

*Amish Greenhouse Mystery*  
*Book 1*

*THE*  
CROW'S  
CALL

WANDA E.  
BRUNSTETTER

SHILOH RUN  PRESS

An Imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc.

© 2020 by Wanda E. Brunstetter

Print ISBN 978-1-64352-021-6

eBook Editions:

Adobe Digital Edition (.epub) 978-1-64352-022-3

Kindle and MobiPocket Edition (.prc) 978-1-64352-023-0

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of the publisher.

Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®.

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All German-Dutch words are taken from the *Revised Pennsylvania German Dictionary* found in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, and/or events is purely coincidental.

Cover Design: Buffy Cooper

Cover Photography: Richard Brunstetter III

For more information about Wanda E. Brunstetter, please visit the author's website at [www.wandabrunstetter.com](http://www.wandabrunstetter.com)

Published by Shiloh Run Press, an imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc.,  
1810 Barbour Drive, Uhrichsville, OH 44683, [www.shilohrunpress.com](http://www.shilohrunpress.com)

*Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.*



Printed in the United States of America

## Dedication

To my Amish friend, Cindy, who suffered a great loss but came through victoriously.

*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

PSALM 56:3 KJV

A decorative rectangular frame with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork at the corners and midpoints of the top and bottom edges. The text "Chapter 1" is centered within the frame.

# Chapter 1

*Strasburg, Pennsylvania*

An April wind's flurry sent swirls of dust into the air and across the yard. *This isn't a good day for a celebration.* Amy King shielded her eyes for a moment. The current of air rustled her dress as she cradled a basket of spring flowers from her parents' greenhouse up to their home. Amy's sister, Sylvia, and her family would be coming for supper soon to help them celebrate Mom's birthday, and she wanted everything to be perfect.

Amy's brothers Henry and Abe still lived at home, but their older brother, Ezekiel, and his family were now part of an Amish community in New York State. They had hired a driver and planned to join them this afternoon. Amy always looked forward to the times when their whole family could be together.

As the wind calmed down, Amy gazed at the basket of flowers and smiled. She would put the lovely blooms in a glass vase and set it in the center of their dining-room table. Mom had a love for flowers, which was why she'd worked faithfully in the greenhouse with Dad for so many years.

Amy liked flowers too, but there were other things she enjoyed more, such as spending time with her boyfriend, Jared. He'd begun courting her almost a year ago, and Amy figured most any time now Jared would ask for her hand in marriage. She was prepared to say yes, of course, for Jared was all she'd ever wanted in a husband. He was

courteous, kind, strong, and gentle, and of course she thought he was the most handsome man she'd ever met.

Amy halted her footsteps when the eerie sound of a crow's call invaded her dreamy thoughts. She'd had an aversion to crows ever since she was a young girl and one had flown over the blanket she'd sat upon, dropping a corn cob right on her foot. It had left a nasty bruise, and following the incident, the crow carried on like Amy had done something wrong. It was superstitious of her, but ever since that day, whenever she saw or heard a crow, Amy expected something bad might happen. Today was no exception. The crow, sitting on a fence post and making such a fuss, seemed to be taunting Amy as she stood with goosebumps on her arms and chills tingling her spine.

Refusing to give in to her anxiety, Amy hurried toward the house. *Caw! Caw! Caw!* The crow's foreboding call continued.

Amy shuddered and moved on. It was childish to allow an irrational belief to take over her thoughts, but she couldn't help feeling that something bad was on the horizon. Maybe this time it would be worse than a simple corn cob bruising her foot.

She brushed the notion aside and stepped into the house. Amy wanted everything to be special for Mom's birthday, and she wouldn't let a silly old crow and her unfounded trepidation put a damper on this evening's celebration.



"It's so good to see you again!" Amy gave Ezekiel and Michelle a hug and reached her hand out to stroke the top of their little girl's head. "Angela Mary has grown so much since we last saw her. It's hard to believe she's two years old already."

Michelle smiled and placed one hand against her stomach. "I wasn't going to share this till we were all sitting around the supper table tonight, but in about five months our daughter will have a little sister or brother."

Amy clapped her hands and gave Michelle another hug. “Oh, that’s *wunderbaar!*”

“What about your big brother? Don’t I get another hug?” Ezekiel nudged Amy’s arm.

“*Jah*, of course.” She gave Ezekiel a second hug.

When Amy stepped back, he looked around the yard. “Where is everyone? Figured when our driver’s van pulled in, we’d be greeted by the whole family.”

“Henry went out to buy a gift for Mom. Abe’s still at work. Dad and Mom are in the greenhouse, getting ready to close up for the day. They might not have heard the van come into the yard.”

At that moment, their parents stepped out of greenhouse and headed for Ezekiel and his family. Hugs started all over again.

“It’s so good to see you.” Mom teared up. “I wasn’t sure you could come.”

Ezekiel shook his head. “We wouldn’t have missed your birthday for anything.”

“That’s right,” Michelle agreed. “Happy birthday, Belinda.”

“*Danki*.” Mom leaned down and swept Angela Mary into her arms. “How’s my precious little granddaughter doing?”

The child giggled when her grandpa reached over and tickled her under the chin.

“She’s doing well.” Michelle looked over at Ezekiel. “Should we tell them our news now?”

He nodded. “May as well, since you already let Amy know.”

“Let her know what?” Mom’s eyelids fluttered. “Are you planning to move back to Strasburg?”

“No, it’s nothing like that, although we do miss everyone here. My business is doing well, and we’re all settled into the community at Clymer.” He pointed to Michelle’s stomach. “We have another little one on the way.”

Dad thumped Ezekiel’s back, while Mom handed Angela Mary

to Amy and then gave Michelle another hug. “That’s great news. When is the *bopp*li due?”

“In about five months.” Michelle’s blue-green eyes glistened. “Sometimes I have to stop and pinch myself to see if I’m dreaming. Becoming a Christian, joining the Amish church, and marrying Ezekiel were the best things that ever happened to me.” She smiled up at him. “I feel like my life is complete.”

Amy smiled too. It was a joy to see the radiance on her sister-in-law’s face. It was hard in the past when Michelle used to be English and had deceived them into believing she was the Lapp’s granddaughter, whom they’d known nothing about for too many years.

*Thank the Lord that through the power of God’s love and forgiveness, people can change and start fresh with a new life in Him.* Amy held her little niece close and said a silent prayer. *Heavenly Father, may this child grow up to be a woman who seeks Your ways and walks the right path that will be pleasing unto You.*

“Well, let’s get your suitcases out of the van, and we can all go up to the house.” Dad’s booming voice ended Amy’s prayer.

“Good idea.” Ezekiel’s head moved quickly up and down. “I’ll remind our driver what day to pick us up, and then after we get the luggage out, he can be on his way.”

Amy waited beside the van until everything had been taken out. Then she handed Angela Mary to her mother, picked up one of the suitcases, and started for the house. As soon as Sylvia and her family got here, they would get things going for supper.



Everyone sat around the living room and visited until Sylvia and her husband, Toby, arrived with their two-year-old boy, Allen, and four-month-old baby girl, Rachel. Henry returned from shopping about the same time, and Abe, who worked for a local buggy maker, showed up a few minutes later. After greeting everyone, they grabbed some chairs and joined in on the conversation.

Amy smiled, seeing Henry sitting by his twenty-one-year-old brother. He appeared to be attentive as Abe told Dad about his day at work. Henry and Abe were close, despite their six-year age difference.

*I wonder if Henry will become a buggy maker as well. Or will he end up helping us full-time in the greenhouse?* Amy shifted on her chair.

It wasn't long before Ezekiel announced Michelle's pregnancy to the rest of the family, who were enthusiastic at the news.

Amy thought how much easier it would have been if they'd shared their good news once everyone had arrived. *I suppose it's more exciting to share the news more than once.* Amy rose from her chair. "I believe supper's about ready. If you all want to take seats at the dining-room table, I'll bring everything out."

"I'll help." Mom started to rise from the couch, but Amy shook her head. "Not tonight, Mom. Since it's your birthday, you're the guest of honor."

Mom's brows furrowed. "Now how can I be the guest of honor in my own home?"

"Because we say so." Dad grinned at her and then looked around the room. "Isn't that right, family?"

Everyone nodded.

"I'll help get supper on the table." Michelle gestured to her daughter. "Ezekiel, would you please keep an eye on Angela Mary?"

"Of course, but I doubt I will be the only person watching her." He glanced across the room at their mother and winked. "Right, Mom?"

"Absolutely."

Michelle left the room with Amy. "Your family is so special," she said when they entered the kitchen. "You are blessed to have such loving, caring parents."

"I think so too." Amy grabbed two potholders and opened the oven door. Warm steam escaped along with the tantalizing aroma of ham and baked potatoes. She placed the ham and potatoes on the kitchen table and asked Michelle to dish up the green beans on the stove, while she took sour cream, butter, and freshly cut chives from the refrigerator.

“When I was growing up, I would have given anything to have parents like yours.” Michelle frowned as she placed the green beans in a serving bowl.

“I’m sorry you had such a difficult childhood.”

Her sister-in-law shrugged. “It’s in the past. I had to move on with my life.”

Ezekiel had told Amy about the abuse Michelle and her two younger brothers, Ernie and Jack, had suffered at the hands of their parents. She couldn’t imagine how hard it must have been for Michelle to endure such a thing, or to be taken from her parents and put in foster care with people she didn’t even know. What made it worse was that Michelle and her brothers had all gone to different homes and never saw each other again until the day of Michelle and Ezekiel’s wedding. What a wonderful surprise it was when Mary Ruth’s granddaughter Sara located Ernie and Jack and brought them to meet her.

So many good things had happened in her family. Amy knew folks who had dealt with worry, fear, and even tragedy, but things had been going along quite well for her family. The greenhouse ran smoothly, providing for them financially, but since Sylvia was a full-time wife and mother and no longer worked for their folks, Amy had left her job at a dry goods store to help in the greenhouse full-time. Dad took care of advertising, billing, and making sure everything ran smoothly, while Amy and her mother were responsible for the plants and flowers they sold to the public, as well as providing a few florists in the area with flowers to make their floral arrangements. It was a good life, and Amy felt content. The only thing that would make it better would be if Jared proposed marriage to her soon.

Michelle tapped Amy’s shoulder. “You look like you’re a hundred miles from here. Didn’t you hear what I said?”

Amy shook her head. “Sorry. I was deep in thought. What did you say to me?”

“I was wondering if you’re ready to take the food items out to the dining room yet. I’m sure our hungry family is waiting eagerly.”

She laughed. “Of course they are, and I’m eager to join them.”

Amy picked up the platter of ham and was about to leave the kitchen when Abe stepped in.

“Hey, Sister, what’s taking so long? Don’t you know we’re starvin’ in there?”

She rolled her eyes. “Well, if you’re starving, grab a couple of dishes and take them in.”



*Thank You, God, once again for my family.* Amy glanced around the table at the smiling faces looking back at her as they all enjoyed the tasty meal.

Mom was in especially good spirits this evening, laughing and enjoying the antics of her three grandchildren. It wouldn’t be long before she’d be blessed with four little ones to dote on.

Amy thought of Jared, wishing he could be here with them as part of the family. But since they were only courting and not an engaged couple, she felt it wouldn’t have been right to ask him to join them. She would be seeing Jared tomorrow night anyway, when they went out for their evening meal at the Bird-in-Hand Family Restaurant.

“Let’s not worry about doing the supper dishes right now,” Sylvia said when the meal ended. “We can just put them in the sink till after Mom opens her presents and we’ve had cake and ice cream.”

Amy thumped the side of her head. “Oh, no. When I went shopping yesterday, I forgot to get some ice cream.”

“That’s okay.” Mom flapped her hand. “We can get by without it.”

“No, we can’t.” Dad shook his head. “It wouldn’t seem like a birthday celebration if there wasn’t cake and ice cream.”

“We could crank out some homemade if we had all the ingredients.” Amy leaned her elbows on the table. “Trouble is, we don’t have any heavy whipping cream and maybe not enough eggs. Even if we did, it would take too much time to mix it all, crank till it froze, and then let it set until we could eat it.” She looked over at Mom. “So, I agree. . . . We should settle for just cake.”

Dad shook his head again—this time with a determined set of

his jaw. "I'll hitch my horse to one of our carriages and head for the grocery store." He glanced around the table. "Anyone wanna come along for the ride and to keep me company?"

"I'll go." Toby pushed his chair away from the table.

"Me too." Abe also left his seat.

"Okay, guess I'll take the two-seater. Anybody else want to join us?"

The others, including Amy, shook their heads.

"After that good meal, plus the long ride down here from New York, think I will try to catch a few winks while you're gone." Ezekiel yawned and stretched his arms over his head.

Mom rose to her feet. "Well, if we're going to wait on ice cream to have our dessert, we may as well do the dishes." She reached for her plate, but Michelle grabbed it out from under her.

"This celebration is in honor of you, so you ought to go relax in the living room. Amy, Sylvia, and I will take care of the dishes. Right, ladies?"

"Absolutely," Amy and Sylvia said in unison.

"All right." Mom heaved a sigh. "I can see I'm outnumbered."

Amy got up right away and started clearing dishes. Sylvia and Michelle did the same. Mom led Angela Mary and Allen to the living room, and when Amy glanced over her shoulder, she saw her mother peek at baby Rachel, where she lay sleeping in the playpen.

Dad, Toby, and Abe said their goodbyes, put on their straw hats, and went out the back door.

A short time later, as Amy began filling the sink with warm, soapy water, she saw her father's horse and buggy go down the driveway at a steady pace. She placed all the silverware into the sink and glanced out the window again in time to see Dad's rig ease out onto the road. The horse and carriage had gone only a short distance, when a semitruck came out of nowhere. Amy clutched her throat and screamed as the semi rammed the back of Dad's buggy. For a few seconds, her mind went blank, as if her brain had stopped working. Then, just as quickly, Amy screamed for the rest of the family to come, before she raced out the back door.