

NEW-YORK.

# The Orphan of ELLIS ISLAND

A TIME-TRAVEL ADVENTURE

ELLIS-ISLAND.



Will Dominic ever return  
from the past?

## Elvira Woodruff

# CHAPTER ONE

"WELCOME TO ELLIS ISLAND," the ranger from the National Park Service said to the group of fifth-graders standing before her. "This museum is dedicated to the millions of immigrants who passed through these buildings on their way to becoming American citizens."

There was one fifth-grader, however, who was not thinking about the buildings or the millions of immigrants who passed through them. This fifth-grader was thinking about his feet.

*If only they would stop growing,* Dominic Cantori thought. He stared down at his toes, which were painfully squeezed into a pair of old sneakers. Then he looked around him at all the sneakers on his classmates' feet. Some looked as if they had never been worn before.

Dominic sighed. He longed to have a new, fashionable pair of sneakers, a pair that fit. But he knew it wasn't going to happen any time soon.

Having new, fashionable sneakers, and keeping up with Dominic's quickly growing feet was almost impossible as long as he lived with one foster family after another.

His feet had grown so much in the past few weeks that he was unable to tie his laces, and he finally just pulled them out.

Whenever he could, when no one was watching, he would slip his feet out of the tight sneakers so that his cramped toes could unbend. He checked now to see that no one was looking, and as the ranger talked on, Dominic silently worked his left heel out of his sneaker.

"As we search our family trees, many of us can find relatives who came through Ellis Island as immigrants," the ranger continued.

Dominic stood for a moment, wiggling his free toes within his sock, wondering about his family tree. What would it look like? He imagined a little twig with one tiny leaf hanging from it. On the leaf was his name. That was it.

Dominic had never known his family. His parents had both died when he was a baby. He had no sisters or brothers. There were no grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, or uncles. The state had tried to locate any living relatives, but none could be found. Dominic had become a ward of the state, and no one had come to claim him. Now he

was living with his third foster family this year, in Brooklyn, New York.

Besides a few possessions that fit into three suitcases, the most important thing that Dominic owned was a gold key that hung from a chain around his neck. You could see that the key was very old. It had been with his mother's belongings when she died.

"It's not real gold," a kid in one of his classes had pointed out, but that didn't matter to Dominic. What mattered were the initials, S.C., scratched on the key. Dominic loved to rub his fingers over them. Sal Cantori had been his father's name, and he was certain the key must have belonged to him.

The key's history, like Dominic's, was a mystery. He had no idea what it was meant to open, but it was the only thing left from his family, something he could touch, something solid. It was his "lucky key" and he wore it always on a chain around his neck. But Dominic wasn't sure just how much his lucky key was working.

In fact, he had been a kid with incredibly bad luck. Dave Santos, his caseworker, had called him just yesterday. Dominic's current foster family regretted to inform him that things weren't going to work out after all. They were moving to California at the end of the month, and they wouldn't



**It all began  
as a class trip.**

Dominic Cantori has a painful secret. He's an orphan, and he doesn't want anyone to know it.

One day, while on a class trip to Ellis Island, a tour guide asks everyone about their families. To avoid answering, Dominic flees from the group and hides in a closet where he falls asleep.

When he wakes up, the museum is deserted. Lonely and afraid, he picks up one display telephone after another and talks to the recorded voices of immigrants who tell about their lives in faraway places. To Dominic's amazement, an old Italian immigrant answers him....And before he knows it, he's transported back in time—to Italy in 1908!



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