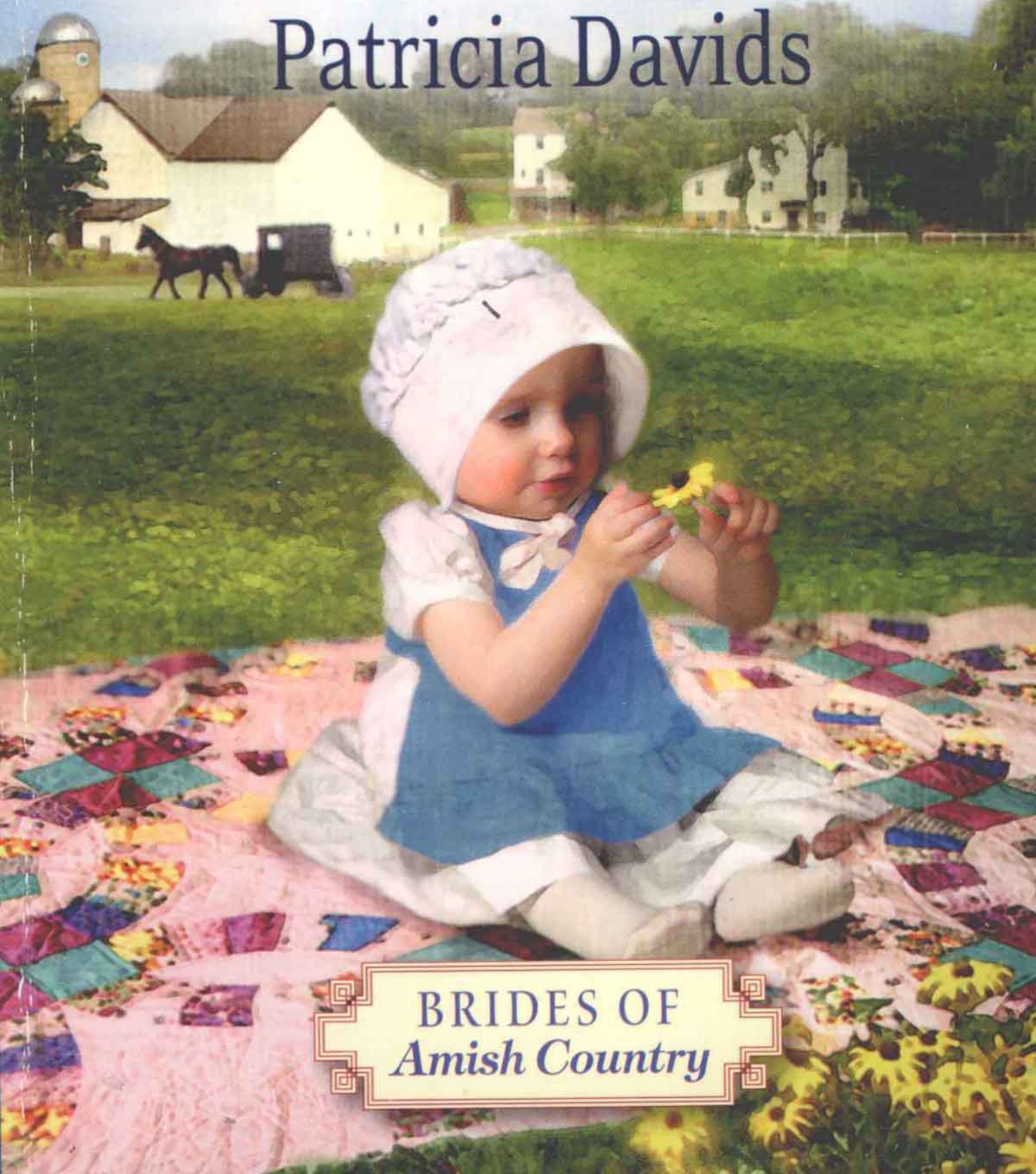


HEARTWARMING INSPIRATIONAL ROMANCE

Love of Amish®

The Doctor's Blessing

Patricia Davids



BRIDES OF
Amish Country

"When can we begin seeing patients, again?" Amber asked.

Philip's gaze deepened into a fierce scowl.

"You're planning on seeing maternity patients?"

Amber didn't care for his tone. "I haven't since Harold left, but now that you're here, I have one waiting now."

"I see." His glower lightened.

Amber continued to study him. He was a hard man to read. "We haven't exactly been on vacation while we waited for you to arrive. We've traveled a lot of miles letting people know what happened."

He raised an eyebrow. "Wouldn't a few phone calls have been easier?"

Smiling with artificial sweetness, Amber said, "It would if our patients had phones. The majority of our clients are Amish, remember?"

"I'll let you get to work, but there will be changes around here that you and I need to discuss. Come to my office when you're done."

Amber didn't like the sound of that. Not one bit.

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Speed Trap

PATRICIA DAVIDS

After thirty-five years as a nurse, Pat has hung up her stethoscope to become a full-time writer. She enjoys spending her new free time visiting her grandchildren, doing some long overdue yard work and traveling to research her story locations. She resides with her husband in Wichita, Kansas. Pat always enjoys hearing from her readers. You can visit her on the Web at www.patriciadavids.com.

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Patricia Davids



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THE DOCTOR'S BLESSING

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My little children, let us not love in word
or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

—1 *John* 3:18



To Terrah in Kansas City and to Rachel in Poland,
Ohio. Bless you both for all your help. This book
is dedicated to nurse-midwives everywhere.
Women helping women bring healthy babies
into loving families.

Chapter One



“Amber, you won’t believe who’s here!”

The agitated whisper stopped Amber Bradley in her tracks halfway through the front door of the Hope Springs Medical Clinic. She glanced around the small waiting room. The only occupant was her wide-eyed receptionist standing at her desk with one finger pressed to her lips.

Amber whispered back, “I give up, Wilma. Who’s here?”

The tiny, sixty-something woman glanced toward the hallway leading to the offices and exam rooms, then hurried around the corner of her desk wringing her hands. “Dr. Phillip White.”

Oh, no. Amber closed the door with deliberate slowness. So the ax was going to fall on their small-town clinic in spite of everyone’s prayers. What would they do now? What would happen to their patients? Her heart sank at the prospect.

Please, dear Lord, don’t let this happen.

Composing herself, she turned to face Wilma. “What did he say? Is Harold worse?”

“He said Harold is the reason he needs to meet with us, but he wanted to wait until you were here before going into details.”

Dr. Harold White was the only doctor in the predominantly Amish community of Hope Springs, Ohio. Four weeks earlier, he'd taken his first vacation in more than twenty years to visit his grandson, Phillip, in Honolulu. While there, a serious accident landed the seventy-five-year-old man in intensive care.

Wilma leaned close. "What do you think he's doing here?"

"I have no idea."

"You think he's here to close the office, don't you?"

Amber couldn't come up with another reason that made more sense. Harold's only relative had come to close the clinic and inform them that Harold wouldn't be returning.

At least he was kind enough to come in person instead of delivering the news over the phone.

Amber had been expecting something like this since she'd learned the extent of Harold's injuries. Chances were slim a man his age could make a full recovery after suffering a broken leg, a fractured skull and surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain. Still, Harold hadn't given up hope that he'd be back, so neither would she.

Summoning a smile for her coworker, Amber laid a hand on Wilma's shoulder. "When I spoke to Harold last night, he assured me the clinic would stay open."

"For now." The deep male voice came from behind them.

Wilma squeaked as she spun around. Amber had a better grip on her emotions. Wilma hurried away to the safety of her oak desk in the corner, leaving Amber to face the newcomer alone. She surveyed Harold's grandson with interest.

Dr. Phillip White was more imposing than she had expected. He stood six foot at least, if not a shade taller. His light brown hair, streaked with sun-bleached highlights, curled slightly where it touched the collar of his blue, button-down

shirt. His bronze tan emphasized his bone structure and the startling blue of his eyes.

He was movie-star gorgeous. The thought popped into Amber's brain and stuck. She licked her suddenly dry lips. When had she met a man who triggered such intense awareness at first glance? Okay, never.

Rejecting her left-field thoughts as totally irrelevant, Amber tried for a professional smile. Moving forward, she held out her hand. "Welcome to Hope Springs, Dr. White."

His grip, firm and oddly stirring, made her pulse spike and her breathing quicken. He held her hand a fraction longer than necessary. When he let go, she shoved her hands in the front pockets of her white lab coat, curling her fingers into tight balls.

Striving to appear unruffled, she said, "Your grandfather speaks of you frequently. I never saw him so excited as the day he learned of your existence."

His expression remained carefully blank. "I'm sure my happiness was equal to his."

Little warning bells started going off in Amber's brain. He wasn't here to make friends. Her smile grew stiff. "Of course, it can't be every day a grown man discovers he has a grandfather he never knew about."

Up close, Phillip's resemblance to Harold was undeniable. They shared the same intense blue eyes, strong chin and full lips. But not, it seemed, Harold's friendly demeanor. Still, she cast aside any lingering doubts that the whole thing was a hoax. They were obviously related.

She said, "Isn't it strange that both of you became family practice doctors. It must be in the genes. I'd love to hear the whole story. Harold was vague about the details."

A cooler expression entered Phillip's eyes. "It's a personal matter that I'm not comfortable discussing."

Oops! It seemed she'd stumbled on a touchy subject. "I'm sorry Harold's holiday with you ended so badly."

"As am I." His lips pressed into a tighter line.

Amber indicated their receptionist. "I take it you've met Mrs. Nolan? Wilma has worked for your grandfather since he came to Hope Springs over thirty years ago."

He nodded in Wilma's direction. "Yes, we've met."

"And I'm Amber Bradley." She waited with bated breath for his reaction. She knew Harold had told his grandson about their collaborative practice.

Phillip's expression didn't change. "Ah, the midwife."

There it was, that touch of disdain in his voice that belittled her profession, dismissed her education and years of training as if they were nothing. She'd heard it before from physicians and even nurses. It seemed young Dr. White didn't value her occupation the way his grandfather did.

She stood as tall as her five-foot-three frame allowed. "Yes, I'm a certified nurse midwife. It's my vocation as well as my job."

"Vocation? That's a strong word."

"It is what it is."

Was that a flicker of respect in his eyes? Maybe she had jumped the gun in thinking he disapproved.

Bracing herself, she asked the unspoken question that hovered in the air. "What brings you to Hope Springs, Dr. White?"

He glanced around the small office. "Harold is fretting himself sick over this place."

Amber tried to see the clinic through Phillip's eyes. The one-story brick building was devoid of frills. The walls were painted pale blue. The chairs grouped around the small waiting room had worn upholstery. Wilma's desk, small and crowded by the ancient tan filing cabinets lined up behind it, didn't make much of a statement.

Their clinic might not look like much, but it was essential to the well-being of their friends and neighbors. Amber wouldn't let it close without a fight.

"Harold shouldn't worry," she said. "We're managing."

"Grandfather's doctors can't keep his blood pressure under control. He's not eating. He's not sleeping well. He needs to concentrate on his recovery and he's not doing that." Deep concern vibrated through Phillip's voice.

A pang stabbed Amber's heart. "I know Harold's concerned about us, but I didn't realize it was affecting his health."

"Unfortunately, it is. The only way to relieve his anxiety was to find someone to cover his practice. In spite of my best efforts to hire temporary help, I've had no success. Clearly, working in a remote Amish community is not an assignment most physicians are eager to take on. In the end, I had to obtain a temporary license to practice in the state of Ohio. I'm here until the tenth of September or until a more permanent solution can be found."

"You're taking over the practice?" Amber blinked hard. While she was delighted they were going to have a physician again, for the life of her she couldn't understand why Harold hadn't mentioned this tidbit of information. It ranked above bad hospital food and clueless medical students, the subjects of their conversation last night.

Her shock must have shown on her face. Phillip's eyes narrowed. "Harold did tell you I was coming, didn't he?"

Amber glanced at Wilma, hoping she'd taken the message. Wilma shook her head. Amber looked back at Phillip. "Ah, no."

"I shouldn't be surprised. His mind wanders at times. This is additional proof that he is incapable of returning to work."

Amber wasn't sure what to think. Harold sounded perfectly

rational each time she'd spoken to him on the phone. Could he fool her that easily?

Compelled to defend the man who was her mentor and friend, she said, "Perhaps his pain medication muddled his thinking and he forgot to mention it. He will bounce back. He loves this place and the people here. He says working is what keeps him sane."

Phillip didn't look convinced. "We'll see how it goes. For now, I'm in charge of this practice."

He jerked his head toward the parking lot visible through the front plate-glass window. A gray horse hitched to a black buggy stood patiently waiting beside the split-rail fence that ringed the property. "Do we put out hay for the horses or do their owners bring their own?"

His satire-laden comment raised Amber's hackles. The Amish community was tight-knit and wary of outsiders. Harold had earned their trust over thirty years of practicing medicine by respecting their ways, not by poking fun at them.

She crossed her arms over her chest. "I thought you were joining some big practice in Honolulu. I'm sure Harold told me that before he left."

"Under the circumstances my partners have agreed to let me take a two-month leave of absence."

Wilma finally found the courage to pipe up. "But what if Dr. Harold isn't back in two months?"

"Then I imagine he won't be back at all. In that case, the clinic will be closed until another physician can be found. I'm aware there is a real shortage of rural doctors in this state, so you ladies may want to think about job hunting."

Wilma gasped. Amber wasn't ready to accept Phillip's prediction. The community needed this clinic. She needed Harold's support for her nurse-midwife practice. The people of Hope Springs needed them both.

She chose to remain calm. There was no use getting in a panic. She would put her faith in the Lord and pray harder than ever for Harold's recovery.

Phillip didn't seem to notice the turmoil his words caused. He said, "I found the coffeepot but I can't find any coffee."

His abrupt change of subject threw her for a second. Recovering, she reached in her bag and withdrew a package of Colombian blend. "We were out. I stopped at the store on my way here."

"Good. I take mine black. Just bring it to my office."

Was he trying to annoy her? Everyone was equal in this office. That was Harold's rule. The person who wanted coffee made it and then offered it to the others. He never expected anyone to wait on him. And it wasn't Phillip's office anyway. It still belonged to Harold.

"When can we begin seeing patients?" The object of her ire glanced at his watch.

Wilma advanced around the corner of her desk with a chart in hand. "There is a patient here to see Amber now."

His frown deepened to a fierce scowl. He pinned Amber with his gaze. "You're seeing patients?"

Amber knew the legal limits of her profession. She didn't care for his tone.

Her chin came up. "I *am* a primary care provider. I do see patients. If you mean am I seeing obstetrical patients, the answer is no. I haven't been since Harold left. Edna Nissley is sixty-nine. She's here for a blood pressure check and to have lab work drawn."

"I see." His glower lightened.

"People knew Harold was going to be gone, so our schedule has been light. Those patients outside my scope of practice have been sent to a physician in a neighboring town."

"Plus, we painted all the rooms except Harold's office and had the carpets cleaned," Wilma added brightly.

Amber continued to study Phillip. He was a hard man to read. "Someone had to be here to refer patients and fax charts to other doctors. We haven't exactly been on vacation. We've both traveled a lot of miles letting people know what has happened."

He raised one eyebrow. "Wouldn't a few phone calls have been easier?"

Smiling with artificial sweetness, Amber said, "It would if our patients had phones. The majority of our clients are Amish, remember?"

"Edna is waiting in room one," Wilma interjected.

Amber started to walk past Phillip but stopped. She pressed the bag of coffee into his midsection. "I take cream and one sugar. Just leave it on my desk."

Phillip took the bag. "I'll let you get to work, Miss Bradley, but there will be changes around here that you and I need to discuss. Come to my office when you're done."

Amber didn't like the sound of that. Not one bit.

Chapter Two



Phillip watched Amber's stunning blue-green eyes narrow. She was right to worry. He wasn't looking forward to the coming conversation. He'd rather see the charming smile she'd greeted him with earlier than the wary expression on her face at the moment.

She was pretty in a small-town-girl kind of way. Her pink cheeks and slightly sunburned nose gave her a wholesome look. She wasn't tall, but she had a shapely figure he admired. He knew from his grandfather that she wasn't married. Seeing her, he had to wonder why.

Phillip had listened to his grandfather singing the praises of Nurse-Midwife Bradley for the past year but this woman was nothing like he'd imagined. He had pictured a plump, gray-haired matron, not a pretty, petite woman who didn't look a day over twenty-five.

Her honey-blond hair was wound into a thick bun at the nape of her neck. How long was it? What would it look like when she wore it down?

Intrigued as he was by the thought, it was her blue-green eyes that drew and held his attention. They were the color of the sea he loved. A calm sea, the kind that made a man want to spend a lifetime gazing over it and soaking in the beauty.

Such romantic musings had to be a by-product of his jet lag. He forced his attention back to the matter at hand. He was going to be working with Miss Bradley. He had no intention of setting up a workplace flirtation. Besides, he'd be lucky if she was still speaking to him by the end of the day.

He didn't believe in home deliveries. In his opinion, they were too risky. She wasn't going to be happy when she learned his stance on the subject.

He hefted the coffee bag. Perhaps it was best to give her this small victory before the confrontation. "Cream with one sugar. Got it."

He left her to see her patient and retreated to the small refreshment room beside his grandfather's office. Making coffee took only a few minutes. As he waited for the pot to fill, he studied the array of mugs hanging from hooks beneath the cabinet. Which one belonged to Amber?

He ruled out the white one that said World's Greatest Grandma in neon pink letters. Beside it hung two plain black mugs, one with a chipped lip. Somehow he knew those belonged to his grandfather. That left either the white cup with yellow daisies around the rim or the sky blue mug with 1 John 3:18 printed in dark blue letters.

1 John 3:18. He pulled down the mug. He didn't know his Bible well enough to hazard a guess at the meaning of the passage, but he filed it away to look up later.

Studying medicine, working as a resident and then setting up a practice had consumed his life. All of which left him time to eat or maybe sleep, but rarely both. Even his surfing time had dropped to almost nothing. Bible study had fallen by the wayside, but it looked as if he'd have some free time now. How busy could he be in a small town like this? The next two months stretched before him like an eternity.

He'd do his best while he was here. He knew how much this place meant to his grandfather. Taking over until things