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"Tucker, please come and erase what you wrote on the bathroom mirror."

It's a fine line between getting the message through



and overkill. I figured it was better to go overboard than risk ending up with another pair of underwear for my birthday.



I'd wanted—no, I'd *needed*—a Treasuremaster 300 for months. That's because I knew there had to be a quicker path to middle school riches than mowing lawns and shoveling snow. So when I came across a video about how a guy had found a \$20,000 ring with a metal detector, I knew this was my answer. But how could I get the cash to buy a Treasuremaster 300? By the time I saved enough, I'd be too old to use the thing.



My only hope was getting mom and dad to give me the detector as a present. I'd heard somewhere about "the seven times factor." It means people need to see an advertisement at least seven times before they'll buy something. My birthday was coming up, and the dry-erase-marker-on-the-mirror effort was only advertisement number four.

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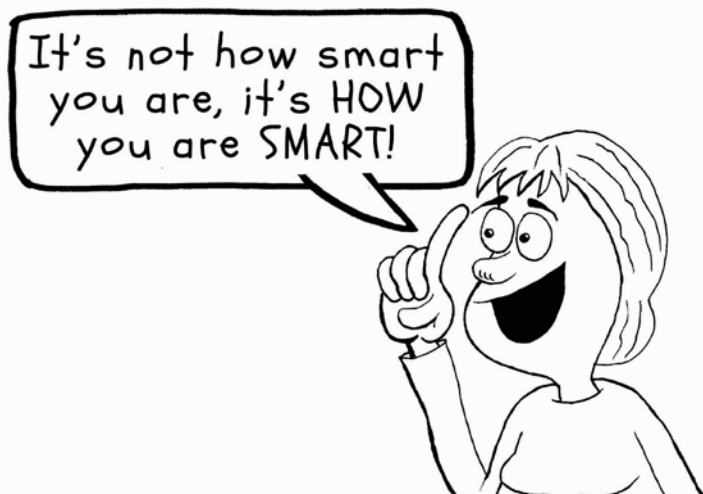
Now, the same mom and dad I hoped would buy me a metal detector had once told me that God is interested in every part of our lives. At first, I figured He was too busy running the universe to bother with this metal detector thing. But just to cover my bases, I've been tossing in a prayer here and there. I just don't know how prayer really works, so I don't really know what to expect.

At school, I told Rico about my latest effort to get the metal detector message through to my parents. "They haven't said anything yet, but I'm pretty sure they've figured it out," I said. "Besides, it's still a few days until my birthday."

"I don't know," Rico responded. "maybe you ought to try different things."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, remember when Mrs. Harder said that thing about being smart?"



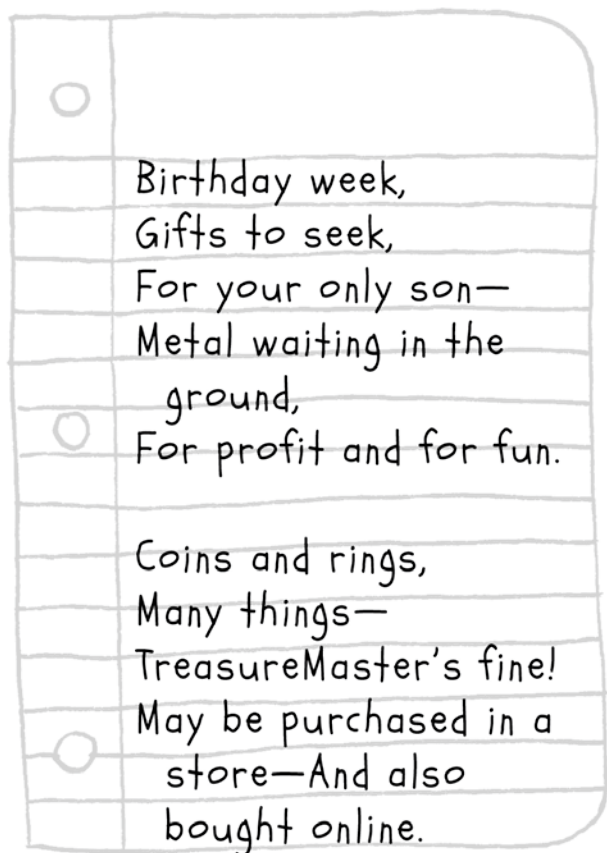
"Yeah, she meant we all learn differently," I replied. "But Mrs. Harder is a teacher—what does she know about learning?"

"What I'm saying is that maybe you need to branch out a little bit. You've been using *written* words to twist your parents' arms—printing out ads and writing on the bathroom mirror. Maybe they need to hear something about the Treasuremaster 300 instead."



I couldn't believe Rico was actually making sense—it just wasn't like him. But I knew he was onto something.

The next morning when I took my shower, I sang this really loud to the tune of "Jingle Bells":



It wasn't perfect, and it was kinda in-your-face, but I couldn't afford to take any chances.

That night as I was getting ready for bed, I thought about how great it was going to be not doing yard work next summer. Sure, waving the TreasureMaster 300 back and forth would take some energy, but it would be worth it! I imagined some of the things I might find . . .



When I knelt down to say my prayers that night, a new thought struck me: *maybe I haven't been praying hard enough about the Treasuremaster 300! Sure! God probably wants to see how badly I really want the machine!* Why haven't I thought of this before? So right there, I narrowed my eyes, gritted my teeth, and prayed really, really hard. It was exhausting, which I figured would impress God.

When I crawled into bed that night, I figured this was pretty much a done deal, especially if I kept on doing what I was doing.

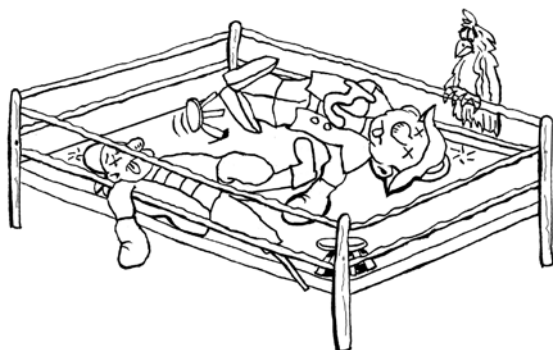
That night I dreamed about finding treasure with my metal detector. Unfortunately, the constant beeping kept waking me up, so I was pretty tired in school the next day. But it was a small price to pay for finding the treasure buried in 1596 by the infamous pirate Right-Hook Ricardo.



did I mention it was only in my dreams?

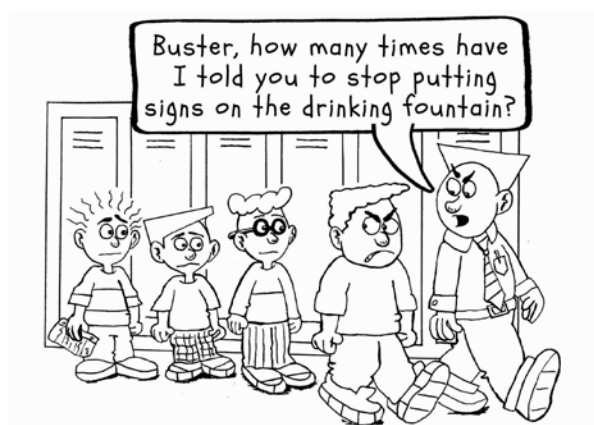
BONUS CONTENT!

1596 pirate world championship match
punch-out pegleg vs. Right-Hook Ricardo



The match ended in a draw when Punch-Out Pegleg tripped over his wooden leg and Right-Hook Ricardo passed out from land sickness.

The next day at school, there was a commotion at the far end of the hallway. Principal Brightman was escorting Buster Musclemann to his office (Principal Brightman's office, that is—Buster only has a locker). I overheard Principal Brightman mumbling to himself as he passed Rico, Lamar, and me.



Buster's signs were actually pretty good.

