

*Spinoso is a small village in southern
Italy in the province of Basilicata*

A DAY IN SPINOSO

By Lorenzo Caricchio

Awakening, for the first time, in my great-grandfather's house, I see, out of the window, the eternal Apennine Mountains marching north forever, their distant peaks softened in the morning haze of the fresh new day. I watch as the rising sun sharpens the point of Raparo, the mountain that my father must have viewed from this same window when he was a boy, arising in this room that his father had also lived in as a child. I am drawn to the balcony rail to take in the full panorama. Inhaling the cool morning air, laced with the scents of my heritage, my eyes travel along the winding road that leads into the valley (where a river once ran) down to the sparkling depths of the man-made lake nestled at the feet of Spinoso

The stone balustrade that surrounds Spinoso becomes visible in the morning light. Then the sun jumps to the red tile roof tops revealing the bright colors and deep textures within the village. In the narrow cobblestone streets the village patriarchs sit with their backs against the thick, ancient walls of their homes. They watch and comment on the passing day as their neighbors go about their daily rounds walking with measured steps; marking time as they pass each other saying: "Buon Giorno", "Buona Sera" or "Buona Notte", while the bells in the church Campanile sing out the hours, baptisms, weddings and deaths.

Midmorning activity in the village is punctuated by the shouts of children and the friendly arguments of men playing cards. Occasionally a vehicle rumbles through the narrow streets, a hint that the world might be larger, but it quickly passes, disappearing in the labyrinth of Spinoso and life goes on as before the interruption. In homes, the afternoon meal is being prepared, a mini-feast, to be eaten slowly; while families share their thoughts as well as their food. The meal is followed by a rejuvenating period of rest and reflection during the heat of the day before resuming the necessary activities of life.

An evening stroll in the piazza is savored like a sweet desert after dinner. Villagers renew acquaintances and follow up on discussions begun earlier in the day. Jokes are told, lovers and potential lovers meet and children continue to run and play among the adults. The sun lingers along the top of Raparo, as if the mountain were impeding its progress to the other side of the world. Twilight is unhurried; darkness slips in unnoticed, and in the fullness of night the stars intermingle with the lights of other mountain villages until the earth is indistinguishable from the sky.

