

Conversions
Wars
Cultures
Religions
and a
Family Name

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WARS ARE FOUGHT to gain and keep control over wealth. Tribes, clans, countries and other groups that have wealth have the power to wage and win wars. Those without wealth will always be war's victims. They lack the resources to build effective defences and protect themselves against destructive powers. Besides extermination or assimilation, one consequence of wars for the vanquished is displacement. Defeated peoples are often set adrift.

Cultures, or societies, come into existence when a sufficient number of individuals agree on a way of living together, either through consensus or through force. Cultures are sensitive organisms. They are born, sometimes growing and flourishing, oftentimes contracting and vanishing. Even the most powerful civilizations in their times have had to relinquish their positions of dominance, most often because of self destructive actions taken by their leaders. When one culture is diminished, there is always another waiting to take its place. Humankind is the sum total of all those cultures that have gone before.

Religion is the codification of a society's rules that define what is considered right and what is deemed wrong. Societies base their laws on these definitions, and the laws establish the worldly consequences of not upholding or abiding by the rules. Those who are the codifiers, the priests, gain their legitimacy by providing answers to the unanswerable. Some offer the promise of immortality by positing the existence of an immortal and supreme being who can fulfil the promise of eternal life. Other priests declare that by following their rules, an individual can experience paradise on earth. Philosophers try to prove the priests right or wrong.

A family name can say much or nothing about its bearer because everyone has the power to accept or reject the name which is given to him or her, to take the name of another or to create one that is totally new. The most remarkable family names are those which appear to have no meaning, no connection to a place—real or imaginary—to a culture, to a profession or to person. Even more remarkable is the fact that successive generations continue to use these names, to keep the spelling, the pronunciation and the symbolism long after their original meaning or importance has been lost to history.



Dedication



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO the memory of my paternal grandparents, Michele Sena and Giovanna Ricciardi Sena who emigrated at the end of the 19th century from Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi, Region of Campania, Province of Avellino, and who settled in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

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September 1, 1896 A.D.

11:05 a.m.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING? he heard a voice say. At first he did not want to respond. His thoughts and his eyes were fixed on the pier, which gradually grew smaller as the ship slowly sailed away, out toward the open sea. Michele could still distinguish his grandfather from the others standing on the pier, waving to their loved ones, perhaps for the last time. One year ago, at the age of seventeen, he had been there with his grandfather and uncle waving to his family as they left the Port of Napoli on their way to America. He remembered seeing the tears in his grandfather's eyes and how he sat quietly next to his older son during the long journey home. When they arrived in the village and his grandfather climbed slowly down from the wagon, he heard him say to his son, "We will never see them again."

Now, on board the steamship *Italia*, the very same ship that his family had taken, it was his turn. His uncle drove the same wagon with the very same horse that had carried his family the year before. His grandfather insisted on coming himself. There were others in the village who were taking the same ship. They had left the village two days before and arrived in Napoli in the middle of yesterday afternoon. They had brought food and wine and made their camp close to the pier where the ship was moored. It had been a long night; the mood was more that of a funeral than a wedding. When morning came, Michele bid farewell to all those he was leaving behind. He promised them that he would try to return one day. His grandfather gave him a small box wrapped in red coloured paper and told him to open it when his feet were on American soil. He placed the small package in his suitcoat pocket. Michele boarded the ship, but the families would not leave until the ship had sailed over the horizon and was well out of sight.

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He turned to see a small man wearing wire-rimmed spectacles and smoking a pipe. He had a well-trimmed beard that was mostly white with auburn colored curls mixed in. Atop his head was a dark grey felt bowler hat with black ribbon trim and an unusually wide brim that would have hidden his entire face if he had not been looking straight up into Michele's light grey-brown eyes. The tufts of hair that peeked out from under the hat's brim were decidedly more white than auburn. His black woolen coat stretched down to his ankles. It was difficult to guess his age, but he appeared to be younger than his actual years.

"America," answered Michele, and he turned his gaze immediately back toward the pier. His grandfather had disappeared into the sea of faces and arms and bodies.

"We are all going to America," laughed his neighbor at the ship's rail. "Some of us will get in. The others will be sent back. I meant where will you go if they let you in."

"They will let me in," replied Michele sharply. "My whole family got in one year ago, and there's nothing wrong with me!"

"So your family is already there?" queried the small man.

"Yes. They're in Brooklyn," said Michele, showing signs that he was tiring of the conversation.

"You're going to Brooklyn, then?" persisted the man.

"No! I'm going to Scranton, Pennsylvania," said Michele in a way that indicated that he was not answering any more questions.

"To start a shoe repair business," said the man, casually, as if it was an obvious fact.

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“How did you know that?” demanded an astonished Michele, now clearly unable to close off the conversation.

“You’re not going there to work in the mines. That’s the reason most people go to Scranton. I can see plainly by the shape of your back and the width of your shoulders that you are not a farmer or a laborer, and you are definitely not a miner. You have some color in your skin, but not much. You work indoors. You have a craftsman’s hands. They are stained with leather dye, and you have obviously been punishing your finger tips with a hammer. Your new shoes are the giveaway, though. They are almost perfect, but there are small details that show they were made by the apprentice and not the master, and these would not be sold to a customer. You are too young to be the master, so you must be the apprentice. If you have a trade, then you must be planning on using it when you arrive in your new home. That was not so difficult, was it?”

“How could you manage to see all of that in such a short time?” asked Michele, humbled somewhat by the powers of his inquisitor.

“We train our eyes to see the details, and our minds to remember what those details mean,” replied the man.

“We? Who are ‘We’?” asked Michele.

“My people, the Jews,” the man responded. “We have been practicing the art of observation for centuries. It’s a matter of survival. We must know when we are amongst aggressive or benign enemies, for we are rarely, if ever, among friends when we are outside of our communities. We must be able to tell who will persecute us and who will leave us alone; who want what we have and will pay for it, and who will simply take it.”

“The master shoemaker I was apprenticed to was a Jew,” said Michele.

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"I know," replied the man with a laugh. "He let you keep your shoes. He invested in you."

"He was not so cynical as you make him. He was my grandfather's good friend," continued Michele, ignoring the man's attempt at irony. "Their fathers had been friends, and their fathers before them. The families have been friends for as long as anyone can remember. I know it may seem unusual, but so it was. When my family decided to leave for America, my father asked his father to talk to Signore Usiglio and ask him to take me on as an apprentice so that I would have a trade when I came to America. My father said I should start my own business and not work as a laborer. That was the fastest way to become an American, my father said."

"But you don't want to become an American, do you?" asked the man, sensing the answer.

"Why do we have to leave our village?" replied Michele, avoiding the question by asking one of his own. "Why are so many people from Italia on this boat," he said as he motioned with his arm toward all of those gathered on the deck waving goodbye to their homeland, "and the many other boats leaving each day from Napoli? The rich stay and gain more land and more wealth while the poor are cast about like, like, I don't know what."

"Like those pieces of wood floating out there in the water," offered the man. "Flotsam and jetsam; debris from a sinking ship. Yes, it does seem unfair. And this is not the first time your family has been uprooted. From your accent I can hear that you are from Campania, the area around Avellino. You don't have the look of a Longobardo. Your family probably came to the region from Iberia some centuries ago. Your family's name is from the other side of the Mediterranean, isn't it?"

"Yes. It's 'Sena'," replied Michele, who still had a tone of anger in his voice. "Although the exact story has been lost, we know that we came to

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Italia when our part of the country was ruled by Spagna. We have lived in Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi for at least three-and-a-half centuries, probably more. There are many other families in our village with a history that began in Spagna. At least that is what my grandfather told me.”

“Your family has an interesting history, if you would care to hear it,” offered the man. “And with your name, that history probably began in what is now Francia.”

“How can you know the history of my family?” asked Michele, irritated that his neighbor seemed to know more than he should.

“There is no black magic in it,” answered the man. “Every name that is kept through generations can be used to trace each person to a point in time. Some people change their names so that they will blend in with their new surroundings. My people have practiced this art since we left Judea in your first century. Your family’s friend, Signore Usiglio, is a good example. It is an Italianization of a Hebrew word, *uziel*, meaning ‘my strength is God’. It is not a very common name, but there are two brothers, Angelo and Emilio Usiglio, who were from the north of Italia and were very active in the unification of the country.”

“I am certain they were not related to Signore Usiglio,” replied Michele. “He spoke only of the bad things that happened in our part of the country since it became part of the rest of Italia.”

“In some countries, like Sweden and Ireland, sons and daughters have surnames built on their father’s and mother’s first names, erasing any possibility of tracing a single line through the generations. The Scandinavians add *son* to identify John’s son or Erik’s son. The German-French use the prefix *Fitz* to mean child of, as in Fitzpatrick, child of Patrick. Many other cultures have their own prefixes to indicate “of the father’s name”, like the Scots *Mac Arnold*, Irish *O'Reilly*, Dutch *Van Rijn*,

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the French *de Jean*, Germans *von berger*, Spanish/Italian *Di Tello* and the Arab-speaking nations *ibn'Saud*. Sometimes the prefixes were attached to places rather than the father's name, such as traditional land holdings or estates, like Di Napoli. ”

“There were many families in the village with the same names,” reflected Michele, beginning to soften. “I often wondered why some of them did not change their names. But we would never do it. My grandfather told us if we ever did, bad luck would follow the family until the end of eternity, and then we would be damned to hell.”

“He had been told that by his grandfather and all the grandfathers before, back to the time when your family took their name,” said the man.

“When was that?” asked Michele.

“Are you ready for the whole story?” replied the man. “It’s long.”

“Longer than the time we will be on this ship?” Michele asked, now smiling himself.

“I will make sure I finish my part by the time we arrive in New York harbor,” replied the man. “You will continue it when you leave the ship. The story begins with a young boy in a small village near what is now Paris, before the time that your Jesus was born.”

“Before you begin, please tell me your name,” interrupted Michele.

“Giacomo Salomone Di Sanguè,” replied the man. “My family has a long history in the country that is shaped like a boot, but much blood was spilt to arrive there. You will hear part of this history in your own story. Shall I begin?”

“Yes. Please do,” answered Michele.

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“We could begin your family’s story at the time when your ancestors arrived in the village of Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi, but then we would miss the part about why they left where they were and from where they came,” explained Signore Di Sangue. “We could begin at the time when your ancestors arrived in Italia, in the Port of Napoli, from where we just sailed, but then we would not know what made them leave Spain or Portugal. We could begin at the time that they arrived on the Iberian Peninsula, but then we would miss the explanation of what brought them there. No, we will begin as close to the beginning as we can, as far back as we dare to go. The story starts in the northern part of the region that is now called Francia, five centuries before the birth of your Jesus.

“This was a time when the people in our part of the world, the one around the Mediterranean Sea on which we are now sailing, knew nothing of the yellow people across the mountains to the east or of the red people across the oceans to the west. It was a time when the world was flat and the heavens circled around above us. It was a time when our part of the world was divided into empires ruled over by a dominant civilization, like the Greeks and Carthaginians and Etruscans and Egyptians and Babylonians, and my people, the Jews. It was before the rise of the Romans, before they would conquer all of these other civilizations and give Roman names to such places Helvetica, Gallia, Iberia, Germania and Britannia. Beyond the civilized world, there were other regions that would never be ruled by the Romans. These were the regions in the far north and east where the barbarians lived. These people would in time become the conquerors, sacking Roma and spreading their seeds across the empire.

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“I believe that your ancestors were members of a Gallic people known as *Senones*¹, who occupied the northern region of what is now Francia². These people were of Celtic origins, the same as those in Britain. Before 500 B.C. they had established a prosperous farming culture in the region of the rivers Seine, Yonne and Vanne, and they began to trade their surplus for tools and wares made by other peoples. They acquired weapons and eventually built armies. Around 400 B.C., one group of *Senones*, along with their army, marched south, over the Alps and into Italia. Their army fought and won battles against the Umbrians in central Italia, and after driving out the Umbrians, they settled on the eastern coast of the peninsula close to what is now Ancona, founding the town of Sinigaglia. This town became their capital. It was later named Sena Gallica by the Romans. Today it is called Senigallia.

“In 391 B.C. the *Senones* in Italia sought to expand to their west and invaded Etruria, besieging Clusium. The Etruscans pleaded for help from Roma, which at that point in history was still a small and weak city state. The Romans came to the assistance of Clusium, but the *Senones*, led by a capable warrior named Brennus, defeated the Romans near the river Allia in 390 B.C. They then captured and burned Roma. For over one hundred years the *Senones* and Romans engaged in countless battles until the Romans finally took their revenge for the destruction of their capital by defeating the

¹ Either of two ancient Celtic tribes, or perhaps two divisions of the same people, one living in Gaul, the other in Italia. The Gallic *Senones* lived in the area that includes the modern French *départements* of Seine-et-Marne, Loiret, and Yonne. The *Senones* were included in Gallia Lugdunensis. Their chief town was Agendicum later Senonus, whence Sens. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

² The Italian words *Italia* and *Francia* are used when referring to the countries or the region that are today called in English, Italy, and in both English and French, France.

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Senones in 283 B.C., driving out all of their people and erasing any traces of what they left behind.

“Your ancestors were not part of this group, I am certain of that,” declared Signore Di Sangué.

“How can you be so sure?” asked Michele. “Some of them could have fought bravely at the edge of the battle and escaped south to my family’s region.”

“No, the Romans were ruthless in those days with invaders. Any who survived the battles would have been hunted down and killed. Your forefathers stayed in Gallia, continuing to farm and trade. As Gallia continued to grow and prosper, Roma became a powerful force in the entire region around the Mediterranean Sea. The Romans conquered the Etruscans and pushed the Greeks out of the southern provinces. They sent their armies over land and sea and conquered all that they could reach, including Gallia. In 59 B.C., Caesar had become a Roman consul and Gallia was under his control. He appointed Cavarinus to be the king of the *Senones* region, but the *Senones* would not accept him, even though he was one of them. They expelled him in 54 B.C. Caesar, preoccupied with chaos caused by a civil war in Roma, did not react immediately to this insurrection by his subjects. He was also engaged in a deadly and growing conflict with a rival named Cneus Pompeus Magnus (Cneus Pompeus the Great), who had been his son-in-law until the death of Caesar’s daughter, Pompeus’ wife.

“Caesar was not able to turn his attentions to the unrest in Gallia until 52 B.C. By then, the region was in full revolt led by an *Averni* aristocrat’s son named Vercingetorix. This was not his true name. It is translated into “Great King of a Hundred Battles”. The *Averni*, like the *Senones* and the other Gallic tribes, kept their true names secret, believing that if someone knows your real name, that person would have magical powers over you.

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Caesar and his armies did eventually respond to the revolt in order to bring the area of northern Gallia and the *Senones* back under Roman rule. This is where we begin our story.”

52 B.C.

There had been talk in the village of gathering up everything that could be carried and fleeing north, to the other side of the River Seine. Several men had returned from a hunt at the southern edge of their territory and told of seeing smoke billowing up from the places where they knew there were neighboring villages. The tribe’s leaders gathered to discuss this news and to reach a consensus, but before they could agree about what they should do, the enemy soldiers appeared. The soldiers surrounded the village and began burning the huts. The men of the tribe were no match for the armed soldiers, and all of them were killed. Before the men turned their meager weapons on the enemy, they killed their own women. Husbands killed their wives, fathers killed their daughters, brothers killed their sisters, rather than surrendering them to a life of slavery to a Roman legionnaire.

One woman, already widowed, hid with her infant son in the icy waters along the river bank, in a space that had been carved out by the spring floods. When she felt her own body beginning to numb and saw her son’s skin turning purple, she emerged from her hiding place and climbed up on the bank to find the smoldering remains of her village. All but the dead had abandoned it. She walked, carrying her frozen son, to where their hut had been. There was nothing left but embers. At that moment she wished she had a husband, father or brothers when the soldiers arrived so that she and her son would be dead as well, killed by one of her own. But she was alive.

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All the men in her life had drowned when their fishing boat struck a rock in the rapids.

The woman found a rake that had escaped the fires and with it she scraped at the smoldering coals that had been her home, forming a bare space of earth large enough for herself and her son. She carried her son into the ring, laid down with him and fell asleep. It was night when she awoke. Her son was still sleeping, and he was breathing. Her heart was lightened for a moment. The air was cool and the warmth from the coals had diminished. She wrapped herself around her son and waited for dawn.

When the woman opened her eyes as the first trickles of light filtered through the oak leaves, she wished once again that death had taken her from this place. Staring at her and her son were a dozen wolves. They had feasted through the night on the remains of the villagers, and they did not appear in any hurry to extend their eating to live prey. They just stared. She knew that if she moved out of the circle, the wolves would be upon them in an instant. Wolves would not walk on the ash so they were safe until wind or rain exposed them, or until they finally had to move to seek food or shelter. Hours passed.

Then a branch snapped. The wolves rose, sniffed the air, looked toward the place from where the sound had come. WHOOSH! A wolf fell, his head pierced by an arrow. WHOOSH! WHOOSH! Two more wolves fell and the pack fled in panic. The arrows had come from the opposite direction to the one that the woman and wolves had been staring. Down from an oak at the edge of the clearing where the woman's hut and those of the other villagers had stood jumped a young man. He walked toward them. The woman did not recognize him. He was not from their village.

When he had reached within a short distance of the woman and her son, he said softly, "Do not be afraid. I come from the village in the next valley.

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The soldiers killed everyone there as well. I escaped with my life but nothing else. The soldiers are moving toward the south, burning and killing along the way. I am certain they are heading toward Vellaudunum. We must go north, quickly!”

The young man reached across the ash that had warmed and protected the woman and her son until their rescue and handed her a piece of bread and his leather flask containing water. She broke off a piece of bread, wet it with water, and fed it to her son. Then she ate a piece of the bread and drank the water. She kept her eyes on her rescuer, not sure whether to believe him. Her options were few, she thought.

“What is north?” she asked, breaking the silence.

“Agedincum,” he responded. “It is already controlled by the Romans. We must find a way into the city, to become one of the many if we are to live. You will become my wife. What is your name and that of your son? I am called Jumping Fox.”

“I can see where you got your name,” she replied, not smiling, but losing her fear. “I am Shining Water. My son is Running Elk. Why are you not fighting with Vercingetorix?”

“I was,” replied Jumping Fox with a weary look on his face. “Caesar’s army divided the *Senones* into smaller and smaller groups and then massacred each one in turn. We fought bravely, but we were defenseless against a more intelligent foe. I fear that it will not be long before our Great King of a Hundred Battles is captured and killed. Do you agree to come with me? The boy will be called Running Fox from this moment, and I will take him as my son. If you are not barren, he will have brothers and sisters to play with if we live long enough to get to Agedincum.”

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Shining Water looked carefully at the man standing before her. He appeared younger than her dead husband. He had just proposed their union. Should she take him as her husband? Did she have a choice?

“If we must be bound together to survive, then so be it,” replied Shining Water. “First show us to safety, then I will keep my pledge. But how can you lead us into the home of our sworn enemy, the Romans?”

“We have many enemies. Today the Romans kill us and we kill them. Tomorrow they will protect us and we them. In time, they will become us and we will become them.”

A wise answer, thought Shining Water. She picked up her son and wrapped him with her garments to her breast. She stepped out of the circle of earth where she and her son had found refuge. She stretched her arm to reach for the outstretched hand of her new life’s companion. Together they walked through the thick forest along the trail leading to Agedincum.

The threesome arrived at the gates of Agedincum after spending two perilous days in the forests and marshes evading the Roman troops. It was evening and the gates were closed. Jumping Fox decided that they would wait until the morning before trying to enter the town. They stayed in the forest, out of sight. Shining Water and her infant son slept while Jumping Fox kept watch. When Shining Water woke at first light she saw a pouch full of berries next to a fish that had been cooked over a fire. Close by were several dead rabbits and forest doves. Jumping Fox sat on the other side of the game with a wild pig, quite dead, lying on the ground next to him.

“You have had a busy night,” said Shining Water.

“These animals who have offered their lives to us will be our price of entry into the city,” replied Jumping Fox. “You slept deeply. Did you dream?”

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“I dreamt that the Romans forced me to worship their gods, and I resisted. Just as I awoke I was about to be cast over a cliff. I will not accept their gods!”

“Why not?”

“Because I believe in ours.”

“Everyone believes in the gods they were born with until a better alternative comes along. But you don’t have to worry, my good woman, the Romans will not force you to give up your old gods. They will only ask you to honor theirs along with your own.”

“You do not sound like a man who honors any gods, Jumping Fox. My son’s father was led by our gods. I cannot take as a husband someone who does not share my beliefs.”

“Fear not, Shining Water, I will honor the gods, all of them. But I believe that the gods, who are almighty and powerful, should fight amongst themselves for the right to rule us, and that we men and women, who are poor and weak in comparison, should not fight amongst ourselves over who should be our rulers.”

“I can see that we are going to have an interesting life together,” said Shining Water, finally managing a smile for her benefactor. She broke off pieces of the fish and mashed them in her mouth before feeding them to her infant son. She did the same with the berries. When the sun was over the trees, Jumping Fox gathered up the results of his night’s hunt, Shining Water picked up her son, who would now be known as Running Fox, tied him to her breast once again, and they walked slowly to the town’s entrance gates, which were now open.

The pig was given to the Roman guard at the gate. This sufficed for allowing them passage into the town. The rabbits went to the owner of a

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stable in return for allowing the new family to sleep there out of the wind and rain for a few nights until they could find their own quarters in one of the many dwellings now empty because the men and their families who had lived there were now dead. The doves were exchanged for bread and root vegetables. Jumping Fox left the safety of the town each night and returned with a new supply fresh meat to trade for their shelter.

They took Roman names to be used outside of their dwelling. Jumping Fox took the public name of Vulpis. Running Fox became Celticus. Shining Water was given the name Constantia by her new husband because she was steadfast in all of her ways and beliefs. Vulpis and Constantia agreed that *Senones* would always be part of their names, of Celticus' name and those of the sons and daughters who would be born to them.

Constantia raised her children to respect and honor the gods of their ancestors, who were the spirits of the forest, stream and mountain. Her own special goddess was *Sequana*, the river goddess. She had prayed to her when she and her son hid in the river from the Romans, and promised her that she would always be honored above all the other gods and goddesses if her life and that of her son were spared. She instructed her children in how to leave offerings to *Lugus*, the god of the sun, each morning inside their own dwelling, and to *Vosegus*, the god of nature, when they ventured out together into the forest. She instructed them in how to gather mistletoe, a sacred plant which grew on the oaks that symbolized immortality.

Vulpis had been true to his word. He honored the Celtic gods, but he always made sure that he mentioned both their Gallic name and their Roman equivalent. His favorite was *Arduinna*, the goddess of the forest and hunting. Her Roman equal was *Diana*. Celticus had his favorite god as well. It was *Belenus*, the god of light and of healing. Vulpis told him that he also had the name of *Apollo*.

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Celticus Senonius hunted with his adopted father when he was old enough to set the traps for rabbits, squirrels, minks and other small animals. Vulpis taught him to use the bow and arrow at a very early age, and by the time he was ten he had taken his first deer. When he grew to the age when he should take a wife, he married and built a hut next to that of Vulpis and his mother. His brothers did the same. His sisters lived with their husbands in their respective compounds within the town's walls. The sons of Celticus followed him into the forest, as he had followed Vulpis, but his sons began to trade in skins and furs and then to make goods from every part of the animals that were killed by their cousins. Within a few generations, the family of Celticus Senonius was well established in the leather and fur trades.



This is the moral portrait that Caesar has left us of the Gauls:

'Brave to the point of temerity, with a quick mind, sociable, communicative, fond of oratory, for which they showed a peculiar gift; boastful as well as brave, "fearing nought save that the Heavens should fall," unsteady, impatient, quick to discouragement and despair, with no sense of orderly rule and discipline.'

Such were the Gauls about 50 B.C., and such, many French observers would confess, are the French today. Caesar had granted the nobles of Agedincum Roman citizenship, and the town was colonized by Romans. Its population grew and its trade flourished.

Following the subjugation of the Gallians, Caesar returned to his political battle with Pompeus. Caesar prevailed in 48 B.C. when Pompeus, defeated in battle by Caesar, fled to Egypt where he was killed. Caesar took sole power of the empire in 46 B.C., but his reign was short-lived. He was murdered two years later by some of his most trusted men, including Gaius

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Cassius, Decimus and Marcus Junius Brutus. After the fall of Caesar, Roma was ruled by the Triumverate of Antonious, Lepidus and Octavianus. Octavianus was the nephew of Caesar and his heir. He raised an army and vowed to revenge his uncle's assassination. He saw off Lepidus and then defeated the joint forces of Antonious and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. By 27 B.C. he stood alone. This brought to an end the period of bloody civil wars. In honor of his achievement, the senate bestowed upon him the title *Augustus*, which means venerable and majestic. He took this title as his name.

There was relative peace during the forty-one years that Imperator Caesar Augustus ruled. The Roman Republic, in which the people of Roma in the Assemblies, Councils and the Senate interpreted the constitution and ruled the land, was now only a memory, but Augustus had the full assent of the Senate to rule.

Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus succeeded Augustus and ruled for twenty-three years, from 14 to 37 A.D.. At the request of Emperor Augustus, Tiberius had divorced his first wife and married Julia the Elder, the daughter of Augustus. The Emperor then adopted Tiberius and made him his heir. Tiberius had been a great general, but he was a reluctant emperor. He extracted heavy taxes from the colonies, especially from the prosperous regions of Gallia. In 21 A.D., Gallic tribes to the south and east of Agedincum attempted a revolt. Julius Florus led the Teveri tribe, and Julius Sacrovir lead the Aedui. Both men had been granted Roman citizenship due to the deeds of their ancestors, but they had grown weary of paying constant tribute and high taxes, and of the cruel treatment they and their people had to endure at the hands of their oppressive Roman rulers.

The uprising was brief and ended tragically for its leaders and their followers. The other states of Gallia endured the same oppression as the

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Teveri and Aedui, but they did not take part in the revolt nor share in its consequences.

In another part of the empire, on the farthest eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea in the lands of Judea, Samaria and Galilee, a Jewish prophet named Jesus of Nazareth, from the House of David, began his ministry with his baptism by his second cousin John on the banks of the River Jordan. For three years, Jesus and his group of disciples were thorns in the sides of both the Jewish and Roman leaders. In the spring of 30 A.D. Jesus entered Jerusalem, as was prophesied in the Bible: Zechariah 9:9, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

It is claimed in the writings of Christianity's Gospels that Jesus was immediately arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane by the forces of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council of judges, aided by a Roman official and guards. It is also claimed that he was identified to these authorities by one of his own apostles, whose name was Judas Iscariot. The crime with which Jesus was charged was pronouncing himself to be the Messiah. The Sadducee, one of the Jewish sects in the land of Judea, controlled the Sanhedrin at the time. They were the ruling elite, and it is said in the Gospels that they had no interest in being replaced by a man whom they believed was a false prophet. The Sanhedrin had no civil authority at this time. This belonged to the Romans. The Roman procurator of Judea and Samaria was Pontius Pilate.

Jesus was a threat to the Roman rulers as well as to the Jewish leaders. Both saw him as the eventual leader of a rebellion against their authority in Judea. His lineage, as a direct descendant of King David, gave him a definite claim to a secular crown, and his pronouncement that he was the

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Son of God established his claim to the spiritual crown as well. Pontius Pilate officiated at the trial of Jesus. It is written that Jesus was judged to be guilty of the charges against him, but that Pontius Pilate would not personally condemn him to death. He is said to have turned to the crowd and offered to release to them Jesus or the murderer, Barabas. “Give us Barabas!” was their supposed reply.

Following his death by crucifixion, a cult was born which declared that Jesus was God—not a god, but God—who had taken the form of man to redeem man’s sins and open the gates of heaven to all those who believed in Him.

Tiberius took no notice of this event. Four years before the crucifixion of Jesus, the emperor had abandoned Roma and lived on the island of Capri, leaving the administration of the empire in the hands of Lucius Aelius Sejanus. Sejanus proved to be an unfaithful servant, at least that is what Tiberius believed. He accused Sejanus of conspiring against him and of killing his son, Drusus. Sejanus was executed and Quintus Naevius Sutorius Macro took over the administrative duties. For the next six years, until the death of Tiberius, these duties mainly consisted of overseeing executions of anyone having links to Sejanus.

When Tiberius died in 37 A.D., he was succeeded by his adopted grandson, Caligula. Caligula reigned for four years before he was assassinated by his wife and daughter with the help of the Praetorian Guard. Caligula was a nickname, given to him by his father’s officers. It meant “little soldier’s boots”. His real name was Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus. As emperor, he spent lavishly to amuse the common people of Roma, and they mourned his death. He was succeeded by his uncle, Tiberius Claudius Nero Germanicus, known simply as Claudius. He had been born in

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Lugdunum³, the capital of the province Gallia Lugdunensis, and he held a fondness for the province of birth. It was under his reign that the conquest of Britannia began, further strengthening the position of Gallia within the Empire.

Claudius was most concerned about the religious well-being of Roma and its people. He was a traditionalist, even a reactionary. He refused to be proclaimed a divinity, declaring that only gods may choose new gods. He forbade rituals and celebrations that were not founded in the ancient observances, and revived those that had been neglected. The *haruspices*, or Roman soothsayers, who had been forsaken in favor of foreign astrologers from the east, regained their former status and the foreign astrologers were expelled. Claudius was against proselytizing in any religion, whether it was Druidism, Judaism or the new Christianity that had sprung up in the eastern lands.

The Jewish people began to come to Roma after their conquest at the hands of the Romans in 63 B.C. They were allowed religious freedom with the understanding that they should not promote their own religion or practice it publicly. The arrival of Christian disciples in Roma following the crucifixion of Jesus upset the balance that had been maintained for almost a century. There was unrest and quarreling among the Jews and the earliest Christians, most of whom were Jews who had accepted Christianity. The dispute was over their different views on the validity of Jesus as the Messiah. Claudius had both the Jews and Jewish Christians expelled from Roma in 50 A.D. They went where they could. Some traveled by boat to other ports around the Mediterranean, including those on the southern coast of Gallia. From there they found their way to many of the Roman towns, like Agedincum, where they were given shelter and allowed to stay.

³ Today, Lugdunum is known as *Lyon* in the southeast of France

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The ship was sailing directly into the late afternoon sun when Il Signore Giacomo Salomone Di Sangue paused in his tale. He was smiling, clearly pleased with the spell he had cast over his young listener. “Shall we see what the chef has made us for dinner?”

Michele frowned and nodded a reluctant yes. He knew what was to be their daily fare from the letter he received from his family after their sea crossing a year earlier: bread, soups of various kinds, all too thin, and maccheroni with a touch of tomato sauce. “Have you seen the part of Francia where you say my people, the Senones, came from?” he asked.

“I have been to most places, my young friend. That is what I do. That is how I have spent my life.”

“What is your profession?” asked Michele, seemingly puzzled that someone could make a living by travelling around the world.

“I have had patrons during my many years, men and women who value what I can tell them about the world and their place in it,” responded Signore Di Sangue.

“But I cannot pay you for my story,” said Michele with a worried tone in his voice.

“No, I know that,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “I am not at work during this voyage, my young friend. This is a pleasure cruise for me, and your story is part of the enjoyment. Now let us put some food into our stomachs.”



Michele walked down the stairs and along the corridors that eventually led to the place where he would attempt to sleep each night. It was swelteringly hot. The air was unfit to breathe. The room was filled with

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both familiar and unfamiliar odors. Grease, oil and smoke blended with steaming wet wool, unwashed undergarments, the contents of vomit pails and the fumes of men relieving themselves of the gases built up during the day. If he survived this journey he would never set foot in another ship again, at least not if he had to travel in steerage. He lay in his cot trying to sleep. Sleep did not come and his mind wandered to the story he had heard and the strange man who had told it.

He can't know the names of my distant relatives unless he is a spirit. I don't think he is. He is a story teller and he is making it all up so that the story is interesting. The idea our name coming from that place in Francia seems very believable. Sena Gallica. If it were not for Nonno Sena telling us that our family came from Spagna I would have believed we were from that early tribe who fought against the Romans. I like that better for some reason. Now that I think of it, there were not so many stories about the past. We were doing what our family had always done, we were told, nothing more and nothing less.

He wandered through the village in his mind, visiting the piazza, the church, the market and arriving at home where his mother was rolling out the dough for Sunday's dinner maccheroni while his nonna stirred the ragu. He sat down and watched them without saying anything. Soon he was asleep.

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September 2, 1896 A.D.

9:30 a.m.

THEY MET AS PLANNED THE NEXT MORNING, the second day of the journey.

“We can walk around the ship as long as the weather is accommodating,” suggested Signore Di Sangue. “The sea can be an unfriendly companion once we have passed Gibraltar, so we should enjoy it while we can. Let’s see, where did we leave off yesterday?”

“It was 50 A.D. and the Roman emperor Claudius had just expelled the Jews and Jewish Christians from Roma,” replied Michele.

“Very good,” congratulated Signore Di Sangue. “I can see that I will be able to depend on you to keep track of our journey in case I go off course. We will pick up from there. But first, maybe you can tell me a little bit about yourself.”

“You seem to know everything about me already. There’s not much to tell,” replied Michele.

“You’ll be surprised, my young friend. It’s all hidden inside your head. We’ll get it out by the end of this journey.”

“Babbo worked in the tannery mixing the dyes. My younger brother Nicola and I worked there too, for as long as I can remember. We cleaned out the vats when we were younger, then we pulled the carts with skins to the tanning vats and back to the drying racks. The strongest men pulled the skins from the vats or hung the wet skins on the drying racks. You had to be very strong to lift the wet skins. When the men got too old for this back

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breaking work, they mixed the dyes, like Babbo did, or they stirred the vats or cut the finished skins.

“Babbo had worked there all his life, just like his father and his father’s father, and his brothers and uncles. We would still be there now if a man hadn’t come to the village one Sunday afternoon almost two years ago offering any man willing to go to America the chance to work there. He would pay for the ship fare, one way, in return for part of the man’s pay check during the first two years. Babbo saw it as a chance for a better life for himself and the whole family, but he would not go there alone. We all had to go together. He offered the man a larger part of his and Nicola’s pay checks if he would pay for Mamma and our four sisters, Nonno and Nonna Sena. Babbo’s brother did not want to leave, and Nonno and Nonna Villani felt they were too old to start another life. The man agreed to pay for all nine of them, but we also had to give him everything in our home that we could not pack in our suitcases.”

“Your father had different plans for you,” said Signore Di Sangue. “He did not want you to be burdened with a loan when you started out in America.”

“That’s right,” responded Michele, no longer showing any sort of surprise at the older man’s psychic powers. “I was apprenticed to Signore Usiglio for one year. I should pay for my own ticket to America, and then, when I start my shoe repair business, I will send money to my family.”

“Your mother, is she religious?” asked Signore Di Sangue.

“Very religious,” laughed Michele, “just like her mother. My mother celebrates all of the saint’s days. She fasts every day. I don’t think I ever saw her eat meat. She eats fish only on Christmas Eve and Good Friday. My sisters are just like their mother. Mamma and the girls go to mass every

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morning. They say dozens of rosaries and stop for the Angelus three times every day.”

“Only three times?” asked Signore Di Sangue with a curious grin.

“Yes, only three times,” answered Michele with an uncertain tone of voice. “That’s how many times the bells ring in The Church tower. I think that’s the rule in every church, isn’t it?”

”Yes, yes. It’s the rule for all Catholics, but there can always be exceptions in small, isolated villages. What was your home like?” asked the older man, changing the subject again.

“Like everyone else’s, I think,” replied Michele. “We lived in the middle of the town, close to the church. We had two rooms, the kitchen and another room. The fireplace was between the two rooms so when it got cold in the winter the fire could heat both rooms. Nicola and I and our two oldest sisters slept in the kitchen. Babbo and Mamma slept in the other room with our two youngest sisters. Our apartment was on the third floor. Nonno and Nonna Sena live on the ground floor, and Babbo’s brother and his wife live on the second floor. Their youngest daughter, my cousin Maria Giuseppa, lived there too until she decided to leave for America. She came on board the ship with me, but she has been spending all of the time in her bed. She is seasick. She says God is punishing her for leaving her aging parents, and she has promised to take the next ship back if she can find the money and if God will let her survive this journey.”

“I have just the thing to fix her up,” said Signore Di Sangue. “We’ll see that she gets it later today, when we stop for lunch. Now let us see what has been happening in the middle of the first century. But before we do, I have a question for you. Did your father give the man who came to your village all of your furniture and belongings?”

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“No, he did not,” replied Michele. “He sold them to the Duke’s secretary. The Duke bought the belongings of all of the villagers who left and paid us a very good price. It was the Duke’s secretary who then negotiated with the man. We have a receipt from the Duke that says that if we come back we can repurchase our belongings at a fair price. Why did you ask that question?”

“It’s a small detail, but an important one,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “We will return to it later in your story. I promise.”

“This was a troubled time for Roma,” said Signore Di Sangue, beginning his story on this second day of the journey. “It has taken almost two thousand years for human kind to understand just how important this period in history was for the future of civilization. During forty short years, from the crucifixion of a man, a Jew, who said he was God, to the destruction and desecration of the holiest of places for the Jewish people, the Temple of Jerusalem, both at the hands of the Romans and both in Jerusalem, the course of history was cast in stone. We still live with the consequences of the actions of a spineless ruler and a uncontrolled legionnaire, as we shall see.”



Claudius was assassinated by poisoning in 54 A.D.. It was his wife, Agrippina, who administered the death potion, and it was her seventeen year old son from her first marriage, who had been adopted by Claudius four years earlier, who became emperor. At birth he was given the names Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. At his adoption he became Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus. He was known simply as Nero.

Nero was a paradox. He was as fastidious in running the affairs of the state as he was imprudent and injudicious in running the affairs of his personal life. He was sadistic, extravagant and brutish; sporting, artistic and

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sensual. Challenged by his mother for political power, he had her clubbed and stabbed to death. He divorced his wife, Octavia, and then had her executed for adultery. He married his mistress, Poppaea, and then kicked her to death, along with his unborn child whom she was carrying, when she complained of his lack of attention.

In July, 64 A.D., a great fire burned through the Roman capital for six days. Two-thirds of the city was destroyed. Nero used a large area that had been cleared by the fire to build his Domus Aurea, including the Portico of Livia and the Circus Maximus. Pleasure gardens, replete with an artificial lake, were added. The temple being built to honor Claudius, which did not burn during the fire, was demolished because it did not fit into the plans Nero had for his gardens. Many suspected that it was Nero who had the fires set in order to clear the land for his projects, but Nero pointed a finger of blame at the Christians. He had all who could be identified as Christian arrested and sacrificed to the flesh eating animals in the circus. He even had them tied to posts along paths in his gardens where their bodies were burned at night to serve as lighting torches.

Among those who were claimed to be martyred during the persecutions that followed the great fire were the apostles Peter and Paul. It is said that Peter was crucified like his teacher, Jesus, but with his head down and feet up, and that Paul was beheaded. There is no proof for these claims, but there is also no proof to the contrary.

Four more years passed. Countless men were executed: senators, generals, citizens. The Gallic-born governor of Gallia Lugdunensis, Gaius Julius Vindex, revolted. He, along with Galba, the governor of northern and eastern Hispania, fought against Nero's army led by Vesontio, and were defeated. Vindex committed suicide. Shortly afterward, the senate, finally weary of his excesses, condemned the emperor to be flogged to death. When

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Nero heard this sentence, he committed suicide, aided by his secretary. His last words were “*Qualis artifex pereo*”: What an artist the world loses in me.

The death of Nero was followed by The Year of the Four Emperors. The year 69 A.D. was a year of civil war, the first since Julius Caesar took firm control of the Empire in 30 B.C.. Galba succeeded Nero by acclamation of the Senate. Galba was murdered by Otho, who ruled for three months. He committed suicide and was succeeded by Vitellius, who was murdered in the Roman Forum in December. Vespasian became the fourth emperor in the year, recalled from Judea where for three years he had been leading the battle for Jerusalem against the rebelling Jews. He remained in power for ten years, until 79 A.D..

Vespasian's son, Titus, led the Roman armies in their final assault against the defenders of the Temple of Jerusalem. They besieged the city and eventually were able to breach the city's outer walls. The Jewish traitor, Josephus, who took Vespasian's family name, which was Flavius, wrote an account of the battles that has survived through the ages. In seven books, called collectively *The Jewish War*, he tells the story of the seven year war of independence, which began in 66 A.D. and did not end until 73 A.D. with the defeat of the Jewish people. The text begins at the point in his account as the Romans are fighting to reach the inner sanctum of the Temple in 70 A.D.:

"...the rebels shortly after attacked the Romans again, and a clash followed between the guards of the sanctuary and the troops who were putting out the fire inside the inner court; the latter routed the Jews and followed in hot pursuit right up to the Temple itself. Then one of the soldiers, without awaiting any orders and with no dread of so momentous a deed, but urged on by some supernatural force, snatched a blazing piece of wood and, climbing on another soldier's back, hurled the flaming brand through a low

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golden window that gave access, on the north side, to the rooms that surrounded the sanctuary. As the flames shot up, the Jews let out a shout of dismay that matched the tragedy; they flocked to the rescue, with no thought of sparing their lives or husbanding their strength; for the sacred structure that they had constantly guarded with such devotion was vanishing before their very eyes.

“No exhortation or threat could now restrain the impetuosity of the legions; for passion was in supreme command. Crowded together around the entrances, many were trampled down by their companions; others, stumbling on the smoldering and smoked-filled ruins of the porticoes, died as miserably as the defeated. As they drew closer to the Temple, they pretended not even to hear Caesar's orders, but urged the men in front to throw in more firebrands. The rebels were powerless to help; carnage and flight spread throughout.

“Most of the slain were peaceful citizens, weak and unarmed, and they were butchered where they were caught. The heap of corpses mounted higher and higher about the altar; a stream of blood flowed down the Temple's steps, and the bodies of those slain at the top slipped to the bottom.

“When Caesar failed to restrain the fury of his frenzied soldiers, and the fire could not be checked, he entered the building with his generals and looked at the holy place of the sanctuary and all its furnishings, which exceeded by far the accounts current in foreign lands and fully justified their splendid repute in our own.

“As the flames had not yet penetrated to the inner sanctum, but were consuming the chambers that surrounded the sanctuary, Titus assumed correctly that there was still time to save the structure; he ran out and by personal appeals he endeavored to persuade his men to put out the fire, instructing Liberalius, a centurion of his bodyguard of lancers, to club any

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of the men who disobeyed his orders. But their respect for Caesar and their fear of the centurion's staff who was trying to check them were overpowered by their rage, their detestation of the Jews, and an utterly uncontrolled lust for battle.

“Most of them were spurred on, moreover, by the expectation of loot, convinced that the interior was full of money and dazzled by observing that everything around them was made of gold. But they were forestalled by one of those who had entered into the building, and who, when Caesar dashed out to restrain the troops, pushed a firebrand, in the darkness, into the hinges of the gate. Then, when the flames suddenly shot up from the interior, Caesar and his generals withdrew, and no one was left to prevent those outside from kindling the blaze. Thus, in defiance of Caesar's wishes, the Temple was set on fire.

“While the Temple was ablaze, the attackers plundered it, and countless people who were caught by them were slaughtered. There was no pity for age and no regard was accorded rank; children and old men, laymen and priests, alike were butchered; every class was pursued and crushed in the grip of war, whether they cried out for mercy or offered resistance.

“Through the roar of the flames streaming far and wide, the groans of the falling victims were heard; such was the height of the hill and the magnitude of the blazing pile that the entire city seemed to be ablaze; and the noise - nothing more deafening and frightening could be imagined.

“There were the war cries of the Roman legions as they swept onwards en masse, the yells of the rebels encircled by fire and sword, the panic of the people who, cut off above, fled into the arms of the enemy, and their shrieks as they met their fate. The cries on the hill blended with those of the multitudes in the city below; and now many people who were exhausted and tongue-tied as a result of hunger, when they beheld the Temple on fire, found

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strength once more to lament and wail. Peraea and the surrounding hills, added their echoes to the deafening din. But more horrifying than the din were the sufferings.

"The Temple Mount, everywhere enveloped in flames, seemed to be boiling over from its base; yet the blood seemed more abundant than the flames and the numbers of the slain greater than those of the slayers. The soldiers climbed over heaps of bodies as they chased the fugitives."

The Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed and the dispersion of the Jewish people from their homeland, the *diaspora*, was set into motion. Many of those who were spared from death during the battle were enslaved and chained to an oar in a galley, or forced to work in the diamond mines of Egypt. Others were transported in cages to arenas in every corner of the Empire to be torn apart by animals or split in half by the axe of a gladiator. The Temple's sacred relics and the Menorah, the candelabrum that was a symbol of Judaism from the time of Moses, were taken to Roma where they were displayed in celebration of the victory. Pockets of resistance existed for another three years when finally the last stronghold of the Jews, Masada, fell.

The Temple had been the center of the Jewish faith. Without the Temple, the center of worship shifted to the Rabbinic authority. As the Jews dispersed throughout the empire, there developed different views on their faith.



81 A.D.

It was late in the year 81 A.D. and Domitian had just become emperor after the death in September of Titus, who was much loved and respected by the Romans and much despised by the Jews. Titus had succeeded his father

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Vespasian, in 79 A.D. Agedincum was a prosperous trading town and had grown substantially in size and population. Travelers from all regions of the empire came to its gates, and most of them were welcomed.

The Christian holy man was allowed to enter the city by the captain of the Roman garrison. He was not put to death like the others who came before him who had declared themselves messengers of Christ, the God Man. This man's beard was thin, his hair fair. His days of fasting and walking had left little flesh on his bones. He would have cracked on the torture wheel within minutes, offering little entertainment to the citizens and tormenters. There was, however, a forceful resonance in his voice which seemed to come from somewhere else than his emaciated body. The voice captivated the crowds that gathered to hear him speak. He was speaking now.

"The children of Abraham were chosen by God to receive their Messiah as they had been chosen by God to lead the way to heaven for those others who peopled the earth. Until they crucified their Messiah, the children of Abraham had the straight path to heaven. When God created man and woman in his likeness, he gave them free will. When God sent His Son to Abraham's children, some of them used this free will to follow the only true God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ, His Son, while others chose not to believe that the Messiah had come. So God decided to reveal Himself to all the people on earth, not just the children of Abraham. He sent Paul and all the disciples of Jesus to deliver His message.

"Today, there are three people on the earth: Those who follow the teachings of God as revealed by His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; those who were chosen but rejected Him as their Savior; and those who have not yet received the true word of God. I am here to bring this word to you so that you can be one with Him. He does not ask what faith you had before you accept His word. He does not ask what land your father inhabited, or the

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lands inhabited by your father's father and all who came before. He does not ask whether you have wealth or are poor, healthy or sick, strong or weak. All souls who believe His word will be welcome in His Eternal Kingdom when our lives on earth are done.

"Love, forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life are yours when you embrace the faith that Jesus Christ has brought to us, when you allow yourself to be baptized to cleanse away the sins we have committed against God before His Son showed us the way to salvation, and when you verify your faith by partaking in the sacrament at the holy mass.

"Follow me now, my brothers and sisters. As I am ordained to share with you the body and blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, I offer to baptize you in the name of the Holy Trinity, the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, to take away the original sin that man committed against God, and all the sins you have yourself committed."

Hororus, the great great great grandson of Celticus, was standing outside of his leather working shop at the edge of the square when the holy man spoke. What the man was saying was against all that he had been taught and all that he believed. *We have our own gods*, he thought. *The numina are all around us. How could we forsake our lar familiaris after he has protected our family for so many years. I, like all men, have my genius; my wife, like all women, has her luna. Do we just deny that they are there and have been there since we were born? Forculus greets us as we approach the door of our dwelling; Limentinus takes away the burdens that we carried with us as we pass over the threshold; Vesta warms our bodies and cooks our food in our hearth. How can one God do all these things for us? I will continue to put my faith in Jupiter to rule over the gods that control the forces of the earth and the skies, sacrifice to Juno to bring forth healthy children from my wife, and offer up our victories in war to Mars as long as I live. Most of all,*

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I will worship the Eternal City, the Goddess Roma, and her divine ruler on earth, the Emperor.

“He has walked a long way to find men and women who will listen to his message,” said an old man, a peddler, standing beside Hororus. “My people do not understand the story of this man he talks about, Jesus. There can be no Messiah for the Jews. It is the expectation of the Messiah upon which the Jewish religion is built, not the coming. Once the Messiah arrives, everything, both sacred and profane, loses its meaning. The religious lose their purpose and privileges. They lose their hold over the people. Our religion tells us what we must do in our daily life. It gives us a set of rules that we must follow each hour, each day, each season. This man preaches that we should have faith in a man who says he is God. There can be only one God, and this God cannot be a man. ”

“What are you saying, peddler?” demanded Hororus.

“Pay no attention to a poor and decrepit old man,” answered the peddler. “I meant no harm.” And with that, he disappeared into the crowd.

“Wait! I wish to speak with you,” demanded Hororus. “I have questions.” They would go unanswered, at least for now.

Jews and Christians; two sides to the same coin, thought Horous. This was a family squabble between brothers. Why are they bringing it to a Roman city, and why does our new Emperor, Domitian, allow these people to spread seeds of discontent among the people? Titus would not have done so. He did not put down the revolt of the Jews in Judea, capture Jerusalem and destroy the Temple of the Jews just to open the way for his successors to allow these religions?

Calimira, wife to Hororus, also heard the holy man preaching on that day. She was on her way back from the market square when she saw a crowd

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gathered around a frail looking young man with a powerful voice. She was no less devoted to her personal gods, the gods of their dwelling, or the gods who inhabited the upper and lower worlds. But there was something in the holy man's message that resonated with her. "Love, forgiveness, redemption and eternal life."

Calimira did not follow the holy man on that day. No one did, or they would have been put to death immediately. But she opened up her mind to the idea of a single, supreme God. In addition to teaching her children about the Gallic gods of their ancestors, and the Roman gods of their present day protectors, she began teaching them about the God of the Christians.



"Shall we see how your cousin Maria is feeling?" suggested Signore Di Sangue.

"When I looked in on her this morning in the women's sleeping quarters she said that she would be in the galley," replied Michele.

They found her sitting alone at a long table in the nearly empty dining hall. In front of her was a full cup of tea growing cold. Her face was the color of ash and her eyes were rimmed with black halos. A white scarf tied over her head and behind her neck covered her light brown hair; a large, heavy, grey woolen sweater covered most of the beige linen dress she wore and engulfed the tiny, listless frame hidden beneath. Her features were not unpleasant, thought Signore Di Sangue, a well-chosen mixture from the many peoples who comprised her lineage. She looked up when she saw the two men and attempted a smile.

"Do you still feel as bad as you look?" said Michele, trying to humor her out of her misery.

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“Worse, if that is possible,” she whispered in reply. She turned to Signore Di Sangué. “You must be Michele’s new friend. He has told me much about your gifts of story-telling.”

“Has he told you that I am also a healer of sea sickness who has come to make you well?” he replied. “I have brought you a medication that has never failed to work, including on patients who were so ill that they could not venture from their cots.”

“If you are not a doctor you may work your magic. In doctors I have no trust. It is an inherited family trait.”

“The cure arises from understanding the cause,” explained Signore Di Sangué. “You are ill because your brain is getting conflicting messages from the other sensing parts of your body, like your eyes, skin, muscles and most of all, your ears.”

“Is it the sound of the waves that is causing my distress?” moaned Maria.

“It is not what your ears are hearing but what they are feeling. Your ears are like small barrels of wine that are half full, chambers filled with liquid. If you close your eyes and are turned upside down, it is your ears that tell you that because the liquid in your ears pushes on the opposite side of the chamber. When you are at sea, your ears are sloshing, your eyes are seeing the ship move up and down, your feet cannot feel a steady hold beneath you, and your muscles are straining to keep you upright. Your brain receives all of these messages but cannot make any sense of them. So your body reacts by making you ill and trying to put you to sleep.”

“Why hasn’t my cousin Michele gotten sick, or many of the others walking around like they were taking a stroll through the piazza on Sunday afternoon?” sighed Maria.

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“Our bodies are different. When I am stung by a bee the area around the wound swells up like the shell on a turtle. My cousin can place his hand in a hive and get stung dozens of times and there is not the slightest sign that he has been attacked. Is it God who has made our bodies different, or is there some other explanation? Some day we will know the answer. Today, I just accept that it is so.”

With this, Signore Di Sangue reached into an inner chest pocket in his outer coat. When his hand reappeared it held a metal box the size and shape of a matchbox. He lifted the lid and exposed its contents to Maria. Michele leaned over his cousin’s shoulder to see what the box held. In it were a few dozen round yellow-orange pills.

“What are they?” asked Maria.

“They are what will make you enjoy the rest of this journey. My people joke that Noah was given the pills by God who told him to hand them out to all the passengers on his ark. The main ingredient is simply ginger root. And I guarantee that one of these will do wonders in a very short while. Just to be sure, I will ask you to wash it down with a teaspoon of this in a glass of water.”

He produced a small vile from another pocket. On the label was printed *Angostura*.

“And what is that?” asked Maria.

“Bitters. *Amargo Aromatico*.”

Signore Di Sangue prepared the liquid and handed the glass and one of the pills to Maria. She swallowed the pill and drained the entire glass.

“Lie down for awhile. When you awake, you will be a new person. Of this I am certain,” Signore Di Sangue assured Maria.

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Maria retired and Michele and Signore Di Sangue walked out on the deck. It was a wonderfully calm late afternoon. The sun was low in the sky off the bow of steamship *Italia*.

"I have always wondered what Jewish people think of Jesus," thought Michele aloud.

"Did you ever think of asking your shoemaking master and family friend, Signore Usiglio?" responded Signore Di'Rosssi.

"No," said Michele. "Nonno told me that we were never to talk about religion with someone who did not share our beliefs."

"Your grandfather sounds like a very wise man. Perhaps Signore Usiglio would not have been able to answer your question without offending you. According to the strict view of Judaism, it is heresy to claim that Jesus is God or part of a Trinity, or that he can be a mediator to God. Anyone who makes such a claim excludes himself from being part of the Jewish community. This is written in the *Mishneh Torah*, the compendium of Jewish law. In it, Jesus is described as a "stumbling block" who leads the world astray. Jews believe that the last prophet was Malachi, who lived over four centuries before the time of Jesus. Jesus did not fulfill the prophecies of the Torah, and he committed the sin of contradicting the laws set forth in the Torah, something that, according to the traditions of Judaism, the Messiah would not have done."

"I thought that the first Christians were converted Jews," offered Michele. "Isn't that what you said earlier in your story?"

"Many were," replied Signore Di Sangue. "But there were then and are today many different ways of being Jewish. There were over two dozen religious sects that had formed by the beginning of the first century of what Jews refer to as the *Common Era* and what you Christians call *Anno Domini*.

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The largest of the sects were the Basusim, Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots. The Pharisees were the most important. They believed that God gave Moses the knowledge of what the written laws in the Torah actually meant and how they should be applied in everyday life. It was a oral tradition along with the written one. Later, this knowledge was written down in the Talmud. The Pharisees also believed in an afterlife where God would punish the wicked and reward those who followed His way.

“The Saducees did not believe in an oral law, insisting that the Torah should be followed literally. They did not believe in an afterlife saying that there is no mention of it in the Torah. There is no trace of the Saducees after the destruction of the Temple.

“Christianity was established initially as a Jewish sect, centered in Jerusalem. Many anticipated the arrival of the Messiah, a religious-political-military leader who was expected to drive out the Roman invaders and restore independence. For the Jewish Christians, Jesus was the Messiah. They followed the teachings of Jesus Christ and were led by James, one of Jesus' four brothers. The Jewish Christians believed that in order to believe in Jesus and salvation through this belief, a person had to first be Jewish. The non-Jews had to convert to Judaism, men had to be circumcised and all had to follow the strict laws of the Torah.

“Paul, who was a Pharisee before becoming a Christian, broke with the Jewish Christian tradition at the same time as the destruction of the Temple, when most of the Jewish Christians were killed, enslaved or forced to leave Jerusalem, just like the other Jews. Paul created an alternative belief system, different from the Jewish Christians, and he spread the religion to the non-Jews, called Gentiles, in much of the Roman Empire. He preached that non-Jewish followers of Jesus did not need to convert to Judaism to share in all

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of the promises God made to Jews, his chosen people. It is his view of Christ's teachings which evolved into the Christian religion."

"Many of the Epistles in the mass are written by Paul, aren't they," mused Michele.

"Yes, more than half of the letters are his. Even those that are anonymous, like the Letter to the Hebrews, are attributed to him. Paul emphasized the differences between Judaism and Christianity. He wanted the new religion to be inclusive of all people, not a chosen few whom God had once anointed."

"What are the differences?" asked Michele, "and will knowing these differences help to explain how my people wandered from Francia to Italia?"

"The differences between Jews and Christians explain most of what happened in our part of the world starting in the first century of modern time," replied Signore Di Sangue. "Jews believe in one indivisible God; Christians believe in a God that is a Trinity, a single entity with three personalities."

"The Father, the Son who is Jesus, and the Holy Spirit," interjected Michele.

"Yes, exactly. Jews also believe that actions and behavior are more important than beliefs, while Christians claim that actions are derived from beliefs. Jews do not believe in the idea of an original sin that all people inherit from Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God's instructions in the Garden of Eden. Most importantly, Jews do not recognize the need for a savior as an intermediary with God."

"I wonder how God decides who is born into a Catholic family and who is born into a Jewish family, or a family with any other religion or no religion at all," reflected Michele.

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“Or in a black skin, white skin, yellow or red skin,” added Signore Di Sangué. “The answer to this question is the secret that humankind has been trying to find since it could think. Maybe He does not decide, my young friend. Shall we meet over breakfast tomorrow morning?”

“I look forward to seeing you in the galley at 8.30,” answered Michele.

They bid each other good afternoon and retired to their quarters before dinner, Michele to his cot in steerage, and Signore Di Sangué to his modest cabin on the second deck.



He is talking very much about the Jews. Is it because he himself is Jewish? He said that the forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus are the most important time in history because of what happened in Jerusalem. Why is it important for our family? We were far away. He says we were in Francia, which was part of the Roman Empire. He says that he will explain how we came to our home in Italia, but he is giving me so much information about kings and emperors that I am not sure I can follow him. I need to ask him more questions.

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September 3, 1896 A.D.

8:30 a.m.

ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE JOURNEY, with the *S.S. Italia* now in the Atlantic Ocean, the seas grew turbulent and heavy rains fell. Michele found Signore Di Sangue in the galley when he came in for breakfast at the appointed time. Only the most hearty were about during these rough seas, and the galley was quite empty.

“Buongiorno, Michele. Have you looked in on Maria?” asked Signore Di Sangue.

“Buongiorno, Signore Di Sangue,” answered Michele. Before he sat down across the table from his story telling friend, he poured himself a cup of tea from the kettle that was sitting on a coal burning stove at one side of the galley, and took three slices of bread and two hard boiled eggs from a warming pan and placed them on a plate. Michele had a good appetite. He was taller than most of the men in his village, and he was lanky thin, indicating that he might still have some growing left to complete. He had wavy dark chestnut hair and a matching mustasch that curled up at the ends. His nose and eyes and mouth and ears all were of good proportions. With a stronger jaw he might have been considered handsome, but he was not at all unpleasant to look upon. Several of the young women on board smiled broadly when he passed them, and he greeted them pleasantly, but with obvious shyness.

Before leaving Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi, Michele had ordered a suit from his cousin, Alberto Villani, his mother’s brother’s son, who was a tailor. It was a three-piece suit with four pockets on the vest and three buttons on the jacket. A watch chain was strung between the two lower

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pockets, passing mid-way through a hole that was made specially for the purpose. There was a watch on one end and a simple fob on the other. The suit material was a medium weight wool. It was a dark brown color with a thin vertical grey-brown stipe every two centimeters. The color matched perfectly with his shoes, which he shined each morning. He wore a tie each day when he came above deck. He had purchased three silk ties from his cousin, and he wore them on alternating days. Michele intended to replace both when he had earned enough money.

“Yes, she is doing fine, completely cured of her sea sickness,” answered Michele. “She has now become the nurse for the other women in the sleeping quarters. This morning she has much to do. Where will we start today?”

“We will visit a time of relative peace in the part of the Roman Empire where your ancestors lived,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “Two hundred or so years can pass quickly in a history book or when a man is telling a story, especially when the time is so long ago and when it is about a small group of people, like the Senones, in a place far removed from the capital of a culture, which was Roma for this part of the world. You remember that the town that was the home of the Senones, Agedincum, was in the part of Gallia called Lugdunensis. It was the middle one of three Gallian provinces. To the north of Lugdunensis was Gallia Belgica, and to the south was Gallia Aquitania. Lugdunensis and Aquitania are today in the country of Francia. Belgica, as you can tell by the name, is today the country of Belgium along with part of The Kingdom of The Netherlands and Luxembourg.

“The Senones of Lugdunensis had been part of the Roman Empire for almost one hundred fifty years. They were more or less assimilated. They seemed to have appreciated the fact that Roman culture was superior to the one they had developed themselves. Neither the nobility nor the commoners

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were forced to accept this culture. Roma had a very liberal policy to the rule of its conquered lands. The conquered retained their own municipal laws, if they had them. Roman citizenship was not granted unless it was earned. It was viewed as a privilege and offered as a reward. Though it did not have to be accepted, who would not want to exchange their inferior status within the Empire to become one with the world's elite? And once a citizen, a person was welcome anywhere in the Empire as a Roman.

“Similar to many of the other villages that had been fortresses of refuge or temporary market places in the early times after becoming Roman territories, Senones gradually became an urban center like the cities of Greece and Roma. The inhabitants were the aristocracy and a new class of merchants.”

“Like the leather working Senones you have been telling me about,” interjected Michele.

“Yes, just like them,” responded Signore Di Sangué. “Only the aristocrats were able to take part in the government. The *Curia*, or Senate, had one hundred members from the upper classes. Once a family became a member, it kept the privilege until it had no men left to fill the position, or it lost its wealth, or it disgraced itself in some way. This was the same as it was in Roma at the time. Taxes were not yet so high that either the common people or the aristocrats objected to paying them.

“This was a remarkable time. The Senones and other Gallians walked out of savagery and into a civilized form of life. Schools and colleges were established that were recognized as among the best in the entire Empire. The Romans built roads, aqueducts, like the Pont du Gard, circuses, baths, temples and triumphant arches. Some of these still remain. The people adopted the dress of the Romans, and, what is most important for our story, they adopted the Roman version of their family name. Remember the name

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the Romans gave the region in Italia where members of the Senones tribe lived for almost two centuries?”

“Yes. Sena Gallica,” replied Michele.

“Correct. So from this point onwards, those who belonged to the Senones tribe called themselves ‘Sena’”.



177 A.D.

Ergon and Merelix conceived twelve children. Eight of them lived beyond their first three years, and seven of them were still alive. After the birth of their third child who died after only a few weeks, Merelix decided she must worship only one god, the God of the Christians. She talked to Ergon about this. He knew there were many Christians already in Senones, but none yet in his family. They met in houses, in small groups, so that they would not be too conspicuous. The authorities knew that the non-Romans worshipped many different gods, including their old Celtic ones, and practiced other religions than the one sanctioned by Roma. They tolerated this as long as there were no open manifestations and no question of ultimate authority. Periodically, all residents were told to take part in public rituals and sacrifices, and those who refused were punished and sometimes put to death as an example to the others.

Ergon did not understand why one god was better than another. He did not want to anger the authorities or show any sign of disloyalty. His family's businesses depended on selling leather goods to the army and to all citizens. And yet he could not find a reason to deny his dear wife the pleasure and comfort of knowing that their newly departed child, who had been baptized into the Christian religion before he died, would be waiting for

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his mother to join him in a very special afterlife in a place called 'heaven'. Merelix wanted them all to be there together, she had said.

"What of our parents, brothers and sisters and their families who were not or are not Christians?" asked Ergon. "What will happen to them? Will we have to be alone in this place called 'heaven'?"

"I have talked to our religious leader," replied Merelix, "and he said that we can pray for them to join us. It may take some time, but eventually we shall all be together."

"Then I think we should take the safe course and not become Christians," said Ergon, "and let those who proclaim the faith pray for us."

"You are making light of this, my husband."

"No. Changing religions is serious. I have had this one all my life. I am not sure if I can learn the new rules. What if I mix up my prayers and say the wrong name when I am asking God for help? I might be struck down dead."

"I can see that you are determined to remain a pagan," rejoined Merelix. "I will go to the service early tomorrow morning and continue to pray that one day you will open your soul to Christ."

"Which ones are they?" asked Ergon carefully.

"Do you mean are they Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians?" answered Merelix.

"Yes," replied Ergon.

"Would it make a difference?" answered Merelix while a worried wrinkle spread across her brow.

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“Yes it would,” said Ergon. “One or more of our boys will be taken into the legions. If he is circumcised he will always be the first to be put at the front of the charge.”

“They follow the teachings of Paul and do not require that we conform to the traditions of the Jewish religion,” replied Merelix in a calm and quiet voice, clearly trying to assuage her husband’s fears.

“Then perhaps one day I will join you at one of your meetings,” said Ergon, now smiling.

“I will pray that God will one day grant that wish,” replied Merelix.

Their youngest son, Vectir, who was also the youngest of their seven living children, was taken from them by the Roman legionnaires when he was just thirteen years old. That was four years ago. No word had been heard from him since then. Ergon and Merelix had the worst thoughts about what was done with the young boys while they were training to be soldiers, to fight for their lives each day with little hope of surviving their first battle. They did not expect to see their son ever again. He could already be dead for all they knew. At least he had not been circumcised so he would not be treated like the son of a Jew or a Jewish Christian and placed at the front of every battle line.

Ergon remained unbaptized, the only member of the household that retained his original sin, said Merelix. He had attended a few gatherings and said afterward that he felt moved by the experience, seeing everyone taking part in the re-enactment of Christ’s last days as a man.

Ergon’s two oldest sons , Mielichus and Casirus, worked with him in his saddle shop. One day they received a visit from a magistrate accompanied by two guards. The magistrate, a young man and the son of one of the

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noblemen in a family who had become Roman citizens before any others, came quickly to the reason for his intrusion.

“Ergon Sena, are you a Christian?” he demanded.

“No, your Excellency, I am not,” replied Ergon calmly with an answer that was certainly an honest one.

“Is your wife a Christian?” the magistrate continued.

“My wife is my wife and does as I do,” responded Ergon, without showing the slightest sign of agitation at this provocation.

“It surprises us that there are people whom we have protected for so long, whom we have allowed to live in our cities and earn their daily bread by our grace, who would sacrifice all of this and their lives over such a trivial matter as the choice of their preferred god. What does it matter which gods you honor, as long as they are the ones your protectors select for you!”

With that said, the magistrate and his guards left the workshop.

Ergon talked to his family that evening. His sons and their families lived in the same house on separate floors. He sent word to his daughters to come to his house with their families. When they were all together he told them that they must all stop meeting with other Christians. This was more than a request, he said. He said that he would not allow any member of his family to be tortured or killed over the matter of religion.

“We respect you, father,” said his oldest daughter Filometus, “but we cannot agree to deny that we are members of the religion that Christ established to save our souls.”

“I am not asking you to deny that you are a Christian,” replied Ergon. “I am asking you not to put yourself in a place where the authorities will be able to know you are a Christian without asking. You may believe that you

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are performing a noble deed by becoming a martyr, but for those you leave behind you will simply be dead.”

“Eventually they will tire of persecuting Christians and move on to the Jews or cripples or dwarfs or anyone with an infirmity,” offered Filometus’s brother Mielichus. “We will soon be able to return to our worship. I agree with father, we should keep our religion private during this dangerous time.”

The family members agreed. In the weeks and months that followed, those in the town of Agedincum and in the province of Gallia Lugdunensis who did not heed the warnings against public profession of a non-Roman faith suffered the most cruel deaths. Those who were not beheaded were thrown into the arena with lions or other wild beasts and eaten alive. A story was told of a woman named Blandine who had confessed to being a Christian and was led into an arena. The lions refused to eat her. The lions were replaced by a bull, but the bull would not touch her. Finally, Roman soldiers had to kill her with their swords.

Ergon heard these gruesome stories and saw the cruelty with his own eyes. What possessed these people, he asked himself, to give up their lives? With a few simple words they could have saved themselves from pain and death. Still, they resisted and persisted in their declaration of faith in the man who claimed to be God. His own wife and his children would have joined them if he had not forced them through the strength of his own love to stay with him.

Killing the Christians had the opposite effect to the one which the Romans had hoped to achieve. It strengthened the faith of those Christians who survived and it drew to the fold men and women who might never have considered any gods but the Roman ones. Some converted in body and soul, while others converted only in their innermost thoughts. Ergon was among the spiritual converts.

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The struggle for control of the Roman Empire was a constant that all the people in the realm learned to accept. In 193 A.D., Emperor Pertinax was murdered. He had reigned for only eighty-six days, killed by one of his own soldiers in the Praetorian Guard. The men of the Guard were dissatisfied because Pertinax had failed to adequately compensate them for assisting in the assassination of his predecessor, Commodus. Four aspiring generals determined to seize power. One of them, Didius Julianus, won an auction held by the Praetorian Guard for the imperial position. Two of the four, Clodius Albinus and Lucius Septimus Severus, formed an alliance. Albinus was a former *legate* of Britannia who commanded legions in Britannia and Gallia. Septimus Severus commanded the Pannonian legions from the Danubian region. Severus first defeated Didius Julianus near Roma in 193 A.D., and in the following year he led his legions in successful battles against the fourth general, Pescennius Niger, who had been governor of Syria.

With the backing of the Roman Senate, he broke his alliance with Albinus and prepared for a decisive battle with his last rival in Albinus's stronghold, Lugdunum. Albinus chose an area near Lugdunum for his encampment in 195 A.D. He declared a state of independence from Roma for the Gallian provinces, Belgica and Britannia, and had himself proclaimed Augustus. His army was joined in an alliance with the governor of Hispania, Tarraconensis. For almost two years Albinus was able to maintain control over the northern provinces. However, toward the end of 196 A.D. Severus moved his army north from Italia into Pannonia along the Danube. He moved west with his army and was joined by German troops under the command of Virius Lupus. The first battle against Albinus was fought at

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Tinurtium⁴. The battle proved indecisive, and Albinus retreated with his legions toward Lugdunum.

On the 19th of February, 197 A.D., in what has come to be known as the *Battle of Lugdunum*, Severus and his armies attacked to the northwest of the city. The battle was one of the largest involving rival Roman armies. Albinus committed suicide before his rival's forces reached his position. When Severus found him, he had Albinus's corpse laid on the ground so that he could beat his body to a pulp with the hooves of his horse. He had Albinus's head severed from the body and sent to Roma as a warning to others who would defy the Senate. The trampled remains of Albinus and the bodies of Albinus's wife and sons were cast into the Rhine. Those who had supported Albinus were brutally executed or banished and their property confiscated. The city was left in partial ruins as a result of the battle, and what was not destroyed was plundered. The *Legio I Minervia*⁵ remained in Lugdunum until 211 A.D.



“Did the Senones suffer greatly after the defeat of Albinus?” asked Michele when Signore Di Sangue had finished his gruesome description of the end of Albinus.

“For a period of twenty or more years, all the people of Lugdunensis were persecuted by the oppressive rule of the Romans. The people of Senones, like those in the rest of the province, were at once angry with their upstart leader, Albinus, for having disturbed the peace they once enjoyed, and infuriated with the Romans for treating them like newly subjugated

⁴ Modern Tournus in the department Saône-et-Loire. It was a settlement in Gallia Lugdunensis on the via Agrippina.

⁵ Latin for "First legion *Minervia*", "devoted to goddess Minerva" was a Roman legion formed by Emperor Domitian in 82 A.D., for the campaign against the Germanic tribe of the Chatti. It was garrisoned in Lugdunum 198–211.

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barbarians. Lugdunum never regained its wealth and glory, at least not while it was part of the Roman Empire.”

“They probably learned their lesson and stopped revolting,” said Michele, more in the form of a question.

“No they did not,” replied Signore Di Sangue emphatically. “You would not be here if they had. We shall continue with this part of your history tomorrow. I will bid you a good evening, my young friend. It is time for me to take these old bones and give them a rest.”

“Good evening, Signore Di Sangue,” called Michele after his companion. “Thank you for your company and for continuing with my story.”

Michele remained above deck in the second class seating area after Signore Di Sangue retired. He was there as a guest of the older gentleman, and this is where they had met on the two previous days after lunch. This is probably where they would continue to meet on those days when it was either too wet, too cold or too windy to be out in the open air. Michele had never before experienced anything like this, days without work, food served by strangers. He caught glimpses of the passengers who were on the upper decks that were reserved for the first class passengers. How had they managed to become so wealthy, he thought. There were so many of them. In Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi there were only a few who were considered rich, but he was sure they were not as wealthy as most of those who were moving about on the levels above him.

Perhaps the Duke Caracciolo was an exception. He was a regular visitor to Signore Usiglio’s shop. It seemed that he ordered many more shoes than one person could ever possibly wear. He came into the shop and greeted Signore Usiglio in a friendly manner, and then they went into Signore Usiglio’s back room where they sat and talked while they drank strong tea. They talked mostly about the political situation in the country, and it seemed

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that the Duke valued the opinions and advice that Signore Usiglio would give to him. Before he left he always gave me a coin and asked about cousin Maria, how she was getting along. The Duke has very special eyebrows. They look like the wings of a swallow, shallow up-side-down Vs.

It was well known that the Duke's family had fought with the King's armies against Garibaldi, but when the inevitable outcome became clear, the Duke had cooperated to make the transition to *La Repubblica* a smooth one. Things had not gone well for the town nor for the former Kingdom, what they were now calling the *mezzogiorno*, since that time. Signore Usiglio had told Michele that before *Risogimento*, the largest trading partner for the Kingdom had been Great Britain. Heavy taxes on the former Kingdom's products by the new government in Roma and duties on exports meant that their goods were no longer competitive in the export markets, and other parts of the new country in which the Kingdom found itself were not interested in buying their goods and produce. They had their own trading partners and they grew their own produce.

In spite of this, the Duke's wealth was still very visible. He used it to keep the shops running, like Signore Usiglio's and the bakery and the tailor and all the others.



I never thought about what it had been like to be an early Christian or how someone changes his religion. The Senones worshipped nature, then they worshipped the gods of the Romans, and then they were believers in Jesus. Could someone convince me to become a Jew or a Protestant? I don't think so, but that's what my ancestors did, convert from the religion they had to one that they thought was better or one their rulers thought was better. I guess they didn't have a choice. If they didn't convert, I would not be here. Will it be different in America where there are so many different

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religions? We had two religions in Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi and no one ever thought about changing from one to the other, converting from being a Catholic or being a Jew. Maybe the Jews wanted to convert but the Church would not let them. I know there were people who did not believe in God, but they kept that to themselves. How could there be a world without God. Who would we pray to? Who would we ask for forgiveness? Where would we go when we died? I can't imagine such a world. I don't think I would want to live in such a world.

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September 4, 1896 A.D.

9:45 a.m.

THE RAINS HAD STOPPED AND THE SEAS WERE CALM on the fourth day of the journey. The air was decidedly cooler as the ship was sailing now in a northwesterly direction. A mist hung over the shallow breaking waves. The sky to the ship's stern had a yellow orange glow, while ahead of the bow it was a cobalt grey. There were more passengers on the deck than during the previous three days, a result, no doubt, of the accommodating weather and the gradual acclimation of the novice sea travelers to the steady swaying and heaving of the vessel. Signore Di Sangue had already made two passes around the main deck when he saw Michele walking toward him. The two men, teacher and pupil, greeted each other warmly, and Michele turned to walk in the same direction as his older companion.

"Have you noticed that most people walk around the boat in an anti-clockwise direction?" queried Signore Di Sangue.

"Yes I have," replied Michele. "I thought it might be a rule that I had missed being told. In any case, I just broke it. No one seemed to mind."

"It is an unwritten rule, but it is also part of human nature. We see better with our left eye because the right side of our brain is the one that controls recognition. We have better visibility on the left than on the right, and we feel more confident and are more at ease when we are moving in an anticlockwise direction around a circuit."

"What does the left side of the brain do?" asked Michele, unsure whether Signore Di Sangue was telling the truth or stretching it.

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“The left side is there to control logic, speech, reading and writing, memory,” replied Signore Di Sangué.

“Come to think of it, when I am putting in the smallest tacks on a lady’s sole, I tilt my head to the right to put my left eye closest to the nail,” offered Michele.

“There is one more thing. In our northern half of the earth, called the Northern Hemisphere, the earth is spinning around in an anticlockwise direction. That is why the sun appears to rise in the east and set in the west. Cyclones and tornadoes in our hemisphere spin around in an anticlockwise direction. If you travel below the equator, these natural phenomena reverse themselves. The sun still rises in the east because north and south don’t switch sides when you travel below the equator, but once you cross that line, the earth spins in a clockwise directions, and cyclones and tornadoes follow suit. So when ships travel below the equator, some people on deck switch direction.”

“We are not going to be traveling below the equator, are we?” queried Michele worriedly?

“No, my young friend, we will not be anywhere close to the Southern Hemisphere on this trip. We will remain in the Northern Atlantic in our bodies, and in the northern Roman province of Gallia in our minds. Are you ready to go back there?”

“I am,” replied Michele.

“When we left your story yesterday it was shortly after the beginning of the third century, and affairs were just getting back to normal. For the next fifty years or so, after the oppression eased in Lugdunum and the rest of the province of Lugdunensis, there was a rapid succession of Roman emperors.”



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Severus was followed by his son, Caracalla. Caracalla was killed by his Prefect, Macrinus, who was then proclaimed emperor. Macrinus was killed by his Syrian legion one year after his ascension and was succeeded by the young Marcus Aurelius Antonius. Severus Alexander came next and then five others up to 253 A.D. when a remarkable event occurred. Valerian and his son, Gallienus, divided the empire into two, East and West, and ruled as co-Augustus. The reason for this division was a military one. The Roman Empire was being attacked in the north by the Germanic tribes, and in the east by the Sassanid Persians led by their king, Shapur.

Valerian was captured in battle by the Sassanid Persians in 259 A.D. Shapur tortured and publicly humiliated Valerian, finally putting him to death and removing his skin to produce a trophy of the Persian victory over Roma. Valerian's skin was stretched around a straw form in the shape of Valerian's body, and this macabre statue was placed in the principal Persian temple. Never before had anything of this sort happened to a Roman emperor. Valerian's son could do nothing to help his father because he was completely occupied holding back the invaders in the north.

After initial successes against the northern invaders, Gallienus eventually had difficulty controlling the borders of the empire's northern provinces. While Gallienus was putting down insurrections in the region of the Danube, Postumus, who was governor of Germania Superior and Inferior, was left in charge at the Rhine. Postumus was stationed in Colonia Agrippina⁶. Gallienus sent his young son, Saloninus, along with the boy's guardian, Silvanus, to Colonia Agrippina to be kept out of harm's way. Rather than protecting Saloninus, Postumus put the boy and his guardian to death after the boy had demanded his share of the spoils of victories over the invading

⁶ The city that is now called Cologne

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Franks, who had been soundly defeated by Postumus and his forces. The soldiers under Postumus proclaimed their commander Emperor.

This was the beginning of the Gallic Empire that lasted fourteen years, from 260 to 274 A.D. Three provinces, Gallica, Britannia and Hispania, broke away from the Roman Empire and formed their own empire with Postumus as its leader. Gallienus tried unsuccessfully to regain control over the rebel territories, but Postumus would not engage him in battle. Finally, both men came to an understanding to leave the other in peace, and Gallienus returned to Roma. Gallienus broke his promise after a few years and crossed the Alps to once again try to defeat his rival, but he was injured in a battle and was forced once again to retreat.

Many of the people who lived in the Gallic provinces were pleased and proud of the bold move made by Postumus to declare independence from Roma. But there were some who were unhappy with the prospect of losing their rights as Roman citizens and the protection that this had afforded them. The life span of the new empire was relatively short, but it had a significant influence on the region's destiny. It was really the beginning of the end for those who lived in Gallia to be citizens of the empire that was Roma. The end did not come suddenly. It took a few generations for the people to become separated first from their ties to Roma and then to their homes. Like the Jews in Jerusalem, they were invaded, defeated and then scattered to the winds.

For fourteen years as an independent domain, the Gallic Empire mirrored the government established in Roma. The Empire's capital was at Colonia Agrippina. It had its own senate, two annually elected consuls and its own Praetorian Guard. It embodied the desire of the provinces, particularly those that had gained wealth and power as a result of the very Roman protection that they now disavowed, to exert control over their own destinies.

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Romanitas was replaced with provincial nationalism. Postumus declared that his sole intention was to protect Gallia against the barbarians, and that he could do this more effectively if he controlled both the forces and the financial resources in the region. Postumus and his three successors were surprisingly effective at this task, but it was certain that Roma would not allow any part of its realm to forswear allegiance to the one, true Emperor in Roma.

The end of the Gallic Empire came in the summer of 274 A.D. Aurelian, who had been declared Emperor by the Roman Senate in 270 A.D., crossed the Alps and defeated the army of Tetricus, the last Gallic Emperor, near Civitas Catalaunorum⁷. The battle was described as one of the most bloody ever fought between opposing Roman forces. Aurelian declared himself *restitutor orbis*, 'rebuilder of the world'. But this reunification in time proved to be disastrous for Gallia and the other northern provinces. With many soldiers now dead, the Frankish and Alamannic armies easily overran all of the country north of the Alps. Cities and towns were sacked, looted and their inhabitants slaughtered. Many areas were depopulated. Those parts of Gallia that were left in peace fell victim to another plague: the inhabitants were forced to pay high taxes, which were used to maintain the armies of the Danube and Euphrates. The Rhine frontier was left unguarded, and many Alamans and Franks began to settle in the Roman empire.

The next ten years were among the most turbulent in the history of the Empire. Aurelian was murdered and succeeded by a senator, Tacitus. He soon died, most likely murdered, and was succeeded by his half-brother Florianus. Florianus was supported by Roma as well as Gallia, Hispania and Britania. A rival, Probus, who had been a member of Aurilian's staff during

⁷ Today called Châlons-en-Champagne and formerly known as Châlons-sur-Marne.

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that Emperor's Eastern campaigns, had the backing of Syria, Phoenicia, Egypt and Palestine. Probus prevailed and was declared Emperor in 276 A.D. He reigned until 282 A.D. when he was killed by his troops. During his reign, another revolt took place in Gallia, again near the city of Lugdunum. It was led in 280 A.D. by Proculus, who was abandoned by his troops when Probus arrived to quell the rebellion.

Probus' Praetorian Prefect, Carus, revolted against his Emperor when Probus was about to begin a campaign against the Persians. When Probus was murdered by his own men, Carus was proclaimed Emperor. He was successful in battles with barbarians in the north and proceeded to do battle with the Persians, but he died of natural causes after arriving in Persia. His younger son, Numerian, who, along with his new bride, Aper, had accompanied his father to Persia, was proclaimed Emperor. On the return journey from Persia, without following through with the Persian campaign, Numerian died. Aper attempted to conceal his death from the troops until their return to Roma, but her deceit was discovered by the commander of the imperial bodyguard, Valerius Diocles, who accused the young bride of treachery and ran her through with his sword. He was proclaimed Emperor by his troops in late 284 A.D. Diocles took the name of Diocletian. Following a military encounter with Carus' older son, Carinus, at the Battle of the Margus, which was won by Diocletian, the crisis of the third century was brought to a close.

Following two years of sole rule, Diocletian, like Valerian, decided that the empire was too large to be governed by a single ruler from one seat of governance. He divided the empire in half creating two equal emperors who would rule their respective territories, each with the title of Augustus. He created what would eventually become the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire. Diocletian became the Augustus of the East with

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his capital in Nicomedia.⁸ Maximian was designated the Augustus of the West and made his capital the city of Mediolanum.⁹ In 293 A.D. each Augustus took a junior Emperor with the title of Caesar in order to provide for a line of succession. This became known as the Rule of Four, the *Tetrarchy*. Constantius Chlorus was Caesar of the West and ruled under Maximian from Treverorum¹⁰, and Galerius was Caesar of the East under Diocletian and ruled from Sirmium.¹¹



“The reign of Diocletian, who was the leader among leaders in the Tetrarchy, was the storm before the calm for the Christians,” said Signore Di Sangue.

“This is getting very confusing, Signore Di Sangue,” replied Michele, sounding quite exasperated. “It was hard enough to remember a single line of emperors, but first two and now four, it is impossible for my unlearned brain to absorb.”

“My people have always had to keep facts in our heads since papers and books were too much of a burden to carry with us in our travels from one land to the next,” explained Signore Di Sangue. “We have developed simple tricks to help us remember these facts. Try this for remembering the Tetrarchs. You are climbing a ladder. Your left hand and left foot are one rung up on the ladder from your right hand and right foot. North is up, so your left side is west and your right side is east. If you think of the capital cities on a map, Trier in Germania is north of Milano in Italia, Belgrade in Serbia is north of Izmit in Turkey. The hands serve, so they are the Caesars.

⁸ Located in what is now Turkey.

⁹ Which is today the City of Milan.

¹⁰ What is now Trier in Germania.

¹¹ What is now Mitrovica in Serbia, near Belgrade.

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The feet are therefore the Ausgustuses. The left foot is higher so it is Maximian and in Mediolanum. The left hand constantly serves, so that is Constantius who is Maximian's Caesar. Give the right foot the name Dionico and you will remember both Diocletian and Nicomedia. Think of Dionico climbing the ladder to the gallows, and you will remember Galerius as his Caesar. All that is left to memorize is the name of his capital, Sirmium."

"You make things sound so simple, Signore Di Sangue," sighed Michele.

"All things really are simple, even when they look complicated," laughed Signore Di Sangue. "You will see as you grow older. Now, back to the evil doings of Diocletian. They began in 303 A.D. and were recorded by Eusebius¹², who was from the town of Caesarea in Palestine, in his book, 'Martyrs of Palestine'. The spark was an event that occurred in Caesarea.

"A man named Romanus, who was a deacon and exorcist in the parish of Caesarea, rallied the Christians in the city against the destruction of their churches and publicly rebuked the city's people for sacrificing to the Roman gods. He was arrested and brought to Antioch, where Diocletian was visiting. There are different versions about who was responsible for the torture of Romanus, Diocletian or the Prefect Asclepiades, but Romanus was brutally tortured and eventually had his tongue cut from his mouth for his relentless verbal abuse of the Prefect and the Roman gods. Even without his tongue, it is said that he used his last breath to speak the words: 'A tongue has never failed the man who speaks of Christ, nor need you ask what organ is the source of words, when He is praised who gave us the gift of speech.'

¹² Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine also known as 'Pamphilus' or the 'son of Pamphilus', was born a little around 260 A.D. He became bishop of Caesarea in 313 A.D. and lived there until his death in 339 A.D.

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“Diocletian and Galerius argued over how severe and widespread the repression of Christians and their religious holdings should be. Galerius pressed for universal repression, so they consulted an oracle to serve as mediator. The oracle told them that ‘the just on earth hindered Apollo’s ability to provide advice’. Diocletian was told that these ‘just’ could only be the Christians. Diocletian therefore decided to make the persecutions extend to the entire empire. In February of 303 A.D., Diocletian issued the first Edict against the Christians. The Edict ordered that the Christian scriptures and places of worship should be destroyed. A fire in the palace a few weeks following the Edict was attributed by Galerius to the Christians conspiring with the palace eunuchs. When an investigation found no proof of this claim, the eunuchs were killed anyway. The bishop of Nicomedia was beheaded. A second fire broke out in the palace two weeks after the first, and Galerius decided that the city was unsafe. He departed for Roma, soon followed by Diocletian.

“What is important for you, Michele, is that the Augustus and his Caesar in the west did not follow the lead of their counterparts in the east. They did not persecute the Christians. Your family and all those practicing the new religion either openly or in secret were left unharmed in Gallia and the rest of the western provinces. In the east, only those Christians who were hidden by their pagan brothers escaped death or torture. Others became apostates, abandoning their faith and offering sacrifices to the Roman gods.”

“How long did the persecutions last?” asked Michele.

“Eight years, until 311 A.D.,” replied Signore Di Sanguie. “Both Diocletian and Maximian retired in 305, elevating their Caesars to the positions of Augustus. Galerius carried on with the persecutions in the east, since they were, after all, his idea in the first place. But he eventually recognized the obvious. Attempting to prohibit the religion only made the

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faith of those who believed in the religion stronger. Rather than eradicating Christianity, Galerius and Diocletian had succeeded in strengthening it. Galerius rescinded the Edict in 311 A.D just before he died. He was succeeded by Licinius and Maximinus Daia who shared power.”

“What happened then?”

“Things returned to normal. That is, there were constant power struggles, deception and treachery to obtain the highest position. Constantine, son of Constantius Chlorus, had been declared Augustus by his father’s legions at the death of his father in 306 A.D. He married Maximian’s daughter in 307 A.D. Maxentius, son of Maximian and now brother-in-law to Constantine, was favored to take his father’s place as Augustus by both the Praetorian Guard and the senate in Roma. The conflict simmered for six years when finally the forces of the two men met in Roma at the famous Battle of Milvian Bridge. The battle was won by Constantine when he fooled Maxentius into abandoning his strategic position behind the Aurelian Wall. Once his army was exposed, Constantine’s forces drove them into the Tiber River. Constantine said that he had dreamt of Christ the night before this battle, and now regarded himself as a protector of Christians.

“In 313 A.D., Licinius, Augustus of the East who took full control of that part of the realm after defeating Maximinus Daia, married Flavia Julia Constantia, half-sister of Constantine. The marriage took place in Mediolanum, where Constantine had established his capital. The occasion was used to issue a proclamation often referred to as the Edict of Mediolanum, or the Edict of Toleration. This edict gave Christians and others freedom of worship and exemption from taking part in the Roman religious ceremonies. It is said that Constantine announced this edict in return for his victory over Maxentius the year before.

“So Christians and Jews could worship openly?” queried Michele.

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“The Edict was intended to give Christians freedom from being forced to worship the Roman gods,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “The Edict was not interpreted as an acceptance of Judaism. Quite to the contrary, Constantine forbade the conversion of pagans to Judaism, and he did nothing to prevent the continued destruction and plundering of Jewish temples and the confiscation of the lands on which they stood.

“Having gotten rid of one brother-in-law as a rival, Constantine now turned to the other. He and Licinius did battle in 314 A.D. and then again in 316 A.D. Following a reconciliation that lasted for seven years, they battled again in 323 A.D. at sea and 324 A.D. on land. The second battle, at Adrianople¹³, proved decisive. Licinius was interned at Thessalonica and, despite pleas from his half-sister, Constantine ordered him killed.

“In 324 A.D, Constantine decided to move the capital of the empire from Roma to new ground. Roma had become a tired and divided city with bickering among the leading families sapping the strength of the empire. It was open to attack from all sides. He chose the ancient Greek city of Byzantium because of its defensible geography, its position along the land route from the western provinces of Roma to the east, its pivotal point along the sea route from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and its location equidistant from the hostile borders of the empire to the northwest and southeast. Construction commenced on new public buildings in the image of Roma. The new city was dedicated in 330 A.D. and given the name *Nova Roma*. It was renamed Constantinople after Constantine’s death in his honor.”

“Does the city still exist?” asked Michele.

¹³ Today called Edirne in the European section of Turkey, near the border with Greece and Bulgaria.

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“Today it is the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Moving the capital of the Roman Empire brought to a close the dominance of Rome and to the western empire. Constantinople did not replace Rome, but it reduced its central importance. From this time forward, the power in the Roman Empire was concentrated in the eastern portion of the Mediterranean Sea. Many of the nobles from Rome were enticed away from the old capital with grants to build estates around the new capital.

“In 325 A.D. Constantine summoned the First Ecumenical Council of The Church. A dispute had started within the Christian community that threatened to divide it in two. Constantine decided that as Emperor of the realm who had newly adopted Christianity as his private faith—publicly, he was still a believer in the Roman gods—it was his duty to resolve the dispute. The council was held in Nicea, a city that was not far from the future site of Constantinople, and was attended by a group of over three hundred bishops who had been elected by their communities.

“On one side of the divide were the Nicene Christians, who were led by Athanasius. They held the belief that is central to the teachings of the Catholic Church today, that Jesus was one with the Father, that he was God in the same measure as the Father and the Holy Spirit. There are those who believe that the teachings of the Nicene Christians were more suitable to Constantine and the Romans because they were closer to the Roman view of the world. The Romans worshipped idols and sacred images and were therefore sympathetic to the veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and of the saints; they believed that men could be gods and gave gods human traits, so the belief that Jesus is divine and that the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ was not an unthinkable thought; and they appreciated the candles, vestments, music and incense as part of the ceremonies.

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“On the other side were the Arian Christians, who owed their spiritual direction to Origen of Alexandria and their name to Arius, their leader from 256 to 336 A.D. The Arians believed that Jesus was holy, but not godly nor a god, and especially not God. Logically, Jesus cannot be God and still suffer the death he experienced on the cross, Origen had reasoned. If Jesus was perfect, how could any human imitate him, and if humans could not imitate Jesus, how could they become Christians?

“In the end, all but a few of the bishops voted in favor of the Nicene Catholic Christian version, and the principles they decided upon became known as the Nicene Creed. Can you recite it, Michele?” asked Signore Di Sanguie. “It begins with ‘We believe in one God’.”

“I think so,” replied Michele, and he closed his eyes to hear the words that were spoken at mass every Sunday for as long as he could remember.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and born of the Father before all ages. Light of light, true God of true God. Begotten not made, consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary and was made man; was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried; and the third day rose again according to the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose Kingdom there shall be no end. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is to be adored and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets. And one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the remission of

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sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

“Catholic. Where does the word come from?” asked Michele.

“It is Greek, *katholikos*, which means ‘throughout the whole’ or ‘universal’. The word appeared in Greek classics works written by Aristotle and Polybius,” explained Signore Di Sangue, as if he was reading from a book. “The combination ‘Catholic Church’, *he katholike ekklesia* in Greek, was used for the first time in the letter of St. Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, written about the year 110 A.D. The words run: ‘Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus may be, there is the *katholike*.’”

“Constantine saved his baptism and his full conversion to Christianity until just before his death in 337 A.D. Shortly after Easter in 337 A.D., while he was preparing for battle with the Sassanid king, Shapur II, Constantine fell ill. He travelled to Drepanum, now named Helenopolis in honor of his mother, where he prayed at the tomb of his mother's favorite saint, the martyr Lucian. From there he proceeded to the suburbs of Nicomedia, and there he was baptized. A few weeks later, on the day of Pentecost, Constantine died at Nicomedia. His body was escorted to Constantinople and lay in state in the imperial palace. His sarcophagus was then placed in The Church of the Holy Apostles, as he himself had directed, and was surrounded by the memorial stone slabs of the Twelve Apostles, symbolically making Constantine the thirteenth Apostle.

“It took another forty-three years for Christianity to become the official and single religion of the Roman empire, and when it did, it was the Nicene Christianity version of the religion,” concluded Signore Di Sangue.



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The beliefs and practices of Catholicism, as defined by the Nicene Christians, include:

§Direct and continuous organizational descent from the original church founded by Jesus, who, according to tradition, designated the Apostle Peter as its first leader.

§Belief that Jesus Christ is Divine, a doctrine officially clarified in the First Council of Nicea and expressed in the Nicene Creed.

§Belief that the Eucharist is really, truly, and objectively the Body and Blood of Christ, through the Real Presence, and that adoration and worship is due to the Eucharist, as the body and blood of Christ.

§Possession of the "threefold ordained ministry" of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

§All ministers are ordained by, and subject to, Bishops, who pass down sacramental authority by the "laying-on of hands", having themselves been ordained in a direct line of succession from the Apostles.

§Belief that The Church is the vessel and deposit of the fullness of the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles from which the Scriptures were formed. This teaching is preserved in both written scripture and in unwritten tradition, neither being independent of the other.

§A belief in the necessity and efficacy of sacraments.

§The use of sacred images, candles, vestments and music, and often incense and water, in worship.

§Veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus as the Blessed Virgin Mary, and veneration of the saints.

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§A distinction between adoration (latria) for God, and veneration (dulia) for saints. The term hyperdulia is used for a special veneration accorded to the Virgin Mary among the saints.

§The use of prayer for the dead.

§Requests to the departed saints for intercessory prayers.



380 A.D.

On the 27th day of February 380 A.D., by an edict issued in Thessalonica and published in Constantinople, Emperor Theodosius I declared Catholic Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, and defined the term "Catholic" in Roman Imperial law. This edict was read in all the cities in the empire.

Theodosian Code XVI.i.2:

'It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our clemency and moderation, should continue the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one Deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the

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chastisement of divine condemnation and the second the punishment of our authority, in accordance with the will of heaven will decide to inflict.'

All the people of Senones, Lugdunensis, including Michon and Vesta Sena and all their children, would convert at once to Nicene Catholic Christianity. No other interpretation of Christianity would be tolerated. No other religion, including worship of the traditional Roman gods, would be allowed.

The family was already Christian, but they held the beliefs of the Pricillianists, as did some of the others in Senones, and they continued to honor both the Roman and Celtic gods. Most of the inhabitants of Senones still worshiped the Roman Gods. There were also a small number of Jewish families, and the rest were Christians who followed the example of the local bishop. Michon's family had adopted the Pricillian version of Christianity following the visit of a missionary from Hispania. Michon was the first to hear him preach, and he came back to tell the family. He spoke so eloquently, and what he said made so much sense, Michon felt that the rest of the family had to hear him immediately. The missionary explained the Pricillian doctrine as follows:

There are two kingdoms, one of the Kingdom of Light and one of the Kingdom of Darkness. God created Angels and the souls of Men so that they might conquer the Kingdom of Darkness. But the souls of men fell into sin and became imprisoned in material bodies from which they could not escape. God sent spirits in the form of the Twelve Patriarchs, Reuben, Simeon and the others, to teach man how to free himself from matter, represented by the signs of the Zodiac, but they did not succeed. He decided to send the Savior, Jesus, to appear in a body like that of other men in order to reveal the way to be one again with God. Through his apparent death, he showed how man could release his soul from the influence of the material.

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The missionary stayed long enough in the village to instruct a small group of families, including Michon's and his brothers' families, in the ways of the sect. This group had practiced their special form of Christianity in private during the next several years. They knew there were limits to how far The Church officials would allow free expression, even though supposedly religious freedom was guaranteed. Just before the announcement about Nicene Catholicism being decreed as the official religion there had been a rumor about Pricillian and three of the sect's highest leaders, Instantius, Salvianus and Helpidius, having been excommunicated.

After the conversion and baptism of all the men, women and children in Senones was completed, Vesta raised her children to openly follow the practices of Nicene Catholicism, but she also taught them the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms as well as to respect and honor the gods of their ancestors. She instructed them in how to leave offerings inside their dwelling and in their garden surrounded by walls and out of sight of other families. With each instruction she also gave a warning: 'Never tell anyone outside the family about our gods or show them our relics.'

"Now that everyone has only one God, they will want to possess our family's many gods, and they will do anything to have them," she told their children. "They will cut out your tongue so that they can speak to them as if they are you; they will pluck out your eyes so they can see them as you do; they will slice off your ears so they can hear their voices." She did not know any other way to impress upon them the importance of keeping their secret than through fear.

One day, their youngest son, Mattias, asked his mother why the family had to pray to the Christian God when they had their own gods. Vesta was filled with fear when she heard this. "Do you remember what I have told

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you about our gods, not to talk about them to anyone outside of the family?” she asked her young son, trying to stay calm.

“Yes, mother,” he replied. “I have not told anyone. But if our gods are so special, why can we not share them with our friends?”

“Our friends have their own special gods, just as we do,” she answered. “But it is our enemies we must fear, and we do not always know who they are. It is they who will take our gods from us.”

“Without our gods having anything to say about it?” questioned Mattias innocently. “Are they not faithful to us?”

Vesta saw that her son had unknowingly cornered her in a box of her own making. She searched for a way out.

“They may feel that another needs them more than you do. We cause our gods great distress when we force them to choose to stay with us or leave with another. We show our love for them when we do not make them have to choose. You have been blessed with your gods, my son. Keep them for yourself.”

Mattias seemed to accept this explanation and did not mention it again. Vesta, however, was now uneasy. Was she putting her children in danger by teaching them about the Roman gods and encouraging them to put their faith in them? That evening when the children were asleep, she talked to Michon about her worries.

“Our ancestors thought they were trading the many gods of the Romans and Celts for the one true God of Christianity. We followed this path for many years, and hoped that one day all the world would accept this faith. Many good men and women died as a result of having made this choice. We were never discovered, or betrayed. Now, when our faith is finally accepted by the entire Empire, the priests tell us that one God is not enough. God

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must be three, a *Trinity*, they called it. Those who cannot grasp this new idea will be persecuted, they told us today. We believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that he revealed to us the way to eternal happiness. Why do we have to believe that our one God is really three different gods all at the same time? It is too confusing. Do they make it complicated so that we need to have the priests interpret our religion for us?"

"I am disturbed by this change as well, my husband. We will need to be careful. I have already heard of some of our friends being questioned about their faith. We will just have to continue to pray one way in public and our own way in private, as we have always done."



It was very late in the evening when Signore Di Sangue finished his story telling for the day. Both he and Michele were quite tired as they found their ways to their respective places of rest. As was now their custom, they bid each other a good evening and agreed on the appointed time of their meeting the following morning.



Michele lay awake on his cot. *Where is this story taking me? Maybe I don't want to learn where my family came from and how it got to the village we have left behind us. What will I do with this knowledge once I have it? I learned that I would go to heaven because I was fortunate enough to be born a Catholic. I never thought that my family might have had other beliefs in the past. I can't believe that they did. Maybe he will tell me that we are really Jews, like him. What if we are? Or that we are Moors! Should I stop meeting him? But I like hearing the story. I am learning things I never would have known unless I was the son of a rich man and was taught how to*

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read. I will ask Signore Di Sangue tomorrow if he intends to tell me that I am descended from Jews or Arabs, and if he says that I am, I will stop listening to him. And having decided on his course of action, Michele finally slipped into a deep sleep.

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September 5, 1896 A.D.

8:15 a.m.

WHEN THE TWO MEN MET ON THE FIFTH DAY they were both wrapped in most of the clothes they had brought with them. They were joined on this day by Maria. Maria's presence made Michele change his mind about confronting Signore Di Sangué with the question that had kept him awake the night before. He decided to wait until the next time they were alone.

"Will it be alright for me to listen to your story today?" she asked.

"It would be a pleasure to have the company of such a lovely and now healthy young woman," replied Signore Di Sangué with a warm smile.

"You have a way with words for all occasions, I see, Signore Di Sangué," said Marie with a blush on her cheeks.

He accepted her compliment with a smile, a nod and a finger to his hat. "Have you thought about what you will do when you arrive in New York, Signorina Sena?" he asked.

"Do you mean whether I will go to work in a factory or marry as quickly as I can?" replied Maria.

"The two often go together in America, Signorina," declared Signore Di Sangué, "at least until the first child arrives."

"I would like to work in one of the fashionable stores in Manhattan that I have heard so much about in letters from my cousins," replied Maria.

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“Are you and your cousins able to read and write?” queried Signore Di Sangue, trying to hide his surprise that a young woman from a laborer’s family would have been able to have the luxury of an education.

“Oh goodness no!” Maria replied with a nervous laugh. “My letters are written and read by our parish priest. There is a man from Roma who lives in the Brooklyn neighborhood close to my Uncle’s family who is a notary. He writes the letters for my cousins.”

“Well your cousins have told you correctly that there are indeed some very fashionable stores in Manhattan, such as Macy’s, Stewart’s, Altman’s, Lord and Taylor and Brooks Brothers. But you will have to first learn to speak English and to do your maths. There are very few customers who come to these stores from across the river in Brooklyn, or from the Italian neighborhood south of Houston Street.”

Maria looked disappointed. She had dreamt about meeting the wealthy women of New York and helping them to pick the most suitable gowns and dresses for their fancy balls and dinner parties.

“There are young girls who are arriving every day from England who speak with an accent that is the envy of the society women,” continued Signore Di Sangue. “They will be competing for the same positions. Maybe you could start as a fitter and then work your way into becoming a salesperson. Can you sew?”

“Yes. Yes!” Maria replied. “I learned to sew at a very early age, and I have been making my own clothes almost all my life.”

“Including that lovely coat you are wearing?” queried Signore Di Sangue.

“Of course. Everything!” Maria unbuttoned her coat and opened it up to show off the gabardine suit she was wearing over a white cotton blouse with mother-of-pearl buttons.

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“You are quite gifted, Signorina Sena. Your clothes are very handsome, and I can see that they are also well made. I will write a letter to my good friend who is in charge of the fitting room at Lord and Taylor, Mr. Abraham Rosenberg. And I will write a letter that you can take with you when you meet him. You will have a job to begin your new life in America. What happens after that will be up to you.”

Maria had no words to thank her benefactor. Michele smiled broadly, showing his love and pride for his cousin. She left the two men to their daily routine as she joined a group of young women whom she had met on board. She had news to tell them and forgot her original intention of listening to Signore Di Sangue tell the story that was as much hers as her cousin's.



“So now all the people in the entire Roman Empire must worship according to the Nicene version of Christianity, with three divine persons making one God,” said Signore Di Sangue, beginning a new segment of the story. “Theodosius I was the last emperor of both the Eastern and Western Roman Empire. After his death, the two parts split permanently.”

“What happened between Constantine and Theodosius I?” asked Michele.

“You don't want to miss anything, do you my young friend,” replied Signore Di Sangue with a smile. “Well, the sons of Constantine who became the new emperors after their father's death, divided the Empire. Constantius II took the eastern provinces, Constans took the middle portion, which at that time included Italia and Africa, and Constantine II, held the western provinces, which included Britannia, Gallia and Hispania. Constantius II continued with his father's persecutions of the Jews. Constantine had denounced Jews as Christ killers. His son branded them a ‘pernicious sect’. Constantine II eventually decided he wanted his brother Constans' portion of the west, and invaded Italia to take it. However, he was

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killed in battle and Constans ruled the West on his own for ten years before he was killed in the Pyrenees. After that, Constantius II eliminated all rivals by the year 353 A.D. to become sole ruler of the Empire until his death by illness in 361 A.D. He was succeeded by Claudius Julianus, who was killed in battle against the Persians.

“This was the period when the Saxons, Alamanni and Franks to the east of Gallia intensified their raids on the province, and a peace was finally reached with Shapur and the Persians at the price of relinquishing lands formerly conquered. Theodosius became Emperor in 379 A.D. and remained so until his death in Mediolanum in 395 A.D. It was shortly after his ascension that he made Christianity the state religion.

“The two sons of Theodosius succeeded their father. Arcadius took the East and Honorius, who was only eleven years old, received the West. There is a hard lesson to be learned by the events that unfolded around the young Honorius during the years following his father’s death. Theodosius put the boy under the protection of a favorite general named Stilicho. Stilicho’s father was a Vandal, one of the Germanic tribes, who, with the blessings of former emperors, had made their homes on the banks of the Danube. He was also an Arian Christian. His commanders were of the same background and faith. He had a strong influence on Honorius, and when the boy married Stilicho’s daughter, that influence only increased. Jealousy among the members of the court eventually infected Honorius, who had his father-in-law relieved of his duties and later killed in 408 A.D. Not satisfied with this treachery, Honorius ordered that the troops with Germanic blood be murdered as well. Some escaped, and they sought revenge, asking for and receiving help from the Visigoths.

“Revenge has a way of inspiring those who feel they have been wronged. The Visigoths, under the leadership of Alaric, crossed over the Alps,

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bypassed the court, which had moved from Mediolanum to Ravenna, and headed straight for Roma. On August 24th, 410 A.D., they broke through the city's meager defenses and ransacked the city for three days. They stripped the temples of all the gold they could find. The glorious city that had been the capital of the world's most powerful empire was a shambles and the Western Roman Empire collapsed. When Honorius died in 423 A.D. he ruled over the Italian peninsula and northern Africa. A pretender, Ioannes, took the throne for a brief period until Honorius' nephew, who was then Emperor of the East, sent troops to remove Ioannes and place his cousin, Valentinian, in his stead."

"Is this when my family left Senones?" asked Michele.

"Not immediately," replied Signore Di Sangué. "The Germanic people had been living among the Gallians for a few hundred years and they viewed each other more as allies against the Romans than enemies of each other. But the Gallians were no longer warriors. They had lived under the protection of Roma for almost five centuries and had become educated and cultured people, even those who were not of the nobility, like your ancestors. As more Germanic people moved into the cities from the countryside, their rough ways clashed with those of the older inhabitants. Since it was the Germanic tribal leaders who were now the rulers over the dominion, conflicts and disagreements were usually resolved in their favor. The Gallians became second class citizens. In time, they grew weary of the constant struggle to hold on to what had been theirs, what they had worked so hard to build. Some of them decided to leave and look for a new life, to start over again. Others remained until a new enemy appeared, the Franks. The Frankish tribes took Belgica and Lugdunensis. This is most likely when the Sena family moved south."



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The fifth, sixth and seventh centuries were turbulent times in what was the Western Roman Empire, from Britannia through Gallia, Hispania, Italia and Roma itself. Alaric, king of the western Goths, or *Visigoths*, died immediately after he plundered Roma, but his followers established themselves in southern Gallia and Hispania. Their rule over Hispania lasted until the beginning of the eighth century when, in 711 A.D., Roderick, the last king of the Visigoths was killed in battle with the Moors. Visigoths were one of two tribes of Goths, a Germanic tribe that originally lived along the shores of the Baltic Sea. The tribe broke into two groups around the late fourth century. The eastern Goths, called *Ostrogoths*, were settled in the late 400s by the Romans in the province between the Danube and Sava rivers. In 488 A.D., under their ruler Theodoric, they invaded Italia. The Eastern Roman armies battled against the Ostrogoths, finally defeating and scattering their people in 554 A.D.

The Vandals, another Germanic tribe, lived in the northeastern part of Germania in the region between the Oder and Vistula rivers. As the Western Roman Empire declined, the Vandals saw an opportunity to expand their territory. They attacked Gallia in 406 A.D. and later fought the Visigoths in southern Gallia and Hispania. They turned southward, capturing northern Africa and Carthage in 439 A.D., making Carthage their capital city. Using this as their base, they conquered Sicilia, Sardegna, Corsica and the Balearic Islands. Recognizing that the Vandals were indeed a threat to the Empire, Emperor Valentinian III offered his daughter, Eudoxia, in marriage to Geiseric's son, Huneric, but Valentinian was killed by Petronius Maximus before the wedding could take place. The Emperor's wife, Licinia Eudoxia, sent a letter to Geiseric's son begging him to rescue her and her daughters, one of whom was his bethrothed. In 455 A.D., the Vandals led by Geiseric, invaded Roma and once again the city was plundered. They did, however, save the Empress and her daughters. Licinia Eudoxia and her youngest

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daughter, Placidia, were sent to Constantinople, while Eudoxia returned to Carthage and married Huneric.

The Vandals terrorized the Mediterranean for another seventy-eight years when forces of Emperor Justinian I of the Eastern Roman Empire led by Belisarius defeated them and destroyed their kingdom. Nothing was ever heard of them again although the name lives on in the region of Andalusia, which is a variation of Vandal.

The Franks were also a Germanic tribe. They began crossing the Rhine into Gallia around 250 A.D. Under the young king Clovis, the Franks established a kingdom in 486 A.D. encompassing most of Gallia. Clovis and all his warriors were baptized as Nicean Christians, thereby winning the support of The Church. Clovis was the first of the Merovingian dynasty which lasted until 751 A.D. when it was overthrown by Pepin the Short, starting the Carolingian Dynasty.

The Langobardi began as a tribe called the Winnili living in southern Scandinavia. One group of Winnili left the homeland, probably as a result of over population, and migrated southward led by two brothers, Ybor and Aio, and their mother Gambara. They arrived in Scoringa, a land that was ruled by the Vandals. The Vandals offered them a choice of tribute or war. The Winnili refused tribute, saying that it was better to maintain liberty by arms than to stain it by the payment of tribute. The Vandals turned to Odin, chief of the gods, and prayed for guidance. Odin answered that he would give the victory to those he would see first at sunrise. Gambara prayed to the Goddess of Love, Freya, who told Gambara to instruct all the Winnili women to tie their hair in front of their faces like beards. The women should march in line with their men so that there would be double the number of warriors.

When Odin saw the Winnili at sunrise, he said to Freya: "Who are these long beards."

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Freya answered, “My lord, thou hast given them the name, now give them also the victory.”

The victory belonged to the Long Beards, the *Langobardi*, and from that point forward that was their name. Between 166 and 489 A.D, the Langobardi were invisible, dwelling deep in inside Germania. When successive harvests failed in the second half of the fifth century, they emerged and migrated southward. When they crossed the path of the invading Huns, they were engaged in battle, their king Agelmund killed, and they were subjugated by the victors. But the Langobardi had not won the favor of Odin by allowing themselves to be defeated. In time, they gathered their strength, rose up against their captors, and prevailed in battle. With their victory they gained both wealth and confidence.

In 568 A.D., the Langobardi King Alboin led his own troops and those of other tribes from Germania, together totaling 500,000 men, across the Julian Alps and into northern Italy. They captured Forum Iulii¹⁴ in 569 A.D. Vicenza, Verona and Brescia fell in quick succession. The Eastern Roman force defending Mediolanum, the former capital of Western Roma, capitulated in the summer of 569 A.D. Three years later Ticinum¹⁵, which is a short distance south of Mediolanum, became the first capital of the new Langobardi Kingdom of Italy. Duchies were established in Spoleto and as far south as Benevento. The Eastern Roman forces eventually managed to retain control of Roma and Ravenna, as well as a narrow strip of land connecting these two cities through the province of Perugia, however most of Italy, from north to south, was now firmly under the control of the Langobardi.

¹⁴ A town in northeastern Italy which today is known as Cividale and is the door to Italy for those coming from Eastern Europe.

¹⁵ Later called Pavia from the Latin Padus, the name of the river Po which flows nearby

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The older son of Theodosius I, Arcadius, died of natural causes in 408 A.D. after seven years as Caesar of the East. Arcadius' son, Theodosius II, was seven years old when he became Caesar of the Eastern Roman Empire. In 425 A.D, Theodosius II and Valentinian III, Caesar of the West, enacted a law prohibiting a Jewish father from disowning his Jewish child or grandchild who converted to Christianity. Also in 425, Theodosius II had executed Gamaliel VI, the last chief justice of the *Sanhedrin*, the high court of Jewish religious and political life. Gamaliel was charged with erecting new synagogues thereby contravening an imperial decree. With his death, the title Nasi, the last remains of the ancient Sanhedrin, became illegal.

In 429 A.D., a commission was appointed by Theodosius II to collect and codify all of the laws that had been enacted since the reign of Constantine I. The purpose was to create a formal system of law for the Empire. The *Codex Theodosianus*, or Theodosius Code of Law, was published in 438 A.D. It specified a number of restrictions against Jews, including limitations on where they could live and what they could wear. Jews were prohibited from holding public office, building synagogues, holding slaves—which meant they could not perform anything but subsistence farming—and they were subject to extraordinary taxation.

Theodosius II died in 450 A.D. after falling from his horse while hunting. Having left no successor, the Senate elected Flavius Marcianus as Augustus. One of his first acts was to stop payments to Attila the Hun. Attila replied by invading Gallia with a massive force of allied tribes. He was met by Flavius Aëtius with an army composed of Visigoths, Franks, Alans and Burgundians, all tribes whom Aëtius had met in battle during his previous 30 years as a Roman General. The advancing Huns were stopped at the Battle of Campus Catalaunos in 451 A.D. Attila moved his armies toward Italia,

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attacking and sacking Ticinum and Aquileia in the middle of 452 A.D. He reached the Po River before turning back due to sickness in his army and a stronger force. Attila died in the Spring of the following year.



451A.D.

Marcus Sena with his own family and five other families from Senones had walked for three months, steadily south-southwest. They followed in the tracks of the Roman legions who were abandoning their posts in northern Gallia and attempting to reach the main army in the south. Attila and his Hun forces were laying waste to Gallia and routing the Roman forces that attempted to stop the advancing Huns. The Visigoths, under their King, Theodoric I, were now allied with the Romans against the Huns. Somewhere a decisive battle would be fought, but the families from Senones wished only to be as far from that battlefield as their legs could take them.

Marcus had buried his aged father on the mountain through which they had passed a week before. The frozen, snow-covered ground could not be penetrated with a spade, so he and his family had covered their father's body with as many stones as they could find under the snow by looking for small mounds on the flat, white surface. Some stones lay exposed by the heavy winds. Other men, women and children had died along the way, from sickness or hunger or exhaustion. *It is a miracle that any of us are still alive*, thought Marcus. He carried on his back his youngest child, a girl named Juliana. His wife, Lidia, carried their infant son, Marius, close to her breast, nestled in a shawl tied at her back.

Night was approaching. They would have to stop soon and prepare to camp for the night. They could see the campfires of the legionnaires in the distance. The women would gather berries and nuts, while the children would collect branches for the fires. The elderly would cut grass for their

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beds, and the men would hunt any animal that moved or try to pull up anything that swam in a river or stream. Burning fires was dangerous because their smoke signaled the group's location to their enemies, the Huns, Visigoths, Vandals or Romans. In these times no one was to be trusted. On moonlit nights they made no fires. That is one reason why they all prayed constantly for rain and cloud covered skies. They prayed to their Christian God; they prayed to their Roman gods; and they prayed to the gods of their ancient ancestors, the Celts. The other reason they prayed for rain was that rain made the trails less passable for the horses and carts of their enemies. They did not know how close these enemies were, but they were sure they were there and could take no chances.

The forests through which they had been walking for the past several days suddenly ended in a rocky plain covered with low growing shrubs. A stream, large enough to hold fish but small enough to wade across on foot, cut through the plain. There was a path that had been worn by the men and their carts that had preceded them. The path continued a short distance and then divided in two, one toward the west that clearly showed the fresh tracks of horses and the ruts of wheels, and one to the east that was less trodden. Sitting in the bifurcation were a man, a woman and two young children, a boy and a girl. When the man saw the group approaching, he covered the woman and children with his cloak, rose up and pulled out his sword. Marcus went toward him, slowly.

"Who are you?" said Marcus. "We mean you no harm."

The man did not respond. Marcus called the priest to speak to him, believing the stranger would be less threatened by a religious man. The priest asked the man again who he was and from where he had come. The man answered, speaking the language that everyone in this part of the world understood, but with a slight dialect that distinguished the people in each of

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the regions. He said that he was a Jew. He explained that the new laws made it impossible for Jews to stay in Roma. They had tried to move north, but the people in the villages, who were strictly controlled by the Catholic priests, were more hostile to them than the Romans had been. They had bought passage on a boat to Hispania, landing in Tarraco. They were immediately put into prison when they landed, where they had stayed for over a year, and were released only when a general amnesty was declared. They were forced to leave, and had been walking for twelve days. Everything they owned had been taken from them. There were a few more families behind them, but they were moving more slowly because some were sick and elderly.

“Tell him that his family can share our camp and our food, and that we will wait for the others in his group to join us so that we can care for them as well,” Marcus instructed the priest. “Tell him that they can travel with us if they wish until we find a place where we will settle.”

“This will not make it easier for us, Marcus,” said the priest, “but God will bless us for this act of kindness.”

All the members of the Sena family agreed that this was their wish as well. On their own, this family of Jews would perish, either from the elements or at the hands of the Visigoths who followed in their footsteps.

“There must be one condition of our help,” said Marcus. “Tell the Jew that he must practice our form of Nicene Christianity outside of his house. We can have no synagogues in the settlement we will make one day when we find our place on this earth. What he and his kinsmen do inside their homes will not be questioned.”

The priest explained this to the Jew, whose name was Michael. The Jew talked with his wife, whose name was Rachel. Rachel shook her head to signify no. Michael continued to talk. Rachel continued to shake her head

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slowly, back and forth. Finally, her head moved down, then up, gazing at her husband for a long time. A few more words were exchanged, and Michael turned to the priest and told him that it was agreed. When the other families finally arrived, Michael talked to them, explaining the conditions of their band with the families from Gallia. Most of them agreed. Those few who did not continued their journey on their own and were not heard from again.

The families stayed camped along the stream for a few days. Marcus and several of the other men, including Michael the Jew, made short excursions in different directions to determine whether there was a place where they could safely set up a more permanent camp. There was no point in continuing to follow the legionnaires, they decided, because they would be no more welcome in Roma than in their former homeland. Even though they were now in an area controlled by the Romans, they needed to find a place that was of no interest to the Visigoths when they eventually took this part of Hispania, that had no material advantages worth fighting over, so that when their enemies did finally arrive, they would be convinced to leave them to the wolves, the vultures or to the elements.

From the camp that the Senas and the families of Jews had established, some of the men searched for a place where they could build a more permanent settlement. When they found it after a few weeks of exploring, it was a place half a day's walk to the east of their camp. It lay in a plain, north of a river that flowed from east to west out of the mountains in the north. The river ran along a mountain ledge to the south. It did not appear to be the most fertile ground, nor the most strategic from a defense perspective. It was imperfect in many ways, which is just what was needed. The families gathered up whatever they had brought with them and moved to what would become their new home.

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Days, weeks, months and years passed without anyone disturbing the peaceful existence of the settlers. Throughout the spring and summer they had built more permanent shelters using materials they could carry and pull with the few horses they had brought with them. At first they built crude huts made of poles covered with a combination of the hides of game they had managed to kill and straw tied into tubular bundles. These dwellings protected their inhabitants from the harsh winter winds and kept out most of the rain. Gradually, they built more permanent dwellings using stones and bricks made of clay dug from the banks of the river. In the middle of the village they piled stones into four walls with a single opening on one side as an entrance. They cut trees and lashed them together into trusses, which they raised up with the help of their horses. Over the trusses they placed more poles, then bark and finally straw tied into bundles. This was their church.

Northern Hispania had a climate that was much hotter and drier than the one the Senas were used to in Gallia. It was more like the climate of Roma or even Jerusalem than to the one in their former home. The Jew explained that the Senas would have to learn how to eat in the hot, arid land where they were now settled. In time, he said, the Senas could learn on their own what they should and should not eat, but there would inevitably be errors and lives would be lost. His people had already made the sacrifices centuries ago, so why not accept this as a gift. The Senas agreed to allow the Jew to teach them the eating laws of Judaism, and they lived by most of these laws.

Michael explained that certain animals should not be eaten. Pigs could not forage in the forest as they had done in Senones. They would have to be kept in pens and eat the same grains that the villagers ate. In times of drought or poor harvest, they would compete with their keepers for food. Better to avoid this by simply not keeping pigs. The Torah states that pigs and hares may not be eaten, explained Michael, because they do not have

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cloven hooves or chew their cud, like cattle, sheep, goats and deer. *The practical reason for not eating pigs is stronger than the religious one, thought Marcus, and concerning hares, he had never become ill if it was cooked well.* Scavenging animals of all kinds, including those that fly, live on land or under the water, or anything with a shell should be avoided. Reptiles, rodents, frogs and insects can all carry poisons which they use for their own defense, and if these are ingested by humans sickness or death may follow.

There were two practices that the Senas had difficulty understanding and following. The first was that an animal had to be drained of all blood before it could be eaten. The second was that milk and foods made from milk and meat could not be mixed or eaten at the same time. Michael could not provide a sufficient argument for these two practices, other than they are explicitly stated in the Torah and must be followed by a practicing Jew. Since the Senas were practicing Catholics, and had eaten meats and cheeses, and drank milk willingly and had never died from the practice, they ignored these rules.

When the Visigoths finally arrived in the village after four summers had passed from the time the Senas and the Jews had settled there, they were accompanied by their Arian priests. The villagers offered no resistance against a force of Visigoth soldiers that was four times their own, counting women, children, infirmed and elderly.

“Where is your priest?” the Visigoth commander demanded of Marcus, who stood at the head of the villagers who had come to meet the intruders. Their priest was just behind him. As Patre Donathian began to prepare his feet to step forward and his voice to speak, he felt the weight of Marcus’s left arm, shoulder, side and thigh crush into him, stopping him from moving or speaking.

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“We will abide by your laws and cause no trouble,” replied Marcus. He would lie to protect their friend because he would surely be put to death, he thought. “We have no priest. We came from Lugdunensis four seasons ago and will make this our home, by your leave.”

“You have a church,” interjected the obvious leader of the Arian priests, pointing to the structure in the middle of the village bearing a cross over the entrance. “Are you carrying on a heretical religion?”

“We have been waiting for a man of God to arrive to serve our religious needs,” replied Marcus. “We built The Church with the hope that we could convince a priest to stay with us.”

“You will henceforth have Brother Anadoric as your spiritual leader,” said the commander, pointing to a middle-aged man dressed in a brown tunic. “He will also see to it that you live according to our laws.”

Anadoric walked slowly to the side of the commander. “I will accept the hospitality of these good people and minister to their spiritual needs.”

“You will make a home for Brother Anadoric and you will follow the laws of the Arian Catholic Church,” said the commander. “We will return every twelve cycles of the moon, and we will punish any deviances from the laws that will be explained to you by Brother Anadoric.”

Continuing in the direction in which they were headed when they arrived, the Visigoths left the village. As some members of the village stood watch, the men, including Patre Donathian, gathered in Marcus’ hut.

“Once you told them that you did not have a priest, I could not come forward for then both you, Marcus, and I would be killed,” whispered the priest.

“You are not only our priest, Patre Donathian, but our friend,” replied Marcus with a muted voice. “We must also be careful now to conceal our

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Jewish members. This Arian priest is young and he seems kind enough, but he may be ambitious. Let us not provide him with the means for him to forward his personal career.”

“We shall follow the Arian religion in public,” said Patre Donathian. “What each man and woman does in private will be up to their own conscience to decide. Our people have undergone many conversions throughout our history. We can only pray that God continues to have mercy on us.”

Just then here was a knock on the door, the signal that someone was coming. The men in the room waited and the door opened. Standing in the doorframe was Brother Anadoric.

“You will need both me and your priest to administer to your welfare if you are to live beyond the first return visit of your new masters,” said the Arian priest. “Let us talk as brothers.”

“You are welcome amongst us,” replied Patre Donathian, introducing himself and the other men in the room. “We have seen that you are a kind and understanding man of God, and it is our wish to make your task of guiding us a successful one for both our people and for you. Please teach us your faith, as we have no real choice but to follow it.”

“It is the Arian belief that Jesus Christ, or Jeshua the Messiah or chosen one, was a man to be followed, not worshipped. Physically, he was a *tzaddik* Orthodox Jew, born of Mary and Joseph. Spiritually, he was the son of God, sent by God as a messenger. We do not believe that there is a trinity of three persons in God. God is one. We do not worship images or saints. We worship only God. We observe the Sabbath starting with First Vespers after sunset on the fifth day and continue our observation until sunset on the sixth day. The seventh day is the Lord’s Day when we conduct the service of the breaking of the bread in commemoration of Easter and Pentacost. You will

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see no differences between the service you perform, Patre Donathian, and the one which I will celebrate in a few days.”

And so began the accommodation of the Visigoth rulers over the region of Hispania where the emigrants from Senones had settled. When the children of Marcus and Lidia were of marrying age they paired with the sons and daughters of the families that had accompanied them from Senones all those seasons earlier. They kept to their Nicene Christian religion within the walls of their homes, they continued to teach the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, and they continued to respect and honor the gods of their Celtic ancestors. On the Sabbath and on the Lord’s Day, they worshipped according to the Arian Christian manner along with Brother Anadoric and Patre Donathian, in The Church which they had built with their own hands. Rachel and the other Jewish women raised her children to respect and honor the traditional beliefs of their Jewish ancestors, again within the walls of their own homes. Since the day of observance of the Sabbath was identical to their own, they were able to add their traditions to this day each week. And together with the Senas, they took part in the Arian celebration of the Mass each Sunday and holy days as required.

They passed these practices and customs on to their children, who in turn passed them on to their children for the following one hundred and fifteen years when everything changed. That was when they would once again convert to Nicene Christianity.



“The kings back then changed their religion whenever it suited them, didn’t they!” declared Michele.

“It has been the way of rulers throughout history,” replied Signore Di Sangué. “Whoever controls the religion of a people controls their minds, and whoever controls the minds of a people controls the people. It is power,

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and with power comes wealth. So it is; so it has been; and so it will be. One way to take command over a rival is to adopt a faith that is different from his, and then to make the taking of this faith a sign of loyalty.”

“Your people have kept your religion for a few thousand years, haven’t you?” asked Michele. “How have you managed to do that?”

“There is a simple reason why we Jews have been able to cling to our beliefs for so long: no one wants us to be part of their religious community,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “We have not been welcomed as converts to other religions.”

“What about all the saints who martyred themselves because they would not give up their religion?” asked Michele. “If everyone held on to their religion the rulers would have no one to rule, no one to pay taxes.”

“It is not human nature to die for beliefs. The martyrs were exceptions, idealists, men and women of words, ultimately very unpractical people. Perhaps that is why they are so honored by those who remain because they did something that common people would never think of doing. Man fights to live, not to die. He fights to protect his family, to obtain food if he cannot grow it or buy it. He does not naturally stand in front of a sword and ask to be killed unless he believes his life is worth more as a dead man than one who is alive.”

“Isn’t that what Christ did? Isn’t that what He teaches us we should do, to die for our beliefs?” queried Michele.

“It is not Christ who teaches this nonsense; it is the religion that man has built around Him that equates blind faith with love of God. It is not just Christianity that poisons the minds of its followers with this message. All religions have done it in one way or another, ennobling killing as well as dying in the name of God. However, luckily for you, your people never

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listened to these teachings. They did what they needed to do to survive, and they kept their true beliefs to themselves.”

“I guess I should be thankful that they did,” replied Michele, smiling.

“Yes, and you will see that it does not get any easier for them. By the year 500 A.D., the Visigothic Kingdom included Gallia Aquitania, Gallia Narbonensis and most of Hispania. The village where your ancestors lived was under the control of the Visigoths. The Visigothic capital was in what is now Toulouse in Francia. The Suebic Kingdom of Galicia in the north western part of Hispania, the Basque region to the east of this and a few other small areas were outside of their control. In 507 A.D. the Franks, who ruled over most of Gallia, attacked Toulouse and sacked it. Before the end of the first decade, the Visigoths had lost most of their Gallian holdings to the Franks.

“For the next forty years there were invasions into Hispania by the Franks and Ostrogoths, civil wars among rival Visigoth tribes and murders of those who would be king. In 549 A.D., the Eastern Roman Emperor, Justinian I, sent an army to Hispania believing that the chaos that reigned on the peninsula offered his empire an opportunity to begin the gradual reacquisition of its western holdings. Justinian’s troops were able to take hold of a small section of the southern portion of the peninsula, forming a province called Spania, but that is all.

“King Liuvigild ruled the Visigoths from 569 to 586 A.D. During his reign all of Hispania was brought under his control. He pushed out the Eastern Romans from the province of Spania and conquered Suebi while that region was involved in a civil war. When Liuvigild died in 586, he was succeeded by his son Reccared. One of Reccared’s first acts was to convert to Nicene Christianity, taking most of Visigoths with him. His older brother, Hermenegild, had converted to Nicene Christianity while his father still

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lived. He had led a revolt against his father, who ordered him to be killed in 585 A.D. Reccared succeeded with following through with what his brother had started. There were uprisings and protests, but Reccared and Nicene Christianity prevailed.

“In May 589 A.D., the Third Council of Toledo was convened in King Reccared’s name. He made a public confession of faith and denounced Arianism as a heresy. He took the name Flavius, which was the family name of the Constantinian dynasty, and adopted the trappings of the Roman emperors. Little did he realize that he was starting a process that would eventually strip the power of Visigothic kings in favor of The Church. By 633 A.D., The Church councils in Hispania had grown so strong that they excommunicated and exiled King Sisinand. These church councils now regulated the succession of kings by elections in which noble senators and church officials took part.

“The Visigoths also developed the most extensive secular legislation in Western Europe, the *Liber iudiciorum*, which formed the basis for Spanish law throughout the Middle Ages. Completed in 654 A.D., the code included old laws by past kings like Alaric II in his *Breviarium Alarici* and Leovigild, but many were also new laws. Roman law served as the principal foundation of the code. Germanic law was included when Roman law was lacking. The code applied equally to both the Visigothic and Roman peoples, each having followed their own laws previously. For the first time, women could inherit land and they could write wills to pass down their property. They could testify in their own defence in courts of law and even arrange their own marriage. There was some easing of the oppressive laws concerning my people, but this was short-lived.

“In 693 A.D. the Sixteenth Council of Toledo met. This council was held as a direct result of a rebellion against King Egica by the Archbishop of

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Toledo, Sisebert, and a group of nobles. Sisebert was excommunicated and defrocked, but the council went further to reform many laws, including those in the *Liber iudiciorum*. Henceforth, the penalty for homosexuality would be castration, the mutilation of slaves was strictly prohibited and an oath rendered unto anybody other than the monarch was invalid and illegal. The council also addressed the rights of practicing Jews and Jews who had converted to Christianity, called *conversos*. *Conversos* would be allowed to trade with Christians, but not until they had proven themselves to be true Christians by reciting the creeds and eating of non-kosher food. Christians who traded with a non-converted person or with a *converso* who had not proven themselves would be punished.

“While Hispania under the Visigoths was becoming more like Roma, the Roman state that had continued in the east with Constantinople as its capital was gradually dissolving. When Heraclius became Emperor in 610 A.D., Eastern Roma was under attack from all sides. To the west were the Avars and Slavs. The Slavs had taken control of the regions along the Danube River as well as Thrace and Macedonia. They were threatening Greece and Peloponnesus. The ever menacing Persians were attacking along the entire eastern front and would capture Damascus in 613 A.D., Jerusalem in 614 A.D. and Egypt in 619 A.D. In Jerusalem they destroyed The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and took the Holy Cross upon which Jesus Christ was purportedly crucified. You can imagine what this meant to the Christians, both Western and Eastern and all the different variations.

“For the next seven years, Heraclius and his armies were engaged in one battle after another. The climax came in 626 A.D. when the Persians, Avars, Slavs and Bulgars simultaneously attacked Constantinople. After several weeks, it was the Heraclius’ navy that prevailed against the forces in the west, causing the Persians in the east to retreat to Syria. Heraclius followed the Persians and prevailed. By the year 630 A.D. there was no longer a

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Persian Empire. Heraclius triumphantly returned the Holy Cross to the city of Jerusalem.

“In the early days of his reign, Heraclius made some important changes that had as much to do with the eventual disappearance of the Roman Empire as did the constant warfare that raged around it. He adopted Greek as the language of government, causing the influence of Latin to decline. He took the Greek title, *Autokrator*, meaning ‘Self-ruler’, in place of the Latin *Caesar* or *Augustus*. As in his military ventures, most of his initiatives met with success. However, his attempt to unify the different schisms within Christianity in the Empire’s regions met with total failure.

“Agreement on the true nature of Christ was difficult to achieve in the early years of The Church, and it remains a problem even to this day. The eastern areas, including Syria and Egypt, believed in the idea that Christ had a single, divine nature. They were called *monophysites*. The approved view that had been adopted at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. was that Christ had two natures, human and divine, united in one person. With the encouragement of Heraclius, the Patriarch of Constantinople put forward the idea that Christ had two natures represented by one energy, a vague term at best. This was called *monoenergism*. The Roman Pope, Honorius I, objected to both ideas, so Heraclius proposed a third idea which was called *monothelitism*. This held that Christ had two natures, divine and human, but only one will. After Heraclius’ death in 641 A.D., the Sixth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 680 A.D. declared *monophysism*, *monoenergism* and *monothelitism* heresies.

“Before Heraclius died he witnessed an unexpected result of his victory over the Persians. The weakened Persians were no match for the Arabs who had begun to assert themselves from their Arabian desert stronghold against their neighbors. In 634 A.D., the Arab armies invaded Syria, which was

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being defended by Heraclius' brother, Theodore. The Arabs defeated Theodore and went on to take Mesopotamia, Armenia and then Egypt."

"What had happened to make the Arab armies so strong?" asked Michele, breaking into Signore DiSangue's long narration.

"Something that had as much of an effect on your family as all the previous wars and religious conversions combined. It started in 570 A.D. in the city of Mecca in what was then the Kingdom of Arabia. A man by the name of Muhammad ibn'Abdullah, or son of Abdullah, was born. He would become the founder of Islam, one of the three religions of Abraham. We will start with his story tomorrow. I think that three hundred years will do for one day, don't you my young friend?"

"You must be quite tired having journeyed for such a long time, Signore Di Sangue. Before we say goodnight, I have to ask you a question."

"What is it, my young friend?"

"Am I a Jew or an Arab?"

"You want to hear the end of the story when we have only just begun?" replied Signore Di Sangue with a smile.

"I don't want to lose my faith," answered Michele, "I don't know how I would fill the space that became empty."

"When mankind began, we were all one people. Religion did not divide us because there were no religions. We started as bands of men and women who hunted and gathered to survive. We formed ourselves into tribes to be more effective in growing our food and defending ourselves against nature, against predatory animals and other humans. Eventually, mankind traded some of his freedom for a greater measure of security and states were created in which control of a group within a geographic area was delegated to a

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powerful ruler or a council of men who had more authority than the general populace.

“Religion played an important role in this evolution and legitimized the rule of law. Sometimes the priests were the rulers. At other times, the ruler assumed the title of God’s representative on earth. Being born into one tribe or another, or in one state or another, was a matter of chance. This is what you will learn in the coming days. If there is one thing that you will take with you when you leave this ship it is that no man or woman can say for certain that they have only the blood of their fathers and mothers coursing through their veins. You are of Italia, and your religion is Catholicism, but these are temporary truths. My friend, if you are worried that you will learn something about your family’s past that will cause you to lose your religion or become ashamed of your heritage, I cannot ease your mind. If you want to stop hearing your story it is simply a matter of saying so.”

“No! No, Signore Di Sangue. I do not want to stop. Now that we have started and come this far, it would be a shame to stop,” offered Michele after letting Signore Di Sangue’s words sink in. Michele understood that he was going to have to be patient and let the story unfold from the past to the present and not the other way around. “I guess I will have to wait until the time comes to see how I feel about being someone other than the person I thought I was—if that time comes.”

“We shall see,” said Signore Di Sangue, “but now it is time to bid each other goodnight. I hope this night’s sleep will be peaceful for you.”

“Goodnight, Signore Di Sangue,” said Michele. “I wish you the same.”



I suppose it is possible that our family came from Gallica and left it when they did and for the reason Signore Di Sangue has given. He makes it all sound so true, as if he had been there. Maybe he was. Maybe he really is a

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spirit who has lived for hundreds or thousands of years and has first-hand experience of everything he is telling me. Or maybe he is what he says he is, a storyteller who spends his life entertaining people with tales of the past. I am happy I met him and that he chose me to talk to on this journey. Cousin Maria is certainly thankful for his help in curing her of seasickness, and she will be forever grateful if his letter of recommendation helps her to secure employment.

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September 6, 1896 A.D.

10:00 a.m.

THE TEMPERATURE WAS CLOSE TO FREEZING on the morning of the sixth day. A warming sun hung in the sky close to the stern on the port side of the ship when Michele and Signore Di Sangue met. They talked of the weather briefly and then of the quality of the food at the dinner on the previous evening, which was exceptionally good compared to the four first evening meals. Michele said he hoped the improvement would last for the entire trip. Signore Di Sangue advised him not to count on it. They did not discuss the last words they exchanged before parting the evening before. Then, as usual, Signore Di Sangue abruptly changed the subject.

“Who is your betrothed?” asked Signore Di Sangue.

“Did I tell you that I was engaged?” replied Michele, smiling, now used to the older gentleman telling him facts that he should have had no way of knowing.

“No, but you are engaged to be married, aren’t you? She is a girl from your village, and she and her family have been in America for a few years already. They have settled in Scranton, and that is why you are going there.”

“Yes, you are correct, in every detail. Her name is Giovanna Ricciardi,” said Michele. “Her father, Lorenzo, is a barber now in Scranton and her mother is Filomena Giovaniello. He worked with my father in the tannery. She is very quiet and shy. We have not exchanged many words during the years when we were growing up, although we knew that one day we would marry.”

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“Did your mother tell you this?” asked Signore Di Sangue, knowing that it would either be the mother on whom this task would fall, or it would simply be left unsaid. Fathers talked with their sons about how they should conduct themselves with other men and what they should do to sustain themselves and their own families when the time came for them to marry. Fathers did not usually talk to their sons about their future brides.

“My mother did not tell me directly,” answered Michele. “It was over supper one day a few years after Giovanna had left for America. My mother said she had heard that the Ricciardis were in a small city a few hundred kilometers west of New York where Signore Ricciardi had become a barber. I remember my father saying his old friend had made a step up the ladder from cutting hides to cutting hair.”

“You will be living in your wife’s village,” said Signore Di Sangue somberly. “Without your own mother and grandmother and aunts to guide your wife as they themselves were guided, your home will no longer reflect the two thousand years of traditions of the Sena family, but will move in the direction of the Ricciardis. Have you thought about this?”

“No, I haven’t,” replied Michele, reflectively. “I thought that since we came from the same village, we would have the same ideas.”

“It is not the ideas, but who expresses them. *‘This is how my family has always done things, so this is how we will do things.’* Your life will be different from what you were used to in your own home. Your wife, not your mother or grandmother or eldest aunt, will rule your kitchen, and from the kitchen she will rule the house. *‘This is how my mother cooked the maccheroni; this is how we did it on Easter.’* You will visit your brother, who will remain in the house of your father, and life there will be as it was in your house in Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi. You will visit your brothers-in-law who will be living with their father or close by, and life there will be as

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they were used to it, with their ways being the ways of the house as defined by their mother. Why do you think the men always live with their parents, and the women always follow the men?"

"I never thought about that question," said Michele, "at least not in the way you ask. As boys we worked with our father, and as we grew older we took more of the burden and responsibilities. It seemed natural that we would all live together. The women's brothers did the same with their fathers."

"Yes, my young friend," rejoined Signore Di Sangue, "that is how your family survived for the past two millennia. You will be plowing new ground in your adopted homeland. Your sons may live close by, but they will not live in your house, and it will be their wives who will make the rules. This is because they will grow up in a house where their mother is in charge. What is your father's name?"

"Vincenzo," replied Michele, "and my mother is Rosina Villani."

"If your first daughter is a girl, name her Venzina," replied Signore Di Sangue with a serious expression on his face. "If you do not have any boys at least you will set your mark on the family."

"You make it sound like I should start wearing a dress," joked Michele.

"I am only telling you this so that you are not surprised when it happens," offered Signore Di Sangue. "Don't worry. You will have a lot of company from the other men who have done what you will be doing. But let us return to your story."

"I think that is a good idea," replied Michele. "I have enjoyed hearing about my past. I am not so sure I want to hear anything more about my future."

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“After almost two-and-a-half centuries of living in northern Spagna, your family had acclimated to the country. They had adapted to the weather and foods and general way of life. Their own language had changed only slightly from the Roman they had spoken in Lugdunensis, but they were also able to understand the language of the Visigoths, and some Visigothic words entered every day conversations. The village had grown from the few dozen who wandered over the mountains separating Hispania from Gallia Aquitania to over a few hundred. They had built more houses and stables and churches and places to store their grain. Your people most probably rediscovered their vocation, working with leather, preparing the hides, dying and drying and transforming this most flexible material into sandals, shoes, saddles, bridles, floor and wall coverings, vests, pants, coats, caps and helmets and much more.

“While all this was happening, a new culture centered on the religion called Islam was being born in a desolate land known then as Arabia. It is said that Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was born in the city of Mecca in 570 A.D, that he was orphaned when he was very young, and that he was raised by the family led by his uncle, whose name was Abu Talib. Muhammad tried his hand at different jobs when he was old enough to work. He was a merchant for awhile, then a shepherd. He married at the age of twenty-five. However he seemed to be discontented with his life and with the way life was lived in Mecca. He wanted to change his life and the lives of the Arab people, and he sought answers in the seclusion of a cave nestled in a mountain overlooking the city. After many years of reflection and meditation, at the age of forty, he claimed to have received the first word from God, who the Muslims called *Allāh*. The words Muhammad received he spoke to scribes, for he could not write, and the scribes wrote down the words of God as verses in the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam.”

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“What proof did this man Muhammad have that it was God who was speaking?” demanded Michele. “Why should people believe him?”

“At first, people did not believe him,” replied Signore Di Sangué. “He did not claim to have any special powers, other than serving as a channel for God’s voice. He was a messenger, he said, a prophet. His followers called him ‘The Prophet’, the last and greatest among the great prophets, the leaders of those called *Rasuls*: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus.”

“But we were taught that the last prophet was John the Baptist and that he prepared the way for Jesus, his cousin,” replied Michele. “How could someone else claim that Jesus was only a prophet, one among many, and that he was greater than Jesus? Why wasn’t he punished?”

“When he began preaching about belief in one God, the ultimate judgment day, the need to ask for forgiveness of sins, the offering of frequent prayers, assisting others in need, rejecting cheating and the love of wealth, he was mostly ignored and sometimes mocked by the people of Mecca. There were Christians who lived in Mecca at the time as well, and while some viewed his preaching as blasphemy, others, including his wife’s cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, encouraged him because they saw him as a true follower of the Lord. Muhammad had at first only a few followers, including his wife, Khadija, their adopted son, Zaid, a close friend, Abu Bakr, and a young cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib. Soon, others followed, and as he gained a larger number of adherents, he posed a greater threat to the local rulers and wealthy merchants. He criticized their religion which was based on worship of idols and many gods. His own tribe, the Quaraysh, the most powerful and prominent in Mecca, were his most strident critics.”

“Why wasn’t he silenced?” asked Michele.

“Attempts were made to do so,” replied Signore Di Sangué. “Some of Muhammad’s followers were killed. His supporters were boycotted by his

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kinsmen, with no result. Then, in 619 A.D., both his wife and his uncle, Abu Talib died. A sworn enemy of Muhammad, Abu Lahab, became the new leader of the Banu Hashim clan, the clan that had protected Muhammad from the Quaraysh. This completely exposed Muhammad to being killed since there would be no blood revenge for the deed. He and his followers were in constant danger, although now they had the protection of another Meccan clan, the Banu Nawfal. For three years he tried to find a way to leave Mecca. He was finally saved by a group of young Arab converts to Islam who had come from the town of Yathrib—which later became known as Medina—to meet the founder of their faith. Muhammad's teaching of monotheism had found fertile soil there because of the existence of a Jewish community. With the help of these young men, Muhammad and all of the other Muslims in Mecca managed to escape. This event, called the *Hijra*, is the beginning of the Islamic calendar. The emigrants became known as the *muhajirun*.

“Once in Medina, Muhammad assisted the clans in establishing order, serving as an arbitrator amongst the Arab warring clans, the Jews and the Christians. He had drafted a document known as the Constitution of Medina which established a federation among the eight Medinan tribes, the Muslim *muhajirun*, the Jews and others called ‘Peoples of the Book’, referring to the Jewish and Christian bibles. This Constitution was both religious in outlook and practical in substance, creating the foundation for the first Islamic state. It was then that the conversion to Islam in Medina began to gain momentum. The conversions continued until opposition was no longer possible, and those who resisted were assassinated.”

“It seems like this is a very different approach to starting a religion than the one taken by Jesus,” offered Michele.

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“Yes it is,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “Perhaps Muhammad knew about the difficulties faced by the religious movements that began before his own, and he took steps to overcome them, by force if necessary. You have heard of the expression perhaps, ‘Necessity is the mother of invention’? The emigrants had no means to support themselves because all of their possessions had to be left behind in Mecca when they fled. With the moral support of their leader, who issued verses in the Qur’an justifying their actions, the Muslims began attacking the Meccan merchant caravans. Their raids proved effective, and their wealth grew. In 624 A.D., the Muslims defeated a force three times their size at Badr. The following year, Meccans retaliated at the Battle of Uhud.

Muhammad was now viewed as the political and spiritual leader of Medina. He listened to counsel on how to repel the Meccan forces, then chose the course proposed by one of the groups. This time, the course proved incorrect. They were defeated, but the Meccans made a fatal mistake in not pursuing the Muslims back to Medina, destroying their stronghold and killing Muhammad. They decided to wait until a more opportune time.

“While the Meccans readied their attack on Medina, the Medinans prepared their defenses. Again, the Medinans were outnumbered three to one, but this time Muhammad chose the way they would fight. He ordered trenches dug to stop attacks by cavalry, an idea brought to him by a Persian convert to Islam named Salman. The siege of Medina began in the spring of 627 A.D. and lasted for two weeks, but Abu Sufyan and his troops gained no ground and finally gave up. They returned to Mecca having suffered few losses, but their prestige was severely damaged.

“The biggest losers of this battle were the members of the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza. They were dissatisfied with the position of being ruled by laws that were built upon another faith. They began to negotiate with the

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Meccan leaders, promising to fight on their side if they were assured protection in case the Meccan attack failed. The negotiations were never finished, probably because the battle was too short-lived. When the Meccans retreated, the Banu Qurayza were exposed. The Muslims of Medina attacked them, beheading every man except for a few who converted to Islam, and enslaved all the women and children.”

“Why do the Jews continue to make trouble for themselves like this?” wondered Michele out loud. “They had lived with the Arabs for centuries. What was so wrong with living with these same people who had now taken another religion, especially one that was so close to their own?”

“The religion was perhaps too close to their own,” suggested Signore Di Sangué. “As long as the Arabs were pagans worshipping idols, the Jews could look down on them. They were not God’s chosen people, and never would be. The Jews could not accept Muhammad as their prophet because, according to scripture, He must come from their own people. When the Muslims claimed to descend directly from the Jews’ own founding patriarch, Abraham, through his son, Ishmael, born to him by his wife’s servant, whose name was Hagar; when they claimed to have a prophet who communicated with God; and when they claimed to have a code that was so similar to their own, the Muslims had, in the eyes and minds of the Jews, overreached. They were now rivals. Any advance made by the Muslims was a step back for the Jews. Yet, once again, the Jews were the minority. Their only chance of stopping the progress of Islam was to ally themselves with the enemies of their enemies. When their allies lost their battles, the Jews were left exposed to retribution, and Muhammad took it without mercy.”



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Muhammad's principal mission was to convert Arabs to Islam, to convince them that this was their religion and that by following it all of the Arab people would benefit. He would do this preferably through negotiation. If this failed, he would use force. Muhammad and his closest advisors knew that they had to subdue the Quraysh, their kinsmen, if they were going to succeed. They also knew that they must eliminate all of their enemies who plotted and incited hostilities against them. These were mostly the Jewish tribes. A truce was signed between the Medinans and the Meccans in 628 A.D., called the *Truce of Hudaibiyyah* for the place outside of Mecca where it had been signed. The truce lasted two years before it was broken by the Meccans and their allies. Muhammad gave the Meccans a chance to acknowledge their mistake, but they proved too proud to do so. Muhammad then marched on Mecca with an overwhelming army. In what became known as a bloodless battle, Mecca was conquered. Muhammad declared all past offenses forgiven, except for a small number of men and women who had disrespected him and Islam in song and verse. The Arab inhabitants were converted to Islam and the statues of Arabian gods destroyed.

In midyear 632 A.D., at the time of Muhammad's death, the majority of the Arabian Peninsula had been converted to the Islamic faith. The Bedouins did not choose to convert to Islam, instead wishing to retain their ancestral traditions and their independence. Muhammad granted this wish, but demanded that they swear both military and political allegiance to Medina, refrain from attacking any Muslims and their allies, and pay the Muslim religious tax, called the *Zakat*.

Before Muhammad died, he completed two important tasks. He made his Great Pilgrimage, called the *Hajj*, from Medina to Mecca, and he made his farewell speech to Muslims. Mecca was the site of the *Kaaba*, an Arab shrine that originally housed 360 idol statues of tribal patron gods. Its true

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history is not known, but it is believed to date from around the second century when Mecca was the main trading centre on the Peninsula. One theory is that it was built as a religious shrine to all the gods, allowing the many tribes in Arabia to meet for trade without fear of harm. It was constructed out of black granite mined in the hills surrounding Mecca. Its shape is a cube, a pure form, with its corners facing toward the principal compass directions. Muhammad co-opted this pagan shrine when he and his followers conquered Mecca and made it the most holy place for a Muslim. The *Kaaba* was rededicated as an Islamic house of worship, and with his Great Pilgrimage he taught his followers that the object of the *Hajj* forever more would be to visit the *Kaaba*.

When he returned to Medina, he gave 'The Farewell Sermon' in which he gave his followers practical advice on how to live peacefully after his death. He delivered the following verse that was made part of the Qur'an: 'Today I have perfected your religion, and completed my favours for you and chosen Islam as a religion for you.'

Muhammad died in 632 A.D. in Medina, where he is buried. Soon after his death, rival factions within his inner circle began to quarrel over who would succeed him as the religion's leader, the *caliph*. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's friend and associate, was nominated by Umar ibn al-Khattab. Others supported this and he was made the first *caliph*. Another group believed that Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, had been chosen by The Prophet as his successor. The supporters of Abu Bakr as the legitimate successor to Muhammad became what are called *Sunnis*. The word comes from the Arabic *ahl al-sunnah wa-l-jamaa*, meaning 'the people of the custom of the Prophet and community'. Those who believed that Ali was the rightful heir are called *Shiites*. This comes from the Arabic *shiat Ali*, meaning the 'party of Ali'.

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There are different views on why the Muslims of the Arabian Peninsula began to expand their territory through aggression. Some believe they did so to spread the glory of their faith. This view is in direct conflict with a major tenet of Islam, that no man or woman can be forced to adopt the faith. A person must come to Islam of his or her own free will, according to the teachings of Muhammad and the words in the Qur'an. A more likely reason for their aggressive expansion was to obtain booty which the Muslims would use to strengthen their religion, to show that it was a strong force compared to the other world religions. But why did the Muslims succeed in their conquests?

Muslim historians claim that the strength of their faith and determination were the deciding factors in battle. Other, more neutral historians, claim that the Persian Sassanid and Byzantine Roman empires were exhausted and in military decline as a result of decades of fighting each other, and were unable to mount an effective defense against any invader. They speak of enemies within these empires, Jews and Christians, who collaborated with the conquerors and aided them out of dissatisfaction with their rulers. Within a century of their leader's death, Muslims had extended their reach from northwest India, across Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, southern Italy and the Iberian Peninsula to the Pyrenees Mountains.

The conquest of the Iberia began in 711 A.D. when the Moors, who were mostly Berbers with some Arabs, invaded the peninsula led by Tariq ibn Ziyad. The date of their landing at Gibraltar is recorded as April 30th. With a force of seven thousand men, they moved northward, meeting limited resistance. They captured Toledo. One year later, Musa bin Nusair arrived with an additional eighteen thousand men. During the following eight years most of the peninsula was brought under Islamic rule. There were two notable exceptions: Asturias in the northwest, and the Basque region in the Pyrenees. The entire territory became an Emirate and was given the Arab

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name *Al-Andalus*.¹⁶ Except for being forced to pay the *Jizyah* tax, the Christians were generally left alone to practice their religion.

The Muslims did not stop at the Pyrenees. They had been defeated by Duke Eudes in southern Gallia in 721 A.D. but returned time and again in raids, destroying as much as possible before returning over the mountains. In 732 A.D., Abd-er-Rahman, who was governor over all of Hispania, led a large army into Francia. As with the early Muslim advances in Hispania, the Muslim armies easily overcame all resistance. They defeated Duke Eudes in the south and continued north, leaving little standing in their wake. In October, 732 A.D. they arrived at the river Loire near Tours, where an opposing force waited, led by Charles, son of Pepin of Herstal. At the Battle of Poitiers, Charles defeated and killed Abd-er-Rahman, earning his Frankish name, *Tudites*, meaning ‘The Hammer’, which became *Martel* in Frankish. Charles Martel stopped the advance of the Muslims, and his heirs, Pepin the Short and Pepin’s son, Charles the Great, known as *Charlemagne*, would begin the long process of driving them from the continent.



714 A.D.

Francisco awoke very early one morning to an unfamiliar sound. It was a chanting voice far off in the distance, echoing among the hills that surrounded his village. His father was not in his bed, and his mother was already preparing the fire. The nights were shorter at this time of year, but only the first glimmers of light could be seen in the sky through the unshuttered windows facing into the courtyard. He rose from his bed and approached his mother.

¹⁶ From which was derived Andalusia, the name for the southernmost region of Spain.

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“Where is father and what is that sound?” he asked.

“Your father is with the other men in the village. They are talking about the person who is troubling us so early on this cold morning,” she replied. Her voice was hushed. She showed both irritation and fear. “Go out and bring in the water, and try not to wake your sisters and brother.”

Francisco was the oldest of the four children. He was in his eighth season. His brother, Pedro, was the youngest, born just two seasons ago. His sister Angelina was two seasons older than Pedro, and his other sister Maria was two seasons older than Angelina. It was like the movement of the sun in the heavens. Every two seasons a new member of the family appeared. He could see on his mother that it would soon be time again. He opened the heavy wooden door to their dwelling and walked into the morning air out into the street leading to the village well.

Outside of their dwelling the chanting was louder. If the chant contained words, they were not words that Francisco could understand. He saw his father among the other men along one side of the square where the well was located. They were talking quietly. The village leader was listening, shaking his head. *There is someone out there who is a danger to our village,* thought Francisco. *They are trying to decide what to do about him. I could go and see who it is and what he is doing, but they would not let me.* He carried the wooden water pail to the well and filled it, watching all the while his father and the men. As he poured the water from the well into the jar his father saw him and motioned him to return to their hut. When he pretended not to understand, his father motioned more firmly, aggressively, still without saying a word. Francisco walked quickly back with the half-filled pail.

This was a peaceful village. Most of the men herded the goats and tended the cattle that were the source of meat and milk and the hides that

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Francisco's family used in their trade. They plowed the fields and sowed the grains that were used to make breads baked in the village ovens. The women grew crops that were eaten and preserved, pruned the fruit, nut and olive trees and picked the ripe harvests. The dwellings had grown in number since the village was first settled a little more than two and a half centuries earlier. New techniques for building were adopted as the villagers were able to build more sturdy tools. Each house was constructed around a central courtyard with two or three storeys, depending on the size of the family, and they were attached to the adjoining house. Most of the ground floor facing the public street was used for shops. Francisco's family's house and those of his uncles, all adjacent to each other along a single street, formed the leather district in the village.

Soon the chanting ceased. The gathering of men dissolved without having reached a decision on what to do. The families went about their normal morning business. Francisco's brother and sisters awoke and they all had their morning meal. Then, later in the morning as the shadows grew shorter, it started again. It continued for a brief time and then stopped. The men gathered again. Someone had to see who was disturbing the peace of the village. Francisco's father's older brother, who was the leader among the village elders, volunteered to go. He prepared his mule, mounted it and rode away in the direction of the chanting. He disappeared over a hill and the chanting stopped. Much time passed before Francisco's uncle reappeared at the top of the hill flanked by a dozen men on horseback and one other man on a mule. As they rode down the hill toward the village, Francisco could see that all of the men except his uncle and the other man on a mule wore strange costumes and carried weapons. As they came closer Francisco saw that his uncle's hands were bound. The riders reached the middle of the village and the other man dismounted from his mule. He spoke.

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“These men and their armies have come to rule your lands. They will not harm you unless you resist. You should continue with your work as before. You will pay a tax for their protection.”

Francisco’s great uncle spoke: “This man is able to speak the language of these people, although he is not one of them. He has told me that they have a vast army, that they came from lands far away in the east, farther than the home of our Holy Church in Roma, and farther still from where our Lord was born. They worship one God, as we do, but he is not our God. They do not want us to worship their God because we are not His chosen people as they are.”

The man who had served as an interpreter spoke. “The commander of these men told me to give you this message in his words: ‘Today there are three people on this earth: Those who are followers of Allah, the God who the great Prophet Muhammad made known to us, God’s chosen people; those who serve us, God’s people, so that we may continue to worship in a way befitting God’s mighty powers; and those who one day will come to serve God’s people when we have conquered their armies as we have conquered yours.’”

The interpreter continued. “Go about your business as you have always done. You will no longer pay tribute to your former rulers. You will pay tribute to the men of Islam. They will build a camp not far from here. In time, the camp will become a city where they will live with their families and their slaves.”

That evening the men and women and children of the village gathered in The Church to talk about what had happened that day and what they would do. The Church had been enlarged many times since it was built. There had been talk of building a second church, much larger and grander than the one the villagers had inherited from their ancestors who first settled in this place.

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It was mostly the priests who encouraged this idea. Each time the village elders considered the proposal they voted against it. ‘We should keep the congregation in one place,’ they would say. ‘If the village has two heads, it will eventually have two minds and two souls.’

The priest led them in prayer, asking God for guidance and the strength to keep their faith if He so willed. Francisco sat next to his father with his brother and sisters between him and his mother. He wondered what could be different about the religion of these men who spoke a strange language, wore cloths tied around their heads and loose fitting garments on their bodies. Did they have churches? Did they believe that Jesus was the Son of God? Did they understand the difference between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness and did they know about the Twelve Patriarchs? Did they know how to leave offerings to the gods of nature?

“How do we know they will keep their word and not force us to worship their god?” asked one of elders. “Whenever we have had new leaders they have come with their own religions.”

“We will take them at their word until we have reason to do otherwise,” replied Francisco’s great uncle.

The conquerors were true to their word. No one was forced to convert to Islam, but there were conversions nevertheless. Some of those who crossed the line did so for the most obvious of reasons, to curry favour with the ruling elite. Others converted out of love for the man or woman they would marry. Still others said they were convinced by the content of the message of the Qur’an. In time the bloods mixed in the valley and there were six groups living in close proximity to one another: the Christian Senones and Visigoths, the Jews, the Berber and Arab Muslims, and the mixed Muslims.



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“It has been written that the period of Arab and Moorish dominance was a golden time for Spagna,” explained Signore Di Sangué. “It is true that with Islam came a culture of art and science, agriculture and industry that did not exist before on the Iberian Peninsula, nor has it been seen there since. The Visigoths attempted to emulate the Romans, but they were never able to achieve more than a veneer of culture and refinement. The Muslims built beautiful palaces and mosques. They built schools and hospitals. They built roads, bridges and aqueducts. They built ports along the coast of the Mediterranean which opened routes of trade back to Damascus, the political heart of Islam, and also with Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire. They developed the gold and silver and lead mines that neither the Romans nor the Visigoths had been able to find. They grew crops that had never before been rooted in Iberian soil. They produced cloth and clothes out of silk and cotton and merino wool, the likes of which had never before been seen in the Empire.

“But make no mistake, my young friend, the Arabs and Moors were the conquerors, and the *dhimmis*, as those of us who had lived on the Iberian Peninsula before the Muslims arrived were known to the conquerors, were the conquered. It was on the backs of the Catholic and Arian Christians and the Jews that the great works of architecture and feats of engineering were built. The conquered people were heavily taxed. The penalty for refusing or avoiding the payment of the levies was death. The harems of the Muslim rulers needed to be kept filled, and Christian families were expected to deliver a tribute in the form of their young daughters. *Dhimmis* were often reminded that they were second-class citizens of their conquered territory. They could not adopt the clothing or hair styles of the Arabs. In some places, non-Muslims were obligated to wear a special belt, called a *zunnâr*, to identify themselves. And attempting to convert a Muslim to Christianity,

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or preventing a Christian who wished to convert to Islam, were prohibited acts which were severely punished by the caliphs and jurists.

“What did not exist in those early centuries of Islamic rule was suppression of either the Christians or the Jews. Christians and Jews were considered ‘peoples of the book’, meaning they accepted the basic principles of a single God and a final day of judgment. They were allowed to practice their religions as long as they did not draw excessive public attention. Bell ringing, feast day and funeral processions were limited in size, loud chanting was discouraged. The bishops served in important ministerial positions, were often consulted on matters of politics, and functioned as ambassadors between the rulers and both ecclesiastical and temporal rulers from other lands. The administrative structure that was in place prior to the conquests was largely left in place and staffed by the native non-Muslims.”

“Do you think my ancestors converted during that time?” asked Michele, seeming to have awakened from a trance induced by all of this new information entering his head through his absorbing ears.

“Your story would have turned out very differently if they had,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “Eventually, the Muslims were driven out of Hispania, mostly into Africa. Of course, if your people did convert to Islam, they could have converted back again to Christianity once their rulers were driven out and replaced by the Frankish Christians. That happened a few hundred years after the original conquest. It is difficult to say for sure, but I do not believe that your ancestors abandoned their Christian religion, especially since they did not have to do so. Maybe a cousin or two strayed over to the other side during the occupation, but I think the main line of your family stayed in the Christian camp.”

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"I am weary from all of the battles that have been fought during this long day," sighed Michele. "I think I will sleep very well tonight. I will say good night to you, Signore Di Sangue, and wish you a good night's sleep as well."

"Good night, my young friend," replied Signore Di Sangue. "Tomorrow will bring a new chapter in your story."

Signore Di Sangue stayed above deck for a short while longer, thinking about his last visit to Spagna when he travelled to Toledo. He had returned in spite of the edict of the Sephardim prohibiting any true believing Jew from ever setting foot on Iberian soil again. *Sefarad* was the Hebrew word for Spagna, and the Jews who were forced to leave were known as *Sephardim*. Signore Di Sangue understood the Sephardim's anger. Wasn't it the Jews who had preserved the civility of the country that the Christ-believers had delivered to the Moors with not so much as a single major battle? Wasn't it the Jews who spoke both the language of the conquerors and the language of the conquered, and who helped each group live in relative peace with one another? To be cast out was humiliating enough, but to be forced to leave all that was valuable, their gold and silver, was the act of betrayal and utmost ingratitude. Ferdinand and Isabella issued the expulsion order on the 30th day of March, 1492, and it was to be carried out in exactly four months. The Jews were forced to sell all they had in a very short period of time, which meant they did not receive in payment the true value of what they sold.

There is no way to know how many Jews took passage on the boats that left from Cartagena, Valencia and Barcelona. Some say it was almost a quarter of a million. Many of them were refused permission to land because of sickness on board ship, and they were forced to return to Spagna where they either submitted to baptism or were slaughtered. Most of the refugees travelled to Constantinople, which was by then the capital of the Ottoman

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Empire. The city that had fallen to the Ottoman Turks thirty-nine years earlier. Sultan Bayezid II had sent ships to Spagna to rescue Arabs and Jews and bring them to Constantinople, and he derided the Spanish monarchs for their conduct: “You venture to call Ferdinand a wise ruler, he who has impoverished his own country and enriched mine.” To all who refused Jews admission into his empire or treated them disrespectfully he threatened death. The Arabs and Jews who came to Istanbul and other regions of the Ottoman Empire rewarded Bayezid’s generosity by contributing greatly to its growing prosperity.

Some refugees went to America. Christopher Columbus set sail from the southern port of Palos de la Frontera exactly three days after the expulsion date, on the 3rd of August, 1492 A.D. Five Jews were chosen by Columbus to accompany him. His translator, one of the five, was Luis de Torres. Columbus was certain that he would find the ten lost tribes of Israel and there would be a need for the services of a Hebrew speaker. His navigator and personal doctor were also Jews, as were his surgeon and astronomer. They were all *conversos*, of course, having made their conversion to Christianity one day before their journey. Two other *conversos* took part in financing Columbus’ journey. They were Luis de Santangelo, who was chancellor of the royal household of Ferdinand and Isabella, and Gabriel Sanchez, treasurer of Aragon.

Signore Di Sangué had returned to find a key he had lost. The key would unlock a part of his memory he had never seen, but knew was there. It was not something he had forgotten; it was something he never knew. The streets he walked along had a familiar feel. He saw buildings he recognized from their description by his grandfather. His grandfather and great grandfather and great, great grandfather had never been in Toledo either, but they had retold the stories they each had heard from their grandfathers when the last member of their family sailed toward Napoli in July, 1492. It was

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then they took their name, Di Sangué, “of the blood”. The generations that followed should never forget the blood that was spilled over the centuries so that they would remain who they always had been.



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September 7, 1896 A.D.

10:00 a.m.

ON THE SEVENTH DAY, one-half of the journey was ahead and one-half of the journey was behind the passengers and the crew of the *S.S. Italia*.

“Tell me about your village, Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi,” said Signore Di Sangué.

“It is very dry and rocky. There is a small river, *fiume Fredano*, that runs close to the village and a bigger river that flows south of the village, *fiume Ofanto*. Castello Langobardo and the cathedral are the oldest buildings. Our family belonged to the smaller church, Chiesa di San Marco. The castle is now used as a prison, but most of the people who would be in there have left for America.

“It always felt like a place where people came who didn’t have anywhere else to go. The trees had been cut down long ago, and the sheep made sure they never grew back. It is cold and damp in the winter and hot and dry in the summer. But worst of all is the shaking. Sometimes it is only a rumbling underground, but every now and then walls tumble down and the earth opens up and swallows one or two of us.”

“There is no place on earth that is free from nature’s destructive forces, my young friend. For Italia, nature’s two geophysical plagues are earthquakes and volcanoes. Running down the middle of the Italian peninsula, like the quill of a feather, are the Apennine Mountains stretching almost a thousand kilometers from north to south. An earthquake can occur anywhere along this spine.”

“What causes them?” asked Michele.

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“There have been all sorts of theories through the centuries. One early theory was that the earth’s interior is hollow and when rocks fall into this void, they strike each other and cause vibrations. Another theory was that air flowed into underground passages and when too much air came in, the passages expanded and caused the earth above to crack. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, suggested a reason for earthquakes, which, while incorrect, was accepted until the eighteenth century. He suggested that there was a central fire inside the earth, and when this fire grew too hot it would cause an explosion resulting in vibrations. Eventually, these fires would burn away those supports holding up the outer parts of the earth, and the surface would collapse.

“Today we know that the cause of earthquakes is a sudden shift of rock along a fracture in the earth,” continued Signore Di Sanguie. “This fracture is called a ‘fault’.”

“Is it like cutting a slice through an apple?” asked Michele.

“Think of the earth more like a peach coated with a thin layer of chocolate. In the middle of the peach is the pit, then the soft meat of the fruit, a thin layer holding it all together, and finally the outer layer of chocolate. The outer surface of the earth, up to one hundred kilometers, is made up of thick slabs of rock called plates. The inner core of the earth is solid, like the peach pit, but around this core is a layer of molten rock a few thousand kilometers thick. Around this is another layer of equal thickness called the mantle that is neither solid nor liquid. It deforms, and this is what the plates sit on. The plates are not fixed to the mantle, but move like large blocks of ice move on a lake when the spring thaw comes. When the plates are forced together, or move in different directions, there is great force exerted along the seam where they meet. The greater the force, the more severe the earthquake that results.”

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“You have made this mystery so simple to understand, Signore Di Sangue,” commented Michele. “Where do you get such knowledge?”

“Knowledge is like currency, my young friend,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “If you know one thing, you can exchange it for something else. If you give knowledge, you will get it in return. My knowledge of earthquakes was given to me by an Irish engineer named Robert Mallet. We met when he came to Napoli to study the earthquake that destroyed large portions of Campania in 1857. I was living with my wife, God rest her soul, and our children in Napoli at the time. We had celebrated *Chanukah* and it was almost a week before Christmas. We had felt rumblings all during the day. Then, around ten o’clock in the evening, everything began to shake.”

“Yes,” replied Michele, excitedly, my grandparents have told me about this. “It was one of the biggest earthquakes they could remember. People said that it was bigger than anything before.”

“Mr. Mallet said that it was the third largest known earthquake,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “There was some damage in Napoli, but most of the suffering was located close to the center near Montemurro and Caggiano. Mr. Mallet was staying in a hotel close to our place of business, and he came in on one occasion to have his coat mended after he had torn a hole in his sleeve as a result of a fall in the rubble. He sat and we talked while I mended his coat. My wife offered him a cup of tea, which he gladly accepted, commenting on how he had missed his tea since leaving home. He made regular visits to our shop in the following two months, always with some small mending job that needed to be done, but I think he came mostly because my wife made tea to his liking. He talked about the destruction caused by this earthquake, and his theory of what caused it.”

“What did cause it?” asked Michele.

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“Mr. Mallet performed many experiments during the two months he was in the region. He calculated that there was a crack, a fissure he called it, that was one hundred kilometers deep and centered near the village of Caggiano. When the two sides of this fissure moved in opposite directions due to the pressure exerted at its base, everything along the sixteen kilometer extent of the crack moved as well. These main movements caused secondary shocks in all directions, including up to your village and past Napoli.”

“Why build a town in such a place, and why did my ancestors settle there?”

“There is oftentimes safety in danger,” explained Signore Di Sangue. “You said that it always felt like a place where people came who didn’t have anywhere else to go. Your village was settled nine hundred years ago by the Langobardi who, as you have already learned, invaded the peninsula from the northern regions of Germania and Scandinavia. At the beginning of the tenth century, the principalities of Benevento, Salerno and Capua in southern Italy were the only part of the peninsula left in the hands of the Langobardi. The toe and the heel were controlled by the Eastern Roman Empire, and Sicilia was in the hands of the Saracens from North Africa. The Roman Church, the Eastern Roman Empire, the Saracens. and the Holy Roman Empire all had their eyes fixed on taking this last remaining bastion of the once dominant Langobardi.

“From the time they arrived, raping and pillaging their way down through the center of what had been the Roman Empire, they had taken over the towns that were already established. They left the small villages with their few miserable inhabitants to their farming and trades and extracted tribute from them. But as their own families grew, the pressure to expand beyond the established cities also grew. Sons had to divide their properties among their sons. And so those with less power had to move beyond the larger

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cities to ever smaller ones and eventually to places that were not populated. This is probably how they came to the place that eventually became called Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi.

“If indeed there were inhabitants there before the first Langobardi, it was not likely they had been there very long since it is certain that an earlier earthquake had discouraged settlements during the Roman times. The first structure that was built was a fortress, the Castello Langobardo, which would be the home of the new lord of the surrounding lands. The peasants who were brought there to build the castle built huts and eventually began to till the earth. A town grew that has endured many earthquakes and has seen many different rulers. The Langobardi who settled the piece of ground gave it the name of their special saint, the archangel Michele.”

“Because he helped them win the battle over the Greeks in Napoli on the 8th of May, isn't that right?” added Michele. “That's why we celebrate it as a feast day.”

“Yes, that is correct,” answered Signore Di Sangue, “in 663 A.D. The Catholics celebrate it today as Apparitio S. Michaelis, the apparition of Sant'Angelo, but it originally commemorated the victory of the Langobardi. Within a very short time after the Langobardi arrived in what became your village, they were threatened by a new force on the peninsula, the Normans. Their new fortress was a safe haven for a small group against the Normans because it was secluded, defensible and, most of all, located in an undesirable place.

“Scores of years may have passed before the ground shook and toppled their first simple dwellings. Some of the settlers probably left for less dangerous surroundings, but the majority most certainly stayed. Once you have invested in a place, it is difficult to leave it, even though everything you own has been destroyed or taken away from you. You rebuild, this time

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constructing more sturdy structures. You and your children repeat this behavior until your blood line runs out or some event causes you to leave, like the one that caused you and your family to leave now.”

“Somehow and for reasons that I cannot imagine, my ancestors came to that same village which I have now left,” interjected Michele. “What brought them there?”

“Eight hundred years will pass between when the Moors conquered your ancestors’ region of Spagna and when your family will start their journey from Spagna toward Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi. Let us have a look at Italia during the time the Muslims ruled most of Spagna and see if we can find some clues to why this migration took place. This will be a good time to talk about the Popes.”

“I was wondering when you were going to get around to the Popes,” laughed Michele. “I thought you had forgotten them.”

“No, no, we cannot leave them out of the story,” chuckled Signore Di Sangue. “It is just that they were not so important until now. Remember that Christianity was a subversive religion until 313 A.D. when the Edict of Toleration gave Christians the freedom of worship. In 325 A.D., when the Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicea, the Bishop of Roma, who was later called Pope Sylvester I, decided not to attend. He feared he would not survive the journey due to ill health. The Patriarchs, Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch and Marcarius of Jerusalem, were in attendance, but it was Constantine who led the Council.”

“Then he is the first Pope,” offered Michele.

“The word ‘Pope’ comes from the Latin word *papa*,” explained Signore Di Sangue, “which was the affectionate word for father. The Latin speaking provinces referred to the Bishop of Roma, their Patriarch, as Papa. The title

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did not at first bestow any special position on the holder, at least not among the other bishops and Patriarchs. The Roman bishops had to argue their case for being the leaders of the faithful. They based their arguments on teachings that Peter, one of the twelve apostles, had been given the charge of leadership by Jesus before His crucifixion, that Peter had come to Roma to establish The Church in the capital of the Empire, and that every bishop following Peter's martyred death was endowed with the power to carry on in that role of leadership."

"But all of this is described in the bible," exclaimed Michele. "Why did they have to prove it when everyone could simply read it. Didn't Jesus say 'Upon this rock I will build my Church', naming Peter as 'the rock'?"

"You have learned your bible well, my young friend," answered Signore Di Sanguine patiently. "The four gospels describe the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The first of the gospels, Mark, was written around 70 A.D. That was more than three decades after the crucifixion. The second, Matthew, followed Mark by one or two dozen years. It is in Matthew where the phrase you have repeated is written. It begins with 'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock...' and so forth. These words were translated from the original Greek into Latin and the meaning of the phrase has been hotly debated. Was Peter the 'rock', as the Roman bishops interpreted the phrase, or was it just a poor translation? Did Jesus tell Peter this in the presence of all of the Apostles, in which case all would have told the same story, or in private, in which case it was Peter's word against the rest? It seems that it was in private. As we see to this day, Protestant Christians and the Russian Orthodox Catholics feel that accepting the Pope as the one and only leader of Christianity is a difficult pill for them to swallow.

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“Before Christianity was made the official religion of the Empire in 380 A.D., there was no possibility that bishops in any part of the realm could have powers that exceeded those of the Emperor. At the First Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D., the importance, but not the superiority, of the Bishop of Roma’s position was affirmed, although he was absent again. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., Leo I, Bishop of Roma, stated that he was ‘speaking with the voice of Peter’, even though he was speaking through his emissaries because, like his predecessors, he too did not attend. At this same council, the Bishop of Constantinople, as the spiritual leader of the New Roma, was awarded equal privileges as those of the Bishop of Roma. Leo was most certainly not pleased by this.

“It was only when the Western Roman Empire fell that the Bishop of Roma gained preeminence—at least in Roma. Gregory the Great was the first of these Popes, holding the position from 590 to 604 A.D. He traced his family line to ancient Roman senators, and it seems that he could not imagine a world in which Roma was not at its center. He believed that the end of the world was approaching. It must have seemed that way to any resident of Roma. The city was filled with refugees who had fled from the Langobardi advances all over the Italian peninsula. In the year before Gregory became Pope following the death of Pelagius II, floods had ravaged the city destroying many buildings and emptying the granaries of The Church. The floods were followed by disease. So many of Roma’s citizens perished that they had to be buried in common graves outside the city’s walls.

“Within a few years following Gregory’s consecration, Roma was threatened by the Langobardi forces of Duke Ariulf of Spoleto. In a simultaneous action, Ariulf’s army massed outside the walls of Roma and the army of another Langobardi, the Duke Archis of Benevento, approached Napoli. There was no help forthcoming from the Emperor’s forces under the

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command of Romanus who was garrisoned in Ravenna in the northeastern near the Adriatic coast. Gregory came up with the brilliant idea of negotiating a peace directly with the Langobardi armies. Viewing this as an act of treason, Romanus gathered his forces, moved south on Perugia, which had been captured by the Langobardi, and retook it before marching triumphantly into Roma. His stay was brief, and when he left the city with his troops, the Langobardi under their king, Agilulf, set the city under siege. There are different stories about how the siege was broken. Some say that Gregory convinced Agilulf with his piety and prayers to withdraw. Others say that a large sum of money was paid by Gregory. What is important to understand for our story is that the bishops of Roma were gaining independence from the Emperor due in large part to their distance from the capital of the Empire in Constantinople. They were surrounded by the hostile Langobardi forces who did not acknowledge their authority, and, in order to survive, they had to use both cunning and force. As we will see, successors to Gregory became masters of both.”



Alboin, king of the Langobardi, led his people and other northern tribes to successive victories in Italia. He paused briefly in his campaigns in 566 A.D. to marry Rosamund. She was the daughter of the king of the Gepidae, a Germanic tribe who were defeated and subjugated by Alboin. It was in 572 A.D., the year Ticinum, what is today the city of Pavia, became the capital of the Langobardi Kingdom of Italia, that Alboin was murdered by Rosamund, who presumably had waited for her chance at revenge for her tribe’s humiliation. A new king, Authari, was not chosen until 584 A.D. when the Franks threatened an invasion. The new king and his armies ward off the Franks, but his time as the Langobardi leader was short. In

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589 A.D., one year before his death, King Authari married Theodelinda, who was a Catholic, daughter to the Duke of Bavaria and friend of Pope Gregory I. They had one child, a girl whom they named Gundeberga.

Theodelinda encouraged the Christianization of the Langobardi. She married her husband's successor, Agilulf, formerly Duke of Turin, and when he died in 616 A.D., their thirteen-year-old son, Adaloald, was named king. However, it was Theodelinda who reigned as a regent for her underage son until 626 A.D. when Adaloald was deposed by Arioald, the husband of Gundeberga, Theodelinda's daughter whom she had with Authari. Arioald was the leader of the Arian opposition to the Catholics, and when he took the reins, he attempted to inhibit the spread of the Pope's version of Christianity.

Arioald's successor was Rothari. It was under his rule that the Langobardi dominions began to expand even further, first capturing Liguria to the west in 643 A.D. and then consolidating the former Byzantine territories in Veneto. The *Edictum Rothari* was prepared during his rule, establishing the laws and customs of the Langobardi people. It was written in Latin—a vulgar form, but nevertheless in Latin. The *Edictum* addressed mostly the compensations for wrongs and issues of property rights, and made no references to the duties of government or the obligations of the citizenry.

The Langobardi territories in the south, the Duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, had grown rather independent of the kings in Ticinum during the *interregnum*, the period between the death of Albion's successor, Cleph, in 574 A.D. and the crowning of Authari ten years later. By 576 A.D. Faroald I, the first Duke of Spoleto, had seized Nursia and Spoleto, establishing his duchy and sponsoring an Arian bishop. Although Spoleto was never as important as the Duchy of Benevento, its leaders were determined to make their presence known. Spoleto was more or less at constant war with the

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Eastern Empire's armies led by the Exarchate of Ravenna. Between 579 and 592 A.D., Duke Ariulf, the second Duke of Spoleto, led his forces against Ravenna, and in 592 A.D. he attacked Roma, forcing the Bishop of Roma, Pope Gregory, to pay him tribute before he and his men withdrew. Ariulf was succeeded by Theudelapius, son of Faroald. Then came Atto in 653 A.D., Thrasimund I in 663 A.D., and Faroald II and his brother Wachilap in 703 A.D., who ruled the Duchy jointly. In the middle of the eight century, one of the Dukes of Spoleto rebelled against the King of the Langobardi, Liutprand, and formed an alliance with Pope Gregory III. This brief rebellion was put down by the King, and Spoleto was brought under tighter control of Ticinum.

The Langobardi Duchy of Benevento was centered on the Roman city of Beneventum in the region of Campania. The original name of the city was Malowent, which the Romans translated as Maleventum, meaning the 'site of bad events', from *Malum*, meaning 'bad', and *eventum*, meaning 'event'. The Romans changed *Malum* to *Bene* for 'good' to bring it luck. It worked. Beneventum flourished during the height of the Roman Empire. Its prosperity was due in part to its location along the Via Appia at a point where the road divided into two branches, one leading to Apulia and the other to Venusia and Tarentum. It was in the last half of the sixth century A.D. that Benevento became the seat of a Langobardi duchy.

By the middle of the eighth century, the Langobardi controlled the vast majority of the Italian peninsula. Exceptions were the tip of the boot and bottom of the heel, along with a sliver of land around Venezia, the region of Roma, and the islands of Sicilia¹⁷ and Sardegna, which all remained in the hands of the Eastern Roman Empire. Langobardi society was similar to the

¹⁷ Sicilia would fall to the Saracens in the beginning of the ninth century and become an emirate.

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other Germanic states that moved into the lands formerly under Roman control, Frankish Gallia and Visigothic Hispania. There were four classes: a noble class at the top; slaves at the bottom; and, free persons, mainly merchants and owner cultivators, and non-free serfs in between. Unlike their northern brethren, the Franks, most of the Langobardi nobles lived in the cities. They usually had no more than twice the amount of land as the free person class, which was a much smaller amount than that of the Frankish nobles. While the merchants and landed class had more economic influence in Langobardi than in the other Germanic regions, they were less powerful politically. The freemen of the Lombard kingdom were far more numerous than in Francia, especially in the eighth century. The freemen were mostly *exercitales* and *virii devoti*, meaning respectively, soldiers and devoted men. Devoted was not a religious term, but a military one. It meant they served as aids to the officers.

In Benevento there is one of the first and most important abbeys of Roman Catholic monasticism, Montecassino. In 744 A.D., Gisulf II donated the land on which the abbey was eventually constructed. It was designated *Terra Sancti Benedicti*, and was subject only to the Bishop of Roma. Montecassino became the centre for the Beneventan rite for the liturgy of the mass, the special Beneventan chant, which is similar to the Gregorian chant, and to the use of a handwriting script, known as the Beneventan script, that was derived from the Roman cursive style.

The remainder of what had once been Roman territory and what was then the seat of the Bishops of Roma, was under severe threat in the middle of the eighth century A.D.. The Langobardi king, Aistulf, demanded tribute from Pope Zachary just prior to the Pope's death in 752 A.D. Zachary's immediate successor, Stephen, died three days after his election, but his successor, Stephen II, travelled in 753 A.D. to Quiercy-sur-Loire, in Francia, to meet Pepin the Short, King of the Franks, to ask for help and protection.

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In return for a promise of assistance, Stephen II anointed Pepin in the Basilica of Saint-Denis, giving him the title of *Patricius Romanorum*, Patrician of the Romans. At the same time, he anointed Pepin's two sons, Charles, who was the older, and Carloman.

Pepin the Short was the son of Charles Martel, who is best remembered for stopping the advance of the Moors at the Battle of Tours in 732 A.D. The Franks had been Christianised in the sixth century A.D. and were ruled by a dynasty named *Merovingi*, after the sons of Merovech. In the eighth century A.D., most powers of government were in the hands of the chief officer to the king, called the Mayor of the Palace, or *major domus*. Charles' father, Mayor of the Austrasia Palace, rose to sole power of the Frankish kingdom after his victory at Tertry. When Charles succeeded his father, he ruled the kingdom, but did not assume the title of King. Charles' two sons, Pepin the Short and Carloman, decided together to name the Merovingian Childeric III as king, believing that this would avoid divisive battles among the different factions. Childeric would be the last Merovingian ruler. In 751 A.D., after his brother Carloman left his duties to his brother, Pepin deposed Childeric III. Thus was born the Carolingian Dynasty, after *carolus*, descendant of Charles.

Shortly after his anointment, Pepin repaid his benefactor by engaging the Langobardi in battle between 754 and 756 A.D. He defeated King Aistulf and forced the return to The Church of the territories from Roma to Ravenna, including the regions of Romagna, Marche, Umbria and Lazio. This became known as the Donation of Pepin, and the territory was called the *Status Pontificus* or The Papal States. The Popes would govern these lands as temporal rulers, and from their seat in the heart of Roma, they would now begin to exert their ecclesiastical influence on Catholic Christians.

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The Langobardi regions to the north and to the south of the Papal States were ruled by King Desiderius, former Duke of Toscania, who was chosen with the support of Pepin the Short and the Pope. Desiderius promised to return to the Holy See many of the towns that had been seized by the Langobardi during the previous centuries of their domination of Italian peninsula. Although still ruled by the Langobardi king, the Duchy of Benevento and southern Italia were now totally separated from the northern provinces.

Before he died in 768 A.D., Pepin drove the Muslims from Narbonensis in the most southeastern part of Gallica, and he integrated Aquitania into the Frankish kingdom. When Pepin died, his realm was divided between his two sons. Charles ruled the outer regions and Carloman took the inner. A rebellion in a part of Aquitania ruled by Charles brought to light a rift between the brothers. Carloman refused to assist his brother in putting down the insurrection led by Hunald. Charles defeated Hunald and began to form alliances, including one with Desiderius. In 770 A.D., he married Desiderius's daughter, Desideria, to seal an alliance with forces to the south of his brother. This union was opposed by Pope Stephen III. It was one thing to allow the Langobardi, who had been a threat and a nuisance to the Catholic Church for almost three centuries, to remain in control of the peninsula, but it was quite another to solidify both their power and legitimacy through such marriages. What he wished for was to be rid of the Langobardi, not to strengthen them through unholy alliances with his favored people, the Franks. His prayers were soon answered.

Less than a year after his marriage, Charles repudiated Desideria and requested that the marriage be annulled. Did he find her unappealing or unsuitable as a wife? Or did he find the need to form an alliance with the Swabians more compelling. In any case, he remarried quickly to a thirteen-year-old Swabian named Hildegard. King Desiderius was outraged and

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thirsted for revenge, but before he could ally with Charle's brother Carolman to make war against his former son-in-law, Carloman died in December 771 A.D. Carolman's wife Gerberga buried her husband and immediately sought refuge in Desiderius' court in Ticinum.

Desiderius' anger seems to have clouded his judgment. He decided that he had the strength to oppose both the Pope and Charles. He supported the claims of Carolman's children to the lands their father had ruled. When Pope Adrian I, who had succeeded Stephen III in February 772 A.D., demanded that Desiderius follow through with his promise to return the papal cities, Desiderius countered by capturing additional cities and moved his armies toward Roma. The Pope once again called to the Franks for assistance, and Charles with his uncle Bernard crossed the Alps into Italia in 773 A.D. Desiderius was defeated at Susa, in a border region between Francia and Italia, and forced back to Ticinum. Charles placed the city under siege until the late spring of 774 A.D. The Langobardi capitulated, opening the gates to Charles and his troops. Desiderius was exiled to the Benedictine Abbey of Corbie in Francia. Charles crowned himself King of the Langobardi and soon returned to the north. He was not troubled by the refusal of Duke Arechis II of Benevento to swear his allegiance. Even when Charles returned in 776 A.D. to quell a rebellion by the Dukes of Friuli and Spoleto, Benevento remained independent.

Charles became known as Charles the Great, or *Charlemagne* in the language of the Franks. He respected the Pope and the Holy Roman Catholic Church, but retained the right to name the dukes in the lands formerly held by the Langobardi. In 787 A.D., Charlemagne returned to Benevento. He laid siege to Salerno, and forced Duke Arechis to submit to vassalage. Four years later, when Arechis died, the Duchy, led by the Duke's son, Gimoald III, again proclaimed independence. Charlemagne sent

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armies to attack Grimoald, but Charlemagne himself never returned to the lands in the south and Grimoald never surrendered to the Franks.

Charlemagne's legacy was sealed by another Pope, Leo III. Leo had been Pope for four years when, on the 25th of April 799 A.D., he was attacked by men hired by the nobles of Roma. It is said that these men were led by relatives of the previous Pope, Adrian I, who resented Leo's common background, but this has not been confirmed. According to this story, the nobles of Roma had taken for granted that the Bishops of Roma would come from their families, and the one singled out to be the leader of the Holy Mother Church, who would be called The Pope, would naturally be a member of the most senior family. How could such a mistake have been made by the electors to choose a commoner? Leo was accused of adultery and perjury, which he strenuously denied, but the mob was intent on poking out his eyes and severing his tongue.

Somehow, Leo managed to escape from his tormentors. He was taken to the monastery of Santa Erasmus on the Caelian Hill in Roma, where he recovered from his wounds. While he was recovering, he had been deposed as Pope and was being held under house arrest. When he was well enough, he escaped from the monastery and travelled to Paderborn in the Frankish kingdom where Charlemagne was quartered.

The Pope pleaded for assistance to regain his position as leader of The Church. Charlemagne agreed and accompanied Leo back to Roma and held a council to review the claims of the Pope's accusers. The Pope swore an oath of innocence on the 23rd of December and was declared free of guilt. To celebrate this event, the Pope held a mass in honor of Charlemagne on Christmas Day, 800 A.D. When Charlemagne came into the Basilica del San Pietro, a jeweled crown was waiting for him on the altar. The Pope

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placed the crown on his head and named him *Imperator Romanorum*, Emperor of the Romans.

Charlemagne continued the expansion of his kingdom by taking the islands of Corsica and Sardegna from the Eastern Empire, and pushed over the Pyrenees into Catalan in Hispania. By the end of his reign, the Carolingian empire that he would leave to his sons had a border that extended from Hispania in the west, northward along the ocean coast and then eastward through the base of the peninsula that was the home of the Viking Danes, those who would be called the Normans, and as far east as the hostile border with the Slavic peoples, then southward into Italia. It was like a huge sickle, with the handle being the former Langobardian provinces north of The Papal States that his father had created, and the blade extending in an arc with its point directed at the Moors occupying Hispania. Charlemagne died in 814 A.D. at the age of seventy-one. He was buried in the cathedral at Aachen. He had already divided his empire amongst his sons. Louis the Pious became Emperor of the West and successor to his father. He was crowned in Aachen just before his father died.



“Do you see how the Popes, beginning with Stephen II, managed to outmaneuver their mostly Arian Langobardian enemies by enlisting the Nicene Catholic Franks in their cause?” continued Signore Di Sangue.

“They must have been very good talkers,” quipped Michele.

“Yes, indeed they were. The Popes survived, their strength gradually increasing until Pepin delivered to them the centre of the Italian peninsula. With these holdings, The Holy Mother Church had enough land to sustain itself and support the continued growth of its spiritual kingdom, and it had protectors in the form of the Frankish nobles who would ensure that those lands were not retaken by the Langobardi or by their chief rivals, the Eastern

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Byzantines, or by the Moors and Normans who would arrive later. The Roman Church's major triumph, however, was its creation of the new Roman Empire through the crowning of Charlemagne as its emperor."

"I was wondering about this," mused Michele. "Who gave them the right to make any person the Emperor of Roma?"

"God did," replied Signore Di Sangue, "at least that is what they told Charlemagne. Of course, the Emperor of Eastern Roma, who actually was a woman at the time Charlemagne was crowned, Empress Irene, and officially the only successor to the former Roman Empire, did not accept this. The patriarchs of the Byzantine Church did not accept it either. It did not matter. Charlemagne and his Carolingian heirs were convinced that they had been given the supreme authority to rule. The Pope and The Roman Church which they led had simply assumed the right to award the ultimate temporal prize, and by doing so, made themselves the supreme authorities on earth. Brilliant, don't you think!"

"I guess so," replied Michele. "Can people think so far ahead?"

"We make it seem so when we retell the stories years later," answered Signore Di Sangue, "but I do believe these men did think in strategic and tactical terms. I mean they first thought about what they wanted to happen, and then they figured out in detail how to get to the desired result. One lesson we have learned so far is that only the quick of mind were able to survive all the intrigues and conspiracies. A person with power was constantly under threat from friends, family and foes alike.

"Charlemagne proposed to Irene. She rejected his proposal, but not quickly enough to suit her subjects. She was deposed by them for briefly entertaining the idea of re-merging the empires. Charlemagne was finally acknowledged as Emperor of Western Roma in 812 A.D. by Michael the First, Emperor of Eastern Roma. In exchange for this acknowledgement,

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Charlemagne had to give up his claims to the principalities of Istria, Venezia and Dalmatia. This was a small price to pay for the recognition he now received as an equal in title and superior in force to the eastern emperor. But a strange thing happened. Charlemagne never really liked the idea of being the emperor of the people his tribes had defeated a few hundred years earlier. He continued to call himself *rex Francorum et Langobardum*, King of the Franks and the Langobardi. Nevertheless, his heirs fought amongst themselves over who should carry the title of Emperor of Roma, and eventually the Popes began to bestow their gift on whomever they thought could provide them the most protection or wealth.

“The southern part of Italia continued to be controlled by the Langobardi, but the territory itself was claimed by both the Carolingian Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire. The Langobardi managed to maintain control over their territories by pledging loyalty to each of these powers, while actually not keeping their promises to either. The powerful dukes of Benevento saw no reason to limit their desires for more wealth and demanded that the Neopolitans, a rich enclave that was closely allied with Greece and Eastern Roma, should pay them tribute. They captured the Neopolitan city of Amalfi in 838 A.D. and extended their influence over most of the southern portion of Italia.

“As often happens, when there is a civil war, external foes seize the opportunity to move in. This is when the Saracens, followers of Islam, gained their foothold on Sicily and even on the Italian peninsula. They did so not by invading, but at the invitation of the leader of Napoli, Andrew II. He hired Saracen mercenaries to help him against Sicard of Benevento. Sicard followed Andrew’s lead and did the same. The Saracens attacked Sicily and those parts of the peninsula held by Eastern Roma. They captured Bari in 847 A.D. and continued their march northward.

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“In 849 A.D., after ten years of civil war in the southern regions of Italia, the Carolingian Emperor, Louis II, stepped in and imposed a treaty that divided the southern region into the Principality of Benevento and the Principality of Salerno. This was the first time a sovereign from the north was able to exert any control over the south. As it turned out, his strength would be needed to drive out the Saracens, who decided that they liked what they saw and would take as much as they could get. An unholy alliance between the forces of Louis II and Basil I, Emperor of Eastern Roma, defeated the Saracens at Bari in 869 A.D.

“Wars between invading Saracens, Eastern and Western Roman troops, Langobardi, Neopolitans, and other principalities of southern Italia continued for the next forty-five years. It was a Pope, Pope John X, who was able to unite all of the Christians with interests in southern Italia in battle against what he described as a common foe, the Muslims. At the Battle of the Garigliano River, these united forces defeated the Saracens and finally drove them from mainland Italia.

“Is this the part of Italia that is called *mezzogiorno* today?” asked Michele.

“Yes,” replied Signore Di Sangue, “but it was not called that until very recently. You should now see how the area became distinct, being cut off from the rest of the peninsula when Spoleto was incorporated into the Papal States. But the region is still not ready for your family to settle there. Many more battles will have to be fought and blood spilled before the way is clear.”



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932 A.D

Fernando Sena, his six brothers and a dozen other men from the village rode their horses into what had been the Muslim fortress. It had stood there well before any of them, or their fathers, or their fathers' fathers before them, had been born. It had been a magnificent place, with walls made of timber covered in smooth plaster tinted with the earthy reddish color of ocher. Two sets of splendidly sturdy wooden gates opened the fortress each morning to those who were allowed in and those who wished to go out. These same gates closed at sunset, and those who did not manage to return before they closed were without shelter until the next morning. Inside the walls was a maze of streets, slightly wider than a single cart pulled by a mule and a man walking beside it. This was to keep the inhabitants safe in case the gates were forced or the walls breached. A tall minaret rose from one of the corners of the fortress from where the faithful were called to prayer five times each day by the *muezzin*. In the very center of the stronghold was an open square with a large circular fountain pouring forth water that spilled over the sides and was led in four directions, one of them being to the mosque, the second to the public bath, the third toward the gardens where fruit trees and vegetables mixed with lush flowers, and the fourth into the markets.

Once each week Fernando and some of the other men in their village had been allowed inside the walls where they would buy certain products made by the Arab artisans and deliver what they had made by agreement with one of the merchants. They could not sell their own wares inside the walls; they were restricted to temporary stalls which they set up outside one of the major gates. On his visits inside the fortress, Fernando always stopped at the alchemist. His name was Baahir, which he explained meant 'dazzling', and true to his name, he concocted potions that dazzled the senses. Headaches, toothaches, unruly stomachs, limbs that complained when asked to work

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were all made well with Baahir's mixtures. While he stirred and ground the ingredients that comprised his potions, he talked about the religion that formed the foundation of his thinking and his way of living.

"The Prophet was a man who understood the value of money and of hard work," explained Baahir one day to Fernando. "He did not tell his people to concentrate on what happens after death, but to live a good and righteous life and *jannah* would be the reward. We do not believe that man is born in sin, as you Christians do, and a poor, little child who dies before the water is poured over him or the sign is given by a priest will be denied entry to the happiest of places. For us, the men and women of Islam, *jannah* is real, a place where all our worldly wishes will be granted. This promise alone is reason enough for us to please Allah, and the Qur'an tells us how to do that."

"Do you think there can be two heavens, Baahir," asked Fernando, "one for Muslims and one for Christians?"

"Our men of science tell us that the universe is large," answered Baahir with a laugh. "There is surely enough room for two, perhaps more, at least one more for the third people of the book, for those among them who believe in such a place."

The men became friends, and each one looked forward to the weekly visits. Baahir made special mixtures for Fernando to make the thick straps of the sandals he sold to the residents of the fortress more supple and therefore more comfortable. He prepared dyes that gave the leather Fernando and his brothers used in all their wares deep, rich colors that made them more appealing to the men and women who purchased them. Over the years, Fernando saw Baahir's sons enter the shop from the workroom behind a thick, green curtain, watching them grow from small children to young men. Several times he had been invited behind that curtain.

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Smoke hung in the still air as Fernando walked through the remains of the gate that had stood so proudly for so long. Signs of life were few. Bodies of men, women and children were everywhere, frozen in the grotesque positions they assumed when death came. The Christian armies of the Aragonians and Franks had been given instructions to spare no one, to take no prisoners, to leave nothing that could be used or consumed. Kill all of the infidels and burn everything that was theirs to the ground! And that is what they did, or that is what was in the process of happening when Fernando and the others arrived. The Christian armies had left, continuing southward toward their next target of destruction, leaving the Muslims in their former fortress, which had stood against their Christian faith for two hundred years, to putrefy and return to the dust of the Cinca River valley.

Fernando and one of his brothers walked to the place where Baahir's shop had stood. The shelves that held the herbs and potions carefully mixed by Baahir and his sons were empty, their contents mixing on the floor with shards of pottery and remnants of the heavy, green curtain that had separated Baahir's family's public from their private domain. There were no signs of life. Fernando walked through the opening where the curtain had hung. Benches, chairs, measuring scales, mixing containers—everything—had been hacked and overturned and pushed into a pile that was then touched with fire, attempting to make it all disappear in flames and smoke. It was Fernando's brother who found the family in their courtyard. Baahir, or what remained of him, was at the front of his wives and children. They had been praying together when the soldiers arrived, and they were killed where they kneeled. Heads and arms and legs and bodies were twisted into a large mass of dead flesh.

Baahir had introduced each of his sons to Fernando as they grew old enough to work in his shop.

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“You must bring your son with you,” Baahir had told him after Fernando had been coming to his shop for a few years. “What is his name?”

“Miguel,” replied Fernando. “He will be seven soon, old enough to begin to learn the trade.”

Fernando remembered the first time Miguel came with him to Baahir’s shop and he met Baahir’s sons. They did not have a common language at that first meeting, but they were able to communicate somehow. Eventually, Miguel learned the language of the Arabs. He learned other things as well. Baahir’s family were Sunnis, and that meant they had different traditions than the Shias, but they were all based on The Prophet’s teachings and the words written in their Holy Book, explained Miguel to his father. Miguel learned the names of the five pillars of Islam for the Sunnis: *Shahādah*, profession of faith; *Salah*, prayer; *Zakâh*, giving to the poor; *Sawm*, fasting during *Ramadan*; and, *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca. He learned that before *salah*, a Sunni Muslim must perform a ritual using water, called a *wudu*. It consisted of washing the hands, mouth, nose, face, arms, forehead and hair, ears and feet three times each in that order. He learned the names of the different prayer times. A Muslim had to be sure that he was praying at the proper time.

“With *Salah*, a Muslim communicates with God,” instructed Baahir. “I stand in front of God, I thank Him and praise Him and ask Him to show me the right path. Through prayer I express my gratitude for all the blessings that God has given me. Most important, it reminds me to put Islam first before all else.”

“Who leads you in your prayers?” Fernando had asked.

“We have no priests, my friend,” replied Baahir. “No one is given powers by the laying of hands on him. Any man can lead his fellow

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Muslims in prayer. He is the *imam* for that prayer session and he has the position because of his knowledge of the prayer form, that is all.”

Baahir had explained to Fernando the five prayer times. *Fajr* is the prayer time from when first light appears until sunrise. *Dhuhr* is said between when the sun is at its highest point in the sky until the next prayer period, which was *Asr*. *Asr* begins when the length of your shadow is twice your own height, and it ends as the sun begins to set. The *Maghrib* prayer is said after sunset and until dusk, and the *Isha’a* said any time between dusk and dawn.

Miguel could not pray, explained Baahir to Fernando, because he was not a Muslim. But he could watch and listen, which Miguel did. They all faced toward the shrine in Mecca, the *Kaabah*. In fact, their prayers would be meaningless unless they faced in the correct direction, and did so at the proper time of day.

“How do you know in which direction to face and when the time is exactly right?” a puzzled Fernando had asked Baahir.

“Our imam tells us the direction,” instructed Baahir. “He can read the stars and the movement of the sun, and he decides. If we are alone on a journey or in the mountains or the fields, we must do our best to point in the correct direction, toward Mecca. God knows when we are sincere in our efforts, even when we are not correct. ‘Do your best,’ He says. ‘That is sufficient for Me.’”

Fernando and his brother heard a whimpering sound. It was coming from beneath the mass of bodies. Carefully, they moved the women and children who several hours before had been the children and wives of their friend. They would bury all of them and as many of the others as they could. Two babies were found alive, barely alive, under the bodies. They were the young twins that Baahir had told Fernando so proudly about, a boy and a girl

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less than six months in this world. Fernando tried, but he could not remember the names Baahir had given to them.

They searched for others who had survived the slaughter and found none. They went to the harem. Perhaps the Christian girls has been spared. What they found was a gruesome sight. The bodies of the women had been piled in the center of the courtyard and set on fire. The stench of charred flesh filled the air. They buried as many as they could before night fell, then Fernando and his brothers put the two children carefully into the wagon they had with them and they travelled home. Fernando took the male twin to his wife, and his older brother, whose wife was barren, took the girl.

“They are too young to know that they would have had Islam as their religion,” Fernando said to his brother. “We will baptize them and they will be raised as good Christians, but we will find a way to pay our respects to our friend Baahir in some way in their upbringing.”



The reconquest of Spagna, *Reconquista*, began soon after the conquest of Hispania by the people of Islam. Soldiers from all over Christendom came to Hispania as an act of penitence to fight for the return of the lands and its people to the Holy Catholic Church. These early efforts succeeded in recapturing some of the border regions in the north, but the *Reconquista* truly gained momentum when it became part of The Crusades, the greater effort initiated by The Church to reclaim the Holy Land and other dominions taken by the followers of Muhammad. Jerusalem had been captured in 1070 A.D., and during the following twenty-two years all of the major cities of Asia Minor came under the rule of Islam. Pilgrimages to the Holy Lands were under constant threat and the continued existence of the Eastern Roman Empire was in jeopardy.



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September 8, 1896 A.D.

9:00 a.m.

THE SEAS WERE STILL CHURNING from the storm that had raged the night before. Although the winds had ceased, high waves continued to roll toward the *S.S. Italia* forcing its bow to slice through them in order to make headway. The sky was clear on this eighth day of the journey. Only a few wispy clouds punctuated the light blueness above, and the sun had a clear view of the ship and those few passengers who had braved the heavy seas to breathe the clean, fresh air that always followed a heavy storm. Michele and Signore Di Sangue were at the stern, shielded from the spray caused by waves being cut by steel.

“Have you thought about what you will miss most from your life in Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi?” asked Signore Di Sangue.

“Yes,” answered Michele without hesitation. “I have thought about this for the past year, since my family left for America. I will most of all miss my Nonna Rosa Villani’s smile. She always had a smile on her face when she looked at me, even when I had done something that I should not have done. It was never possible to be sad when I was close to her.”

“Grandmothers, especially our mothers’ mothers are the most forgiving and generous individuals in the world,” commented Signore Di Sangue. “Imagine if everyone behaved like our grandmothers, what a wonderful life we would all have.”

“Then I will miss the walks with my father’s father, Nonno Michele, after church on Sundays. He would buy one cigar in the small store in the piazza and smoke it while he talked to his friends. He would buy me a gelato that I

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would eat slowly, savoring every lick. Then, after an hour had passed, which we could see on the big clock overlooking the piazza from the town hall, we would walk home for Sunday dinner.

“I will miss my teacher, Signore Usiglio. I learned a great deal from him, not only how to make and repair shoes, but how to judge whether a person was honest and would pay his bill, how to bargain with the leather, nail, thread and glue suppliers for a fair price, and how to count and read the thickness of thread.”

“Those who are fortunate to have one good teacher during the early part of their lives will have a fortunate life,” reflected Signore Di Sangue.

“With all of your travels, don’t you miss your family and friends, Signore Di Sangue?” asked Michele.

“My people have been leaving their family and friends behind for centuries,” explained Signore Di Sangue, “and we have found ways of bringing them with us. We write letters, of course, but I do not keep any of the letters I have received over the years. If I did, I would need to carry a dozen shipping trunks around with me. I read each letter, try to remember its essence, and then file it in my mind’s attic relating the person to a time and place where I received the letter. When something happens to cause me to remember one of my family or friends, I go up to the attic to fetch their last letter. In this way, I keep my memories fresh. When someone dies, or marries, or has a child, I fix a small mental note to the letter.”

“I hope I will be able to go back to see my grandparents before they die, but they are already old,” sighed Michele. “I do not know if I can earn enough money to make this journey again soon.”

“If you think about returning to your village, you will never be able to truly be a part of your new home in your adopted country,” advised Signore

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Di Sangue. “I would not presume to advise you, my young friend, although my experience in life has shown me that a young sapling that is dug up with its roots can be replanted in a new place and can grow into a healthy and mature tree. A tree that is cut down and separated from its roots can be burned or used for timber, but it will no longer grow.”

“Do you mean that I should re-plant myself in America, stay planted and not try to keep thinking about Italia?” asked Michele.

“Yes, that is what I mean,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “Take your traditions with you and give them life in America. Do not hide them or be ashamed of them. However, leave Italia in Italia. You will be happier, your neighbors from other parts of the world will be happier, and you will all get along much better. Now, where did we leave your story yesterday?”

“It was around 1000 A.D.,” replied Michele.

“This was a very special time in human history. One thousand years had passed in the Common Era, since the birth of your Christ,” mused Signore Di Sangue. “There were many predictions that the world would come to an end with the second coming of the Messiah, and there have been stories of apocalyptic events like stars falling out of the sky, earthquakes, volcano eruptions and floods, but the world is still here and the doomsday stories were just that, stories.”



Charlemagne left his empire to his son, Louis the Pious. Upon the death of Louis the Pious in 840 A.D., his three sons, Lothair, who was the eldest, Louis the German and Charles the Bald, fought for control over the entire dominion. Lothair's kingdom was Middle Francia, including Italia, and he inherited the imperial title becoming Lothair I. Louis the German naturally had the German provinces and Bavaria, and Charles the Bald controlled

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Aquitaine. Louis and Charles allied against their older brother and defeated him at the Battle of Fontenay. As a result of the Treaty of Verdun, which was negotiated among the three brothers in August 843 A.D., Lothair I retained what was called Middle Francia, which contained Lorraine, Alsace, Burgundy, Provence and the northern half of the Italian peninsula. Louis received the eastern provinces, which was called East Francia. Charles received the western provinces, called Western Francia, which later became Francia.

Charles the Bald and his Carolingian successors, Louis the Stammerer, Louis III, Carloman, Charles the Simple, Louis IV, Lothair and Louis V, ruled over Western Francia until 987 A.D. In 987 A.D., Hugh Capet, Duke of Francia and Count of Paris, took the throne of the western realm. He established the Capetian dynasty and thereby ended the Carolingian dynasty.

The eastern dynasty of Louis the Germanian lasted until 911 A.D. His successors were his sons Charles the Fat, Arnulf and Louis the Child. Arnulf, who died in 899 A.D., was the last Carolingian to hold the title of Emperor. Arnulf's son, Louis, succeeded him upon his death. He was only six years old. He died twelve years later with his realm near collapse at the hands of the Magyars from the eastern regions. The dukes of East Francia elected Conrad of Franconia as their king in 911 A.D. Upon Conrad's death in 918 A.D., and according to his recommendation, Henry the Fowler, who was Duke of Saxony, was elected King of East Francia. He consolidated power, strengthened the army and fortified the cities. When he died in 936 A.D., all of the Germanian tribes were united under one ruler. His son, Otto, took the crown at the age of twenty-four.

Otto I, or Otto the Great as he was later called, inherited his father's ambition and aggressiveness, and like all sons who inherit their father's throne, he had to contend with his jealous brothers who wanted what he had,

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and his distant cousins who wanted to extend their domains by acquiring his. In 951 A.D., he received an appeal for help from the widowed Queen of Italia, Adelaide, wife of Lothair II. Lothair II was the son of Lothair I, who died in 855 A.D. Lothair I was, in turn, the son of Louis I, also called Louis the Pious, son and successor of Charlemagne.

It seems that King Lothair II had been poisoned either by Berenger II, his rival for the throne of Italia, or possibly Berenger's son. Berenger II decided that Adelaide should marry his son, and imprisoned her until she agreed to this union. Her pleas for help reached Otto, who invaded Italia, freed Adelaide, and, being a widower himself due to the death of his first wife, Edith, he married Adelaide himself. He declared himself King of Italia and King of the Langobardi.

Otto returned to Germania with his new bride, having subdued Berenger II sufficiently—and as it turned out, only temporarily—to ensure he would pay him tribute. Rebellion from within and attacks from without were what awaited the bridal pair upon their return. Even Otto's son, Duke Ludolf of Swabia, was conspiring with his father's enemies. It was only when the threat of an eventual Magyar victory united the bickering factions to join forces that the Magyars were defeated at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955 A.D. Berenger II had not given up his dream of control over northern Italia and resumed his cantankerous activities against Otto's forces and those of the Pope, John XII. Pope John sent a petition to Otto for assistance, and Otto once again obliged, travelling himself to Roma, where he was crowned by the Pope as Holy Roman Emperor on the 2nd of February, 962 A.D. Adelaide was at his side and was crowned Empress.

Otto was no less hungry for power than any nobleman at the time, and the title of Holy Roman Emperor gave him all the more reason to assume that he could exert that power over both temporal and ecclesiastical matters. The

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Popes and all those who were part of The Church hierarchy wanted protectors who did their bidding and deferred to them in all religious matters, especially in the naming of cardinals and bishops, and preferably in all temporal matters as well. Otto proved to be as unmanageable by The Church as he was obliging to come to its aid. While Otto was engaged in battle with the belligerent Berenger, Pope John was conspiring to have Otto dethroned. Otto learned of John's treachery, returned to Roma and summarily relieved him of his papal duties. He installed a new Pope, Leo VIII, a man more to his liking. A year later, the citizens of Roma revolted and re-installed John, who died shortly after his return to the Papacy. Otto immediately placed Leo firmly back on the papal throne and that was that.

Otto unsuccessfully tried to gain control over the southern provinces of Italia, but he did manage to achieve a diplomatic victory by creating an alliance between his Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire through the marriage in 972 A.D. of his son, Otto II, to a Greek princess, Theophanu, the niece of the Eastern Roma Emperor, John I Tzimiskes. Otto the Great died in 973 A.D. and was succeeded by his son, Otto II, who ruled until 983 A.D., and his grandson, Otto III, the son of Otto II and Theophanu, who reigned until 1002 A.D. Henry II, also known as Henry the Holy, followed Otto III. He was Otto's cousin and was the last of the Saxon Ottonian line. When he died in 1024 A.D. with no children, apparently because both he and his wife, Cunigunde of Luxembourg, had taken a vow of chastity, the crowns of Germania and Italia and the title of Holy Roman Emperor passed to Conrad II, the first of four kings and emperors in the Salian or Frankish Dynasty who held the crowns for the next one hundred years: Conrad II, Henry III, Henry IV and finally Henry V, who died in 1125 A.D.



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There was a problem that the Langobardi in Benevento had difficulty resolving. On the one hand, they wanted to be rid of the Eastern Roman Empire, and this was best accomplished through a union with the newly anointed Holy Roman Emperor. On the other hand, they did not want to be dominated by or united with the Holy Roman Empire, and this was best accomplished by conspiring with the Eastern Roman Empire. Not being able to resolve this conflict, they simply quarreled and did battle with their closest neighbors, principally the principalities of Napoli and Salerno.

Since their arrival on the peninsula, the Langobardi had looked for allies who were somewhat close to them in appearance and disposition. Although centuries had passed since they invaded, conquered and settled the peninsula, and they had integrated their culture with that of the people who had preceded them, they were still people of the northern lands with fair skin, red or blonde hair and a trust in their ancient gods more than in their adopted God. When the Normans arrived in the later part of the tenth century, it must have felt like their prayers to the Norse gods had been answered.

The Normans were descendants of Vikings who invaded and took control of northwestern Francia. It seems they discovered southern Italy by chance. It is said that in 999 A.D. Norman pilgrims who had been in The Holy Land stopped in the port of Salerno. While they were there, the city was attacked by Saracens. The Normans fought alongside the Langobardi prince and after they helped to defeat the attackers, the prince asked them to stay and become part of his army. They declined, but when they returned to Francia they told stories about the prospects in the southern Mediterranean. Seventeen years later a group of Norman pilgrims to the shrine of Sant'Angelo de Monte Gargano were persuaded by the Langobardi freedom fighter, Melus of Bari, to accompany him back to Bari to help him defeat the Byzantine rulers.

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In 1029 A.D., Duke Sergius IV of Napoli gave the leader of the Normans, Rainulf Drengot, the fortress of Aversa, and this served as their first base from which they expanded their influence and holdings. A minor nobleman in Normandy, Tancred of Hauteville, sent a succession of his sons to the region, starting with William Iron-Arm, Drogo and Humphrey, and later Robert Guiscard and Roger. They were nothing more than bandits, and the Longobardi as well as the Pope, Leo IX, decided that they had overstayed their welcome. The Normans proved to be no easy match. They defeated the Pope's forces and continued their conquests. They took Sicilia, Malta, Apulia, Calabria and Capua.

Showing the shrewd judgment that had kept the Popes and their Church at the head of the ecclesiastical world, Pope Nicholas II decided to convert the Normans to allies. The Church feared the Eastern Empire more than any other force. The Eastern Church was under the Eastern Emperor's direct control, and the Popes had neither influence nor jurisdiction over the people in the East. Nicholas II invested Robert Guiscard with Apulia, Calabria and Sicily, and his brother Roger with Capua. This occurred on the 23rd of August 1059 A.D. in Melfi, the town that the Normans had made their capital. The Norman conquests continued until the Greeks were finally driven from the peninsula. The Church and the Norman rulers of the southern lands lived in a symbiotic relationship until 1130, when Pope Honorius II died and two Popes, whose families were enemies, were elected by the rival forces. A commission of eight men elected Cardinal Gregory Papareschi as Innocent II, and another group of cardinals elected Cardinal Pietro Pierleoni as Anacletus II. Innocent left Roma and went directly to seek the help of the Holy Roman Emperor, Lothair III, the Supplinburger who had succeeded the last Salian Emperor, Henry V, in 1125 A.D. The dispute between the rival Popes did not end until Anecletus died in 1138 A.D.

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In 1130 A.D., Roger Guiscard's son, Roger II, was crowned by the Anacletus II, as King of the Kingdom of Sicily that encompassed all of the lands south of the Papal States, including the islands of Sicilia, Malta and Gozo. Innocent II did not accept this coronation as valid, and supported several attempts by Lothair to remove Roger and take all of the Norman lands. After the death of Anecletus and Innocent's ascendancy to the sole Pope, he led forces himself against Roger, only to be captured by Roger's son, also named Roger, Duke of Apulia, who forced him in 1139 A.D. to sign the Treaty of Mignano, acknowledging his father's kingship and his possessions.

The Normans proved to be capable governors. They took the best practices of their predecessors, the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and Langobardi, and combined these practices with their own tradition of feudal law. They created a society that was unique in many ways. Its people had religious freedom unequalled in any other region in the occidental part of the world. While the Norman nobles were the highest class, and the Roman Catholic Church was their religion, all of the region's citizens, including Jews and Muslims and Byzantine Catholics, were given the chance to participate in the administrative bureaucracy. But their rule was short-lived. It ended in 1194 A.D. This was not due to a loss on the battlefield, nor to the treachery of one or another ruler, including the Pope. No, it was simply a matter of the Norman ruling family dying out.

After Roger II came his son, William I of Sicily. He ruled until 1166 A.D. When he died, his son William II was a minor and did not assume the throne until 1172 A.D. The period of the regency was tumultuous, but the time of his rule, until his death in 1189 A.D., was peaceful and prosperous for the kingdom. He died without a single heir. The power vacuum was filled in 1194 A.D. by the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI, whose wife, Constance, was the daughter of Roger II. Henry was the second in the

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Hohenstaufen line to inherit the title Holy Roman Emperor. The first in the dynasty was Frederick I Barbarossa, who led his army to the Holy Land in the Third Crusade and died along the way in 1190 A.D when his horse stumbled while crossing the Saleph River.

In the same year that Henry VI took the Kingdom of Sicily, his wife, who was now forty years of age, gave birth to a boy, who, as Frederick II, would take the title of King of Sicily in 1197 A.D., so the blood line of the Norman Guiscards continued.



“Do you see now that the receiving end of your family’s eventual journey, southern Italia, has gradually been preparing itself for their arrival?” said Signore Di Sangue. “It became a kingdom, what we today would call a country, rather than a collection of cities with no-man’s-land in between. What remained to complete the picture were for conditions to be right on the sending end, Hispania, and for a logical connection between both sides.”

“Let me see if I have been following this very complicated story,” said Michele. “First Charlemagne is crowned Emperor of Roma, then Otto is given the even more impressive title of Holy Roman Emperor. They more or less control what is now Francia and Germania and northern Italia. The Roman Catholic Church controls the middle of Italia and is now a leader of an army as well as a religion, and it seems that its main goals are to take control over the former eastern provinces of the old Roman Empire and to regain control from the Muslims over what is now Spagna and Portugal. The southern portion of Italia is in the hands of the Greeks, the Byzantines, Langobardi and finally the Normans. Once it is unified by the Normans, it becomes part of the Holy Roman Empire, just like the northern part. Is that right?”

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“So far, so good,” replied Signore Di Sangue, obviously pleased that his young friend was not only an attentive listener but also had a talent for analytical thinking. “There are two important things to keep in mind. The first is that the Popes were never happy unless they had total control. The second is that the Popes decided when power was to be given and when it was to be taken away. The marriage in 1186 A.D. of Henry VI to Constance, who had been in a convent when she was betrothed at the age of thirty, was not approved of by Pope Celestine III. It gave Henry a claim on the Kingdom of Sicily, which as we have seen, he took. A southern Italia united with the lands held by the Holy Roman Emperor was a threat. The Church benefitted from the tension between a Norman controlled region on their southern border and the subdued Langobardi region on their northern border, which was kept under control by the Emperor whom the Popes had designated.”

“If the Emperor had too much power, the Pope would have trouble getting him to do his bidding, you mean?” offered Michele.

“Precisely!” exclaimed Signore Di Sangue.

“Why did Henry choose to marry a nun?” asked Michele. “He must have had his pick of women.”

“Oh no, Constance was not a nun,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “She was placed in a convent because her father died before she was born and her mother was dependent on the good graces of her husband’s family. They apparently took their time with finding her a husband. It was also common to marry off the first daughter with a fine dowry and then to send the rest of the daughters to a convent where they would supposedly stay out of trouble until a suitor could be found. Convents were lively places back then, my young friend, filled with young women who did not have a calling and tried

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to make the best of a life in what was from their point of view a prison, but we shall not digress into that part of history just yet.

“Henry VI died when little Frederick was only three. Frederick’s mother had him crowned King of Sicily, and she succeeded in breaking the ties between him and the Empire. Her ambition was to recover the Kingdom of Sicily for the Normans and to separate it forever from the Germans and the vestiges of the Roman Empire. She placed Frederick under the guardianship of the Pope, Innocent III, in order to shield him from the power struggles that surrounded them, and she restored some of the powers to The Church which the Norman kings had claimed as theirs in order to maintain their autonomy. Constance died in 1198 A.D., and for a period it appeared that The Church was firmly in control of the southern kingdom.

“But as often happens, the child who is most closely guarded becomes the most insubordinate as he grows older. He was well educated by his papal tutor, Cencio, who became Pope Honorius III. Frederick spoke many languages, became known as *Stupor mundi*, ‘the wonder of the world’. He also became a source of trouble for The Church. He was, quite simply, too smart for his own good. He became a religious skeptic, questioning the scriptures, claiming that the prophets, including Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, either did not exist or were not who they claimed to be. At fourteen, in 1209 A.D. he married a twenty-five-year-old widow. The marriage was arranged by his guardian, presumably to settle him down. His bride, named Constance like his mother, was the daughter of the King of Aragon from a lineage of Visigoths. This connection across the sea to Hispania will be important. Constance bore Frederick a son, named Henry, and she died in 1222.”

“How did Frederick manage to escape from being punished by The Church?” asked Michele in amazement.

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“His former tutor protected him until he himself died in 1216 A.D. The Pope and Emperor Otto IV of Brunswick, who preceded Frederick as Holy Roman Emperor, could perhaps ignore his blasphemies and outrageous behavior, like wearing a mantle with an Arabic inscription at his coronation, but his political actions began to attract critical attention. Not only did he not remove all traces of the Saracens in Sicilia, but he allowed them to move to the mainland, establish communities and build mosques. He brought them into his army and made them his personal guards. He is also said to have had a harem. The successor to Innocent, Honorius III, crowned Frederick Holy Roman Emperor in 1220 A.D. in Roma and Frederick’s son, Henry, took the title of King of the Romans, but then things began to go horribly wrong.

“Frederick had promised his former tutor, the new Pope, that once he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor he would separate the Kingdom of Sicily from the empire and place it under the control of his son. When the coronation was over, the new Emperor reneged on his promise. He also delayed honoring his promise to lead a crusade to the Holy Land, which incensed the Pope. Frederick angered him further by claiming full sovereignty over the northern Italian states of Lombardia. Honorius died in March of 1227 A.D. and was succeeded by Gregory IX, who had no bonds to the Emperor as guardian or tutor. He pushed Frederick to honor his promise to lead a crusade, but when he finally set out for the Holy Land in August of 1227 A.D., he took ill and returned. The Pope had him excommunicated for his troubles. This was the first of four excommunications. At one point, the Pope referred to him as an anti-Christ.

“So I ask again, why wasn’t he captured and executed?” repeated Michele.

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“Frederick was both good and bad for the Kingdom of Sicily and for The Church. He ruled the Empire from Palermo, Sicily following his coronation and began to institute reforms that on the one hand reduced the power of the nobles and on the other improved the well being of his subjects. His administrative reforms, fostering of trade and commerce and patronage of the arts and science brought prosperity to the region. He was a firm supporter of the Roman rituals and abided no heresies, save his own. But his self-destructive and arrogant behavior, and his constant battles with the Pope, led to the eventual downfall of the Hohenstaufen line and a diminished regard for the papal office. Frederick and Pope Gregory were at war, with their armies fighting each other for several years. Frederick had seized the Papal States and was attacking Roma when Gregory died in 1241 A.D. Gregory’s successor, Innocent IV, fled the capital in 1244 A.D. for Lyon where he deposed Frederick at the Council of Lyon in 1245 A.D. In the following year. Frederick’s younger son, Conrad IV, whose mother was Yolanda, Queen of Jerusalem, whom Frederick had married following the death of Constance, was elected King of Germania. But things began to go against him throughout his dominion until his death in 1250 A.D. of dysentery.”

“What a simple way to die for such an important man,” reflected Michele.

“Disease does not recognize the cut of a man or woman’s cloth,” replied Signore Di Sanguie. “Conrad IV died a short four years after inheriting the crowns of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Kingdom of Sicily. The opportunity for the Normans to reclaim the Kingdom that they had created was past, and the door was opened for the region to be ruled from afar. It would not be long before someone walked through that door, with the Pope, once again, extending the invitation.”

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1099 A.D

The three priests arrived in the town late on the afternoon of the sabbath during the first weeks of spring. They were dressed in black robes, and each wore a hooded cape to keep out the chill that was still in the air. Snow had fallen this winter, and it had been colder than Miguel could ever remember in all of his forty-seven years. This he remarked to his wife, Cristina, on many occasions. “*Yes,*” she would say patiently each time, “*It is colder than I ever remember as well.*” Accompanying the priests were several dozen soldiers and twice as many men, women and children.

Every day for a week the three priests would emerge from the dwelling the soldiers had commandeered. They could be seen walking through the village, often stopping and whispering amongst themselves. One of them, the youngest and smallest—although each was at least double the girth of the largest man in the village—would take out a thin piece of charcoal that was wrapped in paper tied with thin leather straps and make a note in a book with empty pages that he carried. Then they would continue their inspection.

The purpose of the priests was to identify those villagers who would be displaced by Franks who had come with the priests and soldiers. This had been expected by the villagers. They had heard of the practice from other villages in the regions that had been reconquered from the Moors. After more than three hundred years of living under the rule of Islam, could any of these people really be trusted to follow the ways of the Holy Mother Church, the Frankish bishops asked.

Miguel was worried. “What can they possibly find?” said Cristina, trying to ease her husband’s mind. “We are all good Christians in this village. We

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lived at peace with the Moors, but we never took their religion. We have no *moriscos*, except for the two children, whom The Church must treat mercifully. We have no *conversos*. The Jew who came here when we arrived became one of us, didn't he? Isn't that the story we have been told? We follow the laws of The Church, each and every one of us," she added, and then blessed herself three times for good measure.

"We do, my wife," replied Miguel, "in ways we learned from our fathers and mothers. But I have talked with our good priest, Don Pedro, and he has told me that some of our traditions might be questioned by The Church."

"Which ones?" demanded Cristina, lowering her eyebrows, signaling her disbelief that such could be the case.

"Here is one example," replied Miguel. "Each of our homes has a small cross on the outside frame of the entrance door. The crosses are all made of copper with no inscription, just two holes on the top and bottom of the longest piece. These crosses are always fixed to the frame on the right side of the door at a man's shoulder height. No one knows exactly when they were made. They have been handed down through the generations, each family having dozens of similar crosses to give to their children when they build a new home."

"Is this unusual?" questioned Cristina. "Don't all Christians place crosses at the entrances to their homes?"

"Don Pedro says that he has never seen them in any other place in all of his travels to Madrid and Barcelona," answered Miguel.

"Can this be bad?" queried Cristina, adding a nervous laugh. Her husband was beginning to cause her now to worry. But she refused to show any signs of doubt in the villagers' devoutness. "We have found a way to honor Our Lord in a way that should be copied by all Christians."

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“Perhaps,” said Miguel, but the look on his face showed clearly that he was concerned that the three inquisidors would not see things in quite the same way. Don Pedro had told him that Jews nailed a small case made of wood or metal to their door frames. His good friend Nicolau had one that he kept in the pouch which was always tied around his waist inside his garments. He showed it to Miguel many years ago when they were young boys up in the mountains tending their sheep. Nicolau made Miguel promise under pain of death never to tell anyone about it. It had a strange name, which Miguel could not remember.

“Is there anything else, my good husband?” asked Cristina, trying to add a sense of levity to the air, which was decidedly heavy.

“We pray too often,” he replied.

“Surely this cannot be considered sinful!” gasped Cristina. “We say the Angelus five times each day. Can that be too often?”

“Don Pedro says that the Angelus is said one, two or sometimes three times each day, but not five,” answered Miguel. “And we always face east when we kneel. That is not necessary.”

“Are we not facing toward the cross where Our Lord Jesus was crucified?”

Miguel nodded. Don Pedro had told him that the Moors prayed five times each day. It was their obligation. Surely the Inquisidors would understand that during all the years of rule by the men of Islam, some of their traditions and practices would affect those of the people they governed.

“And then there are the eating habits,” continued Miguel.

“What can possibly be wrong with the way we eat?” demanded Cristina.

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“We keep no pigs and eat not of them. We separate all that is made with the milk from our cows and goats from the meat of these and other animals. We fast for forty days before Easter as all Christians do, and once again for thirty days after the harvest. The second fast seems to come from the practice of the Moors, what they called Ramadhan.”

“The story of why we do not eat from the pig is told to every child when they are old enough to understand,” replied Cristina. “We were taught by the wandering Jew how to survive in the hot and arid land that we fled to from our homes in the north country. He taught us other skills that helped us to turn this piece of barren earth into a fertile paradise that has sustained us for nearly six hundred years.”

“As for the fasting,” continued Cristina, “we have been told by our priests that the bible says the truly holy fast every day of the year, not just during special times like Lent. Fasting focuses the mind and brings us closer to God. Should we be punished for this, even if we use a tradition from another religion?”

“We will have an answer to that question quite soon, my dear wife,” offered Miguel. “Quite soon.”

Sunday morning, the bells rang as they always did in the early morning. By the time the bells stopped ringing, all the families had awoken, knelt as they always did facing toward the east, and were ready to be led in prayer by the head of the household. With Cristina, their two boys and two girls kneeling, Miguel led them in the Angelus.

V/. Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ,

R/. Et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.

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Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen.

V/. "Ecce Ancilla Domini."

R/. "Fiat mihi secundum Verbum tuum."

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen.

V/. Et Verbum caro factum est.

R/. Et habitavit in nobis.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen.

V/. Ora pro nobis, Sancta Dei Genetrix.

R/. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

Oremus: Gratiam tuam quæsumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde; ut qui, angelo nuntiante, Christi Filii tui Incarnationem cognovimus, per passionem eius et crucem, ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Later in the morning, the families gathered in their church. The three Dominican priests sat in chairs on the left side of the altar where Don Pedro said mass. When the mass was over, the eldest of the priests came to the front of the altar. He spoke: "My brothers and I have finished our work. Your village has strayed into heresy, but we have concluded that it has happened over a very long period of time. No one will be charged with leading you into sin, but each of you must confess and repent if you will be

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led back from the abyss. Your priest, Don Pedro, will be reassigned to another parish after he retakes his vows. He should have been more diligent in enforcing the laws of The Church and not have allowed you to continue with your pagan traditions.”

The middle priest took over: “It is your solidarity that has fostered these conditions. You have passed your practices from father to son, from mother to daughter. This cycle will now be broken. We know there are true non-believers among you, those who have continued to hold to their forbidden religions in private while publicly professing belief in the one true faith. *Conversos*, *Moriscos* and *Marranos*, you know who you are. You will have the next thirty days to come forward. Those of you who do and who freely allow yourselves to be baptized will be forgiven. Those of you who do not will be punished and then banished to a place outside of these lands that are consecrated in God’s name.”

Miguel knew what a *converso* and a *morisco* was, as well as a *marrano*. *Morisco* was Spanish meaning "Moor-like". Originally it was used to describe someone who was a Catholic but who was originally of Muslim heritage. Over time the term was also used to label someone who seemed to practice Catholicism but who secretly practicing Islam. Converted Jews were called *conversos*, and those who were suspected to be secretly holding on to Judaism were called *marranos*.

When the mass was over they returned to their homes. As Miguel opened the door he saw that the small cross that he had nailed to the frame when he moved in with his new bride was gone. The two small nail holes were visible, and there was a sliver taken out of the frame as from a knife that had been placed under the cross to remove it by force. He looked at the door frames of his neighbors. Their crosses were also gone. The next day, Miguel received a visit from one of the soldiers. He was told that his family

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would be moved to a place in Barcelona. Fifty of the families in the village would come with him. They should count themselves lucky, said the soldier, because those who stayed would be no more than slaves to the Franks who would now move into the empty houses.

The families that would move were given a few days to gather up those belongings they could carry on their backs and in the few carts they shared. Cristina tried to keep a smiling face for the sake of the children, but she wept herself to sleep each night. The home she had made together with Miguel would be abandoned to strangers who did nothing to deserve it and who would give them no recompense. Which of the gods had she angered, she wondered. She had always placed the Christian God first, gave Him the most valuable offerings, even when Allah was the God of those who ruled their lives. Why would the Christian God send His priests and soldiers to persecute them? Most of the families were neither *moriscos* nor *conversos*, but now she understood how they felt. These priests and soldiers, and the bishops or kings who sent them, were not following the words and teachings of Christ. They were making up a new set of rules to fuel their own selfish vanities. Cristina silently cursed them and said a prayer that one of her gods, if there was one who was still listening, would punish the evil deeds of these horrible men.

All of the families who were being forced to leave gathered in the center of the village at dawn on the appointed day. A dozen soldiers had been assigned to accompany them, to see to it that they did not stray off course, and to lead them to the place where they would start their lives once again. They walked for several days. There was not enough room in the wagons for all of the old and infirm, and in spite of the forceful prodding of the soldiers to move at a quicker pace, the emigrants walked at the speed of their slowest members. Still, some of their numbers died along the way. As was the custom, they were buried as soon after their death as it was possible to

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prepare the grave. The graves were marked with a pile of stones arranged into a pyramid so that one day the villagers could return to pay their proper respects. The soldiers bore the weight of the silent curses that rained down upon them, and each of them, one after the other, climbed down from their horses after the second death so that the weak could ride instead.

After ten days they reached their destination, a small hill on the western edge of the city of Barcelona.



Is it possible that men can be so cruel, especially holy men, men who supposedly serve the Lord? By what right does a man of one religion persecute a man of another? If we are certain that only those of our religion will find eternal happiness in heaven, what is the purpose of killing those who are already doomed to eternal damnation? How sad it must have been to be forced to leave their homes after they had been liberated from the Moors. They must have wished the Moors would come back and rescue them from the reconquerors.

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September 9, 1896 A.D.

8:30 a.m.

ON THE NINTH DAY the seas were once again calm. Michele said a small prayer asking that the waters remain as they were now for the rest of the journey. Even as he said this prayer, he doubted that it would be heard, or if it was heard, that it would be answered. There were millions of people sailing on seas all around the world asking for the same gift every minute of every day, he thought. He did not suppose that anyone prayed for storms and rough seas, but the storms came and the seas rolled. Were the storms the natural course of nature and the calm times the result of all those prayers, he wondered? Or did nature follow Her own mind, not heeding the pleadings of the meaningless creatures who walked the earth?

“The ocean has its own mind, my young friend,” said Signore Di Sangué as he joined Michele at the rail.

“How could you hear my thoughts?” asked Michele.

“When a man looks out over the still waters he is usually searching for peace,” replied Signore Di Sangué. “Depending on the age of the man, he is either seeking peace for the soul, the heart or the stomach. At your age, it cannot be the soul, and since you are engaged, it cannot be the heart. What is left is the stomach.”

“Right, as usual, Signore Di Sangué,” replied Michele. “I have a question for you on this fine morning. Last evening, as I returned to my quarters, I overheard two of the seamen talking to each other. One said to the other that he had seen a whale “breek” off the starboard’ while he was on his watch. What does that mean?”

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“I am certain that the seaman meant to say ‘breach’, like in *ciao*, not like in *che*,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “The word has many meanings, most of them having to do with breaking. The whale broke through the surface of the water. It ‘breached’. Now, as for ‘starboard’, it is an old seaman’s term referring to the right side of the ship when standing on the deck and looking forward, toward the bow. The left side is called the ‘port’ side.”

“They looked for stars on the right and drank port on the left?” laughed Michele.

Signore Di Sangue laughed as well. “Good guess, Michele. Like many of the words in the English language, they come from another language and get changed over the years so that their history is lost. It is a lot like people, like you and your family, for instance. But we will get back to your story in a short while. The ‘star’ in the word came from the people in northern Europe called Vikings. It meant ‘steer’, and the ‘board’ referred to the oar that was used to steer. Since most of us now, and even back in the time of the Vikings over one thousand years ago, are right-handed, the steering oar was placed over the back of the boat on the right hand side.”

“Are you making this up as you go along?” asked Michele.

“I would not be able to weave such a complicated tale, so I must be telling the truth,” said Signore Di Sangue with a chuckle.

“Since the steering oar was on the right, boats were moored along their left side. This is the loading side, and the old Viking term for that was ‘lar’. So ‘larboard’ was the left side. The two words sounded too much alike, and rather than confuse them, the word ‘port’ was substituted, referring to the dock. To keep the terms straight, just remember this: ‘The ship left the port.’ ‘Port’ and ‘left’ each have four letters.

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“There is one more thing to remember about these two terms. When two ships are crossing paths, the rule is that the ship on the left must give way. That means if the ship is off your port side, you have the right-of-way. If the ship is off your starboard side, you must give way.”

“I will remember that the next time I am captaining a ship,” joked Michele.

“Your people have always felt more comfortable on land,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “This is only your third voyage.”

“I guess that the first one was when my family traveled from Spagna to Italia,” interjected Michele. “Am I correct?”

“No,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “That was the second.”

“When was the first?” asked Michele. “Did we stop along the way in Sardegna or Sicilia?”

“No, you went directly to Napoli,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “The first one was made by only one member of your family, as you soon shall hear.”



At its greatest extent, Islamic rule covered all of the Iberian Peninsula except for the northern extremities of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the country of the Basques. As the Muslims attempted to push further north into Francia, the Franks led what became known as the *Reconquista*, or ‘reconquest’. One of the first major areas to be retaken from the Muslims was Barcelona.

Less than half a century after it was established over Hispania, the Emirate of Cordoba began to decline. It was weakened by defeats at the hands of its enemies, but also by internal strife and rebellions. The original

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Umayyad Dynasty was overthrown and replaced by the Abbasids. Most of the Umayyads were slaughtered, but one of their leaders, Abd ar-Rahman, escaped to Northern Africa and later returned to reclaim the title of Emir of Cordoba. He was disliked by many of the provincial rulers. The northern provinces of the Emirate, including Zaragoza, Girona, Barcelona and Huesca, sent envoys to Charlemagne in 777 A.D. to ask for his assistance in defeating Abd ar-Rahman in return for their oath of allegiance and payment of homage. Charlemagne agreed and led a force over the Pyrenees in 779 A.D. His forces met strong resistance and he eventually retreated back over the mountains. His rear guard was attacked and destroyed at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass. Twenty-one years passed before Charlemagne's son, Louis, led another army over the Pyrenees and attacked the city of Barcelona. Following a two-year siege, the city capitulated on the 28th of December, 801 A.D.

Barcelona grew in strength and influence over the surrounding region and became the de facto capital of the Frankish-controlled areas. In 948 A.D. Count Borrel II declared Barcelona's independence from Francia, stating that the Capets were not legitimate rulers of Francia and therefore they could not be the rulers of Barcelona. This independence continued and the city expanded its rule over the whole region of Catalonia. In 1137 A.D., when the *Reconquista* had resulted in the capture of more than one-half of the peninsula, the Principality of Catalonia, of which Barcelona was the capital, merged with the Kingdom of Aragon, which included Huesca and Zaragoza. This was achieved through the marriage of Ramon Berenguer IV, Count of Barcelona, and Petronilla of Aragon. At the time of the marriage, Petronilla was one year old. Their son Alfonso II of Aragon ascended to the throne in 1162 A.D., using both the titles of Count of Barcelona and King of Aragon. His territories were later to be known as the Crown of Aragon which conquered many overseas possessions, ruling the western Mediterranean Sea

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with outlying territories in Napoli and Sicily and as far as Athens in the thirteenth century. With Alfonso II's marriage to Sancha of Castile, sister of the Castilian king, he opened the way for the eventual merger of the two kingdoms. That would come three centuries later.



"We seem to be stuck in the eleventh and twelfth centuries," joked Michele.

"Yes," replied Signore Di Sangue, "and with good reason. We won't be leaving it until we have studied two more very important events: the controversy over investitures, and The Crusades."

"I suppose that these two events were related and that the Popes played a major role in both?" said Michele, stating it as a question but leaving no doubt that he already knew the answer.

"Correct," intoned Signore Di Sangue.

"What does 'investiture' mean?" asked Michele.

"It means 'installation'," replied Signore Di Sangue, "and referred to the assignment of a cleric to his duties. As you will come to see in your new homeland, those politicians who give people jobs are the ones who have the most power. They hold the job-taker's life in their hands. They can demand tribute in the form of money or votes or both. He who hands out the greatest number of jobs is the one with the most power and the one who holds the highest office. The Church, like governments, creates jobs. The job titles are priest, abbot, bishop, cardinal and, ultimately, Pope. The Pope is a cardinal who is elected by his fellow cardinals. In this period of The Church's history where we are spending a great deal of time, the cardinal who was elected was not necessarily the holiest or the one that the other cardinals felt would be best at forming Church doctrine. He was the one

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who had the most influence from both a political and financial perspective. Part of that influence was related to how much control the family of the eventual Pope had over the rise of the other cardinals.”

“I did not realize before that the Popes had their own armies,” reflected Michele, “but I guess if the Muslims were waging wars, and there were different groups even inside of Christianity that were converting people to their ways of thinking after conquering them, it would make sense to fight fire with fire.”

“Correct, my friend,” replied Signore Di Sanguie. “The Popes felt they needed to wield secular power if they were to maintain their hold on the souls of the people. But the Emperors and the various kings in the realm of The Church had just as much reason to want to control the appointments of spiritual servants to their posts as they did to the appointments of their worldly servants. In addition to earning money by selling the posts, a practice known as ‘simony’, there were very good security reasons for making the appointments themselves. As you have seen, life at the top was dangerous. Conspiracies and murder plots were commonplace, especially within the leaders’ innermost circles. It was of utmost importance that a leader had people around him whom he could trust. Allowing a bishop or cardinal in the court who was appointed by the Pope was viewed as a sign of weakness since the cleric owed his allegiances first and foremost to the Pope, not the regent.

“The Church hierarchy seemed to accept the practice of secular appointments, but a group of clergy, called the Gregorian Reform, decided that the practice was sinful and determined that it should be The Church, not the secular leaders, who appointed church officials. They understood that reform had to start at the top, with the appointment of the Pope being taken totally out of the hands of the Emperor. As we have seen, if an Emperor did

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not like how a Pope was running things, he would simply appoint a replacement. The reformers saw their chance in 1056 A.D. when a six-year-old Henry IV became the King of Germania. They prepared a doctrine that was passed at a Church council in 1059 A.D. stating that secular leaders could not participate or play any role in the selection of the Pope. They created the College of Cardinals which, as a body made up entirely of Church officials, had the sole right of papal selection. Once this right was established, they began to take on the wider task of gaining control over all Church official selections.

“Once the Pope felt free of interference by the Holy Roman Emperor in his own affairs, he decided to re-exert his influence over the affairs of the Emperor. Pope Gregory VII declared in 1075 A.D., in what was called the *Dictatus Papae*, that deposing an Emperor was the sole prerogative of the Pope. He claimed that papal power, which had been delivered to the Roman Church by God, was the sole universal power. Another decree came out of the Lateran Council held in the same year stating that only the Pope could appoint and depose Church officials and move them from one diocese to another.

When Henry IV reached an age at which he could rule, he ignored these investiture rules and continued to appoint his own Church officials. He informed the Pope in a letter in which he referred to the Pope as a ‘false monk’, that he, Henry, could no longer give his unconditional support to the Pope. He called for the election of a new Pope. Henry’s installation of his own Bishop of Milano to compete with a bishop whom the Pope had already appointed led to the Pope, Gregory VII, excommunicating Henry in 1076 A.D. and deposing him as the King of Germania.”

“What did Henry do then?” relishing the idea of a battle between the two men of ultimate influence.

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“At first he ignored the Pope,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “But when the German aristocracy began siding with the Pope, using the Emperor’s excommunication as a pretext to disobey laws that he had passed concerning local jurisdiction over properties and the peasants, Henry saw his position severely weakened. In 1077 A.D., in the middle of winter, he met the Pope in northern Italy in a town called Canossa, where he gave the Pope a public apology and performed a humiliating act of contrition, donning a hairshirt and standing barefoot in the freezing snow. Gregory lifted the excommunication, but as soon as Henry and Gregory were reconciled, Henry appointed a rival Pope, called an ‘AntiPope’. His name was Clement III. Henry’s rivals then elected their own King of Germania, Rudolf von Rheinfeld, and the battle lines were drawn. Henry prevailed over his German rivals and captured and killed Rudolf in 1081 A.D., but when he attacked Roma in 1083 A.D., Gregory called in the Normans from southern Italy who drove back Henry. In the process of protecting Gregory, the Normans sacked Roma. The citizens of Roma blamed Gregory for their misery and rebelled. The Normans retaliated by setting fire to buildings on the Capitoline and Palatine hills, and eventually subdued the populace.

“Finally,” continued Signore Di Sangue, “in 1122 A.D. at a meeting that was called the Concordat of Worms, a compromise agreement was reached to eliminate investiture by secular leaders while still allowing secular leaders to have influence on the appointment process, but in an unofficial manner.”

“It sounds like they decided to keep doing what they had been doing all along except that they would do it in a different way,” commented Michele.

“That’s usually the result of a successful negotiation and a compromise agreement,” said Signore Di Sangue. “Nevertheless, the Popes and The Church were the clear benefactors of the controversy and its outcome. The Popes grew in strength and exerted a stronger influence over the nobility and

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the populace. A true test of the Pope's strength and influence occurred in late 1095 A.D. when Pope Urban II, called Blessed Urban, travelled to the center of the Frankish Kingdom to convene a council in the town of Clermont-Ferrand."

"Before we hear about Pope Urban and leave Gregory," continued Signore Di Sangué, "there is another important point to make about this time in history. Gregory said about himself, and it is written on his tomb: 'I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile.' Two other causes he took up were 'simony', which, as I said, is the paying for sacraments and for positions in the Church, and mandatory celibacy of priests. At this time, the Church had not made celibacy an obligation for ordination, although it was encouraged. Gregory argued that priests cannot be loyal to the Church and to their wives, and that duties to family were taking precedence over duties to the Church. There was also the problem of children of priests and bishops inheriting Church property. In this way, he connected the practice of simony to marriage among priests. In 1139 A.D., Pope Innocent II declared all priests' marriages to be annulled and that celibacy was a requirement for ordination from that day forward."

"Can I ask you how a person of the Jewish faith can know so much about the popes and the Catholic Church?" requested Michele. "Have you made the study of the Catholic religion your life's work?"

"You might say that, my young friend," replied Signore Di Sangué. "The Jewish and Catholic religions are so intertwined, and my people's fate from the first century of your time has been so dependent on who was in charge of the Catholic religion that in order to understand myself and my people I have had to study your religion with the serious intensity of a one subject scholar."

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It was the last week in the eleventh month of 1095 A.D. when Pope Urban II convened a church council in the middle of the Frankish realm. In attendance were fourteen archbishops, two hundred fifty bishops, four hundred abbots and many hundreds of knights and other men. His message was that all Christians should take up arms to win back the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem that had been destroyed along with all of the Christian places of prayer and dwelling eighty-six years earlier by Hakem, the Fatimite Caliph of Egypt. In return for taking a solemn vow to make the journey to the Holy Land and meet the Muslims in battle, the soldier would receive from the hands of the Pope or one of his aids a red cross of cloth, *the crux*, to be worn on his shoulder. This would be a sign of his pledge to sacrifice his life for the cause of Christianity. The soldier received promises of eternal privileges, known as ‘indulgences’, and temporal privileges in the form of exemption from certain rules and taxes.

Urban alone had not conceived the idea for a holy war against the Muslims. The inevitability of the Christian world having to make a final stand against the Muslims, perhaps even in Roma, was growing larger with each triumph won in the name of Muhammad. The Muslims had captured and for many years had controlled Hispania, which at the time was a quarter of the Christian realm. It was not Jerusalem that was the object of the war but the religion itself. Islam had taken the battle to the heart of Christianity; Christianity would now take the battle to the heart of Islam.

Between Roma and Jerusalem was Constantinople. The Seljuk Turkmen, under the leadership of Alp Arslan, had defeated the Byzantine army at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 A.D., where the Emperor had been taken captive. The Turks had already gained control of almost all of the Byzantine Empire’s eastern provinces, including Syria and Jerusalem, and by the time of Pope Urban’s speech, not a single one of the former Christian sees in

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Asia were in the possession of Christians. Now, Constantinople was threatened. The Western and Byzantine Christian churches were still deeply divided by the schism caused in 1054 A.D. by the Byzantine Patriarch, Michael Cærularius. Cærularius initiated the break between the two churches by criticizing the practices of celibacy and the use of unleavened bread. His true aim was to place himself and his church in a position above which there was no higher power, especially not another church and its leader. Excommunicated by the Pope, he died in disgrace, but both the secular and ecclesiastical rulers of the Eastern Empire saw an advantage in continuing the official separation. Nevertheless, this did not prevent them from requesting help from the Pope and the Western Christian countries to defend them from the advancing Turkmen.

Urban was apparently eloquent and convincing on that day on the plain in Auvergne. He won the pledges of all those assembled. This was followed by him sending letters to all Christian nations to take up arms and find their way to Jerusalem. An organized plan for the First Crusade was drawn up by dukes and counts from Normandy to Southern Italia. While the major armies prepared for battle, the rabble armies, called the People's Crusade, forged eastward through the Danube valley toward Constantinople. They plundered and killed along the way, and Jews were their favorite prey. They could practice the killing of non-believers before arriving in the Holy Land and obtain free provisions in the process. At times they might offer conversion as an alternative to death by the sword. Be baptized and be saved.

Most of the soldiers of the People's Crusade, who were fully capable of murdering innocents, were no match for the Seljuk warrior. They were slaughtered when they emerged out of the Bosphorus. The Seljuks were not prepared, however, for the force of the First Crusade. Princes, dukes, counts

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and bishops led their forces to victory, recapturing Nicaea, Iconium, Kayseri, Antioch and finally to Jerusalem in 1099 A.D.



1195 A.D

Saúl, the oldest son of Cristián and Adriana, sat at the table with his family. He had just arrived home from the Third Crusade. He had been gone for six years. Now he was home. He was in his twenty-fourth year, but he appeared to be much older. He talked quietly. Saúl had been at the side of a third level nobleman all the way to Palestina and during the Battle of Asruf, until the noble was killed. The nobleman, Count Damien, was the cousin of the Frankish Duke of Barcelona. He was killed at the battle of Asruf, and partly as a result of this, Saúl was not able to return home when the last ships of the Third Crusade left Palestina.

It was not the usual practice for the son of a craftsman to accompany a nobleman to the Holy Land to do battle with the Saracens. Count Damien decided to make an exception. For many years, the Count had had all of his shoes made by Cristián Sena, as his father before him had his shoes made by Cristián's father. The Count often came to Cristián's shop to see his shoes being made and to test the fit. He was always pleased with the result. When Saúl began to work beside his father, the Count brought his son to have his shoes fit by the young apprentice, and he was not surprised when the result appeared to be of a similar level to that of the boy's father. Saúl was also steadfastly religious, assisting at mass and attending each morning before taking up the tools of his craft.

When the Count asked Cristián if he would allow his son to accompany him to Jerusalem, Cristián at first hesitated. He was honored, he said, but was it proper for a boy of non-noble birth to make the pilgrimage? The Count assured him that he would make all of the arrangements and he would

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see to it that Saúl received all of the same indulgences that were given to the other foot soldiers. Saúl could not contain his excitement when he heard that he was chosen to take part in the most important duty that a Christian could perform. He had reached his eighteenth year the week before he and the Count and several other Barcelona nobles set out on their long journey.

“When I left you all those six years ago, I followed alongside Count Damien and the other knights. We travelled to a large city on the southern coast of Francia. They called the city Massalia.¹⁸ No one knew what we would do when we reached there, if we would continue on foot all the way to Palestina, or whether we would make the journey by ship. I said that I hoped we would walk because I had never been on water before and I was sure that by the time we arrived in Palestina the war with the Saracens would be over and we would have been victorious.

“The King of Francia, whose name was Philip, was coming to Massalia. We were told that he would lead us all into battle against the Saracens. We were told the story of the second crusade and why it was so important to return to the Holy Land. The Saracens, led by the King of Syria named Saladin, had defeated the Christians in the Battle of Hattin three seasons before. He defeated the armies of Guy de Lusignan, King of Jerusalem, the armies of Raymond III of Tripoli, Prince Reginald of Chatillon, Falian of Napoli and the Knights Templars and Hospitallers. It was a terrible defeat. The captured knights were beheaded and the soldiers taken as slaves. The Holy Cross, on which our Lord was crucified, was taken to Damascus.

“We waited in a camp outside the city. Two phases of the moon passed. Then one day an army appeared. It was not King Philip as we expected, but King Richard, the Norman king of England. Philip and Richard travelled together from Vézalay in Francia to Lyon where Philip left the English. He

¹⁸ Today called Marseille

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led his army over the Alps to Genoa from where he would sail. The English would sail from Massalia directly to Messina. We were given leave to travel with the English. We boarded the ships, men and horses and enough food and water to last until we reached Messina on the island of Sicilia where we spent the winter. We did not realize that King Richard had a quarrel with the Sicilia's ruler, King Tancred. The King had imprisoned Richard's sister, Joan, who was the widow of the former king, William II. Richard demanded her release and the payment of her inheritance willed to her by her dead husband, which Tancred had withheld. Tancred was slow in reacting, and the people of Messina were incited to revolt, demanding that the foreigners leave. Richard was not disposed to grant wishes to these people, and he and the English attacked Messina, looted and burned the city. This was enough to convince Tancred to comply with Richard's demands, and we prepared to leave.

“In the spring we reloaded the ships and set sail again. In the third month of the new year, the Frankish forces, with Count Damien and myself, sailed directly to the coast of the Holy Land and the City of Acre. The English fleet left two months later. A remarkable thing happened just after they left Messina. A ship carrying King Richard's sister Joan, his newly bethrowed Berengaria of Navarre, and most of his treasure, went aground. The two women were unharmed, but they were taken prisoner by the ruler of Cyprus, Isaac Komnenos, and along with the recovered treasure, taken to the island. Richard sailed to Cyprus, recovered the treasure and claimed the island as his own. Isaac was turned over to the Knights of St. John and imprisoned, and the King and his army continued to Acre.

“The city of Acre had been under siege by the Christians for two seasons and was near its end when we arrived. The siege was led by Guy de Lusignan, who was imprisoned in Damascus after his defeat at Hattin, but released after one year. I suppose Saladin regretted not beheading him as

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well. There was no food left inside the walls of Acre, and its people were dying of starvation. The city surrendered just after we arrived and there were great celebrations amongst the nobles and lesser knights, including Count Damien. The footmen like me were given some extra food and wine, but we were kept outside the city's gates.

“Soon after the fall of Acre, King Philip returned to Francia. He had taken ill and was in poor health. He left his army under the command of one of his dukes, Hugh III, Duke of Burgundy. It was said that he and Richard quarreled often, so it was just as well that he left. Count Damien said to me that he would not consider leaving until Jerusalem was once again in the hands of the Christians, and he would not rest until the Holy Cross was returned to the Holy Sepulchre. He swore his allegiance to Hugh, as did the other Frankish nobles. Our forces were strengthened further by some soldiers of the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, who arrived without their leader. Frederick had died leading his forces on the way to the Holy Land. These Germanians were led by Frederick's son, and it was said that he carried his father's bones with him in order to bury them in the Holy Land. It seems that they had boiled the Emperor to remove the flesh from the bones.

“We were told that we would march south from Acre to Jaffa and set up our camp there to use as a base to attack Jerusalem. It was near the end of the eighth month when we began our march, and the heat of the sun was at its strongest. I learned from one of the foot soldiers who had survived the Battle of Hattin that the lack of water had beaten them more than the enemy's forces. King Richard saw to it that this same mistake would not be repeated. This was the first time I was in battle so I did not know whether the formation that King Richard placed us in was how battles were usually fought. The seasoned men said that the formation was most unusual. Over twenty thousand men moved together very close to the coast like a giant

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wagon. Out in the sea, as close to the shore as they could sail, were our ships. The cavalry were in the middle with foot soldiers and archers on the two sides. I was on the side close to the coast. My task was to move water and other supplies from the small boats that came from the ships to the soldiers and knights, and to carry the wounded to the boats so that they would not be slaughtered if the battle went against us.

“Saladin’s mounted archers attacked us constantly, but our tight formation and the deadly return of arrows from our archers kept our casualties low while reducing our enemy’s numbers. We camped each night, although our sleep was fitful due to the constant presence of tarantulas and the fear of attack from our enemies. Fourteen days passed and we were near to Jaffa on the plain called Asruf. At dawn on the fifteenth day we were called to battle by the blowing of horns. I and Count Damien were placed near the back, just ahead of the Knights Hospitaller. At the very front were the Knights Templar led by Robert de Sablé.

“When the Saracens attacked in the middle of the morning they did so to the accompaniment of screaming and shouting and banging drums and clashing symbols and blazing trumpets. I had never in my life heard such noise. My ears rang for days afterward. They were trying to unsettle us, but our leaders held us together all the while we continued to move southward toward Jaffa. For six hours we held our positions in formation. Although we were losing men and many horses, their losses were much higher. Then the rear ranks of crossbowmen began to move more slowly as they had to stop often to reload their bows to fend off the increasingly intense attacks. A space opened up between the main group and the Knights Hospitaller crossbowmen, which the enemy quickly filled, cutting them off from the rest of us.

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“I was on the side with the main group and saw how the leader of the Hospitallers, Garnier de Nablus, argued with King Richard to allow him to attack the Saracens who were killing his men on the other side of the divide. King Richard refused, but finally Garnier disobeyed Richard and attacked. The rest of the Franks followed. I ran as fast as I could to keep up with Count Damien as he thrust himself into the mass of Saracens, but soon he was in the thick of the fighting and I lost sight of him.

“Soon after this, King Richard broke the entire formation and ordered the Bretons and Angevin to attack one flank of the enemy while he led the Normans and English knights himself against the other flank. Count Damien was only fifty yards from me when I caught sight of him again. I saw his horse fall. He rose quickly to his feet and fought bravely, killing a score of Saracens with his heavy sword before he was stuck by an arrow in the back of his neck. Unfortunately, when he fell off his horse he lost his helmet.

“We routed Saladin’s army and destroyed their camp. As darkness approached, with the battle over, I returned to the place where Count Damien fell. The arrow had pierced his neck. When he fell, he broke off the pointed tip. I pulled the arrow out of his neck and removed his armor. He was a large man, as you might remember, but with the help of another foot soldier I did manage to get him up onto a horse that was standing nearby. I was still dazed by all the noise and killing that had gone on since the early morning. I placed the armor on top of him, tied it all down securely and led the horse with the Count and his armor back to our camp. I had left his purse untouched. The captain who took the Count’s body removed the pouch, reached in and gave me a few coins and told me that he would take care of everything from that point. The nobles were buried in one place, the lesser knights in another, and the foot soldiers were placed in a common grave.

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“The next day, the Saracens were given leave to return to the battlefield to retrieve their dead. It looked like there were ten times as many of their dead as there were ours. We had weakened Saladin’s army, but we had not destroyed it. There were enough men in the lands surrounding Jerusalem who could fill the saddles tomorrow of the men who had fallen in the Battle of Arsuf. Saladin had regrouped, but he lost his confidence to attack. We fortified Jaffa and only then set out for Jerusalem. The distance between Jaffa and Jerusalem could be covered in three days at a normal walking pace. Our advance was very much slower. After three phases of the moon had passed we were still not in sight of the city, and King Richard decided to pull us all back to Jaffa where we spent the winter and spring. During most of this time we worked on more fortifications to protect the city against an attack that never came.

“Our second attack on Jerusalem began in the early summer. This time we moved quickly with very little resistance and in only a few days we were able to see the Holy City. All of the men expected that we would attack immediately, but the King would not give the order. There were many meetings of the King with his generals. Someone said that the King wanted to turn toward Egypt to secure the southern territory before finally taking Jerusalem. Months passed. Then the news came with a rider from Jaffa that Saladin and his army had attacked and captured Jaffa. We tried to return to Jaffa, but Saladin’s troops had secured the best positions and our advance was slow. We reached the city but could not attack.

“Nothing happened as day turned to night and then day again. Then, one night as we slept, we were awakened and told that the King had taken many of the knights in order to prepare to attack from a different position. No one knew where he was for a few days, then one morning we saw the most spectacular sight. Many of our ships appeared in the sea. As they came closer to land, we could see the King leading the knights ashore. Waiting for

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them was Saladin's army, but the King killed one after the other, each with a single blow. Finally, those Saracens who still had their lives ran away and the battle was won. Jaffa was retaken.

"A treaty was signed allowing free access to Jerusalem by the pilgrims. The coastal areas remained under Christian control. The King left for his homeland in the tenth month of his second season in the Holy Land. The ships we had sailed with from Sicilia had returned with King Philip. The remaining ships had to return to their ports. Many of us were told that we had to remain in the Holy Land to continue to guard Jaffa. We would be relieved by fresh soldiers, they said. I had no choice but to stay.

"One day, as I walked through the small streets of Jaffa, I came upon a leatherworker's shop. I went in and asked if the owner needed an assistant. He gave me a broken sandal and asked me if I could fix it. I told him I could and went about doing it. When I was finished he asked me where I had learned my trade. I told him that our family had leatherworking in our blood since the time of Caesar. He made me his assistant right then and there.

"His name was Ismael. His wife's name was Leah. He was now a Christian, like everyone in the town. He said that his family had been forced to convert under pain of death when the Christian armies recaptured Jerusalem after four and a half centuries when Jews could live in peace. That was almost one hundred years ago, he said. 'It will not be long before the Christians lose control over these lands once again,' he said, 'and we can return to the religion of our forefathers.'

"The family had two young daughters but no sons. I had a small room at the back of the shop where I slept, and I ate with them each day after I promised Ismael and Leah not to tell anyone that they continued their Jewish eating traditions. They were surprised that a Christian knew so much about their ways. I told them that we have always lived with many traditions.

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They made me part of their family. We had as much work as we could do with all the repairs that the knights and foot soldiers needed to make to the straps on their armor and the new sandals and vests and tunics that they ordered. Every now and then a noble or knight would give me an extra coin to show his appreciation for my work. I always offered it to Ismael, but he told me to save it for the time I would return home.

“Ismael and I would often talk while we worked. He asked me about my homeland and how it was different from Jaffa. He had never been anywhere else besides Jaffa and Jerusalem. I told him that before I left for the crusade I had never been outside of our small village in Barcelona. He thought it was peculiar that the Christians were sending so many men and boys to their deaths in his land when Jerusalem was not even the center of our religion. ‘Why had we not made Jerusalem the place where the leaders of The Church sit and make their rules instead of Roma?’ he asked. ‘Why fight over it now when there are so few Christians who live here and in the surrounding lands? Many of your Christians are really Muslims and Jews just waiting to go back to our real religion,’ he said.

“I could not answer him. Although I had fought in two battles, I had not really become a soldier. I was a leather worker who hoped to one day be a master of his trade, like my father.”

Cristián smiled. Tears of joy ran down Adriana’s cheeks.

“Your bench is ready when you are ready to sit down at it,” said Cristián.

Saúl smiled and nodded in acceptance. He continued his story. “Almost two seasons passed when one of my fellow Hispaniolians came to the shop to tell me that a Venezian ship was sailing in a fortnight and they were able to take a half dozen men if we were prepared to earn our keep. There was always a place for someone who could repair all the leather strappings that broke or wore out during a journey, he said. I felt sad to leave Ismael and

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his family. We had grown fond of each other and he had come to depend on me in his shop. I was big brother to the little girls. But they understood that I had to leave. My own family waited for me and my place was with them.

“We set out from Jaffa on a fair summer day. We made many stops along the way, first in Cyprus, then in Rhodes, Athens, Malta, Palermo and Bari. Venezia was to be the final port, but we left the ship with the blessing of the priest on board and with some food and water and advice on how to reach Napoli where we would find another ship that would take us to Barcelona. There were seven of us, two Hispanolians, two Franks and three Germans. We were told it would take half a fortnight to reach Napoli if we walked steadily each day. It took much longer, first because it was very difficult walking with many hills, and second because we lost our way and arrived at a town we had difficulty leaving. We met a monk on the main road who warned that there was a band of robbers, three times our number, half a day behind him. He told us to turn off the road to the south and to follow that road through the hills. Eventually, he said, we would come back to the main road well past the place where robbers were located.

“We seemed to be heading deeper into the hills and after two days of walking we were completely lost. Then we caught sight of a fortress and decided that it was our only hope of finding our way. We were met at the gate of the fortress by soldiers who took our weapons and led us into the compound. It was difficult to understand what the men were saying because they did not speak any of the languages we knew. A priest was sent for and he spoke to us in Latin. He told us that we had come to a town that was inhabited by the Langobardi. We knew enough Latin to explain our situation. The crosses on our tunics, showing that we had been in the crusades, helped to convince them that we meant no harm. We were taken to a room where we were given food and water and a place to sleep.

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“The next day the priest came back with a group of men who looked like they were of higher rank than the men we had met the day before. The priest introduced us to the leader, who was a count, and asked us questions about the Holy Land and the battles we had fought there. We told them what we could, and they seemed very pleased with our stories. The priest explained that even though they had been conquered by the Normans, they respected them. They had heard of King Richard and his bravery. He said that the count called us Richard’s men, Ricciardi.

“That evening, a large feast was arranged in the main hall of the fortress, and we found to our surprise that we were the guests of honor. The next day and the next, we were asked more questions about how the battles were fought, how many soldiers were killed and who were the bravest of the leaders. We were running out of things to tell and worried that we would have to start making up tales to keep our hosts satisfied.

“Then the priest told us that if we wished to stay we would be given a wife, a dwelling, a portion of the ground outside the fortress and a position of rank in the count’s army or a place to work a craft if that was what we preferred. Although the fortress was in an isolated location, the surroundings were very beautiful. There was abundant water and forests, and the ground seemed to be fertile. The young girls we had seen were fair-skinned and light-haired, and all of us were tempted to take the count’s offer. Three of our group, the two Franks and a German, decided to stay. I thanked our host for his generosity, but said that my family waited for my safe return. I promised that if by any circumstance I or my family were forced to leave our home in Hispania, we would seek refuge within the walls of this fortress and contribute our labors to the future success of the kind people who lived here.

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“The four of us who chose to leave were escorted to the edge of Napoli, for farther than that the Langobardi could not safely go. We said our farewells, found our way to the harbor and bartered our labor for a place aboard a ship that was sailing for Barcelona.”

“God has brought you back to us,” said Adriana. “I hope that neither you nor any other members of our family will ever have to leave again, especially not to fight in a war, holy or otherwise.”

“I do not believe that we are meant to fight in wars, Mother,” replied Saúl, “and if we are forced to fight, I do not believe we are meant to kill or harm anyone.”



“The fortress where Saúl and the other men told their stories, that was Sant’ Angelo dei Lombardi, wasn’t it?” asked Michele.

“Yes,” replied Signore Di Sangue.

“Is there any proof that this is so, or are you making this up?” questioned Michele, smiling as he put his elderly friend to the test.

“Can you think of a better reason for an entire family to make their way across the sea to a strange country and then choose to travel further inland, away from the sea and the capital city only to end up where your family did?” answered Signore Di Sangue.

“Maybe they were captured by Langobardi pirates who came ashore in Barcelona and carried them back to the fortress,” joked Michele. “Is the name of my bethrowed, Ricciardi, really from King Richard’s men?”

“As we have seen, the wanderings of our ancestors are caused by wars, famines, epidemics and searches for peace, safety and freedom. Often, where we go is not up to us, but sometimes we can choose our destination,

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like you are choosing now to go to America. We shall soon see why your family left Barcelona. The name 'Ricciardi' does indeed spring from a Richard. How can we be certain it was not the Norman English king?"



I heard the word 'crusade', but I never knew what it meant. Now that I understand what the Crusades were, I cannot understand why they took place. The Christians believed they would get to heaven faster if they died fighting the Muslims. The Muslims believed the same thing, that they would get to heaven faster if they killed Christians. Why is everyone in such a hurry to get into heaven? One day I will tell Giovanna where her name comes from. Maybe she already knows about her family and her name. Maybe she knows about the Normans and the Crusades. I know so little about her and yet we will be getting married as soon as I get settled. This is all happening so quickly. We are leaving a lot in God's hands. I hope He has time for us with all of the more important things that are happening in the world.

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September 10, 1896 A.D.

8:45 a.m.

THE TENTH DAY STARTED like the day before. The seas were calm and cirrus clouds leading the ship toward America caught the early morning sun's rays, turning them into fiery red strings in the sky. Michele had awoken before dawn and was leaning over a rail at the ship's stern watching the sun rise when Signore Di Sangue approached. They exchanged their usual greetings concerning how well or poorly they had slept and whether they had enjoyed their breakfast. Michele had learned that these were two very important events for his older friend, and he endeavored to provide a response each morning to the inevitable questions that were both truthful and informative. When they had finished with their early morning pleasantries, Signore Di Sangue led the conversation in the direction he seemed to have carefully chosen.

"What did your mentor teach you about running your own business, Michele?" asked Signore Di Sangue.

"That the most important part was getting paid," replied Michele. "He warned me that the customers who looked like they had the most money were usually the ones who tried the hardest to avoid paying their bills."

"I suppose he had what he called his 'system' for seeing to it that his labors were rewarded," commented Signore Di Sangue.

"Yes, he certainly did, and I saw it work every time. First, if a man came into the shop who could not pay for new shoes and wanted only to repair the ones on his feet, Signore Usiglio would show him pairs of shoes that had never been claimed by their owners, either because they could not afford the

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repairs once they were finished or because they did not need them in their grave. Signore Usiglio and the customer would discuss a fair trade in either work to be done, a piece of cloth or something else that could be useful. If this was still too much for the poor man, Signore Usiglio would fix his shoes for a promise that the man would try to put money aside for the next time he needed his shoes repaired. If the man came back some months or years later and still could pay for a used pair, Signore Usiglio would ask him to pick up a wagon load of skins from my family's tannery in return for the repair. This, he felt, compensated him adequately for both the first and the second job. If the man came back the third time with the same pair of shoes and still had not saved for a used pair, Signore Usiglio offered to close his shop and go with the man to his employer to ask him why he did not pay his laborer enough to allow him to keep a pair of shoes on his feet. This was usually enough to convince the man that he should come back when he could buy a used pair or pay for the repairs.

“With the ones who looked rich—maybe they were rich or maybe their money had disappeared a long time ago—he had another way of making business. These men or women usually came in and asked for something they had seen in Benevento or Napoli, trying to describe the shoes but usually not doing such a good job. He would take out three different models of shoes, men's or women's, depending on who was the customer, and ask them which one most closely resembled the shoe they wanted him to make. If they chose one of the three, he would first offer to make them the exact shoe for a fixed price. If they agreed, most of the battle was over. The only other choice was the color, either brown or black. He asked for one-third of the amount to begin the work, one-third when they came back for a final fitting, and one-third when the shoe was complete.

“If the customer continued to demand that he produce the exact shoe they had seen, he would bring out illustrations from magazines and newspapers

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that he clipped out. If it was among them, he would give them a price, which was usually very high, and they would then reconsider and choose one of his standard shoes at his standard terms. Some people could never be satisfied with just any ordinary shoe, and they would tell him they wanted the shoe in the magazine and they would pay for it, but only when they were satisfied that it was exactly what they wished. To them he would give the illustration and show them the door, suggesting that they find someone else who could make it or travel themselves to a city where they would find it on a shelf.

“For those who were neither rich nor poor, he had both the used shoes—and some of these were very good quality—and another three models of shoes that were less expensive than the ones he showed the wealthy looking customers. He had, of course, men’s shoes and women’s shoes, shoes for all ages and shoes for all professions. The quality of his shoes was of the absolute highest, whether it was the most or least expensive. He perfected his models, constantly improving them while lowering both his cost of labor and what he paid for materials.”

“These lessons will serve you well in America, Michele,” said Signore Di Sangue when Michele had finished his explanation. “You will have more poor than rich as your customers, at least at the start, unless you work for someone who is already established. You will have to decide that when you are there, after you have talked to your future wife’s family and their friends. Now if you wanted to stay in New York City where I have my friends, I could introduce you to one of the shoemakers in the City.”

“That is kind of you, Signore Di Sangue,” replied Michele, “but I will make my way, I am confident of that.”

“Yes, my young friend, I believe you will. Your people always have.”

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Michele saw an opportunity to lead the conversation himself, and he took it.

“What happened to the Jews in Spagna after the Christians took the land back from the Muslim rulers?” asked Michele. “Were they persecuted and forced to convert or killed or driven out?”

“Not at first,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “There were a few centuries when they served a very useful purpose and so were tolerated. Then everything changed. And it was not only my people who were eventually persecuted, but also the former rulers of Hispania and those who had lived peacefully beside them. It started with the Inquisition.”

“What is the Inquisition?” asked Michele. “The word sounds like something bad happened.”

“It was bad. It began in 1477 A.D. A Dominican monk from Sevilla named Alonso de Hoyeda was able to gain the ear of Queen Isabella during one of her visits to that city. He said there was widespread worship in private by *conversos* in their Jewish faith while they practiced Christianity publicly. She ordered an investigation, which substantiated what the monk had asserted. Converted Jews were secretly continuing to practice their faith. They were referred to as *marranos*, Jews who pretended to be Christians. Isabella conferred with her husband, King Ferdinand, and they decided to introduce a religious enquiry, called an *Inquisition*, initially in Castile, with the goal of removing false converts from that part of their realm. So, you see, it was not intended to persecute practicing Jews or even the Moors, but to find baptized Christians who were secretly practicing Judaism.

“Any Inquisition must be ordered by papal authority, and the monarchs requested this authority from Pope Sixtus IV. Their request was denied, principally because they stated that the Inquisition should be under their

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control, not that of the Pope. Ferdinand and Isabella were not ready to accept the Pope's denial, and they knew that the Pope was not in a position of great strength at the time. Their troops were part of an army raised to protect Roma and other Christian lands against the surging Ottoman Turks. Since the fall of Constantinople in the spring of 1453 A.D., the Turks were gaining territory and therefore converts to Islam in the eastern regions of Christian lands, and they were menacing Vienna. The Spanish monarchs threatened to recall their troops from the support forces."

"Blackmail?" interjected Michele.

"Yes, blackmail. Their threat worked, and the Pope issued a proclamation, called a 'Papal Bull', in November 1477 A.D., *Exigit Sinceras Devotionis Affectus*, establishing the Inquisition in the Kingdom of Castile. The King and Queen had the sole authority to name the inquisitors and to guide their work. Two years passed before the first inquisitors were named. They were Miguel de Morillo and Juan de San Martin. In Sevilla on February 6, 1481 A.D. the first six victims of the Spanish Inquisition were burned alive, found guilty of being *marranos*. Officiating at this execution ceremony was no other than Alonso de Hojeda. During the next ten years, Inquisition tribunals existed in eight Castilian cities, including Córdoba, Segovia and Toledo.

"Introducing the Inquisition into Aragón was not as easy as in Castile. Ferdinand and Pope Sixtus IV were quarrelling again, and the Pope was not predisposed to extend his earlier Bull. Whether they were insincere Christians or not, they still paid their obligations to The Church in one form or another. The Inquisition was reducing The Church's numbers. Instead of extending the Inquisition to Aragón, he issued a new Bull specifically prohibiting the Inquisition from expanding into Castile. He criticized practices used by the Spanish inquisitors, saying that they relied on

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unsubstantiated testimony of the accused by his or her enemies, and they applied no valid tests of the accused guilt or innocence.”

“How do you prove that you truly believe in a religion?” wondered Michele aloud. “My only defense would be that I have never known any other religion but the one I have, and I know very little about it.”

“Some of the accused were learned people, but most were just poor people trying to survive,” continued Signore Di Sangue. “Their forefathers had made the sacrifice of renouncing their inherited religion and with it their heritage as Jews. Traditions of that heritage had probably survived in one form or another. What was the difference between these people and the first Jews who converted to Christianity? But this is not how the inquisitors saw things.

“The Pope finally relented and issued a new Bull in October 1483 A.D. He named Tomás de Torquemada Inquisitor General of Aragón, Valencia and Catalonia. Sixtus was succeeded by Innocent VIII in 1494 A.D., and he attempted to intervene in the Inquisition and allow appeals to Roma. Ferdinand responded by having a law passed that punished anyone trying to use the appeal process with death and confiscation of all property. The Spanish monarchy was now in total control. The people of Aragón continued to voice their distaste for the tribunals, and there were even revolts. Then an inquisitor was murdered. His name was Pedro Arbués, and the murder took place in Zaragoza in 1485 A.D. From this point forward, public opinion shifted away from sympathy for the *conversos* in favor of the Inquisition. It became easier for The Church to single out influential men in the service of the court who had converted from Judaism, accuse and condemn them.”

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“It seems like the Christians are never satisfied,” offered Michele. “First we force people to convert, we make them pass many tests, we baptize them and then we accuse them of being insincere.”

“It’s greed and jealousy that are the demons,” replied Signore Di Sangue, “and it’s not just religions that are at fault. But at the time that these events were taking place, religion and government and daily life were one.”



By the middle of the thirteenth century A.D., Christian forces had reconquered most of Hispania. The Moors held the southernmost tip of the peninsula, the Emirate of Granada. For the next two hundred fifty years, the Emirate was subject to the Christian King of Castile. During this two-and-a-half century period, Hispania would regain its Christian identity with the help of the Jews. There were still large numbers of Arabic-speaking Muslims in the newly won territories in the south. The Jews spoke Arabic, and they had been employed in the administrative services during the period of Muslim rule. They knew the language and they were intimately familiar with the methods necessary to keep the wheels of government moving while the new Christian rulers learned the old rules and established new ones.

This time has been described as a Golden Age for Jews in Spagna, which eventually had an effect on Jews everywhere. Because of the liberal laws in Hispania under the Muslims governing people of ‘The Book’, Jews had been educated in more than Talmudic learning. They were schooled in philosophy, science, history and Hebrew grammar. In the thirteenth century A.D., the *Sefer ha-zohar*, which is a work of Jewish mysticism, was composed in Spagna. The text is central to *Kabbala*, Jewish mysticism that developed in the twelfth century A.D. This tradition stated that there was secret wisdom which was communicated by God to Adam and Moses that was not written in the Torah. The *Book of the Image* stated that each cycle of

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history has its own Torah, and the *Book of Splendor* addressed the mystery of creation. These books were composed in a Spagna where learning flourished.

This era of respite for the Jews gradually ended in the fourteenth century A.D. when the Christian monastic orders grew more influential and began preaching against the Jews. Perhaps there was a relation between the deep divisions within The Church at this time and attempts to find external enemies to blame for their problems. The Jews were always close at hand. What was dividing the Western Christians was the rising star of Francia and the waning strength of the Holy Roman Emperor, and the fight over who controlled the secular world, the kings or the Popes.

It began as a feud between King Philip IV of Francia and Pope Boniface VIII. Philip, like his counterpart in England, Edward I, was building a single nation with a powerful monarchy. Philip would have no meddling by the clergy and expelled them from his inner circle of close advisors and administrators. Both England and Francia began to tax the clergy in order to finance their continuous battles against one another. Boniface decided that it was time to react against this threat to his and The Church's authority. He issued a Bull, *Clericis laicos*, in February, 1296 A.D. which forbade the taxing of the clergy without the approval of the holy office of the Pope. In this Bull, Boniface said that "emperors, kings, or princes, or dukes, earls or barons who presume to take possession of things anywhere deposited in holy buildings should incur the sentence of excommunication". Philip then issued a bull of his own prohibiting the sending of money from Francia to Roma, thereby starving The Church of what it needed most to exercise its power: money. Boniface reacted strongly stating that "God has set Popes over kings and kingdoms".

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The struggle for supremacy between these two strong-willed men culminated in November, 1302 A.D. when Boniface issued what is believed to be one of The Church's most important papal Bulls, *Unam sanctam*. This Bull declared that not only spiritual but temporal power resided with The Church and that kings were subordinate to The Church. Philip could not accept this humiliation. He directed his minister, Guillaume de Nogaret, to denounce Boniface as a heretic and a criminal. Boniface took nearly a year to consider his next action, but then excommunicated both Philip and Nogaret. And then a most remarkable event occurred. Nogaret led an army into Italia directly to the residence of Boniface in Anagni, and demanded the Pope's resignation. When he refused, saying that he would "sooner die", Sciarra Colonna, who was with Nogaret, slapped Boniface's face. Boniface was then subjected to beatings for three days before he was rescued by the townspeople of Anagni. He died shortly thereafter.

Boniface was succeeded by Blessed Benedict XI, who died within the year after his ascension. It was said that he was poisoned. A conclave lasting eleven months followed Benedict's death, the length of which was due to the French and Italian cardinals mirroring the conflict between Philip and the papal office. Finally, on the 5th of June, 1305 A.D., Bertrand de Got was elected and became Clement V. He was French, born in Gascony, and his election was viewed as a concession to Philip. He had been Archbishop of Bordeaux, and as such he was in fact a subject of the King of England since Bordeaux was ruled by England at this time. But he had been a friend of Philip since their childhood. When he was elected, the cardinals asked him to return to Italia and Perugia where the conclave had been held and then to Roma, but he travelled to Lyon where the Papal Tiara was placed upon his head. His friend, Philip, was there to witness the coronation.

Clement would never return to Italia. Whether it was out of fear for his safety in the uncertain political climate of Italia in general and in the Papal

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States in particular, or out of subservience to Philip, he stayed in Avignon as did six of his successors. Between 1309 A.D. and 1378 A.D., a period called the *Babylonian Captivity*, seven Popes ruled over western Christians from Avignon in Francia: Clement V (1305-1314); John XXII (1316-1334); Benedict XII (1334-1342); Clement VI (1342-1352); Urban V (1362-1370); and Gregory XI (1370-1378).

Gregory XI was the last of the Avignon Popes. At the time of his election, Avignon had become as dangerous as Roma had been when his predecessor Clement V abandoned the city. The constant war between England and Francia was creating a state of lawlessness among citizens and soldiers. At the same time, the longer the Papacy stayed away from Roma, the more difficult it would be to eventually return. Powerful forces in the city states, led by Firenze, were organizing opposition to the Papacy as a result of measures like grain embargos. The substantial lands and other properties owned by The Church were in danger of being lost. In a desperate move to quell the revolts in Italia, Robert de Geneva, a papal legate, prevailed on Gregory to send mercenaries to the rebellious cities. In one city, Cesena, over three thousand people were slaughtered. Firenze rose up against the Pope, and the entire city was excommunicated. In the end, what caused the rioting and reprisals to halt was the fact that trade was being affected, and the flow of money into the hands of the mighty and the The Church coffers was being hampered.

After returning the Papacy to Roma in 1378 A.D., Gregory died. The cardinals elected an Italian—although a Neopolitan, not a Roman—Urban VI. The French cardinals held a conclave of their own and elected Robert de Geneva, who took the name Clement VII, and then another Frenchman in 1394 A.D., Benedict XIII. These two men were declared ‘antiPopes’ by the 15th Ecumenical Council of Constance, begun in 1414 A.D. when Gregory XII was Pope and while he was opposed by not one, but two anti-popes:

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Baldassare Cossa as John XXIII and Pedro de Luna as Benedict XIII. The Council recommended that all three Popes abdicate, which they did. Martin V was elected in November, 1417 A.D. Another anti-Pope surfaced in 1439 A.D., Amadeus of Savoia, who took the name of Felix V, but the Papal Court was now firmly back in its true home, Roma.

And so preaching against the Jews became more virulent. Why should they have positions of influence, and why should they be allowed to gain wealth, when they were responsible for the crucifixion of Our Lord and Savior, the priests asked. Wasn't it the Jews who encouraged the invasion of Hispania by the Moors, they claimed. How can we be certain that they will not do it again with another enemy of Christianity? The Church can surely put the property of these enemies of Christianity to better use, they suggested.

The verbal attacks persisted and became more vitriolic. Then the Jews were accused of causing the Black Death, which was decimating the population of the continent in the thirteen hundreds. The reason behind this claim was that fewer Jews were dying of the great disease. There were good reasons that this was the case. For one, Jews, like Muslims, were obligated by their religion to practice ritual cleansing, and their rabbinical laws engendered living habits that were cleaner than those of the Christians. A second reason was their relative isolation from the Christian population, living as they did in Jewish ghettos. The less contact one had with infected individuals, the less likely one was to be infected oneself. But these reasons were neither understood nor considered as reasons for their lower morbidity with respect to the plague.

By the middle of the fourteenth century A.D., Christian villagers were attacking Jewish settlements in Hispania, Francia, Germania and Britania. Jews were massacred, their communities destroyed, and many of those who

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survived were either forced to convert or escaped. Conversion was not immediate. The eventual *converso* had to endure a protracted process and pass through many stages before finally being officially accepted as a Christian, even if the converted was never trusted again by either those of the new or former faith. Those who were not killed or converted, left the country. An eastward migration of Jews began toward Poland and Russia.

These anti-Jewish preachings were not believed or acted upon by all the political or religious leaders. The King of Aragon, for one, continued to trust his Jewish administrators. Jews were often protected by the monarchs because of their administrative skills. So in spite of the persecutions, as the end of the fifteenth century A.D. neared, there were still approximately 50,000 Jews in Granada and 100,000 in the whole of what was left of the Muslim controlled Hispania.

While Jews were periodically persecuted before, during and after Muslim rule of Hispania, the Christians who had converted to Islam, called *elches*, were able to move to lands that continued to be controlled by the Muslims as the *reconquista* pushed further south. The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 A.D. was followed by expansion of their control over most of the Muslim regions. They seemed to be pragmatic people, the Ottomans. When they entered the Byzantine capital after their victory over its defenders, they allowed the Christians who did not resist them to keep their churches, and converted to Mosques the churches in which those Christians who did resist them worshipped. The Orthodox Patriarchate had ceased to exist when the city was conquered, so Sultan Mehmed II, the victorious leader of the Ottomans, designated a new Patriarch, a Byzantine scholar and monk, George Scholarius, who took the name Gennadios II. They negotiated an agreement allowing the Orthodox Church to keep its autonomy and its holdings in exchange for recognizing Ottoman authority.

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"Better the Sultan's turban than the Papal Tiara", commented Loukas Notara, the last Grand Duke of Constantinople.



Constantinople was not lost or conquered as much as it was sacrificed. Mehmed II and his Ottoman forces deserve due credit for their skill in exploiting the weaknesses of the Byzantines, of which there were many, and of exhibiting perseverance in breaching the most impenetrable barrier the world had ever known, the Theodosian Wall. Nevertheless, the myth of Ottoman invincibility that has been nurtured over the close to six centuries since Constantinople ceased to be ruled in the name of its founder, Constantine I, who built it, and its last emperor, Constantine XI Palaeologus, who died defending it, is as overstated as the inevitability of the Golden Horn becoming the capital of the Ottoman nation. Constantinople was sacrificed to Islam because it was not Catholic. It was a Christian nation, but it refused to recognize the Pope as its supreme ruler. It refused to acknowledge the Pope's infallibility, declared by Pope Nicholas I. At the time, it was Photius, Bishop of Constantinople, who dared to contradict Nicholas, setting the stage for centuries of conflict. It refused to leaven its host and to water down its wine taken by its priests during the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

At its peak, Constantinople had half a million inhabitants and more riches than a city had ever held. When Mehmed surrounded the city with a quarter of a million followers, of which sixty thousand were ready to do battle, the city had fifty thousand men, women and children and only five thousand who could wield a weapon. It's riches had long ago disappeared in the previous plunders the city had endured at the hands of fellow Christians, the Roman Catholics. When the Ottomans—with the substantial help of converted, subscribed, enslaved and mercenary Christians, like the super

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cannon forger, the Hungarian named Orban—finally entered the city on the 29th of May, 1453 A.D. after a siege of over fifty-three days, there was little booty left for the ravagers, except humans. Pleas for assistance, which began several years before the siege and continued until it was over, brought a meager number of volunteers, including Giustiniani with seven hundred fellow Genoans, but there were no official relief troops offered by the rulers of Europe, and particularly not from the Pope.

In the aftermath of Constantinople's sacrifice there was much hand wringing. Six years later, Pope Pius II, who had succeeded Callistus III in 1458 A.D., who himself in 1455 A.D. had succeeded the Pope who ceded Constantinople, said in a speech at a congress he convened in Mantua with the intention of unifying the Christian nations:

*"We ourselves allowed Constantinople, the capital of the east, to be conquered by the Turks. And while we sit at home in ease and idleness, the arms of these barbarians are advancing to the Danube and the Sava. In the Eastern imperial city they have massacred the successor of Constantine along with his people, desecrated the temples of the Lord, sullied the noble edifice of Justinian with the hideous cult of Muhammad; they have destroyed the images of the mother of God and other saints, overturned the altars, cast the relics of the martyrs to the swine, killed the priests, dishonored women and young girls, even the virgins dedicated to the Lord, slaughtered the nobles of the city at the sultan's banquet, carried off the image of our crucified Savior to their camp with scorn and mockery amid cries of 'That is the God of the Christians!' and befouled it with mud and spittle. All this happened beneath our very eyes, but we lie in a deep sleep."*¹⁹

¹⁹ Babinger, Franz, Mehmet the Conquerer and His Time, Princeton University Press, 1978.

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Pius' words were prophetic. Before Mehmed died, most probably poisoned by his own son, his troops had landed on the heel of Italy. Nearly the entire population of 12,000 citizens in the town of Otranto on the Adriatic coast was butchered as the Ottoman forces moved toward Roma. The advance on Roma was halted only when news of Mehmet's death on the 3rd of May, 1481 A.D. reached his troops. The advance of the Turks did not end, however, with their withdrawal from the peninsula. Pope Pius continued:

"...Mehmet will never lay down arms except in victory or total defeat. Every victory will be for him a stepping-stone to another, until, after subjecting all the princes of the West, he had destroyed the Gospel of Christ and imposed the law of his false prophet upon the whole world."

Those who followed Mehmed as the leader of the Ottoman empire were equally determined to spread their dominion and the word of their Prophet. In their wake there were many who converted, but not by force. Constantinople ceased to be a Christian city, but with the Ottomans came new prosperity. Those Christians who remained were resettled and were able to worship without hindrance. Conquered or rescued; enslaved or liberated?



The Granada War of 1492 A.D. ended the last vestige of Muslim rule in Spagna when Muhammad XII, also known as Boabdil, surrendered to Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. With this final victory over the Muslims, there was no place left for the believers in Islam to go, other than off the peninsula. Initially, the large number of followers of Islam were granted the freedom to worship in their faith while Christian missionaries proselytized for Christianity. The secular rulers did not want to take the chance that mass conversions might cause rebellion and strife. For the

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clergy, this slow process was not acceptable. They felt that the longer the Muslims were allowed to function as if nothing had changed, they would create a subculture that would be impossible to integrate with a Christian Hispania. The principal advocate of fast and total conversion was Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros. He travelled with the Spanish Inquisition to Granada in 1499 A.D. and began making mass conversions. He ordered that all Arabic manuscripts, save those concerning medicine, should be burned.

As the rulers expected, there was a major revolt, called the First Rebellion of the Alpujarras, in which the unconverted Moors, called *Mudéjar*, took to the streets. There was no chance that this rebellion would succeed. It was brutally suppressed, and the *Mudéjar* were given the choice of conversion or exile—or, of course, death. By 1500 A.D., Cardinal Cisneros boasted that there was no one remaining in the city of Granada who was not a Christian, and all the mosques were now consecrated as churches. It would take another one hundred years before Hispania could truly claim that there was no longer a worshiper of Islam living on the peninsula.



“Where is the city, Cesena?” asked Michele.

“It is in Romagna,” replied Signore Di Sangue, “near the border to Lombardia. It was called Caesena by the Romans. Although *Romagna* means “land inhabited by Romans”, this area had been populated by the same Gallic *Senones* who had their capital near Ancona, the city called *Sena Gallica* by the Romans. You remember that I told you that this group of Senones had conquered the native Umbri and Etruscans and were later wiped out by the Romans along with all the other members of their tribe.”

“Yes, I remember. Just imagine if they had defeated the Romans,” mused Michele. “Maybe there would be a whole country named *Sena*.”

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“That is correct,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “As long as they kept on winning, just like the Franks and the Turks did. There are exceptions, of course. The name ‘Germania’ comes from *Germani*, the name the Romans gave to the people of the region. The people of Germania do not call themselves ‘Germans’ and they do not call their country Germania or Tedesco, as it is known in Italian. They call their country ‘Deutschland’ which literally means the German lands in their language.”

“Where does the name of our country come from, Italia?” asked Michele.

“There are a few different explanations,” answered Signore Di Sangue, “and it is difficult to say which one is the truth, or if there is another explanation still waiting to be found. One story is that the name comes from an ancient king named ‘Italus’, leader of the Sicel or Oenotrian tribe. These were among the earliest known settlers of the peninsula and the surrounding islands. Another story is that the name comes from Oscan, a language spoken by one of the rival tribes to the Romans, the Osci, at the time the Roman Republic was being formed. The Osci referred to the region where they dwelled as *Viteliú*, meaning ‘land of young cattle’. The peninsula had been heavily populated by cattle for hundreds of years before the Romans became dominant. There were coins minted by their rivals with the name *Italia* on them. As we have already learned, the Romans were a pragmatic people. That means they were practical when it came to using what was available rather than trying to reinvent everything themselves. They saw a good name for their country and simply used it.”



1493 A.D.

“Vincente Sena,” said the inquisidor, reading from a page in a large book spread open in front of him on a rectangular oak table. He sat in a high

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backed chair that was also made of oak. The legs of the table and the chair were carved with identical intricate designs, and the back and seat of the chair were covered in a rich tapestry upholstery in various colors of red and yellow. He wore a black *zucheto* which almost covered the bald spot on the back of his skull. Officially, it is referred to by its Latin name, *pileolus*. According to the Catholic hierarchy, the Pope wears a white pileolus, cardinals red ones, bishops purple ones and priests black. The tradition comes from the old testament in which Jewish priests were required to cover their heads as a sign of humility in the presence of God. “You are accused of being a non-believer and an unwilling convert to the true religion. How do you answer these charges?”

Vincente was silent. He was preparing his response. The night before he had sat in the courtyard of his family’s home with his father and mother, his uncles and their wives, his brothers and sisters and cousins. They had talked about the history of the family from all the stories that had been handed down to them over the ages. Each family had a piece of the story to contribute, like stones that are placed on top of each other to build a wall, in the form of the religious relics, which they had begun collecting since their time in Senones and which they had kept safely hidden through the centuries. They used the relics to recall the stories of their journey.

Vincente was now arranging the different parts of the story in his mind so that they created a clear and understandable defence. He was not learned, like the priest sitting before him, but he had the gift of a sharp mind. He could not read, of course, but he listened carefully to the readings of the gospels and epistles in church and could recite many of the verses. Most of all, he had learned by heart the family stories.

“Speak!” demanded the inquisidor.

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“Who has made this claim against my family?” asked Vincente. He knew the answer and did not expect the Inquisidor to divulge the name. It was a rival leatherworker who saw an opportunity to be rid of his family’s chief competitor. They were Franks and had always envied the talents of Vincente’s family. The Senas were not the first family accused of being Jewish converts.

“It is I who ask the questions, not you,” shouted the inquisidor. “Answer the charges!”

“I and all of my family are believers in one god. God hears and sees all that we do, and only He can judge whether our faith is sincere.”

“You deny that The Holy Mother Church represents God on earth and that we, as the representatives of The Church, are endowed with the right and obligation to judge in His name?” retorted the inquisidor.

“No man can judge another man in God’s name,” replied Vincente calmly. “Not even Jesus, the Son of God, claimed the right as a man to judge his fellow men when He walked on this earth. As it is said in the Holy Bible, Jesus said: ‘Let he who is without sin cast the first stone. Do not judge, or you too will be judged.’ Man makes laws that we live by and can be judged by, but these are laws of this earth.”

“You are speaking heresy, and you will be damned for it,” shouted the inquisidor.

“I speak only what is in my heart,” replied Vincente. “Show me the scripture that gives any man the right to damn another for his beliefs. You charge me and my family with being non-believers, and I answer that our beliefs in God are as strong as any other man’s, including your own.

“Concerning the charge of being unwilling converts to the true religion, my family has a tradition of remembering our ancestors and retelling the

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stories of how we came here from another place. According to these stories, we have been forced many times to leave one religion and take on another. Each time we were threatened with torture or death if we did not stop believing in our god and accept the god of our conquerors. We left our Celtic gods; we left our Roman gods; we willingly accepted the God of Christianity, even though we risked our lives until it became the religion of the Romans. We were forced to flee to Hispania, and the Visigoths made us practice Arianism until they accepted the Roman rite. When the Moors conquered our people, they did not force their god or their ways on us, and we continued to pray to Jesus and Mary and all the Catholic saints, and we have never wavered in our beliefs.”

“How do you know all of this, and why should I trust that what you have told me is the truth?” questioned the inquisidor. “Why should I believe a man who denies my authority to hold this position, a position which The Church has delegated to me?

“Because I am an honest man,” answered Vincente. “Our family has kept these stories alive and we have told them to our children so that they can tell them to their children. I have told you what I believe about this court. I meant no disrespect. I did not lie to you in order to save myself and my family from the inevitable consequences. For those of us who choose to believe in Jesus, in the Holy Trinity and all that is contained in the Nicene Creed, The Church makes the rules for how we live our lives in order to gain a place in heaven. But only God can judge whether I have met His expectations.”

“I am finished with you today,” said the frustrated inquisidor. He turned to the bailiff and said, “Return this man to his cell. Bring him back tomorrow to hear his punishment.”

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Vincente knew that the inquisidor had already decided his fate. He would either be executed or deported. Either way, he would be lost to his family. But what his family needed now was time. The night before, after their meeting, the entire family had gathered their most prized possessions, the relics, and brought them one by one to the open fire. Vincente's father took each relic, kissed it and placed it in the fire. If they were captured, they would at least not have to explain away the pagon objects. When the fire had burned down, they gathered the ashes and the remains of the relics which did not burn and buried them. Then they gathered whatever they could carry and left for the harbour. They had said good-bye to Vincente. He had volunteered to represent the family at the Inquisition. He was the logical choice because he was learned in the Bible and, from the time he could first speak, he had a gift with turning an adversary into a friend through his words. Also, he was not yet married. Now, as he sat chained in a room converted to a prison cell in the basement of the church where his family had worshiped since their ancestors built it, he prayed that his family was safe. He took out his Rosary beads fastened to a hollow metal cross, the contents of which had long ago disappeared. He blessed himself and began to recite the decades until he finally fell asleep.

That night, the family members left their hiding place in groups of twos and threes and made their way on to the gallion loaded with textiles with Napoli as its destination. Vincente's father had made the leather strappings for the wagons used by the textile company, and the owner, Sigñor de Santamaria, had befriended him. He arranged for the entire family to sail with the ship, and even provided for them when they arrived in Napoli. The crew were promised a reward if the family arrived safely, and luckily for the family, none of the men saw any advantage in informing the Inquisition or the authorities. Food and water were provided during the weeklong journey,

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with stops at the islands along the way, but they all stayed below the deck in the place they had been allotted among the rolls of cloth .

Why was Napoli a safe place for Jews and others suspected of being insincere Christians, Vincente's father had wondered when Sigñor de Santamaria had told him that was where they would go? Sigñor de Santamaria explained why. The ruler of the Kingdom of Napoli, Ferdinand I, known as Ferrante, protected the Jews and welcomed them. He was the successor to Alfonso V of Aragón who had defeated Louis III and René of Anjou for control of the Kingdom in 1442 A.D. He had been invested with Napoli by Pope Eugene IV. Earlier Popes had supported the French rivals to the Aragónese back to Charles of Anjou, known as Charles I, who became the ruler of Sicilia and the Norman lands of southern Italia in 1266 A.D.

When the ship docked in Napoli, they waited until after the cargo had been unloaded and darkness had fallen. As they prepared to leave the ship, the door to the hold opened and a man appeared as a silhouette against the moonlit sky. "Don't be afraid," he said. "I am a friend sent by Sigñor de Santamaria. I am here to take you to your new home."

The family had no choice but to trust this man. They climbed up the steep stair leading from the hold, each with part of the family's belongings hanging over a shoulder, and followed the man from the ship, across the pier and into the streets of Napoli. There were few people about on this warm summer evening. It had rained shortly before they left the ship and the air was still very damp. The wetness clung to them and soon they were moist inside their clothes from the sweat produced from carrying their burdens and soggy outside from the humidity.

They passed in single file through the narrow, winding streets. There was barely room for two of them to walk abreast. Finally, their guide stopped in front of a door that looked like all the doors they had passed along the maze

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of streets that was Napoli. He knocked and the door opened. He exchanged a few words in a language that they could not understand, and then, using words that were familiar, he beckoned them to step inside. One by one they walked over the threshold, through a vestibule and into a square room that was open to the sky. It was lit by oil burning lamps placed along each side of the roofless room. When they had all assembled, their guide asked them to put down their loads and to sit and rest on the benches that were placed in the center of the room. Food and water were brought into the room by several young boys, and the family satisfied their hunger and thirst. No one spoke.

“Where are we and who are you?” asked Vincente’s father, finally breaking the silence.

“You are in the Jewish quarter of the city,” replied their guide. “You are safe here. Sigñor de Santamaria has provided a place for you to live. He has spoken highly of your skills with leather, and you will have as much work as you and your family can manage. I am Benjamin Usiglio, both a friend and banker to Sigñor de Santamaria.”

“You have been very kind to us, Sigñor Usiglio,” replied Vincente’s father, “but we are not Jewish. We are not even *conversos*.”

“We know that,” replied Signore Usiglio, “and your ways will be respected. There are churches in the quarter where no questions are asked and you may worship as you please.”

And so it was. They lived a peaceful and productive life in the seclusion of the Jewish ghetto for two years. They learned the ways of the city and they learned the language spoken by most of the people. Then, in 1495 A.D., Charles VIII of Francia pressed the claim of the French for the Kingdom, and his forces briefly seized Napoli. The Italian Wars between Francia and Hispania were begun. Louis XII, Charles's successor, joined

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forces with Hispania and removed Frederick from the throne of Napoli in 1501 A.D. He was the last Aragonese king of Napoli. In 1504 A.D., as part of the Treaties of Blois, the Kingdom of Napoli, including Sicilia and the southern mainland, became part of Spagna, and in 1510 A.D, the expulsion of all Jews was decreed, all except the wealthiest two hundred families.

The Sena family did not have to leave, but they were certain that the equivalent of the Spanish Inquisition would question all who remained living in what had been the Jewish quarter, and, as in Spagna, few would escape some form of punishment. Vincente's father and most of his uncles had gone to their graves since the family settled in Napoli, and Vincente's brothers and their wives sat and discussed what they should do.

"There has not been a single day since we came here that we have not felt welcomed and safe," declared the oldest brother, Jaime. "We have been protected by our Jewish brethren and they have bought our wares so that we might feed ourselves and our children. Why should we abandon them now?"

"Yes," added the oldest brother's wife, Lucia. "The women have taught us the language and ways of the Neopolitans. We would never have survived in this unfriendly city without their help."

"I do not disagree with what you have said," said Vincente's youngest brother, Francisco, "but you cannot deny that there are great risks that we take by continuing to be so closely tied to the Jewish community. If we move with them to Benevento, as you have suggested, we will tighten the bond between us and make it even more difficult to prove we are and have been Christians since almost the beginning of Christianity."

The City of Benevento was under the protection of the Pope, an enclave of the Papal States within the Kingdom of Napoli. Several times since it was delivered to the Pope in 1053 A.D., the city was taken by forces hostile to the Pope. Frederick II, Stupor mundi, took it twice, in 1229 A.D. and again

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in 1241 A.D. In 1266 A.D., the Angevins defeated and killed Frederick's son in a battle and returned the city to The Church. Napoli was a city of a quarter of a million people when the Sena family sat together and discussed how they would leave it. The number of inhabitants inside Benevento's walls was less than one-fifth that of Napoli. These new immigrants would swell the population and strain its resources to the point of breaking.

"This is true," added Vincente's younger brother, Lorenzo. "If the Inquisition comes to The Kingdom we will easily be identified as the family that escaped from Barcelona. It will not be easy to make a good defence this time once inquisitors find out how we have spent the time since arriving in this land."

"You are correct, my brothers," admitted Jaime. "Still, the dangers we might face if we cast ourselves free from the main fleet could be far worse."

"Why don't we go to the place where the crusader was given shelter?" suggested Vincente's one remaining uncle, José. He was very old and feeble, and spent his days sitting in the courtyard with his thoughts. His age and physical condition belied his mental capacity. His mind was as sharp as a carving knife, and his memory extended back to the first days of the Senas in the forests south of Paris.

"Do you think there would be anyone who would remember the crusader, Tío?" questioned Jaime.

"Oh yes," replied Tio José. "There will be many who remember the three crusaders who stayed, but there will be no one who remembers the four crusaders who left."

"Then why should we go there?" asked several in unison.

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“For the first,” answered Tio José, “we don’t know of any other place where we at least have a few words we can exchange before they either show us the way out of their village or set us all in chains.”

“I can see it now,” jested José’s wife, Costanza. “Good day, signori. We are looking for King Richard’s Crusaders who came here long ago. We have a dead cousin who was one of the men with them, but he left for his home in Hispania. We just travelled here from Barcelona to give his friends our greetings.”

“Very good, my wife!” exclaimed Tio José. “That is exactly what we shall say.”

“But why should they take us in?” questioned Francisco. “What can we offer? Here in Napoli we were able to earn our keep doing what we have always done, working with leather. Do we know if this village, Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi, is a prosperous place or simply a fortress on a hill in the forest?”

“We do not know,” replied Tio José. “That is why you will go there first to learn more about the place and its people before we travel there with the whole family. Who knows, perhaps it has been destroyed by war or some act of God. Maybe it is peopled with disagreeable men and women. But if it is a peaceful village with leaders who are interested in trading, we do have something that we can offer. I will show you”

Tio José rose up and went to the part of the house where he and Costanza made their bed. The family sat silently waiting to hear what Tio José would say when he returned. He was holding a small box in both of his hands when he came back to the table. He opened the box and took out a piece of paper that was folded many times.

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“I kept this one relic in memory of our past when we left Spagna. I felt that one day we would have need of its contents. Forgive me. These are the recipes we received from the Arab who was killed by the Franks. One tells how to make the softest of leathers and the other tells how to dye them with the most pleasant colors so that they are irresistible to the buyer. This is what we can offer, if we can find someone who will translate them for us.”

That seemed like a very big ‘if’ for the family, but if they could, then it just might work, thought Jaime.



“Didn’t the kings and queens and Popes realize what misery they were causing everyone?” wondered Michele. “Why didn’t they just kill all the people they suspected of holding different beliefs and get it over with! All these inquisitions and banishments and excommunications seem like a very big waste of time.”

“Oh yes, they realized what they were doing,” answered Signore Di Sangué. “They were showing who was in control and they were showing the consequences of not submitting to that control. You would think that the greater the misery the greater would be the chance that people would revolt, overthrow their oppressors and cut the shackles off the ankles of their brothers and sisters. But misery is an anesthetic. The greater the misery the more passive one becomes. Misery makes it possible for people to pile stones as large as a house on top of one another and create a tomb for a pharaoh. Misery makes it possible for these same men and women to swallow poison so that they can die with their king and serve him in the next world. It is hope that is the stimulant. Hope, even the slightest glimmer, can breed a revolution.

“The kings and queens and Popes did all they could to make the people believe that only through death—not just any death, mind you, only one that

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followed their rules—could hope finally be found. Imagine if all the people started killing themselves in order to reach heaven faster. So suicide had to be made a very serious sin, serious enough to keep the self murderer out of heaven. And then, of course, they needed these poor souls to work and pay taxes and fill the churches. If they started killing them they might not be able to stop, and then the nobles and clergy would have to clean up their own messes, maybe even have to do some real work.”

“I wonder what happened to Vincente,” said Michele. “Do you think he was executed?”

“Execution was often reserved for those who would be seen as an example to others. Most of the ones found guilty of being true non-believers were herded together with Jews and Moors and cast out on the sea. He may have landed in Moroco or Istanbul or America or even Napoli. Perhaps he continued with his strong Christian beliefs, or maybe he learned to accept the religion of his countryless companions. My family helped to shelter many refugees.”

“Maybe your family took him in and he became a real Jew,” suggested Michele. “Maybe we are related.”

“We are all related, my young friend,” replied Signore Di Sangue.



Jaime, his brothers Francisco and Lorenzo and his cousins Louis and Miguel followed the priest, Patre Rossi, along the narrow, dirt road that led southeast toward Avellino, off the main road between Napoli and Benevento. They had walked through Napoli’s eastern gate before dawn and it was now approaching the middle of the day. They planned to reach Avellino before nightfall. The young priest had both walked and talked without pause since they were beyond sight of the city. His firey red hair

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that flowed from under his cap and the beard that covered his face did not have a trace of silver. He was tall, perhaps a head taller than Jaime, who was the tallest in the family at the time. He took long strides, helped along with his walking pole which he had fashioned from an ash limb. On his feet he wore a pair of sandals that Lorenzo had made for him and presented as a gift for all the good deeds he had performed on behalf of Christians living in the Jewish quarter.

“These are my people,” explained Patre Rossi, referring to the people whom they would meet when they arrived in Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi. “My vow of celibacy will end this line of Longobardi, but there are many other ancient Viking streams, large and small, flowing through these hills. My mother, may God have mercy on her dear soul, had hair the color of wheat and eyes the color of heaven. My father, who works in the court in Benevento and is as devoted to God as any man can be, has provided me with my height and my hair. Our cousins, the Normans, may have outwitted us, but they will not outlive us. When you see what our people have done in these southern hills you will not be able to keep from being impressed.”

He blessed himself and lifted his eyes upward as he apologized for expressing himself in such a prideful manner, and then he continued. He told them the entire history of the Longobardi, from the origin of their name through to the present day. He was a wonderful story teller, and it was clear to his listeners that he thoroughly enjoyed talking about his ancestors.

They arrived in Avellino after sunset. The priest led them through the northern gate, along the narrow streets to the monastery where he had taken his vows. It was a happy reunion for Patre Rossi. After the priest had greeted what seemed like every living creature in the monastery and stopped to pray at the tombs of many of the non-living buried in the floors and walls, they were taken to the dining hall where they were served a meal that could

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have sustained them for a week. It began with a m'nestra of wild greens, chicory and lentils. The bread was made of whole wheat, not the "maize" and "chick peas" they had become used to since arriving in Italia. There were plates of onions, zucchini, tomatoes, varieties of peppers, both hot and sweet, and cabbage. The best of all was the fresh roasted lamb. Meat of any kind was rare, but this was the first time they had eaten lamb in many years.

The next morning they were up at dawn and after sharing bread and warm milk with the abate and a small group of priests they were on their way. Their next destination would also be a holy place, the Benedictine Abbey of the Goleto outside the walls of Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi, explained Patre Rossi. It was founded three centuries before by San Guglielmo da Vercelli.

"Guglielmo had been born into a noble family, like many of the holy men and women at that time. He searched for God through many pilgrimages and then retired to the life of a hermit in the mountains. The Virgin Mary appeared to him many times and finally she asked him to erect a sanctuary. He was given the ground by Ruggiero Sanseverino of a noble Longobardi family. The name Goleto comes from lu Gallitu, which were the ruins of a Roman temple dedicated to the Roman's pagan sun god.

"Guglielmo built the monastery for both men and women. A large and small church were added, along with the cemetery and tower and finally a fortified castle. The nuns and monks were guided by a succession of *badesse*: Febronia, Marina I and II, Agnese and finally Scolastica. It is Badessa Scolastica we will meet. She will be the last of her distinguished line because His Excellency, Papa Giulio²⁰, has decreed that the convent shall be closed."

"Why?" asked Jaime.

²⁰ Pope Julius II

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“We do not know for certain,” replied the priest. “Perhaps they have not contributed sufficiently as a benefice, although Il Papa has so many one should think that a convent in the far reaches of The Holy Mother Church’s domains would not be noticed. Perhaps the convent would not admit his daughters, of which he has three, and he has taken it as a personal affront. There is most probably more to the story than we will ever know.”

They arrived at the gates of the city before they were closed for the night, but they did not pass through them. Instead, they continued around the walls and toward the monastery. They walked passed the portal to the convent and approached the large wooden doors to the seminary. Before Patre Rossi could raise his stick to announce their presence, the door opened a crack and from the opening a short, bearded, elderly monk peered out. His eyes widened when he saw the young priest and he pulled the door fully open and stretched out his hands to his friend.

“Patre Rossi!” cried the monk, “you have returned to warm the hearts of your many friends in the Irpinian hills. We have sorely missed your good humor.”

“And I have missed the friendship of my brothers and sisters,” answered Patre Rossi. “I am here as a guide for these men who would take their families to live among you in these blessed hills.”

The elderly monk blessed himself and then said, “May the Good Lord be merciful to you.” It was not just what he said, but how he said it, and how he looked when he uttered the words, first with his eyes raised upward, then with his head bowed low to the ground, that caused Jaime to wonder whether the monk was seeking deliverance for himself from this place or warning them that they were making a grave mistake in coming here.

The monk led them to chambers of the assistant to Badessa Scolastica who was in charge of the men’s half of the monastery. Abate Fontaniello

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had added as many lines in his forehead as the number of years which had passed since Patre Rossi's last visit. The priest introduced the four men and explained why they had come and told the story of their crusader ancestor.

"This is a place where people come who have nowhere else to go," explained the abate. "Richard's men stayed here for that reason. Their families have remained here. They are the Ricciardi. You will be welcomed by them and all of the good people who live in the city. But you must come with open eyes. The soil is as unfriendly to plants as what is underneath it is unfriendly to all who inhabit these hills."

Patre Rossi interrupted to explain that the abbot was referring to the shaking of the earth that happens now and then.

"We spend much of our time rebuilding the walls we have erected and the ceilings we have painted to glorify God. Of course, we thank Him for providing us with the work we do in His name, but sometimes we think he should let us enjoy the fruits of our labors for a little longer," said the abbot with a smile, and then blessed himself as a recognition of his complaint. "Are you good with building. There will always be work for you here. We are still rebuilding from the great destruction that happened fifty years ago."

"When our family was forced to leave the village where they had lived in Hispania and were resettled in the region of Barcelona, they worked for two generations building a church where we worshipped until we came to Napoli. We can do it again," asserted Lorenzo. "But we thought we would bring our skills with leather. We have a special recipe for the tanning that we have preserved from the time of the Moors. It works without most of the foul smell that usually comes with tanning."

"I am certain it is a good recipe and the products you would make from your leather would be superb," replied the abbot. "There may be one problem, and that is the raw material you will need to do your tanning. You

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may have noticed, but this rocky and barren hillside is not so friendly to animals either. There is little meat in our diets. Adamo and Eva did not eat of their lesser brethren in the garden, I tell our flock, so it must have been God's will that we would sustain ourselves with the foods we can grow in our own gardens. But not one of us will turn down the offer of a piece of cooked flesh when it is offered. That is a rare occasion around here."

The four Sena men sat quietly and listened to Abate Fontaniello paint a very grim picture of their future home. When he paused they sat quietly, thinking thoughts of a future in this bleak part of the world which periodically grumbled from below and only grudgingly gave sustenance from above. How would they obtain the hides they would need to do their work? They would solve this problem with the ingenuity they had shown through their long history as a family, each man thought to himself. The abbot broke the silence.

"In the not too distant future the convent will be closed," said the abbot. "It is our Holy Father the Pope, Julius II, who is more of a general than a spiritual leader of The Church, who has declared this. We are not alone in the forced abandonment of our holy building, and the reasons for these closings are the same. When the holy man, Guglielmo da Vercelli, founded this place it was at a time of great spiritual devotion. The men and women who came here sacrificed their entire lives to quiet contemplation and hard work. That has changed greatly over the years. The convent is a holding pin for the younger daughters of the wealthy, and the seminary a training ground for men who will live off of the labors of the poor. The convent functions more as a maternity hospital for the children these women now bear from their liaisons with both secular and religious men than a place where women learn how to follow the path of The Lord. Does this shock you? I can see the wonder in your faces."

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The five men were white as ghosts, agape. Jaime spoke.

“I am sorry, Abate, but we have never heard such stories before.”

“It is shocking! What is even more disturbing is that we are all guilty of allowing it to continue for so long. I am no less of a sinner, and my penance on this earth will never be enough to atone for my own sins. Christ was God. He showed us the way to salvation. He left it to mortals to build His church, and He knew that we would make many mistakes. He gave us the Word to follow, but we humans are foolish. We believe He will always forgive us if we profess to be of His faith and confess our sins. I believe that one day He will lose his patience and He will destroy this world to begin anew somewhere else. The earth will open and we will be swallowed in the flames below. For those who live here, death will come quickly. For those without sin, it will be the fastest way to heaven.”

In a peculiar way, the abbot had turned all of the bad things he had said about Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi into one very good phenomenon, thought Vincente. He and his brother and cousins had listened while the abbot criticized The Church in general and the Pope in particular, and they could say nothing when he had finished. And yet, he gave them one good reason for moving to this place: It was possibly the quickest way to reach heaven.

It was Patre Rossi who finally broke the silence.

“What is your guidance to these good men, Signore Abate?”, he asked.

“If they truly have nowhere else to go, then of course they should come here,” replied the abbot. “Perhaps their leather tanning business will create an industry that will attract others and the community will grow. Perhaps they and their families will bring new life to this tired mountain village. Who knows? Only the Good Lord. Pray to Him for guidance.”

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They sat silently for a few more moments and then the abbot rose, bid them farewell, and left the room.

“Abate Fontaniello was in one of his better moods today,” enthused Patre Rossi.

“If that is what he says on a good day I am sure I would not like to hear what he has to say on a bad one,” laughed Lorenzo.

“Well, he didn’t mention the feuds among the three wealthiest families, and there was nothing said about the special tax that the bishop has levied,” offered Patre Rossi.

“Except for the shaking, is it worse here than anywhere else in this part of the world where we now find ourselves?” asked Jaime, but he expected no answer.

They spent the day walking around the village. The town seemed to grow from the Piazza d’Andrea and walls of Castello Longobardo. Just as Abate Fontaniello had said, the Cattedrale di Sant Michele Arcangelo was being rebuilt. Patre Rossi knew everyone and he presented the quartet to them all as new residents of the village and their future neighbors. “They will be coming back soon with their families. Make room for them in your town and your hearts,” he said. They visited the office of the Royal Secretary where they petitioned for the right to build their tanning and dyeing vats. They explained the process they would use and how they had received the recipe. The Secretary said that he would provide them with the funds to start their activity and would pay them a wage once they began to sell their leather. They would have to support themselves as best they could in the meantime.

Jaime lay awake on his straw mat, which each of the men had been given to serve as their bed for the night in the monastery. He thought about what

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he had seen and heard during the day. He tried to understand what the abbot had said. His words did not match his own view of The Church, of the men and women who had the special relationship to God and interpreted His words for the unordained. *Is it possible he is telling the truth?* He wanted to believe that the abbot was deranged. *Why hasn't he been burned as a heretic if he is spreading such falsehoods? But what if he is telling the truth? What if The Church is being led by men and women who are more concerned with the worldly pleasures than with the salvation of our souls—of their own souls? Can we continue to worship as we have done?* There were no revelations that night. Eventually, he fell asleep. The next day they began their journey back to Napoli, to their families. It was already decided that they would return soon. There was nowhere else to go.



This was a very long day. The family was about to be uprooted again. It is strange that with all the warnings they received they still decided to settle in the village. Now we have left. Not all of us, but my family. Others must have gone away over the years since we arrived, looking for a better place to live for themselves or their families. But there were many of us Senas in the village, all working together and sharing what little there was to share. I wonder how many more will leave and whether they will join us in America. But even I am not going to be with the rest of my family. I will start over with my wife and, if we are blessed by God, our children.

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September 11, 1896 A.D.

8:30 a.m.

THE ELEVENTH DAY of the journey was a Wednesday. Michele's mother was having her birthday on this day. She was born Rosa Villani in the neighboring village of Rocca San Felice. Her father and his brothers lived in the village with their families and worked on the farms that surrounded it. They had small plots of land at the edge of the village where they grew vegetables and kept a few chickens and a pig which they butchered each year and divided amongst all the brothers' and their sisters' families. When Rosa received her portion it was a feast in the Sena household. She made a special roast with most of it and used a small piece to put into the sauce for the maccheroni. Michele remembered this occasion as the best one of each year, better than Christmas and Easter.

As he walked from his cot in steerage to the upper decks, he thought about what he could bring with him when he came to the tenement house on Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn where his parents and brother and sisters were now living. He would buy a piece of pork, he decided, a large piece of pork. This would be his present to his mother and his family. First he would have to make an exchange of money. His friend Signore Di Sangue would help him with that, he was certain.

Michele made a full round of the deck before he found Signore Di Sangue sitting in a wood slat chair on the port side of the ship.

"Buongiorno, Signore Di Sangue," Michele called out when he was close enough to the elderly gentleman so that he was certain his salutation would be heard.

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As usual, Signore Di Sangue's welcome was warm and convivial. He always greeted his young friend as if they had not met for a protracted time even though it was only a few night hours that had passed since they had parted company. After they discussed the state of the weather, the temperature of the tea water at breakfast and the prospects for finding a piece of meat in the dinner's stew, Michele asked how he would go about changing his Italian money to American dollars so that he could buy a piece of pork on his way from the ship to his family's apartment in Brooklyn.

"How much money do you have, if you do not mind me asking you this question?" enquired Signore Di Sangue carefully.

Michele unbuttoned first his overcoat, then his vest and finally his shirt. He reached in under his shirt and unbuttoned a small, leather pouch from a strap that circled his chest. He unbuckled the strap on the pouch and pulled open the flap covering the contents of the pouch. He reached in, took out lira notes and coins contained in the pouch and handed them to Signore Di Sangue.

"I see you have the new paper lira the Bank of Italia began printing just this year. You would get perhaps fifty dollars for what you have if you changed it at an honest bank," said Signore Di Sangue. "On the street, from a money changer, you would get less than half of that, probably much less. We will count it together and write down the total amount. I will also write down an address where you can send me a letter telling me that you have arrived safely. I will give you one hundred dollars for your money. My condition is that you take the paper with the amount we write on it to a bank in Scranton when you arrive there and ask them to tell you how much it would be worth if you exchanged that much money. If it is less than fifty dollars, then you will put fifty of the dollars I give you in the bank as your first deposit and keep the rest in your pocket. If it is more than fifty but less

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than one hundred dollars, then you will put the difference between what it is worth and one hundred dollars in the bank. With that money in the bank, you will be able to borrow more if you need it in your business. If the sum the bank would have paid you is more than one hundred dollars, then I have underpaid you. When you write me your letter, you will tell me how much I owe you and I will send you the money. Is that a bargain you would like to make, my young friend?"

"It sounds to me too generous," replied Michele. "I will be in your debt forever because I will never be able to repay you."

"*Noli, ut vulgare proverbium est, equi dentes inspicere donati,*" replied Signore Di Sangue. "*Never inspect the teeth of a horse received as a gift.* This is good advice offered by the scholarly St. Jerome."

"I am sorry if I have offended you, Signore Di Sangue," replied Michele contritely. "Thank you, it is very generous of you to help me in this way."

"No apology is necessary. I have taken no offense, my young friend. Have you ever heard of the game of chess, Michele?" asked Signore Di Sangue, again seeming to change the subject as quickly as a hare springs across a field to his form when he senses danger.

"Signore Usiglio had a chess board in the back room of his shop," replied Michele. "He would sit there with his brother-in-law on some evenings after we finished our work for the day. They would smoke their pipes and drink strong tea that Signore Usiglio brewed in a big tea pot he called a *samovar*. I never learned anything about the game."

"Chess is an ancient game, invented in the fifth century or so A.D. in the far east. It is a perfect model for how the world works. Two opposing forces face each other across a field of squares. In the front row of each force are the pawns, representing the foot soldiers that come from the

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peasantry. Behind them are the nobles, clergy and bureaucrats along with the king and queen. The pawns can move in only one direction, forward. The gentry have more flexibility in their movement, especially the queen. The objective of the game is to reduce the other player's forces and eventually to capture the king."

"It sounds very simple," laughed Michele.

"Life reduced to its basics is quite simple, my young friend," replied Signore Di Sangue. "The pawns move forward and kill each other providing a shield for the knights. The knights fall while protecting their sovereign. The bureaucrats, called the rooks, attempt to defend the edges of the domain, but are thwarted by the clergy and the queen. When a master meets a beginner, a game can be over in a few moves. When a master meets another master, the true complexity of life can be revealed. What I find to be the most compelling part of the game is the possibility for a surviving pawn to become a queen if it reaches the last row of the opposing side. A pawn can do nothing to avoid capture by any of the gentry pieces, but if it is left alone, ignored, while the battle rages around it, it can be raised to one of the most powerful pieces on the board and win the battle."

"I've never seen that happen in real life," said Michele.

"Oh, it has occurred many times over the centuries. A person from the lowest ranks can advance, especially in the country where you are going. If you stay out of harm's way, work hard and have the goal to succeed, you may not become a king or a prince, but you will no longer be a peasant. Pass this thought on to your children and one day your family name will be honored. My small gift may help you on your way. You will remember me and my people. That is my payment."



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The one hundred years between 1450 and 1550 A.D. were the pinnacle of the Renaissance on the Italian peninsula. Living and active during this time were the painters and architects Filippo Brunelleschi, Leonardo da Vinci, Raffael Santi, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Titian, Bellini, Tintoretto and Verone. Their works expressed the flourishing culture at the time and the growing wealth of the Holy Mother Church. In 1497 A.D. in Milano, Leonardo da Vinci painted The Last Supper for his patron, Duke Ludovico Sforza and his duchess Beatrice d'Este. The Popes were the major patrons of the arts, and houses of God were their principal objects of construction and adornment. Pope Julius II, the General who led his armies into battle, commissioned Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel in 1508 A.D.

This thriving cultural expression was not, however, dispersed evenly throughout the Italian realm. Italia was divided into states, the largest of them being Venezia, Milano, Firenze, Stati Pontifici and the Regno di Napoli²¹. Venezia was clearly the most powerful and wealthy as a result of its extensive trading and its many possessions. Milano, under the rule of Ludovico Sforza, was located in a rich agricultural region in the *Pianura Padana* dominated by the fertile river, *fiume Po*. Firenze was the absolute centre of art, culture and learning reaching its peak under the rule of Lorenzo il Magnifico. These states were rivals, unfriendly inhabitants of a body of land that was hemmed in by water on three sides and by an impressive wall of mountains in the north.

The Regno di Napoli did not participate in the advances brought about by the Renaissance in the same way as the other regions of Italia. In 1500 A.D., Napoli was one of Europe's largest cities. With a population of 125,000, it was larger than either Venezia or Milano. Paris had 225,000 inhabitants in that year, London only 50,000. But Napoli was also one of the poorest

²¹ Venice, Milan, Florence, Papal States and Kingdom of Napoli

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cities, and its swollen population was more an indication that the governors of the city had lost control over it than of it becoming a flourishing metropolis.

Between 1442 A.D., when King Alfonso V of Aragon united Sicilia and Napoli, and 1559 A.D. with the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrés, control over Napoli and Sicilia fluctuated between the Aragonese and the French kings. In 1489 A.D., Pope Innocent VIII offered the Kingdom of Napoli to Charles VIII of Francia in order to remove the troublesome Ferdinand I. Charles had a claim to the throne of Napoli through his father's grandmother, Marie of Anjou. God took care of both Ferdinand and Innocent in the meantime. Alfonso II, Ferdinand's son, succeeded him, and Alexander VI took up the Holy Sceptre after Innocent. Charles finally invaded with 25,000 men and arrived in Napoli in early 1495 A.D., ousting Ferdinand II, Alfonso's son (Alfonso had abdicated rather than face the prospect of being dethroned) and crowing himself King of Napoli. Charles was successful in his Italian campaign, but his success was his undoing. Pope Alexander and the City States in the north formed a coalition that defeated Charles and his forces at Fornovo in July 1495 A.D. that sent the French back to Francia with little to show for their efforts.

Ferdinand II returned after the defeat of the French and briefly held the throne. He died in 1496 A.D. and was succeeded by his uncle, the younger brother of Alfonso II, Frederick of Calabria, who became Frederick IV. The French, now led by Louis XII, would not give up their claim, and together with Frederick's cousin, Ferdinand II of Aragon, they deposed Frederick IV in 1501 A.D. Louis XII was given Napoli, but Ferdinand II of Aragon and Louis XII were not destined to be friends. Their quarrels led to battle, and in 1503 A.D., Ferdinand of Aragon defeated the French at Cerignola and then again at Garigliano. On the first day of 1504 A.D., the French surrendered at Gaeta. The Kingdom of Napoli remained in Aragonese hands from that

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point forward, and with the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrés in 1559 A.D., the French officially relinquished all claims to the region.

When it became part of the Spanish Empire, The Kingdom of Napoli was ruled by a viceroy in Napoli. Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba was the first viceroy of The Kingdom, appointed in 1504 A.D. For Spagna, the Kingdom was a source of money and goods. It was taxed heavily, although the clergy and the nobles were exempt from all taxation. Small farms that supported the families who tilled the soil for generations were taken over by noble families and The Church, with most of the produce taken by the estate owners and sold. Famines were common. Disease spread quickly because ignorance and superstition reigned, and the very old and very young were easy prey for deadly illnesses. Death helped to reduce the crowding, allowing the living to have more space to breathe.

In 1555 A.D. the new Pope, Paul IV, revived the periodic Christian theme of hatred of the Jews by issuing a Papal Bull, called *cum nimis absurdum*, that introduced both religious and economic restrictions in the Papal States. The name of the Bull is derived from the opening sentence: “Since it is completely senseless...”²² The bull required all Jews to live in the Roman Ghetto, a walled quarter of the city that had three gates which were locked at night. The Bull restricted the Jews’ economic relations with Christians to the selling of used clothes. Jewish men were obliged to wear a pointed yellow hat. Jewish females were forced to show a yellow scarf. Attempts to counter the repression, including a proposed boycott of the Port of Ancona led by Dona Gracia Mendes, failed due to lack of unity among the Jews.

²² Laws and ordinances to be followed by Jews living in the Holy See [decreed by the] Bishop [of Rome, the Pope] Paul, servant of the servants of God, for future recollection. Declared at St. Mark's, Rome, in the one thousand five hundred fifty fifth year of the incarnation of our lord, one day prior to the Ides of July, in the first year of our Papacy.

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Some feared even more severe reprisals. *Yes, it is bad, but it could always be worse*, their leaders reasoned.

Pope Paul would shortly add to the repression by declaring the Talmud to be a blasphemous book insulting Christianity and placing it on the list of banned documents, the *Index librorum prohibitorum*. In 1569 A.D., Pope Pius V expelled the Jews from all towns in the Papal States with the exceptions of Ancona and Roma.



“You know that we live on a planet called Earth, don’t you my young friend?” asked Signore Di Sanguie as they sat drinking hot tea and eating slices of dark bread that was their mid-day meal .

“Signore Usiglio explained it to me,” replied Michele with a smile, “and he made me promise not to say anything to our priest because he would get into trouble. He told me that The Church was still having some problems accepting the idea that we are not at the center of everything. I must admit that I had a very difficult time understanding what he told me, but he had a large book with many drawings showing the earth, the moon, the sun and the other planets all floating around in heaven.”

“Signore Usiglio has certainly made it easier for me,” laughed Signore Di Sanguie. “Well, this planet that we live on was not any bigger in 1500 A.D. than it was in 50 B.C. when we started your story, but after 50 B.C., things started happening in more parts of the world that began to affect the south of Italia. Colombo did not discover America; it was always there, and others, like the Vikings and the Basques, had already visited there long before the Genoan made the journey. Exploration and trade were opening all parts of the world and its people to one another, for both good and evil. Italia did not enjoy tomatoes until they were brought there from South America in the

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early 1500s. Sicknesses like the great plagues were not widespread until trading ships brought the infected vermin with them from Asia.”

“Nothing new ever came to our village,” said Michele. “We never heard about what was happening in other places. Was it any different back then?”

“No it was not,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “Common people were told what their leaders wanted them to know, no more and no less. They were kept illiterate so they could not fill their minds with thoughts that did not agree with those of their rulers. Whenever a commoner received too much education, it usually ended badly for the elite. But whether or not people knew of happenings on the other side of the globe, they experienced the effects, like eating tomatoes for the first time or seeing their loved ones die of the plague.

“The irony was that wealth from colonial expansion into North and South America and Central Asia and Eastern Asia was providing the funds to carry out petty wars between neighbors close to home. This was not so different from what had been done for centuries by the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines and the Arabs, although these civilizations built buildings and lasting institutions in the lands they colonized and did not simply take the grains of wheat and leave the chaff.

“Even though the fate of southern Italy was settled in principal in 1504 A.D., the Italian Wars, as they were called, continued until 1559 A.D. when the peace of Cateau-Cambr sis was signed. At the end of the fifteenth century there were four powerful forces in the Mediterranean region. First, there was the Papacy, which had wealth and influence and claimed supremacy over everyone’s bodies, minds and souls. Second, there was the Holy Roman Empire, which had the backing of the Pope when it suited him, but through force and cleverness, had gained dominion over three corners of the region: Hispania, Germania and the southern portion of Italia. Third,

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there was Francia, a powerful country with powerful and determined kings. Unlike Italia, Germania and Hispania, Francia was a single dominion with a single king. Fourth, there was the Ottoman Kingdom, constantly threatening to expand into Hungary-Bohemia and to cross the Adriatic Sea and conquer Italia. The Ottoman Turks were the biggest threat because they were Muslims. The Church and the Catholic nobles had spent centuries ridding the northern shores of the Mediterranean from Muslim control, and they were determined to do whatever was necessary, including forming alliances with their sworn enemies, to keep their lands free of Islamic influence and domination.

“The French kings were by far the most aggressive. They were determined to capture the entire Italian peninsula, thereby dividing the Holy Roman Empire and eventually weakening it, and also subduing the Papacy in order to gain greater control over its wealth. They kept invading, and they kept being defeated and expelled. It was the reigning Pope at the time who assumed the responsibility of organizing the resisting army, creating alliances, and sometimes even leading the forces himself. The struggles for domination were continuous and intense, consuming countless lives and great sums of wealth. In the midst of this, a voice was raised, unheard at first, that would change forever the course of the region that we now call Europe and set in motion a new Diaspora that would rival the one of my people one-and-a-half millennia earlier. The voice was that of a man named Martin Luther, a priest and professor of theology living in the town of Eisleben, in Saxony.”

“How could one small man have the power to make big changes?” wondered Michele.

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“It is one of the oldest techniques in the art of battle. Use the strongest force of your enemy and turn it to your favor,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “And what was the strongest force at the time?”

“The Roman Catholic Church,” answered Michele, without hesitating.

“Correct! He claimed that the leadership of The Church had become corrupted by money. *“How could the purchasing of indulgences sold by petty salesmen free a sinner from God’s eternal punishment?”* he asked of The Church. He wrote his criticisms in a paper he called his *Ninety-Five Theses* and published this in 1517 A.D. Pope Leo X demanded he retract all of his *Theses*. He refused. The Pope excommunicated him. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, at the Diet of Worms in 1521 A.D. demanded that he retract all of his *Theses*. Luther refused once again. Charles declared him an outlaw.

“Martin Luther was not deterred. He continued his preachings. He taught that salvation is earned through faith in Jesus Christ and as a free gift of God’s grace, and that it cannot be earned by good deeds. He challenged the authority of the Pope by teaching that the bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge. Interpretations and extensions of the words in the bible are not valid, he stated. He challenged the Roman Catholic law of *sacerdotalism*, the belief that priests act as mediators between God and us humans. He said that all baptized Christians belonged to what he called a ‘holy priesthood’ and that we can talk directly to God without the need of an interpreter. This threatened the very existence of Catholic priesthood.

“These were not new ideas. There had been dissidents within The Church for centuries who sometimes, even openly, challenged the excesses of the clergy and especially the Pope. They had been silenced. Luther was protected by men who believed in what would be called the Protestant Reformation. One of them was Frederick III of Saxony, who hid Luther in

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Wartburg Castle following the Diet of Worms judgment against him. Luther's views spread, especially in Germania following his translation of the Bible into German. This led to other translations, like the King James Bible into English. His marriage set an example for the practice of clerical marriage, which is a more natural state, he said, than the enforced bachelor status and vow of celibacy, often ignored, for Catholic priests. More importantly, his ideas gave form to a Christian religion without the Pope at its head. In part as a result of his teachings, churches in England, Germania, Scandinavia and the Low Countries, began to be established with the secular rulers as the leaders and protectors of the people. Of course, this was not only related to religious beliefs and piety; money was also involved. Once the ruler was in charge of The Church, he—or sometimes she—was also in charge of its wealth.

“Unfortunately, the one blemish on Martin Luther's pure soul was his belief that Jews should be eradicated from the face of the earth. He wrote this in an article published later in his life, in 1543 A.D., *On the Jews and Their Lies*. He was not always an anti-Semite. In his early years he taught that the condition of the Jews should be pitied, and he worked diligently to try to convert us to Christianity. In an essay he wrote in 1523 A.D., *That Jesus Was Born a Jew*, he claimed that this task was made more difficult by The Church, which, he said, ‘*dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings. If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles.*’

“Let us return to the wars engulfing Italia. There was a fifth force at this time, Republica de Venezia, which had exerted a significant amount of influence in the region since the time of the first Crusades and had become an irritant to the dominant powers. In 1508 A.D., Venezia had become so strong and so determined to expand its territory inland that Julius II, the

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‘War Pope’, formed the League of Cambrai to curb its aggression. The League comprised the Papacy, Francia, Spagna and the Holy Roman Empire. At the Battle of Agnadello in 1509 A.D., most of the Venezian army was destroyed, but the Republic held on to Padua. One year later, the Pope decided that it was not Venezia that was the greatest threat, but Francia. He took his army out of the League and allied his forces with Venezia to do battle against Francia. This proved to be totally unsuccessful, so the Pope formed a new Holy League consisting this time of England and Switzerland along with Spagna and the Holy Roman Empire. They won, they lost, they won, they lost, and members switched sides. Julius died and the League lost its indomitable leader. Louis died and was followed by Francis I. Finally, in 1515 A.D., by the Treaties of Noyon and Brussels, northern Italia was surrendered by the League to Francia and Venezia.

“It was relatively peaceful for awhile, but then the childish rulers started up again. Francis was disappointed that Carlos of Spagna, a Habsburg, and not he, had been elevated to Holy Roman Emperor as Charles V. He abruptly attacked the Spanish and was duly punished for his foolishness by the Spaniards under the leadership of Fernando de Avalos. The French lost badly in several battles. Still not satisfied, Francis personally led his French forces into Lombardia in 1525 A.D. Not only was he defeated, but he was captured at the Battle of Pavia and imprisoned in Madrid. Once again, the Pope, now Clement VII, decided that the Emperor had become too powerful and he organized an alliance, the League of Cognac, with Francia, Firenze and a number of smaller states on the peninsula. Venezia refused to be drawn into this war.

“This was not going to turn out well for the League or the Pope. Roma was sacked in 1527 A.D. by Charles’ armies and Clement was imprisoned. The Treaty of Cambrai was drafted in 1529 A.D. declaring Francia defeated and returning the Medici family as rulers of Firenze. It was an uneasy but

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relatively long peace. It was broken, again by the impetuous Francis. He invaded Italia when the powerful Duke of Milano, Francesco Maria Sforza, died in 1536 A.D. and Charles' son, Phillip, received the Duchy as a prize. Francis captured Torino, but he was repelled from Milano. Charles invaded Provence. Another stalemate ensued and after two years of war the Truce of Nice awarded Torino to Francia."

"Didn't these men have anything better to do than lead armies into battle?" exclaimed Michele.

"The truth is that they did not," laughed Signore Di Sangué. "It was all they knew how to do. For the most part they were terrible leaders off the battlefields and not always very competent on the fields either. And to win wars, nothing seemed to be unthinkable. Francis even allied with the Ottomans in an invasion of Italia, capturing Nice in 1543 A.D. and defeating forces of the Emperor until further encounters reduced everyone's gains. There was no peace until 1559 A.D. when a treaty was signed between Spagna and Francia. Charles had abdicated in 1556 A.D. to retire to a monastery in Spagna, a year after he signed the Peace of Augsburg giving Lutheranism and Catholicism equal rights in Germania. He divided his empire between his two sons, with Phillip II taking Spagna, southern Italia and the Low Countries, and Ferdinand I receiving Germania.

"When the wars ended with the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, the Habsburgs were firmly in place as the number one power in the region at the expense of the French, the Italian states were severely weakened and significantly reduced in status, and the Renaissance had lost its major sponsors. Leonardo da Vinci, seeking sponsors for his art, emigrated to Francia. So you see, my friend, you are in good company in your decision to move from your homeland to America. Go where you can find work."

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“I would be willing to wager that da Vinci preferred to stay where he was, but, like my family and me, felt he did not have a choice,” mused Michele.

“Oh, we all have choices,” Michele. “Unless we are running from a conquering army, or the police because of a crime we have committed, or conscription in your own army, or from a broken love affair, we have the choice to stay and accept a diminished standard of life. When your grandchildren return to your village in a century’s time, if the earthquakes have not swallowed up the houses and all of its inhabitants, your ancestors may well serve them canolli on fine china dishes and wine in expensive crystal glasses”



1510 A.D.

The Sena, Usiglio and many of the other Christian and Jewish families that had occupied the Jewish Quarter of Napoli walked through the eastern gate of the city just as the day’s first light appeared above the small hills on the horizon. There were around one hundred of them, Christians who thought they were in danger of being accused of insincerely following the Catholic faith, and Jews who were being banished once again. They were led by one of the Jewish merchants who had made the journey to Benevento many times to sell the wares of the craftsmen in Napoli and to bring back goods for sale in the city. Just outside the city’s walls was a cemetery divided into two sections. One was for Jews and the other for Christians. The Christian cemetery was consecrated, and it was a place where all the faithful could be buried, but only the Christians who lived in the Jewish quarter buried their dead in this ground. They could not bury them anywhere else. Each family bid farewell in their own way to those who would stay behind in Napoli.

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When they reached the place where the road forked off toward Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi, Jaime gathered the members of the Sena family around him. He explained once again, as he had done following his return from the visit he had made with his brother and cousins, that it would be a hard life at first in the small mountain village. If some members of the family wanted to continue to Benevento there was nothing keeping them from doing so. As had been the case earlier, all members of the family agreed that they would face the hardships together. Jaime thanked Signore Usiglio for all that he and his family and friends had done to help them since their arrival in Napoli.

"This is not the last we will see of each other, of this I am almost certain," said Signore Usiglio. "Who knows how long we will be able to live in Benevento before we are banished again. Perhaps next time it will be we who will need your assistance, and I hope you will be merciful."

"We are forever in your debt," replied Jaime. "Our homes and our hearts will always be open to you and your people."



In 1571 A.D., a force called The Holy League was organized by the Pope, Pius V. It comprised the Papal States, the Habsburg states of Hispania and the Kingdom of Napoli, the Republic of Venezia, the Republic of Genova, The Grand Duchy of Toscana, the Duchies of Savoia, Parma and Urbino, and the Knights of Malta. Don Juan de Austria, the illegitimate half-brother of King Philip II of Hispania, was given the position of supreme commander of a force consisting of two hundred galleys, one hundred ships, fifty thousand infantry, four thousand five hundred cavalry and artillery. The main purpose of the Holy League was to halt the expansion of the Ottoman Turks. Absent from the League were the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximillian II, the King of Francia, Charles IX, and King Sebastian of Portugal. The

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Emperor had signed a truce with the Turks and so remained neutral. Francia was the sworn enemy of Hispania and therefore in an alliance with the Turks. Portugal was occupied in other engagements against the Turks in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

The Christian alliance had drawn a line in the sand and was determined to halt the interminable expansion of the Ottoman Turks. From the time they conquered Constantinople in 1453 A.D., the Turks had been viewed as an invincible force, expanding northward, conquering the Hungarian Kingdom and setting Vienna under siege. They were now threatening to close off the Mediterranean to Christian shipping. They captured Nicosia in 1570, besieged Famagusta and were in the Adriatic in the Gulf of Patras, near Lapanto, Greece. The one defeat they suffered had been in 1565 A.D. at the hands of their most bitter enemies, the Knights Hospitaller, also known as the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, Knights of Rhodes and Chevaliers of Malta.

The Knights Hospitaller arrived on Malta in 1530 A.D., having successively been driven out of their strongholds, beginning with Jerusalem and the Holy Lands in 1291 A.D. After Jerusalem, they found a temporary sanctuary on the island of Cyprus, but sixteen years later they executed a plan by their Grand Master, Guillaume de Villaret, to commandeer the island of Rhodes, which at the time was part of the Eastern Roman Empire. The island surrendered to the Knights in August 1309 A.D. In 1312 A.D. the Knights Templar were dissolved and most of their holdings were transferred to the Knights Hospitallers. The combined holdings were divided into eight 'tongues', representing the eight points on their cross, one each for the Crown of Aragon, Auvergne, Castile, England, Francia, Germania, Italia and Provence. Each of the 'tongues' was administered by a Prior.

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The Hospitallers gradually abandoned their religious and humanitarian mission in order to fight for their own survival. In 1444 A.D. they fought back the forces of the Sultan of Egypt, and in 1480 A.D., they withstood an attack by the Ottoman Turk Sultan Mehmed II. Forty-two years later a successor to Mehmed, Suleiman the Magnificent, appeared on the shores of Rhodes with four hundred ships carrying 200,000 men. The Hospitallers had at the time 7,000 knights. Suleiman subjected the Hospitallers to a six-month siege before demanding their surrender. The defeated Knights were allowed to flee to Sicilia. In 1530 A.D., Charles V, as King of Sicilia, gave the Hospitallers the islands of Malta and Gozo and the North African port of Tripoli in perpetual fiefdom. In payment, the Knights were obligated to send one Maltese falcon each year on All Souls Day to the King's representative, the Viceroy of Sicilia. Many of the knights viewed this gift as a demeaning gesture, preferring to hold on to the idea that Rhodes was their rightful home.

For the next thirty-five years, the Knights built their defenses on Malta and harassed the Muslims and their Barbary pirate allies in the Mediterranean. Suleiman, who could not be accused of petulancy, finally decided to put an end to this nuisance called the Knights Hospitaller, and in 1565 A.D. sent a force of 40,000 men to Malta. At the time, there were 700 knights and 8,000 Maltese soldiers on the island. Once they were removed, Suleiman would have a new and strategically positioned base from which to launch attacks on Italia and Hispania. The knights and the men of Malta proved to be more than a match for the Ottomans.

Initially, the battle moved in favor of the attackers. Half of the knights were killed and most of the island's cities were captured and plundered. The Grand Master, Jean Parisot de la Valette, was counseled to abandon the fortresses of Il Borgo and Senglea, and to withdraw to the fortress of Sant Angelo. His refusal and determination to fight to the last man emboldened

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the defenders. The final major assault by the besiegers was repelled. The Ottoman troops lost their will to fight as their numbers, ammunition and food dwindled. Their commanders, Piyale Pasha and Mustafa Pasha, proved to be incapable of leading their troops to victory. When word was received that reinforcements for the Knights had arrived from Sicilia, belatedly sent by a hesitant Viceroy concerned that his aid might serve as a red cape to a raging Ottoman bull, the Turks overestimated their numbers, broke off their siege and retreated. Only 15,000 men eventually returned to Constantinople. A new Maltese city was built to replace all that had been lost in the battles with the Turks. It was called Valletta in honor of the Grand Master who led his Knights and the people of Malta to victory.

In recognition of the important role the Knights Hospitallers played in halting the advance of the Ottoman Turks and Islam, in 1607 A.D. the Grand Master of the Hospitallers was granted the status of Reichsfürst, Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1630 A.D. the Grand Master was made the ecclesiastical equal of a cardinal, a Prince of the Church.

Six years after the defeat at Malta, the Turks had regrouped and once again were threatening the Mediterranean. The Ottoman fleet was under the command of Ali Pasa, Muhammad Saulak and Uluj Ali. The sea battle lasted only four hours. Thousands of Turks were captured along with 117 galleys. It was both a physical and moral victory for the Christian forces. The second eruption in the Mediterranean of the volcano called Islam ceased. The hot tongues of fire that it spread to the north and west cooled. Eventually, its effects in most places withered and were replaced once again with Christianity.

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1630 A.D.

Alicia thought about what her nonna had told her many years ago when she was a young girl. They had finished the washing at the stream and they were walking together back to the village. Her nonna was among those first Senas to settle in Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi. They did not know what it would be like when they left Napoli and walked into what felt like the wilderness, her nonna had told her. Along the way they passed many villages, large and small, until they finally arrived. Her nonna's father had been one of the men who came earlier to choose the place where they would all live. The family moved into a dwelling of an earlier family who had all died of a strange disease. No one else would move into this dwelling, so it became their home. It was very dirty and overrun with vermin when they arrived, but the family had set to work and within a short while it was fit to inhabit again.

Much time passed before they received their first visitor because the villagers were still afraid of the house that had killed their former neighbors. The visitor was Don Luigi from the Abbey. He was short and thin, unusual physical characteristics for a man of The Church, her nonna remembered. Most priests were well fed. The little priest blessed each member of the family, young and old, and gave each one a piece of bread that he removed from a basket that he carried. When they had all finished eating, Don Luigi spoke.

"You are welcome and safe here," he said. "We do not care why you have come to us, only that God in His grace and wisdom has guided you here. We are all equal in the eyes of God when we receive His body and blood at the sacrifice of the mass. We are one in the holy, Catholic and apostolic Church, The Church that was founded by Jesus when He died for

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our sins. What you believe and how you live inside your homes is none of my concern. You may be Jews or Muslims or Arians or devil worshippers. As long as you live by the laws of The Church outside of your homes, you will have a home in Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi."

There had been a long silence, her nonna had told her. No one knew what to say. They had talked later and some of the family said they thought it was a trap to trick them into admitting they were not true Catholics. Zio Jaime broke the silence.

"We have been good Christians since our first conversion, Don Luigi," said Zio Jaime. "That was in Gallica during the time of the Romans. Since then, we have lived among people of other religions, and they among us. Although we never took their religion, we took some of their traditions, their ways of preparing food, even their ways of praying. In the case of our present trade, we have also taken their ways of working. Our lives have been made richer because of what we have borrowed, but we have always been suspected by The Church of being something we are not: false Christians. It is good to hear that in our new home that will not be the case. Bless you, Don Luigi. Alicia's nonna said there was a great celebration after Don Luigi left."

The plague had passed through the valley of *fiume Ofanto* the season before. Some members of the family had died, including Alicia's and Tommaso's youngest son and daughter. It was said that the number of deaths were much greater in the other villages, especially in Benevento and Napoli. Don Pietro had told them at mass that the village had been spared the worst because of the faith and devotion of its people. Zio Giuseppe said that it was the smell from their tanning and dyeing vats which kept the evil spirits that carried the deadly disease away, and it was only when the winds

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blew hard away from the village that these spirits could enter and take their prey, including their two little angels.

No one who lived in the village could smell the odors from the family's industry, especially not the men and boys who worked in and around the vats every day except on the Sabbath. It was only when a trader or wandering monk or a tax official came into the village and inevitably exclaimed, "How can you live with that stench?", that anyone acknowledged the malodorous reputation their village had gained in the region. It was the Senas who had brought this dubious distinction to Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi. It was, however, admitted that the smell would be many times greater if the tanning was done with the more traditional methods rather than the one which they were given by the Moors. Of course, they did not own this business. It was the Caracciolo family who provided the money for its operation and who took the profits. The family had employment and was satisfied with the arrangement. After all, when they arrived in the village they came with nothing except their idea, the clothes on their backs and their religious relics, the ones their ancestors secretly kept from the flames.

Tanning leather requires many pits or vats in which the skins are dipped. There are vats to soak and wash the hides to soften them up. There are vats with a mixture of lime to remove the hair. There are vats where the lime is washed off, and then there are the tanning vats where the hides are moved from one to the other, each vat containing a different mixture of the important ingredients to make the leather soft and supple or hard and firm, depending on the eventual use for the leather. Building the vats was quite easy. They were modeled on the mud brick and plaster vats the men in the family had visited in Napoli before the family left for Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi. However, keeping the vats from cracking or breaking up completely whenever the slightest tremor occurred was quite another matter, and tremors, both minor and major, occurred regularly.

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Alicia's grandfather often told the story of how his uncle disappeared one day while working the leather in one of the first vats they had made. He was standing up to his waist in the tanning liquor, working the hides, when the ground shook. His vat broke in half and he was swallowed by the earth while everyone watched him disappear. A few hours later, he re-appeared, clothes in tatters and some scratches on his arms and head but otherwise in good health. He explained that he had been flushed down a tunnel that eventually led to a cave. He followed the water in the cave until it led to a small hole in the side of a hill close to the river. He pushed himself through the hole and tumbled down to the river where he washed himself and then hurried back to the family with the brilliant idea that had come to him as he was being gulped down by the earth as Jonah had been ingested by the whale. He explained how they would make the vats out of wood, like large barrels, and then lash them together like a large raft. When the ground shook, the liquid in the vats would splash around a bit, but their factory would remain intact. They followed his instructions, and those wooden vats are the same ones they have been using for the past fifty or so years. No one except the children really believed this story, but it made an interesting addition to the family's history.

Having solved the problem with their vats—whether through a revelation or trial and error—they needed to find the skins to tan and the tree bark containing the tannic acid necessary for completing the process of converting the skin into leather. Securing these ingredients proved more difficult than building the vats. Cattle, especially the younger calves, and oxen hides were too expensive, and goat hides were too rare because the goats produced milk for cheese. The family decided to concentrate their efforts on horse hide to make the Cordovan leather that the Moors produced. Hemlock, oak, birch, larch and pine were the tanning ingredients. The hides were soaked in one mixture after the other to produce the firm leathers for

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sturdy shoes and saddles. It was a slow and laborious process, and it took over two years before the first usable leather emerged from their workshop. The timing was just right for it was then that Signore Usiglio and his closest family arrived after their expulsion from Benevento, and the partnership was forged between the leather-makers and the shoemakers.



What a blessing it was for the village and for our family that the Usiglios found their way to us. I wish they would come to America. Signore Usiglio said his family felt safe in Italia now, even though he was not happy to see the Kingdom conquered by Savoia. He could not convince Babbo that it would all get better. I know they will miss each other's company. They were such good friends. Will I find such a close friend in my new home, someone I can trust and talk to about what is happening in my life?

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September 12, 1896 A.D.

10:30 a.m.

ON THE TWELFTH DAY, Michele had difficulty raising himself out of his cot. At first he could not fall asleep. He kept thinking about what Signore di Sangué had said about having choices, and the reasons why people choose to leave their homes. He was not a criminal. He could easily find a way to avoid serving in the Italian army, which had lost all sense of distinction since the Kingdom was conquered. He had never told anyone about his feelings for Lucia, especially not Lucia herself. She could never have even suspected that Michele was in a trance when he was in her presence. Or could she? Did she feel about him as he felt for her, he wondered. He had asked himself this same question countless times since he said good-bye to her. It was impossible for them to even think about being together because of their different religions. If only she was not Signore Usiglio's daughter so that he could avoid seeing her every day, and in the tight quarters of the shoe making shop being so close to her that it felt as if they were embracing.

When he finally did succumb to slumber, it was a fitful one. Now he did not want to wake up. It was not a physical ailment that was keeping him under the covers, but a strong desire to fall back into a deep sleep and return to the dream that had kept him enthralled during what he felt had been an all too brief night. He lay awake recalling as many of the details of the dream that would return to his now conscious mind. The most vivid memory was when he had taken several long running strides and lifted off the earth. He soared above a city where he never before had been. There were large buildings and he moved effortlessly between them. Then he was over a high mountain with grassy pastures and spring green forests that were bathed in

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warm sunlight. He landed in the middle of a clearing. He heard a young woman's voice coming from the wood behind him. It was Lucia. When he turned he saw a bright light. And then he awoke.

Try as he might, he could not fall back to sleep. Reluctantly, he rose up, put on his trousers and shirt over his single piece long underwear, and walked up the stairs to the mess to find Signore Di Sangue. It was late, and most of the food in the mess had been cleared. He found a piece of bread and poured a cup of tea from the kettle. He sat alone at one of the tables, eating his simple breakfast when his friend appeared.

"You are a late riser today, Michele," said Signore Di Sangue with a laugh. "Did you stay up late playing cards last evening?"

"I had a dream," explained Michele, "a very wonderful dream, and I did not want to get out of bed. I wanted to go back to the dream and stay there."

"There are two kinds of marvelous dreams, one involving a woman and one involving flying. Was it one or the other or both?" asked Signore Di Sangue.

"It was mostly flying, but there was a girl. I never saw her, just heard her voice," replied Michele.

"You recognized her voice, didn't you?" asked Signore Di Sangue.

"Yes," replied Michele.

"She is one of the reasons you wanted to stay in your village, but felt you could not. On the one hand you were already promised to another, and on the other she was out of your reach in some way, correct?" queried Signore Di Sangue, not expecting any answer but 'Yes'.

"Yes," admitted Michele.

"She is Signore Usiglio's daughter, correct?"

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Michele nodded.

“It is strange that God would have created an imperfect world in which love between a man and a woman is bounded by how we worship him, but so it is today,” said Signore Di Sangué, his sympathy showing in the way he pushed his eyebrows together and shook his head slowly. “I am reminded of a story about a Jew, an Arab and a Catholic who died and went to heaven. First the Catholic arrived and Saint Peter sent him to room eight. Then the Arab arrived, and St. Peter sent him to room nine, but told him to walk quietly past room eight. Then the Jew arrived, and St. Peter directed him to room ten, telling him also to be quiet when he walked past room eight. *“I’m curious,”* said the Jew, *“why do I have to be quiet when I walk past room eight.”* St. Peter bent down and whispered, *“Because the Catholic is in room eight, and he thinks he’s the only one here.”* Then he smiled. Michele wasn’t sure whether he should laugh, but quickly gave way to his urge. He laughed out loud, drawing smiles from the decks below and frowns from the decks above.

“Returning to the other part of your dream, you have a gift, my young friend. You have been given this gift by your father, and he received it from his father. Who knows how one of their ancestors experienced flight and lived to tell about it? Maybe they were carried away by a large bird as a small child and then rescued. Maybe they were forced off an extremely high cliff and fell into water instead of on stones. You will pass it on to your sons, and they to theirs, if your sons survive the inevitable wars that will visit us during the first part of the next millennium.”

“How do you know there will be wars, Signore Di Sangué?” asked Michele, worriedly.

“All the signs are there. Kaiser Wilhelm II will not be satisfied until he plants the flag of his relatively newly united nation over lands that once were

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part of the Holy Roman Empire. First he will take the low countries, Holland, Belgium and the little Luxembourg. This will clear the way for his armies to move in force into Francia. But he will fail, I believe, because he dismissed his Chancellor Bismarck, who was responsible for Germania regaining the strength it had during the period of the Holy Roman Empire. His failure will not be achieved without significant loss of life. The other countries on the continent will be drawn into the conflict, and it is even conceivable that America will be encouraged to join in the war by Great Britain to share in the spoils following Germania's defeat."

"How can you see all of this?" questioned Michele.

"It is the same story I have been telling you during these past two weeks, isn't it?" replied Signore Di Sangué. "Through luck or cunning, a country amasses enough wealth to equip an army that is stronger than the armies of some of its neighbors. It steps on these neighbors, like one would rise up a stair, approaching the door of the strongest foe. Sometimes it knocks and politely asks the foe to surrender. Most times it barges in and engages in battle in the foe's premises. If it prevails, it moves to the next neighbor until a sufficient number of other countries band together to stop the intrusions and punish the transgressor."

"If we know how wars start and end, why do countries continue to waste their time on them?" queried Michele.

"Because that is all most of the people who run countries know how to do," replied Signore Di Sangué, with a swaying of his head that indicated his disappointment with the state of the world. "It is also much easier to be a predator who takes from others than an industrious builder who creates the conditions to generate wealth from within. Some countries are making the change from stealing their way to might to becoming great through industry. Still, the old ways do not disappear over a generation or two. This has been

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the way of the world since we humans came into existence. You and your children and your children's children will not change that in your lifetimes, but changing it is something that we should all work toward. Use your vote wisely in your new country to select politicians who will go to war only as a last resort."

"How will I know them?" wondered Michele.

"It will not be easy. Look for the ones who use their position, whatever it is, as a way of helping people rather than making their country or state or city strong and respected by other countries or states or cities. They will understand that the purpose of a government is to make the lives of its citizens safe and secure, not to use its citizens as cannon fodder, to force them to die for the glory of the state."



The Italian peninsula had become a set of playing cards in a complicated game controlled by the large powers of the day: England, France, Spagna, Germania and Austria. Only the Duchy of Savoia, under Carlo Emanuele II, grandson to Henry IV of Francia, and the Papal States seemed to be strong enough to avoid being traded from one of the powers to the other or included as a concession or a consolation prize in one treaty or another. In 1650 A.D., the House of Habsburg's Philip IV was King of Spagna, and his Viceroy, Íñigo Vélez de Guevara, 8th Count of Oñate, ruled over the Kingdom of Napoli. Ferdinand III, also of the Habsburgs, was Holy Roman Emperor. Louis XIV, of the House of Bourbon, was King of Francia. Oliver Cromwell ruled in England, although the Stuart, Charles II, ruled from Scotland following his father's execution in 1649 A.D. Cromwell defeated him in 1651 A.D. at the Battle of Worcester, and ruled England, Scotland and Ireland until his death in 1658 A.D., when the monarchy was restored. Innocent X was Pope.

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At this time, the Italian peninsula was suffering from years of internal strife. The Wars of Castro, beginning in 1641 A.D., pitted the Pope, Urban VIII, against the Dukes of Parma. These men came from two competing Roman families, the Barberini and the Farnese. Their personal feud erupted into a war between the Papal States and the Duchy of Parma allied with the Duchy of Modena, and the Republics of Venezia and Toscana. The first war, which ended after two years of fighting, resulted in a humiliating defeat for the Pope and the Barberini family. Urban died in 1644 A.D. and his successor, Innocent X, a member of Pamphili family, punished the Barberinis for his predecessor's disgrace by banishing them from Roma. He then renewed the battle with the Farnese by opening up the War of Castro in 1649 A.D. after the Duke refused to honor the terms of the first treaty. This time, under the leadership of Luigi Mattei, the Pope's forces prevailed. Innocent ordered the city of Castro and all of its buildings, including the churches, to be leveled to the ground.

The Kingdom of Napoli was not drawn into the Wars of Castro, but it had one of its own. It was not really a war but a rebellion and then its subsequent suppression. The source of discontent that led up to the revolt was oppressive taxation required to support the many wars in which Spagna was engaged. A new tax on fruit levied on July 7, 1647 A.D. was the final straw for fisherman and fishmonger, Masaniello. He led a large mob that captured the city and forced the hated Viceroy Rodrigo Ponce de León to sign an agreement on July 13, pardoning the rebels and removing the most offensive taxes. Masaniello was cruelly and inexplicably murdered by his own followers three days later, but then, having regretted their insanity, they organized a splendid funeral for him that was even attended by representatives of the Viceroy.

The Spanish leaders interpreted the truce ending the rebellion as a victory for their Viceroy. They wanted to show the people of Napoli that they

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would not tolerate insurrection. Don Juan José de Austria, illegitimate son of Philip IV, arrived with the Spanish fleet and proceeded to shell the city. A new revolt began led by a gunsmith named Gennaro Annese. The rebel forces won the day and declared the formation of the *Serenissima Repubblica di questo regno di Napoli*, the 'Most Serene Republic of this Kingdom of Napoli'. The use of the word 'serenissima' was copied from the title of Venezia's republic. The rebels offered leadership of the new republic to Henry II of Lorraine, which he accepted, hoping to bring the Kingdom under French rule once again. The new country lasted for less than six months when Spanish forces under the command of Don Juan regained control of the city. Henry was captured, imprisoned for four years and then released. Gennaro Annese was beheaded in the Piazza del Mercato.

In 1656 A.D., the Plague killed three hundred thousand people in Napoli, one-half of the residents. In 1660 A.D., Mt. Vesuvius erupted. It was not as violent as the eruption that occurred in 1631 A.D. after the volcano had been quiet for 131 years. *Large trees covered the Gran Cono, the cone within the Somma Caldera, and local people did not remember it being a volcano. The mountain was called "La Montagna di Somma" (the Mountain of Somma, a small town on its northern side). Several months before the beginning of the eruption, people near the volcano felt some earthquakes. They were not particularly frightened because earthquakes from the nearby Apennine chain were often felt in the area. A large one had occurred three years before in Apulia, in 1628. The seismic activity became more severe in the few days before the eruption. Nevertheless, the awakening of Vesuvius in 1631 surprised the inhabitants. A strong explosive eruption started in the night between 15 and 16 December of 1631 and its paroxysmal stage lasted two days.*

In 1665 A.D., Charles II, the last Habsburg king of Spagna, took the throne at the age of four. His mother, Marie of Austria, who was her

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husband's niece—making her Charles' first cousin as well as his mother—was Charles' regent until he reached the age of sixteen. The new king was the ill-fated result of family inbreeding, a misshapen and imbecilic child who only grew worse with age. Charles was also sterile, and wasted both the beauty and fertility of his two unfortunate wives. The thirty-five years of his reign were debilitating for the expansive empire over which Spagna ruled. Charles' physical and mental weaknesses were exploited by his own family, especially his illegitimate half brother, Don Juan de Austria, as well as by foreign enemies and allies alike.

Charles II died mercifully on 1 November 1700 A.D., at the early age of thirty-five. Before he died, he named as his successor his grand nephew, Philip, Duke of Anjou of the House of Bourbon. Philip was the grandson of King Louis XIV, who ruled Francia. His father, Louis, the Grand Dauphin, and his older brother, Louis, Duke of Burgundy, were both in direct line to inherit the throne of Spagna, but they were also in line to succeed to the French crown, and so their claim was transferred to the younger son. He was crowned Philip V of Spagna.

Having the House of Bourbon controlling two of the continent's largest states, Spagna and Francia, disrupted the delicate balance of power that had existed in the region. This balance had only recently been secured by the Treaty of Ryswick, ending nine years of war between Francia and a coalition of countries, called the Grand Alliance, led by England and the Holy Roman Empire, and supported by Spagna, the Dutch Republic, Scotland, Sweden and, oddly, the Duchy of Savoia. Louis XIV had started the conflict by crossing the Rhine in order to exert his expansive territorial claims. When the combatants had nearly bankrupted their treasuries and hundreds of thousands of lives had been lost, they concluded a peace. Louis recognized William III (the 'William' in the William and Mary ruling couple) as king of

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England, Scotland and Ireland. Some borders were shifted, but the changes were hardly worth the human and financial price paid.

Just a few years prior to Charles II's death, Francia, England and the Dutch Republic, who all had some claim to the Spanish throne, met and signed the First Treaty of Partition. They agreed that upon the death of Charles, Prince Joseph Ferdinand, son of the Elector of Bavaria, would become King of Spagna, the Spanish Netherlands and the Spanish Colonies. Spagna's holdings on the Italian peninsula, including the Duchy of Milano and the Kingdoms of Napoli and Sicilia, would be partitioned respectively between Austria and Francia. This plan was thwarted by the untimely death of Joseph Ferdinand in 1699 A.D. The claimant countries tried again with a new treaty, this time awarding Spagna, the Spanish Netherlands and the Spanish colonies to Charles, Archduke of Austria, the second son of Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor. Francia was given Napoli, Sicilia and Milano. Leopold refused to sign the treaty. He wanted his son to receive all of the Spanish territories. Most importantly, Spagna did not agree to partition of its territories. Why should it?

When Charles II died and Philip V became king of Spagna, a new Grand Alliance united against Philip. This ensuing conflict was known as the War of Spanish Succession. Leopold I wished to protect the Austrian Habsburg claim to Spagna, naming his son Charles as King Charles III of Spagna. England joined Leopold, along with the Dutch Republic, the Duchy of Savoia (although they later switched sides), Prussia and Portugal. Forces within Spagna loyal to the Austrian Habsburgs also fought on the side of the Grand Alliance. Philip V naturally had Francia as his main ally along with his loyal Spanish forces. Clement XI had become Pope, and he tried to keep a neutral stance on this familial conflict. He did not succeed. Austria had captured large portions of northern Italia, and in 1709 A.D. was moving against Roma.

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The war dragged on for four more years and came to a temporary end in 1713 A.D. with the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht by two countries, Great Britain (which had been formed in 1707 A.D. when England and Scotland united their parliaments) and Francia. By this treaty, Spagna was obliged to give up most of Milano, the mainland portion of the Kingdom of Napoli, Sardegna and the Spanish Netherlands to Austria, and Sicilia and parts of Milano to the Duke of Savoia, Vittorio Amedeo II of Piemonte. Great Britain received Minorca and Gibraltar. Through the good graces of his enemies and allies, Philip was allowed to remain King of Spagna, but he had to agree never to attempt to unite the crowns of Francia and Spagna.

During the course of the war, Philip's first wife, Maria Luisa of Savoia, had died and in 1714 A.D. he had married Elizabeth Farnese, niece of Francesco Farnese, Duke of Parma—the same family that had battled against the Pope almost a century before. Philip had two sons with his first wife and three with Elizabeth. His new wife was not pleased with the outcome of this war, especially since it restricted the opportunities for her sons to rule over their own dominions. She prevailed on her husband to retake Sardegna and Sicilia. Louis XIV died in 1715 A.D.—after seventy-two years on the throne—with only a five-year-old, his great grandson, Louis XV, as his immediate heir. His sons and grandsons had already died. This provided an opening for Philip and Elizabeth. In spite of the restriction explicitly prohibiting them from claiming the French crown, he expressed his claim if the infant, Louis XV, were to die. Francia turned enemy and together with Great Britain and the Dutch Republic, formed the Triple Alliance. Philip opened hostilities by invading and taking control of Sardegna in August 1717 A.D. With Austria added to the opposing forces, Spagna now faced the Quadruple Alliance with the Holy Roman Emperor, now led by Charles VI—who had unsuccessfully claimed the throne of Spagna as Charles III—joining the other belligerents.

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Philip followed his conquest of Sardegna by invading Sicilia. The Alliance demanded the withdrawal of Spagna. Spagna refused. The British destroyed the Spanish fleet in Sicilian waters. Fighting continued and spread to northern Spagna and the Americas. Both sides won victories and suffered losses, but the war seemed to be going against Spagna. Philip decided to end the fighting and make peace with the Alliance. The Treaty of The Hague was signed in February 1720 A.D. Spagna was forced to give up claims to all territory taken during the war, but his eldest son with Elizabeth, Charles, was given the right to become Duke of Parma upon the death of the current Duke, a Farnese.

In 1733 A.D., as Duke of Parma since 1731 A.D., Charles invaded and captured the Kingdoms of Napoli, which had been in Austrian hands since the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht. Charles was crowned King of Napoli and of Sicilia in 1735 A.D. This action was part of a broader conflict called the War of Polish Succession which was ended in 1738 A.D. with the signing of the Treaty of Vienna. Charles was forced to relinquish Parma, but retained his southern kingdoms. Napoli and Sicilia, as the *Regno di Napoli*, Kingdom of Napoli, were once again under the rule of the Spanish branch of the House of Bourbon. One of his first acts was to allow the Jews to return to Napoli.

Twenty-one years later, Charles would be crowned King of Spagna as Charles III. Yet another treaty was drawn up, the Treaty of Napoli, under which he relinquished the throne of Napoli, including both Napoli and Sicilia, to his third son, Ferdinand. Charles III ruled Spagna until his death in 1788 A.D. Shortly after Charles became king, he renewed the family agreements with his French relations. He joined his forces to theirs in the Seven Years' War against Great Britain, and he allied Spagna with Francia to assist the American Colonies against Britain in their battle for freedom. He supplied the Colonial government with arms and ammunition, and his

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troops tied up the British forces in Florida, the region south of Georgia, which Spagna had ceded to Britain in 1763 A.D. at the Treaty of Paris, but which it regained after the conflict.



“All of these alliances and changes of rulers make my head spin,” exclaimed Michele. “How can you possibly remember who was fighting with and against each other? I could never do that.”

“Today, people do not have to remember all of those tiresome details,” assured Signore Di Sangué. “That is why we have books. But I come from a time when we did not have the possibility of looking up an historical fact. The mind is a muscle, like any other. If it is well trained it can lift heavy weights.”

Michele shook his head in wonder.

“Your stories also show that common people who led revolts to protest unjust treatment had their heads chopped off, while the kings who invaded their neighbors, killed thousands of people and burned down the cities were given prizes even when they lost the battles,” fumed Michele. “Look at that Henry what’s-his-name and Gennaro Annese. What kind of justice was that? Henry is captured and released while Gennaro has his head chopped off.”

“It was the kind of justice that the chiefs of the tribes decided would work best when they formed their states and called themselves ‘kings’,” replied Signore Di Sangué. “This region was just following the same type of order that existed in all parts of the world at the time. Some places, like China, were much better at it than the countries in our part of the world, but the system was basically the same. Everything flowed from the top. The king owned everything and everyone in his realm, although not directly. He had

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his vassals, the dukes and earls and princes and knights. They gave him tribute in return for him giving them land and the people on it. The vassals were expected to deliver taxes and a share of what was produced on the land as well as men to fight the endless wars. Wars were necessary to gain more land and more taxes so the king could be sure that the machinery of the state kept moving. The fortunes of every state went up and down with their success or failure on the battlefields. Wars also brought glory to the kings and the nobility, who led their armies in battle, although this practice was generally disappearing as the nobility became pampered weaklings.”

“During the period when the Austrians ruled Napoli, did everyone have to speak Austrian?” asked Michele. “Is that the language they speak in Austria, Austrian?”

“Austrians speak a variation of German. Many rulers at that time spoke French. In any case, the common people did not speak to the rulers at the top, only to their most immediate overseers, and those men did not change when a new king and his court arrived,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “The further down the economic and political ladder you climbed, the less effect changes at the top had on you. The peasants continued to speak the same language they had always spoken, which in Napoli was a combination of Latin and Spanish with flavours of Arabic and Greek.

“Returning to your question about justice, at this point in the world’s history there were the beginnings of a new order that would have a very large effect on the European continent and eventually the entire world. Remember what I have told you, we need to look at the entire chessboard of Europe, my friend, rather than just a few of the pieces,” urged Signore Di Sangue. “Spagna and Francia were allied against Britain, not only because of their Bourbon family ties, but also because of their common religion. Spagna and Francia were Catholic, while Britain was firmly Protestant.

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Even though either of them might ally themselves with Britain to achieve a certain short-term objective, each was a natural enemy of Britain. Austria and the Holy Roman Emperor were also Catholic, but the family ties to the Bourbons were not strong. Francia, Spagna and most of Italia were now tied together with the Papal States. Austria was firmly in control of a large area of land, including Hungary and Transylvania bordering the Ottoman Empire, which made them an essential ally of the Pope as the principal defender against the encroachment of Islam into Christian Europe. This was a very strong force at the time.

“Another force that had emerged, mainly by cleverly choosing the winning side in each conflict, was the Duchy of Savoia and Piemonte. The Duchy was not truly part of Italia because of its ties to Francia, but it formed a bulwark against the constant attempts of Austria to exert influence over the northern half of the peninsula.”

“What does this have to do with justice?” asked Michele, a bit impatiently.

“These countries all had colonies in America,” replied Signore Di Sangué, exhibiting no perceptible amount of irritation with his pupil’s slight petulance. “They transplanted their wars in Europe to the new continents, both north and south. Britain controlled the eastern portion of North America, Francia the middle along the big river called the Mississippi, and Spagna held a small part of the southeastern and a very large part of the southwestern portions of North America along with all of Central and much of South America. Portugal controlled the area that became known as Brazil as a result of a Papal Bull issued first in 1493 A.D. by the Pope, Alexander VI, in which the *Tordesillas Line* divides South America into Spanish and Portuguese domains. The final demarcation was agreed in 1500 A.D. The rest was still free of invaders, open to the people who had lived there before

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the arrivals of the Spanish, French, British and their Italian servants, like Cristoforo Colombo, Giovanni da Verrazano and Amerigo Vespucci.

“After three hundred years of colonial rule, the group living in the British part of America, who had been formed into thirteen colonies, plotted to free themselves of British rule. This was the start of what the Americans call the American Revolution, and what the British continue to call the American War of Independence. The Americans declared themselves free because they did not believe that any single man could claim the right to rule over many other men. ‘All men are created equal’, they said, and all men had the right to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’. This was truly revolutionary! If Americans could have these rights and demand a new form of justice, why should the same rights not extend to the people in the lands from which they came?”

“No one ever told me I had those rights. I was always taught that happiness was a sin. Why weren’t their heads chopped off?” demanded Michele.

“This is why it is important to look at the whole chess board,” replied Signore Di Sangue with a wink. “The revolutionaries in America never would have gotten past the first skirmish without the help of Britain’s two major enemies, Francia and Spagna. Both countries provided munitions and arms and much more. Francia provided assistance in the form of superior military leaders, such as Pierre Charles L’Enfant and La Fayette. You will see statues of these two Frenchmen in America. Eventually, their involvement became deeper. Before the Americans’ revolution, Britain, Francia and Spagna, along with Russia, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Prussia and Hanover, were involved in what might be called the First World War. It had different names in different places in the world, but it was the Seven Years’ War on the continent. From 1756 to 1763 A.D. they fought in

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Europe, North and South America, India, Africa and even in the Pacific. Losses were heavy on all sides. As was almost always the case in large wars, there was no clear winner. Britain appeared to get the better of Francia and Spagna. When the Colonists rose up against Britain, it gave these two allies a chance to try to regain what they had lost to Britain. Britain had taken Canada from the French and Spagna had lost Florida.

“Francia formally recognized the United States of America on 6 February 1778 A.D. when they signed the Treaty of Alliance. Spagna entered the war on the side of the Americans one year later. French ships protected vital supply lines. Spanish troops in the south kept British forces occupied. Even the Dutch Republic assisted the Colonists. The American army, under General George Washington, proved to be both resourceful and determined fighters. Losses mounted on both sides, and the War became extremely unpopular in London. The British House of Commons voted in 1782 A.D. to end the war. The war ended officially with the signing of the Treaty of Paris and Treaties of Versailles in 1783 A.D.”

“What were the people who lived in America before the arrival of the British and other immigrants doing during the war?” wondered Michele. “Did they take sides, and did they get anything in return after the war?”

“We call those people Indians, but that has always been a mistake. Colombo thought he arrived in India so the native people were called Indians. Yes they did fight,” answered Signore Di Sangue, “on different sides. The western Indians—the Iroquois and Cherokee—fought on the side of Britain. Others, like the Oneida and Lenape, helped the Colonists. The Colonists were grateful for the help they received from all of their allies, but they did not give much in exchange to any of them for their help, especially the Indians. The economic burden that Francia shouldered was especially heavy, and taxes levied by Henry XVI to pay the nation’s debts—as well as

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the heavy costs of his court at Versailles—were a large part of the reason that the next revolution took place. The French lower classes may have been inspired by the Americans or encouraged by writers and philosophers of the day, like Rousseau and Voltaire. In any case, in 1789 A.D., they rose up, and once they did, there was no stopping them. It took three more years before a republic was declared and the heads of the King and his family, along with many other nobles, began to roll off the guillotines, but roll they did. You see, it is not only the peasants who have their heads removed.”

“Do you mean that the King of Francia and the nobles were killed by peasants?” asked Michele, unable to imagine how such a thing could happen.

“For almost a year, between 1793 and 1794 A.D., there was the Reign of Terror in Francia, as it was called. Two political groups with opposing views tried to outdo each other in cleansing Francia of anti-revolutionary influences. The guillotine was their principal weapon. It was named not after its inventor, who was Dr. Antoine Louis, but after its promoter in the French Constituent Assembly, Joseph Ignace Guillotin. He said that the sharp blade hurtling down along a pair of guiding rails and slicing cleanly and quickly through the victim’s neck was far more humane a way to administer death than by hanging or by swinging away at the condemned person’s neck with a heavy sword or axe. The nobility and the Catholic clergy were the main recipients of this execution method. The rest kept being hacked by swords and strung up on ropes.

“While they were busy on their own soil eliminating those who opposed the Revolution, they became equally busy fighting against all of their neighbors who did not want their Revolution to spread to their countries. And now we are getting to the part that is important for you, my friend. These skirmishes gradually developed into wars, and the effects of these wars were felt in far-off places, including Napoli.

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“Do you know who Napoleon Bonaparte was?” asked Signore Di Sangue.

“Yes! Yes. Signore Usiglio told me about him,” replied Michele. “He had a picture of him in his workshop. Signore Usiglio’s given name was ‘Napoleone’. His great grandfather had made shoes for Napoleon’s officers.”

“I might have guessed that,” laughed Signore Di Sangue. “I am gaining a very clear and positive picture of your mentor, Signore Usiglio. Perhaps I will visit him one day. Napoleon became a very popular name among Italian Jews during this century. What did Signore Napoleone Usiglio tell you about this remarkable man?”

“He said that he was the leader of Francia and Italia and many other countries not that long ago, and the liberator of the Jews. When he had power over all of the countries, he changed the laws so that Jews could be free, live outside the ghettos, take off the marks of dishonour and become members of society. He said that it was not only Jews that he helped but the peasants as well. He gave us rights. And one more thing, Signore Usiglio said that Napoleon had a Jewish general.”

“Signore Usiglio has once again distinguished himself with his teaching. Yes, General Andrea Massena was Jewish. He was born in Nice. He volunteered for the French Revolutionary Army. His leadership and bravery were exemplary. He was made commander of the Roman territories and Commander-in Chief of the Italian Army.

“Napoleon’s story starts with the French Revolution and the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen’. This document guaranteed that everyone should be allowed to worship in whatever religion they chose as long as their religion did not disturb the public order. Napoleon was a product of the Revolution and he sincerely believed in its reforms. He came

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from a modestly wealthy noble family on the island of Corsica. His mother, Letizia, bore her husband, Carlo, thirteen children, of which eight grew to adulthood. Napoleon decided on a career in the military and became an officer in 1786 A.D., three years before the Revolution. When the Revolution began, he left for Corsica where he distinguished himself as a leader of the Revolutionary forces against the royalists and Corsican independence fighters. Back in Paris, he spoke out in favour of the Revolution, while many of his fellow officers had either emigrated or been imprisoned. He rose in rank and was given commissions, which he managed very well. He was temporarily out of favour in 1794 A.D. when his early patrons, the brothers Robespierre, were executed, but he redeemed himself the following year when he defended the new government, called the Directory, against an attack by a large band of royalists. He was helped by a young cavalry officer named Joachim Murat. Napoleon's star was rising quickly and to heights he could not imagine, and it would rise even higher within a short while, carrying with it all in his circle of family and close friends.

“In 1799 A.D., he along with two others engineered the takeover of the entire Directory. They set up a new government, called the French Consulate, and Napoleon had himself elected First Consul. In other words, he was the leader and suddenly the most powerful person in Francia. But he was a general first, and continued to lead his armies into battle, including into Italia where he defeated the Austrians. He was also a realist. In 1803 A.D., he sold the French possessions in North America to the US government under then President Thomas Jefferson. It was called the Louisiana Purchase. Francia was made fifteen million US Dollars richer and the United States doubled its size as a result.

“Napoleon crowned himself Emperor Napoleon I on the 2nd of December 1804 A.D. in the church of Notre Dame de Paris. Pope Pius VII

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assisted during the ceremony, handing the crown to Napoleon so that he might place it on his own head. On the 26th of May 1805 A.D., in the Cathedral in Milano, Napoleon was crowned King of Italia with the Iron Crown of Lombardy. Emperor Napoleon established the position of Marshal of the Empire and filled the eighteen positions with his most trusted and capable generals to secure the allegiance of the army.

“When he became powerful enough to push his will through in all those countries where Francia ruled, he made the same reforms he had made in Francia. He allowed the Sanhedrin to be established. Remember, this is an assembly of Jewish representatives. His most memorable reform was the code of law named after him that he put into effect everywhere after he became Emperor. It stated that privileges could not be conferred on the basis of birth. It allowed freedom of religion, and it specified that government jobs were to be given to the most qualified, not because of other considerations, such as money or relations. These reforms were not well received by the former ruling class, and especially not by The Church.”

“What happened to the Jews after Napoleon was defeated?” queried Michele.

“His reforms in favour of the Jews suffered the same fate as the reforms in favour of all the peoples who were not part of the landed, wealthy or noble classes. They were abolished. The former rulers tried with all their might to restore the order that existed before the upstart from Corsica disturbed this order. This period was called The Restoration. In the Papal States, the Pope, Pius VII, quickly set up the boundaries of the ghettos and herded the Jews back into them. He forced us to again wear the pointed yellow hats and Stars of David. The Papacy especially had reason to want to put Napoleon and his reforms behind them. Pope Pius VI, after refusing to give up his claims to have authority over worldly affairs, was taken prisoner

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and moved from one prison to another during a period of six months and died in captivity. His successor spent his last six years as a prisoner after being kidnapped by a French officer and removed from Roma. He was freed by forces chasing the French after Napoleon's abdication in 1814 A.D."

"Signore Usiglio said that Napoleon died on the island of Santa Elena where he was held prisoner," said Michele.

"Yes," mused Signore Di Sanguie. "It is an isolated place claimed by the British and used mostly as a place where they put people they want to die as soon as possible. He lasted for six years, dictating his memoirs to a small group of his closest followers who agreed to share his exile. He was buried on the island, but in 1840 A.D., the King of Francia, Louis-Philippe, was able to convince the British to allow his remains to be returned to Francia where he received an elaborate state funeral and was buried in St Jerome's Chapel. In 1861 A.D., he was moved to the Church of Les Invalides in Paris where he is interred along with other French war heroes. You should take note that he was not buried with the other kings of Francia in Saint Denis Basilica. That was one step further than royalty was willing to take."

"There does not seem to be much left of his good works in Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi," noted Michele, "but maybe I am too uneducated to have seen them."

"Let us see how he and his reforms affected your village and the Kingdom of Napoli."



1798 A.D.

Giuseppe came home with a story he was anxious to tell to the family. He had seen a large group of men, soldiers he thought, in strange uniforms marching into the square. There were other men with the soldiers who came

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on horseback and in carriages. Some of the men had put up posters in the square, which of course he could not read. The other men went into the royal offices and came out with the magistrate, his secretary and others who were in the offices. The magistrate's hands were bound behind his back. He and all the others were led away by some of the soldiers. Giuseppe had asked one of the men standing near to him what was happening. The man replied in a whisper: "The King has fled to Sicilia."

Just then, as Giuseppe entered his home but before he could find anyone in the family to listen to his news, the bells in the cathedral began to ring. This was a signal for everyone to come to the church to listen to an important message from the priest. Tommaso, Giuseppe's father, came into the house still in his work clothes. Giuseppe's older brothers were with him. "Let us go together to the cathedral," ordered Tommaso. "God will have to see us in his house as he sees us in our daily work. Quickly!"

The family walked together at a fast pace. They were joined by their neighbours who gradually filled the small streets leading up to the church. It was December, but the afternoon was warm and sunny and they were all overheated by the time they sat in the church pews to hear what their bishop was about to tell them.

"My dear friends in Christ," began the bishop. "Today is a dark day for our Kingdom and for the Church. Our Holy Father, Pope Pius VI, remains a prisoner of the ungodly French led by the devil himself, Napoleon. Our good King Ferdinand has tried to liberate Roma from these wretched people, but he was not successful. Fearing that his life and the lives of his family would be taken from him by traitors within our own kingdom and therefore denied to us, his unworthy subjects, he has placed himself out of harm's way in Palermo, Sicilia, waiting for the right opportunity to return. Let us pray

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together to hasten that day and the day that our Holy Father will be released and may return to rule from his rightful place in Roma.”

The bishop led the people in the decades of the rosary. When they finished, he spoke to them again.

“There will be a period of uncertainty,” he said, “and I am fearful that it will be accompanied by violence. It has already begun in Napoli. Your brothers and sisters have taken the law into their own hands and have attacked the sympathisers of republicanism. I fear that without leadership, they will only bring harm to themselves and to those who are loyal to our King. Do not engage in violence. Instead, pray that our King will return to us.”

The villagers returned to their homes and carried on through the days of Christmas and the Epiphany. On the 12th of January, 1799 A.D., Prince Francesco Pignatelli Strongoli, who had been left in charge of Napoli by Ferdinand, signed a treaty of surrender with the French in the person of General Championnet. The *Parthenopean Republic* was established, referring to an ancient Greek city, Parthenope, which had existed on the site of Napoli. The peasants, the *lazzaroni*, did not accept surrender or the republic. They rebelled all over the Kingdom, fighting with fierce courage if not with useful weapons or discipline. They proved equal to the task of resisting the French and defending themselves against the Jacobin and Republican Party members who supported the formation of a republic.

“Antonio Calderone is organizing a group to join Cardinal Ruffo’s forces,” announced Pietro to the family after they had finished eating their evening meal. “I want to join him and the others to fight the French. Please, Pa, let me do this.”

“Who is Cardinal Ruffo and what does he have to do with the King?” demanded Tommaso while his wife, Anna, broke into tears.

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“The King has sent him to lead us against the French,” replied Pietro, enthusiastically. “The French are running from him as soon as they see his colours.”

“Well he seems to have done well without you so far. He can continue to win the war without you until it is over,” answered Tommaso. “I could not prevent the King from taking your older brother into his army, and only God knows where he is today. I will not willingly give him another son without being commanded to do so. My answer is No!”

By May, the *Parthenopean Republic* had collapsed. King Ferdinand and Queen Maria Carolina returned to Napoli and immediately ordered arrests and executions of many of those who had supported the French. Known members of the Republican and Jacobin parties were the first to feel the anger of the Bourbon king and his vengeful wife. Napoleon did not bother to return, but made it clear that the reprisals had to stop and forced Ferdinand to issue an amnesty to those French sympathisers who still were in possession of their lives. During the following five years, life was peaceful in the southern Kingdom while Napoleon had himself crowned Emperor of the French in Paris in December 1804 A.D. with the Pope officiating as Popes had done for centuries past during the coronations of Holy Roman Emperors. The Habsburg, Francis I, Emperor of Austria, was still Holy Roman Emperor at the time of Napoleon’s coronation. When he and his Russian allies were decisively beaten at Austerlitz by Napoleon and his army, Francis I was forced to relinquish his title of Holy Roman Emperor and the Holy Roman Empire came to an ignominious end.

Ferdinand had tried to play both sides of the table, signing a treaty of neutrality with the French and at the same time allowing the Russians and one of their allies in the Third Coalition, the British, to avail themselves of the harbour of Napoli. Following the French victory at Austerlitz, Napoleon

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sent troops to the Kingdom of Napoli forcing Ferdinand and his family to flee once again to Sicilia, where he was protected by the British. The French entered Napoli on the 14th of February, 1806 A.D. Napoleon declared that Ferdinand and the Bourbon family had, through Ferdinand's duplicitous actions, lost the right to hold the crown of the Kingdom. He placed his older brother Joseph on the throne as King of Napoli and Sicilia. Ferdinand was safe in Sicilia, shielded by the British, and continued to reign over the island.

Tommaso and his youngest son, Giuliano, had loaded the last piece of leather from their cart into Simone Usiglio's storage racks. The leather was their finest Cordovan and would be used to produce new boots for the twelve officers, four senior non-commissioned officers and four drum corporals, in the five hundred sixty man French battalion garrisoned in the old monastery, just outside the village. The order for forty boots, two pair for each man, would keep Simone and his three sons busy for the coming year, and supplying the leather was very good fortune for the Sena family's leather business.

"What could they do?" asked Tommaso rhetorically. "The Queen's sister had been murdered by the revolutionists, and they had been chased out of their home by the French. The Republicans in Napoli supported the French and would have hung both the King and Queen if they could have gotten to them before they fled."

"Tommaso, my friend," answered Simone, "look at us. This is the first time my people have been free since the Romans forced us to leave Judea. We are no longer labelled 'Christ killers', forced to live in ghettos and wear symbols of guilt. We are free to worship in temples, although I do not know who would do so before we are sure that the dark forces will not return. And your people, you have not seen better times in your entire history. You now own your business and do not have to deliver tithes to the Count and the

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Bishop. Best of all, we are rid of that wretched queen, who took everything we had and gave nothing in return. Is it no wonder the French people rose up and chopped off the head of her sister! If we could have caught her before she and her useless husband escaped, we would have done the same.”

“This is all true,” said Tommaso, while nodding his head slowly. “What they say is one thing, but they are already beginning to act just like their cousins, the Bourbons, even though they pretend to be of a different race. They call themselves kings and emperors. I am most fearful that they do not respect the right of the Pope to rule without interference over the Church and its faithful. This will be their undoing. It is rumoured that our new king is a member of the Masons. How can such a man be trusted?”

At the end of the spring in 1808 A.D., Joseph became King of Spagna. He was sent there by Napoleon to replace Ferdinand VII, who had recently become king after his father, Charles IV, abdicated. Charles vacated his throne in the face of a revolt by his people and also the treachery of his own son. Napoleon decided to end this farse and eliminate a sometime ally and sometime foe. He convinced Charles to name him, rather than is own son, as his successor. When he did, Napoleon delivered the crown to his brother Joseph.

Replacing Joseph as King of Napoli was Gioacchino Murat, the same Murat who had helped Napoleon save the Directory and who was now his brother-in-law, husband to Caroline Bonaparte, the youngest sister among Napoleon’s siblings. At the age of twenty, Murat had run away from a seminary and a life as a priest to join the army. In 1795 A.D., he was instrumental in helping Napoleon defend the National Convention against royalist rioters in the capital. He was rewarded with a commission, and from that point forward he was one of Napoleon’s best and most trusted officers. Murat played a crucial role in Napoleon’s power grab in 1799 A.D.

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Napoleon admired and trusted Murat so much that he allowed his sister to marry him in the year following Napoleon's self elevation to the position of First Consul. Then he made him a King.

"My son, Pietro, says he wants to divorce his wife," said Tommaso with tears in his eyes. "I told you that Napoleon would be a bad thing for us. First he defiles the centre of The Church by making the Papal States part of Francia, and then he takes our Pope prisoner. Now he has passed laws making it possible to divorce so that he can end his first marriage and enter into a new one. See what it has led to! I told my son that if he divorces his wife he can count himself dead in my eyes."

"Why does he want to leave his wife?" asked Simone. "I have seen them together and they have looked pleased enough with each other. Is it that she has not borne him a child?"

"You have to crack an egg before you can fry it, Simone," replied Tommaso. "He has not gotten close to her in the eighteen months they have been married."

"Why did he not say something after the first night?" questioned Simone. "They could have had the marriage cancelled, or annulled, as The Church says."

"He was ashamed," replied Tommaso, "and besides, he thought she would eventually realize that she was being foolish, worrying that she would die like her cousin if she gave birth."

"But she hasn't gotten over this problem, and now he has grown tired of waiting. Is that what has happened?" asked Simone.

"Yes, more or less," replied Tommaso. "He thinks now that the law has changed he can simply start over. I have told him that the French can

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change all the laws they want, but The Church will not change its laws. If he wants to end the marriage, he must go to the priest.”

“What if his wife—Felice is her name, isn’t it?—what if Felice were to change and become a real wife. Would he still want to leave her?”

“I don’t think so. He has been very attached to her since they were small children. They always knew they would marry. This must be very difficult for the poor girl as well.”

“Has your wife talked to her?”

“Everyone has talked to her, but it has not done any good.”

“Bring her here. My wife will try to help her. She has knowledge of how the mind works that she has never shown to any *Gentile*, but I know she would want to help your family.”

Tommaso returned home to talk with his wife and to tell her what Simone had suggested they do.

“I have heard that Signora Usiglio has helped to cure illnesses that cannot be seen,” said Anna. “I do not know what powers she has. Maybe they come from the devil, but if she has a way of helping Felice and Pietro, we must let her try. We must first convince Felice to visit her.”

Anna wondered if her daughter-in-law was just a foolish girl who had been spoiled as the last of ten children, or if she was possessed by a senseless fear that could be defeated by a person who knew the correct words to use. In any case, Michela Usiglio would be able to judge which one it was. At first, Felice would not hear of meeting Signora Usiglio. She would rather cast herself off the highest wall of the castle and crash her skull against the rocks below before subjecting herself to witchcraft. When Anna offered to help her to the top of the castle walls and give her a nudge over

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the edge, Felice began to understand that this was not a subject that Anna was willing to debate.

Signora Usiglio was tending to the family's vegetable garden when Anna and Felice arrived. She smiled warmly at both of them, asked Anna to leave them alone, and then took Felice's hand and led her to a bench under a fig tree. It was very hot, even though the sun was not yet at its highest point in the sky. There was not a single cloud from horizon to horizon to offer a brief rest from its burning heat. The figs had not yet ripened, but they had reached their final form.

"Fear of death is a terrible burden, Felice," began Michela. "It is sometimes so strong that it makes it impossible for us to live."

"Why do you say this?" cried Felice. "I am not afraid of dying! I just do not want to bear a child! What is wrong with that? Cannot a woman decide what she wants to do with her body?"

"Nuns make such a choice. If you had the calling of a nun you would never have married," continued Michela softly. "You wanted the protection and security that marriage offered, and nearness to your family, but you were not prepared for what must go with marriage. Now your husband wishes to leave you so that he can fulfil his responsibilities to his family, to our society and to God."

Felice began to whimper and then she started crying uncontrollably. Michela was quiet and let Felice cry until there were no tears left inside.

"Your husband loves you, otherwise he would have left you after the wedding night," said Michela. "His true hope was that by threatening to leave you he would shock you into changing your feelings about bearing children. You cannot do that because you do not have such feelings. You want a child, and you want your husband to help you make a child. Your

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fear is that you will not live to enjoy either your child or your husband, and you have chosen the one certain way to avoid such a fate.”

“It is true,” whispered Felice, forcing herself to say what she had never been willing to admit even to herself. “I love Pietro more than life itself and do not want to be separated from him by an act that can be avoided.”

“You see now, don’t you,” said Michela, “that it is your selfish love of him that is keeping the two of you from truly fulfilling the love you have for each other.”

“Yes. What shall I do to conquer this fear?” moaned Felice.

“You have already made the first step, Felice,” smiled Michela, “by admitting that you are afraid. “The next step is to understand that you will have to make a choice between losing your fear or losing your love. Life is full of these types of difficult decisions, where we have to show courage in the face of danger. It does not matter if the danger is real or only in our head.”

Felice walked home with her thoughts. She spent the day with her husband’s family performing her household duties and preparing for the evening meal. She sat more closely to Pietro during dinner and smiled at him more warmly than she had since before they were married. He returned her smile. There was a feeling among the family sharing the table with the couple that something wonderful had happened during the day. That night Pietro and Felice began their marriage.

There were five daughters born before their first son arrived. Murat was gone and Ferdinand had returned to be King of both Napoli and Sicilia, now called the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Pope was comfortably back in his palace. Napoleon was already dead and many of the effects of the French reforms had been erased, including the freedoms that the Jews had

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briefly enjoyed. Simone and Michela were back to being practicing Catholics on Sundays and holy days, and could therefore be the *comadre* and *compadre* (using the Spanish terms instead of the Italian *madrino* and *padrino*) to Felice's and Pietro's son, who, with the full blessing of Tommaso, was named Michele and not Tommaso according to tradition.



"This was my grandfather," said Michele. "Think what might not have been if his mother and father had separated. My father would not have been born and I would not be here. We do not tell this story at the dinner table. My father told it to me before he left for America. He said that my mother would tell the story to my betrothed before the wedding night when the time came."

"Our lives are full of such forks in the road, where either we have to choose to take one path or the other, or turn back the way we came. Each day we make decisions that will affect the rest of our lives. We make most decisions without thinking by using the rules we have been taught by our parents, our teachers and by those around us. If we took the time to actually consider all of the consequences of everything we did, we would never get out of bed in the morning or go to bed at night," laughed Signore Di Sangue.

"How did Napoleon die?" asked Michele.

"The official cause of death was stomach cancer," replied Signore Di Sangue, "but it is possible that he was poisoned by his keepers. It is said that his body was very well preserved when he was taken up and transported back to Paris. That is an indication of slow poisoning using small doses of arsenic."

"If Napoleon was such a great leader, why could he not build an empire that would last?" wondered Michele.

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“Napoleon was a brilliant military tactician,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “He knew how to win battles. But he fell prey to the same self delusions that plague most men who gain power, that their judgment in all matters is superior to the judgments of any others. Instead of consolidating his victories and building a new society that would in time be invincible, he over extended his armies and tried to reach farther than his supply lines could support. That led him to Russia, a land which no army should ever try to conquer. Russia, when it falls, will only be taken from within. He also made the mistake of installing his family into positions of royalty, attempting to create within a single generation what the Habsburgs had taken centuries to accomplish. He even divorced his wife, Joséphine, whom he had made his Empress, in favour of marrying an Austrian Habsburg princess, Marie Louise. There is a very good English word for this type of arrogance. It is ‘hubris’, or *tracotanza* in Italian.

“The end for Napoleon began in June, 1812 A.D. with his invasion of Russia. Although he captured Moscow after suffering heavy losses along the way, the city had been emptied of its population and its supplies. Five hundred thousand French troops entered Russia from the west, but only twenty-two thousand remained when they crossed back over the Russian frontier during their retreat. Napoleon rebuilt his army, and he was once again successful in battle against the Coalition forces, comprising Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sweden, Great Britain, Spagna and Portugal. But then the tide turned and his army was again reduced to less than a quarter of its size. Paris was captured by the Coalition in March, 1814 A.D. Napoleon’s officers mutinied when they were ordered to march on their own capital in order to retake it. The Coalition leaders forced Napoleon to accept an unconditional abdication the following month.

“This was done at the Palace of Fontainebleau. The Coalition allies agreed that it was Napoleon himself who was the principal obstacle to

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restoring peace on the continent, and that he should declare once and for all his intention to never attempt to regain domination over Francia and Italia, and that this declaration should also apply to his family and his heirs. He was exiled to his villa on the island of Elba, over which he was given dominion. He retained his title of Emperor. So, you see, he was treated like royalty. However, his wife and their three-year-old son did not accompany him but travelled instead to Austria. Napoleon stayed on the island until February, 1815 A.D., when he escaped. Upon his return to the French mainland, the regiment that was sent to recapture him instead welcomed him with *Vive L'Empereur!* They marched to Paris with Napoleon as their leader. The restored king, Louis XVIII, took flight. For what has been called the Hundred Days, Napoleon ruled Francia. With a force that reached nearly a quarter of a million men, he returned to what he knew best: war.

“On the 18th of June, 1815 A.D., in a place called Waterloo, then in the Republic of The Netherlands, Napoleon and his army met the Seventh Coalition army led by the Duke of Wellington and a Prussian force led by Gebhard von Blücher. It was not Napoleon’s day for victory. He lost the battle and less than one month later he surrendered to the British. This time there would be no face saving exile in a comfortable villa in the Mediterranean where he might sail back to Francia or Italia when the winds seemed to be blowing in his favour. He was imprisoned and then removed to the remote island of Sant’Elena in the same ocean as we are now sailing a few thousand kilometres from the nearest shore. Then all the kings came back and they attempted to restore the old order as quickly as possible.”

“How did Ferdinand manage to survive two escapes and then return as King?” mused Michele. “Was he that much more clever than Napoleon?”

“Indeed he was not,” responded Signore Di Sangue, with a tone of resentment in his voice. “He was a scoundrel. He returned from Sicilia as

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soon as Murat was out of the way. In December, 1816 A.D., he declared the union of Sicilia and Napoli, calling it the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies over which he proclaimed himself King. In reality, he was a puppet of Austria. He was forced to accept an Austrian as commander of his army. Austria gave him freedom to rule with absolute force, and he used it. Any sign of liberalism was ruthlessly crushed. But the more he oppressed the people, the greater became the resentment for him and his rule. A secret society emerged called the *Carbonari*. Their influence grew and became infectious, eventually taking over the minds of some in the King's military. A revolt erupted in July, 1820 A.D. led by General Pepe. Ferdinand was forced into offering his Neapolitan subjects a constitution, but with the help of Austrian troops he later reneged on his promises of reform and continued to persecute the people in his realm until his death in 1825 A.D.”

They sat in their deck chairs silently watching the sun disappear into a blazing orange haze above the horizon. The eerily calm sea reflected the colors on its surface with sky and water melting into each other. Michele tried to remember what he had learned during the day, but he understood that his mind was not trained well enough to hold the names of the men and women he had met during his travels around the ship with his elderly friend. He would try to remember the most important things, like the connection between the French and American revolutions, and the failure of Napoleon to succeed as an emperor.

“Before we leave this period there is something else we should talk about that will be important to you in America,” said Signore Di Sanguè.

“What is that?” asked Michele.

“La Cosa Nostra, the mafiosi,” replied Signore Di Sanguè, darkly. “

“Are they in America?” gasped Michele. “I have heard stories about them, but I do not know what is truth and what is fantasy.”

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“The worst of what you have heard is truth; anything else is fantasy,” replied Signore Di Sangue, sombrely. “Wherever there are Italians you will find the so-called ‘proud ones’. They prey first on the people from their own island, Sicilia, and then on people from the peninsula. One day they will spread their tentacles to squeeze money and the life out of all the poor people no matter where they have come from. The worst thing you can do is find yourself in debt to one of them. Never accept a gift from one of them; never ask for a loan or a favour; never, ever, tell one of them anything about yourself or your family or your business. If you are pressed to pay for their protection for your business, always pay, but ask them to buy something each time they collect the money. Offer to fix their shoes so that they will be in your debt. Never shake the hand of one of them. The stain will not wash off no matter how much soap and water you use. As soon as one of them enters your shop, stick your hands in your glue pot or cover them with shoe polish.

“We travelled over one hundred fifty years today, my friend. Perhaps it is time for a rest.”

“I wish you a good evening, Signore,” said Michele, “and I look forward to our last full day together before we arrive in New York.”

“Try to sleep this night, Michele,” suggested Signore Di Sange, “and dream of pleasant times to come.”

“I think I will stay up here a little while longer before going down to my bed. I believe I will have a hard time falling asleep again this night,” replied Michele. “Buonasera, Signore.”



I wonder if I will ever be so calm as he is. Is it just age that brings peace to a man's soul? ‘I have lived as long as I should, so nothing can really

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harm me.' *When he talks, it is as if he has experienced all of history, but that is not possible. He seems to understand how all of the kings and popes and rebels fit together. Maybe it is his knowledge that gives him his confidence. I will try to be a knowledgeable shoemaker, and I will encourage my children, if God blesses Giovanna and me with them, to study history.*

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September 13, 1896 A.D.

7:30 a.m.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY WAS THE LAST FULL day of the journey. Their ship passed a few fishing boats that were sailing back to their ports after a night on the sea. Michele had always wondered what would drive a man to become a fisherman. Every time he left his mooring he was putting his life in danger, and any day could be his last.

“Some of them think of themselves as adventurers, but most of them are frightened from the time they leave dry land until the minute they return,” offered Signore Di Sangué. “It’s all they know how to do. If you had been born in Nova Scotia where these boats have from you would be one of those men.”

“Never!” exclaimed Michele. “Then I surely would have become a priest so I could pray for their souls.”

“Tell me what you know about America, the country that will be your new home,” requested Signore Di Sangué.

“What should I know?” replied Michele, sounding confused. “I know it’s a big country and people speak many different languages that I will not understand.”

“Yes, that’s right,” interjected Signore Di Sangué. “In Italia, most people speak one of the Italian dialects, so it is usually possible to understand at least a few words, enough to get what you want or need. In America, English is the language that people are supposed to speak, and in business and government they do, but there are large portions of the country where people still speak the language of the people who were there first, like the

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native Indians and Spanish, or the language that they brought with them from their homelands. In the southwest, which was part of the Spanish and then the Mexican empire, many people speak Spanish. In the Mississippi delta people speak French. Also, people have come to America from all over the world, including Italia, and they continue to speak the language of their home country. But you should learn to speak English as soon as you can. This is how you will become a success in business.”

“What else should I know?” asked Michele, now warming to the subject.

“There are people who have different colored skin than you and I,” responded Signore Di Sanguie. “You have seen some of them on board this ship, no doubt.”

“In our church we had a painting with the three wise men who visited baby Jesus, and their skin color was very dark,” said Michele. “I asked my father about that. He said that God made some people different, and that the wise men came from a part of the world where the sun was very hot so it turned their skin dark brown. That was his answer.”

“There are men and women who are called scientists who spend their lives asking and trying to find answers to such questions. The Church, at times, has called them heretics, but they have continued their work. Some of them have a theory that there was a time when there were no humans on this earth, and then somehow we came into being. This happened in the middle of Africa where the sun is at its hottest. Our skin was black to protect us from the sun that would burn our naked skin, so your father was on the right path even though he was going in the wrong direction. In time, after many thousands of years, some of these peoples began to travel. It is not known what routes they took, but eventually our ancestors had spread themselves all over the earth. Those who stayed in places where the sun was very hot retained their dark skin. But those who wandered up into the northern

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regions where the sun was weak became white-skinned. Some scientists think that it was to provide better protection against the biting frost, while others think it has something to do with our skin needing to absorb more of the beneficial rays of the sun during the shorter times that it is high overhead and shines hot, like in the tropics. You can almost tell how far north a person's family has spent the majority of its life by the degree of darkness and lightness in his skin."

"I think my father's explanation was both simpler and more believable than the tale you have just told me, Signore Di Sangue," smiled Michele, "but it is an interesting tale nevertheless. Why are there dark skinned people in America?" questioned Michele.

"There are two types of dark-skinned people in America," replied Signore Di Sangue. "The people who lived there before the settlers arrived from the east have a darker skin color than those from the northern part of the European continent, but it is not black or brown. It is more reddish. They are people who are incorrectly called 'Indians' because the first explorers thought they had reached India when they had actually only gotten as far as the two American continents. The black-skinned people, called 'Negroes', were originally taken there as slaves."

"Yes, I know about that," interrupted Michele. "Signore Usiglio also told me that America and Italia were fighting wars between their own people at the same time. When Italia had the Risorgimento, America had what they called their Civil War. He said that in America the southern part of the country wanted to have its own nation, but the northern part would not let it go. He said that in the south there were Negro slaves that had been brought to America in chains, and they worked for the rich landowners. The President of America said they should be freed."

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“I will have to meet Signore Usiglio,” said Signore Di Sangue with a smile. “He has been a good teacher for you. There were some important differences between the two wars. In America, the two sides had been part of one country. The people south of what is called the Mason Dixon Line had been just as much a part of fighting the British for independence as those from the north. The Mason Dixon Line is the southern boundary of the state in which Scranton, your future home, is located. Thomas Jefferson, the country’s second president after George Washington, was from Virginia, the state that led the south into war. After being one nation for a little more than eighty years, the south wanted to have its own country. One of the reasons was so that its farmers could go on keeping slaves. It was different in Italia. The southern part of Italia was already a nation and had been a nation for over four centuries when Garibaldi and his men landed near Marsala on the west coast of Sicilia and started the war that eventually led to a united Italia.

“Why did the southern farmers have to bring slaves all the way over from Africa?” asked Michele. “Couldn’t they just hire people to work on their farms like they did in Italia? And why did the people let them make slaves out of them?”

“They tried to make slaves out of the native people, but they would not submit. They would rather die, and that is what they did. The Africans kept their hope that one day their sons and daughters or grandsons and granddaughters would be free.”

“Is there anything else I should know about America?” asked Michele. “Are there any other dangers?”

“How to hold on to your money,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “In Italia, The Church has become a master of separating a man from his money. You pay to save your soul and the souls of all those near and dear to you. The new state takes what is left in the form of taxes. In America, you do not

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have to become a member of a church, but you should, my young friend. I will come back to this. In any case, you are not obligated to give in the same way as in Italia. There are taxes, but they are moderate compared to Italia. What you need to watch out for are people who will make you rich if you invest in their dreams. There are countless owners of worthless pieces of paper claiming to be a share of the Brooklyn Bridge. First, invest in your own business, and then invest in something you can own on your own, like a piece of land and the buildings on it. Never, ever invest in a share of something that you can only partially own.”

“Signore Usiglio told me to invest in property as well,” offered Michele. “He said that property was always worth something to someone.”

“Yes, he was right,” replied Signore Di Sanguie. “Tell me something, my friend, now that you are leaving Italia, do you feel Italian?”

“What do you mean?” answered Michele, puzzled by the question.

“The Kingdom of Italia was proclaimed in 1861 A.D., and in 1870 A.D, Roma was captured from the Pope and declared the capital of the new country. The beginning of this transformation, from a northern Kingdom of Piemonte, a collection of city states, Papal lands and the southern Kingdom of Napoli and Sicilia, to a single, united country was the conquering of the south by Garibaldi on behalf of King Vittorio Emanuele I of Piemonte and Sardegna. This is what you have learned. Do you feel that you were part of this united country?”

“My family and most of the families in Sant’Angelo dei Lombardi never accepted this change. We continued to say we were first Santangelese then Avelinese and finally Napolitani,” replied Michele. “The Piemontesi will burn in hell for their disrespect of the Pope and The Church. That’s what both of my nonne and nonni have always said. I believe that.”

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“Yes,” reflected Signore Di Sangue, “although hell may be too good for some of them. In what year were you born, my young friend?”

“My birthdate is May 6, 1878. Why?” asked Michele.

“You were born in the year that two men died who were important for Italia: the last Pope who had formerly ruled over a large part of Italia, and the first king of the new country who took the Pope’s lands. The king, who took the name Vittorio Emanuele II as King of Italia, was a pompous ruffian who despised learning. His son Umberto, the current king, is no better. The Pope, Pius IX, who was born in Senigallia, by the way, refused to submit to the forces of the new Italian government when the Kingdom was declared in 1861 A.D. But he was eventually defeated in 1870 A.D. by the forces of the new country. He was forcibly removed from the Palazzo del Quirinale and retreated to the Vatican where he lived as a self-proclaimed prisoner. His successor, Louis XIII, the current Pope, is doing the same. Pius IX used the only weapon he had left when he was defeated: he excommunicated everyone he held responsible for the disgrace he experienced, including the King and the prime minister.”

“I don’t understand how it all happened,” interjected Michele. “No one has been able to explain to me how a man in a clown suit with a few old soldiers was able to defeat the armies of our Kingdom and those of the Pope, not to mention the big city states in the north.”

“Remember what I said earlier about turning your adversary’s major strength into its biggest weakness?” replied Signore Di Sangue. “That’s what the puppeteer pulling Garibaldi’s strings did. The strength of the Pope, Venezia, Milano and Firenze was the support they enjoyed from powerful friends, like Francia, Great Britain and Austria. When their friends deserted them they were helpless. But it did not start with Garibaldi or Mazzini or even with the Kingdom of Piemonte and Sardegna. It had its beginnings in

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the uprisings in places like Francia and the country that you will soon call your home. Napoleon's conquest of the peninsula gave form to a single and united Italia that had not existed since the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Writers such as Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Vittorio Alfieri, and Antonio Genovesi helped to light fires in the hearts of budding patriots.

"The *Risorgimento*, which eventually led to the unification of Italia, started after the old order was restored to the peninsula by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 A.D. With a few exceptions, this treaty re-established the borders of the kingdoms and states that existed prior to Napoleon's invasion, and the period was called the *Restoration*. The Risorgimento was a three-headed dragon. There was the radical head with different factions. Rebellions in the north and south and even in the Papal States were organized as early as 1820 A.D. by the *Carbonari*, a secret society. Giuseppe Mazzini, who is immortalized in pavement in Italia with a street named after him in practically every city, was the most charismatic radical leader. He founded another secret society in 1831 A.D. called *Giovine Italia*, 'Young Italia'. Remember Angelo and Emilio Usiglio? They were members of this group. Piemonte was the first Italian state that granted Jewish citizens equal rights and allow them to join the military. This came about during the time of King Charles Albert with the *Codice Albertino*. The Chief Rabbi of Torino, Lelio Cantoni, recruited soldiers for the Piemontese army when it went to war against Austria. But I get ahead of myself.

"Mazzini wanted a republic, meaning government without a king, and a country that was free of involvement by The Church. He was behind many attacks against both The Church and the royal families all over the peninsula, guiding his followers from London where he had fled to avoid prosecution for his beliefs and deeds. Most of his conspiracies ended before they began with the arrests of his hapless foot soldiers. However, some of them were

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bloody. Garibaldi was involved in one of these and ended up having to flee the country.

“The second head of the Risorgimento was for moderation. It represented the men of property and the supporters of industry, mostly from the north. They favored unification under the House of Savoia with Vittorio Emanuele as the King. The third and final head was for the conservatives who wanted a federation of Italian states with the Pope as the president.

“There was one head missing, the one that represented land and economic reform that would benefit the majority of the people living on the peninsula, the peasants. The *Risorgimento* was concerned with who had power, not how that power would be used for the good of the masses. This is an important point to remember because it is the real reason why you, your family and so many of your *paesani* are leaving Italia. Whoever won, the radicals, the conservatives or the moderates, the people would be the ones converting to the new order of the state. The purpose of the *Risorgimento* was to restore power and glory to a piece of land that once was the most powerful and glorified center of the Roman Empire, not to create a free, democratic and prosperous country for all of its citizens.

“Let’s return to how it all happened. The Congress of Vienna brought Austria back to Italia, ruling over Lombardia and Venezia. In 1848 A.D., rebels in these states challenged the Austrians, and the King of Piemonte and Sardegna, Charles Albert, ordered his forces to intervene in support of the rebels. The Austrians prevailed, and after the Battle of Custoza, Albert was forced to withdraw. He did not give up, however, and he attacked the Austrians again in the following year. Once again he was defeated, this time at Novara. His defeat led to his abdication. His son, Vittorio Emanuele II, succeeded him, and he agreed to a peace with Austria. Rebellions continued in all corners of the peninsula, but the Austrian rulers of Italia were not

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going to be defeated by small groups of rebels, and the Kingdom of Piemonte and Sardegna was not strong enough on its own to fight against Austria, the Pope or the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

“Piemonte needed strong allies to move against any of these forces, and Vittorio Emanuele’s most trusted minister, Camillo Benso di Cavour, took it upon himself to create the necessary alliances. He made changes that pleased these countries, like social reforms and free trade. He brought Piemonte and Sardegna into the Crimean War in 1855 A.D., allied with the French Empire, the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire against the Russian Empire. By 1858 A.D., he had convinced the French Emperor, Napoleon III, nephew to Napoleon Bonaparte, to provide military aid in their eventual confrontations against the Austrians. The battles began in 1859 A.D. It was the French who carried the day and won the victory over the Austrians at Magenta near Milano, although the propaganda machinery of the eventual united Italia lauded the bravery of the Piemontese.

“Napoleon III had not counted on the military and financial losses that engaging in a war with the Austrians over Italia would cost him, so he signed an armistice at Villafranca di Verona with Austria without his erstwhile allies’ involvement. Austria kept Venezia. Lombardia was awarded to the Kingdom of Piemonte and Sardegna. Toscana, Modena, Parma, Bologna and Romagna were to be transferred to their former rulers. However, the clever Cavour organized referenda in these regions which resulted in them agreeing to union with the Piemontese.”

“You mean they voluntarily became part of the northern kingdom?” interjected Michele.

“Strange as it sounds today, yes they did,” answered Signore Di Sangué. “Of course, they did so without really understanding the consequences. It was more out of a fear that they would be brought back under the control of

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Austria or some other power more foreign than Piemonte. Cavour also let them know that Piemonte had big cannons. This all created a dilemma for Francia. Napoleon III had signed a treaty with Austria which his ally, Piemonte, was now not honoring. What should he do? Again, Cavour had the answer: Recognize the results of unification of the regions with Piemonte and receive Savoia and Nice in return. It was an easy choice for Napoleon. Giuseppe Garibaldi was furious. This was his homeland that was now, once again, in the hands of the French while he was fighting for the unification of Italia.”

“He was hated in our village, so we never were taught anything about him,” offered Michele. “Was he really a brave fighter or just someone they made into a hero?”

“He was both. Giuseppe Garibaldi began life as an Italian Frenchman, on the fourth of July, 1807 A.D. He was born in Nizza, or as the French called it, *Nice*, when that city was the capital of the French *department* of Alpes-Maritimes. It was returned in 1814 A.D. to the House of Savoia. This was part of the settlement following the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. Garibaldi’s family were sea traders, and he became a certified merchant captain at the age of twenty-five. His conversion to a political activist began in April, 1833 A.D, after he had sailed to the Russian city of Taganrog with a load of oranges. While his cargo was being unloaded he met Giovanni Battista Cuneo, a member of Mazzini’s *La Giovine Italia*. Garibaldi became a member of the society and took the oath that bound him to fighting for the independence of all parts of the Italian peninsula from Austrian control.

“Later that same year he met Mazzini, and in February of 1834 A.D. participated in a failed plot in Piemonte organized by Mazzini. A court in Genoa sentenced him to death *in absentia* since he had fled to Marseilles. From Marseilles he travelled to Tunisia and then, in 1836 A.D., he sailed to

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Brazil. It was there he met Anna Maria Ribeiro da Silva, the daughter of a Brazilian cattle farmer. They fought together with the rebels in what was called the ‘War of Tatters’, a revolt in southern Brazil. Garibaldi and da Silva were married in the middle of the fighting, which concluded in defeat for the rebels in 1845 A.D. He stayed in South America for three more years taking part in other revolts and rebellions. When news reached him of an outbreak of revolution in Palermo in January 1848 A.D. it was enough to convince him to return to Italia, and he took sixty-or-so members of his small army with him.

“When he returned to the peninsula in 1848 A.D., it was seething with revolution. Oddly, Garibaldi attempted to align himself with the King of Piemonte and Sardegna, Charles Albert, and offered him his services. The King showed little interest. When a republic was declared in the Papal States, Garibaldi went there to lend a hand. It is said that Mazzini convinced him to take command of Roma’s defense, but I am doubtful that Garibaldi was taking any advice from this cowardly figure. The Republicans, as they were called, were no match for the French army sent by Napoleon III who were there to return the Papal States to the Pope. Defeat came on July 3rd 1849 A.D. Garibaldi and four thousand of his remaining soldiers fled north toward Venezia where rebels were still resisting the Austrian siege. His wife, Anita died along the way. She was carrying their fifth child. When he reached San Marino there were less than three hundred followers left.”

“How did he manage to keep escaping with his own life?” wondered Michele aloud.

“He was near death many times,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “In the battle for Roma, his friend, Achille Cantoni, saved his life. In a later battle, at Mantana, Cantoni was killed. Garibaldi was not welcomed in Piemonte and was forced to leave Italia once again. This time he went to North

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America, specifically to New York City. He was in despair. He had lost his wife and an unborn child. He had lost many of his loyal friends. His dreams of a united Italia appeared that they would go unfulfilled. He decided to return to what he knew best, sailing. A wealthy Italian merchant, Francesco Carpanetto, asked him to take command of a merchant ship that was being delivered in New York, and Garibaldi accepted the offer. What happened between the time he arrived in New York on July 30th 1850 A.D. and when he returned to Italia, landing in the port of Genoa on May 10th 1854 A.D., reads like a travel journal. He was in Canton in China, Manila in the Philippines, Peru in South America, Boston and Baltimore in America, Newcastle in Great Britain and many places in between. He wanted to retire from his senseless wandering and fruitless fighting. He bought part of an island off the northern tip of Sardegna, and for a few years succeeded in his efforts to find a life as a farmer.

“Then, in 1859 A.D., he was called back to duty fighting for the Piemontese against the Austrians. He had long ago given up the idea of a republic and decided that it was only the Piemontese and their royal family that could succeed in uniting the peninsula. He was appointed to the position of major general and he formed a volunteer unit called *Cacciatore delle Alpi*, the ‘Hunters of the Alps’. They won victories against the Austrians and his reputation was at first restored and then grew larger. When revolts broke out in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in April of 1860 A.D. both Garibaldi and his Piemontese handlers saw an opportunity that they could not resist. Garibaldi formed a new band of volunteers, a thousand of them called *i Mille*. They all wore red shirts, so they were also called *Camicie Rosse*. On May 5th 1860 A.D. they set sail from Genoa in two ships, the *Piemonte* and *Lombardo*, and landed at Marsala, Sicilia, on May 11th.”

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“Was Piemonte at war with the Kingdom when this happened?” asked Michele.

“Not in the least,” answered Signore Di Sangue, “but the Kingdom had been in an unstable state since the death of King Ferdinand II on May 1859 A.D., and the ascension of his twenty-three-year-old son, Francis II. Cavour had a plan to conquer the peninsula, and the revolts were an excuse to intervene in the Kingdom’s local affairs. He had tried to trick the young king into accepting an alliance with Piemonte in which they would divide the Papal States between them, with the exception of Roma. Francis would not go along with this because he felt it was heresy. Cavour grew tired of trying diplomacy and felt that an attack could succeed.

“When Garibaldi arrived he was joined by the local rebels. Four days after Garibaldi’s arrival his band won its first victory against a force twice their size on the hill of Calatafimi. *‘Qui si fa l’Italia o si muore’*, he said to his men on that day. Once again he escaped death and it was indeed the start of ‘making Italia’. After the battle, he declared himself dictator of Sicilia in the name of Vittorio Emanuele II.

“Didn’t the Kingdom have an army and navy to defend itself?” asked Michele, clearly perplexed by the idea of a small band of soldiers conquering a country as large as southern Italia.

“They had an army and a navy, but they lacked skillful leaders. One of their generals, Allesandro Nunziante, ordered the killing of a small group of Swiss Guard soldiers who had expressed their grievances about their leadership and conditions. The remaining Swiss Guard were then called home leaving the army without its best soldiers. Another general, Ferdinando Lanza, decided that it was better to pulverize the city of Palermo and all of its residents from the sea rather than to risk losing men in battle. Mercifully, a British admiral intervened, brokered a truce and Lanza

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returned to the mainland leaving the city to the Red Shirts. These were not isolated incidents, and the morale of the Kingdom's forces, along with its government, was slowly but most assuredly eroded.

“Messina, on the northeastern coast of Sicilia, fell to Garibaldi's forces in July, six weeks after Palermo's capitulation. Then they crossed the Straits of Messina, unmolested by the Kingdom's navy. They moved toward the fortifications at Reggio Calabria where the commander surrendered without putting up any resistance whatsoever. There was minimal resistance during the entire march north toward Napoli. Instead, the citizens greeted them as liberators. On the 5th of September they had reached the town of Eboli near Salerno, approximately one hundred kilometers south of Napoli. What happened next decided the fate of everyone living in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies at the time and forever after.”



1860 A.D.

“Who is Garibaldi?” asked little Vincenzo.

Michele did not hear his son's question. He had walked to the piazza after mass as he always did on Sunday, and Patre Tommaso had come with him. It was late May, but still cool. The summer heat that kept inhabitants of Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi to the shaded sides of the streets during the days had not yet arrived, so Patre Tommaso was not sweating profusely as a result of their brisk walk. The priest was worried. This was not a joyous time for The Church. Garibaldi and his *i Mille*, had seen to that. Patre Tommaso went to the piazza to hear for himself what the men were saying about Garibaldi's pronouncement of a Kingdom of Italia with its capital in Roma. Pope Pius IX had threatened excommunication for anyone who supported this aggression. Catholics around the world were sending money and volunteering to serve in the Papal Army to defend the Holy City against

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Garibaldi's forces who were fighting for Vittorio Emanuele I of the House of Savoia, King of Piemonte and Sardegna.

When he came through the door, Michele had said: "They are calling this man Garibaldi a hero. Padre Tommaso says that he is doing the work of the devil. Many of the men say we will be better off when the Bourbons are defeated and King Francesco joins his father, King Bomba, in the grave. What are we to think?"

"Why is The Church against him?" his wife Nicolina had asked.

This is when Vincenzo had asked his question, which his father did not hear.

"He wants to throw the Pope out of Roma!" replied Michele.

"How can he think of such a thing!" cried Nicolina.

"Who is Garibaldi?" repeated Vincenzo. This time his father answered.

"He's a Frenchman who has been a troublemaker all his life," replied Michele, finally acknowledging his son's presence. "He has invaded Sicilia, part of our Kingdom. We know he left from Quarto near Genoa and landed near Marsala on the west coast of the island. Rebels on the island have joined him and our army has fled before them. Cowards! They took the capital, Palermo. General Lanza sailed over with five times the number of troops, but all he did was bomb the city. The British have stuck in their noses and stopped the fighting, but the result is that Lanza is back in Napoli and Garibaldi is the ruler of Sicilia. He claims to be running Sicilia in the name of Vittorio Emanuele. The Piemontesi have sent this scoundrel to invade our country. We must fight back!"

Nicolina was shocked and frightened. She had never seen this side of her husband. What is he thinking of doing? she thought. She had heard from her sister Dorotea the same stories as her husband was telling them. Her

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sister's husband, Giacomo, was in the army, called into active duty by the owner of the farm on which he labored. He had not been with General Lanza, but he heard firsthand accounts of the battles from the men who had returned. They were preparing to meet the invaders when they sailed over from Sicilia. Her sister was worried beyond consolation. Now her own husband was making noises about fighting for the honor of Napoli.

"Giacomo says that many people are calling Garibaldi a hero and that he will be greeted with flowers not bullets when he lands on the mainland," countered Nicolina. "Why do you want to risk your life for the King? What has he and, worse still, his damnable father done for any of us who are their subjects? Answer me that!"

There was no answer that Michele could give to this question, at least not one that would satisfy his wife. She was right, as usual. There was no good reason to risk his life for this king or any other. He was certain that a king from the north would bring no good to Napoli, Campania or Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi, but that was not his main objection to the Piemontese taking control. Michele understood that the Pope stood between them and their goal of a united Italia, and that if the Piemontese succeeded in taking control of the Kingdom it would only be a matter of time before Roma fell and the Pope was imprisoned—or worse.

"Let us kneel and pray that the Lord will protect the Pope and punish those who plan to do him harm," urged Michele. "Then we can eat our Sunday meal in peace."



Michele sat in his friend Beniamino Usiglio's shop, smoking his pipe and watching his old shoes being returned to their original form. Beniamino was a master *calzolaio*. Michele had just delivered several of his best leathers to Beniamino, and in addition to paying for them in full, his friend

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had offered to rejuvenate his sturdy but heavily worn shoes, which, of course, Beniamino had made. Vincenzo had helped his father with the delivery and was now sitting next to Beniamino's son, Napoleone, who worked at a bench near the window carving a last for a new pair of shoes. Beniamino had been ordered to make them for the bishop. The shoes would be paid for, of course, but not the full amount, not what he would receive from a private customer or government official. Vincenzo and Napoleone were exactly the same age, having been born on the same day eleven years earlier, and they were the very best of friends.

The smell of smoked tobacco mingled with the aromas of glue and leather. For a brief moment no one talked, there were only the sounds of work. Beniamino tapped on the tacks that would hold Michele's soles in place for another year. Napoleone drew his carving tool over the wooden last, slicing off thin shavings with each pull. Michele reflected. He wished that he could apprentice his son to a craftsman like Beniamino instead of having him at his side in the tannery. Tanning hides was difficult and backbreaking work. The family struggled constantly to find and pay for the skins they needed, and competition from tanneries in the larger villages and towns was intense. The family had to invent methods to prepare the leather in ways that gave them an advantage, like finding new colour dyes or creating more durable and supple leather. They constantly had to look for ways to lower their costs so they could sell their leather for lower prices. Michele knew that his family had at one time been makers of fine leather products. Like all members of his family, he had samples of some of these products which he had inherited. But that was long ago and in a different place.

"What was it like in Napoli?" Vincenzo asked Napoleone, breaking the silence.

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Beniamino and his son had just returned from Napoli where they had been for almost two months delivering shoes to customers and fitting and measuring for new orders. They arrived in Napoli on the 6th of September, the day Garibaldi entered the city by train and the same day King Francesco and four thousand of his loyal troops quit the city by ship and retreated across the fiume Volturno. The King and Queen and their courts established themselves in the fortresses of Capua and Gaeta.

“It was a circus,” responded Beniamino before his son could speak. “There were thousands of clowns dressed in red shirts. The prisoners who had fought against the invaders were chained together like animals and put on display for the jeering crowds. Roasted *castagne* and *zeppoli* were sold on every street corner. The nobles who had abandoned their king gave speeches in support of the new king, Vittorio Emanuele II. From one yoke to another, I say. People always think that the king who is coming is always better than the king who is leaving.”

“Francesco is still fighting. How long can he hold out? Where do you think he and his wife will go when the end comes?” asked Michele.

“Francia. Bavaria. Austria,” replied Beniamino. “Any one of a number of places that should have come to his aid when he needed them. It is hopeless for them now unless they receive help, but no one will come. It’s a matter of days, perhaps weeks, before he and his army will have to give up. Once the Piemontese army arrives from the north they will be sorely outnumbered. They will run out of food and ammunition. They will become sick with dysentery.”

“Once Francesco is defeated, Garibaldi and the invaders will march toward Roma,” said Michele, despondently.

“Not now,” said Beniamino. “They will have to wait until Napoleon III is looking somewhere else. For the moment, he will not allow the

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Piemontese to attack Roma or il Papa. Venezia is a more likely target, but first a government will have to be formed. Soon we will begin to see the Piemontese in our village levying new taxes, conscripting our sons into their army, dividing up the spoils of their *Risorgimento*. We will have to decide, my friend, whether we will continue to resist this new state, body and soul, or find a way to coexist with it by converting from a Santangelese, Avelinese, Napolitano to an Italiano. The Italiani will not be going away anytime soon.”

“I suppose we can be thankful that this is not a religious war,” joked Michele.

”In some ways it is a religious war, Michele,” replied Beniamino. “There was one thing that I learned while we were in Napoli and that is the role Jews have played in this drama. The Piemontese gave Jews equal rights many years ago and the Jews have repaid the favour by giving up their boys to fight in the Piemontese wars. A dozen of them were with Garibaldi when he landed on Sicilia. One percent of his *i Mille* may not seem like much, but it is out of proportion to the number of Jews in all of Italia, I suspect. They are fighting to give their brothers and sisters in the united Italia the same rights that they have received in Piemonte. They have a cause that is stronger than the ideal of making a single country out of a collection of states, or of hearing everyone speaking one Italian language instead of thousands of dialects. To be free from oppression and slavery will always outweigh pride or greed as a reason to fight fiercely and fearlessly. Imagine what might have happened if Francesco had given the peasants in The Kingdom the same rights as those of the nobility and then called the people to arms to conquer the north.

”I do not mean to offend you, my good friend, but The Church and the Popes since the very first one was anointed have been at the heart of my

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people's misery. If the people who follow the word of Jesus believe that He was God, then he organized and orchestrated His own crucifixion. We have been blamed for killing Christ for far too long. It is time for it to end. But why am I telling you this, Michele? You know the story all too well."

"Maybe something good can come from this," sighed Michele. "We shall see. There does not seem to be any way of stopping it now."

Silence returned to the shop, except for the sounds of tapping and carving. The two boys and their fathers entered their own thought chambers. *Would there be any good that would come of all this, or will our lives have to change too much to bear*, thought Michele.



While Garibaldi and his men, who totaled almost twenty-five thousand, attempted and failed to drive King Francisco's army out of its defenses along the *fiume Volturno*, the Piemontese forces moved toward the Papal States with the goal of joining together with Garibaldi in the final battle against The Kingdom. The Pope did have an army, but with fewer than ten thousand soldiers who were mostly volunteers from many different countries, it would be no match for the Piemontese. The Pope's forces were commanded by General Louis Lamoricière, a Frenchman. The Piemontese were led by Generals Enrico Cialdini and Manfredo Fanti. Lamoricière foolishly moved against Cialdini's forces, which totalled over sixty thousand. Cavour and Napoleon's ministers had most probably decided to allow Umbria and The Marches to be annexed in return for leaving Lazio in the hands of the Pope. Either this message never reached Lamoricière or the Pope, or the Papal army decided to make a stand. The armies met in the Marches at Castelfidardo on the 18th of September 1860 A.D. Those soldiers in the Papal Army who were not killed fled the battlefield and sought refuge in the

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fortress of Ancona, finally surrendering on the 29th of September. There were now no impediments between the Piemontese and Gaeta.

King Vittorio Emanuele joined his armies on the 9th of October and took command. It was at Teano in northern Campania, fifty kilometres east of Gaeta, where Garibaldi relinquished his self-proclaimed title of dictator of The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to the man he referred to now as the King of Italia. The two men rode side by side into Napoli, and shortly thereafter, Garibaldi left the mainland for Caprera, his island retreat, where he intended to stay, removed from war and politics. The Piemontese army laid siege to Gaeta and Francesco finally surrendered on the 12th of February 1861 A.D. It was the removal of the French fleet that had been protecting Francesco and his remaining forces that opened the way for the Piemontese victory.

On the 12th of February in Torino, Vittorio Emanuele called together the first parliament of the united Italia, and on the 17th of March the parliament proclaimed Vittorio King of Italia. Ten days later the parliament declared that Roma was to be the country's capital, which was, in effect, a declaration of war against the Pope. Venezia fell into the new country's lap when it allied itself with Prussia against Austria in 1866 A.D. in what was called the Seven Weeks War. The Prussians of northern Germania, led by Otto von Bismarck, were pitted against the Habsburgs of Austria and southern Germania. The new government of Italia decided that this would be its baptism by fire and threw itself against the Austrian forces at Custoza and Lissa. Both battles ended in dismal defeats for the Italian army. Only Garibaldi, pulled out of retirement and assembling his Hunters of the Alps, distinguished himself and his Italian troops at Bezzecca. In spite of the poor performance of their Italian allies, the Prussians prevailed and the Treaty of Vienna signed on the 12th of October awarded Venezia to Francia. Austria refused to deal directly with Italia. Francia, in its turn, ceded Venezia to Italia.

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Only Roma and Latium remained outside the mantle of the new government. Pope Pius IX was determined to retain both spiritual and temporal powers and not relinquish control over the last remaining remnants of the Papal States that had been under papal control since the Donation of Pepin in 756 A.D. He was aided by Napoleon III, who saw the protection of the Pope as his moral duty.

In July of 1870 A.D., the First Vatican Council that had begun the previous year in Roma affirmed the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility. The Doctrine stated the following:

“We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable.”

A serious warning was placed at the end of the Doctrine: *“So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema.”* In other words, banned, cursed and excommunicated.

Unfortunately for the Pope, his guardian angel was called to duty elsewhere. While the First Vatican Council was coming to a close in July, the Franco-Prussian War broke out. It lasted for ten months, and pitted Francia against the Kingdom of Prussia along with the other states in the North German Confederation, of which it was a member, and the southern German states of Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria. Francia was no match.

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The Emperor was captured with his entire army in September 1870 A.D., but French Republican forces carried on for another eight months. The Treaty of Frankfurt, signed on the 10th of May, 1871 A.D., ended the conflict.

There were three major results from this war. First, Germania became unified under King Wilhelm I of Prussia. Second, Napoleon III and his Second French Empire fell and was replaced by the French Third Republic. Finally, the removal of French troops from Roma left the Pope unprotected, except for a small force of Swiss Guard and remnants of his defeated army. On the 10th of September 1870 A.D. Italia officially declared war on the Pope. The declaration was presented to His Holiness by an envoy from the King, Count Ponza di San Martino, along with a proposal for a treaty. If the Pope accepted the terms of the treaty, he would avoid an unnecessary war that could only have one ending, counselled San Martino. "...you will never enter Roma!" was the Pope's final word to the envoy. The next day he sent a letter to Vittorio Emanuele:

"Sire, — Count Ponza di San Martino has delivered to me a letter which Your Majesty was pleased to send me; but it is unworthy of an affectionate son who boasts of professing the Catholic faith and glories in his kingly loyalty. I will not enter into the particulars of the letter to avoid renewing the pain which its first perusal occasioned me. I bless God, Who has suffered that Your Majesty should fill the last years of my life with bitterness. For the rest I cannot admit the requests contained in your letter nor give my adhesion to the principles propounded therein. I once more turn to God and place my cause, which is His, in His Hands. I pray Him to grant to Your Majesty abundant grace to preserve you from every peril and to render you a participant in the mercies of which you have such need."

From the Vatican, September 11, 1870.

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Nine days later, on the 20th of September, in the same month in which Napoleon III was captured, Italian forces reached Roma. Apparently the Pope's pleas fell on deaf royal ears. The Pope ordered his army to fight in order to demonstrate that he was not willingly abdicating his position as both spiritual and temporal leader. His instructions were to offer resistance and then to raise the white flag. After three hours of brutal bombardment which began at 5.15 a.m. the flag had still not been raised. The Pope sent orders that the army should capitulate immediately, and by 10.00 a.m. his orders were carried out. The Pope was removed from the Palazzo del Quirinale and retreated to the Vatican, refusing to acknowledge defeat, refusing to accept the incorporation of Roma into the Italian state, and proclaiming himself a prisoner.

In the following spring, Vittorio Emanuele attempted to placate the Pope with the 'Law of Guarantees', which was essentially identical to the treaty offered by San Martino before Italian forces invaded. This law would have given the Pope the use of the Vatican, but it denied him sovereignty over any portion of territory, including the land on which the Vatican sat. It gave him the right to send and receive ambassadors, and it provided an annual stipend of 3.25 million lira. Pope Pius IX rejected the offer, including the money, and continued to refuse to have any dealings with the Italian government.



1878 A.D.

Over seventeen years had passed since a small number of men declared the formation of a country they named *Italia*. Vincenzo Sena and Rosa Villani had married two years before. They were living with Vincenzo's parents, Michele and Nicolina, while they saved money to construct an apartment on top of the building that housed most of the Sena family. Rosa was pregnant, in her eighth month. Once she told her parents of her

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condition, her mother, Leonora, came to visit her every day, walking the five kilometers from her home on the hill in the neighboring Commune di Rocca San Felice. She brought fresh vegetables which she grew on a small plot of land at the edge of the village. Once a week she brought a chicken so that Rosa could make soup and have meat for the *sugo* that flavored the *maccheroni* she and Vincenzo and the entire Sena family ate every day.

Rosa's father, Nicola, and his brothers were *braccianti*, short-term laborers who worked on the farms that surrounded the village. Before unification, much of the land had been owned by The Church and the rest by the nobles whose families had lived for centuries in the mountainous area. Not all of the land was arable. Some places were held in common for the grazing of horses and cattle and sheep and goats, and some was left as a wood, fenced off from the animals, so that there would be fuel for the fires and wood for building and repairs. After unification, the Church's lands and commons were confiscated by the government and sold to landholders, many of them resident in far away villas. The *braccianti*, like the men in the Villani family, had to pay for the privilege of grazing their pig, which they butchered each year, and for the small plot of land where they grew vegetables to supplement the meager portions of *maccheroni* that sustained them.

Leonora and Nicola Villani arrived at mid-day on a Palm Sunday in April for dinner with their daughter, her husband and their in-laws. Leonora and Nicolina had become good friends after all of Leonora's visits. Nicola and Michele were still getting to know each other. While the women prepared dinner, Michele took Francesco down to his family's tanning factory. Vincenzo was about to follow along when Rosa called for him and asked him to help her with loading the bread oven. It was really an excuse to let the two fathers have some time on their own.

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As they walked, Nicola and Michele talked about the weather, which was unseasonably warm for late April, which meant that they had already picked a first crop of vegetables from their small allotment. Michele said how much Rosa appreciated the visits her mother made and thanked him for the food that Leonora brought. He said that the costs of bread and flour had increased so much since the grain tax was levied two years ago that they could not afford to eat more than one meal a day, which they took during the early afternoon every day, including Sunday.

Nicola shook his head. "It is a miserable state we are in, Michele," he said. "It goes from bad to worse. When Depretis came in two years ago and they passed the grain tax on imports, the landowners could charge more for their wheat and corn, but we had to pay the higher prices, which we could not afford. So the landowners stopped growing grain and we had less work. Many of the fields have been converted to pasture. We have taxes on our pigs and donkeys, but there are no taxes on the cattle and sheep owned by the rich. These politicians call themselves Socialists, but they do not care about the common people. They are corrupt crooks. They tax the poor and leave the rich alone."

"Depretis is out now, but Cairoli is no better," reflected Michele. "All they know how to do is fight wars and build statues of themselves. I remember how many people in the village danced for joy when King Francesco was defeated. They danced again nine years later when they heard that Il Papa had been thrown out of his castle. My family did not feel joy on either of those two occasions. We went to mass and prayed for the king and then Il Papa. We do not acknowledge this king and we do not accept this government, but what are we to do? If we do not pay their taxes they throw us in prison. If we do not give them our sons to fight their wars, they take them by force."

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Nicola and Michele had reached the factory when they had finished their criticism of the country's government and had made their true thoughts known to each other. This showed a great deal of trust on the part of both men. The former Kingdom was filled with Italian soldiers who were sent there to quell any sign of revolt. Riots were the principal fear of the government because they would exhibit a division among the people of the new state, among the country's citizens and to the world. While the official figures for the numbers of men killed or executed in the former Kingdom during the five years after the Kingdom was made part of the new Italia were just over five thousand, the unofficial—but more believable—number was over one hundred fifty thousand. This slaughter was still fresh in the minds of all the inhabitants of the regions of southern Italia. They were scars on the hearts of the people, scars that would not heal and which ached.

Michele's factory was a modest structure, oblong in shape, constructed of stone with a steeply pitched thatch roof. The centuries old wooden vats were at one end of the building, on the outside, covered by their own thatch roof. A small brook flowed a short distance away from the vats and provided the water used in the tanning.

"I thought it would smell more," commented Nicola.

"Michele laughed. "That is one of our secrets. It was how the family got permission to come into the village when we were forced to leave Napoli many, many years ago."

"How has your business changed since we lost our Kingdom?" asked Nicola.

"We have always sold most of our leather to craftsmen in this part of Campania, mostly in Avellino," replied Michele. "It's where we get our hides, so there is a great deal of trading that we do, rather than taking money. Before Italia, our best leather, the cordovan, was used to make shoes for

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nobles and rich merchants from England and Francia. The nobles still buy shoes, but the merchants no longer come to Napoli. We have had to make more leather that is good for saddles and bridles and furniture. It is not what we are best at doing, but it is what we can sell or use as barter.”

“What about Duke Caracciolo ?” asked Nicola. “Does he still buy from the people?”

“Oh yes. He still orders shoes and other leather goods, and we supply the hides. He has been giving loans to men who want to try to find jobs in America,” replied Michele, “and he has bought all the belongings of families that have decided to move. *It will all be here for you when you return*, he says.”

“Have you lost many men in the village to America?” queried Nicola. “Five men left Rocca last month and twice that many are planning to leave in the early summer. There won’t be anyone left if this keeps up.”

“No one has left from our family because they have work,” answered Michele, “but those who are working in the fields are starting to take the offers of free passage in return for work on the other side. It is disheartening to see our young people being forced to leave for such a far off place. Some of the men tried to find work in the north, but they came back poorer than when they left. They do not hire us up there.”

“Il Papa cursed those men who stole our country and his,” stated Nicola, and spat on the ground. “On his deathbed two months ago I hear he repeated his curse. I would have given a day’s wage to hear what he said when Vittorio died. I heard he was so happy that he wanted to get up and say mass. At least il Papa had the last laugh on that dirty buzzard. The new Papa, Leo, will not have an easier time with the buzzard’s son, Umberto. He’s going to be trouble.”

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“I think you are right, Nicola,” replied Michele. “But I do not believe we are going to be able to talk more politics on empty stomachs. Shall we see what our families have made us for supper?”

There was no more talk of politics during the meal. The expectant grandfathers talked about whether they would be welcoming a girl or a boy into the world in a month’s time. They both decided that it would be a boy, while their wives blessed themselves and prayed to God that the child, whatever its sex, would be born healthy and the mother would survive.

“My wish is that you will have at least two boys, my daughter, so that I may have one named in my honor,” laughed Nicola.

“I will do my best, papa,” said Rosa.

On the 6th of May, Rosa gave birth to a baby boy. He was named Michele after his Nonno Sena, as was the custom.



“Nonno Nicola got his wish,” laughed Michele. “My brother even looks like his Nonno Villani.”

Signore Di Sangue did not seem to hear him. He was silent for a few minutes, but then replied, “You both were too young to be part of Italia’s most recent military disaster.”

“Do you mean Abyssinia?” asked Michele.

“Yes,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “The Italians thought that the Ethiopians were as ill-prepared for a war as Somalia was when they took that country under its control without firing a single shot. The Ethiopians showed us a thing or two about fighting at the Battle of Adwa in March this year. The Italian government was repaid for its treachery.”

“I did not understand why there was a war,” said Michele.

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“It was over the Treaty of Ucciali,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “The government said one thing in the Italian version and another in the Amharic one. Amharic is the language of the Ethiopians. The Ethiopians found out about the deception and cancelled the treaty. The Italians decided to take their country anyway.

“The Ethiopian King Menelik II was also the leader of his country’s forces. When the Italians invaded they had 25,000 soldiers against almost 200,000 well-armed Ethiopians. Menelik lured the Italians to Adwa and waited for them to attack. The terrain was extremely difficult to negotiate and the Italian army could not keep their ranks closed. Menelik attacked the weakest points and routed the Italian enemy. Five thousand of the Italian forces were killed and the rest captured. Menelik would not release the prisoners until the Italian government paid him ten million lire in reparations.”

“There was much talk of this defeat during the last months that I was home,” mused Michele. “Every time I went into the café I would hear someone talking about it. The old men were laughing and joking about the stupidity of the politicians, but there always seemed to be at least one person who was defending the government and the army.”

“The politicians are better at fixing elections than at statesmanship,” said Signore Di Sangue. “I fear that it will not get better before it gets much, much worse. They are worried that Great Britain or Francia will invade Italia and so have made a pact, the so-called Triple Alliance, with their former worst enemy, Austria-Hungaria, and with the one country that intends to dominate the entire continent, Germania. They irritate the Americans by setting up trade barriers, and alienate the British, French and Russians by allying with their enemies. Then they engage in wars in Africa to make people forget about all of the other ridiculous decisions they have

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made. It is good that you are leaving now, Michele, and that your brother has left as well. It will only get worse.”

“The hardest part was leaving the rest of the family,” said Michele. “Babbo tried to make everyone go when they decided to leave, but he could not convince them. I felt so sad when we left for Napoli so I could take this ship. I looked back until I could no longer see the village. The family has been through so much and has always stayed together. You have helped me understand what we went through to stay together, the different religions and wars and countries we experienced. San’t Angelo dei Lombardi has been our home for centuries. The Spanish and the French and the Bourbons have come and gone, but we stayed. What finally forced us to leave are the foreigners living on the peninsula, people who called themselves Italians and who said that we should call ourselves Italians as well.”

“The name will continue, my young friend,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “If one of the branches dies there will be many more that will survive. The trunk is strong. Over the centuries, cuttings from other trees have been grafted on to your family’s to make it stronger and more resistant to disease, parasites and the strongest winds that can blow. It is not the same weak sapling that almost froze to death in a river with his mother in northern Gallica. The seeds that separate from the tree and find fertile ground keep all the traits of the tree that gave them life. You are carrying the family with you, Michele, wherever you go.”

The sun had set across the starboard side of the ship when Signore Di Sangue closed the book on Michele’s story. There was no reason to make any serious pronouncements at the conclusion, or to even make a point about it being finished. Michele understood that they had reached the present moment in his and his family’s lives.

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“What do you think they will be serving on our last evening aboard ship, my friend?” quipped Signore Di Sangue.

“You have made this trip before, Signore,” replied Michele. “I think you know what we will be having. But you will keep it to yourself so that I will be surprised and hopefully delighted. I guess it will be roast beef, stewed vegetables, potato dumplings and an apple cobbler as a *dolci*.”

“You are an optimist, Michele,” laughed Signore Di Sangue. “Keep that optimism and keep a smile on your face for your customers. Together they will take you very far in your new life in America.”



When I came on board this ship two weeks ago, I feared that it would be the worst experience of my life. What would I do to pass the time? I did not want to be on the journey in the first place. I did not want to leave home. The two weeks have now passed and I wish that the journey would continue. Signore Di Sangue has been both a teacher and a companion. I have learned so much about the history of Italia and how things came to be the way they are. Even if the stories about the family are not what actually happened, it is possible that things could have been as he has described. If I could read, I would try to learn more. If I could write, I would put down these words and pass them on to my brother and sisters so that we could pass them on to our children and to our children's children. If I could write. If I could read.

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September 14, 1896 A.D.

7.34 a.m.

THE *S.S. ITALIA* SAILED INTO NEW YORK HARBOR. Michele had been on deck for over two hours, ever since land was within sight. He had not slept at all during the night. He retired after midnight and tried to sleep, but most of the men in his section of steerage stayed up playing cards, smoking and talking, burning candles after the lights were turned off. He had tossed in his cot for a few hours and finally gave in to his nerves. He washed and shaved, trimming his moustache with the small scissors he had been given as a Christmas present by his father's parents two years before. The case for the scissors was black embroidery, and it also held a nail scraper. He put on the suit he had worn the day he and his cousin had boarded the ship which he had folded around his shirts that were wrapped in paper and placed them in his suitcase. He packed his two suitcases with the clothes he had been wearing during the journey and brought them above deck.

Michele caught sight of the Statue of Liberty as soon as the ship moved into the Verrazano Narrows separating the Atlantic Ocean from the Lower New York Bay. In 1524 A.D. the Toscani explorer, Giovanni da Verrazano, sailed along the coast of America and into this harbor. The first rays of morning sun were glistening on the tall bronze woman with her upstretched arm holding a torch that served as a beacon to all those who would start a new life in this still new country. Michele was one of those people. His family, who had seen this same sight one year before, and his betrothed, Giovanna and her family, were among those people. His cousin Maria and all the passengers on the ship in steerage, and perhaps even some on the upper decks, were among those people.

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Signore Di Sangue joined him as the ship cleared the Narrows.

“Buongiorno, Michele,” he said as he placed his hands on the rail and looked out across the harbor water, still colored in its night hue of opaque black. “She is beautiful, isn’t she?”

“Magnificent,” commented Michele, nodding slowly. “Last year, after my family arrived, they sent me a postcard with her photograph. She is much more impressive in real life. How did she get here? Do you know? Of course you do!”

“Yes,” answered Signore Di Sangue. “It was a French artist named Frederic Auguste Bartholdi who had the idea of building a large statue somewhere in the world, and the French politician Édouard René de Laboulaye who commissioned Bartholdi to realize his dream. The statue was supposed to be a gift from Francia to the United States for its one hundred years as an independent nation and in recognition of the help that Francia gave to America during its fight for freedom. It was originally supposed to be completed by 1876, a century after the Declaration of Independence was signed. But as large projects have a way of taking more time and costing more money than originally planned, it turned out to be a joint project between the two countries and it was dedicated on the twenty-eighth of October, 1886. America built the base on which the statue stands. A well known American architect, Richard Morris Hunt, was chosen to design it. Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, who designed the tower in Paris that carries his name, was the engineer for the statue’s skeleton and supports.

“I watched as it rose up from the island, and I was in the harbor when it was unveiled to the world. It was a spectacular party.”

“It must have cost a lot of money, this statue,” reflected Michele.

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“Enough to feed many hungry families on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “The money to build, transport and erect the statue was raised in both countries through lotteries and auctions and donations. The money was paid as wages to laborers, for the materials that went into its construction and for transporting it across the ocean. It was not built with slave labor like the magnificent projects of the Greeks, Romans and Moors. It was a massive effort to put people to work, transferring money from those who have more than they need to those who have less. It is called ‘public works’. There were people who said that the money should be used instead to feed and clothe and house the poor. These people had their own pet projects which collected money so that they could distribute it, of course taking some part of it to pay for administration of the money, for the offices that were needed for the administrators and for the salaries for the workers who collected the money and handed it out. This is called ‘charity’.”

“I think I can tell by the tone of your voice that you prefer public works to charity, is that so Signore Di Sangue?” asked Michele.

“You are correct, my friend. Give a man a loaf of bread and his stomach will be filled for a week. Give a man a job, and his stomach will be filled for as long as he can work. There is an inscription on the side of the statue’s base that tells the world why it is there. I will recite it to you. One day, you will take your children here to see it, and you will climb to the top of her outstretched hand and into the torch she carries.”

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name*

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*Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
' With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

"They call the form of government in America *democracy*," said Signore Di Sangue. "It is a word made from the Greek words 'people' and 'power'. Abraham Lincoln, the great American president during the Civil War, called democracy a government 'of the people, by the people and for the people'. He meant all of the people, not just the rich, educated, Christian or White. This country you are about to enter is an experiment, my young friend. What they are doing has never been tried before. In kingdoms, the people live for the king; in dictatorships, the people live for the state; in the coming socialist states, people will supposedly live for each other, the collective. In America, people live for themselves, and the ultimate purpose of government is to protect the rights of the individual. We do not know how this will turn out. It is a work in progress. You and your family will help to determine its fate."

"I do not understand anything of what you just said, Signore Di Sangue," laughed Michele. "We lived for our family and obeyed the laws of the Pope, the king and then the government. I expect that the only one of these they do have in America is a government, so it should be easier to live there."

"It takes more work to live in America because everyone is expected to carry his own weight, both men and women," explained Signore Di Sangue.

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“There are two opposing views on the role of government that are as old as the country itself. On the one side is the view expressed by Thomas Jefferson, the country’s third president, who believed that less government was better than more government. On the other side is the view of Alexander Hamilton, Jefferson’s arch rival, who thought that a strong central government was necessary in order to achieve a strong country. So far, both sides have been winning. If one side or the other becomes dominant, it will no longer be a democracy.”

“Where does the name ‘America’ come from?” asked Michele, not wanting to continue the civic lesson, but clearly interested in a lighter topic on the same theme. “Do you have time for just this one last story?”

“It is said most often that the name comes from another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine.” answered Signore Di Sangue. “He came to this continent in 1497 A.D., sailing under the Spanish flag, just as the Genoan Colombo did five years earlier. Neither he nor Colombo discovered America, as I have said before. There were many who came to the continents, south and north. What Vespucci did that Colombo and all those who came to these continents before him did not do was to write about his experiences. Most importantly, he called the land the ‘New World’. Colombo was certain that he had come to Asia, a part of the world that had already been discovered.

“A decade or so later, two men were preparing to reproduce Ptolemy’s treatise on Geography, *Geographia*. Martin Waldseemuller was a geographer and Mathias Ringmann was a schoolmaster. Both men were from German states and they came to Saint-Die, a town in Lorraine, Francia because it had a print shop where their work would be printed. It is not known how they came upon Vespucci’s letters, but they interpreted them such that they believed that he, not Colombo, was the discoverer of the New

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World, and they included the accounts of his voyage in their book. They wrote the following: ‘We do not see why the name of the man of genius, Amerigo, who has discovered these lands should not be given to them, as Europe and Asia have adopted the names of women.’ Their treatise, called ‘*Cosmographiae Introductio*’, was published in April, 1507 A.D., a year after Cristoforo Colombo died so he did not have a chance to set the record straight himself. It was the first time that the word ‘America’ appeared in print and no one seems to have wanted to do anything to change it. At least the Americans gave the Genoan some credit by naming their capital the District of Columbia.”

Then, as he had done so many times during their journey, Signore Di Sangue suddenly changed the subject of their conversation.

“You did not sleep, my friend?”

“There will be enough time to sleep when we come ashore,” replied Michele.

“Have you remembered everything you will do once you are ashore?” asked Signore Di Sangue quietly. “Uncertainty can make anyone a little nervous. Do not worry. Between you and your cousin, Maria, you will find your way to your family.”

“Yes, I have been thinking about all of your advice and your instructions on how to reach the address in Brooklyn,” admitted Michele. “There are too many thoughts jumping around in my head. I will sleep well when I am finally with my family.”

“Then you will be off again, to your final destination,” offered Signore Di Sangue, “but take things slowly, in slow bites. They will taste better.”

“And you, Signore, where will you go first? With all your stories about my family’s journey, I never managed to ask you this question.”

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“Oh no, I will not be stopping off here in America. There is no place in this country for a man of my age and occupation,” said Signore Di Sangué shaking his head. He was smiling when Michele turned his head quickly in response to this surprising piece of news.

“You are joking?”

“No, dead serious,” answered Signore Di Sangué, his smile disappearing, replaced by raised eyebrows and pursed lips. “I will stay on board while the ship is prepared for its return journey, and then I will have a new group of passengers to converse with as we sail back to Napoli. Of course I will make sure the letter for your dear cousin is properly delivered.”

“But why?” queried Michele, totally bewildered by his ship-mate friend’s course of action. “Why will you not go ashore? You have family and friends here in New York. You can at least visit them. They would be so happy to see you, I am sure of that.”

“I do stop by from time to time, every few years or so, just to let them know that I am still alive and in possession of my senses,” responded Signore Di Sangué. “I would not wish to wear out my welcome. You see, I now spend the major portion of my life aboard this ship. I have much to accomplish in the short time I have remaining. There are many stories to tell.”

“So you spend your entire life on board this ship?” asked Michele, totally puzzled by this revelation.

“There is one reason that I leave the ship and that is to attend performances by Enrico Caruso,” offered Signore Di Sangué. “You may not have heard of him even though he was born in Napoli just five years before you, and his first performance was in that city. It was in March of last year

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at *Teatro Nuovo* in Napoli. He sang in *L'amico Francesco* by Domenico Morelli. He is in Salerno now, and that is where I will go when I return."

"No, I have never heard of Enrico Caruso," replied Michele. "I did listen to opera once or twice when some men sang in the town square. It was very beautiful to hear. I don't think I will ever earn enough money to attend a real opera."

"Napoli's San Carlo was the center of opera before *Risorgimento*," mused Signore Di Sangue. "The king and his family were not terribly fond of the opera, but they made sure they built the best theatre and hired the best musicians and singers. San Carlo was the favorite of Rossini and Donizetti, two giants of opera, along with Giuseppe Verdi. It is not only the wealthy who attend the opera, my friend. In Napoli, opera is entertainment for the masses."

"Do they have opera in America?" queried Michele.

"Oh, yes," answered Signore Di Sangue, "There is the old money Academy of Music, which opened in 1854 A.D. Only the richest could afford to attend, and the newly wealthy were not able to obtain access. So these *nuovi ricchi* built their own performance center, the New York Metropolitan Opera, superior to the Academy in every way. It has been open for sixteen years and I have been there many times, including opening night, October 22nd 1883, when *Faust*, composed by Charles Gounod, was performed—in Italian instead of French, the language of its original score. Caruso has not yet sung in this marvelous opera house, but his time will come soon, of that I am certain. And I plan to be there to hear and cheer him."

"I wonder if there is an opera house in Scranton," mused Michele. "Maybe it would be less expensive than coming to New York City where everything must cost more."

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“There is no opera house in Scranton today, my young friend, but there will surely be one soon,” offered Signore Di Sangue. “The city is growing quickly. But you may not have to travel to New York or even to an opera house to listen to Caruso or other great singers. A new invention will let you do that in your own home. Emile Berliner founded the *Berliner Gramophone Company* last year. Soon you will be able to hear music that is etched on a round platter and played on a machine.”

“That sounds fanciful, Signore Di Sangue,” laughed Michele, “but if your prediction comes true, I will be one of the first to buy his machine—if I can afford it.”

“You will, my young friend,” said Signore Di Sangue with a smile.

Maria appeared on deck with her valise in one hand and a larger piece of luggage in the other. She wore a navy scarf trimmed in gold thread to keep the wind from blowing her hair.

“Buongiorno, Signore Di Sangue,” she said as she approached the two men. “Buongiorno, Michele.”

“Buongiorno, Maria,” rejoined Michele.

“Buongiorno, Signorina Sena,” replied Signore Di Sangue. “You look like you are ready to go ashore as soon as the ship docks.”

“Yes. I have enjoyed this journey, that is, after you applied your miracle treatment. But now I am anxious to start my new life in America. Will you allow us to accompany you off the ship?”

“Signore Di Sangue will not be going ashore, Cousin,” interjected Michele. “We have just been speaking about this.”

“Your cousin will fill in the details after you are on your way, after we have said our good-byes.”

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“When will we see you again?” asked Maria, accepting that she would have to wait to hear why their new friend would choose to stay on the ship while it was in port, but still hoping that there might be another chance of their meeting.

“I doubt that you will be setting foot back on board the *S.S. Italia* anytime soon, but if you do, I may well be here.”



They said their good-byes. Michele thanked Signore Di Sangue for telling him his family's story. Signore Di Sangue thanked Michele for his company and for being such a good listener. Maria thanked Signore Di Sangue for his kind recommendation of her to his friend. How would she be able to write and tell him how everything turned out, she asked. Signore Di Sangue assured her that his friend would inform him. He was sure that both of them would succeed in their new lives in America, he said, and told them it was now time for them to take the first steps by leaving the ship.

Maria and Michele, their hands laden with their luggage, walked down the gangway leading to the pier. When they reached the landing, they found a free space in the sea of passengers, set down their cases and turned to wave one last time to Signore Di Sangue, but he was gone. They stood there for a short while staring back at the ship. Then Michele remembered the small package he had been given by his grandfather. He should open it when he set foot on land in America. He put his hand in his pocket and took out the box wrapped in paper held in place with a string. He carefully untied the string and removed the paper, placing them in his overcoat pocket. He opened the box. Inside was a rosary with large brown beads. There was a crucifix on one side of the cross. When he turned it over he saw that the back side was hinged at the top. He opened it and it was hollow.



Conversions



Epilogue

Epilogue

2012 A.D.

Michele Sena's own story was only just beginning when he disembarked from the *S.S. Italia* on the 14th of September, 1896 at the age of eighteen. We do not know how long he stayed in Brooklyn with his family, but he did eventually travel to Scranton where he opened a shoemaker shop on St. Francis Cabrini Avenue near the corner where the top of Scranton Street joined Cabrini and close to the site where St. Lucy's Church would rise two decades later. His shop was next door to the Florey's grocery store. He would be the Godfather to one of the Florey sons, Salvatore, who one day would be Right Reverend Monsignor Salvatore J. Florey, pastor of St. Lucy's Parish. Michele married Giovanna Ricciardi in 1904 and they started a family. They would have six children, three girls and three boys. One of the boys, Giuseppe, died at an early age. The rest all lived into their late eighties and early nineties.

The family moved to South Seventh Street, at the bottom of Scranton Street's long, steep hill. Michele bought a building in the middle of the block, 135 South Seventh Street. His shop was in the front half of the building along the street, and their home was on the back half of the ground floor and on the second floor. The kitchen had a view across a steep bank leading down to the Central Railroad of New Jersey tracks and then further down to the Lackawanna River, up the other side to the Delaware and Hudson Railroad tracks with the Scranton Gas Works as a backdrop and finally up to the plateau that was downtown Scranton. They could see the Scranton Silk Mills and Williams Bakery over the top of the gas works. Their backyard was shared with the neighboring three-family house which Michele eventually purchased and where his first-born child, a daughter

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named Venzina lived with her husband after they were married in 1939 until 1960.

Michele and his family became founding members of St. Lucy's Parish. From the family's parlor window that faced South Seventh Street, Michele could see the church while it was under construction on top of the hill where St. Frances X. Cabrini Avenue and Scranton Street met. He also became a member of the Vittorio Alfieri Club. He bought a Victrola and assembled a fine collection of Caruso records. As often as he could, he rode the train to Hoboken, took the ferry across to Manhattan and the subway to Brooklyn to visit his brother's family who lived on Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn. His son, Lorenzo, lived with his Zio Nicola and Zia Asunta and their children for three years while he attended Pratt College of Art in Brooklyn.

Both of Michele's and Giovanna's sons fought in World War II, Francesco in the Pacific and Lorenzo in the European Theater. Both came home safely. Their sons never fought in any wars. He bought a third building on South Seventh Street, number 120, a small yellow house with green trim, a four-car garage and the largest lot on the street. His eldest son, Lorenzo, lived in the this house with his wife and their two children until 1960. Michele died in December, 1952 at the age of seventy-four of intestinal complications. His wife, Giovanna, died six years later of complications resulting from severe dementia. Neither of them ever returned to Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi. In 1960, the real estate legacy that Michele left to his heirs disappeared under the wrecking ball after South Seventh Street and most of its buildings caved in when the rotten supports for the empty coal mines below the surface collapsed.

Vadstena, Sweden

26 December 2013

Epilogue

Appendices

Appendices

The Angelus

V/. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings unto Mary,

R/. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V/. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

R/. "Be it unto me according to thy Word."

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V/. And the Word was made flesh,

R/. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V/. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R/. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Appendices

Senones and Sena Gallica

*“The **Senones** were an ancient Gaulish tribe. In about 400 B.C. they crossed the Alps and, having driven out the Umbrians settled on the east coast of Italia from Forlì to Ancona, in the so-called ager Gallicus, and founded the town of Sena Gallica (Sinigaglia), which became their capital. In 391 B.C. they invaded Etruria and besieged Clusium. The Clusines appealed to Rome, whose intervention, accompanied by a violation of the law of nations, led to war, the defeat of the Romans at the Allia (18 July 390 B.C.) and the capture of Rome.*



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Map of Gaul in 58 B.C.

“For more than 100 years the Senones were engaged in hostilities with the Romans, until they were finally subdued 283 B.C. by P. Cornelius Dolabella and driven out of their territory. Nothing more is heard of them in Italia. It is possible that they formed part of the bands of Gauls who spread themselves over the countries by the Danube, Macedonia and Asia Minor. A Roman colony was established at Sena, called Sena Gallica (currently Senigallia) to distinguish it from Sena Julia (Siena) in Etruria.

“A branch of the Senones (or a different tribe of the same name) settling the district which now includes the departments of Seine-et-Marne, Loiret and Yonne from 53-51 B.C. were engaged in hostilities with Julius Caesar brought about by their expulsion of Cavarinus, whom he had appointed their king. In 51 B.C., a Senonian named Drappes threatened the Provincia, but was captured and starved himself to death. From this time the Gallic Senones disappear from history. In later times they were included in Gallia Lugdunensis. Their chief towns were Agedincum (later Senones, whence Sens), Metiosedum (Melun; according to A. Holder, Meudon), and Vellaunodunum (site uncertain).”²³

²³ Chisholm, Hugh, ed (1911). [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](#) (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

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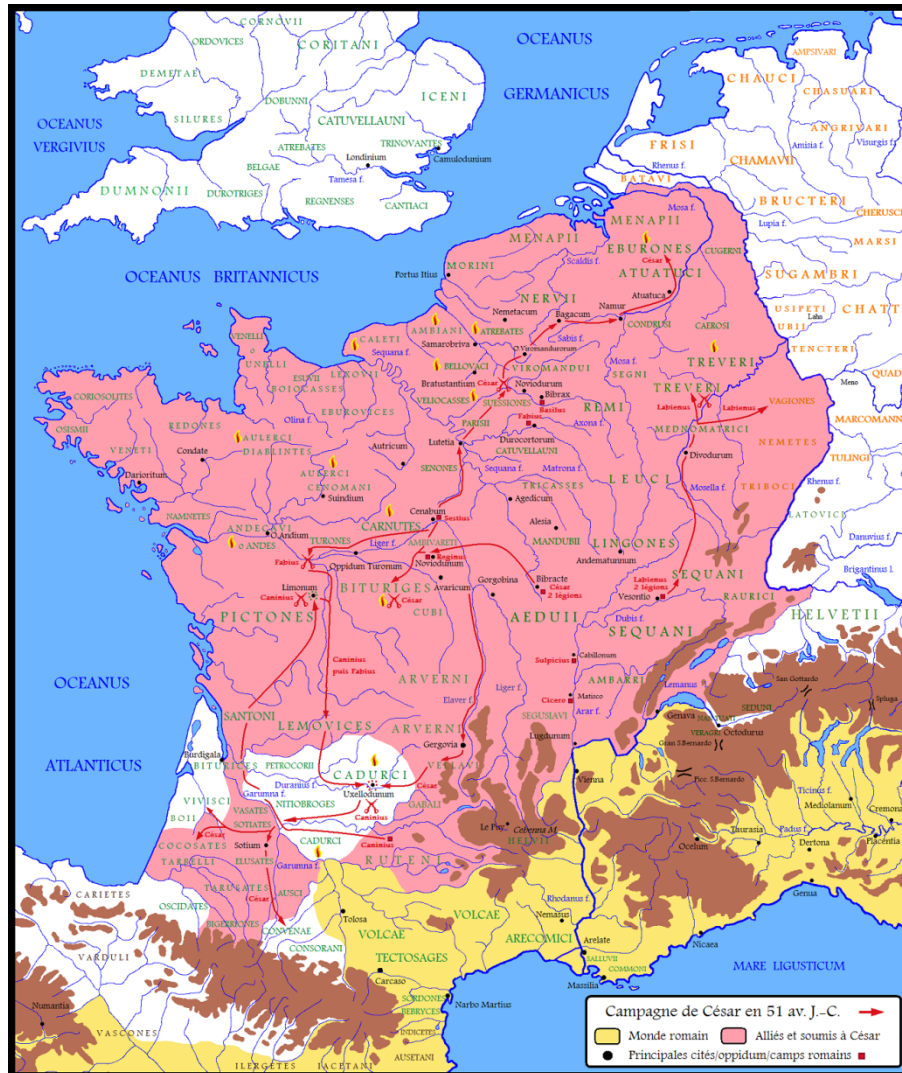
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Gallia following conquest by Caesar in 51 B.C.



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Map of Imperium Gallorum 259-271 A.D



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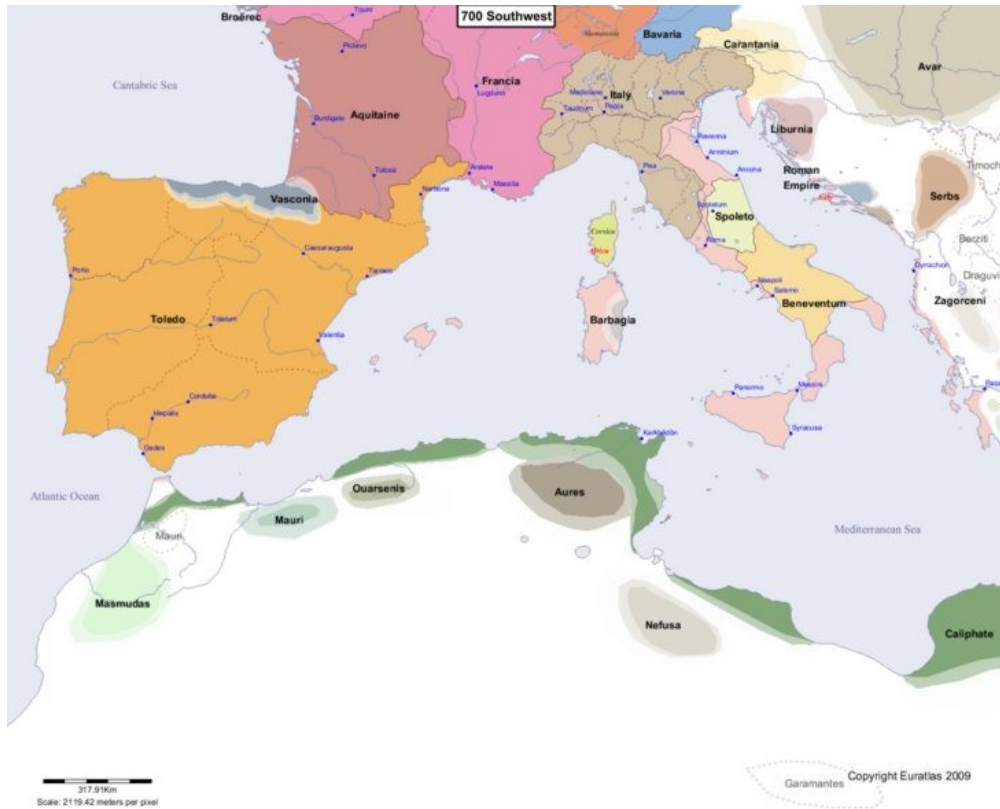
Europe in 1 A.D.

The Roman Empire



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Europe in 700 A.D.



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Europe in 1000 A.D.



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Europe in 1200 A.D.



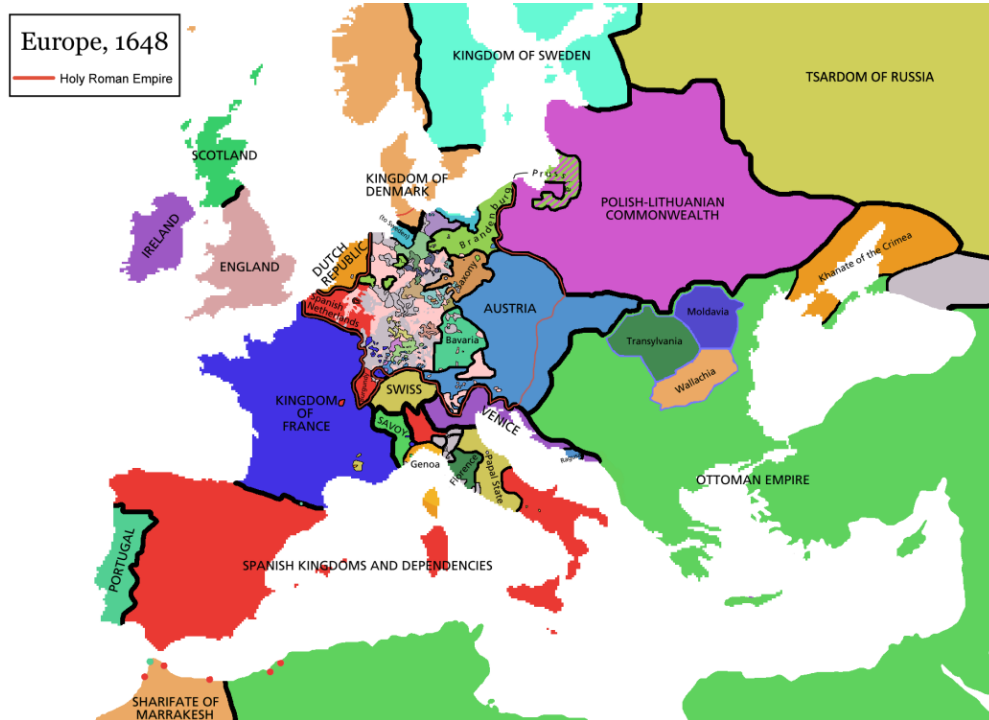
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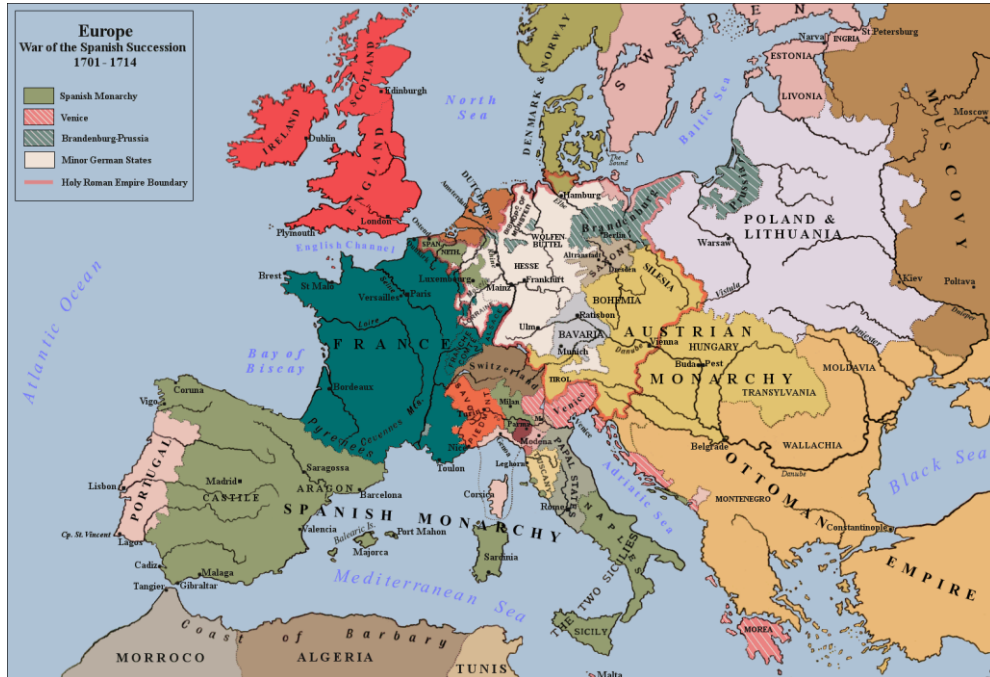
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