



Sylvette, aged 11 | painted by Honor in Dieulefit.



### CHAPTER THREE

## Dieulefit

After our pirate Loulou landed us on the mainland, we took a train up through the Rhone valley, full of denuded fruit trees — peaches, apricots and a patchwork of vines growing in rows — to Montelimar. From there we took a bus to Dieulefit, a village 28 kilometers away from Montelimar, which was enclosed by mountains like a circus pit surrounded by tiers of seats.

The bus drove through a narrow valley in the Drôme climbing slowly up, past Poet-Laval, a little medieval village perched on top of a hill, to the foot of the mountains and Dieulefit, meaning 'God made it'. Approaching it there is a big cemetery followed by an imposing avenue of chestnut trees, opening out onto a large war memorial. Crossing a high bridge over a tiny strip of river below called the Jabron,