

LOVE BLOOMS IN MORNING STAR

by Charlotte Hubbard

EXCERPT

“What do you think of my new courting buggy, Jo?” he asked eagerly. “I ordered it from Saul Hartzler’s factory in December, and picked it up last night.”

Jo’s jaw dropped. A courting buggy! As they approached the open rig with a seat big enough for only two, her heart skipped like a happy schoolgirl’s. “It’s beautiful, Michael! Look at the way the wood shines. And what a wonderful shade of magenta you chose for your seat fabric.”

Michael smiled proudly. “I splurged on real leather, too,” he confided. “I figured this was the only time I’d be buying such a buggy, so I wanted it to be first-class for you, Jo. Wait here while I fetch my mare.”

Jo ran her finger along the buggy’s black wood, polished to such a shine that she could see her reflection in it. Deacon Saul was known for producing a quality product—and he hadn’t gotten wealthy by undercharging for his work, either. It wasn’t her place to ask Michael how many thousands of dollars he’d invested in his new rig. She and Mamm had considered ordering a new buggy a couple years ago, but when they’d heard what it would cost, they decided to make do with their old one.

“Gut girl—you’re doing fine,” Michael assured his horse as he approached Jo. “Josie, this is Starla, my new buggy mare.”

“Oh, aren’t you a pretty girl?” Jo said as she extended her hand. The mare looked young and angular, not yet in her prime. Her coat was a deep gray, with an irregular white star centered above her eyes. “You can keep her—and your new buggy—at our place!”

“Are you sure?” Michael handed Starla’s lead rope to Jo so he could hitch up his courting buggy. “I wouldn’t want your mamm to think we were overstepping her authority—”

“Starla can stay with us on my authority,” Jo interrupted. “If Mamm makes a fuss, I’ll take the blame. This is quite a surprise, Michael!” she added as she admired the way his black buggy and charcoal-colored mare looked together. Wasn’t it just like Michael to get all the details right?

He helped her up the steps and into his new rig. “I’m glad you see it that way, Josie-girl. I don’t intend to upset your mother, but I don’t plan on tiptoeing around her bad moods, either. We have a whole new life ahead of us—together. Shall we get on with it?”