

A  
REVELATION  
*in* AUTUMN



THE  
*DISCOVERY*  
PART 5 OF 6

*A Lancaster County Saga*

A  
REVELATION  
*in* AUTUMN

WANDA &  
BRUNSTETTER



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*In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust:  
let me never be put to confusion.*

PSALM 71:1



# CHAPTER 1

*Bird-in-Hand, Pennsylvania*

“Don’t push, Meredith! Don’t push!” Laurie shouted as she directed her horse and buggy to a clearing along the side of the road next to an open field. The closest farm was some distance away, and Meredith didn’t think there was enough time for them to get there.

A slight breeze picked up, and Meredith caught a glimpse of some fuzzy-looking dandelion seeds drifting through the air like little parachutes. The once-yellow meadow, where they’d pulled over, was now white with the globe-shaped seed bundles. One particular

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cycle of life was slowly coming to an end, while another's life was soon to begin.

Meredith ground her teeth together as another contraction came quickly, pulling her focus away from the dandelions. The pains were closer together, and she knew she shouldn't fight them, but it was hard to remember to breathe, like she'd been taught to do in the childbirth classes. Was it supposed to hurt this much? This certainly was not how she'd planned for her baby to be born. She'd imagined herself having plenty of warning and giving birth under the direction of the midwife at the clinic, not here in a buggy with her panicked sister, whom she was now forced to count on to help deliver this baby.

Meredith tried to remember what the instructor had told them during one of the classes, about what to do if the baby came unexpectedly at home. *"First and foremost, stay calm. Put the breathing techniques you've learned into play. Don't push prematurely. Keep your body relaxed, and work with nature."*

Struggling to deal with the pain, Meredith felt what seemed like a million emotions swirl



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through her brain. Her life was about to change in enormous ways. She had thought about this moment so many times, and now within minutes of this baby being born, it worried her even more. *Will I be able to do all of this on my own as I take on the role of being both mother and father? Can I provide for my baby?*

Meredith would have given anything if Luke could have been here right now, holding her hand and guiding her through each contraction. She was sure he would have remained calm and helped bring their baby into the world. Luke would have been a wonderful father. But this baby would never experience the joy of having Luke as his or her daddy.

She straightened her shoulders and drew in a deep breath. Well, Luke wasn't here, and with God's help, she would be guided along the way. First things first, though. She and Laurie would have to do this birth on their own, no matter how frightened either of them felt.

“‘In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion,’” Meredith quoted from Psalm 71:1. She clasped Laurie's hand tightly. “First and foremost, we need to pray

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and ask God to settle our nerves and guide us through this procedure.”

“You’re right.” Laurie bowed her head. “Heavenly Father,” she prayed aloud, “please give me the courage and wisdom to help Meredith bring this precious new life into the world. And I ask that You protect Meredith and the baby. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

“We need to gather some things,” Meredith said, opening her eyes and focusing on what had to be done.

“What kind of things?” Laurie questioned, looking anxiously at Meredith. “I don’t have much in my buggy and certainly nothing to help deliver a *boppli*.”

“Do you have some clean newspaper?”

Laurie shook her head.

“How about a blanket or quilt?”

“There’s a blanket in the backseat that Kevin and I used when we went on a picnic a few weeks ago. Oh, and there’s also a large towel that I covered the picnic basket with.”

“That’s good. Get them, and place the blanket under me,” Meredith said as she positioned herself with her back leaning against

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the buggy door for support.

She would have given anything to have a comfortable mattress beneath her instead of this narrow buggy seat. But during the childbirth classes, she'd learned there were far more unusual places some babies had chosen to be born. One day in the future, this would be some exciting story to share with her child.

“There’s a bottle of hand sanitizer in my purse. You can use some of that to clean your hands and arms really good,” Meredith told Laurie, taking control. “Since there isn’t much room on the buggy seat, you’ll need to stand outside with the door open so you can help this boppli make his or her appearance.”

With her face looking a little less tense and a bit calmer, Laurie did as she was asked, and then she took her place outside of the buggy, in front of Meredith. “Try to pant, and only push very gently with each contraction,” she said.

“I know. I know. But *danki* for reminding me,” Meredith answered, willing herself to concentrate as another contraction came. Feeling a little less panicky herself, she was glad her sister sounded more in control. Hopefully

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between the two of them, they'd keep their wits and get through this without too much difficulty. Besides, there was no time to dwell on how apprehensive she felt. The baby was coming, and it was happening now!



Jonah stayed around Deacon Raber's place for a while after church, visiting with some of the men. However, when his ankle started throbbing, he knew he'd been on his feet too long, so he decided it was time to go home and rest for the remainder of the day. He needed to prop up his foot because his walking cast seemed tighter. Jonah could only assume his ankle was swelling, and the sooner he got home and off his feet, the better it would be.

Mom and Dad had come to church in their own buggy, and seeing that they were occupied with friends, he figured he probably wouldn't be missed. Besides, Jonah looked forward to spending some time alone, where he could think about his future—a future he hoped to spend with Meredith and her baby.

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“Would ya like me to get your *gaul* and hitch him up to your buggy?” Meredith’s twelve-year-old brother, Stanley, asked when Jonah headed for the corral where he’d left his horse.

“I appreciate the offer,” Jonah said, smiling at the boy, “but Socks is a bit spirited, so he might be hard to catch.”

“That’s okay. I’m sure I can manage.” The child grinned up at him, looking full of confidence. “Besides, with your foot still in that walkin’ cast, it’d probably be hard for you to catch him.”

“You might be right about that.” Jonah smiled. “So if you feel up to the challenge, go right ahead.”

Stanley hurried off toward the corral, while Jonah stood near his buggy. To his surprise, the boy showed up a few minutes later, holding Socks’s lead rope in one hand, while the horse followed obediently behind.

“Here ya go,” Stanley announced. “I got him for ya, just like I said I would.”

*Well, would ya look at that?* Jonah thought. “I appreciate your efforts. Did he give you any trouble?”

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Stanley shook his head. “After I showed him a lump of sugar, he followed me like a *hund*. I remember Luke sayin’ how that always worked for him.”

Jonah chuckled. Over the last few months, Socks had tamed down quite a bit. He seemed to have accepted Jonah as his new master, but the horse had never followed him like a dog. “Guess I’ll have to get some sugar cubes and carry them in my pocket,” he said, taking the lead rope from Stanley.

“Want me to hitch him to your buggy?” the boy asked, seeming eager to please.

Jonah was on the verge of telling Stanley not to bother, when he remembered what the bishop had said during his message. The sermon had been about servanthood and how folks should not only help others when they saw a need but be willing to accept help, too. “If we don’t accept help when it’s offered to us, we’re being prideful,” the bishop had said. “We also steal that person’s blessing if we reject their help, for it is truly more blessed to give than receive.”

“*Jah*, sure, go ahead and hitch Socks up,”

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Jonah said. "I'll just wait inside the buggy till you have him ready to go."

Stanley flashed him a wide smile and led Socks around to the front of the buggy. While he worked at getting the horse hitched, Jonah limped around to the right side of the buggy and climbed into the driver's seat, yearning to get the weight off his feet.

*Someday, when I have kinner of my own, I'll be teaching them to do things like this,* he thought, watching to be sure Stanley did everything just right.

An image of Meredith flashed into his head. *If I'm ever fortunate enough to make Meredith my wife, I wonder how many children we'll have and if they'll have my dark curly hair or be blessed with Meredith's beautiful strawberry-blond hair. Would our daughters have Meredith's sweet personality? Would the boys want to learn the trade of buggy making from me?*

It was foolish to daydream like this, but he couldn't seem to help himself. He'd fallen hopelessly in love with Meredith and wanted nothing more than to make her his wife. Realistically, though, it was too soon for him

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to even hint at such a thing to Meredith. Her husband had been gone nearly six months, but she was still in mourning. If Jonah expressed his feelings to her, and she reciprocated, they'd have to wait to be married until she set her black mourning clothes aside after Luke had been gone a year.

*Guess that's really not so long, Jonah told himself. It's just a little over six months from now, so I'll take one day at a time and try to be patient. I'll keep helping Meredith whenever I can, and wait to see what develops between us.* The friendship Jonah and Meredith shared had been special when they were in Florida years ago, but for him, at least, recently their friendship had grown even deeper. Meredith was precious to Jonah, and for now, difficult as it was, loving her secretly was enough. Someday, he hoped, she would love him equally.

"Socks is ready to go!" Stanley called, disrupting Jonah's thoughts.

"Danki. You did good." Jonah waved and directed Socks up the driveway and onto the main road. Looking back, he saw Stanley's smile spread from ear to ear, making him glad



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he'd let the young boy help him.

Riding down the road, Jonah relaxed and let Socks take the lead. As they passed a field, he noticed how the dandelions had gone to seed and realized that the season was approaching an end. He thought about how he'd always liked the months during springtime and how ever since he could remember, his mother would pick tender dandelion sprouts every March. After washing them several times, she'd mix them with a little onion and cooking oil. Jonah usually ate so much his mouth would turn dry, but he didn't care. For a couple of weeks each year, Jonah's family enjoyed this special springtime salad. Sometimes, Mom cooked the dandelions and drizzled bacon-flavored dressing over them. But as far as Jonah was concerned, there was nothing like eating it freshly picked. It not only tasted good, but as Mom had often told him, the dandelion weed was full of healthy vitamins.

Jonah had only made it halfway home when he spotted a horse and buggy along the side of the road. After a second look, he realized the rig belonged to Meredith's sister Laurie, so

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he pulled over next to the field to see if there might be a problem.

*I wonder what's going on.* Jonah didn't see anyone at first, and then he spotted Laurie standing outside the buggy with the door open.

He tied Socks to a nearby tree then reached up to scratch where a dandelion seed had tickled his nose as it slowly wafted by in the breeze. Seeing that Laurie's horse hadn't been tied, he secured it, too. Then, hobbling toward the buggy, he called, "Is everything all right in there?"

Laurie turned to him with a panicked expression. "Meredith's boppli is about to be born. Could you get us some help?"

Jonah stood a few seconds, letting her words sink in; realizing the seriousness of the situation, he said, "I'll find the nearest phone shack and call 911."

Untying his horse and stepping back into his buggy, Jonah got Socks moving at a fast trot as he headed for the next Amish farm down the road. He barely took notice that his cast felt even tighter, making his ankle throb all the more. *Dear Lord*, he silently prayed, *please be with Meredith right now, and if help doesn't arrive*

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*before the boppli is born, let the birth go smoothly for both the mother and her child.*



“Oh, Meredith,” Laurie said with a catch in her voice, “I don’t think this boppli’s gonna wait until help arrives. I can see the baby’s head already!”

Meredith felt a mixture of excitement and trepidation. As anxious as she was to hold her baby, she feared something might go wrong during the delivery. Neither she nor Laurie had ever delivered a baby before, but they had the knowledge of what to expect and had witnessed puppies and kittens being born. But that wasn’t the same as delivering a baby on the front seat of an Amish buggy instead of in a sterile delivery room.

“Put your hands in front of the boppli’s head, and let it come out nice and slow,” Meredith instructed, trying to keep her voice calm and reassuring, even though she was anything but relaxed.

“I know. The baby’s supposed to slide out slowly, in waves, as your uterus contracts.”

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Laurie sounded more confident, as though remembering the things they'd been taught in the classes. "Don't push too hard, Meredith; just pant and push gently until the baby's head is fully out. You're doing great so far."

Meredith did as her sister told her to do. "You're doing pretty good yourself, Laurie," she said, hoping to offer encouragement. Trying to control her breathing as another contraction knifed through her, Meredith bit down on her lip, ignoring the metallic taste of blood, knowing that soon she'd be holding her precious baby.

"The baby's head is out now," Laurie said, her voice rising with a sense of excitement. "I'll use one of my clean handkerchiefs to wipe away the fluid from the baby's airway."

"Whatever you do, don't pull on the baby," Meredith coached. "Just guide its shoulders out. Once that happens, the boppli will slip right through the birth canal, so hold on tight."

"The boppli is out, Meredith! And guess what? It's a *bu!*"

"Thank the Lord!" Tears welled in Meredith's eyes as Laurie placed the baby facedown across her stomach, and she was able to look

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upon her precious son for the very first time. “Make certain his airway is cleared, and then cover him with the towel. Oh, and be sure you leave his face uncovered so he can breathe.”

Laurie did everything Meredith said, and when the baby started to cry, both women did, too. It was one of the most emotional moments Meredith had ever experienced, and she felt euphoric.

“I’m going to name him Levi Luke,” Meredith murmured once she was able to speak without sobbing. “He’ll never get to meet his father or great-grandfather, but I want him to have both of their names.”

“That’s so special,” Laurie said, wiping the perspiration from Meredith’s forehead. “I know Luke and Grandpa Smucker would be real pleased.”

The birth of a baby was one of the most natural things in the world, but to Meredith, it was a miracle—her and Luke’s special gift to the world. Already, she could feel the power of love between mother and child. It was a bond like no other—one she would protect for the rest of her life.