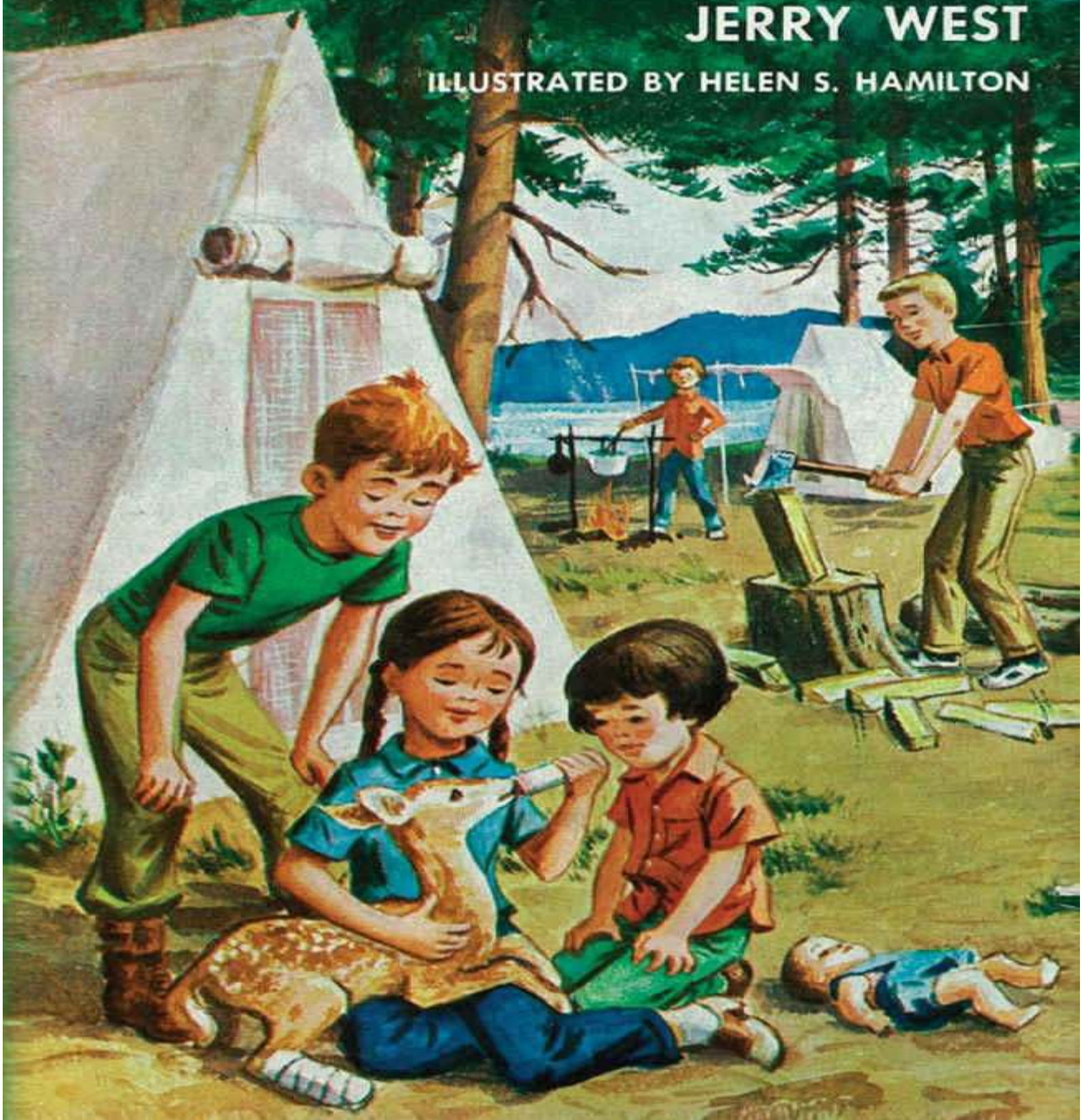


THE HAPPY HOLLISTERS AND THE SCARECROW MYSTERY

JERRY WEST

ILLUSTRATED BY HELEN S. HAMILTON



*The Happy HollistersTM
and the
Scarecrow Mystery*

BY JERRY WEST



Illustrated by Helen S. Hamilton

THE SVENSON GROUP, INC.

on behalf of The Hollister Family Properties Trust

Jacket copy from the original hardcover book:

When Mr. Hollister's sport and toy store, The Trading Post, is robbed, his main concern is for his invention, a new type of collapsible canoe. He is therefore surprised to discover that a Geiger counter and a couple of pickaxes are the only missing items.

After putting the problem of the theft in the hands of the police, the family turn to the matter of testing the canoe. An interested buyer who owns a forest tract has offered his property to the Hollisters for this purpose. They plan to camp out in the forest and test the canoe on the lake and rapids within the boundaries of the property.

All goes well until they come across a "talking" scarecrow blocking the road to their campsite and warning them to turn back because danger awaits them in the forest. The Hollisters refuse to take the warning seriously and continue to set up their camp.

From this point on the strange and unusual events that beset them in the forest seem mysteriously connected with the theft at the store and a search for uranium.

Another exciting adventure that will be welcomed by the hundreds of thousands of Happy Hollister fans.

Any resemblance to other real-life or fictional characters is purely coincidental. Certain events, terminology and behaviors are presented in this volume exactly as originally printed in 1957. In retaining potentially confusing or questionable material and situations, the publisher offers the opportunity for valuable "teaching moments" for today's reader. For more information about The Happy Hollisters, visit www.TheHappyHollisters.com.

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Dedication

The Happy Hollisters and the Scarecrow Mystery is Volume 14 in a 33-book series. The books are being reissued in honor of my grandfather, Andrew Edward Svenson, who began *The Happy Hollisters* series in 1953 using the pseudonym Jerry West. The characters in the Hollister family were based in part on his family – my grandmother, father, uncle, and aunts – and I am grateful to them for inspiring these books, and for their support of this labor of love:

Marian S. Svenson – “Elaine Hollister” Andrew E. Svenson, Jr. – “Pete” Laura Svenson Schnell – “Pam” Eric R. Svenson, Sr. – “Ricky” Jane Svenson Kossmann – “Holly” Eileen Svenson de Zayas and Ingrid Svenson Herdman – “Sue”

I am also grateful to my wife, Callie Larew Svenson, for her diligent research and fastidious attention to detail in preparing the manuscripts for reissue; and to my daughter, Libby Svenson, for her creative energy and boundless enthusiasm for this project.

Andrew E. Svenson III
The Svenson Group, Inc.
on behalf of The Hollister Family Properties Trust

“I want to propose a toast. Here’s to the happiest family of all—the Happy Hollisters!”

Contents

- 1 *Missing!*
- 2 *A Canoe Race*
- 3 *A Bully Is Dunked*
- 4 *The Pancake Girl*
- 5 *A Strange Nickname*
- 6 *Trail Blazers*
- 7 *A Lobstick Message*
- 8 *A Forest Baby*
- 9 *Scarecrow's Hideout*
- 10 *Porcupine Quills*
- 11 *The Rescue*
- 12 *Whitecap Trouble*
- 13 *Friend or Foe*
- 14 *A Telltale Knife*
- 15 *A Dangerous Shortcut*
- 16 *A Yellow Clue*
- 17 *Smoke Signals*
- 18 *The Mystery Solved*

CHAPTER 1

Missing!

BEEP! *Beep!*

Mr. Hollister blew the horn of his station wagon parked beside the rambling home on Pine Lake.

“Where are my helpers?” he cried. “*The Trading Post* opens at eight. Besides, I have a surprise!”

“Coming, Dad!” The screen door burst open and Pete Hollister raced out. Tall and well built for his twelve years, the blue-eyed boy leaped down the porch steps two at a time.

His sister Pam, ten, followed, her fluffy golden hair ruffled by the June breeze. She and Pete slid in beside their father, a handsome, athletic-looking man.

“What’s the surprise?” Pam begged.

Mr. Hollister glanced at his lovely daughter, started the car, and grinned. “I finished the new invention at the store last night.”

“The collapsible canoe?” Pete asked.

Mr. Hollister nodded. “It’s just about ready to test,” he said proudly.

“I can hardly wait to see it,” Pam said as her father neared *The Trading Post* in the center of Shoreham.

“Let us open the store for you, Dad!” Pete suggested.

Mr. Hollister smiled, stopped the car, and handed the boy his key case. The brother and sister hopped out while their father drove into an alley which led to the rear of the combined hardware, sports and toy shop.

The Trading Post was a one-story building with two large plate-glass windows and a door set between them. Pam glanced at the toys and sporting goods on display while Pete selected a large brass key and inserted it in the lock.

He grasped the handle. Then, even before he could turn the key, the door swung open under the pressure of his hand.

Pete gasped. “Pam! The door wasn’t locked last night!”

Mr. Hollister had left the car and now approached the children. "What did you say, Pete?" he asked.

"Someone forgot to lock up," Pete said as he stepped inside, followed by Pam and his father.

"I used the key myself," Mr. Hollister said, puzzled. "I wonder if—"

Suddenly Pam cried out, "Dad! Pete! The store has been robbed!"

All three stood thunderstruck as they glanced down the long aisle which ran the length of the store. Merchandise was strewn about, some of it knocked to the floor.

"Crickets!" Pete exclaimed. "The place was ransacked."

As the Hollisters hurried to the rear of the store, a sudden fear gripped Pam. "Dad!" she cried out. "Your new invention! The collapsible canoe. Do you suppose that's what the thieves were after?"

Mr. Hollister raced to a little room in the back of his shop. In it he kept tools for making minor repairs. It was here that he had worked the night before on his new invention.

As his children watched with pounding hearts, Mr. Hollister flung open the door. He sighed in relief. The canoe was there!

"Thank goodness!" he said.

"Then what *did* the thieves want?" Pete asked, glancing around the disordered counters.

At that moment, two men walked in. "Indy! Tinker!" Pam called out. "We've been robbed!"

"What!" exclaimed the shorter of the two.

He was a stocky man of thirty-five and his jet black hair, high cheekbones, and reddish-tan complexion marked him as an Indian. "Indy" Roades worked for Mr. Hollister as did Tinker, the man with him, who was tall, thin, and elderly. The two glanced about the shop in amazement.

"Quick!" Mr. Hollister said. "We must find out what was taken."

Everybody hurried from counter to counter, examining the misplaced goods as they searched to determine what had been stolen.

"Look here!" Tinker cried out, pointing to a rack containing picks and axes. Three of each were missing.

"They were all here when we closed up last night," Mr. Hollister said.



“Crickets! The place was ransacked!”

Indy, at the other end of the store, cried out, "Mr. Hollister!" The others raced to where Indy stood beside a table on which was a sign reading prospectors' material. "Two of our best Geiger counters are missing!" the Indian said.

Mr. Hollister whistled softly. "Geiger counters, picks and axes," he said. "It looks as if some would-be uranium prospectors helped themselves."

"Shall I call the police, Dad?" Pete asked.

"Yes, son. Have Officer Cal come right away if he can."

Pete hurried to the office telephone and dialed the police department. He asked for Officer Cal, a young policeman who had helped the Hollisters solve other mysteries since they had moved to Shoreham. The lieutenant who answered informed Pete that Officer Cal was touring the town in a prowl car.

"Our *Trading Post* has been robbed!" Pete said.

"I'll send Cal over right away," was the answer.

The children waited anxiously. In a few moments a police car pulled up in front of the store and a good-looking officer stepped out. Hurrying into the store, he said, "The lieutenant contacted me by radio. You say you've been robbed. That's too bad."

"Some valuable articles were taken," Pete told him.

After hearing the story, Officer Cal said, "This looks like the job of two people." He began an examination of the premises. First he looked at the front door lock. "This is strange," he said. "It hasn't been forced."

"The thief used a key, you mean?" Pete asked.

"Apparently," came the reply. "But how they found one to fit is a mystery."

After learning what articles were missing, the policeman stepped inside his car and radioed headquarters. He reported the robbery, then added, "Send over our fingerprint expert."

"What can we do to help?" Pam asked, as Officer Cal returned to the store.

He suggested that they question local merchants who had opened their shops earlier that morning. "Ask them if they saw any suspicious-looking characters prowling around."

Pete and Pam eagerly took up the assignment. "Let's try the service station," Pete said. "It opens early."

Before they reached the gas pumps at the next corner they noticed two boys walking toward them. "Ugh, Joey Brill and Will Wilson," Pam

remarked.

Joey, a frowning boy of Pete's age but larger, continually made trouble for the Hollisters. Will Wilson, his friend, also played mean tricks whenever he saw the chance.

As the two boys approached, Joey cried out, "I just heard you reported a burglary at your place." He smirked. "What's the big idea of making up a story about a fake robbery?"

"It was no fake," Pam said indignantly, and Pete doubled up his fists. His sister nudged him and whispered, "Don't fight. Maybe Joey and Will can help us."

Pete got the hint. "Were you fellows around here early this morning?"

"We did go fishing about six," Joey remarked. "We passed your store on our bikes."

Pete asked the boys if they had seen anything unusual.

"Oh, sure," Joey continued. "A man standing by your store door."

"Are you certain?" Pam asked excitedly.

"Of course," Will added.

"We thought this fellow looked suspicious," Joey went on, "so we trailed him."

"Where did he go?"

"Into a house at 16 Walnut Street," Joey answered. "He went in and didn't come out."

"Thanks, Joey," Pete said. He and his sister hurried off. Walnut Street lay at the fringe of the business district and was not far away.

"Here's Walnut Street," Pete said as they turned a corner. "And there's number 16 across the road."

The children ran up the steps and rang the doorbell. A little old lady with gray hair and a sweet face, who held a cat under each arm, answered. After the children had introduced themselves, Pete said, "We're looking for a man who came in here around six o'clock this morning."

The old lady's eyes widened. "Came in here!" she exclaimed.

"That's what we were told," Pete said.

"Goodness, oh dear!" the woman said, wringing her hands. "It must have been a burglar. I'll go call the police."

"Wait, please!" Pam begged, trying to calm the agitated lady. "Doesn't a man live here?"

"Oh my no!" the woman replied. "I live here alone with my cats."

"We're very sorry," Pete said, realizing that once again Joey and Will had played a mean trick on them.

As they were apologizing to the woman, somebody behind the Hollisters snickered. Whirling about, they saw Will and Joey standing across the street doubled over with laughter.

"You mean things!" Pam cried, and Pete went after them.

Joey and Will took to their heels and finally Pete gave up the chase. He and Pam asked for information about a suspicious-looking man from the gas station attendant and shopkeepers near *The Trading Post* but no one could help them.

When they returned to the store, the children found a crowd gathered. "And there are Mother and the rest of the family," Pam said.

"Daddy phoned me the news," said Mrs. Hollister, who was slender and attractive-looking.

"Isn't it awful?" cried Holly. The six-year-old girl paused to retie the yellow bow on her left pigtail.

"Did you find any clues?" asked Ricky, who was seven. He had red hair, mussed as usual, and freckles on his nose.

When Pam shook her head sadly, her dark-haired, four-year-old sister Sue tried to console her. "Don't worry. We'll catch the bad old robber," she said cheerfully.

"The police are working inside," Mrs. Hollister said, "and asked all of us to wait out here."

Just then Officer Cal and a plain-clothes man came out to report that they had had no luck with the fingerprints.

"If only we had some kind of lead," Officer Cal said.

"Crickets!" Pete exclaimed and snapped his fingers. "I have an idea!"

"What's that?" Officer Cal asked.

"Dad has the name of *The Trading Post* stamped on those ax handles."

Officer Cal jotted this information in a notebook.

"May we go back inside now?" Pam asked him.

Officer Cal nodded and **went off in the** police car. The children trooped into the store and looked about. Presently Sue ran up the center aisle, wearing a light weight hunting cap. It was so large it nearly covered her eyes.

"Where did you get that?" Pete asked.

"I found it," Sue said, pirouetting.

"Where?"

“In the back of the store near the tents.”

“Let me see it, please,” the older boy asked. Sue took off the hat and handed it to her brother. After examining it Pete excitedly called to his father.

“Dad, this isn’t one of the hats we sell. The label states it’s from a store in Montreal, Canada!”

CHAPTER 2

A Canoe Race

“GOOD work, Sue.” Pam smiled and bent down to kiss her little sister on the cheek. “You found a clue, honey.”

As Sue beamed with delight, the hat was passed around for everyone to examine.

“I guess the name of the store in Montreal is the only clue,” Mr. Hollister said.

“Maybe not, Dad,” Pete said, looking closely at the inside of the hatband. “Something is written here in ink, but it’s very faded.”

“I’ll get a magnifying glass,” Mr. Hollister offered and hurried to his desk in the corner of the store. He returned with the glass and examined the faded writing.

“Can you make it out, John?” Mrs. Hollister asked her husband.

“Yes, I can, Elaine. The letters are F-r-e-n-c-h-y.”

“Frenchy!” Pete exclaimed. “He must be the owner of the hat.”

“Yikes!” Ricky exclaimed. “All we have to do is find Frenchy and we have the thief!”

“I suppose,” said Mr. Hollister, “that this is a nickname for someone of French descent.”

Indy spoke up. “The only ‘Frenchy’ I know is the fellow who runs Pierre’s Bakery.”

“But I hardly think he’s the thief,” Mrs. Hollister said quickly. “I often buy pastry at his store. He’s a very nice man.”

“Just the same we ought to investigate him,” Ricky spoke up, trying to lower his voice so it would sound like a policeman’s.

“All right,” Mr. Hollister agreed. “Suppose you go to Pierre’s while I send Indy to police headquarters with this cap.”

Pam took Sue by the hand and the five children hurried from *The Trading Post* and down the street.

“I can smell the bakery,” Holly said a few minutes later.

The enticing aroma of pies and cakes grew stronger as the children turned into the small shop. Pierre, wearing a white baker's hat, came from the back room carrying a tray of sugar buns. He was a short man with a round face and a small waxed mustache.

"Yes?" he said, lifting his eyebrows.

"Do you have a Geiger counter?" Ricky blurted out.

Pierre looked puzzled. He slid the tray of buns into the showcase and waved his hands expressively. "I have lemon meringue pie and éclairs and special strawberry tarts, but none of these what-you-call-it."

"Please excuse my brother," Pam spoke up. "He shouldn't have said Geiger counter."

"Oh," Pierre said, and looked relieved. "Geiger is down the street. He has a shoe store. No, I didn't buy my counter from him." He took a cloth and wiped the marble counter before him with a flourish.



"Do you have a Geiger counter?"

Pete grinned. "I'm afraid you don't understand. What we want to know, is your name Frenchy?"

The baker beamed. "They call me that," he said.

"And you come from Montreal?" Ricky went on.

"No, no, no, from Lyon, many years ago. *Oui*, a fine city," he said, blowing a kiss in the direction of France.

This made all the Hollisters smile. "Pierre," asked Pete, "are there many fellows in Shoreham with the nickname Frenchy?"

"*Oui*," the baker replied, rolling his eyes. "Nearly everybody here from France or French Canada is called Frenchy."

Ricky continued his impatient quest for clues. "Where were you last night, Pierre?"

The baker pointed to the back room. "In there," he said, "mixing crumb cakes and apple pies and butter rings. Now," he said, wiping his hands on his apron, "what would you like?"

Pam felt embarrassed and her hand reached into her skirt pocket. There was a fifty-cent piece tied securely in her handkerchief. She had saved it to go to the movies that afternoon.

"We'd like seven sugar buns," she said.

Pierre reached into the tray and separated a section of the warm buns. "I'll give you eight for the price of seven," he said, beaming. He slid the buns into a white bag and handed them to Pam.

She paid him, then the children returned to *The Trading Post* and told their parents that Pierre was not the Frenchy for whom they were looking.

At this moment a tall, fine-looking man walked into *The Trading Post*. He was well built, middle-aged, and had neatly combed gray hair.

"Is Mr. Hollister in?" he asked.

"I'm Mr. Hollister," the children's father said as he stepped forward.

The man offered his hand. "I'm Mr. Tucker. Damon Tucker. Your brother told me about a new collapsible canoe you've invented. Mr. Hollister, may I see it? If I like the canoe, I may purchase several."

Mr. Hollister introduced **his family**, then said the canoes were not yet for sale. The model had to be given severe tests.

"It will be ready to try on Pine Lake here tomorrow," he said. "Then it will need a final test in rapids."

Mr. Tucker looked surprised. "You have rapids in Shoreham?"

"Oh no," Mr. Hollister replied.

The caller went on. "I know just the place for you to test the canoe—at my forest hunting preserve. It has a lake and a river with rapids." He turned to the children. "You'll be interested in this. The lake is called Fox Lake because it's shaped like a fox."

"Oh, how 'citing!' cried Sue. "Does the fox have legs?"

Mr. Tucker laughed. "Yes, it does. And out of one of its front legs runs the river. There are rapids in it, so we called it Whirlpool River."

"It sounds lovely!" Pam exclaimed.

"The preserve is called Spruce Forest," Mr. Tucker went on. Then his eyes twinkled. "I have an idea, Mr. Hollister. Why don't you take your family on a camping trip when you test the canoe? There's an excellent camp site on the back of the fox!"

"Oh let's go!" Holly begged.

"Yikes!" said Ricky. "Is it wild in Spruce Forest, Mr. Tucker?"

"As uninhabited as the moon," the man replied, chuckling, "except for the forest animals."

Mr. Hollister thanked the man for his kind offer, but said he doubted that they could make the trip at this time.

"Well," Mr. Tucker went on, "if you change your mind, let me know. I'll be at the Shoreham Hotel. Please keep me advised about your canoe. I'm interested in knowing how the tests come out. Good-by."

After Mr. Tucker had left, the Hollister children looked pleadingly at their parents.

"It would be wonderful to go camping," Pete said. "And we could try out some of the new equipment you're selling in the store, Dad."

"And I want to see the little forest animals, Daddy," Sue spoke up.

"Me, too," Holly chimed in, twirling a pigtail.

Mr. Hollister said he did not like to disappoint them. "Perhaps we can make the camping trip later in the summer," he added. "But first we must test the canoe on the lake. We'll do it tomorrow."

For the rest of the afternoon the Hollisters played along the shore front of Pine Lake, rowing their boat and throwing sticks into the lake for their collie dog Zip to retrieve. For a while Sue busied herself dressing up White Nose the cat and her five kittens, Midnight, Snowball, Tutti-Frutti, Smoky, and Cuddly. But the chief topics of conversation among the children were the possible camping trip to Spruce Forest and the burglary at *The Trading Post*.

That evening the telephone rang and Pam ran to answer it. Officer Cal

was calling.

"I have some news for you," he said. "An ax with *The Trading Post* stamp on it was found near a gas station in the town of Glendale. The proprietor said it must have dropped out of a car which had stopped there for fuel."

"Oh thank you," said Pam. "I'll tell Dad."

After she relayed this information to her family, the girl took an atlas from the living-room bookcase. Opening it, she located the town of Glendale.

"Crickets!" Pete shouted. "It's near Spruce Forest!"

Pam showed the map to her parents.

"So it is," Mrs. Hollister said. "And look! It's only fifty miles from that newly discovered uranium mine we were reading about."

"Jumping catfish!" Mr. Hollister cried. "The thieves who stole the Geiger counter are probably headed for that place."

Ricky looked triumphant. "Now we *have* to accept Mr. Tucker's offer," he cried.

"Yes," Pete agreed. "We could test the canoe in the rapids and look for the thieves at the same time."

Mrs. Hollister smiled at her husband. "The children have a point," she said. "I think I'd like to make the trip too."

"Oh Mommy, I love you!" Holly cried, throwing her arms about her mother.

"We'll do it!" Mr. Hollister said. "I'll call Mr. Tucker now."

That night the happy Hollister children dreamed of rapids and woods and campfires. Pete found himself chasing Joey who had taken Pierre's hat and was selling buns to Mr. Tucker! He awoke with a grin.

After breakfast next morning Mr. Hollister and Pete drove to *The Trading Post* and returned with the collapsible canoe. They carried it to the dock. The canoe had ribbed aluminum sections which folded up like an accordion, and it could be carried in a small space. After pulling the release levers on the ends, they watched the canoe elongate section by section. Next Pete and his father tightened the little screws under the gunwales, so the canoe would not collapse while in water.

By this time the other children had arrived and Pete said, "Dad, please let Pam and me test it."

"All right. Step in."

Pete took the stern position and his sister the bow. Mr. Hollister handed

them paddles and they started off. The canoe, being of aluminum, was extremely light and glided along swiftly.

“This is keen!” Pete shouted.

Suddenly he spied Joey and Will coming toward them in Joey’s wooden canoe. It pulled alongside the Hollisters.

“What a funny-looking tub,” Joey scoffed.

“It’s faster than yours,” Pete retorted.

“Oh yes?” said Will. “We’ll challenge you to a race!”

Pam called, “Whoever reaches our dock first wins. One, two, three, go!”

Paddles flashed as the four contestants raced their canoes across the lake. Inch by inch Pete and Pam pulled ahead of their opponents. Joey and Will were hopelessly beaten as Mr. Hollister’s new canoe sped toward the dock.

“We win!” Pam said, turning to her brother, who was still paddling hard. “Stop!” she warned. “We’ll hit the dock!”

Pete tried to swerve the canoe as the rest of the family watched breathlessly from the wharf. But the metal craft was so speedy that the boy could not act in time. He tried to backwater, but it was too late.

Thump! The canoe smashed into the dock!