



Jean-Jacques SANDRAS

CONRAD & ALICE

EPISODE 1 THE MAD MURDER EPISODE 2 THE ANTI-SPECIESISM MURDER

Here are the first two episodes concerning criminal investigations in Paris by Alice, a twenty six year old French psychologist, and Conrad, a South African pensioner in his late sixties.

In the first episode Marie, a young art student, is murdered in her apartment. Her art teacher's wife, Linda, is the prime suspect because Marie was her husband's mistress. Alice calls upon Conrad to help her prove that Linda, who is one of her patients, is innocent. The two investigators set off on what is initially a wild goose chase that ends up by bringing the guilty party to justice.

In the second episode Rita, a fervent vegan activist, is suspected of murdering Sylvie, a journalist who frequently published articles deriding veganism. Alice calls upon Conrad to help prove that Rita, who is one of her patients, is innocent. Once again the two investigators set off on what is initially a wild goose chase that ends up by exposing the guilty party to justice.

What makes these two episodes interesting are the psychological and philosophical interactions between our two investigators and the various people concerned.

This book can be read by old and young alike. There are neither gory nor erotic scenes.

Jean-Jacques Sandras was born in 1947. He grew up in South Africa. He began to travel widely at the age of 19 and has lived on several continents. He draws upon his experiences in foreign lands when describing the why and wherefore of our passage on this earth.

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CONRAD & ALICE, CRIME INVESTIGATORS

EPISODES 1 & 2



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EPISODE 1 THE MAD MURDER

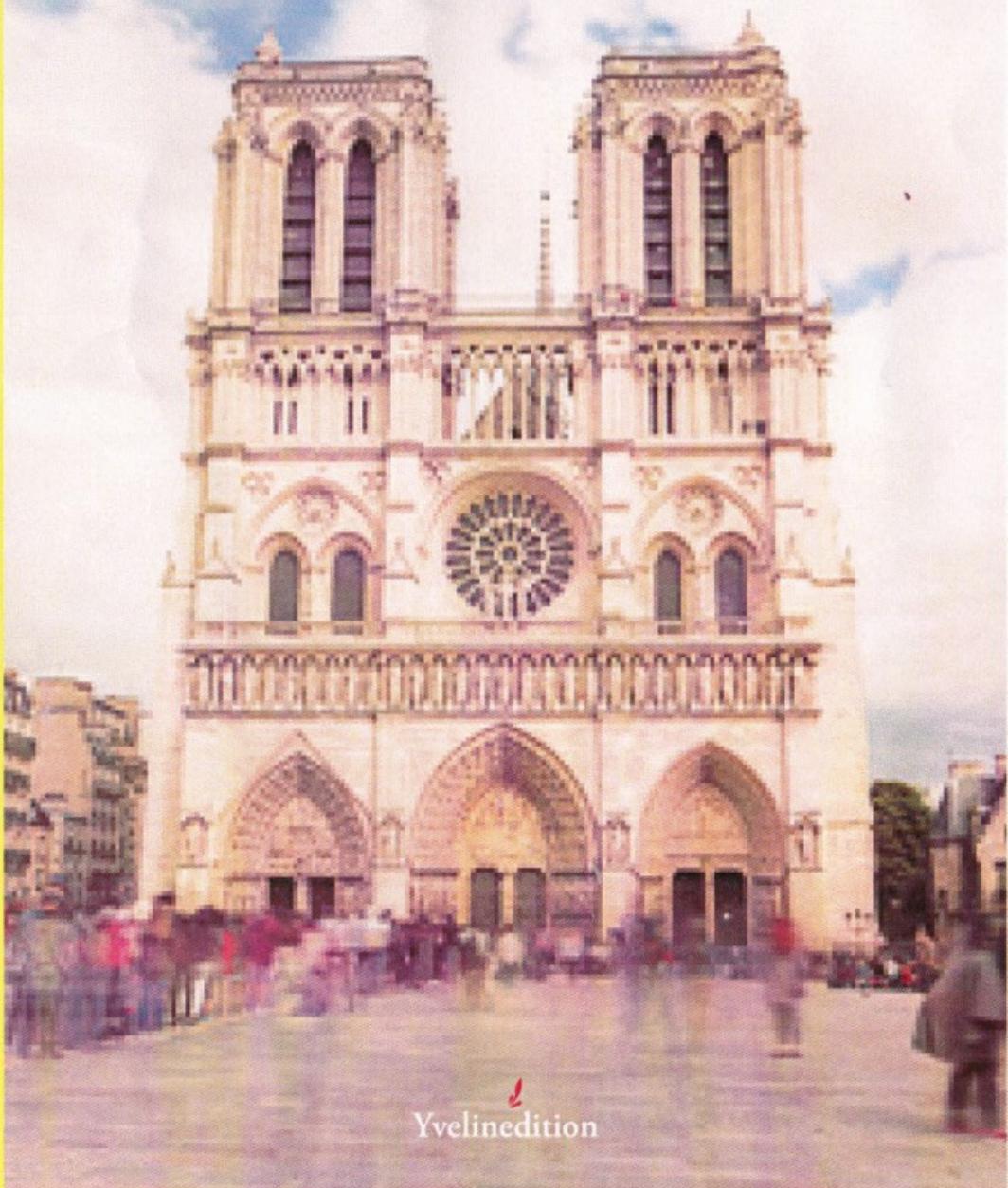


EPISODE 2 THE ANTI-SPECIESISM MURDER

Yvelinedition

Jean-Jacques SANDRAS

CONRAD, ALICE AND THE MAD MURDER




Yvelinedition

To my three sisters: Mireille, Jacqueline and Margaret.

*Not all the characters, names and events
in this book are entirely fictitious.*

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CHAPTER 1

RUGBY IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

“Although I was delighted about her death,” said Alice, “I didn’t kill her.”

“And do you believe that?” asked Conrad.

“Well,” replied Alice after hesitating several seconds, “that’s what she said.”

“You’re not sure?”

“That’s why I’ve come to see you.”

“What did you say to the police?”

“Because it’s a case of murder I couldn’t say that as a shrink I was not allowed to repeat what a patient tells me.”

“And you said all you know to the police?”

“Yes. I had to.”

“So what’s the problem?”

“The facts don’t make sense. There’s every chance of her being condemned for murder.”

“And that bothers you?”

“Because it could be because of what I had to repeat to the police. I feel responsible. As her shrink I strongly suspect

that she isn't capable of murder under those circumstances. Of course, as human beings we are all capable of the worst crimes. It all depends upon the circumstances. I believe that she is innocent."

"And you want me to prove it?"

"At least help prove that she is not necessarily guilty unless, of course, she is."

"To ease your conscience," said Conrad with a slight touch of humour.

"You are a shrink for me." The young woman giggled nervously.

Conrad was well into his sixties and had spent most of his adult life in the computer world before it changed dramatically in the early years of the third millennium with internet. He was neither fat nor thin and his face was rather square. His hair was closely cropped as well as his beard and moustache. With good eyesight for his age he didn't wear glasses. He had earned a good living by working in various countries, mainly in Western Europe, as a software engineer in main line systems. Having grown up in sunny South Africa he started his computer career with IBM in Johannesburg in the late nineteen-sixties before moving to France six years later because of a serious emotional attack. He had fallen in love with a young French girl on holiday south of the Limpopo River who had responded favourably to his amorous advances but who insisted on going back to her country. If he wanted to carry on their lovely relationship he had to follow her. He wanted to and thereafter they spent ten years together in France before the young lady complained of his being a workaholic. The truth is his job took so much of his time and energy that she said she was living with a phantom who was often away for several days at a time and when at home too tired to pay her the attention a woman expects of her man. The flame of passion had diminished with time and after their separation

Conrad lived mainly for his job which he continued to find most interesting and his interest with the Dalai Lama's version of Buddhism. Although he was vegetarian and a teetotaler he was no ascetic. He continued to frequent friendly females. Being good looking and kindly disposed to women, he obtained what he desired while giving as much, if not more, than he took. Now that he was on pension he remained in Paris, a city he loved, and spent most of his time as a tourist in that famous world capital. His desire for intimate relationships with women had dwindled to the point of his being content to only spend time with them as friends.

Alice was tall, slim with long silky light brown hair falling gently on her shoulders. With an oval face she was an attractive woman of twenty-six who loved her job as psychologist to the point of being a workaholic which perturbed her love life. Her boyfriend put up with her because he knew she didn't sleep around and that her relationship with Conrad was purely platonic; two workaholics. The young lady had met Conrad recently at the annual Paris Book Festival when they bumped into each other accidentally. When moving in a dense crowd one inevitably bumps into people and their encounter was truly unintended by either of them unless one wants to believe it was their karma. After apologising to each other in French at the same time they both burst out laughing and ended up having a cup of coffee together. She liked Conrad's English accent and virtually begged him to always speak English with her to allow her to improve her command of that language which she loved so much. As we already know Conrad was always happy to have an attractive young lady for company and he gladly accepted. They discovered that they had many interests in common and where they differed they were happy to learn the other one's point of view. Conrad being old enough to be Alice's grandfather he had the advan-

tage of having more experience in life and she often asked him for his advice, just as she was doing now.

They were sitting at a table in the café Fusain in Paris which was on the same street where Conrad lived. His address was 29 rue Saint Ambroise in the eleventh arrondissement. "If I'm to help you, you must tell all you know about this murder and then I'll see what I can do. So, ...," he said leaving his sentence unfinished on purpose.

"Perhaps I should start with Linda. She's forty and she was having a lot of difficulty with her husband. He was messing around with Marie who was only twenty four."

"Was Linda jealous?" asked Conrad.

"Oh, no! She was relieved about no longer having to go to bed with him. It's the fact that he was spending so much money on Marie. Linda wanted a divorce but her husband refused because he didn't want to marry Marie. All he wanted was to have a good time with an attractive young woman and that was costing money."

"Thus, Linda's interest in Marie's death was purely for money."

"Possibly," said Alice.

"Why only possibly?"

"There was the risk of her husband starting again with another young woman. So killing Marie would not necessarily solve the problem."

"I see," said Conrad.

"But right now she is accused of having killed Marie whether it is for money or jealousy. What her husband does afterwards is another problem."

"I suspect he'll carry on with another young attractive woman," suggested Conrad.

Alice laughed.

"Her basic problem is her husband. It would have been better had he died," said Conrad.

Alice sighed. “Like so many problems. We often solve the symptom instead of the cause.” She smiled. “Isn’t that what your Buddhist masters tell you?”

Conrad laughed. “Right on. And the fundamental problem is ourselves,” he said. “But here I agree that her husband’s death would have been more profitable.”

“That’s one of the arguments her lawyer is using.”

“Who is her lawyer?” asked Conrad.

“Mr Oz,” replied Alice. “I know his name makes us think of the Wizard of Oz but to be frank Bert Oz is a wizard. He is one of the best lawyers in France. Although he works mainly in northern France he is prepared to defend Linda’s difficult case in Paris.

“Does he also have other arguments?”

“He’s trying to prove that Linda who detests violence could not commit such a murder and I’m called upon to testify that her personality doesn’t fit with the method.”

“And what was the method?”

“Marie was stabbed three times; once in the neck, once in heart and once in the stomach.”

“In that order?”

“The scientific police...”

“...the forensics one says in English,” Conrad cut into her sentence. He often did this as it pleased Alice. Like that she was improving her English.

“The forensics aren’t sure. Any one of the three stabbings was enough to kill her and they were only seconds apart.” Alice shrugged. “The thrusts were of similar force and because they were only seconds apart it appears that it was the same person who committed the murder.”

“Not three people?”

“Not even two. There were other technical reasons that the forensics discovered to suggest that only one person was present during the crime.”

“And apart from her having a good motive,” asked Conrad, “what technical details at the scene suggest that Linda is the culprit?”

“Linda’s prints and DNA are present in many places.”

“You mean to say that she also left the murder weapon at the scene!”

“The knife was left lying next to the victim. It was clean of prints and DNA. Either the murderer used gloves or wiped the knife afterwards.”

“Why did the murderer leave the weapon on site?” asked Conrad.

“The police could say she panicked.”

Conrad nodded slowly. “What does her lawyer say about that?”

“He argued that if Linda had ensured that the knife was clean of prints and DNA she would not have left her prints and DNA elsewhere. At first he argued about Linda never having been at the scene of the murder,” Alice said shaking her head, “it was because Linda said she had never been there. But with her prints and DNA on site...”

“And where’s there?”

“Marie’s apartment.”

“So Linda lied about never having been in Marie’s apartment.”

“Unfortunately, yes. Linda did lie about that. She told me she had sneaked into Marie’s apartment once last week to discover what she could about the woman. But she insists on not having being there the day of the murder.”

“And that you had to tell the police?”

“Yes.”

“And the police believe that?”

“I don’t know what the police believe. They are still investigating. The lawyer argues that Linda panicked when she was

arrested for the murder and that was why she lied about never having been in Marie's apartment."

"That seems a reasonable excuse."

"But the police say she has lied once and so they can't trust her."

"That's typical of the police, whether they are French or otherwise," said Conrad. "What about eye witnesses? I mean people who could have seen Linda in the vicinity around the time the crime was committed."

"The police are still looking for someone who might have seen her during that period. They are questioning the neighbours. If they don't find any eye witnesses that could be in favour of Linda. But that doesn't prove her innocence."

"Are you allowed to see Linda? And what about her lawyer?"

"The lawyer says it's better if I don't see Linda. He acts as a go between. He wants me to insist on the fact that Linda is incapable of stabbing someone. It's too violent for her. If she really wanted to kill someone she'd use poison or some other soft method. Men often kill with violence; women often use poison. It's a proven fact."

"But exceptionally a woman can lose her head and behave violently," said Conrad.

"That's true," agreed Alice.

"In the bushveld the lioness avoids fighting the dominant male but when she loses her temper she can become so violent that the dominant male runs away and waits for her to calm down because he knows he would have to kill her to protect himself. Human beings often behave like animals."

"Once you told me that mystics say that sometimes we behave worse than animals," added Alice with a smile.

"Mankind is an animal while human beings are noble." Conrad gave Alice a wink. "Sometimes you do listen when

I philosophise. We are to work our way from mankind to human being.”

Alice smiled back at her tutor. “So what can we do, I mean about Linda?” she asked.

“Find out who did it. That’s the best way to prove Linda’s innocence.”

Alice punched Conrad lightly on the shoulder. “I knew you’d have the answer!” she exclaimed.

“That is if she is innocent.” This last remark brought out a peal of laughter from both of them. “But from what you say,” added Conrad, “I don’t see where your statements to the police are damaging for Linda.”

Alice smiled nervously. “I had to tell them that Linda had planned a meeting with Marie for the time the murder took place.”

“Why did you have to tell them that?”

“Because the police know that she had phoned Marie and Linda had told me that she phoned Marie to talk to her.”

“In Marie’s apartment?”

“Linda told me in a café nearby.”

“I suppose,” said Conrad, “that Linda claims she was at the meeting place and, of course, Marie didn’t show up. But the police suspect that the meeting place was in Marie’s apartment.”

“Exactly!” exclaimed Alice. “And now if the police can prove she was at Marie’s apartment at that time...” Alice didn’t finish her sentence. “You see, Linda didn’t mention the meeting and the police accuse her of hiding information. The lawyer is mad at me. He said I shouldn’t have said that to the police but I told him that the police threatened to lay charges against me if I didn’t say all I knew that is relevant to Linda’s involvement with Linda. I don’t want to get into trouble because of a patient. That’s what I told the lawyer.

But if Linda is innocent and is condemned for murder, I'll be so unhappy."

"But if Linda was in a café," said Conrad, "surely there were eye witnesses."

"The problem is she was on her own and the people working in the café told the police they cannot say for sure if Linda was there at the time."

"What about security cameras?"

"The café doesn't have any."

"And what about security cameras in the vicinity proving Linda was in the area round about that time?"

"Nothing," said Alice. "The police checked that out."

Conrad nodded his head slowly. "We need to investigate like private detectives," he said. "I think we should start with Linda's husband."

"How shall we go about it?" asked Alice.

"Good question," said Conrad. "I think I can go see the husband and say that I'm a private detective working for his wife's shrink who wants to prove Linda's innocence."

"But you're not a private detective!"

"Why shouldn't he believe me?"

"And if he wants to see your permit?"

"And if he doesn't?" Conrad smiled. "I can always try." His smile widened to that of the Chesire cat's. "You see," he added, "as the English say : curiosity killed the cat."

"I don't understand," said Alice.

"People can be so inquisitive that they'll take big risks to find out what is happening." Conrad broke out into laughter.

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed Alice. She rose from her chair and kissed Conrad on the cheek.

And thus it was that the following morning Conrad phoned Charles Smith asking to see him. Linda's husband was surprised by the phone call. Nevertheless, he accepted to

meet Conrad in the Café Livres near the Hôtel de Ville that evening after work.

Charles Smith was a stout man of forty. He was of medium height and wore a short beard and moustache. His abundant and curly hair was almost shoulder length. He was dressed all in black because that was the attire of many professional artists. He gave art classes at the Sorbonne University and was moderately pleased with himself.

“So you are private detective working for my wife’s shrink on my mistress’ death?” said he in English with a friendly smile after shaking hands with Conrad.

“You have an Australian accent,” replied Conrad.

“And you are from South African,” retorted Charles.

Both men burst out laughing. Encouraged by the artist’s cheerful attitude, Conrad said : “perhaps one can say I’m acting as a secret agent.”

Charles shook his head. “I don’t get you,” he said.

“This is an unofficial mission.”

“You mean my wife’s shrink is paying you unofficially?” The joyful reply did contain an element of sarcasm. One can well imagine what Charles was thinking.

“No money, no nothing,” said Conrad in a hurry. “I’m doing this for pleasure. You see, I’m on pension and this sort of occupation is a pleasant way of passing the time.”

Charles nodded his head. “Now what does the shrink want out of this?”

“She doesn’t want your wife to be condemned for a crime she didn’t commit and because what she, the shrink, had to tell the police, she is afraid is damaging for your wife.” Conrad had learnt that honesty is often the best thing in all situations even more so when there is difficulty.

“But shrinks are not supposed to get emotionally involved with their clients, I mean their patients,” objected Charles.

“You are quite right,” agreed Conrad. “But shrinks are human beings like the rest of us. So it cannot be helped.”

Charles took a sip of the beer he had ordered and Conrad imitated him by drinking a few drops of his espresso. The two men looked at each other in silence.

“In what way can I help you?” asked the artist putting down his glass on the small round table in front of them.

Conrad replaced his small cup into its saucer and said : “perhaps you have an idea of who might have committed the murder.”

Charles almost burst into laughter. “That’s a good one!” he exclaimed. “I’m flattered that you should think so much of me.” He shook his head. “The police asked me all sorts of questions including that one. I’m sorry but I haven’t got the slightest idea.”

“Aren’t you worried about your wife being in jail?” asked Conrad. He knew he was taking a risk in asking the question but he couldn’t think of what else to say. Fortunately for him, Charles didn’t take it the wrong way.

“Quite frankly,” said the Aussie, “in a way I’m quite happy with things the way they are now.” He suppressed a peal of laughter. “She was such a pain in the neck.”

“This is like being back in South Africa,” Conrad said to himself. ‘It’s easier for me to deal with a Colonial from the Southern Hemisphere than with an Englishman. I’m on familiar ground.’

The Colonials from the Southern Hemisphere often lack modesty. Perhaps it’s because they had to adapt to harsh conditions in order to survive and also perhaps in order to prove to the English that they are just as good, if not better, than them. Why are New Zealand, Australia and South Africa so good at rugby? It’s because rugby is not a sport for them; it’s a national duty to beat the English who look down upon them.

“You are happy and sad,” said Conrad carefully, “happy about your wife being out of the way and sad because your mistress is dead.”

“I suppose you can say so,” agreed Charles after hesitating a second.

“Then even if you could help to prove your wife’s innocence,” insisted Conrad, “you’d rather not do so.”

“Now you’re pushing things a bit far,” objected Charles.

Conrad felt anxiety for the first time. He was afraid of having overdone it. “I don’t mean it like that,” he said quickly, “I mean that you don’t think it worth your while to work on the case. You have told the police all you know and that’s that.”

“Right,” said Charles. “If I agreed to meet you it was to find out more about the case. The same reason why you wanted to see me.”

“Then we have a common interest,” said Conrad. “We can help each other.”

Charles smiled. “You’re pretty smart,” he said. “But alright. I don’t mind going along with you but I’m not prepared to make any particular effort.”

“That suits me fine,” said Conrad, “and I thank you.” He took in a deep breath. “If you can tell me things about your mistress’ life; I mean the people she mixed with, that would be a good start.”

“And you can tell me about her shrink,” said Charles. “I mean what my wife told her about me.”

“Fair enough,” agreed Conrad.

“Then the next time we meet we both have something to tell each other,” insisted the Aussie. He got up. “I must go now because I have to give a discourse on art later this evening. It’s being fun talking to you.” He offered his hand which Conrad shook. “When you have something of interest to tell me let me know and we’ll meet again.”

CHAPTER 1 RUGBY IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

And that was the end of their interview. Conrad was quite happy with the result. The ball was now in Alice's court. How far was she prepared to break the golden rule of not repeating what a patient said? After all, she did so for the police. Now she'd have to do so for herself. Conrad smiled to himself upon leaving the Café Livres. The situation was more amusing than dangerous. He was in for fun.