

# JOEY'S FRIEND

A Dramatic Reading

by

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From the moment he turned the corner and could see the beautiful home of the Bradwells, Joey always watched for the curly head which was pressed against the window pane, awaiting his arrival. For between Joey, a ragged little newsboy, and David, the son of one of the wealthiest men in the city, a staunch friendship had grown. Joey always waved and David, seeing him, would rush out and pour all the loneliness and heartache of the day into the sympathetic ears of his friend.

One evening the little cheeks pressed against the window pane were streaked with tears and there were sobs in his voice, as he ran to meet the little newsboy.

"Oh, Joey--I feel so bad--I'm gonna run away, Joey."

"Wot's the matter, Davy, did yer dad beat cha--if he did--"

"No--no--he didn't--but Joey--You know--I told you about my mamma that went to live in Heaven--an' how I'm so lonesome 'thout her--Well, this morning, my dad told my--Oh, Joey, he's gonna bring home a new mother tonight--a step-mother--an' I got to go 'way!"

"Why you got to go Davy? You better stay here where you got plenty to eat an'--"

"But, Joey, step-mothers are awful things--they whip little boys an' send them to bed without any dinner--an' make their fathers hate them!"

"Say, will they make yer old man drink an' beat cha?"

"Yes--yes--I think so."

"Then you gotta go--yep--you gotta go. Davy, do you think you could stand to jist live on bread an' milk an' sleep on straw with jist ole rags over ya? If you can I'll take care of you---Sure! I oughta take care of you--yer my friend--my best friend, an' a fella oughta die fer his friends--but we gotta get goin' now afore some one spots us!"

Hand in hand the strange pair ran swiftly down the street. Joey finished delivering his papers then led David through a maze of alleys and railroad tracks to a bare room in an abandoned warehouse.

"Well, Davy, this ain't much fer looks, but yer sure welcome. It'll be a lot better'n bein' beat up an' havin' to go to bed hungry. I got some crackers 'n' milk--enough fer you leastways. I et so much las' night that I'm clean chuck full--anyway when a guy has got a good straw bed like this he don't need so much to eat 'cause he kin go right off to sleep, an' fergit about bein' hungry."

For days the city was scoured for some trace of the missing boy, but Joey was faithful to his trust and kept David hidden in the old warehouse. The days were long and lonely but Joey was firm in his refusal to let David play outside.

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