

My blog post today is an excerpt from my book *The Rainbow's End* which is book two in the Nurse Hal Among The Amish series. The series is set in the rolling hills of scenic southern Iowa on an Amish farm outside of fictional Wickenburg.

This scene takes place in the spring when Nurse Hallie Lapp is given gardening lessons by her step daughter Emma Lapp.

After lunch as Hal put a handful of silverware away, she asked, "Emma, what are we going to plant in the garden?"

"This family likes many different vegetables," Emma said. She opened a drawer and took out a worn, frayed notebook. She handed it to Hal.

"What is this?"

"Turn to the last page that is written on. You will see where I have drawn lines for rows. Beside each row is the vegetable or flower's name we will plant this spring."

Hal opened the book on the table. The two of them leaned over it as Emma pointed out rows labeled peas, beans, beets, carrots, turnips, potatoes, lettuce and more. Around the edges, she planned to plant orange cosmos and yellow marigolds. The very back row nearest the house, Emma saved for her tall green cannas that bloomed a red flower. She had a basket of dried bulbs stored in the basement.

"I didn't realize a garden took so much planning," Hal said, mystified by the thought Emma had put into her garden.

"It is important to rotate the crops so I do not grow a vegetable in the same spot too long. If I keep track each year, I know that will not happen," Emma told her.

Hal heard the restless shift of feet. She looked up to find John leaning against the doorway with his hands in his pants pockets. He had been listening to them. The smile on his face and the beam in his eyes told Hal he was proud of his daughter's friendship with the woman he planned to marry.

He said, "Are you two about done planting garden in here?"

"Jah, for right now. We are going to continue for real soon enough." Emma said, putting her notebook back in the drawer.

In another chapter -

Holding a handful of garden seed packets, Emma interrupted Hal's revelry. "If you are not busy, want to help me plant some garden?"

"Sure. Looks like no one needs my nursing help this afternoon." *Maybe the fresh air will revive me*, she thought.

"That is gute," Emma said.

Hal opened the door and followed Emma out on the porch. "Where is the garden?"

Emma nodded toward the road. "That bare spot."

"I wondered why there wasn't any grass there, but I kept forgetting to ask. Why did you put milk jugs in the garden?"

"There is danger of frost until in the middle of May. The jugs protect the cabbage and tomato plants I set out," Emma explained.

Hal couldn't remember seeing vegetable sets in front of the feed store or at the tree nursery. "You bought sets somewhere this early?"

"Nah, I raised them from seeds."

"Why do you have the garden along side the road?"

Hal could tell that sounded like a silly question to Emma. "Why not?"

"No reason. It's just that my mom had her garden back behind the tool shed. It was sort of out of

sight,” Hal told her.

“Why would I want to hide my garden?” Emma seemed perplexed by the idea. She dropped the seed packets at the end of the garden. “It is of interest for Plain people to see how their neighbors’ gardens are doing when they drive by. Even English like to see what kinds of vegetables and flowers are planted in them.”

Changing the subject, Hal said, “Nothing better to eat than fresh vegetables from the garden.”

Emma nodded in agreement as she went down on her knees. “We have to raise enough to can for winter. You want to learn how to preserve food?”

“Yes, I do. If you think you can stand trying to teach someone who is as dumb as I am about such things,” Hal said sincerely.

“Oh, Hallie. You are not dumb. Now we are going to start by planting radishes and lettuce,” Emma said, sorting the seed packets. A distant rumble turned her attention to the western sky. “Looks like a rain is coming. Dark clouds are banking up. If we hurry maybe we will have some of the planting and my chores done before the storm. I have been trying to start chores early so I can look for Zacchaeus.” She handed Hal the seeds before she picked up a hoe she dropped in the grass earlier. Giving the mellow dirt a whack with the hoe, she walked backward, making a small trench.

“What do you think happened to him?” Hal asked. Opening a packet of radishes, she bent over and dropped the seeds in the furrow.

“If he decided to roost out, a coon, skunk or possum could have got him. Maybe even a coyote. But he never does that,” Emma declared. “I think my brothers had something to do with his disappearing. It is a joke on me.”

“I can’t believe that Noah and Daniel would do that to you,” Hal said, opening the package of lettuce. She followed Emma as the girl made another row.

“Remember the duck eggs under my brood hen?”

“Oh.” Hal didn’t have a defense for that.

Absorbed in what they were doing, Emma and Hal forgot about the approaching storm until large, crystal clear drops pelted them. Emma dropped the hoe. A gust of wind caught the pile of seed packets, causing them to tumble over and over across the garden. Emma and Hal scrambled to gather up the remaining packets.

After Emma chased down the last packet, she yelled, “This is it. Run for the porch.”

Leaning against the porch wall, Emma closed her eyes and turned her face toward the sky. “Ain’t it something how a spring shower keeps up making down. Smell the clean air and wet dust.”

Hal stood beside her and looked out over the hayfield and pasture. The shower draped the fields in a silver veil. She took a deep breath. “As clean as the smell of fresh washed clothes drying on the line.”

“Jah.” Emma’s tone changed. “Oh, no! I forgot to bring in my clothes,” she cried. As an after thought she giggled. “Oh well, too late now. They will have to dry over.”

As quickly as the downpour started it ended. The overcast sky suddenly changed to sunshine. The sun caressed the earth and both of them with its light and warmth.

With excitement in her voice, Emma pointed. “Look a rainbow!”

The ethereal jewel-tone mist arched in the pasture just beyond the barn. “How lovely. As a child, I was told if I could find the end of the rainbow I’d find a pot of gold,” Hal said.

“That’s an English tale,” Emma scoffed. “The rainbow came about because God made a promise to Noah. He said, ‘I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.’ She paused, studying the rainbow, before she continued. “If they feel the need to make wishes, English people should not wish for something that has to do with wealth.”

Hal learned early, on once she got to really know Emma, she should listen to this wise girl’s

thoughts. She was so very perceptive. Her insight into Amish life would be what was going to help Hal fit in. "What kind of wish, Emma?"

Emma paused to think before she spoke. "This could be many things. Maybe you should wish at the end of your rainbow to find happiness or health."

"Happiness. I like that wish. For quite a long time now, I've felt as if happiness is just out of my reach. If I wish on that rainbow, I'm going to have to wish really hard if I expect my wish to come true," Hal said softly.

Emma answered sagely, "Hallie, wishing for happiness does not make it happen. You have to work to get and keep happiness in your life. Now come with me. We have eggs to gather."

This excerpt came from the second book in the series so to be properly introduced to Nurse Hal and the Lapp family you should start with *A Promise Is A Promise* book one. If you want to learn more about Nurse Hal and her life with the Lapp family my books and ebooks can be found in the Amazon and Kindle stores in English and several foreign languages, Smashwords and Barnes & Noble. I sell all the books I've written on my website <http://www.booksbyfaybookstore.weebly.com>. The site has my blog and so does Author Central on Amazon. You can find me on Twitter and Facebook if you want to follow and like me.

I haven't mentioned much about my books this summer so it's time I refresh everyone's memory. I'm an author of thirty books as well as a gardener. My books have a lot of my life experiences in them. A wise English teacher once told me to write what I know about. That's what I've been doing. I write the books I like to read with humor in them. My books are meant to entertain and for the most part be light hearted and easy for the readers to relate to the characters.

The books are written in 12 font which make them reader friendly, and though not advertised as large print, the books are easier to read. I used the larger print because I have elderly relatives that like to buy my books. I've since found the same easy reading that worked for my relatives is appreciated by other readers.

I'm busy this time of year taking care of my garden produce much like Emma Lapp so I can relate to her gardening techniques. My mother and the generations of women in my family before her grew up knowing how to plant, care for and preserve vegetables, berries and fruit for the long winters. They had large families in the Missouri Ozarks and very little money during the Great Depression. What they bought at the store was items like flour, sugar, and coffee. Their garden and meat they raised.

This year and last we've seen dry summer in central Iowa. That means watering the garden if we want it to produce. We're lucky to have a deep well. Not everyone can afford to use their water for fear of running the well dry.

We plant two gardens a year. The first one is in early spring, and when spots where we raised potatoes are cleared off, we plant a fall garden in late July or early August. After last year's fall garden didn't do well even with watering, we debated putting in another one this year. But we are eternal optimists. It had rained almost every day in Iowa during this spring. Rivers and creeks flooded around us several times. So maybe the summer's dry spell wasn't going to last. We planted. Maybe because it is in my husband and my DNA to keep sowing seed.

So now we are reaping the harvest of lettuce, spinach, radishes and a late crop of tomatoes. Perhaps, we enjoy the fresh vegetables even more when we have to work so hard to keep them hydrated.