

him upright, though slightly off balance. FARKAS throws up his arms and howls. SCHWARTZ lets go of RANDY and runs off DR as RANDY falls.)

* RALPH. Randy lay there like a slug. It was his only defense. (FARKAS grabs FLICK's right arm.) At one time or another, Farkas treated every kid in the class to a good, brisk, tendon-snapping arm twist. He gave us this refresher course on a rotating basis. We figured he kept a list and checked us off in turn, but Flick caught it from Farkas more often than any of the rest of us.

(RALPHIE and SCHWARTZ re-enter to help RANDY to his feet. FARKAS wrenches FLICK's wrist up between his shoulder blades, pushing and twisting. RALPHIE, SCHWARTZ and RANDY exit.)

FLICK. Ouch! That's my sore arm! Hey! Hey!

RALPH. Flick's arm was always sore. There was never enough healing time between sessions with Farkas.

FLICK. Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!

RALPH. Fortunately, Flick was left-handed.

FARKAS. Say, "I'm a dirty little chicken." (FLICK, grimacing, shakes his head.) Say it! Say it!

FLICK (the pain is too much for him). I'm a dirty little chicken.

FARKAS. What? (He gives an extra tug on FLICK's arm.)

FLICK (a yelp, then). I'm a dirty little chicken!

FARKAS (twisting even harder). Louder!

FLICK. I'm a dirty little chicken!

FARKAS (hurling FLICK away). Fly away, chicken.

(FLICK runs off R. FARKAS laughs a nasty laugh and shambles off L. as the pool of light fades to black.)

RALPH. See what I mean about Punjab? (He makes a sweeping motion.) Whoosh, bully problem solved. (With a sigh:) Flick had the worst luck of anybody I'd ever known. It was like he'd been cursed.

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(Light comes up DR where RALPHIE, FLICK, SCHWARTZ, HELEN and ESTHER JANE stand around a lamppost mounted on a platform. FLICK and SCHWARTZ are mid-discussion.)

Ralphie, Schwartz, Flick
Ralph

* SCHWARTZ. Oh yeah?

FLICK. Yeah!

RALPH. At recess a select group of us always gathered around a lamppost in the corner of the playground to discuss the deep philosophers and share information based on the latest research.

SCHWARTZ. All right then, if you don't believe me, I double dare ya!

RALPH. The exact exchange and nuance of wording in this phase of the "dare" ritual is very important.

FLICK. So you're sayin' if I put my 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!

RALPHIE. Go ahead, Flick.

FLICK. Heck no!

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

FLICK. Would not!

SCHWARTZ. Would too!

FLICK. Would not!

SCHWARTZ. All right then, I double dog dare ya!

(The other children react with surprise and concern. FLICK is thrown a bit off balance.)

RALPH. This was getting serious. A double dog dare. There was nothing left but a "triple dare you" and, finally, the *coup de grace* of all dares, the sinister "triple dog dare."

SCHWARTZ. I triple dog dare ya!

(Unconcealed shock and sharp intakes of breath all around. Significant looks exchanged.)

RALPH. Hm. Schwartz created a slight breach of etiquette by skipping the triple dare and going right for the throat.

FLICK *(nervous)*. All right, all right.

RALPHIE. Do it, Flick.

SCHWARTZ. Go on, smart pants, do it. *(He gives FLICK a poke in the arm.)*

FLICK *(wincing)*. Hey! That's my sore arm, okay?

RALPHIE. Do it.

FLICK. Don't rush me. *(He cracks his knuckles, shakes out his hands, steps up to the lamppost and sticks out his tongue as RALPH speaks.)*

RALPH. There was no going back now. Flick's spine stiffened. His lips curled in a defiant sneer. His tongue went into docking mode and he moved toward consummation.

FLICK *(leans into the lamppost and his tongue makes contact)*. Thith ith noth... *(And then he realizes.)* Thtuck! Thtuck! I'm Thtuck! *(He begins to wail.)*

SCHWARTZ *(his theory is proven out, but it still surprises him)*. Jeepers! It really works!

(The bell rings to end recess. The children exit, save for RALPHIE, SCHWARTZ and, of course, FLICK. SCHWARTZ moves to leave.)

RALPHIE. Wait! Whadda we gonna do?

SCHWARTZ. I dunno. *(He points offstage in the direction of the school building. It is out of his hands.)* The bell rang. *(He exits.)*

RALPH. We lived by the bell. It told us when to come in, when to go to recess, when to go home. It was the voice of God, and could not be denied.

(RALPHIE turns to leave.)

FLICK. Auth! Oaait! Cuh back! Doe lee nee! Cuh back!

RALPHIE *(with an apologetic shrug)*. The bell rang.

(RALPHIE exits as FLICK, in a blinding panic, grunts after him at the top of his lungs. The pool of light fades, and with it FLICK's howling. In the darkness, the lamppost platform carries FLICK offstage and the fence swings back. A pool of light comes up UR revealing a teacher's desk. U of the desk, a section of blackboard, trimmed along the top with a chain of red and green construction paper loops. MISS SHIELDS sits behind the