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DANGER ON HER DOORSTEP

RACHELLE
McCALLA

Dear Reader,

On my second visit to the gutted house that is now my home, I discovered the cellar door had been pushed in as though someone had broken into the house. It was a creepy feeling to stand there in that dank basement and realize the security of the structure had been compromised. In my case, the crime was fairly innocent. But in Maggie's case there was obviously much more going on.

I have been so blessed to write this book! Though it was inspired by my own experiences fixing up an abused old house, Gideon and Maggie's adventures were entirely their own. I'm so glad I didn't encounter any of the troubles they met up with...except for a few bats. And that cellar break-in. But there are no dead bodies in my house. Honest!

I hope you've enjoyed this visit to Holyoake, Iowa. If you missed the first of the Holyoake Heroes books, I invite you to look for *Out on a Limb*, where we met Gideon Bromley for the very first time. And please continue to look for more of my stories. You can find current information on all my forthcoming titles on my website at www.rachellemccalla.com.

In Christ,

Rachelle McCalla

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Maggie had prayed the handyman she'd called would be willing to work on her house. But when she recognized Gideon Bromley, a man who she felt ashamed to face, she had second thoughts about asking him to take on the job. Has God ever answered your prayers in an unexpected way? How did you respond?
2. When Gideon first learned that Glen Arnold's death was ruled an accident, he was reluctant to share his suspicions with Maggie. Have you ever hidden something from another person because you didn't want them to be hurt? Was that the right choice in your situation? Why or why not?
3. Though Deputy Bernie Gills makes no apology for his attacks on Gideon, the former sheriff doesn't argue with his onetime coworker. Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? How did you respond? Why does Gideon respond the way he does? Do you believe his response was appropriate?
4. Maggie insists on staying in the spooky old house where her father was killed because she feels she has no other choice, and she trusts in God to protect her. Do you believe her decision was wise? Have you ever chosen to do something others may have seen as foolhardy? How did that turn out for you? Would you make the same decision again?
5. Gideon blames himself for Glen Arnold's death because he didn't arrive in time to stop the murderer

from killing him. Do you believe Gideon's guilt is warranted? What might you have done in his shoes?

6. Even though Gideon is suspended from his job as sheriff, he takes comfort in being able to help Maggie. Have you ever had a cherished job taken away from you? Were you able to find new, fulfilling roles? How does Gideon's story help you to understand how others feel when they retire or step down from long-held positions?
7. Maggie and Gideon feel a connection to each other through their prior relationships with Maggie's deceased father. How has a second-degree connection helped you to bond with someone else more quickly? Was that good for your relationship, or were there negative consequences? What are the risks and benefits of trusting someone simply because another person you know has trusted them?
8. Maggie and Gideon have different views about Rex Dunham's questionable ethics and whether that should influence Maggie's decision to sell to the man. Do you believe Maggie made the right choice? What might you have done differently?
9. Because Gideon was so focused on investigating Glen Arnold's murder, he didn't respond immediately to tips he received about a possible drug lab, and his actions made him look as if he'd been covering for his brother. But according to police procedure, a homicide investigation should take precedence even over a narcotics investigation. So Gideon did the

right thing, but for a long time it looked as though he would be punished for his decision. Have you ever been punished for making a choice you felt was right? What happened?

10. Gideon trusted his brother because he looked up to him. Similarly, Kayla had been exposed to possible clues about her father's drug activities while she was growing up, but she still didn't know what he was up to. Have you ever been surprised by the secrets people are able to hide from their loved ones? Have you ever failed to see through someone's actions because you respected them? Do you believe people can be blinded by trust? Is this a good thing or a bad thing—or does it just depend on the situation?
11. Gideon compares Maggie and Kayla to sheep, his brother Bruce to a wolf and himself to a sheepdog. What do you think of his analogy? Which role fits you most closely: sheep, wolf or sheepdog? Why?
12. Both Maggie and Gideon feel condemned by the lies Bruce told about them over the years, but they trust in God's promise that those who trust in Him will never be condemned. Do you think their faith is realistic? Why or why not?
13. Maggie and Gideon are both quiet people who have learned to read each other without necessarily talking things through. How is this good for their relationship? What are some of the drawbacks? Have you ever assumed you knew how someone else felt, only to later be surprised by their true feelings?

14. Gideon is reluctant to let on to Maggie about his growing feelings for her because he's afraid he'll end up in prison. Do you think he made the right choice? What are the costs of his decision?
15. Maggie's father gave Gideon a Bible years before, but it's not until after Glen is dead that Gideon begins to read the Bible and understand about God's love for him. Have you ever planted seeds of faith that you may never see grow? Does Maggie and Gideon's story encourage you to continue sharing your faith with others?

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“I think your profession is most honorable.”

One more quick glance showed him that Tess was smiling, and it was all he could do to keep from breaking into a face-splitting grin at her praise. There was something impish yet charming about the banker's daughter. Always had been, if he were totally honest with himself.

Someday, Michael vowed silently, he would find a suitable woman with a spirit like Tess's and give her a proper courting. He had no chance with Tess herself, of course. That went without saying. Still, she couldn't be the only appealing lass in San Francisco. Besides, most men waited to wed until they could properly look after a wife and family.

If he'd been a rich man's son instead of the offspring of a lowly sailor, however, perhaps he'd have shown a personal interest in Miss Clark or one of her socialite friends already.

Would he really have? he asked himself. He doubted it. There was a part of Michael that was repelled by the affectations of the wealthy, by the way they lorded it over the likes of him and his widowed mother. He knew Tess couldn't help that she'd been born into a life of luxury, yet he still found her background off-putting.

Which is just as well, he reminded himself. It was bad enough that they were likely to be seen out and about on this particular evening. If the maid Annie Dugan hadn't been along as a chaperone, he knew their time together could, if misinterpreted, lead to his ruination. His career with the fire department depended upon a sterling reputation as well as a

Spartan lifestyle and strong work ethic.

Michael had labored too long and hard to let anything spoil his pending promotion to captain. He set his jaw and grasped the reins of the carriage more tightly. Not even the prettiest, smartest, most persuasive girl in San Francisco was going to get away with doing that.

He sighed, realizing that Miss Tess Clark fit that description to a T.

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"Why was there a team investigating my father's death?"

So she'd put two and two together already, had she? She obviously hadn't missed anything, though he wished he could go back in time and replay his first phone call to her. If he'd had it to do over again, he'd have told her from the beginning that there was some possibility her father had been murdered.

Because if anything, it was worse having to tell her now.

"We suspected he may have been murdered." He watched her carefully as she absorbed the news. No screams, no crying, not even a gasp.

"And the fact that somebody broke into the house?"

"It's hard to say at this point," Gideon tempered his response, "but there's a very good chance the two are related."

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Danger on Her Doorstep

RACHELLE MCCALLA

is a mild-mannered housewife, and the toughest she ever has to get is when she's trying to keep her four kids quiet in church. Though she often gets in over her head, as her characters do, and has to find a way out, her adventures have more to do with sorting out the carpool and providing food for the potluck. She's never been arrested, gotten in a fistfight or been shot at. And she'd like to keep it that way! For recipes, fun background notes on the places and characters in this book and more information on forthcoming titles, visit www.rachellemccalla.com.

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RACHELLE
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Unless the Lord builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.

—*Psalm* 127:1



To Henry, Eleanor, Genevieve and Knox.
You inspire me every day.

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You make everything possible.