William and Natalie were in the living room talking.

Betsy and Wes were wrapped up outside.

Dr. Obersteen placed Emma’s yuletide punch on the front porch.

He sat by the fire and sipped on a cup of the punch. He thought it taste wonderful and without alcohol.

Joshua was sitting on the floor in the little girl’s room.

He was telling her play by play what was happening. Who ate what, how they were dressed and about Shelia being crazy.

Joshua scooted over and got on his knees and said whispered in the little girl’s ears, “They got us presents. Are you going to be awake tomorrow to get yours? If not they will be here. They don’t think I know.”

Joshua sat and looked at the little girl.

He laid on his back and went to sleep.

Emma drove the wagon back to the cute house.

Mattie was bent over on the front seat.

Dr. Obersteen and smiled at Emma.

He saw she was not happy. He was watching Emma and did not see Mattie bent over and holding her stomach.

Wes was wrapped up with Betsy and he looked at them and did not see Mattie bent over.

Emma jumped off the wagon and tied the horses.

Emma said, “I need help!”

Wes and Betsy turned to see why Emma needed help.

Dr. Obersteen looked to see why she needed and saw Mattie bent over.

Dr. Obersteen put his cup of yuletide punch down and ran to the wagon in time to catch an unconscious Mattie.

Wes ran to help Dr. Obersteen.

Emma went and begin to put the food together.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma?”

Wes was walking as he carried Mattie into the house.

Natalie and William jumped from the sofa and stood.

Dr. Obersteen put Mattie on the sofa and was about to examine her, when she begin snoring.

Dr. Obersteen jerked his head.

He sat and watched Mattie and said, “Emma.”

Emma told Betsy, “What he keep calling me for. That heifer drank about half of the herbal pain juice. That’s why she is sleep.”

Betsy laughed.

Wes was standing in the door looking back at a frustrated Emma.

Dr. Obersteen looked around the room and said, “Natalie a cover, please.”

Natalie opened the chest of drawers and got a quilt.

Dr. Obersteen stood and Natalie covered Mattie.

Natalie and William sat in the chairs and continued to talk.

Wes told Dr. Obersteen, “Emma said she drank half of the herbs for pain.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “I heard Emma. I want to know what happen why Mattie had pain.”

Dr. Obersteen and Wes walked outside.

Betsy was giggling.

Wes and Dr. Obersteen looked at Betsy.

Betsy could not stop laughing.

She knew that Wes and Dr. Obersteen were so serious about being good doctors and taking care of their patients.

Wes stood on the steps and looked at Emma.

Dr. Obersteen looked at the laughing Betsy and he knew he had to approach Emma right. He did not want her to berate him.

Wes walked behind Dr. Obersteen to Emma.

Betsy said, “Wes.”

Wes looked back at Betsy.

Emma stopped and looked at Dr. Obersteen and Wes.

Wes turned and walked back to Betsy.

Betsy looked at W and said, “You scared.”

Wes said, “No. Not when someone health is at stake. Come here.”

Wes pulled his wife to him and playfully swung her around so he could watch Dr. Obersteen and Emma.

Betsy knew what he was doing and said, “Can you see them?”

Wes said, “Betsy you know I am nosey.”

Betsy laughed and leaned her head on his shoulders and they began to dance.

Dr. Obersteen reached for Emma ‘s hand.

He held Emma’s hand and said, “Emma, why did Mattie need the herbs?”

He began to dance with a frustrated Emma.

Emma said, “You are trying to seduce me with a dance?”  
Dr. Obersteen, whispered in her ear, “No for something else.”

They started laughing.

Wes and Betsy looked at them and smiled.

Emma said, “She was reaching to get back on the wagon and held on the hand grip and she slipped and fell.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “I see. She strained her stomach.”

Emma said, “I guess so. I stopped by our tent and got the herbs and I was in such a rush to get back here I told her to take a capful while I took care of stuff. I put more coal on the fires and lit the oil lamp sticks and two of the torches. When I got back to the wagon to get the herbs I knew she had done something because she would not look at me. I snatched the bottle and put it back in our tent and drove here.”

Dr. Obersteen was thinking.

He kissed Emma on the head.

Emma said, “Where’s Joshua?”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma! You know he is in the house.”

Emma laughed.

They walked over to the fire and sat and was joined by Betsy and Wes.

Dr. Obersteen was pouring he and Emma cups of the yuletide punch.

Dr. Obersteen said, “You two must try this. It is wonderful.”

Wes said, “Are you saying that because Emma made it?’

Dr. Obersteen said, “Yes and because I truly love this woman.”

He turned and looked Emma in her eyes.

She looked in his eyes.

Betsy and Wes watched Emma.

Emma could not think.

She thought, “Bill was gone less than thirty days. I am still married. I have only known Dr. Obersteen for thirty days and had been with him for about three weeks.”

Emma was thinking, “How could this man say he “truly love” me.

Emma said, “Betsy get the dressing from the wagon to heat.”

Betsy rolled her eyes at Emma and was about to tell her off.

Then she remembered Wes put the dressing on the porch and above all it was Christmas Eve. She would let Emma boss Christmas Eve dinner, but she bossed Christmas dinner.

Emma said, “Wes can you get the turkeys so I can make the gravy. We want to eat dinner before the sun goes down on this glorious day.”

She looked at Dr. Obersteen and touched his face and said, “I am in a mess.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “I know.”

She slapped his face and went into the house to check on Joshua and Mattie.

Wes nearly choked on his yuletide punch.

Betsy said, “At least it was not her fists.”

Dr. Obersteen shook his head in agreement and smiled and looked into the fire aas he sipped his yuletide punch.

Betsy went and got the dressing and put it over the fire.

Wes removed the turkeys from the heat and sat them on the porch.

He opened the top of the kettles and said they smell wonderful.

Emma went into the house and saw Joshua asleep on the floor.

She checked on the little girl and adjusted her covers.

The little girl said, “Emma.”

Joshua woke and looked at the little girl and said, “Momma she called you.”

Emma looked at Joshua and keep making her bed.

The little girl said, “Emma.”

Emma begin to cry and walked over and peeped in the little girl’s face and the little girl’s eyes were open ad looking at Emma.

Emma said above a whisper, “ Wes.”

Joshua jumped up and ran passed Betsy and Wes to the fire and was looking around.

Wes and Betsy were at the porch and looked at a disoriented Joshua.

Wes ran into the house.

Dr. Obersteen said, “What?”

Joshua said, “Momma wants Wes. She’s awake.”

Dr. Obersteen saw Wes run into the house.

Dr. OBersteen said, “Come on Joshua.”

They ran by a nervous Betsy.

Betsy was twisting her hands.

Dr. Obersteen grabbed Betsy by the shoulders and ran into the house with her.

They closed the door.

Natalie was in the little girl’s rom.

Emma was holding her by the shoulders.

The little girl did not say anything but was smiling at Emma.

Emma heart felt so much lighter.

Wes saw the little girl was fine and he spoke to her and said, “We have to set a plate for you at the dinner table.”

Everyone laughed.

William stood in the living room.

Wes watched a nervous Betsy.

Betsy walked around and peeped at her baby’s face.

The little girl shifted her eyes to Betsy and smiled.

Wes and Dr. Obersteen looked at each other.

Natalie saw the doctors and wondered what was wrong. All she knew her little princess was awake for Christmas Eve.

The little girl said, “Neck. Turn head.”

Everyone was thinking about what she said.

Everyone understood at the same time.

Betsy stepped back and said, “Wes.”

Joshua and Emma shook their heads for yes and moved out of the way for Wes.

Wes stepped up and said, “You have been laying facing that window for months.”

He touched her head and easily turned it to the opposite side. He gently massage her neck.

The little girl fell asleep.

Dr. Obersteen and Emma stepped into the living room where Mattie was still asleep.

Emma said, “That cow got of the helping.”

William looked at Mattie and thought he has to share the living room.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma we just witness a miracle.”

He kissed Emma.

William said, “I must get some of that yuletide punch.”

Dr. Obersteen and Emma laughed and walked out the door.

Emma looked around and the food was ready.

William came out the house and got two cups of punch for he and Natalie.

He walked into the house and Joshua was walking in the living room.

Joshua looked at William and the two cups of yuletide punch.

William handed one cup of punch to Joshua and the other cup to Natalie.

Natalie looked at Joshua.

Joshua sat on the floor and sipped his punch.

Natalie sat in the living room and waited for William to return with his punch.

Emma quickly made the gravy and set the bread and greens out.

The food looked wonderful.

William was in the living room talking to Natalie.

Joshua was sitting on the floor watching Mattie.

Betsy and Wes were in the bedroom with his friend.

Dr. Obersteen put more wood and coal on the fires around the perimeter of the house.

It was bitterly cold but they all had on their quilts.

Everything looked so nice.

Emma did a great job pulling everything together.

She excitedly ran into the house and yelled, “the food is ready!”

Everyone said, “Quiet.”

She twirled around and remembered Mattie and the little girl.

Natalie said, “Can we pray in here so she and Mattie can be a part?”

Emma said, “Yes.”

She stepped out and called Dr. Obersteen to come in the house.

Dr. Obersteen came in the house.

Joshua was upset and tried to wake Mattie so she would not miss Christmas Eve.

He started crying and turned to the adults and said, “Help.”

Wes said, “I will try to wake her Joshua but she may not wake up until the morning,”

Joshua said, “She can’t miss Christmas. This is the first Christmas as my momma.”

Emma grabbed Dr. Obersteen’s arm.

Betsy started to cry.

William and Natalie stood and watched.

Wes looked at the pitiful child.

Wes sat on the sofa and gently touched Mattie and called her name over and over.

Mattie was in a deep sleep.

Wes sat on the sofa and he thought.

He looked around the room and said, “Someone bring me a washcloth with very cold with water.”

They were thinking where.

Natalie turned to the chest of drawers and got a washcloth and tossed it to Joshua.

Joshua ran out the door.

Emma said, he does not have on his coat.”

Betsy said, “I don’t see him outside. Where did he go?”

Betsy and Emma ran outside and began calling Joshua.

The heard his voice and they ran towards the brook and saw him wetting the washcloth over and over.

Betsy brought a knitted covering for him.

He ran to them and they ran to the house.

Joshua was bringing the wet washcloth in the house.

Wes stood up to keep the getting wet.

Natalie ran and got the water basin and gave it to Wes.

Wes wrung the water out and put the cold cloth on Matties’ face and neck over and over.

Mattie finally woke and tried moving the cold washcloth from her face.

She was irritated and fanned away the washcloth.

Wes continued until she opened her eyes.

She saw Joshua’s face first. Then she looked around and saw everyone else.

She saw Emma was irritated.

Joshua said, “Momma I wanted to spend our first Christmas Eve together. She woke and now you.”

Mattie touched Joshua’s face.

She looked towards the front door.

Everyone was spooked and jumped.

Dr. Obersteen was closest to the front door and William next.

Mattie was trying to sit up and rubbed her eyes.

Wes did not wwant to turn around.

Mattie said, “What is that?”

William cut his eyes and jumped and went to it.

He pulled the coats off and showed them the governor and first lady goodies he stashed away for them.

They all exhaled.

Emma said, “Let’s pray.”

Natalie and Betsy walked into the little girl’s bedroom.

Joshua held his mother’s hand.

Dr. Obersteen and Emma stood between the little girls bedroom and the living room and William helm Joshua’s hand and Wes held Mattie and Natalie’s hands.

Emma said, “Who will pray?’

Joshua said, “I will.”

Joshua said, “God everybody I love is here. I don’t know where my daddy is but watch over him. He was a good daddy to me. He taught me how to fish and catch fireflies and how to skip rocks over water. You know why my mommas and my beloved aunt Betsy is mad with him. I ask you to fix this. I am so glad You allowed your daughter to spend this special Christmas Eve with us. Bless William with a safe return. Bless Wes and Dr. John so they can learn more so they can help more people. Bless Natalie so she can smile. I saw her smile once and you gave her a beautiful smile. Amen.”

Natalie began to cry.

Everyone was moved by a simple heart felt prayer played out of a pure heart.

They wondered outside to get their food.

They ate inside.

Betsy and Wes ate in the bedroom.

Natalie and William sat in the wing chairs.

Dr. Obersteen and Emma sat on the sofa.

Joshua and Mattie sat on the front porch steps and ate and laughed and talked.

Dr. Obersteen walked to the door and peeped.

He returned and sat next to Emma and said, “I hope they don’t catch cold. I got to get back to the city hospital the first week of the new year.”

Emma did not say anything.

She was touched by Joshua’s prayer.

She was in sin with Dr. Obersteen, but he made her feel good and she did not have to think about the mess of her life.

Emma was quiet and tears streamed down her face.

Dr. Obersteen kissed her head.

William and Natalie watched grieving Emma.

Dr. Obersteen collected the dinner plates and watched them outside.

Betsy brought her cakes.

Natalie was so excited to have cake.

She and Joshua jostled positions to get the cake.

Natalie got a plate full of different cakes and ran to William.

William shook his head for no.

Natalie said, “No.”

He shook his head for “no” and continued to talk with Wes.

They talked about the needs of the settlement and the surrounding cities and towns.

They walked outside, where Wes made coffee.

Joshua was enjoying his different kinds of cake.

Betsy said, “I feel bad about all this cake and not sharing with the rest of them.”

Joshua did not feel bad.

He said, “Aunt Betsy how long can this cake last?”

Betsy said, “Because it is cold it will last for a good while.”

Joshua said, “Huh.”

Wes heard Joshua.

Betsy stared at Joshua to understand what he was thinking.

Wes gave Betsy her cup of coffee and rubbed Joshua’s hair.

Wes Said, “Joshua you just can’t eat cake.”

Then Betsy understand what Joshua was asking her.

Emma puled together the leftover turkey to make their famous turkey hash for Christmas morning breakfast.

She left half there along with half the bread.

Wes returned and talked to William about what the new settlement and the cities needed.

The men talked around the fire.

Emma and Betsy put the food away.

Natalie sat by the window and watched handsome William and ate a plate of cake.

Mattie stood up.

Everyone watched her.

She walked in the house.

Natalie said, “Mattie, what you want?”

Mattie turned to the stashed goodies and said, “Natalie. I can get it.”

Natalie was torn watching the little girl, watching Mattie and watching William.

Natalie said, “I don’t know how to treat him.”

Mattie said, “I can’t help you. I was violently raped by Bill and beaten to die. And was threaten for over ten years.”

Wes hard most of their conversation and pushed the door opened and said, “Mattie, what are you trying to get?”

Mattie said, “Nothing.” and went and sat on the sofa.

Wes looked at her and saw where she pulled out cheeses.

He finished the plate.

He was about to offer some cheese to Natalie but saw she was devouring a plate full of cakes.

Natalie looked at the critical Wes and shook her head for so what.

He did not fuss.

Wes took the plate of cheeses outside to the others.

Wes went to the men.

Joshua was enjoying the sweets and went to get some yuletide punch.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Joshua.”

Joshua looked at Dr. Obeersteen and said, “What? I want some yuletide punch. I carried all of this stuff for momma to make this punch. I want some punch Dr. Obersteen.”

Wes and William saw a testy Joshua.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Joshua, I am not denying you a good time, but you have had enough sweets.”

Joshua screamed, “Momma. ”

Betsy and Emma turned.

Joshua ran to them and pointed at Dr. Obersteen.

Emma began to walk to them.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Damn.”

William said, “You should have given him the punch.”

Emma did not say anything but got the ladle and poured the yuletide punch into Joshua’s cup.

She looked at he men and offered them coffee.

They all said they were fine.

Wes was not saying anything. He was watching everything.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma I don’t want him to get sick.”

Emma smiled and winked her eye and said, “I know.”

Dr. Obersteen said, “Why are you giving him the punch?”

Emma looked at Dr. Obersteen and said, “Because it is Christmas.”

Dr. Obersteen sipped his coffee and waited until Emma got back to the porch and gave Joshua his punch.

Joshua went into the house and into the little girl’s bedroom.

He sat on the floor and sipped on his yuletide punch.

He sipped his coffee and said, “He’s going off to boarding school. I don’t care which momma has him.”

William snickered.

William looked at Wes and said, “What would you do in this exact situation?”

Wes sipped his coffee and said, “I can’t think. All I hear is Betsy in my imagination screaming and telling me what to do.”

The strange man said, “Bossy woman.”

The laughed.

Betsy and Emma turned and looked at them.

Emma said, “I know they are talking about me.”

Betsy said, “Us.”

Betsy and Emma looked around and saw they did a good job of cleaning up and putting away everything until tomorrow.

Emma said to Betsy, “What time for dinner tomorrow?”

Betsy said, “Early around one pm.”

Emma said, “We would have just finished breakfast and cleaned up.”

Betsy said, “That would give us more time to play games and sing carols.”

Emma said, “Good idea.”

Betsy and Emma walked in the house and kissed the little girl.

Joshua had fallen asleep on the floor.

Mattie was very tired.

Wes saw Emma coming out the house carrying Joshua.

Wes said, “John you all take the wagon.”

Dr. Obersteen saw Emma carrying Joshua to the wagon and snickered and said, “Thank you.”

Wes looked back at Dr. Obersteen.

Betsy was holding Mattie and walked to the wagon.

Dr. Obersteen watched them, he said, “That’s who I am concerned about. She has a not in her stomach from those tests.”

Wes said, “I know. It’s not a clot but scar tissue.”

Dr. Obersteen looked around and said, “I believe everything is up.”

William shook Dr. Obersteen’s gloved hand and they all walked to the wagon.

Wes helped put Mattie in the wagon.

Emma said, “Wes we will return the wagon after the holidays.”

Wes waved his hand and stood by Betsy.

Dr. Obersteen walked to the wagon and saw a sleeping Mattie and Joshua and said, “Huh.”

Betsy looked at Dr. Obersteen.

Emma untied the horses and turned and drove the wagon home.

Dr, Obersteen looked and said, “She will be home in a minute.”

Wes laughed.

He turned to see Betsy stone face at him.

Dr. Obersteen mounted his horse and rode behind Emma.

Betsy went to their tent and dressed for bed.

William and Wes went into the house.

Natalie went to the bath shed and dressed for bed.

Wes said, “William you can sleep on the sofa.”

William said, “Thank you. But no. Everyone on that sofa is sick. The floor was fine last night and tonight. Do you want me to put some coal on the fires?”

Wes said, “No William I can do that.”

William said, “Wes you do a lot around here. Dr. Obersteen too. I will put coal on the fires.”

William looked around and saw the coal pail.

He put the remaining coal on the little girl’s fire.

He went outside and filled the pail up and put coal on his fire.

Natalie was talking to Betsy at tent and said, “I think I like him but I can’t think.”

Natalie began to cry.

Betsy said, “we all bad things to get out of us so we can live.”

William saw Natalie Betsy with their night clothes on and all wrapped up.

He stood and waited for Natalie.

They walked into the house.

She made a mat by the little’s girl’s bed and laid down.

Natalie instantly went to sleep.

Wes cut off the oil lamp in the little’s room.

He looked around and checked the windows.

He was going to sit and talk to William but he heard him snoring when walked into the

Living room

Wes closed the front door and looked at his tent.

He could see Betsy’s shadow.

He smiled.

He remembered a book he left in the little’s girl and turned and went back and got the book and left the house.

The little girl was awake but did not say anything.

It was early evening.

Wes did not know why everyone was so tired.

He wrapped up in a quilt and read the medical book for about an hour.

He put more coal on the fire.

He went into his tent with Betsy.

Emma pulled the wagon into their campsite and tied the horses.

She went in and checked Mattie’s tent and Joshua’s tent.

Dr. Obersteen watched Emma and thought about how hard she work.

A dazed Mattie sat up in the wagon.

Dr. Obersteen tied his horse and went to the wagon and got Joshua out and took him to his tent.

Emma was helping Mattie until Dr. Obersteen said, “No”.

Emma ran and got the herbal pain therapy and the whistle.

Mattie said, “Emma I don’t need it.”

Dr. Obersteen covered Mattie and said good night.

He and Emma walked to their tent and dressed for bed.

Dr. Obersteen said, “Emma you take care of everyone else. You have been doing it for a long time.”

He walked to Emma and he pulled her onto the bed and said. ”I want to take care of you.”