



The Murders in the Rue Morgue

by Edgar Allan Poe

Part Two

DUPIN: "Read now, this passage from Cuvier."

It was a **minute [detailed]** anatomical and generally descriptive account of the large [reddish-yellow] Ourang-Outang of the East Indian Islands. The gigantic stature, the **prodigious [remarkable]** strength and activity, the wild ferocity, and the **imitative propensities [tendency to imitate]** of these mammalia are sufficiently well known to all. I understood the full horrors of the murder at once.

NARRATOR: "The description of the digits," said I, as I made an end of the reading, "is in exact accordance with this drawing. I see no animal but an Ourang-Outang, of the species here mentioned, could have impressed the indentations as you have traced them. This tuft of tawny hair, too, is identical in character with that of the beast. But I cannot possibly comprehend the particulars of this frightful mystery. Besides, there were two voices heard in contention, and one of them was unquestionably the voice of a Frenchman."

DUPIN: "True; and you will remember an expression attributed almost unanimously, by the evidence, to this voice,—the expression, 'mon Dieu!' This, under the circumstances, has been justly characterized by one of the witnesses (Montani, the confectioner) as an expression of **remonstrance [horror]**. Upon these two words, therefore, I have mainly built my hopes of a full solution of the riddle. A Frenchman [was aware of] the murder. It is possible—indeed it is far more than probable—that he was innocent of all participation in the bloody transactions which took place. The Ourang-Outang may have escaped from him. He may have traced it to the chamber; but, under the [violent] circumstances which ensued, he could never have recaptured it. It is still at large. ...If the Frenchman in question is indeed, as I suppose, innocent of this atrocity, this advertisement, which I left last night, upon our return home, at the office of Le Monde (a paper devoted to the shipping interest, and much sought by sailors), will bring him to our residence [house]."

He handed me a paper, and I read thus:

"CAUGHT—In the Bois de Boulogne [a park in Paris, far from the murder scene], early in the morning... (the morning of the murder), a very large, tawny Ourang-Outang of the Bornese species. The owner (who is **ascertained [believed]** to be a sailor, belonging to a Maltese vessel) may have the animal again, upon identifying it satisfactorily, and paying a few charges arising from its capture and keeping. Call at No. — Rue —, Faubourg St. Germain—au troisieme."

NARRATOR: "How was it possible that you should know the man to be a sailor, and belonging to a Maltese vessel?"

[Dupin explains that the owner must be a sailor, since, at the base of the lightning rod outside the window of Madame L'Esplanade's, he found a ribbon knotted in a way unique to sailors trained in the Maltese Islands.]

At this moment we heard a step upon the stairs.

DUPIN: "Be ready with your pistols, but neither use them nor show them until at a signal from myself."

The front door of the house had been left open, and the visitor had entered, without ringing, and advanced several steps upon the staircase. Now, however, he seemed to hesitate. Presently we heard him **descending [going down]**. Dupin was moving quickly to the door, when we again heard him [the stranger] coming up. He did not turn back a second time, but stepped up with decision, and rapped at the door of our chamber.

DUPIN: "Come in," said Dupin, in a cheerful and hearty tone.

A man entered. He was a sailor, evidently,--a tall, stout, and muscular-looking person, with a certain dare-devil expression.... His face, greatly sunburnt, was more than half hidden by whisker and mustachio. He had with him a huge oaken **cudgel [a club]**, but appeared to be otherwise unarmed. He bowed awkwardly, and bade us "good evening," in French accents....

DUPIN: "Sit down, my friend. I suppose you have called about the Ourang-Outang. Upon my word, I almost envy you the possession of him; a remarkably fine, and no doubt very valuable animal. How old do you suppose him to be?"

The sailor drew a long breath, with the air of a man relieved of some intolerable burden, and then replied in an **assured [confident]** tone:

SAILOR: "I have no way of telling--but he can't be more than four or five years old. Have you got him here?"

DUPIN: "Oh, no; we had no conveniences for keeping him here. He is at a **livery [horse]** stable in the Rue Dubourg, just by. You can get him in the morning. Of course you are prepared to identify the property?"

SAILOR: "To be sure I am, sir."

DUPIN: "I shall be sorry to part with him."

SAILOR: "I don't mean that you should be at all this trouble for nothing, sir. Couldn't expect it. Am very willing to pay a reward for the finding of the animal--that is to say, any thing in reason."

DUPIN: "Well, that is all very fair, to be sure. Let me think!--what should I have? Oh! I will tell you. My reward shall be this. You shall give me all the information in your power about these murders in the Rue Morgue."

Dupin said the last words in a very low tone, and very quietly. Just as quietly, too, he walked toward the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. He then drew a pistol from his [jacket] and placed it, without the least **flurry**, upon the table.

The sailor's face flushed up as if he were struggling with suffocation. He started to his feet and grasped his **cudgel [club]**; but the next moment he fell back into his seat, trembling violently, and with the **countenance [look]** of death itself. He spoke not a word. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart.

DUPIN: "My friend," said Dupin, in a kind tone, "you are alarming yourself unnecessarily--you are indeed. We mean you no harm whatever. I pledge you the honor of a gentleman, and of a Frenchman, that we intend you no injury. I perfectly well know that you are innocent of the atrocities in the Rue Morgue. It will not do, however, to deny that you are in some measure **implicated [involved]** in them. From what I have already said, you must know that I have had means of information about this matter--means of which you could never have dreamed. Now the thing stands thus. You have done nothing which you could have avoided--nothing, certainly, which renders you **culpable [guilty]**. You were not even guilty of robbery, when you might have robbed with **impunity [without getting caught]**. You have nothing to conceal. You have no reason for concealment. On the other hand, you are bound by every principle of honor to confess all you know. An innocent man is now imprisoned, charged with a crime of which you can point out the perpetrator."

The sailor had recovered his presence of mind, in a great measure, while Dupin uttered these words; but his original **boldness of bearing [confidence]** was all gone.

SAILOR: "So help me God! I will tell you all I know about this affair;--but I do not expect you to believe one half I say--I would be a fool indeed if I did. Still, I am innocent, and I will make a clean breast if I die for it."

What he stated was, in substance, this. He had lately made a voyage to [Indonesia]. A party, of which he formed one, landed at Borneo, and passed into the interior on an excursion of pleasure. Himself and a companion had captured the Orang-Outang. This companion dying, the animal fell into his own exclusive possession. After great trouble... he at length succeeded in lodging it safely at his own residence in Paris, where, not to attract toward himself the unpleasant curiosity of his neighbors, he kept it carefully secluded, until such time as it should recover from a wound in the foot, received from a splinter on board ship. His ultimate design was to sell it.

Returning home from some sailors' [party] on the night, or rather in the morning, of the murder, he found the beast occupying his own bedroom, into which it had broken from a closet adjoining, where it had been, as was thought, securely confined. Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a **looking-glass [mirror]**, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the keyhole of the closet. Terrified at the sight of so

dangerous a weapon in the possession of an animal so ferocious, and so well able to use it, the man, for some moments, was at a loss what to do. He had been accustomed, however, to quiet the creature, even in its fiercest moods, by the use of a whip, and to this he now resorted. Upon sight of it, the Ourang-Outang sprang at once through the door of the chamber, down the stairs, and thence, through a window, unfortunately open, into the street.

The Frenchman followed in despair; the ape, razor still in hand, occasionally stopping to look back and [gesture] at his pursuer, until the [sailor] had nearly [captured] it. It then again made off. In this manner the chase continued for a long time. The streets were profoundly quiet, as it was nearly three o'clock in the morning. In passing down an alley in the rear of the Rue Morgue, the fugitive's [animal's] attention was arrested by a light gleaming from the open window of Madame L'Esplanade's chamber, in the fourth story of her house. Rushing to the building, it perceived the lightning-rod, clambered up with **inconceivable [outstanding]** agility, grasped the shutter, which was thrown fully back against the wall, and, by its means, swung itself directly upon the headboard of the bed. The whole **feat [act]** did not occupy a minute. The shutter was kicked open again by the Ourang-Outang as it entered the room.

The sailor, in the meantime, was both **rejoiced [hopeful]** and **perplexed [confused]**. He had strong hopes of now recapturing the brute, as it could scarcely escape from the trap into which it had ventured, except by the rod, where it might be intercepted as it came down. On the other hand, there was much cause for anxiety as to what it might do in the house. This latter reflection urged the man still to follow the fugitive. A lightning-rod is **ascended [climbed]** without difficulty, especially by a sailor; but when he had arrived as high as the window, which lay far to his left, his **career [attempt]** was stopped; the most that he could accomplish was to reach over so as to obtain a glimpse of the interior of the room. At this glimpse he nearly fell from his hold through excess of horror. Now it was that those hideous shrieks arose upon the night, which had startled from **slumber [sleep]** the [residents] of the Rue Morgue. Madame L'Esplanade and her daughter, **habited [dressed]** in their night clothes, had apparently been occupied in arranging some papers in the iron chest already mentioned, which had been wheeled into the middle of the room. It was open, and its contents lay beside it on the floor. The victims must have been sitting with their backs toward the window, and, from the time **elapsing [passing]** between the **ingress [entrance]** of the beast and the screams, it seemed probable that it was not immediately **perceived [noticed by others]**. The flapping-to of the shutter would naturally have been attributed to the wind.

As the sailor looked in, the gigantic animal had seized Madame L'Esplanade by the hair (which was loose, as she had been combing it), and was **flourishing [waving]** the razor about her face, in imitation of the motions of a barber. The daughter lay **prostrate [flat]** and motionless; she had **swooned [fainted]**. The screams and struggles of the old lady (during which the hair was torn from her head) had the effect of changing the probably [peaceful intentions] of the Ourang-Outang into those of [violence]. With one determined sweep of its muscular arm it nearly severed here head from her body. The sight of blood inflamed its anger into frenzy. Gnashing its teeth, and flashing fire from its eyes, it flew upon the body of the girl, and imbedded its fearful talons in her throat, retaining its grasp until she **expired [died]**. Its wandering and wild glances fell at this moment upon the head of the bed, over which the face of its master, rigid with horror, was just **discernible [noticeable]**.

The fury of the beast, who no doubt bore still in mind the dreaded whip, was instantly converted into fear. Conscious of having deserved punishment, it seemed desirous of **concealing [hiding]** its bloody deeds, and skipped about the chamber in an agony of nervous agitation; throwing down and breaking the furniture as it moved, and dragging the bed from the bedstead. In conclusion, it seized first the corpse of the daughter, and thrust it up the chimney, as it was found; then that of the old lady, which it immediately hurled through the window headlong.

As the ape approached the **casement [window]** with its mutilated burden, the sailor shrank **aghast [horrified]** to the [lightening] rod, and, rather gliding than clambering down it, hurried at once home--dreading the consequences of the butchery, and gladly abandoning, in his terror, all **solicitude [concern]** about the fate of the Ourang-Outang. The words heard by the [neighbors and police] upon the staircase were the Frenchman's exclamations of horror and affright, [mixed with] with the fiendish jabberings of the **brute [animal]**.

I have scarcely any thing to add. The Ourang-Outang must have escaped from the chamber, by the rod, just before the breaking of the door. It must have closed the window as it passed through it. It was **subsequently [eventually]** caught by the owner himself, who **obtained [got]** for it a very large sum at the Jardin des Plantes [the zoo]. Le Bon [the accused man] was instantly released, upon our narration of the circumstances (with some comments from Dupin) at the bureau of the Prefect of Police. This [police chief, even though he believed Dupin], could not altogether conceal his chagrin at the turn which affairs had taken, and [sarcastically commented on the idea] of every person minding his own business.

DUPIN: "Let him talk," said Dupin, who had not thought it necessary to reply. "Let him [talk]; it will [make him feel better]. I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle. Nevertheless,...he failed in the solution of this mystery...;for in truth our friend the Prefect is somewhat too **cunning [clever]** to be **profound [really smart]**. In his wisdom is **no stamen [nothing productive]**. It is all head and no body, like the pictures of the Goddess Laverna--or, at best, all head and shoulders, like a codfish. But he is a good creature after all. I like him especially for [his "talent"], by which he has attained his reputation for **ingenuity [cleverness]**. I mean the way he has 'de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas [to deny that which is and explain that which isn't]*."

*Rousseau--Nouvelle Heloise.