



MIDNIGHT Mass is over. Slowly, almost reluctantly, the vast multitude leave the church as if loath to quit the golden atmosphere redolent of joyous Glorias, heartfelt Adestes, soul satisfying peace; and to disappear in the dense darkness enveloping the city, this bitterly cold Christmas night.

Through the wide open portal can be seen glimmering, away down at the end of the deserted nave, the altar candles, like distant twinkling stars, and under the vaulted roof, the brilliant luminous festives emblems, earlier greatly admired by the worshippers, now gradually dying. The massive door with its great iron fastenings closes with a clang that wakens all the mysterious echoes of the old cathedral, then, all is quiet, and profound silence reigns.

Suddenly, a slight noise breaks the perfect stillness and two children cautiously emerge from the furthest corner of the dark portico where they had been hiding and peer into the outer darkness.

"Guiseppe," the smaller one whispers, looking at him sadly, "Guiseppe, I'm so hungry and so cold!"

"Poor Tito, I'm so sorry," gently answers Guiseppe. "Try and be patient until tomorrow. Since we have earned nothing today to bring our master we must spend the night here; but it won't be long and tomorrow will bring us better luck. It will be Christmas you know, the day of peace and good-will, and we will play our choicest melodies at the church door and gather in a rich harvest, —enough to satisfy our master and enable us to return home."