

— THE INN at EAGLE HILL • 3 —

*The*  
Revealing



*A Novel*

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To my son, Gary,  
who has a special knack  
for encouraging others  
to be originals

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# 1



This secret life was doing her in. At times, Naomi King wondered how in the world she had become so secretive. She used to be the type who would answer any question, talk to anyone about anything. No longer. Maybe years of enduring dreadful migraines that had kept her pinned home so much of the time, waiting for the worst to pass, had made her more reticent and reclusive. Maybe it was because she'd never had a reason to keep a secret of this magnitude. Most likely, it was because she didn't realize what she was missing until now. It was as if she had come out of the shadows and into the real world.

And it all had to do with Tobe Schrock.

Tobe was serving out a sentence at FCI Schuykill in Minersville for withholding evidence about wrongdoings in Schrock Investments, his late father's investment company, from the Securities Exchange Commission. Minersville was a one-hour-and-thirty-one-minute bus ride from Lancaster, plus another twelve-minute bus ride from Lancaster to Stoney Ridge. Naomi had it timed to the second.

Except for today, when the bus to Stoney Ridge had run late.

As she walked down the lane, she unrolled a half-eaten pack of Tums, chewed two tablets, and tried very hard to do nothing but take deep breaths and think about Tobe. It helped a little, but not enough. She found herself nervously twirling the strings of her prayer cap and forced her hands down by her sides. Stubbornly, she wrestled against the anxiety. If Galen were already home and asked where she had been, she wouldn't lie to him. *I will not lie*. She had never once lied to him, though she didn't tell him everything, either.

So what would she tell him? The band around her chest cinched tighter and her pulse picked up speed. She would say that she had gone visiting a friend on a Sunday afternoon, which was true. And yet it wasn't. Tobe wasn't just a friend. He was much, much more than that. But Galen, her dear, intrusive, overprotective brother, could never understand that.

She heard a horse nicker in the darkness and another one answer back, and panic swooped down and seized her from head to toe.

She took another Tums and chewed fast.

She couldn't keep this up. She couldn't keep the secret about Tobe much longer. Today he had promised her that the time was coming soon when everything would be out in the open. He said he would be released from prison soon. Any day now.

But until then? Her hands were trembling and her stomach was churning and her heartbeat thundered. Galen *must* be home by now. The horses would need to be fed soon.

Unease tightened in her stomach. She took three more Tums out of the package and chewed them, fast and hard.

Oh . . . where had she left that bus schedule to Minersville? *Where, where, where?* If her brother found out she had been to see Tobe Schrock . . . at a federal prison . . . She cringed.

Naomi and Tobe were an unlikely pair, she knew that. He had been born Amish but spent his growing up years in a Mennonite church and remained unbaptized. Uncertain. Worldly. She was sheltered, overprotected by her brother. Her life was on the horse farm that her brother managed. Her work was to care for their home and be a part of the Amish church, and she loved her life.

Her brother did not think well of Tobe Schrock. It wasn't just because of the recent troubles the Schrock family had with their investment company imploding—his disdain went farther back. He considered Tobe to be lazy and selfish, an opinion based on Tobe as a young teen. But Naomi saw past that and found so much more in Tobe. She believed the best about him. There was a fine man in there, a diamond in the rough, and she was desperately, hopelessly in love with *that* man.

She took a new pack of Tums out of her dress pocket, chewed two tablets, and swallowed so fast she didn't even taste the chalky cherry flavor, turned down the wooded driveway of the King farm, and stopped short. There, in front of the house, was her brother Galen. He stood with his arms crossed against his chest, deep in conversation with Bishop Elmo and Deacon Abraham.



Lightning split the sky, followed by a great clap of thunder and a torrent of soft raindrops. There was a sweet smell in the air on this gray Monday morning, the mulchy smell of

wet earth. Spring was but a promise, but a promise was better than winter.

Rose Schrock crossed the yard to the henhouse with an empty basket in her arms, hardly aware of the rain that was falling, mindful of all she needed to do before the children returned from school. The guest flat needed to be cleaned, aired out, fresh sheets and towels brought in. She just received a message on the machine in the phone shanty from a woman who wanted to reserve the guest flat for an extended stay. The woman said she needed a quiet place to “reinvent herself”—whatever *that* meant.

Rose felt relieved to have someone stay in the guest flat during the off-season. The inn had provided a far more steady stream of guests than she could have imagined, mostly because of the mistaken notion of Eagle Hill as a place where miracles occurred. But the stream of visitors drizzled in December and came to a complete stop in January, February, and March. It was a worry. This was her first year as an innkeeper. She didn't know if it was normal to expect a seasonal dip or if it meant an inevitable decline, but she did know she counted on that income to help make ends meet for her family.

Something on the road caught her eye and she stopped for a moment. It was a truck, following a buggy, and it looked as if they were turning into the vacant property across the road. She'd heard that a new Amish family was moving into the district. Vera, her mother-in-law, who rarely left home but knew the business of everyone, said that the recently widowed father was a minister. He had bought the Bent N' Dent grocery store, looking for a fresh start for his brood, and Rose certainly understood that. A fresh start sounded

delightful on days when life's complications seemed to hold her by the ankles.

The chickens fussed and clucked as she entered the rickety henhouse. She let them out into the yard and gathered the eggs in the nest boxes, taking care with Harriet, the old hen who refused to leave her nest and pecked with a vengeance. When the basket was full, Rose hurried outside and latched the door behind her. As she turned, she found Galen King, her particular friend and neighbor, waiting for her with an odd look on his face.

"Rose, there's something I need to talk to you about." His voice was both soft and gruff, very, very bass, like rumbling thunder from the next county. She loved the sound of it.

He paused, shifting from one foot to another as if he had a pebble in his shoe. He coughed, and Rose saw a bead of perspiration trickle down his temple under his black felt hat. She looked at him, wondering if he wasn't coming down with a fever and thinking that standing here in the rain couldn't be good for him if he was. "Come inside for a cup of coffee."

He glanced toward the house. "Vera's inside, isn't she?"  
"Yes. In the kitchen."

He cleared his throat and met her eyes at last. "Then, no. I'd rather say what I have to say in private."

"Well, could we at least get out of the rain?" She walked over to the porch and spun around to face him, a tad impatient. He followed behind, glancing nervously at the kitchen windows to see if Vera was peering out them. What did Galen have on his mind? It was cold and her feet were wet. She was in no mood for a mystery. "Is something wrong?"

"No, no, nothing's wrong. Well, actually, maybe there is. Did something happen to trouble Naomi yesterday?"

“Nothing that I know of. Why?”

“Bishop Elmo and Deacon Abraham dropped by yesterday afternoon to ask if I would take on another apprentice, since Jimmy Fisher is busy with the chickens.”

That didn’t surprise Rose—she knew Galen had more work than he could manage—but she held out a hope that he might wait for Tobe, to apprentice him after his release. Beyond Galen, Rose noticed a porch gutter was clogged with leaves, causing the water to spill over the gutters. The droplets fell to puddles on the ground with uneven *plips*. She looked at him, not sure what an apprentice had to do with Naomi. It wasn’t typical of Galen to circle around the block before getting to his point. “So . . . about Naomi . . .,” she urged.

“Naomi walked up the driveway like she’d seen a ghost, then shot past us and into the house. Acted as twitchy as a cow’s tail at fly time all evening long.”

Rose shivered in the damp air. “I can ask Bethany if she knows something, though I’m not sure she’d tell me.” She started to move past him.

He reached out to stop her, his hands on her arms. “But Naomi’s not the reason I stopped by.” He glanced over her shoulder to the kitchen windows. Satisfied Vera wasn’t peering out at them, he looked straight into Rose’s eyes, took a deep breath, and said, “I think it’s time we moved things along.”

She glanced around the farm and saw all the things that needed moving along—a pasture fence that needed repairing, a barn door that kept falling off its track, a sagging clothesline that was threatening to fall over in the next big windstorm. She was surprised it had lasted through the winter. In May, they were due to take a turn hosting church at Eagle Hill. The to-do list was endless. Where to start?

But Galen's face had such a strange look on it, uncomfortable and shy, not like a man who was creating a to-do list. A blush began to creep up his face. Slowly, his meaning began to dawn on her and she was astounded. "Galen!" she exclaimed. "Are you asking me to marry you?"

His eyes flew open wide, and he swallowed hard. "Doesn't it sound like I am?"

"Well. Sort of. Maybe. Not quite." The more she said, the sillier she felt. But at the risk of embarrassing him even further, she knew she'd better make her position clear. She wasn't ready. Her husband Dean hadn't been gone two full years and things were still unsettled, unfinished.

Galen took another deep breath. "Yes. Yes, I am. I am asking you to marry me." He took her two hands in his. "Rose, there will always be obstacles. I want us to face those things together. I want us to get married. Soon."

"I . . . I don't know what to say."

"Just say yes." To Galen, everything was simple.

But it wasn't a simple question. The very thought of getting married was ridiculous. It made no sense. Frankly, their entire relationship made no sense! She was older than Galen by more than a few years. She had a family—two stepchildren, three children, plus a very cranky mother-in-law; he had never married. She was still trying to unravel the mess of her husband's investment company gone awry. Tobe, Dean's son, was serving time in jail. Jake Hertzler, a key player in the downfall of the company, charged with all kinds of terrible crimes, hadn't been found. Getting married was the furthest thing from her mind.

And why now, on a rainy Monday morning, would Galen blurt out something like asking her to marry him? Why not

yesterday, when the sun was shining as they had picnicked up at Blue Lake Pond?

Yet such an unrehearsed proposal was so like him. Words were few with Galen, but when he did speak, they were impactful. He was a man of action instead of words, purpose rather than intention. So different from her first husband, who could stir up a dust cloud with his fancy way with words.

Rose remembered the first time she had noticed Galen—truly noticed him. It was a sunny afternoon, sometime after the foggy period when Dean had passed, and Galen had offered to teach her how to drive a buggy. She had been raised Amish but had left the church over a dozen years ago. She hadn't been near a horse in as many years and it was high time she grew comfortable with them again. As she was climbing into the buggy, the horse pranced sideways at a scurrying mouse, and Rose leaped back with a screech, startled. Immediately Galen stepped forward, taking the bridle, rubbing the mare's forehead, and the horse soon quieted. But Rose's reaction must have been so unexpected to Galen that his eyes went wide.

"I take exception to mice," she explained, feeling color rise in her cheeks.

Then Galen broke out in a rich laugh. Never having seen him even smile before, she was unprepared for the impact. The sight was incredible; it completely changed him. She had not known his eyes to sparkle in such a way, his jaw to be so perfect, his throat so tan, his mouth so handsome. It was the first time she saw all that he could be.

An embarrassed laugh left her throat, then a second, and soon her laughter joined his and she suddenly found herself feeling happy. Happier than she had felt in a long, long time.

He had held out both his hands to her to help lift her into the buggy and she felt an unexpected jolt of excitement. As they sat together in the small buggy, she was as close to him as she'd ever been and the thought made her light-headed.

Each time she saw him after that buggy ride, there was a knife-edgy feeling in the pit of her stomach. Galen was so quiet and composed that she had no idea he felt the same way. It was months later that he admitted he had fallen in love with her.

With the rain falling behind him, Rose looked at Galen. He had a rugged, capable face. Firm features, determined jawline, placid eyes. She saw the great kindness in his expression, and she saw his wisdom, which was well beyond his years. She saw compassion in those green, green eyes. She saw love there.

It made no sense to marry now. No sense at all.

But . . . the thing about love was, once started, it couldn't easily be stopped. A voice that she was surprised to realize was hers said, "Yes, Galen. I believe I would like to marry you."