

(ESTHER JANE exits. MOTHER closes the door. She looks at the glasses, smiles, puts them into her apron pocket and crosses into the kitchen as the lights fade to black in the living room. RALPHIE, RANDY and THE OLD MAN sit around the table together. RALPHIE is uncomfortable, waiting for his punishment.)

THE OLD MAN. Somebody at the door?

MOTHER. One of the children.

THE OLD MAN *(still reading his newspaper)*. What's for dinner? I'm starving!

MOTHER *(crossing to the stove)*. Meatloaf and red cabbage.

THE OLD MAN *(deeply resigned)*. Ah. Anything happen today? *(A moment of silence. He looks at RALPHIE.)*

Where're your glasses? You lose your glasses again?

MOTHER *(moving in quickly, she plucks RALPHIE's glasses from her apron and hands them to him)*. Oh, Ralphie! I almost forgot to give you back your glasses. You left them ... *(Waves vaguely.)* ... over there while you were ... working on ... that project. *(RALPHIE accepts the glasses gratefully.)*

THE OLD MAN. Project? What kind of project?

MOTHER *(crossing back to the stove)*. Sociology.

THE OLD MAN. I didn't know they studied that in grade school.

MOTHER *(a significant look to RALPHIE)*. Esther Jane told me about it.

(RALPHIE reacts, looks toward the front door, turns back. THE OLD MAN eyes them suspiciously, then, appeased, goes back to his paper.)

THE OLD MAN. So what else happened today?

MOTHER. Oh, not much. Ralphie got into a little fight.

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THE OLD MAN (*lowers his paper*). A fight? What kind of a fight?

MOTHER (*crossing to him, speaking casually*). Oh, you know how boys are. I gave him a talking to. (*A quick shift of subject.*) How about if after dinner we go pick out our Christmas turkey?

THE OLD MAN (*tosses the paper on the table and springs to his feet*). Great idea! Turkey! Hear that, Ralph, we're gonna get our Christmas turkey tonight! Ha ha! (*A thought.*) Oh, wait, wait, wait, where's the big roasting pan? Gotta have the big roasting pan! Where did I ... ? (*It hits him.*) The basement! Remember? Remember? Took it down there when I was cleaning the furnace. Gonna need it. Gonna have to scrub it up. (*He heads for the basement.*)

MOTHER (*as he exits, she crosses to the basement door*). Don't be long! Dinner's ready!

THE OLD MAN (*offstage, down the basement steps by now*). Won't be a minute! Won't be a minute! Turkey! Ha ha! Turkey!

(*MOTHER leaves the basement door open and crosses back to the stove, tousling RALPHIE's hair on the way. RALPH enters from the basement.*)

stop RALPH. It was then I realized that I was not about to be destroyed. (*RALPHIE turns to look at MOTHER. She turns from the stove and smiles at him, then turns back as RALPHIE looks away downstage, thinks a moment, then smiles broadly.*) From then on, things were different between me and my mother.

(*RALPH exits into the hallway. The lights on the house fade to black. Lights fade up DC. FLICK and SCHWARTZ sit on a log half-buried in a snow bank. They hold a sled between them, vigorously rubbing the runners with waxed paper.*)