Scout, 1894, 4 September

My sister has advised me to write my thoughts down, as the pressure I face is immense. To be short and concise, me and my family cannot stay in Italy any longer. I live with my three daughters and my son, my husband, my sister, and my mother. We are crowded in a stable with three other families, whose babies cry day and night from hunger, and whose young children weep similarly. Our homes were destroyed in the earthquake in Sicily, which reached up to Calabria, and we had to migrate here, to a farmstead. We work to pay the owners, but our pay is very little. Most people here are in poverty. We can only offer to tend the fields, but the soil is poorer than it's ever been, crowded with rock that slides down from the hills. I believe my youngest children—twins, only 5 years old—have no future in this country. I worry they will also grow sick with fever, like my poor mother who has cholera. There is an outbreak of disease due to our contaminated water. Me and my sister have heard many whispers of fleeing to America and it could work for us. I will bring this up to my husband. I hope when I write here again, we will have come to a conclusion.

Scout, 1894, September 18

I'm writing this at the dock, where the boat has just let off her hefty load of passengers; hundreds of us, all immigrants, all fleeing our homes. We traveled for about 9 days to get here, all crowded on this one small boat. It reminded me of our cramped home in the stables. Though as soon as I saw her, I knew it was worth it. First her torch peered through the fog, almost guiding us to the bank. Then, her face came through. Lady Liberty, clad in patina, standing tall for what we came here to seek, for freedom. Every immigrant on the boat froze to look at the Lady, and I don't believe a soul looked away for many minutes. As we passed, my eldest daughter wept softly into my arms, and when I turned to see my mother's face she smiled, the same one I recognized from before her sickness. The smile she gave me when I was young. Overcome with emotion, I cried, as well. I have never felt so hopeful in my life.
My sister is rushing over to talk with me, now, so I should leave this entry here. I will come back to read this entry, to remind myself of this hope.

Scout, 1894, September 18

We had to go through a check up before we could enter America, which is fair, I suppose. I've just never been around so many people at once, in these big long lines, like schools of fish or herds of cattle. I saw old gentleman, young girls, teenage boys, and a lot of women my age, all heading single-file forward. We were stopped by doctors, who looked us over from top to bottom. My husband went by them first with no issue, followed by me, my sister, and my children. I looked back to my mother just as the doctor marked her felt coat with a big X in chalk. A fear rose within me, one I hadn't considered; my mother might not be allowed to enter. We were split up from my husband and son, led into a room with nurses. One of them lifted up my hair to check my scalp and she examined my body, then I was allowed to go on. My mom was not so lucky. I wished not to make a scene, so I held her hands and attempted not to cry as she promised we would meet again when she was no longer sick. After she was taken by a nurse, I had little time to think about her. I was soon after asked about my identity, details from my papers, and I answered as quick as I could. We made it through smooth enough and now, I'm sitting with my sister as she explains why Mother isn't here to my husband. My kids are talking

amongst themselves nearby and I'm not sure they know why she's not here. My hope and desire is so starkly contrasted with my fear for my mother, but we will push on. We have to. If I don't see her again, at least I'll know she got to see us embark on our new future. I know she is proud of us, of me, for that.

Scout, 1894, September 20
Unfortunately, today, we encountered something else that I wish we hadn't. I'm beginning to wonder if we made the right decision to come here, which is a ridiculous thought. It's just grim that after leaving my mother behind we immediately had to witness something so disheartening. We were wandering through New york City when my husband and I turned a corner and saw a giant poster, harshly condemning Italian immigrants. I felt sick to my stomach. I would never have imagined a country that seemed so open to receive us would allow these kinds of messages on their streets. I swiftly turned around, my first thought being to shield the eyes of my children, but they had already seen it. I don't believe my youngest two understood what it was, but my middlest and eldest daughter likely did from the imagery. I feel even sicker. I will continue to hope that it gets easier after all of this. I want it to, desperately.

Scout, 1894, September 21
We are finally housed here, but it certainly is not a home. I'm thankful to be less cramped than we were in Italy but it is not much better here. We have our family of 7 and we also live with a family of 4. They seem nice but they are skittish. I believe they're from Russia? But they don't speak Italian, so I don't know.
The building has cracks along its seams like a poorly sewn garment and the floor groans when we walk with such intensity I fear I'm going to fall through it. It's dreadfully warm with so many bodies and such little airflow. We still do not have toiletries or easily accessible water, some of the many things I miss from our home before the earthquake. Most of all, I could feel the sick in the air when we arrived to the tenements. I don't want my son to fall ill, because I know we need him to work just as much as we need my husband to.
I feel so foolish and embarrassed. I truly believed it would be easy to come here and escape the torment of poverty. I'm running low on hope now. I hope tomorrow is simple.

Scout, 1894, September 24
My husband was in a terrible state when he came home from work today. His skin was covered in dark ash and what was bare looked sickly pale. He was sputtering and coughing, and i could see a bandage wrapped tight around his ankle, that had begun to soak through with blood. I had my daughters fetch a bucket and some water. When they came back, they presented me with a bucket full of cloudy, tinted water, and I decided it was good enough. I pulled off his shoe and the soggy gauze as he told me about what happened.
"It was so dark," he said, "We could barely see a thing despite our candlelight with all the soot in the air." He winced as I put his foot into the bucket. He said that a pickaxe got dropped onto his foot in the dark. He told me the puncture was at least "as deep as a fox bite."
He described the constant fear of the collapsing caves, and how he was beginning to be convinced that he would not make it out alive. They were mining in water deep enough to seep into their boots as they went, and the heat of the caves was unbearable mixed with the moisture

in the air. My sister arrived home to him sitting weakly in the corner of the room, and shortly after I watched the husband of the other family come home in a similar stupor, but less injured.
My husband did his best not to worry me after the fact but I am terrified he will die down there, in the mines, and not only would we lose him but we would lose most of our money. I feel truly lost, especially now without my mother. She would have brushed my hair out of my face and told me I was strong. But I don't feel strong anymore. I'm tired.

Scout, 1894, September 29
For the past five days, all of the girls and I have been working in a textile mill. The factory work is far more intensive than I thought it would be, it requires excellent speed and if we make a mistake it could cost us our hair or fingers. I am constantly filled with dread as I work, and knowing that my family and I are in constant danger being so close to each machine does very poor things to my health. I often feel faint while working, teeming with anxiety and exhaustion, but I don't even dare ask for a break. We are not allowed to stop working; from the moment we arrive as the sun wakes up, to the time we come home as the world falls asleep, we are put to work. It's the same repetitive tasks every day as we aren't allowed to deviate from what they assign us. Sometimes, I look at the machine in front of me, and I feel similarly tedious and confined.
I've also noticed we make less money than my husband and son, which causes me more stress. I would never admit it anywhere else, but sometimes in the night when the vermin and the noise of the tenements keep me awake, I wish I could have had one more son. I wonder if that would make this any easier. I feel disappointed in myself for how little I can provide despite all my efforts. It's a terrible thought, I know that much. I'm moving along slowly now, to the best of my ability.

Scout, 1894, September 30
My son has been working with his father in the mines. It feels good to afford a little bit of food now, although knowing my son is down there makes me terrified. His birthday was a week ago, so he's 6 now. The thought is morbid but I pray he will make it to his next. He tells me that the other boys he works with often have their fingers crushed and that he's heard stories of explosions and collapsing mines that can happen at any moment with no warning. There's something about knowing that he could be gone at any time without me knowing until I get home that fills me with an urgent fear.
His twin sister works with us in the textile factory. My other daughters sometimes catch glimpses of her to make sure she's okay and they run it past me when they can, but since we're split up over the length of the building their reassurance is few and far between. Thankfully, having my sister nearby is helpful for my worries. I've already seen some young girls around my daughters age get injured and I worry about them and their mothers, how they must feel. I believe even the children of our Russian housemates have come home bleeding or bruised from their work.
It pains me that we all must work to live here but I'm growing used to that, and I'll eventually grow used to the fear for our safety, I suppose.

Scout, 1894, November 14

As if everything else wasn't enough, over the past few months our tenement has become a state of absolute squalor. Very few things in the house aren't covered in a thick layer of dirt and all of our piping seems to be coming apart. We can't do anything about it because the issue is not for our tenement alone, but every tenement in the area. Very few of us have running water, and even fewer of those people have clean running water. As we leave the summer months it becomes increasingly cold in the building to the point of numbness. There is a butchery nearby that seems to be dumping waste outside, which creates a foul stench in each apartment and the lack of ventilation means it lingers for a while. It's unbearable and I worry what health conditions we may face in the winter as well.

Scout, 1894, November 18
It's been 4 days since I last wrote and the situation already seems to be improving, for once. My husband told me that he spoke to other workers at the mines and there might actually be a legal solution to the filth of the tenements. People that call themselves progressives have been bringing attention to the issues we face living in such poor conditions and it seems like they might be heard out on it. They plan to present the situation of poverty to any government officials they can find who will listen, and hope it will carry itself by word until actual change comes. Some people have already shown interest in the cause, even some people who are not immigrants. I'm anticipating where this could go in the future.

Scout, 1894, December 5
My husband has developed some kind of lasting leg injury that leaves him with a limp. He has no time to get treated for it, not that it'd be easy to get a doctor anyway. He doesn't want me to worry but I always will. I wish he didn't have to work so much. I wish I had more time to spend with him and my son that wasn't washed over with dread of tomorrow. I could lose either or both of them at any time. Even if I don't lose them, they come home in pain every day. My sister had an incident with a machine that left her right arm difficult to move. She hasn't been able to work as quick and her pay is significantly less. My mother used to tell me, when me and my sister tilled the fields as children, that the reward for hard work is a good meal with good company. But the meals are only okay now, and the company is exhausted. My heart burns for my family.

Scout, 1894, December 10
Though whispers persist about us workers being difficult and needy, so many people continue to be empathetic to our situations. Recently, I've noticed guards being stationed near our machines in the factory, who watch us as we work and intervene in dangerous situations. A few of the other women leave significantly earlier than we used to, as well. I'd love to be able to do that someday. My sister was approached with a job offer from one of the progressives I mentioned in an entry previous. He told her that she could come work as an inspector on the new residencies that are planning to be built. He said he was approaching workers that had limited mobility to offer them a job that would suit them better. I'm overjoyed even in the infancy of this news. I hope soon enough we may all get these kinds of benefits. My husband and I were so excited when she sat us down to give us the news. We are happier than we've been in months.