

# *the* MAGIC BOX



*by Frederique*

Pictures / Design

His father died when he was a baby.

His mother is a cleaning woman and she works hard to make a living.

He is very tiny for his age.

At home, he has no radio, no TV set, no pets. His only toy is a doll that his mother made for him when he was in nursery school. Now the doll is worn out, but he likes it so much that he always sleeps with it in his arms.





When he gets home from school in the late afternoon, he is almost always alone. Every day his mother works until 9 p.m. She has prepared his dinner in advance and he eats it thoughtfully. Afterwards, he washes the dishes quickly and puts them away.

Then he is ready for playing and for spending one of the most pleasant hours of the day.



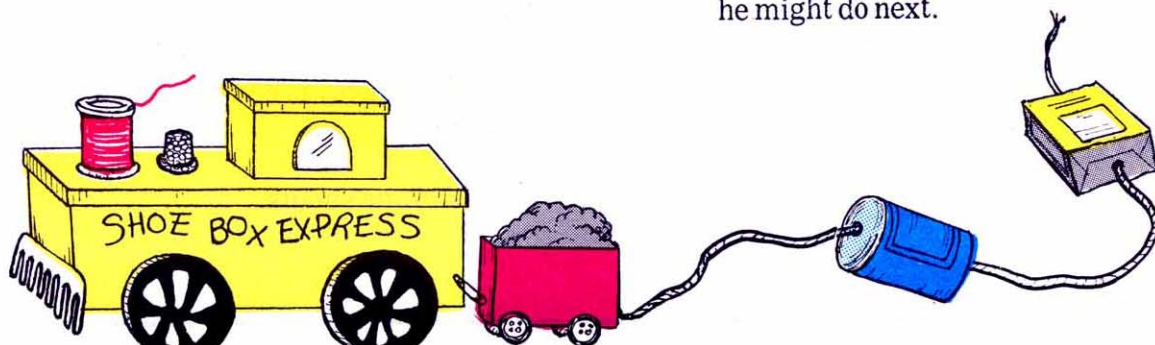
How can he play without any toys, without any pets, without any books, without any music, without any TV to look at?

He is an interesting boy, full of joy and ideas.

He uses his imagination to make marvelous toys out of the simplest, most ordinary things.

Each day, he invents a new game. Each new game seems to him to be more exciting than the last.

When his mother comes home, she always takes time to listen to him, even if she is very tired. They both enjoy sharing his new ideas. She always encourages him and often has good suggestions about what he might do next.





“I am the king,” says the little boy. “This room is my castle.”

Using an old newspaper, scissors and tape, he makes a king’s crown for himself.

In the basement, he takes 24 little empty bottles and lines them up two by two on the floor. He puts a colored straw into each of them and shouts, “I have a big army! Each of my soldiers has a gun!”

He sits on a broomstick. “I am riding my horse into battle!”

He looks out the window and shouts, “I see the enemy! Get ready to fight!” He puts a carrot into an empty box and orders, “Load the cannon.”

Banging on the door with an old wooden spoon, he screams, “Do you hear the shots? The enemy is getting closer!”

“Fire!” he shouts.



He knocks over three bottles and looks out of the window. "We have won!" he exclaims. "The enemy is running away. Only three of my soldiers are wounded." He puts the three bottles on a board and takes them carefully to his bed.

"My surgeon will take care of them." He sits on the floor and looks around thoughtfully. "I am the king, and this is my castle. I have won the battle."

One evening, his mother brought home a large empty box which had held a refrigerator. The box was taller than the little boy. During the night, he dreamed about this marvelous present.

The next day, he came home after school in a hurry. He ate his dinner very quickly and forgot to wash the dishes. Then he put the box in the middle of the room and smiled as he looked at it.





“Today, I shall land on the moon,” he thinks, as he begins to prepare the cabin of his spaceship. He cuts a big hole in one side of the box and covers it with cellophane. He pastes aluminum foil on some parts of the box and fastens corks at each of its corners.

With a thick black marker, he writes APOLLO 20 in block letters. He puts on his parka, pulls up the hood and then puts on his boots, his mittens and his sunglasses.

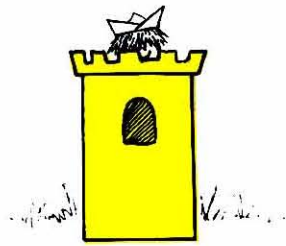
“I am ready to start,” he shouts and gets inside the box.

You can imagine all the adventures he had before his mother came home. The house looked as if it had been turned upside down!

He was so happy and had so much to tell her that his mother didn't scold him about the very messy room.

She helped him to clean up the house and find the right place to park the spaceship.

Day after day, the little boy played with his magic box which became, in turn:



the tower of a castle,



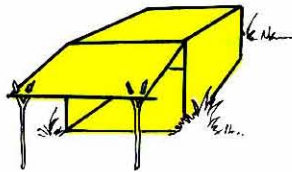
a dungeon,



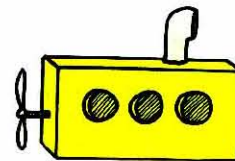
a puppet theater,



a sandwich board,



a tent in the middle of the jungle,



a submarine,



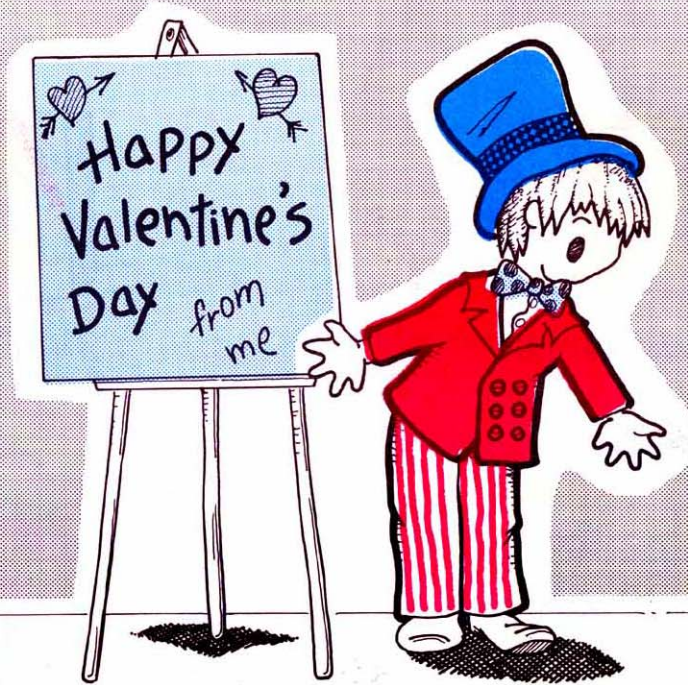
and a basket under a hot air balloon.

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TRY TO INVENT SOME OTHER GAMES  
THAT YOU COULD PLAY WITH THIS  
WONDERFUL BOX.

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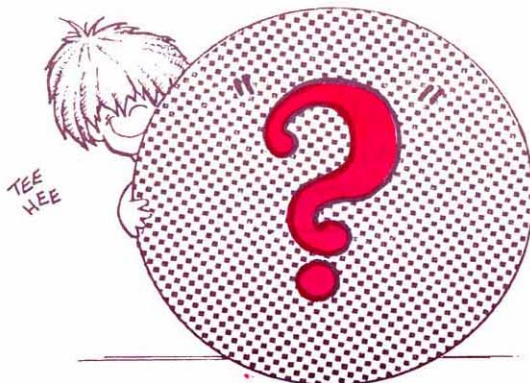
“Tomorrow is Valentine’s Day,” thought our little friend, as he was coming home from school. “I have to make cards for my mother, my friends, and my grandparents.”

He drew a lot of pictures and put the most beautiful one on the valentine card for his mother.

The next day was exciting.

At school, the children had a valentine party and chose the little boy to put on a show. He had so many interesting ideas that they clapped for him many times.

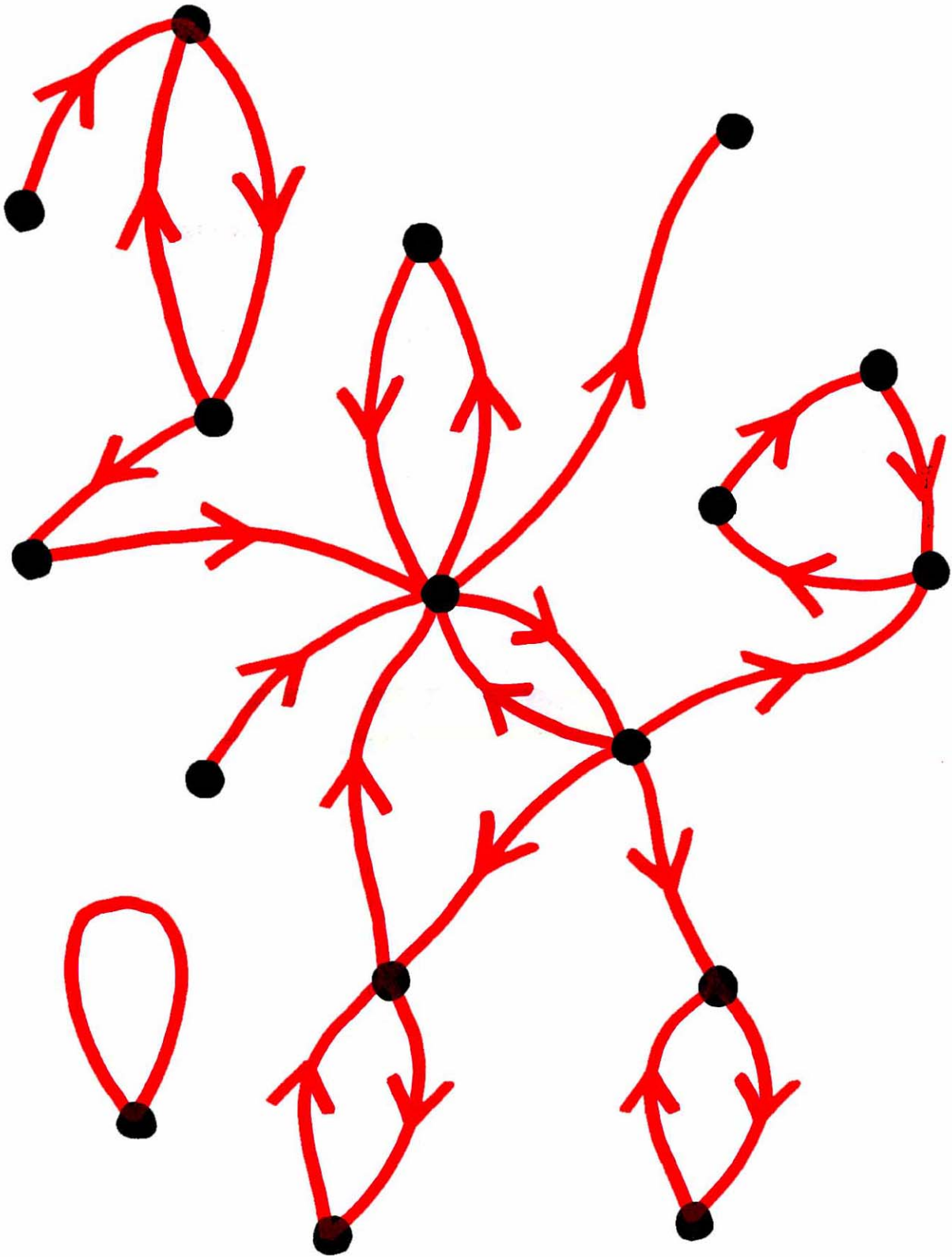
At the end of the celebrations, the children exchanged valentines.



That evening at home, the little boy drew this very strange and mysterious picture. “It is a valentine riddle,” he thought.

“The black dots are the children of my class. So, I am one of these dots. My mother will have to guess where I am. The red arrows. . . .”

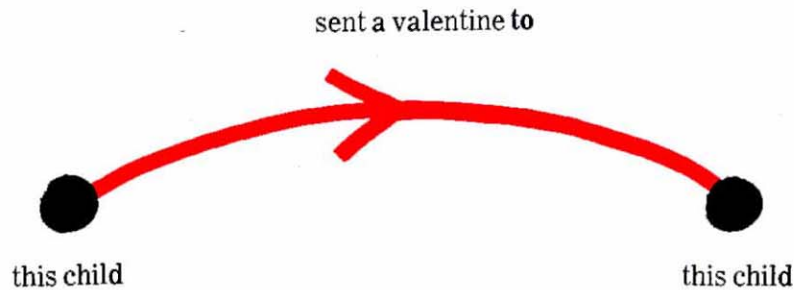




BEFORE TURNING THE PAGE AND READING ABOUT  
THE RED ARROWS, TRY TO IMAGINE A VALENTINE STORY  
THAT THIS PICTURE COULD TELL.

When his mother came home, he explained:

“This red arrow means that



“Do you see the child who received the largest number of valentines?” he asked.

“Yes,” said his mother after looking at the picture for a long time. “Is it you?” she added. “Yes,” he answered proudly.

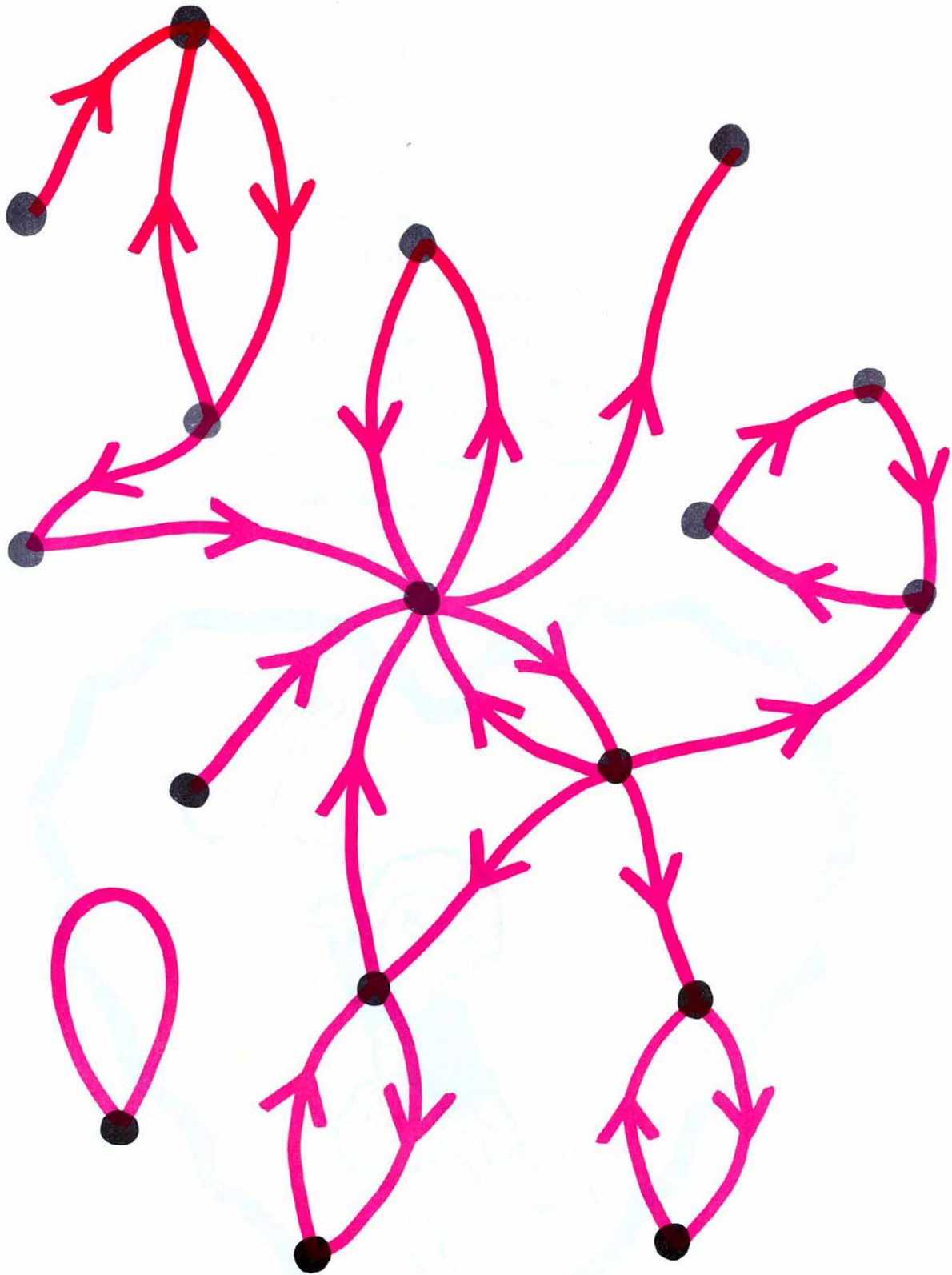
“You received 5 valentines!” said his mother. “I am happy to see that the children of your class like you very much.”

“Do you see the three children to whom I sent a valentine?” he asked.

“Two of them are really my best friends. The third one is a very shy girl who never talks to anybody. I was almost sure that all the others would forget her.”

“That was a kind thought,” said his mother.





BEFORE TURNING THE PAGE, FIND THE LITTLE BOY,  
HIS TWO BEST FRIENDS, AND THE VERY SHY GIRL.

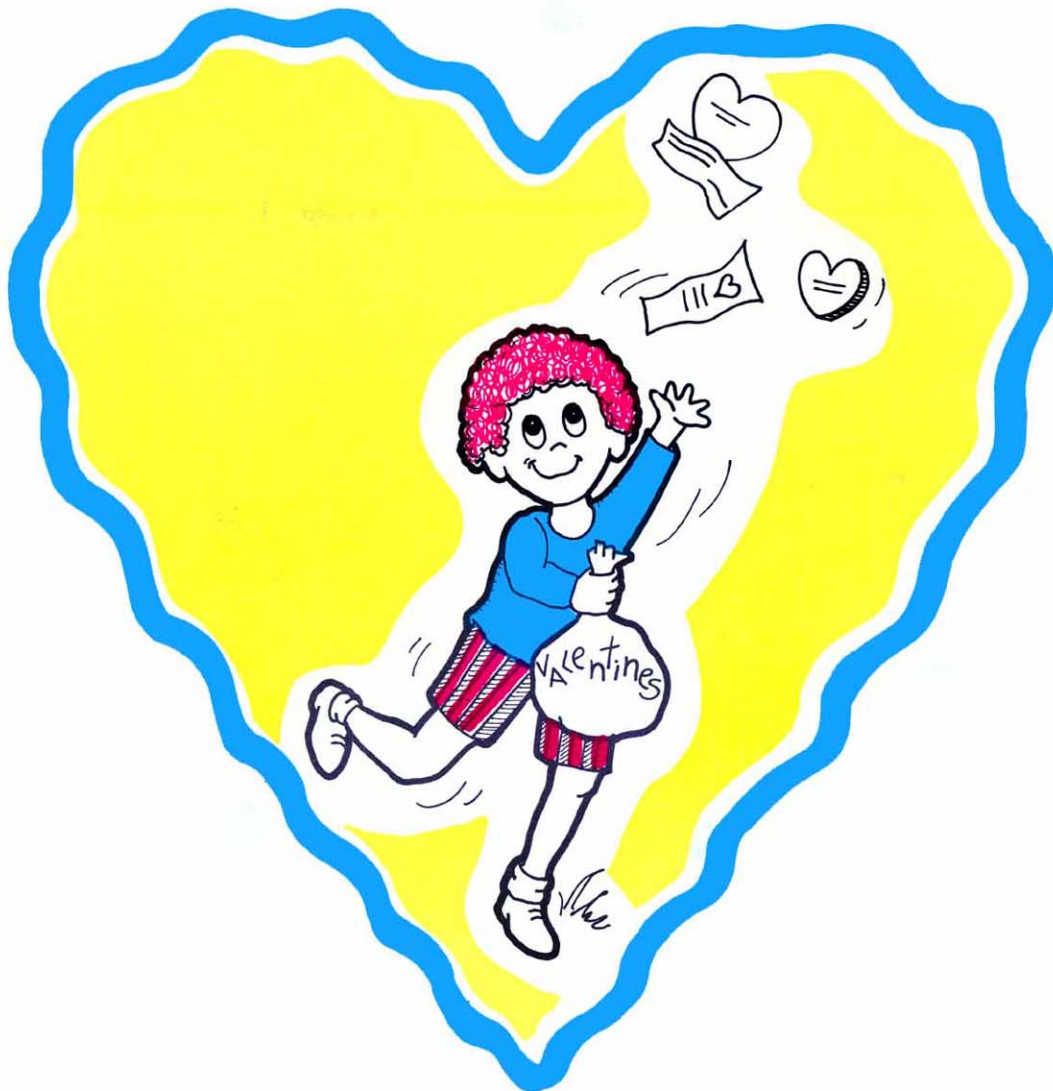
“Look at my two best friends,” said the little boy. “What do you think of them?”

“One of them is very selective,” observed his mother. “He sent a valentine to you, but to nobody else.”

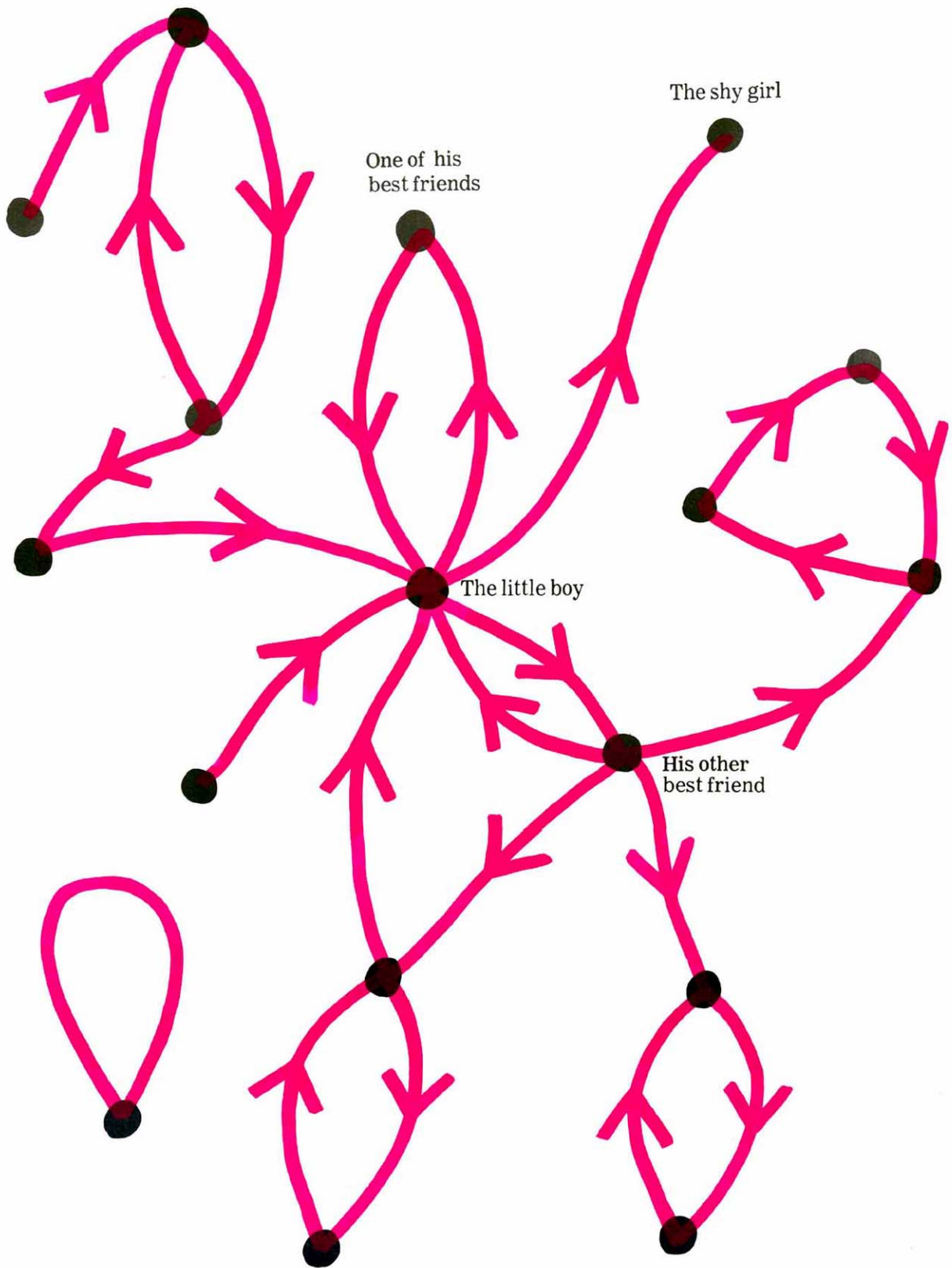
“That’s right.”

“The other is a different sort of character,” she added. “He seems to be very generous. He sent the largest number of valentines.”

“That’s true. He is a good fellow.”







DO YOU RECOGNIZE WHO IS HIS SELECTIVE FRIEND  
AND WHO IS HIS GENEROUS FRIEND?

The little boy pointed to the dot with a loop. "What do you think of this child?"

"It is strange," said his mother. "This child must be very sad. He sent a valentine to himself and to no one else."

"Nobody in the class likes him," observed the little boy. He was silent for a moment while he looked at the picture. Then he added:

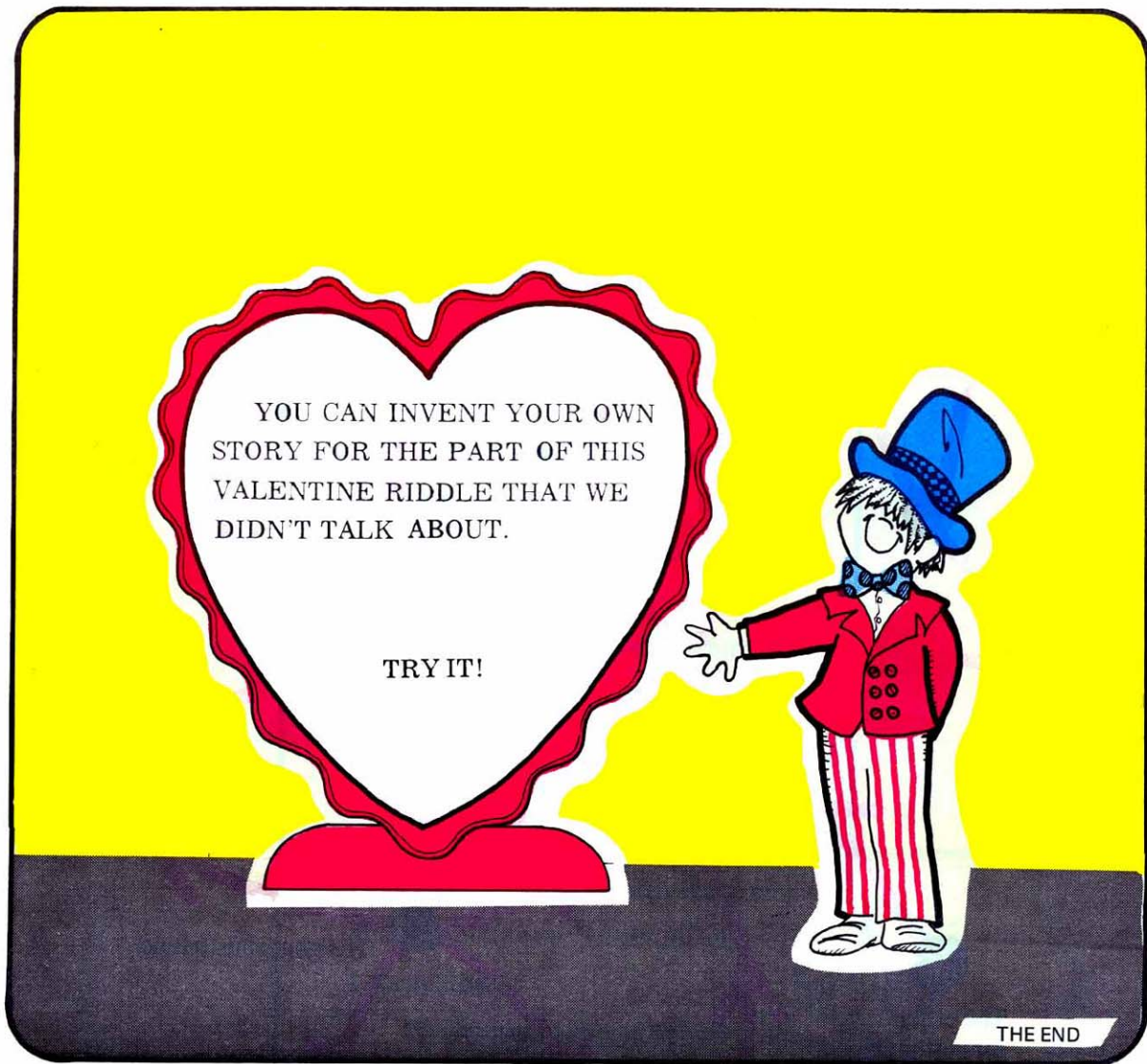
"I feel a little guilty. Two friends of mine sent a valentine to me and to nobody else. Unfortunately, I forgot them."

"Such things happen," observed his mother. "You will get another chance to show your friendship to them."









**STORIES BY FREDERIQUE**

Ages 5 to 8

- The Playful Numbers
- The Baby Is Born
- 81 Roses
- One Out of Seven
- The Old Shoemaker
- I Am A Very Happy Boy
- The Little Dreamer
- Two by Two
- The Weird Story of 24
- Where's My Nose?
- The Happy Puppet
- The Magic Box
- Summer School in the Old Days

Ages 8 to 12

- The Little Donkey
- Singing Friends
- Dancing Friends
- I Am Not My Name
- The Living Lines
- The Square Trap
- Nabu Wins an Award

Ages 10 to 14

- The Hidden Treasure
- A Valentine Mystery
- Election in the Number World
- A Very Strange Neighborhood

“The Magic Box” is a story about a little poor boy with a very rich imagination. Although his working mother has little time to spend with him, she listens thoughtfully as he shares his ideas. If you read this story with a child, encourage him to use his imagination and perhaps to create his own games.

The valentine story drawn by the little boy presents an opportunity to explore a situation which is told completely in the language of vividly colored arrows. There are many relationships a child can notice in the picture. Allow him to study it thoughtfully — then you might ask such questions as, “what do you think about this child?” or “how many valentines did this child send?” After reading “The Magic Box,” a child might wish to draw a valentine story about himself!

Ann Karmos

**McREL**

**Comprehensive School Mathematics Program**