

## JEAN/OLD MAN/MOTHER/RALPHIE/RANDY

**THE OLD MAN** (We then hear barking as the BUMPUS HOUNDS chase THE OLD MAN away once again.)  
No, no, no, Bumpus! Call 'em off! Call 'em off! (We refocus inside the Parker house.)

**MOTHER** (calling upstairs). Boys, breakfast! Hurry. You'll both be late for school.

**RALPHIE** (coming down the stairs, engaging in a recurring argument). Get out of my way, Randy!

**RANDY**. You get out of my way, Ralphie.

**RALPHIE**. I was here first. (RALPHIE and RANDY take their seats at the kitchen table as they jostle each other.)

**RANDY**. Was not!

**RALPHIE**. Was too!

**THE OLD MAN** (growls). Shut up!

**MOTHER**. Hurry up now and eat. (Just as they take their seats to eat, a loud boom is heard beneath the kitchen. A puff of smoke billows out of the furnace grate.)

**THE OLD MAN**. What was that?

**MOTHER** (they both know all too well). It sounded like the furnace again, dear.

**THE OLD MAN** (slowly unleashing his rage). It's the clinkers ... It's the consarned, goobly-degooking, racklin'ash! (Goes toward the door to the cellar.) Sons britches motor-floggin' cake-sniffin' shirty plastards! (He exits down into the furnace room, continuing the faux profanity as MOTHER covers RANDY's ears.)

**THE OLD MAN** (cont'd). Farfangled britches, cobbler-goblin'. (Continues to ad. lib faux profanity until he is heard falling, accompanied by a crash.)

**THE OLD MAN** (cont'd, yelling from the basement). Who left the skates on the steps!?

**JEAN** (with an air of pride). My old man was one of the most feared furnace fighters in northern Indiana. He had lots of practice. And the blue streak coming out of his mouth was equal to the blue smoke pouring out of the furnace grate.

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**THE OLD MAN.** Who turned the damper down?! You have to leave it up! Clinkers again. Cob-globbering, tutt-in-fruitten clinkers. (He continues faux-swearing and banging around downstairs. We then hear the sound of footsteps climbing the stairs. THE OLD MAN re-enters, covered in soot.)

**THE OLD MAN** (cont'd). The fufaluckin' fumulgatin', faarfignugin flopchockitty furnace has gone out again. (To MOTHER.) Call the office and tell them I'll be late. (He exits down the stairs, spewing more faux profanity.)

**JEAN.** Profanity, for us kids, was strictly verboten. But my old man? That day my father wove a tapestry of obscenity that, as far as we know, is still hanging in space over Lake Michigan. And Mother always tried to divert our attention from it.

**MOTHER.** Well ... uh ... What do you boys want for Christmas?

**JEAN.** An opening! I knew the old man would never get me the gun for Christmas. Maybe I'd convince Mom. I only had twenty-three days left. How could I make the case that the Red Ryder wasn't just a Christmas present—it was a necessity!?

**RALPHIE** (measured, deliberate). GOTTA FIND A SUBTLE WAY TO SAY IT PLAY IT CAREFUL DON'T SEEM DESP'RATE OR I'M DONE. GET THE RED RYDER CARBINE-ACTION BB GUN

**RANDY.** I want a toy zeppelin that lights up and makes noises.

**MOTHER.** That's nice ... Ralphie?

**JEAN.** Now I knew the moment called for nuance and nonchalance. But sometimes you just—

**RALPHIE** (blurting out quickly and excitedly). An Official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass in the stock and a—uh—uh—

**JEAN** (sensing the impending doom). Oh, no! My tongue short-circuited my brain. I was dead. Even before she opened her mouth, I knew what was coming.

**MOTHER.** Ralphie—you'll shoot your eye out. (RALPHIE slumps back into his chair.)

**JEAN.** Ah! It was the classic "Mother BB Gun Block." That deadly phrase uttered many times before by hundreds of mothers was not surmountable by any means known to kid-dom. I had to immediately rebuild the dike. RALPHIE (weakly). Heh, heh ... I was just kidding. I guess I'd like, uh—some Tinkertoys.

**JEAN** (disgusted at the very thought). Tinkertoys?! I couldn't believe my own ears. She'd never buy it ...

**MOTHER.** All right boys, time for school.

**JEAN.** Who could I turn to next? (MOTHER retrieves RANDY's snowsuit.)

**MOTHER.** Ralphie, put on your things. Here, Randy, let me help you. (She begins to stuff RANDY into his snowsuit as RALPHIE goes to put on his outerwear.)

**RANDY** (a prolonged whine). Mom, it's too cold to go to school.

**JEAN** (as MOTHER continues dressing RANDY). Hah ... There was no question of staying home. It never entered anyone's mind. It was a heartier time, and Miss Shields was a hardier teacher than the present

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breed. Cold in Hohman was something that was accepted, like air, clouds, parents—a fact of nature, and as such could not be used in any fraudulent scheme to stay out of school. And getting ready to go to school was like preparing for extended deep-sea diving. (Through various and somewhat violent means, MOTHER stuffs, shakes, jiggles, crams and jams

RANDY into his snowsuit. Lots of whining and complaining and squealing and grunting. Once in, his arms stick straight out from his sides. MOTHER wraps a scarf fully around RANDY's head, covering his face.)

**RANDY** (completely indecipherable, speech obscured by heavy layers of clothing). I can't put my arms down!

**MOTHER.** What did you say?

**RANDY** (again, indecipherable). I can't put my arms down! **RALPHIE.** Ah, Ma, we're gonna be late.

**MOTHER.** Just wait, Ralphie.

**RANDY** (desperately, still obscured). I can't put my arms down! (MOTHER unwinds the scarf enough to expose RANDY's face.)

**RANDY** (cont'd, tearfully, clearly for the first time). I can't put my arms down!

(MOTHER presses RANDY's arms to his sides. They pop right back up when she lets them go. Again, she firmly holds them to his sides. A beat. The arms shoot back up again.)

**JEAN.** Solutions are sometimes very practical in Indiana.

**MOTHER** (exasperated). You'll put your arms down when you get to school. (As RANDY hollers in protest, she re-wraps the scarf to cover his mouth.)