

THE NIGHT DAVID WANTED TO DIE!

THE CAB pulled up in front of the Spanish-modern stucco bungalow. The California sun was shining brightly. There was a light wind blowing and the small palm trees and poinsettia bushes around the house danced in the breeze. The woman who had gotten out of the cab hurried up the walk with a smile on her face. The young boy who had emerged from the cab, behind her, stood still, staring at the house as the taxi raced away. For a long time, he seemed to look blankly before him. After awhile he looked down at the ground and blinked, and pushed some wind-tossed strands of his golden-brown hair out of his eyes. One small tear ran down his face. Quickly, the boy wiped the tear away with the side of his wrist, squared his shoulders and walked into the house.

"I think you'll like it here, David," the lady was saying. The little boy said nothing, "Look," the lady continued, "the living room is so nicely furnished. Let's see, down this hall—" and she disappeared, but her voice trailed after her, "here's my bedroom. Yes, it's just like the man said it would be. And down here is yours. Oh, dear—"

The boy looked in the direction of the voice. There was silence for a moment, and then the lady said, "Oh, well—I guess your bed hasn't arrived yet."

The lady rejoined the boy. Her face was lovely and radiant, but she looked a bit tired. "I'm sorry, hon," she said in a soft voice.

"It's all right, Mom," the boy said.

The woman could see that her son was unhappy—deeply unhappy. For a moment, she averted her eyes from his gaze. She, too, was blinking back tears. And she, too, wanted to hide her unhappiness.

It had been a long and difficult journey west for both of them. All their private belongings back in New Jersey had been packed and shipped to Los Angeles. All their clothes had been packed in numerous suitcases, and then David had had the heartbreaking task of trying to decide which of his favorite personal possessions he could and should take along and which had to be left behind in the little house in West Orange, New Jersey—where he had grown to the age of eleven years and where he had spent so many, many happy hours.

After an improvised dinner and some time spent sorting out clothes and things, David's mom made up the living room couch as a bed for him. She went to her room, leaving the hall light on and her door cracked open just enough so that mother and son would have some kind of "communication" with each other during their first night in this new, strange house.

After tossing and turning for awhile, David's mom got up. She walked down the hall and looked towards the couch in the living room. Her son's back was turned to her and,

though it was a warm night, the sheet was pulled up over his head. Her heart went out to her unhappy offspring. Slowly, she walked over to the couch and sat down on the edge of it. She gently put her hand on David's shoulder.

"David," she said in a soft voice, "it'll be all right one day. You'll see, you'll really learn to like it here."

With his face still buried under the sheet, the boy turned over quickly. She took him into her arms and held him close.

"Never, Mom!" came his muffled voice, as he pressed the sheet tighter. "Never! I hate it here! I want to go back home!"

"No, no, David," his mother said, her voice still very gentle. "It'll be all right. You'll see. Besides, son, you can't stay in the same place forever. Even though it's hard at first, *change* is good for you. Change is good for everyone."

Suddenly, the boy sobbed. There was nothing more to say. His mother held him for a long, long time. Many thoughts ran through her head. David's best friends were all back east—all the boys and girls he'd grown up with. His beloved Grandpa Fred, Uncle Stan and Cousin Barbara—and all those wonderful Saturday night "musicales" in the living room—they were left behind too. Probably the worst part for David was leaving behind his beloved cocker spaniel. "Tips"—who had been too old and too cross to acclimate himself to a new home—had to be left behind. Yes, that had been the hardest part of all.

Finally, the unhappy boy stopped shaking. He limply laid his head back on the pillow. He looked up at his mother and said, "You know, Mom, right now I wish I could die." And his usually sparkly eyes were dull and sad.

His mother quickly pressed her fingers to his lips. "Don't say things like that, David," she cautioned him. He looked away.

"I'm sorry, Mom," he mumbled.

Finally, his mother stood up. She looked at him for awhile and—so that he wouldn't see the tears which were starting to roll down her face—she turned and went back to her room.

Many years have passed since that saddest night ever of David Cassidy's life. Many beautiful, strange, exciting and marvelous things have happened to him. And, yes—he *did* get over his sorrow. And, yes—he *did* not only learn to love his new home, but to love it *and* his friends and his new life—as much as he had loved everything back in New Jersey. And when, a few years later, "Tips" passed away, David even got another dog.

Though he still often goes back "home" to New Jersey to see those beloved relatives, and though he still corresponds with his "best friend" Cousin Barbara—what was once his "new life" has become his *real life*. And he hardly even remembers the night he wanted to die.