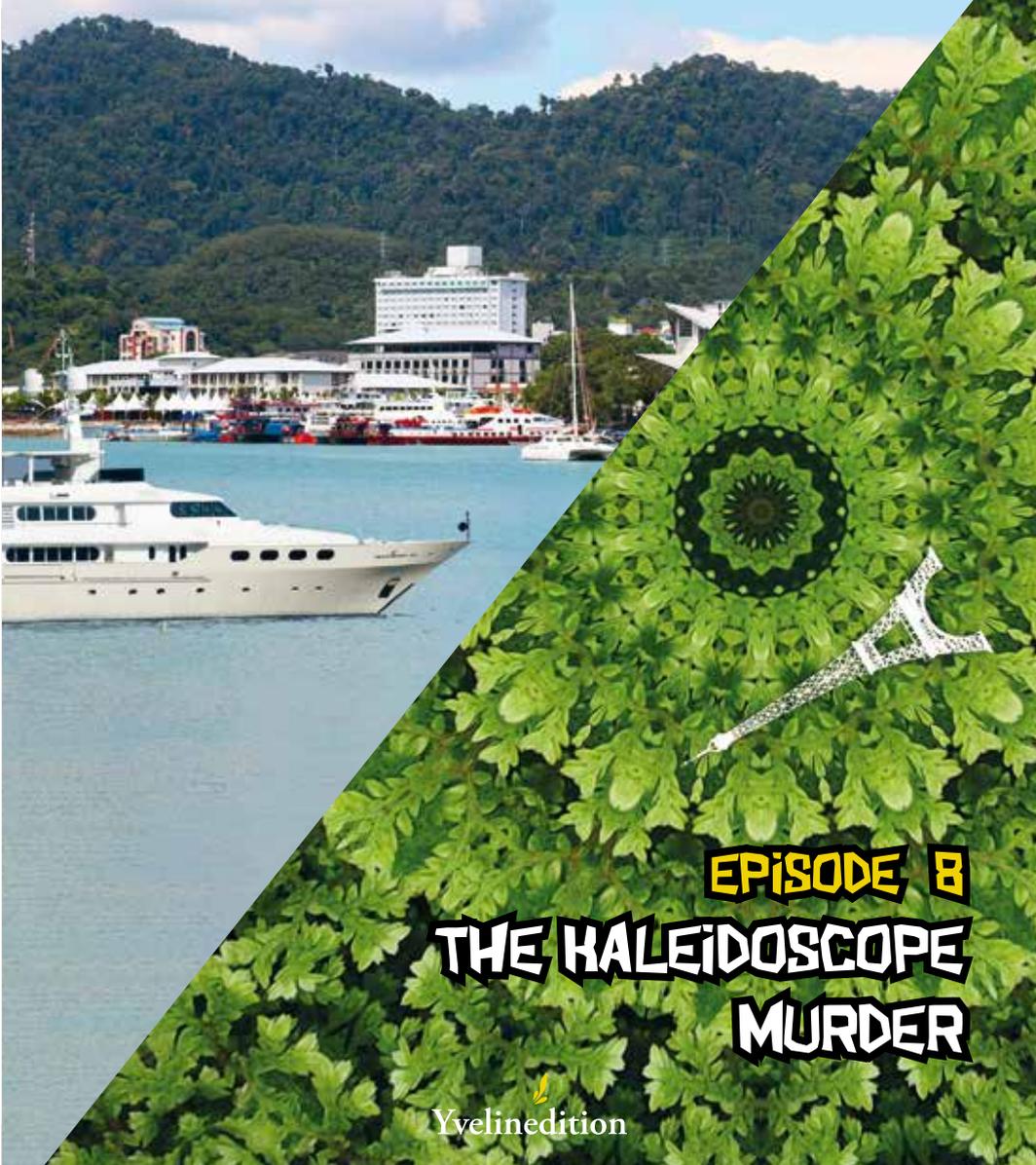


JJ SANDRAS

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**

&

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**Conrad & Alice
and
the globalisation murder**

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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.

6 *Non-assistance à personne enragée*, Yvelinédition, 2012.

7 *Entrave stupéfiante à la justice*, Yvelinédition, 2013.

8 *Erreur fatale sur la personne*, Yvelinédition, 2014.

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 kaleidoscope murder**

To my grandson, Gaston.

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

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CHAPTER 1

THE FINGER AND THE MOON

“Conrad,” said Alice, the pretty and slimly built young psychologist, on her cell phone in a jocular voice, “here we go again.”

“Another patient with a curious problem?” asked Conrad in the same tone.

“That’s why I’m calling you,” she said. “I think it would interest you to meet him; you who are interested in people.”

“But not to the point of being a shrink,” said Conrad. “That’s your domain. Anyway, spill the beans.”

“He is seriously perturbed by various religious philosophies,” said Alice. “He confuses those teachings to such an extent that he’s like Alice in Wonderland and has difficulty in distinguishing everyday normal life with the way he sees the world we live in.”

“And you no longer want to help him?”

“I am unable to help him. So I’m going to tell him to see another psychologist or even a psychiatrist.”

“And, of course, you didn’t speak to him of me?”

“Obviously!” exclaimed Alice. “Like always, it’s only if you are interested in meeting him that I’ll mention you.”

“I agree,” said Conrad. “Shall the three of us meet in the Café Livres as per usual?”

“That’s what I was hoping for,” replied Alice. “Tell me which day and time will suit you.”

“Let’s say Friday at 3pm.”

“Fine,” said Alice. “I’ll call you back as soon as I have his confirmation.”

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 advan-

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

At 3pm on Friday upon entering the Café Livres near the Hôtel de Ville metro station Conrad saw Alice sitting with a man at a small table. Conrad always came five minutes after Alice with her patient. Like that should her patient's aspect displease him he could pretend not to recognise Alice without insulting the patient. So far this had not happened. The patient was a well built, tall man in his early thirties. He had light brown, short curly hair and was clean shaven. His full cheeks surrounded a large nose over a wide mouth. He was wearing a white tee-shirt and blue jeans.

"Good afternoon," said Conrad in a jovial voice approaching the table. Éric got up and shook Conrad's hand. Alice stood up, too, and exchanged the typical French kiss on the cheek with Conrad and immediately thereafter they all sat down. The pretty young waitress elegantly dressed in black came to their table and took Conrad's order for an espresso.

"Éric has an interesting story to tell you," said Alice. "Like you he has visited India. It's his girlfriend who took him with her a few months ago."

Éric nodded. "You have been many times to India?" he said.

"Several times," said Conrad. "Mainly Northern India and Nepal. I've never been further south than Bombay. And where did your girlfriend take you?"

"Near Amritsar, the capital of the Punjab," replied Éric. "There is an ashram nearby."

"There are quite a few ashrams in the area," said Conrad. "The Dalai Lama has his headquarters in Dharamsala. Were you there?"

"No. I was in an ashram that Maharishi had near Amritsar. He was the Beatles' guru but he died several years ago"

Conrad nodded. "In Holland after making a fortune in America," he said.

"He taught transcendental meditation," said Éric. "Very interesting. Did you go to his ashram?"

"No," replied Conrad. "When I was first in the Punjab in 1971 I stayed in an Ashram near Amritsar. There I met two American hippies like myself who were on their way to Maharishi's ashram. They invited me to go with them because for only 50 American dollars Maharishi would initiate you. I refused because I thought it was too small price to pay for god realisation." He softened his harsh words with a smile.

Éric responded to Conrad's smile with a laugh. "Glad to hear that," he said. "My girlfriend is naive. Or rather my ex-girlfriend, should I say?"

"You left her?" asked Conrad.

"The other way round."

"And you would like to win her back again?"

"That's a nice way of putting it."

Conrad shrugged. "And she's making it difficult?"

Éric nodded pursing his lips.

"How?" asked Conrad.

Just then the waitress brought his espresso. She put it on the table in front of him, he thanked her and after she left them Éric said: "She doesn't want to be with someone who is not interested in spiritual love."

"And spiritual love doesn't interest you?"

"Not her version."

"Because you have another version of spiritual love?"

"Not quite. But I have good reasons to doubt hers."

"Then you would like to propose a different version that could suit both of you?"

Éric turned sideways to look at Alice. He bowed his head with a large smile. "Very good," he said to her. "You were quite right to introduce me to Conrad." Then he looked back

at Conrad. "You have understood," he said. "I have listened to a few of Gaby's fellow followers and for me it's all just another religion." He sighed. "Perhaps you can see further."

Conrad lifted his cup to his lips and sipped his espresso. "As Socrates said," he said, "in order to have a discussion we need a common platform."

"Agreed!" exclaimed Éric. He jerked upright embarrassed by his enthusiasm.

Conrad smiled. "Then let's start with when someone points the moon to you, you must not confuse the finger with the moon."

"I've heard that before," said Éric. "It's in the Buddha's teachings."

Conrad nodded. "Then let's consider the finger to be religion and the moon to be spiritual love," suggested Conrad.

Éric nodded energetically. "And Gaby confuses the finger with the moon!" He smiled broadly. "Now how can I show her that?"

"By asking her how she separates the finger from the moon."

"But she doesn't. Can you help me?"

"Perhaps," answered Conrad. "I only have my personal point of view. I'm no mystical master. I met a few of them over the years; in India and in various countries in Europe."

"That could be good enough to help me. Will you try?"

Conrad glanced at Alice. "It could be an interesting exercise, but only as long as we are happy while doing so. I have no wish to convince anyone of my beliefs."

"I'm happy to go along with that."

"Then we need to know how Gaby practises her spiritual love. You can start by telling me."

"By transcendental meditation. I think you've heard of it."

"Uh, huh," said Conrad. "It was the big thing in the late sixties that hit the West."

"And is that what you learnt in the Punjab in the early seventies?"

"No," replied Conrad. "The master who taught in the ashram where I was spoke of raja meditation." He raised his eyebrows. "But I shan't bother you with that. It's Gaby's practice that interests us."

Éric nodded. "She does yogic postures and deep breathing."

"I see," said Conrad. "But that's to relax the body and calm the mind in preparation for meditation."

Éric eyes opened wide. "I don't know about that," he said. "What's that got to do with the finger and the moon?"

"It's like preparing for a meal and not eating it."

"You mean that preparing for the meal is like the finger and eating it is like the moon?"

"In this case, yes. How does she meditate?"

"Like I said: by yogic postures and deep breathing."

"That's what some Indian yogis do to prepare for raja yoga," said Conrad.

"Then is it necessary to do that before practising raja yoga?" asked Éric.

"No," replied Conrad. "One must be relaxed; that's all. But what has happened some yogis have attained great control over their body and mind and not gone over to raja yoga."

"Then Gaby's practice is no good?"

"Not necessarily," said Conrad. "It can be helpful for a happy life." Conrad remained silent for a few seconds before speaking again. "If that is her thing why should it bother you?" he asked.

"Because she wants me to do the same thing?"

"Have you tried?"

"Yes. I tried it for a half an hour or so. I told her it doesn't appeal to me."

"And because of that she doesn't want you anymore?"

"Yes."

“I see. She wants her man to be on the same path as her; right?”

Éric nodded. “But why speak to her of the finger and the moon? I doubt she’ll accept that.”

“Perhaps she will if she also practices raja yoga.”

“Raja yoga. What’s that?”

“It’s sitting still with the back upright, the eyes closed and repeating a mantra while concentrating on the third eye. You forget the body and breathing. That could be what she calls spiritual love. Only she doesn’t know it.”

“And how could that make her want me back again?”

“Perhaps she has other reasons for no longer wanting you.”

“I’m not sure I get you.”

“You went with her to India; right?”

Éric nodded.

“What made her change her mind about you?”

“Well,” said Éric slowly, “I lost my job because of too much pressure. I had to go on the dole. I’m depressed. They call it a burn-out.”

“And Gaby hoped by practising the same meditation as her you would come right?”

“Yes.”

“And it didn’t work?”

“No.”

Conrad pulled a face. “Perhaps it’s not her meditation practice that’s the problem,” he said. “Perhaps it’s your burn-out.”

Éric emitted a short sarcastic laugh. “Maybe you’re right,” he muttered. “Maybe you’re right,” he repeated. He smiled broadly. “I could try my luck with the finger and the moon. But even if she agrees how can that help?”

“Someone who practices raja yoga knows it’s a purely personal path and doesn’t expect anyone else to do likewise. She could want you to do the same but not demand it. She would only want you to allow her to do so if you live together.”

“It’s as simple as all that?” asked Éric in an uncertain voice.

“Yes,” replied Conrad. “It means you allow her to be vegetarian, honest and moral.” He frowned. “Are you prepared to live with her if she asks you to tolerate her values and insists on your being honest even if you’re not vegetarian and do not meditate?”

Éric shook his head slowly. “I suppose so,” he said hesitantly.

“Well,” said Conrad with a sigh. “Then perhaps you could try.”

“That’s if she also practices raja meditation,” said Éric. “Can we exchange phone numbers so I can call you after speaking to Gaby?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied Conrad and they gave each other their phone numbers.

Éric got up, thanked Alice and Conrad for their help and insisted on paying for the drinks. He went to the counter paid for the drinks and quit the café.

“Does the finger and the moon image also concern religions?” asked Alice. “I didn’t want to ask you in front of Éric because I didn’t want to disturb your conversation.”

“Yes, it does,” answered Conrad. “Rites and rituals are good in reminding one of the spiritual teachings but if one limits oneself to only that then there is the risk of despising other religions and that often leads to conflict. Too many crimes have been committed for religious reasons.”

“And that is what the Buddhist masters teach you?”

“They say that all religions teach the same truth. If we were to take what all religions have in common as the basic truth and consider their differences as necessary for the local culture then there’d be no religious wars.”

“Even in the same religion like with the Catholics and the Protestants?”

“Yes. Regardless of the religion and country,” said Conrad.

“For political reasons the Cardinal Richelieu sided with the Swedish Protestants against the Catholic Germans in the thirty years war. It was part of his strategy in combating Catholic Spain.”

“The thirty years war?” said Alice.

“Uh, huh,” said Conrad. “It began as a religious war in 1618 when some Protestants ransacked a Catholic church in Prague.”

“Then religions can also serve as excuses for crimes,” sighed Alice.

“And the war between France and Spain continued for another 18 years after the end of the Thirty Years War,” said Conrad.

Alice frowned. Conrad understood she wasn’t particularly interested in the subject. They sat in silence for a few minutes before Alice thanked Conrad for his intervention and then they left the café to go their different ways.

CHAPTER 2

THE UNIVERSE AND MORE

Two days later, Éric phoned Conrad. “Gaby was impressed by the finger and the moon image and would like to talk to you about it,” said Éric. “We could meet.”

“Alright,” said Conrad. “I’ll ask Alice if she’d like to participate and I’ll call you back to fix a date.”

“Thanks,” said Éric and hung up.

Thus four days later the foursome met at the foot of the statue in the Louis XIII square at place des Vosges. Gaby was a pleasantly plump young woman with long dark curly hair surrounding a friendly face. She had wide bright blue eyes, full cheeks, a big nose over a large mouth with thick lips. She wore a large colourful dress falling down to her shoes. She reminded Conrad of the hippy period of the late sixties. The introductions were made and they went over to a bench nearby. Gaby and Conrad sat next to each other with Alice on the other side of Conrad and Éric on the other side of Gaby.

“So you’ve been to India, too,” said Gaby opening the conversation.