A Christmas Story

By Jean Shepherd
Ah, there it is. My house.
And good old Cleveland Street. How could I ever forget it?
And there I am, with that dumb round face and...
that stupid stocking cap.
But no matter. Christmas was on its way.
Lovely, glorious, beautiful Christmas...
around which the entire kid year revolved.
Downtown Hohman was prepared for its yearly bacchanalia of...
peace on earth and good will to men.
Higbees' corner window was traditionally a high-water mark...
of the pre-Christmas season.
First nighters, packed earmuff to earmuff, jostled in wonderment...
before a golden tinkling display...
of mechanized, electronic joy.
Wow, there it is.
The holy grail of Christmas gifts.
The Red Ryder 200-shot range model...
air rifle.
And there he is.
Red Ryder himself.
In his hand was the knurled stock of as coolly deadly-looking...
a piece of weaponry as ever I had laid eyes on.
For weeks, I had been scheming to get my mitts on one of these...
fearsome blue-steel beauties.
My fevered brain seethed with the effort of trying to come up with...
the infinitely subtle devices necessary to implant...
the Red Ryder range model air rifle indelibly...
into my parents' subconscious.
Ralphie!
Randy!
Down here in two minutes!
And I mean two minutes!
Come on, Ralphie. I got here first!
Cut it out.
My mother, grabbing for her copy of Look magazine...
would find herself cleverly trapped into reading a Red Ryder sales pitch.
They traded Bullfrog. I don't believe it.
What's that?
Well, for Christ's sake, the Sox traded Bullfrog...
the only player they've got, for Shottenhoffer.
"Four Eyes" Shottenhoffer, a utility infielder.
Got a whole goddamned team of utility infielders.
That's nice.
Ralphie, on the double!
Did you hear about this guy who swallowed a yo-yo?
Swallowed a yo-yo?
On a bet.
Some clodhopper down in Griffith, Indiana.
They write the silliest things in the newspapers.
What do you mean, silly? I mean that's real news.
That's not like that politics slop.
What is the name of the Lone Ranger's nephew's horse?
Victor. His name is Victor.
How the hell did you know that?
Everybody knows that.
That's another one of your silly puzzles?
Yeah, it's another one of our silly puzzles.
Could be worth $50,000.
What kind is it this time?
Name the great characters in American literature.
Victor? The Lone Ranger's nephew's horse?
Meanwhile, I struggled for exactly the right BB gun hint.
It had to be firm, but subtle.
Flick says he saw some grizzly bears near Pulaski's candy store.
They looked at me as if I had lobsters crawling out of my ears.
I could tell that I was in imminent danger of over-playing my hand.
Casually, I switched tactics.
Hey, Dad!
I'll bet you'll never guess what I got you for Christmas.
A new furnace.
That's a good one, Dad.
My old man was one of the most feared furnace-fighters...
in northern Indiana.
Hurry up, you're going to be late for school.
Yeah. I'm running late already.
Round one was over.
Parents, one.
Kids, zip.
I could feel the Christmas noose beginning to tighten.
Maybe what happened next was inevitable.
Ralphie, what would you like for Christmas?
Horrified, I heard myself blurt it out.
I want an official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot range model air rifle.
No. Shoot your eye out.
Oh, no! It was the classic mother-BB gun block.
"You'll shoot your eye out."
That deadly phrase uttered many times before by hundreds...
of mothers was not surmountable...
by any means known to kid-dom.
But such was my mania, my desire for a Red Ryder carbine...
that I immediately began to rebuild the dike.
I was just kidding. Even though Flick is getting one.
I'd just like some Tinkertoys.
I couldn't believe my own ears. Tinkertoys?
She'd never buy it.
BB guns are dangerous.
I don't want anyone shooting his eye out.
Randy, will you eat? There are starving people in China.
Mothers know nothing about creeping marauders...
burrowing through the snow toward the kitchen...
where only you, and you alone, stand between your tiny...
huddled family and insensate evil.
Save us, Ralphie! I just knew those bad guys...
would be coming for us in the end!
Don't worry, Dad. As long as I got OI' Blue...
What've we got here, folks?
Well, we figure it's Black Bart, Ralph.
Well, just me and my trusty old...
Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model air rifle.
Lucky I've got a compass in the stock.
Well, I think I better have a look here.
Oh, no!
It's OI' Blue!
Oh, no!
Cheese it, boys!
There's another one! He's a dead-eye, ain't he?
Okay, Ralphie!
You win this time, but we'll be back!
Adis, Bart.
But if you do come back, you'll be pushing up daisies!
And don't you forget it!
Well, son, you saved us!
We were goners for sure! And you saved us!
Oldsmobile!
A pile of junk!
That goddamned Olds is froze up again!
Some men are Baptists, others Catholics. My father was an Oldsmobile man.
That son of a bitch would freeze up in the middle of summer on the Equator!
Little pitchers...
Hold it!
It's a clinker!
That blasted, stupid furnace.
Dadgummit!
Damn skates!
For Christ's sake, open up the damper, will you?
Who the hell turned it all the way down again?
Blasted!
In the heat of battle, my father wove a tapestry of obscenity...
that as far as we know is still hanging in space over Lake Michigan.
Preparing to go to school was like getting ready...
for extended deep-sea diving.
Come on, Mom, we're going to be late!
Just wait, Ralph!
My kid brother looked like a tick about to pop.
What?
What is it?
What is it?
What is it?
I can't put my arms down!
Well, put your arms down when you get to school.
Hey, Flick! Wait up.
Wait up!
So what are you doing?
What does it look like I'm doing? Picking goobers?
Hey, listen, smart ass. I asked my old man about sticking...
your tongue to metal light poles in winter...
and he says it will freeze right to the pole just like I told you.
Baloney.
What would your old man know about anything?
He knows because he once saw a guy stick his tongue...
to a railroad track on a bet and the fire department had to come...
to get the guy's tongue off the track because he couldn't get it off.
Come on, guys, wait up!
Come on, guys!
Come on, guys, wait up!
I can't get up!
I can't get up!
Help!
I can't get out! Help me!
Come on, Flick, wait up for me.
I can't get up!
Come on.
Get up. Sit up. Come on.
You're okay. Come on, let's go.
Come on, you're all right!
Miss Shields!
All right, everyone...
take your seats, please.
Good morning, class.
Good morning, Miss Shields.
Open your books to Page 32.
And as you'll remember, Silas Marner...
You're full of beans and so's your old man.
Says who?
Says me.
Well, I double-dare you.
The exact exchange and nuance...
of phrase in this ritual is very important.
Are you kidding? Stick my tongue to that stupid pole?
That's dumb.
That's 'cause you know it will stick!
You're full of it.
Well, I double dog-dare you!
Now it was serious. A double dog-dare.
What else was left but a "triple-dare you"?
And finally, the coup de grace of all dares...
the sinister triple dog-dare!
I triple dog-dare you!
Schwartz created a slight breach of etiquette...
by skipping the triple-dare and going right for the throat.
All right, all right.
Go on, smart ass, and do it!
I'm going!
Flick's spine stiffened, his lips curled in a defiant sneer.
There was no going back now.
This is nothing.
Stuck? Stuck!
Stuck! Stuck!
Jeez!
It really works!
Look at him!
Ralphie, come back!
Come back! Don't leave me! Come back!
But the bell rang!
What are we going to do?
I don't know! The bell rang!
Where's Flick?
Has anyone seen Flick?
Flick? Flick who?
He was at recess, wasn't he?
Ralphie, do you know where Flick is?
I said has anyone seen Flick?
Yes, Esther Jane?
Oh, my God!
Holy cow, it's the fire department!
Wow, it's the cops!
Now, I know that some of you put Flick up to this.
But, he has refused to say who.
But those who did it know their blame.
And I'm sure the guilt you feel...
is far worse than any punishment you might receive.
Now, don't you feel terrible?
Don't you feel remorse for what you have done?
That's all I'm going to say about poor Flick.
Adults love to say things like that. But kids know better.
We knew darn well it was always better not to get caught.
Now, boys and girls, I'm going to give you an assignment.
I want you to write...
a theme.
"What I want for Christmas."
The clouds lifted.
And I want it handed in tomorrow morning...
I saw a faint gleam of light at the other end of...
the black cave of doom.
I knew that when Miss Shields read my magnificent, eloquent theme...
that she would sympathize with my plight...
and everything would work out, somehow.
Boy, did you see how it stuck?
Did it hurt, Flick?
No. I never felt a thing.
It just caught me off-guard.
You sure were bawling.
I never bawled!
Baloney.
Scut Farkus!
Scut Farkus! What a rotten name. We were trapped.
There he stood, between us and the alley.
Scut Farkus, staring out at us with his yellow eyes.
He had yellow eyes! So help me God, yellow eyes.
Grover Dill, Farkus' crummy little toady.
Mean. Rotten.
His lips curled over his green teeth.
Randy lay there like a slug.
It was his only defense.
Say "uncle."
Uncle!
Louder!
In our world, you were either a bully, a toady...
or one of the nameless rabble of victims.
All right.
Who's next?
In the jungles of kid-dom, the mind switches gears rapidly.
Weeks ago I had sent away for my Little Orphan Annie...
secret society decoder pen.
Oh, skunked again.
No matter. Today I had serious work to do.
"What I want for Christmas."
"What I want is a Red Ryder BB gun with a compass in the stock...
"and this thing which tells time."
Wow, that's great.
"I think that everybody should have a Red Ryder BB gun.
"They're very good for Christmas.
"I don't think that a football's a very good Christmas present."
Oh, rarely had the words poured from my penny pencil...
with such feverish fluidity.
I've won! I've won!
The Bumpus hounds.
Our hillbilly neighbors, the Bumpuses, had at least...
785 smelly hound dogs.
And they ignored every other human being on earth but my old man.
I won!
I won!
What?
A major prize!
I won!
Hey, look at that. Look at that. A Western Union telegram.
Tonight, he's coming tonight. Tonight. Hot damn, tonight!
What does this mean here?
It means it's coming tonight!
I called Ernie McClosky at the freight depot.
He said the telegram was late, the prize was already there...
he was going to send it on tonight.
Come on. Have a chew, fellas, on me. It's my gift.
You know, maybe it'll be one of those Spanish adobe houses down in Coral...
Serves you right, you smelly buggers.
Or it could be a bowling alley.
A guy down in Terre Haute won a bowling alley.
How are they going to deliver a bowling alley here tonight?
They could send the deed, for cripesake. I mean...
I didn't expect they were going to send the whole damn bowling alley.
Yeah, well. How about eating? I'm starving to death.
Getting rich is hard work, kid. Come on.
Every family has a kid who won't eat.
My kid brother had not eaten voluntarily in over three years.
Oh, Randy, don't play with your food, eat it!
Starving people would be happy to have that.
Can I have some more red cabbage?
Stop playing with your food, or I'll give you something to cry about.
You better stop fooling around with it and eat it or you'll be sorry.
Can I please have some more?
My mother had not had a hot meal for herself in 15 years.
Meatloaf, double beetloaf.
I hate meatloaf.
All right. I'll get that kid to eat.
Where's my screwdriver and plumber's helper?
I'll open up his mouth and I'll shove it in.
My mother was more subtle.
How do the little piggies go?
That's right. Oink, oink.
Now, show me how the piggies eat. This is your trough.
Show me how the piggies eat.
Be a good boy. Show Mommy how the piggies eat.
Oh, my.
Mommy's little piggy.
It's here.
Are you Parker?
All right, sign here.
Yeah. Well, what is it?
I don't know.
What's in it?
Here. Bring it in.
Okay, boys. Haul that on in here. Move your tails.
That's right.
Right.
Here, bring it right in, fellas. That's it. Here we go.
A little more. Little more.
That's it.
Watch the lady.
Thanks a lot, guys.
Merry Christmas.
Get the crowbar and a hammer, Ralphie. Go on.
"Fra-gi-ley."
That must be Italian.
I think that says "fragile."
Oh, yeah.
Here we go.
They did a job on this, you know?
No, here, Ralph, hold this.
There could be anything in there!
Jesus!
Maybe they forgot.
It's in there. It's gotta be in there.
Would you look at that?
What?
Would you look at that?
What is it?
It's a leg!
But what is it?
Well, it's a leg.
You know, like in a statue.
Statue?
Yeah, statue!
Yeah, statue!
Ralphie!
My mother was trying to insinuate herself between us and the statue.
Holy smoke, would you...
Do you know what this is?
This is a lamp.
It was indeed a lamp.
Isn't that great? What a great lamp!
I don't know.
Here, hold it. Hold it. Here, go on.
The old man's eyes boggled...
overcome by art.
I know just the place for it.
Right in the middle of our front room window!
Jesus, God.
Honey?
No. It's all right.
Let's see...
This goes to the radio and this goes to the...
Well, it's just one too many.
Well, let's see.
The snap of a few sparks, a quick whiff of ozone...
and the lamp blazed forth in unparalleled glory.
Look at that! Will you look at that?
Isn't that glorious?
It's indescribably beautiful. It reminds me of the Fourth of July!
Turn off all the lights.
I wanna see what it looks like from the street.
I'll go get the dining room.
Couldn't we talk this over?
Move it a little bit to the right. A little that way.
Just a little... More to the right.
Yeah. More. That's it. No, stop!
Right there. That's wonderful.
Parker, what is that?
Don't bother me now. Can't you see I'm busy?
Yeah, but what is that?
It's a major award.
A major award?
Shucks, I wouldn't have known that. It looks like a lamp.
It is a lamp, you nincompoop. But it's a major award.
I won it.
Damn, hell, you say you won it?
Yeah.
Mind power, Sweed, mind power.
The entire neighborhood was turned on.
You should see what it looks like from out here!
It could be seen up and down Cleveland Street.
The symbol of the old man's victory.
Yeah, he won that. It's a major award.
Isn't it about time for somebody's favorite radio program?
Holy smokes, it was 6:45.
Only one thing that could've dragged me away...
from the soft glow of electric sex gleaming in the window.
Kids, it's Little Orphan Annie time.
Brought to you by rich, chocolaty Ovaltine.
I could still taste it.
Hey, you turned the light off!
I knew I was handing Miss Shields a masterpiece.
Maybe Miss Shields, in her ecstasy, would excuse me from theme writing...
for the rest of my natural life.
You call this a paragraph?
Margins! Margins! "F"!
My life's work down the drain.
A semicolon, you dolt!
A period.
"F"!
Oh, I should weep if I have to read one more "F"!
Ralphie Parker.
The theme I've been waiting for all my life.
Listen to this sentence.
"A Red Ryder BB gun with a compass in the stock...
"and this thing which tells time."
Poetry.
Sheer poetry.
Ralph, an "A+.
 My Ralph!
Oh, Ralphie, you've made me proud.
"A+
Is there something you want, Ralph?
I'm just turning in my theme.
Well, you can take your seat now.
Take your seat.
Come on, you guys.

Get in the car. Get in the car.
If we don't hurry we're going to miss all the good trees!
My mother was about to make another brilliant maneuver...
in the legendary battle of the lamp.
The epic struggle which followed lives in the folklore of Cleveland Street...
to this very day.
Don't want to waste electricity.
"Don't want to waste electricity."
Come on, Ralphie. Get in the car.
You folks looking for a tree? We got 300 trees.
This is the Christmas tree emporium of the entire Midwest.
Now, you ain't gonna find no better tree than this here tree.
This here tree is built to last.
Ain't no needles coming off this here tree.
Okay. Now here's a tree.
This here is a tree.
That's a little skimpy in the front.
Well, you just put it in the corner.
Haven't you got a big tree?
Hell, this ain't no tree.
Now here's a tree. This here is a tree.
Wait'll the dogs see that one.
Don't you think it's a little large?
Listen, Christmas only comes once a year. Why not?
How much?
I'll knock off $2... because I can see you're a man who knows his trees. This isn't one of those trees that all the needles falls off, is it? No, that's them balsams. The old man loved bargaining as much as an Arab trader... and he was twice as shrewd. You know, Dew Lock just bought one of those brand new... green plastic trees. Darn thing looks like it was made out of... green pipe cleaners. This is a very nice tree. I'll throw in some rope and tie it to your car for you. You got a deal. Deal. Damn it. Blow out! Not again. Four minutes! Time me. Actually, my old man loved it. He always saw himself in the pits at the Indianapolis Speedway... in the 500. My old man's spare tires were actually only tires... in the academic sense. They were round. They had once been made of rubber. Ralphie, why don't you go help your father? Really? Can I? Yes. Watch the traffic, there. Okay. It was the first time that it had been suggested that... I go help my father with anything. What are you doing here? Mom says I should help. Okay, sit down here. Squat down. Yeah, that's it. Here. Hold this. No, not that way. Come on, rat trap, hold it like this. How? Like this. I want to put the nuts in it. There we are. There's four of them. And we got it! There it is. That son of a gun. I'm gonna get that dirty... There we go.
For one brief moment I saw all the bolts silhouetted... against the lights of the traffic. And then they were gone. Oh, fudge!
Only I didn't say "fudge."
I said the word.
The big one. The queen mother of dirty words.
The "f, dash, dash, dash" word.
What did you say?
That's what I thought you said.
Get in the car.
Go on.
It was all over. I was dead.
What would it be? The guillotine? Hanging?
The chair? The rack? The Chinese water torture?
Mere child's play compared to what surely awaited me.
Everything go all right?
Eight minutes.
Do you know what your son just said?
No. What?
I'll tell you what he said. Randy!
Ralphie!
Over the years, I got to be quite a connoisseur of soap.
My personal preference is for Lux, but I found Palmolive had a nice...
piquant, after-dinner flavor.
Heady, but with just a touch of mellow smoothness.
Lifebuoy, on the other hand...
You ready to tell me?
All right. Where did you hear that word?
Now I had heard that word at least 10 times a day from my old man.
My father worked in profanity the way...
other artists might work in oils or clay.
It was his true medium. A master.
But I chickened out. And I blurted out...
the first name that came to mind.
Schwartz!
I see.
Hello, Mrs. Schwartz? Yes, I'm fine.
Mrs. Schwartz, do you know what Ralph just said?
No.
He said...
Not that!
Yes, that.
Do you know where he heard it?
Probably from his father.
No! He heard it from your son!
What?
What'd I do, Mom?
Why? I didn't do nothing!
Another shot of mysterious, inexorable, official justice.
Rinse out and go to bed. Am I glad you finished your homework!
Get right into bed, and I don't want to see any lights on.
You are being punished, so no comic book reading!
I'll come in, and if any lights are on...
Don't you give me that look! You're gonna get it!
Three blocks away, Schwartz was getting his.
There has never been a kid who didn't believe...
vaguely but insistently, that he would be stricken blind...
before he reached 21. And then they'd be sorry.
Why, it's Ralph!
Well, come on in, Ralph. Where've you been?
Why, he's carrying a cane!
What is it, Ralph? What happened?
Why, he's blind!
Blind? Oh, my God!
Ralph, is it something we did?
What brought you to this lonely state?
Ralph, please tell us no matter how it hurts. What did we do?
Look, I can't.
Please, Ralph. I must know what we did.
What brought you to this?
Soap poisoning.
Oh, how could we do it?
I'll manage to get along, somehow.
I'll never forgive myself.
Thanks, Mom.
I told you not to use Lifebuoy.
I feel awful!
Thank you, Heather.
Merry Christmas.
Merry Christmas.
Thank you, Flick.
Merry Christmas, Miss Shields.
I just thought that you'd be getting tired of the same old stuff.
Yes, truly, a little bribe never hurts.
Well, thank you very much, Ralph.
Merry Christmas.
Happy New Year.
You can take your seat now, Ralph.
The weeks of drinking gallons of Ovaltine, in order to get...
the Ovaltine inner seal to send off for my Little Orphan Annie...
secret decoder pen, was about to pay off.
I got it. "Master Ralph Parker."
My decoder pen!
All right!
"Be it known to all that Ralph Parker is hereby appointed...
"a member of the Little Orphan Annie secret circle and...
"is entitled to all the honors and benefits occurring thereto."
Signed, Little Orphan Annie.
Countersigned, Pierre Andre!
In ink!
Honors and benefits. Already at the age of nine.
Come on. Let's get on with it.
I don't need all that jazz about smugglers and pirates.
Listen tomorrow night for the concluding adventure of...
The Black Pirate Ship. Now it's time...
for Annie's secret message for you members of the secret circle.
Remember, kids, only members of...
Annie's secret circle can decode Annie's secret message.
Remember, Annie is depending on you.
Set your pins to B-2.
Here is the message.
12. 11. 2...
I am in my first secret meeting.
...25. 14. 11. 18.
16. 23...
Pierre was in great voice tonight.
I could tell that tonight's message was really important.
...3. 25.
That's a message from Annie herself. Remember, don't tell anyone.
Ninety seconds later I'm in the only room in the house...
where a boy of nine can sit in privacy and decode.
Ah! "B." I went to the next.
"E." The first word is "be"!
"S." It was coming easier now. "U."
Come on, Ralphie! I gotta go.
I'll be right down, Ma.
Gee whiz.
"T. O."
"Be sure to." Be sure to what?
What was Little Orphan Annie trying to say? Be sure to what?
Ralphie! Randy has got to go! Will you please come out?
All right, Ma! I'll be right out!
I was getting closer now.
The tension was terrible. What was it?
The fate of the planet may hang in the balance.
Ralphie! Randy's gotta go!
I'll be right out, for crying out loud!
Almost there! My fingers flew.
My mind was a steel trap.
Every pore vibrated.
It was almost clear.
Yes!
Ovaltine?
A crummy commercial?
Son of a bitch!
I went out to face the world again.
Wiser.
Red cabbage?
No, that's for tomorrow night. You love red cabbage, Ralphie.
You filthy system!
I hate it!
Schmucker! Smelly watt-buster!
What happened next was a family controversy for years.
What was that? What happened?
What happened?
What broke?
I don't know what happened.
I was watering my plant and...
I broke your lamp.
Don't you touch that!
You were always jealous of this lamp.
Jealous of a plastic leg?
Jealous!
Jealous because I won.
That's ridiculous! Jealous?
Jealous of what?
That is...
the ugliest lamp I have ever seen in my entire life!
Now it was out.
Get the glue.
We're out of glue.
You used up all the glue on purpose!
The old man stood quivering with fury...
stammering as he tried to come up with a real crusher.
All he got out was:
Not a finger!
With as much dignity as he could muster...
the old man gathered up the sad remains...
of his shattered major award.
Later that night, alone in the backyard...
he buried it next to the garage.
Now I could never be sure...
but I thought that I heard the sound of taps being played...
gently.
Know what I'm getting my old man for Christmas?
What?
A rose that squirts.
People come to smell it, it squirts them.
I'm getting my old man a Flit gun.
A Flit gun?
Stop right there!
Ordinarily, if Dill so much as said "hi" to you, you felt great...
warm inside. But mostly he just hit you in the mouth.
I can't now, Grover. I've gotta go see Miss Shields.
Hey, come here! Get over here!
Come on, you! Hey, come here!
You! Come here!
Who, me?
No, your Aunt Tilly.
Yeah, you. Get over here!
I left Flick to certain annihilation.
But BB gun mania knows no loyalties.
Uncle! Uncle!
All right, class.
I have your Christmas themes for you.
I'm pleased.
In general, you did very well.
However, I was disappointed in the margins.
This is it.
"C+"? No, it can't be.
C+?
C+!
Oh, no!
"You'll shoot your eye out"?
My mother must have gotten to Miss Shields.
There could be no other explanation.
You'll shoot your eye out. You'll shoot your eye out.
Was there no end to this conspiracy of irrational prejudice...
against Red Ryder and his peacemaker?
These multiplication questions were most missed in our last math test.
Would you answer in unison, please?
I was surrounded by happier kids who were all going to get... what they wanted for Christmas.
...fifty-six.
Hey, four-eyes!
How'd you like your snowball sandwich?
Maybe you'd like another one!
Listen, jerk.
When I tell you to come, you better come!
What? Are you going to cry now?
Come on, cry baby, cry for me. Come on.
Cry!
Deep in the recesses of my brain...
a tiny red-hot little flame began to grow.
Something had happened.
A fuse blew and I had gone out of my skull.
I'm telling my dad!
Hey, Ralphie!
Beat him up! Beat him up!
Did you hear what he said?
I have since heard of people under...
extreme duress speaking in strange tongues.
I became conscious that a steady torrent of obscenities...
and swearing of all kinds was pouring out of me as I screamed.
Ralphie!
We're going home. Come on.
Calm down. Come on in here, Ralph.
Put your head down in here.
Come on, get down in here.
Settle down.
I want you to go in there and lie down in your room for a while.
Ralphie, just settle down.
Here, dry off.
All right, calm down.
All right. Now go lie down.
The light was getting purple and soft outside.
Almost time for my father to come home from work.
What's the matter? What you crying for?
Daddy's going to kill Ralphie.
No, he's not.
Yes, he is, too.
No, he's not.
I promise you Daddy is not going to kill Ralphie.
Why don't you come on out of there?
Would you like some milk?
You would?
Here you go.
All right?
I'll see you later? Okay. Bye.
I heard the car roar up the driveway, and a wave of terror broke over me.
He'll know what I said, the awful things that I said.
Get out of here!
Go on home, you mangy mutts. Get out of here, you rotten, filthy...
Hey, Bumpus!
Get over here and get your stinking dogs!
Hey, come on, what's for dinner? I'm starving to death.
Well, what happened today?
Where's your glasses?
Did you lose your glasses again?
Ralphie.
Remember, you left these on the radio again.
Now try not to do that anymore.
So what else happened today?
Nothing much.
Ralphie had a fight.
A fight?
What kind of a fight?
You know how boys are.
I gave him a talking to.
I see that the Bears are playing Green Bay on Sunday.
Oh, yeah.
Zudock's got tickets. I wish I had.
He'll freeze his keister off out there.
I slowly began to realize I was not about to be destroyed.
The Chicago Bears.
The terror of the midway.
From then on, things were different between me and my mother.
More like the Chicago Chipmunks, maybe.
But Bears, never.
Strange.
Even something as monumental as "The Scut Farkus Affair"...
as it came to be known...
was pushed out of my mind as I struggled for a way out...
of the impenetrable BB gun web...
in which my mother had me trapped.
Santa!
Yeah, I'll ask Santa.
Of course! Santa.
The big man. The head honcho.
The connection.
My mother had slipped up this time.
Mickey!
The store's going to close soon
and Santa will be gone.
Ralphie, Santa's not going anyplace. Just be still!
Mom, this is just the same old dumb parade as last year.
Ralphie, will you please calm down.
Mom--
Hush!
Shut up, Ralphie!
There he is!
Santa!
Have you been a good boy? Have you?
Can we go now? Can we go?
Yes, we can go now.
Come on, Ralphie.
Merry Christmas!
Come on, Randy, hurry up.
Ralphie, look over there.
See, the line's not so long. Get in it.
Take Randy's hand and hold on to him. We'll see you later, okay?
Stay together, you hear? And don't get lost.
Come on.
Let's go.
Young man.
Hey, kid.
Just where do you think you're going?
We're going up to see Santa.
The line ends here. It begins there.
Merry Christmas!
Come on, come up, boys and girls.
Hurry up.
Come on.
The line waiting to see Santa stretched all the way back to Terre Haute!
And I was at the end of it.
I like Santa.
Let's face it. Most of us were scoffers.
Moments before zero hour, it did not pay to take chances.
The chocolate snowman eats little boys.
My pretty...
What a tasty little boy.
Don't bother me. I'm thinking.
I like The Wizard of Oz.
I like the Tin Man.
If Higbee thinks I'm working one minute past 9:00, he can kiss my foot. Come on up on Santa's lap.
There's a wet one. And what's your name, little boy?
Billy.
Come on, Randy.
And what do you want for Christmas, Billy? A toy truck?
Get him off my lap.
Quick, get me a towel.
I hate the smell of tapioca.
Attention shoppers! It is now 9:00 and our store is closing.

9:
Santa can't wait all night.
Come on up on Santa's lap.
Get moving, kid.
Quit dragging your feet.
Get him out of here.
Come on, kid.
Come on up.
And what's your name, little boy?
Hey, kid, hurry up, the store's closing!
Listen, little boy, we got a lot of people waiting here, so get going!
What do you want for Christmas, little boy?
My mind had gone blank.
Frantically I tried to remember what it was I wanted.
I was blowing it, blowing it.
How about a nice football?
Football. What's a football?
Without conscious will, my voice squeaked out:
Football.
Okay, get him out of here.
A football! Oh, no. What was I doing?
Wake up, stupid, wake up!
I want an official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot...
range model air rifle.
You'll shoot your eye out, kid.
Merry Christmas.
I'll see you in Oz, folks.
Well, did you see Santa Claus?
Did you tell him what you wanted for Christmas?
Did he ask you if you'd been a good boy all year?
No.
Don't worry, he knows.
He always knows.
Merry Christmas.
Okay, down you go.
Bye, Chris.
That's fine.
Now wait a minute. All right. Plug her in!
Well, the green string is out.
No, the green is on. It's the blue that's out.
Oh, don't tell me what color it is.
I'm not color blind.
I'm not color blind, either.
There, see, I told you it was green.
Hold it! Don't anybody move!
Hold it right there!
A fuse is out.
The old man could replace fuses quicker than a jackrabbit on a date.
He bought them by the gross.
Oh, Ralph.
My, isn't that pretty?
That son of a gun.
Yeah. No.
That star is crooked.
That star is perfectly straight.
Oh, you've got to be careful.
I am.
It's just... Let me get it fixed. That's all right.
Perfect.
Oh, goodness, look at the time.
I hope Santa hasn't had to pass up this house...
just because some boys weren't in bed when he came by.
I thought I heard Santa's sleigh bells...
a little while ago, going up the other side of the street.
All right, you two, upstairs.
Go on the double, on the double.
Okay, let's get them.
Randy, come on! Get up, Randy!
Santa Claus had come!
Wow! A truck! That's mine!
Wow, look over here! That's mine!
What's in here?
It's hard.
Fire truck. Oh boy, that's mine!
Does this raise?
Merry Christmas.
Merry Christmas, you two.
Randy, no. Wait for Christmas to start, honey.
I want to play Santa!
Well, wait a minute, Randy.
He played Santa last year, didn't he?
Ralphie, you play Santa this time.
Come on, Ralphie.
Who should I start with?
Well, give Randy a present.
And, I think I see Aunt Clara's gift to you right over there.
She always sends you such wonderful presents.
Give me mine, Ralphie! Come on.
Christmas had come. Officially. We plunged into the cornucopia...
quivering with desire and the ecstasy of unbridled avarice.
 Didn't I get a tie this year?
A zeppelin!
A can of Simonize.
Ralphie, what did Aunt Clara give you? Show everybody.
I don't want to.
Ralphie, show everybody what Aunt Clara gave you.
Aunt Clara had for years labored under the delusion that...
I was not only perpetually four years old, but also a girl.
She just always gives you the nicest things, Ralphie.
Oh, isn't that sweet?
Ralph, go upstairs and try it on you--
I don't want to!
Go upstairs right now and try on that present!
She went to all that trouble to make it! Now go on.
While Ralphie is changing, I'm going to play Santa Claus.
Now, let me see what can I find.
I see something! Randy.
This is for you, honey.
And this is for Daddy.
Here.
From me to you.
Thanks a lot.
I wonder what it could be?
Only one way to find out, isn't there?
Well, it's a blue ball!
It's a bowling ball.
Thank you, darling.
Do you like it?
Yes, very much. Very much.
Ralphie.
We're waiting.
Oh, come on, Mom.
Right now!
Immediately my feet began to sweat as those two fluffy little bunnies... with the blue button eyes stared sappily up at me.
Come down here so I can see you better.
I just hoped Flick would never spot them... as the word of this humiliation could easily make life... at Warren G. Harding School a veritable hell.
Isn't that cute?
That is the most precious thing I've ever seen in my life.
Shut up, Randy.
He looks like a deranged Easter bunny.
He does not!
He does, too.
He looks like a pink nightmare.
Are you happy wearing that?
Do you want to take it off?
You tell the kid to take it off.
You'll only wear it when Aunt Clara visits. Go on and take it off.
Take it off!
My God, will you look at that mess?
Who's going to clean the papers up?
Not me.
Randy did it last year.
Well, he can do it again.
You know, this wine is not bad. It's not good either, but...
You want a sip?
No, you don't.
Did you have a nice Christmas?
Yeah, pretty nice.
Did you get everything you wanted?
Well, almost.
Almost?
Well, that's life.
Well, there's always next Christmas.
That's funny.
What's that over there behind the desk?
Where?
Behind the desk, against the wall over there.
Why don't you go check it out?
What did we put over there, honey?
Santa Claus probably put it.
Oh, it was beautiful. I could hardly wait to try it out.
Do you know how to load it?
That's right.
Be careful.
Don't. They run all over.
Close her up. Close it up.
Can I try it out, Ma? Can I?
Sure.
Okay.
But outside.
I still say those things are dangerous.
Put on your galoshes and your coat. It's cold out.
I had one when I was eight years old.
What if he hurts himself? Ralphie, your coat!
Don't shoot any animals or birds!
Except the Bumpuses' dogs!
Be careful, Ralphie!
Now it is well known throughout the Midwest that the old man...
is a turkey junkie.
A bona fide garley turkicanus freak. A few days before Christmas...
his eyes would begin to gleam with a wild and ravenous light.
Okay, Black Bart, now you get yours.
Oh, my God! I shot my eye out!
You'll shoot your eye out, kid.
You'll shoot your eye out, you'll shoot your eye out!
Ralphie, you be careful out there. Don't shoot your eye out!
She hadn't seen! She didn't know!
My eye's all right. The BB must've hit my glasses.
My glasses! Oh, no!
Where are my glasses?
Few things brought such swift and terrible retribution...
on a kid as a pair of busted glasses!
Stop!
Oh, no!
Oh, no! Pulverized.
For a moment I thought, I'll fake it. They'll never know the lens is gone!
Randomly, my mind evolved a spectacular plot.
Let's see, an icicle!
Falls off the garage and hits me in the eye!
It would work. It had to work. Quickly, I whipped up some tears.
What's the matter, honey? What happened?
What happened? Let me see that.
There was this icicle and it fell off the garage and it hit me.
What is it?
No, it's okay. Just read your funnies.
Wake up, Randy.
Oh, God.
It hit my cheek and it broke my glasses.
And I tried to get out of the way, but I...
There, see, it's just a little bump.
You're lucky it didn't cut your eye.
Those icicles have been known to kill people.
What's going on up there?
Nothing. We'll be right down.
You stay away from that turkey! It's got an hour to cook.
You'll get worms!
But what about my glasses?
You can wear the old ones with the crack in them...
until we get you some new ones.
I had pulled it off!
But I left my gun outside.
When you get dressed you can go out and get your gun.
Hold that on there.
Life is like that.
Sometimes at the height of our reveries, when our joy is at its zenith...
when all is most right with the world...
the most unthinkable disasters descend upon us.
Oh, turkey!
Sons a bitches! Bumpuses!
The heavenly aroma still hung heavy in the house. But it was gone.
All gone. No turkey. No turkey sandwiches.
No turkey salad. No turkey gravy, turkey hash, turkey a la king...
or gallons of turkey soup.
Gone.
All gone.
All right.
Everybody upstairs.
Get dressed.
We are going out to eat.
No! Not, "ra ra ra ra ra." "La la la la la la."

**Sing like this:**
Try again.
Stop!
Sing something else.
No!
Stop!
Kitchen. Bring food. For customers.
Oh, I'm sorry.
It's a beautiful duck.
It really is.
But you see...
What?
It's smiling at me.
Okay?
Beautiful!
That Christmas would live in our memories...
as the Christmas when we were introduced to Chinese turkey.
All was right with the world.
Oh, honey, come over here. Look at this.
Is that beautiful?
Next to me in the blackness lay my oiled blue-steel beauty.
The greatest Christmas gift I had ever received...
or would ever receive.
Gradually, I drifted off to sleep, pranging ducks on the wing...
and getting off spectacular hip shots.