

## Definition of Abundance

Winds from the north jetted across tree tops before driving down a freshly tilled hill, where wheat seed lay nestled in a dark berth. Swishing across the frost bitten lawn, scooping the fallen pecan leaves into its furious stream, and swirling the reds and golds of autumn high into the air, the wind signaled that it would be a cold Thanksgiving.

In a two story cabin with pink hued mortar between the hand hewn logs, four children welcomed their extended family on the Wednesday evening before the November holiday. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and most importantly, cousins arrived in several vehicles that meticulously traversed the rocky path leading to a wreath-covered door. There was noisy jubilation as hugs were given, luggage unpacked and numerous trays of Thanksgiving's dinner hauled out of trunks.

The number of children inside the small home had now doubled; the number of adults quadrupled. Though the four had been warned their beds would be slept in by "company", they cared not one whit. A slumber party - downstairs where the wood stove burned all night, cozied up in front of the television, mashed together with their cousins on the lumpy pull-out sofa bed – added to the excitement of being out of school for a few days.

Heavy quilts, soft as velvet, were pulled from a massive cedar chest. Pillows were gathered while eight cousins changed into their pajamas. Admonishments were heaped upon the younger crowd as room lights were extinguished, one by one. "Do not touch that

tray of turkey!” “Keep your fingers out of the dressing!” “That pecan pie is for tomorrow!” Did their grandmother honestly think they would ruin the merriment of the Thanksgiving meal by sneaking nibbles?

Dawn broke over distant pines and sunlight crawled through single paned windows to awaken the children on Thanksgiving Day. After a head count was conducted, it was discovered that three from their impromptu party were missing. Had they mischievously entered the sacred space of the kitchen? Ah, but no. A little one came down the stairs with her mother. Another two popped up their heads from a hastily created pallet on the floor.

Eight sets of teeth were brushed in shifts. Clothes were “strung and strowed” across the living room floor. Mismatched shoes were slowly coupled with their mates. At some point over pots of coffee and dozens of scrambled eggs, it was decided that the adults would keep to the warm and cozy house, likely speaking of dull topics such as the price of gasoline or their predictions for winter weather. The children wanted no part of those conversations. Instead, their goal was to be outside, where they could play to their hearts content.

Stocking caps were shoved none too gently atop little heads. Coats were buttoned, then patted, by the hands of their elders. No mittens were stuffed into pockets and no gloves protected their tender hands from the whipping wind; they would have been a hindrance anyway. The gang of eight cleared the back porch without so much as a glance back, eager to shed those coats, or at least unbutton them. They knew, though their parents had forgotten, that playtime could make a child uncomfortably warm.

While the baked turkey was reheated and pitchers of tea were sweetened, the children rambled across the farmland, searching for their next group adventure. Facing into the bitter wind, they took turns launching themselves from the duo of swings hanging from a sturdy pecan tree. A rotting oak limb as their starting point, they raced across a small field, losing their caps. Chests heaving, their warm breath adding fog to the terrain, running quickly to escape being seen by the adults, the eight arced behind the remnants of summer's vegetable garden, heading towards the stone garden. Misty rain made it more difficult for bare fingers to grip spongy moss as slick boulders were scaled. No shelter was found within the tree branches only the tallest of them could reach.

After what seemed like hours of play, the eight were summoned back to the cabin for the holiday meal. Their hands were numbed by the cold. Rosy cheeks and uncovered ears were blistered by the wind. The pain of leaving play behind was visible on their faces; but it increased exponentially as they warmed themselves in front of the fire. Hunger pangs struck them as they prepared plates heaped with their grandmother's best cooking.

Juicy turkey drizzled with giblet gravy, cornbread dressing flavored with onions and celery, discs of canned cranberry sauce, buttered yeast rolls, bowls of ambrosia mixed with coconut shavings, crunchy pecans atop rich, gooey goodness had to wait until the blessing was given. Fingers itched to grab forks for a dive into the decadent meal. But first – everyone was asked to recite what they were thankful for that year. Sets of cousins rolled their eyes as their parents invariably uttered “My children; my family; a good job.” Gracious glory, when would they finally be able to eat??

While the windows rattled and the sun lost its fight to shine brilliantly, the mood inside the log cabin was festive. Stories were told. Jokes were shared. Questions were asked and answered. “Can you get me another glass of tea?” “You don’t need such a great big slice of pie. Will you let me get half of that?” “What’s your favorite subject at school?” Multiple conversations occurring at once but everyone knew what everyone else was saying.

The meal seemed to last forever. As the table was cleared and the dishwashing began, the eight cousins realized that they were full, warm and somewhat sore from all the running and climbing. There was a feeling of security, a deep and abiding peace that they could not have named had they tried. And for those effervescent feelings, they were thankful.