

Characters

Narrator (M/F)	-	The narrator of the story
Dupin (M/F)	-	The Detective
Policeman 1 (M/F)	-	Police Inspector
Policeman 2 (M/F)	-	A Policeman
Pauline* (F)	-	A washwoman (witness)
Pierre† (M)	-	A Shopkeeper (witness)
Jules* (M)	-	A Banker (witness)
Alfonso† (M)	-	A Spanish witness
William* (M)	-	An English witness
Alberto† (M)	-	An Italian witness
Paul* (M)	-	A doctor
Sailor* (M)	-	A French Sailor

(*These parts can be doubled, †these parts can also be doubled, so the play can be produced with six actors)

Scene 1 – Study/Street/Police interview room

(Lights up. Tabs remain closed. Narrator enters)

Narrator: (Upstage centre, to audience) Paris! In Paris it was, in the summer of 1840. There I first met that strange and interesting young fellow, August Dupin.

(Tabs open. There are three flats downstage. The first is a bookshelf, the second is a police interview room and the third, dark Paris street with streetlights. Dupin enters carrying several books which he takes over to the 'library' stage left and sits at a table. Spotlight on the 'library' and on the Narrator. Dupin walks over as the narrator continues to speak.)

Narrator: Dupin was the last member of a well-known family, a family which had once been rich and famous; he himself, however, was far from rich. He cared little about money. He had enough to buy the most necessary things of life – and a few books; he did not trouble himself about the rest. Just books.

(Dupin opens a book and turns the large pages with interest)

Narrator: With books he was happy.

(Dupin smiles, chuckles slightly and turns the page)

Narrator: We first met when we were both trying to find the same book. This chance brought us together in an old bookstore. Later we met again in the same store. Soon we began to talk. I was surprised, at how much and how widely he had read; more important, the force of his busy mind was like a bright light in my soul. I felt that the friendship of such a man would be for me riches without price. I invited him to stay with me in my home and he agreed.

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(Narrator walks to the 'library')

Narrator: He could read my collection of fine books and would not be so alone. I was not happy alone.

Dupin: (rising from his seat) How I enjoy our discourse and writings these days but as you must know, I am a lover of the night. You must join me on a walk by only the light of the stars through the Paris streets. To talk, to be silent and to think.

(Dupin sits and reads his book once more)

Narrator: I soon noticed a special reasoning power he had, an unusual reasoning power. Using it gave him great pleasure.

Dupin: Most men have windows over their hearts; through these I can see into their souls. I know your soul, friend; I know things about you that I you think only you could possibly know.

Narrator: **(To Audience)** His manner at these moments was cold and distant. His eyes looked empty and far away. At such times it seemed to me that I saw not just Dupin, but two Dupins – one who coldly put things together, and another who just as coldly took them apart.

(Dupin and Narrator move stage left in front of the 'Paris street'. Spotlight follows.)

Narrator: One night we were walking down one of Paris's long and dirty streets. Both of us were busy with our thoughts. Neither had spoken for perhaps fifteen minutes. It seemed as if we had each forgotten that the other was there. I soon learned that Dupin had not forgotten me, however.

Dupin: You're right. He is a very little fellow, that's true, and he would be more successful if he acted in lighter, less serious plays.

Narrator: **(agreeable but gradually confused)** Yes, there can be no doubt of that! **(Confused)** How?

Dupin: How what?

Narrator: **(Turning to Dupin)** I was only *thinking* about -

(Narrator stops for a moment before Dupin completes the sentence)

Dupin: Chantilly?

Narrator: Yes. It was only a *thought*!

Dupin: You want to know how I knew you were thinking Chantilly is too small for the plays in which he acts?

Narrator: That is indeed what I was thinking. But, tell me, in Heaven's name, the method – if method there is – by which you have been able to see into my soul in this matter.

Dupin: **(Chuckling)** It was the fruit-seller.

Narrator: Fruit-seller!? I know no fruit-seller.

Dupin: I mean the man who ran into you as we entered this street – it may have been ten or fifteen minutes ago, perhaps less.

Narrator: Yes; yes, that's true, I remember now. A fruit-seller, carrying a large basket of apples on his head, almost threw me down. But I don't understand why the fruit-seller should make me think of Chantilly – or, if he did, how you can know that.

Dupin: I will explain. Listen closely now:

(Spotlight on Dupin)

Dupin: The fruit-seller bumped into you, you hit your foot on a cobble. You kept looking down at the cobblestones as we walked. Then we came to a street with new cobbles, cut in a very special way. Your face became brighter and I saw your lips move. I could not doubt that you were saying the word stereotomy, the name for the way of cutting stones. We read about it in the newspaper only yesterday. I thought that the word stereotomy must make you think of that old Greek writer named Epicurus. We were talking about how much his old ideas are like today's ideas about the earth and the stars and the sky. I felt sure that you would look up to the sky. You did look up. I too looked up, and saw that the group of stars we call Orion is very bright and clear tonight.

(Spotlight on Narrator)

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Narrator: This is very strange indeed

(Spotlight on Dupin)

Dupin: Only yesterday, in the newspaper, there was an article about the actor Chantilly, an article which was not friendly at all. We noticed that the writer of the article had used some words taken from a book we both had read. These words were about Orion. So I knew you would put together the two ideas of Orion and Chantilly. I saw you smile, I saw you stand straighter, as tall as you could make yourself. I was sure you were thinking of Chantilly's size, and especially his height. And so I spoke, saying that he is indeed a very little fellow, this Chantilly, and he would be more successful if he acted in lighter, less serious plays.

Narrator: **(Astonished)** You are as right as you could be. I am not surprised you are right, just astonished!

(Dupin nods, smiles and exits)

Narrator: Those were in fact my thoughts, my unspoken thoughts, as my mind moved from one thought to the next. But if I was astonished by this, I would soon be *more* than astonished.

(Narrator moves in front of the Police interview room flat. Policeman 1 enters)

Policeman 1: **(To audience)** There has been a murder!

(Lights wash red as the policeman continues to talk)

Policeman 1: An Elderly lady has been found dead, killed by unknown persons. The killer or killers have removed her head and disappeared into the night. At this stage, we have no answers. No suspects. No clues. We have conducted a full search of the area and found nothing of help. We do not know what to do next and so - we shall do nothing.

(Red wash fades. Lights off. The table at which Dupin sat previously is moved to the centre of the stage along with the chair which is placed behind the table, facing out at the audience. Policeman steps to the side of the table. Narrator takes a seat stage right and looks on silently. Dupin enters reading a Newspaper.)

Dupin: Paris, July 7, 1840. In the early morning today, the people in the western part of the city were awakened from their sleep by cries of terror, which came, it seemed, from a house in the street called the Rue Morgue. The only persons living in the house were an old woman, Mrs. L'Espanaye, and her daughter. Several neighbours and a policeman ran toward the house, but by the time they reached it the cries had stopped. When no one answered their calls, they forced the door open. As they rushed in they heard voices, two voices; they seemed to come from above. The group hurried from room to room, but they found nothing until they reached the fourth floor. There they found a door that was firmly closed, locked, with the key inside. Quickly they forced the door open, and they saw spread before them a bloody sickening scene – a scene of horror! The room was in the wildest possible order – broken chairs and tables were lying all around the room. There was only one bed, and from it everything had been taken and thrown into the middle of the floor. There was blood everywhere, on the floor, on the bed, on the walls.

Policeman 1: A sharp knife covered with blood was lying on the floor. In front of the fireplace there was some long gray hair, also bloody; it seemed to have been pulled from a human head. On the floor were four pieces of gold, an earring, several objects made of silver, and two bags containing a large amount of money in gold. Clothes had been thrown around the room. There was no one there. Above the fireplace they found the dead body of the daughter; it had been put up into the opening where the smoke escapes to the sky. There was blood on the face, and on the neck there were dark, deep marks which seemed to have been made by strong fingers. These marks surely show how the daughter was killed. After hunting in every part of the house without finding anything more, the group went outside. Behind the building they found the body of the old woman. Her neck was almost cut through, and when they tried to lift her up, her head fell off.

(Lights off. Dupin exits. Lights up. Dupin enters carrying another newspaper and reading aloud)

Dupin: Paris, July 8, 1840 The police have talked with many people about the terrible killings in the old house on the Rue Morgue but nothing has been learned to answer the question of who the killers were. Pauline Dubourg, a washwoman, says

(Pauline enters and sits at the table. Policeman makes notes as she speaks.)

Pauline: I had known both of the dead women for more than three years. I washed their clothes during that period. The old lady and her daughter seemed to love each other dearly. They always paid me well. I have no idea where their money came from. I never met anyone in the house. Only the two women lived on the fourth floor.

(Pauline exits. Pierre Enters and sits at the table. Policeman makes notes.)

Policeman 1: Pierre Moreau, a shopkeeper.

Pierre: Mrs. L'Espanaye had bought food at my shop for nearly four years. She owned the house and has lived in it for more than six years. People said they had money. I never saw anyone enter the door except the old lady and her daughter, and a doctor eight or ten times, perhaps.

(Pierre exits.)

Dupin: **(reading from the newspaper)** Many other persons, neighbours, said the same thing. Almost no one ever went into the house and Mrs. L'Espanaye and her daughter were not often seen.

Policeman 1: Jules Mignaud, a banker.

(Jules enters and sits behind the desk)

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Jules: Mrs. L'Espanaye had put money in my bank, beginning eight years before. Three days before her death, she took out of the bank a large amount of money, in gold. A man from the bank carried it for her to her house.

(Jules exits.)

Dupin: **(Reading from the newspaper)** Isidore Muset, a policeman.

Policeman 1: I was with the group that first entered the house. While I was going up the stairs I heard two voices, one low and soft, and one hard, high, and very strange – the voice of someone who was certainly not French, the voice of a foreigner. Spanish perhaps. It was not a woman's voice. I could not understand what it said. But the low voice, the softer voice, said, in French, "My God!"

Dupin: Mon dieu!

(Alfonso enters and sits behind the desk)

Policeman 1: Alfonso Garcia, who is Spanish and lives on the Rue Morgue.

Alfonso: I entered the house but did not go up the stairs; I was nervous and afraid I might be ill. I heard the voices. I believe the high voice was not that of a Frenchman. Perhaps it was English; but I don't understand English, so I am not sure.

(Alfonso exits. William enters and sits behind the desk)

Policeman 1: William Bird, another foreigner, an Englishman.

William: I was one of the persons who entered the house. I have lived in Paris for two years. I heard the voices. The low voice was that of a Frenchman, I'm sure, because I heard it

say, "Mon dieu!" The high voice was very loud. I'm sure it was not the voice of an Englishman, nor the voice of a Frenchman. It seemed to be that of an Italian. It might have been a woman's voice. I don't understand Italian.

(William exits. Alberto enters and sits at the table)

Policeman 1: Mr. Alberto Montani, an Italian.

Alberto: I was passing the house at the time of the cries. They lasted for about two minutes. They were screams, long and loud, terrible, fearful sounds. I also heard two voices. I think both voices were French. But I could not understand any of the words spoken.

(Alberto exits. Policeman 2 enters and stands next to the table.)

Policeman 2: The persons who first entered the house all agree that the door of the room where the daughter's body was found was locked on the inside. When they reached the door everything was quiet. When they forced the door open they saw no one. The windows were closed and firmly locked on the inside. There are no steps that someone could have gone down while they were going up. They say that the openings over the fireplace are too small for anyone to have escaped through them. It took four or five people to pull the daughter's body out of the opening over the fireplace. A careful search was made through the whole house. It was four or five minutes from the time they heard the voices to the moment they forced open the door of the room.

(Paul enters and sits at the table. The Policemen stand either side of Paul as he sits)

Policeman 1: Paul Dumas, a doctor.

Paul: I was called to see the bodies soon after they were found. They were in a horrible condition, badly marked and broken. Such results could not have come from a woman's hands, only from those of a very powerful man. The daughter had been killed by strong hands around her neck.

Policeman 2: The police have learned nothing more than this.

Policeman 1: A killing as strange as this has never before happened in Paris.

Narrator: The police do not know where to begin to look for the answer.

(Policeman 1, Policeman 2 and Paul exit. Narrator and Dupin move upstage centre. Dupin closes the newspaper and stares off into the audience, thinking)

Narrator: **(To Audience)** When we had finished reading the newspaper's account of the murders neither Dupin nor myself said anything for a while. But I could see in his eyes that cold, empty look which told me that his mind was working busily.

Dupin: What do you think of all this?

Narrator: I can only agree with all Paris. I consider it a very difficult problem – a mystery, to which it is not possible to find an answer.

Dupin: No, no, I think you are wrong. A mystery it is, yes. But there must be an answer. Let us go to the house and see what we can see. We must not judge what is possible just by what we have read in the newspapers. The Paris police work hard and often get good results; but there is no real method in what they do. When something more than simple hard work is needed, when a little real method is needed, the police fail. Sometimes they stand too near the problem. Often, if a person looks at something very closely he can see a few things more clearly, but the shape of the whole thing escapes him. There must be an answer! There must! Let us go to the house and see what we can see. I know the head of the police, and he will allow us to do so. And this will be interesting and give us some pleasure.

(Dupin exits)

Narrator: I thought it strange that Dupin should believe we would get pleasure out of this. But I said nothing.

(Narrator exits. Lights off. Tabs Closed.)

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Scene 2 - House in the Rue Morgue

(Narrator enters front of tabs, moves upstage centre. Lights up.)

Narrator: Dupin and I reached the house in the Rue Morgue. We walked around it, Dupin looked at the neighbouring houses. We went up the stairs into the room where the daughter's body had been found. Both bodies were there. The police had left the room as they had found it. Dupin looked with great care at everything, at the bodies, the walls, the fireplace, the windows. Then we went home. Dupin said nothing. I could see the cold look in his eyes which told me that his mind was working, working busily, quickly. I asked no questions. Then, the next morning.

(Dupin enters)

Dupin: Did you not notice something especially strange about what we saw at the house on the Rue Morgue?

Narrator: Nothing more than we both read in the newspaper.

Dupin: How shall we explain the horrible force used in these murders? And whose were the voices? No one was found except the dead women; yet there was no way for anyone to escape. And the wild condition of the room; the broken state of the women. These are all so far from what might be expected that the police are standing still; they don't know where to begin.

Narrator: These things are unusual, indeed.

Dupin: We should not ask, 'What has happened?' but 'What has happened that has never happened before?' In fact, the very things that the police think cannot possibly be explained are the things which will lead me to the answer. Indeed, I believe they have already led me to the answer.

Narrator: You know who did it?

Dupin: **(looking offstage)** I am now waiting for a person who knows about these murders. He did not do them but he knows the killer. I expect the man here – in this room – at any moment. It is true that he may not come; but he probably will.

Narrator: But who is this person? How did you find him?

Dupin: I'll tell you. While we wait for this man we do not know – for I have never met him – while we wait, I will tell you how my thoughts went.

(Dupin paces back and forth, never addressing Narrator directly)

Dupin: The voices heard by the neighbours were not the voices of the women who were killed. Someone else was in the room. The old woman did not first kill her daughter and then kill herself. She would not have been strong enough to put her daughter's body where it was found.

Narrator: The old lady couldn't have killed herself!

Dupin: Correct. A person can kill himself with a knife, yes. But he surely cannot cut his own head almost off, then drop the knife on the floor and jump out the window.

Narrator: It was murder, then, done by some other person?

Dupin: Let us now think carefully about the things people said about those voices. Did you notice anything especially strange in what was told about them?

Narrator: Well, yes. Everybody agreed that the low voice was the voice of a Frenchman; but they could not agree about the high voice.

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Dupin: Yes, but that was not what was strange. All these persons, as you say, agreed about the low voice; but not about the high hard voice. The strange thing here is that when an Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, and a Frenchman tried to tell what the voice was like, each one said it sounded like the voice of a foreigner. How strangely unusual that voice really must have been! Here are four men from four big countries, and not one of them could understand what the voice said; each one gave it a different name.

Narrator: Now, I know that there are other countries in the world. You will say that perhaps it was the voice of someone from one of those other lands – Russia, perhaps. But remember, not one of these people heard anything that sounded like a separate word.

Dupin: **(Talking directly to Narrator)** I believe that in this much of the story there are enough facts to lead us in the one and only direction to the right answer. I want you to keep in mind that this much was enough to tell me what I must look for when we were in that house on the Rue Morgue. And I found it!

(Lights off. Dupin and Narrator exit.)

Scene 3 – Narrator's House

(Tabs open to the library flat. Dupin and Narrator enter. Lights up.)

Dupin: The killer escaped through the window!

Narrator: How do you know?

Dupin: There are only two ways the killer could have escaped - through one of the windows! They had to break down the door to get in, there was no other door. The hole above the fireplace was too small so it had to be one of the windows!

Narrator: But how?

Dupin: Both windows were of the type where one must lift the bottom half. Both were closed tight shut; both had nails driven into the wood frame which I assumed were holding the windows tight shut.

Narrator: But not so?

Dupin: The Police tried to open the windows and could not, assuming as I first did that the strong iron nails were holding them shut. This did not deter me as I was certain the killer left by the window.

Narrator: And what did you find?

Dupin: That there was something wrong with one or both of the nails. The killer could not have removed them, jumped out of the window and then replaced them from outside! I pulled out the nail of the first window – but it would not budge! It had a hidden lock. I flicked the lock and the window opened.

Narrator: So if the Killer left by the window, it could have closed and locked itself from the inside.

Dupin: Correct, but to test my theory I closed the window, replaced the nail and flicked the lock once more.

Narrator: What happened?

Dupin: The window would not move. The nail was indeed holding the window closed. However, I tried this again with the second window and sure enough, I flicked the lock and opened the window – the nail travelling with the frame. This nail was not holding the window closed; It is through here the killer escaped!

Narrator: What seemed to be not possible, you have proved to be possible.

Dupin: It was a hot summer night. When the murderer first arrived he found that window open, open to let some of the fresh night air come in. Through the open window the murderer went in and came out again. As he came out he closed the window, perhaps with a purpose to do so, perhaps by chance. The special lock inside the window held the window firmly closed. The nail only seemed to be holding it closed. And that which was possible looked not possible.

Narrator: (Nervously) Dupin – the windows are on the fourth floor, far above the ground. Even an open window –

Dupin: Yes. That is an interesting question: how did the murderer go from the window down to the ground? Once I was quite certain that the murderer had in fact gone through that window the rest was not so hard to know. And the answer to this question told me still more about who the murderer was!

Narrator: Tell me more!

Dupin: When we were at the house I noticed a lightning rod. Here, I thought, is a way for someone to go up or down the wall, and then to go in or out the window. He would have to be very strong. Only a man with very special strength and special training. This told me more about what the murderer was like. But I still had the question: who?

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(Policeman 1 and Policeman 2 enter and stand upstage centre, a meter apart)

Policeman 1: Clothes had been thrown around the room;

Dupin: (Standing between the Policeman) Yet it seemed that none had been taken.

Policeman 2: The old woman and her daughter almost never left the house.

Dupin: They had little use for many clothes.

Policeman 1: Those that were found in the room were as good as any they had.

Dupin: If the killer took some, why didn't he take the best – or take all?

Narrator: (Appearing at the side of the Policemen) And why would he take a few clothes and leave all the money?

Policeman 2: Nearly the whole amount brought from the bank was found, in bags, on the floor.

Dupin: Money was not the motive for these killings.

Policeman 1: This idea rose when we heard how the money was brought to the house three days before the killings.

Dupin: Coincidence – two things happening at the same time, but only by chance and not because of some cause.

Narrator: If the gold was the reason for the murders, the killer must have been quite a fool to forget and leave it there.

Dupin: No. Desire for money was not the reason for the killings. I think that there was no reason except, perhaps, fear.

Policeman 1: A girl is killed by powerful hands around her neck,

Policeman 2: Then the body is placed in the opening over the fireplace, head down. No murders we usually hear about are like this.

Dupin: Think of the great strength which was necessary to put the body where it was found. The strength of several men was needed to pull it down!

Policeman 2: There are other signs of this fearful strength.

Policeman 1: In front of the fireplace some grey human hair was lying, thick pieces of it, pulled from the head of the old woman.

Dupin: **(To Narrator)** You saw the hair on the floor yourself, and you saw the blood and skin with it. You know, and I know, that great force is necessary to pull out even twenty or thirty hairs at one time. A much greater force was needed to pull out hundreds of hairs at one time. So, we have put together the following ideas: strength more than human; wildness less than human; a murder without reason; horror beyond human understanding; and a voice which made no sound that men could understand.

(Policeman 1 and Policeman 2 exit)

Narrator: What result, then, have you come to? What have you seen? A man? Someone who has lost his mind? **(Frightened)** A madman!! A madman!! Only a madman could have done these murders!

Dupin: **(Walking about the stage)** I think not. In some ways your idea is a good one. But madmen are from one country or another. Their cries may be terrible, but they are made of words, and some of the words can be understood.

(Dupin hands Narrator some orange hair)

Dupin: Here! Look! Look at this hair. I took it from the fingers of the old woman. The hair of a madman is not like this. Tell me what you think it is.

Narrator: Dupin! This hair is...this hair is not human hair!!

Dupin: I did not say that it is. I am almost certain that they are the hairs of an orang-utan. The great size, the strength, the wildness of these animals are well known. Now. Look in this book by Cuvier. Read. Look at the picture.

(Dupin fetches a book from downstage and hands it to Narrator who reads)

Narrator: At once I knew that Dupin was right in everything he said. The colour of the hair, the terrible strength, the wildness of the killings, those sounds which were a voice but were not words; everything fit nicely in its place. Except. **(To Dupin)** Dupin! Here were two voices. Whose was the second voice?

Dupin: The second voice! Yes! Remember, this voice spoke only two words; they were "My God!" spoken in French. Upon those two words I have placed my hopes of finding a full answer to this horrible question. The words were an expression of horror. This means that a Frenchman knew about these murders. It is possible that the Frenchman

himself did not help the orang-utan to kill. Perhaps the animal escaped from him, and he followed it to the house on the Rue Morgue. It must still be free somewhere in Paris. If I am right, and if the Frenchman did not himself help with the killings, I expect him to come here. Read this. I paid to have this put in the newspaper.

(Dupin hands Narrator a Newspaper)

Narrator: **(reading from newspaper)** Caught – Early in the morning of the seventh of this month: a very large orang-utan. The owner, who is known to be a sailor, may have the animal again if he can prove it is his. **(To Dupin)** But, Dupin. How can you know that the man is a sailor?

Dupin: A sailor could go up that pole on the side of the house. Sailors travel to strange, faraway places where such things as orang-utans can be got. The sailor will say to himself: ‘The animal is valuable. The police do not know the animal killed two women. And clearly somebody knows I am in Paris. I don’t want anyone to start asking questions about the animal. So I will go and get the orang-utan and keep it where no one will see it, until this trouble has passed.’ This, I believe, is how the sailor will think. But listen! I hear a man’s step on the stairs.

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Dupin: Come in, my friend! Come in!

(Sailor Enters carrying a large piece of wood)

Sailor: Bon Soir

Dupin: Sit down, my friend. I suppose you have come to ask about the orang-utan. A very fine animal. I have no doubt that it is a very valuable animal. How old do you think it may be?

Sailor: **(French accent)** I have no way of guessing how old it is, but it can’t be more than four or five years old. Have you got it here?

Dupin: No, no. We have no place for it here. You can get it in the morning. Of course you can prove it is yours?

Sailor: Yes. Yes, I can.

Dupin: I wish I could keep it.

Sailor: I would like to have it. I...of course I will pay you for finding and keeping the animal. Anything...anything within reason.

Dupin: Well...That is very fair, indeed. Let me think. What shall I ask for? I know! Let this be my pay. Tell me everything you know about the murders in the Rue Morgue.

(Dupin walks offstage. SFX. Door locking. Dupin returns with a key in his hand, obvious to the audience and places it in his pocket. He takes a gun out of his other pocket and places it on the table. The Sailor nervously raises the piece of wood but weakens and falls back into the chair behind the table, looking scared. He closes his eyes in anguish)

Dupin: My friend, you must not be afraid. We are not going to hurt you. I know very well that you yourself are not the killer. But it is true that you know something about him – or about it. From what I have already said, you must know that I have ways of learning about the matter – ways you could never have dreamed of. Now, I know that you yourself have done nothing wrong. You didn't even take any of the money. You have no reason to be afraid to talk and to tell the truth. It is a matter of honour for you to tell all you know. And you know who the killer is.

Sailor: **(opens his eyes)** So help me God! I...I'll tell you all I know about this, all I know – but I don't expect you to believe one half of what I say – not one half. Still, I didn't kill anyone, and I'll tell the whole story if I die for it. It was that animal! The orang-utan! About a year ago our ship sailed to the Far East, to the island of Borneo. I had never before seen Borneo. The forest, the jungle, was thick with trees and other plants, and hot and wet and dark. But we went – a friend and I – we went into that forest – for pleasure. There we saw this orang-utan, a big animal. But we were two, and we caught it. We took it with us on the ship. Soon, however, my friend died, and the animal was mine. But it was very strong and caused a lot of trouble. In the end I brought it back to Paris with me. I kept it in my house, in my own house, carefully locked up, so the neighbours could not know about it. The animal had cut one foot badly while on the ship. I thought...I thought that as soon as it got well I would sell it. I was certain it was of great value. And it was so much trouble to keep! I wanted to sell it, soon. The night of the murders, very late, I came home and found the animal in my bedroom. It had got free, I don't know how. It held a knife in its hands, and was playing with it. I was afraid. I didn't know what to do. When it saw me it jumped up, ran out of the room and down the stairs. There it found an open window and jumped into the street. I followed, never far behind, although I had no hope of catching it again. The animal, with the knife still in its hand, stopped often to look back at me. But before I could come near enough to even try to catch it, the animal always started to run again. It seemed to be playing with me.

(Lights fade. Spotlight on Sailor. SFX. low foreboding music accompanies the rest of the confession)

Sailor: It was nearly morning, but the streets were still dark, and quiet. We passed the back of a house in the Rue Morgue. The animal looked up and saw a light in the open window of a room high above. It was the only lighted window in sight. The animal saw the metal pole, went up it easily and quickly, and jumped into the room. All this didn't take a minute. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what I could do. I followed the animal. I too went up the pole. As I am a sailor it was easy for me. But the open window was far from the pole and I was afraid to try to jump. I could see into the room, however, through the other window, which was closed. The two women were sitting there, with their backs to the windows. Who can guess why they were not sleeping at that hour of the night? A box was in the middle of the floor. The

papers which had been in the box were lying around on the floor. The women seemed to be studying some of these. They did not see the animal, which was just standing there, watching, the knife still in one hand. But the old woman heard it and turned her head and saw the animal there, knife in hand, and then... then I heard the first of those terrible cries. When the animal heard the old woman's cry it caught her by the hair and slowly moved the knife before her face. The daughter, filled with terror, fell to the floor and remained there without moving, her eyes closed. The old woman continued to cry for help, screaming with fear. I think the animal now was as afraid as the old woman was. With terrible force it pulled out a handful of hair. And when the woman, covered with blood, tried to run from it, the animal caught her again by the hair and with one move of its arm it nearly cut her head from her body. Throwing down the body, the animal turned and saw that the daughter was moving, watching it with horror. With fire in its eyes it rushed to the girl, put its powerful fingers around her neck, and pressed them firmly there until she died. When the girl stopped moving, the animal dropped her body to the floor and looked up. It saw my face in the window. It began to run around the room, quickly, without purpose. It jumped up and down, breaking the chairs, pulling the bed to pieces. Suddenly it stopped and took the body of the daughter and, as if to hide it, with terrible strength it put the body up above the fireplace, where it was found. It threw the old woman out the window. All this time I was hanging from the pole, filled with horror. It seemed I had lost the power to move. But when I saw the animal coming toward the window with the old woman's body, my horror became fear. I went quickly down – I almost fell down the pole, and I ran. I didn't look back. I ran! Oh, my God! My God!

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(Lights off. SFX. Music stops. Tabs Close. Narrator and Dupin enter front of tabs. Lights up.)

Narrator: The Chief of the police was not happy that the answer to the mystery of the killings had been found by someone who was not a policeman. He said that people should keep to their own business.

Dupin: Let him talk. Let him talk. He'll feel better for it. And he's a good fellow. But he makes things less simple than they really are. Still, people call him skilful, and even wise. I think they say this because of the way he explains, carefully, fully, something which is not here, or there, or anywhere; and says, 'Not possible!' about something which is there before his eyes.

(Lights off. Dupin and Narrator exit)

The End

Props List

Scene 1

Books	- Dupin
Newspaper	- Set off Stage
Notebook and pen	- Policeman 1

Scene 3

Orange hair	- Dupin
Book	- set on stage
Newspaper	- Dupin
Piece of wood	- Sailor
Key	- Set off stage
Gun	- Dupin