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Chapter 1

A New Friend

The first thing Megan Fehr noticed when she sat down in church on Sunday morning was the visiting family. Several pews in front of them, a dark-haired girl sat with her parents and three brothers. She looked close to Megan's age.

What will she be like? Megan wondered excitedly.

Megan's older brother Andrew noticed them too. "Who are they?" he whispered.

Megan shrugged.

"Do you think one of the boys is my age?" asked Christopher, Megan's younger brother. He tried to peer past the person sitting in front of them.

"Do they have any more girls?" Sharilyn whispered, a little too loudly.

"Shh," Mom reminded, while nine-month-old Joshua wiggled on her lap.

The song leader walked to the pulpit, and the Fehr family pew was quiet except for the rustling of the hymnbook pages.

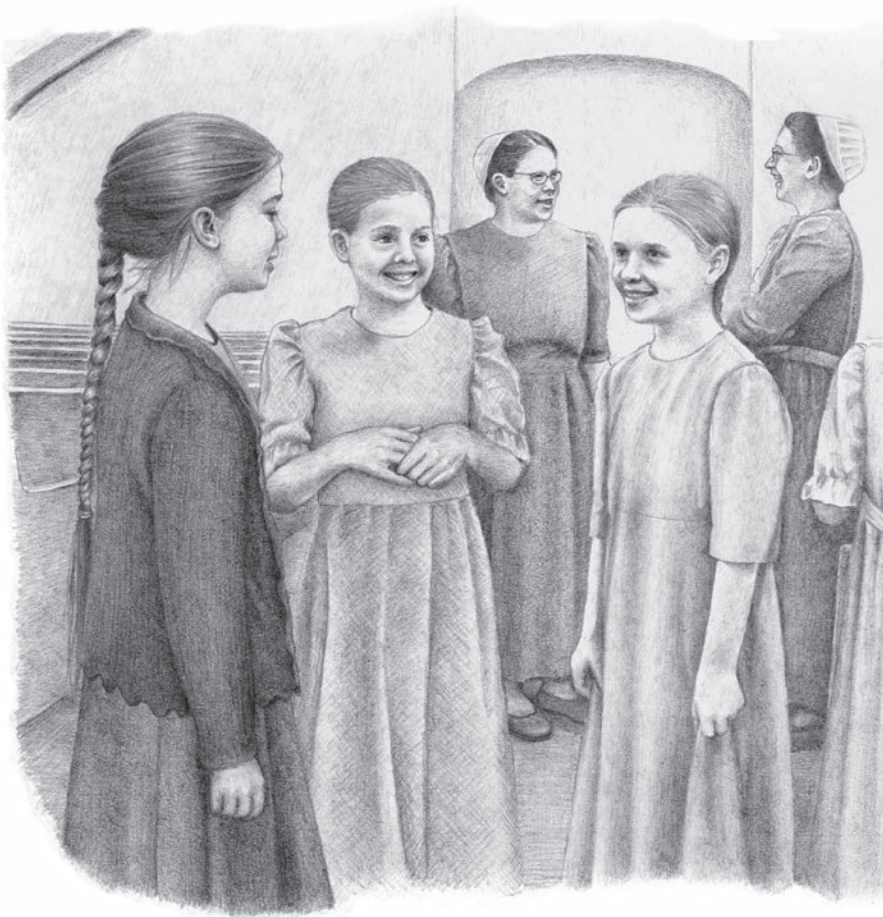
After the service was over, Daddy said, "Let's greet our visitors."

Megan smiled shyly, and the new girl smiled back. "Hi, my name is Megan."

"Hi, my name is Monica," the girl said.

"Monica," Megan repeated. "That's a nice name. It begins with the letter *m*—just like mine!"

"Yes, and we both have dark hair," Monica said.



They were both quiet. Megan tried to think of what to say next.

“Did you just move here?” Megan asked.

Monica nodded. “Yes, we moved here from Mexico.”

“Oh, that’s far away,” Megan said.

Monica nodded again.

Megan’s friends gathered around them. There

was Valerie,
Megan’s cousin,
and all the other
girls their age:
Adrianna, Cindy,
Priscilla, Joanna,
and Lily.

“This is
Monica,” Megan
said. “She just
moved here from
Mexico.”

Monica smiled
shyly.

The girls
greeted her with
friendly smiles
and told her their
names too.

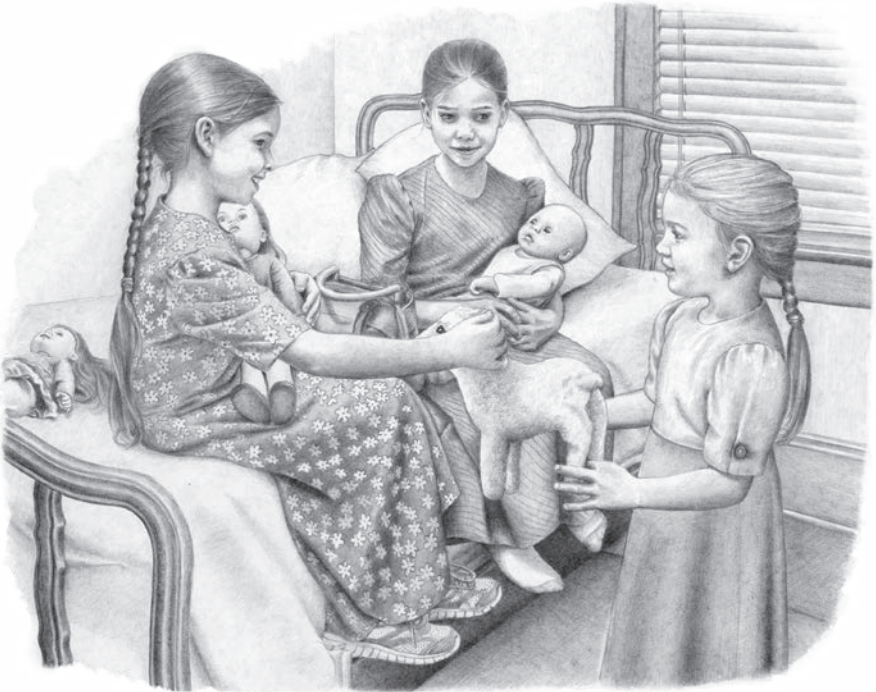


Sister Trudy joined their circle. She was a single sister in the church and a good friend to all the girls.

“I’m glad to see you girls welcoming our visitor so warmly,” Sister Trudy said. “Friendship is a good gift meant to be shared with everyone.”

Daddy invited Monica and her family for Sunday dinner.

In the afternoon, Megan and Monica went upstairs to play with dolls in Megan’s room.



Megan laid all her dolls on her bed. "You may choose first," she told Monica.

Monica chose Jenny. "She's very pretty," Monica said, stroking her silky hair.

"She's my favorite," Megan said, "because she reminds me of a baby like my little brother Joshua. Too bad you didn't bring your doll along, Monica."

Monica didn't say anything. Instead she quickly turned to Sharilyn, who had followed them upstairs. "Which doll do you want to play with, Sharilyn?" she asked.

Megan quickly answered for her. "Sharilyn likes to play with her stuffed animals instead of dolls. Now go play, Linny," she snapped at her little sister. Linny was Sharilyn's nickname.

"I don't mind if she plays with us," Monica said, patting Sharilyn's blonde head. "I don't have a sister."

Megan hesitated. "All right, you may play with us."

"This is my Lammy." Sharilyn held up her toy lamb. "He's my favorite."

"She takes him with her wherever she goes," Megan said with an embarrassed little laugh.

"He's very cute," Monica said, and she gave Lammy a squeeze.