

ITALY

A Shelter of One's Own

by Marika Puicher





Elderflowers that have been collected by a member of staff and a female guest at a Mondo Donna refuge. They plan to make elderflower syrup.



SAFE REFUGE AND HOPE FOR FEMALE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

- The problem of gender violence, which was already at a serious level, intensified during the pandemic.
 - In the more serious cases of violence, the victims are sheltered in safe houses.
 - In the safe houses professional operators and psychologists help the women, offering support and integration opportunities.
 - Sometimes women are placed in protection programs in order to ensure their personal safety.
 - The Mondo Donna Association is one of the non-profit organizations that help women escape from violence and build a new life.
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A victim of violence walks upstairs at a safe house run by the Mondo Donna Association.



A message left for the women guests at a refuge managed by the Mondo Donna Association. The message was written by one of the assistants, Caterina, on her last day of work.



Maryam, originally from Nigeria, is a guest in a refuge for women victims of trafficking. The shelter is run by the Mondo Donna Association.



More than 100 women were victims of femicide in Italy in 2021: this adds up to almost one every three days. In addition to this shocking statistic are the numerous women who experience abuse and violence every day.

Unfortunately, the problem of gender violence is becoming increasingly common in every society and at every social level and, as a result of the pandemic, this scourge appears to be intensifying.

Since 1995 the Mondo Donna Association in Bologna has been helping women escape violence. In the more serious cases it shelters them in its safe houses, where, with the help

of professional operators and psychologists, they can come to terms with their pain in order to escape from the cycle of abuse. The women considered to be most at risk are placed in protection programs that limit their movements and may even mean they have to leave their jobs and change life in order to ensure their personal safety. The refuges are often experienced as a state of limbo where the victims feel suspended between the ghosts and shadows of a violent past and the hope of redemption thanks also to the warmth of those working to help them.

“A Shelter of One’s Own” aims to tell the story of the Mondo Donna Association’s work, opening a small window onto the reality of the safe refuges for female victims of violence and sex trafficking.



Violet, a victim of trafficking. Violet currently lives in a safe house managed by the Mondo Donna Association.



A collection of wigs belonging to a Nigerian woman hosted in a reception facility run by the Mondo Donna Association.



Min, aged 30, works at the Mondo Donna association's Social Chic Design dressmaker's workshop. Min turned to Mondo Donna about five years ago following repeated domestic abuse by her husband. She is currently a guest at one of the facilities for women victims of violence run by the association, which is also helping her in her professional reintegration pathway with an apprenticeship at the dressmaker's workshop.



Cigarette ends on the terrace of a Mondo Donna refuge.



The feet of a woman at one of the refuges run by the Mondo Donna Association for women victims of trafficking.



Jasmin, a social worker, with women victims of trafficking during a yoga workshop organized at a refuge run by the Mondo Donna Association.



A chicken trapped in the window of a refuge run by the Mondo Donna Association for female victims of violence.

Brigitte, a guest at a Mondo Donna refuge, plays her guitar. Originally from Congo, she has suffered all kinds of violence in her life. In Libyan detention centres she was raped and saw other women killed in front of her. Since arriving in Italy about two years ago, she has gradually been losing her sight due to a disease that will result in total blindness. Brigitte is a musician and music is a precious balm for her soul.





Maria Chiara Rosa, Coordinator of the "Protection and reception project for female victims of sex trafficking" – a project run by the Mondo Donna Association – embraces a Nigerian woman who is a guest at one of the Association's refuges.



Fish that will be cooked by Ester in a typical Senegalese dish. Many women who stay in the shelters of the Mondo Donna Association are excellent cooks, they usually prepare dishes from their home countries. Preparing and eating meals also offers moments to reconnect with their origins and spend time together.



Sladjana, a cook for the Altre Terre Food Truck, serves customers. Altre Terre is a Mondo Donna Association project aimed at promoting intercultural interaction as well as the social and employment reintegration of women hosted at its facilities. In the past, Sladjana turned to Mondo Donna's CAV (Anti-Violence Center) because she was a victim of domestic abuse. Thanks to the association she was able to escape the cycle of violence.



The smile of a guest at a refuge run by the Mondo Donna Association.



A persimmon tree in the garden of a safe house.



Saima in her room at a refuge run by the Mondo Donna Association. Saima is a young Pakistani woman who is a victim of domestic violence.

Detail of a wall of Casa Giunone, a reception facility for women victims of trafficking. Casa Giunone is run by the Mondo Donna Association.





A Nigerian woman who is a victim of trafficking plays with her daughter in the garden of a refuge run by the Mondo Donna Association.



An area of the snow-covered garden of a Mondo Donna Association safe house.



Cristina, who works at a Mondo Donna safe house, together with a female guest.



Brigitte's eyes. Brigitte is originally from Congo, she has suffered all kinds of violence in her life. In Libyan detention centres she was raped and saw other women killed in front of her. Since arriving in Italy she has gradually begun to lose her sight due to a disease that will culminate in total blindness. Brigitte is a musician and music is a precious balm for her soul.



The hands of a social worker and a female guest at a refuge run by the Mondo Donna Association, while they make elderberry syrup.



A mannequin head at a safe house.



Ester, a victim of sex trafficking, in a corner of a Mondo Donna Association refuge.

