

Lucia Rudini eBook

Lucia Rudini

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ILLUSTRATIONS

“My pet, see how you frightened the brave
Austrian soldier” *Frontispiece*

“The Soldiers came and chattered and laughed”

“Together they drove the goats before them”

“Lucia and Garibaldi toiled up the hill, each one
using every bit of their strength”

LUCIA RUDINI

CHAPTER I

CELLINO



Lucia Rudini folded her arms across her gaily-colored bodice, tilted her dark head to one side and laughed.

"I see you, little lazy bones," she said. "Wake up!"

A small body curled into a ball in the grass at her feet moved slightly, and a sleepy voice whimpered, "Oh, Lucia, go away. I was having such a nice dream about our soldiers up there, and I was just killing a whole regiment of Austrians, and now you come and spoil it."

A curly black head appeared above the tops of the flowers, and two reproachful brown eyes stared up at her.

Lucia laughed again. "Poor Beppino, some one is always disturbing your fine dreams, aren't they? But come now, I have something far better than dreams for you," she coaxed.

"What?" Beppi was on his feet in an instant, and the sleepy look completely disappeared.

"Ha, ha, now you are curious," Lucia teased, "aren't you? Well, you shan't see what I have, until you promise to do what I ask."

Beppi's round eyes narrowed, and a cunning expression appeared in their velvety depth.

"I suppose I am not to tell Nana that you left the house before sunrise this morning," he said.

Lucia looked at him for a brief moment in startled surprise, then she replied quickly, "No, that is not it at all. What harm would it do if you told Nana? I am often up before sunrise."

"Yes, but you don't go to the mountains," Beppi interrupted. "Oh, I saw you walking smack into the guns. What were you doing?" He dropped his threatening tone, so incongruous with his tiny body, and coaxed softly, "please tell me, sister mine."

"Silly head!" Lucia was breathing freely again, "there is nothing to tell. I heard the guns all night, and they made me restless, so I went for a walk. Go and tell Nana if you like, I don't care."

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Beppi's small mind returned to the subject at hand.

"Then if it isn't that, what is it you want me to do?" he inquired, and continued without giving his sister time to reply. "It's to take care of them, I suppose," he grumbled, pointing a browned berry-stained little finger at a herd of goats that were grazing contentedly a little farther down the slope.

"Yes, that's it, and good care of them too," Lucia replied. "You are not to go to sleep again, remember, and be sure and watch Garibaldi, or she will stray away and get lost."

"And a good riddance too," Beppi commented under his breath.

He did not share in the general admiration for the "Illustrious and Gentile Senora Garibaldi," the favorite goat of his sister's herd. Perhaps the vivid recollection of Garibaldi's hard head may have accounted for his aversion. Lucia heard his remark and was quick to defend her pet.

"Aren't you ashamed to speak so?" she exclaimed, "I've a good mind not to give you the candy after all."

"Oh, Lucia, please, please!" Beppi begged. "I will take such good care of them, I promise, and if you like, I will pick the tenderest grass for old crosspatch," he added grudgingly.

Lucia smiled in triumph, and from the pocket of her dress she pulled out a small pink paper bag.

"Here you are then," she said; "and I won't be away very long. I am just going to see Maria for a few minutes."

Beppi caught the bag as she tossed it, and lingered over the opening of it. He wanted to prolong his pleasure as long as possible. Candy in war times was a treat and one that the Rudinis seldom indulged in.

As if to echo his thoughts, Lucia called back over her shoulder as she walked away, "Don't eat them fast, for they are the last you will get for a long time."

Beppi did not bother to reply, but he acted on the advice, and selected a big lemon drop that looked hard and everlasting, and set about sucking it contentedly.

Lucia walked quickly over the grass to a small white-washed cottage a little distance away. She approached it from the side and peeked through one of the tiny windows. Old Nana Rudini, her grandmother, was sitting in a low chair beside the table in the low-ceilinged room. Her head nodded drowsily, and the white lace that she was making lay

neglected in her lap. Lucia smiled to herself in satisfaction and stole gently away from the window.

The Rudinis lived about a mile beyond the north gate of Cellino, an old Italian town built on the summit of a hill. Cellino was not sufficiently important to appear in the guide books, but it boasted of two possessions above its neighbors,—a beautiful old church opposite the market place, and a broad stone wall that dated back to the days of Roman supremacy. It was still in perfect preservation, and completely surrounded the town giving it the appearance of a mediaeval fortress, rather than a twentieth century village. Two roads led to it, one from the south through the Porto Romano, and one from the north, up-hill and from the valley below. It was up the latter that Lucia walked. She was in a hurry and she swung along with a firm, graceful step, her head, crowned by its heavy dark hair, held high and her shoulders straight.

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The soldier on guard at the gate watched her as she drew nearer. She was a pleasing picture in her bright-colored gown against the glaring sun on the dusty white road. Roderigo Vicello had only arrived that morning in Cellino, and Lucia was not the familiar little figure to him that she was to the other soldiers. But she was none the less welcome for that, after the monotony of the day, and Roderigo as she came nearer straightened up self-consciously and tilted his black patent leather hat with its rakish cluster of cock feathers a little more to one side.

"Good day, Seniorina," he said smiling, as Lucia paused in the grateful shadow of the wall to catch her breath.

"Good day to you," she replied good-naturedly.

"You're new, aren't you? I never saw you before. Where is Paolo?"

"Paolo and his regiment go up to the front this afternoon," Roderigo replied. "We have just come to relieve them for a short time, then we too will follow."

Lucia nodded. "You come from the south, don't you?" she inquired, looking at him with frank admiration; "from near Napoli I should guess by your speech."

Roderigo laughed. "You guess right, I do, and now it is my turn to ask questions. Where do you come from?"

"Down there about a mile," Lucia pointed, "in the white cottage by the road."

Roderigo looked at the dark hair and eyes and the gaudily colored dress before him, and shook his head.

"Now perhaps," he admitted, "but you were born in the south where the sun really shines and the sky is blue and not a dull gray, or else where did you come by those eyes and those straight shoulders?"

Lucia looked up at the dazzling sky above her and laughed.

"And I suppose that spot is Napoli," she teased. "Well, you don't guess as well as I do, for I was born here and I have lived here all my life."

"All my life," Roderigo mimicked. "How very long you make that sound, Seniorina, and yet you look no older than my little sister."

Lucia drew herself up to her full height and did not deign a direct reply.

"Fourteen years is a long time, Senior," she said gravely, "when you have many worries."

“But you are too young to have many worries,” Roderigo protested; “or I beg your pardon, perhaps you have some one up there?” he pointed to the north, where the high peaks of the Alps were visible at no great distance.

“No, not now,” Lucia replied; “for my father was killed a year ago.”

Roderigo was silent for a little, then he raised one shoulder in a characteristic shrug.

“War,” he said slowly. “We all have our turn.”

Lucia nodded and returned almost at once to her gay mood.

“But you are still wondering how I got my black hair and eyes up here,” she laughed.

“Well, I will tell you. My mother came from your beautiful Napoli, and Nana, that is my grandmother, says I inherited my foolish love of gay clothes from her. Nana does not like gay clothes, but my father always liked me to wear them.”

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"Then your mother is dead too?" Roderigo asked respectfully.

"When I was a little girl, and when Beppino was a tiny baby. Beppi is my little brother," Lucia explained.

Roderigo's eyes were shining with delight. There was something in Lucia's soft tones that filled his homesick heart with joy. She was so different from most of the girls from the north, with their strange high voices and unfriendly manners. If she wasn't exactly from the south she was near it. He wanted to sit down beside her and tell her all about his home and his family, for he was very young and very homesick, but Lucia decreed otherwise.

"Now do see what you have done," she scolded suddenly. "You have kept me talking here until the sun is well down, and I will have to hurry if I want to see Maria and return home before Nana misses me. So much for gabbing on the high road with some one who should be watching for suspicious spies instead of asking questions," she finished with a provoking toss of her head.

Which sentence, considering that she had asked the first questions herself, was unjust. Roderigo, however, did not seem to resent the blame laid upon him. He did not even offer to contradict, but watched Lucia until she disappeared around a corner a few streets beyond the gate, and then he turned resolutely about and scanned the road with searching determination, as if he really believed that the open, smiling country about him might be concealing a spy.

When Lucia disappeared around the corner of the narrow street that led to the market place, she stopped long enough to laugh softly to herself.

"The great silly! He took all the blame himself instead of boxing my ears for being impertinent. A fine soldier he'll make! If I can scare him, what will the guns do?" she said aloud, and then with a roguish gleam of mischief in her eyes she hurried on.

The narrow side streets through which she passed were almost deserted, but when she reached the market place it was thronged with people. Every one was out to look at the new troops, and in the little square the great white umbrellas over the market stalls were surrounded by soldiers. Their picturesque uniforms added a gala note to the commonplace little scene.

Lucia elbowed her way through the jostling, laughing men to a certain umbrella, a little to one side of the open space left clear before the church.

CHAPTER II

MARIA

A neatly-dressed, dumpy little woman in a black dress and shawl sat beneath it, and behind a row of stone crocks beside her was a young girl several years older than Lucia, who ladled out cupfuls of the milk that the crocks contained, and gave them, always accompanied by a shy little smile, to the soldiers in return for their pennies. She was Maria Rudini, Lucia's cousin, a pretty, gentle-featured girl with shy, bewildered eyes.

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People often spoke of her quiet loveliness until they saw her younger cousin. Then their attention was apt to be diverted, for Maria's delicate charms seemed pale beside Lucia's southern beauty, and in the same manner her courage grew less. Although she was three years older, Maria never questioned Lucia's authority to lead.

When Lucia's father had died, the kindly heart of Maria's mother had prompted her to offer her home to his children, but Lucia had declined the offer. She said she would undertake the support of old Nana and Beppi and herself. There was considerable disapproval over her decision, but as was generally the case, Lucia had her own way. Her method of wage-earning was a simple one. Her father had owned a herd of goats and a garden, and the two had provided ample support for the needs of the family. At his death Lucia, with characteristic selection, had given up the garden and kept the goats.

Every morning she milked them and carried the bright pails to town, where her aunt sold them at her little stall along with cheese and sausage. The profits wore not great, but they wore enough.

"Is that the milk I brought in this morning?" Lucia asked incredulously as she approached the stall.

"No, no, my dear," her aunt replied, shaking her head. "You brought scarcely two full pails, and they were gone before you had reached the gate. We have had a great day, so many soldiers, it is a shame that you cannot bring in more, for we could sell it. Just see, we had to send to old Paolo's for this, and it is not as rich as yours of course, for his poor beasts have only the weeds between the cobblestones to eat."

"That is because he is a lazy old man and won't take the trouble to lead his herd out on the slopes to graze," Lucia replied. She put her hands on her hips and swayed back and forth as she talked. It was a little trait she had inherited from her mother, and one of her most characteristic poses.

"How well you look to-day!" Maria said, smiling. "I have been wishing you would come, we are so busy—see, here come a group of soldiers all together. Will you help me?" She held out a dipper with a long handle, which Lucia accepted critically.

"I don't like charging full price for this milk which is more like water," she said.

"Nonsense, child, it is business, the soldiers know no difference; it is only your silly pride," her aunt scolded. She was a little in awe of her determined niece, and very often she was provoked at her.

"If you can't bring us more milk, we must do the best we can," she said meaningly. "You used to bring us twice this much."

Lucia shrugged her shoulders and tossed her head. "I can bring no more than I bring," she said, and turned her attention to the soldiers before her.

But the explanation did not satisfy her thrifty aunt. She was no authority on goats, but she had enough sense to know that the supply of milk does not dwindle to one-half the usual quantity over night. Still she did not voice her suspicions.

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Lucia and Maria were busy for the rest of the afternoon. Lucia's flowered dress and brilliantly-colored bandana that she wore tied over her head, were added attractions to Senora Rudini's stall, and the soldiers from the south came and chattered and laughed.

[Illustration: "The soldiers came and chattered and laughed."]

"What a pity we have no more," Maria said as the last crock was emptied, and they set about preparing to return home. "We could go on selling all night now that Lucia is here."

"Well, it is high time to go home, I am tired," her mother replied crossly. "Hurry with what you are doing."

Lucia was busy closing the big umbrella.

"It is late, I will have to hurry, or Beppi will have let all my goats run away—he and his dreams. He is a lazy little one, but I can't bear to scold him," she said. "He is too little to understand."

Her aunt nodded. "Let him dream, but if you are not careful, he will be badly spoiled."

"No fear of that," Lucia replied, "while Nana has a word to say. She is always for bringing him up properly, but little good it does. Now we are ready, I will help you carry home your things, if you will let Maria walk with me to the gate," Lucia bargained.

"Oh, she may I suppose, though she should be at home helping me prepare the dinner. I suppose you have some secrets between you that an old grayhead can't hear," she grumbled good-naturedly.

"Oh, yes a fine secret!" Lucia replied laughing, as she picked up the greatest share of the burden and led the way.

Maria and her mother lived in an old stone house that had once been a palace. It was hardly palatial now, but it was very picturesque. It housed five families besides the Rudinis, and in spite of the many lines of wash that floated from its windows, it still retained enough of its old grandeur to be an interesting spot to the occasional tourist who visited Cellino. Maria and her mother were very proud of this distinction. It made up somewhat for the loss of their house, which they had been forced to leave, when six months before Maria's two brothers had gone off to fight.

The new quarters were not far from the market place and they soon reached them. Their rooms were on the ground floor, and Lucia and Maria made haste to drop what they were carrying and start off again at a much slower pace for the gate. The sun was low in the west. It was setting in a bank of golden clouds over the little river that ran parallel with the west wall of the town. Lucia stopped to look at it.

“Rain to-morrow, I suppose, by the look of those clouds,” she said, a real pucker of concern between her eyes.

“And no wonder,” Maria agreed, “with all this banging of guns one would think it would rain all the time out of pity for so much suffering.”

“Now, Maria, don’t begin to cry,” Lucia protested not unkindly. “It will do you no good, and it will only make things look worse than they really are.”

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"How can they?" Maria demanded, with more show of resentment than was usual with her quiet acceptance of things. "Only this morning I sold milk to such a sweet boy from the south. He had great sad, brown eyes like yours, and he was very young and unhappy. His father and brother were both killed, and now he is going."

"But perhaps he won't be killed," Lucia said practically. "Anyway, he will get a chance to do a little killing first, and surely that is enough to satisfy any one, or ought to be."

"Oh, Lucia you are cruel sometimes," Maria protested. "Who wants to kill? Surely not these happy boys, and they don't want to be killed either. It is all too terrible to think about, and you are an unnatural girl to talk as you do. Why, I don't believe you have cried once since the war began, even when the poor wounded were brought here, and we saw their faces all shot away."

Maria's anger rose as she talked, and Lucia listened curiously. It was something new for Maria to take her to task. Her mind flew back over the past year, and she saw herself with her face buried in the grass and her hands clenched, and remembered her furious anger and her vows of vengeance, but she had to admit that her cousin was right; she had shed no tears.

"We are not made the same way, I guess," she replied ruefully to Maria's charges. "I cannot cry, I can only hate."

"But hate won't do any good," Maria protested feebly.

"It will do more than tears," Lucia replied shortly.

They continued their walk in silence, now and then nodding to an acquaintance or bowing respectfully to the Sisters of Charity who lived at the big Convent just outside the Porto Romano, and who came to town to take care of the sick and cheer the broken-hearted. When they reached the north gate Lucia stopped. Roderigo was still on duty, but this time he did not pause in his brisk walk up and down to chat. He never even glanced in the girls' direction.

Maria nodded towards him and whispered excitedly, "That is the boy I was just now speaking of. Doesn't he look sad?"

"No, he looks quite cross," Lucia replied in a voice loud enough to be overheard, and her eyes sparkled with mischief as she added, "I wonder if he will let me through the gate to get home."

"May I pass, sir, please? I live a little beyond the wall, but I am not a spy," she said with mock humility.

Roderigo blushed. A soldier does not like to be made fun of, particularly when some one else is present.

“Pass,” he said gruffly.

Lucia laughed provokingly.

“Good night, Maria,” she said as she kissed her cousin. “Sweet dreams. I may not be in very early in the morning, there is so much to do, you know, but I will bring as much milk as possible,” she finished. Then without even a glance at Roderigo she walked through the gate and down the wall.

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When she had walked for a little distance she looked back. Maria and the soldier were in earnest conversation. Maria in her timid way was apologizing for her cousin's rudeness, and Roderigo was beginning to have doubts of the superiority of Southern beauty over the Northern, particularly when a gentle spirit was added to the charm of the latter. Lucia did not know she was the subject of their talk. She shrugged her shoulders and turned her thoughts to a more important question that was puzzling her. It was, how to slip out of the house the next morning without disturbing the already suspicious Beppi.

CHAPTER III

BEFORE DAYBREAK

Lucia found Beppi asleep in the grass, curled up in the same position that he had been in earlier in the day. One of his little hands had tight hold of the precious pink bag, and a sticky smile of blissful content turned up the corners of his full red lips.

Lucia looked at him and shook her head. There might have been twenty-seven instead of seven years between them, for there was something protective in her expression.

"Little lazy bones, asleep again!" she said, shaking him gently.

Beppi stirred, one eye opened, and then with a sudden rush of memory he sat up and began excitedly: "I just this minute fell asleep, just this very second, truly, Lucia! I have watched the goats, oh, so carefully, and they have not stirred,—see there they are only a little farther away than when you left. I only closed my eyes because I thought I might go on with that nice dream, but I didn't," he finished sorrowfully.

Lucia laughed.

"Look at the sun," she pointed. "It is late, you should have driven the goats home long ago. But I knew you would go to asleep after you ate up all the candy, such a naughty little brother that you are. What kind of a soldier would you make, I'd like to know, dreaming every few minutes? Come along, get up,—we must hurry back to Nana, or she will be worried."

She took his hand and together they drove the goats before them to the cottage.

[Illustration: "Together they drove the goats before them."]

Nana Rudini was waiting for them at the door. She was a little, wrinkled-up, old woman with bright blue eyes and thin gray hair. She spoke very seldom and always in a high querulous voice.

“So you’re back at last, are you?” she greeted, when the children were within hearing. “Supper’s been on the stove for too long. What kept you?”

“Very busy day, Nana,” Lucia spoke in much the same tone she had used towards Beppi. “I had to help Aunt and Maria at market. More troops have arrived and the streets are crowded.”

“Oh, sister, you never told me that!” Beppi said accusingly. “Where are they from?”

“The south mostly,” Lucia replied, “fine soldiers they are too, if you can judge by their looks.”

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"Which you can't," old Nana interrupted shortly. "Stop your talking and come in to supper."

"Right away," Lucia promised, and hurried off to shut up her goats in the small, half-tumbled-down shack at the back of the cottage.

Supper at the Rudinis consisted of boiled spaghetti, black bread and cheese, with a cup full of milk apiece. It was not a very tempting meal, but Lucia was hungry and ate with a hearty appetite.

After the three bowls had been washed and put away in the cupboard, she helped her grandmother undress, and settled her comfortably in the green enameled bed with its brass trimmings, that occupied a good part of the small room. Lucia's mother had brought it with her from Naples, and it was the most cherished and admired article of furniture that the Rudinis owned.

"Are you comfortable, Nana?" Lucia inquired gently, as she smoothed the fat, hard pillows in an attempt to make a rest for the old gray head.

"Yes, go to bed, child," Nana replied, and without more ado she closed her eyes and went to sleep.

Lucia climbed up the ladder to the loft, and was soon cuddled down beside Beppi in a bed of fresh straw. Though she persisted in her determination that her grandmother sleep in state in the best bed, she herself preferred a simple and softer resting place.

"Tell me a story," Beppi demanded; "not about fairies and silly make believes, but about soldiers."

"But there are no pretty stories about soldiers, Beppino mio," Lucia protested.

"Who wants pretty stories!" Beppi replied scornfully. "I don't—tell me an exciting one about guns and war."

"Very well I'll try, but be still," Lucia gave in, well knowing that she would not have to go very far.

"Once upon a time," she began, "there was a soldier. He had very big eyes, and he came from the south where the sun is very warm and the sky and the water are very, very blue."

"Was he brave?" Beppi interrupted sleepily.

"Oh, yes, he was very brave," Lucia replied hurriedly, "very brave, and he loved his country more than anything else in the world."

She waited but Beppi's voice commanded.

"Go on, don't stop."

"Well, one day he was sent to guard a gate of a city, and he walked up and down before it with his gun on his shoulders, and no one could pass him unless it was a friend."

She paused again. Beppi was breathing regularly.

"Old sleepy head!" Lucia whispered, and kissed him tenderly.

The story was not continued and before many minutes she was fast asleep herself.

It was an hour before sunrise when she awoke. The air that found its way into the little attic was damp and chill. Lucia crept out of bed, being very careful not to disturb Beppi, and slipped hurriedly into her clothes. With her shoes in her hand, she climbed gingerly down the ladder past her sleeping grandmother and out to the shed.

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“Good morning, Garibaldi, how are you this morning?” she said as she patted the stocky little neck of her pet.

Garibaldi submitted to her caress with a condescension worthy of the position her name gave her, and the other goats crowded to the open door, eager to leave their cramped quarters.

“Not yet, my dears,” Lucia said softly, “it isn’t time. Here, Esther, I will milk you first. You must all be good to-day, and Garibaldi, I don’t want you to go running away if I have to leave you with Beppi,” she continued. “You’re nothing but goats, of course, but you know perfectly well that we are at war, and that you are very important, and must do your part. Stop it, Miss, none of your pranks, I’m in a hurry,” she chided the refractory Esther for an attempt at playfulness.

“There now, that’s enough, I can’t carry any more or I would. Two pails only half full aren’t much, but they help, I guess. Now if it won’t rain until I get there it will be all right, but I’ll cover the pails to be on the safer side.” She found two covers and fitted them securely over the pails. “Now children, good-by. Be good till I come back, and don’t go making any noise.”

She paused long enough to give Garibaldi a farewell pat and then left the shed closing the door behind her. She looked up uneasily at the cottage, but everything seemed to be very still, so she picked up her pails and started off at as brisk a pace as possible.

She followed the main road that looked unnaturally white and ghostly in the pale dawn of the early morning. It was down hill for about a mile, and traveling was comparatively easy at first, but when the road reached the bottom of the valley it stopped and seemed to straggle off into numerous little foot-paths. The broadest and most traveled looking path Lucia followed, picking her way carefully for fear of stumbling and thus losing some of the precious milk.

The path led up the other side of the valley. It was a steep climb, and Lucia was tired when she reached the top. She sat down for a while to rest before going on the remainder of the way. The next path that she took turned abruptly to the right, and led up an even steeper hill to a tiny plateau above. From it one could look down on Cellino across the valley. When Lucia reached it she put down her pails in the shade of a big rock and looked about cautiously.

Nothing seemed to stir. The guns were quiet and nothing in the peaceful, secluded little spot suggested the close proximity of battle. The only human touch in sight was a small scrap of paper, held down by a stone on the flat rock above the pails.

Lucia was not surprised, for she had done the same thing every morning for a week now. She unfolded it. As she expected, she found four brightly polished copper pennies and the words, "Thanks to the little milk maid," written in heavy pencil.

Lucia picked up the money and put it into her pocket, then with a pencil that she had brought especially for the purpose she wrote, "You are welcome, my friends; good luck!" below the message, and tucked the paper back under the stone. Then with another curious look around, which discovered nothing, she started back, this time running as fleet and fast as any of her sure-footed little goats.

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She reached home before either Nana or Beppino were awake, and hurried to finish her milking. When the scant breakfast was over, she was ready to start for town with her pails.

When she entered the market-place, it was to find a very different scene from the one of the day before. The place was thronged with soldiers, but they were not laughing and jesting; instead, little groups congregated around the stalls and talked excitedly. Some of the old women had covered their faces with their black aprons, and were rocking back and forth on their chairs in an extremity of woe.

There was an unnatural hush, and men and women alike lowered their voices instinctively as they talked.

Lucia had seen the same thing many times before. She guessed, and rightly too, that a battle was going on, and that news of some disaster had reached the little town. She did not go at once to her aunt's stall, but left her pails inside the big bronze door of the church, and slipped quietly inside. The place was deserted, and the lofty dome was in dark shadow. Long rays of pale yellow light from the morning sun came through the narrow windows and made queer patches on the marble floor. In the dim recesses of the little chapels tiny candles flickered like stars in the dark.

Lucia looked about her to make sure that she was alone, and then walked quickly to one of the chapels and dropped four shining copper pennies into the mite box that stood on a little shelf beside the altar. She stayed only long enough to say a hasty little prayer, and then hurried out again into the sunshine. The clouds of the night before and the mist of the early morning had disappeared, and the market-place was bathed in warm golden sunshine.

Lucia picked up her pails and hurried to her aunt's stall.

"Well, you are late," Maria said. "We thought you had stubbed your toe and spilled all the milk."

"And only two half-full pails again," Senora Rudini grumbled. "But no matter, we can get more from old Paolo. Have you heard the news?" she asked abruptly.

"No," Lucia replied indifferently. "What is it?"

"A big gain by the enemy. They have taken thousands of our men, and they say we may be ordered to leave Cellino at any minute."

"Think of it! They are as near as that!" Maria said excitedly. "Oh if we must move, where can we go to? I am so frightened."

“Nonsense,” Lucia spoke shortly. There was an angry gleam in her big eyes and her cheeks flushed a dark red.

“Leave Cellino, indeed! The very idea! Since when must Italians make way for Austrians, I’d like to know?”

“But if the enemy are advancing as they say,” Maria protested nervously, “we will either have to leave, or be shelled to death by those dreadful guns.”

“Or be taken prisoners, and a nice thing that would be,” her mother added. “No, if the order to evacuate comes we must go at once. There will be no time to spare. Other towns have been captured, and there is only that between us.”

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She pointed to the zigzag mountain peaks so short a distance beyond the north gate. As if to give her words weight, a heavy thunder of guns rumbled ominously.

Maria shuddered. "There, that is ever so much nearer. Oh, I am frightened,—something dreadful is happening over there just out of sight."

"Silly! those are our own guns. Ask any of our soldiers," Lucia said.

"Here comes your guard, the handsome Roderigo Vicello, maybe he can tell us. Good morning to you!" she called gayly and beckoned the soldier to come to them.

"I hope you are well this morning," Roderigo said respectfully, bowing to Senora Rudini.

"Oh, we are well, but very frightened," Maria replied, trying hard to imitate her cousin's gaiety.

"Maria thinks that the guns we heard just now are Austrian, and I have been trying to tell her that they are Italian. Which of us is right? You are a soldier and ought to know."

"Our guns, of course. They have a different sound," Roderigo explained impressively.

He had never been any nearer to the front than he was at this moment, but he spoke with the assurance of an old soldier, partly to quiet Maria's fears, but mostly to still his own nervous forebodings. It would never do to let the little black-eyed Lucia see that he was even a little afraid.

"There, what did I tell you!" Lucia was triumphant. "I knew, but of course you would not believe me. Now perhaps you will tell her that we will not have to run away at a minute's notice, too?"

She turned to Roderigo, but eager as he was to display his importance he could not give the assurance she asked. The little knowledge that he had, made him think that the evacuation was very likely to occur at any day.

He covered his fears, however, by replying vaguely: "One can never be sure. War is war, and perhaps it may be necessary, as well as safer, for you to leave for the time being."

Lucia looked at him narrowly.

"What makes you say that?" she demanded. "Have you heard any of the officers talking?"

"No, but this morning's news is very bad. We have our orders to be ready to start at any moment."

“Oh!” Maria caught her breath sharply, and her eyes filled with tears as she looked at Roderigo shyly.

He saw the tears in surprise, and a contented warmth settled around his heart. He looked half expectantly at Lucia. Surely, if this calm, shy girl of the north would shed a tear for him, she with the warm blood of the south in her veins would weep. But Lucia’s eyes were dry, and the only expression he could find in them was envy. He turned away in disgust. He did not admire too much courage in girls, for he was very young and very sentimental, and he enjoyed being cried over.

A bugle sounded from the other end of the street, and in an instant everything was in confusion. The soldiers hurried to answer, and the people crowded about to see what was going to happen.

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Lucia, eager and excited, snatched Maria's hand and pulled her into the very center of the crowd. An officer, with the bugler beside him, read an order from the steps of the town hall, an old gray stone building that had stood in silent dignity at the end of the square for many centuries.

The girls were not near enough to hear the order, but they soon found Roderigo in the excited mass of soldiers, and he explained it to them.

"We are to leave for the front at once," he cried excitedly. "We have not a moment to spare. Tavola has been captured by the enemy, and our troops are retreating through the Pass."

"The Saints preserve us!" Senora Rudini covered her face with her apron and cried. "My sons! My sons! Where are they, dead or prisoners?"

"No, no, they are safe," Lucia protested. "They are with the Army. Don't worry, when the reinforcements reach them they will go forward again."

But her aunt refused to be comforted. Everywhere in the street women were calling excitedly, and a number of them besieged the officers for information.

The soldiers hurried to their billets and got together their kits. The square buzzed and hummed with excitement and the guns kept up a steady bass accompaniment.

The bugle sounded a different order every little while. Some of the more prudent women went home and began packing their household treasures, but for the most part every one stayed in the market-place and argued shrilly.

"Come!" Lucia exclaimed, catching Maria's hand. "We can watch them march off from the top of the wall by the gate."

They ran quickly through the side streets, and by taking many turns they at last reached the broad top of the wall, which they ran along until they were just above the north gate.

"Here they come!" Maria exclaimed. "I can hear them."

The paved streets of the town rang with the heavy tramp, tramp of men marching, and before long they appeared before the gate. The order to walk four abreast was given. The men took their places, and then at a brisk pace they marched through the old gate, a sea of bobbing black hats and cock feathers.

The townspeople followed to cheer them excitedly. Lucia and Maria leaned dangerously over the edge of the wall in their attempt to recognize the familiar faces under the hats.

The soldiers looked up and called out gayly at sight of Lucia. She had taken off her flowered kerchief and was waving it excitedly. The wind caught her dark hair and blew it across her face, and her bright skirts in the sunshine made a vivid spot of color against the stone wall. The men turned often to look back at her as they marched along the wide road.

Maria did not lift her eyes from the sea of hats beneath her. She was waiting for one face to look up. At last she had her wish. Roderigo's place was towards the end of the column; when he walked under the gate he looked up and smiled. It was a sad smile, full of regret.

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Without exactly meaning to, Maria dropped the flower she was wearing in her bodice. Roderigo caught it and tucked it, Neapolitan fashion, behind his ear, then he blew a kiss to Maria and marched on.

Lucia watched the little scene. She was half amused and half contemptuous. Her little heart under its gay bodice was filled with a fine hate that left no room for pretty romance.

CHAPTER IV

LOST

When the soldiers had climbed out of sight into the mountains, Maria walked slowly back to find her mother, and Lucia after a hurried good-by ran home to tell Nana and Beppino the news.

She was far more worried over the possible order to evacuate than she would admit. As their cottage was the farthest north on the road, it would be the nearest to the Austrian guns. Personally Lucia scorned the very idea of the Austrian guns, but she could not help realizing the danger to Nana and Beppino and Garibaldi. She was still undecided what to do when she reached the cottage.

Nana Rudini was standing in the doorway, shading her eyes with her withered old hand, and staring intently in the direction that the soldiers had taken.

"Did you see the troops, Nana?" Lucia asked cheerfully. "They were a fine lot, eh? I guess they will be able to stop the enemy from coming any nearer."

"Nearer?" queried Nana, "what are you saying?"

"We have had bad luck," Lucia explained. "Tavola has been captured, and our soldiers are retreating. In town they say we may have to evacuate before to-morrow."

The old woman received the news without comment, but a look of despair came into her usually bright eyes, and for the moment made them tragic. Long years before, when Austria had crossed the mountains and entered Cellino, she had been a young girl. Now in her old age they were to come again, and there was no reason to hope that this time they would be less brutal in their triumph than they had been formerly. The memory of their brutality was still a vivid one.

"We will leave at once," she said at last, and her decision was so unexpected, that Lucia gasped in surprise.

“Leave? But, Nana, where will we go? What will become of our things?” she exclaimed. “Surely we had better wait at least until we are ordered out.”

“No, we will leave at once,” Nana replied firmly. “The order may come too late, as it did before. What do those boys who swagger about in men’s places know about the enemy? There is not one that can remember them. But I, old Nana, have known them and their ways, and I say we must go at once.”

Lucia looked at the new light of determination in her grandmother’s eyes, and realized with a shock of surprise that to protest would be useless.

“Where is Beppi?” she asked. “I will go and find him.”

“With the goats,” Nana replied. “Call him, I will go in and start packing.”

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Lucia ran around the house and off to the sunny slope where she had left Beppi a few hours before. She saw the flock of goats grazing, and called, "Beppino mio, where are you?"

No one answered her. She hurried on, believing him to have fallen asleep.

"Beppi!" she shouted, "I have something exciting to tell you. Stop hiding from me."

She waited, but still no answer came.

In a sudden frenzy of fear she began running aimlessly up and down the hillside, and looking down into the tall grasses, but there was no sign of Beppi. There were no trees or houses in sight, no place that he could hide behind, nearer than the mountain path at the foot of the valley.

Lucia looked about her despairingly, then she went over to the goats. Garibaldi was not there.

"She has strayed away, and Beppi has gone after her," she said aloud in relief, and returned to the cottage.

Nana nodded when she explained. She was busy tying up the household treasures in sheets, and Lucia helped her.

Every few minutes she would go to the door and call, but Beppi did not reply. The afternoon wore on slowly and a bank of rain clouds hid the sun. Lucia's confidence gave way to her first feeling of terror, and Nana was growing impatient.

"Where can he be?" Lucia exclaimed. "I am frightened, he has been gone so long."

Nana shook her head. "He was off after the soldiers, I suppose," she replied. "He is always disobeying—no good will come to him and his naughty ways."

Lucia's eyes flashed.

"He is not naughty," she protested angrily, "and he may be lost this very minute. Anyway I am going to find him and I am not coming home until I do. If you are afraid to stay here go to Maria, she and aunt will look after you, and when I find Beppi I will meet you there."

Nana Rudini protested excitedly, but Lucia did not wait to hear what she said. She ran out of the house and down the road towards the footpath. She had no idea of where she was going, but fear led her on. Beppi, her adored little brother, and Garibaldi were lost, and she was going to find them.

At the end of the road she paused and looked ahead of her. The sky was dark with rain-clouds and thunder rumbled in the west, an echo of the guns. Lucia took the path that she had taken early that morning, and as she climbed up the steep ascent she called and shouted. Her own voice came back to her from the flat rocks ahead, but there was no sound of Beppi.

Instead of going on to the little plateau where she left her pails, she branched off to the left. It was hard climbing, and after repeated shouts of “Beppi,” she sat down and tried to think.

Big drops of rain were beginning to fall, and with the sun out of sight the fall air was damp and cold. She pulled her thin shawl around her shoulders and shivered.

“If Garibaldi ran away she came up here; she always does,” she argued to herself. “She loves to climb, and she must have come this way in the hope of finding grass. Up above, and a little over to the left, there is a sort of sheltered spot. Perhaps—” she did not finish the thought, but jumped up and started to climb.

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She hunted until she discovered a way to find the spot. It was not difficult, for she knew every foot of the mountains from long association. But Beppi was not to be seen, nor was Garibaldi. Lucia stopped, discouraged. Fear and helplessness were getting the better of her, and she would most likely have given way to the tears she so despised had her eye not caught sight of a tuft of fur on the ground. She seized upon it eagerly. It was without doubt part of Garibaldi's shaggy coat.

With a cry of joy she started off up the tiny trail that led higher up into the rocks.

"Beppi, Beppi!" she called, and stopped. Still no answer, but she was not discouraged for the guns were making so much noise that she realized her voice could not carry any great distance.

The rain was coming down in earnest now, and it was hard to keep from losing her footing on the slippery rocks. She stumbled on regardless of the danger, hoping against hope that she had chosen the right path, and that each step was bringing her nearer to Beppi. Between calling and climbing, she was tired, and she stopped for a moment to catch her breath.

A sound, faint but unmistakable, reached her.

"Naa, Naa!"

Garibaldi was complaining about the weather, at no very great distance away from her.

In her relief Lucia laughed excitedly.

"Beppi, Beppi, where are you?" she shouted, and waited eagerly for a reply, but none came. She looked puzzled and then Garibaldi answered her:

"Naa! Naa!"

The sound came from directly over her head, and she climbed up the steep rock as fast as she could. Garibaldi was standing at the opening of a cave. Lucia ran to her.

"Oh, my pet, I have found you at last. Where is Beppi?" she cried. Garibaldi did not exactly reply, but she stepped a little to one side, and Lucia saw Beppino curled up on a bed of dry leaves sheltered and snug from the storm, and sleeping quite as contentedly as he did on the mattress in the attic at home.

Lucia ran to him and shook him. He opened his eyes, and a dazed look came into them, then he said:

“Oh, yes, I remember, it began to rain and we were lost, your old crosspatch Garibaldi and I, so I found this nice little place, and I was going to pretend that I was a gypsy brigand, but I fell asleep.”

Lucia was far too happy to attempt the scolding that she knew Beppi deserved. She picked him up in her arms, and hugged and kissed him, then she encircled Garibaldi's neck and kissed her too.

“My darlings, I thought you were both lost. What a terrible fright you have given me! But we are safe now, and we will wait until sunrise to-morrow, and then we will go home,” she said happily.

“I saw the soldiers go away,” Beppi said, pushing her face from him as she tried to kiss him again, “and they looked so fine with their shiny hats. It was while I looked at them that old crosspatch ran away. I did have a chase, I can tell you, she had such a big start.”

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"Are you very hungry, little one?" Lucia asked gently. "I should have brought bread with me, but I did not think."

Beppi giggled, and from the pocket of his little tunic he produced the pink paper bag.

"Two left," he announced as he opened it, "and both long ones. Here's yours and here's mine. Garibaldi's been eating grass all day, so she's not hungry."

Lucia accepted the candy, and they both had a drink of milk. Then Beppi snuggled down in his sister's arms and his eyelids grew heavy.

"Go on with that story," he said, "the one about the soldier at the gate."

Lucia smiled in the dark and hugged him tight. The guns were silent, and only occasional peals of thunder broke the stillness.

"Well, one day," she began, "a very cross girl came to the gate, and the soldier who was always on the lookout for the stolen princess stopped her and spoke to her. But the cross girl was feeling very mean indeed, and she teased the soldier and made him very unhappy. But later on in the afternoon she was ashamed, and so she found the nice girl who was really the stolen princess, and took her with her to the gate, and the soldier—"

Lucia broke off and sat up suddenly to listen. A queer "rat, tat, tat," detached itself from the other night noises. Beppi was sound asleep, and she rolled him gently into the nest of leaves, then she listened again. The sound came again.

"Rat, tat, tat." It was a sharp staccato hammering, muffled by the wall of rock behind her.

She stood up and crept softly to the mouth of the cave.

The wind and the rain made such a noise that she could hear nothing, and it was already too dark to distinguish anything but the vaguest outlines. She crept back into the shelter, believing that she had just imagined what she had heard, but she had not taken her place beside Beppi before she heard it again—a persistent "rat, tat, tat," too metallic and too regular to be accounted for by a natural cause.

Lucia's mind was alert at once. She put her ear up against the rock and listened again. Muffled sounds too indistinct to recognize came to her. Whatever they were, they were not far off, and right in a line with the back of the cave.

Lucia thought of several explanations, but could accept none of them. She tried to argue against her fears by saying over and over again that if it was a sound made by men, those men were surely Italian soldiers, but her arguments could not still the

frightened beating of her heart, as the voice became more distinct. She was filled with terror.

Rumors of underground tunnels and mines blowing off whole mountain tops, that she had heard from the soldiers, came back to her and left her cold with fear.

Beppi had rolled over beside the goat for warmth, and was sleeping soundly. Lucia looked at him and then went once more to the mouth of the cave.

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The cold rain in her face gave her back her courage, and she felt her way around the cliff and up between the crevices of the two rocks, until she was on the roof of the cave. It was flat and the ground seemed to stretch out level for quite a distance before her. She listened for a moment, but the rain beating down made it impossible for her to distinguish any other sound.

She lay down flat on the wet ground, and crawled forward for a few feet, then listened again. At first she heard only the rain and the wind, but after a little wait there was a muffled bang as if a bomb had exploded deep down in the earth, and the ground beneath her trembled.

Lucia sprang to her feet and ran terrified back to the cave. It was fortunate that she was as sure-footed as her goats, for the way was steep and slippery, and she did not pause to take care.

Over in the cave, with her hand on Beppi's curly head, she sat down to think. Her mind was not capable of arriving at any logical explanation. Two thoughts stood out clearly and beyond doubt. First, the enemy was doing something of which the Italians were unaware, and second, the Italians must be warned before it was too late. That she must warn them she realized at once, but the way was not easy to determine.

The mountains were tricky. From one side they might look deserted, and yet a whole army could be in hiding just over the other side. The giant peaks formed formidable and wellnigh impassable barriers between one range and the next. Lucia had seen the troops disappear that morning, as if the great rocks had opened and devoured them, and she knew that at this moment they might be within a half a mile of her, but where to begin to find them she did not know.

The close proximity of the Austrians frightened her, and she was afraid to go off at random, or even to call. Throughout the night she tried to think and plan as she sat up with her back against the rock listening for the rat, tat, tat, which began again after she returned to the cave, and continued at regular intervals.

Before dawn the rain stopped and the wind blew the clouds away. At the first streak of light Lucia stole softly away from the sleeping Beppi and Garibaldi, and crept down the tiny path to the plateau below. Once there she was on familiar ground and even in the pale light she could tell her way.

During the night she had decided to go to the rock where she took her milk in the morning, surely the mysterious hand that left the pennies for her would be there, and she was determined, to wait for him.

She reached the spot without encountering any difficulties, and sat down to wait. The sun rose east of Cellino, and she watched it as it climbed over the hill and lighted the windows of the church with its yellow low rays.

All the world looked as if it had just been bathed and freshly clothed to step out glistening and very clean to greet the day. The air was chilly, but so fresh and sweet that Lucia took long grateful breaths of it. She was just wondering how long she would have to wait, when a stone rolled down beside her and hit her foot. She jumped and turned around. A soldier with a broad smile that showed all his fine white teeth was climbing down towards her.

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Lucia put her fingers to her lip to caution silence, and his smile changed to a look of sudden anxiety.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"Don't make any noise," Lucia warned. "Listen to me."

She told him all that she had discovered during the night.

"Are you sure of what you say?" the soldier questioned her seriously.

"Oh, yes, sir, I tell you I crawled out and listened. The sound was very near."

"Can you show me the place?"

"Yes, yes, I have just come from there, but it is a slippery climb." Lucia looked at him interrogatively.

The man nodded. "Never mind that, lead the way."

Lucia did not hesitate, but hurried back along the rocks, choosing the safest footholds and sometimes leaving her companion far behind.

When she reached the little grassy plateau, she stopped and pointed.
"It is above here, sir."

She started to ascend, and the soldier followed in silence. When they reached the cave she pointed to the back wall and said: "Listen there."

The soldier was so tall that he had to stoop down before he could enter, but he was very careful to be quiet and not disturb the still sleeping Beppi.

He put his ear to the wall and Lucia watched him excitedly. By the expression of his face she knew he was hearing the "rat, tat, tat."

"Can you show me the place where you thought you heard the explosion?" he whispered.

Lucia nodded and beckoned to him to follow. In her eagerness she forgot that he could not climb as nimbly as she could, and she was on the roof of the cave before he had started to ascend.

It was fortunate that she was, for not ten feet ahead of her, crawling along the ground, his helmet shining in the sun, was a soldier in the Austrian uniform.

CHAPTER V

IN THE TOOL SHED

At sight of her he jumped to his feet.

“Halt!” he commanded, unnecessarily, for Lucia was far too frightened to move.

She was thinking of the soldier whose head would appear at any moment over the ledge of rock behind, and her one wish was to stop him.

“I won’t move, sir!” she cried loudly, “I see you have a big gun and I am all alone.” She spoke in Italian, but the Austrian seemed to understand.

“What are you doing prowling around here at this time of day?” he demanded angrily, speaking to her in her own language.

“Oh, sir, I am lost,” Lucia replied, not daring to look below her. “My goat wandered away in the storm and I came out to find her, and now I am very, very far away from home.”

She walked towards the man as she spoke. She was terrified for fear he would discover the cave below her.

“Where did you sleep?” he demanded.

“Oh, I have not slept, sir. See my dress it is wet from the rain, there is no shelter anywhere, and the wind and the rain frightened me so I did not know where I was, and I was afraid to stay still.”

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The Austrian eyed her suspiciously.

“Why didn’t you go to the soldiers and ask for shelter?” he inquired harshly.

“The soldiers?” Lucia’s brown eyes opened wide in surprise. “But there are no soldiers near here. They are miles away with the guns. How could I reach them? My home is over there,” she pointed in the opposite direction from the cave, “and I think I will go back to it, now that it is day.”

“Oh, no, you won’t,” the Austrian replied. “You’ll come with me.”

“But why, what have I done?” Lucia inquired.

“That’s not the point,” the soldier replied. “You’re an Italian, and if I let you go you’ll run home and tell all the troops in the town that I was here. Oh, no, my little lady, we can’t allow that—you’re coming along with me.”

His lordly tone and the sneer on his lips infuriated Lucia. She thought all danger of his discovering the cave was over, so she replied angrily. “And suppose I won’t come? Don’t think you can frighten me, for you can’t. I tell you, I won’t go a step with you.”

The Austrian was about to reply, when a sound that had been so welcome only a few hours ago struck terror to Lucia’s ears.

“Naa, Naa!”

“What’s that?” the soldier jumped nervously. He was startled and frightened. Lucia saw it and her own courage returned.

“My goat,” she said as Garibaldi appeared above the rock.

Lucia ran to him.

“My pet, here you are, I have found you at last. Where have you been? you are a bad girl. See how you frightened the brave Austrian soldier.”

The sarcasm and scorn in her voice were unmistakable. The soldier was indignant.

“Here, that is enough from you. Come along, I will take you where they will teach you better manners.”

He caught her roughly by the shoulder, and Lucia went with him only too gladly. If she could get him well away from the cave, it would be time enough to think of herself. She, had no doubt that she would be able to run away from him later on.

As they walked along the noise underground grew louder. Every now and then the man would turn and look at her suspiciously. He did not speak to her, however, and they walked for quite a distance in silence. When Lucia considered that they had gone far enough she stopped.

"Where are you taking me?" she demanded with spirit.

"Never mind, you come along," the man replied impatiently. "Time enough for you to know when we get there."

"But I won't go any further." Lucia was determined. "Do you think that I will be taken prisoner by an Austrian? Never!"

Her eyes blazed indignantly. She planned so many times just what she would do, if she was ever brought face to face with her hated enemy, that the feeling of helplessness that she felt under the big man's hand infuriated her.

"Come along, I will not speak again," the Austrian commanded, and once more Lucia went on, unable to withstand the strength of his arm.

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The flat ground ended abruptly, and they had to climb down jagged rocks. Lucia thought that her chance of escape had come, but the Austrian never lessened his hold on her arm.

They had traveled this far without meeting any one. The only signs of life had been the mysterious noise underground, and the click of Garibaldi's sharp hoofs as they hit the stone.

When they reached a certain point the soldier stopped. "If you make any noise," he said roughly, "I will have to shoot you."

Lucia opened her mouth to scream, but before the sound came she changed her mind. A new and splendid idea had just come to her. She stopped holding back and walked obediently beside her guard. They did not go very far, before he told her to lie down and crawl, and before she realized where she was going, she was in a deep trench that ran along the base of the rock and was completely hidden from sight.

Garibaldi followed them, picking her way daintily, and stopping every now and then to let out a mournful "Naa!" The Austrian did not seem to hear her. If he did, he paid no attention, but led Lucia hurriedly along the dark passage.

They had not gone far before a sentry stopped them. Lucia's guard said something to him that she could not understand. The sentry disappeared, to return in a few minutes with another man. From the respectful salutes that he received, Lucia decided he must be a very high officer. More talk followed which she could not understand, and then her guard turned to her.

"Follow me," he directed, and led her out of the passage across a stretch of open ground, and over to a shed. Another soldier opened the door, and before Lucia quite got her breath, she heard the key turn in a lock and the thud, thud of the men's boots as they marched away.

CHAPTER VI

GARIBALDI PERFORMS

The shed had been hastily put together, and served as a place for picks and shovels. There were so many of them, in fact, that Lucia at first had difficulty in finding a place to stand, but by rearranging them she cleared a portion of the floor and sat down to think.

The shed was by no means airtight, for the boards had been nailed up so far apart that not only did the air and light enter between the cracks, but it was also possible for Lucia to see everything that was going on about her.

At first it looked as if the soldiers were just hurrying about aimlessly, but by watching them closely, especially the guard that had caught her, she saw that they were preparing to leave.

A bugle sounded from a dugout at the end of the passage, and all the soldiers in sight fell into marching order and waited at attention. Then the officer who had ordered Lucia shut up in the tool-house, gave them some orders that she could not understand.

One soldier came over to the shed and unlocked the door. He beckoned Lucia to step outside, and as the men filed past the door he handed each one a pick and shovel. When they had all received them, and Lucia expected to return, the Captain spoke to her. His Italian was so very bad she pretended not to understand.



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"What is your name?" was his first question.

Lucia shook her head.

"Your name?" he persisted. "Marie, Louise, Josephine?"

"No, Senor," Lucia replied bewildered.

"Well then, what is it?"

"I don't understand."

"Your name?"

"No, Senor."

"Your name? Have you no sense—stupid!" The Captain's patience was fast giving way.

Now to call an Italian stupid is the worst possible insult, and Lucia's cheeks flushed hotly. She was very angry, and she determined not to reply now at any cost. She shook her head therefore, and a very stubborn and unpromising light came into her brown eyes.

The Captain looked at her in disgust.

"Well, I suppose your name does not matter anyway," he said gruffly. "Where do you live?"

Another shake of the small black head, and an expressive shrug.

"You live in Cellino, so why not say so? Come, no more sulking. If you won't answer me of your own free will, you must be made to answer."

"No, Senor," Lucia smiled provokingly.

"No—what in thunder do you mean?"

"No, Senor," there was not a trace of impertinence in her face.

The officer looked at her in despair.

"Do you, or don't you understand what I am saying?" he demanded.

"No, Senor," Lucia reiterated.

"Where is the soldier who found this girl?" the Captain shouted to an orderly.

Lucia did not understand what he said, but she knew that her captor was well out of sight with his pick and shovel by now, and in all probability would not return and give her away, and she was beginning to enjoy the part of a “stupid.”

Just as the Captain turned to continue his questioning, Garibaldi, who had been grazing about unmolested at a little distance from the shed, saw Lucia and came bounding over to her. In her delight at finding her young mistress she very nearly succeeded in butting over the officer.

Lucia had difficulty in repressing a smile, but she put her arms around the goat’s neck and patted her.

“Does that animal belong to you?” The Captain demanded, puffing a little in the effort to retain his balance.

Lucia only smiled and nodded. Garibaldi kicked up her heels in an ecstasy of joy and sent the soft mud flying. The Captain’s anger broke all bounds.

“Take that animal and shoot her,” he demanded, but before the soldier could obey, he withdrew the order. “Tie her to the tree instead, we may be able to milk her,” he said.

The soldier nodded and advanced towards Garibaldi with ponderous assurance, but Garibaldi was not going to be tied, she preferred her freedom. She was not, however, unwilling to play a friendly game of tag; it was her favorite sport and she was very proficient in it. When the big soldier would come within reach of her, she would lower her head and duck under his arm, and before the astonished pursuer could collect his wits and look around, she would be browsing innocently close by.

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This game kept up for a long time. The men who were in sight dropped what they were doing and made an admiring circle; even the Captain had to smile. Lucia wanted to laugh outright, but she managed to keep her face set in grave lines.

At last the soldier gave up the chase and retired among the jeers of his comrades to the side lines. The Captain saw an opportunity to amuse his men, and perhaps end their grumbling for the time being. He offered a reward to the man that could catch the goat.

First one soldier and then another attempted it, but none of them succeeded. After a while the fun of the chase wore off for Garibaldi, and she became angry. She had a little trick of butting that had won her Beppi's dislike, and she used it to the discomfiture of the Austrian army.

Lucia saw them one after another rub their shins and their knees, for although Garibaldi did not have horns, her head was very, very hard indeed, and she was afraid that some one of them might grow angry and hurt her pet. She looked at the officer and pointed to the goat.

"I can catch her," she said simply.

"Well, do it then," the Captain replied.

Lucia called softly and made a queer clicking noise. Garibaldi stopped butting, and walked soberly over to her. She smiled good-naturedly at the men, and tied the rope that one of them handed to her around the goat's neck. One of the soldiers pointed to a tree behind the shed, and she tied the rope securely around it. Garibaldi protested mildly, but she patted her and left her lying contentedly in the mud.

She took time to look hastily about her before returning to the shed. The tree to which the goat was tied was on the edge of a steep hill that fell away abruptly from the little clearing.

Lucia looked down it, and could hardly believe her eyes; for there, far below, was a silver stream glistening in the sunshine, and she realized with a sense of thankfulness that it could be no other than the little river that flowed below the west wall of Cellino, and right under the windows of the Convent. If she could only get away, it would be an easier matter to go back that way, than over the dangerous route by which she had come. But she was not very eager to return at once, for the idea that had come to her earlier in the day still tempted her to wait and listen.

When she returned to the shed the Captain was nowhere in sight, and one of the soldiers pointed to the open door. She nodded and walked in, the key grated in the lock, and she was once more a prisoner.

CHAPTER VII

THE BEGGAR

As the sun rose higher, a quiet settled over the clearing. The men talked and smoked, and the Captain read a newspaper at the door of his dugout.

No one bothered Lucia, and she kept very quiet. She had had nothing to eat since the night before and she was very hungry, but she would not for the world ask her enemies for food. She was not above accepting it, however, when a little before noon one of the soldiers brought her a hard and tasteless biscuit and a cup of water. She ate greedily, and then tired out from so much excitement she fell asleep.

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She awoke an hour later to a scene of activity. She could see through the peek-hole that the Captain was consulting his watch every little while, and the men were hurrying about excitedly. They all looked up at a certain mountain above with suspicious eyes, and Lucia could tell by the tone of their voices that they were angry about something.

A few minutes later the arrival of a very muddy and tired soldier from the opposite direction created a diversion. He saluted the Captain and handed him a message. Whatever the message was, it pleased the Captain, for he brought his fist down on his knee and laughed. Then he gave some very long; and to Lucia, unintelligible orders, and the men lost some of their ugly rebellious look.

He chose two soldiers from the group before him, and motioned them into his dugout. Lucia tried to make something out of the strange words that the other men spoke, but she could not. They were eagerly questioning the messenger and giving him food and water. He was answering them, and from the expression of their faces his replies were not cheering. At last he stood up, shrugged his shoulders and for the first time noticed Garibaldi.

The other soldiers explained, and Lucia knew they were discussing her when they pointed to the shed. The messenger evidently suggested milking the goat, for after a little laughing and jesting, one of the men took a pail and approached Garibaldi.

Now, no one had ever milked Garibaldi in all her life but Lucia, and from the disastrous attempts on the part of the soldiers it was evident that no one was ever going to, if that very particular animal could prevent it, and she seemed quite able to, to judge from the results.

Lucia watching through the cracks in the shed laughed softly to herself. She was not surprised when, a few minutes later, one of the men opened the door and told her to come out.

He could not speak Italian and he resorted to the sign language. Lucia nodded in understanding. She might have pretended blank stupidity, but she wanted some milk herself, and this was a good way to get it. Besides, she decided that she would do something to make it impossible for them to lock her up again on her return.

Garibaldi stood quite still as she milked her, and submitted meekly to her affectionate pats.

The messenger drank greedily from the pail, and when he had finished there seemed to be nothing else for Lucia to do but return to the shed. She walked back to the door as slowly as possible, and looked hard at the lock. It was just an ordinary padlock and it hung open on the rusty catch. She looked quickly at the men behind her. They were busy talking, and did not appear to be paying any attention to her.



Very quickly, without seeming to do it, she touched the padlock; it swung on the catch, and then fell into the mud. Lucia put her foot over it and ground it in with her heel.

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When the soldier remembered her a few minutes later, and came over to shut the door, he grumbled at the loss of the lock, but he did not apparently connect her with its disappearance, nor did he bother much about looking for it. He shut the door and walked back to join the group that still surrounded the messenger.

Lucia sat down again and watched the door of the Captain's dugout. She had wondered all day what the smiling Italian soldier and Beppi had done after she left. She knew that Beppi could easily find his way back to the cottage, and in case Nana had already gone, and Lucia knew that in spite of her threats she would not go off alone, he would go into the town and some one would take care of him.

As for the soldier, he would hear the rat, tat, tat, and know what it meant, and return to his comrades for help. She listened, but there was no sound of guns near enough to mean a fight close at hand.

The thought puzzled her, but she dismissed it as the Captain and the two soldiers came out of the dugout. The men looked cross and sullen, but the Captain was still smiling. He walked over to the messenger, handed him a folded paper, and the man disappeared as mysteriously as he came.

Lucia did not pay any attention to him, however, for she was interested in the two soldiers. They were very busy buckling on their kit bags in preparation for a departure. When they were ready, they stood at attention before the Captain. After more orders from him, they started off down the hill just back of the shed.

Lucia guessed that they were going to the river, with a cold feeling around her heart, she realized that they could go straight to the wall of Cellino. She did not stop to consider the many sentries who walked up and down the walls day and night, or the fact that two enemy soldiers would hardly walk up and attempt to enter a town in broad daylight. She only knew that the river led to Cellino, and that all she loved most in the world was there.

She was sick with fear. She looked back at the Captain; he was again consulting his watch. The soldiers looked at him and fell to grumbling again. After a moment of indecision he called to them.

They stood up and saluted. He gave a very peremptory order, and in a few minutes almost all of them had their guns on their shoulders, and waited his next word. The Captain himself buckled on his revolver, and the party started off at a brisk pace through the tunnel.

Lucia watched them go. In a hazy way she realized that they were going out in search of the men who had left earlier in the morning. This was correct in part, but they were

also going to look for another party of men, the ones who had been responsible for the rat, tat, tat, Lucia had heard.

The diggers, led by her captor, had been sent out that morning to relieve their comrades already at work. When none of them returned the Captain grew anxious, and was himself leading the searching party.

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If Lucia had known, she would have realized that her Italian soldier was in some way responsible for their absence, and she would have been delighted. As it was, she dismissed the Captain with a shrug and turned her attention to the few soldiers who remained. They were a little distance from her, and most of them had their backs to her.

Lucia determined to try to slip out unnoticed. She waited until they were all talking at once. By their angry gestures they appeared to be discussing something of great importance; none of them even glanced towards the shed.

Lucia pushed open the door very gently and waited. No one noticed it, then she laid down flat and crawled out into the mud; it was slow work, but in the end it proved the best way, for she reached the tree and Garibaldi without being discovered. The shed hid her from sight. She hurriedly untied the rope and freed the goat. It had never entered her mind to escape and leave her behind.

Garibaldi, free once more, ran down the steep hill her hoofs making no more than a soft, pad, pad noise in the mud. Lucia dropped to the ground again and crawled slowly after her. Below her, almost at the river's edge, she could see the two soldiers slipping and stumbling along.

She wriggled on in the mud until she was well below the crest of the hill, then she got up and began to run. She jumped from one rock to the next, always keeping the two men in sight, but keeping under cover herself. The men kept to the bank of the river and moved forward cautiously. Lucia kept abreast of them, but stayed high up above their heads.

It was a long walk, for the river twisted and turned many times before it reached the walls of Cellino. But it did not tire Lucia, as it did the two men. They walked slower and slower as the afternoon wore on, stopping every few minutes to rest and talk excitedly.

At a little before sunset the guns grew louder and seemed to be much nearer. All day there had been a dull rumble, but now they burst out into a terrific roar. Lucia saw the men below her stop and look up. They stood still for a long time, and then hurried on. Until now the road had been deserted, but ahead at the end of a footbridge, just around a sharp turn, Lucia, from her vantage point, could see another figure. The soldiers could not have seen him, but when they reached the turn of the road they both left the open and took cover in the rocks above.

Lucia watched narrowly. They did not stop as she half expected them to do, but crept on until they were abreast of the man. He was a beggar to judge by his shabby clothes, and he was apparently whiling away his afternoon by staring into the river.

Lucia's first thought was that the Austrians would shoot him. She caught her breath sharply when a queer thing happened. One of the soldiers picked up a stone and threw it down into the stream.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE SURPRISE ATTACK

Without turning his head, the beggar picked up a stone and tossed it into the river. He repeated this twice.

Lucia watched, fascinated. The soldiers left their hiding-place and came down to the road. The beggar took something out of the pocket of his coat, handed it to one of the soldiers, and shuffled off in the opposite direction.

Lucia waited to see what the soldiers would do. She expected them to return, but instead they waited until the beggar was out of sight, and then hurried across the foot-bridge and plunged hurriedly into the mountains opposite.

Lucia caught sight of their shining helmets every now and then as they climbed higher and higher, and finally disappeared. She was undecided what to do, but after a little hesitation she determined to follow the beggar. Now that the Austrians were out of sight there was no need for her to avoid the open path, and she hurried to it and ran quickly in the direction that the man had taken. She did not know where she was, or how far she would have to go before she reached Cellino. She had seen nothing of the town from the mountains, and she guessed that it was much farther away than she had at first supposed.

She walked on as fast as she could, keeping a sharp lookout for the beggar, but he had apparently disappeared, for she could not find him or any trace of him.

It was late in the afternoon when she reached a part of the river that was familiar to her, and with a start she realized that she was still a good three miles from Cellino. She was very tired and very hungry, but she sat down to consider the best plan to follow. She knew nothing of what had passed between the men at the bridge, but she had sense enough to realize that whatever it was, it was not for the good of the Italian forces.

Some one must be warned, and soon, for the speed of the Austrian soldiers made her feel that the danger was imminent.

"I will go on to town and warn them," she said aloud to Garibaldi, "that is the best plan, and then I can find something to eat."

She jumped up and started off with renewed energy. At a little path that turned to the right she left the river and came out on the broad road at the foot of a valley. It was not long after that, when she saw the little white cottage ahead. The sight of it gave her courage. There, at any rate, would be a human being to talk to, and bread to eat. She ran the rest of the way, and did not pause until she was in the little room.

The sight that met her eyes sent a sudden damper over her spirits. Everything was upside down. The green bed was stripped of its sheets, and all the familiar ornaments had gone. Lucia stood dumbfounded trying to realize that Nana had really gone. A feeling of loneliness and despair made the tears come to her eyes.

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She clenched her fists and tried to swallow the lump in her throat, but without success, the tears came in spite of her and in her disappointment she threw herself down on the bed and sobbed. Fear got the better of her, and in an agony of mind she imagined every possible harm to Beppi.

But she was not allowed to stay long in that state of mind, for suddenly the guns broke into a terrible roar. The air was black with smoke and the house trembled and rocked under her.

She jumped up and ran to the window. Great volumes of smoke arose to the east, and higher geysers of dirt and rock flew up into the air.

"The Austrians!" Lucia did not stop to think in her fear. She dashed out of the house and down the road in the opposite direction from the town. Without realizing the personal danger to herself, she ran as fast as she could. Fear and the noise of the exploding shells sent her plunging ahead regardless of direction.

Instinctively she took the path to the right at the foot of the village and climbed up to the little plateau. She was directly under the fire of her own guns, but the noise from both sides was so great that she did not know it, and she forged ahead, shouting. In all the tumult she could not even hear her own voice, but to shout relieved her nerves of the terrible strain.

When she reached the plateau she climbed on up, choosing the spot where, earlier in the day, the Italian soldiers had come from, and slipping and sliding, but always goaded on by fear, and the knowledge that she must tell some one about the beggar, she kept on her way.

She did not know how long she ran, or when it was that she stumbled, but suddenly everything was black before her eyes, and the noise of the guns was blotted out by the awful ringing in her ears. Then came oblivion.

When she next realized anything, she was conscious of some one bending over her and holding a water bottle to her lips. She drank gratefully and opened her eyes. The Italian soldier was beside her, and another man was lying on the ground near her.

"Give me something to eat," she said, trying to sit up, "or I will go away again." Going away was the only way she knew of, to express the sensation of fainting.

The Italian took something out of his knapsack and gave it to her. Lucia ate ravenously, and the queer feeling at the pit of her stomach disappeared.

"How did you escape?" he asked.

The question brought back a sudden wave of memory, and Lucia jumped up excitedly.

“By the river road—two Austrians and a beggar—they met by the foot-bridge, over there where the noise comes from; I saw them.” She recalled the facts jerkily.

“Go on!” the Italian’s eyes flashed.

“The beggar gave the Austrians a paper, and they left with it and climbed up into the mountains across the river. I could not follow without being seen, and when I tried to find the beggar he had disappeared. The river runs right under the wall.”

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"Oh, look!" She stopped abruptly and put her hand over her eyes.

A great cloud of fire followed a terrific report, and from the distance of the hill it looked as if the whole town of Cellino was in flames.

The Italian snatched a field glass that lay on the ground beside the wounded man, and put it to his eyes. Then without a word he dashed off. Lucia followed him. A giant tree grew between two huge rocks a little further up the mountain, and the Italian climbed up it.

Lucia watched him, and for the first time she noticed that several wires were strung along and ended high up in its branches. She heard the Italian calling some directions, and knew that a telephone must be hidden somewhere in the tree. She could make nothing of the orders; they were mostly numbers, and she waited impatiently until he returned to her.

"Stay here," he said quickly, "and lie down flat—don't move. The Austrians are advancing on the other side of the river, and Cellino will fall if the bridge is not blown up."

"But who can get to it?" Lucia demanded.

"I can; it is mined. If I can reach it we may drive them back."

He did not wait to say more.

Lucia watched him impatiently as he stumbled and slid clumsily down the rough trail below her. The shells were coming nearer and nearer, and the air was filled with brilliant fire.

She watched the man every second, afraid to lose track of him. At the base of the rock he fell. She caught her breath and shouted aloud when he picked himself up and stumbled on. He reached the road and was just starting across the little path that led to the river, when a shell exploded so near him that the smoke hid him completely from view.

CHAPTER IX

THE BRIDGE

It was several minutes before Lucia saw him again; he was lying flat, a little to one side of the road, and he was very still. She waited, hoping against hope to see him move, and fighting against the horrible thought that filled her mind.

“He is dead,” she exclaimed, terrified, “and they are moving; and the bridge!”

Without another thought she got up and very carefully started down the descent, her mind concentrated on the bridge. She did not attempt to go to the road, but kept to the shelter of the rocks, and a little to one side of the fire. The shells were bursting all around her, but she was above the range of the guns, and comparatively safe.

She hurried as fast as she could, but it was hard to keep the direction, in all the noise and blinding flames. She did not dare to look towards Cellino, or think what that hideous column of smoke might mean.

At last she reached the river, and the bridge was in sight a little distance ahead. It was an old stone bridge, and wide enough for men to walk four abreast. At that point the river was very wide and the bridge was made in three arches. It looked very substantial, and Lucia stopped, suddenly terrified by the thought that she did not have the slightest idea how or where to blow it up.

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She looked about her as if for inspiration. She found it in the moving line of men just visible far above in the mountains.

The Austrians! They were advancing, and the sudden realization of it brought out all her courage and daring, and intensified the hatred in her heart.

"They shall not cross our bridge," she shouted defiantly, and raced ahead regardless of the rain of shot and shell.

But when she reached the bridge she stopped again, helpless and completely baffled. The wall rose above her high and impregnable. A little farther along, the window of the convent seemed to be ablaze with light. The church had been struck, and Lucia could feel the heat of the flames from where she stood.

The North Gate seemed miles away, and she turned to the convent. She knew there was a door that gave on to the river bank, and she ran forward. She found it and pushed frantically against it. It was locked, the only other opening being a window higher up.

Lucia looked at it in despair. It was her only chance. The glass had been smashed by the impact of the bursting shells and lay in broken bits under her feet. She could just reach the ledge with her hands, and the stone felt warm. The wall was rough and uneven, and after a struggle she managed to find a foothold and pulled herself up. The jagged glass still in the casement cut her hands, but she did not stop to think about it. Once inside she ran along the dark corridor and up the few steps that led to the first floor. The big iron doors were open, and she caught her first sight of the town.

The convent was just outside, and on the road that led south a great stream of people carrying every size of bundles, was hurrying along. Lucia recognized some of them, but the faces she most longed to see were not there.

She turned away, for the sight seemed to drain all her courage, and she longed to run after them, but the memory of that moving mass of soldiers made her true to her trust, and she hurried through the convent, calling for aid.

At the farthest door she discovered several of the sisters hurrying about and trying to clear the big ward filled with wounded soldiers. They had been brought in that morning, and some of them were very ill indeed. The sisters were carrying them out on improvised stretchers. Those who were able to stand up staggered along as best they could by themselves. Lucia saw one boy leaning heavily against the door, and ran to him.

"Roderigo Vicello!" she exclaimed, when she looked up at him.

Roderigo swayed and would have fallen if she had not supported him.

"I can not go," he said weakly. "I am too tired, and I want to go. I have watched her out of sight, but I am too tired to follow."

Lucia looked at him intently. It seemed to her impossible that a man, and a soldier, could bother to think of a girl at such a time. She took his arm firmly and shook him.

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"Do you know how to blow up a bridge that is mined?" she demanded excitedly.

"Yes, pull out the pin," Roderigo replied, "if it is a time fuse," he spoke slowly and painstakingly.

"Pin?" Lucia exclaimed impatiently, "I don't understand, you will have to come. Listen, the Austrians are just a little way off across the river, they must not cross the bridge."

Roderigo was alert at once. The light came back into his eyes and his body stiffened.

"What are you saying?" he demanded. "Do you mean, they are coming from that side?"

"Yes," Lucia exclaimed, "there is no time to spare; hurry, I will help you."

She put her strong, young arm about his waist, and by leaning most of his weight on her shoulder he managed to crawl along. Lucia was half crazy with impatience, but she suited her step to his, and helped him all she could.

At last they reached the lower door. She opened it hurriedly and the bridge was in sight, but so were the Austrians. They were so near that what had seemed one solid mass now resolved itself into individual shapes. To Lucia it seemed as if a great sea of men were rushing down upon them.

The exertion from the walk made Roderigo sway, and just before they reached the bridge he fell forward. Lucia crouched down beside him, and begged and pulled until he was on the bridge.

"Now where is it? Tell me what to do," she begged, "see they are almost here."

With a tremendous effort Roderigo pulled himself to the edge of the bridge and located the mine. In a voice that was so weak that Lucia could hardly hear it he gave the directions. Lucia obeyed.

"When will it go off?" she demanded. "Will we have time to get away?"

Roderigo shrugged his shoulders.

"You will," he said. "Run as fast as you can, I don't know how long it will take."

Lucia did not wait to argue. She caught him under his arms and dragged him back to the convent as fast as she could.

Roderigo had given up all hope, but as they drew nearer to the door of the convent, the wish to live asserted itself, and he got to his feet and ran with Lucia. They did not stop

until they were safe on the road beyond. The last inhabitant of Cellino was out of sight, and it seemed as if they were alone.

They waited, Lucia supporting Roderigo's head in her arms.

The explosion came, there was a crash, and then a great shaking of the earth. Lucia listened, her eyes flashing.

"Wait here," she said to Roderigo, "I will return at once." She ran hurriedly back to the convent and down again to the door.

The old bridge was ruined. Great pieces of it were torn out and had fallen high on the banks. The center span was entirely gone, and the river, broad and impassable, ran smoothly between the jagged ends.

Lucia did not stand long in contemplation of the scene before her. She hurried back to the road. A sister was beside Roderigo, and Lucia went to her.

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"It is not safe back in there," she said, pointing to the convent. "A shell may hit it."

The sister nodded.

"It hardly matters," she replied quietly. "No place is safe. We will take him there; he is too ill to be carried far."

Lucia agreed, and between them they carried the unconscious Roderigo back to the ward and laid him gently on one of the beds.

Sister Francesca turned back the cuffs of her robe and began doing what she could. As she worked she talked.

"We were all ordered to leave," she said; "but when we were well along the road I turned back. It seemed so cowardly to go when we were most needed. The rest thought that by night the Austrians would be in possession, but I could not believe it."

She was a little woman with a soft voice and big blue eyes, and she spoke with such gentle assurance that Lucia felt comforted.

"They will not come to-night," she said, "for the bridge is down, and our troops will surely be able to force them back."

Sister Francesca nodded.

"I hope so. At any rate, there will be wounded and my place is here."

At the word "wounded," the vivid picture of the smoke-choked valley, the shell explosion, and the still form of the Italian soldier flashed before Lucia's mind.

"What am I doing here?" she said impatiently. "There are wounded now and perhaps we can save them."

She did not offer any further explanation, but slipped out of the big room and hurried back to the road once more.

The sun had set and twilight gleamed patchy through the clouds of smoke. It was still light enough to see, and Lucia hurried to the gate. The first sight that she had of Cellino made her stop and shudder. The church was in ruins, and every pane of glass was broken in the entire village. In their haste the refugees had thrown their belongings out of their windows to the street below, and then had gone off and left them. Great piles of furniture and broken china littered the way, and stalls had been tipped over in the market place.

No one stopped Lucia; the town was deserted. She ran hurriedly across to the North Gate, afraid of the ghostly shadows and unnatural sights. At the gate a splendid sight met her eyes.

From the convent she had only seen the Austrians, the wall had cut off her view of the west. But now she commanded a view of the whole field, and to her joy the Italians were advancing as steadily from the west as the Austrians from the east. They would meet at the river, and at the memory of the bridge Lucia threw back her head and laughed. It was not a merry laugh, but a grim triumphant one, and it held all the relief that she felt.

But, splendid as the sight before her was, she did not stay long to look at it. Below, somewhere in the valley, the Italian soldier of the shining white teeth and the pennies was lying wounded, or dead, and nothing could make Lucia stop until she found him.

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The heavy artillery fire had let up a little, and the shells were not quite so many.

Lucia started to run. She had made up her mind earlier in the day that if she moved fast enough she would escape being hurt. She unconsciously blamed the slowness of the Italian soldier for his injury. She passed her cottage half-way down the hill. It was still standing, but a shell had dropped on the little goat-shed and blown it to pieces. One of the uprights and the door, which was made of stout branches lashed together with cord, still stood. The door flapped drearily and added to the desolation of the scene.

Lucia did not stop to investigate the damage, but hurried ahead. She was afraid the light would fade before she reached the wounded soldier.

At the end of the road in the bottom of the valley she was just between both sides, the shells dropped all about her and she stood still, bewildered and frightened.

The high mountains on either side made sounding boards for the noise, and the roar of the guns seemed to double in volume.

“Lie down!”

A voice almost under her foot made her jump, and she saw the Italian soldier. She did as he commanded, and he pulled her towards him.

He was very weak, and when he moved one leg dragged behind him. He tried to crawl with Lucia into the shell hole close by. She saw what he was doing and did her best to help. When they finally rolled down into the shell hole, the man groaned.

Lucia could feel that his forehead was wet with great drops of perspiration. She found his water bottle and gave him a drink.

“What’s happened?” he asked, speaking close to her ear.

Lucia told him as much as she knew.

“Then the bridge has gone?” There was hope in his voice.

“Gone for good. They can never cross it, and our men are just over there.”

“How can I get you back?” she asked. “The convent is so far away.”

The soldier shook his head. “You can’t. We are caught here between the two fires, it would be certain death to move. What made you come back?”

“To find you,” Lucia replied. “I could not come sooner, there was so much to do. I even forgot you, but when I remembered, I ran all the way and now I am helpless.”



“Don’t give up,” the Italian replied. “You must have courage for both of us, for I am useless. My leg has been badly injured by a piece of shell, and I cannot even crawl.”

“Then there is nothing to do but wait for the light,” Lucia was trembling all over. “Oh, what a long day it has been!”

“But the dawn will come soon,” the soldier tried to cheer her, “and then perhaps the stretcher-bearers will find us. If they do not—”

“If they do not, I will find a way to take you to the convent,” Lucia replied with sudden spirit, and with the same determination that had resulted in her blowing up the bridge, she added to herself:

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"He shall not die!"

CHAPTER X

GARIBALDI, STRETCHER-BEARER

The long night set in, and the soldier, wearied from his long wait, dropped to sleep in spite of the noise. Lucia's tired little body rested, but her eyes never relaxed their watch in the darkness.

The fire kept up steadily, and at irregular intervals a star-shell would illuminate the high mountains. Towards midnight there was an extra loud explosion, and once more the terrifying flames seemed to encircle Cellino.

Lucia wondered dully what had been struck. The church was gone, and she supposed this was the town hall. It looked too near, as far as she could judge, for the convent.

Her ears were becoming accustomed to the sound, and she thought the fire from both sides was being concentrated towards the south. The shells near them lessened, and at last stopped. Before dawn the Italian stirred, and called out in his sleep.

Lucia spoke to him, but he did not answer; he was so exhausted that he was soon unconscious again.

Lucia watched the east, and tried to imagine Beppi safe and sound in a town far away from this terrible din, but she could be sure of nothing. She remembered Roderigo's words, 'She is safe,' and knew that he must have meant Maria. Surely Beppi and Nana were with her and Aunt Rudini; it could not be otherwise.

With a guilty start she remembered Garibaldi. Where was she, and what had become of her in all the terrors of yesterday? Lucia could not remember having noticed her after she left the footbridge. Was she safe in the mountains, or lying dead in a shell hole?

"My Garibaldi, poor little one, she would not understand, and she will think I neglected her."

Tears of pity and weariness stung Lucia's cheeks. The thought of her little goat, suffering and neglected, seemed to be more than she could bear. She buried her head in her arm and cried softly. The tears were a relief to her, and long after she had stopped sobbing they trickled down her cheeks.

She fell into a light doze now that her watch was so nearly ended, and did not waken until the east was streaked with gray. She might not have awakened then, had it not been for a cold, wet nose burrowing in her neck, and a plaintive, "Naa, Naa!"

She sat up suddenly to discover Garibaldi, covered with mud from her ears to her tail, looking very woe-begone, standing beside her. Regardless of the mud Lucia threw her arms around her pet, and for once in her life the little goat seemed to return her caress.

When Lucia lifted her head there was a smile on her lips, and the old light of determination shone in her eyes. She got to her knees slowly and looked about her. The guns were booming back and forth, but their position seemed to be changed. The Austrian guns still sounded from across the river, but their range was much farther south.

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Lucia looked towards the west. None of the guns that were there the night before could be heard. With a throb of joy she realized that the booming now came from the town.

“Had the Italians crept up and into Cellino during the night?” The very idea was so exciting that she could not rest until she made sure.

She stood up and walked over to the road. The gate had an odd appearance in the half light. She walked up the hill a little way, rubbing her eyes as she went. Something behind the wall seemed to appear suddenly, emit a puff of smoke, and then disappear.

Lucia had never seen a big gun in her life, and she did not know that one was hidden securely in the cover of the wall near the ruins of the church, for so quietly had the great monster arrived, and so stealthily had the soldiers worked, that its sudden appearance seemed almost a miracle.

Lucia put it down as one, and offered her prayer of thankfulness from the middle of the muddy road. Then the work at hand took the place of her surprise, and she ran back to her wounded soldier and roused him gently. He opened his eyes; they were bright with fever, and he tossed restlessly.

Lucia tried to move him, but could not. He was very big, and she could not pull him as she had the slender Roderigo.

As she stopped to consider, the walls of Cellino suddenly seemed to let loose a fury of smoke and flame. Nothing that had happened during the day before equalled it. The big guns boomed and the smaller ones sent out sharp, cracking noises that were even more terrifying.

Poor Lucia dropped to her face again, and Garibaldi cowered beside her.

Nothing seemed to happen. The shells did not fall near them as she had expected, and after her first fright had passed, she got to her feet again.

Tugging at the soldier was useless, and an idea was forming in her mind. She ran as fast as she could up the hill to the cottage, calling Garibaldi to follow.

At the shed she stopped and looked at the door. It was light, and she soon tore it away from its support. Then she went into the cottage and came back with a rope. She made a loop and put it over the goat's head. Then with two long pieces she contrived a harness and hitched the door to it. One end dragged on the ground, and the other was about a foot above it. The rope was crossed on the goat's back and tied firmly to the long ends of the door that did duty as shafts. Garibaldi was too disheartened to protest, and Lucia had little trouble in leading her down the hill.

The soldier was delirious when she reached him, but he was so weak that it was an easy matter to roll him on to the improvised stretcher.

Lucia took hold of one shaft, and with Garibaldi pulling too, they started off.

It was a long and weary climb, but at last they reached the cottage.

The terrible jolting had been agony for the soldier. He regained consciousness on the way, and from time to time a groan escaped him. But when he was in the house he did his best to smile, and crawled onto the mattress that Lucia had pulled to the floor.

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She made haste to take off his knapsack, and under his direction she dressed the ugly wound in his thigh. Her fingers, only used to rough work, moved clumsily, but she managed to make him a little more comfortable. He smiled up at her bravely.

"Poor little one, you are tired. Go and eat," he whispered. And Lucia, after she saw his head sink back on the pillow, found a stale loaf of black bread and began to munch it slowly.

The soldier pointed to his knapsack and told her to eat whatever she found in it.

"There should be some of my emergency rations left," he said faintly.

Lucia found some dried beef and offered it to him, but he shook his head and asked for a drink of water. She gave it to him, but his eyes closed and his head fell back as he drank. She ate all the beef and a cake of chocolate that she found; and then went to the door to look out.

Cellino was enveloped in smoke and she could not see the gate. The guns were barking, and little spurts of white smoke seemed to punctuate each separate fire. Away to the east the enemy's guns were still booming.

Lucia realized that a hard battle was under way, and that it would be useless to try to get help until there was a lull. She returned to the room and looked down at the soldier. He was moaning softly, and his eyes looked up at her beseechingly.

CHAPTER XI

THE AMERICAN

"Are you suffering very much?" she asked softly.

The man nodded, his eyes closed, and a queer pallor came over his face. Lucia was suddenly terrified. She felt very helpless in this battle with death, but her determination never left her.

She ran to the door. Poor Garibaldi was still standing hitched to the stretcher. Lucia went to her and led her back to the door of the cottage. She looked half-fearfully, half-angrily at the town above her.

"He shall not die!" she said between her teeth, and went back into the house.

The transfer from the bed to the stretcher was very difficult to manage, for the poor soldier was beyond helping himself. But Lucia succeeded without hurting him too much, and once more the strange trio started out on their climb.

They were in no great danger, for only an occasional shell burst near them. The fighting was going on below the east wall. Lucia and Garibaldi toiled up the hill, each one using every bit of their strength.

[Illustration: "Lucia and Garibaldi toiled up the hill, each one using every bit of their strength."]

The soldier was limp and lifeless, his head rolled with every bump. He looked like one dead, but Lucia refused even to consider such a possibility. She urged Garibaldi on and tugged with determined persistence.

They were just below the wall when Lucia stopped to rest. The little goat was staggering from the exertion, and she was out of breath. She looked at the gate, it was only a little way off, but it seemed miles, and she wondered if she could go on.

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She looked up at the wall. A man dressed in a uniform unlike the Italian soldiers was looking down at her. Lucia called to him just as he jumped to the ground. She held her breath expecting to see him hurt, but he landed on his feet and ran to her.

"For the love of Pete, what have you got there?" he asked in a language that Lucia did not understand.

She looked up at him bewildered.

"I do not understand what you say, but the soldier is very sick. Please help me carry him to the convent," she said hurriedly.

"Hum, well you may be right," the big man laughed, "but I guess what you want is help."

He leaned over the wounded Italian.

"Pretty far gone, but there's hope. Steady now, I've got you." He lifted the man gently in his arms and carried him on his back.

Lucia watched him with admiration shining in her eyes. She followed with the goat through the gate.

Once in the town she could hardly believe her eyes. Soldiers seemed to be everywhere, shouting and calling from one to the other. She saw the little guns that were making all the sharp, clicking noises, and she knew that just below, and on the other side of the river, the Austrians were fighting desperately.

They passed many wounded as they hurried along, and to each one the big man would call out cheerily. Lucia wished she could understand what he said, or even what language he spoke. It was not German, of course, and she did not think it was French.

"Perhaps he was a tourist?" she asked him shyly, but he shook his head.

"I don't get you, I'm sorry. I'm an American, you see."

"Oh, Americano!" Lucia clapped her hands delightedly. "I am glad, I thought so, American is the name of the tourists, just as I guessed," she replied. "I have heard of Americans and I have seen some in the summer, but they were not like you."

She looked up in his face and smiled.

The American did not understand a word of her Italian, but he saw the smile, and answered it with a good-natured grin.

"You're a funny kid," he said. "I wish I could find out what you are talking about, and where you got ahold of that queer rig and the goat."

They had reached the other gate by now, and they hurried through it and to the convent.

Several of the sisters had returned, and there were doctors and nurses all busy in the long room where, the night before, Lucia had left Roderigo and Sister Francesca.

The American laid the soldier down on one of the beds, and hurried to one of the doctors.

"Saw this youngster dragging this man on a sort of stretcher hitched to a goat," he said. "He's pretty bad. Better look at him."

The doctor nodded. Lucia stood beside her soldier and waited. She was almost afraid of what the doctor would say. He leaned over him and began taking off his muddy uniform, while the American helped. When he had examined the wound, he hurried over to a table and came back with a queer looking instrument. To Lucia it looked like a small bottle attached to a very long needle.

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"Don't, don't, you are cruel!" she protested, as he pushed it slowly into the soldier. She put out her hand angrily, but the American pulled her back.

"It's all right," he said soothingly. "It's to make him well."

Lucia shook her head, and the doctor turned to her. He spoke excellent Italian.

"It is to save his life, child, and it doesn't hurt him, I promise you. Now tell me, where did you find him?"

Lucia explained hurriedly. The story, as it came from her excited lips, sounded like some wild, distorted dream. The doctor called to Sister Francesca.

"Is this child telling me the truth?" he asked wonderingly.

"As far as I know," she said; "and that boy in the third cot blew up the bridge. I know she went out to find the wounded."

The doctor did not reply at once. He was hunting for the soldier's identification tag. When he found it, he read it and whistled.

"Captain Riccardi!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, we can't let him die."

It could not be said that the doctor redoubled his efforts, for he was working his best then, but he added perhaps a little more interest to his work.

The American helped him, and Lucia, at a word from Sister Francesca, hurried to her and helped her with what she was doing. It was not until many hours later that she stopped working, for more wounded were being brought in every few minutes by the other stretcher-bearers, and there was much to do. But at last there was a lull, and Lucia ran through the long corridor and down to the door.

She opened it a crack and looked out. Before her, stretched along the banks of the river, were countless Austrian soldiers, staggering and fighting in a wild attempt to run away from the guns in the wall that mowed them down pitilessly. The officers tried to drive them on, but the men were too terrified, they could not advance under such steady fire. A little farther on, there was the beginning of a rude bridge. The enemy had evidently tried to build it during the night, but had been forced to abandon it after the Italians reached their new position.

As Lucia watched, the men seemed to form in some sort of order, and retreat back into the hills. Their guns stopped suddenly, and only the Italian fire continued.



It was a horrible scene, and in spite of the splendid knowledge that an undisputed victory was theirs, Lucia turned away and closed the door behind her. She ran up to the big door and out on the road.

There were signs of the battle all about her in the big shell holes in the road, and in the ruins still smoking inside the walls, but there was no such sight as she had just witnessed, and she took a deep breath of the warm fresh air.

CHAPTER XII

A REUNION

She shaded her eyes and looked down the road.

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Garibaldi, freed from her harness, was lying down in the sunshine, and as Lucia watched her she saw a familiar figure running towards her. She saw it stop and pat the goat. With a cry of joy she recognized Maria, bedraggled and muddy, but without doubt Maria. She ran forward to meet her.

"Maria, where have you come from?" she called as the older girl threw herself into her out-stretched arms and began to cry.

"Oh, from miles and miles away! I have been running since late last night," she sobbed.

"But what has happened? Beppi, Nana, are they safe?" Lucia demanded.

"Yes, yes, they are all safe with mother," Maria replied.

"Then why did you come back?" Lucia persisted.

"Oh, I could not bear it!" Maria tried to stifle her sobs. "All yesterday, as we ran away from the guns, I kept thinking—back there, there is work and I am running away. I knew that you were here, and I thought you were killed. Nana was half crazy with fear and we could get nothing out of her."

"But Beppi, he is safe, and aunt is taking care of him?" Lucia insisted.

"Oh, he is safe, of course, and so excited over his adventure, but he was crying for you last night, and we had hard work to comfort him."

Maria paused, and Lucia looked into her eyes. There was a question there and she knew that her cousin did not give voice to it. She put her arm around her and led her back towards the convent.

"Come," she said, smiling with something of her old mischievousness. "There is much to be done, and I will take you to Sister Francesca. She will tell you where to begin."

Maria followed her.

Lucia went back to the ward and did not stop until she stood beside Roderigo's bed. He was asleep, but his brows were drawn together in a worried frown. Lucia put her finger on her lip and turned to her cousin and pointed. Maria looked; a glad light came into her eyes, and without a sound she fell on her knees beside the bed.

Lucia left her and went over to Sister Francesca. She was awfully tired, and her arms were numb, but she did not dare stop for fear she would not be able to begin again.

"What can I do?" she asked.

Sister Francesca pointed to two empty buckets. “Go out to the well and fill those. We need more water badly,” she said, without looking up.

Lucia picked up the pails and walked to the end of the room, through a little side door and into a cloister. In the center of it was an old well that she worked by turning an iron wheel.

Lucia drew the water and poured it into her pails, and started back with them. It had been all her tired arm could do to lift the empty ones, but now each step made sharp pains go up to her shoulders. She staggered along with them, fighting hard against the dizziness in her head, but when she was half-way down the ward everything began to swim before her. She swayed, lost her balance, and would have fallen had not a strong arm caught her. The pails fell to the floor, the water splashing over the tops.

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Through the singing in her ears she heard an angry voice.

“Poor youngster, whoever sent her out for water? Seems to me she’s earned a rest. Here, sister, help me, will you?”

Then Maria’s soft voice came to her.

“Lucia dear, don’t look like that!” she cried excitedly. “Here, senor, put her on the bed, so.”

She felt herself being lifted ever so gently, and then the soothing comfort of a mattress and a pillow stole over her and she fell sound asleep.

She did not wake up until late in the afternoon. The sun was setting and the long ward was in deep shadow. She opened her eyes for a minute and then closed them again. She was too blissfully comfortable to make any effort.

She was conscious first of all of a strange quiet. The guns seemed to have very nearly stopped, there was only a faint rumble in the distance, and an occasional sputter from the guns near by.

The enemy had retreated beyond, far into the hills, and for the time being Cellino was safe. Lucia guessed as much and smiled to herself.

People tiptoed about the room near her, and she could hear their voices indistinctly. She did not try to hear what they said, she was too tired to think. She snuggled closer in the soft pillows and sighed contentedly, but before long a voice near her separated itself from the rest, and she heard:

“We will go to my beautiful Napoli, you and I, and I will show you the water, blue as the sky, and we will be very happy, and by and by you will forget this terrible war, as a baby forgets a bad dream.”

Lucia opened one eye and moved her head so that she could see the speaker. He was Roderigo, of course, and he was holding Maria’s hand and talking very earnestly.

Lucia eavesdropped shamelessly. She was curious to hear what her cousin would say.

“But surely you will not fight again!” Maria’s voice was pleading. “You are so sick, they will not send you back again.”

“But I must go back, my wound is not a bad one and I will be well in no time, and I must go back. Think how foolish it would be, if I was to say, ‘Oh, yes, I fought for two days in the great war.’ You would be ashamed of me, and that little cousin of yours, Lucia, she would think me a fine soldier.”

Lucia laughed aloud and the voices stopped.

Maria's cheeks flushed and she jumped up.

"Are you awake, dear?" she asked hurriedly, "then I will go and tell Sister Francesca and the Doctor."

She hurried off. Lucia sat up and looked at Roderigo. She was a sorry sight in her muddy clothes, and her hair fell about her shoulders.

"You are a fine soldier, Roderigo Vicello," she said impulsively, "and I would say so if you had only fought for one day, for I know how brave you are. But you are right to want to go back."

"Yes, I am right," Roderigo replied. He stretched out his hand and Lucia slipped hers into it.

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"We have been comrades, you and I," he said, "and we understand why."

Lucia nodded gravely. She felt suddenly very proud.

The Doctor came back a minute later with Maria.

"Well, are you rested enough to be moved?" he asked, smiling.

"Oh, yes I am quite all right," Lucia assured him.

"Well, I wouldn't brag too much," the Doctor laughed. "You'll find you are pretty shaky. Sister Francesca has a little room fixed for you and some clean clothes; how does that sound?"

Lucia smiled in reply, and the American came over at the Doctor's call.

"Think you can manage to carry the little lady, Lathrop?" he asked.

"Guess so."

Lucia felt the strong arms lift her, as if she weighed no more than a feather. He carried her down the ward and up a flight of stairs. Sister Francesca was waiting for them at the door of the little room. It had been one of the sister's cells. With her help Lucia was soon in a coarse white nightgown and tucked in between clean sheets.

The Doctor came in to see her a little later.

"How is my soldier of the pennies?" she asked, and then as she realized he would not understand she added, "the one I brought up the hill."

"Oh, Captain Riccardi, he's still very ill, but he is going to pull through all right."

Lucia smiled.

"Oh, I am glad," she said. "I was so afraid, he looked so queer."

"Well, don't worry any more," the Doctor replied, "and now what do you want?"

Lucia sighed contentedly.

"Something to eat, if you please," she said shyly, "I am very hungry."

CHAPTER XIII

AN INTERRUPTED DREAM

A week passed, a week of lazy luxury between cool linen sheets for Lucia, and she enjoyed her rest to its fullest extent. Every one in the convent, which was now a hospital, and running smoothly with capable American nurses, made a great fuss over her, and she had so much care that sometimes she was just the least bit bored. When the week was over, and she was feeling herself again, she grew restless and clamored to get up. Even the sheets, and the delicious things she had to eat, could not keep her contented. At last the Doctor said she might go out for a few hours into the sunshine, and the whole hospital hummed with the news.

Maria, in a white apron and cap, helped her dress, and went with her down the stone steps and out into the convent garden.

The first thing that met her eye was Garibaldi, clean and lazy, lying contentedly in the sun. She came over and seemed delighted to see her mistress once more.

"But you are so clean, my pet!" Lucia exclaimed. "And your coat looks as if it had been brushed," she added, wonderingly.

Maria laughed.

"It was. The big American, Senor Lathrop, makes so much fuss over her, you would think she was a fine horse."

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"What about Senor Lathrop?" a laughing voice demanded. "Oh, drat this language, I keep forgetting." He stopped and then said very slowly in Italian: "Good morning, how are you this morning?"

"Oh, I am very well, and you," Lucia replied, "you have been very good to take such care of Garibaldi."

"Garibaldi? I don't understand," Lathrop replied.

Lucia pointed to the goat and said slowly. "That is her name."

"Name! The goat's name Garibaldi!" Lathrop exclaimed, and added in English, "Well I'll be darned!"

"Not just Garibaldi," Lucia corrected him. "Her name is 'The Illustrious and Gentile Senora Guiseppe Garibaldi,' but we call her Garibaldi for short."

Lathrop understood enough of her reply to catch the name. He threw back his head and laughed uproariously.

"All that for a goat! No wonder she was a good sport with a name like that to live up to!"

He stood for a long time looking at the poor, shaggy animal before him, then he laughed again and went into the convent.

"He is a funny man," Lucia said wonderingly. "Why should he laugh because of Garibaldi's name?"

"Oh, he meant no disrespect," Maria reasoned. "Americans all laugh at everything. The nurses are the same, they are always laughing. If anything goes wrong and I want to stamp my foot, they laugh."

Lucia was somewhat mollified. "What is the news?" she demanded, "I have been up there in my little room for so long, no one would tell me anything. Sister Francesca would smile and say, 'Everything is for the best, dear child,' when I asked for news of the front, and I was ashamed to ask again, but you tell me."

"Oh, there is nothing but good news," Maria replied. "We are gaining everywhere. The night after the battle, some of our soldiers built a bridge over the river and crossed, and when the Austrians rallied for a counter-charge they were ready for them and took them by surprise."

Maria paused, and her eyes filled with tears. "And only think, Lucia, if you had not destroyed the bridge and warned the Captain of the beggar man, we might have been

taken by surprise, and Cellino would be an Austrian village. Oh, I tell you the ward rings with your praise. The men talk of nothing else.”

“Nonsense, I did not do it alone. How about your Roderigo? He is the one who deserves the praise. But tell me, how is my soldier of the pennies? I am never sure that the Doctor tells me truly how he is.”

“Why do you call him ‘your soldier of the pennies’?” Maria asked. “His name is Captain Riccardi, and he is very brave. Every one knows about him, and some of the boys say he is the bravest man in the Italian army.”

“Perhaps he is,” Lucia laughed, “but he is my soldier of the pennies, just the same, that’s the name I love him by.”

“But I don’t understand,” Maria protested, “did you know him before?”

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"Yes and no," Lucia teased. "I did not know his name, or what he looked like, but I knew there was a soldier of the pennies somewhere."

"But tell me," Maria begged. "I am so curious."

Lucia laughed. "Very well, it is a queer thing. Listen. Do you remember how for a few days about a week before this battle, I only brought two pails of milk to your stall in the morning?"

Maria nodded.

"Well, the rest of the milk went to Captain Riccardi, but I did not know it. You see, one day Garibaldi ran away and went far up into the hills. I think the guns frightened her, and of course I went after her. I found her on a little plateau quite far up, and because I was tired I sat down to rest, keeping tight hold of her, you may be sure. I was dreaming and thinking, and oh, a long way off, when suddenly I heard a voice above me. I looked up; my, but I was frightened, I can tell you, but I could see no one. The voice said: 'Little goat herder, will you give me a drink of milk?'"

Lucia stopped.

"Go on!" Maria exclaimed. "What did you do?"

"I am ashamed to say," Lucia replied, "I was so frightened that I ran back down the mountain as if the evil spirit were after me, and I did not stop until I was safe at home. Then I began to think. Of course, at first I had thought only of an Austrian, but when I stopped to think, I knew that Austrians don't speak such Italian—low and very soft this was, as my mother used to speak, and your Roderigo. Well, then of course, I wanted to die of shame; I had run away from one of the soldiers. I thought about it all night, and I could not sleep. Just before dawn I got up very softly and went down to the shed. I filled two pails half-full and carried them up to the same place.

"I could not see or hear any one, but I left them, and that afternoon I went back to see if it had been taken away. There were the empty pails, and beside them a strip of paper with four pennies wrapped up inside.

"After that, I took the milk up every day to the plateau, but I never saw or heard the soldier again. Sometimes he would write me a little note and say 'thank you,' to me, but always there was the money. So that is why I called him my soldier of the pennies; do you see?"

"Oh, yes, how splendid!" Maria was delighted. "And to think it was Captain Riccardi all the time. No wonder now that he talks sometimes in his sleep of the little goat-herder and her flowered dress. He was an observer, Roderigo told me. That is a very

important thing to be, and he was hidden high up in a tree. That is why you did not see him.”

Lucia thought of the telephone.

“I know now, of course, for I saw him climb up it and talk over the wire to the soldiers miles away,” she exclaimed. “But how could I think to look in a tree for a soldier?” she laughed.

A bell tinkled, and Maria sprang up.

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"I must go, it is my time to be on duty," she said, smoothing her apron and settling her cap importantly, "I will come back when I can."

Lucia looked envious. "Do not be long," she called after her.

She settled back with a sigh, and the little goat came over to have her neck patted. Lucia stroked it lovingly.

"Garibaldi," she said aloud, "we are in a dream, you and I, and soon we will both wake up and find ourselves back in the white cottage with Nana scolding because we are late for supper. And we'll be sorry too, won't we? For that will mean that the beautiful sheets and the soft pillow will vanish the way they do in the fairy tales, and this lovely garden will go too."

"But what if there were another one to take its place?" a voice inquired from the doorway.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FAIRY GODFATHER

Lucia turned and looked up quickly. She was startled and not a little embarrassed at having her confidence overheard.

Through the door that led from the ward the American was pushing a bed on wheels. Lucia had seen that same bed many times before. It had belonged to the old Mother Superior of the convent, and many a bright morning she had seen it out in the garden as she sat at her desk in the schoolroom above.

She looked at the white pillow half expecting to see the old wrinkled face of Mother Cecelia, but instead Captain Riccardi looked up at her and smiled.

"See, I've found you at last," he said, as Lathrop pushed the bed beside Lucia's chair. "I was beginning to think that you were just a dream child, and that I had imagined about the milk."

Lucia laughed gayly.

"No, Captain, that was not a dream, or I hope it wasn't, for if the milk was not real then I dreamed about the pennies, and the sick soldiers never got them."

"Sick soldiers! Did you give away the money?"

"Oh yes, sir, how could I keep it? I did not know you were a Captain, I thought—"



“You thought I was just a poor soldier, eh?”

“Well, yes, if you will excuse me for saying so, I did, but anyway I would not have kept the money.”

“Why not?”

“How can you ask? Why because, to accept pay for something—and such a little thing as a pail of milk—”

“Two pails.”

“No, just one, they were only half-full, but no matter. I wanted to give away the milk, not sell it, and so I put the pennies in the box at church.”

“And all the time I thought you were perhaps buying pretty ribbons with it.”

Captain Riccardi shook his head. “But I might have known better.”

“Ribbons!” Lucia scorned the idea. “What do I need with such foolishness, with a war going on just under my nose! I had other things to think about, I can tell you, and other ways to spend my pennies.”

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The Captain looked at her gravely. Then he took her hand and patted it gently.

"You are a brave and true little Italian," he said, "and I can never hope to pay you for what you have done. You will have to look for your reward in your own heart. It ought to be a very happy and contented heart, I should think."

Lucia's cheeks flushed with pride.

"Oh, it is, Captain Riccardi," she said, "it is indeed, and I am quite content. If you heard what I said just now about the dream, you must not think that I don't want to go back to the cottage—I do, and I want so much to see my Beppino and Nana again—only—"

"Tell me about that 'only' Lucia," the Captain said gently. "That is what I want to hear, and then perhaps I will have something to tell you."

"Oh, it is nothing but silliness," Lucia protested, "how can it matter?"

"Never mind, tell me," the Captain insisted.

"But you will laugh. What do big men know of fairy stories!"

"Lots, sometimes—I believe in fairies."

Lucia looked into the smiling eyes incredulously, "You, a soldier!"

"Of course, haven't I told you that I thought you were a fairy when I first saw you, and by the Saints, I did too. Do you know, I first discovered you way down in the valley. You were with your goats. I looked at you through my glass, and your pretty flowered dress, and the kerchief you wore over your hair, made me think of the little girls at home."

"Ah, then you come from the south, too?" Lucia laughed. "I knew it."

"How do you?" the Captain demanded.

Lucia shook her head sadly.

"No, my mother came from Napoli. When I was a little girl she used to tell me all about the sunshine and the flowers, and the blue water in the bay, and old grandfather Vesuvius always frowning and puffing in the distance. Oh, I tell you I feel sometimes as if I had been there, but, of course, that is silly," she broke off, laughing, "for I have never been away from Cellino."

"Would you like to go away to the south and live there?" Captain Riccardi asked slowly.

“Oh, yes, of course. I dream sometimes that I am a princess and that a wicked fairy has turned me into a goat-herder and forced me to live here where it is so very cold sometimes, and then I wish hard for a good fairy to come and set me free, and take me on a magic carpet away to a garden full of flowers. There,” she smiled shyly, “that is what I was thinking of out loud when you came a minute ago.”

The Captain did not laugh, except with his eyes. His voice was very grave as he asked.

“Wouldn’t a prince or a fairy godfather do just as well?”

“Oh, yes, even better,” Lucia replied seriously.

“Well then, what would you say if I told you that I am a fairy godfather, and that I can spirit you to a garden even nicer than this, where it is always summer?”

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"I would surely say you were telling me fairy tales," Lucia replied frankly.

The Captain laughed delightedly.

"But I'm not, Lucia," he said seriously. "I'm telling you the truth. Down in the south I have a big house set in the very heart of a beautiful garden, and I live there all by myself."

"Oh!" Lucia's big eyes were full of genuine sympathy.

"A long time ago, I used to have a little sister like you, but she died, and since then I have been ever and ever so lonely. How would you like to come and be my sister? I'd take awfully good care of you, and Garibaldi."

For an instant Lucia's eyes danced with happiness, but it was only for an instant, then her face fell.

"Oh, I would like that Captain, so very much," she said, "but I could not leave Beppino and Nana."

Captain Riccardi looked at her in silence for a moment, then he said slowly, "Of course, you couldn't. I forgot them for the moment. But of course I meant to include them in the invitation. I am very fond of Beppino already. We had quite a chat that day in the cave."

"Oh, but you don't mean it!" Lucia jumped up excitedly. "To live with you and Nana and Beppi and Garibaldi in a garden,—oh! but of course, it is not so, and I shall presently wake up."

"Wake up in the little white cottage and milk the goats and trudge to town with the heavy pails?" the Captain said.

Lucia nodded soberly.

"Not if I can help it, you won't," he added with decision. "You'll never do another stroke of hard work again."

"But are there no goats in your garden to milk, and no work to do?" Lucia looked bewildered.

"Yes, but there's a lot of people to do it,—so many in fact, that all you will have to do is to pick flowers and tell Beppi and me fairy stories. Will you come?"

"Oh!" Lucia stamped her foot. "If this is only a dream!" she exclaimed half angrily, "I shall surely die of misery when I wake up."



"It's no dream, little sister, it's true, and it won't be long before you realize it. This leg is going to take a long time in healing, but as soon as it is better we will go home, then when I am well enough to go back to fight, you will stay in the garden and keep it looking beautiful for me until I return."

For a full moment Lucia stared into the Captain's eyes, while the wonderful truth dawned on her, then her emotion being far beyond words, she threw her arms around him and kissed him heartily.

CHAPTER XV

EXCITING NEWS

"Lucia, Lucia, such exciting news, come here at once!" Maria ran up the stairs excitedly.

Lucia, who was busy helping Sister Francesca put away the clean sheets, dropped what she was doing and ran down the corridor.

"What is it!" she demanded. "Have the Austrians surrendered?"

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“No,” Maria stopped, breathless from her haste, “that is, not yet, though Roderigo says —”

“Oh, oh, oh!” Lucia protested. “Don’t start on what Roderigo says, or we will never learn the news.”

Maria pouted. “For that I have a good mind not to tell you,” she threatened.

“Then I shall go downstairs myself and find out,” Lucia replied, not one whit disturbed.

“Then I may as well tell you,” Maria laughed, “for the ward hums with it. The King is coming—think of it—he is coming to Cellino to-morrow, and he is to go through the hospital and see all the wounded. Only fancy, our King!”

“Who told you?” Lucia’s eyes flashed excitedly. Her loyal little Italian heart beat with eager anticipation.

“Do you suppose I can see him?” she demanded, “but of course, I must, even if I have to hide under the Captain’s bed. He is sure to stop and speak to my Captain,” she added with pride.

“Oh, Roderigo says that he always stops and speaks to all the wounded and shakes their hands, and is very kind and so sorry always when they are badly hurt. Roderigo says he has talked to soldiers who have won decorations, and the King himself pins them on—just think of it!”

Lucia gave a profound sigh.

“If he ever spoke to me,” she said solemnly, “I would die of joy.”

It was several days after Lucia and the Captain had talked in the garden, and Lucia was beginning to grow accustomed to the wonderful idea. Her dreams were coming true at last, and she had to admit to herself that she always believed that they would. Captain Riccardi was truly a fairy godfather in her eyes, and she proved her gratitude for his kindness in a hundred little ways a day. It never seemed to enter her mind that all he was offering, wonderful as it was, could not pay her for her courage in saving his life.

She insisted upon laying all the credit on his shoulders, and with a smile and a shrug the Captain accepted the double share, and determined in his big heart to be worthy of it.

When Lucia and Maria went down to the ward a little later, the patients were indeed humming with the news. Every face wore a smile of keen joy, and the nurses hurried about to be sure everything was in perfect order.

Lucia was well enough now to go wherever she pleased, and after she had talked for a few minutes with Captain Riccardi, and made sure that Maria had not exaggerated, she went out of the convent with the intention of going into town. Some of the refugees had returned, but so far there had been no news of Senora Rudini, Nana, or Beppi, and she was growing anxious.

As she walked down the broad steps, she saw Lathrop coming towards her. Lucia was particularly fond of the big American, and she smiled as she saw him.

"Hello!" he greeted.

Lucia returned the salutation.

"Do you know that the King is coming?" she demanded.

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Lathrop understood the word King, and as the town was talking of nothing else he guessed what she meant.

“Yes,” he replied in Italian, “nice—glad—you.”

Lucia laughed.

“Oh, but you are so funny. How I wish you could speak so that I could understand you!” she said.

Lathrop shook his head. “There she goes again, I didn’t get even one word this time.”

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a letter.

“See,” he said, pointing to it.

Lucia nodded. Lathrop scratched his head.

“You—in—letter,” he said painstakingly, “Girl, American.”

“Oh, you have put me in your letter? How nice!” Lucia said. “What did you say?”

“I get you, but I’m blest if I can tell you, and it’s a shame, too. You’re such a little winner, you and your Mrs. Garibaldi, that I’d like to be able to tell you so. But I guess it’s hopeless.”

All of which Lucia listened to politely, but without the first idea of its meaning.

She nodded towards the gate and they walked towards it together. Lathrop mailed his letter, and they stopped to look at the ruins. Lucia questioned some soldiers who were clearing the streets as best they could.

The town hall, at the end of the market-place, was still standing, and to-day it was draped in Italian flags. It looked older and more dignified than ever, amid the ruins, and the flag floated bravely in the crisp fall breeze. Lucia and Lathrop stopped to look at it. Lucia’s eyes sparkled and she threw an impulsive kiss towards it. Lathrop saluted respectfully.

As they turned to go back they noticed a crowd of soldiers and some of the townspeople gathered about the gate.

“What can the matter be?” Lucia exclaimed, hurrying forward. “Perhaps it is the King.”

They ran to the gate and questioned some of the soldiers.

“More refugees returning,” one of them explained. “See there’s a whole line of them, it is a good sight, and a good time that they have chosen. Now we will not look so like a deserted place when the King comes.”

“Oh, perhaps some of them can give me news of Beppino,” Lucia exclaimed, forcing her way through the crowd.

Almost the first person she saw as she ran down the road was Maria’s mother. She was walking along beside several other women, and with a start Lucia realized that she looked thin and wan.

“Aunt Rudini!” she called excitedly, “you are back at last. Oh, Maria will be so glad!”

Senora Rudini looked up, fear and hope in her eyes.

“Maria!” she exclaimed, “where is she?”

“At the convent. She is helping to nurse the soldiers,” Lucia replied.

“Oh, and I thought she was dead or a prisoner. She lay down beside me one night, and the next morning she was gone; I have been terrified.” The old woman was wringing her hands.

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"But she is safe, go and see," Lucia protested, "I have just left her."

Maria's mother needed no urging, she ran as fast as her stiff joints would allow towards the hospital. But she had not gone very far when she returned.

"I am a selfish old woman," she said, "thinking first of myself, when of course you want news of Nana. Well, look yonder in that farm wagon."

Lucia did not wait to hear more. She darted off and met the wagon before it reached the turn in the road.

"Beppi! Nana!" she called.

The man who was driving stopped, and Nana slid down from the straw, right into Lucia's waiting arms. She was so glad to see her, that she could only babble foolishly. All during her long journey, and her stay in strange villages, she had thought of nothing but Lucia in the hands of the enemy, and she was nearly crazy with relief and joy to find her safe again.

At last Lucia quieted her. "Where is Beppino?" she asked, "surely he is with you?"

Something in the straw of the wagon moved, and the old driver pointed his whip at a mop of black hair, and laughed.

Beppi was asleep of course. Lucia's strong young arms lifted his little body out, and hugged and kissed him. Beppi woke up, and at sight of her he shouted with joy.

It was a happy and excited family that walked through the town and down to the little white cottage.

Lucia had so much to say, and Nana would not listen nor believe all the wonderful things she tried to tell her, but at last, from lack of breath, she stopped exclaiming and crying, and Lucia pushed her gently onto the green bed, took Beppi on her lap, and began the recital of her wonderful news in earnest.

CHAPTER XVI

THE KING

"The King! The King!"

"Viva! Viva!" A great cry rose within the walls of Cellino, and swelled to a mighty cheer, as a gray automobile drove slowly through the Porto Romano, and stopped in the market-place opposite the town hall.

The soldiers who had so bravely defended the town were lined up ready for inspection, and as the King lifted his hand to salute the colors, a silence, as profound and as moving as the cheer had been, fell over the crowd.

Lucia, with Beppi held tightly by the hand, was on the edge of the crowd. She trembled with excitement as she looked at the greatest, and best-loved man in all Italy.

“See!” she whispered excitedly to Beppi, “that is the King—our King! Look at him well, for we may never be lucky enough to see him again in our whole lives.”

Beppi’s big eyes were round with wonder. He looked. His gaze fastened on the shining sword. Then the memory that he might some day be a General returned to him, and he drew himself up very straight. As the King passed on his inspection, his little hand went up in a smart salute.

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His Majesty stopped, smiled, and returned the salute gravely.

Beppi waited until he had walked on, then he buried his face in Lucia's skirts, and wept from sheer joy.

Lucia's pride knew no bounds. Her heart was beating wildly, but she stood very still until the King went into the town hall, then she picked Beppi up in her arms and ran excitedly across the town and out to the convent.

"We can see him again, darling, so stand very still," she said. "He is coming to see the soldiers."

They watched the gate eagerly, and before long the gray car came through it very slowly. A crowd of people surrounded it, cheering and throwing flowers. The King smiled and bowed to them all. Lucia's eyes never left his face. Suddenly she saw him lean forward excitedly as the big car stopped. Beppi tugged at her skirts.

"Look at Garibaldi, she is blocking the way."

Lucia looked, and to her horror she saw her pet standing in the middle of the road, her four hoofs planted firmly in the mud, and her head lowered.

"Oh, the wretch," Lucia exclaimed, darting forward. "Come here at once!" she called.

Garibaldi looked around and obediently trotted off. The car started, and the King waved especially to Lucia as he passed, but even so great an honor could not compensate her. She was mortified to tears that her goat should have been guilty of *lese majeste*.

No entreaties on Beppi's part could make her stay to wait for the King's return. She left him with a soldier, and went around the corner of the convent, followed by the disgraced Garibaldi.

She sat down on a bench and sighed.

"Of course you're only a goat," she said scornfully, "but I did think you had more sense than to do anything as terrible as that. Do you know who that was that you made to stop? That was the King, do you hear?"

Garibaldi walked away indifferently.

"Oh, I am disgusted with you forever," Lucia exclaimed with a shrug of disdain. "You will stay here until he goes away again, and then I shall take you home and tie you up."

Garibaldi paid no attention to the threat. Perhaps she knew how empty it would prove to be.

“Lucia, Lucia, my child, where are you?” Sister Francesca’s voice trembled as she called.

“Here I am, sister,” Lucia jumped up. “Do you want me?”

“Oh, my dear, I have looked everywhere for you. Come with me at once.”

Lucia followed, wondering at the expression in the nun’s usually placid face. But Sister Francesca did not stop to give any explanations. She led the way hurriedly back to the front door, of the convent, and up the steps through the ward of smiling men, and only stopped when she reached the door of Captain Riccardi’s private room.

“Go in, my dear,” she said, giving Lucia a little push. “The Captain wants to speak to you.”

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Lucia opened the door and found herself face to face with the King.

She was too astonished, and far too thrilled to speak. She must have shown some of her feeling in her eyes, for the Captain, who was in bed, laughed.

“Here she is, Your Majesty,” he said.

The King stepped forward and put his hand on her shoulder.

“So you are the brave little girl whom I must thank for saving Captain Riccardi’s life, and for blowing up the bridge?”

Lucia was still tongue-tied. She swallowed hard and tried to stop her heart from beating so fast.

“Yes, yes, sir—Your Majesty,” she said at last. “I and Garibaldi.”

“Garibaldi?” The King could not restrain a smile.

“The goat, sir,” the Captain explained.

“Oh, I see, and what did you say his name was?”

“Garibaldi’s a her, Your Majesty, and so she had to be Senora Garibaldi.”

Lucia was fast forgetting her embarrassment.

“‘The Illustrious and Gentile Senora Guiseppi Garibaldi,’ that’s her real name, but of course, it’s too long for every day.”

“Yes, I should suppose so, particularly if you were in a hurry,” the King laughed softly.

“Was that Senora Garibaldi that we came nearly running over?” he asked.

“Oh yes, it was, but please, Your Majesty, don’t be angry with her. You see, she really didn’t know you were the King.”

“Angry, why I should say not. Before I leave, yon must introduce me to her, I couldn’t leave without seeing such a really important person.”

Lucia clapped her hands delightedly.

“Oh, she will be so proud!” she exclaimed.

The King turned to the officer who stood beside him and nodded, then he shook Captain Riccardi’s hand. “I congratulate you on the addition to your household,” he said,



smiling. “Come with me, Lucia,” he continued, “I have something for you, and I want to give it to you where all the soldiers can see.”

Lucia followed in a dream. She stood very still at the end of the ward, and watched the men salute as the King stood before them.

She did not hear what he said to them, for her head was swimming, but she saw him turn to her, and her heart missed a beat as he pinned a medal on her faded bodice.

“In appreciation of your courage and loyalty,” the King said, and Lucia’s eyes looked into his for a brief, but never-to-be-forgotten moment.

CHAPTER XVII

GOOD-BY TO CELLINO

It was over a month before Captain Riccardi was well enough to be moved, but at last the beautiful day for the departure for the south came.

“Do you really mean we are going?” Beppi demanded.

“Of course we are, darling,” Lucia replied, laughing. She was so excited that she could hardly wait to dress Beppi and Nana with the patience that such an undertaking required. Nana had a new dress, Aunt Rudini made it with Maria’s help, and though it was too somber for Lucia’s color loving eyes, it was a new dress and she fastened it on Nana’s bent shoulders with a glow of pride.

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"There now!" she exclaimed when it was on and Nana's stringy gray hair had been reduced to some sort of order.

"Turn around and let me see you."

Nana turned. She was in a flutter of excitement, although she would not have admitted it for the world.

"Don't waste any more time over an old woman," she said, sharply. "I am tidy and that is enough."

"You are more than tidy, Nana, you look beautiful," Lucia exclaimed. "Now do sit still and don't do anything."

"There's nothing to be done that has not already been done," Nana replied as she sat on the edge of the green bed and folded her hands on her lap. Lucia nodded in satisfaction and turned her attention to Beppi.

He had a new suit too, and the broad sailor collar on it was embroidered with emblems and stars.

Beppi was delighted, and Lucia helped him on with it as he danced and hopped, first on one foot and then to the other.

"I'm a sailor," he announced, "a real sailor! See the bands on my arm."

"Fickle one," Lucia protested as she tied the flaring red tie, with loving fingers, "I thought you were going to be a soldier like our Captain."

Beppi thrust his small hands in his trouser pockets.

"I am when I grow up," he replied seriously, "but I can be a sailor in the meantime, can't I?"

"Yes, of course," Lucia agreed, "and now put on your shoes, dear, it must be late, and it would never do to keep the Captain waiting."

"Go and dress yourself then," Nana said, "and don't make yourself look too gay, it is not seemly."

Lucia tossed her head and laughed.

"Ah, but I will, my new bodice is so beautiful; all bright flowers, and my skirt is blue—I know the Captain will like it—and we are going to the South where all the girls wear bright colors—I expect my dress will look very somber."

Nana did not reply, she grumbled a little to herself, and Lucia pulled out the drawer of the dresser and very carefully took out her new possessions. She put them on slowly as if to prolong the pleasure.

"When she was ready she looked at as much of herself as she could see in the small mirror, and smiled happily.

"I look very nice, I think," she said frankly.

"Then we are ready," Nana exclaimed, getting up, "we had better start up the hill."

"Yes, do let's go," Beppi insisted, "I know we are going to be late."

"Oh, but we have plenty of time," Lucia replied. "Go along both of you, I will follow with Garibaldi."

"Such foolishness," Nana grumbled, "to take a goat in a train; there are many goats in the South. Why don't you wait until you get there and leave Garibaldi to Maria with the rest?"

Lucia looked at her grandmother in consternation, but she did not stop to argue with her. She left the house and went to the shed; repaired now enough to make a shelter to keep out the rain.

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Garibaldi was firmly tied to one of the posts.

"Come, my pet," Lucia whispered, "we are going away and I have a ribbon for your neck, see?"

"Now come," she coaxed, "we must go up to the convent, that nice American Mr. Lathrop is going to put you in a box. You won't like it, poor dear, but it's the only way they let goats travel."

Garibaldi seemed to understand something of the importance of the occasion, for she walked along beside her little mistress with lowered head.

Lucia waited until Nana and Beppi had disappeared through the gate before she started. She knew there was plenty of time and she wanted to be alone.

She stood in the doorway of the cottage and looked at the poor, tumbled little room. She felt suddenly very forlorn and lonely.

"Good-by, little room," she said softly, "I will never, never forget you. It isn't as if you were going very far away from me for we have given you to Maria, she and Roderigo will take good care of you, and some day perhaps I will come back for a tiny visit," she said.

A plaintive "Naa" from Garibaldi made her turn. As she left the room her eyes lingered on the green bed.

Captain Riccardi was sitting up, fully dressed, and waiting for them in the garden of the convent.

At sight of Lucia his eyes danced with fun.

"Well, little sister of mine, how are you?" he greeted.

"Oh, I am so excited, Senor," Lucia replied. "Is it nearly time to go?"

"No, not for a couple of hours," the Captain laughed.

"Are we really going in an automobile?" Beppi demanded, "like the one the King came in?"

"Yes, just like that, and then we go in a train for a long time," the Captain explained.

"Do we *sleep* in the train?" Beppi's eyes were as round as saucers.

"No," the Captain shook his head, "we sleep in a lovely house that belongs to a friend of mine in Rome."

Beppi tried to be polite but Captain Riccardi saw the disappointment in his eyes, and patted his small head.

"Are you sorry?" he laughed.

"Oh, no, he is not," Lucia contradicted hastily, "he will like sleeping in Rome, won't you, my pet?"

Beppi hung his head. "I will like it," he admitted, "but it will not be as exciting as sleeping on a train."

"No, of course it won't, but it will be lots more comfortable, and you see I have to think of that," the Captain explained, "but I promise you some day we will sleep in a train, and on a boat, or any old place you like, how's that?"

"I will tell you afterwards," Beppi replied noncommittally.

"I must go and find Maria," Lucia said, "I have not told her half the things I want to. She won't take proper care of my goats, I know, but no matter, I will do my best to tell her what to do."

She went into the convent. Maria was busy in the ward, but at Lucia's beckon she left what she was doing and went to her.

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"Come over by Roderigo's bed," Lucia said, "we have only a little time to talk before we leave."

"Oh, but you must be excited!" Maria exclaimed.

"Look at her eyes," Roderigo laughed, "of course she is."

"Well, and why not," Lucia demanded, "wouldn't you be?" Roderigo shivered.

"If I were going this day, back to Napoli, I would die from joy," he said.

"Nonsense, that's what Lucia said about the King's speaking to her," Maria reminded, "but she's still alive, and the King not only spoke to her but kissed her too."

"Do you know," Lucia said quietly, "sometimes I think perhaps I am dead and this is Heaven."

"Heaven!" Roderigo laughed, "never, it is much too cold, see the sick yellow sun up there." He pointed to the window, "in Heaven the sun is hot and the sky is blue, just as you will find it to-morrow. Oh, but I envy you. What wouldn't I give—" He hesitated and looked at Maria, "No, I would not go if I could; I am happy here."

Maria's smile rewarded him.

"But surely after the war," Lucia said, "you will both come to Napoli to live."

"Perhaps," Roderigo assented, "after the war."

They were silent for a moment, aware for the first time of what the coming separation would mean. Then Roderigo exclaimed gayly,

"But how solemn we are! We must laugh. I tell you, Lucia, when you see my old grandfather Vesuvius you must give him my best respects, for mind if you are not respectful to him he may do you some harm."

"Oh, I will be very careful," Lucia laughed, "but I will never call that cross old, smoking mountain my grandfather, I can promise you that."

"Haven't you some friends that Lucia could see?" Maria inquired, "or could she perhaps take a message to your family?"

"No." Roderigo shook his head, "she will not be near them, but perhaps—" He turned to Lucia, "if you are ever walking along the shore below Captain Riccardi's place, you may meet a soldier, an old man with a scar on his face; if you do, he is my uncle Enrico."

“But what does he do on the beach?” Maria inquired.

“Oh, he watches to see that no one rows out to the boats in the bay without a passport, there are plenty of men who would like to leave without permission,” Roderigo explained, “My uncle is there to keep them safe in Italy.”

“Are they Austrians?” Lucia inquired.

Roderigo winked.

“They are Italian citizens on the face of things,” he replied, “but in their hearts—” An expressive gesture finished the sentence.

Just as Maria was about to ask another question Beppi ran into the ward.

“Lucia, Lucia, come quickly, the American is packing Garibaldi up in a box, and you are missing all the fun.”

Lucia jumped up.

“Oh I must go and help,” she exclaimed, “I will see you again for good-by.”

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She followed Beppi to the garden and found Lathrop nailing on the top to a big wooden crate. From between the slats Garibaldi looked out reproachfully.

Lucia petted and consoled her until it was time to go.

Garibaldi left first in a wagon; she was going all the way by train. Lucia had many misgivings but she watched the wagon out of sight with a smile.

Her thoughts were soon diverted by the arrival of a big automobile. Captain Riccardi was helped in by the doctor and Lathrop, and after repeated good-bys Lucia took her place beside him.

The car started off slowly, they were going to take the train at a point several miles south.

Lucia watched the walls of Cellino grow dim against their background of bare mountains. It was her first departure, and it marked a new period in her life.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE GARDEN

"How does my little sister like her new home?"

Captain Riccardi was sitting in a comfortable chair in the warmth and sunshine of his garden. He looked very much stronger than on his departure from Cellino. A month under the southern sky had done much to make him well again, and as he sat looking at Lucia he was turning over in his mind the possibility of returning to the front. Lucia was picking flowers near him, she had a basket over her arm and a big pair of scissors.

Her cheeks, that had been so pale, were flushed and round, and an expression of happy contentment took the place of the excited sparkle in her eyes.

She dropped down on the ground beside the Captain as he spoke, and looked up at him.

"That is the very first time you have asked me that," she said, "and we have been here for a long time. You know I think it is very, very wonderful, what could be more beautiful than this garden, but I am getting lazy, the sun is so warm and there is so little to do." She looked puzzled.

"That's quite as it should be," the Captain replied, "you are too young to work."



“Oh, that is what you always say,” Lucia protested, “I am too young and Nana is too old, and Beppi—”

“Beppi is too lazy,” the Captain laughed, “he is always asleep under the flower bushes, but tell me,” he continued gravely, “are you ever homesick?”

“Homesick.” Lucia considered for a moment, “For Maria, yes, but for Cellino, no. I like to think of it, but I want always to live here.”

“Good,” the Captain smiled, “then you won’t mind my going away?”

“Back to fight?” Lucia inquired.

The Captain nodded. “My wound is healed and I am well enough; they need all the men they can get up there, you know.”

“I know,” Lucia looked very unhappy, “what terrible times there have been since we came here; everything has gone wrong. Why I wonder, our soldiers are as brave as ever. What has made us lose so much lately?”

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A baffled look stole over the Captain's face and he shook his head sorrowfully.

"No one knows, my dear," he said, "we have suffered terrible losses, every plan that we make is known to the enemy."

"Do you remember the beggar you saw on the road the day you followed the two Austrian soldiers?"

Lucia nodded.

"Well, there are many men like that in Italy, some are disguised as beggars and some as just working men, but they are everywhere, and through them our plans are given to the enemy."

"But surely the police could arrest them," Lucia protested, "they must all be Austrians or Germans."

"They are, of course, but they have lived here among us for so long that it is hard to tell them from ourselves; they speak, act and look as we do."

"But they think as our enemies," Lucia added, "I understand. What very bad men they must be, just to think that but for them we might have won this horrible war by now."

"Perhaps," the Captain agreed, "but if they are here and we can't find them out then we must win the war in spite of them, and that is why I am going back."

"When?" Lucia asked. She was suddenly very unhappy for the memory of the attack was still vivid, and she dreaded to think of her newly found godfather's returning to the dangers and hardships of the front, but she was too brave and too wise to say so. She kept a stiff upper lip and her eyes were dry as they discussed the plans.

"I think I will leave in a day or two now that my mind is made up," the Captain said, "it will take me quite awhile to return to my Company, and I may have to wait in Rome for orders, so the sooner I am off the better."

"Yes, I suppose so," Lucia replied slowly. "Oh, but how we will miss you, I cannot bear to think," she added impulsively.

"Then you must write to me often," the Captain laughed, "I get so few letters and I will treasure them. I will want to know just how you and Beppi and Nana spend each day, and what tricks Garibaldi is up to."

"I shall tell you everything," Lucia promised, eagerly, "every tiny little thing, and you will write back?"



“Yes, as often as I can,” the Captain promised. He got up from his chair and started to walk toward the house. When he was halfway up the path Beppi dashed through the garden gate and ran to him.

“Oh, but I have had a fine morning,” he declared, “you will never guess where I have been.”

“You do look excited,” the Captain smiled, “it must have been a very nice place, tell us about it.”

“Then come back and sit down,” Beppi insisted, taking his hand. The Captain returned to his chair and Beppi perched on the arm of it.

“Now begin,” Lucia said, “we are listening.”

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"Well," Beppi took a long breath. "This afternoon I was tired of playing in the garden and I went out into the road. Nana was sound asleep and did not hear me, and when I had walked a little ways I met two boys; one of them was bigger than me and the other one was littler. We said hello, and one of them asked me my name, and I told him, and then the big one said he guessed I couldn't fight—" Beppi stopped and turned two accusing eyes at Lucia, "that was because I had on these old stockings. I told you, sister, that I'd be laughed at unless I went barefoot, same as always."

"Never mind about that," the Captain interposed, laughing, "tell us the rest."

"Well, I told him I could, and we did, of course, and I won," he continued proudly, "and after that we were friends, and they asked me if I'd ever been to the shore, and I said; not right to it, so they took me. We went down a hill and pretty soon we were right by the ocean, and the waves were coming in all frothy white on the blue water, and I took off my shoes and stockings—"

"Oh, Beppi," Lucia protested.

"Yes, I did," Beppi repeated, "I certainly did and we had a fine time, I can tell you, and here comes the exciting part. While we were on the beach a soldier came along; he was walking on the wall and he had a big gun. The two boys ran to him and I went with them. He asked me my name and where I lived, and I told him, and he said he had a nephew in the war, and one of the boys asked him how Roderigo Vicello was, and when I heard that name I just shouted, 'Why I know him,' and then I told them all about the bridge and the King giving Roderigo a medal, and everything. They were all glad, I can tell you, and I guess these boys won't say I can't fight again in a hurry," he added triumphantly.

"Oh, that is exciting news!" Lucia exclaimed, "Roderigo told me he had an uncle here. Did he have a big scar on his face, Beppino?"

"Yes," Beppi replied eagerly, "he got it in the Tripoli war. He is a very brave man, I think, but he says he'd rather fight than guard the shore, but of course he has to do as he's told, because he's a soldier."

"And I suppose that means you don't have to do what you're told until you're one," the Captain laughed, "what will Nana say when she hears you ran away?"

"Who's going to tell her?" Beppi inquired, "Lucia won't, and I don't think you will," he added with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"No, I suppose I won't after that," the Captain replied, laughing, "that is if you will promise to be very good and mind Lucia while I am away."

"Away?" Beppi queried, "where are you going?"

“Back to fight,” the Captain replied, “and perhaps I shall be gone for a long, long time, and of course, while I am gone I shall expect you to take care of your sister.”

“Oh, Lucia can take care of herself,” Beppi laughed, “she always has, and of Nana and me, too, but I’ll be good if you say so, only can’t I go down to the shore once in a while?”

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"Of course, darling," Lucia answered for the Captain, "but you must tell Nana where you are going."

"No, I will tell you I think," Beppi said gravely.

The Captain got up and he walked beside him to the house. There was a chance that the bright sword might be taken from its chamois case, and Beppi never missed a chance of seeing it if he could help it.

Lucia, left alone in the garden, looked out over the low wall to the west. The bay of Naples stretched out blue and glistening in the last rays of the sun, and the gray of the old house took on a soft pink tint.

"It is a fairy palace, I believe." Lucia buried her face in her basket and whispered to the flowers.

"I wonder if it will disappear when my fairy godfather goes away, or if it will stay and be ours to keep for him until he comes back, for he must come back, he must, he must, he must," she finished almost angrily.

CHAPTER XIX

BACK TO FIGHT

A big gray car, very like the one that had come to Cellino, drove up before the door of the Riccardi villa two days later.

The Captain, once his mind was made up, did not waste any time in carrying out his plans. He was eager to rejoin his comrades in the north, but when the time came to leave he was very sorry to say good-by to Lucia. She had found a warm and secure spot in his big heart, and he knew he would miss her gay chatter and the laughing expression of her eyes.

All the household were on the steps to say good-by, even Nana had been prevailed upon to leave her seat in the garden by the well, and her lace bobbins, long enough to see him off.

Beppi danced about excitedly. "Oh, please hurry up and end the old war," he cried impatiently, "and come back, we will be so lonely without you. I promise to be very, very good."

"That's right, and when I come home I shall bring you all the souvenirs I promised; an Austrian helmet and a piece of shell," the Captain replied.

“And your sword, don’t forget that,” Beppi reminded him.

“Oh no, of course I won’t forget that,” the Captain swung Beppi high in the air above his head and kissed him, then he turned to Lucia.

“I will be good too,” she promised, laughing.

“Of course you will, but you must be happy too, that is the most important of all,” the Captain said seriously. “Be sure and pick all the flowers in the garden and stay out in the sunshine all day.”

“And may I take the flowers to the hospital?” Lucia asked, “we have so many in the house, and the sick soldiers would love them so.”

“Yes, do what you like with them,” the Captain replied, “but be careful, don’t do anything dangerous, you are such a spunky little fire-brand, that I can’t help worrying.”

“Oh, but you mustn’t, I will be so very careful. Besides there is nothing to do down here, it is not like Cellino.”

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"Well, you can't always be sure," the Captain said, his eyes twinkling, "if there was any danger you'd be sure to be in the heart of it."

"No, I will close my eyes tight," Lucia promised, "and walk in the other direction, that is, unless it was something very, very important."

"I thought so. Well, I guess you'll be safe here, safer than you've ever been before, anyway," the Captain said, "and now good-by."

He kissed her low, broad forehead, very gently.

"Good-by, fairy godfather, come back soon." Lucia tried not to let her voice tremble.

The Captain got into the car hurriedly. He waved to the group on the steps until he was out of sight.

Lucia went back into the house, but the spacious rooms and high ceilings only added to her unhappiness. She almost longed for the comfort of the tiny old cottage and the familiar sight of the green bed.

She wandered about listlessly; she was quite alone. Nana had gone back to her lace making, and Beppi was in the garden. The old man and his wife—the Captain's faithful servants—were in the kitchen.

In the library Lucia stopped before the rows of books and tried to read their titles. But she gave it up and looked at the pictures, that amused her for a little while, for she thought they were beautiful, but she did not understand them. She could not give anything her undivided attention for her thoughts were on the way with the Captain, and she was fighting against the unhappiness that threatened to overpower her.

"Surely he will come back," she said, to a copy of Andrea del Sarto's St. John that hung above the mantel. "This cruel war has taken my real father; it cannot take my godfather too." She gave herself a little shake, "It is that I am lonely that I think such sad thoughts, I will go out to the garden and pick flowers for the soldiers."

Accordingly she found her basket and scissors and spent the rest of the afternoon in the garden. When her basket was piled high she put on her hat very carefully, regarding it from every angle of the Florentin mirror. It was the first hat she had ever owned and she was very proud of it.

When it was tilted to her satisfaction she took up the basket and went out by the garden gate.

The hospital was a little over a mile away. Lucia had visited it with Captain Riccardi. It had formerly been a private villa and its terraced gardens went down to the water's edge.

Lucia knew the way and she loitered along, enjoying the newness of the scenes about her. Everything and everybody were so different, the fishermen with their bright sashes and Roman striped stocking caps, the old women and the young girls in their bright dresses, with great gold loops hanging from their ears. Even the sound of their voices was different as they called out greetings to one another.

Lucia decided that the very first thing she would do when the Captain came home would be to ask him for a pair of gold earrings.

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So occupied was she with her thoughts that she reached the gate to the hospital before she realized it. She lifted the heavy knocker; an old man opened the door.

"This is not visiting day, little one," he said, as he looked down at Lucia.

"Oh, I am not visiting," she replied, "I brought these few flowers for the sick soldiers; will you take them?"

"Indeed I will." The old man held out his hand. "Do you want the basket back again?"

"Oh, no, there's no hurry for that, I will get it the next time I come," Lucia replied. "I mean to bring flowers every day or two for the soldiers."

"That is very kind of you," the old man smiled, "I'll take these right up."

Lucia nodded and turned to go back along the road. The sun was setting over the water, and below the bay beckoned invitingly. She looked and decided to go home that way.

She took a path that led to the water's edge. It was steep, for that part of the coast rose high above the water. She was tired when she reached the bottom and sat down to rest on the low stone wall.

The soft lapping of the water made her drowsy, and she slipped to the sand, leaned her head against the wall and closed her eyes.

There was not a sound but the soothing voice of nature, the ripple of the water, the sighing of the wind and the occasional cry of a sea bird.

All the sounds together seemed to rock Lucia in a sort of lullaby, and it was not many minutes before she was asleep.

When she awoke it was quite dark and she was conscious of a difference in the voice of the water. A heavy regular splash, splash, grew nearer and nearer as she listened. If she had been accustomed to living near the water she would have recognized it as the rhythmic stroke of oars, but she did not, and it was not until a shape loomed up in the dusk a little farther down the beach that she realized it was a boat.

She got up and walked towards it. If it was a fisherman's boat she wanted to see it, even if it meant being late to supper.

But it was not a fisherman's boat, it was a light, high-sided row boat and the man in it stood up and pushed forward on his stout oars.

He made a landing on the sand before Lucia reached him, and he jumped out hurriedly.

Whatever his business was it occupied all his thoughts, for he did not look to right or left but ran straight to the wall. Another figure came out of the shadows to meet him. They spoke in whispers, but Lucia was near enough to hear what they said.

She listened out of curiosity for it struck her as being rather strange that a man dressed in beautiful dark clothes, with a hat such as she had seen the men in Rome wear, should be out on the beach whispering in the shadow of the wall to a boatman.

When she had listened she was even more surprised.

“It’s all right, I’ve fixed it, you can get aboard her at midnight.” The boatman’s voice was husky and very mysterious.

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"Be sure and be here on time," the man replied, "this spot is safe, wait until the guard has passed and then land. If there is any danger, whistle."

The boatman nodded. "It's a risky business," he objected.

"You will be well paid for it," the man answered sharply. "Now go."

Lucia watched him disappear into the dusk and waited until the boatman had rowed out of sight. Then she straightened her hat and started for home, thinking very hard as she hurried along.

CHAPTER XX

AN INTERRUPTED SAIL

When Lucia reached the road above she ran as fast as she could. She had been so startled at what she had heard that her thoughts were confused. But as she hurried along her mind cleared.

"Perhaps they are all right, and the man is just going for a row," she said to herself. But the memory of the boatman's words returned to her.

"It's a risky business."

She did her best to attach no importance to it, but back in her brain was the firm conviction that the man with the hat was one of the Austrians that Roderigo had spoken of. "An Italian citizen on the face of things, but in their hearts—" Lucia instinctively mimicked Roderigo's gesture. She knew too, that argue though she might, she would interfere.

When she reached the garden she heard Beppi crying and saw a light in his window above. Beppi did not cry very often and by the sound she thought he was in pain.

She hurried into the house and ran upstairs. Nana met her at the door of Beppi's room; she was wringing her hands.

"So you are back," she cried, "well, praise the Saints for that, I thought I should lose you both on the same day."

"'Lose us,' what are you talking about?" Lucia demanded, pushing past her to the bed.

"Beppino mio, what has happened?" she asked, though there was little need to question for a deep cut in Beppi's cheek, from which the blood spurted freely, was answer enough.

“My face, Lucia, it hurts me so, make it stop bleeding,” Beppi pleaded, “I fell on a big rock in the garden.”

“Caro mio, how long ago?” Lucia asked excitedly, “here quick, Nana, get me some hot water, I will wash it as I saw Sister Veronica wash the soldiers. There, there, darling, it will soon be better.”

With trembling fingers Nana and the old servant, Amelie, brought a basin and a towel, and Lucia bathed the wound. It was a deep cut and poor Beppi winced as the water touched it.

After a little the blood stopped and Lucia bound up his head in soft white cloths.

“Stay by me,” Beppi begged, “don’t go way downstairs, I am afraid.”

“Poor angel,” Amelie cried, “he won’t be left alone; old Amelie will bring up the little sister’s dinner and she can eat by his bedside,” and she hurried off, crooning to herself as she went to the kitchen below.

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Nana, now that she knew that Beppi was not going to die, started scolding him for not looking where he was going, but Lucia sent her downstairs.

“He is too tired to listen to-night, Nana, and anyway he will be careful. Do go away and rest a little, you must be tired.”

When Nana had left, Lucia returned to the bed and sat down. She did not have any idea what time it was, and she knew that it would be impossible to leave Beppi until he was quiet. She hardly touched the tempting tray that Amelie brought her, and her voice trembled as she asked what time it was.

“Ten minutes after seven,” Amelie told her after she had carefully consulted the big hall clock.

“Oh!” Lucia was surprised and relieved. She thought she must have slept for hours, but now she realized that in reality she had only dozed for a few minutes.

She took Beppi’s hand and set about putting him to sleep. It was a difficult task. She told him story after story, but at the end of each his eyes were bright and his demand for another one as insistent as ever.

Lucia kept time by the chimes of the clock, and at ten she turned out the light.

“I am coming to bed beside you,” she explained as Beppi protested, “I think the light will hurt your head.” She took off her dress and slipped on her nightgown. Beppi snuggled contentedly into her arm, and she went on with her stories.

“Sing to me,” he asked at last, sleepily, “your song,” and Lucia began very softly to sing.

“O’er sea the silver star brightly is glowing,
Rocked now the billows are.
Soft winds are blowing,
Come to my bark with me.
Come sail across the sea.
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia.”

Beppi’s even breathing rewarded her efforts. She slipped her arm from under his head and stole softly out of the room just as the clock chimed eleven. She put on her dress hurriedly.

The house was very still as she crept downstairs and out into the garden. The stars were out and it was an easy matter to find her way. She ran until she reached the path that led to the shore, then she moved very cautiously. She hoped to reach the guard, tell him what she had heard, and then go home, but when she reached the beach she realized that she was too late.



There was no guard in sight, but her ears detected the splash of oars, and she knew that the boatman was coming. She crouched down beside the wall and waited. She watched him pull his boat up on shore and then walk swiftly off in the opposite direction from her.

She did not know what to do, and she was frightened—badly frightened. The broad shining water on one side and the hill on the other seemed to hem her in, and she felt lost. It was not like the mountains of Cellino, where she knew every path.

She crouched down by the wall and waited. Another figure joined the boatman, and they stood still, a little farther up the beach. Lucia knew it was the man she had seen that afternoon, and she knew too that in a very few seconds they would turn around and come back to the boat.

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With a courage born of fear she jumped up and before she quite realized what she was doing she was tugging at the boat.

It was not very high up on the beach for the boatman had left it so that it would be easily shoved off. Fortunately the tide was going out. Lucia's arms were strong and she pushed with a will. The boat found the water and drifted silently away.

Her feet were wet, but she did not realize it. She crept back to the beach and flattened herself against the wall. The men returned. They too kept in the shadow of the wall. It was not until they were almost brushing against Lucia that the boatman noticed that his boat was gone.

"The Saints preserve us!" he exclaimed. "It has been spirited away. I knew I should be punished for doing such a black deed."

"Spirits, nonsense!" the man spoke angrily. "It is your own stupid carelessness, you did not pull it up on shore far enough. You rattlebrain idiot, I've a good mind to kill you for this. See, there is your boat out there—empty—go and get it. Do you hear?"

"But how?" the boatman wrung his hands desperately. "I do not know how to swim. I will die. Santa Lucia, Saint of sailormen, spare me," he screamed as the man lifted his heavy cane to strike him.

"Don't you dare strike that man!" Lucia exclaimed, "he did pull his boat up on shore, but I pushed it off. I heard you this afternoon, and I knew you wanted to go away to that big ship out there, and perhaps sail to Austria. I know what you are, you two-faced man. You speak, you laugh, you scold in Italian, and all the time your black heart is Austrian."

"You shall not go away from here. I, Lucia Rudini, tell you, you shall not!"

"Santa Lucia! A miracle!" The boatman trembled with fear, but the man was not so superstitious. He caught Lucia's arm and shook her roughly.

"You did it, you little fiend, well, you shall get what you deserve for your meddling." He motioned to the frightened boatman. "Get me a rope, I'll make a gag of my handkerchief; hurry man, if you are found you will be shot."

"But I dare not, I dare not, she is the spirit of Santa Lucia. She came when I called. The Saints have mercy!"

With a growl of disgust the man turned from him and caught both of Lucia's wrists in his firm clasp. Then he lifted his cane.



“She must not tell until we are well away,” he said, and brought the cane down heavily. It was his intention to stun Lucia, but he had miscalculated when he expected her to stand still and receive the blow.

She dodged to the right and began kicking and struggling. The boatman wrung his hands and screamed for help.

It was not many minutes before the guard, attracted by the noise, came running towards them. The man’s back was towards him, but Lucia saw him and stopped struggling.

The man raised his cane again but this time he stopped, because the muzzle of a gun was pressing him between the shoulder blades.

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Lucia turned to the guard and explained hurriedly. In the starlight she could see that he had a long scar across his face, and she felt very secure.

"I know your nephew, Roderigo," she ended, "he helped me blow up the bridge in Cellino."

The soldier nodded.

"I know about that, Senorina," he said respectfully, "and the rest of your fine deeds. You were born for the work it seems. Move an inch and off comes your head," he turned furiously on the man who had tried to edge away. Then he continued in the soft, courteous tones he had been using. "I hope some day you will do me the honor of telling me of the attack yourself," he said. "It is sometimes very lonely here while I am on guard."

His gentle tone, and above all the flattering respect he showed, gave Lucia back her courage.

"Of course I will come," she said, "just as soon as my little brother is better. He fell and cut his head, and, and—well, I guess I'd better be going back, he may awaken and be frightened. Good night."

"Good night, Senorina," the soldier replied, "I am proud to have seen you."

"Now then,—" his voice became harsh again as he turned to his prisoners, "go along, one wink of your eyelid in the wrong direction and I will shoot."

He marched them off quickly, and Lucia, because the affair seemed finished, started for home.

CHAPTER XXI

THE END OF THE STORY

"Tell me a story," Beppi demanded when she was lying beside him once more, "I'm all awake again and my face hurts."

"What shall it be about?" Lucia asked, stroking his hair. She was still trembling from the reaction of her adventure, and Beppi's warm little body snuggled close in her arms was comforting.

"Go on with the story about the soldier and the bad girl that teased him, and the good girl that was the fairy princess."

“Very well, but shut your eyes. Let me see,” Lucia began, “the soldier went off to the war, and when he came back he was wounded and the good girl took care of him, and they decided to be married and live happily ever after. And the bad girl when she saw the poor soldier wounded was sorry she had teased him, and she never did it again. And because she was good all kinds of nice things happened to her. She found her fairy godfather, and he had a magic carpet, and first thing you know she was in the middle of a beautiful garden with her little—”

“Oh, bother, I knew that wasn’t a real story,” Beppi protested. “It’s just about Roderigo and Maria and the Captain and you. And oh, Lucia, how silly you are, you called yourself the bad girl when really you’re the goodest in the whole world.”

“Am I, Beppino mio?” Lucia laughed. “I don’t think so.”

“Well, I say you are,” Beppi replied, drowsily, “and the Captain thinks so too, so—” He dropped off to sleep.

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"I wonder if he would say so if he had seen me to-night," Lucia mused, "I had to do it, it was the only way, but oh, dear, I do hope I don't ever hear any more wicked men again." She yawned and looked towards the window. The first gray light of dawn streaked the sky.

"I guess I'll stay in the garden with Beppi and Nana and Garibaldi, and wait for my fairy god-father's return," she said as she closed her eyes.

As if to echo her words a faint "naa," came up from the stable yard below. Garibaldi was agreeing with her mistress.

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