



Greetings! To dallywangers,
ringdingers and snuggabouts!
To the imaginary and the
unimaginary! To the living, the
dead and everyone in between, my name is
Keys ... Skeleton Keys.

Many moons ago, I began my existence as
an IF – an imaginary friend. Then, one day,
I suddenly became as real as kneecaps! I had
become what we in the business of imagining
call *unimaginary*.

But I am more than just a handsome bag o'
bones. For these fantabulant fingers of mine
can open doors to hidden worlds and secret
places ... doors to the limitless realm of all
the imagination.

Ol' Mr Keys has seen all there is worth
hearing, heard everything there is to see
and forgotten more stories than I shall ever
remember. Oh, the things I know would curl
your toes! The stories I could tell you...

But of course *stories* are why you are here. Well, have I got a hum-dum-dinger for you, set to blow your mind out of your nose-holes. This unimaginary tale is so truly unbelievable that it must, unbelievably, be true.

Meet Ben Bunsen. Now, I know what you are thinking – why should I care a jot about this little ankle-sprout? He may have a head and toes and soul as any person might possess, but he is certainly no dashing, key-fingered skeleton with a thousand adventures under his belt and a thousand more to come! To look at him, you might imagine he is unremarkable – and, in



truth, most people would agree with you. Ben spends his days being ignored by other children. Why? He is not certain – for, if he was, he might attempt to do something about it.

As it is, Ben has only one friend in all the world. But since this is no ordinary tale, his is no ordinary friend. You see, the most remarkable thing about Ben's friend is that he is a figment of Ben's wild imagination. And strange things can happen when imaginations run wild...

Our story begins in a small town on a small island on the second Sunday of February. As mist rolls in over the ocean and the gulls caw in the darkening sky we see a higgledy-piggledy house – tall, crooked and but a stone's throw from a winding beach. It is Ben Bunsen's tenth birthday, and preparations are under way for a party to remember...