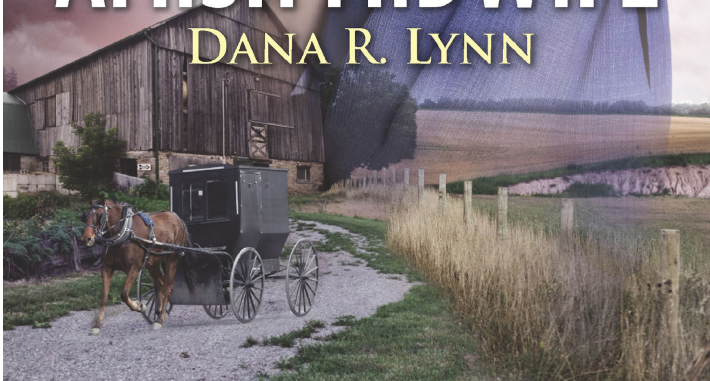


*Love Inspired*® SUSPENSE

# GUARDING THE AMISH MIDWIFE

DANA R. LYNN



**Dana R. Lynn**

# **Guarding The Amish Midwife**

Серия «Amish Country Justice», книга 6

Серия «Mills & Boon  
Love Inspired Suspense»

## **Аннотация**

An Amish witness to murderAnother riveting Amish Country Justice bookOn the way to deliver a baby, Amish midwife Lizzy Miller witnesses her driver's murder—and now someone plans to silence her. Lizzy knows better than to trust strangers, but she must depend on former Amish turned Englisch police officer Isaac Yoder. And there's nowhere safe to hide...unless Isaac reconnects with the Amish community he left behind to protect the woman he's falling for.

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An Amish witness to murder

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On the way to deliver a baby, Amish midwife Lizzy Miller witnesses her driver's murder—and now someone plans to silence her. Lizzy knows better than to trust strangers, but she must depend on former Amish turned *Englisch* police officer Isaac Yoder. And there's nowhere safe to hide...unless Isaac reconnects with the Amish community he left behind to protect the woman he's falling for.

**DANA R. LYNN** grew up in Illinois. She met her husband at a wedding and told her parents she'd met the man she was going to marry. Nineteen months later, they were married. Today, they live in rural northwestern Pennsylvania with enough animals to start a petting zoo. In addition to writing, she works as a teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing and works in several ministries in her church.

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Guarding the Amish Midwife

Dana R. Lynn

# MILLS & BOON

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# MILLS & BOON

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“I won’t forget my promise to you, Lizzy. Got that?”

Her heart melted. His promise to protect her and to see that justice was done. She believed him, too. She wasn’t sure how it had happened, but something about Isaac Yoder had reached out and broken through the wall of distrust and cynicism she had built up.

The fact that she was beginning to trust the earnest man before her terrified her.

She could not afford to let any man close to her, especially not one who seemed to understand her so well. Whatever charms Isaac Yoder possessed, no matter how charismatic or upright he was, he was a man who had chosen to leave the Amish world. So even in the unlikely circumstance that Lizzy decided to one day marry, he would never be a choice she’d be able to make.

“I will be fine. You don’t need to worry about me.”

Deliberately, she got into the cruiser and turned her face forward. The car started advancing. She could feel his gaze on her as the distance between them increased. It took all her will, but she never glanced back.

O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.

—Psalms 7:1

For my husband, Brad. Thanks for supporting me as I followed my dream.

### **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to my children, for understanding when Mom had a deadline and being willing to help out.

To my best friends Amy and Dee—we need to go for coffee, soon!

To Rachel and Lee, I appreciate you all so much. And I’m still laughing over our first Facebook Live video.

To my editor, Tina, I appreciate you so much! Thanks for everything you do!

To my agent, Tamela, I am so blessed to have you on my side!

To my Lord Jesus Christ, may my work always bring You glory.

### Dear Reader,

If you’re like me, you love visiting new places and meeting new people. There’s something fascinating about it. That’s how the Amish Country Justice series has felt to me. I have gotten to

know and love the characters in LaMar Pond. Including Lizzy Miller, whom we met in Plain Retribution. *Guarding the Amish Midwife* was a little bittersweet for me. Although I loved seeing a few old characters, I also left LaMar Pond to journey to a new town.

Waylan Grove is a fictional town in Holmes County, Ohio. I look forward to exploring it with you. It is home to some interesting characters. Such as Isaac Yoder. Isaac and Lizzy both had some issues to work through before they found their happy ending. I enjoyed watching them find their way to each other.

I hope you enjoyed Lizzy and Isaac's story. As always, I love to hear from readers. You can find me at [www.danarlynn.com](http://www.danarlynn.com). I am also on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Blessings,

*Dana R. Lynn*

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# ONE

“Wait here.”

Lizzy Miller watched from where she sat in the front passenger seat, stunned, as her *Englisch* hired driver, Bill Allister, shifted his car into Park in the empty lot before throwing the door open and jumping out of the vehicle, ignoring the rain that pelted him. The drops made wet smacking sounds as they hit his worn leather jacket. He left the car running as he moved toward the back door. She craned her neck to watch him, incredulous. She couldn't believe that he was planning on leaving her here, alone. But clearly, that was exactly what he had in mind as he pulled the back door open. Grabbing a bag, he slammed the door and bolted around the side of the building, never glancing in her direction.

Beyond irritated now, Lizzy waited. And waited. She glanced at the clock on the dashboard several times. Fifteen minutes went by. Then twenty. Why were they stopped here? There were no other cars around. The building in front of her was obviously abandoned. Half the roof was caved in, and the windows were broken. Graffiti covered the exterior walls. Grass and weeds grew up through cracks in the parking lot.

Lizzy drummed her fingers on the hard plastic surface where the door met the window. Amish people did not operate motor vehicles, but instead hired *Englisch* people to drive them when

their buggies were not practical. Therefore, she had made arrangements and hired a driver. Bill, however, was not the driver she had expected. She should have followed her instincts when he had shown up to take her to Ohio that morning. Lizzy had hired a woman named Sue to drive her. Sue was trustworthy, reliable and, most importantly, female. Lizzy didn't trust most men. She'd had an experience several years ago that had left her shattered and insecure, and unable to tolerate the presence of strange men.

For a while, she'd suffered panic attacks. Those had faded as time passed, but her mistrust of men had not.

So when Sue had come down with food poisoning and had sent her brother, Bill, in her place that morning, Lizzy had almost canceled her plans. Not that Bill looked like a bad person. Quite the opposite. She remembered her impression when she had first seen him a few hours earlier. Nothing about him screamed untrustworthy. He was in his twenties, maybe twenty-five or -six, she would guess. Not a man one would take a second look at on the street. His hair was a little long; it just brushed his collar. It was that undefinable shade somewhere between black and brown, but not really either. He was wearing tinted glasses, so it was hard to guess at the true color of his eyes. Just an ordinary young man doing a favor for his sick sister.

She still didn't trust him.

There were two things that convinced her to get into the car with him. First, he had a letter of apology from Sue, and she

knew Sue would feel horrible if Lizzy had decided not to go due to her illness. And second, she had promised her cousin Addie that she would come and stay with her for the last month of her pregnancy and assist with the delivery. Promises had to be kept.

Lizzy glanced at the clock on the dashboard again. Bill had been gone for thirty minutes. What was left of her patience vanished. She had hired a driver to take her to Ohio, not so that she could sit in a parking lot while rain hit the windshield of the car. She gritted her teeth. She had known when she had first seen him that she would not be happy with him as her driver. Sue had always been punctual, and she had always gotten Lizzy where she needed to go on time.

She recalled when Bill had moved off the normal route. She had considered holding her silence.

*Let it go,* she told herself.

But she couldn't. Lizzy liked to know where she was going. Being taken somewhere against her will once was enough for her. Since that time, she always knew where she was going. In the back of her mind, she knew that it was so if she ever needed to find help, she would have landmarks and locations to rely on. Right now, she didn't have either, having never traveled to Ohio by this current route. It was more than she was comfortable with.

"Excuse me, Bill," she had shouted to be heard above the radio. She had to shout twice before he responded.

Scowling, he had reached out and pushed a button as if she were inconveniencing him, and not the other way around. The

song cut off mid-word. She was grateful for the quiet. “Yeah?”

She swallowed. “Um, I was just wondering why we weren’t taking I-80? That’s the way Sue normally takes.”

“I need to make a quick stop on the way there. An errand I need to take care of. It won’t take long.” He had then jabbed the button with his index finger and the raucous music again filled the car.

She had been irritated, both with him and with herself. She was especially annoyed with the lack of control she had over the entire situation. Her mood hadn’t improved when the rain had started to fall in fat, heavy drops on the windshield. She’d actually cringed when the man beside her had bitten off a word that was, at best, rude.

Biting her lip, Lizzy had done her best to ignore her growing anxiety. She saw the sign welcoming them into Ohio with a sigh of relief. At least she knew they were traveling in the correct direction. When Bill pulled off into an empty parking lot, she was confused. What could he be doing here? Lizzy glanced at the clock again. Thirty-five minutes had passed since Bill had left her in this car in the middle of nowhere.

Enough was enough. Lizzy was suddenly tired of allowing her anxiety to control her actions, and her life. She firmed her jaw and reached for the door handle, deliberately ignoring the way her stomach muscles tightened and clenched at the idea of an impending confrontation. She would not back down. Whatever his errand was, Bill needed to finish it quickly or come back to

it after he dropped her off at her cousin's house.

Lizzy straightened the black bonnet that covered the white prayer *kapp* she wore on her head. The bonnet would at least provide some protection from the rain. She stepped out and began to walk in the direction she'd seen Bill go. Within a minute, her cloak was soaked through. Ack! Her feet kicked up more rain onto her black stockings and the hem of her dark blue dress as she trod through the puddles. The sudden discomfort she was experiencing was just one more irritation.

Up ahead, she heard voices. Loud and angry voices. She paused; the manners her parents had instilled in her said it was rude to interrupt a conversation. Then she decided she didn't care. As she drew closer, she could hear Bill's voice raised. He sounded upset. She slowed again. Maybe she should go back and wait in the car again. No. She was done with waiting. It was bad enough that she had to travel with a man, even the brother of a friend. She just wanted to be on her way and get to Addie's house.

Determined, Lizzy walked faster.

Rounding the building, she saw Bill standing with another man. At a glance, she noted that the second man had dark hair curling around his ears. He would have been handsome, but something about him was sinister. Even as she opened her mouth to call out to Bill, the other man pulled out a gun and shot him. Shocked, she watched, frozen, as Bill crumpled to the ground. For a few seconds, her mind refused to believe what her eyes had just seen.

*I cannot stay here!*

Spinning on her heel, Lizzy raced back to the car, the puddles making her steps slower than they would normally have been.

The sound her feet made slapping the water was also very loud in the silence following the shooting.

Within seconds, she heard a shout from where she'd just fled. She had been noticed. She didn't slow down. The sound of running steps behind her encouraged her to run faster. She hopped into the idling car and muttered a prayer of thanksgiving. She hadn't driven since her own *rumspringa* and wasn't sure she'd be able to advance the vehicle quickly enough to escape. She hit the door locks. They clicked. The man slammed against the passenger window. Screaming, she jumped. Fury twisted his features as the man who had shot her driver pounded on the window.

He backed up. The gun was still in his hand. She knew he was going to try to shoot her, too. The adrenaline hit hard, and her heart rate sped up. She felt like she couldn't get enough air as the panic began to ratchet up in her belly. She couldn't afford to have a panic attack now.

She was not going to wait for it to happen. Thankfully, her sister, Rebecca, had taught her how to drive. Sort of. The tires squealed as she yanked the gearshift back. The car jerked forward. The front wheel rammed into the curb and the car rocked, hitting the ground again with a hard bounce.

A gunshot rang out and the back passenger window shattered.

Spinning the wheel, Lizzy pressed her foot down on the gas pedal so hard that she could feel the tires grinding into the gravel and spitting it out before the car jolted forward and sped down the road, away from the man who wanted her dead. A screech and a horn blaring behind her told her that she had cut someone off.

She kept going. The man who had shot Bill would recognize his car. She had to put as much distance between herself and the killer as possible.

\* \* \*

Police officer Isaac Yoder sat up in his parked patrol car as a dark blue sedan that had seen better days raced toward him through the heavy rain, swerving on the wet roads. The driver went over the edge of the road and onto the shoulder three times, the way a frightened rabbit veers back and forth when trying to escape an oncoming car. At one point, Isaac was sure that he saw the vehicle's left wheels lift off the surface of the road.

The driver had to be drunk or having some sort of issue, possibly health related, like a heart attack. It was also possible that it was a teenager texting. Whatever the reason for the erratic driving, he needed to pull the car over now. No one drove that way in fair weather if they were fully competent. Add in the rain pouring down, that driver was asking to hydroplane on the slick surface. Even as he watched, the back tires hit a pool of deeper water and the back end of the car fishtailed before straightening up again.

Flipping on the siren and his lights, he pulled out from beside the overpass where he had been partially hidden as he watched the traffic. Blue-and-red flashes reflected in the puddles on the road. His hands gripped the wheel as he gave chase. It was fortunate that it was midmorning and the traffic was light. Otherwise, he had no doubt that an accident would have already occurred.

The automated plate recognition system in his cruiser alerted him that the car ahead was owned by someone with a driving record. The car he was chasing down belonged to William Allister, a young man who had multiple tickets and two DUIs already on his record. Well, he was about to get another one.

Isaac wasn't shocked when the car suddenly veered onto the narrow shoulder, although in his mind he had prepared for the scenario that Mr. Allister would try to make a run for it. A chase would not have been smart, but sometimes drivers panicked when faced with another DUI and the loss of their driver's license.

He pulled up behind the vehicle, making sure his cruiser was partially on the road. That would make drivers move to the next lane, and it would give him a safe cushion to walk to the car without being too close to it. Isaac turned off the siren, but he left the lights on. He called in the situation to his station, along with the license plate number and the driver's record. Patting his service weapon in his holster, he slowly exited his vehicle. It was always best to proceed with caution in these incidents. The

last thing he wanted was for the person in the car to decide to pull a weapon on him or to attack. Given the way the guy had been driving, it would not shock Isaac if that was exactly what happened.

The rain poured down at a slant, hitting him clear in the face. He couldn't afford to duck his head as he approached the car. He blinked his eyes to clear them. He needed to be able to see, to watch for potential threats. A lone car sped past him, not even bothering to move to the other side of the road. He narrowed his eyes as the vehicle continued down the road and disappeared. No doubt the driver was going above the speed limit.

As he approached, he could see that there was only one person in the car. He didn't let himself relax. Far too often, people ducked down to hide in the floorboards. He could view into the backseat. No one was there. He scanned the rest of the vehicle. One of the back windows had been shattered. His suspicions heightened. He took a cautious step closer, enough that he could just barely make out the top of a head around the headrest. Two hands on the wheel. That was good. If he could see the hands, they weren't reaching for a weapon. He arrived at the car window and stared. Realizing his jaw had dropped open, he closed it with a click.

William Allister might have owned the car, but he certainly wasn't driving it. Inside the car was a young Amish woman, face wet with tears. She turned her terrified, brilliant blue eyes to him. He motioned for her to roll down the window. He had to repeat

the motion twice before she complied. Suspicion darted across her face, but the terror was stronger. A tiny bit of relief mingled in her expression, as well.

Isaac understood the suspicion all too well. The Amish did not, as a rule, involve the police in their business. His own *dat* had refused to go to the police at a very critical time in Isaac's life. Joshua had died, the victim of three drunk teens who had found a blind Amish youth an easy mark, and his father would not be moved to see that justice was done. Isaac pushed his memories of his younger brother from his mind. The bitterness was still too strong, even after seven years.

So was the guilt. Isaac had argued with his father, the first time in his life he had refused to give in to his *dat's* commands. He'd been so angry, in fact, that Isaac had left his Amish community, and the Plain tradition in which he was raised, instead of being baptized in the faith. His father had died two years ago, and they had never reconciled. A circumstance that weighed heavy on his conscience every single day of his life. With his father's death, any hope he might have had of ever rejoining the Amish community that his mother and sister still lived in had also died. It didn't matter that he had not been baptized, therefore meaning he could technically maintain his ties with his community, since his father had made it very clear that if he left, he would not be welcome there anymore. He couldn't have stayed, though. He needed to find some justice for his brother. Nothing mattered until he'd accomplished that.

He pulled his mind back to the car in front of him.

The young woman finally managed to roll the window down. It was an older vehicle, so the windows were manually controlled. Judging by the way she had to resort to using both hands, they weren't in the best of condition, either. Her hands were shaking hard and her face was as pale as milk. Was she injured? He slid his glance over her, doing a rapid assessment. No visible injuries. Still, he couldn't rule out injury or illness.

She was breathing fast and shallow, he noted.

“Miss, do you need help? You're very pale, and you were driving all over the road.”

When she didn't respond immediately, he asked again if she needed help, this time in the American-flavored German used by the Amish, sometimes known as Pennsylvania Dutch. He didn't even stop to think about it. It had been a while since he'd spoken that dialect.

Seven years, to be exact.

Her dark blue eyes widened. She finally responded, though. “*Jah*, I need help.”

She burst into sobs again, burying her face in her hands. Her shoulders heaved. All he could see now was the black bonnet on her head. He frowned. Her cloak looked wet. She must have been out in the rain. Leaning over slightly, he saw the seat on the other side of her was drenched. Yep, she had definitely been out in the downpour.

An unlikely thought occurred to him. He was pretty sure

she wouldn't have stolen a vehicle, but there was still a slight possibility that she had.

“Um, ma'am, this car, did you, um, borrow it?” He didn't want to outright ask her if she took it.

She lifted her face and bobbed her head. “*Jah*, I did borrow it. My driver, Bill, got out to do something, and he left me in the car for a long time. I got tired of waiting for him, so I went to find him. He was with another man. They were arguing. The other man shot him. I think he's dead.”

## TWO

Isaac's eyes scanned the oncoming traffic for any visible threats. He didn't see any, but that didn't mean anything. Right now, he was an open target for anyone who was after the young woman in front of him. Isaac didn't question whether or not she was making up the story. He doubted she could fake terror that deep. Even if she were making up the story, though, he still had a duty to check it out.

"You can't sit out here in the open. And I need to get the details. Can you come back to my car? I want to call in some backup, too."

She hesitated. For a moment, he was sure she would refuse. She surprised him when she nodded and stepped from the car. Isaac moved to her side and cupped her elbow in his palm as they walked back to his police cruiser. He wanted to make sure she didn't slip and fall, but he also wanted to hurry her along so that she was in plain view for as short a time as possible. As long as she was out in the open, she was vulnerable. He kept her along the shoulder, keeping himself between her and anyone passing by.

If someone was going to play target practice with them, hopefully they would hit him first and give her time to flee. Isaac didn't even think of not protecting her. It was just the way things had to be. The area between his shoulder blades itched. He could almost imagine the crosshairs of a scope lining up.

He increased his pace. She kept up with him. For a little thing, she was quick. Her head barely came to his shoulders, and he was only five foot ten.

A minute later, Isaac squired her into his vehicle.

The young woman shifted in her seat. It wasn't difficult to tell that being in a police car was not something she was comfortable with. He wished he could make it easier for her, but it was just something she would have to deal with. Isaac was not unsympathetic. He remembered very well the first time he had dealt with the police. Uncomfortable was a mild way of putting it.

Another quick glance out the window assured him that no one with a gun was bearing down on them. He blew out a breath, relieved. He had never been shot in the line of duty, not in the two years he had been a police officer. He would prefer to keep it that way.

Turning his attention back to his passenger, he squelched the pity that he instinctively felt as he viewed the red-rimmed blue eyes. His whole focus needed to be on keeping her safe and catching the perp. That called for objectivity.

"Before you begin to tell me what happened," he said to her, "let me call in to my station. If there is some guy out there with a gun, I want more than just myself out looking for him."

She frowned, as if he had offended her a bit by what he had said. What had he said? Oh, maybe it had sounded like he didn't quite believe her. He didn't mean it that way.

Isaac quickly radioed in to the station.

“I have a possible shooting,” he told the dispatcher. “Requesting backup.”

“Affirmative, Isaac. What’s the location of the shooting?”

He turned to the young woman sitting beside him. “Can you tell me where you were when this happened?”

She nodded her head. “I am not from here. But I do remember it was about five minutes back. There was an old abandoned place. It was a large blue building. The windows were all broken out.” She bit her lip. “I am sorry. That is all I can remember.”

Isaac flashed her a brief smile. “It’s fine. Believe it or not, that helps a lot.” He pushed the button for the radio again. “Maureen, I have reason to believe that the shooting was at the Carstairs place.”

“Gotcha, Isaac,” Maureen said on the other end of the line. “I have Ryder heading out your way. He should be there in under ten. You hold on.”

“Will do. Could you also send out a tow truck? We need the car towed into evidence.” He waited for her to answer in the affirmative and then he disconnected the call. The young woman beside him was staring out the window, her eyes scanning the road. “All right. Another officer will be here soon. I am Officer Isaac Yoder with the Waylan Grove Police Department. Why don’t you start from the beginning? Who are you and what you were doing when all of this happened?”

She gave the surrounding area one more sweep before focusing her large blue eyes on his face. Her black bonnet was

sagging on her head. Only a hint of pale blond hair peeped out from under it. She cleared her throat. Her voice, when she spoke, was soft. He was surprised that she kept it steady. It was obvious to him that her anxiety had not lessened.

“My name is Elizabeth Miller. Lizzy. I live outside LaMar Pond, a small town in northwestern Pennsylvania. I am training to be a midwife.”

She flushed. A smile nearly slipped out of him. He remembered that women did not talk about things such as having babies and pregnancy in front of strangers, and especially not in front of men. He'd been living in the *Englisch* world so long he'd almost forgotten that.

“I know where LaMar Pond is. Go on.”

“My cousin Addie asked me to visit her here in Ohio.” She paused, as if trying to decide how much to tell him. “My normal driver was sick, so her brother, Bill, showed up to drive me.”

Bill. William Allister. He sat up straighter in his seat.

“Had you met Bill before?”

She shook her head, her nose wrinkling. “I do not hire men to drive me around. I would not have gone with him, but I knew that I needed to get to my cousin's house. I had promised her, and it was too late to change plans. Besides, I didn't want my regular driver, Sue, to feel bad.”

Distress shadowed her face. It didn't take much imagination to know that she was thinking about how the poor woman would feel when she found out what had happened to her brother. He

blocked an image of his own brother's face from surfacing. That was twice in one day he'd thought of Joshua's death.

"I am sorry about the delay, Lizzy. I will try to get you to your cousin's house as soon as I can. I promise."

She shrugged it off. "I got in the car. We drove for a while. I noticed that Bill was going a back route. One that I wasn't as familiar with. I was annoyed with him."

She seemed ashamed of that now.

"He said he had an errand to run. When he stopped, he told me to wait in the car. And I did. I waited for a long time. Over thirty minutes. When he didn't come back, I got impatient and went to find what was taking him so long."

In the quiet car, Isaac heard her swallow in a loud gulp.

"I went behind the building. I could hear voices arguing, but I was so irritated that I did not pay attention to what they were saying. I saw Bill. He was facing another man. The other man had a gun. He shot him. He shot him!"

Her voice rang with horror. Isaac could only imagine how shocking that must have been, for her to witness such an awful thing.

"You saw him shoot Bill?" He wanted to be certain he had the facts correct.

She nodded. "I saw Bill fall. I was so scared I ran back to the car. Bill had left it running. The man shot out the back window."

She pointed to the rear passenger seat with an unsteady finger. He recalled the shattered window. He would need to get this car

into the station so that it could be searched for the bullet. Or other evidence. It would not be safe to try to process the car on the side of the road with a possible killer searching for her.

“Then what happened? After he shot out the window.”

“I drove away as fast as I could. I have only driven a couple of times, for fun. I haven’t driven at all since I was baptized two years ago. I know that the man will come after me. He was running to his car when I reached the street.”

He was sure that he would come after her, too. Right now, he had a possible dead body, a single witness and the murdered man’s car. Oh, yeah. There was a very good chance that someone would come after this young woman to shut her up.

It was his job to make sure they failed.

He spoke quietly, calmly. “I know it was horrible, Lizzy. But I need a description of the man who shot Bill.”

Lizzy squeezed her eyes shut, as if she could force herself to forget the events of the day. He knew the feeling. “He had dark curly hair. Dark brown eyes. I’m certain that I would know him if I saw him again.”

He frowned as he considered what he knew. “The man, do you think he got a good look at your face? Could he recognize you?”

He had to assume that he had, but he knew that to many *Englischers*, all they would notice was the *kapp* and the dress. With her black bonnet on, it was possible that the man wouldn’t have gotten a good look at her.

Her nod was emphatic, tearing that hope to shreds. “For a

moment, before he shot out the window, he looked directly into my eyes. He chased me, too, in his car. When you pulled me over, he continued past us.”

The only car to pass them had been the one that he'd thought he'd been sure had been speeding. Unfortunately, he had not been able to get a plate number or even much information in regard to the make and model of the vehicle. Determined to pay attention and get all the details he could from the witness, he turned back to her. Her wide blue eyes were pinned to his face. She let out a sound that was half sigh, half strangled sob.

“I think if you had not pulled me over, he would have caught up with me and killed me, too.”

\* \* \*

Within minutes, Lizzy saw lights flashing in the side mirrors of Isaac's police car. The backup he had called for had arrived. She was glad, but she also squirmed internally, uncomfortable at once again having to deal with the *Englisch* police. The other officer drew over to the shoulder, pulling behind Isaac's car. The lights remained on, splashing blue and red in a steady pattern against the interior of the car.

“I'll be right back.” Isaac got out of the car and sauntered over to the other officer. She twisted her neck around and watched the two men talking. Both of them scanned the road. A time or two, they glanced in her direction.

*This is the second time today I have been left waiting in a car.* She shook her head at the ridiculous thought. This time, Lizzy

did not mind being in the car alone. It gave her the opportunity to gather her thoughts and compose herself.

*Lord, help me be calm. Still my heart.*

Lizzy was drained by the morning's events. Would she ever be able to forget the sight of Bill's body falling, crumpling to the ground in a heap? Or the cold face of the man who shot him? She shuddered as his face filled her mind. Poor Sue. Her friend would be devastated. Although Lizzy had not had the best impression of Bill in the few hours she'd known him, she knew that Sue had adored her younger brother. She had talked about him every time they'd traveled together.

And now he was gone.

Hugging her arms around herself, she shivered, a mixture of cold and the reaction to the morning's events setting in. Her eyes sought out Isaac, the one thing that had steadied her through the dreadful past hour.

Then she rebuked herself. She was being silly. *Gott* had brought her through it. Isaac had just been the means that *Gott* had used.

Isaac had been Plain once. He didn't have to tell her that. With a name like Yoder, there was a possibility, of course. But when he had spoken to her in the language of the Plain folk, she had been astonished. What had driven him from his community to become something so foreign to their culture as a police officer? She would never ask, of course. Such things were personal, and frequently painful.

Not that she had anything against the police. Her sister, Rebecca, was married to a very fine young police officer, Sergeant Miles Olsen. In fact, Miles had saved Rebecca and Lizzy's life several years ago. Four years ago, to be exact, when Lizzy had been almost seventeen. A man who had held a grudge against her older sister and some of Rebecca's friends had started attacking them one by one. He had killed one of them. Then he had kidnapped Rebecca and Lizzy together. She would never forget being held hostage in that cold, damp basement by the brutal man, not knowing if they would survive. Miles Olsen was an officer with the LaMar Pond Police Department. He had been on the case and had been assigned to work with Rebecca. It had made sense. Rebecca was profoundly deaf, and Miles was raised by his deaf grandparents and uncle, which meant he was fluent in American Sign Language, or ASL, and could communicate with Rebecca, while the other officers needed an interpreter to talk with her.

When she and Lizzy had been taken, Miles had rescued them. He had also been promoted to sergeant for his outstanding work and heroic efforts. He and Rebecca were now married and had a small son. Miles was perfect for Rebecca. *Gott* had provided her with a man who could protect her and communicate with her. Lizzy was very happy for her sister. She had met several of his police officer friends, too. They were all a nice group of men and women.

But that did not mean she was comfortable asking the police

for assistance. She did not have a choice, though. A man had killed Bill, her driver's brother. The Amish might not turn to the police for help normally, but the *Englischers* did.

For Sue, she had to do what she could to cooperate and help them find the killer.

Another thought crossed her mind. What if this man that shot Bill found her? Memories of being chained up in a basement with her sister and another woman flooded her mind, causing a visceral reaction. Cringing away from the memories, she realized that she was pushing herself back against the seat of the car.

She could not allow herself to dwell on those memories. It would only unsettle her. Pressing a hand against her stomach, Lizzy tried to will away the queasiness and the sick feeling that arose whenever she remembered those past events. The man who had kidnapped her was in jail. He was never going to get out. She knew that. He had been charged with several counts of murder and assault. She needed to stop letting these memories and fears have so much control over her.

Lizzy did the only thing she could do and pushed the thoughts out of her mind, distracting herself with watching Isaac and his friend. It helped. For now. As she watched, a tow truck pulled in front of Bill's car and the driver hopped out. He began to hook up the car. Soon he had the car secured and was off. The moment seemed surreal. Just a few hours before, she'd been a reluctant passenger in the car because the driver was a man, and now he'd been shot before her eyes.

Within ten minutes, Isaac returned. He buckled his seat belt and tossed her an absentminded smile. Again, the question rose to mind: Why had he become a cop?

It wasn't hard to imagine him wearing a straw hat and dressed Plain. Even with the gun at his side and the fancy uniform, there was something about him that radiated Plain.

Isaac pulled away from the curb. "We are going to go a mile down the road and turn around. Then we will head back to the Carstairs place. Check out the scene. I am hoping that you will be able to identify the body, and maybe even give us a better description of the shooter. I hope you will be willing to identify him."

She could hear the question he was not asking. Would she be willing to come in and work with the police?

"*Jah*, I hope so, too."

His shoulders relaxed. He had expected her to refuse.

"I am happy to hear that you will help us out."

She hesitated. How much should she tell him? "I am going to help you because of Bill's sister. Sue is a kind woman, and she dotes on her brother. It will devastate her when she learns what has happened."

He pursed his lips. Lizzy sensed that he wanted to ask more questions. For whatever reason, he did not ask. Maybe he didn't want to scare her off. Or maybe he wanted to see what they found before he got more information from her. Whatever his reasoning, she was glad that he restrained himself. She didn't

have any more information, and right now, she was feeling close to screaming.

When he reached out to turn the heat up, his hand accidentally brushed against hers. She jumped and jerked her hand away. Heat crawled up her cheeks as he frowned, his brows furrowed. No doubt he was wondering at her extreme reaction.

This was why she would never get married. Even the most innocent interactions with men set her on edge. To have a normal conversation with a man who came to court her...*nee*, it would not happen. Lizzy had long ago resigned herself to the fact that what Chad Weller had done to her had left her with too many emotional scars to ever consider courting and later marrying any man. She just did not have the ability to get past her fears.

It was likely she never would.

The car turned. Lizzy became aware that they were entering the parking lot that she had fled less than two hours earlier. The building came into view as they drove into the lot. The broken windows. The whole forlorn look of the place. When she had first seen the building, she had thought it looked pitiful and broken. Now, seeing it through the eyes of the horrible situation, she thought she could detect a menacing feel to the structure and the empty lot.

She shuddered.

“Are you all right?” Isaac’s concerned voice broke through the thoughts. She had almost forgotten that she wasn’t alone.

“*Jah*. I am well,” she whispered, even though she felt far from

well. A man had died before her eyes. How was she supposed to feel?

The other officer pulled in and parked next to Isaac.

Lizzy got out when the men did. Her plain boots made a crunching sound. She flicked a glance down. She was stepping on glass.

“I think this is the glass from Bill’s car window. It shattered when the other man shot at me as I was leaving.”

Immediately, Isaac took a picture of the glass with his phone, then carefully picked up a shard and put it in a plastic bag with a zip seal top.

“Hopefully, we can match this to the car you were in. Although glass is pretty similar.”

She shrugged, not familiar with any of the technology.

Dread started to build inside her as they moved toward the back of the building. She didn’t want to see Bill’s body. The thought of how he would look dead was enough to make her ill.

She turned the corner and blinked.

“Where did Bill fall?” Isaac asked, glancing around with a frown.

She pointed her finger at the spot ahead of her.

The body was gone.

## THREE

Isaac walked forward to where the body should have been. It was hard to tell if a body had been there. The black pavement was slick, and the rain had probably washed most of the traces of blood away. His gut instinct told him that there had been a body here, that Lizzy really had witnessed someone getting shot.

“Maybe Bill wasn’t killed?” There was a lilt in Lizzy’s voice that spoke of hope. “Maybe he is hiding from the man who shot him.”

He hated to dampen her hope, but he refused to downplay the danger she could be in. “Lizzy, I doubt he survived. How close were they standing when Bill was shot?”

The hope drained from her face. She sighed, a sound that seemed to be dragged up from the depth of her soul. “They were only a couple of feet apart. Maybe from me to where the other officer is standing.”

About three feet, then.

“This other officer is Officer Ryder Howard.” Isaac indicated his friend and colleague. “At that close range, I don’t think he would miss.”

“Bill is dead.” The lilt was gone and her voice was a flat statement.

“Most likely.”

“Are you sure that this is the place?” Ryder asked, his face

skeptical.

Lizzy flushed. Isaac would have thought she was embarrassed except he had seen the way her eyes had flashed. She did not like being questioned like that. No wonder. Ryder hadn't meant anything by it, but his voice did have a sarcastic edge to it. Lizzy had no way of knowing, but Ryder's voice always sounded that way. He doubted if the man even realized how harsh his tone was. It was just the way he talked.

*"Jah!"* Lizzy replied, lifting her chin, her own voice cold. "This is the place. I did not make up a story about my driver getting shot."

Ryder's eyes widened. Too late the man seemed to realize that his question had been taken the wrong way. "Oh! Hey! I didn't mean that to sound like I thought you were lying. I just wanted to make sure there wasn't a mistake."

He threw Isaac a "Help me, buddy" glance.

"It's okay, Lizzy. We'll keep looking. Maybe we will find some other signs of what happened here."

Ryder grunted, his head bobbing once. Isaac held back a smirk. His friend had gotten himself into trouble on more than one occasion for attitude. The man had a good heart. He just had a bit of a chip on his shoulder. Isaac knew that he had had a very rough time growing up with alcoholic parents. Although he had never asked, wanting to respect his friend's privacy, he had always figured there was some sort of abuse or neglect that went along with it. Ryder had developed a veneer to keep people at bay.

Isaac could not fault the man for it. Not when he had his own past to overcome.

“Lizzy, we are going to have a look around to see if we can find any evidence of what happened. I need you to either stay there or wait in the car.” He zeroed his gaze in on her oval face. “I mean it. If you walk around, you might trample on something. Ryder and I have done this enough to know what we are doing.”

“I will wait right here.” She pointed down at her feet.

He smiled. Something about her earnestness touched him, despite the terrifying situation she was in.

“Okay, then.” Turning to his friend, he gestured to the right. “Why don’t you search from here toward the property line, and I will go toward the building.”

“Sounds like a plan.” All amusement faded as he and Ryder both focused on the job before them.

The men set off in their separate directions, alert for any clue that a murder took place in the parking lot. Every once in a while, Isaac cast a concerned glance at Lizzy. Her arms were tight across her middle, and he could clearly see that she was shivering. April in Ohio was capricious. On this particular day, the temperature hadn’t risen much higher than sixty and the rain was cold. He was wet clear through after a quarter of an hour. She’d been out in the weather several times that morning. And though he knew that one did not catch a cold from being wet, it was still a miserable feeling.

At one point, he had gone over to her to suggest that she wait

in the car. “I can turn the heat up. There’s a blanket in the trunk. It would not be much, but it might warm you up a bit.”

Lizzy had looked at him for a moment. Her lips had curled at the corners in a small smile. Her eyes, though, those deep blue eyes, had remained haunted. “*Denke*, Isaac. I appreciate it. But I would not feel as safe so far away. I might be cold here, but I have two police officers close by. No one would try to harm me here.”

How did one argue with that? Isaac jogged back to continue searching. In his mind, though, her words played over and over again. If he had any doubts about her telling the truth, which he hadn’t, they fled. No one would stand out in the cold to feel safer if it weren’t the truth, he reasoned. Plus, her eyes held far too much knowledge of the dark side of the world.

Ten minutes later, he found his first proof of the shooter’s presence. A bullet had lodged in the side of the building. He ran back to his car and grabbed some tools from his trunk. Carefully, he dug the bullet out and put it in an evidence bag.

Encouraged by what he found, he continued his search, meticulously scouring every inch for any sign of disturbance.

“Yo! Isaac! Got something!” Ryder shouted across the parking lot.

Isaac hurried over, careful not to step on anything useful.

“What do you have, Ryder?”

Ryder indicated the gravel at his feet. “Something was definitely pulled through here. Something big.”

Like a body. Isaac narrowed his glance at the ground. Ryder

was correct. Something had been dragged through. He looked closer.

“Ryder, look here.” He pointed at a spot on the ground. “I think we have blood.”

Grabbing evidence bags and their phones, they went to work taking pictures and collecting samples of both the gravel and the blood. They might not be able to use them. They didn’t have the fastest DNA lab available to them. Nor was DNA always reliable.

It might not have been much. Unfortunately, it was all the evidence they had.

As they were walking back toward the cars, Isaac noticed something that had escaped their notice earlier. Under the bushes, lying on the ground, was a black baseball cap.

Lizzy gasped. “That looks like the hat that Bill was wearing when he picked me up this morning.”

They carefully extracted the hat from the bushes and added it to their evidence. There was an unusual design on the front. It was only partially there, though. It looked like someone had tried to rip it off, but missed some of it. Unfortunately, the part that remained was not part of any logo that he recognized.

“I can’t even tell what logo this is supposed to be. Can you tell?” Isaac frowned as he pointed it out.

The other cop shook his head. “No. Not with so much of it gone. Maybe it’s the logo for the place where he works. Or maybe a sports team of some kind. It’s possible someone will recognize it, although I’m not sure if there’s enough for that.” He snapped

a picture of it.

“We’ll have to ask around, see if we can find anyone who recognizes it. Right now, I am going to take Lizzy into the station to see if she can identify our shooter. As long as I’m heading in that direction, I’ll take this stuff back to the station.”

Ryder gave him a thumbs-up. “I will start seeing if anyone recognizes this logo.”

In the car, Isaac turned the heat on and handed Lizzy a blanket. “I apologize that this is taking so long. As soon as I can, I will get you to your family’s house.”

“I understand. If I had thought about it, I would have asked to grab my bag from the trunk before the car was towed away.” She was silent for a moment. “Do you think that maybe this guy will forget about me?”

He did not want to answer that question, mainly because he didn’t like the answer that he knew he had to give. However, Isaac would never lie. He despised dishonesty.

“I don’t think he will forget about you, Lizzy.” She turned her pale face to him. “Right now, you are the one person who can identify him. He won’t forget that.”

Nor was he likely to let her go.

\* \* \*

Lizzy regretted asking the question the minute the words left her mouth. It was too late to call them back. One look at Isaac’s face, though, and she knew what the answer would be. Had known it before she’d asked.

Once again, she was a target. For no other reason than that she had been in the wrong place. She was trapped in a weird nightmare and had no choice but to let it play out before she could be free from it.

The trip to the Waylan Grove station was silent. At some point, she dozed lightly, lulled to sleep by the rhythm of the car. A hand on her shoulder startled her awake.

She sat up with a shriek, her fist flying out to defend herself.

Belatedly, she realized where she was. When she saw Isaac rubbing the side of his head, she felt guilty.

“Sorry.” She had never been so mortified.

“Don’t worry about it.” He dropped his hand and smiled. “I should have known better than to jostle you awake like that.”

“That’s no excuse. I tend to startle easy.”

He nodded. “I will keep that in mind.”

Isaac left his side of the car, loping around to open her door. “Let’s get this done.”

The Waylan Grove Police Department was bigger than the LaMar Pond one, but not by much. The open desk area where the officers sat was similar, as well. They entered, and the conversation softened to a low buzz. Isaac led her past the desks and into a room near the back. He left briefly to talk with one of the other officers, then he returned. He flipped on a switch and indicated that she could hang up her cloak on the rack in the corner.

“I doubt it will dry by the time you leave, but maybe it will

a little.”

It was sweet of him to be so concerned about her.

A few minutes later, a female cop walked in. Lizzy looked at the bag she was carrying.

“My bag!”

The woman laughed. “Isaac said you had left it in the trunk. The chief okayed us to get it out and bring it to you. There’s a bathroom across the hall. Go ahead and change into something dry.”

Not waiting to hear more, Lizzy rushed over and grabbed her bag. “*Denke*. It will be good to be warm again.”

Isaac and the woman laughed softly. Hurrying to the bathroom, she searched through the bag, quickly locating the items she needed. She even found a clean *kapp* to put on her head. Never again would she take dry clothes, or being warm, for granted.

When she returned to the room, Isaac pulled out a chair for her. She sat, then looked up at him expectantly.

He sighed. “Okay. I want to know if you would be willing to look through the images we have to see if you can identify the man you saw. If you can, we’ll try to arrest him. Soon as that’s done, you could be on your way home to your family in no time.”

“I hope so. I will look at your pictures.”

What she hadn’t counted on was the sheer volume of pictures. It took her nearly two hours to go through each and every picture. And still, she did not find an image that matched.

“Are you sure you would recognize him if you saw him?” Isaac stood to pace the room.

“I would recognize him. I will probably have nightmares of his face for years to come. His picture is not here.”

Moving back to the table, Isaac turned and leaned against it. “I believe you. I had hoped his picture would be in the database.”

“*Jah*, me, too. Did I look at all the pictures?”

“Yup. That was all of them.”

“What do we do? I didn’t see him.” She crossed her arms and rubbed her hands up and down them, shivering slightly, although not from being cold.

“The visual artist will be in tomorrow morning. You will have to come back and give her a description, so she can make a copy of his image to circulate.”

“What about going to my family?”

Isaac did not answer right away, which meant she was not going to like his answer. “Here’s the deal, Lizzy. I want to take you there, but I also want to offer you police protection.”

“That will not happen, Isaac. My uncle will never agree to that.”

Irritation flashed across his face and then vanished. Had she imagined it? She didn’t think so. Something she had said had bothered him. A lot.

“What was that expression for?”

Rubbing his hand through his hair, he avoided her eyes for a few seconds.

“Isaac?”

Finally, he answered. “I’m sorry, Lizzy. Your safety is important. So is that of your family. I really think you should stay in town tonight where we can guard you. I can have someone go to your relatives’ house and explain where you are.”

That was not what she wanted. Part of her wanted to stubbornly insist he drive her out to Addie’s house. But she would never forgive herself if her cousin or her other relatives were injured because of her.

“*Jah*. I would appreciate that.”

His jaw dropped open. “I was sure you’d argue with me.”

The shock on his face amused her. She huffed out a quiet laugh. Her amusement didn’t last. “I have been in a similar situation before, Isaac. I know that sometimes it is best to work with the police.”

He went still. Why had she said anything? She never talked about what had happened.

Ryder entered the room a minute later, putting their conversation on hold. Lizzy took one look at his face and knew that the news had just gone from bad to worse. Isaac straightened away from the wall and faced his coworker.

“What’s the bad news?” Isaac said.

Ryder sat down at the table and stretched his long legs out in front of him.

“The bad news is that I wasn’t able to get any identification on the logo. The shooter, however, might have been a different

story. Did he have a scar on his forehead?” Ryder used his finger to imitate the jagged shape of the scar on his own forehead.

Lizzy started. She had forgotten about that. “*Jah*. He had a scar. It was red still, as if it were recent.”

He nodded. “My sources said the shooter could be a young man by the name of Zave. No last name. He has a rep for being a drug dealer, and a vicious one at that. Apparently, Zave has a nasty temper.”

“Zave? That’s unusual,” Isaac mused. “Anything else?”

Ryder shook his head. “No one wanted to talk. I was astonished to get this much. Whatever he looks like, he has people scared. The word on the street is that his enemies, those who get in his way, they tend to disappear.”

“A drug dealer!” Lizzy covered her mouth with her hand, horrified. The idea had never occurred to her.

Both men shot glances her way.

“It makes sense.”

“What does?” she asked Isaac, even as Ryder nodded in agreement.

Isaac met her gaze squarely. “It makes sense that Zave would be a drug dealer. I think we’ll find that Bill was one of his customers.”

Lizzy hadn’t thought the day could get much worse. She was wrong. She had fallen on the bad side of a drug dealer who had no last name, that no one could describe, but who had enough power to make people disappear.

People like her. Who was she, after all, but an Amish girl from a very small community in a quiet part of Pennsylvania? If she disappeared, would her family go to the police? It was a possibility, especially since her kidnapping. She recalled her father had allowed police officers at her brother's wedding four years ago because Rebecca had been in danger again.

They hadn't been so quick to go to the police the first time her sister had been taken, though. She remembered when Rebecca had been kidnapped with a few of her school friends so many years ago. Her parents had been hesitant to work with the police, but they had. To an extent. When it came to having Rebecca actually testify against her kidnapper, they had refused. Rebecca had gone against her parents' and the bishop's wishes and testified. It hadn't been a difficult decision for her, though, because she'd already made the decision to leave the community so she could take advantage of the deaf community in the *Englisch* world. Being deaf had kept Rebecca isolated from many in the community. She didn't read lips, and the language she used was American Sign Language, which her parents had struggled to learn. No one had blamed her when she left.

Lizzy, however, wouldn't leave.

Isaac's phone rang. He pulled it out of his pocket. "It's the chief. Hold on a minute." He answered the phone. "Yoder here, Chief."

It seemed strange hearing an Amish last name in that way.

"Yes, ma'am, she's here with me. I can do that."

A second later he hung up the phone. She tensed at the expression on his face. It was grave, and her insides quivered as she waited to hear what was coming.

“We might have a sighting on the car that Zave drove. It looks like he abandoned it. I didn’t get a good look at it when he drove past us, so the chief wants me to take you to where it was found. She hopes that you might be able to confirm it was the car used by our shooter.”

She nodded. “I can do that.”

He stood. “Let’s head out. The sooner we find this guy, the sooner you’ll be safe to go to your cousin’s house.”

She grabbed her cloak from the rack where it had been hanging and tossed it over her shoulders. The black bonnet was quickly pulled on over her *kapp*. Then she was ready to leave. Even as she walked out to his cruiser with him, though, Lizzy couldn’t completely quell her nerves. She was once again mixed up with a killer. Would she be alive when it was all over?

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