

## MAGIC IS AS MAGIC DOES

*(Twirling flashlight.)* Hi. No, I don't mind you telling me I'm stupid for carrying this old flashlight in the daytime. I don't mind at all. Go ahead and laugh all you want. My *jinni* lives in the flashlight, and I never know when I might need him. You know, a *jinni* — the magical creature that comes out of a lamp when you rub it and gives you three wishes. Well, my *jinni* prefers electricity to kerosene, so it lives in this flashlight. Have I ever used my three wishes? Nope. They're right here in this flashlight, all saved up and ready to go. Would you like a wish? Well, you could have all three, I'm a generous person. Sure, my *jinni* wouldn't mind if you borrowed him for a while. Umm, he does need to have his special *jinni* food. I send away for it, and it's only twenty dollars a box. Yes, if you gave me twenty dollars right now, I'd buy the *jinni* food while you made your wishes. Sure, I'll meet you later. In the park right by the sucker — I mean — honeysuckle tree. *(Takes bill, waves goodbye, smiles.)* So long! Happy wishing!

## INVISIBLE FRIENDS

Sure I have Invisible Friends. Don't you? Well, I suppose I could loan you one or two of mine. Who would you like? There is Earl King, sort of a small fellow. He speaks German and is a very good guide for walking through the woods. And there is the Elebunicken — a very rare animal that is part elephant, part rabbit, part chicken. It eats lettuce and peanuts and can fly over your head and keep you shady when the sun's really hot. Or you could borrow Millard Fillmore. He was the thirteenth President of the United States. You can ask him what a Whig was and why he doesn't wear one. Invisible friends are great, especially when you move to a new city like my family does every year. You may not be able to take your visible friends with you. But your invisible friends are always there wherever you go.

## CAPTAIN ANTONYM

“Goodbye, Amy, that dress is very ugly. Would you hate to be enemies? We can leave outside. The library is noisy and warm.” (*Pause.*) I am Captain Antonym! I speak only in antonyms — words that mean the opposite from each other. So, what I really just said was: “Hello, Amy, that dress is very pretty. Would you like to be friends? We can go inside. The library is quiet and cool.” What? I should say what I mean and mean what I say? Well, that’s no fun! Talking in antonyms makes you use your brain to the max. But, if there are those of you out there who dwell in the, shall we say, “slower mental latitudes,” I can instantly become — *ta-da!* Captain Synonym! Who is very truly sorry-contrite-regretful-ashamed-embarrassed-apologetic-mortified *and* conscience-stricken to have forced you to exceed your registered brain capacity.

## WALKING IN THE CEMETERY

I like walking in the cemetery. You see lots of interesting artwork on the stones. And there is a lot of history you can learn about your community. Am I afraid? Of what? Ghosts? Come on! If dead people's souls do hang around, they probably just want to relax and take it easy. After all, most of them had a tough life and they're pretty tired. Probably they would enjoy hearing about what's going on in their town these days. Somebody who lived in the 1800s would like to know about computers and space rockets, I bet. And people who died from diseases like typhoid and smallpox would be interested in all the new medical cures coming out in our time. Mostly, I think ghosts in a cemetery like to talk to somebody new. I mean, wouldn't you get a little bored if you were stuck in the ground with the same bunch of souls for eternity?

## MY FAVORITE BUNYIP

*(Casting fishing rod.)* I like to go fishing. I'm a good fisher, too. But, between you and me and the yum-yum tree, I get a little help. See those tiny ripples? That's the Bunyip. The Bunyip is a very little person that lives in the stream and helps people catch fish. The Bunyip gets the fish's attention by singing a song and doing a little water dance. The fish sees the Bunyip and thinks, "What in the world is a very little human doing in the water dancing like an idiot and singing a ridiculous song about goober peas? I think I'll eat this thing!" But by then the ripples in the water show where the fish is, and you can catch it — just like that! *(Yanks fishing rod up.)* How do you get a Bunyip to help you fish? Well, my Bunyip actually belongs to my uncle. He's letting me borrow it for awhile. Until I learn to catch a fish of my own.

## COWABUNGA CATERPILLAR

I saw a man walking down the beach yesterday carrying a surfboard. I noticed that on the end of the surfboard was a caterpillar. I had never seen a caterpillar on a surfboard before. And I thought, that is very interesting. I bet that caterpillar had always wanted to be a surfer. But all of her caterpillar friends had told her, "You are crazy! Caterpillars don't surf!" And the caterpillar asked why, and they told her all kinds of reasons like, "It's too dangerous! It's wrong! It looks silly! It's not something a good caterpillar does!" But she really wanted to surf, whether it was something caterpillars had ever done before or not. And so she found that surfboard and climbed on it and waited until a man picked it up, headed for the ocean to surf. Anyway, that's what I thought when I saw a man walking down the beach yesterday carrying a surfboard with a caterpillar on it. I mean, why else would it be there?

## AND THEN I WAKE UP

Did you ever look at your cat when it was sleeping? It sleeps soooo peacefully all curled up and dreaming. Dreaming of what? What if your cat was dreaming of you, and your whole life was only a dream in the mind of a cat? It could happen! And it would be pretty cool! But if your life was just a dream in somebody else's sleep, who would you want to be dreaming it? Would you want to be a grownup's dream? Or a kid's dream? The dream of a movie star or a president? Would you want your dreamer to be a person or an animal? What kind of animal? Or are all the animals you know just part of this dream you're in, and in the Real World of the Dreamer there isn't any such thing as a zebra or hippopotamus, and the color blue is really green or there aren't any colors at all, because that's just what your dreamer is dreaming for you. Hmmm . . . I don't know. Somehow I think all that is a little bit more than my cat Smokey has room for in his little cat brain. And then . . . I wake up! Or do I?

## EVEN-STEVEN

*(Flipping a coin in the air.)* My dad says I don't know how to handle money. He was giving me four quarters a day to take to school. So at recess yesterday this older kid came up to me and said, "Hey! Let me borrow a dollar, but just give me fifty cents." Now that sounded like a good deal to me! So I asked him, "Why should I loan you a dollar but give you only fifty cents?" And he said, "Beause then you will owe me the other fifty cents, and I will owe you the fifty cents you loaned me, and we will be even-steven." Well, that made sense to me, I mean, fifty cents plus fifty cents is one hundred cents, which is one dollar, right? I don't know why my dad thinks I don't know how to handle money. Say, would you like to borrow a three-dollar bill?



## AMBER DAY

You'd better watch out what you say today — *especially* today. Why? Because today is an Amber Day. If you make a false wish on an Amber Day, it will come true. We had some neighbors once, Mr. and Mrs. Poole. They were just the arguing-est pair of folks you ever did see. One day Mrs. Poole was trying to clean house, and she says to Mr. Poole, "Why, you're always in the way! Always clumping around like an old mule! Why, you're nothing but a mule from the waist down!" And he says to her, "Stop yammering, woman! The way you're always braying at people, why you're nothing but a mule from the neck up!" And what do you think but she says back to him: "Eee-yaw! Eee-yaw!" He looks at her, and she's got the head of a mule sitting on her shoulders! And she points to his feet, and he looks down and sees four big mule legs! They'd both been turned into half-mules because of their false wishes on Amber Day! "Eee-yaw! Eee-yaw!" Of course, there's a lot more to the story, but I can't tell you now. I've got to hurry and get some sticky paper to hang on the ceiling for my little sister. She said she wished she were a fly on the wall and, well . . . that's Amber Day for you!

## THE OTHER SIDE OF A PUDDLE

*(Walking slowly around something on the ground, then stopping.)* No, I'm not afraid of getting wet. I know it's only a puddle. But did you ever look at a puddle? Really look *inside* the puddle? Sure, you see your reflection. But what's underneath? Go ahead, look deeper. What's on the other end of a puddle? Do you have the guts to find out? Maybe it's another world, a world that's like ours, only backwards and upside-down, and your name wouldn't be Emily but Ylime, or Mit instead of Tim. Maybe your cat would bark and your dog would climb trees and chase mice. And maybe kids would be grownups and getting gray and going bald, and grownups would be wearing diapers and singing nursery rhymes and riding tricycles while kids drove big cars and trucks. *(Backs up a step and points to ground.)* Who really knows what's on the other side of a puddle? Do you have the guts to find out?