

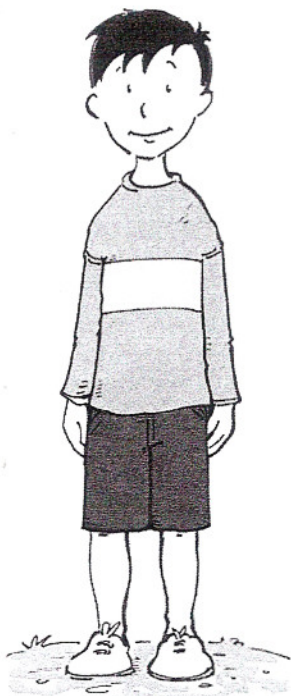
The adventures of Luc and Lucie

Canada

Episode 14

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CANADA

"No sign at all?" asked Denis.

"No sign at all," replied Luc.

"No sign of what?" asked Anne-Marie.

"It's just a parrot that used to come and see us," said Lucie
"but we don't think he'll be coming back again."

"Why not?"

"Well it's a bit complicated to explain but he may have gone
abroad somewhere," said Luc.

"Our dad is abroad isn't he, Denis?"

"Yes, he's away on business in Canada."

"Look I'll show you," said Anne-Marie and got out an atlas.

"First he went to Toronto, then to Vancouver, then to
Quebec and now he's in Montreal and coming home today
isn't he?"

Luc and Lucie tried to be interested but really their minds were on Pirate. They'd always thought he'd come back before but last time when he left them in Tunis he'd just flown off saying things were getting too dangerous. It had been frightening on that hillside in Carthage but more than two months had passed and, sitting in Denis' house, with the sun flooding in and daffodils in the garden, chatting about their visit to Parc Asterix the following weekend, they didn't feel at all afraid. However, they couldn't forget Sélène and the way she had been dragged away. They kept wondering where she was and whether Pirate had tracked her down.

They had told Denis all about what had happened in Tunis and they had just been wondering what their next step was.

"I think we'd better be going," said Luc.

"And I'd better get on the computer and do some research for my history homework," said Denis. We had so many volleyball practices last week I got behind. What a waste of a Saturday. See you tomorrow."

Luc and Lucie walked home in silence - both thinking about Sélène and Pirate. Talking to Denis about him again had brought it all back to them.

Suddenly Lucie said, "Do you remember that strange Bastille Day when we first met Pirate. We were in the garden and we both thought the birds were calling our names. Perhaps we could talk to THEM and ask them to find Pirate for us?"

"OK, let's try it," said Luc as they opened the gate.

They stood under the trees and listened. They could hear the birds singing.



"FindPiratefindPiratefindPiratefind-Pirate," they chanted together.

"What on earth are you doing out there?" called mum, opening the window.

"Just learning something for school," replied Luc..

Mum gave them a funny look. "Come on in, the meal's on the table," and closed the window.

After lunch they took Picasso for a long walk. He was full of energy, bounding off, plunging into the undergrowth and into the stream where he came out soaked and shook himself all over them. When they threw a ball for him to chase, their minds were elsewhere and they kept looking up into a grey and darkening sky hoping to see their brightly coloured friend flying down to them. But the sky was empty. They walked home disconsolately and as they reached home they saw Eloise coming out of the gate.

"I've been looking for you," she said. "Your Dad's watching football on TV and my mum and your mum have gone into Paris shopping. I've been looking on the internet for the information for that history project but I can't find it. Can you show me where it is?"

They all went into the little room where their computer was. As Luc switched on the light Eloise let out a shriek.

"Shhh," said Pirate. "I thought you weren't frightened of me any more."

"No, I'm not," she said, "it was just the shock."

"What's going on?" shouted their father rushing in from his football.

"Nothing," said Luc. "We were just messing about."

"Nobody hurt?" said Dad.

"No," said Eloise. "Sorry, it was my fault."

"Thank goodness," said Dad. "Calm down a bit," and returned to watching football.

"Oh Pirate it's so good to see you," said Lucie. "We've been wondering what was happening and whether we'd ever see you again."

Pirate looked touched.

"Well after the experience you had in Carthage I didn't want to put you in any more danger."

"Do you know what's happened to Sélène? Where is she now?" asked Lucie.

"I've managed to track them all down to Montreal and contacts over there say she's being held in a small building in a courtyard near the river. They haven't hurt her. I managed to get a message to her through my friends there. She says she's being well looked after."

"We still want to help," said Luc.

"Are you sure? When the birds in your garden came to find me, I couldn't really believe it."

"Of course," they said together.

"Why don't we go now?" said Lucie impulsively.

Eloise was looking rather confused by all this.

"I'm afraid we have to go somewhere for a minute or two but before we go I'll show you where the info is on the internet," said Luc and brought it up quickly. "And then we'll come round and find you when we get back. Let's see, it quarter to five now, so we should be with you at five. All right?"

"All right," said Eloise, aware that something strange was going on. "Be careful, won't you?" and she went down the path.

"Now," said Lucie. "Let's be practical. Montreal will be colder than here won't it? And what about money?"



"Yes, you'll need your ski-ing

anoraks," said Pirate. "As for money - I've discovered that if you keep your Euros with you they will change into Canadian dollars as we go."

"That's lucky," said Lucie. "I've still got twenty Euros from Christmas."

"I've got some left too," said Luc "in the top drawer of my desk."

"I'll go and get them," said Lucie, "and our anoraks at the same time. Perhaps I'd better bring a backpack and put our woolly hats and mittens in too."

"While you're doing that," said Pirate, "Luc could you find a picture of the Mont Royal Park. That's where my contacts live. By the way do not forget the key."

After a few minutes Luc found:

http://www.edinphoto.org.uk/O_my_p_m/O_my_photographs_montreal_winter_sunrise_1mr#picture

"The snow looks thick - we probably should wear our boots as well." So he dashed off to find them.

Five minutes later they were all standing in a line as they had done for Madagascar with Pirate touching the computer screen and S-w-o-o-s-h - off they went once more sucked down the dark tunnel and shot out into the bright white snow of a Canadian morning. They picked themselves up and looked around. The snow was fresh and dry and deep. Small figures on skis and toboggans were shooting down the hill in the distance.

They brushed the snow off their clothes.

"A good thing we brought all our anoraks with us," said Luc unpacking them.

"Where are we?" asked Lucie.

"In Mont Royal Park. Everyone who comes to Montreal comes to this viewpoint. You wait here and I'll go and find my friend, the cardinal, who lives over by the lake."

"The cardinal?" queried Lucie but Pirate was off.

"What a view!" said Luc tramping through the snow towards the parapet and looking down at the city spread below.

"Yes," said Lucie "I wonder where Sélène is? Look at all those windows. How can we possibly find her?" Her tone changed.

"Luc can you remember what those men with her in Carthage looked like? I can only remember that huge black figure towering above us and two shadowy figures coming out of the bushes."

"It was quite dark wasn't it but I think the man was very tall. Taller than anyone I've met but perhaps that was because I was so frightened."

"Oh Luc, quick, hide behind that pile of snow over there," and without waiting for any reply Lucie dragged the startled Luc after her.

"What's the matter? Have you seen the men?"

"No," said Lucie. "Look who's over there."

"Oh goodness - it's Denis' dad!"

A large black car had stopped along the road and two men got out and were walking towards the lookout spot.

"It's the least we could do Matthieu to give you a bit of sightseeing after all the work you've done for us. Just come and look at this view then we'll have a spot of lunch and we'll drive you to the airport," said the other man to Denis' dad.

"Keep down Luc," said Lucie as the men leaned over the parapet and started identifying the buildings.

"Those buildings down there are McGill University. That one in Place Ville Marie is Montreal's first skyscraper. That area over there is where all the museums are, and down by the river is the old part of the city where we'll go and eat."

At that moment Pirate appeared with a red bird. "Where are you?" he squawked and then said to the red bird, "Well Cardinal, I left

them here ten minutes ago - perhaps they've gone over there to have a look at the ski-ing."

"No we're here!" shouted Luc jumping up.

"Get down," said Lucie - but it was too late.



Monsieur Tavernier turned and saw them. "Luc and Lucie whatever are you doing here?"

"Quick," said the Cardinal "run for the bus - the number 11 takes you down to the Metro."

It was just about to leave the bus-stop nearby. Luc and Lucie jumped on it as the doors closed and it set off down the hill leaving Denis' dad open-mouthed.

Luc fished in his pocket for his money. It was true what Pirate had said. The euros had changed into Canadian dollars.

"Buy day tickets," said Lucie "then we'll have no problems."

"Good idea."

At the next stop Pirate flew in. "Stay on until we get to the Metro Mont Royal," he said.

Huge flakes of snow began to fall as the bus descended into the city and the buildings they had seen from the park became blurred in the snowstorm.

"Do you think Denis' dad is following us?" asked Luc as they got off. They looked back through the falling snow and thought they could see the black car stuck in the traffic behind them.

"Now," said the Cardinal "you need to get on the Metro. It's the orange line in the direction of Côte-Vertu. Get off in two stops at Champs de Mars. Go to the exit. You'll see some amazing stained glass windows and waiting for you there will be Arlette, who will be your guide in Montreal. She's about seventeen and will be wearing a white fur hat and will be reading a copy of Faze magazine.

"You should begin to sing '**Savez vous plantez les choux**' and she

will say 'Je le sais bien'. We've got to go and make some more arrangements. We'll see you later" and he flew off onto the snow.

"O.K.," said Lucie "we'd better do as he said." They made their way down the escalator and found the platform. A pale blue train with a white stripe drew in and they got on.

"Two stops," said Luc. The train was crowded. His gaze wandered through to the next carriage and suddenly what seemed like an electric charge went through his body. He could see through the window a man, an exceptionally tall man, who had his back to him but somehow seemed familiar.

"Oh no," he muttered. The train stopped and people pushed on and off. The man stayed where he was. The train set off again.

"Lucie," he whispered. "What do you think?" and nodded his head in the direction of the next carriage.

"It's him? It can't be. It's too much of a coincidence."

The man stayed with his back to the window as the train hurtled through the tunnel and then slowed down as it reached Champs de Mars.

"It's our station now," and they leapt out.

"Let's look," and as the doors closed they walked past the next carriage. The tall man was walking towards an empty seat and as he sat down his eyes met theirs. Was there a flash of recognition? The train set off but not before a small grey rodent sneaked off and mingled with the crowds.

"Was it him?"

"Don't know."

They climbed the stairs to the exit. "Huge whirls of coloured glass faced them. "This must be the stained glass and there she is."

"Arlette?" asked Lucie. The girl looked up but said nothing.

"**Savez vous plantez les choux,**" sang Luc feeling very stupid.

She replied immediately "**Je le sais bien.** You must be Luc and Lucie. Let's have something warm to drink." At the entrance to the station was a small café and they went in and sat at a table while Arlette bought the hot chocolate.

As they sipped it Arlette began to describe what was going to happen. "We have to go to Place d'Armes to buy a map in a shop in the Underground City. The place, where our friend is," she explained looking round warily, "will be marked with an X and there will be the next set of instructions on the back. We know it's somewhere in the Old town so we then have to go out of the Metro and pick up a Calèche - it's a sort of horse drawn carriage - which will be waiting for us. We'll then go to find her. You have got the key haven't you?"



"Oh yes," they said together.

"Let's have a pain au chocolat with our drink," suggested Lucie and got up to buy some. As they bit into them a man, reading a newspaper at the next table, got up and went out unnoticed.

"The underground city is what it says - a huge city underground with everything you'd find in an ordinary city: shops, banks,

restaurants, cinemas, hotels, offices..... there are over twenty miles of tunnels - so we'd better stick together," warned Arlette as they went into the Metro again.

At the Place d'Armes they emerged into the underground city. Opposite the exit was a newsagents and bookshop.

"That might be the one," suggested Luc.

It was full of tourists buying guidebooks and newspapers. It all looked very normal. At the till a large lady dealt with customers briskly. Arlette joined the queue and, as she reached the desk, said "I'd like a plan of the old city."

"We have a number over there," indicated the woman.

"No it's a rather special plan," insisted Arlette. Customers behind her wanting to pay for their newspapers were becoming restive.

"Exactly what kind of plan is it?"

Suddenly Lucie began to sing "**Savez-vous planter les choux.**"

"Oh that kind of map, just wait a minute and I'll be with you."

The queue eventually disappeared and from under the counter an envelope was produced.

"Nothing to pay," said the sales assistant.

In a corner of the shop they opened the envelope. It was a map of the old town and had a red cross marked on it. On the back was written 'Take a calèche to Place Jacques Cartier then on foot to rue Amande. The calèche will wait for you. In the first courtyard at number 2 our guest is staying. The calèche will take you to the waterfront - Bassin Jacques Cartier - where the speedboat Vitesse is ready to take her away.'

"That was what was supposed to happen last time," muttered Lucie, "but it didn't work out."

"I know," said Arlette.

They looked at each other. "Fingers crossed," they said.

Everything went according to plan. Only one calèche was outside

the station. Arlette started humming 'Savez-vous planter les choux' and the driver replied 'Je le sais bien'. They climbed in and the carriage set off.

At the Place Jacques Cartier, in the old town, they got out and followed the map to the rue Amande, a narrow street full of tiny art and craft shops. Between two of these was a narrow alley that led into a courtyard.



Number 2 looked to be small storage place of some sort. The door was closed. Luc produced the key and in a flash the door was open and they were inside. They closed it immediately and tiptoed up the staircase (they weren't sure whether anyone was around). Every wooden stair seemed to creak as they put their weight on it. At the top they were confronted with three doors. Luc listened carefully at the first door.

"Nothing," he said.

At the second door he hesitated and listened again. "I can't hear anything there either."

Outside the third door they all listened. "I think I can hear the floorboards creak." They all looked at each other. "It might not be her, it might be a guard, one of those dreadful men but I think we should try,"



Luc turned the key in the lock and opened the door.

Sélène was huddled in a moth-eaten armchair near a rusty radiator trying to read a book.

"Oh, however did you find me?" she whispered putting her finger to her lips.

"Tell you later," said Lucie. "Have you got a coat? It's very cold outside."

"Yes, in the cupboard," she replied and went to get it.

"Hurry," said Arlette. "Not a minute to lose."

They crept back down the stairs and Luc led the way back to the calèche. The driver set off immediately, almost at a gallop.

Arlette looked alarmed. "He's not going towards the waterfront. Stop," she said. "You're going the wrong way."

The driver turned round and peered in at them through the window at the front.

"On the contrary," he said "I'm going the right way," and began to laugh.

"Oh no," said Sélène "it's one of Deimos' men."

At that moment a white van overtook them and the calèche stopped.

"Out you come," said the driver. Two men emerged from the van - one very tall.

"So you don't like it here in Montreal in winter. We've come to take you somewhere much warmer. I'm sure you'll like that. As for you, you meddling children just keep out of this affair. I warned you in Tunisia and I won't warn you again."

With that they dragged Sélène off into the waiting van and drove off dangerously fast.

"Now what? Failed again. How do we get in touch with Pirate?" said Lucie despondently.

"I'm here," said a familiar voice, and Pirate flew down. "We knew something was wrong because we found the original driver bruised and battered in an alleyway. Deimos' men must have overpowered him while you were rescuing Sélène and then one of them took his place. There's no point in trying to follow them now - we just better get home as soon as possible."



"Before we go," said Lucie, "let's see if they have left any clues as to where they might be taking her. The driver left in a hurry."

She climbed up into the driving seat. "No, I can't see anything."

"Look under the seat," called Luc.

"No wait a minute there is something but it's just a scrap of fabric - blue with some white squiggles on it. It's probably nothing but I'll keep it in case."

The cardinal arrived. "I've just alerted those on the speed boat as to what has happened," he said.

"I'm sorry but I don't think I can be of any more help to you."

"Thank you for everything you've done," said Pirate. "I'm sorry it didn't turn out better."

"We'd better get home. Arlette, can you take us to the nearest Internet café?"

"There's one just next to the restaurant over there."

As they passed the restaurant they were horrified to see, Denis' dad sitting at a table in the window.

"Oh no," said Luc and as he spoke Denis' dad looked up and caught his eye.

"Hurry," said Lucie.

They dashed into the café. Arlette booked half an hour and they gathered round the computer. Luc typed in their e-mail address.

"It's been really nice knowing you," said Lucie.

"Are you going somewhere now?" asked Arlette, puzzled.

"Just you watch this," said Luc. "Bye."

They lined up as usual and swoosh, they were immediately sucked down the tunnel and back into their computer room, leaving Arlette staring in amazement at the e-mail on the computer screen. She logged out and turned to leave. As she did so a man rushed in looking round wildly.

"Did some children come in here?" he asked the café owner.

"Yes, two of them with this young lady who is leaving?"

Turning to Arlette," he said "what's happened to your two friends who came in with you a minute or two ago?"

"I really don't know," said Arlette. "They seem to have disappeared," and walked out into the snow.

Back in Charmante La Forêt it was five to five - just in time for Luc and Lucie to go round to Eloise's. They rushed next door forgetting to take off their anoraks. The two mothers had just come back from shopping and were having a cup of coffee.

"Why on earth are you wearing your ski anoraks?" asked Luc and Lucie's mum. "It's a really warm spring day and - it almost looks like snow on your sleeves."

The following day they were round at Denis' sharing all the stuff they had found for their history project. A taxi drew up.

"Oh, that must be dad back from Canada," said Anne-Marie.

"I wonder if he's brought us any presents?"

Their mother opened the door and Denis' dad came in. Anne-Marie and Denis rushed to meet him. But it wasn't at them that he was looking. He went quite pale.

"What's the matter Matthieu?" asked Nicole. "Are you not feeling well?"

"Luc and Lucie you weren't in No of course you weren't. I'm fine," he said turning to his wife. "Just rather tired."