

tugged a paper from the bag, hitched the strap higher on his shoulder, and pushed off.

When he arrived at Cedar and Pine, he found Helmut licking his fingers and looking anxious. "I almost didn't wait," he scolded, offering Anthony a butterscotch Lifesaver. "I'm in a hurry tonight, you know."

"Sorry," Anthony mumbled, accepting the treat.

"Collection troubles?"

"Not really. But I haven't tackled Mrs. Waithwort yet."

"Oh, oh." Helmut rolled his eyes sympathetically. "Say, do you think you could turn in my list and money and collect my wages tonight?"

Anthony looked at his friend, considering, then shrugged. "I suppose. Do you think Jerry would mind?"

"I doubt it. He knows we sometimes help each other out. As long as the job gets done, he doesn't care who does it."

"He did say that once, but I'm not sure he meant handing in the money." Anthony watched a tawny cat pick its way around a puddle on the sidewalk. "I'll do it," he agreed.

"Then I can finish my route and go straight home," Helmut said gratefully, looking at his watch. "I'll meet you at Queen by the National Bank in half an hour, all right?"

"Right," Anthony agreed, and, brushing off his pants, he hoisted his bag and pedaled off in the opposite direction.

The half hour sneaked by more quickly than he had thought it should. He had to step inside at Mrs. George's house and wait while she finished a telephone call. And the Laske's retriever would not let him near the door. He had to jangle his bicycle bell for several minutes while fending the dog off with the paper before someone came