

# Ronald and Rose and the birthday surprise

By Amy Narkis Illustrated by Cathleen Donohue

**Synopsis: It's Ronald and Rose's birthday, (they're twins), and their parents have decided to make opening their presents a little more challenging this year. They were left a clue that seemed to make no sense, but had a hidden meaning. The clue tells them that one of their friends stole their present, and they have to figure out who! After solving the clue, they knew that they were looking for their friend, Alice. Here's the next part of the story:**

“Wow! Let's talk to Alice!” Ronald shouted enthusiastically, as soon as he understood.

“Alright, come on,” Rose replied. They both ran off. Mom emerged from the kitchen. She turned to Dad and chuckled, “They'll find the next one a little bit harder.”

When the twins arrived at Alice's tree, she was nowhere to be found.

“Hmm,” Rose said, writing down Alice's address.

“The 2nd tree of Maple

Lane,” Ronald read over her shoulder. “Interesting address. Let's check her 'house'.” The two rooted around the tree, looking like some strange hogs searching for acorns. At last they stopped and compared finds. Together, all they had found



were two clothespins and an old ball.

“Nothing much,” Ronald commented. “Let's go ask the others.”

The first person they saw was Fred. He had a table and was trying to make log houses out of stick pretzels and toothpicks.

“Oh, hi!” he said, as the two approached. “I'm having a contest with Bob to see who can make the tallest house.

Look how high mine is!” He showed off his creation proudly.

“That's nice, Fred. Have you seen Alice?” asked Rose, nudging Ronald, who had started examining the house, completely forgetting why he was there.

“Oh, yes, have you?”

Ronald said, although his eyes still wandered over the pretzels.

“Nope,” Fred answered, carefully adding another pretzel.

“Well, thanks anyway.” Rose started across the lawn to the next tree, by which Bob sat, also making a pretzel

house.

“How can I help you?” he asked jokingly. However, when she asked her question, his reply was the same as Fred's. “I've got to hurry,” he added, “Fred's winning.”

“Good luck,” Rose yelled, as she started across their brook to Sara's tree. Sara was reading a book.

“Hi,” she said. “Your mom

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told me to sit here. Then the boys asked if I would enter their contest, but I said 'no'. I never was an architect." Rose laughed.

"I don't blame you. I'm not so good, myself. I came to ask if you have seen Alice," she added.

"No, the last time I saw her was when she was at that tree." Sara gestured toward Alice's tree.

"She's gone now," Rose replied. "Why don't you come and look with us?"

"No, thank you," Sara replied. Then she whispered, "I'm not supposed to help you figure out your mystery."

"Well, I'll be back soon," Rose said. As she headed back toward Alice's tree, she met Ronald, who was coming from the opposite direction.

"Where were you?" she asked.

"You should see the pretzel tower Fred is making. It's awesome!" Ronald answered.

"Have you completely forgotten our birthday present?" Rose grinned at him.

"Oh, yes, what did you find out?" They had reached the table that had held the present and Ronald started fingering

his notepad.

"Nothing. There seem to be no clues whatsoever."

"Hmm." Ronald didn't answer.

"Suppose," he finally mused, "We look at the table again. Couldn't the clue be there?"

"I guess so," Rose replied, "it wouldn't hurt to look. Once again the twins went over the table, their fingers searching every scratch and dent. They didn't find anything different than before.

Rose finally said: "Let's work with the original clues. Maybe they will reveal something."

After a long interval, she finally gave up.

"I can't seem to find anything," she said. She looked at Ronald. Her brother was once again in deep thought.

"I think I've got it! Where's Alice's 'address'?"

"Here it is," Rose said, handing it to him, "but we know she 'lives' right over there."

"The 2nd tree at Maple Lane'," read Ronald. "Remember that row of trees we used to call 'Maple Lane'?"

"Yes, I remember now. Let's go!" Rose pulled her brother to his feet. The two twins raced across the lawn and plunged into the forest beyond.

Their house had been built where a tree farm used to be, so some of the trees in their woods were arranged in straight lines. One of these such lines was made of maples, so they had nicknamed it 'Maple Lane'.

"Here.... we..... are!" Rose gasped, trying to regain her breath.

"It says 'The 2nd tree'. Thank goodness there is only one row of trees. I guess they mean 'second farthest from the house'." Ronald wasn't even breathing hard as he read the note. He didn't get breathless as easily as Rose did. He walked over to the second tree. It was like all the others; tall, straight, and about twenty inches in diameter.

"Well," he said, tucking the note in his pocket, "let's search it. I'll climb the branches, and you can go over the base." He swung up to the first branch.

Rose started her examination of the tree at shoulder height. She ran her hand over the smooth bark, searching for any difference in it.

She continued in this way until she reached the roots. Then she brushed away all the leaves surrounding the base of the tree. She ran her fingers

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under the thick roots, feeling for anything sticking out.

Suddenly, Ronald was startled from a half-scream half-shout that came from the base of the tree. He looked down. Rose's scrunched-up face looked at him.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I touched a salamander." "Good grief!" Ronald, and went on with his examination of the tree. Rose continued hers also, but a little more carefully this time.

About five minutes later, Ronald called, "Hey, Rose, come look at this!"

Rose swung up to the first branch.

"How am I supposed to sit on the branch if you're there?" she asked him.

"It's not on this branch; it's over there," Ronald replied. Rose climbed to the branch he indicated.

"There," Ronald said, pointing to a place on the tree. It was a place where a branch had been, but had apparently been broken off in a storm. Something was wedged in the broken place. "See if you can get it out." Rose started prying

carefully at the unknown object.

"I don't want to touch any more salamanders," she said. "One is quite enough. Did you try to get it out already? This piece is – ah, here it is!" She pulled out a small walnut shell



triumphantly.

"Open it," Ronald directed her. Rose carefully pried the top piece of shell loose.

"What do you know, another note," she laughed, as a small sheet of paper came out. She handed it to Ronald. "Your turn," was all she said. He started reading.

"Alice moved. Her new address is: 7 Elm Lane. Her new phone number is: (191) 755-15145

Her new name is: Pamela."

"We never had an 'Elm Lane',

" commented Rose. "I wonder what all the "new" stuff is for."

"Let's go check the phone book for the phone number," suggested Ronald.

"No, New Hampshire's area code is 603, not 191,"

Rose said. "We would have to get on the computer."

"Oh, yeah. Hmm. Let's write everything on paper again."

"Sure." Rose bent to her writing. When she was done, she looked up to find Ronald nowhere in sight. Then she spotted him back up in the tree.

"I finished before you did, so I went to see if

there was anything else in the hole," he explained, after he had jumped down. "Here's my paper. Let's switch." The two traded notes. Ronald's said:

"Address: 7 Elm Lane  
Phone number: (191) 755-15145  
Name: Pamela  
Nickname: Pam"

Rose's said:

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“Address = 7 Maple Lane“

“Well, what took so long to write that?” Ronald wanted to know.

“I couldn't think of anything else,” Rose told him. “I just thought that, since we didn't have an “Elm” Lane, maybe it means the seventh maple.”

“Well, let's try it,” Ronald shouted, “beat you there!” “This time I get the branches,” gasped Rose, as puffing she sat down.

“Okay,” Ronald said, as he started his hunt. Rose climbed up into the branches.

“How far should I go up?” she asked, looking down at Ronald.

“About twenty feet,” Ronald answered without looking up. Rose decided to start at the top and work down. Ronald's estimate was about right. When she was about twenty feet up, the branches were smaller and too close together to do any good climbing. She searched for about five minutes, slowly making her way down. When she got to the lowest branch, she jumped down carefully.

“Any luck?” she asked Ronald, who was leaning against the tree.

“None at all. Have any other ideas?” Ronald asked.

“No. There must be some clue, though. I guess we should look at our notes again.” Rose and Ronald got out their papers.

Neither of them saw the bushes swaying as someone retreated into the brush.

“Well, my note didn't help. Let's see yours,” Rose said, tucking her pad back into her pocket. “Here.” Ronald handed his to her. “The only thing I could think of is this- 'Pam' is a nickname for Pamela. Pam switched around is 'map'. I don't see how that would help anything, though.”

“That's it!” Rose snapped her fingers excitedly. “I have an idea, but I have to work on it. Here; why don't you try to figure out the 'phone number' and the 'address' while I work this out.”

“Sure,” Ronald said as he sat down at the base of the maple tree. Rose had already set to work with her back to the other side of the tree.

First, she put all of the letters in 'Pamela' in a circle. This is what her pad looked like:

	p	
a		a
l		m
	e	

Putting the letters in a circle is an old trick for unscrambling words. Rose wrote down nonsense word after nonsense word, but none of them made real words. They called to mind a word that sounded *almost* the same, but she couldn't remember it. Meanwhile, Ronald was trying his best with the 'address' and the 'phone number'. After changing the 7 into 'seven', he tried scrambling the letters, combining it with 'Elm' and scrambling it, and combining it with both 'Elm' and 'Lane' and mixing it up. He couldn't make it work, so he turned his attention on the phone number.

He had only worked on it for ten minutes when he figured it out. He jumped up and ran around the tree to tell Rose.

“Rose-” he started, but Rose frowned at him, saying, “Just a minute, I've almost got it.” However, it was five minutes and many laps of impatient walking around the tree before Rose beckoned him in excitement.

“I finally figured it out!” she said. “Did you have any luck?” “Let me show you,” Ronald replied.

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## Answer:

“I fiddled around with the numbers for the first few minutes,” he went on, “but then I remembered the simplest form of a code. You know, A=1 B=2 and so on.”

“Of course!” Rose exclaimed. “The phone number is a code. What did it say?”

“I spent the rest of the time figuring out the combinations. You know, the first numbers could be 1=A or 19=T,” Ronald answered, pulling out his pad. “See? This is what I came up with.”

“19 17 5 5 15 14 5  
t r e e o n e” the paper said.

“I get it,” Rose said, growing even more excited. “It makes the name make sense, too. After I had mixed the letters up for a while, I finally came up with 'a maple'. Tree one, a maple!”

Want to know if Ronald and Rose retrieve their present? You'll find out in the next issue!

# To Be Continued...