Dr. Obersteen walked to Emma and held her by the waist.

Emma looked at him.

Mattie was wrapped in a quilt and a knitted covering sitting outside of her tent by the fire and reading her Christmas present.

Joshua was in his tent’s door on his bed playing with his sailboat.

Dr. Obersteen dropped to his knees.

Mattie saw movement she looked over to their tent to see what it was.

She saw Dr. Obersteen on his knees.

Mattie was thinking, “He can’t be getting sick again.”

Joshua lifted his sailboat in the air and saw Dr. Obersteen on his knees.

Joshua had blank thoughts.

Emma looked at Dr. Obersteen questioning in her mind what was wrong.

Dr. Obersteen kissed Emma’s stomach.

Then Emma realized he was not sick.

Mattie put her book down and stared.

Joshua said, “Momma, what is he doing?”

Mattie said, “Be quiet.”

Joshua ran out of his tent to Emma.

Dr. Obersteen said, “That’s that boy ain’t it.”

Emma eyes were locked in Dr. Obersteen’s eyes.

Emma put her hand up for Joshua to stop.

Joshua knew better to move.

Dr. Obersteen stood up and got Emma’s hand and carried her into their tent and closed the flap.

He went down on his knees.

Joshua tipped to the tent and put his ear to the tent.

Mattie did not call Joshua back, because she wanted to know what was being said.

She would know in a few minutes if Dr. Obersteen was thrown out the tent.

Mattie sat and watched.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma. I want to marry you. I want to have a baby only by you. I want us to have a beautiful baby girl with big brown eyes.”

Emma slapped Dr. Obersteen on his head.

Emma said, “You have seen the big beautiful brown eyes of the baby and you fell in love with the beauty. You have forgotten.”

Emma started crying.

Joshua yelled back to Mattie, “Momma is crying. I’m going in.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “That boy better not come in here.”

Mattie ran and said, “Joshua come on here.”

Joshua was twisting and pulling back.

Dr. Obersteen was watching Emma.

He knew she was in pain over Bill.

She gently sat her down on their bed.

He sat next to her.

They could hear Mattie struggling with Joshua.

Joshua falling to the ground and pulling down Mattie.

Joshua yelled and said, “He made my momma cry.”

Betsy and Wes rode in the yard at the time and saw this spectacle.

Wes turned to Betsy and said, “You want to go home?

Betsy rolled her eyes at Wes and dismounted her horse.

She ran to Joshua and Mattie.

Joshua was crawling on the frozen ground and Mattie was holding onto his legs.

Wes was looking and all he could think, “That boy is going to hurt them.”

He ran and pulled Joshua back and stood him up.

Joshua was crying and wrestling with Wes.

Wes tried to hold Joshua and help Mattie up.

Betsy looked at Joshua and yelled, “Boy stopped!”

Wes dropped Mattie back on the ground.

He looked at Betsy because she was loud and she scared him.

He was confused about who she was commanding, him or Joshua.

Mattie was sitting on the frozen ground and said, “Damn.”

Betsy walked over and helped Mattie off the ground.

Joshua stood still because he knew when Betsy was very mad she yelled.

Betsy looked at Mattie and said, “You alright?”

Wes looked Mattie.

Mattie looked at Joshua and said, “I will be.”

Joshua stood still.

He knew he was in for at with Betsy.

Betsy walked over and all she said was, “Joshua.”

Joshua fell on his knees and began to cry and crawled to Betsy and held onto her knees.

Wes said to Mattie, “I tried that it won’t work.”

Mattie looked at Wes because she was angry with Joshua.

Joshua was crying out loud.

Dr. Obersteen said, “What’s wrong with that boy?”

Emma was still crying.

Dr. Obersteen walked to the tent door and saw Wes and Betsy and Joshua was on his knees holding onto Betsy’s knees.

Wes saw Dr. Obersteen looking out their tent.

Dr. Obersteen turned the tent door loose and went back to Emma.

Wes was looking at Betsy because he knew she was about to beat Joshua, he just thinking about how many licks he would let Betsy hit Joshua before he stepped in and stop her.

Betsy started rubbing Joshua’s hair.

Wes stood stunned.

Mattie looked at Wes and said, “Right.”

She walked to her chair and picked up her book and sat and continued to read.

Betsy said, “Joshua get up and wash your face and go to your tent.”

Joshua got up and went to wash his face.

Betsy thought, “I have to deal with Wes.”

Betsy cut her eyes at Wes.

Wes was stunned.

Betsy was walking pass Wes.

Wes grabbed Betsy’s arm.

Betsy looked at Wes.

Wes could not talk and stuttered and said, “Why?”

Wes said, “I mean why not?”

Betsy said, “He’s my baby.”

Wes shook his head and pointed to himself and said, “No!! I am your baby.”

Betsy touched Wes’s face and said, “You are my big baby.”

Betsy reached for Wes’ hand.

Wes looked over at Joshua at the water basin.

Joshua was rolling his eyes at Wes and drying his hand.

Wes was thinking about Dr. Obersteen said he was going to send Joshua off to boarding or to military boarding school.

Wes said out loud, “Military.”

Betsy stopped walking and cut her eyes at Wes.

Wes realized he said it out.

He started whistling and walked on to Mattie.

Betsy walked over and sat down.

Betsy looked at Wes.

Mattie opened her book again and said, “Whew.”

Betsy said, “Mattie what is going on?”

Wes saw Joshua going to his tent.

Wes and Joshua eyes met for a stare down.

Betsy and Mattie watched Wes and Joshua.

Betsy turned and looked at Joshua.

Joshua went to his tent.

He laid on the bed and then got up and started pretending he was sailing his boat overseas around the tent.

Mattie said, “I don’t know what is going on. When I looked up Dr. Obersteen was on his knees. I thought oh God I hope he is not getting sick. Then He kissed Emma’s stomach.”

Betsy yelled, “What?”

Wes was sitting still because Dr. Obersteen told him he wanted a baby from Emma.

Betsy looked at Wes and said, “You know about thus?”

Wes said, “Betsy how would I know. I don’t know if I got on my knees to propose to you.”

Mattie said, “That’s usual.”

Betsy hit at Mattie and started laughing.

Wes sat there and was trying to piece together what Mattie had just said.

Wes finally got it and he was so shocked at Mattie.

He said, “Mattie!! Dr. Obersteen is right, you have a foul mouth. When you were in the hospital, I thought you were the sweetest of them.”

Betsy jerked her head and looked at Wes and did a double take at Mattie.

Mattie said, “All that pulling with Joshua has me tired.”

Wes said, “Have you thought about boarding school especially military.”

Betsy said, “Wes. You have nothing to do with their relationship.”

Wes looked at Mattie and said, “Have you?”

Wes looked at Betsy and said, “You know I am nosey.”

Mattie said, “I don’t have the money. Joshua needs to get out of this environment. He is too big for this small town mindset. Now I have some pull with Emma.”

Mattie begin to cry.

Betsy reached over to Mattie and said, “What is wrong Mattie.”

Mattie sniffing said, “It hurt so bad, Betsy.”

Wes leaned forward and said, “What your stomach hurt Mattie?”

Mattie just begin to cry.

Betsy said, “Wes?”

Mattie said, “I don’t know what to do or how to do so I can be free.”

Wes began to follow the conversation because all he was thinking about before was the military school for Joshua.

Betsy said, “I don’t know what to say. I just don’t know what to do Mattie. I won’t tell you to forget about it and move on.”

Mattie looked at Betsy and said, “You give me hope Betsy.”

Wes watched these two best friends.

Betsy said, “Really.”

Mattie said, “You gave me strength everyday when you were going through your heartbreak for five long years. There were days when I did not know you were to live or die.”

Wes looked at Betsy.

Betsy eyes begin to tear up and she wiped away the tears.

Wes said, “She. Betsy.” He looked at his beautiful wife.

He continued, “Had to be here to be my wife and have our baby. Well according to the little girl “two”.”

Wes shook his head for no.

Betsy said, “What is that Wes?”

Wes turned his head.

Betsy said, “Wes you better talk fast.”

Wes said, “Betsy I truly love you. But…”

Betsy and Mattie watched Wes.

Wes stood.

Betsy forcibly pulled him down.

Mattie put down her book.

Wes said, “Mattie I see you put down your book. Ain’t no violence today. You know I will not touch you. Because I would have to heal you.”

Betsy hit his arm.

Wes looked at Betsy.

Betsy knew it was something in Wes’ heart.

Wes said, “Betsy. I am broke and poor. I cannot provide for you, now we have a child or two. They will be born poor and in proverty. I think badly on these bums around here but if the attendant had not provided for me, I would be on the street. I am not a bad person.”

Wes bowed his head and covered his eyes and cried.

Betsy went and sat on his lap and held his head up and kissed him.

Betsy said, “Wes, God sent you to help all of us. You have such a heart to heal people, that can only come from God. I know if you were not here.””

She took his hand and held it to her stomach and said, “I would never have a new life in me. I would be bitter and angry everyday of my life and could not grow into the person God created me to be. Your wife and the mother of your child or “two.”

Wes smiled.

He hugged Betsy

Emma and Dr. Obersteen walked up and sat and watched Betsy and Wes.

Betsy said, “If you were not here, my Mattie would be dead or be an experiment for the doctors at the city hospital. I have seen you grow, my love over these three months. You so carefully watch over my baby and provide for her every care. You get up early and get the herbs for her and you make all the herbs. You don’t give that responsibility to anyone else. You bathed her and sit all day with her. What not to love?”

Mattie, “Wes, I know I may not should speak but I truly am thankful for you and the care you provided for me.”

Mattie reached for his hand.

Wes held her hand and kissed it.

Emma, “What is this?”

Betsy waited and then said, “Wes is upset because we are poor.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Wes you are a great doctor and you were noticed in the big city. I believe God wants you here.”

Wes said, “Dr. Obersteen I have not a penny to my name.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “I just don’t believe things happen by chance. Even though sometimes it is bad circumstances. I believe God planned everything. We just have to ask Him what is His plan for us. Especially when we can’t see it. Let us pray.”

They all held hands and Joshua ran out his tent with his quilt on and fell between Dr. Obersteen and Wes.

Dr. Obersteen said, “God you know all of hearts. You know the plans you have designed for all of our lives. The plans may or may not be for riches and wealth but always for Your glory. Amen.”

Everyone said, “Amen.”

Joshua yelled, “Wait!”

Mattie and Emma were about to fuss at Joshua.

Joshua said, “Father God, thank you for sending my friend back. I know she won’t be my playmate anymore, but can You heal her so she won’t hurt. Please. Stop both of my mommas from crying . You know what is wrong with them. Give Wes some money because he is married to my aunt Betsy and she is my best friend and I want the best for her since he came and got her.”

Betsy giggled.

Joshua said, “I want her to be happy and rich and have a house full of children. I heard the preacher say You can make a harren woman a joyful mother of children. I want my second best friend to be happy now since he got her.”

Betsy broke down and cried.

Wes held onto her.

Joshua said, “Watch over her since she has left me.”

Dr. Obersteen sat with his mouth open.

Joshua said, “I don’t know what to say about my daddy and what a grap is that he did to Mattie. I know You can make it right.”

Emma and Mattie boohooed.

Dr. Obersteen turned to look at Joshua and saw Bill.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Bill.”

Everyone opened their eyes.

Bill said, “Yeah. I’m back.”

He looked at Emma for her to follow him.

Emma stood and looked at him.

He turned to walk to their tent.

Dr. Obersteen looked for his guns.

Bill stumped out the tent with Dr. Obersteen’s underwear.

Dr. Obersteen stood and snatched his underwear out of Bill’s hand.

Joshua stood up and said, “Daddy? O I forgot in JESUS’ name. Amen.”

Bill stood and watched everyone looking at him.

Betsy stood and walked to Mattie.

Wes stood.

Bill said, “Six against one.”

Dr. Obersteen reached towards Bill and said let’s talk.

Joshua walked to Bill and said, “I miss you yesterday. We always spend Christmas together. Where have you been? Were you lost? Did you forget how to get back home?”

Wes and dr. Obersteen knew Joshua was trying to give Bill a reason to lie. And make everything alright.

Bill said, “Emma tell them to leave or I will.”

Bill turned to walk to their tent.

He did not hear Emma say anything.

Dr. Obersteen walked to Bill and said, “Lets walk Bill and have a grown up conversation.“

Bill said, “You don’t tell me what to do.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Yes I do.”

Bill saw the new wagon and horses and said, “That wagon and horses belong to me.”

Dr. Obersteen continued, “Since you don’t want to talk in private. Wait here.”

He went to his saddle and paused and pulled out two pieces of paper.

He turned and walked to Bill and handed him the first paper.

Bill read the paper and looked at Dr. Obersteen.

Wes wanted to know what the first paper said.

Bill was so perplexed.

Joshua saw Bill’s facial expression and said, “What does it say.”

Bill looked up at Dr. Obersteen.

Dr. Obersteen handed Bill the second piece of the paper.

Joshua was jumping from Bill to Dr. Obersteen to see the paper.

Bill balled the second piece of paper and threw it to the ground.

He walked to Dr. Obersteen and said, “Never. She will never be free.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Neither will you.”

Joshua ran and grabbed the balled up piece of paper and took it to Betsy.

Betsy read it.

It was a voluntary bill of divorce paper that was notarized.

Bill was angry.

Frank, Glenda and Abraham were on the dirt road looking.

Abraham saw Bill when he entered in the new settlement and told him about Dr. Obersteen and Emma and the new wagon and horses.

When Bill left Abraham’s homesite, Abraham followed him and stopped at Frank and Glenda and told them what was happening.

JESUS, the city angel, the scribe and the attendant were watching everything.

JESUS looked at Abraham.

He said is, “Abraham’s name in the book to be a resident of this new city?

The scribe said, “Yes.”

The LORD GOD Almighty was talking to JESUS.

JESUS kept his eyes on Abraham.

JESUS said, “Is Bill’s name in the book to be a resident of this new city?”

The scribe said, “His name is not here.”

JESUS said, “So be it.”

HE walked to the cute house with the attendant.

JESUS felt the earth he made begin to cool down.

HE looked at the wind and the cold air HE sent to heal the earth.

The HOLY GHOST was walking to the house.

JESUS walked to the house and HE was thinking all the way to the cute house.

HE said to the attendant, “Emma has asked forgiveness of how mean and hateful she was to her grandmother because she got sick and dementia. She has asked forgiveness for how she blamed Betsy for her mother’s death. She’s working on forgiving Mattie for trying to turn her against Bill. Remove the scar tissue from Emma’s wound. Once she stops blaming Mattie for Bill raping her then her womb will be healed and she will conceive. Her heart will be pure enough to love a child. She loves my little girl that is what is helping her to be delivered.”

The HOLY GHOST was standing on the front porch watching Natalie, holding the wrapped up little girl and letting her look out the window.

William ran in the house with a cup of bean juice for the little girl.

William turned the chairs around to face the outside.

Natalie sat with the little girl in her lap and gently fed her the bean broth.

William sat in the other chair and looked out over the scenery.

He sipped on the last of the yuletide punch.

He said, “I better drink this now. This is a very beautiful piece of land. I leave tomorrow Natalie.”

Natalie looked at him the little girl looked at him.

He looked at both of them.

William said, “I have been having these dreams about the first lady.”

Natalie said, “I thought she is to be gone.”

William said, “I don’t know what these dreams are about. My mother said always take them as a warning.”

Natalie said, “Your mother is wise.”

William knew she said that because she had no mother.

He looked at Natalie and said, “Someday you will meet her and my father.”

Natalie was so very happy, finally somebody who cared for her Betsy and Joshua.

William leaned over and said, “May I have a kiss lady Natalie?”

Natalie smiled and said, “Yes, Sir William.”

They slightly kissed over the little girl’s head.

William looked at the little girl and said, “One day will meet and marry your prince.”

The little girl closed her eyes in sleep.

William said, “Whoa that was quick.

He and Natalie sat and looked at the scenery for hours and had a very pleasant conversation.

JESUS and The HOLY GHOST stood and watched Natalie and William.

The HOLY GHOST spoke to the little girl the Word of God for that day.

He expounded the scripture to her.

JESUS and the HOLY GHOST watched as the little girl’s faith begin to grow and her trust in the Lord’s Word for her deliverance.

JESUS and the HOLY GHOST knew what she had to face in the next town and gave her the Word of God that would heal and set many free.

The attendant was in the yard giving God praise and dancing for God’s goodness towards the sons of men.

Wes saw Abraham, Frank and Glenda and knew they had something to do with Bill.

Joshua sneaked and yanked the other paper from Bill’s hand and ran and gave it to Betsy.

Joshua knew Bill would not attack Aunt Betsy.

Wes kept watched at Abraham, Frank and Glenda.

DR. Obersteen stood in Bill’s face.

Abraham looked at Dr. Obersteen with a look that dared him to try that with him.

JESUS was in heaven watching Abraham.

He heard the prayer of Abraham’s grandmother to save his soul.

JESUS gave Abraham a time to repent.

HE was not going to allow Abraham’s wicked heart to destroy Dr. Obersteen, Emma and Cate.

Betsy grabbed the paper from Joshua and then tapped Emma’s shoulder and handed it to her.

Mattie was in shock.

The man of Mattie’s dream from college stepped out of a stage coat and turned around and looked at the capitol.

He was there to cover the young new governor and his young first lady wife.

A woman and three children stepped out the stagecoach.

The woman looked at the man and he looked at her.

The woman and the children went into the hotel.

The man thought, “It is three days away.”

He turned and walked into the hotel followed by the bellhops with all their luggage.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Give me the divorced papers.”

He whipped the pen out of his pocket.

Emma looked at the paper she held in her hand which was a copy of the arrest warrant for Bill for the rape and vicious attack on Mattie.

Emma said, “No. Don’t sign it Bill.”

Dr. Obersteen looked destroyed at Emma.

Emma reached at Bill’s hand and said, “We have to make up time.”

Bill looked at Wes and Dr. Obersteen and grinned.

Joshua was confused.

He looked at each adult’s face.

Joshua said, “Why did Momma go with Bill?”

Dr. Obersteen was devasted.

 He turned and walked to his horse and he got his horse.

He noticed a pistol was missing.

Dr. Obersteen looked at his saddle and said, “Wes.”

Wes looked at Dr. Obersteen’s saddle and saw a gun was missing.

Wes and Dr. Obersteen ran towards the tent followed by Joshua.

They heard two shots.

Glenda said, “Oh God,” and ran.

Frank said, “Shush” and ducked and ran behind Glenda.

Abraham ran into the campsite.

Emma was a perfect shot.

Betsy fainted and fell over Mattie.

JESUS told the angel over the city to deflect the bullets to keep her from wounding or killing Bill.”

Bill was scared to death he never knew Emma to miss.

Dr. Obersteen ran into the tent along with Abraham.

They all saw Bill alive and Emma with the pistol in her hand.

Abraham saw the pistol in Emma’s hand.

Dr. Obersteen whipped out his pen and said to Bill, “Last time. “

Joshua ran into the tent and saw his momma with Dr. Obersteen’s gun.

Wes walked and took the gun out of Emma’s hand.

Joshua looked at Bill on the bed and ran to Emma.

Wes looked at Abraham and said, “Get out.”

Joshua ran and pushed Abraham out of the tent.

Cate’ heard the shots and went to the dirt road and saw Frank and Glenda running home

Harold was walking down the dirt road and stopped when he heard the shots.

Cate began to run down to Betsy’s campsite.

Then Harold began to run.

They got there in time to see Joshua push Abraham out of Emma’s tent.

Cate ran behind Harold .

Abraham looked at Cate.

Then at the fainted Betsy and at the shocked Mattie.

They rushed into the tent and saw Wes with a gun and Bill sitting on the bed signing something and

 Dr. Obersteen standing over him.

Bill said to Cate and Harold, “You see he’s making me sign this divorce.”

Harold said, “I don’t see him forcing you to sign nothing. I see two gentlemen coming into an agreement.

Harold said, “What’s this is about?”

Joshua said, “It’s about Bill gape Mattie. And Mattie is my real momma. Bill and Emma raised me.”

Cate and Harold was trying to understand the word gape Joshua used.

Then Cate said, “My God.”

Then Harold understood what gape was.

Harold said, “Oh my.”

Bill stood up and wobbled.

Bill said, “I want Joshua.”

Joshua, “Me?”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Bill go and live the rest of your life. You can have nothing else here. If you ever show up again in their lives this warrant lives as long as you do.”

Bill looked at Emma.

Harold opened the tent door and walked Bill out.

The rest of the new settlement had hopped in Mike’s wagon and rode up to go and get some food. At the cute house.

Mattie yelled and said, “Bill the next time I won’t miss.”

Bill looked at Mattie and said, “I’m sorry. I will move on and not come back.”

Wes walked out with the gun in his hand.

Mike turned the wagon around fled.

Thomas and Shelia were holding.

Thomas was holding onto his hat and Shelia had her legs over the wagon and her hands in the wagon, she was laughing and kicking up her heels.

Glena and Frank were peeping from around the back of their tent.

There were no trees or bushes.

They could only hide behind their tent.

Emma and Dr. Obersteen were still in the tent.

Dr. Obersteen was holding a weak Emma.

Emma looked up into Dr. Obersteen’s face stuttering said, “I missed.”

She cried.

Dr. Obersteen shook his head and said, “I know.”

Emma was shivering.

Dr. Obersteen did not turn Emma loose but leaned down and got a knitted covering and put on Emma.

Dr. Obersteen said, “I cannot live without you. Only God could have known that. I can make you happy. I will take Joshua, if I have to.”

Emma laughed.

They heard a horse leave and knew it was Bill.

Wes handed the gun to Harold.

Harold looked down at the gun and then at Cate.

Cate leaned away from Harold.

Wes picked up Betsy and begin to slap her to bring her to.

Mattie said, “Wes enough!”

Wes looked at Mattie and said, “I am a doctor.”

Whack.

Wes leaned and kissed Betsy like his life depended on it.

Betsy pushed away from Wes and said, “My sister?”

Wes laughed and said, “She’s fine.”

Betsy grabbed Wes’s head and kissed him.

Mattie smiled.

Mattie’s beau from college mounted a horse.

He had a shotgun on each side of his saddle and had a gun tied to his chest and one to both thighs.

An older man, the woman and the three children stood on the porch of the hotel and waved at the him as he rode off.

Harold said, “Wes.”

Wes looked at Harold.

Harold was shaking with the gun in his hand.

Dr. Obersteen walked up and took the gun out of Harold and looked around.

Wes said, “Abraham and Bill are gone. I hope they never return.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma this is your divorce. Keep it safe.”

Joshua stepped forward and said, “What about me?”

Dr. Obersteen looked at Emma.

Emma smiled she said, “Dr. Obersteen and I are getting married.”

Cate covered her mouth with surprise.

Mattie said, “Emma.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Mattie watch that foul mouth today.”

Wes said, “Too late.”

Mattie said, “Congratulations. Joshua and I can make it by ourselves. It time for you two to enjoy yourselves.”

Joshua turned and looked at Mattie. He turned back around and then he looked at Mattie.

Emma bent over and said, “What is it Joshua?’

Joshua said, “I have never been without you.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “We are trying to think that part through.”

Joshua said, “I have to be thought through. I am her son. I don’t have a daddy no more and no one told me what a gape is. I feel by myself.”

He held his head down.

Dr. Obersteen kneeled down and said, “Joshua is a good thing. Now you can get to your birth mother. You are not abandoned. We will come back for you and Mattie.”

Betsy said, “Josh I am here.”

Joshua said, “He has you and you are gonna have your own baby or “two”.”

Joshua said, “I want my family.“

He ran into his tent and screamed.

Betsy ran into the tent and held Joshua and rocked him.

Emma said, “I’m leaving with Dr. Obersteen in a week.”

They all heard Joshua screaming.

Emma said, “I have to get away from this and get back to me.”

Mattie reached for Emma’s hand.

Emma said, “Mattie I hated you for trying to get me away from Bill.”

Wes looked like this is not good.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma.”

Emma held up her hand to Dr. Obersteen.

Mattie tried to pull her hand from Emma.

Emma held Mattie’s hand. “When you were raped and beaten and left for dead. I thought good.”

Dr. Obersteen watched Emma.

Betsy was listening from Joshua’s tent.

She was holding Joshua and rocking with him to calm him down.

Emma said,”I took you in my home because everyone expected me to. I helped you but hated you everyday. I did not know Mattie.”

Emma screamed.

Betsy and Joshua came out of the tent.

Wes was trying to follow what Emma was saying.

Emma said, “Oh God. I was killing myself everyday that I hated you. I was dying in your place Mattie. I fought you and Betsy all the way on everything. I had you declared mentally incompetent. To drive the knife in you for trying to take me from Bill. For the past few weeks God has let me know I am dead. Because I was full of hate and unforgiveness.”

Mattie snatched her hand from Emma.

Emma said, “Mattie please hear me out. When you got sick. I knew it was my fault because I hated you.”

Mattie stood up and walked into her tent.

Dr. Obersteen was following what Emma was saying.

Harold was trying to follow.

Cate was shocked.

Betsy held onto Joshua.

Mattie fell onto her bed.

She cringed in pain.

Emma said, “Mattie I don’t want you to hurt now, Nor ever. I lived a parallel life of pain caused by my hate of you. You lived a life of pain due to unbelievable torment. I began to process that when you were in the hospital. I could not let you die. You had to live so you could have what was taken from you, life.”

Betsy was not understanding.

Joshua walked over to Emma and stood in front of her.

Joshua said, “Emma you hated my momma?”

Emma crying and blowing her nose said, “Yes Joshua. Because I thought she was trying to take my best friend from me.”

Joshua said, “Like you and Bill were trying with me and my friend.”

Emma sit and looked and said, “Yes.”

Joshua said, “Now you see how it felt.”

Emma nodded her head and blew her nose.

Emma said, “Mattie I was willing to free you and me today. How wrong I was. I want you to be free of all this pain. I want you to live.”

Joshua turned to Dr. Obersteen and said, “Why did Bill gape my momma?”

Dr. Obersteen bowed his head and blew.

Josshua walked to Dr. Obersteen and said, “Please. Please tell me.”

Dr. Obersteen looked at Wes and he said, “I don’t know.”

Dr. Obersteen looked at Betsy she didn’t say anything.

Dr. Obersteen looked at Emma, she didn’t say anything.

Harold and Cate walked out the campsite and went home.

Dr. Obersteen said in a low voice, “So all of you left this with me.”

Mattie said, “Joshua come here. I will tell you.”

Joshua went to Mattie and Betsy walked to the tent door. Wes sat and listen.

Dr. Obersteen held Emma’s hand.

He looked at Emma and said, “You are free. Now you can be healed.’’

Wes looked at Dr. Obersteen and Emma because he was still not sure if was following what was happening.

Mattie was holding Joshua said, “A long time before you were born Betsy and I went off to the state university to get an education. I became a teacher and Aunt Betsy a business woman.”

Wes, said, “Really. Betsy you have a college degree in business?”

Betsy rolled her eyes at Wes.

Wes said, “I’m married to you now.”

Joshua said, “Are yall finished.”

Wes looked at Dr. Oversteen and said, “Military.”

Betsy looked at Wes.

Mattie said, “We met some nice men at school. I met a man that loved to read as much as I did.”

Joshua said, “Where is he?”

Mattie said, “I don’t know.”

Joshua said, “Well..”

Mattie said, “Joshua you say something else I will not tell you anything else.”

Emma closed her eyes.

Dr. Obersteen looked at Emma, and wondered what she did.

Mattie said, “Your aunt Betsy met a doctor like Wes and Dr. Obersteen.”

Wes and Dr. Obersteen listened.

Mattie said, “I tried to talk to your cousin Emma to go to college and meet educated men, who want her to grow and develop. Bill got mad and Emma just said she also hated me for trying to take her from Bill. Do you understand so far Joshua?”

Joshua said, “Yes.”

Mattie said, “so one evening I was leaving the school and reading my usual path.”

Mattie stopped for a minute.

Dr. Obersteen breathed heavily.

Mattie said and “Bill was waiting behind some bushes. I saw him and did not know what he was doing. Then he grabbed me and started to beat me. I fell to the ground. He kept beating me. The he raped me. Joshua not “gape” me. Rape means he took out his private and put it in me to hurt me. To degrade me. To say that I was nothing. I felt darkness around me. The air was cold and dark. I began to seep into darkness. My head was wet. It was my blood flowing out of my head. I prayed and asked God to help me. The next morning some of my students were going to school and found me. They ran and got help. Your cousin Emma took me in and cared for me until after you were born.”

Joshua said, “So cousin Emma was mad at you because you wanted her to leave and go to school and get from Bill.”

Mattie said, “Yes.”

Joshua said, “But Bill is gone now.”

Mattie said, “After you were born my friend came looking for me. He found me and they told him what happened to me. He wanted to take me and you away, but Your cousin Emma.”

Each time Mattie said, “your cousin Emma”, Emma closed her eyes. She is no longer mother nor aunt but her rightful place, cousin.

Mattie said, “Your cousin went to court to fight him and she won. So your cousin Emma was awarded custody over you and me,”
Joshua said, “Why?”

Mattie said, “So she could have continued to see us each day and hate us and watch and hope evil would come upon us. Because she hated me.”

Joshua said, “You want cousin Emma to leave?”

Mattie said, “Yes I want cousin Emma to leave. Maybe she will be forgiven.”

Emma yelled, “Mattie I don’t feel that way anymore. All of that hate is gone. Please forgive me!!!”

Wes was not following the conversation.

He looked at Betsy.

Betsy was not following after Emma was glad that Mattie was hurt.

Wes said, “Betsy. I am not understanding.”

Betsy looked at Wes.

Wes said, “Why are you looking at me like that. You know I only know medicine. I depend on you for everything else.”

None was following the conversation.

Betsy stood in front of Mattie’s tent and did not look at Emma.

Betsy said, “Emma. You hated Mattie all these years and you wanted for Mattie to hurt for trying to split up you and Bill. You wanted to hurt Mattie by being appointed the conservator over she and Joshua so you can make decisions in their lives that would hurt them. But you claimed you love Mattie and Joshua. Is that right Emma?”

Emma, “But I don’t feel that way anymore.”

Betsy said, “Shut up Emma!!!!!”

Betsy said, “You blocked Mattie’s sweetheart from taking her and Joshua so he can make a good life for them so Mattie can hurt. Is that right Emma?”

Emma held her head and cried.

Betsy, “I told you to get the conservatorship voided. You lied to me for nearly ten years and said you did. But when Mattie was in the hospital you pulled the conservatorship role. Is that right Emma!!!”

Emma said, “Yes.”

Betsy said, “When you were told it was your beloved Bill that rape and beat Mattie to near death then you started feeling that your evil mouth in the evil ears of your beloved Bill caused Mattie’s life to be hell. That everyday Mattie had to look at the evil Bill and the hate you have in your heart for her. Is that right Emma!!!!”

Emma jumped up and beginning screaming.

Dr. Obersteen grabbed Emma. He felt she was having a nervous breakdown.

Wes stood and looked at Emma.

Betsy said, “So now Emma you say that your heart is clean and you have asked God to forgive and now you want Mattie to forgive for all the evil you have done against her and Joshua. Is that right Emma?”

Emma was screaming.

William looked around and said to Natalie, “Do you hear that?”

Natalie said, “What does it sound like?”

William said, “I don’t know.”

He watched Natalie struggle to take the little girl to her bed.

William said, “I can carry her to her bed. I swear Natalie I won’t hurt her or dropped her.”

Natalie reached the little girl to William.

William carried the little girl to her bed.

Natalie put her to bed.

William went in the living room and packed his bag and put food and water together for a three day trip.

Dr. Obersteen said, “That’s enough Betsy.”

Wes said, “Betsy stop.”

Wes walked to Dr. Obersteen and Emma.

Betsy said, “We don’t need another crazy person in this camp. She needs to go to the big city with Dr. Obersteen.”

Wes said, “Betsy stop.”

Betsy said,”Give her some of your herb sedatives that should calm her down until she tells more lies.”

Wes said, “Betsy go home.”

Betsy turned to Dr. Obersteen and said, “Can you leave today?”

Dr. Obersteen was thinking and said, “No.”

Wes said, “Betsy go home.”

Betsy said,”No. Who will take care of a sick Mattie and a child Joshua. Talking to me like I am a dog, Go home Betsy.”

Wes watched Betsy.

Joshua walked out and saw Emma shaking and screaming and being held by Dr. Obersteen.

Wes watched Joshua.

Joshua said, “Can you give her something to take away her pain?”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Joshua only the truth can take this type of pain away. And she just told the truth and now we have to wait and see the results.”

Joshua said, “I don’t want her to hurt.”

Betsy went to her horse and lied it up and gave the horse water.

She took the cake she brought and set it in the kitchen area.

Wes watched Betsy cut the cake and began eating a slice like nothing was going on.

Joshua ran and checked on a crying Mattie.

He peeped out of Mattie’s tent at a screaming Emma.

He began to cry.

Betsy went and sat down at the fire and ate cake.

She picked up Mattie’s book and began to read it.

Betsy looked at Joshua and said, “Come baby and eat some cake.”

Wes thought she has lost her mind.

Joshua, said “No.”

Betsy sat at the fire and ate cake and read Mattie’s book.

Dr. Obersteen took Emma into their and gave her a sedative.

Joshua ran to see what Dr. Obersteen was doing.

Joshua stood in the tent door.

Dr. Obersteen said, “What is it Joshua?”

Joshua said, “Is she crazy?”

Dr. Obersteen said, “I want have any idea Joshua until the morning. Then we will go from there. Some of these others are.”

Wes was sitting at the fire watching Betsy eat cake.

Joshua said, “Aunt Betsy aint crazy.”

Joshua ran out the tent and said, “Aunt Betsy Dr. Obersteen said you’re the one that’s crazy.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “God don’t let that crazy woman come in here. I got to deal with this one. And don’t let her be crazy.”

Wes grabbed Betsy as she stood up.

Wes said, “Joshua go and lay down with your mother and don’t move again.”

Joshua looked at his Aunt Betsy struggling to get free of Wes grip said, “Which one? I have two you know. What are you doing to my Betsy?”

Wes said, “Look boy. I need for you to go to Mattie and stay in the tent out of the cold. I do not want Betsy fussing any more today. Let Dr. Obersteen take care of Emma.”

Wes yelled, “Betsy stop!! Get in the tent Joshua now!!”

Joshua ran in the tent and jumped in the bed with Mattie and covered up.

Wes said, “Betsy, I had it with you. Go to Joshua’s tent and lie down. Since you have made up your mind to stay until the morning. I am going back home. William has to leave tomorrow and I want to see him off because he was very good to us.”

Wes held Joshua’s tent door open.

Betsy walked over and said, “I a so mad Wes I just don’t know what to do.”

He said, “This is weird. A shooting. Family discord, and engagement and a rape all before one in afternoon.”

Betsy pulled on Wes shirt.

Wes said, “No.”

Betsy went and laid down on Joshua’s bed and she continued to read Mattie’s book.

Wes put coal on the fires and put coal under the black kettle and the cooking kettle.

He cooked on the horses and checked on dr. Obersteen and Emma.

Wes looked at Emma and said, “Whoa!”

Wes said to Dr. Obersteen, “ant second thoughts. Doubts?”

Dr. Obersteen said, “No I believe she has asked God for forgiveness. Now everyone else has to decide if they will forgive her.”

They heard Betsy laughed.

Dr. Obersteen cut his eyes at Wes.”

Wes said, “She’s reading Mattie ‘s book.”

Wes said, “When did you go and get an arrest warrant and a divorce paper?”

Dr. Obersteen said, “The arrest warrant is fake. But a couple of weeks ago when I left to go and get the Christmas presents I had a printer to print the arrest warrant and have a friend that is a judge in the city he is legit and signed off on the divorce paper. He’s the one who told me to black mail Bill with the fake arrest warrant to sign the divorce paper.”

Betsy burst out into laughter.

They shook their heads.

Dr. Obersteen said, “I did not know Betsy had a college degree in business.”

Wes said, “Nor me.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “We are not leaving any sooner than we planned. It is a lot of work needs to be done.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Wes do you feel a knot in Emma’s stomach. She told me can’t have children because she slid down a hill. Which makes no sense.”

Wes turned his head.

Dr. Obersteen looked at Wes and said, “Is that a lie?”

Wes said, “Betsy told me she and Emma got into a bad fist fight ten years about Joshua and she beat Emma and started stumping her until she was barely conscious. I believe that maybe the damage.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “We have a lot of healing. I believe when we confess our sins to God and ask for forgiveness it gives us strength to ask our brothers for forgiveness. They have the right to forgiveness or not to forgiveness us. Once we give it to God that settles it.”

Wes stepped out of the tent and went to Mattie’s tent and checked on a sleep Mattie.

Joshua said, “Can I have cake?”

Wes went and cut Joshua a piece of cake.

He went into the tent with Betsy and laid down.

Betsy was sleep.

Wes took the quilt and threw it over him and laid and watched Betsy sleep.