

Chapter 1

Italy 1964

Sister Magdalena stood unobserved at the window in the office she shared with Mother Thecla. Sister Magdalena watched what would be the final contact between a mother and the child she left at the Catholic orphanage. She remembered the days leading to this inevitable moment. Carmen approached her and Mother Thecla when Angela was 1 year old, asking them to care for her and possibly find her a family. They had hoped that this woman, with flawless almond-colored skin and blue-black wavy hair, would find her way in the world and reclaim her precious treasure. There was an unspoken understanding concerning her occupation. Carmen's hair would cheerfully bounce on her shoulders as she spoke animatedly about the men who were willing to sponsor her during art classes. The two nuns could understand why wealthy men were enchanted by her charm. Yet, they recognized her vacant look, the words spoken bereft of emotion, and little Angela starving for love, accepting the few scraps that Carmen reluctantly gave to her.

Sister Magdalena held back her own tears as Angela sobbed. Her little dirty face was smeared with tears. "There, there, little one. Mommy said she would be back, didn't she?" Angela shook her head yes, still unable to speak. It had been 2 years and 3 months now that Angela had lived in the orphanage. Each visit from Carmen was farther and farther apart. Each visit was shorter. Sister Magdalena knew where this was going, and her heart screamed to God, why? Who would not love this angelic baby with the big dark eyes and beautiful black curly hair? Who would not want to hold her and rock her to sleep at night?

Angela finally said, "When will mommy come?"

A distraught Sister Magdalena quietly uttered, "I don't know, sweetie."

Mommy never returned.

□

AMERICA 1966

Sister Magdalena relished the private time she had with Angela. She would comb her hair, tell her stories and kiss her good night. When Angela would grab her hand and say "Tell me a story, Sister," it made her heart sing. One day, as she was happily singing to Angela following her bath, her song was interrupted by a knock on the bathroom door; there was an urgency of quick, sharp knocks. "Who is there? Who is it? I'm almost done in here."

"It's me, Sister Louisa. Mother Thecla wants to speak with you in her Chambers immediately."

“I’ll be there in a moment. I’m just finishing braiding Angela’s hair. She just finished her bath.”

“Well, hurry. She’s pacing.”

Sister Magdalena had a sense of dread when she had awakened this morning, and it had remained with her all day. She had just dismissed it as an overactive imagination, until the knock on the door. Mother Superior only paced when she was about to make an announcement that was unsettling. But, Sister Magdalena would not allow herself to be distracted from Angela’s favorite song. She resumed singing.

“Angela, you must go to your room now, and say your prayers. It’s time for bed. I have to go see Mother Superior.”

Before she realized what was happening, Angela put her tiny arms around her neck and kissed her on the cheek, saying, “I love you, Sister.” As she happily scampered out of the bathroom, the automatic reply followed her, “I love you, too, my Little Angel.” The words came out so quickly, that she didn’t realize what she had said. Mother Thecla had cautioned her about becoming too partial to this baby. She had said, “Do not show favoritism. The other children will feel it. It is not fair.” While she knew it was true, Sister Magdalena could not resist loving her Little Angel. The longings of her own heart were fulfilled with the love Angela returned unabashedly. The elation of the moment ended, as her knock on Mother Superior’s door was met with an, “Enter, Sister Magdalena.”

While she was unprepared for the finality of the conversation and the new direction of her life, she obediently seated herself in the lonely chair facing Mother Superior at her massive desk. Mother Thecla immediately began her discourse, not missing a beat. Her lack of hesitation was reflective of her very determined nature. She would have her way, regardless. “Sister Magdalena,” she began, “we have been instructed by the Archbishop to send some of the older children to America so that they will have a greater opportunity to be adopted. You are well aware that our Community is not capable of funding the care of these children. We are a poor agency, and the older children would actually benefit from this change. There are twelve of them who will be flown to America by the end of the week. Angela is one of them.”

Sister Magdalena crossed her forearms on Mother Superior’s desk, rested her head on them and wept uncontrollably. The ordinarily composed and curt Mother Thecla found herself momentarily rattled. A softer tone was conveyed to Sister Magdalena. “Sister, it was not my decision to send Angela to America. The Archbishop chose the children 4 years old and up. Angela fell into that category. His feeling was that, in this impoverished area, the older children would be the hardest to provide adoptive families. You recognize that is true, do you not?”

Through a tearful voice, Sister Magdalena conceded, “I suppose.”

Regaining her composure, Mother Thecla continued, “I did warn you, you were becoming too attached to her. Ideally they are all with us temporarily; we can’t change that. It is our purpose to

locate loving families for them. You are aware of our purpose.”

“Yes, but she’s so special. She never has lost the desire to love or be loved.”

“Sister Magdalena, she has a chance in America to be adopted into a loving family that is capable of providing her with a wonderful life. Here, she will be destined for poverty like the rest of us. Consider this as a blessing, and prepare her for the journey. This will be hard for her, too. You are aware that she now regards you as her mother.”

“As you wish, Mother Thecla.” Sister Magdalena stood, never looking Mother Thecla in the eyes and departed the room.

Mother Thecla resignedly gazed out the window at the sky and said, “Father in Heaven, why was Carmen gifted with this blessed child, while loving women are barren? Please take care of her and Bless Sister Magdalena with Peace. Amen.”

Sister Magdalena hand washed the few garments Carmen had given Angela. She chose not to disclose to Angela that she would be leaving until Friday morning of the trip. She wanted to provide Angela with the loving memories she deserved until her journey began. Angela was barely 4 years old now, and it simply didn’t make sense to prematurely break the news. As she carefully brushed Angela’s hair for the last time, Sister Magdalena turned her around and said, “Angela, you’re going on a long journey today. You’re going to fly on a big airplane that will go to a place called America. You’ll be living in a state there called California.”

“Are you coming with me?”

“No, I must stay here and take care of the other girls and boys.”

“But I don’t want to go, unless you come with me,” Angela said as the tears began to flow.

“This is going to be a great adventure. The people in California will find you a new mommy and daddy. You’ll live in a house with your own room.”

“But I want you to be my mommy,” Angela sobbed.

“Please don’t cry my Little Angel. You can come back to see me when you are a big girl and tell me about your new friends, your new mommy and daddy and your own room.”

“I don’t want my own room, I want you...”

“Listen, we are going downstairs because you’ll be picked up very soon. I don’t want Mother Thecla to think I’ve been pinching you. Come on, put a big brave smile on your face and we’ll walk down together. Mother Thecla won’t let me stay with you if you’re crying. I’m giving you my suitcase and these pretty bows I made for you. When you look inside this suitcase and see the bows, the pictures we drew together, you’ll remember all the fun we had together. Here’s a rosary; I have one just like it, and I’ll always be praying for you. Just remember that!”

The lady from the Agency was waiting when they arrived downstairs. “Hello, Angela, my name is Katie. I’ll be your companion all the way to California.” She bent down to speak to her, and Angela ran

back to Sister Magdalena, grabbing her legs, "Please don't make me go! Please, YOU be my mommy!"

Sister Magdalena mustered up all her strength to steady her voice, to simply say, "I love you, my Little Angel, but now you must go." As she unloosed herself, she ran upstairs to Angela's room to watch her go and hide her tears from the other children. The pit of her stomach screamed to her; don't allow this baby to go! Run after her and raise her as your own! But, she couldn't break her vow. It was the first time in her life when she realized there was no right answer, and whatever she did would cause regret and pain. The hope for Angela's golden opportunity would be her only solace for years to come, because she could not imagine that anyone would love her as much as she loved her. It was the second time in her life, when the loss was greater than the gain.

California

Neither in the darkness of the night, nor in the light of day, was there anyone to wipe away Angela's tears. She was not old enough to understand why she was being transferred from one location to the other. Angela would stand in complete horror and fear when people would bellow orders to her, in a language she did not understand. It was noisy, crowded, people dressed strangely, and the cars zooming by kept her petrified. The orphanage where The Nuns protected her was safely tucked in the country in Italy. Hidden from the world, Angela might see two vehicles in a day, if a delivery truck came on the day mail was delivered. The noise on the streets, radios blaring, horns honking, and not understanding a single word spoken to her, engendered a new brand of fear. Angela was beginning to become frail and withdrawn. She was not bonding with the staff, and the food being offered to her was not agreeing with her tummy. She cried out for Sister Magdalena, but only the darkness of the night enveloped her.

One rainy morning, she was awakened by a woman, who hurriedly bathed her and combed her hair. Angela began to think of her as the lady who smelled like smoke. Her breath was stinky and she did not possess the gentleness of Sister Magdalena. She would yank her arms to communicate direction. Before Angela knew it, she was in a car, driving toward a city in Southern California named Torrance. Pulled from the car, then plopped in front of the door, she stood bewildered as a beaming blonde lady greeted her. It was the first time in California that a gentle woman bent down, gazed at her in the eyes and greeted her. She took Angela's hand and guided her into the living room. It was warm, and the lady picked her up and seated her on the couch. She never stopped smiling at her. The lady who brought her to the house left after words were exchanged, and there Angela remained; with the smiling lady. Angela found herself at a kitchen table with what seemed to be endless choices of food, and the pretty lady said, "Manga." Hesitantly, Angela proceeded at first, and then a famished Angela dove in like a starving wolf. The ladies smile gave her a little bit of hope. She never stopped smiling at her.

It turned out that the only word in Italian that the pretty lady spoke was *manga*. That worked out well for Angela, because her appetite returned and eating around this lady, Monica, and her husband, Eddie, was pleasant. They wanted to adopt Angela. Monica yearned to be a mother, so after 3 years of unsuccessful attempts to conceive, they decided to adopt. Monica had a gentle nature, and patiently set out to teach Angela English. Angela mastered a few of the necessary sentences, "I am hungry," "I am thirsty," "I have to go potty" and conversations that she would hear

would make some sense. The days were filled with walks, the park, and playtime in a beautiful pink room. But, nights were very confusing. Eddie would drink something that made him very angry. Angela would begin to shiver when he would reach for the bottle on top of the refrigerator. It would mean that, after the news, he would begin yelling at Monica. When it was too loud, Monica would take Angela to bed without her bath. She would hear loud noises and sometimes banging on the wall. Then, one day when Angela woke up, the beautiful Monica had a big black circle around her eye and bruises on her arms. She kept smiling at Angela, but at dinner time, Monica took a suitcase similar to the one Sister Magdalena had given Angela, and put it on the porch in front of the door. She taped an envelope on it as the two of them were leaving for their first dinner in a restaurant. The restaurant had pictures on the menu of pancakes and eggs. Angela chose the pancakes with the blueberries rippling down the sides. Monica smiled and taught her the word *pancake*, but she had tears coming down her cheeks during the meal. It was confusing and frightening to Angela. When they returned home, the suitcase was gone and so was the bottle on top of the refrigerator. Angela never saw Eddie again.

The year with Monica had flown by, and during that time, Angela remembered how it felt to be loved and return love. It brought back the feeling of hope. Then, one day, Monica began to cry out loud as she packed Angela's clothing in the suitcase Sister Magdalena had given her. Monica cried to her, "I love you so much, My Little Angel." Now 5 years old, Angela was even calling Monica mommy and felt safe in her room with her toys. She could hug Monica, and no one would pull her away. Angela still could not completely understand Monica's ramblings as she tried to explain that the State would not allow her to adopt Monica because she and Eddie were divorcing. Angela did understand when Monica placed her suitcase by the front door, and opened it to the stern-faced woman who smelled like smoke. Angela could see the familiar gray car behind her and the fat man who puffed away on cigarettes as they drove. Angela gazed at Monica with both an expression of betrayal and fear. As she kicked and screamed, she was dragged to the car. When a sobbing Monica closed the front door, she slammed the door on Angela's ability to trust and feel safe for the next year.

Today was yet another morning being jerked out of bed, and rushed down to the woman smelling of smoke. The Driver from downstairs, called out to her, and said, "Joan, hurry up, I don't have all day." Angela obediently followed Joan without tears and without question. It was as if she were bereft of emotion. A solitary German maid quietly wept in the corner besieged by the memory of the blank looks of her family as they boarded the trains leading to the camps. The pretty little girl shouldn't possess the demeanor of a prisoner, yet she did. Little did the maid realize that the next year of the pretty little baby's life, would be the nightmare which would leave an indelible mark on her spirit.

Today the smoke filled car only represented a ride into the unknown. A veil was now shielding her heart. Expressionless, Angela followed Joan and the trail of smoke toward the door of yet another home. A smiling, heavy set woman invited them inside. She plopped down on a huge chair that could barely accommodate her rotund legs and behind. She held a dirty rag that she repeatedly used to wipe her brow. Her breathing was labored. Following the departure of Joan, the woman, whom Joan addressed as Bel, led Angela down the hall. Bel's widespread legs created a creak in the floor, which became a sound that created dread and fear. The room was to be shared with two other children. It smelled like dirty diapers, the walls were covered with crayon markings and the beds smelled like urine. She closed her eyes and pretended that she was in her pink room again. This would not only be an introduction to filth for Angela, but the degree of neglect that would transform her innocence into a nightmarish existence denied hope.

The smile had disappeared from Bel's face moments after Joan had driven away. She announced to Angela that she was to respond only to Mrs. Cline. Angela did not understand that Bel had another name until she dragged her down the hall a few times and threw her into the room. It was

the other two girls who managed to communicate that Bel HAD to be called Mrs. Cline. Meal time became a dreaded ordeal. Mrs. Cline would demand that Angela speak English and, when she couldn't, the first thing that was within reach of her fat paws would sail through the air toward Angela. If Angela was eating cereal, the bowl would be splashed in her face. When the other children were heading off to school, Angela was held behind. Bel elected to not register Angela for school. Instead, after the older children headed toward the school bus, Angela was locked out of the house. There were no lunches. Angela became a scavenger, sneaking into other people's garages and looking into trash cans for food. The little bit of weight that she managed to build up at Monica and Eddie's house began to rapidly drop off. Angela found an open garage that housed bags of raw potatoes. She would eat them due to starvation. Evening meals were another nightmare. She was given potatoes and the fat off of meat. She actually developed a taste for it. The only English that Angela managed to learn was "Help me" and "Mrs. Cline." It was by the grace of God that Bel could not tear herself away from the kitchen long enough to register Angela for school. A social worker who was doing a random check on school attendance noticed that Angela had not been registered at any of the local grammar schools. In addition, there had been a few calls from concerned neighbors. Bel was not a favorite in the neighborhood, and she was known for neglecting her foster children. For some strange reason, she held a particular disdain for her newest child. One lady began to leave a sandwich out for her in the morning, when she realized that Angela was only foraging for food and was not engaging in malicious conduct. She attempted to befriend her, but frightened, Angela ran away. Due to malnutrition and being dragged down the hall on a constant basis, Angela had bruises all over her body. She was always filthy. The abuse and neglect may have continued, had it not been for the fact that Bel neglected to register her for school.

A surprise visit from a social worker named Sharon, altered the course of Angela's life. Sharon had spoken to concerned neighbors the night before the visit, so there were Police waiting to be called into Bel's home. Sharon rang the doorbell at 11am. Bel unsuspectingly opened the door. "Yes?" she curtly offered.

"Good Morning. I am Sharon Miller, Angela Ravelli's social worker. May I step in? I need to ask you a few questions."

"This ain't a good time. Could you make an appointment for another day?"

"No, Mrs. Cline, I'm afraid that's not an option. You are receiving state funds to care for your foster children, and I have the authority to make surprise visits. I think you better let me in now."

Sharon glanced around the room in horror. It was lunch time and the cereal bowls and milk bottle remained on the table. The cereal boxes weren't closed. Even the living room reeked of urine. The stench was overwhelming, and the garbage overflowing from the trash can appeared as if it might have been last night's dinner. Roaches were crawling all over the trash, undeterred by the presence of company. Incapable of disguising her disgust, Sharon practically snarled, "Where Is Angela Ravelli?"

"She's outside playing," Bel meekly countered. She was no stranger to rage, she had to live in her own skin.

"Why isn't she in school?"

"She was not feeling well today."

"That's interesting. Then why is she outside playing? Which school is she attending?" Sharon was having difficulty masking her fury; she realized the neighbors were not exaggerating their description of this vile excuse for a human being.

"She's outside playing because the dumb kid doesn't even speak English, and I can't do a thing with her. Me and my husband thought she was retarded. You can't fool me; you already know she isn't in school. Why did you people give me a dumb kid who doesn't even speak English?"

"My husband and I," Sharon sarcastically countered.

“What?”

“You obviously don’t know how to speak proper English. Where is Angela?”

“I dunno.”

“Bel, I need to see her room and the rooms of the other children.” As she followed the ambling Bel to the children’s room, her heart sunk. The smell was so horrific that she pulled a handkerchief from her purse to cover her nose. “Bel, which bed belongs to Angela?”

“Well, she’s taken to sleepin’ on the floor. That’s her pillow and blanket over there. She won’t get in the bed. We just leave her be.”

Sharon walked over and pulled a blanket on the bed back only to witness grimy sheets that had been repeatedly stained and not changed. “Bel, we need to go find Angela now.”

When Bel and Sharon located Angela, she was hovering in the corner of the neighbor’s garage, quivering with raw potatoes smeared on her face. By this time, the squad car that had been placed on alert had arrived. The officers approached with Sharon and Bel.

“Angela looked at Sharon and started crying, “Help me.” Then she began to speak in Italian. One of the officers understood her. He comforted her in Italian.

“Hello, Angela. My name is Joey. We’re here to help you. It’s okay. This nice lady named Sharon is going to take you away. You don’t have to go back to that woman’s house again.”

“I want my suitcase,” she cried, “Sister Magdalena gave it to me.” Angela had one possession to call her own, and it represented love to her.

“She says she wants her suitcase. Sister Magdalena gave it to her.”

Bel blurted out, “I don’t know where I put that old thing.”

In unison both Joey and Sharon said, “Find it now!”

Angela looked at Joey, with pleading eyes, “I’m so hungry.”

Joey’s heart was breaking. She resembled a feral child with her wild hair and crouched in a corner. This little emaciated girl was so filthy, bruised from head to toe, and the 300-pound elephant didn’t want to give Angela her only possession, her suitcase. Angela made two new friends. Sharon would now keep a closer eye on her and Joey would be there to be her advocate.

Angela would return to the orphanage long enough to regain her health. There would be one more foster home. Although Sharon made a sincere attempt to monitor Angela’s progress, the abuse encountered during her final year of living in a foster home was not immediately visible to the naked eye.

On the morning of Angela’s final transfer in foster care, Sharon accompanied her to the assigned family, along with Joan and the Driver.

“Sharon,” Joan offered uncharacteristically, “I’m a little concerned about this one. She’s been tossed around to a couple of homes and has learned very little English. She doesn’t attempt to interact with the other children. She appears more withdrawn than when she first arrived from Italy. I don’t think she’s capable of handling misplacement, again.”

“I agree. I will keep a closer eye on her. If you could have only seen her huddled in that corner, shivering and so very filthy, you would be experiencing the same nightmares I have. It was tragic!” Sharon looked into Angela’s blank dark eyes, hoping that she might grasp some of what she was saying. “Angela, we’re going to introduce you to the new family who will be caring for you until you are adopted. They have two children of their own, and you will be their only foster child.”

Angela just stared at her expressionless. She had learned from the last placement that attempting to speak could turn into beatings, being dragged down the hall, or locked out of the house from morning to dinner time. She had the suitcase Sister Magdalena had given her and very little else. The orphanage provided a minimal amount of clothing. At 5 years old, she was now underweight and not developing at the normal rate.

Sharon attempted to sound happy as they approached the door of the Kirks. Mrs. Kirk opened

the door beaming and invited them all into her home. Angela just followed, silently. After a brief introduction, Mrs. Kirk led her down the hall by grabbing Angela's hand. Opening the door to the bedroom, she excitedly explained that she would share it with her daughter, Sarah. It was pretty with a lot of dolls and a doll house. This room was pink and frilly, just like the room she had at Monica's. Her single bed had a pretty pink bed spread with flowers on it. It smelled like perfume in the room. An open window revealed a swing set and slide in the back yard. Angela was relieved. She just stared as Mrs. Kirk chattered away. Mrs. Kirk was trying to make her feel comfortable and she understood that. Like Monica, there was a lilt in her voice and a kind energy. She wore a gathered dress that exposed a rounded belly. One thing Angela would learn about Mrs. Kirk was that she loved to cook and would sample a lot of her dinner before it ever was presented on the table. Mrs. Kirk seemed to smell like cookie dough, daily. Her plump figure really bespoke of her nature. She was a loving housewife and mother who preferred caring for her children, as opposed to an education and career path. It gave her a sense of purpose to be there exclusively for her family, especially her husband. She adhered to a strict routine, which included wash days, ironing days, housework and Friday night grocery shopping. Very rarely did she deviate from the norm; change in routine was threatening to her. Her rosy cheeks and winning smile convinced Sharon and Joan that they made the best fit for Angela. She obviously loved being a nurturer, and that was exactly what Angela needed.

Sharon and Joan left relieved, feeling that this would be an appropriate placement. Even though neither of the Kirks spoke Italian, there was a language of warmth that appeared to penetrate Angela. She did not cry when they left, and while she may have not demonstrated happiness, her cautious demeanor was not alarming.

Initially, Angela, found her new home comfortable. Mrs. Kirk was so kind. She gave her beautiful clothes that no longer fit Sarah. She gently spoke to Angela, teaching her new English words. She would play with her, teaching her as they went along. Angela was finally registered for kindergarten. Not having been to a school in the past, she was mystified as to why she had to go there in the morning. At five years old, she still could not properly express herself in English. Her socialization skills were significantly underdeveloped. As a result of this inadequacy, Angela was incapable of verbalizing the behavior of Mr. Kirk at bath time to Mrs. Kirk, or anyone else.

Mr. Kirk would walk into the house after work with a smile on his face and an empty lunch box he plunked on the counter. He would lovingly hug Mrs. Kirk and kiss on her cheek as she washed dishes or prepared his dinner. At 6 foot 2 inches, he towered over the petite 5 foot 4 inch Mrs. Kirk. It was pleasing to observe their chemistry together. Strangely enough, Sarah did not appreciate the hugs and kisses. She would pull away and head down the hall to play in her room. At first, Angela did not understand why.

Johnny was a quiet boy. He, too, was not partial to all the hugging and kissing his mother cheerfully reciprocated. He, too, chose not to participate in his father's open display of affection. Johnny was either outside on his bicycle or inside his room doing his homework. He was twelve years old and serious about school. Sarah appeared more dedicated to her dolls than studying.

One Friday night during dinner, Mr. Kirk pulled a brown bottle with a cap out of the refrigerator. Then he pulled another and another. Johnny and Sarah left the table before the dessert was served. From the hall, when her father wasn't looking, Sarah signaled Angela to follow her. Angela didn't understand but complied. Sarah was 8 years old and acted as a protector to Angela. Like her mother, she attempted to teach her English, and they played dolls together. Everyone seemed nice in this house, until this night.

Later, Mr. Kirk came to their room and asked, "Have you girls taken your baths yet?" Sarah lied, "Yes, I have, Daddy," not thinking what it would mean for Angela.

Kirk said, "Come on Angela, let's go take a bath." He was teetering, like Eddie used to do

before the arguing began and Monica would send her to her room. Angela followed him, like a good girl, but she felt uneasy. Was he going to hit her, like Eddie hit Monica? She knew something was wrong, but wasn't certain what it was yet. Eddie closed and locked the door. He ran the bath water and put Mr. Bubble in it. He helped her take off her clothes. She happily stepped into the warm bubble bath. Inexplicably, Mr. Kirk removed his clothes and proceeded to get into the tub with her. Angela screamed for help, but no one answered.

On Saturdays, when Mrs. Kirk would go to have her hair done, Mr. Kirk would take Angela for a ride on his motorcycle. They would ride to Grandma Kirk's house. She was a lovely old lady who would give Angela freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Grandma Kirk was hard of hearing, and apparently never became suspicious of her son's desire to give Angela a bath at his mother's house.

She would give Angela a puzzled look when she came downstairs following their bathroom routine. "Why are you crying Sweet Pea?"

Angela would just look at her son and cry more. The little bit of English she could speak at this point, did not include, "Your son is raping me."

A concerned teacher began to notice the behavior change in Angela. One day, she kicked a little boy in the testicles. When Mrs. Kirk came to pick Angela up, Mrs. Kennedy expressed her concern.

"Mrs. Kirk, I am a little alarmed at Angela's behavior lately. She has suddenly become aggressive with the other children, especially the boys. She actually kicked Tommy in the testicles today, and we had to send him to the nurse's office."

Mrs. Kirk's demeanor suddenly changed. She appeared rattled. "Well, you know, Mrs. Kennedy, Angela is our foster child. The good Lord only knows how those other families have treated her. I'll have a talk with her when we get home." Mrs. Kennedy thought it quite odd that the composed Mrs. Kirk was presenting so frantically. Then she remembered, her daughter Sarah had been known to exhibit similar behavior. Mrs. Kennedy decided to locate Angela's social worker and give her a call.

Within three days Sharon knocked at the Kirks' door, during their Friday dinner hour. Mr. Kirk had already inhaled a few beers and Mrs. Kirk was preparing for her Friday outing at the grocery store.

"May I come in, Mrs. Kirk?" requested Sharon.

"Of course, of course. We are just cleaning up the dinner dishes and I will be off to the grocery store. You remember Mr. Kirk?"

"Yes I do. Good evening." Without waiting for his response, Sharon directed her gaze at Mrs. Kirk. "Where's Angela?"

"She's playing in her room with Sarah, I'll go get her." As she walked down the hall, Mrs. Kirk called to Angela, "Miss Sharon is here to see you Angela." Angela looked at her with pleading eyes, but said nothing. She looked at Eddie with the brown bottle in his hand, and his head slightly swaying from left to right. She knew where this was leading.

"Let's go have an ice cream, Sweetie." Angela meekly nodded yes. As they drove down the street, Angela began to cry hysterically saying, "He's hurting me," as she pointed at her private parts. "Help me!"

Angela was inconsolable. She knew Sharon would help her, and if she didn't speak up now, there would be another bath with Mr. Kirk tonight.

Sharon looked at her and did everything she could to stop herself from crying. She simply stated, "You're leaving the Kirks tonight."

It wasn't easy watching Mrs. Kirk and Sarah cry and wave as they waved goodbye from the porch, but Angela felt protected by Sharon. It was better to leave with Sharon than go back to the Kirk's bathroom. Angela no longer possessed hope for love, nor trust in the male adults around her.

Then the day came when Angela's life would take on new meaning. Sharon came early on a

Saturday morning and was rushing Angela through her bath and taking extra time with her unruly hair. At this point, Sharon was one of the few people Angela trusted. She walked Angela downstairs to the living area where a white screen was suspended on a tripod. Sharon attempted to explain to Angela the nice man was going to take her pictures, and she proceeded to leave the room. At this point, Angela began to scream bloody murder. Sharon walked over and attempted to console her. Addressing the photographer, she said, "I told the Times to send me a woman photographer. The child has been abused. I'm going to stand with you."

He said, "It's alright, Lady, I have two daughters of my own. I don't want to imagine what has happened to her."

"Thank you, Stan. Be certain when the Times posts the story, it includes this exact story. If someone doesn't step forward to adopt her, we may have to send her back to the impoverished orphanage in Italy."

"Are you kidding me? I would take her, but my wife doesn't want any more kids. Even a cutie, like her. Wow, this is so sad."

"I'm praying that we find an Italian family that speaks Italian. She's six years old and barely speaks English."

With the loving coaching of Sharon, Angela gave her best effort for a smile. Even in the black and white photo in the newspaper, the pretty little Angela wore a sad smile.

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