

And Claudina shook her head gravely.

"No, signora. It wants some minutes yet. But I thought if Giovanino was gone, you ought to go to bed."

They had prepared another little room for her to sleep in; but she insisted first upon going to see him once more.

By the light of the altar lamp, she found her way to the bed. Without the sound of a cry, or the hesitation of those who are suddenly brought into the presence of Death, she lifted the sheet from his face. It was almost as though she had expected to find that he was asleep.

For a little while, she stood there, looking quietly at the peacefulness of it all, then she bent over the bed. Claudina saw her whisper something in his ear. At the last, she crossed him with trembling fingers, laid back the sheet upon his face and, without a sound, slowly turned away.

In Claudina's hands, she was like a little child. Like a little child, she was undressed, like a little child, put into her bed, the clothes pulled warmly round her, her beads given into her hand to hold.

With candle lighted and held above her head, Claudina stood at the door before she went out. The tears rushed warmly to her eyes as she saw the white head alone upon the pillow, and thought of the silent figure they had just left in the other room.

"*Buona notte, signora,*" she said, as bravely as she could.