Eleanor wanted the house to be beautiful.

She, Brenda and Shirley came up with how they wanted to decorate the house and the boys and Patrick heled make and put the decorations around on the yard.

Patrick and Brenda allowed the field hands to stay out in the fields with the tents.

Patrick knew the winter was to be bad.

He did not want the field hands on the cold ground.

The supply shipments begin to shut down for the winter.

Patrick had the field hands to make platforms that elevated their tents off the ground.

Eleanor and Brenda went through the storage area and sent the field hands two quilts a piece.

They were grouped two to three field hands around the back of the field.

Patrick and Brenda gave them cold and food for the winter

The field hands were to provide safety from the mob or poachers.

Brenda and Patrick were not satisfied.

The field hands told Brenda and Patrick they would be find.

They had the nice scarves, gloves and hats that Denise made them.

Brenda and Patrick told them to come to the house like Thanksgiving for Christmas and New years.

Dan came to work on that Wednesday.

He did his usual inspection of the storage area.

His heart stopped beating when he saw a space in the storage area.

Nadine pass Dan.

Dan turned his head and saw Nadine.

He said, “What happened? Who has been in here?”

Nadine said, “A friend of Brenda who fell on bad times asked if she could have some some things/ Brenda said yes.”

Dan said, “I don’t care about her falling on bad times. Is she coming back before I get my stuff.”

Nadine frowned and looked at Dan and said, “What? Dan none of this stuff belong to you.”

Dan looked at Nadine.

Nadine made sure she upset Dan even more and said, “They are thinking about taking some more of the tables and chairs and putting them in the servants’ dining area.”

Dan’s head started swirling.

Nadine looked at him and smiled.

She said, “Did you know that Brenda was a conductor in the underground railroad to help free the slaves and Genevia and Patrick gave money to help.”

Dan turned to Nadine and said, “What has that to do with my furniture?”

Nadine said, “I told you this stuff is not yours. It does not belong to you.”

Nadine puffed from Dan and walked upstairs to make up the boys’ room.

Dan turned and walked through the house to find Patrick.

Thomas was peeping and listening to Nadine and Dan from the kitchen.

He followed Dan.

Dan heard footsteps and looked down at his feet because he was still confused.

He thought something was wrong with his head and his hearing.

Dan was looking for Patrick because he was the head of the house.

Eleanor was not there.

He saw Lorraine coming out of Shirley’s room with laundry.

He said, “Lorraine, is nobody here?”

Lorraine said, “I don’t know. I know Eleanor and the count are not here.”

Brenda was in her study and heard Dan.

She thought Dan wanted something about dinner.

Dan heard the footsteps again and he turned and saw Thomas.

Dan said, “Thomas, what are you do? Following me?”

Lorraine looked at the two and walked away.

She took Shirley’s laundry to the end of the hall for Nadine to take it to the laundry room.

Brenda heard Dan asked Thomas what if he was following him.

Brenda was going through fabric samples for window decorations.

She yelled, “Dan and Thomas I am here and in my study.”

Dan and Thomas turned and walked to Brenda’s study.

Dan stood in the door and Thomas stood slightly behind Dan.

Brenda looked at them and knew with the holidays she did not want any mess between her cooks.

She knew Dan was off from Christmas Eve to the first week of the new year.

She thought, “Where is that Jose?”

Dan looked at Thomas.

Thomas looked at Dan.

Brenda watched both of them.

She sat straight in her chair and said, “What is wrong?”

Dan stared at Thomas.

Brenda said, “Dan. I heard you first?”

Lorraine had tipped to the top of the stairs to listen.

Dan said, “Mrs. Stith can I get some of the furniture and stuff from the storage area to help in my house?”

Brenda looked at Dan for a minute and said, “Yes.”

Dan turned to walk away.

Brenda said, “Dan that was your problem?”

Dan said, “Yes ma am.”

Brenda was startled at Dan.

She looked at Thomas and said, “Thomas what is wrong?”

Thomas said the exact thing Dan said, Mrs. Stith can I get some of the furniture and stuff from the storage area to help in my house?”

Brenda looked at Thomas.

Dan was still standing in the door.

Brenda realized Thomas said the exact thing Dan said.

Brenda said the exact thing to Thomas,”Yes.”

She said, Thomas that was your problem?”

Thomas felt foolish.

He looked off and said, “Yes ma am.”

Brenda stared at both of them and said, “Of all the problems in our country, yours were furniture.”

Dan shook his head to shake off stupidity.

Thomas said to Dan, “It’s too late for that.”

Brenda said, “You better not burn that meat. Eleanor will have your tails.”

They turned and ran back to the kitchen.

Thomas ran to the stables and got a covered wagon and drove it to the house.

He had Gary and louis to load the wagon.

He got a table and four chairs, a sofa and two bedrooms of furniture and some rugs and paintings that Eleanor had placed to be trashed.

Thomas checked on the meat for dinner and left.

He, Gary and Louis were gone for three hours.

Thomas and Michael learned there were boys in the barn about their age.

Thomas and Michael asked Eleanor if they could play with the boys.

Eleanor thought for a minute and said, “Yes.”

Patrick smiled.

He knew Eleanor was thinking back when she was little and people would not let her play with their kids because she was mixed and because they did not want their children to see Eleanor’s house and their children were poorer than her.

Eleanor did not bring her children up to look at money.

But to look at the person.

To see if the person is a good person or a bad person.

The count held Eleanor around the waist and kissed her on her temple.

Nathan and Gary would watch the boys.

Nathan felt much better.

He was beginning to think and have human feelings again.

Eleanor told Brenda she had to buy Shirley and Michael clothes.

Brenda said, “Buy some clothes for Tom’s two boys. I am mad as hell. I did not know those children were working out in the fields. That back breaking work…”

She looked at Patrick and said, “Did you Patrick?”

Eleanor looked at her daddy.

The count looked at Patrick.

Patrick could not answer Brenda.

He turned to look at Brenda and reached towards his pocket.

Brenda looked at Patrick reaching towards his pocket.

Patrick exhaled and said, “Yes I saw them around the fourth of July. I went out there to the field to get some corn and watermelons. They were really helping out.”

Patrick stood to leave from Brenda’s glare.

Eleanor looked at her strong daddy and said, “Are you running away daddy?”

The count looked up at tall and strong Patrick.

Patrick looked at Eleanor.

He said, “Yes my love.”

Brenda acidly said, “Sit down.”

The count swallowed because Brenda was harsh.

Eleanor bucked her eyes in fear.

Patrick stood for a minute then he sat.

He said, “I did have the boys moved to the barn.”

Brenda said, “Why are they here?”

Patrick said, “I don’t know. No one else knows why.”

Brenda said, “Tom better not be a fugitive running with those children.”

Patrick said, “At least the boys will be warm and safe this winter.”

Brenda glared at Patrick.

Brenda said, “Find out.”

Patrick said, “Alright.”

Meredith moved out from Lorraine.

She and Hutch rented a nice room together.

They had a separate wash closet from the other renters.

Hutch paid for the room each week.

He was paid from giving Shirley, Genevia and Ben therapy each week.

Hutch would work on the servants’ bones.

Meredith said, “Charge them. We need to get a larger place come the spring.

Hutch really liked Meredith.

He saw she wanted a large house and nice things.

She wanted to go to Europe and spend time over there.

Her excitement to do better caused him a lot of joy.

He worked on his emotional breakdown about slavery every day.

He would talk to the field hands nearly everyday about how they were living with the memories

That made Meredith happy. Because he would have nightmares every night.

When Hutch woke the next morning he would not remember the nightmares.

Meredith was about to run away from that good looking physician.

Lorraine told Meredith Hutch just came out the war and he had to get use to living and has to shake all of that death and destruction from him.

Meredith said, “He looks better than Dr. Woodson.”

They laughed.

Brenda heard them talking and walked through the hall to go to the storage area.

Meredith leaned and looked back to see where Brenda was and said, “I started a letter to Dr. Woodson that day that Hutch came along.”

Lorraine said, “What?”

Brenda said, “That is God.”

She walked into the storage area and saw things were missing.

She called Meredith and Lorraine.

They walked into the storage area.

Brenda said, “Eleanor will be gone most of today. The children are fine. Help me get all the blankets and quilts so I can send them to the orphanage.”

Lorraine smirked her lips.

Brenda looked at Lorraine.

Lorraine walked to the door and yelled, “Shirley I’ll be right there.”

Brenda stared at Lorraine for a minute and realized what she did.

Meredith watched Brenda.

Brenda said, “Lorraine, you maybe a nurse and was hired only to take care of Shirley, but if you don’t get you’re a\*s in here and help me today. We will fight.”

Lorraine said, “We know how that will go unless you get your Underground railroad shotgun.”

Meredith hollered.

Brenda said, “I don’t need a shotgun for you Lorraine.”

Lorraine smirked.

Brenda said, “Dr. Ralph.”

Lorraine begin to cry.

Meredith looked at Lorraine.

Brenda said, “See. Now get over here woman and help go through this stuff.”

Shirley was in the sitting room.

She heard Lorraine said she’ll there in a minute and she had not called Lorraine.

Shirley put down her needlepoint and held onto the walls and furniture and walked to the storage area.

Brenda turned and saw Shirley.

She exclaimed, “Shirley!!”

Lorraine and Meredith turned and looked.

Lorraine looked at Brenda and smirked and ran to Shirley.

She said, “What’s wrong?”

Shirley said, “Nothing. You yelled that you were coming to me.”

Lorraine said, “I told your grandma that because I don’t want to help out in here.”

Shirley looked around and said, “I want to help.”

Lorraine said, “Fine. I’ll go and do your needlepoint.”

Shirley snickered.

Brenda walked up to Shirley and stared at Lorraine.

Lorraine poked out her mouth and walked back to her area and continued to look for blankets and quilts.

Dan walked down the hall and spoke to Shirley.

He walked around her and Brenda and went into the storage area and found his table and chairs and two sofas and one bedroom and several rugs and he found curtains that matched the furniture he was so happy he started dancing.

Brenda was stunned and watched Dan.

Shirley laughed at Dan.

Bend said, “Shirley I am trying to find as many blankets and quilts to send to the orphanage.”

Shirley said, “Did you and grandpa bought coal for them?”

Brenda said, “Yes, but they still need cover.”

Shirley walked into the storage area and sat on Dan’s sofa.

Dan turned and looked and said, “You can sit there.”

Brenda looked at Dan.

She said, “What are you doing?”

Dan knew what Brenda was saying and responded, “Just folding these curtains and putting them on the sofa with Shirley.”

Brenda said, “Dan, you know what I mean.”

Dan said, “I am cooking lunch.”

Brenda said, “You are making sandwiches. You are not busy.”

Dan said,”I am making Miss Shirley a mashed potato and giving her some of the broth from last night’s beef stew.”

Shirley licked her lips and said, “Oh good.”

Dan smiled.

Brenda said, “Make sure you feed Tom’s boys the same as Michael and Thomas. Well not like Michael. I don’t what parent can take that?”

Shirley laughed.

Brenda said, “Dan who is Tom and why does he have those boys in the fields?”

Dan looked at Lorraine and Meredith.

Brenda looked at Dan.

Dan said, “I don’t know ma am.”

Dan was walking out the storage area.

Brenda leaned backwards to Dan and said, “You owe me.”

Dan turned around and went and marked another bedroom suite for him.

He passed Brenda and said, “I will tell what I heard.”

Brenda bowed her head.

Shirley grinned.

She and Brenda were going through the blankets and quilts.

To make sure they were good to be used.

Shirley said, “Grandma how many children are at the orphanage?”

Brenda stopped and thought and said, “About thirty seven.It was more.”

Shirley said, “Did they go to another place? With another kin?”

Brenda looked at Shirley then back at the blanket.

Shirley looked at Brenda and said, “Grandma, I am older and you can tell me. Did they die?”

Brenda said, “Yes.”

Shirley said, “I am learning everyday that death is a part of life. What we do in between is what matters.”

Brenda stared off in the distance remembering the slaves that drown or were shot but running and fighting to live.

She looked at Shirley and said, “Well said.”

Robert left early that morning but went into the storage area and got five quilts for his house for the winter.

He had siphoned a lot of coal over the past several months to last him through the winter.

He did not have to incur that bill.

He was angry he had to work that Christmas and New Years.

Lorraine was not saying anything.

She discovered the storage area years ago and furnished her house.

Brenda did not have as many blankets as she thought.

She was mumbling and looking around the storage area.

Shirley said, “Grandma the servants talk about you talking to yourself.”

Brenda said, “I am talking to myself. I am saying these thieving so and sos have stolen all of my stuff. I know I had two hundred blankets and seventy five quilts. I had twenty sofas, seventeen tables and twelve eating tables with fifty two chairs. I had two hundred rugs and a hundred and twenty pairs of curtains and two hundred and three vases. Shall I continue.”

Lorraine and Meredith looked at each other.

Because they thought Brenda was what they called touched in the head.

They realized she was very calculating and knew everything she had in that large house.

Shirley said, “Grandma you are a genius.”

Brenda said, “Yes I am. Now you see where you get your smarts from.”

Dan prepared lunch and let Thomas and Michal eat with Tom boys in the servant’s dining area,

Caleb and Stewart enjoyed playing with Thomas and Michael.

Bruce and Percy would join them for lunch.

Percy and Bruce would go riding every morning.

Thomas started joining them every morning to ride.

Michael would stay and play with Caleb and Stewart.

Caleb was eleven years old and Stewart was nine years old.

They were in the servant’s area eating lunch and Caleb yelled and said, “This house is like grandpa’s.”

Stewart said, “Yeap.”

Dan ran out the kitchen and looked at the boys as they ran out the house to go and play.

Dan straighten up the chairs and thought.

He checked on the meat for dinner.

Then he walked to the storage and looked at Brenda.

Brenda walked out the storage and looked back and said, “Lorraine go and tell Stanley to get a covered wagon and come and put these blankets I found to take to the orphanage.”

Lorraine was mumbling all the way.

Brenda looked at Lorraine.

Dan said, “Caleb and Stewart were eating lunch with your grandboys and Caleb said, “This house is like grandpa’s. And Stewart said, “Yeap.”

Brenda’s mouth dropped open.

She said, “Where do you think they are from?”

Dan said, “I don’t know.”

Brenda said, “I haven’t seen them nor talked to them, so I have not picked upon an accent.”

Dan said, “It’s a New England accent.”

Brenda said, “Oh my word. Suppose Tom stole the children?”

Dan looked around and saw Lorraine stomping back in the house.

He hurried and said, “Some believe Tom killed his wife and took the boys.”

Brenda thought and said, “That’s too much.”

Dan said, “The boys were in a military academy because they were Thomas and Michael how to march.”

Lorraine stomped pass Brenda and Dan.

Brenda stared at Lorraine.

Dan walked back to the kitchen.

Stanley, Lorraine, Brenda and Meredith carried the fifty blankets and quilts to the covered wagon.

Brenda said, “Stanley you are off tomorrow, if you want you can keep the wagon until you come back on Saturday. “

Shirley was amazed that her grandma knew her servants’ work schedules and off days.

Shirley began to see how complex it was running a large house and having workers with ethics and loyalty around you and your family.

She heard of the mob and how they were trying to take over their railroad and shipping businesses. Now the mob was trying to see how they could steal their land.

Shirley asked God and the man of Light to stop the mob.

Brenda walked back to the storage area.

Lorraine said, “Brenda I do not have a ride home. Stanley will pass my house can I leave early?”

Brenda looked at Shirley.

Shirley said, “I am fine. I had my bath for today. I had food. And momma can help me dress for bed. Which I will be going to early and getting ready for Dr. Hutch tomorrow.”

Brenda looked at Meredith biting her lips and prancing.

Brenda thought, “Look at heifer.”

Brenda said, “Lorraine you can leave.”

Shirley said, “Lorraine I want to see your house.”

Lorraine said, “Sure Shirley you can come. My house is about the size of your room.”

Meredith laughed.

Lorraine kissed Shirley on the forehead and said, “See you tomorrow.”

She rolled her eyes at Brenda without Brenda seeing her.

She ran to Stanley.

Meredith said, “How is she getting to work tomorrow?”

Brenda was helping Shirley up from the sofa and said, “You’re picking her up.”

Meredith stopped grinning and looked.

Brenda told Shirley, “I don’t care how small Lorraine’s house is. My furniture is in it. She will have a conniption fit if I go with you to her house.”

Shirley was laughing.

Lorraine jumped in the wagon with Stanley.

Lorraine was adjusting herself in her seat and she remembered what Brenda said, that her servants had taken her furniture and furnishings.

Lorraine became sick.

Stanley looked over at Lorraine and became scared.

He said, “Lorraine are you sick? Do you need to see Hutch. You want to turn and go and get Hutch?”

Stanley slowed the covered wagon.

Lorraine touched Stanley’s hand and whispered, “I am alright.”

Stanley said, “No you’re not.”

Stanley was turning the wagon around.

Lorraine said, “Pulled over.”

Lorraine stepped out the wagon and went and threw up.

Stanley was standing back but listening.

Lorraine walked back to the wagon.

Stanley looked at her to see if she was still sick.

Lorraine whispered, “We can go now.”

Stanley looked at Lorraine and walked to help her in the wagon.

Stanley said, “You still don’t look good.”

Lorraine said, “I furnished my house with the furniture and rugs and stuff from Brenda’s storage area.”

Stanley was trying to think what Lorraine was saying and why that would make Lorraine sick.

He thought and said, “Oh, you stole her stuff and did not ask for it.”

Lorraine leaned back in the wagon seat and finally fell out.

Stanley said, “Which street?”

Lorraine pointed.

Stanley pulled up to a house and stopped.

Lorraine turned her head to see why they stopped.

Stanley said, “Is this your house?”

Lorraine peaked and said, “Yes. How did you know?”

Stanley said, “Brenda’s swing set on the front porch.”

Lorraine screamed.

A neighbor was passing by and looked at Lorraine and then Stanley and said, “Lorraine are you ok?”

Lorraine waved at the neighbor and whispered and said, “My stomach. But I will be o’k.”

Stanley whispered, “Your conscious.”

The neighbor said, “You need help getting down?”

Stanley wanted to see the inside of Brenda’s house he leaned forward and said, “Good evening sir I work with Lorraine the boss wanted me to bring her home and walk her inside her house.”

Lorraine rolled her eyes at Stanley because she knew he wanted to see what else of Brenda’s furniture and furnishings she had gotten.

Stanley jumped out the wagon.

The neighbor looked at Stanley.

Stanley reached his hand to Lorraine to pull her out the wagon.

Stanley smiled at Lorraine.

Lorraine rolled her eyes at Stanley.

They walked to Lorraine door.

Stanley walked and looked around the house and the back of the house.

Lorraine tried to rush into the house to keep Stanley out.

But quickly walked around the back and the other side and had jumped on the front porch while Lorraine was still peeping to the other side of the house.

Stanley caught the door.

Lorraine stood straight and let him in.

Stanley walked through Lorraine and he would point to the different things that belong to Brenda.

A couple of items he had to think about and looked back at Lorraine and said, “Don’t tell me. I remember this piece.”

Stanley said, “Nice house. It suites you. Are you gonna tell Brenda you stole her stuff or just let guilt eat you up?”

Lorraine said, “I’m gonna tell her. Especially since you know everyone will know by tomorrow.”

Stanley grinned.

He said, “I notice the house behind you is for sale.”

Loraine said, “ I don’t know.”

Stanley said, “I am telling you it is for sale, neighbor.”

Stanley walked out and spoke to the neighbor.

He looked back at Lorraine and said, “Howdy neighbor.”

Lorraine slammed and locked her door.

Stanley grinned all the way to the orphanage and dropped off the blankets and quits.

On his way home he thought about the children he saw.

He saw their tenderness and sweetness.

He thought he and Margaret could adopt a few.

All of a sudden the wagon was going across the street in the path of other horses and buggies as people were going home from work.

Stanley caught the wagon and pulled it back on his side and apologize to the other people.

Stanley could only see Margaret screaming and cussing if he approached her about adopting children.

He tried to calm down.

He really did not know Margaret’s feelings about children.

He knew she wanted a nice home and furniture.

He knew she hated being poor and did not know how to earn additional money or go to school because she had been told all of her life she was dumb and a man who married her only wanted her body.

He thought about what Margaret did say, that she would be jealous of any of her children if they had a better life than she.

Stanley could not believe she said that. He felt a parent would want their children to have better stuff and a nicer life than they. But he felt it was necessary to be put on the table.

He thought about the nice house in the back of Lorraine.

He thought, “I’ll ask Brenda for some furniture if any is left.”

He burst out and laughed back to the house and dropped off the wagon and went to his rented room and sleep until early in the morning.

Shirley looked at the backstairs and said, “I want to go to my room.”

Brenda looked and said, “Shirley are you not feeling well?”

Shirley said, “A little sick. I want to ask you and grandpa if I can invite the orphans here for a Christmas party of if you think it might be too much for them, can I have a party for them at the orphanage?”

Meredith admired Shirley.

Brenda looked back at Meredith and saw Meredith look of admiration towards Shirley.

Brenda said, “We have to think about that.”

Benda said, “Meredith.”

Meredith walked up and said, “Ok Shirley lets get you dressed for bed. Maybe Dr. Hutch can examine you tomorrow and see what’s wrong.”

Shirley said, “I’m on my cycle.”

Meredith laughed.

Brenda went back to her study.

Shirley was sleep when Eleanor returned home.

Dr. Parker sent a telegram to Hutch about the type of therapy the doctors agreed to give to Shirley.

When Patrick came home he went into his office and read the therapy.

He was talking to Eleanor and Brenda about the telegram.

Michael explained to them the type of therapy Dr. Parker was talking about and how it was to benefit Shirley.

Eleanor was impressed with Michael’s knowledge of the medical processes.

Brenda said, “Michael you are pretty smart. You don’t want to be a physician?”

Michael said, “No.”

He started talking to Percy about Caleb and Stewart.

Eleanor said, “Michael who is that?”

Michael looked at Eleanor and said, “Momma the two boys who live in the barn.”

Brenda turned and whispered to Patrick and said, “I have some information about them.”

Michael said, “Stewart said, they lived there during the summer.”

Patrick said, “Lived where Michael?”

Michael said, “At the military academy.”

Bruce said, “I’m not going there.”

Percy said, “Me neither.”

Patrick was trying to follow the conversation.

Brenda looked at Patrick and said, “Michael did they say how big their house was?”

Michael looked at Brenda and said, “No.”

Thomas said. “Caleb said his grandpa’s house is like our house.”

Patrick stopped cutting his meat.

Brenda said, “That’s what I was trying to tell you.”

Patrick turned to Brenda and said, “We need to find out who he is because I don’t want any trouble.”

Brenda looked at Patrick.

Patrick looked Brenda in her eyes.

The count watched them and he saw the love Patrick had in his heart for Brenda.

He saw the love Brenda had in her heart for Patrick.

Brenda said, “Shirley wants to have a Christmas party for the orphanage either here or at the orphanage.”

Eleanor said, “And a tea party for she, Alice, Ginger and Mary.”

Brenda said, “I can see both.”

Eleanor said, “The orphanage is big. Those children will be looking for gifts.”

Percy said, “I ‘ll buy them a gift. I have money.”

Eleanor stared at Percy.

Patrick and Brenda slowly turned and looked at Percy.

The count grinned at Percy.

He was now beginning to see a Percy who was hidden from them.

Percy knew everybody was looking at him because they thought he did not have good sense.

Percy shook his head for yes and said, “I have money I can do that.”

Bruce said, “I’ll help you with my money.”

Percy said, “Thanks Bruce.”

Thomas said, “I’ll add some of my money.”

Michael said, “I’ll contribute to this party.”

Percy said, “We need Santa’s list from the orphanage. And have the cooks here and the bakery in town to bake sweets for the kids.”

Patrick and Brenda sat with their mouths opened as how Percy started this party for Shirley and how they all jumped on the wagon to help Shirley’s Christmas to become real.

Michael said, “Momma can we give them my clothes?”

Eleanor said, “Yes Michael. But you have to go and get the clothes and take them to the carriage for them to be taken to the orphanage.”

Michael said, “OK.”

Eleanor said, “We have to buy you and Shirley some clothes for the winter. Shirley has many dresses that she can give to the orphanage.”

Bruce said, “We need peppermint and punch and mulled cider.”

Thomas said, “I think that does it.”

Michael said, “Not quite.”

The count was watching Eleanor.

He thought, “She is lovely and don’t think so. She is calm with her children planning and discussions.”

Michael looked at Eleanor and took her hand and held it.

Eleanor looked at Michael.

Patrick and Brenda were waiting for whatever was coming out of Michael’s mouth.

Bruce and Percy looked at Michael.

Thomas said, “Michael don’t put me in this.”

Percy said, “Me neither.”

Bruce said, “What is he going to say?”

Thomas said, “Look at him.”

The count never fell over into his stew.

He held in his laughter as best as he could.

He watched the calm Eleanor until she heard whatever Michael said.

Michael looked deep into Eleanor’s eyes and said, “Momma I want a horse for my Christmas gift.”

Patrick and Brenda seemed relieved.

The other boys sighed and said, “That’s it?”

Bruce said, “What kind of horse?”

Percy said, “You want one like we got?”

Eleanor said, “Quiet.”

The count had his head down to eat some stew. He stopped.

He was surprise at Eleanor. The count sat straight in his chair to hear what was about to be said.

Michael did a double take at Eleanor.’

He looked at his grandmother first and then at Patrick.

He looked back at Eleanor and said, “Because I want one. I like to ride. I enjoy riding like I enjoy lamb chops. It’s what I like to do.”

Eleanor looked at Michael.

Brenda sat and looked at Eleanor.

Eleanor looked at Michael and said, “Those are reasons Michael.”

Michael stared at Eleanor and said, “A horse is the way to move besides a train or ship. Mother.”

Eleanor said, “Fine Michael. A horse is a way to move about.”

Percy said, “I knew that.”

Bruce said, “Percy you better not open your mouth anymore.”

Michael was staring at Eleanor.

He said, “Momma, I have not been with you for nearly three years. Does that mean I am getting a horse for Christmas or not?”

Eleanor looked at her baby and said, “Yes Michael you are getting a horse for Christmas.”

Michael looked at his brothers, then his grandma and his grandpa.

He said, “Grandpa can you and grandma go with me to get it?”

Patrick was taking his napkin to put it on the table when Eleanor said, “Wait Michael I don’t know when.”

Brue looked at Eleanor.

Percy looked at Eleanor.

Thomas put his water glass to his mouth and started mumbling.

The count looked at Eleanor.

Patrick looked at Eleanor and Brenda said, “Why Eleanor?”

Eleanor said, “If we are not here he won’t get a chance to ride it.”

Thomas put down the glass of water so he could hear.

The count said, “It was a rough ride coming with the horses. We thought we were going to lose Thunder.”

Thomas yelled, “Thunder!”

He sat back in his chair dishearten.

Brenda said, “Eleanor, how are you going to run the railroad from overseas?”

Patrick looked at Eleanor.

Eleanor said, “I’m thinking momma and daddy. Not slow.”

Percy laughed and said, “Good one momma.”

Brenda turned and looked at this skinny boy.

Patrick said, “Eleanor need to talk to me.”

Brenda said, “Us.”

Eleanor said, “I will. Bruce got the divorce papers. My lawyer said, wait three months.”

The count picked up his coffee and sipped a taste and he listened.Percy said, “What are we to do until you all get divorce?”

Bruce said, “You go to Bruce.”

Eleanor said, “You too.”

Bruce looked at Eleanor.

Thomas begin to slide underneath the table.

Brenda looked at him.

Patrick said, “Three months would be the beginning of the spring.”

Patrick looked at the count and said, “Joseph will you be here until then?”

The count said, “I will go back on your first ship.”

Brenda looked at him.

She said, “So we wait. In the meanwhile, Shirley decided to go back to the hospital with Dr. Ralph.”

Michael said, “I’ll go with you. Get me a governess.”

Eleanor said, “Michael be quiet.”

Brenda said, “Me and your daddy will go and stay with Shirley until the spring.”

Patrick said, “I can work on the shipping business while I am there.”

Brenda said, “I asked Mable if she wanted the doctors to help her?”

Michael said, “Dr. Hutch has been helping her.”

Eleanor put her spoon down in her bowl and looked at Michael.

Michael sat and blew air in his cheeks.

Eleanor said, “I think I worked it in my head how to give the railroad workers to go to the doctor and how to pay for their children college. Like Josiah and Mag.”

Patrick was intensely listening to Eleanor.

Eleanor said, “I got to get over a few mountains, but I think I can do it.”

The count was impressed.

Brenda was stunned, that her daughter who was dead is becoming alive again.

Eleanor said, “I am waiting for some telegrams to come daddy. And momma there is an old motel not far from the hospital. I may not be able to go with you all to take Shirley back to the hospital but I want you to check on that motel and see if it is fit to buy. Then I can buy it for the families of the workers that need medical attention.”

Brenda said, “Well Eleanor…”

Eleanor lifted up her hand and had her head down like was looking at something.

Michael said, “You can do it momma.”

Brenda said, “Yes you can.”

Brenda said, “Patrick you know Gen and Ben were talking about going to Philadelphia with us so they can go back to the hospital, but Hutch has been adjusting them here.”

The count said, “Hutch. Huh.”

Percy and Bruce looked at the count.

Brenda started laughing and said, “Jealous Count Joseph?”

The count said, “Of course.”

Patrick and Brenda laughed.

Eleanor heard their laughter but did not join in.

She lifted up her head and looked at Percy.

Percy jumped.

Bruce looked at Percy.

Then Eleanor looked at Bruce.

He jumped.

She looked at Thomas who was nearly under the table.

Eleanor said, “Michael wants a horse for Christmas, Shirley wants some heirloom sapphires and diamond earrings for a gift. What do you boys want?”

Thomas exclaimed as he was sitting in his chair, “Not to go to Bruce. Especially after we beat him.”

The count hollered and tried to sip his coffee.

Patrick smirked.

Eleanor looked at Bruce.

Bruce said, “I want that model of the ship we saw in Paris.”

Eleanor looked at Percy.

Percy said, “I want a model of a train.”

Eleanor looked at the count.

He said, “You. I fell I am losing you.”

He turned his head and sipped some coffee and looked at the wall.

Thomas said, “We can’t have that, because we plan on you being our daddy. We need a new one.”

The count laughed and nearly choked on his coffee.

Bruce and Percy were scared.

Michael said, “I can stay her with grandma and grandpa.”

Brenda’s eyes filled with tears as she watched the count and saw his fear of losing Eleanor.

She shook her head and said, “Yeah Eleanor we need time to work out a lot of things.”

Patrick and Brenda received the boys Christmas gifts and had them hid in a secret place.

Eleanor noticed Bruce and Percy running to the same shops looking at the same toys and she bought them the week they left Europe and shipped them to Patrick and Brenda.

Eleanor said, “I have to move money around to buy Shirley those earrings.”

Brenda said, “Me and your father will help.”

Patrick put down his coffee cup and said, “Brenda this is one of those things Eleanor must work out for herself. It will show her to shift the money from one budget to another and get the problem solved.”

Eleanor said, “That’s right momma. It us slow people a chance to exercise our brain muscles.”

Percy started laughing.

Brenda rolled her eyes at Eleanor.

Eleanor said, “We have Shirley’s tea. Which is for four girls. We have the kids party and gifts for the orphanage. We have our Christmas dinner with how many people momma? We are all invited to the governor’s for New Years Eve ball for the last time. We are invited to the mayor’s New Years’ day brunch. We need to give the orphanage some hams for Christmas dinner. We have to order the servants and workers their Christmas gifts.

William whispered to Ruth, “Money.”

Patrick said, “It might be easier to give them money. They may want to buy gifts or special foods or liquor.”

He looked at William.

William walked out the family dining room.

The count looked at William leaving and smiled.

Ruth snickered, because she knew William and Wyonna would siphoned off liquor for them to drink later in the night after duty.

Eleanor said, “We have to get housing in Europe. I plan on taking Lorraine for Shirley. I will start the ‘he Stiths house’ construction and the services it will need. I plan on expanding the rail line to the other city where the supplies can get to us in a few weeks as opposed to several months. It is a lot to think about.”

Patrick enjoyed talking about business.

Percy said, “Momma you need to go to that city and look around. Maybe you can build a hotel and have a good restaurant there for people who are waiting for the train.”

Patrick grinned and said, “Slow, huh Percy?”

Percy grinned.

Eleanor said, “Percy I thought about that. I have been going over that map in my office.”

Bruce said, “What are blue pins?”

Eleanor said,” Restaurants.”

Michael said, “That serve lamb chops.”

Thomas yelled, “You go to Bruce!!”

Brenda and Patrick stared at Thomas.

The count was started by Thomas and put his coffee cup down and said, “Thomas?”

Thomas had begin to tear up and cry.

Eleanor leaned over to Thomas and said, “Thomas, baby what is wrong?”

Thomas looked at Eleanor,

He looked at a concerned Brenda and Patrick.

Thomas said, “Bruce messed up everything. He took Shirley and Michael. He built a house he did not want us to live in. He brough his girlfriend and her family to live in this house. He hates us and I hate him.”

William had walked into the family dining room when Thomas started screaming.

Ruth looked at Thomas.

The count did not know what to say.

He finally said, “Thomas. I see I am not the only one with problems that have to worked out.”

Percy said, “And without alcohol and boots flying in the air.”

Brenda said, “That will never happen again. That’s the reason why our children are crazy now.”

Patrick turned his head.

Eleanor held Thomas and kissed his head.

She said, “Thomas I don’t know how to remove the pain.”

Thomas said, “At we beat Bruce and you beat his girlfriend.”

Eleanor exhaled.

Brenda said, “I know all of this is important bhut we got a lot to do all through this holiday. Thomas send a message to the orphanage for one toy each child wants. We need to order turkeys, geese and ducks for the holidays. We need to find out the workers that will be here for Christmas’ dinner. We need to order the flower seeds for my gardens and I want to build housing for the field hands. We need to get Tom’s children to their family. We need to get to the bank and get these ninety five employees their holiday pay and gifts. You Eleanor need to do the same thing for the railroad workers. There are two hundred and fifty of them.”

Eleanor held Thomas and stared off in space.

The count looked at Eleanor.

Brenda said, “Eleanor you can do this. We are all here to help each other. And we all have to get clothes for all of these festivities. Patrick can you and the boys go into town and get party clothes. God I forgot about church clothes.”

The count said, “Can I come along?”

Patrick said, “Yes.”

The count said, “I need to go to the market because I need a few ingredients for my cooking. I am excited about that.”

Eleanor said, “I’ll give the two and fifty railroad workers cash for their Christmas gift and send them a ham. Daddy I have to send a message to meet with your railroad engineers. We may have to take a trip to that city.”

Patrick said, “That’s the way it has to be done. We may have to stay in wagons.”

Michael said, “I won’t be going.”

Thomas looked up in Eleanor’s face and said, “Me neither. Momma you gonna help me write the message to the orphanage?”

Eleanor said, “No. You four boys and Shirley have a meeting and decide what part of the party will you be over and that’s if the orphanage wants you all to have a party there. I don’t think it is good to have a party here.”

Thomas said, “Because we have a family?”

Eleanor said, “Yes.”