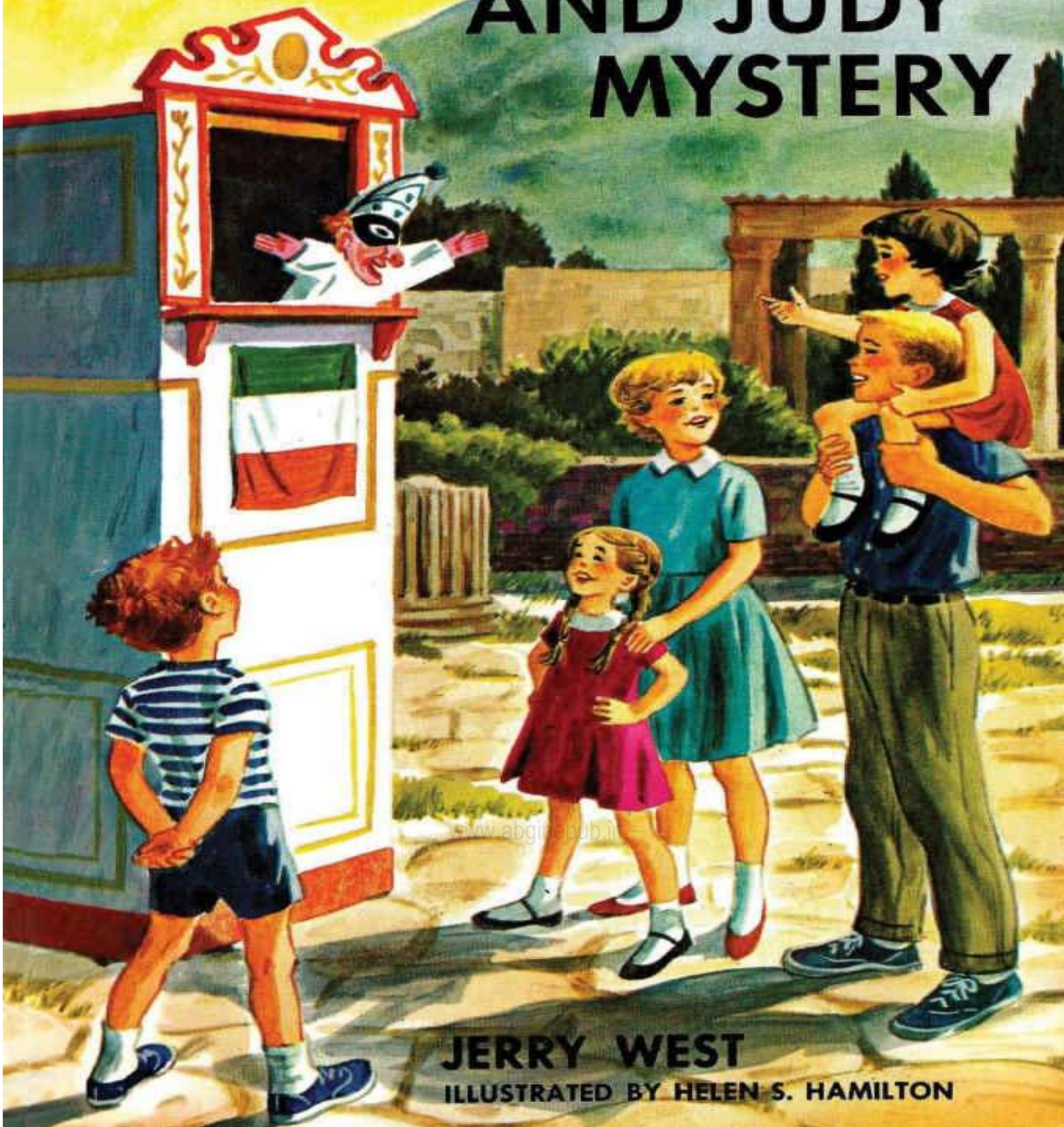


THE HAPPY HOLLISTERS AND THE PUNCH AND JUDY MYSTERY



*The Happy HollistersTM
and the
Punch and Judy Mystery*

BY JERRY WEST



Illustrated by Helen S. Hamilton

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on behalf of The Hollister Family Properties Trust

Jacket copy from the original hardcover book:

In this thrilling new adventure, the Happy Hollisters befriend little Nada Boschi, an Italian girl who is visiting in Shoreham. Nada confides to the Hollisters that her Uncle Giovanni, a famous toymaker and puppeteer, has disappeared from his house in Rome. Nada is sure that he has been kidnapped. But why would anyone want to kidnap a kind old man who spends his time entertaining children? The Hollisters are eager to try their hand at solving the mystery and help Nada find her uncle. But all this has happened in Italy—half-way around the world from Shoreham. There seems to be nothing that they can do.

Then Pam learns that she has won first prize in a contest—a trip around the world . . . and, well —almost before Pete can say “Crickets!” Mrs. Hollister and her children find themselves in the beautiful land of Italy.

Here they have a wonderful time riding a gondola through the famous “streets of water” in Venice . . . climbing to the top of the leaning tower of Pisa . . . shopping in the funny little stores that have been built on a *bridge* in the city of Florence . . . and visiting the ancient city of Pompeii which had been buried in the ash of a volcano over 2000 years ago!

The Happy Hollisters have all kinds of adventures touring these and many other famous places in Italy. And, before their trip has ended, they not only find Uncle Giovanni, but help the Italian police round up a gang of dangerous thieves!

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 1964. 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 Punch and Judy Mystery is Volume 27 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”

Many thanks also to Janet Riley, Callie Svenson, and
Libby Svenson for production and marketing assistance.

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

“You’re all wonderful detectives.”

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Whack, Whack!

“Come one, come all!” cried Pete Hollister. “The great Punch and Judy show is about to start!”

Pete, twelve, and oldest of the five Hollisters, stood in the middle of the lawn beside a red booth. It was a foot higher than his blond crew-cut head, and the puppet stage was covered with a black shade.

A handful of children fidgeted in front of the booth. Dark-haired Sue Hollister, four, jumped up and down and tugged at the hand of her sister Holly, who was six. She, in turn, wrinkled her nose, tossed her pigtails, and called out, “Ricky, stop galloping around!”

Her red-haired, freckle-faced brother, a year older, did not answer, but slapped himself like a horse once more, somersaulted on the grass, and landed at Holly’s feet. This made Ann Hunter laugh, while her younger brother, Jeff, grinned and little Donna Martin looked on shyly.

Pete spoke to a tall boy with straight tousled hair. “Are all the pennies collected, Dave?”

Dave Mead nodded and jiggled the coins in a tin can. He was twelve, too, and Pete’s best friend. He looked around the Hollisters’ back yard and said, “I don’t see Joey and Will. They told me they’d come.”

“And what about Pam?” curly-haired Ann asked anxiously. “We can’t begin without all the Hollisters.”

“Pam!” the children chorused.

“Where are you?” Ricky shouted.

It was ten-year-old Pam who had thought up the Punch and Judy show to raise money for a special project. This was the Fifty Fund, sponsored by the Shoreham newspaper to send fifty needy children to summer camp.

Then Pete had hit on the idea of earning fifty pounds of pennies. He had

weighed coins and found that there were one hundred forty-seven pennies in a pound. Pam's speedy arithmetic showed that fifty pounds of them would equal seventy-three dollars and fifty cents, enough to give one boy or girl two weeks in camp.

For two weeks, the Hollisters' spacious, rambling home on the shore of Pine Lake had been busy with the Punch and Judy preparations. First Pam had borrowed a book of instructions from the library. Using it, the children had carved and painted the wooden faces, dressed the little hand puppets in gay costumes, and constructed the stage.

Now everything was set for the first show. The neighborhood children had arrived on the Hollisters' lawn, and Pete, as the showman, had already fitted one of the puppets over each of his hands.

Punch, with his big curved nose and chin and a roguish grin, was ready to perform on Pete's right hand. On his left was a long-snouted dragon.

"Hurry, Pam! Where are you?" Holly called impatiently.

"I'll go find her," Ann Hunter volunteered. She was Pam's age and had black hair which hung in ringlets. Her gray eyes danced with excitement, and her dimples showed as she ran off to look for her best friend.

"Oh, there you are!" cried Ann as she spied Pam standing next to the mailbox which stood in the shrubbery along the sidewalk. "The show can't start without you!"

"I'll be there in a minute," Pam promised, then added, "I wish Mr. Barnes would hurry! He's late with the mail today."

"You must be expecting an important letter," Ann said with a sidewise look at her friend.

"Oh no, it's not from a boy if that's what you mean," Pam said with a shake of her fluffy golden hair. Then her brown eyes sparkled, and she lowered her voice. "I'll let you in on a secret, but you mustn't tell anyone."

As Ann promised, a twig snapped in the bushes behind the girls, but they were too busy talking to notice the noise. Pam confided that she had entered an essay contest about a children's book called *The Mystery in Venice*.

Winners were to be announced shortly.

"And guess what, Ann! First prize is a trip for two around the world!" As her friend's eyes widened, Pam explained that the second prize was a trip to Hawaii and the third prize a real palomino horse.

"I can hardly wait to hear," said Pam. "But I guess I'll just have to be

patient,” she added with a sigh, and the two girls ran toward the Punch and Judy show.

As they disappeared around the house, the bushes moved, and two heads came out. Joey Brill and his friend Will Wilson stood up. Joey was Pete’s age but larger. Will was big, too, and always tagged after Joey. Both of them delighted in annoying smaller children and making trouble for the Hollisters.

“Do you want to see the show?” Joey asked. “We were invited.”

“No, it’ll probably be crummy,” Will said.

“Then I know how to make some excitement,” Joey said. He whispered to his companion, and the pair crept off through the foliage, working their way unseen toward the back of the Hollisters’ garage.

On the lawn, Pam announced the show, and Pete stepped into the back of the red booth. The black shade popped up. Punch stuck his saucy head over the edge of the stage and in a high falsetto voice said,

“La-dies and gentlemen. What a beautiful day to take a walk along the shore of Pine Lake. Roo-to-to! Roo-to-to-it!”

Punch strutted back and forth, bobbing his head and shaking his tall green hat as the onlookers giggled. “I used to be a tightrope walker once in the circus,” Punch said. “I’ll see how close I can come to the shore without falling in!”

The puppet wagged this way and that, all the time singing, “Roo-to-to-to-to-it!” Finally, he fell into the imaginary lake. Pete shouted “Splash!” and Punch popped up again at once.

“Help me! Save me!” he cried out. “I just remembered, I can’t swim!”

With that, up from the water came the long snout of the green dragon, as Pete deftly manipulated it.

“Ow!” Punch cried. “I’m a goner for sure! If I don’t drown, the monster will eat me!”

“Eat you!” the funny-looking creature replied. “Who wants to eat an old wooden-head like you? Why your nose alone is enough to scare small babies.”

“Don’t talk about my pretty nose. Glub! Glub!” Punch said, going out of sight for a moment.

The monster turned to the audience. “Shall I save him?”

“Yes!” the children shouted.

“Hurry!” piped little Sue loudly. The dragon grabbed Punch’s hat in his mouth and pulled him back onto the stage.

“There now, Mr. Punch, you’re all right, aren’t you?” the monster asked, his big jaws moving up and down.

“Yes, but I’m all wet,” Punch complained, shaking himself. “You got me wetter than I would have been.”

“How’s that?” the monster asked, looking perplexed.

“I’ll show you,” Punch said in his squeaky voice, “if you’ll look yonder over the lake.”

As the unwary creature turned his head, Punch disappeared and came up with a stick. *Whack! Whack!* He hit the long green snout. “Take that, and that, for getting me wetter than I would have been!” Punch shouted gleefully.

Just then the youngsters, who were looking on enthralled, became aware of another noise. From behind the puppet stage, Joey Brill and Will Wilson came racing across the lawn toward the audience. They ran about ten feet apart, holding a clothesline between them.

“Stop!” Pam cried out, “Or else you’ll hit—” Before she had a chance to finish her sentence, the bullies knocked the Punch and Judy booth flat! Pete was thrown to the ground as the rope caught him behind the shoulders. Punch went flying in one direction, the monster in another.

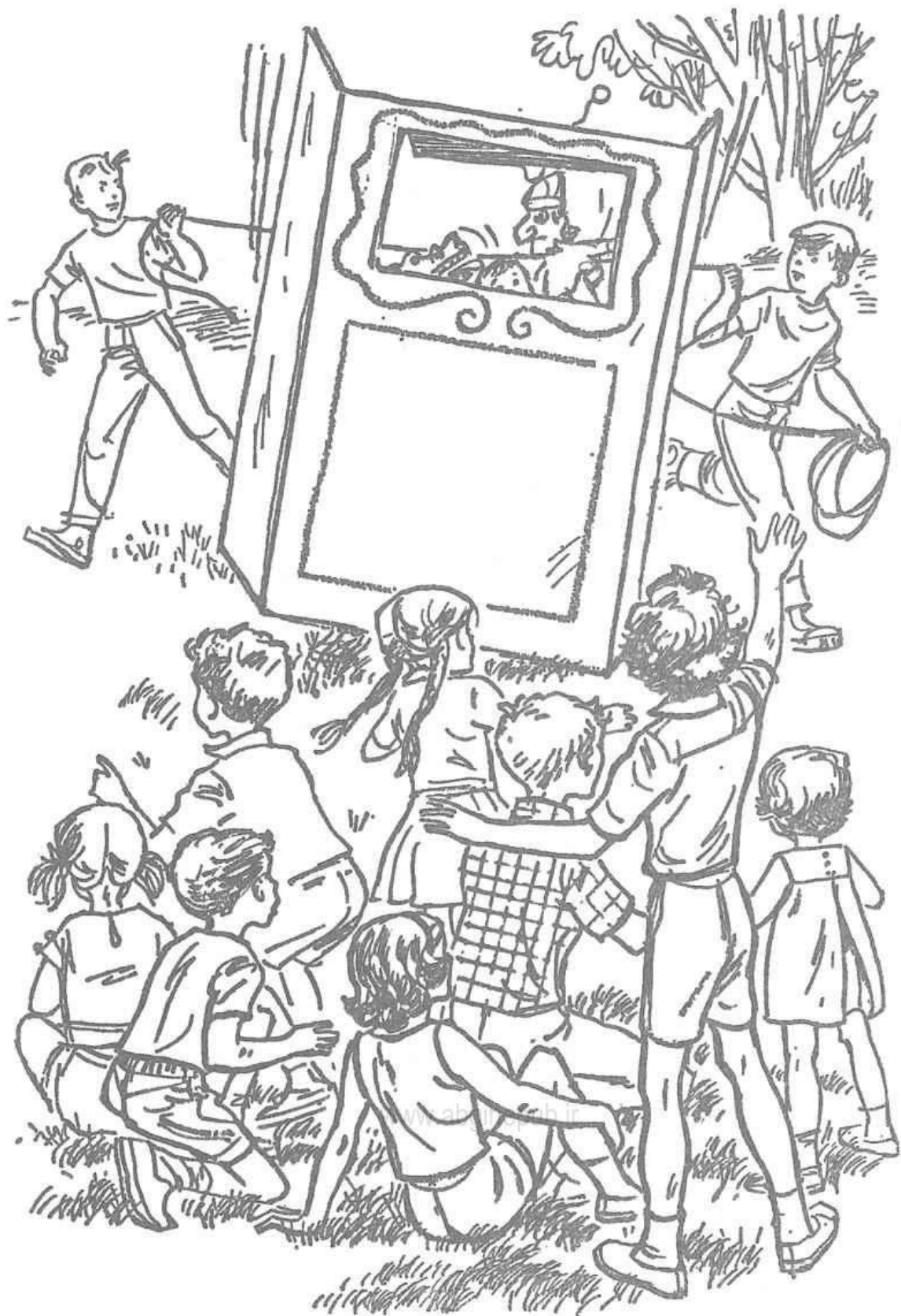
The neighborhood children were stunned for a moment as Joey and Will dropped the rope and sped off as fast as their legs could carry them.

“Oh you!” Holly cried, stamping her foot. “Joey, you’re meaner than Punch.”

Ricky raced after them, but the two bullies outdistanced him. He returned red-faced with anger. “That Joey Brill better watch out,” he declared. “He’s going to be sorry!”

By this time, Pete had untangled himself from the booth.

“Are you all right?” Pam asked her brother. Pete rubbed a bump on his forehead ruefully. “I guess I am,” he said. “Where’s Zip?”



“Stop!”

“Here, Zip!” he called out. The Hollisters’ beautiful collie dog jumped from a clump of cattails growing along the shore not far from the Hollisters’ house. He bounded across the yard and circled around Pete, bobbing his head and whining.

“I want you to keep a lookout for Joey and Will,” Pete told the dog. “Don’t let them come in the yard while we’re putting on our show.”

Zip barked sharply three times, walked over to the side of the driveway, and lay down in the grass with his head between his forepaws.

“Now we can go on with the show in peace,” Pete declared. “Do we still have our money?” he called out to Dave Mead. His friend jiggled the tin can, making the pennies jump up and down. “It’s not fifty pounds,” Dave said, “but at least it’s a start.” Then he added, “Look, here come more customers.”

Across the lawn walked two women and a small girl. With a squeal of excitement, Ann Hunter jumped up. “It’s my mother! Our company came!” She raced toward them.

The woman and the girl with Mrs. Hunter both were very pretty, with jet black hair, gray eyes, and fair complexions. After Ann had greeted them, she led the way over to her playmates.

“I would like you to meet Mrs. Boschi and her daughter Nada,” Ann said. “They’re from Italy and are going to stay with us for a few days before they return.” Mrs. Hunter explained that Mrs. Boschi was a famous dress designer who was in this country on business. Pam said they were glad to meet the visitors and asked Nada how old she was.

“I am nine years,” replied the Italian girl, saying the words carefully. Her glossy hair was straight and cut in bangs.

“Where’s her father?” Holly whispered to Ann.

The older girl bent close to Holly’s ear. “He’s not living,” she answered.

Just then Ricky spoke up. “We’re having a Punch and Judy show,” he said. “You want to see it?” He pointed to the booth which Pete and Dave had readied again.

But when the little visitor looked up at the puppet stage, she burst into tears.

“Oh my goodness,” Pam said, worried. “What’s the matter, Nada?”

An Unlucky Lookout

As the youngsters looked on, surprised, Mrs. Boschi took a handkerchief from her purse and wiped the tears from Nada's eyes.

Then the little girl told why she had cried. Her great-uncle, Giovanni Boschi, was an expert Pulcinella showman.

"Pulcinella is Punch's Italian name," Nada's mother put in quickly. Her daughter went on to say that four weeks before, Uncle Giovanni had mysteriously disappeared.

"Oh dear," said Pam. "No wonder you cried, Nada."

"But Italy is such a small country," Ricky spoke up. "Why can't they find him?"

Nada told the Hollisters about the mountains and lakes and rugged coastline of her homeland.

"It's not big," she said, "but there are many good places to hide people." Then she brightened and smiled. "I have a hundred lire," she said. "May I see your show?"

"Yikes, that's a lot of money!" Ricky exclaimed.

"It's only sixteen cents," Mrs. Boschi told him with a smile, as she and Nada dropped some foreign coins into the tin can held by Dave.

Mrs. Hunter also stayed to enjoy the show, which got under way again in a few minutes.

Before Pete entered the booth, he told the audience that he and Pam had made one puppet which had no name yet. He held up the stout figure with red, bulging cheeks and a purple nose. "I'm going to call him Joey," announced Pete. As the onlookers laughed, he ducked into the booth. The curtain went up. Punch and the new puppet sprang upon the stage.

"So you're Joey who ruined my show!" Punch said in his high, reedy

voice.

“Yes, I’m the one. I was just having some fun.”

“Oh, it’s fun you want?” Punch disappeared and once again returned with a stick held between his hands. “I know a game that’s a lot of fun,” he went on.

“Show me,” the other demanded.

Punch took a swing, and Joey ducked. He swung again, and Joey dodged.

“Stop, you’ll hurt me!” the red-faced puppet cried out.

“Don’t complain. I haven’t hit you yet,” Punch replied impishly. “Hold still, and I’ll show you how much fun it is to get whacked.”

“I won’t!”

“You will!”

Then Punch said, “Turn around. Here comes your friend Will.” When Joey turned, Punch whacked him. “There, take that, and that!”

Joey disappeared. As Punch laughed loudly, a puppet with a yellow face, red body, horns, and a tail popped up behind him. Punch turned around and stopped laughing.

“Whoa-oa-oa!” he quavered. “Who—who are you?”

“The devil.”

“Well, go away. I don’t like devils,” Punch declared, bobbing his head demandingly.

“I’m going to take you,” the horned puppet said, “for being so mean to a sweet boy like Joey.” The devil pounced, Punch howled, and the two dropped out of sight.

As the children laughed and clapped gleefully, the curtain went down.

“That was a very good show,” Nada said.

“And we collected a dollar forty cents,” Dave spoke up, “just about one pound of pennies.”

While Pete, Ricky, and Dave carried the puppet stage into the Hollisters’ garage, the girls plied Nada with more questions about the mystery of the missing Giovanni. They learned that he was a retired merchant. Pulcinella had been his hobby for years. He made very interesting painted faces, especially on Punch.

“You can tell one of Uncle Giovanni’s Punch faces because there is a mole on his nose,” Nada said.

“On your uncle’s nose?” Sue piped up.

“Oh no,” the girl replied, laughing. “The puppet’s.”

Nada’s great-uncle had traveled around Italy putting on shows because he liked children. He had a collapsible stage which he carried on the back of his motorcycle.

Now the boys returned and listened intently as the little Italian girl continued. Her uncle’s booth and puppets had been abandoned in a park in Milan. His motorcycle had been found wrecked on the big highway. “We looked in hospitals and everywhere,” the dark-haired child told them, “but we could not find him.”

“Too bad we’re not Italians,” Holly said, “or we could help you.”

“Thank you anyway,” Nada replied. Then she ran to her mother, who was leaving with Mrs. Hunter. Ann started to follow, then darted back and whispered in Pam’s ear, “I hope you win a prize!”

“Don’t forget that’s our secret,” Pam said as Ann skipped off.

After lunch, all the Hollisters but Sue went to the garage and took turns practicing with the puppets. Pam liked the part of Punch’s wife and played it in a high squeaky voice. She acted the baby well, too, imitating his crying better than any of the others.

“Pete, you and Pam ought to do the show,” Holly said, “‘cause you’re best.” Ricky agreed.

“I wish we could get a crowd to see it,” Pam said, switching to her own low voice.

“Maybe Mother can give us a good idea,” Holly said. The children left the garage and trooped across the yard to the kitchen door, where they were met by a delightful aroma of baking cookies. As they entered, Mrs. Hollister, a pretty and slender woman, was pulling a tin sheet of gingersnaps from the oven. She set it on the table, wiped her hands on her apron, and with a spatula slid several of the cookies onto a plate. “Help yourselves,” she said, smiling.

“Mmmm, they’re good warm,” Ricky declared and in the same breath added, “Mother, we need a big audience for our show if we’re going to collect fifty pounds of pennies.”

“Do you know how we can make money fast?” Pete asked, reaching for a second cookie.

“Daddy’s committee of the Rotary Club is meeting here tonight,” Mrs. Hollister said. “Why don’t you ask them?”

“Maybe we can put on Punch and Judy for them!” Pam suggested.

“Ricky!” Mrs. Hollister said. “That’s enough cookies now. There won’t

be any left for the men this evening.”

After supper, Pam helped her mother ready the house. They finished only a few minutes before the committee members began to arrive. Mr. Hollister held the meeting on their large open porch. The children hovered in the front yard, making certain not to disturb their father’s guests.

But when business was over, and refreshments were served, Pete called out, “Is it all right now, Dad?” Mr. Hollister, a tall, handsome, athletic-looking man, nodded to his son, and the children trooped up onto the porch. Pete stepped forward.

“Gentlemen,” he said seriously, “we’re raising money for the summer camp fund and would like to put on a Punch and Judy show for you. The price is as many pennies as you would like to give.”

“Splendid idea,” said Mr. Thompson, the Rotary treasurer. “Why don’t you stage it tomorrow noon in the park in the Town Square. Our club meets in a restaurant across from there, and all the men will come to see the play.”

“Maybe a lot of other people, too,” Mr. Hollister added.

“Oh, great!” Ricky exclaimed. “I’ll be the barker!”

There was a buzz of excitement as the men discussed the project. All seemed certain that it would attract a large crowd.

“Maybe we could put an announcement in the newspaper,” Pam said.

“Good idea,” was her father’s reply. “Do it by telephone right away, and it will appear tomorrow morning.”

“Tell the paper the Rotary Club is sponsoring you,” Mr. Thompson instructed.

Pam hastened into the house and soon came out again.

“The editor promised to put the notice on page one,” she reported.

Since it was not yet dark, the girls ran over to the Hunters’ house to tell their playmates the big news. Pete picked up Dave Mead and followed them. All the children wanted to help in the project. Nada offered to set up a lemonade booth with Ann.

“Swell idea, Nada!” Pete said. “We may be able to earn all of our money in one day!”

The Hollisters went to bed that night full of exciting ideas. But there was one thought uppermost in Pam’s mind. Would Mr. Barnes, the postman, bring her a letter telling that she had won a prize?

Next morning the children practiced their puppetry. After an hour, Pam went over to Ann’s house to help make the lemonade. Then she returned to

her own postbox and waited for Mr. Barnes. He arrived with a handful of letters which Pam took eagerly. She looked at one after another. None for her.

“Oh dear,” she said and walked slowly toward the house.

Shortly before noon, Dave, Ann, and Nada came over. A few minutes later, a pickup truck arrived from The Trading Post. This was a combination hardware, toy, and sporting-goods shop which Mr. Hollister operated in the center of town. Driving the truck was Indy Roades, a good-natured Indian from New Mexico, who worked for Mr. Hollister.

“Hi, Indy!” Ricky called out. “Everything’s ready. Let’s load it on.”

The Punch and Judy booth, the puppets, a long table for the lemonade, a large checkered tablecloth, Sue’s baby scale, some brown paper bags, and a big carton were put in the truck with other paraphernalia. Then the children climbed in, followed by Zip, and Indy drove to the park in the Town Square. There, the mayor himself awaited them.

“I saw the notice in this morning’s paper,” he said, “and wish to congratulate you on your efforts to aid the Fifty Fund.”

Pete and Pam shook hands with the mayor, then quickly began preparing their Punch and Judy booth. Dave, Ricky, and the others helped set up the lemonade table.

As they did, Holly called Ricky aside and whispered, “I want to keep a lookout for Joey and Will. If they come along this time, we’ll be ready for them.” She pointed to a tree nearby.

Ricky gave his sister a boost, and she shinned to the first stout branch, then climbed out on it. Before her eyes, cradled in some branches, was a robin’s nest. In it were three beautiful blue eggs.

“Oh dear,” Holly said to herself, “I’d better get off this limb before I shake the eggs out of the nest.” She began to crawl back, but the branch shook. Then she decided to hang by her hands and swing along the limb. Holly dropped down, but the branch was too fat for her to grasp, and one hand slipped off.

“Help!” she screeched, hanging by one arm. Ricky immediately snatched the checkered tablecloth and called to Pete, “Come on, quick! We’ll catch her in this!”

The two boys had barely stretched the tablecloth beneath their frantic sister when down she came! Holly landed so hard that Pete and Ricky tumbled to the ground. But the girl was not hurt, for the tablecloth had broken

her fall.

