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RENE AND PATOU



By
ANNE MERRIMAN PECK



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RENÉ AND PATOU





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Story and Pictures by
ANNE MERRIMAN PECK

JUNIOR PRESS BOOKS
ALBERT WHITMAN
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CHICAGO

1938

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OCT 29 1938



RENÉ AND PATOU

PUTT, putt-putt, putt—a distant sound came from the sea.

“Ah, the boats are coming home,” said René to himself. He jumped out of bed and ran to the window.



His tall pink house stood in a row of pink, yellow, and white houses close to the sea, in a village on the southern coast of France. From his window René could look right down into the empty harbor.

René's father was a fisherman. He and the other fishermen of the village had been far out on the sea all night, with big nets let down into the water to catch fish.

Now the sun was just peeping up over the rim of the dark sea. René quickly dressed in his blue cotton pants and striped jersey, ran downstairs, and out to the sea wall. He was the only person



awake in the whole village at that early hour.

But as the sound of the boats came nearer, green window shutters flew open, doors opened, and fishermen's wives came out carrying baskets for the fish. The beggar cats of the village came too, marching along with tails in the air, sniffing for fish.

On the sea wall René and his friend André stood with their mothers waiting for the boats. The boats, which had looked like specks on the sea, came rapidly nearer. They sailed across the little harbor to the sea wall, their engines chanting a loud putt, putt.

Still René and André waited, and at last two

white sails skimmed around the lighthouse at the entrance of the harbor.

“There they are,” shouted René.

The white sails belonged to the boats of the two boys’ fathers. As they sailed up to the sea wall, René’s mother sighed, “If only we had an engine in our boat, little son, ours would not be the last to get home.”

“Still, Papa and Uncle Toni bring many baskets of fish,” said René. He waved his hand to his father, calling, “*Bon jour*, Papa, a good catch today?”

Papa looked up with a grin on his brown face.

“Yes, my brave,” he shouted, “good luck today.”

René jumped into the boat and helped Papa and Uncle Toni scoop up the wriggling fish into baskets. They passed the baskets up to *Maman* on the sea wall. All the women were now busily filling their baskets from the boats. Already many of them were on their way to the village street where the old yellow bus waited to carry the fish to the railroad station.

The beggar cats circled around the baskets purring and mewling. One bold fellow reached a paw into René's basket to steal a fish. René threw a small fish to the hungry one and laughed to see how several cats fell on it at once, growling and fighting.

"Come, little son," said *Maman*, when the baskets were filled. "Marius at the hotel will be waiting for our fish to cook for dinner."

They picked up the baskets and set off for the village street, followed by André and his mother with their fish. After them trotted a procession of cats, hopefully waving their tails.



René and André were hungry for their breakfast after the fish were sold. As soon as the boys had finished their coffee and milk with crusty chunks of bread, they ran out to help their fathers with the big fish nets.

René's father stood on the sea wall pulling up the wet heavy net which Uncle Toni handed him. He coiled the net around his arm and gave the end of it to René, who wound it around his arm the same way. Soon the whole net was out





of the boat and they spread it flat on the cobblestones to dry in the sun. Before long the broad space in front of the houses was covered with big brown nets spread out by the fishermen.

When the nets were dry André and René sat on the wall helping the men mend breaks in the



nets through which the fish might escape. Some of the fishermen were cleaning their engines in the boats below.

“Ah, André,” said René, “if only our fathers had engines in their boats so that they could sail far and get more fish! See *Père* Marius there. With two boats and hired men he sells so much fish that his family have new clothes every year. They even go to the city for fêtes.”

“That’s true,” said André. “A sailboat is too slow. In our family we are saving for a boat engine,” he added proudly.

“So are we,” answered René. “We have a lot of francs in a yellow jar. I think Saint Pierre up there is helping us.” He looked up at the statue of the fishermen’s saint which stood in a niche on the wall of his pink house. Saint Pierre had

stood there so long watching over the fishermen that his stone robes were cracked and worn by the weather.

Just then *Maman* called from the doorway, "The soup is ready." René, Papa and Uncle Toni jumped up, hungry for their dinner.

After they had eaten their bowls of good cabbage soup Papa took down the yellow jar from the shelf and looked into it.

"It grows, our engine money," he said gaily. "And I have an idea how to earn some more. You and I, Toni, will go to the coves this afternoon to catch mussels, clams, and sea urchins. Visitors will come to the village tomorrow for the Sunday fête, and we will sell them our seafood."

"I'll help, Papa," cried René.

"Brave man," said Papa. "You shall have a stand on the village street to sell these fruits of the sea to visitors. They will want a taste before their lunch, I know that. Then Toni and I will take them out on the sea in our boat. They will pay us well. Eh, is that good, my little family?"

"Splendid," cried the family in chorus.



Early next morning the village was astir getting ready for visitors. The sun shone brightly, touching the blue sea with sparkles of light. Under the trees fishermen's wives set up stands to sell seafood, which French people call fruits of the sea. *Maman* and René set out plates of

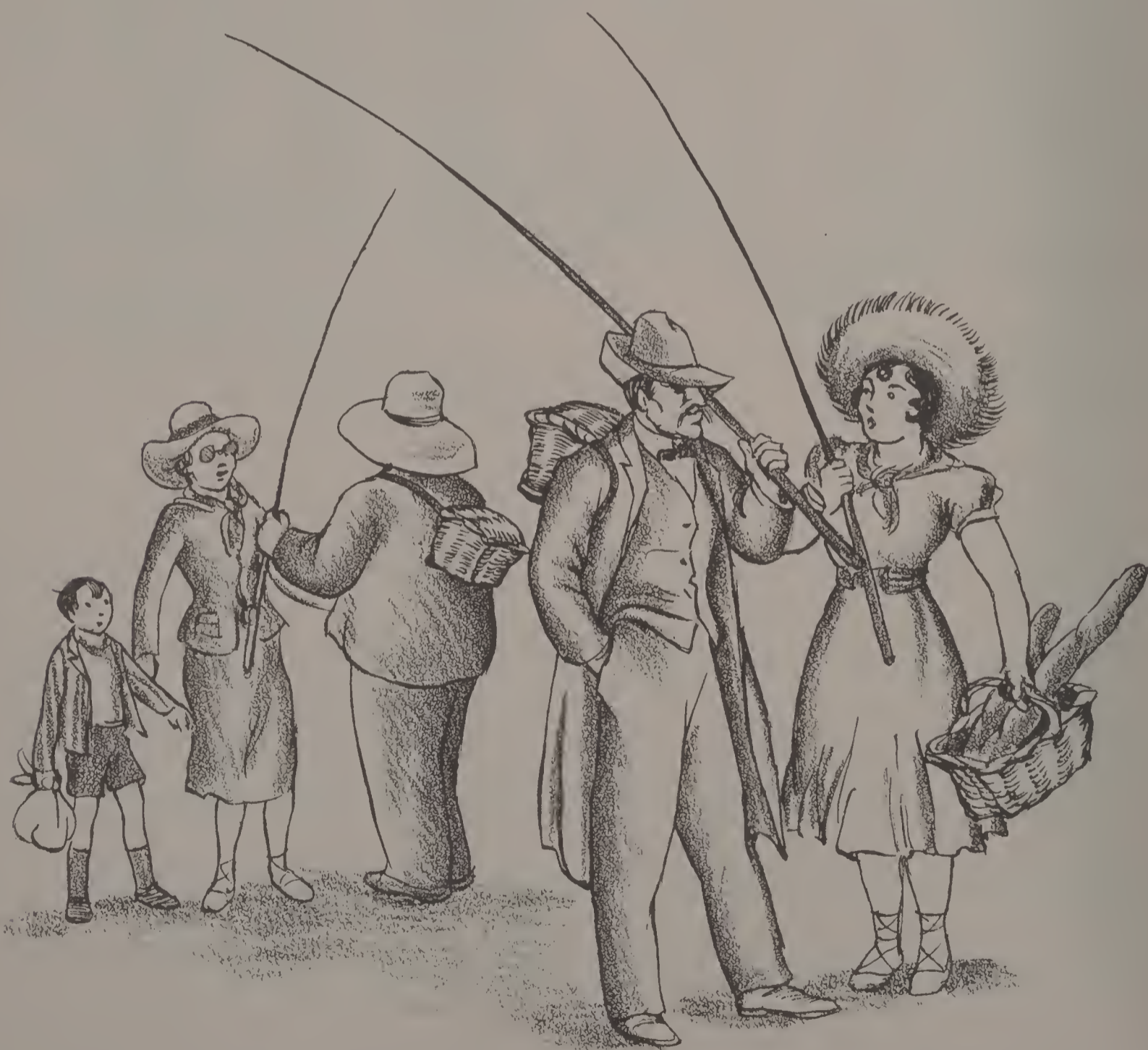


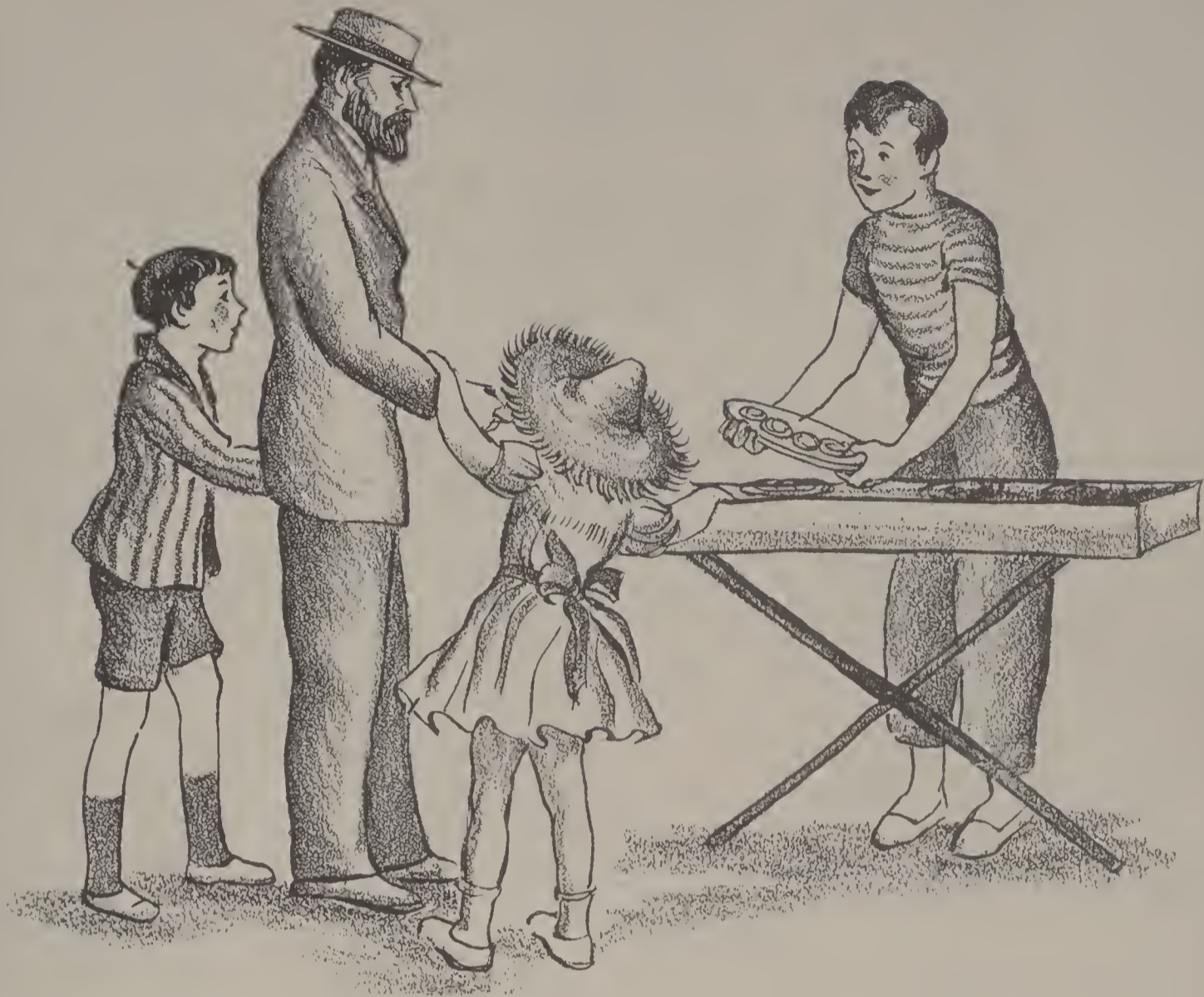
clams, mussels, and sea urchins on their stand. When the brown, prickly sea urchins were opened, the white meat inside looked very good.

René sat down on a box by his stand, and shouted to André, who was in charge of a tray of small pink lobsters. René was proud to be a man of business.

The bus from the railway rattled into the street and fishing parties climbed down from it. René thought they looked very funny in their sun goggles and big, flopping hats. Automobiles and motorcycles roared up to the hotel and soon the street was full of noisy people.

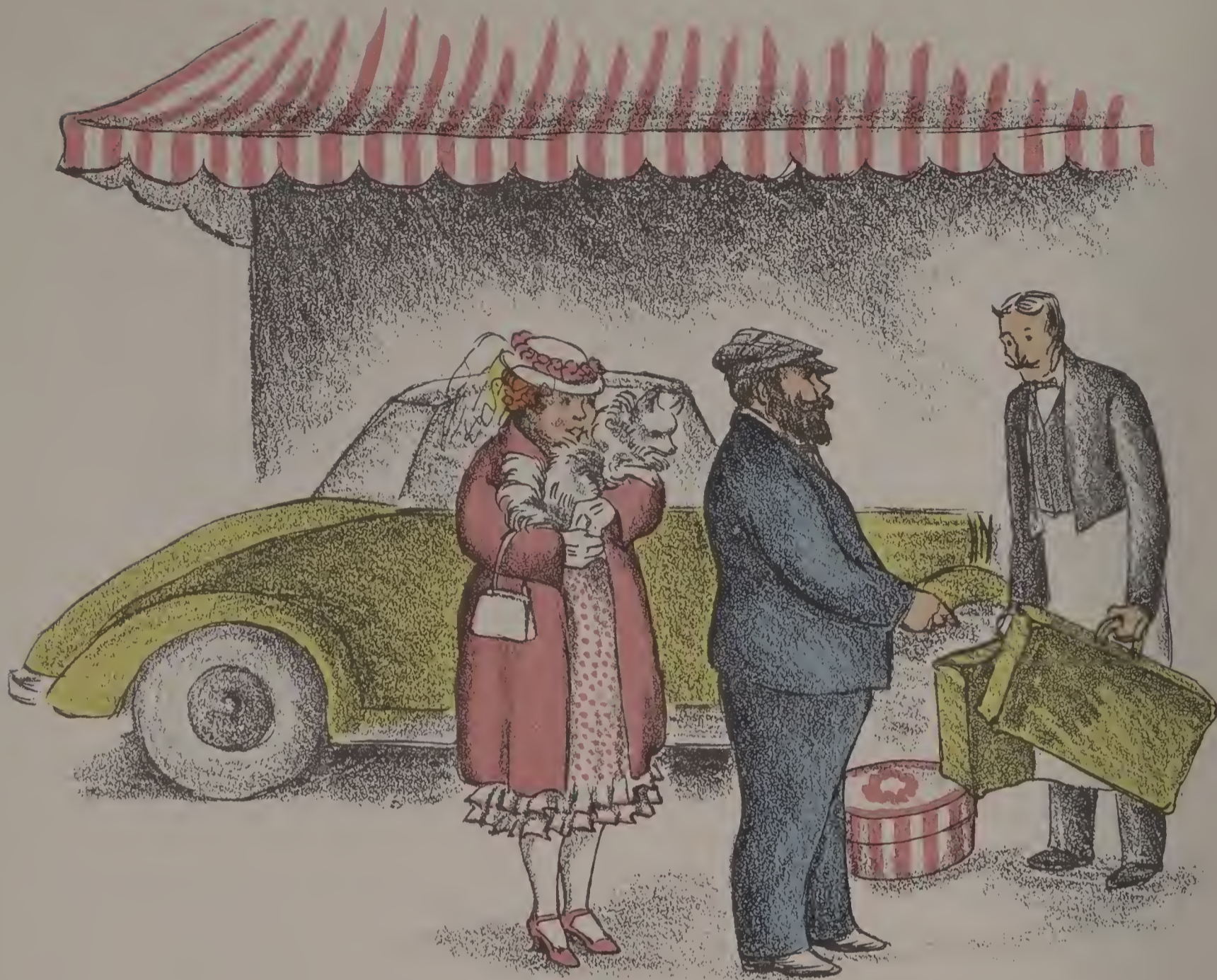
René stood up and piped in a shrill voice, “Fruits of the sea, *Messieurs-dames*, fresh caught.”





A family party loaded with baskets and fishing rods stopped by his stand. "Papa," said a little girl, pulling at her father's coat, "please buy me some clams."

So the father bought plates of René's seafood for the whole family. They sat down at tables on the sidewalk to eat their fruits of the sea and have something to drink.



Just then René saw a fine yellow automobile drive up to the hotel. A black-bearded man climbed out of it. He was so fat he could hardly see over his stomach. After him came a very plump woman with a fluffy white dog in her arms.

“Look, André,” called René. “Did you see that pretty *tou-tou*?”

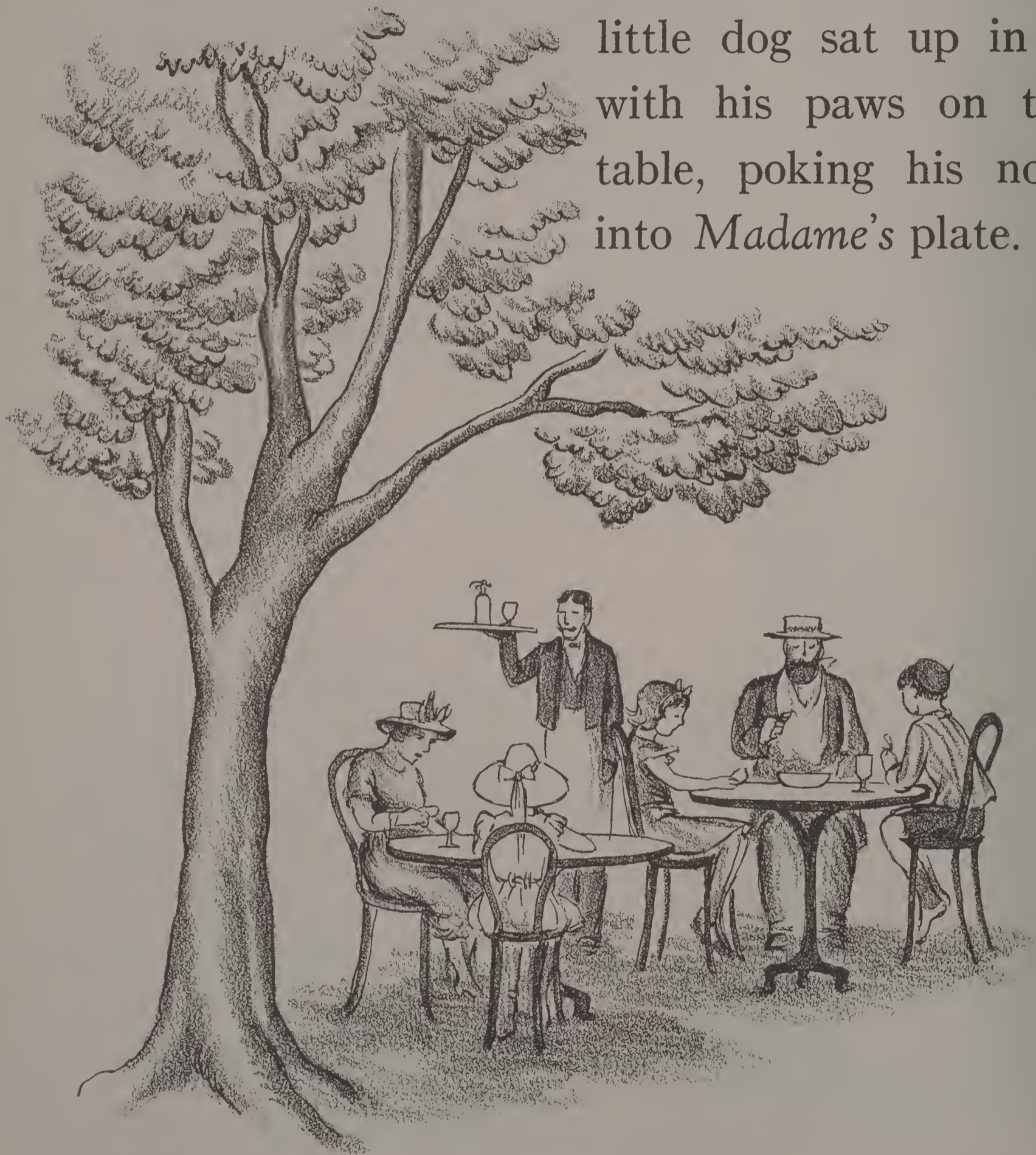
“Yes, and did you see Ange carry their bags into the hotel? They are going to stay. Maybe we can make friends with the *tou-tou*.” This is a name French people give to all small pet dogs.

René was so busy selling his seafood that he could not see what became of the fat gentleman and his wife with her *tou-tou*. Then suddenly he saw them coming straight toward him. René smiled all over his face and called, “Fruits of the sea, *Monsieur-dame*. Will you buy?”



Monsieur bought a plate of mussels for Madame and one of sea urchins for himself. They sat down at a table under the trees. Then René's eyes opened wide with surprise, for he heard Madame order a chair for the *tou-tou*. The

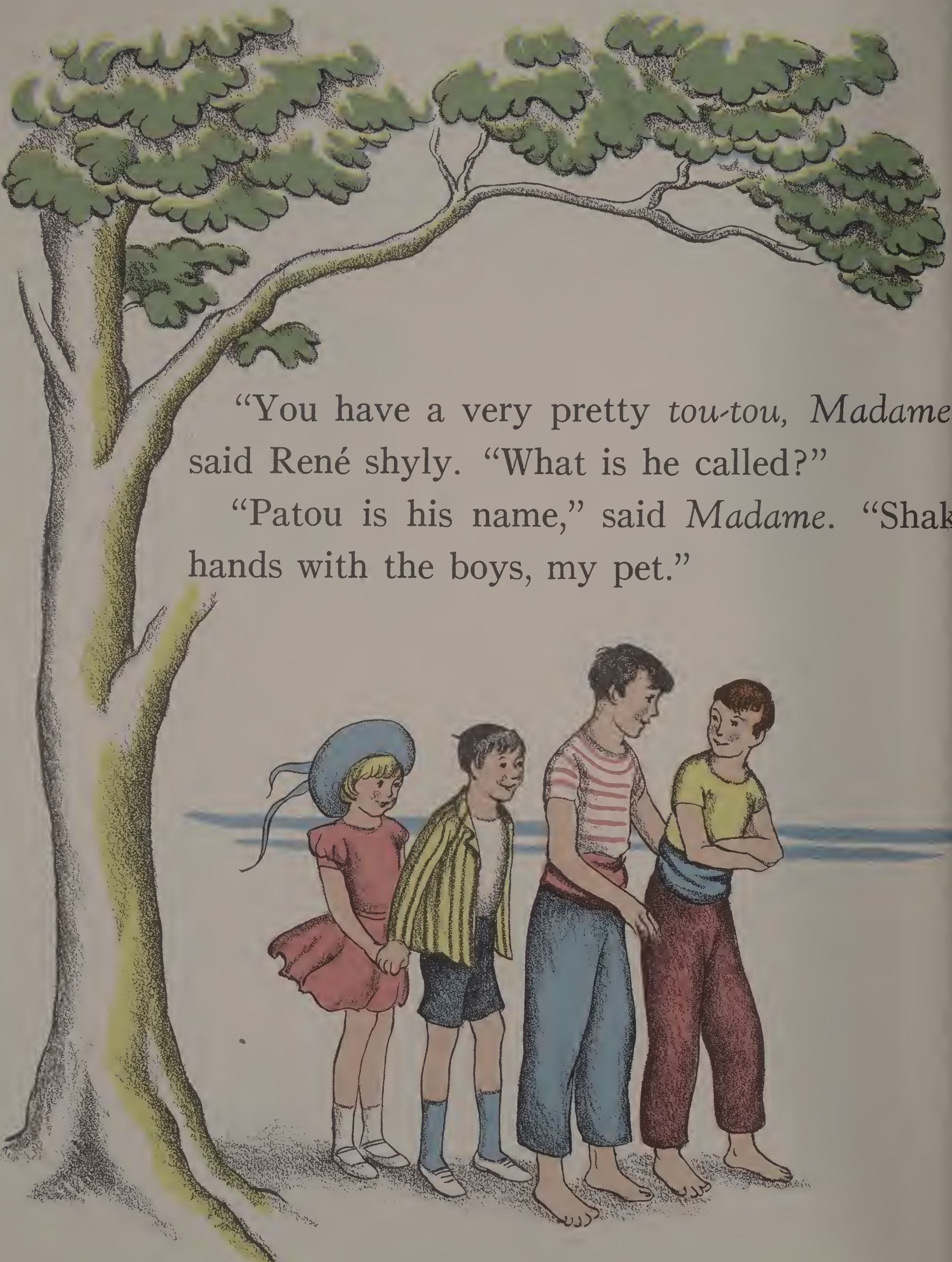
little dog sat up in it with his paws on the table, poking his nose into Madame's plate.





“Now, now, little one,” cooed *Madame*, shaking her finger at him, “you don’t like mussels but you shall have something nice. Waiter, bring a saucer of milk.”

The *tou-tou* sat up and lapped the milk, taking bits of bread soaked in it from *Madame*’s fingers. René and André, who had sold all their wares, crept up to the table and stood watching.



“You have a very pretty *tou-tou*, *Madame*,”
said René shyly. “What is he called?”

“Patou is his name,” said *Madame*. “Shake
hands with the boys, my pet.”



But Patou drew back and yapped in a sharp, high voice. He had two round black eyes and a sharp, black nose, like three dots in the silky white fluff of his head.



“Bad one, you are not polite,” scolded *Madame*. She tucked the little dog under her arm and walked away with the fat *Monsieur*.

Then René remembered that he was hungry and that *Maman* would be waiting to hear how much he had sold. He went skipping home, jingling the money in his bag. He saw Papa’s boat sailing in and thought, “Good business for Papa, too.”

René poured out the money on the table for *Maman* to admire. “See, *Maman*,” he said, “I sold every single thing.”

“Good for you,” said Papa who had just come in. “Maybe you will be a man of business instead of a fisherman.”

“Oh, no, Papa, I’m going to fish with you,” said René seriously.

Papa took down the yellow jar and emptied the money on the table. He added René’s coins and the money he had made taking people for boat rides. Then he counted it all, coin by coin. Such a lot of copper sous and silver francs!



“We still need fifty francs,” he said. “Alas, how long it takes to save money.”

“Never mind,” said René. “Saint Pierre will help us.”

“And at the moment we have *bouillabaisse* for dinner because it’s a holiday,” said *Maman* cheerfully, as she set a great dish of spicy-smelling soup on the table.

Bouillabaisse for dinner, money for the boat engine, a holiday afternoon playing with the boys, what a good day for René!

Next morning André and René ran over to the



hotel hoping to see Patou. Sure enough, *Madame* was having breakfast at the outdoor café. Patou walked around on the table, sniffing at *Madame's* coffee cup, snapping up lumps of sugar from her fingers.

The boys stood and gazed at this spoiled pet, and the beggar cats sat in a row staring too. They envied this dog who had everything given to him and who did not have to fight for his food.

“*Bon jour, my friends,*” said *Madame* smiling.



“Do you like my Patou? Is he not sweet?”

The boys stepped up and replied politely,
“Good morning.”

Patou stared at them with his bright black eyes. René gently touched the dog’s head and Patou leaped up and licked his face in a friendly way.

“Come, Patou, play with us,” coaxed André.

The little dog waved his fluffy tail gaily, but just as the boys thought they had won him, a

tootling horn was heard. Patou leaped to the ground, barking furiously, and the boys ran to the street to see what was happening.

Around the corner came a blue wagon drawn by an old white horse. A man led the horse and tooted on the horn.

“La cirque, la cirque!” cried the boys, and off they went after the wagon. Boys and girls came running from the houses to follow the circus wagon. It stopped in the little park by the sea.

The circus man blew a loud blast on his horn





and made a low bow. "Welcome, my children," he said. "Tonight there will be a great show. You will see the cleverest trained animals in the world, and circus performers wonderful to behold. Tell your mothers and fathers to come to the show."



René and André watched while the circus man dragged long planks from the wagon, which he and the acrobat set up under the trees for benches. Then out jumped a nannygoat and after her another *tou-tou*! He was a curly white poodle, bigger than Patou, and very friendly.

“Behold Monsieur Riquetine, prince of clever poodles,” said the circus man. “Shake hands with the gentlemen, Riquetine.”

The poodle sat up on his hind legs and offered a paw first to one boy, then the other, yapping excitedly.

“Oh, how clever he is, the little *tou-tou!*” cried the boys, squatting down beside him. Riquetine licked their faces and shook hands over and over.

“Wait until you see him act tonight,” said the circus man, rolling his eyes. “It will astonish you.”

He tied the nannygoat to a wagon wheel which made her sulky and she refused to make friends with the boys. Then the circus man brought out a small hand organ and played a merry tune.

“Now, who wants to earn five sous playing the hand organ for me tonight?” he asked.

“Oh, let me,” begged René.

André looked disappointed, so the circus man went on, “I also need someone to fetch wood and water for my wife so that she can make a fire for soup and heat water for our washing. I’ll give you five sous for that work, my other friend.”

The circus man’s wife smiled at them and her husband said gaily, “She has to work now, but wait until you see what a beautiful circus lady she will be tonight.”



As soon as it was dark all the people of the village came to the show. The benches were set up under the trees and gas flares were lighted on the tops of poles.

Mothers, fathers and children sat on the benches while the bigger children sat on the ground in front. *Madame* and her husband were there with Patou, who was much excited by the lights and the crowd.

The circus man came bounding into the circle. He was dressed like a clown, in ballooning checked trousers and a silly sailor hat. His face was painted white with a big red mouth and red spots on his cheeks.

After him pranced the acrobat dressed in yellow tights. And who would have believed that the lovely lady in blue silk tights who followed, was the circus man's wife for whom André had carried wood and water!





René proudly played the hand organ while the circus began. Madame and the acrobat jumped from a springboard and turned somersaults in the air. They tossed each other about like rubber balls, and finally with a big spring, Madame landed on the acrobat's shoulders and proudly stood there.

Next the acrobat twisted himself into knots as though he were made of macaroni. He ended

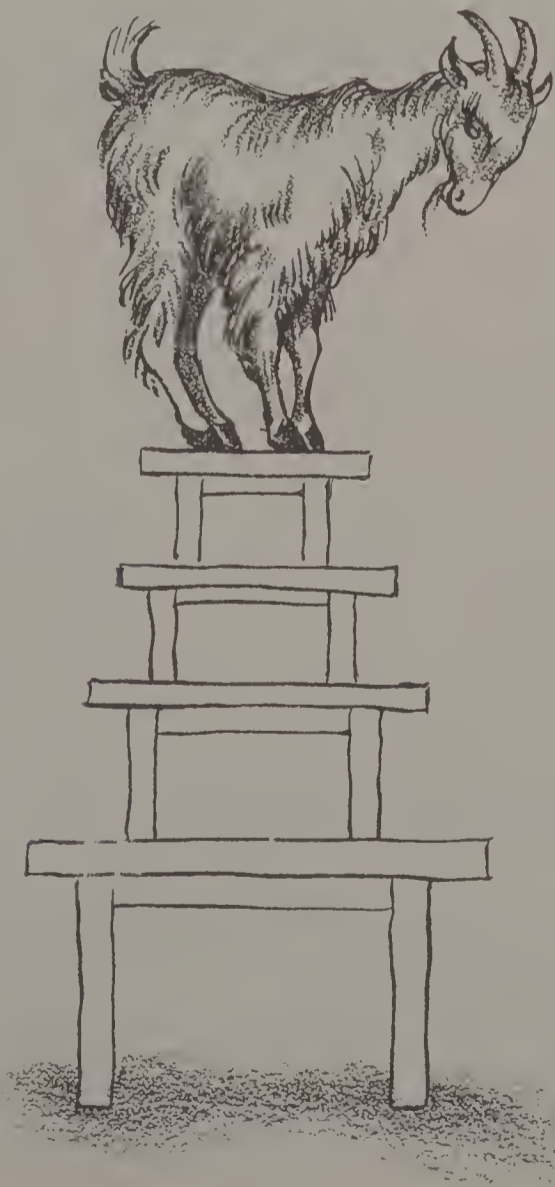


by wriggling himself through a barrel while it was rolling around. Then the circus lady danced on top of a great ball, rolling it all around the circle under her lively feet. All this while the clown pranced around, chattering and cracking jokes.

Ninon the nannygoat had the next act. Monsieur made her climb up on a pile of tables until she stood on a tiny one at the top with her little hoofs close together.

“Now bow to the ladies and gentlemen, Ninon,” cried the circus man.

But Ninon did not like the squeals of the children, so she gave a little kick, and down came the tables with a crash! Ninon raced around the circle, butting at the children, until the circus man caught her and dragged her off to the wagon in disgrace.



Riquetine the poodle now danced into the ring. He was all curly and white, and wore a blue bow on his collar.

“Ah, the pretty *tou-tou*,” cried the children, and Patou, on *Madame's* lap, nearly burst himself barking.



Riquetine danced to the hand organ music, he played dead, and ran races, jumping over hurdles set up by the circus man. Patou barked louder and louder. He did not like to see this other dog being praised and petted.

“Now, *Messieurs-dames*,” cried the circus man, “you see this big hoop, and you see the paper stretched tight over it? Watch now, and see what our clever Riquetine will do!”



Riquetine galloped around the ring, gave a great spring to reach the hoop which the clown held high, and burst right through the paper.



“*Bon, bon,*” shouted the people, clapping their hands in approval.

Just as Riquetine stood on his hind legs to

make a bow Patou flew from *Madame's* lap into the ring and jumped on Riquetine.

The poodle's furious barking said plainly, "How dare you spoil my bow?" And he rolled Patou over and over, growling with rage.

"Oh, oh, my darling will be killed," screamed *Madame*.





René jumped over the children in front of him, ran into the circle and seized Patou. The circus man pulled Riquetine away. René carried a struggling Patou back to his mistress.

“Come here, my naughty one,” she cried, seizing the little dog in her arms. “Are you hurt, my pet?”

“He is safe, *Madame*,” said René. “But I am sure Riquetine did not want to hurt him. He is a nice dog, but you see Patou spoiled his bow.”

“No, no, he is not a nice dog, but you are a good boy to save my Patou. Give him a franc, Papa,” she said to her husband. The fat *Monsieur* took a silver franc from his pocket and gave it to René with a smile.



“Oh, many thanks, *Monsieur*,” said René, thinking to himself, “here’s more money for the boat engine.”

The circus man was very angry because Patou had spoiled the end of his show with a dog fight. People crowded around him, telling him how sorry they were that it had happened. The old women shook their heads, saying, “Indeed, that little *tou-tou* of *Madame’s* is not at all well-behaved.”



Riquetine hid behind his master, feeling that he, too, was in disgrace. The boys patted Riquetine and told him it was not his fault. They were sorry for the poor little circus dog, but they loved Patou also, although he had been naughty.

Next morning René and André did not wait for their father's boats to come in, so eager were they for news of the two little *tou-tous* they loved so much. They hurried to the park by the sea. but alas, it was empty. The circus was gone.





“Oh dear,” said André sadly, “I’m afraid the circus man went away because he was angry about that naughty Patou. Maybe he won’t bring his circus to our village again.”

“And Riquetine was such a nice dog, and I did want to play with him again,” added René a little sadly. “But let’s see what our bad Patou is doing anyway.”



They started toward the hotel, but as they reached the café, a great commotion broke out. *Madame* rushed from the hotel screaming, followed by her husband waving his hands and shouting. Ange, the waiter, followed after them, flapping a napkin distractedly.

“Patou is gone,” wailed *Madame*. “That wicked circus man has stolen him.”

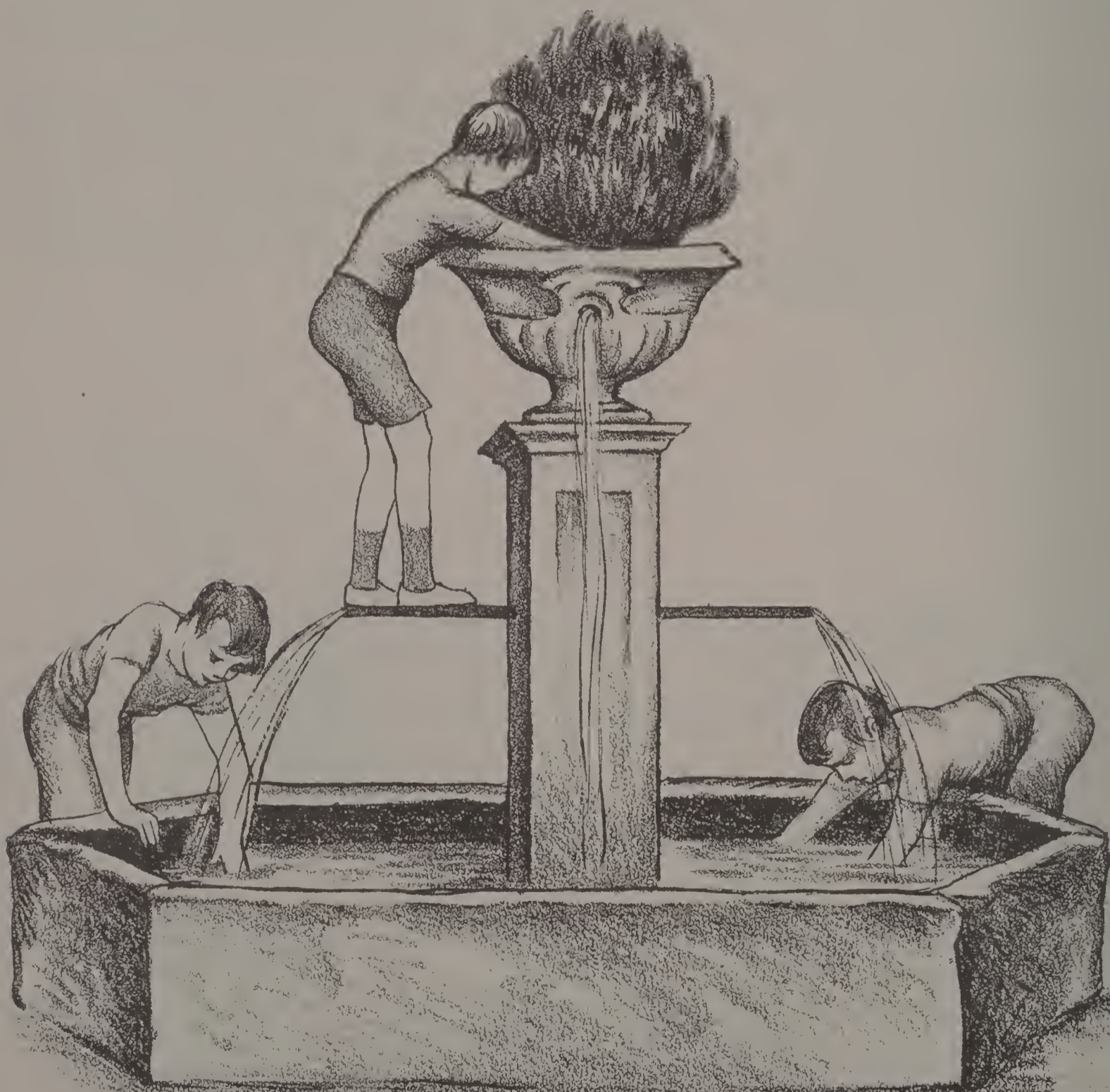
Patou lost? The boys ran up to hear about it.

“We’ll look for Patou, *Madame*,” cried René, “but I don’t believe the circus man stole him. Maybe he followed the wagon. Let’s look on the road outside the village, André.”

But though they searched all along the road, calling and whistling, no Patou answered them. When they came back Ange pointed to a paper tacked on the café wall and said, “See there, my braves, *Monsieur* offers fifty francs for the return of the dog. Off with you now, there’s a fortune for you.”



Fifty francs! Just what Papa needed for the boat engine, thought René. But everyone must have a chance to win the reward. So René and André told the news to their friends, and the band of boys started off to find Patou. They





looked in the boats, under the counters of shops, and in the church. They went out to the beach and looked under the rocks. They even peered into the fountain in the village square, but not a sign of Patou did they find.



Night came, and Patou was still lost. René could hardly sleep, for he heard a storm wind howling outside and thought how cold and hungry Patou must be, somewhere in the darkness.

Early in the morning René was dressed and out on the sea wall, calling Patou. The sky was grey and waves dashed against the wall.



“I must find Patou,” he thought. He looked up at the statue of Saint Pierre standing in his niche on the house wall. “Now, Saint Pierre,” he said, “please be a good saint and tell me where to look. You know this is your birthday and that we shall make a big bonfire for you tonight.”

René remembered how the fishermen asked Saint Pierre to help them on the sea, and to protect them from storm spirits which were supposed to live in the woods at the top of a tall cliff beyond the village. The pines on top of the cliff were tossing in the wind at the moment, and suddenly René had an idea.

“I do believe Patou is on that cliff,” he thought. “If he followed the circus wagon, he might have run off the road into the woods.”

René ran down the road toward the cliff, while the wind roared in the olive trees alongside and the sky grew dark. He was afraid of the dark pine woods, but he turned into the path just the





same, climbing up toward the top of the cliff.

Calling Patou, René searched under rocks and bushes while thunder crashed overhead. The shrieking wind sounded like the voices of the storm spirits he had heard about, and his heart beat fast with fear.

At last he heard a faint bark, and stooping down, he found a small cave under some great rocks. He wriggled in and there was Patou, hiding in the darkness.

“Poor little one, poor little beast,” he said. “How did you get so far away? And see, your poor little leg is hurt, and your pretty white coat is all dirty.”



Patou snuggled close to him, and boy and dog took comfort from each other while the storm howled over their heads. Presently the thunder and rain were over. René crawled out of the cave with Patou in his arms, and ran down the path



as fast as he could go. He did not dare to look behind, for he still heard voices in the wind. He trotted on down the long white road, tired and panting, until at last they were back in the safe little village. René staggered into the hotel carrying Patou. There sat *Madame*, looking very sad.



“My darling pet, you are found,” she exclaimed joyfully, seizing Patou in her arms. Then she hugged René too and gave him a smacking kiss. “Where did you find him, my good, kind boy?” she asked.

“He was away off on the cliff, *Madame*,” said René. “And see, his poor little leg is hurt.”

Ange and the fat *Monsieur*, and Marie the maid, all gathered around praising René. *Madame's* husband took from his pocket ten pieces of crisp paper money and gave them to René.

“There is the reward, my friend, and well do you deserve it,” he said kindly.



Ten pretty five-franc paper notes. Fifty francs! René had never before held such important money in his hand. He was used to copper sous and silver francs. He felt of each note, and the crisp paper rattled in his fingers. Just pieces of paper with pictures on them, and yet they meant enough money to buy the boat engine!

René looked with shining eyes at the stout, kindly gentleman, and at *Madame*, who was hugging Patou and smiling at the boy who had found her pet.

“Many thanks, *Monsieur-dame*,” he stam-



mered. Then he ran out of the hotel and across the village at top speed. He burst into his house with the glad cry, “*Maman*, fifty francs! Now we shall have the boat engine!”



“*Mon dieu*, little son, what have you been doing!” exclaimed his mother.

“I found Patou,” cried René, dancing around the room. “I got the reward—fifty francs. Saint Pierre told me where to look.”

Then what rejoicing there was in the tall pink house! Papa clapped René on the back and called him “brave man.”

“Tomorrow I shall go to Marseilles to buy the boat engine,” he said.

“Let me go too,” begged René.

“Yes, indeed, little son. You earned the fifty francs, and you shall help choose the engine.”

René rushed out to tell his friends the good news.

“Next time it will be your good luck, André,” he said. “Saint Pierre will arrange it. Now we must get wood to make him a splendid bonfire.”



The boys and girls ran about the village collecting wood for the bonfire. They heaped it in a big pile under the statue of Saint Pierre on the wall of René's house.

As soon as it was dark the fire was lighted. The rosy flames leaped up before the kind saint.



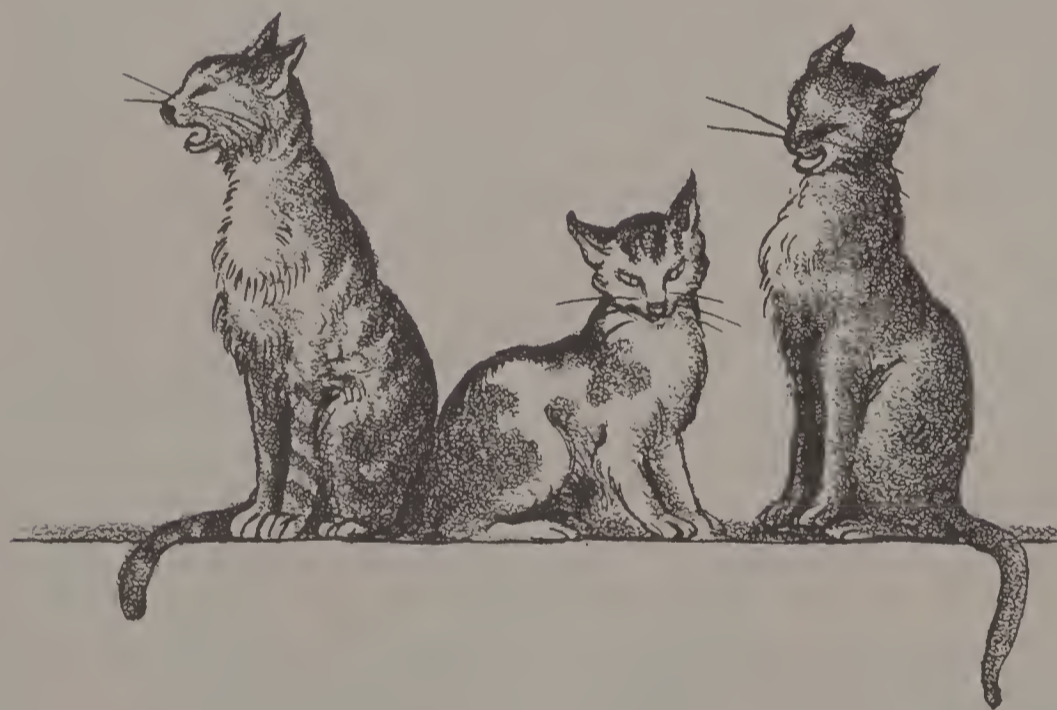


The boys and girls made a big circle around the fire, dancing and singing. *Madame* and *Monsieur* were there with Patou, who took his part in the celebration by barking furiously. The cats on



the sea wall joined in with their wailing night song. Round and round danced the boys and girls, weaving in and out in a long chain.

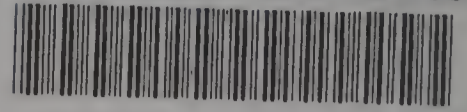
“*Vive* Saint Pierre!” they cried.







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