

The Hopes and Dreams Series
Mexican-Americans

The Magic Paper

A story based on history



Tana Reiff

Illustrations by Tyler Stiene

PRO LINGUA  ASSOCIATES

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Orders: 800 366 4775

E-mail: orders@ProLinguaAssociates.com

SAN: 216-0579

Webstore: www.ProLinguaAssociates.com

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Text ISBN 13: 978-0-86647-383-5; 10: 0-86647-383-1

Audio CD ISBN 13: 978-0-86647-384-2; 10: 0-86647-384-X

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.

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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.

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.

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1 The Visa

Mexico City, Mexico, 1980

The line of people
seemed a mile long.
It seemed
half of Mexico
wanted a visa today.
The line moved very slowly.

Teresa Garcia
had been here
since early morning.
Now it was 3:00
in the afternoon.
She was hungry.
Sometimes she sat
on the ground
to rest her feet.

Then someone
poked her.
She turned around.
“Need a visa?”
a young man asked her.

“That’s why I’m here,”
Teresa said.
“I need to visit
my aunt and uncle.
They live in Los Angeles.
My aunt is sick.
I want
to take care of her.
I don’t plan
to stay in the U.S.
My family is here
in Mexico City.”

The young man
put his face
close to Teresa’s ear.
“You will never
get a visa here,”
he whispered.
“Many people
are turned down.
But I can get you one.
Real fast.”

“A real visa?”
Teresa asked.

“It will look real.
That’s what matters,”
said the man.
“You give me
your pesos.
I’ll bring your visa
in one hour.”

Teresa walked away
from the long line.

The young man
led her around the corner.
He took her picture.
Then he took her money.

“I’ll be back
in one hour,”
he said.
“You have my word.”

Teresa waited.
She wasn’t sure
she had done
the right thing.

What would happen
if the fake visa
didn't work?
Or what if the man
ran away
with her money?

But an hour later,
true to his word,
he came back.
He handed Teresa
her new visa.
"Have a great trip!"
he smiled.

The next day
Teresa said goodbye
to her family.
She walked
to the bus station.
She got on a bus
heading north.
Two days later,
the bus
pulled into Los Angeles.



2 Los Angeles

“Oh, Tia*!
I am so sorry you are sick.
Oh, but Los Angeles
is so nice!”
Teresa said to her aunt.
“Now I see
how very poor
the people in Mexico are!
Here, there are jobs.
People can eat
whenever they are hungry.”

“This is true,”
said her aunt Silvia.
“We do not
run out of food.
We are far from rich.
But we are not
dirt poor either.”

“Do you think
I could work
while I am here?”
asked Teresa.

*Tia means aunt in Spanish. Tio means uncle.

“After you
are feeling better?
I want to pay
for my own food.
And I would love
to send money home.
My family
really needs it.”

“You may not work,”
said Silvia.
“You do not have
the right kind of visa.”

Her uncle
was shaking his head.
“I can find you work,”
said Ruben.
“In a dress factory.
I know people there.
No one there
will check your visa.”

So, when Tia felt better,
Teresa went to work
in a dress factory.

She got paid in cash.
Not by the hour.
It was piece work.
She got paid
for each dress she sewed.
The faster she worked,
the more money
she made.
She worked
12 hours a day
to make more money.

One day,
Teresa's nose
began to run.
It must be a cold,
she told herself.
But days later,
her nose
was still running.
She felt hot
all the time.
She could not work.
She was sick,
but no work,
no pay.

“You are not well,
dear girl,”
said Silvia.
“The dress factory
made you sick.
The air in that place
can get pretty bad.
Now it is my turn
to take care of you.”

“Tia, I have something
to tell you,”
Teresa began.
“I have already stayed
in the U.S.
too long.
My visa is no good now.
You are feeling better.
Maybe this would be
a good time for me
to go back to Mexico.”

“You cannot go
when you are sick,”
said Silvia.
“You must stay here
until you feel better.”

In a few days
Teresa felt better.
But she did not want
to leave Los Angeles.

Work was hard to find
back home.
She could never make
as much money
as she did
in the dress factory.
If she stayed here,
her family back home
would be better off.

“Stay with us
as long as you want,”
Ruben told her.
“Both Tia and I
have green cards.
We may live here
as long as we want.
But lots of people
live here without papers.”

“I don’t want Teresa
to get into trouble,”
said Silvia.

“What is the worst thing
that could happen?”
Ruben asked Silvia.
“They would send her
back to Mexico.”

“Oh, thank you
for letting me stay,”
said Teresa.
“I will
take my chances.
I will stay
a little longer.
I will find
a new job.
But I’m afraid
I will not feel safe.
I will look
around every corner.
I will always be afraid
of getting caught.”

Glossary

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

Chapter 1 — The Visa page 1

poked (to poke) — To touch someone or something with a finger or stick.

Then someone poked her.

take care of — To help someone who is ill, disabled, or young.

I want to take care of her.

whispered (to whisper) — To speak very quietly.

You will never get a visa here," he whispered.

turned down (to turn down) — Not accepted.

Many people are turned down.

fake — Not legal; false.

What if the fake visa didn't work?

work (to work) — To be successful.

What if the fake visa didn't work?

pulled into (to pull into) — To arrive at.

The bus pulled into Los Angeles.

Chapter 2 — Los Angeles page 5

dirt poor — Very poor.

We are not dirt poor.

check (to check) — To look at and inspect.

No one there will check your visa.

piece work — Not by the hour; payment for each product finished.

It was piece work.

to run (runny nose) — A condition in which “water” drips from the nose.

Teresa’s nose began to run.

better off — In a better situation, usually financially.

Her family back home would be better off.

green card — A permit to live and work in the U.S.

Both Tia and I have green cards.

papers — Legal documents such as a green card.

... lots of people live here without papers.

Chapter 3 — Benito page 11

border — The line that separates two countries. *You will get caught at the border.*