

## CHAPTER 1

### Extraordinary Murders

I was staying in Paris during the spring and part of the summer of 18#. There I met a Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin. This young gentleman came from a noble family but he himself was not very rich. He was not really interested in money. He lived frugally. Books were his only luxury.

We first met at an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre. By some strange coincidence we were both looking for the same book. After that, we met many more times.

He told me about the history of his family. I was astonished by the extent of his reading. When did he find the time to read so many books? And I was fascinated by his vivid imagination.

It was decided that we should live together while I was in Paris. We found a big, old, deserted house in the Faubourg St. Germain. As I had more money than Dupin, I offered to pay the rent.

Our isolation was perfect. We admitted no visitors. Nobody knew the address of the house where we lived.

For some strange reason, Dupin loved the night and I began to share his enthusiasm. Of course the night did not last forever, so when the morning came we closed all the shutters on the building to simulate the conditions of darkness. Then we lit two or three candles. This was to have enough light to read or write or simply talk. We sat in the house all day until the clock indicated that the true night was coming. Then we went out into the streets continuing our conversation. We walked far and wide in the great city, looking for things to stimulate our imagination. There was an infinity of mental excitement in simply observing the world.

It was during these walks that I discovered and began to admire Dupin's incredible analytic ability. He told me that he could see directly into men's hearts and minds. At first I did not believe him. But then something happened to change my mind. One night we were walking down a long dirty street near the Palais Royal. I was looking at a newspaper when I noticed one particular story:

### EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS

This morning at about three o'clock, a number of terrible screams awoke the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch. The screams were coming from the fourth floor of a house in the Rue Morgue. Only two people lived there: Madame L'Esplanaye and her daughter Mademoiselle Camille L'Esplanaye. After several attempts, neighbours finally entered the house together with two policemen. By this time there were no more screams. But as the group ran up the stairs, they heard two more angry voices coming from the upper part of the house. However, when they got to the fourth floor there was again silence. They divided up into small groups, moving from room to room. They finally arrived at a back room. The scene they discovered there was almost too horrible to describe.

The apartment was in great disorder. The furniture was broken and the bed lay in the middle of the floor. On a chair was a razor covered in blood. Bloody lengths of human hair lay in the fireplace. On the floor there were three large silver spoons, an ear-ring and

two bags containing four thousand francs in gold. The drawers of a desk which stood in one corner were open and papers were scattered about.

Under the bed was an open safe with the key still in the door. It contained a few letters and other papers but nothing of any importance.

There was no sign of Madame L'Espanaye. But somebody noticed there was an extraordinary quantity of soot in the fireplace. And so they searched the chimney. There they found the dead body of the daughter. The body was quite warm. A doctor examined it and found many bruises and cuts. On the throat there were several dark bruises and finger marks. This suggested only one thing. Strangulation.

They searched the rest of the house but found nothing. Finally they went into the small garden at the back of the house. There they found the body of the old lady. Her throat was completely cut and when two men tried to raise her, the head fell off. The body itself was completely mutilated. It didn't look human.

No one has yet found a clue that could help to solve this mystery.

## CHAPTER 2

### **The Testimonies**

The next day's paper had the following additional details:

#### *The Tragedy of the Rue Morgue.*

Police have questioned many individuals about this horrible incident. The truth behind the murders, however, still remains a mystery.

Below we have printed the testimonies of the neighbours and witnesses:

Pauline Dubourg, Madame L'Espanaye's laundress, says that she has known both the victims for three years. The old lady and her daughter seemed to have a good relationship. They were very affectionate to each other. They paid her very well. She didn't know what Madame L'Espanaye's job was. She never met anyone in the house when she came for the washing. They didn't have a servant. There was no furniture in the building apart from that in the fourth floor apartment where they lived.

Pierre Moreau, tobacconist, says that he has sold tobacco to Madame L'Espanaye for almost four years. He was born in the area and has always lived there. The victims moved to the house six years ago. The two of them lived a very quiet life. He believed they had money. The only people who entered the house were the old lady and her daughter, a porter once or twice and a doctor eight or ten times.

Other neighbours said similar things. There were never any visitors to the house. Nobody knew if Madame L'Espanaye had any relatives. The shutters of the front windows were usually closed and those on the windows at the back of the house were always closed with one exception: the large room at the back on the fourth floor. It was a good house and wasn't very old.

Isidore Muset, policeman, says that someone called him and told him to go to the house. There he found about twenty or thirty people at the gates. They were trying to get in. He opened the gates easily with a piece of metal. The screams continued until the gates

were open. Then they stopped. They seemed to be screams of a person (or people) in great agony. They were loud and long. The party went upstairs. From the first floor they could hear two voices. They seemed to be arguing. One was quite low, the other much higher - a very strange voice. The first voice was that of a Frenchman. Not a woman. The other voice was that of a foreigner but he could not tell if it was a man or a woman. He thought the language was Spanish but Mr Muset does not speak Spanish.

Henri Duval a neighbour, says that he was one of the party who first entered the house. In general he agrees with the testimony of Muset. But he thinks that the high voice was that of an Italian although he does not speak Italian. He is certain it was not French. He could not be sure that it was a man's voice. Possibly a woman. He knew Madame L'Esplanaye and her daughter. He was sure that the high voice did not belong to either of them.

Monsieur Odenheimer, restaurant owner, comes from Amsterdam and does not speak French. He was passing the house when he heard the screams. They lasted for about ten minutes. He was one of those who entered the building. But he was sure that the high voice was that of a man - a Frenchman. He didn't know what it was saying. The words were loud and quick, spoken in fear and some anger. The voice was harsh. The low voice said several times "Heaven help us!" and once "My God".

Adolphe Le Bon, clerk to Mignaud and Son, says that at 12 noon he accompanied Madame L'Esplanaye to her house with the 4,000 francs in two bags. He did not see anyone in the street at that time.

William Bird, tailor, is an Englishman. He has lived in Paris for two years. He was one of the first to go up the stairs. He heard the voices and also a sound, like the sound of people fighting. The shrill voice was very loud. He believes it was German although he does not speak the language. Perhaps the voice of a woman.

Four of the above-named witnesses also said that the door of the room where they found the body of Mademoiselle L'Esplanaye was locked from the inside. Everything was perfectly silent. When they opened the door there was nobody there. The windows of both the back and front room were closed and locked from inside. A door between the two rooms was closed but not locked. The door from the front room into the corridor was locked with the key on the inside. A small room in the front of the house at the end of the corridor was open. This room was full of old beds and boxes. The police searched the whole house.

Some of the witnesses say that only three minutes passed between the time they heard the angry voices and the moment they forced the door of the room. Others think the interval was as long as five minutes.

Alfonso Garcia, undertaker, says that he lives in the Rue Morgue. He was one of the party who entered the house but he did not go upstairs. He was too afraid. He heard the voices arguing but he could not hear what they said. The low voice was that of a Frenchman. The high voice was an Englishman. He is sure of this although he does not understand English.

Alberto Montanit baker, says he was one of the first to go upstairs. He heard the voices clearly. The low voice was that of a Frenchman. He thinks that the shrill voice was speaking Russian. He has never spoken to anyone from Russia.

Several witnesses said that the chimneys of all the rooms on the fourth floor were too small for a human being to enter them. The apartment had no back door for a killer to make his escape while the party were coming up the stairs. The body of Mademoiselle

L'Españaye was so firmly pushed up the chimney that it took four or five of the party to remove it.

Paul Dumas, doctor, says that he saw the bodies in the early morning. They were both lying in the room where the daughter was found. The young lady's body was covered in cuts and bruises. The throat was greatly marked. The face was discoloured and the tongue was partially bitten through. According to M. Dumas, the girl's death was the result of strangulation. The body of the mother was horribly mutilated. All the bones of the right arm were broken. The whole body was badly bruised and discoloured. It was not possible to say what the cause of these injuries was. Possibly a heavy wooden club or an iron bar or a chair. Any large, heavy object could produce these results in the hands of a powerful man. But it would be impossible for a woman. The head of the old lady was separate from the body. Her throat was cut, probably with a razor.

This is the strangest murder case that Paris has ever seen. As usual, the police know nothing. But there is not one single clue to help them.

## CHAPTER 3

### **At the Scene of the Crime**

The story of the murders in the Rue Morgue continued in the evening edition of the newspaper. "It says here that the police have arrested and imprisoned Adolphe Le Bon, the clerk from the bank," I said.

"The Parisian police are clever, but no more than that," Dupin replied. "There is no method in the way they work, other than the method of the moment. The results they get are surprising but most of the time they are obtained simply thanks to diligence and hard work. But when these qualities are not enough, their strategies fail. Vidocq, for example, was a good policeman. But he always made the same mistake. His investigations were always too intense. He couldn't see clearly because he held the object too close. Perhaps he saw one or two details clearly but in doing this he couldn't see the object as a whole. It is possible for an investigation to be too profound. The truth is not always at the bottom of a well. In fact, I believe that the truth is often at the surface of things.

"As for these murders," Dupin continued, "we will go and see the house with our own eyes. I know the Police Commissioner. It will not be difficult to obtain permission."

Dupin obtained permission and we went immediately to the Rue Morgue. It was late in the afternoon when we arrived at the house. It was an ordinary Parisian house. Before we went inside we walked around the building. Dupin examined the whole area with great attention. Then we entered the house.

We went upstairs, to the room where they had found the body of Mademoiselle L'Españaye. To my surprise, the bodies of the two women were still there. Dupin examined everything including the dead bodies. We then went into the other rooms, accompanied by a policeman. We stayed in the house until it began to get dark. Then we began the journey home. On the way home Dupin stopped for a moment to visit the offices of one of the daily newspapers.

My companion did not speak about the murders again until about noon the next day.

"Did you notice anything peculiar at the scene of the murders?" he asked me.

"No, nothing peculiar." I said. "Only the things I read about in the newspaper."

"The newspapers know nothing!" he declared. "It seems to me that they consider this case insoluble for the very reason that renders it easy to solve. I mean the bizarre character of the murders. The police cannot understand the fact that there is no obvious motive for the atrocity of the murders. They are also confused by the angry voices because there was no one upstairs apart from the body of Mademoiselle L'Esplanade. And there was no way to leave the building apart from the stairs - the stairs that the investigating party of neighbours were going up. The disorder of the room; the incredible violence of the murders; the mutilation of the old lady's body. These things are incomprehensible to the police. But the police have made a mistake. They think the case is difficult when in fact it is only very strange. In this case we must not ask 'What has happened?' We must ask 'What has happened that has never happened before?'"

I looked at Dupin in silent astonishment.

"I am waiting for a person to come here. I don't think he is responsible for these terrible murders but he is involved in them in some way. I look for the man here - in this room - every moment. Perhaps he will not arrive but the probability is that he will."

Dupin continued, looking at the wall as he spoke.

"We know that the witnesses heard two voices arguing and that these voices were not the voices of the victims. And if they are not the voices of the victims they must be - or one of them must be - the voice of the killer. Let us now consider the testimony. Did you notice anything peculiar about it?"

"Well, all the witnesses said the low voice was that of a Frenchman. But they all had different opinions about the other voice."

"Yes, that was the testimony they gave. But it was not the peculiarity of the testimony. The witnesses, as you say, agree about the identity of the low voice. But regarding the high voice, the strange thing is not the fact that they disagreed. The strange thing is that each of them, an Englishman, a Spaniard, an Italian, a Hollander and a Frenchman thought it was the voice of a foreigner. They were all sure that it was not the voice of one of their countrymen. But each of these witnesses also says that the voice was speaking a language that they do not know.

The Frenchman says it was the voice of a Spaniard, but he does not speak Spanish. The Hollander does not speak French but says that the high voice was that of a Frenchman. The Englishman thinks that it was the voice of a German and does not understand German. The Spaniard is sure that it was the voice of an Englishman but he does not know English. The Italian believes that it was the voice of a Russian but he has never spoken to anyone from Russia."

Dupin continued. "From these conflicting testimonies we can conclude that the voice was very strange. In addition, one witness says the voice is harsh rather than shrill. And two others say it is quick and unequal. No witness could distinguish any words it said.

"I do not know," continued Dupin, "if this is easy for you to understand, but I tell you now that the part of the testimony regarding the two voices is enough to enable us to find the solution to this mystery"

## CHAPTER 4

### **The Mystery Unfolds**

Dupin continued, "Let us now imagine that we are in the room in the Rue Morgue. What is the first thing we should look for? The way the murderers escaped. Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter were not killed by ghosts. So how did the murderers escape? Let us now examine the possible means of exit. One thing is clear. When the party came up the stairs, the assassins were either in the room where they found Mademoiselle L'Espanaye or the room next to it. So we have only two rooms to look for exits. The police have made a complete search of the apartment. But when we were there, I decided to make my own search.

"Both doors going from the rooms into the corridor were locked with the keys inside. Then there are the chimneys. As we have already seen, these are too small to permit a person to climb up them. In fact they are too small to permit a cat to climb up them. So the only possible exit that remains are the windows. The murderers couldn't escape through the windows at the front of the house because somebody in the street would see them. Therefore they passed through the windows in the back room.

"There are two windows in this room. One of them is completely visible. I examined this window and found that it was nailed shut. It was impossible to raise it. Then I examined the other window. It too was nailed shut. The police concluded from this that the murderers did not use the windows to escape. Even if they did manage to raise the windows they could not replace the nail again from the outside. So the police did not even try to remove the nail from the second window. But I knew that the windows were the only means of exit.

"I went to the first window and with difficulty I took the nail out. Once the nail was out it was easy to raise the window. But the police were right. It was impossible to replace this nail from the outside. Then I turned to the other window. It looked exactly the same as the first. Once again I pulled the nail. But when I took it out, I saw that what I had in my hand was only a part of the nail. I raised the window and saw that the bottom part of the nail remained in the window sill. The nail was broken and I saw that the fracture was very old. Now I understood everything. This window only appeared to be locked. And when the assassins closed it from the outside, the nail once again appeared secure. The police didn't see this because they didn't try the second window. They assumed from its appearance that it too was securely locked.

"The next question is how the murderers got down from the fourth floor to the ground. Before we went up to Madame L'Espanaye's apartment, I had a walk around the building. Less than two metres from the window I have just spoken about, there is a lightning rod which runs to the ground. From this rod it is impossible to reach the window itself. But then there are the shutters on the windows. These shutters are very interesting. They are in the form of a single door, but the top part is composed of horizontal wooden bars which provide excellent hand-holds. Each shutter is about a metre wide, which means that if it is extended fully back to the wall, the shutter of our window is less than a metre from the lightning rod. It is possible that someone with great strength and agility could jump from the lightning rod to the shutter. Then he could use his feet to push himself from the wall and close the shutter. And if the window was open he could even enter the room.

"But after all I have said, I want you to consider the extraordinary agility necessary to do this. It is possible but - and here is the important point - you would need to have an almost animal-like agility to do it.

"Now we must put together the two peculiar facts we have. The first is this act of animal-like agility that I have just spoken about. The second is the extremely peculiar voice that the witnesses spoke about, the voice that was both shrill and harsh, and also unequal. And of course you remember that none of the witnesses could agree about its country of origin."

At that point I felt that I almost understood what Dupin was saying but I could not make the final connection.

"You see," Dupin continued, "that I have moved the focus of my investigation from how the assassins got out to how they got in. Because I believe they used the same route in both cases. But now let us consider the inside of the apartment. Here, the peculiar thing is why the assassins did not take the gold. Almost all the 4,000 francs that Monsieur Mignaud talked about were in bags on the floor. This money cannot be the motive. It is simply a coincidence that the money was delivered to the house on the same day as the murders. Stranger coincidences than this happen every day of our lives. If the gold was the real motive, then the murderer must be a complete idiot. It is impossible to believe that after murdering the two women, he forgot to take the gold.

"So now we have three points: the strange voice, the incredible agility and the absence of any motive for the murders."

## CHAPTER 5

### "Caught"

But let us look now at the murders themselves. Here is a woman strangled to death and then pushed up into a chimney. Would an ordinary murderer push his victim up a chimney? Don't you think that it is a bit excessive? A little absurd even? Do you think that it is something a normal human being would do?

"Remember also that it took four men to pull her down from the chimney. The murderer must be incredibly strong. And there is other evidence to suggest this almost superhuman strength. On the fireplace there were several lengths - very thick lengths - of human hair. Now you and I know that it is extremely difficult to pull even twenty or thirty hairs together from the human head. But our murderer pulled perhaps half a million hairs from the head of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye. And then the throat of the old lady was not simply cut: the head was completely separated from the body. But the instrument the murderer used was a simple razor. Then we must also consider the terrible ferocity of these actions.

"Now we almost have a complete picture of the murderer: incredibly agile with superhuman strength, brutally ferocious but without motive, inhuman in his reasoning and actions and with an extremely strange voice that is foreign to the ears of men from many different countries. What is your opinion?"

"A madman," I said. "Some maniac escaped from a psychiatric hospital."

"An interesting idea," said Dupin, "but madmen come from some nation. It is true their language is often incoherent but it does contain recognisable words. And the hair of madmen is not like the hair I now hold in my hand. I found this piece of hair in Madame

L'Españaye's hand. What do you think?"

"Dupin!" I said, completely shocked; "this is no human hair."

"I didn't say that it was," said Dupin. "but before we decide its true nature I want you to look at this drawing. It is a facsimile drawing of the bruises and fingermarks that were found on the throat of Mademoiselle L'Españaye."

"You see that this drawing gives us the idea that the hands of the murderer easily encircled the throat. They did not move until she was dead. Now, take this cylinder of wood which is approximately the diameter of the throat and wrap the drawing around it."

I followed Dupin's instructions.

"Now I want you to try to place your fingers over the fingermarks of the murderer."

I tried to do this but it was impossible. The hands on the paper were too big, the fingers too long.

"This," I said, "is the mark of no human hand."

"Now read this article that I found in a book on ethology."

I took the book that Dupin offered me and read. It was a detailed description of the large orangoutang of the East Indian islands. I knew very well the beast's enormous size, its incredible strength and ferocity and its capacity to imitate human sounds and actions. I now understood completely the horrors of the murders in the Rue Morgue.

"The description of the fingers is exactly the same as those in the drawing," I said. "The orang-outang is the only animal that could make these marks. Also the hair that you showed me is identical to that of the beast described in the book. But I cannot understand the details of the mystery. For example, the fact that there were two voices arguing and one of them was clearly that of a Frenchman."

"This is true," said Dupin, "and we also know that it was the voice of the Frenchman who said the words 'My God!'. Certainly this Frenchman knew about the murders. It is probably, however, that he was innocent of the bloody act itself. I imagine that the orang-outang escaped from him and that he followed it to the house in the Rue Morgue. But after the confusion of the incident I do not believe that he recaptured it. It is still free. But this is just my intuition. If the Frenchman is innocent of the murders, the advertisement which I left at the office of Le Monde last night will bring him to our house."

He gave me a newspaper and I read:

### CAUGHT

*In the Bois du Boulogne early in the morning (of the morning after the murder) a very large red orang-outang. The owner of the animal (believed to be a sailor from a Maltese ship) may come to collect it at No. - Rue - , Faubourg St. Germain.*

"How could you possibly know," I asked, "that the man was a sailor, and from a Maltese ship?"

"I do not know it," said Dupin. "I am not sure of it. But I found this piece of ribbon at the bottom of the lightning rod. It is the type of ribbon that sailors use to tie their hair in a ponytail. If you look at the knot you will see that it is the kind that only sailors can tie. And this particular knot is peculiar to the Maltese."



"Our man is innocent of the murders," Dupin continued, "but he knows about them. Certainly he will hesitate before replying to the advertisement - and before coming here and asking for the orang-outang. But he will also think: I am poor; my orang-outang is of great value - particularly to someone poor like me; why should I be afraid? Why should I lose it because of some imagined danger? After all, the beast was found in the Bois du Boulogne - a very great distance from the scene of the murders. And no-one could possibly think that an animal was responsible for them. Above all, the advertiser knows me. I don't know how much he knows about the atrocity, but if I do not collect the animal I will attract suspicion, both to it and to me. And I do not want to do that. Therefore I will answer the advertisement and get the orang-outang back and keep it with me until everyone has forgotten this horrible incident.'

## CHAPTER 6

### A Sailor's Story

At that moment we heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs. But now the visitor seemed to hesitate and we heard him going back down. Dupin was moving to the door when we heard him coming back up. This time he did not hesitate but came to our door and knocked.

"Come in," said Dupin in a friendly voice. A man entered. He was a sailor, a tall, muscular man.

"Good evening," he said.

"Sit down, my friend," said Dupin. "I imagine you are here for the orang-outang. A remarkable beast. How old is he?"

"I don't know exactly," the sailor replied, "maybe four or five. Have you got him here?"

"Oh no," said Dupin. "We cannot keep him here. He is at a stable in the Rue Dubourg. You can get him in the morning."

"Thank you," said the sailor. "I will of course pay you a reward for finding him."

"That's very kind of you," said Dupin. "Now let me see. What shall I ask for this service? Ah yes, I know. My reward shall be this. You will tell me everything you know about these murders in the Rue Morgue."

As he said these words, Dupin walked slowly to the door and locked it, and put the key in his pocket. He then took a pistol from his pocket and placed it calmly on the table.

The sailor fell back into his chair, trembling with fear. His face went as white as death itself. He did not say a word.

"My friend," said Dupin in a kind voice. "There is no need to be alarmed. I know that you are innocent of the murders in the Rue Morgue. But you must admit that you are involved in them in some way. You have nothing to hide.

But every principle of honour obliges you to confess all that you know. An innocent man is now in prison, charged with these murders. You must tell us who the real perpetrator is."

"I will tell you all I know about this business, but you will not believe me. I do not really believe it myself. But I am innocent."

The sailor was silent for a moment. Then he began to tell the story.

"It began on the island of Borneo. Our ship stopped there on the way to India. A friend of mine captured an orang-outang but he fell sick and died. I became the beast's master. I took it with me on board the ship, where it stayed until we got back to Paris. Then I hid it in my apartment. I knew that it was valuable so I decided to sell it.

"The next evening I went out with some sailor- friends. When I got back in the early morning I could not believe what I saw. There, sitting in my chair, was the orang-outang. Its face was covered in shaving foam and in its hand was my razor. It sat there looking at itself in the mirror. I realized that the beast was trying to shave. But all I could think about was the razor in its hand. I was terrified. For a minute I didn't know what to do. Then I took the whip that I used to control the orang-outang. When he saw it he was afraid, but before I could do anything he ran out of the room and down the stairs, and then jumped out of an open window into the street.

"I followed the orang-outang down street after street. The city was deserted. It was three o'clock in the morning and everyone was in bed. Finally I trapped it in an alley at the rear of the Rue Morgue. But then the beast saw a light shining from the open window of Madame L'Espanaye's room on the fourth floor of her house. Running to the building, it saw the lightning rod, which it climbed with unbelievable agility. Then, with one long arm, it grasped the shutter which was against the wall and used it to swing itself into the room.

"At first I was happy. The beast was trapped and it would be easy to capture it now. But I was afraid for the occupants of the house. So I decided to follow it. With some difficulty, I climbed up the lightning rod, but when I got to the level of the window I could not reach the shutter. I could only look into the room. I was horrified by what I saw and heard. The two women were screaming. I saw the orang-outang take Madame L'Espanaye by the hair and cut her throat with the razor. The movement of its arm was so powerful that the woman's head was almost separated from her body. On seeing her blood, it became furious and jumped upon the girl, putting its hands around her throat until she too was dead. Just then, it saw me through the window and was suddenly afraid.

"It became agitated and started throwing the furniture around the room. I could see it wanted to hide the evidence of its terrible acts, so it took the body of the girl and pushed it up the chimney. Then it turned to the body of the old woman which it threw out of the window.

"As the orang-outang approached the window I was terrified. I climbed back down the lightning rod and ran home as fast as I could. I wanted to get as far away from the beast as possible."

"So the words that the party on the stairs heard were your exclamations of horror," I said.

"And the shrill, harsh voice was that of the beast," Dupin added.

And that is almost the end of the story. Dupin and I went to the police and told them everything. They immediately released Adolphe Le Bon, the clerk from the bank. And as for the sailor - well, he finally caught his orang-outang and sold it to the city zoo for a very large sum of money.

- THE END -

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