

# HOMETOWN by Wendy Rich Stetson

## EXCERPT

The girl entwined her fingers in her skirt and tugged the fabric tight. “Your hair is the same color as my cat, and she’s the best cat in the world.” In a heartbeat, she fled and buried her face in the man’s lap.

“My goodness. What a compliment. Thank you.” She fumbled with the clasp of her wallet, discovering only then she smushed her thumb deep into the whoopie pie.

The elfin child giggled and bounced on bare toes.

Standing, the man swept her into his arms and smiled down at Tessa. “Rebecca has not seen many women with ginger hair.”

*Ginger hair.* For years, she was tormented by boneheaded boys shouting, “Carrot Top” and “Flame.” No one ever called her mane ginger. Beneath his candid gaze, her curls heated like embers, warming her from top to toe. Who was this man?

The girl wriggled, knocking askew his straw hat.

He tossed her under one arm like a sack of flour and righted it, loosening a tawny curl that escaped the wide brim and fell over one brow. His gaze passed over Tessa’s face.

Her unruly hair and short shorts tweaked at her consciousness. What did the Amish call outsiders? English? She was definitely dressed like an English woman. And not one from a Jane Austen novel.

He deposited the giggling girl right-side up on the floor and approached the table. “I’ve rarely seen hair that color myself. Like a copper penny.”

She stared at the mangled whoopie pie and blushed even deeper. For a brief moment, she felt his gaze trail down her body like a caress. Or did she?