

# *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

## *Greg Heffley's Journal*

**A Novel in Cartoons; Over 250 Million Books Sold**

**Jeff Kinney (REFERENCE USE)**

### **SEPTEMBER**

#### **Tuesday**

First of all, let me get something straight: This is a JOURNAL, not a diary. I know what it says on the cover, but when Mom went out to buy this thing I SPECIFICALLY told her to get one that didn't say "diary" on it.

Great. All I need is for some jerk to catch me carrying this book around and get the wrong idea.

*\*PUNCH\** "Sissy!"

The other thing I want to clear up right away is that this was MOM's idea, not mine.

But if she thinks I'm going to write down my "feelings" in here or whatever, she's crazy. So just don't expect me to be all "Dear Diary" this and "Dear Diary" that.

The only reason I agreed to do this at all is because I figure later on when I'm rich and famous, I'll have better things to do than answer people's stupid questions all day long. So this book is gonna come in handy.

"Gregory! Tell us about your childhood!"

"Were you ALWAYS so smart and handsome?"

*\*FLASH\**

"Here's my journal, now shoo, shoo."

Like I said, I'll be famous one day, but for now I'm stuck in middle school with a bunch of morons.

(MORONS)

Let me just say for the record that I think middle school is the dumbest idea ever invented. You got kids like me who haven't hit their growth spurt yet mixed in with these gorillas who need to shave twice a day.

"Outta my way, runts!"

And then they wonder why bullying is such a big problem in middle school.

If it was up to me, grade levels would be based on height, not age. But then again, I guess that would mean kids like Chirag Gupta would still be in the first grade.

Today is the first day of school, and right now we're just waiting around for the teacher to hurry up and finish the seating chart. So I figured I might as well write in this book to pass the time.

By the way, let me give you some good advice. On the first day of school, you got to be real careful where you sit. You walk into the classroom and just plunk your stuff down on any old desk and the next thing you know the teacher is saying --

"I hope you all like where you're sitting, because these are your permanent seats."

"GAAH!"

So in this class, I got stuck with Chris Hosey in front of me and Lionel James in back of me.

Jason Brill came in late and almost sat to my right, but luckily I stopped that from happening at the last second.

"Is this seat taken?"

"YES! YES!"

Next period, I should just sit in the middle of a bunch of hot girls as soon as I step in the room. But I guess if I do that, it just proves I didn't learn anything from last year.

"Greg, will you please pass this note to Shelly?"

[Greg is a dork.]

"Why, certainly! Heh, heh."

Man, I don't know what is up with girls these days. It used to be a whole lot simpler back in elementary school. The deal was, if you were the fastest runner in your class, you got all the girls.

And in the fifth grade, the fastest runner was Ronnie McCoy.

Nowadays, it's a whole lot more complicated. Now it's about the kind of clothes you wear or how rich you are or if you have a cute butt or whatever. And kids like Ronnie McCoy are scratching their heads wondering what the heck happened.

The most popular boy in my grade is Bryce Anderson. The thing that really stinks is that I have always been into girls, but kids like Bryce have only come around in the last couple of years.

I remember how Bryce used to act back in elementary school.

"Girls are stinky poos!"

"Yeah!"

"I don't think girls are stinky poos!"

But of course now I don't get any credit for sticking with the girls all this time.

Like I said, Bryce is the most popular kid in our grade, so that leaves all the rest of us guys scrambling for the other spots.

The best I can figure is that I'm somewhere around 52nd or 53rd most popular this year. But the good news is that I'm about to move up one spot because Charlie Davies is above me, and he's getting his braces next week.

I try to explain all this popularity stuff to my friend Rowley (who is probably hovering right around the 150 mark, by the way), but I think it just goes in one ear and out the other with him.

[COMIX]

## **Wednesday**

Today we had Phys Ed, so the first thing I did when I got outside was sneak off to the basketball court to see if the Cheese was still there. And sure enough, it was.

That piece of Cheese has been sitting on the blacktop since last spring. I guess it must've dropped out of someone's sandwich or something. After a couple of days, the Cheese started getting all moldy and nasty. Nobody would play basketball on the court where the Cheese was, even though that was the only court that had a hoop with a net.

Then one day, this kid named Darren Walsh touched the Cheese with his finger, and that's what started this thing called the Cheese Touch. It's basically like the Cooties. If you get the Cheese Touch, you're stuck with it until you pass it on to someone else.

*\*SCREAM!\**

The only way to protect yourself from the Cheese Touch is to cross your fingers.

But it's not that easy remembering to keep your fingers crossed every moment of the day. I ended up taping mine together so they'd stay crossed all the time. I got a D in handwriting, but it was totally worth it.

This one kid named Abe Hall got the Cheese Touch in April, and nobody would even come near him for the rest of the year. This summer Abe moved away to California and took the Cheese Touch with him.

I just hope someone doesn't start the Cheese Touch up again, because I don't need that kind of stress in my life anymore.

## **Thursday**

I'm having a seriously hard time getting used to the fact that summer is over and I have to get out of bed every morning to go to school. My summer did not exactly get off to a great start, thanks to my older brother Rodrick.

A couple of days into summer vacation, Rodrick woke me up in the middle of the night. He told me I slept through the whole summer, but that luckily I woke up just in time for the first day of school.

"Shoot."

You might think I was pretty dumb for falling for that one, but Rodrick was dressed up in his school clothes and he set my alarm clock ahead to make it look like it was the morning. Plus, he closed my curtains so I couldn't see that it was still dark out.

After Rodrick woke me up, I just got dressed and went downstairs to make myself some breakfast, like I do every morning on a school day.

But I guess I must have made a pretty big racket because the next thing I knew, Dad was downstairs, yelling at me for eating Cheerios at 3:00 in the morning.

[Cheerios]

It took me a minute to figure out what the heck was going on.

After I did, I told Dad that Rodrick had played a trick on me, and HE was the one that should be getting yelled at.

Dad walked down to the basement to chew Rodrick out, and I tagged along. I couldn't wait to see Rodrick get what was coming to him.

But Rodrick covered up his tracks pretty good. And to this day, I'm sure Dad thinks I've got a screw loose or something.

## **Friday**

Today at school we got assigned to reading groups.

They don't come right out and tell you if you're in the Gifted group or the Easy group, but you can figure it out right away by looking at the covers of the books they hand out.

[Einstein as a Child]

[Bink Says Boo]

I was pretty disappointed to find out I got put in the Gifted group, because that just means a lot of extra work.

When they did the screening at the end of last year, I did my best to make sure I got put in the Easy group this year.

"Fred picked up the buh... bah... bee..."

"The 'book.'"

"Whew. Thanks!"

Mom is real tight with our principal, so I'll bet she stepped in and make sure I got put in the Gifted group again.

Mom is always saying I'm a smart kid, but that I just don't "apply" myself.

But if there's one thing I learned from Rodrick, it's to set people's expectations real low so you end up surprising them by practically doing nothing at all.

"Rodrick, I want your dirty underwear off the kitchen table before I get home from work."

*\*Grunt\**

(Later...)

Actually, I'm kind of glad my plan to get put in the Easy group didn't work.

I saw a couple of the "Bink Says Boo" kids holding their books upside down, and I don't think they were joking.

## **Saturday**

Well, the first week of school is finally over, so today I slept in.

Most kids wake up early on Saturday to watch cartoons or whatever, but not me. The only reason I get out of bed at all on weekends is because eventually, I can't stand the taste of my own breath anymore.

*\*Smack\* \*Smack\**

Unfortunately, Dad wakes up at 6:00 in the morning no matter WHAT day of the week it is, and he is not real considerate of the fact that I am trying to enjoy my saturday like a normal person.

*\*VROOM\**

I didn't have anything to do today so I just headed up to Rowley's house.

Rowley is technically my best friend, but that is definitely subject to change.

I've been avoiding Rowley since the first day of school when he did something that really annoyed me.

We were getting out stuff from our lockers at the end of the day, and Rowley came up to me and said:

"Want to come over to my house and *PLAAYYY?*"

I have told Rowley at least a billion times that now we're in middle school, you're supposed to say "hang out," not "play." But no matter how many noogies I give him, he always forgets the next time.

I've been trying to be a lot more careful about my image ever since I got to middle school. But having Rowley around is definitely not helping.

I met Rowley a few years ago when he moved into my neighborhood.

His mom bought him this book called "How to Make Friends in New Places," and he came to my house trying all these dumb gimmicks.

"Knock knock!"

"Huh?"

"Thermos!"

"Excuse me?"

"Thermos be *SOME* way to tickle your funny bone!"

"Say what?"

I guess I kind of felt sorry for Rowley, and I decided to take him under my wing.

It's been great having him around, mostly because I get to use all the tricks Rodrick pulls on ME.

"Did you know that if your hand is bigger than your face it's a sign of 'low intelligence'?"

"*REALLLY?*"

*\*WHAP!\** "Ha! Gotcha!"

"But do I have 'low intelligence'?"

"Hmm... let me check again."

## Monday

You know how I said I play all sorts of pranks on Rowley? Well, I have a little brother named Manny, and I could NEVER get away with pulling any of that stuff on him.

Mom and Dad protect Manny like he's a prince or something. And he never gets in trouble, even if he really deserves it.

Yesterday, Manny drew a self-portrait on my bedroom door in permanent marker. I thought Mom and Dad were really going to let him have it, but as usual, I was wrong.

"Awwww..."

But the thing that bugs me the most about Manny is the nickname he has for me. When he was a baby, he couldn't pronounce "brother," so he started calling me "Bubby." And he STILL calls me that now, even though I keep trying to get Mom and Dad to make him stop.

Luckily none of my friends have found out yet, but believe me I have had some really close calls.

[HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GREG]

"Hey, this one says it's to 'bubby'!"

[BUBBY]

*\*TOSS\** "Must be a mistake."

Mom makes me help Manny get ready for school in the morning. After I make Manny his breakfast, he carries his cereal bowl into the family room and sits on his plastic potty.

"C' is for Cookie and Cookie is for me!"

"HA!"

And when it's time for him to go to day care, he gets up and dumps whatever he didn't eat right in the toilet.

*\*DUMP\**

Mom is always getting on me about not finishing my breakfast. But if she had to scrape corn flakes out of the bottom of a plastic potty every morning, she wouldn't have much of an appetite either.

## Tuesday

I don't know if I mentioned this before, but I am SUPER good at video games. I'll bet I could beat anyone in my grade head-to-head.

Unfortunately, Dad does not exactly appreciate my skills. He's always getting on me about going out and doing something "active."

So tonight after dinner when Dad started hassling me about going outside, I tried to explain how with video games, you can play sports like football and soccer, and you don't even get all hot and sweaty.

But as usual, Dad didn't see my logic.

Dad is a pretty smart guy in general but when it comes to common sense, sometimes I wonder about him.

*\*SLAM\**

I'm sure Dad would dismantle my game system if he could figure out how to do it. But luckily the people who make these things make them parent-proof.

"Dag nab these fancy gadgets!"

Every time Dad kicks me out of the house to do something sporty, I just go up to Rowley's and play my video games there.

Unfortunately, the only games I can play at Rowley's are car-racing games and stuff like that.

Because whenever I bring a game up to Rowley's house, his dad looks it up on some parents' Web site. And if my game has ANY kind of fighting or violence in it, he won't let us play.

"Hmmm..."

I'm getting a little sick of playing Formula One Racing with Rowley, because he's not a serious gamer like me. All that you have to do to beat Rowley is name your car something ridiculous at the beginning of the game.

And then when you pass Rowley's car, he just falls to pieces.

[BAD FART AHEAD!]

"BWAAHAHAHA!"

Anyway, after I got done mopping the floor with Rowley today, I headed home. I ran through the neighbor's sprinkler a couple times to make it look like I was all sweaty, and that seemed to do the trick for Dad.

"Whew!"

But my trick kind of backfired, because as soon as Mom saw me, she made me go upstairs and take a shower.

## Wednesday

I guess Dad must have been pretty happy with himself for making me go outside yesterday, because he did it again today.

It's getting really annoying to have to go up to Rowley's every time I want to play a video game. There's this weird kid named Fregley who lives halfway between my house and Rowley's, and Fregley is always hanging out in his front yard. So it's pretty hard to avoid him.

"Wanna see my 'secret freckle'?"

"Um... no thanks."

Fregley is in my Phys Ed class at school, and he has this whole made-up language. Like when he needs to go to the bathroom, he says:

"JUICE! JUUUICE!!!"

Us kids have pretty much figured Fregley out by now, but I don't think the teachers have really caught on yet.

"OK, kid... Gee whiz!"

[Hi-C]

Today, I probably would have gone up to Rowley's on my own anyway, because my brother Rodrick and his band were practicing down in the basement.

Rodrick's band is REALLY awful, and I can't stand being home when they're having rehearsals.

His band is called "Loaded Diaper," only it's spelled "Löded Diper" on Rodrick's van.

You might think he spelled it that way to make it look cooler, but I bet if you told Rodrick how "Loaded Diaper" is really spelled, it would be news to him.

[LÖDED DIPER]

Dad was against the idea of Rodrick starting a band, but Mom was all in for it.

She's the one who bought Rodrick his first drum set.

I think Mom has this idea that we're all going to learn to play instruments and then become one of those family bands like you see on TV.

Dad really hates heavy metal, and that's the kind of music Rodrick and his band play. I don't think Mom really cares what Rodrick plays or listens to, because to her, all music is the same. In fact, earlier today, Rodrick was listening to one of his CDs in the family room, and Mom came in and started dancing.

That really bugged Rodrick, so he drove off to the store and came back fifteen minutes later with some headphones. And that pretty much took care of the problem.

## **Thursday**

Yesterday Rodrick got a new heavy metal CD, and it had one of those "Parental Warning" stickers on it.

I have never gotten to listen to one of those Parental Warning CDs, because Mom and Dad never let me buy them at the mall. So I realized the only way I was gonna get a chance to listen to Rodrick's CD was if I snuck it out of the house.

This morning, after Rodrick left, I called up Rowley and told him to bring his CD player to school.

Then I went down to Rodrick's room and took the CD off his rack.

You're not allowed to bring personal music players to school, so we had to wait to use it until after lunch when the teachers let us outside. As soon as we got the chance, me and Rowley snuck around the back of the school and loaded up Rodrick's CD.

But Rowley forgot to put batteries in his CD player, so it was pretty much worthless.

Then I came up with his great idea for a game. The object was to put the headphones on your head and then try to shake them off without was using your hands.

The winner was whoever could shake the headphones off in the shortest amount of time.

I had the record with seven and a half seconds, but I think I might have shook some of my fillings loose with that one.

Right in the middle of our game, Mrs. Craig came aorund the corner and caught us red-handed. She took the music player away from me and started chewing us out.

But I think she had the wrong idea about what we were doing back there. She started telling us how rock and roll is "evil" and how it's going to ruin our brains.

I was going to tell her that there weren't even any batteries in the CD player, but I could tell she didn't want to be interrupted. So I just waited until she was done, and I said, "Yes, ma'am."

But right when Mrs. Craig was about to let us go, Rowley started blubbering about how he doesn't want rock and roll to ruin his "brains."

Honestly, sometimes I don't know about that boy.

## Friday

Well, now I've gone and done it.

Last night, after everyone was in bed, I snuck downstairs to listen to Rodrick's CD on the stereo in the family room.

I put Rodrick's new headphones on and cranked up the volume REALLY high. Then I hit "play."

First, let me just say I can definitely understand why they put that "Parental Warning" sticker on the CD.

But I only got to hear about thirty seconds of the first song before I got interrupted.

It turns out I didn't have the headphones plugged into the stereo. So the music was actually coming through the SPEAKERS, not the headphones.

Dad marched me up to my room and shut the door behind him, and then he said:

"Let's you and me have a talk, *FRIEND*."

Whenever Dad says "friend" that way, you know you're in trouble. The first thing Dad ever said "friend" like that to me, I didn't get that he was being sarcastic. So I kind of let my guard down.

*"Friend = Good"*

I don't make that mistake anymore.

Tonight, Dad yelled at me for about ten minutes and then I guess he decided he'd rather be in bed than standing in my room in his underwear. He told me I was grounded from playing video games for two weeks, which is about what I expected. I guess I should be glad that's all he did.

The good thing about Dad is that when he gets mad, he cools off real quick, and then it's over.

Usually, if you mess up in front of Dad, he just throws whatever he's got in his hands at you.

[Good time to screw up:]

[Bad time to screw up:]

*\*KICK\**

Mom has a TOTALLY different style when it comes to punishment. If you mess up and Mom catches you, the first thing she does is to take a few days to figure out what your punishment should be.

And while you're waiting, you do all these nice things to try to get off easier.

"I dusted the dining room for the heck of it!"

"How thoughtful of you!"

But then after a few days, right when YOU forget you're in trouble, that's when she lays it on you.

"Are you having fun?"

"YEAH!"

"No video games for a week!"

## **Monday**

This video game ban is a whole lot tougher than I thought it would be. But at least I'm not the only one in the family who's in trouble.

Rodrick's in some hot water with Mom right now, too. Manny got ahold of one of Rodrick's heavy metal magazines, and one of the pages had a picture of a woman in a bikini lying across the hood of a car. And then Manny brought it into day care for show-and-tell.

Anyway, I don't think Mom was too happy about getting that phone call.

I saw the magazine myself, and it honestly wasn't anything to get worked up over. But Mom doesn't allow that kind of stuff in the house.

Rodrick's punishment was that he had to answer a bunch of questions Mom wrote out for him.

**Did owning this magazine make you a better person?**

No.

**Did it make you more popular at school?**

No.

**How do you feel about having owned this type of magazine now?**

I feel ashamed.

**Do you have anything you want to say to women for having owned this offensive magazine?**

I'm sorry women.

## **Wednesday**

I'm still grounded from playing video games, so Manny has been using my system. Mom went out and bought a whole bunch of educational video games, and watching Manny play them is like torture.

"What number comes after two and rhymes with 'tree'?"

"Hmm..."

"THREE! THREE!"

The good news is that I finally figured out how to get some of my games past Rowley's Dad. I just put one of my discs in Manny's "Discovering the Alphabet" case, and that's all it takes.

"Mm HMMMM!"

## **Thursday**

At school today, they announced that student government elections are coming up. To be honest with you, I've never had any interest in student government. But when I started thinking about it, I realized getting elected Treasurer could TOTALLY change my situation at school.

"We cheerleaders are tired of riding to games in the same bus as the nerds in the band!"

[TREASURER]

"Hmm... let me see what I can do..."

And even better...

"We jocks just need an air pump to inflate our only football."

[TREASURER]

"Yeahhhh... sorry. Can't help you with that."

Nobody ever thinks about running for Treasurer, because all anyone ever cares about are the big-ticket positions like President and Vice President. So I figure if I sign up tomorrow, the Treasurer job is pretty much mine for the taking.

## **Friday**

Today, I went and put my name on the list to run for Treasurer. Unfortunately, this kid named Marty Porter is running for Treasurer, too, and he's real brainy at math. So this might not be as easy as I thought.

I told Dad that I was running for student government, and he seemed pretty excited. It turns out he ran for student government when he was my age, and he actually won.

Dad dug through some old boxes in the basement and found one of his campaign posters.

[INTEGRITY; HONESTY; KNOW-HOW]

[VOTE Frank Heffley for SECRETARY]

I thought the poster idea was pretty good, so I asked Dad to drive me to the store to get some supplies. I loaded up on poster board and markers, and I spent the rest of the night making all my campaign stuff. So ley's just hope these posters work.

## **Monday**

I brought my posters in to school today, and I have to say, they came out pretty good.

[Do you want MARTY PORTER to be your TREASURER?]

["Hey, you're dropping all our money, you fool!"]

["Darr..."]

[Remember in second grade how Marty Porter had head lice?]

[\*Itch\* \*Itch\*]

[Do you really want him touching YOUR money?]

I started hanging my psoters up as soon as I got i. But they were only up for about three minutes before Vice Principal Roy spotted them.

Mr. Roy said you weren't allowed to write "fabrications" about the other candidates, so I told Mr. Roy that the thing about the head lice was true, and how it practically closed down the whole school when it happened.

But he took down all my posters anyway. So today, Marty Porter was going around handing out lollipops to buy himself votes while my posters were sitting at the bottom of Mr. Roy's trash can. I guess this means my political career is officially over.

# **OCTOBER**

## **Monday**

Well, it's finally October, and there are only thirty days left until Halloween. It's my FAVORITE holiday, even though Mom says I'm getting too old to go trick-or-treating anymore.

Halloween is Dad's favorite holiday, too, but for a different reason. On Halloween night, while all the other parents are handing out candy, Dad is hiding in the bushes with a big trash can full of water.

And if any teenagers pass by our driveway, he drenches them.

"YAAARGH!"

I'm not sure Dad really understands the concept of Halloween. But I'm not gonna be the one who spoils his fun.

"Trick or treat! Heh, heh."

Tonight was the opening night of the Crossland High School haunted house, and I got Mom to agree to take me and Rowley.

Rowley showed up at my house wearing his Halloween costume from last year. When I called him earlier I told him to just wear regular clothes, but of course he didn't listen.

I tried not to let it bother me too much, though. I've never been allowed to go to the Crossland haunted house before, and I wasn't going to let Rowley ruin it for me. Rodrick has told me all about it, and I've been looking forward to this for about three years.

Anyway, when we got to the entrance, I started having second thoughts about going in.

"Good EEEVENINGGG."

But Mom seemed like she was in a hurry to get this over with, and she moved us along. Once we were through the gate, it was one scare after another. There were vampires jumping out at you and people without heads and all sorts of crazy stuff.

But the worst part was this area called Chainsaw Alley. There was this big guy in a hockey mask and he had a REAL chainsaw. Rodrick told me the chainsaw has a rubber blade, but I wasn't taking any chances.

*\*RRRRRRRRRRRR!\**

Right when it looked like the chainsaw guy was going to catch us, Mom stepped in and bailed us out.

"That's not nice!"

"I'm sorry, ma'am!"

Mom made the chainsaw guy show us where the exit was, and that was the end of our haunted house experience right there. I guess it was little embarrassing when Mom did that, but I'm willing to let it go this one time.

## Saturday

The Crossland haunted house really got me thinking. Those guys were charging five bucks a pop, and the line stretched halfway around the school.

I decided to make a haunted house of my own. Actually, I had to bring Rowley in on the deal, because Mom wouldn't let me convert our first floor into a full-out haunted mansion.

I knew Rowley's dad wouldn't be crazy about the idea, either, so we decided to build the haunted house in his basement and just not mention it to his parents.

Me and Rowley spent most of the day coming up with an awesome plan for our haunted house.

Here is our final plan:

HALL OF SCREAMS; LAKE OF BLOOD; BOTTOMLESS PIT; RAT TUNNEL; MAZE OF 1,000 SKULLS; KNIFE ALLEY; HAND HALL; DEATH SLIDE; ACID LAKE; EXIT.

I don't mean to brag or anything, but what we came up with was WAY better than the Crossland High School haunted house.

We realized we were gonna need to get the word out that we were doing this thing, so we got some paper and made up a bunch of flyers.

I admit maybe we stretched the truth a little in our advertisement, but we had to make sure people actually showed up.

[HAUNTED HOUSE; WITH LIVE SHARKS!]

["Ouch."]

[32 SURREY STREET; ADMISSION: 50¢; 3:00 p.m.]

By the time we finished putting the flyers up around the neighborhood and got back to Rowley's basement, it was already 2:30, and we hadn't even started putting the actual haunted house together yet.

So we had to cut some corners from our original plan.

When 3:00 rolled around, we looked outside to see if anyone had showed up. And sure enough, there were about twenty neighborhood kids waiting in line outside Rowley's basement.

Now, I know our flyers said admission was fifty cents, but I could see that we had a chance to make a killing here.

So I told the kids that admission was two bucks, and the fifty-cent thing was just a typo.

The first kid to cough up his two bucks was Shane Snella. He paid his money and we let him inside, and me and Rowley took our positions in the Hall of Screams.

The Hall of Screams was basically a bed with me and Rowley on either side of it.

"RAH!"

"RAH!"

*\*SQUEAL!\**

I guess maybe we made the Hall of Screams a little too scary, because halfway through, Shane curled up in a ball underneath the bed. We tried to get him to crawl out from under there, but he wouldn't budge.

I started thinking about all the money we were losing with this kid clogging up the Hall of Screams, and I knew we had to get him out of there, quick.

Eventually, Rowley's dad came downstairs. At first I was happy to see him, because I thought he could help us drag Shane out from under the bed and get our haunted house cranking again.

But Rowley's dad wasn't really in a helpful mood.

*\*POKE POKE\**

Rowley's dad wanted to know what we were doing, and why Shane Snella was curled up under the bed.

We told him that the basement was a haunted house, and that Shane Snella actually PAID for us to do it for him. But Rowley's Dad didn't believe us.

I admit that if you looked around, it didn't really look like a haunted house. All we had time to put together was the Hall of Screams and the Lake of Blood, which was just Rowley's old baby pool with half a bottle of Ketchup in it.

I tried to show Rowley's dad our original plan to prove that we really were running a legitimate operation, but he still didn't seem convinced.

And to make a long story short, that was the end of our haunted house.

The good news is, since Rowley's dad didn't believe us, he didn't make us refund Shane's money. So at least we cleared two bucks today.

## **Sunday**

Rowley ended up getting grounded for that whole haunted house mess yesterday. He's not allowed to watch TV for a week, AND he's not allowed to have me over at his house during that time.

That last part really isn't fair, because that's punishing me, and I didn't even do anything wrong. And now where am I supposed to play my video games?

Anyway, I felt kind of bad for Rowley. So tonight, I tried to make it up to him. I turned on one of Rowley's favorite TV shows, and I did a play-by-play over the phone so he could kind of experience it that way.

"Wow! Look at the size of that flamethrower!

"Oh yeah, never mind."

I did my best to keep up with what was going on on the screen, but to be honest with you, I'm not sure if Rowley was getting the full effect.

"I bet this part is gonna be funny.

"Whup! Ha ha! I was right! It was funny."

## **Tuesday**

Well, Rowley's grounding is finally over, and just in time for Halloween, too. I went up to his house to check out his costume, and I have to admit, I'm a little jealous.

Rowley's Mom got him this knight costume that's WAY cooler than his costume from last year.

His knight outfit came with a helmet and a shield and a real sword and EVERYTHING.

I've never had a store-bought costume before. I still haven't figured out what I'm gonna go as tomorrow night, so I'll probably just throw something together at the last minute. I figure maybe I'll bring back the Toilet Paper Mummy again.

But I think it's supposed to rain tomorrow night, so that might not be the smartest choice.

In the past few years, the grown-ups in my neighborhood have been getting cranky about my lame costumes, and I'm starting to think it's actually having an effect on the amount of candy I'm bringing in.

"What're YOU supposed to be?"

"A cowboy."

[Double baseball hats]

But I don't really have time to put together a good costume, because I'm in charge of planning out the best route for me and Rowley to take tomorrow night.

This year I've come up with a plan that'll get us at least twice the candy we scored last year.

## Halloween

About an hour before we were supposed to start trick-or-treating, I still didn't have a costume. At that point I was seriously thinking about going as a cowboy for the second year in a row.

But then Mom knocked at my door and handed me a pirate costume, with an eye patch and a hook and everything.

Rowley showed up around 6:30 wearing his knight costume, but it didn't look ANYTHING like it looked yesterday.

Rowley's mom made all these safety improvements to it, and you couldn't even tell what he was supposed to be anymore.

She cut out a big hole in front of the helmet so he could see better, and covered him up in all this reflective tape. She made him wear his winter coat underneath everything, and she replaced his sword with a glow stick.

I grabbed my pillowcase, and me and Rowley started to head out. But Mom stopped us before we could get out the door.

"I want you to take Manny WITH you!"

Man, I should have known there was a catch when Mom gave me that costume.

I told Mom there was no WAY we were taking Manny with us, because we were going to hit 152 houses in three hours. And plus, we were going to be on Snake Road, which is way too dangerous for a little kid like Manny.

I should never have mentioned that last part, because the next thing I knew, Mom was telling Dad he had to go along with us to make sure we didn't step foot outside our neighborhood. Dad tried to squirm out of it, but once Mom makes up her mind, there's no way you can change it.

*\*SLAM\**

Before we even got out of our own driveway, we ran into our neighbor Mr. Mitchell and his kid Jeremy. So of course THEY tagged along with us.

Manny and Jeremy wouldn't trick-or-treat at any houses with spooky decorations on them, so that ruled out pretty much every house on our block.

Dad and Mr. Mitchell started talking about football or something, and every time one of them wanted to make a point, they'd stop walking.

*"BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH"*

*"BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH"*

So we were hitting only about one house every twenty minutes.

After a couple hours, Dad and Mr. Mitchell took the little kids home.

I was glad, because that meant me and Rowley could take off. My pillowcase was almost empty, so I wanted to make up as much time as possible.

A little while later, Rowley told me he needed a "potty break." I made him hold off for another forty-five minutes. But by the time we got to my grandma's house, it was pretty clear that if I didn't let Rowley use the bathroom, it was gonna get messy.

So I told Rowley if he wasn't back outside in one minute, I was gonna start helping myself to his candy.

After that, we headed back out on the road. But it was already 10:30, and I guess that's when grown-ups decide Halloween is over.

You can kind of tell because that's when they start coming to the door in their pajamas and giving you the evil eye.

We decided to head home. We made up a lot of time after Dad and Manny left, so I was pretty satisfied with how much candy we took in.

When we were halfway home, this pickup truck came roaring down the street with a bunch of high school kids in it.

The kid in the back was holding a fire extinguisher, and when the truck passed by us, he opened fire.

*\*FWOOSH\**

I have to give Rowley credit, because he blocked about 95% of the water with his shield. And if he hadn't done that, all our candy would have gotten soaked.

When the truck drove away, I yelled out something that I regretted about two seconds later.

"We're calling the COPS!"

The driver slammed on the brakes and he turned his truck around. Me and Rowley started running, but those guys were right on our heels.

The only place I could think of that was safe was Grandma's house, so we cut through a couple backyards to get there. Grandma was in bed already, but I knew she keeps a key under the mat on her front porch.

Once we got inside, I looked out the window to see if those guys had followed us, and sure enough, they did. I tried to trick them into leaving, but they wouldn't budge.

"Well, I guess now that we're safe in our own house, you can't get us!"

After a while, we realized the teenagers were going to wait us out, so we decided we were just gonna spend the night at Gramma's. That's when we started getting cocky, making monkey noises at the teenagers and whatnot.

Well, at least I was making monkey noises. Rowley was kind of making owl noises, but I guess it was the same general idea.

"OOH OOH! EEE EEE! AHH AHH!"

"HOO! HOO!"

I called Mom to tell her we were going to crash at Gramma's for the night. But Mom sounded really mad on the phone.

She said it was a school night, and that we had to get home right that instant. So that meant we were gonna have to make a run for it.

I looked out the window, and this time, I didn't see the truck. But I knew those guys were hiding somewhere and were just trying to draw us out.

So we snuck out the back door, hopped over Gramma's fence, and ran all the way to Snake Road. I figured our chances were better there because there aren't any streetlights.

Snake Road is scary enough on its own without having a truckload of teenagers hunting you down. Every time we saw a car coming, we dove into the bushes. It must've taken us a half hour to go 100 yards.

But believe it or not, we made it all the way home without getting caught. Neither one of us let our guard down until we got to my driveway.

"Ahhhhhhhh..."

But right then, there was this awful scream, and we saw a big wave of water coming toward us.

*\*SPLASH\**

Man, I forgot ALL about Dad, and we totally paid the price for it.

"Whoops! Heh, heh."

When me and Rowley got inside, we laid out all our candy on the kitchen table.

The only things we could salvage were a couple of mints that were wrapped in cellophane, and the toothbrushes Dr. Garrison gave us.

I think next Halloween I'll just stay home and mooch some Butterfingers from the bowl Mom keeps on top of the refrigerator.

# NOVEMBER

## Thursday

On the bus ride to school today, we passed by Gramma's house. It got rolled with toilet paper last night, which I guess was no big surprise.

I do feel a little bad, because it looked like it was gonna take a long time to clean up. But on the bridge side, Gramma is retired. so she probably didn't have anything planned for today anyway.

## Wednesday

In third period, Mr. Underwood, our Phys Ed teacher, announced that the boys will be doing a wrestling unit for the next six weeks.

If there's one thing most boys in my school are into, it's professional wrestling. So Mr. Underwood might as well have set off a bomb.

Lunch comes right after Phys Ed, and the cafeteria was the complete madhouse.

I don't know what the school is thinking having a wrestling unit.

But I decided if I don't want to get twisted into a pretzel for the next month and a half, I'd better do my homework on this wrestling business.

So I rented a couple of video games to learn some moves. And you know what? After a while, I was really starting to get the hang of it.

"Does this feel right?"

"Yes! No! HELP!"

In fact, the other kids in my class had better look out, because if I keep this up, I could be a real threat.

Then again, I better make sure I don't do TOO good. This kid named Preston Mudd got named Athlete of the Month for being the best player in the basketball unit, so they put his picture up in the hallway.

[P. Mudd]

[Athlete of the Month]

It took people about five seconds to realize how "P. Mudd" sounded when you said it out loud, and after that, it was all over for Preston.

"Pee mud!"

"Pee mud!"

## Thursday

Well, I found out today that the kind of wrestling Mr. Underwood is teaching is COMPLETELY different from the kind they do on TV.

First of all, we have to wear these things called "singlets," which look like those bathing suits they used to wear in the 1800s.

And second of all, there are no pile drivers or hitting people over the heads with chairs or anything like that.

There's not even a ring with ropes around it. It's just basically a sweaty mat that smells like it's never been washed before.

Mr. Underwood started asking for volunteers so he could demonstrate some wrestling holds, but there was no way I was going to raise my hand.

Me and Rowley tried to hide out in the back of the gym near the curtain, but that's the girls were doing their gymnastics unit.

"Hee hee hee!"

We got out of there in a hurry, as we went back to where the rest of the guys were.

Mr. Underwood singled me out, probably because I'm the lightest kid in the class, and he could toss me around without straining himself. He showed everybody how to do all these things called a "half nelson" and a "reversal" and a "takedown" and stuff like that.

When he was doing this one move called "fireman's carry," I felt a breeze down below, and I could tell my singlet wasn't doing a good job keeping me covered up.

That's when I thanked my lucky stars the girls were on the other side of the gym.

Mr. Underwood divided us up into weight groups. I was pretty happy about that at first, because it meant I wasn't going to have to wrestle kids like Benny Wells, who can bench-press 250 pounds.

But then I found out who I DID have to wrestle, and I would have traded for Benny Wells in a heartbeat.

"Greg, you'll be paired up with Fregley here."

Fregley was the only kid light enough to be in my weight class. And apparently Fregley was paying attention when Mr. Underwood was giving instructions, because he pinned me every

which way you could imagine. I spent my seventh period getting WAY more familiar with Fregley than I ever wanted to be.

*\*TWEET!\**

## **Tuesday**

This wrestling unit has totally turned our school upside down. Now kids are wrestling in the hallways, in the classrooms, you name it. But the fifteen minutes after lunch where they let us outside is the worst.

You can't walk five feet without tripping over a couple of kids going at it. I just try to keep my distance. And mark my words, one of these fools is going to roll right onto the Cheese and start the Cheese Touch all over again.

My other big problem is that I have to wrestle Fregley every single day. But this morning I realized something. If I can move out of Fregley's weight class, I won't have to wrestle him anymore.

So today, I stuffed my clothes with a bunch of socks and shirts to get myself into the next weight class.

But I was still too light to move up.

I realized I was gonna have to gain weight for real. At first I thought I should just start loading up on junk food, but then I had a much better idea.

I decided to gain my weight in MUSCLE, not fat.

I've never been all that interested in getting in shape before, but this wrestling unit has made me rethink things.

I figure if I bulk up now, it could actually come in handy down the road.

The football unit is coming in the spring, and they split the teams up into shirts and skins. And I ALWAYS get put on skins.

I think they do that to make all the out-of-shape kids feel ashamed of themselves.

"UNH!"

If I can pack on some muscle now, it'll be a whole different story next April.

"Greg Heffley, you're on skins."

*\*RRIPPP\**

Tonight, after dinner, I got Mom and Dad together and told them my plan. I told them I was going to need some serious exercise equipment, and some weight-gain powder, too.

I showed them some muscle magazines I got at the store so they could see how ripped I was going to be.

Mom didn't really say anything at first, but Dad was pretty enthusiastic. I think he was just glad I had a change of heart from how I used to be when I was a kid --

"If you work out regularly, you can get big muscles!"

"Muscles are GROSS!"

But Mom said if I wanted a weight set, I was going to have to prove that I could stick with an exercise regimen. She said I could do that by doing sit-ups and jumping jacks for two weeks.

I had to explain that the only way to get totally bulked up is to get the kind of high-tech machines they have at the gym, but Mom didn't want to hear it.

Then Dad said if I wanted a bench press, I should keep my fingers crossed for Christmas.

[MUSCLE]

But Christmas is a month and a half away. And if I get pinned by Fregley one more time, I'm gonna have a nervous breakdown.

So it looks like Mom and Dad aren't going to be any help. And that means I'm going to have to take matters in my own hands, as usual.

## **Saturday**

I couldn't wait to start my weight-training program today. Even though Mom wouldn't let me get the equipment I needed, I wasn't going to let that hold me back.

So I went into the fridge and emptied out the milk and orange juice and filled the jugs with sand. Then I taped them to a broomstick, and I had myself a pretty decent barbell.

[MILK]

After that, I made a bench press out of an ironing board and some boxes. Once I had that all set, I was ready to do some serious lifting.

I needed a spotting partner, so I called Rowley. And when he showed up at my door wearing some ridiculous getup, I knew I made a mistake inviting him.

I made Rowley use the bench press first, mostly because I wanted to see if the broomstick was going to hold up.

He did about five reps, and he was pready to quit, but I wouldn't let him. That's what a good training partner is for, to push you beyond your limits.

"Fifteen more! Come on!"

I knew Rowley wasn't going to be as serious about weight lifting as I was, so I decided to try out an experiment to test his dedication.

In the middle of Rowley's set, I went and got this phony nose and mustache Rodrick has in his junk drawer.

And right when Rowley had the barbell in the "down" position, I leaned over and looked at him.

*"FPOOOO!"*

Sure enough, Rowley TOTALLY lost his concentration. He couldn't even get the barbell off his chest. I thought about hleping him out, but then I realized that if Rowley didn't get serious about working out, he was never going to get to my level.

*\*Gasp\* \*Sputter\**

I eventually had to rescue him, because he started biting the milk jug to let the sand leak out.

After Rowley got off the bench press, it was time for my set. But Rowley said he didn't feel like working out anymore, and he went home.

You know, I figured he'd pull something like that. But I guess you can't expect everyone to have the same dedication as you.

## **Wednesday**

Today in Geography we had a quiz, and I have to say, I've been looking forward to this one for a long time.

The quiz was on state capitals, and I sit in the back of the room, right next to this giant map of the United States. All the capitals were written in big red print, so I knew I had this one in the bag.

But right before the test got started, Patty Farrell piped up from the front of the room.

"TEACHER! TEACHER!"

Patty told Mr. Ira that he should cover up the United States map before we got started.

"Nice catch, Patty!"

So thanks to Patty, I ended up flunking the quiz. And I will definitely be looking for a way to pay her back for that one.

## Thursday

Tonight Mom came up to my room, and she had a flyer in her hand. As soon as I saw it, I knew EXACTLY what it was.

It was an announcement that the school is having tryouts for a winter play. Man, I should have thrown that thing out when I saw it on the kitchen table.

I BEGGED her not to make me sign up. Those school plays are always musicals, and the last thing I need is to have to sing a solo in front of the whole school.

But all my begging seemed to do was make Mom more sure I should do it.

Mom said the only way I was going to be "well-rounded" was by trying different things.

Dad came in my room to see what was going on. I told Dad that Mom was making me sign up for the school play, and that if I had to start going to play practices, it would totally mess up my weight-lifting schedule.

I knew that would make Dad take my side. Dad and Mom argued for a few minutes, but Dad was no match for Mom.

So that means tomorrow I've got to audition for the school play.

## Friday

The play they're doing this year is "The Wizard of Oz." A lot of kids came wearing costumes for the parts they were trying out for.

I've never seen the movie, so for me, it was like walking into a freak show.

[SCRIPT]

Mrs. Norton, the music director, made everyone sing "My Country 'Tis of Thee" so she could hear our singing voices. I did my singing tryouts with a bunch of other boys whose moms made them come, too. I tried to sing as quietly as possible, but of course I got singled out, anyway.

"What a LOVELY soprano!"

I have no idea what a "soprano" is, but from the way some of the girls were giggling, I knew it wasn't a good thing.

Tryouts went on forever. The grand finale came with auditions for Dorothy, who I guess is the lead character in the play.

And who should try out first but Patty Farrell.

*\*Tap\* \*Tap\* \*Tap\* \*Tap\* \*Tap\* \*Tap\**

I thought about trying out for the part of the Witch, because I heard that in the play, the Witch does all sorts of mean things to Dorothy.

But then somebody told me there's a Good Witch and a Bad Witch, and with my luck, I'd end up getting picked to be the good one.

## **Monday**

I was hoping Mrs. Norton would just cut me from the play, but today she said that everyone who tried out is going to get a part, so lucky me.

Mrs. Norton showed "The Wizard of Oz" movie so everyone would know the story. I was trying to figure out what part I should play, but pretty much every character has to sing or dance at one point or another. But about halfway through the movie, I figured out what part I wanted to sign up for. I'm going to sign up to become a Tree, because 1) they don't have to sing and 2) they get to bean Dorothy with apples.

Getting to peg Patty Farrell with apples in front of a live audience would be my dream come true. I may actually have to thank Mom for making me do this play once it's all over.

After the movie ended, I signed up to be a Tree. Unfortunately, a bunch of other guys had the same idea as me, so I guess there are a lot of guys who had a bone to pick with Patty Farrell.

## **Wednesday**

Well, like Mom always says, be careful what you wish for. I got to picked to be a Tree, but I don't know if that's such a good thing. The Tree costumes don't actually have arm holes, so I guess that rules out any apple-throwing.

I should probably feel lucky that I got a speaking part at all. They had too many kids trying out, and not enough roles, so they had to start making up characters.

Rodney James tried out to be the Tin Man, but he got stuck with being the Shrub.

## **Friday**

Remember how I said I was lucky to get a speaking part? Well, today I found out I only have one line in the whole play. I say it when Dorothy picks an apple off my branch.

*\*Pluck\**

"Ouch."

That means I have to go to a two-hour practice every day just so I can say one stupid word.

I'm starting to think Rodney James got a better deal as the Shrub. He found a way to sneak a video game into his costume, and I'll bet that really makes the time go by.

*\*BEEP\* \*BOOP\* \*BEEP\* \*BOOP\**

So now I'm trying to think of ways to get Mrs. Norton to kick me out of the play. But when you only have one word to say, it's really hard to mess up your lines.

*\*Pluck\**

"Owwwchhh?"

## DECEMBER

### Thursday

The play is only a couple days away, and I have no idea how we're going to pull this thing off.

First of all, nobody has bothered to learn their lines, and that's all Mrs. Norton's fault.

During rehearsal, Mrs. Norton whispers everyone's lines to them from the side of the stage.

"I get that you're pretty!"

"I'll get you, my pretty!"

I wonder how it's going to go next Tuesday when Mrs. Norton is sitting at her piano thirty feet away.

Another thing that's screwing everything up is that Mrs. Norton keeps adding new scenes and new characters.

Yesterday, she brought in this first-grader to play Dorothy's dog, Toto. But today, the kid's mom came in and said she wanted her child to walk around on two legs, because crawling around on all fours was too "degrading."

So now we've got a dog that's gonna be walking around on his hind legs for the whole show.

But the worst change is that Mrs. Norton actually wrote a song that us TREES have to sing. She said everyone "deserves" a chance to sing in the play.

So today we spent an hour learning the worst song that's ever been written.

"We three trees..."

Thank God Rodrick won't be in the audience to see me humiliate myself. Mrs. Norton said the play is going to be a "semiformal occasion," and I knew there's no way Rodrick is going to wear a tie for a middle school play.

But today wasn't all bad. Toward the end of practice, Archie Kelly tripped over Rodney James and chipped his tooth because he couldn't stick his arm out to break his fall.

"GAAH!"

So the good news is, they're letting us Trees carve out arm holes for the performance.

## **Tuesday**

Tonight was the big school production of "The Wized of Oz." The first sign that things were not going to go well happened before the play even started.

I was peeking through the curtain to check out how many people showed up to see the play, and guess who was standing right up front? My brother Rodrick, wearing a clip-on tie.

He must have found out I was singing, and he couldn't resist the chance to see me embarrass myself.

The play was supposed to start at 8:00, but it got delayed because Rodney James had stage fright.

You'd figure that someone whose job it was to sit on the stage and do nothing could just suck it up for one performance. But Rodney James wouldn't budge, and eventually, his mom had to carry him off.

The play finally got started around 8:30. Nobody could remember their lines, just like I predicted, but Mrs. Norton kept things moving along with her piano.

The kid who played Toto brought a stool and a pile of comic books onto the stage, and totally ruined the whole "dog" effect.

When it was time for the forest scene, me and the other Trees hopped into our positions, and when they did, I heard Manny's voice.

"BUBBY!"

Great. I have been able to keep that nickname quiet for five years, and now all of a sudden the whole town knew it. I could feel about 300 pairs of eyeballs pointed my way.

So I did some quick ad-libbing and I was able to deflect the embarrassment over to Archie Kelly.

"I think you dropped an apple, 'Bubby.'"

But the major embarrassment was still on the way. When I heard Mrs. Norton playing the first few bars of "We Three Trees," I felt my stomach jump.

I looked at the audience, and I noticed Rodrick was holding a video camera.

I knew that if I sang the song and Rodrick recorded it, he would keep the tape forever and use it to humiliate me for the rest of my life.

I didn't know what to do, so when the time came to start singing, I just kept my mouth shut.

"We three trees from yonder glen..."

For a few seconds there, things went OK. I figured that if I didn't technically sing the song, then Rodrick wouldn't have anything to hold over my head. But after a few seconds, the other trees noticed I wasn't singing.

I guess they must've thought I knew something that they didn't, so they stopped singing, too.

"Do spy a maiden fair and sweet..."

Now the three of us were just standing there, not saying a word. Mrs. Norton must have thought we forgot the words to the song, because she came over to the side of the stage and whispered the rest of the lyrics to us.

"Whilst we are rooted to our spots, she doth move on lighter feet..."

The song is only about three minutes long, but to me it felt like an hour and a half. I was just praying the curtains would go down so we could hop off the stage.

That's when I noticed Patty Farrell standing in the wings. And if looks could kill, us trees would be dead. She probably thought we were ruining her chances of making it to Broadway or something.

Seeing Patty standing there reminded me why I signed up to be a tree in the first place.

*\*Clonk\**

Pretty soon, the rest of the Trees started throwing apples, too. I think Toto even got in on the act.

Somebody knocked the glasses off Patty's head, and one of the lenses broke. Mrs. Norton had to shut down the play after that, because Patty can't see two feet in front of her without her glasses.

After the play was over, my family went home together. Mom had brought a bouquet of flowers, and I guess they were supposed to be for me. But she ended up tossing them in the trash can on the way out the door.

I just hope that everyone who came to see the play was as entertained as I was.

## Wednesday

Well, if one good thing came out of the play, it's that I don't have to worry about the "Bubby" nickname anymore.

I saw Archie Kelly getting hassled in the hallway after fifth period today, so it looks like I can finally start to breathe a little easier.

*\*SHOVE\** "Hi there, 'Bubby'!"

## Sunday

With all this stuff going on at school, I hadn't even had the time to think about Christmas. And it's less than ten days away.

In fact, the only thing that tipped me off that Christmas was coming was when Rodrick put his wish list up on the refrigerator.

### Rodrick's Wish List

1. New drums
2. New van
3. Shrunken Head

I usually make a big wish list every year, but this Christmas, all I really want is this video game called Twisted Wizard.

Tonight Manny was going through the Christmas catalog, picking out all the stuff he wants with a big red marker. Manny was circling every single toy in the catalog. He was even circling really expensive things like a giant motorized car and stuff like that.

So I decided to step in and give him some good big-brotherly advice.

I told him that if he circled stuff that was too expensive, he was going to end up with a bunch of clothes for Christmas. I said he should just pick three or four medium-priced gifts so he could end up with a couple of things he actually wanted.

But of course Manny just went back to circling everything again. So I guess he'll just have to learn the hard way.

When I was seven, the only thing I really wanted for Christmas was a Barbie Dream House. And NOT because I like girls' toys, like Rodrick said.

I just thought it would be a really awesome fort for my toy soldiers.

When Mom and Dad saw my wish list that year, they got in a big fight over it. Dad said there was no way he was getting me a dollhouse, but Mom said it was healthy for me to "experiment" with whatever kind of toys I wanted to play with.

Believe it or not, Dad actually won that argument. Dad told me to start my wish list over and pick some toys that were more "appropriate" for boys.

But I have a secret weapon when it comes to Christmas. My Uncle Charlie always gets me whatever I want. I told him I wanted the Barbie Dream House, and he said he'd hook me up.

On Christmas, when Uncle Charlie gave me my gift, it was NOT what I asked for. He must've walked into the toy store and picked up the first thing he saw that had the word "Barbie" on it.

So if you ever see a picture of me where I'm holding a Beach Fun Barbie, now at least you know the whole story.

Dad wasn't real happy when he saw what Uncle Charlie got me. He told me to either throw it out or give it away to charity.

But I kept it anyway. And OK, I admit maybe I took it out and played with it once or twice.

That's how I ended up in the emergency room two weeks later with a pink Barbie shoe stuck up my nose. And believe me, Rodrick has never let me hear the end of THAT.

## **Thursday**

Tonight me and Mom went out to get a gift for the Giving Tree at church. The Giving Tree is basically a Secret Santa kind of thing where you get a gift for someone who is needy.

Mom picked out a red wool sweater for our Giving Tree guy.

I tried to talk Mom into getting something a lot cooler, like a TV or a slushie machine or something like that.

Beause imagine if all you got on Christmas was a red wool sweater.

*"Yippee."*

I'm sure our Giving Tree guy will throw his sweater in the trash, along with the ten cans of yams we sent his way during the Thanksgiving Food Drive.

## Christmas

When I woke up this morning and went downstairs, there were about a million gifts under the Christmas tree. But when I started digging around, there were hardly any gifts with my name on them.

[To Manny; From Santa]

[To Manny; Fr: *Santa*]

[TO MANNY; FROM SANTA]

[TO MANNY]

[Manny]

*\*Toss\**

But Manny made out like a bandit. He got EVERY single thing he circled in the catalog, no lie. So I'll bet he's glad he didn't listen to me.

I did find a couple things with my name on them, but they were mostly books and socks and stuff like that.

I opened my gifts in the corner behind the couch, because I don't like opening gifts near Dad. Whenever someone opens a gift, Dad swoops right in and cleans up after them.

*\*Rip\**

I gave Manny a toy helicopter and I gave Rodrick a book about rock bands. Rodrick gave me a book, too, but of course he didn't wrap it. The book he got me was "Best of L'il Cutie." "L'il Cutie" is the worst comic in the newspaper, and Rodrick knows how much I hate it. I think this is the fourth year in a row I've gotten a "L'il Cutie" book from him.

[BEST OF L'il Cutie]

I gave Mom and Dad their gifts. I get them the same kind of thing every year, but parents eat that stuff up.

[#1 MOM]

[#1 DAD]

"Thanks."

"Heh, heh."

The rest of the relatives started showing up around 11:00, and Uncle Charlie came at noon.

Uncle Charlie brought a big trash bag full of gifts, and he pulled my present out the top of the bag.

The package was the exact right size and shape to be a Twisted Wizard game, so I knew Uncle Charlie came through for me. Mom got the camera ready and I tore open my gift.

But it was just an 8 x 10 picture of Uncle Charlie.

I guess I didn't do a good job of hiding my disappointment, and Mom got mad. All I can say is, I'm glad I'm still a kid, because if I had to act happy about the kinds of gifts grown-ups get, I don't think I could pull it off.

"I know the PERFECT place for this!"

"I just KNEW you'd love it!"

[BLESS THIS HOUSE]

I went up to my room to take a break for a while. A couple minutes later, Dad knocked on my door. He told me he had my gift for me out in the garage, and the reason it was out there was because it was too big to wrap.

And when I walked down to the garage, there was a brand-new weight set.

That thing must have cost a fortune. I didn't have the heart to tell Dad that I kind of lost interest in the whole weight-lifting thing when the wrestling unit ended last week. So I just said "thanks" instead.

I think Dad was expecting me to drop down and start doing some reps or something, but I just excused myself and went back inside.

At about 6:00, all the relatives cleared out.

I was sitting on the couch watching Manny play with his toys, feeling pretty sorry for myself. Then Mom came up to me and said that she found a gift behind the piano with my name on it, and it said, "From Santa."

The box was way too big for Twisted Wizard, but Mom pulled the same "big box" trick on me last year when she got me a memory card for my video game system.

So I ripped open the package and pulled out my present. Only this wasn't Twisted Wizard, either. It was a giant red wool sweater.

*\*Flash\**

At first I thought Mom was playing some kind of practical joke on me, because this sweater was the same kind we bought for our Giving Tree guy.

But Mom seemed pretty confused, too. She said she DID buy me a video game, and that she had no idea what the sweater was doing in my box.

And then I figured it out. I told Mom there must have been some kind of mix-up, and I got the Giving Tree guy's gift, and he got mine.

Mom said she used the same kind of wrapping paper for both of our gifts, so she must've written the wrong names on the tags.

But then Mom said that this was really a good thing, because the Giving Tree guy was probably really happy he got such a great gift.

"It's a Christmas miracle!"

I had to explain that you need a game system and a TV to play Twisted Wizard, so the game was totally useless to him.

"Oh."

Even though Christmas was not going that great, I'm sure it was going a whole lot worse for the Giving Tree guy.

*"Jerks."*

I kind of decided to throw in the towel for this Christmas, and I headed up to Rowley's house.

I forgot to get a gift for Rowley, so I just slapped a bow on the "L'il Cutie" book Rodrick gave me.

And that seemed to do the trick.

[BEST OF L'il Cutie]

Rowley's parents have a lot of money, so I can always count on them for a good gift.

But Rowley said that this year he picked out my gift himself. Then he brought me outside to show me what it was.

From the way Rowley was hyping his present, I thought he must have gotten me a big-screen TV or a motorcycle or something.

But once again, I let my hopes get too high.

Rowley got me a Big Wheel. I guess I would have thought this was a cool gift when I was in the third grade, but I have no idea what I'm supposed to do with one now.

Rowley was so enthusiastic about it that I tried my best to act like I was happy anyway.

"Gee, thanks!"

We went back inside, and Rowley showed me his Christmas loot.

He sure got a lot more stuff than I did. He even got Twisted Wizard, so at least I can play it when I come up to his house. That is, until Rowley's dad finds out how violent it is.

And boy, you have neever seen someone as happy as Rowley with his "L'il Cutie" book. His mom said it was the only thing on his list that he didn't get.

Well, I'm glad SOMEONE got what they wanted today.

"It's a Christmas miracle!"

[BEST OF L'il Cutie]

## **New Year's Eve**

In case you're wondering what I'm doing in my room at 9:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve, let me fill you in.

Earlier today, me and Manny were horsing around in the basement. I found a tiny black ball of thread on the carpet, and I told Manny it was a spider.

Then I held it over him pretending like I was going to mke him eat it.

"YAAAAAH!"

*\*SCREAM!!\* \*SQUEAL!!\**

Right when I was about to let Manny go, he slapped my hand and made me drop the thread. And guess what? That fool swallowed it.

*\*Gulp\**

Well, anny completely lost is mind. He ran upstairs to where Mom was, and I knew I was in big trouble.

Manny told Mom I made him eat a spider. I told her there was no spider, and that it was just a tiny ball of thread.

*\*Sniff\**

Mom brought Manny over to the kitchen table. Then she put a seed, a raisin, and a grape on a plate and told Manny to point to the thing that was the closest in size to the piee of thread he swallowed.

Manny took a while to look over the things on the plate.

Then he walked over to the refrigerator and pulled out an orange.

So that's why I got sent to bed at 7:00 and I'm not downstairs watching the New Year's Eve special on TV.

And that's also why my only New Year's resolution is to never play with Manny again.

**WORK STOPPED ON FEBRUARY 25, 2026.**