

Chapter 1

Mr. Mach is a very distinguished. He wears a different hat and a matching silk scarf.

Every Saturday, he borrows seven books from the village library. He is the favourite reader of Mrs Floris, the giraffe librarian: he is polite (although sometimes ill-tempered), cultured and has a memory like an elephant. But Mr Mach has a big defect: it never returns all the documents

he has borrowed. There is still one missing! Each time, the camel has a good excuse: the book was stolen by a woodpecker, burned in a barbecue, run over by a hippopotamus or forgotten in a ghost train... One day Mrs. Floris is so upset that she has that she summons him to her office.

- Mr Mach, the cup is full: you have lost too many books!
- Finally, Mrs Floris, don't go up on your high horse: it's not so bad since I'm paying you back...
- Of course you're paying me back, that's the rule! But some are not no longer published and I can't buy them back. More no one can read them, this is unacceptable!
The giraffe bends its long neck over the desk and stares at the camel.
suspicious.

- Mr Mach, stop making things up outlandish excuses. For once, tell me the truth. What do you do really

of these books? You keep them for the read again?

- Yes. Well, no.

- Do you sell them?

- Absolutely not!

- So you're offering them?

- Nothing of the sort, Mrs Floris. À To tell you the truth, I...

The camel turns crimson. His muzzle twitches. His ears twitch.

- I can't tell you.

- This is your last word, sir Mach?

- Yes, Mrs Floris.

The giraffe stands up, neck straight as a Capital "I". She says in a cold voice:

- Mr Mach, the regulation is clear: we must exclude people who too often steal, damage or lose the books. I'm sorry but you won't be able to not to return to the library for a year and seven months.

The camel chokes:

- One year and seven months! But that's a long time!

- Give me

your reader's card. I will return it to you in two springs.

Mr Mach raises his hat in silence, rummages around inside and comes out a small rectangle of purple plastic which he on the desk. Then he stands up with dignity and said in a haughty voice:

- Farewell Mrs. Floris.

- Goodbye Mr Mach.

When the door closes, the librarian throws herself on a bowl of crisps which she crunches with

nervousness. Behind her window, she observes

the camel walking down the street, head down,
under the blazing trees. Despite its
azure blue hat and silk scarf
turquoise, it has lost its panache.

Suddenly, a little giraffe runs into
the room and jumps on the table.

- Mum, can you give me some chips?

Mrs Floris turns her head away from the
window and sighs:

- Kika, I told you a hundred times to knock
before you enter. And get down from
my office.

- Oh yes, sorry. They are rose-coloured, your
chips, or acacia? And what were you looking at
through the window? You look strange. You have a
problem?

- Kika, you ask too many questions. Here you go,
help yourself,
they are spinach.

- Ugh, no, thanks, I don't want any. You come
read me a story? I found one
awesome about superhero pterodactyls
!

Without waiting for an answer, the little giraffe
disappears running into the library.

Madame Floris rushes forward shouting:

- Kika, it is forbidden to run in the
library!

Chapter 2:

Mr Mach has respected the rules:
he did not return to the library. This
afternoon-
there,

Mrs Floris is busy
to one of his favourite activities: filing
books in alphabetical order on
shelves that touch the ceiling. They are
so high that they are never disturbed:
except for the librarian, no one can
access. Mrs Floris is delighted: she
loves to admire its impeccable shelves.

- Mum, why can't we see
Mr Mach?

The Giraffe dusts off a documentary
on fluorescent fish and entrusts
Kika, a little embarrassed:

- Because I told him that he didn't have
the right to come here.

- Oh, well. Why is that?

- Because he did something that was forbidden.

- Did he? Did he shout in the library?

Did he pee on the books? He bit

Mr. Mole? Did he dance on the tables?

Did he eat a carpet? Did he...

- Shh! I won't say anything. Secret
professional.

Kika sticks her tongue out at her mother and disappears
in the comics corner, grumbling:

- It's terrible! I miss him, sir

Mach. Okay, he's really bad

breath. But I love it when he tells me
his youth in the desert: he is always
a lot of faces!

Mrs Floris sighs. In fact, the old
She also misses the camel. She loved
discuss with him the books they had read,
listening to him recite poetry or strut his stuff
with her eccentric hats... She
grab the book on gardening without
pesticides that he asked Mr.

Mole and returns to the reception area.
She pecks at her nettle roots and smiles at the
readers: Madame Zébu who broods about
hours, snout in magazines;
Mrs. Pie is always looking for a
scoop on the internet, Mr Tapir who
in manga... But it is to
Mr. Mach she thinks: alone at
him, deprived of novels through his own fault.

Tonight, as every month, the
readers meet at the library. Kika
loves these evenings. Because exceptionally,
she has the right to stay too. To be
going to bed late, eating sweets in the evening
fennel while reading piles of books, while
that his mother discusses with the members of the
club.

The camel has never missed a meeting.
Everyone is surprised: why is he
absent? Mrs Kangaroo is worried:

- It may have
measles?

- In my opinion, he went on a tour of the
the world in a vicylete, er, bycylete, in short
by bike," retorts Mr. Boar.

- In fact, it is rolling its hump away from the
village. Oh no, am I right?
beast, it has
two!" laughs Mrs. Scarab, whose
jokes never make anyone laugh.

Mr. Lazy, however, says nothing: he
fell asleep.

- What if he had become short-sighted?

Miss Kiwi with a dramatic air.

Kika emerges from the Albums corner and says with a
important tone :

- Mr Mach is not here because

Mum has forbidden him to come.

- What are you talking about? What are you talking about?
girl?

chokes out Mrs Kangaroo.

- Mum doesn't want to see Mr Mach anymore
because of a pre-something secret.

In the face of indignant exclamations, the
librarian finally takes the floor:

- Mr Mach is excluded from the
library because it did not comply with the
regulation. Kika, go back immediately
in the Albums area. This is a meeting
of grown-ups.

While the little giraffe goes on a
protesting, Mr. Boar babbles:

- Didn't respect the rules? Uh, I
Do you mean preaching? Ah, for crying out loud
acorn, the chirping?

- What regulation exactly?
Madame Scarab in her shrill voice.

- The one in the library, answers
Mrs. Floris.

Mrs Kangaroo opens her mouth
but the giraffe interrupts him curtly:

- No more questions. It is none of your business
not.

The librarian is impressive
when she is angry. From the height of her
three metres away, she looks at her interlocutors
with its black eyes that become very
dark. No one dares to speak up anymore. After
having wolfed down twenty pieces of dandelion toast, the
giraffe asks in a softer voice:

- So what did you think of the novel
The Canines of the Forest?

Madame Scarab suddenly wriggles on

its seat.

- I loved it! What a style! What suspense!

And this evil squirrel is great...

- I don't agree!

Mrs Kangaroo. There are, however, some
a little too much hiccup, oh no, I have hiccups!

- A little too much of what, scrognebouse?
grumbles Mr. Boar. Of pang?

Uh, from vrang? Good grief! Blood? It's a

This? You are too sensitive, madam

Fanrougou!

Miss Kiwi murmurs with a
very small voice :

- This book is far too cruel. I have
was very scared and...

But nobody listens to him. The boar
rants against Mrs. Kangaroo while
that Madame Scarabée shouts in a voice

acute. In the midst of the din, the lazy
opens one eye and says with a yawn:

- Personally, I found this book
totally soporific...

When the readers' club meeting
is finally over, Mrs. Floris is
exhausted. The five members argued
all evening. She must have gotten mad three times.
If Mr Mach had been there, he could have
help him. Because when he gets angry, he
screams very loudly and may even bite those
who annoy him.

Kika, who loves to push buttons,
turns off all the lights while his

mother closes the library door.
Outside, the night is cold and silent.
Bare trees look like ghosts
in the light of the street lamps. All
two walk with long strides in the
the snow-covered alleys.

Near Mr Mach's house, a
mixture of spices and broth flavours
the air. Kika stops for a moment.

- Mum, Mr Mach is at home!

Shall we go and say hello to him?

- No, Kika, it's far too late!

- Look, it looks strange... What is it?
that it does?

Mrs Floris looks around the house. Behind
the lighted window, the old camel, with its headdress
of a cream hat, seems very agitated: he
holds something up
of his head
and slams it down hard on a table.

Spying on a reader is prohibited by the
regulation. That is true. But Mr Mach
has returned his membership card, so he is not
no longer a subscriber to the library...

Floris enters the garden, approaches
without a sound and suddenly stops, petrified
of horror: there, in front of her, Mr Mach
sticks a huge knife in a book.

He cuts it up, tears it apart, skins it like a
a game!

Behind her, Kika hops to
see something.

- So, Mum, what is it

What is going on?

The giraffe whispers:

- Kika, stay where you are.

The librarian throws herself at the door in
drumming. The old camel approaches
of the windows, looking suspicious. He opens the window
and exclaims in the darkness:

- What do you do
here, Mrs Floris?

Are you spying on me?

The giraffe said in a trembling voice
of indignation:

- And you, Mr Mach, what do you do?
there with this library book?

Kika appears in the dark.

- Well, what do you do? In my opinion,
a big mistake because Mum looks like she's been
super angry!

Mr Mach replies in a dry tone:

- I will not tell you anything. What I do
my house is none of your business!

He is about to slam the window but

Mrs. Floris slips her neck into
the doorway with a roar:

- Assassiiiiinnn!

From the giraffe's mouth comes a long
pink tongue. His black eyes are out of focus.

And his neck is so red that Kika is afraid

that it explodes into a thousand pieces. The old

The camel suddenly looks very impressed.

He takes a step back and says in a low voice:

- Calm down,

Mrs Floris. I will

explain everything to you. In fact, I'm... I'm preparing
this novel to cook it.

- This is really a big mistake,

Kika murmurs.

The librarian opens her eyes wide.

- Cooking it? What is it?

that it is this

history?

- This is not a story, madam

Floris. For once, this is the truth.

- But, Mr Mach, what are you doing
exactly of my books?

The camel bows its head and whispers
with a strange grimace:

- Actually, I eat them.

Chapter 4

The librarian opens her mouth but
nothing comes out of it. It is as silent as a
carp. Kika exclaims:

- Ugh! But it's disgusting!

Her mother suddenly finds her voice. She
yelp:

- This is especially forbidden by the regulations!

- Yes, I know," sighed the camel.

- And it is very bad for your health!

adds Mrs Floris. Ink and paper
are full of chemicals.

Kika exclaims with a grimace:

- Do you have a stomach ache?

Mr Mach smiles.

- I have no digestive problems,
my little one. You know, you just have to get them right.
cooking. Simmered or stuffed, accompanied by
with a chive cream or a sauce
with shallots: it's delicious!

The librarian shivers.

- And... are they all edible?

- Some of them are indigestible, but I
avoids. The best ones are the ones I have
chosen. When I borrow books,
Mrs Floris, I read them with love. I would like to
the ones I don't like, but I'll give them back.
I can't help it.

I choose a recipe and enjoy them: a
a little piece each day in the...
The giraffe interrupts him with a voice
impatient:

- But why do you eat
those of the library? No one
cannot read them when they disappear!

Buy them
in bookshops!

Mr Mach looks at her with a look of
sorry.

- Madame Floris, the books of a
library have much more taste than those
of a bookshop! They have aged: their paper has
yellowed, their pages are corroded, stained...
and above all, they have a taste for the emotions of
those who have read them!

- That's right!" said Kika. I, on the other hand
For example, I laughed a lot when I read *Les
Adventures of the Big Bad Earthworm*.

Mr Mach points to the carcass of the
book on the table.

- Laughter, yes, but also tears. By
example, this novel: *Les Champignons se*

to survive. A sad and romantic
love story. Well, it is full of
tears of its readers. Boiled in a pot
fire,
it will melt in your mouth... Once
digested, his words will remain in my mind forever.
memory. Do you want to
that I recite it to you?

The giraffe wags its ears indignantly.

- No, Mr Mach, I am not interested
not! Give me back
this book and all the other
the ones you still have.

The old camel opens the door. He comes out
on the landing and head down, holds out what's left
Mushrooms are hiding to survive the
librarian. Then he disappears in a
another room and returns with two more

books intact but sprinkled with curry :

The Pimp of the Future and *The Mystery of the Pig*
possessed.

The librarian collects them between her
paws and stares at him coldly.

- Stay away from my children,
Mr Mach. You are a criminal.

Come on Kika, we're leaving.

Without waiting for her daughter, the giraffe walks away
in the night. Before joining his mother,
Kika whispers:

- Sorry, Mr Mach. I love you
well, I...

The page of a book twirls in the breeze
and lands on a hoof of the old man
motionless camel. Small flakes
are gradually covering his thick fur.
Mr Mach seems to be frozen in his
garden, like a snowman.

Chapter 5

That night,

Kika can't sleep.

She thinks of Mr Mach who seemed so unhappy when they left him the day before.

The next afternoon,

on the way back from

At school, the little giraffe does not go to her mother in the library. She makes a big diversion and stops in front of the old man's house camel. She shakes a little as she knocks at the door. Mr Mach may be

angry

against her? Or so sad that he

won't answer? But the latter, wearing of a tartan beret, just seems very surprised to see it here.

- Kika, what are you doing there?

- As you are no longer allowed to come to the library, I have come to you to lend one of my books. This is my favourite: *The Dragoness who didn't want to fly anymore*. I hope that as you please.

Mr Mach stammers:

- Thank you, my dear. I am very touched.

It is a beautiful novel, indeed. I read it a long time ago, when I was your age. I was I will be happy to read it again.

The giraffe looks at him worriedly.

- And, uh, you promise not to eat it?

The camel bursts out laughing.

- No, I promise! I will be very careful!

- Ah, phew! You can keep it all for as long as you like. And then... I wanted to ask you something.

Kika takes a deep breath before throw :

- I can taste a book you have cooked?

The camel looks at the giraffe intrigued.

- Are you sure? Why do you want in eat?

- Because I really, really want to to know what it tastes like.

- I don't think your mother is agreed.

Kika replies in a very serious tone:

- I am a child. I have the right to do nonsense, don't I?

The camel remains thoughtful for a long time. moment. Then he said with a smile:

- You're lucky, I have one more plate in the fridge from *Rita's 101 Jokes water hen*. I cooked it with spaghetti flavoured with saffron. Delicious!

- And you can tell me again the story where you fought a giant scorpion in the desert?

- Of course I did. And even the one where I won the race against the terrible crocodile of the slimy marshes," replies the old camel with a smile.

- A crocodile? Wow, you're a real adventurer!

And as they sit in front of the
jokes of Rita the water hen, Mr
Mach tells Kika for the tenth time
the rocky adventures of the time of
his youth.

Chapter 6

In spring, Mrs. Kangaroo
and Mr. Wild Boar have become
hysterical: the competition of the
Readers' Day is a month away. Without Mr.
Mach, they will never win it! Despite
his bad breath is the most qualified:
no one speaks better about books than
him. Miss Kiwi is too shy.
Mrs Kangaroo often hiccups.
Mr. Boar turns red with anger

as soon as he stammers (which he often does).
Madame Scarabée has a very high-pitched voice
and Mr. Sloth falls asleep
every three minutes.
Last year, the camel had
presented two books to the jury. And
among all the representatives of the
The country's readers, he had won!
The reward had been extraordinary:
all six were able to meet with the
great writer Iris Lalouve. They had
discussed for an hour with her. Finally,
especially Mr Mach. Because Mr.
Wild boar had asked a lot of questions
incomprehensible, Mrs. Kangaroo
had hiccupped most of the time and Mrs.
Scarab had spouted a string of

distressing jokes. Miss Kiwi,
She was so moved that she fainted.

As for Mr. Lazy, very stressed,
he had collapsed, overcome by the lack of
sleep in the last few days...

That evening,
in the library, Kika is
peony-scented candies in front of
the shelves of stories. Next to her, a
huge pile of comics from
SpeedyNail, a superhero snail
loved by children. Suddenly, she hears
bursts of voice. Mr. Boar claims
dramatically:

- Mrs Floris, Mr Mach is
excluded, it's true, but... you couldn't
not make a dent in the rules? No,
a break in the rules? Scrognebouse,
a deletion from the rules? A curl?
A...

- Shut up,
Sanglio is
Unbearable!" exclaims Mrs. Scarab.

- Please stop shouting, Scarabin!
Mrs. Kangaroo. Mrs Floris, we
wanted to ask you if you could,
hic ! Oh no, here we go again, hic!
Mrs. Kangaroo leaps to her feet.
get rid of its
hiccups. She
lack of crushing
Miss Kiwi,
which, red as

a raspberry, approaches the giraffe and
whispers:

- Mrs Floris, please,

could you
bring Mr Mach back to
the library? We need so much
him...

They all look at her with pleading eyes. The
librarian is very annoyed. Mr.
Mach is a book murderer. He has violated
all the regulations. But it is also

a great lover of literature and without
What will happen to the readers' club?
Kika's head pops up between two shelves
of DIY documentaries.

- Come on, Mum, make an effort! Mr.
We really miss Mach a lot.

And he's great at telling books.
You're sure to win again with him!
Mrs. Floris sips thoughtfully at her
litre of birch sap. Crunch fifteen
honeysuckle pancakes.

- It's okay," she sighs.

But
attention: just for the duration of the competition.
Then he will be excluded again.

Kika explodes with joy. The five members
of the club are so happy that they run off
on each other. What is not
without consequences: Mrs. Kangaroo
almost crushes Madame Scarab.

Miss Kiwi mistakenly pushes her
beak in Mr. Boar's snout
who squeals in pain. As for Mr.
Lazy, slumped in a black armchair,
he lifts an eyelid and says in a voice
pasty :

- Did we win anything?

Chapter 7

A fortnight later, Mrs Floris
has not yet gone to see Mr Mach.
She always has an emergency after work:
buy thirty kilos of acacia leaves,
eat two bags of sunflower seeds,
read the latest novel by Iris Lalouve... In
fact, she is afraid of the old man's reaction
camel: and if, terribly offended, he
refused?

The day before the readers' club meeting,
Kika, sitting in the kitchen with her mother,
says in an innocent tone:

- You know, Mom, your dandelion pasta
are significantly worse than those of
Mr Mach.

The giraffe suddenly stops chewing its
shells.

- You've tasted the cuisine of Mr.
Mach?

- Well, yes. And it was very good. It is
really strong, you know. It's his mum who
taught her everything. She was a starred chef
in the desert. She had a restaurant that
was called...

- When did you
tasted exactly?

- Oh, a long time ago. One evening, after
school.

- Which evening exactly?

Kika blushed and replied sheepishly:

- One night when I told you I was going to do
my homework with Capucine...

The giraffe's eyes suddenly become
very dark:

- Kika, you must not lie to me.

Then she adds suspiciously:

- And what have you

eaten so well?

- A book of jokes with spaghetti and
safri. Or safro. Finally, a delicious spice,
in any case.

Mrs Floris chokes:

- What? Did you eat a book?

- Yes, you should try it too,
mum. And even ask her for the recipe.
It's really good.

The giraffe suddenly puts down its fork
on the table. She roars:

- Go to your room. You are being punished.

And I have two words to say to Mr Mach.

Kika leaves the room with her head down.

But when she looks out the window at her
mother walking away down the street, she sketches a
mischievous smile.

In the village, a light breeze caresses
the soft green leaves of the trees. The air
perfumes the flowers. But Mrs. Floris

is not sensitive to the scent of spring.

She is too angry for that. She gallops
in the village to the home of Monsieur
Mach. When the camel opens the door,
the librarian rants:

- Mr Mach, not only do you
devoured the books in my library
but you made my daughter eat them.

This is unacceptable!

The camel replies indignantly:

- But, Mrs Floris, I did not
obliged. It was she who came to me.

She who asked me to try it. Here you go,
I am returning the novel she wrote to you.

had lent me. You will thank her: I have
reread with great pleasure. Kika is a
Very endearing little giraffe with a heart,
her. Goodbye, Mrs Floris.

He adjusts his peony pink hat
and slams the door. Mrs Floris, a
a little stunned, contemplates the cover of the
book *The Dragoness Who Wouldn't Fly*.
Machinically, she picks dozens of
of purple flowers in the garden and the
chews thoughtfully.

Chapter 8

Two kilos of flowers later, Mrs.
Floris has thought about it enough. She hesitates
for a moment and then strikes again. The
camel opens the door bellowing:

- What else, Mrs Floris?

The librarian takes a step back.

Mr Mach looks very angry and his
breath smells like a clogged sink. She
says in a calm voice:

- Well, let's leave the Kika case aside. At
In fact, I should have come a long time ago. I
from the readers' club. The five
members have a proposal for you.

Mr Mach's eyes shine
of hope. He adjusts his scarf and says with a
tone of voice:

- Really? Please come in.

The librarian, far too big
for the camel's house, put your head down

under the ceiling to which are suspended hats of all colours. It is not not very comfortable, she has a bit of pain in her neck. In the kitchen, a pan is simmering on the fire. His stomach growls with envy and she can't help but ask:

- What will you what to eat tonight? What wonderful smell! My daughter told me that your mother was a star chef.

The camel replies with a smile embarrassed :

- I don't know if I should tell you...
The giraffe looks at him suspiciously.

- Mr Mach, don't tell me that...

- Yes... Sorry, Mrs Floris. It's a my last literary dinner. A pan of forestry crime novel. Do you want to taste?

- But at last! I thought you had me returned all the books in the library to the last time!

The camel blushes under his hat.

- Not quite. I had three left...

But this one

is the last one, I swear!

A very good novel: *Pour qui dansent les woodpeckers*.

Mrs. Floris is a bit annoyed by the lie of the camel. She is horrified to the idea of eating one of its young but also... a bit curious to try it.

And then Kika tried. So why not

She? With the tip of her nose, she accepts

to swallow a spoonful.

The pages, cut into fried strips,
melt under the tongue. Behind the taste of the
mushrooms and broccoli, Mrs Floris
a pinch of mystery, a zest of anguish
and a hint of feverishness. A strange
sensation that perfumes the palate for a long time.
She almost forgets her stiff neck... It's
so delicious that she would like to swallow
the whole pan! It can be mastered just by
time and rest the spoon.

- Yes, it's not so bad,

Let's get back to our case:

Mr Mach, the members of the
readers are convinced that they will not be able to
win the competition without you. This
year, the winners will meet the famous
author Raoul Panda. They ended up giving me
convince. So I'm going to do a little
Breach of the rules: do you want to
become again
member of our club until the competition?

- And... you will give me back my
reader?

- No, Mr Mach. You will read the
books in the library. There is no way that
you take them home. I don't want
take any risks.

The old camel licks his plate,
swallows his bucket of hay juice in silence.

Finally, he said in a haughty voice:

- I accept only to please
to my friends.

Then he adds dramatically:

- But I must admit that I am very sad:

I would have liked to borrow again from
novels.

- Take it or leave it, sir
Mach. So, what do you say
?

Under his peony pink hat, the old man
camel nods with a shy smile.
Outside, the setting sun sets the
some surviving purple flowers from the
garden.

Chapter 9

The next evening, Mr Mach made
a very successful entrance to the library.
When he saw it, Mr. Boar, with joy,
rolled around on the carpets. Mrs Kangaroo,
very excited, jumped over
three bins
of albums. Madame Scarabée pushed
a howl that pierced the eardrums of
the meeting. Miss Kiwi melted into
tears and Mr. Sloth opened a
eye. Impassive, Mr Mach settled down

in the biggest chair, crossed his legs
and exclaimed with a huge smile:

- So you can't do without
of me?

They talked for an hour about books
they had read. Then they chose the two
works that Mr Mach would present
in the competition: *The Pink Flamingo is still ringing
five times* and *Who Killed Gigi Chameleon?*

On the day of the competition, Mr Mach
is particularly distinguished: it wears a
flaming red hat and a scarf
of scarlet silk. The broadcast is transmitted in

live on television. Just before she
begins, the other members of the
readers run to Mr. Wild Boar: he
has a sofa as long as a whale
and a television as large as a bear.
As they slump over each other,

Kika climbs on Madame's shoulders
Kangaroo and Mrs. Floris sit on
a chair for quiet enjoyment
its peanuts with parsley.
Mr Monkey, the presenter, is
full of tics. He scratches himself, grimaces all the time.
every two seconds and wriggles on and on
his backside. While picking his ears,
it introduces the spokespersons
clubs in
readers in the country. There are many of them:
twenty-seven
exactly. Near Mr.
Mach, are sitting: a hippopotamus looks
a smelly skunk, a hyena
with hysterical cackling, an anaconda
with a purple wick and an octopus
dripping.
Each of them presents their two
favourite books for five minutes and
thirty seconds. All defend their choices
with a lot of passion but Mr.
Mach does not listen to them. He is dizzy. All
turns around him. Sweat drips down
under his hat and the chair is too small
for its two humps. In fact, he is in
hypoglycaemia: he didn't get his dose of books
to read and eat for weeks. He
chews his gum nervously
with mint. Tonight, the smallest details
disturb him: the tongue of the snake that

the sea water that gradually covers the

- *The Pink Flamingo always rings three times,*
err, no, five times. This is the story of a
seahorse that, ah no, excuse me,

I

I meant a flamingo that...

The camel stops. Mr.

Monkey scratches his head:

- Yes, who what?

But Mr Mach is silent: he does not
remembers nothing. For the first time in
his life, he has a memory lapse. He becomes
lemon yellow, then kiwi green. The hyena emits

an ironic chuckle and the hippopotamus
blows like a seal.

- You are fine, Mr Mach, hi
hi?" asks the monkey, as angry as a
chip.

The camel wants to vomit. He shakes,
chattering his teeth. Suddenly, he swallows his
chewing gum
and makes a strange
bellowing that sounds like a huge
burp. Then he stands up, knocking over his chair,
gallops across the stage and disappears
backstage.

In front of their television sets,
the members of the readers' club are
dismayed. Madame Scarabée is in hiding
in the pocket of Mrs. Kangaroo who
hiccups with fury. Miss Kiwi
is white as whipped cream.

Mr. Boar grunts

plaintive. As for Mr. Lazy,
he opens two big round eyes, which
shows great emotion in him. The

giraffe swallows a peanut the wrong way with parsley. She coughs, suffocates, ends up spit out the food. Then she gets up, turns off the television and said in a tired voice:

- Go home. The show is completed.

Kika's throat tightens. She wants to crying. In the heavy silence, she descends of Mrs. Kangaroo's shoulders and follows his mother, dragging her legs.

Chapter 10

Since this fiasco, no one has seen Mr Mach. Kika, her mother and the five members of the readers' club all rang the bell every day at his home. He never replied. The The shutters are closed, the garden uncultivated. Perhaps is

really gone for a tour of the world on a bicycle? Kika often thinks about him.

One evening, as her mother tells her a story, she bursts into tears.

- It's all your fault, Mum!

- What are you talking about Kika?

- From Mr Mach! You always think to the regulation. Sometimes, I think that It would be nice if you could forget about this regulation. If you had not forbidden him to come to the library, this would never have happened. À Because of you, now we will not see him again never again!

Mrs Floris tries to console her daughter. But deep down, she has a doubt. What if

Was Kika right?

Since this conversation, Madame
Floris is pensive. Every day she reads
stories to the nine excited children of
Mr. Pig, responds kindly
to the stupid questions of Mr
Parrot, patiently wipes the drool from
Madame Slug on the covers of the
DVD. But it is elsewhere. Somewhere

with Mr Mach, she imagines,
wandering around with a soul in pain, because of his fault.

With the summer, readers went on a
holidays and the moment that Mrs. Floris
dreaded has arrived: the weeding of the
books. To make room for the new
documents, it is necessary to get rid of the most
old: those that are damaged, those that are not
are more borrowed, those containing
outdated information... It is
always difficult for the librarian. These
works that she has chosen with such care
will disappear! Some will be given to
associations but others are too damaged,
will go to the pound: they will be crushed by
a machine, reduced to a pulp, annihilated!

Kika takes the opportunity to invent lots of new things.
with those piles of books that his mother
has set aside. Huts to hide in.

Rocks to climb. Slides
improvised. From time to time, she helps
his mother to put them away in boxes.

That evening,
a fragrant breeze blows
in the leaves of the trees. While
Kika turns off all the lights, ma'am
Floris locks the library, his
big eyes full of tears. She must have been

to be separated today by thirty-two
books
eleven of which she particularly liked.
To console her, her daughter shared with
she her three pockets of cabbage sweets
braised.

Suddenly, Kika sees a figure
on the other side of the avenue.
A figure wearing a green hat
emerald and a khaki scarf that comes out
of the grocery shop and then disappears into an alley.
- Mum, it's Mr Mach!

Without thinking, Kika goes after him.
She gallops through the streets in a zigzag pattern.
Mr Mach has just joined
him when the little giraffe lands in his
garden. Her heart beats very fast when she
knocks on the door. After a long time,
the old camel finally appears. It is the
first time Kika has seen him without a hat.
He lost a lot of hair in a few days.
weeks.

- Mr Mach, I am so happy
to see you! How are you? You are
gone cycling around the world?
Mrs Floris appears behind her
girl and exclaims in a breathless voice:
- Kika, you could have waited for me! Hello,
Mr Mach, nice to see you. I have
thoughtful. I have a proposal for you
which is not in the regulation.

Kika looks at her mother curiously.
The camel seems to hesitate for a moment. Then
he said dismissively:
- Really? Well, come in then.
Kika hiccups with surprise as she
laying the legs on the floor: columns

of cardboard boxes climb to the ceiling.

- But, Mr Mach, you
moving?

The camel claims in a dramatic tone:

- Yes, my little one. Life is only worth being
lived without literature, you see.

She is the one

that feeds me. Thanks to books, I dream,

I escape. To another country or

in someone else's skin... I am

no library allowed until spring

next. It's too long. And there is no

bookshop in the village. I'm going far from here, there

where I will not be prevented from fulfilling my
literary appetite...

Kika throws herself against him and whispers:

- I will miss you very much!

- You too, my little one.

Mrs Floris says nothing. She

is very moved and sits, unsteady, on

a wobbly chair. Finally, she emerges from her

bag a small rectangle of purple plastic

which she places on the table.

The old camel looks at him in disbelief.

- This is my reader's card! But... you

You were only supposed to give it back to me in seven months!

Can I really take it back?

- Yes, Mr Mach. On one condition:

that you bring back all the

documents you have borrowed. At

On the other hand, each week you will be able to

choose two books that I have weeded.

If you like them, you will eat them without

guilt. And then they will be saved from

forgetfulness thanks to your elephantine memory...

What do you think about it?

?

Mr. Mach's eyes shine under
the kitchen lamp. Her smile is
dazzling even if its teeth are a bit
yellow.

- With pleasure, Mrs Floris. I like
the smell of your books...

Kika looks at her mother with pride. For
once, she did not mention regulation...

Since then, every week, Mr.

Mach borrows seven documents from the
library that he brings back without
exception. But he also takes home
two books weeded by the librarian
which he cooks with great relish. Dishes
which he shares each month with Mrs.

Floris and the members of the readers' club.

And Kika? She chooses the spices and invents
new recipes: science fiction fillets
with figs, crispy polar bear
with preserved lemons or strips of meat
with mirabelle plums, it is not lacking
no ideas!