

## [A Granite-Shed Owner's Son]

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Miss Mary Tomasi

63 Barre St.

Montpelier, Vt. The Granite Worker Italian

### A GRANITE-SHED OWNER'S SON

He was a tall, broad-shouldered young man. Sparkling eyes and ruddy cheeks bespoke health and vitality. In gray canvas trousers and white sweat shirt, clean shaven, he stood conspicuous among the older group clad carelessly in a motley assortment of clothing. They were in the shed yard of the Chioldi Brothers Monumental Works. Guido's father owned a half of the business, but the young man worked beside the employees and was one of them. He held a suction hose to a long slab of granite that was coated a half inch thick with stone dust. The hose ate slowly over the surface clearing the gray powder with clean bites. When the slab was clean, the tiny mica flakes and quartz caught the sunlight and glistened. Guido surveyed the surface, drew a finger over it and sat down. Now he turned the hose to his clothing, running it up and down the pant legs, chest and shoulders.

"The month before Memorial Day is usually our rush season, but it isn't this year," Guido admitted. "We should be working 35, but we've had to cut down to 23. Most of the sheds are working below full capacity. There isn't the demand there used to be. There's too much competition from southern and western states. We've tried to make the natives absolutely Barre-granite minded. People with lots in the Hope Cemetery are requested to erect no memorial other than of Barre granite. 2 Not long ago a marble monument was smuggled

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into the cemetery and set up at night. The cemetery directors haven't taken any steps towards having it removed, but they've voiced their disapproval openly.

“The new work that goes into the cemetery today doesn't compare with the art of a few years back. That's what the older fellows say, I don't know. To them Corti, Novelli, Tosi, Bertoli, Corvisi and Abatti are heroes of granite art. Abatti is alive today, he's well over eighty. They say that back in 1901 an art school was popular here in Barre. Old Abatti was one of the teachers. Classes were held in the Aqua Pura building on Granite Street. They had as many as 125 students, Scotch, Italian, French, Irish and Swiss. They paid \$.50 a week for three night classes. The young fellows starting in the granite business those days took advantage of this opportunity.

Guido continued, no, he wasn't interested in the granite business except that it was a source of income for the family. He'd had two years of college after Spaulding High School. At that time his father and mother separated; it left his mother alone except for a younger sister. If it hadn't been for that he'd still be at school or finding employment out of State. Most of his school friends were out of town. But it had been easy to slip in here working for his father. Two days a week he did office work; the remaining days he did odd, unskilled labor. It was a depressing atmosphere .....

Three of the group to the right of Guido engaged in 3 marking off a granite block were discussing Mussolini. “I see him last year,” a gaunt, hollow-cheeked man was saying. “I see him at the Riva Ricogli. The Riva on the Adriatic is his favorite beach resort. When I see him he wear just trunks, an' he look like a gorilla. Hair on his arm and chest. All the people around there they bow an' smile at him, but in their hearts they feel different. I have a girl cousin who is a doctor near Rome, but before she is allow' to practice she has to say she is a 'black shirt'.”

Guido smiled. “That man who is talking is the greatest grappa drinker in Barre. He won't drink anything else. Says the grape was mentioned in the Bible as a drink, and if it was

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Christ's drink then any of its byproducts were the best for him. He has a very good recipe for punch. Would you like to hear it?"

A stubble of dark beard shaded the gaunt granite worker's face. Yes, he'd be glad of a convert to his favorite drink. "Put some orange peel in the oven," he said. "When it is dry an' brittle, crush it to a powder. Boil your grappa with two-thirds as much water. When it is boiling hard touch a match to it to burn off the fusel oil. Then add the orange powder. With fruit juices this will make the best hot or cold punch you have ever tasted." Somewhere in the shed a four o'clock whistle blew. The gaunt-faced man touched a hand to his dusty cap, turned abruptly, and left.

Guido laughed. "They're all the same. When that four o'clock whistle blows, they like to leave the shed as fast as they can and as far behind them as they can."