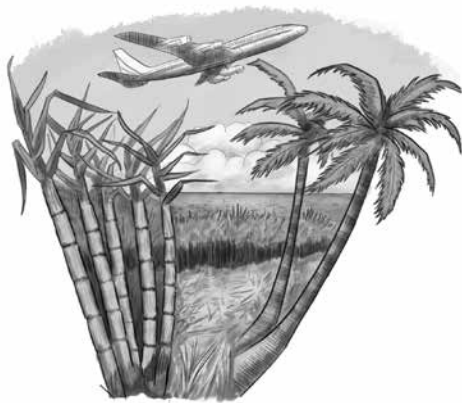


The Hopes and Dreams Series
Cuban-Americans

A Different Home

A story based on history



Second Edition

Tana Reiff

Illustrations by Tyler Stiene

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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.

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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)
Two Hearts (Greek-Americans)
Hungry No More (Irish-Americans)
Sent Away (Japanese-Americans)
A Different Home (Cuban-Americans)
The Family from Vietnam (Vietnamese-Americans)

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1 Leaving Home

High Over Cuba, 1962

“Look hard!”
said Mario Perez
to the little boy.
“You can still see
the sugar cane fields.”
He pointed
out the airplane window.

Mario had to speak loudly
over the plane’s engines.
He pulled the boy
close to the window.
The little boy
pressed his face
against the glass.

“See down there?”
Mario shouted.
“Sugar cane season
is almost over now.”

“I see what you mean,”
said the boy.

“The fields look
more brown than green.”

“Ah, it is hard
to say goodbye
to our home,”
said Mario sadly.
“We Cubans
grow such sweet cane.
We make
such fine sugar.”

Mario told the boy
about his family.
How they had owned
a big sugar business.
How he had helped out
in all parts
of the business.
How they shipped sugar
all over the world.

“Then why
are you flying
to the United States?”
asked the boy.

“Try to understand,”
said Mario.
“Cuba has seen
a big change.
New leaders
took over the country.
Now, some people
no longer fit in.
Some people
must start all over.
My parents
stayed in Cuba
to run the business.
Only now,
they do not own it.
The government
owns everything.
My parents sent me
to work in the U.S.
They say
I will be better off.
Maybe they will come later.
What about you?
Why are you flying
to the U.S.?”

“My parents
don’t want me
to go to school in Cuba.
They said that someone
from the church
will meet me
at the airport.”

“You are flying
all by yourself?”

The little boy
nodded his head.
His eyes were down.

“You will be all right,”
Mario told him.
But he worried
about his own family.
Mama and Papa
had very little left.
And he would not be there
to help them.

He looked down
at his clothes.

A second shirt
was in his bag.
That was all he had.
In Cuba,
before Castro took over,
he had lots of clothes.
He had everything
he ever needed.
He knew
life would be different now.

Mario turned his head
toward the window.
With each passing second,
the island of Cuba
grew smaller.
Before long,
Cuba was a tiny dot
in the ocean.
A few seconds later,
it was gone.
In all of his 23 years,
Mario Perez had never felt
so alone.

He turned
when the little boy
pulled at his shirt.

“When can we
go back home?”
the boy asked.

“Soon, I hope,”
said Mario.
“When things get better.
You wait and see.”
He wanted
to give the boy hope.
But deep in his heart
he was afraid
things might only get worse.

It was a short trip
to Miami, Florida.
Only about an hour.
The plane touched ground
with a hard bump.
And then it rolled,
slowly and smoothly,
to a stop.



2 Miami, Florida

As a Cuban,
Mario was not alone
in Miami.
He was one of thousands.

The city of Miami
was old and run-down.
The weather
was warm,
as in Cuba.
Palm trees
were everywhere,
as in Cuba.
And all the Cubans
spoke Spanish.
So most of them
stayed in Miami.

Mario got off the plane.
First he had to check in.

Like all the refugees,
he answered many questions.
The church people
gathered the little boy
and the other children.
Mario waved goodbye.

Mario was sent
to a house
for Cuban refugees.
He could stay there
until he found
a place to live.
There he met
a new friend.
The young man's name
was Domingo Gonzales.

“We can go
to El Refugio,”*
said Domingo.
“They help Cuban refugees
find jobs.
They will give us money
for food and rent
till we get a job.”

*the Cuban Refugee Center

“I do not want
free handouts,”
said Mario.
“I will find my own job.
I will make my own money.
And soon enough,
I will go home
to Cuba.”

Mario found a job
in a grocery store.
He and Domingo
moved into two rooms
in an old house.
Three nights a week
Mario went to school.
He already knew
some English.
But he needed
to learn more.
Some nights
he felt too tired
to go to school,
but he never
missed a class.

Mario worked hard.
But he could not say
he liked his job.
Back home,
he had helped his parents
run a big business.
Now he opened boxes.
He took jars
out of the boxes.
He stamped prices
on the tops
and put the jars
on the shelves.

Back home,
Mario wore
a suit and tie
to work.
Here, he wore
a white apron.
He felt out of place.

Back home,
Mario had worked
with a lot of money.

The grocery store
would not let him
touch money.

“I don’t mind
hard work,”
he told Domingo one night.
“I don’t mind
long hours,
but this is not
my kind of work.”

“Go to the refugee center,”
Domingo said.
“I’m telling you,
the people there
want to help Cubans.
Go!”

“All right, I will,”
said Mario.
“After work tomorrow.”



3 Leaving Miami

The Cuban Refugee Center
was in a tall building.
Mario put his head back
and looked toward the sky.
The building
was 17 stories high.
Its golden sides
rose up to a copper dome
on top.
Mario went inside.

“What are you good at?”
a woman there asked,
in Spanish.

“Back home
I helped to run
a big sugar business,”
said Mario in English.
“I know quite a bit
about business.

I am good with numbers.
And I often have
bright ideas.”

“And you speak English
very well,”
said the woman,
this time in English.
“Have you ever worked
in a bank?”

“No,”
said Mario.
“But I have worked
with a bank.
I know how banks work.”

The woman
pulled out a paper.
“There’s a job for you
in Ohio,”
she said.
“It’s in a bank.
They need someone
who can speak
both Spanish and English.

You will help the bank
do business
with Spanish speakers.
We will pay your way
to Ohio.
We will also give you
50 dollars.
It will help you
get on your feet.
A church in Ohio
will find you
a place to live.”

“Ohio?”
Mario asked.
“I’m sorry,
but isn’t that up north?
I do not want to leave Miami.
When it’s time
to return to Cuba
I want to be here,
ready to go!”

“Don’t worry,”
said the woman.
“We will pay for you
to come back to Miami
when the time comes.”

“And what if my parents
decide to leave Cuba?
They think
I am in Miami.
I can’t tell them
I am in Ohio.
If I contact them
they will be in trouble.
How will they find me?”

“If they come,
we will contact you,”
said the woman.
“But you must know,
Cubans are waiting
to get out of the country.
There are not enough planes
for everyone.
Leaving Cuba
is getting very hard.”

All of this
was bad news
for Mario.
He put his head down.
“I have never lived
in cold weather,”
he said.

“And I don’t want to be
the only Cuban in Ohio.
I don’t know
if I should go
to Ohio.”

“Not enough jobs
here in Miami,”
said the woman.
“If you don’t want
to work in a grocery store,
you don’t have much choice.”

“All right,”
said Mario.
“I must do
what I must do.”

He went
to tell Domingo
he was leaving Miami.
Mario was not happy
to be going away.
He wished
his whole family
had left Cuba together.

A week later,
Mario left for Ohio.
He had left Cuba,
his first home.
Now he was leaving
the other Cubans
in Miami.

He took a train
to Ohio.
He sat by a window.
He watched
as the land rushed by.
Fields and mountains.
Towns and cities.
It was as if his past
were rushing by
as fast as the train.
Where was home?
Where had it gone?
Would he ever find it?

A man in blue
walked up
to Mario's seat.
"Would you care
for a pillow?"
he asked.

“Yes, thank you,”
said Mario in English.
But, as he rested his head
on the pillow, in his sleep
he still dreamed
in Spanish.

Glossary

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

Chapter 1 — Time to Leave page 1

sugar cane — A tall, thick plant that is the source of sugar.

“You can still see the sugar cane fields.”

pressed (to press) — To push against something.

The little boy pressed his face against the glass.

shipped (to ship) — To send things. Large items are often sent by ship.

How they shipped sugar all over the world.

better off — In a situation which is better than another one.

They say I will be better off.

Chapter 2 — Miami, Florida page 7

run-down — Not in good repair; old and worn.

The city of Miami was old and run-down.

check in — To report to an office or hotel.

First he had to check in.

handouts — Items like clothes and food given to people who need them.

“I do not want free handouts.”

stamped (to stamp) — To mark something with a device that prints information.

He stamped prices on the tops and put the jars on shelves.

apron — A cloth covering to protect clothing. Often used in preparing food.

Here, he wore a white apron.



Chapter 3 — Leaving Miami page 12

rushed (to rush) — To move past very quickly.

He watched as the land rushed by.

rested (to rest) — To place part of the body on something comfortable.

He rested his head on the pillow.

Chapter 4 — Welcome to Ohio page 19

icing — The sweet covering on a cake.

Icing on the top spelled out “Welcome!”

speed things up (to speed up) — To make something happen faster.

I could put my parents on the list. Maybe speed things up.