

Inspired by . . .

DR. CHESTER SOUTHAM: While Charles South (Dr. Gibbon's mentor) is fictional, he's modeled after an actual doctor. According to his Wikipedia page, Dr. Chester Southam "conducted clinical research on people without their informed consent, in which he injected cancer cells (HeLa cells) into their skin, to see if their immune system would reject the cancer cells or if the cells would grow. He did this to patients under his care or others' care, and to prisoners." Despite his unethical experiments, he was elected president of the American Association for Cancer research and later became head The Division of Medical Oncology at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

AMISH SISTERS: Miriam and Leah's story was loosely based on the experiences of two Amish sisters with whom I've become friends. Like so many other women who have survived sexual violence, they too were victim-blamed. Unfortunately, their perpetrator was never brought to justice. Let me be clear, PLAIN OFFENSE is a work of fiction. I do not claim to have accurately portrayed the Amish lifestyle, beliefs, or actions, but as a woman living in America, I know firsthand misogyny is alive and well.

NICKEL MINES SCHOOL SHOOTING: In October 2006, shots rang out in the idyllic Amish community in the village of Nickel Mines. A gunman entered a one-room schoolhouse, took hostages, then shot ten young girls (aged 6-13). On that devastating fall day, 6 Amish girls were killed before the gunman committed suicide. In accordance with the deeply rooted commitment to forgiveness, within hours of the shooting members of the Amish community comforted the shooter's family and extended their forgiveness.

FOUNDER EFFECT: The founder effect occurs when a small group of people migrates to a new locale, leading to a disproportionately frequent occurrence of their genes in the resulting population. The Amish community provides a prime example of this effect. In the early 18th century, approximately 200 people immigrated from Europe and formed the Amish community in Eastern Pennsylvania. Most Amish marry from within their own community so genetic mutations tend to persist. Due to genetic isolation and limited founding individuals, certain recessive traits are amplified in future generations.

Sources: AmishAmerica.com, PBS.org, ThoughtCo.com