

Darren's F

By Linda G. Paulsen

(Based on a true story)

When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God (Mosiah 2:17).

Bryan watched his little brother Darren skip down the porch steps and dash out the gate. Darren hugged a handful of cookies to his chest as he ran. "Jonathan will like these," he called as he disappeared around the corner.

Mom was chuckling as she shut the front door. Bryan shook his head. "Why do you let him get away with it?" he asked her. "You know he's just making Jonathan up."

"Darren must be growing," Mom said. "He's extra hungry."

"Yeah, but he's lying to you, Mom," Bryan huffed.

"I know you think it's unfair, Bryan," Mom said. "But I want to give Darren a chance to admit he's pretending he has a friend named Jonathan."

Bryan snorted. "Jonathan has been getting extra after-school snacks for weeks."

"Maybe so," Mom said. "But Darren is sensitive. I'll think of something."

"Sensitive!" Bryan thought. "This sensitive kid is getting away with lying to Mom."

Another week went by. Almost every day after school, Darren begged for extra snacks for Jonathan. Once, Bryan heard his mom asking Darren why his friend never came to the house himself. "He's really shy," Darren said.

"Why don't you ask Jonathan to play soccer with us?" Bryan suggested slyly.

"Jonathan doesn't like soccer," Darren said.

Bryan gave up. "I guess it doesn't hurt anything to have an imaginary friend," he said to himself. "Maybe he'll outgrow it."

One chilly day, Bryan heard Mom say sternly, "Darren Robins!" She sounded upset.

"Mom is mad at Darren? I have to see this," Bryan thought, slipping down the hall.



riend



“I gave it to Jonathan,” Darren said.

“That was a brand-new coat!” Mom was trying not to shout.

“I know, but Jonathan doesn’t have one. I can wear Bryan’s old one.” Darren stood shivering just inside the front door.

Mom knelt down in front of Darren and looked him in the eyes. “I want you to tell Jonathan he can have the coat, but only if he will come see me and say thank you for it.”

Bryan grinned. Mom was a genius.

The next day, Bryan hurried to be there when Darren got home from school. The front door opened and Darren poked his head inside.

“Mom? Please come here. Jonathan is really shy.”

Mom went to the door. Bryan peered around her to see a boy wearing Darren’s new coat. He had longish tangled hair. His eyes seemed too big for his skinny face. Bryan saw him swallow nervously.

“Thank you for the coat,” the boy whispered, and then dashed away.

“See you, Jonathan,” Darren called as the boy disappeared around the corner. He walked into the house, seeming not to notice that Mom and Bryan were standing there, speechless. Mom finally closed the door.

Later, Mom had a quiet talk with Bryan. “I called the school,” she said. “I should have thought of that sooner. They know about Jonathan’s situation. The counselor said they’re working to help his family. I thought you should know.”

“There’s something else I know,” Bryan said. “My brother is a cool kid.” ♦

“[Service] teaches us to love and understand our fellowmen. . . . It teaches us to think of the needs of others.”³

Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy

