

## He Healed her; “ Broken Heart”

By Gina lafrate

The Christmas holidays were just over; the New Year had rolled around. It was a cold and misty January morning in 1950, as a new chapter was beginning in three women’s lives. Young Angelica accompanied by her mother Gloria and little sister Stefania had boarded the Andrea Doria in Naples, Italy. They were bound for a stopover in New York City, then on to their destination in Niagara, Canada. Her dad was eagerly awaiting their arrival and the family would be reunited after a long separation, ready to start a new life there.

Angelica’s mom wanted a father figure for her two daughters, especially for Angelica. She was a petite girl, of medium stature, with light brown hair and brown eyes. She was born with a pretty face and good features. Her demeanor was docile, and approachable; the boys were showing interest in her. This was the main reason Gloria, her mother, was concerned and wanted the family together to share the responsibility of raising a family with her husband. Gloria herself was by nature shy, but she had no trouble enforcing her rules. She would put a lot of responsibility on the fifteen-year-old Angelica, including looking after her little sister Stefania. In the meantime, when it came to stronger discipline, this was for her husband to implement.

As much as Angelica wanted to be reunited with her dad and be with her family, this transition in her life was devastating. She was madly in love. Mother’s decision was putting an enormous distance between her and the love of her life. She had left behind a seventeen-year-old boy without letting him know of her whereabouts or knowledge of her new address. Communication between the two had been forbidden by her mother, which did not bode well for the relationship. As a result Angelica had been traveling with great sadness in her heart, and a somber soul. She had been taken away from the love of her life by her imposing mother. Her friends had been left behind, plus the love she nurtured for this young man would, in time, be erased forever. Her life would be more difficult when she left her native land, but even if she had continued to live in Italy, her professed love had to end.

She was not excited by what was taking place. In her mind there was little desire to settle in Canada. Knowing this voyage and emigration was sure to be a temporary move, she intended to be here a short period of time and then return to her city. There she would reunite with her Joseph and spend the rest of her life with the young man she had left behind. Although this had all been forbidden, her dream was to find a way to return and search for her lost love.

Once the family was settled in Niagara, Angelica continued to nurture her melancholy feelings. She rarely laughed or took part in family occasions, because the craving in her heart was incessant. Her passion was reading, and going to school and learning. She had quickly been enrolled in a private school run by the nuns, and began hibernating in her room with her books. That was how she spent her free time. The person she longed for and wanted to be with was across the ocean. Therefore she was spending a lot of time dreaming of the impossible dream that someday she would find herself in the arms of her beloved Joseph, and life for them would be happy ever after.

In the fifties there were no computers, or easy communication like today. Money was scarce, as her family barely made enough to pay the bills. There were no plans to return to Italy anytime soon, and the only people that were left there were her grandparents. But they had both passed on not long after the family's departure. The two elderly people missed the family so much; they could not cope with the void that was left by the grandchildren's departure and an empty nest. A cardiac arrest had taken her grandfather, Angelo, and a month later her grandmother Giovina gave in to the same fate. Angelica knew they had died of a broken heart. Their love had had a strong presence in her heart, because they were her protectors and saviors, but now they were gone. The other relatives had their own children to worry about, no room for other siblings with young silly intentions, especially looking for a young boy who was not accepted by her mother.

Angelica's dream was only an unrealistic reverie. The Atlantic Ocean dividing the two continents was an immense body of water. A trip by air was expensive, not even possible. It was not permissible for a sixteen-year-old girl to go anywhere alone in those days. Besides, her dad would never permit it. Angelica belonged to a strict Catholic Italian family. You obeyed and lived by their rules. She felt trapped with no hope. Angelica's social life was limited, consisting of attending school and church services, and the Sunday afternoon family sightseeing excursions. She could only resign herself to her fate and make the best of the situation.

It was at one of the church functions that life changed for Angelica. The Catholic group was putting together some plays on the stage to entertain the members of the congregation. Angelica became a member and started to participate on stage; this was allowed by her dad and it was something the entire family could enjoy.

These plays were well-attended, because a lot of young people were in the cast, and it attracted a crowd of all ages, including some of the city's available bachelors who found their way into the church

auditorium when they weren't working or going to school.

Angelica was exposed on the stage, both heard and seen. This was a small community, it did not take long to be known and she was well received. This is where it all began. The performances and her participation in the Catholic group brought some relief to Angelica, plus she made new friends. These friends helped to change her mood and gave her some motivation in her newfound interest in Canada. She started to venture out of her room more often, and left the dreaming and the longing for what she had across the sea in a sealed-off place in her heart.

Some young fellows that were among the group were showing Angelica their interest and good intentions, looking at her with admiration, desperately seeking her attention. She was showing no emotion or response. She was asking herself if she would ever get over this aching pain in her heart from the love she had left behind, across the ocean, without hope. He was always on her mind. The priests and the nuns from school had asked her if she would consider enrolling in the convent to become one of them and serve the house of God. Because of her disinterest, not wanting to get involved with male company, they thought it would be a good place for Angelica to serve a life in the mission. She suited her name well, because she possessed a loving face, showed profuse kindness in her eyes, and her demeanor did portray the image of an angel. She had no desire to dress up or groom herself with cosmetics, like the other girls in her class; she just presented herself in a very natural way. The teachers and the priests had already taken steps to send her to school in Hamilton, at St. Joseph hospital, where she could start her nursing career. She was going along with this since she had not much interest in anything else uplifting, but she liked to help people in need, and she would give of herself in any way she could. This might have not been a bad idea, because it would put her where she could be dedicated to the well being of others.

But call it fate or what was meant to be a new turn, one Sunday afternoon, after the church gathering, one of the boys invited a group of friends to his home for an afternoon of music and dancing, and included Angelica. She gracefully accepted, unlike other times when she would refuse, only to run home to her books and solitude. Two young men arrived at this gathering, they were not part of their group but they were invited. They introduced themselves as John and Luca as they were welcomed to participate in the festivities. Angelica loved music, and hoped it would lift her spirits. The songs played were of love and romance; the sweet music of the fifties placid and soothing. In some instances her mind would drift away, as the words from the songs would make her feel sad, and bring tears to her eyes. Many times these songs intensified her sorrow. She loved to dance back in her homeland with her cousins and

friends, but here she had not allowed herself that pleasure.

She had often questioned if her heart would ever open up and allow her to love another, since she had been so fixed on her old lost love.

Since this new young man had arrived, he seemed to have eyes only for Angelica, and she had noticed him and felt intrigued by him. She asked herself, What is my interest in this person? Before she had a chance for a second thought, the music started to play a lovely, slow but striking melody called; “Red Roses for You,” a romantic song that awakens the heart. This new young man Luca had crossed the room and was right beside her, tapping on her shoulder and asking her to dance, and to her surprise she accepted gladly. When dancing, she found she enjoyed being in this stranger’s arms, it felt warm and comfortable. She started to take inventory of him, noting he was well dressed, well spoken, had beautiful big eyes with long lashes; his black hair slicked back, he was of a normal stature, of medium height and well-polished. In the little conversation they had while dancing, she also noticed that he spoke with good grammar, which was gratifying to hear. Most of all he had awakened an interest, and some feelings in her deadened body, and dancing with him simply felt good. She also felt that the feeling was mutual, because if someone else asked her to dance, he would simply sit and wait. He chose to dance only with her. The young man had left an impression on her that lingered for the rest of the evening.

Finally a little spark of fire and some happiness seemed to have struck a nerve. She sincerely wanted to talk to her mother now to tell her all about her new experience and her new acquaintance. Although her mom had caused her misery, she still respected her and loved her. Deep down she figured that Mom wanted only the best for her, because she always praised her and boosted her self-esteem. She constantly reminded Angelica how both she and her dad were proud of her. She felt their love was sincere, and therefore she could not hate her mother or resent her for what she had done. She went to sleep that night thinking of this fellow, that she would not mind seeing him again, to spend some time with him, and had told her mother, “Mom, I have met the fellow I am going to marry.” This was so strange, she thought, why would I even consider or make such a statement? I do not want or desire anyone other than my Joseph. A spell seemed to be cast over Angelica.

To her surprise Luca did not call, and although he had not asked for her phone number, he knew her name and could have looked it up in the phone book. Months passed and Angelica put this young Luca at the back of her mind, with not much care or value to that encounter. I guess I was wrong, she thought, and continued her life with the church outings. The old misery resumed its home in her heart. Several months

later at one of the church feast celebrations, she ran into this young man again. Angelica did not care one way or the other, her affect was carefree and nonchalant, and by now whatever had taken place earlier had dissipated. She had settled back into her old pattern of sadness and was comfortable there. The very next day the phone rang; to her surprise, he was at the other end of the phone, imploring her to please see him. Angelica still had to run such things by her family, as she was not at liberty to come and go as she pleased. She needed permission, but this young man was insistent in his demands. Although she did not care one way or the other, again she questioned why he had not called since they had met. How could she have been wrong? Almost indignant, Angelica was motivated to meet this fellow to find out what had caused his delay in calling her. A force stronger than her seemed to guide her toward his direction. A date was set for a Sunday afternoon. Poor Angelica, she did not possess a large wardrobe and only had two pairs of shoes: one for everyday wear, and one pair of white summer sandals to dress up with. On her way walking to church that morning one of the heels had broken, and here she was to go on a date with broken shoes. Her little spark of desire to look good turned this into another dilemma.

A nice English lady, Mrs. Jennings, lived next door. She liked Angelica and they often chatted. She was petite, a pretty woman, with a great sense of humor, and often sympathized with Angelica's lack of wardrobe or other necessary needs. Mrs. Jennings every now and then would offer her some of her surplus. She decided that she needed to go pay a visit to the neighbor and explain her problem. Mrs. Jennings happily came to her aid with a big smile on her face; she had no trouble finding a white pair of sandals for Angelica to wear since they wore the same size. Her only Sunday dress came together in perfect completion with the borrowed shoes. Usually Angelica managed to get herself together with her few possessions, pulling her golden brown hair back in a ponytail, the curled bangs adorning her forehead, her big brown eyes sparkling with radiance. She was a beautiful girl by nature, so with a smile on her face she went to meet the new young man that had found his way into her life.

A new beginning had appeared, Luca had come along to heal her broken heart. This Sunday afternoon meeting consisted of a pleasant sight-seeing drive, as they stopped for an ice cream cone and a soft drink, and then decided to take a stroll by Lake Ontario, on the pier. The sky was without a cloud, a mantle of blue up above, the sun was creating a golden glow all around them, a gentle warm breeze caressing their faces. The lake on each side of the pier was peaceful and harmonious. At the extension on the northern part, where the pier ended, the lake connected Niagara to Toronto. It was a picture-perfect scene in early July. The two young people walked the pier holding hands and absorbed in their

surroundings of water and nature and pleasant conversation. They seemed to be the only ones on the planet and they felt complete. This young man Luca was very pleasant; he was well spoken, mature, most of all humble in his revelations, with the appearance of a serious demeanor. He related to her all his great plans; she listened attentively because he had captured her attention. Some of his plans seemed unrealistic, but she had observed that he believed in himself with sincerity in his heart. She thought, Good for him, it's admirable to think big and reach for the sky. He seemed so honest that Angelica felt secure and protected. She was not a spoiled girl, her demands were few, therefore natural simple offerings were more than she needed to fulfill her wants.

It would soon be time to return home and bring the lovely outing to an end. Angelica loved nature and water, and the company of this newfound friend had been most pleasurable.

The car had been parked alongside a row of pine trees, and the scent was invigorating. As they made their way back to the car, Luca put his arm around her waist and she found herself wanting to do the same; this all seemed to come on like a guiding force for Angelica, feeling warm and comfortable. When they sat in the car, he asked her permission to kiss her, and because of the gentleness in his voice and the sincerity in his eyes, Angelica took one look at his lips and welcomed his to meet hers. They engaged in a passionate kiss that sent shivers all through her body. They both seemed to be in a state of ecstasy, the spell of pleasure was upon them, and neither of them wanted it to come to an end. With this awakened emotion, Angelica returned home with the resolution that this young man was the one to heal her broken heart. Just to be in his company brought her great pleasure.

The relationship continued and Luca wanted to be with Angelica every moment he could spare, the feeling of unity between them was almost magic. This universal bliss seemed to erase all her past misery; and she told herself maybe her mom was right all along to have forbidden her previous mad love, because this newfound love was waiting for her.

Angelica could not help but fall in love with this young man because being with him made her world seem so serene. She could hardly believe what was taking place in her heart and in her soul. She was a religious girl and believed that Luca in her life was a God-send, he was meant to be on her path, as by fate. Her past despair for the love that had been taken away from her seemed to dissipate. This new young love had transformed her existence, now she was eager to live, to have a life here and even plan for a future. But most of all the abyss of her stirred emotions that Luca was able to provoke in her was shocking.

He became her best friend and her soul mate as their love grew, and they became inseparable.

Although Angelica was young, she was also mature for her age, by her upbringing and the responsibilities she had been given by her parents. The grandparents had played a big role in her life also. Luca, being a little older, related well with her, he recognized her good qualities. Not too long after their relationship had begun, Luca was stricken with health problems that led to financial problems, since he could not work and had no insurance coverage, and found himself in a very crucial situation. Angelica was his consolation, the place he found refuge and sincere support.

As usual life was not meant to be a bed of roses; there are always crossroads to challenge everyone. Luca and Angelica were not immune to life's occurrences.

One evening he arrived at her home and said to her, "I am penniless and sick, with no job, and lots of bills to pay. I do not know how I am going to survive." He looked so troubled and despondent, Angelica listened to him attentively, and allowed him to pour out all his troubles. After he was finished, Angelica, being the caring girl that she was, with a sincere look on her face reassured him, stating; "I will be here for you and I will never abandon you. Whatever obstacles may appear, we will overcome them together.." With this encouragement, she put her arms around him in a tender embrace and with her imploring eyes said, "You have reason to succeed now because you are not alone. You have to give it all that life demands, because it is not only for you, but also for me. I will be here for you." Her reassurance was meaningful to Luca, as he felt the true love and friendship of this lovely creature that by luck for some reason had been placed in his path. He did not want to fail her, she had become the center of his universe, therefore he needed to pull himself together and try his utmost to overcome this bad period in his life.

As much as Luca wanted to pretend that things were going to change in what was only a matter of time, life for him was getting worse, not better. He was struck with severe pain on his side that brought on a high fever, the family doctor did not know what to make of his symptoms when the fever started to persist and not break, and he was unable to get out of bed and became delirious. Luca was admitted to St. Catharine's General Hospital for further investigation to research what had struck this young man to become powerless and dysfunctional. In the meantime, he was sinking deeper and deeper in his the financial crisis, because in those days there was no O.H. P. Coverage, he had no insurance for his health care, plus he could not afford a private policy. Regardless, he was a very sick young fellow and he needed health care more than anything else in his life. This was in the fifties, and medical science was not as advanced as it is today. After his near death sentence, Luca found he had a strong will in him to be with his beloved Angelica, who had been at his side daily. Her image gave him hope and a desire to fight whatever

had taken over his body to reduce him to this lifeless state. The doctors kept saying it was a virus that had taken over all the muscles in his body. They had no medication to combat it, hoping the fever would break, and the immune system itself would be able to fight off this virus so he would survive. Otherwise there was nothing they could do and eventually he would succumb with heart failure, once this ugly virus had found its way into his internal organs. Angelica's outlook now had so changed since this precious man had come into her life, and there was a strong possibility that he would be taken away from her by some strange malady that no one could control. This person had become so important to her mainly because she cared so much about his well-being and so desperately hoped to get him back on his feet. She always believed in her prayers, so she turned to her faith with all her might. She had forgiven her mother for the pain she had caused her in the past; her great sadness had been alleviated by finding Luca. Now this could not be happening again to her, losing him to some strange virus that would eventually destroy his main artery, his heart and he would be gone. Luca's heart was meant to love her; she could feel it in her own veins. She knew from the first time he had laid eyes on her that he was sent to her by some divine force for a reason. No, she could not lose him, he needed her. She needed him!

She was not going to accept the doctors' verdict, she would be there at his side with her own strength, will it on to him to destroy whatever had taken over. But most of all her prayers, yes, she believed her prayers were going to be answered and this ordeal would turn around, because she willed it to be. He was only twenty-two years old, his life could not be cut so short, for this young man had so many plans, and such a powerful brain to do and create on this earth. It could not happen. Angelica knew in her heart that if she continued to pray hard eventually God would listen to her. It took a long time, after continuous perseverance, but Luca started to come around; he was winning, and she was right there to cheer him on, and he wanted to live for her also. After many months of fighting, and rehabilitation, his feeble body started to regain strength. The fever had given up battering his body. Luca started to regain strength. Finally, to everyone's surprise, including the doctors and the nurses, he was dismissed from the hospital. On his dismissal, a cousin of his had gone to pick him up, and he insisted he to drive him straight to Angelica's house. After arriving at her door, although her parents were not really in favor of her having a serious relationship because she was so young, they could not help but embrace this young man and accept him with all their love.

Luca did manage to pull himself together, he got his health back, and found himself two jobs this allowed him to pay all his debts that had accumulated. He had told Angelica that as soon as she helped him

save two thousand dollars, they would get married. He would conquer the world for her. He kept stating his goals and promises, all for his Angelica. She really did not care, for as long as she had this wonderful human being to share her life with, she would be happy.

Their first goal was soon reached. The two were united in matrimony, and their love blossomed with two lovely daughters. When Angelica had met Luca, he was just coming out of a small haberdashery business where he worked alone with no support. This had robbed him of his small savings plus had brought him his ill health from contracting some strange bacteria, due to the unsanitary premises he had occupied. This was when Angelica had appeared in his life either by fate or the by the will of God, or because it was meant to be. He was at the lowest point of his life. When he first laid eyes on Angelica that Sunday afternoon, she had struck him like an angel. But he had reservations because of his troubled status at this time in his life. Once he saw her again he had decided that come hell or high water, he was not going to miss out on this chance of a lifetime..

He cherished her from that moment on. He often promised her that someday soon, with her on his side, he would regain his monetary status. He wanted to build a mansion for her to live in, plus he wanted to enjoy all the beautiful things this planet had to offer. He kept saying that, although they were poor, it did not matter, because they had the bare necessities, but most of all each other. Luca's dreams and goals eventually all materialized, but Angelica had fallen so in love with this precious person that really nothing else mattered as long as they had each other. They would have small disagreements, but Luca, in order to always keep peace, would patiently explain his position, and should Angelica insist, he would acquiesce to her wants. Their motto in life was togetherness. They indulged in simple pleasures, like going for nature walks; their favorite place was by the roaring falls of Niagara Falls, and the theater was another of their favorite pastimes. They worked together, they grew together, and they cried together as they overcame the many obstacles that life presented to them. As long as they had one another, nothing else mattered.

They would separate for a little while, but when reuniting it was just like the first time they discovered each other.

Luca and Angelica have been blessed, with their marriage and their partnership in life. Angelica once stated that; "There are two kinds of mates, one created by people, one created by God." She always felt that hers and Luca's was arranged in Heaven. They will soon celebrate fifty-two years of marriage. They still walk side-by-side holding hands, they still go dancing, Luca always requests the band play the song that brought Angelica into his arms, "Red Roses for You," so long ago. Angelica smiles at him with loving

eyes, and with a strong embrace she looks up at him and whispers in his ear, to tell him that, with each day that goes by, she loves him more and more. A silent prayer is in her heart: "Please, God, let me keep this love of mine forever."



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