

JJ SANDRAS

# CONRAD & ALICE

## EPISODE 3 THE OLD AGE HOME MURDER



## EPISODE 4 THE HUMAN RIGHTS MURDER

Yvelinedition

*Here are the third and fourth 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 third episode, Alice introduces Conrad to one of her patients, Julie, who has a serious problem because her handicapped mother wants to leave the old age home where Julie had placed her. Julie is afraid of losing her boyfriend should her mother come to live with her. Not wanting to jeopardise her love life Julie desperately wants to find a solution. Her boyfriend offers to help solve the problem but the situation gets out of hand. Once again our two investigators find themselves involved in a murder riddle and end up by helping the police solve the case.*

*In the fourth episode, Alice invites Conrad to meet one her patients, Gerard, who is a South African journalist hiding in Paris from political extremists in South Africa who have executed one of his colleagues in Johannesburg because he had criticised their activities. Later on, another fleeing colleague, Jeremiah, turns up in Paris and things go wrong. Once again, our two investigators find themselves involved in a murder riddle and end up by helping the police solve the case.*

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

*The Conrad and Alice episodes can be read in any sequence and by old and young alike. There are neither gory nor erotic scenes.*

*JJ 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.*

**CONRAD & ALICE  
AND THE OLD AGE HOME MURDER**

**&**

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AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS MURDER**

JJ SANDRAS

**Conrad & Alice**  
and the old age home  
murder

**&**

**Conrad & Alice**  
and the human rights  
murder

Yvelinédition

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

BOOKS IN ENGLISH:

*The Lord Magicians*, Solkeo publisher, 2015.

volume 1: *The Knight of the Flower*,

volume 2: *The Lady of Noble Love*,

volume 3: *The Knight of the Boar*,

A philosophical trilogy on mysticism written as a fantasy tale with the background of France in the Middle Ages.

*Conrad & Alice*

An elderly pensioner and a young psychologist as crime investigators.

episode 1: *Conrad & Alice and the mad murder*.

episode 2: *Conrad & Alice and the anti-speciesism murder*.

episodes 1&2, Yvelinédition, 2016.

*The Magic Flute*, Yvelinédition, 2017.

*Conrad in the making*, Yvelinédition, 2017.

BOOKS IN FRENCH:

*Le Chevalier à la Fleur*, éditions Déjà, 2001.

Roman philosophique et mystique écrit à la manière d'un conte fantastique sur fond de Moyen-Âge en France.

*Les Seigneurs Magiciens*, éditions Clair de terre, 2005.

Bande dessinée inspirée du roman *Le Chevalier à la Fleur*.

*Guy Marais, détective privé*

Les mésaventures comiques d'un détective privé sud-africain à Paris.

1 *Les clients mortels*, Yvelinédition, 2010.

2 *L'or de la mort*, Yvelinédition, 2010.

3 *Association mortelle de malfaiteurs*, Yvelinédition, 2011.

4 *Crime fatal en bande désorganisée*, Yvelinédition, 2011.

5 *Homicide volontaire en flagrant délire*, Yvelinédition, 2012.

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9 *Mystère et cupidité au musée du Louvre*, Yvelinédition, 2015.

10 *La fin du 36, quai des Orfèvres*, Yvelinédition, 2016.

Bandes dessinées tirées des romans éponymes.

1 *L'Or de la mort*, Yvelinédition, 2015.

2 *Mystère et cupidité au musée du Louvre*, Yvelinédition, 2016.

# Conrad & Alice and the old age home murder

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*To my Wium and Atwell cousins.*

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

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## CHAPTER 1

### OLD AGE HOME WOES

“Conrad,” said Alice, the pretty and slimly built young psychologist, on her cell phone, “I need your help again.”

“Glad to hear that,” said the elderly gentleman on pension. “Another mystery to solve?” He chuckled. “The last one was most interesting. I suppose you don’t want to give me the details over the phone. Where and when do we meet?”

“How about this evening at the Café Fusain?”

“Great!” approved Conrad. “Close to my apartment. At what time?”

“Let’s say half past six,” suggested Alice.

“The French would say eighteen hours thirty,” said Conrad. “I’ll be there.”

And he was. Alice joined him shortly thereafter. “So what’s the problem this time?” asked Conrad while they were drinking their espressos at one of the tables next to the window giving a large view on the rue Saint-Ambroise.

Readers having already read an episode of the Conrad and Alice series can skip the next two paragraphs.

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

"One of my patients is seriously depressed," said Alice. "She doesn't know what to do about her mother who is most unhappy in the old age home where my patient put her."

Conrad nodded slowly with a frown. "The silver economy," he said. "Some people make a fortune out of their grey haired clients with no consideration for their well being." He raised his coffee cup to his lips and took a sip. "People live too long nowadays," he added. "It's one of the drawbacks of progress in the medical field."

"You can complain!" reproved Alice in a hushed voice.

“Several years ago they saved your life with an emergency operation after your appendix exploded.” She immediately felt ashamed of her angry outburst and leaned forward to place her right hand on Conrad’s left one.

Conrad raised his free hand in mock surrender. “True, true,” he agreed. “The peritonitis was poisoning my system for a couple of days and I would have probably died the next one if my doctor hadn’t sent me to the emergency ward where they operated on me less than 4 hours after my arrival. They called it a Mac Burney.” He smiled. “I am truly grateful to them,” he added before asking: “so what’s the problem with your patient?”

Alice withdrew her hand. “Life in the old age home is like torture,” she said.

“Don’t you think the old woman is exaggerating somewhat?” asked Conrad. “After all, these institutions are well organised with qualified staff, nurses and doctors, aren’t they?”

“Yes and no,” said Alice. “Not all of them. And the problem is that some of the staff, mainly the room cleaning staff and those who are supposed to help the disabled to wash and dress, can be cruel.” She raised her hands, palms outwards, and proceeded with: “fortunately most of the staff and kind and gentle but only a few difficult staff members are enough to make life hell for the residents.”

“I see,” said Conrad. “And what about the other residents?” he asked.

“Some are friendly and some are downright nasty,” replied Alice. “The other day a staff member had to intervene when a patient was trying to smother her roommate with her pillow because she was sick and tired of her roommate always complaining.”

Conrad stifled a laugh. “Well,” he said, “if they kill each

other the old age home will lose clients and the investors in the silver economy won’t be happy.”

“You’re not funny,” said Alice with a rue smile. “Please, be serious.”

“Alright,” answered Conrad. “So what is your patient’s mother’s complaint?”

“Firstly,” said Alice, “the old age home is worse than boring. She spends her time with people, some of who are very, very old, and it’s most tiresome. No or little interesting activities. It’s depressing to always be with people in wheelchairs, people with all kinds of illnesses like Alzheimer and physical handicaps.”

“That I can understand,” said Conrad.

“And then having to get up and go to bed when they tell you to,” said Alice. “It’s like the army. And breakfast in bed is often cold coffee or cold chocolate with biscuits because the food comes too late after having been prepared in the kitchen far away. Some of the residents don’t even eat their breakfast because of that.” Alice shook her head. “I can’t tell you the worst.”

“Then don’t,” said Conrad. “So why doesn’t your patient take her mother back home? Is she physically handicapped or does she have Alzheimer’s?”

“Sort of,” replied Alice. “She needs to wear a nappy at night otherwise she pees in bed.”

“And they don’t take care of that in the old age home?”

“Yes, but the unpleasant staff members who are always in a hurry put her nappy on too early in the evening and she has to sleep with a wet nappy.”

“Can’t she ask them to let her go to the toilet first?”

“Some won’t wait but, of course, there are nice staff members who actually accompany her to the toilet later in the evening and put on her nappy afterwards.”

Conrad put his empty cup back onto its saucer. “So

her problem is the other residents and the some of staff members,” he said.

Alice nodded.

“And if your patient’s mother goes back home it will mean a lot of unpleasant work for her.”

“And she just doesn’t have the time.”

“How old is your patient and her mother?” asked Conrad.

“She is 55 and her mother is 86.”

“Is your patient married?”

“No but she has a sort of boyfriend of her age and she’ll lose him if her mother goes to live with her.”

“Does your patient’s boyfriend live with her?”

“No but he often spends nights at her place and they often go away for the weekend. So, you see, her present life will no longer be possible.”

“I see,” said Conrad. “I see,” he repeated. “Doesn’t she have a brother or a sister? And what about her father?”

“Her older brother lives in Canada and lost all contact with his parents long ago. She has no sisters and her father died several years ago. He was 5 years older than his wife.”

“So the old father is not a problem,” said Conrad, “because he’s dead.” He raised his left arm to imply that he wasn’t being cynical.

Alice acquiesced with a sad smile.

“Does that mean that things were alright while the mother was living with your patient...”

“...they weren’t living together,” said Alice, butting into Conrad’s question. “She had her own apartment close by and my patient went to see her often. But recently her mother started peeing in bed and gave signs of having Alzheimer. She also had more difficulty in getting up and spends a lot of time in her chair.”

“And now in the old age home she has a wheelchair?” asked Conrad.

“Yes. She can still stand up and walk a little.”

“Can’t your patient find a better old age home for her mother even if it’s more expensive?”

“She already pays the price of a 4 star hotel where she is.”

“Wow, that’s a lot!” exclaimed Conrad.

“It includes medical services like doctor and nurses,” said Alice, “and that costs a lot.” Alice shook her head with a shrug. “And when my patient complained to the management running the place they told her if she wasn’t satisfied she could place her mother in another old age home.”

“That’s rather arrogant of the management,” said Conrad.

“They can afford to be,” said Alice. “There aren’t enough beds for the elderly in the Paris basin. There is a long waiting list.”

Conrad nodded. “Bad times for the old,” he said.

“The seniors,” said Alice. “In France there are no longer old people. They are called seniors.”

“Of course,” said Conrad. “People don’t die in this country anymore. They disappear or get lost.” He smiled wryly. “The other day a man told us that he had lost his mother. I knew I was not to offer my help in finding her.”

Alice nodded.

“So,” said Conrad, “your patient would like to convince her mother to remain in the old age home.” He smiled. “Where do I come into the picture? I mean, what can I do to help convince the old lady to stay where she is?”

Alice shook her head. “I won’t ask you that,” she said.

“Then what do you ask me?” asked Conrad.

“Talk to my patient.”

“Convince her to allow her mother to live with her in spite of the fact that she’ll lose her comfortable lifestyle?”

“No.”

“What then?”

“Help her to keep calm in order to find the solution to her problem.”

“But isn’t that your job?” exclaimed Conrad with a laugh. “You’re her shrink!”

“You’re quite right,” acquiesced Alice, “but I failed.”

“Then you send her to another shrink,” said Conrad. “Isn’t that what you psychologists do when you no longer want to treat a patient?”

Alice nodded. “That’s what I did,” she said.

“And your patient came back to you?”

“Yes,” said Alice. “She said she tried and it didn’t help.”

“But you’re not obliged to take her back,” objected Conrad.

“No,” agreed Alice. “So I advised her to join a group like sophrology which has a structured method to produce optimal health and well-being. It consists of a series of easy-to-do physical and mental exercises.”

“Did she follow your advice?”

“Yes.”

“And she came back again?”

“Yes.”

“Surely you can tell her to leave you alone,” said Conrad.

Alice shook her head. “She even joined a yoga group,” she said, “and all that did was to add confusion.”

“I don’t understand,” said Conrad.

“Before life was easy to understand. Her only problem was her mother.” Alice sighed. “Now she has heavy metaphysical issues.”

“Like what?”

“Reincarnation and karma.”

Conrad stifled his urge to laugh. “Isn’t she Catholic?” he asked. “The church gives them the answer to the meaning of life. No need to think. Just go to mass on Sunday and try to be kind and honest. And if you fail sometimes all you have to do is go to confession.” He smiled. “The worst that can happen

to you when you die is to be sent to purgatory for awhile before being accepted in heaven.”

Alice shook her head. “You can be so cynical sometimes,” she said, “but I must admit that what you say is so true.”

“Then your client is not Catholic?”

“Yes and no,” replied Alice. “Like so many people in France today she is a non-practising Catholic. They mainly go to church for weddings and funerals and don’t bother about metaphysical questions.”

“But her yoga group has troubled her mind?” asked Conrad.

“Sort of,” said Alice. “That’s why I’m appealing to you. You’re into a Buddhist path and it suits you. The things you explain to me from time to time are comforting.”

“So you think I could explain karma and reincarnation to your client in a comforting manner?” asked Conrad.

Alice nodded. A short silence followed with the two friends staring at each other. Then Conrad asked: “did you speak of me to her?”

“I only said I knew someone who could explain these things in a nice manner without saying who that someone was,” replied Alice.

Conrad pursed his lips. “I do not consider myself to be a Buddhist teacher,” he said. “I only have my own personal understanding which is not suitable for everybody and when I disagree with other people trying to practice the same path I do not condemn them.”

“But that’s it!” exclaimed Alice.

Conrad sat upright in surprise.

“That’s why I thought of you,” said Alice. “Too many people who believe having found the truth think that their point of view is valid for everyone. Religious fanatics are the worst example.”

Conrad smiled. "Didn't your client come across nice people in her yoga group?" he asked.

"I suppose so," said Alice. "But there is a certain Martine who is a leading member in the group and she has a strong influence on Julie."

"Julie is your patient?" asked Conrad.

Alice nodded. "Her name is Julie."

"What does Julie's boyfriend have to say?"

"He wants Julie to be like she was before. That is to say without her mother and without her yoga group."

"And Julie cannot get rid of either problem. She's afraid of losing her boyfriend. Is that it?"

"That's about it," said Alice.

Conrad sat back in his chair. He frowned. "I suppose I could meet Julie but with you and in a café we don't often go to."

"That's exactly what I was hoping for!" exclaimed Alice.

"Then where and where?" asked Conrad.

"There is the Café Livres near the Hotel de Ville metro station," replied Alice.

Conrad nodded. "Alright," he said. "Let's say round about 3pm when after lunch and before Happy Hour there are fewer people in the café."

## CHAPTER 2 THE PLOT THICKENS

And thus it was that our two friends were drinking their espressos while waiting for Julie in the Café Livres near the Hotel de Ville metro station three days later. Julie was wearing a large pale blue dress which covered her plump figure gracefully. She had a healthy complexion, full cheeks, large nose, generous mouth with fleshy lips and hazel eyes. Her curly greying hair was dyed dark brown. She displayed a pleasant smile upon greeting Alice and Conrad.

"Thank you for accepting to meet me," said Julie shaking hands with Conrad who had risen from his chair when Julie walked towards him.

"You're welcome," said Conrad.

Alice stood up and the two women shook hands. Then the three of them sat down. A waiter approached their table and took Julie's order for lemon tea.

"How shall we start?" asked Julie brushing her dress over her knees.

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