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Chapter 1

Sheepshearing

The warm barn was alive with the bleating of sheep and lambs. Eight-year-old Sharilyn Fehr grinned as she looked around. What an adventure!

Brother Willis and Sister Amy had invited several families from church to visit their sheep farm. Their daughter Kiana, who was Sharilyn's age, showed the girls around.

"Here is where we keep the newborn lambs," she explained.

In the straw-covered pen, two little lambs wobbled to their mother and nuzzled her side. "They're so cute!" Cousin Sharon exclaimed. She tugged at Sharilyn's arm and pointed. "Look at that one, Linny. How adorable!"

Sharilyn smiled her agreement.

"May we hold one?" Cousin Sharon asked.

"Um, no," Kiana said. "Not until they're older. C'mon!"

Sharilyn and her friends followed Kiana to another room of the barn. About twenty lambs scampered this way and that. Sharilyn could tell they were older and more stable on their feet.

Each lamb had a yellow tag clipped to one ear. Sharilyn wondered what it was for, but she was too bashful to ask aloud. By now the boys and the mothers had joined the girls, and she didn't want everyone looking at her.

"Twila," Sharilyn whispered, "ask Sister Amy why the lambs have tags in their ears."

Sharon, who had overheard the whisper, stared at her. "Sharilyn!" she admonished. "Ask her yourself. Don't be so shy."

"I'm not shy," Sharilyn mumbled. She didn't like when people called her shy. She wasn't as talkative as Sharon and her friends, but that didn't make her shy, did it?

Sharilyn stepped over the low fence into the pen. "Baa! Baa!" The bleating lambs ran into a corner and huddled in a group.

Sharilyn inched toward them. "It's all right," she murmured.

Gently she stretched out her arm. When one lamb nuzzled her hand, she picked it up. She had a stuffed lamb named Lammy that she loved, but she had never held a real live lamb before. The



wiggly lamb's short fleece wasn't as soft as she had imagined.

"Baa!" The bleat was so close to her ear that it startled her.

Kiana petted the lamb too. "They're still a little scared of us," she said with a giggle.

"Why do you put tags in their ears?" Sharilyn asked.

"Um, my mom can answer that better than I can," Kiana said. She turned and yelled, "Mom! Sharilyn wants to know why the lambs have ear tags!"

Sister Amy and all the others turned to look at her. Sharilyn felt her cheeks grow warm.

"The reason the sheep and lambs have ear tags," Sister Amy began, loudly enough so everyone could hear, "is to identify them. That way we know which lamb is which. Besides, we can't sell any sheep or lamb unless it has an ear tag."

"That was a good question, Sharilyn," Sister Susie said. Sister Susie, their minister's wife, was always kind and ready to talk with Sharilyn. She also liked Lammy and asked about him often.

"Gather 'round, everyone," Brother Willis called. "It's time for the sheepshearing."

The girls followed Kiana to the other room of the barn. Five sheep waited, one behind the other, in a narrow pen to the left.

Kiana's brother opened the gate and led a sheep to Brother Willis. They helped the sheep lie down on its back. Brother Willis turned on the electric clippers and began to shear the wool from the sheep's stomach.

"I always shear the tummy first," he explained over the noise of the clippers. He turned the sheep over and began to shear its back.

Sharilyn watched as pieces of the thick fleece fell to the cement floor. Now the sheep lay still and quiet. When Brother Willis was finished, the sheep scampered to the other end of the barn where one of the boys guided it into its pen.

"Look!" cried Joshua, Sharilyn's four-year-old brother. "The sheep has no wool!"

"Won't they be cold this winter since you're shearing the sheep in the fall?" Mom asked. Sharilyn was glad Mom had asked the question. She'd been wondering the same thing.

"Actually," Sister Amy answered, "without their wool, they keep the barn warmer. Their bodies give off heat into the barn instead of it being trapped beneath their wool coats."

“Brother Jake, would you like to try?” Brother Willis asked.

Daddy laughed. “Sure,” he answered.

Daddy had to work hard to hold the sheep between his knees. He took the clippers and carefully began to shear the sheep’s tummy. Thick gray wool fell to the floor. With Brother Willis’s help, he awkwardly turned the sheep onto its side and began to shear again. Soon the shorn sheep stood and scampered away. “You make it look easy, Brother Willis,” Daddy said, wiping sweat from his face.

“You did a great job, Daddy,” cheered Christopher, Sharilyn’s older brother.

“Good job, Daddy,” Sharilyn called.

Brother Willis sheared three more sheep. After a campfire supper, it was time to watch the milking. All the sheep clambered into their stalls as the group of children and parents gathered around. Brother Willis and Sister Amy and their children attached the milking gear.

Sharilyn stood close as the sheep munched their feed. Suddenly, the stalls opened and, with a clamour, the sheep hustled back to their pens. Then the next set of sheep entered the stalls, ready for milking.

“Who would like to taste sheep milk?” Sister Amy asked. She set a full pitcher and a stack of plastic cups on a rough wooden table.

Twila scrunched up her nose. “Sheep milk!” she exclaimed.

Sister Amy filled a cup and held it out to her.

“I’ll let someone else go first,” Twila said, taking a step back. Sharon shook her head.

But Sharilyn bravely stepped forward and took the cup. She took a small sip and swallowed. It tasted much like cows’ milk.

“What does it taste like, Sharilyn?” Twila wondered.

“Do you like it?” Sharon asked.

Sharilyn smiled mysteriously. “You’ll have to taste it yourself,” she answered.

Her friends might have a reason to call her shy, but at least she was brave.

Chapter 2

Glasses

Sharilyn sat stiffly at the edge of the chair. She was glad she'd brought Lammy along. He was her favorite toy, and she took him with her almost everywhere she went. She tilted her head and squinted at the letter chart on the wall.

She glanced at Dr. Burton, who was bent over his desk. Would he ask her to read the letters aloud, like he had at her last appointment?

E, F, P, she practiced to herself. She squinted some more and then shook her head. She couldn't read the rest.

The problem wasn't that she couldn't *read* the letters. She was in Grade 3, and she loved to read. The problem was that she couldn't *see* the letters. They were blurry and fuzzy and meshed together like the wool on Lammy's coat.

The doctor swiveled his chair toward her. "Let's try these on," he said as he slid a pair of glasses onto her face. The metal frame felt cold

where it touched her nose and ears. “All right, now look in the mirror.”

Sharilyn blinked at her reflection. She wiggled her nose and raised her eyebrows. She decided that the girl in the mirror looked nice in her purple-framed glasses.

She glanced at Mom, who was smiling. “They suit you perfectly,” she said.

“Now read the chart,” Dr. Burton instructed.

Sharilyn turned to the chart. The letters weren’t fuzzy anymore! “E, F, P, T, O, Z, L, P, E—” she read, faster and louder as the letters got smaller with each row.

“Thank you, Sharilyn,” Dr. Burton said with a chuckle. Then he turned to Mom.

“Your daughter has astigmatism. That means the curve at the front of her eye is not the same in both eyes,” he explained. “Sharilyn’s left eye is weaker than her right eye. It will need to be strengthened. Cover her right eye with an eye patch, and then have her read or do a puzzle or beadwork—anything that will give the left eye lots of exercise.”

On the way home, Sharilyn could clearly see the fall colors outside the van window. She wouldn’t mind wearing glasses. Both Daddy and Mom wore glasses, and so did her brother Christopher. But an eye patch! She did not want to wear an eye patch.

That evening at the supper table, Daddy said, "You look lovely in glasses, Sharilyn."

"Yes, you look so cute," her older sister Megan agreed.

"Cute little Linny," thirteen-year-old Andrew teased, using her nickname.

Sharilyn smiled shyly. She was glad everyone liked her glasses, but she had to get used to wearing them. Everything was framed by

