

Grant's Big Advent Calendar

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING!

Merry
Christmas
one and all



Here's your
Master Author Showcase story
from the pages of the
Inner Circle Writers' Magazine

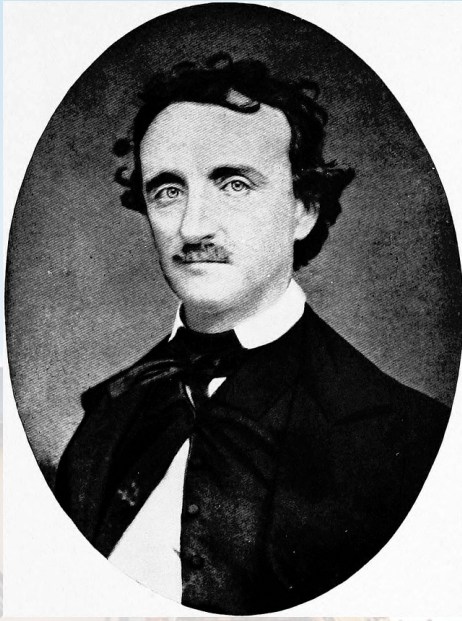


PRESENTS

MASTER AUTHOR SHOWCASE

The Murders in the Rue Morgue

Edgar Allan Poe



Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849) was an American writer, editor, and literary critic, best known for his poetry and short stories, especially his tales of mystery and the macabre. He is widely regarded as a central figure of American literature as a whole, and he was one of the country's earliest short story writers. He is also considered the inventor of the detective fiction genre, and was the first well-known American writer to earn a living through writing alone. 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' is considered to be an important early forerunner of the modern detective story, first appearing in 1844 and soon reprinted in numerous journals and newspapers.

Paris! In Paris it was, in the summer of 1840. There I first met that strange and interesting young fellow, August Dupin.

Dupin was the last member of a well-known family, a family which had once been rich and famous; he himself, however, was far from rich. He cared little about money. He had enough to buy the most necessary things of life — and a few books; he did not trouble himself about the rest. Just books. With books he was happy.

We first met when we were both trying to find the same book. As it was a book which few had ever heard of, this chance brought us together in an old bookstore. Later we met again in the same store. Then again in another bookstore. Soon we began to talk.

I was deeply interested in the family history he told me. I was surprised, too, at how much and how widely he had read; more important, the force of his busy mind was like a bright light in my soul. I felt that the friendship of such a man would be for me riches without price. I therefore told him of my feelings toward him, and he agreed to come and live with me. He would have, I thought, the joy of using my many fine books. And I would have the pleasure of having someone with me, for I was not happy alone.

We passed the days reading, writing and talking. But Dupin was a lover of the night,

and at night, often with only the light of the stars to show us the way, we walked the streets of Paris, sometimes talking, sometimes quiet, always thinking.

I soon noticed a special reasoning power he had, an unusual reasoning power. Using it gave him great pleasure. He told me once, with a soft and quiet laugh, that most men have windows over their hearts; through these he could see into their souls. Then, he surprised me by telling what he knew about my own soul; and I found that he knew things about me that I had thought only I could possibly know. His manner at these moments was cold and distant. His eyes looked empty and far away, and his voice became high and nervous. At such times it seemed to me that I saw not just Dupin, but two Dupins — one who coldly put things together, and another who just as coldly took them apart.

One night we were walking down one of Paris's long and dirty streets. Both of us were busy with our thoughts. Neither had spoken for perhaps fifteen minutes. It seemed as if we had each forgotten that the other was there, at his side. I soon learned that Dupin had not forgotten me, however. Suddenly he said:

"You're right. He is a very little fellow, that's true, and he would be more successful if he acted in lighter, less serious plays."

"Yes, there can be no doubt of that!" I said. At first I saw nothing strange in this. Dupin had agreed with me, with my own thoughts. This, of course, seemed to me quite natural. For a few seconds I continued walking, and thinking; but suddenly I realized that Dupin had agreed with something which was only a thought. I had not spoken a single word. I stopped walking and turned to my friend. "Dupin," I said, "Dupin, this is beyond my understanding. How could you know that I was thinking of..." Here I stopped, in order to test him, to learn if he really did know my unspoken thoughts.

"How did I know you were thinking of Chantilly? Why do you stop? You were thinking that Chantilly is too small for the plays in which he acts."

"That is indeed what I was thinking. But, tell me, in Heaven's name, the method — if method there is — by which you have been able to see into my soul in this matter."

"It was the fruit-seller."

"Fruit-seller!? I know no fruit-seller."

"I mean the man who ran into you as we entered this street — it may have been ten or fifteen minutes ago, perhaps less."

"Yes; yes, that's true, I remember now. A fruit-seller, carrying a large basket of apples on his head, almost threw me down. But I don't understand why the fruit-seller should make me think of Chantilly — or, if he did, how you can know that."

"I will explain. Listen closely now:

"Let us follow your thoughts from the fruit-seller to the play-actor, Chantilly. Those thoughts must have gone like this: from the fruit-seller to the cobblestones, from the cobblestones to stereotomy, and from stereotomy to Epicurus, to Orion, and then to Chantilly.

"As we turned into this street the fruit-seller, walking very quickly past us, ran against you and made you step on some cobblestones which had not been put down evenly, and I could see that the stones had hurt your foot. You spoke a few angry words to yourself, and continued walking. But you kept looking down, down at the cobblestones in the street, so I knew you were still thinking of stones.





“Then we came to a small street where they are putting down street stones which they have cut in a new and very special way. Here your face became brighter and I saw your lips move. I could not doubt that you were saying the word stereotomy, the name for this new way of cutting stones. It is a strange word, isn't it? But you will remember that we read about it in the newspaper only yesterday. I thought that the word stereotomy must make you think of that old Greek writer named Epicurus, who wrote of something he called atoms; he believed that the world and everything in the heavens above are made of these atoms.

“Not long ago you and I were talking about Epicurus and his ideas, his atoms, ideas which Epicurus wrote about more than 2,000 years ago. We were talking about how much those old ideas are like today's ideas about the earth and the stars and the sky. I felt sure that you would look up to the sky. You did look up. Now I was certain that I had been following your thoughts as they had in fact come into your mind. I too looked up, and saw that the group of stars we call Orion is very bright and clear tonight. I knew you would notice this, and think about the name Orion.

“Now follow my thoughts carefully. Only yesterday, in the newspaper, there was an article about the actor Chantilly, an article which was not friendly to Chantilly, not friendly at all. We noticed that the writer of the article had used some words taken from a book we both had read. These words were about Orion. So I knew you would put together the two ideas of Orion and Chantilly. I saw you smile, remembering that article and the hard words in it.

“Then I saw you stand straighter, as tall as you could make yourself. I was sure you were thinking of Chantilly's size, and especially his height. He is small; he is short. And so I spoke, saying that he is indeed a very little fellow, this Chantilly, and he would be more successful if he acted in lighter, less serious plays.”

I will not say that I was surprised. I was more than surprised; I was astonished. Dupin was right, as right as he could be. Those were in fact my thoughts, my unspoken thoughts, as my mind moved from one thought to the next. But if I was astonished by this, I would soon be more than astonished.

One morning this strangely interesting man showed me once again his unusual reasoning power. We heard that an old woman had been killed by unknown persons. The killer, or the killers, had cut her head off — and escaped into the night. Who was this killer, this murderer? The police had no answer. They had looked everywhere and found nothing that helped them. They did not know what to do next. And so — they did nothing.

But not Dupin. He knew what to do.

Part Two

It was in Paris in the summer of 1840 that I met August Dupin. He was an unusually interesting young man with a busy, forceful mind. This mind could, it seemed, look right through a man's body into his soul, and uncover his deepest thoughts. Sometimes he seemed to be not one, but two people — one who coldly put things together, and another who just as coldly took them apart.

One morning, in the heat of the summer, Dupin showed me once again his special reasoning power. We read in the newspaper about a terrible killing. An old woman and her daughter, living alone in an old house in the Rue Morgue, had been killed in the middle of the night:

Paris, July 7, 1840. In the early morning today the people in the western part of the city were awakened from their sleep by cries of terror, which came, it seemed, from a house in the street called the Rue Morgue. The only persons living in the house were an old woman, Mrs. L'Espanaye, and her daughter. Several neighbors and a policeman ran toward the house, but by the time they reached it the cries had stopped. When no one answered their calls, they forced the door open.





As they rushed in they heard voices, two voices; they seemed to come from above. The group hurried from room to room, but they found nothing until they reached the fourth floor. There they found a door that was firmly closed, locked, with the key inside. Quickly they forced the door open, and they saw spread before them a bloody sickening scene — a scene of horror!

The room was in the wildest possible order — broken chairs and tables were lying all around the room. There was only one bed, and from it everything had been taken and thrown into the middle of the floor. There was blood everywhere, on the floor, on the bed, on the walls. A sharp knife covered with blood was lying on the floor. In front of the fireplace there was some long gray hair, also bloody; it seemed to have been pulled from a human head. On the floor were four pieces of gold, an earring, several objects made of silver, and two bags containing a large amount of money in gold. Clothes had been thrown around the room. A box was found under the bed covers. It was open, and held only a few old letters and papers.

There was no one there — or so it seemed. Above the fireplace they found the dead body of the daughter; it had been put up into the opening where the smoke escapes to the sky. The body was still warm. There was blood on the face, and on the neck there were dark, deep marks which seemed to have been made by strong fingers. These marks surely show how the daughter was killed.

After hunting in every part of the house without finding anything more, the group went outside. Behind the building they found the body of the old woman. Her neck was almost cut through, and when they tried to lift her up, her head fell off.

The next day the newspaper offered to its readers these new facts:

The Murders in the Rue Morgue. —Paris, July 8, 1840. The police have talked with many people about the terrible killings in the old house on the Rue Morgue but nothing has been learned to answer the question of who the killers were.

Pauline Dubourg, a washwoman, says she has known both of the dead women for more than three years, and has washed their clothes during that period. The old lady and her daughter seemed to love each other dearly. They always paid her well. She did not know where their money came from, she said. She never met anyone in the house. Only the two women lived on the fourth floor.

Pierre Moreau, a shopkeeper, says Mrs. L'Esplanaye had bought food at his shop for nearly four years. She owned the house and had lived in it for more than six years. People said they had money. He never saw anyone enter the door except the old lady and her daughter, and a doctor eight or ten times, perhaps.

Many other persons, neighbors, said the same thing. Almost no one ever went into the house and Mrs. L'Esplanaye and her daughter were not often seen.

Jules Mignaud, a banker, says that Mrs. L'Esplanaye had put money in his bank, beginning eight years before. Three days before her death she took out of the bank a large amount of money, in gold. A man from the bank carried it for her to her house.

Isidore Muset, a policeman, says that he was with the group that first entered the house. While he was going up the stairs he heard two voices, one low and soft, and one hard, high, and very strange — the voice of someone who was certainly not French, the voice of a foreigner. Spanish perhaps. It was not a woman's voice. He could not understand what it said. But the low voice, the softer voice, said, in French, "My God!"

Alfonso Garcia, who is Spanish and lives on the Rue Morgue, says he entered the house but did not go up the stairs; he is nervous and he was afraid he might be ill. He heard the voices. He believes the high voice was not that of a Frenchman. Perhaps it was English; but he doesn't understand English, so he is not sure.






William Bird, another foreigner, an Englishman, says he was one of the persons who entered the house. He has lived in Paris for two years. He heard the voices. The low voice was that of a Frenchman, he was sure, because he heard it say, in French, "My God!" The high voice was very loud. He is sure it was not the voice of an Englishman, nor the voice of a Frenchman. It seemed to be that of an Italian. It might have been a woman's voice. He does not understand Italian.

Mr. Alberto Montani, an Italian, was passing the house at the time of the cries. He says that they lasted for about two minutes. They were screams, long and loud, terrible, fearful sounds. Montani, who speaks Spanish but not French, says that he also heard two voices. He thought both voices were French. But he could not understand any of the words spoken.

The persons who first entered the house all agree that the door of the room where the daughter's body was found was locked on the inside. When they reached the door everything was quiet. When they forced the door open they saw no one. The windows were closed and firmly locked on the inside. There are no steps that someone could have gone down while they were going up. They say that the openings over the fireplace are too small for anyone to have escaped through them. It took four or five people to pull the daughter's body out of the opening over the fireplace. A careful search was made through the whole house. It was four or five minutes from the time they heard the voices to the moment they forced open the door of the room.

Paul Dumas, a doctor, says that he was called to see the bodies soon after they were found. They were in a horrible condition, badly marked and broken. Such results could not have come from a woman's hands, only from those of a very powerful man. The daughter had been killed by strong hands around her neck.

The police have learned nothing more than this. A killing as strange as this has never before happened in Paris. The police do not know where to begin to look for the answer.



When we had finished reading the newspaper's account of the murders neither Dupin nor myself said anything for a while. But I could see in his eyes that cold, empty look which told me that his mind was working busily. When he asked me what I thought of all this, I could only agree with all Paris. I told him I considered it a very difficult problem — a mystery, to which it was not possible to find an answer. No, no, said Dupin.

"No, I think you are wrong. A mystery it is, yes. But there must be an answer. Let us go to the house and see what we can see. There must be an answer. There must!"

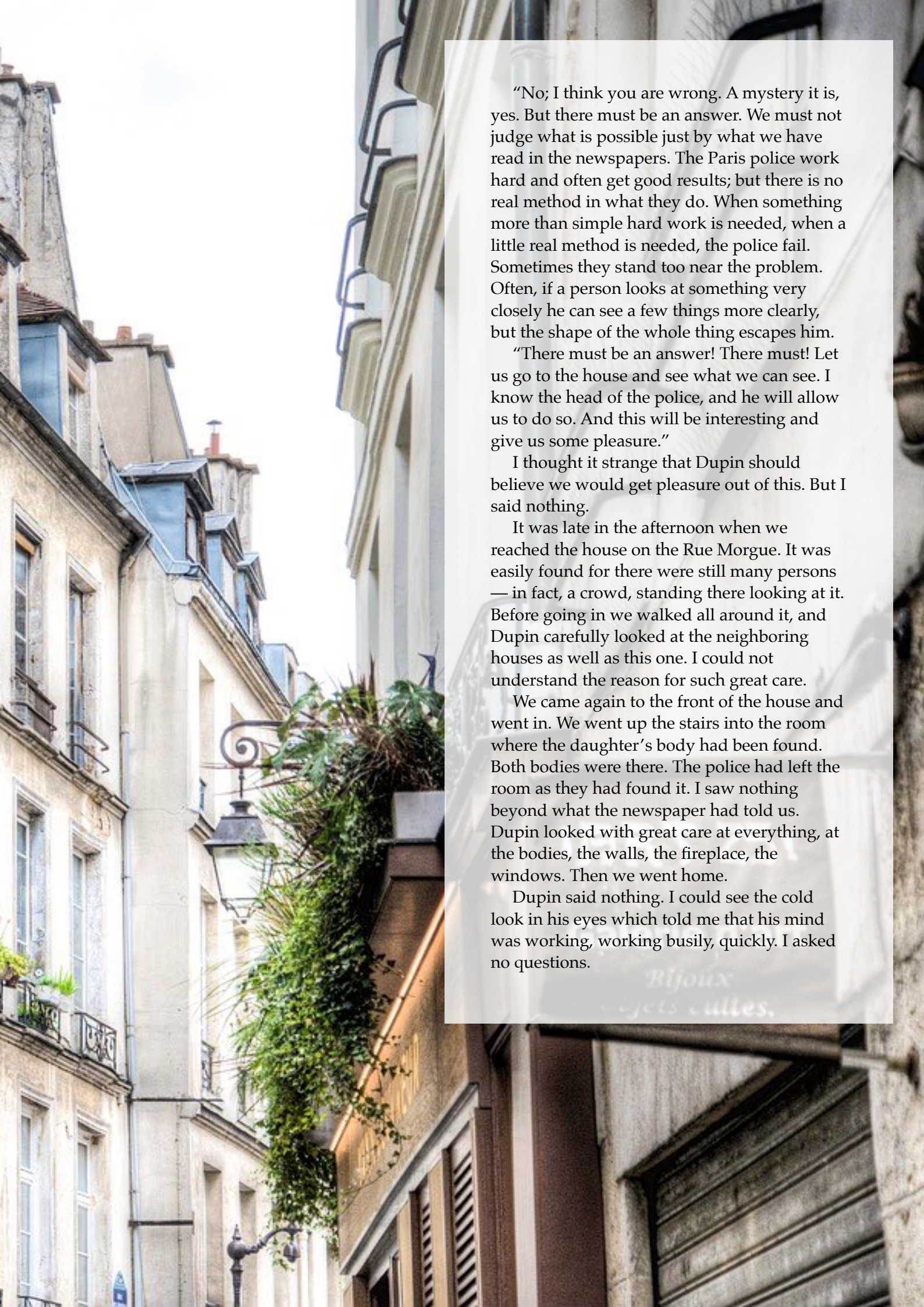
Part Three

It was in Paris that I met August Dupin. He was an unusually interesting young man with a busy, forceful mind. This mind could, it seemed, look right through a man's body into his deepest soul.

One hot summer morning we read in the newspapers about a terrible killing. The dead persons were an old woman and her unmarried daughter, who lived alone on the fourth floor of an old house on the street called the Rue Morgue. Someone had taken the daughter's neck in his powerful fingers and pressed with fearful strength until her life was gone. Her mother's body was found outside, behind the house, with the head nearly cut off. The knife with which she was killed was found, however, in the room, on the floor.

Several neighbors ran to the house when they heard the women's cries of fear. As they ran up to the fourth floor they heard two other voices. But when they reached the room and broke down the door they found no living person in the room. Like the door, the two windows were firmly closed, locked on the inside. There was no other way that the killer could have got in or out of the room.

The Paris police did not know where to begin to look for the answer. I told Dupin that it seemed to me that it was not possible to learn the answer to the mystery of these killings. No, no, said Dupin.

A narrow street in Paris, likely Rue Morgue, with tall buildings, a balcony with plants, and a street lamp. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking up the street. The buildings are multi-story with windows and balconies. A balcony on the right side has a large potted plant. A street lamp is visible on the left side. The sky is overcast.

“No; I think you are wrong. A mystery it is, yes. But there must be an answer. We must not judge what is possible just by what we have read in the newspapers. The Paris police work hard and often get good results; but there is no real method in what they do. When something more than simple hard work is needed, when a little real method is needed, the police fail. Sometimes they stand too near the problem. Often, if a person looks at something very closely he can see a few things more clearly, but the shape of the whole thing escapes him.

“There must be an answer! There must! Let us go to the house and see what we can see. I know the head of the police, and he will allow us to do so. And this will be interesting and give us some pleasure.”

I thought it strange that Dupin should believe we would get pleasure out of this. But I said nothing.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached the house on the Rue Morgue. It was easily found for there were still many persons — in fact, a crowd, standing there looking at it. Before going in we walked all around it, and Dupin carefully looked at the neighboring houses as well as this one. I could not understand the reason for such great care.

We came again to the front of the house and went in. We went up the stairs into the room where the daughter’s body had been found. Both bodies were there. The police had left the room as they had found it. I saw nothing beyond what the newspaper had told us. Dupin looked with great care at everything, at the bodies, the walls, the fireplace, the windows. Then we went home.

Dupin said nothing. I could see the cold look in his eyes which told me that his mind was working, working busily, quickly. I asked no questions.

Dupin said nothing until the next morning, when he came into my room and asked me suddenly if I had not noticed something especially strange about what we saw at the house on the Rue Morgue. I replied: "Nothing more than we both read in the newspaper."

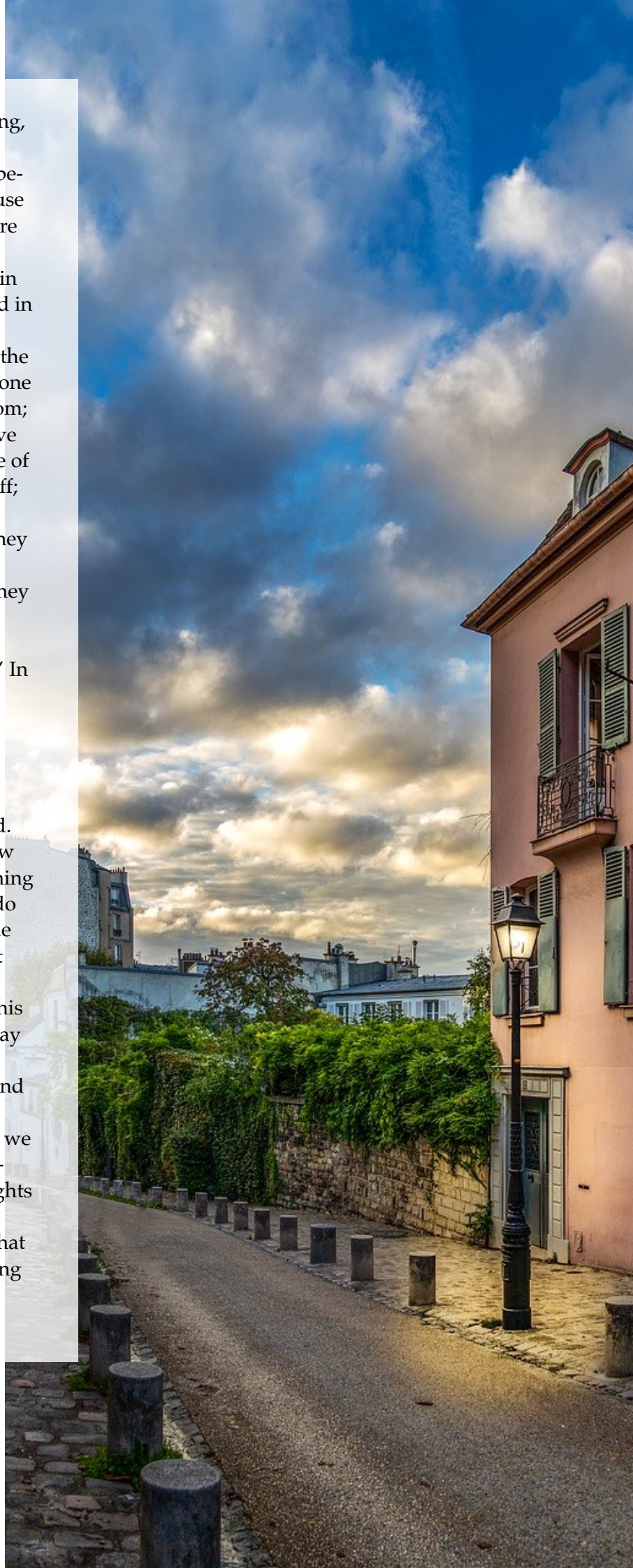
"Tell me, my friend. How shall we explain the horrible force, the unusual strength used in these murders? And whose were the voices that were heard? No one was found except the dead women; yet there was no way for anyone to escape. And the wild condition of the room; the body which was found head down above the fireplace; the terrible broken appearance of the body of the old lady, with its head cut off; these are all so far from what might be expected that the police are standing still; they don't know where to begin.

"These things are unusual, indeed; but they are not deep mysteries. We should not ask, 'What has happened?' but 'What has happened that has never happened before?' In fact, the very things that the police think cannot possibly be explained are the things which will lead me to the answer. Indeed, I believe they have already led me to the answer."

I was so surprised I could not say a word. Dupin looked quickly at the door. "I am now waiting for a person who will know something about these murders, these wild killings. I do not think he did them himself. But I think he will know the killer. I hope I am right about this. If I am, then I expect to find the whole answer, today. I expect the man here — in this room — at any moment. It is true that he may not come; but he probably will."

"But who is this person? How did you find him?"

"I'll tell you. While we wait for this man we do not know — for I have never met him — while we wait, I will tell you how my thoughts went." Dupin began to talk. But it did not seem that he was trying to explain to me what he had thought. It seemed that he was talking to himself. He looked not at me, but at the wall.

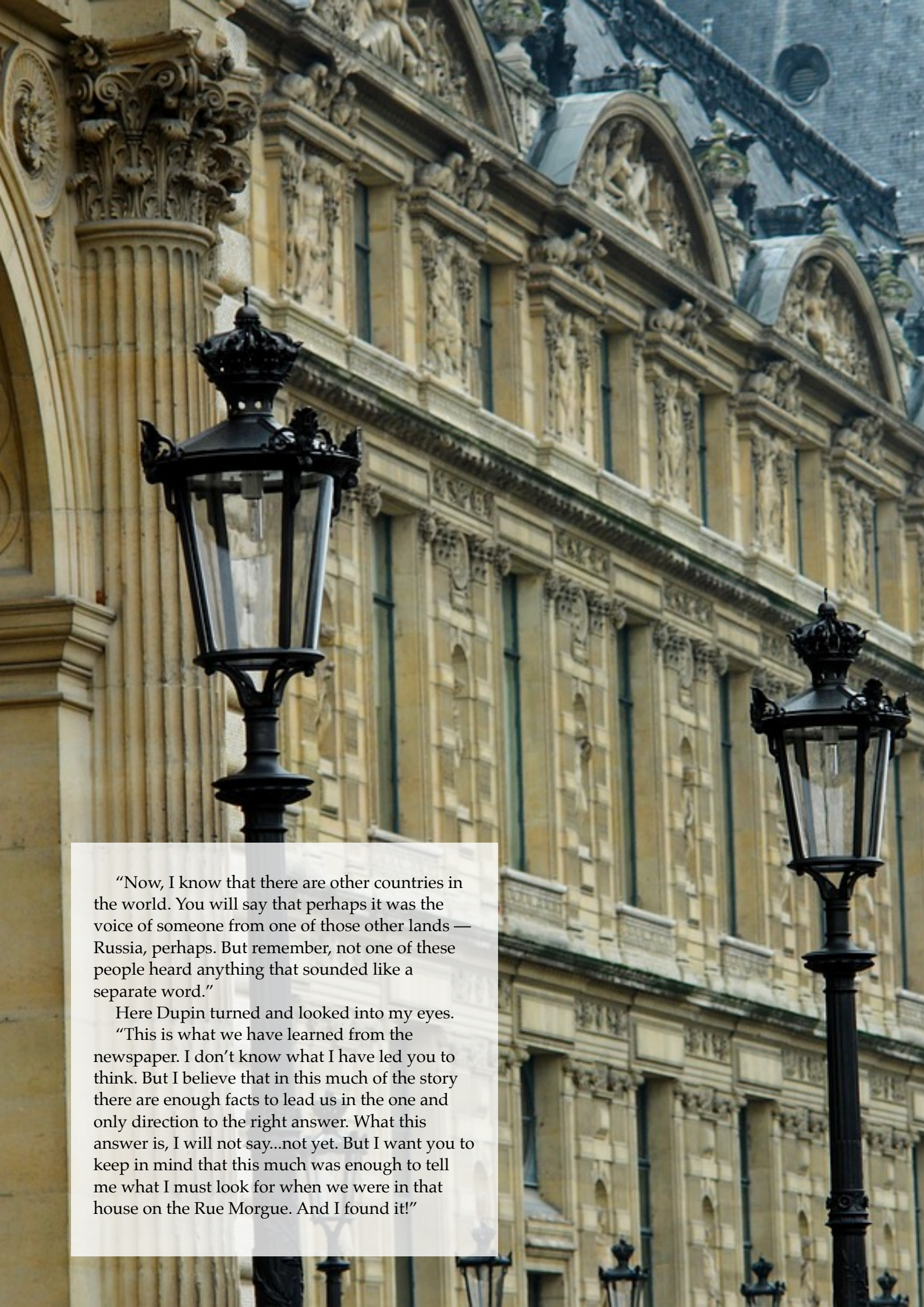




“It has been fully proved that the voices heard by the neighbors were not the voices of the women who were killed. Someone else was in the room. It is therefore certain that the old woman did not first kill her daughter and then kill herself. She would not have been strong enough to put her daughter’s body where it was found; and the manner of the old lady’s death shows that she could not have caused it herself. A person can kill himself with a knife, yes. But he surely cannot cut his own head almost off, then drop the knife on the floor and jump out the window. It was murder, then, done by some third person — or persons. And the voices heard were the voices of these persons. Let us now think carefully about the things people said about those voices. Did you notice anything especially strange in what was told about them?”

“Well, yes. Everybody agreed that the low voice was the voice of a Frenchman; but they could not agree about the high voice.”

“Ah! That was what they said, yes; but that was not what was so strange about what they said. You say you have noticed nothing that makes their stories very different from what might have been expected. Yet there was something. All these persons, as you say, agreed about the low voice; but not about the high hard voice. The strange thing here is that when an Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, and a Frenchman tried to tell what the voice was like, each one said it sounded like the voice of a foreigner. How strangely unusual that voice really must have been! Here are four men from four big countries, and not one of them could understand what the voice said; each one gave it a different name.

A street scene in Paris featuring ornate classical buildings and black street lamps. The buildings are made of light-colored stone with intricate carvings and arches. The street lamps are black with glass lanterns. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking up at the buildings.

“Now, I know that there are other countries in the world. You will say that perhaps it was the voice of someone from one of those other lands — Russia, perhaps. But remember, not one of these people heard anything that sounded like a separate word.”

Here Dupin turned and looked into my eyes.

“This is what we have learned from the newspaper. I don’t know what I have led you to think. But I believe that in this much of the story there are enough facts to lead us in the one and only direction to the right answer. What this answer is, I will not say...not yet. But I want you to keep in mind that this much was enough to tell me what I must look for when we were in that house on the Rue Morgue. And I found it!”

Murderers had come to the old house on the street called the Rue Morgue! Murderers had come and gone and left behind the dead bodies of an old woman and her daughter. The daughter's body was in the bedroom on the fourth floor. The old woman was lying outside, behind the house, her head almost cut off; but the knife which killed her was up in the bedroom, on the floor. The door and the windows were all firmly closed, locked on the inside; there was no way for anyone to go in or out. Voices had been heard. One voice was speaking in French; the other voice had not spoken even one word that anyone could understand. But there was no one in the room when police arrived.

This much we had learned from the newspapers, my friend Dupin and I. Interested by it, we had gone to look at the house and the bodies. Dupin was now explaining to me what he had learned there.


"That is what we learned from the newspapers. Please remember it; for that much was enough to tell me what I must look for when we were in that house on the Rue Morgue. And I found it!

"Let us now take ourselves again, in our thoughts, to the room where the murders were done. What shall we first look for? The way the murderers escaped. All right. We agree, I am sure, that we do not have to look for anything outside of nature, for anything not having a real form, a body. The killers were not spirits; they were real. They could not go through the walls. Then how did they escape? There is only one way to reason on that subject, and it must lead us to the answer. Let us look, one at a time, at the possible ways to escape. It is clear that the killers were in the room where the daughter was found. From this room they must have escaped. How?

"At first I saw no way out. It had been necessary for the neighbors to break down the door in order to enter the room. There was no other door. The opening above the fireplace is not big enough, near the top, for even a small animal. The murderers therefore must have escaped through one of the windows. This may not seem possible. We must prove that it is possible.

"





There are two windows in the room. Both of them, you will remember, are made of two parts; to open the window one must lift up the bottom half. One of these windows is easily seen; the lower part of the other is out of sight behind the big bed. I looked carefully at the first of these windows. It was firmly closed, fastened, like the door, on the inside. To keep the window closed, to fasten it, someone had put a strong iron nail into the wood at the side of the window in such a way that the window could not be raised. At least it seemed that the nail held the window closed. The nail was easy to see. There it was. And the people who discovered the killings used their greatest strength and could not raise the window. I, too, tried to raise the window and could not.

“I went to the second window and looked behind the bed at the lower half of the window. There was a nail here, too, which held the window closed. Without moving the bed, I tried to open this window also, and again I could not do so.

“I did not stop looking for an answer, however, because I knew that what did not seem possible must be proved to be possible. The killers — or perhaps I should say, the killer, for I am almost certain there was only one — the killer escaped through one of these windows. Of this I felt certain. After the murderer had left the bedroom he could have closed the window from the outside; but he could not have fastened it again on the inside. Yet anyone could see the nails which held the windows tightly closed. This was the fact that stopped the police. How could the murderer put the nail back in its place?”

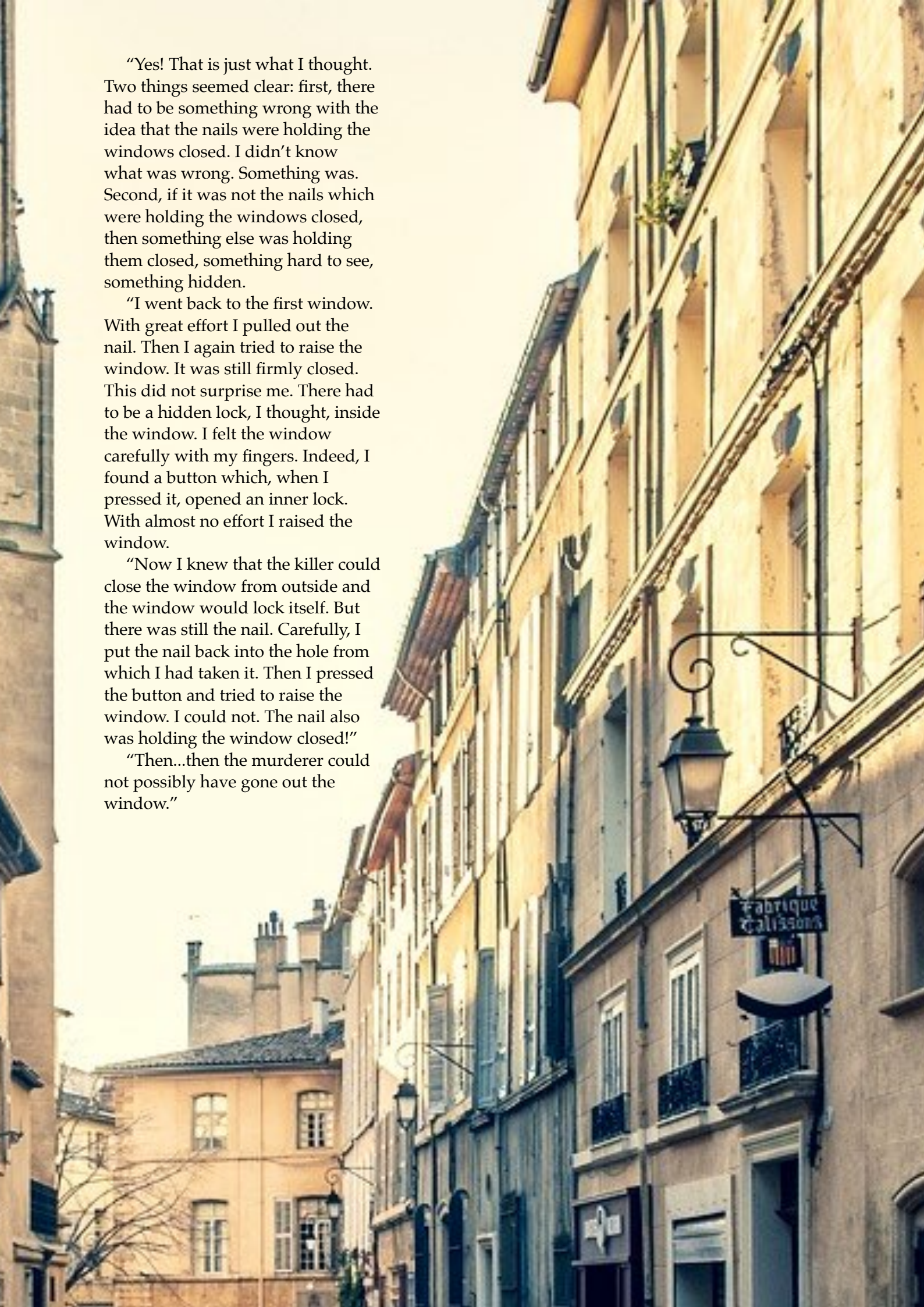
“Perhaps — perhaps if you pulled out the nail...”


“Yes! That is just what I thought. Two things seemed clear: first, there had to be something wrong with the idea that the nails were holding the windows closed. I didn’t know what was wrong. Something was. Second, if it was not the nails which were holding the windows closed, then something else was holding them closed, something hard to see, something hidden.

“I went back to the first window. With great effort I pulled out the nail. Then I again tried to raise the window. It was still firmly closed. This did not surprise me. There had to be a hidden lock, I thought, inside the window. I felt the window carefully with my fingers. Indeed, I found a button which, when I pressed it, opened an inner lock. With almost no effort I raised the window.

“Now I knew that the killer could close the window from outside and the window would lock itself. But there was still the nail. Carefully, I put the nail back into the hole from which I had taken it. Then I pressed the button and tried to raise the window. I could not. The nail also was holding the window closed!”

“Then...then the murderer could not possibly have gone out the window.”



A street scene in a European city, likely Paris, featuring ornate yellow buildings with classical architectural details. A flag with horizontal stripes of blue, white, and red flies from a pole on the right. In the background, a white building with a clock tower is visible under a clear blue sky. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking up the street.

“He could not have gone out that window. Therefore, he must have escaped through the other window. The other window was also held closed by a nail. But I knew I must be right. Although no one else had looked carefully at the window behind the bed, I went to it and tried to see whether the two windows were in some way different. The nail in the second window looked the same as the one I had just seen. I moved the bed so that I could look closely. Yes. There was a button here, too. I was so sure I was right that without touching the nail I pressed the button and tried to raise the window. Up it went!

“As the window went up it carried with it the top part of the nail, the head. When I closed the window the head of the nail was again in its place. It looked just as it had looked before. I took the head of the nail in my fingers and it easily came away from the window. I saw that the nail had been broken. But when I put the nail head back in its place, the nail again looked whole.

“What seemed to be not possible we have proved to be possible. The murderer indeed escaped through that window. I could now see, in my mind, what had happened.



“It was a hot summer night. When the murderer first arrived he found that window open, open to let some of the fresh night air come in. Through the open window the murderer went in and came out again. As he came out he closed the window, perhaps with a purpose to do so, perhaps by chance. The special lock inside the window held the window firmly closed. The nail only seemed to be holding it closed. And that which was possible looked not possible.”

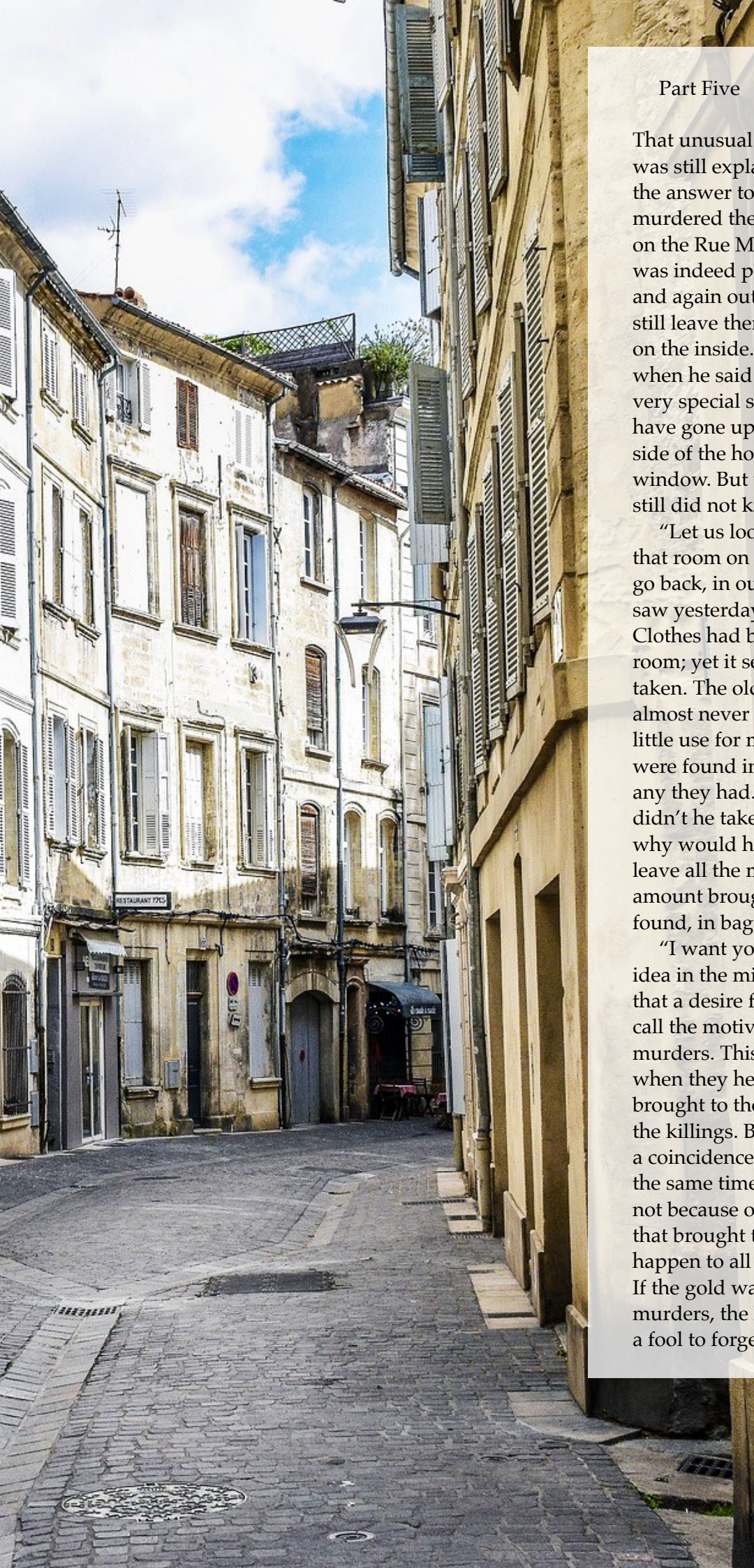
Dupin had been talking not to me, it seemed, but to himself. His cold eyes seemed to see only what was in his own mind. Now he stopped and looked straight at me. His eyes were now hard and bright. And I understood that using his unusual reasoning power to find the answer to those bloody murders was giving Dupin great pleasure!

At first I could think only of this. Then I said: “Dupin — the windows are on the fourth floor, far above the ground. Even an open window...”

“Yes. That is an interesting question: how did the murderer go from the window down to the ground? Once I was quite certain that the murderer had in fact gone through that window the rest was not so hard to know. And the answer to this question told me still more about who the murderer was!

“When you and I first came to the house on the Rue Morgue we walked around the house. At that time I noted a long, thin metal pole which went from the top of the building to the ground — a lightning rod, put there to carry down to the ground a charge of electricity that might come out of the clouds during a bad summer storm. Here, I thought, is a way for someone to go up or down the wall, and then to go in or out the window. He would have to be very strong. Although certain animals could easily go up the pole, not every man could do it — only a man with very special strength and special training. This told me more about what the murderer was like. But I still had the question: who?”



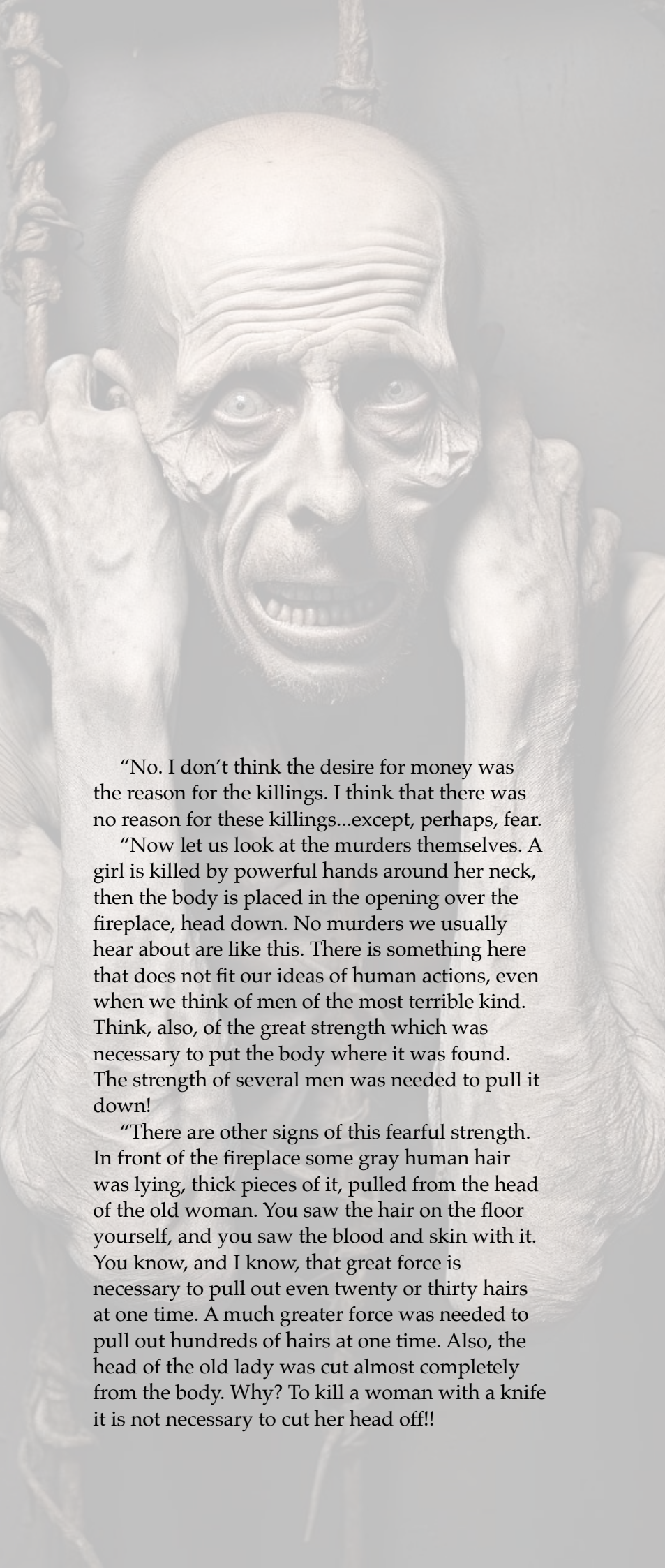


Part Five

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 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.

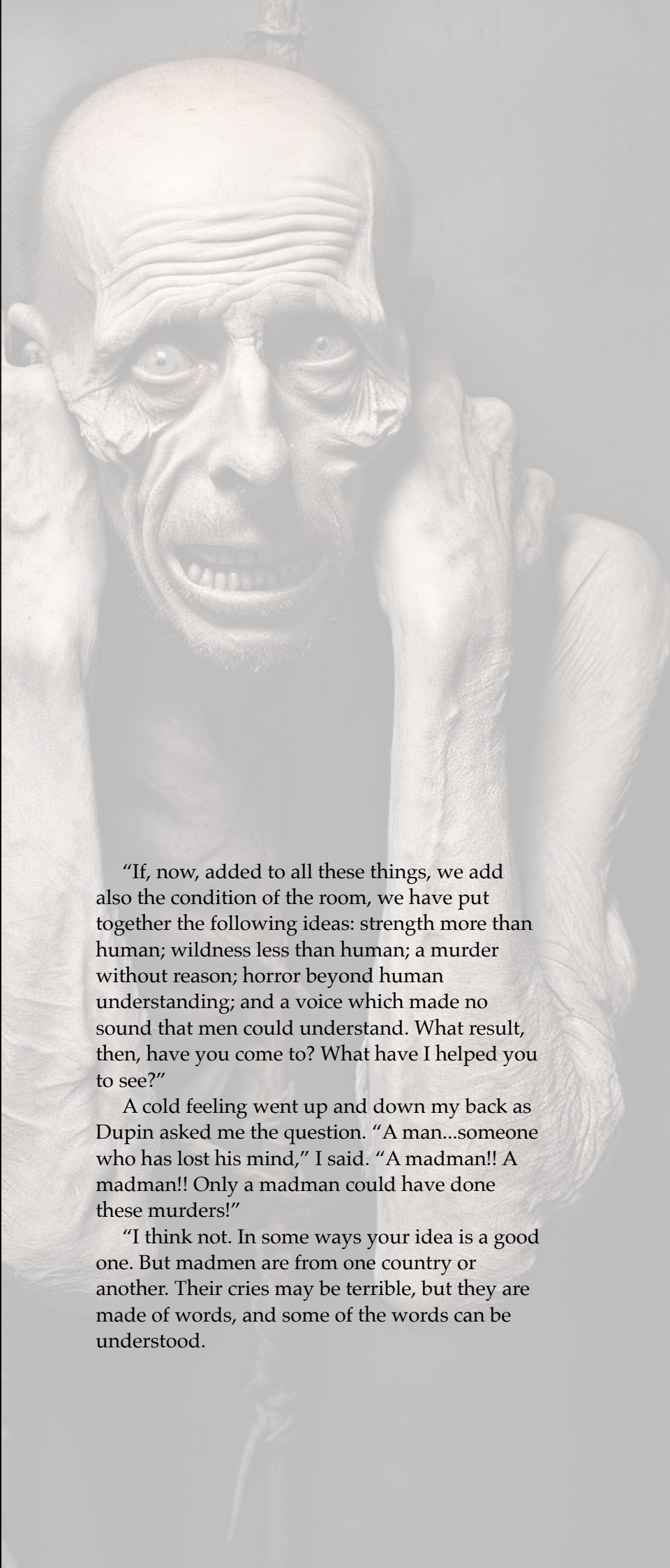
“I want you therefore to forget the idea in the minds of the police, the idea that a desire for money was what they call the motive, the reason for the murders. This idea rose in their minds when they heard how the money was brought to the house three days before the killings. But this is only what we call a coincidence — two things happening 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 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!

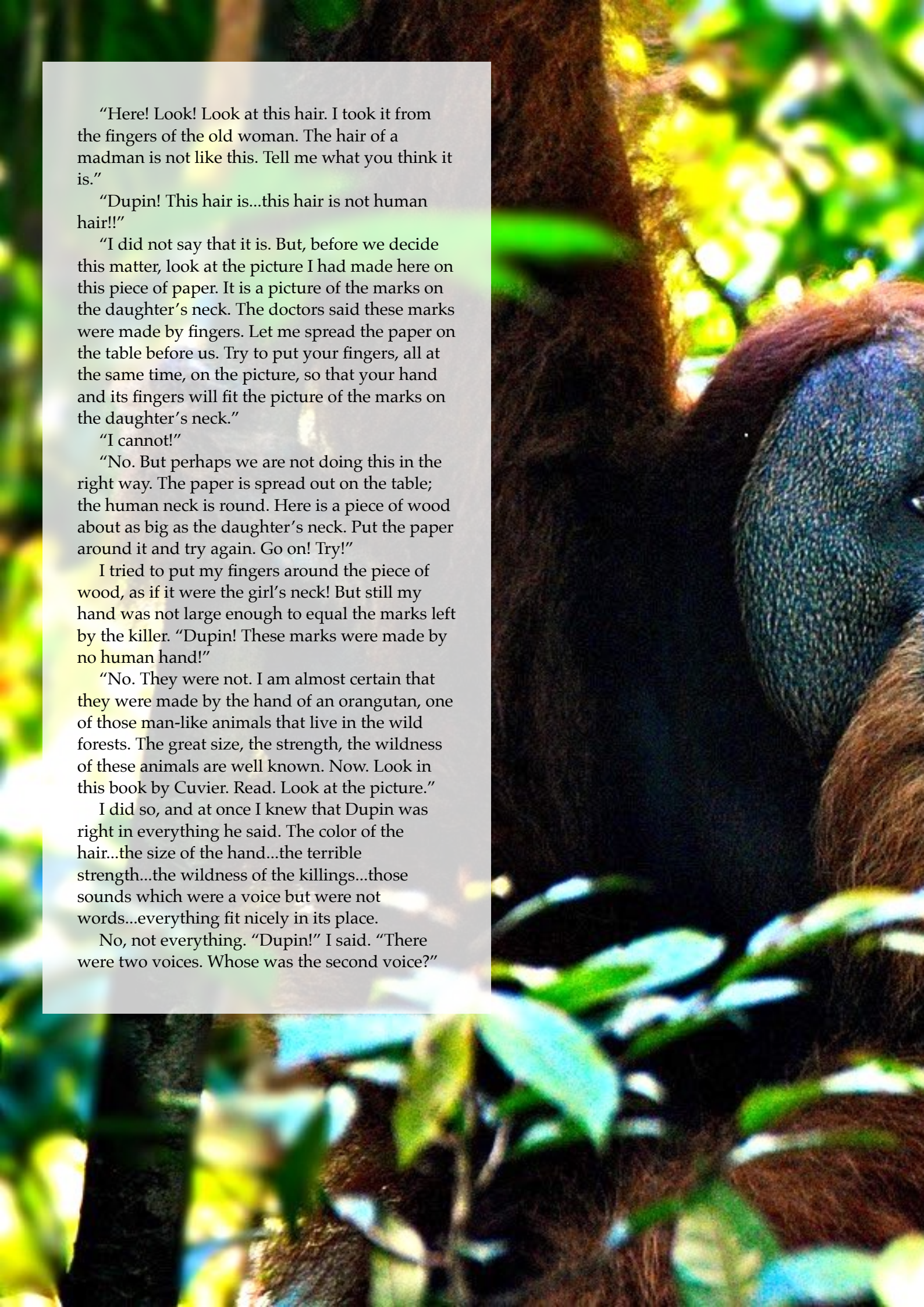
“There are other signs of this fearful strength. In front of the fireplace some gray human hair was lying, thick pieces of it, pulled from the head of the old woman. You saw the hair on the floor yourself, and you saw the blood and skin with it. You know, and I know, that great force is necessary to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


I tried to put my fingers around the piece of wood, as if it were 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 orangutan, 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. Now. 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 orangutan. 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 orangutan 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 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 orangutan. 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 orangutans 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 orangutan 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, 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!

Part Six

My friend Dupin was now certain that the murders in the Rue Morgue had been done by a wild animal of the jungle, the man-like animal known as an orangutan. The animal had escaped from its owner, he thought; and the owner was probably a sailor. He had put a notice in the newspaper that the man who owned the orangutan could have it again if he came to our house to get it. Now, as the owner came to our door, we were both wondering if that man would, as Dupin guessed, be a sailor.

Yes. The man who entered was indeed a sailor. He was a large man, and strong. He carried a big, heavy piece of wood, but no gun. He said to us, in French: "Good evening."

"Sit down, my friend. I suppose you have come to ask about the orangutan. A very fine animal. I have no doubt that it is a very valuable animal. How old do you think it may be?"

"I have no way of guessing how old it is, but it can't be more than four or five years old. Have you got it here?"





"No, no. We have no place for it here. You can get it in the morning. Of course you can prove it is yours?"

"Yes. Yes, I can."

"I wish I could keep it."

"I would like to have it. I... of course I will pay you for finding and keeping the animal. Anything... anything within reason."

"Well...That is very fair, indeed. Let me think. What shall I ask for? I know! Let this be my pay. Tell me everything you know about the murders in the Rue Morgue."

As quietly as he had spoken Dupin walked to the door, locked it, and put the key in his coat. At the same time he took a gun out of his coat and placed it on the table.

The sailor's face had become red. He jumped to his feet and reached for his stick of wood, but in the next moment he fell back into his chair, trembling. His face became quite white, bloodless. He spoke not a word. His eyes were closed.

“My friend, you must not be afraid. We are not going to hurt you. I know very well that you yourself are not the killer. But it is true that you know something about him — or about it. From what I have already said, you must know that I have ways of learning about the matter — ways you could never have dreamed of.

“Now, I know that you yourself have done nothing wrong. You didn’t even take any of the money. You have no reason to be afraid to talk and to tell the truth. It is a matter of honor for you to tell all you know. And you know who the killer is.”

“So help me God! I... I’ll tell you all I know about this, all I know — but I don’t expect you to believe one half of what I say — not one half. Still, I didn’t kill anyone, and I’ll tell the whole story if I die for it. It was that animal! The orangutan!...

“About a year ago our ship sailed to the Far East, to the island of Borneo. I had never before seen Borneo. The forest, the jungle, was thick with trees and other plants, and hot and wet and dark. But we went — a friend and I — we went into that forest — for pleasure. There we saw this orangutan, a big animal. But we were two, and we caught it. We took it with us on the ship. Soon, however, my friend died, and the animal was mine. But it was very strong and caused a lot of trouble.

“In the end I brought it back to Paris with me. I kept it in my house, in my own house, carefully locked up, so the neighbors could not know about it. The animal had cut one foot badly while on the ship. I thought... I thought that as soon as it got well I would sell it. I was certain it was of great value. And it was so much trouble to keep! I wanted to sell it, soon.





“The night of the murders, very late, I came home and found the animal in my bedroom. It had got free, I don’t know how. It held a knife in its hands, and was playing with it. I was afraid. I didn’t know what to do. When it saw me it jumped up, ran out of the room and down the stairs. There it found an open window and jumped into the street. I followed, never far behind, although I had no hope of catching it again. The animal, with the knife still in its hand, stopped often to look back at me. But before I could come near enough to even try to catch it, the animal always started to run again. It seemed to be playing with me.

“It was nearly morning, but the streets were still dark, and quiet. We passed the back of a house in the Rue Morgue. The animal looked up and saw a light in the open window of a room high above. It was the only lighted window in sight. The animal saw the metal pole, went up it easily and quickly, and jumped into the room. All this didn’t take a minute.

“I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know what I could do. I followed the animal. I too went up the pole. As I am a sailor it was easy for me. But the open window was far from the pole and I was afraid to try to jump. I could see into the room, however, through the other window, which was closed.

“The two women were sitting there, with their backs to the windows. Who can guess why they were not sleeping at that hour of the night? A box was in the middle of the floor. The papers which had been in the box were lying around on the floor. The women seemed to be studying some of these. They did not see the animal, which was just standing there, watching, the knife still in one hand. But the old woman heard it and turned her head and saw the animal there, knife in hand, and then... then I heard the first of those terrible cries.

“When the animal heard the old woman’s cry it caught her by the hair and slowly moved the knife before her face. The daughter, filled with terror, fell to the floor and remained there without moving, her eyes closed. The old woman continued to cry for help, screaming with fear. I think the animal now was as afraid as the old woman was. With terrible force it pulled out a handful of hair. And when the woman, covered with blood, tried to run from it, the animal caught her again by the hair and with one move of its arm it nearly cut her head from her body. Throwing down the body, the animal turned and saw that the daughter was moving, watching it with horror. With fire in its eyes it rushed to the girl, put its powerful fingers around her neck, and pressed them firmly there until she died.





“When the girl stopped moving, the animal dropped her body to the floor and looked up. It saw my face in the window. It began to run around the room, quickly, without purpose. It jumped up and down, breaking the chairs, pulling the bed to pieces. Suddenly it stopped and took the body of the daughter and, as if to hide it, with terrible strength it put the body up above the fireplace, where it was found. It threw the old woman out the window.

“All this time I was hanging from the pole, filled with horror. It seemed I had lost the power to move. But when I saw the animal coming toward the window with the old woman’s body, my horror became fear. I went quickly down — I almost fell down the pole, and I ran. I didn’t look back. I ran! Oh, my God! My God!”

The Chief of the Police was not happy that the answer to the mystery of the killings had been found by someone who was not a policeman. He said that people should keep to their own business. "Let him talk," said Dupin.

"Let him talk. He'll feel better for it. And he's a good fellow. But he makes things less simple than they really are. Still, people call him skillful, and even wise. I think they say this because of the way he explains, carefully, fully, something which is not here, or there, or anywhere; and says, 'Not possible!' about something which is there before his eyes."

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