

A VISIT TO PARIS

'Ou est la plume de ma tante?' Susan's daddy said to her mummy. They were packing to go on their annual vacation.

'What does that mean?' Susan asked

0 'It's French,' her mummy said, as she packed some of Susan's dresses, 'It means: where is my aunt's pen?'

Why are we taking auntie Valerie's pen with us?' Susan asked, feeling very puzzled.

Her mummy laughed.

'We're not going to take her pen with us. Your father was just practising his French. And I think that's about all he knows,' she added, giving him a playful nudge.

'I know more than that,' her daddy protested. 'I can also say: 'J'ai soif.'

'What does that mean?' Susan asked.

'It means I'm thirsty,' said her daddy. 'It's always useful to be able to say that when you're abroad.'

The Miller family were all going to France, to visit friends of the family.

Susan went out of the room and returned a few minutes later carrying an armful of soft toy animals.

'What are you doing with all those animals?' her mummy asked.

'I want them to come with, so that they can all learn French,' Susan said.

0 'Well, you can't take them all. You can just take Teddy bear.'

'And Huckle the elephant,' Susan said.

'Oh, all right. But that's all.'

'But what about Chimpo the monkey?'

'We can't take any more. Just Huckle and Teddy,' her mummy said, firmly

'But Chimpo must go, too.'

'Why Chimpo? You don't even like him very much. You don't take him to bed anymore.'

'That's because he likes to sleep up in a tree,' Susan said. 'But he must come, because he wants to learn to speak French, too.'

'Oh, my oh, my,' her mummy said despairingly. 'We are going to need an extra Jumbo to carry this lot.'

Still, she threw Chimpo into the suitcase.

'And Bunny-pie,' Susan said in a small voice, producing another toy animal.

'No, *definitely* not,' her mummy said.

And she slammed the suitcase lid shut.

'But Bunny-pie wants to learn French,' Susan protested..

'Then you can teach her when we come back from France,' her mummy said. 'Come on. We have to have our tea before we catch the plane.'

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The Miller family had a nice smooth flight to Paris. But they were very tired when they got there and they all went straight to bed. When they had breakfasted the next morning on croissants, orange juice and coffee, they all went sightseeing, to see the Eiffel Tower.

There was a babble of strange voices on the Metro underground train. Susan couldn't understand a word that anyone was saying. Nor could John, her little brother. But that wasn't surprising, because he was only one- year old. But he *did* know that everything was different, because he kept saying 'Goo-goo' in a surprised sort of voice.'

The Eiffel Tower turned out to be just a big iron tower, with arches underneath. It looked like the CN tower in Toronto, but smaller. They paid some money and went up in some elevators, until they could look right across Paris. Susan's Daddy told her that the tower was nearly a hundred years old and when they made it they were really practising to make the very big one like their own tower in Toronto. The CN tower was very useful, because it could send out radio messages to all the people of Canada.

When they came down again to ground level, Susan's daddy bought some postcards with pictures of the Eiffel tower on it, to send to their friends back home. Then he felt in his pocket and said: 'Oh, I can't write it. I forgot to bring la plume de ma tante.'

Everyone laughed. Even John thought it was funny. Suddenly, Susan said 'I think I have a soif.'

Her mummy said: 'You have a what?'

'You know...' Susan said awkwardly. 'A soif.'

Her daddy tumbled to it first.

'She's remembered it.' he said enthusiastically. 'She's remembered the French word for thirst. You're thirsty, aren't you, darling.'

'Susan nodded solemnly. She *was* very thirsty, because it was a hot day and they had been travelling so much.

So they went into a restaurant and they all had ice cold Cokes and ice creams.

'What is the French for ice cream?' Susan asked afterwards.

'Glace,' her mummy said.

'It's funny, it sounds like the glass we're drinking out of. Why doesn't everybody speak the same language?' Susan asked.

Mummy and Daddy shook their heads. They didn't know the answer to that question.

They all had a lovely time in France. Susan learned how to say bon jour- good morning- and she said it to everybody, including the hostess on the plane on their way home. Daddy said that even John was saying goo-goo with a French accent.

As they flew above fluffy white clouds, Susan said thoughtfully: 'I think Bunny-pie must be very lonely.'

'Because she was left behind?' her mummy asked.

'No, because she doesn't understand any language at all,' Susan said. 'Not even English.'

The hostess brought them a nice meal. As she was eating it, Susan said thoughtfully: 'But when we get home Teddy bear will build a tower that will reach right up to the tree where Chimpo sleeps. And then they will all be able to speak to one another.'

'But why should that be?' her mummy asked, looking rather puzzled.

'Because it will be like the CND tower and will send out radio messages,' Susan said.

Her daddy, who was half-asleep, patted her on the head, approvingly.

John said: 'Goo-goo,' which means the same in any language.