The older driver woke early.

He went and got some hot water from the black pot.

The soldiers watched him.

He took the water pails with him and placed them by his wagon.

He went to the bath shed.

He walked inside and peeped back to see if anyone saw him.

The soldiers in the yard watched him, because the bath shed was for the family.

He washed and shaved afterwards he cleaned the bath shed.

He was not going to hear anything from Wes.

The older driver peeped out the bath shed and tip toe into Wes.

Wes looked at him and said, “Good morning.”

The older driver straightened up and said, “Morning.”

Wes had his water basin filled with hot water.

The older driver only had on his thermal underwear and was about to freeze.

The soldiers watched him, as jumped around and put on his socks and pants and shirt.

He put on his coat and picked up the water pails.

The older driver picked up the water pails and he began to walk to the brook.

The soldiers watched him, they were told he was Bishop’s brother.

Bishop was a very honorable soldier. He was respected by all soldiers who ever met him and especially all those who were trained by him.

The troop was told through word of mouth that Bishop’s family would be arriving that day.

A wagon was entering the cute house yard.

It was the new cooks.

Two of the cooks brought the wagon to cook breakfast for the soldiers.

The soldiers in the yard stood and talked and looked around.

The soldiers allowed the cooks to enter and directed them to go by Wes’ tent.

The older driver pointed to the brook.

The lead soldier held up his hand for him to stop.

He walked back to the brook.

The soldiers worked all day and night to remove the dead bodies.

They started with their fellow troop members. The two brave soldiers killed at the brook that stopped over thirty assassins and the one soldier who died at the beginning of the path to the cute house.

The only assassin who survived was Charlotte.

She laid in total misery in the path to the house in the freezing cold.

Wes refused to attend to her.

Their dead soldiers were taken back to the post and prepared for burial.

The captain told me of the soldiers to send telegrams to the soldiers’ families, the headquarters and the governor’s office like (like Ida told him).

Those were the last telegrams he sent that day, before the gun battle.

All the assassins’ dead bodies were moved by wagon down to the sergeant.

The thirty horses were taken to the post. All the saddles were taken to a secured and guarded area and no one was to enter until the captain and his identification processors came.

The headquarters were sending half of the commanders to the town.

The commanders were coming to escort the live traitors to the capital.

The captain told Foster to communicate with those commanders everyday.

Foster sent a telegram to the second in command about what happened.

The second in command sent a reply telegram that he received it.

Foster sent a telegram that the fighting broke out in the town and the captain was shot and his condition unknown.

The commanders rode through the night to get to the town.

They brought five troops of a hundred soldiers with them.

The commanders knew there was no medic or doctor in any of those towns, they brought three military doctors with them.

The newspapers knew something was taken place and tried to follow the commanders.

The commanders told them they would be arrested and held with the assassins.

The soldiers at the brook felt the earth moved.

They all turned and ran to the dirt road with their guns drawn.

The commanders were riding hard.

They saw the brave soldiers and continued to them.

They dismounted their horses.

The sergeant and the thirty eight saluted the commanders.

The commanders saw the bodies of the dead assassins.

The troops were peeping to see the dead bodies.

The commanders walked and looked at the dead bodies they walked by the brook and stood and talked.

The sergeant and his soldiers did not know why half the top brass commanders were there.

The commanders waked back to the troop and looked at the stripes of the sergeant and said, “We are sorry about your captain.”

The troop said “What?”

The commanders looked around at the troop and said, “You have not been told?”

The sergeant was shaking and said, “Told what?”

The lead commander said, “There was a gun battle yesterday morning in this town and your captain and a soldier Newsom…”

The troop said, “Newsom?”

The commander looked at the troop and continued, “… Newsom and your captain ran into the enemy stronghold and were shot and the last report telegrammed no one knew their conditions and presumed dead.”

The sergeant opened his mouth and said, “Sir..”

The new soldier who is the friend of Clara’s beau coughed and the sergeant stopped.

The commander said, “Yes.”

Because he wanted to know what was going on.

A horse flew passed them with a saddle.

The troop cut their eyes and followed the horse.

The commanders and the troops watched the loosed horse.

The commander said, “The horse has a saddle. Does it belong to the enemy?”

The commander said, “What did your captain tell you to do about these bodies?”

The sergeant said, “The captain …”

He stopped and continued said, “… Identify and bury. But we don’t know. He was looking for a place, but did not get a chance to tell us.”

The commanders looked around and they all pointed over to no man land.

They heard another wagon and saw it was loaded with bodies.

The commander said, “Any survivors?”

The sergeant said, “The prisoners were sent to the post yesterday.”

The commanders walked and saw the soldiers unloading the bodies and one commander broke down and begin to cry.

The commanders looked and saw his son.

His father said, “Why?”

The sergeant saw a captain, he could not stand.

He whispered to the new soldier. “They brought a replacement for our captain.”

The new soldier said, “Know him. Can’t stand him. Let’s be quiet.”

Another horse flew by and raised up on his legs at neighed at the horses and ran wild.

The commander kneeled by his son and told the other commanders he wanted to take his son and let his mother bury him.

The lead commander called his recorder and he wrote a paper and all the commanders signed it.

They wrapped his son’s body up and he carried his body and they brought him a spare and the commander in total shame said, “Send a telegram to my wife and family. Tell them to dig a grave and meet me at the family cemetery in three days.”

The commander mounted his horse and held his head down and had his son’s horse and rode away.

The new soldier said, “Broke protocol.”

The sergeant said, “Sir, its going to take a week to dig a deep grave and their more bodies.”

The commander waved his hand and fifty soldiers rode forward and had a wagon with shovel and a machine.

Another horse ran by.

The commanders said, “Another horse with a saddle.”

The commander, “We are leaving a troop that will be at the entrance of this town. These soldiers are a part of that troop.”

He looked at the men and said, “You have not eaten and rested. Rest and the cooks will prepare food for you. Are the commanders held with the other prisoners?”

The troop yelled, “What commanders?”

The lead commander looked at the troop and said, “That’s why we are here. Your captain caught them in another town and arrested them.”

The sergeant said, “That’s the reason.”

The commander stepped to the sergeant and said, “No that’s not the reason. We have to find out what is going on here.”

The commander looked and said, “This place is eerie.”

The commander said, “Captain take your troop and make camp at the beginning of this town and be alert. All of you soldiers rest today. Eat and get your strength back. And start tomorrow digging the mass grave.”

The commanders rode back and entered into the town.

Th sergeant called his soldiers to him and they who wanted to pray.

The new soldier led the prayer.

The sergeant said, “They brought the captain’s replacement. I will retire if he is our captain.”

Another soldier said, “Why did they let that commander take his son’s body to give it a proper burial?”

Another soldier said, “Because it was his spoiled brat. I know him from the academy.”

Another soldier said, “How are we suppose to rest with nearly two hundred bodies out here that has started to decompose?”

The new soldier pointed to the small house and said, “The captain said burn it. Let’s burn it.”

The sergeant turned to the soldier that brought the las wagon filled with bodies and said, “What do you know?”

The soldier walked to them and said, “The captain and Newsom are not dead. Wes operated on both of them yesterday into late the night. Hs sisters helped him. He sent a telegram to another doctor to come and help. We don’t if the captain and Newsome will make it. But they are not dead yet.”

Another soldier said, “Don’t want them to die.”

The sergeant looked at the dead bodies and said, “What happened. The commanders just told us some of the brass were caught alive and are being held as prisoners?”

The soldier said, “I don’t know nothing about. I know two of our troops by the brook were killed and one on the way to the governor’s tenant and one assassin is alive and Wes refuse to help her.”

The troop yelled, ”Her?”

The sergeant said, “Are all the bodies and blood moved from the house?”

The soldier said, “Yeap.” Yes sir.”

Another soldier said, “I don’t think we should them.”

The sergeant was listening.

The troop had unloaded a tool and the troop walked to see it.

The soldiers surrounded the little house and set it on fire.

The cooks prepare supper for the troops and brought them food.

The soldier from the dead assassin wagon looked at the food and said, “No thanks.”

The troop was enjoying the food.

The soldier said, “The governor’s office sent us all kinds of food and a wagon loaded with meat. This morning we had two strips of bacon and eggs. This food is nice, but I want to know what they had for supper.”

The soldiers sat near the fire from the little house and the soldier said, “I guess I will go back to that iceberg. All the bodies have been moved and the three bodies of our troop members are back at the post. I’ll keep my ears open on the captain’s condition.”

The sergeant said, “The second in command and the third in command, where are they?”

The soldier said, “I don’t know. The captain’s pack left yesterday and left ‘Baldie’ there. So I don’t know anything?”

They watched the soldier jump into the wagon and ride away.

The troop moved away from the bodies and camped on near the burning house for warmth.

The new soldier and three soldiers from he grave digging troop knew each other. They slept in a circle and talked most of the night.

Wes came out the bath shed and place his wash basin on top of the coal.

The older driver was waiting for his approval to get some water.

He walked and picked up Wes’ water basin and walked and took it to his tent and place it on the stump.

Betsy was sleep.

The soldiers near Wes tent watched the older driver.

The lead soldier came back as the older driver was walking back.

They could smell the bacon frying.

The lead soldier said, “You can go and get the water, but the captain gave us an order to get the water and keep the fires and lights light around the house not where the governor is.”

The older driver said, “I used their water. I am going to return their water. I’ll be leaving today to meet my brother’s family in the town. I do not know what to expect from that town, if there is a hotel there or anything.”

The older driver walked away and filled his pails and returned the water to the black pots near Betsy.

He went and got coal and loaded the fire near Betsy and put coal under the black pot so the others would have hot water.

Betsy smelled the bacon and sit straight up in the bed.

Then she smelled the grease and fell flat in the bed.

She and Mattie lost weight during this bizarre season.

Mattie was sick for a couple of months and lost weight and vowed never to gain it back and starving the Iceland she would not.

After Christmas Betsy was not able to keep anything on her stomach.

She and Wes would fight all the time about her eating something.

Betsy would bat her eyes at Wes.

Wes said, “Healty.”

Wes walked into the tent and had coffee and oatmeal.

He only had a little oatmeal because he knew Betsy would not eat it.

He brought an orange from the house.

Betsy was laying slightly on her back and her hair covered her pillow.

Wes smiled.

He sat and watched her.

He wanted to wake her and try to get her to eat the oatmeal.

He turned his head and saw the oatmeal stain on the tent wall from before.

Wes sat and watched his wife sleep as he ate a boiled egg and oatmeal and drank his half of cup of coffee.

He noticed Betsy’s stomach and her baby’s bump.

He grinned and leaned over and touched it.

Betsy moved.

Wes smiled and leaned over and kissed her.

He left her food.

And put on his quilt and walked back to the governor’s tent.

He passed a sleep walking Mattie.

Mattie’s thick and long red hair was all over her head.

She smelled the bacon and said, “No.”

She filled two hot water basins.

And went to the bath shed and washed and dressed.

The second hot water basin was for Natalie.

Natalie ran out the house to the bath shed as Mattie was leaving out.

Mattie walked back with the extra basin to get hot water, when Joshua ran out the house and passed Wes with his dish.

Wes watched Joshua run and get in the chow line.

The cook looked at Joshua.

Joshua said, “Two pieces of bacon and two eggs and a toast and strawberry jam. Please.”

Mattie sat and watched her son.

Joshua ran into Betsy’s tent and sat on her bed and ate.

Wes shook his head and walked in the house.

Natalie was dressed and coming out the bath shed.

She smelled the bacon and passed out.

Her water basin and toiletries fell out of her hand.

Wes ran back and picked her up and carried her into the house.

Mattie looked at Natalie and Wes.

She got Betsy’s mug and poured a half of cup of coffee and sat and watched Wes run into the house with Natalie.

Mattie sipped her coffee and thought, “I’ll pick up her stuff when I go back.”

She sat and heard her son’s fork hit his plate.

Joshua did not come back out of Betsy’s tent.

Mattie finished her coffee.

She thought about yesterday and last night.

Mattie thought about when their town’s only doctor died last year how she and Emma spent the summer taking classes at the big city hospital.

Mattie thought, “Oh Dr. Brown if you had not died me and Emma would not have been able to help Wes last night my Bruce could have died. It’s almost like GOD knew this was going to happen and was preparing us…”

Mattie leaned forward and squinted her eyes and said, “If that’s the case that GOD prepares us for what is down the road, Let me see what else I remember. I got a life insurance policy that is going to pay me. I knew Bill’s day was coming…”

Mattie began to shake her head and grin.

Wes ran out the house.

Mattie saw Wes and said,”Oh, God I want Dr. Obersteen.”

She was upset over Bruce.

Her stomach was upset, but she knew she had to be strong.

Mattie stood to start her day.

She opened Betsy’s tent door and saw Joshua laying on Wes side of the bed asleep.

She said, “He is still fighting with Wes about Betsy and her love. He could have slept behind Betsy.”

She picked up his plate and fork and turned the water basin upside down and place his plate and fork on top and walked to the governor’s.

Then she thought about Emma.

Mattie turned around and moved Joshua’s plate and fork and picked up the water basin and filled it with hot water and walked to the bath shed.

Two of the soldiers were eating breakfast and watching Mattie.

One of the soldiers said, “That women don’t rush for nothing.”

The other said nodded his head in agreement.

Mattie put the water basin the bath shed and walked back and picked up Natalie’s water basin and toiletries.

She walked in the house and saw the little girl was still in the bed.

She looked over and saw Natalie laid out on the sofa.

She was conscious and had her hand over her dead.

Mattie went to the chest of drawers and put Natalie’s water basin and toiletries.

Mattie thought, “I wasn’t going back to sleep.”

She noticed the house was getting coal.

The older driver filled both coal buckets and left them by the fireplaces.

Mattie put a lot of coal on the fire by Natalie.

She went in where the little girl was and put fire in that fireplace.

She stood and looked at he little girl.

She hated looking at her back.

She pulled he cover on the little girl.

The little girl yawned and said, “Hey Aunt Mattie.”

Mattie be so nervous around the little girl and said, “Good morning. Go back to sleep.”

The little girl giggled because she knew Mattie was scared of her.

The little girl said, “Bruce.”

Mattie said, “I haven’t there yet. I will let you know when you wake back up.”

Mattie turned and went to the little girl’s draw and pulled out a lavender color gown. She held it up and said, “How pretty.”

The little girl watched Mattie.

Mattie said, “I can feel you.”

Mattie found a pair of lavender socks.

Mattie looked through the little girl’s ribbons and hair bows and lavender colored ribbon.

The little girl said,”Wes won’t put the ribbon in my hair.”

Mattie said, “I see ribbons and bows in your hair all the time.”

The little girl said, “Natalie. Wes has to help Momma Betsy with his girls’ hair. Their hair is going to be like Momma Betsy.”

The little girl yawned.

Mattie had the little girl’s clothes in her hands and ran and leaned over the bed and said, “Don’t you go to sleep now. Tell me more.”

Mattie saw a figure in the doorway and slowly turned and saw it was Wes.

Wes stood and looked at her and then the little girl.

Wes did not know what to say.

Mattie stood up and reached Wes the little girl’s clothing.

Wes looked and the little’s water basin did not have water.

He picked up her basin and turned and went to the living room.

He looked at Natalie, she was laying on the sofa with her arm over her head.

Wes poured water into the basin and turned to go back in the bedroom.

He called Natalie.

Natalie did not move.

Mattie walked in the living room.

Wes handed her the little girl’s beautiful water basin.

Mattie looked at Wes and said, “What am I to do with this?”

He looked at Mattie.

Mattie said, “You don’t scare me Wes.”

Mattie said, “I’ll see about Natalie and you bathe the little girl.”

The little girl laughed.

Mattie laughed.

Wes walked over to Natalie

Mattie put the water basin on the dresser and walked back to the living room.

Wes sat next to Natalie and moved her arm.

He looked at the unconscious Natalie.

He checked her pulse and he touched her stomach.

Mattie sarcastically said,”Is this where Betsy had the falling out with you?”

Wes did not respond to Mattie.

He begin to gently shake Natalie until she opened her eyes.

Natalie said, “I was sleep.”

Wes said, “I need you to get up and move about and eat something. I have to take care of the little girl and I will not be going back there for a little.”

Wes turned and looked at Mattie who walked over to their stashed and got an apple an orange and some crackers.

Wes looked at Mattie.

Natalie laid there and laughed.

The little girl laughed.

Wes looked at Natalie and said, “Get up so you can move.”

He helped her up.

Mattie put her quilt on and walked out the door.

When Natalie passed out.

Wes put her on the sofa.

The little girl sat up in the bed and begin to call Natalie.

Wes did not say anything to the little girl but put his attention on Natalie.

He brought Natalie to and checked her vitals.

As he was attending to Natalie.

Emma yelled for him.

He ran to the governor’s tent and Newsome was having a body jerking fit.

Wes knew what was wrong and gave Newsom another type of IV and some blood and waited.

Newsome calm down.

Wes checked all of Newsom’s vitals.

Wes checked Bruce while he was in the tent.

He felt Bruce was doing well.

Emma was up to give them the two hour herbs.

The bald soldier sat and watched.

Mattie walked in and looked around and said, “Emma your water maybe cold right now.”

Emma said, “I have about an hour and a half before they need the herbs.”

Mattie said, “Get some breakfast, the new cooks have bacon and eggs.”

Mattie looked at the bald soldier and said, “They have bacon and eggs.”

The bald soldier said, “You can bring it to me.”

Mattie said, “That’s a cold day in hell.”

She lifted her hands up to say like now.

She and Emma laughed.

Bruce whispered, “Mattie. Emma.”

Emma pushed Mattie out the way and grabbed Bruce’s hand and kissed his face.

Bruce smiled and went back to sleep.

The governor said, “Welcome back foul mouth.”

Mattie looked around.

Emma was looking at Bruce.

The bald soldier smiled at the governor. He liked the governor.

The governor saw Mattie looking around.

He said, “What you’re looking for?’’

Mattie said, “Your sedative.”

The governor laughed and went back to sleep.

The bald soldier got up and went to the bath shed and used Emma’s water and emptied the water basin and took it to re-file. He put it at Betsy’s tent.

He heard wo snoring coming out the tent.

He was nosey he peeped in the tent and said all the medical books and assumed it was Wes’ tent.

He looked at Betsy’s hair over the pillows.

He saw a tip of red hair that seems like it belonged to a child.

The bald soldier turned around and several soldiers were looking at him.

He looked at the soldiers and went and got bacon, eggs and toast and coffee and sat on the stump outside of Betsy’s tent and ate.

He thought about the horrible day yesterday.

He about the captain and Newsom would have died, if Wes was not there.

He thought about the funny governor and that Mattie.

One of the soldiers walked over and said, “Sir are we going to be rotated out today?”

The bald soldier said, “I don’t know. I don’t have anything to do with. Whoever is in command make that decision.”

The bald soldier finished breakfast and filed the water basin and walked to the bath shed and left the water for Emma.

He walked into the governor’s tent and wrapped in a quilt and sat and watched Newsom.

Mattie looked at the bald soldier and walked over and said, “I hope you cleaned the water basin and put her hot water back.”

The bald soldier said, “I did.”

The bald soldier said to himself, “She watch me like I watch her.”