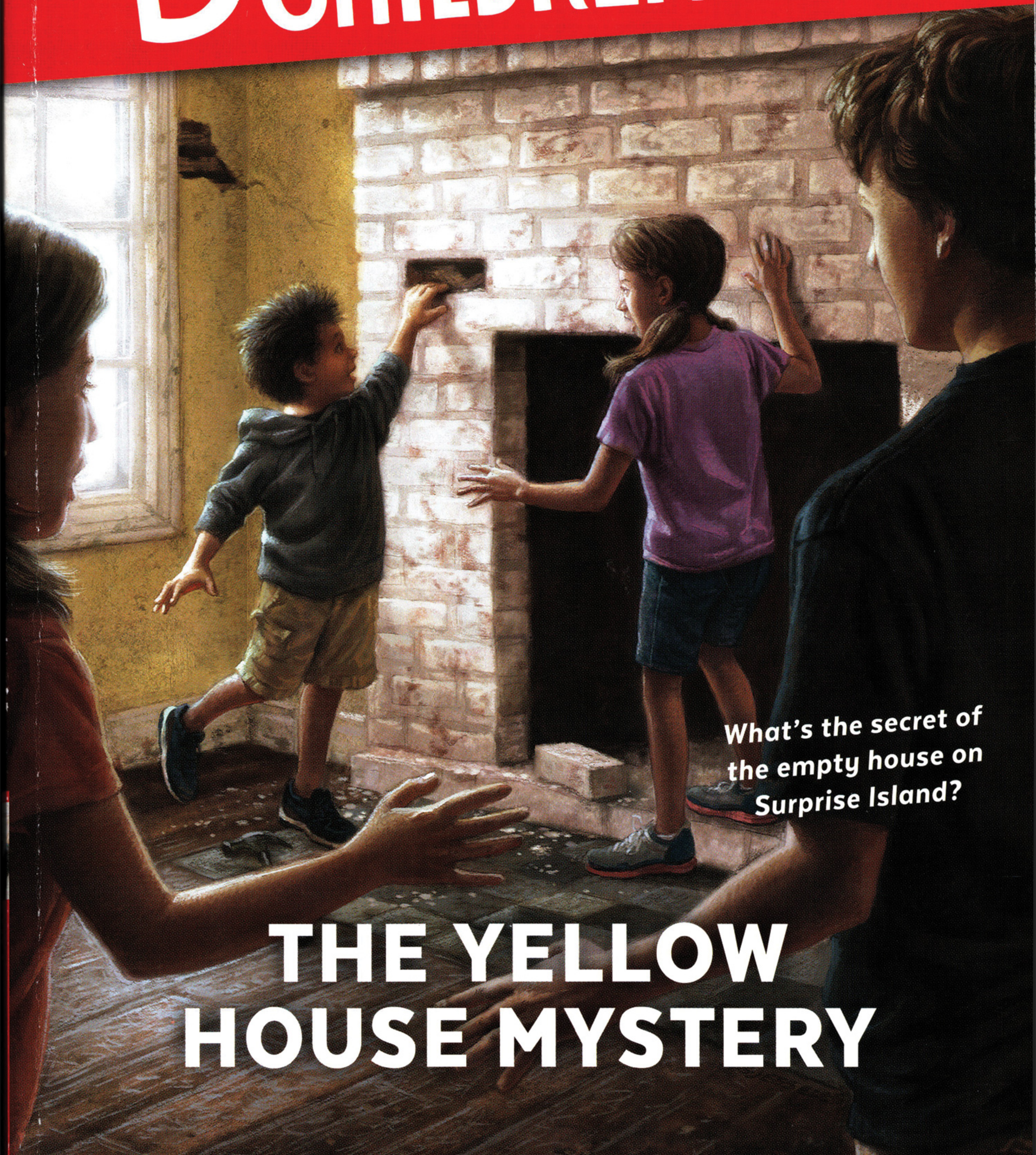


THE BOXCAR CHILDREN®



BY
GERTRUDE
CHANDLER
WARNER



What's the secret of
the empty house on
Surprise Island?

THE YELLOW HOUSE MYSTERY

THE BOXCAR CHILDREN[®]

**BY
GERTRUDE CHANDLER WARNER**

THE YELLOW HOUSE MYSTERY

BOOK



**ILLUSTRATED BY
MARY GEHR**

**ALBERT WHITMAN & COMPANY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**



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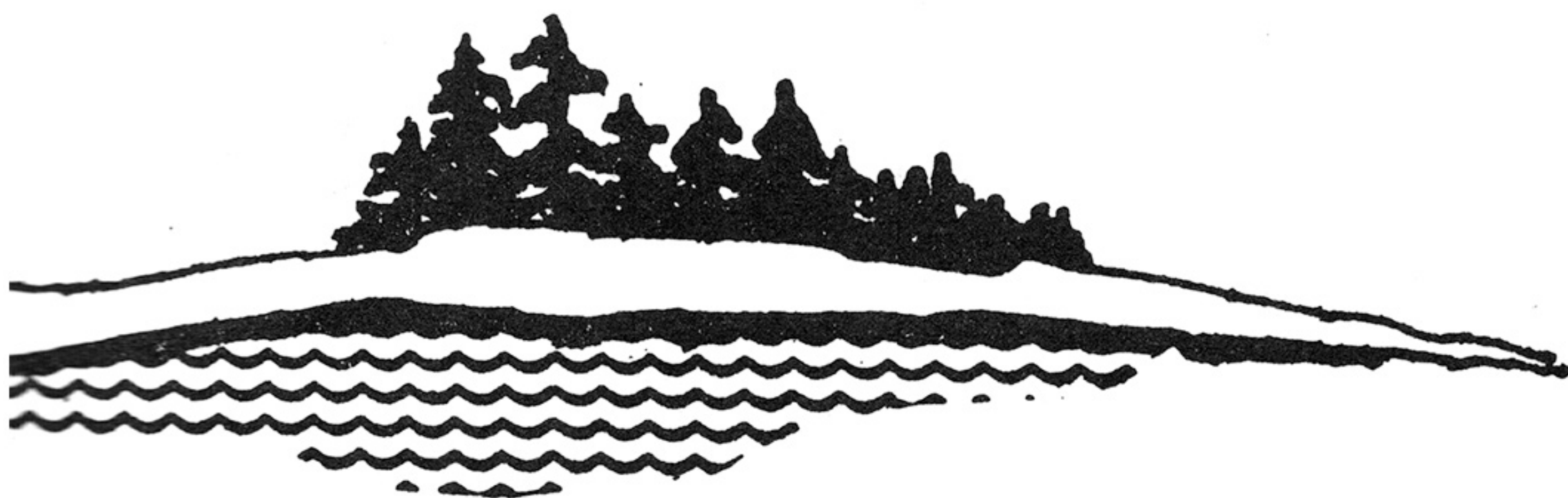
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THE YELLOW HOUSE MYSTERY

CHAPTER 1

The Cave

Four lively children lived with their grandfather Alden in a big house. The children's father and mother had died years before. Their cousin Joe lived in the big house too. He was grown up and his cousins thought he was great fun.

First there was Henry Alden, who was sixteen and in high school. Jessie Alden came next. She was in high school too. Violet was a pretty dark-haired little girl of twelve, and Benny was seven.

Benny was on his way home from school one day in Spring. The minute he went into the house, he heard the telephone ringing. Then he heard Mrs. McGregor, the housekeeper, answering it.

"It's for you, Benny," she said. She was excited. "It's your cousin Joe."

Benny went to the telephone. "Hello, Joe," he said.

"We're going to blast, Benny!" Joe called over the telephone. "The men are almost ready to blast the top off the cave. They say that you children can come over to the island, if you stay right with me. You get the others and come along over."

"O.K. Joe!" cried Benny. "We'll come just as quickly as we can." He hurried to the hall to tell his brother Henry. For this cave was one the children had found themselves the summer before. They had crawled in to see how far they could go. Without trying, they had found some Indian tools in the sand which Joe said were very wonderful.



Now, their grandfather had sent some men to the island to take the top off the cave, so that it would be easier to dig the things out.

"Was that Joe? What did he want?" asked Henry. He came out into the hall.

"He said the men are going to blast the cave open!" shouted Benny. "Last summer he told us we couldn't come that day, and now he says we can."

Benny ran upstairs two steps at a time, calling, 'Jess! Jess! Vi! Vi!'

"Well, what's the matter now, Benny?" asked Jessie, looking up from her school work.

"The men are going to blast the cave on Surprise Island, and we have to hurry and go over."

"Who said so?" asked Jessie.

"Joe," answered Benny. "He just telephoned to me."

"But we can't go without Grandfather," said Violet, softly.

"Grandfather is just driving into the yard," Henry called loudly up the stairs. "Hurry and come down before he puts the car away!"

Mr. Alden could not understand a word at first, because everyone talked at once. But his driver seemed to be turning the car around anyway. Mr. Alden was smiling to himself about something.

"Did Joe call you, too, Grandfather?" cried Henry.

Mr. Alden laughed. "Well—" he said, "we'll go down to the dock and over to the island in the motorboat."

"I hope Captain Daniel will have the boat on

this side," said Henry. "Joe seems to be in a hurry, and the men won't wait for us for very long."

"Oh, I hope they won't blast until we get there," cried Benny.

"I don't think they will," said Mr. Alden smiling. "If Joe sent for you, he will wait until you have time to get there."

"Of course he will, Grandfather," said Jessie. "There is Captain Daniel on the dock already."

It was true. Captain Daniel smiled when he saw the four children coming with their grandfather. He liked them all.

"I'm waiting," he said, "and Joe is waiting on the island and so are the workmen. Joe said they won't blast until you are all there."

"Good. I'm glad," said Benny, getting into the boat and sitting down.

They were soon on their way across the water to the island where they had spent such a happy summer the year before. They were all thinking of that exciting day when they had found the cave.

Benny looked at the captain. "I don't suppose you remember the Indian things we found in that cave, Captain?" he said.

"Indeed I do," said the captain with a laugh. "You children didn't know then that Mr. Joe dug up things for a living. But I did. I knew Mr. Joe when he was a little boy."

"Remember how excited Joe was?" cried Jessie. "He wouldn't even let us dig any more inside the cave."

"That was all right though, Jessie," said Henry. "He wanted things done right. These workmen know how to dig better than we do."

"And here we are, going to blast the top off the cave!" said Benny.

"There's Joe now," said Jessie. "Who in the world is that with him? It's a girl!"

"That's not a girl," said Benny. "That's a lady."

"Well, anyway, she isn't very old," said Jessie.

"She's awfully pretty," said Benny, as they came nearer.

"Hello, children," cried Joe, as the boat stopped at the dock. "This is Alice Wells. She came over to look at the Indian things you found. She knows lots about such things."

"That must be interesting work," said Jessie to Alice, shaking hands. She liked Alice at once. She had such a beautiful smile.

"Yes, it is," said Alice. "I feel as if I knew every one of you. This is Benny, I'm sure. And Violet. And Henry. Joe has told me so much about you all." She smiled at Mr. Alden as if she already knew him well.

Benny took Alice's hand. "Let's go right off and see them blast," he said.

"This is going to be fun for you, Benny," said Mr. Alden, smiling at the little boy. "The men are going to let you push the handle to set off the blast."

"Oh boy," cried Benny. "Where is the handle?"

Joe led the way without a word. Past the little yellow house, past the barn where they had lived the summer before, past the beach. There beside

a crowd of workmen, they saw a handle in the ground.

"Here they are," said one of the workmen. "Are you the little boy who is going to set off this blast? Now, you take hold of that handle and push it down as far as you can."

Benny did as he was told. From far away down the island came a loud noise like thunder. Then the children saw a great cloud of smoke, and then flying rocks.

"What a noise that was!" cried Benny. They all watched the smoke still coming from the cave.

"Very good," said Joe. "Let's go."

Down the path they went. Soon they came to the cave. The big rocks were broken into small pieces, and the men started to take them away. The whole cave was open. The children watched quietly.

"I suppose nobody can dig in the cave until all those rocks are lifted off," said Henry at last.

"That's right," said Joe. "They will be taking rocks off for days. Really there is nothing more to see now."

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"You mean we'd better go home then?" said Mr. Alden. He winked at Benny.

"Well, I don't care too much," said Benny. "Anyway, we blasted and that's more than I expected."

"You will come over many times when we get to digging," said Alice. "We have already taken away the shell pile and all the things in it."

"The Museum people were delighted with all the things," said Joe. "You found some things that they had never seen before."

"That's right," said Alice. "Joe and I are going to try to find out what they all are. I shall be working on them for a year maybe, and maybe longer."

"That's good," said Benny. "You come up to our house and see us." He was surprised when Joe laughed.

At supper that same night, Benny sat thinking.

"What's the matter, Ben?" asked Henry kindly. "Aren't you going to eat your supper?"

"Oh, yes," said Benny looking up. "I was just thinking."

"What about?" Violet asked gently.

"Well," replied Benny slowly, "I was thinking about Alice. I think Joe likes her. I think that's why he wanted us to go home."

"Well," laughed Jessie, "what of it? Didn't you like her yourself?"

"Oh, yes," cried Benny. "I liked her a lot. But that's different. I think Joe is going to marry her."

"What!" shouted Henry. "How can you tell? Joe just met her today."

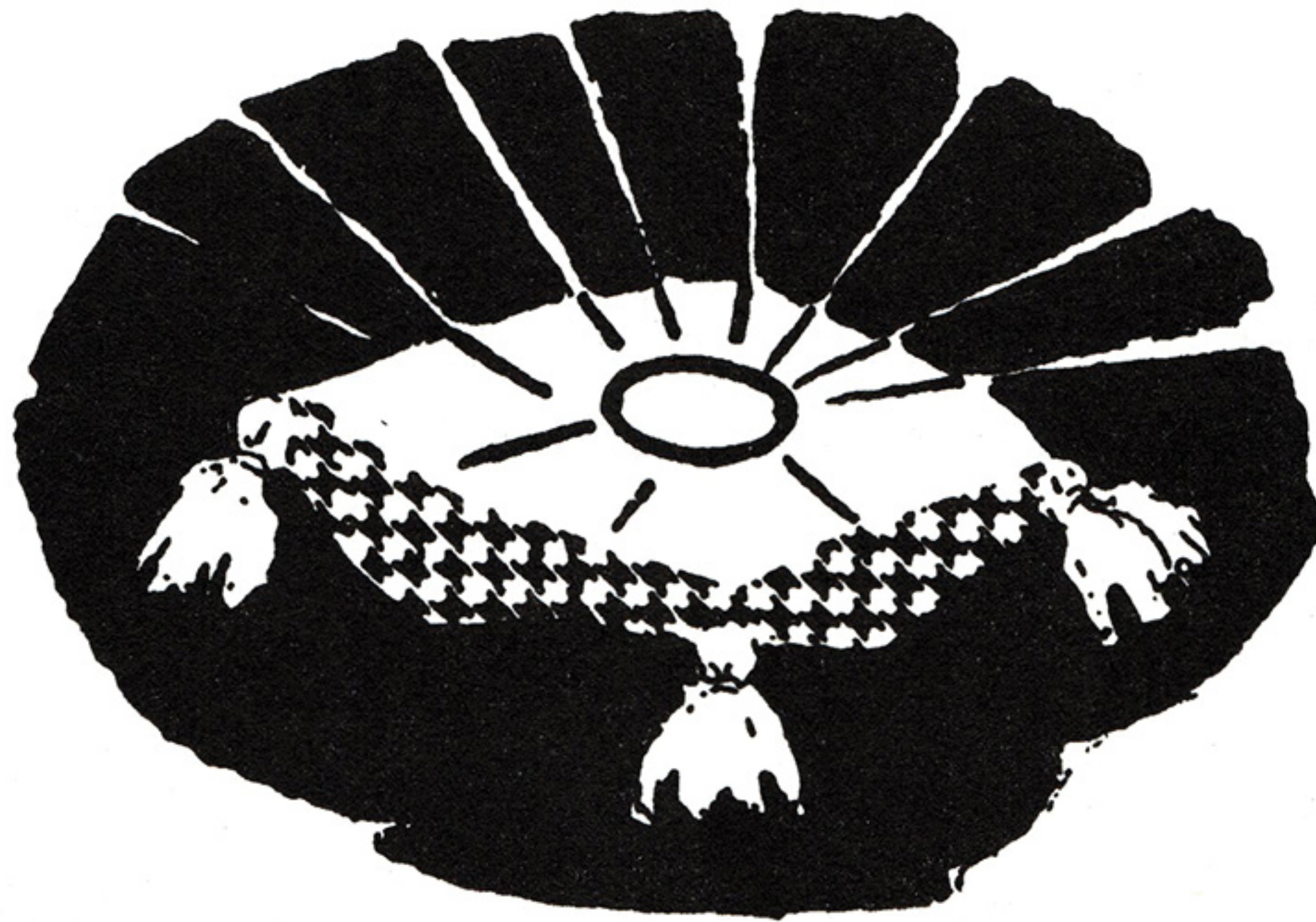
"Oh, no, he didn't, my boy," said Mr. Alden. "Joe and Alice went to school together when they were children. Alice has been away a long time. She just came back to do this work for Joe."

"Well, I wish Joe *would* get married," said Jessie. "It must be lonesome for him living all alone on the top floor of this house with a lot of children like us."

"And an old man like me!" said her grandfather. "But I'll tell you something. I watched Joe and Alice today and I think Benny is right."

But don't say a word. Let's wait and see what happens."

"Yes, let's," said Benny. "But you'll see they will get married all right." Then he started to eat his supper.



CHAPTER 2

A Wedding

What a day it was for the Alden children when the rocks were all taken away. The floor of the cave was smooth sand, just right for digging. More men came to the island that day, and the digging began.

"Isn't it funny to see grown-up men digging in the sand," said Benny.

"Watch them, Benny," said Alice. "You will see them put things in that big box."

Sure enough, the men often found broken

pieces of a dish, or a smooth stone, and carefully put them in a box. The children never grew tired of watching them. Every day after school they went over to the island to see what the men had found.

Henry could not come until late on some days, for he had to row with the high school crew on the river. He had been Captain of the high school crew for a year. But as soon as he came, he always helped Joe carry the boxes to the boat.

One day the box was so heavy that Henry



could not get it to the boat. "I'm sorry, Joe," he said. "Let's stop here at the yellow house and sit down for a minute. This is harder work than rowing."

Joe was glad too, to sit down on the wooden steps of the little yellow house.

Soon Benny was looking in all the windows. "Let's go into this house some time," he said.

"I wonder why we never did, Joe," said Jessie. "Do you know why Grandfather doesn't like to talk about it?"

"No," said Joe. "I never asked him because he seemed so sad about it. I think it has a mystery. Some day Alice and I are going into the house and solve the mystery."

"Without us?" cried Benny.

"Yes, sir, without anybody!" said Joe.

"You don't *really* mean you'd go without us?" Benny asked. He could hardly believe his ears.

"Don't tease him, Joe," said Alice suddenly. She put her hand gently on Joe's arm. "Let's tell him! Let's tell them all!"

"Ho-hum. Maybe you don't need to tell us. Maybe we can guess," cried Benny.

"All right. Go ahead and guess," laughed Joe. He took Alice's hand and held it.

"You make it too easy," said Benny. He looked at Henry. "Didn't I tell you? I told you a long time ago."

"It wasn't true a long time ago," said Joe.

"Let's guess," said Violet, taking Alice's other hand. "Does the secret have anything to do with music?"

"Yes!" said Joe and Benny together.

"Will everyone wear beautiful clothes?" asked Jessie smiling.

"Yes," answered Joe and Benny.

"Will there be a cake, and maybe a beautiful ring?" asked Henry.

"Right here!" said Joe. He held up Alice's hand. On it was a beautiful new ring.

"Funny we didn't see that," said Jessie.

"Not so funny, dear," said Alice. "It went on just this minute."

"For good," said Joe.

"Where are you going to live, Alice?" Violet asked suddenly.

"Well, you know Joe has the whole top floor of that big house all to himself," Alice said. "He says he needs company, so we will live there together."

"Oh, boy! Right in the same house with us, just the same as ever!" Benny shouted.

"Does Grandfather know?" asked Henry.

"Well, yes," said Joe. "We told him yesterday. He said we could have the top floor. After all, it's his house."

"Will the wedding be in our house too?" asked Jessie.

"Yes. We want Violet to play the wedding music on her violin, and we want Watch to wear a big white ribbon and come to the wedding too."

"He won't like the ribbon," said Benny. "But he won't bark if Jessie tells him not to. When is the wedding going to be?"

"As soon as you get out of school," answered Joe. "Then, you children won't be busy. And

Alice and I will have done a lot of work in the cave."

"I can't wait till school is out," said Benny.

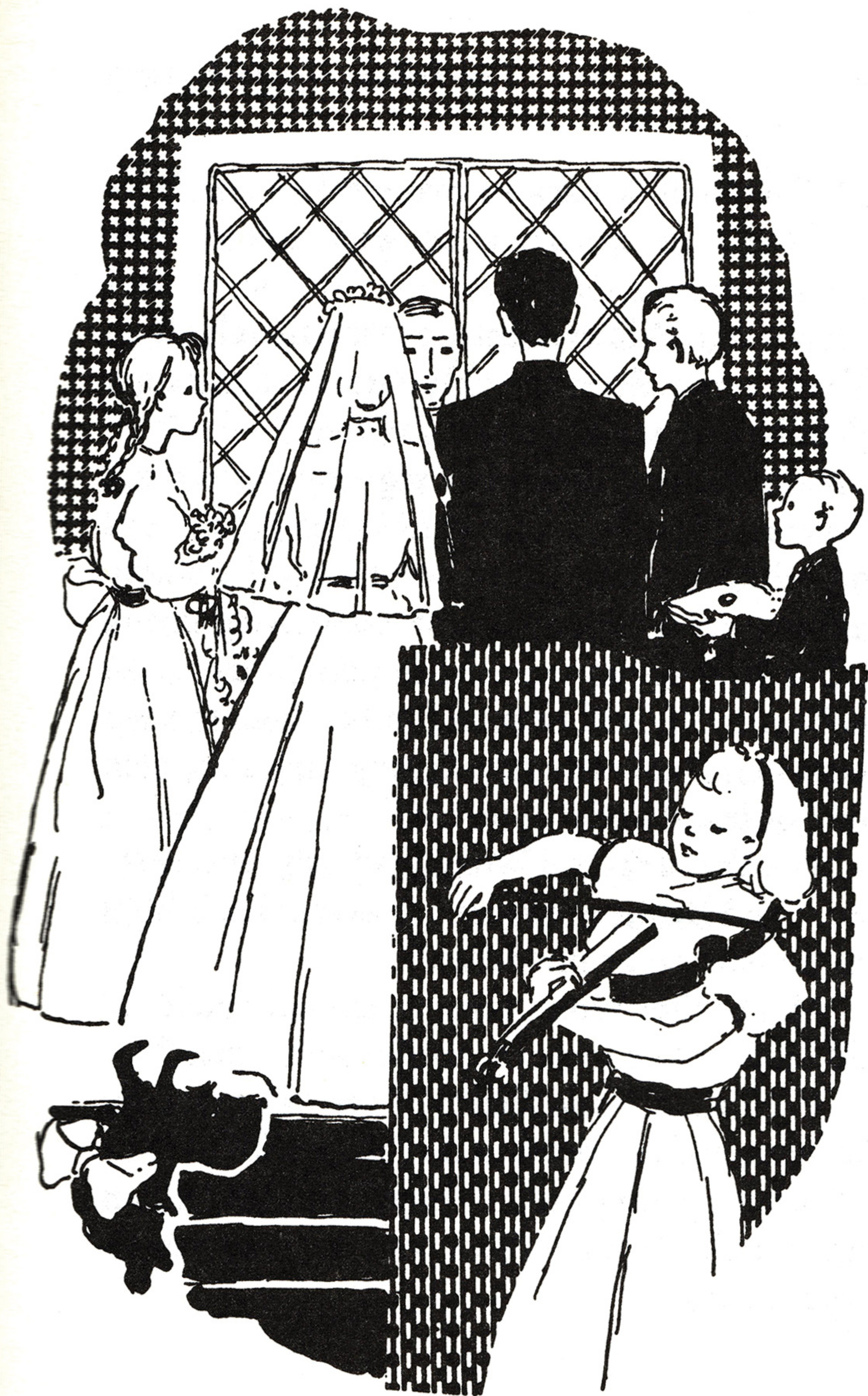
"I guess you'll have to," laughed Joe.

What a wedding the Alden wedding was! Everyone talked about it afterward for days. Alice was very lovely in her beautiful white dress. Violet played for the wedding on her violin, with three other players. She wore a long violet dress. Jessie wore blue.

Watch wore his big white ribbon, and he did not bark until it was all over. When everyone was out on the porch saying good-by to Joe and Alice, he barked and barked. By then it didn't matter, for everyone was laughing and talking.

The children did not know what to do with themselves right after Joe and Alice had gone. They tried to read. When it was almost time for supper, Jessie said, "I wonder where they are going on their wedding trip."

"I don't know myself," said her grandfather. "People don't tell where they are going."



"They will be back in two weeks," said Violet. "Let's go upstairs again and look at their lovely home."

Even Mr. Alden went up with the children. Watch came along too. He was always happy when he was with his four children.

Mr. Alden sat down in a big easy chair while Violet and Jessie looked again at the pretty blue and white kitchen. They went into the sunny bedroom, and back to the pleasant living room.

The new dishes were set in piles in the clean cupboards. "It will be such fun for them to keep house here," cried Jessie. "Everything is in such good order. Alice will love it."

"Won't we have a wonderful time this summer," said Benny. "When Joe comes back he is sure to have some fine ideas."

"Maybe they won't want us around, though," said Jessie. "We must be careful about that."

"Well then," said Benny, "*we* can think up the ideas, and ask them to do things with us."

"A very good plan, my boy," said Mr. Alden with a smile. "If they don't want to, they can always say no."

Then they heard a step on the stairs. It was Mrs. McGregor, the housekeeper. She was a kind little lady, and took fine care of the children. Her hair was white and her eyes were blue.

"Supper is ready," she said with a smile.

"I hope I can have some more wedding cake," said Benny. "I just love weddings, don't you, Mrs. McGregor?" He took her hand.

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. McGregor, smiling at the little boy. "Your cousin Joe has a fine wife, and he is a fine young man himself. It was a lovely wedding."

Then Violet thought, as she had often thought before, that there was something sad about Mrs. McGregor. "Yes," she said to herself, "she is sad even when she smiles."

CHAPTER 3

The Mystery

The children were lonesome after the wedding. They longed so much for Joe and Alice. But just then the mystery of the little yellow house began.

Supper was over. Warm air was blowing through the open windows, and birds were singing their evening songs.

As Mr. Alden sat down in his easy chair, he said with a pleasant smile, "Isn't it time to think about summer plans?"

Henry looked at his grandfather.

"Grandfather," he said, "do you mind if I ask you something?"

"No, of course not," said Mr. Alden. "Ask anything you like."

"You may not think it is polite," said Henry slowly.

"But what is a grandfather for?" asked Mr. Alden, winking at Benny. "I know you are very polite to me always. Go ahead and don't be afraid."

"Well," said Henry, "do you remember last fall I asked you why we never went into the little yellow house on Surprise Island? You looked very cross for a minute, and Jessie and I were sure we had hurt your feelings."

Jessie went on, "Don't you remember? You said, 'That's another story.'"

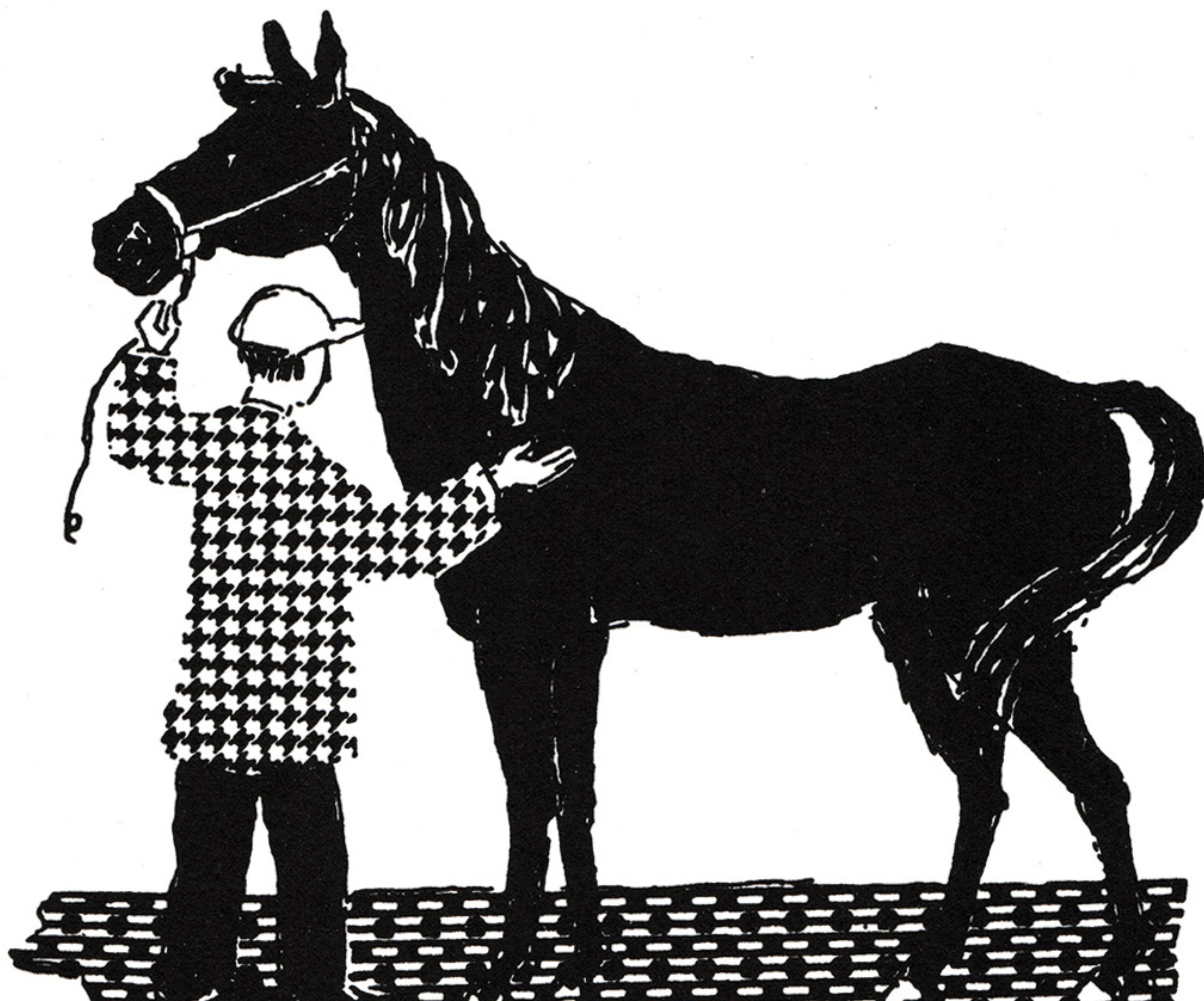
"Oh, I remember all right," said Mr. Alden. "I never could forget that." He looked from one face to another. "If you four children will come over here and sit down on the floor, I'll tell you all about it. I guess the time has come when you ought to know."

Mr. Alden waited until they were ready to listen, and then he began.

"You know I told you my father built the barn on Surprise Island for his best race horses? And that the man who took care of the horses built the little yellow house for himself?

"The man's name was Bill. He was about thirty years old then and so was I. I loved Bill very much. He took fine care of the race horses, and he lived in the little yellow house with his good wife."

"Race horses!" cried Benny. "Did they race?"



"Yes, they raced while my father was living. My father was your great-grandfather, you know. Bill loved the horses, and he was a good, kind man. But I must tell you he was weak."

"Not very strong, you mean?" said Benny.

"No, Benny," said Mr. Alden sadly. "I don't mean that at all. He was a very strong man. He could lift the boat. I mean he had a weak will. Anybody could tell him what to do." Mr. Alden stopped.

"Don't tell us, if you don't want to!" begged Jessie.

"Yes, I want to tell you now. I'm afraid Bill was a coward. He would do anything his brother Sam told him. His brother had some bad friends."

The children were suddenly very quiet. They knew that this was a sad story for their grandfather to tell.

"Let me go and get Watch, please!" cried Benny. "I'll be right back."

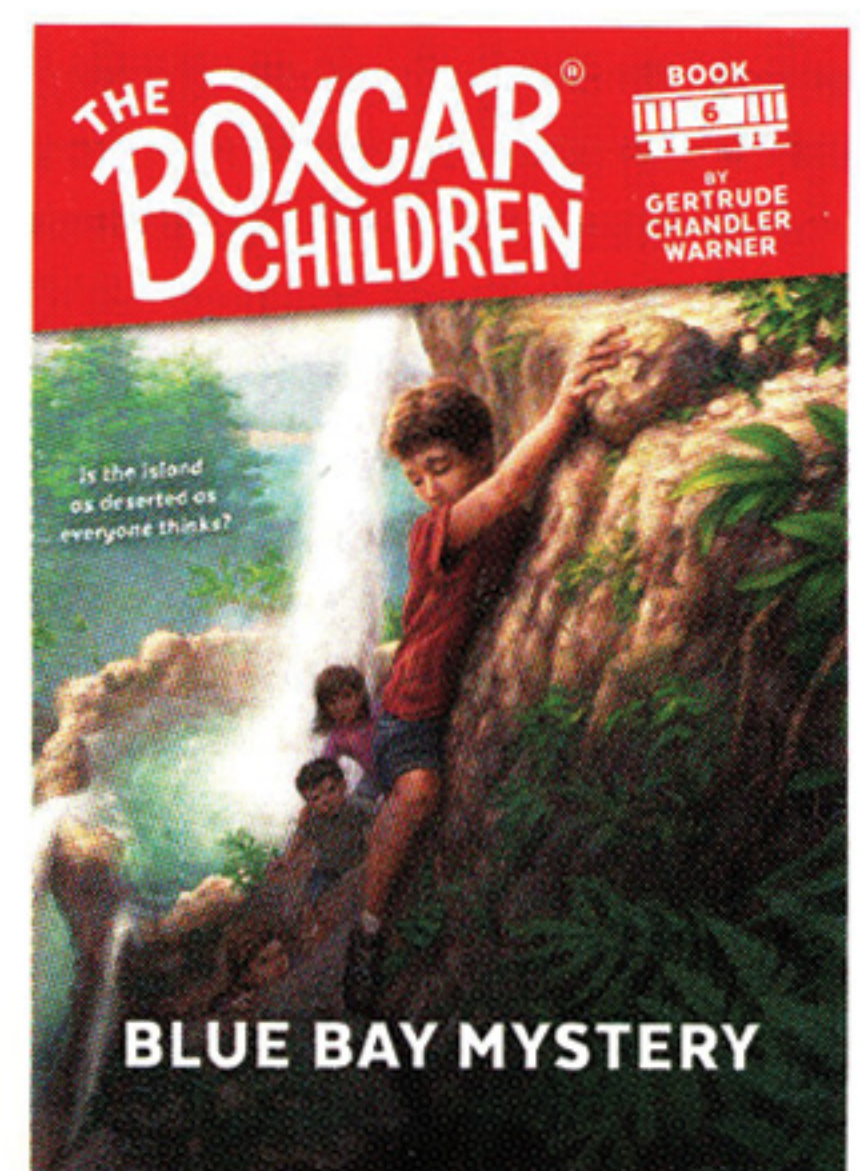
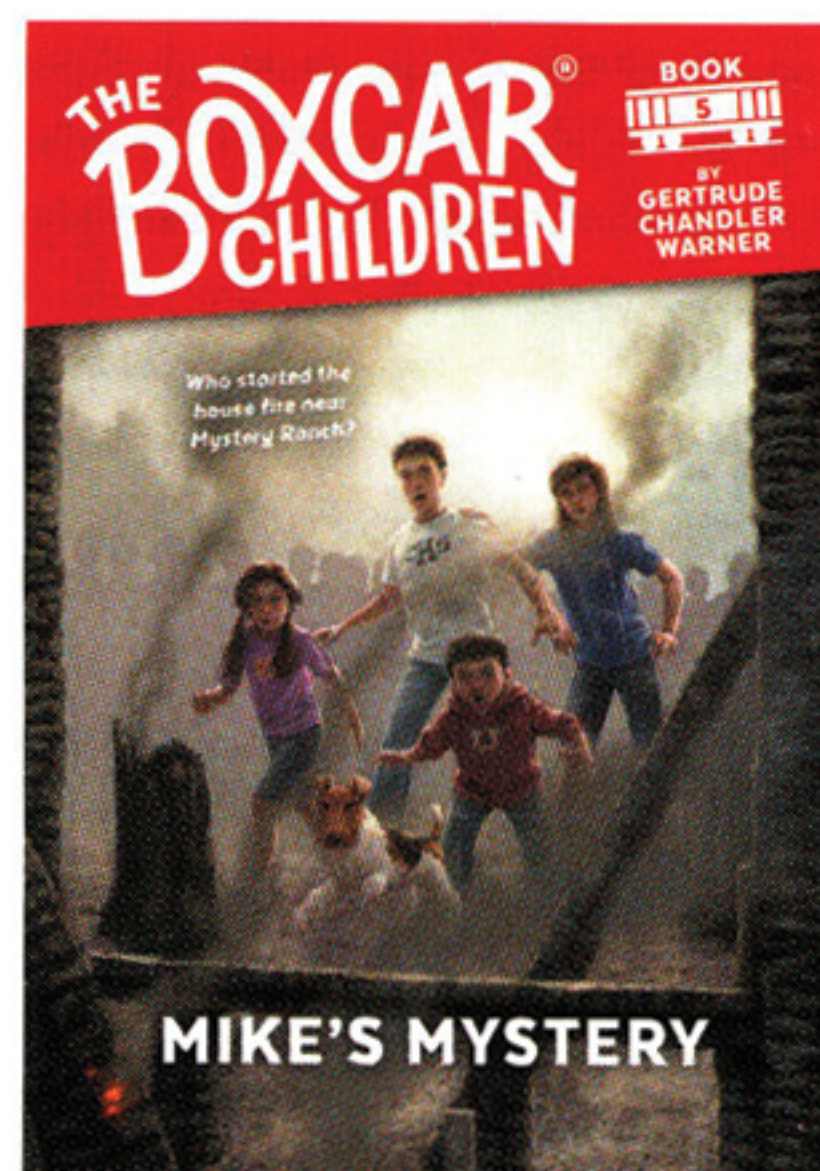
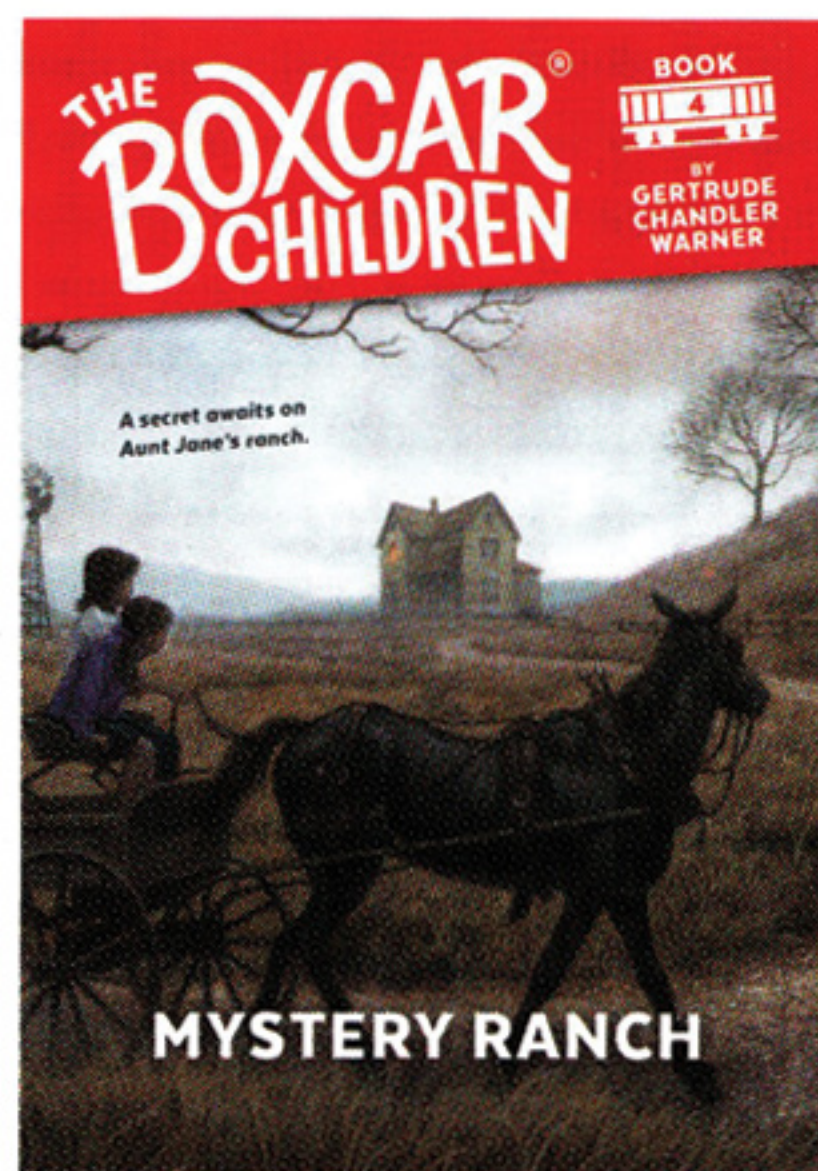
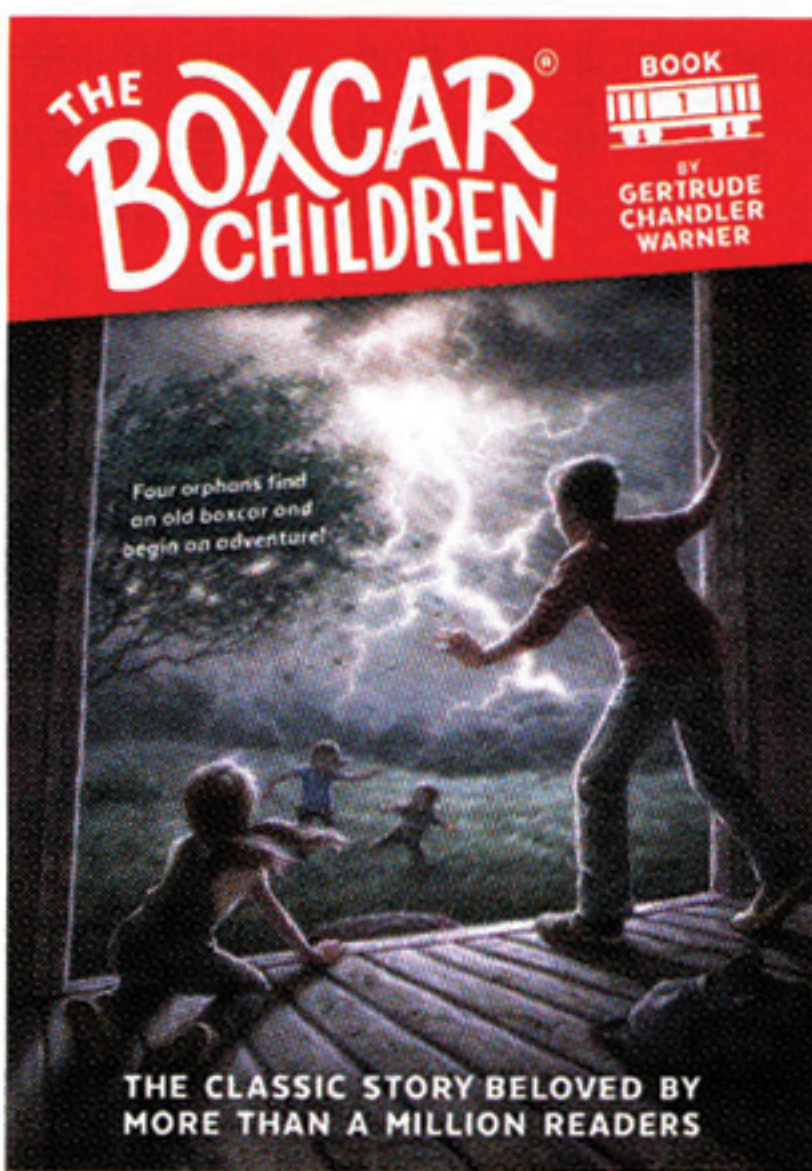
Everyone had to smile as Benny disappeared into the kitchen. They knew that Benny always

THE BOXCAR CHILDREN®

**No matter where they go, Henry, Jessie,
Violet, and Benny Alden find adventure!**

A mystery surrounds the old yellow house on Surprise Island! Years ago, a man vanished from the house, and no one knows how or why. Now a long-lost clue leads the Aldens to investigate the mystery—and to a new adventure!

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