

Raúl

the hero rat

in Palma



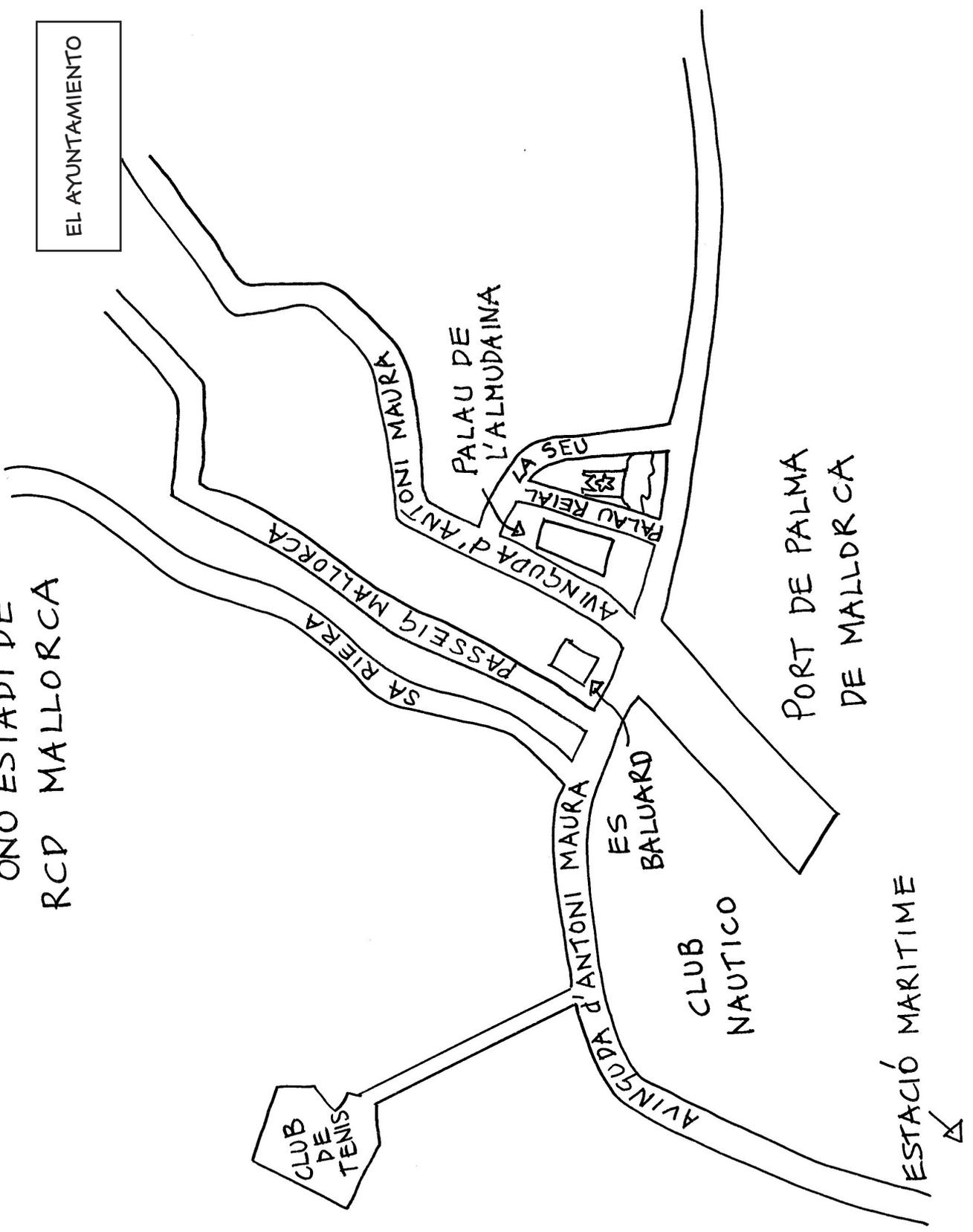
by
Gwendoline Boland

Drawings by
Colette Lambe

Plan of Palma

←
ONO ESTADI DE
RCD MALLORCA

EL AYUNTAMIENTO



CLUB DE TENIS

AVINGUDA D'ANTONI MAURA

ES BALUARD

CLUB NAUTICO

PORT DE PALMA DE MALLORCA

ESTACIÓ MARITIME

SA RIERA
PASSEIG MALLORCA

AVINGUDA D'ANTONI MAURA

PALAU DE L'ALMUDAINA

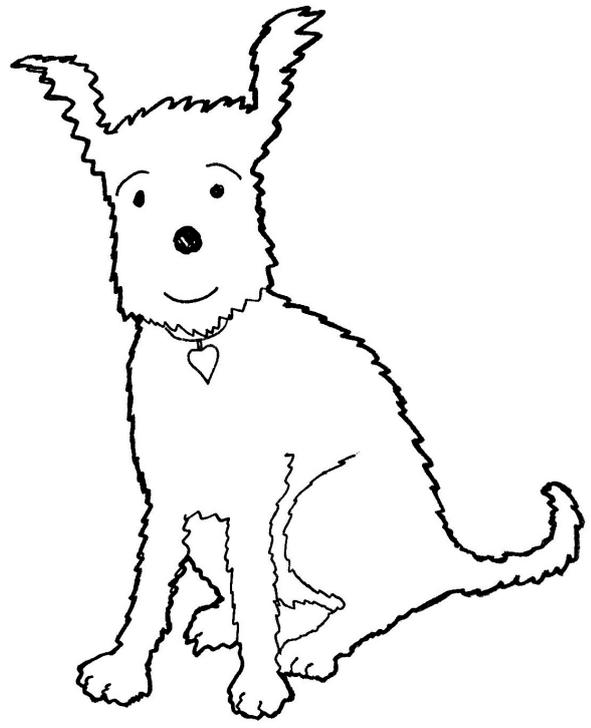
LA SEU
PALAU REIAL

EL AYUNTAMIENTO

Hi,
I'm la abuela
the children's
grandmother



This is Guido





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Robey and Rafa were despondent; they'd lost Raúl! Worse than lost him, he'd been stolen - kidnapped on the last day of their holiday in Palma de Mallorca!

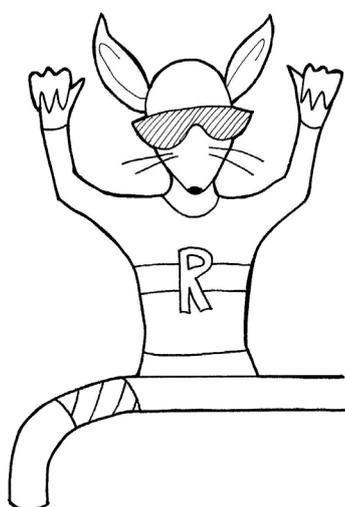
And now they were going home to the mainland without him - away from the island where they'd been swimming, cycling, playing tennis and messing about on boats.



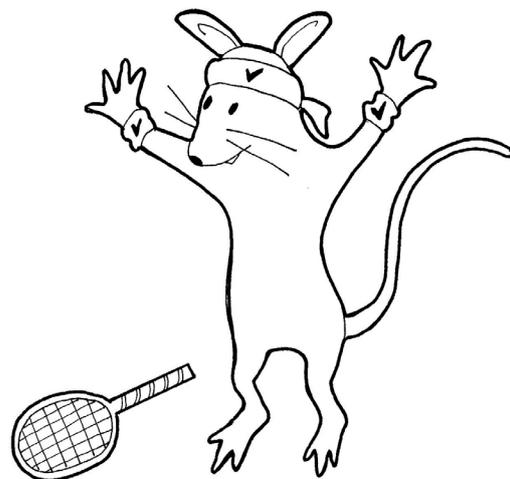
The twins were sharing memories of Raúl's remarkable rat abilities.

"He could hold his breath underwater for fifteen minutes; he was an excellent diver," said Rafa.

"Raúl was a champion cyclist," Robey said. "He flattened himself to the crossbar while I pedalled, then flung up his little paws like he was being cheered."



"He was a tennis STAR," choked Rafa, "the way he sprang over the net with the ball and shouldered it in the right direction."



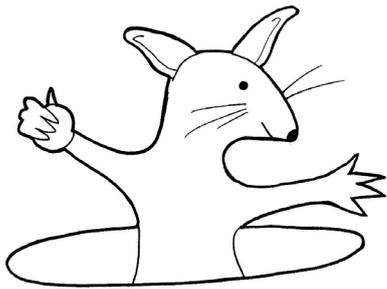
Raúl had been a natural seafarer; as Ship's Rat he scaled masts, flung ropes, swabbed decks and drank rum.

Raúl had been so much fun and now, the twins realised, they were talking about him in the past and going home without him. Dad was driving them onto the car ferry. Their sister, Maria-Cristina, wished they would stop crying but she had to hide her own red eyes by looking sideways out of the window.

"I'm sorry, boys, but we can't wait any longer," Dad said. "Your mother has to leave on an early flight tomorrow and we have to be home to look after baby Isabel"

Carmen, the children's mother, was a famous travel writer and she had stayed home in Madrid to work. She was due to start her next expedition and the family had to get back to care for Isabel.

Theirs was the last car onto the ferry. A mournful horn announced departure.



Now it was Dad's turn to remember Raúl. "He was a promising golfer. When I put him in the hole his little paws would shoot out and grab the ball. Without his help," Dad sobbed, "I'd never have won the championship."

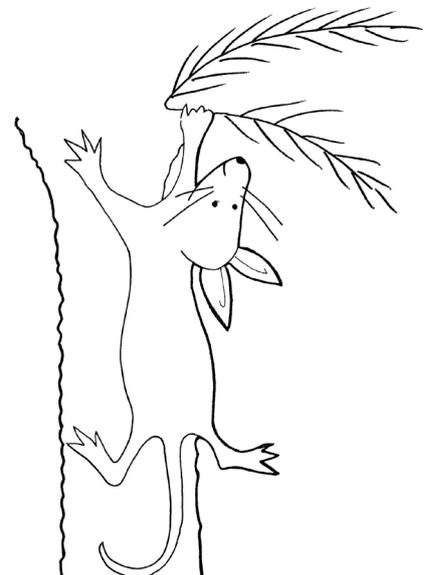
The heavy-laden ferry pulled out of the harbour into clear morning light.

"Oh! NO!" cried a poor, little rat at the harbour's edge. "I'm too late!"

Raúl had run, fast, through traffic, across the promenade only to see the ferry disappearing - no hope, now of telling the twins that he had given his kidnappers the slip and that he had information to put them in prison. Raúl had found out that they were stealing precious water from the city's supply and selling it to the golf courses in Mallorca.

Raúl couldn't give way to despair. He must think what to do. First, go back to the apartment in Passeig Mallorca where they had been staying with the children's Abuela - it could be his centre of operations and Abuela wouldn't need to know he was there.

Raúl scurried along the banks of the river and climbed up a palm tree to the road in front of the building. He took the lift up to



Abuela's apartment and slipped in through her garbage hatch. She was on the telephone,

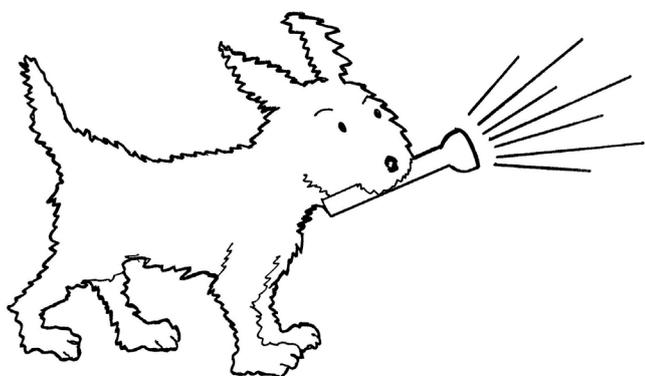
"Yes, they've caught the ferry, Carmen. They should be in Barcelona by 2pm and driving to Madrid immediately. You'll see them by bedtime. They had a great holiday but the twins have been upset since yesterday - I don't think they wanted to leave. Let them all come back soon. Goodbye, Dear."

Abuela settled down to rest and Raúl climbed a curtain to look out of the window across to his friend Guido's carpet shop on the other side of the river.

Guido was a sophisticated, business-dog who loved to pose in front of the oriental carpets in his shop window. His golden fur set off the glorious colours of the carpets and he often reclined in front of a spotlight so that the whole window was a halo of gold. Tourists and shoppers would stop to admire the display.



But the glamorous Guido was also an eco-warrior and Raúl had told him about the plot to steal water. Guido had been horrified and he made a speech about each golf-course using as much water as a town of 12,000 people.



Guido was lying with his head in his paws - he was sad because Raúl was missing. Suddenly his ears shot up; Raúl's familiar "Eek!" had reached him from across the river and there he was, waving from the balcony of Abuela's flat. Guido signalled to him with the spotlight and Raúl hurried over to the shop.

Guido had more news for Raúl. "It's worse than stealing water and even kidnapping," he barked. "The villains are building on the nature reserve."

A customer in the shop had said that building machinery had been moved onto a secluded spot where wildlife thrived. "It's marshland where building is forbidden," said Guido, "and the description of these men is the same as the water thieves. We've got to stop them before the last pockets of marshland are spoiled and before our island is turned into a desert."

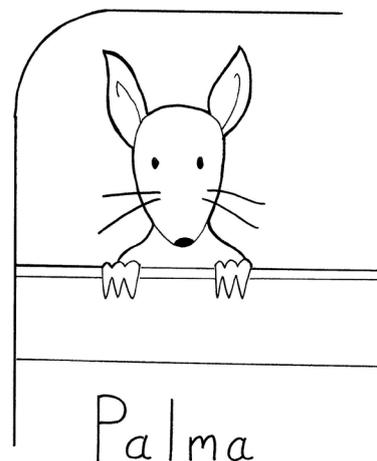
"We've got to save the environment," they both agreed. "This beautiful island must be protected."

Raúl was keen to act. "I'm going to search the city," he said. "I'll go upstairs on a sightseeing bus and I'll comb the streets. When I see the villains I'll track them wherever they go."

Guido was clipping on a glamorous diamond collar. "I have an invitation from Rafael Nadal to a celebrity reception at the Town Hall. The tennis trophy will be presented and I'll watch out for anyone suspicious. They may be forcing the tennis clubs to buy water as well. They must be stopped."

Raúl was upstairs on the open-top bus, hanging on to the handrail as the breeze tried to snatch him away. His little head was craning over the side to look out for the villains. The bus approached the tennis club in Palma. Loud cheers rang from the stands as Nadal won game, set and match. Raúl spotted the kidnappers; they were stuffing money into their pockets and making a quick getaway. They jumped into a car and headed for the city.

Raúl raced down the stairs and off the bus. He caught up with the gang at the harbour where they were boarding a luxury yacht. Raúl jumped aboard as it pulled out to sea and he found a hiding place below deck with a porthole to peer through.

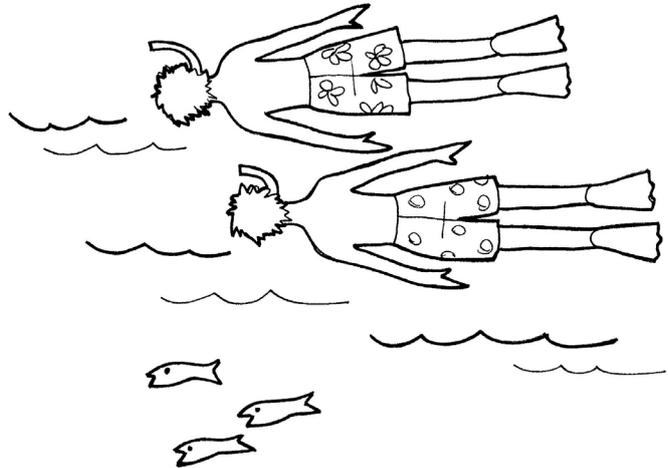


The clear, blue sea reminded Raúl of the fun he'd had swimming here with Robey and Rafa.

Would he ever see the twins again?

It had been so great looking down with them into the bright underwater kingdom teeming with colourful fish. There were grottoes and ancient wrecks on the seabed, and carpets of violet and yellow coral. Robey and Rafa had used diving masks to breathe but Raúl needed only his superior rat lungs to stay underwater.

Right now, though, Raúl had to stop thinking about his lost friends and follow the gang. A dingy was taking them to the shore and Raúl squeezed through his porthole and swam fast to follow it.



The men were striding inland towards the nature reserve as Raúl scampered from the sea, shaking water from his fur. He caught up with them in time to see handshaking and backslapping and more money being stuffed into their pockets. They spotted Raúl and one of them leapt on him and ground him into the swampy earth with his big boot.

"Pesky rat," the man spat. "That'll keep you out of our business for good. Next stop, Es Baluard there's money to be made out of the Art gallery there!"

They walked away, laughing. Raúl wriggled and squirmed but he couldn't get free; only his little arms stretched up above the ground.

"Oh! NO!" he despaired. "I may be here forever."

A water-skier in the bay spotted the little paws waving and he signalled to his speedboat driver to fling a line towards them. The boat circled swiftly nearer to the shore and the line whirled through sunlight to the grateful paws. Raúl was winched from the marshland with a soggy 'POP' like a cork out of a bottle and he flew through the air into the speeding boat.

"Eeek!" he said; meaning, "Don't stop. I need to get to Es Baluard. Pronto."

"Drop him at Es Baluard," shouted the water-skier, who hadn't understood Raúl but who knew there was a display of friendly, model rats in the Art gallery there. They were made out of pieces of drainpipe and Raúl would safely blend in with them.

The boat slowed down by the ancient fortifications of Es Baluard and Raúl dived overboard and sped towards land.

"Hi, Guys," eeked Raúl to the drainpipe rats as he burst in to their rooftop gallery. "I'm after a gang that's going to steal Mallorca's water so they can sell it. Might need your help." Just as Raúl said this the gang arrived and started to rearrange the drainpipe rats so that they made one long drainage channel.

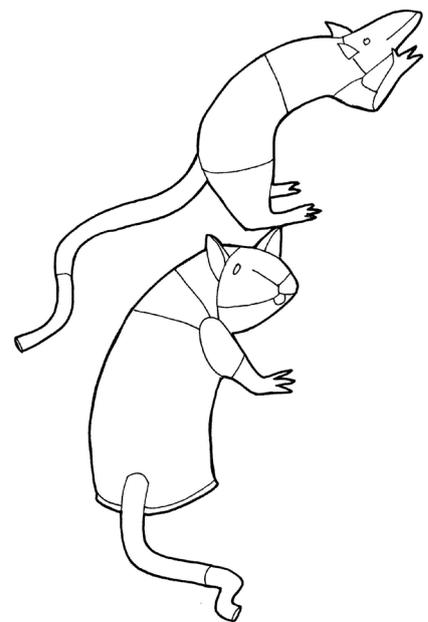
"This is how we'll get water down into the city's swimming pools," one villain said. "Run it through these vermin. Ha! Call this Art?" he mocked. "Might as well make it useful."

To get the gang away from the innocent family of drainpipe rats Raúl leapt out and squeaked viciously.

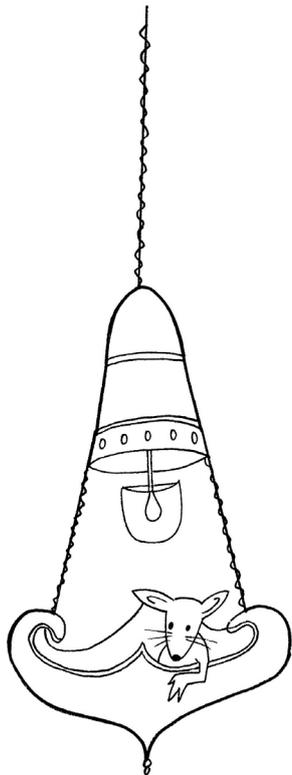
"Hey! That's the one we squashed," they said and chased after Raúl who headed for Palma's cathedral, through a maze of pink stone buildings and palm trees.

In the huge, dark space of the cathedral Raúl climbed up into the chandelier made by the famous architect, Gaudí, and sat in the metal cradle of one of its thirty-five candle holders. It felt just like sitting in the hole on the golf-course and this memory made Raúl sad.

"Oh! I hope I see my family again," he sighed, "Robey and Rafa and..."



His reverie was interrupted by the gang crashing into the echoing silence of the cathedral. They stood right underneath Raúl and discussed their plans.



"It's the football stadium next. ONO Estadi, the home of Real Club Deportivo Mallorca. They'll pay up now that we've kidnapped the mascot. Idiots! They'll pay whatever we ask to get their stupid mascot back. And then we'll make them buy water." "Yeah! And we'll get rid of that pesky rat properly this time."

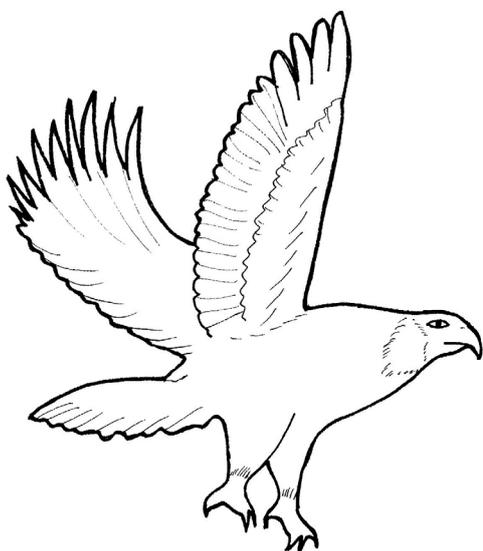
"Yeah. And that stupid dog from the carpet shop,"

Raúl was mad when he heard this and he shifted angrily on his perch.

The gang spotted him and he had to escape up into the roof and out onto the pinnacle of a cathedral spire, hundreds of feet above the city. The air in outer space was thin and even Raúl's superior lungs suffered from lack of oxygen. He was tired and dizzy and ... slipping.

"Oh! Who will save a little rat like me?" he cried.

"I will save you," proclaimed a noble eagle, swooping majestically towards him and lifting him in strong and kindly claws.



"I am an endangered species," the eagle explained as he flew with Raúl across the city. "The marshland and the water must be saved on this island for the survival of all. I salute your bravery in fighting the wicked exploiters of our environment."

"Oh! Please don't salute," begged Raúl. "You might drop me."

"Look below, little rat," commanded the

eagle, ignoring Raúl's fear. "Observe our parched city. Water must be fairly shared."

"Er - I, ummm, need to get to the ONO Estadi," Raúl ventured to say, hoping this wouldn't seem as though he hadn't listened.

But the eagle had spotted something else, far below - a red and fiery demon screaming and stamping its feet.

It was Dimonio the mascot of R C D Mallorca. Dimonio was brandishing his devilish fork and flapping his red cloak furiously. He had been humiliated and held against his wishes and now smoke was fuming from his nostrils. His sharp teeth and horns bristled as the eagle swept close and lifted him into the sky.

A shadow crossed the turf in the stadium where the R C D Mallorca players were training. They looked up in amazement at the approach of the eagle bearing a precious cargo.

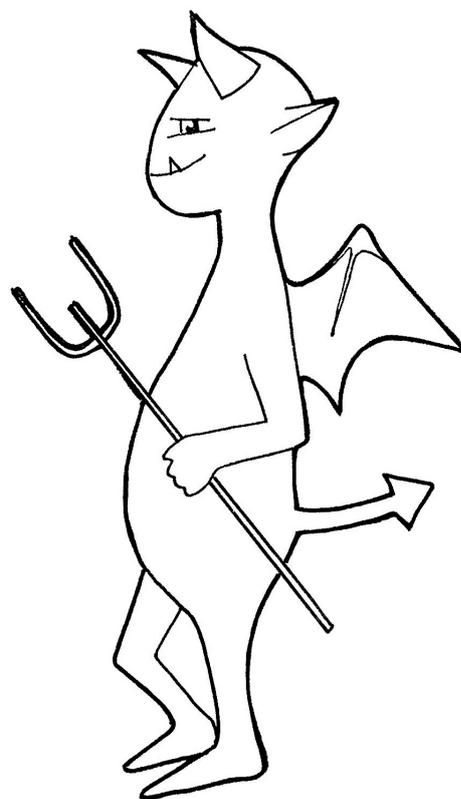
In one claw was Dimonio and, in the other, Raúl.

As the eagle swept away to his home in the mountains the circle of players welcomed the two tiny figures deposited on the turf.

Just then Guido came barking onto the pitch.

"The tennis trophy is going to be presented in one hour, and the gangsters are after it. Come on!"

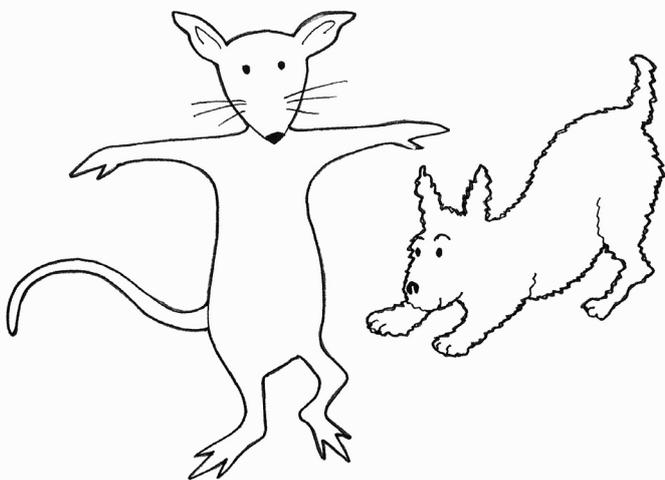
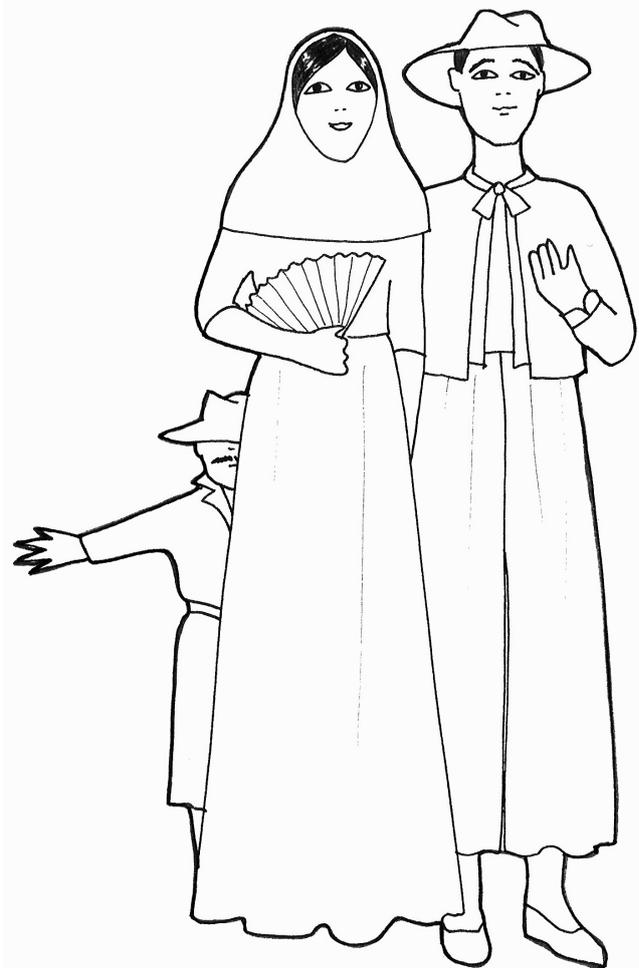
The whole of R C D Mallorca marched behind Raúl, Guido and Dimonio to the Town Hall. Townspeople joined in as they went and the little army swelled the crowd already waiting in front of the Ayuntamiento. Two giants in traditional Catalan dress came out from the Town Hall on either side of the Victory balcony and the



thieves found themselves pinned to the wall by these huge figures. As the crowd cheered, police cars arrived and police ran to arrest the villains.

Nadal appeared, fresh from his victory, and held up his trophy in triumph. Raúl and Guido bowed on either side of him. Dimonio paced up and down hissing, stabbing with his fork and letting off steam. His fans, who had thought he was lost, loved this and roared their approval.

After this applause the captain of R C D Mallorca presented football strips to Raúl and Guido - red shirts, black shorts and black socks. They felt they



could burst with pride, though Guido was a little concerned that his diamond collar clashed with sports clothes.

Then the captain spoke to the crowd,

"As you know Real Club Deportivo Mallorca has its own aeroplane to get to

fixtures off the island of Mallorca. Now, this little rat here has been separated from his loving family and he wants to get home. So, he will fly with the team as guest of honour to Madrid for tonight's game."



Guido was sad to say goodbye to Raúl but he knew now he would be safe and would come back again to Palma de Mallorca with his family.

Raúl, in his new kit, climbed the steps to the special red and white plane that had the team's crest emblazoned on its nose and R C D MALLORCA all along the sides. Raúl turned at the top of the steps for his fans to admire him. He waved to the cameras and TV crews before joining the rest of the team for their journey to Madrid.



On a screen in their car Robey and Rafa were watching the sports news. The commentator said, "R C D Mallorca is reunited with Dimonio and fans are hoping this will bring victory tonight. Dimonio arrived back in the stadium today with Raúl, a hero rat, who I can see now boarding the plane. Yes! There he is. There's the plucky little fellow..." "IT'S Raúl!" screamed Robey and Rafa. "It's Raúl, It's Raúl. He's safe. He's coming home!"

Dad swerved in shock but quickly got the car en route for Madrid airport and they were all there on the tarmac when

the plane landed, the door opened and Raúl emerged into a blaze of camera lights.

In his red shirt, black shorts and black socks Raúl posed on the steps for photographs and acknowledged the cheers with his little paws raised.

Later that night in Madrid's floodlit Bernabeu stadium, Raúl led the team out onto the pitch. He strutted forward with his chest puffed out and stood in the centre of the pitch while the crowd sang,

Cap amunt, cap amunt! Sempre amunt, sempre amunt! El Mallorca triomfara

Mallorca, Mallorca, Mallorca, Mallorca, Mallorca, Mallorca tot Mallorca

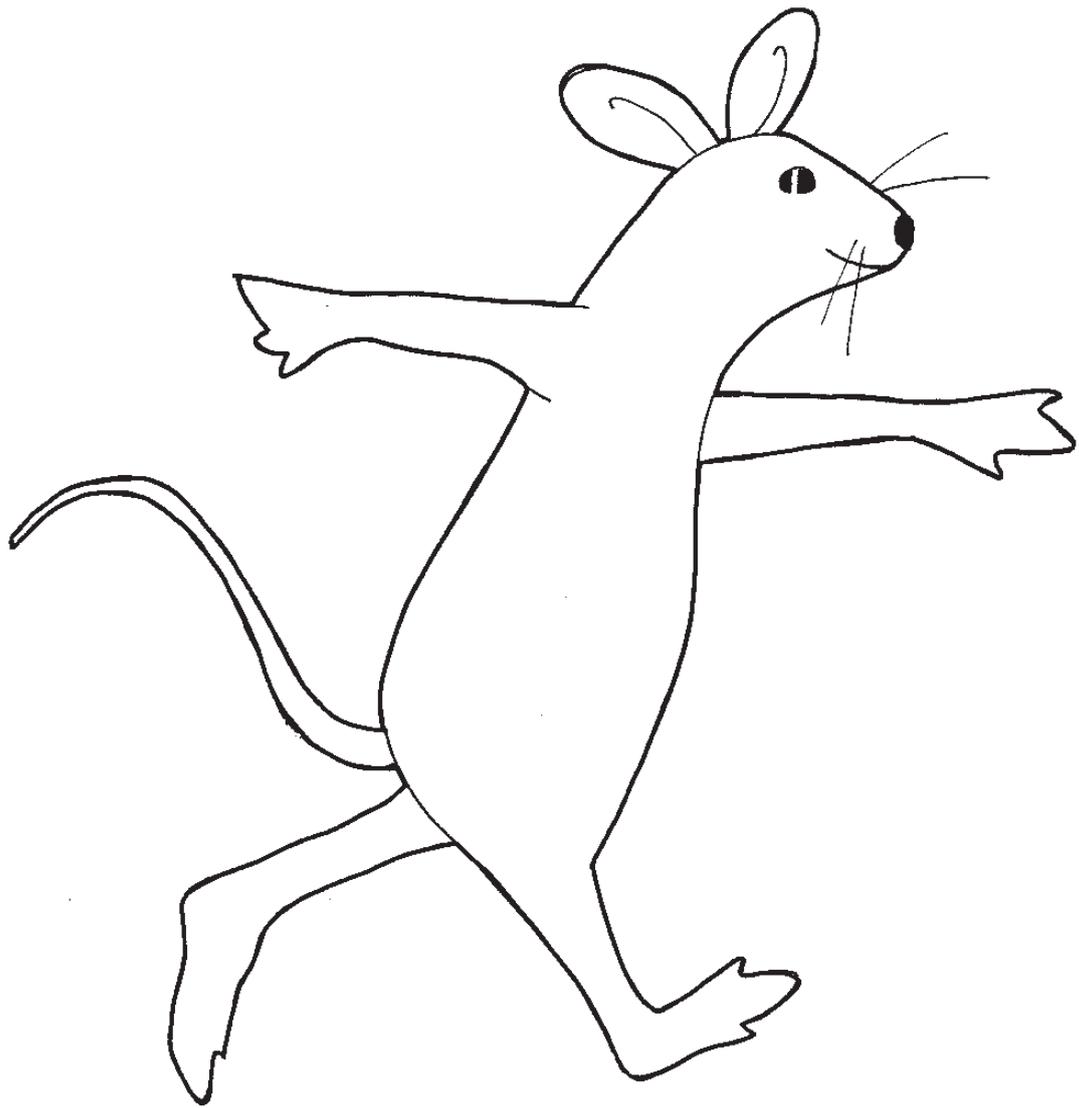
Guanyarem, guanyarem! Triomfarem, triomfarem!

Triomfarem, triomfarem! El Mallorca es superior.

Raúl basked in the adulation of the crowd. He loved the chanting and the floodlights and his own importance. He stood with his chin up, proudly and heroically until the whistle went.

In the rush that followed he had to scarpener quickly out of the way. Robey and Rafa giggled as they watched from their VIP box. They could see that Raúl didn't like to be sidelined!

They were laughing, too, at the way his black socks kept slipping down on the dear, skinny, rat legs that they had missed so much.



"See you in Argentina. Hasta luego."

