

Chapter 2: The Investigation Begins

Midnight, August 28, 1855

Where: Hercules Drawing Room, 1st Floor, Versailles palace

List of characters: Chief of police, Inspector Clouseau, Emperor Napoleon, Princess Alice, Duke Freddy, Milou the dog, and Princess Veronique.



Hercules Drawing Room, Versailles

Just after midnight, my uncle Napoleon III met with the chief of national police and the detective who will investigate the crime. They gathered in the Hercules Drawing Room, just down the hallway from the Hall of Mirrors. The chief of police did not seem very sympathetic; and the man he put in charge of the investigation—inspector Clouseau—seems like he spends most of his days eating pastries at Parisian cafes. Alice and I sat at the back of the room and listened to their conversation.

Alice's stupid cousin, Duke Freddie, came to listen too. Freddie is the most annoying and stupid 15-year old boy on the planet. Maybe they can find a job for him on the Paris police force. I've met cows smarter

than him! He's so lazy too. I have no idea why he wants to help solve this mystery. To make matters worse, Alice says he likes me. Tonight at the gala, he kept smiling at me. Yuck! He's no prince charming. If they were giving out trophies for idiots tonight, Freddy would have gotten two!

Chief of police: Emperor Napoleon, how tragic that the Ice Dragon diamond has been stolen. And such an embarrassment for the Royal family. This is why I suggested using more security inside the Hall of Mirrors this evening. To get you out of this predicament, I am placing our best inspector on the job. Inspector Clouseau of the Paris police department.

Inspector Clouseau: Your majesty, I'm sorry we have to meet under such terrible circumstances. I have already spoken with the guards on duty tonight. I saw them standing by a left-over desert tray and thought I would interview them. I understand there were four soldiers at each of the two entrances to the Hall of Mirrors, with the diamond displayed on a table at the center of the room. According to the captain of the guards, only the 200 invited guests and the servants were in the room with you.

Napoleon III: Yes, I wanted the guests to admire all the jewelry, books and art on display in the Hall of Mirrors. It was an important night for France. I did not think we'd need additional security. This was a tragic mistake. What will the newspapers write on Monday morning? Oh, this is all my fault!

Inspector Clouseau: Fortunately, we have 48 hours to solve the case before the newspapers hit the streets of Paris Monday morning. By the way, the cake you served tonight was delicious. It looks like the thief waited for the fireworks to distract everyone's attention. Such a simple plan. So obvious. I also spoke with the cavalry officers who

chased the woman on the horse. They were patrolling the garden just outside the palace and chased the fleeing horse into the foggy forest. Both soldiers said they had never seen a horse run so fast. She disappeared into the thick fog along the road heading towards the Grand Trianon palace, then she seems to have disappeared along with the diamond.

Alice: (whispers) Where is the Grand Trianon palace?

Veronique: (whispers) There are actually three palaces on the Versailles property. We're in the main chateau right now. The Grand Trianon and Petit Triannon are small palaces tucked away in the forest about a 20-minute walk from here. Louis XV built them as a vacation spot to get away from the big chateau. Later, Louis XVI gave the Petit Trianon to his wife Marie Antoinette. I can show you later.



Grand Triannon



Petit Triannon

Alice: (whispers) Alright.

Chief of police: Your majesty, we don't have a lot of clues yet. We do have this cryptic note left on the jewelry display case. But what could this gibberish all mean? In addition to this mysterious note, the cavalry officers on horseback returned with two further clues they had found on the road to the Grand Trianon palace: a piece of white candle and a

pack of matches from the World Fair in Paris. There was nothing special about the candle, it was the same kind used in the chandeliers around the palace. As for the matches...well...a tourist may have dropped them earlier. So, aside from this mysterious note, we have no real clues and a most embarrassing mystery to solve. One that could have easily been prevented. This event should never have taken place at Versailles. We should have held it in Paris. I wish you had taken my warnings more seriously.

Emperor Napoleon III: I feel most terrible! My father warned me about the curse of the Ice Dragon. You know, it was the "The Affair of the Queen's Necklace" in 1786 that sparked the French Revolution. A second revolution would be a tragedy! The Jacobins could return to cut off my head!

Freddie: Your majesty, on behalf of the British people and the crown, I would be deeply honoured to help solve this crime. In a time of deep crisis, you learn who your real friends are. I've read two or three British detective novels and so I feel as though I know a lot about police investigations. I would be happy to lend my expertise to the French police. I'm just surprised Marie Antoinette had a head. I wonder how she got it back on?

Napoleon III: Thank you young Freddie, your assistance is greatly appreciated. But I do think Inspector Clouseau can handle the investigation. Why don't you children go to bed. It's getting late.

Freddie: (whispers to Veronique and Alice): If I can find that diamond first, I'll be a hero and Napoleon III might give me an award. Then Queen Victoria might make me a prince! Oh, by the way Veronique, would you care to join me in the garden tomorrow morning while I look for clues? It will be a beautiful day for a walk.

Veronique: (whispers) No thank you, Freddie. I'd rather roll around in poison ivy. I'm going to follow my uncle's advice and let the police investigate this mystery. (Veronique rolled her eyes at Alice)

Freddie: (whispers) I understand. Yes, pretty girls shouldn't risk their lives in such a dangerous investigation. Let the men handle this. But do let me know if you change your mind. The Grand Canal is beautiful this time of year.

Veronique: (whispers) I have a good idea Freddie. Why don't you go jump in the Grand Canal? Because you stink. And maybe, just maybe, the cold water will wash some sense into your brain!

Inspector Clouseau: The Ice Dragon is an impressive diamond. Round, the size of an apple, with the Sun King's symbol cut into the mineral. Many of the chandeliers in the palace have crystal replicas hanging from them. It was Marie Antoinette's favourite, you know. She had it with her when she was captured by the Jacobins—she was going to use it to pay for safe travel to Austria with her lover, Axel von Fersen of Sweeden.



A crystal replica (fake copy) of the Ice Dragon dangling from the bottom of this Versailles chandelier

Alice (wispers): She had a boyfriend??... I thought she was married to Louis XVI?

Veronique (wispers): She was...but he ignored her a lot so he could play with his lock collection. Locks and keys were his passion. Judging from the paintings I've seen, Axel was very handsome army officer!



Axel Von Fersen

Alice: (whispers) ooh la! la! How interesting! I was in love with a cavalry officer once at Buckingham palace. He didn't know it. I kept it a secret. My mother says I must marry someone who can afford to take care of me. But I keep telling her that I must marry for love, not money. Like she did.

Inspector Clouseau: Your majesty, after inspecting the scene of the crime, I've concluded the criminal had three possible motives: The first possibility is that the thief is poor and wants to sell the diamond for money. Of course, the Ice Dragon is a priceless national treasure and would net a fortune in the underworld jewelry market. The second possibility is that the thief wants to embarrass the French royal family. Crimes of revenge are common. Or third, we are dealing with a thief who wants to impress someone. Possibly for love. Indeed, love motivates many crimes I solve in Paris.

Emperor Napoleon: You've solved some crimes before, have you inspector? That's reassuring. Do you have a suspect in mind?

Inspector Clouseau: Yes I do, your majesty. I believe someone is trying to embarrass you and the royal family. An artist. They are often poor and struggling types. But what kind of artist? There were several here tonight for the gala. Maybe a writer, or a painter, or a dancer? I have a strong feeling that this is the work of an American. I understand the famous writer Mark Twain was in the Hall of Mirrors tonight. I read a story about him in the newspaper this week. He was touring the World Fair in town and was making fun of the French police uniforms. He thinks he's so funny. It's late now, but I will start by questioning him first thing in the morning...after I eat my breakfast. I'll enjoy watching the smile vanish from his face when he discovers he's at the center of a police investigation!

Veronique: Excuse me inspector, but do you think it's possible that the ghost of Marie Antoinette simply didn't want the diamond to leave France? I've heard that the diamond was taken from her before her execution. She promised to return to get it.

Inspector Clouseau: There is no doubt that the woman on the horse scared the guests at the party tonight. But ghosts...phantoms...specters...they live in books and in the imaginations of children like yourself. No, we are dealing with a thief. A common thief. But I will catch them! And the sooner I can piece together how and why they committed the crime, the sooner we'll have our villain behind bars and the diamond back where it belongs. But if you're frightened of ghosts, Princess Veronique, it might be best if you lock your bedroom doors tonight.

Chief of police: Your excellency, I will leave extra police at the palace this evening. Clouseau, see to that personally.

Alice: Inspector Clouseau, could Veronique and I help with your investigation in the morning?

Inspector Clouseau: No thank you princess Alice. Perhaps you and the other royal children could enjoy a tea party tomorrow. Leave this major crime to the professionals...Oh, I see there is a doggie here. It's such a beautiful doggie. Doggies love me. Does your dog bite princess Alice?

Alice: No inspector, my dog doesn't bite.

Inspector Clouseau: Nice doggie....let the inspector pet you...nice doggie... (inspector reaches down to pet the dog)

Dog: AAARRRGGGG!!! AARRRGGGGG!!! Chomp!!

Inspector Clouseau: I thought you said your dog doesn't bite!?!

Alice: That's not my dog. That's Milou... princess Veronique's dog...oh, and she bites.



Milou

Napoleon III: Perhaps you shouldn't approach the dog with so much cake frosting on your hands inspector. Now what about the servants? Do you feel the need to question them first?

Inspector Clouseau: No, your majesty. I doubt the servants committed the crime. Each servant is specially selected by the police to work here

at the palace. They are very patriotic. They would not embarrass the French government at an international gala such as this. Besides, they were kept very busy cleaning and bringing food and drinks to the guests tonight. I was also told that during the fireworks, only the invited guests were in the Hall of Mirrors, the servants were cleaning and preparing tea and deserts.

Napoleon III: Gentlemen, you must solve this mystery quickly and get the diamond back. Thankfully the newspapers have the weekend off due to the World Fair. Come Monday morning, however, this story will be on the front page of every major newspaper and I will be the laughingstock of Europe. If the French people lose faith in the Royal family again, it could lead to another revolution. You must find that diamond!



Marie Antoinette 's library, Versailles palace

After the meeting, Alice and I walked down to a little library in the palace. Years ago, it had been Marie Antoinette's favourite room to relax and hide away. Today it's a cozy room full of old books, fancy furniture, a fireplace, and comfortable chairs. Alice and I have been having secret chats here all week. No boys allowed!

Alice: I don't think a thief stole the diamond tonight! I'm sure Versailles is haunted! And Marie Antoinette has returned. Did you see the dress she wore tonight? And the signature on the note was perfect. I've seen it in books. And did you see the dress? It was the simple white dress she wore when she went to the guillotine! I've seen that in books too! I don't know how she got her head back on, but she scared the daylights out of me. And to think she was in the Hall of Mirrors with everyone tonight! She must be able to walk through walls like other ghosts. What has your uncle told you about her?

Veronique: There is a legend that the diamond was cursed. Uncle Napoleon told me about the story on the train from Paris. In fact, he was worried the ghost of Marie Antoinette might return for it one day, especially if the jewel ever left France.

Alice: What else did he tell you? I don't know much about her. Wasn't she the last queen of France?



The teenage Marie Antoinette and teenage Louis XVI

Veronique: Yes. Here's what I know. She was born in Austria in 1755 and was forced to marry the young Louis XVI in 1770 when she was 14 years old to bring peace between France and Austria. Louis didn't like her much. Like I told you earlier, he was immature and enjoyed playing with his collection of locks and keys. Marie did not enjoy being queen of

France and instead spent a lot of time at the Petit Triannon palace tucked away in the back garden of Versailles, where she played with her children. There is a play village and a theatre where the queen and her friends would put on costumes, dance, paint and put on plays. While she enjoyed life inside the protective walls of the palace, outside Versailles the French people grew hungry and angry because the king and queen did nothing to help them. The French people revolted...and well...you know what happened after that. Let's just say nobody in the royal family needed to buy a hat!

Alice: Yuck! I hope that doesn't happen to us someday. Being a member of the royal family is dangerous in any country. It's all smiles, fancy dresses, lemonades, and shaking hands at county fairs until the people want to get rid of you!

Veronique: You can tell that my uncle Napoleon is worried about the theft. The loss of the diamond could destroy the trust the French people have in him. This is his darkest hour. We simply must solve this mystery.

Alice: OK, so we need to find the Ice Dragon quickly. Where should we start looking? The palace of Versailles is huge!

Veronique: Inspector Clouseau doesn't seem to be very bright. He is going to question the American writer Mark Twain in the morning...that's only if he can pull himself away from the desert table. And Freddie couldn't find his shoes this morning. So unless Marie Antoinette dropped the diamond in his pocket, I don't think he's going to find it either. But you and I are clever and smart! We can start to question the artists in the morning, but for now, let's return to the Hall of Mirrors and look for clues...tonight!

Alice: But it's dark in there now!

Veronique: Yes, I know. The guests have gone to bed or fled back to Paris. Don't worry. Milou will protect us! Won't you girl? Grab your purse Alice. We're going back to the scene of the crime!

Reading questions to guide your investigation

- 1) During the French Revolution, what do you know so far about Marie Antoinette's basic plan to escape capture?
- 2) Do you think inspector Clouseau is capable of solving this crime? Tell me why?
- 3) Why did Marie Antoinette marry Louis XVI?
- 4) Inspector Clouseau's lists 3 possible motives driving the theft. What are they?
- 5) Inspector Clouseau's mind is prejudiced already without weighing all the evidence that might come later. Who is his number 1 suspect? Why is this person first on his list? In your mind, is the inspector's hunch sensible?
- 6) Describe the Ice Dragon diamond in detail so you know what you're looking for later.