Bruce worked late into the night.

He had not seen Emma all week.

He wondered how they were doing, especially Joshua.

He thought about the big smile baby girl they love and now him.

Bruce said, “I have to go into the town and begin to see which house or land I want.”

He pulled out of his chest pocket the list of vacant houses William gave him that day.

Bruce thought, “The third in command is stationed there and he said he will retire and live there. Bishop requested his family to move here. I better start searching out these houses and land and make my decision, before they are all gone. I have to talk to Emma. She may not want to move here after I tell her about the witches.”

Bruce could see him talking to Emma about witches. He could see Emma’s face. He shuddered.

He cut off the lights and looked around and left the office tent.

Bruce looked around the post.

He saw the sentries.

He wondered how the governor’s mother-in-law was doing.

He would check on her in the morning.

Bruce thought about the governess said, she had to run with the governor’s children and the assassins knew where they were hiding with the children. There’s more to this. Now they are under my protection. This is a mess. All I can think about is Emma and how badly I want her. I signed the divorced papers and had them notarized and sent back to Priscilla. She can now pursue her dream.

Bruce smiled and shook his head and said, “Priscilla.”

Bruce went to his tent and dressed for bed.

He always slept with one gun in his hand, now he sleeps with two guns. One in each hand.

He laid in the bed and his thoughts went to the cook and his son the second in command.

He thought about all his men he lost.

The number of the assassins.

He thought, “Damn. Bill’s trial starts this week and his execution. I have to go to that iceberg in the morning and call a family meeting and tell them. Listen to me talking about a family meeting when I am not married to Emma. I wondered whether we will last, finally being married. I do love that woman. I have always loved her but for some reason she held onto Bill. What happened to you Emma?” What is it? Before we marry I must know. I hope it will not stop my love for you. I don’t want to be separated from you ever.”

Bruce thought he said, “God, I don’t know YOU. But I am in a mess. My human skills can only take me so far. I love Emma. You know that. What’s wrong with her? Whatever it is can you heal her for me. I won’t lie to You. I am selfish. But can You heal her so she can be happy? And what about this town of vacant houses and lands because of witches? I need a house for Emma. Can You get rid of all the evil and make them leave so we can be happy?”

A thought came to Bruce of how he looked at the escort soldier that morning for not addressing him as the captain.

Bruce said, “Your right.”

Bruce got out of bed and got on his knees and said, “Amen.”

He crawled into bed and slept until the bugle sounded.

The captain had to shake the sleep from him.

He say on his bed for a minute.

He started getting his clothes together.

Bruce saw the shadow of someone at his tent door.

The soldier yelled and said, “Captain sir, your hot bath water and shave is ready.”

The captain said, “Thank You.”

Bruce fell back over on his bed and took a nap.

He got up thirty minutes later and went and took his hot bath and shaved.

He was dressed and passing the tent they put the governor’s mother-in-

law for her stay.

He stopped to check on her, but he could hear her snoring.

He smirked because that’s what he wanted to be doing.

The captain had posted soldier outside of her tent until she left.

The captain looked at the soldiers and said, “Has she been out the tent?”

One of the soldier’s said, “Only to use the toilet, sir.”

The captain said, “Keep it that way.”

The captain walked away and went into the kitchen, where one soldier was cooking.

The captain saluted his men and walked out.

He stopped by his tent and placed his things in the tent.

The valet soldier had cleaned the captain’s tent and put everything in order the way the captain trained him.

The captain picked up his two quilts and walked into the command post office.

He looked over the reports.

The telegrams came in stating the trials would start the next day.

The captain received a telegram from Bishop’s family they would be bringing the older driver’s wife.

They should arrive Wednesday of that week.

The captain began to write orders.

His office soldiers watched him.

The captain called one of his men and handed him an order to take to Danny, to escort Bishop’s family around.

Another order was to the third in command, to find the vacant houses and lands.

The captain had them to send many telegrams to the command headquarters for supplies.

He also, sent a telegram to thank the commander at the headquarters for sending him the two cooks and the three kitchen supply helpers.

He was taking Ida’s advise to see to the small details himself.

The captain said to one soldier, “Go and place an update on my desk about the governess’ laundry.”

The captain said,”Send another telegram to the command headquarters and request two medics, since we don’t have one.”

Bruce picked the folder from his desk that contained the list of the assassins with Bill’s name on it.

The captain told another soldier to saddle and bring his horse.

Bruce learned to listen very hard.

He could hear the soldier go and get his saddle and put it on his horse.

The office soldiers knew he was going to the new settlement and would be gone most of the day.

They were happy.

They saw the two quilts and figured they were for him and his woman.

The office soldiers were ready to drink and gamble and were excited that Bruce was leaving.

One soldier began to look over the protocol list, to see who would be in command until the captain returns.

They knew the second in command was on leave for a month and the third in command was in the town fighting witches.

The soldier stopped and looked at the captain.

The captain said, “Soldier Todd, you can put the list up. You are next in command.”

Soldier Todd sat stunned, because he was the one that orchestrated the gaming for the troop.

The captain turned and looked at him.

Then Bruce started putting two and two together.

He said, “Better yet ride with me to the new settlement.”

Soldier Todd sat and could not move.

The captain said, “Soldier Foster you are in command, I do not want any gambling, drinking and debaucheries while I am away.”

The captain sat at his desk and re-wrote his orders.

The captain said, “Soldier Todd when I stand up you better be ready to leave.”

Soldier Todd ran and got his coat and horse.

The captain said, “Soldier Foster take this order and rotate the soldiers now at the new settlement.”

Soldier Foster stood and walked to the captain and said, “You got nerves talking about debaucheries and going with that married woman.”

The captain looked at soldier Foster.

Soldier Foster stared at the captain and thought I know I did not speak out loud.

Soldier Foster looked around at the other soldiers, who were staring at him.

He nervously took the orders the captain reached to him.

The soldier the captain sent to check on the governess laundry returned.

He told the captain, “The governess’ laundry will be ready tomorrow. I will write it in the report and place it on your desk.”

Everyone was looking at Foster.

The captain said, “Fine.”

Soldier Todd was outside.

He captain thought, “Go back and find out if there is any laundry for the governor and the first lady. If it is have them place it in a clean wagon and you drive the wagon to the new settlement.”

The soldier stunned looked at the captain.

The captain said, “Tell Soldier Todd it is cold at the new settlement he needs additional coverings. To go and get it. Soldier Foster make sure the soldiers that are being rotated have additional coverings because it is freezing at the new settlement.”

The captain looked at his soldiers who were standing looking at him.

Bruce said, “When I make my first step it will be a court martial.”

Soldier Foster and the other soldier ran out the tent.

The captain heard Soldier Foster yelled and told Todd, “The captain said, It is cold at the new settlement and for you to take some coverings.”

Soldier Todd was angry and said, “I’m use to the cold. I’ll be fine.”

Soldier Foster turned and ran to the soldiers’ tent and started yelling the names of the soldiers to leave immediately for the freezing new settlement.

The other soldier ran passed Todd and Foster back to the laundry area.

He was bent over and out of breath.

The laundry workers looked at him, because he just left.

The soldier said, “The captain wants to know if any laundry is ready for the governor and his wife?”

The laundry workers said, “Over there on the tables.”

The soldier was trying to catch his breath.

He said, “The captain wants you to put it in a clean wagon and for me to drive the wagon to them.”

The laundry workers loaded up the wagon.

They hitched the horses to the wagon.

The soldiers at the governor’s mother-in-law tent was watching the soldier.

He looked over at them and threw them a finger sign.

The soldiers looked at each other and decided not to shoot him.

They would get him at the gambling tent later.

The soldiers looked around for any other soldiers that might be watching them.

The soldier waited for the laundry workers to load the wagon.

He got in the wagon and drove off.

He stopped at his tent and got his blanket

Bruce walked out the tent with the official folder and his two quilts and he looked at Soldier Todd.

Bruce did not say anything to Soldier Todd.

He told him it was freezing cold there.

Bruce mounted his horse and they rode out the command.

Bruce was thinking about how he was going to tell them about Bill and that Harry.

He was perplexed about why anyone would want to kill the governor’s children. He was thinking that is truly personal. He thought about the governor’s mother-in-law if he sent her home, they could easily kill her. He thought about the governess who said she had the governor’s ear.

He rode in silence for an hour with a mad Soldier Todd.

The captain heard a wagon behind them and it was the soldier driving at full steam.

The captain stopped and allowed the soldier to bring the wagon into the yard.

The captain was about to ride in the yard when his horse bucked.

The captain patted his horse.

He rode into the yard and one of the soldiers stationed there ran and got his horse.

The captain walked to the cute house and looking at his men as he stepped on the porch.

He knocked on the door.

Emma who was sitting at the window saw him ride up.

She pressed her hair down and tried to press her dress.

Mattie said, “That won’t help.”

Emma said, “I am glad I washed my face and brushed my teeth.”

Emma ran to the door and opened it.

The captain took off his hat and had a stern look on his face.

Mattie looked at him.

Emma was staring at Bruce.

Betsy was sitting on the sofa by Joshua, who was sitting on his quilt and playing with his sailboat.

Wes was in the bedroom with the little girl and Natalie was sitting to feed her.

Wes looked at Bruce and the soldier behind him.

Betsy finally looked at Bruce, she saw the soldier with him.

Betsy wondered, “What was going on?”

The soldier in the wagon wrapped in his blanket and said, “Sir!”

Bruce thought, “I know he did not yell at me.”

Bruce slowly turned and looked at the soldier.

Emma was looking.

She knew Wes did not allow anyone to go to the governor’s tent.

She said, “Wes, the governor’s laundry.”

Wes stood and put on his coat and walked to Bruce and said, “Good morning.”

He looked at the soldier with Bruce who was angry.

Wes said, “You are new? It does not get any warmer.”

Bruce turned and looked at his soldier and said, “You go and help them put the laundry up.”

Wes looked back at the soldier and they walked to the governor’s tent and the wagon driver got the soldiers to form a line and to the governor’s tent.

No one went into the governor’s tent but Wes.

Wes put the washcloths in their place, the towels, the clean sheets.

He was so happy to see clean laundry.

Wes gathered all the dirty laundry and put it in the wagon.

When the soldier Todd went to help the other soldier, Bruce stepped in the house and closed the door.

The little girl waved at Bruce.

Bruce said, “Hello sweetheart.”

Natalie turned around and said, “Hello.”

The little girl said, “Me Natalie. He called me sweetheart.”

Joshua stood up and said, “We ain’t having this.”

He walked to the bedroom.

Bruce said, “What are you going to do with him Mattie?”

Before Mattie could answer, Bruce grabbed Emma and kissed her a long time. He bent her over and held her.

Mattie said, “Well I don’t know yet.”

Joshua was standing in the bedroom door stunned.

The little girl said, “What Joshua?”

Natalie stood from her chair and walked to the door and grinned.

Natalie began to close the door and pulled Joshua out the door into the bedroom.

The little girl looked at Natalie and said, “What Natalie?”

Natalie grinned and turned and looked at the little girl and leaned on her bed and smiled she said, “Love.”

The little girl said, “Whose love? Joshua ?”

Joshua was disturb and stood by the door.

The little girl looked at Joshua and said, “Aunt Emma and the soldier?”

Natalie looked back at Joshua and saw he was bothered about Emma and Bruce.

Natalie reached her hand to Joshua.

Natalie said, “Joshua all of this stuff will work out.”

Joshua said, “How? Everybody is happy but me.”

The little girl looked at Joshua.

The little girl looked at Natalie and said, “applesauce please.”

Natalie reached for the bowl with the applesauce and thought, “No you little stinker. You had your two spoonfuls.”

The little girl said, “I won’t tell Wes.”

Natalie put the bowl back and said, “You won’t.”

The little girl laughed

Wes opened the front door and heard the little girl belly laugh.

He smiled.

He turned and saw Bruce kissing Emma and his soldier was coming on the porch.

Wes said, “Bruce.”

Bruce let Emma go.

Mattie looked at Betsy.

Betsy said to Mattie, “Would you have stayed with him?”

Mattie said, “Hell no.”

Betsy and Mattie began to laugh.

Bruce looked at them and said, “Heifers.”

The captain soldiers walked in the house.

Wes went into the chest of drawers and gave the soldier all the dirty linens.

The soldier took all the dirty linens and ran to the wagon and got in the wagon and turned the wagon around and flew out the yard and barely escaped the two wagons of the soldiers entering the yard.

Bruce went and stood on the front porch with soldier Todd as the soldiers rotated.

They moved very quick.

The soldiers with them showed where their positions were around the cute house.

Some of the soldiers who never been looked at the house and said it was cute.

Soldier Todd became very cold and wanted to go back in the house.

Bruce watched him and knew soldier Todd wanted to go back in the house.

The captain stepped off the front porch followed by soldier Todd.

The captain confirmed the position of each soldier.

Bruce walked the perimeter of the house.

Todd was becoming sick because it was so cold.

He never experienced anything of the kind. He had never heard anyone talk about that kind of cold.

Bruce had on two pairs of thermals and an additional uniform under the one he had on and an additional pair of wool socks.

Bruce was very cold but he was not freezing.

Bruce turned and soldier Todd turned thinking they were going back to the house.

The captain told him, “Continued around the perimeter and secure each soldier position and then report back to me.”

Soldier Todd just stared at Bruce.

Bruce walked away.

The captain was thinking, “I have had it with hard headed, disobedient soldiers, who are lazy and know more than me.”

The captain walked back to the house and knocked on the door.

The attendant was standing on the corner of the house that faced the dirt road.

He was looking into the town and he said, “They are sending a lot of devils into the town.”

The new attendant continued to look in front of him.

The strange man continued to stand at attention.

The wall of six thousand holy angels were in their positions.

JESUS said, “She will be ready.”

The strange man said, “Is Clara holding on?”

JESUS said, “Yes.”

Bruce walked into the cute house and stood.

Mattie and Betsy were talking in French.

Wes watched them.

Emma was sitting in the chair with her legs turned to the door grinning and waiting for Bruce.

Bruce looked at Emma.

Emma batted her eyes at Bruce.

Betsy said something to Mattie in French and Bruce responded in French.

Wes said, “Everyone speak French but me.”

Emma said, “Betsy you think you are the only one who could flirt?”

Bruce laughed and said, “I am official here this morning.”

They all stopped laughing.

Bruce never let go of his folded.

Wes went and sat next to Emma.

The captain man walked in the door.

Bruce turned and looked at him.

Betsy said, “Knocked.”

Soldier Todd knocked on the door.

No one said for him to enter.

Mattie wrapped her quilt around herself.

Bruce knew that meant she was not going to allow him in, and he was letting in the freezing cold.

Wes said, “Come and close the door.”

The angry soldier Todd saw he was not liked nor welcomed by the people in the house.

He stood by the door.

Emma looked him up and down and said, “I know you were told it is freezing here and you did not prepare for this weather. Huh.”

Emma was staring at soldier Todd and his disrespect and bad attitude.

The captain looked at soldier Todd and continued, “I wanted to inform you that William Earl Wilkinson was one of the assassins and his trial is schedule to start Monday tomorrow and execution to follow in a week.”

Emma heard what Bruce said, but her attention was on soldier Todd, whom she did not like.

Wes was stunned.

Betsy and Mattie slowly looked over at Emma.

Joshua turned his head to listen.

The little girl said, “What they said?”

Natalie knew she heard them call Bill’s name with the assassins.

No one moved.

Wes looked at Emma.

Joshua opened the bedroom door and said, “We can’t hear.”

Wes said, “Joshua close the door.”

Joshua said, “Well talk louder.”

Bruce stood and watch Joshua closed the door.

Emma began to shake.

Bruce did not know what to do.

Wes rubbed her shoulder.

Bruce said, “One more.”

They all looked at him, but Emma.

The captain looked on his list and said, “Mattie.”

Mattie was watching Emma began to have spasms.

Wes stood to get the herbs until Bruce said, ‘one more’.

The captain said, “Harry.”

Mattie sat for a moment.

She burst out laughing.

She said, “Oh my God. He came here to scope out this place.”

Emma could not breath and began to reach for the arm of the chair.

Wes ran to the bedroom and opened the door.

Joshua said, “Who is Harry.”

The little girl said, “Yeah.”

Wes got confused about what to give Emma.

The little girl knew Wes was confused and said, “Put her to sleep.”

Wes got the sedative and closed the bedroom door.

He looked at Betsy and Mattie and said, “Move.”

Betsy and Mattie got up and Mattie walked over and sat in the chair Wes was sitting.

Bruce looked at Mattie and thought, “Still sorry.”

The captain stood at attention and his heart was breaking for Emma.

Wes went to Emma and tried to give her the sedative and she would not take it.

The captain looked back at soldier Todd and said, “Go back to the command post now.”

Soldier Todd wanted to stay and see what was going on.

Bruce walked towards soldier Todd.

Soldier Todd saw Bruce’s face and he opened the front door and ran down the steps to his horse and flew the mile back to the post.

Bruce turned to Emma and was on his knees.

He held Emma and rocked her.

Wes said, “Mattie are you alright?”

Mattie looked at Betsy and said, “I’m like Joshua. I hate this place.”

Shelia was outside singing.

Mattie turned her head and said, “Listen to this fool.”

Wes looked at Betsy who turned her head.

Wes opened the door and saw Shelia standing in the freezing cold with no coverings.

He said, “Please Shelia come in.”

Emma was shaking.

She jumped up and ran into Shelia as, she ran out the house and began to run down the dirt road screaming.

The soldiers yelled after the captain.

The captain said, “I am handling this.”

Wes picked up Shelia and pulled her inside the house.

Then the first lady began to scream.

Wes thought and looked at the clock and said, “What?”

He ran out of the house.

Joshua opened the bedroom door and looked and he did not see Emma.

He walked out the bedroom and looked at Betsy and his mother.

He sat next to Mattie and looked at Shelia.

Joshua said, “Shelia where is coverings?”

Natalie turned in her chair and walked into the living room.

She looked at Betsy and Mattie.

Shelia said, “I’m not cold my boy Joshua.”

Mattie did not say anything but continued to look out the window,

Betsy did not look at Shelia.

Natalie knew Wes ran out the house to attend to the governor and his wife.

She looked at the clock and thought it was not time for their medications.

Natalie said, “Hi Shelia. Do you need something?”

Shelia said, “Someone to talk to. No one is back there but me. I don’t want to go and talk to Thomas.” She was shrugging her shoulders, and said, “Because people will think I am crazy.”

Shelia was making facial expressions.

Joshua sat and said, “Shelia talk about what?”

Shelia sat on the coffee table and leaned over to Joshua.

Natalie said, “Shelia Wes is mean about the furniture because he does not want the attendant to fuss about his house when he comes back this spring.”

Shelia turned and looked at Natalie and waved her hand and said, “He won’t be coming back.”

Joshua said, “I hope I never see him again.”

Betsy nodded he head.

Shelia said, “Well Joshua how are you?’

Joshua said, “Aren’t there soldiers back there with you?”

Shelia said,“They are all the way over where Mike use to be. Have anyone heard from Mike?”

She turned and looked around the room at Natalie, Betsy and Mattie.

No one answered her.

Joshua said, “How would we hear from Mike?”

The little girl said, “Joshua.”

Joshua stood up and patted Shelia on her shoulder and walked into the bedroom and closed the door.

Shelia sat on the table and rocked and patted her hands and looked very sad.

She said, “I guess no one wants to talk to me.”

She began to cry and wipe her nose with her sleeve.

Wes walked in and he looked at Natalie, Betsy and Mattie then at the crying Shelia who was wiping her nose on her sleeves which Wes hated.

He went to the chest of drawer and got a clean washcloth and gave to Shelia.

He said, “Shelia what is wrong?”

 Shelia trying to catch her breath said, “I was lonely. I walked all this way to talk to them and they turned their heads.”

Wes sat in the chair Joshua was sitting in.

He leaned over and was talking to Shelia.

He looked at them.

Natalie turned and walked to the bedroom and closed the door.

Wes thought, “What is this.”

Wes said, “That’s right Mike is gone. Do you feel unsafe, there are soldiers back there?”

Shelia was crying and said, “Wes I was lonely. They think I am crazy.”

She pointed at Betsy and Mattie.

Shelia continued, “They think I don’t make sense.”

Betsy said to Mattie in French,”Fou.”

Mattie replied, “Dingue.”

Shelia said, “Pas fou.”

Mattie who head was out the window turned and looked at Shelia.

Betsy looked at Shelia.

Shelia stood and looked at Mattie and Betsy.

Wes stood.

Shelia said to Wes,”Bonne visite.”

She looked at a stunned Betsy and Mattie and nodded.

Wes said, “Shelia I am going to take you home. It is freezing cold outside.

Shelia said, “Can I have Thomas coal?’

Wes said, “I guess so.”

Shelia said, “And Mike’s if the soldiers have not burned it all.”

Wes looked at the clock.

He said, “Shelia we may not be able to do much today because I have get back here.”

Betsy looked at the clock and said, “We”

Mattie started mumbling.

Betsy looked at Mattie.

Betsy said, “Shelia let’s go.”

Wes grabbed Betsy’s hands and said, “I’m proud of you.”

Shelia was standing and shaking her head and humming.

Wes said, “Shelia, do you need and coal for now?”

Shelia said, “Yes and some food.”

Mattie had her head turned.

Wes looked at Mattie and said, “Mattie while I am getting Shelia some water and coal, can you please get her some food.”

Mattie was mumbling.

Wes said, “Mattie you have been mumbling for months. I need to talk to you.”

Mattie continued to mumble and look out the window.

Wes looked at Betsy.

Betsy turned her head.

Betsy said, “Wes I will see about Shelia’s needs.”

Mattie still had her head looking out the window.

Betsy looked at Shelia and said, “Allons.”

Shelia said, “Merci.”

Wes went out and hitched the horses to the wagon.

Betsy walked to her tent and got two quilts and walked back to the wagon.

Shelia was standing outside at the wagon bouncing and singing.

The soldiers watched her.

Wes had gone in the house to, get some of William’s stash for Shelia.

He looked at Mattie.

Mattie looked at Wes and said, “She’s crazy but got enough sense to speak in French.”

Wes looked at Mattie and did not say anything to her.

Wes put the food and some oranges in a towel and took it to Shelia.

He said, “Shelia don’t eat all of this at once, it could make you sick.”

Betsy went and hopped in the wagon.

Wes moved to help her into the wagon, he saw she was in the wagon.

He helped Shelia in the wagon.

He said, “Shelia, you don’t want to move closer?”

Shelia said, “Nope. They really would not speak to me.”

Wes watched Betsy’s face.

Betsy looked at Wes and said, “Don’t you say nothing to Mattie.”

Betsy rolled her eyes at Wes and flew out the yard and nearly ran over Bruce and Emma.

Bruce and Emma were standing in the dirt road.

Bruce was holding a hysterical Emma.

Betsy drove back to Shelia’s campsite.

She said, “Where are you water pails?”

Shelia pointed to the empty water pails.

Betsy who was seated in the wagon said, “You go and get the water pails and bring them back.”

Shelia got out the wagon and went and got the water pails and put hem in the wagon and stood.

Betsy said, “Get your fake crazy ass in this wagon and come and get your own water.”

Shelia jumped in the wagon.

Shelia stared at Betsy.

Betsy looked at Shelia and said,”You are a fake Shelia. You are not going to bother my husband, who is taking care of really sick people with your foolishness. You better get down here and live. Because you showed me today you are not crazy but a manipulator. Don’t come near us again.”

Betsy drove to the brook.

She looked over and saw the cross grave maker they put for Thomas.

Betsy helped put the water pails in the wagon.

She drove back to Shelia’s campsite.

She and Shelia did not speak.

Betsy got out the wagon and helped with Shelia’s water pails.

Betsy lit Shelia’s fire and took coal out of Shelia’s tent and put outside.

Betsy took the towel of food Wes gave her and put it in her tent.

She light the oil lamp sticks.

Betsy stood and looked Shelia in her face and walked to the wagon.

Betsy wanted to tell her, “I know you and Thomas killed your children and thought the people of your town was going to let you stay and you’ll split the money. But the people ran you out. Joshua was right about you.”

Betsy got in the wagon and turned the wagon around and flew from the back of the new settlement.

She stopped at Harold’s place and called him.

Harold stuck his head out of his tent.

Betsy said, “What are you doing back here? Keep an eye on Shelia.”

Harold said, “I keep an eye on her alright, when I am back there playing ball with the soldiers. Shelia isn’t as innocent as you’ll think.”

Betsy said, “I told her to stay away from us.”

Harold look over towards Shelia and he looked around his campsite and said, “Maybe I need to tell her that too. She be walking around here at all times of night.”

Betsy said, “Really?”

Harold said, “The soldiers chipped and bought me a bat to go along with the mat and ball. I don’t trust Shelia. I have never trusted her.”

Betsy said, “She manipulated Wes to bring her home after she walked up.”

Harold said, “Wes has to see about the governor and his wife. So you brought her home?”

Betsy said, “Bye Harold.”

Betsy went the two miles to their campsite.

She checked the campsite.

Betsy made up the beds and started the fires and light the oil lamp sticks.

She looked around the kitchen area to see what was out.

She got two of Mattie’s favorite books.

She put the water pails in the wagon and turned out the yard.

She stopped and told Emma and Bruce to get in the wagon.

They got in the wagon.

Emma finally told Bruce what she only told Dr. Obersteen.

That she helped planned the attack on her family that night.

She said Bill said he would leave her if she did not tell him how to get into the house.

She wanted Bill so terribly.

Emma told when the attack started she ran to her parents and told them she helped plan the attack against the family.

Emma said, “Their faces told their hearts feelings of betrayal. They said they forgave me. Mattie and Betsy were standing in the kitchen and my mother said, “did you tell him of the secret door. I said yes. Mattie and Betsy started crying.”

Emma said, “My mother and my father looked at each other and kissed. I knew it was over. My father turned and said, you three I need you to run as fast as you can to your grandmother’s secret shed and stay there. Don’t stop and don’t look back. Emma said my father went on the front porch and my mother on the back porch and we girls laid low and crawled to my grandmother’s secret shed and stayed. Betsy slipped out and shoot several people and ran to the well. Then Mattie slipped out and shoot a couple of people. I sat and was shaking my head and screaming, when I heard all the shooting. I knew my mother was dead. I knew my father was dying all because of me. I can never forgive myself for their deaths. I could not understand when I betrayed them. I died that night and every time I think about it or relive it.”

Bruce held Emma.

Bruce said, “Your parents forgave you. Now forgive yourself so you can live and not die.”

Emma said, “Bruce, I wanted to go to the state university. Bill refused to let me leave. He became brutal. We would fight all the time. He hated Mattie, because she was trying to get me to leave him. When Mattie was raped and beaten to near death I believed it was Bill. But I could not face his horror again. Betsy swore Bill was at the house and involved in the attack on my family. I need to be free, but I don’t know how.”

Bruce held Emma’s head up and said, “We will find out together.”

They hugged.

Betsy said, “Get in.”

Betsy said, “Bruce can you have your soldiers to fill the water pails. We are going to stay at our campsite until the weather breaks.”

Emma was leaning her head on Bruce.

Bruce said, “That’s where I thought you were.”

Betsy said, “Well last night Joshua, well we all had a moment where we hated this place and thought about going back to our town because it is freezing here and only bad things happened here. I believe Shelia plotted with Thomas to kill her five children so they could split the money. Their town threw them out because they could not hang them because they had no proof. I told her to stay away from us. I do believe she was involved with the assassins and will come after us tonight.”

Betsy pulled up in yard.

Bruce said, “Betsy that sound crazy.”

Betsy said, “That’s what she wants people to believe. Thomas slipped one day and said, their daddy taught Shelia how to hunt not him, Harold said tonight that Shelia is walking through the new settlement all through the night. Why?”

Bruce said, “I know Betsy and I trust you and you are pregnant.”

Bruce helped a frozen Emma out the wagon.

He called four soldiers to get the water pails and filed them.

He helped Betsy down.

They walked into the house.

Betsy told Wes, “They were going back to their campsite that night. That Joshua would stay there.

Betsy brought Joshua a couple change of clothes.

The adults sat in the living room and talked.

Emma told Wes her big secret. Why she was a hard, empty and inadequate human being.

She shared why she never went to the state university.

Wes said, “Emma, the bad part of that will end this week. I hope Bruce is the person to help you get peace and happiness.”

The little girl said to Natalie, “What they said?”

Natalie told the little girl, “Shush.”

Joshua was returning from the bathe shed.

He handed his clothes to Betsy.

Betsy had just completed telling them about Shelia.

The little girl and Natalie looked at each other.

Natalie said, “When you crawl in the living room tonight you better pray for them.”

Wes said, “You’ll are not going to the campsite.”

Joshua said, “I know I am not going back. Are we having fried chicken for dinner?”

Bruce looked at Joshua.

Joshua said, “I’m just asking. And when will the governor’s children come back? I miss playing with them.”

Bruce said, “I don’t know Joshua. Can you go back in the bedroom with them until we finish talking.”

Joshua looked at Emma and gave her a hug.

Emma hugged him tightly.

She pushed him towards the bedroom.

Joshua slowly walked to the bedroom and opened the door.

Natalie and the little girl looked at Joshua.

Joshua said, “What?”

The older driver came back early.

He saw the wagon and knew everyone was inside.

He knocked on the door and saw the gloom look on their faces.

The older driver said, “What’s wrong now?”

Wes cut it short and said, “We think Shelia has lost her mind and might be endangering the rest of the new settlement residents. They are determined to go home tonight.”

Bruce said, “I can’t release any more soldiers.”

The older driver said, “I can read between the lines. I’ll come up there for tonight. I ‘ll leave my wagon here.”

Emma said, “You can sleep under that wagon.”

Bruce said, “What about your ammunition?”

Betsy said, “We have to check when we get back.”

Bruce ate dinner with them and left.

He rode back to his troop and was thinking all the way.

The older driver left his wagon and rode back with Mattie, Emma and Betsy.

Mattie and Emma cleaned the dishes and prepared Joshua’s mat for the night.

Betsy checked on their tent and Wes.

Betsy kissed the little girl on her head and said good night to Natalie, all though it was early evening.

Wes was standing in the bedroom while Betsy said good night to Joshua and the little girl.

Wes looked at the little girl and said, “No wandering.”

The little girl looked at Wes and said, “Yes sir.”

She laid down and went to sleep.

They thought she was sleep but she was in her secret prayer room.

Betsy secured their tent and got another dress and nightgown.

She kindled their fire and spoke to the two soldiers by her tent.

She kissed Wes again and got into the wagon.

She said to the older driver, “You got your quilts?”

He older driver said, “I don’t know where my mind is.”

He jumped out the wagon and went to his wagon and got his gun, quilts, and goodies.

He came back and got into the wagon.

Bruce before he left called two of his soldiers to him and told them to watch out for the lady that was there earlier. He told them to alert the soldiers at the back of the new settlement and the five men stationed at the entrance. He told them to check on the residents, but keep an extra eye on the women at the next campsite.

When Bruce left the two soldiers went to the back of the settlement.

One of the soldiers told the three soldiers, “The captain said keep an eye out for the lady back here.”

The soldier that cut his face said, “We have been watching her. She walks all night. I don’t think she is crazy.”

One of the soldiers cocked his gun.

The two soldiers rode to Harold’s campsite and called him.

Harold peeped and came out of his campsite.

One of the soldiers said, “The captain wanted to make sure you were safe. And do you have a whistle.”

Harold said, “Yes.”

He looked around and went into his tent.

The two soldiers alerted the five soldiers at the front of the new settlement.

They checked on Glenda and Frank and, Richard and Abraham.

They stopped and checked on Cate.

The soldiers asked her did she have a whistle.

Cate became frightened and said, “Yes.”

The two soldiers met Betsy as they were headed back to the cute house.

They knew of the women was the captain woman, but they did not which one.

They stopped Betsy and said, “Do you have a whistle?”

Mattie pulled the whistle from around her neck.

They soldiers said, “Very well.”

The soldiers rode back to the cute house.

The older soldier set up the wagon not to close to the tents.

He set the wagon up near the kitchen area.

He emptied the water pails.

The three took baths and put on their nightgowns.

They all settled in for the night.

Betsy went to sleep.

The older driver and Emma checked the guns and the rifle.

He looked at Emma and said, “Only two shells for the rifle who can handle that?”

Emma reached for the rifle and said,”Betsy.”

They counted nine bullets.

They put four in Mattie’s gun and five in Emma’s gun.

Mattie went into the kitchen area and got three butcher knives.

Emma gave Mattie her gun.

Mattie gave Emma a butcher knife.

Mattie put her gun and her butcher knife in her tent.

She went into the tent and put Betsy’s butcher knife under the rug.

Emma walked in and put Betsy’s shotgun against the wall.

Emma put her knife under her side of the mattress.

The older driver made a mat on the ground.

He placed three quilts over the wagon that touched the ground.

He dressed for bed and he did not drink and he did not have a light on.

He covered up with the other quilts and went to sleep.

He was thinking as he was falling asleep, “This is just pure ‘d’ mess.”

Mattie did not read that night but got a strong nap before midnight.

Emma cried for the first part of the night.

She and Betsy shared the bed.

Betsy said, “Emma you have cried for hours. I need you to shut up and go to sleep so the rest of us can be alert and not sleepy.”

Emma drifted off to sleep.

Wes was sleeping on his mat in the governor’s tent he said, “God we need your help for safety and protection. In JESUS’ name. Amen”

Wes had placed coal in the fireplaces before he went to the governor’s tent for the night.

Natalie dressed for bed.

She put a chair against the living room door.

She turned another chair to face the window.

The little girl yawned said, “Thank you Natalie.”

Natalie said, “You’re welcome.”

Natalie placed a mat on the living room floor.

Joshua walked into the living room and got on his mat and covered up with his quilt.

The little girl slept on her side.

Natalie told Wes the little girl was sleeping on her side.

Natalie took her quilt and folded it in half and sleep between the quilt.

Bruce could hardly sleep.

He knew his troop was out of control.

Now there maybe another piece to the assassins’ story.

And Emma, Betsy and Mattie could be exposed to a killer.

Bruce thought and said, “My God Emma.”

He forgot to check on the governor’s mother-in-law.

He said, “I will check on her in the morning.”

Bruce said, “God.”

Then he remembered to give GOD reverence by getting on his knees.

Bruce said, “God thank YOU for exposing what happened to Emma to stripe her life away. Can ask YOU how to bring her back. Please keep all of them safe. I know the assassin root will always be here but expose and destroyed it. Who tried to kill the governor’s children and why. And can You show me what to do to help her. And can You run the witches away. In JESUS’ name. Amen.”

Bruce crawled into bed with a gun in each hand and he slept to the bugle blew.