

Reader's Theater

The Babbs Switch Story

by Darleen Bailey Beard

Cast:

Ruth Ann Tillman

Elden Larrs

Miss Holman

Narrator

Narrator: Just before Christmas 1924, students sat in the one-room school house of Babbs Switch Oklahoma. Ruth Ann Tillman tried her best to listen to Miss Holman's history lesson.

Elden: Guess how *Webster's Dictionary* defines *burp*?

Narrator: Ruth Ann didn't have to turn around to know who was speaking. She could tell by the hot breath on her neck. It was Elden Larrs, the most disgusting boy in School District 42.

Elden: I said guess how *Webster's Dictionary* defines *burp*?

Narrator: Ruth Ann twirled her hair round her finger, feigning a sudden interest in Miss Holman's lesson on the Battle of Bunker Hill. But she knew he would tell her anyway.

Elden: To eject wind noisily from the stomach through the mouth.

Ruth Ann: Elden Larrs, you're sick.

Elden: Thank you. Just admit it. You're crazy-mad-in-love with me, Ruth Ann Tillman, and you know it.

Ruth Ann: I'd sooner be in love with a frog.

Elden: Would you kiss me if I were a frog? I might turn into Prince Charming.

Ruth Ann: You? Prince charming?

Elden: So how is Ding-Dong Daffy doing?

Ruth Ann: Her name is Daphne, and you know it.

Elden: Daffy? Daphne. What's the difference.

Miss Holman: Mr. Larrs? Would you care to stand and finish this lesson?

Elden: Yes ma'am.

Miss Holman: Colonel Prescott issued his famous order, 'Don't one of you fire until you can see the whites of their eyes.' The Americans allowed the British to advance almost to the base of the earthworks and then surprised them with open fire.

Elden: Is vomit spelled with an e or an *i*?

Ruth Ann: Give me that dictionary! If you'd quit looking up every revolting word you can think of and start listening, you might accidentally learn something.

Elden: I'm learnin'. I just learned somethin' that *you* probably don't know.

Ruth Ann: What?

Elden: Not gonna tell you.

Ruth Ann: Good. I don't want to know.

Elden: Yeah, you do.

Ruth Ann: No, I don't.

Elden: Then I'll tell you, anyway. Earwax is one word, not two.

Ruth Ann: Elden Larrs! When I get rich and famous and write my autobiography, I'm going to tell the whole world how positively absolutely disgusting you are.

Elden: Oh yeah? How the heck are *you* gonna get rich and famous?

Ruth Ann: As a singer, naturally. I'm going to be the next Bessie Smith, Empress of the Blues.

Elden: I wouldn't count on it.

Ruth Ann: Why not.

Elden: Cause you can't sing worth a lick.

Ruth Ann: I can, too, and you know it. You're just jealous.

Elden: Me? Jealous?

Ruth Ann: Just wait until Miss Holman announces the parts for our Christmas Tree Celebration. I'll be the soloist. You'll see.

Narrator: Elden couldn't argue much about that. Ruth Ann had sung the solo in the Christmas Tree Celebration for the last three years. Folks were always telling her that she sang like a canary. And Ruthie's Pop said she sang before she learned to talk, which is why he called her Ruthie bird.

Ruth Ann: Someday you're going to hear me on the radio.

Elden: Radio! That's a hoot. We ain't got electricity in Babbs Switch, Oklahoma.

Ruth Ann: Well, Hobart has electricity. Miss Holman says one day electricity will be as common as cows!

Elden: Then Miss Holman don't know nothin'.

Narrator: Ruth Ann turned back around thinking that Elden Larrs made as much sense as a two-headed mule with half a brain. So if you want to hear the whole story of Ruthie and Elden and what happens to their tiny one-room school house, run to the library or bookstore nearest you and check out this exciting book, ***The Babbs Switch Story***, written by Oklahoma author, Darleen Bailey Beard.