

*Growing Up*

# Dedication and Acknowledgments

To my six special grandchildren: Jinell, Ric, Madolynne, Rebekah, Philip, and Richelle. Though in different ways, you've each been an inspiration for the books in this series.

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# Glossary

*absatz*—stop  
*ach*—oh  
*aldi*—girlfriend  
*appenditlich*—delicious  
*baremlich*—terrible  
*bensel*—silly child  
*bett*—bed  
*Biewel*—Bible  
*blentsching*—spanking  
*boppli*—baby  
*brieder*—brothers  
*bruder*—brother  
*buch*—book  
*bussli*—kitten  
*buwe*—boy  
*daed*—dad  
*danki*—thanks  
*dumm*—dumb  
*dummkopp*—dunce

*fraa*—wife  
*gut*—good  
*hinkel*—chickens  
*hund*—dog  
*hungerich*—hungry  
*jah*—yes  
*kapp*—cap  
*katz*—cat  
*koppweh*—headache  
*kumme*—come  
*mamm*—mom  
*naas*—nose  
*nodel*—needle  
*sau*—pig  
*schliffer*—splinter  
*schnell*—quickly  
*schpell*—pin  
*umgerennt*—upset  
*windel*—diaper

*Alli mudder muss sariye fer  
ihre famiyle.*

*Die Rachel is die ganz zeit  
am grummle.*

*Er hot mich verschwetzt.*

*Es fenschder muss mer nass mache  
fer es saurwer mache.*

*Ferwas bischt allfat so  
schtarkeppich?*

Every mother has to take  
care of her family.

Rachel is grumbling all the  
time.

He talked me into it.

One has to wet the window in  
order to clean it.

Why are you always so  
stubborn?

*Guder mariye.*

*Gut nacht.*

*Hoscht du schunn geese?*

*Was in der welt?*

*Wie geht's?*

*Windel wesche gleich ich net.*

Good morning.

Good night.

Have you already eaten?

What in all the world?

How are you?

I don't like to wash out diapers.

# Chapter 1

## Sidetracked



**H**a! Ha! I beat you home!” Rachel Yoder shouted as she raced into the yard ahead of her brother Jacob.

“Grow up, Rachel,” Jacob said when he caught up to her. “It doesn’t matter who got to the house first.”

“*Jah* [Yes] it does!” Rachel bounded up the porch steps. She didn’t tell Jacob, but she figured if she got to the kitchen before he did, she’d get first pick of whatever snack Mom had waiting for them. If Jacob got there before she did, he’d probably eat more than his share and leave her with just a few crumbs.

Rachel jerked open the back door and rushed inside. She dropped her backpack in the utility room and raced into the kitchen. Her brows puckered when she saw that no snack was on the table. She glanced around. No food was waiting on the kitchen counter either.

Rachel scratched the side of her head. “Now that’s sure strange.”

“What’s strange?” Jacob asked, stepping into the room.

“Mom’s not in the kitchen, and no snack is here for us.”

“Maybe she’s in her room with the *boppi* [baby].” Jacob took off his straw hat and hung it on a wall peg near the door. “We’re not helpless, Rachel. We can get our own snacks, you know.”

Rachel shook her head. “What if we eat something Mom doesn’t want us to eat? What if we eat something she’s planning to serve for supper? We’d be in trouble if we did that, and you know it.”

Jacob grabbed an apple from the fruit bowl sitting on the counter. “I’m sure Mom won’t care if we have a piece of fruit.”

“No, I suppose not.” Rachel took a banana and headed for the back door.

“Where are you going?” Jacob asked.

“Out to the greenhouse to help Grandpa!” Rachel called over her shoulder.

“Don’t you think you’d better do your homework and get your chores done first?”

Rachel shook her head and kept walking. She could do those things later on.

Rachel found Grandpa in the greenhouse, snipping the leaves of a large, leafy plant. “*Wie geht’s* [How are you]?” she asked.

“I’m good. How was school?”

“It was okay, but I’m glad to be home. I was anxious

to get here and work with you. It's a lot more fun than being in school."

"I'm always glad to have your help in our little greenhouse," Grandpa said.

Rachel smiled. She felt good to hear Grandpa refer to the greenhouse as *ours* and not *his*. "Have you had many customers today?" she asked.

He nodded. "This morning I was so busy I could hardly keep up. The business has slowed down a little this afternoon though."

"I'll be glad when I've graduated from school and can be here all day to help you," Rachel said.

He nodded. "That will be nice, but in the meantime, you need to study hard and learn all you can while you are in school."

"I know." Rachel glanced around. "What do you need my help with today?"

"I was planning to fertilize some plants but haven't gotten around to it yet." Grandpa motioned to a shelf full of geraniums across the room. "You can do that now if you like."

"Sure, Grandpa." Rachel had fertilized plants before, so she knew just what to do. She hurried to the back room and took out the bottle of liquid fertilizer. She squeezed several drops into a jug of warm water, carried it into the other room, and began the process of fertilizing the plants. She'd only gotten a few of them done when the bell above the greenhouse door jingled

and Mom stepped in. Her forehead was wrinkled, and she didn't look one bit happy.

"Jacob said you didn't do your homework or any of your chores before you came out here," she said, peering at Rachel over the top of her metal-framed glasses.

Rachel swallowed hard. "I—uh—was planning to do them later—after I finished helping Grandpa in the greenhouse."

Mom slowly shook her head. "You know you're not supposed to come out here until your homework and chores are done. When are you going to grow up and start acting more responsible, Rachel?"

Rachel's cheeks felt as if they were on fire as she stared at the floor and struggled not to cry. She didn't like it when Mom scolded her. It made her feel like a baby. "I—I just like being here so much, and I—"

"I know you like being here." Mom's voice softened a bit. She touched Rachel's chin, raising it so Rachel could look at her face. "However, schoolwork and chores come first. After those things are done, you can work in the greenhouse. Is that clear?"

"Jah," Rachel mumbled.

"What was that?"

"I said, 'Jah,' Mom."

Grandpa stepped forward. "Rachel was in the middle of fertilizing some plants for me, Miriam. Is it all right if she finishes them and then goes up to the house?"



Mom nodded. Then she turned to Rachel and said, “Oh, by the way, I was changing your little sister’s *windel* [diaper] when you and Jacob got home from school, so that’s why there was no snack waiting for you. You can have some cookies and milk while you do your homework.”

Rachel shook her head as she poured fertilizer onto another plant. “I ate a banana while I was walking out to the greenhouse, so I’m not really hungry.”

Mom turned toward the door. “All right then. I’ll expect to see you at the house in a few minutes.” She stepped out of the greenhouse, and the bell above the door jingled when the door closed behind her.

“I guess I should have asked if you’d done your homework and chores before I put you to work out here,” Grandpa said to Rachel. “Next time, I will ask.”

Tears burned the backs of Rachel’s eyes. Grandpa didn’t trust her anymore. He probably thought she was a baby, too. “I like working for you in the greenhouse more than doing chores or homework,” she said.

Grandpa touched Rachel’s shoulder. “I’m sure you do, but there’s one thing you should always remember.”

“What’s that?”

“The Bible teaches us to do whatever we do as if we are doing it for the Lord,” Grandpa said.

“Really?”

Grandpa nodded. “If you remember that, you will find it easier to do the things you don’t enjoy so much.”

Rachel smiled, wondering if she'd ever be as smart as Grandpa.

When Rachel returned to the house, she found Mom peeling potatoes at the kitchen sink.

“Is it time to start supper already?” Rachel asked.

Mom shook her head. “Not quite, but your little sister might wake up from her nap soon, and then I’ll be busy feeding her. So I thought it would be a good idea if I started preparing supper early.” She glanced at Rachel over her shoulder. “It’s always good to stay ahead of things.”

Rachel nodded. “Should I do my homework first or start on my chores?”

“You’d better do your chores first. Now that summer’s over, it gets dark earlier than before.”

“Okay. What chores do you want me to do?” Rachel asked.

“Let’s see now. . . . Jacob is cleaning the chicken coop, which I was going to ask you to do before you went out to the greenhouse.”

Rachel wrinkled her nose. Cleaning the smelly chicken coop was not her favorite thing to do. She was glad Jacob had been asked to do it this time.

Mom held the potato peeler out to Rachel. “If you’d rather do an inside chore, you can finish peeling the potatoes while I take the dry clothes off the line.”

Rachel frowned. The last time she’d peeled potatoes

she had nicked her finger. “I’d rather get the clothes,” she mumbled.

Mom nodded. “The laundry basket’s sitting on the back porch.”

Rachel scurried out the door, picked up the basket, and hurried out to the clothesline. Several big fluffy towels flapped in the breeze, along with some of the men’s trousers and a few dresses. There were also lots of baby diapers and some little outfits that her three-month-old sister, Hannah, wore.

Rachel set the basket on the wagon she often used to haul laundry to and from the house. Then she stood on her tiptoes, yanked the clothespins free, and dropped the towels into the basket. She was about to remove one of the clothespins from a pair of Grandpa’s trousers when Cuddles leaped into the basket. *Meow!*

Rachel giggled and bent down to rub her cat’s head. “You silly *katz* [cat]. What do you think you’re doing?”

*Purr. . .purr. . .purr.* Cuddles nuzzled Rachel’s fingers with her warm pink nose.

Rachel took a seat on the ground and put the cat in her lap. Cuddles purred louder as Rachel stroked behind the cat’s ears.

Just then Cuddles’s kitten, Snowball, zipped across the yard, leaped into the air, and landed on Cuddles’s head.

*Yeow!* Cuddles jumped up as if she had springs on her legs and then tore across the yard, hissing and

meowing as she raced to the barn.

Snowball burrowed into Rachel's lap and began to purr.

"Shame on you for chasing your *mamm* [mom] away." Rachel shook her finger at Snowball.

The cat only purred louder and licked Rachel's hand with a sandpapery tongue.

Rachel smiled. Snowball was spoiled, no doubt about it, and she liked lots of attention.

*Neigh! Neigh!* Rachel looked over her shoulder and saw Tom, their old retired buggy horse, with his head hanging over the fence. *Neigh! Neigh!* Tom bobbed his head up and down and opened his mouth very wide.

Rachel chuckled. "I'll bet you'd like an apple, wouldn't you, Tom?"

*Neigh! Neigh!*

"Oh, all right. I'll go inside and get you one." Rachel set Snowball on the ground and sprinted for the house.

Mom wasn't in the kitchen, and Rachel figured she must be in her room with the baby. She hurried to the fruit bowl and grabbed a big red apple; then she rushed back outside.

Old Tom stuck his head out even farther as Rachel approached the fence. As soon as she opened the gate and stepped into the pasture, Tom plodded over and nudged her arm with his nose.

Rachel snickered. "Okay, okay. Don't be in such a hurry." She placed the apple in the palm of her hand

and held it out to him.

Old Tom lowered his head. *Crunch! Crunch! Slurp! Slurp!* He took his time eating the apple and drooled a lot. When he was done, he nudged Rachel's arm with his nose again.

"Sorry, Tom, but I only brought one apple for you." Rachel patted Tom's flank. "You're such a good horse. I'm glad Pap put you out to pasture when you got too old to pull the buggy. I would have been sad if Pap had sold you to the glue factory, like Jacob said he might do."

Tom wandered over to a tree, dropped to his knees, and rolled onto his side. Then he reached down and out with his mouth, as though he was yawning, and let out a strange-sounding sigh. Just seeing him there made Rachel feel tired.

She leaned against the fence and closed her eyes, letting her mind wander. She thought about the letter she'd received from her cousin Mary a few weeks ago. Mary had let Rachel know that she'd made it safely home. Rachel had fun when Mary had come for a visit. She couldn't wait to visit Mary in Indiana someday.

Rachel thought about the bonfire Pap said he might build Saturday evening. They'd probably roast hot dogs and marshmallows and enjoy plenty of freshly squeezed apple cider. Rachel's sister Esther and her husband, Rudy, would be invited, too.

"Rachel! Where are you?"

Rachel turned and saw Mom standing on the porch.

“I’m coming,” she called.

Rachel hurried out of the pasture and ran all the way to the house. “I’m here,” she said breathlessly as she stepped onto the porch.

Mom gave Rachel a curious look over the top of her glasses. “Where’s the basket of clothes?”

“Huh?”

“The clothes, Rachel.” Mom pursed her lips. “I sent you to get the clothes off the line some time ago, remember?”

Rachel reached under her stiff white *kapp* [cap] and scratched her head. “Oh yeah, that’s right. Guess I lost track of what I was doing.”

“What *have* you been doing all this time?” Mom asked, giving Rachel a stern look.

Rachel shifted from one foot to the other, feeling like a fly trapped in a spider’s web. “Well, I—uh—”

“Did you take any of the clothes off the line?”

“Jah. Well, part of them anyway.”

*Tap! Tap! Tap!* Mom’s foot beat on the porch, and she folded her arms. “If you only got part of the clothes, then what were you doing the rest of the time? And where are the clothes you took off the line?”

“Uh—some are still on the line. The others are in the basket.”

*Tap! Tap! Tap!* “Why didn’t you take all the clothes off the line, Rachel?”

“I—uh—got distracted.”

“Distracted by what?”

Rachel held up one finger. “First Cuddles landed in the basket of clothes.” A second finger came up. “Then Snowball came along and jumped on Cuddles’s head.” Rachel lifted a third finger. “Then Old Tom came over begging for an apple, so I—”

Mom held up her hand. “You became sidetracked?”

Rachel nodded. “I just wanted to have a little fun, and—”

“No excuses, Rachel. When a person’s asked to do a job, he or she should do it.” Mom pointed to the clothesline. “I want you to finish the job I asked you to do, right now.”

“Okay, Mom.” Rachel trudged to the clothesline. One by one she quickly removed the wooden pins holding the men’s trousers. She put the trousers in the basket. Then she took down the dresses, diapers, and baby clothes.

*Chirp-or-ee! Chirp-or-ee!* A bird called from a nearby tree.

Rachel was tempted to sit on the grass and watch the bird, but knew she’d be in trouble if she did. With a heavy sigh, she grabbed the wagon handle and pulled it to the house. She wished she didn’t have any chores to do!

As Rachel helped Mom fold clothes at the foot of Mom’s bed, she thought about Grandpa’s greenhouse.

*I'd rather be out there!* she thought. It was a lot more fun to water, repot, and prune plants than it was to fold Hannah's diapers.

She glanced at her baby sister, lying in the crib on the other side of Mom and Pap's room, and wondered when Esther's baby would be born. Would it be a boy or a girl? Would it have blond hair or brown? What color would the baby's eyes be?

Mom nudged Rachel's arm. "Watch what you're doing, Rachel. You're folding that windel the wrong way."

Rachel looked down at the pile of diapers still on the bed and frowned. "I don't like doing this. It's boring."

"Why don't you make a game out of your chores, the way Grandpa taught you to do several months ago?" Mom's glasses had slipped to the end of her nose, and she paused to push them back in place. "I'm sure you can think of something to pretend while you're helping me fold clothes."

Rachel nibbled on her lower lip as she tried to think of something fun about folding diapers. She couldn't think of a thing!

*Moo! Moo! Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!*

"Now what's going on outside?" Mom hurried to the window and peered out. "*Ach* [Oh] no! The cows are out of the pasture! They're running all over our yard!"

She rushed out of the room, calling over her shoulder, "*Kumme* [Come], Rachel, *schnell* [quickly]. Help me get the cows back in the pasture!"



Rachel followed Mom down the hall and out the back door. When they stepped into the yard, Mom raised her hands and shouted, “Just look at my garden! They’ve trampled everything to the ground!”

Rachel dashed into the yard and shooed a cow toward the pasture. Soon the other cows followed.

“Look there,” said Mom, pointing her finger. “The pasture gate’s wide open!” She turned and looked at Rachel sternly. “Did you open that gate, Rachel?”

Rachel quickly closed the gate behind the last cow. She turned to Mom and said, “I opened it when I went to give Old Tom an apple. Guess I must have gotten sidetracked and forgot to close it when I left.”

Mom shook her head. “You’ve gotten sidetracked way too much this afternoon, Rachel. Now you’ll have double chores to do for the next few days.”

Rachel frowned. “Can’t I just help you replant the garden?”

“It’s too late in the season for that. Maybe a few extra chores will help you remember not to get sidetracked the next time you’re asked to do something.” Mom turned and went back into the house.

Rachel swallowed around the lump in her throat. She couldn’t believe she’d already forgotten what Grandpa had said about doing her chores as if she was doing them for the Lord. Wouldn’t she ever grow up?

## Chapter 2

### Too Many Chores



For the last half hour, Rachel had been sitting at the kitchen table with her notepaper, a pencil, and a stack of books. She was supposed to do her homework, but it was a lot more fun to look at the book about a cat that she had borrowed from the book mobile. The book mobile was like a traveling library that frequently came to the Amish community. Rachel had done some of her homework but not all of it. She planned to finish it sometime before going to bed.

“Rachel, are you done with your homework?” Mom asked as she ran water into the kitchen sink.

Rachel glanced at her schoolbooks then at the cat book. “Uh—jah, I’m just about done.”

“That’s good, because it’s time for you to do the supper dishes,” Mom said.

Rachel groaned. “Already?”

Mom nodded. “I want you to wash and dry them all, and then I have some mending for you to do.”

Rachel frowned. “What about Jacob? Isn’t he helping with the dishes?”

Mom shook her head. “Part of your punishment for leaving the pasture gate open is doing extra chores, remember?”

Rachel nodded slowly as a lump formed in her throat. She didn’t think it was fair that Jacob didn’t have to help with the dishes just because she had extra chores. Why should he have the evening free to do as he pleased?

“The sink’s ready for you now, Rachel. Are you coming?” Mom peered at Rachel over the top of her glasses.

“I’ll be there in a minute.”

*Waaa! Waaa! Waaa!*

“I’m going to check on Hannah. Now you get busy on those dishes,” Mom said as she scurried out of the room.

“I wish I didn’t have to work all the time,” Rachel mumbled. “I wish I was a katz. They don’t have any chores to do. They get to lie around and sleep all day or scamper everywhere, having all sorts of fun. Jah, I wish I was a katz.”

“Why do you wish you were a cat?” asked Rachel’s oldest brother, Henry, when he entered the kitchen.

“Cats have life so easy,” Rachel explained.

“You think so, huh?” Henry tapped Rachel lightly on the head. “Think about it, little sister. Your cats get

chased by Jacob's dog, and they have to look for warm spots to sleep on cold days. They can also get worms from eating too many birds and mice, and they often get hair balls." He tapped her head one more time. "And another thing—cats can't read books! Now do you think those furry critters have it so well?"

She shrugged. "At least they don't have to do dishes."

Henry chuckled, poured himself a cup of coffee, and left the room.

Rachel banged her book shut and jumped out of the chair. "I may as well get this over with!"

Rachel grabbed the sponge and dropped it into the soapy water. Then she picked up a dish and sloshed the sponge over it. Next, she rinsed the dish and placed it in the dish drainer.

The dishwasher was beginning to cool, so Rachel turned on the hot water. She turned on a little more cold water so she wouldn't burn her hands. While the sink was filling, she stared out the window and daydreamed about how much fun she'd have if she ever visited Mary in Indiana and went to the Fun Spot Amusement Park.

"Rachel, are you almost done with the dishes?" Mom called from the other room. "And don't forget, you still have to mend some things before you go to bed."

"I'll be done soon," Rachel hollered. She grabbed another plate to wash and realized that she'd filled the sink too full. Water had begun running onto the floor.

“Oh no,” she mumbled as she turned off the water. She grabbed a towel, dropped to her knees, and mopped up the spot where the water had puddled.

*I need to concentrate on what I'm doing*, she told herself as she began washing dishes again.

*Whoosh!*—a bubble flew up and popped on Rachel's chin. It made her wish this was a warm summer day and that she could be outside blowing bubbles with her bubble wand. But no, she was stuck in here, doing dirty dishes in a hot, stuffy kitchen!

By the time Rachel had finished washing the dishes, she was tired, bored, and not in the mood to dry the dishes. However, she knew if she left them in the dish drainer, she'd be in more trouble with Mom. Besides, she remembered she was supposed to be doing her chores for the Lord.

Rachel picked up a glass and dried it with a clean towel. She was about to set it on the counter when—*bam!*—the back door hit the wall as it swung open.

Rachel was so startled when Jacob entered the room that the glass slipped from her hands and fell to the floor. *Crash!* Her hand shook as she pointed to the broken glass. “Look what you made me do!” she shouted at Jacob.

He shook his head and raised his hands. “Don't blame me. You did that yourself.”

“If you hadn't slammed the door and scared me, I wouldn't have dropped the glass.”

“Grow up, little *bensel* [silly child], and quit blaming others for things you’ve caused yourself.”

Rachel shook her finger at Jacob. “Stop calling me a silly child!”

“I will when you stop acting like one.” He grabbed an apple from the fruit bowl on the counter and sauntered out of the room.

Rachel’s chin quivered, and her eyes filled with tears as she squatted to pick up the broken glass. “Jacob Yoder, you’re a mean boy,” she muttered under her breath.

By the time Rachel had cleaned up the broken glass and finished drying the dishes, she’d forgotten that Mom had asked her to do mending. She grabbed her cat book and headed up the stairs.

“Where are you going, Rachel?” Mom called from the living room.

Rachel halted on the steps and turned around. She knew right then what she’d forgotten. “I’ll be there in a few minutes,” she called to Mom. “I’m taking my book upstairs to my room.”

When Rachel entered the living room a few minutes later, she found Grandpa sitting in the rocking chair in front of the fireplace, holding Hannah. Pap and Henry sat at a small table on the other side of the room, playing a game of checkers. Jacob stood behind Henry, watching over his shoulder. Mom sat on the sofa with a basket of mending in her lap.

“Kumme,” Mom said, motioning Rachel over to the sofa. “One of your dresses needs the hem let down.”

Rachel grunted as she flopped down beside Mom. “You know I’m not good at sewing.”

Mom handed Rachel the small metal seam ripper. “The more you do, the better you’ll get.”

“That’s right,” Grandpa spoke up. “Practice makes perfect.”

Rachel wrinkled her nose. “I don’t think I’ll ever be perfect at sewing, no matter how much practicing I do.”

Mom reached over and patted Rachel’s arm. “Just do your best.”

Rachel squinted as she picked at the threads in the hem of her dress. “This is what I get for growing so much this summer,” she mumbled.

“What was that?” Mom asked.

“Oh nothing.”

“King me!” Pap hollered from across the room, where he and Henry were playing checkers.

“I sure didn’t see that coming,” Henry said with a groan.

Jacob nudged Henry’s shoulder. “Then you oughta pay closer attention to the game.”

Henry scowled at Jacob. “Why don’t you find something else to do and quit bothering me? I can’t concentrate with you hovering around.”

“I’m not hovering. I’m keeping my eye on the game, because I’ll get to play whoever wins.”

Rachel smiled. As much as she didn't like sewing, she'd rather be doing that than playing checkers with Jacob. He didn't play fair and always tried to distract her so he would win. She sometimes got frustrated and quit before the game was over, but the last time they'd played checkers, she'd let Jacob win just so he'd quit bothering her.

"I'm done ripping out the hem," Rachel said, handing the dress to Mom.

"Now you need to make a new hem." Mom handed Rachel a container of pins, a needle, and some dark green thread.

"How am I supposed to know how big I should make the hem?" Rachel questioned.

"Let's see now. . . ." Mom gave her chin a couple of taps. "You grew two inches over the summer, and you'll need to allow for more growth that might occur during this school year." She handed Rachel a measuring tape. "I would suggest that you make the hem on your dress three inches longer than it used to be."

Rachel frowned. This would take a lot longer than she'd expected.

Mom looked at Rachel again. "Once you've got the hem turned up, you'll need to thread your needle and sew it in place. Oh, and be sure you make tiny stitches so the thread doesn't show too much."

*This isn't fair, Rachel thought. At this rate, I'll be here all night!*



“Another king for me!” Pap shouted as he clapped his hands.

Rachel jumped and stuck herself with a pin. “Ouch!”

“What’s wrong?” Mom asked with a look of concern.

“When I heard Pap holler, I jammed a *schpell* [pin] into my finger.” Rachel stuck her finger in her mouth and sucked on it. The metallic taste of blood made her lips pucker as she scrunched up her nose. “I’m bleeding, Mom. I don’t think I can finish this dress tonight.”

“Let me see.”

Rachel held her hand out to Mom. “It really stings.”

“It always stings whenever I prick my finger,” Mom said, “but it never lasts long. Just blow on it a few seconds, and then continue pinning the hem.”

Rachel frowned. She didn’t want to pin the hem in her dress. She wanted to go upstairs and finish reading her book. But she knew from the serious look on Mom’s face that she’d better not mention it. She blew on her finger, but it didn’t help much.

By the time Rachel finished pinning the hem, her finger felt a little better, but now she was bored. “Can’t I finish this tomorrow?” she asked Mom.

Mom shook her head. “You’re almost done, Rachel. You just need to sew the hem in place.”

Rachel threaded the needle and tied a knot. She was glad she wore glasses now and could see to do it. If she had tried threading a needle before she’d gotten glasses, she wouldn’t have been able to see the tiny eye

of the needle at all.

In and out. In and out. Rachel yawned as she made the tiniest stitches she could possibly make. This was so boring!

“Hannah’s asleep now, Miriam,” Grandpa said as he stopped rocking. “It’s time for me to go to bed, too.”

“Here, I’ll go put her in her crib,” Mom said. She rose from the sofa and took Hannah from Grandpa. “I’ll be back in a few minutes, so keep sewing,” she said to Rachel before she left the room.

Grandpa stood and yawned noisily. “*Gut nacht* [Good night], everyone.”

“Why are you going to bed so early?” Rachel asked.

“I was busier than usual in my greenhouse today,” he replied. “I’d counted on your help this afternoon, but since you had other things to do, I had to do everything on my own.”

Rachel felt guilty for letting Grandpa down. She wished she’d been able to help him all afternoon instead of doing a bunch of chores she didn’t enjoy. “I’m sorry I couldn’t help you, Grandpa. Maybe tomorrow I’ll have more time.”

Grandpa moved over to the sofa and squeezed Rachel’s shoulder. “We’ll have to see how it goes.”

When Grandpa left the room, Rachel resumed her sewing. In and out. In and out. She wished she didn’t have to make such little stitches. At this rate she’d be up all night trying to get the dress hemmed!

“That’s it! The game’s over, and I won!” Pap hollered.

Henry grunted and pushed back his chair. “It’s your turn now, little *bruder* [brother],” he said, thumping Jacob’s arm. “I hope you have better luck than I did. Pap’s one tricky checkers player!”

“I can be pretty tricky, too.” With a smug smile, Jacob dropped into Henry’s chair. “Now we’ll see who’s the champion checkers player in this family!”

Pap rubbed his hands briskly together. “Jah, we’ll see indeed!”

Rachel rolled her eyes. Jacob was such a braggart, and bragging was being prideful, which the bishop of their church had said wasn’t a good thing. It would serve Jacob right to lose this game of checkers!

In and out. In and out. *Tick-tock. Tick-tock.* The clock on the mantel kept time with Rachel’s stitches.

“King me, Pap!” Jacob shouted. “And then king me again!”

“Ach,” Pap said with a grunt. “You outsmarted me with that sneaky move, boy!”

Jacob chuckled. “I told you I was good at this game!”

Rachel rolled her eyes again and cut the end of her thread. Finally, she’d finished hemming her dress. She stuck the needle in the arm of the sofa, made a knot in the thread, and clipped it with the scissors. Then she wandered across the room to watch the checkers game. Pap had three kings, but Jacob had seven. Unless Pap improved, Jacob would probably win the game.

Rachel was tempted to offer Pap some suggestions but figured he wouldn't be too happy about that. Jacob didn't deserve to win—not when he thought he was so great at checkers.

*Tick-tock. Tick-tock.* Several minutes passed. Jacob managed to get two more kings. *Click! Click! Click!* He jumped Pap's last few checkers.

"I won!" Jacob pushed his chair back and waved his arms. "I'm the checkers champion in this house; that's for certain sure!"

Pap winked at Rachel. He probably thought Jacob was a big braggart, too.

"Whew, that game about wore me out!" Jacob shuffled across the room and flopped onto the sofa. "Yeow!" He leaped up and waved his hand in the air. "There's a giant *nodel* [needle] stuck in my hand!"

"Well, what's the matter with you, boy? Take the nodel out," Pap said.

Jacob hopped from one foot to the other. "I can't! It'll hurt!"

"Oh, don't be such a boppli. The nodel's not that big." Rachel hurried to Jacob and grabbed his hand. "If you hold real still, this won't hurt a bit." She grabbed the end of the needle and yanked. "There you go! Your hand's as good as new!"

Jacob's eyebrows furrowed as he scowled at Rachel. "You put that nodel in the sofa, didn't you?"

She nodded slowly. "I was going to take it out, but I forgot."

He shook his finger in her face. "I'll get even with you for this!" Before Rachel could respond, Jacob darted out of the room.

Rachel sank to the edge of the sofa and groaned.

# Chapter 3

## Getting Even



Rachel sat up with a start. She looked at the clock on the nightstand by her bed and realized she'd almost overslept. She scrambled out of bed and raced to her closet. Then she took off her nightgown, grabbed a dress from its hanger, and slipped it on. She picked up her sneakers and rushed to the dresser.

In a hurry to finish getting dressed, she jerked the bottom drawer of her dresser all the way out. *Crash!* It fell on the floor, spilling all her underclothes. She flopped down beside them and fumbled around until she found a pair of black stockings. In her hurry, she put both stockings on the same foot.

"Always trouble somewhere," she grumbled as she pulled the stockings off and started over again. This time she carefully put only one stocking on each foot.

Rachel stood and smoothed the wrinkles from her dress. Then she raced out of her room and down the stairs.

Rachel's stomach rumbled when she stepped into the kitchen and smelled bacon frying. "Mmm. . .I'm *hungerich* [hungry]," she said, rubbing her stomach. "How soon until breakfast is ready?"

"As soon as you go to the chicken coop and get more eggs." Mom motioned to the carton of eggs on the counter. "I only have four. That's not enough eggs for the six people living in this house."

"What about Jacob?" Rachel asked. "Can't he go to the chicken coop and check for eggs?"

Mom shook her head. "Jacob's helping Henry and Pap milk the cows and do outdoor chores."

Rachel frowned. She guessed she had no other choice than to do as Mom asked. She grabbed her jacket from the wall peg near the door and headed outside.

When she stepped onto the porch, a blustery breeze whipped through the trees and under the porch eaves. She shivered. "*Brr. . .*" Autumn had crept in while summer faded away. Soon winter would be here, and then she'd really be cold.

Rachel hurried to the chicken coop, opened the door, and stepped inside.

*Crack! Crack! Crunch! Crunch!*

Rachel looked down. Six eggs were lined up just inside the door, and she'd stepped on four of them! She clenched her fists until her fingers ached. "Jacob Yoder, you'll be sorry for this!"

She grabbed the two eggs that hadn't been broken

and checked each of the hens' nests. No more eggs. With a groan, she scurried out the door and raced back to the house.

Mom smiled when Rachel entered the kitchen. "Did you get some eggs?"

Rachel held out the two eggs. "Just these. The others were broken."

Mom frowned. "How'd they get broken?"

Rachel's face heated. "I—uh—stepped on them." She debated about telling Mom that she thought Jacob had put the eggs there on purpose, but decided against it. Mom might accuse her of being a tattletale. Or she might think Rachel had made up the story just to get Jacob in trouble.

"Well," Mom said with a sigh, "I guess we'll have to make do with the eggs we have this morning. We'll just have one apiece instead of two."

Rachel sighed in relief. At least Mom hadn't yelled at her for stepping on the eggs.

"Wash your hands and set the table, Rachel," Mom said, motioning to the silverware drawer.

Rachel glanced at the clock and hurried to do as she was told.

She'd just finished setting the table when Pap, Henry, Jacob, and Grandpa entered the kitchen.

"Mmm. . .bacon and eggs." Grandpa smacked his lips. "I could smell 'em as soon as I stepped out of my room."



“There’s only one egg for each of us,” Mom said, “but I’ve made plenty of bacon and toast, so I don’t think anyone will go hungry.”

Jacob gave Rachel a smug smile as he sat at the table, but then he quickly looked away.

Rachel ground her teeth together. *I just know he put those eggs by the chicken coop door!* she fumed. She remembered him saying last night that he would get even with her.

Rachel ate her toast and drank her juice, but nothing tasted right. She decided she’d get even with Jacob for getting even with her.

After breakfast, Jacob, Henry, and Pap went outside to do more chores, and Grandpa headed to his greenhouse.

“I need to feed the boppli now,” Mom said, looking at Rachel and pushing her chair away from the table. “It may take me awhile, and I don’t want you and Jacob to be late for school, so I’d like you to make yours and Jacob’s lunches.” Without waiting for Rachel to reply, Mom hurried from the room.

Rachel stomped to the refrigerator. She didn’t mind making her own lunch, but she didn’t see why she had to make Jacob’s lunch, too. It wasn’t fair! After what he’d done in the chicken coop, he should make her lunch this morning!

Rachel grabbed the handle of the refrigerator and yanked the door open. As she reached inside, she spotted

a jar of peanut butter. Her hand stopped in midair when she spied a jar of brown mustard. *Hmm. . . I wonder. . .*

Rachel snatched the jar of mustard along with the jar of peanut butter and some of Mom's homemade strawberry jelly; then she shut the refrigerator door. She tromped back across the room and grabbed a loaf of bread from the pantry. Quickly, she made two sandwiches—one with peanut butter and jelly. But for the other sandwich, she mixed a hefty serving of brown mustard in the peanut butter. She put the normal peanut butter and jelly sandwich in her lunch pail and the other in Jacob's lunch pail.

"That should teach my bruder a good lesson," Rachel muttered. "He deserves it after making me step on those eggs!"

As Rachel walked along the path toward school, she glanced at Jacob and thought about the sandwich she'd made for his lunch. He'd sure be surprised when he bit into it at noon and discovered it was full of brown mustard with the peanut butter!

Swallowing back the feelings of guilt creeping into her heart, Rachel tried to concentrate on something else. She looked at the sun, which was trying to peek between the gray clouds. A flock of geese glided through the sky, and the trees lining the road swayed in the breeze. If Rachel didn't have so many troubling thoughts on her mind, she might have enjoyed this walk

to school. Maybe she'd made a mistake in making Jacob that mustard sandwich.

When they entered the school yard, several children were playing in a pile of leaves. Rachel was tempted to join them, but the crisp autumn air made her shiver, so she hurried inside.

All morning Rachel had a hard time concentrating on her studies. She kept thinking about the sandwich waiting for Jacob in his lunch pail.

*Maybe I could sneak it out of there before it's time for lunch, Rachel thought. But then when Jacob goes to eat his lunch, he'll wonder why he has no sandwich.*

Rachel nibbled the tip of her fingernail as she continued to mull things over. By the time Teacher Elizabeth dismissed the class to get their lunches, Rachel had bitten almost every one of her nails.

*I need to quit worrying about this, she finally decided. Jacob deserves that mustard sandwich. Jah, he surely does!*

"Say, Rachel, what happened to all of your fingernails? They look really short," Orlie said as he opened his lunch pail and sat on the back porch.

"They're in her stomach," Jacob said before Rachel could reply. "She's supposed to quit that bad habit of chewing on her nails, but she's still a little boppli, so she probably won't."

Rachel's face heated. "You're a mean bruder, Jacob," she mumbled. He really did deserve that mustard sandwich!

Jacob snickered and plopped down beside Orlie. “I’m not mean, but I’m sure hungerich!”

He opened his lunch pail and removed his sandwich. Then he unwrapped it and took a big bite. His eyes widened, his lips puckered, and he coughed as he spit the piece of sandwich out onto the porch. “Ugh! What’s wrong with my peanut butter and jelly sandwich?”

Rachel clamped her lips shut and looked away.

Jacob took a drink of milk from his thermos. Then he pushed Rachel’s arm. “You made my sandwich with mustard, didn’t you?”

She nodded slowly and turned to face him. “I did it to get even with you for setting those eggs in front of the chicken coop door so I’d step on them.”

Jacob scowled. “What you did to me was ten times worse than what I did to you! You should have tasted that sandwich, Rachel. It was *baremlieh* [terrible]!” He nudged Rachel’s arm again. “Mom’s not gonna like it when I tell her what you did.”

Rachel glared at him. “You do and I’ll tell her about the eggs.”

*Ping! Ping! Ping!* Rain started splattering on the roof and blew under the eaves of the porch. All the scholars who’d been sitting there grabbed their lunch pails and ran into the schoolhouse.

Rachel hopped up, but Jacob just sat there, staring at his sandwich.

“Aren’t you coming inside?” Rachel asked.

He glared up at her. "Give me your sandwich!"

"What?"

"I said, 'Give me your sandwich!'"

She shook her head. "Why should I?"

"Because you ruined mine!"

"You ruined all the eggs we should have had for breakfast."

"Did not." Jacob tossed the rest of his sandwich into his lunch pail. "You ruined the eggs when you stepped on them."

"I wouldn't have stepped on them if you hadn't put them on the floor by the door."

Jacob folded his arms and glared at her.

"Well, I don't know about you, but I'm not going to stay out here and get wet." Rachel hurried into the schoolhouse and shut the door.

As Jacob and Rachel walked home from school that afternoon, Rachel walked slower than she normally would have. The rain had stopped, but mud puddles filled the path by the road. She tried to dodge them, but one was so big she stepped right in, soaking her sneakers and splattering the hem of her dress. Her wet shoes made a squeaking sound as she continued to walk, and when she came to the next puddle, she jumped right over it.

Rachel usually liked coming home from school, but not today. Besides the extra chores she knew would be

waiting, she was afraid Jacob would tell Mom about the mustard she'd put on his sandwich. Then she'd be in big trouble with Mom. Well, if he did tell, then she'd tell on him, too!

As Rachel turned into their driveway, Jacob ran past her and made a beeline for the house. Rachel ran as fast as she could, but Jacob leaped onto the porch ahead of her. Rachel's face was hot, and she was out of breath when she entered the house.

"Please don't tell Mom about the sandwich," she whispered, tapping Jacob on the shoulder.

"What was that?"

"I said, 'Please don't tell Mom about the sandwich,'" she said a little louder.

"Huh?"

She poked his arm. "You should get your hearing tested!"

"You don't have to yell. I'm standing right beside you, little benschel."

"Don't call me that!"

Jacob snickered.

When they entered the kitchen, Rachel saw a note on the table from Mom. Mom had gone to Esther's to see how she was doing.

Rachel plopped down on the floor and removed her wet sneakers. After being out in the chilly, damp weather, Rachel thought the kitchen felt warm and cozy. The longer she sat there waiting for Mom to get home, the more nervous she became.

*I sure wish I hadn't made that mustard sandwich. I sure hope Jacob keeps quiet about it, she thought.*

When Mom stepped into the kitchen a short time later, Jacob rushed to her and said, "You know that sandwich Rachel made for me this morning?"

Mom nodded. "What about the sandwich?"

"She put brown mustard on it!" Jacob wrinkled his nose and made a horrible face. "It tasted baremlich, Mom!"

Mom turned to Rachel and frowned. "What in all the world possessed you to do something so mean?"

"I—I did it to get even with Jacob for putting eggs on the floor of the chicken coop this morning so I'd step on them," Rachel said.

Mom peered at Jacob over the top of her glasses. "Is that true, son?"

He nodded and hung his head.

"You two should be ashamed of yourselves. Don't you remember what the Bible says about doing unto others as you would like them to do to you? We're supposed to love everyone, even our enemies. We're not supposed to do mean things or try to get even with anyone." Mom pointed to Jacob. "For the next week it will be your job to clean the chicken coop and gather eggs every day." She pointed to Rachel. "It will be your job to make Jacob's lunch every day, and you have to fix him something he likes."

Jacob grunted. Rachel gasped. So this was what she got for trying to get even!