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An
Amish Cradle



BETH WISEMAN,
AMY CLIPSTON,
KATHLEEN FULLER,
AND VANNETTA CHAPMAN



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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In His Father's Arms

BETH WISEMAN

To Raelyn Cutbirth



GLOSSARY

ach—oh

danki—thank you

Englisch—non-Amish person

gut—good

kapp—prayer covering or cap

kinner—children or grandchildren

maedels—girls

mamm—mom

mammi—grandmother

mei—my

mudder—mother

nee—no

sohn—son

ya—yes



PROLOGUE

Ruth Anne squeezed her eyes closed and held her breath as she sat beside her husband in the hospital waiting room. They left Bethany's room because her best friend's wailing was more than Ruth Anne could bear. Levi leaned closer to her, the roughness of his brown beard grazing her cheek as he whispered, "You know your delivery won't be like this. Bethany has never had *gut* tolerance for pain."

She opened her eyes, glanced around the waiting room, then also spoke softly. "Having babies hurts. Even *Mamm* said that God makes sure we shed the memory. Otherwise, we'd all just have one child." She squeezed her lips together and held her breath again, remembering Bethany's cries.

Ruth Anne looked around the room again. Both of Bethany's parents were here, along with her in-laws and cousins. About twenty folks waiting for little Esther Rose to arrive.

Levi leaned close to her again. "Ruthie, you're gonna do real

fine. Mary Elizabeth is going to see to that.” He gave a taut nod at the mention of the midwife who would be delivering their baby. Unlike her best friend, Ruth Anne had chosen not to deliver in a hospital, and she’d also opted not to have an ultrasound. Or pain medication. But as she listened to Bethany struggle, she was starting to second-guess her choices. But her husband was right. They’d all grown up together, and Bethany made a fuss over the smallest of ailments.

Ruth Anne stood and walked down the hall to listen at her friend’s door. She strained to hear something since Bethany had grown quiet. She silently prayed that the worst of the pain was over and that little Esther Rose had made a safe and healthy arrival into the world.

It was about twenty minutes later when John walked into the waiting area, a tiny bundle swaddled in his arms. His ear-to-ear smile was proof that all was well. Everyone rushed toward him, and Levi helped lift Ruth Anne from her chair. As scared of the delivery as she was, she had to admit she was ready to hold her own baby in her arms.

She waited until the grandparents and other family members had a chance to see Esther Rose before she and Levi moved toward the proud father.

“She’s beautiful,” Ruth Anne said as she eyed the tiny infant with a hint of Bethany’s red hair. “Welcome, Esther Rose.”

Ruth Anne and Bethany had both found out they were pregnant the same week, and they’d spent the last nine months knitting baby clothes, setting up nurseries, and preparing for these blessed events. She thanked God for Esther’s safe arrival.

“The doctor said she’s just perfect.” John beamed as he gazed down at his daughter. He didn’t lift his eyes when he added, “And Bethany did just great.”

Ruth Anne swallowed hard. If that was great, she wondered what not-so-great would have sounded like. She put a hand across her tummy, wondering if God would bless her with a boy or a girl.

Levi said it didn't matter to him if they had a daughter or a son, but Ruth Anne knew he wanted a son. All three of his brothers had daughters. Five total. Levi was hoping to give his parents their first grandson.

Ruth Anne smiled as John said he needed to get back to Bethany, and then he gave both sets of grandparents a final peek at Esther Rose before he left the waiting room. Ruth Anne and Levi said their good-byes and left through another door that led to the parking lot where a line of buggies were tethered. Levi reached for her hand and squeezed.

"I can't wait to see who shows up in our life—Joshua or Eva Mae."

Waddling alongside him as fast as she could, she said, "Me either."

And if truth be told—Ruth Anne was secretly hoping for a boy too. Somehow she sensed that Joshua would be making his entrance soon.



CHAPTER ONE

Ruth Anne held off pushing when Mary Elizabeth said to, even though she was sure the baby was going to come out anyway. Levi stood at the end of their bed, white as the sheet that covered Ruth Anne. He apparently had forgotten everything he was supposed to do during the birthing process. Ruth Anne had asked for her mother to come in four hours ago, and she'd only just arrived. And she'd asked for pain medication. Repeatedly. As she focused on a stuffed elephant on her bedroom dresser, she tried to recall the day she and Levi had gone to the fair, but the pain wouldn't allow her to shift her thinking. She'd packed a small red suitcase, which now sat in the corner, in case of an emergency and they needed to rush to the hospital, but Mary Elizabeth had assured her that everything was going well.

"Not quite yet," Mary Elizabeth said as she positioned herself on the stool at the end of Ruth Anne's bed. She pulled the sheets to the side and checked Ruth Anne again. "Levi, I see the head. Look."

Ruth Anne hadn't cried out and wailed the way Bethany had, but this was indeed the worst pain she'd ever felt in her life. Even worse than when she broke her leg in three places when she was seven. But when she saw her husband move in closer and a smile light up his face, she knew that Joshua was almost here.

"Wow," her husband whispered before he looked up at Ruth Anne. "I can see the head. I can see the head."

"Oh, blessed be the Lord," Ruth Anne's mother said as she reached for her daughter's hand.

"It's time, Ruth Anne. You can push." Mary Elizabeth edged Levi to the side as Ruth Anne held tightly to her mother's hand.

Ruth Anne pushed with all her might, knowing she sounded like Bethany and not caring. She followed Mary Elizabeth's instructions and kept pushing and pushing and pushing—and crying. The pain, the anticipation, the miracle of birth . . . Her emotions were all over the place. But when she heard a tiny cry and felt the pressure ease from her body, she drew in a deep breath and wept. Her mother walked to the end of the bed, her eyes tearing up.

"It's a boy," *Mamm* said as she brought both hands to her chest.

Thank You, God. She closed her eyes and thanked Him again. After a couple more deep breaths, she looked up just in time to see her mother and Mary Elizabeth exchange looks, both leaning closer to the baby.

"What? What's wrong? What is it?" She tried to lift herself, but couldn't. "Levi!" she screamed. "What's *wrong*?"



Levi was sure he'd never seen a more precious sight in his life. He quickly counted his son's fingers and toes. Ten. And he was

breathing. And beautiful. He looked at Mary Elizabeth, waiting for confirmation that everything was okay since his wife was acting concerned all of a sudden.

“Ya, dear. Ya. Everything is fine.” Mary Elizabeth smiled as she and Ruth Anne’s mother cleaned the baby. Once they were done, both women touched Joshua’s feet, and as Levi leaned closer, he saw why they were studying his son in such a way.

“His big toes are a long way from the other ones.” It was almost like an extra toe could fit there. “Will he be able to walk okay?”

Mary Elizabeth nodded. “Everything is fine.” She swaddled Joshua and handed him to Levi. He couldn’t take his eyes off his son. He’d always heard that the love a person has for a child isn’t like any other kind of love, but experiencing the emotion had caught him off guard. He hated to cry, but a tear slipped down his cheek just the same.

“Let me see. Let me see.” Ruth Anne had both arms stretched toward him.

Levi didn’t want to turn his son loose, but Ruth Anne was anxious. He handed her their baby boy, then put a hand on his wife’s arm. He wished his mother were here. Levi’s parents and siblings lived in Hershey, too far to travel by buggy, so he didn’t get to see his family as often as he would like. Had it not been for a mutual friend’s wedding in Paradise, Levi might not have ever met Ruth Anne. His mother had planned to hire a driver so she could be here, but a feverish cold had kept her away today.

“You did *gut*, Ruthie. You did so *gut*. Isn’t he the most beautiful person you’ve ever seen?”

Ruth Anne met eyes with her son, each studying the other. There was no doubt that it was love at first sight for her too. “His eyes are so blue. Will they stay that color?” She glanced toward the

end of the bed, but both the midwife and Ruth Anne's mother were talking in low voices in the corner of the room. After a few seconds, Mary Elizabeth walked back to the bed.

"He is a beautiful baby." She shrugged, smiling. "And who knows if his eyes will stay so blue. Some do and some don't."

Both Levi and Ruth Anne had brown eyes, so Levi figured the likelihood of Joshua's eyes staying blue were slim. And that was fine by him. Joshua was perfect in every way. Except maybe his toes, but that was certainly something they could live with.

"Mary Elizabeth said we need to cart little Joshua to the pediatrician. Maybe tomorrow if you feel up to it." Carolyn smiled, but Ruth Anne's mother had never been good at hiding her emotions, and Levi could tell the smile was forced.

"What's wrong?" Ruth Anne's eyes grew round, and Levi could feel his pulse quickening.

"Everything is fine," Mary Elizabeth said again. "Remember, we talked about this, that the baby would need to be thoroughly checked out by a doctor."

"But you said we could wait a few days as long as everything looked okay." Ruth Anne peeled back the swaddling and began inspecting their son, eventually latching onto one of his tiny feet. "Are you worried about his feet?" She glanced at Levi before she looked at Mary Elizabeth. "Because no one will see his little toes most of the time anyway." She smiled.

Levi helped her bundle Joshua back up. Their son had closed his eyes, but Levi could see him breathing.

"So beautiful." Levi's mother-in-law folded her hands in front of her as she stared at Ruth Anne and Joshua. But Levi saw her blink back tears before she asked, "Shall I go get the others?"

Mary Elizabeth finished cleaning up Ruth Anne and draped

fresh covers on her. “Are you ready to show the world your precious son?”

Ruth Anne and Levi both nodded. Levi was anxious for their family to see their boy. There were probably twenty people in the living room waiting to visit.

Levi gazed upon his son with so much love in his heart that it almost hurt. When he finally pulled his eyes from the baby, he saw that Ruth Anne’s mother and Mary Elizabeth were back in the corner again. Despite the fact that everyone kept saying everything was fine, in the pit of his stomach, Levi knew it wasn’t.