

The Murders in the Rue Morgue

EDGAR ALLAN POE

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THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

There are many famous detectives in the world of books – Philip Marlowe in Los Angeles, Vic Warshawski in Chicago, Inspector Morse in Oxford, and of course, the great Sherlock Holmes in London. But before any of these, there was Monsieur Auguste Dupin in Paris.

He was not a policeman, and not really a detective either. He was a quiet young man, who loved books and reading. But he was clever, and he could understand many things that other people did not. He took a close interest in the horrible murders in the Rue Morgue, because there were no answers to the mystery. Who murdered the old lady and her daughter? Why were the murders so brutal? How did the murderer get out of the house? So many questions – and no answers.

‘The secret,’ said Auguste Dupin, ‘is to ask the *right* questions. Then you will find the answers . . .’

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EDGAR ALLAN POE

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Jennifer Bassett

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My friend Auguste Dupin

I met Monsieur Auguste Dupin while I was living in Paris during the spring and summer of 1839. This young Frenchman was from an old and famous family, but the family was now very poor and Dupin only had a little money to live on. He ate and drank very little, bought no clothes, and lived very quietly. Books were the love of his life, and in Paris it is easy to get books.

Our first meeting was in a small bookshop in the Rue



My first meeting with Auguste Dupin

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The Murders in the Rue Morgue

Montmartre. We were looking for the same old book, and that is how our conversation began. We met again and again, and were soon very friendly.

He knew much more about books than I did. Conversation with a man like him was very helpful for my studies, and after a time we agreed to find a house and live there together for the time of my stay in Paris.

We found a house in a quiet street in the Faubourg St. Germain. It was a very old house, and was neither beautiful nor comfortable. But it was right for us, and our strange way of life.

We saw no visitors, had no friends, and lived only for the night. When morning came, we closed all the shutters on our windows, and in this half-light we spent the day reading, writing, or talking, until the true darkness came. Then we went out into the streets, and walked for hours among the wild lights and shadows of the crowded city.

During these night walks I learnt how clever my friend was. He could think so clearly and understood so much! He could read other people's thoughts as easily as writing on a wall. He often said, with a laugh, that people had windows in their faces and that he could see through them. Sometimes he read *my* thoughts in ways that surprised me very much.

One night we were walking down a long street near the Jardin du Luxembourg. We were both thinking, and for

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My friend Auguste Dupin

fifteen minutes we did not say a word. Then, suddenly, Dupin said:

‘He cannot write tragedy, that’s true. He’s much better at writing his funny pieces for the newspaper.’

‘Oh yes, I agree with that. He—’ Then I stopped, astonished. ‘Dupin,’ I said, ‘I do not understand. How could you possibly know that I was thinking about—?’ Again, I stopped. Did Dupin really know who I was thinking about?

‘About Chantilly,’ Dupin said. ‘You were saying to yourself that he was a good writer, but he cannot write tragedy.’

‘Yes, that’s true,’ I said. ‘I *was* thinking that. But tell me, please! How did you know?’

This Chantilly wrote for one of the Paris newspapers. He wrote about Paris and Parisians in a way that was both clever and very funny. But then he wrote a book, a long story about the ancient Greeks, and Phaedra, the wife of King Theseus. It was, everybody in Paris agreed, a very bad book.

‘It was the apple-seller,’ replied my friend. ‘The apple-seller began the thoughts that took you to Chantilly and his book.’

‘The apple-seller!’ I said, astonished. ‘But I don’t know any apple-sellers.’

My friend was happy to explain. ‘Some minutes ago we

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passed an apple-seller, who was carrying a big box of apples on his head, taking them to the fruit market. He didn't see you, and you had to jump out of his way. There were holes in the street, and you turned your foot in one of these holes and nearly fell.'



'You had to jump out of the apple-seller's way.'

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My friend Auguste Dupin

I remembered this now, but how did the apple-seller take us to Chantilly?

‘You looked around,’ my friend went on, ‘and saw all the other holes and broken stones in the street, and then you looked up, a little angrily, to see the name of the street. You were thinking, I am sure, that it was a dangerous street to walk down in the dark, when you could not easily see the holes.

‘Then we turned a corner into the Rue Racine. Here, the stones were new and unbroken, and you looked up, pleased, to find the name of this street. This name began a new thought. You smiled a little and shook your head. The famous Racine, who wrote a play about Phaedra in 1677, was a better writer than Chantilly will ever be. And you remembered that when Chantilly’s book first came out, the bookshops called Chantilly “the new Racine”. Everybody in Paris laughed at poor Chantilly because of that. I was sure that you were thinking of that when you smiled. And when you shook your head, I knew you were thinking of poor Chantilly’s book.’

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE SAMPLE.**Want to read more?****CLICK HERE TO BUY!**