

# GOOD OLD ARCHIBALD



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# Good Old Archibald

By

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*Illustrated by Mary Stevens*



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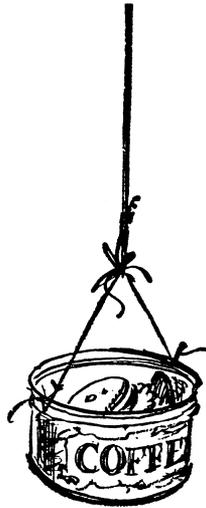
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TO GERALD, KEITH, AND LOUISE

their sister dedicates this book

in memory of the happy days



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## CHAPTER ONE

### Good Old Ralph

**I**N BROOKFIELD SCHOOL, things happen fast, sometimes. So, before anything else happens, I, Trenton J. Conway, Junior, am going to write down some important events of the past four weeks, just for the records.

First, good old Ralph Jackson moved away and left his seat and desk in Miss Kramer's room very empty.

The Monday morning after that, the guys stood around in the schoolyard eating their salted peanuts very sadly.

Wilmer Pitkin looked saddest because Wilmer had a black eye, and there is something very sad about one black eye and one blue one.

"Good old Ralph!" Wilmer said. "He is gone, but not forgotten. I miss him. I feel bad. I don't feel like playing baseball, and the big game is only four weeks away. Maybe the Lawson Lions will beat us Brookfield Bumblebees this year."

The Bumblebees always play the Lawson Lions on picnic day, and our mothers always come to watch. Ralph had been a very good player.

“Yes, this is hard to take,” Wilmer said. He licked some salt off his fingers and wiped his fingers on his pants. He said, “Any more peanuts, Harley? I need a few more to brace me up.”

“Take some,” said Harley Scott. “Wait.” Harley took a few first.

Harley has black hair; and as soon as he is eighteen, he’s going to join the Marines and have a black mustache to scare the girls away.

But Harley has feelings. He said, “I’m going to miss Ralph when we sing ‘The Marines’ Hymn.’ Won’t you miss good old Ralph when we sing ‘The Marines’ Hymn,’ Trent?”

Now even though it is true that I’m the captain of the Bumblebees, I am just a plain guy with a short haircut and freckles and a loud voice. But under my sweater I am not just skin and knobby bones. I have feelings, too, and I felt sad.

I swallowed my last peanut. “One more peanut, Harley,” I said. “Yes, Ralph sang it loud.”

“And all on one note,” added Wonderful Wanda Wilson.

Wanda was standing behind me, with Gorgeous Glenora Jones and Harley’s cousin, Susie Scott. They are always listening in.

“What about you, Wanda?” Harley said. “I will now sing a little to show how you sound.” Harley opened his mouth wide, shut his eyes, and sang: “Sa-ha-hanta Loo-hoo-cheeya! San-taw Loo-chee-yaw!”

“Very funny!” Wanda said. She shook back her pony tails.

Wanda has two yellow pony tails and eyes that are the color of my blue china piggy bank.

She said, “I sing on tune, don’t I, Trent?”

“I will answer that,” Wilmer said. Wilmer is a great thinker. He always knows what to say. “No one would ever get lonesome for your singing, Wanda,” he said. “You flutter around too much from high to low. Ralph did not flutter around. Ralph always sang C-sharp, and you could depend on it. Right, Harley?”

“Right!” Harley said. “Ralph sang C-sharp in kindergarten, and kept right on. When good old Ralph is one hundred, he will still sing C-sharp.”

“Loud!” said Glenora. She put her hands over her ears, flopped her funny black eyelashes at Harley, and laughed. “I can hear him now!”

Susie giggled. “I hear a horrible sound, too. But it isn’t Ralph. It’s the bell.”

It was the first bell, and I said, “I hate to go in and look at good old Ralph’s empty seat and desk.”

“So do I,” Wilmer said. “Ralph even took his horse chestnut.”

Just then something happened. A long, shiny car stopped in front of the school, and a boy got out of it. He stood there on the walk and looked at us, and we looked at him.

“Who is that?” Wilmer said. “He doesn’t look like any guy I ever saw.”

The boy was dressed up in a gray jacket, gray pants, a white shirt, and a necktie. He had a wrist watch and a ring. His hair looked kind of red and kind of brown, and it was combed down slick.

“Well,” I said, “my mother says you shouldn’t look at other people’s clothes. Inside his best clothes, he is just a guy, maybe.”

“He can’t play ball in his best clothes,” Wilmer said. “Victor Valley would laugh him out of town.”

Victor Valley is captain of the Lawson Lions. He’s thirteen and a very hard man.

The girls had their arms around each other, and they were smiling at the strange boy.

“Oh, he’s cool!” Wanda said. Her eyes were round. I hope he’s in our room!”

“Maybe he will be,” Susie said. “He’s just as tall as Trent and Harley and Wilmer. I hope so.”

“So do I,” Glenora said. She poked Wanda, and then she ran, and Wanda chased her. They ran in a circle around us giggling.

Susie jumped up high in her blue plaid skirt, and the flowers fell off her pony tail.

“Well,” I said, “look at some people wasting giggles and high jumps.”

Wilmer said, “I-hope-he’s-in-our-room-I-hope-he’s-in-our-room-I-hope-he’s-in-our-room!”

Harley said, “It is easy to see that some people aren’t sad because good old Ralph is gone-but-not-forgotten.

They will be happy to see the Lawson Lions win the big game and be the champions!”

The second bell rang, and we ran in. Susie stopped on the stairs to fix her flowers, and the new boy caught up with her.

“Good morning,” he said. “I am Archibald Brewster. I shall be attending your school. Where is the principal’s office, please?”

Susie giggled again and said, “It’s right there!” She pointed at Miss Buckmaster, standing in her door.

“Thank you,” Archibald said. He walked over to Miss Buckmaster, and the rest of us went into Miss Kramer’s room.

But in a minute there was a tap on the door. Miss Kramer went into the hall, and we could hear Miss Buckmaster’s voice. Then Miss Kramer brought Archibald into our room.

“Boys and girls,” she said, “you will all be happy to know that we have a new boy in our class. His name is Archibald Brewster, and he will have Ralph Jackson’s seat.”

Well, it did not make us happy to see someone else in good old Ralph’s seat, putting his books in good old Ralph’s desk.

“We’re going to sing this morning,” Miss Kramer said. “Who has a choice?”

The fellows raised their hands.

“Harley,” she said, “what do you wish to sing—as if I didn’t know?”

“‘The Marines’ Hymn,’” Harley said.

“The Marines’ Hymn” sounded very strange without Ralph’s good old C-sharp. It was sad to see Archibald Brewster sitting there tapping on Ralph’s desk with one finger but not singing.

He was as smart as Wonderful Wanda. He got one hundred in arithmetic and one hundred in spelling. But we boys knew he was just showing off.

At recess he stayed in Ralph’s seat to pile his books neatly in the desk. We walked over and watched him.

“Well,” Harley said, “Ralph is gone.”

“Yes, Ralph is gone,” Wilmer said. “We have nothing to remember him by.”

“Right!” said Susie. “A black eye can’t last forever, Wilmer Pitkin, but I think the one Ralph gave you will last another week.”

“Very funny!” Wilmer said. “It was all a mistake.”

“Yes!” I said. “Two mistakes. Pitkin made them both. First, he struck Ralph out, and then he couldn’t run away fast enough. Good old Ralph was the fastest Bumblebee. He could really run!”

“And hit!” Wanda said. “And it is impolite to talk over Archibald’s head this way.”

“Oh, I don’t mind,” Archibald said. “In fact, if you wish to put a few flowers on this desk in memory of Ralph, I shall be very careful not to spill the water.”

This was a very strange speech. We didn’t know any other guy who would make a speech like that.

But then, we didn’t know any other guy who had a real gold wrist watch or a ring with a brown stone in it.



We also did not know any other guy who wore his best gray jacket to school with a white shirt and necktie, or who put smelly stuff on his hair to plaster down the curls.

I sniffed. "What do I smell?" I said. "It smells like the dear little flowers in spring."

Wanda sniffed, too. "I smell that big chew of terrible mint gum in your pocket, Trent Conway!" she said. "When you chew that, everyone will think you have mumps."

"I won't chew all of it," I said. "I am gum banker for the guys this week."

All the girls tried to turn pale. But it was only a joke, and all the guys laughed except Archibald. He looked worried.

"Boys and girls," Miss Kramer said, "you are missing some nice sunshine."

So we went out to play.