QUESTIONS TO SLEEP ON

If Nobody Could See You



Book 10 · For Lara and Zac



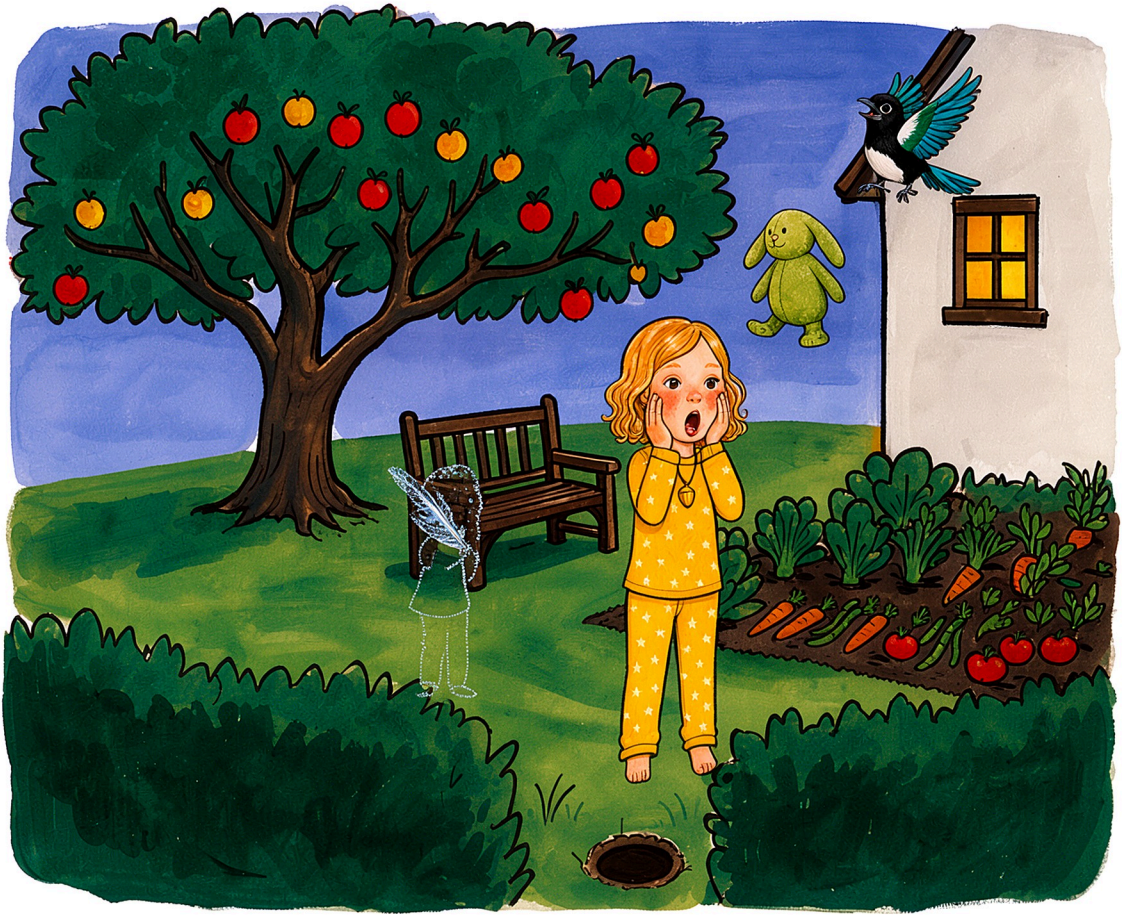
When the lamp goes warm and the garden goes quiet, Ponder comes out to wonder.

> Tonight Pip had a secret. He had been bursting with it all day, hopping and flapping and nearly telling, and not telling, and nearly telling again.



Pip landed on the bench with a long silver-blue feather. “It’s MAGIC,” he whispered.

> “Whoever holds this feather goes completely invisible,” said Pip. “Nobody can see you. Not Mum. Not Dad. Not even a tortoise.” Lara did not believe him. Zac believed him completely.



Zac held the feather. “**Now you see me… now you DON’T!**”

> And Zac was gone. Well, in this story he was. There was just a faint dotted shape where Zac used to be, and Bunny floating in the air all by himself.



“If I was invisible,” said Zac, “I’d eat ALL the biscuits.”

> “Every single one. Even the ones on the top shelf. And nobody would know it was me.” “Bunny would know,” said Lara. Zac thought about this. “Bunny won’t tell,” he said.



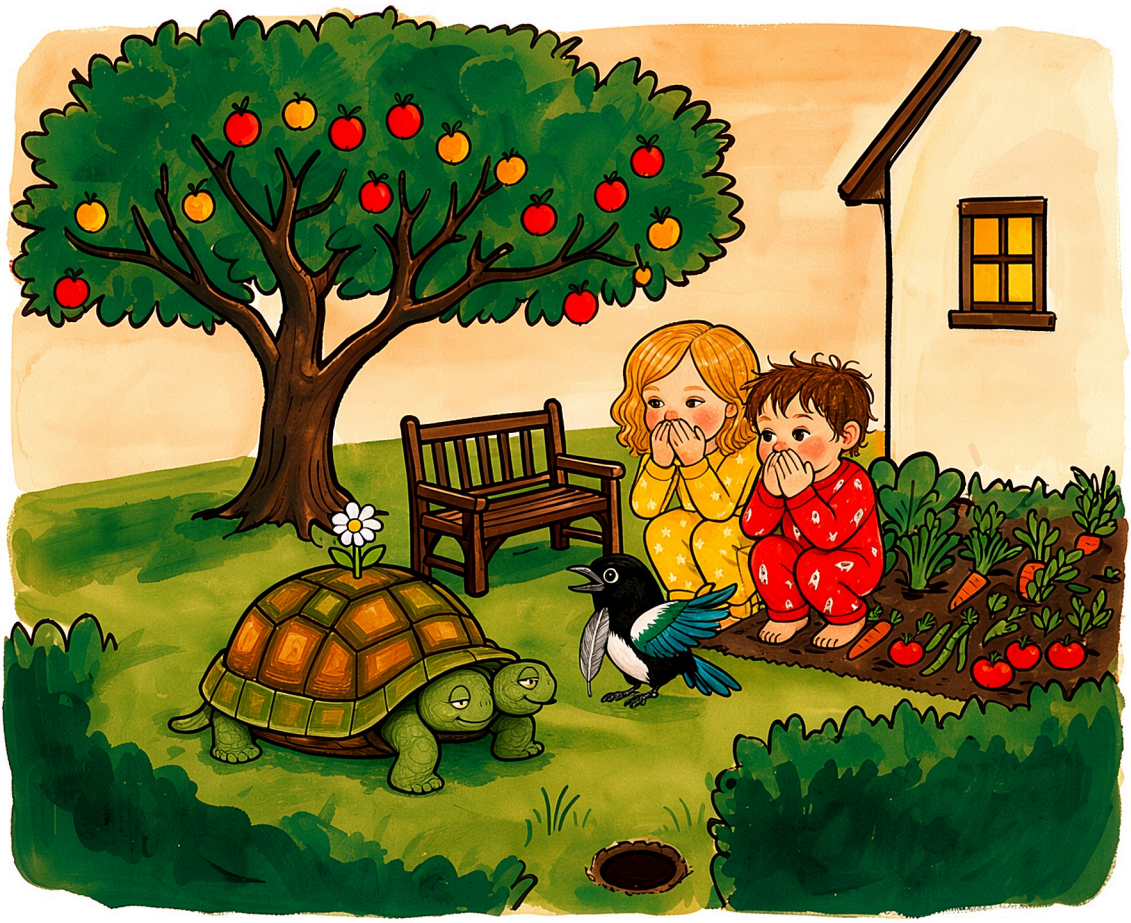
Then Lara took the feather. “**Now you see me… now you DON’T!**”

> “If I was invisible,” said Lara, “I’d peek at my birthday presents, on the top of the wardrobe. Just one little peek. Nobody would ever, ever know.”



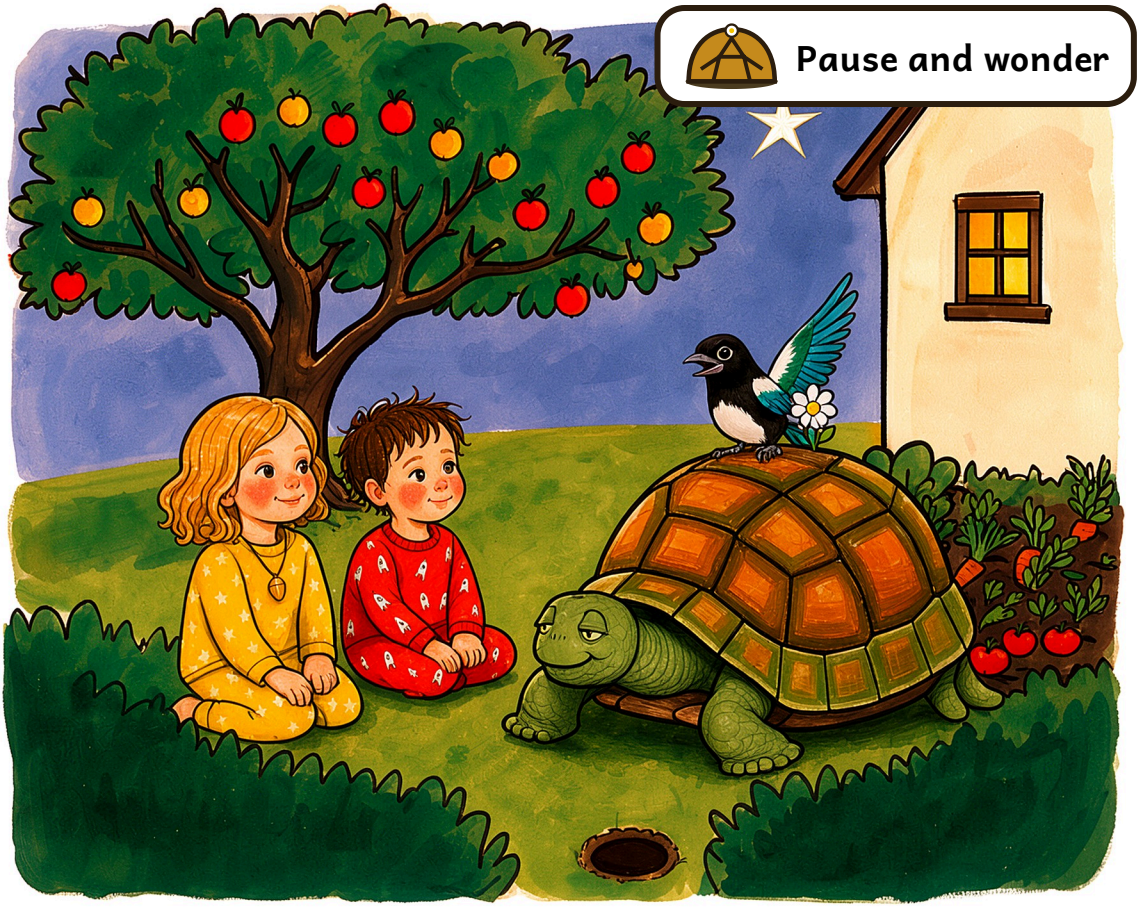
“If I was invisible,” said Pip, “I’d take ALL the shiny things in the whole world.”

> “That’s stealing,” said Lara. “Not if nobody sees,” said Pip. “If nobody sees, it doesn’t count.” Lara opened her mouth, and then shut it again. Did it count?



Very slowly, Ponder crept out from under the hedge. “Hmm,” she said. “Where did everybody go?”

> Zac giggled. Lara giggled. Ponder pretended to look for them under a leaf, which took a very long time. Then she said, “If nobody could see you, would you still be you?”



“Ponder,” said Lara, “if nobody could ever see you, would you still have to be good?”

> “No,” said Pip. “Yes,” said Zac. “Maybe,” said Lara. Ponder blinked, very slowly. “Hmm,” she said. “I wonder. What do you think?”



“Long ago,” said Ponder, “a shepherd found a magic ring that made him invisible.”

> “What did he do?” asked Zac. “Some very naughty things,” said Ponder. “A man called Plato wrote the story down, and people have argued about it ever since. Would a good person do something different? Or would everybody be a little bit like the shepherd?”



Zac looked at the feather for a long time. “Bunny would know about the biscuits,” he said.

> “And I’d know,” said Lara slowly. “I’d know about the presents, even if nobody else did. And then they wouldn’t be a surprise.” “I’d know too,” said Pip, “and I’d LOVE it.” Ponder said nothing at all.



In bed, they gave the feather back to Pip. Or did they?

> Lara wasn't sure it was really magic. Zac was sure it was. Pip said he would keep it somewhere safe, which, if you are a magpie, means somewhere secret.



“Some questions are for sleeping on,” said Ponder. “Night night, Ponder.”
“Hmm. Night night. I wonder…”

> And if anyone had been looking very, very closely, they might have seen a silver-blue feather on Bunny’s pillow. But nobody was looking. Everybody was asleep.

Ponder's question

If nobody could ever see you, would you still be kind?

ZAC
What would you do if you were invisible? Show me your sneakiest tiptoe!

LARA
Is something naughty because you might get caught, or for another reason?



Some people think...

If nobody sees, it doesn't matter. You only get told off if you get caught.

It still matters, because you would know, and it would still be unkind.

It depends. Peeking at presents is different from taking someone's shiny things.

Or something else?

You're allowed to agree. You're allowed to disagree.

For grown-ups

The question: Do we behave well only because others are watching, or would a good person act the same unseen?

Its name: The Ring of Gyges. The question of why be moral, and whether justice is valued for itself or only for its rewards.

Where it comes from: Plato, *Republic* Book II (359a–360d), where Glaucon tells of the shepherd Gyges, who finds a ring of invisibility. Benjamin Jowett's translation is public domain. In the original, Gyges uses the ring to seize a kingdom; that has been softened to "some very naughty things".

QUESTIONS, LITTLE TO BIG

1. Would you like to be invisible? (Thumbs up or down.)
2. Why does Pip think it doesn't count if nobody sees?
3. Have you ever done something good when nobody was watching?
4. What if you could be invisible, but Bunny (or Mum) could still see you? Would you change your plan?

WHAT THEY MIGHT SAY

Zac (3): Expect a wish list (biscuits, toys, staying up late). That's fine. Ask, "Would that be naughty? Even invisible?" and let them say "No!" without correcting.

Lara (6): Six-year-olds often answer "You'd still know" or "God would see". Follow both gently with "Why does that matter?" rather than taking sides.

TOMORROW

Play an "invisible kindness" game. Each of you secretly does one kind thing today (tidying a toy, drawing a picture). At bedtime, guess who did what.

How to wonder together: ask, then wait. Say their words back to them. "Can you say more?" "Someone might say…" Don't say "right" or give your answer; Ponder never does. Too big for tonight? "Let's wonder about that at breakfast." (Then do.)