

ESTHER JANE
RALPHIE

ACT II

A Christmas Story

107

~~START~~

SCHWARTZ. Come on, Flick!

(They exit. RALPHIE sits on the log. ESTHER JANE enters, carrying ice skates.)

ESTHER JANE. Hello, Ralph.

RALPHIE. Oh ... hello.

ESTHER JANE. May I sit here?

RALPHIE. Um ... sure. *(She does.)* Thanks for, you know, bringing my glasses over.

ESTHER JANE. You're welcome. I just didn't want you to get in trouble. *(A pause. She seems to be building her courage. Finally, she pulls a square pink envelope from her coat and hands it to RALPHIE. Quickly, in one breath.)* Here's a Christmas card I got you. I got it myself. It's not from my parents. I bought it with my allowance. G'bye.

(She exits quickly. RALPHIE watches after her, confused. He contemplates the card for a moment, then opens it. RALPH enters upstage of RALPHIE as he reads it.)

~~STOP~~
RALPH. It was an expensive Christmas card. Esther Jane had spent more than a week's allowance on it. It was all flowers and doilies and bad poetry. Just the sort of card I'd never cared for. But for some reason I didn't mind this one so much. I even kind of liked it. *(RALPHIE smiles, stands and exits. RALPH crosses around the log and sits.)* Now, in our house we always opened one present on Christmas Eve. Other less fortunate people, I had heard, waited until Christmas morning before they were allowed to open anything. I always thought of our family as more civilized. Those great heaps of tissuey, crinkly, sparkly, enigmatic packages were a terrible temptation, half hidden among the folds of a white bed sheet snow bank under the tree. That one opened present on Christmas Eve helped relieve the pressure.