



***Getting closer***  
***A Solved Mystery around a Family***  
***Misunderstanding<sup>1</sup>***

***Written by***

DUCHER Florent, EL GHERBI Manel, GUIRROU Reda, HERVE Mathilde, IMIRA Checkna, LAGUERRE Eliana – Adema, MERDACI Manar, MOHAMMAD Maira, MOHAMMED SEGHIR Lisa, MUSLIC Ali, SERGEANT CUSTODIO Léana, VADRAEV Dalil, VERT-PRE Alyssa and YOULOU Joana.

***Illustrated with colored pictures by***

HERVE Mathilde, MOHAMMED SEGHIR Lisa, MUSLIC Ali and SERGEANT CUSTODIO Léana.

*Nous tenons à présenter, à l'avance, toutes nos excuses pour les éventuelles incohérences, fautes de frappe et de langue.*

©Droits d'auteur-2024 – Les 14 élèves de Section Internationale de l'année scolaire\* 2023-2024 et Mme Nadège Faustin. Tous droits réservés.

\*DUCHER Florent, EL GHERBI Manel, GUIRROU Reda, HERVE Mathilde, IMIRA Checkna, LAGUERRE Eliana – Adema, MERDACI Manar, MOHAMMAD Maira, MOHAMMED SEGHIR Lisa, MUSLIC Ali, SERGEANT CUSTODIO Léana, VADRAEV Dalil, VERT-PRE Alyssa, YOULOU Joana

---

<sup>1</sup> *Pour se rapprocher : mystère résolu autour d'un quiproquo familial.*

# **Content**

*Prologue*

*Chapter 1: All Alone*

*Chapter 2: Trick or Treat*

*Chapter 3: The Spirits Book*

*Chapter 4: Jennyfer Must Be Warned*

*Chapter 5: In Search of Clues*

*Chapter 6: The Investigation*

*Chapter 7: Found at Last*

*Chapter 8: Conflicting feelings*

*Chapter 9: Home Sweet Home*

*Epilogue*

# *Prologue*

A long time ago, an old rich couple lived happily but one day a disaster happened, the old man accidentally fell on a kitchen knife and killed himself. They had children but people thought that they had also died because nobody saw or heard of them anymore.

From that day, the old woman was lonely, she gradually became sad, angry with everyone, and she no longer talked to anyone. The house became dirty, dark and decrepit. Children threw stones at it. People said that some of those children had entered the house but that they had never come back. They also said that they could hear children crying at night, and that they could see flashing and weeping shadows going past the windows. Others said that the children who had managed to escape the house had become creepy. And they even said that the old woman had a big magic book with which she invoked spirits, and that at night she would go into her basement to read some passages to wake up monsters ...

\*\*\*

Around 2000, there was a happy family who lived in Lancaster, California,<sup>2</sup> but one day, Mr. Mike Miller, the thirty-year-old loving father, did not go back home. The members of his family were distraught<sup>3</sup>. Nonetheless four years later, Katelyn, the mother, remarried a man who she worked with. She had fallen in love again and she thought he was a very good husband. At first, she presented him to her four-year-old daughter, Jennyfer, but the little girl did not like him because she did not understand why she had a new father, and she kept on<sup>4</sup> asking about her biological father, Mike Miller. She took time to accept Younes Hait as her new father and call him "Daddy". Three years after meeting Younes, Katelyn expected a baby boy. Jennyfer was excited to meet her new brother and play with him. Nine months later, her baby brother Mohammed Hait-Miller was born. Jennyfer became fond of him the moment she saw him.

At the end of 2010, Mohammed, Jennyfer and their parents were at a camping park in a village called Elizabeth Lake. There, Katelyn and Younes, who worked as International Humanitarian Doctors, had a very important call. They had to go to Kyrgyzstan<sup>5</sup> at once.

---

<sup>2</sup> État du sud-ouest des États-Unis.

<sup>3</sup> Bouleversé.

<sup>4</sup> Continuer de.

<sup>5</sup> Un pays situé en Asie centrale.

Katelyn and Younes were used to travelling to different countries. They had not much time to play with their children or to rest. So, on the first days of the Autumn holidays, Katelyn, a slender red-haired woman aged forty, and Younes, a forty-two sporty dark-haired man, were already on their way to Kyrgyzstan. They had to stop at Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport where they had planned to take a flight to Manas airport, in Bishkek.<sup>6</sup>

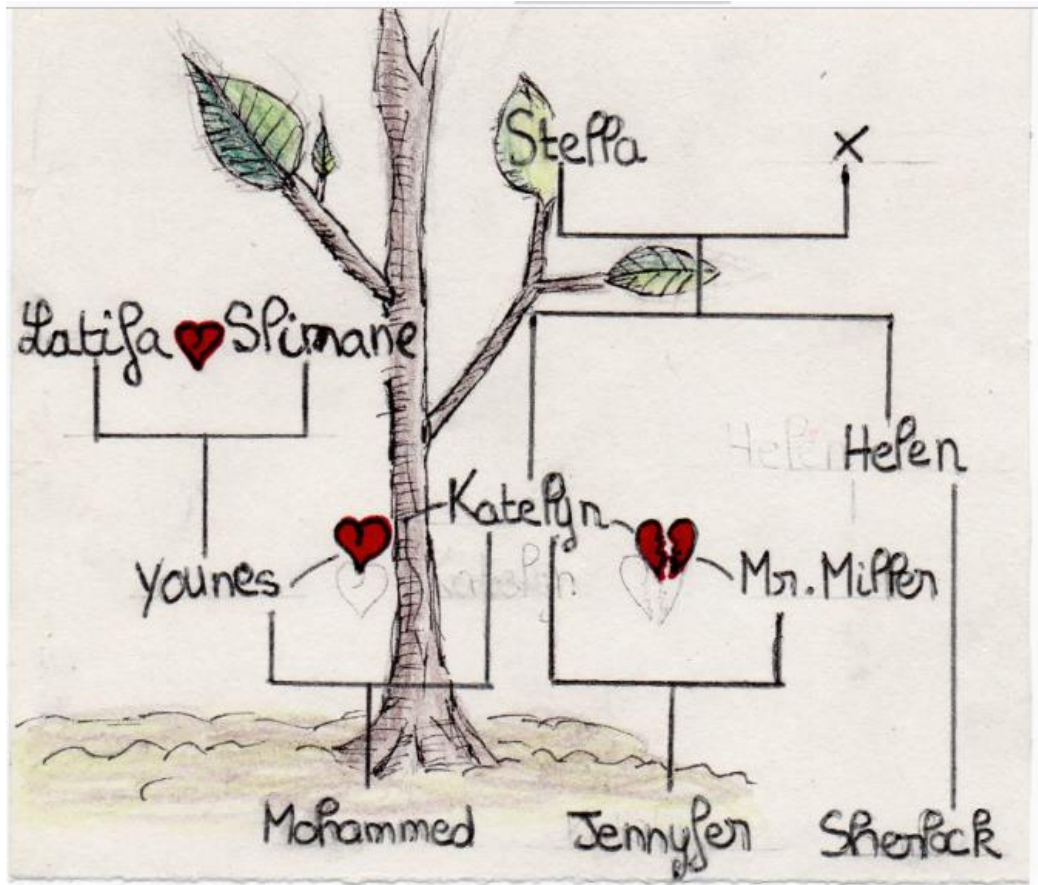
At the time the story begins, Mohammed and Jennyfer stayed at their scatterbrained<sup>7</sup> grandmother's home, Stella<sup>8</sup> while Katelyn and Younes were away. During that period, Mohammed, Jennyfer and their friends lived an extraordinary adventure ...

---

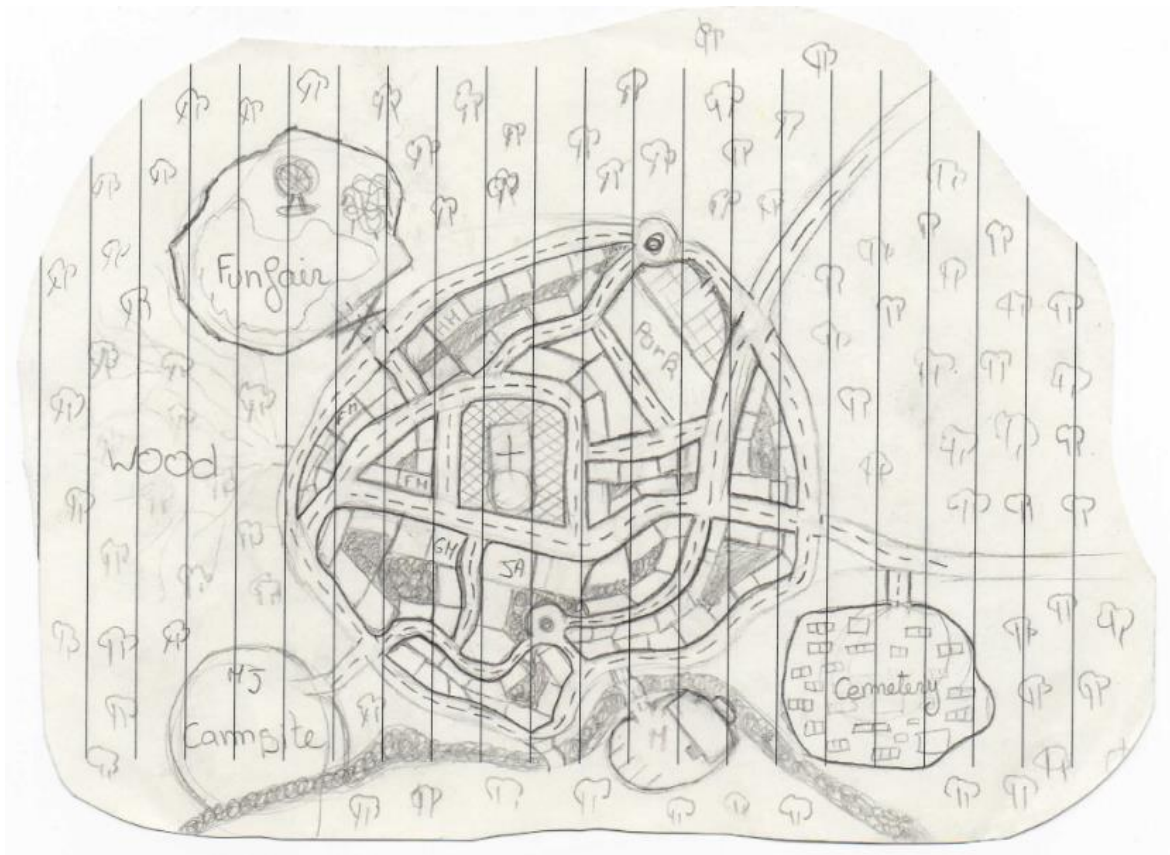
<sup>6</sup> Bichkek est la capitale du Kirghizistan.

<sup>7</sup> Étourdie.

<sup>8</sup> La mère de Katelyn.



Family tree 1



The village Elizabeth Lake

# Chapter 1: All Alone

Around Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October, Jennyfer and Jake Anderson, her best friend, went for a walk into Beth Park. That day, Jennyfer wore the locket<sup>9</sup> that her father, Mike Miller, had given her before his disappearance. In the park, an old lady looked at Jennyfer's neck insistently and in a strange manner. It was as if she recognized the locket. Jennyfer was so embarrassed that she hurried away.

"That old lady was quite weird, wasn't she?" Jake noticed.

"Indeed, she'd had a strange way of looking at my locket." Jenny said a little scared.

"For a moment, I thought she knew you." Jake went on.

"Let's forget about it! It was too scary." Jennyfer said, and they resumed their walk. "Halloween is in two days. This year, we should let Mohammed go and get some candies on his own." Jennyfer added.

"Sure, he's old enough now. And we're too old for that." Jake replied.

"So, we could think about how we could organize the New Year's Eve party, instead!" Jennyfer went on.

"Have you seen who's just gone past us?" Jake interrupted her. "I think the old lady's been following us. But I thought she'd turned left a little earlier." Jake noticed surprised.

"She's *really* weird. Has she gone for good now?" Jennyfer asked frightened.

"I think so!" Jake reassured her.

\*\*\*

A few blocks from where they were standing, outside the park, the old lady had rushed into a large decrepit house. Once she was inside, she exclaimed:

"Son, she is here! I saw her."

"What? It isn't possible! Are you sure?" Her son asked.

"Yes, I am. She wears the locket around her neck." The old lady answered.

"So, she kept it!" He realized.

But his mother was not listening and was already imagining a scheme<sup>10</sup> to get her granddaughter back with them.

---

<sup>9</sup> Médaille

<sup>10</sup> Un plan

“We could kidnap her on 31<sup>st</sup> October when she comes to get some candies for Halloween.” She suggested.

And they continued discussing the matter through the night ...



## Chapter 2: Trick or Treat

On 31<sup>st</sup> October ...

“Jenny, can I go trick-or-treating with my friends?” asked Mohammed. Jennyfer’s little half-brother was a carefree<sup>11</sup> seven years-old boy who was always smiling. He was small, had curly hair, blue eyes and he was quite swarthy<sup>12</sup>.

“No, you can’t! First, you must clean your bedroom!” Jennyfer answered.

“You’re not my mother ...!” Mohammed said cheerfully on his way out of the house. And he banged the front door behind him.

Jennyfer was a tall thirteen-and-half-year-old girl, she had curly hair too, but she had green eyes, and she was white skinned.

“Momo! *Mohammed!* Pfff! ... My little half-bro seems very excited to celebrate Halloween.” she thought aloud.

Mohammed took his bike and went to the forest to meet his friends James and Steven at their “Head Quarter” in Beth Forest. Then, they went trick-or-treating together on bike.

“Last time, while I was going home, I saw a strange house. It was very scary and looked haunted.” James said.

“Oh Really!! Let’s go and see it together, *now!*” Mohammed said excitedly.

“Are you sure?” Steven asked fearfully.

“Yes, I’m *sure*, It’s Halloween, isn’t?” Mohammed asked.

“Oh yes, let’s go and get *scared!*” James said.

Then, they all cycled to the haunted house. Once they arrived there, Mohammed asked:

“Is it the haunted house?”

“Yes, it is!” James replied.

Then they went closer to the front of the house. Mohammed suggested:

“Let’s go and knock!”

“Wait a minute! I can’t go in there! I am too scared!” Steven said trembling.

“Hahaha! You chicken!” Mohammed said laughing.

“I’m not a chicken, I’m just *scared!*” Steven said annoyed.

---

<sup>11</sup> Insouciant

<sup>12</sup> Basané

“Why don’t you come with us then? Chicken, chicken, chicken! Hahaha!” Mohammed continued.

“Alright, alright, I’ll go with you, but don’t ever call me Chicken again!” Steven said angrily.

Mohammed knocked three times at the door. Then an old lady opened it, and Mohammed and his friends asked all together: “Trick or treat?”

“You want candies, don’t you? Of course, but you must *come inside* to get them.” the old lady said grinning<sup>13</sup>.

“You may go inside if you want to, Momo.” Steven whispered frightened. “But you’ll go alone for I’m too scared. Imagine if she kidnapped or killed us. We don’t know what she is capable of!”

“Actually, I won’t go either because ... we don’t know her.” James said even more frightened.

“Too bad for you because I won’t share my candies!” Mohammed said teasingly<sup>14</sup>.

“No problem! I’d rather not have any candies than be kidnapped” Steven said.

“Okay! As you please, guys,” Mohammed said.

Then, Steven and James were so scared that they ran in the opposite direction of the haunted house.

“Er... Steven, James, come back! it’s just an old lady!” Mohammed said laughing at his coward friends.

“Don’t worry about them and *come inside* little boy!” The old lady said still grinning.

She was small, wrinkled and she had white hair and broken teeth. When Mohammed entered the house, the door closed with a creaking sound. But he did not pay attention and followed the old lady into kitchen. The house was dirty and decrepit, there were many cracks and holes everywhere in the floor.

“So where are the candies?” Mohammed asked.

“There! Look on the table, little boy!” the old lady said slyly<sup>15</sup>.

Mohammed went to the table, took the candies and said happily:

“Thank you!”

“You’re welcome, little boy!”

When Mohammed went to the door to leave the old lady’s house it was locked.

“Why is the door locked? Where is the key?” Mohammed asked.

---

<sup>13</sup> Avec un sourire grimaçant

<sup>14</sup> En les narguant

<sup>15</sup> Sournoisement

“The key is in the basement<sup>16</sup>, but you can go and get it if you want,” the old lady said.

“Alright! Let’s go!” Mohammed said still gaily.

The corridors were long and looked very creepy, but Mohammed was not afraid. Many rooms were locked and there was no light in the basement. He went down and as he was searching for the key and entering a damp<sup>17</sup> room - lit only by the moonlight coming from a small window - the old lady closed the basement trapdoor violently behind him.

“Madam, help me please! I can’t open the door. It’s closed.” Mohammed said in a candid voice.

“Hm! He was supposed to be with Jennyfer, but never mind! I’ll change my scheme. He’ll help us attract his sister,” the old lady thought.

“I should’ve listened to my friends!” Mohammed sighed.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> La cave

<sup>17</sup> Humide

<sup>18</sup> Soupirer

## Chapter 3: The Spirits Book

From the moment he went down the basement of the haunted house, on that foggy October night, Mohammed did not hear a single noise coming from outside.

“Help!” He shouted for hours. “Let me out!”

When he calmed down at last, he heard a creaking sound at the end of the room he was locked in. When he turned around, he saw that the basement was in fact a library. He decided to explore the room. In fact, it was bigger than Mohammed thought. There were four huge cupboards along the walls and a single bulb that flashed. Since Mohammed started to get bored, he got closer to the cupboards and picked a book to read.

“It's not as funny as a comic strip... It's boring!” He thought. After skimming through several books - he was looking for comics - he stopped. “There are four huge cupboards but not even one single comic strip, pfff!...” he sulked<sup>19</sup> and sat down.

Suddenly, he noticed something special next to his feet - some kind of light. So, he looked down and saw a bright object. As he was curious, he bent down to see what it was. But since he was dazzled<sup>20</sup> by the light, he put one hand in front of his eyes to protect them, and at the same time he groped for<sup>21</sup> the bright object with his other hand. He felt something and realized that it was a book. It was already opened on page four hundred and thirty-seven, so Mohammed tried to read it. On that page, he could read a strange text in an almost illegible<sup>22</sup> handwriting. Nonetheless, thanks to some illustrations, he understood that it was about a specific topic. Actually, he found out that the book dealt with rituals - there was a picture of the haunted house and another one of people getting out of the house. But those people were nonhumans, there looked more like spirits. Under the drawing, there was written a short text about how to do the ritual. There were weird symbols that scared Mohammed a little. So, he closed the book quickly, but the cover was odd,<sup>23</sup> too. In its center, there was a big medal. Mohammed realized then how much the place which he was locked in was weird.

---

<sup>19</sup> Boudier.

<sup>20</sup> Éblouir.

<sup>21</sup> Chercher à tâtons.

<sup>22</sup> Illisible.

<sup>23</sup> Particulière, étrange.

## ***Chapter 4: Jennyfer Must Be Warned***

At 7.40 p.m., Mohammed's friends, who were playing hide and seek in the forest, realized that Mohammed had not come back. Steven wanted to text<sup>24</sup> Jennyfer, but his hands were shaking with fear, and he soon realized that he had no connection. Suddenly, they both heard a scary sound that froze their blood. They were paralyzed with fear and as pale as milk. They looked at each other terrified. James said with a quavering<sup>25</sup> voice:

"Do you really think that we have to stay here and wait for Momo?"

"No way! I can't imagine what could happen to us if we stayed here! We have to find Jenny, quickly!" Steven answered.

So, they cycled out of the forest and went to find Jennyfer. About ten minutes later, they finally arrived at the village. Then, they decided to go to Jennyfer's grandmother's house. On the threshold, they knocked at the door but unfortunately, it was Stella who opened it. She was a small woman with big glasses. That day, on her white hair, there was a strange small orange hat, on which they could read: "HAPPY HALLOWEEN!"

When she saw the two boys, she seemed to be very happy:

"Hello my Dears! Happy Halloween! Take these sweets!" she said, giving them a box filled with sweets.

The two boys were bewildered<sup>26</sup> and answered:

"Thank you, Mrs Johnson, but..."

"No, take them! Don't be shy! I insist, and call me Stella, please!", the old woman interrupted them.

"Is Jenny here, Mrs Johnson?" The two boys asked.

"Jenny? Who's Jenny?" The grandmother asked astonished. "And please, call me Stella!"

"*Jennyfer!*" The boys replied annoyed

"Ah yes! Sorry, she isn't here", Stella Johnson answered.

Mohammed's friends wanted to shout out in anger and fear because they could not see Jennyfer to tell her that Mohammed had disappeared, but they kept calm. They left and decided to look for Jennyfer throughout the village, but they could not find her. When they returned to Stella's house, it was Jennyfer who opened the door this time.

"So here you are!" They both said.

---

<sup>24</sup> Envoyer un sms.

<sup>25</sup> Chevrotante, tremblante.

<sup>26</sup> Perplexe.

“Where is Momo?” Jennyfer asked.

“We were playing in the forest and ... we wanted candies .... and Momo ...”, James and Steven began weeping. Jennyfer was scared, so she took her phone with a shaking hand and told the boys:

“Let's call Jake! He'll know what to do.”

She dialed Jake's phone number.

“Hello Jake! Hey, I've something very serious to tell you!!”

“Sure! I've always wanted to tell you... I lov...!” Jake started to say passionately.

“Momo's disappeared!” Jennyfer interrupted him.

“Oh, my goodness!! it's horrible! We have to call your famous cousin, Sherlock<sup>27</sup>!” Jake shouted.

“Yeah, that's a great idea! We'll find him faster and easier with him”, Jennyfer said relieved. “Come to my grandmother's house, quickly!” she went on. “What did you want tell me by the way?”

“Nothing really important. Call him! I'm coming right now”, Jake said ignoring her question and hanging up the phone quickly.

Then, Jennyfer called Sherlock:

“Hello, Sherlock, can you join us quickly into Beth Forest?” she asked.

“*Hello Sherlock, how are you?*” Her cousin asked her ironically and imitating Jennyfer's tone of voice. “*Fine and you Jenny? Fine, thanks! It's been a long time, how's your mother?*” Sherlock went on.

“No time for that! Come and hurry up!” she interrupted him.

“Alright! See you in about fifty minutes then!” Sherlock said a little bewildered,<sup>28</sup> and he put the telephone down.

A few minutes later, Jake knocked on Stella's door. He was a tall light brown-haired white teenager with two different eye colors<sup>29</sup>.

“Hi Jenny! So, tell me what happened?” Jake asked.

“Come inside, it's started raining.” She answered.

Then, they began talking and decided to go to Momo's head quarter in the forest to see what they could find him. When they went back home, after a while, there was a knock at the door. This time, it was Sherlock.

---

<sup>27</sup> Sherlock Hilmes est le cousin de Jennyfer (Et non, nous n'avons fait ni faute de frappe, ni faute d'orthographe !)

<sup>28</sup> Perplexe.

<sup>29</sup> Sherlock a les yeux vairons.

## Chapter 5: In Search of Clues

Sherlock was a fourteen-year-old medium height boy. He was smart, and he knew how to control himself. Jennyfer took him in her arms, and said relieved:

“I’m very happy to see you”.

“I’m happy too.” Sherlock said smiling.

“My brother has disappeared. I want to find him, and I need your help!” Jennyfer implored.

“Yes, of course, I’ll help you, but who is this boy?” Sherlock asked Jennyfer pointing at Jake.

“Hello, Sherlock! I’m Jake, Jenny’s best friend.” Jake answered.

“Oh, hi Jake! At last, we meet! Okay, I’ll go with you and help you search for clues to find Momo but let me give you some advice<sup>30</sup> first. You need to have a map and to mark the places you’ve searched for Momo and the places where you found the clues.” Sherlock explained.

“Okay, we have to start searching for clues now, even if it’s already dark,” Jennyfer said anxiously.

“Jenny and I have already found huge footprints in the forest while we were waiting for you.” Jake added.

So, Jennyfer, Jake and Sherlock decided to go back to the forest to check if the footprints were still there. Once they arrived at the first clue, Sherlock took out his camera to take pictures of the big footprints. As Jennyfer saw that the sun was setting, she decided that they should stop their search and go to sleep. The next day, at 7 a.m., without Stella’s knowing, Jennyfer and Sherlock, who had slept at her place, fetched Jake. Once they were all together, Jennyfer explained her idea:

“I suppose that, if the footprints are so huge, they may belong to a very tall person who may live in a huge place, and that place may be a high building.”

“Indeed, in a huge building! You’re very smart, but you are *always* smart!” Jake said with stars in his eyes.

“You’re right, Jenny, let’s go now to the biggest building in the village!” Sherlock said. Five minutes later, the three teenagers arrived at a watermill<sup>31</sup> - the biggest building in the village - entered it and climbed up the stairs. At the top of the watermill, they saw an open door and when they stepped into the main room they saw a mysterious paper. Jake picked

---

<sup>30</sup> Conseil.

<sup>31</sup> Moulin à eau.

it up and realized that it was a map. Jennyfer took the paper from his hands and Sherlock took a picture of it and said that they would have a better look at it outside the watermill thanks to the sunlight. Once they were downstairs, Jennyfer saw that there was a path on the map and a cross where the churchyard should be. They decided to follow the path, so they left the watermill and turned right three times, and then they arrived at the churchyard. There, they took the decision to go and search separately... When Jake went to the east end of the churchyard, he discovered a mysterious symbol painted in mud.

“Jenny! Sherlock! Come here! I’ve found something,” He shouted.



## ***Chapter 6: The Investigation***

Jennyfer and Sherlock ran up to Jake and when they saw the symbol, Jennyfer exclaimed:

“Oh, it’s a symbol of a theme park!”

“I’ll take pictures. I think it means that we now need to go to the new theme park of the village!” Sherlock guessed.

But Jake said that he had to go back home because it was breakfast time, and his parents would be waiting for him. Jennyfer and Sherlock agreed, but they decided to continue their search. So, they went through the town to the theme park on their own. At that time of day, it was closed, so the teenagers climbed up the wall of the theme park. They roamed around<sup>32</sup> the park and searched for clues everywhere. Fifteen minutes later, Jennyfer and Sherlock arrived at the lost and found<sup>33</sup>:

“Look! It’s Momo’s backpack, I know it. He takes it every day to go to school!” Jennyfer said. “I’ll go and take it!” Jennyfer added.

She went to the backdoor and tried it, but it was locked. Sherlock remembered that all the blinds were never closed so he went through one of them, took the backpack, and was about to go back to Jennyfer outside when the burglar alarm went off. Jennyfer and Sherlock hid in one of the bumper cars. When the theme park opened later that day, and visitors started coming in, Jennyfer and Sherlock took the opportunity to go out and back to Jennyfer’s house.

“So, what do we have now?” Sherlock asked on the way.

“We have footprints in the forest, symbols in the cemetery, and now Momo’s backpack.” Jennyfer recapped.

The two teenagers stopped on their way home and opened Momo’s backpack. But they could only see candies in it. They emptied it and found Momo’s phone and a drawing scribbled<sup>34</sup> on a little piece of paper. It represented a dark decrepit house among more beautiful ones. After thought, Jennyfer remembered that there was a haunted house on the outskirts<sup>35</sup> of the village.

---

<sup>32</sup> Déambuler.

<sup>33</sup> Le service des objets trouvés.

<sup>34</sup> Gribouiller.

<sup>35</sup> La périphérie du village.

“Oh, I think I know where Momo is now,” she said. “But we *mustn’t* be late for breakfast. Grandma Stella is probably waiting for us. And I don’t want her to know about Momo’s disappearance.”

So, they hurried home. When they arrived at 10 a.m., they could hear Stella’s favorite show on TV: *Which house is the best?*

“Hi Granny! How are you today?” Jennyfer asked.

“You woke up late, Darling! It’s breakfast time! Oh! Who is this beautiful gentleman with you? Is he your boyfriend?” Stella asked surprised.

“Nooo, er ... This is Sherlock, Granny! My cousin! Don’t you remember?” Jennyfer replied in a nice tone.

“Oh, indeed. Come and have something to eat, both of you!” She said a little confused.

“Thank you, Stella! But I can’t stay long. I have to be back home in about an hour. Sherlock apologized.

## Chapter 7: Found at Last

Later that day, Jennyfer and Jake met again in front of the haunted house. Jennyfer pushed the door open with her foot. Jake, who was scared, claimed he would stand guard<sup>36</sup> outside. Jennyfer agreed and entered the house alone. But she hesitated to move further<sup>37</sup> when she saw the long dark corridor. She went past many closed doors along that corridor and arrived at a mysterious trapdoor.<sup>38</sup> She lifted it and suddenly was dazzled by a beam of light. After a while, she saw a wooden ladder<sup>39</sup> through the trap-hole. She thought that it was not a good idea to go down because there was maybe a strange thing or a trap<sup>40</sup>. But while she was thinking over what to do, she heard a scream:

“Woow! I’ve found a very strange thing!” The voice said.

As Jennyfer recognized Mohammed’s voice, she decided to go down through the trapdoor. Once she arrived downstairs, she found herself in a huge room which contained some kitchen stuff, a bathtub and a bed. Those objects were modern. There was also a lot of cobwebs.<sup>41</sup> Jennyfer saw Mohammed and ran happily to him. She took his brother in her arms affectionately, and said without loosening her embrace:<sup>42</sup>

“I missed you so much! I’m so happy to see you, my lovely brother!” She was crying and kissing him all over his face.

Mohammed said innocently that he did not want to worry his sister and that he just wanted to get some candies.

“Please Jenny, stop hugging me like this, I can’t breathe!” Mohammed uttered with difficulty.

Jennyfer let go of him and then she saw a shadow in the corner of the basement. She went towards it and saw a ... terrible, mysterious, horrific ... *creature*. Jennyfer was flabbergasted<sup>43</sup> and had a backward movement. The creature looked like a monster. It came closer to her, but she stepped back furthermore. While Jennyfer was facing the monster, Mohammed had already gone out of the basement to explore the haunted house. He supposed that the old lady had gone because he could not hear her. He opened all the doors except one because it was locked. Jennyfer, who was still facing the monster, wanted to run away but at the same time the creature took out a small object from one of his pockets. It

---

<sup>36</sup> Monter la garde

<sup>37</sup> Plus en avant/loin

<sup>38</sup> Une trappe

<sup>39</sup> Échelle

<sup>40</sup> Un piège

<sup>41</sup> Les toiles d’araignée

<sup>42</sup> Desserrer son étreinte

<sup>43</sup> Estomaquée

was a beautiful locket.<sup>44</sup> He held it out to Jennyfer, but she was too scared to look at it. So, the monster made the locket slide through the room up to Jennyfer's feet. Jennyfer picked it up. Suddenly, the locket opened in her hands. She was very surprised when she saw the picture in it. Her eyes went from the locket to the monster several times. After one minute of reflection, Jennyfer understood that she was the baby in the picture and that the monster was ... *HER FATHER!!!* So, she suddenly ran to him and took him in her arms. They cried and laughed at the same time and finally the "creature", Mike Miller, started telling Jennyfer his story ...

\*\*\*

"It was a day like the others. I was in a hurry to see you and your mother. When, I left work that evening, I went to the shop to buy your favorite cake. And then I took the road to go back home. It was raining and I was driving too fast. Then something appeared on the lane, but I saw it too late. I lost control of my car, and I had a car crash. Someone must have had called the rescue and fire brigades since they arrived straight away. I was seriously injured. I passed out in the ambulance when they were taking me to the hospital. When I woke up at the hospital after ten days in a coma, my whole face was scarred. It was ugly and I was ashamed.<sup>45</sup> Later on, a doctor came into my room and told me that my identity card had burnt in the accident and that he didn't know who I was. He asked me if I had a phone number so that he could call a member of my family. I answered that I didn't have any wife or children and that he could simply call my mother, Rosalia. I said that because I didn't want you to see my damaged face. I was embarrassed." Mike said.

"Oh Dad!! It wouldn't have been a problem for us. We'd have understood!" Jennyfer interrupted with tears in her eyes.

"I know. I was selfish,<sup>46</sup> I didn't want to leave you, but I had to. Later that day, my mother came to the hospital to see me and asked me if I wanted to go back home. I refused and made her promise not to tell you or your mother anything about the accident. Moreover, you were only three years old at the time. My mother, your grandmother, didn't understand and told me that your mother was very upset because I'd been missing for two weeks. Grandma Rosie<sup>47</sup> explained to me that Kate thought I'd left her. Jenny, I've never stopped

---

<sup>44</sup> Médaillon

<sup>45</sup> Honteux

<sup>46</sup> Égoïste

<sup>47</sup> Diminutif de Rosalia

thinking about you and your mother. I've always loved you because you're the suns of my life. About a month later, I went home to my mother's house. That's *my* story. But now, let's talk about you and your mother. I want to know everything. How's Kate?" Mike asked.

"She's fine! And I have a little brother now." Jennyfer answered.

"Really?" Mike said disappointed.

"When I was four years old, Mom met Younes. I was about seven when they got married. A couple of months later, Momo was born." Jennyfer said.

"Momo? Mike asked surprised.

"My brother's name's Mohammed". Jennyfer answered.

"Is he kind to you?" Mike asked

"Of course! Sometimes, he's really annoying like any brother in the world," Jennyfer answered.

"And, what's your stepfather's name again? Er... right... Younes. Is he nice?" Mike asked.

"Yes, he's adorable and he's a good father because..." There, Jennyfer was interrupted by her father.

"He's your *step*father not your father. *I am* your father!" Mike said in an irritated tone ...

## Chapter 8: Conflicting feelings

Jake was waiting and picking leaves off<sup>48</sup> flowers outside the haunted house when Mohammed joined him.

“Are you in love with my sister?” Mohammed asked him sneering<sup>49</sup>. “Are you going to marry her?” He went on.

“Indeed, I’m in love with her but don’t tell anyone!” Jake answered shyly.

Jennyfer left the basement after promising her biological father to keep his accident secret. Then, she joined the boys outside the haunted house. She noticed that Mohammed was sneering, and that Jake was a bit strange because he smiled much more. He was also much nicer than usual and kept on paying her compliments.

“You’re so brave! What a heroine! A real Wonder Woman! ...” Jake started praising Jennyfer<sup>50</sup>.

“No time for that!” Jennyfer snapped back<sup>51</sup>.

“You’re right, sorry!” Jake apologized. “What did you see in the haunted house?” He asked.

“Nothing important, really!” Jennyfer answered.

“What about the old lady? What about the spirits ...?” Mohammed asked.

“Oh my God! What spirits?” Jake asked shaking.

“I don’t know, and to be honest, I don’t care!” Jennyfer replied remembering that she had promised not to talk about her father.

\*\*\*

Several weeks later, during breakfast, Jennyfer and Mohammed’s mother phoned them. Their grandmother Stella tried to answer the phone, but she didn’t know which button to press to answer it. So Jennyfer took the phone from her grandmother’s hand, and she started a conversation with her mother.

“Hello Mom!”

“Hi Jenny, how are you?”

---

<sup>48</sup> Épétaler = effeuiller des fleurs

<sup>49</sup> Ricaner

<sup>50</sup> Louer

<sup>51</sup> Rétorquer

“Fine, thanks, and you?”

“Good!”

“Where’s Dad?”

“I’m sorry, but he’s working at the moment.”

“It’s okay, I get it.” Jennyfer replied a little disappointed.

“Can you put me through to your brother?”

“Yes, sure. Love you, Mom! Bye!”

“Love you, Honey! Take care, Lov’!” Katelyn added affectionately.

“Hello Mom, how are you?” Mohammed asked cheerfully.

“Fine, thank you, my Little Man!” Her mother answered. “And you, Dear? How are you?”

“Fine, or let’s say I’m even *great!*” Mohammed answered, smiling on the phone.

“That’s excellent news! Can you put me through to your grandmother then?”

“Yes, sure, bye Mom!” Mohammed said in a hurry.

“Bye Lov’!” Katelyn said. But Mohammed had already gone. “Hello Mom, how are you?” She added.

“Hi Kate, I’m fine, and you? How are things going on at work?” Stella asked.

“We’re quite exhausted! We’ve had so many patients.” Katelyn answered.

“Yes, I’m understand, but do you know when you’ll be back home?” Stella added. “I know everything is fine here but still we really miss you.” She went on.

“Yes, that’s why I’m calling. We’ll be back tomorrow. Could you come and get us?” Katelyn asked.

“Yes, of course! What time?” Stella inquired.

“I don’t know exactly. But I’ll let you know soon enough. Oh, sorry, Mom! I have to go now! See you tomorrow!” Katelyn said in a hurry.

“Alright, Dear! Bye bye! See you tomorrow! Stella said and signaled the children to say goodbye.

“See you tomorrow, Mom!” Jennyfer and Mohammed yelled back happily together in the distance.

Then Stella hung up the phone.

\*\*\*

After they had talked to their mother, Jenny and Mohammed were so excited that Stella had to send them out of the house to have some peace. So, they decided to go and meet Jake into the park. Twenty minutes later, they arrived there.

“Hello Jake!” Mohammed said gaily.

“Hi, Jake! I’m so happy, my parents will be back home tomorrow.” Jennyfer added smiling.

“Hello, Mohammed! Hello Jenny!” Jake replied. “That’s great! They’ll be right on time for our party. After a while, her added: “Tell me, Jenny, have you gone back to the haunted house since last time?”

“No, I didn’t, and I told you, to be honest I don’t really care!” Jennyfer lied. In fact, she kept on thinking about her biological father she had met in that house.

“What? But why?” Jake and Mohammed said all together.

“Because ... I don’t know ... I don’t want to talk about it!” Jennyfer retorted<sup>52</sup>.

“No! You can’t say that!” Jake said in a worried tone.

“Why, not?” Jennyfer asked surprised.

“Because I think we should do something about it. We should try to clear it.”

“That’s an excellent idea! I agree with Jake. Let’s go and clear it!” Mohammed said.

“Okay, so give me three good reasons why we should free that house?” Jennyfer asked.

“First, because people say there are spirits in it!” Jake answered.

“Secondly, because we are nice people!” Mohammed answered cheerfully.

“Third, because your father will be proud of you!” Jake said smiling.

“Okay, okay, we’ll clear the house!” Jennyfer said wondering which of her two fathers would be proud of her - Younes or Mike. “But how do you intend to do this?” Jennyfer asked skeptically.

“Er...the book, we need the book!” Mohammed answered.

“What book?” Jake and Jennyfer asked surprised.

“The magic book that I find in the haunted house!” Mohammed said excited.

“A magic book? Really?” Jennyfer asked even more skeptically. “Still, you didn’t answer my question, how do you intend to do it?” She went on.

“According to the magic book, some specific words must be recited! We could do it just before our New Year’s party actually!” Mohammed answered. “On page four hundred and fifty, there is a spell to clear the place from bad spirits.”

---

<sup>52</sup> Rétorquer.



“Okay, so the day after tomorrow, on New Year’s Eve, we go to the haunted house, and we cast the spell.” Jenny summed up.

“That’s it!” Mohammed added.

“So, let’s do that!” Jake said. “I need to go now. I’ve been away too long. See you tomorrow!”

“Okay, so see you!” Jennyfer and Mohammed said together.

## Chapter 9: Home Sweet Home

The following day, at 9.00 a.m., Stella received a call from Katelyn saying that they would arrive at the airport two hours later.

“I warn you in advance, so that you won’t be late, since it takes an hour and a half to go to the airport.” Katelyn told Stella.

After hanging up, Stella called the children. “Jenny, Mohammed come down here, please! Your parents are about to arrive at the airport. So, we must go there at once to get them,” she said.

“Oh, that’s great, Granny! Can Jake come with us, please?” Jennyfer asked.

“Of course! But we have to go now! Come on! Let’s go!” Stella said in a hurry.

Everybody went into the car, and after fetching Jake, Stella drove to the airport. In the car, she started talking to the children but did not pay attention to the road:

“Tell me Jenny, Momo, are you happy to see your parents again after a three-month separation?”

In the meantime, the car began to go off the road.

“Watch out, Granny!” Mohammed screamed.

“Oh, my God!” Jake yelled hiding his eye with his hands!

“No!” Jennyfer screamed.

“Oooh!” Stella said in panic, but she strengthened the steering wheel right away.

“Thank you so much, my Dears!”

“Now, you *must* concentrate on the road, Granny! Okay?” Jennyfer said shaking.

One hour and a half later, they arrived at the airport, and the two children ran into their parents’ arms, pleased and relieved at the same time.

“Mom, Dad! I missed you so much.” Jennyfer said on the verge of crying.

“We missed you too!” Katelyn said so relieved to see her children in good health.

“Jenny, I can see you’ve brought Jake with you.” Younes said smiling. “Each time, I see you, you’re always together. How strange!” He went on laughing.

“Stop it Dad, please! We’re just friends!” Jennyfer answered blushing.

“Yes, we’re just friends!” Jake said disappointed.

“Yeah, just friends!” Mohammed repeated sneering.

“Well, let’s go home!” Katelyn said impatiently.

They all sat into Stella’s car and went back home. On the way, they started talking about the coming New Year’s Eve.

“Mom, Dad, while you were away, we’ve organized a New Year’s party!” Jennyfer said secretly signaling Mohammed and Jake not to tell anything about their late adventures.

“Oh, it’s an excellent idea! You must have been really busy. When and where will it take place?” Younes asked.

The teenagers looked at each other slyly and Jennyfer added: “Mohammed had the wonderful idea to organize the party at the square of the village, near the cathedral. And it’ll take place in two days, in the evening.”

“What a good idea! That’s a beautiful spot!” Katelyn said surprised. “You were indeed really busy.” She went on.

“And, you’ll be present of course, Jake?” Younes asked still teasing Jennyfer.

“Yes, Sir! I’ll go with my parents. My mother’s decided to prepare the food for the party. She’s a good cook.” Jake said.

“Nice! I can’t wait!” Katelyn and Younes said all together.

When they all arrived at Stella’s house, Katelyn and Younes unpacked at once and they started to help prepare the party with the children. Mohammed, Jennyfer and Jake dealt with the decorations while Katelyn and Younes went to help Jake’s mother prepare the food.

\*\*\*

On 31<sup>st</sup> December afternoon, everybody was impatient. Finally, the day of the party took place. Jennyfer, Mohammed and Jake finished decorating the square quickly, and went back home to dress up. Jennyfer dressed up as a witch, Mohammed as a pirate, their grandmother dressed up as Wonder Woman and Jake as a knight. But before 4p.m. they sneaked out<sup>53</sup> of the Millers’ home discreetly and cycled to the haunted house.

“So, what do we do now?” Jennyfer asked.

“Mohammed, give me the book! Jake said.

“Oh, no! Sorry...But...How can I say this ...? Hm ...! The book is still in the haunted house.” Mohammed answered.

“No, I can’t believe it!” Jake snapped back.

“So, what now?” Jennyfer asked annoyed.

“But I remember the spell!” Mohammed replied.

“Great! So, let’s not waste more time! Let’s start!” Jenny said reassured.

---

<sup>53</sup> Filer en douce

Mohammed gave them the instructions, and a few minutes later they all started the ritual:

*“ZUCCHINI!”*

*“ZUCCHINI!”*

\*\*\*

After a while ...

“Is it okay? Is the haunted house free now?” Jennyfer asked.

“I think so, but ... nothing has changed!” Mohammed noticed.

“Oh ... look!” Jake exclaimed pointing at the house.

At the same time, the haunted house transformed itself and became as it was before - a wonderful bright house surrounded by lovely flowers. The garden was luxuriant again.

“Wow, I can’t believe it! It’s so beautiful!” Jake said surprised.

At the same moment, Rosalia and Mike went out of the house.

“What have you done to my house?!” Rosalia said choking<sup>54</sup> with surprise.

“We’ve cleared it from the spirits who lived in it!” The children answered all together.

“It is just the way it was when I was a little girl. I remember it now. How did you do that?” Rosalia asked.

“Thanks to your magic book I found in your basement.” Mohammed answered.

“But why?” Rosalia went on.

“Because we couldn’t leave you and my Dad live like that.” Jennyfer said sadly.

“Wait a minute? Your Dad? But Younes ...” Jake started.

“Not Younes, but Mike ... My real Dad. Jennyfer answered and pointed at Mike who had remained at a distance.

He then came closer and Jennyfer told them what she had discovered in the house while looking for Mohammed.

\*\*\*

---

<sup>54</sup> S'étrangler

Later that night, all the villagers were gathered in the square, including Mike, Rosalia, Sherlock and Helen, his mother. Jennyfer put some music to break the ice, hoping that some of them would want to dance. Then, she went towards Katelyn, Younes and Stella.

“Mom, Dad, Granny, come with me, please!” Jennyfer said pulling her parents’ hands to the place where Mike and Rosalia were standing.

“I want you to meet someone.” She added.

\*\*\*

“Jennyfer, this party is simply extraordinary!” The mayor of the village said. “I was sure that I could trust you! By the way, Jake told me he wanted you to meet him on the outskirts of the forest.” He went on.

“Oh, er, okay..., thanks!” Jennyfer answered surprised.

In the meantime, Jake and Mohammed were discreetly preparing something in the forest.

“Momo, is everything ready?” Jake asked.

“Yes, I’ve hung the mistletoe on the branch.” Mohammed replied sneering.

“Great! Hush, she’s coming!” Jake said trembling.

Then Mohammed hurried back discreetly to the party and let Jennyfer and Jake on their own.

“Hi, Jake! Did you want to tell me something?” Jennyfer asked. “Why here?” She went on.

“Yes, er... I wanted to show you something. Come!” Jake answered embarrassed.

“Okay, so what is it? Jennyfer insisted.

“Er... It’s in the forest!” Jake answered.

Jake and Jennyfer entered the forest as they talked. Then, Jake confessed that he was in love with her the moment they approached the tree with the mistletoe. But Jennyfer had not seen it.

“You’re in love with me! I knew it. And to tell you the truth I think I feel a little something for you too, actually!” Jennyfer said shyly.

Then they kissed tenderly under the mistletoe, right at the moment when Mohammed came back. He saw them kiss one another and said:

“Hello, lovers! It’ll be 2011 in ten minutes. Come or you’ll miss the countdown!”

They all went back to the party the moment the countdown began.

“10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.... *HAPPY NEW YEAR!*” The villagers yelled all together.

Then, Katelyn decided to share some news with the audience:

“Everybody, your attention please! It’s a night full of surprise.” She said while looking smiling at Mike and Rosalia. And we have some more good news to share with you!”

“We’re listening, Mom” Jennyfer said impatiently.

“I’m pregnant! Jennyfer, Mohammed, you’re going to have a little brother or a little sister!” Katelyn said smiling.

## *Epilogue*

After a year, they had finished renovating the former haunted house. Rosalia and Mike had settled back down in the beautiful new house. Katelyn and Younes's twins, whose names were Maria and Lilia were about to celebrate their first birthdays, and the same day Jennyfer and Jake were about to celebrate their first anniversary. That day was the occasion for a family reunion and Rosalia had decided to tell the whole family the story about Mike's accident. So, she called out for Kate, Younes and the children.

"What's the matter, Grandma Rosie?" the children asked.

"Come and have seats next to your parents!" Rosalia told them.

The children were both very curious and puzzled, so they sat down quietly. Then, Rosalia started her story.

"Hum...Okay, so..." She sighed. "It all started in 2000, on a rainy night. Your father was going home from work. He was driving fast, and the road was slippery. Suddenly, a wild boar rushed out of from the woods. Your father tried to avoid it, but it was too late. So, his car crashed into a tree. He was driven to hospital where he stayed for about a month and half."

"Why didn't Mike come home after that? I really don't understand." Katelyn asked Rosalia.

"Because he was ashamed of his scars, and he thought that you wouldn't like him anymore" answered Rosalia.

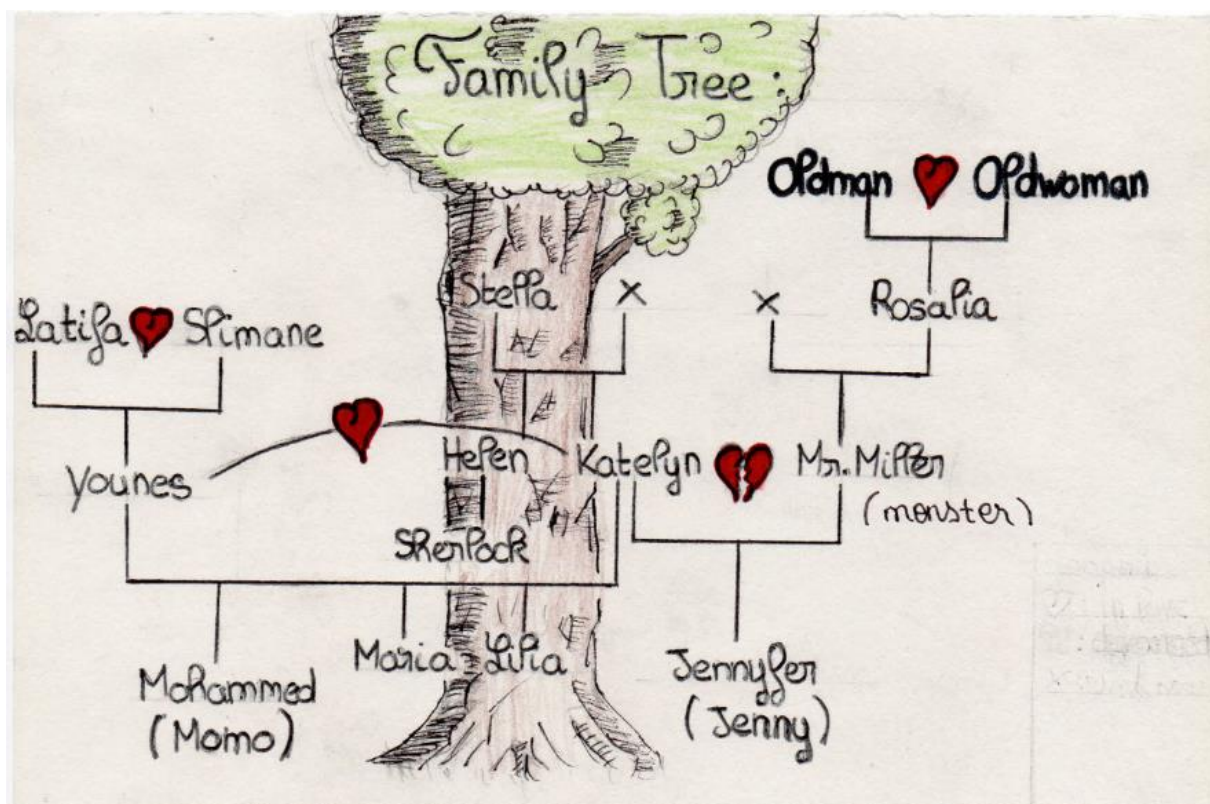


\*\*\*

Ten years later ...

Mike and Rosalia would visit the whole family every Saturday. The twins had begun secondary school. Jennyfer and Jake were married. And Mohammed had opened a candy shop with his childhood friends.

And the extended family<sup>55</sup> lived happily ever after...



## THE END...

©Droits d'auteur-2024 – Les 14 élèves de Section Internationale de l'année scolaire\* 2023-2024 et Mme Nadège Faustin. Tous droits réservés.

\*DUCHER Florent, EL GHERBI Manel, GUIRROU Reda, HERVE Mathilde, IMIRA Checkna, LAGUERRE Eliana – Adema, MERDADI Manar, MOHAMMAD Maira, MOHAMMED SEGHIR Lisa, MUSLIC Ali, SERGEANT CUSTODIO Léana, VADRAEV Dalil, VERT-PRE Alyssa, YOULOU Joana.

<sup>55</sup> La famille élargie – comprend, en plus des parents et des enfants, les grand parents, les petits-enfants, les oncles, les tantes ...