

pirates or trapping smugglers. Best of all, whenever Annie got into a really tight spot, this friend of hers named Punjab would show up and cut the bad guys' heads off. What a great friend to have!

THE OLD MAN. Sorry, nothing today from Little Orphan Annie. (*RALPHIE goes through the discarded mail.*)

RALPH. At the end of each broadcast the announcer called out a string of numbers. Kids all over the country translated those numbers into the secret message, getting the real truth straight from Orphan Annie. Every day without a decoder pin postponed my spiritual and intellectual growth.

MOTHER. Come eat your oatmeal.

(*RALPHIE moves toward his chair.*)

RALPH. To a kid, the time it takes to get something you've sent for in the mail is longer than the time it would take to build the Pyramids singlehanded using the number three Erector set. (*Pause.*) The one without the motor.

(*RALPHIE sits next to RANDY who has congealed globs of oatmeal on his face, in his hair and distributed over the table top, islands of goo in a sea of spilled milk. His spoon sticks straight up in the oatmeal bowl.*)

MOTHER. Oh, Randy, don't play with your food, eat it! (*RANDY begins to pout, cry and whimper.*)

RALPH. Most mornings my kid brother wore more oatmeal than he ate. He was a notoriously picky eater who had been known to go for years without taking on provisions.

THE OLD MAN. Stop that noise! Eat that food or I'll give you somethin' to cry about!

RALPH. My mother was more subtle. She'd invented a game to get the little runt to eat.

MOTHER. Randy, how does the little piggy go?

RANDY (*suddenly full of life, grunts twice*). Snort! Snort!

MOTHER. That's right! That's right! How does the little piggy go? (*RANDY grunts again. MOTHER laughs and claps her hands. She turns back to the countertop, picks up another bowl and conceals it behind her back, moving toward RANDY.*) How does the little piggy go? (*RANDY grunts again. MOTHER laughs and, in one smooth balletic movement, replaces his oatmeal bowl with a new one.*) Now show me how the piggies eat! Here's a new trough! Go on, show me!

RANDY. Snort! (*He buries his nose in the fresh bowl and makes pig noises.*)

MOTHER. Mommy's little piggy! Good piggy! Eat it all up!

OLD MAN (*sorting through mail*). ...bill, bill, neckties by mail ... bill ... Ha! Look at this! (*Turns the envelope over, opens it.*)

MOTHER. What is it?

THE OLD MAN. Another contest! Fifty Thousand Dollar Giant Jackpot Puzzle! (*He sits at the table, takes a pencil from his pocket and begins writing.*)

RALPH. The Old Man was hooked on contests. He entered them all. Match the Baby Pictures. Find the Hidden Objects. And sports? The Old Man knew sports.

THE OLD MAN. "What National League team won the World Series in 1907?" Easy. Chicago Cubs. (*He writes.*)