

Growing Up
in
Lancaster County

4-IN-1 STORY COLLECTION

WANDA &
BRUNSTETTER



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For more information about Wanda E. Brunstetter, please access the author's website at the following Internet address:
www.wandabrunstetter.com.

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A Happy Heart

Dedication

To the children at Riverside Christian School in Yakima,
Washington. Thanks for letting me share
my life as an author with you.
To Dr. Richard Ehlers and Dr. Ben Jaramillo,
my kind and helpful eye doctors.

Glossary

absatz—stop
ach—oh
aldi—girlfriend
bensel—silly child
blos—bubble
boppli—baby
brieder—brothers
bruder—brother
buwe—boy
daed—dad
danki—thank you
dumm—dumb
ekelhaft—disgusting
fehlerfrie—perfect
felder—fields
fingerneggel—fingernails
gees—goat
geh—go
grank—sick
grossdaadi—grandfather
guder mariye—good morning
gut—good
hund—dog

Bass uff as du net fallscht.
Du kannscht mich net uffhuddle;
ich bin zu schmaert
Duh net so laut schmatze.

Geb acht, schunschd geht's letz!

Grummel net um mich rum.
Sei so gut.
Was in der welt?
Wie geht's?

hungerich—hungry
jab—yes
kapp—cap
kichlin—cookies
kinner—children
lachlich—laughable
lecherich—ridiculous
mamm—mom
mied—tired
mudder—mother
naas—nose
naerfich—nervous
narrish—crazy
nee—no
pescht—pest
retschbeddi—tattletale
schlang aage—snake eyes
schmaert—smart
schnell—quickly
schpassich—odd
schweschder—sister
wunderbaar—wonderful

Take care you don't fall.
You can't confuse me;
I'm too smart.
Don't make such a noise
when you eat.
Watch out, or else things
will go wrong!
Don't grumble around me.
Please.
What in all the world?
How are you?

Chapter 1

A *Lachlich* [Laughable] Day



This is so much fun!” Ten-year-old Rachel Yoder squealed as her end of the teeter-totter shot into the air.

“My stomach feels like it’s in my throat!” Audra Burkholder shouted when her side of the teeter-totter dropped down and then sprang up again.

Rachel waved one hand in the air. “Whe-e-e-e!” she hollered.

“Are you gonna ride that thing all day or does somebody else get a turn before recess is over?”

Rachel looked down. Freckle-faced Orlie Troyer stared at her. Rachel and Orlie had become friends during the year, but Rachel didn’t want anyone at school to know she was friends with a boy so she kept it a secret.

“Well?” Orlie asked, tapping his foot. “Can I have a turn on the teeter-totter?”

Rachel squinted at him as her side of the teeter-totter dropped again. “Is that any way to ask for something?”

“Maybe he doesn’t know how to say *sei so gut*

[please].” Audra said, wrinkling her nose. “Maybe he doesn’t know about manners.”

Orlie squatted in the dirt, raised his hands in front of his chest, and said, “Can I please have a turn on the teeter-totter?”

Rachel giggled. “You look like Jacob’s dog when he sits up and begs.”

Woof! Woof! Orlie bounced up and down.

“Oh, all right, you can have a turn while I get a drink of water.” When Rachel climbed off the teeter-totter, she held the handle so Orlie could get on.

“This is sure fun!” Orlie shouted as his end of the teeter-totter rose. A gust of wind whipped his straw hat from his head and spun it away. He tipped his head back and howled with laughter.

Rachel raced to the pump, grabbed a paper cup, and pumped the handle up and down. When the cup was full of water, she took a big drink. Then she pumped until her cup was full again.

Rachel’s brother, Jacob, nudged Rachel’s arm. “Save some of that for me, would ya?”

Water sloshed out of Rachel’s cup and splashed her dress. “Say, watch what you’re doing!”

“I figured you might need a bath.” Jacob snickered. She glared at him. “Very funny.”

“I thought so, little *bensel* [silly child].” He leaned back and laughed until his face turned red.

“Stop calling me a silly child!” Rachel dipped her

finger into the cup and flicked water at Jacob's shirt. "And there's plenty of this to go around!"

"A little water doesn't bother me," Jacob said with a shrug. "In fact, it feels kind of nice on this warm spring day."

"Puh!" Rachel hurried across the playground, still holding her cup of water. "I'm back," she said as Orlie's side of the teeter-totter shot up. "It's time for you to get off now."

When the teeter-totter came down, Orlie shook his head. "I don't want to; I'm having too much fun."

"I said you could take a turn while I got a drink," Rachel announced. "So now you need to get off."

Orlie grinned but didn't budge.

Rachel glanced at Audra as Orlie's end of the teeter-totter rose and Audra's end dropped. "Can I take your place?"

Audra pushed a strand of dark hair under her *kapp* [cap] and shook her head. "Sorry, Rachel, but I'm having too much fun."

Rachel tapped her foot impatiently. If she'd known this would happen, she wouldn't have gotten off the teeter-totter. She would have waited until recess was over to get a drink.

Suddenly, Orlie leaped off the teeter-totter, sending Audra thudding to the ground.

Audra squealed. "That wasn't nice! You should have warned me that you were getting off!"

“I decided I was thirsty!” Orlie snatched the cup out of Rachel’s hand and drank. “Ah. . .that’s better.”

“Aren’t you worried about germs?” Audra asked as she scrambled off the teeter-totter.

“Nope.” Orlie took another drink and handed the cup back to Rachel.

“*Eww*.” Audra wrinkled her nose. “That’s so *ekelhaft* [disgusting]!”

Rachel pushed the cup at Orlie. “You may as well keep it, ’cause I won’t drink from it again.”

Orlie shrugged and drank some more.

“Let’s play on the swings,” Rachel said to Audra.

“Okay.”

The girls had only been swinging a few minutes when Orlie headed toward them wearing his straw hat. He stopped in front of the swings, swayed back and forth, and fell on the ground. The paper cup flew out of his hand and landed in a clump of weeds. His straw hat flew off his head and landed in the dirt.

Rachel rushed over to Orlie and dropped to her knees. “Orlie’s what’s wrong? Are you *grank* [sick]?”

He stayed with his eyes closed, unmoving.

Audra gasped. “*Ach* [Oh], do you think he’s dead?”

Rachel touched Orlie’s arm, but he didn’t move. She clasped her hand over her mouth. “Maybe he *is* dead. I’d better get the teacher!”

Rachel raced for the schoolhouse, but she hadn’t gone far when someone pushed her. She whirled

around. There stood Orlie, wearing his tattered hat and a lopsided grin.

“Ha! Ha! I got you good!” he said, slapping his knee.

“Orlie Troyer, you should be ashamed of yourself, scaring us like that,” Audra said in a shaky voice. “We thought you were a goner. *Jab* [Yes], we sure did.”

Rachel shook her head. “Not me; I knew he was only pretending to be dead. I was just playing along.”

Orlie’s lips twitched, his shoulders shook, and he laughed so hard tears streamed down his cheeks. Then he dropped to the ground and rolled in the grass.

Orlie looked so funny that Rachel laughed, too. Soon Audra joined in.

“Now you really do look like Jacob’s dog.” Rachel pointed at Orlie. “Whenever Buddy has an itch on his back, he rolls in the grass just like you’re doing.”

Woof! Woof! Orlie sat up and begged.

Rachel giggled. “What a *lachlich* day!”

When Rachel and Jacob got home from school that afternoon, Rachel still felt like laughing. She’d laughed so much during recess that she couldn’t concentrate on her schoolwork the rest of the day. In fact, a couple of times the words in her spelling book had looked a bit blurry. She figured it was because she had tears in her eyes from laughing so much.

“How come you’re wearing such a silly grin?” Jacob asked.

“I just feel happy today.”

Jacob stared at Rachel a few seconds. Finally, he shrugged and opened the door. “We’re home, Mom!”

“Mmm. . .it smells like Mom’s been baking today,” Rachel said, heading for the kitchen. “I hope she made maple syrup cookies, because they’re my favorite.”

Jacob tickled Rachel in the ribs. “Every kind of cookie is your favorite, sister.”

Rachel giggled and tickled Jacob back.

He snickered. “Stop that. You know how ticklish I am—especially my ribs!”

“Then you shouldn’t have started it.”

“What’s all this silliness about?” Mom asked when they entered the kitchen.

“Rachel’s in a lachlich mood today,” Jacob said.

Mom removed a tray of cookies from the oven and placed them on the counter. “It’s good to be in a laughable mood. When we laugh it makes us have a happy heart,” she said, peering over her metal-framed glasses at Rachel.

Rachel nodded and smiled. “I’ve had a happy heart most of the day.”

“Wash your hands and have a seat at the table,” Mom said. “Then you and Jacob can have a glass of milk and some of my freshly baked maple syrup cookies.”

Rachel patted her stomach. “Yum. . .that sounds *gut* [good] to me.”

Rachel and Jacob raced to the sink. They reached

for the bar of soap at the same time, and—*woosh!*—it slipped off the soap dish and landed in a bowl of water sitting in the sink. *Floop!* A spurt of water flew straight up and splashed Rachel's face.

"That soap's sure slippery." She giggled and dried her face on a towel.

"I'll bet it won't be too slippery for me." Jacob plunged his hand into the bowl of water and scooped up the soap. He'd just started to scrub his hands when the soap slipped through his fingers and landed back in the water with a splash.

Rachel chuckled. "I warned you about that, Jacob."

"Will you two please quit fooling around and wash your hands?" Mom said, shaking her head. "I'm going to see if Grandpa's up from his nap."

When Mom left the room, Jacob lunged for the soap, just as Rachel bumped his arm. The soap flew in the air, bounced onto the floor, and slid all the way to the table.

Rachel laughed as Jacob scrambled after the soap, his feet sliding with every step he took.

Smack! Jacob banged into the table, knocking over a carton of milk. "Oh no," he moaned as the milk dribbled onto the floor. He took a step back, and his legs sailed out from under him. He landed on the floor with a thud.

Rachel rushed forward. "Are you all right?"

Jacob grabbed the soap and scrambled to his feet.

“I’m fine—I’m not hurt a bit.”

“I’d better get the mop and clean this before Mom comes back.” Rachel hurried to the cleaning closet and removed the bucket and mop. She leaned the mop against the counter, set the bucket in the sink, filled it with warm water, and added some detergent.

“This bucket is sure heavy,” Rachel said as she struggled to lift it out of the sink. “I’m not sure I can carry it now that it’s full of water.”

“Here, let me help.” Jacob reached around Rachel, put the soap in the soap dish, and grabbed the bucket handle.

“Careful now. You don’t want to spill any water.”

“Don’t worry; I know what I’m doing.” Jacob lifted the bucket. *Bang!* It bumped the edge of the sink, sloshing water all over the floor.

“Oh, no,” Rachel groaned.

“Look at it this way,” Jacob said with a chuckle, “the water’s already out of the bucket. Now you only have to mop the floor.”

Rachel grabbed the mop and pushed it back and forth. “This isn’t getting the water up,” she muttered. “There’s too much of it on the floor.”

“Say, I have an idea.” Jacob tossed two dish towels on the floor. He put his left foot on one towel and his right foot on the other; then he starting moving around the room.

“That looks like fun.” Rachel grabbed two more

towels, tossed them on the floor, and followed Jacob. “Whe-e-e—this *is* fun! It’s almost like skating on a frozen pond!”

“*Was in der welt* [What in all the world]?”

Rachel whirled around. Mom stood inside the kitchen door with her arms folded, frowning. “Would someone please tell me what’s going on in here?”

“The bar of soap fell on the floor,” Rachel explained. “Then Jacob bumped the table and spilled the milk. I was going to mop up the mess, but the bucket of water spilled on the floor.” Rachel drew in a quick breath. “We couldn’t get the water up with the mop, so we decided to use some towels.”

“I’m sure you meant well, but that isn’t the way to mop the floor.” Mom stepped toward Rachel.

“Don’t come in here!” Rachel shouted. “You might slip and fall.”

“That’s right,” Jacob said. “You wouldn’t want to break a bone or hurt the *boppili* [baby].”

Mom placed her hands against her bulging stomach. “You’re right; I do need to be careful.” She pointed to the mop. “One of you needs to hold the head of the mop over the bucket and wring out the water. That will make it easier to mop.”

“I’ll do it!” Jacob grabbed the mop.

Mom pointed to the sopping wet towels. “Rachel, please get some clean towels to help Jacob mop up the water.”

“That’s what I was trying to do,” Rachel said.

Mom shook her head. “Not with the towels under your feet. That’s dangerous. You need to kneel on the floor, mop up the water with the dry towels, and wring them into the sink. You’ll also need to wring out the wet ones you and Jacob used under your feet.”

Rachel nodded. “Okay, Mom.”

Mom watched until Rachel and Jacob had finished mopping up the water. When the floor was dry, she stepped into the kitchen and motioned to the table. “Shall we have cookies and milk now?”

“That sounds good to me.” Jacob smacked his lips. “All that hard work made me *hungerich* [hungry].”

Mom went to the refrigerator for another carton of milk. As she placed it on the table, Grandpa entered the room. He motioned to the cookies. “I hope some of those are for me.”

“Of course. Sit down and help yourself while I pour some milk,” Mom said.

They all sat at the table, and Grandpa smiled at Rachel. “How was your day?”

“It’s been a lachlich day.” Rachel grinned at Jacob. “Isn’t that right?”

He nodded.

“Laughable days are the best kind of days.” Grandpa reached for a cookie and dunked it in his milk. “I learned some time ago that even if things aren’t going my way, it helps to put on a happy face.”

“What are some things that make you feel happy?” Jacob questioned.

Grandpa wiggled his bushy gray eyebrows. “For one thing, I like to tell at least one good joke every day.”

Rachel touched Grandpa’s arm. “Would you tell us one now?”

“Jah, sure.” Grandpa combed his fingers through the ends of his long gray beard. “Let me see now. . .”

“Why don’t you tell the one about spinach?” Mom suggested. “You used to tell that joke when I was girl, and it always made me laugh.”

“Well, when I was a boy, my *mudder* [mother] used to say, ‘Now son, eat your spinach, because it will put color in your cheeks.’” A smile spread across Grandpa’s face as he leaned close to Rachel. “You know what I had to say to that?”

She shook her head.

Grandpa gently pinched Rachel’s cheeks. “I would say to my mudder, ‘Who wants green cheeks?’”

Rachel giggled, Mom chuckled, and Jacob snickered.

“All’s well when you laugh and grin,” Grandpa said with a wink.

Rachel gave Grandpa a hug. “I’m glad you’re my *grossdaadi* [grandfather]. I’m gonna try to make every day a lachlich day.”