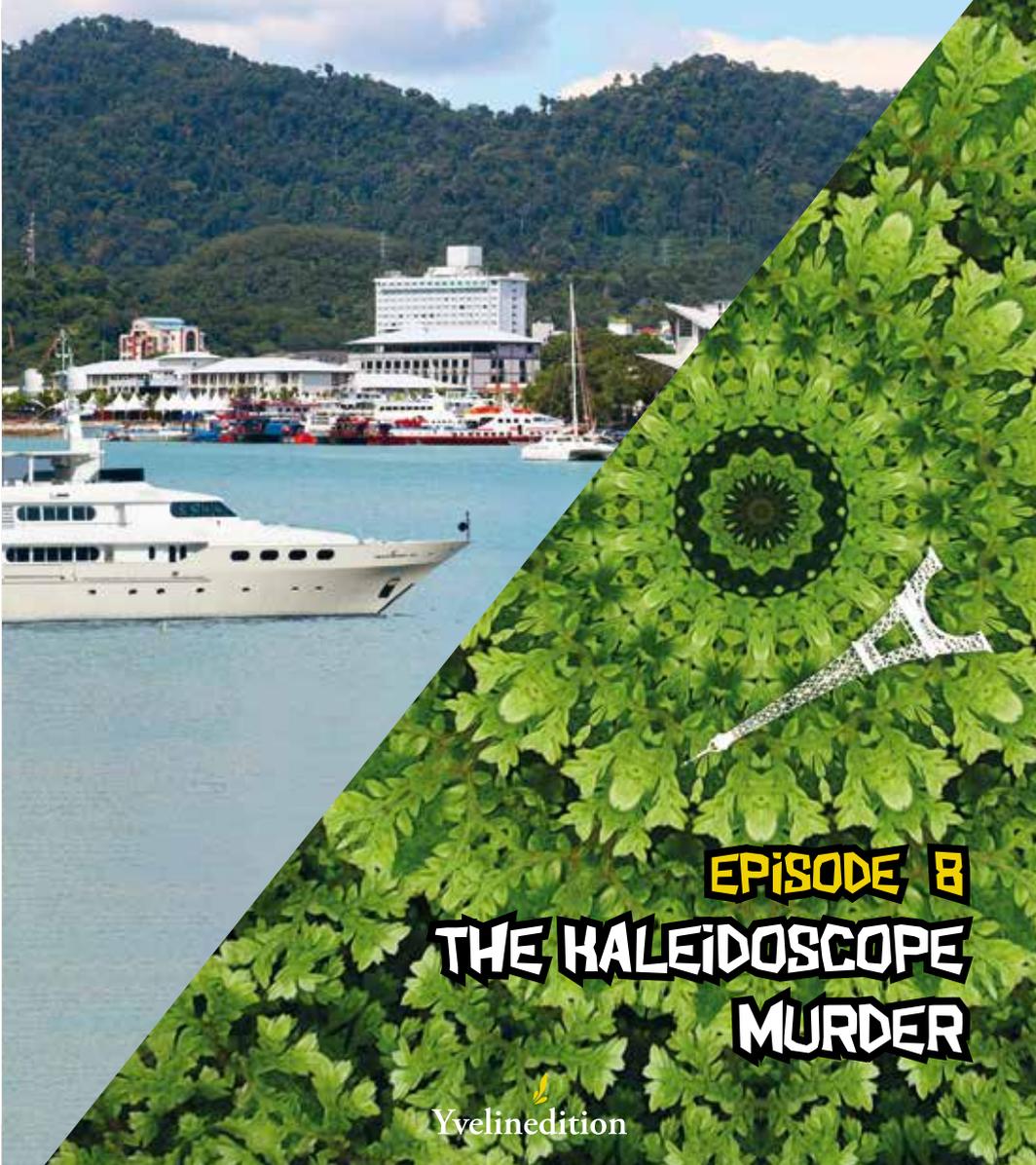


JJ SANDRAS

CONRAD & ALICE

EPISODE 7

THE GLOBALISATION MURDER



EPISODE 8

**THE KALEIDOSCOPE
MURDER**

Yvelinedition

Here are the seventh and eighth 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 seventh episode Alice introduces Conrad to one of her patients who, after living comfortably for several years in Malaysia, has recently returned to France because conditions over there for ex-pats changed dramatically due to globalisation. Yet his psychological problem is due to something worse and Alice suspects that he is hiding some vital information concerning a murder on a yacht in the Philippines. Once again, our two investigators find themselves involved in a murder riddle and end up by helping the police solve the case.

In the eighth episode Alice invites Conrad to meet one her patients overcome by losing his beloved who prefers what she learnt in an ashram in India to him. She disapproves his lack of interest in mysticism. The ensuing philosophical discussions between our crime investigators, the forlorn lover, his ex-girlfriend and one of their acquaintances reveal an unexpected murder. 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.

www.jj-sandras.com

**CONRAD & ALICE
AND THE GLOBALISATION MURDER**

&

**CONRAD & ALICE
AND THE KALEIDOSCOPE MURDER**

JJ SANDRAS

Conrad & Alice
and
the globalisation murder

&

Conrad & Alice
and
the kaleidoscope 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.

episode 3: *Conrad & Alice and the old age murder*.

episode 4: *Conrad & Alice and the human rights murder*.

episodes 3&4, Yvelinédition, 2017.

episode 5: *Conrad & Alice and the ecology murder*.

episode 6: *Conrad & Alice and the space-time bubble murder*.

episodes 5&6, Yvelinédition, 2018.

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 globalisation murder

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To my granddaughter, Ilona.

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

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CHAPTER 1

THE TIMES, THEY ARE A'CHANGING

“Conrad,” said Alice, the pretty young psychologist, on her cell phone, “I have another interesting case.”

“Good news,” 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?”

“Alright,” approved Conrad. “It’s 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 up 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 suffering from nightmares," said Alice with a smile and then kept silent.

"That's rather common," said Conrad with a frown. "I know that smile of yours," he added half closing his eyes. "There must be something special about his nightmares."

Alice laughed. "You're on the right track as usual," she said. "But the interesting thing here for you is where he was living."

"Uh, huh," said Conrad. "Stop keeping me in suspense," he added opening his eyes wide. "Spill the beans."

“He was living in Malaysia,” said Alice with a coquette smile.

Conrad burst into laughter. “That’s where I was on holiday last year!” he exclaimed.

“You went there to see your sister and her husband who left South Africa to live on their yacht over there because that country is nice, warm and friendly. It’s an ideal place for pensioners with a bit of money.”

Conrad nodded. “But Malaysia has many islands. My sister lives in Langkawi. Is that where your patient was living?”

Alice nodded.

“So that’s why you think I might have met your patient?”

“I suspect so. The yachties who live in Langkawi get to know each other. It’s not such a big place like Cannes.”

“And he was there with his wife and yacht?”

“Not quite. He didn’t have a yacht.”

“Then perhaps I didn’t get to meet him. I was with my sister and her husband who mix with people who have yachts.”

“But your sister also rents a house on the island,” said Alice. “She and her husband spend some of their time in the house. They like sailing but hardly go far. That’s what you told me. Their sailing days across the Indian Ocean are over. They have sort of settled down.”

“Why do you think I might have met your patient in Langkawi?”

“Although he was not one of the wealthy Westerners with his yacht, he used to work for them to pay for his upkeep in Malaysia. Perhaps he worked for your sister.”

Conrad pursed his lips. “Did you speak to him of me?”

Alice shook her head. “Of course, not,” she muttered with a frown.

“Sorry,” said Conrad. “Stupid question. I know you’re very careful about that sort of thing.” He smiled and put up his arms like in surrender.

Alice smiled back and took his left arm and pulled it gently onto the small table between their coffee cups. “No harm,” she said. They sat in silence for several seconds then Alice added: “perhaps you could help him with his problem.”

Conrad raised his eyebrows. “What is his problem?” he asked.

Alice shook her head slowly. “I’m afraid I’m not to speak of my patients’ problems,” she said almost in a whisper. “Let him tell you.”

“Where did the problem take place? Here in Paris or over there in Langkawi? And what is his role?”

“Perhaps I should explain the situation,” said Alice.

“I’m all ears,” said Conrad sitting upright. “Fire away.”

In her usual gentle manner, Alice told Conrad about Pascal and Marie. They married when they were young and had no children. They met when she was a waitress in a restaurant in the south of France and he was working there on a building site as a bricklayer. At the age of forty-five, she lost her job when the restaurant closed down and lived on her unemployment allowance. But shortly thereafter, when Pascal was fifty-two, he injured his back at work and was laid off. He managed to get a small pension as an invalid. But when Marie’s unemployment payment ended and she was unable to find another job, there wasn’t enough income for the two of them to live decently. They discovered that with Pascal’s small pension revenue, they could live comfortably in Malaysia where life was cheap. So there they went. Pascal did odd jobs here and there for the yachties and Marie did housecleaning for those who also rented houses on the island. Like that, life was fine. They were happy.

“That’s a happy story,” said Conrad when Alice finished her story. He leaned back in his chair. “Alright, then I’ll be happy to hear him out. Shall we say the Café Livres near the Hôtel de Ville metro station?”

“As per usual,” acquiesced Alice. And thus it was that two days later Conrad found Alice at a table in the aforementioned café sitting next to a man who introduced himself as Pascal when Conrad approached them. Pascal was near sixty. He had drawn cheeks enhancing the anxious look on his face. He was going bald with grey hair and bushy eyebrows. His full nose and thin lips seemed to contradict each other.

Conrad sat down and told the waitress who had come over to their table upon seeing him that he would have an espresso. “So we have something in common,” he said looking at Pascal. “We have both been to Langkawi.”

Pascal uttered a small nervous laugh. “I use to live there and you were on holiday to visit your sister. What’s her name?”

“Juliana,” answered Conrad. “Her husband is William. Do you know them?”

“Oh, yes. They were one of the couples for whom I worked on the yacht occasionally.”

“And in their house?”

“My wife did housecleaning once a week.”

“How about that!” exclaimed Conrad. “It’s a small world.”

Alice remained silent to allow the two men to get on with their conversation.

“Why did you leave Malaysia?” asked Conrad.

“Things went wrong,” answered Pascal. He hesitated several seconds and when Conrad remained silent he continued with: “At first, when we got there, life was cheap and with my disability pension, Marie and I could live comfortably. We rented a small house cheaply. In the past, when your three month visa was up, all you had to do was to go to Thailand for a day and then go back to Malaysia and get another three month visa.”

Conrad frowned. “And that’s no longer the case?” he asked.

Pascal nodded. “Recently, they decided that to get another three month visa you had to be away for at least three months.

So you must live in another country part time.” He sighed. “That was too complicated and too expensive for us.” He shook his head slowly. “Furthermore, with more tourists coming to the island, there was no longer only one hotel but now there are four and the beaches have begun to overflow with paddle boats and the like for tourists. Langkawi is no longer the peaceful place with few foreigners it used to be.”

“Globalisation,” said Conrad. “Higher prices, less space and the locals are the first victims.”

“And they start disliking foreigners,” added Pascal, “who make life more expensive for them and overcrowd their living space.”

“But my sister didn’t mention that,” said Conrad.

“The yachties have money and they buy a permanent residence visa, which I could never afford,” Pascal muttered. “Now, the authorities no longer want foreigners like me. They want people like your sister who pay docking fees for their yacht and spend money in the restaurants and so on.”

“I see,” said Conrad. “So you’ve come back to France where life is more expensive.”

“Much more expensive!” exploded Pascal.

Conrad raised his eyebrows. “But why do you see a shrink?” he asked. “You need material help; not psychological help.”

“There’s something else,” said Pascal. He remained silent the time it took the waitress to put Conrad’s coffee on the table and when she was out of earshot he said: “I made a mistake in the Philippines and that’s why I need a shrink.”

“But we are talking about Malaysia,” objected Conrad.

Pascal nodded. “I went to the Philippines to see if Marie and I could live there.”

“And the situation there wasn’t any better for people like you?”

“I won’t go into the details,” said Pascal, “but the world is changing fast. Everywhere you go now everything’s the same.

McDonalds, Starbucks Coffee, tourist hotels; even French perfumes! Like you said yourself: globalisation.”

“And the local inhabitants are always the biggest losers,” added Conrad with a sad smile. “Fewer and fewer people are getting richer and richer while most people are on their way down.” He shrugged his shoulders. “But here in France there is still hope.”

“For how long?” asked Pascal.

“For the time being, at least,” said Conrad.

“With migrants invading this country,” said Pascal in a bitter tone, “many French people will soon suffer.”

Conrad nodded. “The richer countries in North America, Western Europe and also Australia suffer from poor people invading them for material comfort.”

“All over the world the environment is being devastated with buildings for tourism,” added Pascal. “There’s no stopping the destruction. Beautiful beaches lose their natural vegetation, peace and quiet because of hotels, restaurants and too many tourists.”

“Before different countries were different,” agreed Conrad, “but with television since the 1950s and internet some forty years later people are brainwashed into all desiring the same things. We are now living in a global village. We eat the same food, wear the same clothes and communicate with the same language: Globish.”

“Globish?” asked Pascal sitting upright in surprise.

“Global English,” answered Conrad. “It’s the new version of pidgin English.” He raised his eyebrows as if to excuse his harsh words on modern life. “Of course, the extraordinary technical progress is great. It allows us to discover our universe and makes life comfortable in many ways. Satellites allow us to find our way on the road without maps.” He sighed. “But unfortunately we are also making wrong use of it. That’s the problem.”

“Globalisation is certainly a serious problem,” said Alice joining in the conversation. “Shouldn’t we get back to what’s bothering Pascal?”

Conrad nodded. He looked at Pascal. “But then your problem is not in France. It has to do with the Philippines; right?”

“It started there and now it’s come to France,” said Pascal.

Conrad raised his eyebrows making Pascal laugh lightly. Alice shrugged.

“I was in the Philippines,” said Pascal, “when I met a yachty normally living in Malaysia who was sailing around the Pacific Ocean. We were in a restaurant and he asked me about my yacht. I explained my situation and he insulted me by calling me a migrant.” Pascal breathed in deeply to suppress the discomfort he felt talking about the incident. “He said times had changed so much that migrants were no longer only dark skinned beggars from Asia and Africa. Now there were white skinned migrants from ex-colonial powers like France.” Pascal grimaced.

“That was an unnecessary insult,” said Conrad quickly.

“Well,” said Pascal, “I told him what I thought of white South Africans who abused Africans with apartheid. I also said that the white South Africans who fled to Australia at the end of apartheid were called the new boat people and that is the same thing as migrants.” He sighed. “The conversation almost ended in a fist fight.” He sighed again. “I know you grew up in South Africa,” he said, “and I understand how things can happen. As long as you do not approve apartheid, I accept you.”

“When I was a child everyone, black and white, played the game and so things seemed normal to me. It was only after I travelled to Europe did I discover that it wasn’t right.”

“Did you fight it?” asked Pascal.

“No,” replied Conrad. “I have never been a member of a

political party or any other organisation. I believe in individual responsibility and avoid doing harm." He raised his eyebrows. "My philosophy of life agrees with the Dalai Lama's teachings."

"Reincarnation and karma?" asked Pascal. "So whatever happens to us is our own fault and we must accept it!" he exclaimed.

"Yes for reincarnation and karma," replied Conrad sternly, "and no about our accepting whatever happens to us. The dice are loaded at our birth. Our destiny for one life is a link in the chain of karma of all our lives. But we do have some free will and we can change our destiny." He remained silent waiting for Pascal to answer and when Pascal didn't, he went on with: "therefore I judge no-one. You are currently in a difficult situation and perhaps by talking about it could help you."

"Okay," said Pascal. "The South African I met wasn't like you."

A short silence followed.

"Let's get back to your problem, Pascal," suggested Alice in a gentle voice.

"My problem is," said Pascal, "that lousy South African accused me of having robbed him. I had to leave the Philippines in a hurry before the police could arrest me. I'm worried about the Philippines asking France to extradite me." He slunk back into his chair.

"Is the accusation so bad that the Philippines would ask for your extradition?" asked Conrad.

Pascal nodded. "He was found murdered on his yacht afterwards and I found out because the yachties were talking about it. And the way they were looking at me reminded me of my argument with him a couple of days before. They took me for the perfect suspect."

"But did you go to his yacht?" asked Conrad.

"Yes," muttered Pascal.

"Why?"

"To steal."

"So his accusation was valid?"

"Yes, but I didn't kill him."

"Was he on the yacht when you were there?"

"No."

"What did you steal?"

"Some money. Not much. There was nothing else. Like that I took revenge for his insults."

"And so far the French police haven't bothered you?"

"No, but Betsy has."

"Who is Betsy?"

"The wife and she is here in Paris."

"Are you sure of that?"

"She contacted me."

"What does she want?"

"To see me."

"Have you seen her?"

"It's for tomorrow and I don't want to go alone."

"And you want me to go with you?" asked Conrad in surprise.

"You are South African like her. You lot understand each other!" Pascal clenched his fists. "I'm sorry to ask you this," he said, "but I don't know how to handle this."

"You can understand if I refuse," said Conrad slowly.

"That I do," said Pascal. "Don't answer now. If you don't come I understand. If you do come it's by the Charlemagne Statue in front of the Notre-Dame Cathedral. It's for 3pm." He got up. "Allow me to pay for the drinks," he said. "Thank you for listening to me and perhaps see you tomorrow." He went to the counter and paid for the drinks.

Conrad looked at Alice and before he could speak, she

said: “I didn’t know he was going to ask you to accompany him tomorrow.”

Conrad nodded with a grimace. “That doesn’t surprise me. He’s not an honest fellow.”

“Perhaps we could stop with him now,” said Alice. “In any case I told him I would no longer keep him as a patient.”

Conrad smiled as he watched Pascal leave the café. “I think I’ll be there,” he said, “and I’ll play it by ear.”

Alice sighed. “As you like,” she said. “Thank you for having come here today. Do let me know how things turn out.”

“That I will,” said Conrad. “Perhaps this will be another murder case for us to solve.”

They both laughed heartily.

CHAPTER 2 THE PLOT THICKENS

Conrad stepped out into the sun upon leaving the Hôtel de Ville metro station. He was happy to take the ten minute walk to the Notre-Dame Cathedral on the island in the River Seine known as ‘Île de la Cité’. Crossing the right bank of the river on the Arcole Bridge always pleased him as it offered a wide view of one of the many beautiful sights of Paris. On the bridge with a name honouring Napoleon’s brilliant victory in 1796 in Italy against the Austrians, Conrad would slow down to gaze at the boats flowing calmly beneath him, some with visitors to Paris, others with merchandise and sometimes the faster river police boats. There are often many people on the bridge and during the holiday season it amused him to pick out the various languages he heard when coming across tourists.

He was careful to arrive at the rendezvous several minutes later than the appointed time. He saw Pascal sitting next to a rather plump stocky sixty year old woman on the low concrete wall in front of the Charlemagne statue. She had short greying hair covering a square face with shifty eyes, a