

## Chapter 22

About one o'clock night I came in the big station in Chicago. No one was there to meet me and I didn't know I could stay there in the station. I went right through and came out in the street. (It was good I didn't think I could stay in the station, because the policemen, they had the telegram already to arrest a young Italian woman with the shawl over her head and two children. I didn't know then about the police, but they couldn't catch me anyway, because I was right away out in the street.) So I was out there in the street in the night and I was talking to my Francesco and my Domenico in Italian. I said, "Oh, children, what are we going to do? Where are we going to go?" And [end page 200] then I was praying, "Oh God help me! I don't know where I'm going to go! Oh Madonna, You pray for me! "

I always was praying. And it is true-I don't remember one time when I asked for something with all my heart and I didn't get it from God. I pray God and the Madonna and all the time I get my prayer!

So I was standing there in the street praying and the man in a little fruit store heard me. He came out and he said, "Lady, I'm Italian too. Don't you know where you go? "

Oh, I was happy when I heard that man talking in Italian! He was talking Toscano like Gionin. I said, "Well I've got the name and the number for one Toscano man, but I don't know where to go. Do you know him? His name is here."

"Well I don't know," he said. "But I'll take you near on the streetcar. I'll

take you by one other Toscano that has a fruit store up Milwaukee Avenue."

So we came on the streetcar near to Chicago Avenue. Then that man had to change to another streetcar to go home, but he showed me where to go. I went in the fruit store he showed me and I found another Toscano. So I showed him my paper with the address and asked him where to go.

He said, "Yes, I know that man. You're going to go about three blocks up this way. You walk this street till you come by one store where are the coats and the hats for men in the window. Next to that you'll see a little gate with three steps going down. You go in that gate, then you go way back behind the store and you'll find the back door to that man you want."

Me, I was kind of scared in the night like that, and I was afraid I couldn't find it. I ask that Toscano if I could just stay there in his store till the morning. But I guess he was afraid to have me there with two children. He said he had to close the store. So then I went. I walked those three blocks and past the store I found that little gate. I went in and way back in the dark till I found the door with a little piece of roof over, like he said. I put down my bundle and I started to knock on the door. Bump-bump, bump-bump, I was knocking and it sounded so loud. But nobody came.

I sat down on the step with Domenico sleeping in my arms and [end page 201] Francesco holding my dress. Then it started to rain. It poured rain. About an hour we stayed there and we were getting so cold-my children were crying with the cold. I said, "Oh, I'm going to knock again," and I began to pound and pound.

Pretty soon, sure enough, I heard a noise inside-somebody was coming. They hollered through the door, "Who is it?"

I said, "Rosa, the friend of Gionin. Rosa Cristoforo."

"Oh yes, yes! " They opened the door. "Yes, sure we knew about you from Gionin.

Come in. Come in. We knew you would come but we didn't know when." So then they made some coffee, because we were wet through and so cold, and they made me and my children go to bed and rest. They were very good and very kind, because they were good friends and cousins with Gionin-they came from the same town in Tuscany.

But after one or two days I didn't like to stay no more with two children and make them so much bother. So I asked them where I could go to find work and the room to stay in. They sent me by some other Toscani who were working in the plaster, making the statues for the cemetery and all those ornament things.

There were sixteen men and they said they would give me five cents each to wash their shirts.

Those shirts, I had to take the knife and scrape before I could wash them, and then I was rubbing all the skin off my hand. But I was glad to have those sixteen shirts. I got eighty cents a week. Oh, that was good to have! Then I found one restaurant to scrub the floor.

Three days I stayed by those good Toscana people. Then here came Gionin. [end

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