

CREEKTOWN DISCOVERIES
VOL *The* THREE
Apple Creek
ANNOUNCEMENT

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER

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Dedication

To Pastor Dan and Robyn:
Thank you for your ministry that
touches so many people's lives.



*This is the confidence that we
have in [God], that, if we ask anything
according to his will, he heareth us.*

1 JOHN 5:14

Prologue

Walnut Creek, Ohio

“Would ya look at this old chair? I think it’s a beauty, don’t you?” From his kneeling position, Orley Troyer pointed to the vintage oak office chair he’d purchased at a family-run estate sale he and his wife had visited earlier in the day.

“I’d say so, and it appears to be in quite good condition. Not only that, but you got the chair for a fair price,” Lois responded. She held up an old washboard she had found at the sale. “But this is one of my favorite items. I don’t know if you noticed, but the lettering on the backside of the board looks pretty clear.”

Orley nodded. “Now we need to put these items on display in our store.”

“I’ll place the washboard with the kitchen items, and you can move the chair over with the furniture.”

“No problem.” Orley stood up and rubbed the small of his back, where a knot had begun to form. “Although business has been strong this spring and hopefully will continue to grow now that it’s summer, it has been a while since anyone has come into Memory Keepers with some sort of problem they wanted to talk about.” His eyes squinted as he pulled his fingers slowly through the end of his long, full beard. “I miss mentoring folks one-on-one.”

“I do too,” Lois agreed, “but I’m glad for the opportunity to advise people who contact me via the Dear Caroline column in the local newspaper.”

“*Jah*, that must be a good feeling all right.” Orley couldn’t help feeling a bit envious that his wife had such a unique opportunity to help others. Even so, there were days when he wished Lois would quit the job and spend more time with him. He looked over at her and said, “Maybe the newspaper would be interested in hiring a man to write a Dear Samuel column just for men. Then we’d both be too busy to make popcorn and work on puzzles in the evenings.” He jiggled his brows and gave her arm a playful poke. “What do you think, *Fraa*? Would it be a good idea if I went to the newspaper and suggested that they hire me for that job?”

Lois snickered as she rolled her eyes at him. “I think you’d better stick to selling antiques and stay ready for the day when the Lord sends another person into our store who needs some counseling from you.”

Orley smiled. “You’re right, and I hope that day will come soon.”

Chapter 1

Apple Creek, Ohio

Click. . .click. . .click. . . Andrea cringed as her newest piano student's fingers hit the keys while she played the piece of music she'd been given last week. For some piano teachers, the sound of nails clicking on the keys was exasperating. Andrea was one of those teachers.

She waited until the fourteen-year-old girl had finished playing before speaking to her. "Peggy, you hit all the right notes, and your timing was good, but your fingernails are much too long, and I'd like you to cut them before your next lesson."

"But Miss Wagner, the teacher I had before my folks and I moved to Apple Creek never said anything about my nails." Peggy held out her hands. "I like 'em this way, and they don't look as pretty when they're short."

"Having shorter nails will help you maintain a relaxed, curved hand position," Andrea explained.

"Why do my fingers have to be curved?"

"By doing so, you will make them close to the same length, giving each finger equal playing ability. I'm sure your previous teacher must have told you that." Andrea paused to be sure that she had her student's full attention, but the girl merely sat with a glum expression.

Being able to feel the keys with the pads of your fingers will give you a better touch on the keyboard, which in turn will allow you to play with greater control," Andrea continued. "You'll also have greater speed, because long nails could get in the way and might

even cause you to make mistakes. And have you noticed how when your nails hit the keyboard they make clicking sounds?” Andrea placed her hand on the girl’s shoulder. “During a recital, would you want the only thing your audience remembers from your performance to be the sound of your nails?”

Peggy lifted her shoulders in a brief shrug. “I guess not.”

Believing she had gained a little headway, Andrea added one more thing. “Not only can long fingernails affect a pianist’s performance, but they can also increase your chances of getting injured.”

“What do you mean?”

“It may seem hard to imagine, but when I was a girl taking lessons, my teacher told me about one of her students who had refused to trim her fingernails and ended up catching one of them between keys, which caused the end of the nail to break and bleed.”

Peggy’s eyes widened. “Ouch!”

“I agree, but if the student had willingly trimmed her nails, the breakage could have been avoided.” She looked directly at Peggy and spoke kindly but firmly. “So what do you say—are you willing to trim your fingernails before your next lesson?”

To Andrea’s surprise, the girl shook her head. “After today’s lesson is done, I’m goin’ home and tell Mom and Dad that I want ’em to find another teacher who isn’t picky about my nails. Either that or I’m gonna quit taking piano lessons.”

“It’s up to you, Peggy, but your folks might not be happy about it—especially since they’ve paid me in advance for your next eight lessons.”

“Okay, whatever. I’ll wait and see what Mom and Dad have to say.” The girl lifted her chin in a defiant pose. “Cause I don’t think cutting my nails will make me play one bit better.”

“You don’t have to cut them really short, just short enough so you can easily feel the keys with the entire fleshy part of your fingers.”

“All right, I’ll do it—but only if my mother won’t look for another teacher.”

Andrea’s toes curled inside her shoes. At a moment like this, she

wondered why she had decided to teach private piano lessons when she could be painting pictures full-time. Of course, her artwork didn't sell on a regular basis, making it difficult to pay the bills with what her father had often referred to as "a nice hobby."

With cautious hope, Andrea moistened her lips using the tip of her tongue. *Maybe tomorrow at the open-air market, several of my paintings will sell.*



Andrea pulled her minivan into the parking area, noticing several horses and buggies at the hitching rails on the other side of the lot. Andrea wished she could set up her easel right now and paint the appealing scene set before her, but there was no time for that. She'd arrived at the Farmstead Vintage Market, located on the Pine Hill Farm, later than she'd planned and needed to get to her open-air booth so she could display her paintings before the crowds poured in.

Andrea looked in the rearview mirror to check her hair. She'd showered this morning, but with trying to hurry out the door, she hadn't done much to style her chin-length auburn bob. Andrea pulled out a lip color from her small cross-body bag and applied it with care. Grabbing her purse, she got out of the minivan.

Andrea had no more than opened the back hatch of her van when her best friend, Colleen Jones, showed up. "Oh good, you're just in time." She hugged Colleen and gestured to the items inside her vehicle. "I was afraid I'd have to lug all this stuff over to the booth by myself."

Colleen shook her head. "Promised I'd be here, didn't I?"

"Yes, but I wasn't sure if you'd be able to find a sitter for Tyler."

Colleen offered Andrea one of her usual easygoing smiles. "My mother was more than willing to watch him for me this morning. Of course," she quickly added, "by the time I pick up my active two-year-old, he will no doubt be ready for a nap, and so will Mom."

"I hope if I ever have any children that my mother will be willing to watch them." Andrea reached inside the van and slid out the

folding table she'd brought to display some of her smaller paintings.

"I'm sure she'd be willing, and if that good-looking veterinarian you've been dating for two years would get down on one knee and ask you to marry him, there might be a few kids in your future." Colleen grabbed the other end of the table.

"Maybe." Andrea started walking in the direction of the market. Truthfully, she wasn't sure Brandon Prentice would ever propose. If he was as committed to her as he was to his profession, he would have proposed by now. Brandon was a popular vet in their area, and his business was expanding, which meant longer hours for him. He worked at the clinic Monday through Friday, and sometimes on Saturdays when there was an emergency. Brandon also doctored large animals such as horses and livestock outside of the clinic. Andrea had heard from many sources that his animal patients and their owners liked Dr. Prentice, and it wasn't hard to realize that he liked them too. Brandon's kindness and gentle ways were two of the things that had drawn her to him, as well as his six-foot stature and those piercing blue eyes. *I have to agree with Colleen—my boyfriend is good-looking.*

The tantalizing aroma and sounds of caramel-flavored popcorn being made near the entrance of the market drove Andrea's dreamy thoughts aside. The sweet and salty treat was almost addictive, and she felt tempted to stop and buy some right now. But it would have to wait, at least until she'd set up her booth. And it was definitely time to quit thinking about the man she'd fallen in love with and hoped to marry, because she needed to focus on the day ahead.

After they'd found Andrea's booth space and set up the table, she glanced down the aisle where several other vendors were busy setting their items out. Wind chimes tinkled in the gentle breeze, drawing attention to displays of baked goods, honey, homemade candles and soaps, pottery, jewelry, birdhouses, and various other rustic gifts. So much to look at but no time to do it now. Andrea wished she had time to browse and maybe buy a few items, but she needed to get the rest of her things out of the van and finish setting up.

“It sure would be nice to do some shopping here today,” Andrea commented as she and Colleen made their way back to the parking area. “But I guess that’s the price I must pay for renting a space to hopefully sell some of my paintings.”

“I’ll stay with your booth whenever you feel like browsing,” Colleen responded. “I want to do some shopping too, so we can take turns.”

Andrea put her hand in the small of her friend’s back and gave it a few tender pats. “That’s nice of you, but I didn’t think you’d be staying very long today. Figured you came just to help me unload and set up.”

Colleen shook her head. “Nope. I’m here for the duration or until you kick me out.”

“Not a chance of that.” Andrea opened the van’s hatch and reached inside to grab a box filled with some of her larger paintings. “I appreciate the time you’re giving up to help me when you could be spending the day with your family.”

“I don’t mind.” Colleen tucked one of her blond curls behind her ear. “It’s good for Tyler to bond with his grandparents, and my husband needs a day off to spend with his golfing buddies.”

“Guess it worked out well for everyone.” Andrea waited until Colleen had picked up a second box, and then they started back toward the market. They hadn’t gone very far when she noticed two more Amish buggies pull into the parking lot.

“I wonder what it’d be like to be Amish,” she whispered to her friend.

“I don’t know, but I can’t imagine giving up my car for a horse and black carriage.”

Andrea chuckled. “It would be pretty hard to imagine either of us dressed in Amish clothes, not to mention having long hair pulled up in a bun, or being seen in public with no makeup to hide our imperfections.”

Colleen shook her head. “Nope, not for me. I’m a city gal, even if I do live in a rural community.”



At noon, Andrea left her booth in the capable hands of her friend. She would check out a few of the booths on the other side of the market and stop by the food truck to get them something to eat. Of course, she wouldn't go back to her booth without picking up two large bags of kettle corn.

Andrea was pleased that she'd sold two paintings this morning—both images from Amish country. The larger one was of a black buggy parked near a red barn. The second painting featured a clothesline with several Amish quilts flapping in the breeze. That had been one of Andrea's favorites, and she'd hated to part with it, but the money she'd earned had made it worth the sacrifice. Besides, living so close to an Amish community made it easy for her to paint more pictures of quilts and other Amish backgrounds that appealed to her. Rural scenes, especially anything depicting the Plain people's way of life, were Andrea's favorite subjects. Those seemed to be the ones that sold quickly and for more money.

Andrea wandered up and down a few aisles, stopping to smell some lavender-fragranced products. She'd also been invited to sample some mild-tasting herbal tea and had even paused to try a bit of salsa—although it had proven to be a bit too spicy for her taste.

I bet Brandon would have liked it, Andrea thought as she approached the next stand. An assortment of items, most of them appearing to be secondhand or of vintage quality had been spread out on two large tables. She felt the urge to check out the display.

Andrea had picked through a few of the items when her gaze came to rest on an old quilt that looked like it had seen better days. Something about the faded quilt drew Andrea. She pursed her lips. *Perhaps this would be an interesting piece to drape over a quilt rack and hang in my house so I could paint a picture of it.* She fingered a fraying patch on the quilt.

Andrea noticed a small piece of paper pinned to one corner of the quilt and blinked when she saw the price. *Twenty-five dollars?*

Could that be right?

Andrea picked up the quilt and headed over to where a teenage girl, her arms crossed, sat in a metal chair behind a small table that held the cash box.

“Excuse me, but is this the right price?” She pointed to the place where the square piece of paper had been pinned.

The girl nodded. “Yep. My aunt Nicki—she’s the one who rented this booth—said everything had been priced.”

“Where is your aunt now? Could I talk to her?”

The girl shook her head. “She had to go home ‘cause her baby got sick, so she left me in charge. Aunt Nicki said she’d send my uncle to come help me. He should be showing up here pretty soon, so if you have any questions about the quilt, he might be able to help you.”

“I can’t wait around because I have my own booth and need to get back there soon. Do you know anything about this quilt—how old it is or who it used to belong to?” Andrea questioned.

“Nope.”

Continuing to hold the item, Andrea couldn’t help feeling the lure of the soft fabric in her hands. “And you’re sure it’s only twenty-five dollars?”

The girl bobbed her head. “If I remember right, my aunt said she found it at a yard sale a few years ago, and she only paid five dollars for it. She was hoping to make a profit, so if you’re interested. . .”

“Yes, I’m definitely interested.” Andrea reached into her purse and took out her wallet. After she’d paid for the quilt, the girl put it in a cardboard box and handed it to Andrea. “I don’t know what you’re gonna do with that old thing, but it’s the first sale I’ve made since Aunt Nicki left, so thank you.”

Andrea smiled. “You’re welcome.” *I’m glad I stopped by this booth. I can’t wait to get this quilt home and set out for display.*

Andrea had blanked out all thoughts of getting lunch or even grabbing a couple sacks of the tasty kettle corn she’d been craving all morning. She headed straight back to her booth, feeling like a child who’d opened a favored gift on Christmas morning.