

## Joey's Luck by John Escott

Joey Kerrigan arrived in London in January 1912. He did not have a place to stay.

'It doesn't matter,' he thought, smiling. 'Joey's luck is going to find me a room.'

Joey thought a lot about luck. 'One day I'm going to be rich,' he told everybody. 'Lucky people get rich, and I'm lucky.'

After a lot of walking, he found a room in a house. It was near Tower Bridge. The room wasn't very big but it was cheap. The landlord's name was Mr Webber. He looked Joey up and down.

'What's your name?' he said. 'Where are you from?'

'Joe. Joe... Smith,' Joe said. 'I'm from Ireland.'

'Well, you can have the room,' Webber said, 'but I want two weeks' money now.'

'I've only got one week's money,' Joey said.

'And tomorrow's Sunday,' Webber said. 'You can't find work on a Sunday. So when can you give me the second week's money?'

Joey smiled with his mouth but not his eyes. 'I can find work,' he said. 'I'm lucky. Good things happen to me. It's called Joey's luck.'

On Sunday, Joey stayed in bed all morning and in the afternoon, he went for a walk. After an hour, he took a bag from a woman in Fleet Street.

The woman shouted, 'Stop! Stop!'

But Joey was now fifty metres away, and there were no other people near.

Joey laughed and ran down a little street, then between two tall buildings down to the river.

He stopped and opened the bag. There was some money in it, but not very much. He took the money out, then put the bag into the river.

Later that day, he walked past a bookshop. There were lots of people there, looking at books, and Joey moved carefully between them. For a second he stood behind a fat man, then moved quietly away. The man did not feel Joey's hand in his back pocket, but the man's wallet was now inside Joey's shirt.

It was a big, fat wallet, and when he got back to the house, he gave the landlord the second week's money for the room.

'You found work on a Sunday?' Webber said. 'Where? Who with?'

Joey smiled. 'I told you, I'm lucky. Joey's luck!'

For the next three months, Joey Kerrigan walked the streets of London most days. He stole handbags from

women, or things from shops, and he took wallets from men's pockets. One morning at the beginning of April, he took a wallet from the pocket of an old man with a red face. Joey was usually a very good pickpocket - people never knew anything about it.

But not that morning. The man with the red face was quick. He turned, saw Joey, and shouted.

'Hey! You! That's my wallet! Come back here!'

But Joey was a good runner too. In two seconds, he was round the corner into another street, then round another corner, and then he jumped onto a bus.

'Joey's luck!' Joey said, laughing.

There was more luck for Joey that week.

He first learned about Theo Goldman's money in a pub near his landlord's house. Webber went to the pub most evenings and sat with his friend, Goldman.

Goldman had a shop not far from the pub. He bought and sold a lot of different things - tables, chairs, beds, clocks, watches, books, pictures...

When Joey went into the pub that evening, he saw Webber and Goldman at a table near the window. There were a lot of people in the pub. Joey bought a drink, then found a chair near Webber and Goldman. They did not see him. Joey sat with his back to them, and listened.

'But I need money to buy things when people bring them in,' Goldman said.

'Some money, yes,' Webber answered. 'But a hundred pounds or more? And in the shop? No, no, Theo!'

'It's not in the shop,' Goldman said. 'It's in my room at the back.'

'Do you have a good place to put it?' Webber said.

Goldman laughed. 'A very good place,' he said.

Joey sat with his drink, thinking. He knew Goldman's shop because it was in the same street as Webber's house. Joey often walked past it.

A hundred pounds or more. 'I'm going to get that hundred pounds!' he thought. 'Then I can do anything! Perhaps begin a new life in America!'

He smiled. Joey's luck again!

So the money was in the room at the back, in a very good place. But where was that place?

The next morning Joey walked slowly past Goldman's shop. He did not go in, but looked through the window. The old man was in the shop, but he did not see Joey.

Joey saw an open door to the room at the back of the shop. Through the door, he could see a table, two chairs, and a big cupboard. Was Goldman's money in that cupboard?

Suddenly, the old man looked up, and Joey quickly turned and walked away.

He did not go to bed that night. He put all his things into a bag, sat in an armchair and waited. Midnight came, and went. At two o'clock in the morning, he went down the stairs and out of the house.

It was a cold night and Joey looked up at the moon in the sky.

'Are you a lucky moon?' he said, smiling. 'Joey's lucky moon?'

He walked to Goldman's shop and looked round. Nobody was in the street. He took a small hammer from his coat pocket and broke the glass in the shop door. Then he put his hand through and opened the door.

Joey moved quickly into the shop. He closed the door behind him and put his bag on the floor. Then he walked quietly across the shop to the door into the back room, opened it, and went through. It was dark, but moonlight came through the window, and Joey could see the big cupboard.

The little hammer soon opened the cupboard. There were a lot of books and papers inside; some of the papers fell out on to the floor.

'Who's there?'

Joey did not move. Only his eyes moved, looking around the room. Then a door at the back of the room opened, and Theo Goldman came in with an oil lamp. He saw Joey.

'What -!' he began.

Joey jumped across the room, grabbed the old man's arm, and pulled it up behind his back. Then he held the hammer in front of Goldman's face.

'Where's the money?' he said. 'Tell me!'

'M-money?' Goldman said. 'What - what money? There isn't any money.'

'Yes, there is,' Joey said. 'You told Webber about it in the pub. A hundred pounds or more. Where is it?'

Goldman said nothing.

'Tell me,' Joey said, 'or I'm going to break your arms! First one arm, and then the other one. Where is it?'

Goldman tried to pull his arm away. He made small angry noises, but no words came out.

Joey held the hammer in front of Goldman's eyes. 'Tell me! Or this hammer goes into your face!'

'All right! All right! It - it's under the floor,' Goldman said. 'Under the cupboard.'

Joey pushed the old man across to the cupboard. 'Get it,' he said. 'Now!'

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The old man put the oil lamp on the floor and pulled the cupboard away from the wall. Then he got between the cupboard and the wall and pulled up some of the floor. There was a small box under the floor and Goldman got it out.

Joey grabbed the box from the old man's hands, and opened it. It was full of money.

Joey smiled.

'I know you!' Goldman said suddenly. 'You live at Albert Webber's house!'

'Albert who?' said Joey. 'Don't know him.'

He began to take the money out of the box and push it into the pockets of his coat.

'Yes, you do! You live in his house,' Goldman said. 'Albert told me about you. You're -'

'Be quiet!' Joey said. 'All right, so you know me. But nobody's going to find me.' He laughed. 'I can get a long way away with this money.'

All the money from Goldman's box was now in Joey's pockets. He gave Goldman a little push. 'Now, get back in your bedroom and stay there.' He pushed him again. 'Go on! Get moving!'

The old man began to walk across the room with the oil lamp. Suddenly, he turned and hit Joey on the head with the lamp.

'Aaagh!' cried Joey.

The lamp broke and fell on the floor, next to the papers from the cupboard. The oil from the lamp ran across the floor, carrying the flames to the papers.

Goldman tried to run into the shop but Joey jumped on him and the two of them fell to the floor. The old man's head hit the wall. After that, he did not move.

Joey heard the noise of the flames before he saw them. He looked behind him. The flames were big, and were already halfway up the legs of a table.

Joey jumped to his feet and ran through the shop. He found his bag by the front door, went out into the street and began to run again. At the end of the street, he stopped and looked back.

There were now flames in the shop window, and black smoke came from the shop door. He thought about the old man on the floor in the back room - but only for a second.

Then he turned and ran again.

Two days later, on Wednesday 10th April, 1912, Joey was in Southampton, with thousands of other people. They came to see the new ship there - the biggest and fastest ship in the world. It was the day of its first voyage across the Atlantic to New York, carrying more than two thousand people.

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Some of the people in Southampton that day were the ship's passengers. Some of them just came to look at the wonderful new ship.

And there it was! Joey was a happy young man. He was a passenger, with a ticket in his pocket - a ticket to New York! Life was good, he thought.

'Joey's luck got me the money for my ticket!' he said, laughing. 'And Joey's luck is taking me to America. This is the end of my old life!'

And he walked onto the Titanic.

- THE END -

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