

LOCAL MAN ORCHESTRATES SICILIAN CAPTURE

Palermo, Sicily. AP - Sioux Falls native, Marquette Caselli, has been credited with the massive imprisonment of a Sicilian Mafia family. Thirty-eight members of the infamous Ponerello family were captured and arrested early yesterday morning when Sicilian authorities, under the direction of Caselli, stormed Ustica. After a lengthy investigation by Caselli, Sicilian police were strategically positioned on the island before sunrise. A small freighter was used to ship the family to the prison in Sicily, where they will await trial. Still missing are 50 loose diamonds, presumed taken by a member of the Ponerello family when an earthquake toppled the small island earlier this year. As the freighter began its



departure from Ustica, Salvatore Ponerello, Jr., known as the Elder Son of the family, escaped his bonds and threw himself against rocks near the shoreline in an apparent suicide attempt. He is presumed dead.

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Ucciardone Prison, Palermo, Sicilia August, 1968

Salvatore Ponerello, Sr. dropped to his knees on the concrete floor of his small prison cell, weeping. "My son is gone?" he cried. "My loyal, perfect son?"

The guard nodded.

"I must see Marquette Caselli!" Salvatore wailed, his tears unrestrained. "Bring me Marquette Caselli and I will tell you anything you wish!"

The guard nodded and hurried to report the request to the prison's warden.

Sicilian authorities were encouraged. They asked Marquette to visit Ponerello, giving him full authority to offer Salvatore a lesser sentence if he would provide the location of the fifty missing diamonds.

Salvatore Ponerello was tall and lean with piercing, dark eyes. His grieved expression narrowed as he took a seat on the other side of the glass where Marquette waited. His face was

more aged than Marquette had expected, but his body was not stooped at all. His shoulders were straight, broad, and strong.

Salvatore sneered as he looked at the younger man. “How could you work against one of your own?” he snarled. “Have you no honor?”

Marquette was taken aback. “You are not *my own*,” he said. “You are *Mafioso*.”

“You prejudiced dog. Do you not understand what we work for?”

“Why did you ask for this meeting?” Marquette interrupted brusquely. “Was it just to bash me, or did you actually have something of worth to tell me?”

Salvatore laughed. “I shall escape this place you have confined me to, Marquette Caselli!” he declared. “I swear it upon my god, Daedalus! He will come on the wings of eagles and deliver me from this place!”

Marquette rolled his eyes, standing from his seat as he said, “You must be truly insane if you think for a moment *that* will happen.”

“I swear to you I will bring vengeance upon you and your family that you will feel in decades to come!” Salvatore ranted.

“You do not have such power over me, for my God is the God over all, and He will protect me from whatever witchcraft you possess,” Marquette retorted.

Salvatore laughed again. “I *will* have my revenge,” he promised. “And because of the death you forced upon my son, I will make you hurt in years to come.”

“Save your breath, for you will need it to fight off the prisoners who so want you dead,” Marquette replied.

Salvatore got to his feet, putting his hands upon the glass dividing them. He gritted his teeth together and yelled, “I shall pray every day for Daedalus to curse the very ground you walk upon!”

“Pray all you want,” Marquette scoffed. “Jesus Christ is the Lord of Lords, and He will not allow a hair upon my head harmed. And if I were you, Salvatore Ponerello, I would ask Jesus to forgive my countless sins so that when you do leave this place, you may join Him in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Salvatore pretended to laugh, and said, “What if I choose not to bow in silly submission to your faceless God?”

“Then you shall burn in hell for all eternity.”

Salvatore Ponerello’s maniacal laughter rang off the walls of the prison.

Marquette felt sick to his stomach, and he hurried for the door.

Shortly before suppertime in South Dakota, Marquette placed an overseas phone call to his mother. It was nearly midnight in *Sicilia*, but Marquette always called his family when he was finished with a big case.

“Oh, my Marquette!” Rosa exclaimed. “You were in the *Argus Leader* today! And we saw that smart car they put you into! Your little sister has passed out papers to all of the neighbors. We are *so* proud of you!”

“The front page?” Marquette asked, surprised. “How did I look?”

“Like a star!” Rosa answered, laughing. “Papa says you need to get rid of your ponytail now that you are so famous, but I thought it looked just fine.”

Marquette chuckled, but he was tired and troubled, and Rosa heard it in the tone of his voice.

“What is wrong, my son?” she asked.

“John and I are traveling to *Roma* tomorrow,” he began, sighing heavily.

Rosa caught her breath and whispered, “But why, Marquette?”

“I want to see the memorial,” he answered. “And who knows when I will be this close to *Italia* again.”

“But, Marquette —”

“Ma`ma,” he interrupted gently, “it has been twelve years. Do you not feel I have had to go through enough? I need to lay her memory to rest once and for all, and if I can just read her name upon the granite plaque, then I can come home and be at peace.”

Rosa shook her head, but said nothing to her son. In her heart she knew that it would take more than just a granite plaque to bring Marquette peace.



“Ever been to Rome?” John Peters asked with a crooked smile as they bumped along in the tour bus. He took off his round-rimmed spectacles and cleaned them with the handkerchief from the breast pocket of his dark suit.

Marquette shook his head. “And it is pronounced *Roma*,” he corrected.

John nodded as he put on his spectacles. “You mean to tell me that you were born and raised in Italy and never visited *Roma*?” he asked, being sure to pronounce it correctly.

Marquette smiled faintly with a shake of his head. “When I lived in *Italia*, we were very poor. There was not time or money to travel to *Roma*.”

John nodded, looking out the window of the old bus. “Well I have,” he replied. “I knew a guy here — great informant — but he up and became a priest. We still write letters every now

and then. He's one of the pastors over at Santa Susanna — that's an American parish here in *Roma*.”

The bus came to a stop, and the tour guide at the front began to speak Italian.

“She says,” Marquette interpreted, “that we are being left off at the Great Crash of 1956 and that we will be picked up in one hour. We are encouraged to shop the merchants along the way as long as we are back here in one hour.”

John and Marquette followed the rest of the passengers off the bus and into the street. A great granite wall stood near unused and broken tracks, and Marquette strolled in that direction.

“Where are you going, Marq?” John asked, noticing the sudden despair in Marquette's eyes.

“I knew a family involved in that crash,” Marquette answered quietly. “I would like to see their names.”

“I'm sorry,” John replied, taking a closer look at the carved stone. “Who were they?”

“The D'Annenci family,” Marquette answered. “And their mother, Sophia Pasquelucci.” He took a breath as his finger traced the names. “Here they are...Sergio, Zina, Conrad...” He swallowed hard, his eyes suddenly filling with tears.

John saw the overwhelming emotion in Marquette's eyes and put a friendly hand on his shoulder. “I'm sorry, Marquette.”

Marquette shook his head. “But her name is not here,” he whispered. He took a deep breath and looked at John. “Why is her name not here?”

“Whose name?”

“My Tara!” Marquette exclaimed in a whisper, his eyes going back to the wall, searching frantically. “Her name is not here and neither is the name of her grandmother, Sophia!”

“Who's Tara?” John asked with a frown...*Marq's never mentioned a Tara...what on earth is he talking about?*

“She was the love of my life,” Marquette replied with a suddenly elated smile. “She must still be alive!”

“Now, Marq,” John said, attempting to calm his friend, “this could just be a mistake —”

“No,” Marquette interrupted with a shake of his head. “This is no mistake. I have never been able to let go of her memory, even when I heard of her death. I could never bring myself to believe that she had left this world. *My Tara lives!*”

John watched Marquette search the names on the wall again. *The poor guy has finally lost it, he thought. This is some kind of stress-related battle fatigue left over from Vietnam, or Ponerello's curse has already kicked in.* “Marquette,” he said in a stern tone. “This is a mistake. Don't get worked up this way.”

Marquette turned to look at John, smiling as he said, “This will be an easy mystery for us, John. Let us find whoever compiled the list of fatalities. That person will know for sure.”

“It’s been twelve years since this crash,” John reminded him. “Whoever compiled the list will never remember who lived and who did not.”

“I *must* find out for myself,” Marquette insisted. “Please help me, John.”

John sighed heavily as he looked back into Marquette’s hopeful expression. “I don’t know, Marq...” he began.

“Please, John.”

John swallowed hard and slowly nodded.



The closest church to the crash site, St. Vincent’s, was within walking distance of the memorial. They noticed that the cornerstone was dated 1903, and once they’d made contact in the church office, were delighted to learn that it was indeed the church that had compiled the list of fatalities — as well as survivors.

“I am quite certain that the memorial wall is accurate,” the secretary assured Marquette politely.

John didn’t know a word of Italian, so he whispered to Marquette, “What did she say?”

“She believes the memorial wall to be accurate,” Marquette answered. He looked at the secretary, speaking Italian, “Please, *Signorina*, it is imperative that I see the actual lists. I believe that a missing loved one could be on your survivors’ list. If she is, I will attempt to find her.”

The secretary took a deep breath and began to nod. “Give me a moment,” she said. “Wait here and I will see what I can find.” With that she turned, her high heels clicking down the long hallway.

“Where did she go?” John asked.

“To find the list,” Marquette answered. He gave his head a nervous scratch and began to pace.

John’s stomach felt as if he were going over hills. *I find it hard to believe he ever had a girl*, he thought. *He’s so serious, so dedicated to our work — I never saw any sort of a sign that something was missing in his life.* He watched Marquette pace, noting the strained expression in his frown and the set of his jaw...*he’s like a different person...I’ve never seen this part of Marquette. The love of his life? How was he able to hide this from me?* “Why didn’t you ever mention Tara before?” he asked.

Marquette shrugged, answering as he paced, “I did not want you to misunderstand me...” He stopped pacing and looked at John, confessing, “I even keep a journal every day. *I write to her.* I was afraid that I was just a little crazy and hiding it very well.”

John looked at Marquette, thinking, *you write to a dead girl every day? You're not just a little crazy. My partner's nuts...where was my detective prowess on that one?* He sat down on a nearby bench, rubbing his temples with his fingertips, staring down at the floor. "Should we call your family, Marq?" he suggested.

Marquette shook his head. "They would never understand."

John glanced above his spectacles, studying Marquette as he said, "This isn't like you at all. Why *can't* we call your family?"

Marquette looked at John, narrowing his eyes as he studied his friend's face. "Why does that frighten you?" he asked.

"I don't know," John snapped. "It just does. You call your family before you change your socks in the morning. I can't imagine why you wouldn't call them now."

Marquette laughed out loud, alarming John even more. "Listen to me, my friend," he said with a smile. "I cannot explain what I am feeling, just that I am certain we will get information on my Tara and I will be with her once again!"

John wanted to argue with him, but couldn't find the words to even begin. High heeled shoes clicked in the hall, and they turned to see the secretary with a tattered folder in her hand.

"Both lists are in here," she said, handing the folder to Marquette. "The survivors, and there were only a handful, are listed at the top of the first page. You cannot take this file with you, you must read it here."

Marquette took a breath as he opened the file, explaining to John, "She says we must read it here." He suddenly closed the file and handed it to John. "Will you look for me? See if her name is not on that list — the list at the top of the first page is for the survivors."

John stood from his seat, taking the file from Marquette, quickly opening it, certain that the names Marquette sought would *not* be there. *Hopefully this will straighten him out and we can get back to work...but he's going to the Vet's hospital when we get home.* He scanned the short list of survivors, taking a sharp breath when he saw Tara's name.

"What is it, my friend?" Marquette asked. "Is she *not* there after all?"

"She's here," John whispered, amazed, his eyes glued to the list. "And so is Sophia Pasquelucci." He handed Marquette the list. "Good news, especially for me. You're not crazy after all."

Marquette stared at the names on the list, feeling his legs go weak. He slumped into the bench. Glancing up at the secretary he asked, "Who compiled this list?"

"Father Stefano Gabanelli," she answered, looking at Marquette with concern. "Are you all right, sir?"

Marquette nodded and asked, "Where can I find Father Gabanelli?"

“I do not know,” she answered. “He was gone from this parish when I began my employ here ten years ago.”

“Is there a record of transfer?” Marquette asked.

The secretary shook her head. “There was a fire here shortly after the crash and very few records were saved. All of our transfer records were completely destroyed, as were our birth records. That file is all that remains of our death records prior to the crash — and it was delivered here by a secret messenger in 1964.”

Marquette raised an eyebrow...*secret messenger?*

“What’s happening, Marq?” John asked quietly.

“She says that Father Gabanelli compiled this list, however, she does not know his whereabouts because of a fire that destroyed pertinent records,” Marquette answered, frowning. “And the only reason for this particular record’s existence is that it was delivered by a *secret messenger* in 1964.”

“Wow,” John replied dryly. “Church intrigue.” He smiled with confidence and said, “Well, I bet I know somebody who can help us, secrets and all. Get up, Marquette, and tell this woman thank you, so that we can be on our way.”

Marquette smiled faintly, rising from his seat. He closed the file, handing it to the secretary as he said, “*Grazie,*” and he and John hurried out the door.



Chicago, Illinois, USA

Frank Bailey came home from World War II to his family’s business in 1945, just as he promised them he would. His beautiful Italian bride came along shortly thereafter.

Frank was now forty-eight years old and senior comptroller for Bailey Industries. All of his siblings worked there, and he also put his niece to work there after she finished college. She had an incredible propensity for mathematics, and Frank knew exactly where he could use her. She audited the vast set of books for Bailey Industries, tracking down thieves within the company from coast to coast.

Frank’s blond hair was thin on top now, his pale blue eyes lined by many smiles. He was tall and slender, and he wore black suits every day, giving most the appearance that he was a very serious person. However, it was his secretary that was serious enough for both of them.

Mrs. Charles was stern. Nothing escaped Frank Bailey’s very professional assistant. She kept her silver hair tightly drawn back at the base of her neck and tiny bifocals rested on her sharp nose. She always wore dark suits and sensible black shoes.

Mrs. Charles unfolded the World section of *The Chicago Times*, laying it out on her desk. She poured herself a cup of coffee, settling comfortably into her chair. Frank would arrive at the

office soon and she wanted to have a chance at the paper before it became part of the mess on his desk.

She read through the various articles, finding nothing of particular interest, until she turned the page, spying the photo of a man with a ponytail stepping into the back of a limousine. The caption read: “South Dakota Man Orchestrates Sicilian Capture.” She glanced at the article below, carefully sipping her coffee as she read. She nearly choked when she saw the name ‘Marquette Caselli.’ At that moment, the door to the office opened and in walked Frank.

“Good morning, Mrs. Charles,” he said with a smile, removing his black hat, hanging it on the rack by the door.

Mrs. Charles’ eyes were big and round as she stared at her boss, trying to make words come out of her hanging-open mouth. *I’ve found him!* was all that she could think, yet couldn’t form a single syllable. The boy that Frank and his niece had searched for was right there in the paper.

Frank laughed at the expression in his seemingly astonished secretary’s eyes, teasing, “Whatsamatter? Cat got your tongue?”

She shook her head slowly, closing her mouth, putting a shaky finger on Marquette’s photo. “Frank, look at this,” she whispered.

Frank smiled as he walked to Mrs. Charles’ desk. He glanced down at the photo she pointed at, frowning as he began to read the article. “Marquette Caselli...” he whispered, staring in astonishment...*Marquette Caselli, it can’t be!* Poor Tara could only say that name with tears and regret. They’d searched for the young man for eleven years, finally making the decision only last year to stop, hoping to end Tara’s agony, so she could begin a new life without him.

“John was with him,” Mrs. Charles said quietly, continuing to skim through the article.

“He lives in D.C.,” Frank murmured. “Wonder if his mother’s still alive.”

“Says here his parents live in Sioux Falls, South Dakota,” Mrs. Charles replied.

Frank continued reading aloud, ““after emigrating from Italy in 1956, where they have remained. Marquette’s father Guiseppi Caselli was prompted to make the move by his brother, Angelo Caselli, who served with General Miller in the Apennines...” Frank’s voice trailed off as he finished scanning the article.

“We were looking in the wrong place,” Mrs. Charles said.

“I see that...but all of the information I received said that General Miller was from Colorado.”

“Says here he owned land in Centerville, South Dakota, at the time he sponsored Angelo,” Mrs. Charles added, reading from the article. ““which he bequeathed to Angelo Caselli when he died. Vincenzo Caselli, Angelo’s nephew, and his wife, Kate Martin Caselli, were left the land when Angelo passed away in 1964.” She looked up at Frank. “Do you think we should call them?”

A thoughtful frown spread across Frank's brow as he answered, "I don't know. Why didn't Marquette look for Tara? Surely he must have found out by now that she survived the crash."

"Oh, poo!" Mrs. Charles admonished. "That deceitful bunch back in Italy probably never told him!"

"Oh, Mrs. Charles," Frank argued politely, "they lived and died for one another. I can't imagine that the Andreottis wouldn't tell Marquette that his beloved Tara was still alive."

"Well they sure didn't tell *us* where Marquette was, now did they?" she retorted. "They left us to flounder around Colorado and the surrounding areas —"

"It's been twelve years," Frank interrupted. "Perhaps he's no longer interested. They were very young and a young man's heart can be fickle."

Mrs. Charles tapped the article with her index finger as she replied, "Says here that Mr. Caselli is unmarried."

Frank took a thoughtful breath and nodded. "Give John Peters' liaison a call. Maybe she can get a hold of him and have him call us."

Mrs. Charles reached for her Rolodex, quickly thumbing through it as she murmured, "I know I saved John's card the last time he was in —"

"And remember?" Frank interrupted. "He was talking about his partner —"

"Marq," Mrs. Charles finished. "Oh my goodness, Frank, he's known Marquette the *entire* time. Why didn't we ever call him for help?"

"Because he was always busy," Frank reminded.

Mrs. Charles nodded, finding the card. She quickly picked up her telephone and dialed the number. Within a matter of minutes, the connection was made. Mrs. Charles swallowed away her nerves as she blurted, "Hello, Phyllis. I need the name of that boy — I mean *that man* — you know the one?"

Phyllis laughed and asked, "What man?"

Mrs. Charles cleared her throat, speaking more professionally she said, "The man who works with Mr. Peters. I need to contact him."

"Marquette Caselli," Phyllis answered, and Mrs. Charles heard some papers rustle in the background. "They're currently in Rome."

"Mr. Bailey needs his number in Rome," Mrs. Charles stated.

"Alrighty then," Phyllis answered. "You guys must have a big one."

"Oh we do," Mrs. Charles replied. "Biggest one ever."

Phyllis located the number and gave it to Mrs. Charles, who wrote it down on her steno pad.

“Thanks, Phyllis, you’re a lifesaver,” Mrs. Charles said, hanging up the phone. She tore the number from her pad and handed it to Frank.

Frank held the number in his hand, looking down at it for a very long time.

“What’s wrong, Frank?” she questioned.

Frank shook his head. “I can’t believe it. We looked for so long and now here it is, right in my hands.”



John contacted his old friend at Santa Susanna, who knew a clerk in the central registrar’s office of transfers. Through the clerk, John and Marquette learned that Father Gabanelli had been promoted to bishop in 1956, shortly after the train crash, and then to archbishop in 1960. In 1964, Pope Paul VI appointed him cardinal, and he transferred into Vatican City.

Through John’s friend, Marquette and John were allowed into the Vatican, but only as far as a waiting chamber. A young guard stayed behind to watch them, while another went to ask Cardinal Gabanelli if he would have visitors. Soon, the other guard reappeared.

“The cardinal will see Mr. Caselli and Mr. Peters,” he said. “Please follow me.”

The young guard led them to the cardinal’s chamber, where they were presented to an old man, heavily draped in crimson robes, and securely bound in a wheelchair. He could not rise to greet his guests, but offered them a feeble wave and faint smile.

Marquette shook his head in dismay. The man before them was extremely aged, and he wondered what, if anything, the cardinal would remember about the crash survivors. The bit of hair showing on the sides of his head was white against his red cap. His face was deeply furrowed with wrinkles, and his black eyes were shadowed with bushy, white brows. His sunken mouth and jaw made obvious his lack of teeth.

“Cardinal Gabanelli,” John said, kneeling on his left knee, kissing his ring. He stood up, moving aside for Marquette.

Marquette frowned at John’s odd greeting, but submitted and did the same.

“I’m John Peters,” he introduced. “This is my associate, Marquette Caselli.”

The old cardinal nodded, studying the two of them in silence. When he finally spoke, his voice was weak, his English heavily accented as he said, “I *almost* did not see you this day...” he hesitated, looking at Marquette. “You are *Italiano*, and of some reputation I understand.”

Marquette nodded, producing a photograph of Tara, handing it to the cardinal. “Cardinal Gabanelli,” he began. “I am here to ask you some questions about the train crash in *Roma*.”

“1956,” the cardinal murmured, taking the photograph into his shaky hands.

“Yes,” Marquette replied. “We understand that you compiled the list of survivors. I am looking for two ladies —”

“We pulled only five from the crash that day,” the cardinal blurted, looking intently into the photograph. He slowly nodded his head as he said, “There was an older woman with her. She asked me not to tell anyone that they had survived.” Marquette gasped, and the cardinal looked into his hopeful eyes.

“Why?” John questioned, his heart beating in his throat.

The cardinal looked back at the photo, explaining, “She told me that a man and his son would come looking for them and I was to tell them I did not recall ever seeing them.”

“Did the man and his son come?” Marquette asked.

The cardinal swallowed hard, answering, “They came...” he hesitated as he looked at Marquette. “Dear son, I prayed for wisdom. I did not want to lie to them, but I hid the list of survivors and told them that I did not recall ever seeing an old woman and a girl. They visited me several times, determined to find the truth, but the last time they came, I called the police to take them away. The boy cried bitterly and my heart broke for him.”

Marquette’s emotions surged within him. “Where did they go after the crash?” he asked.

Cardinal Gabanelli shook his head, answering, “I helped the woman make several calls to the United States. She would not tell me where she was calling or whom she had reached. I hid her and the girl in my apartment for two weeks, and when the time came, I took them to *Napoli*, where the woman said that she had made arrangements to board a ship owned by a wealthy businessman in the United States who had agreed to pay their way.”

“The man and his son,” John questioned. “Do you know their name?”

“Andreotti,” the cardinal answered.

Marquette’s eyes were wide with surprise, obviously overwhelmed with the information that he had just received.

The cardinal reached for Marquette’s hand and said, “She was very beautiful.” Marquette looked down at the cardinal, watching tears suddenly well in his eyes as he continued, “She did not belong with that boy, and somehow I knew it...what will you do with this information?”

“I will try to find her,” Marquette answered. “There are no other choices for me but to find my Tara.”

The cardinal nodded, took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He turned his face upward, whispering his prayers in Latin. When he finished, he looked intently at Marquette and said, “Go. Find her as quickly as you can.”

“I will, Cardinal Gabanelli,” Marquette replied, stooping to kiss the cardinal’s cheeks as he often kissed his own father and siblings. “Thank you so much. You cannot possibly imagine what this means to me.”

The cardinal smiled tiredly as he said, “To be without the love of your life would be a life of emptiness. For me it would mean being without God. I will pray that He guides your footsteps to her.”

Before John and Marquette went back to their hotel, Marquette insisted that they stop at a church to spend some time in prayer. John had never been a “religious” person, but Marquette was so distressed, and had had several troubling days in a row. It all seemed to begin with Ponerello’s great curse, and now the thing with Tara.

John waited patiently in the pew while Marquette went to the front of the sanctuary, where he knelt for an hour, praying in Italian, weeping until his shoulders shook. John was uncomfortable, to say the least, as he’d never seen a man behave in such a way.

After that, they returned to their hotel and ordered dinner to be served in their room. John was nearly finished with his steak before he worked up the courage to speak.

“So they went to America,” he said. “Who do they know in America?”

Marquette had wolfed down his food and was working on the *caffé* John didn’t want to finish. He set down his cup answering, “Tara has an aunt there — but I have never known the city...never cared until now. I am certain that is where they went.”

“Hmm...so how old were the two of you when you were separated?” John asked.

“We were both fifteen years.”

“Kinda young, weren’t ya?” John remarked

Marquette shrugged. “Marriages at that time could take place at the age of consent, which was sixteen. We had only a few months left to wait.” He got to his feet and walked to the balcony, gazing down into the city below them. “I promised her I would keep a journal of every day of my life until we were together again, and I could never bring myself to stop writing to her.”

John raised his eyebrows in surprise, murmuring, “I really can’t believe you never mentioned any of this, Marq. And now you’re both twenty-seven years old. What if she’s changed her mind about you?”

Marquette shrugged again, turning from the window. He smiled faintly as he said, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His* purpose.”

John stared back at Marquette. He was always slipping in Bible verses here and there, consistently sharing what he called the “Good News.” For the most part, John had grown accustomed to his partner’s subtle preaching, but tonight was very different. There was something in Marquette’s tone and demeanor that made John ask, “How do you know that there’s a God in heaven, Marquette?”

“Because He put it inside of me to know,” Marquette answered, placing his hand over his heart. “And I know He dwells within me because I asked Him to.”

“Because you believed yourself a sinner and asked Jesus for forgiveness?” John asked, repeating the message Marquette had given for the past eight years that they’d worked together.

Marquette nodded with a small smile. “Certainly you know the message by now, my friend. My Jesus died for you as well as he died for me so that all of us who believe could live forever.”

John nodded in understanding.

“You must make a decision, my friend,” Marquette reminded, as he had several times in the past. “I wish nothing more than for you to share eternity with me.”

John nodded again, promising, “I’ll make a decision here one of these days.” He grinned at Marquette, adding, “But right now we gotta put our heads together and find your Tara — how ’bout this Andreotti character? Do you think he knows where she is?”

Marquette frowned. “Recall, John, that you met Luigi Andreotti while we were in Chicago eight years ago — ”

“Our layover after we solved the Markelle case,” John blurted. He raised a brow, adding, “He couldn’t get away from us fast enough — do you suppose he had Tara there with him?”

“Yes, I *do* suppose,” Marquette replied, his eyes wide with realization.

“But why wouldn’t he tell you that he had her there?” John questioned. “In fact, why the big deception about whether she lived or died in that crash?”

“Well...” Marquette sighed heavily, putting his hands into his pants pockets, clinking the change. “There is one little matter I have left out of the details.” He paused, looking at John with a sly smile.

“And that would be...” John coaxed.

Marquette took a deep breath, explaining, “My Tara was promised to Luigi.”

John’s eyes were huge with surprise. “You mean an arranged marriage? People really do that?”

Marquette nodded. “Yes, my friend, people really do that. And since Tara was not at the age of consent, which is sixteen, tradition was that she had to marry Luigi upon the death of her father.”

“Whoa,” John muttered, shaking his head in disbelief.

“It is how we took care of one another in the valley,” Marquette continued. “A nonsensical rule of tradition that I want to make perfectly clear I would *never* consent or submit to.”

“But Luigi would?” John questioned.

Marquette nodded. “For he loved Tara nearly as much as I.”

“Wow, she must really be somethin’.”

Marquette chuckled. “Oh, yes, she is really something, John. I cannot wait for you to meet her.”

John got up from his chair, collected his billfold from the dresser and eased it into his pocket.

“Where are you going, my friend?” Marquette asked.

“To visit with the concierge,” John answered. “I’m gonna see if he can help us get a couple of tickets to O’Hare tonight. You get your stuff packed up and I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

“But Chicago is a very big place,” Marquette pointed out. “It will be difficult to locate her there. Where will we even begin?”

“We’ll start with the phonebook.”



John got them seats on a tiny, private jet that took them from *Roma* to *Milano*. They would then take a commercial jet from *Milano* to Amsterdam, finally connecting with a flight that would take them directly to Chicago.

Though it was nearly two a.m. when they boarded their flight in *Milano*, and they were exhausted, neither could sleep because of the turbulence over the Alps.

“So,” John began with a yawn, “why would Tara’s grandmother want to hide her away and why didn’t they call you when they had reached America?”

Marquette stretched his long legs comfortably out in front of him, answering, “I would like to believe that Sophia tried to hide Tara from Luigi. And as far as not contacting me when they reached America, that is because the crash took place before any of my letters reached Tara. We were moving to America and were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean when the train crashed in Roma. When I arrived in Sioux Falls, I began to write to Tara immediately with my new address — but she was already gone.”

“But Luigi must have found her,” John reminded. “How would he know where to look?”

“My number one guess is Pietro,” Marquette answered. “He runs the local supply store and mail office near *Castellina* there in *Chianti*, where we all lived at one time — and where the Andreottis have resided for many generations. If Tara’s aunt, who came to America shortly after World War II, mailed her any letters *before* the crash, Pietro would have intercepted them and taken the return address directly to the Andreottis.”

John frowned. “Why would he be so loyal to *that* family, rather than yours?”

“He is married to Luigi’s sister, Marsala,” Marquette answered. “And I am told that when he was young, he wanted Tara’s aunt, Claretta, for his bride, but an American soldier came along during the war, swept her off her feet, and took her to America.”

John’s heart stumbled as the familiarity of the story rang in his ears. “*Where in America?*” he asked.

“I told you...I do not know, and never cared until this moment,” Marquette answered, yawning and rubbing his forehead.

“What was the name of the soldier?” John asked.

“We called him Frankie,” Marquette answered, smiling at his memories. “I was very small when Frankie came to us, but I remember his kindness. Apparently he was hurt in battle while our fathers were away and he stayed with us until he was well again.”

John chuckled and shook his head. “Marq, you’re never gonna believe this, but I have this friend named Frank, and he’s always talking about his service in Italy, and that he was shot up over there and his wife’s family patched him back together. His wife’s name is Claretta.”

Marquette’s mouth fell open in surprise. “John...” he whispered, unable to say anything else.

John nodded. “Frank lives in Chicago, Marquette. We’ll go see him first thing.”



When Frank called Rome, he learned that John and Marquette had already departed the hotel. It was too late to contact their liaison in D.C., so Frank was forced to wait until the next day before he could gather any further information. He was waiting in the chair at Mrs. Charles’ desk when she came in the next morning.

“You gotta call that woman in D.C.,” he said quickly, getting to his feet, rushing to close the door behind Mrs. Charles.

“What on earth for?” she asked, untying her scarf.

“I can’t make heads or tails of that Rolodex of yours,” he explained. “And Marquette and John left the hotel in Rome last night.” He took Mrs. Charles by the elbow, escorting her to her desk. “Now, just call that woman, or give me her number.”

Mrs. Charles flipped quickly through the Rolodex, reaching for the phone at the same time. It wasn’t long before the connection was made and Frank listened to the other end of the conversation.

“I’m sorry,” Phyllis said. “They didn’t notify me that they were leaving the hotel already...and sometimes they’re like that. They just pick up and follow a clue without telling anyone. I guess I could call John’s wife. Perhaps she might know where they went.”

“Yes, please do that,” Mrs. Charles replied. “Call me back as soon as you can.” They hung up and she saw Frank’s disappointed expression. “She’ll call us back,” she said, finishing the removal of her scarf.

“I shouldn’t have hesitated,” Frank lamented. “I was just so unsure.” His shoulders slumped as he sighed, making his way to his office.

“At least we know how to reach him now,” Mrs. Charles encouraged.

Frank nodded his head as he went into his office, closing the door.



John and Marquette hurried a cab driver through the busy streets of Chicago, heading for the Bailey Industries Building on LaSalle Street.

“I hope I do not become sick,” Marquette murmured as the taxi jostled along. “I am so nervous. Never before have I felt like this. Perhaps I will faint.”

John laughed, but it wasn’t his normal hardy expression of humor — it sounded more distressed than anything. “Don’t faint, Marq,” he said.

The cab came to an abrupt stop and John handed the driver a fistful of cash as he and Marquette scrambled from the car. “Keep the change!” he yelled over his shoulder as they rushed for the building.

Once inside Bailey Industries Building, they spied a directory between two elevators, and hurried over.

“Let’s see…” John muttered, his finger going over several lines on the directory, looking for Frank’s name. “There!” he exclaimed. “Seventh floor.”

The elevator opened at that moment and the two of them stepped inside. The young lady operator asked, “What floor, please?”

“Seven,” Marquette answered with a smile.

She nodded, closed the heavy doors, and turned the crank.

As they felt the elevator moving beneath them, Marquette suddenly grabbed John’s arm, whispering, “I think I am fainting after all.”

John rolled his eyes. “Okay, let’s just forget about this then. Let’s just go.”

Marquette shook his head. “Let us continue…but I am afraid.”

The elevator stopped and the operator opened the door. Marquette and John paused in the doorway, looking into the magnificent lobby. John gave Marquette a soft shove out the door, stepping out behind him.

In the center of the lobby was a circular desk, occupied by one woman with a headset.

“The receptionist,” John said, starting in her direction.

“May I help you?” she asked.

“Frank Bailey, please,” John requested.

“Do you have an appointment?” she asked, looking the two of them over. By now they’d journeyed several thousand miles in less than twenty-four hours. Their shirts and slacks were crumpled and their faces unshaven.

“Yes,” Marquette lied, flashing a most charming smile, laying down one of his business cards. “John Peters and Marquette Caselli at your service, *Signorina*.”

John followed Marquette’s cue and laid down one of his cards as well, following with a hopeful smile.

The receptionist narrowed her eyes, looking suspicious as she said, “One moment, please.” She dialed a number on her switchboard.

Mrs. Charles picked up the phone on the first ring, praying that it was finally Phyllis returning her call.

“Mrs. Charles,” the receptionist began. “I have two gentlemen here that claim to have an appointment with Mr. Bailey.” She paused. “Marquette Caselli and John Peters?”

Mrs. Charles felt her mouth go dry as speechlessness grabbed a tight hold of her throat.

“Mrs. Charles,” the receptionist said. “Are you still there?”

Mrs. Charles nodded, attempting to clear her throat. “Send them in,” she blurted, hanging up the phone. She lurched out of her chair, barging into Frank’s office, leaving his door hanging wide open.

Frank was sitting on the window sill behind his desk, eyes closed, obviously deep in prayer. When he heard the commotion in his office, he opened his eyes and looked at Mrs. Charles. “Yes?” he said.

“He...he’s here,” she whispered, clearing her throat again.

“Pardon?” Frank said.

“Marquette and John are here,” she said, aloud this time.

At that moment, the door to the outer office opened and the two disheveled travelers walked in. Frank squinted, recognizing John immediately, and then his eyes looked upon Marquette.

“Oh my dear Lord,” Frank whispered, sliding off the sill to greet them.

“Frank,” John smiled, extending his hand in greeting. “I know this is unexpected.”

Frank took John's hand in a fairly weak shake as he replied, "You have no idea." He swallowed hard, but his voice began to tremble as he continued, "I've been looking for the two of you since yesterday."

John raised an eyebrow and looked at Marquette, who only smiled and shrugged.

"Yesterday's paper," Mrs. Charles said, unable to take her eyes off of the handsome Italian. She smiled and nodded with approval. "My goodness, Frank, what will she think of that ponytail?"

Marquette extended his hand to Mrs. Charles. "How do you do?"

Mrs. Charles took his hand, but was pleasantly surprised when Marquette lifted it gently to his lips and gave it a soft kiss. "Rebecca Charles," she murmured through a grin. "And you must be Marquette."

"We're actually here about your niece," John interjected, looking at Frank, noticing his surprised expression. "You see, Frank, Marq and I were talking on our flight from Milan —"

"*Milano*," Marquette politely corrected, smiling.

"Yes, *Milano*," John began again. "And the funniest thing happened along the way —"

"I tried to reach you," Frank interrupted. "I called the hotel in *Roma* yesterday, but you had already left."

"Why?" Marquette asked.

Frank had to swallow away his emotions before he could speak. "Tara has an office just down the hall from me," he said, his voice trembling. "I'd like you to see her."

Marquette's feet suddenly felt like lead, seemingly frozen to the spot where he stood. *Go see her? Now?* Marquette stared at Frank, thinking perhaps he'd be sick. "Does she know about me?" he asked.

Frank shook his head and answered, "I wasn't sure how to handle this, Mr. Caselli. I wasn't sure how you'd react or what you'd say." He paused to clear his throat, continuing, "I want you to know that we've looked for you for many years."

"She wanted to find me?" Marquette questioned.

"You're all she's talked about since she was a kid," Frank replied. "She would never date, and the best have tried, but she held out for you."

Marquette felt sudden tears dropping from his eyes, and he quickly wiped them away, laughing nervously. "I *will* faint now, John," he said, staggering backwards to lean against the wall where John stood. John put a strong hand on Marquette's shoulder, steadying him.

"How long have you known about Marq?" John asked.

"Just yesterday," Mrs. Charles blurted. "We saw your picture in the paper yesterday."

Marquette nodded. He suddenly threw his arms around John, holding him tightly. “What shall I do?” he whispered, taking a deep breath. He let go of John and fished a handkerchief from his pocket. “I cannot see her like *this*,” he murmured, laughing nervously again as he wiped his eyes.

“Well, you’ve looked better,” John commented dryly, and Mrs. Charles laughed nervously.

“Her office is right this way,” Frank said, heading for the hall.

Marquette watched Frank leave through the open door, hesitating as he looked at John.

“Come on,” John said, giving Marquette a shove. “This is why we’re here.”

Marquette took a deep breath and forced himself to follow Frank. John fell in behind them.

“Incidentally, she does the same thing that you do, only on a smaller scale,” Frank said as they walked down the hall, stopping to knock on a door. He waited only a second before walking in.

An elderly woman was sitting at a desk and she smiled at Frank. “Good morning, Mr. Bailey,” she said, glancing at Marquette and John. “What can we do for you today?”

“Is Tara in her office?” he asked as he strode toward the closed office door, resting his hand on the knob.

“She’s on a very important call,” she replied.

“Thanks,” Frank acknowledged, opening the door. He reached for Marquette, pushing him into the office ahead of him. He and John followed.

Near the windows overlooking the city stood a woman on the phone. Her back was to them, but she turned slowly to see what had caused the commotion in her office. She gasped, nearly dropping the phone when she saw them. “I will call you right back,” she whispered, placing the phone into its cradle. Her petite body was dressed in a straight white skirt with a matching jacket, a pale blue scarf tied at her neck. Her wavy, black hair fell gently on her shoulders, and her soft, dark eyes began to shine with tears.

“Oh, my,” Marquette whispered, unable to take his eyes off of her. “It really *is* you.” His voice trembled with emotion as he said, “I have thought of you every day since we parted.” He walked across the small office, reaching for her hand.

She took his hand into her own, looking into his handsome eyes. “Marquette?” she breathed.

He nodded, folding her into his arms, holding her as tightly as he could. “I have loved you every moment,” he whispered into her hair. “Would you please marry me?”

“I will marry you, Marquette,” she answered, beginning to cry.

“Now hold on you two,” Frank said, stepping into the room. “You’ve been reacquainted for nearly thirty seconds. We have to get blessings. Nonna Pasquelucci has authority here, and Mr. Caselli needs to call his parents.”

Marquette and Tara laughed through their tears. “You are right,” Marquette agreed. “I will call my parents immediately, and then we will ask Nonna Pasquelucci for Tara’s hand.”

“I can’t imagine there’s gonna be a problem,” Frank said, getting out his handkerchief to dry his tears. “You can call your family from here and then we’ll go over and see Nonna and Claretta.” He paused to look at the two of them for a moment, feeling his tears begin again. “I’m so happy for you.”

“Thank you, Uncle Frank,” Tara said, putting her arms around her uncle. “My life will be so wonderful now.”

John watched the dramatic scene with a lump in his throat. He took off his spectacles and dried his tears with his handkerchief. *Thank you, Jesus,* he thought. *Please forgive me for not believing and forgive me for my other sins. Please dwell in my heart so that I’ll see You...and Marquette, in eternity....*