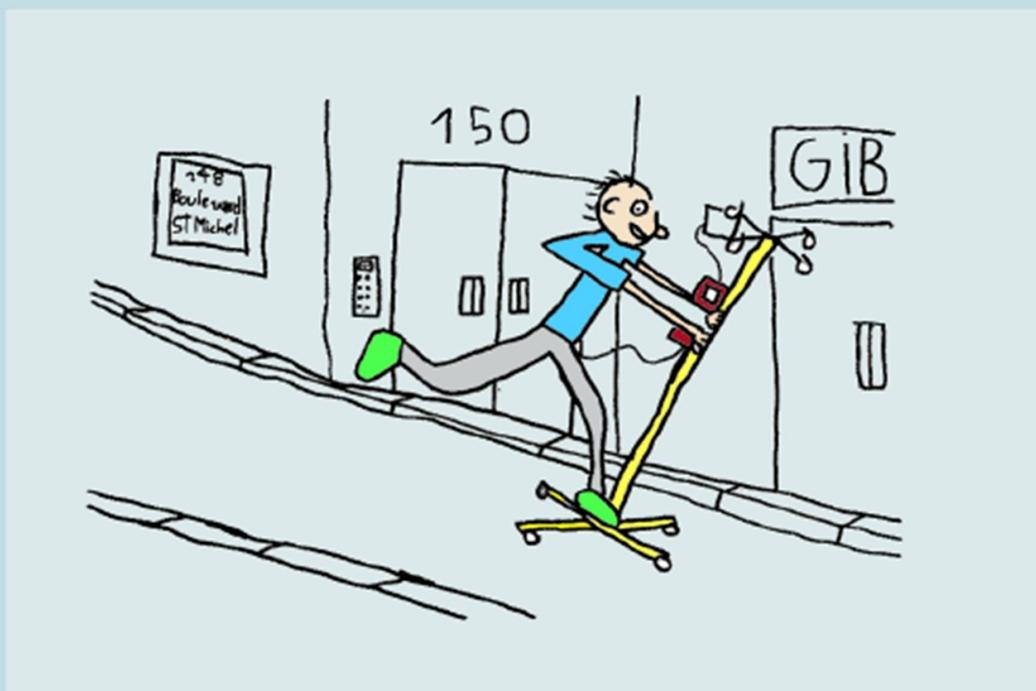


ESCAPE FROM THE HOSPITAL



**Ewen
Hélène Élisabeth**

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Escape from the Hospital

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PREFACE

When we arrived in Paris for Ewen's treatment, we didn't know we would stay so long in France. The rest of the family was still in Zambia (where we were posted for 3 years). We naively thought we would go back and forth between Paris and Lusaka. "Eight months? Here? It's an eternity." This was Ewen's spontaneous reaction when we realized it would not be possible to go back to Lusaka as planned. We had to find a pastime, a long-term project so we would not dwell too much on Ewen's treatment and our time away from the rest of our family. This is how the story of two boys escaping each night from the hospital came to life.

Before we began writing the book, we had to face a lot of questions. Which narrator? What kind of hero? A mystery? A tale? Letters? After we answered these questions, we spent a few weeks thinking about original ways to escape from the hospitals, destinations for our heroes, and means of transportation. During this time of reflection and imagination, we used the splendid shower room of the Institut Curie as much as we could. It had a moving bathing tub that could go up and down. "So fun" thought Ewen.

We really started to write when we had all the details on hand. Writing is not exactly the word I would use to describe the process. Only eight years old and tired from the chemo sessions and surgeries, Ewen didn't feel in top form to hold a pencil. Almost every day, I asked him questions and I wrote what he said or wrote what he wanted to say. We asked questions together to help develop the story. Ewen recounted his feelings when we arrived at the Institut Curie for a chemotherapy session. We asked, "How is Alcibiades?" "What sensations would he experience if he was riding his scooter?" "How would he go out of his room without being noticed?"

The first lines of the first chapter were written by Ewen himself. They originated during the first day of third grade of school, when his teacher asked him to write few lines about himself.

Six months after we arrived at the hospital our story was almost finished. Then we started the editing stage. Like a picky editor, Ewen took a pencil and underlined what did not please him or did not correspond to what he wanted to say.

Ewen created all the illustrations. He completed them during the art classes assisted by Elodie at the Institut Curie. Because he was not confident, Ewen thought at the beginning that he would never be able to illustrate his story. Thanks to Elodie's encouragement, Ewen threw himself into the project and he is very proud of the result!

I would like to thank Dr. Orbach and his team from Institut Curie, Professor Glorion, Dr. Pannier and Dr. Irtan from Hôpital Necker and Dr. Serinet from Hôpital de Reeducation de Bullion and their teams for not only their professionalism, but their human qualities and their availability. Our stay in Paris could have been our worst nightmare. Instead, we will always have a special memory where the good times prevailed over the bad ones. Ewen will remember the numerous "Mille Bornes" card games (I guess he went more than three time around the earth), and "Belle Ile en Mer" superbly interpreted by Armelle, Helene and Vicky while in his room in a cast from feet to chest, the rugby passes with the players of the Stade francais, Denise's lasagna ("better than Mom's ones") and, of course, the Sunday croissants.

The rest of the family will remember the many different board games (we couldn't try all of them), the picnic in the garden of the hospital, the candies of the first Saturday of the month, the terrace in front of the Eiffel Tower and especially all of those who supported Ewen during the bad times.

We also would like to thank our family and our friends (from all the continents) who helped us and supported us throughout it all.

The English version of this book wouldn't have been possible without the help of our friends Bart Trawick, Helen Cawley, Mary Morningstar, Tara Trawick, Terry Fortline and Wilder Leavitt.

Hélène Élisabeth.

<https://lesballand.wordpress.com/>

The Secret

My name is Ewen and I am eight and a-half years old. I like to play soccer, but it's been a long time since I've run after a ball. Usually, I am always in a good mood, but now I am often sad and sometimes I'm afraid.

My eyes are hazel with some green and my hair is dark brown, wavy, almost curly. It was curly. Right now, I am completely bald because I have cancer.

Before, I was a boy like all the other boys and one day (a Wednesday afternoon, March 16th at 2:45 and 33 seconds) while I was jogging on my school grounds, CRACK, the bone of my leg broke. Because it was not possible to treat me at the hospital of Lusaka (in Zambia, where I was living for two years), an air ambulance came to pick me up to take me to South Africa. The plane was great and my arrival in the ambulance with the siren on was great, too, but two months later when I was told that I had cancer, it was no longer fun anymore.

That's how I ended up in France to be treated at the Institut Curie. The first day, Dr Legrand explained everything to me, as if I were a grown up. I like him because of his sense of humor and because he explains all I need to know about the illness and its treatment. I don't like people who talk to me as if I am a baby.

Today, it's Friday; it's the first day of my 26th chemo session at Curie. In the elevator when I usually press 5 for "Pediatrics" I think of only one thing: to run away (in my case it would be rolling away because I am in a wheelchair). But today, it's different because last week I met a new friend.

He is new on the ward (he still has his hair). There are new people on the ward every day. Big kids, little kids, girls, boys and even babies. Benjamin is special; he is my age, and he likes soccer, geography, chess, and cricket like me. We share the same room and I know immediately that the two of us will have fun together.

Last week I didn't tell him anything, but today I'm going to reveal my secret to him - a big secret that I've never told anyone. I haven't walked since I broke my leg eight months ago. I wasn't really the one who broke my leg, my cancer did. I move around in a wheelchair now, but I am doing physical therapy and I'm learning to walk again. I have a brand-new leg inside. I have a prosthetic hip, a