

As luck would have it

Success, disillusion and happenstance of new Italians in America

Dedicated to all the insatiable
and uprooted,
searching for a dream,
searching for new roots
in a place that doesn't have any.

by Elena Attala-Perazzini

Real stories of real people interviewed by the author.

Why leave? Why escape or seek something different, something often indefinite, in another country? Seven real stories: Italians of the last decades who decide to start all over again on the other side of the world. A timeless dream. No longer fueled by poverty and hunger. The new immigrants have different attitudes and reasons for departing. Most of them expect to find better opportunities and a rewarding career. Others no longer identify with their own country. Some are simply fleeing lives of boredom and dejection. All over Europe, America and the American dream are still the first options for a new life.

Serendipities and misfortunes pull the strings of these stories, as well as obstinacy and humbleness of the protagonists, some of them will succeed, while others will decide, inept, to retire.

One of the first Italians acclaimed on Broadway is **Mario Fratti**, a dramaturge from L'Aquila who wrote the **musical Nine**. Determined to come to America, he teaches himself English. In Venice, the encounter with a charming American journalist and, a few months later, with Lee Strasberg settles his decision to leave. He shares years of friendship with Tennessee Williams, indulge in his attraction for women and, thanks to one of them, decides to convert one of his scripts into a musical. But Italians don't have a good reputation on Broadway. He will struggle for seven long years until he'll see his stage adaptation of Fellini's 8 1/2 have a successful run in theaters and become an Hollywood movie.

Dr. Giovannella Moscovici, from an aristocratic family in Rome, has been married for two weeks when her husband tells her that they're going to America. He will work with the team that discovers the poliomyelitis vaccine and she will become a great scientist working also in the contradictory world of stem cell research. The story begins with a phone call announcing the homicide of one of her colleagues. She might know who the killer is. The couple will spend over fifty years in many cities of the United States, moving from hospital to hospital, buying and loosing houses, following the research projects that eventually bring Giovannella to work jointly with a Nobel Prize scientist.

Half a century after her arrival in the States, Moscovici's story intertwines with that of **Stefania Mondello**, a bright young doctor from Palermo. Mondello is working on an important project about brain biomarkers and, in 2008, ends up moving into Moscovici's house in Gainesville a spectral, monotonous town where some of her colleagues feel cornered by their own indomitable passion for science. During the birth of a new friendship, the mystery of the homicide will be revealed.

Gino Angelini, from San Clemente in Romagna region, is now one of the most celebrated chefs in Los Angeles. He has worked privately for many American and Italian celebrities including the Pope. His departure from Italy begins as a joke and as a challenge. He is already forty-three years old with an established career in Italy. The choice is difficult. The decision to pursue success in the States comes as happenstance and the price to pay is high: living in a constant state of nostalgia for his hometown.

A very **young businessman** enters the luxurious, sparkling, pricy New York life with a specific goal: to make a lot of money. With the nice, serious face of someone you can definitely trust, he becomes the **boyfriend of a top Hollywood movie star** and participated with her to the Oscars. After three years of successful international frauds and millions in profit, he got arrested in his thirtyfive thousand a month Central Park apartment. He was in trial for fraud and **sentenced** to more than four years in jail. He came out on May 2012. It's the story of a young boy who finds himself in an attractive, dangerous game and falls into the avidity mistake of an inexperienced gambler. His identity might be revealed.

Diego hails from a small town on the Tirreno's coast. He is bored with his job and his friends and fed up with the Berlusconi government. He arrives in New York welcomed by a lawyer met in Amsterdam and a weird, 'too-good-to-be-true' surprise. He gives the illusion of a fantastic, exciting life and an invented apartment with beautiful views in a skyscraper, when skyping with his friends. In reality he is consumed by the city nightlife and by drugs to the point where he's forced to leave, before he loses not only his mind but also his dignity.

Angela is a strong career-focused woman from Como. She's married to a sweet man, has a child, and a quiet, even life. She's been hiding her real identity from the world and decides to fly to New York, secretly, in search of an answer to her double life. On the streets of the West Village she feels free to be herself, almost ready to forget everything and stay in New York, but guilt overwhelms her. When she goes back home, a shocking surprise awaits her.

While the last story of the book, the tale of **Savia** is the first, chronologically speaking. She arrives in Ellis Island with three small children in tow. Daniele, her husband, is supposed to meet her there. Instead an unknown man claims to be the one she should follow. She never wanted to leave her hometown in the Alps in Trentino, and never stops trying to convince her husband to move back there. But they stay. He and his cousins start a unique business that to this day the **Salvadori** descendants are successfully perpetuating in the tristate area.