

Humble Pie

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER

SHILOH  kidz

An Imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc.

© 2014 by Wanda E. Brunstetter

Print ISBN 978-1-62836-389-0

eBook Editions:

Adobe Digital Edition (.epub) 978-1-63058-967-7

Kindle and MobiPocket Edition (.prc) 978-1-63058-968-4

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purposes, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without written permission of the publisher.

Churches and other noncommercial interests may reproduce portions of this book without the express written permission of Barbour Publishing, provided that the text does not exceed 500 words or 5 percent of the entire book, whichever is less, and that the text is not material quoted from another publisher. When reproducing text from this book, include the following credit line: "From *Double Trouble: Humble Pie*, published by Barbour Publishing, Inc. Used by permission."

All German Dutch words are from the Revised Pennsylvania Dutch Dictionary found in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, and/or events is purely coincidental.

Cover illustration by Colleen Madden/MB Artists

Published by Shiloh Kidz, an imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 719, Uhrichsville, Ohio 44683, www.shilohkidz.com

Our mission is to publish and distribute inspirational products offering exceptional value and biblical encouragement to the masses.



Printed in the United States of America.
04813 1014 DP



❁ DEDICATION ❁

To my Amish friends,
who know what true humility is about.



GLOSSARY



absatz—stop
ach—oh
appeditlich—delicious
bauchweh—stomachache
blumme—flowers
brieder—brothers
bruder—brother
daadihaus—grandparents' house
daed—dad
danki—thanks
dumm—dumb
eefeldich—silly
felse—rocks
fenschdere—windows
grank—sick
grossmudder—grandmother
guder mariye—good morning
hochmut—pride
hund—dog
hungerich—hungry

Is gut.—It's good.

jah—yes

katze—cats

kichlin—cookies

kinner—children

kumme—come

mamm—mom

naerfich—nervous

schlang—snake

schmaert—smart

schocklaad—chocolate

schuhbendel—shoelace

umgerennt—upset

wasser—water

wendich—windy

Wie geht's?—How are you?



CONTENTS

1. Mattie's Mistake	9
2. Broken Glass	18
3. Found with the Trash	27
4. Test Results	36
5. No Fun Jumping Rope	46
6. Mattie Hides Out	56
7. Last Day of School	61
8. The Flu Bug	69
9. Change of Plans	78
10. Trouble with Twinkles	88
11. Good News	98
12. Stella's Visit	108
13. A Bat to Catch	118
14. Broken Latch	129
15. Blueberry Pie	137
16. Birthday Surprise	148



❁ CHAPTER 1 ❁

Mattie's Mistake

“Hey, Mattie, come see what I found,” Mark called to his twin sister from across the yard. The sky had finally cleared after a couple of days of rain, and even though the grass was still wet, it felt good to finally be outside again. He was glad this was Saturday and he and Mattie had time to play.

“Can it wait?” Mattie hollered. “I’m playing fetch with Twinkles right now.”

Mark wrinkled his nose as he watched the little brown-and-white terrier zip back and forth across the yard in pursuit of a small red ball. He couldn’t believe Mattie would rather play fetch with her dog than see what he’d found a few feet from their barn. After all, it wasn’t every day that he discovered not one, but two unusual stones. “Mattie, *kumme*,” Mark said. “I want you to see these *felse* I found.”

“Maybe later I’ll come and look at the rocks,” she said, bending down to pick up the ball again.

Mark figured Mattie would probably forget all about

his rocks, since she wasn't a rock collector. *Where have these pretty stones been all this time, and why haven't I noticed them before?* he wondered. *I'll bet all the rain this past week made them rise to the surface.*

Mark squatted down for a closer look. One of the rocks was black with silver flecks, and the other was gray and shaped like a duck. At least Mark thought it looked like one. Part of the rock resembled a beak, and another section reminded Mark of a duck's tail feathers stretched way back.

Mark had been looking for special rocks since he was six years old, when he'd discovered a large flat stone that looked like a pancake. Now, Mark was almost ten, and he'd collected lots of rocks for the last four years. He kept them in cardboard boxes underneath his bed and would often take them out and count every single one. Then he'd write down the amount in a notebook, along with a description of any new ones he'd found. Sometimes when Mark found a special rock, he would draw a picture of it and put that in the notebook, too. Rock hunting was a fun hobby, and Mark had been surprised to learn that Mattie's friend Stella collected rocks, too. Stella showed Mark her collection once, and although she had some nice ones, Mark thought his rocks were the best. Too bad he couldn't get Mattie interested in looking for unusual stones.

It was odd how different rocks could be, but then he thought about how people were different, too,

because everyone was unique. Like a snowflake, no two were alike. Other than the fact that Mark was a boy and Mattie was a girl, most folks couldn't tell by just looking at them that they were nothing alike. They had the same red hair, blue eyes, and a few freckles. Their personalities and the things they enjoyed doing were not the same, however. Mark was full of adventure and liked to use big words. He collected rocks, went fishing whenever he could, and loved his two cats. Mattie enjoyed drawing pictures and planting flowers, and was good at playing baseball. She preferred dogs and didn't care much for cats. His twin sister also liked to make up silly songs that rhymed.

A gentle breeze came up, and Mark's thoughts turned to the weather again. Springtime was in full swing in Walnut Creek, Ohio. The warmer temperatures, not too hot and not too cold, made it hard for Mark to be inside when he wanted to play. When it rained, he either had to stay in his room or find something to do out in the barn. He was glad he could be outside today.

Mark glanced at the clean sheets hanging on the clothesline, drying in the wind. It would sure smell good when Mom put those sheets on his bed tonight, with the fresh scent of outside air. This kind of weather made Mark feel energetic—like there was a spring in his step.

A bird chirped from a tree in the yard, and Mark smiled. Except for the ones that wintered in Ohio, most of the other birds had returned a few weeks ago from

their winter homes south of Ohio. Spring was nesting time in nearby trees and in the bird boxes Grandpa Miller had made. One of the boxes hung on the post connected to the fence that ran along their backyard, and soon after it had been put up, a pair of pretty bluebirds had claimed it.

Earlier this spring, everyone in Mark and Mattie's family had watched anxiously each day as the bluebirds flew back and forth, bringing nesting material to the box until it was completed. After that, they saw the male more often, sitting on top of the birdhouse or in one of the trees in their yard. The female bird flew out sometimes, but never for long, since she was sitting on eggs. One day Mark had waited until she flew out. Then he climbed a ladder and took a peek. Sure enough, four powder-blue eggs lay in the nest.

"Sure wouldn't be throwing that ball in close proximity of our bluebird box, Mattie," Mark called.

Her forehead wrinkled. "*Proximity?* What's that?" she asked, moving closer to Mark. "I've never heard that word before."

"It means 'near,' or 'close,'" he explained.

"Why didn't you just say that then?"

Mark snickered. "Because I like to use big words."

"*Jah*, I know." Mattie grunted. "I think you do that just to show off."

"No, I don't." Mark motioned to the bird box. "If you throw the ball over that way, it could make the birds feel

naerfich, and they might abandon the nest.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll be careful,” Mattie said.

Mark scooped up the two rocks he’d found and held them out to Mattie. “I want you to see what I found. Aren’t these great?”

“They’re okay, I guess,” Mattie said, barely glancing at the rocks. She picked up the ball Twinkles had dropped at her feet and gave it a toss. The ball landed near the fence along the driveway.

“How was that for a good throw?” Mattie asked, smiling widely. “Bet you can’t pitch a ball that far.”

“You’re right, I probably can’t, but have you ever thought about teaching Twinkles something else besides retrieving a ball?”

“Like what?” Mattie wanted to know. “She already knows how to speak, sit up and beg, and walk on her hind feet.”

“How about jumping through a hoop?”

Mattie shook her head. “I’ve tried that already with my Hula-Hoop, but it’s a hard trick, and she won’t do it.”

Mark lifted his chin and grinned at Mattie. “I’m *schmaert*, and I bet I could teach her how to jump through a hoop.”

Mattie wrinkled her nose. “Are you saying that I’m *dumm*?”

“Didn’t say you were dumb. You’re just not as smart as me.”

Mattie bent down to pet Twinkles, because the little

terrier had dropped the ball at her feet again. “You’re full of *hochmut*, Mark. Besides, it’s not nice to brag.”

“I am not full of pride. I’m tellin’ the truth, so it’s okay to say that.” Mark shoved his newly found rocks into his pockets and hurried to the house.



Mattie watched as Mark went inside. “He’s full of *hochmut*, even if what he said was true,” she mumbled to Twinkles, although she knew the dog didn’t understand. Twinkles was a smart dog, though, and Mattie hoped she could teach her a lot more tricks. Maybe someday the dog would learn to jump through a hoop, but Mattie wanted to be the one who would teach her. Truth was, Mark didn’t even like dogs that much. He preferred taking care of his cats. So Mattie didn’t understand why he’d want to try teaching Twinkles a new trick. *Probably just to show how schmaert he is*, she thought.

Arf! Arf! Twinkles jumped up and pawed at Mattie’s leg.

“Get down, Twinkles! You’re getting my dress dirty,” Mattie scolded when the pooch kept jumping up.

Woof! Twinkles got down and nudged the ball with her nose.

“Okay, here ya go!” Mattie leaned over, grabbed the ball, and threw it as hard as she could. The ball hit the side of the barn and bounced off, sending it far across the yard.

The dog raced after the ball, grabbed it in her mouth, and took off like a flash. Around and around the yard she went, lickety-split, as if showing off a proud possession.

“Come back with that ball!” Mattie shouted, lunging for Twinkles to try and catch her.

Twinkles kept running and didn't look back.

“Twinkles, you can sure run fast,” Mattie panted. “Wish I had your energy to run like that.” Truth was, Mattie could run pretty fast, and that was one of the reasons she enjoyed playing baseball so much. She played ball as good as most of the boys at school, and they liked having her on their team. Mark had never been able to run as fast as Mattie, and he wasn't good at throwing or catching the ball, either. But then, some things Mark did Mattie couldn't do as well, like spelling and thinking of big words to say. So they both had things to brag about. Of course, Mom and Dad had told the twins many times that it was wrong to boast and that bragging was a form of pride. Mattie didn't mean to be prideful, but it made her feel good to be able to do some things better than Mark, especially since he could do so many things well.

Glancing at the golden daffodils blooming across the yard, Mattie forgot about Twinkles for the time being and knelt on the grass beside her own special garden spot. Flowers seemed to be blooming everywhere. All their bright colors made Mattie think of a pretty

rainbow. *Maybe I should pick a few and give them to Mom to put in a vase, she thought. They sure would look nice in the middle of our table at supper tonight.*

Mattie was about to pick one of the daffodils, when her brother Perry, who had recently turned six, came out of the barn, pulling his little red wagon. “Want to help me pick some flowers?” she called.

Perry shook his blond head. “I’m busy right now.”

“Doing what?” Mattie asked.

“I’m gonna look for felse and load ’em into my wagon.”

Mattie’s eyebrows lifted. “What are ya gonna do with a bunch of rocks?”

“I’m startin’ a rock collection, same as Mark.” Perry looked over at her and grinned. “If I fill the whole wagon with felse, I’ll have more than him.”

Mattie clicked her tongue, the way Mom often did when she was trying to make a point. “That’s *eefeldich*,” she said with a shake of her head.

“It ain’t silly.” Perry gestured to a pile of rocks near the fence. “Those are bigger felse than Mark has, too.”

“The word is *isn’t*, not *ain’t*, and it doesn’t matter whose rocks are the biggest. Besides, Mark doesn’t collect rocks for their size. He looks for pretty or unusual stones to add to his collection.”

“I don’t care,” Perry argued. “I’m lookin’ for the biggest ones I can find.” With that, he pulled his wagon over to the fence and began loading it with rocks.

“Be careful not to scare the bluebirds nesting in the

box,” Mattie warned. She was going to say more, but Twinkles showed up and dropped the ball by her knees. “Well, it’s about time. Where have you been anyways?”

Twinkles tipped her head to one side and wagged her little tail. *Yip! Yip!*

Mattie picked up the ball and stood. She waited a few minutes, and laughed when Twinkles whined and pawed at her leg. Taking aim, Mattie threw the ball as hard as she could.

Whoosh! Mattie watched in horror as it sailed across the yard and right through the window on the side of the barn with a *crash!*

“Oh, no!” Mattie slapped the palm of her hand against her forehead, staring at the broken glass that lay in the grass. “Why’d this have to happen to me? I made a big mistake when I threw that ball.”



CHAPTER 2



Broken Glass

“What happened? How come ya broke the barn window?” Perry asked, leaving his wagon and rushing over to Mattie.

She blinked several times, trying hard not to cry. “I . . . I didn’t mean to do it.” Looking at what was left of the window, when only minutes ago she’d been playing fetch with her dog, Mattie wished she could rewind time and change what had happened.

“What was that?” Mark called from the back door. “I was just gettin’ ready to come back outside, when I heard a loud crash.”

Mattie pointed to the barn. “I threw the ball for Twinkles, but it hit the window, and now it’s broke.” Tears pooled in her eyes and ran down her cheeks, in spite of her best efforts to stop them. “I wonder what Mom and Dad are gonna say when they find out what I did.”

Mark joined Mattie on the lawn and gave her a hug. “Don’t cry. You didn’t do it on purpose, and I’m sure our folks will understand.”

“Sure hope you’re right about that.” Mattie sighed, worried about how she was going to explain all of this. “By the way, where is Mom? Did she hear the crash, too?”

“I don’t think so,” Mark said. “She’s down in the basement, washing another load of clothes.”

Mattie sank to her knees and sobbed. “That’s just great. Mom will be out here soon to hang the clean clothes on the line, and then she’ll see the broken window herself.”

“Calm down, Mattie.” Mark gently patted her back. “You’re gettin’ all worked up, and it won’t change the fact that the window’s broke.”

She sniffed deeply and dried her eyes with the sleeve of her long brown dress. “Guess I shouldn’t have thrown the ball so hard. My aim was way off, too.”

“I’ll help you clean up the glass, and then you’d better go tell Mom what happened,” Mark said.

Mattie’s jaw clenched. “Do I have to tell her?”

“ ’Course you do. Like you said—she’ll probably see it when she comes outside, so you may as well tell her now, don’t ya think?”

Mattie slowly nodded. As much as she didn’t want to admit what had happened, she needed to tell Mom about the broken window. “*Danki* for saying you’d help me clean up the mess,” Mattie told Mark.

He smiled and rubbed Mattie’s shoulder. “You’re welcome. I’m going to the barn to get a cardboard box for the broken glass.”

Mattie looked at Perry, who stood staring down at the pieces of broken glass. “Don’t touch,” she warned. “It’s sharp, and you could get cut.”

“I ain’t gonna touch nothin’,” Perry said with a shake of his head.

“I’m not,” Mattie corrected.

“Me neither.” Perry squinted at Mattie. “Just said that.”

She squinted back at him. “I was reminding you to say ‘I’m not,’ instead of ‘ain’t.’”

“Oh, sorry,” he mumbled, putting his hand over his mouth.

Mattie couldn’t believe her little brother couldn’t seem to remember not to say *ain’t*. Maybe he would do better once he started school in the fall. Their teacher, Anna Ruth, would never allow any of her scholars to say *ain’t*.

Thinking about school caused Mattie to remember that next Friday was their last day of classes for the late spring and summer months. Mattie was excited about that, because she and her brothers Mark and Calvin would have more time to enjoy doing many fun things they couldn’t do when they were in school all day. They would still have chores, of course, but at least Mattie could do things she enjoyed, like working in her garden, picking flowers, riding her bike, and spending time with her best friend, Stella.

Of course, being able to enjoy the beginning of school vacation depended on what her punishment might be for breaking the barn window. She might have

to put fun stuff on hold for a while, especially if she had to do extra chores to pay for a new window.

Glancing up, Mattie saw a bluebird sitting in one of the big trees shading their backyard. It didn't stay there long and quickly flew over to the top of the bird box, when it started to chirp. Then another bluebird stuck its head out and flew to the roof of the barn. Mattie figured it was probably the female and had been sitting on her nest. She looked back and caught a glimpse of the other bluebird as it disappeared inside the birdhouse. "Sure wish I was one of those birds," she murmured to herself. "At least they don't have to worry about getting in trouble with their parents for throwing balls in the wrong direction."

"I'll put the broken glass in this," Mark said, returning from the barn with a small cardboard box. He squatted down on the grass and began picking up pieces of glass. "By the way, who were you talking to just now, Mattie?"

"No one but myself. I was watching the bluebirds go in and out of the birdhouse by the fence. Be careful, Mark," Mattie cautioned, turning her attention back to what he was doing. "You should wear gloves when you handle broken glass."

"I'll be fine." Mark picked up another piece and winced, dropping it suddenly. "Ouch! I cut myself!"

Mattie's eyes widened when she saw blood seeping out of Mark's thumb. "Is it bad? Should I go get Mom?"

“I think she oughta check it,” Mark replied, grasping his thumb.

“I’ll go get her!” Perry ran off toward the house before Mattie could make a move. A few minutes later, he was back, and Mom was with him, holding a towel.

“What happened?” Mom asked, looking at Mark with obvious concern. “Perry said you cut your finger.”

“It was my thumb.” Mark held up his hand.

“It doesn’t look serious and should be fine with some antiseptic and a bandage,” Mom said, after she’d examined Mark’s thumb and wrapped it in the towel. “How did this happen?”

“I cut it on some glass,” he explained, pointing to the remaining pieces lying near them, glistening in the sunlight.

Mom clicked her tongue. “How did broken glass get here on the lawn?”

“I was tossing the little red ball to Twinkles and it hit the barn window and broke the glass,” Mattie said, dropping her gaze to the ground. “I’m sorry, Mom. Do you think Dad will be upset with me? Guess my aim was off, but I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“I believe he will understand, Mattie,” Mom said, looking at where the glass in the opening of the window had been. “He has some spare glass in the barn, so he should be able to fix the window. However, you do need to be more careful when you’re throwing a ball outside. Keep it away from the barn and the house.”

Mattie bobbed her head. “I know, and I’ll try not to let it happen again.”

Mom smiled and gave Mattie a hug. Then she turned to Mark and said, “Let’s get you inside now so I can clean your thumb and put a bandage on the cut.”

“What about the broken glass?” he asked. “It still needs to be picked up and thrown away.”

“Just leave it for now. I’ll tend to it after I take care of your thumb.” Mom motioned to Perry, who stood nearby. “You’d better come inside with me. I don’t want you anywhere near that broken glass.”

As Mom, Mark, and Perry started for the house, Mattie breathed a sigh of relief. She was thankful she wasn’t in trouble for breaking the window and grateful that Mom had been so understanding about it. Hopefully Dad would be, too. Right now, though, Mattie needed to get Twinkles and take her into the house so she didn’t go near the glass and get her little paws cut.



“How is your thumb feeling, Son?” Mom asked as Mark sat at the table eating supper with his family.

“It’s okay,” Mark replied, reaching around the vase Mattie had filled with flowers, for a piece of Mom’s tasty meat loaf. Truth was, his thumb throbbed a bit, but he wouldn’t admit it—especially with his little brother, Perry, sitting beside him. Mark wanted Perry, as well as his older brothers, Calvin, Russell, and Ike, to think he

was brave. After all, he would be ten years old in four months, and that meant he was growing up. Mark was getting taller, too, and that made him happy. For the longest time, Mattie had been taller than him, and now they were nearly the same height.

“Next time you need to pick up broken glass, you should put on a pair of gloves,” Dad said, fingering his full blond beard that matched the color of his hair.

“Jah, I know,” Mark said with a nod. “I didn’t think about looking for my gloves, but I’ll be more careful from now on.” He glanced at Mattie and figured from her relaxed expression that she was glad Dad hadn’t gotten upset about her breaking the window. He, like Mom, had given Mattie a lecture about staying clear of windows when playing with a ball.

“Accidents can happen so quickly, and we all need to use caution when we’re doing things.” Dad looked across the table at seventeen-year-old Ike. “Remember the other day when you were cutting some pieces of wood in my shop?”

Ike nodded slowly and brushed a piece of auburn hair out of his eyes. “If I hadn’t been watching what I was doing, I could have cut my fingers on the saw.”

Mark clenched his teeth. His thumb felt bad enough from being cut by glass. He couldn’t imagine how much pain he would feel if he’d gotten cut by a saw.

“I think we should talk about something else.” Mom turned to Calvin. “How did things go for you and

Russell today, when you went to help Grandpa Miller chop and stack firewood from that tree he cut down?”

“Went real well.” Calvin, who was twelve, bobbed his blond head. “Grandpa paid us when we were done.”

“And Grandma fed us a big lunch, with chocolate cupcakes for dessert,” Russell put in. He was fifteen and worked in Dad’s shop with Ike part-time.

“Did ya bring some home for us to eat?” Perry asked with an eager expression. “I love cupcakes!”

“Nope. Sorry, but we ate them all,” Calvin said.

“How about a piece of strawberry pie?” Mom nodded toward two pies sitting on the counter. “That’s what I made for our dessert tonight, using some of the berries I froze last summer.”

Perry smacked his lips. “Yum!”

“Yum! Yum!” four-year-old Ada repeated; then she giggled and clapped her hands, like she always did when she got excited. Ada also had red hair, just like the twins’.

“What about the rest of you?” Mom took a drink of water. “Does strawberry pie sound good to you?”

Mark and Mattie both nodded, and so did Dad, Calvin, Russell, and Ike.

Mom smiled. “All right then, it’s strawberry pie for everyone.”

After the meal was finished, Mom dished up the mouth-watering pie and handed each person a tall wedge on their plate.

“This is *appetitlich*,” Mattie said after she’d taken her first bite. “I love sweet strawberries—in a pie, over ice cream, or just in a bowl by themselves.”

“Mattie’s right,” Dad agreed. “The pie is delicious.”

The rest of the family bobbed their heads in agreement—even little Ada, with strawberry juice rolling down her chin.

When they were done eating, Mark announced that he was going out to the barn to feed his cats.

“Can I go with ya, Mark?” Perry asked.

“Sure,” Mark replied. He thought it was nice that his little brother liked to be with him. In fact, Mark felt kind of proud about this. It meant that Perry looked up to him, the way Mark did with his oldest brother, Ike.

“Before you go,” Mom said, “I’m wondering if you’ve studied your spelling words for the test you’ll be having on Monday.”

Mark shook his head. “Don’t need to study ’cause I already know all the words.”

“You shouldn’t be bragging like that,” Mattie said, bumping Mark’s arm with her elbow.

“I’m not bragging. It’s a fact.” Mark jiggled his eyebrows up and down. “Just wait till Monday, and you’ll see what a good grade I get on the spelling test.”



❁ CHAPTER 3 ❁

Found with the Trash

“Should we ride our bicycle-built-for-two today?” Mark asked Mattie on Monday morning after they’d finished eating breakfast. “Sometimes I like it better than riding our own bikes to school ’cause we can visit easier if we’re closer together.”

“That’s fine with me,” Mattie said, scooping her backpack and lunch pail off the kitchen counter.

The twins hugged Mom good-bye and hurried out the back door. Their older brother Calvin was ahead of them on his bike, but Mark didn’t care. He and Mattie still had plenty of time to get to school, even if they made a quick stop along the way. Mark enjoyed scouting for things on their route that he could fix up and reuse.

“Hope I do well on the spelling test our teacher gives us today,” Mattie said as she climbed on their bike behind Mark. “I studied all the words this weekend, and some of them are hard.”

“Not for me.” Mark started pedaling, and Mattie

did the same. He laughed as they left their yard and the gentle wind blew in his face. It was a warm breeze, and the intense blue sky overhead was cloudless. If they didn't have to go to school today, it would be a great day for fishing. Mark looked forward to this summer, when he and Grandpa Miller could go fishing and relax at the pond near their home. He was also anxious to spend time with his best friend, John Schrock, and thought it would be fun if they went camping with their dads this year. Of course, his brothers would probably want to go along, because they liked camping as much as Mark did.

"How's your thumb doing?" Mattie asked.

"Not too bad. It throbbed at first but feels much better now."

They rode in silence for a while. Mark saw a lot of different rocks, and he would have liked to stop and take a closer look, but they could do that on their way home from school. Mark spotted a group of stones that really sparkled, and he paid close attention to where they were so he could find them later. Luckily, the stones were near a fence post at the edge of a field. Mark figured he'd soon need another box to keep his rock collection in. Maybe at supper tonight he'd ask Dad if there was any extra lumber in the barn and if he would have time to make a big, sturdy box for Mark's growing collection. One large wooden box would be better than several smaller boxes pushed under his bed. Maybe he could keep the bigger box in the barn or even in their buggy shed.

As they continued on, Mark realized he was pedaling to the rhythm of a tune Mattie was humming. He recognized the song but couldn't remember the name of it. Just as he was about to ask his sister what the melody was, Mattie stopped humming and shouted, "Hey, look over there!"

Mark's gaze went to the left. "Where? I don't see anything unusual over there."

"No, not that side. Look to your right." Mattie giggled. "I see a bunch of wildflowers blooming. Think they might be buttercups mixed in with all those blue violets. Maybe we can stop after school and pick some for Mom."

"We'll see about that," Mark replied. "If we have time, that is. I saw some sparkly rocks back there by the field, and I'd like to stop on our way home this afternoon and get 'em."

"How about this? We can park our bike between both places. While I pick flowers, you can gather the rocks. You can't take too many, though, 'cause there's not much room in our bicycle basket," Mattie said.

Now that Mark had something to look forward to, he started whistling to the melody Mattie had been humming. As they approached their neighbor's house, Mark quit pedaling and pulled back on the brake handle.

Mattie tapped Mark's shoulder. "Why are we stopping?"

"I see the Johnsons' garbage out by the road, and I

want to see if they're getting rid of anything I might want."

"Oh, no. Not this again." Mattie groaned. "Just because they gave you that old bike awhile back, doesn't mean you should pick up everything they've set by the side of the road for the trash collector."

"I don't want everything; only the good stuff I might be able to use." Mark got off the bike and left his sister holding on to it. He walked over to see what was in the Johnsons' trash. "Looks like there's a basketball hoop they don't want anymore," he called to Mattie.

She set the kickstand on their bike and came over to join him. "Jah, that's what it looks like, all right, but its old and rusty, and the netting's gone."

"I don't care. I'm gonna ask if I can take it."

Mattie rolled her eyes. "What do you want with a rusty old basketball hoop?"

"I'm gonna clean it up, and then I'll ask Dad or Ike to help me hang it on the side of the barn so I can shoot some baskets." Mark grinned. "If I practice real hard, bet I can make more baskets than any of my brothers."

"I'll bet ya can't, 'cause you don't even have a basketball to go with the hoop. Besides, I think any of our brothers, except maybe Perry, who's not so tall, can play basketball better than you."

Mark shrugged his shoulders. "We'll see about that." He picked up the hoop, stepped onto the Johnsons' back porch, and knocked on the door. Soon, he heard the steady rhythm of feet approaching the door. A few

seconds later, Mrs. Johnson answered Mark's knock.

"Well, if it isn't Mark Miller," she said, smiling.
"What can I do for you this morning?"

Mark held up the basketball hoop. "I noticed that you'd thrown this out with the trash, and I was wondering if I could have it." His darting gaze joined the object he held.

She nodded quickly. "That's not a problem at all. Just leave it on the porch and stop back for it on your way home from school. I hope you can clean it up and have a lot of fun playing basketball, like our kids used to do."

"Thank you very much." Whistling, Mark set the hoop down and headed back to where Mattie stood waiting near their bike.

"What did Mrs. Johnson say, and where's the old hoop?" Mattie asked, tapping her foot against the pavement.

"She said I could have it and that she'll hold it for me till we stop back here on our way home from school." Mark could hardly wait to clean up the old hoop. Better yet, he looked forward to practicing, so he could show everyone how good he was.



As Mattie sat at her school desk that morning, she thought about the basketball hoop Mark had discovered by the Johnsons' trash. She didn't understand why her brother wanted it so badly, because he didn't even have

a basketball. What good was a hoop without a ball? Maybe he planned to save his money and buy a ball, but that could take awhile, because neither of the twins had done anything to earn money for some time. They would make some money once their family's produce stand was set up at the end of their driveway near the road, but that wouldn't be until summer, which was more than a month away.

Maybe Mark will ask Grandpa or Dad if they have some work he can do to make money, Mattie thought. That's what I would do if I wanted to buy something new.

Their teacher, Anna Ruth, announced that it was time for the spelling test, bringing Mattie's thoughts to a halt.

Mattie looked over at Mark, whose desk was across from hers, and couldn't help but notice his big smile. Spelling, like most other subjects they learned in school, came easy to her twin. Even though he hadn't studied for the test, she figured he would do well because he was so smart.

I studied hard for this test, so I hope I'll do well, too, she thought.

"Does everyone have their paper and pencils ready?" Anna Ruth asked the class.

All heads bobbed up and down.

"All right then. Let's begin. The first word is *excited*." Their teacher paused. "Did everyone get that?"

Most of the children nodded, including Mattie, but

Mark raised his hand. “I don’t remember that word being on the list you gave us on Friday,” he said, after Anna Ruth called on him.

“Yes, it was,” their teacher replied.

Mark opened his mouth, as though he might say something more, but then he closed it and wrote the word on his paper.

Since Mark hadn’t studied the spelling words, Mattie figured he’d probably forgotten what some of them were. Since Mattie had studied the words for the test, she remembered how to spell this first one.

“Now for the second word,” Anna Ruth said, smiling at the scholars as she stood near her desk holding the list of words. “It’s *balloon*.”

Mark’s hand shot up again. “I’m sure that word wasn’t on the list you gave us last Friday,” he said, frowning.

“Yes, Mark, it was on the list, too.” Anna Ruth said.

Several others nodded in agreement, and so did Mattie. She remembered the word well, because it made her think of the red balloon Mom had bought for Ada the last time they’d gone shopping at one of the stores in Millersburg.

Mark scratched the side of his head and pursed his lips as he wrote the second word on his paper.

Mattie figured he was wishing now that he’d studied for the spelling test instead of thinking he knew the words already. She wondered if he might even fail

the test. *Maybe he would learn a lesson if he did*, she thought. *He's always telling me I ought to study more, so now maybe Mark will realize that he should always study for any test.*



Mark's palms grew sweaty, and his mouth felt dry as cardboard. The spelling words Anna Ruth gave them weren't the ones he thought they'd be given. He wondered if he had taken home the wrong list. Mark was sure he'd copied them down correctly after Anna Ruth wrote them on the blackboard Friday afternoon, but maybe the paper he took home had been the one from the previous week. Since their teacher gave them words to study each week from the list she wrote on the blackboard, it could have easily happened that he'd taken the wrong words home.

Guess that's what I get for not looking at the list right away, he thought. *If I don't know all the words Teacher gives us today, I'll probably fail this spelling test. I should have dated each of my word lists, and then this wouldn't have happened. If Mattie does well on the test, I bet she'll be the one bragging.*

Mark did the best he could with all the words Anna Ruth gave them and was glad he knew at least some of them. A few, like the word *balloon*, he wasn't too sure about. Did it have two *l*'s or one? Was there an *e* at the end of the word? Mark knew he wouldn't find out how

well he'd done until they got to school tomorrow, so he would just try not to think about it. All he wanted to concentrate on was school getting over for the day so he could stop at the Johnsons' and get that basketball hoop. Mark wasn't interested anymore in stopping for the sparkly rocks he'd seen; at least not today. He hoped Mattie had forgotten about the wildflowers she wanted to pick. Maybe tomorrow after school, they could stop for both.