

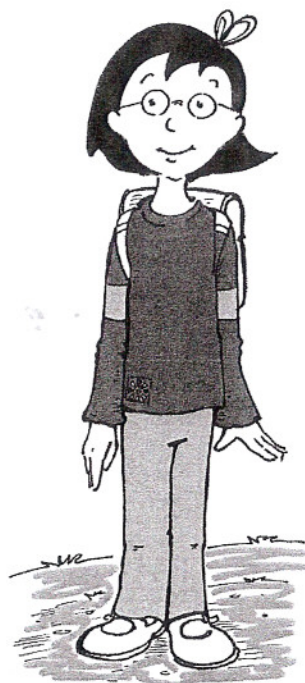
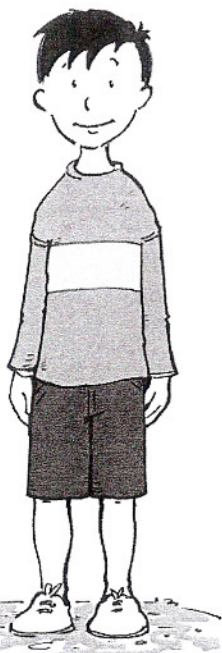
The adventures of Luc and Lucie

Back Home

Episode 2

*Valerie Halstead
Jacqueline Hughes
Marion Vincent
and
Bernadette Clinton*
©clé group.

Illustrations by Amanda Wood
© 2006



An Unexpected Visitor

Luc and Lucie loved driving at night. Everything looked different, magical even. The ring road round Paris, the *péripherique*, by day a roaring mass of engine fuel and noise, was transformed at night to a picture gallery from which they could see, in the distance, famous buildings illuminated. Dad turned off the *péripherique* on to the motorway and then on to the smaller roads which led to their village, Charmante La Forêt. The children dozed in the back of the car and somehow things which had happened during the day came back to them - the feeling that they had been singled out by the twittering birds, the meaning of the message on the train, the parrot in mother's crossword which had reappeared in the fireworks and the strange man with the song about cabbages.

As the car stopped in front of their house, they woke with a jolt, sleepily clambered out and went inside, not noticing, as they did so, the parrot which peered at them through the darkness and the strange shadow which lurked by the door.

The children dumped their clothes in the hall and went into the kitchen.

"I'm hungry," said Luc.

"All right," said mother, "Have something light."

"Why don't I make us all some pancakes as a treat?" suggested Dad.

"Oh ye-e-s," they both shouted enthusiastically.

"Go and wash your hands first," said Mum.

Luc and Lucie rushed up to the bathroom, glad of the opportunity to be alone for a few minutes.

"What a peculiar day it's been," said Luc.

"I know," said Lucie "let's try to make some sense of it all. First there was the twittering of the birds. They did keep saying 'LucandLucie, LucandLucie,' didn't they?"

"I'm sure they did and then there was the train. In the clanking I could hear 'It's got to be found' again and again. Could you?"

"Yes, really clearly and what did you make of the parrot? It could have been just chance that one appeared in the crossword and another in the fireworks. It was odd though that Mum, who's usually so good at crosswords, didn't get that clue and we did."



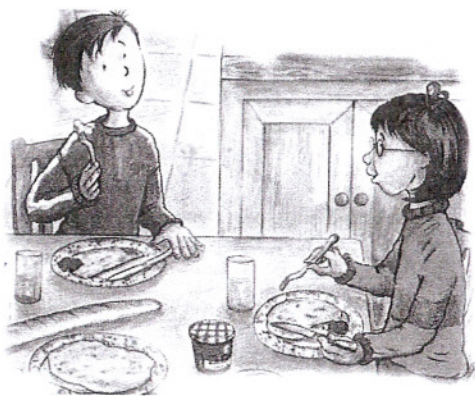
"Then there was that strange man in the metro singing the song about cabbages. Do you think he was just strange or there for a purpose? I thought I saw him later on the platform opposite looking at us."

"It's all pretty creepy, isn't it? I can't see where it's all leading. I wonder what we should do about it."

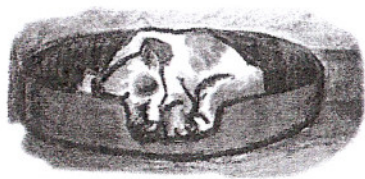
"Children," called Mum "your pancakes are ready."

Dad had produced a pile of pancakes in a minute or two - making pancakes was one of his specialities. The children devoured them as fast as Dad made them. They both started with strawberry jam pancakes then went on to their favourites: lemon for Lucie and chocolate for Luc. Josephine watched Dad intently, whiskers twitching, and miaowed plaintively.

Dad looked at Josephine affectionately. 'Perhaps you would like a fish pancake?'



Picasso slept on soundly in his basket.



While the children were busy eating and discussing the fireworks the parrot silently flew in through the door and landed on the dresser. Picasso stirred and started to growl and Josephine began to prowl round the kitchen uneasily.

"Shh," said Mum "you don't like pancakes."



Luc looked round at Picasso and suddenly saw the parrot.

He immediately choked on his pancake and muttered between his coughs.

"Look what's on the dresser, Lucie."

Lucie caught her breath as she spotted the parrot and choked as well.

"I think you're both eating too quickly," said Mum.

"No Mum, it's not that, there's a....."

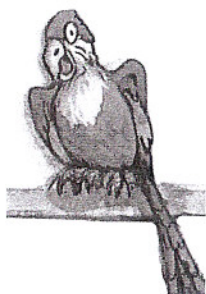
"Come on," interrupted Dad "I think you've had enough to eat. We had a great evening at the fireworks but it's late now, so off to bed."

"Off to bed," repeated the parrot. "Off to bed. Goodnight Luc, Goodnight Lucie."

Luc and Lucie were so amazed that they simply said "Goodnight" and went upstairs. There had been no reaction from their parents who obviously thought the 'Goodnight' had been addressed to them. A black shape silently climbed the stairs behind them and lingered on the landing. It watched the children as they went first into their own bedrooms and then as Luc crept into Lucie's when he thought the coast was clear.

"Well, what did you make of that?" he said. "We weren't wrong about the parrot - but how did it know who we were? It used our names."

"Search me," replied Lucie. "Where do you think it's come from?"



"I've no idea," said Luc. "Where is it now?"

"Hello, I'm here," said a voice and they turned

to see the parrot perched on the top of the door. "My name is Pirate. I'm a messenger to you from 'the Enchanter.' No, you're not mad or dreaming! Children can see me and hear me - but not adults - they only see and hear what they expect to. You're twins too and you're very close to each other, aren't you? Sometimes you know what the other one is thinking, don't you?"

"Yes," they said together.

"And," continued the parrot "you're both very sensitive. We tested you today. You picked up the messages from the birds and in the train and you identified me in the crossword."

Luc looked puzzled. "We're in the twenty first century," he said. "I'm not sure I believe in all this fairy tale stuff."

The parrot began to sing "Savez-vous planter les choux?" but Luc interrupted him. "You mean that the old man is involved!"

"Are you willing to help us on a quest?"

Luc and Lucie looked at each other.

"What sort of a quest?" asked Lucie.

"I can't really tell you that," replied the parrot. "You'll see. You'll be sent things and you'll have to find things, and decipher messages and be on the lookout for 'the enemy' who may try to stop you."

"What sort of enemy?" asked Luc. "Is it going to be dangerous?"

"Well," said Pirate "From time to time unusual things might happen to you but....."

At that moment there was a strange
on the landing - a sort of 'scuttering'



"What's that?" They huddled together nervously

"Look," said Pirate, "If you're not interested I can
and find someone else."



"No, no," they replied in unison. "We'll have a go. What do you want us to do?"

"Too much chattering up there," called Mum. "You were supposed to be in bed ten minutes ago."

"I must go now but I'll come and talk to you again," whispered the parrot "sometime during the summer."

"In August we're off to Summer Camp near Tours in the Loire Valley," explained Lucie.

"See you there then," said the parrot. "Please open the window for me. Au revoir." Leaving the children confused but excited, he flew off into the darkness.

