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## Modern Child

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# Modern Child . . .

. . . Bob Chatterson

I hate school, Mama. I just don't give a damn about school.

Please don't talk like that, son. You talk like a man and you're only a boy yet. Please don't talk like that, or I'll have Daddy smash you in the mouth.

Daddy won't smash me in the mouth, Mama. Daddy is usually too drunk to walk home at night. He wouldn't even be able to see me, let alone smash me in the mouth.

I've tried to be patient with you, son. We'll talk about this matter later. Right now I have to go down to the World Wide Airplane Plant and rivet bolts on the wings of airplanes for two dollars and fifty cents an hour, with time and one-half for overtime.

I'm not going to school today, Mama, because I think school is a lot of—

I'll whale the tar out of you if you keep talking like that.

Awright. Awright. I'm just telling you I'm not going to school today.

By God, you will go to school today.

Ha. What the hell you going to do about it if I don't?

You just wait until I get home from work and I'll knock some of that cockiness out of you.

Go to hell, Mama.

God, but you're a trial to your Mama. Why do you always have to be a trial to your Mama? Can't you try to be decent for a change?

I'm going out and throw stones at a few windows this morning. Just for something to do.

I hope you're kidding or I'll call the cops. They'll know how to handle snotty kids like you.

What'll I do when I get hungry, Mama?

Here. Here's five bucks. Buy yourself some lunch and supper. I probably won't be home tonight.

Where the hell are you going tonight?

That's none of your business.

Got a date with that guy in the Cadillac convertible, Mama? Are you going to come home drunk again tonight?

Don't you dare talk to me like that, damn you. I'm your mother and don't you ever forget it.

Nah. I won't never forget it. Where's the five bucks?

Here. And I want you to spend it on food, not beer. Do you hear? Shove off, Mama. I'm not as little as you seem to think.

Oh, God. I wish your father was here now. He'd damn quick put a stop to this snottiness of yours.

Daddy doesn't really give a damn one way or the other, Mama. He told me so himself. He said, "Son I don't really give a damn one way or the other." That's what he said, Mama.

Oh, shutup, will you. I know your Daddy doesn't give a damn one way or the other. He never did. He never will.

That's the way the ball bounces, Mama.

Sometimes I could hit you, you little beast. You're impossible. I can't stand here yakking with you all day. Yesterday I was five minutes late for work and they docked me a buck. Can you imagine, docking me a whole dollar for being five minutes late?

What do you do with all your money, Mama?

Daddy and I are saving up to buy a new home and a new car and a new television set and new clothes and we are going to save enough money so that you can go to college.

How come Daddy spends all his money on booze, Mama? Doesn't he want a new home and a new car and a new television set and enough money to put me through college?

Why don't you ask your Daddy, son? What the hell do I look like, an encyclopedia?

I did, Mama. Daddy just said he doesn't really give a damn one way or the other.