

PIPER AND EDITH EXPLORE THE WORLD



The Beginning

Piper was standing in Edith's room, waiting for her to put her shoes on so they could go for a walk around the Mountain Lake. Edith seemed somewhat preoccupied these days. Piper felt compelled to find out why, but at the same time he was resisting the urge to pry. But then it just slipped out:

-“What have you been thinking about lately?”- Piper asked quietly in his soft voice and calm but curious manner. Edith could barely hear the slight speech impediment Piper had, because it only showed when he was scared or excited and spoke faster than his normal speed. Which wasn't now.

-“I was thinking, we should take a trip. Everybody at school always takes trips. Why don't we also go somewhere?”-

-“Would we be taking Kailus with us?”- Piper asked with a slight worry in his voice. Kailus was a big long-haired cat that was Piper’s best friend for as long as they knew each other. Which was since both of them were born. Piper’s eleventh birthday was just coming up this June and so was Kailus’s. Whilst Piper was very young, Kailus was somewhat past his prime. But still a super-cat.

-“Of course! We must take Kailus with us!”- Edith exclaimed.

-“And Clotaire too!” -

Piper smiled. The idea of the four of them: Piper, Edith and their cats, Kailus and Clotaire, taking a trip together was a happy thought. But how would they make it happen? Edith was a year older than Piper, but even as a twelve year old she wasn’t old enough to travel without her parents’ permission. And taking parents on the trip wasn’t exactly the kind of trip Edith had in mind when she proposed it to Piper, he was sure.

But it wouldn't be Piper and Edith, if they hadn't figured it out somehow. So before they left for their Sunday walk to the Mountain Lake, they made a plan. The plan involved Edith, her anorexic, tiny and scared-of-everything cat Clotaire, Piper, his cat Master Kailus and an Ipad. They were all huddled up in Piper's attic hide-out, planning where they must go one day. And that day was to come much sooner than they knew.



Prague, Czech Republic

Edith always wanted to see Prague. She had read a few books about the Old Town of Prague and it sounded amazing! Full of history and fun but also scary ghost stories that both Piper and Edith loved so much. Edith decided that the first place they must one day go would be Prague. Piper agreed. He did hear from one friend at school that Prague was supposed to be an -„industrial looking city“- but the images Edith was scrolling through on the Ipad looked nothing like that. They showed a city full of old churches, beautiful castles and bridges with impressive and ancient looking statues. Piper was very interested.

-“So what would you like to do in Prague, once we are there?”- he asked.

-“I read about it and it looks like we must see the Prague Castle. And the Charles Bridge. That’s a bridge that was built in the 1300s! Imagine that!”- Edith had done her homework.

-“1300s?”- Piper exclaimed. -„How on earth is it still standing?”-

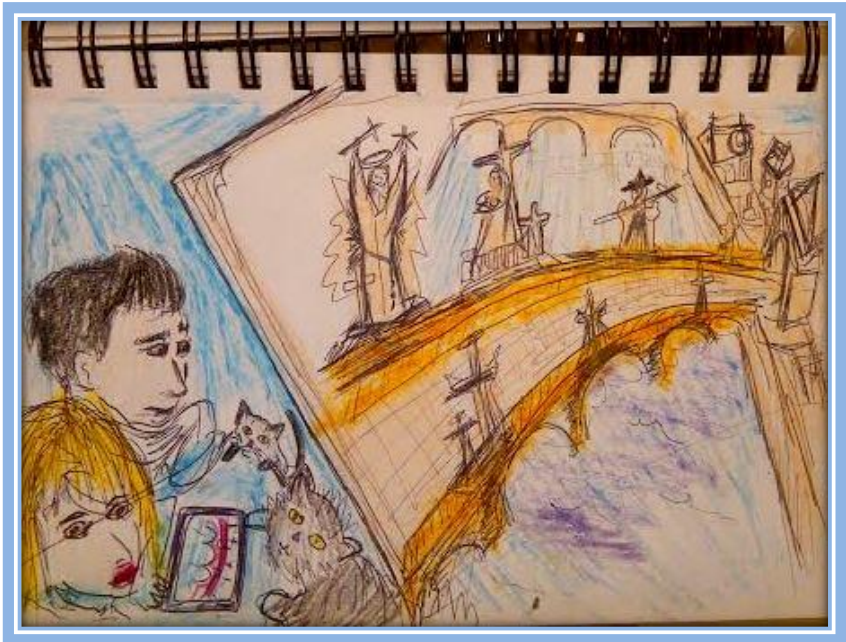
-“I read they put eggs in it.”-

-“Eggs don’t last centuries.”- Piper frowned, as he moved closer to Edith under their blanket to see the iPad better. Kailus, who was rudely woken up by the move, stood up, moved a few inches away from them and started licking his fur as if it was the most important thing to do right now. Piper apologized for disturbing him and gave him a big kiss on the forehead. Kailus liked that very much and decided to forgive Piper right then and started purring. Piper was happy to see it and continued talking about eggs:

-“When I had eggs at home and forgot to eat them, the whole house smelled like something had died in there centuries ago. But the eggs

were only a few days old. I can't imagine what it would smell like centuries later. Do you think the Charles Bridge smells really bad?"-

-“Of course it does not smell bad, Piper. Look, it's beautiful. With statues on it. That is where we should start our trip!"-



Vienna, Austria

Piper was standing in front of the hotel with his backpack on and his fancy camera in a cross-body bag. Ready for action! Kailus was lurking out of the backpack, wondering if Vienna meant their business with Viennese sausages. That was the important part of this trip to Kailus.

Clotarie, on the other side, was more interested in eating some Viennese grass today, and then, in getting lots of hugs from Edith. Maybe kisses and licks would even be exchanged. And the rest of the day would be spent sleeping. That was Clotaire's dream day.

-“Koala house! Koala House!”- Piper said excitedly. His right hand was slightly trembling and his fingers were running up and down an imaginary keyboard. He didn't know he did that.

-“What is a koala-house?”- asked Edith, as she smiled about Piper's nervous tick. She found it adorable.

-“Isn’t it where koalas live? Look, it’s in the zoo here, downtown Vienna. That must be where koalas live.”-

-“Or is it the house they built?”- Edith was imagining a house built by koalas. It would be full of lemon grass and bamboo shoots. Obviously.

-“We should go there, we should go there!”- Piper insisted.

-“We will. But how about we walk around the Museum Quarter first and see some art?”- Edith thought that since they were already in this artsy looking town, they should see some art.

-“Koala House is art”- Piper was being stubborn.

-“But look, here is the palace where the young Marie Antoinette lived before she was married and off to Paris. That was in the 1700s. She was just a fourteen year old girl back then. Just two years older than me. And she was getting married to the French King Louis the XVI. Imagine that. One day you are just a young spoiled princess in Vienna and the next day you are a queen in France.”-

-“Do you think she got any koalas as a wedding present?”- Piper was really set on visiting the koalas. And the Great Pandas as well. After all, the Vienna Zoo was the only European Zoo that had Great Pandas in it. Both Clotaire and Kailus weren’t excited at the prospect of going to see a Zoo of any kind, and at the first mention of it they both squeezed into the backpacks that Edith and Piper were carrying and pretended they were not even present.

But they were in no danger. They were both loved so much by Piper and Edith. The Viennese Zoo, other Zoos, nor anyone else could take them away. So off they went, all four of them, to say *Gutten Tag* to the Viennese koalas.



Ratingen, Germany

-“What is in Ratingen?”- asked Piper, as he was gently petting Kailus with one hand and going through the map of Germany with his right index finger.

-“I am not sure.”- Edith shrugged her shoulders.

-“So why are we going there?”- asked Piper.

Clotaire started listening. Going to Germany seemed like a strange option to him, no matter where in Germany it would be, but then again, it might have been his semi-French blood talking.

-“We are going there to see something different.”- said Edith, somewhat pedantically.

-“Well, if you put it that way.”- Piper gave up. He was still stroking Kailuse’s face, when he said -“I hear Germans have funny mustaches, is that true?”-

-“Aren’t all mustaches funny?”- Edith wondered out loud.

-“To me they are, yes.”- agreed Piper. -“But I hear that the German mustaches are exceptionally funny.”-

-“Can you grow a moustache before we go to Ratingen?”-

-“Sure. If we are going in many many months.”- Piper knew his mustache-growing abilities were limited. Kailus and Clotaire had better chances of growing mustaches before he did.”-



Dusseldorf, Germany

-“Look at those amazing modern looking buildings. So colorful too.

What do you think the tall one with the flying saucer top is called?”-

Edith was captivated by the skyline of Dusseldorf.

-“I don’t know, but I bet it is mighty fancy up there.”- Piper pointed at the restaurant at the top of the sky-high building.

-“You mean like angry mustaches everywhere you look?”-

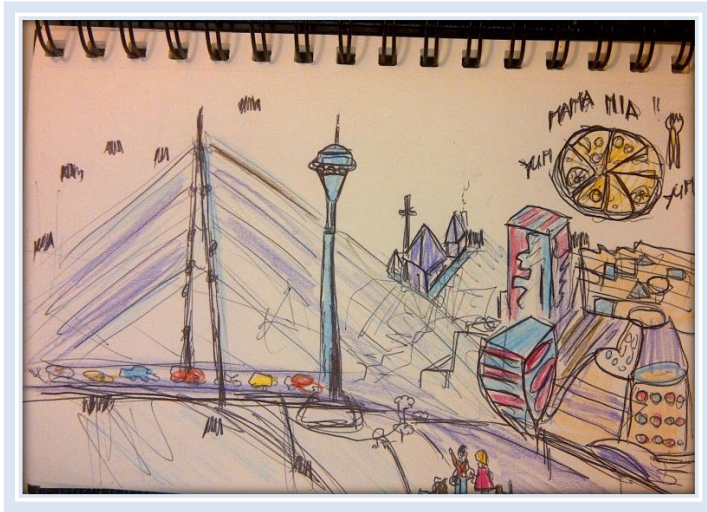
-“What?”- Piper was startled by that statement.

-“Don’t you see? This is the land of angry moustaches.”- Edith was making an observation and pointing to the people walking around.

-“How is a mustache angry?”-

-“Like this”- Edith made a few faces to show him how.





Brussels, Belgium

-“Everyone goes and sees the statue of the Peeing Boy. Isn’t that strange? I mean half the population on this planet can see a peeing boy if they look in the mirror as they go to the bathroom”- Piper was amazed that people would want to see a statue of a peeing boy.

-“I think there is something special about this particular Peeing Boy,”- Edith replied.

-“I guess we should check it out, since we are in Brussels and all. But right after we have to have some Belgian waffles. Or just “waffles”, I presume that is what they call them here.”- Piper was getting hungry.

-“Or should we have some Brussels sprouts?”- asked Edith.

-“I hate Brussels sprouts.”- Piper was very firm on that.

-“I love Brussels sprouts!”- Edith wished she had some right now.

-“I love you.”- Clotaire looked at Edith as she was petting him with her left hand.

-“I love me too.”- announced Kailus to everyone.



Paris, France

-“Where do we start in Paris?”- Piper asked. He couldn’t wait to begin exploring Paris. It was always his favorite city to visit in his dreams. The French with their long baguettes, stylish clothes and fancy accent. Piper even started learning French before the trip. He and Edith tried practicing it already, but couldn’t understand each other yet, mostly because Piper had a really strong American accent. His adorable lisp

did compensate for it a little, so his „*Ca-Va*“ was almost native, but his –“*Je vais boire un verre de l'eau*“– was a bit of a tragedy. For now. Yes, French is a hard language. Clotaire was lucky enough to be born into it, so when Edith started learning, he understood what was going on. Kailus was a bit less lucky, as he only spoke English and Japanese, so when Piper attempted to talk to him in French (“*Ici, Kailus, ici, nous voulons manger maintenant*”) he didn’t get what was going on until Piper started opening the tuna can.

–“I want to go see Le Petit Palace“–, said Edith. –„It has a beautiful collection of art inside and an amazing inner garden. What about you? What do you want to see? The Eiffel Tower? The Rodin Museum? Sacré-Coeur? Or people falling off the light fixtures in front of Louvre?“–

–“I want to see the Notre Dame Cathedral.“– said Piper.

–“Why?“–

-“Um, you know I like Disney movies. I want to see where Quasimodo lived.”-

-“Okay. Sounds good to me. But you know that Disney didn’t write the Quasimodo story, right?”- laughed Edith.

-“Of course I know!”- Piper snapped back.

-“Oh, oh, you do? So who wrote it?” Edith liked teasing Piper.

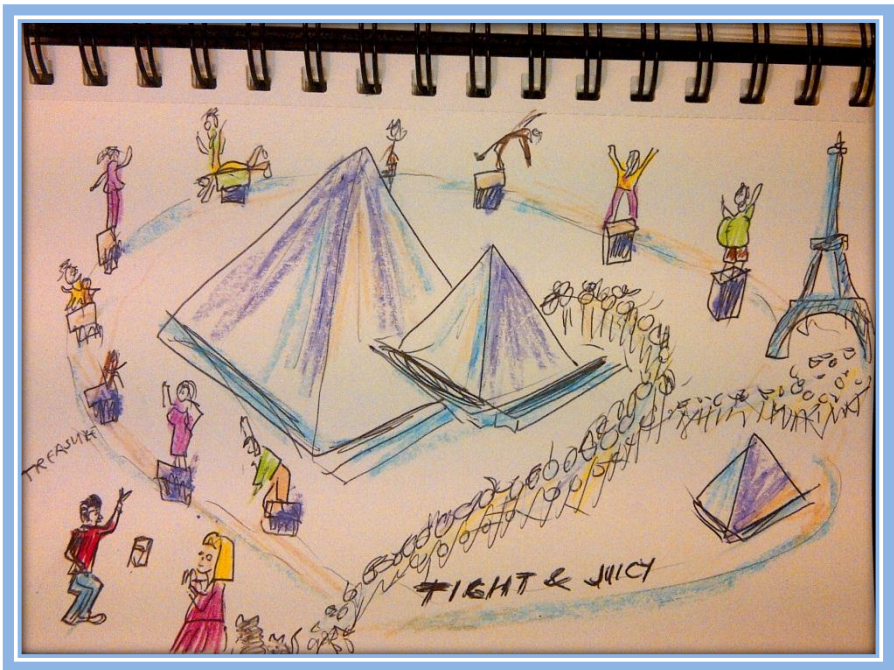
-“Some French guy with a beret?”- Piper guessed and turned a slight shade of red.

-“You don’t know, you don’t know, you don’t know,”- Edith yelled annoyingly and started jumping up and down in excitement. She always enjoyed when she knew something that Piper didn’t. And because it didn’t happen often, it was a moment of true joy. Yes, she should grow up, shouldn’t she?

-“So what? I still like the story.”- Piper defended himself and pulled the duvet closer to his now completely red face.

Edith continued to laugh hysterically.

Clotaire was thinking that reading a Victor Hugo novel might be a nice thing to do this evening. And Kailus was looking at the bunch, wondering what was going on and if any more tuna cans were to be opened.



Amsterdam, The Netherlands

-“Was that a rat?!“- Piper asked in shock

-“Where?!“- Edith was scared.

-“Where?!“- Kailus was hungry.

-“What is a rat?“- Clotaire was sure he heard the word before, but was unsure in what context.

-“Right there. Did you not see it? It just ran past us on the pavement. I think it went into the hotel.“- Piper was pointing toward the reception of the hotel they just came out of.

-“It would make sense that there are rats here, because of all the water canals, right?“- he continued.

-“Yes, and the food everywhere.“- agreed Edith.

-“And tulips.“- Piper reminded her.

-“Do you think rats eat tulips?“- Edith wondered out loud.

-“I don’t know, but they may.”-

-“Well aren’t the Dutch rats spoiled then? Feasting on tulips. And I bet those are the finest tulips you can find in the world. The Dutch tulips.”- Edith has heard about the Dutch being very proud of their tulips.

-“I bet you are right. So, should we get some? For our parents?”- Rats or no rats, Piper was in a good mood.

-“I am sure my mum doesn’t want rats in the house,”- Edith said with a cringe.

-“No silly, I mean tulips!”- Piper burst out laughing.

-“Oh yeah, we should definitely buy her some of those.”-



Portland, Oregon

-“Is this city full of bums? I have never seen so many bums hanging around downtown“- Piper was surprised. After all he was from Princeton New Jersey and the only bum-resembling person there ever was to be seen was when after Sandy the director of the architecture department was trapped in the Firestone Library for two days and

couldn't shave. When he came out, people gave him weird looks at first, as they thought he was homeless. But then they started inviting him to their homes and offering him help. After all, Princeton is no Trenton, is it.

-“Why do you think they are bums?”- Edith was not certain about what she was seeing on the streets of Portland.

-“They are dressed like that, they look like that, they act like that. You know, the whole duck and a bum story.”-

-“No I don't know. How does it go?”-

-“It's like this: act like a duck, walk like a duck, sound like a duck – you are a bum.”-

-“Makes sense. But I think these are artists.”-

-“Same difference, no?”-



Multnomah Falls, Oregon

-“I hate myself. I hate this hike. I hate you.”- Edit seemed to be on repeat. -“I hate myself. I hate this hike. I hate you.”-

-“Why do you hate yourself?”- Piper was startled by that statement.

-“Because I said yes to this hike? I am not saying I would rather stay home eating pancakes, but why do we have to climb like a gazillion miles across this steep hill?”- Edith wasn’t done complaining: -“You can’t even see where this trail ends.”-

-“Well isn’t that magical? And wait for the pay-off.”- Piper was trying to motivate her further: -“The view from the top is going to be amazing, trust me.”- He wasn’t disturbed by the fact that he couldn’t see the trail end.

Piper enjoyed hiking. And he didn’t even mind carrying Kailus in his arms while doing it. He knew Kailus couldn’t walk up the hill himself. To Piper Kailus smelled like pancakes, so while he was carrying him, every once in a while Piper would just smell his belly for comfort. Yes, it smelled like pancakes and caramel popcorn.

-“That is if I ever make it to the pay-off.”- mumbled Edith. Clotaire was quietly sitting in her front pocket, looking slightly scared as always, but thinking loving and devoted thoughts about Edith for carrying him. He

felt a little guilty about weighing a whole two pounds, but Edith didn't seem to hold it against him. On the contrary, she kept telling him how much she loves him the whole way up to the top. And Piper was right. The view was amazing. And Kailus, Clotaire and above all Edith had to admit that it was all worth it.



Seattle, Washington

-“We should start making money.”- proclaimed Piper after looking into his valet briefly.

-“I know. Everyone does it.”- Edith agreed.

-“How do we make money in this city?”-

-“How do we make money anywhere?”- wondered Edith.

-“Well everyone here seems to be making money off of their apple trees. Look, organic apple cider. Organic home grown apples only. Lavender-Cinnamon cider. Vanilla Spice cider. Sunday Midnight Mist Cider. Baby Arugula Freedom cider. I mean apples are big here.”-

-“That’s why we should make and sell something different.”- Edith was feeling her entrepreneurial spirit waking up.

-“Like what?”-

-“Like baby-ghost bags.”-

-“What are you talking about?”- Piper seemed confused but intrigued.



Niagara Falls, New York

-“Look, look! The map says „Goat Island“! Let’s go there first. There must be goats! I love goats“- Edith was overjoyed with the prospect of seeing live goats. After all, she grew up in a big city and watching pigeons in the city park was the closest to nature she ever got.

-“What do you love about goats?”- Piper was more skeptical about goats but willing to give it a shot.

-“What’s not to love about goats?”-

-“I guess”-

-“The falls are best observed from the Goat Island anyway, it says right here.”- Edith pointed to the map.

-“Okay, then Goat Island it is.”- Piper agreed.

-“Goats? Goat cheese is nice.”- Kailus was dreaming out loud again. When he woke up a few minutes later they were on the Goat Island, but there were no goats in sight. But there was a pretty impressive waterfall with a bright rainbow coming out of it and highlighting it. Even such an old cynical cat like Kailus had to admit it was somewhat pretty.

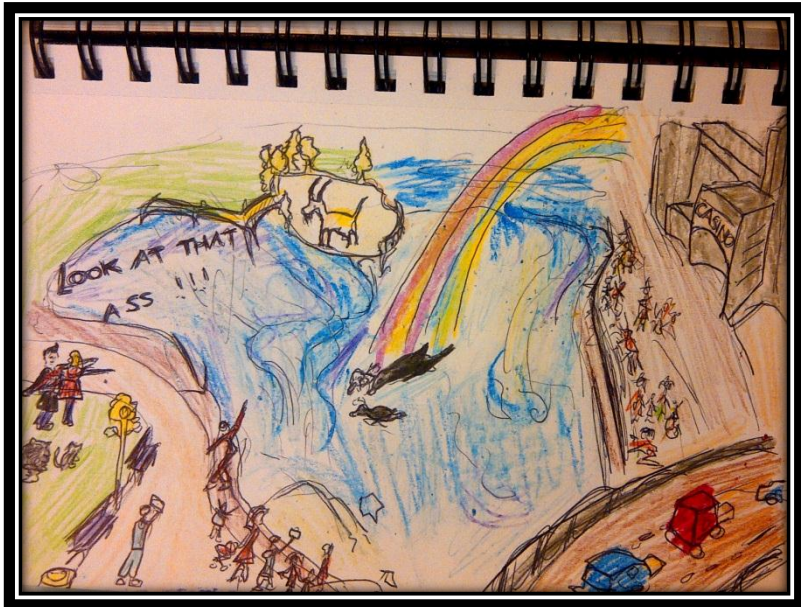
-“Oh my god, look at the falls! That is spectacular. And do you see the rainbow? I bet there are loons at the end of it.”- Edith was amazed by

the beauty of the waterfall. It cascaded down into the river with a rainbow over the horse-shoe opening. They now both looked at it and were completely magnetized.

-“What? Loons? Why loons?”- Piper asked slowly, as if he was trying not to disturb the mist that was around them.

-“Aren’t there supposed to be loons at the end of each rainbow?”-

-“Only if you stand there”.-



Toronto, Ontario

-“It looks like a flying donut!”- Piper pointed out the main building in Toronto’s skyline.

-“No, no, not a flying donut. It looks like a falling donut.”- Edith corrected him.

-“Um, donuts. Don’t care if they are flying or falling, as long as they are not flying away from me and are falling into my mouth“- thought Kailus.

-“Donuts? I am scared of everything that is round and sweet! I hope it doesn’t come here!”- Thought Clotaire. He had a bad kitty-hood memory. Yes, it involved an old crusty donut falling from the kitchen counter and trapping Clotaire for hours. He had to wait for the icing to soften by melting in the sun and then eat his way out of the entrapment. He gained like 27 grams. Which is a lot for a kitten to gain in one afternoon. And mostly on strawberry icing! A second on your lips, but forever on your hips!

-“I wonder why all these cities have the flying saucers or flying donut shaped buildings in their skyline. It all looks the same. This one is just like the one in Seattle, no?”- Edith was pondering the miracles of modern architecture.

-“This one is nothing like the Space Needle!”- Piper was obviously disturbed by that notion. After all, he could see himself living in Seattle one day soon, and hated the thought of the city not being a hundred percent unique. -“And it looks nothing like a falling donut. You look like a falling donut”,- he added.

-“Excuse me?”- Edith was hurt.

-“I mean it in a good way. Like you are sweet like a donut. And...”-

-“Falling like a donut?”-

-“I mean like you know... you do fall down a lot.”-

-“No, I don't know.”-

-“Anyway, shall we explore the city a bit?”- Piper was ready to change the subject.

-“Yes please“- Edith agreed.

-“Where do you want go first, M’lady?”- Piper was being polite to compensate for the flying donut mishap.

-“I want to see Snake Island“- Edith clapped her hands in joy. She loved all animals. Including snakes.

-“Oh no, are there snakes?”- Snakes weren’t Pipers favorite. Snakes in water especially scared him. Or on planes.

-“I certainly hope so! Why else would it be called Snake Island?”-

-“I don’t know. Maybe it’s shaped like a snake?”-

-“But it is not“- Edith kept pointing to the map.

-“So, maybe, um, I guess there are snakes.“-

-“There better be!“- Edit was not prepared to be disappointed.

They took a ferry to the Central Island from the Sugar Beach port. On the Central Island, they walked across three tiny bridges, got lost a few times (only because Edith was the one in charge of navigating), and saw some farm animals, but there were no snakes or snake-shaped islands in sight. Finally Edith decided to ask a lunch lady in a kiosk.

-“Hello there. We are making our trip to Snake Island today. Are there snakes on it?”- Edith asked, trembling with excitement.

-“I don’t think so”-, said the lunch lady.

-“No snakes on Snake Island? Not even one?!”- Edith couldn’t believe her ears.

-“Not that I’ve heard of.”- Confirmed the lunch lady.

-“Well why is it called Snake Island?”- Edith questioned the logic.

-“I don’t know.”-

-“Is it not famous for its snakes?”- Edith was investigating further.

-“No, it’s more like for picnics.”-

-“With snakes?”- Edith was still hopeful.

-“Drop it with the snakes already”- Piper felt he had to interfere. The poor lunch lady started to look frustrated with Edith.

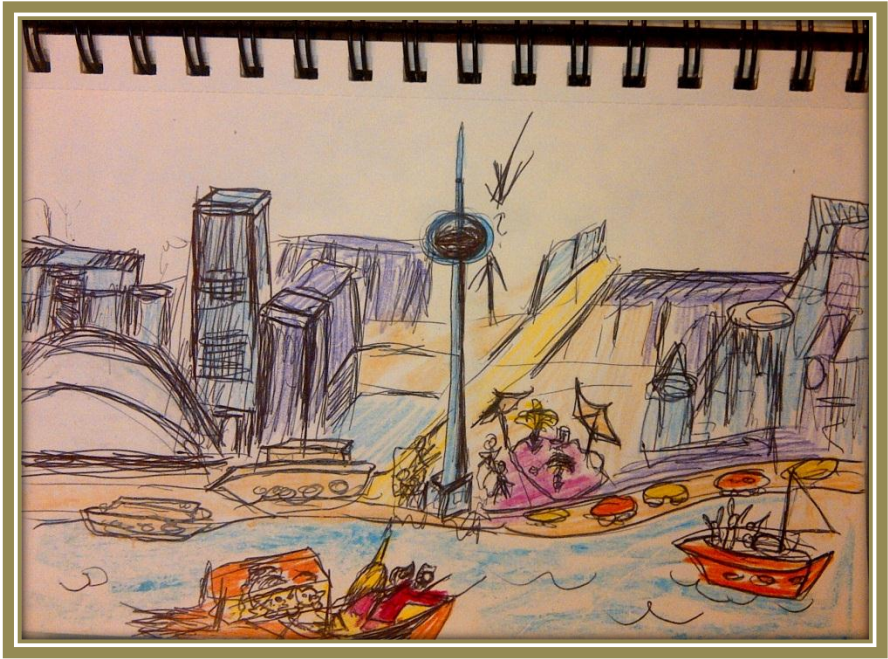
-“Well that is just false advertising, isn’t it. It’s the goat island all over!”- Edith wasn’t happy.

-“Shall we go see it anyway?”- Piper offered nicely.

-“Oh yeah, totally. But there better be snakes!”-

-“Does anyone know what snakes taste like?”- Kailus wanted to contribute to the conversation.

-“Oh god, oh god, I hope no snake bites me. Somebody save me please!”- went through Clotaire’s head at the same time.



The Hilton Falls, Ontario

-“Which path should we follow to get to the Hilton Falls?”- Edith was speaking out loud as she was trying to consult the map. She struggled with maps and orientation in general. Piper watched her with curiosity. He kept telling her she was not as bad with maps as she thought, but after a while it was obvious that the Hilton Falls were not to be found,

if Edith was left in charge. Piper looked at the map for about fourteen seconds and then started waving his hand in the air, pointing at things:

-“So, we are here, and this is the way to the Visitors Center, that is the way to the Beavers Dam and this is the way to the Hilton Falls. So we should follow yellow.”-

-“Yellow looks good on me”- thought Kailus.

-“I am worried about the amount of black flies coming towards us. Can’t anyone else see them?”- thought Clotaire. He didn’t like flies in general, but he hated black flies with passion. Yes, another bad kitty-hood memory. Or a trauma this time. When he was trapped in the old donut with hard strawberry icing that was slowly sinking into his rib cage with time, he became the easiest prey to a group of black flies that was flying around the nearby woods. Clotaire bet they could smell his fear. And immobility. So a whole cloud of them got to nibble on the aged donut and aging Clotaire while he was patiently waiting for the icing to melt and release him.



Meanwhile, Edith and Piper started marching towards the Falls, both carrying their cat companions and not minding the cloud of hungry black flies.

The black flies that were in Clotaire's head were not only hungry, but they were also a bunch of meanies. And bullies. And they were led by a huge, evil black fly, that enjoyed torturing people as well as animals.

Clotaire imagined this fly leader was named “Oculus”. He liked to wear baseball caps that said “Immortal”. He always had a cigarette in his mouth, several knives on him and a huge baseball bat nearby. And he wore special Nike Air sneakers that allowed him to jump higher and provided extra support for his feet, so he could spend a long time lurking around and his feet would never hurt. He waited in the shadows until his victims were near him, and then he jumped in front of them out of nowhere and robbed them of their assets as well as their dignity. Clotaire was thinking all of this, while the group made it to the spectacularly underwhelming site of the Hilton Waterfalls, got lost once or twice when Edith was in charge of navigating, and made it back to where they started. Through all of this, they were completely unharmed by the cloud of black flies that followed them, and with no sight of the mighty Oculus, their leader.

He must have been on a cigarette break, Clotaire thought later.



Buffalo, New York

-“I want to explore Buffalo at night! I want to explore Buffalo at night, I want to explore Buffalo at night!”- Edith was annoying and unstoppable.

-“Do you have a death wish?”- Piper asked carefully. He knew Edith enjoyed the sense of adventure above all, but from looking around he didn’t think Buffalo at midnight was a place for the four of them to be.

-“How about we just look at it from far away?”- he suggested softly.

-“No, I want to explore it close up. Do you see that white tower over there? What if the evil snow queen lives in it? Shouldn’t we know?”-

-“I think we know.”- Piper was just being a killjoy today. It was his pragmatic self speaking. He has never heard anything bad about Buffalo, but he has also never heard anything good about Buffalo. To him that was a gigantic red flag. Plus he didn’t like empty streets after midnight. He remembers what happened to Batman’s parents.

Kailus was looking at the both of them thinking -“Why don’t you just flip a can of tuna and see who wins?”-

Cloitaire was blissfully sleeping. After all, it was midnight and at midnight all good kitties sleep.



The End

Edith watched Piper and the cats sleeping. She enjoyed watching them all sleep. They looked so peaceful and happy. Piper often talked in his sleep, and all three of them sometimes snored very lightly. Like now.

Edith gave Clotaire a kiss on the forehead, and pulled up the blanket on Piper and Kailus, who were snuggling together next to her. It was a good day, Edith thought.

She was sure Piper was just dreaming up the next place they would go together. And they would. As soon as his parents start the Wi-Fi in the morning again, they would be on their way. Where to this time? Piper had said he was curious about Rome. And Edith couldn't wait to visit the Colosseum with him. If only she just goes to sleep now, maybe the four of them will meet there sooner than in the morning.

