

Lady Dynamite

A Coal Miners Wife

by

Bob Furlin

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In memory of my Mom the wife of a Coalminer.

Mary Charlotte Furlin
September 9, 1907 – August 9, 1998

I want to thank my brother Louis and sister Dolores in helping me remember our Mom's story, trials, and life.

September 2, 2011

I dedicate this to my brother who asked me to write this in memory of our Mom. He suffered with terminal cancer and died today. I promised to finish this work before he left this earth. I got a preliminary copy to him two days before he went on to be with the Lord.

His last words to me were, "I'll see you up there!!

Brother - We will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Amen and Amen!!

That's My Mom

She was always doing something.
You wondered about the strength.
She kept the house so spick and span
She would rest awhile you'd think.

My Papas job was digging coal
And he was always black.
O course he came home everyday
Ah looking just like that.

My Mama had his water hot
As he walked through the door.
Of course, she helped him with his bath
Before he hit the floor.

Mama always had a garden
That she loved to work in too.
And she always canned her veggies,
That she liked so much to do.

She'd set down on her steps awhile
And fan and fan and fan.
She never set there very long
She could out work any man.
She canned her food for winter
And made her home brew to.
She never stopped if she could see
There was something else to do.

She washed and ironed our clothes each week
She cooked three meals a day.
She'd smile and hum as she rushed along
This really was her way.

She always had this friend come by
Soon after, she made the brew.
The little old Doctor of the town,
She wondered how he knew.

She loved her family dearly
But one day they'd be gone
And her work is less demanding
Cause now she's all alone.

The doctor came more often
Than anybody knew.
He helped her with her many chores
She helped him with her brew.

By Ann Furlin

Introduction

The coal miner's wife is a hardy breed and her role in the family sometimes becomes overshadowed by the miner's dangerous business.

He may work a ten-hour shift but her shift is twenty-four hours as she is the heart and soul of the family. Her work never finishes and continues night and day.

Before the modern conveniences of living, she kept the fires going in the cooking and heating stoves plus bringing in the coal and carrying out the ashes.

She carried in the water for herself, her kid's weekly bath, and his daily bath to wash off the coal dust. She heated the water at midnight when he was on second shift; in the morning when he came home from third shift; then in the afternoons when he completed his day's work.

Cooking, baking, day and night, as her man had to eat whenever he got off work. Breakfast, dinner, and supper religiously ready for her brood. Cleaning and the continuous scrubbing of floors and unending chores that kept her tired and old before her time.

The miner's best friend was a stick of dynamite especially in the early days of mining. It usually came in a small package and it could be dangers in large amounts. One can define it as something potentially powerful as either a drug, news, or a person.

'The story about the coal miner's wife is dynamite and kept selling books for years.' Something that is excellent and powerful, as 'I want some more of your dynamite ravioli, please.'

She was small in stature but excellent, powerful and resilient tackling the duties of a 'Coal Miner's Wife'. This story tries to capture her life and times.

Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast
Let's dance and sing!
Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast!
Let's dance and sing, and dynamite!

Our fathers once danced
To the sound of dynamite in the past.
Now this tragic dance
Requires stronger music.
Let's dynamite, let's dynamite!

Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast
Let's dance and sing!
Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast!
Let's dance and sing, and dynamite!

Author unknown

Chapter 1

She lay across the bed in the small bedroom on the second floor of the four-room house her mind troubled waiting for him to come home.

The bedroom was cold and its only heat came through the single floor register from the kitchen below. The smell of the ever-simmering sauce on the stove filled the room.

The light from the streetlight on the corner gave a glow to the room. Suddenly the house began to shake as if an earthquake was occurring. The young boy that was sleeping in the bed sat up with fear on his face.

"It's ok Bobby it is only from the mine as they are close to the surface," his mother assured him.

Once again, the miners had set off a blast of dynamite dangerously close to the surface. The coal was not deep in the earth, the Coal Company wanted a quick profit, and it was the main reason they opened the mine.

"Do you think it is Pap this time?" he asked.

"No, it's from the mine in Gilmore. Besides Dad worked first shift today and is down at the club," she said in disgust.

It confused the boy because his dad worked on all three shifts and he never knew exactly when he was working or was just out drinking.

His schedule was two weeks on day shift then two weeks on second and then two weeks on third shift. It was hard on him and the family as they all had to adjust their eating, sleeping, and recreational habits. Miners were a hardy lot as they worked hard, played hard, and most drank hard.

She was the forgotten one in all of this living as she bore the brunt of the struggle in making the family work. She was the same as the dynamite used to blast the coal out from the clutches of the earth. Just like that dynamite,

she was spectacular and able to perform the tasks set before her. The family took it for granted that if something needed to be done they knew that Mom was clever and gifted enough to do the job. Whatever way you said it forward or backward Mom had it covered and was up to the task.

Her husband thought of her as his ‘Il mio piccolo dynamite’ or roughly translated from Italian means ‘my little dynamite’. He knew that Mary would adapt to any circumstance and deal with it just as he knew the dynamite would do the job in the dark recesses of the damp mine.

She wanted to talk but the boy drifted off to sleep. She started to hum an old French ballad that she learned in the old country.

“Lady Dynamite, let’s dance fast
Let’s dance and sing!
Lady Dynamite, let’s dance fast!
Let’s dance and sing, and dynamite!”

She lay there with something disturbing her and it was a serious life changing decision. Life she thought was like dancing with dynamite fraught with perils and dangers. She believed she had danced fairly well so far in her forty-one years of dancing with that dynamite. Would her decision shorten those years or would the dance continue to an old age?

She lay there a few moments, then got up and went to the adjoining bedroom to make her decision. She came back in a few minutes and looked down at the boy then she gently lay down across the bed. Her memories took over as she gazed out the window waiting for her minatore.

Was it a bad omen that in her birth year, 1907, two separate dynamite explosions killed six hundred coal miners in Pennsylvania and West Virginia? Her father, Joseph, mother, Maria, and two brothers, Tony and Angelo had migrated from Northern Italy in late 1906.

They moved into a Coal Company house built around 1872 in Hahntown, Pennsylvania. In that same year the Penn Gas Coal Company opened, its second shaft called the Penn Gas No. 2 Mine, between Hahntown and Adams Hill, Pennsylvania.

The mine consisted of an engine house, boiler house, blacksmith shop and a large mule stable that housed thirty mules. The company listed Joseph as a pick miner because he used a pickax to dig out the coal.

They came to the states with no plan of staying. They wanted to make some money and then return to their beloved Italy. Her father was a gentle slight man but her mother was a stern woman with strong beliefs in how to run a family. She would impose hard disciplines on her family. She ruled the roost and what she said was the law. Neither of her parents spoke English and had no intent on learning it. Mary came into the world in the fall of 1907.

“Signor, I have decided to send the child back to the homeland,” her mother announced to her husband one day.

“Donna, why would you do that? She has only been here eighteen months,” he said as he had developed a fondness for the baby.

“She will have an educazione in the manners of our people and not of these uneducated barbarians,” she snapped back at him.

“Where does the denaro come from?” he asked.

“Signor, you will just have to work a little harder for her and the new bambino,” she told him that she was pregnant once again.

“Mamma mia, how did that happen?” he blurted out.

“Stupido, you can’t figure that out?” she snapped.

She decided that she would send her baby back to the homeland for an education as she had dreams of returning to Italy one day with great wealth. That settled the issue.

This belief of going back soon vanished as she or none of her family would ever return except for her firstborn girl. She would go back but as a naturalized citizen of the United States. She named her firstborn girl Mary after her sister still living in Italy. Her sister’s name was Marie the same as hers but with a different middle name.

Therefore, at the age of two the little black haired brown-eyed baby girl was on a ship going to Northern Italy with an uncle who was returning home. Her aunt had agreed to raise her in the traditions of the mother country. Her mother paid to transport her baby back to the village where she also planned one day to return.

The ship sailed from New York to Napoli and she was one of the 1,000 third-class passengers. In twelve days, the ship arrived in Napoli then a train trip to Northern Italy and a small village in Belluno Province.

Maria, her mother’s sister and husband Giuseppe were in the same business as her father was when he lived there. He was a taglialegna or a woodcutter and life was hard in that beautiful land of mountains and valleys. They had four children who seemed very excited to meet the little girl from the new country.

The small village of Arsie situated in the Dolomites section of the Alps had a breathtaking view of the mountains and its contrasting valleys.

Giuseppe was a hard worker as were all the families living in the area. He had a house in the valley and another one in the mountains as they made their money in the mountains. He also had a vineyard on the mountain and it provided some extra income.

She grew to love her new family having no remembrance of her real family. Maria treated her as she did her own children but she did complain if the money came late from her sister to keep the child.

They called her by her middle name of Carlotta, Italian for Charlotte, as her first name was Mary, Maria in Italian, the same as her aunt. She was a fast learner walking, speaking, and reading Italian much quicker than her cousins. No one spoke English in the family except for a few simple words.

Her three older cousins Tony, Robert, and Angelo paid her little attention. Angelina two years older than Carlotta at first beamed with excitement over having a playmate. However, as they grew older, she became jealous of her cousins emerging beauty.

In 1904, Italian law mandated compulsory four years of free education for all children through the age of twelve. Therefore, when she was five years old Maria enrolled her in the Public School in the small village. Her mother would not send the necessary money for her to attend the Catholic System, which was expensive for those times.

Maria was a strict Catholic and saw to it that all the children attended church and she enrolled all her children in the Catholic school. It disappointed Carlotta that she could not go with them but she accepted her fate just as she would all through her life.

She made the best of every test that came her way and excelled in school. The walk to the school was a struggle as the weather was among the most severe in the Alps.

Snow was on the ground from late October to midMarch and she never missed a day in all the years of her schooling.

Carlotta was in the second grade when Europe broke into open conflict and World War 1 began. In June, there was an assassination of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary and the event triggered the war. Italy decided that they would stay semi neutral and only react if attacked.

Although she did not attend a Catholic school her aunt made sure that she attended mass and Sunday school. She learned the Catechism and loved to recite the information to any one who would take time to listen.

“You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure, and man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you,” was a prayer she learned early from the Catechism and she astonished her aunt by being able to recite it.

She could not wait for the day she would take her First Holy Communion and the day finally arrived.

“Carlotta, the Sisters have told me that you are the best student they have and two weeks from now you will be able to take of the Holy Eucharist. Do you understand what that means?” her aunt asked.

“Yes Zia Maria I understand,” she had a broad smile on her face as she responded to her Aunt Maria.

First Communion was an important celebration and Maria prepared for the large family gathering to celebrate the occasion.

“Carlotta I have taken down the dress, headdress, veil, and gloves that I wore for my Holy Communion. We need to see how it all fits,” she said to the excited seven-year old.

The Sunday came and Carlotta was so proud of the fancy white outfit a symbol of purity. She came out of the bedroom beaming in the fancy white dress, headdress with attached veil, and the long white gloves.

“Carlotta, you are so bellissimo all the boys are going to run after you,” her uncle teased her as he handed her a black rosary and prayer book. It was the family’s gift to her for the occasion.

“We want you to lead us in saying the Rosary,” Maria didn’t ask but ordered.

Carlotta didn’t hesitate and took her new prize then starting at the cross she blessed herself and recited the Apostle’s Creed.

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. Who, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.”

She went to the next bead up from the cross and said, “Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

Without hesitating, she went to the next three beads and repeated the Hail Mary, “Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

She moved to the next bead and said, “Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

She stopped and looked up seemingly a little confused but she remembered that it was Sunday. She knew that Jesus arose from the dead on that day.

So she said, “The Resurrection,” the first of the Five Glorious Mysteries.

She said an Our Father and ten Hail Maries while meditating on the mystery. She then said, “Glory to the Father,” and announced the next four mysteries, the ‘Ascension’, the ‘Descent of the Holy Spirit’, the ‘Assumption’ and the ‘Crowning of the Blessed Virgin’.

She repeated the prayer for each mystery and when she finished the rosary she prayed, “Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. O God, who’s only begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary

of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.”

She amazed the family when she finished as she went through the complete recital without one mistake. They went to the church with Carlotta beaming all the way. The party afterwards was one of the most enjoyable days of her life.

She did not know the communions she so enjoyed through her teen years would one day end. She would have to wait until she was well into her seventies before she could take part in the sacrament again.

Chapter 2

A letter from the states arrived in September 1914 on her seventh birthday. It had enough money to return the seven-year-old back home as her mother had decided she was now old enough to help with the family. Times had become tough with one more boy and another girl so her mother decided her daughter had enough education.

“Carlotta, we received a letter from your mother and she wants you to come back home,” Maria told the seven-year-old on her birthday when she came in from school.

“But I am home,” she cried out.

“My little kitten I told you about your family in America,” Maria grasped the stunned girl’s hand.

“Your mother loves you and wants you back in America. You do know that you are American by birth,” she lied about the mother’s love.

“Yes, but this is my home and I don’t want to leave all my friends,” she repeated her plea.

“Well there is a war on and we will wait until spring to send you home. Wash up and get ready to eat and think of all the advantages of living in America,” Maria hugged her and went to the kitchen.

Carlotta walked away discouraged and cried once she was alone in her room.

“At least I have until spring and perhaps they will change their mind,” she smiled as she spoke to her doll.

She prized the doll she made of her uncle’s old woolen work socks as it was her security blanket and she adored her little friend.

“I’ll pray to Saint Anthony and he will help me,” she clutched her doll as she knelt to pray.

Maria wrote back and reminded her sister that it was winter and war had broken out in Europe. She wrote that she would wait until May then she would send Carlotta back to the states.

Saint Anthony she thought answered her prayer because on April 26, 1915 Italy came into the war on the side of the Triple Entente – Britain, France and Russia.

Then on May seven, a German U-boat torpedoed the ocean liner the Lusitania. It sank in eighteen minutes, eleven miles off the coast of Ireland killing 1,198 of the 1,959 people aboard. The 118 Americans that perished turned public opinion in the United States. The U.S. entered World War I and postponed her departure.

Maria had booked her on a voyage scheduled to leave Italy on May 20. It thrilled Carlotta and her cousins except for Angelina as Carlotta's wit and charm threatened her.

"Mamma, how long is Carlotta going to stay here before she goes back to America?" Angelina asked at Sunday dinner.

"Maybe it will be a long war," Maria smiled at Carlotta.

"No we will make short work of the Hun. Our Alpini boys are the best at mountain fighting," Giuseppe spoke up and Maria gave him a hard stare.

"Then again we are lovers instead of fighters you know," he changed his tune and they all laughed.

The Italian Army was successful at first but as Giuseppe predicted they in the end were lovers and not fighters. The Alpine troops to their credit distinguished themselves and fought a three-year long campaign in the Alps against Austro-Hungarian Kaiserjäger and the German Alpenkorps and become known as the "War in snow and ice". Poor tactics and leaders caused a rout of the Italian army with much bloodshed.

"Carlotta would you like to spend the summer with your cousins and uncle cutting wood?" Maria asked.

She knew that Carlotta loved the little cabin high in the mountains.

“Oh yes I would and when are we going?” she asked all excited as she had been there a few times but had never stayed long.

“The men are leaving in the morning,” Maria referred to her husband and sons.

“Then you and Angelina are not going,” Carlotta, asked surprised.

“No and you will have to take care of my men,” she smiled.

They were up at daybreak and the boys had the horse harnessed to the wood hauling cart. Giuseppe climbed in the front and took the reins. Tony the oldest sat next to him while Carlotta and her other three cousins sat in the bed of the wagon.

They started the slow climb up the road that led to the cabin. It was not much wider than a walking path. Two carts could not pass unless one pulled off the ‘road’.

Carlotta loved the trip to the cabin with all the colorful flower blossoms that carpeted the meadows. It was the most beautiful landscape she would ever see and she would never forget its clean crisp air where the sun even seemed stronger. She never forgot the taste of the clean water, the smell of its pure air, and all the beautiful surroundings of the mountains.

It was late in the afternoon around sunset when they arrived at the cabin. She stood fascinated by the flame-hued sunset that illuminated the mountains that overlook the town.

The lush valley and pine forest with a backdrop of jagged white peaks stretching through the clouds and the scene of the village nestled in the valley would always remain in her mind.

The old log cabin set in the pines with a flower garden out front was picturesque as the flowers were just starting to blossom. She loved flowers and promised her aunt that she would take care of all the flowers planted around the cabin. It was there she learned how to talk and sing to the flowers and they would grow and prosper.

She loved the Primrose with all its different colors of bold yellows, reds, pinks, and blues. They had ground-hugging rosettes of thick green leaves that stayed in bloom for weeks and she would talk to and praise them about their ability to stay so long in bloom.

The glacier crowfoot or glacier buttercup with its bright dark wide ovate green 3-lobed 3-inch leaved somewhat fleshy plant was another of her favorites. The white and pink cup shaped flowers made the white pedals more vivid. She loved to sit and look at them as she admired the beauty of the mountains.

The boys unloaded the supplies from the wagon as she helped her uncle clean the cabin that had been empty for about seven months. The air was so clean there was no dust on the few chairs and table except for a film of moisture.

She made up the small bunks with the bedding they had brought as Giuseppe made a fire in the fireplace. The temperature could still get cold at night during that time of year.

Giuseppe put up a blanket around her small cot to give her some privacy from the men. She got some of the water one of the boys brought in from a spring situated about a hundred yards from the cabin. Then Giuseppe heated it in the fireplace and she made herself a warm bath. She got behind the blanket and washed up quickly as Giuseppe had something to eat. The boys had washed down at the spring at least that is what they said.

Giuseppe washed his hands and face then they ate bread, cheese, and sausage with some wine. She never developed a taste for wine and had a glass of cold clear water.

They were up at daybreak had a breakfast of coffee, bread with jelly and then the men went off to cut wood. Carlotta cleaned the cabin and made the beds then she was alone until the men came in for lunch.

The first morning she just wandered around familiarizing herself with the area and enjoying all the beautiful scenery. She found the small vineyard that Giuseppe kept and she promised herself that she would ask him to show her how to graft and to take care of a vineyard.

She was busy with the flower garden again when someone yelled, "Cousin, do you have dinner ready?"

She turned and saw Giuseppe Tony, Robert, and Angelo, the youngest about four years older than she, running ahead and yelling.

"Oh my," she thought. "It's time for dinner and I have forgotten the most important meal of the day. Giuseppe will be mad at me." She jumped to her feet and rushed into the cabin.

Before the men had washed in the spring, she had the table set with bread, cheese, ham, olives, and some boiled chestnuts that Maria had sent. She stood at the table with a sheepish grin on her young face waiting for her Uncles reaction.

The boys didn't wait but quickly sat down and started making sandwiches. Giuseppe smiled at her as he sat down, ""Well the little girl is growing up and she will make someone a good wife. Perhaps he would like to have some wine with his meals."

She put her hand over her mouth and quickly set out glasses and filled them not seeing the grin on her Uncle's

face. She didn't know that this first lesson on preparing a meal with short notice would come in handy in her future life in the states.

That evening she was ready for dinner setting out what she had on the table for lunch adding risotto. Giuseppe complimented her on the rice dish she had prepared. She had helped Maria at home prepare the rich and creamy dish and was one of the many dishes she would become efficient in preparing.

Three days and they had a load cut so Tony and Robert took it back to the village to sell. That evening Angelo was in a feisty mood and asked Carlotta if she would dance with him. Giuseppe had his tambourine, gave it to her, and encouraged her to dance with Angelo. They stated to dance the traditional Tarantella.

Angelina had taught Carlotta how to perform the dance, they would practice it together, and both became skillful at it. Carlotta loved to dance especially the dance that folklore said would cure the bite of the tarantula spider. The name of the Italian folk dance comes from Taranto, Italy, the place it began. Usually performed by couples the light and lively dance was flirtatious in nature.

They stood side by side and crossed their right foot in front of the left. Then they crossed their left foot in front of the right.

They stepped their right foot aside then stepped their left foot in like manner. They repeated the steps while Carlotta shook the tambourine in a clockwise circle in front of her body.

Placing their hands on their hips, they kicked their right foot out to the front keeping it low to the floor. Then they put it in front of the left putting weight on it. Touching the ball of their left foot to the ground not putting their full weight on it, they put it beside the right foot. This completed the tarantella step.

They repeated the sequence again beginning with the left-foot low, front kick. Then they did the same with the right foot. They repeated it once more beginning with the left and performed the sequence three more times while traveling backward slightly.

They faced each other and Carlotta hit the tambourine to her left shoulder, her left hip and then her right hip. She repeated this, making a triangle across the body.

She tapped her left hand twice with the tambourine. Then did the tarantella step forward twice, beginning with her right foot kick, so their right shoulders passed each other. They danced the tarantella step twice moving backwards to return to the starting position. Some called this back and forth sequence a "do-si-do."

Moving the tambourine twice as quickly, she tapped her left shoulder then right hip. She repeated the sequence then she tapped her left hand twice with the tambourine. Then she repeated the "do-si-do."

She placed her hands on her hips and danced eight tarantella steps in place while Angelo with the tambourine in his left hand went down on his right knee. He tapped the tambourine for seven counts of music on his right hip. On count eight, he tapped it twice then he continued to kneel for eight more counts of music.

He remained in the kneeling position for the next sixteen counts of music while shaking the tambourine above his head. She performed eight Tarantella steps forward in a counterclockwise circle around him.

Then they stood opposite each other with their right hands reaching center, holding hands, forming a star shape, with their left hands holding the tambourines. They did eight tarantella steps simultaneously rotating in a circle clockwise clapping their tambourines on the last step. They perform eight tarantella steps again while turning in the opposite direction and clapped their tambourines on the last step.

“Bravo, bravo,” Giuseppe shouted. He jumped to his feet took Angelo’s tambourine then he and Carlotta danced.

Chapter 3

A month later, a load of wood was ready for Belluno the capitol of the Province about a 24-hour trip. She wanted to go with Giuseppe and Robert. Giuseppe resisted at first but he finally gave in.

Up at daybreak they were off with Carlotta huddled between the two. Although somewhat cramped it did not bother her as the thrill of the adventure to the big city overcame any inconvenience.

The complete trip was a breathtaking sight to her, she marveled at the sight of the gigantic rock formations, and the beautiful mountains in full bloom.

They stopped at a small Inn halfway there and ate. Staying there that night they were up early again the next morning. As they got closer to their destination, Belluno came into sight and it was an impressive one.

The imposing Schiara range of the Dolomites rose above the city and the sight fascinated her. The ancient city itself rose above a cliff near the confluence of the Torrente Ardo and the Piave River. She understood why the name of the city meant 'splendid hill'.

The sight of the beautiful Alpe valley mirrored in Lake Santa Croce and the peaks of the Dolomites shimmering above the water astounded her.

Giuseppe was familiar with the city, he pointed out the points of interest such as the 15th century Duomo Cathedral. The bell was sounding in its 18th century tower as they passed.

The sight of the Fountain of Piazza del Duomo excited her. Next came the Bishop's Palace and Giuseppe told her that they erected it in 1190. He continued to point out the many churches and cathedrals.

They got to their destination quickly unloaded the wagon and left the city not spending the night. When it turned dark they found an Inn.

They were on the road early once again the next morning and before long they passed the road that led to the village of Fonzaso.

“Our next load goes to Fonzaso?” Robert said as they passed the turn off to the village.

“Yes it does. Tony and Angelo are taking a load. Do you want to go Carlotta?” Giuseppe asked.

“No, I would prefer to stay at the cabin and have you teach me about the vineyard,” she replied which brought a smile to his face.

She never traveled to Fonzaso a small village north of her aunt’s place. If she had, she would have definitely run into a young carefree boy that lived by rules that he set and followed. His family owned a large farm in fact so big that he never realized the extent of their holdings.

He born in America for the same reasons that she was but under different circumstances. His mother was the ruler of the roost with his father totally controlled by the self-willed woman. She had great plans and very determined to make a fortune in America, which she eventually did.

School was not one of his favorite activities and the long walk from his home to the school gave him ample time to get into trouble. He loved to steal fruit from the large orchards that he would have to travel by on his way to school. He found out many years later in life the fruit he was stealing was from his family’s orchards.

The war eventually affected the province of Belluno and especially the young man. The ‘War in the snow and ice’ found the carefree young boy running down severed heads of the captured Italian troops. The Austrians recruited him to play their game and they gave him a basket to chase the severed heads. The soldiers bet how many he would catch.

She never met him while in Italy but one day he would become her minatore.

The load was ready for shipment to Fonzaso and Giuseppe started teaching Charlotte on how to care for a grape vineyard.

“Remember my little one that keeping a grape vineyard is a year-round labor of love,” Giuseppe smiled at her as he started fixing fallen posts and broken wires a typical springtime chore.

She watched and then began helping and over the summer, he taught her how to graft. He also taught her all the jobs the vineyard needed during the different seasons of the year.

The summer went by too fast for her and it was time for her to go back down and start 3rd grade. It would be the last time she went to the cabin but the lessons she learned there stayed with her the rest of her life.

The war delayed her returning to the states and she was wishing that her mother would not ask for her return until the war was over. The Germans were sinking merchant ships and passenger liners that made travel very risky. Her mother continued to write asking for her immediate return but Maria would not comply until she considered it safe.

In 1917, the Germans changed their policy and said they would not attack passenger liners after the U.S. logged complaints of their sinking of the Lusitania. This was an effort to keep the Americans out of the war but was not successful. The Americans entered the war as the U.S. Congress declared war on 6 April 1917 after German submarines sank seven U.S. merchant ships.

The British and American navies finally got control of the sea and in September of 1917 the sad day came when Maria agreed to send her home. It gave Charlotte time to complete fifth grade and she was grateful for that but very

discouraged that she had to leave those she had grown to love.

Carlotta overheard Maria talking to Giuseppe about her mother, “The only reason that ‘strega’ wants her back is because she is having another bambino.”

“How many does that make now?” Giuseppe asked.

Maria hesitated a moment, “Let me see there is Angelo, Anthony, then came Charlotte, Joseph, Angelina, Atolio, Frank, Joanne and the latest which she said she was going to call Ernie.”

“Nine, she is an ‘allevatore’ dropping them one after another,” Giuseppe shrugged and walked out.

Maria turned and saw Carlotta standing in the doorway from the kitchen, “How long have you been there?” she asked but by the look of bewilderment on the ten-year’s olds face, she knew the answer.

Carlotta could remember Maria telling her of her other siblings when she was old enough to understand. However, she never knew her aunt thought of her mother as a witch and her uncle thought she was a breeder. Tears welled up in Carlotta’s eyes and she turned to leave the room sobbing.

“Maria Carlotta,” Maria called out and Carlotta stopped never remembering her aunt calling her by her first name.

“Come over here as we need to have a grown up talk,” Maria waved to her and she walked over and sat down in front of her aunt with tears streaming down her cheeks.

“Wipe your tears because you are going to be a donna before your time,” she handed Carlotta a hanky.

“I spoke out of turn about your mother but you must know the truth about her. She is a very stern and hard woman and has great plans. She is my sister and I love her but I am sad to say you will find little love in her. She wants you home to take care of your brothers and sisters.

I am afraid life will be hard for you but God has given you great inner strength and mind.

Let me tell you that when times get hard remember that we love you and will keep you in our prayers. You'll leave here with that love but with no understanding of the English.

I have made up a note with your name, birth date, mother's and father's name and destination in America. You give this to the authorities when you get to Genoa and they will make a sign to hang around your neck in English. Make sure you always wear it and included in the envelope is a copy of your birth certificate to show them that you are an American citizen.

Your ticket for the boat is also in the envelope. Here is enough money to use on your journey so put it in a safe place. They will give you American money when you get to New York. You keep this in a safe place" she handed her the envelope and money.

By then Carlotta's tears were gone and she had a stern look on her face.

Maria continued, "You will not need the money on the boat as they include your meals with the ticket. Therefore, you eat all you want and don't pay for anything.

Once you get to America things will be different and strange to you. I don't think anyone will meet you in New York but there is enough money for a train ticket to the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They will meet you there so you find a friend on the boat that speaks English to help you.

I have written all this out for you and the information is in the envelope. There is a telephone number for you to call when you get to Pittsburgh if no one is there to greet you."

Maria sopped and shook her head and tears came down her cheeks as she realized what the child was going to have to go through.

“I will be fine donna matura and I am sorry if I have burdened you and I will cherish you forever,” Carlotta smiled at her.

Maria got her passage on the Italian Ocean Liner Regina d'Italia sailing out of Genoa to Palermo, and Naples then on to New York that cost \$50.

She would be one of 1,900 third class passengers as there wasn't enough money to book her with the 120 first class passengers.

The day came for her departure and Carlotta had one suitcase with all her possessions. She also had the envelope tied to her belly with her doll in her hand and stuffed inside was the money. She had steeled herself to face the trip to Genoa alone but Giuseppe came out of his room with a suitcase followed by a smiling Maria.

“We have decided that I will go with Carlotta to Genoa,” he smiled at her and she ran and hugged him.

Everyone piled in the wagon and made the tip to the bus station, they said their goodbyes, and off she went. That would be the last time she ever saw any of them although they did communicate for years.

Many wounded soldiers going south on leave filled the bus. She and Giuseppe sat in the front behind the driver. The bus started on the 280 plus mile trip first heading south for a few miles then turning west towards Trento. It then went south past Roverto until they reached Verono where they had a rest stop.

After thirty minutes, they were on the road again heading west towards Brescia then south towards Piacenza. Then turning west for Tortona where they stopped for another rest stop.

Soldiers got off and on the bus along the entire trip-saying good-bye to their fellow warriors. Most saying they would see them on the trip back to the front.

They rested an hour and then went south to Acqui Terme and then on to Genoa. The bus route went right past the dock where they saw the Regina d'Italia docked.

Giuseppe had told the driver that she was leaving on the ship and when it came in sight, he stopped.

The sight of two-mast, twin funneled, 430-foot long, 52 ft wide liner was impressive to her but to a seasoned ocean traveler they would consider it a small Italian boat.

The elite knew that on a transatlantic crossing they would spend their days on a long top deck. There would be a large color tiled pool filled with clear seawater. The passengers around the pool would be lounging in swimwear stretched out on white soft towels catching the sun's rays getting a tan.

Others would be sitting around tables, under umbrellas playing cards, backgammon or reading a novel. Some would intermittently take a swim in the pool, and then return to their previous activities.

Their nights would be more glamorous with colored lights lighting the pool and decks. A full moon and the beautiful ocean night sky would further add excitement. Underwater lights made the pool more exciting.

Elegantly dressed passengers would be dancing under the stars to an orchestra. Other well-dressed passengers would stroll along a glass-enclosed promenade on their way to a late dinner in one of the three large dining rooms.

However, it would not be the case on this steamer at least for the ten-year-old girl standing looking up at the ship that would take her home. Of course, because of the war, there would be no lights at night and the crew

blocked all the portals. This would prevent someone shining a light for a waiting German submarine.

There was a bevy of activity all around her a bit hectic but exciting. Many of the passengers were soldiers missing arms and legs who were going home to Palermo, and Naples.

Families were saying their good byes and the first-class passengers had steamer trunks. She saw what she learned later were the ship's crew returning from shore leave and others were company officials who she would soon meet.

"Carlotta, I see an eating place over there and we need something to eat and you can clean yourself," Giuseppe picked up her suitcase and they crossed over and sat at an outside table.

A waiter came up and Giuseppe ordered a plate of risotto for each of them and asked the man if they could use the rest rooms. The waiter pointed the way and they went to wash. Their plates were already at the table when they returned and the waiter was waiting for payment.

The food was good and the steamship gave a loud blast sounding a call for boarding, "Well my little girl it is time for you to get on board the boat."

"Thank you uncle for all your kindness and I do not know what I'd do without you," she smiled at her frowning uncle.

He returned her smile and said, "We need to see the officials."

"This little lady is an American citizen and is returning home to her country. I will escort her on board the ship," Giuseppe told the stern looking official.

"Show me her papers," the man grunted.

Carlotta reached in her blouse and pulled out the envelope got her papers and handed them to the official.

He looked them over and said in Italian, "They are in order and do you speak English?"

"No," she answered and handed him the page that Maria had written down all her information.

The man handed the page to a young man who wrote all her information on a cardboard tag. He attached a thick cord and gave it to the official.

"You always wear this so others will know of your status. Stand in that line for an examination," he ordered and pointed to a short line where a nurse and man in a white coat were examining the passengers.

She grinned and put the tag around her neck then put her papers back into the envelope. Then she and Giuseppe stood in line.

"Are they going to let me go?" she asked but wished they would not approve her.

"Those people are health inspectors and can refuse you entrance into the United States. You must pass the inspection because the ship-owners must transport you back here if you should fail your health inspection in America," Giuseppe told her.

The nurse examined her, gave her a clean bill of health, and told her to get in line with a group of third class passengers. It was obvious there were different status of people leaving in the first, second and third class commonly called the steering class.

Those that were in steering had no air circulation and fresh air was lacking. Steerage was below the waterline, which meant there were no portholes. The hull plating was bare and the steel would sweat with condensation. With a lack of insulation, one heard the sound of the sea hitting the ship and it made such a racket that it was difficult to sleep.

Giuseppe carried her suitcase onboard and they found their way to her cabin if one would call it that. A steward pointed out to the group the ships facilities that were

available to them. They would soon find out the company carefully controlled its facilities.

They separated the single men and women and assigned specific sleeping locations. They assigned the married couples with or without children to the same area.

Giuseppe didn't like that her sleeping accommodation was nothing more than a bunk rack. It was made of steel pipes with fabric stretched over the framework and they were three bunks high. There were no pillows but there was a simple wool blanket.

Maria had put a small pillow in her suitcase and Giuseppe got it out. He laid claim to the bottom bunk, as she would have had a hard time climbing into the other two.

They said little but smiled at each another then he noticed a couple with a young boy about Carlotta's age a couple bunks down from them. Her bunk was close to the married couples' assigned area and he thought he heard them speaking some English.

"Excuse me," he said to the man who was probably in his midthirties, "Do you think you could help my niece who is traveling alone to America? She will be no problem but she speaks no English and some may take advantage of her."

"Of course we will," the woman said in English.

"I speak no English," Giuseppe replied.

"Of course we will," she repeated in Italian.

He called Carlotta over and introduced her to the family who were returning to America. It seemed they were touring in Austria when the war broke out and spent the money they had finding their way to Genoa leaving enough funds for a third-class passage.

Giuseppe got their names, Tony, Charlotte, and Angelo Piazza and they were Canadian citizens. The ship's horn broke the conversation as it was a signal for the non-passengers to leave the ship.

“Carlotta, tell your mother and father we love them and you know that we love and will miss you,” Giuseppe told her and wiped a tear.

“I love you uncle and all my family,” Carlotta replied.

He turned and was gone and so was her name Carlotta. From that point on, she used her English name - Mary.

She was now alone to face the future with many fond memories of Northern Italy and the family she left behind hoping for the same in her new life.

Chapter 4

She liked her new found friends and asked them to call her Mary, as that was the first word she learned to speak in English. Dolores started to call her Carlotta and Mary asked her how to say her name in English.

“It reads Mary Charlotte Semifero,” Dolores told her reading the plaque around her neck.

“Please call me Mary,” she said then she excused herself, as she needed to rest.

She was about to fall asleep when her bunk shook as the twin screw propellers started to turn shaking the hull of the ship as it prepared to leave the harbor.

“Mary, do you want to go on deck with us and wave good-bye?” Dolores called out.

Mary did not hesitate and jumped out of her cot clutching her doll and hurried out behind them. Angelo stopped and waited for her to catch up. He was a year younger than she and they developed a close friendship during the voyage. He spoke some Italian thus they could communicate. He taught her enough English that when they arrived in New York she was not entirely in the dark. She could understand at a basic level what people said to her in English.

They hurried up to the main deck and found a place at the rail where the passengers stood waving. There was an excitement in the air. The Regina d'Italia was a small ocean liner compared to the Aquitania one of the largest liners of the day where 100,000 people saw it off on its maiden voyage.

She pulled back at first as the boat seemed so high off the water but she was fearless and was right back at the rail in fact leaning over the rail.

“Mary, you be careful, we don't want to lose you before we even get under way,” Dolores warned her.

“I don’t see my uncle,” Mary said as she searched the crowd of people waving from the dock.

“There he is over there,” Tony cried out pointing to Giuseppe who had seen them and was waving furiously to get their attention.

Mary started waving back at him and yelling, “Good-bye uncle and tell everyone I love them,” not realizing he could not hear her over all the noise.

The ship slowly pulled away from the dock as a tugboat pulled alongside to help its departure from the harbor. Mary became fascinated as she watched the small boat seemingly propel the larger craft. The dock eventually disappeared, the excitement subsided, and they went back below deck.

“Mary, do you need to use the ladies’ room?” Dolores asked when they reached their quarters.

She shook her head yes and they found what would be very loosely called a ladies room. They used a shared bathroom and it was not private. At least the bathing facilities were sex divided. The liner companies considered the third-class passengers no more than cattle making some easy money. They made the best out of their conditions keeping their modesty the best they could.

A few hours later and it was time to eat and while the first-class passengers were dining in style, their dining facilities consisted of long tables with tightly spaced seating. They served the meals from a large pot and there was no menu. Everyone ate the same food usually soup or stew made from the cheapest cuts of meat.

In earlier years, passengers often had to use their own silverware but in this case, the company provided eating utensils. The food was not particularly appealing but it was wholesome and nutritious.

There was only one steward and they served themselves. Some were fortunate enough to have a little extra money and got more food from him, who, for the right "tip" would bring food from the first-class dining room. Mary held onto her doll with her extra money and ate what she wanted although she was never a big eater.

The noise of the engines, the smells caused by confinement in a congested place, the rolling ship, the lack of privacy, and the lack of fresh air made for a rough passage.

Sleep did not come easy to her and about midnight someone shook her bed and her eyes snapped open to see Angelo.

"I don't like this smelly place with no fresh air as we seemed trapped like some wild animals. Let's sneak up on deck and get some fresh air," he was on the verge of tears.

"Won't the authorities stop us?" she asked not out of fear but curious of how they could get away with it.

"No, those goons are asleep and if they catch us they will just make us return down here," he replied and continued. "I have been on many ships and have done it before."

She was game and clutching her doll, they crept up to the top deck with no one seeing them. The wind and fresh air was refreshing and they found a couple of deck lounges and went to sleep. They both had brought the blanket the company provided as the night air was chilly. They continued the practice the entire trip and a steward caught them once and made them return to their quarters.

Dolores knew what they were doing and never stopped them except on cold nights in fact she joined them a few times. She read them a passage from a book written in 1905 about the conditions in the steerage class.

“They packed 900 steerage passengers like cattle into the hold of the elegant and roomy steamer the Kaiser Wilhelm II, of the North German Lloyd line. They took walks on deck when the weather was good to breathe clean air. However, below in rough weather, they closed the hatches and it was an impossibility to get fresh air. The stench became unbearable and many of the emigrants tried to go topside. The crew drove them down below deck, as they preferred the bitterness and danger of the storm to the foul air below.

There wasn't any division between the sexes and the young women quartered among the married passengers. They had no privacy that they should be entitled. They were no more protected than if they were living promiscuously.

The miserable food they got out of huge kettles and put it into the dinner pails provided by the steamship company. When they give out the food, the crowd pushed each other so the meals were anything but an orderly procedure. The authorities should condemn steerage as unfit for transporting human beings on the modern ship.

Take for example, the second cabin, which costs about twice as much as the steerage and sometimes not twice so much. Yet the second cabin passenger on the Kaiser Wilhelm II has six times as much deck room, much better located and well protected against inclement weather. Two to four sleep in one cabin, which is well and comfortably furnished; while in the steerage from 200 to 400 sleeps in one compartment on bunks, one above the other, with little light and no comforts. In the second cabin the food is excellent and eaten in a luxuriantly appointed dining room. They cooked the food well done almost burning it and doled out the unsavory rations with less courtesy than one would find in a charity soup kitchen.

The steerage ought to be outlawed and the law should abolish it. On many ships, they grudgingly gave drinking water. On the steamer Staatendam, four years ago, we had literally to steal water for the steerage from the second cabin, and that of course at night. On many journeys, particularly on the SS Fürst Bismarck, of the Hamburg American Line, five years ago, the bread was uneatable, and thrown into the water by the irate emigrants.

The English steamship companies have always led in providing better quarters. While the discipline on board the ship is always stricter than on other lines, the care given to the emigrants is similarly greater.” Dolores stopped and a tear fell from her eye.

The three-week voyage would have been unbearable if they would not have found that escape on deck from the horrible conditions. The liner company provided no shipboard entertainment so they entertained themselves. Mary taught Angelo, Tony, and Dolores how to dance the Tarantella. Eventually she taught other passengers and they would join in the fun. Mary although shy loved to dance. Dance she did and her fellow passengers enjoyed her dancing.

Mary did not find herself in quite the same circumstances as the story Delores read. However, they came in a close second and from those times, she learned how to adapt to any situation. She made the most of the situation and she became as dynamite.

The ship steamed south along the coast to Naples and in about twenty-five hours docked in Naples.

The trip to Naples was smooth and she did not get seasick but Angelo did not fair so well and stayed sick. They docked just long enough to load and unload passengers.

They were all on deck watching the passengers get off and new ones board for Palermo and the States. It would be a short fifty-odd hour trip to Palermo.

She watched and felt sorry for the soldiers returning home some minus arms and legs or badly burned. They had recovered from their initial wounds and given a heroes send off in third-class.

She heard their cries as they tossed in their bunks having nightmares reliving the horror of trench warfare. She watched intently as families gathered to greet their sons, brothers, or husbands as they left the boat.

The ship left port in the middle of the night heading south to Palermo located on the north coast of Sicily. Four hours out and they hit one of the treacherous storms that could suddenly come up in the Mediterranean Sea and it tossed the small boat around.

She heard the waves hit the hull of the boat and saw loose objects fly through the air as the ship rocked in the waves. The storm lasted for ten hours slowing their journey almost to a stop and they finally arrived in port. The stench in the so-called cabin was beyond bearing as many of the passengers just lost everything on the floor. Mary never got sick and stayed curled-up on her bunk clutching her doll. The fresh air was such a relief when they reached the top deck.

The ship was to stay in port for a day resupplying for the transatlantic crossing.

“Mary would you like to go ashore with us,” Dolores asked.

She hesitated a moment, then answered, “Yes I would maybe we can get a bath?”

“That was our thoughts but it will cost. Do you have money?” Dolores asked.

“Yes, a little, how much will it cost?” Mary did not want to reveal how much she had or where she hid it.

“No more than thousand liras but probably less,” Tony spoke up.

She hurried back down to her bed giving the impression that she had the money there while all the time it was in her arms. She got four thousand liars out of the doll, as she wanted something to eat.

She wondered if they had enough money. She always had a heart of giving. Her mother had sent an extra one hundred dollars for her trip besides the boat ticket. She rushed back on deck and they started to go ashore.

“Darling, do you think our luggage will be save here if we leave it unattended?” Dolores asked her husband.

He stopped and thought a moment, “I am glad you thought of that, they probably will not be safe. We don’t know who will board before we get back or what others on board will do,” he said and they went below to see to their luggage.

It was lucky they did because as they entered the cabin a young man was standing at Mary’s bunk pulling out her suitcase.

“Hold it there you scoundrel. What do you think you are doing?” Tony rushed over towards the young man.

The man turned and bolted passed Tony and out the cabin door right into the arms of the steward who was entering.

The large man witnessed the scene and he grasped the back of the young man’s collar, “We don’t tolerate thieves on board this ship,” he said and cuffed him alongside his head. He dragged the young man off and they never saw the young man again.

Tony was still pondering what to do with their luggage when the steward came back. He told them that for a slight fee he would look after their luggage.

The steward did not hesitate and said, “I’ll watch over all of them for a thousand liars.”

Mary did not hesitate and handed the man the money then opened her suitcase and got out a change of clothes to put on after her bath. Dolores marveled at the generosity and wisdom of such a young person. She got a change of clothes for her family.

“Thank you Mary,” she said smiling.

Mary just knew that they had limited funds the way Tony looked when the man said a thousand liars.

“Don’t worry young lady the suitcase will be safe enjoy yourself ashore,” the steward padded her on the head. He also saw her generosity, which is contagious.

This time they left the ship much happier with no worries about their belongings. Tony asked an official if he knew where they could find a public bath.

“Find any restaurant order a meal and the wash facilities are free,” the man volunteered.

“That does mean a bathtub bath doesn’t it?” Dolores asked.

“No, there is one over there that you have to pay for,” he replied, pointed and walked away.

No one wanted to eat they just wanted to get the filth off their bodies and walked in the direction the man pointed.

A bath for the four of them of them was 1,200 liars and they took advantage of it. The men were in separate parts of the place and there was plenty of hot water. Mary and Dolores even washed all the dirty clothes and they left the place renewed with wet clothes in their arms. They found a walkway on the beach; Dolores hung their wet clothes on a rail. They sat down and enjoyed the warm sun then waited for their clothes to dry.

Tony and Angelo went to a small restaurant and brought back sandwiches and drinks. They had a picnic right there on the walkway as they watch the activity in the port. The time past fast and it was late in the evening

when they found their way back to the ship. They went below and some of the filth was gone, as someone had washed down the deck of the cabin although it still smelled bad. Tony found the steward and brought back their luggage.

They spent the night on the top deck went below to eat breakfast then back topside to watch the new passengers board. This time they were mainly Sicilian and a few Spanish immigrants with none speaking English.

Mary stood at the rail as she watched the beautiful city of Palermo fade in the distance. That was the last time she ever saw Italy never to return except in her memories and dreams.

Chapter 5

A few hours at sea and The Regina d'Italia joined one of the first convoys Britain formed to protect her merchant fleet from marauding German U Boats.

Although they introduced the convoy system in the early part of the war for ships on the short cross-English Channel routes, they thought that trans-Atlantic protection would be impossible.

It took the looming U-boat crisis following the entry of the USA into the war in April 1917 to make the Admirals change their minds. The sinking of merchant ships reached a level that threatened to force Britain out of the war within months. They found that most losses fell on ocean-going trade so they decided the convoy was necessary.

The result was a gradual introduction of a convoy system and the construction of dedicated escort vessels to supplement the fleet destroyers. The convoy greatly reduced the number of ships sunk and countered the U-boat threat. This enabled Mary to go home earlier than she wished.

There was another threat looming that was just as dangerous if not more so. The fourth day out Tony complained to his wife, "Baby my head is just killing me all of a sudden I have this terrible headache."

"I'll get a wet cloth and put it on your head. Do you remember when I got this terrible headache when we were in Germany? I still have a few tablets they called Aspirin. They worked for me," she said and gave him one of the new drugs put on the market in 1915 Germany. She also put the compress on his head.

"Darling, you are burning up with a fever, is your headache better?" she asked a few hours later. He seemed to becoming unresponsive.

“Mary you and Angelo hurry and find the steward and tell him to bring the ship’s doctor,” she was panicking.

They rushed off found the steward and he finally went for the doctor after they begged him. An hour later, the doctor showed up and Tony by this time was coughing and breathing very heavy. They tried to give him some juice but his throat was raw and he could hardly swallow nor could he breathe thru his noise.

Two hours passed and the Doctor became puzzled as four more passengers and the steward started similar symptoms. He called for the Captain and he decided to quarantine all those showing signs.

They set the lounge in first-class apart for all those showing symptoms. Dolores was very upset and the Doctor recruited her as a nurse as she had some training in her past.

“Mary you watch over Angelo and keep to the upper deck away from others the best you can,” she told Mary as she rushed to her husband who they had moved about an hour earlier.

The ship’s doctor did the best he could to separate the passengers and he became stymied over the fact the ones who died were healthy and in their midtwenties. Tony was in that category and within two days of contacting it, he died.

He was one of thirteen passengers that died including three crewman one of which was their steward. The curse was not class sensitive as half of those who died were in first-class. Many others came down with slight symptoms and Mary was one of them. She was one of the lucky ones as she just got a slight case of it just enough to build up immunity to it.

Devastated, Dolores and Angelo watched as they buried Tony at sea. The Doctor wasted no time disposing of the bodies as soon as they succumbed to what he thought was some sort of plague.

The culprit was the influenza pandemic called the flu which broke out in early June 1917. The insidious virus caused between 50 and 100 million people's deaths making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history with some 500 million infected before it subsided in December 1920.

It stuck the Regina d'Italia probably carried aboard by the immigrants from Sicily or Spain. They called the scourge for some reason the Spanish Flu but there were many theories of where it started. The soldiers were among the most affected by this epidemic.

This strain was different from other outbreaks as most victims were healthy young adults, in contrast to other outbreaks that mainly affected juvenile, elderly, or weakened patients.

Mary fell into both categories, as she was healthy and a juvenile. She had contacted all the childhood diseases as the mumps, and measles.

Mary tried her best the rest of the trip to comfort Angelo and Dolores after she got on her feet as it only affected her less than a week. Neither Angelo nor Dolores got a symptom and she kept busy by nursing those that were recovering.

"Angelo let's go on deck and watch the other ships in the convoy," Mary suggested trying to distract him from his grieving.

He finally agreed and they went out to view the convoy and it surprised them when they saw the number of ships that were all around them. Suddenly all the ships sounded their horns three times and all made a turn to the right in unison. They stood at the rail fascinated by the sight, a young crewmember stopped beside them to watch the activity.

“One of our escort destroyers has alerted us of a possible submarine sighting. We are trying to make it hard to target us by maneuvering,” he volunteered the information.

The ships horns sounded twice and the ships turned in unison to the left and this continued for about an hour as they turned in unison with all the other ships. This went on the entire trip as alerts sounded but they never had an attack and Mary never became tired watching the great sight. Angelo slowly adapted to his dad’s death and started to share in her enthusiasm at the sight of the ships.

They even slept on deck as many of the crew and passengers were still fighting the symptoms of the flue. They became lost in all the confusion and were free to roam the deck. Even during some rough weather, they would huddle on deck and watch the ships plow through the waves sometimes disappearing then reappearing and the scene kept repeating as another wave would hit the ship.

Another scene that she would never forget was the military sea burials. They sewed the body into sailcloth with weights and sometimes they covered it with a flag. The body bearers carried the body feet first on deck. They placed it on a stand, with the feet overboard. The crew would line up and an officer would say a prayer. They tilted the platform and body slid off the platform and into the ocean. If there was a flag draped over the body, it stayed on the ship. The body would hit the water and the weights caused it to sink eventually out of sight into the depths of the sea.

They watched the same scene played out on other ships close by. The men looked like ants lined up on the decks and one time when an escort destroyer was close enough that she could hear some of the activity as the wind carried the sound.

The officer of the deck called, “All hands bury the dead,” and they lowered the ship’s flags to half-mast. The crew included a firing party, body bearers and a bugler. They stood at attention on deck and the firing party fired three volleys, the bugler played Taps, and after the body was overboard, they folded the flag. There were about five bodies the best she could see and many more ended in the depths of the sea that she could not see.

Mary, Angelo, and Dolores were up early on the bright calm morning when the convoy approached New York harbor. Dolores had entered the harbor two previous times so she was familiar with the places of interest and she pointed them out.

“We are entering Lower Bay and The Narrows, Staten Island is on our left and Brooklyn is to our right. See how it opens gradually into the Upper Bay and New Jersey will be on our left,” she stopped and tears fell down her face as she remembered that someone was missing from those previous entrances.

She regained her composure and continued, “That’s Ellis Island straight ahead but we will not have to go there as we are citizens of Canada and you Mary are a citizen of the United States.”

“There is the Statue of Liberty,” Angelo yelled out as there went up a shout from all the passengers.

Dolores recited the famous poem ‘The New Colossus’ written by Emma Lazarus on a plaque and located inside the statue:

“Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, With conquering limbs astride from land to land; Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, and her name Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command.

The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she with silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore." Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me; I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

She recited it more as a prayer than a poem with her dead husband in mind as he had taught it to her. Then she continued, "Manhattan is straight ahead and Brooklyn is still on your right."

Mary heard one of the immigrants say as they entered the harbor, "Look at the number of forts they have guarding the entrance of the harbor."

Dolores expanded on the comment, "You can see Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook then between the lower and upper bays on the Narrows, are Fort Wadsworth and Fort Tompkins. Across the Narrows are Fort Hamilton, Fort Lafayette, Fort Columbus, South Battery and Castle Williams."

She was still pointing out places of interest as the ship docked and passengers started to exit the ship. Mary, Angelo, and Dolores were in the middle of the crowd with Mary struggling with her lone piece of luggage but still holding on to the ever present doll.

Immigration officials were standing at the bottom of the plank stopping each person and checking their names off a list filled out by the shipping company. They guided them to a ferry that would take them to Ellis Island.

Dolores and Angelo showed their papers and told to go to customs and Mary forgot to have her papers ready. She put down the suitcase, fumbled under her clothes, and finally got the envelope out.

"Come on there sister you are holding up the line," one of the officials growled in English.

Dolores rushed back and told him Mary didn't understand English and that she was an American citizen. Mary showed him her papers and he found her name as a non-immigrant and growled, "You need to learn English little girl."

The three of them hurried over to the customs area and after about an hour of questions, inspection of their luggage, a quick physical, and exchanging of their lira into dollars. They then found themselves free to enter the country. It amused the man changing the money when Mary started pulling money out of the worn sock doll. Once she had the dollars, she put them into her bank.

Dolores told her to keep enough money for a train ticket and a ferryboat trip to the Central Railroad of New Jersey train station in Hoboken. The total cost of both modes of transportation was around four dollars and she got out ten dollars.

They arrived at the train station and Dolores saw to it that she got her a ticket to Erwin, Pennsylvania and sent a telegram with the time she would arrive in Irwin. Mary treated them to lunch as a thank you for their help and then it was time for Dolores and Angelo to leave for Canada. They helped Mary to her train and just had a few minutes to hurry to their train.

"Mary you keep in touch and you be careful," Dolores said and kissed her and Angelo hugged her with tears in his eyes.

They left, turned once and waved and that was the last time she ever saw them or heard from them again as they seemed to vanish into the turbulent times that was ahead.

She was alone and fear gripped her heart then she heard someone ask, "Are you boarding this train?"

She turned and saw an old black porter and replied, “I do not speak much English,” she repeated what Angelo had taught her and showed him her tag.

He smiled when he finished reading and said, “Little girl we will get you home just follow me,” he picked up her suitcase pointed for her to climb the steps to the coach.

He followed her into the coach found her a window seat then smiled at her and said, “Your ticket please.”

She just looked at him and he showed her a ticket he had in his hand and she got the meaning of what he said and gave him her ticket.

Tired and sleepy she fell immediately into a deep sleep not even noticing when the train left the station. She dreamed of the Alps and her family that she had grown to love.

“If you are one of those
Eternal Ideas that the eternal mind
Scorns to clothe in solid form,
To endure the pain of our deathly life
Among fallen bodies,
Or if you are received in another earth,
In the highest circling, among
The innumerable worlds, and a star
Closer and brighter than the sun
Illuminates you, who breathe a purer air:
Accept your unknown lover, in this hymn
From this world of unhappy and brief
days.”

Giacomo Leopardi - 1821

Chapter 6

“Next stop Philadelphia, next stop Philadelphia,” the call of the porter woke her from her dreams.

She began to look for her luggage just as the porter returned and he stopped her, “Little lady this is not your stop.”

She just shrugged her shoulders and he said, “You are going to Irwin. Do you understand, Irwin?”

“Irwin is my home,” she replied which was another thing Angelo taught her.

“This is not Erwin, this is Philadelphia,” he smiled.

“This is Philadelphia,” she mimicked.

“Yes, Philadelphia,” he nodded yes.

“This is Philadelphia,” she repeated and he smiled and walked off just as the train started.

She ran after him and said, “Rest room please,” she could thank Angelo again.

Finished washing her hands and face she went to her seat and fell asleep.

Five hours passed and the porter woke her again when he called out, “Breakfast is being served.”

“It is time to eat,” said the Porter stopping by her seat, “Mangire,” he said and giggled because he had butchered the Italian word to eat.

“Do you have denaro?” he quickly added exhausting his knowledge of the Italian language.

She nodded her head yes and said, “Yes I have money,” Angelo was a good teacher.

She ate a good breakfast, returned to her seat, and watched the Pennsylvania landscape pass by the window. Ten hours later and another meal then the train pulled into Union Station in Pittsburgh commonly called Penn Station by the locals.

The porter finally convinced her that she had to change trains to continue the twenty-two odd mile trip to Irwin. She would miss the kindly old gentleman.

She found herself alone again in the grayish-brown terra-cotta historic station built in 1898. The huge rotunda with its corner pavilions was very confusing to her and she just stood admiring the impressive structure and all its scurrying passengers.

She spotted a black porter and thought it may be the kind man on the train and she went over to him pulled on his jacket.

“Irwin is my home,” she said.

The tall porter looked down at her first with a frown on his face then broke into a broad smile noticing the plaque around her neck.

He asked, “You lost young lady?”

“Irwin is my home,” she repeated and handed him her ticket.

He picked up her suitcase and took her to a waiting room next to the tracks going to Irwin. He finally got it across to her that her train would leave in three hours. She sat on the long bench and waited until she saw a train pull in and the people in the room started to exit towards it.

She was struggling with the suitcase when the tall porter came up and said, “They have assigned me to this train seems the regular porter is sick and I am standing in for him.”

She just looked at him not understanding a word but knew by his attitude that he would help her and followed him onto the train. It was getting late and night had fallen when they pulled into the station in Irwin.

The porter helped her off and she stood on the small-enclosed train platform. Before she knew it all the passengers had disappeared even before the train could get out of sight and again she was alone. She looked

around for someone who was to meet her. She went into the small waiting room and over to the only man behind the ticket counter.

“My name is Mary Charlotte Semifero and my home is Irwin,” she said in a shaky voice.

He looked at her and said loudly in bad Italian, “So you are another of those Wop brats come to pollute the country.”

“No you Hun, she is my daughter,” someone said behind her in Italian.

She turned around and saw a slender build but wiry middle-aged man and two burley young boys standing beside him.

“Mary, I am your Papa and these are two of your brothers. That is Tony my oldest and he is Angelo my second bambino, and you are my third child,” he pointed at the stocky boys.

Tony was fourteen years old and Angelo was two years younger.

She shook hands with the two boys and her father awkwardly hugged her. She liked him immediately as he was a kind and a gentle man. Tony picked up her suitcase and they went outside.

She looked for transportation and saw none then her father turned and said, “We will walk home. It is about a quarter mile walk.”

He turned and they went a short distance down Main Street and turned south-west onto a small road called Entry Road. About halfway there Tony handed her suitcase to Angelo. They walked briskly in front of her and their father.

She noticed the landscape was hilly but nowhere did it even compare with the mountains she loved. Another striking difference was the quality of the air. She noticed the difference when the train stopped in Pittsburgh and it changed little in Irwin. They called Pittsburgh the Smoky

City with smog sometimes so thick that streetlights burned during the day. She seemed to have a film of dust on her and everything around her had the same dust. Her father noticed that she kept trying to brush the soot off.

He said, "It is the coal dust that you see and it comes from the many steel mills, steamboats, coal locomotives, and houses as all of them use the coal your Papa digs."

"You not a woodcutter?" she asked.

"No my daughter I left that life back in Italy," he frowned as he remembered a life that he wish he had never left.

They crossed over a train track then passed the mine and tippie at the base of the hill called Adams Hill, a 'coal patch' community. The so-called patch town housed many immigrants from Northern Italy the company brought over to break a miner's strike in 1910.

"Are we going to the house of my birth?" Mary asked looking at her father.

"Oh no, that's the house over there," he replied pointing to another hill. He continued, "The Company moved us out of it when we went on strike in 1910 and they brought many of our Pisan brothers over from Northern Italy. Then when the strike ended we moved into the house we now call home."

He was referring to the coal company houses on Adams Hill built to house those they brought in to break the strike and the locals called it Scab Hill. The Company built about thirty two-story wood-frame double-family houses near the mine entrance when the miners went on strike in 1910 and ended in 1911. The Penn Gas Coal Company wanted to keep its mines running using imported workers, scabs, and strikebreakers most of them from Northern Italy. The company used a heavy hand trying to break the strike employing their own police force called the Coal and Iron Police.

There were also single-family houses on the hill and they lived-in one of the one-story wood-frame buildings that had a gable roof, a basement, with cast stone foundations.

They continued walking up the hill then turned into the next to last row of houses and stopped at the third one in and her father stopped. Tony and Angelo did not stop but went into the house calling out to their mother that they were home.

Her father said, "Daughter, your mother is with child and at times can become irritable." He warned her of the hard times that were ahead for her.

He tried to protect her from her mother's wrath but her mother was the boss of the family. He did not want to confront his wife and he let her rule the house. They went into the house.

"Maria, here is your beautiful daughter home at last," he said as his wife came out of the kitchen followed by all the boys but the two girls were not in sight.

Her mother was not smiling and seemed irritated and snapped at her husband, "What took you so long don't you know that you have to be at the mine in an hour?"

"Aren't you going to greet your oldest daughter?" he asked ignoring her question.

"Did you spend all the money I sent you for the trip?" she asked walking up and hugging her daughter.

"No, I have most of it as I spent very little," Mary, answered her mother near tears at the greeting she received.

She had her bank in her arms then took out the remaining money and handed it to her mother. Her mind flashed back to the conversation she overheard between her aunt and uncle. Her aunt called her mother a witch and she wandered from that time forward if she wasn't right.

Her mother counted the money and the harshness in her voice softened. She was pleased with the amount of money Mary handed her.

“You will sleep with Annie and Angelina will sleep in the other bed. There are makings for a sandwich in the kitchen and you can wash up in the wash shed out back. You need to get some sleep as you will be up early to help me,” her mother snapped.

She finished with her welcome to her returning daughter and abruptly turned and went into her bedroom.

They got their drinking water from a spring at the bottom hill. There was a shared cistern used for water to wash clothes and bathe but it was not fit to drink. Two houses shared the same cistern and outhouse for many years eventually there was a pump for drinking water. She used the outhouse took a bath the best she could then went into the kitchen just as her father was leaving for work.

“Your mother is not felling well and I will see you in the morning,” her father patted her on the head and left for work.

She made a sandwich then crept into the bedroom and crawled in bed with her little sister without waking either. She still held her empty doll in her arms and sobbed as she drifted off to sleep thinking she would have to re-stuff her friend.

Mary was up at the break of dawn as her sisters continued sleeping. She put on clean clothes and went into the kitchen. She hurried to the outhouse and had to wait as someone was inside. She waited until a middle-aged woman opened the door and stepped out. She stopped and smiled at her.

“And you must be Mary. I saw you come home last night,” she said in Italian, “I am Dorothy Rossi and we share this facility. Welcome to America.”

Mary thanked her and told her she was happy to meet her then heard the door to their house slam shut. She excused herself and hurried into the outhouse before someone else got in before her.

“Whoever is in there hurry up as I have to go,” she heard her mother’s voice call from outside.

Finished she opened the door and her mother hurried past her and said, “My slop-jar needs emptying.”

“Good morning,” Mary said and thought thanks for the warm welcome.

She hurried into the house and went into her mothers’ bedroom looking for the chamber pot. She found the round white porcelain pot with a turned edge at the top that provided comfort for one’s backside. Before leaving the room she made up her mother’s and father’s bed then picked up the pot by its black metal and wood handle. Thankfully, it had a porcelain lid that lessened the smell.

She passed her mother on the way to the outhouse and she told Mary to empty all the pots that were in each bedroom. When she went to her bedroom, the two girls were still sleeping and she could tell by the smell that one had recently used the pot. She wondered who did this chore before she came but now she was sure why she was there, she thought – “I am a maid”.

She finished with the pots and went into the kitchen and her mother asked, “Did my sister teach you to cook breakfast?”

“She taught me how to prepare Caffè e latte and colazione,” she told her mother that she knew how to make coffee and mix in milk, or coffee with bread or rolls with butter, and jam. She soon learned that coffee with milk and bread was her sibling’s usual breakfast.

She quickly made the coffee and set out the items she could find and set out places for eleven at the large wooden table. She had to empty the ashes from the cook

stove and stoke it. She used the coal that one of the boys had previously brought in from the coal shed.

“Maybe I won’t have to bring in the coal,” she said aloud but soon learned differently.

She had just finished when her father entered the kitchen and spoke to her.

“Good morning, I see you will make someone a fine wife,” he laughed and patted her head.

She noticed that he was not dirty and learned that he would take a bath at the mine after his ten hour day. He left his coal dust-covered work clothes in a basket at the mine for use the next day.

She wondered what else was in store for her this first full day home.

Chapter 7

“It is time to get the girls up or they will be late for school and Annie needs help dressing,” her mother ordered and Mary learned more of her assigned chores.

She was only a child herself being ten years old and she wondered if she would be able to attend school.

Her mother continued and she found out, “Make sure you shine your brother and sisters shoes every morning. Make the beds and hurry as Mrs. Russo is expecting you to do her laundry this morning. She may be a Calabrese but we can use the money,” she smirked showing her disdain for the Southern Italians.

Mary went to her bedroom and woke up her sisters then introduced herself. Angelina three years younger was in second grade. At first she was cool towards Mary but they quickly became close although they received different treatment from their mother.

Mary now knew that her school days were over but she would help with her sibling’s homework and they helped her to learn English. She was a quick learner and with their help became where she could speak and read English at the same level as they did. How she found the time to learn besides doing all her chores was something to behold.

She watched them leave for school having shined their shoes then she quickly cleaned the kitchen. Next, she shined the cooking stove that was her mother’s prized possession. It was a new 1917 Clifton cast range coal or wood stove. Mary soon learned that her mother if not satisfied would use her favorite tool of correction. She beat Mary with the poker of her prized possession.

Her mother’s prize was versatile as its primary purpose was for cooking but it could warm the kitchen in winter much more effectively than a fireplace. Heat from the bored fire chamber was distributed to cooking holes

on the top surface and to several ovens. Mary could direct some of the heat to a compartment that kept food warm or to an apparatus that heated water.

The stove could be annoying besides it was exhausting. She had to start the fire again each morning then feed it regularly using up to 50 pounds of coal a day. At times controlling the heat with dampers and flues was a tricky business. Touching any part of the stove's surface would produce a nasty burn. She emptied ashes twice a day and had to apply a waxy black polish twice a week to prevent rusting. It took her an hour or more a day attending to the prize.

Finished with her chores she sat down and prepared herself some coffee and bread before leaving to do the Russo's laundry.

"Take your sister with you when you go as your Papa is sleeping and she disturbs him. Hurry back to help me prepare dinner before the children come home from school," her mother ordered with a frown obviously angry that she had taken the time to feed herself.

She and Joanne walked midway down the hill and she found the Russo's house and knocked on the door. A pregnant woman in her mid-twenties opened the door and it looked like she had been crying.

"My mother said I was to wash your clothes," Mary said holding onto her sister's hand.

"You must be Mary just over from Italy and you are so little. Are you able to make my clothes clean?" she asked and continued looking at Joanne, "You are a pretty girl and must not give your sister problems."

"I will take care of her and I know how to wash clothes," Mary replied thinking America has made our people very harsh.

“There is hot water on the stove and keep that child quiet as my husband is sleeping,” Sophia Russo cautioned.

Mary had no problem finding the kitchen as all the houses were the same. She told Joanne not to make any noise and to keep close to her. She poured hot water in a bucket and carried it outside to the wash shed. She saw a washtub and a scrub board on a homemade bench that was taller than she could reach. She found a footstool in the corner, stood on it and poured in the hot water.

A pile of clothes was on the bench and she thought the man of the house had put them there. She found out later that he didn't. Sophia had to carry them out and that was the reason she was crying.

Standing on the stool she picked up a pair of men's pants and wet them then placed them against the washboard. She then found a piece of homemade lye soap and lathered the pants. She scrubbed them against the board as if she was cleaning the board until they were clean. She repeated the process for each piece of clothing setting it aside until she finished with the stack of clothing.

She emptied the tub of dirty water then went to the kitchen for more hot water. She filled the tub and swirled each piece of clean clothing rinsing out all the suds. When she finished with all the clothing, she took out an armful to a clothesline. She realized she couldn't reach the line to hang them. She went back and got the stool then began hanging them as Sophia came out to inspect her work.

“Mary, you did a good job and I know your mother is proud of you,” she smiled and went back into the house.

Eventually Mary got them all hung then emptied the rinse water and shook Joanne who had fallen asleep in the wash shed.

“Time to go as mother is waiting,” she said not expecting her mother to compliment her on returning on time.

She decided that it wasn’t in her mother’s personality to compliment anyone least of all her oldest daughter.

They arrived back at the house just in time to help with supper and her mother greeted her by demanding her wages. Sophia paid her a dollar, which was actually above the nine dollars a week paid for washing clothes. Nine dollars was the amount a woman usually received for an eight-hour six-day week for that service.

She helped her mother prepare Risotto a dish of rice cooked to a creamy consistency in broth. They made the broth from fish, parmesan cheese, butter, and onion. It was one of their favorite dishes with polenta actually being their staple dish as it was the traditional rural food of Northern Italy.

Her day was not over and it was late before she finished all her chores including giving Joanne a bath and putting her to bed.

“Tomorrow is our wash day so you will not be going to do any others clothes,” her mother told her before going to bed.

“Mary, I saw Tony Russo down at the club and he said you were a hard worker and it pleased his wife,” her father told her as he prepared to leave for work.

There were so many Italians in the small village there were two Italian social clubs. The S. M. Italiana was the club that her father preferred where most northern Italians patronized. He enjoyed playing cards at the one-story building with a full basement, brick walls, a gable roof, and a stepped parapet wall along its main facade.

She was up early the next day and as soon as her siblings left for school, she started on the large pile of

dirty clothes. It was a full day's work and she finished hanging the last of them on the clothesline about an hour and half before they were to come home from school. Her mother and dad were sleeping during that time. She fried pork chops and potatoes for supper. She finished making the tossed salad about fifteen minutes before they came in so she sat down with Joanne on the steps to rest.

She decided to get her best friend and re-stuff it by replacing the void the money left when she gave it to her mother. Joanne heard her sister come in from school, jumped up and ran to see Angelina. A few minutes later, they came out and Angelina had her store-bought doll in her arms.

"My doll is prettier than yours," she repeated several times.

Mary had enough jumped up and shoved her and down Angelina went. She started screaming and holding her broken arm. Her mother and father came rushing outside and asked what happened. Angelina told her and Mary's father this time did not get between her and his angry wife. Normally he would intervene, if he were home, when she would beat Mary's back with the poker. This time Mary knew she was in for a severe beating that she did receive.

Mary developed anger towards her mother verging on hate for the beatings most of them not justified. She decided that one day she would stop those terrible beatings.

Meanwhile she went to communion her normal practice each Sunday and asked for forgiveness for the pent up hatred. She talked to the priest and got no solace there as he considered children to be small adults and the property of their parents.

Whipping with switches was common, as was beating with belts, or boards. Catholic school had their own form

of corporal punishment called "pick your stick" and if the nun didn't think it was big enough you got the 'cane' from the classroom. Besides, society considered children a source of cheap labor and many boys started in the mines at the age of fourteen or younger.

The next five years she worked for most of the women in the village mainly doing their laundry. She also did some housework and helped in the cooking, which became something useful when she had her own family. She learned how to cook southern style Italian, as there was a vast difference in the northern and southern dishes.

Traditional Italian cuisine is somewhat regional and does not follow strict North-South patterns. To most, northern and southern foods differ mainly with the north using more butter and creams and the south more tomato. Generally, there is a marked difference between regional use of cooking fat and traditional style of pasta.

The inland northern and northeastern regions tend to favor more butter, cream, polenta, mascarpone, grana padano, and Parmigiano cheeses, risotto, and fresh egg pasta. Coastal northern and central regions are somewhat of a bridge between north and south using tortellini and ravioli and known for its prosciutto.

The southern regions traditionally use mozzarella, cacciavallo, and pecorino cheeses, olive oil, lasagna and dried pasta. Southern Italian cuisine also makes far greater use of the common tomato.

Her mother had her last child and called him Ernie. Mary had more dirty diapers to wash but she took it in stride taking a liking for her new brother.

When she was twelve, she overheard her mother and dad talking about her oldest brother Tony.

“It is time the boy quits school and goes into the mine. He has had enough education and most boys are there at the age of fourteen,” her mother said.

“I promised him that he wouldn’t have to go into that place of darkness and dampness,” her father replied.

“No matter he will go into the mine,” she answered and settled the matter.

It might have settled it for her but Tony had other thoughts in mind after his father broke the news to him. Two weeks later, he ran away and knowing that his sister had no great love for their mother, he confided in her before leaving.

“Mary, promise that you will tell no one what I am about to tell you. You are the only one I am telling and do you promise not to tell anyone?” he asked.

“I promise, do you have money?” she replied concerned about his welfare.

“I have been selling some of the coal we found along the tracks and it is enough to get me where I am going. I am not going into any coal mine and no one will ever make me,” he said with a flash of anger in his eyes.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“Nevada,” he replied.

“Nevada that is way out west and what are you going to do out there?”

“For one thing I am not going into any mine, I promise you that,” he laughed.

They said good-bye and he left early the next morning. When Angelo told his mother that Toni’s clothes were missing, she had a fit.

“Did he tell you where he was going,” she said getting her favorite correction tool.

“No, he didn’t say a word to me,” Angelo replied eyeing the raised poker.

Mary walked into the kitchen and she incurred the wrath of her mother.

“You two were close and he told you where he was going,” she raised the poker to strike just as her husband walked into the room.

“Woman, put down that thing, your daughter does not know where he went,” he took the poker out of his wife’s hand.

“I know where he is and we will let him alone,” he lied but for once, he stood up for one of the children.

Mary was happy about that and smiled at him and he gave her a wink then padded her on her head his favorite form of affection.

They did not hear from Tony for quite a few years. He eventually became a headwaiter in one of the large gambling establishments and he never entered the mines.

In 1918 and 1919 things got bad but the next year conditions improved for a short period. A severe recession hit in 1920 and 1921 then Warren Harding took office in 1921 replacing Woodrow Wilson. The economy was in the depths of a depression with an unemployment rate of 20% with runaway inflation.

President Harding proposed to reduce the national debt by reducing taxes, protecting farming interests, and cutting back on immigration. He died in 1923 and his Vice President took the office. Harding’s policies led to the "boom" of the Coolidge years and the ‘roaring twenties’. It presented an opportunity for Mary, she took advantage of it, and she found herself a new job.

Chapter 8

Mary's life changed one day in March 1923 after she turned seventeen. She was doing Sophia Russo's laundry and her sister stopped by on one of her frequent visits. Gina was a year older than Mary and they had become friends over the years that Mary worked for Sophia.

"Hi, what are your plans today?" Gina asked.

"Oh I thought I'd take a vacation in Florida after I finish your sister's dirty clothes. What are you up to?" Mary smiled and continued scrubbing.

"I am getting a new job and a good one at that," Gina walked over, picked up a dirty pair of pants, and gave them to Mary.

"Is it legal," Mary snickered.

"They started hiring down at the Jersey Cereal Company and I am going to be one of their new employees," Gina answered ignoring the snide remark.

"I thought that place went out of business," Mary had read it in the local paper that the company had gone bankrupt.

"Someone else bought the old Jersey Cereal Food Company and renamed it and are hiring. Want to go with me and apply for a job?" Gina held onto the pants she was handing to Mary causing her to stop washing and look at her.

"I have to finish this and it is going to take me most of the day then mother needs me at home," Mary turned and continued scrubbing.

"I'll help and we can finish with the clothes then hurry down and apply then you can go home," Gina stopped her again.

Mary hesitated and thought, "If I got a job how would her mother react?"

She decided that this could be her chance to change her life and finally said, “Ok, let’s do it and thanks for asking.”

They hurried and quickly finished the clothes giggling the whole time excited with the possibility of a good job and a new life. They hurried to the factory located about a mile from the mine. The sight of the four-story, 400-foot-long facility excited them.

The factory would once again become the largest cereal manufacturing company in Pennsylvania. They sold their products throughout the country. The company, known for being progressive, was one of the first to ban cigarette smoking and the use of alcohol by its employees.

“Do you think they will hire us,” Mary asked.

“Yes I do as I hear that they only hire unmarried women. You’re not married are you?” Gina giggled.

They had no problem with the company hiring them and never once did the interviewer ask what their ages were. Their job as well as all the women was to work on the cereal line. Most of the male employees were foremen, maintenance workers and inspectors. The line workers dressed in white smocks and caps and the two girls were proud of their uniforms. As with many area-manufacturing facilities during that time period once a woman married, she was no longer allowed to work in the factory.

“Twenty-five cents an hour, we are rich,” Gina exclaimed.

“That means fifteen dollars a week and a box of cereal of our choice,” Mary smiled knowing she had a bargaining chip with her mother.

“I am going to ask for a box of rice flakes because they are the best tasting,” Gina said.

“One woman told me that we can eat all the cereal one wants,” Mary chimed in.

“Maybe in time we can get a job in the ‘gun room’ as I hear they are the best paying jobs,” Mary smiled.

"I hear that when they 'shoot' or 'puff' the rice or wheat puffs, it sounds like many cannons going off," Gina added.

The two hurried home giggling and laughing all the way. Mary worried how she was going to tell her mother. Gina stopped at her house and Mary hurried up the hill realizing that she was about an hour late.

“Where have you been? I sent Angelina down to see what held you up. Sophia Russo said you and her sister finished and rushed off and didn’t say where you were going,” her mother asked as Angelina shrugged her shoulders at her sister.

“We got ourselves jobs,” Mary blurted out thinking that she would face the threat head on.

“What kind of job did you get? Is it respectable?” her mother snapped.

“Yes it is, the Jersey Cereal Company hired us,” she squared her shoulders.

“That company is out of business. Who are you kidding,” her mother growled.

“They have opened under new management and they hired me and I will earn fifteen dollars a week plus a box of cereal of my choice. I can also eat all the cereal I want while working,” Mary stood as tall as her four foot eight frame would stretch.

“You are not lying to me are you?” her mother asked calming down when she heard fifteen dollars.

“No I am not, as I am not a liar. I start work Monday morning at seven o’clock,” she said it in a manner that caused her mother to look hard at her.

“Remember, you still have a job to do here at home,” her mother conceded the argument but made it known that she was still the boss.

Mary never received another beating from her mother after that event. They never did warm up to each other as her mother never felt close to her nor did Mary ever fill as if her mother had any good feelings for her.

Mary and Gina were at the plant a half hour before their starting time, which was seven am. Neither of them ever missed a day of work come rain, snow, or sunshine. Within a week, they made friends and started going skating at a nearby rink.

A foreman became interested in Gina and he had a Packard Clipper 120. He would cram a car full of women into it and off they went to the skating rink.

Mary knew how to skate and enjoyed every minute of it. She met a young man at the rink who was three years older than she was. They started dating as they both loved to skate and they went dancing on Saturday nights. He worked as a clerk for a local lawyer and he planned to be one himself.

They dated about once a week and met often at the rink after work with the group from the plant. Their relationship went no further than dating but he was the first boy she dated and they especially enjoyed dancing. They continued dating for the next six months.

She still had to shine her mother's prize possession, do the laundry, and general housework at home. She seldom worked for other woman but one of those times was when she just turned eighteen.

She just had started to hang out the clothes when someone called out in Italian, "Lady, do you need any help?"

She turned to see a young man standing by the door of the shared outhouse. He was six feet tall around one hundred ninety pounds, brown hair, and ruggedly handsome. She immediately noticed his large hands also

that he had outgrown his clothes. He had a broad cocky smile on his face telling the world I am my own man. She thought she detected a northern Italian accent to his speech and that caught her attention.

She hesitated and that gave him the opportunity to walk over to her and introduce himself, "I am Louis Furlin and who am I talking to?"

She told him her name and asked, "You said that your last name was Furlin?"

"Yes I am and that is my brother living there," he answered pointing next door.

The name registered with her as Gina told her about going to a place called a speakeasy run by a large woman with a last name of Furlin. She asked Gina what was a speak-easy.

"The speak-easy is an unlicensed saloon where they sell bootleg whiskey," Gina laughed somewhat ashamed of going to such a place.

She said that her boyfriend also took her to a place located in McKeesport where the term speak-easy originated. He said that a friend told him the owner told some noisy customers to - "Speak easy, boys!"

After that the owners told their customers to "speak-easy" to escape notice by the police.

"What part of northern Italy did you immigrate from?" she asked.

"I am no immigrant I am a citizen of this country," he proudly announced.

"Why don't you speak English?" she asked.

"My mother took me to Italy when I was just a little baby," he smiled.

"Where in Italy?" she asked thinking he's very tight-lipped and doesn't volunteer anything.

"We live in Fonzaso," he replied.

"When did you come here?" she asked intrigued.

"I came back when I was fourteen and live with my sister in Library. My brother in-law got me a job in the mine," he announced proudly.

"Then you were there the same time I was. My mother sent me to Arsie to live with my aunt. So we were just a few miles apart," she smiled.

"I've been to Arsie many times to sell fruit but I never saw you" he shrugged just as his brother called him.

"We are eating do you want to join us?" he asked.

"No, I don't think so, I have to finished here," she smiled

"Do you want to go to Kennywood with me next week-end?" he asked.

"He is very brash," she thought.

Kennywood caught her attention as she heard a lot about the amusement park and she hesitated before answering.

"You will have to ask my mother," she replied thinking that would crush that idea.

"I'll ask your Papa, I know him at the club," he said, as he went next door not waiting for a reply.

The idea intrigued her and she thought maybe I'll go with him and ask Gina and Salvatore to go with us. She doubted if Louis had a car, he didn't say he did but she thought not.

Three days later, she came home from work and heard her mother and father arguing.

"I tell you that she is not going out with that criminal," her mother was saying.

"He is no criminal he works at the number nine mine and has been for many years. He is a hardworking boy," her father argued.

"His mother is nothing more than a madam with all those illegal places. My daughter will not go out with him," she came back at him.

“He asked me and I gave him permission if she wants to go with him,” he snapped back unusual for him.

“She has work to do here on that week end and she will not go with that malvivente,” she replied calling him a criminal.

That sealed it for Mary and she decided to ask Gina the next day. When she walked into the kitchen, her mother gave her a hard look.

“You have a hard day today?” her Dad asked.

“The usual,” she smiled at him and went out to wash before helping her mother.

“A young man asked me yesterday at the club if he could take you to Kennywood next week-end,” her father said when she came back into the kitchen.

“Yes, Louis Furlin asked me to go with him,” she replied.

“Where did you meet that rogue? Have you been going to those illegal places?” her mother asked.

“I met him when I was doing Mrs. Russo’s laundry as he was visiting his brother,” she said causally never revealing that she overheard their conversation.

“I don’t approve of that man and you will not go out with him,” her mother snapped.

Mary didn’t answer and looked at her father with a slight smile and he winked at her. She never responded to her mother and continued helping with supper.

“Gina do you think you and Salvatore would go to Kennywood with me the week after this one?” she asked as they were walking to work the next morning.

“Did John ask you to go?” Gina asked if the man Mary had been dating had asked her out.

“No, Louis Furlin asked me the other day,” she answered looking at Gina for her response.

“Did you say Louis Furlin?” Gina stopped and asked surprised.

"That's his name," she grinned amused by the look on Gina's face.

"Not the Furlin I am thinking of?"

"Yep, that's him."

"You do know what business his mother is in? Don't you?" Gina asked.

"I've heard that she owns a few Speakeasies," Mary smiled.

"More than a few, what does your mother say about you going out with him?" Gina asked concerned.

"She doesn't like the idea and in fact hates it but Pap said I could go. I wasn't going until I overheard Mother telling Pap that I couldn't go. That made me change my mind," she giggled and Gina laughed.

"Do you think Salvatore will go?" Mary asked.

"If I say I want to go he'll take us," Gina said confidently.

She was right and told Mary on their way home that evening that he said it was a longtime since he had gone. In addition, it surprised him who you were going with as Salvatore frequented some of his mother's places.

She added, "The family has money and that boy would be a catch but Salvatore said he was a trip. He didn't elaborate but said he hoped you knew what you were getting into."

"I don't plan on getting involved but if mother wasn't so opposed I probably wouldn't go out with him," Mary said laughing.

They had just finished with supper that evening and Mary was washing the dishes when she heard the sound of a motorcycle stopping out front. She hurried to the front door and saw Louis getting off a new Indian Scout motorbike. He squared his broad shoulders and walked to the front door. She stepped out on the front porch to greet him trying to head off her mother.

Smiling broadly, he greeted her, "I got permission from your Padre that you can go with me."

"Are we going on the motorcycle?" she gave him her answer by referring to their mode of transportation.

"Yes, you like my new bike?" he grinned broadly.

"Can you take four?" she asked.

"You taking Madre and Padre?" he asked with a frown on his face.

"No, but my two friends would like to go with us and he has a car and said we could go in it," she brought a smile to his face.

"Do I know them?" he asked.

"Do you know Gina your brother's next door neighbor Sophia's sister and her boy friend," she asked.

"Yes I know about her and Salvatore, he has a nice car," he said but didn't answer her question about going with Gina and Salvatore.

"Well will you go with them?" she asked again.

"Of course the four of us can't fit on that thing," he said pointing at his bike.

Her mother came to the door and just stared at him.

He grinned and said, "Hello Madre I am Louis Furlin and I have permission from your marito to see your figlia."

The harsh look did not intimidate him. Her mother didn't reply, turned, and walked away.

He shrugged and turned to Mary and said, "I'll be here early around six am next Saturday."

"I'll be ready," she replied and he turned and went to his bike and waved as he drove away.

Chapter 9

Mary was up early Saturday morning after the threat the night before by her mother. She said that if Mary went out with that criminal, as she called him. She would have him arrested for kidnapping her daughter and have him put in jail.

Mary was wearing a pair of bloomers fastened above her knees. It was under a below the knee skirt. She was going to wear a pair of woman's pants but thought better of it as society still was hesitant in accepting them in the early twenties.

She looked pretty in a blue blouse coordinated with a matching skirt. Since going to work, she became liberal in her dress habits. Some of the woman even wore pants when they worked on the production line but she never became that bold. The bloomers underneath the skirt would provide the modesty she wanted especially since she was leaving on his cycle. The four of them had agreed to meet at Gina's place and Louis was going to pick Mary up.

He came exactly at five thirty and she rushed out and climbed on behind him just as her mother came rushing out onto the porch. She was livid and threatened them with arrest as they drove away.

Mary held on tightly as he seemed to think he was in some sort of bike race. The ride did not threaten her, as she seemingly had no fear when facing something new. This was her first cycle ride; she had a grin from ear to ear enjoying the feeling of freedom. Maybe it was a touch of rebellion and it definitely provided an adrenaline rush. Worries about her mother were the furthest from her mind as she was enjoying the moment and anticipating the coming day.

He came to a screeching stop in front of Gina's place and both were laughing. Gina and Salvatore were waiting

in the car ready to go. Mary climbed in the backseat as Louis parked his bike in Gina's yard. He walked over to the driver's side, shook Salvatore's hand, and handed him money for gas.

He ignored Salvatore's objections and got in next to Mary. Salvatore turned to hand him back the money but stopped when he saw the look he got from one who believed in the proverb, 'He that dances should always pay the fiddler.'

Mary would soon learn that it was a trait that that her man would practice during his entire life. She would eventually adopt it. One paid their own way was his strong belief and one should never take from someone without repaying more.

They started on the fifteen-mile trip to Kennywood Park located eight miles outside Pittsburgh on the Monongahela River. Salvatore had gotten hold of a flyer with the history of the park and Gina started reading from it in English. She soon realized that Louis understood little English so she gave it to Mary to translate into Italian.

Mary took it, read it over, then read aloud in Italian, "Welcome to Kennywood located on a bluff overlooking the Monongahela River, just minutes from downtown Pittsburgh. Thousands thrilled since its beginning in 1898 as a trolley park owned by the Monongahela Street Railway Company. Its one hundred-four-acres of exciting attractions include several dark rides and roller coasters plus an original "tunnel of love" a dark ride from 1901 then ride one of the two historic Carousels located in the carousel pavilion building that dates from 1898.

The two famous roller coasters The Racer and the Speed-O-Plane now joined by a new thriller the Jack Rabbit. Designed and built by the famous John A. Miller. He located it on a natural ravine that includes a seventy-

foot double down drop. This is a whirlwind of fun with its long ascents and steep descents, which offer one of the most spirited forms of enjoyment. With all their lightning speed, the cars are perfectly safe. Not one accident occurred last season.”

She stopped her eyes on fire with excitement, “That sounds exciting to me,” she continued reading.

“Take a night boat ride on the lagoon and stop under its bridge. Just stroll along the lagoon’s tree lined shore enjoying the colorful scenery. Then enjoy the dance hall in “the "Pavilion" a place of romance since 1898. The two-story enclosed structure features a clerestory with screened windows and a ceiling of rugged, exposed beams.”

They arrived at the main gate a half hour before the park opened having stopped to eat a small breakfast. They were at the head of the line.

Mary and Louis found something else in common and it was that neither believed in being late for any appointment. If you're early, you're on time; if you're on time, you're late and they lived by that motto.

The gates opened and the four of them rushed over to the sign that read Jack Rabbit, they bought tickets for ten rides and were the first on the orange train with Mary and Louis in the very last seat. It provided the longest airtime on the seventy-foot drop, and gave the most exciting ride. The double dip made them feel that it would throw them from their seat with a feeling the train had left the track.

The four got off after the ten consecutive rides with Salvatore being the worse for the wear.

“I need to find a place to sit down as the ground seems to be moving under my feet,” he and Gina found a bench.

“Want to go again?” Mary asked Louis.

He hesitated, and then decided that no woman was going to show him up so he went for another five rides.

Gina and Salvatore were sitting on the bench with Salvatore still not fully recovered.

“Why don’t you two daredevils go and enjoy yourselves and we will meet on the bridge at noon,” Gina suggested patting Salvatore’s hand.

They rushed off and saw a dark ride called the ‘Old Mill’ and Mary asked, “I wonder what that’s like?”

“Let’s try it,” he said.

He didn’t wait for a reply, grasped her hand, and bought tickets. Her small hand became lost in his hand that was practically three times as big as hers. The first thing she had noticed about him was his very large hands.

The small boats resembling the gondolas of Venice carried them through a water-filled-canal. The guided boats traveled through specially lit scenes that contained animation, sound, music, and special effects. It was more commonly referred to as a ‘Love Tunnel’ and he was a gentleman throughout the ride not making any offhand advances.

Both seemed uncomfortable especially when they caught a glimpse of a couple in a heated kiss. They quickly got out of the boat and headed for another coaster they saw in the distance.

The Speed-O-Plane was a three-car coaster carrying eighteen passengers and it was the oldest in the park. It was not as thrilling as the Jack Rabbit and he was happy with that fact. The ride unimpressed her because it was not thrilling enough for her taste. Two rides were enough for her and she started looking for something more exciting.

Their next stop was the Dodgem bumper cars where Louis seemingly had the most fun driving his car into anything that got in his way. She could see why he didn’t drive a car as he was very reckless.

Then it was on to the Bug House and its fifty-seven varieties of rib tickling devices such as the slide, the

barrel of fun, the witching waves, the laughing mirrors and vibrating floors. They came out laughing and giggling like two kids having the time of their lives.

“It’s about noon and Gina and Salvatore are waiting for us,” she pushed him towards the bridge over the Lagoon.

Approaching the small rustic log bridge, they didn’t see either of their friends so Louis stood on the rail and called out Salvatore’s name.

“Over here,” Salvatore answered back.

Mary saw them sitting on the grass by a small flower garden next to the bridge. She pulled on Louis’s leg as he was still busy calling out for Salvatore.

“There they are,” she pointed and he jumped down from the railing.

“Are you hungry? Salvatore said he could eat a horse. A couple told us the food was good at the Kennywood Park Casino,” Gina said as they walked up.

“Let’s go I can tell that he could use something to eat,” Mary said looking at Louis.

They entered the Café with its all-natural wood interior. It had hundreds of small white lights that followed the outline of the arches in the ornate tin ceiling.

“This is a pretty place,” Gina said looking around.

“Does it make the food taste better?” Louis said to no one in particular.

He and Salvatore both ordered the Potato Patch French Fries and three Hot Sausage Sandwiches while the ladies went for the Chef Salad. They all had a Kennywood Dip Cone for desert and one serving of the Homemade Fudge that they shared.

Louis struck up a conversation with a young man sitting next to them grilling him on where one could get a cold beer. The young man leaned over and quietly told

him that he could get a cold one just a few blocks from the main gate.

“My mouth is dry as cotton how about yours,” he said to Salvatore.

Salvatore said he could use a cold drink and they told their dates that they would be back in an hour and wait for them by the Lagoon.

“Come on let’s go over and look at the dance hall. They probably will be longer than an hour,” Mary suggested.

They found the Pavilion containing the dance hall, which was one of the first structures erected after the park opened in 1898. The two-story enclosed structure featured a clerestory a row of windows in the upper part of the wall with screened windows and a ceiling of rugged, exposed beams.

They stood there admiring the structure and listening to a polka band from Cleveland. Mary was itching to get out onto the floor but it was about time for the boys to get back and they headed for the lagoon.

They had just seated themselves on the grass when they saw their dates cross over the bridge. When Louis saw the girls they both broke into a run and fell on the ground alongside them. It was obvious that they had more than a single ‘cool one’.

“What have you two been up to?” Salvatore asked.

“It is more like what have you two been up to,” Gina retorted.

“How about a boat ride,” Louis broke in ignoring her comment.

“You’re not going to upset that thing are you?” Gina said still irritated.

“Me and my buddy are great rowers,” Louis said standing and putting his hand out to Mary.

“Number fifteen looks like a nice save and clean boat to me,” Mary said when the attendant ushered them to the number twelve boat.

“They are all the same lady,” the attendant said.

“The lady said number fifteen, gumba,” Louis said in Italian and the attendant just stared at him.

Louis just ignored him, took Mary over to the boat with a fifteen on its side, and helped her onboard. The attendant looked perturbed and started to say something.

Salvatore stopped him, “He called you friend and I’d leave it at that,” he took Gina’s hand and helped her into the boat.

Mary sat in the back and Louis took the oars and sat facing her. Salvatore sat facing Gina who reclined in the bow. Louis knew how to row although a little reckless at times but he never ran into anyone. They enjoyed the ride for about two hours and then decided to go coaster riding again.

They passed by a shooting gallery and Salvatore said to Gina, “Baby I am a great shot and will win you anything you want.”

Louis didn’t say anything and he picked up a pellet gun after Salvatore didn’t win anything. He didn’t miss a shot and won any prize he wanted.

He turned to Mary and said, “Get what you want.”

She pointed at a gold painted ceramic banjo that had a round clock mounted in its base. That was the very first gift, so to speak, he bought for her and she kept that prize until she died.

They rode the Jack Rabbit until Salvatore said that he had enough. They finished the night on the Ferris wheel and the view was spectacular. The park had just begun to turn the lights out in the park. Mary enjoyed the view especially when it stopped at the very top.

They left the park tired but excited by the day's activities and Mary could not remember a day where she had so much fun. She knew the fun would stop once she got home having to deal with her angry mother.

They arrived at Gina's around nine-thirty and Louis insisted on taking her home as he said that he wasn't afraid of the "strega".

It was the second time she heard her mother referred to as a witch. Her mind went back to the time in Italy when she overheard her uncle talking to her aunt. She smiled as those good times flashed before her mind and 'home' was the thought that warmed her.

She wouldn't go as far as calling her mother a witch but would replace the 'w' with a 'b' meaning someone that was aggressive and hard to get along with to say the least.

She got on behind him and he cranked the noisy bike that surely would alert her mother of their arrival. He stopped and turned off the engine and she saw her mother standing in the doorway.

"You don't need to see me to the door," she said.

He didn't reply but bent down and gave her a kiss that startled her and she thought she could hear a gasp come from the front door. He took her arm, walked her to the front porch, and greeted her mother.

"I have brought your daughter home safe and sound Senora. You will see a lot more of me as I plan to see her again," he turned to Mary kissed her hand and walked briskly to his bike then skidded a tire as he left.

"Did he violate you?" her mother asked.

"He didn't touch me," she answered and brushed by her Mother and went to her room.

She waited a week for him to contact her and he didn't then Gina told her that she had just heard from Salvatore that he had wrecked his bike.

"Is he hurt badly?" she asked concerned.

"No Salvatore said he was out of work a few days but he totaled the bike," Gina didn't know any more than that.

Chapter 10

Mary didn't hear from Louis after his accident so she decided to take matters into her own hands. Her mother continued to threaten her if she ever went out with him again.

Her Mother's threat plus being curious of why he hadn't contacted her drove her to stop by his Brother Angelo's house on her way from work one evening.

She went around to the back basement door as she had noticed when she worked next door that they lived out of the basement. Angelo's wife, Mabel, answered the door, invited her in, and offered her a cup of coffee.

"I heard that Louis had an accident and was wondering how he was doing," Mary asked as she sipped on the coffee.

"He will be ok but he hurt his leg in the accident and has not been able to work since," Mabel surprised her.

It was new news to her as Gina didn't know that information.

The door opened and Angelo came in from work and she could see the surprise on his face when he saw her. Mabel poured him a cup of coffee spiked with homemade wine. Mary was just finishing her coffee and he told his wife to pour her more with some wine.

"I'll have another cup as it is delicious but please no wine," Mary smiled at Mabel and she nodded yes.

They sat and talked about Italy as they had come from the same area. They remembered the places and people they knew. They eventually came around to Louis.

"My brother is very o' scugnizz," Angelo laughed calling him mischievous and naughty.

"He is a wild man. Angelina said when he came down the ramp from the ship he threw his suitcase into the ocean and jumped in front of her and yelled. Here I

am again! Me and my suit,” Mabel recalled and snickered.

Mary smiled as she had heard him refer to his sister and she asked, “Is he still with your sister in Library?”

“Yes he is and I will tell him you asked about him,” Angelo replied with a twinkle in his eye.

“I have to go as I have some laundry to do,” Mary said and hurried home.

Two days later as she was leaving work she saw Louis approaching with a slight limp and a big smile on his face.

“Ciao, Mary, how are you today?” he asked.

“The question is how are you feeling? I hear you had an accident,” she smiled and continued walking and he walked alongside.

“Yes a tree got in my way,” he laughed.

She could not see any damage done to his body except for the slight limp, “Are you working?” she asked.

“I am working with the graveyard dead this week,” he replied referring to the third shift.

She noticed that he was trying to speak English and had improved since she last saw him.

They walked and made small talk. He eventually got around to asking her out again. She didn’t hesitate and said she would go out with him. He asked if the coming Saturday would be ok with her.

That Saturday he came over and they walked into Irwin from Hahntown. It was a little longer than the distance she walked to work. They started dating regularly over objections of her mother and a threatened beating with her favorite weapon, the poker. Sometimes they went out with Gina and Salvatore.

When they parted on their last date Louis seemed nervous as he said goodnight. He finally asked, “Nome and Padre are going back home for a while and we are having a send off party. I’d like for you to go with me.”

“How do we go as you have no transportation,” she asked

“I have a friend that will take us,” he smiled, “We will walk back as it is only twenty-two miles,” he laughed.

“When will you come and get me?” she asked.

“Twelve as we are eating at two,” he informed her.

She was ready at eleven thirty and he showed up at twelve with a friend driving a bright yellow 1920 Ford Model T. He introduced the driver as his friend Tony. Tony was maybe a year or two older than he was and they worked in the same mine.

She sat in one of the two front seats next to Tony and Louis sat in the small backseat. It took them about an hour to get to Library and stopped at a large farmhouse. The large house surprised her. Tony did not stay as he had a date and had to hurry.

Louis took her hand and they walked into the house. His sister Angelina greeted them and introduced Mary to her father, Giovanni.

“Son, you have found a beautiful one,” Giovanni smiled and he kissed Mary’s hand.

He was a good-looking man a little over five foot-eleven with a full bush mustache, olive skin, dark brown hair, and brown eyes. Mary immediately liked him and Angelina.

Angelina then introduced her husband, Joe, to Mary. He turned and winked at Louis.

“Where’s Nome?” Louis asked his Father.

“She is upstairs and will be down in a few minutes,” Giovanni answered.

He just had the words out of his mouth when Mary saw a large woman come down the stairs.

She was an imposing woman and oozed with chutzpah. Mary immediately saw that she was the boss of the family. One had to have nerve, brass, hubris, and a

swagger summed up as ‘chutzpah’ to operate a string of illegal nightclubs during a time of Prohibition.

She looked at Mary and asked, “And who is this?”

“Misiz Furlin this is Mary your son’s beautiful ragazza,” Giovanni said smiling at Mary.

Mary caught that he called her his son’s sweetheart and the odd way he addressed his wife calling her Mrs. Furlin. She thought what an odd way to address ones wife and was it a term of endearment or a put-down?

“Does he treat you with respect?” she said to Mary while looking at her son.

“He has been a gentleman,” Mary answered.

“If he mistreats you, just let me know,” she said sternly. Then she turned to Angelina and said, “It is time to eat.”

Mary felt at home because her mother dismissed her in the same manner. Although at dinner, they had a friendly conversation with each other.

Mary found out that her brashness was just her nature. She was the boss of an organization usually run by men who were gangsters and hoods and she had to deal with many shady and mean characters. A woman in a man’s world in 1920 especially in the business she was in had to be tough and determined.

Giovanni took her around and introduced her to the other guests. They were not family and she guessed they worked for the organization.

Lunch, pranzo, started at two and that was late for a traditional Italian lunch. That was why Misiz Furlin asked if it was time to eat.

It lasted for two hours and started with an appetizer of cold meats; assorted hams and cheese; bruschetta, grilled bread rubbed with garlic, and topped with extra-virgin olive oil, salt, and pepper. Then there was the prosciutto, a thinly sliced uncooked dry-cured ham plus assorted small sandwiches; olives; and sauce dips.

The primo or first course consisted of pasta, soup, crepes, ravioli, and risotto. Then the second course with a beef and a veal roast, meatballs, pork chops, tripe, then topped off with a roasted lamb.

Finally, the dessert came consisting of hot fresh Biscotti and assorted fruits, nuts, and pistachios.

Espresso and wine flowed during the meal and she could see that Louis was having his share of the hard stuff. Angelina made a potent dandelion wine and a small amount would put an ardent drinker on their backside.

“I and my two sons challenge all you peons to a game. You know that we are the greatest and will take on all challenges,” Giovanni stood and announced thus ending the eating.

This stirred a response from all the men as he had challenged them to their traditional game of Bocce. Joe had built a standard sixty by eight feet court at one side of the front yard. Nothing stirred the memories of these immigrants of the old country more than playing one of the oldest games devised by man. They headed out to the court leaving the woman to clean up the mess.

Mary had no problem helping as she washed the dishes by herself at home. She found herself a friend in Angelina’s five-year-old daughter, another Mary. The little girl wanted to help with the dishes and Mary put an apron on her and let her dry the utensils. Angelina was about to give birth and in time she and Joe had five beautiful daughters.

The women finished and as they gathered in the large den, they could still hear the loud cheers coming from outside. Mary got her purse, pulled out the ever present crochet needles, and continued her work on a pair of baby booties. She was never idle and when she sat down, she had her needlework in her hand. She was making the

booties for one of the girls at work and she finished the white booties as they were talking.

The conversation turned to why they had gathered when Angelina addressed her mother, “Madre you will miss the birth of your third grandchild why not stay here and have the operation?”

“As I told you before I do not trust these American trained doctors and will go home where I will receive excellent treatment from competent doctors trained in Italy,” she sternly replied.

“But...” Angelina tried to object and got no further than saying ‘but’.

“I will hear no more of this matter,” her mother settled it got up and went upstairs.

“She is so old fashion,” Angelina said to no one in particular.

Mary never did find out the reason for the operation as she had closed the subject and there was no further talk about the matter.

“Those hyenas outside are going to want to eat again we need to get about preparing cena,” Mabel noticed that it was eight o’clock and past Dinnertime.

They went to the kitchen and prepared a large crisp salad and a traditional Italian soup, Pasta Fagioli with a hot loaf of garlic bread. They also put out some of the leftovers from lunch.

They had just finished setting the table when the hungry sportsmen came bursting into the kitchen. The meal didn’t last as long as dinner and they finished at nine-fifteen.

It was around ten when the women finished with the dishes and everyone was ready to go home. Mary told his parents that she wished them a safe trip home and back.

“We will be leaving New York next Thursday and will be back early next year,” his mother told her.

Giovanni having a lot to drink, gave her a big hug, and said, “Arrivederci bella- donna,” he turned to Louis and commanded, “Marry her.”

“See you later Pap,” Louis ignored his father’s remark.

Gerald, one of the guests that worked for the Matrona, took them back to Hahntown and it was an exciting ride because he was ‘bombed’ and quite reckless. Louis also had too much to drink and he was feeling little pain. They arrived about eleven thirty and he walked her to the door. He took her in his arms and for the first time gave her a kiss with passion.

“Arrivederci bella-donna,” he laughed and mimicked his father.

He walked back to the car and Gerald squealed a tire as they sped away.

Their dating became more frequent over the next nine months and on a cold Saturday day on October 31, 1925, they took a bus to Kennywood Park on its last day of operation for that year. She hadn’t seen him for the prior two weeks and he met her that Friday and asked her to go to Kennywood. They hadn’t been there since that first visit.

He was a man of few words except when he had a couple drinks and he seemed troubled about something. By that time, she knew him and did not to ask what was troubling him. He would tell her in his own time.

They had just gotten off their first coaster ride when he stopped and got them a drink, and they sat down on a bench.

“I have been meaning to ask if you have heard any news about your mothers operation. Has she had it yet?” she asked.

He looked at her and said, “Will you marry me?”

It stunned her as it wasn't what she expected and he just seemed to ignore her question.

"Do you love me? You have never told me that you loved me," she said deflecting his question.

"Yes I love you and want to marry you. I will ask your father," he replied and grasped her hand.

"What will your mother say about that?" she asked still deflecting.

"She won't say anything, she is dead," he said indifferently.

"She is dead, when, how, why?" she blurted out.

"Papa sent a telegram to Angelina and said she died on the operating table two weeks ago. That's all we know as we have not heard anything else. Will you marry me?" he stared at her.

"Yes I will. I will tell my parents and it will have to be in March," she replied.

She thought, "I don't even know if I love him. This is not very romantic and definitely not how I dreamed that someone would propose to me. Well at least no one has prearranged my marriage and that is what mother has thought she could do. She has taunted me many times with the Old Italian saying. *An unmarried woman is like a fly without a head.*"

The most important thing for Italian fathers, brothers, and in her case mother was to find a husband for their daughter or sister. She knew that Italian boys prefer to marry girls from their region. It still wasn't very smart in their culture for women to avoid marriage and she reasoned that she would grow to love him as she did like him.

He never did ask if she loved him as he just assumed that fact. He gave her a steamy kiss then he reached in his pocket and gave her an engagement ring. She made him put it on her finger and for the first time she felt more than just a fondness for him.

They enjoyed the rest of the day and were the last to leave the park that night, celebrating what they both wished would be a lasting relationship.

Chapter 11

The next few months passed quickly as they planned for an early March wedding. The word somehow got to her mother and Mary never found out who told her. She did have her suspicions as only a few knew of their plans. Her mother was having nothing to do with their being married. She said she would have him arrested or worse.

She quietly got up at three-thirty on Tuesday March nineteen. She put on a new dress she had bought for the special occasion.

She tried to be quiet but Angelina woke up and asked, "What are you doing?"

"Keep quiet or you will wake up the whole house," she didn't want to alert their mother.

"Why are you dressed up?" Are you running away?" Angelina insisted.

"You ask too many questions go back to sleep," Mary snapped.

"Momma is not going to approve of you leaving," Angelina replied.

"Why are you two making so much noise?" Ann sleepily asked waking up.

"Mary is running off and getting married," Angelina volunteered.

"You two keep your mouths shut or you will have her awake and ruining everything," Mary ordered her two younger sisters.

"Are you really getting married?" Ann asked.

"Yes and you two keep your mouths shut or I'll pop both of you," Mary threatened again.

"So you are running away and getting married," Angelina proclaimed.

"Yes I am and don't you tell mother one thing about it," Mary ordered.

“We won’t say anything. Where are you getting married?” Ann asked.

“Momma said if you married him she wished someone would kill both of you,” Angelina said.

She had overheard an argument that Mary and Louis had with her mother a few days before. She heard her mother say that she wished them dead.

“We are not going to die and we are planning on marrying. I have to go. Both of you go back to sleep and remember keep your mouths shut. If she asks tell her I had to be at work early today,” she hugged them both.

She quietly crept out of the house carrying a small suitcase with some of her clothes. It was four in the morning on a damp and cold Tuesday morning. Louis was waiting for her at the gate. He kissed her and they walked to Irwin and the train station.

“You do have the license?” she asked as they quickly walked to the station.

“Yes, it is right here,” he answered and patted his coat pocket.

She had quit her job that previous Friday and Louis met her at the train station where they caught the first train to Wheeling, West Virginia. They applied, for a wedding license to satisfy the three-day waiting period. They hurried back in time for Mary to arrive home about the same time she usually did from work.

She went into Irwin on Monday and spent the day shopping. She had saved some of her wages and had even worked extra not telling her mother. She went home pretending as if she had once again been at work.

She knew that her mother would do anything to stop the marriage as she overheard a conversation between her mother and father. She told Louis about the conversation on their first trip to Wheeling.

“She thinks she is going to sneak off and marry that rogue but I will stop them at all cost. Mother angrily snapped.

“What are you going to do? You don’t know the day or place or even if they are going to marry. Pap replied startled.

Mother smiled and said - I’ll find out because they will go to Wheeling as it is quicker and easier. I’ll have someone there to greet them.

What you goanna do, have them murdered? Then he laughed.

She angrily replied - If need be, I will.

He gripped her arm and said - You are a crazy old woman, leave them alone.

She will not get the better of me and defy my wishes, mother said and I never knew she disliked me so much.”

Mary had tears in her eyes as she told him about the conversation.

“I am one step ahead of her as we are not going to get off at the usual stop at the Wheeling station but the one before it. So don’t worry, no one will hurt you anymore,” Louis said grasping her hand.

The fifty-odd miles to Wheeling passed very quickly and they got off the stop before the train station just as he had planned. He got a cab and she told the driver the address of the Justice of the Peace’s house. They walked to the front door and an elderly woman came to the door and greeted them.

“You two are eager aren’t you,” she smiled as she understood their eagerness.

“We are a little early; do you think we can freshen up?” Mary asked.

“Sure darling right in there,” she pointed to a door at the end of a hall.

Mary wore a long coat over her new dress and removed it. She got a pearl necklace out of her purse and put it around her neck. Louis gave her a small rose and carnation bouquet. She pinned it to the left of the neckline on the long sleeved white sheer dress. She bought the dress that Monday shopping.

She fixed her black natural wavy hair slightly over her right eye and pulled it back from the left side of her face. She did not have to put on any makeup except for a touch of lipstick. The off-white dress highlighted her olive skin as she timidly left the room hoping that her appearance was satisfactory.

"Mister you have a beautiful lady coming down the hall," the Justice's wife said to Louis.

He had a half grin on his face as he turned and saw her walking towards him. He looked ruggedly handsome to her dressed in the new suit, white shirt, and colorful tie he had bought for the occasion.

"You two make for a nice couple we better get this over with before one of you changes your mind," the Justice of the Peace said as he entered the room.

The ceremony was short and sweet and ended with Louis putting on the ring that he pulled out of his coat pocket.

"You can kiss the bride now and there is a photographer two doors down if you want to get a picture," the Justice said as Louis paid him.

"You are beautiful darling and you make sure you don't mistreat that lovely girl," the Justice's wife cautioned him as she let them out the door.

"Let's get a picture," Louis said and half-pulled her two doors down to the photographer.

"Just married?" the photographer asked the obvious.

"We want a picture taken," Louis ignored the question.

“We need to put her on some steps so she will be as tall as you,” he said to Louis.

He pulled out some steps for her to stand on and took a few pictures.

“The preliminary pictures will be ready to review in about an hour. There is a place to eat across the street,” the photographer said.

“We are hungry and will be back in an hour,” Louis replied.

They did not take the time to eat on the way down and they were hungry. They took their time eating and the food was surprisingly good. He was a big eater but she was more of a nibbler but in this case, she ate a hardy meal.

The pictures were ready when they got back and they selected two shots and bought the negatives for an extra fee.

“We need to hurry if we are going to get the next train back to Pittsburgh,” Mary said.

They got a cab to the train station. It did not concern him or her that someone might be there to confront them. No one approached them and it was good because he was excellent brawler. She soon learned that he never turned down a challenge especially if he was drinking.

They went to Library to stay with Angelina and Joe as they were having a small gathering to celebrate their marriage. They then planned to move into two rented rooms a few houses below Mary’s family. It would not be available until the following Saturday so they stayed with Angelina.

Tony saw them first and yelled out, “Eviva lyi SPO-zi!,” he wished the newlyweds would have a long life.

“Brother-in-law I see you have had a head start on the sweet wine,” Louis shook his hand.

“Per chent-ANni,” his brother Angelo called out slurring the words as he wished them many years of married life. He walked over ignoring Louis and kissed Mary.

“Quello che un piatto bello,” he bellowed describing her as a beautiful dish.

The women all greeted the two complimenting her on her beautiful dress. Little Mary couldn't take her eyes off her new aunt. Mary noticed and walked over and took off the bouquet from her dress and gave it to the thrilled little girl.

“You have caught the bridal bouquet so you are the next one that will marry,” she giggled as the little girl jumped up and down.

Angelina had the table full of food and all feasted. Louis shortly caught up with his tipsy relatives.

The men went to the cellar for further celebration around the wine barrel.

The women cleaned up not allowing Mary to help this time and telling her to rest. The conversation eventually turned to a subject that made Mary uncomfortable.

“Who is going to have the job of examining the fogli sanguinosa now the old lady is dead?” Mabel asked.

When a couple consummated their marriage in the early Italian culture the husband's mother inspected and displayed the "bloody sheets" to prove the girl's virginity before the marriage.

“No one will inspect our sheets,” Mary spoke up angrily.

“You do know it is our tradition and our priest read the passages in the Bible to me giving the authority to perform the custom,” Angelina spoke up.

Obviously prepared to justify her claim she got the bible and read from Deuteronomy 22:13-17.

“If any man takes a wife, and goes in unto her, and hates her. And give occasions of speech against her, and

bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid; Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the Elders of the city in the gate: And the damsel's father shall say unto the Elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hates her; And, lo, he has given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not your daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the Elders of the city."

"I don't care what your priest said or how someone interprets the bible says. I am not married in the church. I can't take part in its sacraments so no one inspects my sheets," Mary stood and exclaimed.

"We will see what your husband has to say about that matter. I had no problem displaying my sheets and it wasn't pig's blood," Mabel said proudly.

"Yes let's see what my husband has to say," Mary snapped.

"I'll get my brother," Angelina said.

"No, I'll get my husband," Mary said and went to the cellar.

She went down the steps and saw the men sitting at a table playing Euchre, a card game. She went over and tapped her husband on the shoulder. She told him in a stern voice that the women wanted to see him upstairs.

"You better go with her brother as your new boss calls," Angelo joked.

Louis did notice how she addressed him even through the fog of the drink. He turned and saw the look on her face. He did not hesitate and got up and followed her up the stairs.

"Here is my husband, you can tell him of your plans," she said sternly.

No one spoke up so she continued, “They want to examine the fogli sanguinosa.”

He never hesitated and yelled, “No one will examine my wife’s sheets and if they try they will deal with me. We have left that crazy country and their rules. We will run our house. Kapeesh!” he turned and went downstairs.

They dropped the subject, as they all knew that when he said, “Do you understand,” he meant it.

Mary didn’t visibly gloat but she was never so proud of her new husband. The ladies attitude towards her quickly changed. She thought it was because of his stance on the sheets but something deeper was there that concerned them.

“Those men need to break it up down there. All of them are on the day shift tomorrow. I’ll go down and break the party up,” Angelina said then turned and went down into the cellar.

“They will stay a little longer to show that no woman can break up their fun but they will be up shortly,” she said when she came back.

It was a short time later, the rowdy group came up, and the party was over for the night. Mary and Louis received their final congratulations and jabs pointed at Louis from the men as they went up to his room now theirs.

She was up early in the morning before anyone else sheets in-hand. She hurriedly washed them and hung them on the clothesline. She started cooking breakfast and made sandwiches for their lunch pails before anyone else stirred. Angelina was up just as she finished breakfast surprised that she was so efficient.

The men came down quickly ate and were off to work. Louis had a big smile on his face as he went out the door with his brother and brother-in-law still throwing

barbs at him and laughing. Mabel went with them and they took her home before going to work.

Mary and Angelina now alone had just sat down to eat lunch when a knock came at the door. Angelina went to the door and it was Gina and a friend with some gifts for Mary. Some of the women at work sent wedding gifts after hearing of her marriage.

Angelina invited them to eat lunch with them and they accepted. The girls spent the meal by questioning Mary about her escapades.

After they left Angelina asked, "What are you going to do for furniture? Do you have anything?"

"No, just what they just gave us," she sighed.

"I recently received word from my father. Your husband has a large inheritance now that mother is dead. The three of us children will receive one-half of her estate, as she left no will. Our father receives one-quarter and the state takes one-quarter.

Your husband is not a responsible person and would squander all that money and besides he told us that he didn't want any of that dirty money. Has he said anything to you?" Angelina let the cat out of the bag.

Mary knew now why they so quickly backed down when he yelled, "Kapeesh!" Money was their concern and if he didn't want it, what would he do with his part?

He hadn't said a word to her so she avoided the question, "I have confidence that my husband will do the right thing."

Chapter 12

Early Saturday morning they were on their way to their first home excited to be alone and starting out on their journey of life together. The two-room apartment was just three rows down from her family's house. She was somewhat apprehensive of seeing her mother for the first time after their marriage. Louis didn't care one-way or the other as he had no great liking for her mother.

She never asked him about his inheritance and thought that he would tell her of his plans in his own time. It excited her more having her own place to care for and the possibility of starting a family.

In the back of her mind, she still had hope of one day persuading him of marrying in the Church. It worried her that they had not married there because she was giving up access to the Eucharist that was so important to her. She did convince him to let her raise their children in the Church.

She never found out what turned him away from the Church. She guessed whatever happened, it occurred in Italy. He was proud to be an Italian but never wanted to return to the old country.

Louis's friend Tony drove them to their apartment and went in with them. The renters furnished the apartment with a kitchen table, four chairs and a cooking stove. The bedroom had a dresser and double bed. She had received a set of sheets from the girls at work plus hand and bath towels. She got a set of drinking glasses and a few kitchen utensils.

The men sat down to a glass of wine to celebrate their new home. Mary had just started to take a sip of soda when there was a knock at the door.

"Our first company," she said and opened the door.

Standing there were her father and two sisters and he said, "Congratulations my daughter and where is the man of the house?"

"Thank you and come into our home," she smiled as he hugged her and the two girls giggled then hugged her.

"Bravo son-in-law I came to celebrate with you," he walked over and shook hands with Louis and Tony.

They had a toast and Mary knew they were chomping at the bit to go down to the club and celebrate. She needed to go shopping and her two sisters could help her.

"I need to go to the store and get some groceries so why don't all of you go down to the club and celebrate as we are out of wine," she said.

"Just what I was thinking," Louis answered.

She gave him some money and the three of them hurried out the door. He quickly returned and gave her a quick kiss as the girls giggled.

They returned four hours later with groceries and the girls had to go home immediately as their mother would be waiting. They now had to do the chores Mary had been doing. They had slipped out with their father without their mother's approval. Mary thanked and hugged them and they left. She put away the groceries then she cleaned the small apartment.

It was late and there was no sign of her husband and friends. She knew the club closed at twelve midnight and they would stay until then. Therefore, at eleven-thirty, she started to make sandwiches and a salad because she knew her husband would want to eat. She also knew by intuition that he would arrive home drunk and bring her father plus at least one buddy with him.

Twelve-thirty and she heard a car stop and some loud talking. She opened the door and there he stood with her father and Tony following close behind.

That was her first night in her new home and she was happy that her dad and husband got along well. She didn't know it but scenes similar to that one would repeat throughout their years of marriage. She learned to have something to eat at a moments notice and she could have a meal spread before one could blink an eye.

They sat down to eat and continued to celebrate ignoring the late hour or the trouble they had put on her. She was there to serve her husband. The head of the family had come home and he was going to rule the roost.

Louis's mother and her mother ruled the home and dominated their husbands. She watched through the years as her mother continually belittled her husband in front of the children, friends, or company.

She wanted a strong willed man and she had found one. In time, she learned how to manipulate him. The party finally broke up and she was happy that her father and husband got along even if it was in drinking. Louis always welcomed her father into their home and over the coming years, he spent time with them. Her mother was another case entirely as Louis did not welcome her.

The next day Sunday she was up early dressed and on her way to eight o'clock mass. He was still sleeping and knew she would be back before he awoke.

She saw her mother and sisters coming down the hill behind her and she didn't know if her mother would even speak to her. She deliberately walked slow letting them catch up and the girls ran ahead of their mother.

"Mama said that you had no right to go to mass as you can't participate, she said the Priest should excommunicate you," Angelina blurted out.

"Well I am not excommunicated and can attend if I want," she replied as her mother got close enough to hear her.

“Come girls or we will be late for mass,” her mother snapped walking past ignoring her.

Angelina ran ahead with her mother but Ann walked with her and sat next to her in church.

“You are going to catch it when you get home,” she whispered to Ann.

“I don’t care it won’t be long until I’ll marry and run off,” Ann whispered back.

Her mother still did not speak to her after mass and Ann walked home with her and Angelina with her mother.

She walked into the house just as Lewis was getting up. She had coffee made before leaving and gave him a cup with a shot of wine his favorite morning wake-up after a night of drinking. He said it settled his stomach and they talked as she fried him some eggs.

“You want to go up and see the old lady?” Louis asked.

“Do you think we should as she didn’t talk to me at mass this morning? Maybe it will best if I go tomorrow when you are at work,” she replied.

“Then let’s go down and visit my brother this afternoon,” he suggested.

“Ok, after lunch as we don’t want to walk in when they are eating,” she replied.

They spent the afternoon at his brother’s place and naturally, the brothers had to go to the club and play cards. She and Mabel spent the afternoon talking and crocheting. The men came home around five for supper and they ate there and then went home early.

Around one o’clock the next day she went up to visit her mother and try to make some sort of peace with her. Angelina was washing clothes and her mother ignored her so she went out to help her sister. Angelina was happy with the help and they laughed and giggled as they finished the clothes.

Her mother watched from the back porch and as they walked up said, "I have made lunch and you can eat with us."

"Thanks I'll stay," she smiled at her mother knowing it was a ploy to keep her as extra help around the house.

That broke the ice a little but her mother never congratulated her on her marriage or gave her a gift. Mary spent time helping her in the coming months as Lewis would not let her hire out as a maid for others. The small apartment did not take long to clean and she had free time on her hands. The months went by and they settled into a routine. She wanted a baby but the idea didn't excite him and he kept throwing off the idea.

She awoke early Thursday April 7, 1927 nauseated as she had missed her last monthly cycle and decided to see the doctor that day to confirm her suspicions. She was waiting for him when he came home from work. She had a meal with his favorite foods and a big but apprehensive smile.

"How did it go at the mine today?" she asked.

He looked up with a mouthful of pork chops and mumbled, "Ok."

He then took a fork full of the green leaf lettuce, tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, olives, and pepperoncini topped with Genoa Salami salad.

She was hoping he had asked how her day was so she tried again, "How many cars did you load today?"

He stopped and looked at her as it was an unusual question for her to ask him.

"More than any one else," he said.

"I went to the doctor today," she decided to approach the subject head-on.

He looked up and asked, "Are you sick?"

"No, lui diceva che ero incinta," she put the blame on the doctor.

She had told him that he said that she was pregnant.

“Un bambino?” a baby he asked.

“Yes around Christmas,” she smiled.

“Mama mia, I am going to have a son. I need to celebrate,” he beamed.

He quickly finished eating and kissed her and off he went to tell his friends about the good news. Once again, she was alone to clean up then she sat crocheting waiting until he came in half lit up having celebrated.

The months passed, December one finally arrived, and she was eager to have her baby. He came home from work excited with news that would change their lives. She was a little late in having something to eat and he sat down at the table and blurted out.

“I have a new job,” he said stopping her in her tracks.

“You have a new job at the mine?” she asked

“No I have a job in Michigan working for the new governatore,” he smiled.

“Come on Louie don’t fool with me. You don’t have a job with the governor of any state. What kind of work can you do for a governor?” she sat down looking at him.

“I am going to be his motivi custode,” he beamed.

“Your are going to be his groundskeeper, a gardener?” she asked puzzled.

“Yes, I should start January 30 next year if they accept me.”

“How did you get such a job? You don’t even know a governor let alone one hiring you. What do you know about gardening?” she asked puzzled not knowing that he even knew a thing about being a gardener.

“Here is the application for me to fill out and you need to help me with it,” he handed her an application form.

She looked it over and asked many questions before finding the details of his job offer. The best she could put

the story together it started with his friend Tony's brother. The brother worked in Michigan as the head groundskeeper for the former Governor Groesbeck. The new Governor Green kept him on but some of the brother's help quit. Tony told him about his friend who knew all about gardening.

She did find out that Louis had worked as a boy in Italy as a gardener and his cousin had taught him how to care for trees and shrubs. The large farm his mother owned gave him enough exposure in caring for plants.

Besides it thrilled her that he was getting out of the mine and all its dangers. He had a few minor scrapes in the short time of their marriage and as most miner's wives she had the constant fear of a cave in. The sound of the mine's siren always frightened her.

She completed the form, he signed it the next day and gave it to Tony. Then they waited.

Two weeks went by and there was no word and she about gave up. The third week and he came home all excited. She was not in the kitchen and his meal was not ready nor was his bathwater heated. He went to the bedroom and she was lying down on the bed.

She weakly smiled and he saw that something was wrong and asked, "What is the problem is the bambino giving you problems?"

"I had false labors and the doctor said I should rest," she weakly said.

"We will get someone to help," he said more as a question.

"Gina is going to help as she has quit her job as Salvatore proposed and they are marring next month," she replied.

"I am now a gardener for the Governor of Michigan," he broke the good news to her.

“Then I’d better have this baby soon,” she replied as she knew they had many things to do for the move to Michigan.

“Tony’s brother has found an apartment for us in Detroit on the same street that he lives on,” he said trying to relieve her of some worries.

“Detroit, I thought that Lansing is the State Capitol,” she replied having looked up the information.

“It is an eighty mile drive and he drives each day and I will ride with him. He said that he will not charge me to go with him but I told him I’d pay my way or wouldn’t take the job,” Louis would not take advantage of anyone and always paid his way.

Another week went by and her labor pains increased and Gina told him to go for the doctor. Three hours later and she gave birth to a baby boy and they named him after his papa and called him Louis Furlin Jr. Now there were two in the family with no middle name. Naturally he had to go to the club and celebrate with his father-in-law and friends.

Her sisters came down to see the baby but there was no visit from her mother. She decided to break the news to them that she and Louis were moving to Detroit. She knew she had better tell them because Louis would tell her father. She had about three weeks to recover and then they move to Michigan.

Chapter 13

Mary woke early on a snowy Monday January 16, 1928 a week before Louis was to start work in Michigan. They were staying with his brother the past two nights because on Friday they sent the few possessions they had to Michigan. They also gave up the apartment that Saturday.

During the last days, she did her best to have her mother recognize her grandson. Her mother just would not give up the anger bordering on hate for Louis and now his son.

The baby was a picture of health and growing every day and she doted on her firstborn. Louis was happy to have a son but maybe a little jealous of the excessive love she lavished on the baby.

Her father tried to compensate for the actions of her mother. However, she intimidated him or some would say that he was just plain henpecked and would rarely contradict his wife. Her sisters and brothers did visit her once under a threat by their mother not to go around her or the baby.

Mary thought, "Hate me all you want but I love my baby and husband."

She got herself and the baby dressed and fed then she woke her husband, "Louie it's time to get up if we are to make the train in time."

She had breakfast ready for him, his brother, and Mabel. She overheard Angelo say to his brother when they went out to the outhouse.

"Fratello, hai una grande gemma. Non abusare di lei."

She smiled at Angelo for saying he had a great gem and not to abuse her.

She helped Mabel wash the dishes then she bundled the baby and Lewis picked up the two suitcases. They said their goodbyes and walked into Irwin to the train

station. An hour later they were on their way to a new beginning in Michigan.

They arrived in the Michigan Central Train Station around ten in the morning the next day. They waited looking for someone that looked like Aldo who Tony described as his brother. They had the address of the place Aldo had rented for them and she worried about their meager possessions. They sent them to Aldo at the train station and she thought that maybe it was a mistake.

Two hours later and Louis was getting impatient when she spotted a man that fit the description Tony gave to them. He spotted them and rushed over apologizing for being late.

He was a few years older than Tony and she immediately felt uncomfortable by the covetous look he gave her.

“I need to watch this one,” she thought.

He pointed towards the front of the station and said that he had parked his truck out-front. He did not volunteer to help Lewis with the suitcases. He got on the other side of Mary and walked close to her talking a mile a minute in Italian.

If Lewis saw his flirting with his wife he said nothing. However, she knew enough about her husband already that if he did see there would be a day of reckoning. Aldo was messing with trouble boss or no boss.

“Did our possessions arrive ok,” she asked Aldo.

He looked at her with a blank look and replied, “What possessions?”

Louis dropped the suitcases and stared at him and Mary hurriedly said, “Tony told us that he told you that we were sending our household goods to the station and you would get them.”

“He told me nothing,” he replied nonchalantly and turned to walk off.

“Dago è stupido, è meglio trovarli,” Louis stepped in front of him calling him stupid and that he’d better know where their belongings were.

“We sent them to this station in care of you. They must be here at the station,” Mary broke in trying to stop a ugly scene that she knew would happen if she didn’t head it off.

Louis had his fists clenched and she saw what havoc he could cause with his large powerful hands and quick temper. She remembered one evening as they were walking home from Irwin a few months after their marriage. Two burly men that had a few to many drinks made some ugly remarks as they passed. Louis confronted them and a fight was on. She saw that she had married a brawler who had the two big men on the run in short-order. She did not want to see that scene repeated here especially with his new boss.

Aldo didn’t hesitate seeing he was about to get his behind kicked, so he said, “I’ll go get my truck and meet you at the receiving place.”

“And where is that?” Louis asked.

Aldo told them how to get to the receiving department and quickly turned and headed to his truck. Mary wondered if he would even return for them. They found the place and the clerk told them that their shipment was ready for pick up.

Aldo had their possessions on his 1926 Ford Model T Pickup before they got to the loading dock. There was only room for two in the cab and their stuff filled the small bed of the truck. So Lewis stood on the passenger’s side running board as Aldo drove to a northwest suburb of Detroit.

It was a mixed neighborhood mainly comprised of Irish and Polish immigrants plus a few Italian families. He stopped in front of a typical row house partitioned for two families and shared a "party" wall. It needed paint

and was in need of much repair. They learned that Aldo had recently bought it as a rental. So not only was he the boss but their renter. After paying the rent and travel to the job, it didn't leave much for food let alone entertainment.

The burden of making his pay cover all the expenses fell on her shoulders as Louis had little interest in money except for feeding his drinking habits. She made sure there was money to cover his needs and she knew how to 'stretch' it. He was a hard worker and as long as there was beer money, he was happy camper.

Aldo helped with unloading the truck then showed them where he lived six houses down from them. He considered himself a ladies man living with a different woman every month.

"A peacock," she thought.

He asked if there was anything else, he could do for them while looking at her.

"What time will you pick-me-up next week?" Louis asked. His way was of telling Aldo to leave them alone.

"I'll be by at five thirty sharp," Aldo grunted and left.

The house had a living room, kitchen and two bedrooms all needing a good cleaning. She thought with her husband's help she would get the place clean but first the baby needed feeding and they had eaten little. They were about to see if there was a store nearby when someone knocked on the door.

She opened the door and a young couple introduced themselves as Albert and Agatha Karmowski their next-door neighbors. Mary asked them in apologizing for not having anything to offer them.

"We just came home from shopping and saw that you had just moved in and thought that we could introduce you to the neighborhood," Agatha smiled.

"We were just talking about needing groceries and we didn't know where there was a store," Mary said as Louis

came out of the kitchen where he was starting a fire in the kitchen stove.

Louis introduced himself and Albert said, "We were just telling your wife that we could take you to the store for groceries. There is a bar two doors down from it and as they shop, we could get a few 'cool ones'."

This brought a big smile to Louis and he knew that he had found himself a drinking buddy even if he was a Pole and not a fellow Italian.

The baby bundled up and in his crib started crying. Mary rushed over and got him out.

"What a beautiful baby. May I hold him? It is a he isn't it?" Agatha gasped as Mary handed her the crying baby.

"Look Albert isn't he just beautiful, I want one just like him."

"Ok but not this very moment as these people need to get some groceries," Albert laughed, "Our car is out-front if you are ready to go."

"We are ready," Louis, answered thinking of a 'cool one'.

Albert had parked his 1925 Ford Model T black Fordor in the common driveway. They went to the grocery store with the men anticipating some 'liquid bread'.

Mary and Agatha finished shopping and a bag boy loaded them in the trunk of the car. The men were nowhere in sight.

"Get in the car out of the cold wind and I'll get that 'oliwa' husband of mine," Agatha said.

I don't understand Polish what does 'oliwa' mean?" Mary asked.

"Boozer or wino and he better not be 'zwazony', plastered, or drunk," Agatha answered.

She was a big framed young lady and Mary thought she probably controlled her smaller husband.

A few minutes later, she came with both men in tow and a new name for Lewis that would stick to him for the rest of his life. Albert started calling him Muzzy after the 40th Prime Minister of Italy, Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini, who came into power in 1922. It seems the two men swapped war stories from their homeland over the few “cool ones”.

Louis told about the time Mussolini passed through his hometown prior to the First World War and gave a speech. The name Muzzy did not excite Mary but she accepted it. Albert started introducing him as Muzzy to the neighborhood. Aldo liked the name, thought it was funny, and introduced him by it at work.

Mary and Agatha became close, as both their husbands were gone most of the time. Albert worked for Ford Motor Company on the assembly line and would work every overtime hour they offered.

The country had become the wealthiest in the world. Most people had good paying jobs seemingly with plenty of spare cash to spend. Neither Mary nor Agatha found it to be the case as their husbands spent more than the spare cash down at the local pub. Neither complained except to each other and learned how to manage the family's finances. Agatha finally got pregnant and gave birth to a girl in March 1929.

Little Louie was a bright baby and learned to walk and talk quicker than most and Mary was proud to show him off. She made up for the lack of attention Muzzy paid to his son. His thoughts were that taking care of the children was the wife's work. He was the breadwinner and a hard worker but he did like his spirits. He was not a womanizer just a drinker that couldn't pass up a bar without having a drink.

Tuesday October 29, 1929 was just another day to Mary as she was up early as usual then fed her men and

was ready for the day. About midday, Agatha came rushing over all excited.

“Have you heard the news on WWJ?” she asked.

“No, you know that we don’t have a radio. What has got you so excited?” Mary asked.

“Get the baby and come over and listen as people are killing themselves jumping out of windows,” Agatha gasped.

“Why are we in another War?” Mary asked.

“No the stock market just crashed and people are rushing to the bank for their money,” Agatha hugged her baby.

“Well I don’t need to worry about that as we haven’t a bank account. Want me to look after the baby so you can go to the bank?” Mary volunteered.

“We don’t have one either,” Agatha shrugged.

“Well I guess we won’t be jumping out of any windows,” Mary laughed.

“You know I don’t even know what the stock market is,” Agatha giggled.

“Come on let me show you how to make polenta,” Mary smiled.

The coming months did impact them as conditions in the country worsened as the world went into the Great Depression. Albert lost his job and he and Agatha went to live with her family.

Aldo did have money in the bank and lost everything including the house they were living in. Louis still had his job but the state was cutting back big time and the groundskeepers were the first to go.

In June, Mary became pregnant and it pleased her but not Louis. The same day she told him about being pregnant Aldo told him the State would end both their jobs the first day of December. In the meantime, they were cutting their pay in half. She knew there was only

one place they could go. That was back to the mine and that was if Louis could find work.

Luckily, Louis had started a garden in the small backyard. Mary canned beans, tomatoes, celery, cauliflower, carrots, and various vegetables. He even got a few chickens and they had a small pen in the backyard. She made their bread, noodles, rolls, pies, and cakes from scratch. Milk and coffee were two things they did buy and they did not starve. She even learned how to make home brew for her thirsty husband.

Mary wrote a letter to her father asking for help. In November, he wrote back and said that he had found Louis a job at Montour Number One Mine in Southview, Pennsylvania starting on April 6, 1931. She saved up enough money to have their belongings shipped to Irwin plus their train fare.

They were on their way back to Irwin on a Wednesday December 3, 1930 with Mary seven months pregnant. Angelo rented them an apartment in Hahntown until they could find a place in Southview.

Conditions in the Country were worsening and they were lucky to find work but the next months were rough with no income.

Her mother still was not friendly and volunteered no help but his sister Angelina having the farm sent canned goods. Louis borrowed his brother's shotgun and they ate rabbit and occasionally a pheasant.

In February, she gave birth to a beautiful auburn haired baby girl and they called her Dolores.

Mary knew of the tale that said, "Is that an Italian? I think so, but she's a red head with freckles. Oh, must be a Garisto."

She knew that a Garisto is ancient line of Italians, noted for their uniquely red hair. Freckles are common.

The fable says that their laughter, looks, and charm have saved their people many times throughout the ages. Her sister Ann also had auburn hair and she learned of the tale from her days in Italy.

When the baby was six weeks old, they moved to Southview not knowing that would be the place they would spend the rest of their lives.

Chapter 14

The train stopped at a small station with a sign reading ‘Georgetown Station’. It is located in the hills of Western Pennsylvania roughly eighteen miles southwest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The four passengers got off and watched them unloaded their meager belongings from a baggage car onto the small loading dock.

“Georgetown, I thought this place was Montour Number One or Southview,” Muzzy said to Mary.

She held their six-week-old daughter as his large hand gripped his son’s hand.

The stationmaster overheard his remark and asked, “Do you people have a place to deliver this stuff?”

“No, we are waiting for a house to become available,” Mary answered.

“Well we can store it here for a small fee but some folk store their stuff in the barn in the Patch,” the old man volunteered.

“Ok, keep it for us until we can get some help in moving it to the barn,” Muzzy replied.

“What is your name? Mine is Fred Spurgeon.”

“Louis Furlin and they call me Muzzy and that is my wife Mary,” Muzzy answered.

“Well Muzzy welcome and I heard your question about your new home. I’ve been here since they opened the mine in 1914.

We still call the railway the Wabash owned originally by the Wabash Pittsburgh Terminal Railway. It is a Pittsburgh extension of George J. Gould’s Wabash Railroad.

The PWV, Pittsburgh and West Virginia Railway later bought it, but Wabash sounded better to those rich folks. They named the station after George Gould and it is actually on the Montour Line with a spur that connects to

the Wabash. The Montour people renamed the place Southview and those living in upper Southview referred to it as the Patch and we call this lower Southview,” Fred paused took a breath and continued with his history lesson.

“You can see right down the hill and across the main road is the Post Office with a small grocery store. But you folks will probably do most of your buying at the Company store located in the Patch.”

“We will stay at the boardinghouse until a place opens. We will have to check in at the Company Store. Will you tell us how to get there?” Mary asked as she saw something catch her husband’s attention.

“Sure, the boardinghouse is across the street down from the store. Just follow the road down there and you come to the one car bridge that we call the Camel-hump. You can see it from here,” he paused and pointed at the small bridge.

Muzzy thought – “I hope Mary gets all those directions and what do I see down there?”

Fred continued with is in-depth directions, “Go through the tunnel under the tracks and up a hill and you will pass the Mine supervisor’s house on the right. You’ll notice the road parallels the tracks as it divides the two villages,” he paused waiting for some reply but only getting a blank stare from his audience he continued.

“If you’re not tired by now continue up the hill a short piece and the road will level off. You’ll go by some tin garages on your right and you will see the mine on your left and a path that leads to a bridge. However, you good folks turn right up the hill that will take you into the Patch. A couple hundred yards and you will pass an alley but you go to the next street and turn left. The Company Store will be on your left and the boardinghouse on your right a few houses down the

street,” Fred was a talker and liked to spread his knowledge about his home place.

“Is that a filling station that I see over there?” Muzzy asked smiling.

He had spotted what he thought looked like a beer joint about a block down from the Post Office.

“Yep, a gas station and the local Pub,” Fred smiled.”

“I can smell them a mile away,” Muzzy thought.

“These babies need something to eat and rest. Thank you for all your help,” Mary told Fred and stopped any further thought of having a beer.

Muzzy shook Fred’s hand then picked up the two suitcases while Mary carried the baby and they walked to their new home. Little Muzzy scurried ahead of them excited about walking over the bridge.

“Son, be careful that you don’t fall over the bank and into the creek,” Mary cautioned.

They had stopped on the Camel Hump and he couldn’t see over the concrete wall of the bridge. He had crawled around one end trying to see the water.

“Come here boy,” Muzzy called and his son came running. He put the boy on the wall.

“Spit into the water and watch what happens,” he told the boy.

He held onto his son as he leaned over and spit in the water. The boy became excited as he watched as the spit caused the minnows to rise in the water looking for food.

“Come on boys you can play later,” Mary grinned and started walking towards the small tunnel.

“You would think the Company would have built the ponte a litter wider the stingy meticci,” Muzzy said.

He thought the Coal Company didn’t make the tunnel much wider than the bridge. He didn’t realize they had horses on their mind instead of cars when they built the two structures.

“Mamma look,” the boy said pointing towards his right to a large water tank that was filling a steam engine. The tank was by the side of the tracks about fifty yards up from the tunnel.

They saw the Superintendent’s house at the top of the hill and two men starting down the hill. They met the men halfway up the hill, the men stopped.

“Hey what are yunz guys doing, just moving in?” one asked.

“I start Monday,” Muzzy replied.

“We going for a Fort Pitt come join us when you can. They call me Slim and that’s Jake,” Slim pointed to his buddy.

“My throat is dry as cotton and I’ll see you later and they call me Muzzy. That’s my wife Mary,” Muzzy smiled thirsty for a beer.

“Nice to meet you,” Mary said.

“He’s going to find a way to that beer joint one-way or another,” she thought as they started up the hill.

They found the store with no problem and Muzzy was in a hurry to check in and get to their rooms. They walked up the large concrete steps to the store with little Louie having to crawl up each step.

Mary talked to the store Manager giving him all the information he needed and he told them that their house would not be ready for two weeks. He also told them the rooming house had one room available until their house became available.

She asked if they could store their furnishings in the barn until their house opened. He told her there was space in the horse barn if they thought it would be safe. He said the company would not be responsible if anything went missing.

The room had a single bed and little else. He saw the opportunity to get a cool one, “What do you need from the train station? I’ll go down get it and have the rest moved to the barn.”

She told him what to get from their belongings and knew full well he’d have to have a few drinks before coming back. He left and she bathed the children in the wash shed behind the house. She then prepared something to eat for them and herself in the common kitchen. She put them both to sleep and sat in the single chair waiting for him to return. They were the only family staying in the house and the other boarders were men.

Two in the morning and a knock at the door plus someone calling her name wakened her. She had finally fallen asleep crocheting in the wooden chair. She hurriedly opened the door not wanting to have him waken the children and the rest of the house.

He stood outside the door with the two men they met on the hill. They had the items she asked him to get from the train storage.

“Bring them in and try to be quiet and not wake the children,” the three drunks upset her. She thanked his two new pals knowing he had paid them well for their services and they left.

“Did you put the rest in the barn?” she asked as he sat down in the chair.

“Everything is in the barn,” he answered starting to fall asleep.

“I made a pallet on the floor,” she grasped his arm and led him to the bed she made of blankets.

He passed out as soon as he hit the floor. She quietly set up the small cot for Louis Jr. and the crib for the baby. She sat in the chair and drifted off to sleep.

The next two weeks were busy for Mary as Muzzy started to work the Monday after they got the room. She found herself being the mother to all the roomers as they found out that she was a great cook and saw what her husband was eating. One by one they brought groceries and asked her to prepare their meals. She knew how to cook for a large family besides it meant she didn't have to spend their meager funds for food. She even found herself doing their laundry and there were many sad faces when their house became available.

Saturday and they moved to their new house located at the far end of the street. House twenty was the last house on the row and across the street from the barn.

"Louie, bring our things from the barn and I'll try to get this place clean," Mary said upset with the condition of the place. In her eyes, it was filthy.

He left and she thought, "This place needs a good scrubbing," and went to the kitchen sink turned on the only cold-water faucet in the house.

Nothing but a few drops came and she thought, "What else can happen?"

Two minutes later and Louis came rushing into the house cursing up a storm in Italian.

"Qualche bastardo ha rubato i nostri prodotti dal fienile," he shouted.

"What do you mean someone stole our belongings from the barn?" Mary asked.

"Most of it is gone and I put the little remaining on the porch," he started cursing again.

She hurried out onto the porch and broke into tears seeing the few items he had put there. Their dishes were gone and all the pots and pans. The bedroom furniture plus two living room chairs were among the items missing.

She sat down on the porch totally dejected then the crying baby brought her back from her self-pity. She knew that at his weekly pay of forty dollars it would be a struggle to replace the items stolen but she resolved that they would make it even if she had to take in laundry.

She went through the remaining items and made a list of the items they would need. It was time for him to go to work on the second shift and after he left she started cleaning and arranging the few things they had left.

She was upstairs in one of the two bedrooms putting up the crib and cot. She heard someone knocking at the back door.

Standing on the small porch was a young lady who introduced herself as, Ethel, her next door neighbor. She had a dish of stuffed cabbage in her hand.

“Thank you, come on in and excuse me for not having a place to sit but we lost most of our furniture,” Mary said smiling.

“You mean the railroad lost you furniture?” Ethel asked.

“No, someone stole it when we stored it in the barn.”

“That happens very often around here and they should have told you at the store it wasn’t safe down there,” Ethel shook her head noticing the lack of furnishings.

“My husband said he was going to talk to the Irons about the theft,” Mary said referring to the Coal and Iron Police hired by the Company.

“Is he a strong union man?” Ethel asked.

“Yes he is a union man and likes John L. Lewis. In fact he is very outspoken about it,” Mary answered referring to the President of the United Mine workers of America.

“Then I think he should stay away from those thugs they probably had a hand in the theft. Didn’t you hear about our problems here in 27 and 29?” Ethel asked.

"No we were in Michigan until a few months ago," Mary said interested.

"Well in 27 a group of black miners organized and wanted to strike about the terrible conditions at the mine. Some minors received brutal beatings when three of the Irons broke into the home of one of the colored miners. They beat-up four men with their blackjacks and two women were also severely injured by the thugs," Ethel sighed.

"Let's sit on the back porch," Mary interrupted.

She got the baby out of the crib and they went out and sat on the steps. Little Louie was playing in the backyard.

"You have two beautiful children and he is a pretty little boy," Ethel smiled.

"Thanks, are those Irons still here?" Mary asked.

"Oh no, but others of the same sort are still living in house thirteen at the end of the street. However, the miners didn't give in until Mr. Louder, of the Pittsburgh Coal Company, said he'd fire the three. He said he did but instead of firing them he just sent them to another mine and I hear they are still thuggish," Ethel said disgusted.

"Well what happened in 29?" Mary asked her curiosity aroused.

"Well the black workers continued to protest as the company was robbing them and more severe than the white miners. The Foreman promised to pay for extra hours worked but never paid them. We know they rig the scales at the tippie and do not give credit for coal the guys load. In fact, a paper investigated and found a difference in the money they paid the men for the coal they loaded and the amount the records showed that goes out on the railroad cars.

My husband John complains all the time but they tell him to shut up or find work somewhere else. Now where can one find a job in these times? I believe the job your

husband has is because they fired old man Edwards that lived here before you,” Ethel looked at her with a grin on her face.

Mary thought knowing her husband, “When he finds out he’ll probably quit,” and she said, “We had no idea, did he find work?”

“I don’t know as we lost track of them and don’t know where they moved to,” Ethel replied.

“So what happened next?” Mary asked intrigued by the tale she was telling.

“Well the strikers continued to complain and that included the Company Store,” Ethel started and Mary interrupted.

“Don’t tell me the store is also corrupt but I guess it shouldn’t surprise me. That is the only place we can buy some of furniture.”

“Well there is a family moving and wanting to sell some of their furnishings and I believe they have a kitchen table and chairs. Decide quickly as they are leaving in a week,” Ethel tried to be helpful.

“I’ll have to talk with my husband about it. Do you have any idea what they are asking?” Mary knew they had very little cash on hand and he needed his beer money.

“No, but I can find out,” Ethel suggested.

“Sorry for interrupting go on with you story,” Mary apologized.

“Well they are overcharging for almost everything a pair of shoes that sells for \$2.98 they are charging \$6.00. Also check what they deliver because they will not send everything you ask for but will charge you for it. Then there is the Boardinghouse as they monitor all the conversations and some weasels report to the Irons any remarks against the company. They fired some for the remarks they made.

Some of the black miners signed a document laying out the improvements they wanted the company to carry out.”

Mary interrupted, “Has it done any good?”

“No, they continued with all their bad practices and it came to a head on October 26 in 29. They falsely arrested one of the black miners who signed the document for drunk driving. They took him to house 13 and about three hundred protesters gathered outside the house protesting. They demanded that they release the man and two Irons told them to break it up.

One Iron attacked one of the blacks that signed the document knocked him to the ground and then they shot and killed him. They claimed the miner attacked them but the miners saw it differently. Welcome to Southview, oh my look at the time I must get home as John will be home soon and I need to have something to eat,” Ethel laughed.

“Ethel,” is the water working at your place?” Mary asked.

“No, it is off and on and they keep promising to repair the water tank. You do know the water is not fit to drink so use the water from the pump,” Ethel told her.

“Thanks for the dish and check on the furniture if you will,” Mary called out as Ethel climbed over the low fence separating the two yards.

I’ll get back with you soon about the furniture,” Ethel yelled.

Chapter 15

Mary knew she had to do something before the company store closed, as they had nothing to eat but the dish Ethel brought over. Louie would need a bath when he came home from work the babies needed one. They didn't have a tub or anything to boil water. There was a cooking stove in the kitchen curtesy of the company and they added it to the rent.

She hurried down the two blocks towards the store holding the baby with little Louie in tow. She had some money that she had set aside for an emergency and she definitely knew this was one.

She passed the four large bosses' house's on her left and seven four single room houses on her right. The infamous house thirteen was the eighth situated at the corner of the street that went up the hill separating the patch. She crossed the street and as she passed the superintendent's house, a woman came out and stood on the porch.

Mary smiled at her but the woman did not respond and went back into the house. Mary thought nothing of it understanding the cast system that operated in all the coal-mining villages.

The ways of the old country having no middle class only the haves and the have not's. Those ideas carried over to the land of opportunity. She shrugged her shoulders and continued to the store that was next door to the super's house.

She entered the store, went over to a clerk, and gave him the list of items she needed. He read it and went into the back of the store and a few minutes later, the store manager came out.

"Mrs. Furlin this is big list of items and your husband has not worked long enough to have built up any credit. How do you intend to pay for it?" the manager asked.

"I have cash," she smiled at him.

"It will be around fifteen dollars. Do you have that amount?" he smiled back at her.

She reached in her purse, handed him three five-dollar bills, and said nothing.

He grimaced and called out to the clerk, "Fred go ahead and fill that list."

He turned to her and said, "It is too late to have it delivered today, I'll send it around tomorrow."

"But I need it today," she said disappointed.

"Well it will be tomorrow," he replied.

"Mrs. Furlin we will take the stuff to your house."

She turned and recognized two of the single men she had cooked for at the boardinghouse.

"I don't want to put you out but I would appreciate it. Someone stole most of our things in the barn and I have nothing to cook or bathe in," she said while looking at the manager's face.

He shrugged and walked away without saying anything and in a few minutes, the clerk brought her fifteen cents change and put the items on the counter.

"Fred put that in some boxes so we can carry it," one of the young men ordered the clerk.

She thanked them again and tried to pay them for carrying the items to the house. They refused said they owed her for the good cooking.

"We'll put them on the back porch as we are going down to play a little baseball," one said as they walked out of the store.

Mary arrived at the house as the two men were walking down the path at the end of the street to lower Southview and the ball field.

She put the baby in her crib and the groceries in the kitchen then told little Louie to play in the back yard. She turned on the faucet and once again got only a few drops. So she went to the shared pump in front of the double

wash shed located on the property line between Ethel's and her house. She had just filled the bucket when Ethel and her husband came down the alley and Ethel yelled out.

"Mary, we just talked to the Fletchers about their furniture," she hurried over with a piece of paper in her hand and gave it to Mary.

Mary read the list - 'five piece kitchen set, ice box in working condition, floor lamp, three piece bedroom set with mattress, three piece living room furniture, lounge chair and ottoman. Total price was \$38.00 with no individual prices given. She thought it was a very good price. She didn't especially want the mattress and thought she'd see what it looked like. She could get a new one for \$14.00 where they would fill more comfortable sleeping.

"A good price and I'll talk with my husband when he gets home tonight. Thanks for getting the information," Mary smiled at her.

"Well they need the money since he'll have a hard time finding a job with that bad leg," Ethel said referring to the cave in at the mine where Fletcher had his leg mangled.

"I especially don't like taking advantage of their condition," Mary said.

"Oh no, they have had no takers and they worry that they will have to leave all of it. There are some vultures just waiting around to plunder. You will be doing them a great favor if you buy it," Terry tried to calm her fear of taking advantage.

Mary thanked her then carried the water into the kitchen and heated it for bathing the children and herself. Then she got more for Louie's bath when he got home. She put the children to bed then she started making dough for bread, rolls, and pie.

When he came in around one in the morning she was taking out the first of the bread. By the time he bathed,

ate, and she told him about the furniture it was two thirty. They lay down on the pallet she made on the floor of their bedroom.

She was up at five thirty then got the children up at six thirty and she had them dressed and fed by seven fifteen. She heated water and took it out to the wash shed then washed clothes before he got up at eleven. She made lunch and when they finished eating they went up the backyard to the Fletchers.

They passed the outhouse and down the alley towards the Fletchers. The alley separated the outhouses and backyards of the next row of eight single houses. They stopped at house twenty-four opened the back gate and went up the backyard. They climbed the stairs to the small porch and Louis knocked on the back door.

A middle-aged woman opened the door and Mary told her they were there to look at the items they had for sale. Mary noticed that they had boxes, suitcases, and a trunk setting in the kitchen.

“Oh I am so glad you folks showed up as we are leaving this afternoon,” Ruth Fletcher said as she greeted them.

Her husband was in the living room resting in his lounge chair for the last time. He and Louie greeted each other and he said little else seemingly embarrassed at their condition. Two teenagers were sitting on the front porch talking to three friends.

Ruth showed them the items and Mary wondered where the two girl's beds were but did not ask. The items had much use but they were in good condition. The icebox had seen better days but it was usable. Mary noticed the soiled and worn mattress and knew she would replace it but told Ruth that they would take everything.

Mary handed her two twenty dollar bills and Ruth looked embarrassed as she asked if they didn't have the correct amount because they had no money.

"No don't worry they are a bargain at forty dollars," Mary said with tears in her eyes.

Just about then one of the girls called out that their transportation had come. Fifteen minutes later the Fletchers were gone never saying where they were going. They were just one family of many millions who struggled through the great depression. Mary thought how thankful she was that she had a husband with a job where many had none.

Muzzy got one of his newfound drinking buddies to help him carry the furniture. Never once did he ask where she got the money to pay for it. His Mary he learned would take care of the situation whatever it was and he didn't seemingly worry. Two days later, she bought a new mattress and gave the other one away to a friend of Ethel's.

She had cleaned the mattress and all the items even painting those that needed it. She made the wooden icebox look like new and that included repairing the leaky pan that collected the melted ice water.

"Do you think there is time to have a garden?" Mary told Louie a few days later.

"We don't have a spade," he replied resting in his clean newly bought lounge chair.

"I bought a spade, hoe, rake, and seeds yesterday at the store," she brought a frown to his face but he got up and started preparing the garden.

The first of the week they had both sides of the back yard planted with vegetables that she would can for the coming winter.

He was a hard worker in the mine but at times needed a little prodding at home. However, a garden was

something that he loved to work at and he was an excellent shot and loved to hunt. He hunted rabbits and pheasants plus wild berries, mushrooms, and dandelions.

He had outstanding eyesight and could spot a rabbit nesting and just shoot the top of its head off preserving the body. It may not be very sporting because it was not a sport. It was for survival!

She did the messy part of cleaning and preparing the kill. She learned how to make the wild taste disappear although if one took special notice she ate very little of it.

“Yesterday I was at the store when a shipment of bitties came in. I’d like to have some chickens. We need to repair the chicken coop,” Mary told Muzzy when he came home at five in the afternoon as he had rotated to day shift for two weeks.

“Is the store delivering them?” he asked.

“They are out in the wash shed.”

“You know those things need a lot of attention for about a month. You are going to have to check on them at least five times a day. So we have plenty of time to get the pen ready,” he said as he finished eating and went out the back door.

“Thanks,” she thought that he was going to the beer joint.

She washed the dishes, went out to the wash shed, and saw him repairing the chicken fence. The pen attached to the dual coal shed was on the property line. Each house had a half of a coal and wash shed and each had a double-seated outhouse. The coal shed and outhouse was next to the alley.

He finished and came down as she was finishing feeding and watering the chicks.

“I’m going for a beer,” he said looking at her.

She stopped what she was doing and went into the house and got him two dollars.

He left and she set up a light bulb over the bed of the chicks for heat. She had watched and learned how to raise chicks from her uncle while in Italy as he raised them for their own use and selling.

“Louie, you stay away from those little babies. They are not pets,” she cautioned her son who was trying to enter the shed and play with the cute chicks.

The four year old was a quick learner speaking and talking much earlier than most babies. Speaking Italian was not one of them as Mary persuaded her husband that they would not teach their children how to speak Italian. Her reasoning as most immigrants of the times wanted their children to assimilate into the culture by speaking English.

The Government called it Americanization the process of an immigrant to the United States of America becoming a person who shared American values, beliefs and customs then assimilated into American society.

The process involved learning English and adjusting to American culture, and customs, while keeping the old foods and religion. The United Mine Workers of America encouraged their members to become citizens and learn English.

Louis at first resisted but when his man John L. Lewis said, it was the thing to do; he went along with the idea. If they spoke in Italian around the children it was infrequent and in private. The children were the losers in the process and denied an aspect of their identity.

“I won’t hurt them I just want to look,” little Louie replied starting up the steps to the shed.

“Ok, you look but don’t touch any of them,” she said and went into the house.

A few minutes later, she came out of the house and he had three of the chicks out in the yard playing with them.

She forgot all about Americanization and scolded him in Italian. She switched his legs with a small limb from a tree she got from the woods across the street from the house.

“Put those chicks back into the pen and get into the house as supper is ready,” she continued in Italian.

He just looked at her not understanding a word she said and she realized she was speaking in Italian then repeated her instructions in English.

Four weeks later and the chicks were ready to move out to the chicken pen but it would be five months before she got an egg. She only lost four chicks during the whole process with little Louie being the cause of two of their demise. From that time forward, they had eggs and fresh chicken. She didn’t like the taste of chicken and had a secret ingredient that she used when she cooked one.

It was many years before she revealed her secret. It was nothing more than adding a little cinnamon to the recipe at least that is what she said she did. She did not write down her recipes, they with the secret ingredients were in her head, and they stayed there.

She spent the week setting aside each day for a specific task, as was the custom of the day. Monday she washed clothes and on Tuesday, she ironed the clothes and linens. Then on Wednesday, she baked as many as five loaves of bread, or enough to last a week. Thursday she dedicated to sewing and mending tattered clothes. Friday was cleaning day. Saturday she spent shopping and bathing in a big metal tub.

The company store’s shelves had everything imaginable—from mining lamps to laundry soap. Muzzy bought his powder, lamps, tools, and other equipment for work from the store.

Sunday she and the children went to church that offered some solace and rest from her regimented life although she had to care for her husband, children, and prepare the Sunday meals.

Chapter 16

It was a cold Sunday in December and Mary was taking the children to mass at nine. A priest from the Missionary Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was visiting to offer Mass. They usually came twice a month and held it in the Community Building. The church rented the building that also served as a movie theater and other community functions. The Church established the Parish in September 9, 1915 and they conducted the first mass that Christmas.

It was an important day for little Louie as he was going to recite to his Sunday school class the prayers Mary had taught him. He had impressed the Nuns by flawlessly reciting the Lord's and Hail Mary prayers plus the Rosary.

She quietly got out of bed not disturbing her sleeping husband. He had come in late last night with some of his friends. In a very short time she had a meal on the table having prepared for the event. It troubled her but she humored him as not to cause any problems. She would like to have given his so-called friends of his a piece of her mind. All they wanted was to have a good meal and extend their drinking binge.

Little Louie was going to be four at the end of the month and she believed that he should receive his first Communion. The Priest said no and he would at least have to wait until he was seven.

She had enrolled him in school that fall and he would only be five at the end of December. She lied about his age and said he would be six. He was a quick learner and had no problem keeping up with the older children.

The school was located west of the house on the main road. He would walk the eighth of a mile past the company store up the road to the school.

There was a small one-room building that housed the first and second grades and a two-room building for the other six grades. In one room were grades three and four. The other room had five through eight. It was that way because as the children got older there were less of them. Many dropped out of school for various reasons mainly because by grade six many had to go to work.

Dolores was ten months old and beginning to walk. She talked at eighth months and came wobbling into their bedroom loudly crying that she had to go to the potty.

Mary quickly picked her up and put her hand over the struggling child's mouth trying to keep her quiet. She was a lively child more like mischievous with signs of having a strong determined will of her own. Her auburn hair and feisty manner caused Muzzy to say many times.

"Mary you have given birth to a 'demonio'," he showed little visible affection to all his children.

His childhood lacked the affections that would develop in him a show of outward emotions or tenderness. It would take time but he would eventually develop a pride in his children and grandchildren. One had to look hard for any outward signs as he held them in check. Mary never truly understood his inner feelings only recognizing his rough outward expressions.

She left the house for church carrying Dolores and holding little Louie's hand. There was snow on the ground and the street was slippery but she was going to mass regardless of the conditions. The building was at the far end of the Patch and she waited to the last moment so she would not encounter too many churchgoers.

She heard the snide comments about her not taking communion. The Patch had its gossipers just like any other small village. It did not deter her from attending mass but some remarks cut deep.

She hurried down the street towards the store and she remembered a story her Aunt read to her in Italy from the Bible. It was about a self-righteous man who thought he was religious and a tax collector who all thought was beyond salvation. They both prayed and the self-righteous one praised God that he was not like the bad people for he was good in his own eyes. The other man wouldn't even lift his eyes and asked forgiveness as he was a sinner.

About time, she saw the supervisor and his wife hurry down their porch steps. They did not speak to her and hurried to church. Mary thought they are just in a hurry and good people if one really knew them.

"Hurry baby, we don't want to walk in late," she said to little Louie and she increased her steps.

They passed the store then the boardinghouse and at the end of the street turned right up the road to the building. They arrived five minutes before mass began and it pleased her that they were not the last one into the building.

She made sure her babushka was in place blessed herself with the water at the door. She saw space two rows down from the rear and genuflected before entering the row of chairs. She pushed Louis ahead of her then sat down and put Dolores on her right side.

She loved the mass but it bothered her during communion that she could not join in. She would pray to God to forgive her during communion. She did not realize that she was like the tax collector.

She stayed in the building after mass and waited for her baby to recite his prayers.

"Mary Furlin your son will make an excellent altar boy. Someone has taught him well and is that someone you?" Father John asked.

He had come up behind her without her noticing him.

“Yes, I taught him,” she smiled.

“You did well and when are we going to convince your husband to let me marry him and you in the church?” he asked her every time he got a chance.

She thought – “Probably when Hell freezes over,” and said, “Maybe someday.”

He shook his head and said, “I’ll even come to the house and perform the ceremony.”

“We will see,” she replied.

He didn’t say anything else went out of the building to his car as he had to hurry to say an eleven o’clock mass at another mission. The two Nuns and children followed him out. The Nuns said nothing to Mary and hurried to the car and the Priest drove away.

Little Louie was angry with her as he believed that he was a big boy and could find his way home. The other children scurried off unescorted and he wanted to do the same. He ran ahead of her showing that he knew the way home but she was in no way impressed. She told him he could when he reached five.

Muzzy was up when they arrived home and was in his easy chair drinking one of her homemade brews. She could see that he was unhappy with their going to church but said nothing.

She hurriedly got on another dress and changed the children’s clothes. She told them to go out and play in the backyard and that they were not to leave the yard. She had the meal planned and before long she had the Sunday dinner of pork chops and salad on the table. She had baked bread, cake and set out a bowl of homemade canned peaches.

She gave the children a large piece of bread and they were to eat everything set before them. It was a rule that he enforced vigorously and no one wanted a smack with

that large hand. Pork chops was his favorite food and his attitude changed after the meal.

“I think I’ll go to the club for a while and play a couple game of cards,” he was itching to leave.

“Are you on third shift this week?” she asked knowing that he was.

She tried to subtly remind him of that fact and prevent him from getting drunk. She did have to admit that he never missed work because he had drunk too much. She marveled that he would come home late in a stupor then be able to get up and go to work sober.

“I’ll be home in plenty of time,” he said as he went out the door.

The only club close that he could easily attend was a Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota or SNPJ. Slovenian immigrants formed the lodge in 1915. Most of the miners at the camp were from Slavic countries mainly Poles, Czechs and Slovaks.

He came home sober two hours before he had to go to work. The children were in bed so they took advantage of being alone. They wanted one more child and then no more. She wanted them early in life and not at an older age.

She had his lunch pail packed plus four extra sandwiches in a paper bag. He was a hard worker and needed the fuel at least that is what he told her. He left in a good mood saying he would see her – “mañana.” There were a few Mexicans at the mine and he tried to impress her with his knowledge of Spanish.

She went to bed as soon as he left and fell into a rare deep sleep. The sound of the mine’s siren jarred her awake.

“My God a cave in,” she cried aloud.

She jumped out of bed immediately dressed and went downstairs with the intention of rushing to the mine.

“The children, I can’t leave them here alone,” she said aloud.

She was in a dilemma of either going to the mine or staying with the children. She stepped out on the back porch as she heard someone talking next door.

“John be careful and don’t put yourself in danger recklessly,” Ethel was yelling at her husband as he ran out of their front yard.

“Ethel, will you do me a favor?” Mary said as she rushed over to the fence.

“Is Muzzy working?” Terry asked.

“Yes he is. I was wondering if you would look after the children. I want to go down there,” Mary said almost sobbing.

“Sure it will be no problem,” Ethel patted her on the back.

Mary put on a coat and hurried to the mine. She crossed the main road and went down the small path that led to a wooden bridge. There were a group of women gathered and a Coal Iron blocking the way across.

“Is there any news yet?” she asked one of the women standing next to her.

“Not yet, and it could be serious,” she answered.

“This could be the end of the mine as the company has been threatening to close it for some time,” another woman spoke up.

The woman and some children stood and waited in the cold for an hour before news came from management.

“There was a cave-in with some injuries but no deaths,” a supervisor called out standing next to the Coal Iron.

“What are the names of those injured?” another woman yelled out.

“We have no names and will be back shortly,” the supervisor said and left.

The crowd stood patiently until daybreak but no one came back with further information and they got angry.

“It’s the same thing over and over you keep us in the dark while you cover your tracks,” one of the women yelled out.

“We want news of our husbands,” another yelled out and the crowd surged towards the bridge.

“Keep back or someone will have their head bashed,” the Coal Iron threatened and pulled his pistol.

“You going to shoot us as you did in 29,” a woman called out.

“I just may do that,” he yelled back.

“Open the way here comes the first shift,” one of the women called out.

The first shift miners approached the Coal Iron and one asked, “Are we working today?”

“I don’t know but an official will come and tell us,” the Iron snapped.

A murmur went through the crowd and in ten minutes two supervisors walked across the bridge.

“Listen up the mine will temporally close and the Company will decide in a few days when to open,” one of the officials announced.

“How are the men? When are they coming out?” one of the women asked.

“We are attending to them and we will release them in a half hour. The cave-in caused no serious injuries but the company wants to check each one before releasing them,” the other supervisor said.

Twenty minutes and the first of the miners started across the bridge. Mary tried to see over the crowd and finally worked her way to the front. Finally, she saw Louis enter the bridge and she noticed that he was walking with a limp. When he came off the bridge, she rushed over to him.

“Are you hurt badly?” she asked grasping his hand.

“Just a bump on the leg,” he said grinning.

They turned to walk up the path and one of the trapped miners walked over and said, “Muzzy, thanks for pushing me out of the way. I owe you one. How is your leg?”

“A little swelling but it is ok,” he answered quietly.

They walked home with him using her as a crutch as the leg hurt more than he confessed. Two weeks later, he was walking normally but he was out of a job as the Company closed the mine.

It surprised no one as the company threatened to close it many times. The company offered some but not all the workers a job at another mine. Mary became concerned as no offer came their way. He would not go down to the mine office and ask if they were going to offer one.

Mary was washing clothes, Ethel was doing the same, and she told Mary that they offered John a job at Montour 4 in Westland.

“Did he go down to ask or did they come to him?” Mary asked.

“Oh no, he went down they are not going to approach anyone at least that what he said. Has Muzzy gone down to the office?” Ethel asked.

“No, he said he wouldn’t beg them,” Mary sighed.

“Then he won’t get an offer and they are firm on that. One supervisor told John the company had just so many jobs. If a miner showed no interest the company will not offer them a job because the jobs would go to those that showed interest,” Ethel shook her head.

Mary knew she was going to have a hard time getting Louis to go down and ask.

“We are out of money and the store will not give us any further credit. The store manager said the ten-dollar

house rent was due at the end of the month. We will have to leave,” she told him as they lay in bed.

They rented their house and paid \$1.50 a month for each room. They had to sign a written lease and it only covered his time of employment. His death or termination of employment meant that they only had five days to vacate the house or face court action.

“I’ll go down in the morning,” he said surprising her.

Chapter 17

The Christmas of 1932 was an extremely bleak one and Muzzy did not get a job offer until the last day of December. Mary found part of an article written by the poet Harriet Monroe about the Christmas of 1932 that expressed exactly how they felt that day.

“The world today is standing wistfully beside the chimney, wondering whether Santa Claus will come down and fill its stocking. Its meals of late have been thin and dry. Its clothes have lost out at knees and elbows. It has stubbed and sole-less shoes. Its home, once so cheery and comfortable, stripped of ornaments, perhaps even of furniture. The very fire on its hearth is shivering. So, like a little boy whose father's pocket and mother's cupboard are empty, it begins to doubt even the patter of reindeer hoofs for the midnight drive of the merry little saint who once a year should make everybody happy. It has tried everything, even millions of votes in a ballot-box, to placate the offended deities, and now there seems nothing to do but sit in a cold corner and hope against hope for the sound of sleigh bells over the roof.”

However, Mary had great hope for the future as their man Franklin Delano Roosevelt became the 32nd President of the United States. They were staunch Democrats their whole lives and they now knew that life would get better because that lousy Herbert Hoover was gone. Hope always springs eternal in those that believe and they were believers.

It did not look like he would receive a job until there was an accident at the Westland mine one that severely injured a miner. The company offered Muzzy a job and he started work on the 3rd of January. The pay was the same but a little less because he had to pay for a ride to the mine.

He and little Louie left for their respective jobs that day and Mary just knew that good times were right around the corner and the depression would soon end.

The next two years were a struggle and the hope of a quick end of the depression did not materialize. Then another problem arose that would put a strain on their finances.

Mary woke one morning in late July with an upset stomach, which confirmed her suspicions as she missed her monthly cycle. Muzzy came home from third shift and as she was washing his back she broke the news to him.

“I am pregnant. Does that bother you?” she asked.

He didn’t immediately answer her and she became nervous then he turned and said, “Better now than later and another son will guarantee a continuation of my name.”

“You know there is no guarantee of a boy,” she smiled at him.

“It will be a boy,” he said confidently.

She knew that another child would put a strain on their budget and she thought one-way she could save money was to make the kids clothes.

“If I only had a sewing machine,” she thought. She also knew that a new one would cost around ninety-six dollars.

She saved the printed cotton muslin feed sacks with their floral prints having four or five different patterns. She knew that she could make herself a dress for thirty to forty cents and the kid’s clothes cheaper. The dress patterns would usually sell from fifteen to twenty-five cents but she knew she could create her own pattern. A spool of thread cost five cents and of course, the material was free since she got it with the feed. She also saved the flour, meal, sugar, salt, and coffee muslin sacks.

She figured that with three of the floral printed sacks she could make a nice Sunday dress. She knew that with two sacks of the same print she could make a plain and simple dress. A dress for Dolores would take much less material. She also knew that she could also make blouses, shirts for the boys, pillowcases, aprons, table and dresser scarves, kitchen towels, and other items.

“There is the one problem I need a Singer machine with the large pedal at the bottom,” she thought and pictured working the pedal back and forth with her feet. “The faster I peddle the faster I can sew,” she mused.

Two weeks later and she bought a brand new Singer model 66 in a five-drawer cabinet. She signed a contract to pay a dollar a week for two years. She now owned what the children called the ‘miracle’ machine. Its five drawers never seemed to run out of pennies whenever one needed a few for a movie, candy, or soft drink. She kept it in her bedroom where one could only enter with permission. A four-room house and one of the rooms was off-limits to young prying eyes.

“It’s time, ask Ethel if she will come over then see if Margret is available. You better send for the doctor,” May told Muzzy late in the afternoon of May 19, 1936.

He did not hesitate and went next door and rushed up the alley to the Margret’s house as she claimed to be a mid-wife. He then went down to the store to call the doctor, as they did not have a phone.

“How often are the pains coming?” Ethel asked.

“Will you watch after the kids? My sister said she would come over for a few days until I got back on my feet,” Mary said.

“Don’t worry they will be alright. How far apart are the pains?” Ethel asked.

“One minute lasting about five minutes and they started over an hour ago,” Mary grunted as another struck.

“I’d say it’s time,” Ethel grinned.

A knock at the back door and Ethel let Margret in and she examined Mary.

"You have problems with your first two?" Margret asked.

"No problems," Mary whispered.

"Did Muzzy call the doctor?" Margret asked Ethel taking her aside.

"He went to the store to call. Is there a problem?" Ethel asked.

"I don't know but I've got a hunch," Margret said.

"What kind of a hunch?" Ethel frowned.

"She not dilating properly nor has her water broke," Margret said.

"How many babies have you delivered?" Ethel asked.

"Enough and take the kids home with you and get them out of the way," Margret told her.

"Ok I get the message," Ethel answered.

She got little Louie and Dolores dressed and started out the door just as Muzzy came in.

"How is she doing?" he asked.

"Ask the mid-wife," she snapped and took the children home with her.

He shook his head and thought, *women* and went upstairs, "How is she doing," he asked again.

"Is the doctor coming?" Margret asked.

"Yes, how is she doing?" he asked for the third time perturbed.

He didn't wait for her to answer, went over to Mary, and asked for the fourth time, "How are you doing?"

"I'm ok, why not go up and stay with Dan as Ethel has things under control," Mary softly said. Dan was Margret's husband and a friend of his.

"You know how to boil water?" Margret asked.

"Naturalmente signora regina," he called her Mrs. Queen.

“Then do it and wait downstairs. You are in the way up here,” she replied.

“Vedo perché Danècosì scontroso con una cagna come te,” he snapped and went downstairs.

“Did you call me a bitch?” Margret said as he left the room.

The water was boiling on the stove when the doctor knocked on the front door. Muzzy was ready for him and handed him one of Mary’s home brews and a glass of her homemade wine.

“Thanks Muzzy, how is she doing?” the Doctor asked.

“The female witch doctor is with her,” he grunted.

The Doctor grinned being familiar with Muzzy’s brand of humor and liked his tell-it-like-it-is-attitude.

He lived four miles in Hickory and he also acted as the Company Doctor. He was what a country Family Doctor should be and knew and was very concerned about his patients. He doctored Muzzy’s leg caused by the accident and tended to the children’s ailments.

His first visit was when he treated Dolores for a three-day-fever. Mary did not have any money and could not pay his fee. He was the Company Doctor but that only meant he did not charge for company caused injuries. He and Mary worked out a deal that whenever he was in town he’d stop by for one of her home brews and sometimes a glass of wine.

The tongues wagged saying – “Mary Furlin was very sickly,” then came a snicker.

Muzzy knew why he stopped so often and when two of his card playing friends made an offhand comment at the club about his Mary there was hell to pay. They carried the offenders home that night and it wasn’t because they had drunk too much. No one made further comments about his Mary at least not where he could hear but the town gossip’s tongues wagged.

At midnight May 19, 1936, Mary gave birth to a boy and the doctor gave her a choice of the birth date. She chose the 20th because it was closer to the man who predicted that he would have another son and his birthday was the 27th.

Mary named him, "Robert."

"See I told you it would be a boy," Muzzy bragged.

"Ann where are the girls?" Mary asked her sister the next day.

"Phil had to rush back as he is on third shift so we left them with his sister until I get back," she replied.

Muzzy and Phil were pals as both loved to drink and play cards. The families visited often throughout the years.

"Ann will you be the boy's God Mother," Mary asked.

"I would love to as he is a cute little thing. It doesn't look like we are going to have a boy," she said and they never did.

"Mary, I was talking to dad the other day and he hinted that he would like to come visit you and the family for a few days. Do you think Louie would mind?" Ann asked.

"Sure dad can come as the two get along fine it is just mom that Louie has a problem with," Mary said.

Her father came a few times over the years and sometimes he stayed as long as a week. The family so enjoyed his visits especially Lewis.

Little Louie was in the fourth grade and Dolores was starting school in the fall which gave Mary time to dote on her baby. He was the baby and treated that way. Muzzy was not as hard on him as he was with his other two children.

Three years passed but the good times did not as her President was struggling in bringing about a recovery. The face of the Patch was changing as the company began dismantling the mine. They also began to sell the houses but if the company still employed the miner, they could rent a house if someone moved.

Little Louis would be starting eighth grade and he was known as Muzzy Jr. by all his buddies. Dolores at nine was in third grade and still an enigma to her father.

Then sickness struck in August with a vengeance as Muzzy Jr. started running a fever and broke out with a red rash similar to measles. The Doctor announced that it was Scarlet fever. He quarantined the house and family then put signs on both doors.

Three days and it was gone but a day later Dolores showed signs and the sign went back up. Two days and it went down as she had just a mild case then it struck the youngest.

As usual, it struck the youngest the hardest and the Doctor spent thirty hours treating the 105-degree temperature.

Mary became concerned when her Bobby started speaking Italian and pointing at the ceiling.

Doctor asked, "Mary, I didn't think you were teaching the children to speak Italian."

"We haven't," she frowned.

"He is speaking it, isn't he?" he asked giving her a hard look.

"Yes it seems he is talking to his dead grandmother," she said.

"Well this is a new one on me," he shrugged his shoulders, "It's not covered in my medical journals. I understand his hallucinating but the speaking has me stumped."

Mary thought maybe the Mary he was speaking to or maybe it was another Mary. Then it could be his

guardian angel. Her belief in the Catholic Church ran deep as they embedded their doctrines in her mind.

The fifth day the fever broke and the Doctor announced the boy would recover.

“Mary, I may have to stop by more often for some of that good stuff,” the Doctor quipped when he left.

A month later and another major problem surfaced when a knock came at the front door.

“Mrs. Furlin, I am Joseph Clark a lawyer for the Company and this is Mr. and Mrs. Rettinger and they have purchased this property. They would like to look around if it is ok with you.”

The lawyer didn’t wait for an answer and brushed by her entering the house. She stood there a moment completely stunned.

“Please come in and I’ll show you around,” she said sarcastically.

“We know our way around,” he snapped.

“What is so special about this house it’s no different than the others with just four rooms,” Mary said.

“We also bought the woods next door,” Mrs. Rettinger replied, “You keep a very clean house.”

She tried to lessen the impact of the news and Mary appreciated it and smiled at her. However, it did not quench the uneasy feeling in her belly – “What are they going to do?” she thought.

The lawyer told her to be out by the end of the month or the Company would evict them.

“They sold the house and we have to be out by the end of the month,” she told Muzzy as she was washing his back. This usually was when she broke bad news to him. Naked and enjoying having his back scrubbed made him easier to talk with.

He didn't say anything just grunted as he knew she was after him to buy one of the two open supervisor's houses. His sister had his inheritance money and it was much more than they were asking for the house. He would not budge and the company sold them.

He never commented ate and went down to the beer joint leaving her to spend another Friday night home alone. She knew this just gave him another reason to tie one on although he really didn't need a reason.

The store was still open so she decided to go and inquire if there was a house available for rent. She told Muzzy Jr. to watch his brother and sister then hurried to the store before it did close.

She entered the store and asked the clerk if she could see the Store Manager.

"He is busy with tallying today's sales. Can I help you?" the clerk asked.

"No you can not help me as I need to see the manager," she replied.

He shook his head then went to the office. When he returned said, "He's not very happy but he said that he would see you. Follow me."

"Mrs. Furlin, what can I do for you that can't wait until tomorrow?" the manager rudely asked.

"I'm sure you know the company sold the house we are renting and have to vacate by the end of the month," she said.

He interrupted her and lied, "In fact I didn't know."

"Whatever the case is there a house open for renting?" she asked softly.

He finally looked up at her smiled and said, "Well there is one and it will be empty in a week." Before saying anything further, he sat with a smirk staring at her.

"Well which house is it?" she asked irritated by his look.

"House thirteen," he said smiling.

“House thirteen that’s where the irons live,” she said aloud but more to herself.

“Yep the infamous house thirteen that many say has a curse on it,” he said smiling.

“I don’t believe in curses and will talk to my husband then get back with you tomorrow,” she smiled at him and walked out of the office.

“I wouldn’t give that sorry man the pleasure but that house thirteen scares me,” she said aloud as she hurried home.

“I went down to the store and there is only one house open for rent,” she told Muzzy when he came home surprisingly not drunk.

“Così la donna che casa è che,” he asked.

“Casa thirteen,” she replied.

“Casa thirteen,” he repeated then laughed and said, “noi ci vorrà.”

“We will take it?” she asked startled.

“Ho quindi può essere un poliziotto,” he said laughing.

“Living there won’t make you a policeman,” she said giggling.

One thing she liked about him was his wild independent spirit. The next day she told the store manager they would take it.

The irons left the place a week later and they went down to see what repairs they had to do before they moved in.

Chapter 18

The house was a mess as the irons left it dirty and in need of repair. Mary felt like crying but she rolled up her sleeves and went to work. She knew that hard work, a little paint, soap, hot water, wallpaper, and whitewash would make it livable. The yard was also in bad shape and needed much work. She noticed the clapboard siding was in good condition but the window frames, eaves of the house, and porches could use some paint.

One positive happened while they moved as the county put the new water tank on-line and the water was reliable and good to drink.

She had a workforce of four, one was full-time and the other three were part-time. Muzzy worked, Muzzy Jr. and Dolores were in school so the three-year-old was her only full-time helper.

She and Muzzy removed the worn out linoleum that was on the floors. Then she with the help of Muzzy Jr. and Dolores stripped the wallpaper off all the walls. She wallpapered all the rooms having learned in Italy from her aunt.

The baseboards, molding, and doors needed paint and she with some help worked well into the night painting everything in sight.

She spent two days on her knees scrubbing the floors sparkling clean before they installed new linoleum. Muzzy worked on the yard after work but he was on second shift the hardest shift with little free time. Muzzy Jr. helped his dad and both he and Dolores helped their mother after school.

She even scrubbed the wooden stairs that led to the dirt cellar and thought how she would like to dig it out and have a full basement. Perhaps someday she thought they would install a furnace, and maybe a washing

machine. Her thoughts were on buying the place - If they were going to put so much effort into it then why not buy it?

The place was ready to move into four days before the deadline to move. She kept the kids out of school that week to help with the moving. She hesitated doing that, as she wanted them to have outstanding attendance records. Muzzy was on third shift that left him time during the day to help move the big things. A couple of his drinking buddies helped move the heavy items. Friday September 29 they slept in their new home for the first time.

She talked with the Store Manager and asked if he would get the company to draft paper so they could buy the house.

The company knowing they would have a hard time selling the 'cursed' place put a price tag of \$1,500 on it. The payment was \$12.50 a month for ten years and the payment was only \$2.50 a month more than the rent. She thought they had made a good deal. They would now be a homeowner and a part of the American dream of owning a home of their own.

War clouds once again covered the globe and she became concerned about their families in Italy. Mussolini joined the Axis powers with Germany and Japan and it concerned her when Germany invaded Poland the first of the month. Little did she know that it would affect her family right here at home.

"Mom, Sylvia O said the authorities would arrest you and dad as traitors and we are not real Americans. She said that's why they call dad, Muzzy," Dolores was upset when she came home from school.

"Well you tell little Miss Pollock that you are a second generation American. Tell her that Dad and I are Natural born citizens. Her mother and dad still have to

fill out green cards every year as they haven't become citizens yet. She is a first generation American and you are second generation," Mary said also upset.

She never did like them calling her men Muzzy and Dago. She knew that some called Louis a dumb Dago behind his back but never to his face. Some did once but never twice.

"Son have they been giving you problems in school about the war?" she asked Louis Jr. when he came in to eat.

"No mom but some give me strange looks like I'm some type of criminal. The Schmidt kids are catching it," he sadly said.

She thought, "War is coming for sure."

The Germans killed one of the Schmidt boys in 1945. The Patch was a microcosm of the Country with those thought loyal being unloyal and those shunned as traitors being Patriots. Mary knew no one who refused to take part in the war effort but she had her suspicions that some had their loyalties elsewhere. The Italians entered the war in June 1940 and she wrote to her aunt in Italy.

On a cold Sunday afternoon December 7, 1941, they were listening to Polka music on WCAE out of Pittsburgh. She had a late start on dinner as the women in the church held a meeting. They all were listening to their new Philco Model 41-290X push button radio when the music stopped.

An announcer finally said, "We have witnessed this morning the attack of Pearl Harbor and a severe bombing of Pearl Harbor by army planes, undoubtedly Japanese. They also attacked the city of Honolulu and considerable damage done. This battle has been going on for nearly three hours. One of the bombers dropped within 50 feet of (the sound faded then came back) It's no joke. It's a real war."

“Turn that radio to KDKA there’re better,” Muzzy told Muzzy Jr.

Mary convinced him to buy the radio three months before hoping it would keep him home more since he loved to listen to the Pirates games broadcast on KDKA. He liked to show off the power of his radio by tuning to WINX a powerful AM station out of Washington DC that broadcast the Homestead Grays the all-Negro team out of Pittsburgh. The radio cost \$85 and she thought it was well worth it as she also had something to entertain the children and her.

They listened all afternoon and well into the night for further news. School turned out early the next day to hear the Presidential Address to Congress. President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered the Day of Infamy Speech at 12:30 p.m. to a Joint Session of Congress.

Mary worried if the war would be a long one, as she feared that it might catch her eldest boy. She knew that her husband was over age at thirty-five and besides he was in what they considered a critical job. Coal was an important commodity in the war effort.

The war brought many changes to the lifestyle of most Americans and Mary adapted being familiar with change. The patch emptied of eligible men who rushed to the draft board volunteering for service.

In May 1942, her little Bobby turned six and she knew that she had a fight to get him to go to school. He just hated to go to school taking after his father and showing a very independent attitude.

The same month the government froze prices on practically all everyday goods, starting with sugar and coffee. She received their War ration book and tokens controlling how much gasoline, tires, sugar, meat, silk, shoes, nylon, butter, cheese, eggs, coffee, and canned goods plus many other items that she could buy.

Gasoline and tires were not one of her worries not having a car.

To lesson the demand on fruits and vegetable the Government encouraged the people to plant Victory Gardens. They already had the backyard in a garden and the people cleared land down by the creek. She and Muzzy planted an additional Victory garden there. She bought a Pressure Cooker expanding her canning of fruits and vegetables.

“We need to dig out that cellar so we can have a root cellar to store these jars,” Mary told Muzzy.

“When do we start?” he surprised her.

“Nothing like today,” she said smiling.

She already had the picks, shovels, and a wheel barrel bought for the job. Muzzy Jr. put them in the partially dug cellar until she broke the news to his dad.

Digging the hard clay was the same to him as using a pick to dig coal and in three weeks, it was ready for a cement floor.

Mary and Muzzy Jr. carried the dirt out and put it on the bank. Time wore the banks were down and the hard clay reinforced them. In time, she had them green, sloped, and able to cut with a lawn mower.

Neither she nor Muzzy knew anything about mixing concrete and she started asking questions. She learned a rule of thumb that said to use one-cement, two-sand, and three-gravel by volume. Mix the dry ingredients then slowly add water until the concrete is workable. The mix should not be too stiff or too sloppy. It may be too stiff and not workable or too sloppy and water may bleed from the mixture. One person told her to remember that water was the key ingredient. Add too much water and you get weak concrete. Then they also said adding too little water resulted in unworkable concrete.

She ordered the materials and she experimented when no one was around. She found the best mixture was when

she used one shovel of cement, two shovels of sand, and three shovels of gravel. Adding the water was tricky but she learned and they began.

A month later they had a cemented basement with one flaw and that was water leakage. Through the years, she tried every method they could afford to solve the problem but it still leaked and she learned to live with it. They built shelves and had a root cellar to store everything including ketchup, root beer, beer, vegetable, fruits, and berries.

They made a sidewalk with the left over material that led from the back porch to the outhouse. Then they made another walkway that went from the back porch to the street, a steep hill that went from one end of the Patch to the other. Then a short one from the front porch to the path that ran on top of the front bank. Eventually they made steps down the bank to the street in front of the house.

The Company used red-dog from the “slate dumps” to pave the streets. The miners picked slate plus any non-combustible materials out of the coal and dumped it across the creek from the mine. Over the years, the weight of the material created pressure that resulted in spontaneous combustion, somewhere within the dump. The dump would burn until all the combustible material burned. While the coal within the dump was burning, the slate and rocks would not burn and subjected to intense heat it would turn red. The fire took years to burn itself out. After several years it cooled down, the remaining material, they called “red dog”, and they used it to pave the roads.

In Mid September, there was a knock at the front door and Mary wondered – “Now who can that be” as few

people came to the front door. She opened the door and a man smiled and introduced himself.

“My name is John Abraham an official of the US Office of Civilian Defense and may I come in and talk with you?” he asked.

“Have we done something wrong,” she asked concerned.

“Oh no, the Country is in need of citizens to volunteer to be air raid wardens. I was wondering if you and your husband would volunteer?” he smiled.

“What is an air raid warden,” she asked interested.

“You will receive training in first aid, fire prevention, and the use of gas masks plus handling bombs. You know that when the air raid siren goes off it signals a blackout,” he said.

She interrupted him, “That’s when we turn off the lights and pull down the shades.”

“That’s right and the air raid warden is in charge of making sure the people comply. They also make sure all the people are off the streets, and all cars must park with their lights off,” he grinned.

She snickered.

“Is there something wrong?” he asked puzzled.

“Oh no, I was just thinking we have so few cars on our street,” she blushed.

He continued, “We will schedule blackout drills that will force everyone to practice their response to the air-raid alarm. You have heard the series of intermittent siren blasts when the street lights go off at the scheduled time. Anyone outside will take cover inside. You as an air-raid warden will supervise the blackout drills. You will walk up and down the street assigned to you and make sure everyone complies and no light can come from the houses. You will receive a white helmet with a red CD emblem printed on it and you can keep it.”

“I’ll ask my husband when he comes home,” she said.

“Ok, if you decide tell them at the store and they will notify us. We need to know in two days,” he said and left.

When Muzzy came home, she told him about the visit and his response was. “See I told you I was going to be a policeman.”

So they became air-raid wardens and valued their white helmets and took their new job very serious.

September 1942 and Mary had another problem to deal with and that was keeping her baby in school. The first day she switched the back of his legs with him crying all the way to the schoolhouse. He determined that he was not going to school and before she could get back home, he was sitting on the front porch steps. Dolores and Louie would hold onto him and make sure he went into the room but when the teacher turned her back, he was home.

Sometimes he would not go home and hide on the slate dump that lined the road to the school. It concerned Mary, as it was dangerous because of the hot spots caused by the burning coal as he could easily fall into one those dangerous spots.

She tried everything begging and even crying but he was a stubborn and spoiled little boy. There was only one cure and it was someone that also hated school and that was his dad.

“We are going to somehow make him go to school. You know that hunting season is coming and he just loves going with you to train the dog. You tell him he can’t go with you unless he stays in school,” she told Muzzy one night when he got home from work.

“I never liked school either he is just following after me,” he replied grinning.

“Times are different and the boy needs an education. You want him to end up in the mine?” she asked, as she knew he didn’t want either of his boys in the mine.

He didn’t say anything but the following Saturday he was up early to go train the dog and Bobby ran out to the dog house as his dad was getting Skippy their hunting dog. Following close behind was his little black terrier, Fritzzie, that his dad brought home one night. The dog loved to go hunting as much as the boy did and loved to run the rabbits down in the open fields.

“The dog can go but you stay home,” Muzzy snapped.

“Why can’t I go, I won’t get in the way and you promised,” Bobby whined.

“Boy if won’t go to school you won’t go hunting. Go back into the house,” Muzzy gave him a look and the boy knew that he’d better do what his dad told him or else.

Bobby turned towards the house walking slowly then stopped and said, “Will you take me with you if I promise to go to school?”

Muzzy didn’t answer and the two dogs followed him out of the yard into the alley. He stopped turned and said, “Boy you better go to school and stay there or you’ll get worse than no hunting.”

Mary was standing inside the door watching and smiled as she saw the look that came onto her sons face as he broke into a run after his dad. There were no further problems except for an occasional Friday, “My side is hurting,” complaint.

The Doctor would say, “Mary there is nothing wrong with the boy he is just faking it,” but she let him occasionally get away with the fake. Seems the hurting went away after dinner.

Mary rejoiced in 1943 when she heard the good news was announced that the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh purchased the Community Building and converted it to a

church. They called it the Guardian Angels Church, Southview, Pa. and on November 28, the church was dedicated.

Chapter 19

“Mom, are we going to have a tree this year?” Bobby asked on Friday morning December 24, 1943.

“I don’t know I only have a dollar and the cheapest one cost two dollars. I also don’t have a way to Hickory even if I did have the money,” Mary answered.

Christmas was always an adventure causing her problems. One problem that occurred from year to year was how she was going to save money for gifts and a tree? Their tradition was to decorate the tree on Christmas Eve before going to mid-night mass. It would be the first Christmas mass said at the Guardian Angels Church and the people rejoiced that night.

“Why not ask Mike to take you?” Dolores asked. Mike was the husband of one of Mary’s close friends Marie who bought one of the boss’s houses across the street from them.

“Ok, let’s go down and ask,” Mary said.

Marie talked her husband into going and he agreed, but would not take any money for going. Mary brought a bottle of her wine and six bottles of home brew and he did take the gifts.

Mary bargained with the tree owner and he sold her a tree with two tops for a dollar. They brought it home and spent the night decorating it and disguising the two tops. The tree was one of the best-looking trees they ever had and she received many compliments on how beautiful it was.

The three of them went to mass at midnight proud of their evenings work but the good feelings ended after mass started. A commotion and loud talking came from the rear of the church.

“That’s dad’s voice,” Dolores said.

“Louie go back and see if that is your dad,” she knew that it was.

He usually celebrated by getting dead drunk and showing up at the church or they would find him passed out at the house after they got home from church.

She would send the children to bed and somehow the four feet ten inch one hundred twenty pound woman could help her six foot two hundred twenty pound husband up the thirteen step narrow staircase to bed.

“It’s him and four others,” Louie Jr. whispered when he returned.

“Is he in an angry mood?” she asked.

“No, he seems to be in a good mood in fact the five of them quieted down when the usher asked them to keep quiet,” he smiled.

Muzzy was outside waiting for them when mass was over and they came home together. They opened their gifts before going to bed and Mary slept about two hours before getting up and preparing the Christmas meal.

Throughout the years she dealt with his bringing his drinking buddies home for something to eat at two or three o’clock in the morning. It usually occurred late Saturday night or early Sunday morning. They usually ate the meat she had for their Sunday meal.

“Dolores, go to the store and get pork chops for dinner,” she would tell her un-happy daughter before they went to nine o’clock mass.

“Why is it always me that has to go? Why can’t you send Louie or Bobby once in a while,” Dolores would complain.

“It is the woman’s place to see the men have meat for dinner,” Mary would always make up same lame reason.

“That doesn’t make sense.”

“Make sense or not just go before we are late for church and your dad is going to want pork chops,” she demanded.

“Then send him because the store manager always gets mad at me,” Dolores said as she went out the door.

Returning with the meat she asked, “Mom can I stay at my girlfriend’s house Monday night?”

“What friend is that?” Mary asked.

“Edith, who that lives in Hickory.”

“I don’t know your dad doesn’t like any of you staying overnight and especially you. If he finds out all hell will break out,” Mary said.

“Does that mean ok?” she asked.

“Yes, but be careful,” Mary cautioned.

Luck was not on Dolores’s side that night as one of her dad’s friends saw her when she went with Edith for her piano lessons. That Friday evening as she and Bobby were taking off their dirty shoes before entering the house the ‘hell’ broke out.

“Where do you think you are going? You don’t live here. Hickory is where you belong,” Muzzy half loaded broke the bad news.

“Yes I do daddy,” Dolores replied.

He just gave her that look and Mary pulled her outside and said, “Stay in the wash house until he goes to sleep and I’ll call you.”

She had to go the outhouse and decided to stay there but heard him leaving the house to do his business so she ran to the chicken coop attached to the coal shed. She remembered that she couldn’t latch the door and thought he would see it and ran to the wash shed. She leaned against the door and fell asleep with the baby chicks.

“Dolores come out your dad is asleep,” Mary woke her around four in the morning.

“Mom, I think those chicks gave me lice, she said scratching her head.

Mary made a mixture of olive oil and vinegar and washed her hair before letting her go to bed. Her dad

never again mentioned the incident as if it never happened.

“Mom, had daddy ever hit you when he is in one of his moods?” Dolores asked her mother the next day.

“No, he has never raised a hand to me and you know he has never hit you. He may have a problem with his drinking but striking a woman is not one of his faults,” Mary said. He never did strike her or to her knowledge any woman.

“Mom, do all dads sleep with their daughters?” she asked surprising her mother.

“What did you say?” Mary asked.

“Most of my girl friends tell me that their dad sleeps or tries to sleep with them,” she repeated.

“I never heard of such a thing and you’re not trying to tell me your dad has tried that,” Mary asked.

“Oh no, he has never laid a hand on me,” she said giggling.

“Why are you giggling?” Mary asked.

“Daddy would never try anything like that but I sure wish he’d let me go out with boys,” she smiled.

“Those girls are pulling your leg,” Mary smiled.

“Oh they are not lying and they all say they are going to leave home as soon as they can,” she said.

“Don’t ask me to let you stay over with any of those girls as those men may try something with you,” Mary said.

“Edith said her dad never tried anything with her,” she tried to calm her mothers fears but that was the last time she slept out until she married.

“Bobby, come in and wash up if you are going with us tonight,” Mary called him in from playing with his lead army under the front porch.

It was Friday night and time for the monthly Hillbilly band at the S.N.P.J. Club usually held at the lot behind the

club. Mary enjoyed going and listening to the band. She really liked it when they had a Polka Band in the hall.

Dancing always was her main form of entertainment then there was the annual Coal Company outing at Kennywood. That was where she and Muzzy continued to enjoy doing something together. Now the family could enjoy the park especially the Racer rollercoaster with the kids on one train and their mom and dad on the other.

They also enjoyed the weekly sixteen-millimeter movies at the S.N.P.J. club that cost eight cents for adults and five cents for children. Their favorites were the war, cowboy, and weekly serial cliffhangers advertised as, "Pulse pounding, Thrills, Spills and Chills, Thrilling, Thundering and Throbbing, Breathless, Breakneck Adventure!" Many times the feature movie didn't come and the operator played nothing but the cliffhangers. The drunks would come up from the bar below and at times, a fight would break out in the middle of a movie.

These attractions relieved the pressures of the times as the war at first didn't go well and recovery from the depression was taking longer than expected.

Graduation time and Mary worried that she was going to loose her eldest to the war effort. Then a minor problem came up that she had to solve. Lou was a small actor in the 1944 senior play and Bobby had a bit part in a skit that his second grade was holding. The problem was they both wanted to use Fuzzy their black Persian cat.

Mary found the kitten in the chicken coop half-dead and she cleaned it up and fed him raw eggs, which she said was good for his fur. Fuzzy was totally black except for a white star on its chest and by coincidence it matched Fritzzie who was also totally black with a white star on his chest.

She had no control over loosing her son to the war but she could solve the minor problem. She convinced Bobby

that his brother needed the cat more than he did and he could use Fuzzy in rehearsal during the day. His brother would rehearse with the cat in the evening. The plays were on the same day with Bobby's in the late morning and Lou's at night. She thought she had it solved but at the last moment, Lou's director wanted to have a walk through during the day.

She needed another cat so she convinced her neighbor into letting Bobby use the mother of Fuzzy. It was black and the same size as Fuzzy but there was one problem – it did not like anyone holder her. So Mary made a cat carrier out of a cardboard box. The audience did not see much of the cat but they heard its loud meowing and scratching. Mom always came up with a solution of sorts.

Fuzzy was the star of the play performing on cue in the murder mystery. The main actor got sick two days before the play and they drafted Lou to play the part. Mary was so proud of him learning the lines on short notice and giving a good performance.

In December, he avoided a draft again and joined the Navy. Mary proudly hung a Son in-Service flag in the window. She prayed the blue star in the center of a red-bordered white rectangle did not turn to a gold one meaning that he lost his life in the service of his country.

She received a letter from him about the weather while he was in boot camp at the Sampson Naval Training Center on Lake Seneca, in New York. The worst and prolonged winter since 1918 struck on December 11, 1944 just after his arrival and went to February 1, 1945.

The snowfall at Buffalo during that time was more than 90 inches, while at Syracuse it was 102 inches. The snowfall for January at Buffalo was 50.6 inches, which was by far the most ever recorded in one month. In addition, the cold was continuous with the thermometer going over freezing only once or twice in the period, and falling below zero frequently. The weather was brutal

especially the wind off the lake cut through the thin barrack's walls.

Mary worried that he wouldn't even make it out of Boot Camp let alone get into the War. But in mid January he came home for eleven days and joined in the yearly fun of sledding on the hill next to the house. They also had a record snowfall and the hill provided the Patch months of entertainment. Throughout the years, the steep street more like a large hill was the town's playground during the winter months.

Young, old, and all ages gathered on the hill for nights of sledding. It became a sheet of ice and the few cars in the Patch didn't even try to get up it. Mary bought a single sled for Lou and a double for Dolores and Bobby. One could go a quarter mile if they shined their sled's rails but most turned toward the store at the street below the house. Located at the bottom of the steepest part of the ride on the hill the house provided a way station for the cold and wet sledders. Mary had a hot stove, hot chocolate plus at times cookies. She also provided fresh coal ashes on her small driveway where they could keep their sled's rails polished and shined for a good fast run.

Lou joined in the fun until he went to his next assignment and twenty weeks of training as a Radio Operator. Mary made sure his clothes were clean, ironed and she even ironed his underwear.

On Thursday April 12 as was her custom Mary was sewing and mending clothes. At three in the afternoon, she brought the items downstairs she could repair by hand to listen to her favorite soap opera, Guiding Light.

Just as she turned the radio on an announcer said in a quivering voice, "The President is dead."

"I didn't know he was even sick," she thought and cried.

It shocked her when she learned that FDR had contracted Polio in 1929 and was in a wheelchair. She

didn't know how sick he was and she was in the majority as he kept his illness a secret from the public.

When Muzzy came home from work, he had already heard the bad news and they kept their ears glued to the radio for further information. They learned that he died of a stroke while sitting for a portrait at a home he had built at Warm Springs, Georgia. They mourned his death just as the country and world as many pinned their hopes on their man, FDR.

"The Resistenza partigiana captured Mussolini today," Mary told Muzzy when he came home from work Friday April 27.

"Was he running away?" he asked.

"The news said he was trying to get to Switzerland," she replied.

"I saw him once as he came from Switzerland," he said almost to himself.

He went out to celebrate and came home drunk. The next day he heard that they killed Benito then took him to Milan and hung upside down and put him on display. This gave him another reason to celebrate.

He came home from work on Monday and heard the news that Italy had surrendered. Mary never liked the cruelty displayed by Mussolini and the harm he brought to the place that gave her many good memories.

She convinced Muzzy to finish spading the garden that afternoon to keep him from celebrating again.

"Well at least my son will not have to fight his own people," she thought.

The same day Italy surrendered the news came over the radio that Hitler committed suicide. A week later May 8 the world celebrated V-E Day as Germany unconditionally surrendered. Mary breathed another sigh of relief, as her son would not have to fight the Germans either but there still was the Japanese.

Chapter 20

Mary listened every free time she had on the progress of the war with Japan. On June 23, she heard the vicious battle for Okinawa ended.

"Eighty-five thousand plus of boy's lost or wounded. Maybe the Japanese will surrender before our son becomes involved," she said to Muzzy as she washed his back.

Three days later Lou came home on a ten day leave after he completed radio school. Orange, Texas was his next assignment.

"What are you going to do down there," Mary asked.

"I am assigned to the USS Orleck," he replied.

"Is that a Battle ship," Muzzy asked overhearing their conversation.

"It is a Destroyer that they just commissioned and I'll be a 'plankowner'," he proudly said.

"Does that mean you actually own a part of that boat," Muzzy asked.

"Not really it just means that I am one of the first crew members. I can brag that I own one of the planks on the main deck," he tried to explain but his dad just shrugged his shoulder while his mother proudly smiled.

"Then you will be going to fight the Japanese," Mary asked.

"They haven't said where we are going," he told her.

Two weeks after he left for Texas President Truman on July 26 issued his Potsdam Declaration to Japan, "Surrender or suffer prompt and utter destruction."

Three day later she heard the Japanese rejected his proposal.

Monday wasday August six and she came in from hanging the wet clothes to listen to the news and she heard, "An atomic bomb, "Little Boy" was dropped on Hiroshima today.

“What in the world is an atomic bomb,” she thought.

No one explained to her what an atomic bomb was then on Thursday August 9, she sat down to mend the worn clothes and listen to her soap.

“Another atomic bomb the "Fat Man" has been dropped on Nagasaki. Stay tuned for an important message from President Truman in two minutes,” an announcer broke in.

“The British, Chinese, and United States Governments have given the Japanese people adequate warning of what is in store for them.

We have laid down the general terms on which they can surrender. Our warning went unheeded; they rejected our terms. Since then the Japanese have seen what our atomic bomb can do. They can foresee what it will do in the future.

The world will note the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come.

If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost.

I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately, and save themselves from destruction. I realize the tragic significance of the atomic bomb. Its production and its use were not lightly undertaken by this Government. But we knew that our enemies were on the search for it. We know now how close they were to finding it. And we knew the disaster which would come to this Nation, and to all peace-loving nations, to all civilization, if they had found it first. That is why we felt compelled to undertake the long, uncertain, and costly labor of discovery and production.

We won the race of discovery against the Germans. Having found the bomb, we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans. We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us."

The government declared Wednesday August 15, 1945 as V-J Day when the Japanese surrendered and Mary rejoiced knowing that her son would not see action in the war. That Saturday the town gathered at the SNPJ Club for a dance to celebrate the end of the war. The war might be over but the dance of life continued for Mary.

"The house needs shingled, I can fill the wind whistling thru in places," Mary said to Muzzy in December of 1945.

"No one can do it now we will have to wait until spring," he replied.

"I was thinking to have red French-lap asbestos shingles put on," she said.

During the spring of 1946 the house received new siding and she went in debt.

"Mom when are we getting a phone? Everyone has had one for years," Dolores asked her mom.

"Everyone knows your business when you get one and besides we can't afford one," Mary made an excuse.

Everyone that had a phone in the Patch was on a party line. She listened to the constant complaints from her friends that every time they made or received a call they

could hear the clicks of rubbernecks. One neighbor had a chair at her front door and sat there constantly monitoring the calls. The boys called her Mrs. KDKA as she knew all the news all the time. Mary could look out the front window and watch her and then she heard the woman gossip.

She finally agreed and they received a phone and their number was seven short rings and two long rings. She would talk in Italian when talking to her sisters or Muzzy's family. Muzzy didn't like the phone and rarely talked on it.

She had a hard time making ends meet that year and in February of 1947 Dolores decided, "Mom I want to quit school so I can go to work then I can help with the bills. Mr. Gasvoda has offered me a job in his store. "

"I don't think that is a good idea you need to complete your education," Mary replied.

"Most of the kids quit school before the age of sixteen. You know it is up to you as Dad doesn't care if I go to school or quit," Dolores replied.

She did not know that in 1947 fifteen was the school leaving age recently raised from fourteen.

"It that is what you want to do then go ahead," Mary didn't want to argue the matter.

"Mom, I want to quit school too," Bobby, asked overhearing their conversation.

"No and that is the end of the matter you are going to graduate and go to college," Mary put her foot down.

"Him, go to college, he can't even get passing grades in fifth grade," Dolores laughed. Her reason for quitting was not her grades.

"He will graduate and pass to the sixth grade," Mary predicted and time proved her right.

“Mom, I met this boy and want to go to a drive-in movie with him,” Dolores asked later that summer.

“What boy,” Mary asked knowing that Muzzy would have problems with her going to a drive-in movie.

“His name is Robert William and we call him Bill. He just got out of the Navy and he has a Ford coup,” Dolores said.

“Ask you’re Dad,” Mary smiled.

She thought she knew what he would say. She may have known how her husband would answer but not the cunningness of her daughter.

“Dad, now that I have made some money I would like to take Bobby with me to a drive-in-movie,” she asked as he was studying the sports pages.

He looked up at her never asking how she was going and said, “Ok,” and went back to the sports page.

Bobby and his buddy sat in the rumble seat of the Ford and she went on her date. That was the beginning of many dates and in the spring of forty-eight Bill asked Muzzy if he could marry his daughter.

The wedding was on and turned into a big one that caused Muzzy to say to Mary, “We’ll be paying for this craziness for the next fifty years.”

Mary prepared for the event by buying thirty-six chickens then she killed and cleaned them. Her method of execution was to put the chicken under a washtub pull out its head sit on the tub and with her ax cut its head off. She then threw it out the cellar door and the neighbors saw headless chickens running all over the yard and down the bank. Her partner Bobby made a game of it running them down.

The day before the wedding Mary recruited her neighbors and both her sisters in the frying of the chickens. For a week she baked bread, made Italian cookies, ravioli, sauce, meatballs, and various other goodies.

It was a wedding feast with the reception held at a packed S.N.P.J. hall. She was proud of Muzzy that day keeping sober until after the wedding at the Church and not messing up giving her daughter away. He went missing for two days after she saw him and his buddies carry a keg of beer and the remaining whiskey into his buddy's cellar.

"Let's have a picnic with my sons-in-law's money," Mary heard him say to his happy buddies.

"Mom, I am going to have a baby," Dolores broke the news to Mary a couple months later.

"Babies sometimes can be a problem and are you ready for the responsibility?" Mary asked seemingly disturbed.

"You are going to be a Grandfather," she told Muzzy that afternoon.

"I need to celebrate that," he said and left for the beer joint.

"Forty-one years old and another baby," she thought as she washed the dishes.

Bobby was sleeping when she lay across the bed to look out the window waiting for Muzzy to come home. The sound of a car stopping outside the house and the loud talking broke her chain of memories. She quickly got out of bed rushed downstairs and opened the locked door.

Muzzy and three of his friends came stumbling in and she set out another plate as he brought home one more than she thought he would.

"I brought my friends home to eat some of our deer meat," Muzzy said.

He and Dan killed a deer a few days before and brought it to her to cut up. They had field dressed it and she had them remove the front and hind legs plus the head

using Dan's meat saw. She with their help cut it into steaks, roast, and stew beef. Dan took half and she kept the rest knowing this night would come.

Two o'clock and she got him into bed and then up at six to go to work. He left and she sat down dizzy headed and thought it was caused by lack of sleep. Bobby came down and she made him breakfast then he went out to play. She felt that she was going to faint and lay down on the couch.

"Mom, are you ok?" Dolores asked waking her.

"I am alright," she answered but fell back onto the couch.

"You're forehead is awful hot," Dolores said.

"I feel hot all over," she replied.

"I saw Doctor McCarroll next door at the Schmidt's when I came down. Do you want me to get him?" Dolores asked.

"Maybe you'd better," she answered weakly.

Dolores ran up the hill and got the doctor. He came down an hour later examined Mary and told Dolores that they needed to take her to the hospital. They put her in the car and the doctor took her to the hospital in Washington.

Dolores found Bobby left a note for Bill telling where she was then she got a friend to take them to the hospital.

"Doctor what is wrong with her?" Dolores asked when they got to the hospital.

"She is in serious condition and you need to get your Dad," he replied.

"He is working," she replied.

"Then get him," he snapped.

"But what is wrong with her?" she asked again.

"Get her husband," he replied and walked off.

"What wrong with Mom," Bobby asked.

“The doctor won’t say. I wonder if Bill will think to wait for Daddy and bring him when he gets home from work?” she replied.

“Pap and Bill are coming down the hall,” Bobby said two hours later to his sister.

“How is your Mom?” Bill asked.

“The doctor isn’t saying,” Dolores, answered.

The doctor came down the hall pulled Muzzy aside and talked to him. Then they entered the room. Dolores started to follow and Bill stopped her.

She heard her dad say, “Mary, what have you done?”

“I am ~~,” Mary said and the door closed.

Dolores could not hear the rest of her mother’s reply. The doctor came out shaking his head did not say anything and walked away.

Lady Dynamite, let’s dance fast
Let’s dance and sing!
Lady Dynamite, let’s dance fast!
Let’s dance and sing, and dynamite!

The dance of life continues.

Epilogue

The author tells the first forty-one years of Mary's life through her eyes and experiences. The end of the story, the last fifty years of her life is in chronological order. Highlighted are the special events, the fate of the various characters plus tying up the loose ends of her story.

1948 – 1949

Mary stayed in the hospital for two weeks worrying the complete time how Muzzy and Bobby would get along without her. Dolores presented her with her first grandchild and named him Robert William after his father. Mary doted on the boy and since he lived just up the hill, she saw him every day.

The Navy discharged Lou two weeks before his twenty-first birthday. The USS Orleck was his home for two years sailing mainly in the China Sea. During that time, the ship conducted mail runs from Hong Kong to Shanghai, Tsingtao, and Taku, China and Jinsen, Korea, and assisted in minesweeping operations in the Hainan Straight. The fleet encountered a wicked typhoon in 1946 and his ship almost sank.

Bill and Lou took a Diesel correspondence repair course through the GI Bill but neither completed it. Bill went into the mine for a period of time but did use the course when he eventually bought his own truck doing the repairs on it.

Lou successfully ran the SNPJ Club from 1948 to 1950 by booking popular Polka Band that brought in crowds into the hundreds. He bought a used 1949 Desoto with fluid drive quit the SNPJ and drove it to Kansa City, Missouri to attend attended Central Technical Institute

where he graduated in 1950 with a degree in radio electrical engineering.

Mary struggled to make ends meet and John L. Lewis didn't make things any better for them. He took his miners on strikes or "work stoppages" yearly. In 1945, 1946, 1948, and 1949–1950, he led strikes that President Harry S. Truman denounced as threats to national security. In response, industry, railroads and homeowners rapidly switched from coal to oil. Some of the miners under the threat of firing changed over to oil furnaces.

John L. Lewis timed the strikes usually to the Christmas season and winter months to get better settlements. Muzzy, the early miners, and their families paid the price and future miners reaped the benefits. Christmas during those times were tough but Mary made the best of them and there were always gifts under the tree for everyone.

The house received somewhat of a makeover as Mary received her first electric stove and refrigerator. She and Muzzy turned part of the cellar into a coal bin and had a coal furnace installed. No more carrying coal from the coal shed but there still was the ten tons of coal to get into the cellar. Muzzy passed the job off to Bobby when he reached the eighth grade. Mary would sneak out and help after Muzzy went to the beer joint or work.

Lou Jr. rewired the house and each room had outlets for the first time with light switches instead of a string to turn the overhead light off and on.

Mary in fact all the family rejoiced when they had an electric water heater and a shower installed in the basement. No shower stall, just a showerhead but it had hot and cold water a luxury for them.

She bought her first ringers washing machine and put it in the basement. The drain for these two new items was

nothing more than a pipe that ran out to the drainage ditch by the hill. There was a sewer drain but it was above the cellar floor and only used by the kitchen sink. The drain emptied into a ditch at the far end of town that ran into the creek down by the mine.

When the miners started installing indoor bathrooms, they were to install septic tanks but some used the drain. The bosses' houses did have indoor bathrooms and used another drain that ran to a simple sewage treatment facility down by the creek.

The Fifties

Lou came back home in a 1949 Hudson Hornet and went to work as a TV Engineer with WDTV, channel 3, owned and operated by the DuMont Television Network. He stayed there for a year and a half just after WDTV moved its facilities to Channel 2 on November 23, 1952.

Mary bought their first TV during that time and Lou repaired TV's out of the cellar teaching Mary how to change tubes and keep their TV working. She repaired their TV's for many years until tubes passed from the scene.

Dolores had another son and named him Ronald. Mary loved all her grandchildren and sometimes as most grandparents will do, she spoiled them. Bill built Dolores a home about a mile from the Patch and they lived there until his death.

Mary had problems in 1951 when Muzzy was in a mine cave-in that injured his right hand. His job was operating a machine that drove a 4 foot long steel bolt

with a steel plate, expansion shell, and pal nut into the roof of the mine. Designed to support the roof, prevent, limit roof falls, and eliminate the need for timbers by fastening together several weaker layers of roof strata to build a support "beam."

It didn't in this case and the fall drove the machine's control knob through his right hand. He spent weeks in a Pittsburgh hospital and months recovering but never regaining the full use of his hand. He did recover enough use of the hand to go back to work.

The same time Muzzy was in therapy Bobby began working in construction. His job was digging water ditches to the new houses in one of the housing developments that sprung up around Pittsburgh for the homecoming GI's. They usually bought them using the GI Bill.

He jumped out of the way of an oncoming bulldozer and twisted his left knee throwing it out of joint. They put him in another Pittsburgh hospital and Mary kept herself busy going back and forth between the two. Bobby recovered at home with a full cast on the leg while Mary and Muzzy continued to stay in Pittsburgh.

One problem ended and another reared its ugly head that Mary had to work through it. The next hunting season Muzzy after recovering from the hand injury decided to go groundhog hunting. They did not eat the critters but neighbors did and he would give them away.

His hunting ground was the Wabash railroad as the hogs dug their holes in the bank of the railroad. He knew their location and would wait above a hole with his 22 caliber single shot rifle. When it did come out of its home 'bang' and there was one dead hog. He came upon a hole and saw one already outside its home and he shot.

The trouble was it wasn't a hog but another miner waiting with a club to get a hog. What Muzzy saw and

thought was a hog was the miner's boot. The bullet went clean through the man's flattop or dorsal of his foot.

Mary had to arrange their finances to pay for the man's doctor's bill and time lost from work that he milked. Muzzy never hunted again and turned to his first love fishing.

Mary lost the last of her brood when Bobby graduated in 1954 and enlisted in the Air Force where he served eleven years thus avoiding the draft. When he came home from basic training, Mary had a surprise for him as they had installed a bathroom upstairs. It meant the digging up half of the side yard for a septic tank.

Lou moved back to Kansas City for a short time and met his future wife, Beverly, from Bay City, Michigan and they married in 1955. They settled in Bay City and he went to work for Gerity Broadcasting Company rising in time to Vice President. They gave Muzzy a grandson, Christopher, in 1959 to carry on his name and Mary another grandchild to brag about.

1960

The decade started off with the birth of two grandchildren with Dolores giving birth to Timothy and Beverly birthing Mary's only granddaughter, Maria.

Mary loved all her grandchildren with only one reservation there was not one full-blooded Italian among them. Her children did not marry an Italian and she had pinned her hopes on Bobby but he also let her down.

During the decade of the sixties Mary and Muzzy spent their vacation time either in Michigan or North Carolina. While stationed in Goldsboro, N.C. Bob

married, LoRayne, and settled there with his stepson, Edward.

Muzzy loved to go and sit for hours at the end of the runway at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and watch the B52 and F4 Fighters take off and land. Bob would park the station wagon with the tailgate down and Muzzy would eat sandwiches and drink beer hour on end.

They spent most of their vacation with Muzzy fishing off a pier at Topsail Island on the coast. Mary did not fish but would sit for hours keeping him company and supplied with food and something to drink. They rented the same cabin each time they visited over the years. Their last visit was in 1977 during the time Elvis Presley died.

Their times with Lou, Bev, and children in Bay City involved various jaunts around the country and into Canada. Lou had a cabin on a lake north of Bay City and they would spend weeks there fishing.

Muzzy would row Mary out into the lake in a small rowboat never concerned that she could not swim a stroke although he was a good swimmer.

He loved to brag, when he had a few, how as a young man he would swim across the Ohio River when he visited the Sons of Italy Club in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

Mary was fearless and it never occurred to her that she couldn't swim and if she did remember it did not bother her.

The house received more improvements as they finally got over the fear of the company firing him and installed an oil furnace. They tore down the coal shed, outhouse, and wash shed during that time frame. The house received aluminum siding and they finally replaced the old slate roof with an asbestos one.

Muzzy retired in 1968 when he reached sixty-two and Mary never did retire as her job never ended. Their favorite pastime was sitting on the small back porch and watching the activities going on around them. They became a fixture as the passing cars would honk their horn, wave, or stop to chat.

Mary became known as the candy lady to the passing children as she always had homemade cookies and candy ready for all the kids that came to the porch.

1970

Mary for many years suffered with osteoarthritis and she kept her hands busy crocheting or working a small rubber ball to keep her fingers operating. Over the many years she crocheted hundreds of doilies, full-size Afghans, and bedspreads giving them to family and friends. She pushed herself through much pain as the osteoarthritis settled in her knees.

She had both knees replaced in the early seventies not long after the first artificial knee joints were developed and after the first joint replacement surgery occurred in late 1969. She adapted very well and kept them until she died and she would climb ladders walk up the many steps in Three Rivers Stadium to the third tier as the family gathered to see a Pirates baseball game.

Muzzy in 1976 took her to Hawaii to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary and it was one of the highlights of their life. He liked to fly and was afraid; she loved to fly and nothing scared her. She at first said she didn't want to go but she was happy they did having those positive memories to think about when she was alone.

On a very cold Monday on January 23, 1978 Mary's life changed as Muzzy died of Black Lung Disease. The doctors called it Leukemia to protect the Coal Company.

They buried him on one of the coldest days in years with the ground so frozen that they could not dig his grave until late spring. He died a miner's death after living a miner's life of hard work, hard drinking, and hard living.

One of his last words to this writer was, "Bobby I am not afraid to go under the ground as I spent most of my life there."

He lived by a code of justice and an odd sense of humor that few understood. He never cheated on his Mary nor raised a hand towards her in anger. He outwardly showed little love or affection but he left a love and good memories of him in this writer.

He did not practice any form of religion but one day sitting in his favorite lounge chair he put down the paper he was looking at and said, "Son I believe in God." He went back looking at the sports pages making no further comments.

Mary was now free to do something she waited fifty-one years to do and that was to take Holy Communion. She never lost her Catholic upbringing from the days in Italy. She tried several times to have them say their vows with a Priest but he would never agree to it.

Death frees one from many things but it did not make her leave the possession they treasured, their home. She lived there for many years but never alone, as Dolores was her constant companion.

The last years of her dance with life.

Mary continued to live in her home occasionally vacationing in Michigan or North Carolina but she loved

her home and her life there. Two events occurred during her last year's that drastically took away her independence.

She was in a car wreck a couple years after Muzzy's death and suffered a severe concussion then she had a heart attack in 1986.

She had the heart attack alone at home in the bathroom. She fell hitting the commode and broke a couple ribs. She lay there until the next day when Dolores found her. The doctor said she would have died but the fall and broken rib shocked her heart back to life.

The concussion probably brought on Alzheimer's disease faster than it normally would have and in 1994 she started showing signs of the disease. She had to give up her prize possession her home a few years later and she moved in with Dolores.

Bill had died in 1991 and Dolores was living alone.

The end of the 'dance' came on Sunday, August 9, 1998 at the Allegheny University Hospitals, Canonsburg, Pa. Dolores was alone with her at the time of her death and tells what happened.

"She died a very easy death and I was with her at the hospital. They called that her heart rate was going down and said she would probably live an hour. When I got to her room and she saw me her heart rate went up and she lived three more hours. I talked to her until the last seconds.

Five minutes before she died I had her head on my arm and she looked up at me and said, "I am sorry and I love you then died in my arms and I was alone."

Her obituary read: "Mary C. Furlin, 90, a member of St. Mary's Church in Cecil, Cecil Township, formerly of Southview, died Sunday, August 9, 1998, in Allegheny University Hospitals, Canonsburg.

She was born November 9, 1907, in Hahntown, a daughter of Joseph and Maria Semifero. Mrs. Furlin was a member of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church and the Hilltoppers, both in Cecil Township.

She was married to Louis Furlin Sr., who died January 23, 1978. Surviving are a daughter, Dolores Kendzlic, with whom she made her home; two sons, Louis Furlin Jr. of Essexville, Mich., and Robert J. Furlin of Mt. Olive, N.C.; a sister, Joanne Horwarth of Irwin; six grandchildren, Robert, Ronald and Timothy Kendzlic, Christopher and Maria Furlin, and Donald Moxley; seven great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Deceased, in addition to her husband, are a sister, Angelina Hrabak; and six brothers, Angelo, Anthony, Joseph, Atolio, Frank and Ernie Semifero.”

Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast
Let's dance and sing!
Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast!
Let's dance and sing, and dynamite!

Our fathers once danced
To the sound of dynamite in the past.
Now this tragic dance
Requires stronger music.
Let's dynamite, let's dynamite!

Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast
Let's dance and sing!
Lady Dynamite, let's dance fast!
Let's dance and sing, and dynamite!

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