



## Book 5: Homestead Surprises

By Brian Combs

The Homestead Kids Book Series

[www.thehomesteadkidsbooks.com](http://www.thehomesteadkidsbooks.com)

Copyright 2024 © ETX Homeschool Publishing, LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

The Homestead Kids Series created by Brian Combs

Text by Jeanette Poteet.

Cover-art by Brian Combs with assistance from AI.

Interior illustrations by Viviana Moyano.

Games and Activities by Sophia Poteet.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - The Big Surprise .....	1
Chapter 2 - Playing Detective .....	11
Chapter 3 - The Building Begins .....	21
Chapter 4 - Lessons from Mr. Emmett .....	33
Chapter 5 - Planning Faith's Big Day .....	47
Chapter 6 - A Week of Hard Work.....	55
Chapter 7 - Great Ideas & Breaking Jars ..	61
Chapter 8 - Sewing & Problem-Solving ...	69
Chapter 9 - Faith's Birthday Bash .....	77
Chapter 10 - Surprise Visitors .....	87
Chapter 11 - Big news .....	97
Chapter 12 - The Grand Reveal.....	107
Games & Activities .....	117

## Chapter 1 - The Big Surprise

Hanging upside down, braids dangling beside her reddening face, ten-year-old Rosie couldn't help but ask again, "Are you sure that's what he said?"

"Yep," answered Michelle. Eight-year-old Michelle lay on the ground under the tree, munching on a plum. She idly thought how unpleasant it would be if Rosie lost her grip and fell on her. Why Rosie had to dangle right above where she lay, she did not know, but it always made her nervous! Putting those thoughts away, she shook her



head and finished, "'You'll know when you know', that's exactly what he said."

"I wonder what on earth is going on! It's not like Mom and Dad to be secretive." Rosie laughed, "That's our job!"

Michelle laughed, remembering the last time they'd worked so hard to keep a secret. They had planned to surprise Mom and Dad by washing Dad's truck. She had no idea how they hadn't noticed that Dad's window was still rolled down, but Dad was definitely surprised to find out what they'd done. Michelle grimaced; it wasn't the pleasant surprise they'd planned, she remembered, shaking her head.

"I'm sure we'll figure it out," Rosie continued. She started swinging back and forth, trying to gain momentum to sit back upright again. Dangling was easy! But getting back up always made her stomach hurt. She finally pulled herself upright and laid forward on the large oak branch so she could keep Michelle in sight. "Do you think they're taking us on a trip? Amanda's family kept it a secret last summer when

they went to the waterpark.” Rosie speculated.

Michelle swiped some tree bark off her plum, which had fallen when Rosie shifted on the tree. Michelle sighed but didn't feel too angry. She remembered when she'd prayed with Mom about feeling so angry with Rosie. When Rosie did something annoying these days, the old anger wasn't there. Just a quiet sigh and a shake of her head. “Nah,” she finally responded. She was about to explain why she thought that, but Rosie quickly pushed herself upright and interrupted.

“Sit up, 'Chelle! Now!”

When Rosie's voice took that tone, Michelle always obeyed quickly: she didn't just sit up but stood up and moved away. Looking up at Rosie, whose arm was pointing toward the ground, Michelle followed Rosie's pointing finger to see... what was that?

“UGGGH!” Michelle moaned, shutting her lips tightly with a sick feeling. Tiger had started walking straight over to her on the ground with a dead mouse in her

mouth. Why cats thought dead mice made good gifts was beyond her. It wouldn't be so bad, except you never knew that the "gift" was dead. One time, Tiger had brought one into the house as a gift for Mom. Only when Tiger had put the mouse by Mom's feet, the house had taken off running. Mom had gone crazy trying to get that mouse out of her house. That story was their favorite to tell about Tiger, to get a laugh from their friends, but they also took it as a serious warning to watch out for living gifts!

"Let's head to the barn, Rosie. I still need to clean out the chicken's water pans before dinner, but I haven't done that yet." Michelle didn't wait for a response but dusted some grass off her pants and started towards the barn while Rosie started working her way down from the tree.

Both girls worked together, dumping the water from the chickens' large water buckets and then scrubbing the pans to get some algae growth off the buckets with a scrubby brush they kept in the barn just for such purposes. They had just refilled the buckets with fresh, clean water and were



watching the birds rush over for a drink when a big white truck pulled into the drive.

From the barn door, the girls watched as Dad exited the house and shook hands with the tall man who'd just stepped out of the truck. Dad motioned towards the other side of the house by the garden and walked in that direction while the man followed him in the truck.

Rosie and Michelle looked at each other, and without a word, they both quietly headed to a corner of the house where they knew they could watch. Unless someone specifically looked at the corner, they'd never be seen.

They watched with confusion as Dad and the man wandered around the clear patch of land by the garden. The man from the truck had brought a tape measure, and the two men were measuring all over the empty field. Occasionally, the man put a small piece of wire with a red flag on it into the ground to mark a spot.

“AAAAAChooooooooooooooooo!”

Rosie nearly screamed. Michelle's loud sneeze had startled her so badly. Both jumped behind the house so they couldn't be seen. Michelle thought she saw Dad look their way but couldn't be sure.

"Think you sneezed loud enough, 'Chelle?" Rosie said with a laugh.

Michelle laughed but also held her hands over her face, slightly mortified. "I'm so sorry! I tried to hold it so hard; it only made it louder! I thought I saw Dad look this way - do you think he saw us?"

Rosie shook her head, smiling broadly, "I have no idea. But, I do know if his surprise is in that pasture, and he talked about it to that man, he won't be able to keep it a surprise for long!

Michelle wrinkled her nose in confusion and asked, "Why? You think the guy with Dad will tell YOU?" *No way.* Michelle didn't say that in the last part but certainly thought it. *No way, no how.*

With a broad smile still in place, Rosie answered, "No, I don't think he will, but she will." Rosie led Michelle back to the corner of the house, peered over, and pointed so

Michelle could look straight down her arm to where her finger pointed. She was pointing at the tree they had been playing in earlier. Only now, there was a splash of red in the tree that hadn't been there earlier.

"Adee!" Michelle whispered, her mouth agape. "If they talked about it, she'll have heard everything!"

"Yup!" answered Rosie victoriously. "We'll need to wait until the man leaves, but I bet you anything she heard every word. We're gonna know what the surprise is by supper time!"

Rosie and Michelle did their special high five, slapping hands high once, then low, turning around and clapping. They grinned at each other and started heading for the house. It sure was nice when your best friend was also your sister. And it was even better when that sister also loved playing detective and figuring out what Mom and Dad's surprise was just as much as she did.

Rosie clapped her hand on her forehead just before reaching the front door. Michelle stopped and just looked at Rosie

questioningly. Rosie just shook her head, turned, and picked up one of the two small buckets on the front porch. They had both completely forgotten that Mom had sent them outdoors in the first place to collect some dandelion flowers. Mom made the best dandelion jelly in the world. Its sweet honey taste made it their favorite jelly on Mom's left-over dinner rolls as a quick snack.

"Oh! Yikes! I'm glad you remembered!" Michelle said, also reaching forward to grab her bucket.

As they worked, their buckets easily filled very quickly, as the lawn and pasture areas were spotted with so many dandelions that it looked like a giant connect-the-dots game. Rosie again began speculating why Dad and the man had been measuring the field. "Speculating, which just means guessing," she explained to Michelle, "Is a detective's greatest skill."

"Well, speculating and interrogating." Michelle corrected happily.

"Interrogating?" asked Rosie.

*PREVIEW*

“You bet,” Michelle said, nodding firmly, pointing her head towards the garden area. “When we see Adee, we must find out what she knows!”

## Chapter 2 - Playing Detective

Rosie and Michelle brought in their buckets filled with dandelion flower heads. They grabbed a bowl from the sink to wash them, then told Mom the flowers were ready whenever she was.

“Thanks, girls!” Mom responded, giving the girls a quick hug. “It’ll only take a bit to get the jelly done and into jars. I’d like y’all to return in about an hour to help me get dinner going.”

“Okie doke, Mom!” answered Rosie, and Michelle nodded in agreement.

The girls looked at each other, grinned, and hustled off, searching for Adee.

It took several minutes to track her down. Adee was in her room working on reading a Fred and Toad book. It took her forever to get through it, as she was only six years old and learning to read. Her older sisters were reading all the time, and Adee was determined to catch up to them. Plus, she loved books, so the sooner she could easily read all of them herself, the better!

“There you are!”

Rosie and Michelle’s loud shout startled Adee so much that she jerked sideways suddenly, turning towards the voice. With a thud, she toppled off the bed. Stunned, she lay there a moment, staring at the ceiling and the side of her bed while Rosie and Michelle rushed into the room. Their shocked faces came into her view as they leaned over her.

“You okay?” asked Rosie, reaching down to take Adee’s hand and then tugging to help pull her to her feet. “I’m so sorry; we

didn't mean to startle you. We were just happy - we'd looked everywhere for you!"

Adee collected her book, which had slid across the room in the tumble and was underneath Faith's crib. She stood up and just looked at Rosie and Michelle. Both sisters were just staring at Adee with silly grins on their faces. "What?" Adee asked.

"What did you hear?" Michelle raised her voice excitedly, and Rosie quickly shushed her and shut Adee's door.

"What do you mean? What did I hear? I heard you shouting and the wind rushing through my hair as my life flashed before my eyes." Adee dramatically waved her arms to show herself falling.

Rosie rolled her eyes but grinned. Adee was so dramatic she should be an actress on TV one day. Michelle stepped up and excitedly asked, "We saw you in the tree, right by where Dad and the guy with the truck were talking. Did you hear what they are going to do? Are they building something there? Did you hear what they're building?"



Michelle's eyes lit up. "Did they say anything about a swimming pool?"

"What? Ohhh, no. I didn't understand what they were talking about. Dad definitely talked about building, and they were measuring out the corners of something. Dad pointed out where the doors and windows would be. But we already have a house, so I don't know why he'd be building another house," Adee finished with a shrug.

"Maybe it's an animal barn?" Michelle suggested, always willing, that there should be more animals on the farm.

"Did Dad mention anything about animals?" Rosie questioned Adee again.

Adee simply shook her head.

All three girls stood in silence for a moment, frowns on their faces as they thought through what they knew so far. It really wasn't much.

Rosie sighed. She'd been so sure she'd know Mom and Dad's secret plans before dinner. The idea of waiting to find out what was going on was so frustrating. She

wanted to know now! Patience was not her easiest virtue.

As if reading her mind, Michelle said, "Patience," and sighed. "I hate patience."

All three girls could hear Grandma Becky's song in that moment, running through their minds:

"Patience is a virtue,  
Patience is a virtue,  
It helps you to be kind,  
When things don't go on time,  
You and I need patience all the time."

Patience is so hard, though. It's much easier to like patience when you aren't waiting for something!

Rosie looked at the clock and said, "We need to get back to Mom and help with dinner. It's almost been an hour."

Michelle nodded her agreement but added, "This doesn't mean we give up, though - we may still figure it out!"

All three girls headed to the kitchen. Mom quickly settled the girls into various jobs. Michelle collected a small basket with carrots, rutabaga, turnips, radishes, and potatoes from the pantry. Rosie collected

several cutting boards and knives for the three of them to use. Adee brought over the compost bucket to dump the peelings into.

As they settled into chopping and peeling, the girls chatted about various things the animals had done. Adee had seen Ornerly, one of the stray cats, leap over three feet in the air, swatting at a moth.

Rosie dumped all the diced veggies into a colander and rinsed them in the sink. The colander was a simple bowl with small holes. The water would run out the bottom of the bowl so fruits and veggies could be rinsed. It was a simple job, but the older girls always ensured one of them did the job. Adee always seemed to forget the holes would still drain water even after she turned the water off. She'd end up dripping water everywhere as she carried the colander back over to the workspace. So, while Rosie handled the veggies, Michelle tried catching small chunks in her mouth while Adee tossed them toward her.



“You’re going to have to clean up those misses, you know!” said Rosie, chuckling. Michelle had yet to ever catch one in her mouth. But she kept trying.

Mom spread the chopped veggies onto a tray, added some sliced sausage and seasonings, and stirred everything together before spreading it all into a flat layer and sliding the tray into the oven.

The girls set the table, and Adee had just placed cups of water on the table when laughter suddenly rang out. Adee turned to see Mom bowing. Over the laughter and the noise, Rosie and Michelle explained that Mom had caught a chunk of turnip in her mouth! It was hard to imagine Mom being silly like that. Adee laughed and hugged Mom. “I can’t believe you did it!”

Mom chuckled and shook her head. “Dinner won’t cook itself, so I better leave the playing around to you girls if you want to eat on time,” she bent to slide her dinner rolls into the oven. “Y’all go play now, and I’ll call you when dinner is ready. If you see your Dad, tell him 30 minutes to dinner.”

At dinner, the family laughed as one-year-old Faith, sitting in her highchair, happily labelled everything in her bowl “tay-toes”. Rosie tried to correct her and point out the different veggies, but Faith picked up each piece and exclaimed “tay toes!”.

By the time the dishes were done, the kitchen cleaned, and nighttime chores completed, the girls were more than ready for bed. But for Rosie, sleep didn’t come quickly. Her brain kept racing. Would Mom and Dad tell them tomorrow?