

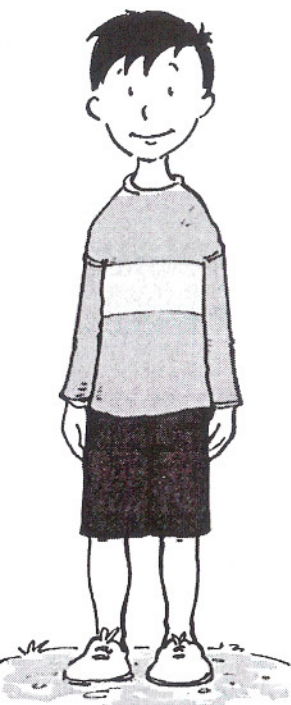
# The adventures of Luc and Lucie

## At the Safari Park

### Episode 8

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## At the Safari Park

"They're here," shouted Luc as the noise of the old Espace, which had seen better days, could be heard coming up the lane. Today, 1st September, was the twins' birthday.

Their grandparents had organised a visit for them and Denis and Eloise to the Safari Park at Thoiry as a birthday treat. It wasn't very far away, really, but somehow they'd never been. All four of them were waiting at the gate.



Picasso had thought they were going to take him for a walk and was peering miserably out of the window, having been left behind.

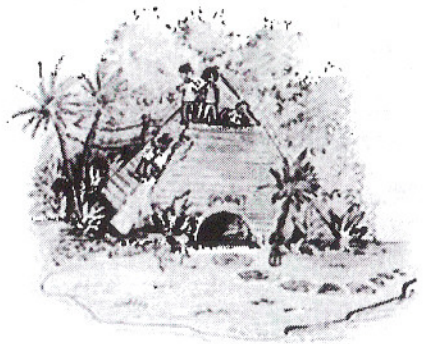
They piled into the Espace which Grandad has used for deliveries in the region when he'd had the baker's shop so it still smelt of bread and cake.

The sun was shining, the birds were singing, the children were excited: it was going to be a great birthday.

As Grandad drove through the narrow lanes Granny explained that the Safari Park was in the grounds of a beautiful Renaissance Stately Home.

"I don't think we'll have time to look round that as well," she said. "We'll have to come back another day."

Luc and Lucie had looked at the Safari Park on the internet on their mother's computer and with their grandparents had planned the day. First they were going to drive among the wild animals in the African reserve, then they would go to the Mysterious Island and explore the Wooden Pyramid and zoom down the slides. After lunch there were the other animals and the lion and tiger tunnels and then they would try to find their way round the maze.



Gradually, it seemed from nowhere, cars appeared on the road all packed with children. Probably it was the last treat before school began again, so they weren't going to be alone in the Safari park. Soon there were the signs and then the Chateau and the Park itself. It was much bigger than they had imagined with plenty of room for all the cars.

At the ticket office the official impressed on Grandad that the car windows were to be kept firmly shut when they were among the wild animals and of course that they should not feed the animals. They set off immediately for the African Reserve. Luc had brought his camera and Granny her video camera so she could film while Grandad drove.

"Look, there's a giraffe, no two," shrieked Eloise.

Grandad was driving very slowly and the giraffes ambled towards them and peered down at them through the sunshine roof. "Remember, don't open the windows," shouted Granny as the long tongue of the giraffe licked the roof of the car.



They drove on, leaving the giraffes behind, moving slowly as zebras crossed the road in front of them and a group of rhinoceros wandered about in the distance. In the sunshine they felt they really had been transported to another continent. Luc used his zoom to get



close-ups of some rhinoceros and Granny tried desperately to record both the children inside the car and the animals outside. They thought they could see an elephant across the grass and passed round binoculars to make sure it was really true.

They found at least two and some other animals they couldn't immediately identify. They looked in the book Granny had bought and found they were elands.

"Are those ostriches?" asked Eloise a little nervously.

"I think they are," said Granny looking at the map of the park and then she tried to film them. At that moment gates moved slowly open and clanged shut behind them as they drove into the

lion enclosure. Without warning there was a crack and a terrific roll of thunder. Over the back of the car sinister black clouds had crept up, had quickly overtaken them, and then suddenly there was an absolute deluge. The raindrops drummed on the roof and danced on the road. It was impossible to see through the water pouring down the windscreen.



"It must be like being in a monsoon," thought Luc.

Through the downpour ominous blurred shapes gradually emerged and came towards them. One bumped against the side of the car. A lion! Then another and another and finally four of them stood in front of the car, on each side and round the back.

"You're supposed to keep moving, aren't you?" said Granny to Grandad.

"I would if I could see anything but the rain is so heavy that the windscreen wipers can't clear it." The rain was all over in a couple of minutes. It stopped as quickly as it had started - but the lions were still there knocking against the car.

"Come on," said Granny "let's get out of here."

"Sorry," said Grandad, "I'm doing my best but I think the rain must have dampened the plugs and the car won't start."



"OOOhhhh," said Lucie, "I don't like this."

"Don't worry," said Granny reassuringly, "sound your horn Bertrand - that's what the notices say and someone will come. The lions won't harm us. We're safe inside the car - I'll film it all. Smile!"

At that moment the warden appeared in his 4 x 4 and the lions amazingly disappeared into the trees.

"Having some trouble are you?" he asked "I'll tow you out of the Wildlife Reserve area and then we'll see what we can do."

Once safely outside the reserve they all breathed freely again - including Granny who, despite her words, had been as nervous as the rest.

Once the plugs were wiped the car started again and Grandad drove it into the car park. They sat in the sun, drank bottles of Fanta, and recovered from the 'lion experience'.

"Now for the Mysterious Island," said Lucie, anxious not to waste time.

No adults were allowed on the island and the Grandparents looked on a little uneasily as the children scrambled across the rope bridge and through the entrance into the tunnels. Inside it

was very dark and low and twisty. Lucie went first followed by the others. Luc was last in. His eyes hadn't become accustomed to the darkness and he stumbled as he tried to catch up with the others. He put out his arm to prevent himself from falling and found his hand coming up against a ledge in the wall where his fingers closed on a tight ball of paper.

"Mmm," he thought. "I thought it might happen here." He called to the others and they crowded round beneath one of the lights. He unfolded the paper and they read:

*'This search will amaze you. Animals will guide you if you venture to .3..'*

They all peered at each other through the darkness.

"Let's leave it until lunch time," suggested Lucie.

"Good idea," agreed Denis. "There aren't any animals here so when we've explored the tunnels, let's go up inside the Wooden Pyramid."

They clambered up the stairs to the top where they could slide down to earth again through the tunnels.

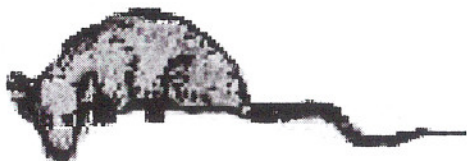
"So there you are," came a voice from above them as Pirate perched on one of the rafters. "Did you enjoy the African Reserve?"





"It was great, especially the bit where we broke down," said Lucie. "though I didn't like it much at the time! We've got another clue but we haven't really solved it yet."

"Don't worry," said Pirate. "When the time comes I can show you the way.... This time I'm...." As he spoke there was a swift movement and along the rafter sped the rat. The parrot took off just in time and disappeared through the wooden tracery. The rat hissed in anger and disappeared.



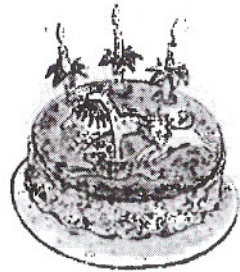
It was very exciting in the Pyramid and even more exciting as they all plunged down the steel tunnels from the darkness to the bright sunlight.

"It's almost 12.00," shouted Grandad across the water. "How about some lunch?"

"Just another slide down," replied Luc and they all disappeared again.

Back down they came across the rope bridges to join the adult world again. They had lunch under an awning at tables specially provided. Granny had packed up a picnic for them. There were baguettes with ham and gherkins, tomatoes and pieces of cheese

and grapes and, as it was the twins' birthday, she had made a special cake decorated with all sorts of wild animals.



They passed around the cake while a man on the next table borrowed Luc's camera and took a photo and then they ate it ALL.

After lunch they went through the tiger tunnel. Thick glass protected them but it was still a strange feeling to have tigers only an inch or two away, rubbing themselves on the glass just as Josephine rubbed herself against their legs when she wanted them to stroke her.

"I hope the glass is safe," said Eloise. She was relieved when Denis suggested that they walk over to find the monkeys. After that they looked at wolves, a whole pack of them walking menacingly towards them staring directly into their eyes, then at two brown bears hiding behind rocks and finally at a python coiled round a branch in its enclosure and sleeping in the sun. None of the animals seem to guide them in any way.

Time was going really fast and the children couldn't think what the message meant.

"I think if you want to explore the Maze," said Grandad, "we should go now - it's getting late."

"Stick together children," said Granny "we don't want to lose anybody!"

At the entrance to the Maze they were surprised to see a large computer.

"Goodness, look at this," said Denis "it's a kind of quiz. There are five themes and three levels of difficulty. They're: the Symbolism of Mazes, French History, Our World, Animals and Myths."

Lucie whispered, "That's it!"

"Yes," said Luc " *This search will aMAZE you. ANIMALS will guide you if you venture to .3. So we have to choose the most difficult questions on Animals.*" They looked for the first question and answered it correctly. A quick flash on the screen said 'Move on to the first bridge'. Granny and Grandad didn't seem to have noticed anything and were anxious to move on. They went in single file between the box hedges and eventually found themselves in front of a bridge. They climbed up and looked down at people, some excited, some worried, trying to get out. Suddenly there was a flash of colour and Pirate was above them.

"Follow me," he squawked and flew off.

Luc and Lucie dashed off down the steps, followed by Denis and Eloise.

"Wait a minute," shouted Grandad. "We mustn't get separated."

The parrot led them along the pathways through the hedges and, eventually, they found themselves in front of another computer screen.

They looked for the next question and again got it right. The parrot squawked above them and for a split second there flashed on the screen.

*It's under the first step of the next bridge.*



"Come on," said Pirate "follow me."

The children all set off again pursued by Granny and Grandad who, of course, didn't understand what was going on.

At the next bridge Luc bent down pretending to tie his shoe laces and quickly looked under the first step and there was the familiar shape. He took a quick look - the same old line on yet another square.

"I've absolutely no idea where we are." said Granny. "However shall we get out!" It's already past four o'clock so I don't think we have the time to do all the quiz questions."

"Don't worry," said the parrot to the children "I can get you out quickly."

"It's this way," said Lucie and the children set off again after Pirate.

"Just a minute Lucie," shouted Grandad but as the children didn't stop they had no alternative but to follow them and were astonished when in a minute or two they found themselves at the exit.

"However did you do that?" asked Granny.

"Magic," replied Luc and Lucie together.

They were all beginning to feel tired now. They bought some postcards and some animals key rings but looking round the Chateau would be for another day.

They piled into the car again and set off back home through the country lanes. Laughing and joking in the back of the car, the children didn't notice that they were actually going very slowly.

"You're driving very carefully," said Granny "is everything all right?"

"No, I'm afraid something's wrong - I can't seem to get any power when I press the accelerator," murmured Grandad sounding

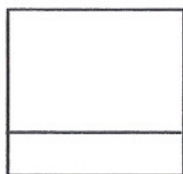
rather worried. "I'll try to find somewhere off the road to park."  
He soon found a track going off into a wood.

"Now what?" asked Granny. "I'd better phone Monique to tell her what's happened," rummaging in her bag for her mobile.

Mum answered. "Don't panic," she said. "Hugo has the car and is somewhere in Yvelines today so if you phone him direct I'm sure he will come and find you. Look on the map before you ring him so that he knows where you are - I'll ring Denis's and Eloise's parents to let them know what's happened then I'll ring you back to make sure you've contacted Hugo."

So the mobile phones started to ring: Dad was about twenty kilometres away and said he would come immediately. Mum rang back to say she phoned the other parents so nobody was to worry and then she rang Dad to encourage him to hurry. Granny had found some little cakes in her picnic bag so the children ate again while the grandparents went down to the road to look for Dad's car.

Luc produced the square



"Here we go again," said Luc. "It's the same old line."

"Yes I know," said Lucie "but if we hold it against the warm engine of the car we might be able to see if it has a letter on the back."  
All four children jumped out of the car and watched in suspense

while Lucie held it against the front of the car which was, in fact, very hot. She turned it over and there was a letter C distinctly visible. At that moment they heard the first patter of rain and where they were again.

Granny should "Back into the car children, I don't want you all to get wet." The sky darkened, another deluge of rain swept down on to the car and the track became a river. Granny's mobile rang. "It's Hugo," she said. "He can't find us!"

Grandad took the phone and carefully described, looking at the map, exactly where they were again. "I think he understands now, he just went wrong at the last cross road. He should be here any minute," and sure enough the headlights of a car appeared and Dad's voice shouted "I'll just wait until the rain stops and then I'll fix a tow-rope."

It was quite a complicated manoeuvre as he needed to fix the rope to the front of Grandad's car so it had first to be pushed back down the track which was now just squelching mud. Everyone got out and then put branches and stones under the wheels but it didn't move a centimetre. After a quarter of an hour, frustration turned to concern.

"We really must get out of here before dark," said Dad. "I may have to ferry people back in my car tonight and come back for your car tomorrow." But at that moment a farmer appeared down the road with a tractor.

"Trouble?" he said. "Perhaps I can help," and with the rope he was able to pull the car forward, turn it in a circle in the field and then drag it down on to the road where Dad was able to tow it home.

"Oh dear," said Mum when she saw them wet and covered in mud. "What a mess you all look" (and they did) "Eloise and Denis whatever will your parents think?"

"I know what I think," said Granny. "I think we need a new car. Two breakdowns in one day that's a bit too much."

"Yes, quite an eventful day," said a voice above them in the tree and the parrot squawked with laughter as the children went inside to have a shower. The expedition to the Safari Park wouldn't be forgotten in a hurry.

