

but deep down there was emptiness, and aloneness that engulfed me at times to tears. Was it the same loneliness that made her believe in fairies?

One day, as she returned from playing at the village playground she asked me, "Mummy, why don't I have a daddy? Raju and Veena have a daddy, and so does Gita."

I had over the years rehearsed this question which I knew she would one day ask. But when she did I didn't know what to tell her. How was I to tell a six year old that her daddy had abandoned her before she was born and that her grandparents had disowned them? Could I tell her all those? I had thought of answers that were truthful, without being hurtful.

"Tina, darling, you do have a daddy, but daddy had to go away from us." I told.

"Why?" she asked.

I realized, I could not tell her the truth. Nevertheless I consoled her, "Lots of young girls have only mummy, darling. And you know that I love you very much. I am your daddy and mummy."

"Then my daddy is never coming back?"

"That's right darling. He's never coming back. But you have me, for ever and ever."

Tina looked very sad. She sat quietly on my lap. I hugged her tight, knowing she was hurt just as much as I was. What could I do?

Her magical friends continued to be her constant companions. she would religiously leave a saucer of milk near the rose bush each evening. One evening she came up to me in great excitement.

"Mummy, today I asked the fairy queen to get me a daddy."

I laughed at her silliness. How innocent a child can be, living in a dream world. She was skipping with joy.

"You know what? The fairy queen told me she would give me a daddy if we could make a dress and a silver crown"

## EXODUS

- Monica Di Santi, US A

Love was all that counted for fifteen year-old Teresa. She dreamt of a man who would be with her through thick and thin, and of a paradise far away from the hideous surroundings where she lived.

"Mamma," Teresa pleaded. "Let me go. My friends are leaving. Some have already left. There I can start a new life."

The war had just ended. Italy's economy was shattered like those of other European countries. Ruin, poverty, crime and social depression were seen everywhere. Rumors spread like wild fire about faraway lands with extraordinary natural resources, plenty of food to eat and ever so many easy ways of becoming rich.

"You're too young to go by yourself. I can't come with you," answered Maria.

Maria knew most people in the little town of Sorono were leaving for America. Even her friends and relations have left. Being a widow with a weak heart, she didn't dare to undertake such a long and hard journey. She knew it was a risky adventure.

As days and months passed Maria's health deteriorated. She became bed-ridden. She knew her daughter would stay with her till she breathed last. But what would happen to her after her demise? Who would care for her? She got worried. She reasoned and prayed.

"Teresa, I've made a decision," Maria announced. "I'm dying, I want you settled before I close my eyes. I'll let you go to America if you get married before your departure."

"Mamma, I can't leave you now. You're badly sick and you need me."

"Don't care too much about me. I'll be all right here in a hospital."

Maria panted. A tint of purplish-blue covered her lips.

"Relax, Mamma. We can speak about this later on."

Maria breathed deeply and said, "Dear Teresa, I know I'll die very soon. Please listen to me. You should get married and then go. Then I can go in peace"

With best compliments from



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