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BEVERLY  
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To  
Edwin and Marion Rohrer,  
cousins ever dear.



## Prologue

Something about heading for home at nightfall tugged at my better judgment that Thursday evening. And my squirmy youngsters weren't helping my concentration one bit as I picked up the reins and signaled for the mare to move forward.

"*Psch!* Be still back there," I called over my shoulder. All four of them had managed to squeeze into the back of the carriage.

"*Ach*, but Sarah's hangin' over the edge with her doll," tattled nine-year-old Benny.

Leda, his twin, complained, too. "*Jah*, she's awful *rutschich* tonight."

"*Kumme* sit with me, Sarah, won't ya?"

"My dolly wants to look at the sky," little Sarah said in *Deutsch*. "*Sei so gut, Mamma?*"

*Please?* Sarah had a way of adding sugar to her pleadings. Such mischief she was! How many times in her four years had Sarah gotten her way simply by making her perty blue eyes do the talking? "*Please, Mamma,*" she'd say in *Deutsch* and warm my heart yet again.

Soon I could hear Sarah and Leda chattering and laughing softly, playing their hand-clapping game. Their brothers, Benny and seven-year-old Tobias, grew quiet, most likely watching the fireflies twinkling on the roadside. *Must be wishing they were catching them in a big canning jar.*

It was beyond me why they'd bunched up together back there, all sticky and sweaty from the long, hot day at the benefit auction in Paradise. We'd raised money to assist two Mennonite families with children who suffered with fragile X syndrome, a genetic disease. We did this twice each year.

Mine were the only Amish *Kinner* present, but that didn't seem to bother a soul. And the children played cheerfully, jabbering in Deitsch. At the end of the day, once all the money was counted, many families were reluctant to leave, enjoying the good fellowship. My great-aunt Heddy Hoover, Mennonite matriarch, suggested we make strawberry ice cream. So the young folk took turns cranking the old ice cream makers brought out from the summer kitchen, and we sat and talked. There was some gossip, too, including news about Rosaleen Yoder, the preacher's twenty-year-old daughter and the teacher at our Hickory Hollow school. Due to her recent engagement, Rosaleen would not be permitted to teach this fall.

In the end, we'd lingered much longer than planned. And I'd thought for sure my children would be fussing over who'd get to sit up front with me during the trip home to Hickory Hollow. *Little Sarah always wins out. . . .*

Looking back at them again, I saw my precious girl kneeling to peer out the back of the buggy, holding up her cloth doll, Kaylee, and talking to it. I couldn't help wondering what thoughts buzzed round in her head.

*My last baby with Benuel . . .*

The sweet scent of honeysuckle mingled with the oppressing

humidity as I made the turn onto Harvest Road. A few more *clip-clops* of Dandy's hooves on the pavement, and just that quick, the family carriage fell still. The children were sound asleep.

I breathed a grateful prayer, thinking how far my young ones had come since their father's farming accident three years ago. "*Children are ever so resilient, Maryanna,*" Great-Aunt Heddy had whispered today as we stood under the immense green canopy of a tree, watching Sarah and her sister and brothers as they mingled happily with all the other Plain youngsters present. *Jah, resilient . . . more so than their own Mamma, just maybe?*

Tender thoughts of Benuel filled my heart anew. Although many expect me to remarry in due time, someone to share the responsibilities for this family, I can scarcely consider it. At thirty-three, I'm thinking no one will ever replace my dear husband, so why should I receive another man into my life? Although I miss Benuel terribly, we're all doing fine, with the Lord's help. In all truth, I am rather content as a single mother.

Honestly, it had never crossed my mind that our lives would take such an unforeseen turn the year after Sarah was born. I'd been taught to lay down my own wishes and desires to accept God's sovereignty. The events and circumstances of our lives were enveloped by this heavenly covering.

*A shelter, of sorts . . .*

So I'd set out to be a young woman who lived cheerfully and worked hard under the shadow of the Almighty, as the psalm declared. And for the most part, I had not questioned what happened to Benuel. At least not to God.

The sound of Dandy's hooves on the road calmed me. *Ah, twilight . . . such a pensive time of day.* On a similarly tranquil evening, baby Sarah was born as healthy as can be, free of the fatal genetic disorder that plagued many of our Old Order

communities due to generations of intermarrying. Right from the start, little Sarah's life seemed like a divine miracle, God's gracious gift. How thankful Benuel and I were, and ever so relieved. With three healthy children at home, we'd feared that eventually a babe would be born with the disorder . . . that little Sarah might be the one.

"Sarah?" I called softly to her now. "*Boppli?*"

No answer.

I didn't call again, lest I awaken her . . . and the others. My girls sometimes curled up next to each other and slept on the ride back from a family or church gathering. But this night, I wanted my youngest one's company—*needed* her near. Oh, to have Sarah's head resting against me, her tiny hands folded prayerfully in her lap as she slept.

*Sarah . . . God's little princess.*

"Once we're home, I'll tuck her into bed," I whispered. Now that my children had no earthly father to care for them, it was up to me to be the best Mamma they could have. *A sacred and blessed calling.*

# Chapter 1



Maryanna Esh directed the mare onto the familiar road, the carriage lights showing the way. Hickory Lane was indeed a welcome sight. She gave in to a deep sigh as a nearby owl *hoo-hooted* at the glistening white half-moon.

In just minutes, Bishop John Beiler's farmhouse appeared on the left—its tall, ancient trees adding to the air of dignity about the place . . . a quality the People affixed to the man of God and everything surrounding him.

Farther down Hickory Lane, beyond Nate Kurtz's vast cornfield, the spread of land that had belonged to widowed Ella Mae Zook came into view. Known as Hickory Hollow's Old Wise Woman, Ella Mae was one of Maryanna's dearest friends and confidantes—Ella Mae liked to say she always had time for peppermint tea and a prayer. The land had been parceled out to Ella Mae's adult children, including her daughter, the Amish midwife, Mattie Beiler, and her husband, who'd lived in the main farmhouse for more than two decades now.

The stretch of road eventually led to the stark white clapboard house built many years ago by Benuel's grandfather, Simeon Esh, once a well-respected carriage maker in the hollow.

The rustic outbuilding where some of the first carriages were made and repaired still stood on the north side of the property, flanked by thick underbrush and wild flowers and nearly obscured from view.

Maryanna relaxed as she rode into the tree-lined driveway, relieved to be home. The solar-powered yard light shone brightly, and for that she was grateful. Someone, possibly her father, who resided with her mother in the *Dawdi Haus* next door, had gone over and lit the gas lamp in the kitchen.

She stepped down from the buggy and tied Dandy to the hitching post, then called to the sleeping children. "We're home now. Leda, you and Benny unhitch the horse an' stable her, won't ya?"

After a moment, the twins climbed out and stumbled toward the mare. Tobias came next, rubbing his eyes as he followed his older siblings. "I can help, too, Mamma," he said in a husky voice.

"Jah, right quick," Benny said, seemingly more awake than the others.

Maryanna made her way back inside the carriage for Sarah, glad for the slight breeze this warm night. "Kumme, little one . . . Mamma's gonna take ya off to bed." She couldn't remember a time when she hadn't carried Sarah into the house while the older children unhitched after an evening trip. Not since Benuel's accident, anyway. "Sarah, honey . . . time to open your peepers, ya hear?"

"*Tis best not to show partiality,*" Ella Mae had once chided her privately after Maryanna repeatedly sought out Sarah at a picnic gathering following Preaching service. "*Ain't good for her, nor you,*" Ella Mae had said, her milky blue eyes mighty serious.

Maryanna hadn't realized she was even doing it, but she supposed if Ella Mae thought so, then it surely must be.

“Sarah . . . where’d ya go?” whispered Maryanna, looking about. Then she realized her youngest must have crawled out when no one was watching.

She exited the carriage again, making her way around it to the children. “Did ya see Sarah wander by?” she asked Leda, who’d already unhooked the back hold strap on her side of the mare.

“*Nee*—no,” said Leda.

Benny merely shrugged.

“*Des Haus*, maybe?” Tobias piped up.

Maryanna glanced at the house. “Jah, prob’bly.”

She made her way across the driveway and through the large backyard. The grass felt comforting on her bare feet, and she made a mental note to mow tomorrow. *Right after breakfast, while it’s still a bit cool.* Goodness, but it seemed like yesterday little Sarah had taken her first few tentative steps here—just weeks before her first birthday. Benuel had knelt right down in the grass, egging her on and wearing the biggest grin on his mischievous bearded face. He’d clapped his callused hands as Sarah tottered into his open arms, and Maryanna couldn’t help but notice his twinkling blue eyes.

*Like Sarah’s own . . .*

Maryanna entered the house by way of the west-facing side door, where the well pump was attractively enclosed in white gingerbread laths. Clipped shrubs flourished along the edges, as well as hollyhocks and petunias. That particular back door led directly into the kitchen, and just inside, she noticed again that the linoleum was beginning to show some wear. Maryanna pushed a throw rug over the worst of it. *No extra money for new flooring.*

There was a second back door, as well, which opened into the long utility room, where work shoes and boots were neatly

lined in a row. Maryanna was fairly sure Sarah would've wandered in this way, sleepy and eager for her bed.

The house was downright stifling after being shut up all day, and she hurried to the kitchen windows, opening them as wide as they'd go.

Pressing the back of her hand to her face, she longed to slip away to the shower. What a treat on such an oppressive night! But she didn't dare indulge herself till the children were settled inside once Dandy was stabled for the night.

Stopping to light a lantern, she then carried it up the stairs. Heading past Leda's room on the right, Maryanna moved to Sarah's room on the left, at the far end of the hallway. Sarah liked her bedroom close to the street because she loved the sound of the *clippity-clopping*, she'd whispered in Deutsch one night when Maryanna tucked her in with the Lord's Prayer and a hymn.

Slowing her step, Maryanna wondered how the children always managed to find their way up the long, dark staircase without a flashlight or lantern. *Young eyes.*

In Sarah's room, she raised the lantern high. The bed was still made, the room uninhabited, as best she could tell. She set the lantern on the oak dresser, built by Benuel himself, and looked under the bed skirt. "Are ya hidin', little one?" This wasn't the time for a game of hidey-seek.

But Sarah was not there, either.

She snatched up the lantern. Calling louder, she made her way back down the stairs. "Sarah, are ya here?"

Maryanna searched the entire main level of the farmhouse, every possible hiding spot Sarah and her siblings had ever used for rainy-day fun.

*Wurum is sie?*—Where is she?

Maryanna headed back outside. She set the lantern on the

porch steps and ran across the yard, retracing her path to peer into the carriage. But she found it as empty as before.

It would do no good to alarm the other children, yet she rushed back to them and helped insert the tugs into the harness around the back of the horse. “Have ya seen Sarah anywhere?” Her voice was a wavering thread.

“She ain’t inside?” Benny asked.

“Can’t seem to find her.” Then, thinking she ought to have done it sooner, Maryanna grabbed the lantern from the steps and made a beeline to the stable. Not finding Sarah there, Maryanna moved on to the greenhouse, where she and the children spent many hours planting vegetables—and garden flowers, too—ofttimes dividing and potting plants to sell at their roadside stand.

“Dear one?” The lantern flooded the familiar corners with light—the nooks and crannies her youngest knew so well. Where Sarah pretended there were little fairy creatures living amidst the cobwebs she refused to sweep away.

Picking up her pace, Maryanna made her way to the Dawdi Haus to check with her parents. On many occasions, Sarah liked to pad over there in her long white nightgown and say *Gut Nacht to Mammi* Emmie and Dawdi Zeke, who sometimes slipped candies to all four children. “*Our secret*,” Sarah had told Maryanna with a playful smile. And sure enough, the next morning, Maryanna found the wrappers under bed pillows.

Tapping lightly on the screen door, Maryanna looked into the small house where her parents lived, snug and contented. “*Mamm?*” she called through the dark utility room that led to the small kitchen. “Are ya still up?”

She heard rustling, and then the downstairs bedroom sprang to light. Maryanna realized she’d likely awakened her parents

and felt bad, wondering what she might say, not wanting to worry them needlessly.

Her mother appeared in the hallway, hair hanging loose to her waist. “Maryanna . . . what is it?”

“Chust lookin’ for Sarah—thought she might’ve come over here.”

“Ain’t she with you?” Mamm replied, a wrinkle forming on her brow as she motioned Maryanna inside.

“Checkin’, is all.” Maryanna waved good-night and turned to leave.

But her mother called after her. “Maryanna?”

“Not to worry.” She kept going, moving faster now as a nameless fear settled on her.

When Leda saw her coming from the driveway, she must have known her little sister was still missing. “Mamma . . . did ya find her?”

“Sarah’s got to be round here somewhere.”

“I’ll have a look-see in the house,” Leda said, her skirt tail flying as she dashed back before Maryanna could stop her.

“Mamma?” It was Tobias’s small voice now. “I looked in the woodshed.”

“How ’bout the springhouse?”

“Ain’t there, neither,” he said.

Maryanna struggled to catch her breath, her hand on her heart. Her pulse pounded in her temples as she looked out to the dark road and beyond, to hundreds of shadowy acres of cornstalks, and she couldn’t help but tremble.

*O, Lord Jesus, where’s my darling Sarah?*

## Chapter 2



Jodi Winfield pulled her shoulder-length hair into a loose twist and reclined as she situated her laptop for her upcoming Skype session with her fiancé, Trent Norton. Lounging indoors against peony-red pillows on this sultry July evening was the best way to avoid the miserable heat. It was her first time house- and cat-sitting at her cousin's modest country home in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Certainly, the place was a step up from Jodi's tidy apartment in Arlington, Vermont, where she shared two walls with other renters.

*Plenty of time to regroup before school starts!*

She recalled the text message a teacher friend had sent yesterday, just as Jodi arrived. *Are you up for teaching a third-fourth grade combo next fall?* Jodi had winced at the thought. It was not her ideal setup, but she was willing to do whatever it took to get tenure after her second year of teaching.

Reaching for a tall glass of lemonade, she relished the pleasant surroundings. Scattered about were silver-framed wedding pictures of her first cousin—policeman Scott Winfield—and Paige, his winsome blond bride of two years. There were candlesticks in graduated sizes placed on the barn-wood coffee table.

A large framed pastoral print graced the entryway. Cozy was the best word to describe Scott and Paige’s bright, homey place . . . Jodi’s home away from home for the next two weeks.

The room overlooked a fruitful landscape to the south, where lush fields and a picturesque barn with two silos stood in the distance. The unique setting and comfortable furnishings made it impossible to refuse the couple’s request to spend some time here.

Eyeing the clock, Jodi awaited the specified time to contact Trent. She curled her toes, attempting to relax, but it was impossible to dismiss the trauma of the past six months. At one time, she and Trent had been knit together by their faith. Now it was all Jodi could do to whisper an occasional prayer—not that it mattered. As it turned out, God didn’t hear them, anyway.

And now there were Trent’s recent remarks to contemplate. Just two days ago, Trent had stopped by her apartment to say good-bye while she was packing. He’d mentioned their mutual friends’ new baby boy. “*Such a handsome little guy.*” Trent had sounded almost wistful. “*Sometimes I find it hard to believe we’ll never have one of our own, hon.*”

She hadn’t known what to say. Sure, she loved kids—*other* people’s children, particularly in a classroom setting. But after a long day in the trenches, it was great to return to a peaceful home.

Thankfully, Trent had moved on to another topic, but Jodi had remained rattled. She hoped she’d concealed her concern, especially since it was to be their last visit before Trent left for Japan in less than two weeks.

As for herself, Jodi wasn’t up for revisiting the idea of having children someday. Not with her only sister’s, passing still so fresh. Jodi’s life had flown into a tailspin from which she

had yet to recover. Some days, if it hadn't been for Trent's encouragement and support, she felt she might not have survived losing Karen.

Jodi recalled her fiancé's look of exuberance when he'd talked of the infant. Trent's soft green eyes—nearly blue—twinkled at her, though not in jest.

So was he having second thoughts?

Presently, she signed into her Skype account. *Don't complicate things further*, she decided. As it was, Trent had to have noticed her frustration with God these past months, although she couldn't tell by his demeanor—he was the same patient Trent as always. Eventually, she would have to come clean about that matter, as well. Right now, she never wanted to set foot in church again.

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When Trent's handsome face came into view, Jodi thrilled to see him. She couldn't help smiling.

“Hey, pretty lady. You look cute with your hair up.”

“Thanks. Trying to keep cool.”

“So how are you?” His light brown hair was combed neatly, and his five-o'clock shadow was beginning to appear. Trent's grin and confident voice nearly dispelled her earlier concern.

“Livin' the good life,” she admitted. “Attempting, anyway.”

“Well, I miss you, too.” He chuckled.

She nodded slowly. “Yeah, sorry.”

“You sound tired.”

“Just a little.”

He tilted his head. “You sure?”

She was tempted to say nothing, but that wasn't fair. “Just deep in thought, I guess.”

“Missing Karen?”

“Some, yeah.” She mentioned having talked recently with

Karen's husband, Devin, and hearing the pain in his voice. "He's really struggling . . . as we all are."

"Well, once school starts you'll be very busy again," Trent suggested kindly, "which might be helpful."

*Nothing helps*, Jodi thought, recalling how difficult it had been going to school and teaching all day, weighed down by wrenching sorrow.

Trent continued talking, referring fondly to his own teacher friends in Bennington, Vermont, where he'd already acquired tenure as a fifth-grade teacher, though he'd taken a one-year leave for the upcoming job overseas. The decision had thrown her for a loop, although technically, they'd made it together.

Trent was fired up to teach English as a second language in the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme, also known as JET. The plan was to make some extra money to set aside for their honeymoon next summer. And, too, Trent had always wanted to do something "to spread some cultural love around," as he liked to say. More recently, it was also tied to spreading "the Good News."

Deep down, Jodi was secretly crushed. But she'd pulled herself together, refusing to stand in the way of his dreams, even if it meant they had to wait another year to marry.

Presently the conversation lulled, and Jodi mentioned her cousin's delightful home and their beautiful white cat with gray-blue eyes. "Oh, and you should see the stocked fridge—enough for the whole block. Scott and Paige have spoiled me."

"You deserve it." He grinned. "Be sure to invite them to the wedding."

"Don't worry." She paused, wondering how to proceed. "And Trent . . . uh, I've been thinking about what you said the other day . . . before I left."

He smiled knowingly. "About kids, right?"

She nodded.

“I didn’t mean to upset you,” he said.

“You didn’t,” she lied. “I mean, I guess I should ask you . . . are *you* having second thoughts?”

“Jodi, I want you to be happy.”

“I know, but—”

“Honestly, this is the kind of thing we should have taken more time to discuss.”

She fell silent. So there *was* something more to talk about.

“In the meantime,” Trent continued, “we’ll trust God for the future.”

She cringed, saying nothing, but felt dishonest in her silence.

“You okay, Jodi?”

She couldn’t bear to tell him the truth. Trent’s faith was rock solid. She held her breath and forged ahead. “It’s just that I’ve been struggling . . . a lot.”

“Go easy on yourself, Jodi. You’re plowing through deep waters.”

She took a breath.

“Remember, I’m praying for you,” he said, but it sounded patronizing, and Jodi wanted to reply that prayer certainly hadn’t helped Karen, her older and wiser sister. And dearest friend.

Jodi twisted the thin twenty-four-carat gold bracelet Karen had given her before she died. It was a keepsake present her sister had purchased with her first paycheck, fresh out of grad school.

Jodi willed away her tears. “Oh, before I forget, I received an email from George Stringer, my principal. He plans to call me later this week. I guess the district’s in a financial crunch.”

“Like most school districts in the States.”

“Still, teaching two grade levels might present a challenge.”

“You’re an amazing teacher, hon. You might love it. I’ve seen you in action, remember?”

Jodi smiled, feeling more optimistic. “Speaking of action, I’ve been logging a bunch of miles here.” She honed in on her training for the half marathon in Boston in October. “Sometimes I wish I could run with a group or an instructor.”

“Well, you ran with me for a while.” He winked, winning her heart all over again. “Just remember to warm up and don’t push it—it’s easy to overtrain, you know.”

“Tell me about it.”

He reminded her to take the supplements her doctor had recommended and to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. “But keeping hydrated is key.”

“That’s not hard here.”

“Exactly.” He chuckled. “You’re *breathing* water, right?”

They said their usual I-love-you’s and good-byes. And Jodi was relieved they’d avoided more talk of babies—and prayer.

*A lot can change in a year*, she reassured herself.

## Chapter 3



Jodi chopped a few tomatoes and sliced cucumber into a bowl of baby greens and spinach leaves, then tossed the salad, looking forward to a late supper. Gigi, the fluffy white cat, meowed up at her, begging. Smiling as she remembered what Paige had warned about the fastidious animal, she checked the food dish and saw that it was still full.

“So you want fresh food, is that it?”

Gigi meowed again.

“Um, you’re not spoiled at all, are you?” She chuckled, thinking she’d like to have a cat of her own to keep her company while Trent was gone.

Gigi rubbed up against her ankles, going in circles between her feet.

That’s when Jodi noticed the loaf of homemade bread on the far end of the kitchen counter, with a note: *Delish! From a local Amish stand. Enjoy! ~Scott and Paige.*

Unable to resist, Jodi decided to have a piece with her light supper. But only one. She wondered about the person running the roadside stand, having never actually met anyone Amish. A copy of the June issue of *The Mirror*, the newsletter published by

the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, was lying on the counter nearby. Circled in red was a blurb about a discussion and tour featuring Amish businesses without electricity. Jodi was curious how that was even possible and read further about four summer field trips offered by the local historical society, guessing Scott and Paige were members.

Breathing in the homey smell of the bread, Jodi recalled that the couple had referred to the “Plain” people quite frequently since moving here from the outskirts of Chicago. Jodi had also noticed a number of Amish novels in the corner of the downstairs family room, which additionally included a collection of old Dickens’ books that Paige had acquired at a rummage sale. And as a trusted policeman, Scott had mentioned interacting with nearby Amish during the course of his job, including at the annual Gordonville Fire Company Fall Mud Sale and Auction, where he often helped with parking and checking in vanloads of Amish from other states. From their many chats, there was no doubt in Jodi’s mind that Scott and Paige were Amish aficionados.

Jodi hadn’t the faintest idea what their attraction was to the horse-and-buggy crowd. *What’s the big deal, anyway?* She turned and spotted Gigi standing by the food dish, just staring down at it. Jodi laughed and shook her head. “You’re missing Mommy and Daddy, eh?”

She crouched to stroke Gigi, who purred into Jodi’s open hand. *I miss someone, too*, she thought. Her big sister’s memory was planted firmly in the middle of Jodi’s heart. Even though she was six years older, Karen had always understood what made Jodi tick. *Like no other . . . not even Trent*. Her constant confidante and close friend, Karen had promised to always be there, though in the end, through no fault of her own, she couldn’t keep the promise.

Gigi stepped away and looked back at her. She tilted her fluffy little head.

“Give me a chance, okay? You’ll like me soon enough.”  
With that, Jodi washed her hands and set the table for one.

She wondered what Trent really thought of her struggles. *What if I can’t recover spiritually? Will he still want me?*

The answer seemed obvious. *Why would a wonderful guy like Trent want to marry a faithless basket case like me?* Jodi thought as she picked at her food. *Poor guy needs a good wife . . . someone normal who trusts God, wants kids, and doesn’t cry on cue.*

Jodi blew out a breath, dabbed at her eyes, and began to eat. *Enough of this*, she thought.

When she finished eating, she cleaned up the few dishes and relaxed for an hour or so. She was eager to get out and jog first thing tomorrow, to explore the unfamiliar Pennsylvania back roads. She enjoyed losing herself in the effort of putting one foot in front of the other, her ever-attendant companions—despair and regret—slipping away with each stride. At this stage of her life, running beat prayer any day. It was Jodi’s only dedication now, her sacrificial altar.



Maryanna strained to remember when she’d last seen little Sarah in the back of the carriage. Wasn’t it right before turning onto Harvest Road? Sarah had been looking out the back with her dolly. And Benny and Leda had both warned Maryanna, hadn’t they? “*Sarah’s hangin’ over the edge,*” Benny had said. But then everyone had quieted down, and Maryanna had assumed that all of her children had fallen asleep.

*Everyone but Sarah.*

Startled, Maryanna did not want to admit the appalling

possibility that she had not noticed the goings-on in the buggy while concentrating on the drive in the ever-dimming twilight. It struck a blow to her very heart to consider her young daughter might have fallen out of the carriage and onto the road while her older siblings slept. Could it be? Yet what other explanation was there?

“Go quick an’ fetch Jake Lantz and his father,” she told Benny. “Run!”

Her eldest grabbed a flashlight and took off out of the house barefoot. “I’ll be back in a jiffy, Mamma.”

*Ever-willing Benny*, she thought, thankful not for the first time that he was named for Benuel.

“Will Freckles Jake tell all the men?” Leda asked softly.

Maryanna nodded. “Jah, for certain.”

“I can run over to the other neighbors’, if ya want,” Tobias offered, his pale blue eyes blinking up at her as they all stood in the kitchen, Leda’s arm wrapped tightly around her. “Joshua will be glad to help.”

Maryanna shook her head. She didn’t want to involve him if she didn’t have to. In due time, Josh would hear the news of missing Sarah, just as all the other farmers would.

Tobias frowned. “Mamma, Joshua’s mighty *schmaert*—we should tell him. He’s just next door!”

Maryanna sighed. Tobias was right. Regardless of her aggravation with the young widower, they needed everyone’s help tonight, including her father’s. “Fine, then, Tobias. Go an’ tell him.”

Eagerly, the boy nodded and headed for the door.

“I’ll wait here with you, Mamma, in case little Sarah comes home.” Leda breathed in spurts, like she might cry.

“*When* she comes home,” Maryanna said, leading her to the long bench near the table. She simply didn’t trust her

emotions tonight. Yet she needed to be strong for her children all the same.

*Think*, she told herself. *What would Benueel do?*

Oh, if only her husband were still living! “*You’ve got a good head on your shoulders, Maryanna . . . and don’t forget it,*” he’d said the morning before the accident that took his life. Out there in the field just across from theirs—helping with the corn harvest in Josh’s brother Ned’s absence. Maryanna hadn’t ever let herself think Benueel shouldn’t have offered to help that day. No, it wasn’t for her to question God’s sovereign will. Even though there were times when the loss hurt as surely as if her arm had been the one crushed and severed.

“Mamma?” Leda asked, her light blue eyes solemn. “Remember Sarah’s guardian angel is with her.”

Maryanna nodded and pressed her lips together. “He shall give his angels charge over thee.” she quoted.

“Will the angels lead Joshua and the farmers to our sister?”

Maryanna reassured her that men from all four corners of Hickory Hollow would come and help search. And all night if necessary. They’d done the selfsame thing when Mary Beiler’s elderly grandfather, Abram Stoltzfus, wandered off one night last summer.

“Let’s pray Sarah won’t be too frightened.” Maryanna leaned her head on her older daughter and felt Leda’s wet cheek against her face. The vision of her little one walking around crying, nowhere near home, wondering what to do—it was all Maryanna could do to suppress her distress. To think they hadn’t even noticed Sarah had fallen out of the carriage. *If that’s what happened*, Maryanna thought, still aghast at the idea.

“The Lord Gott sees just where she is,” she added, partly to comfort herself.

“Right now?” Leda whispered, looking up at her.  
Maryanna smiled faintly. “Jah, this very minute.”

With that, they bowed their heads, ending by reciting the Lord’s Prayer together. And the all-important words “*Thy will be done*” lingered in Maryanna’s mind long into the night.