

**REMEMBERING**

Books in the Valley of Artisans Series

by AmyLu Riley

Remembering

Open for Miracles

A Winter Wedding in the Valley of Artisans

Ordinary Miracles

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# REMEMBERING

AMYL U RILEY

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## *Chapter One*

RIVER CARTER HAD never liked goat cheese, until she finally tried it. And now she could not eat a fresh peach or a spinach salad without thinking about how well goat cheese went with either one, and how all goat cheese really *lacked* was a more appetizing name.

However, as she rolled her bike down the driveway toward the mailbox, she realized with some disappointment that *she* lacked the cheese itself, because she had forgotten to buy any yesterday during her grocery run. Her spinach salad would just have to carry on for dinner tonight without her favorite topping.

River briefly wondered if there might be space here in the yard at Grandma's house—well, *her* house, now—to keep an actual goat. Not that she would have time for a pet with all she was about to embark on. Maybe there'd be time for a pet of

some kind later, she told herself, but definitely not now.

Holding her bike's handlebars with one hand, River flipped open the door of the mailbox. *E. Carter* it read in black script on the side of the large metal box, amidst a swirl of painted green and white moonflower vines and flowers.

She would have to find out if the artist who had painted the mailbox mural was still here in the Valley. She would like to have her own first initial put on the mailbox, and maybe have some vines of blue morning glory added to the design while she was at it.

*Empty.* Maybe she had already gotten the mail today, she thought, as a hummingbird zinged toward her on its way to the front flowerbed for its evening meal, then stopped in midair, hung there, and peered at her face.

*Here's something new,* its gaze seemed to say.

The bird was stunning, and River stared back. Its jeweled green feathers shimmered even more brilliantly than the metallic glaze she loved to use on her pottery.



“Hello, sweetie,” she said in a gentle, friendly tone to the thumb-sized creature. “I’m River. I live here now. May I call you Emerald?”

The little bird seemed to consider her for another split second before zipping off into the shelter of a nearby tree.

*Well, River thought, getting onto her bike and pedaling into the road, that’s the kind of pet I’ll have time for.*



When she reached the top of the low rise where Great-Aunt Della’s house and café had stood River’s entire life, River stopped her bike in the road and just drank in the picture.

The structure looked a little bit like something transported from a European village, but she knew that her great-uncle, Della’s brother Jim, had built it—and the guest house behind it—himself, right here on this spot in what he called *God’s Country*, in southern Indiana.

In River’s family, everything south of Indianapolis seemed to be considered *southern*

*Indiana*. And River remembered wondering as a young child why Uncle Jim felt that the top half of the state should be excluded from God's special favor. It was one of those mysteries that River had pondered as a girl but neither solved nor inquired about, so it had just been filed away in some drawer in the back of her mind, along with a million other things.

As she stood there astride the bicycle on Lantern Ridge Road, drinking in the perfect weather and the profuse flowerbeds that spilled color over half of Aunt Della's front yard, she thought how funny it was that that particular obscure childhood memory about her great-uncle should present itself to her now.

Even though River was mostly recovered from a toxic mold exposure that had caused neurological symptoms, her memory could still be like a hummingbird at times, arriving—or flitting away—entirely on its own terms. One could no more direct it than one could summon a hummingbird. If she *could*, she would request that it save and produce useful pieces of information—like remembering to buy goat cheese and recalling

that she'd already gotten the mail today—instead of offering her spontaneously retrieved, decades-old facts she had no need of, such as the name of the old man from her childhood church who had always worn suspenders.

“You might as well laugh as cry,” Grandma had been known for saying. And laugh is exactly what River had decided to do.

And now that she was doing much better, River's family had encouraged her to make the move here and take over the potter's wheel that her grandmother had always promised would one day be hers.

Of course, it was more than just the wheel. Being here also meant running the shop and participating as an active member of the artisan community—helping to organize festivals and events for visitors, and generally doing her part to help make the Valley of Artisans a thriving tourist destination.

For all of the shop owners here, their craft was their number-one love. But, as her great-uncle had once remarked, “As long as you have the habit of eating, you're going to need to make money.”

Tourists had once flocked in large numbers to the many shops here, and the artisans who remained in the Valley hoped those numbers would surge again. Many of the original craftspeople had retired and closed their shops, while others carried on just as they always had. Some, like River, represented a younger generation who were now stepping into the shoes—and shops—of their elders. They all had a lot of work ahead of them to once again make the Valley of Artisans a thriving tourist destination, delighting visitors and thereby feeding the makers' habits of both creating art and taking meals at regular intervals.

River waved and smiled genially as a departing café customer got into a small car parked on the street and pulled away. She didn't recognize the driver. River pedaled up to the café's ground floor porch and public entrance, and stowed her bike, leaning it against the painted bench. As she stepped inside and pushed the wood door shut, the delicious scents of her great-aunt's cooking greeted her.

“River, honey! I thought it was about time we’d be seeing you.” Aunt Della came around the counter and enfolded River in a big hug.

A few feet away, at a sturdy, dark wooden table, Uncle Jim was finishing a plate of fish. He smiled at River and swallowed an entire mouthful of food in one gulp. “Hello there, stranger,” he said, getting up to give her a hug.

“Would you like a plate of the special?” Aunt Della asked. “I ate earlier between customers and Jim’s just finishing up, but there’s plenty for you in the warmer.”

Della’s cooking was legendary in the Valley, but twilight was already falling and River didn’t like to bicycle in the dark, so she declined, with a promise to come back to the café soon and join them for a meal.

Aunt Della reached into her pocket and pulled out a key on a painted leather keychain that was made to look like a sandal. River had seen her grandmother use that same key many times to unlock the pottery shop. Della handed it over to River now, without any fanfare, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that River should

now be the owner of both the shop and its former proprietor's key.

"How is the unpacking going at the house? Do you need anything?" Aunt Della asked. "Did you forget anything important?"

"It actually went pretty quickly," River said, zipping the shop key securely inside her bag. "In fact, I'm pretty much finished at the house for now. And I stopped for groceries on my way into town this morning, so I think I have everything I need at the moment, but thanks. Well, everything except the goat cheese I forgot to put on the list, but I can live without that." River laughed. "If it's not on the list, it doesn't have a chance."

Aunt Della laughed her rich, broad laugh. "Well, my sister always said, '*Forgetting* may be out of your hands, but *forgiving* is always in reach.'"

River laughed. "That sounds like something Grandma would have put on one of her signs."

Jim snorted appreciatively at this apt characterization of his and Della's beloved sister's penchant for sayings, and a mouthful of coffee tried to escape through his nose.

“Well, I can’t think of anyone I need to forgive,” said River. “But then,” she added with a playful smile, “I *usually* can’t think of anything I’ve forgotten.”

## *Chapter Two*

AS THE MORNING sun did its best to burn through the bedroom curtains, River stood on the opposite side of the room and ran her hand across the clothes she had hung the day before in the small closet of her new, but very old, home. What, she wondered, was the right sort of thing to wear for the first day of the rest of one's life?

She would be attending a meeting of the Artisans' Guild this morning, and she wanted to look presentable for that, but she would also be cleaning at the pottery shop that had been closed for too long. She decided that the day's agenda was too much to ask of any one outfit. She would dress for the meeting, and take along a change of clothes.

She pulled out a pair of blue linen pants and a matching top. The outfit required ironing every time it was washed, so she never selected it lightly. Ironing meant just that many minutes of one's life



that one would never get back. But this occasion seemed like a worthy one.

Once that task was done, and the outfit had already been wrinkled by the mere act of putting it onto a body with bendable arms and legs, River tucked her work clothes into her well-worn leather bag, along with a notebook and some pens. She planned to take meticulous notes during the meeting, not the least of which would be writing down everyone's names.

To help rebuild the tourism that had once been the lifeblood of the Valley, the Artisans' Guild wanted to bring the seasonal festivals back to the level of their former glory. Today's session was the first meeting to make a collective plan for doing just that.

River was excited about the idea. She remembered those festivals from her childhood. She knew how much everyone—residents and visitors alike—had enjoyed those occasions. And now, as the owner of a pottery shop, she also realized how important they would be for the profitability of her business and that of the other artisans' shops, as well.

She pulled the backpack-style straps of her bag up onto her shoulders, snapped on her bike helmet, and walked out to the garage. A first-day-of-school kind of feeling washed over River—a feeling of anticipation, combined with that empty space one’s stomach makes for the unknown when one is irrevocably headed into it.



END OF SAMPLE



*There is more just waiting for you  
in the Valley of Artisans series!*

[Remembering](#) - Book 1

River Carter arrives in the Valley of Artisans to reopen her family’s pottery shop in time for the fall tourist season. But instead of an exciting new beginning, will pain from her past shatter her peace?

[Open for Miracles](#) – Book 2

It’s WinterFest time in the Valley of Artisans, and River Carter’s new life may be about to snowball.

Uncle Jim and Sara announce a winter wedding—but will their trip down the aisle end before it begins? And when one of Vera's big prayers for River is answered, will life be the same for any of them again?

### [A Winter Wedding in the Valley of Artisans](#) -

#### Book 3

The Valley's charming wedding chapel is finally ready for its grand opening. But when an ice storm brings an unexpected wedding guest with questions for River Carter, where will his inquiries lead?

### [Ordinary Miracles](#) – Book 4

River Carter is unexpectedly faced with a challenge to her very beliefs about how God works. As she transforms her neglected garden into a place of inspiring beauty, will she find herself coming to life in a new way, as well?

## About AmyLu Riley



AmyLu Riley is the author of inspirational fiction and nonfiction books that grow out of her friendship with God. She lives in Indiana, United States, with her husband, Richard Riley, and their Golden Retriever, Annie. Visit [amylu-riley.com](http://amylu-riley.com).

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