

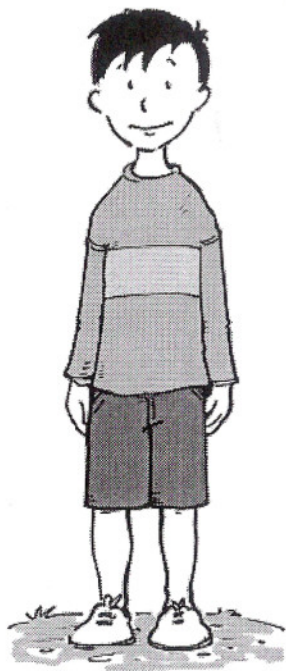


The Adventures of Luc and Lucie

Shrove Tuesday

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Illustrations by Amanda Wood
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It was the middle of February; not the children's favourite month. Since they had come back from the Alps it had snowed and melted, snowed and melted again. A heavy mist lay like a great blanket, smothering life in the countryside. Now it was raining heavily again, as it had been doing for the past week, and the lanes round the village were just lakes of mud. It was Friday morning and Luc and Lucie went to school in their wellingtons; not very 'cool' but very practical.

Luc looked out of the window not really concentrating in a particularly boring lesson. He was thinking more about the following Tuesday. It was Shrove Tuesday when there was going to be the village carnival. His thoughts were interrupted by the teacher Madame Jacquinot.

“Put away your books, children. Today we have a visit from a local artist Monsieur Alain Fouillard who is going to help us make our masks for next week.”

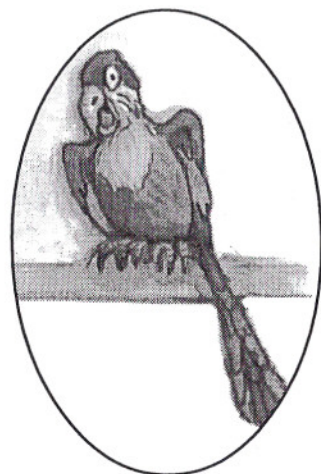


Luc woke up. He loved art and making things. He wanted to be an architect like his father. Every Shrove Tuesday - the last day of celebrations and eating before the Christian season of Lent - there was a special market in the village and a procession round the square led by the children wearing fancy dress and masks .

The children left the classroom and went into the room next door where the artist had assembled all sorts of materials : newspapers, fabrics, paints, chickenwire, felt pens piled up on a table in the centre of the room. He had also brought with him three types of basic masks which could be cut and adapted . There was one you fixed on with elastic round your ears, one you held in your hand, one you put over your head.

He asked the children to give him ideas about what they might be and wrote them on the whiteboard: spaceman, cat, clown, eagle, witch, fairy...

Luc thought carefully. He didn't want to share his idea. He didn't want some one else to choose it. He wanted to be King Louis XIV. They had talked about him in history lessons - the Sun King - and he had got a book out of the library about him.



Lucie had no ideas at all . She didn't like the ideas on the board but her mind was a complete blank. Suddenly she heard a voice say "Why don't you pretend to be me?". It was Pirate.



"Oh yes, what a good idea," she whispered with relief.

Monsieur Fouillard gave out the basic masks and showed the children how to make papier maché (so that they could add on noses or huge eyebrows or long chins) and how to stick on wool to make hair or beards. They could make their masks more exciting by painting them with bright colours or by adding sequins.

When Lucie talked to him about being a parrot, he produced lots of brightly coloured stiff paper to cut out in the shape of feathers and showed others how to cut the masks so that holes were left to see through. Eloise wanted to be the Snow Queen and Denis a deep sea diver. The class was sent off to the IT room to search the internet for pictures of their character to download. Even though they had to share the five computers, by the end of the morning everyone had a character and a picture.

The rest of the day was spent working on their masks and it was surprising how much was achieved with the help of the artist .

Luc and Lucie rushed home excitedly to tell their parents.

“Oh Luc,” said Mum “ whatever are you going to wear as Louis XIV ? “I simply don’t think I’ve got time this week to make such a complicated costume and oh Lucie! a parrot, - why do you two have to choose really difficult things?”

The children were rather disappointed.

Dad thought a bit and then said “Just a minute. Do you remember the village pageant we had five or six years ago. There was a page boy in that, wearing satin. That would do for Luc. The costumes are stored in the Town Hall so I’ll check. We can add some lace and ribbons and I can help Lucie to stick feathers on her leotard so I think we’ll manage.’



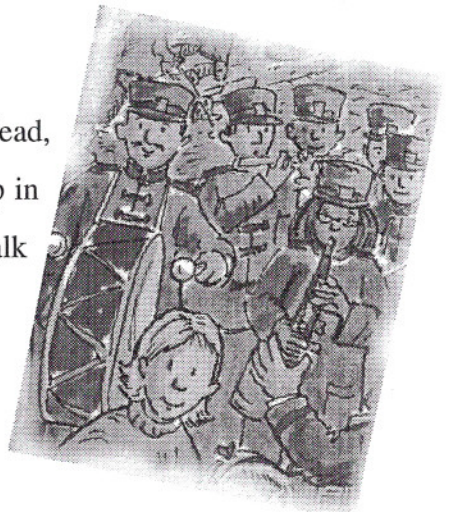
Mum looked very relieved and Luc and Lucie smiled again.

Tuesday seemed to come very quickly and Luc and Lucie had worked hard on their masks and costumes during the weekend.

It was Shrove Tuesday and a quarter to two. In the Square a special market had been set up. Members of the village band had assembled, wearing their smart navy and red uniforms, and were tuning up.

In the school, however, there was chaos. The children were all nervously getting into their costumes and putting on their masks in the hall: Eloise had lost her crown, Denis was desperately sticking another piece of cellophane across the eyepiece of his mask as the original had split and Lucie was pinning more ribbons on to Luc's costume where Picasso had chewed some of them off.

A whistle blew. "Now children," said the Head, in the silence that followed, "Please line up in front of your class teacher so that we can walk in an orderly way into the Square."





At one minute to two the Head opened the door and the children moved down the lane to join the band which had already formed up. Round the square were waiting all the villagers and their friends who had come to join in. Some of the market stall holders had also dressed up; the fishmonger as an enormous shark, the wine seller as Bacchus, the god of wine, the butcher transformed into a bull and the greengrocer into a large tomato. Everyone was in a good mood.

The band started to play and the procession moved off to march round the square.

In the centre of the square under an awning were six huge hot plates. Luc and Lucie's father was there helping to make pancakes, the traditional dish of Shrove Tuesday. He was working at home that day so that he could dash out to take part.

Adults in fancy dress joined the children in the procession. Lucie, inside her parrot mask, found it quite difficult to see properly and desperately tried to keep up. The smell of freshly made pancakes wafted across to her and as she imagined herself eating her favourite chocolate one, she became aware of someone walking close to her and a voice, the voice of an old man, said

“It’s Lucie isn’t it?”

“Yes,” replied Lucie nervously.

“I have something for you” he continued, “Keep it safe” and she felt a little square of cardboard pressed into her hand.



“Who are you?” she asked.

There was no reply but she could hear a voice singing.

“Savez-vous planter les choux?” which was lost in the noise as the band struck up a rousing march and the crowd cheered.

