



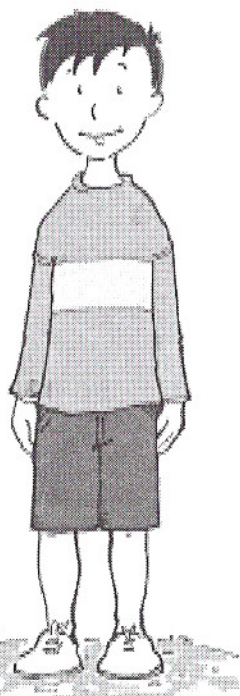
# The adventures of Luc and Lucie

14th July

## Episode 1

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# The beginning of it all

July 14<sup>th</sup> turned out to be a very strange day. Lucie sat in the garden reading, with Josephine, the cat, curled up in the sun at her feet. Luc was playing with the dog. It was hot, very hot, the middle of summer. It was the day of the great procession down the Champs Elysées to celebrate the storming of the Bastille. Dad had been invited by his firm to watch it all from the stand which had been set up in Place de la Concorde. Later they were going with Mum to meet him in Paris to watch the fireworks. They had been thinking about it all day and couldn't settle down to do anything. Mum was finishing off her work on the computer so they had escaped outside before she *found* them something to do.



Lucie read on. It was a rather boring book actually. The birds in the trees overhead were twittering, unnaturally loudly it seemed, somehow drawing attention to themselves. Lucie stopped reading and listened.



At the same moment Luc stopped playing with Picasso, their dog, and they both listened intently. You know how it is when someone says your name in a crowded room and you hear it above the noise.

Luc was the first to speak.

“Are they saying...?”

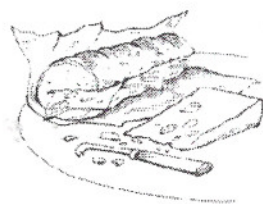
“I think so” said Lucie looking rather uneasy.

“I think they’re saying over and over again Lucand LucieLucand LucieLucand LucieLucandLucie.”

They looked at each other not knowing what to do, when, at that moment, their mother appeared at the door and called to them. “Luc and Lucie, come in, the procession is just about to begin.” The children ran inside and sat in front of the television in the sitting room. Mum had prepared some food for them all: ham, gherkins, and cheese with a newly baked baguette followed by yoghurt and apple juice so that they could watch without having to go into the kitchen to eat.

The soldiers started to march down the Champs Elysées, the bands played and the crowds, packed on the pavements, cheered wildly. As the first line of soldiers

wheeled round the corner into the Place de la Concorde the children were sure they caught sight of Dad in the second row of the stand. The parade was terrific - there were so many different battalions and bands and finally there was a fly



past. The planes produced red, white and blue smoke like streamers across the bright blue sky and suddenly Mum shouted "Out in the garden children, they'll be over here soon" and a few minutes later the planes appeared flying over the village.

Mum looked at her watch. "We need to hurry. The train leaves in twenty minutes time." Everyone rushed around the house and then down the lane reaching the station just as the Paris train arrived at the platform. They clambered on board and sank back panting and catching their breath. Luc and Lucie had been so involved in the Bastille day celebrations that they'd had no time to discuss their strange experience earlier in the day.

It was now early evening and the train was almost empty. It was also quite old and not too clean - not the usual fast comfortable express to Paris. Mother said it should be taken out of service. They sped towards Paris, first through the countryside thick with yellow corn, and then into the outer suburbs. The train clanked and creaked and as it did so Lucie was sure she could hear the clanks and creaks saying something like "It's got to be found. It's got to be found. It's got to be found." Was she imagining it? The hot sun today must have made her light headed but as soon as she looked across at Luc she knew she wasn't. He, too, was listening with concentration and then their eyes met and she knew he could hear it too. Their mother was reading the newspaper, unconcerned. Luc looked out of the window again as the Eiffel Tower appeared in the distance above the haze and the roofs of the city. As the train circled round, the sun, low in the sky, shone through the trellis work, seeming to

form a gold pathway directly to him. His thoughts were interrupted by his mother who was now doing the crossword.

"I'm stuck on this one," she said. "Any ideas? Here's the clue: *a multi-coloured imitator of the human voice*. Whatever can it be?"

The children thought hard.

"Have you got any letters?" asked Lucie.

"Yes," said Mum "the third letter is 'r' and the final letter is 't'."

Luc remembered the twittering of the birds." "Could it be a bird?" he suggested.

"Of course," said Lucie as the train drew into Gare St Lazare. "It's a parrot."

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Their father was there to meet them.

"Were you in the second row of the stand in Place de la Concorde?" asked Luc, rushing towards him." "We're sure we saw you there."

"Yes I was" replied Dad. "However did you manage to find me among all those people?" Turning to Mum he said "I've been lucky for once. I've found a parking spot not far from the Ecole Militaire so we ought to have a good view of the fireworks from there."



They had to catch the metro. Father went to buy the tickets. He had to join a long queue as he had no change for the machine.

It was fun travelling by metro. Even if it was just a train which went underground there was something mysterious about it. You popped down one hole and came up another and forgot all about the cars and buses and buildings which were above your heads. Then there were the people crowded together from all over the world. In the passageways there were musicians and people selling fruit or jewellery. It was always exciting.

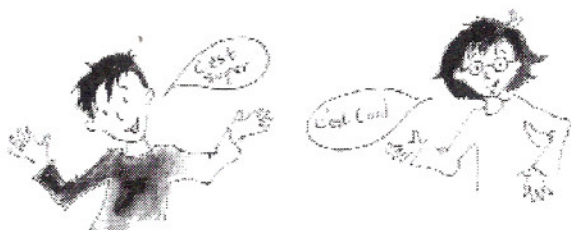
As they stood and waited impatiently, an old man appeared and stood by them. He wore a very long blue coat and, as they watched, he took a recorder from one of his voluminous pockets and started to play. It was a tune that the children recognised: "Savez-vous planter les choux?" Luc and Lucie thought that was a funny thing for him to be playing.

"Come on," said Dad interrupting their thoughts, "we need to hurry if we're going to get a good place."

They followed the crowds down the passageway and emerged on to the platform. Luc looked across the track and thought he saw the old man on the opposite platform smiling at them conspiratorially before the train swooped in and cut him off from view.



At the metro station Ecole Militaire they at last got out. It was good to breathe fresh air again as they emerged into the evening light. They managed to find an excellent place not far from the building of the Ecole Militaire with a great view of the Eiffel Tower. They bought some ice-cream and, as the sky grew darker, the fireworks began. Huge bursts of shooting stars shimmered in green and silver like fish swimming in the sky, gradually fading and dropping to earth. Golden rockets swooshed through the air arching over the crowds and dropping bright red crackers that whizzed and spluttered. On and on they went in purple and blue and orange and yellow and turquoise and each time the crowd roared and clapped. Finally there was a huge set piece of Vive La France (Long Live France) surrounded by all kinds of different birds and animals in vivid colours, all the colours of the rainbow.



“Oh, look! There’s our crossword parrot,” said their mother pointing to a magnificent brightly coloured parrot on the left. Something seemed to have gone wrong in the right hand corner where the fireworks hadn’t ignited properly - so there remained a little black patch. It didn’t matter at all though - the fireworks had been *marvellous* , well worth waiting for. By this time Luc and Lucie were excited but beginning to feel tired and were glad the car was nearby. They turned and made for the side roads with the rest of the crowd.



Now that the fireworks were over, nobody was looking at the Eiffel Tower any more. If they had been looking they would have noticed that something was 'escaping' from the scaffolding which held the set piece. Where the firework parrot had been on the left, something flew out - a real parrot - and, from the black area, some sort of shadow emerged. The parrot followed Luc and Lucie and their parents at a distance and, when they got into their car, it firmly anchored itself onto the roof rack. There also seemed to be something black under the car - or perhaps it was just the shadow left by the street lights.

