic portrayal of coming to terms with loss in order to continue living with hope and happiness.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4 stars, on *Room on the Porch Swing*

“A story of grief as well as new beginnings, this is a lovely Amish tale and the start of a great new series.”

—*Parkersburg News and Sentinel* on *A Place at Our Table*

“Themes of family, forgiveness, love, and strength are woven throughout the story . . . a great choice for all readers of Amish fiction.”

—*CBA Market Magazine* on *A Place at Our Table*

“This debut title in a new series offers an emotionally charged and engaging read headed by sympathetically drawn and believable protagonists. The meaty issues of trust and faith make this a solid book group choice.”

—*Library Journal* on *A Place at Our Table*

“These sweet, tender novellas from one of the genre’s best make the perfect sampler for new readers curious about Amish romances.”

—*Library Journal* on *Amish Sweethearts*

“Clipston is as reliable as her character, giving Emily a difficult and intense romance worthy of Emily’s ability to shine the light of Christ into the hearts of those she loves.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4½ stars, TOP

PICK! on *The Cherished Quilt*

“Clipston’s heartfelt writing and engaging characters make her a fan favorite. Her latest Amish tale combines a spiritual message of accepting God’s blessings as they are given with a sweet romance.”

—*Library Journal* on *The Cherished Quilt*

“Clipston delivers another enchanting series starter with a tasty premise, family secrets, and sweet-as-pie romance, offering assurance that true love can happen more than once and second chances are worth fighting for.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4½ stars, TOP

PICK! on *The Forgotten Recipe*

“In the first book in her Amish Heirloom series, Clipston takes readers on a roller-coaster ride through grief, guilt, and anxiety.”

—*Booklist* on *The Forgotten Recipe*

“Clipston is well versed in Amish culture and does a good job creating the world of Lancaster County, Penn. . . . Amish fiction fans will enjoy this story—and want a taste of Veronica’s raspberry pie!”

—*Publishers Weekly* on *The Forgotten Recipe*

“[Clipston] does an excellent job of wrapping up her story while setting the stage for the sequel.”

—*CBA Retailers + Resources* on *The Forgotten Recipe*

“Clipston brings this engaging series to an end with two emotional family reunions, a prodigal son parable, a sweet but hard-won romance, and a happy ending for characters readers have grown to love. Once again, she gives us all we could possibly want from a talented storyteller.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4½ stars, TOP

PICK! on *A Simple Prayer*

“... will leave readers craving more.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4½ stars, TOP

PICK! on *A Mother’s Secret*

“Clipston’s series starter has a compelling drama involving faith, family, and romance . . . [an] absorbing series.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4½ stars, TOP PICK! on *A Hopeful Heart*

“Authentic characters, delectable recipes, and faith abound in Clipston’s second Kauffman Amish Bakery story.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4 stars on *A Promise of Hope*

“... an entertaining story of Amish life, loss, love and family.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4 stars on *A Place of Peace*

“This fifth and final installment in the Kauffman Amish Bakery series is sure to please fans who have waited for Katie’s story.”

—*Library Journal* on *A Season of Love*

“[The Kauffman Amish Bakery] series’ wide popularity is sure to attract readers to this novella, and they won’t be disappointed by the excellent writing and the story’s wholesome goodness.”

—*Library Journal* on *A Plain and Simple Christmas*

“[*A Plain and Simple Christmas*] is inspiring and a perfect fit for the holiday season.”

—*RT Book Reviews*, 4 stars

the
Bake Shop

Other Books by Amy Clipston

THE AMISH

HOMESTEAD SERIES

A Place at Our Table
Room on the Porch Swing
A Seat by the Hearth
A Welcome at Our Door

THE AMISH

HEIRLOOM SERIES

The Forgotten Recipe
The Courtship Basket
The Cherished Quilt
The Beloved Hope Chest

THE HEARTS OF THE LANCASTER GRAND

HOTEL SERIES

A Hopeful Heart
A Mother's Secret
A Dream of Home
A Simple Prayer

THE KAUFFMAN AMISH

BAKERY SERIES

A Gift of Grace
A Promise of Hope
A Place of Peace
A Life of Joy
A Season of Love

STORY COLLECTIONS

Amish Sweethearts
Seasons of an Amish Garden

STORIES

A Plain and Simple Christmas
Naomi's Gift included in
An Amish Christmas Gift
A Spoonful of Love included
in *An Amish Kitchen*
Love Birds included in
An Amish Market
Love and Buggy Rides included
in *An Amish Harvest*
Summer Storms included
in *An Amish Summer*
The Christmas Cat included
in *An Amish Christmas Love*
Home Sweet Home included
in *An Amish Winter*
A Son for Always included
in *An Amish Spring*
A Legacy of Love included
in *An Amish Heirloom*
No Place Like Home included
in *An Amish Homecoming*
Their True Home included
in *An Amish Reunion*
Cookies and Cheer included in
An Amish Christmas Bakery

NONFICTION

The Gift of Love

the
Bake Shop

AN AMISH MARKETPLACE NOVEL

AMY CLIPSTON

 ZONDERVAN®

*With love and appreciation for Eric Goebelbecker,
the coolest big brother on the planet*

Glossary

ach: oh

aenti: aunt

appetitlich: delicious

Ausbund: Amish hymnal

bedauerlich: sad

boppli: baby

bopplin: babies

brot: bread

bruder: brother

bruderskind: niece/nephew

bruderskinner: nieces/nephews

bu: boy

buwe: boys

daadi: granddad

daed: father

danki: thank you

dat: dad

Dietsch: Pennsylvania Dutch, the Amish language (a German dialect)

dochder: daughter

dochdern: daughters

GLOSSARY

Dummler!: Hurry!
Englischer: a non-Amish person
faul: lazy
faulenzler: lazy person
fraa: wife
freind: friend
freinden: friends
froh: happy
gegisch: silly
gern gschehne: you're welcome
grossdaadi: grandfather
grossdochter: granddaughter
grossdochterdorn: granddaughters
grossmammi: grandmother
gross-sohn: grandson
Gude mariye: Good morning
gut: good
Gut nacht: Good night
haus: house
Hoil!: Get back here!
Ich liebe dich: I love you
kaffi: coffee
kapp: prayer covering or cap
kichli: cookie
kichlin: cookies
kind: child
kinner: children
krank: sick
kuche: cake
kuchen: cakes

GLOSSARY

- kumm*: come
lieue: love, a term of endearment
maed: young women, girls
maedel: young woman
mamm: mom
mammi: grandma
mei: my
Meiding: shunning
mutter: mother
naerfich: nervous
narrisch: crazy
onkel: uncle
Ordnung: the oral tradition of practices required and forbidden
in the Amish faith
schee: pretty
schmaert: smart
schtupp: family room
schweschder: sister
schweschdere: sisters
sohn: son
Was iss letz?: What's wrong?
Wie geht's: How do you do? or Good day!
willkumm: welcome
wunderbaar: wonderful
ya: yes
zwillingbopplin: twins

The Amish Marketplace
Series Family Trees

GRANDPARENTS

Erma m. Sylvan Gingerich

|

Lynn m. Freeman Kurtz

Mary m. Lamar Petersheim

Walter m. Rachelle

Harvey m. Darlene

SECOND GENERATION PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Lynn m. Freeman Kurtz

Christiana —|— Phoebe

Mary m. Lamar Petersheim

Cornelius (Neil) —|— Salina

Darlene m. Harvey Gingerich

Bethany —|— Anthony

Rachelle m. Walter Gingerich

|

Leanna m. Marlin Wengerd

Leanna m. Marlin Wengerd (deceased)

|

Chester

Joyce m. Merle Stoltzfus

Jeffrey —|— Nicholas

A Note to the Reader

While this novel is set against the real backdrop of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the characters are fictional. There is no intended resemblance between the characters in this book and any real members of the Amish and Mennonite communities. As with any work of fiction, I've taken license in some areas of research as a means of creating the necessary circumstances for my characters. My research was thorough; however, it would be impossible to be completely accurate in details and description, since each and every community differs. Therefore, any inaccuracies in the Amish and Mennonite lifestyles portrayed in this book are completely due to fictional license.

Prologue

Christiana Kurtz watched as a car pulled up to her bake stand near the road in front of the large, white farmhouse where she'd been born and raised. The warm early May breeze tickled her nose, and the scent of moist earth and flowers mingled with the sweet aroma of her homemade baked goods.

She quickly straightened the rows of pies, cookies, and cakes on the shelves on either side of her and then pushed the ties from her prayer covering behind her shoulders.

The dark sedan's doors opened, and two middle-aged women stepped out, dressed in T-shirts and shorts.

"Good morning," Christiana stood straighter and smiled. "How may I help you?"

"We heard you had the best cookies and pies in Lancaster County. Is that true?" one of the women asked.

"Oh . . . well . . ." Christiana's cheeks heated. "I do have quite a few regular customers."

"What are your most popular items?" the other woman asked.

"Most people seem to enjoy my whoopie pies." Christiana gestured toward the shelves to her right and left. "But the shoofly

PROLOGUE

pies and chocolate chip cookies are popular too. What would you like?"

"Hmm." The first woman pursed her lips. "I think the whoopie pies—one of each flavor."

"Yeah, that sounds good," the second woman said. "I'll take one of each too."

Two more cars pulled up as Christiana filled bags with whoopie pies. When she took the women's money, she glanced at the four women now waiting behind them. A couple of them seemed impatient. Unfortunately, she'd grown used to that.

"Here you go, and thank you for stopping by," Christiana said as she gave the women their change and then their bags. Then she turned her attention to the next customers. She wasn't sure which of them had stepped up to the stand first, so she said, "I can help who's next."

"Do you sell pumpkin whoopie pies?"

"Do you have any carrot cake?"

The two women she'd sensed were unhappy waiting had spoken at the same time, and now they turned to stare at each other. Christiana took a deep breath. She wouldn't allow these pushy women to get under her skin.

"Yes, we do have carrot cake." Phoebe, her younger sister, appeared behind Christiana, fresh from the house, her smile as bright as if she were talking to a dear friend instead of an outspoken customer. "It looks like we have one left. Let me get that for you."

"*Danki*, Phoebe," Christiana said under her breath. Then to the woman who had asked for them, she said, "How many pumpkin whoopie pies would you like? I have a dozen here."

"Don't you have more?" she snapped. "I need at least two dozen."

PROLOGUE

“Yes, I have more. Let me get these down for you, and then I’ll go get the rest.”

As Phoebe stretched for the carrot cake and Christiana leaned toward the pumpkin whoopie pies, the sisters collided. Christiana stumbled forward, sending her cash box crashing to the ground. At the same time, Phoebe dropped the carrot cake.

Christiana heard the customers gasp, and she gritted her teeth as she picked up the cash box and took in the demolished cake.

“Was that your last carrot cake?” the woman who’d wanted one asked, her eyes narrowing. “It’s my husband’s birthday, and I promised him a carrot cake from Amish Country. I really need that cake for his party tonight.”

Christiana swallowed against her dry throat and squared her shoulders. “I’m not sure if I have any more in the house—”

“Well, can you check? I told you. I need one today.” The woman tapped her fingers on the counter.

Christiana turned to Phoebe, and when she saw that her face had twisted into a frown, she decided she’d better send her to the house instead of going herself. “Will you see if there’s another carrot cake in the refrigerator, please, and—”

“Get another dozen pumpkin whoopie pies too!”

Christiana avoided looking back at the woman so intent on getting enough pies.

Now Phoebe’s eyes flashed with what Christiana knew was annoyance, but she nodded. “Yes. I’ll check.”

A third woman spoke up for the first time. “And, uh, could you please see if you have some cherry turnovers? I don’t see any on your shelves. I’m sorry, but we’re in kind of a hurry.” At least this woman wasn’t rude, and the fourth woman had been looking at her phone the whole time.

PROLOGUE

And at least no one was traipsing up to the house when they found the bake stand closed. She couldn't believe how often that happened.

Christiana plastered a smile on her face and focused on the two women who'd been so demanding. "My sister will be right back. In the meantime, would you like to look at my other selections?"



Later that afternoon, Christiana and Phoebe packed the few remaining baked goods into a cooler, and then they took it, the cash box, and the unused bags to the house.

After loading the leftovers into the refrigerator, Christiana plopped into her father's favorite easy chair in the living room and rested her feet on his footstool.

"Busy day at the bake stand?" *Mamm* asked as she came into the room.

"The busiest."

Christiana blew a loose strand of her fiery red hair out of her face as she thought about the truth of the matter. Managing rude customers and being extra busy was one thing, but she wished she didn't feel so isolated at the bake stand. Phoebe was responsible for helping their mother with most of the household chores when the bake stand was open, though, and Christiana couldn't expect her help nor her company.

She sighed. Unless her business became so successful that she could afford to hire a helper—and that was unlikely—she'd just have to get on with it alone. Selling her baked goods was too important to her to give up.

1



“Christiana!”

Christiana’s cousin Bethany Gingerich smiled brightly as she sat at a high-top walnut table on a matching ladder-back chair in her Coffee Corner booth at the Bird-in-Hand market. Sitting on either side of Bethany were Christiana’s two other favorite cousins, Leanna Wengerd and Salina Petersheim.

“*Gude mariye.*” Christiana greeted them all and set her purse and tote bag on the floor beside the empty stool at the table. She inhaled the rich aroma of Bethany’s delicious coffee. The smell made her taste buds dance with delight. It was no wonder her cousin’s booth was so successful. “How are you all?”

“We’re great,” Bethany said. The other two nodded as they sipped their coffee. “We were just catching up before the market officially opens.” Bethany smoothed her hands down her black apron, and her light-blue eyes seemed to sparkle under the fluorescent lights glowing above them. Although she was twenty-two, Bethany always reminded Christiana of a happy kitten with her unfailing energy and constant smile. “How are you doing this lovely Thursday morning?”

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"I'm fine," Christiana said. "I had to run an early errand for *mei mamm* before opening my bake stand, so I thought I'd drop in. The greeter at the door remembered I'm your cousin and let me in."

"Sit with us." Leanna patted the empty stool. At thirty-four, she was both their oldest cousin and the shortest, standing at only five foot three. Christiana considered her to be the bravest and most resilient. She'd lost her husband in an accident three years ago, but she persevered, raising her son on her own.

"I do have a little time." Christiana hopped up on the stool and then glanced over her shoulder at the counter where the coffee and donuts were beckoning her.

"*Kaffi?*" Bethany asked, as if reading Christiana's mind. "Cinnamon is the special today."

"*Ya*, that would be perfect." Christiana pulled a bill from her pocket and handed it to Bethany. "*Danki.*"

"*Gern gsehne*," Bethany sang out as she slid from her stool and headed toward the counter.

"How are things at the bake stand?" Salina picked up her cup and took a sip.

"It's *gut*. Busy." Christiana shook her head. "I can hardly keep up with the demand. I have to come back to the *haus* more than once to replenish my inventory, and if I close the stand early because I've run out of baked goods, sometimes customers knock on our door asking for pies, *kichlin* . . . everything. Sometimes they've come even after hours!"

Salina and Leanna locked eyes.

"What?" Christiana leaned forward as if to catch their unspoken thoughts.

"Here you go." Bethany set a cup of coffee and a donut on the

the Bake Shop

table. Then she divided a look between Salina and Leanna. “Did I miss something juicy?”

“Christiana was just saying her bake stand is so busy that she can’t keep up with the demand . . . and she has a few other challenges too,” Leanna said.

“*Ya*. Customers come to her door even if the bake stand is closed.” Salina made a sweeping gesture toward the back of the market. “What were we just discussing, Bethany?”

At twenty-four, Salina was just two years older than Bethany, but Christiana had always considered Bethany and Salina to be opposites. While Bethany was a bubbly chatterbox, Salina was quiet and thoughtful, with dark-brown hair framing her blue eyes.

“Oh!” Bethany’s eyes rounded as she picked up her cup of coffee. “You mean the empty booth.”

“There’s an empty booth?” Christiana took a bite of the chocolate donut and savored the taste. The best, just like Bethany’s coffee!

Leanna nodded. “*Ya*, there is. The knickknack boutique closed down. I heard the owner decided to find a storefront. A bakery is just what we need here at the market. Besides the gift shops, we have a deli, a candy shop, and then my Jam and Jelly Nook and Salina’s Farm Stand, but I think customers would love to see baked goods.”

“You should snatch up that booth before someone else gets it,” Salina said.

“Then the four of us will have Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays together every week.” Bethany beamed. “Wouldn’t that be fun?”

“I don’t know.” Christiana shook her head. “I may be twenty-five, but you know how strict *mei dat* can still be. He’s always leery

of anything that, as he says, might allow either of his *dochdern* to spend too much time in the *English* world. Plus, I can't leave all the chores for Phoebe and *Mamm*."

"But we're here only three days a week." Salina held up three fingers.

"*Ya*. Don't you step away from chores to run the bake stand six days a week now?" Leanna shrugged. "You'd have more time to help with chores at home if you sold your baked goods only the three days you're here. And I'm sure you'd make just as much money. Maybe more."

"Exactly!" Bethany snapped her fingers.

"That does make sense." Christiana let their reasoning roll around in her mind as she sipped her coffee. "It would be nice to not have to deal with customers at the *haus* all the time. I could put a sign out by the road inviting them to come here to buy their baked goods instead."

"Right." Salina nodded.

Christiana flattened her lips and then asked, "But how much is the booth rent?"

"It's not too bad. I'm sure you could make your rent quickly," Leanna said.

"*Ya*, that's true," Salina chimed in.

"But you both have regular customers, and I don't know if mine would really come here." Christiana nodded at Salina. "You have customers who come every week for your produce." She turned to Leanna. "And you have regulars for your jams and jellies." Then she looked at Bethany. "I don't even need to discuss how popular this booth is. It's always busy when I stop by to see you. You never have to worry about making booth rent and a profit."

"Now, now. Let's not be *gegisch*. You have plenty of regulars,

the Bake Shop

too, and I do think they'd come here for your baked goods." Bethany looked over her shoulder, and her eyes lit up. "*Gude mariye*, Jeff. *Wie geht's?*"

Christiana looked up as the young Amish man Bethany addressed walked toward them. She took in his solemn expression as he murmured a response to Bethany and followed her to the counter. He looked to be in his mid to late twenties, and she guessed he was a few inches taller than her five-foot-seven height. He was clean shaven, which meant he was single, and dark eyes matched hair that was both wavy and curly. One thick curl was falling over his forehead. He was attractive, but his sad expression was what tugged at her heartstrings.

Turning on the stool, Christiana looked back at the counter as Bethany slipped behind it.

"Do you want your usual?" Bethany asked him. Then she tilted her head. "The special today is cinnamon. Maybe you want to try something new."

"I'll just take the regular roast. *Danki*." He pulled his wallet from his trousers pocket.

Bethany poured his cup of coffee. "It's warm out there, isn't it? It feels more like July than mid-May. I think it's going to be a hot summer."

Christiana turned back to Salina and Leanna and tried to put this Jeff's sad expression out of her mind. Instead, she concentrated on the booth opportunity at the market. "I'll talk to my parents about this. Maybe it would be a *gut* idea to close down the bake stand and just concentrate on running my business from here." *And I wouldn't be so isolated!*

"I think you'll be *froh* you did," Leanna said. "I appreciate that I can go home and leave my booth behind."

“Me too.” Salina folded her arms over her chest.

“I’ll see what *mei dat* says.” Christiana sipped her coffee and then set the cup down on the table. She pushed herself off the stool. “I need more creamer.”

“Wait!” Leanna called. “Christiana!”

As Christiana pivoted, she slammed into Jeff, sloshing his hot coffee onto his dark-blue shirt and knocking his donut to the floor.

Christiana gasped as she looked up at him. His face had twisted with a deep scowl.

“Uh-oh!” Bethany called from behind the counter. “I’ll grab a towel.”

“Let me get napkins.” Salina popped down from her stool and grabbed a handful from the counter.

“Oh no. I-I’m so sorry,” Christiana said as Jeff set his empty cup on the table. She thought her cheeks might combust with embarrassment. “I-I didn’t see you, and I—”

“Forget it.” Jeff took the towel from Bethany and began to mop his shirt.

“Let me help.” Christiana grabbed the napkins from Salina and started to wipe at his soaked sleeve.

“Please don’t.” He stepped away from her, and her cheeks flared hotter.

“Let me buy you another cup of *kaffi* and donut,” Christiana said, offering what she could.

“Don’t worry about it,” he muttered. “I guess nothing is going to go right today.” He looked over at Bethany. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Wait, Jeff.” Bethany rushed over to the counter. “Let me give you another cup of *kaffi* and another donut. I insist.”

the Bake Shop

"I'm so sorry," Christiana repeated as she handed him more napkins. "I should have looked behind me before I got up."

"It's fine." He swallowed, and when his gaze met Christiana's, his grimace warmed slightly. "After the morning I've had, nothing surprises me."

"Here you go." Bethany sidled up to him and held out another cup of coffee and donut.

"Let me pay for these." Christiana pulled her wallet from her apron pocket.

Bethany waved her off. "Accidents happen."

"*Danki.*" Jeff cleared his throat and then started toward the exit.

"I hope your day gets better," Christiana called after him, but he didn't look back at her.

Salina began to wipe up the lake of coffee at Christiana's feet, and Bethany picked up the damaged donut and threw it away.

"Let me clean that," Christiana said, insisting. "I caused the mess."

"It was an accident," Leanna said as she wiped up the table. "It's like I tell Chester all the time. Accidents happen. Just clean it up and move on."

"*Ya*, but his shirt might be ruined." Christiana heard the hint of a whine in her voice. "He got soaked, and that *kaffi* was hot too."

"He'll be fine." Bethany smiled. "Stop beating yourself up."

"Who is he? Jeff who?" Christiana asked.

"Jeff Stoltzfus," Salina said. "He runs a leather and wood booth."

"Leather and wood?"

"*Ya*, you know." Bethany deposited a pile of wet napkins into a trash can. "He makes personalized leather bracelets and belts

and those wooden letters people use to spell out names, like on signs. He also makes little trains made from wood letters that spell out little kids' names and key chains with names on them. The *Englishers* love that stuff."

"Oh." Christiana cupped her hand to her forehead. "I can't believe I bumped into him. I feel so stupid."

Leanna rubbed her arm. "You're too hard on yourself. It was just a mistake."

Christiana helped finish cleaning up the coffee spill. "I'm really sorry for the hassle," she told Bethany.

"It was no trouble at all. And at least we know Jeff will never forget you." Bethany grinned.

"Stop." Christiana swatted her arm. "I should get going."

Bethany squeezed Christiana's hand. "See you soon."

"I need to get back to my booth. The market just opened." Leanna gave Christiana a quick hug. "Let me know what your parents say."

"I will."

"Why don't I show you the empty booth on your way out?" Salina said. "It's across from mine. They're both on corners where two aisles intersect—mine and a main one."

"Okay." Christiana walked through the aisles with Salina, passing both *English* and Amish customers just coming in to visit the variety of booths. She'd always liked exploring the one with used books.

When they reached the far end of the market, they approached Salina's booth, the Farm Stand.

"Here's the empty booth." Salina pointed across the aisle and then led Christiana inside. "I think it's perfect. The last vendor left all the shelving." She gestured around. "You could organize it

the Bake Shop

with pies over here and maybe cookies here.” She pointed to the back. “There’s electricity, as you know, so you could even use a small refrigerator to—”

“Oh no.” Christiana shook her head. “*Mei dat* would never allow me to use electricity. You know how he feels about worldly things.”

“No electricity? Really?” Salina spun toward her, and then she lowered her head and nodded. “*Ya*, I should’ve known that. *Onkel* Freeman is strict.” She pointed to the back of the booth again. “But you’d have plenty of room for supplies.”

“I would need a propane oven to keep up with the baking since I couldn’t just run home to get more. I do think this could work, though. But will *mei dat* allow me to come here?”

“I think he will.” Salina looped her arm around Christiana’s shoulders. “Just be sure to tell him that you’ll have more time to help with chores at home earlier in the week.”

“Right. At least when I’m not baking.” Christiana wound her finger around one of the ties from her prayer covering as she scanned the large booth. It did have more shelves and storage than her bake stand. She could sell more goods and decorate it with a theme for each season. She felt her lips turn up in a smile as she imagined adding pumpkins and leaves to the shelves in the fall and then a poinsettia and greenery at Christmastime. This would be *her* store, her place to do what she loved—sell her baked goods.

“From the grin on your face, I get the feeling you like this idea.” Salina bumped Christiana with her shoulder.

“*Ya*, I do.” Christiana turned toward her cousin. “And seeing you, Leanna, and Bethany is the best part.”

“*Ya*, it is.”

AMY CLIPSTON

Christiana's grin widened. How she adored her favorite cousins! And because they shared their deepest secrets, they often felt like sisters.

"I need to get to my booth." Salina pointed to where the colorful, fresh produce from her garden was already on display for customers to inspect and buy.

"Have a *gut* day." As Salina left, Christiana stepped out of the empty booth and turned the opposite direction from where they'd come. The booth next door boasted the sign Unique Leather and Wood Gifts. She stopped when she spotted personalized bracelets, key chains, and belts inside. A shelf beside those items displayed wooden signs, blocks, and letters. Beyond the shelves and a counter were a workbench, a table, a couple of stools, and tools.

And Jeff Stoltzfus.

When her gaze collided with his, her stomach seemed to drop. Standing, he was wiping a paper towel over the large, dark stain on the front of his shirt.

He offered her a curt nod, which she returned before spinning on her heel and hurrying out of the market.



"I stopped by the market this morning," Christiana said as she set two sheets of peanut butter cookies in the oven late that afternoon.

"Oh *ya*?" *Mamm* was mixing the ingredients for a batch of chocolate chip cookies.

"If you had told me you were going, I would have gone with you." Phoebe frowned as she pulled together ingredients for lemon bars. "You know I like to see our cousins too." She stuck

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her lip out, and Christiana bit back a laugh at her cute expression. At eighteen, Phoebe was seven years younger than her, but unlike her, Phoebe was the spitting image of their mother with her light-brown hair and blue eyes.

Christiana had always believed Phoebe looked like she belonged to their parents more than she did. With her red hair and blue-green eyes, Christiana thought she looked like a stranger in her own family, but her parents had shared that her great-uncle Harvey, whom she never knew, also had red hair and green eyes.

"I promise I'll take you next time." Christiana moved to the counter and began putting cooled butter cookies into boxes.

"How are the *maed*?" *Mamm* asked.

"They're *gut*." Christiana looked at her over her shoulder. "There's an empty booth available across from Salina's, and I'm wondering if I should move my business there."

"What?" *Mamm* spun to face her. "You want to close down your stand here?"

"I think it would be a *gut* idea." Christiana explained all the reasons she and her cousins had come up with. "It would make *gut* business sense, protect our home from unwanted customers, and give me more time to help you and Phoebe here."

"Hmm." *Mamm* tapped her chin. "We'll have to discuss it with your *dat*."

Christiana nodded. "I know. I think he'll agree to it since my cousins are there, and other Amish have booths there too. I wouldn't have any more interaction with the *English* at the market than I do here." She turned back to the counter as her thoughts turned to Jeff Stoltzfus. He'd been rather rude when she apologized to him and tried to help him clean up the mess. After all, the spill had been an accident, and she'd expected him to be a

little more forgiving. Amish were taught to forgive others from a young age.

And maybe he could have been a little warmer, especially when she saw him in his booth. Of course, he was still trying to get the coffee stain out of his shirt.

Still, she couldn't get his sad eyes out of her mind. Nor could she forget her embarrassment. How would she face him if she did take the booth next to his?

"Did you hear what I said, Christiana?"

"I'm sorry." Christiana pivoted to face her mother. "What did you say?"

Mamm tilted her head. "I said Phoebe has something to ask your *dat* too. But why are you so lost in thought?"

"Oh, it's nothing, really." Christiana waved off the comment as she packaged more cookies. "Something just happened at the market this morning. It was—well, it was embarrassing."

"What happened?" Phoebe was at her side in a flash.

Christiana frowned. Why had she even brought up the subject of her clumsiness in the Coffee Corner?

"Tell me." Phoebe's eyes were wide.

Christiana sighed. "I had *kaffi* with the *maed* this morning, and one of the vendors came in. I wasn't paying attention when I got up from the stool to get more creamer, and I bumped into him. I dumped his *kaffi* all over his shirt and made him drop his donut."

Phoebe gasped, and then she cupped her hand over her mouth to muffle a giggle.

"It's not funny," Christiana deadpanned. "It was humiliating."

"*Ach* no." *Mamm* shook her head. "Did you apologize?"

"Of course I did." Christiana leaned back against the counter. "I also tried to help him clean up, but he told me to stop. He wasn't

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very nice. But he made a comment about how he was already having a bad day, so I guess I just made it worse.”

“Accidents happen,” *Mamm* said.

“I know, but there’s more to the story.” Christiana gestured widely. “His booth is next to the one I want to rent. That means I’ll have to see him every day I’m at the market. It’s going to be awkward.”

“What does he sell?” Phoebe asked.

“He makes wooden and leather gifts.” Christiana shook her head. “I don’t know how I’ll face him again.”

“You said he wasn’t nice to you, but was he rude?” *Mamm* asked.

“Ya, he was.” Christiana tapped her finger to her chin. “But he also seemed *bedauerlich*.” Those eyes! She couldn’t get them out of her mind.

“Is he Amish?” Phoebe asked.

Christiana nodded.

“He probably *was* just having a bad day,” *Mamm* said. “We all have those. Say a prayer for him.”

“I will.” Christiana turned back to the counter. “I need to get this baking done before it’s time to start supper. *Danki* for your help—both of you.”

“You’re welcome.” Phoebe shook a finger at Christiana. “But you do need to take me to the market when you go again.”

Christiana smiled. “I promise.”



Later that evening, Christiana scooped a pile of green beans onto her plate and then passed the bowl to her sister.

“Christiana had an interesting day,” *Mamm* began from her

seat at one end of the table, surprising Christiana. Her mother was taking the lead? She hadn't expected that. "She visited the Bird-in-Hand market and saw her cousins, and she also found out there's an open booth. She'd like to move her business there."

"Why would she do that?" *Dat's* eyes widened as he looked at *Mamm* and then at Christiana.

Christiana's stomach tightened. "You know how busy my stand has been and how it's been hard for me to keep up. I keep having to come back to the *haus* to get more of my baked goods. If I move to the market, I'll have more room. And I would be selling my baked goods only Thursday through Saturday. That means I could help *Mamm* and Phoebe with chores Monday through Wednesday when I'm not baking."

Dat pointed to the table. "But you wouldn't be *here* those three days to help as much as you do now."

"I can handle all the chores on those days," Phoebe said, chiming in.

Christiana smiled at her across the table.

"Isn't the market owned by an *Englischer*? Don't they have electricity there?" *Dat* asked.

Christiana nodded. "*Ya*, they do."

Dat shook his head. "I don't think it's a *gut* idea. You know using electricity is against our beliefs, and it's better if you're home and away from the *Englischer* world."

"I won't use the electricity," Christiana said. "Salina and Leanna don't use it. I can put my baked goods in a cooler like I do now. And I'd set up a little propane oven so I could bake *kichlin* during the day to keep up."

Dat shook his head. "No, it's best if you stay here. You see your cousins at church and at family gatherings."

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Christiana's shoulders slumped. She stared down at her pork chop, disappointment plaguing her. Her vision of talking to her cousins at the Coffee Corner before the market opened and maybe at times throughout the day evaporated. How could she convince her conservative father that selling her baked goods at the market wouldn't weaken her loyalty to the Amish church and its beliefs?

Christiana felt a sharp kick on her shin, and she sucked in a breath as she looked up at Phoebe. Phoebe lifted her eyebrows as if to offer encouragement. How Christiana adored her baby sister! With their seven-year age difference, Christiana often felt like her second mother.

Phoebe suddenly sat up straight and folded her hands on the table. "I spoke to Suzanna today. Her parents have given her permission to go to Mexico with a group of young people from the community this fall. They're going to build a *haus*, and she asked me if I'm going too." She bit her lip and exchanged a look with *Mamm*.

Christiana set her fork on her plate and watched her father.

Dat kept his eyes focused on his plate. "You already know my answer, Phoebe. We've discussed this."

"I thought maybe you'd change your mind if you knew one of *mei freinden* is going. We won't be gone very long—not even a week. That means I won't leave *Mamm* and Christiana with chores for long, and I also—"

"No." *Dat's* response was clipped as he frowned at Phoebe. "There's no *gut* reason for you to go to Mexico."

Her sister winced as if *Dat* had slapped her.

"But it's a mission trip. We're going to help people just like the Bible tells us to." Phoebe's pleading voice tugged at Christiana's heartstrings.

“The answer is no,” *Dat* said. “There’s no more discussion.”

“But you always said we need to live a life of service, and—”

“Phoebe Kate!” *Dat* bellowed. “The answer is no. Now, please drop it.”

A heavy silence fell over the kitchen, utensils scraping the dishes creating the only sound.

Christiana met Phoebe’s gaze and gave her an encouraging smile. Phoebe nodded and then looked down at her meal.

“Did you have a *gut* day, Freeman?” *Mamm*’s voice was cheerful.

“*Ya*, we worked on that *haus* over in Strasburg. We almost have the foundation done.”

“How exciting. How big is that *haus* again?”

A knock on the back door sounded, halting her father’s response.

“Are you expecting company?” *Mamm* asked *Dat*.

“No.” *Dat* shook his head as he wiped his graying light-brown beard with a paper napkin.

“May I answer the door?” Phoebe asked.

Dat nodded.

Phoebe popped up from her chair and rushed through the mudroom to the back door. Voices sounded before Phoebe reappeared in the doorway.

“An *English* woman is here,” Phoebe told Christiana. “She wants to know if you have any apple and shoofly pies. She’d like one of each.”

Christiana saw Phoebe’s lips twitch. Why did she find this funny? Then it hit her—this interruption was demonstrating one of her points, the one their father might find the most important.

Perfect timing!

“I do have them.” Christiana glanced at her mother, who

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seemed to be suppressing a smile. "I'll take them out to her." She retrieved the pies from the refrigerator and hurried to the back door. A young woman clad in jeans and a denim jacket stood on the porch. "Hello. My sister said you want to buy some pies?"

"Yes, I do!" She rubbed her hands together. "I'm going to my boyfriend's parents' house for supper tomorrow, and my mother suggested I take something special for dessert. She said you sell the best pies in Lancaster County."

"Tell her I said thank you." Christiana told her the price, took the money, and then handed her the pies. "Have a nice evening."

"You too!" The woman smiled, and then Christiana watched as she headed to her small car.

Christiana closed the back door and then dropped the money into her apron pocket as she returned to the kitchen. When she slipped into her chair, she forked a piece of her pork chop and put it in her mouth as silence once again fell over the kitchen.

"You know, Freeman," *Mamm* said, "if Christiana moved her business to the market, our supper wouldn't be interrupted by eager customers."

Christiana's gaze snapped to her mother's as she held her breath. *Please agree with her, Dat. Please let me move to the market!*

"That's true." *Dat* lifted his glass of water as his blue eyes focused on her before turning to *Mamm*. "But, Lynn, the market is owned by an *Englisher*—"

"And you build for *Englishers*." Christiana wanted to take back the words as soon as they escaped her mouth. She'd never been so bold toward her father before. She chewed her lower lip, awaiting his explosion.

Instead, *Dat* nodded. "You're right. I do." He took another bite and was obviously mulling that thought over as he chewed.

Then he looked up and said, “Christiana, if I allow you to rent a booth at the market, you must promise me that you’ll keep our Plain ways.”

She sat up taller. “Of course I will.”

“Then I will allow it—but on a trial basis. If I see you’re not keeping our Plain ways, you’ll move your business back to the bake stand here.”

“*Danki, Dat.*” Christiana smiled. “May I go to the market tomorrow to talk to the manager?”

“*Ya.*” He gave her a curt nod.

“I want to go with you,” Phoebe said. Her tone held a note of insistence.

“Okay,” Christiana told her.

“Once you confirm that the booth is yours, I’ll take down your stand so customers will stop knocking on our door,” *Dat* said. “I’ll put up a sign asking them to visit you at the market instead.”

“*Danki.*” Christiana looked at her mother, who smiled openly this time. “This is going to be *wunderbaar.*”

2



Jeff stood at his kitchen sink and scrubbed his shirt with such force that he thought the dark-blue material might shred. He gritted his teeth and silently willed the coffee stain to disappear.

When the screen door clicked shut from the mudroom behind him, he peered over his shoulder just in time to see his mother appear in the doorway.

“Hi, *Mamm*.” He did his best to sound bright and sunny despite his foul mood.

“What are you doing?” She crossed the kitchen and took the soiled shirt from his hand. “Are you trying to destroy this shirt?” She turned it over. “What is this stain?”

“*Kaffi*.” He did his best not to roll his eyes as he remembered the stares his shirt had caused at the market. All day long, his customers had seemed more interested in his stain than his items for sale.

Mamm’s dark eyebrows rose above her equally dark eyes. “How did you manage to spill *kaffi* all over this shirt?”

“It’s a long story.” He sighed as the pretty redhead’s shocked

face filled his mind. What had Leanna Wengerd called her? Christine? Christina? No, it was Christiana.

Mamm shook her head as she examined the stain. “The secret to getting rid of a *kaffi* stain is applying warm water, dishwashing liquid, and white vinegar for fifteen minutes. I’ll take care of it.” She met his gaze again. “Now tell me this long story of yours.”

“It’s not that interesting.” Jeff folded his arms over his chest, ignoring his damp hands. “I went to the Coffee Corner to buy my usual cup of *kaffi* and a donut. As I was leaving, a *maedel* bumped into me, and my entire cup of coffee spilled. Not just on my shirt, but all over the floor. I dropped my donut too. Anyway, I spent the rest of the day trying to ignore customers’ stares. It was pretty embarrassing. I suppose I should keep a change of clothes in the booth in case of future emergencies. It was just a terrible day from the start.”

“Did you say a *maedel* bumped into you?” A smile spread across her lips. “Who was the *maedel*? Is she *schee*? Is she single?”

Jeff swallowed a groan. He wasn’t in the mood for one of his mother’s lectures about how he wasn’t getting any younger and needed to get over his heartache and move on before it was too late. “Was that all you heard me say, *Mamm*? Did you not hear that I had a really bad day?”

“I’m sorry.” She folded the shirt and slung it over her arm. “Why did you have a bad day?”

“I had to stop for supplies on my way to the market, and Ella and her husband were at the hardware store.”

Mamm waited a beat before responding. “Oh. Well, what did Ella have to say?”

He looked down at the off-white linoleum and kicked at a scuff with his shoe. His mother would always remember what

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happened; he knew that. But he didn't want her to see the whole truth in his eyes. He didn't want her to know how fiercely he still seethed at the mere sight of Ella and the man she'd married.

"She didn't say anything. I had already made my purchases, so I just slipped out the door before they could see me. I don't care to talk to either one of them." He shook his head. "It just kind of set the tone for my day, though. Then I went to get *kaffi* and the *maedel* dumped it on me. I sold just four wooden signs all day long." He looked up into his mother's warm eyes, and guilt rolled over him. Did he have any right to complain when he had a family who cared for him?

He reached for his shirt. "I can wash my shirt. Just tell me how much dishwashing detergent and vinegar to use."

"That's not necessary." *Mamm* pulled the shirt away from him. "I'll do it since you don't have anyone to do your laundry."

Jeff felt his lips press into a thin line. Not only had he run into his ex-fiancée today, but his mother also had to remind him that he was alone in the house he'd built for her.

Could this day get any worse?

"Are you coming for supper?" *Mamm* gestured toward the back door. "I made your favorite—steak."

"Ya." Jeff raked his fingers through his thick waves and curls. "*Danki.*"

He followed his mother through the small mudroom, out the back door, down the porch steps, and up the path that led from his three-bedroom house to the large, four-bedroom, whitewashed house where he'd been born and raised. He glanced around the lush, green pastures of the dairy farm he and his younger brother helped their father run.

As he and *Mamm* approached her back porch, he looked

over his shoulder at the white house he'd built for Ella. Had his father's farm and the house he'd built not been good enough for her? What did John Lantz have that Jeff didn't?

These questions had haunted him ever since Ella had broken his heart more than a year ago.

"Jeffrey?"

"Ya?" Jeff turned toward his mother's gentle smile.

"Do you want to talk about what's bothering you?"

Jeff bit back a sardonic smile. Hadn't she heard anything he'd said earlier?

"I'm fine, but *danki*." He rubbed his hands together. "I'm ready for some of your fantastic steak."

Jeff entered the kitchen behind his mother and waved a hello to his father and younger brother, Nick, as they sat down at the table. The delicious aroma of steak, potatoes, and freshly baked rolls wafted over him, causing his stomach to gurgle with delight.

"We were wondering if you were going to join us." Nick grinned as he sat across from Jeff. At twenty-four, Nick was four years younger than Jeff, and he'd inherited the same dark hair and eyes from *Mamm* as Jeff had. Jeff thought again about how he secretly envied Nick's straight hair that didn't seem to protest attempts to brush and comb it into submission.

"Jeff was busy trying to get a *kaffi* stain out of his shirt." *Mamm* set the shirt on the counter and then took her seat across from *Dat*. "A *maedel* bumped into him at the market and spilled his entire cup of *kaffi*, most of it on him."

"Oh really?" Nick's smile transformed into a smirk. "Who was the *maedel*?"

Jeff closed his eyes. Why had he shared the coffee story with *Mamm*?

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“Let’s pray,” *Dat* announced.

They all bowed their heads in silent prayer. When every head had lifted, they filled their plates with the delicious food.

“So who was the *maedel*?” Nick asked again as he passed the basket of rolls. “Was she *schee*?”

Ya. *She was*.

Jeff shoved the thought away as he swiped a roll. “I don’t know who she was. She was talking to Bethany Gingerich and Bethany’s cousins when I went into the Coffee Corner.”

“What did you say to provoke her?” Nick chuckled.

“I didn’t say anything to her. It was just an accident. But I had to deal with strange looks from customers all day.”

Nick guffawed, and Jeff fought the smile that threatened to overtake his lips. He had to admit it was kind of funny.

“So was she *schee*?” Nick asked again.

Jeff shrugged. “I don’t know. I don’t even know her.” He cut his steak and racked his brain for a way to change the subject.

“You don’t need to know a *maedel* to decide if she’s attractive,” Nick said. “You should have found out her name.”

“I know her name.” The response leapt from Jeff’s lips without any forethought.

“What is it?” Nick asked.

Jeff hesitated. If he said her name aloud, Nick would nag him relentlessly until Jeff found out more about her or even asked her out on a date. He didn’t need to be harangued about finding someone to replace Ella. He wasn’t ready to move on or trust anyone else with his heart.

“That’s enough, Nicholas,” *Dat* said, and Jeff swallowed a sigh of relief. “Did you sell a lot of items today?”

“Only a few.” Jeff shook his head. “But there’s always tomorrow.”

“That’s right.” *Dat* smiled and pointed his fork at him.

Jeff always appreciated his parents’ upbeat attitude no matter what troubles they encountered. It was their optimism that had prompted Jeff to open the booth at the market after Ella had broken their engagement. They had encouraged him to move forward and try something new as a way to repair his heart. Although he enjoyed his new business venture, his heart was still in shambles. This hobby was his solace, and he was grateful his grandfather had taught him how to create wood and leather crafts when he was younger, but sales weren’t what Jeff had hoped they would be. In fact, if his sales didn’t improve soon, he wouldn’t be able to pay his booth rent and he’d have to close it down.

The notion was almost too much to bear. He couldn’t process the thought of failing at something again so soon after losing Ella. Was he going to spend the rest of his life living as a failure?

“I ran into *mei freind* Miriam at the market today,” *Mamm* began. “She said her *mamm* is feeling much better after that terrible bout of pneumonia.”

As Jeff turned his thoughts toward everyone else’s news, he felt his shoulders relax. He couldn’t allow himself to worry about his booth right now. Somehow, God would see him through this season. He’d just keep praying for better sales so he could keep his business afloat.



“*Gude mariye!*” Phoebe greeted their cousins as she and Christiana stepped into the Coffee Corner booth the next morning.

“Hey there!” Bethany waved Christiana and Phoebe over to their table. “What a *wunderbaar* surprise.” She hopped off her

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stool and pulled a fifth stool over to the table. "Would you both like *kaffi* and a donut?"

"*Ya*, please," Phoebe said. "What's your special flavor today?"

Bethany beamed. "Almond."

Phoebe clapped. "Yum! I'll help you, Bethany."

"*Danki*." Bethany smiled as they headed toward the counter.

Salina scooted her chair closer to Christiana. "Did you talk to your *dat*?"

"I did." Christiana couldn't stop her smile. "It took some convincing, but he approved my moving my business here."

"That's fantastic!"

"How did you convince him?" Leanna asked. "Oh, wait until Bethany gets back to tell us."

When Bethany and Phoebe returned, Christiana explained what happened.

"Did you ask that woman to come to the *haus* during supper?" Bethany asked, joking.

"No, but it would've been a great plan." Christiana handed Bethany money for the coffee and donuts. "I'm so excited. I need to go talk to the manager." She sipped her coffee and then took a bite of her chocolate donut.

"What are you going to call your booth?" Leanna asked.

"I'm thinking of calling it the Bake Shop." Christiana bit her lip while she waited to see if her cousins approved.

"I love it." Bethany held up her coffee cup. "Let's all toast the Bake Shop."

"*Ya!*" Phoebe said as they touched their coffee cups.

"It's going to be *wunderbaar* to be able to see each other every week at the market," Salina said.

"You need to let me come and work with you too," Phoebe said.

“Only if *Mamm* says it’s okay. Remember, you promised to help with my chores,” Christiana said, reminding her of their plan.

“But there will be a price for that.” Phoebe grinned. “I get to come and help occasionally.”

“I guess that’s fair,” Christiana said, and everyone laughed. Then she felt as if someone might be watching her, and when she turned toward the booth entrance, there stood Jeff, looking at them. Her mouth dried as heat crept up her neck.

He nodded at her, and she cleared her throat and looked down at the table.

“Jeff!” Bethany waved at him. “How are you?”

“I’m well.” Jeff approached their table and divided a look between them all. “*Gude mariye.*”

Christiana’s cousins and sister greeted him while she longed to crawl under the table and hide. But when Jeff smiled, Christiana felt the tension in her neck release slightly. He had a really nice smile, and he seemed to be in higher spirits today. But she still noticed a hint of sadness in his eyes. Plus, he’d been rude to her yesterday.

“Would you like *kaffi* and a donut as usual?” Bethany stood and walked to the counter with him. “Today’s special flavor is almond.”

“I’d love *kaffi* and a donut. Almond sounds perfect,” Jeff said. “That’s the best way to start my day.”

“As long as Christiana doesn’t spill your *kaffi* on you,” Leanna muttered, and Salina snorted.

“Is he the guy?” Phoebe’s question was a little too loud.

“Shh,” Christiana hissed. “I’m already embarrassed enough.” She glanced at Jeff, looking over her shoulder.

Is it too late to run out of here?

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“Ya, that’s the guy,” Salina whispered. “And his booth is next to the one that’s vacant.”

“I know!” Phoebe chortled.

Christiana covered her face with her hands.

“Have a *gut* day,” she heard Bethany say.

Christiana uncovered her face as Jeff moved past them, his eyes locking with hers before he exited the booth.

“Did you have to embarrass me like that?” Christiana glared at them all, but they chuckled.

“We were just teasing you, Christiana. It was all in fun,” Salina said. “Besides, he smiled at you. I don’t think he’s holding the spill against you.”

“He’s handsome.” Phoebe’s smile was bright.

“Who’s handsome?” Bethany climbed onto the stool beside her.

“Jeff.” Phoebe nodded toward the entrance to the booth. “He’s really handsome, and he smiled at Christiana.”

“Can we please talk about something else?” Christiana moaned.

“So, when are you going to talk to Kent Dobson about the booth?” Leanna asked. “He’s the manager of the marketplace.”

Christiana felt the muscles in her neck relax as she smiled at her oldest cousin. “I was going to go talk to him after I finished *mei kaffi*.”

“*Gut*. You need to snatch up that booth before someone else does.” Salina held up her cup. “Here’s to our cousin joining us at the Bird-in-Hand market.”

“Hear, hear,” Bethany said.

Christiana touched her cup to her cousins’ and sister’s cups and smiled. She couldn’t wait to get her booth set up. She just hoped no one else had already rented it.