

Copyright © 2023 Amy R. Anguish, Sarah Anne Crouch, Rachel Herod, and Heather Greer

Published by Scrivenings Press LLC  
15 Lucky Lane  
Morrilton, Arkansas 72110  
<https://ScriveningsPress.com>

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy and recording— without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotation in printed reviews.

Paperback ISBN 978-1-64917-272-3

eBook ISBN 978-1-64917-273-0

Editors: Elena Hill and Linda Fulkerson

Cover design by Linda Fulkerson - [www.bookmarketinggraphics.com](http://www.bookmarketinggraphics.com)

This is a work of fiction. Unless otherwise indicated, all names, characters, businesses, events, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

# Contents

ROMANCE AT REGISTER FIVE Amy R. Anguish	1
WHERE LOVE IS PLANTED Sarah Anne Crouch	91
SWEET DELIVERY Heather Greer	179
THE MERMAIDS, THE EX, AND USSS Rachel Herod	275
More Romance Collections from Scrivenings Press	357



A NOVELLA

ROMANCE  
*at register five*

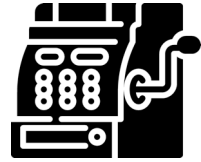
AMY R. ANGUISH



*For my Aunt Karan, who is like another mom to me. She's also one of the most creative people I know. And proves each day her strength as she lives with her MS. I'm so glad God blessed me with you!*



# Chapter 1



The strawberry blonde looked familiar.

Mack McDonald prided himself on knowing who came through his store. After all, what was the point of running a small-town grocery if he couldn't give the best customer service? And how could a person give good service without knowing the customers?

Sassafra, Arkansas, only had about twelve thousand people. And that was on the day of the annual watermelon festival. Most of the year, like now in October, the numbers hovered closer to ten thousand.

The woman paid little attention while Mack rang up her canned goods and snack items. Instead, she bent over her wallet. As he scanned a package of candy, something seemed off about her purchases. What was it?

Mack tried not to pass judgment on what people bought when they came through his register, but it was hard seeing someone in such good shape buying so much junk food. Maybe she was having a bad day.

He finally recalled the last time he'd rung her up. She'd



bought all organic veggies, gluten-free pasta, and vegan meat substitutes. Today's order was the complete opposite.

"Not in the mood for veggies today?" He started a conversation, hoping something would trigger his memory, and he could figure out if he'd heard her name before. The nametag clipped to her shirt did no good, showing only the back.

She laughed. "Oh, these aren't for me."

With a swipe of her card, she was done and pushing her groceries toward the door. So much for getting to know her. He should've said something earlier. More than "Hi. How ya doin'?"

Maybe next time. Surely he wouldn't forget her more than once. Especially if she returned to her health foods.

He wiped down the conveyor belt then straightened the candy and magazines at the end of his aisle. The first hour after opening was one of the busier times, and people often tossed last-minute discards among the periodicals. The most frustrating finds were the ones needing refrigeration. No telling how long they'd been sitting at room temperature.

"Jorge, can you come take care of these for me?" Mack held up an armful of items to be reshelved.

"Sure thing, boss." Jorge maneuvered the products into a cart and pushed it away.

Candie, Mack's assistant manager, came in. "Welcome back, boss. Good vacation?"

"It was okay. Can't complain too much about a few days off, but it's good to be back. You know I can't stand not being busy."

Candie shook her head. "More power to you. I'd love to take a vacation, but I need the money." She leaned against the counter. "Speaking of money, did I keep everything running well enough while you were gone?"

*Romance at Register Five*

“As if I’ve had time to go over reports today.” Mack laughed and waved her out of the way as another customer arrived. “I’ll look over things this afternoon when we have more cashiers on hand.”

“Let me know if you have any questions.”

She sauntered off as he rang up Moses Perry’s weekly supply of fruits and yogurt—ingredients for his daily smoothie. Candie’s mannerisms had been fishy, but he didn’t have time to think about it now. Moses liked to talk.

Moses frowned. “Couldn’t find any strawberries worth buying today. All of them were bruised or moldy.”

“October isn’t a good month for strawberries, Mr. Moses. I do the best I can to get good ones, but you’re going to have to wait until May and June before you start seeing good berries again. We have some frozen back there.”

“Frozen aren’t the right texture.” The older man’s hands trembled as he pulled out several twenties. “Can’t stand when the texture is off.”

“All right. I’m sorry we didn’t have any berries worth buying today. I’ll have Candie weed out the bad ones, okay?” Mack made change and handed Moses his receipt. “Need me to bring you a pint later?”

Moses waved him off. “I’ve survived worse times than a week without strawberries.”

“You have a good week, Mr. Moses.”

The older man shuffled out the door. He was in the store like clockwork each Wednesday, wanting to get the freshest items after the store clerks unloaded their mid-week truck the night before. And he was a good example of how well Mack usually remembered his customers. So, why couldn’t he place the blonde from earlier? Was she new in town?

And why was he more intrigued with her than his other customers?



GROCERY SHOPPING for other people wasn't Kaitlyn Daniels's dream job. But it made ends meet while she waited for a full-time teaching position. That was one downside to moving during the school year. Nothing but substitute hours available. She snagged all those, too, if only to get a foot in the door for next year.

Why her mother chose the small town of Sassafras, Arkansas, Kaitlyn had no idea. Far as she could tell, it wasn't near anything but fields. It was about an hour north of Little Rock, where she grew up. Kaitlyn had settled near Fayetteville after college, while her mother downsized and relocated here. Mom claimed Sassafras had charm.

Maybe she was thinking of the quaint family-run grocery store, McDonald's. Not to be confused with the famous burger chain. The store wasn't huge, but it did stay well-stocked and clean, something Kaitlyn hadn't always found in chain grocers.

"Avocado, avocado." She scanned the dark green veggies in front of her. "Softer, riper, or something for later in the week?" To be on the safe side Kaitlyn sent a message with the hopes the customer would reply quickly.

On to the almond milk. Kaitlyn shook her head as she loaded up the carton along with several kinds of kombucha. At least this small-town store carried such items. A few years ago, she'd have had to travel to Little Rock to find the fermented drink.

Her phone buzzed. Ah. Riper. She returned to the avocados and finished her order. One more scan of the list showed she had everything. On to the register.

The same man who had rung up yesterday's order stood at the register. His hairline, or lack thereof, was deceiving. When he spoke with her yesterday, he came across much closer to her

age—late-twenties. Would he comment again? This order was opposite of the junk food. She set the veggies and fruits on the belt.

“Hello, again.” His eyes crinkled at the edges when he flashed her a smile.

She couldn’t help but grin in return. “Hi.”

“Doin’ okay today?”

“Pretty good.” Not a riveting conversation, but what else could she say? He hadn’t asked for her life history, and she wouldn’t have shared it anyway.

He weighed the butternut squash. “Going healthy again today, huh?”

“This isn’t for me, either.”

A frown crossed his face, and she schooled her smirk. Didn’t he know his store participated in Grocerease, the new-to-this-area grocery shopping and delivery service?

“You’re awfully nice to shop for so many other people.” He scanned the last bottle of kombucha and pointed to the screen. “Fifty-four, sixty-seven.”

She slipped her company card through the reader. “Thanks. But it’s not so much about being nice. I get paid to do it.”

“You get paid to grocery shop?”

She quickly tapped the app on her phone to show the logo. “I work for Grocerease.”

The red creeping up his neck and over his stubbly face darkened his already dark tan. His flush showed brighter on his shaved head. Was he angry at her? Why?

He jerked the receipt off the register and thrust it at her, offering no other words. Instead, he stormed toward the door marked *office*. Weird.



“I’M HOME, MOM!” Kaitlyn pushed through her garage door and into the kitchen.

“In here.”

The temperature in the house sent shivers up Kaitlyn’s arms, but the cool air kept Mom more comfortable, so Kaitlyn stashed cardigans throughout the house for when she needed to warm up. She drew the sleeves over her arm as she walked into the living room.

“Whatcha up to?”

“Not much. Trying to work on some props Barb can use in Bible class on Sunday. She’s sharing the story of the apostles fishing, so I’m trying to rig a net of sorts.”

Yarn was laid out in a crisscross pattern over half the living room floor. Mom was knotting the intersections one piece at a time, but it resembled a fishing net to a point. And since Mom’s health wasn’t reliable, this activity enabled her to help with the Sunday school program.

“Looks good.”

“Something’s wrong.” Mom pointed a finger. “You look worried.”

“Not worried. Just had a weird experience.”

“Oh?”

Kaitlyn eased down into a wingback chair. “I was checking out with that last order for Grocerease and the checker mentioned how I purchased health food today instead of the junk I bought yesterday. I commented that I wasn’t shopping for myself, but that I worked for Grocerease. He barely finished handing me the receipt before he stormed off.”

“Which store?” Mom narrowed her eyes. “Mack’s or Foodland?”

Kaitlyn shook her head. “I was at McDonald’s.”

“Was it Mack who rang you up?”

*Romance at Register Five*

She hadn't even paid attention to the ID tag on his shirt. "I don't know."

"Around your age, smooth head, friendly smile?" One of mom's eyebrows lifted.

"Sounds right. Why?"

"That store has been in Mack's family for ages. His great-grandfather opened it around the turn of the century. And Mack was raised to keep everything exactly as it always has been. He doesn't do change well."

"But Grocerease isn't changing anything for him. Except that he'll see me quite a bit." Kaitlyn shrugged. "What's the big deal?"

"I don't know, but I'd almost bet it has something to do with this app you work for. Don't take it personally."

"I'd better get our dinner started." Kaitlyn pushed back to her feet and wandered into the kitchen, her mind awlirl.

Was he that upset over her buying groceries for other people? Why?