

BEVERLY
LEWIS

The
Revelation



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Beverly Lewis, *The Revelation*

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Dedication

For

Mary Jo and Helen Jones,

two wunderbar aunties.

By Beverly Lewis

ABRAM'S DAUGHTERS

The Covenant • *The Betrayal* • *The Sacrifice*
The Prodigal • *The Revelation*



THE HERITAGE OF LANCASTER COUNTY

The Shunning • *The Confession* • *The Reckoning*



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October Song • *Sanctuary** • *The Sunroom*



The Beverly Lewis Amish Heritage Cookbook

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BEVERLY LEWIS, born in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch country, fondly recalls her growing-up years. A keen interest in her mother's Plain family heritage has inspired Beverly to set a number of her popular stories in Amish Country, beginning with her inaugural novel, *The Shunning*.

A former schoolteacher and accomplished pianist, Beverly has written over eighty books for adults and children. Her novels regularly appear on the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller lists, and *The Brethren* won a 2007 Christy Award.

Beverly and her husband, David, make their home in Colorado, where they enjoy hiking, biking, reading, writing, making music, and spending time with their three grandchildren.

Prologue

October 24, 1963

Six endless days have come and gone since that wonderful-good crimson-and-gold-speckled day when Jonas returned to Lancaster County to declare his fondest affection for me. Yet I've had no word since—not even following his important visit with the bishop. And as each day passes I am mindful not to give in to fretting, losing myself in needless worry. I must simply bide my time till I know precisely what my beloved is up against. That decision will be made following Preaching service tomorrow, though I don't dread this meeting as much as I did my sister Sadie's kneeling confession, because Jonas did not commit a sin of the flesh, as Sadie did. His only transgression was to disobey Bishop Bontrager's rigid position on never leaving the church of one's baptism, a sin as defined by our *Ordnung*.

The winds of autumn bluster over Dat's frayed fields and Smitty's silver pond, and the sound reminds me of the work remaining to be done before winter sets in fully. Often I feel as if I'm chasing after the daylight, hoping to complete every last chore on my mental list. All the while the mules eagerly

dismantle one bale of hay after another, growing thicker coats for the coming cold.

Sadie and I have talked frankly about Jonas's return—I simply had to share my heart lest it burst apart. She is the only one who knows he saw me before he went to visit Bishop Bontrager, as he should have done straightaway. Honestly there are times when I am nearly giddy with anticipation, knowing Jonas is only thirty minutes away, living once again in the orchard farmhouse on Grasshopper Level. The sky seems nearly like a blue jewel on clear days, and I have never been so awestruck by the color and texture of grazing land, windswept dew ponds, or even the shy silhouettes of clouds. What I thought had long since died in me has sprung to vibrant life, surprising me all to pieces.

Truly, it is a rare night when Jonas is not present in my dreams, and he is my cherished first thought at daybreak. I carry within my heart the hope of one day being reunited with my darling beau, if God should see fit.

Still, I must be ever so careful not to let this renewed passion for Jonas distract me from mothering Lydiann and Abe. The dear Lord knows there are enough issues to provide conflict under one roof, including Lydiann's *rumschpringe*, which, despite an unexpected twist, has thus far been innocent compared to Sadie's running-around time long ago.

We have heard by way of Jake Mast's letters to Lydiann that he's chomping at the bit to get home and right the wrong he feels was done to him by his father—not to mention rekindle the flame with Lyddie—even though I am sure Peter Mast will continue to put the nix on things. My heart quivers at the thought of Jake's potential return—a prickly prospect, to be sure. Although he remains in Ohio at the moment,

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Sadie and I agonize over what will befall us if his identity should ever be revealed. Truth be told, if the Masts were aware their youngest son is in fact Sadie's, there would be no question in *anyone's* mind that the two youngsters must never marry.

Thinking again of Jonas, I have no way of knowing if he'll be expected to abandon his woodworking. The bishop, in particular, has scorned any livelihood but those related to the soil—sowing and reaping—and blacksmithing or other necessary tasks. For Jonas to be forced to farm would be heartache, what with his keen interest and skill in the area of crafting fine furniture. Just how long his Proving will last is hard to know . . . if the bishop will require one, considering the lesser sin he's committed against the church.

Secretly, though, I fear something will yet keep us apart. I pray not, but alas, ever since first seeing swarms of ladybugs a few weeks back, heralding the advent of winter with its dearth of light, I have been aware of a sense of foreboding. Soon snow as thick as lamb's wool will fall, and if I lose myself in the flurry, the road seems to become a looming tunnel . . . and as I imagine riding horse and buggy through its shadowy center, the eyes of my heart become painfully aware of the confinement. Try though I might, will I ever truly find my way out to the other side?



Part One



*Our joys as winged dreams do fly;
Why then should sorrow last?
Since grief but aggravates thy loss,
Grieve not for what is past.*

—Thomas Percy

Chapter One

A chill had settled into the rustic planks of the old farmhouse overnight, and Jonas worked quickly to remedy the situation. He crouched near the wood stove and watched the kindling seize hold of dry logs in a burst of flame. Temperatures had unexpectedly dropped to the midthirties in the wee hours, and the wind had crept up, too. His aging mother and his youngest sister, Mandie, Jake's twin, would especially mind the cold.

Jonas had roused himself while it was still dark, enjoying the stillness and a renewed sense of duty since his permanent return from Apple Creek, Ohio. He had taken a mere two days to say good-bye to his longtime church friends and to pack his belongings—passing along his unfulfilled orders for several pieces of fine and fancy furniture to a good friend and seasoned woodworker. Here in Grasshopper Level, his father had given him permission to live at home, working alongside him, till such time as Jonas hoped to marry.

His father had made it mighty plain where *he* stood on the tetchy topic of marrying an Ebersol, but there was nothing he

could do now that Jonas was thirty-six years old. Jonas pondered just how difficult Dat might make things, especially for Leah as his daughter-in-law. Would he exclude them from family get-togethers? And what of Jonas and Leah's children, if God so willed it; would they ever know their Mast grandparents?

Hard as it was to envision his and Leah's living with such a situation, Jonas was determined to get on with the business of marriage and having a family of his own. When he was most discouraged with his father's disapproval, he had only to think again how the Lord had kept dearest Leah for him all these years!

But, for the time being, he must convince the bishop by his compliant attitude and willingness to come under the People's scrutiny that he was ready indeed to begin courting Leah immediately following his confession at Preaching today. He suspected Bishop Bontrager of wanting to keep him at arm's length. "There's no need to be thinking 'bout doing much of anything 'cept farmin' now," the revered elderly man had pointedly admonished him at their initial meeting. "If you're not so keen on that, then there's not much for ya to do round these parts." Such was not the case in Ohio, where a good number of Amishmen made their living making and selling furniture. Jonas guessed the reason Bishop Bontrager was so set against his woodworking was because he'd been creating fancy, fine furniture for Englishers, using turned lathe pieces and scrollwork. The bishop likely had in mind to get the hankering for such things out of Jonas's system—even though the Ohio brethren had permitted them.

But Lancaster County was the original settlement of their Amish ancestors and remained by far the most traditional.

Still, even if it meant Jonas could not sell them, he hoped to someday make at least the necessary pieces of furniture for his own house.

Hurrying out to the woodshed, Jonas was glad to be of help at the start of this Lord's Day. He would do whatever it took to change the bishop's mind about allowing furniture making to be his primary source of income, but only once the Proving was past. He was a woodworker through and through, but if required, he would attempt to make a living as a farmer and dairyman, or even perform odd jobs around the community till such time as he was reinstated with the People.

Opening the shed door, he spotted a fat mouse dart across and then under the dry stack of wood. He made note of the critter's fleshiness as he reached down for an armful of logs. *Winter's round the bend. . . .*

He'd also observed patchy clusters of milkweed out in the cow pasture, their thick-walled pods cracked open to reveal hundreds of downy seeds, each attached to its own glossy parachute. A sure sign wedding season was coming up right quick.

Jonas recalled his childhood as he nimbly covered the very ground he'd walked as a lad. He and his younger brothers, especially Eli and Isaac, had often stopped to count the spidery seeds as they floated far and wide, dotting the skies high overhead. The two-story barn and farmhouse and surrounding apple orchard all looked the same to him, except for the trees having grown much taller. At a glance, it might have seemed as if nothing had changed at all . . . when everything had.

So much catching up to do.

He wanted to get reacquainted with his seven married

brothers and sisters—meet their spouses and children, too—as well as keep in touch with Jake, who was in Ohio working with an older apprentice, an arrangement made by the same man who'd taken over Jonas's outstanding orders for fine furniture.

Having enjoyed his all too brief encounter with Jake, Jonas was glad there was still one sibling living at home, though fun-loving Mandie was already courting age. And here she came just this minute, her golden locks hanging loose to her waist, looking *schtruuwlich*, not having bothered to brush her long hair before heading out for milking. Jonas had never witnessed any Amishwoman in such a state, and he found himself wondering how Leah's beautiful thick hair—such a rich brunette it was—looked undone, long and freed from her tight bun. He shook away the inappropriate thought, deciding he must wait to contemplate his soon-to-be-bride's lovely tresses until after he'd married her . . . and not a single moment before.

His arms loaded down with plenty of wood for the cookstove, Jonas called over his shoulder, “Mornin', Mandie! Forget somethin'?”

She returned his teasing with a silent smirk and a toss of her tousled hair behind her head.

Somewhat amused at the sight of her, he made his way toward the back porch, quite aware of Dat's dog nipping at his heels. “Ya want a hullo, too? Is that what you're askin' for?”

He rushed to stack some wood inside the screened-in porch, mindful of the dog still waiting. When the chore was done, he went and sat on the back stoop, rubbing the golden retriever's neck and beneath his sides. “How's that, ol' boy?” he said before turning his attention to the important Preach-

ing service to be held at smithy Peachey's place, next farm over from Abram Ebersol's. These days Smitty's son-in-law and daughter, Joseph and Dorcas Zook, and their boys occupied the main house, where they evidently had been living for a number of years, tending to most of the farming and looking after Smitty and Miriam in their twilight years.

Jonas smiled at the thought of comical Joe Zook hitching up with Smitty's serious younger daughter. He well recalled Joe's making fast work of ripe tomatoes at barn raisings and corn huskings as a youngster, eating them whole before the women folk could get to slicing them, the red juice dribbling down his neck. While growing up Joe had helped his own father raise truckloads of tomatoes, no doubt the reason for his nickname, Tomato Joe, as the bishop had referred to him when speaking of the location where Preaching was to be held today. Jonas had been reminded once again of how awful long he'd been gone from home—and from Leah.

His thoughts drifted back to his years in Ohio, recalling different nicknames for the young men coming up in the church, Gravy Dan being his favorite. The name brought Jonas back to the present with thoughts of the big Sunday morning breakfast his mother was sure to cook up, and he gave the dog a final pat on the belly and headed inside.

But when the time came for all of them to sit down to the delicious food Mamma had carried to the table, Jonas suddenly felt he ought to skip eating. He was strongly impressed to pray during the breakfast hour, just as he had observed the traditional fast day prior to the fall communion service that had taken place here a week ago. Recognizing the significance of *this* day, Jonas headed to his room, where he knelt to pray at his chair.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. . . .



Leah got herself settled on the same backless wooden bench where Sadie, Lydiann, and Aunt Lizzie sat in an attitude of prayer, waiting for the house-church meeting to begin. Her bare feet scuffed softly against the wood floor, and she briefly wondered when the first snow might fly, making it necessary to don shoes again.

Today several hymns from the *Ausbund* would be sung, including the *Lob Lied*, always the second hymn. The introductory sermon would come next, followed by the silent kneeling prayers of the People. The main sermon, which would undoubtedly address obedience to the baptism vow, the Bible, and the honor due to parents, was most likely to be given by Bishop Bontrager. Even now the ministers were upstairs, deciding who should give the sermons.

What will the bishop require of Jonas following his confession?

She had awakened in the night to nerve-racking dreams, and now, as Leah sat surrounded by her family and church friends, she wondered how Jonas was holding up today.

Her gaze fell on Adah Peachey Ebersol, her best friend and cousin by marriage. Fondly Leah looked away to her younger sister Hannah and her three school-age daughters, Ida Mae, Katie Ann, and Mimi, all of them sitting tall in the row directly in front of Leah. She focused especially on Mimi, whose present delightful disposition bore no trace of the fussy, colicky baby she had been, causing Hannah such emotional

trauma at the time. Those days were long past, and Leah anticipated the little one Hannah was expecting next spring, curious as to what sort of temperament he or she might have.

Her thoughts of babies led Leah to note a record number of infants in the house of worship this day. *Will I ever have a baby of my own . . . as Jonas's wife?*

Just then Ol' Jonathan Lapp rose from his seat and announced the first hymn in a feeble voice, and the People joined him in unison, filling the farmhouse with the familiar sound. Glad for the opportunity to raise her voice in song, Leah breathed a prayer for God to be near and dear to Jonas throughout this sacred meeting.

Jonas knew Leah was definitely amongst the crowd in Tomato Joe's front room—all voting church members were required to be in attendance. Besides that, he'd caught a blissful glimpse of her outdoors as she, Lydiann, and Lizzie stood together with the other women before the bishop and the preachers had arrived. Oh, the rapture he felt whenever their eyes met, even briefly. When Leah was near—when she was in the selfsame room—it was as if there was no one else in the world. Just seeing her lovely face, her honest, shining eyes, the bit of hair showing outside her head covering, near the middle part . . .

But no, he must set aside thoughts of Leah, even though she was the singular reason why he was here in this place on this day. It did seem strange not sitting next to his longtime Apple Creek friends at Preaching service, where he'd enjoyed the good fellowship of many other believers while living in Wayne County. Yet this was Leah's place, and so where he belonged. Already it seemed difficult to believe that it was

only last week he'd swiftly purchased a train ticket and come home once he knew for certain, via Abram Ebersol's letter to him, that Leah was a *maidel*, having never married. His heart had not allowed room for another love, so here he sat, waiting for the moment when Bishop Bontrager would give the nod and present him to the church membership.

His stomach rumbled unexpectedly during the deacon's reading of the Scripture, yet he was thankful to have skipped breakfast in favor of spending time in prayer. Reverently he had once again committed this meeting, as well as his future—and Leah's—to the guidance of the Almighty.

When Leah's brother-in-law Preacher Gid went to stand before the People, Jonas was particularly interested in observing his manner—this man whom he had been fooled into thinking had been the downfall of his and Leah's affection years ago. The brawny man who'd married bashful Hannah instead of Abram's Leah had an unflinching gaze. How ironic that this relatively young man was now one of the Gobbler's Knob preachers!

Slowly, piece by piece, Jonas was taking in all he'd missed during his lengthy absence. But more essential than fitting together details about people and events would be standing humbly before God and the local church this fine autumn day.