

GOODBYE  
*to*  
YESTERDAY



THE  
*DISCOVERY,*  
PART I

*A Lancaster County Saga*

GOODBYE  
*to*  
YESTERDAY

WANDA &  
BRUNSTETTER



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To all my Amish friends who live in Pennsylvania.  
I appreciate your friendship and hospitality.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,  
whose mind is stayed on thee:  
because he trusteth in thee.*

ISAIAH 26:3



# CHAPTER 1

*Bird-in-Hand, Pennsylvania*

“Would you like another piece of bacon?” Meredith Stoltzfus asked her husband, Luke, barely able to look at his grim expression as he sat across from her at the breakfast table.

“No thanks,” Luke mumbled. The sparkle was gone from his beautiful turquoise eyes, and there was no joy on his bearded face. They’d only been married a little over a year, and already the thrill seemed to have worn off. At least for Luke it must have. Meredith had been so sure about his love for her during their courting

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days and throughout the first eight months of marriage. But now Luke's attentiveness had been replaced with worry and defeat. When Luke lost his job at the nearby furniture store, everything had changed. Oh, not at first. Luke had been optimistic, saying he was sure the economy would turn around and that he'd either get hired back or would find another job where he could use his woodworking skills. But that had been six months ago, and he was still out of work, as were some of the other Amish men the store had let go. Luke hardly talked about it anymore, but Meredith knew it was eating at him.

"Would you like some more juice?" Meredith asked, reaching for the pitcher of apple juice.

He shook his head. "I'm fine. Haven't finished what's in my glass."

"No, you're not fine, and I wish you would talk about it instead of sitting there, staring at your plate."

He shrugged. "There's nothin' to talk about."

Meredith sighed. Lately, all she had to do was look at her husband to know he was



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depressed. Luke's stance was no longer confident. He walked slightly hunched over, with a look of uncertainty and doubt. Gone was his open-minded manner, replaced by edginess and impatience. Luke's folks had offered to help out financially, but Luke had turned them down. Since Luke's dad had sold his bulk food store and worked part-time for the man who'd bought it, Luke's folks were getting by okay, but they weren't well off. Meredith's parents wanted to help as well, but they had seven other children to raise—all still living at home. And Grandma Smucker had moved in with them two years ago, after Grandpa died of a heart attack, so she, too, needed their financial support. On more than one occasion, Meredith had suggested that she look for a job, but Luke wouldn't hear of that. He insisted that it was his job to provide for them.

Meredith, trying to be optimistic, was thankful that while Luke had been working at the furniture store, he'd put some money into a savings account he had started even before he'd met her. They'd been given some money

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from several people who'd attended their wedding, and that had gone into the bank as well. Since losing his job, Luke had sold some of his handcrafted projects at the local farmers' market, as well as at a few gift shops. That had helped some, but for the most part, they'd been living off their savings. That money wouldn't last forever, and Meredith feared they might be unable to meet all their financial obligations if Luke didn't find a job soon.

She sighed. Being forced to pinch pennies had put a strain on their marriage. When Meredith and Luke had first gotten married she'd been convinced that the love between them could withstand any hurdle. Now, she wasn't so sure. To make things more complicated, Meredith felt pretty sure she was pregnant. She'd sometimes been irregular but had never missed two consecutive months. After her appointment with a local midwife next week, she'd know for sure. She hadn't told Luke, though, and felt apprehensive about doing that before she was certain. He was already uptight about their finances, without worrying

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about the possibility of having another mouth to feed in about six months.

But if the midwife confirmed Meredith's suspicions, she'd have to tell Luke soon because it wouldn't be long before she'd start to show. If Luke could just find another job, all their worries would be put to rest.

She cleared her throat. "Uh, Luke, I need to do some shopping today, and I was wondering—would it be okay if I buy some paint for the spare bedroom next to ours?"

Luke's eyebrows furrowed as he pulled his fingers through the ends of his thick blond hair—so blond it was nearly white. "Using our money for groceries is one thing, but paint will have to wait till I'm working full-time again."

Meredith clenched and unclenched her fingers. *What would he say if he knew that spare room I want to paint is for the baby I believe I'm carrying? Should I go ahead and tell him right now, or would it be better to wait?* "I know we have to be careful with our money," she said, "but paint shouldn't cost that much."

"It costs more than I want to spend right

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now.” Luke drank the rest of his apple juice and pushed away from the table. “Now, if we’re done with this discussion, I need to go out to the barn.”

“But Luke, I really would like to paint that room because—”

“I said no, Meredith,” Luke said firmly. “We can’t afford to do any painting right now. The spare room can stay like it is for the time being. There’s no need to paint anyways, since we’re only using it for storage. Until we get on our feet again, we should leave well enough alone.”

“But Luke, if you knew—”

“*Mir sin immer am disch bediere iwwer eppes.*” He frowned. “And I’m gettin’ tired of it.”

“It does seem like we’re always arguing about something,” she agreed, “and I don’t like it, either.”

“Then let’s stop arguing and talk about something else.” Irritation edged Luke’s voice.

“You can be so *eegesinnisch* sometimes,” she muttered, looking away.

“I’m not being stubborn; I’m being practical, and as far as I’m concerned, this discussion is over!”

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Luke grabbed a dog biscuit and went out the back door, letting it slam behind him. Meredith flinched. It wasn't right for them to be quarreling like this. It wasn't good for their marriage, and if she was pregnant, it certainly wasn't good for the baby. She would never have imagined that their lives could have changed so drastically in such a short time.

Meredith jumped up, moving quickly to the kitchen window, watching through a film of tears as Luke tromped through the snow to fuss with his dog, Fritz, before going into the barn.

She ran her fingers over the cold glass. *I wish Luke would communicate with me as easily as he does with his dog.*

Sometimes Meredith wondered if it would be better for her to not even talk to Luke unless it was absolutely necessary. It was ridiculous to be thinking this way, especially since up until recently they'd always discussed things and made important decisions together. But wouldn't it be less stressful to keep quiet than to quarrel with him all the time?

A year ago, those thoughts would have

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never entered her mind. How was it that they were either behaving like total strangers or snapping at each other these days? When they were newly married, with their future spread out before them, Meredith had been full of hopes and dreams, and every day had been blissful. Now the discouraging job outlook was swallowing Luke up and affecting every aspect of their marriage.

Despite it being a nice idea to spruce up the terribly drab spare bedroom, Luke was probably right about not spending the money on paint with their finances so tight. Paint wasn't that expensive, but in Luke's eyes, it may as well cost a million dollars. Even a few cans of paint were a luxury they really couldn't afford. If the midwife confirmed Meredith's suspicions, then maybe she could start moving some boxes up to the attic. That would need to be done anyway, before it became a baby's room.

She reached for the teapot simmering on the stove and poured some hot water over a tea bag in a cup. While it steeped, she cleared the

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breakfast dishes and ran water into the sink. Then, blowing on the tea, she took a cautious sip. The warm liquid felt good on her parched throat. For now, she would forget about painting the room and stop adding to the anxiety her husband already felt.

*Lord, she silently prayed, please help Luke find another job soon, and while we're waiting, help us learn how to cope.*



“Sure wish I could find another job,” Luke mumbled as he crunched his way through the snow toward the barn. He and Meredith hadn’t argued at all until he’d gotten laid off. Now it seemed like all they did was argue. *Guess it’s mostly my fault, but I can’t help being fearful that we’ll lose everything if I don’t find something soon. Maybe I should quit being so stubborn and let Meredith look for a job. Maybe she’d have better luck finding one than I have.*

Luke had made good money working at the furniture store, but he’d been one of the newest

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men hired, so when things got tight, he was the first to go. He guessed during these hard economic times that people were buying less furniture, even the finely crafted kind. Luke had applied for several other jobs in the area, but no one seemed to be hiring. Even though he'd sold a few of his handcrafted items, that income wasn't enough to fully support them. This whole situation sure was discouraging!

“How are you doin’ there Fritz, ole boy?” Luke asked, hearing his German shorthaired pointer bark out a greeting and feeling glad for the diversion. “Don’t worry, I hear ya.” Entering the pen, he petted the head of his beloved companion and bird dog. Good ole Fritz. Luke loved that faithful critter, and he was glad Meredith loved the dog as much as he did.

Last winter, Meredith had insisted on bringing Fritz into the house, where she felt he would be warmer. Luke would have preferred to keep the dog outside in the kennel like he had when he was still living at home. But after a while, Meredith convinced him to let Fritz



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become a part-time house pet. Those times that he was allowed to stay inside, Fritz would lie right by their feet while Luke and Meredith ate popcorn or played board games. At night while they slept, Fritz was like their guardian angel, lying on the floor by the foot of their bed, watching over them and keeping the house safe from intruders. So now only on rare occasions did Fritz stay outside in his kennel at night.

Luke squatted down and scratched the soft fur behind the dog's ears, while Fritz gazed back at him with trusting brown eyes. Fritz was beautifully marked. His head was a solid liver color, and his body was speckled with spots and patches of liver and white. Fritz was affectionate and gentle with everyone. He'd no doubt be good with their children when Luke and Meredith started a family. Luke didn't have that in mind when he'd first purchased Fritz, of course, but it just so happened that the breed produced not only excellent hunting dogs but also good family pets.

Most times, Fritz accompanied Luke when

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he went to visit his parents. Even Mom and Dad's barn cats tolerated the dog when he'd bound over to greet them in his happy-go-lucky manner. Sometimes, it seemed as if they actually enjoyed his company, when they'd lie down beside him on a bed of straw and take a nap.

"Do you want to play fetch?" Luke asked.

Fritz tilted his head to one side, as though understanding exactly what his master meant, and then, like a streak of lightning, he took off across the yard.

*How can dogs be so smart that way—understanding what people are saying to them? Luke wondered. Sometimes I think that critter's smarter than me.*

"Find a stick, boy!" Luke commanded, watching Fritz run around with his nose to the ground.

In no time, Fritz returned with a small branch that Luke could throw for him to retrieve. If Luke let him, the energetic dog could run for hours. Then he'd flop on the floor and sleep for hours.

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From the time Luke bought Fritz, when he was an eight-week-old puppy, he and the dog had bonded. Fritz followed Luke everywhere. He'd had an easy time training Fritz, too, and there wasn't anything the dog wouldn't do for him. So loyal and willing to please his master, Fritz would sit in anticipation, eagerly waiting for Luke's next command. Good ole Fritz was the best bird dog ever. At least Luke thought so. With hardly any training, Fritz tracked and flushed pheasant, rabbit, or grouse as well as any spaniel or retriever.

As he and Fritz played fetch, Luke looked toward the house. He and Meredith had been so excited after their home was built. Luke had beamed with satisfaction when his wife thanked him for all the hard work he had done in constructing the home. Their wedding ceremony had taken place at Meredith's childhood home, but afterward, everyone had come back here to celebrate and share the wedding meal. The fall day had been warm, so they'd set up long tables in the yard to accommodate the large crowd, as well as the variety of food and

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desserts that everyone enjoyed. It had been a wonderful day, starting their new life together surrounded by family and friends. Luke had felt good about their roomy two-story home that he hoped would one day be filled with their children's laughter.

"Come on, boy. That's enough for today," Luke finally called, clapping his hands after having given his dog a small workout. He wished he could spend more time with Fritz, but he had chores that needed to get done. "I see your water dish is frozen," Luke said, whacking the ice onto the ground and then refilling the bowl with fresh water.

Fritz wagged his docked tail and anxiously sniffed Luke's hand.

"*Jah*, here it is. You know I always have a treat for ya." Luke grinned as Fritz gently took the dog biscuit he offered him.

Seeing that Fritz was relaxed and content with the biscuit between his paws, Luke stepped into the barn and quickly shut the door. It was bitterly cold, and the wind howled noisily, finding its way through the cracks in the walls.

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He'd be glad when spring came, and he hoped he would have a job by then.

*It's a good thing it's only me and Meredith right now, Luke thought as he stepped into his horse's stall. If we had a family to feed, I'd be even more troubled than I am.*

Luke was glad they didn't owe any money on their house. He'd built it with the help of friends and family, and all of the building materials had been purchased by Grandpa Stoltzfus, who had since passed away. Despite the lack of a mortgage payment, property taxes still needed to be paid come spring. Taxes alone were high enough, but so far, they'd been manageable. But like nearly everything else, they were supposed to go up this year, and Luke hoped their savings account would still have enough money to cover the bill when it came due. If he could just sell a few more of the wooden things he'd made. Of course, that money would be nothing compared to the wages he'd earned at the furniture store.

Luke thought about Meredith's request to buy paint. He hated saying no to her. If he could,

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he wouldn't deny his wife anything. Normally, Meredith was quite understanding. For that, and many other reasons, Luke felt blessed. She wasn't the type to ask for much, and buying some paint was really no big expense—that is, until now. It may as well be the moon she was asking for. And while she only wanted to paint the room, most home projects inevitably led to more, so for now, painting or any other home improvement just wasn't a necessity.

Luke knew Meredith was concerned about their finances, too. He also knew she kept herself extra busy around the house so she wouldn't fret so much about him being out of a job. That's how Meredith had always dealt with things. She hadn't slept well since he'd been out of work, either. Many a night, he'd wake up and discover her standing in front of their bedroom window, staring out at the moon. Well, Luke was worried, too, and it was taking a toll on him. He'd become irritable and impatient, often snapping at Meredith for no reason. He owed her an apology and planned to do that as soon as he returned to the house.

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Shaking his thoughts aside, Luke fed and groomed their two horses and then cleaned out their stalls. Taffy was Meredith's horse, and rightly named. The mare was the color of deep molasses taffy, with a mane and tail that was almost black. Luke's horse, Socks, was appropriately named, too. All four of the gelding's feet had white patches that looked like socks, and while pulling their buggy, it appeared as if he was showing them off with each prancing step he took.

When Luke was done with his chores in the barn, he decided to walk down the driveway to the phone shack to check for any messages.

Inside the small building it was so cold and damp that Luke's teeth began to chatter, and when he blew out, he could see his breath, heavy in the air. Blowing on his hands for some warmth, he clicked on the answering machine to listen to the first message.

"Hello, Luke. This is your uncle Amos out in Middlebury, Indiana. I was talkin' to your *daed* the other day, and your name came up. You see, I'm plannin' to retire from my headstone-

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engraving business, and I was wondering if you'd be interested in coming out to Indiana as soon as possible to learn how to run the business. I'm sure you'd catch on fast. And if you don't have enough money to pay for all my tools and equipment right now, you can give me half down, and the rest after you've learned the trade and have started making money. In case you're wondering, I don't expect you to move to Indiana. Just thought you could come here to learn the trade; then when you return home and the tools and supplies have been sent, you can open your own business there. There's another fellow in my area doin' this kind of work right now, so it's a good time for me to sell out, and I'd like it to be to a family member. Give me a call soon and let me know if you're coming."

Luke dropped into the folding chair inside the phone shack and listened to the message again. He wanted to make sure he wasn't hearing things. Uncle Amos had been engraving names on headstones for a good many years and was now ready to pass the trade along to



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a family member. Since he had no sons to take over his trade, this was a golden opportunity for Luke. “Perfect timing,” one might say.

“Thank You, Lord. This is surely an answer to our prayers,” Luke said aloud. He knew of only one other Amish man engraving headstones in eastern Pennsylvania, but he lived clear up in Dauphin County, so Luke was sure he’d get plenty of business right here in Lancaster County, and it would be a benefit to the community.

Luke was tired of being pulled lower and lower into a valley of unanswered questions, and he wanted more than anything to stand up straight, feeling safe and secure about their future. Uncle Amos’s offer was a chance for a new start, and he couldn’t let it slip through his fingers. The only problem now was that Luke didn’t know how he could justify to Meredith drawing money out of their savings to pay his uncle half the amount he would need to purchase the equipment. He’d just told her they couldn’t afford to buy paint for the spare bedroom. How would she take the news that

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he wanted to withdraw money from their dwindling bank account to learn a new trade he wasn't even sure he'd be any good at? Not only that, but would Meredith be okay with him being gone for a few weeks until he learned this new skill?