

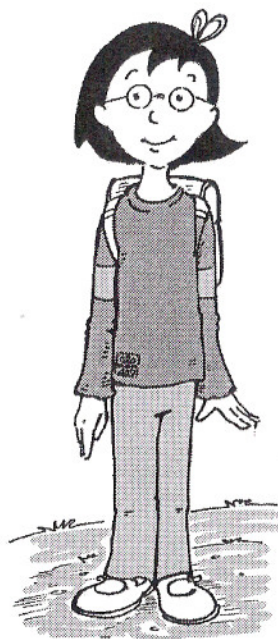
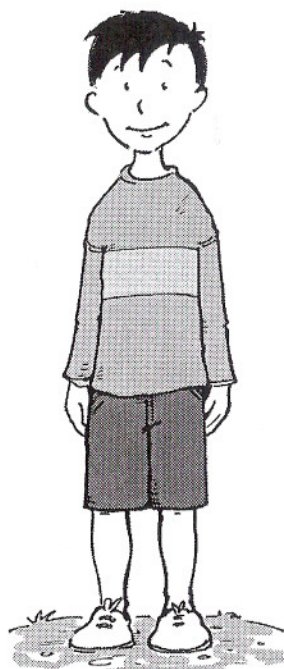


The adventures of Luc and Lucie

The Colonie

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The Colonie

"Come on children, get ready for lunch." The voice was Claire's.

She was the team leader at the Colonie de Vacances near Tours. It was their second week and it had all been fantastic. It was exciting to sleep in the old, converted stables and to whisper to their friends in the dormitory after 'lights out'. Each day had been packed with activities: picnics, walks by the river and an outing to the famous castle of Chenonceaux nearby, but most of all, like most of their friends, they really enjoyed the sports - especially volleyball and football. They'd learned to canoe and had also been swimming. Lucy could now do the "Butterfly" and had won a competition for the crawl and Luc had improved his diving. He had a photograph highly commended earlier in the week. They had all gone on a visit of the town and everyone had taken 2 photographs, one of a place and the other of a person. Luc, who was a very keen photographer, had taken a lot of photographs with his brand new camera. He wasn't satisfied until at last he found an ice cream man panicking because his ice cream was melting in the hot sun and dripping all over his van and his cornets. He was very excited that it had been judged first in the 'person' category.



At first Luc and Lucie had been slightly homesick, away from their parents and school friends for the first time, but they had soon made new friends: Mohammed from Paris, Francois from Menton, Wai Ling from Lille and Androulla from Lyon. They had become "the gang" and did most things together.

The gang was sitting together under a tree exhausted after a hectic game of volleyball. Of the parrot there had been no sign. Luc and Lucie were beginning to think that they had imagined it all or that it had been some kind of dream.



Francois, lying on his back, suddenly said "Look there's some brightly coloured bird up in the tree." They looked and there it was - **their** bird.

"Hi Luc, hi Lucie" the parrot said. The other children looked amazed.

"At last" said Lucie "We've been expecting you for the last ten days. Where have you been?"

"Well you were quite hard to find among the tourists in the Loire valley" replied the parrot.

"Have you got a message for us?" asked Luc.

"I have indeed" said the parrot "This is the message. Look for me when the wind and the water meet."

"What does that mean?" said Luc.

"No idea," said the parrot.

Mohammed was looking puzzled.

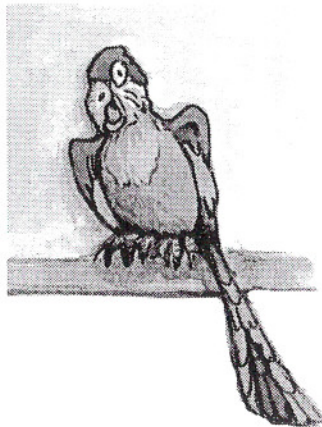
"Is it your pet?" he asked

"No," said Luc "but it's a kind of special friend."

"I don't understand" said Wai Ling. "Did it come with you or has it escaped from the zoo or what?"

"Listen." interrupted the parrot "somebody's trying to prevent you from helping us so you must beware of the"

A whistle blew and they were called in again for lunch.



"Come on" shouted Lucie "let's all sit together." They collected their lunch on trays: melon, meat and salad and fruit and found a small table where they started to discuss what had just happened.

"I don't understand," said Androulla "Parrots copy words but that one actually talked to you."

Francois asked "What did it mean about the wind and the water meeting?"

"Well" said Lucie "It's really a secret. It's a special parrot, called Pirate, and we're trying to find something for him. We're not sure what it is yet."

"We've no idea what the wind and water message means." added Luc.

"Perhaps there's going to be a storm" suggested Androulla. But the sun was shining and the sky was blue.

"There's the swimming pool and some showers near the pool" said Francois "or there's the lake."



"If we don't know what it means, how can we help" muttered Luc.

"And we don't know whom to beware of. I do wish he wouldn't talk in riddles."

"Do you think it's somebody here, at the Colonie?" asked Wai Ling. They looked round at the tables of children, laughing and joking. Nobody looked at all threatening.

Claire called for attention.

"This afternoon, we're dividing up for activities. One group is going to make sailing boats for a competition tomorrow; the second group is going on a nature trail and the third group is going to learn archery." Luc and Lucie's table discussed the choices.

"Perhaps I'll go on the Nature trail" said Francois.

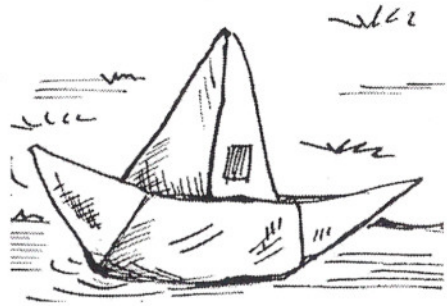
"I might try" said Androulla "I'll try archery."

"I might make a sailing boat" said Mohammed.

Suddenly Lucie looked at Luc "Sailing boats they are moved over the water by the wind on the sail. Can that be it?"

There was no parrot to ask so they decided to choose that group too.

"Why don't we do it together and find out?" suggested Wai Ling. They worked hard all afternoon making little boats out of card and paper. The following day the sailing boat group met together.



Claire appeared.

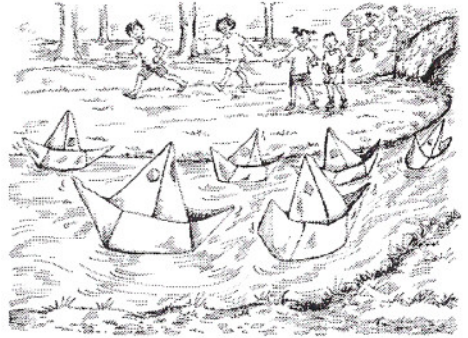
"Now, so that you can recognise your boats I'm going to give you each a sticker which I'd like you to attach to the sail. Write your name on it with this black felt pen and then you will be able to watch your boat as it sails down the river."

The children did as they were told.

"Ready children?" said Claire. And they all set off down to the bridge at the end of the lane near the Colonie.

Claire told them to stand on the bridge. "I'll count to three and then all drop your boats over the parapet. One...two...three.... Drop."

There were twenty boats and they were all dropped in together. As the current took them downstream the children raced along the bank. Some boats hit rocks and sand, some became waterlogged and disappeared, but Luc's and Lucie's, with six more, continued to sail, carried on in the light breeze.



Through the weeds and rushes, on the opposite bank, something was running parallel with the children. The breeze strengthened and blew the eight boats towards the rushes. Before the current took them out again a claw emerged and grabbed Lucie's boat. To the children opposite, it looked as though it had simply been caught in the rushes. Luc's sailed on with the other six. The ripple through the rushes continued and got ahead of the boats. There was a sudden snap and a long twig of willow was broken off and was pushed out midstream under the water. As the boats sailed on the twig was raised and knocked five of them off course. Luc's and Mohammed's boats were the only two still afloat. As they rounded the bend before the bridge that marked the finishing line, a large stone suddenly rolled down the bank making a huge splash and capsizing Mohammed's boat so Luc's sailed in triumphantly. His was the winner.

"Well done Luc," said Claire, and the other children dutifully clapped, wishing secretly that theirs had come in first.

Claire produced a small silver cup from a box.

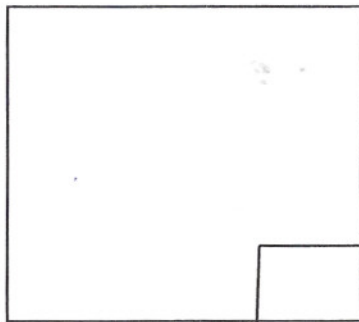
"Here's your trophy," she said, and presented it. Luc blushed.

"We'll put it back in the box for safe keeping and I'll give it back to you at the Colonie."

That night, after the campfire, Luc and Lucie took the trophy out of the box to look at it. They noticed a piece of cardboard in the bottom of the box. It was 2 cms square with a design on it in black.

"Do you think that's what we're looking for?" said Luc.

"I think it must be." replied Lucie.



"The trophy was for the winner of the sailing boat competition and we agreed that wind and water were linked to that."

They looked at the square again.

"But what on earth is it!" said Luc

"If it's a messsge I can't imagine what it means - if anything."

"Perhaps the parrot will tell us when he comes back." said Lucie.

"If he comes back," said Luc sceptically.

