

Project: Christmas Eve Perpetration

I was a Kid Secret Agent.

Around Christmas time, anyway. Who wasn't? Which one of you glorious readers can honestly raise his or her hand to testify that not once did you ever do a little illegal snooping, sneaking, or ransacking (for the less patient) to get the jump on your gift reception list? Excuse me: addressing the brother reading this in his Morrison dorm room raising his hand, please note the word HONESTLY. Remember that time you got caught and whooped all the way back to yo' room? Yeah, that's better.

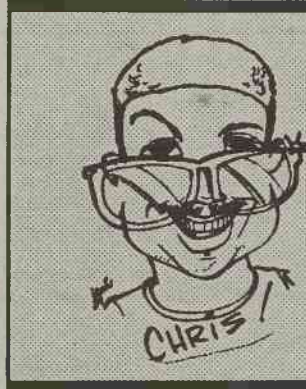
You see, not all of you are trained in being 24-7 Spyz like myself. Thanks to a special government grant called N.O.S.E. (Nocturnally Ordained Special Espionage), I was selected to have Bond-like traits at a young age, and was trained in the way of the Agent. So, whenever Christmas time would roll around, I utilized my spy training to infiltrate the foreign territory and gather information via advanced surveillance. I have pulled one of such true accounts to share with you. I could tell you a few others, but then I'd have to kill you. And Lenoir and Chase are doing sufficient jobs of that already. Remember, this portion of the *Ink* will be destroyed in seven minutes (not by an advanced mechanism; you will probably rip it out and throw it away 'cause you're sick of this Chris Brown guy).

From N.O.S.E. File codename Boo Gar: Mission Christmas Eve Perpetration

I sit almost breathless in my Mom's Regal, quietly leaving the school parking lot. Little does she know that I ran to the car not only out of glee to see her, but because Mookie Covington chased me around the building seven times for trying to loan him my afro comb. The life of a Kid Secret Agent is never an easy one.

As the Spinners harmonize on the radio, my Mom turns to me and asks if I've made my list out for Santa Claus yet. Hmph. She thinks that I don't realize just what the whole deal is about this Santa Claus character. I may be young, but this third-grader wasn't born yesterday! I know that Santa, or should I say Master Agent Cringle, has millions of agents all over the country, posing in Malls as the real thing and sending the orders out to the big man himself. Yep, even my Dad is an agent for Cringle; last year on my mission I spied him in the den, sitting over a bag of toys, arranging them quietly. I figure by the time I'm twenty or so, one of those Santa agents will approach me about joining the force, then I'll kill him on the spot! Such is the way of a Kid Secret Agent.

I tell my mother that I haven't finished making my list yet. She says to get it done soon, that the church Christmas Play is



Point After Touchdown

Chris L. Brown

tonight and she wants it before we go. Maybe I can get out of going by not doing my list. She just said that if I try to skip the play again, I'm going to have to come to school on Christmas day. Crime and Punishment, that's how this country works.

When we get home, I try to find the *Brendle's* catalog. We always have to get our Christmas toys out of this book. I'm the only one who knows that this store is actually a gigantic front for that Cringle guy. He's thorough, I'll give him that. When I get the book and flip to the back, scissored gaps abound where my brothers and sisters have already cut-and-pasted their selections. No problem, I usually don't want the things they got—wait!! Somebody got the Super Loop Nite Glow Daredevil Race-track!! That is mine! I search the house for my brother, Corey. I calmly ask him if he's seen the missing piece. "No." LIAR!! Begone with thee! I look on Cedric's list, which doesn't have the track but has a set of Encyclopaedia on the concepts of Jazz Musicians—not bad for a nine-year old. I ask Carol, who doesn't know what I'm talking about and starts crying, then in turn Sandy proceeds to tell my Mother. I escape the scene before any damage can be done.

When I get back to my room, I flip through the catalog for the other things I wanted: a Six-Million Dollar Man, Digital Derby, a model Battleship, a Michael Jackson Book of Surgical Alterations (a little anachronism, there), a football, and so on. I would make sure that this Cringle guy knew just who he was dealing with (I'm positive that he'd have a few choice words for me).

Before I knew it, the time for the Christmas play had rolled around. As I donned my Third King costume, I wondered aloud if we could do something more fun this year, maybe go scrape manure off of the bottom of the Lion pit at the Zoo. My Mom told me to shut up.

As we neared Church, I thought about plotting an escape, but knew that to be impossible. If I was caught, My Mom would probably send me to School on Christmas—besides, they had "Security Guards" at the doors at church. Of course, I could take those bunch of pansies, but I didn't

bring my guns. We went downstairis to the children's dungeon— I mean, department—and met with all the other kids to get ready to put on the play. I looked around, and felt sorry for these directionless clones. Not the kids, the adults that "coordinated" the stuff. Here's this eighty year old man telling me to speak up. Sir, I advise you first refit your teeth into your mouth, then pull that one foot out of the grave, and we can do business. Uh-oh. There's Nathantha Davis. A troublemaker with a principal's office criminal record as long as my left leg. Have to keep an eye on him—he'd probably try to steal the Frankencense. And, of course, there's Karla. She's smiling. Yeah, I figure by the time we get married, I'll have a zillion bucks and a car like Speed Racer. Well, here goes: it's showtime. May as well win another emmy.

The refreshing non-school R & R before Christmas comes and goes. It is now Christmas Eve, and I know that I'll have to solve this mystery and trap Agent Cringle on the only night he truly comes out every year: tonight. The day dissolves into night, and I began my trap-setting.

Carol and Sandy bake cookies, and after they set them out, I lace them with some poisonous stuff I found on top of the refrigerator. I can tell it's poison because I can't read the name (it reads, Nutmeg). I go into the Den, and when a commercial comes and my Dad goes out, I implant a letter of warning in the chimney. It simply states to this Cringle guy, that he better watch out, I am going to apprehend him. I then place a few water balloons at the bottom.

"All children go to bed. Santa Claus has been spotted, all children go to bed." At least I know that I can trust my worthy accomplices at Channel 12 to inform me of what's goin' down. My Mom quietly escorts us to our bedrooms and tucks us in. I overhear my brother telling her to tell Santa Claus 'Hi.' Well, I'll tell him 'Hi' alright—when I capture him and expose the whole setup! Hahahahaha! My Dad then comes down the hall, audibly questioning whether we'll get anything this year since we've been so bad. Ever want to scare the scrap out of a kid, then tell them that they aren't getting anything for Christmas. It was quiet

as a mugg on that Night Before Christmas.

I wake myself. I reach over to grab my watch, and through squinting eyes see that it is 4:12 am. I don't know if my traps have been set or not, but— HOLD UP! I hear someone rustling around (If I were smart, I'd be worried that it was not a burglar)!! It's him! I quietly climb down from my bunk. Corey is sound asleep, and so is Cedric. I silently open my door. The coast is clear. I tip out into the foyer. Aaaaa! He's coming!! Agent Cringle is coming this way!! I speedily hide near the closet. Instead of taking this path, he goes around the foyer the other way. It wasn't Cringle, it was my Father. Am I too late?! Has the secret meeting already took place? I sneak through the kitchen to see. Look! My poison trap-disarmed! He scraped the Nutmeg off on the table! A wily one, this Cringle is. Here it is: the Den. I see the flickering shadows cast by the Christmas tree lights. I ever so carefully peek around the corner..... and can't believe my eyes. Toys, toys, toys! It's too dark to see specifically, but once again, Santa has proven my Dad's threats to be idle. I glide back to my room, unable to wait for get up time. Bustin' Santa can hold out 'till later— I've got toys to tend to.

Later, I feel like a housefly in the middle of an untouched pizza. Everything is here: the Six Million Dollar Man, the football, the Digital Derby, the.....no. Everything is not here. I wildly scope the room, to see if it was mistakenly placed in any of my siblings' toy piles. But no, it is nowhere to be seen. Santa must have known that I was out to get him. He didn't give me the Super Loop Nite Glow Daredevil Race Track. I'll get you for this, Cringle! I will have my.....

"Chris?"

"Ma'am?"

"You forgot something." My mother motions to the corner. Ahhhhhh. I love it. I just love it. Despite my plotting, despite my being bad at times this year, despite my questioning, Santa came through for me. The track beckons me like a pond to a fish.

Hours of play later, my Dad is making the traditional chimney fire out of the not-needed boxes in the chimney. Indeed, it is very rare to see everyone so happy. Later, we will go to Grandma Ruth's for the family gathering and show-off session. My Dad ceremoniously strikes a match, and leans into the paper to ignite it....what's that red thing at the bottom? It looks like.....an unused water balloon?!? Too late. Everything's in flames. Oh, well, my Christmas has been Merry, and I know that somewhere northward, Cris Cringle is smiling, also.

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