

## Uncle Fletcher, from Dixon, is a House Guest

By [Paul Rhymer](#)

**Announcer:** *Well sir, it's about the middle of the morning as we approach the small house half-way up in the next block now, and here on the back porch we find young Mr. Rush Gook and his great-uncle Fletcher. The gentlemen are seated side by side on the top step but one, talking casually about this, that and the other thing. Listen:*

**FLETCHER:** I like a collie myself.

**RUSH:** I like a bulldog better.

**FLETCHER:** Yes, a bulldog makes a good dog. It's like anything else. Some people like one thing, some like the other. I've always liked blunt-toed shoes. Well, I know fellas that like pointed-toed shoes.

**RUSH:** Don't make much difference to me about my shoes.

**FLETCHER:** You're like me with coffee.

**RUSH:** [little chuckle] Am I?

**FLETCHER:** With coffee I can take it with cream or without cream. With sugar or without sugar. Six of one, half a dozen of the other. I could name you off a dozen folks it makes plenty of difference to about whether they take cream an' sugar in their coffee or not. But not me. Put sugar in my coffee or don't put sugar in my coffee. I'll drink it.

**RUSH:** Uh-huh.

**FLETCHER:** Been that way all my life.

**RUSH:** Uh-huh. No, but about dogs I think a bulldog's got more pep than a collie. A bulldog'd just as soon bite your leg off as look at ya. What I'd like to have is a mean bulldog. Lead him around on a chain.

**SADE:** [off a little, in the doorway] Rush.

**RUSH:** Oh, hello, Mom.

**SADE:** Can I see you a minute?

**RUSH:** Sure.

**SADE:** Come on inside. You makin' out all right, Uncle Fletcher?

**FLETCHER:** Fine, Sadie, fine. Wonderful day.

**SADE:** Yes it is.

**FLETCHER:** Looked like rain when I got up this morning.

**SADE:** Did it?

**FLETCHER:** Quite a few dark clouds in the west.

**SADE:** [who is now up to the microphone] Uh-huh.

**RUSH:** Whatcha want, Mom?

**SADE:** [low tones] Come in the house a minute. [to Fletcher] He'll be out again directly.

**FLETCHER:** [who is now off microphone a little] All right.

**SADE:** [to Rush] Let's go to the living room.

**RUSH:** You wanta talk to me about...

**FLETCHER:** [calling] Morning, Gumpox, how are you this morning?

**SADE:** [to Rush] Oh, there he goes again.

**FLETCHER:** [off, calling] Say, you were all wrong in that argument we had yesterday. I looked up the information in the encyclopedia an' it...

**SADE:** [calls] Uncle Fletcher.

**FLETCHER:** [calling] ...said rutabagas had just as much nourishment any day in the week as parsnips.

**SADE:** [calls] Uncle Fletcher.

**FLETCHER:** [off] Yes, Sadie?

**SADE:** [calls] Would you mind not yelling please?

**FLETCHER:** [off] Railroad engineer next door still asleep?

**SADE:** [calls] Yes, I believe he is.

**FLETCHER:** [off] I'm sorry.

**SADE:** [to Rush] Second time today I've told him about yelling. He don't remember stuff a minute. Mr. Donahue got in off'n a Saint Louis freight drag at nine o'clock an's tryin to get some rest. Simply dead tired.

**RUSH:** [little chuckle] Who'd Uncle Fletcher yell to before?

**SADE:** The Mailman. Yelled to him from the bedroom window. [quoting] "Pretty warm day to be trampin' around with that big bag of letters, aint it? I bet your jobs pretty hard on shoe leather." [disgust] Top of his lungs he hollered. Goodness.

**RUSH:** What'd you want to talk to me about, Mom?

**SADE:** [briefly] Uncle Fletcher. He's got to be spoken to. An' I think you're the one to do it.

**RUSH:** [reluctant] Aw.

**SADE:** [firmly] Yes, I do.

**RUSH:** [reluctant] I can't bawl out a ...

**SADE:** It's not a matter of bawling out anybody. But you can kinda halfway suggest stuff.

**RUSH:** [reluctant] I should think you would.

**SADE:** [bluntly] When I make any remarks to him that sounds anything like I'm criticizing, he shuts right up tight an' acts like he's injured. You can drop little hints an' insinuations an' he'd never notice. For instance you can say...

**FLETCHER:** [off] Say-dee. Brick-mush man.

**SADE:** [to Rush, distressed] Oh my.

**RUSH:** [little chuckle] Oh heck, Mom, he don't mean anything.

**SADE:** [sharply] 'Course he don't mean anything. Only thing I'm sayin' is...

**FLETCHER:** [off] Say-dee. Brick-mush man.

**SADE:** [to Rush] I bet Mr. Donahue over next door in bed is fit

to be tied.

**FLETCHER:** [off] How we fixed for brick-mush, Sadie? The Brick-mush man's out here.

**SADE:** [calls] We got plenty brick-mush on hand, Uncle Fletcher.

**FLETCHER:** [off] What?

**SADE:** [calls] Tell the brick-mush man not to bother leavin' any brick-mush. We got all the brick-mush we can...

**FLETCHER:** [off] What?

**SADE:** [to Rush, unhappily] you yell.

**FLETCHER:** [off] I didn't catch what ya said, Sadie.

**RUSH:** [calls] We got enough brick-mush, Uncle Fletcher.

**FLETCHER:** [off] Got enough brick-mush?

**RUSH:** [calls] Yeah.

**FLETCHER:** [off] O.K.

**SADE:** [to Rush, unhappily] Why does he yell when I tell him not to yell?

**RUSH:** [little chuckle] He forgets.

**SADE:** He's got to be spoken to. An' not only just about yellin' to people either. He's got to be told to leave things alone. He put my front doorbell on the blink this morning.

**RUSH:** Did he?

**SADE:** Yes. He said it didn't ring loud enough an' went an' got tools from the basement an' disconnected wires an' screwed out screws an' everything else. Now the darn bell won't let out a peep.

**RUSH:** [involuntary chuckle of delight]

**SADE:** [crisply] It's not funny.

**RUSH:** No, I know it's not, only...

**SADE:** Also he nailed himself to a kitchen chair.

**RUSH:** Yeah?

**SADE:** He said one of the legs was comin' loose an' got a hammer an' nails an' started to pound away. He was sittin' on the chair while he pounded. Tried to get up an' couldn't. He'd hammered nails right through his pants.

**RUSH:** [chuckles] Shucks.

**SADE:** Did you see the address business he made for the front porch?

**RUSH:** Was that what he was whittling on after breakfast this morning?

**SADE:** Yes. He whittled this enormous big board. It's as big as a sign. Then he printed numbers on it. An' stuck it out on the front porch up above the mailbox.

**RUSH:** [little chuckle] Is it there now?

**SADE:** Yeah.

**RUSH:** Guess I'll go look at it.

**SADE:** You can look at it later.

**RUSH:** Number plate for the house, huh?

**SADE:** Yes...only he printed the wrong number.

**RUSH:** [chuckles] Yeah?

**SADE:** No more our address than a rabbit. He's got a seven where there's s'posed to be a four an' a zero where there's s'posed to be an eight.

**RUSH:** [chuckles] By George, Mom, Uncle Fletcher is the darndest...

**SADE:** I'll say. I wonder what Mr. Donahue thought of that pounding. Uncle Fletcher pounded the kitchen chair an' then pounded his number plate. Person could hear the commotion a mile away. He's got to be spoken to.

**RUSH:** [reluctant] I don't think I better...

**SADE:** I do. You can drop hints an' insinuations. If I say anything he thinks he's being criticized an' tightens right up. Why don't you just kinda buttonhole him an'...

**FLETCHER:** [approaching] You people in the living room?

**RUSH:** [calls cordially] Hello.

**FLETCHER:** [closer] Sun's getting' pretty hot outside.

**RUSH:** Yeah.

**FLETCHER:** [closer] I can't stand hot sunshine like I usta could. Didn't want any brick-mush, hey, Sadie?

**SADE:** Got more on hand now than we can use.

**FLETCHER:** [almost up] I told the fellow you had plenty.

**SADE:** uh-huh.

**FLETCHER:** [up] Seems like a nice sociable fella.

**SADE:** Yes.

**FLETCHER:** [brief pause] Am I interrupting something here?

**RUSH:** [cordially] Not at all. Sit down.

**FLETCHER:** No, thanks. On my way upstairs.

**SADE:** [cordially] Lay down a little while?

**FLETCHER:** Oh, no.

**SADE:** Getting' up at five o'clock the way you do I wouldn't blame you for feelin' tired.

**FLETCHER:** No, I'm not tired. Just going to my room an' write a letter.

**SADE:** Write it here on the library table. Pen an' ink in the drawer an' stuff.

**FLETCHER:** Believe I'd rather go to my room an' write with a pencil.

**SADE:** All right.

**FLETCHER:** Don't care much for pen an' ink. When I write I generally chew on the pencil point while I'm thinkin'. Fella chews on a pen an' ink an' he gets ink all over his face an' necktie.

**SADE:** Uh-huh.

**FLETCHER:** So if you'll excuse me I'll just stroll on upstairs.

**SADE:** Anything you like.

**FLETCHER:** Gonna drop a line to my landlady in Dixon, Mrs. Keller.

**SADE:** [nodding approvingly] Uh-huh.

**FLETCHER:** Tell her I'm feelin' well an' havin' a good time an' so on.

**SADE:** Sure.

**FLETCHER:** Ask her to send on my rockin' chair.

**SADE:** [politely inquiring] Rocking chair?

**FLETCHER:** [chuckles] Hope ya won't think that's a slam on your chairs. Matter of fact it helps me feel at home if I got my own rocking chair to sit in. I wake up in the morning an' if I see my own rockin' chair there by the bed I'm easy an' comfortable. I'd feel at home in Africa if I had my own rocking chair along.

**SADE:** [politely but without enthusiasm] Uh-huh.

**FLETCHER:** Ya don't mind if I have Mrs. Keller send me on my rockin' chair?

**SADE:** Oh, no... 'course not.

**FLETCHER:** [moving off] Well, I'll go on up an' write my letter.

**SADE:** All right.

**FLETCHER:** [moving off] Need me for anything... want anything fixed, ya know... just holler.

**SADE:** All right.

**FLETCHER:** [moving off] I like to make myself useful whether I'm company or not.

**SADE:** [low tones] Uh-huh.

**FLETCHER:** [after a pause] Sadie.

**SADE:** [calls] Yes.

**FLETCHER** I say if ya need me for anything... want anything fixed... just holler.

**SADE:** [calls] All right.

**FLETCHER** [off] I like to make myself useful whether I'm company or not.

**SADE:** [calls] All right. [to Rush, distressed] He's sending for furniture.

**RUSH:** Just a rocking chair is all.

**SADE:** A rocking chair is furniture. [distressed] How long's he intend to stay, ya s'pose?

**RUSH:** [I don't know] Um.

**SADE:** [aghast] Goodness, if he sends for his rocking chair, next thing he's liable to send for his dresser. His bed. His trunk.

**RUSH:** [after a pause] Mom, I like Uncle Fletcher around.

**SADE:** Oh sure-person likes him around an' all...but [unhappy giggle] it's so wearing on a person. Take this morning. All that yelling with Mr. Donahue tryin' to get some sleep next door. The monstrous signboard he whittled out for the front porch with our wrong address on it. Nailing himself to a kitchen chair. Puttin' my bell on the blink.

**RUSH:** Yeah, but still...

**SADE:** [unhappy giggle] It's that getting' up at five o'clock in the morning beats me. An' his talking to himself. Why, I can't sleep myself after five o'clock worryin' about what he's up to. He might crawl up on the roof an' try to shingle it an' fall off an' break his neck.

**RUSH:** Um.

**SADE:** An' now he's sending for his furniture.

**RUSH:** Um.

**SADE:** [aghast] How long's he plan to stay? Why, heavens alive, he might...

**FLETCHER:** [upstairs, yelling] Good morning, Mr. Call.

**SADE:** ...even intend to stay...[halts]

**FLETCHER:** [yelling] How are you this morning?



**SADE:** [to Rush, unhappily] Oh my.

**RUSH:** Heck, Mom, he's got a right to ...

**SADE:** Listen.

**FLETCHER:** [upstairs, yelling] Can't kick, thanks. Feelin' fine.

**SADE:** [to Rush] He's hollerin' out the window.

**RUSH:** Uh-huh.

**FLETCHER:** [upstairs, yelling] Glorious day, glorious day.

**SADE:** [to Rush, unhappily] Hollerin' out the Donahue side of the home.

**RUSH:** Yeah.

**FLETCHER:** [upstairs, yelling] We've had a beautiful summer in Dixon. Not too hot an' not too cold. Thermometer hung around seventy degrees all during June, July an' August.

**SADE:** [to Rush, feebly] Go up an' talk to him, Rush.

**RUSH:** [little chuckle] O.K.

**SADE:** [feebly and almost plaintive] Go up an' talk to him.

*Which concludes another brief interlude at the small house half-way up in the next block.*

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