

The Hopes and Dreams Series
Greek-Americans

Two Hearts

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)
Hungry No More (Irish-Americans)
Sent Away (Japanese-Americans)
Two Hearts (Greek-Americans)

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1 Adonia Needs a Husband

A Mountain Village in Greece, 1910

“We are poor as dirt,”
said George Stavros’s mother.
“And you are too young
to make money.
Our only hope
is for your sister
to get a good husband.
But how do we find
a good husband for her?
We have no dowry.
No gift of money
for a man.
Your father is dead.
And Greece
is in a sorry state.
Many men
are out of work.
So what can we do?”

George’s sister Adonia
was dark and pretty.

But being pretty
was not as important
as having money.
And the more money
a family had,
the better the husband
a young woman
might get.

“Poor Adonia,”
said Mama.
“Look at her.”

George’s sister
sat by the one window
of the little house.
“Maybe I could find
a good man,
even without a dowry,”
she said.

“You dream,”
said Mama.
“I have high hopes
for my children.
You will not marry
just any man
who comes along.”

Mama rocked
in her chair.
Like all Greek widows
she wore only black.
She would wear black
until the day she died.
She was only 40 years old.
She had no hope
of having another husband
of her own.
Her only hope
was for her children.

George began to sing.
*I want to go
to far away lands.
To far away lands
I must go.*

“What is this song?”
Mama asked.

“It’s about America,”
said George.
“All the boys
sing this song.
In fact, Mama,
a man spoke
with some of us boys.

He has jobs for us
in America.
I can go there
and make money
for Adonia's dowry."

Mama looked George
right in the face.
"You mean to tell me
Greek boys can go
to a far away land
for work?"
Mama thought
for just a moment.
Then she said,
"I will tell you
what I think.
George, you should go
to America.
Send us money
for your sister.
We will be all right
until you come home."

But when the day came
for George to leave,
Mama was not so ready
to see him go.

There were tears
in her eyes
as George kissed her goodbye.

The boys walked
in a line
down the mountain.
Each boy
carried a heavy pack
on his back.

George turned around
for one more look
at the village.
The little houses
were tiny white boxes
against the green mountain.
He could see
the open fields
high up the mountain.
There he had watched
a little herd of goats.
George would never forget
those happy days.
He did not want to leave.
This was home.
The mountain.
The village.

The country of Greece.
George wondered
if he would ever again
see anything so beautiful.
Yet he couldn't wait
to make a good dowry
for dear Adonia.

At the bottom
of the mountain
George picked up
a little, round, gray stone.
He put it
in his pocket.
There it stayed,
for the whole trip
to America.



2 The Shoeshine Boy

When George and his friends
set foot in New York,
some men met them
at Ellis Island.

“Come with me,”
said one man to George.

“I am your padrone.
I will take you
to your job.”

He tipped
his round, black hat.

He took George
to a busy street
deep in the busy city.
They turned down
a little side street.
They went inside
one of the buildings.
George followed the man
up the stairs,
up five floors.

They walked
to a room
at the end
of a dark hall.

“You will sleep there.”
The padrone
pointed to a bed.
“With two other boys.
Two beds.
Six boys.
Not so bad!”

George was afraid
to say anything.
All he did
was look away.
He had never lived
in a place like this.
The room
had two beds
and nothing more.
It smelled bad.
There was no window.
The beds
had no sheets,
just rough old blankets.

“All right, then,”
said the padrone.
“Now I will show you
where you will work.”

Out on the street again,
George took a deep breath.
The air
did not smell clean
like the mountain air
back home.
But it was better than
that little room.
He walked
behind the padrone
to the next block.
The padrone stopped
at a bootblack shop.

“You will
shine shoes here,”
he told George.
“Meet your boss.
This is Kostas.
This is his shop.
You will work here.
Kostas will feed you.”

Now I will go.
I'll stop back soon
and check on you.
Good day!"
The padrone
tipped his black hat
and left the shop.

“Now watch me,”
Kostas said.
“I will show you
how to do
a perfect spitshine!”
The boy watched
as Kostas
ran the shoeshine rag
over the shoe.
He made the rag
fly back and forth.
George wondered
how he could ever work
as fast as Kostas.

But each day,
George worked faster
than the day before.
Men in suits came by
from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

George shined
their shoes and boots
until he could see
his own face
in the toes.
To pass the time,
he tried to understand
people speaking English.
Every day
the padrone came by
to pick up the boy's tips.
Every night
George went to his room.
His arms, neck, and back ached.

But Kostas said,
“Why do they send me
lazy boys like you?”

“I try very hard,”
said George.

“You and I—
we're stuck
with each other,”
said Kostas.
“And don't try
to run away!”

Heaven only knows
what your padrone
would do to you.
So get on the stick!
Work better!
Work faster!”

The one good part
of George’s life
was making friends
with an older boy
in the shop.

“When do we get paid?”
George asked Gus
after a few months
on the job.

“I get paid
next month,”
Gus said.
“20 dollars
for the year!
You won’t get a cent
until you finish
your first year here.”

“No pay for a year?”
George asked.

“That’s the deal,”
said Gus.

“I came here
to make money
for my sister’s dowry,”
said George.
“Now I’m stuck
in this bootblack shop.”
He was almost crying.

“You’re not stuck,”
said Gus.
“You can walk out
anytime you wish.”

“Why don’t you leave?”
George asked Gus.

“I’d have to find
a place to live,”
said Gus.
“The padrones
are not kind people.
But they do keep
a roof over our heads.
Put in some time here
and it pays off.”

George didn't feel good
about any of this news.
He couldn't see himself
waiting a whole year
to get paid.
He was only a boy,
and he felt very alone.
He didn't feel ready
to be on his own
in a strange country.

Then an old friend
from his village
told him about a restaurant
in the city.
It would be easy
to get work there.

The next day,
George didn't show up
for work.
He headed downtown.
He walked
into the restaurant
and never returned
to the bootblack shop.

Glossary

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

Chapter 1 — Adonia Needs a Husband page 1

dowry — Money that is paid to a man for marrying a family's daughter.

We have no dowry.

sorry state — In this case, weak or poor condition.

And Greece is in a sorry state.

rocked (to rock) — To move one's body back and forth.

Mama rocked in her chair.

herd — Many animals in a group, usually watched by a person.

There he had watched a little herd of goats.

Chapter 2 — The Shoeshine Boy page 7

shoeshine boy — A boy whose job is to shine people's shoes.

set foot — To arrive, usually for the first time.

When George and his friends set foot in New York, some men met them.

padrone — A man who helps immigrants find a job. He may take part of their pay.

I am your padrone. I will take you to your job.

tipped (to tip) — To lift one's hat slightly as a gesture to show good manners or just to say "hello" or "goodbye."

He tipped his round, black hat.

bootblack shop — A shop where people bring their boots to be cleaned and polished.

The padrone stopped at a bootblack shop.

spitshine — A very bright shoeshine. The shiner may use his spit to increase the shine.

I will show you how to do a perfect spitshine!

rag — A piece of cloth used for cleaning or wiping.

He made the rag fly back and forth.

tips — The extra money customers may give to the person who gives a service.
Every day the padrone came by to pick up the boy's tips.

get on the stick — Do better and don't complain.
So get on the stick!

pays off (to pay off) — To have good results from the work you do.
Put in some time here and it pays off.

show up — To appear; to be where you should be.
The next day, George didn't show up for work.

Chapter 3 — The Restaurant Job page 15

No matter — It is not important.
No matter. No need to speak to clear tables!

take you on — To hire someone.
But I can't take you on in those clothes.

busboy — A restaurant worker who clears and cleans the tables.
I need a busboy right away.