

COURAGE FOR TWO

A Dramatic Reading

by

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The muddy, fast-rising flood waters swirled and roared about the gnarled branches of the old scrub oak tree and as he watched, from a fork in the topmost branches, ten-year-old Jeff Arend clung more closely to his four-year-old sister, Janie. It was all like a horrible nightmare: His mother's sudden illness the night before, necessitating a hurried trip to a hospital in the distant city; his father's deep concern at leaving the children, alone, in the isolated farmhouse. The storm that had raged all night, taxing too greatly the levee along the banks of the already swollen river. Then: the mad rush of water and debris that had surrounded and filled the small house; his struggle with Janie to the only sizable tree in sight, the old scrub oak near the barn; Janie's terror and his own fear that had been hidden under an air of bravado that he did not feel; and now—darkness was falling; the water was steadily rising—unless help came soon—but he dare not think of that—Then Janie was speaking:

“Jeff—are—are you scared?”

“Scared? Pooh, I should say not! Why we're in the safest spot in the whole valley: This ol' scrub oak has stood here for a hunderd years, I s'pect. Betcha it's got roots that reach clear to our barn!”

“You—you mean where the barn was, Jeffie. Where do you s'pose our barn is now? And our house?”

“Oh—prob'ly floatin' down the Mississippi, somewhere. Gee, am I glad we got out an' came here 'stid of crawlin' to the roof! It's safer here, even if we are pretty stiff from settin' up here so long! Look, Janie, there goes a hen-house with chickens roostin' on the ridge pole! Wisht they'd float this way an' lay us a few eggs as they pass. Gee whiz, what you cryin' about, again? Big girls like you shouldn't cry!”

“But I'm not so very big an' I'm scared of the water—an' the cold an'—an' I'm afraid Daddy won't find us when he comes. Maybe he won't even come—maybe he'll stay at the hospi'l with Mamma—Maybe he won't know the levee broke an' he'll get drown-ded—”

“Hush, Janie, Papa will find us! He said he'd be home before dark.”

“But there isn't any home—it's just water—and if he doesn't come, who will find us? It's getting dark. No one can see us.”

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---