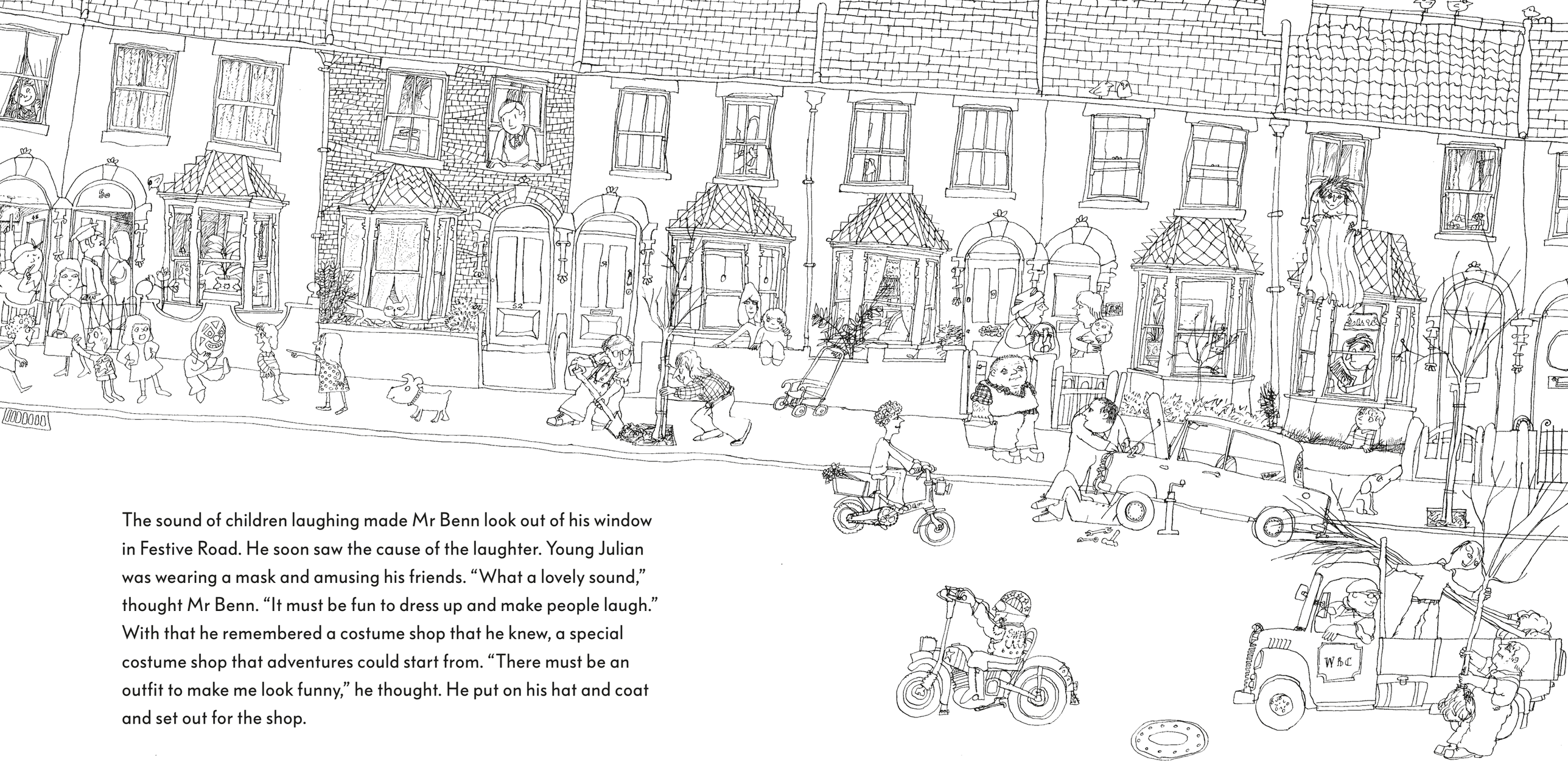


MR BENN BIG TOP

DAVID McKEE

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The sound of children laughing made Mr Benn look out of his window in Festive Road. He soon saw the cause of the laughter. Young Julian was wearing a mask and amusing his friends. “What a lovely sound,” thought Mr Benn. “It must be fun to dress up and make people laugh.” With that he remembered a costume shop that he knew, a special costume shop that adventures could start from. “There must be an outfit to make me look funny,” he thought. He put on his hat and coat and set out for the shop.

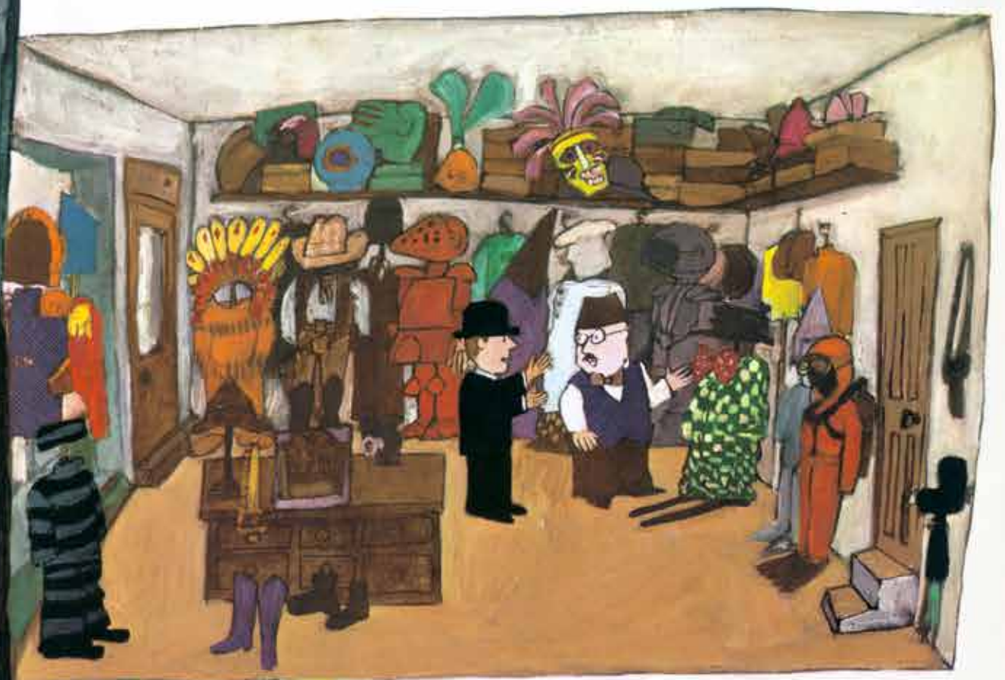


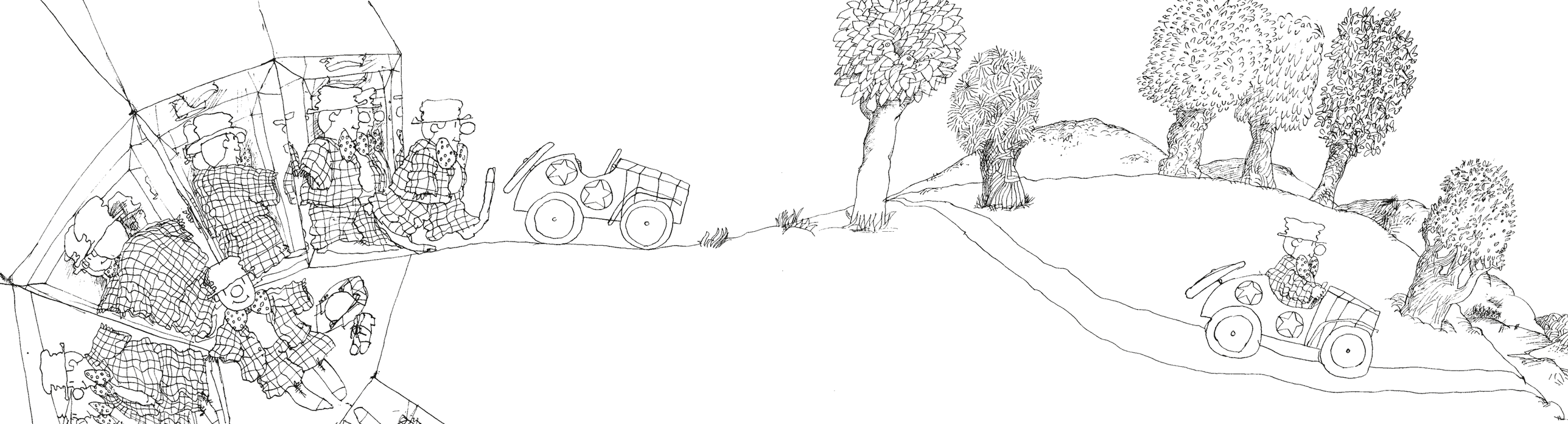
As he walked, Mr Benn remembered adventures he'd had from the little shop. He reached the door and went in. When he saw the costumes again he almost decided to try something exciting instead of funny but before he did, as if by magic, the shopkeeper appeared.

"Good morning, sir," he said. "What would you like to try today?"

"Well," said Mr Benn, "I rather thought I'd like to make people laugh." The shopkeeper smiled and showed Mr Benn a baggy suit with a big bow tie.

"See if it fits, sir," said the shopkeeper and as Mr Benn took the suit towards the changing room he added, "This goes with it," and handed him a red false nose.





In the changing room Mr Benn put on the clothes. The suit was too big, the shoes were huge but when he put on the false nose and looked in the mirror he burst out laughing. “Perfect,” he said and walked to the door, not the one to the shop but the one marked “Trying Room”. “I expect I’ll come out into a circus,” he thought.

He was wrong. He came out into open countryside. Nearby was a car, obviously intended for Mr Benn. It could only be a clown’s car. Mr Benn jumped in and set off down the road.

At first it was just a pleasant country drive but as Mr Benn approached a bend in the road the car started to behave oddly. It bounced and banged and steamed and squeaked and wriggled and rattled and behaved like, well, like a clown's car. At the same time he came to a line of circus vehicles packed along the road. There was just room to pass.

