

Mama's Song

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Look for the sequel to this book.

It is called *Hopes and Dreams*.

Mama's Song

Chapter 1 The Old Country



The story starts long ago in the Old Country. Peter Louka lived in a small town. He lived in an old house with his little boy Martin.

Peter did not have much money. He worked long hours in John Staiko's factory, but he did not get very much money. There were no other jobs in town. Times were hard. Martin had to stay by himself all day.

When Martin was twelve years old, his Papa said, "It is time for you to go to the factory with me. You can start to work there. You will get some money for your work. That will help us get some things we need. You can save some money for yourself."

The boss gave Martin a job. It would be a good job for a big man. It was a very hard job for Martin! Martin worked and worked. At night he was almost too tired to eat. He wanted to go to bed and sleep. His father made him eat a little before he went to bed.

The boss paid Peter and Martin for their work. Martin said to himself, "I will save a little money for myself. I will give the rest to Papa. I am happy to help Papa."

John Staiko was Peter and Martin's boss. He owned the factory where they worked. He was a fair boss, but the men and boys had to work very hard.

John had a house in the best part of town. The house was large and beautiful. The yard around the house had many trees and pretty flower beds. It was the nicest place in town. John was very proud of it. He was proud of his wife, Anna and their daughter, Josie.

Josie was very pretty. She had black hair like her mother. She had green eyes like her father. When Josie was old enough, a teacher came to work with her at the house every day.

Josie learned many things. She liked to learn everything her teacher told her. She learned to play the piano, how to sew, and how to look after a big house. Josie's parents wanted a good life for her.



Every night John, Anna and Josie talked for a little while. John talked about his day at the factory. Anna talked about what happened at the house. Josie talked about many things. She talked about the piano lessons and the things her teacher told her.

When Josie was feeling sleepy, her mother sang to her. It was always the same song. Josie called it "Mama's Song". Mama sang:

"Can you see the sunlight on the flowers?
Can you feel the wind blow through your hair?
When I put my loving arms around you
You will know how very much I care.

Can you see the stars begin to sparkle?
Day is done and night is coming near.
I will tuck you safely in your bed now,
If you need me, call and I'll be here."

When Josie was thirteen years old she said to her father and mother, "I want to go to the factory sometimes. I want to see what it is like there. Maybe I could help you there, Papa."

Josie's father said, "A factory is no place for a girl! You must stay at home and work with your teacher. A factory is a place for men."

Josie had a mind of her own! She wanted to see Papa's factory. Sometimes she asked her mother, "Mama, can we take the horse and buggy to the factory to see Papa, just for a little while?"

Sometimes Mama took Josie to Papa's office in the factory. Sometimes Papa would let Josie walk with him in the factory. It was hot and dirty but Josie didn't care. She liked learning about the factory.

One day when Josie was fifteen years old, she and her mother went for a ride with the horse and buggy.

They went to Papa's factory. Papa came out to the buggy. It was closing time, and the men and boys were leaving the factory. Josie saw Martin and asked her father, "Who is that boy, Papa?"

John looked at Martin. Martin was seventeen years old. He had worked in the factory for five years. He was strong and good looking. John said to Josie, "He is a worker. Never mind, you don't need to know him."

Martin saw Josie looking at them and asked his father, "Who is that pretty girl?"

Peter said, "She is the boss' s girl. Remember this. She is not for a boy like you!"



Josie could not forget Martin! Martin could not forget Josie!

One Sunday, Martin walked to Josie's place. He hid until he saw Josie come outside by herself. He called, "Josie! I'm over here. Come here!"

Josie ran over to where Martin was hiding. They talked for a long time. After that day, they met many times.

One day Josie's mother saw Josie leave the house. She saw her run over to the trees. She told her husband. He went outside and found Josie and Martin together. He was very angry!

"Don't ever come back here!" John shouted at Martin. "I can make a lot of trouble for you and your father."

Every day Martin thought about Josie. Every day Josie thought about Martin. Martin found a way to see Josie, but they could not see each other very often.

Chapter 2 Making Plans

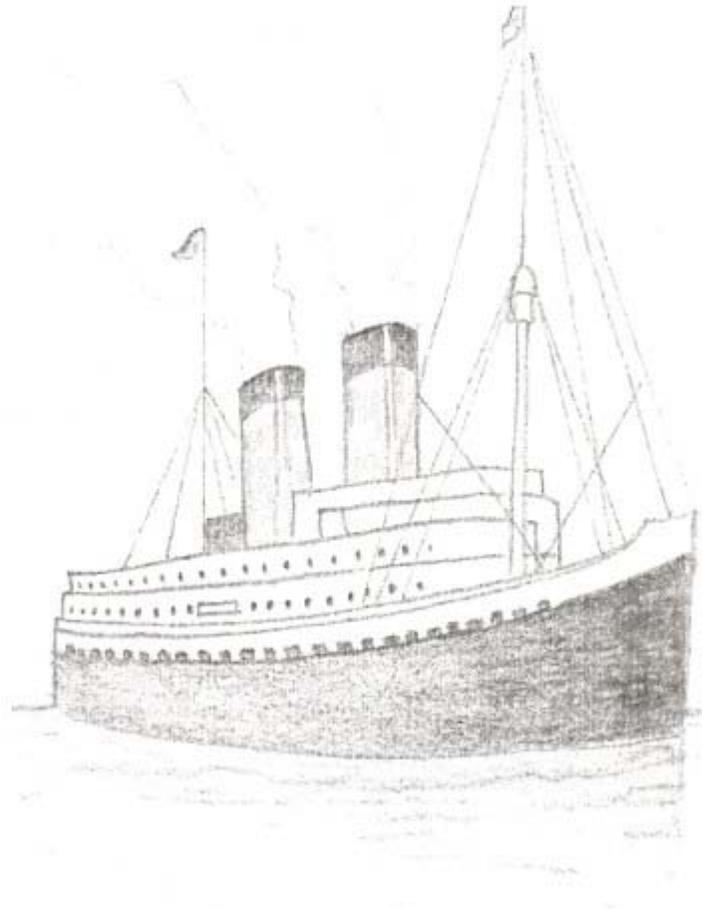
One day when Josie was sixteen years old, she said to Martin, "Let's go away from here. I want to be with you always. I am tired of hiding"

Martin said, "It would be a hard life for a girl like you! I would have to work in a factory. You would have to work hard, too!"

Josie said, "Please, Martin! I just want to be with you! I can work hard. I can learn new things. If we stay here, we will never be together. We can't hide like this forever."

Josie and Martin made their plans. Martin had some money saved. Josie had some money too. They knew they had to go far away. They knew their parents would try hard to find them and keep them apart. They planned to go on a ship. They knew they could get married on the ship. They planned and waited.

After a year of planning, the day came for them to leave. They were excited and scared at the same time! What if Josie's Papa found them before the ship sailed?



At last the ship sailed! It sailed slowly away from the dock. Martin and Josie stood at the ship's rail. Josie had tears in her eyes. It was hard to go away from home forever! Martin thought, "I hope I can take good care of Josie!"

That first night, Martin and Josie asked to be married on the ship. The captain looked at them. He had seen many others just like them. He knew they would have many hard times. He hoped they would be able to make a good life for themselves. He smiled and said, "Yes! I would be happy to marry you!"

Martin and Josie were husband and wife at last! Martin said, "Nobody can keep us apart now!"

Martin had a job working on the ship. Josie washed and mended their clothes. She sewed new clothes. She kept their tiny sleeping place clean. She learned a lot about life on a ship.

They were on the ship for a long time! Martin had to work hard. Josie missed her family, but she was happy to be with Martin.

After many days on the ship, they saw land at last!

Chapter 3 A New Country

Life was hard for Martin and Josie in the new country, but they were happy together. Martin got work in a factory. They lived in a very small house. Josie worked hard to make a good home for them. She learned how to do many new things. When Josie was lonely for her family, she would sing the song her mother used to sing to her.

"Can you see the sunlight on the flowers?
Can you feel the wind blow through your hair?
When I put my loving arms around you,
You will know how very much I care.

Can you see the stars begin to sparkle?
Day is done and night is coming near.
I will tuck you safely in your bed now,
if you need me, call and I'll be here."



Soon Josie and Martin had a baby girl. They called her Emma. A few years later they had another little girl named Ruth. Josie said, "Now we are a family."

Josie and Martin loved the two little girls. Every night the four of them would sit and talk. When Emma and Ruth were sleepy, Josie sang "Mama's Song" to them.

One day Josie did not feel well. She did not tell Martin because she knew they did not have money for a doctor. Josie got sicker and sicker. Still she did not tell Martin.

She asked Emma to look after her sister and do some of the work around the house. At bedtime Josie held the two girls. Josie was too tired to sing. Emma sang "Mama's Song" to Mama and Ruth.

One day Martin came home in the afternoon. He was in a big hurry. He said to Josie, "I have a chance to go north for a job cutting logs."

Josie did not tell Martin that she was sick. She knew Martin had to go north.

Martin said, "I will be away all winter. I have to go. It is a chance to get more money. I will be back in the spring."

Martin hugged the girls. He picked up a few things and put them into a bag, then he was gone.

That winter many people in town were very sick with the flu. Many of them died.

Josie got sicker and sicker. She could not eat. She could not get out of bed.

Emma got someone to come and see her mother. Some people took Josie to a big hospital in the city.

Emma and Ruth were too little to stay by themselves. They had to go to an orphanage in the city. There was no other place to go.

The orphanage was very old and very big. There were a lot of orphans because of the terrible sickness.

Emma said to Ruth, "We will be all right if we can be together."

The workers at the orphanage were good to the children, but there were so many children! The workers did not have time to do anything but work.

Emma and Ruth had jobs to do. They liked to help. Working made the time go faster. The orphanage wasn't a bad place, but it wasn't like home.



Every night Emma sang "Mama's Song" to Ruth. Ruth heard the song so many times that she could sing it, too!

Chapter 4 Mama' s Song

In the spring, Martin came back to town. He went to his house. There was nobody there! There were boards on the windows.

There were boards on many of the houses in town. Many families were gone.

Martin was afraid! He asked people if they knew where his wife and girls had gone. Nobody could help him. People said, "So many people were sick. It was the worst kind of flu ever! Many people died this winter."

Martin knew about the flu. Many men at the logging camp had died. At last someone said to Martin, "Look in the city. Many of the children had to go to the orphanage."

Martin felt so afraid! He went to the city as fast as he could. He found the orphanage. He wanted to go in, but he was afraid!

Martin said to himself, "I hope Emma and Ruth are here. What will I do if they are not here? How will I find Josie?"

Martin walked in the front door. It was evening and there were not many people in the halls.

Martin asked one of the workers if she could help him find his girls. The worker was very busy. She said, "I am new here. I don't know all the children."

Martin asked if he could go in and look for Emma and Ruth. The worker said kindly, "Yes, of course! Two of the sleeping rooms are this way. The other sleeping room is that way."

Martin looked in two large rooms. There were many children sleeping. Some were still awake. Martin looked at them all. He did not see Emma and Ruth.

Martin walked to the door of the last room. Suddenly he heard:

"Can you see the sunlight on the flowers?
Can you feel the wind blow through your hair?
When I put my loving arms around you,
You will know how very much I care."

Martin had tears in his eyes. He walked into the room. He sang:

"Can you see the stars begin to sparkle?
Day is done and night is coming near.
I will tuck you safely in your bed now,
If you need me, call and I'll be here."

Two little girls turned to look at Martin. Their eyes were as round as could be!



"Papa!" the girls shouted. They ran to Martin.

"Oh, Papa! We are so glad to see you again!"

Martin hugged the girls tightly. He said, "I think 'Mama's Song' is the most beautiful song I ever heard!"

Martin asked Emma and Ruth about their mother. Emma said, "A little while ago somebody told us she was still in the hospital. I think she still is. She was very sick. We have not seen her for a long time."

Martin said, "Tonight we will rest. We will find Mama tomorrow. I think she needs to hear "Mama's Song"!"

To Paul Sigurdson
who encouraged me to write

This book is not based on the lives
of specific people.