

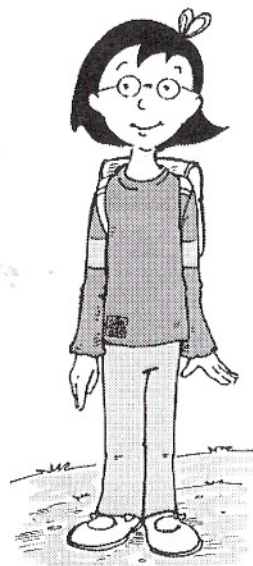
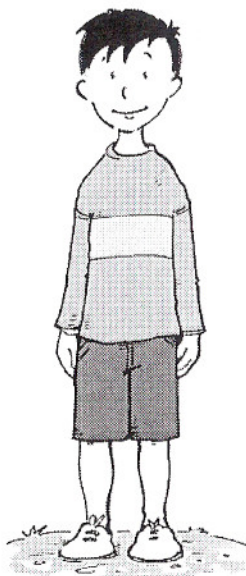
The adventures of Luc and Lucie

Back to School Episode 4

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Back to School

It was the end of the summer. Luc and Lucie had been puzzling all summer over the square they had found under Luc's cup. They could make no sense of it and the parrot wasn't any help either. They had begun to lose heart and to feel that it had all been a mistake. Then suddenly September arrived and the new school year began. They always felt very excited to return to school and meet their friends and teachers again. They had already been to the bookshop to buy the text books they needed for the year and new exercise books and felt-tipped pens. Their parents bought the 'serious' things and they added in some fun things with their own pocket money - rubbers in the shape of a lizard and a bat, striped pens which had three colours, blue, green and red and metal pencil boxes which looked like mobile phones.

When they got to school that first day they had a shock. Their teacher had broken her arm and was being treated in hospital so the Headteacher, Mr Leblanc, took their class. He was a nice, friendly man but he was still the Head.



In the first lesson, Maths, they were amazed to see Pirate fly in through the window and perch on the

whiteboard. The class erupted into roars of laughter - except for a shy girl, Eloise, who was rather frightened of birds and got up nervously from her seat and moved towards the door.

"Sit down," ordered the Head. "What is the matter Eloise? Are you ill?"

"No," answered Eloise "I hate birds."

"Don't be silly," said the Head "there are no birds in the classroom, Eloise."

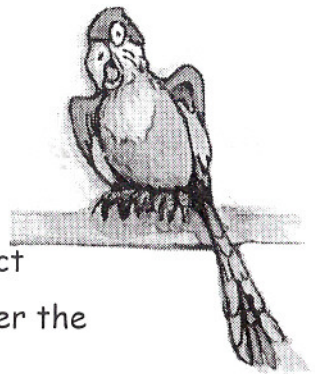
"Yes, there is a bird" shouted the class. "It's a parrot."

"A parrot?" said the Head "What nonsense!"

"What nonsense," repeated the parrot.

The class roared with laughter again.

"Silence!" Mr. Leblanc was outraged. "I expect you to concentrate on the first day back after the holidays. Behave properly."



The parrot quietly flew out of the window. Silence reigned and the children worked really hard in the hope that they would not have to stay in the next day.



The class worked hard all lesson. The Head said "That's better. You've always been such a good class, I can't understand what came over you.

After break it's French, so make sure you behave then. Go and get some fresh air now."

In the playground Pirate waited for an opportunity to catch Luc and Lucie. They were not pleased with him.

"We've all got to stay in tomorrow because of you."

"I know a way out," squawked the parrot. "I heard the Head say that he was going to ask for volunteers to sort out the books in the cellar. You must volunteer." The bell rang and they all went back inside.

The French lesson was revision of last year's grammar. The Head seemed pleased with what they had remembered. At the end of the lesson he did indeed ask for volunteers to sort out the books which had been put into the cellar while the library was being redecorated.

Luc and Lucie raised their hands straight away.

"Fine," responded Mr. Leblanc, " and I need two more." Denis and Eloise said they would go too.



It was actually quite exciting down in the cellar - dark and a bit creepy. In fact it was more than creepy. It was dangerous. Do you remember the black shape which emerged from the firework display? And was lurking by the door when the children got home? And caused the ripple in the rushes at the summer camp? Well, it was here too, waiting. The children began to carry piles of books upstairs to the librarian. It was hard work and they went up and down the steps for more than twenty minutes.

Luc and Lucie returned for one last time. As they picked up a couple of heavy old encyclopaedias an envelope fell out. "Get it quick!" squawked the parrot. Lucie grabbed the dusty envelope just as an enormous grey rat sprang towards her, out of the shadows. Wings outstretched Pirate swooped down with a loud screech. His claws dug into the rat's back as it escaped into the darkness. Lucie screamed and, shaken, fell up the stairs.

"Whatever's the matter?" asked the librarian.



"There is an enormous rat down there," stammered Luc. "Really I'm serious. We all saw it."

They looked so white that she knew they were telling the truth. "Come on, we'll have to tell Mr Leblanc."

Mr. Leblanc ventured into the cellar armed with a large ruler but the rat had disappeared. The Head told them not to worry as he would deal with it.

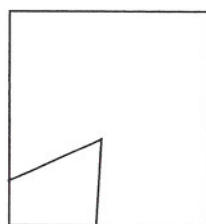
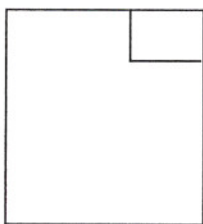
"You have done an excellent job clearing the cellar of books. The library can now open tomorrow as planned. I'm really very grateful to the four of you for all your help. I have decided that, in the circumstances, nobody will have to stay in at lunchtime."

The children were so relieved that the Head was not going to punish them for the morning's behaviour. It also meant that they would be popular with the rest of the class.

Home once more, Luc and Lucie were sent to bed early as they

looked tired after their first day back at school. The experience with the rat had certainly shaken them.

Lucie sneaked into Luc's bedroom. They opened the envelope and saw that it contained a square piece of card with strange markings on it. Once again they took out the other square which they had found under the cup in the summer camp. They had hidden it in their secret box at the bottom of Luc's wardrobe.



"I don't know what the first one is but the lines on this new one look a bit like the hands of a clock." Lucie was thinking aloud.

"Do you think that rat is part of the 'quest'?" said Luc.

"It was terrifying. I'm not sure I want to go on."



"Come on," urged Lucie. "We agreed, and Pirate is obviously there to protect us. He was brilliant in the cellar today. I feel that even if he isn't here he's keeping an eye on us from somewhere."

"I know what you mean," said Luc. "But what do you suppose we have to do on this quest? What do these stupid pieces of card mean? I've had enough for tonight, I give up."

"So do I," agreed Lucie. Even she felt disheartened. "I'm tired."

And they went to bed.

