



Diary

*Written by
Carmen, Mariella and Rosanna*

My name is Lucia and I am 20 years old. My parents died two years ago and now I'm the only one who takes care of the family: I've got three brothers and four sisters, and they're all younger than me. Three months ago two of my sisters, Rosanna and Carmen, left our village to go to America. They are 17 and 16 years old and they're two clever girls, we all had high hopes for them; we knew many families that moved and now have a better life in the other continent and we all decided they deserved this possibility.

Of course we are not rich, it was incredibly difficult to find the money to buy the tickets from here to Naples, where the ships leave for America, and then from there to New York, but we managed to do it. They left one day at 5 in the morning. They left with nothing but a small bundle, a pair of shoes, a change of clothes and little money, maybe just to buy three new vests once arrived. I cried a lot, but I still don't know if I cried for them, leaving and starting a new life without any certainties, or for me, staying here with no possibilities of improving my family's conditions.

They wrote to me when they arrived in Naples after six days and they told me their journey went well, they didn't walk a lot because they were lucky enough to stay on the cart most of the time. They were going on board and they felt very nervous. After that letter I hadn't received anything from them until yesterday: Rosanna wrote to me and she said she is now in Ellis Island, her immigration request has been accepted and she has to wait there for 40 days before leaving and entering the city. But after this good news she told me that Carmen is not with her and she has no idea where she could be right now. When they were on the ship there was a problem she has told me nothing about and Carmen was forced to move to another ship which took her probably to South America.

I am not brave enough to inform my siblings and I can't find a way to help Rosanna and Carmen...what should I do? Lord help us all.

Lucia

I'm Carmen and I'm 16. Actually, next month I will be 17...this means that I'm becoming an adult. An adult! People say that when you reach adulthood you can't act like a baby any longer. Well, I don't know if I still need a little bit of time or I've already entered the adults' world for my current situation.

I know exactly where I come from: a very poor Italian family made of three brothers and five sisters who own **NOTHING**. Sometimes our eldest sister, Lucia, starves to feed the younger ones. She told me and my almost twin-sister (we were born with only 10 months' difference) to go to America, find something with our skills that could keep us alive. What I don't know is where I am now. What happened? I've never arrived at Ellis Island. Why? I was so confused that I remember only the sea (an endless sea) and the ship which literally **SAVED** my life. Rosanna? Well, I really hope she survived.

I'm in this new country full of people who all stare at me and speak a strange language...they even make fun of me! When I try to say my name they say: "Oh, señorita Carmencita!" and I do hate that name!

I'm a vase full of fear and worries, but everyday I try to keep the hope alive. My siblings are constantly in my thoughts, I always wonder whether they are good or whether Rosanna has got to her destination safe and sound or not. Finally...what about me? Will I survive? Will I be able to handle all of this? In these moments I understand that yes, I'm ready to be an adult for me and my family.

With love and nothing else

Carmencita ----> NO! Carmen

My name is Rosanna, I'm 17 and I left my family three months ago to go to America and find a job to help my brothers and my sisters; I left them in Potenza with my eldest sister Lucia who will take care of them while I am absent from home. I left with my sister Carmen, my "twin" (because she was born just 10 months after me), one morning in June to arrive in Naples and then to board to Ellis Island. We reached Naples in one week, and we took with us only little money, shoes, some pieces of bread and cheese to eat during the voyage, and clean clothes. In Naples we were visited by a doctor to receive the permission to continue our journey: if we had been ill, we wouldn't have had any chances to board!

After four hours, my sister and I boarded the 'Saint Lucy': when I read the name on the ship I immediately thought of my sister Lucia, alone in our terrible and miserable land.

The voyage was awful, I felt sick every day and every night, because I'd never ever been on a ship in my entire life, so I didn't eat much, even if we had three meals a day.

Five or six days before the arrival at Ellis Island, at 5.00 A.M. a deep voice woke all the passengers up and invited us to go to the deck. There the captain said that 5 passengers had to go with him on a new ship which would arrive directly in New York, without stopping at Ellis Island to make other examinations. Straight away I said to Carmen to go on the new ship without me. Crying she left me without saying a word.

I arrived at Ellis Island one week later.

I was subjected to all the examinations and now I live in a tiny apartment in New York with a Sicilian girl, she's a very lovely girl with great ambitions: she would like to be a teacher and in her spare time she makes Sicilian cakes and sweets for poor people.

Every day I work hard in a small factory, with other women, for my family in Italy and every hour I think of my twin Carmen: I'm still waiting for her, I don't know where she is, but I hope with all my heart she's fine!

I hope everything goes well!

Rosanna