GROWING UP by Wayne Scheer

It started when my mom and dad were fighting all the time. Or maybe it started before that, I really don’t know. Mr. Shankowski says I shouldn’t blame Mom and Dad for everything, but I don’t think he understands what it’s like to be thirteen.

I guess my trouble began with the stories I made up. Sometimes they were just for fun. Like telling my friend, Joey, that Kathryn Neeson liked him and then telling Kathryn that Joey liked her. Then I’d watch how they’d act funny whenever they were around each other. It was really cool.

And then there was the time I made up this story about how I was riding my bike and I saw this little kid playing behind a car and I saw the car rolling back. I told how I jumped off my bike and opened the car door and pulled the emergency brake just before the car hit the kid. I repeated that story all around school and Theresa Hutchins thought I was awesome and she kissed me and called me a hero.

But then the adults got into it.

Somehow, my mom found out and she made me look into her eyes and tell her if all that stuff really happened. I tried to lie, but she told me my upper lip curled when I lied and I finally had to admit that I made it up. Then she told my dad and we had all these long talks and they made me stand up in front of my homeroom class, the one with Theresa in it, and tell my friends that I made up the story.

That’s when I knew that I could never trust my parents again.

So from then on, I only told them things that made them happy, like about me joining the science club. I figured they didn’t need to know about how me and my friends started smoking the pot that Paulie’s sister hid in her underwear drawer. Or about the money that the older kids gave me to watch for cops when they went into that abandoned house on Manton Avenue to make out and smoke dope and stuff.

Then the adults messed things up again.

Paulie’s mother caught us sneaking into his sister’s underwear drawer and she told my mother. That was really embarrassing. I mean, I couldn’t tell her the truth about the pot so I had to tell her I just wanted to touch girls’ underwear.

My parents decided to send me to a shrink. They couldn’t afford a real one, so they had me talk to this old guy, Mr. Shankowski. I think he used to be a high school guidance counselor or school psychologist or something.

And I had to lie to him and tell him all kinds of crazy sex stuff because I sure wasn’t going to tell him the truth and get Paulie and me in trouble with the older kids.

So I kept telling lies to keep Mr. S. happy and then I’d tell other stories to my mom and dad to keep them happy.

And last week Mr. S. asked me what I had learned from all this. I was able to look him in the eye and tell him I learned that I shouldn’t keep things to myself and that I should trust adults who care about me. And my top lip didn’t curl up the way it used to.

Now I don’t have to see him anymore.

He says I’ve learned what it means to be an adult.