

## An excerpt from "Raising The Dead"

By the time Ryan and I started to lose interest in *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*, the '80s were winding down, as was the popularity of the toys that had dominated most of the decade. New toys had been released and were now the “cool” thing to own, such as *Battle Beasts*, *Dino Riders*, and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. I had very little interest in these new toys, as I was reaching the age where I was discovering new, non-toy related things. Ryan, on the other hand, jumped right in and began collecting all of them.



*The only existing picture of my original Transformers collection (1987).*

A few toy-related fads had reared their heads during this time, chief among them the Topps trading cards *Garbage Pail Kids*, a parody of Coleco's still-popular *Cabbage Patch Kids* dolls. Both Ryan and I were interested in them, Ryan more so than I. But the day Ryan came home and announced that he had a huge new stack of *Garbage Pail Kids* cards was the day that even the very name *Garbage Pail Kids* was forbidden to be spoken around the house. You see, Ryan had made a deal with a kid in his elementary school: his entire collection of *G.I. Joe* figures for all the *Garbage Pail Kids* cards this kid owned. He made no secret of it, because he was getting out of *G.I. Joe* anyway and he didn't think it was a big deal.

Our parents, on the other hand, **did** think it was a big deal. They'd spent a lot of money on those figures over the years, and to see them all exchanged for a bunch of “worthless trading cards” made them hit the roof. Ryan was ordered to get his figures back immediately. On top of that, once that transaction was complete, we were **both** ordered to hand over any *Garbage Pail Kids* cards we had. They were banned from the house as of that moment, and we were informed that if either of us even mentioned *Garbage Pail Kids* again, we would be grounded for an undetermined length of time. Naturally, I was upset with Ryan over this turn of events. I hadn't done anything, yet I was being punished too. But I wasn't stupid enough to protest their decision, and I quietly handed my cards over. I presume they were all torn up and thrown into the trash immediately afterwards.

However, because I hadn't done anything to warrant this kind of punishment, I decided that no

matter what my parents said, I was keeping my two favorite *Garbage Pail Kids* cards: Jay Decay and Roy Bot. Upon being sent to my room to get my cards, I slipped those two out of the deck and stashed them in a metal lockbox I had. There they stayed, with no one the wiser as to their continued existence. They stayed in that lockbox for a decade and a half, along with many other cherished childhood mementos.

Around 1988, I had developed a fascination with our family's microwave oven. I was always cooking things in it, everything from microwavable french fries (which tasted absolutely disgusting) and a new line of microwaveable cakes. I also started conducting different experiments, such as what happens when you microwave ice (it melts, duh) and what happens when you microwave marshmallows and butter together (the end result: the most disgusting taste since those microwave french fries).

One day, after our parents had gone out for the afternoon, I began to wonder what else I could microwave. I knew metal was out of the question, as I'd been told it would destroy the microwave. But what about plastic? As I thought about that, I spotted Ryan playing with his *Battle Beasts*, and a huge grin spread across my face.

"Hey Ryan!" I shouted. "Want to help me with an microwave experiment?"

"What this time?" he grumbled.

"Ever wonder what would happen if you put a Battle Beast in a microwave?"

Ryan suddenly grinned. "Here," he said, grabbing one of his beasts and handing it to me. "I don't like this one anyway."

I grabbed a paper plate, stuck it in the microwave, set the Battle Beast onto it and closed the door. I set the time for three minutes. I figured that would be enough time for it to cook completely.

Ryan and I got up close to the microwave door window, watching with fascination over the next three minutes as the hapless Battle Beast melted into a puddle of bubbling plastic. When the microwave beeped, I opened the door and pulled the plate out. "Awesome," Ryan said as we admired the melted pile of goop. It was still bubbling slightly.

That's when it started to smoke. As we watched, the little plumes of smoke grew into thick, dark, noxious clouds of smoke. It wasn't on fire, but it was spewing out this horrible smoke like there was no tomorrow. I began to panic.

"Open the windows!" I shouted as I ran over to the kitchen sink and turned on the water. I shoved the smoke-belching remains under the torrent of water, and began to relax as the smoke dissipated. After a minute of this, I turned off the water and sighed.

That's when the smoke started back up. "Shit!" I coughed. With that, I ran outside, Ryan right behind me, smoke trailing behind us both. We headed for a relatively barren patch of land. "Grab the shovels!" I ordered. Ryan ran over to the shed as I tossed the smoking pile of goop on the ground. Within moments, he was back with the shovels, and we frantically began to dig. When we'd excavated a hole about two feet deep, I chucked the smoking remains of the Battle Beast in. A few minutes later, the hole was filled, and we headed back to the house. As I opened the door, a now all-too familiar smell wafted out at me.

The place stunk like melted Battle Beast. Opening the windows hadn't helped much, as it turned out. I began to panic again, as our parents were due home any time. "Get the fans!" I shouted. Soon the fans were positioned by the living room and kitchen windows, blowing the stench outside. After a half-hour or so, the smell had faded away, for the most part. I sighed, and vowed to leave the microwave alone for the rest of the day.

That's when our parents walked in the door. I gulped, hoping they wouldn't detect anything out of the ordinary. Those hopes were dashed as soon as Dad started sniffing the air. He'd smelled the stench.

"What happened here?" he asked. "Did you burn some hot dogs?"

My heart skipped a beat. "Yep," I said. "Sorry about that."

**Whew.**

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