




**Marcel is a French mouse who is a very fine secret detective. Thieves steal the famous White Star diamond ring which belongs to the opera singer, Zaza Dupont. But Marcel is determined to return it to her.**

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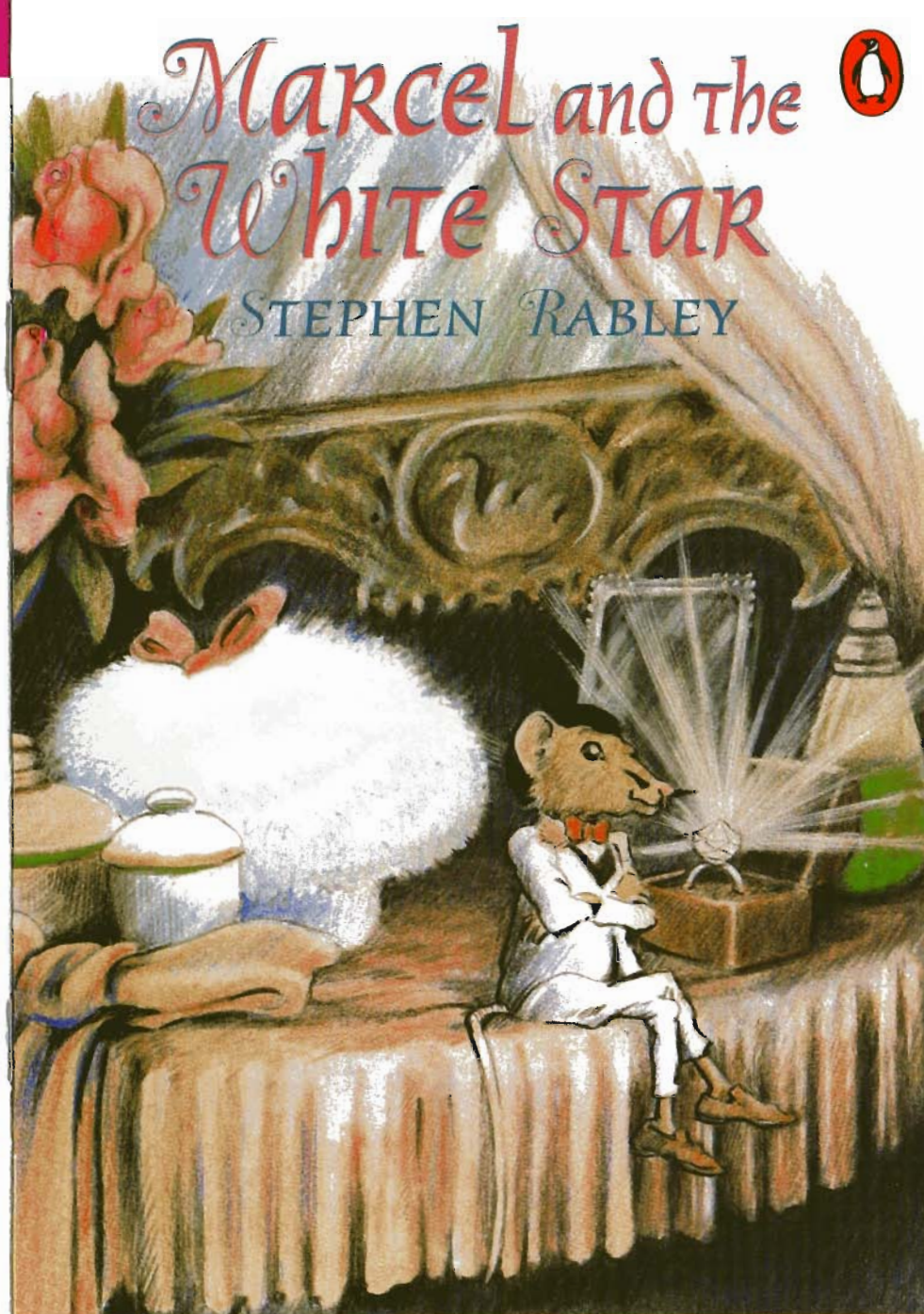
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# Marcel and the White Star

STEPHEN RABLEY





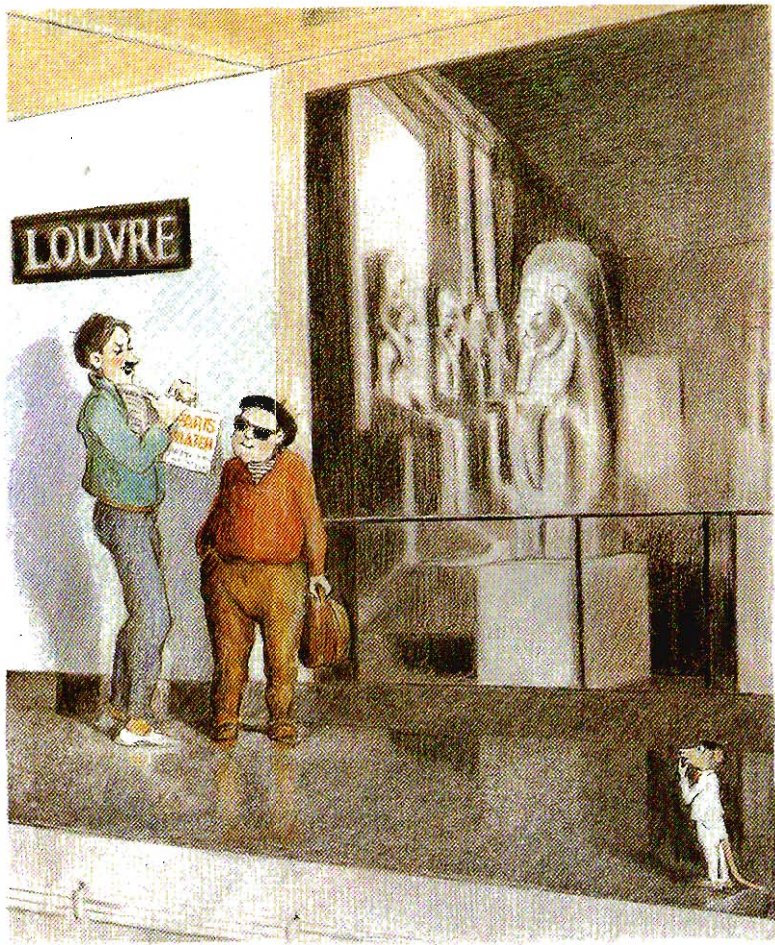
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Marcel is a French mouse. He lives on a beautiful old boat in Paris. (His home is under the kitchen floor.) He likes books, restaurants and old films. He likes the opera, too.

One evening in June, Marcel finishes a detective story. Then he goes to have dinner with some friends. They live in the metro station at the Louvre.



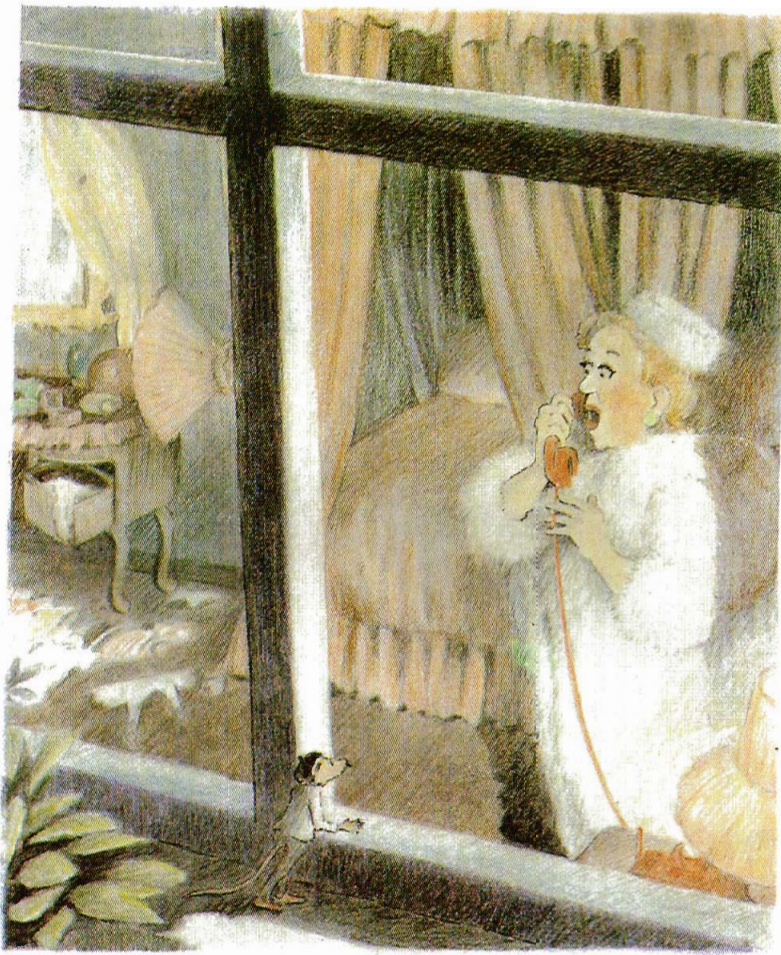


After dinner, Marcel waits at the station. He sees two men standing next to him. The tall one is reading a magazine, "Look," he says, "here she is: 'Opera star Miss Zaza Dupont with her beautiful one million pound diamond ring – the White Star.'" "Her beautiful diamond ring?" The short man looks at the photo and laughs. "Not after tonight," he says.

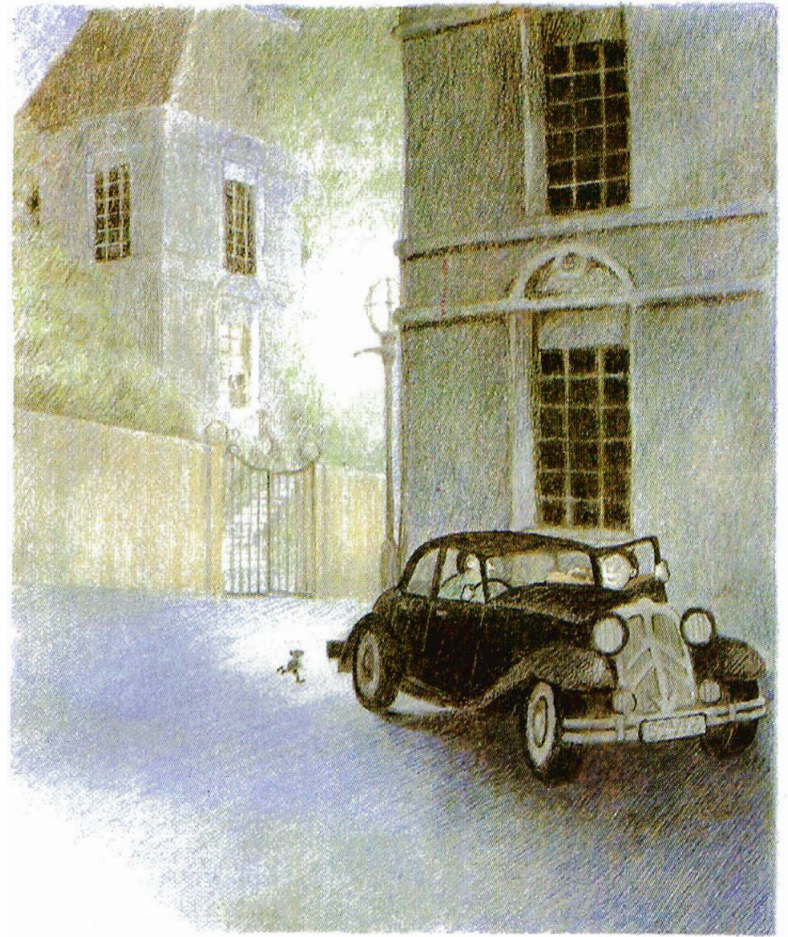


Marcel's mouth opens. "What?! Are the men going to steal Zaza Dupont's diamond?" He remembers an evening at the opera two weeks before. Zaza's green dress. The music. The beautiful White Star on her finger. No! They can't steal it! The train comes and the men get on. Marcel pulls down his hat and follows them.



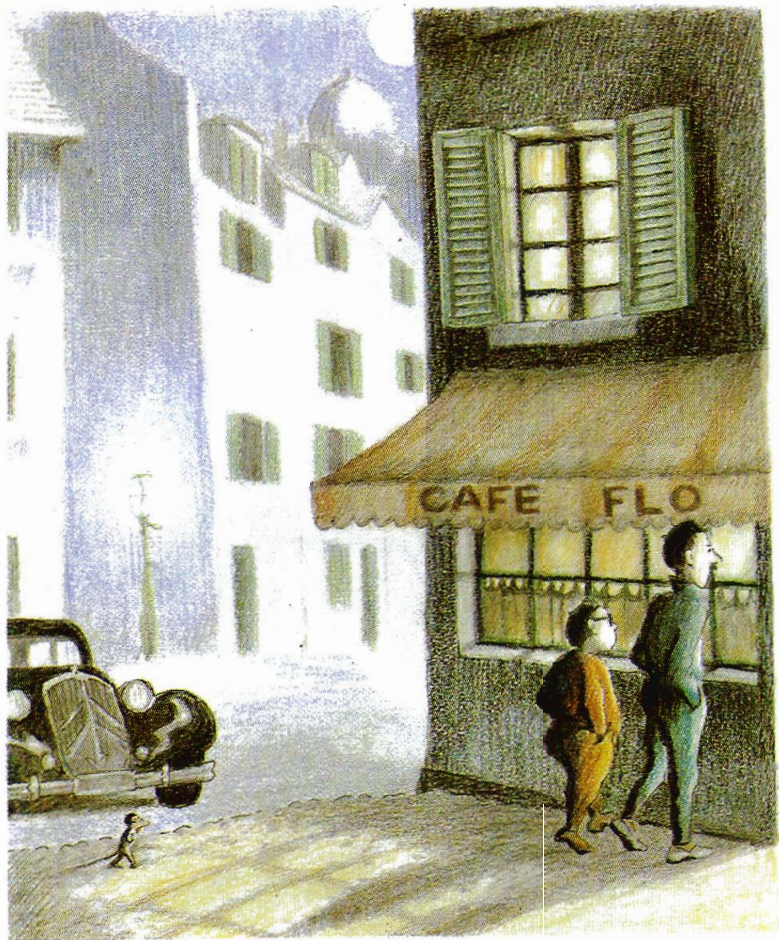


Half an <sup>quel'aita</sup> hour later he gets off again at *La Mouette* station. But there are hundreds of people, and Marcel loses the two men. Then he sees an old mouse. "Excuse me," he says. "Do you know where Zaza Dupont lives?" But when Marcel finds Zaza's house, it is too late. "Yes – two men," she is telling the police on the telephone. "And they've got the White Star."



At that moment Marcel hears a motor start. "Where's that coming from?" he thinks. Then he sees something at the end of the road. It's them! It's the thieves and they're stealing a car! He runs across Zaza's garden and down the street. He can see the car's number-plate. It's near. Very near. "Can I ... ?" he thinks, and he jumps.





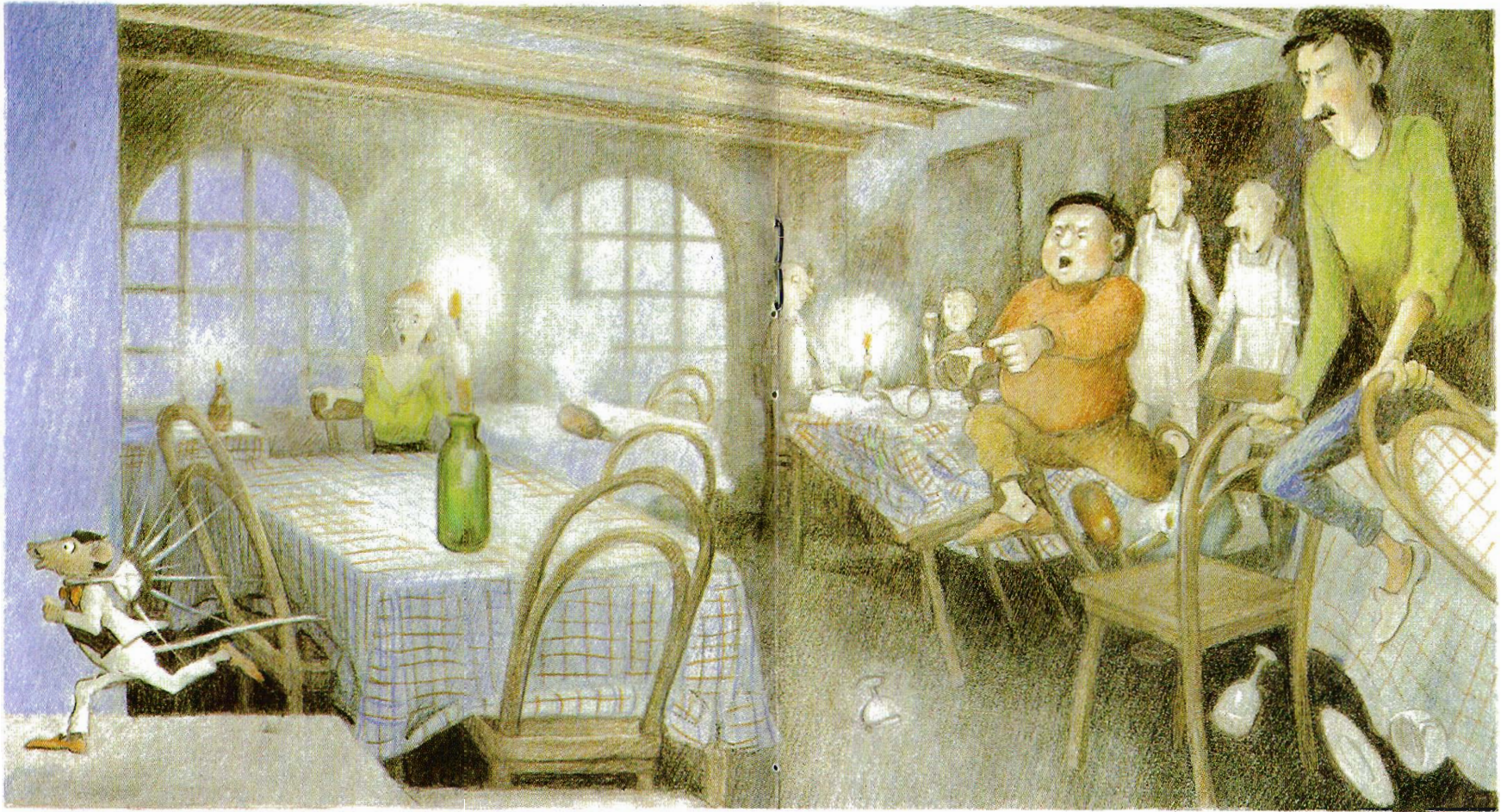
Yes!! Marcel sits on the number-plate. “Good,” he thinks. Then, after a second or two ... “But what happens now?”

The thieves drive across Paris very fast. Marcel can hear them in the car. They are laughing and talking. But Marcel is not laughing. He is very, *very* angry. After half an hour the car stops next to a café.



It is late and the café is quiet. In one corner there is a woman. The thieves sit at her table. Marcel sits *under* the table and listens. “Have you got it?” the woman asks. The tall man takes a box from his jacket. Then he opens it. “Look,” he says. “Ahhh!” The woman puts a hand to her mouth. “What a *beautiful* diamond!” “This is it,” thinks Marcel. “This is the moment.”





He bites the tall man's leg very hard. "Aiiiee!" The tall man throws up his arms. The box and the White Star fly across the room. "What's that on the floor?" one waiter asks. "I don't know," says another. "Is it ... ? No, it can't be a diam ... " But before he can finish, Marcel runs across the room. He puts the White Star around his neck. Then he runs to the door.

The thieves jump up and follow him. Suddenly there are tables and chairs everywhere. "What's happening?" an old man asks. "I don't know," his wife answers. "Who can understand young people these days?" "Stop that mouse!" says the tall man. "Shut the door!" says the short one. But they are too late. Marcel runs out of the café and does not look back.





After ten minutes he stops. There is nobody following him, but ... where is he? Marcel looks right and left. Then he sees a big, white church. "Ah! – the Sacré Coeur," he thinks. "Now I know where I am." It is late and there are no metro trains, but Marcel is not tired. He walks back to Zaza's house. When he gets there, she is asleep in bed.



There is a table next to the window. On it Marcel can see lots of photographs, boxes and perfume bottles. He runs across the floor and up one leg of the table. "Now ..." he thinks, "... it's time to take off the White Star. In the morning Zaza is going to be very ..." Then Marcel stops. Oh, no! He cannot take the ring off. He pulls and pulls, but nothing happens.



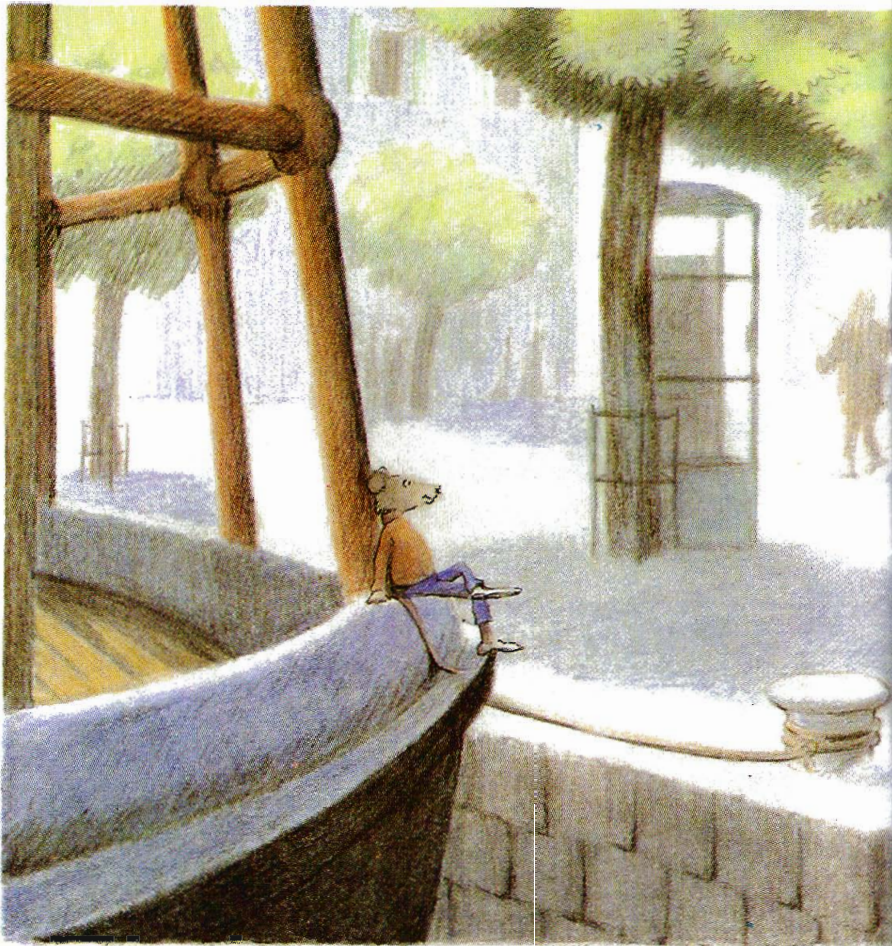


“Now what?” he thinks. Then ... “Of course! Some soap!” He runs down the table leg and across the floor. Zaza’s bathroom door is open. Marcel goes in and looks up. A soap-dish is above his head. Ten seconds later he is sitting in it. He puts some soap on his neck. Then he closes his eyes and pulls again. Yes! This time the diamond ring comes off.

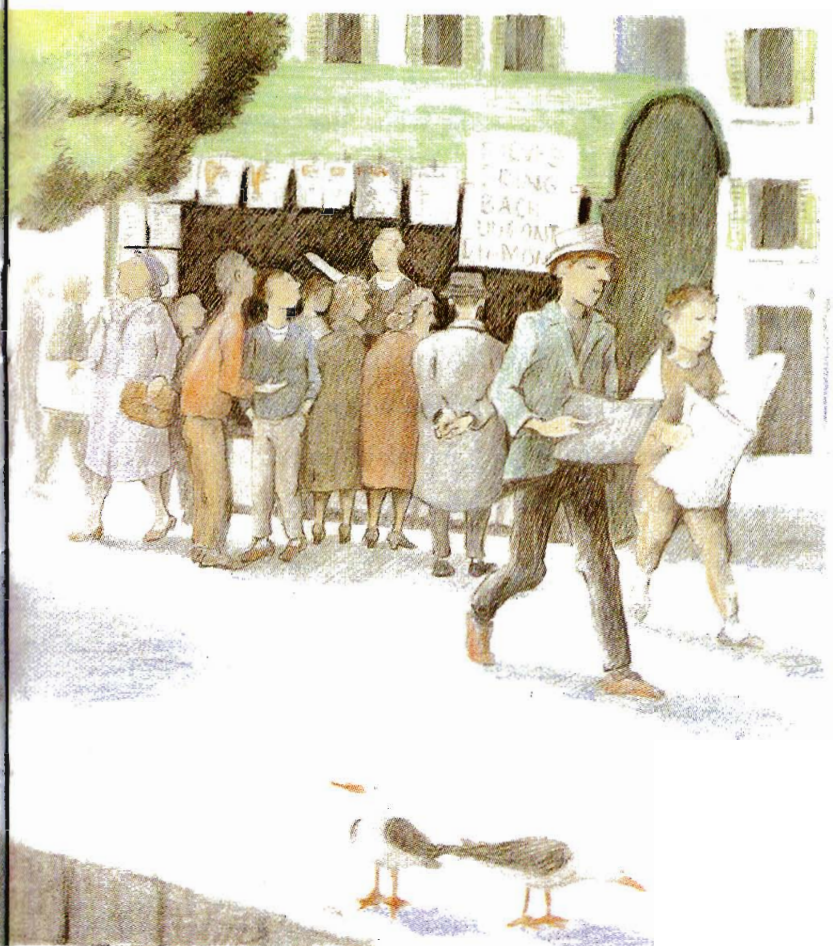


In the morning Zaza finds the White Star. It is on her bedroom table between two perfume bottles. “But ... I don’t understand,” she says. “Thieves don’t bring things back. How ... ?” She looks at the ring. Then she looks at her face in the mirror. Then she looks at the ring again. “And why is there soap on it?” She telephones the police.





Next day, Zaza's story is in all the newspapers. 'OPERA STAR'S £1,000,000 RING IS SAFE' says one. 'THIEVES BRING BACK DUPONT DIAMOND' says another. 'NOW POLICE ASK, "WHY?"' And there are lots of photos of Zaza with the White Star. At home. At the opera house. Standing in front of the Eiffel Tower. She looks very happy in all of them.



Marcel is happy, too. Back on his boat he reads the newspaper stories. Then he looks in the mirror. There is a thin, red line on his neck. "What a night!" he says. After that, he washes, has breakfast and opens the window. It is a beautiful, warm morning. Marcel looks up at the blue sky and smiles. "Now ..." he thinks, "what's going to happen today?"



## Questions

- 1 Where does Marcel live? (page 1)
- 2 Who is Zaza Dupont and what is the White Star? (page 2)
- 3 Why does Marcel follow the two men? (page 3)
- 4 How does he find Zaza's house? (page 4)
- 5 Later, in the café, how does Marcel get the White Star? (pages 8/9)
- 6 What is the Sacré Coeur? (page 10)
- 7 In the end how does Marcel take off the White Star? (page 12)
- 8 Who does Zaza telephone the next morning? (page 13)
- 9 In the last picture, what is the weather like? (page 15)

## Puzzle

Paris is the capital of France. Here are five more European countries and five more capital cities. The letters in the capital cities are mixed up. First work out the names of the cities then put the right letter (A, B, C etc) in the boxes.

- 1 Portugal     2 Italy     3 Germany     4 Spain   
5 Norway

**A** OOLS    **B** ONBN    **C** MROE    **D** OILSBN    **E** MDIDAR

## Ideas

- 1 Draw and colour a picture of Marcel's home. Put in all these things: a bed, a chair, a photo of his family, a book of detective stories, some clothes.
- 2 After Marcel takes Zaza's diamond (pages 8 and 9) the thieves follow him, but not for long. What happens when they go back to the café? Write a short dialogue between the thieves and the people in the café. Then act out the dialogue with some friends.

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# Marcel and the White Star

Stephen Rabley



## Summary

*Marcel and the White Star* is a story about a mouse that acts as a detective. Marcel visits some friends at the Louvre metro station. After dinner, he's at the station and he sees two men talking about the opera singer Zaza's ring. It's obvious they're going to steal it. He decides to follow the two men. He loses them at *La Mouette* station and when he arrives at Zaza's house, it's too late. He sees the two thieves in a car, and jumps onto the number plate. The car stops at a café. The two men enter and talk to a woman who's waiting for them. Marcel realises this is the right moment.

Marcel takes the ring, puts it round his neck and runs to Zaza's house. He tries to pull the ring off, but it's stuck so he uses soap. He finally takes it off and leaves it on her bedside table. Zaza finds her ring and is very happy. Marcel is back at home, reading the newspaper stories, and he's happy too.

## Background and themes

**Animal stereotypes:** Some animals, like mice, are considered disgusting by some people, but they are often heroes in stories.

**Courage:** Marcel is ready to take risks for somebody he doesn't know.

**Justice:** Marcel knows what's fair and what's not and acts according to his beliefs.

**Low profile:** Marcel is the real hero, but he doesn't tell anybody. This doesn't prevent him from helping others in the future.

## Discussion activities

### Before reading

#### Pages 1–7

1 **Pair work:** Put students into pairs and ask students to look at the cover and the title. Students ask each other the following questions:

*What can you see? Is it a 'boy' mouse or a 'girl' mouse? Where is he sitting? What colour are his shoes? What colour is his hat? Is this a happy story? What is the White Star?*

### After reading

2 **Describe and draw:** Students work in pairs.

Student A chooses one of the pictures from pages 1–7 and describes the scene to Student B. Student B tries to draw the picture from Student A's description. Then they reverse roles. How accurate are the pictures?

3 **Pair work:** Write the following words on the board: *magazine, opera, old mouse, a car, a café, a box*. In pairs, students make sentences including these words to reflect how they were important in pages 1–7, without looking back at the book.

### Pages 8–15

#### Before reading

4 **Predict:** Put the students in small groups and ask them to predict what is going to happen next. Give them some possible suggestions: *Marcel talks to the men. Marcel bites the tall man / short man / woman? Marcel eats the White Star. Marcel puts the White Star in his jeans. The men catch Marcel. The police catch Marcel. Marcel jumps on the table.*

**While reading** (p. 13, after "She telephones the police.")

5 **Role play:** Put students into pairs. Student A is Zaza and Student B is a policeman. Write and act out their conversation. Encourage the students to be imaginative. Student B could ask the questions: *Where do you live? Where do you work? Do you work in the morning? Is there a person in your house? Where is the White Star? Is it expensive? Is there perfume on the White Star?*

### After reading

6 **Research:** Ask students in pairs to choose one of the following: a famous French film, a famous French sportsperson, a famous French building, a famous French artist. Students then look for information on the Internet and give an oral presentation to the rest of the class, or make a poster for the classroom.

## Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to [www.penguinreaders.com](http://www.penguinreaders.com).