



A LITTLE RASCAL

The True Story of Anthony Rossi

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NOTE TO THE TEACHER

A Little Rascal is written as a three-chapter story. You may tell or read aloud this true story in three or five chapters. The chapter divisions for a five-chapter story are designated by ◊.

Pronunciation guide:

Terramoto (ter-rah-mot'-toe)

Birbanti (beer-bahn'-tee)

Arrivederci (ar-ree-veh-dehr'-chee)

Display each illustration where indicated in text, laying volume aside when the story line continues beyond the picture.

Lesson #1

THE DAY OF THE TERRAMOTO

Anthony listened hard in the darkness. He heard the even breathing of his brothers, the ticking of a clock, and then—he heard *it* again, a low rumble that seemed to come from far away. The family’s pet bird flapped his wings frantically against the bars of his cage. Suddenly the room began to roll and windows rattled. Tony felt as if his home were swaying back and forth as he jumped out of bed and ran down the stairs with his family.



Show Illustration #1

“Terramoto!” “Earthquake!” they shouted to each other as they scrambled toward the massive doorway of their home. They clung to each other as the earthquake rumbled and the ground shook. Soon they could no longer tell the thundering noise of terramoto from the crashing of buildings and walls as they fell.

When the shaking stopped, Tony peered cautiously into the early morning dawn. Not a building was left standing in Messina, Italy. The Rossi family had nowhere to go.

“What about Aunt Emilia’s house?” Mother asked as she looked at her husband. “Would we be safe there?”

The family walked to Aunt Emilia’s home out in the country, but even there no one dared to stay indoors as the earthquake’s aftershocks rocked the ground every five minutes. As the earth quaked, homes toppled like toy building blocks.

Hours passed. No one thought of eating. They were too afraid, and besides, there was no food as it was all buried in the ruins. But soon Tony’s empty stomach grumbled. He tried the lemons on Aunt Emilia’s tree, but their sour juice made his stomach cramp in pain.

The family waited for help, for food, and for news of missing relatives. Then a message came. Riccardo, Tony’s older

brother, had been killed in the earthquake. Tony forgot his fear and hunger. His insides felt twisted like a tight knot.

Riccardo had always been generous and caring. He had been away from home caring for a sick relative when the terramoto hit. Six-year-old Tony couldn’t understand that 80,000 people had died along with his brother. All he knew was that he wanted things to be normal again. He missed his big brother so much that now his stomach ached all the time.

Finally, after three days, a rescue ship reached the island of Sicily. Now, there was bread and butter in Messina—and a way to safety. The Rossi family sailed to Syracuse, a town farther along the Sicilian coast which had not been harmed by the earthquake. There, Tony and his four brothers, his parents, and his grandmother lived in a small building until their home could be rebuilt.

Tony thought often about the earthquake. He heard his grandmother speak of Judgment Day and wondered, *Will Judgment Day be like the day of the terramoto?* Looking up into the cloudless, blue sky over Syracuse, Tony thought also about his brother. *Riccardo was good, so he is probably in heaven. If I had died, I don’t think I would have gone to Heaven. I know I am not good.*



Show Illustration #2

Tony was always getting into mischief. By the time the Rossi family moved back to Messina to live in barracks with other families, Tony was called “Birbanti.” “Rascal.” And was he a rascal!

Two years passed and one day Tony saw a “horseless carriage.” He was fascinated by the car and began to run beside it. But the car gained speed and Tony’s excitement grew. He wouldn’t give up! The wheels of