

but now Christmas was only weeks away and I'd yet to implant the idea of that BB gun into my parents' subconscious.

(MOTHER enters from the basement with a laundry basket full of folded towels.)

THE OLD MAN. "The man of bronze."

MOTHER. Doc Savage.

THE OLD MAN. Doc Savage?

MOTHER. Well, Clark Savage, Junior, but his men called him "Doc." Do you want to know their names? Ham, Rennie ...

THE OLD MAN. No. No. Fine. Thanks. *(He writes.)* Doc ... Savage.

RALPH *(moving across the stage)*. I'd have to be careful. If my kid brother got wind of my scheme, he'd begin wheedling and whining for what I wanted, and nobody would score, since he was too young for heroic weaponry.

(MOTHER crosses to the counter with her basket, touching base with RANDY on the way.)

MOTHER. How's my little piggy?

(Energized, RANDY snorts and buries his face in his oatmeal. THE OLD MAN shudders, puts down his pencil, picks up the newspaper and hides behind it. RALPHIE enters.)

MOTHER. Want your oatmeal warmed up?

RALPHIE *(sitting at the table)*. No. I was letting it cool.

MOTHER. Oh.

RALPH. Now would be a good time to mention the BB gun. *(To C.)* My fevered brain struggled for the right hint. It had to be clear, but subtle.

RALPHIE. Schwartz told me he saw a pack of wild bears

MOM
RALPHIE

START

behind Pulaski's candy store last week. (*He looks hopeful. MOTHER turns slowly to look at RALPHIE. THE OLD MAN lowers his paper.*)

RALPH. They looked at me as if I had lobsters crawling out of my ears.

MOTHER (*turning back to the stove*). What would you like for Christmas, Ralphie?

RALPH. Horrified, I heard myself blurt out ...

RALPHIE. An official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle! (*He claps his hand over his mouth.*)

MOTHER (*still turned away; almost offhand*). You'll shoot your eye out.

RALPH. Oh no! It was the *classic* mother BB gun block, not surmountable by any means known to kid-dom! Immediately I went into damage control mode.

RALPHIE. I was just kidding. Heh-heh! Even though Flick is getting one ...

RALPH. A lie.

MOTHER (*coming to the table with a cup of coffee*). BB guns are dangerous. You'd shoot your eye out.

RALPH (*crossing to R proscenium*). The boom had been lowered, and I was under it. I thought I'd better change the subject and draw attention away from my master plan.

RALPHIE. Hey, Dad ...

THE OLD MAN (*concentrating on his newspaper*). Hmm?

RALPHIE. Bet you can't guess what I got you for Christmas!

THE OLD MAN (*still occupied*). Let's see ... is it a new furnace?

RALPHIE (*a forced chuckle*). That's a good one, Dad.

(*RANDY laughs too long and too hard at THE OLD MAN's bon mot. THE OLD MAN is again flushed out from behind*)

STOP