

# *The Farm Stand*

# Other Books by Amy Clipston

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*The Bake Shop*  
*The Coffee Corner* (available  
December 2020)

## THE AMISH HOMESTEAD SERIES

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*Room on the Porch Swing*  
*A Seat by the Hearth*  
*A Welcome at Our Door*

## THE AMISH HEIRLOOM SERIES

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*Love and Buggy Rides* included  
in *An Amish Harvest*  
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in *An Amish Summer*  
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in *An Amish Christmas Love*  
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in *An Amish Winter*  
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*Cookies and Cheer* included in  
*An Amish Christmas Bakery*  
*Baskets of Sunshine* included  
in *An Amish Picnic*

## NONFICTION

*The Gift of Love*

ZONDERVAN

*The Farm Stand*

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*For my wonderful literary agent, Natasha Kern, with love*

# Glossary



*ach*: oh  
*aenti*: aunt  
*appeditlich*: delicious  
*bedauerlich*: sad  
*boppli*: baby  
*bopplin*: babies  
*bruder*: brother  
*bu*: boy  
*buwe*: boys  
*daadi*: granddad  
*daed*: father  
*danki*: thank you  
*dat*: dad  
*dochder*: daughter  
*dochdern*: daughters  
*Englischer*: a non-Amish person  
*fraa*: wife  
*freind*: friend  
*freinden*: friends  
*froh*: happy  
*gegisch*: silly

## GLOSSARY

*gern gschehne*: you're welcome

*Gude mariye*: Good morning

*gut*: good

*Gut nacht*: Good night

*haus*: house

*Ich liebe dich*: I love you

*kaffi*: coffee

*kapp*: prayer covering or cap

*kichli*: cookie

*kichlin*: cookies

*kind*: child

*kinner*: children

*krank*: sick

*kuche*: cake

*kumm*: come

*lieve*: love, a term of endearment

*maed*: young women, girls

*maedel*: young woman

*mamm*: mom

*mammi*: grandma

*mei*: my

*naerfich*: nervous

*narrisch*: crazy

*onkel*: uncle

*Ordnung*: The oral tradition of practices required and forbidden  
in the Amish faith

*schee*: pretty

*schmaert*: smart

*schtupp*: family room

*schweschder*: sister

## GLOSSARY

*schweschdere*: sisters

*sohn*: son

*Was iss letz?*: What's wrong?

*Wie geht's*: How do you do? or Good day!

*wunderbaar*: wonderful

*ya*: yes

*zwillingbopplin*: twins

*The Amish Marketplace*  
*Series Family Trees*

GRANDPARENTS

Erma m. Sylvan Gingerich

|

Lynn m. Freeman Kurtz

Mary m. Lamar Petersheim

Walter m. Rachelle

Harvey m. Darlene

SECOND GENERATION PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Lynn m. Freeman Kurtz

Christiana \_\_\_ Phoebe

Mary m. Lamar Petersheim

Cornelius (Neil) \_\_\_ Salina

Ellen m. Neil Petersheim

Betsy Kay \_\_\_ Jayne

Darlene m. Harvey Gingerich

Bethany \_\_\_ Anthony

Rachelle m. Walter Gingerich

|

Leanna

Leanna m. Marlin Wengerd (deceased)

|

Chester

THE AMISH MARKETPLACE SERIES FAMILY TREES

Joyce m. Merle Stoltzfus  
Jeffrey —|— Nicholas

Jean m. Ira Yoder  
Josiah —|— Lizzie

Shirley m. Gary Zimmerman  
Irvin —|— William —|— Roger

Karen m. Irvin Zimmerman  
|  
Heather

Loretta m. Robert Horst  
Caroline —|— Irene

## Note to the Reader

While this novel is set against the real backdrop of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the characters are fictional. There is no intended resemblance between the characters in this book and any real members of the Amish and Mennonite communities. As with any work of fiction, I've taken license in some areas of research as a means of creating the necessary circumstances for my characters. My research was thorough; however, it would be impossible to be completely accurate in details and description, since each and every community differs. Therefore, any inaccuracies in the Amish and Mennonite lifestyles portrayed in this book are completely due to fictional license.

# 1



Salina Petersheim huffed as she pulled two wagons piled high with boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables across the parking lot at the Bird-in-Hand marketplace. The hot Pennsylvania morning air felt like a smothering, wet blanket, and perspiration pooled at the base of her neck as she blew out a puff of air to push the ties of her prayer covering out of her face.

Customers' cars already filled nearly all the spaces in the lot, a sign that it would be another busy day in July. She looked toward the front of the building, where people already stood in line waiting for the market to open.

Her shoulders tightened with frustration, and she silently scolded herself. Why hadn't she set her alarm before she climbed into bed last night? She was running nearly thirty minutes behind, which meant she'd not only made her driver wait but she would still be stocking the shelves in her Farm Stand booth when all those customers spilled in through the front doors. The market was open only Thursday through Saturday each week, and since today was Thursday, she had to set up all her produce at once.

If only Josiah and his family hadn't stayed so late after supper

last night, she might not have been so tired that she forgot to set her alarm.

Ashamed to be placing blame on her boyfriend, she pushed the thought away. Then she heaved and yanked as the wheels of the two wagons hit the ramp. She pulled them to the top and halted, hoping they would stay in place as she pulled her key card from her pocket to unlock the back door reserved for vendors. Once the door was open, she managed to pull the wagons through without help and then start her journey to her booth, grateful it was near the back of the building.

Her arms and shoulders ached as she maneuvered down the short aisle to the Farm Stand, the wagon wheels scraping along the worn oak floors as she trekked past the Unique Leather and Wood Gifts booth, run by Jeff Stoltzfus, her cousin Christiana Kurtz's boyfriend.

"Salina! There you are!" Christiana, who was also her best friend, appeared as Salina moved past her Bake Shop, located across from Salina's booth. Her cousin grabbed the handle of one of the wagons and pulled.

"Hey, Christiana," Salina responded as she switched to using both hands to pull the second wagon. She considered her cousin's concerned expression. She'd always thought Christiana, who was twenty-six and only six months older than Salina, was her prettiest cousin—although she kept that opinion to herself. Christiana had fiery red hair and blue-green eyes, coloring unique among the cousins. Salina had inherited dark-brown hair and baby-blue eyes from her mother.

"I was so worried about you," Christiana said. "You're normally already here when I arrive. I even called your *dat's* phone, and he told me you were running late."

## *the Farm Stand*

One reason Salina enjoyed running a booth in the marketplace was that it gave her the opportunity to spend time not just with Christiana but with all her favorite cousins. Bethany and Leanna ran booths there as well, and they all looked out for one another.

Salina lowered her gaze and sighed. “Ya, I was late this morning. I don’t like starting the market weekend like this. You know I always do my best to be organized and ready for my customers.”

Jeff sidled up to Salina and took over pulling her wagon. “Let me get this for you.”

“*Danki*, Jeff.”

She was grateful the couple met when Christiana opened her Bake Shop last spring. Their booths were next to each other, so they’d had plenty of opportunities to talk, and soon they were dating. Jeff was a kind and thoughtful man, handsome with dark eyes and matching dark, curly hair. He was also twenty-nine, a few years older than Christiana. Salina wondered if he was ready for marriage and would propose to her cousin soon.

The thought brought both excitement and anxiety. Would she be ready to get married if Josiah asked? Would she be ready to join the Yoder family?

She couldn’t think about that now. She had so much to do, and the market was opening in five minutes. As she entered her booth, she cringed. She’d never get even half her inventory organized in time. What would her customers think if her space was disheveled? They might consider buying their produce at a more presentable market—although hers was the only booth here that sold such a variety from a garden. She turned toward the empty shelves and pressed her lips together.

“We’ll help you. Put us to work.” Christiana seemed to have read Salina’s mind.

“But you have to get your own booths ready.” Salina gestured across the aisle.

“We are ready,” Jeff said.

“*Danki*, then.” Salina’s shoulders sagged as humiliation set in. Her tardiness wasn’t affecting only her day. It was affecting Christiana and Jeff’s, too, and she hated that.

She set out a box of corn on the cob and then unloaded plastic containers of blackberries. Soon the hum of customers’ conversations danced from the aisle as she turned to arrange a display of cucumbers.

“Excuse me.”

Salina spun to look up into the face of a man with golden-blond hair and striking blue eyes. He looked to be in his late twenties, and she could tell by his clothes that he was Mennonite and not Amish. He wore a blue plaid, button-down shirt and jeans, along with suspenders that clipped to his waistband. He also held a hat in his hand. It was similar to the straw hats her father and brother wore, but its rim wasn’t quite as broad. And he was tall—just as tall as her father and brother, if not taller.

“*Gude mariye*.” He was also clean-shaven, but unlike Amish men, a Mennonite man without a beard could be single or married.

“Hello.” Salina stood straighter and swiped her hands down her apron, hoping she looked acceptable for her first customer.

“How much for all your cherry tomatoes?” He jammed his thumb toward the display Christiana had just set out.

Salina blinked. Had she heard him correctly? “You want all of them?”

“Please.” He gestured widely. “I’d also like all your cucumbers, carrots, and butterhead lettuce.”

Salina tilted her head and studied his face. She wasn’t in the mood for humor this morning. “Is this some kind of joke?”

## *the Farm Stand*

He chuckled. "No, it's not. I own the restaurant across the street. Zimmerman's Family Restaurant? You may have noticed it. We've been open for about a year, and I want to add some dishes with local ingredients to my menu and upgrade my salad bar. I'm not just the owner. I'm the chef too."

"Oh."

"You'll have to stop by for a meal sometime."

She nodded and looked past him as customers filed in and out of nearby booths. How would she make it through the day if this man wiped out so much of what she had to offer?

Christiana and Jeff came over, and her cousin's eyes sparkled with what was no doubt curiosity as she looked back and forth between Salina and her customer. "We're going to head back to our booths now."

"*Danki* for your help." Salina touched Christiana's arm. "I'll talk to you later."

"*Gern gschehne.*" Christiana nodded at the man, who smiled at her, and then she and Jeff hurried off.

The man looked down at the floor as Daisy, the resident marketplace cat, brushed against his leg. Then he grinned as he squatted and rubbed her chin. "Hello there. What's your name?"

"That's Daisy," Salina said. "She lives here and likes to visit with the vendors and customers."

"Nice to make your acquaintance, Daisy," he told the gray tabby before he stood and gave Salina two palms up. "What do you say, then? How much for everything I need?"

"Let me work up a price for you."

"Fantastic." He rubbed his hands together. "You have a great selection. Where do you get your produce?"

"I have a large garden." She walked to the counter at the back of her booth, and he followed.

AMY CLIPSTON

"You grow all this?" He glanced around, taking in all her displays.

"Ya." She pulled a calculator from a shelf under the counter.

"This is impressive. How long have you been gardening?"

"Ever since I could walk, I suppose." She began pushing buttons.

"*Gude mariye*, Salina!" one of her regular customers called as she entered the booth, causing her to look up.

"Hi, Salina!" Another Amish woman waved at her.

Salina smiled at them both before one perused her cucumbers and the other her corn. Then she finished her task and gave the man her price.

"That's fair." He pulled out his wallet and counted out a stack of bills. "I can tell you're popular around here."

Her cheeks heated as she took his money. "I'm not popular, but my produce sells well."

"I'm not surprised you stay busy." He slipped his wallet back into his jeans pocket and then held out his hand. "I'm Will Zimmerman, by the way."

She shook his hand. "Salina Petersheim."

"Nice to meet you."

"How are you going to transport all this produce to your restaurant?"

He looked at her with a sheepish expression. "I was just wondering the same thing. I wasn't expecting to find everything I need here." He gestured toward her wagons sitting at the back of the booth. "Any chance I could use one of those?"

When she hesitated, he grinned.

He put his hand over his heart. "I promise I'll bring it back soon. You know where I work, so you can come after me if I don't."

She couldn't stop a smile from forming. "Okay. I'll trust you."

## *the Farm Stand*

“*Danki.*” He claimed the wagon and then loaded his purchases. “I’ll see you soon, Salina.” He nodded and then pulled his borrowed conveyance into motion.

“Salina,” her customer near the green peppers called, “your vegetables are beautiful today!”

“*Danki, Martha.*” Salina glanced toward the far end of the booth as Will pulled the wagon into the aisle.

“Just look at these blackberries!” the other woman said. “The Lord has blessed you with a bountiful garden, Salina.”

“*Ya, he has.*” Salina watched Will and the wagon disappear into the aisle before turning toward the customer admiring her blackberries. “How is your family, Sylvia?”



“Who was that tall Mennonite man who came to your booth this morning?” Christiana asked Salina as they sat at a high-top table in their cousin Bethany’s Coffee Corner booth at lunchtime. Jeff was there too. They were counting on Sara Ann King to keep an eye on their booths while they took a break to eat, which she’d done before when the crowds had thinned out enough. None of them were thrilled with Sara Ann’s habit of playing the marketplace gossip, but her quilt booth was next to Salina’s, and they knew they could trust her with their businesses.

The aroma of Bethany’s almond-flavored coffee filled Salina’s senses as customers at nearby tables drank the fabulous special of the day.

“His name is Will Zimmerman, and he owns the restaurant across the street.” Salina took a bite of her turkey sandwich and then placed it back on her paper plate.

AMY CLIPSTON

“What did he buy?” Bethany grinned as she pushed the ribbons from her prayer covering behind her slight shoulders. Her light-blue eyes seemed to sparkle in the fluorescent lights humming above them. Her Gingerich cousin was younger than Salina at twenty-three, and once again Salina marveled at how Bethany always seemed to be upbeat with unfailing energy and that constant, pretty smile.

“He bought all my cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, and butterhead lettuce.” Salina checked off the items on her fingers as she listed them.

“What? He bought them all?” Leanna asked. Leanna was her oldest cousin as well as the shortest. She had the same shade of dark-brown hair Salina had. But unlike Salina’s eyes, hers were a beautiful brown that resembled chocolate milk. Her eyes weren’t what Salina most admired about Leanna, though. Her cousin had been only thirty-one when she lost her husband, Marlin Wengerd, in an accident, and now, four years later, she was still raising her son alone—although they did live with her parents. Yet with an unwavering positivity, she consistently counted her blessings, including the success of her Jam and Jelly Nook booth at the marketplace.

Salina nodded as she took a sip from her bottle of water, then said, “*Ya*, he bought them all. He also borrowed one of my wagons to take everything back to his restaurant.”

“I hope he returned it,” Leanna said with a pointed look.

“He did.” Salina fingered her bottle as she recalled Will’s wide smile when he returned. Something about him struck her, but she couldn’t put her finger on it. He wasn’t a flirt, but he was outgoing, almost to the point of it feeling familiar to her. “He also said he’ll see me soon.”

## *the Farm Stand*

“Sounds like he was *froh* with what you had to offer, then. This will be great for your business.” Bethany grinned.

“*Ya*,” Jeff said. “Helping to stock his restaurant with local produce should be profitable for you, especially if he lets his customers know you’re his supplier.”

Salina nodded. “That’s true. My booth stays busy, but a consistent customer like Will would be *gut*. He said he wants to make a point of adding local produce to his menu.”

Christiana swiped a chip off Jeff’s plate and grinned at him before turning back to Salina. “You said something about being late this morning because Josiah came over last night and stayed late. Did he come for supper?”

“*Ya*, he did. His family came too.”

“Why did they stay so late?” Leanna asked.

Salina swallowed a sigh. “You know how our *dats* get when they start talking. I thought they were never going to finish their conversation. Next thing I knew, it was after eight, and I hadn’t finished packing my produce yet. *Mamm* helped me, but I didn’t get to bed until almost eleven—and I forgot to set my alarm. You know I always work in the garden before I head to the market. And then I was running late . . .” She sighed and took another bite of her sandwich.

“How long have you and Josiah been together now?” A smile twitched on Bethany’s lips.

“Almost a year,” Christiana answered as she grinned at Jeff. “Salina and Josiah started dating in August, which is when we started dating.” She gave Jeff an elbow in the side, and he smiled at her.

Salina looked down at her half-eaten sandwich. Christiana and Jeff seemed to easily show their affection for each other, but

Salina couldn't remember if Josiah had kissed her cheek last night when she walked him to his buggy. Had he even held her hand? Salina liked Josiah very much, and she enjoyed his company. He was funny and sweet, and he always brightened her day when he stopped by to visit. But if their relationship was solid, why did showing affection seem so difficult for them?

Or maybe not difficult but an afterthought.

"Has he said anything about getting married?"

Salina's eyes snapped up to meet Bethany's. Then she looked at Jeff, sure her cheeks were turning red. Didn't Bethany realize how embarrassing that question was—especially in front of Christiana's boyfriend?

Bethany's eyes rounded, and she cleared her throat before turning to Leanna. "How's business at the Jam and Jelly Nook today?"

Thankfully, Leanna didn't miss a beat when she responded. "*Gut*. A tour group came in and bought nearly all my cranberry and apple jam."

As Leanna shared more about her morning customers, Salina finished her sandwich and more thoughts about Josiah filtered through her mind. She was grateful she'd managed to dodge the question Bethany asked, because her response would have been no. Josiah had never mentioned marriage. The subject had never even come up once since they'd started dating. Did that mean they didn't have a solid relationship after all? Maybe with most couples, marriage would be discussed after dating for eleven months.

Salina further contemplated their relationship as she munched on her pretzels. It seemed right when Josiah asked her to be his girlfriend last year. After all, they'd been friends for their whole lives, and he was handsome with his dark hair, dark eyes, and

## *the Farm Stand*

warm smile. He also worked hard and made a good living as a foreman in his father's roofing company. His parents had been close friends with hers since before she and Josiah were born. To no one's surprise, her father not only approved of the relationship but encouraged it. *Strongly* encouraged it. It made sense that Josiah would ask her to date him—and, of course, Salina had said yes.

She looked up just as Christiana leaned close to Jeff's ear and whispered something. When he laughed and then whispered something in return, Salina's stomach twisted. Suddenly she craved a warm and romantic relationship like the one Christiana enjoyed with Jeff. But that wasn't what she had with Josiah. Would she ever? Did they just need more time to develop those feelings?

This wasn't the first time she'd asked herself such questions. Doubt had been a near constant companion lately, but she'd just pushed it away.

"Oh my goodness," Leanna announced when she glanced at the clock on the wall. "Look at the time. I need to get back to my booth."

Salina gathered her belongings and then started toward the Coffee Corner exit. "See you later," she called back to everyone.

Christiana caught up to her with Jeff close behind. "Wait, Salina. Are you okay?"

Salina kept walking. "Ya. Why?"

"You seem upset about something."

"I'm fine." Salina forced a smile and gave them a little wave. "Have *gut* sales." Then she waved her thanks to Sara Ann as she hurried into her booth and stowed her lunch bag and purse in the back.

Christiana walked up behind her. "You know I can read you like a book. Something is bothering you. You're always quiet,

but today you're even quieter than usual." She paused. "You can trust me."

Salina closed her eyes for a moment and then turned to face her cousin. "I'm fine. I was just thinking about everything I have to do when I get home tonight. You know I can't stand it when I get behind on my chores in the garden. I'm just frustrated with myself. I started today on the wrong foot, and now I'm trying to catch up."

While that was true, it wasn't what was heavily weighing on her mind. And it wasn't that she didn't want Christiana's help. She did. She longed to ask her if she loved Jeff. And if so, how did she know she did? She also wanted to know if Christiana and Jeff had discussed marriage, and if Christiana wanted to marry him.

She needed to know if her relationship with Josiah measured up to what Christiana and Jeff had together—or could. Again, they seemed to have something she and Josiah didn't. But the conversation was too personal to have in the market. Customers were walking into the Farm Stand.

"You're too much of a perfectionist." Christiana wagged a finger at her. "Last year you kept telling me to give Jeff grace when I was frustrated with him. I think you need to give *yourself* some grace."

Salina snorted. "It's easy for you to say that when your *dat* isn't the bishop."

"Excuse me. Do you have any more cherry tomatoes?"

Salina looked over her shoulder. Two women dressed in shorts and T-shirts stood next to her display of tomatoes. One of them was pointing to her empty shelf.

"I'm sorry, but I sold out of them this morning."

## *the Farm Stand*

“Too bad.” The other woman snapped her fingers and then gestured toward the display of figs. “Your figs look fantastic, though. Those are hard to find!”

Salina turned back to her cousin. “I need to take care of my customers.”

Christiana gave her a warm smile. “I know. Me too. Talk to you later.” She glanced down at Daisy as the gray tabby sauntered over and brushed against her leg. “Have you noticed Daisy seems hungrier lately? She even looks like she’s gaining some weight. But then, I know we all feed her—probably too much.” She leaned down and rubbed the cat’s ear.

Salina shrugged. “Now that you say that, she does look a little fluffier than usual.”

“Come on, Daisy. I’ll give you a snack anyway.” Christiana beckoned for the cat to follow her and then walked out of the booth with Daisy jogging behind.

Salina smiled as she made her way to her customers, but she mentally shook her head before greeting them. Perhaps she was too focused on her feelings for Josiah. After all, he was a good Christian man, and God had blessed her when he brought him into her life. Josiah was just busy with his work, and so was she.

Surely the warmer relationship she craved with him would come. She’d just have to wait a little longer.

## 2



“The customers are raving about the salad bar,” Danielle said as she walked into the restaurant’s kitchen later that afternoon. “I think it’s that *appetitlich* butterhead lettuce and those ripe cherry tomatoes.”

Will grinned as he grabbed another head of lettuce from the counter and began to wash it in the sink. “I told you I found a *wunderbaar* new source.”

“Did you say you went to the marketplace across the street?”

“*Ya*. I decided I wanted to start featuring local produce, and when I checked out the booths over there, I found an Amish *maedel* who grows all her own vegetables and fruit. Her prices are fair, and you can see the produce is fantastic.” Will separated the lettuce leaves and started laying them on a paper towel. “If you look at the specials list on the chalkboard out front, you’ll see I added a note that says we now feature locally grown produce.”

“Sounds like you found a *gut* vendor. I’m going to need that lettuce. The salad bar is almost out.”

“I’m working on it.” Will held up one of the large, green

## *the Farm Stand*

petals. "I'll bring it as soon as I have it ready." He nodded toward one of the stoves. "Check out my stuffing over there. I'm serving turkey tomorrow, and I'm trying something different with the stuffing."

Danielle took a clean spoon from the counter next to the stove and put a bit of the stuffing into her mouth. She swallowed it and then gagged. "Ugh. Is that sage?"

"Ya." Will pointed to the pan. "I added more than the recipe said to give it extra flavor. Not *gut*?"

"No." She shook her head. "Not to me. Too much."

"Hmm." He rubbed his chin. "I'll try again." His mind immediately spun with ideas to improve the recipe, and he was grateful his staff felt comfortable enough to offer opinions. Danielle Hoover was just one among his great hires.

Danielle dropped her spoon into the sink and then leaned against the long counter as she pushed the ties from her Old Order Mennonite prayer covering over her shoulders. Then she smoothed her hands down the gray apron that covered her pink dress decorated with small white flowers, which Will knew was her favorite. It seemed like she'd been wearing it even more than usual lately.

"We need more lasagna for the buffet too," she said. "It's been going fast."

"We have another pan ready to go."

His brother Roger walked into the kitchen from the small room in the back and then grabbed two pot holders before picking up the pan Will had just taken out of one of the large ovens. "I don't know how you find anything in that office, Will. It's a mess. Don't you lose things?"

"I know where everything is," Will muttered, and that was

mostly true. He loved his kid brother, but he didn't need criticism from him. Four years younger than Will, Roger was twenty-six and just slightly shorter than Will's six foot three. Their grandmother liked to refer to them and their older brother, Irvin, as "three peas in a pod," not only because of their height but because of their almost identical blond hair and blue eyes. Will had to admit the family resemblance was uncanny. Even Irvin's wife often commented on how much alike the three of them looked.

Will noticed Danielle's bright smile as she looked at Roger. And when she straightened her name tag, she seemed to stand a little taller.

"I'll walk with you out to the buffet," Roger said as he carried the pan toward the double kitchen doors leading to the dining room. He was smiling too.

"I'll get the door," Danielle said. Then she pushed open the door on the right and held it while Roger went through.

"I'll bring out the lettuce," Will called after them, but they seemed to ignore him.

Will grinned as he shook his head. Lately he'd noticed a spark between Roger and Danielle, which might account for seeing that favorite dress of hers more often. When Will hired Danielle as one of his waitresses last year, she seemed to be all smiles whenever Roger was in the room. And lately his brother seemed to smile whenever he saw Danielle. Perhaps he would ask her out soon.

Will turned his attention to chopping lettuce and dropping it into a container, and then he sliced mushrooms, green peppers, cucumbers, and carrots before chopping onions. He might as well replenish everything on the salad bar. After grabbing more

## *the Farm Stand*

cherry tomatoes, he placed all the ingredients into separate containers and set them on a tray. Then he hefted it onto his shoulder, pushed through the kitchen door, and stepped into the dining area, where patrons' voices buzzed in his ears.

He smiled as he glanced around at all the people eating plates full of the selections he and Roger had placed on today's lunch buffet—lasagna, garlic bread, green beans, and corn, along with their usual variety of sandwiches and desserts. Happiness radiated through his body as he took in the restaurant he and his brother ran together—the large dining room, the oak tables and chairs, and the large windows where bright early-afternoon sunlight spilled in.

This was Will's dream, the fruition of all he'd strived for since he was nineteen and spent the summer working at his uncle Eddie's restaurant in upstate New York. That had been eleven years ago, when he'd arrived at his uncle's home spiritually bewildered. But he left there with a calling that felt as though it had come straight from God.

If only Uncle Eddie were alive to see what he'd accomplished through hard work and prayer.

"We're low on just about everything on the salad bar," Valerie said, rushing past Will, the skirt of her dress fluttering as she carried a tray of drinks to a nearby table. She was another one of his waitresses, just as dependable as Danielle was.

"I'm on it," Will called back to her. Then grateful to see a brief lull in customers helping themselves to the salad bar, he quickly set the tray on a nearby cart and started switching out the nearly empty containers with his full ones.

As he worked, he recalled how when his usual produce supplier had run low on a few items last week, he'd decided it was a good

time to improve the selections he and Roger offered. Then he'd asked his staff for recommendations for a new supplier. Minerva Martin, a waitress who'd become like a surrogate grandmother to him, Roger, and the rest of the staff, had recommended the marketplace across the street. Will had been convinced the cost there would be too high for his budget, but Salina Petersheim's prices were reasonable, and her produce was impressive.

He chuckled to himself as he recalled her confused expression when he'd asked to buy so much of her stock. Her brow had puckered, and her blue eyes had narrowed. She stared up at him as if he were completely crazy—or at least as if she was trying to figure out if he was teasing her.

When he returned her wagon, he'd observed her while she was deep in conversation with an older Amish woman. They were talking about the vast number of herbs Salina's booth offered. Her attention to detail came across in her tidy display, and their discussion had been quick and to the point. She seemed to be a serious if not a shy young woman. He guessed she was only in her early to midtwenties and yet was a shrewd and mature businesswoman.

Also apparent was that she loved her produce. She'd been meticulously arranging her cucumbers when he'd first arrived that morning. He could imagine her spending hours in her garden, weeding and caring for the plants as if they were her precious children.

He tried to envision how large her garden would be for such a vast variety of produce. Was it many acres like his father's pasture at his dairy farm? Did she tend to all the plants and trees by herself, or did she have a houseful of siblings helping her?

A strong hand on Will's shoulder startled him from his

## *the Farm Stand*

thoughts. Turning, he found two of his regular customers smiling at him.

“You’ve outdone yourself today, Will,” Don Bradford said as he withdrew his hand. “That lasagna is superb.”

His wife, Pam, placed one hand on her chest and briefly closed her eyes. “Oh yes. And that cheesecake is out of this world!”

“Thank you. I’m so glad you liked them both.” As the couple walked away, Will made a mental note to ask Salina about her blackberries. He could make some delicious desserts with them. His mind ticked off a list of recipes. Blackberry cream pie, chocolate blackberry tart, blackberry cobbler—

“Will?”

He glanced over his shoulder to find his girlfriend smiling up at him. “Caroline. Hi. I didn’t expect to see you here today.”

“We’re going to run errands this afternoon, and we thought we’d surprise you by having lunch here first.” Caroline turned and grinned at her younger sister, Irene. Although the Horst siblings were four years apart, they looked almost as much alike as Will and his brothers did. The two women had the same sunshine-kissed blond hair under their Old Order Mennonite prayer coverings, a shade inherited from their mother, Loretta, and the same honey-brown eyes, inherited from their father, Robert.

Will recalled how quickly he’d fallen for Caroline’s beautiful smile and adorable laugh when a friend introduced them. That was four years ago, when her family was visiting his church, one of two Mennonite churches in their general area. Then, after getting to know her for about six months, he’d asked her to be his girlfriend.

“That’s great.” He tucked the now-empty tray under one arm. “You get off work early?”

AMY CLIPSTON

Caroline nodded. “*Ya*, we did. The bookstore wasn’t busy all morning, so we got a lot of our work done, and *Mamm* and *Dat* said we could both leave.” She turned toward the salad bar. “Oh my. Doesn’t that look fantastic, Irene?”

“*Ya*. The lettuce is so green.”

Will nodded toward the stack of bowls. “Help yourselves. Also, I have a surprise for you, Caroline.” It was a good thing he’d made her favorite cream pie that morning instead of waiting for the lull between the lunch and supper crowds.

“You do?” Caroline set her hand on his forearm as her smile brightened. “I can’t wait to find out what it is. By the way, I was wondering if you’d like me to come back and help you clean up tonight.”

“That’s not necessary, but *danki*.”

Her smile grew coy. “Well, someday we’re going to be husband and *fraa*, and then I’ll be here to help with cleanup all the time. Why not start now, right?”

Will swallowed against his suddenly dry throat, and he had to work to keep his eyes from widening as he took in Caroline’s hopeful expression. Her comments about marriage seemed to come more often lately, and each time he fought back anxiety. He cared about her very much, yet every time marriage came up, doubts about their relationship rose to the surface. He wasn’t sure why. He should be excited by the idea of marrying his sweet and beautiful girlfriend.

He forced his lips into a cordial smile. “Well, okay. If you’d like to. But right now I need to see if the next pan of lasagna is ready to come out of the oven. Please help yourself to the buffet. I’ll bring out your surprise in a little while.”

He nodded greetings to several customers as he made his way

## *the Farm Stand*

back to the kitchen, and once there, he set the tray on a counter and the empty containers in the large sink. Then he checked the timer on the oven with the lasagna.

"I saw Caroline and Irene out there," Roger commented as he walked up behind him.

"I just spoke to them."

"When are you going to propose?"

Will glanced over his shoulder at him. "Not you too."

"What does that mean?"

Will sighed as he opened the oven door and pulled out the pan. "Caroline has been making a lot of not-so-subtle comments about us getting married. She just asked about coming back here to help clean up when we close tonight, since, she said, she'll be doing it when we're married."

"Can you blame her, Will?" Roger pulled a tray of garlic bread out of the second oven. "After all, you've been together three years, and neither of you is getting any younger. You're thirty, and she's twenty-seven. She's probably ready to start a family."

That was the last thing he wanted to hear. How could he be ready to be a father when he wasn't even certain he was ready to be a husband? *At least not Caroline's husband.*

He cringed at the thought. He'd choose Caroline when he was ready to marry, wouldn't he? Just not yet. First he had to wrestle with the doubts that had run rampant for weeks now.

"What are you afraid of?"

Will faced his brother. "I'm not afraid. I'm just not ready."

"But you're in your thirties now. When *will* you be ready?"

"I don't know."

Roger shrugged as he slid the bread onto a tray. "You'd better figure it out before Caroline gets tired of waiting."



“*Danki* for coming back to help us clean up.” Will held Caroline’s hand as he walked her up her parents’ driveway later that night.

“You’re welcome. And *danki* for my delicious cream pie! It was just perfect, as usual.” She looked back at his van, where Roger was waiting for him, and then smiled. “I appreciate your having your driver give me a ride home.”

“*Gern gschehne.*”

“*Ich liebe dich, Will.*”

Her eyes were full of her love. But he couldn’t echo the meaning in them and her sugary sweet tone by repeating her words. It would feel like telling a fib. Something had to be wrong with him!

He leaned down and kissed her cheek. “Sleep well.”

She placed her hand on his arm. “You too.”

“*Gut nacht.*” Will felt tense, but he gave her hand a gentle squeeze. Then when she turned to wave at him from the top of her porch steps, he waved back before she entered the house.

As he climbed into the front passenger seat of the van, renewed guilt sloshed in his stomach. Caroline was perfect for him, but he was so confused. Shouldn’t his feelings for her have grown into love by now? Perhaps they still would—over time. He just had to be patient and continue to appreciate her. After all, he did care for her, and he was always happy with her around. But all this talk of marriage . . .

“So is tomorrow’s lunch special still chicken potpie?” Roger’s question broke through Will’s thoughts as the van rolled toward their house in Lititz.

Will’s body finally relaxed. Concentrating on the menu was a welcome relief to this suffocating guilt. Cooking and talking

## *the Farm Stand*

about cooking were always a balm to his soul. It was what kept him sane when anxiety plagued him.

“Ya. Chicken potpie is still the plan.” Will twisted around so he could see his brother in the back seat.

“Good.” Roger held up an index finger. “It’s one of our most popular items. And we’ll still have the sandwich area and chicken fingers for kids. We’ll also have our vegetable and chicken noodle soups. And, of course, our burger bar.”

Will turned back around and looked at passing traffic as he considered the recipes he’d use the next day. Salina’s succulent produce came to mind, just as it had throughout the day. He already had to go back to her booth for more salad makings, and he also wanted to try her corn. He’d go first thing tomorrow.

“Well, we’re here,” Austin Helms announced as he steered into the driveway of the house Will and Roger shared. “You two have a nice evening.”

“Thank you.” Will shook Austin’s hand. Old Order Mennonites weren’t permitted to drive cars, and the trip from Lititz to Bird-in-Hand was too long for a horse and buggy. Will not only appreciated Austin’s service but his flexibility too.

“See you in the morning,” Roger told Austin before climbing out of the back seat.

The brothers walked up their driveway to the two-story, dark-red brick house their grandparents had owned for a few decades. It was divided into two apartments, one upstairs and one downstairs. When he and Roger started working at local restaurants two years ago, they moved out of their parents’ home and rented the units. Then when Will had finally saved enough money to start his own restaurant, he and Roger became business partners, opening the restaurant in their family’s name.

“*Gut nacht.*” Roger yawned as he unlocked the door that led to the second floor.

“Get some rest.” Will grinned as his brother yawned again before disappearing inside.

Will stepped into his downstairs apartment, flipped on the lights, and hung his keys and hat on the peg on the wall above an end table in his small family room. He’d furnished the room with a worn blue sofa and matching love seat his older brother passed down to him along with another end table and two old brass lamps. Caroline and Irene had dropped by with some soup not long ago when he was down with a head cold. Even then Caroline had assumed marriage, telling him how she’d love to decorate the place.

He would never bring a bride to a place like this, but he didn’t want to think about that now.

He shuffled through the small kitchen and down the short hallway, passing his second bedroom. When he’d moved in, that room had immediately become a home office. But soon it was just as cluttered as his office at the restaurant was now, and that clutter nagged him as he made his way to the master bedroom. One of these days he’d clean up the mess in both spaces. At least that’s what he kept telling himself.

He flipped on the light in the bedroom, which was also plainly furnished. Against its white walls were a king-size bed, two matching cherrywood nightstands—hand-me-downs from his grandparents—and two matching dressers. He undressed and climbed into the bathroom shower. He stood under the hot water, allowing it to flow over his aching muscles, sore from another day of working in his beloved restaurant.

After his shower, he pulled on his favorite nightclothes—a

## *the Farm Stand*

worn-out pair of sweatpants and a black T-shirt—and then returned to the kitchen. He poured himself a glass of iced tea and then gazed at his bookcase in the corner.

The bookcase held his most valued cookbooks. Most of them were worn and weathered, but he rarely took them to the restaurant. He liked to look through them at home. He'd bought some at yard sales and picked up others at used bookstores. Still others had been gifts from relatives and friends. Each of his cookbooks held at least one favorite recipe that had brought him closer to his dream of owning a restaurant.

Will ran his finger over some of the bindings and stopped when he reached the cookbook his uncle Eddie had given him. He pulled it out and sank into one of the two chairs at his small, round table.

He smiled as he flipped through the recipes and imagined working in his kitchen the next morning. But first he'd visit Salina Petersheim's booth to buy more of her stellar produce. He'd do whatever he could to make his customers happy.

### 3



“Bethany makes the most *appetitlich kaffi*,” Salina said as she hurried past the used books booth beside Christiana and Jeff. She always liked exploring that booth when she had time, but the doors to the marketplace were just about to open.

Jeff nodded as they all headed toward their businesses. “She sure does. This mocha flavor is amazing.”

Salina had just noticed the delicious scent of Christiana’s Bake Shop goodies was already wafting through the area when she halted. So did Jeff and Christiana. Will Zimmerman was looking at her display of cherry tomatoes, and two large carts sat beside him.

“Your *freind* is back,” Christiana sang close to Salina’s ear. “And with *two* carts.”

Salina spun toward her and hissed, “He’s not *mei freind*.”

Her cousin gave her a little shove. “Go sell all your tomatoes. Maybe you can close up early and go home if he buys everything you’ve got.” She giggled before she and Jeff slipped into her Bake Shop across the aisle.

Salina squared her shoulders as she walked into her booth.

## *the Farm Stand*

Will looked up and smiled, and his intelligent, sky-blue eyes seemed to twinkle in the bright fluorescent lights. “*Gude mariye.*”

“Hi.” She stared up at him. “The market isn’t open yet. How did you convince the security guard to let you in?”

His smile seemed a little sheepish. “I just explained that I own the restaurant across the street and that I need to get supplies before I have to start preparations. He let me in.” He paused, and his smile faded. “I hope this is okay with you, though. I suppose I should have considered your time.”

“It’s fine.” She shrugged and set her cup of coffee by the cash register and then stepped behind the counter. “How may I help you today?”

Will pushed his carts over and then leaned against the counter. “Your produce was a hit yesterday. I had to refill the salad bar four times, twice for lunch and twice for the supper crowd.”

“I’m *froh* to hear it.” She glanced down at the cash register to avoid his intense gaze. Why did this man she didn’t even know make her feel so self-conscious? And was his smile always so bright?

“How was your evening after work?” he asked her.

Her eyes slid to his, and she took in his easy expression. Was he just making small talk? Or was he flirting with her? But his expression seemed genuine, so maybe he was just being friendly. “Fine.”

“*Gut.* Mine was too.” He looked over his shoulder at her produce. “I’d like to buy more of your butterhead lettuce, cherry tomatoes, and carrots.” He tapped his chin. “Could I also get some of your green beans and corn?”

Salina blinked at him for the second time in two days. Was he really going to buy so much of her inventory again? Perhaps she *would* get home early, just like Christiana joked she might.

AMY CLIPSTON

"I brought my own carts today." He pointed at them. "Now I won't have to use your wagon." Then he tapped his forehead. "But I didn't think to bring boxes. I knew I had forgotten something, but I couldn't figure out what it was."

"I have some plastic crates. How many do you need?"

He rubbed his chin again. "Maybe four?"

She retrieved four plastic crates from the pile at the back of the booth. Then she found a handful of plastic bags and set the crates and bags on his carts. "Here you go."

"*Danki.*" He pushed the first cart over to the lettuce and began filling a crate.

Salina straightened the items on her counter and then watched Will move from the lettuce to the carrots. She took in how his gray shirt complemented his blue eyes. Curiosity took over. Was he married? Did he live near his restaurant? Was he a good chef?

She dismissed her questions. This man's life wasn't her business. He was only a customer.

Salina looked into the aisle just in time to see Sara Ann King saunter past with an armload of quilts. She looked at Salina and smiled, and Salina responded with a smile she had to force. Salina didn't want to be caught up in any gossip this morning. She released the breath she'd been holding when Sara Ann disappeared, no doubt into her booth next door.

Salina pulled out her record book and began making a list of what produce she needed to replenish the next day. She had just finished when Will appeared in front of her, his two carts full. He beamed as he pulled his wallet from his trouser pocket.

"All this looks so *gut*. What do I owe you?"

"Let me see . . ." She took out her calculator again, heat rising

the Farm Stand

up her neck because she could feel him gazing at her. Why was he doing that?

When she looked up, he was still looking at her. She gave him the amount and stilled as she waited for his response.

“*Danki* for another fair price.” He took out his wallet and handed her a stack of bills. As he slipped his wallet back into his pocket, he nodded toward her display of blackberries. “Do you happen to have a recipe for blackberry pie?”

“I would have to check *mei mamm*’s cookbooks, but I’m sure my cousin does.” She pointed across the aisle. “She runs the Bake Shop across the way. I could ask her for you.”

His light eyebrows rose. “Your cousin has a booth here?”

“*Ya*. Three of them do, actually. My cousin Bethany runs the Coffee Corner, and Leanna runs the Jam and Jelly Nook. Then Christiana has the Bake Shop over there.”

“Do you like working with your cousins?”

“I do,” she told him as she pulled out his receipt. “We usually meet for *kaffi* in Bethany’s booth before we start our day. I consider them *schweschdere* since I don’t have any. I only have an older *bruder*.” She pressed her lips together. Why did she feel compelled to share so much personal information with this stranger?

“I’m the middle child. I have an older *bruder* and a younger *bruder*. My kid *bruder* is in business with me.”

“Oh.” She felt stuck on that detail for a moment. She had to change the subject before she shared any more. “I can ask Christiana for a recipe. But don’t you have one? You’re a chef, after all.”

“I have plenty of cookbooks, but I’m always looking for new recipes to try.”

“Okay. And like I said, I’ll also ask *mei mamm* if she has one. She’s a much better cook than I am.”

AMY CLIPSTON

He shook his head. "I find that hard to believe. I can see the care you take with your produce, and I'm certain you take care with all areas of your life. But I would like to try her recipe if she has one. Your cousin's too."

"Okay." She studied his eyes, not knowing how to react to the compliment he'd given her.

"Do you ever take a lunch?"

She froze. Maybe he *was* flirting! She wasn't sure how to react. "Sometimes. If we're not too busy. Why?"

"You should come to the restaurant sometime. I'm sure you'd like seeing how our customers are enjoying the food you've grown."

"Oh." When her cheeks began to heat, she looked down at the cash register and realized she hadn't given him his receipt. She ripped it off and handed it to him. "I almost forgot."

"*Danki.*"

"*Gern gschehne.*"

"I'll bring back your crates soon."

She shook her head. "There's no hurry. I have plenty of extras."

"Have a great day, Salina." He nodded at her and then pushed his carts toward the aisle.

Sara Ann appeared at the entrance to the booth. She nodded at Will, who nodded in response and left.

"Oh no," Salina muttered to herself as Sara Ann pranced inside.

"Who was that?" Sara Ann asked.

"His name is Will. He runs the restaurant across the street." Salina folded her arms over her black apron.

"He's so handsome, and he bought so much from you!" Sara Ann said with a simper. "You must be so excited to have a customer like that."

## *the Farm Stand*

"Ya, I'm blessed that he chose to buy produce for his restaurant here." Salina glanced toward the clock on the far wall. "The doors will be opening soon. Don't you need to set up your booth?"

"We have a few minutes. How's Josiah?" Sara Ann's lovely eyes glinted as she smiled. Salina had always considered her to be pretty with her dark hair and striking gray eyes. Her tendency to gossip wasn't pretty, though.

"He's fine." Salina longed for one of her cousins to pop into her booth and save her. Last year, when Christiana and Jeff had a disagreement over Christiana's long customer line blocking Jeff's booth, Sara Ann told the other booth owners about their squabble. Salina didn't want any details about her life to be fodder for Sara Ann's gossip at the market or her quilting bee.

"Has he proposed yet?"

Salina fiddled with the hem of her apron, willing herself not to groan. "No."

"I'm certain he will soon. You've been together about a year now, right?"

"We have." Salina looked back at the clock. The doors should open any second now . . .

"Aren't you ready to get married?" Why was Sara Ann pressing her on this?

"I don't know—" Thank goodness Salina's words were cut off by the whoosh and loud voices of customers as the marketplace opened for the day.

"Oh! Time to go. I'll see you later." Sara Ann waved and then hurried out.

Salina felt something brush against her legs and glanced down as Daisy blinked up at her. "Are you ready for another busy day at the market?"

AMY CLIPSTON

Daisy meowed.

"I'm ready, too, Daisy. Let's sell some produce—at least what I have left to sell."



Will whistled to himself as he pushed his carts through the back door and into the kitchen. Then he steered them up to the longest counter and rubbed his hands together. This was his favorite time of day—prepping for the lunch crowd.

The swinging door from the dining room opened with a whoosh, and Roger and Danielle came in together, laughing.

"You're back." Roger walked over to the carts. "Wow. You got some great produce."

"*Ya*, I did." Will pulled out a bag of green beans. "I'm going to use these and the corn in the chicken potpies today."

Danielle pointed to the carrots. "You should use those too. They look fantastic."

"I agree with Danielle." Roger smiled at her.

Will hid a grin. His brother obviously liked Danielle as much as she liked him.

Danielle's dark eyes focused on Roger as if Will weren't even in the room. "I'm going to start putting the utensils and plates out on the buffet."

"Okay. I'll come out and check on . . . everything later." Roger winked at her, and Will turned his attention to unloading the purchases he wouldn't need until he was preparing for the supper menu.

A few minutes later Will focused on his favorite chicken potpie recipe. "I might change this up a bit. You know I like to experiment."

## *the Farm Stand*

“Uh-oh,” Roger said. “As long as you have time to make more if your experiment doesn’t work out!” He grinned. “I’ll start washing the vegetables.”

They worked in silence for several minutes, then once Will had the counter organized with everything he needed, he said, “What do you think of blackberry pie as a dessert next week?”

Roger looked up at him, then paused before shrugging. “Blackberry pie sounds *gut* to me. Why?”

“Salina has the most succulent-looking blackberries. I also asked her for a recipe for blackberry pie.”

“Wait a minute.” Roger held up a hand. “Who’s Salina?”

“She’s the Amish *maedel* who runs the booth where I bought all this produce.”

“Oh.” Roger seemed to study him. “You have close to a hundred cookbooks and you asked her for a recipe?”

Will laughed at his brother’s confusion. Although Roger was eager to go into business with him, he didn’t share Will’s obsession with the culinary arts. “I know you can’t understand my fascination with recipes, but I’m always looking for new ones. I thought she might have one that’s better than what any of my cookbooks have to offer. You should see her booth. It’s well organized, and all her produce is ripe and perfect. I thought she might have a *gut* recipe since she seems to take both her gardening and business so seriously.”

“Okay.” Roger seemed satisfied with that response and returned to washing.

Will sorted through the ingredients for the potpie crusts. “When are you going to ask her out?” If Roger could ask him when he was going to propose to Caroline, he could ask him when he was going to date Danielle.

AMY CLIPSTON

“Who?” Roger’s head popped up.

“Come on now. Do you think I’m blind?”

Roger bit his lower lip and glanced toward the doors to the dining room. “Do you think she likes me?”

“It’s quite obvious that she does—and I think she has for a long time. You should ask her out.”

“Maybe I will.”

“I hope you do.” Will turned his focus to crust making, but his mind wandered from potpies to images of the blackberry pies he wanted to make next week. He hoped Salina would have a good recipe. If so, he’d try it and maybe add it to his collection.

## 4



Later that afternoon Salina finished counting her money and closing out her register. Then she stowed her remaining produce before pulling her two wagons into the aisle, where she met Christiana and Jeff.

“How was your afternoon?” Christiana asked.

Salina adjusted her tote bag on her shoulder. “*Gut*. I ran out of quite a few items.”

“Thanks to your Mennonite *freund*?” Jeff asked.

“Actually, *ya*. That reminds me.” Salina looked at Christiana. “Do you have a recipe for blackberry pie?”

“Probably. Why?”

“Will asked me if I had one, and I told him I would ask you. He says he wants to buy some of my blackberries for pies.”

“Oh.” Christiana began pushing one of her rolling baker’s carts toward the back exit while Jeff pushed the other. “I’m certain I have a recipe. I’ll check my cookbooks tonight. But if he owns a restaurant, wouldn’t he already have a recipe?”

“He said he enjoys finding new ones. But it was still kind of strange.”

AMY CLIPSTON

Jeff pushed the button next to the door, and it automatically swung open. They exited and then moved down the ramp toward the parking lot. The humid air hit Salina like a wall after working in the cool, air-conditioned market all day.

She scanned the parking lot and spotted her driver's van sitting at the back, in front of a row of tall oak trees and a few picnic tables.

"Have a *gut* evening. I'll try to find a recipe tonight," Christiana said as she and Jeff headed to his waiting horse and buggy. Salina had seen Jeff head outside periodically throughout the day, no doubt to tend to his horse.

"*Danki. Gut nacht!*" Salina waved to them and then hurried off.



"What are you looking for?" *Mamm* asked Salina as she sat down across from her at the kitchen table that evening. They'd just finished cleaning up after supper.

"A recipe for blackberry pie." Salina scanned the list of pies in her mother's favorite cookbook.

"I'm sure there's one in there. I believe I made it years ago. Would you like me to look?"

"I found it." Salina had just turned to a new page, and she smiled as she popped up from the table and found a notepad and pen. Then she sat back down and began writing.

"Did Christiana ask you for my recipe?"

"No." Salina shook her head as she continued to write. "One of my customers did. I told him I would try to find one for him."

"Him?" *Mamm* leaned toward her. "A man asked you for a pie recipe?"

## *the Farm Stand*

“Ya, that’s right.” Salina glanced at her mother, who was watching her with eyes full of curiosity.

“He’s Old Order Mennonite, and he owns the restaurant across the street from the marketplace. He came in yesterday and today and bought a lot of my produce. He also asked me if I had a recipe for blackberry pie. He’s interested in my blackberries too.”

“Huh. What’s the name of the restaurant?”

“Zimmerman’s Family Restaurant. His name is Will Zimmerman.”

“I suppose he was impressed with your produce if he came back a second day.”

“He said he had to refill his salad bar four times.” Salina grimaced at her words. Had she just sounded prideful? If so, it was a good thing *Dat* hadn’t heard her. She was certain he’d lecture her about how the Amish are supposed to be humble.

“That’s *wunderbaar*.” *Mamm* tapped Salina’s hand. “Have you ever eaten at his restaurant?”

“No, but he suggested I stop by for lunch sometime and see how the customers are enjoying my produce.” She pushed back her chair and stood. “I should go through my pantry and make sure I have enough for tomorrow.”

“Do you want help?” *Mamm* asked.

“No, *danki*. You rest.” Salina smiled at her mother and then walked down to the basement. Her father had built a second kitchen and pantry down there for her three years ago—when she first opened her booth at the market. The large room had a sink, a table for sorting and canning, a propane-powered refrigerator and freezer, a row of shelves, and storage containers. She enjoyed working down there, where she could get lost in thoughts and prayer—and love of her produce. The only place better was her garden.

She was checking her inventory of lettuce when she heard her father call down the stairs for her.

“Coming!”

When she entered the kitchen, *Dat* was sitting at the table with *Mamm*.

“Here she is,” *Mamm* said before turning to Salina. “I was just telling your *dat* about the Mennonite man at your booth. I told him you might get more business since the customers at his restaurant are so impressed with your produce.”

*Dat* nodded, but *he* didn’t seem impressed. “It’s *wunderbaar* that you might have more customers because of this opportunity. But remember you won’t have your booth when you and Josiah are married. You’ll have too many responsibilities as a *fraa*. Josiah will carry the burden of taking care of you, just as a husband should. He’s doing well with his father’s roofing company, and I think he’ll be ready to support you soon.”

Salina’s back and shoulders stiffened.

“You’ll have plenty to do at home,” *Dat* said, continuing his lecture. “And when *kinner* come, you’ll be even busier, so you might have to give up so much gardening too. You know how busy Ellen is with your nieces. Just imagine when you and Josiah have *kinner*.”

Salina nodded out of habit, but she felt a hot jolt of frustration. How she tired of her father comparing her to her brother and his wife! Just because Neil married at twenty-five didn’t mean Salina was ready to be married.

And why did her family assume she would marry Josiah? Of course they didn’t know she was having doubts about her relationship with him. She’d kept those to herself.

*Dat* looked at *Mamm*. “Mary, I meant to tell you that Neil did

## *the Farm Stand*

a great job balancing the books last night. I think he's going to do just fine when he takes over the business."

"Oh, I'm certain he will. He's learned so much from you, Lamar."

Salina looked down at the toes of her black shoes as a familiar pang of jealousy washed over her, adding to her frustration. It was a sin to be jealous of her older brother, but she grew tired of living in Neil's shadow. She'd never live up to his perfection. After all, her father was the bishop for their district, and Neil was the deacon. Salina's light would never shine as bright as theirs.

"Are you ready for devotions?" *Dat* asked Salina as he held up his Bible.

"Of course." She sank into a chair beside her mother. Only God could help her sort out her feelings.

"*Gut*. I'd like to read from the book of John."

As her father opened their devotional time with prayer, Salina bowed her head and opened her heart.

*Please, God, help me be the dochder my parents want me to be. And please help me sort out my confusing feelings for Josiah. Help me feel the way I should if you want me to marry him someday.*



Will pushed his carts to the marketplace the next morning and found Salina arranging a display of figs in her booth. He took in her profile and noticed how her blue eyes were a beautiful contrast to the dark-brown hair peeking out from under her prayer covering. Today she wore a green dress and a black apron, and she looked very pretty.

Wait. Not only was Salina an Amish woman who would

never be interested in a Mennonite man, but he was with Caroline. Having thoughts like that about another woman was completely inappropriate! He might be having doubts about their relationship, but he would never want to hurt Caroline that way.

Salina turned toward him, and a shy smile overtook her lips. “*Gude mariye.*”

“*Gude mariye.*”

“How was your evening?”

Her question caught him off guard. She hadn’t seemed interested in small talk before.

“It was pretty *gut*. I stayed at the restaurant a little later than usual to make sure I was organized for today, and then I just went home and crashed. I was too exhausted to do anything at the *haus*. How about yours?”

She leaned back on the counter behind her. “It was okay.” She pulled two pieces of paper from her apron pocket. “I have two recipes for you. I found one in *mei mamm’s* cookbook, and Christiana also found one for you.”

“That’s fantastic.” He smiled as she handed the papers to him. “*Danki* so much.” He glanced over the recipes, taking in each handwriting. Which one was Salina’s? Then he looked up at her expression, which seemed . . . eager? “Which recipe is your favorite?”

She glanced past him as if making sure no one could hear her. Then she leaned in closer and pointed to the recipe in his right hand. “This one is from *mei mamm’s* cookbook. It sounds the most *appeditlich* to me. But don’t tell Christiana I said that.”

He laughed, and she grinned. Suddenly he felt as if something between them had changed. It was as if they might become friends, and the feeling warmed his heart.

*the Farm Stand*

"Let me know what you think," she said.

"I will." He nodded toward the blackberries, displayed to her right. "How many boxes of those will you let me buy?"

"You're going to buy them now?" Her brow pinched.

"I'll need to if I want to make the pies on Monday. You're not open again until next Thursday."

"Oh. Right." She gave a little laugh, and he enjoyed the sound. "You may buy as many as you'd like."

"Great." He began loading one cart with the little plastic containers of fruit. "I already told *mei bruder* we're going to make blackberry pies next week."

"You said he runs the restaurant with you. Not your other *bruder*?"

"No. Irvin works in construction."

"Really?" She handed him more containers. "*Mei dat* is a carpenter. He owns a cabinet-making business, and *mei bruder* works with him. Neil is going to take over the business someday soon. *Mei dat* likes to remind me of that often." Her eyes widened, and she looked away as if realizing she'd said too much.

"And that bothers you?" He hoped she would finish that thought.

She looked up at him and then waved off the comment. "It's nothing." She pointed to the display of berries. "Would you like more?"

"I would if that's okay."

"Of course."

They worked without talking for several moments, and he hoped she'd break the silence. He wanted to know more about her father and how he seemed to favor her brother. But when she didn't speak, he searched for something else to say.

AMY CLIPSTON

"These pies are going to be *wunderbaar*. You should come by next week to taste them. Bring your cousins. I'll be sure to save a few slices for you."

She gave him a smile. "I'll see if I can. *Danki*." Then she hesitated with the last container of berries in her hand. "You're going to buy all my berries?"

"I will if you'll let me."

She laughed. "I don't think I have a choice." She handed him the container and then gestured around the booth. "Do you need anything else?"

"You know I do." He pulled out the list he'd made during his ride to the restaurant that morning.

"What can I help you find?"

For the next several minutes, they loaded his carts with almost every kind of vegetable she had. Then Salina worked up his price, and he paid her.

"We don't have church tomorrow. Do you?" she asked as she handed him the receipt.

"No, we don't, but I'm going to spend the day with my girlfriend and her family."

"That sounds nice. I hope you have a *gut* day with them."

"*Danki*." He stuck the receipt in his pocket. "I hope you have a great day too. And don't forget to stop by for pie next week."

"I'll try."

"I'll see you next Thursday, though."

"I'll be here." She gave him a little wave, and then he pushed his carts out of the Farm Stand.

Will nodded at the redhead in the Bake Shop as he moved into the aisle. He now knew her name was Christiana. A smile overtook his lips as he recalled Salina's adorable expression

*the Farm Stand*

when she admitted she liked her mother's recipe more than her cousin's.

He'd never reveal that secret, but he had to stop thinking about her adorable expression.

## 5



Salina sipped from a water bottle as she sat at a picnic table between Bethany and Christiana and across from Josiah and Jeff on Sunday afternoon. The hot sun beat down on her neck and back as she looked out toward a lush, green area where other youth group members played volleyball on the grass, their laughs and yells sounding through the humid air.

“How was your week?”

Salina’s gaze snapped to Josiah’s as he pushed his hair off his tan forehead. She marveled at how his long hours working as a roofer in the summer sun had turned his skin almost golden brown, making his eyes seem like a deeper shade of their usual mocha brown.

His eyebrows rose as a frown overtook his face. “Are you all right, Salina?”

“Ya, of course.” She chuckled as she began to peel the label off the plastic bottle in her hands. “I was just thinking.”

“Oh.” He took on an apologetic expression. “I’m sorry I didn’t get by to see you. We’ve been so busy with all these big roofing projects.” He leaned toward her. “How were your sales at the market?”

*the Farm Stand*

"Gut. A new customer bought nearly all my produce each day."

"Really? Who is she?"

"It's a he, actually." Continuing to pull at the label, she told him about Will and how he'd purchased produce for his restaurant. "He wiped out my supply of blackberries yesterday so he can make blackberry pies this week. He suggested I stop by for a slice."

"We should do that."

"You think so?" She looked up at him.

"Why not?"

"I don't know." She hedged as she imagined showing up at Will's restaurant. Wouldn't it be awkward? They hardly knew each other.

"Bethany," Josiah said.

"Ya?" Bethany turned from talking to Christiana and faced him.

"Don't you think Salina should go to the restaurant owned by that Mennonite man and taste the pie he's going to make with her blackberries?"

"That sounds *appetitlich* to me." Bethany turned to Salina. "You don't want to go?"

"I don't know," she repeated. Having already successfully removed the label from her bottle, Salina fingered a loose piece of wood on the tabletop. "Wouldn't it be strange to just walk into his restaurant?"

Bethany chuckled. "Why would that be strange? Don't you normally just walk into a restaurant? And then you sit down, order food, eat it, pay the bill, and leave, right?"

Salina looked down at the table, wishing she'd never brought up the subject.

"We should go there for supper this week," Josiah said as

though he were insisting more than suggesting. "Salina, you work so hard. You should enjoy the fruits of your labor." He grinned. "Get it? Fruits!"

Bethany snorted. "You're so *gegisch*, Josiah."

"That's why Salina likes me, right?" Josiah waggled his eyebrows.

Salina laughed.

Jeff stood. "Who wants to play volleyball?"

Josiah looked at Salina. "Want to join them?"

"Come on." Bethany tapped Salina's shoulder. "Let's show these guys we know how to play."

Christiana winked. "Exactly."

Jeff smirked. "That sounds like a challenge, right, Josiah?"

"Ya. Let's go."

Salina smiled as she followed her cousins to the volleyball court. How she enjoyed these afternoons!



"Did you have fun today?" Josiah asked as he guided his horse toward Salina's home.

"Ya. Did you?"

He gave her a sideways glance and smiled. "Of course I did."

She took in his profile as he trained his eyes on the road again. With his long, thin nose and strong jaw, Josiah was an attractive man. But that wasn't the only thing she admired about him. He was kind, funny, and thoughtful. He also supported both her passion for gardening and her work at the marketplace.

She crossed her arms and stifled a yawn as she looked out the windshield, her thoughts wandering to her father's com-

## *the Farm Stand*

ments about giving up her booth when she was married. Why did thoughts of marriage to Josiah send her pulse galloping with fear? Wouldn't they love and cherish each other forever?

She swallowed as the familiar doubts crashed around in her head. She recalled Neil being excited about proposing to Ellen, and she knew Ellen was excited when he did. Shouldn't she feel the same way when she thought about Josiah proposing to her?

"What's on your mind?" Josiah's question broke through her thoughts as he steered his horse onto her street.

"Nothing." Her answer came a little too quickly, but Josiah didn't seem to notice. "I was just thinking about all the chores I have for tomorrow. It's laundry day. And I need to weed my garden and harvest my produce, of course. I also need to can so I have items to sell during the winter season."

"Like I said, you work hard. I think we should have supper at that Zimmerman restaurant Tuesday night."

She still wasn't sure that was a good idea. "You don't have to take me out."

"I want to." His smile was warm—genuine. "Let's celebrate how successful your booth is. Besides, I'll be finishing a big project on Tuesday, so we can finally spend some time together. Is five thirty a *gut* time to pick you up?"

"Ya, it is."

Josiah guided the horse up the driveway to her family's white, two-story home.

"I look forward to seeing you then," she said as he halted the horse.

He turned toward her and smiled. "*Gut nacht.*"

She hesitated, waiting to see if he would lean over and touch her hand. Or hug her. Or maybe even kiss her. But when he did

nothing, she picked up her bag. "I'll see you in a couple of days, then. Be safe going home."

She climbed out of the buggy and hurried up the front porch steps before turning to wave.

As Josiah's horse trotted down her driveway, a familiar disappointment overcame her. Why did their relationship seem so . . . platonic?

Then a new thought hit her. *Does Josiah have the same doubts I do?*



"What a *schee* sky." Caroline pushed the glider into motion before sipping from her glass of iced tea. "It's the perfect Sunday evening."

"Ya, it is." Will glanced at her beside him and smiled, then settled back and looked out toward her father's red barn and the pasture beyond. Lightning bugs made their presence known in the glow of the orange-and-red sunset as if welcoming the night, and the sweet aroma of summer filled his senses.

"*Danki* for the beautiful flowers you brought me today," Caroline said.

"*Gern gschehne*." Will patted her arm. "I saw those daisies in *mei mamm's* garden, and I thought of you. I know they're your favorites."

"You know me so well. And they look so *schee* on the table." She gave his hand a gentle squeeze. "What do you have planned for your menus this week?"

"I told you about my new supplier, right?"

"You did. An Amish *maedel* at the marketplace? At a booth called the Farm Stand."

## *the Farm Stand*

"That's right. I bought all her blackberries, and I'm going to make blackberry pies for one of our desserts."

"Oh my! That sounds fantastic." She angled her body toward his, and her smile seemed to glow in the light of the porch lamps. "Did you find the recipe in your *onkel* Eddie's cookbook?"

"No, actually, I didn't. Salina gave me a recipe."

Caroline's smile wobbled. "Who's Salina?"

"She's the *maedel* who runs the Farm Stand."

"Oh." Caroline's eyes seemed to search his. "Does she run it alone?"

"Ya. She grows everything too. You should see her booth. Her produce is incredible."

"You seem to know her pretty well. Is she married?"

Will took in Caroline's hesitant expression and thin lips. Was she jealous of Salina? Did she truly believe he would hurt her by deliberately spending time with another *maedel*?

"I don't think she's married, but I don't know her well. I've only talked to her when I've bought produce from her. That's all."

"Oh." Caroline nodded, but her smile seemed forced. "Well, I'm sure the pies will be amazing, and I can't wait to sample a piece." Then her expression grew coy again, and she tilted her head. "When we're married, will you do all the cooking? Or will you at least let me make you breakfast before you head to the restaurant?"

Will opened his mouth to respond but then closed it. Why did she have to constantly push the marriage issue? Couldn't they have one conversation without discussing it?

Her smile flattened, and she laughed awkwardly. "I was just kidding. I'll do all the cooking at home. And, of course, at least until we have *kinner*, I'll be working at the restaurant with you six days a week."

The screen door opened and then clicked shut as her father stepped onto the porch.

Will's jaw relaxed. Robert had saved the day! "Hello there," Will said as he looked up at him.

"May I join you?" the older man asked. Somehow he'd managed to unlatch the door when he was carrying both a glass of iced tea and a plate of cookies. "I brought chocolate chip *kichlin*."

"Of course, *Dat*." Caroline pointed to the rocker beside their glider. "Sit."

Robert sat down and held out the plate to his daughter. "Would you like one?"

"Ya." Caroline took two cookies and handed one to Will.

"How are things at the restaurant?" Robert asked him.

"*Gut*. I have a new produce supplier, and that's already improved not only my salad bar but some of my recipes." As Will told Robert about finding the Farm Stand, he noticed Caroline's posture relax. "I already have some new items planned for this week."

"He's going to make blackberry pies," Caroline announced with enthusiasm.

"Who's making blackberry pie?" Irene asked as she came out of the house.

"I want a piece," Loretta chimed in as she joined the group.

"Will is going to make them at the restaurant this week," Caroline told her mother.

"That sounds fantastic." Loretta sat down on a rocker beside Robert, and Irene sank into the last rocker beside her.

"And has the bookstore stayed busy?" Will asked.

"It has," Robert said. "Tourists always seem to enjoy visiting an authentic Mennonite store."

## *the Farm Stand*

Irene nodded as she took a cookie from the plate her father had placed on the small table that sat between them all. “And they love to ask questions about the differences between Amish and Mennonite. They just don’t understand why we use electricity when the Amish don’t.”

“I’m certain you get similar questions,” Robert said to Will.

He smiled as he took another cookie. “I do.”

“Tell us more about this blackberry pie,” Loretta said. “Will we be able to sample a piece? If not, we’re never going to invite you back for Sunday supper.”

Will laughed, and everyone joined in. He glanced around the porch and took in this wonderful family. When he was with them, he felt as if he were home. Why, then, was he so confused whenever he thought about marrying Caroline? She was such a good friend to him, and surely God not only approved of their relationship but blessed it.

He just needed to count his blessings.



Will walked into his home office later that evening and surveyed the mess. A mountain of paperwork on the desk leaned precariously, containers overflowed with old receipts, and the stapler, hole puncher, calculator, and tape dispenser he knew he owned sat lost among the random folders and books scattered around. More stacks of books lined the narrow pathway to the door. He didn’t even have time to read them—especially since opening the restaurant, most of his reading required cookbooks, not the biographies he favored.

Roger was right when he said Will needed to get organized,

but who had the time? He spent long hours at the restaurant, and when he was home, he was preparing for the next day. Someday he would get both his offices in shape, but it wouldn't happen today. It was Sunday, the day of rest.

Will closed the office door to prevent the disaster from glaring at him, and then he strode to the family room, where he sat down on the sofa and picked up his favorite devotional. He flipped through the pages as thoughts of Caroline and her family overtook his mind. He had enjoyed visiting with the Horst family, but the familiar confusion and doubt had warred within him when once again Caroline mentioned marriage. It was obvious she was ready for him to propose, but he wasn't ready. Worse, he wasn't sure he ever would be. That bothered him more than he cared to admit even to himself.

Suddenly his life seemed almost as messy as his offices.

Then he spotted a Scripture verse from Romans that had always spoken to him. *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Closing his eyes, Will whispered a prayer. "Lord, *danki* for my family, my girlfriend, my community, and my restaurant. I'm so very grateful for all the blessings in my life. But I'm confused about my relationship with Caroline. I care for her, but I have so many doubts. I'm not sure I see her as more than a precious *freind*. She's *wunderbaar*, loyal, and special, and I know I should cherish her. Is something wrong with me? Why don't I love her? I trust you, God—with my life, as messy as it seems right now. Please lead me down the path you've chosen for me. My heart is open to hearing you, and I will listen for your guidance."