

*Jumping to  
Conclusions*

# Dedication

To the students and teachers of the Walnut  
Valley School near Walnut Creek, Ohio.  
Getting to meet you was great!

# Glossary

*abastz*—stop  
*ach*—oh  
*an lauerer*—eavesdropper  
*appetitlich*—delicious  
*baremlich*—terrible  
*bensel*—silly child  
*blos*—bubble  
*boppli*—baby  
*bopplin*—babies  
*brieder*—brothers  
*bruder*—brother  
*bussli*—kitten  
*buwe*—boy  
*daed*—dad  
*danki*—thanks  
*dumm*—dumb  
*gaul*—horse  
*grank*—sick  
*grossdaadi*—grandfather  
*grossmudder*—grandmother  
*gut*—good  
*heiraat*—marriage  
*hund*—dog  
*iem*—bee  
*jah*—yes  
*kapp*—cap  
*katze*—cats

*Bass uff, as du net fallscht!*  
*Guder mariye.*  
*Ich kann sell net geh!*  
*Mir hen die zeit verbappelt.*  
*Raus mitt!*

*kinner*—children  
*kinskinner*—grandchildren  
*kumme*—come  
*lecherich*—ridiculous  
*maedel*—girl  
*mamm*—mom  
*missverschtand*—  
    misunderstanding  
*mun*—moon  
*naas*—nose  
*naerfich*—nervous  
*pescht*—pest  
*peschte*—pests  
*retschbeddi*—tattletale  
*schmaert*—smart  
*schnarixer*—snorer  
*schnuppich*—snoopy  
*schtann*—stars  
*schteche*—sting  
*schweschder*—sister  
*umgerennt*—upset  
*verbuddelt*—mixed-up  
*wasser*—water  
*windel*—diaper  
*wunderbaar*—wonderful  
*zoll*—inches

Take care you don't fall!  
Good morning.  
I cannot tolerate that!  
We talked away the time.  
Out with it!

*See dich, eich, wider!*  
*Was in der welt?*  
*Wie geht's?*

See you later!  
What in all the world?  
How are you?

# Chapter 1

## Good News



I'm going out to get the mail!" Rachel Yoder called to her mother as she raced out the back door.

"Oh no, you don't!" Rachel's brother Jacob shouted as he dashed out the door behind her. "Getting the mail is Buddy's job!"

Rachel screeched to a halt and whirled around to face Jacob. "Since when is it Buddy's job to get the mail?"

"Since I started training him to open the mailbox." Jacob grinned at Rachel, and the skin around his blue eyes crinkled. "Today I'm gonna teach him how to take the mail from the box and then bring it to the house and put it on the kitchen table."

Rachel snickered and waved her hand. "Like that'll ever happen. That big, hairy *bund* [dog] of yours isn't *schmaert* [smart] enough to get the mail."

"*Jah* [Yes], he is. Buddy's the smartest dog I've ever owned," Jacob insisted.

"That's because he's the *only* dog you've ever owned."

Rachel blinked her eyes several times. “Buddy’s nothing but trouble!”

“Is not.”

“Is too.”

“Is not.” Jacob pointed at Rachel. “You’re the one who’s trouble!”

Rachel frowned and shook her head. “I am not trouble!”

“Jah, you are.”

“Am not.”

“Are so.”

“Am not. Buddy’s the troublemaker, and he’s not schmaert enough to get the mail!”

“He is so schmaert enough, and I’m gonna prove it to you right now!” Jacob dashed across the yard and yanked open the door to Buddy’s dog run.

*Woof! Woof!* Buddy leaped off the roof of his doghouse, where he liked to sleep, and dashed out of the dog run. Then he raced to Rachel, put both paws on her chest, and—*slurp!*—licked her face.

“Yuck!” Rachel pushed Buddy down and swiped her hand across her face. “Stay away from me, you big, hairy beast! I don’t want any of your slimy kisses!” She wrinkled her nose. “Besides, you have bad breath!”

Jacob chuckled and slapped his knee. “He’s just letting you know how much he likes you. You should realize that by now.”

“Humph!” Rachel folded her arms and glared at

Jacob. “The only thing I realize is that Buddy’s a big *pescht* [pest], and I don’t enjoy his sloppy, stinky kisses!”

Jacob thumped Rachel’s back. “You’ll get used to them some day!” He clapped his hands and gave an ear-piercing whistle. “Come on, Buddy. Let’s go get the mail!”

Buddy tore off down the driveway, barking all the way, and sending gravel flying in several directions.

Jacob sprinted behind the dog, yelling, “Go, Buddy! Go!”

Rachel followed. She was curious about how Buddy could get the mail.

When they reached the mailbox by the side of the road, Jacob grabbed the handle and yanked it open with a thunk! He waited a few seconds; then he closed it again. He did this several times. After the fifth time, he pointed to the mailbox handle and said, “Open it, Buddy. Open the mailbox!”

*Woof! Woof!* Buddy wagged his tail and stared at the mailbox as if to say, *What are you talking about?*

Jacob opened and closed the mailbox door several more times; then he said, “Open it, Buddy! Open the mailbox now!”

Much to Rachel’s surprise, Buddy grabbed the handle on the mailbox in his teeth, pulled, and—*thunk!*—the door popped open.

*Woof! Woof!* Buddy wagged his tail and stared at the mailbox as if to say, *Look what I did!*

Rachel rushed forward to grab the stack of letters. Jacob stepped in front of her. “How’s Buddy gonna learn to get the mail if you do it for him?”

Rachel rolled her eyes. “Buddy might be schmaert enough to open the mailbox, but he’s not schmaert enough to take the mail out.”

“Sure he is. Just stand back and watch.”

“Whatever.” Rachel stepped aside, even though she was sure Buddy would not take the mail out of the box.

Jacob pointed to the mail inside the box. “Get it, Buddy! Get the mail out of the box!”

Buddy tilted his head and whined.

Rachel shook her head. “He doesn’t have a clue what you’re talking about.”

“Okay, then, I’ll try it another way.” Jacob reached into the mailbox, picked up one of the letters, opened Buddy’s mouth, and put the letter between the dog’s teeth. “You’re a good hund!” He patted Buddy’s head.

Buddy whimpered and nuzzled Jacob’s hand with his big nose.

Rachel reached into the mailbox and snatched the rest of the mail. “I knew he wasn’t schmaert enough to get the mail by himself.”

“Hey!” Jacob frowned. “How am I supposed to train Buddy to get the mail if you take it first?”

“I don’t care if Buddy learns how to get the mail. I just want to take the mail to the house, and—” Rachel stared at the letter in her hand. It was addressed to her.



It was from her cousin Mary!

Mary was not only her cousin but had also been her best friend. Rachel had been very sad when Mary's family moved to Indiana.

"Yippee! I've got a letter from Mary! I've got a letter from Mary!" Rachel shrieked as she waved the letter in the air. "I'm going to the house to read Mary's letter. You and your schmaert dog can bring the rest of the mail whenever you're ready."

Rachel started to turn around, but Buddy dropped the letter in his mouth, leaped into the air, and snatched Mary's letter out of her hand!

"Give that back, you big, hairy mutt!" Rachel lunged for the letter.

*Woof! Woof!* Buddy took off on a run.

Rachel raced after him.

The dog zipped up the driveway then turned and zipped back again. Rachel ran behind him, waving her hands and shouting, "*Abastz* [Stop]! You're a bad dog!"

Jacob doubled over with laughter as Rachel chased the dog. She'd just started down the driveway again when she spotted their friend Orlie Troyer walking up the driveway.

"Catch that *dumm* [dumb] hund!" she shouted to Orlie. "Don't let him get away!"

Orlie cupped his hands around his mouth. "What?" he called.

"I said—"

*Woomph!* Buddy plowed into Orlie, knocking him to the ground. The letter flew out of Buddy's mouth.

*Yip! Yip!* Buddy tore across the field on the side of their property, yapping all the way.

"Bad dog!" Rachel shouted.

Jacob dashed after Buddy, waving his hands. "Come back here, Buddy! Come back here right now!"

Rachel ran down the driveway and dropped to her knees beside Orlie. "Are you all right? Buddy didn't hurt you, I hope."

Orlie shook his head. "Just knocked the wind out of me, that's all." He clambered to his feet and brushed the dirt from his trousers. "I think Buddy was excited to see me."

"Maybe so, but I think the real reason Buddy plowed into you was because he stole a letter from me and was trying to get away." Rachel snatched the letter Buddy had dropped. "It's from my cousin Mary in Indiana."

"How'd the hund get your letter?" Orlie asked.

Rachel groaned. "Jacob was trying to teach Buddy to get the mail."

"Guess he needs to teach him to come when he's called." Orlie chuckled as he pointed across the field. "Jacob's going to be tired by the time he catches Buddy."

"You mean *if* he catches the hairy hund." Rachel lifted Mary's letter. "I'm going to the house to read my mail. Do you want to come along?"

Orlie grinned. "Jah, sure. I'd like to hear what Mary

has to say, too.”

Rachel wasn't sure she wanted Orlie to read Mary's letter, but she didn't want to be rude, so she smiled and said, “Let's go sit down, and I'll read Mary's letter out loud.”

When they were settled on the back porch steps, Rachel tore open the letter and began to read.

*Dear Rachel*

*I have some very good news. I'll be coming back to Pennsylvania in a few weeks for—*

*Woof! Woof! Woof!* Buddy darted onto the porch, swiped his sloppy wet tongue across Rachel's face, and then leaped into Orlie's lap.

Jacob, red-faced and sweating, dropped onto the step below them. “That crazy mutt can sure run fast. I'm all worn out!”

Rachel grunted. “You should get rid of him. He's nothing but trouble.”

“No way! Buddy's a nice hund.” Jacob rubbed Buddy's ears.

Orlie patted the top of Buddy's head. “I'd never have given him to you if it hadn't been for my *mamm's* [mom's] allergies. I'm glad you were able to take Buddy.”

Jacob nodded. “I'm glad Buddy came to live with us. He's been a good friend to me.”

Orlie's head bobbed up and down. “He was a good

friend to me, too, and he's also a good watchdog.”

“You two can sit here all day talking about that dumm hund if you like, but I'm going inside to tell Mom about Mary's letter.” Rachel jumped up and raced into the house, banging the screen door behind her. “I got a letter from Mary!” she hollered as she dashed into the kitchen.

Mom was sitting at the table drinking a cup of tea. She looked up and smiled. “That's nice. What'd she say?”

“She's coming to Pennsylvania!”

“When?”

“I don't know. Thanks to Jacob's dumm hund, I didn't get a chance to finish reading Mary's letter.” Rachel dropped into a chair and placed the letter on the table. “I'll finish reading it now though. Would you like me to read it out loud?”

“Jah, why don't you?” Mom's metal-framed glasses slipped to the end of her nose, and she pushed them back in place.

Rachel touched the nosepiece of her own plastic-framed glasses. Then she began to read.

*Dear Rachel,*

*I have some very good news. I'll be coming back to Pennsylvania in a few weeks for a visit. I'll be with our neighbor, Carolyn, who's coming there to see her daughter who's expecting a baby. Mama will call soon to let you know when I'll arrive.*

*Love, Mary.*

Rachel looked at Mom and smiled. “Isn’t that the best news?”

Mom patted Rachel’s arm. “It certainly is. I know how much you’ve missed Mary. It will be nice for you girls to be together again.”

Rachel wiggled in her chair. “I can hardly wait to see Mary again!”

Mom smiled and stood up. “I’d better check on your baby sister. She should be waking from her nap soon. Then she’ll need to be diapered and fed.”

Mom hurried from the room, and Rachel picked up Mary’s letter to read it again.

*Clip-clop. Clip-clop.*

Pap’s new horse pulled their gray, box-shaped buggy down the road the following morning. Rachel and her family were headed to church. It would be held at Howard and Anna Miller’s house today.

Rachel enjoyed going to church every other Sunday with her family and friends, and this morning she was even more eager to attend. She wanted to tell her friend Audra Burkholder about her letter from Mary.

When they approached the Millers’ barn, Rachel spotted Audra and Orlie across the yard by the swing. As soon as Pap stopped the horse, she hopped out of the buggy and sprinted across the yard.

“*Wie geht’s* [How are you]?” Rachel asked Audra.

“Okay,” Audra mumbled; then she quickly looked away.

Rachel looked at Orlie and smiled, but he hurried away. Rachel figured he was going to join some of the boys.

“Guess what?” Rachel asked, nudging Audra’s arm. Audra shrugged.

“I got a letter from—”

“Church is about to begin. We need to get inside.” Audra hurried toward the buggy shed, where several wooden benches had been set up for the members of their Amish community to sit on during the three-hour church service.

*I guess I’ll have to wait until church is over to tell Audra about Mary’s letter,* Rachel thought. She followed behind the others to the shed, her shoulders slumped and her head dropped in disappointment.

*Whoomp!* Rachel bumped into Sadie Stoltzfus, a widow. “Oops! I’m sorry,” she said.

Sadie turned and scowled at Rachel. “You should watch where you’re going. Can’t you see that there are people in front of you?” Her false teeth clacked when she spoke.

“I—I was looking at the ground and didn’t see you.”

Sadie blinked her pale green eyes and shook her finger. “Well, you should pay more attention. Hasn’t your mamm ever told you to hold your head up when you walk?”

Rachel nodded.

“Then you should listen.” Sadie’s teeth clacked a little louder, and she shook her finger again. “I’m glad

all my *kinskinner* [grandchildren] are grown. I have no patience with little *kinner* [children] anymore.”

Rachel thought it was obvious that Sadie didn't care much for children. “I'm sorry I bumped into you,” she said. Then she hurried into the building.

When Rachel looked at the women's side of the room, she spotted Audra sitting between Phoebe Byler and Karen Fisher. Rachel was disappointed again. She usually sat by Audra. Maybe they could sit together during the noon meal.

Rachel slipped onto a bench beside Rebekah Mast.

As the group began to sing the first song, Rachel looked at Audra and smiled.

Audra stared straight ahead.

Every few minutes Rachel looked at Audra, but Audra never glanced Rachel's way.

*Maybe Audra's afraid she'll get in trouble for fooling around in church,* Rachel thought. *That's probably why she won't look at me.*

Rachel heard someone clear her throat loudly. She glanced over her shoulder. Sadie Stoltzfus was frowning at Rachel. Rachel turned back around. She was glad she wasn't one of Sadie's kinskinner.

Harvey Fisher, one of the ministers, began giving his sermon, so Rachel sat up straight and listened.

“He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity,” Harvey quoted from Proverbs 21:23.

Rachel was good at spelling, and she knew that another word for *calamity* was *trouble*. *I have lots of trouble*, she thought. *Trouble seems to find me wherever I go.*

She looked at Audra, but Audra still kept her gaze straight ahead. Rachel frowned. Was trouble brewing with Audra?

When church was over and the noon meal had been served, Rachel looked for Audra. She stopped in her tracks when she saw Audra sitting at a table between Phoebe and Karen.

*Is Audra trying to avoid me? Is she mad at me for something?* Rachel wondered. *Are those her new best friends?*

Rachel felt like crying. She waited until Audra had finished her lunch; then she stepped up to her and said, "Should we go out to the Millers' barn and play?"

Audra shook her head. "I'm not in the mood."

"Then let's go swing."

"Nope." Audra hurried toward the creek.

Rachel looked after her in dismay. What would she do if Audra didn't want to be her friend anymore? First, she'd lost Mary. Had she lost Audra now, too? Who would she play with? Who would she tell her secrets to? Who would be that special friend to laugh with her?

Tears trickled down Rachel's face. She quickly wiped them away. It wouldn't do for Orlie or anyone to see her cry.



“Well, if she doesn’t want to be my friend, that’s okay!” she said out loud. As soon as she spoke, she remembered the scripture from the morning. *“He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.”*

*Maybe I shouldn’t say such things*, Rachel thought. In fact, a little something inside Rachel nudged her to go after Audra. She’d try to talk to Audra one more time before she gave up on their friendship.

At the creek, she found Audra sitting on a rock with her arms folded, staring at the water.

Rachel knelt in the grass beside Audra and touched her arm. “I wanted to tell you that—”

*Ribbet! Ribbet!* A little tree frog jumped out of the grass and landed on Audra’s shoulder.

“Eeeek!” Audra leaped to her feet and hopped up and down. “Get the frog, Rachel! Get the frog off me!”

Rachel plucked the frog from Audra’s shoulder and dropped it in the water.

Tears rolled down Audra’s flushed cheeks.

Rachel patted her back. “It’s okay. Don’t cry. The frog’s gone now.”

Audra pulled away. “I—I’m fine.” *Sniff! Sniff!*

“It was just a little tree frog,” Rachel said. “It wouldn’t hurt you. There’s no reason for you to cry.”

Audra swiped at the tears running down her cheeks. “I’m not just crying because of the frog.”

“Why are you crying?”

“I’m not your best friend anymore.”

Rachel tilted her head. “Who says you’re not my best friend?”

“Orlie.”

Rachel frowned. “Why would Orlie say that?”

“He said you got a letter from your cousin.” Audra sniffed a couple more times. “Orlie said Mary’s moving back to Pennsylvania, and that she’s your best friend.”

Rachel could hardly believe Orlie had said those things. Was he trying to cause trouble? Was he mad because she’d called Buddy a dumm hund?

“That’s not true,” Rachel said. “Mary isn’t moving back here. She’s only coming for a visit. Orlie didn’t even hear all of Mary’s letter.”

“Really?”

Rachel nodded. “Mary and I used to be best friends, but you’re my best friend now.” She hugged Audra. “I’m excited for you to meet Mary, and for her to meet you, too.”

Audra smiled. “I guess Orlie must have jumped to conclusions.”

“What’s that mean?” Rachel asked.

“‘Jumping to conclusions’ is an expression I heard from my mamm,” Audra said. “When someone jumps to conclusions, it means they’ve made a decision without getting all the facts.”

Rachel hugged Audra again. “I think Orlie jumped to conclusions as high as that frog jumped.”

The girls laughed. Rachel felt so good to be friends with Audra. She didn't dare tell Audra about jumping to her own conclusions.

"As soon as Mary gets here, I'll invite you over to play," Rachel promised.

Audra smiled. "*Danki* [Thanks], Rachel. I'll look forward to that."

## Chapter 2

### Out of Patience



Rachel hurried to finish the breakfast dishes so she could help Grandpa in the greenhouse. She enjoyed spending time with Grandpa. She also liked being around the plants and flowers.

“Would you hold your baby sister while I go to the garden and pull weeds?” Mom asked Rachel.

“How long do I have to hold her?”

“Until she burps.”

Rachel’s excitement about going to the greenhouse melted like a brick of ice in the hot sun. “*Ach* [Oh] Mom, you know how long Hannah takes to burp.” She motioned to the window. “I promised Grandpa I’d help him in the greenhouse this morning.”

Mom draped a piece of cloth over Rachel’s shoulder and handed her the baby. “Just keep patting her back. I’m sure she’ll burp soon; then you can put her down for a nap and go to the greenhouse.”

“All right, Mom.” Rachel headed for the living

room, patting Hannah's back as she went.

Hannah nuzzled Rachel's neck with her soft, warm nose, but she didn't burp.

Rachel continued to pat Hannah's back. "Hurry up, Hannah. I need to get out to the greenhouse."

"Goo-goo. Gaa-gaa." Hannah drooled on Rachel's neck.

"Yuck!" Rachel used the cloth Mom had draped over her shoulder to wipe the drool away. "You're a cute *boppli* [baby], but you can sure cause trouble sometimes."

"Gaa-gaa," was Hannah's response.

Rachel sat on the sofa and placed Hannah facedown across her knees.

*Squeak! Squeak!* Rachel reached behind her to find one of Hannah's squeaky toys. She tossed it across the room.

Hannah whimpered.

Rachel patted Hannah's back.

Hannah started to howl.

Rachel sat Hannah up and rubbed her back.

Hannah stopped crying, but still no burp.

"Just when I thought I could have a little time to help Grandpa, I'm stuck with a baby who won't burp," Rachel grumbled.

*Is this going to take all day?* Rachel thought about turning Hannah upside down to see if that would make her burp, but she'd be in big trouble if Mom caught her.

She placed Hannah on her knee and bounced her up and down.

Hannah giggled, but still no burp. She didn't look sleepy, either.

*Hic! Hic! Hic!*

"Oh great," Rachel moaned. "Now you've got the hiccups." She placed Hannah in her cradle, hurried into the kitchen, and filled a baby bottle with water.

When Rachel returned to the living room, Hannah was crying between hiccups.

Rachel picked up the baby, sat on the sofa, and gave Hannah some water.

Hannah spit the water out and hiccuped again.

Rachel gritted her teeth.

*Waaa! Waaa!* Hannah's face turned bright red.

Rachel put the baby over her shoulder and patted her back.

*Blurp!* Hannah spit up on Rachel's shoulder.

"Ewww!" Rachel wrinkled her nose. She placed Hannah in her cradle, scampered to her room, and changed into a clean dress.

When Rachel returned to the living room, Hannah was crying again. She picked up Hannah and took a seat in the rocking chair. Mom often put the baby to sleep by humming and rocking her. Rachel hoped it would work for her, too.

*Hmm. . .hmm. . .hmm. . .* Rachel hummed while she rocked back and forth.

Hannah continued to fuss and squirm.

"Please go to sleep," Rachel begged. "You should be

sleepy by now, Hannah.”

*Waaa! Waaa!* Hannah’s face turned even redder, and she waved her chubby little hands in the air.

Just then, Rachel felt something damp on her knee. “That’s just great,” she said with a moan. “Your diaper must be full, and it leaked on my dress.”

Rachel placed Hannah in the cradle and quickly changed the wet diaper. It was not her favorite thing to do!

Hannah finally quit crying and fell asleep. Rachel sighed with relief. Then she hurried upstairs to change her dress so she could go to the greenhouse.

As Rachel skipped across the grass toward Grandpa’s greenhouse, she felt like she was floating on a cloud. She still couldn’t believe Grandpa had put her name under his on the wooden sign outside the greenhouse. She felt good to know that he wanted her help and almost thought of her as his partner.

Rachel shivered as a cool wind blew several leaves across the yard. Summer was nearly over, and soon school would start again. Usually Rachel looked forward to this time of year, but now things were different. Going back to school would mean less free time to help Grandpa in the greenhouse. Rachel would also have homework every evening.

*I won’t think about that now,* Rachel decided. *I’ll just enjoy every day I’m able to work with Grandpa.*

A musty, damp odor met Rachel when she opened the door to the greenhouse. She figured Grandpa must have recently watered the plants.

Rachel looked around but didn't see Grandpa. She decided he was in his office or at the back of the greenhouse where he kept supplies. Sure enough, she found Grandpa pruning a large green plant with pointed leaves.

"I'm sorry for being late, Grandpa." Rachel frowned as she thought about what she'd been through in the last hour. "Mom asked me to burp the boppli, and I had all kinds of trouble."

"That's all right," Grandpa said without looking up.

"What kind of plant are you working on?" Rachel asked.

"This is an ivy plant. It pulls toxins from the air, which helps us breathe better." Grandpa motioned to another plant across the room. "That's a spider plant. It does the same thing."

"I didn't realize plants could clean the air," Rachel said. "Guess I have a lot to learn about greenhouse things."

"You'll learn more as time goes on. It's taken me a whole lifetime to learn what I know." Grandpa's bushy gray eyebrows drew together when he looked at Rachel. "Why are you dressed like that?"

"Like what?"

He motioned to her dress. "It's on backwards."

Rachel touched the neck of her dress and grimaced.



“I had to change my dress because Hannah wet on me. I guess I wasn’t paying attention. I’d better run back to the house and change it around before someone comes into the greenhouse and sees me wearing my dress backwards.”

Grandpa chuckled. “We sure couldn’t have that, could we? If someone saw you wearing your dress backwards they might think I hired a *verhuddelt* [mixed-up] girl to work in my greenhouse.”

Rachel blushed. “Do you really think I’m *verhuddelt*?”

Grandpa hugged her. “Of course not. I just think you get in too big of a hurry sometimes instead of being patient.”

Rachel nodded. “I get frustrated when I have to wait for things.”

“One of my favorite Bible verses is Psalm 40:1: ‘I waited patiently for the Lord.’ You should think about that whenever you feel impatient.” Grandpa squeezed Rachel’s shoulder. “Now run into the house and turn your dress around; then hurry back here so we can play with some plants.”

“I’ll be back as quick as I can.” She hugged Grandpa and scurried out the door.

When Rachel entered the house, she was relieved to see that Hannah was still asleep, and Mom was taking a nap on the sofa. She didn’t want Mom to see her dress.

Rachel scrambled up the steps. “The hurrier I

go, the behinder I get,” she mumbled. It was one of Grandpa’s favorite sayings.

She zipped into her room, slipped off her dress, and put it back on the right way. Then she scurried out of the room, dashed down the stairs, and raced out the back door.

She’d just stepped off the porch when she spotted her English friend Sherry coming up the driveway. Sherry had her fluffy little dog, Bundles, on a leash.

“Hi, Rachel.” Sherry waved. “I came over to see if you could play.”

“I can’t today. I’m supposed to help my grandpa in his greenhouse,” Rachel said as she hurried to meet Sherry.

“Oh, that’s right.” Sherry pointed to the greenhouse. “I still haven’t seen it inside. Can I look at it now?”

“I’d be happy to show you around.” Rachel pointed at the dog. “Bundles will have to stay outside, though. Grandpa doesn’t allow animals in the greenhouse. Whenever they’ve gotten in by mistake, there’s been trouble.”

“Okay.” Sherry tied Bundles’s leash to a fence post.

Bundles plopped on the ground and closed her eyes.

*At least she’s not the kind of dog who barks a lot, jumps up, and licks you,* Rachel thought. Sherry’s sweet little dog was nothing like Jacob’s troublesome mutt.

Sherry pointed to the sign above the greenhouse door. “I didn’t know you owned this place, too.”

Rachel shook her head. “Grandpa’s the legal owner. I help him here whenever I can, so he included my name on the sign.”

“Maybe you’ll own it someday—after your grandpa’s too old to work anymore.”

“I hope that won’t be for a long time.” Rachel opened the door. She didn’t see any sign of Grandpa and figured he was probably in the back room repotting or pruning plants.

“This place is great! There are so many pretty plants and flowers, and it smells good,” Sherry said. “My mom’s birthday’s in a few weeks. Maybe I’ll buy a plant for her.”

Rachel nodded. “I’m sure she’d like that.”

*Zzzzz. . . zzzzz. . .*

Sherry tipped her head. “What’s that weird noise?”

Rachel listened to the low rumble coming from the back room. “I think it’s my grandpa snoring. He must have fallen asleep. He’s quite a *schnarixer* [snorer].”

“What’s a schnarixer?” Sherry asked.

“It means ‘snorer,’” Rachel explained.

Sherry snickered. “My dad’s a schnarixer, too.”

Rachel chuckled. “My brother’s dog sometimes snores. When he does, he sounds like a freight train.”

*Woof! Woof!*

Rachel glanced out the window. “It looks like something’s upset your dog; she’s barking and tugging on her leash.”

Sherry flipped her blond ponytail. “Guess I’d better get out there and see what’s riled Bundles.”

Rachel followed Sherry out the door. She saw Snowball, one of Cuddles’s kittens, prancing around with her tail lifted, just out of Bundles’s reach.

“Come here, you silly *bussli* [kitten].” Rachel was about to pick Snowball up when the kitten leaped into the air and landed on Bundles’s head.

*Woof! Woof!* Bundles shook her head, tossing Snowball into a clump of bushes.

*Meow!*

Rachel gasped. “Snowball! Oh, you poor little thing. Are you hurt?”

She couldn’t see the kitten. She only heard a pitiful *Meow!* coming from inside the bushes.

“She probably won’t come out as long as your dog’s here,” Rachel told Sherry.

Sherry nodded. “I’d better head for home.”

“What about the plant for your mother?”

“I’ll come back another day and pick one out.”

Sherry scooped up her dog. “I’m sorry for all the trouble, Rachel.”

“It’s okay. Snowball shouldn’t have been teasing Bundles.” Rachel glanced at the bushes. “I wish she’d come out, though.”

“I’m sure she will once we’re gone.” Sherry squeezed Rachel’s arm. “I’ll come over to get the plant soon, and I’ll leave Bundles at home.”

As Sherry hurried away, Rachel leaned into the bushes and called, “Here Snowball. It’s safe to come out now.”

No response. Not even a meow.

Rachel pulled the bushes apart and spotted a fluffy white tail. “Come here, you silly bussli.”

Snowball swished her tail and went deeper into the bushes.

Rachel stuck her hand inside the bush. She felt around until she touched a soft furry paw.

“Yeow!” Snowball scratched Rachel’s hand with her sharp little claws and flew out of the bushes.

Rachel turned to chase after the kitten, but her sleeve caught on the bush. *Rip!* A hunk of material tore loose.

“Trouble, trouble, trouble!” Back to the house Rachel stomped, grumbling and mumbling all the way.

She zipped up the stairs, raced into her room, and flopped onto the bed. This had not been a good morning! Now she really was out of patience!

## Chapter 3

### Eavesdropping



When Rachel returned to the greenhouse, she was surprised to see Grandpa standing on his head in one corner of the greenhouse.

“*Was in der welt* [What in all the world] are you doing?” she asked, bending down to see Grandpa’s face.

“My brain felt foggy,” Grandpa said. “I’m letting the blood run to my head so I can think better.”

Rachel stared at Grandpa and slowly shook her head. She could hardly believe a man his age was strong enough to stand on his head.

“I’ve been doing this since I was a *burwe* [boy],” Grandpa said. “I could stand on my head longer than any of my *brieder* [brothers].” He lowered his feet to the floor and slowly stood.

Rachel wondered how many other things Grandpa could do that she didn’t know about.

“You sure took a long time turning your dress around,” Grandpa said. He studied Rachel. “Say, that’s

not the same dress you were wearing earlier. Your backwards dress was blue, and this one's green."

"This is the second time I've changed my dress," Rachel said. "Well, really the third time, since the baby wet on my other dress. Oh, and I had another dress before that—until Hannah spit up on it."

Grandpa frowned. "I don't remember you going up to the house more than once."

Rachel told him that her friend Sherry had come over. "I showed her the greenhouse. And we heard you snore," she added.

Grandpa puckered his lips and tugged his long beard. "Was I really snoring?"

"Jah."

"Guess I must have fallen asleep at my desk." Grandpa chuckled. "Your grandma never got used to my snoring. She told our kinner, 'When he snores, he keeps me awake.'"

A look of sadness spread over Grandpa's face, but he quickly covered it with a smile.

Rachel knew Grandpa must still miss Grandma, who had gone to heaven several years earlier. "Since my room's upstairs and yours is downstairs, your snoring never keeps me awake," Rachel said, hoping to change the subject. "I sure can't say that about baby Hannah. She keeps me awake when she cries at night."

Grandpa nodded. "I know what you mean. I finally bought myself a pair of earplugs."

“Maybe I should get some, too.” Rachel frowned. “But if I had earplugs, I might not hear my alarm clock ring when school starts next month.”

Grandpa tweaked the end of Rachel’s nose. “That wouldn’t be good, now, would it?”

She shook her head. “Guess I’ll have to put up with Hannah’s crying until she grows out of it.”

“At the rate the boppli’s growing, she’ll soon sleep all night.”

Grandpa pointed to some potted plants on a nearby shelf. “I watered a few of those plants earlier, but I have some office work to do, so why don’t you water the plants over there?” He pointed to some plants on the other side of the room.

“Okay.” Rachel hurried to the sink, filled the watering can, and headed to a tray of purple and white petunias. She’d just started back across the room for more water when the greenhouse door swung open.

“*Guder mariye* [Good morning],” their neighbor Anna Miller said when she stepped inside.

“Guder mariye,” Rachel said with a smile.

“Is your grandpa here?” Anna asked.

Rachel motioned to the small room Grandpa used as his office. “He’s at his desk, but you can go in if you like.”

“Danki.” Anna headed for the office, and Rachel scurried to the sink. As she carried the watering can back across the room, she noticed a praying mantis



sitting on the shelf between two pots of pansies.

Rachel watched as it devoured a fly, one limb at a time. Rachel didn't care much for dirty flies, but she almost felt sorry for this one because it had no chance to get away.

"It's sure. . . A worm. . ."

"Jah, that's right. . . . It's kind of. . ."

Rachel listened to Grandpa's and Anna's voices. She figured Grandpa must have spotted a worm someplace, which was strange, since he had no plants in his office.

"It wouldn't be so bad. . . Wasn't full of humility. . ."

Rachel set the watering can down. She eased closer to the office door to better hear what they were saying.

"I can't really blame her. . ."

"I know what you mean. . ."

Rachel put her ear against the door. She wished they would talk a little louder.

Suddenly the door swung open, knocking Rachel to the floor.

"Ach Grandpa, you scared me!" She scrambled to her feet.

Grandpa stepped toward Rachel. "Are you all right?"

"I—I'm fine. It just knocked the wind out of me when you opened the door."

Grandpa frowned. "Why were you by the door? I thought you were watering plants."

Rachel's face warmed with embarrassment. "I—I was, but I heard you and Anna talking about a worm,

and—” She glanced over her shoulder. “Is there a worm in your office, Grandpa?”

He shook his head. “Of course not. I don’t know where you got such a notion. I never said anything about a worm.”

“He said it’s a *warm* day. Maybe that’s what you heard,” Anna said, entering the main part of the greenhouse. “And I said, ‘It wouldn’t be so bad if it wasn’t for the humidity.’”

“I thought you said ‘humility,’” Rachel said.

Anna shook her head. “No. Never said a word about humility.”

Rachel stared at the floor. She felt foolish.

Grandpa frowned. “I think you’d better get back to work and stop eavesdropping, Rachel.”

“Okay.” Rachel shuffled back to finish watering the plants.

As Grandpa and Anna continued their conversation, Rachel tried not to listen. It was hard, though, because she was sure they were talking about interesting things.

“I think an African violet would be a perfect plant for her,” Grandpa said.

*Perfect plant for who?* Rachel wanted to ask, but she knew Grandpa wouldn’t appreciate her listening to his conversation again.

“Jah, I’m sure she’ll like the plant, and I think. . .” Anna’s voice trailed off as she moved to the other side of the room.

Rachel wished she could follow, but she had more plants to water.

“That’s right; it’s not good to be alone. I’m sure you must miss. . .”

Rachel tipped her head and strained to hear the rest of what Anna was saying.

“Marriage is. . .” Anna moved even farther away, and then her voice sounded like a whisper.

Rachel gritted her teeth. She couldn’t hear any of Anna’s words now.

She raced to the sink, filled the watering can with more water, and started watering plants closer to where Grandpa and Anna stood.

“Thanks for stopping by, Anna,” Grandpa said. “When you see Sadie Stoltzfus, tell her I’ll be over later today. I need to ask her that question.”

Rachel’s ears perked up. Why would Grandpa go to see the widow Stoltzfus, who didn’t like kids and clacked her false teeth?

Anna paused and smiled at Grandpa. “A fall wedding will be nice, don’t you think?”

He nodded, and Anna hurried out the door.

Rachel stood like a statue in front of the flowers, her mouth hanging open. This couldn’t happen! No, it just couldn’t!

Grandpa nudged Rachel’s arm. “What are you doing? Catching flies?”

“Huh?”

“Your mouth’s hanging open. I wondered if you were trying to catch a few flies.”

Rachel clamped her mouth shut. Her hand shook so badly that some water sloshed out of the watering can and landed on her bare foot.

Grandpa snickered. “Now what are you doing—giving yourself a bath?”

Rachel tried to swallow around the lump in her throat. She couldn’t tell Grandpa what had upset her. If she said what she’d heard, he would know she’d been listening to his and Anna’s conversation.

“I—uh—guess I wasn’t watching what I was doing,” she mumbled.

He patted her arm. “If you’re done watering, I’d like you to put the watering can away and help me repot some plants that have grown too big for their containers.”

Rachel nodded. “I will. . . just as soon as I wipe up the water I spilled.”

As Rachel hurried to get a clean rag, she made a decision. She would have to find a way to keep Grandpa from marrying Sadie Stoltzfus!

By the time Rachel had watered all the plants and helped Grandpa repot several, it was time to go to the house and help Mom make lunch.

Rachel had just started across the yard when she spotted Jacob coming around the side of the barn.

“I’m so glad you’re here,” she said breathlessly. “I need to talk to you.”

Jacob eyed her with a curious expression. “What about?”

“Grandpa’s on the verge of making the biggest mistake of his life. He’s not thinking straight. He needs our help to. . .”

Jacob held up his hand. “Slow down, Rachel. You’re talking way too fast.”

She shook her head. “No, I’m not. You’re listening too slow.”

He glared at her. “I’m not listening too slow.”

Any other time Rachel might have argued, but right now she needed his help more than she needed to prove she was right.

“Grandpa’s planning to take a plant over to Sadie Stoltzfus this afternoon,” she said.

“How do you know?”

“I heard him tell Anna Miller.”

“So what if he’s taking a plant to Sadie? She lives several miles away. It’s probably hard for her to hitch the horse to the buggy and travel to Grandpa’s greenhouse,” Jacob said.

Rachel lowered her voice. “He’s not just taking Sadie a plant. He’s getting married again.”

Jacob raised his eyebrows. “Who’s he going to marry?”

Rachel groaned. “Aren’t you listening? I’m talking about the Widow Stoltzfus! When he takes her the

African violet, Grandpa's going to ask her to marry him."

Jacob's eyes widened. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. I was in the greenhouse when Anna and Grandpa were talking about Sadie Stoltzfus. They talked about a wedding in the fall and about Grandpa needing a wife." Rachel drew in a quick breath. "He said he's going to see Sadie later today, to take her a plant and ask her a question."

Jacob slowly shook his head. "You're an *an lauerer* [eavesdropper], Rachel. You should quit nosing around and mind your own business."

Rachel stomped her foot. "If we don't do something to stop it, we'll end up with a new teeth-clacking *grossmudder* [grandmother] who doesn't like kinner!"

"This is none of our business, Rachel. If Grandpa wants to marry her, that's his decision. You need to keep your nose out of Grandpa's business and spend your time doing something else." He poked her arm. "Maybe you should get busy and clean your room so it'll be ready when Cousin Mary gets here."

"I've been getting ready for Mary, but she won't be here for a week or so." Rachel pursed her lips. "Right now we need to concentrate on—"

"Listening to other people's conversations can lead to trouble," Jacob interrupted. "Besides, you don't even know if you heard correctly."

Rachel knew all about trouble. It seemed to follow her everywhere.

She squinted her eyes at Jacob and said, "If I did hear correctly, then we need to do something to stop it!"

Jacob shook his head. "That wouldn't be right. If Grandpa wants to marry again, you should be happy for him."

Tears welled in Rachel's eyes. "I—I can't be happy about this. If Grandpa marries Sadie, he'll move out of our house, and she'll—"

"How do you know Sadie won't move in with us?"

Rachel gasped. "Do you really think she might do that?"

Jacob shrugged. "All I know is whatever Grandpa does, it's his business, not ours." He walked toward the house. "I don't know about you, but I'm hungry. I'm going inside to eat lunch!"

Rachel sighed. She'd hoped she could count on Jacob, but he'd been no help at all! If anything was going to be done to keep Grandpa from marrying Sadie Stoltzfus, she'd have to do it alone!