



The Divine Proverb of Streusel

Sara Brunsvold

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A heartbroken woman who's estranged from her father confronts her relationship fears while exploring German cooking in Sara Brunsvold's homespun Christian novel *The Divine Proverb of Streusel*.

Though her boyfriend, Isaac, is eager to plan for their future, Nikki is more hesitant. Her father, Chris, left her mother after twenty-nine years and soon remarried; Nikki feels betrayed, and her resentment alienates Isaac. Meanwhile, Nikki's family members—including her uncle, Wes—also contend with the fallout from Chris's decision. They are patient with Nikki's raw feelings—and with the fact that she seems to be running from her problems.

For Nikki, the family farmhouse beckons. There, she discovers her ancestors' cookbook. She follows the cookbook's recipes, which are accompanied by notes and faith-filled advice. She makes a hoppel poppel (a leftovers-and-eggs casserole); she bakes crumb cake. Through this work, she comes to understand the strains in her family better, and her sense of her heritage blooms.

Warm and wise, the novel's focus alternates between Nikki and her relatives. Wes is nonjudgmental and calm, and there are intriguing hints about his past—as well as some sweet romantic interest. An elderly aunt of Nikki's is involved in an enthusiastic ladies' league, whose members are a fun counterpoint to Nikki's brooding.

In time with her cooking experiments, Nikki works on restoring the farmhouse. This work is complemented by religious ideas of rebirth, which are also made to apply to the book's relationships. There are also themes related to healing with the help of one's community; shared stories; and fanciful musings concerning kitchen creativity—and the foresight involved in leaving one's descendants a guidebook in disguise.

In the empathetic and uplifting novel *The Divine Proverb of Streusel*, a woman at a crossroads is drenched in family nostalgia and considers forgiveness.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2024)

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