

Marcel is a French mouse, and a detective. He has lots of friends in Paris. One of them is Céline. She paints pictures and is very beautiful. Céline's home is at the Louvre. Marcel often goes there for dinner. One evening in May he arrives with some pink flowers. There is a guard at the door. "I don't know him," Marcel thinks. "He must be new." Then he walks inside.



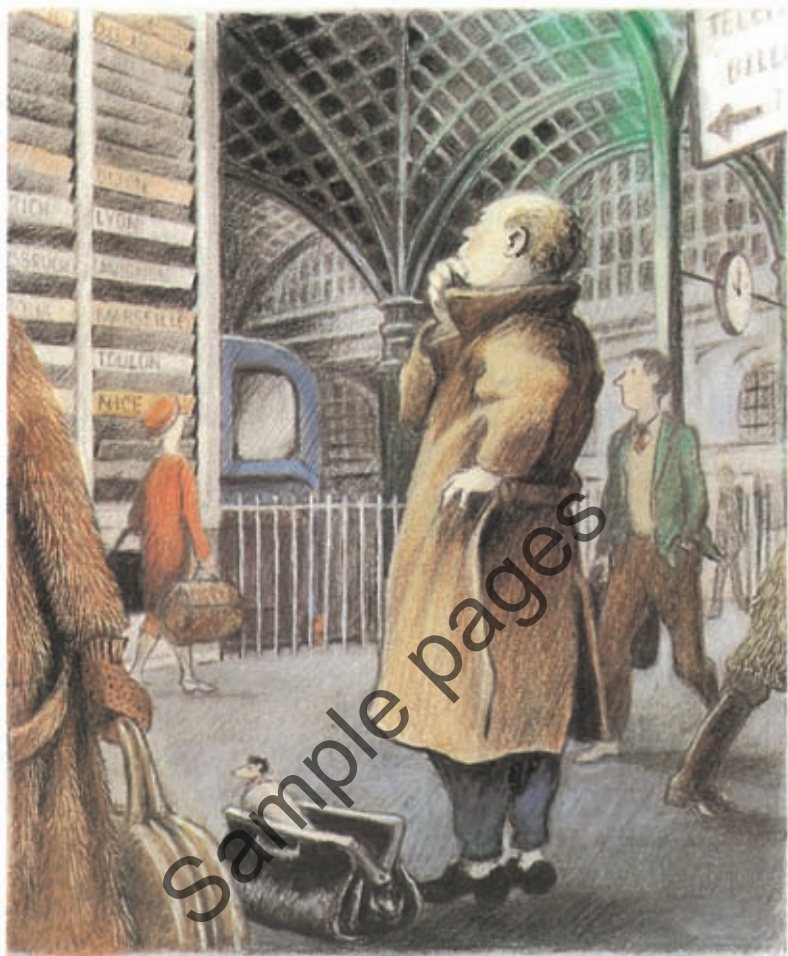
The two friends eat, drink and talk all evening. Céline shows Marcel her new paintings. They talk about their summer holiday in Los Angeles. They laugh, play jazz records and tell lots of stories. Then at 11 o'clock Marcel puts on his coat. "It's late," he says. "I must go home." Two minutes later he leaves. "Good night," says Céline. Then she closes her front door.



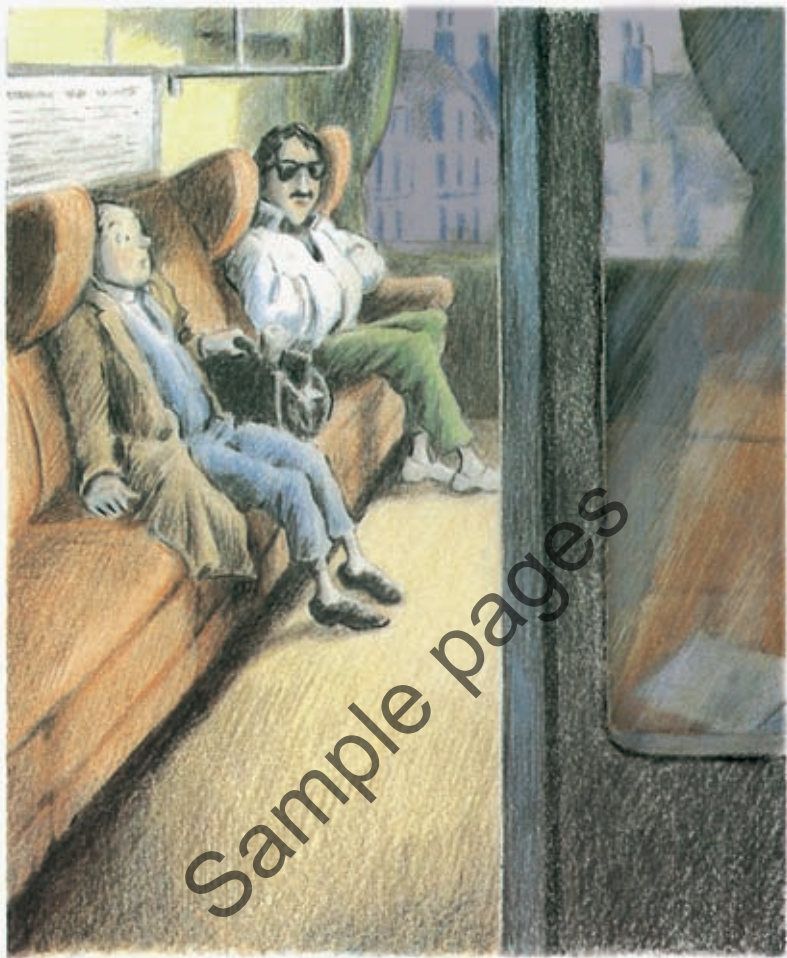
Marcel walks across the floor. He is very happy. Then he stops. The room is dark, but he can see something. What is it? A man? A man with a long knife? *Yes!* Suddenly Marcel's mouth is very dry. He runs to the wall. Then, after five seconds he looks again. This time he can see the man's face. "It's that new guard," he thinks. "And he's . . . he's stealing the Mona Lisa!"



Next to the thief there is a black bag. Two minutes later the Mona Lisa is inside it. The thief smiles and picks up the bag. But a second later he puts it down again. “Car keys,” he says, and begins to look in all his pockets. “All right – this is it,” Marcel thinks. “It’s now or never.” He runs along the wall very fast, climbs up the tall, black bag, and jumps inside it.



At the bottom of the bag Marcel can see a face. The Mona Lisa's face. She is smiling at him. "Now what?" he asks her. There is no answer, but at that moment the bag starts to move. Marcel can hear lots of noises: a motor starts – traffic goes by – a radio plays. Then the bag suddenly stops. Marcel climbs the painting and looks out. "A railway station!"



Five minutes later the Louvre ‘guard’ gets on a train. He sits next to a thin man in sunglasses and a white jacket. “Have you got it, Antoine?” the thin man asks. “Yes,” the guard answers. After that the train starts and there is a lot of noise. “Oh no! Now I can’t hear them,” Marcel thinks. But he *can* hear one or two words. “Italy”, for example, and “all those cats”.



“Cats!” Marcel looks at the Mona Lisa. His eyes are two big saucers. “But cats *kill* mice,” he thinks. “They *eat* them. And where are we going in Italy? Rome? Milan? Naples? . . .”

But at that moment Antoine puts the bag under the seat.

“Now I *really* can’t hear,” Marcel thinks.

Then he goes to sleep and has a very bad dream.