

AMY CLIPSTON · KELLY IRVIN
KATHLEEN FULLER

an
amish
barn raising

THREE STORIES



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ZONDERVAN®

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Building a Dream

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chapter one

KATHRYN BEILER TAPPED HER CHIN WITH HER finger as she surveyed the folding table filled with bowls of pretzels, chips, popcorn, trail mix, a variety of dips, a fruit salad, a vegetable plate, and plastic containers of lemonade and iced tea.

“We forgot the *kichlin*,” Kathryn said.

“And where do you suggest we put the cookies?” Maria Swarey gave a little laugh as she pushed the ties from her prayer covering over the shoulders of her red dress. Kathryn smiled at her best friend. She had always thought that red made Maria’s bright smile, dark brown hair, and milk-chocolate-colored eyes look even prettier.

“Maybe get another table? After all, we have plenty of *freinden* here that will be hungry for snacks soon.”

Kathryn shielded her eyes from the bright June afternoon sun as she looked out over her father’s rolling green pastures dotted

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with cows and then toward the dairy barn where her friends played volleyball and laughed. Her golden retriever, Fred, sat by the volleyball nets, wagging his tail as her friends played. Every so often, someone would reach over and rub his head, causing him to look up at them, his tongue lolling. She grinned and shook her head. Fred had never met a stranger!

It was Kathryn's turn to host the youth gathering, and Maria had come over the day before to help clean and prepare. Since today was an off-Sunday without a church service, a few young men from youth group had arrived early to put up the volleyball nets before the rest of their friends arrived.

"Do you want to ask a few of the *buwe* to help us get another table out of the utility room?" Maria asked.

Kathryn smiled as her eyes found Anthony Gingerich laughing beside his best friend, Dwain Bontrager, who prepared to serve the volleyball to the opposing team. Not only was Anthony friendly and thoughtful, always seeming to go out of his way to talk to Kathryn and lend a hand at youth gatherings, but he was also handsome.

"I'm fairly positive I know who you'd like to ask to help with another table." Maria's singsong voice was next to Kathryn's ear.

"Stop it." Kathryn felt her cheeks heat as she waved off her best friend's teasing. "We don't need another table. We'll just rearrange everything to make room for the *kichlin*."

Maria's dark eyes sparkled with teasing as she began moving the bowls of chips. "Whatever you say, Kathryn, but I think making room on this table will be like solving a puzzle."

"We'll make do." Kathryn stole one more glance at Anthony

and then began pushing the serving platters and bowls closer together.

“Why don’t you try talking to him and telling him how you feel?” Maria whispered as she pushed a bowl of dip toward the end of the table.

“Shh!” Kathryn peeked up to make sure the group of six young women standing near the table hadn’t heard Maria. When they continued with their conversation without looking over, she breathed a sigh of relief. “Anthony and I have been friends our whole lives, and we talk all the time. You know that!”

Maria jammed a hand on her small hip. “But he won’t know that you have a crush on him unless you tell him.”

Kathryn shushed her again. “We have food to bring out. Let’s discuss this later.” *Or not at all!*

“I’ll get the *kichlin*, and you get the cups.” Maria headed into Kathryn’s house to gather up the supplies.

Kathryn glanced around the small kitchen and then pointed to the four containers of cookies she and Maria had baked yesterday. “There they are. I can’t believe we forgot them.”

“I’ll take them out.” Maria picked up the containers and headed back out the door.

Mamm stepped into the kitchen from the family room. “How is everything going?”

With *Mamm*’s bright smile and easy laugh, Kathryn considered her one of her best friends. Blonde hair peeked out from her prayer covering, and the wrinkles around her eyes were clues that her mother was close to fifty, but the sparkle in her deep brown eyes gave a hint of her young and fun demeanor.

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“Fine.” Kathryn opened the cupboard and retrieved a large stack of cups. “Maria and I were trying to make room on the table for the *kichlin* and cups. We were discussing setting up another table.”

“Oh. Should I ask your *dat* to get one for you?” *Mamm* pointed to the family room. “We’re just reading in the *schtupp*.”

“No, *danki*. We’ll be fine.” Kathryn balanced the package of cups and then started for the back door. “Enjoy your reading.”

She descended the stairs and walked toward the table, where a group of young men and women were filling plates with the snacks as conversations buzzed through the air. Fred sat nearby, begging for attention, and Kathryn shook her head.

“Come here, Fred,” she called, and the dog trotted over to her. She pulled a dog treat from her apron pocket. “Sit.”

He sat and lifted a paw to her.

“Here you go.” With her free hand, she gave him the snack, and he chomped it with delight. “Now, go sit on the porch like a *gut bu*.”

The dog complied, bouncing over to the porch and sitting in his favorite spot, where he could watch all of the action around the yard.

Kathryn walked to the end of the table, and after setting down the cups, she rearranged containers of cookies to make more room.

“Please tell me you made oatmeal raisin.”

She felt a flutter dance in her stomach when she peeked up at Anthony standing beside her. “I did.”

“*Danki.*” With his light-brown hair, bright blue eyes, and angular jaw, Anthony towered over her by nearly nine inches. And he always sent her pulse pumping when he aimed his electric smile at her. “You made them for me, right?”

“Maybe.” She gave him a coy smile as he took a bite. She *had* made the cookies with him in mind, but she chose to keep her response more flirtatious than direct.

“Wow. *Appeditlich.*” He finished the cookie and then grabbed two more.

“I’m glad you like them. I have more oatmeal raisin *kichlin* stashed away. If you like, I can put together a container for you to take home.”

His smile widened. “That would be amazing.”

Dwain smacked Anthony on the arm as he lumbered past him. “Hey, Anthony. Let’s get back to the volleyball game.” He nodded at Kathryn and headed to the group of young people standing by the volleyball net.

“I guess I have to go.” Anthony swiped another cookie. He winked at her and then jogged toward his friends.

Kathryn felt her lips turn up in a smile as she watched him dash over to Dwain and smack him on the arm before laughing at something someone said.

“I saw that wink,” Maria said as she sidled up to Kathryn. “I told you he likes you. It’s so obvious.”

Kathryn hugged her arms over her waist as she tried to imagine what it would be like to date Anthony. To call him her boyfriend. To plan a future with him.

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Then her shoulders drooped as facts brought her back to reality. Those dreams would never come true.

Because her father didn't approve of Anthony.



"I think you need some practice serving the ball," Dwain quipped as he helped Anthony roll up the volleyball net later that evening.

"Uh-huh." Anthony snorted. "Because you're the expert. How many bumps did you miss?"

Dwain shrugged and then pushed his hand through his sweaty, dark hair. "A few."

Anthony couldn't stop his laughter as he recalled his best friend's blunders during their games that afternoon. "Ya, a few. That's a great way to put it."

He hefted the net in his arms as Dwain picked up the ball. Then he glanced over his shoulder as they made their way to the supply barn to stow the net and the ball.

Above them, the sky lit with bright streaks of orange and yellow as the sun began to set. The cicadas began their evening chorus, and lightning bugs started to make their appearance. While the other members of their youth group had left for the evening, Anthony and Dwain stayed to help clean up.

Anthony's pulse ticked up when he spotted Kathryn and Maria gathering up bowls and plates at the snack table. Fred guarded the table, waiting for someone to drop a piece of food. Anthony grinned. How he enjoyed that dog!

Kathryn looked beautiful today clad in a yellow dress that

complemented the sunshine-kissed blonde hair peeking out of her prayer covering. He'd had a difficult time keeping his eyes off her when he'd first seen her this afternoon. And when he'd had an opportunity to talk with her at the snack table, he'd longed to stay there all day, continuing to flirt and make small talk about the cookies.

Anthony had always felt drawn to Kathryn, even when they were children attending the same school. They'd become fast friends on the playground in first grade, and that friendship had blossomed over the years during youth group gatherings. She was the friend he sought out when he needed advice or he craved someone with whom to share happy news.

And now that they were both twenty, he wanted to take their friendship to the next level. He just had to muster up the courage to ask her father's permission to date her.

But he found himself pondering if Kathryn would even want to date him after knowing him so long. Did she harbor the same growing feelings for him, and if so, how could they turn their friendship into something more meaningful?

After stowing the volleyball net and ball, Anthony and Dwain headed toward the house, where they folded up the empty table that had held their snacks. Anthony headed up the steps toward the back door, and Fred trotted beside him.

"How's it going, Fred?" he asked the dog, who panted and smiled up at him. "I had fun today too."

As Anthony reached the top step, the door swung open, revealing Kathryn. Fred sat down beside him and wagged his tail, which thumped against the porch floor.

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“*Danki* so much for bringing in the table,” Kathryn said. “It’s heavier than it looks.” She pushed the door open wide as her smile brightened. “Maria and I were just discussing carrying it in.”

“We thought we’d stay and help you,” Anthony said as he hefted the table past her, stepping into the kitchen, where Kathryn’s mother, Suzetta, washed dishes and Maria dried.

“Oh, thank you for bringing the table in, you two,” Suzetta said, her smile bright as she rinsed a serving platter.

“Of course,” Anthony responded before nodding toward the door that led to the utility room. “It goes in there, right?”

“That’s right,” Suzetta said.

Maria scampered toward the utility room. “Oh! Let me get the door for you.” She pushed it open and flipped on the overhead propane-powered light fixture.

“Thanks,” Anthony muttered as he moved past Maria and set the table down beside a shelf full of cleaning supplies and the wringer washer.

“Did you have fun today?” Dwain asked Maria.

“I did. You?” Maria fiddled with the hem of her black apron as she smiled up at him.

“*Ya*, I was just telling Anthony that he needs to work on his volleyball skills. If he improves, we might win more games.”

Maria tittered, and Dwain’s grin widened as his green eyes seemed to glint in the propane light above them.

Anthony blinked. His best friend was flirting with Maria! He hadn’t seen Dwain flirt since he had broken up with his last girlfriend nearly a year ago.

When had this development taken place? And how had Anthony missed it?

“Anthony?”

He spun toward Kathryn, who was standing in the doorway watching him. She held up a container. “As promised, I have your *kichlin*.”

“*Danki*.” He rubbed his hands together and moved into the kitchen. “I’m going to hide them from my family. If not, then *mei dat* will try to eat them all.”

Kathryn laughed as she placed the container in his hands. “Maybe just offer him one and then hide the rest.”

“How are your folks?” Suzetta asked as she faced him while drying a large bowl.

“*Gut. Danki. Mei dat* and I are staying busy, and *Mamm* tries to keep us in line,” he joked, and Suzetta and Kathryn laughed.

“I guess your business is booming this time of year,” Suzetta said.

“*Ya*, it is.” Anthony leaned back on the door frame.

“How is it going with Micah?” Kathryn asked about Anthony’s older sister’s boyfriend, Micah Zook.

“It’s been *wunderbaar* ever since Micah combined his patio furniture business with our gazebo business. We don’t seem to have a moment between orders, which is nice, though a bit hectic.”

“What a blessing,” Suzetta said. “How is Bethany doing with her Coffee Corner?” Bethany, Anthony’s older sister, ran a coffee and donut booth at the Bird-in-Hand Marketplace.

“Her booth has been busy since tourist season is in full swing. She comes home exhausted each day, but she loves it.”

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“I need to stop by there,” Kathryn chimed in. “She has the most *appetitlich* flavored *kaffi*.”

“We should go there together sometime,” Anthony told her.

“*Ya*.” The intensity in her pretty brown eyes sent his blood pounding.

“Please tell your folks hello for me,” Suzetta said.

“I will.” Anthony turned to Kathryn. “Would you please walk me out?”

Her eyes widened for a split second as if she were surprised or excited by the suggestion. “Of course.”

“Great.” He turned toward the utility room, where Dwain and Maria continued to talk and laugh. “I’m heading out. *Gut nacht*.”

“I’ll be there in a minute.” Dwain gave him a half wave before returning to his conversation with Maria.

Anthony swallowed a snort. He was eager to ask Dwain about his sudden interest in Maria.

He turned his attention back to Kathryn and held the back door open for her. She picked up a lantern from the counter and then stepped out onto the porch, where Fred still sat, his tail thumping.

Anthony gave Fred a pat on the head as he walked by. “*Gut nacht*, buddy. Hopefully I’ll see you soon.”

Fred responded by thumping his tail harder, and Anthony chuckled.

“Fred had a great day, and I did too. The youth gathering was really fun today,” he commented as he followed Kathryn out into the warm night air. He looked over at the pasture, which was now cloaked in darkness.

“Fred always loves when we have company. I agree it was a great day.” Kathryn set the lantern on the porch railing and then wound a tie from her prayer covering around her finger as if she were nervous. Fred came to sit by her, smiling up at her with his doggy grin.

“You never played volleyball with me. I missed having you on my team.”

She gestured over toward where the snack table had sat this afternoon. Earlier in the evening, Maria had helped her fill the table with trays of sandwiches for their supper. “I was busy worrying about the snacks and making sure everyone had what they needed. I guess I owe you a game.”

“I’m going to hold you to it.”

“Okay.”

They stared at each other for a moment, and he felt a strange stirring in his chest. It was as if everything between them had shifted and come into clear view. He cared for her and wanted to date her, if only he could find the words to ask.

The storm door opened and clicked shut, yanking Anthony back to the present.

Dwain pulled a flashlight out of his pocket and then loped down the steps. “You ready to go, Anthony?”

“Ya.” Anthony held up the container of cookies. “*Danki* again.”

“*Gern gschehne*. I’ll see you soon,” Kathryn said.

“*Danki*, Kathryn.” Dwain walked toward his horse and buggy. He and Anthony had hitched them up before they began taking down the volleyball net.

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“Bye, Dwain.” Kathryn gave one last wave and then headed back into the house with Fred in tow.

Anthony pulled a flashlight out of his pocket as he quickened his steps to catch up to his best friend. “So, you and Maria, huh?”

Dwain’s smile widened. “She’s so *schee*.”

Anthony grabbed Dwain’s arm and spun him to face him. “When did you develop this sudden interest in her?”

“I don’t know. I just sort of woke up one day and realized that I cared for her. Does that sound *narrisch*?”

Anthony shook his head. “No. It doesn’t sound crazy at all.”

Dwain leaned back against his buggy. “Do you think she’d go out with me if I asked?”

“I think so.”

“I feel like I’m meant to be with her, and the feeling came out of nowhere. Maybe God is leading me to her.” He yanked open the door to his buggy.

Anthony understood because his feelings for Kathryn had also caught him unawares. As he looked back toward Kathryn’s porch, he felt called to ask her father’s permission to date her. But first he had to find out if she would even consider the idea. If she said no, he’d be crushed—and he’d be sad to lose her as a friend too.

But his heart skipped a beat at the idea of her saying yes. Perhaps there was a chance that they could be together. And maybe, just maybe, he’d have a chance to plan for a future with his beautiful friend if the Lord saw fit.

chapter two

“I THINK DWAIN LIKES ME,” MARIA GUSHED AFTER Kathryn stepped back into the kitchen. “He’s so handsome—especially his *schee* green eyes. And he’s so nice and funny.”

Kathryn blinked as she studied her best friend. Fred sat down beside her and divided a look between Kathryn and Maria. Kathryn glanced behind her and noticed that *Mamm* had disappeared. She could hear her parents talking softly in the family room as she took a step closer to Maria. “You like Dwain?”

Maria bit her lower lip as she shrugged. “Why not? He goes out of his way to talk to me at church and at youth group gatherings. I think he would be a nice boyfriend.” She elbowed Kathryn in the side. “What about you and Anthony? You seemed to be getting awfully close today.”

Kathryn peeked toward the doorway as her parents’ voices had seemed to come closer to the kitchen. “I don’t know . . .” She tried to wave off Maria’s comments.

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“Are you kidding? I saw him flirting with you at the snack table more than once today. And he and Dwain didn’t have to stay and help us clean up, but they did. It’s obvious that they’re up to something.” Maria’s eyes widened. “Wouldn’t it be amazing if Dwain asked me out, and Anthony asked you out? The four of us could go on dates together.” Then Maria started counting off on her fingers. “We could go on picnics, go swimming, have dinners together . . .”

Then Kathryn’s parents stepped into the kitchen, and her father’s frosty expression sent a chill down her back. “Maria, we’ll talk about this later, okay?” Kathryn said quickly.

Maria’s brow furrowed, and she glanced over her shoulder at Kathryn’s parents before looking back at Kathryn. “I suppose I should get going. It’s late.” Her pretty smile returned as she waved at Kathryn’s parents. “Have a *gut* evening.”

“You too,” *Mamm* said.

Maria gave Fred a pat on the head, gathered up her purse and tote bag, and then retrieved her flashlight from the bottom of her bag. “See you soon.”

Kathryn let Fred out the door, and he ran off to do his business. Then she walked Maria out to the porch and gave her a quick hug. “*Danki* for helping me today.”

“*Gern gschehne*.” Maria’s brow pinched once again. “Is everything okay?”

“*Ya*. Why?”

“I don’t know.” Maria looked back toward the house. “I know your *dat* is serious, but he seems almost annoyed tonight. Did something happen?”

“He just gets that way when we have youth gatherings at our *haus*. He’s always anxious to get to bed since he has to get up early to take care of the cows. I’m certain your *dat* is the same way.” She hoped her response was believable.

“Right. Of course.” Seemingly satisfied with that explanation, Maria hefted her tote bag and purse higher on her shoulder. “*Gut nacht.*”

“Be safe walking home.”

Maria headed down the rock driveway toward the street, the beam from her flashlight bumping along the ground as she walked. Fred ran back up the porch steps and joined Kathryn.

Kathryn squared her shoulders and turned back toward the door, where Fred sat looking in through the screen. Her hands trembled as she awaited another lecture. Her father had warned her once before to stay away from Anthony Gingerich.

She tried to steel herself. Maybe this time, she could convince *Dat* that Anthony was worthy of a chance to prove himself as her friend and possibly more.

Kathryn’s confidence began to crumble when she entered the kitchen, and her gaze landed on her parents sitting at the table, her father with a disapproving frown.

“Sit, Kathryn,” *Dat* barked.

Mamm shot Kathryn a sympathetic look as Kathryn dropped into a chair across from her father. Fred walked over to his bowls and began noisily lapping up water.

“*Ya, Dat?*” Kathryn longed for the quiver in her voice to disappear. “What did you want to talk about?”

Dat rubbed his graying brown beard. “I overheard your

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conversation with Maria earlier. She implied that you have feelings for Anthony Gingerich.”

Kathryn opened her mouth to respond and glanced at her mother, who frowned.

“Do you care for Anthony?” *Dat* asked, his dark eyes assessing her.

“We’ve been *freinden* our whole lives.” She looked down at the tabletop and began drawing invisible circles on the wood-grain with her fingernail. “We get along well, and I enjoy his company.” She took a deep breath and then looked up at her father again. “I do care for him, and I think he might care for me.”

Dat huffed. “You know I don’t approve of Anthony Gingerich’s occupation, and I wouldn’t allow you to date him.”

Kathryn held her hands up. “Could we please discuss this, *Dat*? You know Anthony’s family. His *schweschder* runs her own business. They’re all hardworking people. Just because they don’t live on a farm doesn’t mean they aren’t truly Amish.”

Mamm shot her a warning look as *Dat*’s expression hardened.

“Their gazebo business is frivolous and caters to *English* people. Selling *kaffi* and donuts to tourists is the same. I can’t respect it.” He gestured around the kitchen. “Taking care of animals and the land is what we’re called to do.”

He tapped his finger on the tabletop for emphasis. “But building impractical gazebos and patio furniture for *Englishers* is not God’s work. I will not allow you to waste your time on a man like him.”

Disappointment clogged her throat, and she tried to clear it. “*Dat*, Anthony is a *gut* man.” Her voice quavered. “He’s a talented

carpenter, and he works hard alongside his *dat* and Micah. He's not a frivolous person, and I know he feels he's doing what he's called to do with his life."

Dat shook his head. "You will not see him. End of discussion."

"But what if I feel called to be with him? What if God wills it for me to date him and have a future with him?"

"Kathryn . . ." *Mamm's* warning came in a whisper. "You need to stop."

"You should listen to your *mamm*," *Dat* snapped. "You will not disobey me by pursuing a relationship with Anthony. You need to look for a man who does God's work. I can't allow my only *kind* to marry a man whose job is worldly."

He pushed his chair back and stood, his expression suddenly calm as if he hadn't just ripped Kathryn's dreams to shreds. "I'm going to bed. We need to be up early to work."

"I'll be there in a moment, Nelson," *Mamm* said.

Dat picked up a nearby lantern and left the kitchen, his boots echoing as he made his way up the stairs toward the second floor.

Kathryn clasped her hands together and tried to calm her jangling nerves.

Mamm reached across the table and touched Kathryn's arm. "Are you okay?"

"Ya." Kathryn nodded, but inside her heart was breaking.

"You have to obey your *dat*."

"I know."

"He only wants what's best for you. Anthony is a nice young man, but you'll find someone who better suits your *dat's* idea of what a Plain man should be."

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Kathryn pursed her lips as she studied her mother's serious expression. *Mamm* would never go against *Dat's* wishes, and normally, neither would Kathryn.

But this decision felt wrong to the depth of her core.

"Get some sleep." *Mamm* pushed her chair back and stood. "It's late, *mei liewe*. And tomorrow is laundry day."

"*Ya, Mamm.*" Kathryn stood and picked up a lantern from the counter. "*Kumm, Fred.*"

The dog scampered to life, his nails clicking on the linoleum as he followed Kathryn and her mother to the stairs.

As they headed to the second floor, Kathryn sent up a quick, silent prayer:

Lord, I believe in my heart that Anthony and I might be called to be more than freinden. Help us find a way to be together if that's your will.

When she reached her bedroom door, she said goodnight to her mother and then slipped inside. Fred plopped down onto his cushion, and Kathryn sank down on the edge of her bed. As she hugged her arms to her chest and closed her eyes, Anthony's handsome, smiling face and bright blue eyes filled her mind. With God's help, they would be together. She would have faith.

"With God all things are possible, right, Fred?" she whispered before gathering up her nightclothes.

Fred glanced over at her and set his chin on his paw.

"Right," she said as she got ready for bed.

Anthony stowed his horse and buggy in the barn and then headed toward the back porch of the large farmhouse where he'd been born and raised. The bright beam of the flashlight guided his way.

He glanced up at the sky and marveled at the bright stars glittering above him and smiled. It had been the perfect day. He looked down at the container of cookies and his chest warmed. He couldn't wait to see Kathryn again.

When he spotted a warm, yellow glow on the porch, he quickened his steps and waved the container of cookies in greeting to his older sister, Bethany, and her boyfriend, Micah, sitting on a glider together.

"*Wie geht's!*" Anthony called.

"You're finally home," Bethany said. "How was the youth gathering?"

At twenty-four, Bethany was four years older than Anthony. While he had many friends who complained about their siblings, Anthony could count on one hand the times that he and his sister had argued. With her golden-blonde hair, clear blue eyes, and chatty demeanor, she was as bright and sunny as a June day, and Anthony was grateful God had blessed him with her for his sister.

"It was *gut*." Anthony climbed the steps and leaned back against the railing. "We played volleyball and visited. Then I stayed to help clean up."

Micah grinned as he pointed at the container. "Did you bring us snacks?"

"Uh. Well, I don't have many to share." Why hadn't he just gone in the house and avoided having to share his special cookies from Kathryn?

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Micah clucked his tongue and then leaned over toward Bethany. “Did you hear that, Bethany? Anthony doesn’t want to share his snacks. I’m offended.”

Bethany grinned at Micah. “I am too. I’m not going to share my leftover donuts from the Coffee Corner with him anymore.”

Anthony groaned. “You two are so dramatic.”

“That’s why we’re together,” his sister quipped while gazing at Micah.

Anthony took in the love they had in their eyes for each other, and he felt a twinge of jealousy. If only Kathryn would look at him that way. Was such a thing even possible?

Micah was three years older than Bethany, and they had started dating officially a couple of months ago. After his grandfather died, Micah had discovered that his grandfather’s patio furniture business—the business they had shared—was drowning in debt. He had considered selling the business and moving away, but Bethany convinced him to combine his patio furniture business with the gazebo business that Anthony and their father had built. Now sales were booming, and Bethany and Micah’s relationship also seemed to be moving along. Anthony expected his sister to be engaged soon.

Anthony set his flashlight on the porch railing and then opened the container. “Here. You can each have one. Just one.”

“Oh!” Bethany rubbed her hands together as he held out the container. “I love oatmeal raisin.”

“My favorite,” Micah said.

“They’re mine, too, so don’t eat them all,” Anthony warned.

Bethany and Micah each chose a cookie and then took a bite. Then they gasped and smiled.

“Amazing,” Bethany said.

“The best I’ve ever had,” Micah said, and Bethany shot him a look. “Other than yours, of course.”

Anthony snickered and then replaced the lid.

“Who made them?” Bethany asked.

“Kathryn.” Anthony tried to hold back his smile as he said her name.

“How nice.” Bethany finished the cookie. “Did she host the gathering today?”

Anthony nodded and picked up his flashlight.

“How’s she doing?” Bethany asked.

“Fine.” He nodded toward the door. “I’m going to get ready for bed. *Gut nacht.*”

Anthony stepped into the house. He headed through the mudroom and kitchen to the family room. When he found the house completely dark and quiet, he assumed his parents had already gone to bed.

With quiet steps, Anthony made his way upstairs to his room. He set the tin on his dresser, opened the lid, and smiled as he pulled out another cookie. He took a bite and wondered if Kathryn was thinking of him tonight, just as he was thinking of her.

As Anthony showered and prepared to sleep, visions of Kathryn kept him company. When he crawled into bed, he tried to turn his thoughts away—but her pretty face filled his mind as he waited for sleep to find him.

chapter three

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, MAMM HANDED Kathryn a pair of *Dat's* trousers, and Kathryn pulled a couple of clothespins out of her apron pocket before hanging them on the line.

As she pushed the line farther out, she glanced up at the blue, cloudless sky and squinted at the bright sunlight. Across the yard, Fred rolled around in the grass and then settled onto his side. If only Kathryn's life were as easy as Fred's.

The early-morning birds serenaded her as her thoughts turned to her disappointing conversation with her father. She'd stayed awake last night trying to think of ways to change her father's mind about Anthony, but she'd tossed and turned and come up empty.

Kathryn took a damp shirt from her mother and hung it on the line. Then she paused. "*Mamm*, could I ask you a question?"

"Of course." *Mamm's* expression was warm.

“Why is *Dat* so hard on Anthony’s family’s businesses?” She reached for more laundry and then moved along while awaiting her mother’s response.

“I think it’s just how your *Dat* was raised. He comes from a long line of dairy farmers. This land has been in his family for generations, and his *dat* believed that farming was God’s work.”

“But why isn’t being a carpenter God’s work? Aren’t we called to use the gifts that God gives us? Anthony and his *dat* are both skilled woodworkers, and they’re using their gifts the way they know best. Micah is the same. And *Dat* said that Bethany’s work isn’t worthy either. She has the gift of not only making the donuts and *kaffi* but also talking to the customers. She’s never met a stranger, and she brings joy to the people who give her their business. I’ve seen her have conversations with people who look as if they’re having a terrible day. She makes them smile and brings some light into their lives.”

Mamm clucked her tongue. “I understand what you’re saying, but we have to respect your *dat*. He is the head of our family, and we have to abide by his rules.”

“What if I don’t agree with his rules?” Kathryn muttered as she hung another one of her father’s shirts on the line.

“Kathryn!” *Mamm* snapped. “You need to stop talking that way. You’ve always been a dutiful *dochder*. Don’t let this situation change you.”

“I won’t.” She felt her shoulders droop as she reached into her apron pocket for more pins.

She couldn’t even get her mother to be on her side, but she’d

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find a way. She just hoped that Anthony cared for her the way that she cared for him. If not, then all of her hopes and prayers were in vain.



Anthony swiped his hand across his sweaty brow Friday afternoon as he walked around the large cinder block shop on his father's property. He walked past the line of workbenches cluttered with tools and the large pieces of wood that would become the gazebos their customers had ordered. The sweet, familiar scent of cedar and sawdust filled his lungs.

Dat had left to go to town earlier in the day to talk to one of the business owners who sent orders for his customers, and Anthony didn't expect him to be back for at least another hour.

Anthony walked past the diagrams and posters of gazebos on the wall and stopped by the large cooler he kept stocked with cold bottles of water on hot days like today. After grabbing two bottles, he entered the back part of the shop, where Micah worked on sanding a large piece of wood that looked as if it would become one of his benches.

"How's it going?" Anthony asked as he hopped up on a nearby stool.

"*Gut.*" Micah stood up tall and swiped the back of his arm across his forehead. "Hot."

Anthony held out a bottle of water. "Need a drink?"

"*Danki.*" Micah took the bottle and sat on another stool. "Is your *dat* back?"

“Not yet. He said he might stop for supplies after his meeting, so I assumed he’d be a while.” Anthony studied his bottle of water as the questions he’d wanted to ask Micah all week filled his mind again. He looked up and found Micah watching him. “Micah, since you’re the expert on this . . . How do you know when it’s the right time to ask for a father’s permission to ask out a *maedel*?”

Micah let out a bark of laughter that echoed through the shop, and Anthony cringed as his face burned hot. He took a long drink of the cold water, hoping to cool his humiliation.

“You’re asking me for dating advice?” Micah pointed to himself. “I am the worst person to ask. You know what I put Bethany through earlier this year. You were there when she found me in my shop after a night of drowning myself in my sorrows. I’m still astounded that she gave me another chance.”

Anthony took another drink of water. “You made amends for your sins, completed your shunning, and then you and Bethany were able to build a relationship together with God’s help.”

Micah nodded and then took a long drink of water. “That is true.”

They were both silent for a moment, and Anthony’s embarrassment only grew.

“Who’s the *maedel*?” Micah asked.

Anthony hesitated.

“Is it Kathryn?”

“How did you know?”

Micah grinned. “The *kichlin* that you refused to share on Sunday were my first clue.”

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“I shared a few. I just didn’t want to share *all* of them.” Anthony smiled. “*Ya*, it’s Kathryn. I’ve known her my whole life, but recently I started seeing her in a new light. Now I want to be more than just her *freind*, but . . .” He looked down at his lap. “I don’t know how to make the transition from *freinden* to something more. How do I know if she’s even interested in me that way?”

“Follow your heart. And rely on God. Pray about it and see where he leads you. That’s what I did, and I couldn’t be happier.”

Anthony nodded. “*Ya*.” He stood. “Well, I better get back to work. Thanks, Micah.” He started for the door.

“Hey, Anthony,” Micah called, and he spun to face him. “If she makes you *kichlin*, I would imagine she cares about you too. *Maed* like to bake for the men they care for. Your *schweschder* did for me. You came with her when she delivered meals to me, remember?”

“That’s true.” Hope lit in Anthony’s chest.

“It will all work out.”

Anthony smiled as he made his way back to the front of the shop. He hoped Micah was right.

Later than afternoon, Dwain stepped into the workshop. “Hey, Anthony!” he called out.

“Dwain.” Anthony stopped painting a picket for a gazebo and walked over to him. “What are you doing here?”

“I forgot to grab my lunch this morning, so I had to run home. I thought I’d stop by on my way back to the store.” He looked past Anthony and waved. “Hello, Harvey.”

“Good to see you, Dwain,” *Dat* said before returning to painting.

“How’s your week been?” Anthony asked as they walked to the door and stepped outside into the hot June afternoon air.

“*Gut.*” Dwain grinned. “I think I’m going to ask Maria to ride home with me after the youth gathering on Sunday.”

“Really?”

“*Ya*, I’ve been thinking about her all week, and I feel led to ask her out.” He grimaced. “I just hope her *dat* gives me permission.”

“Please.” Anthony snorted and gave Dwain’s shoulder a push. “Why would he say no? We’ve all been in the same church district our whole lives. We all grew up together. Her *dat* knows you’re a *gut* man.”

Dwain rocked back on his heels. “We’ll see.”

Anthony thought about his conversation with Micah earlier in the day, and he squared his shoulders. He was ready to confess his feelings about Kathryn to his best friend. “Speaking of *maed*, I’m thinking about asking Kathryn out too.”

Dwain’s eyes widened. “You and Kathryn?”

“Maybe.” Anthony rubbed at a tight muscle in his neck. “I care about her, and I’m hoping she cares about me.”

“That’s fantastic news.” Dwain rubbed his hands together. “If this all works out, we could double date!”

“*Ya*, it would be great.”

And it certainly would be.



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On Sunday afternoon, it was the Glick family's turn to host the church service in their barn, and Kathryn had helped the women serve the meal before she sat down to eat with Maria and the rest of her girlfriends.

After helping clean up the dishes, she told her mother she was going to go out with her friends and then hurried into the warm June afternoon air to head to the youth gathering.

She'd anxiously waited for Sunday to come in hopes that Anthony might ask her to ride with him to the gathering and then offer her a ride home. Normally an offer of a ride home would lead to dating, and her stomach dipped at the thought!

Kathryn quickened her steps when she spotted Maria standing with Dwain and Anthony by the line of horses and buggies near the pasture fence. She shielded her eyes from the bright sunlight as she approached them.

"Hi, Kathryn." Anthony gave her a wide smile, and his handsome face lit up like the sun above them.

"Hi." She tried to stop her heart from beating out of her chest as she smiled at him. "Are you heading to Gretchen King's *haus* for the gathering?"

"We were just talking about it," Dwain said.

"Are you going?" Anthony asked Kathryn as he leaned back against the fence.

"I am." She held her breath, waiting for him to offer her a ride.

"Great." He pushed himself off of the fence. "I'll see you there." Then he started toward his horse and buggy.

Kathryn's lips pressed into a thin line as Anthony stopped in front of a buggy and began talking to one of his friends. Her

shoulders slumped, and her hopes of riding with him were dashed.

Kathryn heard someone call her name and spun around. She froze when she found her father glaring at her while beckoning her to walk over to where he stood with her mother next to their buggy.

She slowly made her way over to her parents as worry gripped her. “*Ya, Dat?*”

“What did I tell you about staying away from Anthony Gingerich?” he hissed through clenched teeth.

“We were only discussing going to the youth gathering.” With a shaky hand, she gestured toward the group of young people climbing into their buggies. “We’re all heading to Gretchen King’s *haus* to—”

“I’ve told you to stay away from him. You need to limit your time with him, or you’ll have to stop going to youth group.”

Kathryn’s eyes burned with anger and humiliation as she looked around, hoping her friends couldn’t overhear them. Thankfully, Anthony, Maria, and Dwain were engrossed in their own conversations and didn’t seem to notice her. “*Dat*, I’ve known them my whole life.”

“That doesn’t matter.” He shook his head. “I spoke to my cousin Arlan in Lititz earlier this week, and he told me about a young farmer out there named Jeremiah Fisher who is single and looking for a *fraa*. I’d like you to meet him. He’d be a *gut* match for you.”

Kathryn stared at him as her heart began to pound. “You’re trying to set me up with a farmer?”

“Kathryn . . .” *Mamm* warned.

“If you want to keep coming to these Sunday gatherings, then

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I want you to promise me that you'll agree to meet Jeremiah," *Dat* said.

Kathryn glanced behind her to where Maria smiled up at Dwain, who seemed just as smitten with her. Why couldn't her father allow her to choose her own boyfriend instead of interfering? She wanted to be as happy as Maria seemed to be.

Squaring her shoulders, she looked back at her father. She'd agree to meet Jeremiah just so she could have a chance to talk to Anthony again. "Okay. I'll meet him."

"*Gut.*"

"I'm going to go see *mei freinden* now."

"Fine," *Dat* said.

With frustration pressing down on her shoulders, Kathryn made her way back to where Maria and Dwain stood together. She hoped she could get Maria alone to tell her what her father had just said.

"Do you want a ride to the gathering?" Dwain asked Maria.

"*Ya*, that would be nice," Maria gushed.

Kathryn turned back toward where Anthony stood laughing while his friend seemed to share a story. Now she was stuck without a ride. She couldn't possibly ask Anthony, either, for fear of her father seeing them together.

"Could Kathryn ride with us?" Maria asked.

Kathryn swallowed a groan. She didn't want to interfere with Maria and Dwain's time.

"Sure." Dwain's smile seemed forced as he turned toward Kathryn. "That would be fine."

"Oh no." She shook her head as she stepped away. "I'll find a

ride.” She spun and spotted Gretchen standing with a few of their other friends. “I can go ask Gretchen if—”

“No, no.” Maria grabbed Kathryn’s arm and gave it a tug. “Ride with us.”

“But I don’t want to be in the way.” Kathryn tried to convey her thoughts with her expression.

“Ride with us,” Maria said, emphasizing her words. “I insist.”

Kathryn felt her brow pinch as her friend seemed to plead with her. Why would Maria want Kathryn to intrude on their time together?

“Let’s go.” Maria took Kathryn’s arm and then smiled at Dwain. “*Danki* for giving us a ride.”

“Happy to do it.” Dwain opened the buggy’s passenger side door.

Kathryn peeked over her shoulder at Anthony one last time and found him still talking to his friend. Her heart crumbled as she recalled what her father had said. Would he force her to marry this stranger named Jeremiah? How would she ever get over her feelings for Anthony?

Reluctantly, she climbed into the back of the buggy as Maria took her place beside Dwain. Kathryn stared out the back while Maria and Dwain discussed the weather and their busy weeks during the ride to Gretchen’s farm.

While she was happy to hear her best friend and Dwain bond during the ride, her heart ached at the memory of how easily Anthony had walked away from her. Between her father’s ultimatum and the way Anthony had dismissed her, she was certain her heart was doomed.

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Before long, she spotted Gretchen's family farm ahead. She pushed her disappointed thoughts away and took a deep breath. She would ignore Anthony and try to forget her father's threat. Instead, she would spend her time today helping Gretchen with the snacks and enjoying the other women's company.

Kathryn was strong. She could make it through this afternoon and hopefully keep her spirit intact.



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Photo by Tim Irvin

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