

Ronald and Rose and the birthday surprise

By Amy N. Illustrated by Jacinta S.

Rose strolled down the street, feeling the fresh spring breeze whip through her golden curls. Her blue eyes were radiant today, as she looked searchingly at all the shops that lined the street like a row of building blocks. She imagined that she could, with one sweep of her arm, knock the whole row down.

Rose's freckled nose wrinkled as she wondered which of the shops to enter. The flower shop was sending out an overpoweringly sweet fragrance. The door of the bakery shop opened suddenly, letting the delicious smell of fresh-baked bread wander the street. Rose wasn't interested in these shops, however, so when she remembered the small toy store at the end of the street, she immediately directed her short strides in that direction.

As she entered the shop, a little bell rang with a small, tinkly sound. An old man came walking toward her. He had friendly brown eyes that twinkled as he addressed her in his pleasant voice.

"How can I help you?" Rose had only been in the store a couple of times, so she looked around with interest.

"Hello, Mr. Jameson. I'm looking for a birthday present," she replied.

"Whose birthday?" Mr. Jameson asked.

"Mine!" she answered, and then almost burst with laughter at the puzzled look on his face.

"I'm a twin," she explained, starting to giggle. "It's my birthday, but I'm looking for a present for my brother." Then Mr. Jameson started to laugh, and when he laughed, his eyes twinkled more than ever.

"Your store hasn't been around for awhile, has it?" she asked, when their laughter had subsided a little.

"Yes, I just moved here, six months ago," Mr. Jameson replied, wiping his eyes. "Well, what does your brother like?"

"Tree forts," Rose replied promptly. She flung her curls behind her shoulders, to get them out of the way.

"Let's see, you could try Section 9," suggested Mr. Jameson thoughtfully. "What's your brother's name?"

"Ronald," Rose answered. Mr. Jameson went with her to Section 9 since he didn't have any other customers.

Section 9 was comprised of build-it-yourself kits. Rose

wasn't very interested in any of them. Then Mr. Jameson remembered that the book section had a few books on tree forts. They went along together to the book section, and Rose scanned the books.

"This one looks interesting," Rose mused, holding it up, "but I think I will keep looking for a while, and then come back. Thank you anyway, Mr. Jameson." The old man waved, and Rose skipped happily out of the store. To think, she was almost eleven! And Mom had let her go shopping all by herself! Well, almost. Even now she could see the old, green Ford van waiting at the corner.

"Hi, Mom!" she said, as she climbed in and shut the door.

"Any luck?" Mom turned around and smiled at Rose. She had brown curls of hair bouncing on her shoulders, and blue eyes that sparkled as she spoke.

"Maybe," Rose replied, fastening her seatbelt. "I found a book he might be interested in, but I remembered that he also likes candy."

"I suggest you stick with the book." Mom's eyes were

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twinkling again as she turned the corner.

“What do you mean?” Rose shook her curls from her face again and tried to see Mom's in the rear view mirror.

“It just might be a good idea, that's all,” Mom replied.

In a few minutes they had reached home. Home for

Rose meant a comfortable brick house, in the suburbs of the town, set back a little from the street.

Rose helped Mom unload the van.

“My goodness, these bags are heavy,” Rose remarked, wishing for the tenth time that Mom didn't

have the groceries put in paper bags. Her curiosity would make her wonder what the bags held.

“Nosy Nellie,” Mom laughed, closing the door behind them. “Run along upstairs, now, and see what mischief your brother has gotten into while we were gone.” Rose skipped up the stairs.

“Hi, Ronald,” she greeted her brother. She looked around. Ronald was nowhere to be seen. Just then, she

heard a couple of muffled bangs from their good-sized closet. Ronald emerged from the clothes and quickly shut the door. He looked just like Rose, the only difference being that he had more freckles, and his hair wasn't as long.



“What's the idea, bursting in the room like that?” he said, somewhat indignantly.

“Oh, I'm sorry,” Rose said. “You have a sock in your hair,” she added, giggling. Ronald picked a pink-frilled sock off the top of his head with pretended disgust.

“I don't see why I have to share a room with a girl,” he complained. Rose could see he didn't mean it.

“Last one downstairs sets the table!” she called,

speeding off.

“No fair! You had a head start!” Ronald was racing after her, as fast as his feet would carry him.

Rose leaped out of bed.

“It's my birthday!” she almost yelled. Changing her mind, she leaped back into bed, onto Ronald.

“Wake up, wake up! It's our birthday!”

“I know,” Ronald announced calmly.

“I've known for a half an hour, since I've been awake, getting kicked by my twin sister.”

“Oh, I'm sorry,” Rose said, climbing down. “I guess I've been excited.”

“Excited!” Ronald

climbed out of bed with a grin. “It felt like you were running a whole race – by yourself.” Rose laughed.

“You don't have to be so grumpy,” she said, returning the grin. “It's your turn to get dressed in the closet.” Since Rose and Ronald shared the room, they took turns, one getting dressed in the closet, while the other got dressed in their room.

“Okay,” Ronald said, this time with a mischievous grin.

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“But if I finish first, I get the biggest popover!”

“That's not fair!” Rose started hurrying to gather her clothes. “You know it takes me longer!”

Soon they were both downstairs, with Ronald pretending to complain. There was no “biggest popover”. The biggest had a twin, exactly the same size.

“Happy Birthday!” Mom said, bringing in some bacon. “You two can have the biggest popovers.” After saying ‘good morning’ to Mom, Ronald said:

“Since the popovers are the same size, I can have the biggest piece of French toast.”

“Go ahead,” Rose answered, laying some crispy bacon on her plate, “I don't like French toast. Oh, good morning, Dad.” Dad entered the room, with “happy birthday's” for Rose and Ronald.

“You will have to get to the biggest piece of French toast first,” he said jokingly to Ronald, “Rose might not like it, but I do.”

They all sat down to a

special birthday breakfast.

A few hours later, at ten o'clock, the guests for the party started to arrive. With Alice, Rose's special friend, arrived a parcel. On it were the words, 'Special Delivery from Mr. Jameson's Shop'.

“Thanks, Alice,” Rose



whispered, “I'll be right back.” She ran to her room, and was soon back with two packages in her hands. She handed them to Mom.

“Thank you for asking Mr. Jameson to send the book,” she whispered to Mom.

“Wasn't he nice,” Rose said to Alice when she rejoined her, “he sent me a present, too.”

“Yes, our family knows him

well. He is very nice,” Alice replied.

The party was a lively one, though it was small. Rose had two friends, Alice and Sara; and Ronald had two, Bob and Fred.

When the cake appeared, it was the center of much

admiring. It was skillfully made, taking the shape of a book. The title was: Little Jack Horner.

“Where is the cake?” Bob joked, “all I can see is a book!”.

“Be careful when you chew,” Mom warned. “You might bite something.” Her eyes twinkled.

When Fred was almost done with his cake, he

yelled, “What's this?” He showed Ronald where his fork had uncovered a small plum, about the size of a golf ball.

“Does it have a pit?” Ronald asked.

Fred pulled the plum apart.

“No,” he said. Then he laughed. “There's a bouncy ball instead!” Just then, Mom entered the room.

“I see that someone has found my little surprise,” she commented. “Is everyone

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done? Good. Ronald, you and Rose can clear the table. I'll come in later to load the dishwasher." Ronald exchanged a glance with Rose at this unusual request.

"Yes, Mom," they replied together.

"Let's go outside," Mom said to the guests, ushering them out. Ten minutes later, after the table had been cleared, it was present-opening time. The twins received many nice presents, and Rose discovered that Mr. Jameson's present was a tool kit. It was a small one, comprised of only a hammer, a few screwdrivers, a wrench, and a tape measure.

Her big surprise was when she found out that Ronald had gotten her present (a recipe book; Rose liked cooking) at Mr. Jameson's. And Mr. Jameson had given Ronald a tool kit, too!

When all the presents were gone, Ronald couldn't help but remember that Mom and Dad hadn't given them any presents. He didn't have much time to wonder, however, before Mom made an announcement.

"Attention, Ladies and Gentlemen," she said in an

over-exaggeration of an announcer's voice. "I thought that it might be too boring," - she paused and winked at Dad - "if we just gave our present to Ronald and Rose. So, we decided to make a mystery of it." She went on to explain that the twins were not going to be told what the present was, but they had to find out which of their friends had 'stolen' it, and where he or she hid it. "You get one clue," she added. When several moments had gone by and she had not said anything, Rose said:

"A clue?"

"Yes," Mom said, "this is where your present *used* to be." She pointed to a table.

Rose and Ronald surveyed the small table that Mom had pointed out. The only things that indicated anything had ever been there were a long strand of curled ribbon and a note. Mom gave each of the twins a pad of paper and a pencil. Rose looked at Ronald.

"The first thing that comes to my mind," she told him, "is that the clue must be pretty small." She gestured to the table, which was a bit flimsy. It came from the storeroom, and had only been able to hold

folded bedsheets. She picked up the note. It said:

"A friend took your present, and it's up to you to find out who.

Little is known about the theft, but I left a clue for you.

I wrote this note with some advice, so here it is right now: Catch the thief and your gift, before they Escape to the moon somehow."

"That's funny," she added, "Mom's usually so good at making up rhymes. This is definitely not one of her best."

"Let's take a look at the ribbon," Ronald said, after studying it for a bit. "I can't make heads or tails of the note." He looked up. Mom and Dad were nowhere to be seen, and all of their friends were standing by trees. Each tree had a sign on it, with an address. Rose saw it, too. They paid no attention and bent their heads together to examine the ribbon.

"This end is a bit frayed."

"Here's a small rip in it."

"What kind of ribbon do you think it is?"

"It's not the smooth plastic kind; it's got ridges." They wrote down all of these

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characteristics on their note pads. Then they examined the table.

“I don't remember this dent,” remarked Ronald.

“Yes, and what is this red stuff?” Rose answered his question with another. She pointed to what looked like some dried paint, except it was a bit shinier and had a faint lingering smell. After a little more observing, they combined their results. Their list read:

- ◆ the clue must be small or light-weight to fit on the not-so-well-made table
- ◆ the ribbon that was found on the table is frayed
- ◆ there is a note that seems to be just a random rhyme
- ◆ there is a small rip in the ribbon
- ◆ there is a dried paint-like substance on the table
- ◆ there is a new dent in the table
- ◆ the ribbon has ridges on it
- ◆ there is a small piece of tape on the side of the table
- ◆ the first letter of the last line of the note is not capitalized

Rose looked at Ronald.

“Have you figured out who stole it yet?”

“You mean you have?” Ronald looked up in surprise.

“Of course!” Rose laughed.

Answer:

“See,” she said, pointing to the table. “The stuff that we thought was red paint is really nail polish. I noticed that Alice had some new nail polish on. But here's the real clue: if you take the first letter in each line and put it together, it spells out 'Alice'. That's why the rhyme wasn't as good as Mom's usually are. She put the indented lines to throw us off.”

TO BE CONTINUED.....

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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...

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“Sure I have,” Rose laughed, “it's just another one of Mom's scrambled words. EATER = A TREE. Get it?”

“Yes, but which tree?” Alice looked in dismay at the dip filled with trees.

“That's an easy question to answer,” Ronald commented. “Remember the 'address'? We never solved that one. 7 Elm Lane, could mean the tree we're looking for is an elm. Who can identify trees? I can't!” “Well, I can,” Alice offered. “There are only two elms, that one and that one.” She pointed to a tree in the dip and one on the hill.

“Let's try the lower one first. It's closer,” Rose directed.

Soon they were

crawling all over the tree, examining the bark closely. Ronald dropped down onto the ground and started examining the base. Rose soon joined him.

“I didn't find anything, did you?” she asked. Ronald shook his head.

“Let's try the other tree. Where was it?”

“Over there. I can see it from here.” Rose pointed out the tree. The three set off at a fast pace; first Rose, then Ronald, and finally Alice, who was lagging behind a little bit.

When they were about ten yards away from the tree, she said, “Are you sure you checked the little hole at the base of the last tree?”

“Hole? What hole?” Ronald asked, coming back.

“There was one on the west side of the

tree,” Alice answered.

“Let's check it after we have finished with this one,” Rose suggested, gesturing toward the second tree.

“But, uh, that one might not be an elm. If you go back and check the first tree, I'll go and see if this one is the right kind of tree,” suggested Alice.

“Okay, sure,” Ronald replied, looking at Rose questioningly. As the twins turned back to the first elm together, he whispered to her, “Did it seem to you that Alice didn't want us to see that tree?”

“Yes, she did act like it. Oh well, we'll be there as soon as we've checked out this one. Race you there!” It didn't take the twins long to reach the tree,

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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 several clues that have led them to many different places. After solving the most recent clue, they know that they need to go to the first maple tree. Here's the next part of the story:



It didn't take long for the twins to race back to the first maple tree. Ronald got there first and swung up into the branches. Rose had hardly begun her search of the ground when she

heard Ronald shout down.

“Come up and take a look at who I found.”

Rose climbed up as fast as she could go, and saw Alice sitting on a

branch.

Alice laughed and said, “Hello! I thought you would never figure it out. It was so funny listening to you, though. I think this is yours,” she added.

She pulled a small

envelope out of her pocket. It was sealed and had no writing or mark of any kind on the outside. Ronald turned it over and ran his finger under the flap.

Alice was just as excited as the twins to see what was inside as she leaned over Rose's shoulder. She almost fell out of the tree as she did so.

“I think we should get out of the tree first.” Ronald said.

They all

scrambled out of the branches. Down on the ground, Ronald handed the opened envelope to Rose. “Go ahead, take it out,” he said. Rose pulled the piece of lined paper out and unfolded it.

Ronald and Rose and the Birthday Surprise

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Happy Birthday, Ronald and Rose. You can have your birthday present after one more search.

- Starting from the base of this tree, face North.
- Walk straight until you reach the broken rock.
- To your left, you will see a jagged tree stump.
Stand on top of it.
- Look down.
- Eater.

Rose had read it. “I wonder what 'eater' means.”

“Well, let's do what they say.” Rose looked at Ronald. “Where's north?”

“That way,” Ronald said confidently, pointing to the right.

“How do you know?” asked Alice. Ronald explained.

“It's about 2:30,” he said, “and the sun is over there. It's going west. So, that way is west, and that way is east. Now imagine a

map of the United States. California is west, and New Hampshire is east. Canada is north, so

north is that way.”

“Oh, I get it,” Alice said.

Walking straight, the three were soon at the broken rock. They turned to their left and Rose immediately spotted the stump. They ran over to it.

As soon as they had reached it, there was a debate on which twin would follow the next directions. Alice solved the problem by pulling a nickel out of her pocket and saying to Ronald, “Heads or tails?”

“Heads,” Ronald

answered. Alice flipped the coin. She missed it, and it landed in the bushes. She ran, stooping, after it, and in a moment had returned, shouting, “Heads!”

Ronald mounted the stump and looked down.

“There's an arrow,” he said. He turned around and looked up. “It points that way.”

They were overlooking a small depression in the forest, with a hill on the other side.

“I've never been over here before,” Rose commented.

“Now what?” was Ronald's only answer.

“What do you mean 'Now what?'” Rose asked, and though she tried to suppress it, a laugh burst out of her.

“Don't tell me you've got it again,” Ronald said.

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traveling at a fast clip. Ronald arrived first and said:

“West side, that's right here. Here's the hole!”

The hole looked just like a chipmunk hole, just large enough to fit a golf ball in. Ronald and Rose both examined it, but found nothing.

“Well, come on and we'll see why Alice was in such a hurry to get to the elm. Race you!”

Ronald was the self-appointed starter this time. Rose arrived first, and started to climb into the branches.

“Come up here!” she called to Ronald, who was only a second behind. She had reached the sixth branch.

When he reached Rose's branch, she showed

him what she had found. It was a piece of wood nailed to the tree. Above it, more pieces receded into the leaves.

“Ladies first,” Ronald said with a laugh.

“Why, thank you, sir,” Rose replied, grinning.



She didn't look very dainty as she climbed of the ladder of wood, with Ronald following right behind her.

Rose and Ronald climbed up onto a platform. They were standing in a big tree house that had been decorated with balloons and ribbons. In the center stood a table with

sandwiches, milk, and cookies. Around the table stood Mom, Dad, Bob, Fred, Sara, and Alice.

“HAPPY BIRTHDAY!” they all sang, and Mom handed Rose and Ronald each a package of their favorite chocolates.

“Thank you, Mom! Thank you, Dad!” Ronald said.

“Thank you so much!”

Rose echoed.

“I hope you like your birthday present,” Dad said. “I hope a tree house isn't too big!”

“Oh, no!” Rose said happily.

“Wow, look how close to the house it is! We must have gone around in a circle!”

Ronald and Rose and the birthday surprise

By Amy N. Illustrated by Jacinta S.

Ronald had moved around to one of the windows.

“Specially chosen!” Mom laughed.

The party continued from where it had been left off, and after their friends had left, Rose turned to Ronald and said, “I guess you won't need that tree house book after all!”

The End

**Want to have more fun with Ronald and Rose?
Look for a new adventure in the
upcoming issue!**