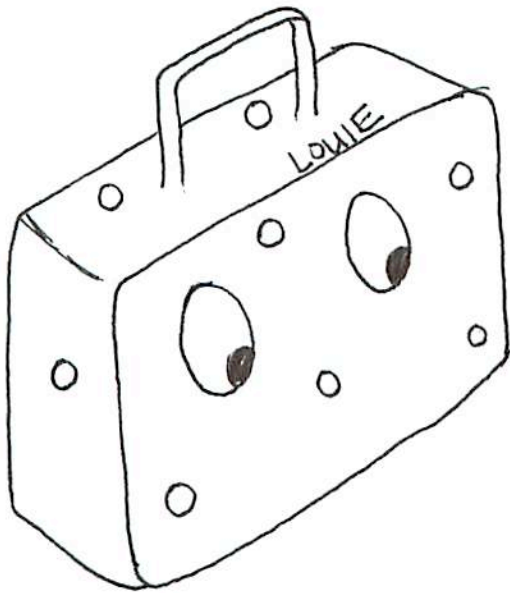


The Adventures of Louie the Lost Lunchbox by Audrey Haynes

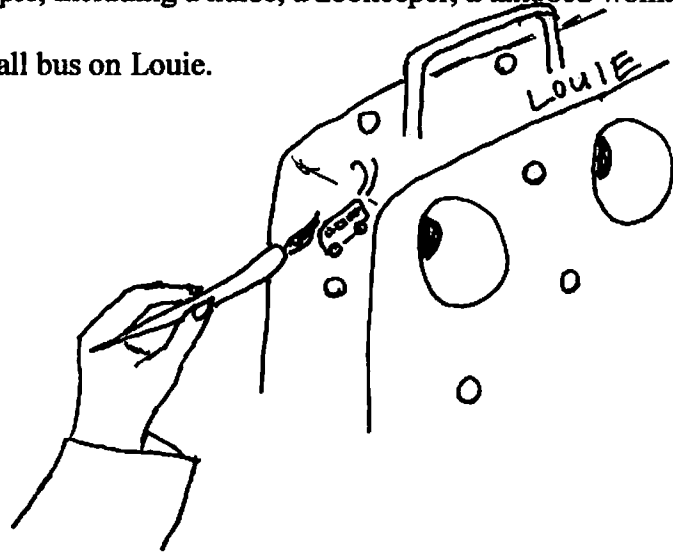
There once was a lunchbox named Louie. He was bright yellow with red polka dots and belonged to a little girl named Isabel Chardak. Every morning Isabel's mother would put a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a banana, two sticks of string cheese and a juice box into Louie and give him to Isabel on her way to school. Every morning Isabel rode the number 43 bus with Louie to school and every afternoon she rode it back home with him. Isabel loved Louie and Louie loved Isabel.



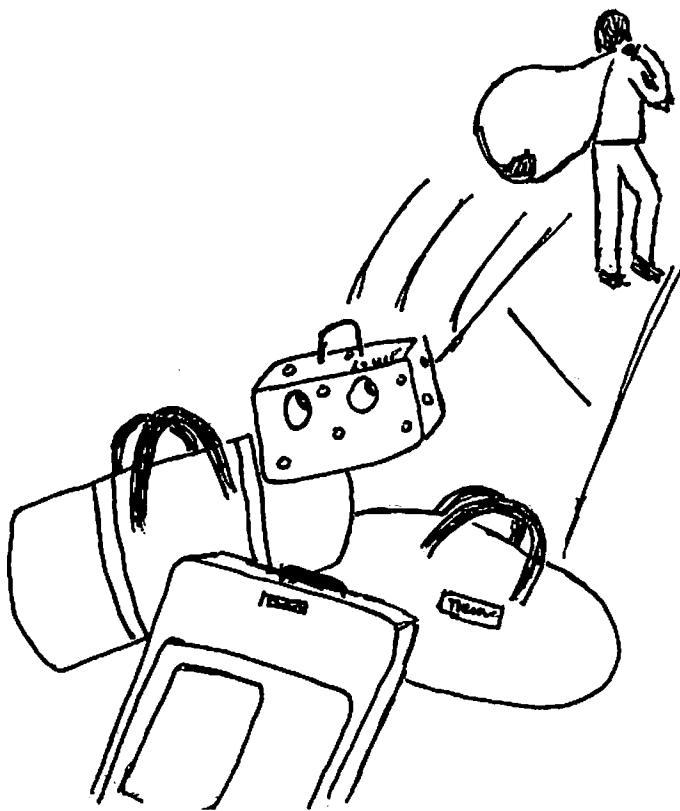
One morning Louie and Isabel were on the bus to school. Isabel's friend, Leslie, was with them. Isabel put Louie on the seat next to her so she could play patty cake with Leslie. Louie didn't mind Isabel leaving him since Isabel and Leslie were having a terrific time, laughing and giggling. But Isabel was so distracted that when she got up with Leslie to get off the bus she forgot Louie!

Louie was left on the bus all by himself. "Oh no! What should I do?" Louie asked himself. But what was a lunchbox to do? Louie resigned himself to sitting on the bus by himself. Soon, however, Louie had many neighbors. A funny man with big curly hair and a guitar boarded the bus and sat next to Louie. Louie liked him because he played nice

songs. After the funny man left, a woman with a parrot sat next to Louie. Over the next few hours Louie met many new people, including a nurse, a zookeeper, a tattooed woman and an artist who even painted a small bus on Louie.



As the sky darkened fewer and fewer people boarded the bus until soon there were no passengers left. The driver pulled into a lot with many other buses. Louie had never seen this place before and was scared. The driver came through the bus picking up trash and throwing it into a garbage bag. The driver picked up an empty soda bottle, a newspaper and finally Louie. "I'm not trash, but now I am going to be thrown away. What shall I do?" Louie thought. But what was a lunchbox to do?



Whoosh! Suddenly Louie was falling. There had been a hole in the trash bag and Louie had fallen to land plop! Right on a suitcase on the sidewalk. All around Louie were several other suitcases, piled high on the curb.

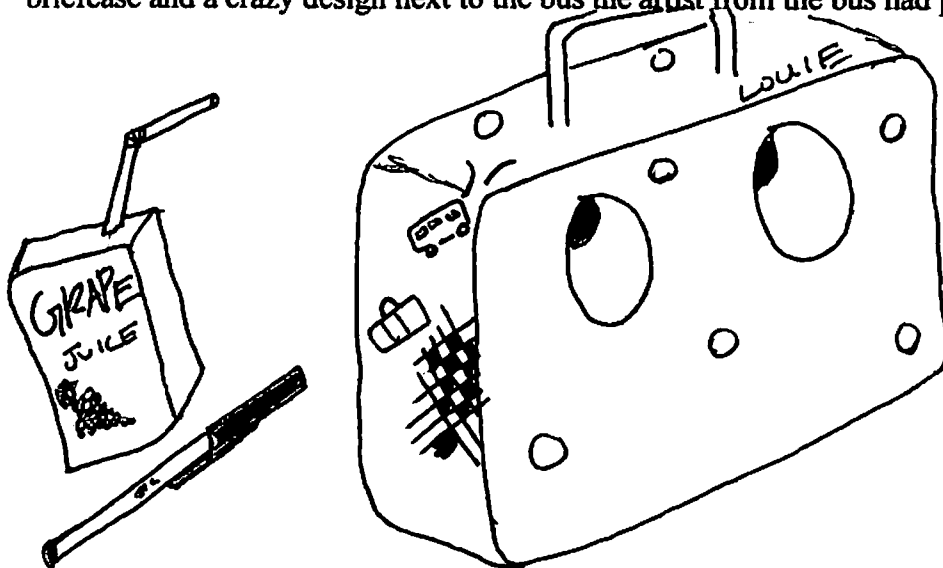
“Can you help me with these?” a voice asked. Suddenly Louie was whisked away and dropped into the trunk of a car by a pair of hands. More luggage was dropped next to Louie. Louie could see two people talking next to the trunk.

“Is this everything?” a man asked a woman in a blue suit.

“I think so Jack,” she replied and shut the trunk. Louie was surrounded by darkness but could hear muffled goodbye’s outside the trunk. Then suddenly the car lurched and Louie knew they were driving away. Louie wondered where they were going.

Soon they had arrived. Louie was taken out of the trunk by the woman in the blue suit. She eyed Louie, confused, and then opened him. Isabel’s lunch was still inside. “Oh, how sweet,” she exclaimed, “Jack must have packed me a lunch for the plane ride!” She then tucked Louie into a larger bag. The woman in the blue suit then gathered all of her bags and walked through the big main gates of the San Francisco Airport.

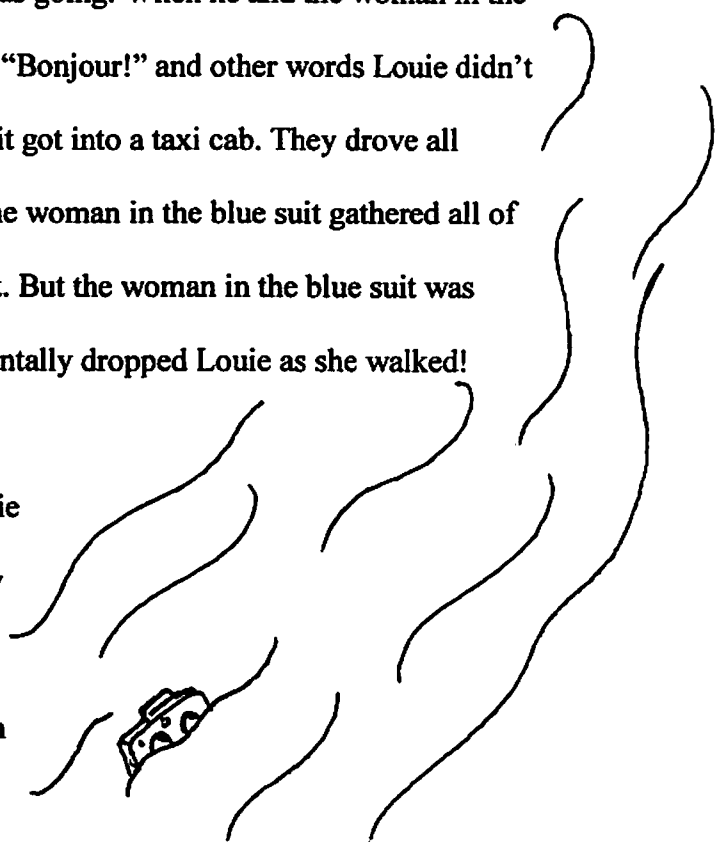
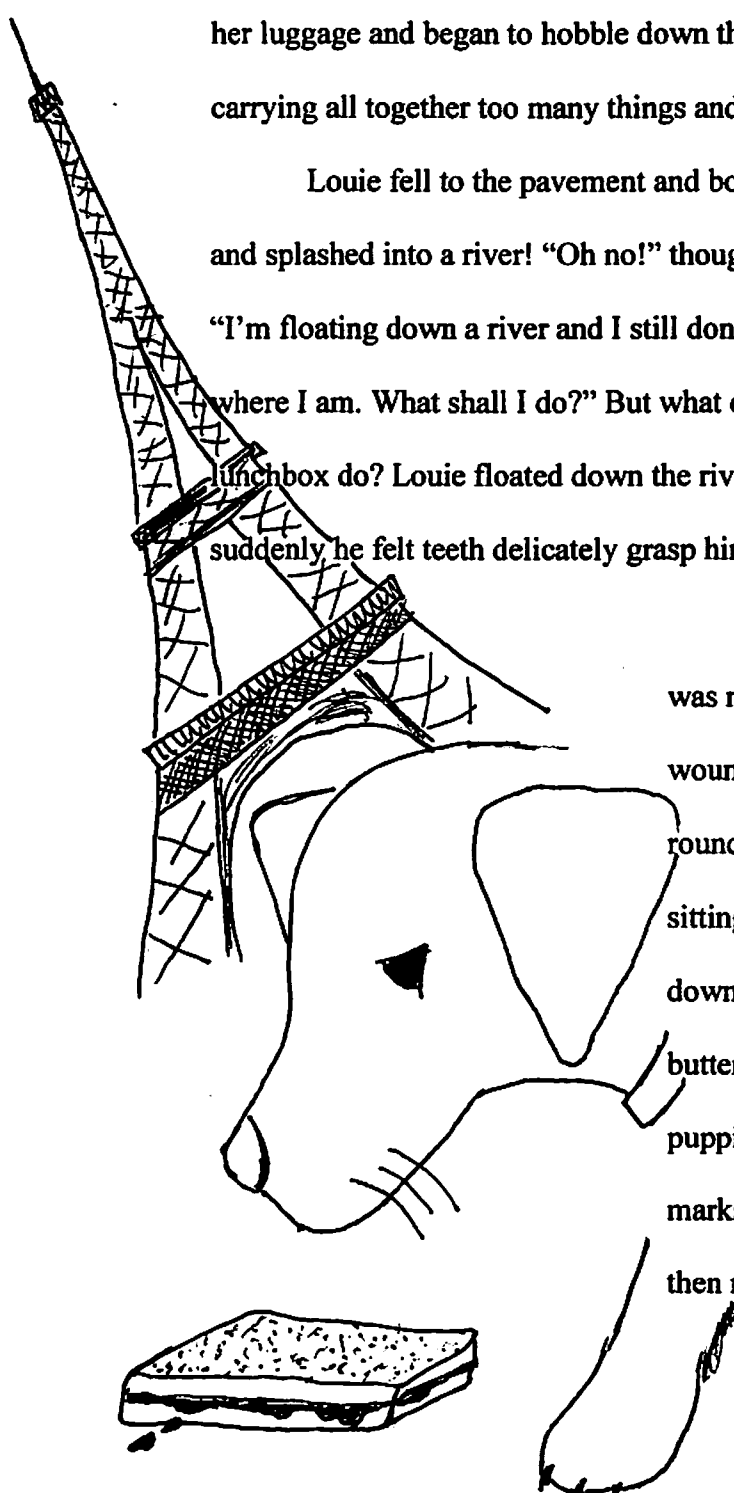
The woman in the blue suit left Louie in her bag all through security. Although the woman in the blue suit was very serious around the other passengers, once the people next to her on the plane were asleep she took Louie out to eat the string cheese and the juice box. Bored, the woman in the blue suit began to doodle on Louie. She drew a little briefcase and a crazy design next to the bus the artist from the bus had painted.



After many hours, the plane began to descend and Louie could see unfamiliar land out the window. Louie didn't know where he was going. When he and the woman in the blue suit exited the plane signs around him read "Bonjour!" and other words Louie didn't understand. Louie and the woman in the blue suit got into a taxi cab. They drove all through the city and got out near a big tower. The woman in the blue suit gathered all of her luggage and began to hobble down the street. But the woman in the blue suit was carrying all together too many things and accidentally dropped Louie as she walked!

Louie fell to the pavement and bounced and splashed into a river! "Oh no!" thought Louie "I'm floating down a river and I still don't know where I am. What shall I do?" But what could a lunchbox do? Louie floated down the river when suddenly he felt teeth delicately grasp him.

A dog had grabbed him out of the river and was now carrying him through the streets. The dog wound its way through the alleys. Louie and the dog rounded a corner and Louie saw several puppies sitting next to an empty crate. The dog set Louie down and the puppies hungrily tore at the peanut butter sandwich and banana that Louie still had. The puppies were so excited that they got a few teeth marks in Louie but Louie didn't mind. The puppies then nuzzled together inside Louie and went to sleep.



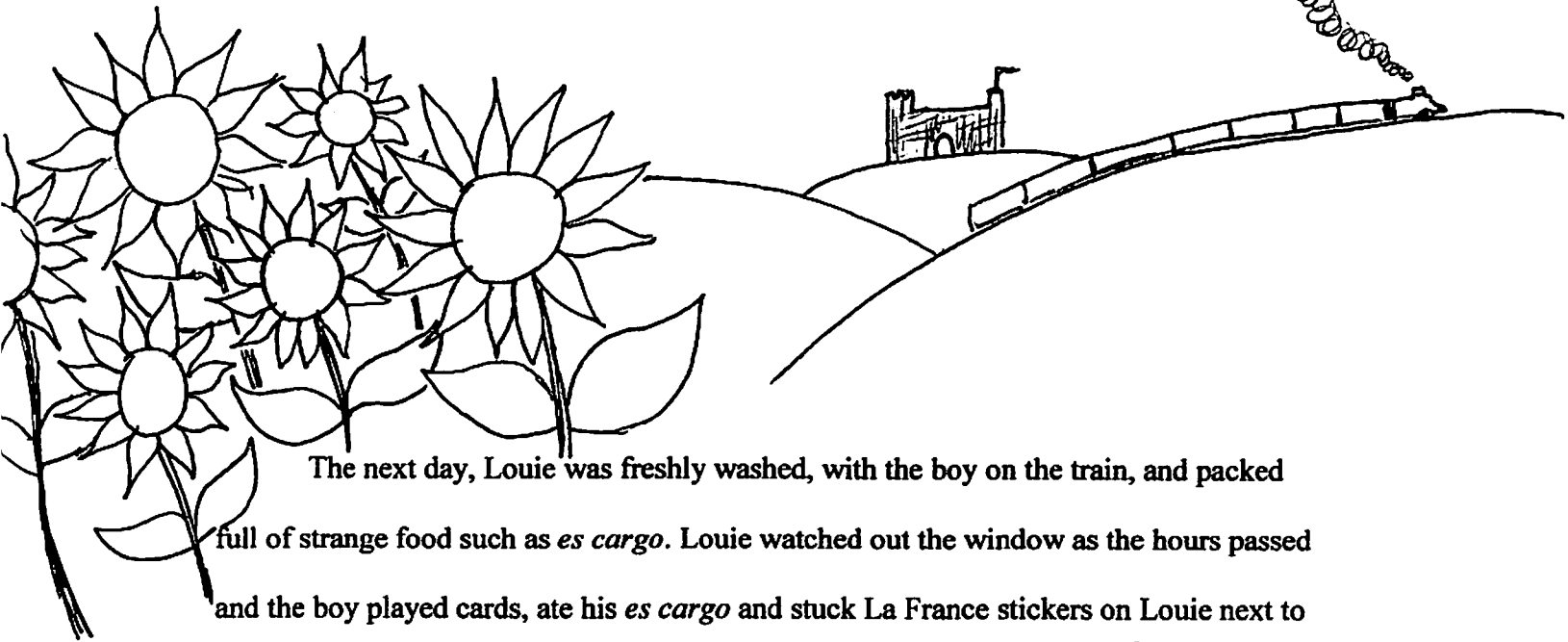
Louie was about to do the same when a boy's voice called out through the alley, "Jacque?! Jacque?!" The dog perked its ears as the boy came around the corner into the alley. "Jacque! There you are! I haven't been able to find you all day!" The boy gathered up Louie and the puppies and they began to march down the street.

Louie soon arrived at the boy's house with several puppies in tow. The boy called out, "Mama! I'm home and I found Jacque!" A rather large woman trundled down the stairs to the front hallway where Louie and the boy stood. "All the puppies were in this lunchbox," the boy showed his mother Louie.

"How wonderful," the boy's mother replied.

"Can I use this lunchbox for my trip tomorrow, Mama? Please?!" the boy begged, clutching Louie close to him.

"Sure, honey. Let me just give it a quick wash," she replied.

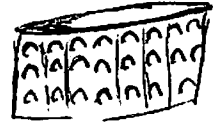
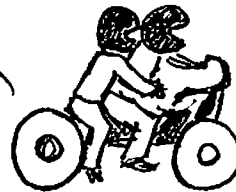


The next day, Louie was freshly washed, with the boy on the train, and packed full of strange food such as *es cargo*. Louie watched out the window as the hours passed and the boy played cards, ate his *es cargo* and stuck La France stickers on Louie next to his other decorations. They passed fields of sunflowers and old castles.

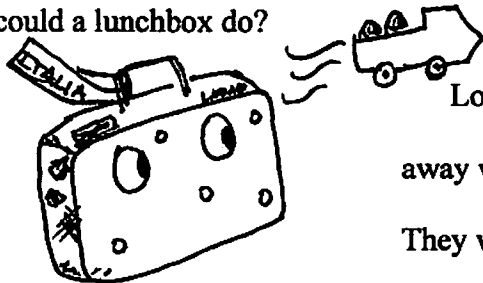
After many hours, Louie and the boy got off the train. "Ciao!" read the signs. A young man ran up to the boy. They greeted each other excitedly and the boy jumped on the back of the young man's scooter. They zoomed off into the new city.

The wind blew the boy's hair and all of a sudden, Louie flew off the scooter. Louie skidded on the cobblestone and bounced into the feet of a figure dressed all in black and white. The mime picked Louie up and silently carried him back to his house.

Glad to not be left alone in the foreign city, Louie snuggled into mime.

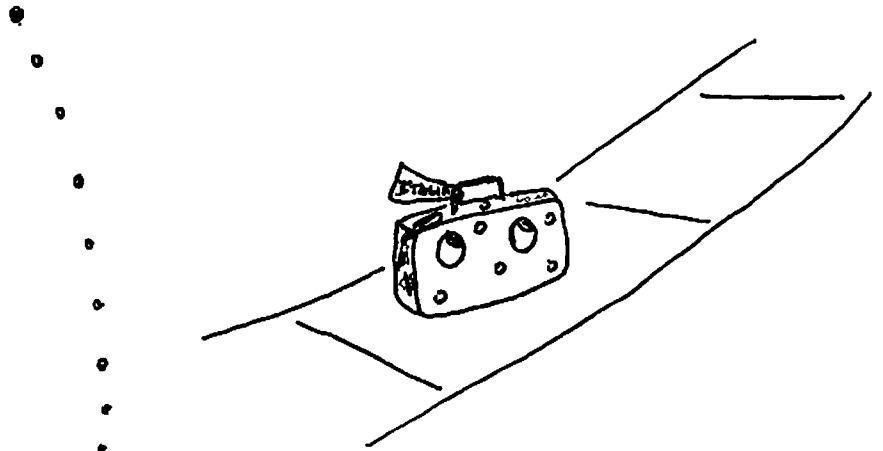
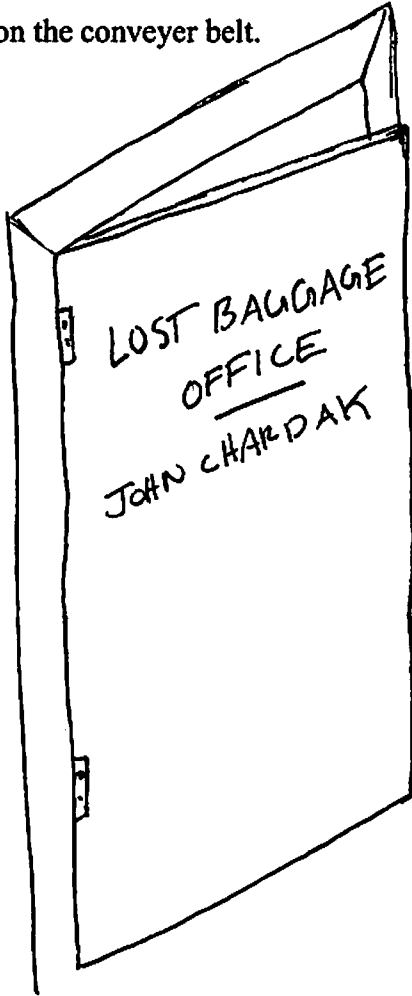


The next day, mime washed Louie, packed him full of pasta and salami and put him with a pile of other bags. The pile of bags told Louie that they would soon be traveling somewhere new. Sure enough, he and the mime piled into a car and drove to the airport. At the airport, the mime checked Louie with the rest of her baggage. Louie was thrown in a huge pile of luggage and tagged with a sticker that said "Italia- San Francisco." All of the other bags said "Italia- New York." They were then divided into separate piles and Lucia's bags were loaded onto a truck and wheeled away from Louie. "Oh no!" Louie thought "I'm supposed to be with them. What shall I do?" But what could a lunchbox do?



Louie was then thrown in another pile and wheeled away with other bags marked "Italia- San Francisco." They were all thrown into the bottom of an airplane.

After many hours Louie emerged from the darkness of the bottom of the airplane. He and the other bags were thrust onto a conveyer belt and the travelers came through and picked up their luggage. Nobody came to pick Louie up and he went round and round on the conveyer belt.

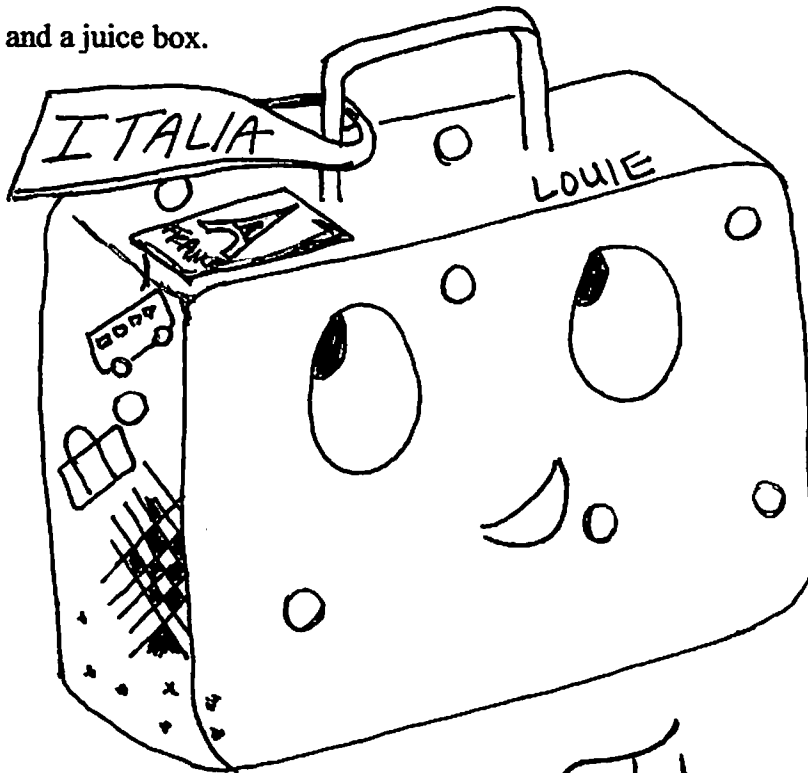


When he was the only bag left, a man in a uniform came by and picked Louie up. He walked over to an office. Louie read “Lost Baggage Office: John Chardak” on the plaque on the door. The man in the uniform tossed Louie into the empty room. Louie landed on the desk and sat dejected. He was “lost baggage” and felt lonely. “All I want is to find Isabel again” Louie thought.

“Hey, how’d you get here?” a voice asked from the doorway. Louie looked up as a man entered the office. “What was it she called you? L-Louis the Lunchbox! That was it.” Louie recognized the man who worked in the Lost Baggage Office as Isabel’s father. Mr. Chardak picked Louie up off the desk, “Well, we’ll get you home to Isabel as soon as possible; I get off work in twenty minutes.”

That night Louie rode home to his old house. Isabel was ecstatic to see Louie again. "I thought I'd lost you for good!" she cried out as she hugged Louie. "I'll never forget you anywhere again!" Isabel took a good look at Louie and noticed the drawing of the briefcase, the painting of the bus, the La France sticker, the Italia-San Francisco sticker and the teeth marks. "What adventures you must have had!"

Although Louie had had lots of fun all over the world, he was glad to be back home with his Isabel. No one was happier than Louie the next morning when he rode the bus with Isabel, full of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a banana, two sticks of string cheese and a juice box.



The End