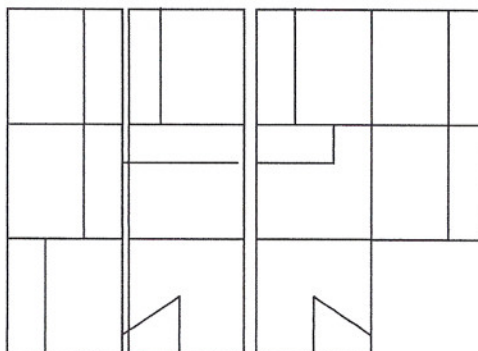


TO BE READ
AFTER THE
PARIS EPISODE
PACK 11 BEFORE
THE
MADAGASCAR
EPISODE PACK 12

12. The last clue (31.08.06)

It was the end of June and evening before the last day of the summer term. Luc, Lucie, Denis and Eloise gathered at Denis's house and tried to make sense of the squares of cardboard. They had come to the conclusion that it must be some sort of jigsaw. There was still the last one missing but "Eleven out of Twelve" said Luc "we ought to be able to solve it." But whichever way they put the pieces nothing made sense.



They turned over the pieces and looked at the letters – but they couldn't make any sense out of them either.

	D	C	S
A		A	A
G	M	R	

Lucie was rather gloomy. "Pirate hasn't been around since the day we were in Paris" she murmured "It's almost a year since we met him and started the quest."

"Cheer up" said Eloise "After tomorrow, we've more than six weeks holiday. "I'm going down to the Dordogne to stay on my uncle's farm."

"You'd better keep away from the chickens" said Denis.

"Do you know," replied Eloise, laughing, "After getting to know Pirate, I don't mind birds so much now."

“I’m off to the Colonie this year” said Denis “What are you two doing?”

Mum and Dad are taking us camping but we haven’t decided where yet” said Luc

“And tomorrow’s the last day of term”

“But we’ve still got our Maths lesson.” groaned Luc.

“That’s really mean” said Eloise

Yes” said Denis’ It’s not our fault if we haven’t quite covered all the work.”

“Everyone else seems to be having fun and competitions tomorrow.”

They were all silent.

“Look “said Denis suddenly, I’ll show you some conjuring tricks.. I got a book on how to be a conjurer and a pack of magic tricks for my birthday.”

They sat back and watched him while he made red and yellow handkerchiefs appear from nowhere and disappear as quickly. He made three pieces of cord join up into one long rope and he produced an egg from Eloise’s ear.”

“How do you do it all?” asked Lucie, intrigued.

“It’s a secret and it takes a lot of practice” said Denis.” I know just one more – do you want me to show you?”

“Yes” they all cried.

He produced two plastic cups (a blue one and a green one) and showed the others there was nothing in either of them. He put them upside down on the floor a metre apart. “Now I’ll put this one euro coin under the blue one and Abracadabra” and he lifted the green one. There was nothing there. He looked both disappointed and embarrassed. “Oh’ he said “It hasn’t worked” and lifted the blue one again. Instead of the coin there was a little roll of paper.

“However did you do that?” said Eloise beginning to look at Denis in a rather frightened way.

“I’ve no idea” said Denis uneasily ” That’s not supposed to happen.” He picked up the paper and unrolled it.

“I think it must be for you” he said and handed it to Luc and Lucie. It was a little poem which Luc read out

The end is near

Don’t lose heart

A tub of bran

Will play its part.

“Well I don’t know what that means but it does sound a bit encouraging.” reflected Lucie.

“Yes it does but it’s getting late”, said Eloise “I think I’d better go home”

“So had we” said Luc and Lucie

Luc and Lucie said goodnight to Eloise at her house and wandered off down the lane towards theirs. It was a warm summer evening and they could hear Picasso barking as he knew they were coming. They also heard something else – a familiar squawk overhead.

“Nearly there” said Pirate “See you tomorrow.”

The last day of Term (31.08.06)

The children were sitting rather miserably in their Maths lesson. It wasn't that they didn't like Maths – it was that they didn't like it today when everyone else was having fun. There was to be a kind of school fair for charity and each class had to arrange something. Luc was daydreaming about the glass jar full of Smarties their class had prepared. They'd pinned a notice to it "How many green ones in here?" Their teacher knew the answer and the winner would have them all!

"Now, I know this is the last morning of term and you're all longing to join the others at the fair but first we must just finish off this chapter in your books on 'Area' said Madame Jacquinot " If any of you have helped your parents to decorate at home you'll know how carefully they have to work out the area of a wall or the floor so that they know how much paint or varnish they need."

She put an example on the board. "Suppose your mother is making a duvet cover and the bed is four metres long and three metres wide what sort of area will she have to cover? Yes, Eloise, 12 metres, good, 3 by 4 – easy isn't it? Do some examples from page five. The children settled down reluctantly to work.

"Now," she said, having wandered round and found that they were all able to do it. "We can work back the other way. Suppose you have an area of twelve metres. You might have three possible shapes. We've looked at 3 by 4. What else could it be?"

There was silence.

"What also multiplied together makes 12?"

"1 and 12" said Denis

"Good, that would be a long shape perhaps for a scarf - or

"2 and 6" Luc and Lucie suddenly shouted together.

"I'm pleased to see you so enthusiastic...."

'Yes" said Luc whispered.

"That's it" muttered Lucie

They couldn't get out of the lesson fast enough.

"We were so stupid only seeing our jigsaw as 4 by 3 " said Lucie

"I can't wait to get home and try it out " said Luc " but don't forget, we've one other piece to find ."

They ran out of the building to join the other children. They walked in front of the row of brightly decorated stalls, while behind, in the long grass, the rat lurked, his eyes following their every move.

They guessed the weight of a huge and specially made baguette and the number of green smarties.

They passed a stall where little cakes were being sold and bought two each. Lucie bought a T shirt saying *Skool's cool* and Luc one which had a pattern of shooting stars and bubbles on it.

Denis pointed to another stall where there was a general knowledge quiz to be completed. They did as many questions as they could but really they just wanted to go home and try out the jigsaw.

Lucie was just saying “We can’t go yet, we haven’t found the last piece when they came to the final stall, labelled Lucky Dip. It was a huge tub filled with bran. The boy in charge was shouting “Try your luck. All sorts of presents hidden in the sand. Only fifty cents each .” They paid him a euro and dug their hands into the bran . Their fingers met as they scrabbled around .

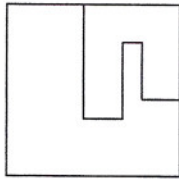
‘Got it” they said together and brought out the final square of cardboard. “What’s that?” said the boy in charge “Have another go. There’s some really good stuff in here.” There was a triumphant squawk from the tree above them and a long agonised squeal from the long grass..

Luc and Lucie ignored them both.

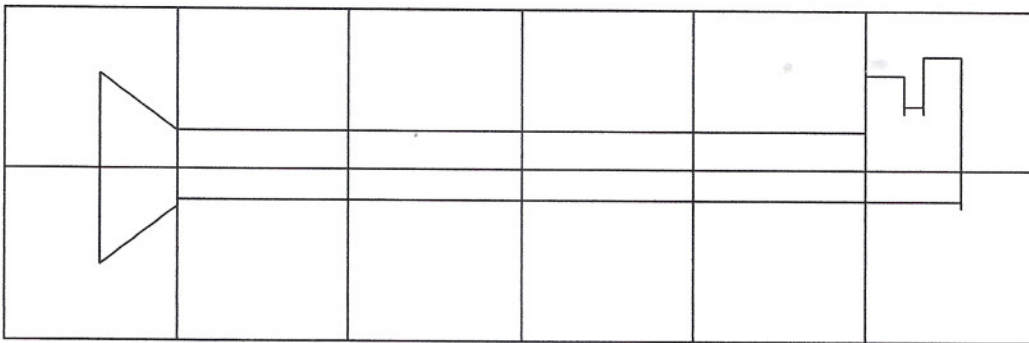
That’s all right” they shouted and dashed off, (the parrot swooping above them) out of the gate, across the square, up the lane and home.

“O.K.” said Lucie “Let’s get organised”

They spread out all the pieces they had collected on the kitchen table.. The latest one looked like this



Excitedly, and with shaking fingers, they moved the pieces around and finally everything fell into place.



“It’s a key” cried Lucie.

“But what for?” asked Luc.”

“Brilliant . You’re both stars.” said the parrot “I knew you’d never let us down. Now watch while I do some magic.” He fluttered over cardboard squares and emitted a strange humming sound.

Without warning something freed itself from the cardboard and, suspended in the air in front of them, was a real key, golden and glittering in the sunshine.

“Take hold of it” instructed the parrot and simultaneously they both put out their hands and took it. It felt strangely heavy for its size and very smooth.

“Now what about the letters?” said Luc and he began to turn over the squares.

A	A	A	C		R
M	D	G	S		A

“I just can’t see it” said Lucie.

“There seem to be far too many As “ said Luc and three out of four on the top line.”

“Just a minute. Let’s try to combine the two lines taking a letter from each.” said Lucie.

So they started:

M	A	D	A	G	A	S	C	A
								R

“Madagascar, that’s a country “ almost shouted Luc.

“I don’t understand.” said Lucie “ Is the golden key connected to Madagascar?”

“It is” replied the parrot. “That’s obviously where we’re all going in the Autumn.”

“We can’t possibly do that, we go to school here in Charmante La Foret and in any case we haven’t got the money.”

“Enough” said the parrot “All will be revealed. For the moment just enjoy having solved the puzzle.

Here are some thankyou presents. “

“I don’t see anything” said Luc.

“Just wait a minute...”

“Luc and Lucie, come here a moment” called mum.”We’ve a surprise for you.”

They went out into the hall.

“Last week my boss gave me a new laptop so dad and I thought you could have my old computer and my printer too. While you’ve been busy at school we’ve been fixing them up in the little room where we used to keep the spare camping equipment. Come and see.”

The children followed her, hardly believing their ears and then their eyes. A computer of their own in a room of their own.

“Funny” said mum “It suddenly came over me in a flash – I don’t know why we didn’t think of it before.”

Pirate laughed loudly at this.

“Can we try it?”

“Of course you can,” said mum. “ Oh there’s someone at the door, but you know how to use it. Just don’t stay on it too long. This summer I really want you to be out in the open air but I’m sure you’ll find it very useful in the Autumn”

“I’m sure you will.” said the parrot “ Have a good summer and look up Madagascar on the Internet. and , I need hardly say, keep the key somewhere VERY safe”

With that he spread his wings, took off through the open window, rose in a magnificent spiral and flew off over the trees. They watched him grow smaller and smaller until he was only a speck in the distance and then vanished altogether.

“He’ll be back” said Lucie while Luc found Google on the Internet and typed in MADAGASCAR.