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# **MONOLOGUES**

## **Just for Kids!**

**A Collection of 50 Great Monologues  
For Audition, Competition, Training, and Performance**

**By R. J. Ryland**

# MONOLOGUES

## Just for Kids!

By R. J. Ryland

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## **GOOD DOG**

Whose dog is that? Here boy! Here boy! Good dog. Nice dog. Aren't you a pretty dog? (Pause.) Uh, oh! Good dog. Nice dog. Back. Back! (Pause.) Run!

## **FAT CAT**

I bet fat cats have more lives than skinny cats. I bet fat cats climb higher and purr louder than skinny cats. I bet fat cats like people better. They're prettier and softer and eat less. Okay, so maybe they eat more, but that's all. I know because I have a fat cat and my cat is the best cat in the whole world! Better than your skinny old cat any day.

## **TERRITORIAL RIGHTS**

No! I told you before; absolutely you may not play in my room. (Pause.) Why?  
It doesn't matter why. All you need to know is that I said so. (Pause.) Sound like Mom?  
I do not sound like Mom! Anyway, what if I did? She's a nice enough lady. Now, get  
out of here before I call Dad!

## I AM KING/QUEEN

Roar! I am a tiger! A ferocious tiger! If you take one step towards me I'll pounce on you like, like—a tiger! You're just a lowly lion. I'm not afraid of you. Watch it! I'll tear you to shreds and gobble you up in bite-sized pieces. Ask nicely and I might let you go. But don't ever try walking through my yard— I mean *jungle*, again. I rule here. I wear the crown. I am king!

## TWO LEFT FEET

Mike, my oldest brother, says I have two left feet. Look at them. They don't look the same, so they can't both be left. I know, from your direction they look right. But even from your side they can't both be right because they're obviously not the same. That means this one is right and that one is left. Or from your side, this one is left and that one is right. This one is definitely different from that one. So would you please tell my brother I do not have two left feet!

## **SALLY**

Sally is a really nice kid. Everybody says so. She's popular and pretty, and smart, too. All the teachers like her. And she's talented. The Principal let her sing the National Anthem over the loud speaker once. She was really good. And I'm not saying that just because she's my friend. But Sally has a secret. She told me her secret. It's not a good secret. If it were up to me, I'd tell on Sally. But I don't want to hurt her. Something happened to Sally that was really bad. It's strange that such terrible things can happen to someone and nobody know it. I really want to tell someone. But Sally made me promise. She's afraid people won't think she's nice anymore.

## JACK

So what is a jackrabbit? Is it a rabbit named Jack? Does it work down at Big O' Tires? Does it carry a wad of money in its pocket? If you're fast as a jackrabbit does that mean you can hop faster than a kangaroo? If a hobo named Jack made rabbit stew in a pot, would you call it Jack rabbit stew? And if he ate it for lunch would you say he hit the Jack pot? If I got a regular rabbit and I named him Jack that would make him Jack Rabbit, right? And if somebody stole him out of his cage, you would say Jack Rabbit was rabbit-jacked, right? You might say I don't know Jack, but if I did, I can tell you one thing for sure, he'd be a rabbit.

## LOST IN SPACE

My grandma tells me I'm lost in space. I'm not quite certain what she means by that, but I'm pretty sure it has something to do with the blank look she accuses me of having all the time. I'll have you know, my mind isn't blank at all. I spend lots of time thinking about things. Lots of things. Sometimes I'm not sure exactly what it is I'm thinking about, but you can be sure it's something. In fact, I'm thinking about something right this very minute. It's something really important. I can't tell you what it is just yet because I don't know but as soon as I do I'll tell you. I don't waste my time thinking about nothing at all you know.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mo-om! Pepper won't stay off my paper. I can't do my homework if he keeps walking all over my stuff. (Pause.) On the desk? I can't work on my desk. It's all covered with junk. (Pause.) Clean it off? I can't clean it off. I don't have time. I want to go to Chrissy's before dinner. She found a turtle in her backyard and I promised I'd help her build a special box to keep it in. (Pause.) Dinner's ready? I can't eat now! Haven't you heard anything I've said? I told you I have homework to finish and— (Pause.) Fine! But right after we eat I'm going to Chrissy's house so you'll have to send a note to my teacher tomorrow and tell her it's your fault I didn't finish my homework.

## FRONT ROW SEATS

Hold on to your seats, folks. You are in for the time of your life. I have ridden this coaster over two hundred times since it opened last June. Me and my mom and dad, we live just about a mile away. We get season passes every year, ever since I was tall enough to ride the big rides. But this one's the best. The best. It ain't for the frail, though. If you faint easy or get sick flying upside down at sixty miles per hour, you better step off now. Don't wait till that light comes on. You can't get off then. Raise your hand and let the attendant know you want off right now. I promise if you don't get off right this minute you'll be sorry. (Pause.) Oh, you want to ride. Well, okay. But would you at least consider trading places? It's no fun unless you're in the front seat.

## **DAD'S BEST FRIEND**

Jake is Dad's best friend and my worst enemy. Twice a day I feed Jake. Twice a day he bites the hand that feeds him. Jake used to be Mom's dog and that was okay. We'd take family walks with Jake in the park after school, or after work, or after dinner before dark. But when Mom went away— when Mom died— Dad said it was my job to feed Jake twice a day, and walk him before school and after school. And now, when Dad comes home from work, Jake lies at his feet and Dad strokes him for hours and hours and hours. It would be okay if I had a spot next to Dad's chair, under his feet, near to his heart. But Jake lies there taking my place. And night after night, before dark, I go to bed early, lonely, missing Mom, and hungry for Dad's love.

## SCRIBBLES

I wonder if anyone can tell I can't read? I can talk, that's obvious enough. And I can read words like on street signs and sometimes the title on a book. But when I open the book, all those words blend together and it looks like a bunch of scribbles, which is what I do when I write. And everybody laughs and says that I write like a doctor. Don't they know I can't grow up to be a doctor if I can't read and write? I might not be able to get any job at all. It's really bad not knowing how to read. I'd talk to my teacher but I think he already knows. Maybe that's what he's going to tell my parents at the parent-teacher conference after school today. Oh, I do hope so. I don't want my mom and dad to think I'm stupid. But more than that, I don't want to *be* stupid. I'd rather learn to read.

## WOW

I went white water rafting with my family yesterday. Wow, what a rush! I got to sit in the back next to the guide. My mom and dad were in the front. They had paddles and the guide would yell out when they were supposed to use them. He said they were supposed to paddle like their lives depended on it. Which it did. We'd come around a bend in the river and the water would be nice and calm and wow, right in front of us would be these rapids and rocks and sometimes a waterfall and we'd go flying through it! My heart beat so fast. Wow. We spent four hours on the river and not once did any of us fall overboard or get stuck in the tree branches or go belly up. I was really proud of my folks. They never lost their cool and they always did exactly what the guide told them to do. All I can say is 'Wow'.

## SEPARATED

There's an empty birdcage at my house. My parrot, Hugo, used to live there. He lives with my dad, now. I got Hugo for my birthday two years ago. I taught him to say 'hello' and 'feed me' and 'look out behind you!' I don't quite understand how he can be my bird but live somewhere else. His home is here. Last night I overheard Dad say he paid for the parrot and that's why Hugo was going with him and I heard Mom say she bought the birdcage and that's why it was staying with her. And then he left. With Hugo. I wonder who paid for me? This is my home, but Dad pays the bills, I think. Mom works, too, but she still gets money from Dad, so who owns the house? Will I have to leave, too? I wonder where Hugo sleeps if his cage is here. I wonder if he misses me. Is he still my bird if he doesn't live here? Is my dad still my dad if he lives somewhere else? I don't like being separated from things I love. It feels awful.

## STEALING TIME

I didn't take it. No. It wasn't me. I think I saw Stevie over by the teacher's desk when I came in from recess. I was the first one back. Second, I mean. In fact, I'm sure it was Stevie. I came back in early because I wasn't feeling very good. I can't tell you what time it was, I don't have a watch. It was only a minute or two before everyone else got back. I wouldn't have had time to go through her desk. Only enough time to see Stevie and sit down before the bell rang. Did you ask him? He's always doing stupid things. He said I broke his pencil yesterday. Why would I do that? He doesn't like me. He told the teacher I tripped him during recess. Why would he say that? He tripped over his own two feet. Have you seen his shoes? They're too big for him. They're old and dirty. When he sits at his desk you can see the soles. They're full of holes. My mom buys me anything I want. I don't need the teacher's watch. It was Stevie. You can tell by the way he smiled when you called me to your office.

## SUMMER IN THE COUNTRY

Summertime. My favorite time of year. All the wonderful smells; flowers, fresh cut grass, exhaust fumes, herbicides, chemicals in my neighbor's swimming pool. Oh, yes, the sweet smell of summer. I live in town. I like to play outside but I can barely breathe. We live on a busy street. The traffic wakes me up at a quarter past six. When I'm in school I don't care, but during the summer I like to sleep in. I work hard all year. I need my rest so I can face another round of reading, writing and math in September. My folks keep talking about moving to the country. We've looked at a couple of really great places where I could have a horse and play in the creek and help my mom in the garden. Do you think it's possible to be born one way and meant to be something or someone entirely different? I've never lived anywhere but here and yet I am sure I was never meant to be a city kid. I hope we move soon so I can spend my favorite time of year where I was meant to be; in the country.

## FLYING

If I had one wish it would be to fly. I would fly out my bedroom window right this minute. I would fly up over the rooftop of my next-door neighbor's house. He has a little dog and I'd whistle real loud and when the dog looked up he'd see me flying over and start barking. He'd bark so loud that Tommy, who lives two doors down, would hobble out his backdoor to check out what's happening and he'd see me and he'd start yelling and pointing and the whole neighborhood would run outside and there'd be a bunch of whoops and hollers. And then the guy who runs the store at the end of the street, he'd call the newspaper and maybe even the fire department and I'd get my picture in the paper when they put up the ladder to try and reach me all the way up there above the treetops. But they wouldn't reach me because I'd fly away, so far away everyone would cry. Especially my mom. And she'd be real sorry then that she sent me to my room for telling Tommy I know how to fly. And that he broke his leg jumping out of that tree trying to fly like me.

## GROWING OLD

I don't want to grow old. Old people have wild hairs growing everywhere, like out of their noses and ears. Take my great-grandfather. His eyebrows are so long they brush against his reading glasses. One of these days I'm going to sneak in while he's sleeping on the couch and buzz them off with my dad's raiser. Have you ever noticed his fingernails? They're yellow and creepy. I wonder what kind of creatures lives underneath them. He asked me to trim his toenails for him once and I almost vomited. And, oh, my gosh, his skin. My great-grandfather should always wear long pants. He put on shorts last week and asked me to hold his hand and walk with him around the block. I could see his knees. They looked like the skin on a Sharpe's back. Why do old people have to look so funny? Why can't they just have birthdays and stay the same? He turned eighty-three Sunday. My dad says he won't be with us much longer— he's really starting to look old. Yeah, well, I can see that. But somehow that doesn't seem fair. Is dying a punishment for looking old? I love my great-grandfather. I don't care how hairy and wrinkly he is. I don't want him to ever go away.

## BUMPY

My frog died this morning. Okay, so it wasn't my mom or dad or even my pet turtle. It was just a frog. You could say he croaked. That wasn't funny. But sometimes it helps a little to laugh in the face of adversity. I plan to put him in a box and bury him behind the garage and say a few words that express my deep felt sorrow. I'll start with, "Bumpy was a good friend." That was his name, Bumpy. He had bumps all over him. My mom tried to convince me that Bumpy was a toad because of those bumps. I never believed her. Who would ever have a toad for a pet? A brother maybe. Or a sister. But never a pet. No, Bumpy was definitely a frog and a good frog. He jumped high enough. He croaked loudly enough. His chin grew big enough and he definitely had a long enough tongue. That's a fair enough eulogy, I think. I'll write it down and ask mom to join me for the ceremony even though she would never touch Bumpy. She said he'd give her warts. He never gave me warts. Oh, that's a good one, too. I'll close the ceremony with it. "Bumpy never gave me warts." What more can you ask of a good friend?

## TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

Stand back everyone! I am here to tell you that little is in. I expect most of you believe that big is the only way to go. I am living proof that little is far more important than big. Unlike you, I can get into the movies for half price. Unlike you, I can play in the wading pool at the water park. Unlike you, I can fit through that hole. Oh, you don't believe me? That's only because you think big and I think little. When I look at the hole, I see myself on the other side. I without a doubt will slip easily through and then I alone will know exactly what's on the other side. Trust me, if Alice were the size of Tweedle Dee she never would have met the White Rabbit. So, stand back. Here I go. Almost through. Just a little bit more. A little more. Hmmmmm. I seem to have hit a little snag, the belt on my jeans or probably something in my pocket. I think I better go home and change before I try to go any further. There's nothing really worth looking at on the other side of the hole anyway. Can you tug there on my legs a little? Grab me by the ankles, it won't hurt. (Pause.) What do you mean you're too little? You're much bigger than me, just pull. Harder. Harder. Don't give up. Pull! (Pause.) Oh, stop complaining and go get your big brother. I can't lie here stuck in this hole all day.

## GREAT AUNT MOLLY

I swear if my great aunt Molly comes into my room one more time without asking I'm going to box her ears. "Box your ears". Ever hear such a stupid expression? That's what she says. Box your ears. What part of the planet is she from? Why, I bet when she was a little girl they didn't even have Sony Play Station One let alone Two. She said, "When I was a little girl we made do with what we had. We made pies out of mud and hung rubber tires in trees so we could swing like monkeys." Swing like monkeys? Whatever. And like I'm going to stick my hands in a bowl of mud and make mud pies. Can you believe that? I can hear her now, "Mommy, do you want to try a piece of pie? I made it just for you. It's your favorite flavor—mud." Yuck! And I bet her mommy pretended to eat it, too. "Oh, yes, Sweetie, I'd love to have a piece of that pie. Ummmmm! Just the way I like it. I'll take a piece to your daddy, too. Now, don't eat too much or you'll spoil your dinner." As if any kid in his right mind would eat mud! Old people are always doing dumb stuff like that. Pretending to eat mud just to make us kids feel good about ourselves, so they don't hurt our self-esteem. Mom says a good therapist is hard to find and cost so much these days. I bet Great Aunt Molly never went to a therapist. I bet she was one of those happy, well-adjusted kids. Well, you'll never catch me eating mud but, I don't know, that swinging on a tire in a tree stuff sorta sounds like fun. Maybe Great Aunt Molly could show me how to hang one.

## LITTLE KIDS

Little kids drive me nuts. Last night my little brother threw an entire plate of spaghetti on the floor. I had to clean up the mess. If I make a mess, it's my responsibility to clean it up. So how come my little brother gets away with tossing his dinner on the floor and I get the grand privilege of cleaning it up? My mom says it's 'cause he's only two and that when I was two she cleaned up after me all the time. That makes sense to me. She's the one who had me in the first place. I didn't have this kid. I didn't even want this kid. He gets all new clothes every couple months. I'm lucky to get a new pair of shoes twice a year. He got a new tricycle for Christmas and he can't even reach the pedals. He has a stroller, a wagon, and a baby pack for us to haul him around in. I asked for a rolling backpack to carry my books to school and my dad said my old over the shoulder one is fine and I said yeah but it hurts my back and my dad said if I want it badly enough I can do some extra chores around the house and then he'd think about getting it for me. My little brother doesn't have to do any chores. He gets anything he wants even if he doesn't ask for it. I'm going to keep a list of everything my mom and dad do for this kid. One of these days my little brother will be my age. When my mom and dad start babying him and spoiling him and expecting me to let him tag along with me and my friends, I'm going to say forget it. It's my turn. I'll show them the list. Then they'll be sorry they treated me so badly and it will be my turn to get all the love.

## TOO OLD TO LEARN

You want me to jump in now? Do I really have to? It looks awfully deep. I'll meet you over on the other end where I can touch the bottom. (Pause.) At least let me test the water first. (Pause) It's freezing! People actually like this? Ever hear of a heater? (Pause.) It is? Then it's the air. See, I have goose bumps. I heard the weather should be a lot warmer tomorrow. I will get my grandmother to bring me back. Is that my towel? (Pause.) I know she paid you to teach me to swim. But nobody in my family knows how. We live in a condo on the fourteenth floor. We have an exercise room and a whirlpool sauna. We don't have water like this where I live. Nobody *swims*. I'm only staying with my grandmother for the summer and I'll probably never come here again, so you see, you're wasting your time. (Pause.) I don't care if the fee is non-refundable. Besides, I'm too young. What if I drown? Who will walk the dog after school? Who will feed my fish? Please don't make me get in the water. It's too deep! (Pause.) Hey, that kid over there looks like she needs help. Look! There! She's going to fall in. Oh, no, she jumped in. I can't watch! She's going under. Save her! (Pause.) Oh, she knows how to swim? But she's no bigger than my baby sister and she's only in Kindergarten. (Pause.) Two years? She's been swimming two years? She started when she was three? You're kidding me, right? This is some trick to get me in the water. But she's not afraid at all. Look at her go. How does she do that? I wish I knew how to swim like that. (Pause.) You can teach me? I don't know. Maybe. Okay. Are you sure I'm not too old to learn?

## BAD LUCK

My cousin, Ralph, came to live with us during the winter. His dad went to prison for robbing a Dunkin Donuts at 2:00 AM. Ralph's dad is my mom's half brother. When my mom asked why he did it, he said he couldn't sleep so he went for a drive and stopped to get some donuts for Ralph for breakfast. He said they didn't have the kind of donuts he wanted. When she asked him why he had a gun he said he thought about killing himself but Ralph needed him. Yeah, well, that makes a lot of sense. They didn't have the kind of donuts he wanted so he pulled out a gun and took all the money in the cash register instead. Ralph needed him? What an idiot. But, that's Ralph's dad. He hasn't made sense for a long time, not since his wife got killed a couple years ago about 2:00 in the morning out on the by-pass. He came down with the flu so Ralph's mom got up and drove out to Wal-Mart to try and get him something for it. It was graduation night and a bunch of kids were celebrating and one of 'em might have had a little too much to drink and slammed into her car. Two of the kids died. The whole town was in mourning. Those kids had their whole lives ahead of them. It was really awful. Everybody at school teases Ralph about his dad. I get a bunch of it, too, seeing how he's my mom's half brother. They say he's bad and that bad runs in families. I used to have lots of friends and now it's just Ralph and me. He makes my life miserable. I hate going to school. I wish he'd go and live far away from here— in prison with his dad if they'd let him. Just my luck I'd get stuck with the son of my mom's loser half-brother. What did I do to deserve this? Some people have all the luck.

## A BIG TALE

I visited my Grandpa last week. He lives on a farm near a little town called Gracious. Gracious is surrounded by big hills and tall trees and sparkling clear water. In Gracious all the people are big, really big, and the biggest of all is my Grandpa's neighbor, Bob. Bob has a big farm and on this farm is a chicken that lays golden eggs. Bob loves his chicken but Dinah, his cat, hates it. Everyday Dinah chases that chicken until it's so exhausted its eggs turn green! Bob has a wife name Jean who's big like Bob. Jean likes Dinah but she likes the chicken even more. When Dinah chases the chicken it makes Jean cry big tears. Jean cried so much her big tears threatened to flood all of Gracious. In order to save Gracious, Bob asked a woodcutter to chop down enough trees to make a dam. The Woodcutter said he'd cut the trees if the chicken would lay a golden egg for him, but Dinah chased the chicken up a hill and when Bob told the chicken to lay the egg, it was green. That made Jean cry even bigger tears! The more Jean cried, the more the water rose in Gracious, threatening to flood everything, even my Grandpa's farm. Jean cried day and night and had no time to feed Dinah any cream. Dinah got so hungry she promised to stop chasing the chicken. The chicken overheard Dinah and laid another egg. This time it was gold! Bob gave the golden egg to the woodcutter. The woodcutter chopped down 20 trees and built a dam that held back the tears and saved all of Gracious. Jean quit crying, Dinah never chased the chicken again, and all the eggs are gold! Grandpa promised we'd go see Bob and Jean the next time I visit. I plan to take Dinah some fresh cream and I bet the chicken will lay a golden egg for me. A big one!

## **TWO THUMBS AND A HAND UP**

What a fall! I give you two thumbs up for that one! Three if I had 'em. I've never seen anything so funny in my life! I can't stop laughing! Ohhhh. Oh! (Pause.)  
Oops. That hurt. Hey, what's so funny? Stop laughing and give me a hand up, here!

## MAKING THE CUT

Scissors, please! Scissors! I need a pair of scissors here! I can't cut rope with my teeth. It's not that funny, guys. I really can't get the knot out. Someone is liable to come along and see me tied to this tree, and that isn't going to be funny, not funny at all. I'll pay you. I'll give you whatever I've got in my pocket as soon as you cut me loose. I'm really not happy about this. And I'm getting unhappier by the minute. You better not be anywhere near here when I get out of this. Are you listening? Cut me loose!

## **ELEPHANT EARS**

My Uncle Ned has elephant ears. They stick out of the side of his head like flaps. My mom has round dark beady eyes. You'd have trouble picking her out from a stand of Black Eyed Susans. Dad has this huge bulbous looking chin. He got my mom a silk orchid for her desk at work. I guess he wanted her to think about him when they were apart. My sister, Ellie, has thick frizzy hair like a fern. My mom said when she was born, before her hair grew in, she looked like a coneflower. I guess that explains why I look the way I do. But what we lack in looks, we make up in loyalty. You're bound to have strong roots when you come from a family of plants.

## **PUNCHING BAG**

My kid brother uses me for a punching bag. I can defend myself, that's not the problem. The problem is that if I ever let myself fight back, I'm afraid I'd pulverize him. Not that he doesn't deserve it. He most certainly does. But I'm not that kind of person. I strive for peace and harmony, not violence and conflict. I'm the sort of person that would nurse a rat back to health if I found one caught in a trap, which is exactly how I feel sometimes when he's wailing on me. Trapped like a rat. Trapped by my own ideals when really all I want to do is turn the little creep upside down and shake him until his brain falls out. Which, of course, I'd never do, because I'm the gentle, quiet type.

## SPROUTING LEGS

Okay, where are you? I know you're here somewhere. I will not take one more step till you come out of hiding. Where are your parents when you need them? I said I'd clean my room. I'm cleaning my room. I'm doing exactly what I was told to do. I should not have to deal with the likes of you under my feet. A few cobwebs never hurt anyone. I am okay with cobwebs. But you, you are entirely unacceptable. I know it's been awhile since I swept under the bed. A long while. Last year. But that does not give you the right to move in on me. I'm going to be stuck in this position until mom gets home from the store, aren't I? Mom said the garbage in my room would sprout legs if I didn't pick it up. But why do they have to be so long and so black and so creepy?

## **TOO MUCH PAPER**

I'm supposed to write a five-page report on Conservation. I'm supposed to download photos from the Internet and document my research. Why have the Internet at all if you're going to copy the information? Anybody can look up anything they want. I can find out anything I need to know. The Internet is like, like— my external brain. My mind's own personal hard drive. I don't have to know the answer. I only have to ask the question and more than I can ever remember is right there at my fingertips. Why can't I just E-mail my teacher the link to the Website and save all of us a lot of time and energy. Talk about Conservation. If we all did everything online, we could save a whole bunch of trees. Written reports are a total waste of time and use entirely too much paper.

## BEST STUDENT

Okay, so I said I didn't do it. Is that such a big deal? I could have told you the truth but you wouldn't have believed me. Who cares anyway? It was just a dollar or two. It's not really stealing if it's under \$300, ask a judge. I'm your best student. My test scores are higher than anyone else's in the whole school. You need me to make you look good. (Pause.) Suspended? No way! You're kidding, right? You can't do that! My Dad's a lawyer. He'll have you fired! (Pause.) You don't care? What do you mean you don't care? I'll—I'll— Okay. I'm sorry, okay? Please don't suspend me. I didn't hurt anybody. I only hurt myself, right? I promise I'll never do it again. Never! You won't tell my parents, will you?

## MOUNTAINS

Sometimes I dream of mountains. Beautiful mountains with tall peaks covered with snow. Oh the hillsides graze sheep, or maybe even antelope. Not goats. And on one side of the mountains I see water cascading over huge slick boulders, falling into a clear ice blue stream that weaves its way off into an amber sunset. I dream of becoming an artist. I want to paint pictures of places I've never seen and people I've never met. I want to hold a brush in my hand and feel the power of the color flowing from my fingertips. I would make great strokes of purple for the sky and close my eyes as I fashioned the gentle wisps of white clouds on the canvas. Some people think when you're blind that you can't see. But really you can. You see with your mind what you dream in your heart.

## SEVEN MAKES TEN

That girl at the counter just gave me change for a ten. She used to go to high school with my brother but she dropped out last year. Okay, so I'm not supposed to be here. What can I say, I skipped school today and need quarters to play some games. I bought a pack of gum for a buck and handed her a ten and enough for tax and asked for a five-dollar bill and the rest in change. She gave me five dollars and four quarters. I told her that was wrong. She handed me three more dollars and I said that was a dollar too much. She took back a dollar and said she was sorry and that the register was down. I don't get it. She needs a machine to tell her how to make change for a ten-dollar bill? Whoa, that's scary. I have to admit, I don't much feel like playing games any more. I think I'd rather go home and study my math for school tomorrow.

## CELL PHONES

You can't be serious! Not my cell phone! Anything else. I'll set the table every night this week—that is if you ever decide to cook. I'll study twice as long even when I don't have a test. I'll walk the dog if we get one. I'll feed the neighbor's cat. Anything! But, please, don't take away my cell phone. I'd have no way of knowing where anyone is, where I am going next, and who's going to be there when I get there. I can't fathom going out the door without it. I'd feel half-dressed! Naked. You don't want me out on the street *naked* do you? I might as well stay home. Oh, I get it. That's the idea. You don't have the guts to ground me. You think if you take away my cell phone I'll be devastated. I won't leave the house. I promise you, that will never work. I can do it. I can live without it. You'll see. Don't expect me back before eight. And if you try to reach me, forget it! You can't. I won't be carrying my cell phone.

## FAIR PLAY

I have two words to say to you. “Too bad.” I won, that’s the way it goes. Ha, ha, ha! You lose. What? You pouting? You should be used to it by now. It’s not the first time I’ve beat you. Or the second. How about the *thirteenth*! You’d think you’d give up. I have been and always will be better than you. It’s a fact. Face it. If you had a prayer of a chance to win you would have won by now. I’m surprised you have the nerve to keep coming back for more. But, I’m a good sport. Come on, let’s try it again. Ready? (Pause.) What? You don’t want to? Why not? This is your chance to get me back. What? Are you chicken? Afraid to look stupid? Wait! Come back. You know thirteen is an unlucky number. Something bad will happen if we don’t go another round. You can’t quit now. Look, I’ll even let you win. (Pause.) Forget it. Go home. You’re such a poor loser. I didn’t want to play with you anyway. You never play fair.

## HOTEL FEVER

Will it ever stop raining? I have been in this hotel for two days. I'm going nuts here. Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain! I can't take it. I want to go outside. I want sunshine. I want the ocean. I want sand. I want the beach! I want everyone back at school to be jealous that I went to Florida for Spring Break. Mom and Dad are down by the pool, the *indoor* pool. No one goes to Florida and swims at an indoor pool. I might as well be at a Holiday Inn in Iowa! Where are the people? Where are the kids? I suppose I should just turn on the TV and watch a movie or something. I bet Tom and Lisa aren't sitting at home watching TV. They'd at least go to the mall and watch a movie on a big screen. And afterwards everyone would meet over at Jill's house and order a pizza or something and play video games. I'm going to end up spending the whole week alone. Oh, why did we have to go to Florida for Spring Break! Is anyone listening? It isn't fair. It just isn't fair!

## ASSUMPTIONS

Uh, I'm not deaf and you don't have to speak so slowly. Why do you ask me that? I'm not white but I was born here in the United States and I speak English. I don't get it when I meet someone and I get asked where I'm from. Duh, I'm from America. Look around you, not everybody looks the same in this country. My grandparents emigrated here before I was born. My parents are citizens. I have one brother and two sisters and we have a dog, a hamster, two cars, and three televisions. I get A's in Science and B's in Math and Social Studies. I run track, I play the piano, and I baby-sit for spending money. My favorite food is, wow, are you surprised, *pizza*. I like techno, rap, and reggae and I shop at the mall. Do me a favor. Next time you're sitting next to a stranger on a bus and her eyes are a little different or his skin a shade or two darker, don't assume she can't speak English or that he just slipped across the border illegally. Assume they're as American as you are.

## ADDICTED

Help! I am addicted to tomatoes. Not possible? Oh, yes, quite true. I only eat tomatoes. It's been going on for years. I eat them raw, cooked and fried. Sometimes I embellish them with pizza, hamburger or spaghetti and when I'm really desperate for a little variety I slice up a nice juicy red tomato and throw in cucumbers and onions and spice it up with a little garlic, mayo, and vinegar. And that's just for dinner. For breakfast I mix in a little egg and cheese with my tomatoes, stir fry it with peppers and roll it up in a tortilla. If I'm really disgusted with myself for not being able to kick the habit, I'll toss a few shredded carrots on top. For lunch I eat tomato soup. I always add cheddar cheese or potatoes and celery to disguise my addiction. It must be working cause my mom tells everyone what a great eater I am. Oh, if she only knew the truth. I know I have to learn to like other foods if I'm to grow up big and strong and healthy. But for now I have to accept myself for the tomato addict I am.

## COOL STUFF

Mom went shopping today. There was this sale at Macy's. I wish she'd taken me. I like to shop at Macy's. But I stayed up late last night watching a movie. It was Friday night so I didn't have to go to school today. I slept till ten and mom said she couldn't wait for me because she had to be there when they opened or all the good stuff would be gone. From what she brought home, I think the good stuff was gone before they opened the door. Or turned on the lights, for that matter. Maybe they never did and mom shopped in the dark. At least that might explain how she could possibly have bought these pants and this shirt. What was she thinking? Does she think it's Halloween? I'll look like a total geek in these pants. No sense of style at all. None. Zip. I wear this shirt and no one will sit with me at lunch. I'll be banned from school. The planet! I might as well go live on the moon! (Pause.) What? Nothing, Mom. I was just looking at the stuff you got me. (Pause.) They're yours? Really? Wow, really. I didn't know you wore such cool stuff. Maybe I can borrow the pants sometime.

## THE GAME

I don't get it. I was supposed to meet John and Lisa here forty-five minutes ago. I did exactly what they told me to do. I opened the front gate, sat down on the painted green rock next to the fishpond and waited. I like this game but I'm just a little worried that something went wrong in the plan. Maybe John and Lisa got lost on their way here. Maybe John had a flat tire on his bike or Lisa couldn't catch a ride. I wish she'd given me her cell phone number, I mean, just in case there was a problem. I wonder how long I'll have to wait. What really confuses me is why the gate is locked now. I could just climb the fence but that wasn't in the directions. I was to follow the directions exactly the way they were written. John and Lisa said I'd lose the game if I did anything different. This is the first time they've ever let me play. I wouldn't want to do something wrong and never get another chance to hang out with them. Oh, no, if I'm not home by supper mom will come looking for me. Then I'll really look like a dork. I'll call her on my cell and tell her Lisa invited me to dinner. That way I can stay here until they come. I'll sit right here on this rock and look cool all night if I have to.

## IF I ONLY HAD A BRAIN

I can be so stupid sometimes and there is no excuse for stupidity. Laziness, maybe. Forgetfulness, absolutely. But stupidity? Never. I lent my brother ten dollars. That was two weeks ago. I will never see that ten dollars again. I should have learned my lesson when I lent him my bike and he hit the curb head on. Flattened the tire and bent the rim. If he hadn't gotten a concussion we might have come to blows. I got my dad a really great tie and a pair of leather driving gloves for Christmas. My lame brother didn't finish his shopping and I had to give him the tie to give to Dad so he wouldn't hurt his feelings. I'm always covering for my brother. He's the one who broke the handle on my mom's favorite coffee mug. I said it was broken when I took it out of the dishwasher. He's the one who left the stereo on in the car and ran the battery down and we had to borrow the neighbor's jumper cables and we were late for church, which wasn't so bad, but I never told. And he was the one who poked holes in the garden hose with a knife so he and his buddies could play around in the spray. I said I accidentally ran over it with the lawn mover. One of these days I'm going to figure it out and stop playing the sucker. One of these days I'll get a brain.

## JUMPING JASPERS

No way. I am not riding in the same car with those nutty Jaspers. If it was the last game of the season I'd stay home, flat tire or not. Why can't Dad come and get me? What's so special about work? Aren't I more important than his job? Forget it, I'll fix the tire myself! (Pause.) Why not? (Pause.) So who took the jack out of the trunk? Can't you two be a little more responsible? I count on you! I have to get to the game, don't you understand? I'm almost the star of the team! (Pause.) I said no! Those people cannot be trusted. You send me with them and who knows where I'll end up. Last week I saw the whole family, every last one of them, jumping up and down in their front yard like a bunch of frogs soaked in Red Bull. (Pause) Exercising? Are you kidding? Families don't exercise together, especially not in the front yard where the whole neighborhood can watch. It isn't normal. I've never once seen you or Dad jump up and down, not even when I score a run. By the way, why is that? Why don't you stand on your seat and yell and clap when I slide into home? You ought to see the Jaspers when their kid scores. You'd think they'd won the lottery. You could learn a thing or two from them. Do you have any idea how late it is? What are you waiting for? Hurry! Give them a call and see if they've got room in their car for me! I'll get my glove.

## STRAWBERRIES

I don't care what anyone says, I hate strawberries. Strawberries are the most disgusting edible plant in the universe. Oh, and I suppose you think I'm wrong, too? Well, think about it. Strawberries are full of seeds. Teeny, almost microscopic seeds. They're gritty like sandpaper and get caught in the fillings of your teeth. Oh, you don't have fillings. I see, you have perfect teeth. Well, I don't. I have fillings. And sometimes those fillings are magnets for food debris like popcorn husks, grape skins and yes, strawberry seeds. And what happens when food debris gets caught in your teeth? You mess with it with your tongue, for hours, and hours, and hours, until your tongue gets sore. Then you can't eat pizza for days. And when you do eat pizza, you burn the roof of your mouth. In fact, when you think about it, food is one of your worst enemies. If you didn't have to eat it to live I would never take another bite. I am quite certain there are people on other planets that have figured out how to survive without eating anything. No one ever suffers from hunger or dies of starvation. I plan to move to one of those planets someday. And maybe not too far from now, either. I'll bet they have the technology right this minute that can take me anywhere I want to go in the universe. So why can't they figure out how to get seeds out of strawberries?

## MY NOSE TURNS RED

A guy came to our school to teach clowning. I walked on a giant ball. Nobody else in the school could do it, not Johnny who plays football or Linda the cheerleader or Kevin who's the star of the basketball team. Only me. We had an assembly and all the kids came and all the teachers and the Principal. I was the featured act. Only when the guy put me up on the ball I got all tense and nervous with all those people watching. Nobody's ever watched me do anything. I'm the kid in the fourth row. Not the first, not the last, the one right in the middle. I'm the kid who's exactly four foot eight. Not tall enough to matter and too short to see above the crowd. I never fail a test. I never get a 100. I'm the kid nobody ever sees. As I'm standing there wobbling back and forth with all eyes on me, I could feel my nose turn red. And I remembered what they guy said, "When your nose turns red that's when you can feel the clown's blood rushing through your veins." Johnny the football player yells out, "Come on, you can do it! Show 'em how!" Linda starts cheering me on and Kevin says, "Keep your eyes straight ahead, not on the ball." I felt the ball move under my feet, or maybe it was me moving the ball. It's hard to tell when you're totally balanced. And it was then that I knew I wasn't just in the middle, I was the balancing point. I felt my knees relax. I looked straight ahead. I centered myself and away we went. That ball and I made it clear across the gymnasium and the whole auditorium exploded with applause. I'm pretty sure more than my nose turned red. And you know what, I realized I don't need to be the center of attention, I just need encouragement now and then to keep my balance.

## FAMILY TIES

If you don't want that anymore, I can use it. I like the color and it's in good shape. Let me try it on. If it doesn't fit I have a friend who might be able to wear it. Well, not exactly a friend. My mom volunteers down at the homeless shelter. I help out once in a while in the soup line. I met some kids there last week and they've got it pretty rough. Their dad's been out of work for four months. They lost their apartment and they've been sleeping in their car while their dad's been driving from town to town looking for work. Now they've run out of money for gas so they're at the shelter and he's looking for something around here. (Pause.) Well, yeah. I suppose it's possible their mom could look for work, too, but she doesn't speak very good English and, and, well, I think she's pregnant. (Pause.) How many kids? I don't know, two or three, I guess. Probably four when this one's born. (Pause.) I know it's a lot of kids but, hey, this is a free country and if I remember correctly we're still aloud to have big families. How many brothers and sisters do you have? (Pause.) Okay, see, you have a big family, too. Forget it. If you're too good to give an old shirt to a homeless family—Yeah? Well, sure, if you'd like to take it down yourself. I plan to volunteer a few hours this weekend. There are some great folks down there, you'll see. (Pause.) Good idea! We'll go through your closet and then we can go over to my house and hit mine. Do you think your mom and dad have anything they'd like to get rid of? My dad donated one of his suits and ties to use for job interviews. Hey, and speaking of job interviews, isn't there an opening down at your dad's store? I know a nice man with a great family I'd like to recommend.

## NIGHTMARES

I had the worst nightmare last night. I was standing listening to music on my iPod on the end of a giant steel beam sticking out of the 74<sup>th</sup> floor of the Sears Building in Chicago. My family went to Chicago on vacation last summer. My brother finished basic training at the naval base there on Lake Michigan. Now, why that steel beam was sticking out of the building, I don't really know, but it seemed really strong, like no one could ever knock it down. But for some reason, it wasn't clear, most of the rest of the building collapsed and I was stuck out there on that beam for two days all by myself. No one came to save me, not my dad or my mom, my little sister, my brother, or the navy. In the nightmare the Sears Building was next to a big river and there was this lock or dam or something of some sort with giant turbines directly below me. After two days the beam cracked and began to slowly bend towards the river. I knew at any moment I would slip off into the water and be swept into one of the turbines. I was so scared. I didn't want to die. Do you think that's how those people felt in New York when they were stuck up there and there was all that heat and nobody thought the steel could melt and the whole building collapse like that? And nobody came to save them. Nobody could. All those people who tried, they just died, too. My mom woke me up just before I fell into the river. I got dressed, ate breakfast with my family and went off to school. Someday I'll go to college and maybe have an important job in a big city in one of those really tall buildings overlooking a river. And I'll have the perfect view from my office. I'll see people walking to work through the park and old people sitting on benches feeding birds and I'll look across the river into dark windows in other buildings where people just like me sit making important decisions, and I wonder if I'll ever feel safe.

## NO BIG DEAL

The most horrible thing just happened to me. I was sitting on this bench next to the sidewalk outside Dairy Queen eating a banana cherry coconut fudge blizzard when two policeman walk up to me and ask me what's in my backpack cause some kid just swiped a box of expensive cigars from the tobacco and gift shop across the street. And I say, 'I'm a kid, what do I want with a box of cigars, expensive or otherwise?' And the one cop says, "Don't get smart." And the other one says, "What does any kid want with a box of cigars?" And then he picks up my back pack and I'm like feeling like a thief and a loser and gosh, I've never even tried to smoke a cigarette let alone a cigar and he's like asking me again what's in my backpack and I say I really would prefer he not open it and that the last thing he's going to find is a box of cigars and he says "Then you shouldn't care if I look inside," and I say, 'But I do care.' About that time my third period math teacher comes out of Dairy Queen slurping on a milkshake and she wants to know what the problem is and the cops say that some kid with hair my color about my age stole a box of expensive cigars from the tobacco and gift shop across the street and my teacher looks at me kinda sideways and the one cop says I don't want him to look in my backpack and my teacher tells me to let him look and I tell her I would rather not and I can tell she's thinking maybe I did take it and I finally say, 'Okay, if that's the only way you'll believe me.' And the cop opens up my backpack and pulls out a couple of books and a bottle of water and my stinky gym clothes that I was carrying home to wash and my underwear fall out from inside the shorts right there on the sidewalk in front of Dairy Queen. I look back at the window and a bunch of kids from school are watching and

they're cracking up. The cops start laughing and my teacher can barely hold it together. I pick up my shorts and my jersey and my smelly socks and my dirty underwear and I stuff 'em back in my bag and say, 'Are you happy?' The cops say don't worry about it and my teacher says it's no big deal. But it is to me.

## FAMOUS RECIPE

My big sister, Tess, and I were playing down by the park. She just got back from soccer camp and we were kicking the ball around and working on blocking. She wants to try out for Goalie on her team at school. We'd been down at the park for a couple of hours and I had to use the Restroom. Only when I went up to the blockhouse there was this notice posted that the Restrooms were out of order, something about a leak in the drainage system. I told my sister we'd have to head back 'cause I really had to go. That super sized coke I'd picked up at Lee's Famous Recipe on the way to the park was playing on my kidneys. So she throws the ball into the pack on the back of her bike and we head down the street. Now, I have to go really bad and I see the Lee's Famous Recipe sign and tell Tess I'm going to duck in there and use the Restroom. Only when I get off my bike and reach in my pocket, I realize I don't have any change. There's a sign on the door that says, 'Restrooms for Customers Only'. I can barely stand it about that time and so I figured I'd take my chances so I open the door and head straight to the Restroom. I come out and start walking towards the exit and the manager says, "Hey can't you read the sign?" And I say, "Yeah, I know, but it was an emergency." And she says, "It's always an emergency. The least you can do is buy something for the service." And I say, "I would, really, only I don't have any money." And she says, "It figures." About that time my sister walks in. She wants to know what's taking so long. I tell her the manager's giving me a hard time 'cause I used the Restroom without buying anything. Now, my sister isn't one for patience with unreasonable people, but being the diplomat she is, she tells the manager we *are* customers. That two hours earlier we

stopped and got pop on our way to the park. And the manager says, “That was two hours ago.” And my sister says, “Yeah, well, we didn’t need the Restroom then. We need it now because those super sized cokes you sold us are about to do us in and I have no intention of ever buying another one from you ever again until we get rid of the ones we already bought.” So my sister brushes right past the manager and goes in the Restroom. When she comes out, the manager is standing there holding two cups of coke. She hands one to my sister and one to me. “Thanks for being good customers,” she says. Tess takes a sip. “Thanks, we’ll be back, “ she calls over her shoulder as she heads for the exit. I look at manager and smile as I follow her out the door.

## A FREE CATALOGUE

Today is my best friend's birthday. Wait till you see what I got him. I am so excited. I can't wait. You see, this gift is more than just a gift. It's revenge! Oh, I can't wait to see his face. Every year, every year, I take months looking for just the right thing for him. I listen to him talk. Listen for clues on what he's into, the kinds of clothes he likes, the music. Last year I spent hours on E-bay searching for this old CD he wanted that you can't get in stores anymore. It really matters to me that I get him something really special. I really try, really try to get him just the right thing. And what does he do? On my birthday, he gives me the most ridiculous, ridiculous things you could imagine. I don't know where he comes up with these ideas. On my last birthday he gives me this great looking package and there's plastic dog doo in side. What kind of a gift is that to give your best friend? Okay, okay, I can forgive him for that. But one year he gives me a rubber rat that sticks in your mouth. A rubber rat! What was he thinking? I regifted it to my brother. But oh, oh, this year, this year, I'm going to get him back. I got this free catalog by mistake. It just showed up in the mail with my name on it. I didn't ask for it. It just came. Anyway, it's a "Things You Never Knew Existed and Other Items You Can't Live Without" catalog. It's great! I mean, check out page 9—Hair Brain Planter. You plant grass seed on this clay head and green hair grows out of it. Oh, oh, and look at this, page 12, one of their new items, a SPAM T-shirt and cap. That's definitely a can't do without item for the man who has everything. I considered the exploding golf balls on page 19 but he doesn't play golf, oh, but I love this one on the top of the next page, "Tip the Cows!" Udder Madness Game. Better than the "moo-vies!" Players throw two

small rubber cows, scoring points on how the cows land. Intellectually stimulating. I could hardly make up my mind, so many appropriate gifts. But this one had Jack's name written all over it. An electronic sound machine. "A Pocket sound synthesizer with full volume sound." It's a loudspeaker that plays the most embarrassing human eruptions; belches, barks, hacking coughs, gaseous digestive by-products. Notice the great gift-wrap. He'll never suspect a thing. I love this gift! Maybe if he'd take a little time looking through this catalog he'd find something I like for a change. In fact, that's what I'll do. I'll mail in the "send your friend a free catalog" postcard. There's still time before my birthday. Maybe he'll get the hint.