



# The Murders in the Rue Morgue

## Part Five

took some, why didn't he take the best — or take all? And why would he take a few clothes and leave all the money? Nearly the whole amount brought from the bank was found, in bags, on the floor.

"I want you therefore to forget the idea in the minds of the police, the idea that a desire for money was what they call the motive, the reason for the murders. This idea rose<sup>1</sup> in their minds when they heard how the money was brought to the house three days before the killings. But this is only what we call a coincidence — two things happening<sup>2</sup> at the same time, but only by chance and not because of some cause, some cause that brought them together. Coincidences happen to all of us every day of our lives. If the gold was<sup>3</sup> the reason for the murders, the killer must have been quite a fool\* to forget and leave it there.

"No. I don't think the desire for money was the reason for the killings. I think that there was no reason for these killings...except, perhaps, fear.

"Now let us look at the murders themselves. A girl is killed by powerful hands around her neck, then the body is placed in the opening over the fireplace\*, head down. No murders we usually hear about are like this. There is something here that does not fit our ideas of human actions, even when we think of men of the most terrible\* kind. Think, also, of the great strength which was necessary to put the body where it was found. The strength of several men was needed to pull it down!

"There are other signs of this fearful strength. In front of the fireplace some gray human hair was lying, thick pieces of it, pulled from the head of the old woman. You saw the hair on the floor yourself, and you saw the blood and skin with it. You know, and I know, that great force is necessary to pull out even twenty or thirty hairs at one time. A much

THAT UNUSUAL FRENCHMAN, August Dupin, was still explaining to me how he found the answer to the question of who murdered the two women in the house on the Rue Morgue. We now knew that it was indeed possible for the killer to go in and again out one of the windows and still leave them both firmly closed, locked on the inside. And I agreed with Dupin when he said that only someone with very special strength and training could have gone up the lightning-rod\* on the side of the house and thus entered the window. But who the murderer was, we still did not know.

"Let us look again," said Dupin, "at that room on the fourth floor. Let us now go back, in our minds, to the room we saw yesterday. Consider its appearance. Clothes had been thrown around the room; yet it seemed that none had been taken. The old woman and her daughter almost never left the house. They had little use for many clothes. Those that were found in the room were as good as any they had. If the killer

greater force was needed to pull out hundreds of hairs at one time. Also, the head of the old lady was cut almost completely from the body. Why? To kill a woman with a knife\* it is not necessary to cut her head off!

"If, now, added to all these things, we add also the condition of the room, we have put together the following ideas: strength more than human; wildness less than human; a murder without reason; horror beyond human understanding; and a voice which made no sound that men could understand. What result, then, have you come to? What have I helped you to see?"

A cold feeling went up and down my back as Dupin asked me the question. "A man...someone who has lost his mind," I said. "A madman!! A madman!! Only a madman could have done these murders!"

"I think not. In some ways your idea is a good one. But madmen are from one country or another. Their cries may be terrible, but they are made of words, and some of the words can be understood.

"Here! Look!<sup>4</sup> Look at this hair. I took it from the fingers of the old woman. The hair of a madman is not like this. Tell me what you think it is."

"Dupin! This hair is...this hair is not human hair!!"

"I did not say that it is. But, before we decide this matter, look at the picture I had made here on this piece of paper. It is a picture of the marks on the daughter's neck. The doctors said these marks were made by fingers. Let me spread<sup>5</sup> the paper on the table before us. Try to put your fingers, all at the same time, on the picture, so that your hand and its fingers will fit\* the picture of the marks on the daughter's neck."

"I cannot!"

"No. But perhaps we are not doing this in the right way. The paper is spread<sup>5</sup> out on the table; the human neck is round. Here is a piece of wood about as big as the daughter's neck. Put the paper around it and try again. Go on!<sup>6</sup> Try!"

I tried to put my fingers around the piece of wood, as if it were<sup>7</sup> the girl's neck! But still my hand was not large enough to equal the marks left by the killer. "Dupin! These marks were made by no human hand!"

"No. They were not. I am almost certain that they were made by the hand of an orangoutang, one of those man-like animals that live in the wild forests.\* The great size, the strength, the wildness of these animals are well known. Look in this book by Cuvier. Read. Look at the picture."

I did so, and at once I knew that Dupin was right in everything he said. The color of the hair...the size of the hand ... the terrible strength...the wildness of the killings...those sounds which were a voice but were not words...everything fit nicely in its place.

No, not everything. "Dupin!" I said. "There were two voices. Whose was the second voice?"

"The second voice! Yes! Remember: we decided that only someone with a very special kind of strength could have gone up the lightning-rod, up the side of the house to the window on the fourth floor — perhaps an animal, perhaps a strong man from a circus\*, perhaps a sailor\*. We know now that one of the voices was the voice of an animal, an orang-outang. The other was the voice of a man. This voice spoke only two words; they were "My God!" spoken in French.

"Upon those two words I have placed my hopes of finding a full answer to this horrible question. The words were an expression of horror. This means that a Frenchman knew about these murders. It is possible — indeed it is probable — that the Frenchman himself did not help the orangoutang to kill. Perhaps the animal escaped from him, and he followed it to the house on the Rue Morgue. He could not have caught it again. It must still be free somewhere in Paris.

"I will not continue with these guesses\* — for I cannot call them more than that. If I am right, and if the Frenchman did not himself help with the killings, I expect him to come here. Read this. I paid to have this put<sup>8</sup> in the newspaper."

I took the newspaper and read the following:

CAUGHT — Early in the morning of the seventh of this month: a very large orangoutang. The owner, who is known to be a sailor, may have the animal again if he can prove it is his.

"But, Dupin. How can you know that the man is a sailor?"

"I do not know it. I am not sure of it. I think the man is a sailor. A sailor could go up that pole on the side of the house. Sailors travel to strange, faraway\* places where such things as orangoutangs can be got. If I am right....

"Think for a moment! The sailor will say to himself: 'The animal is valuable. Why shouldn't I go and get it? The police do not know the animal killed two women. And clearly somebody\* knows I am in Paris. If I do not go to get the animal, they will ask why. I don't want anyone to start asking questions about the animal. So I will go and get the orang-outang and keep it where no one will see it, until this trouble has passed.' This, I believe, is how the sailor will think. But listen! I hear a man's step on the stairs\*."

Dupin had left the front door of the house open, and the visitor entered without using the bell\*. He came several steps up the stairs<sup>9</sup>, then stopped. We heard him go down again. Dupin was moving toward the door when we again heard the stranger coming up. He did not turn back a second time, but came straight to the door of our room.

In a strong, warm, friendly voice, Dupin said:

"Come in, my friend! Come in!"

Slowly the door opened, and in came — a sailor!<sup>10</sup>