



The Immigrant Boy

Marion Houldsworth

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Joe Clark came to Townsville with his family in 1912 from England. Within a few weeks of arrival the father died and twelve-year old Joe has to become a bread-winner to support his family. His first job was at Rooneys' Sawmill, sweeping sawdust. He is a likeable lad and though he feels himself to be a despised 'Pommy', the men soon take to him. They share their midday crib and pass the hat around when he sings. Other jobs follow, feeding the plumber's horse; creating the sound effects at the open-air Picture-Show and nippering on the railway to the new meatworks at Alligator Creek. Through it all Joe's keen eye and lively mind don't miss much that is going on in the Townsville of the day, the local characters, the opium dens, the illegal gambling and the shanties of Flinders Lane. There isn't a thing he doesn't know about every engine in town so it seems appropriate when at length his mother makes the financial sacrifice necessary to have him apprenticed at the railway. A boy's-eye view of Townsville in the early years of the Twentieth Century.

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