

L'oeil Dansant

The night was cold—as to say—possessing an eerie and sharp tinge, as if the silver fog over Paris were attempting to conquer every man beneath its pillowy grasp. A crescent moon perpetuated a yellowish light, casting its ghastly presence—that felt unnaturally daunting—behind the thick rolls of clouds that overshadowed the streets. Upon this night the cobblestone walkways of Fifth Avenue Anatole reflected the great visage of the Eiffel Tower within pools of dark water; and by the impertinent and frowning winds, the rain was all but promising a return. Storied buildings and leveled homes of the inner city were dazzling with the subtle waning of candlelight, flickering orange and yellow visions of those inside onto the apartments across. Tavern doors were still open, and the sound of great drunken merrymaking resounded off of every glass window and vacant alleyway into a symphony of rumbling contentment. Many eyes were clouded with heavy lives, and amidst the ludicrousness of the music, lay silent the despair they were all attempting to evade.

The night was cold—as to say—in correlation with the attitudes of a scheming and murderous fiend. Now, the death of Monsieur Sigrid was not to be said... unexpected, nor a great travesty. The high born aristocrat was a prominent banker of a rather ill reputation and morales standing. By appearance alone he reeked of self-service. His pale sun deprived skin was almost always a proud shade of pink, rosy from too many glasses of expensive Italian wine. His beady little eyes, that peeked out from rolls of wrinkled fat, were filled with an almost sickening suspicion that tended to permeate any room he entered. And, marked by royal word, there was no exception, nor reprieve, from his paranoia. His grimey thick fingers reached out with a great monetary perspicacity to further his overwhelming wealth.

Such was his greed, his covetous and unsatisfied nature. His own family avoided him like the plague, only attending to him in order to gain favor, slithering deeper into his will. They were conspiring, sinister beings in their own right. Though by isolating the vile nature of Monsieur Sigird they were able to hide their own, oftentimes even from themselves.

Apart from his suffocating delusions, Monsieur Sigrid was the type of rich man to carry a golden pocket watch and still arrive disrespectfully late, with no trace of remorse in being so. Though he was reclusive, before his self conscious thoughts could whisper those little lies he loved to revel in, he would strut around the city, finely dressed in velvet, only as to showcase his wealth and vindicate his superiority. No one cared for Monsieur Sigrid, they detested him; but to say no one cared about his death would be an utter manipulation of the truth. After all, Monsieur Sigrid's wealth had to go somewhere—as to say—his murder was less of a dreadful shock as it was a pleasant surprise to those around him.

Of course, it was this very situation, and the malevolent nature of the crime, that spurred the investigation. It would have been completely plausible if Monsieur Sigrid had died of a simple heart attack, due to his piggish delight in expensive, and even foreign sweets; but death by bludgeoning was less than natural. The constable, Monsieur Tibet, by nature an inadequate and yet moral man, found no leads nor convicting evidence, as his mind was less than ample to solve such an astute crime. He would scratch his thin brownish orangish mustache and mutter something incoherent about common atrocities and the disdain he held for criminals, but in doing so, he accomplished nothing. Regardless, Monsieur Tibet was a fine constable, one who followed the letter of the law rather than the principle of it. He maintained his duties with vigilance and chose his deputies through an extensive interviewing process that he took great pride in. A man of respect, is how the citizens would refer to him, though his intelligence was subpar. When it came to hunting a rather cunning criminal he was

at more than a loss. The quite simple solution that he had conjured up years prior was to hire outside of the law, and there was no man better for the job than the fabled *Détective Aux Yeux Morts*, or, the *Dead Eyed Detective*, also known by his official title as Monsieur Alois De'Garde.

Monsieur Alois De'Garde was the unsolved mystery of Paris. His background was scarce as a winter sun, his trails were swept clean within hours, and his dry dead lips were sealed to pointless chatter. No man knew him, nor wished to. To be in his presence was a premonition to death, an eerie omen that promised colder winters, darker days, and winds to whisper. Some believed he was not human at all, naming his pale skin and ominous gaze as grounds for his place as a vampire or demon. Though it was hard to argue such a ludicrous claim, especially when he was only ever seen in light of solving a murder. Nevertheless, it could be agreed upon that Monsieur Alois was dangerous.

Walking upon the shimmering streets of Fifth Avenue Anatole, Monsieur Alois arrived at the scene of the crime. Up to the moment, this was all he knew: The murder had taken place within the confines of a wealthy apartment complex that sat upon the street corner, across from the Rothschild's bank. On the night of the murder, Monsieur Sigird had been alone in his work apartment, having returned from an excursion to London with a desire to rest. With no sounds of struggle he was found dead three days later, his absence sparking outrage in the financial community. The man was hated. The money was loved. There was much to gain for many by his demise.

Monsieur Alois approached the wooden double doors of the fine establishment and he was met with a young deputy, likely no older than twenty-three, who had a nervous complexion, a thick pointed nose, a fine smile, and a wide-split chin that homed a sad excuse

for a beard. The young man's eyes focused upon Monsieur Alois and his knees began to quiver. He had never seen the fabled detective before, but he was impossible to miss. Standing at an intimidating six foot three with fine black pants and a matching cloak, the thin well-dressed man was indeed a nightmare. His blue eye was vibrant in the pale moonlight, reflecting like a vibrant gem, while his dark green eye seemed to disappear beneath the shadow of his black top hat. Alois's raven crowned cane struck the cobblestone with a distinct and sharp echo and his smooth strides made him float over every puddle, never dampening his fine Italian sharp-nosed shoes. The young deputy felt his mouth dry up and quickly worked his tongue to conjure up some moisture, hoping to swallow his nerves. The detective slowly climbed the silver stairway, neglecting the handrails, until he was but a step from the unfortunate guard.

“U-uhh, good evening monsieur. May I be of assistance to you on this fine clouded night?” The words had barely rattled from his lips when Monsieur Alois turned his head ever so slightly to stare at the weaker man, no emotions allowed to show, if he possessed any. The policeman felt a shiver crawl down his spine, goosebumps rising from his coarse skin. The detective exhaled a chilly breath and simply walked on, completely ignoring the deputy. The man opened his mouth and turned to let his indignation be known, but quickly thought better of it. Monsieur Tibet could deal with him.

The vibrant carpeted floors of the complex softened the steps of the detective as he approached the stairway, climbing with no sense of urgency nor care. He reached the third floor and turned down the hall towards room thirty-four, where two more deputies were waiting, along with a young journalist and a huddle of ‘mourning’ family members. Monsieur Alois, despite his presence, utilized his utter silence to slip into the room without hindrance,

and approached Monsieur Tibet from behind. The poor constable turned and practically jumped backwards at the unexpected appearance, his arm striking a candelabra that the detective snatched in a split second.

“Confound it Alois! You could at least breathe for god's sake! I might have stumbled upon a heartattack with a scare such as that!” The constable’s outcry caught the attention of all company, and they looked with a mixture of great suspicion and consternation at the harrowing figure who was now casting shadow upon the entirety of the room. Thankfully, the constable himself was more than familiar with the mysterious character and his typical smile put the others at ease. It had been some time since he had required the detective’s services.

“The body.”

Monsieur Alois’s voice was quiet and seemed to hover in the air. His tone was neither intrigued nor disinterested, playing at a light sense of duty, as if he were fulfilling a familiar purpose. The constable alone heard him, and with a silent nod, he motioned towards the bedroom.