

The Adventures Of Aila and Niilá



Ängelholms Montessoriskola, Sweden

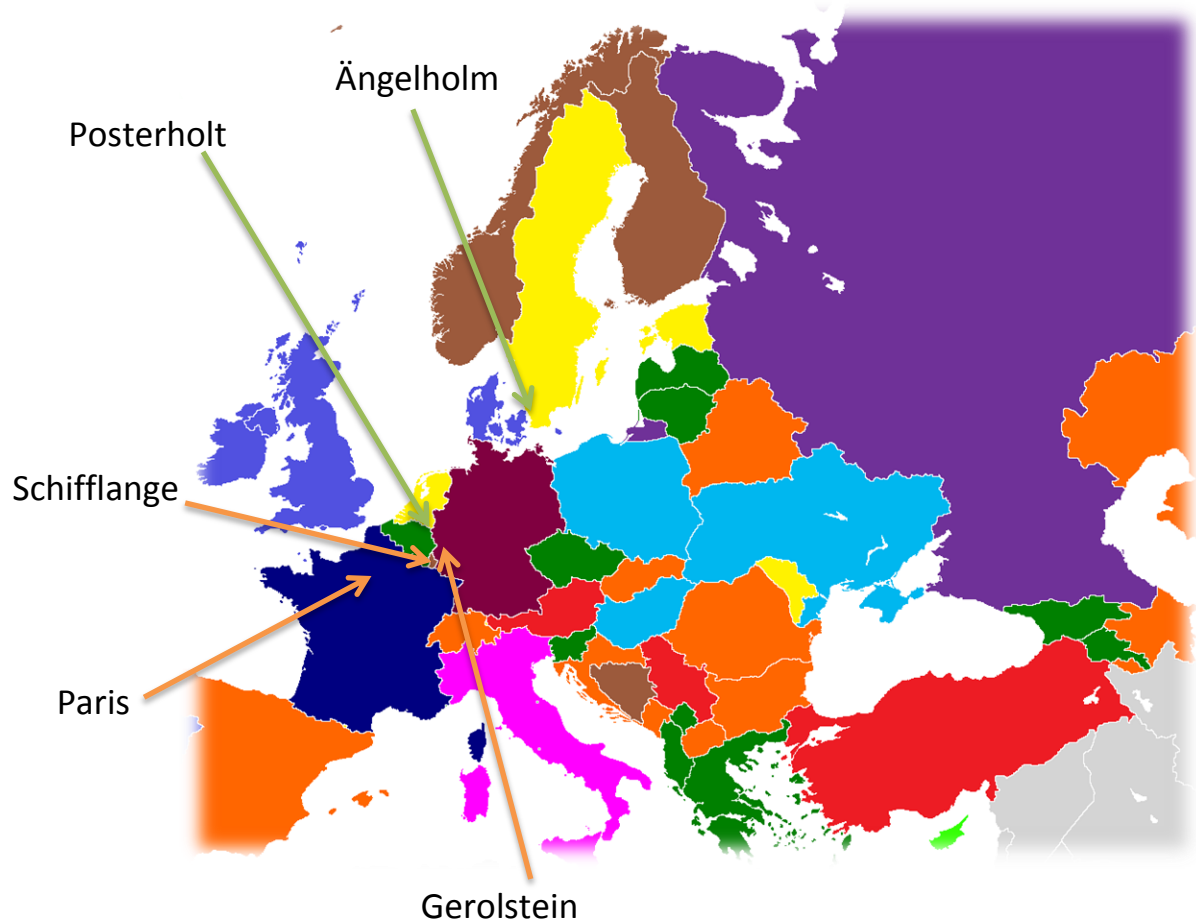
Draaiende Wieken Posterholt, the Netherlands

Grundschule Gerolstein, Germany

Ecole Albert Wingert Schiffange, Luxemburg

Ecole Daumesnil à Paris, France

Europe



Chapter 1

Sweden

Once upon a time there were two children living in Lapland in the northern part of Sweden. Aila was the girl's name and the boy was called Niilá. They lived with their parents close to a mountain where they kept their herd of reindeer in the summertime. In the wintertime the animals stayed in the area closer to the house. The family were Laplanders, the native inhabitants in the north of Sweden.

Aila and Niilá did not have any human friends because they lived in such a remote area but they did not lack friends, all the animals around them were their friends. They had a pet reindeer called Várjjalit which means protect in English. They also had five dogs. And they had each other.



One day in early January their parents wanted to talk to them.

- We have to leave you here and go and search for some of our reindeer that are missing, said the father.
- We will be back within a week and your grandmother is coming tomorrow to take care of you until we return, said the mother.
- Why can't we come with you, asked Niilá?
- Because the two of us can search a much larger area if we go alone. And we also rely on the two of you to take care of Várjjalit. We will bring the dogs with us to help search for the reindeer, said father.

- We really do not want to leave you alone today but we have to get going as soon as possible, said mother.
- And your grandmother will be here about noon tomorrow, said father.

The mother and the father quickly packed a few necessities and got the dogs ready. They hugged and kissed Aila and Niilá and said goodbye. They promised to be back within the week. The children waved goodbye and went into the enclosed pasture to make sure that Várjjalit had enough lichen to eat and fresh water to drink. Then they went inside.

At first they did not know what to do but after a while they decided to read. They both liked reading very much. They liked to read about places far away and about children in other countries. They sat close to the fireplace reading for several hours.

- I am hungry. Let's make something to eat, said Niilá.
- I just want to finish this chapter. You can start making some sandwiches, said Aila.

Niilá went into the kitchen and began to make sandwiches.

- I have just finished a wonderful book by Selma Lagerlöf. It would be wonderful to see all those places she wrote about. I really want to see the rest of Sweden and the world. We have never been to any other places than here and up in the mountains, said Aila.
- I have made something for you to eat. Sit down and stop dreaming, said Niilá.

They ate and then they cleared the table and went outside to play in the snow. After playing for a long time they went to make sure the reindeer had enough food and water for the night. Niilá and Aila went inside to have dinner and settle for the night. They put more wood on the fire and ate some food their mother had prepared earlier

- I am tired. Let's go to bed. I want to read a little before I go to sleep, said Aila.
- Can I borrow the book by Selma Lagerlöf that you told me about, asked Niilá?
- Of course, I hope you enjoy as much as I did.

The next morning they woke up quite late because they both read for a long time before going to sleep. They prepared and ate their breakfast. Then they did their chores like washing the dishes, feeding Várjjalit and tidying up. At 11:30 they started to prepare lunch since their grandmother was expected at around 12 o'clock. She lived 25 km away in the neighbouring village and they knew that she would be hungry after the long walk. But nobody came at 12 o'clock. They waited for half an hour but then they decided to have lunch.

After lunch they cleaned up, gave the reindeer its lunch and played.

- It is 4 o'clock and grandmother has not arrived yet. I wonder what has happened to her, said Aila.
- Perhaps she didn't get the message that she was needed here, replied Niilá.
- What do you think we ought to do?
- I have been thinking about the book I read last night, the one by Selma Lagerlöf. I would also like to see the rest of our country, to learn about how people in other parts of the country live and to meet these people, said Niilá.
- What are you really saying?
- I would like to see the rest of Sweden, to travel and meet a lot of other people, said Niilá.
- But what about the Várjjalit?
- We can ride on him, said Niilá.

Aila thought for a while but then she said that she really wanted to experience the same thing. They packed a few necessary belongings and some food. They also packed some silver that they could use as money. They saddled up Várjjalit. The children climbed onto the reindeer with their few belongings and off they went.

They began their journey by going east. They wanted to go to Kiruna, the only big town in the north. They had read about the iron mine there.

- We have travelled for hours now and I am hungry and tired. But where can we sleep, said Aila.
- I don't know, but I am sure we will find somewhere to stay, answered Niilá.

They continued for another hour and then they saw a light. They stopped at a small house and knocked on the door. An old woman opened and invited them to come in. She gave them something to eat and her husband made sure that Várjjalet was comfortable in the stable.

After dinner the children told the old man and woman about the adventure that they were about to experience. Then it was time to go to bed and the children were so tired that they fell asleep at once.

When they woke up they saw a table full of food. There was meat, fish, bread and many other things. They sat down and started to eat.

- But where is the man and the woman, said Niilá?
- This is really strange. Perhaps they are outside. Let's go outside and look for them. I hope Várjjalet is all right, said Aila.

They went outside to look around but they did not find anybody. They looked inside the stable and saw Várjjalet eating lichen.

- I wonder where they are, but I am really happy to see that you have been looked after my beautiful reindeer, said Aila.
- I am happy too, said Várjjalet.
- What! Did you hear that Niilá?
- Don't be afraid. We can talk and understand each other as long as there are no other people around, said Várjjalet.

He continued to explain that animals understand all languages but they never speak except under certain conditions. He also told them that the man and the woman only were part of their imagination. He said that he would help them on their journey and that he had magical powers.

- Go inside and pack your belongings and as much food as you can carry, said Várjjalet.

They did what the reindeer had told them to do and soon they were on their way again. They travelled for many days and then one day they saw many houses and streetlights. This was something the children never had seen before. When they came close to the mine they saw a wolf.

- Don't be afraid. I have come to show you the mine, said the wolf.



They went underground. It was dark and a little bit scary. The wolf told them about the mine and showed them around. He also told them that the whole town of Kiruna had to be moved because there was a big risk that the mine would collapse. Then Aila did not want to see more of the mine. She wanted to go up again before anything happened.

Soon they came back up to the surface and could breathe fresh air again. The wolf told them to continue to the Icehotel in Jukkasjärvi, where they would be met by another wolf that would take care of them.

Soon they were on their way to the Icehotel. When they arrived they saw a wonderful building made of ice and snow. This was something so much bigger and more beautiful than the igloos they had built at home. A wolf met them and brought them inside. Everything was made of ice and snow; furniture, lamps, glasses etc.



They were tired and the wolf gave them dinner before they settled down for the night on beds made of ice covered with animal skins. They were very tired and soon fell asleep.

In the morning they discussed with the wolf where to go next. The wolf suggested that the town of Umeå, on the coast of the Baltic Sea, would be a great place and completely different from what they had already seen. So off they went.

It was a long journey, but they were well taken care of by wolfs living in the huge pine forests. It was the middle of May when they finally reached the coast. They had never seen so much water before. Then they went into town and were overwhelmed by all the birch trees growing along the streets. The birch trees they had seen up in the mountains were just little bushes, but here they were big beautiful trees in the process of turning green. They reached the Ume-river just where it flows out into the Baltic Sea. Here they were met by a pike that took care of them. She showed them around and made sure that they had food and a place to sleep.



In the morning they had potato dumplings for breakfast and then they went down to the river to meet up with the pike.

- I think you should follow the coast along the Baltic Sea down to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. I will accompany you as far as Gävle. It is going to be a long journey but I have many friends all the way down the coast so you will be well looked after, said the pike.
- We are grateful for this offer. We have seen so many new things but we still want to see more, replied Aila.
- This is the most exciting adventure ever, said Niilá.

Off they went day after day, week after week until they finally reached Gävle.

- This is as far as I can go. A very good friend of mine, a beaver, will take care of you when you reach the Dal-river.
- Thank you so much for all your help, said Niilá
- Goodbye!
- See you!



When they reached the river they were met by a beaver that showed them around the town. They saw the factory where they roasted coffee-beans. Both Aila and Niilá thought the smell to be wonderful but they did not like the taste of the coffee. At home, way up in Lapland, they used to have salt and butter in their coffee. But here the taste was different. In the evening they went to an ice-hockey game and saw Brynäs versus HV71. Brynäs, the home team, won and people cheered and were very happy.

- I am glad to be outside. I have never heard so much noise before, said Niilá.
- My ears are still ringing, said Aila.
- This is nothing compared to all the noise you will hear in the big city, said the beaver.

In the morning they set out for Stockholm.

After a few days they reached the outskirts of Stockholm.

- I can't follow you any further, but I have arranged for a friend of mine to meet you outside The Royal Palace. It is a rat, a very nice rat. Good luck and goodbye!
- Goodbye!

They rode into the capital on Várjjalit and then they saw all the people and cars. They reached The Royal Palace safely. Here they were met by the rat that showed them the palace. The children had never seen such large rooms and beautiful things. There were so many things to see in Stockholm like the beautiful archipelago, the changing of the guards outside The Royal Palace, the Globe which is a huge sports arena and lots of other things.



- Let's go to Skansen today, said the rat.
- What is Skansen, asked the children.
- It is a zoological park, answered the rat.

And off they went. When they reached the park they saw wonderful things. There were old houses from all over Sweden. It felt like home. But then they reached the animals.

- The animals are inside cages. Why, said Aila?
- Because then people can come here and look at them, said the rat.
- But all animals should be free, said Niilá.

When Várjjalit saw the reindeer in a small fenced in area he went up to them. They told him that this was the way they lived all year round. They could never get up into the mountains and roam free.

The children and Várjjalit felt sad because of all the animals kept in cages but then the rat told them that those animals served a purpose to the world. People in the city need to be educated about animal life. They have to learn what happens to animals when forests are cut down, when pollution is spread

and lakes and seas are eutrophicated. This made them feel a little bit better but they still felt sad for all caged-in animals.

- I think we have seen enough of Stockholm. Where do we go next, said Aila?
- To Gotland, the largest island in Sweden. But I can't go with you. I don't feel comfortable outside the city. I will arrange for a friend of mine to meet you outside the city tomorrow morning. It is a red fox.



After a good night's sleep they left Stockholm and met up with the red fox. Together they went to Nynäshamn where they were going to take the ferry to Visby, the biggest town on Gotland. The red fox told them that they would be met by a hedgehog in Visby.

They travelled with the ferry for some hours when suddenly the island of Gotland seemed to rise up from the water. It was a magical moment.



They were met by a hedgehog outside the ring-wall around the old town of Visby. They walked around the ring-wall and looked at the beautiful ancient wall with many towers, the wonderful roses and very old houses. This was like stepping back in time. They travelled around the island. They saw the stone

formations so typical for Gotland, they ate smoked flounder and they visited Loyst hed where the only Swedish wild horses roam.



- There are many sheep here on Gotland, said Várjjalit.
- Yes, and they are a very special kind of sheep, said the hedgehog.
- Look at this pebble over there. They look like animals, said Aila.
- Those are fossils. Gotland originated close to the equator where millions of sea animals formed this island.
- We have seen many things here but now it is time to continue our journey. Goodbye hedgehog!
- Goodbye! And, by the way, I have arranged for a friend of mine to meet you in Oskarshamn. It is an otter and he will meet you when you get of the ferry.

After crossing the Baltic Sea they safely reached Oskarshamn where they were met by the otter. They decided to go to Ängelholm. The otter told them he would escort them as far as to the border of Skåne. That was as far as he felt comfortable to travel. They travelled through the deep forests of Småland. It almost felt like home.

When they reached the border of Skåne they said goodbye to the otter. He had arranged for a friend of his to meet them in Ängelholm. It was a red deer. They travelled over a high ridge and reached the flat farming-land. They could see that this was a rich area. The fields were turning yellow and it was almost time for harvest.



On the outskirts of Ängelholm they met the red deer that brought them into town. First they went down to the long beautiful beach where the children went for a swim. The reindeer and the red deer found some shade where they rested and talked about many different things.

- Now I am going to show you a very special place, said the red deer.

The deer led them to a big house by the Rönne-river. There were no people there and the house was nothing special.

- Why have you brought us here, said Várjjalit?
- This is a very special place for all of us. This is a school with close to 200 pupils. It is called Ängelholms Montessoriskola.
- What is so special about this school, asked Niilá?
- Because all the pupils and their teachers care about all animals and the environment. They want to make the Earth a better place to live on. I am sure that there are many other schools that do the same, but this is my favourite school. I often stand close by and listen to what they do. You see, it is the children who can make a difference.
- Where are the pupils now? And all the teachers, said Várjjalit.
- They are on summer vacation. That's why nobody is here now, said the red deer.

The children were happy to learn about other children and how they lived. They were also a bit envious. The children in the school had many friends and also a school to go to in order to learn many important things. They decided that it was time to travel south to the third largest city in Sweden, Malmö.



When they reached Malmö they saw an extraordinary building called Turning Torso. They went to the top of the building and had a fantastic view over the city. They saw the bridge stretching over Öresund to Denmark. And outside the city they saw the rich farm-land stretching for miles.



- Let's go to Trelleborg. I will take you there but then I have to leave you. You will board a large ferry that will take you to Germany. I am sure you will find many animal friends that can help you.
- Thank you for all your help, said Aila.
- Goodbye!
- I hope we will meet again. Have a safe trip. I hope you will meet interesting people and see splendid sights. Goodbye, said the red deer.

They boarded the ferry. They spent the evening talking about all the adventures that had happened in Sweden and wondered what would happen next.



Chapter 2

The Netherlands

When the ferry arrived in Rostock (Germany), a seagull flew over their heads, saying that he would accompany them during the next part of their journey. Later on they surely wanted to travel through Germany, but now they went to the Netherlands directly. Since Várjjalit had been able to rest during the crossing, he suggested that Aila and Niilá were going to sit on his back. The journey would be going much faster that way. With powerful wingbeats the seagull flew over their heads.

- What a strange feeling is this, it seems as if the ground is moving underneath me, said Várjjalit as they arrived in the Netherlands in the province of Groningen.
- In this area little earthquakes regularly occur, said the seagull. Deep in the ground there is natural gas. They take it out of the earth to warm houses with it, or to cook on it. When the gas has been taken out, the ground collapses a little. That's why the earthquakes occur.



The seagull flew to Lauwersoog. After he had asked a seal to accompany the children, he stayed with some friendly seagulls.

- I would like to show you one of the Waddeneilanden. We can go there by ferry, but it is ebb now, the water is low. It is possible to go on foot. People do this, under the guidance of a guide who knows exactly where you find the deep fairways. You have to stay out of them, said the seal.

It seemed very adventurous to Aila en Niilá to walk to Schiermonnikoog and so they did. The seal knew exactly where they had to walk so that they wouldn't become totally wet. They got wet feet though, and sometimes they stood up to their waist in the water, but the sun was shining and fortunately at this time of the year the water of the Waddenzee wasn't that cold. On their way sometimes they saw seals laying in the sun on a sandbank. There also were footprints of birds in the sand, which were washed away again by little waves.

Schiermonnikoog was a beautiful island, with broad beaches, dunes and woods and a natural reserve with many kinds of birds.



Aila and Niilá heard that there were dunes and dikes everywhere along the shore of the Netherlands. The seal told them that half the Netherlands lie below sea-level and that that part would be under water when there wouldn't be dunes and dikes. Aila and Niilá thought this was a strange idea.

- Are those dunes and dikes solid enough, asked Niilá.
- They are inspected very well. Moreover the Dutch took all kinds of measures to protect their country even better against the water. When you arrive in the province of Zeeland, you can see that very well, said the seal.

After they had promised to go and look at the seals' nursery in Pieterburen for a moment, they said goodbye to the seal. They watched a movie about seals that were taken care of at the nursery, and afterwards were released in the

sea. After that they went outside, where they saw a nursery for baby seals who lost their mothers and for sick seals from abroad. There also was a heap of rubbish, like fishing nets and ropes, in which seals had been tangled up. Aila and Niilá were glad that there were people looking after the seals.



Across the Afsluitdijk, with water on both sides, they went to Amsterdam. They thought it better to leave Várjjalit in a meadow (a city is far too busy for reindeers). A mouse would accompany them in the town.



Aila and Niilá thought Amsterdam to be a beautiful town, with typical old houses along the canals and beautiful buildings. It was very busy. What struck them most was that there were so many people cycling amongst the trams, busses and cars. At home, in Lapland, there were no bicycles and Aila and Niilá would love to try to cycle. Fortunately the mouse knew a place where they could get hold of some bikes which they were allowed to use for a short while. It was not easy to keep balance, but after practising a while in a quiet street, they managed to cycle without falling down.

After they picked up Várjjalit, they went to Leiden. The mouse had told them that there was a museum in the shape of a human being: Corpus. You could walk through the human body in a way.

- Let's look at the 3D-movie too. In that you travel through the human body with a little blood cell, said Niilá.



After they had seen the film and had walked through the whole body, they took off for Den Haag. There is a miniature town: Madurodam, in which beautiful buildings and squares from the whole country are copied in miniature.

- Look. There are the houses and the canals that we have seen for real in Amsterdam, said Niilá.
- And we saw that church over there too, said Aila.

After visiting Madurodam, they said goodbye to the mouse.

- I don't go with you any further. A rat will help you, said the mouse.
- Thank you for caring. You have shown nice things to us, said Aila and Niilá.

Aila and Niilá had left for the south for a while, together with Várjjalit, when the rat joined them. It appeared that he was a distant cousin from the rat that had accompanied them in Stockholm.

They went across the Biesbosch, a beautiful natural reserve with many creeks and bushes, in which many different animals live like otters, beavers and many kinds of birds.

- As you already have heard from the seal, the Dutch have to protect their country very well against the water. Otherwise a larger part of the country would flood. That happened in 1953. Much has changed since then: the dikes have become higher and stronger and dams have been built which close the sea-arms in Zeeland. The most beautiful thing is the “stormvloedkering” in the Oosterschelde, said the rat.
- What is a “stormvloedkering”, asked Aila.
- It is a kind of a long dam full of slides to stop the water and preventing it from flooding. Those slides are almost always open, so that the seawater can flow in and out and there is low tide and high tide as usual. Only when a very heavy storm is expected to come, the slides close and the high waves are being stopped by the dam. The advantage is that the water stays salt and that the culture of mussels and oysters can keep existing, said the rat.



Together with the rat and Várjjalet, Aila and Niilá went across the road on top of the “stormvloedkering”. They thought it was an impressive building and they didn’t speak a word.

When they reached the end of the road, they saw a big amusement park. They wanted to go there immediately, but the rat told them that they would go to another park, with many more attractions. All those attractions were based on

stories from all over the world. There also was a fairy-forest in which the fairytales of the Grimm Brothers were represented. All the buildings looked like fairy-tales too, as if they had been drawn by Anton Pieck. The name of that amusement park was: De Efteling.



Because people don't like to see a rat in the Efteling, the rat said goodbye. After Aila and Niilá had taken care of finding a nice spot for Várjjalit, they went in. Soon a sparrow came to them. Amidst the high trees and the beautiful plants and flowers, Aila and Niilá walked across the fairy-forest, sat in a little boat, in a little train or in a roller coaster and were very excited. How beautiful it was here, so many green plants, so many things to experience. But they also wanted to see more, so they moved on again.

Across a lot of nice nature, woods with birds, rabbits and squirrels, meadows with horses and cows, and land under cultivation, Aila, Niilá, Várjjalit and the sparrow arrived in Posterholt. Here they met a magpie that could tell them anything they wanted about the village.

- I'll show you a very nice school, the magpie said. I like to come here during the breaks, to see the children play outdoors.
- Why do you like to come here, asked Aila.
- These children have a playground for sports and one for games where they can play different games. They can walk on stilts, play basketball, tennis, handball, soccer and a lot more, said the magpie.

Aila and Niilá were very impressed by what they saw. These children had a lot to play with. Aila and Niilá didn't have that at home, in Lapland. There they played especially with the animals. The magpie told them that there were about 300 children in this school and that school paid much attention to the children playing and working nicely together.



Aila and Niilá thought that that was very important. In Lapland there didn't live any children in their neighbourhood, but if that were the case, they would want to play with them in a nice way.

It was time to travel on. The magpie flew over their heads for a while and showed them the way to Belgium. After that, the magpie said goodbye and Aila and Niilá, together with Várjjalit, set forth to new adventures.

Chapter 3

Germany

As soon as they arrived in Germany they were expected from an elephant. The elephant was a friend of the magpie.

- We are in Cologne, the elephant said.

Aila and Niilá wanted to see more of the city of Cologne. They asked Várjjalit and the elephant to take them to the biggest sport stadium in town, the *Rheinenergiestadion*.

On their way they got to know that at this place the city's football team *1. FC Köln* plays their home matches and that it seats over 50.000 people. The elephant and Várjjalit had to wait outside, since animals were not permitted to the stadium.



- This stadium is huge! Aila said.

Afterwards they decided to have a look at the cathedral of Cologne. They admired this magnificent building.

- The Cathedral of Cologne is a Roman Catholic church and about 157.38 m high. It is the Europe's second highest church, the elephant told them.

Then they walked inside and admired the nice interior. After that Aila and Niilá took a walk to the river Rhine and enjoyed a river cruise. Later on they visited the zoo of Cologne and had a look at the various animals: monkeys, elephants,



hippopotami, lions, tigers, birds and bears. Inspired by this attraction they watched the movie 'King of the Lion's Marathon', that lasted four hours. Aila and Niilá really liked Cologne and its sights and attractions. Then the elephant said goodbye to the children with the words;

- You have been travelling already quite a long time. Now take the train to the city of Essen. At the train station you will find a restaurant where you

are going to be expected by a rabbit that will show you the town. I wish you a safe trip! Goodbye and take care!

Being on their way they got really hungry and thirsty, therefore they went to the restaurant as soon as they arrived at the train station in Essen. They ordered a meal which tasted very delicious and then they met the rabbit. They made a tour through town and when it was evening the rabbit had a good idea.

- You could spend the night in a room at the restaurant and tomorrow we will see what to do next.
- This is a wonderful idea, answered Aila and Niilá and the two of them spent the night in a guest room.

The next morning they had a breakfast of eggs and bacon.

- This tastes very good, we don't have it at home, Niilá said.

Later on they went to *Grugapark* and met ducks, goose, horses, flamingos, golden poison frogs and colourful parrots. Having discovered the park they walked onward to another cinema called *CinemaxX*.

- Here in Essen you find the largest cinema of whole Germany, the rabbit explained to them.
- Let's have a look inside and watch a movie.
- But how do you want to manage to get inside? Niilá asked.
- Let's climb on top of the roof, there is a hatch and we can look inside, the rabbit answered.

So it happened that they watched another movie with the title 'Dolphin Tale'. Afterwards they went to a place called *Zeche Zollverein*.

- It used to be a mine of black coal and Europe's largest coking plant. They closed the production in 1993 because of financial reasons. After the production was closed down they changed the place to the *Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage Site*. Here the visitors may achieve a good knowledge of the industrialisation that took place during the last centuries, explained the rabbit.

- This is very interesting to know, Aila said.

Then the three of them took the underground to a downtown shopping mall to do some shopping. It was their first time in an underground and they had lot of fun in the mall.

Their last stop was at a big aquarium called *Sealife* in the town of Oberhausen. There they admired various species of fish, sharks and all sorts of marine life.

- From now on I can't come with you anymore. My friend the turtle is going to show you the nice town of Hamburg, the rabbit told them.



They said goodbye to each other.

- We had lots of fun here in Essen but now we have to travel on. Thank you and goodbye! said Aila and Niilá.



They were already expected by the turtle. Right away they went to the harbour and did a harbour boat trip. Later on, they went to a restaurant since Aila and Niilá were really hungry. When they had finished their meal it was nearly dark outside and they went

quickly to a performance of the musical "The Lion King". Aila and Niilá were very excited. At the entrance there was a lady who checked the tickets. Aila and Niilá explained that they didn't have any tickets because they had been on a long trip. The woman hesitated at first.

- O.K, she said after a while, I will make an exception for you. You can go inside and watch the performance free of charge.

So both of them went inside the musical theatre and enjoyed the show. Afterwards the turtle brought them to a hotel. They were really tired!

The next morning they went to a wildlife park in the south of Hamburg which is called “Wildpark Schwarze Berge”.

- Let's visit the wildlife park with all its animals. There are about 1000 of them. The biggest attractions are the pot-bellied pigs and the pets corner, the turtle said to Aila, Niilá and Várjjaalit.
- I hope you liked Hamburg, unfortunately I can't accompany you any longer but if you travel to Berlin you will meet my special friend the Berlin bear.



Aila, Niilá and Várjjaalit said goodbye to the turtle and were happy get to know Germany's capital city.

As they arrived in Berlin the children and the reindeer were glad to meet turtle's friend.



- Hello, I'm the Berlin bear and I will guide you through the wonderful city of Berlin. Let's go to the *Brandenburg Gate*, Berlin's most famous sight. On our way I will tell you about how come that a bear is on the Berlin flag. Sometime during the city's history there was a person called Albrecht the bear. People had the idea to use the animal of his name on the flag because it fits so well.

After quite a long way they reached the Brandenburg Gate and they begged him to tell something about it.

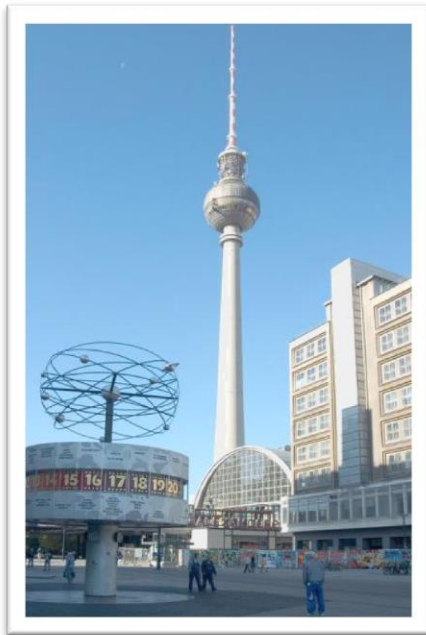


- O.K., the Brandenburg Gate is about 26 metres high and the passage is 11 metres deep. The figure on the top is called *Quadriga* and represents a goddess of victory in a four-horse chariot. Since it was built from 1789 till 1791, it's over 200 years old.
- Cool, this is very interesting. And the Brandenburg Gate is really already 200 years old? I didn't expect that because it looks so nice! Aila exclaimed.
- Let's take a tram and get some sweet things! Would you like to eat some *Berliner*?
- What? You eat the people?
- No of course not, I thought about the pastry! the bear said.
- Oh well, do you always have to scare us like this? I have already thought that it would be horrible if the citizens ate each other, responded Aila.
- Sorry, answered the bear, I didn't want so scare you! In most of Germany's regions it is no problem to order a Berliner in a bakery. But in Berlin people call the pastry Pfannkuchen. We should go and get one right now.

- We can't walk anymore! the children both said in unison.
- No problem, the bear said, we will take a tram.

And soon they ate delicious Berliner!





Strengthened with this little snack they walked on to see the Berlin television tower. It is situated in the middle of the city centre at a place called *Alexanderplatz*. As soon as they could see the tower the children asked with much interest about it.

- About 203 metres up there is an observation storey. In the next story you find a coffee bar. It turns about its own axis once every thirty minutes. You may enjoy a very nice and far view over the city. The tower's height is 365 metres, it was built from 1965 till 1969. The main part till 250 metres is made of reinforced

concrete then there follows a pylon with red and white stripes. They rebuilt the far end of it in 1997 and extended it with 3 metres, the bear explained to them.

- Cool, Aila and Niilá said, but we haven't heard anything yet about the Federal Chancellery! In addition to that we also would like to know since when Angela Merkel works there as a chancellor.

So they took a taxi and drove to the Federal Chancellery. Luckily they had a very nice driver who allowed Várjjalit in the taxi.

Aila and Niilá didn't have to ask. The bear started to tell them as soon as they arrived in front of the Federal Chancellery;

- This is the main building, it is called *Leitungsgebäude*, which is about 36 metres high and has eight storeys. In the seventh floor there is the chancellor's office, in the eighth floor she has her official residence. In addition to that she owns her private flat in Berlin. The Federal Chancellery is situated right at the river Spree and continues on the opposite bank of the river. In the western direction you find the nice chancellor garden. Since you have to go on soon, we will go to the Reichstag and in case you have any more questions you just ask.

But the children didn't have any further questions because of the detailed explanation of the bear.



After a short walk they arrived at the Reichstag building and the bear had again something to tell them about this sight.

- The Reichstag is the domicile of the German Bundestag. This sounds maybe a little weird but is easy to explain. The building was erected between 1884 and 1894. Afterwards the *Reichstag* of the German empire held its meetings right there, with the German emperor Wilhelm. From 1995 till 1999 the building was reconstructed and modernized. Since April 19th 1999 the German Bundestag is convening for its meetings in this building, but for the building the original name is being kept.



The bear had given them a lot of information about the city and with this experience they went back to the main station. There they went into a shop and bought some crackers for the long trip. Then they said farewell and thank you to the bear.

- You know very much about Berlin and it was a pleasure for us to have you as a guide through this wonderful city. But now we have to go! Goodbye!

Aila, Niilá und Várjjalit rode on and the bear shouted to them.

- Just ride on South, there you will meet my friend the mountain goat, she will show you another exciting part of Germany. Have fun!

Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit tramped through Garmisch-Partenkirchen. When the three passed a cable railway they met Lotti the mountain goat

- I will show you the Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain, she said.

Aila felt uncomfortable but Niilá encouraged her. On their way Lotti explained that the Zugspitze is 2062 metres high. After a walk of about one and a half



hours the four of them found a place to rest. Revitalized they went on.

Then Lotti explained;

- Joseph Naus was the first person to climb on the top of the mountain on 27.08.1820. Today you even find a hotel up there.

Finally, after six long hours of climbing the children and Lotti and Várjjalit reached the top. They were all very impressed of the amazing view, so they forgot about being exhausted from the long journey.

- You can see as far as Munich from up here on a bright day as it is today,said Lotti. Isn't that great?

After they really had enjoyed the view, they took the cable railway to get back down to the valley. Aila and Niilá passed a coach stand and one coach drove to Munich. They harnessed Várjjalit as well and so he became a coach reindeer.

When they arrived in Munich Lotti was very hungry and wanted to eat something.

- So do you know a real Bavarian dish? Aila asked.
- Pretzel and German spaetzle dumplings with cheese. Let's go and have some, Lotti answered.

They went to a restaurant and ordered pretzel, spaetzle with cheese and some mineral water.





Following their meal they all went to the German Museum Munich. There they discovered a space traveller trainer. Niilá wanted to test it right away and even got an autograph of a real space traveller.

- I'm really tired, Aila yawned.
- In my parent's stable you find a nice warm bed of straw, there you can stay for the night, Lotti

answered.

The next morning Aila asked the goat if there was any coffee house nearby

- Yes, said Lotti, and they drank something in the coffee house to get ready for their journey. Aila drank lemonade, Niilá a cup of tea and Várjjalit and Lotti drank a bowl of water. Lotti gave Aila and Niilá a complete hiking equipment and bid farewell.
- Now you have everything you need for the long journey, but it is well worth the effort. You will meet my friend the deer and she will show you a nice little town with a great school.

After they said goodbye to each other, they got on their way to Gerolstein.



There they met the deer right at a nice church.

- Hello, nice to meet you. I am here to show you the city of Gerolstein, said the deer.

- Yes, that sounds like a good idea, Aila and Niilá answered excited. Lotti already made us very curious!

First the deer showed them around in the Protestant church of town, which is called *Erlöserkirche*. A famous architect with the name Franz Schwetzen built the church from 1907 till 1913.

- Now I will accompany you to the primary school, where some of the children expect you, said the deer. It

was built in 1974, has 16 classrooms, 3 rooms as a dining area, a kitchen, a big gym and even a library.

After that the animal brought them to the Dolomites of Gerolstein and explained to them;

- These are the Dolomites. It is a very large mountain of rocks that have been formed during the last 400 billion years.

The visitors were truly impressed and they did some more hiking in this nice nature until it was almost dark. They found a nice place to camp. During the night it was really cold but because of the good equipment it was no problem for them. The next morning they walked through another part of town until they reached a place called *Auberg*.

- The legend says that the earth swallowed a giant, and since then you can just see the fingers. Therefore the mountain looks like five fingers, the deer told Aila and Niilá.

They had a very nice view and they really enjoyed being up there.



Afterwards the deer brought them to a Greek restaurant with the name Poseidon. There Várjjalit was already waiting. He had taken a tour through town with some other animals. Now their journey through Germany had come to an end. The deer brought them to a bus stop, bid them farewell and told them;

- Take this remote bus, it goes right to Luxembourg. Bye bye!

Chapter 4

Luxembourg

In Trier, the kids took a bus that brought them to Luxembourg. As they did not have a map of Luxembourg, they just got out of the train, when they saw a beautiful place with a big castle. This town was called Vianden.

Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit went uphill to that castle. They made a little walk through the castle and suddenly they heard strange noises.

- What kind of noise is this? Aila asked.

They were a little bit scared and continued their tour running. A few minutes later, they arrived in the garden of the castle and saw lots of people. A big medieval festival was held in the castle. Aila suggested to participate and to discover things from former times. There were many stands where knights organised different activities. The kids and Várjjalit wanted to do all the activities. First they tried a knight's armour. Afterwards they watched a knights' fight. This was very fascinating, but Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit continued their walk. They bought some souvenirs: games and great heads. They watched all these objects from the medieval times: swords, arms, canons, towers, bows and pictures of the evolution of the castle. Then, Niilá asked a knight if he could tell them some medieval stories. Afterwards, Aila and Niilá were even allowed to ride a horse. They made a very nice ride through the woods of Vianden and then they went back to the castle. They participated to all the activities of the festival and they loved that experience.



Aila went to a girl that had more or less her age and asked her, what else they could do in Luxembourg.

- Go to that place called Kockelscheuer, the girl replied. There is an ice skating stadium where you can have a lot of fun!

- That sounds good! said Aila.

Aila and Niilá climbed on Várjjalit's back.

- Várjjalit, are you ready? Niilá asked. Let's ride to Kockelscheuer!



Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit arrived at the Kockelscheuer. They had never tried ice-skating before. They were very excited and they are a little bit scared to hurt themselves. Before they could start, they had to borrow the ice skates.

Then, the exciting part could start: they put their feet on the ice rink. Also Várjjalit went ice-skating, but he did not need special shoes. Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit immediately made a race. They were very good and fast and they nearly felt like in Lapland where they were used to see a lot of ice. But suddenly the speed became too high; they slipped and banged against the wall.

Aila and Niilá laid on the floor and whined of pain. Also Várjjalit hurt himself and screamed like a bear.

But after a few minutes the pain was forgotten and they continued ice-skating. They decided to make artistic figures on Várjjalit back. They had a lot of fun until the Kockelscheuer closed its doors.

Niilá asked a 12 year-old boy;

- Hey! What's your name? We don't know what to do now. Do you have an idea?
- My name is Carlos and I am in the National team of football in Luxembourg, the boy replied. I have to go to training in Stade Josy Barthel now. Do you want to join me?
- Fantastic idea, answered Niilá. Football is amazing! Aila and Várjjalit, do you agree?

Everybody wanted to see the stadium and together they took the bus to Stade Josy Barthel.



They entered the stadium where they met the Red Lion who asked Carlos what the kids would be doing here.

- I met these kids and their reindeer and I suggested them to participate to our training, Carlos explained.
- Carlos, the Red Lion replied, I am sure that your coach won't be happy about your idea because you have to train seriously today, as your team will have an important game next weekend. If you want, I can look after your friends and play football with them.

That was a good idea.

- What are you doing here all alone? Aila asked the Red Lion.
- I am the mascot of Luxembourgish sports teams and today I want to play football. Do you want to play with me?

Aila and Niilá were very excited. They played football for half an hour. Suddenly Niilá realized that it was already late and they stopped playing. The Red Lion was astonished.

- Are you leaving already? he asked.
- Unfortunately we have to go, but the stadium is amazing, said Aila.
- Indeed, the Red Lion replied, Stade Josy Barthel is my favourite stadium. I come very often here to play football.
- I would do exactly the same if I would live here. I love playing football! Niilá exclaimed.



Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit went to Carlos' team to say goodbye. But the coach said;

- Carlos told me about you. Please stay a little bit longer and watch the game of our National team against France. I offer you the tickets.
- That is very kind of you, Aila replied. We would love to stay here for the game. Unfortunately, we don't know where to sleep tonight.

Carlos interrupted Aila.

- Don't worry! You can sleep at my place. I call my mom to ask if she allows me to bring guests overnight. When I will go to school tomorrow, you will join me and then you will walk to Esch/Alzette, which is the second biggest town in Luxembourg.

A phone call later, they decided to watch the big game between Luxembourg and France. The Luxembourgish player Mutsch scored the first time for Luxembourg. The Luxembourgish fans celebrated the goal like never before. But after twenty minutes, the French Benzema scored the first goal for his country and all the French fans jumped of happiness.

Immediately after the draw, Benzema took back the ball from a Luxembourgish player and scored another goal. Again, the French fans were very happy. The Luxembourgish coach was extremely angry, because his team did not play well. Before the game, he had watched Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit while they were playing football with the Red Lion and their talent amazed him.

- Play better now! If you continue playing football like this, I will have to substitute, the coach shouted.

This speech did not change anything and Luxembourg continued playing badly. The coach whistled and called Aila, Niilá, Carlos and Várjjalit. The four weakest players had to leave the court and the three kids and the reindeer replaced them. Immediately when Aila touched the ball for the first time, she scored a goal. The team, the coach and the fans were surprised of Aila's goal and everybody was jumping and singing of happiness. After the kick-off, Niilá took away the ball from the French superstar Ribéry, passed it to Carlos and when

the ball arrived next to Várjjalit, who was standing in front of the goal, Várjjalit scored again for the Luxembourgish team.

In this moment the game was over and Luxembourg was happy. All the fans did not stop jumping, singing and dancing and Aila, Niilá, Carlos and Várjjalit were celebrated like heroes. Luxembourg won 3:2 against France. That was a sensation.

After they enjoyed a long celebration, Carlos' mother brought home to Schiffflange her son and his new friends. After such a long and exciting day full of impressions, Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit were very happy to go to bed.

The day after, they had to wake up quite early, because Carlos had to go to school. He took his three new friends with him to the Albert Wingert School. He showed them the school and presented to them the pupils of cycle 4.2.

- I love coming to this school because I have many friends here, Sheryl, one of the pupils said.
- Yes, we come along very good together, Chiara agreed. Last year we even went on ski holidays with our classmates and our teachers. And this year we will go to visit Paris.
- Yes! We can't wait to go to Paris, because it is an amazing city, Erol exclaimed.

They continued chatting until the Luxembourgish pupils had to enter the school.



Carlos suggested Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit to go to Esch/Alzette.

- There, you can eat an ice-cream and you can do many other things.

He explained the way to Esch/Alzette to his new friends, they said goodbye and they left Schiffflange.

When they arrived in Esch/Alzette, Aila and Niilá saw a supermarket and decided to go in to buy a drink. Of course, Várjjalit had to stay outside. Unfortunately, Aila and her brother

took a little bit longer in the supermarket because they had problems to understand the cashier. When they came out of the supermarket, they saw a big white truck with a huge logo on it. A tall man full of muscles got out of the truck and ran in Várjjalit's direction. Aila and Niilá did not understand what this man was doing. They found out that the man was an animal catcher from the animal park in Esch/Alzette. The man thought that Várjjalit escaped from the animal park. Aila and Niilá explained to him that Várjjalit is their pet and that they came from Lapland. The man liked the kids' story and brought them to the animal park where he showed and presented to them all the animals: deers, wild boars, ducks, donkeys and many others.



Várjjalit was happy to meet so many animals. He told them, what he already experienced in Europe and in Luxembourg. The animals could not believe what they were hearing. They would have loved to travel with Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit. Suddenly the deer made a very loud noise. A few minutes later, a fox arrived. The deer presented his friend, the fox, to the kids and to Várjjalit

- This is my friend, Futz. Futz is a fox and he is not scared of anything.
- That's true, the fox replied. Just tell me where you want to go and I will bring you there.

Aila was amazed by the fox's courage.

- Oh, I would love to visit Luxembourg city. That city must be wonderful.
- No problem! said Futz. We just need to get out of the woods, we will run down the street and then we will be at the train station, where we will take the train to Luxembourg City.

They said goodbye to the animals, followed the fox and arrived at the train station. A few minutes later, they were on their way to Luxembourg City.

When they arrived in Luxembourg City, the fox immediately brought them to the cathedral. The kids were astonished to see such a beautiful building.

- Let's go into the cathedral! Niilá suggested.

Inside, Aila was amazed.

- Wow! Have a look at these wonderful coloured windows and these fantastic patterns on the ceiling! I have never seen such beautiful windows. And look at all these candles!

The fox interrupted her.

- Shh! In a cathedral, you need to be quiet. In here we are just allowed to whisper.
- Listen to the music! said Várjjalit.

Futz explained that this music was played on a huge organ and that one can only listen to that instrument in a church.



After the visit of the cathedral, the fox continued explaining;

- You haven't seen the most amazing thing in Luxembourg. Are you hungry and are you ready to have a lot of fun?

Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit replied in a chorus: "Yeeeee!"

- Great! So follow me! We will walk to the Schueberfouer!

When Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit saw the entrance of the Schueberfouer, they did not believe



their eyes.

- What is this? Niilá stuttered. Are all these things games?
- Yes! Futz replied. The Schueberfouer is a huge fun fair. It is open only 3 weeks a year and you can have a lot of fun here. Now, I will show you the nicest games of the Schueberfouer.

They went on the roller coaster and had an amazing time.

- Now, I am very hungry, whined Várjjalit.
- Don't worry! the fox replied. We are going to eat Luxembourgish sausages, popcorn and cotton candy. These things are so tasty!

Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit started eating and they could not stop, because the food was so amazing. Várjjalit enthused;

- Wow! The food was so good!

After this delicious meal, they went on the big wheel. On the top of the wheel they had a fantastic view over Luxembourg City. Várjjalit was scared of the height. Aila even had to throw up, because she ate too much. After the ride on the big wheel, they went together on a wild water slide, where they became all wet.

Afterwards they tried out the bumper cars, where they had a lot of fun, as well.

At the end of their stay at the Schueberfouer, Niilá wanted to go in a haunted house, but Várjjalit was too scared to join him. That was the reason why Aila and her brother went on their own in the haunted house. Meanwhile, Várjjalit went for a ride on a carousel horse with his friend, the fox.

After an amazing day at the Schueberfouer, everybody was happy.

- What else have you done in Luxembourg? Futz asked.
- Up until now, we visited the castle of Vianden, we went ice skating to the Kockelscheuer, we watched a football game in Stade Josy Barthel and we saw the Albert Wingert School in Schiffange, Aila answered. Then we visited the animal park in Esch/Alzette and came with you to Luxembourg City.
- Well, so you have had a lot of fun in Luxembourg. Have you ever been to France?
- No, but I would really love to go to Paris, said Niilá. A pupil from Albert Wingert School told us that Paris is a wonderful city.

- You want to go to Paris? said Futz. There is nothing easier than this! Come on! Join me to the train station! There, you can take a very fast train, called TGV that will bring you to Paris.
- Wow! That's a fantastic idea! exclaimed Aila.

The 4 friends walked back to the train station, where Futz showed them the right train. Aila, Niilá and Várjjalit said goodbye to the fox.

- Thanks for your help! Without you, our stay in Luxembourg would only have been half as nice. Bye bye!

Chapter five

Paris

- 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 Niilá 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, Niilá 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 neighbourhood? 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! Niilá said.
- No, you cannot do that because these ducks are wild, the squirrel replied. After they fed the ducks, the squirrel suggested going on a small boat around the lake.
- But who will row? Aila asked.
- I will, Niilá 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 reopened 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 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 Niilá 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.

- Can animals get in? Aila asked.
- No, they can’t, the pigeon answered.

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

- I know an animal that can go 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:

- Now the films are over and 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 Niilá 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 get strong, Niilá added.
- What is this strange smell? Aila asked.
- These are waste waters, Mimi explained.
- Where do they go? Aila and Niilá 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 odourless and colourless, 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.

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 her 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 Niilá 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 Niilá declared they were full 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 the 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 left 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 Niilá saw many colourful “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 coloured bright stones.

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

Aila and Niilá bought some croissants, another typically French thing 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 mooches” (“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 Niilá, 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, Niilá said.
- Hey! Look! Here is the European Parliament office! Varajjalit 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 Niilá'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 tour 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 Stravinsky fountain". There, a dog came to them and said:

- You are Aila and Niilá, 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 colourful "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”, our 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 plastic. 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 Niilá 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, Niilá recommended.
- No, it’s too dangerous, there are too many people and he might go into 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 Niilá 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".

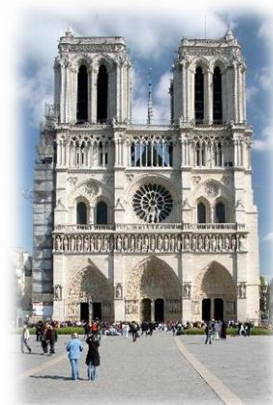
- Alright then, but before that, I will put you in Câline's paws, she is a very nice cat.

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 barbarous 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 Niilá 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. Niilá and Aila exclaimed:



- What a magnificent cathedral! Wow! We can even hear bells!
- Look at all these sculptures, they look like lace, Niilá 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 Niilá found quite strange there weren't any wall, since the roof and the walls are held thanks to the flying buttresses. There were many colourful 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 Niilá 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 favourite turtle again. Mimi gave a kiss to everybody. She crawled to the top of Arnaud's head, then Mael's 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, Niilá 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 and drove them to the airport. Then Aila and Niilá took off to Sweden. As for Varjjalit, he was put on a special private plane, with only animals on it!

Chapter 6

Sweden

- I am really happy to be back in Sweden. We have been away for a long time and I want to go home to Mum and Dad, said Aila.
- But now when we are here in Gothenburg we have to go to Liseberg, the amusement park, before we continue our journey back home, replied Niilá.
- But first we have to find a place where Várjjalit can graze. He is tired and very hungry.

The two children and the reindeer went on their way. After a while they found a beautiful park and here they left Várjjalit.

- Look over there, Aila! I recognize that building. Do you know what kind of a building it is?
- It looks like a church.
- Come on! Let's go inside, said Niilá.



The children walked up to the building, went inside and found out that it was a huge fish market. They walked around and looked at all the strange fish and seafood. There were also restaurants so they had a good meal because they were also hungry. Here they learnt that the building was called Feskekörka which means “fish church” because it looks like a church and they sell fish.

- Time to go!

- Look! They have got trams here. Let's go for a ride to Liseberg.



They arrived at Liseberg and went inside. The first thing they did was to go on the “Flume Ride”, a rollercoaster where they got really wet. Luckily it was nice weather and quite warm. After going on several rides they decided to go to a lottery booth.

- You can win bikes here. Let's buy some lottery tickets, said Niilá.
- Yes, that is a good idea. It would be good for Várjjalit. He needs a rest from carrying us for so long.

They were very lucky and won two bikes, one green and one blue. Then they went to fetch Várjjalit and continue their journey.

On the way they met a cat that wanted to show them the way out of Gothenburg. This was good because Gothenburg is the second largest city in Sweden. At the outskirts of the city they said goodbye and thank you to the cat and began the bike ride back to Lapland.

- We have really seen some wonderful places and met such nice people and animals. Paris was really impressive with the Eiffel tower, museums, churches and many other things.
- And before France we were in Luxemburg. It is a mountainous country and it reminded me a little of home.
- And before Luxemburg we were in Germany, not far from Luxemburg.
- The first country we visited was the Netherlands. I always thought that the country was called Holland, but now I know that Holland is only a small part of the Netherlands. They have very good cheese there.

- And I liked the German hams and sausages and the French croissants and baguettes.

They continued to bicycle and talked about their experiences. After many days they saw a huge lake. It was Vänern, the biggest lake in Sweden.

- Hello children, said a wolf. I have come to take you to a very special place a little further north from here. And that is the house, where Selma Lagerlöf lived and wrote many of her books. But first I must tell you something else. Vänern, the big lake you can see here, is more than twice the size of the country of Luxemburg.
- Wow, said both Aila and Niilá.

Várjjalit was not that impressed.

- But let's continue to Mårbacka, said the wolf.

It didn't take them many hours to reach Mårbacka which is now a museum. Here they were met by a guide who showed them around and talked about Selma and her life.



- In this house Selma was born in 1858 and died in 1940. She became a teacher and an important Swedish author. She was the first woman and the first Swede to receive the Nobel Prize for literature in 1909. Because of a problem with her hip she couldn't play around like the other children but she was a very clever child. She liked to read and decided at the age of seven that she would become an author. First she studied to become a teacher. The book about Nils Holgersson and his journey around Sweden became an international success. She didn't live here her whole life. She lived,



studied and worked in many other places. You can visit one of these places, Falun, on your way back home.

- Thank you very much, said Niilá.
- You have taught us so much. I must say that we have made the same kind of journey as Nils Holgersson. He got to see Sweden but we got to see parts of Europe, said Aila.

They said goodbye and thank you to the guide and continued north. On their way they made a quick visit to Falun.

A few days later they reached Mora. This is the finish of the Vasa ski race. It is 90 km and begins in Sälen. It is a yearly ski race in commemoration of the Swedish king Gustav Vasa, who became king in 1523. He had to flee from the Danes and skied from Mora to Sälen. But he was summoned back to Sweden to fight the Danes out of the country. He ruled for many years.



They travelled for many weeks and saw many different places but mostly they went through pine forests. There are very few people in the northern part of Sweden. You can travel for many days without seeing another person.



- I long for Mum and Dad, said Aila.
- So do I, and I long for some traditional food like smoked reindeer meat or some fried char, said Niilá.

As they were getting closer to home they became very excited and wondered what their parents would say. They had run off without telling them. Perhaps they were angry.

- Look over there! I can see our home, cried Aila.
- I can see Dad and look, Mum is just coming outside.

They hurried home and of course their parents were happy to see their children. They hugged and kissed each other. The five dogs also came outside to greet the children and the reindeer. Várjjalit was happy to be home but also very tired. He went into his stall in the stable for a good night's sleep. Mum, Dad, Aila, Niilá and the dogs went inside the house and closed the door.