

M E E K *and* **M I L D**

MEEK *and* MILD

• AMISH TURNS *of* TIME •
BOOK 2

OLIVIA NEWPORT

SHILOH RUN  PRESS

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PROLOGUE

Flag Run Meetinghouse
Niverton, Somerset County, Pennsylvania
1895

From the first scratch of sound to settle in her daughter's throat, Catherine Kuhn knew the coming squall would agitate a tempest in the entire row. Even as she tightened her grasp around the toddler and prepared to leave the worship service, Catherine looked across the aisle to catch her husband's eye. Hiram, the reddish hue of his beard distinguishing him in the third row of married men, kept his eyes forward. Probably he would not know she took the child out until Catherine told him later.

Clara's cry rose through her throat and burst across her lips. Catherine hastened her pace, easing herself outside the meetinghouse just before her daughter threw her head back and unfurled her distress into the unsympathetic empty air. Catherine carried the writhing girl farther from the confines of the worship service. This was no simple task. Catherine was eight months along. The energy required for moving quickly enough to contain the disturbance sapped her breath. When she reached the grass at the edge of the clearing where the meetinghouse stood, she let Clara slide down her skirt to the ground.

Clara was tired and probably hungry. When she was rested and fed, she was a delightful child full of curiosity and fluid smiles. When she was tired, though, she seemed to require a primal eruption of temper

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before surrendering to sleep. Catherine squelched envy of the mothers whose children slumbered during church, content in the arms of their mothers or older sisters, with their mellow baby noises exuding comfort to anyone seated close enough to hear. Catherine had expected her own baby would be like this. She took the infant to church when she was only a few weeks old, believing it was best for the child to become accustomed at the earliest possible age to the routine of three-hour services on alternate Sunday mornings. But Clara, with her feathery light brown hair in wispy curls, had not been the sort of baby to fall asleep oblivious to surroundings.

Catherine was grateful to be part of an Amish district that met in meetinghouses rather than homes, alternating between two meetinghouses, both in the southern end of Somerset County, Pennsylvania. Catherine and Hiram had married three years ago in the Flag Run Meetinghouse, Catherine's favorite. It was silly to have a favorite, since the two were identical and two more just like them existed over the border in Maryland, but Catherine enjoyed this particular clearing around the unadorned frame structure.

The year after their wedding was when the trouble started. Bishop Witmer visited to help sort it out, but the results seemed dubious.

Clara settled in the grass, rubbing her cheek in its cool texture, and Catherine saw she had thwarted the tantrum. The child already had closed her eyes and slowed her breathing. Catherine's back ached, but even if she managed to get herself down to the ground, she wasn't sure she would be able to rise when the time came. About ten feet away was a fallen log of sufficient girth to keep her off the ground and give her a fighting chance to stand up again. The log had been there for years, and Catherine suspected it was going soft at the core, but it was her best option. Still catching her breath, Catherine lumbered to the log.

She didn't mind being alone. On most days she savored a few minutes to hold herself still and notice the signs of life around her, the green of the grass, the flutter of tree leaves, the insects crawling along a wooded path, the birds inspecting the ground with their perpetual optimism of finding sustenance. On this day, though, Catherine had hoped against hope that she would be able to remain in church and hear whether the rumors were true. From this distance, she could not discern what was happening inside the meetinghouse.

Twenty minutes later, the women's door opened, and the eldest

Mrs. Stutzman emerged. She had five sons, all married with families of their own. Some of her grandsons had married as well, making “Mrs. Stutzman” an indefinite term. The youngest grandson, John, had only one year of schooling left before he would turn fourteen and join his father in the fields. Catherine had always thought he was the nicest of all the Stutzman children. Betty Stutzman now strode as purposefully as her age allowed toward the log where Catherine sat.

“Hello, Betty.” Catherine reflexively laid a hand on her belly, where the baby had wakened to wriggle.

“You should go inside.” Betty lowered herself beside Catherine and nudged her elbow.

A torrid burst fired up through Catherine’s gut. “What’s happening?” She glanced at Clara, who had thrown her arms above her head in her favorite sleeping position.

“Bishop Witmer should have stayed,” Betty said. “How could he have thought this was settled?”

“Tell me what’s going on.” Catherine’s gaze returned to the meetinghouse.

“Just go in.” Betty nudged Catherine’s elbow again, this time with more force.

Catherine rose. “But Clara—”

“She knows me,” Betty said. “If she wakes, I’ll bring her in.”

Catherine was not sure Betty could lift Clara but supposed she could at least take her by the hand.

She wished her sister, Martha, were there. But Martha and Atlee were at the hub of the trouble, although they held in their characters nothing resembling maliciousness, and the decisions now stirring controversy were made nearly twenty years ago.

“What happened?” Catherine said, frustrated. “Everything’s been fine for more than fifteen years. Why must we suddenly quarrel?”

Betty smoothed her skirt and interlaced her fingers in her lap. “It was peaceful at the time. When some members considered a few small changes, it was a simple thing to use the state line to indicate the preferences.”

“The ministers agreed, didn’t they?”

Betty nodded. “People were free to worship where they were comfortable. No one held a grudge. We were still one church, and have been all this time.”

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Martha and Catherine were children when it happened, too young even to have memories of the event. They had grown to womanhood understanding that congregations meeting in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, held to the old ways, while those in Garrett County, Maryland, took a wider view. Still, the differences were small. Anyone looking in from the outside would not have perceived them.

“So why now?” Catherine said. “If the ministers have held their own opinions and yet served together all this time, why now?”

Betty held Catherine’s eyes. “You’re worried about Martha.”

Catherine forced down the bulge in her throat. “It’s just a class for children and a few new hymns.”

Most of the members in Pennsylvania found the notion of Sunday school hideously of the world. The Amish had lived apart for centuries, so why should they now adopt a spiritual practice that began in Protestant churches? In Maryland, where Martha and Atlee decided to live after they married, church members saw no harm, and neither did Catherine.

“Go on in,” Betty said. “The outcome will not change my life. It’s different for you—and your little *boppli*.”

As quickly as she could, Catherine moved back toward the building and pulled the creaking door open. Inside, the congregation sat in stunned silence as Bishop Yoder spoke in the firm, full-throated manner the congregation had come to expect since he was ordained bishop earlier in the year.

“We will, of course, take a congregational vote,” Bishop Yoder said. “But I will remind you that Bishop Witmer is well acquainted with the events that have occurred in our district in the last two years. Some of you met him while he visited to advise us on how we should proceed. I have presented to you the substance of his counsel to me as your bishop. Let us not respond to the division we have already suffered with more factions. I plead with you now for a unanimous vote on this matter.”

What matter? Catherine wished she could pull on Hiram’s arm to find out what was happening and what his thoughts were.

A man’s hand went up—one of Betty Stutzman’s sons—and Bishop Yoder acknowledged it.

“Are we certain this is the counsel Bishop Witmer offers? Perhaps he does not realize the extent of our family relationships with the Marylanders.”

Martha. Whatever had brought the conversation to this point, it was

going to involve Martha. Heartburn spread across Catherine's chest, and she did not think it was because of the baby.

Bishop Yoder straightened his shoulders. "Jesus said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'"

Deny. Bishop Yoder was talking about shunning the Maryland families, Catherine realized. *Meidung.* He wanted her to shun her sister. To not see Martha. To not speak to Martha. For her children not to know their *aunti*. Catherine stared at the back of Hiram's head, willing him to turn around and see her, but he didn't.

"After this date," Bishop Yoder said, "any families who join the fellowship of the congregation in Maryland will no longer belong to our fellowship, and we will regard them as having abandoned the true faith."

Catherine twisted between relief that the shunning would only apply to future families who left the church and anxiety that shunning should occur at all.

Another hand went up and another man spoke. "In my conversations with Bishop Witmer, I did not find him so resolute."

Irritation flickered from Bishop Yoder's face. "I assure you that Bishop Witmer and I studied the Scriptures together. We also carefully considered the Discipline of 1837, which stresses the importance of a strict ban to maintain a vigorous church. I am sure we all want a vigorous church, do we not? When we neglect God's ordinance, the church falls away. Have we not already seen this in what happened with our former brethren in Maryland?"

Former brethren. The bishop had already cast aside Martha and Atlee Hostetler and the families who worshipped at the Maple Glen and Cherry Glade meetinghouses. How was it possible that the believers who labored side by side to build four meetinghouses should now see each other as former brethren? Catherine's body tensed. Her sister's heart had not fallen away from God. If the bishop would visit the families in Maryland, he would see this for himself.

A few heads turned now, forming pockets of whisper around the congregation. Catherine watched husbands and wives leaning forward or backward around those among whom they sat to find the eyes of their spouses across the aisle. Hiram rotated at last and caught her gaze. Catherine felt the blood siphon out of her face.

"We must vote now," Yoder said, "and I again remind you that a

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unanimous vote is essential to protect us from further division. You are here at Flag Run in Niverton, and not at one of the meetinghouses only a few miles away in Garrett County, because you already realize the authority of the Word of God in this matter. You understand the spiritual benefits that flow into your lives when you submit to the church and the congregation is of one mind. Consider carefully whether you want to be responsible for causing a crack in our unity with a dissenting vote.”

If there had been any honest discussion of the question, Catherine had missed it. The bishop now left members of the congregation with little choice but to vote as he wished.

“All baptized members may vote,” Yoder said. “I ask you to raise your hands with me if you uphold the Word of God and desire to be obedient to the teaching of the true church.”

Catherine’s throat thickened as she again looked at Hiram. Bishop Yoder had not asked whether people believed Sunday school violated the Word of God. He had not asked whether they agreed that the shunning was needful. He had framed his request in a way that marked anyone who disagreed with him as a heretic or an apostate.

Bishop Yoder lifted his right hand high in the air. Catherine, still standing at the back of the congregation, buried her hands in the folds of her skirt. Technically her sister had begun worshipping only on the Maryland side of the border before the ban the bishop now proposed. Catherine could still see her. Yet in her heart she was supposed to think of her as having fallen away. She could not make herself lift her hand.

Yet around the Flag Run Meetinghouse, one hand after another went up. Some lifted eagerly and some reluctantly, but the hands of baptized members present rose. Hiram’s was one of the last, but he complied. Catherine knew her husband had no strong feeling on the matter of shunning those who left to join other churches—even the Lutherans—but she understood that he did not want to be the source of friction in the congregation. Who among the church would accept that role? Hiram sat in a row of men who had already raised their hands. In front of him and behind him, the men watched each other. On the other side of the aisle, the women did the same. Only because Catherine stood in the back could she withhold her vote without notice.

When the bishop asked if anyone opposed, Catherine’s heart pounded. But she said nothing. Perhaps with her silence she had voted

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in agreement after all.

Bishop Yoder smiled in pleasure. “We have a unanimous vote. God will be pleased that we have placed ourselves in His care and have chosen His will over our own. Let us do as the disciples did and sing a hymn as we depart.”

One of the bishop’s sons, Noah, began the hymn, and the congregation soon joined with German words their ancestors had been singing for two hundred years.



CHAPTER 1

*Somerset County, Pennsylvania
June 1916*

The pan lid clattered to the kitchen floor. Clara Kuhn scrambled to contain the noise by stepping on the lid and then picking it up to press against her chest while her heart rate slowed. Three-year-old Mari had gone down for her afternoon nap not six minutes earlier. Rhoda was likely to stick her head in the kitchen and scowl at her stepdaughter within the next seventeen seconds. Expelling her breath, Clara turned around and dunked the lid back into the sink of water to scrub it again. Once she had dried it and stowed it with its matching pot on a low shelf, she ran a damp rag across the kitchen table and declared the kitchen properly tidied after the midday meal.

Rhoda had not appeared.

Rhoda's propensity to scowl at Clara was a recent development in their relationship. Clara didn't know what triggered it or what she could do to make it subside. She rinsed out the rag, hung it over the side of the sink, and drained the water. Mindful of where her skirts might catch or what her elbow might encounter, she moved out of the kitchen and into the hall leading to the front parlor. The voices were low, but with Josiah and Hannah in their last week of school and Mari napping, the house offered nothing to obscure the words. This was not a conversation Clara should walk into, accidentally or not. She halted her steps and held her breath.

"It's time Clara married," Rhoda said.

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“She goes to the Singings,” Hiram Kuhn said. “When she has something to tell us, she will.”

“There must be any number of young men she could marry,” Rhoda said. “Perhaps she’s being particular.”

“I was particular. After Catherine died trying to birth our child, I waited nine years to marry you even though I had a daughter who needed a *mamm*.”

Rhoda’s voice softened. “And I am blessed that you did. Your wait gave me time to grow up and meet you. I have done my best to love Clara as my own—I *do* love her as my own. I want what’s best for her. She needs a husband and her own house to run.”

“I always thought she was a help to you after the children were born.”

“She was. She is. But I can manage my children without help. Clara should be looking after her own *boppli*.”

Remaining still, Clara allowed herself to ease out her breath and cautiously fill her lungs again.

“Of course you can manage the children, but it’s nice to have help, isn’t it?”

“I won’t have Clara thinking that I need her help,” Rhoda said. “She must know that it’s time to grow up. She’s twenty-three.”

“Hardly past the age of being marriageable,” Hiram said.

“Very nearly. She could go to Maryland to stay with her mother’s people,” Rhoda said. “Perhaps she would meet someone to her liking in their church.”

Clara visited her aunt Martha and her cousin Fannie often. Fannie had her own little girl now, and Clara adored Sadie. But Clara had never thought of joining their church. She certainly wouldn’t look for someone to marry in the Mennonite-leaning congregation.

It was not for lack of possibilities that she had not yet married.



Andrew Raber liked going to the *English* hardware store. Whenever he had reason to do so, he allowed himself three times as long as his errand might legitimately require. If he needed a wrench he couldn’t find in an Amish shop, he went to that aisle in the *English* store by way of the electric toasters. If he needed barbed-wire fence to keep horses in their pasture, he also marveled at the rolls of wire that could carry electricity. If he needed a new ax head, he first flipped through the brochures and

catalogs of what could be sent for by special order. He could spend hours under the tin ceiling, walking the uneven wooden floor and investigating the overflowing shelves.

It was not that Andrew intended to purchase any of these things. It was only that he could not stifle his curiosity.

Today he was contemplating a new hoe and rake. Weeks of spring labor had made clear that handles on the cast-off overworked tools he received from his father years ago were ready for replacement. Andrew was fairly certain his grandfather had used those tools as well, and his faulty efforts to sand the long wooden handles back into service without risk of splinters in his hands had persuaded him new tools would not be an extravagance.

He would get to the tools, but right now he was looking at electric table lamps. Some were spare and efficient. Others had ornate bases and decorative glass globes. Some were sold as matched pairs and others billed as unique. Andrew had no doubt, though, that they were all wired alike. When they were plugged into a wall socket, electricity would flow through all the lamps in the same manner.

Andrew chose the lamp that appeared the least fragile and turned it upside down to see if the base might come off and give him a glimpse inside. If he had a screwdriver, he could pry it off, but the risk of damaging the lamp and then feeling obligated to purchase it was too much. He removed the shade and stared at the bare socket where a bulb would go, wishing he understood what he saw.

“Why are you looking at that?”

Andrew didn’t have to look up to know whose mouth the words came from. “Hello, Yonnie.”

“What are you doing?”

“I’m only looking.” Andrew carefully replaced the shade and set the lamp back on the shelf. His eyes flicked to a white globe with painted flowers on it.

“We have all the light we need to read by with our oil lamps,” Yonnie said.

Andrew wondered if Yonnie Yoder even heard the perpetual stern streak that ran through nearly every sentence he ever uttered. Perhaps it was just the way he spoke, his own cadence of language. They’d been boys together, and Andrew learned to disregard Yonnie’s tone years ago. Lately, though, it had begun to irritate him. He had always supposed

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Yonnie would grow into a more graceful way of speaking, but Andrew no longer thought he would.

“Why do you always fuss with the *English* things?” Yonnie said. “Our people do not use them.”

“Maybe we will someday.”

“You should not wish for something so worldly.”

Andrew turned his back to the lamps. “I need a new rake.”



Clara withdrew to the kitchen and then out the back door.

She was in the way. How had she not seen this years ago? It was one thing to be an eleven-year-old child whose father at last remarried and another to be twenty-three and thought to be without options.

Clara’s own mother died when Clara was not yet two. Although Clara’s birth was uneventful—at least that’s what her father always told her—the boy her mother carried had taken too long to come. By the time he arrived—stillborn—Catherine Kuhn was exhausted. The bleeding that followed the birth quickly became uncontrollable, and within minutes Catherine was gone as well. Clara cocked her head, listening to the faraway sounds of that day. As always, she was unsure whether she remembered the screams and the rushing and the clattering of pans as she lay in her crib resisting a nap, or whether imagining the events had seared into her mind in the manner of memories.

Hiram was left with a small daughter and his grief. He was attentive and patient and sad.

When Clara was ten, Hiram met Rhoda, and the little girl saw the light in her father’s eyes that she had longed for all her life.

But grief did not abandon the family with the marriage of Hiram and Rhoda. While Rhoda quickly became with child, one after another, three babies were born three and four months too early. Clara remembered the pall that fell over the house with each loss and the nervousness that shrouded each succeeding pregnancy. Though daylight streamed through the home, weighty darkness pressed on Hiram and Rhoda. After each loss, Hiram withdrew into the shadows and Rhoda instigated a frenzy of “trying again.” At the time, Clara understood little of the biological process that ushered in repeated, cumulative grief, and no one thought to explain it to her, but clearly marriage brought with it great risk of sadness and disappointment.

Finally Josiah safely arrived, and then Hannah, and then Mari. Rhoda was still young enough to have several more children, if God should choose to bless her.

When Clara was a child, before Rhoda, she used to visit her aunt and uncle in Maryland and their rambunctious household. After Fannie, only a year and a half older than Clara, Martha and Atlee produced a string of boys. At twelve, the youngest was scarcely four years older than Josiah. In the summers, when she did not have school, Clara stayed for weeks at a time with the Hostetlers. Sometimes she stared at Martha when no one was watching, wondering if Martha resembled Catherine. Could she look at her aunt and see her own mother's face? Clara couldn't imagine loving Martha more if she had been her mother.

But staying in Maryland now? Away from Andrew?

Clara was not without options, as her stepmother supposed. She could have married two years ago. She could marry in the next season if she wanted to. If Clara confided in her now, Rhoda would plant extra rows of celery in preparation for a wedding as soon as Andrew had his fall harvest in.

Clara did not want to leave Andrew. She did not want to go to a strange Singing and have a strange man ask if he might take her home in his strange buggy.

But neither could she marry Andrew Raber.

Clara glanced back at the house and decided it was time to go clean the *English* household. The banker's wife maintained a busy social schedule, and three giggly daughters felt no compunction to pick up after themselves. A woman who came in to cook the family's meals was adamant she would not clean beyond the kitchen, so the family depended on Clara to come twice a week and restore order. Later in the week she would go to the Widower Hershberger's house for her regular afternoon of housekeeping.

Rhoda's words rang in Clara's ears. Maybe it was time to find more housekeeping work.



Andrew bought his rake. He had come into town in Yonnie's buggy, and now they were headed back toward their farms—Andrew to the

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acreage where he grew up and now lived alone and Yonnie to his parents' home, where he lived while trying to save enough money to purchase his own land.

As the buggy jostled and Andrew's eyes soaked up the scenery, he wondered how his parents could have left this place for Lancaster County. No matter what the season, beauty spilled from every vantage point. The mixed green hues of early summer or the rich rust palette of autumn, the brilliance of summer sunlight or the heavy laden clouds of winter moisture—Andrew savored it all.

A glint of dark green caught Andrew's eyes. On its own, he might have thought it a believable June hue, but it bounced the sun's light in a way that vegetation didn't, and his eye quickly followed the shape to brassy lines.

"Stop!" Andrew said.

Yonnie glanced at Andrew but did not pull on the reins or reach to set the brake.

"Stop," Andrew repeated. He positioned himself to jump down off the buggy's bench whether or not Yonnie halted the forward motion. They were not moving so fast that he would hurt himself—at least not seriously.

The horse's hooves slowed. Andrew glanced gratefully at Yonnie and saw the skeptical expression on his face. Ignoring it, he dropped down to the ground and strode toward the object that had caught his eye at the side of the road, its rear positioned under the lowest branches of a spreading red maple tree.

"Andrew, no."

Andrew ignored the warning in Yonnie's voice. The worst that could happen was Yonnie would drive off and leave Andrew here, which was a risk worth taking.

The sign painted on a large wooden square and propped against the front of the object said FREE.

"Get back in the buggy," Yonnie said. "That's for the *English*. It's not our business."

Andrew moved the sign out of the way and felt the smile well up inside him.

"Andrew!" The sharpness of Yonnie's tone escalated.

"Relax," Andrew said. "Look at this. It's beautiful." His eyes feasted. In town he always felt obliged to avert his eyes at such a sight, but out on

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a quiet road through an Amish district, his courage mounted.

“It’s an automobile,” Yonnie said.

Andrew grinned. It sure was. Shiny and clean and modern.

And free.



CHAPTER 2

A Model T.

Andrew pushed aside drooping branches and uncovered the upholstered seat with neat rows of tufted green diamonds. Hanging off the back of the seat were the neat, organized folds of the collapsed roof that left the seats open to the air. He felt the sun on his head and imagined wind in his face as the automobile rumbled at top speed. Andrew wasn't sure what the maximum speed was for a Model T, but it would be fun to discover it.

Behind him, Andrew felt Yonnie's silent judgment, but he ignored his friend's effort to bore into him with eyes of guilt. At the front of the car, brass-rimmed headlights were open eyes ready to stare fearlessly into the night. Andrew walked around the car, finding four perfectly round tires, two unbroken axles, and twin wide running boards—at least he thought that's what they were called—which would make it far easier to step into the car than it was to get into a buggy. He opened the driver's door and climbed in.

"Andrew!"

"There's a note," Andrew said, taking a card tied to the center of the steering wheel.

"It can't possibly be for you," Yonnie said. "Get out of that *English* contraption before anyone sees you."

Andrew inhaled the alien smell of the vehicle as he unfolded the card and scanned the lines.

Congratulations. It's yours. I've come to the end of my wits with this thing. The ownership documents are in the box under the seat. Good luck getting it running.

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Andrew allowed one side of his mouth to rise in pleasure. “Actually, it is for me. I just found a free car.”

A squirrel darted across the road, and the dark gelding nickered.

“Let’s go,” Yonnie said. “I have chores to do and so do you.”

Andrew glanced at the sky. Nothing on his farm mattered whether he did it today or tomorrow or next week. The horses had plenty of water and hay, and the two hens would lay eggs whether or not Andrew was there. He didn’t keep a cow because he’d never liked milking schedules. Andrew’s fingers fished for the handle again and he leaned into the weight of the door to open it, wondering how to open the cover over the engine. It could not be too complicated—a lever, a hook, a latch to displace. Andrew ran his hands lightly along the angled shape of the hood, feeling for possibilities. When he found the release latch, he paused before opening the motor’s covering.

“Aren’t you even curious?” Andrew gently lifted a green rectangle off one side of the motor.

“No, I am not.” Yonnie’s response was swift. “And you should not be, either.”

“Curiosity is not a sin.”

“If your curiosity takes you away from God’s people, you’ll have to reconsider that statement.”

“Look at it, Yonnie. It’s beautiful. Someone kept it in perfect condition. All I have to do is get it running.”

“And what do you know about the motor of an *English* automobile?”

“Nothing. But I can learn.”

Not everyone in the church spurned motor vehicles as instantly or vehemently as Yonnie did. Although Yonnie was a third cousin to Andrew—neither of them was sure of the exact connection—his family’s name was Yoder, and Yonnie never loosened his grip on the responsibility he felt in also being related to Bishop Yoder.

Yonnie was still on the buggy’s bench.

“Just come down and look at it.” Andrew poked a finger into a greasy connection in the motor and sniffed his blackened fingertip. Oil. He understood nothing about what he was looking at, but the thirst to learn compelled him. Wires. Cylinders. Rubber hoses. Parts he had no words to describe. Somehow all of this harnessed energy that could compete with the power of galloping horses.

To Andrew’s surprise, Yonnie stood beside him now with his fists

balled behind him. Andrew ran one hand along the sleek, polished rod that ran from behind the lights on the front of the car to a shield of glass in front of the steering wheel.

"It's a marvel," Andrew whispered. He saw cars on the road nearly every time he ventured beyond the ring of Amish farms, but never before had he enjoyed the freedom to touch and feel and explore.

"It's for the *English*." Yonnie stepped back several feet.

"What are you afraid of, Yonnie?"

"I am not afraid." The edge in Yonnie's voice sharpened. "I take my baptismal vows seriously. I will live in submission to the church."

Andrew made up his mind. "I'm going to keep this car."



Back from the *English* house, where the electric lights and glittering trinkets held no allure for Clara, she climbed the steps to her room. Clara had slept in the same bedroom all her life. It was neither large nor especially comfortable. She supposed that if her mother had lived and her parents had more children, eventually she would have shared the room with a sister, but living alone with her father for most of her childhood allowed Clara the privilege of privacy. She was fifteen before Josiah was born and eighteen before she had a sister. By that time, no one expected her to share a room with an infant.

At twenty, Clara already had married friends with infants of their own the same ages as her little sisters Hannah and Mari. Her cousin Fannie, for instance, had a daughter barely a year younger than Hannah. Clara was certain Sadie and Hannah would like each other if they were ever allowed to meet.

A dust mop stood propped in the corner of the room, reminding Clara she had intended to clean her own room before Rhoda's words drove her from the house. She ran the mop over the bare wood floor under her bed. She did this often enough that she did not expect to encounter serious accumulation of dust, but she took satisfaction in knowing her bedroom was company clean at any moment. Her mop bumped up against the one item she routinely stored under the bed, and Clara pulled out the small leather bag that once belonged to her mother. With a rag, she cleared the hint of dust that had begun to gather around the handle.

"I wish I had a bag like that."

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Clara looked up to see Hannah enter the room and throw herself across Clara's bed. She kissed her sister. "I didn't realize you were home from school."

"Only two more days."

"You'll miss seeing Priscilla every day when school lets out."

Hannah giggled. "We've promised each other we will nag our mothers all summer to let us play together."

"*Bensel*." Silly child. Clara was certain both girls would fulfill this commitment. Whether their mothers would cooperate in their response was another question.

"Can I use your bag?" Hannah rolled over and took the bag from Clara.

"What will you use it for?"

"Maybe I can go see Aunt Martha, like you do."

Clara had used this bag for overnight visits to Maryland since she was a little girl not much older than Hannah. As soon as her sister died, Martha insisted that Hiram Kuhn allow his daughter to know her mother's family. Hiram never objected. Because Martha and Atlee had joined the Conservative Amish Mennonites before the bishop's ban when Clara was a toddler, Clara broke no rules by seeing her aunt and cousins. The shunning was not strictly enforced anyway. Most of the families in the district traced to both churches at some point in the family trees, and those who were not related by blood were connected by friendships spanning generations. Amish business serving both congregations flourished on both sides of the border. Farms on both sides of the border supplied milk to an Amish dairy in Somerset County. Dairy drivers collected the milk on daily rounds, and the dairy sold milk, cream, butter, and cheese to the *English* as well as Amish families who wanted more than their own animals produced. No one stopped to ask what date a person had joined the Marylanders.

"I could ask *Mamm*," Hannah said, "and maybe the next time you visit Aunt Martha, I can go with you. It's going to be summer. I won't miss any school. I could play with Sadie."

"We'll have to see." Clara did not want to make promises. Rhoda would be the first to point out that her children were not related to the Hostetlers in any way.

"That's what *Mamm* says when she hopes I'll forget about something." Hannah's lower lip trembled on the verge of a pout.

“She’s your *mamm* and she loves you,” Clara said.

“But you’re my sister and you’re a grown-up. You wouldn’t let anything happen to me.”

Footsteps sounded down the hall, and Hannah sat up in recognition of her mother’s approach.

“Hannah!” Rhoda called.

“Go quickly.” Clara nudged Hannah’s thin form and was relieved when the child complied without arguing. The last thing Clara wanted to do right now was inflame her stepmother’s mood. She would stay out of Rhoda’s way, be as silently helpful as she could, and hope that the notion of sending her to live in Maryland would pass.



“Come on,” Andrew said. “Help me.”

“Help you do what?” Yonnie said.

“Move this car.” Andrew picked up the FREE sign from the ground in front of the car and carried it to Yonnie’s buggy.

“You’ve been making me do things like this our whole lives.”

Andrew winked. “We’ve never moved a free car before.”

Yonnie turned his head to look both directions down the road. “Where exactly are you planning to move it? We’re still a long way from our farms.”

“So you’ll do it?”

“I didn’t say that. I’m just pointing out reality.”

Yonnie was especially good at pointing out reality. Even as a boy, he persistently hovered over what might go wrong or which rules they might break even accidentally in the course of ordinary childhood play. Perhaps that was why Andrew had long ago developed the ability to ignore Yonnie’s lack of enthusiasm. He barely heard the protests anymore.

“There’s a barn,” Andrew said, “just over a mile down the road. It’s been empty for at least five years.”

Yonnie cocked his head to think. “An *English* family named Johnson used to live there.”

“That’s the place. A fire took the house, and they didn’t rebuild.”

“If they were Amish, they would have. Everyone would have helped.”

“Well, they weren’t Amish and they were getting on in years. I heard they moved in with their son in Ohio.”

“They must still own the land.”