

SCENE 1: SCHWARTZ and FLICK

SCHWARTZ: Oh yeah?

FLICK: Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: Alright then, if you don't believe me, I double dare ya!

FLICK: So you're sayin' if I put y tongue on this post, it'll stick.

SCHWARTZ: Yeah!

FLICK: That's dumb! It wouldn't happen!

SCHWARTZ: Then go ahead! Prove I'm wrong!

FLICK: Heck no!

SCHWARTZ: That's 'cause you know it'd stick!

FLICK: Would not!

SCHWARTZ: Would too!

FLICK: Would not!

SCHWARTZ: Alright then, I triple dog dare ya! *(Flick is stunned.)*

FLICK: *(nervously)* Alright, alright.

SCHWARTZ: Go on, smarty pants, do it.

FLICK: Don't rush me. *(He cracks his knuckles, shakes out his hands, steps forward. Taking a breath, he leans in to the lamp post and his tongue makes contact)* Thith ith noth....THTUCK! I'm thtuck!

SCHWARTZ: *(theory is proven correct, but still surprised)* Jeepers! It really works! *(Backs away and turns to leave)*

FLICK: Auth! Oaaait! Cuh back! Doe lee nee! Cuh back!

SCENE 2: ESTHER JANE, RALPHIE, RANDY

ESTHER JANE: (shyly) Hello, Ralph.

RALPHIE: Oh...um...hello, Esther Jane.

ESTHER JANE: What are you here for?

RALPHIE: (nervous) To...to see Santa.

ESTHER JANE: (gasps in fake surprise) I'm here to see Santa too!

RANDY: Santa! Santa!

ESTHER JANE: (moves closer to Ralphie, who backs up) We're both here for the same reason. Isn't that funny?

RALPHIE: Yeah. Funny. Yeah. (Turns to see if anyone else has joined the line.) Guess I'm the last one.

ESTHER JANE: It's almost closing time.

RANDY: Santa! Santa!

ESTHER JANE: I'm asking Santa for a doll. What are you asking for?

RALPHIE: (self-conscious) Um...a legendary official Red Rider carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock.

ESTHER JANE: (impressed) Oooooo.

RALPHIE: Yeah...

ESTHER JANE: Aren't you afraid you'll shoot your eye out?

(Ralphie is deflated but tries to act casual)

RANDY: Santa! Santa!

ESTHER JANE: It guess that's me.

RALPHIE: Guess so.

ESTHER JANE: It was nice talking with you, Ralph.

RALPH: Uh huh.

ESTHER JANE: 'Bye

RALPHIE: 'Bye.

RANDY: I gotta go wee-wee!

SCENE 3: ESTHER JANE, SCHWARTZ, HELEN, FLICK, RALPHIE

ESTHER JANE. We should have found the trading post by now.

SCHWARTZ. I'm afraid we're lost, Esther Jane.

HELEN. All the other classes got to go to the park or the steel mill on their field trips ... but they send our class to the swamps.

FLICK. The Indiana swamps are unforgiving.

SCHWARTZ. Where's Miss Shields?

FLICK. Gator got her. About a mile back.

SCHWARTZ. Oh, man!

FLICK. Indiana gators are unforgiving.

ESTHER JANE (hysterical). We'll never get out alive! We're going to die!

RALPHIE (makes a hero's entrance). I wouldn't count on that if I was you, little missy.

HELEN. It's Ralphie Parker, Soldier of Fortune!

ESTHER JANE. Save us, Ralphie!

RALPHIE. Nothin' to it, Esther Jane ... thanks t'my legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock. Look out!

(He cocks and fires. A python drops out of the flies. SCHWARTZ runs to pick it up.)

ESTHER JANE. You saved my life!

SCHWARTZ. Got him right between the eyes!

FLICK. Good thing, too; Indiana pythons are unforgiving.

RALPHIE. We'd best get out of here before the rest of the herd shows up.

HELEN. We can't. We're lost.

SCHWARTZ. We don't even know what time it is!

RALPHIE. I always know what time it is and I'm never lost, because my legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle has a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock. It's ... (He looks at rifle stock.) ... 3:38 and ... 30 seconds. And north is that way! (He points into the wings.)

ESTHER JANE. Oh, Ralphie! (She whirls once and he catches her at arms length.) You're my hero!

SCENE 4: MOTHER, RALPH, RANDY, THE OLD MAN

RALPH. Most mornings my kid brother wore more oatmeal than he ate.

THE OLD MAN. Stop that noise! Eat that food or I'll give you somethin' to cry about!

RALPH. My mother was more subtle.

MOTHER. Randy, how does the little piggy go?

RANDY *(suddenly full of life, grunts twice)*. Snort! Snort!

MOTHER. That's right! That's right! How does the little piggy go? *(RANDY grunts again. MOTHER laughs and claps her hands. She turns back to the countertop, picks up another bowl and conceals it behind her back, moving toward RANDY)* How does the little piggy go? *(RANDY grunts again. MOTHER laughs and, in one smooth balletic movement, replaces his oatmeal bowl with a new one.)* Now show me how the piggies eat! Here's a new trough! Go on, show me!

RANDY. Snort! *(He buries his nose in the fresh bowl and makes pig noises.)*

MOTHER. Mommy's little piggy! Good piggy! Eat it all up!

THE OLD MAN *(sorting through mail)*. ... bill, bill, neckties by mail ... bill ... Ha! Look at this! *(Turns the envelope over, opens it.)*

MOTHER. What is it?

THE OLD MAN. Another contest! Fifty Thousand Dollar Giant Jackpot Puzzle! *(He sits at the table, takes a pencil from his pocket and begins writing.)*

RALPH. The Old Man was hooked on contests. He entered them all. Match the Baby Pictures. Find the Hidden Objects. And sports? The Old Man knew sports.

THE OLD MAN. "What National League team won the World Series in 1907?" Easy. Chicago Cubs. *(He writes.)*

RALPH. The Old Man never lost hope. He believed that awards would come to him who was faithful, persevering and mailed by deadline.

THE OLD MAN, "What's the name of the Lone Ranger's nephew's horse?" The Lone Ranger's nephew? His horse? Who could...

MOTHER. Victor. His name is Victor

THE OLD MAN *(surprised)*. How'd you know that?

MOTHER. Everybody knows that.

(THE OLD MAN turns to look quizzically at RANDY, who nods solemnly.)

THE OLD MAN *(mocking under his breath)*. Oh! Everybody knows that!

SCENE 5: RALPH MONOLOGUE 1

RALPH. 'Tis the holiday season and Christmas fever is upon us. Windows are garlanded in red and green, yards are alight with plastic reindeer and milling crowds of shoppers fill the streets, stores and malls. I put up my tree last week. Had to assemble it first. Then I threw an artificial Yule log on the propane-augmented fire and began to reminisce. The holidays tend to do that. I found myself remembering another Christmas in another time ... another place.

And there it is. The house on Cleveland Street in Hohman, Indiana, where I spent the festering years of my childhood. Yes sir, Hohman, Indiana – ragged vacant lots, American Legion halls and bowling alleys woven together with a compact web of high tension wires, telephone lines and sewer pipe. This time, every year the wind would come screaming over frozen Lake Michigan, laying down great drifts of snow. The air would crack and sing, and power lines would creak under caked ice. Christmas was on its way. Lovely, beautiful, glorious Christmas, around which the entire kid year revolved.

SCENE 6: RALPH MONOLOGUE 2

RALPH: For myself that Christmas, I wanted only one thing. I found the ad in a magazine called Open Road for Boys. (RALPHIE pulls out a copy of the magazine and opens it.) It was a magnificent thing of balanced copy, superb artwork and subtly contrived catch phrases. It said: "BOYS! At last YOU can own an OFFICIAL RED RYDER carbine action 200-shot RANGE MODEL AIR RIFLE!" And there was a picture of Red Ryder himself, clutching the knurled stock of the most beautiful BB gun I'd ever laid eyes on. No self-respecting cowboy would be without one. (*RALPH pulls a BB gun from nowhere, puts one foot up on a stool, and becomes a cowboy.*) Hey, partner, this legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle is just like the one Red Ryder uses when he's chasin' bad guys. It even has a compass built right into the stock, so you'll never get lost on the trail; and say, there's an official Red Ryder sundial for tellin' time in the wilderness, too! It's a real straight shooter! Y'just look down the barrel to the special cloverleaf sight, and pull the trigger. Y'can't miss.

SCENE 7: MOTHER, THE OLD MAN, RALPHIE, DESPERADO 1, DESPERADO 2, BLACK BART

MOTHER. We're saved! We're saved! It's Ralphie the Kid, come to fight the bad guys!

THE OLD MAN. And he's carryin' Old Blue, his legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle!

MOTHER. With a compass ...

THE OLD MAN. ... and this thing which tells time ...

MOTHER. ... built right into the stock!

RALPHIE (*walks with a bowlegged assuredness*). Now, don't you folks worry none. We'll make short work o' these here polecats, I reckon. What you figure we're up against here?

THE OLD MAN. Well, Ralphie the Kid, we sorta figger it's Black Bart and his desperados.

MOTHER. They're packin' plastic water pistols, and big rubber daggers!

THE OLD MAN. They come in by air, in a tin zeppelin with little wheels and a friction motor.

RALPHIE. I ain't seen the desperado alive can stand up to me once I get 'em in the special cloverleaf sight of Old Blue, my legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock.

THE OLD MAN. That's what I said. (*MOTHER and RANDY nod agreement.*)

RALPHIE. Reckon I better have a look-see. (He climbs to the table top and poses with Old Blue.)

DESPERADOS (freezing in their tracks). Oh no!

BLACK BART. It's Ralphie the Kid!

DESPERADO 1. With Old Blue! His legendary official Red Ryder carbine action ...

DESPERADO 2. ... 200-shot Range Model Air Rifle ...

BLACK BART. ... with a compass and this thing which tells time ...

ALL THREE. ... built right into the stock!

BLACK BART. Vamoose, boys! Not even plastic water pistols and big rubber daggers can beat Old Blue!

BLACK BART. You win this time, Ralphie the Kid! I'm a-headin' for the border! But I'll be back!

RALPHIE. Aye-dee-ose, Bart! But I'm warnin' ya, if ya do come back, ye'll find yerself a-pushin' up daisies on Boot Hill, 'cause these here squatters is under my personal protection! And wherever Ralphie the Kid is, you'll always find Old Blue, his legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock!

SCENE 8: MOTHER, THE OLD MAN, RALPH, RALPHIE, RANDY

RALPH. The Old Man's spare tires were actually only tires in the academic sense. They were round, they had been made of rubber. They had long ago been given extreme function.

RANDY. I gotta go wee-wee!

MOTHER. You should have thought of that before. Ralphie, why don't you go help your father?

RALPHIE. Can I?

MOTHER. Yes. Just watch for traffic getting out.

(RALPHIE gets out of the car.)

RALPH. It was the first time it had ever been suggested I help my father with anything.

THE OLD MAN. Whaddya doin' here?

RALPHIE. Mom said I should help.

THE OLD MAN. Oh! Oh, yeah?

RALPHIE. Yeah.

THE OLD MAN. Sit down here, then. Squat down. Here. Hold this here. *(Hands the hubcap to RALPHIE, who holds it against his chest. THE OLD MAN twists off the lug nuts, then looks up.)* No, not that way. *(He paws at the hubcap.)* Come on, come on. *(He rearranges the hubcap, so that RALPHIE is holding it horizontally.)* Hold it like this, see ... so I can put the lug nuts in it. *(The lug nuts clatter into the hubcap.)* Five of 'em. There ya go! *(THE OLD MAN rapidly jacks up the car.)* And ... we ... got it! *(He pulls off the flat, puts on the spare.)* There ... *(As THE OLD MAN turns, lights cross fade to strobe. There is a long, low musical sting as, in slow motion, THE OLD MAN reaches for the lug nuts, accidentally catches the edge of the hubcap and snaps it upward. RALPHIE tries to recapture the lug nuts as they sail up into the air.)*

RALPH. For one brief moment I saw all five of the lug nuts silhouetted against the lights of the traffic!

RALPHIE. *(as if in slow motion)* OOOOOOOOOOh, fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuudge!

RALPH. Only I didn't say fudge. I said the word. The big one. The "F" blank, blank, blank word!

THE OLD MAN. What did you say?

RALPHIE *(cringes, shrugs)*. Um ...

THE OLD MAN. That's what I thought you said. Get in the car. Go on!

(RALPHIE climbs into the car as THE OLD MAN finds a couple of the lug nuts and quickly puts on the spare.)

RALPH. I was dead. What would it be? The guillotine? The chair? The rack? Chinese water torture? Mere child's play compared to what surely awaited me. I climbed into the back seat

next to my kid brother. He knew something was wrong, I knew something was wrong, my mother didn't have a clue.

(THE OLD MAN climbs back into the car)

THE OLD MAN. Do you know what your son just said?

MOTHER. No, what?

THE OLD MAN. I'll tell you what he said. *(He leans in to whisper, she leans in to him, RANDY moves between them to hear:)*

MOTHER. Randy! *(RANDY retreats. THE OLD MAN whispers. MOTHER screams once, then twice.)*
Ralphie!

RALPH. We rode home in deep, complete, absolute and total silence.

RANDY *(in darkness)*. I gotta go wee-wee!

SCENE 9: SCUT FARKAS MONOLOGUE

FARKAS: Hey! Hey you! Come here! I said come here! Hey, listen, jerk, when I tell ya to come here, you better come here! How about we wash your face! What are you gonna do? Cry now? Come on, cry baby, cry for me! Come, cry!

SCENE 10: MISS SHEILDS

MISS SHIELDS. Margins! Margins! Margins! Why don't they listen? Why don't they learn? Semicolon, you dolt, not period! Oh, I can't take this anymore. But I must! It is my duty! One more! Just one more! *(Takes a theme from the top of the pile and reads.)* "Ralph Parker" *(Rolls her eyes.)* Ha! *(Reads silently.)* Why ?.. why ... this is ? good. This is ... it's wonderful! *(She clutches it to her bosom)* The theme I've been waiting for all my life! It validates my existence! The prose ... it ... it sings! " ... legendary official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot Range Model air rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time build right into the stock!" Why, this isn't prose! It's poetry! Sheer poetry! I am transported! It out-Shakespeares Shakespeare! *(She stands and sweeps the stacks of themes from her desk.)* These are not worthy to be in such close proximity to this ... this ... masterpiece! Let the word go out, past is prologue! The history of theme writing begins here!