

## Chapter five

« We are so happy that we could take the train to Paris, Aila said. We managed to get tickets. It was more difficult for Varjjalit ; we thought we would have to put him under the seat ! Ha! Ha! Ha! It was just a joke ! At the end, we could put him in a special carriage. »



But as soon as they arrived at “gare du Nord” train station, Varjjalit felt like going to a park to eat some green grass before discovering Paris. So, Aila and Niila first went to “Vincennes woods”. As soon as they got there, they met a squirrel :

« Hi there, I am going to be your guide into the woods. But before that, we will leave Varjjalit in the middle of this beautiful lawn near the small lake and as for us, we are going to drink a hot chocolate. »

A few minutes later...

« - Yum! This chocolate drink was so good that we would like to drink some all day long, Aila said.

- Now, we are going to feed the ducks, the squirrel said.

- But we haven't got any bread, Niila said.

- We just have to go to the bakery.

- What is a bakery like, here ?

- The bakery is a shop where we sell fresh bread, particularly the “ Parisian baguette ”: a long loaf which is well-known all over the world.

- So, let's go there !

- Hello children; are you newly arrived in the neighborhood? The baker asked.

- No, we aren't. We are only here for a short stay.

- What would you like?

- A loaf, please.

- Fine, that will be 0,90 €.

- Wow ! In Lapland, our bread costs us the price for 1 kg of flour because we make it at home.

- But where are your parents ?

- They are in Lapland. They let us go with some friends. »



Back in the woods.

« - Look ! What beautiful mallards ! I think I would like to have one to take it to Sweden ! Niila said.

- No, you cannot do that because these ducks are wild » the squirrel replied.

After they fed the ducks, the squirrel suggested to go on a small boat around the lake.

- But who will row ? Aila asked.

- I will » Niila answered.

They saw some children walk quickly on the shore of the lake while they were on their boat. The squirrel explained to them that each year, all the pupils from “Daumesnil elementary school” walk quickly around the lake several times during the school year.

Thirty minutes later, they finished their boat trip around the lake and they saw lots of different trees; they really liked the weeping willows with their branches falling in the water. Then, they decided to pick up a few leaves, acorns, chestnuts and some small flowers.

After that, the squirrel advised them to visit “Vincennes zoo” not far from the lake, which re opened after four years of refurbishing. The giraffes looked very tall.

The children also saw monkeys, panthers and many other animals ... This zoo was really nice with its funny huge rock in the middle. Then they left to visit “ The Emigration Museum ” and the Aquarium of Porte Dorée ” ( “ the Golden Door ” ). But they finally didn't manage to visit it because they had to pick up Varjjalit before leaving the woods and it was already very late.



The squirrel said goodbye to them because he had to stay in the woods. But a pigeon was supposed to come and look after them. Indeed, not far from there, they met a pigeon, which was waiting for them on the branch of a tree. He told them :

« I am going to take you to the « Plants Garden » and the « The Children's Gallery » which is located within the « Evolution Gallery ».

But I saw a reindeer pass by and I really wonder what it is doing here, since there aren't any reindeers in our city, the pigeon added. »

Aila and Niila explained that it was their reindeer and they started off. On their way, the pigeon showed them how to find their way thanks to his GPS system. When they got to the park, they found the flowers very beautiful. At the end of it, they saw a very big building. Aila asked :

«-Can animals get in ?

- No, they can't. » the pigeon answered.



So the children let Varjjalit outside the museum. The pigeon couldn't get in either, so he said :

« - I know an animal who can get in with you ; it is a rabbit. »

The rabbit was hopping when he arrived. He took them to the activities on the city, then to those on the River Seine, later on the blue planet Earth and the last ones on the tropical forest. They learnt many things. At the end of the visit, everybody was hungry; they decided to have a picnic in a place where they were allowed to, and where there was some grass. They managed to find a little basket in which they could find carrots for Varjjalit and the bunny. After a good meal, they went to the auditorium to see two films: « On the tracks of the Gallics » : one was about their diet and the other one about arms and weapons. These two films were shown during the week of « Paris bets on sciences » which offered many scientific workshops for children. Then the rabbit told them :

« - The films are over ! Now, I will take you to visit Paris sewers but I won't be able to come with you. Over there, you will meet my friend the tortoise who will show you around for the rest of your trip. She will explain to you how the sewers work. »



Indeed, Aila and Niila met the tortoise down the stairs.

She told them :

« - Hello, my name is Mimi, I am a turtle from Florida. I am going to take you around during your stay here and we will visit the sewers together. Be careful ! You may find rats on your way ! We will tell you the story of the sewers.

- Oh dear ! The smell is starting to be strong, Niila added.

- What is this strange smell ? Aila asked.

- These are waste waters, Mimi explained.

- Where do they go ? Aila and Niila wondered.

- The water route doesn't stop here, said Mimi. I know where tap water comes from. But I do not know where the dirty water from our sinks at home goes. So I asked a guide; his name is José; he is a sewer worker. »

He invited them to follow him in his world: the underground galleries of Paris sewers. He was rather reassuring because he was comfortable in this dark, huge and strangely smelly realm. He explained that a long time ago, much later than the Middle Ages, Napoleon asked an engineer to create sewers. Indeed, it was necessary to clean up Paris to prevent the population from diseases like the plague, because the streets were extremely dirty. There were huge machines to clean the sewers which removed the sand and all the rest of the filth from the pipes. One day, the sewers workers even found a crocodile ! When they are at work, they wear a special waterproof outfit and a gas detector. Sometimes, it is true that there is a toxic undetectable gas in the pipes, because it is odorless and colorless, and it is lethal.

Suddenly, Mimi cried out : « I haven't told you my story! Before, I used to live in a classroom of " Daumesnil Elementary School ". But one Friday, as every Friday, the children were washing me when I fell in a sink drain. I ended up in the pipes then in the sewers. I found them narrow, dirty and greatly damaged. » Later, one day, José found Mimi when the pipes were being repaired. When he opened a pipe to fix it, he saw the small turtle and he tried to pull her by its head to let her come out. He finally succeeded after ten attempts ! After he asked her her name, he decided to give her something to eat and let her go free in the sewers. Since then, Mimi had been walking





around the sewers, looking for someone who could adopt her. Aila and Niila jumped and happily offered to do so. Mimi said yes straight away and Aila put her in her pocket. At the end of the visit, they said goodbye to José and they came out from the shop to go and eat in a pub. As a starter, they ate “foie gras” ( cooked goose liver ) on toasts; their main dish was steak with chips and Dijon mustard; as a dessert, they had a delicious chocolate mousse. After eating so much of these typical French dishes, Aila and Niila declared they were full up and they couldn't eat anything more ! However they decided to go and see Niki de Saint Phalle exhibition.



« I am staying with you but my friend the hamster will join us, said Mimi. SO, let's cross the bridge; he is waiting for us. »

On the other side of the bridge, the small rodent was waiting for them and he said to them :

« Let's go to the « Grand Palais » to see Niki de Saint Phalle exhibition. »

When they got to the museum, not far from the “ Champs Elysées ” which is the most beautiful and the best known avenue in Paris, a lecturer gave them audio guides. The children hid Mimi and the hamster in their pockets because animals were not allowed in the museum. As for Varjjalit, they let him outside the building again. Then they went inside to visit the Niki de Saint Phalle exhibition. She was a painter and a sculptor.

When she was young, Niki had a very famous model. In fact, she wanted to show all her emotions in her creations. She had a sad and difficult childhood and she thought that being married prevented women from being free. Niki preferred leaving her two children, Laura and Philip.

To her first husband in order to create works full time. Then she got married with Jean Tinguely who was also a famous painter and sculptor. Walking through the exhibition, Aila and Niila saw many colorful « Nana » representing women. They also learnt how she created some paintings by shooting paint with a rifle.



They saw a short film on “ Taro park ” in Tuscany where she had a funny house built, with glass mobiles which made music when it was windy. Finally, they were surprised to see a skull made of colored bright stones.

« I am hungry, Mimi suddenly said. We could go and eat something. »

Aila and Niila bought some croissants, something else typically French and they drank a hot chocolate again. Then, they went to the supermarket to buy carrots for Varjjalit, shrimps for Mimi and grains for the hamster. Later, they decided to look for a hotel for the night because they started feeling very tired. The hamster said he had to leave them but that the next day a mouse would be waiting for them outside the European Parliament office next to the « Assemblée Nationale ».

On the next day, after a quick breakfast, they left to the European Parliament office. They walked along the River Seine and they saw “ the Invalides ” with its golden dome, exactly where Napoleon the First's grave is. They also saw some « bateaux mouches » (« fly boats »), those big flat open boats which take tourists on the River.

Aila, who was very excited to see all these things, cried :

« - Look ! We can see the Eiffel Tower ” ! It is huge !

- It is true, and it looks like an «A», said Niila, who was quite surprised.

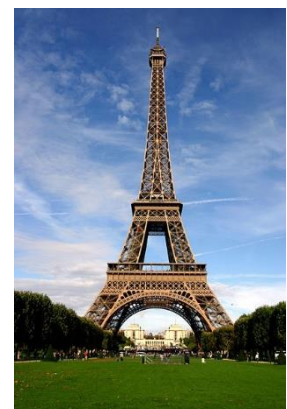
Mimi explained that it was 324 meters high. It was finished being built in 1889. There were 5 lifts and 250 million people had already visited it.

« - You know a lot of things », Niila said.

- Hey ! Look ! Here is the European Parliament office ! » Varjjalit told them.

The little mouse was already waiting for them.

« - Let's go inside and visit it ! » Aila suggested.





Everybody agreed; but it was written on signs that non domestic animals had to stay in the courtyard. They split into two groups, Aila's with Mimi and Niila's with the mouse. Each group in turn went to a conference room where they were told how the European Parliament works, what people did in it, and where in Europe its offices were. They also watched a film on the important laws on eco-friendly agriculture.

They also went to a library with computers games on Europe, its countries, their capital cities and their flags.

At the end, Aila said :

« - This discovery of the European Parliament is really good.

- Yes, but I am cold; can I go back into your pocket, please ? Mimi answered.

- Yes, of course ! »

Then Mimi went back into her pocket and they left to meet Varjjalit in the courtyard again. The little mouse couldn't go with them but she told them to go to Georges Pompidou Gallery. It was another museum which had the name of a former French President who had it built. There, a dog would look after them.

They got in front of a big fountain, " the Stravinski fountain ". There, a dog came to them and said :

« - You are Aila and Niila, aren't you ? Do you know the works which are in the fountain ?



- Yes, we do. These sculptures were made by Niki de Saint Phalle.

- Indeed they were; the dog answered. Anybody can notice the colorful «Nanas». But you can also find black metal statues which were made by her husband Jean Tinguely.

- Now it is too warm in Aila's pocket ! Mimi said.

The dog was quite puzzled:

- Who said something ?

- It is me ! Mimi answered. Then Mimi looked around her and she saw the dog.

- I think I know you, we were in the same club.

- Which club ? The dog asked.

- You know, the club where you learn how to travel around Paris.

- Oh yes ! Hello there ! My name is Lulu.

- Well, that is all very good, sorry to interrupt, but we must carry on.

- Do you want me to show you " the Georges Pompidou Gallery ", or Museum ?

- Yes, of course, they all answered.

- So, it is just next to the fountain. Let's go.

- Wow ! These big plastic tubes are really strange, aren't they ? Aila noticed.

- They aren't. They are made of metal, Lulu explained. This place is a modern art Gallery. The paintings there are contemporary. The front of the building is very modern too. It is made of metal and glass elements, with a structure in a zigzag shape. In fact, the architect put the stairs outside the building to have more space inside.

- Could we visit the museum ? Aila and Niila asked.

- No, we can't, it is too late already and there isn't a park for Varjjalit.

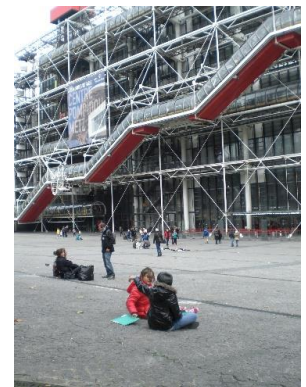
- We could leave him here, in the square outside the building, Niila recommended.

- No, it's too dangerous, there are too many people and he might go on the street.

- So, let us go and meet « the time defenders » Mimi said.

- What are the « time defenders » ? The children asked.

- It is a huge automatic clock which is located in the courtyard of these buildings, not far from here, and it is quite amazing.







They got in front of the clock. They thought the knight sculpture was going to attack them! But Lulu explained that an artist had created this clock simply to let people know the time ! Its mechanics had stopped a long time ago, but it couldn't be repaired because it would cost too much money. Before it broke down, at certain times, the knight would fight the dragon or other elements, as a way to symbolize the struggle against time which flies on. The statue was made of metal too.

« - Now, it is time to go, the dog said. Goodbye to you all ! ».

But before leaving Paris, Aila and Niila didn't want to miss « The Isle of the city » which is where Paris started, quite a long time ago. They wanted to see " Notre-Dame Cathedral ".

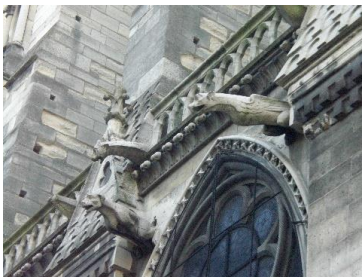
« - Alright then, but before that, I will put you in Câline's paws, she is a very nice cat. »

Câline arrived to meet them and told them :

« - I will tell you the story of the Isle of the City. At the very beginning, Paris was called Lutèce. One day, the village people were very scared that the barbarious Attila might come to their village. One woman, who was called Geneviève, prayed a lot to make sure he didn't come. Indeed, he never showed up! Since then, Geneviève became the protective lady patron of Paris. Now, let us go to the Conciergerie. »



Aila and Niila saw the outside with its four towers: the clock tower, Caesar's clock in memory of Caesar, the silver tower in which there was the royal treasure, and the « Bonbec » tower, which meant « good mouth » because there was a torture room in which people always ended up by saying, mouthing the truth. As they went walking, the children saw the River Seine and the bridges. They could easily see they were on an island. Then Câline offered to see Notre Dame. Niila and Aila exclaimed :



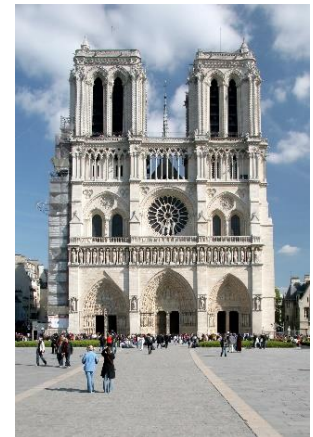
« - What a magnificent cathedral ! Wow ! We can even hear bells !

- Look at all these sculptures, they look like lace, Niila noticed.

- But there are some monsters faces which are frightening ! Aila added.

- These are in fact gargoyles, which are used to spew out water. In the Middle Ages, they were also used to take away evil spirits. Would you like to go inside ?

- Oh yes, please !



They left Varjjalit to a pilgrim who had come to visit Notre Dame. Inside, they discovered some amazing things. They thought the inside was absolutely huge. They were quite surprised by the height of the vaults and the width of the cathedral. Moreover, Aila and Niila found quite strange there weren't any wall, since the roof and the walls are held thanks to the flying buttresses. There were many colorful stained glasses and rose windows. Then Aila said :

« - It is high time we meet our parents again.

- Before you go, could you help me go back to the school where I belong ? Mimi asked.

- But of course, Aila and Niila answered together; we are going to take you to Daumesnil School. »

They took the underground, line 4 then line 8. When they got to the school, Bernard, who is the warden, said he could look after Varjjalit. The children met the Head of school: Mrs Germain.

They explained to her :

« - We found Mimi, the CM1 class's turtle.





- What great news ! Why don't you come with me to give it back to the teacher; they are on the second floor, Mrs Germain answered.
  - Fantastic ! We are going to meet the CM1 class and their teacher ! »
- They went up the stairs and knocked on the door. The teacher asked :
- « - Hello there ! Who are you ?
  - We are two children from Lapland. We have visited a few European countries. We arrived in France to visit Paris and we found Mimi while we were visiting the sewers. »

The teacher started to cry and the pupils shouted and jumped for joy ! They were so happy to see their favorite turtle again. Mimi gave a kiss to everybody. She crawled to the top of Arnaud's head, then Mael' one. Then, she did a somersault, dived into the aquarium and crawled on top of her stone. She was so tired that she went to sleep straight away.

The teacher said it was time to go and listen to «Peter and the wolf» concert and offered the children to come with the class. At the end of the performance, the children said goodbye and thank you to everybody.



« - We really enjoyed our stay and we thank you for your welcoming organization; but now we will have to go back to Lapland, Niila said.

- Before you go, here is a photo of the class, the teacher added.

- And here are some biscuits which were made by the children during the « Peter and the wolf » week. You can have them during your journey back », Mrs Germain suggested.

She left with them in her car. She drove them to the airport. Then Aila and Niila took off to Sweden. As for Varjjalit, he was put on a special private plane, with only animals on it !