

Seek Me
With All Your Heart

A Land of Canaan Novel

Beth Wiseman



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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To Natalie Hanemann



Pennsylvania Dutch Glossary

ab im kopp—off in the head

Aamen—Amen

ach—oh

aenti—aunt

boppli—baby or babies

The Budget—a weekly newspaper serving Amish and Mennonite
communities everywhere

dumm—dumb

daadi—grandfather

daed—dad

danki—thanks

dochder—daughter

Englisch—a non-Amish person

fraa—wife

Frehlicher Grischtdaag—Merry Christmas

gut—good

guder mariye—good morning

hatt—hard

haus—house

kaffi—coffee

kapp—prayer covering or cap

kinner—children or grandchildren

lieb—love

maedel—girl

mamm—mom

mammi—grandmother

mei—my

mudder—mother

nee—no

onkel—uncle

Ordnung—the written and unwritten rules of the Amish; the understood behavior by which the Amish are expected to live, passed down from generation to generation. Most Amish know the rules by heart.

Pennsylvania Deitsch—Pennsylvania German, the language most commonly used by the Amish

rumschpringe—running around period when a teenager turns sixteen years old

schtinkich—stinks

wunderbaar—wonderful

ya—yes



One

EMILY STOOD BEHIND THE COUNTER OF HER FAMILY'S country store, watching as the tall man walked down each aisle, the top of his black felt hat visible above the gray metal shelving. First thing that morning, he'd strolled in and shot her a slow, easy smile, white teeth dazzling against bronzed skin. He moved slowly, sometimes glimpsing in her direction.

Emily twisted the strings on her apron with both hands and tried to slow down her breathing. Her heart pulsed against her chest as she glanced out the window toward her family's farmhouse in the distance. *Where is Jacob?* Her brother knew she didn't like to be left alone in the store, and he'd promised to be right back.

Their community was small, and all the members in the district knew each other, which was the only reason Emily agreed to work in the shop. But this Amish man was a stranger. And Amish or not, he was still a man.

Emily jumped when the man rounded the bread aisle toting a box of noodles in one hand and a can in the other. With the back of one hand, he tipped back his hat so that sapphire blue eyes blazed down on her. As he approached the counter, Emily clung to her apron strings and took a step backward.

“How come everything in this store is messed up?” Tiny lines creased his forehead as he held up a can of green beans with a large dent in one side. Then he held up the box of noodles. “And this looks like it’s been stepped on. It’s mashed on one side.” He dropped them on the counter, then folded his arms across his chest and waited for her to answer.

He towered over her. Emily stared straight ahead, not looking him in the eye. The outline of his shoulders strained against a black jacket that was too small. Her bottom lip trembled as she turned her head to look out the window again. When she didn’t see any sign of Jacob, she turned back to face the stranger, who looked to be about her age—maybe nineteen or twenty—which didn’t make him any less threatening. His handsome looks could be a convenient cover up for what lay beneath. She knew he was not a married man since he didn’t have a beard covering his square jaw, and his dark hair was in need of a trim.

He arched his brows, waiting for her to respond, looking anything but amused. Emily felt goose bumps on her arms, and chills began to run the length of her spine, even though Jacob had fired up the propane heaters long before the shop opened that morning.

“This is—is a salvage store.” Her fingers ached as she twisted the strings of her apron tighter. “We sell freight and warehouse damaged groceries.” She bit her lip, but didn’t take her eyes from him.

“I can’t even find half the things on my list.” He shook his head as he stared at a white piece of paper. “What about milk and cheese?”

“No, I’m sorry. We mostly have dry goods.”

He threw his hands in the air. Emily thought his behavior was improper for an Amish man, but raw fear kept her mouth closed and her feet rooted to the floor.

“Where am I supposed to get all this?” He turned the piece of paper around so she could see the list.

Emily unwrapped the strings of her apron and slowly leaned her head forward. She tucked a loose strand of brown hair underneath her *kapp*.

“What’d you do to your hand?”

Emily glanced at her hand, and a blush filled her cheeks when she saw the red indentions around her fingers. She quickly dropped her hand to her side and ignored his comment. “You will have to go to Monte Vista for most of those things. People usually come here to save money, just to get a few things they know we’ll have for a lesser price.”

“That’s a far drive by buggy in this snow.” He put both hands on the counter and hung his head for a few moments, then looked up as his mouth pulled into a sour grin. With an unsettling calmness, he leaned forward and said, “Just one more thing I can’t stand about this place.”

Emily took two steps backward, which caused her to bump into the wall behind her. “Then leave,” she whispered as she cast her eyes down on her black shoes. She couldn’t believe she’d voiced the thought, and when she looked back up at him, the stranger’s eyes were glassed with anger.

“Please don’t hurt me.” She clenched her eyes closed.

DAVID COULDN’T BELIEVE what he’d heard. “*What? Hurt you? What are you talkin’ about?*” He’d never hurt anyone in

his life. He walked around the counter and reached his hand out to her, but she cowered against the wall.

“I’m sorry. Whatever I did, I’m sorry. Please, don’t cry.” He touched her arm, and she flinched as a tear rolled down her cheek. He pulled back and said softly, “Please. Don’t cry. Look . . .” He showed her his palms, then backed up and got on the other side of the counter. “I’m leaving. Don’t cry.”

He rubbed his forehead for a moment and watched her trying to catch her breath to stop the tears from flowing. She swiped at her eyes and sniffled, then looked up at him. He noticed a scar above her left brow. A deep indentation that ran nearly to her hairline.

The bell on the front door chimed, and David looked away from the woman and toward the sound. An Amish fellow around his own age stepped inside. He glanced at David, then took one look at the woman against the wall and hastily rushed over to her. He brushed past David, almost pushing him, and touched the woman on the arm.

“Are you all right?”

“I didn’t do anything, I promise.” David watched the young man wrap his arm around her and whisper something in her ear. “I mean, I guess I acted like a jerk, but I never meant to . . .”

The fellow waved a hand at him and shook his head before turning his attention back to her. “Go on back to the *haus*.”

David’s eyes followed the young woman as she scurried out the door, her chin tucked. Through the window, he saw her trudge through the snow toward a white house on the other side of a picket fence, her brown dress slapping at her shins as she hugged herself tightly. David pointed to a black wrap hanging

on a rack by the door. “She forgot her cape,” he said and looked out of the window again. He wondered what exactly had just happened.

“I’m Jacob.” The man walked closer and extended his hand to David, who forced a smile.

“I’m David, and I’m real sorry. I came in here in a bad mood, and I guess I must have scared her or something.” He dropped his hand and shook his head. “But I sure didn’t mean to. Really. I’m just real sorry.”

Jacob peeled off a snow-speckled black coat, walked to the rack, and hung it beside the forgotten cape. He turned to face David. “It’s not you. My sister just gets like that sometimes. I try not to leave her alone, but I heard one of the horses in the barn kicking at the stall, and I was gone longer than I should have been.”

“Is she . . .” David wasn’t sure how to ask. “*Ab im kopp?*”

Jacob chuckled. “*Nee*, she ain’t off in the head.” His expression grew serious. “She’s just . . . I reckon she’s just going through a *hatt* time right now.”

The bell on the door chimed again, and David saw a small girl enter. She was bundled in a black bonnet and cape and was breathing hard. “Are you the one who made Emily cry?” She thrust her hands on her hips and drew her mouth into a frown. David opened his mouth to answer, but Jacob cut in.

“Betsy, what are you doing out here? You’re supposed to be helping *Mamm* get those jams labeled so she can carry them to Abby’s bakery later. Does she know you ran over here?”

The child untied the strings of her bonnet, pulled it off, then tucked loose strands of blonde hair beneath her *kapp*. “I reckon this is more important.” She folded her small arms

across her chest as her hazel eyes bored into David. "What did you do to Emily?"

"Betsy, he didn't do nothing. Now, get on back in the house." Jacob stacked papers on top of the counter, dismissing the child.

Betsy walked to David, her hands landing back on her tiny hips. She squinted her eyes and pursed her lips together. "I want you to know that if your behavior instigated this outpouring of emotion from my sister, it would be best for you not to visit us here again." She nodded her head once, but David was too stunned to say anything. *The women in this family are crazy.*

"Just pretend she's not here," Jacob said as he walked to the girl. He gently grabbed her by the arm and led her to the door. He pulled the door open. "Put your bonnet on and go home, Betsy."

Betsy stood in the doorway as snow powdered her black cape and the threshold of the shop. She plopped her bonnet back on her head, tied it, then lifted her chin. "I will be going back to tend to Emily, and I suspect you should be heading to your own *haus*." She spun around and slammed the door behind her.

David cocked his head to one side and watched Betsy from the window. "How *old* is she?"

"Seven." Jacob shrugged, then sighed. "And a handful."

David scratched his chin and finally pulled his gaze from the window. "I have a sister who is seven, but she doesn't talk like that." He paused. "I don't know many Amish folks who talk like that, even us older ones."

"*Ya*, Betsy is special. She's a real pain most of the time,

but *Mamm* and *Daed* let some *Englisch* people give her some tests, and they said she's what they call gifted." Jacob pushed a button on the cash register, and the drawer swung open. He filled the slots with bills as they talked. "Betsy's been reading since way before other *kinner* her age. I reckon she thinks she knows everything." He chuckled. "Sometimes I think she does, too, using them big words and all. She does math real *gut* too."

David nodded. "Oh."

Jacob slammed the cash drawer shut, then smiled. "In case you were wondering, *mei mamm* is normal."

David laughed. "*Gut* to know. Are those your only siblings?"

"No. I got a younger *bruder*, Levi. But he works with *mei daed* doing construction and installing solar panels."

David had noticed that lots of the Amish homes in Canaan used solar panels, something you didn't see a lot of in Lancaster County. "How'd your *daed* and *bruder* get into that?"

"*Daed* knew he was going to need to find an outside job here since farming is going to be a challenge, at least in the beginning." Jacob shook his head. "Can't believe that there's only three months of frost-free weather here." He paused with a sigh. "Anyway, *Daed* planned ahead and learned about these solar panels before we moved here."

David nodded again as he considered whether or not his family might benefit from solar panels.

"And me and Emily take care of the shop, and 'course *Mamm* has the house to tend to . . . and Betsy, which is a full-time job when she ain't in school." Jacob scratched his forehead. "What 'bout you? Where'd you come from? I haven't seen you around here."

David sighed. "We moved here. Yesterday. We're not even

unpacked, but my stepmother wanted me to pick up a few things.”

“You don’t sound happy about this move.” Jacob sat down on a stool behind the counter and eyed David skeptically.

“I’m not, really. I mean, my whole family and everything I’ve ever known is in Lancaster County. In Pennsylvania. My great grandfather left us some land, so we moved.” David shook his head. “Although . . . I reckon I don’t know why. This is nothing like Lancaster County. It’s—” He stopped when he realized he might offend Jacob if he went on.

“It’s all right.” Jacob took off his hat and ran a hand through wavy brown hair. “You ain’t tellin’ me anything I don’t know. We moved here from Middlefield, Ohio, three months ago. It’s real different here for us too.”

“What made your family move?”

Jacob shrugged. “Needed a change.” He pulled his eyes from David’s and his forehead wrinkled as he went on. “And Levi’s got asthma. The weather is better here for him. Less mold, which seems to trigger it.”

David suspected there was more to it than that, but he just nodded.

“Lillian, my stepmother, was wondering where the school is for my sister. I have two sisters, but only Anna is old enough to go to school. She’s the one who’s the same age as Betsy. Elizabeth is almost five, so she won’t start until next year.”

Jacob grunted. “There ain’t no schoolhouse. Hoping to build one soon, though. Right now, the young ones are getting their schooling from Emma Miller, the widow around the corner.” Jacob pointed to his right. “Big blue house on the next road to the right. She teaches them in the barn.”

“In the barn?”

“Ya. She’s got a *gut* setup out in her barn. All the young scholars have their own desk, and it’s all heated with propane. It’s just until we can get the school built. Widow Miller is sick; otherwise Betsy would be in school today.” Jacob chuckled. “Bet *Mamm* is hoping she gets well real soon.”

David had almost forgotten about his list from Lillian. “I better pay for these couple of things, then head to town for the other items.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a five dollar bill.

“There’s a singing here on Sunday, if you’re interested.” Jacob handed David his change. “It won’t be nothing like what you’re used to, I’m sure, and there ain’t a whole lot of people who attend, maybe only ten or fifteen, but you could meet some folks. There will even be a few single girls coming. How old are you, anyway?”

“I just turned twenty.”

“And you ain’t married yet?”

David forced a smile. Marriage wasn’t in his plans. “No.”

“I’m getting married in December.” Jacob grinned again. “Adding another crazy woman to my life. Beth Ann’s her name.”

David watched Jacob’s eyes light up when he said her name—his new friend was happy about this. “Congratulations.”

“*Danki.*”

David picked up his small bag with the noodles and green beans, and then extended his other hand to Jacob. “Nice to meet you, and please tell Emily that I’m not some psycho or anything.” He chuckled, but stopped when he saw the color fade from Jacob’s face. “Did I say something wrong? I just don’t want her to think I’m—”

Jacob waved his hand. “Nah, it’s okay. I can tell you’re a normal guy.” Then he stood up and headed toward the back of the shop. “See ya ’round,” he said over his shoulder. “Come Sunday, if you feel like it.”

David opened the front door of the shop and walked toward his buggy. The snow had stopped, and he glanced across the white terrain between the shop and the house. Movement on the front porch caught his eye. *Emily*. He stopped for a moment, then pivoted on his foot and headed in her direction. He’d never made a woman cry before today.

EMILY’S FACE FLUSHED with embarrassment as she watched him walking toward her. When was she ever going to feel—and act—normal again? She reached up and touched the scar on her forehead. *Never*.

The screen door slammed behind her, and Vera Detweiler joined her daughter on the porch.

“Who is that handsome fellow comin’ ’cross the yard?” *Mamm* smoothed the wrinkles in her brown apron. “I don’t recognize him.”

“I’m going in the *haus*.” *Emily* started to step around her mother, but felt a hand on her arm.

“*Emily*. That’s rude. Is this young man coming to see you? Did you meet him at the shop?”

Emily wiggled free of her mother’s grasp. “*Ya*. But he’s not very friendly, and I’d rather not talk to him.”

Mamm’s lips thinned. “*Emily*, how are you ever going to find a man and get married if you keep running away from

everyone?” She softened her expression. “You must move past what happened.”

The man was nearing earshot, so Emily didn’t have a chance to respond.

“*Guder mariye.*” *Mamm* waved from the front porch. Emily didn’t think there was much good about this morning at all.

“*Guder mariye* to you.” He stopped in the yard and looked up at Emily and her mother. “I just wanted to come apologize to Emily.” He shoved his hands in his pockets, and with his shoulders hunched forward, his gaze landed on Emily. “I’m sorry for the way I acted back there.” He nodded toward the shop. “I’m just having a really bad morning. I didn’t mean to scare you.”

With renewed humiliation about her behavior, Emily looked away from him. When she turned back to face him, his gaze was still on her. “It’s all right,” she mumbled, casting her eyes to the ground, wishing she’d never have to see him again. *Not much chance of that if he lives here.*

Her *mamm* carefully eased down the porch steps, then extended her hand to him. “I’m Vera Detweiler.”

“David Stoltzfus. We just moved here yesterday from Lancaster County.” He latched onto *Mamm’s* hand, glanced at *Mamm* for a moment, then looked up at Emily.

Mamm turned her head and smiled. “That’s my daughter, Emily.”

As David’s hand dropped, he nodded in Emily’s direction. “*Gut* to meet you. And again, I’m sorry for the way I acted. I’m not normally like that.”

Emily drew in a deep breath and was about to speak when *Mamm* cut in.

“Come into the *haus*. Let me get you some hot *kaffi*. You can tell us about your family.”

Mamm started back up the porch steps and then turned around to see if David was following her. He hadn’t moved. *Good. Maybe he’ll just head back to wherever he came from.*

“Come in, come in,” *Mamm* coaxed with a wave of her hand. “We’re such a small community, we’re always anxious to meet new members.”

Emily held her breath, but David smiled and moved toward the steps. *Mamm* waited for him at the doorway and held the screen door for him to follow her in. Emily trailed slowly behind them.

“Emily, you keep David company while I go get us all a cup of *kaffi*. I have some on the stove.” *Mamm* smiled in a way that made Emily self-conscious, and she waited until her mother turned before she rolled her eyes.

“Uh, I can go if you want.” David arched his brows, holding his hat in his hands. “I saw the eye rolling thing.” Then he grinned.

Now that she was feeling safe inside with her mother, she allowed herself to notice the well-defined, boyish dimples on either side of his striking smile. Back in Middlefield, she might have responded to his good looks, but she was wiser now and knew that looks were deceiving.

“*Mamm* asked you to stay, so stay.” Emily pointed to the rocker in the corner of the room. She waited for him to sit down before she eased onto the couch across the room from him. She folded her hands in her lap, sighed, and then watched David tap his foot nervously against the wooden floor.

“So . . . Jacob tells me that there is a singin’ here on Sunday.”

Thanks a lot, Jacob. Emily forced a smile. “*Ya.*” She strained to see around the corner and into the kitchen. *Mamm* was placing three cups on a tray. “I reckon there won’t be many people here. It won’t be anything like you’re used to, I’m sure.” She turned back to him, narrowed her eyes, and frowned. “No outside games or anything. And mostly younger teenagers.”

“*Kaffi* for everyone.” *Mamm* hummed as she sauntered back into the den, then placed the tray on the coffee table. Emily wondered how much more transparent her mother could be. “*Ach*, I forgot the creamer. I’ll be right back.” *Mamm* scurried back to the kitchen about the same time Emily heard tiny feet jumping down the stairs. Betsy stopped at the bottom of the stairs and folded her arms across her chest.

“What are *you* doing here?” Betsy glared at David, who sat up a little taller when he saw her.

“Besty, *Mamm* invited him for *kaffi*. This is David Stoltzfus.”

“Betsy and I met earlier.” David smiled. “Although we weren’t properly introduced.” He stood up and extended his hand to Betsy, who ignored the gesture. She squinted her eyes and pressed her lips firmly together before she veered around him and plopped onto the couch beside Emily. David returned to the rocker as Betsy slid closer to Emily on the couch, then placed a protective hand on her sister’s knee. Emily’s heart was heavy as she put her hand on top of Betsy’s. *I wish Betsy didn’t know something bad happened to me.*

“Here we go.” *Mamm* returned carrying a white creamer in the shape of a cow, a trinket *Mamm* said her grandmother had given her. Emily disliked the creamer, and it embarrassed her every time her mother used it. When *Mamm* walked toward

him, David held out his cup, and Emily stifled a grin as he eyed the cow.

“Interesting creamer.”

Mamm raised the tail end so that milk spewed out the cow’s mouth and into David’s cup. *Mamm* thanked him, although Emily wasn’t sure David’s statement had been a compliment.

“So where are you living? What homestead did you purchase, David?” *Mamm* sat down in the other rocking chair in the far corner.

David finished taking a sip of his coffee, then set the cup down on the table between him and *Mamm*. He shook his head before answering. “I don’t know who owned it before, but it’s a real mess. Needs lots of work.”

“Where ’bout’s is it located?” *Mamm* crossed her legs as she sipped her coffee.

“If you head north toward that bakery that’s on the corner . . .” David pointed to his right. “I can’t remember the name of it, but you turn on that street.” He scratched his forehead for a moment. “My family lives in the two story *haus*, the one that badly needs new paint. And my *Aenti* Katie Ann and *Onkel* Ivan moved into the smaller *haus* on the property.”

Betsy leaned forward and narrowed her eyes at David. “You bought that old place?” Betsy’s voice squeaked as she spoke.

Emily watched David’s cheeks redden. “*Ya*, I know. It’s in real bad shape. But we plan to start painting, and . . .” David let out a heavy sigh. “My stepmother, Lillian, ’bout fell over when we pulled in last night and she found out that there ain’t no indoor bathroom. Just an outhouse.”

Mamm set her coffee cup down and kicked her rocker into motion. “You said your stepmother?”

Since divorce wasn't allowed, Emily knew David's mother must have died, and she felt a wave of sympathy as she recalled the death of her grandmother two years ago.

"Ya. Lillian is great. *Mei mamm* died when I was eight, and *Daed* married Lillian about three years later." He paused and the warmth of his smile echoed in his voice. "Everyone loves Lillian. She's been a great stepmom, and I have two sisters now. Elizabeth is almost five, and Anna is seven, same age as Betsy."

"I look forward to meeting all of them." *Mamm* returned the smile and then turned to Betsy. "I'm sure Betsy will be anxious to meet Elizabeth and Anna."

Betsy's eyes sparkled with mischief and grew rounder as she spoke. "Lizzie at my school said an evil witch used to live at that house."

"What?" David cinched a brow and leaned forward.

"Betsy!" *Mamm* glared at her. "That's enough!" She turned to David. "I apologize for *mei maedel*, David." She faced off with Betsy again. "Where in the world do you hear such nonsense, such silliness that is not proper talk?" Then their mother straightened in her chair as she folded her hands in her lap. "I reckon to have a word with Magdalena about this." She turned to David. "That's Lizzie's *mamm*," she said as she cringed. "They're from Missouri." Then she shrugged, as if that explained it.

Canaan was home to Old Order Amish families from Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri. Folks had slowly been settling in this southern part of Colorado for about seven years. From what Emily had learned over the past three months, some were buying land at cheaper prices than in their home state. Others said there was a shortage of land where they lived. And she'd recently met an older man

and woman who left their Order in Indiana because they disagreed with the way their bishop was running the community. Then there were those folks who seemed to be running from something—like her own family. She instantly wondered which category David and his family fell into.

“David, how did you come to purchase the property?” *Mamm* tilted her head to the side as the tiny lines above her brows became more evident.

“My great-grandfather purchased it.” David shrugged. “I don’t think he ever saw the place. He bought it off a computer at the library before he died. *Mei daed* said Grandpa Jonas bought it mostly for the land, but said we’d have lots of work to do on the houses.” He shook his head. “But I reckon none of us knew it was gonna be this much work.”

Betsy chuckled. “That’s for sure.”

Mamm pointed a warning finger in her direction. “Be quiet, Betsy.” Her mother turned back to David and took a deep breath. “Well, as you know, we’re all about hard work, and I’m sure the community will pitch in and help.”

David’s mouth tipped up on the left side as he nodded. “We might need some help. I know *mei daed* and Lillian would appreciate it.”

Betsy crossed her small legs, pressed her lips together, then peered at David. Emily recognized the expression and feared Betsy was about to disobey their mother again.

“Lizzie said there are snakes in the basement that the witch collected, and I’m not going to that house.” She shook her head back and forth.

Mamm bolted upright from her chair, and Betsy’s face twisted into a frown. “Betsy! To your room. Right now. You

are being rude.” Their mother pointed to the stairs as her face turned a bright shade of red. “There is a load of clothes on my bed that needs folding. Tell David good-bye.”

Betsy huffed and then stood up. She gave a quick wave in David’s direction; then she stomped across the room to the stairs. *Mamm* waited until Betsy was out of earshot before she turned her attention to Emily.

“Where does *mei dochder* come up with this silliness?” *Mamm* sighed. “I will most surely be havin’ a talk with Lizzie’s mother.”

Emily shrugged, and *Mamm* turned back to David. “I apologize for Betsy. We continue to scold her for making up such outrageous stories. Betsy is a smart girl, but she has a big imagination.” She took a deep breath and stood taller. “I’m sure that you and your family will make the *haus* into a wonderful home. And I’m sure the community will help you.”

David nodded with a half-smile, then stood up from the rocker. “I best be going. I’ve still got to go to Monte Vista for some supplies.”

Emily wasn’t surprised by his desire to get out of their house. He probably thought they were all a bit *ab im kopp*. He’d witnessed Emily react like a crazy woman earlier in the shop, and Betsy said there were snakes in his basement left there by an evil witch. Emily couldn’t help but grin. Maybe he wouldn’t come around too much.

But then there was *Mamm*. Always trying to make up for her family’s actions by running her perfect household with a smile on her face. Always perfect, always happy. It never mattered what happened, *Mamm* carried on as the ideal *fraa* and *mudder*, with her flawless *haus* and her ability to pretend that

everything was good . . . all the time. Betsy often made that difficult, but three months ago it had been Emily who challenged her mother to face tragedy and still keep a smile on her face.

“Wait right here.” *Mamm* jumped up and scurried toward the kitchen. Emily drew in a breath and blew it out slowly as she avoided David’s eyes on her. *Don’t look at me*. She wanted to reach up and cover the scar on her forehead, but doing so would only draw attention to it, so she fought the urge, leaned into the back of the couch, and kept her eyes down.

“Guess I’ll see you Sunday.” David smiled as he spoke, and Emily felt her chest tighten.

Her mouth dropped open slightly, but she quickly snapped it shut. After a moment, she said, “You won’t like the singings here. Hardly anyone comes.” She shook her head as she stood up and faced him. “I wouldn’t waste your time.”

“Jacob said there will be some single ladies here.”

Emily locked eyes with him for the first time since he’d arrived. Nervously, she moistened her dry lips and shrugged. “Maybe.” Then she looked away as her stomach churned, wishing he’d just leave and not come back. She knew his type. Charming and good-looking—but deceitful, which could cause a girl to let down her guard.

She shivered as a brief flashback threatened to squeeze her throat shut and leave her breathless, a feeling she’d had more than once.

“But *you* don’t want me to come on Sunday?” He rubbed his chin for a moment, then dropped his hand and fumbled with his hat.

Emily was relieved when *Mamm* walked back into the den.

“Here, David. You carry these things to Lillian.” *Mamm*

pushed a large, brown paper bag toward him. “There are three loaves of bread, some pretzels, and a batch of my famous oat-meal cookies.” She smiled as David stood and accepted the bag. “And you tell Lillian to stop by anytime. And not to panic. We will all help you get things together at your new home.”

“*Danki*, Vera. I know Lillian will be real appreciative.” He moved to leave, *Mamm* following. Emily was relieved when he was almost out the door.

He turned around before he pulled on the handle. “See you Sunday, Emily.” An easy smile played at the corners of his mouth. Emily bit her bottom lip, then forced a smile.

“*Gut, gut.*” *Mamm* gazed at him as if he were the answer to all her prayers.

Emily began to calculate. *Today is Wednesday. Four days.*

Four days to find an excuse not to be at her own house during the singing.