

Le chat qui parle
12 Short Suspense Stories
in French, Nr. 4
For French Learners



(Intermediate and Advanced)
With Glossaries, Grammar Tips, Cultural Notes,
Exercises and Full Audio for Each Story

Annick Stevenson

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Le chat qui parle

12 Short Suspense
Stories in French

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12 Short Suspense
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Nr. 4

(Intermediate and Advanced)

by Annick Stevenson

With Glossaries, Grammar Tips,
Cultural Notes, Exercises
and Full Audio for Each Story

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We suggest that you take the time to read, listen and repeat out loud every sentence. There is nothing like repetition!

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*Pour que l'événement le plus banal
devienne une aventure, il faut et il suffit
qu'on se mette à le raconter.*

(For the most banal event to become
an adventure, you must – and this is
enough – begin to recount it.)

Jean-Paul Sartre, *La nausée*

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FOREWORD

THIS BOOK IS THE FOURTH in a series of publications by *Languages at Home* that complement the French lessons by Skype that we have been providing since 2004 to more than 3,000 students through our main school: *Learn French at Home* (see page 129).

The first book in this series, *Le bruit des vagues*, was published in 2017. The second one, *Le pays de l'amour*, in 2018, and the third one, *Le trésor*, in 2019. All the books of this series bring together short suspense stories, with a surprise ending, that are accompanied with detailed glossaries sprinkled throughout the text.

This series has already been a great success with our readers and students, who said they like this approach, and the possibility of both reading and listening to French stories.

Indeed, not only can you read the stories but you can also listen to the entire text in French through the audio links at the beginning of each story (see page 6 on how to access them).

The 12 new stories that you will find in this fourth volume have all been previously published in the *Petites histoires* section in various issues of our magazine *French Accent*. We have added longer glossaries, and a few very useful and easy to un-

derstand grammar and vocabulary tips, cultural notes, and more questions, in French, about what happens in the stories (with the answers at the end).

Bonne lecture, et bonne écoute !

1. LE CHAT QUI PARLE



Listen to the story, and read it out loud :

DEUX YEUX JAUNES, perçants, me fixent. J'ai un visiteur sur le balcon. Il est magnifique avec son pelage couleur de feu. Je m'approche timidement de lui pour ne pas lui faire peur.

- Bonjour chat ! Que tu es beau ! Tu veux quelque chose ? Pourquoi me regardes-tu comme ça ?
- Et toi, pourquoi me regardes-tu ?
- Quoi ?... Tu parles ?... Tu es un chat qui parle ?
- Tous les chats parlent, il faut seulement savoir les écouter.

perçants = piercing, penetrating

me fixent (*fixer*) = stare at me

pelage couleur de feu = coat the color of fire

Je m'approche (*s'approcher*) = I come closer

pour ne pas lui faire peur = so that I don't frighten him

il faut seulement savoir les écouter = you just have to know how to listen to them (see page 62)

- Oh, vraiment ? Tu sais, je ne connais aucun chat.
- Moi je ne connais pas beaucoup de gens non plus.
- Tu n'appartiens à personne ? Tu n'as pas de maître ?
- De maître ? Ah non, quelle horreur ! Certainement pas.
- Alors tu es un chat de gouttière.
- Si tu veux. Mais ce n'est pas très flatteur. Je préfère dire que je suis un chat libre.

vraiment = really?

Tu n'appartiens (appartenir) à personne = You belong to nobody; lit.: you don't belong to anyone

chat de gouttière = stray cat (see page 18)

ce n'est pas très flatteur = it's not very flattering

- Oh excuse-moi. Tu n'as pas du tout le look d'un chat de gouttière, tu es bien trop raffiné. Mais je ne t'ai rien offert ! Veux-tu une tasse d'eau ? Il me reste aussi un peu de poulet.
- Ce n'est pas de refus. Je peux entrer ?
- Bien sûr !

Il marche lentement, élégamment. Quelle chat majestueux !
Il attend patiemment que je coupe des petits morceaux de poulet.

raffiné = sophisticated

je ne t'ai rien offert (perfect tense of *offrir*) = I haven't offered you anything; *offrir* mainly means "to give"

Ce n'est pas de refus = I wouldn't say no (a common expression in France)

Il attend (attendre) patiemment que je coupe (subjunctive of *couper*) = He's patiently waiting for me to cut

- Ce n'est pas trop difficile d'être un chat de goutt... un chat libre ?

- Ça va. Et toi comment vas-tu? Tu vis seule. Ce n'est pas trop déprimant ?

C'est un peu déconcertant cette façon qu'il a de répondre à une question en m'interrogeant à son tour.

- Ça va. Tout va très bien pour moi...

déprimant = demoralizing, depressing

déconcertant = unsettling

cette façon qu'il a = his way of; lit.: this way he has

en m'interrogeant (*interroger*) à son tour = while interrogating me, asking me questions, in turn

Je pose une assiette au sol, et m'accroupis à ses côtés. Il mange avec délicatesse. Il ne semble pas affamé.

- Ton poulet est exquis.

- Oh, ça me fait très plaisir ! Je garderai toujours quelque chose pour toi désormais si tu veux ?

- Volontiers, merci.

m'accroupis (*s'accroupir*) = squat down

Il ne semble pas affamé (*sembler*) = he doesn't seem to be starving

exquis = delicious, outstanding; this adjective is a bit outdated today, if a person is using it, it shows that he/she is either very sophisticated or bourgeois

désormais = from now on

Volontiers = With pleasure

- Tu manges où, d'habitude ?
- Par-ci, par-là. Certains de tes voisins sont très accueillants.
- C'est vrai ? Je ne les connais pas.
- Tu n'as jamais de visite, non plus.
- C'est exact. Comment le sais-tu ?

Par-ci, par-là = Here and there

Comment le sais-tu ? (*savoir*) = How do you know that? (meaning: that I never have any visitors)

- On apprend beaucoup de choses en se promenant sur les rebords de fenêtres et les balcons.
- As-tu des amis ? Je veux dire, d'autres chats ?
- Des connaissances. Mais je suis un solitaire. Pas comme toi, tu n'aimes pas la solitude.
- D'où tient-il ça ?

se promenant (*se promener*) = walking around

rebords de fenêtres = windowsills

connaissances = acquaintances

D'où tient-il (*tenir*) ça = Where does he get that from

- Tu as raison. Mais ce n'est pas si facile de se faire des amis.
- Ou de rencontrer l'amour de sa vie.

Je ne réponds pas. Je trouve que ce chat commence à se mêler un peu trop de ma vie privée.

rencontrer = to meet

se mêler = to meddle

--- GRAMMAR TIP---***Par*, one of those prepositions...**

Par is one of those prepositions that are never easy to use for non-French speakers, as they can take various meanings depending on the context in which they are used, and the words that accompany them. It's main meaning is "by," like in the top of page 29. But lower in the same paragraph, you'll find it again with a slightly different nuance: through.

It also means "through" like in the expression below:
regarder par la fenêtre = to look out of the window.

Here are some other meanings:

par amour, par plaisir = out of love, out of pleasure;

par chance = luckily (like on page 81);

le prix par personne = the price per person;

le train passe par Lyon = the train travels via Lyon...

And *par* appears in many expressions, like in the paragraph at the top of page 16: *par-ci, par-là*.

Here are a few others that translate differently:

par ailleurs = in addition, furthermore;

par exemple = for example, for instance;

par-dessus or *par-dessous* = above or beneath;

être intéressé par = to be interested in;

voyager de par le monde = to travel around the world;

commencer par = to begin with;

commencer par le commencement = to begin at the beginning, etc.

A cultural note

What is *un chat de gouttière*?

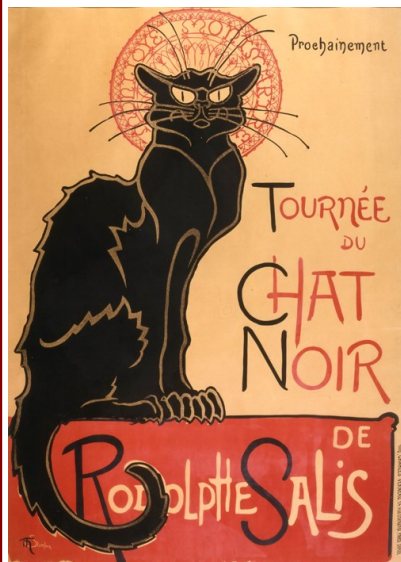
As its name indicates, *un chat de gouttière* is a sort of stray cat that belongs to nobody, lives in the streets, and spends most of its time in the gutters, like in the picture on the right, while partly socializing with people. But more generally, it designates mixed-breed cats, the origin and line of descent of which is unknown. They are often confused with European shorthair cats, even if there is no "standard" for a *chat de gouttière*, that can be of any type or any color. They aren't even really stray or wild cats: today, in France, the vast majority of



© Paerdna

households having cats indeed own *chats de gouttière*, that have the reputation of often being very intelligent.

Such cats have frequently been honored by artists, one of the most famous being *Le Chat Noir*, a painting by Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen (left) in a poster illustrating one of the concert tours given in the famous Montmartre cabaret at the end of the 19th century.



© DR

- Ne te fâche pas. Toi, tu sais écouter les chats mais tu ne remarques pas ce qui se passe autour de toi. Tu vois cette fenêtre, de l'autre côté de la rue ? Il y a souvent là un jeune homme qui te regarde. Il est seul aussi mais il est timide et n'ose pas t'aborder...

Ne te fâche (imperative of *se fâcher*) pas = Don't get mad (at me)
tu ne remarques (*remarquer*) pas = you don't notice
n'ose pas (*oser*) t'aborder = doesn't dare to approach you

- C'est lui qui t'envoie ?

- Tu es drôle ! Non, il est charmant, mais il ne sait pas écouter les chats.

□

C'est lui qui t'envoie (*envoyer*) ? = Is it he who sent you (to me)?
Tu es drôle = You're funny