

THE HAM CURING

by Ken Bradbury



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(Enter Right: Dan and Skip, two young aspiring actors)

SKIP: I don't see why we've gotta be in this silly speech contest anyway. We could be out playing basketball.

DAN: I'll tell you why, buddy. Can't you remember anything? The girls! Don't you remember all those beautiful young ladies at last year's contest? Remember how we walked around all night with those ribbons pinned to our chests and those little beauties would come up and ask us: *(imitating girl)* "Gosh, where'd you get that big shiny medal?"

SKIP: Yeah, I guess you're right.

DAN: And then you told 'em: "Why this here is the C.C.C. medal. Coolest Cat at the Contest!"

SKIP: Well, it didn't hurt to stretch things just a little.

DAN: A little! *(laughs, then looks around)* Listen, we'd better get busy. Mr. Orr said that if we didn't find us a speech today, we couldn't even be in the contest. *(looking around)* There's sure a lot of speeches around here.

(They both begin to hunt around, through imaginary files, on desks, etc. - Skip right and Dan left.)

SKIP: *(searching through a pile of speeches)* It's gotta be good this year. Mr. Orr said that speech contest judges are the pickiest people in the world ... You remember that really frightful one we had last year?

DAN: *(chuckling)* Yeah, I don't know who got the biggest kick out of it ... Her laughing at us or us laughing at her Botox and fake eyebrows. *(they both laugh)*

SKIP: Hey, listen. *(turning to Dan).*

DAN: *(still shuffling through a stack of papers, in a falsetto)* Listening.

- SKIP:** Why don't we write our own?
- DAN:** (*turning*) Do what?!
- SKIP:** Write our own speech ... you know, from the stuff that happens around here at school ... Like Mr. Brim. Do you remember when he read that announcement at the assembly in September?
- DAN:** (*beginning to laugh*) The one where he ...
- SKIP:** Yeah, he got up behind the microphone (*puts himself into position of important speaker, moves behind imaginary mike*) "It has been brought to my attention..."
- DAN:** In other words, some teacher sneaked in and told him.
- SKIP:** Yeah. "It has been brought to my attention that several girls have been taking physical education who have failed to buy the required school PE shorts and blouses. Beginning today, all found without their shorts and blouses should be sent to my office." (*both laugh*)
- DAN:** Or how about that announcement he put on the bulletin board last semester? "LOST: An old canvas bag containing various art supplies belonging to Mrs. Pritchett. Mrs. Pritchett will be gone for a few days, but she promised a small reward for its return. So, if you see the old bag, please inform the office." (*both laugh*)
- DAN:** We could do another Huckleberry Finn thing like we did a couple of years ago.
- SKIP:** Oh, no we won't!
- DAN:** What's a matter? That was good!
- SKIP:** Yeah, but when you played Huck Finn chewing tobacco, you weren't really supposed to spit.
- DAN:** I know, but when we got to the contest, I got all excited and thought it would be more real if I really did spit.
- SKIP:** Well, that lady on the front row thought it was pretty real all right.
- DAN:** (*thinking back*) Boy, she was mad, wasn't she?
- SKIP:** Yeah.

DAN: Got her little boy right between the eyes.

SKIP: Let's keep looking.

(They turn, Skip right and Dan left, and begin to search through imaginary files again.)

SKIP: Hey, here's one ... *(pulling script from drawer ... reading)* "The Night of the Trainer, by Clyde J. Fish."

DAN: *(totally uninterested, looking through another pile)* Whoopee.

SKIP: No, listen. It says it's for two men and a narrator.

DAN: *(becoming interested, moving right to Skip)* Okay, so we cut out the narrator.

SKIP: Naw, he's got most of the lines. You'll have to play the part of both men.

DAN: Me? How come it's always me that has to do the work?

SKIP: What are you complaining about? You don't have to learn any lines ... just do what the narrator says. This fits us perfect ... I read and you move ... I've got the brains and you've got the rhythm.

DAN: *(sarcastically)* Thanks.

SKIP: OK. Here's the set-up. The scene is a cabin way back in the North woods. You're spending the weekend there by yourself. "The cabin is furnished with a bed, up center *(motions up center)* and two doors located at the Left and Right." *(indicates the positions)* OK, you play the part of both men and put in all the sound effects.

DAN: All right.

SKIP: *(reading again)* "While sleeping one night in my secluded forest cabin, *(Dan lies on the two chairs and snores)* the wind howling its mournful song, *(Dan howls)* the fire crackling in the fireplace."

DAN: Crackle, crackle. *(continues snoring)*

SKIP: I lay dreaming of my long lost, beautiful, vivacious *(Dan smiles and grows more excited with each adjective)* warm ... enticing ... cuddly ... old sheep dog,



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