



Plain Truth

By Jodi Picoult

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From the bestselling author of *My Sister's Keeper* comes the riveting story of a murder that shatters the picturesque calm of Amish country -- and tests the heart and soul of the lawyer defending the woman at the center of the storm.

The discovery of a dead infant in an Amish barn shakes Lancaster County to its core. But the police investigation leads to a more shocking disclosure: circumstantial evidence suggests that eighteen-year-old Katie Fisher, an unmarried Amish woman believed to be the newborn's mother, took the child's life. When Ellie Hathaway, a disillusioned big-city attorney, comes to Paradise, Pennsylvania, to defend Katie, two cultures collide -- and for the first time in her high-profile career, Ellie faces a system of justice very different from her own. Delving deep inside the world of those who live "plain," Ellie must find a way to reach Katie on her terms. And as she unravels a tangled murder case, Ellie also looks deep within -- to confront her own fears and desires when a man from her past reenters her life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Though it begins as the quietly electrifying story of an unmarried Amish teenager who gives birth to a baby she is accused of then smothering, Picoult's latest (after *Keeping Faith*) settles into an ordinary trial epic, albeit one centered intriguingly on an Amish dairy farm near Lancaster, Pa. Katie Fisher, 18, denies not only having committed the murder but even having borne the baby, whose body is found in the Fishers' calving pen, and she sticks to her story, even when she is quizzed by Ellie Hathaway, the high-powered Philadelphia attorney who undertakes Katie's defense as a favor to Leda, an aunt she and the young woman share. Ellie, who has retreated to Leda's farm in Paradise to reconsider her life--she successfully defends guilty clients--embarks on the case reluctantly: at 39, she wants nothing more than to have a child. However, to meet bail stipulations, she volunteers as Katie's guardian (since Kate's strict parents reject her) and moves in with the Fishers. Living with the Amish necessitates some adjustments for both parties, but Katie and Ellie become fast friends in spite of their differences. Very little action occurs beyond the initial setup, though the questions remain: Who was the father of Katie's child? And did she smother the newborn? Told from both third-person omniscient and first-person (Ellie's) vantages, the story rolls leisurely through the trial preparations, the results of which are repeated, tediously, in the courtroom. Perhaps the story's quietude is appropriate, given its magnificently painted backdrop and distinctive characters, but one can't help wishing that the spark igniting the book's opening pages had built into a full-fledged blaze. (May)

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From School Library Journal

YA-Philadelphia defense lawyer Ellie Hathaway retreats to her great Aunt Leda's home in Paradise, PA, to get a break from her high-pressure job. Almost at the same time that she arrives, a dead baby is discovered in the barn of an Amish farmer. A police investigation reveals that the mother is an 18-year-old unmarried Amish girl, Katie Fisher, and that the infant apparently did not die of natural causes. Even in the face of medical proof that she recently gave birth, Katie denies the murder charge. Ellie reluctantly agrees to defend her, even though she does not want to be defended. To better understand her client, Ellie moves into the farmhouse with the Fisher family where she begins to see firsthand the pressures and sacrifices of those who live "plain." As she searches for evidence in this case, she calls upon a friend from her past, Dr. John Cooper, a psychiatrist. As Coop and Ellie work together to unravel fact and fiction, they also work to resolve issues in their relationship. Readers will experience a psychological drama as well as a suspenseful courtroom trial. The contrast between the Amish culture and the "English" provides an interesting tension. This study of opposites details much information about a way of life based on faith, humility, duty, and honesty.

Carol Clark, formerly at Fairfax County Public Schools, VA

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From Library Journal

Ellie Hathaway is a successful but disillusioned defense attorney who needs to get away from the often guilty people she has been defending in court. She flees Philadelphia for Paradise, PA, the small town where she spent idyllic childhood summers. Shortly before Ellie arrives at her aunt's house, a young Amish girl is accused of murdering her newborn son in her parents' barn. Ellie's aunt, who is related to the family, believes that the girl is innocent and asks Ellie to defend her. The judge orders Katie to be released into Ellie's custody, and Ellie reluctantly moves onto the dairy farm that Katie's family operates while she prepares her defense. Picoult (*The Pact*) offers an interesting look into Amish culture and beliefs and the effect they have on various people. Her courtroom scenes are exciting and realistic, but a surprising twist at the very end just doesn't ring true. Nonetheless, public libraries will want this well-paced story, which focuses on a unique

way of life.

-Penny Stevens, Centreville Regional Lib., VA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Terri Root:

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