

The Hopes and Dreams Series  
Italian-Americans

# Little Italy

A story based on history



Second Edition

Tana Reiff

Illustrations by Tyler Stiene

PRO LINGUA  ASSOCIATES

# Pro Lingua Associates, Publishers

P.O. Box 1348

Brattleboro, Vermont 05302-1348 USA

Office: 802 257 7779

Orders: 800 366 4775

E-mail: [orders@ProLinguaAssociates.com](mailto:orders@ProLinguaAssociates.com)

SAN: 216-0579

Webstore: [www.ProLinguaAssociates.com](http://www.ProLinguaAssociates.com)

Copyright © 2015 by Tana Reiff

Text ISBN 13: 978-0-86647-389-7; 10: 0-86647-389-0

Audio CD ISBN 13: 978-0-86647-390-3; 10: 0-86647-390-4

The first edition of this book was originally published by Fearon Education, a division of David S. Lake Publishers, Belmont, California, Copyright © 1989, later by Pearson Education. This, the second edition, has been revised and redesigned.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or other, or stored in an information storage or retrieval system without permission in writing from the publisher.

The cover and illustrations are by Tyler Stiene. The book was set and designed by Tana Reiff, consulting with A.A. Burrows, using the Adobe *Century Schoolbook* typeface for the text. This is a digital adaptation of one of the most popular faces of the twentieth century. Century's distinctive roman and italic fonts and its clear, dark strokes and serifs were designed, as the name suggests, to make schoolbooks easy to read. The display font used on the cover and titles is a 21st-century digital invention titled Telugu. It is designed to work on all digital platforms and with Indic scripts. Telugu is named for the Telugu people in southern India and their widely spoken language. This is a simple, strong, and interesting sans serif display font.

This book was printed and bound by KC Book Manufacturing in North Kansas City, Missouri. Printed in the United States. First edition 2015

## **The Hopes and Dreams Series**

by Tana Reiff

**The Magic Paper (Mexican-Americans)  
For Gold and Blood (Chinese-Americans)  
Nobody Knows (African-Americans)  
Little Italy (Italian-Americans)  
More to come.**

## Contents

1	Hard Times in Italy.....	1
2	A Ship to America .....	6
3	New York.....	11
4	Two Bags.....	18
5	Across the Ocean .....	22
6	A New Day .....	25
7	Ellis Island.....	30
8	Together Again .....	36
9	Mulberry Street .....	40
10	Building a Life.....	44
11	Lucky To Be Alive .....	49
12	Paper Flowers .....	54
13	Festa!.....	57
14	Top of the Class .....	61
	Glossary .....	67





# 1 Hard Times in Italy

Southern Italy, 1920

“Little ones!”  
said Rosetta.  
“Your Papa is home!  
Let’s clean you up.  
I want you  
to look pretty  
for your Papa.”

The three children  
came to their mother.  
She washed  
their six little hands.  
Then she returned  
to the pot of sauce  
on the stove.

Vito Trella  
opened the door.  
The door was broken.  
It made a loud noise.  
Vito did not look happy.

“So sad, so sad,”  
he said,  
shaking his head  
from side to side.

“You know how  
to fix the door,”  
Rosetta said.

“No, no, not that,”  
said Vito,  
rubbing his head.  
“The trouble  
is not the door.  
The door  
is easy to fix.  
The trouble  
is the fruit.  
I cannot sell  
enough oranges.  
I don’t know  
how to fix that.”

“What is wrong  
with the oranges?”  
asked Rosetta.  
“They taste sweet to me.”

“The sweetest oranges  
in the whole world!”  
said Vito.

“But the Americans  
do not need oranges  
from Italy anymore.  
They grow oranges  
in North America now.  
And our land  
is wearing out.  
We do not get  
as many oranges  
as we did before.  
They are small, too.”

“What shall we do?”  
asked Rosetta.

“We must think about  
going to another place,”  
said Vito.

“We must think about  
going to America.  
Our land is poor.  
Our town is crowded.  
Everyone is poor.”

Our children  
will have nothing  
if we stay here.  
They need a chance  
for a better life.  
That is the best gift  
we could ever give them.”

“I want that too,”  
said Rosetta.  
“But a new life in America?  
It would be so different.”

“We could make  
a better living,”  
said Vito.  
“We cannot make  
a good living here.  
We could give  
our children  
hope for tomorrow.”

“Do we have  
enough money  
to go to America?”  
asked Rosetta.



“We have enough  
to buy one ticket,”  
said Vito.  
“I will go first.  
I will work hard  
and save money.  
I will send you money  
to buy tickets.  
Then you can bring  
the children over.”

Rosetta hated to see  
her husband go away.  
She did not want  
to leave her town.  
She did not want  
to take the children  
to America  
by herself.  
But she knew  
Vito’s plan  
might be the only way  
to make things better.



## 2 A Ship to America

Rosetta and Vito  
saw the signs  
all around town.  
Ships were looking  
for people  
to take to America.  
Once a week,  
a young man  
came to town.  
He sold tickets  
to ride on a ship.  
He talked about  
the streets of gold  
in America.

For months,  
Rosetta helped Vito  
get ready for the trip.  
She packed  
a bag for him.  
She packed salted meat,  
bread, and cheese.  
She packed  
his clothes.

Her tears  
fell on the bag.  
Those tears  
would go to America,  
along with her husband.

All the neighbors  
came to say goodbye.  
They waved and cried.  
They kissed and hugged.  
They wished Vito  
good luck and good health.

Then Vito turned  
to his family.  
“Goodbye, my loves,”  
he said.  
“I will write to you.  
I will send money.  
The four of you  
will come to America  
very soon.”

In his mind,  
Vito said goodbye  
to his town, too.  
He had lived here  
all his life.

He would miss  
his farm.  
It had once been  
a good farm.  
He looked back  
at the mountains.  
He had loved  
to climb those mountains.  
He remembered  
the river.  
He had loved  
to swim and fish  
in that river.  
He was leaving  
everything he knew  
and everyone he loved.

He tried  
to act brave.  
He hugged his family  
one last time.  
His heart was full  
of love and fear.

A horse cart  
took Vito and his bag  
to the train station.  
The train  
took him to Naples.  
There, he saw  
the big ships.  
On the dock  
he bought a book.

The book cover said,  
“Learn English  
by the time  
you reach New York!”

Vito laughed.  
But he bought  
the book anyway.

A ship's mate  
tied a little tag  
to his coat.  
On the tag  
were his name  
and some numbers.

Then Vito  
and the other people  
got in line.  
The ship's mates  
pushed the people  
up a ramp  
to board the ship.  
Vito felt  
like a farm animal.

The ship  
was on the ocean  
for 15 long days.  
Finally, the trip was over.  
Vito was in New York.  
He was in America.

## Glossary

Definitions and examples of certain words and terms used in the story

---

### Chapter 1 — Hard Times in Italy page 1

**shaking** — Moving something rapidly to and fro, back and forth.  
*...shaking his head from side to side.*

**rubbing** — Moving one's hand back and forth over a surface; here, his head.  
*"No, no, not that," said Vito, rubbing his head.*

**wearing out (to wear out)** — To be used a lot and become less useful or strong.  
*And our land is wearing out.*

**make a better living** — To improve one's life, such as having more money and better things.  
*"We could make a better living," said Vito.*

---

### Chapter 2 — A Ship to America page 6

**hugged (to hug)** — To hold someone closely.  
*They kissed and hugged.*

**dock** — The place where ships are tied.

*On the dock he bought a book.*

**mate** — An officer on a ship.

*A ship's mate tied a little tag ...*

**ramp** — A walkway with no steps for going into a ship or building.

*The ship's mates pushed the people up a ramp.*

**board** — To get on a large vehicle such as a bus, plane, or ship.

*The ship's mates pushed the people up a ramp to board the ship.*

---

### Chapter 3 — New York page 11

**lifted (to lift)** — To pick something up.

*He lifted them into place.*

**chicken** — Afraid to do something or take a chance.

*"It's easy money! Are you chicken?"*

**(to) bet** — To take a chance to get some money by playing a game; gambling.

*"I don't want to bet any money," Vito told him.*