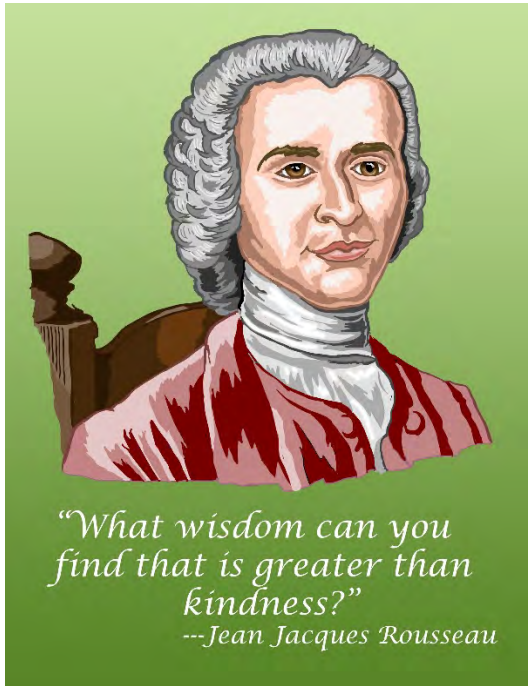


MAX and VOLTAIRE

Where is Voltaire?



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The Max and Voltaire Series™ Book Six

CHAPTER ONE

A WALK ALONG THE RIVER

“I’ll be away for just one week,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

“Don’t worry about your furry friends,” *Madame* Sweet reassures her. “I’ll take good care of them.”

“I’m sure they’ll be just fine,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie.

“I’m sure you’ll have a lovely time in New Delhi,” says *Madame* Sweet. “Many years ago, I traveled to India on vacation. I had a wonderful time.”

“I’m not sure I’ll see much of New Delhi,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie. “I only have one free day. I would like to see the Taj Mahal. It’s about four hours from New Delhi by car, in a town called Agra.”

“I hope you manage to visit the Taj Mahal,” says *Madame* Sweet. “I was lucky enough to visit the Taj Mahal many years ago. It’s a stunning white marble building which overlooks a reflecting pool. The tour guide told us that it took about 17 years to build. More than 1000 elephants were used to transport the construction materials. The Indian Emperor who built it for his wife must have loved her very much.”

Madame Rosemarie hears her doorbell ringing.

“That must be the taxi driver,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

“Have a wonderful time,” says *Madame* Sweet. “*Bon voyage.*”

“*Merci,*” replies *Madame* Rosemarie.

Madame Rosemarie gives *Madame* Sweet a hug and then bends down to pat her dog *Voltaire* and her four cats, *Max*, *Zoa*, *Tish*, and *Say What*. *Voltaire* is a mixed breed, medium-sized dog with curly white fur. *Max*, a large cat, is brown and beige with black stripes. *Zoa* is the female of the group. She is slender and has white fur. *Tish* has black fur with white patches on his forehead, chest, and the tip of his tail. *Say What* is a muscular, silver-colored cat.



Say What

Tish

Voltaire

Max

Zoa

“I’m leaving now,” announces *Madame* Rosemarie. “I expect you all to be on your best behavior and to listen to *Madame* Sweet.”

Of course we will behave ourselves, thinks Max. *Madame Sweet takes good care of us when Madame Rosemarie is away. We wouldn’t want to do anything to upset Madame Sweet.*

Madame Sweet is *Madame* Rosemarie’s next-door neighbor. They live in a small town in France called Ferney-Voltaire, near the Swiss border. *Madame* Rosemarie is an interpreter for the United Nations. Her two daughters are away at university. When *Madame* Rosemarie has to travel for her work, *Madame Sweet* often takes care of her dog and four cats.



I’ll miss Madame Rosemarie, thinks Voltaire. *I hope she comes home soon.*

I’ll keep an eye on things while Madame Rosemarie is away, thinks Max.

After *Madame* Rosemarie leaves, *Madame Sweet* takes Voltaire, Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What outside to play in the backyard. It’s a lovely spring day and the sun is shining. Max joined *Madame* Rosemarie’s household when he was a kitten. Max was living in a bakery in

town and needed a loving home. Over time, Max and the other kittens bonded and became friends.

Adopting Voltaire was a difficult decision for *Madame* Rosemarie. She had never taken care of a dog before and she wasn't sure how he would get along with her cats. But he needed a home. Voltaire and his feline companions figured out how to get along with each other and now they live together in harmony.

"Catch the ball, Voltaire," says *Madame* Sweet.

Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What are sitting in the backyard near the hedge watching Voltaire and *Madame* Sweet play ball.

"I really don't feel like sitting here," says Tish. "I'd rather be relaxing on the rug in the living room. But I know *Madame* Sweet likes to keep an eye on us. She gets nervous when she can't see us all together."

"When *Madame* Sweet goes back to her house, I think I'll go for a walk," declares Say What.

"That was fun," says *Madame* Sweet. "I have to go home now. I'll be back later to take you for a walk, Voltaire. Come, Voltaire, let's go back into the house. The kitty cats can stay in the garden and go inside later through the cat door."

Sometimes I wish I were a cat, thinks Voltaire. *Then I could use the cat door to come and go.*

After *Madame* Sweet goes home, Say What takes a walk in the neighborhood. He likes to see what's

going on. Max, Zoa and Tish go into the house to see what Voltaire is doing.

“*Bonjour* Voltaire,” says Max. “What are you doing?”

“*Bonjour* Max,” replies Voltaire. “I’m thinking.”

“What are you thinking about?” asks Max.

“I was thinking about the special place where *Madame* Rosemarie takes me for walks,” replies Voltaire. “We get into the car and she drives to a large field. I don’t have to wear my leash there. I can just run and run. I meet other dogs and sometimes we run around together. But *Madame* Sweet doesn’t have a car, so we just go for short walks around the neighborhood and I have to wear my leash.”

“When *Madame* Rosemarie comes back, she’ll take you for long walks,” says Max. “In the meantime, you can go for short walks.”

“Yes,” says Voltaire. “But it’s not the same. I love running in the fields and splashing around in the stream near the walking path.”

“What are you going to do today, Max?” asks Voltaire.

“I’m going to go for a walk with Zoa,” answers Max. “She wants to watch the sheep grazing near Voltaire’s *château*. I’m going to keep her company.”



“Last week, I was walking near the field next to Voltaire’s *château* where the sheep graze,” says Zoa. “One of the baby sheep came to say *bonjour* to me. Her fur was white, just like mine. Maybe she thought I was a baby sheep. When her mother saw me, she started running toward us. At first, I was a little scared and started to run away, but the baby sheep followed me. I stopped and stood behind the baby sheep. When the mother sheep realized I was not going to hurt her baby, she bent down and nuzzled my back. Now we’re friends.”

“I am looking forward to meeting your sheep friends,” says Max.

“I’ll stay here with you, Voltaire, until *Madame Sweet* comes to take you for a walk,” says Tish.

A little while later, Voltaire and Tish hear the front door open.

“Voltaire,” calls *Madame Sweet*. “Are you ready for your walk?”

After Voltaire and *Madame Sweet* leave, Tish goes into the living room and jumps up on the couch.

I think I’ll relax for a while, decides Tish. *It’s so quiet in the house. Maybe I’ll just take a little nap.*

Early the next morning, *Madame Sweet* comes over to *Madame Rosemarie’s* house to check on Voltaire and his furry pals, and feed them. There’s a woman with her.

I wonder who the lady with Madame Sweet is,

thinks Voltaire. *I haven't seen her before.*

Madame Sweet introduces her friend *Madame Odette* to Voltaire, Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What.



“Voltaire,” says *Madame Sweet*, “*Madame Odette* will take you for a long walk today. I have a doctor’s appointment. She’ll come back to get you later this morning. *Madame Odette* has a nice dog named Polo and you can all walk together.”

That sounds great, thinks Voltaire. *I really wanted to go for a long walk.*

Later that morning, *Madame Sweet* arrives back at *Madame Rosemarie’s* house with her friend *Madame Odette*. *Madame Sweet* puts on Voltaire’s leash and takes him outside to *Madame Odette’s* car. Polo is sitting in the back seat. Polo and Voltaire look at one another. Polo has shaggy brown fur and is about the same size as Voltaire. *Madame Odette* takes Polo out of the car and introduces him to Voltaire.

“I think they’ll get along,” says *Madame Sweet*. “Voltaire is very well behaved. He went to dog school.”

“Why don’t we let them sniff each other for a little

while,” suggests *Madame Odette*. “If all goes well, I’ll take Voltaire and Polo for a walk along the river in the woods.”



Polo seems like a friendly dog, thinks Voltaire.

I like Voltaire, thinks Polo. He’s friendly and easygoing.

“You are right,” says *Madame Odette*. “Polo and Voltaire seem to have hit it off.”

Madame Odette helps Polo and Voltaire into the backseat of her car and drives off, waving to *Madame Sweet*.

Tish has been watching from a safe distance.

I hope Voltaire has a nice time, thinks Tish. As for me, it’s time for another nap.

“Wake up, Tish,” says Max. “Where’s Voltaire?”

“Voltaire went for a walk with *Madame Sweet*’s friend and her dog, Polo,” replies Tish. “I’ve never met her friend before. *Madame Sweet* had a doctor’s appointment today and couldn’t take Voltaire for a walk. I’m sure he’ll be home soon.”



Madame Odette stops the car near a wooded area. She puts leashes on Polo and Voltaire, and takes them out of the car.

“This is one of my favorite places to walk,” says *Madame* Odette. “I’m sure you’ll like it, Voltaire.”

Madame Odette, Polo and Voltaire enter the woods along a well-worn path and soon come across a narrow, shallow river.

“I don’t see any other people walking their dogs, so I’ll take your leashes off,” *Madame* Odette tells Polo and Voltaire. “You can run around for a little while. Oh! I left my cell phone in my car. I’ll be right back.”

Madame Odette walks back to her car. As she opens the car door, *Madame* Odette hears her phone ringing. She picks it up and starts a conversation.

“Let’s go this way,” says Polo.

Voltaire follows Polo, who seems to know his way around. They walk along the path by the river and come to a clearing in the forest. Suddenly, Polo starts to run. Voltaire chases after him, but Polo is too fast and he disappears.

Where did he go? Voltaire asks himself.

Voltaire keeps looking for Polo, but he can’t find him.



I'd better go back and look for Madame Odette,
thinks Voltaire.

After walking for a while, Voltaire sits down.

I'm not sure which way to go, thinks Voltaire.
Walking in a forest is very confusing.



"I hear the door opening," says Max. "That must be *Madame Sweet* and Voltaire."

When *Madame Sweet* enters *Madame Rosemarie's* house, she sees Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What standing in the hallway.

"I'm glad you're all here," says *Madame Sweet* with a worried expression on her face. "Let's go to my house. I'll feed you there and you will all spend the night with me."

I wonder what's going on, thinks Max. *And where is Voltaire?*

Madame Sweet opens the door to her house and hears her telephone ringing. She dashes over to pick up the phone.

"*Bonjour,*" says *Madame Sweet*. "I'm glad you found Polo. You must do everything you can to find Voltaire. I feel horrible. You must find him!"

"Don't worry," *Madame Sweet* tells her furry friends after she gets off the phone. "*Madame Odette* told me that she has organized a search party.

I'm sure they'll find Voltaire soon. Oh dear, this is terrible."

Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What look at each other with deep concern.

"Where do you suppose Voltaire has gone?" whispers Tish.

"I don't know," sighs Max quietly.