

Praise for A Clearing in the Wild

"A Clearing in the Wild is Jane Kirkpatrick at her finest. The story is quickly paced and engaging from the first to the last. One of the most difficult tasks for a writer—and Kirkpatrick's specialty—is to contemplate the lives of real people and to re-create a believable episode in those lives that is accurate yet interesting, to both inform and entertain. The dialog sings masterfully with perfect tone, building characters and pushing the story line in succinct phrasing that never overstates. Emma Wagner Giesy's story feels as genuine as if she herself were telling it."

—NANCY E. TURNER, author of Sarah's Quilt and The Water and the Blood

"Jane Kirkpatrick has done it again! A Clearing in the Wild introduces us to a feisty young heroine who, by her determination, ingenuity, and faith, helps to create a home and a life in the wilderness. Readers are sure to fall in love with Emma as she weaves the story of her life, creating a pioneer tapestry and leaving us anticipating the next layer of her inspirational story."

—RANDALL PLATT, author of Honor Bright and The Likes of Me

"Through her careful research, Jane Kirkpatrick has captured the trials of those who are determined to settle a land that does not easily yield to civilization. She has brought to life another woman in our history whose faith, strength, and commitment is a testament to not only the pioneer spirit but the human spirit as well. Thank you, Ms. Kirkpatrick, for not allowing Emma Wagner Giesy to languish in obscurity."

—KARLA K. NELSON, owner of Time Enough Books in Ilwaco, Washington

"Emma Wagner Giesy is brave, willful, and beautiful, and *A Clearing in the Wild* brings her to life without for a moment sacrificing her complexity. Kirkpatrick compels us to think again, and deeply, about the needs of the body, soul, and mind; and in these pages she proves once again that she is a gifted chronicler of the lives of women in the West."

-MOLLY GLOSS, author of The Jump-Off Creek and Wild Life

Praise for A Tendering in the Storm

"Jane Kirkpatrick again proves herself to be one of the finest writers working in historical fiction today. With *A Tendering in the Storm*, Kirkpatrick applies her usual meticulous research and rich period detail to give readers a wonderful story with strong, unforgettable characters. Beautifully and thoughtfully written as always, this novel will capture your attention, your imagination, and your heart."

—B. J. HOFF, author of the Mountain Song Legacy and An Emerald Ballad

"In A Tendering in the Storm, Jane Kirkpatrick continues the story of the tensions between the individual and the community that are at the core of the communal experience. The voices of Emma Giesy and Louisa Keil offer personal and passionate perspectives of these often conflicting views. Kirkpatrick presents a historically based and emotionally charged account of challenges, change, and charity."

—James J. Kopp, communal historian, Aurora Colony Historical Society Board of Directors and the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission

"Once again Jane Kirkpatrick's attention to historic detail brings the hardscrabble existence of the Willapa Bay pioneers to life. In *A Tendering in the Storm*, Emma Wagner Giesy struggles with choices she makes in response to great tragedy. With rigid honesty, Kirkpatrick shows the consequences of these choices and how Emma regains her strength through love, trust, and sacrifice."

—KARLA K. NELSON, owner of Time Enough Books in Ilwaco, Washington

"The title *A Tendering in the Storm* keenly expresses the continuing story of the intrepid Emma Wagner Giesy as she struggles between the comfort and security of her religious community and self-reliance in the midst of tumult. Jane Kirkpatrick's impressive research on this true character reveals many realities of one woman's efforts to carve out a life for herself and her children on the burgeoning frontier of Washington Territory. In her engag-

ing style rich with metaphor and imagery, the author explores issues still relevant in today's world: women's rights, child custody, property rights, domestic violence, and religious freedom. Bravo!"

—Susan G. Butruille, author of *Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail* and *Women's Voices from the Western Frontier*

Praise for A Mending at the Edge

"I love when a book illuminates a small slice of history that has relevance to our lives today—even better when it does so with interesting characters and a compelling story. Emma Giesy is a woman with flaws and attributes we all can relate to and whose journey is one that easily could have taken place today."

—JUDITH PELLA, best-selling author of the Daughters of Fortune series

"Jane has a gift for breathing simple beauty into the lives of remarkable historical women characters. In *A Mending at the Edge*, Emma comes off the page and shows readers an unforgettable picture of a very unique Oregon community."

—ROBIN JONES GUNN, author of the best-selling Glenbrooke series and the Christy Award—winning Sisterchicks novels

"Jane Kirkpatrick's knack for stitching history and fiction together is as skillful as the quilts she writes about in the Change and Cherish Historical Series. *A Mending at the Edge* is a satisfying ending to an absorbing series that manages to stay true to the past while relating remarkably well to today's modern women."

—Tina Ann Forkner, author of Ruby Among Us

"In A Mending at the Edge, Jane Kirkpatrick completes the literary quilt of the Emma Wagner Giesy trilogy, piecing together the historical fabric of Emma's personal story with that of the Aurora Colony. Emma's efforts to find a house—and a home—in this communal society in Oregon once again reflect the conflict of individual and community needs represented in Kirkpatrick's earlier two works in the Change and Cherish Historical Series. Based on a solid historical framework of the Aurora Colony and the broader social, political, and cultural landscape of the 1860s, Kirkpatrick offers a story of hope and achievement that captures the spirit of giving, sharing, and receiving central to 'mending' within a communal settlement."

—James J. Kopp, communal historian and board member of the Aurora Colony Historical Society

"Jane Kirkpatrick artfully weaves this story for us, rather like Emma and the women of Oregon's Aurora Colony weave together their quilted existence as well as their personal quilting projects. Her masterful placement of the fresh-turned phrase and the graceful metaphor enriches this captivating and yet disquieting story of mid-nineteenth-century pioneer women whose lives are so very different from ours—or are they?"

—SARAH BYRN RICKMAN, author of Nancy Love and the WASP Ferry Pilots of World War II, The Originals, and Flight from Fear

Emma & Aurora

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JANE KIRKPATRICK

Emma & Aurora

THE COMPLETE

Change So Cherish

TRILOGY



EMMA OF AURORA
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For A Clearing in the Wild, Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, translated out of The Original Tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised. New York: American Bible Society, 1858. For A Tendering in the Storm and A Mending at the Edge, all Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version. Scripture quotations marked (RSV) are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1952 [2nd edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by Permission. All rights reserved.

This book is a work of historical fiction based closely on real people and real events. Details that cannot be historically verified are purely products of the author's imagination.

Grateful acknowledgment is made for the use of the Paul Johannes Tillich quote in *A Tendering in the Storm* on page [to come].

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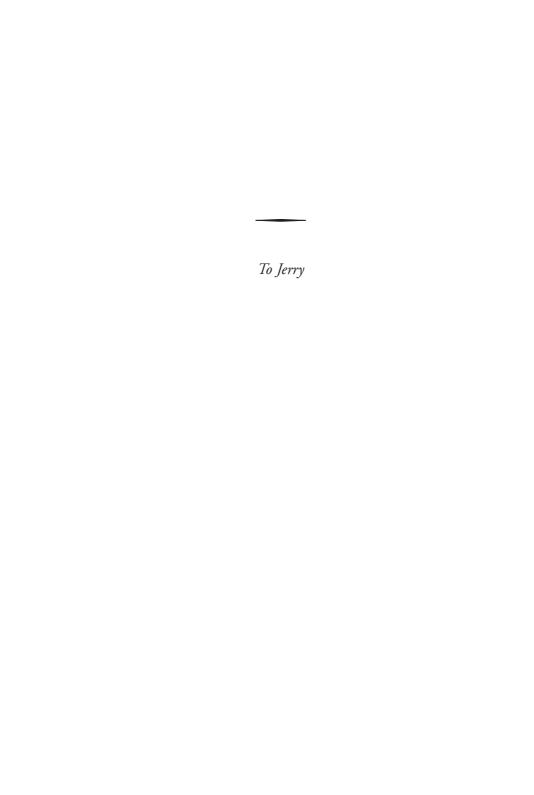
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Clearing in the Wild

a novel



CAST OF CHARACTERS

Emma Wagner

young German girl living in Bethel Colony

David and Catherina Zundel Wagner

Jonathan, age 18 David Jr., age 11 Catherine, age 9

Johanna, age 7 Louisa, age 5

William, age 3

Emma's siblings

Emma's parents

Christian Giesy

Andrew Catherina

Wilhelm Keil Louisa Keil Willie

> Aurora Gloriunda

Several other Keil children

Andreas and Barbara Giesy

Helena Giesy Mary Giesy Sebastian Giesy

Karl Ruge

John "Hans" Stauffer John Stauffer

appointed leader of the scouts;

Emma's husband

his son his daughter

leader of Bethel, Missouri colony

Wilhelm's wife

his son his daughter his daughter

Christian's parents one of Christian's sisters

sister-in-law to Emma and Helena Mary's husband; Christian's brother

German teacher in colony

scouts sent west

Michael Schaefer Sr.
Joseph Knight
Adam Knight
John Genger
George Link
Adam Schuele
Christian and Emma Giesy

John Stauffer Michael Schaefer Sr. Joseph Knight Adam Knight John Genger George Link returning scouts

Ezra Meeker

*Nora and the gut doctor

*Simmons and Marie

*Frau Flint and Frau Madeleine

*An-gie

*Pap

*N'chi

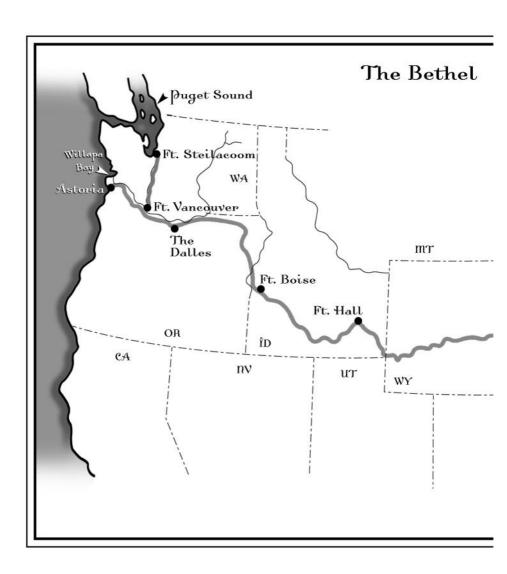
Captain Maurice Maloney

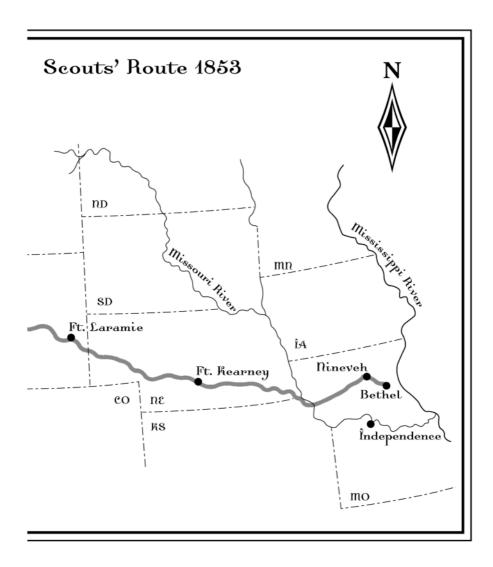
Sam and Sarah Woodard James Swan

Opal Opal Charlie Washington Territory settler couple at Fort Steilacoom their children women at Fort Steilacoom Chehalis maid her daughter her grandson commander at Fort Steilacoom

settlers at Woodard's Landing early resident/writer of Willapa region the mule the goat the seagulls

^{*}fictional characters





You can tell they're all related even though they're each unique. They resist exposing their tender innards. Something hard must happen to break them open; a foreign source invades. Then a knife slice and they unveil their treasures deep within.

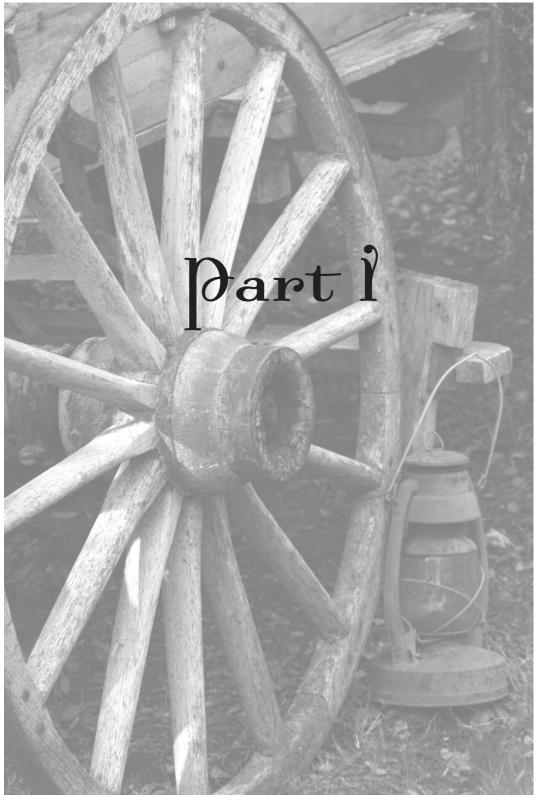
ANONYMOUS, "On Oysters"

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?...And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?...Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

GENESIS 3:9, 13, 21

And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.

ACTS 2:44-45, RSV



The Thread of Love

Some say that love's enough to stave off suffering and loss, but I would disagree. Quietly, of course. Words of dissent aren't welcome in our colony, especially words from women. I should have learned these lessons—about dissent and love—early on before I turned eighteen. But teachings about spirit and kinship require repetition before becoming threads strong enough to weave into life's fabric, strong enough to overcome the weaker strains of human nature. It was a strength I found I'd need one day to face what love could not stave off.

But on that Christmas morning in Bethel, Missouri, 1851, celebrating as we had for a decade or more with the festivities beginning at 4:00 a.m., a time set by our leader, love seemed enough; love was the thread that held the pearls of present joy. It was young love, a first love, and it warmed. Never mind that the warmth came from the fireplace heat lifting against my crinoline, so for a moment I could pretend I wore the wire hoop of fashion. Instead of something stylish, I wore a dress so simple it could have been a flannel sheet, so common it might belong to any of the other dozen girls my age whose voices I could hear rising in the distance, the women's choir already echoing their joy within our Bethel church. Winter snows and the drafts that plagued my parents' loft often chilled me and my sisters. But here, on this occasion, love and light and music and my family bound me into warmth.

Candle heat shimmered against the tiny bells of the Schellenbaum,

the symbol of allegiance my father carried in the church on such special occasions. The musical instrument's origin was Turkish, my father told me, and militaristic, too, a strange thing I always thought for us German immigrants to carry forth at times of celebration. The musical instrument reminded me of an iron weather vane on top of one of the colony's grain barns, rising with an eagle at the peak, its talons grasping an iron ball. Beneath, a crescent held fourteen bells, alternating large and small, dangling over yet another black orb with a single row of bells circling beneath it. A final ring of tiny bells hovered above the stand my father carried this early morning. As a longtime colonist, he walked worshipfully toward the *Tannenbaum* sparkling with star candles placed there by the parade of the youngest colony girls.

My father's usual smiling face wore solemn as his heavy boots took him forward like a funeral dirge, easing along the wide aisle that divided men from women, fathers from daughters, and mothers from sons even while we faced one another, men looking at women and we gazing back. All one thousand members of the Bethel Colony attended. The women's chorus ended, and I heard the rustle of their skirts like the quiet turning of pages of a book as they nestled down onto the benches with the other seated women.

Later, the band would play festive tunes, and we'd sing and dance and give the younger children gifts of nuts and apples, and the men might taste the distillery's nectar of whiskey or wine, though nothing to excess, before heading home to open gifts with family.

We began the Christmas celebration assembled in the church built of bricks we colonists made ourselves. We gathered in the dark, the tree candles and the fire glow and our own virgin lanterns lighting up the walnut-paneled room as we prepared to hear Father Keil—as my father called him—preach of love, of shared blessings, of living both the Golden and the Diamond Rules. He'd speak of loyalty to our Lord, to

one another, and ultimately to him, symbolized on this day by the carrying of the *Schellenbaum* and the music of its bells across the red-tiled floor.

As my father passed in front of me, I spied my older brother, Jonathan, my brother who resembles me. He, too, is small and slender with eyes like walnuts framed by thick brown eyebrows set inside a heart-shaped face. I used to tease my brother about his chipmunk cheeks until the day I overheard Helena Giesy say, "Emma Wagner and her brother look like twins, though Jonathan is two years older. Such puffed up cheeks they share," she said. Our rosy cheeks bind us.

Jonathan held his lower lip with his teeth, then raised his eyebrows, letting his eyes move with deliberateness toward the front and the tall, dark-haired man standing next to Father Keil. Now my heart skipped. Jonathan lifted his chin, grinned. My face grew warm.

I never should have told him.

At least I kept the secret from the little ones, though Catherine at nine, wise beyond her years, would claim she was adult enough to know, but she'd have clucked her tongue at me for even thinking in the way I did. David, Johanna, Louisa, and William, well, they'd have blabbed and babbled without knowing what they really said.

The bells tinkled and the band struck up notes. Later, if the weather held, the band would move out onto the platform around the church steeple and play *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing* so loudly that perhaps the ears of those in Shelbina thirteen miles south would be awakened and our colony would intrude on them, but in a glorious way. We were meant to be set apart by our commitment to the common fund, Father Keil told us, and yet to serve. Lately, Shelbina and its railroad threatened us. My father said Father Keil grew worried that Shelbina's life might lure young men away. Father Keil would do his best to keep Bethel's sons loyal, separated, even though he said our passion should be

to bring others to our fold, save others from God's planned destruction of our world, give to those in need, especially to widows and their children. We were to bring to the colony, through our acts of love, the women who wore white globes called pearls around their necks, the fine ladies who sought after jewels and gems that marked false loyalties to luxury over faith.

Neighbors. The people of Shelbina were good neighbors, I always thought. They bought our gloves, our wine, and our corn whiskey. But few of us really knew them. We had no way of knowing if they'd heard about the coming destruction or if they suffered from worries and woes. Our religious colony cherished lives of simplicity, sharing frugal wealth in common, all needs of colonists met, silencing desire for unnecessary passions. Whatever cash we earned went to the common purse. If we needed cash for some outside purchase, we went to that same coffer. Whatever we needed from the colony's yield, we simply walked to the storehouse to secure it. My mother said it eased all worry about the future; I saw it as one more person to have to convince to let loose the purse strings.

We colonists were different from those around us in Missouri; we were an island of our own. We worked to stay unsullied by the larger distractions of the world that Shelbina symbolized even while we attempted to bring others into the joys of our colony's ways.

Only the strongest of us could reach outside and yet stay faithful, Father Keil said. I smoothed my skirt and felt the ruffle.

The brass horns pierced the room, announcing Father Keil's beginning words. Angels' trumpets. Music is the perfect way to celebrate a glorious occasion, I've always thought. Jonathan played in the men's band. Not me. Not girls, not young women. Our music came from our voices raised in the choir or while beating rugs or dyeing wool or serving

meals to men. I couldn't carry a tune in a candlestick holder, something else that made me different.

But separation from the women's choir or the brass instruments of music did not keep me from the joy of this day especially.

My father set the *Schellenbaum* on its stand, then took his place across from us, sliding next to my brothers, who then wiggled on down the bench, a place they always sat. We'd been a part of this colony for as long as I could remember. My father had been one of three scouts sent out from Pennsylvania by our leader to find a "place of separation" in the unknown territories, far from the larger world. I was five years old when we moved with other German families discouraged by the changes in George Rapp's colony at Harmony, Pennsylvania. We seceded first to Phillipsburg, then into Indiana, then into Shelby County, Missouri, where our leader imagined Bethel into being. It is a joyous place, Bethel, even though my father says many will be summoned in the morning to discuss reasons we might have to leave again.

Change never troubled me. I welcome change, newness, though I work to keep my pride in check about it. Pride is an evil thing, our leader tells us. We must not envy, must not lust, must not covet. So no one knows I've stitched a ruffle to my crinoline. It is a harmless vanity easily removed but one that warms my spirit knowing it is there, unique on this winter morning as crisp as a hot-ironed crease. I gaze without envy along the row of plain and simple wool dresses of Bethel's sisters on the benches.

Change has its richness in a colony where everything seems the same. At seventeen, I am of marriageable age, so change sticking its head inside my door will be patted like a welcomed dog on its happy head.

Before we left our brick home this morning, my mother cautioned me when I noted that this might be my last Christmas as Emma Wagner. Next year, next Christmas, I might carry a new name and enter the festivities not as a child, but as a woman.

"He preaches of late, Father Keil does, that one should be devoted to the colony, not marry so young," my mother said as we readied to leave for the service. She combed Johanna's hair into a braid, brushed a crumb from little Louisa's face. "He says perhaps women should marry not at all. Tink of Saint Paul who advised, 'I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.'"

"But he also said it's 'better to marry than to burn,' "I challenged. I could see my breath through the cold of our large house. I licked my fingers and flattened three-year-old William's cowlick as he sped out the door, then pulled on gloves made by Bethel factory workers.

"Paul says that, too," my mother continued, "but then tells, 'He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.'"

"Ja, a good husband should please his wife," I said. "Besides, Father Keil married." I pulled on my woolen hood and tied the bows beneath my chin. "His nine children might say he either burned much or none at all."

"Ach, Emma!" my mother chastened. "How you talk. Young Father Keil married before he came to know the Lord as he knows Him now." Her hands shooed me out the door toward the rest of the family.

"He's been a colony leader for many years, and his wife Louisa still has diapers to change," I said, walking backward to keep chatting with my mother. My father held a lantern so we could see to walk to the church on the crunching snow, and he used it to signal me to turn about, gather up my younger brothers and sisters.

"Wiser now he is, so he shares his wisdom with us, and we must listen," my mother finished.

"Who is wiser?" my father said as we joined him beneath the stars. "You," my mother offered, taking his arm.

I didn't pursue the subject, but my disagreement with her and with our leader's view gave me yet another reason to be joyful about my unseen ruffle. After all, isn't part of wisdom thinking on one's own, doing not what everyone else does but making distinctive marks, as distinctive as...as a Turkish instrument carried by a German man?

Now we sat and listened to the bells of the *Schellenbaum* tinkle at this early hour service. Surely our leader didn't think young men and women would forgo marriage or families for the sake of the colony? How would it grow? Would he rely on new conversions of men going with courage into the outside world, men too strong to be lured into the world's ways?

The tall man standing next to our leader moved to center the *Schellenbaum* on its stand beside the altar. My heart pounded with anticipation. He was my father's good friend, our leader's emissary most recently into Kentucky and the Carolinas. His name was Christian Giesy, and it was him I hoped to marry, though I wasn't sure if he even knew my name.

Christian Giesy. I prayed I'd aged enough that he might see me this Christmas morning as a young woman and not just a snippet of thread tethered to the weaving of my parents.

He did not look my way but instead stared off as though he saw a glorious place somewhere far beyond this room, his eyes as shining as the lantern light flashed against the *Schellenbaum*. I swallowed. Perhaps he too believed as our leader did, that the finest way to honor God meant remaining celibate and unmarried.

I pitched away that disappointing thought.

Our leader raised his voice, large before us. Even errant thoughts of mine were pulled into the cymbal clang of his call to worship. His eyes were deep pools of churning water that nearly frothed with intensity and yet a kind of joy. We young women stopped shuffling our slippers. Men muffled their coughs. Mothers whispered quietly to their children, "Be silent, now." His oldest son, Willie, gazed up at his father as though he were a saint. Only the sizzle of candle wax and the fire's roar and the occasional tinkle of the *Schellenbaum* bells moved by the fire's draft interrupted our leader's words as he drew our faces toward him, toward the words my parents first heard in Pennsylvania, words that took us all in and changed our very lives. The fire waned in the brick church. I felt a chill. We remained awake in the cold and with *his* words. When he raised his voice, a mesmerizing sound echoed words I'd heard so often as a child from him and then from my own father, too, who preached, though without the fervor of our leader. I didn't need to pay attention now. But I willed myself to keep staring at him, to not let my eyes wander onto Christian Giesy.

A tinsmith, Christian, who also served as one of the missionaries our leader sent south to bring in new communal members, was a man one year younger than our leader but wiser and more handsome than our leader had ever been, though Christian's build was leaner, a sturdy pine beside Father Keil's squat oak. The recruits, whom we hoped would eventually convert, were usually people who could advance the colony: wagon makers, farmers, coopers. I wondered if we were contributing to their souls by making them colonists as much as they contributed to our coffers. Sacrilege, such thoughts.

My eyes ached from staying open. I refused to blink for fear the lids would overtake me and embarrass me with sleep. Maybe just for a second I could close them.

My head dropped onto my mother's shoulder. "Emma," she whispered. "Sit straight!"

Catherine pursed her lips as I wiped my drooling mouth with the

back of my hand, hoping no one else had seen my lapse. Catherine was "too good" and would never sleep in church. Some unseen force moved my eyes to Christian's. I willed my face to heat no crimson blotches on my cheeks as I looked boldly at him. He stared, his dark hair as silky as a beaver pelt, no part, combed back. Long sideburns rolled up into a mustache thick and trimmed. Dark hair acted as a picture frame for a strong face, straight nose, and eyes as blue as the feathers of a bluewinged teal and just as soft. I sighed despite myself and my mother elbowed me. Had he seen me fall asleep? I hiccupped. My mother frowned. When I saw that Christian let his eyes rest on mine before he eased them toward our leader, I couldn't control the racing of my heart.

"Ve never neglect the children," our leader said when his sermon about Christmas joy ended and the children swarmed around him. My father said we American children were spoiled now, no longer having to fear the arrival of *Peltz Nickel*, the frightening, chain-dragging, bell-ringing companion of *Belsnickel* and *Christkind*. The former frequented the old country, prepared to punish us for wrongdoing through the year while we waited for presents from the Christmas hosts. Instead, we German-American children of the Bethel Colony witnessed our leader in the form of *Belsnickel*, who brought us goodies and who celebrated with tiny *Schellenbaum* bells instead of ugly chains. Still, I wondered whether even in this colony, because of our German history, joyous things came with the threat of later punishment and chains.

As children gathered around *Belsnickel*, I held back. But then the childhood lure drew me, and I rushed in to reach for the candies and raisins along with the little ones. Peppermints are my favorite, and our leader's wife, Louisa, had placed several inside little strips of cloth tied

with hemp. Her youngest daughters, three-year-old Aurora and five-year-old Gloriunda, pushed on either side of me, and I helped them forward, lifting Aurora to my hip, stepping in so my five-year-old sister, Louisa, could reach more easily too. The rest squealed in delight. Their voices sounded like tinkling bells and I loved it.

"Not so much with the little ones," my mother said as I pranced back to her, my young charges now on their own and my hands filled with little cloth bags of sweets I handed out to William, barely three, and to mother and others too embarrassed to reach in with the children. Wool swirled around my legs. She shook her head. "Spending time with the children is easier, I tink, than acting of your age."

"I might be unmarried forever, you tell me, so let my childhood fingers dip into *Belsnickel*'s bag, please?"

"Ach," she said, brushing her hand at me dismissively, but she smiled and accepted the peppermint piece I gave her. "We help serve food now," she told me, and I gave Louisa and Aurora a candy. Both scampered to our leader, who lifted them high and nuzzled their necks with his beard, a dozen other children still clamoring at his feet.

Arm in arm, my mother and I walked to where the women uncovered tins of sausages and scrambled eggs kept heated in their tubs. Breads of all kinds and *Strudels* and moist cakes with nuts quickly covered the table. Steins of wine set like sentries along the white cloth overlooked the bounty. Our leader said these common meals following his sermons were celebrations of the Last Supper, served as though the Lord Himself were present, and it did seem as though our community was blessed this day with love in abundance and the spirit of grace.

Dawn seeped in through the tall windows, but outside the ground lay comforted by snow that didn't appear warm enough to melt. We'd have fine ice-skating later. I wondered what Christian would be doing. Enjoying his sisters and brothers and parents, I imagined, since he'd

been gone so long. I sensed where he stood in the room. His presence filled a space, and I could see glimpses of him towering above many of the other men as I set tubs of *Sauerkraut* on the table.

The band played now, and Jonathan and Willie—our leader's oldest, my age—tapped their feet while marching notes rang out. Our leader didn't play in the band but sometimes brought out his harmonica. Now he clapped his hands as the children gathered around him for new treats he gave each one. The Christmas celebration proved almost as glorious as when we celebrated our leader's birthday on March 6. His wife's birthday and year were exactly the same, but it was *his* years we all cheered over. Louisa cheered too and said on more than one occasion that her husband was nearly as blessed as our Savior. I wondered if all wives see their husbands as such. She didn't even want us mentioning the day of her birth. My mother said she was a saint, Louisa was, and such a model of a wife and mother.

Perhaps.

The table now looked complete, and Louisa signaled to our leader the readiness.

"Christian will ask the blessing," he said. This surprised me that our leader would permit another to speak on such a spirited occasion.

Christian stepped forward and clasped his hands in prayer, holding them before his straight, strong chest. People in our colony did not kneel to pray. We stood tall, our heads raised, our loyalty and worship given freely, not because it was required as it had been in the old country, in the old religion, but because we believed in our Lord and our leader and stood ready to move to follow both as required.

Christian closed his eyes, and yes, I know I should have too, as did other Bethelites gathered in the church, but the opportunity to watch him, without any others noticing or later chastising me for my boldness, was a gift as precious as the peppermints and twice as sweet. Christian's words came first in German, to make us feel at home, as one, though we are set apart. Then he spoke them all in English, for it was the language of our adopted nation, a language I'd just begun to learn. "The Lord bless this bounty prepared by grateful hands whose duty is set to minister to others. We thank the Lord for this provision, as for all provision. May we follow Your directives always to worship You and live in Christian love and not false luxury."

He paused then. I thought to add more of what our leader might have said about our colony. Instead, I watched as he turned slightly and searched the crowd. He found my eyes. He smiled, winked, nodded once, and then he said, "Amen."

The meal filled our stomachs. I watched as Helena, Christian's sister, laughed with her brother. I hungered as Christian clicked his heels in recognition of one of Helena's friends, closer to Christian's age than I. The Giesys were of Swiss descent, prudent, hard-working, and wise. I served meals and talked with friends, always aware of where my soul was anchored: to Christian, to his dark eyes, his promise of adventure taking him places far from Bethel.

I never once spoke to him. He was the favorite of so many. He never looked my way again, and so the wink became a question for me. Perhaps it hadn't happened.

Just before we'd set to leave, with Jonathan and David Jr. carrying out the *Strudel* pans, my mother and Catherine and Johanna bustling about making sure we left the church without a crumb beneath a table, and Louisa still skipping with Aurora, I noticed Christian Giesy stood beside my father. I straightened my shoulders, hoping it made me look older. I walked to the men then, bold as a bull calf, and heard my father

say "trouble." I wondered if they spoke of Shelbina, but then Papa said, "move one more time," and I knew they must be talking of a new colony somewhere. Michael Forstner, a friend of my father's and a carpenter, had built up four colonies already following our leader, most in Pennsylvania: Harmony and Phillipsburg and New Harmony in Indiana, and then Bethel in Missouri. My father spoke often of the intricacies of keeping our colonists separated from the world's influences while still allowing commercial interaction that sustained us all. Our grain and gloves and whiskey were sold to outsiders. We sometimes even talked of mulberry trees and silk production just as those at Harmony did. Harmony was the colony where discord reigned, and my father seceded from it along with all the Giesys, eventually finding our leader to follow to Missouri.

Then I heard my father say to Christian something about "asking for trouble," and before I could lick the peppermint from my lips, that handsome friend of my father's turned to me. He clicked his heels as though a Swiss soldier and bowed at his waist. "Your father consents to my walking you home, should you concur," he said. "Though he warns me of the trouble."

"Trouble is the needle God uses to stitch us into finer quilts," I said before I could censure the spicy words as they rose through the tightness in my throat.

"I warn you," my father told Christian with raised eyebrows, but also with a smile.

We started off walking past the houses that inside were filled with celebrating Bethelites. I hardly heard a word Christian said, aware more of how close he stood, how the backs of our hands barely brushed, yet I could feel the heat of them like hot rocks my mother placed at the foot of our bed to warm the sheets of my sisters and me. Once I nearly stumbled in the snow, and Christian caught my elbow but in an instant

released it, keeping chaste as required. He spoke a little of his journeys into Kentucky. I merely listened, hoping he'd not ask questions of me. What in my life was worthy of sharing with so important and so fine a man twenty years my senior? My feelings bounced like bells in a strong wind.

We sauntered toward the sawmill, past brick houses. Up the incline stood Elim, the large three-story home of our leader set up like a castle on a hill. We would walk to it later, and on the second floor, everyone would gather. Suddenly, our leader rushed out of the Latimer *Haus* toward us, his white napkin still tugging at his throat as he strode to where we stood.

"Chris, it is *gut* you have passed by. Ve have much to talk about. I'm finished eating here, so come, ve go to Elim."

Christian smiled at him. "Wilhelm, can it not wait until—"

"You rush along now, Emma Wagner," our leader said, shooing his hands at me as though I were his chicken. "Catch up with your father and brothers and stop bothering Mr. Giesy. He has little time to look after girls who fall behind their families." He tugged at the tuft of hair below his chin kept separated from his beard. "Go, then. See, your father waits now."

I wondered what Christian would do to correct our leader's understanding of my annoying him. *Annoying him.* I pushed my shoulders back straight as a knitting needle.

"Wilhelm," Christian began, but our leader already headed up the hill toward his home. He rolled his arm as though inviting Christian to hurry along, refusing to look or listen to what anyone else had to say. He left his wife and children at Latimers' to fend their own way home.

Christian smiled at me, eyes sparkling and wistful as a boy's. But he shrugged his shoulders, lifted his palms, then pointed with his chin to

my father. "Hurry along then, Emma Wagner. There must be trouble I need to tend to."

"Ja, there's trouble," I said as I turned my back to him before I had to watch him do the same.

I reasoned something as I stomped away: Keil, our leader, pronounced his own name in the English as *keel*, the word that means the backbone of a vessel. He saw himself as a keel, that portion of a boat's structure which runs from bow to stern and to which all else must attach to form the ship. It is what keeps the ship afloat. But in German the word does not mean "keel," but "wedge" instead, something that splits, heavy like an anchor piercing the sea to hold the ship or keep it from moving forward. As I turned to see the back of Christian walking from me, I began that day to wonder if Father Keil would form a wedge in what I wanted for my future.



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