



A Talk With Dad

A selection from Dear Mr. Henshaw

Setting: Leigh's home, Sunday afternoon

(Leigh sits staring at the phone. He finally, picks up the phone and begins dialing his dad's number.)

Leigh's Dad: Hello?

Leigh: *(pauses, slightly surprised his dad answered)*
You promised to phone me this week and you didn't!

Dad: Take it easy, kid. I just didn't get around to it. I was going to call this evening. The week isn't over yet.

(Leigh remains silent.)

Dad: Something on your mind?

Leigh: *(pauses, and then continues)* My lunch. Somebody steals the good stuff out of my lunch.

Dad: *(sarcastically)* Find him and punch him in the nose.

Leigh: *(with slight anger)* I hoped you would call. I waited and waited.

Dad: There was heavy snow in the mountains. I had to chain up on Highway 80 and lost time.

Leigh: (*changes the subject*) How's Bandit?

(*Leigh's dad remains silent.*)

Leigh: (*with more force*) How's Bandit?

Dad: (*softly*) Well kid—

Leigh: (*interrupting*) MY NAME IS LEIGH! I'm not just some kid you met on the street.

Dad: Keep your shirt on, Leigh. When I had to stop along with some other truckers to put on the chains, I let Bandit out of the cab. I thought he would get right back in because it was snowing so hard, but after I chained up, he wasn't in the cab.

Leigh: (*accusingly*) Did you leave the door open for him?

Dad: I could have sworn I did. I whistled and whistled, but Bandit didn't come. I couldn't wait any longer because the highway patrol was talking about closing Highway 80. I couldn't get stranded up there in the mountains when I had a deadline for delivering a load of TV sets to a dealer in Denver. I had to leave. I'm sorry, kid—Leigh—but that's the way it is.

Leigh: (*crying with anger*) You left Bandit to freeze to death!

Dad: Bandit knows how to take care of himself. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts he jumped into another truck that was leaving.

Leigh: *(still crying)* Why would the driver let him in?

Dad: *(assuring)* Because he thought Bandit was lost and he had to get on with his load before the highway closed, the same as I did. He couldn't leave a dog to freeze.

Leigh: *(with panic)* What about your CB radio? Didn't you send out a call?

Dad: Sure I did, but I didn't get an answer. Mountains cut down on reception.

(said in the background by a unknown boy's voice)

Boy: Hey, Bill, Mom wants to know when we're going out to get the pizza?

(Leigh slams the phone down)