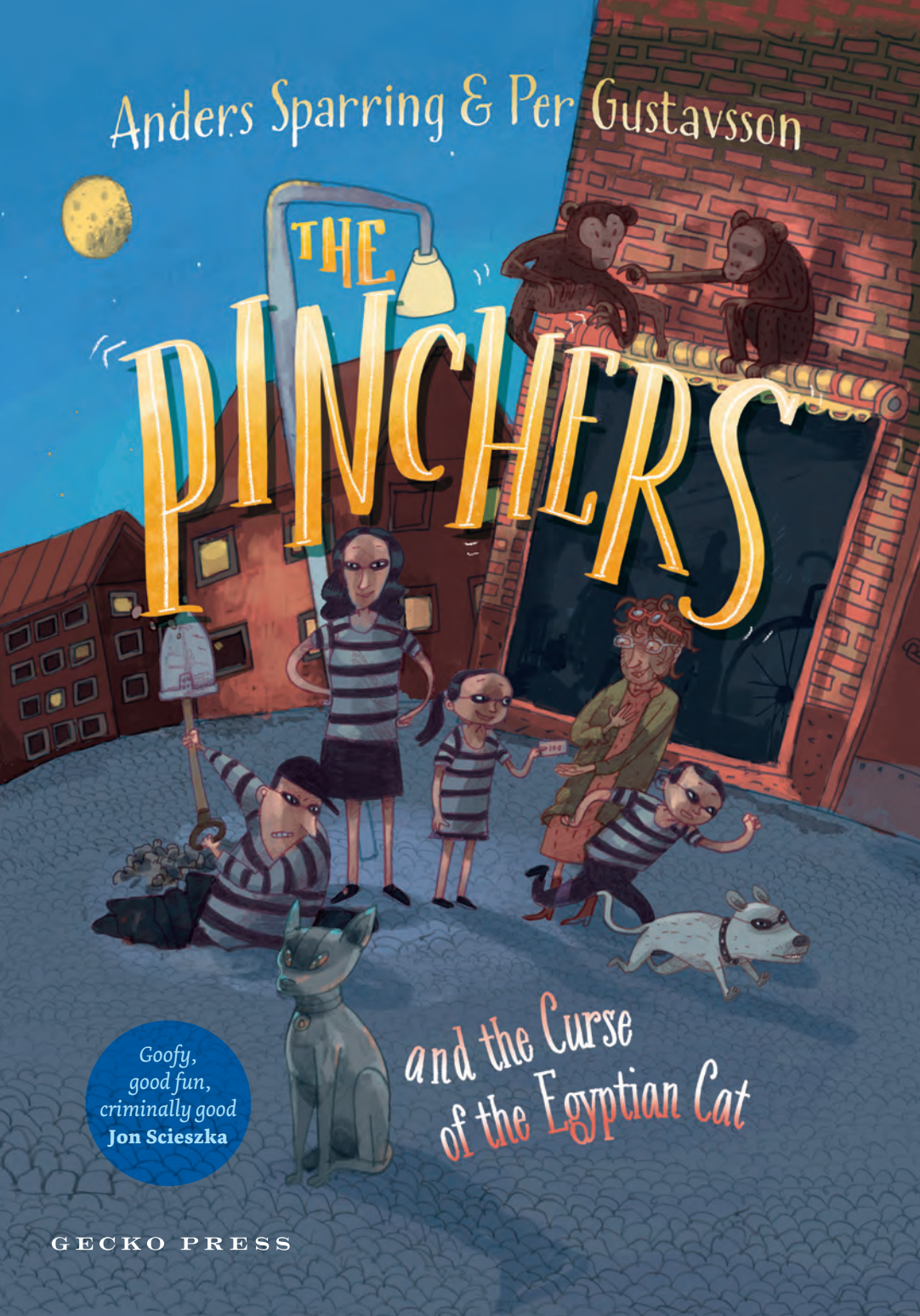
Anders Sparring & Per Gustavsson

THE PINCHERS



and the Curse of the Egyptian Cat

Goofy, good fun, criminally good
Jon Scieszka

GECKO PRESS

The Pinchers and the Curse of the Egyptian Cat



Anders Sparring & Per Gustavsson

THE PINCHERS
and the Curse of the Egyptian Cat

Translated by Julia Marshall



GECKO PRESS

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Meet the Pinchers





Rob Pincher

Job: Thief

Tools: Crowbar, dynamite ("The more people can see where you've been, the better.")

Loves to steal: The man next door's newspaper, safes, Theo's socks

Motto: "If you just give a child enough love, the thief (in them) will emerge."





Nic Pincher

Job: Thief

Tools: Nic seldom needs a tool. She is so thin, she can get in almost anywhere. And if there's nowhere to squeeze through, she can always follow Rob.

Loves to steal: Anything that glitters and shines, Theo's socks

Motto: "All that glitters is not gold, but it's still nice when things are shiny."





Ellen (Criminellen) Pincher

Job: When Criminellen grows up, she wants to be a thief, just like Rob and Nic.

Tools: Lock pick, slingshot

Loves to steal: Mints, toys

Motto: "Why pay for things when stealing is fun and it's free."





Theo Pincher

Job: When Theo grows up, he wants to be a police officer. (But Rob and Nic don't know that yet.)

Tools: Keys (If he doesn't have keys, he knocks at the door and waits till someone says, "Please come in.")

Loves to steal: Theo doesn't steal. But sometimes he borrows Rob's and Nic's socks without asking.

Motto: "A clean conscience is the best pillow."





Sherlock

Job: Dog (guard dog)

Tools: Sherlock is a dog. He likes barking and pulling on his lead. He doesn't need tools.

Loves to steal: Anything he can eat

Motto: "Woof, Woof, Woof!"

"Shuddup Sherlock! No one understands you anyway!"

"Woof!"





Stola Pincher
(Theo and Ellen's grandma)



Job: Retired thief

Tools: Tiny, sweet cookies (ideally ones you shouldn't eat)

Loves to steal: Anything that glitters and shines (just like Nic)

Motto: "Tittle-tattlers have no friends."



Paul Eessman (lives next to the Pincher family)

Job: Police officer

Tools: Magnifying glass, fingerprint equipment, pocket light

Loves to steal: NOTHING! GOOD GRIEF, PAUL IS A POLICE OFFICER, POLICE DON'T STEAL, POLICE UN-STEAL!

Motto: "No one turns good from sitting in jail, so it's best to stop the thief before the crime is committed."



Long ago, in ancient Egypt, there was a very rich king called Tuttan-K. When Tuttan died, all his gold and diamonds went with him into the tomb. Tuttan-K's tomb lay inside a great pyramid, where he could rest for eternity. To prevent thieves from getting their paws on Tuttan's treasure, the tomb was guarded by a sacred plaster cat. If any thief tried to enter the tomb, the poor thing would suffer a terrible curse. The Curse of the Egyptian Cat.

Beware!



This story includes:

Shoplifting

Whistling

A mysterious old woman

An unfortunate accident

A curse

Tricky clues

Cute monkeys

A mean zookeeper

More whistling

A reasonably happy ending





Chapter One

THEO CAN'T WHISTLE

Theo Pincher has a sore stomach. He's frozen, even though it's warm outside. His hands are shaking. His legs are jelly.

What's taking Ellen so long?

Theo sneaks another anxious glance through the shop window. Kids are crowded around a woman with yellow teeth. That's Tilly Tender, who owns Tilly's Tongue Fizzers. Tilly eats candy every day. Even for breakfast.

But right now, she has no time to eat anything. Right now, she's busy filling small rustly paper bags with creamy chocolates and super-sour lemon balls.

She's so busy, she doesn't see a small girl in a stripy T-shirt and robber mask, putting gobstoppers and lemon balls straight into her pockets. The girl's name is Ellen Pincher, and she is Theo's little sister. (Her real name is Criminellen. But it takes so long to say, everyone just says Ellen.)

Theo's stomach hurts even more. Why does Ellen have to steal treats all the time? Why can't she buy



them like everyone else? Why does she have to be such a criminal?

At any moment, an angry adult could turn up, or an angry dog. Or a police officer! In which case, Theo has promised to whistle loudly, so Ellen has time to get away.

Theo is good at many things. He's good at brushing his teeth and going to bed on time. He can read thick books without pictures, and he can operate the washing machine and the TV remote control.

But when Theo tries to whistle, what mostly comes out is spit. The only sound is a pathetic *pfff*. Theo hopes that Ellen will hear the pfffing if anyone comes. Maybe if he blows harder?

Theo puts a finger at each corner of his mouth and blows a little, testing.

"Pffff!"

"Hi there, Theo!"

Behind Theo is Paul Eessman, Theo's friend, who lives next door. Who is also a police officer. Theo sticks his fingers in his mouth again. This time he blows as hard as he can. "PFFFF!"



Paul Eessman smiles kindly. “It’s a matter of technique,” he says. “Try this.”

He straightens Theo’s fingers. They need to be a little further apart. Right into the corners of the mouth. “Like that. Now try!”

“Pffff.”

“You have to tense your lips too. Try tightening them.” Theo tightens his lips: “Pffff.”

“Pucker them,” says Paul. “Think of something sour.”

Theo thinks of super-sour lemon balls: “Pffff!”

Paul Eessman shakes his head. “Watch, Theo. This is how you do it.” Paul puts a finger in each corner of his mouth and takes a big breath. “Lisshhnn!”

“What?”

Paul Eessman takes his fingers out of his mouth. “Listen!” He puts his fingers back in. And blows.

Theo has never heard anything so loud. Paul Eessman’s whistle is as sharp as barbed wire: “PUUIIIIIIII!”



Inside Tilly's Tongue Fizzers, Ellen freezes, then rushes out to the street. "Come on, Theo!" she says, nipping away, quick as a silverfish.

"Wow, she was in a hurry," says Paul in surprise.

"True." Theo hopes Paul won't ask why Ellen was in such a hurry. If he does, Theo will have to tell him that Ellen has just stolen all those gobstoppers. Not only is Theo bad at whistling. He can't lie either.



Luckily, Paul has no more to say about Ellen. He wants to talk about whistling. How to hold your fingers and so on. "Try again," he says.

"I'll try again later," says Theo. "Thanks for the tips!"

And he runs after Ellen.

