



## Chapter 2 – Growing a Farmer’s Daughter

### Excerpt From *Out of the Cocoon: A Young Woman’s Courageous Flight from the Grip of a Religious Cult* [www.outofthecocoon.net](http://www.outofthecocoon.net)

I loved to tease my cousins. One of our favorite pastimes was playing Hide-and-Go-Seek inside my house. There were so many crevices and storage areas in our large farmhouse in which to squeeze a child’s tiny body. But while everyone searched feverishly for me *inside* my house, I’d climb out my bedroom window (on the second floor), lower myself onto the roof below, and then cannonball to the grassy knoll below. Secretly concealing myself *outside*, I waited for them to scream, “Brenda, we give up!” I’d then sneak back into the house and sit calmly on the sofa. When they found me, I’d snidely inquire, “Why didn’t you see me? I was right here the whole time!”

When I wasn’t playing the queen of deception, my favorite hiding spot inside the house was an antique dresser with a small enclosure on top. Like a contortionist, I’d squeeze myself into its undersized confines, close the door, and wait for what felt like an eternity. I was delighted to sit in the dark pretzel-like and motionless while I anticipated the rustling in the room and giggles, followed by heavy sighs, and eventually the squeaking of the old wooden door as my cousins exited the room in humble defeat. I kept that hiding spot a secret for a long, long time.

Another favorite activity was to climb the twenty-foot ladder to the rafters in our barn and plummet into the soft hay below. After we dove in, the hay swallowed us whole, whilst the musty fragrance and hayseed permeated the air as we struggled to “swim” to the surface. Laughing so hard and barely able to stand, we sprinted like Olympic runners to the ladder to do it again and again. Looking back at it now, it’s a miracle we didn’t break our necks!

When we felt the need to be creative, we dug clay out of the ice-cold stream’s muddy embankment and made lopsided pottery from it. My dad’s barbeque pit in the side yard served as our kiln where we “fired” our creations.

If the forest beckoned us, we’d find adventure by exploring abandoned houses or swinging from vines. We loved climbing trees and hanging upside down until the blood rushed into our heads and made us stagger like eighty-pound drunken fools.

Our property was densely populated with fruit trees, so if our stomachs growled we devoured apples, pears, plums, cherries, walnuts or whatever appealed to us. On good days I brought back flowers for my mom. On bad days, I brought back poison ivy....(continued)