

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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Maurice Leblanc, *The Extraordinary Adventures of Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Burglar* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

The Arrest of Arsène Lupin

Part 1

It began as a pleasant sea journey. Our ship, *La Provence*, was fast, strong, and comfortable. The captain was polite, and the passengers were people of good society. On a ship like that, strangers quickly become companions, because they eat together, walk together, and watch the same sea and sky. We were cut off from the world, as if we lived for a few days on a small island. That made everyone more open, more curious, and more ready to talk.

Sea travel has its own strange life. In one hour there may be bright sun and cheerful laughter, and in the next hour there may be rain, wind, and fear. A calm sea can make people dreamy, and a storm can bring them close together. During the first day of our voyage, all of us enjoyed that pleasant feeling. New friendships were beginning. Small games, light talk, and chance meetings filled the time. It seemed that the voyage would pass in a happy and easy way.

But one modern thing had changed the old life of the sea. Even in the middle of the ocean, we were not fully alone anymore. The ship could receive messages by wireless telegraph from far away. That invisible voice from land followed us over the water and reached us in sudden whispers. One passenger received a farewell greeting. Another heard news from home. I myself received a few words from friends. It felt almost magical, and all of us took pleasure in that strange bridge between the world on land and our floating world at sea.

On the second day, the weather changed. A violent storm shook the ship. The sky was dark, the sea was angry, and now and then lightning broke across the clouds. In the middle of that storm, a wireless message arrived. The officers received it first, but such a thing could not stay secret for long. The message said that Arsène Lupin was on board our ship. It added that he was in the first cabin,

that he had blond hair, that he had a wound on his right forearm, and that he was traveling alone under a name beginning with the letter R. At that exact moment, a flash of lightning cut the sky, and the message was broken off. We never learned the rest of the name.

The effect on the ship was immediate and powerful. By the end of the day, everyone knew. Arsène Lupin, the famous thief, the man of a hundred faces, the gentleman-burglar whose name filled the newspapers, was among us. He might be in the dining room, in the smoking room, on deck, or seated quietly beside us at dinner. He might already have spoken to us. He might even have smiled at us. What had been a cheerful voyage at once became something very different. Every man looked at his neighbor with a new and doubtful eye.

The next morning Miss Nelly Underdown spoke of nothing else. She was one of those women whom all men notice at once. She was young, rich, beautiful, and full of charm. She had been educated in Paris and was now going to America to visit her father in Chicago. Her friend Lady Jerland traveled with her. During the voyage I had become very close to Miss Nelly. At first I had treated the matter lightly, as one often does on a ship, but little by little my feelings had grown more serious. I liked her smile, her lively mind, and the soft music of her voice. So when she turned to me and asked, "Monsieur d'Andrézy, surely you know something," I was very ready to answer.

"I know nothing certain," I told her, "but perhaps we can solve the mystery ourselves." She laughed and said, "You speak very boldly." We were seated in deck chairs in the sun, and several others were near us. The storm had passed, and the sky was now clear and blue. "Let us begin with the facts," I said. "The man travels alone. He is blond. His false name begins with R." Miss Nelly looked amused, but also interested. "And what will you do with so little?" she asked. "Very simply," I said. "We shall look at the passenger list."

I had the list in my pocket. When I opened it, we all leaned closer. "There are thirteen men in first class whose names begin with R," I said. "That is too many," Miss Nelly replied. "Wait," I told her. "Nine of them are traveling with wives, children, or servants. That leaves only four men who are alone." I began to read

the names. "The Marquis de Raverdan." Miss Nelly shook her head at once. "Impossible. I know him." "Major Rawson," I continued. A voice behind us answered, "He is my uncle." Then I said, "Monsieur Rivolta." An Italian gentleman with a heavy black beard raised his hand, and Miss Nelly laughed. "That man may be many things," she said, "but blond he is not."

"So," I said, "there is only one left. Monsieur Rozaine." No one answered. Then Miss Nelly turned with a little smile toward a quiet young man who had often been near her during the voyage. I had noticed him already, and I had not liked his silent success. "Well, Monsieur Rozaine," she said, "why do you not speak?" All heads turned toward him. He was indeed blond. He was alone. His name began with R. For a few seconds no one said a word. Even I felt a sharp little shock, though the idea still seemed too simple to be true.

Rozaine smiled, but his face looked pale. "Why do I not answer?" he said. "Because I have reached the same conclusion as all of you. My name begins with R. I travel alone. My hair is fair. Therefore I suppose I must be arrested." A few people laughed, but not with ease. There was something odd in his look. His lips were tight, and his eyes had a tired, red line in them. Miss Nelly, with the innocent cruelty of a curious woman, said, "But the message also spoke of a wound. Have you the wound?" "Sadly, no," he replied. "I lack that detail."

He pulled back his cuff and showed his arm. At once I noticed that he had shown us the left arm, not the right. I was on the point of mentioning it. But before I could speak, there came a cry from behind us. Lady Jerland was running toward our group, white with fear. "My jewels!" she cried. "My pearls! They are gone!" In an instant all talk of the passenger list ended. We hurried after her. The thief had not taken every piece, only the best stones. The empty settings lay open and bare. The door of her cabin had been forced, the hidden case found, and the finest jewels carefully removed. No one needed to name the guilty man. On every face the same thought appeared: Arsène Lupin had begun his work.

Part 2

The theft created great excitement on the ship. Everyone talked about it. The passengers gathered in small groups, whispering, arguing, and repeating the same question again and again: who was Arsène Lupin?

The answer seemed simple to many people. Suspicion fell at once upon Monsieur Rozaine. The facts were too clear, they said. He traveled alone. His hair was blond. His name began with the letter R. And the mysterious telegram had pointed to exactly such a man.

That evening, when we gathered for dinner, the seats beside Rozaine remained empty. No one wished to sit near him. Some passengers looked at him openly, as if he were already a criminal. Others avoided his eyes. Rozaine himself behaved with calm dignity, but he seemed pale and tired.

During the evening a rumor spread across the ship. It was said that the captain had ordered Rozaine to be placed under arrest. The news passed quickly from mouth to mouth, and it produced a great feeling of relief. The danger seemed to be over. The mysterious thief had been found.

As a result the passengers returned to their amusements. There was music in the saloon, dancing on the deck, and cheerful conversation. Miss Nelly was particularly lively that night. Her light laughter returned, and her bright eyes showed no sign of anxiety. If she had ever felt interest in Rozaine, she had already forgotten him.

For me the evening was very pleasant. The strange events of the voyage had brought Miss Nelly and me closer together. She spoke freely with me, and sometimes rested her hand on my arm as we walked together under the moonlight. At last, near midnight, I spoke to her with deep feeling.

“Miss Nelly,” I said quietly, “these days on the ship have been the happiest of my life.”

She did not laugh. She looked at me with gentle eyes.

“The voyage has certainly been interesting,” she said.

Encouraged by her tone, I spoke more openly of my admiration. She listened without displeasure. In that quiet moment, under the silver light of the moon and the endless sky above the sea, I believed that she understood my feelings.

But the next morning everything changed again.

To the great surprise of all the passengers, Rozaine appeared on deck as usual. He was free.

Soon we learned the explanation. The captain had questioned him carefully and examined his documents. Everything was correct. His passport showed that he was indeed the son of a wealthy merchant in Bordeaux. Moreover, when the officers examined his arms, they found no wound.

The evidence against him was not strong enough.

Many passengers refused to accept this result. They insisted that Arsène Lupin could easily obtain false papers. As for the wound, they argued that a clever criminal might remove the mark or hide it.

“Besides,” they said, “who else can it be?”

And the question remained without answer.

A few minutes before breakfast, Rozaine himself approached the group where Miss Nelly and Lady Jerland were standing. As he came closer, both women turned away and left the place without speaking to him.

An hour later another surprising event occurred. A handwritten notice was passed among the passengers and the crew. It announced that Monsieur Louis Rozaine offered a reward of ten thousand francs for the discovery of Arsène Lupin or for information leading to the recovery of Lady Jerland’s jewels.

“And if no one helps me,” Rozaine declared, “I will discover the thief myself.”

This announcement created new excitement. People began to speak of a strange contest: Rozaine against Arsène Lupin.

Or perhaps, as some whispered, Arsène Lupin against himself.

For the next two days nothing important happened. Rozaine walked about the ship almost without rest. He spoke to sailors, questioned stewards, and examined every part of the vessel. The captain also ordered a careful search. Every cabin was inspected. Every possible hiding place was examined.

The officers believed that the jewels must be somewhere on the ship. They searched the passengers’ rooms, but always under the polite excuse that the stolen objects might be hidden anywhere.

Yet the search brought no result.

“Sooner or later they must find something,” Miss Nelly said to me one afternoon.

“Yes,” I answered, “diamonds and pearls cannot simply disappear.”

Then I added with a smile, “Perhaps they should examine hats, coats, and cameras. A small camera like mine could easily hide many jewels.”

I showed her my Kodak camera, which I had used several times to take photographs of her during the voyage.

“See,” I said, laughing, “in a machine like this a thief could hide all the jewels without anyone noticing.”

Miss Nelly laughed at the idea.

“But I have heard that every criminal leaves some clue behind,” she said.

I shook my head.

“That may be true for ordinary criminals,” I replied. “But Arsène Lupin is not an ordinary man.”

My words soon proved correct.

One morning the captain discovered that his own watch had been stolen.

The news spread rapidly. The captain was furious. He increased the search and watched Rozaine more closely than ever. But the next day the watch was found inside the collar box of the second officer.

This strange discovery caused great astonishment. It seemed almost like a joke played by the thief. Many passengers began to believe that Arsène Lupin was mocking all of us.

Whenever I saw Rozaine walking alone on the deck with his dark and serious face, I could not help feeling a certain admiration. If he truly was Arsène Lupin, he was a remarkable actor.

Then another dramatic event occurred.

Late one evening a sailor heard groans from a dark corner of the deck. When he went to investigate, he found a man lying on the floor. The man’s head was wrapped in a thick scarf, and his hands were tied tightly with rope.

It was Rozaine.

He had been attacked and robbed.

A card was pinned to his coat. On the card were written these words:

“Arsène Lupin accepts with pleasure the ten thousand francs offered by Monsieur Rozaine.”

And in fact the stolen wallet contained twenty thousand francs.

At first some passengers believed that Rozaine had staged the attack himself. But that explanation soon seemed impossible. His hands had been tied too tightly for him to do it alone. And the handwriting on the card was different from his own.

Once again the fear of Arsène Lupin returned stronger than before.

Now everyone suspected everyone else.

No one wished to walk alone on the ship. Passengers moved in groups and watched one another carefully. Even close friends felt a secret distrust. Arsène Lupin seemed to be everywhere. He might be anyone. He might even be someone we trusted completely.

As the ship approached America, the tension grew even stronger. We all waited for the moment when the mystery would finally be solved.

Who was Arsène Lupin?

Under what name, under what face, was he hiding among us?

Part 3

The last day of the voyage seemed very long. Everyone was nervous. People spoke in low voices and looked at one another with uneasy curiosity. Even the most cheerful passengers had become quiet. Every small noise made someone turn his head quickly.

Some passengers believed that Arsène Lupin would commit another crime before we reached America. Others feared something even worse.

“He will not stop with small thefts,” one man said during breakfast. “A criminal like that may attempt anything.”

These fears were exaggerated, but they spread quickly through the ship.

For me, however, those hours were strangely pleasant. Miss Nelly had become

more dependent on me. The strange events frightened her, and she often sought my company for reassurance. She walked beside me on the deck and listened attentively when I spoke.

In truth, I almost felt grateful to Arsène Lupin. Without his presence on the ship, Miss Nelly might never have come so close to me.

“How pale you are today,” I said to her during our final walk on deck.

“And you!” she replied with a nervous smile. “You look very serious.”

“This is an exciting moment,” I answered. “Soon we shall know everything.”

But Miss Nelly was not listening. Her eyes were fixed on the shore that had just appeared on the horizon.

At last we reached the harbor. The ship moved slowly toward the pier, and the passengers gathered near the gangway, eager to leave the vessel.

Customs officers soon came aboard, dressed in uniform. Miss Nelly whispered nervously:

“Perhaps Arsène Lupin escaped during the voyage.”

“That is possible,” I said lightly. “Perhaps he jumped into the ocean rather than be arrested.”

She looked at me with alarm.

“Please do not joke about such things.”

At that moment something caught my attention.

“Miss Nelly,” I said quietly, “do you see that small old man standing near the bottom of the gangway?”

“The one with the umbrella and the green coat?”

“Yes.”

“Who is he?”

“That is Ganimard.”

“Ganimard?” she repeated.

“Yes, the famous detective. The man who has sworn to capture Arsène Lupin.”

Miss Nelly looked at the man with great curiosity.

“Then Lupin cannot escape,” she said. “I would like to see him arrested.”

Meanwhile the passengers began to leave the ship. One by one they passed

down the gangway while the officers watched carefully.

The Marquis de Raverdan left first. Then Major Rawson. Then the Italian Rivolta.

Finally Monsieur Rozaine appeared.

“Perhaps it is he after all,” Miss Nelly whispered to me. “What do you think?”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“If it is he, we shall soon know.”

I handed Miss Nelly my camera.

“Take this,” I said. “Perhaps you can take a photograph of the detective and the suspect together.”

But it was too late. Rozaine had already passed by Ganimard. An American officer standing behind the detective leaned forward and whispered something in his ear.

Ganimard merely shrugged his shoulders and allowed Rozaine to pass.

Rozaine walked calmly down the gangway and disappeared into the crowd.

Miss Nelly looked astonished.

“Then who is Arsène Lupin?” she said.

Only a few passengers remained on board now. Miss Nelly watched them carefully one after another.

“We cannot wait much longer,” I said.

She moved toward the gangway. I followed beside her.

But suddenly someone stepped in front of us.

It was Ganimard.

“One moment, monsieur,” he said.

“What is it?” I asked with surprise.

“What is your hurry?”

“I am escorting this young lady.”

“One moment,” he repeated firmly.

He looked straight into my eyes and said quietly:

“Arsène Lupin, is it not?”

I laughed.

“No,” I replied calmly. “I am Bernard d’Andrézy.”

Ganimard shook his head.

“Bernard d’Andrézy died three years ago in Macedonia.”

I quickly took out my papers.

“Here are my documents,” I said.

He glanced at them briefly.

“Yes,” he said, “they belonged to him. I know exactly how they came into your possession.”

“You are mistaken,” I said sharply. “Arsène Lupin was traveling under a name beginning with R.”

“Another trick,” he replied calmly. “A false clue to mislead everyone.”

Then suddenly he struck my right arm with his hand.

A sharp cry escaped my lips.

He had struck the wound mentioned in the telegram.

At that moment I understood that resistance was useless.

I was Arsène Lupin.

I surrendered.

I turned slowly toward Miss Nelly. She had heard everything. Our eyes met for a moment.

Then her gaze moved to the camera that I had placed in her hands.

Yes.

Inside that small camera, carefully hidden between the folds of leather, I had concealed Lady Jerland’s jewels and the twenty thousand francs taken from Rozaine.

Without those objects there was no proof against me.

Everything now depended on Miss Nelly.

Would she betray me?

Would she reveal the truth?

Or would she keep my secret?

She walked past me without speaking. I bowed to her respectfully.

Holding the camera, she moved down the gangway toward the pier.

For a moment I believed she would give the camera to the officers.
Instead, when she had descended only a few steps, she pretended to stumble.
The camera slipped from her hands.
It fell into the water between the ship and the pier.
Then she continued walking and disappeared into the crowd.
I never saw her again.
For several seconds I remained silent. Then I murmured softly, almost to myself:
“What a pity that I am not an honest man.”

Arsène Lupin in Prison

Part 1

Every traveler who has visited the valley of the Seine remembers a curious little castle that stands on a rock in the middle of the river. The waters of the river flow quietly around it, and an arched bridge connects it with the shore. From a distance the building appears peaceful, almost charming, but its past is filled with violence.

That castle is called Malaquis.

In earlier centuries it had been the scene of many battles, robberies, and murders. Soldiers had fought over it. Bandits had used it as a refuge. There were even stories of secret underground passages that once connected the castle to distant buildings along the river.

In modern times the castle belonged to a man named Baron Nathan Cahorn.

On the Paris stock exchange people sometimes called him “Baron Satan,” because he had become rich with astonishing speed and skill. He had bought the castle when its former owners fell into poverty. The ancient family that had lived there for centuries had been forced to sell it.

The baron now lived there alone.

Three elderly servants worked in the house, but no visitors were ever admitted. The baron had filled the castle with priceless treasures: paintings, sculptures, rare furniture, and delicate works of art. There were three paintings by Rubens, two by Watteau, and many other objects that collectors would have paid enormous sums to see.

Yet no one saw them.

The baron guarded his collection jealously. He loved his treasures as a miser loves gold. Every evening at sunset he personally closed the heavy iron gates that protected the bridge and the entrance to the castle courtyard. The doors were equipped with electric alarms that would ring throughout the building if anyone touched them.

The baron feared thieves more than anything else.

One Thursday afternoon in September the village postman arrived at the gate. As usual the baron himself opened it slightly and looked suspiciously at the man outside.

The postman laughed.

“It is only me, Monsieur le Baron,” he said cheerfully. “Not a thief wearing my uniform.”

“One can never be too careful,” the baron replied.

The postman handed him several newspapers. Then he added with a smile:

“Today there is something unusual.”

“Unusual?” the baron asked.

“Yes. A letter. A registered letter.”

The baron frowned.

He almost never received letters. He had no friends and no business partners who wrote to him. A letter could mean only trouble.

He signed the receipt reluctantly and took the envelope.

After the postman left, the baron walked nervously back and forth across the bridge. At last he stopped beside the stone railing and opened the envelope.

Inside was a sheet of paper. At the top were the words:

Prison de la Santé, Paris.

His eyes moved quickly to the signature at the bottom.

Arsène Lupin.

The baron felt a cold sensation run through his body.

Slowly he read the letter.

Arsène Lupin wrote politely, almost respectfully. He explained that he had carefully studied the treasures in the castle gallery. He admired the Rubens paintings and one of the Watteau works. He also mentioned a Louis XIII table, several tapestries, and a cabinet full of jewels and miniatures.

Lupin wrote that he would be satisfied, for the moment, with a selection of these objects.

The baron should pack them carefully and send them within eight days to the railway station at Batignolles in Paris.

If the baron refused, Arsène Lupin would visit the castle personally during the night of September 27.

In that case, Lupin added politely, he might decide to take more objects than those mentioned in the letter.

The letter ended with a curious remark.

Lupin suggested that the baron should not send one particular Watteau painting because it was only a copy. According to Lupin, the original had been destroyed many years earlier.

The baron lowered the letter slowly.

His hands trembled.

The name Arsène Lupin filled him with fear.

Of course he knew that Lupin had been arrested in America by the famous detective Ganimard and was now imprisoned in Paris. But the baron also knew the stories about Lupin's incredible cleverness.

Could such a man truly be powerless inside a prison?

Even more frightening was the knowledge shown in the letter. Lupin described the castle's treasures in exact detail. Yet no visitor had ever seen them.

How could he know so much?

The baron looked around at the quiet river and the massive walls of the castle.

The building stood on a high rock. The water surrounded it on every side. The gates were strong. The alarms worked perfectly.

No ordinary thief could possibly enter.

But Arsène Lupin was not an ordinary thief.

That evening the baron wrote immediately to the public prosecutor in Rouen. He enclosed Lupin's letter and asked for protection.

The answer arrived quickly.

The prosecutor assured him that Arsène Lupin was securely imprisoned in Paris under strict surveillance. The prisoner had no opportunity to send such a letter. Therefore the letter must have been written by someone else.

However, the authorities had examined the handwriting.

It closely resembled Lupin's writing.

The baron read the reply several times.

Those words—“closely resembled”—filled him with anxiety.

What if the experts were wrong?

What if Arsène Lupin truly had written the letter?

The date mentioned in the letter approached quickly: September 27.

The baron spent two sleepless nights walking through the castle and examining every door and window.

At last he decided that he needed help.

If the local authorities refused to act, he would go to Paris and hire a detective.

On the third day something happened that filled him with sudden hope.

While reading a small newspaper from a nearby town, the *Réveil de Caudebec*, he saw a short article.

The article reported that the famous detective Inspector Ganimard was spending several days in the town of Caudebec for rest and fishing.

Ganimard.

The very man who had captured Arsène Lupin.

The baron smiled for the first time in days.

If anyone could defeat Arsène Lupin, it was Ganimard.

The town of Caudebec lay only six kilometers away.

Without hesitation the baron put on his coat and hurried toward the road.

Part 2

Baron Cahorn walked quickly along the road toward the town of Caudebec. His steps were fast and uneven, pushed forward by fear and hope. If he could speak to the famous detective Ganimard, perhaps the terrible threat would disappear.

When he arrived in the town, he first tried to discover where the detective was staying. But no one seemed to know. At last the baron visited the office of the small newspaper that had published the article.

The editor himself received him.

“Inspector Ganimard?” the man said. “Yes, I saw him earlier today. He was

fishing beside the river.”

The editor went to the window and pointed.

“There he is now, under those trees.”

The baron looked in that direction. He saw a small man wearing a straw hat and holding a fishing rod.

“That is Ganimard?” he asked.

“Yes,” the editor replied. “He is not very talkative, but he is famous.”

The baron hurried toward the river.

A few minutes later he approached the detective. The man sat quietly on a folding chair beside the water, his attention fixed on the fishing line.

The baron introduced himself politely and tried to begin a conversation. But Ganimard seemed almost unwilling to speak. He listened while the baron described the threatening letter and the danger to the castle.

When the baron finished his explanation, the detective slowly turned his head.

“Monsieur,” he said calmly, “thieves do not usually announce their robberies in advance.”

“But this is Arsène Lupin,” the baron protested.

“Arsène Lupin is in prison.”

“Perhaps he has escaped.”

Ganimard shook his head.

“No one escapes from the Prison de la Santé.”

“But if he—”

“If he escapes,” the detective interrupted, “I will arrest him again. Until then, go home and sleep peacefully.”

He turned his attention back to the fishing rod.

The conversation was finished.

The baron returned to the castle, partly reassured but still uneasy. During the next two days he carefully inspected the gates, the windows, and the alarm system. Gradually he began to believe that the letter was only a cruel joke.

After all, Ganimard himself had shown no concern.

September 26 arrived.

Nothing had happened.

But that afternoon the castle bell rang.

A messenger boy stood at the gate holding a telegram.

The baron opened it quickly.

The message contained only a few words:

“No goods at Batignolles station. Prepare everything for tomorrow night. Arsène.”

The baron’s fear returned immediately.

Tomorrow night was the date mentioned in Lupin’s letter.

Without wasting a moment he rushed back to Caudebec.

Once again he found Ganimard fishing beside the river.

This time the baron said nothing. He simply handed the detective the telegram.

Ganimard read it slowly.

“Well?” he said calmly.

“Well?” the baron repeated in despair. “Tomorrow night he will come!”

“Who will come?”

“Arsène Lupin!”

The detective sighed impatiently.

“You are disturbing the fish, monsieur.”

“Please listen to me,” the baron begged. “Come to the castle tomorrow night. Help me guard my treasures.”

“Impossible,” said Ganimard. “I am on vacation.”

“Name your price,” the baron insisted. “I will pay anything.”

The detective looked at him thoughtfully.

“Anything?”

“Yes.”

“Three thousand francs?”

“Agreed.”

Ganimard considered the matter for a moment.

“Very well,” he said at last. “But you are wasting your money. Nothing will happen.”

“I do not care,” replied the baron. “As long as my treasures are safe.”

The detective nodded slowly.

“Perhaps Arsène Lupin has accomplices,” he added. “Are your servants trustworthy?”

The baron hesitated.

“I believe so.”

“Do not trust anyone too easily,” said Ganimard. “I will bring two assistants with me.”

He stood up and gathered his fishing equipment.

“Tomorrow evening at nine o’clock,” he said. “But we must not be seen together before that.”

The next evening Baron Cahorn prepared for battle.

He inspected his weapons, walked through the castle corridors, and checked every lock and alarm. The river flowed quietly below the walls. The sky grew darker as night approached.

At half past eight he dismissed his servants to their rooms in a distant wing of the castle.

Soon after that he heard footsteps on the bridge.

It was Ganimard and his two assistants.

The assistants were large, powerful men with thick necks and heavy arms. After a short inspection of the castle, Ganimard carefully closed and locked all doors and windows leading into the gallery where the most valuable treasures were displayed.

He then placed his two assistants inside the gallery and locked the door behind them.

“Stay awake,” he told them firmly. “If you hear anything, open the windows and call me.”

Then he turned to the baron.

“Now we take our positions.”

Ganimard had chosen a small guard room built into the thick outer wall of the castle. Two narrow openings allowed them to watch the bridge and the courtyard.

In one corner there was also the entrance to an ancient tunnel.

“You told me this tunnel has been closed for many years?” Ganimard asked.

“Yes,” the baron replied.

“Then we are safe.”

The detective placed three chairs together and stretched himself comfortably across them.

He lit his pipe and smiled.

“Monsieur le Baron,” he said, “I feel almost ashamed to accept your money for such an easy task.”

The baron did not answer.

He stood near the opening of the tunnel, listening anxiously to every sound.

The hours passed slowly.

Eleven o’clock.

Midnight.

One o’clock.

Suddenly the baron grabbed Ganimard’s arm.

“Listen!” he whispered.

Ganimard woke with a start.

“What is it?”

“Did you hear that?”

The detective listened carefully.

Then he laughed softly.

“That is an automobile horn,” he said.

“An automobile?”

“Yes. Do you imagine Arsène Lupin will destroy your castle with a motor car?”

He turned over and closed his eyes again.

“Good night, monsieur,” he murmured.

That was the only alarm during the entire night.

At dawn the two men left the guard room and walked toward the gallery.

The river shone quietly in the early light. Everything seemed peaceful.

“You see?” said Ganimard. “I told you nothing would happen.”

He unlocked the gallery door.

Inside, his two assistants sat in chairs with their heads hanging forward.

They were asleep.

But something else was wrong.

The baron suddenly cried out in horror.

The walls were empty.

The paintings were gone.

The tapestries had vanished.

The cabinets had been opened and emptied.

The treasures of Malaquis had disappeared.

Part 3

Baron Cahorn stood in the middle of the gallery like a man who had suddenly lost his mind. His eyes moved from one empty space to another.

“The paintings!” he cried. “The Rubens! The Watteau!”

He ran along the walls, touching the empty hooks where the paintings had hung only hours before.

“The tapestries! The cabinets! My jewels!”

His voice broke with despair.

“My Louis XVI candlesticks! My great chandelier! My statue of the Virgin!”

He walked rapidly from one corner of the room to the other, counting the losses, repeating the names of the missing objects, adding their prices in a confused whisper.

For him these treasures were not merely objects. They were his life.

Meanwhile Inspector Ganimard stood silent and motionless.

The famous detective looked around the gallery slowly, examining every detail. The windows were still closed. The locks on the doors were untouched. The walls showed no cracks. The floor was perfectly solid.

Everything appeared exactly as it had been the night before.

And yet the entire collection had vanished.

“Arsène Lupin,” Ganimard murmured quietly.

Suddenly he rushed toward his two assistants and shook them violently.

“Wake up!” he shouted.

The men did not respond.

Ganimard bent down and studied their faces carefully. Their breathing was slow and heavy.

“They have been drugged,” he said calmly.

“Drugged?” the baron repeated in shock.

“Yes.”

“But how?”

“That is easy enough,” Ganimard replied. “Either Lupin himself or one of his accomplices came here during the night.”

“Then I am ruined,” the baron groaned.

“Perhaps.”

“This is terrible! My treasures are gone forever!”

Ganimard shrugged his shoulders slightly.

“You should report the crime to the police.”

“The police?” the baron said bitterly. “You represent the police, and you do nothing!”

The detective smiled faintly.

“With Arsène Lupin,” he said, “one does not solve problems in five minutes.”

The assistants slowly began to regain consciousness. They looked around the room with confused expressions.

“What happened?” one of them asked weakly.

“That is exactly what we would like to know,” Ganimard replied.

He questioned them carefully.

“Did you see anyone enter the gallery?”

“No.”

“Did you hear any noise?”

“No.”

“Did you drink anything?”

The two men looked at each other.

“Yes,” one of them said at last. “We drank some water.”

“From that carafe?” Ganimard asked.

“Yes.”

The detective examined the water carefully, smelling it and tasting a small drop.

It had no smell and no taste.

“The drug must have been very strong,” he said.

Then he turned toward the baron.

“We cannot solve this mystery here,” he said calmly. “But I promise you one thing.”

“What is that?” the baron asked desperately.

“I will catch Arsène Lupin again.”

Later that day the baron officially accused Arsène Lupin of the robbery.

The accusation created enormous excitement.

Soon the castle was filled with police officers, judges, reporters, photographers, and curious visitors. The newspapers published long articles describing the crime and discussing the incredible cleverness of Arsène Lupin.

Many fantastic explanations were suggested.

Some people believed that secret tunnels connected the castle with the riverbank. Others imagined hidden doors or secret passages inside the walls.

The police searched everywhere.

They examined the cellars, the walls, the chimneys, the floors, and the ceilings. They even studied the rocks beneath the castle.

But they discovered nothing.

The disappearance of the treasures remained a complete mystery.

At last the authorities asked the Paris police for assistance.

The chief of the detective service sent several experienced investigators to examine the case. They searched the castle again, but their efforts produced no results.

Finally they decided to consult the man who knew Arsène Lupin better than anyone else.

Inspector Ganimard.

The detective listened quietly as his superior described the case.

When the explanation ended, Ganimard shook his head slowly.

“You are looking in the wrong place,” he said.

“What do you mean?” asked the chief.

“The solution is not in the castle.”

“Then where?”

Ganimard smiled slightly.

“With Arsène Lupin.”

“Impossible,” the chief protested. “Lupin is in prison.”

“Yes,” Ganimard replied calmly. “But I would not change my opinion unless he had chains on his feet, chains on his hands, and a gag in his mouth.”

The chief sighed.

“You are very stubborn, Ganimard.”

“Perhaps,” the detective said. “But there is only one man in France capable of planning such a crime.”

“And that man is?”

“Arsène Lupin.”

After a moment of silence the chief asked:

“What would you do if you were in charge of this case?”

“I would spend one hour with Lupin.”

“In his cell?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

Ganimard smiled.

“Because we became good friends during the voyage from America.”

The chief looked surprised.

“Friends?”

“Yes,” Ganimard said. “And if Lupin can help me without revealing too much, I believe he will.”

A short time later the detective entered the prison cell where Arsène Lupin was

confined.

Lupin was lying comfortably on his bed.

When he saw Ganimard he sat up immediately with a cheerful smile.

“My dear Ganimard!” he exclaimed. “What a wonderful surprise!”

The detective nodded.

“Ganimard himself.”

Lupin laughed.

“I am delighted to see an honest face,” he said warmly. “Life here becomes very boring.”

Ganimard sat down on the small stool beside the bed.

“Let us speak of the Cahorn affair,” he said.

Lupin raised his eyebrows with interest.

“Ah yes,” he said thoughtfully. “The castle of Malaquis. Two Rubens, one Watteau, and a few other small objects.”

“Small objects?” Ganimard repeated.

Lupin smiled.

“My dear friend, those details are not important. The real question is this: how can I help you?”

“Tell me honestly,” said Ganimard. “Did you organize the robbery?”

Lupin nodded calmly.

“From beginning to end.”

He opened the drawer of the small table beside his bed and removed two small pieces of paper.

“Here are the postal receipts for the letter and the telegram,” he said politely.

Ganimard stared at him in amazement.

“You receive newspapers and letters in prison?”

Lupin laughed softly.

“The guards search my pockets, examine my shoes, and inspect the walls of my cell,” he said. “But they never imagine that Arsène Lupin would hide things in such simple places.”

Ganimard shook his head slowly.

“You are an extraordinary man,” he said.

Lupin began to walk back and forth across the cell.

“Let us imagine a castle that cannot be entered,” he said. “The doors are locked. The windows are protected. The walls are strong.”

“Yes,” Ganimard said.

“What must a clever thief do?” Lupin continued.

“Break in?”

“No,” Lupin replied. “He must be invited inside.”

Ganimard leaned forward with sudden interest.

Lupin smiled.

“That is exactly what happened,” he said.

Then he explained the entire plan.

He had written the threatening letter to frighten the baron. He had arranged for a friend to pretend to be the famous detective Ganimard in the nearby town. When the frightened baron read about the detective in the newspaper, he naturally asked for help.

Thus the baron himself had invited Lupin’s accomplices into the castle.

During the night the treasures were removed through the windows and lowered by ropes to a boat waiting on the river.

The robbery had been perfectly simple.

When Lupin finished speaking, Ganimard sat silently for several seconds.

At last he laughed quietly.

“Magnificent,” he said.

Lupin bowed slightly.

“Thank you,” he replied.

The Escape of Arsène Lupin

Part 1

Arsène Lupin had just finished his meal.

He sat quietly on the edge of his narrow prison bed and took from his pocket a fine cigar with a gold band. He examined it with great care, turning it slowly between his fingers as if it were a rare jewel.

At that moment the door of the cell opened.

Lupin quickly slipped the cigar into the drawer of the small table beside him and moved away from it.

A prison guard entered.

“Time for exercise,” the guard said.

“I was waiting for you, my friend,” Lupin replied cheerfully.

They walked together along the corridor and disappeared around the corner.

A few seconds later two men entered the empty cell.

They were inspectors from the police: Inspector Dieuzy and Inspector Folenfant.

Their mission was simple.

They were determined to discover how Arsène Lupin communicated with the outside world.

The authorities were now certain that the famous prisoner had secret accomplices beyond the prison walls. Newspapers had recently published a threatening message signed by Lupin himself, promising revenge against a journalist who had insulted him.

The handwriting was unmistakable.

Lupin was clearly sending letters.

But how?

The inspectors began a careful search of the cell. They examined every stone in the wall, every piece of furniture, and every object belonging to the prisoner.

They lifted the mattress, shook the blankets, and inspected the small table.

Nothing.

At last they were about to leave when the guard returned suddenly.

“The drawer!” he whispered.

“What about it?” asked Dieuzy.

“When I entered the cell earlier, Lupin was closing that drawer.”

The inspectors immediately opened it.

Dieuzy gave a cry of satisfaction.

“We have found something!”

Inside the drawer were several objects: a small bundle of newspaper clippings about Arsène Lupin, a pipe, a tobacco box, a few sheets of thin writing paper, and two books.

One of the books was an English edition of Carlyle’s *Hero-Worship*.

The other was a very old book, a German translation of the *Manual of Epictetus*, printed in the seventeenth century.

The pages of both books were heavily underlined and filled with small notes written in the margins.

“Perhaps this is a code,” Folenfant suggested.

“Perhaps,” Dieuzy replied.

They examined every page carefully.

Still nothing.

Finally Dieuzy picked up the cigar with the gold band.

“A fine cigar,” he said. “Henry Clay.”

Out of habit he pressed the cigar gently between his fingers to test its firmness.

Suddenly he stopped.

The cigar had collapsed slightly under his touch.

Dieuzy looked closer.

Between the layers of tobacco he saw something white.

Using a small pin, he carefully pulled it out.

It was a tightly rolled piece of paper.

A letter.

A few minutes later the chief of the detective service, Monsieur Dudouis,

arrived in the cell.

He examined the letter carefully.

It had been written in a feminine hand.

The message read:

“The basket has replaced the others. Eight out of ten are ready. When the outer foot is pressed the plate moves downward. From twelve to sixteen every day H-P will wait. But where? Answer quickly. Do not worry. Your friend is watching over you.”

Dudouis thought for several moments.

“It is clear enough,” he said slowly.

“Clear?” asked the inspectors.

“Yes. ‘Eight out of ten are ready’ probably refers to the compartments of some machine. ‘From twelve to sixteen’ means from twelve o’clock to four o’clock.”

He paused.

“And H-P must refer to an automobile.”

“An automobile?” Dieuzy asked.

“Horsepower,” Dudouis explained. “Automobiles are often described that way. A twenty-four horsepower motor, for example.”

The inspectors nodded.

“But how did Lupin receive this message?” Folenfant asked.

Dudouis walked slowly around the cell.

“He received it in his food,” he said.

“In his food?”

“Yes. Hidden inside bread, or a vegetable perhaps.”

The guard shook his head.

“We have examined his meals many times,” he said. “We never found anything.”

Dudouis smiled slightly.

“This evening we will find Lupin’s reply,” he said. “Keep him outside the cell a little longer today. I will take this letter to the examining judge. We will photograph it and then place it back in the cigar exactly as before.”

Everything happened according to his plan.

That evening Dudouis returned to the prison with Inspector Dieuzy.
Three empty plates stood on the stove in the corner.
“He has eaten?” Dudouis asked.
“Yes,” the guard replied.
Dudouis began examining the food remains.
“Break the macaroni into small pieces,” he ordered.
Dieuzy obeyed.
Nothing.
Dudouis opened a bread roll.
Nothing.
He then picked up the knife from the table.
It was a simple knife with a rounded blade.
Dudouis twisted the handle slowly.
To his surprise it unscrewed easily.
The handle was hollow.
Inside was a tiny folded piece of paper.
Dudouis smiled with satisfaction.
“There it is,” he said.
He unfolded the note and read:
“I trust you. H-P will follow every day at a distance. I will go ahead. Farewell,
dear friend.”
Dudouis rubbed his hands with pleasure.
“Excellent,” he said. “Now we understand the escape plan.”
The guard looked worried.
“But what if Arsène Lupin escapes?”
Dudouis shook his head confidently.
“He will not escape,” he said.
“Why not?”
“Because we will allow him to try.”
The inspectors stared at him in surprise.
Dudouis smiled again.

“When he attempts to escape,” he explained, “we will arrest his accomplices outside the prison.”

Everything seemed perfectly arranged.

But the authorities had forgotten one important detail.

The man they were dealing with was Arsène Lupin.

Part 2

The police believed that they had finally discovered Arsène Lupin’s plan.

The hidden letters seemed to explain everything. Lupin was preparing an escape. Outside the prison walls an automobile would wait for him every day between noon and four o’clock. His accomplices were ready.

Now the authorities decided to turn this knowledge to their advantage.

If Lupin tried to escape, they would allow him to begin the attempt. Then they would arrest his accomplices and capture Lupin again before he could disappear.

It seemed like a perfect trap.

Meanwhile Arsène Lupin behaved in prison exactly as usual. He walked calmly during exercise hours, spoke politely with the guards, and spent long hours reading his books.

No one could guess what he was thinking.

Inspector Dudouis carefully replaced the secret letter inside the cigar and returned it to the drawer of Lupin’s table. Everything had to appear exactly as before.

That evening the prisoner returned to his cell.

Lupin greeted the guard cheerfully.

“Good evening, my friend,” he said.

“Good evening.”

Lupin sat down calmly at the small table and opened the drawer.

He took out the cigar.

His eyes rested on it for a moment.

Then he smiled slightly.

Without hurry he removed the thin paper hidden inside.

He read it.

His face showed no surprise.

Instead he laughed softly to himself.

“Very good,” he murmured.

He then began writing a reply.

The reply was hidden inside the hollow handle of the knife and returned with the next meal.

Exactly as Inspector Dudouis had expected.

The trap was ready.

During the following days the prison guards watched Lupin more carefully than ever before. The police prepared their men outside the prison. An automobile patrol waited near the surrounding streets every afternoon between twelve and four.

Yet nothing happened.

Arsène Lupin showed no sign of escape.

He ate his meals calmly, read his books, and even joked with the guards.

Days passed.

The detectives grew impatient.

“Perhaps he suspects something,” one officer suggested.

“Impossible,” Dudouis replied. “The letters were returned exactly as before. He believes everything is going according to his plan.”

But Lupin still made no move.

Then one morning the prison received unexpected news.

Arsène Lupin’s trial was approaching.

The newspapers began discussing the famous prisoner again. Reporters wrote long articles about his crimes, his cleverness, and his possible escape.

The public followed the story with great excitement.

Lupin himself appeared amused by all the attention.

One afternoon he spoke quietly to a guard.

“Tell me,” he asked politely, “do the newspapers still speak about me?”

“Every day,” the guard replied.

Lupin smiled.

“Excellent,” he said.

A few days later Inspector Ganimard came to visit him again.

Lupin greeted the detective warmly.

“Ah, my dear Ganimard! How pleasant to see you.”

“You seem in good spirits,” the detective observed.

“Life here is peaceful,” Lupin replied. “I rest, I read, I think.”

Ganimard looked at him thoughtfully.

“Your trial will begin soon,” he said.

Lupin shrugged.

“Perhaps.”

“You speak as if you will not attend.”

Lupin smiled.

“My dear Ganimard,” he said quietly, “I have already decided something.”

“What?”

Lupin leaned closer.

“I will not be present at my trial.”

Ganimard laughed.

“You forget that you are in prison.”

Lupin shook his head.

“Arsène Lupin remains in prison only as long as he wishes.”

The detective studied his face carefully.

“You mean to escape.”

Lupin did not answer.

Instead he took a cigar from the drawer and examined it thoughtfully.

“Let us say,” he replied calmly, “that prison life does not suit me for very long.”

Ganimard stood up.

“If you escape,” he said quietly, “I will capture you again.”

Lupin smiled.

“Perhaps,” he said.

The two men shook hands.

When the detective left the cell, Lupin sat down once more at the table.

For a long time he remained motionless, thinking.

Then he whispered softly:

“It is time.”

The next morning everything appeared perfectly normal inside the prison.

Guards walked along the corridors.

Prisoners remained in their cells.

But somewhere inside the building a quiet and extraordinary plan had already begun.

Arsène Lupin was about to disappear.

Part 3

The morning began like any other morning in the prison.

The guards followed their usual routine. The prisoners received their food. Doors opened and closed with the same heavy sound that echoed through the corridors every day.

Nothing seemed unusual.

Arsène Lupin appeared calm and cheerful as always. When the guard brought his breakfast, Lupin greeted him politely.

“Good morning, my friend.”

“Good morning.”

Lupin ate slowly. When he finished, he sat down and began to read one of his books. From time to time he smoked a cigar and looked thoughtfully at the walls of his small cell.

The guards believed that everything was under control.

Yet the police remained alert.

Inspector Dudouis had placed men outside the prison every afternoon between noon and four o'clock. According to the secret letters, that was the time when Lupin planned to escape.

Day after day the officers waited beside the prison walls.

Nothing happened.

On the morning of the expected day, the prison doctor came to examine the prisoners, as he did regularly. When he reached Lupin's cell, he looked at the famous prisoner with mild curiosity.

Lupin greeted him politely.

"Doctor," he said with a slight smile, "I am feeling rather weak today."

"Weak?" the doctor asked.

"Yes. Perhaps prison life is not good for my health."

The doctor examined him briefly.

Lupin's pulse was slow. His skin looked pale.

"You should rest," the doctor said. "I will send medicine."

Lupin thanked him and lay down on the bed.

A short time later the guard returned with the medicine.

Lupin swallowed it obediently.

Soon afterward he appeared to fall into a deep sleep.

Hours passed.

At noon the guard opened the door quietly to check on him. Lupin lay on the bed without moving.

"He is still sleeping," the guard murmured.

The guard closed the door again.

A little later another guard passed along the corridor and glanced through the small observation window.

Lupin had not moved.

"He must be very tired," the man said.

Afternoon arrived.

Inspector Dudouis and several officers waited outside the prison walls as usual.

Once again nothing happened.

At four o'clock the officers began to relax. Perhaps Lupin had abandoned his escape plan.

Inside the prison, however, something very strange occurred.

At about half past four a guard finally entered Lupin's cell to wake him.
"Time to rise," the guard said.
Lupin did not move.
The guard approached the bed and touched his shoulder.
Still no response.
Alarmed, the guard called for help.
Several officers hurried into the cell.
Lupin lay perfectly still.
His face was pale, and his breathing was very slow.
"Call the doctor!" someone shouted.
The doctor arrived quickly and examined the prisoner.
"He is unconscious," the doctor said.
The guards lifted Lupin carefully and carried him out of the cell. They placed him on a stretcher and hurried toward the prison infirmary.
The corridors were quiet.
No one suspected anything unusual.
A few minutes later the stretcher reached the outer gate of the prison.
According to the doctor's orders, the unconscious prisoner was to be taken to a hospital outside the prison walls.
The gate opened.
The stretcher passed through.
A carriage waited nearby.
The guards placed the unconscious prisoner inside and climbed in beside him.
The carriage began to move slowly down the street.
Several minutes passed.
Suddenly the unconscious man opened his eyes.
Arsène Lupin sat up calmly.
The guards stared at him in complete astonishment.
But before they could react, the carriage stopped.
Two men opened the doors from outside.
In the confusion that followed, the guards were quickly overpowered.

Lupin stepped down from the carriage, smiling.

Nearby an automobile engine started.

Lupin climbed inside.

Within seconds the automobile disappeared down the street at great speed.

When Inspector Dudouis finally learned what had happened, it was already too late.

Arsène Lupin had escaped.

The famous gentleman-burglar was once again free.

The Mysterious Traveller

Part 1

One autumn evening the train from Paris to Rouen moved rapidly through the dark countryside. Inside one of the first-class compartments sat six passengers who had met only a short time earlier.

Such meetings were common on long railway journeys. At first strangers remained quiet and reserved, but little by little conversation usually began. A remark about the weather, a complaint about the train, or a shared newspaper could quickly create a temporary friendship.

On this journey the conversation had begun almost at once.

The compartment contained a rich merchant from Rouen, a young woman traveling to visit her family, a serious gentleman who read a book without raising his eyes, a soldier returning home on leave, and two quiet travelers who seemed to prefer observing rather than speaking.

The train moved steadily through the night. Outside the windows the landscape passed quickly in darkness. Inside the compartment the passengers talked softly.

Suddenly the merchant folded his newspaper and said:

“You have all heard the news, I suppose.”

“What news?” asked the soldier.

“Arsène Lupin.”

At once the name attracted everyone’s attention.

Arsène Lupin had become the most famous criminal in France. His escapes, disguises, and clever robberies filled the newspapers. Some people admired him; others feared him.

The merchant tapped the newspaper with his finger.

“According to this report,” he said, “Lupin has been seen near Rouen.”

The young woman looked uneasy.

“Surely he would not travel by train like an ordinary passenger.”

The merchant shrugged.

“Why not? Lupin is known for his disguises. He may appear as anyone.”

The soldier laughed.

“Perhaps he is sitting here with us.”

The passengers smiled nervously.

Only one man did not react at all.

The quiet gentleman who had been reading his book continued to turn the pages slowly, as if he had not heard the conversation.

The merchant glanced at him with curiosity.

“Monsieur,” he said politely, “do you not follow the adventures of Arsène Lupin?”

The man looked up calmly.

“Not very closely,” he replied.

His voice was gentle and controlled. His appearance was simple. He wore dark clothes and round glasses, and nothing about him seemed remarkable.

The merchant returned to his newspaper.

“According to this article,” he continued, “the police believe Lupin may attempt another theft soon.”

“Where?” asked the soldier.

“No one knows.”

The young woman shivered slightly.

“I do not like these stories,” she said.

The merchant smiled reassuringly.

“Do not worry, mademoiselle. The police are searching everywhere.”

At that moment the train slowed as it approached a small station.

A railway guard opened the door of the compartment.

“Tickets, please.”

The passengers handed him their tickets one by one.

When he reached the quiet gentleman with the glasses, the man produced his ticket calmly.

The guard examined it carefully.

“Monsieur Guillaume Berlat,” he read.

The gentleman nodded politely.

“That is correct.”

The guard returned the ticket and closed the door.

The train began moving again.

For a time the compartment remained silent.

Then the merchant leaned toward the soldier.

“You see,” he whispered, “anyone could be Arsène Lupin.”

The soldier laughed.

“Even you?”

“Why not?” the merchant replied jokingly.

The passengers laughed softly.

Yet the young woman still looked uneasy.

“I wish we would arrive soon,” she said quietly.

Outside the night grew darker.

The train continued its journey through the silent countryside.

None of the passengers realized that before the train reached Rouen, something very strange would occur.

And that one of the travelers in the compartment was not what he appeared to be.

Part 2

The train continued to move through the dark countryside.

Inside the compartment the passengers slowly returned to their conversation. The soldier told amusing stories from his regiment. The merchant spoke proudly about his business in Rouen. The young woman listened quietly, smiling from time to time.

Only the quiet gentleman named Guillaume Berlat remained mostly silent.

From time to time he lifted his eyes from his book and looked calmly at the other passengers, as if he were studying them carefully.

Suddenly the train gave a violent jolt.

The lights flickered.
Then the train stopped completely.
The passengers looked at one another in surprise.
“What has happened?” the young woman asked.
The soldier stood up and looked out the window.
“We are not at a station,” he said.
The merchant frowned.
“Perhaps there is some problem with the engine.”
Several minutes passed.
Then the door of the compartment opened suddenly.
Two men entered.
They wore dark clothes and heavy coats. One of them carried a revolver.
The passengers froze.
“Do not move,” the armed man said coldly.
His companion closed the door and stood in front of it.
“This is a robbery,” the first man continued calmly.
The merchant turned pale.
“A robbery?”
“Yes.”
The man with the revolver pointed toward the passengers.
“Place your money, watches, and jewelry on the seat.”
The soldier clenched his fists.
“This is outrageous!” he said angrily.
The revolver moved slowly toward him.
“Do you wish to argue?” the robber asked.
The soldier hesitated.
He slowly removed his watch and placed it on the seat.
One by one the other passengers followed his example.
The merchant placed a thick wallet on the seat. The young woman removed a small bracelet from her wrist. The quiet traveler in the corner handed over a gold watch.

Only Guillaume Berlat remained seated quietly with his book.
The robber noticed him.
“And you, monsieur.”
Berlat slowly closed his book.
“Of course,” he said politely.
He placed a small purse on the seat.
The robber collected the objects quickly and placed them in a leather bag.
“Thank you,” he said.
The passengers remained silent.
Suddenly the quiet man with glasses spoke.
“May I ask a question?” he said calmly.
The robber turned toward him.
“What?”
“You seem to be experienced professionals.”
“Perhaps.”
“Then why do you choose such a dangerous method?”
The robber frowned.
“What do you mean?”
“Stopping a train in the middle of the countryside,” Berlat explained calmly, “is extremely risky. The police will soon search the area.”
The robber laughed.
“We know what we are doing.”
“I do not doubt it,” Berlat replied.
The robber looked at him more carefully now.
“You speak very calmly for a man who has just been robbed.”
Berlat smiled slightly.
“Money is not very important.”
The robber studied him suspiciously.
“You are an unusual passenger.”
“Perhaps.”
For a moment the compartment was silent.

Then Berlat spoke again.

“You have forgotten one detail.”

“What detail?”

“You have not robbed everyone.”

The robber looked confused.

“What do you mean?”

Berlat pointed calmly toward the leather bag.

“You have robbed yourselves.”

Before the robber could react, Berlat moved with incredible speed.

In one sudden motion he seized the revolver and twisted the man’s arm.

The weapon fell to the floor.

The second robber tried to attack him, but Berlat struck him quickly and pushed him back against the wall.

The entire struggle lasted only a few seconds.

The passengers watched in amazement.

When it was finished, both robbers were lying helpless on the floor.

Berlat calmly picked up the revolver and handed it to the soldier.

“Please hold this,” he said politely.

The soldier stared at him with admiration.

“Monsieur,” he said, “you are remarkable.”

Berlat smiled modestly.

“It was nothing.”

The merchant leaned forward excitedly.

“You saved us all!”

The young woman looked at him with shining eyes.

“You are very brave.”

Berlat shrugged.

“I simply dislike thieves.”

The passengers laughed with relief.

Soon the train began moving again.

At the next station the robbers were handed over to the police.

The passengers gathered around Berlat to thank him again and again.

The merchant shook his hand warmly.

“You must allow me to introduce you properly in Rouen,” he said.

“You are too kind,” Berlat replied.

The young woman smiled at him with admiration.

“We will never forget this journey,” she said.

Berlat bowed politely.

But when the train finally reached Rouen and the passengers stepped onto the platform, the mysterious traveler named Guillaume Berlat disappeared quietly into the crowd.

And later that evening the newspapers reported something curious.

The two robbers had been carrying a leather bag.

But inside the bag the police found nothing at all.

The money, watches, and jewelry taken from the passengers had vanished.

And one of the passengers on the train had also disappeared.

His name was Guillaume Berlat.

Another name for the same man was

Arsène Lupin.

The Queen's Necklace

Part 1

In the quiet town of Enghien, not far from Paris, lived a young woman named Jeanne de Dreux.

Jeanne was not rich. In fact, she lived very simply with her father in a small house near the lake. Yet everyone who met her immediately noticed her beauty. Her face was calm and graceful, and her gentle manner attracted admiration wherever she went.

Her father, Monsieur de Dreux, had once belonged to an old noble family. But years of misfortune had taken away their wealth. Now he lived modestly, spending most of his time reading books and walking slowly beside the lake.

Despite their poverty, Jeanne remained cheerful.

One afternoon she returned home with bright eyes and an excited expression.

"Father," she said, "I have wonderful news!"

Monsieur de Dreux looked up from his book.

"Wonderful news?" he asked.

"Yes. The Countess de Crozon has invited me to visit her tomorrow."

"The Countess de Crozon?" he repeated with surprise.

"Yes."

The countess was a famous and extremely wealthy woman who lived in a large house nearby. Her parties were known throughout the region, and many important guests often visited her.

"But why has she invited you?" the father asked.

Jeanne smiled.

"She met me last week in the park. We spoke for a few minutes, and she seemed very kind."

The next day Jeanne visited the countess.

The house of the Countess de Crozon was magnificent. Elegant furniture filled the large rooms. Paintings covered the walls, and soft carpets lay across the floors.

The countess herself welcomed Jeanne warmly.

She was a beautiful woman, graceful and confident, and her voice carried a gentle charm.

“My dear Jeanne,” she said, “I am delighted that you have come.”

The two women soon became friends.

During their conversation the countess spoke of many subjects: music, art, Paris society, and the lives of famous people.

At last she said:

“I have something very special to show you.”

She opened a small velvet case.

Inside lay a necklace of extraordinary beauty.

The necklace contained dozens of diamonds that shone like tiny stars in the light.

Jeanne gasped with admiration.

“It is magnificent!”

The countess smiled proudly.

“It once belonged to Queen Marie-Antoinette,” she said.

Jeanne looked at the necklace with wonder.

“May I hold it?”

“Of course.”

Jeanne carefully lifted the necklace. The diamonds sparkled brilliantly.

At that moment a servant entered the room.

“Madame,” he said, “Monsieur Floriani has arrived.”

The countess smiled.

“Excellent. Send him in.”

A tall gentleman entered the room a moment later.

He was elegant and charming, with dark hair and bright eyes. His manner was confident and polite.

“Monsieur Floriani,” said the countess, “allow me to introduce Mademoiselle Jeanne de Dreux.”

Floriani bowed respectfully.

“I am honored,” he said.

His voice was warm and pleasant.

During the next hour the three of them spoke together comfortably. Floriani told amusing stories about life in Paris, and Jeanne listened with fascination.

When she finally left the house that evening, she carried with her a strange feeling of excitement.

She could not stop thinking about the charming Monsieur Floriani.

During the following weeks Jeanne visited the countess several times.

Each time Floriani was present.

Gradually Jeanne and Floriani became close friends. He often walked with her beside the lake and spoke gently about art, music, and travel.

Jeanne began to admire him deeply.

One evening Floriani spoke to her with unusual seriousness.

“Jeanne,” he said quietly, “may I tell you something?”

“Of course.”

“I love you.”

Jeanne’s heart beat quickly.

She had guessed his feelings, yet hearing the words spoken aloud filled her with happiness.

“And you?” Floriani asked softly.

Jeanne lowered her eyes.

“Yes,” she whispered.

Soon afterward Floriani visited her father to ask for her hand in marriage.

Monsieur de Dreux welcomed him kindly.

Floriani appeared honest, intelligent, and generous. He seemed to love Jeanne sincerely.

The marriage was arranged.

Several weeks later Jeanne became Madame Floriani.

Their life together began happily.

Floriani rented a comfortable house in Paris. Jeanne discovered the pleasures of the city: theaters, music, beautiful shops, and elegant society.

She often visited the Countess de Crozon, who remained a close friend.
Yet one evening something happened that would change everything.
The countess invited Jeanne to dinner.
After the meal she opened the velvet case once again and showed the famous necklace.
The diamonds shone even more brilliantly than before.
Floriani examined the necklace with great interest.
“It is extraordinary,” he said.
The countess smiled.
“Yes. And tomorrow I must take it to Paris to show it to a jeweler.”
Floriani nodded thoughtfully.
No one could have guessed that this beautiful necklace was about to disappear.
And that its disappearance would soon be connected with the name of Arsène Lupin.

Part 2

The next morning the Countess de Crozon prepared to travel to Paris.
The famous necklace rested safely inside its velvet case. The diamonds shone softly in the early light as she closed the lid.
“Such a treasure must be handled carefully,” she said.
Her carriage waited outside the house.
The journey to Paris was short, and the countess soon arrived at the home of the jeweler who had agreed to examine the necklace. The man studied the diamonds with great care, turning the necklace slowly beneath the light.
“Magnificent,” he murmured.
The countess smiled with satisfaction.
After the examination she returned home.
Everything seemed perfectly ordinary.
But two days later a terrible discovery was made.
The necklace had disappeared.

The velvet case remained inside the cabinet where the countess had placed it. The cabinet itself had been locked. No door or window in the house showed any sign of forced entry.

Yet the diamonds were gone.

The countess was furious.

She called the police immediately.

Officers arrived and began to question the servants. They searched the house carefully, examining every room, every piece of furniture, every corner of the garden.

They discovered nothing.

The mystery became even more troubling when the police learned something about the visitors who had recently entered the house.

One of those visitors was Monsieur Floriani.

Naturally the officers asked him to come and speak with them.

Floriani arrived calmly.

His manner remained polite and confident, but the officers noticed that he answered their questions carefully.

“You saw the necklace during your visit?” one officer asked.

“Yes,” Floriani replied.

“Did you know where it was kept?”

“No.”

“Did you return to the house after that evening?”

“No.”

The officer studied him for a moment.

“You understand that the necklace is extremely valuable.”

“Of course.”

The questioning ended.

Floriani returned home.

That evening Jeanne noticed that her husband appeared thoughtful.

“Is something wrong?” she asked.

Floriani hesitated.

“The police are searching for the necklace.”

Jeanne nodded.

“Yes, I heard about it. What a terrible loss for the countess.”

Floriani looked at her seriously.

“They may suspect me.”

Jeanne stared at him in shock.

“You?”

“Yes.”

“That is impossible!”

Floriani smiled gently.

“The police must consider every possibility.”

Jeanne shook her head firmly.

“Anyone who knows you would never believe such a thing.”

Floriani did not answer immediately.

Instead he walked slowly across the room and looked out the window.

“Jeanne,” he said quietly, “suppose the police were mistaken.”

“Mistaken?”

“Suppose the necklace was not stolen by an ordinary thief.”

Jeanne looked confused.

“What do you mean?”

Floriani turned toward her.

“Suppose it was taken by Arsène Lupin.”

Jeanne gasped.

“Arsène Lupin!”

The name had become famous across France.

Floriani nodded calmly.

“Yes.”

“But why would he steal from the countess?”

Floriani smiled slightly.

“Because Lupin steals wherever he wishes.”

Jeanne thought for a moment.

“If Arsène Lupin took the necklace,” she said slowly, “then the police will never find it.”

Floriani laughed softly.

“Perhaps.”

The next day the police continued their investigation.

They questioned the servants again. They examined the cabinet where the necklace had been kept. The lock showed no sign of damage.

Everything suggested that the person who removed the necklace had used a key.

The police also learned something else.

On the evening before the necklace disappeared, a stranger had been seen walking near the countess’s house.

The man wore a dark coat and a soft hat.

No one could describe his face clearly.

The officers immediately thought of Arsène Lupin.

Yet there was still no proof.

Days passed.

Then suddenly another strange event occurred.

One morning the Countess de Crozon received a letter.

The envelope contained only a short message.

“Madame,” the letter said, “the necklace you believe stolen will soon return to you.”

There was no signature.

But at the bottom of the page appeared a small symbol.

A simple letter “L.”

The countess stared at the message in astonishment.

The police were called again.

When the officers saw the letter, they exchanged serious glances.

Everyone understood the meaning of that symbol.

The mysterious thief had revealed his identity.

Arsène Lupin had taken the Queen’s necklace.

Part 3

The letter from Arsène Lupin caused great excitement.

The Countess de Crozon showed it immediately to the police. The officers examined the message carefully. The handwriting was elegant and confident.

“It is certainly Lupin,” one of them said.

“And he promises to return the necklace,” another officer added.

The countess was furious.

“Return it?” she cried. “Why did he take it in the first place?”

The police could not answer that question.

Meanwhile Jeanne and Floriani also heard about the letter.

Jeanne looked relieved.

“You see,” she said to her husband, “everything will be solved.”

Floriani smiled quietly.

“Perhaps.”

But inside he seemed thoughtful.

A few days later another letter arrived.

This time the message was addressed directly to the countess.

The letter read:

“Madame,

The necklace will be returned to you tomorrow evening at nine o’clock.

You will find it in the garden beside the stone fountain.

Please come alone.

Arsène Lupin.”

The police immediately made a plan.

They decided to hide several officers in the garden. When Lupin appeared to return the necklace, they would arrest him.

The countess agreed eagerly.

“Yes,” she said. “We will catch him at last.”

The next evening the garden of the countess’s house remained silent and dark.

Several police officers hid behind trees and bushes. Another officer watched

the gate.

At exactly nine o'clock the countess walked slowly toward the stone fountain.

She looked around nervously.

The garden was quiet.

Suddenly she noticed something on the edge of the fountain.

A small velvet case.

Her heart beat quickly.

She approached and opened it.

Inside lay the famous diamond necklace.

The diamonds sparkled brightly in the moonlight.

The countess cried out with joy.

"It is here!"

The officers rushed forward immediately.

They searched the garden quickly.

But no one was there.

Arsène Lupin had disappeared.

Once again he had defeated the police.

The next day the newspapers across France published the story.

The return of the necklace made Lupin even more famous. Some people laughed at the police, while others admired the mysterious thief.

But for Jeanne the story soon became more troubling.

One evening she noticed something unusual.

Floriani sat alone in the living room, examining a small object carefully in his hands.

When Jeanne entered, he quickly placed it on the table.

Jeanne looked closer.

It was a diamond.

A small diamond.

Jeanne stared at it in surprise.

"Where did that come from?" she asked.

Floriani hesitated for a moment.

Then he smiled.

“From the necklace,” he said.

Jeanne felt her heart stop.

“From the necklace?”

Floriani nodded calmly.

“Yes.”

Jeanne stepped back.

“But the necklace was returned.”

“Almost all of it,” Floriani replied.

“Almost?”

He picked up the diamond again.

“One stone was missing.”

Jeanne looked at him with growing fear.

“You mean...”

Floriani walked toward her.

His eyes were gentle.

“Jeanne,” he said quietly, “do not be afraid.”

“Floriani... what are you saying?”

He took her hands softly.

“You must know the truth.”

Jeanne whispered:

“The truth?”

Floriani smiled.

“My name is not Floriani.”

Jeanne’s breath stopped.

“Who are you?”

He bowed slightly.

“Arsène Lupin.”

Jeanne stared at him in shock.

For a moment she could not speak.

The man she loved... the man she had married...

was the most famous thief in France.

Arsène Lupin.

Part 4

Jeanne stood motionless.

The room seemed to grow silent and distant around her. She looked at the man before her—the man she had loved, the man she had married—and tried to understand what he had just said.

“Arsène... Lupin?” she whispered.

Floriani—or rather Lupin—watched her calmly.

“Yes.”

Jeanne slowly pulled her hands away.

“No,” she said quietly. “It cannot be true.”

Lupin did not argue. He simply waited.

Jeanne turned away and walked toward the window. Outside the evening lights of Paris shone softly across the street.

At last she spoke again.

“Why are you telling me this?”

Lupin answered gently.

“Because you deserve the truth.”

Jeanne faced him again.

“Did you marry me as part of one of your crimes?”

Lupin shook his head immediately.

“No.”

His voice was firm and sincere.

“I married you because I loved you.”

Jeanne searched his face carefully.

“And the necklace?”

Lupin smiled faintly.

“That is a different matter.”

Jeanne's voice trembled.

"Tell me everything."

Lupin sat down slowly and began to explain.

"The Countess de Crozon's necklace had a long history," he said. "It once belonged to Queen Marie-Antoinette. For many years collectors believed the necklace had been destroyed during the Revolution."

Jeanne listened silently.

"But the necklace that the countess owned," Lupin continued, "was not exactly the original."

"Not the original?"

"No. Several diamonds had been replaced long ago."

Jeanne looked surprised.

"Then the necklace was not perfect?"

Lupin shook his head.

"Exactly."

He held up the small diamond he had shown her earlier.

"This stone is genuine. It comes from the original royal necklace."

Jeanne frowned.

"I do not understand."

Lupin leaned forward slightly.

"When I saw the necklace at the countess's house, I noticed the difference immediately. Some stones were authentic. Others were not."

Jeanne looked confused.

"Then why steal the necklace at all?"

Lupin smiled.

"Because the authentic stones were extremely valuable. Much more valuable than the necklace itself."

Jeanne slowly began to understand.

"So you took the necklace..."

"Yes."

"Removed the real diamonds..."

“Exactly.”

Jeanne looked at the small diamond again.

“And then returned the necklace.”

Lupin nodded.

“With the false stones still in place.”

Jeanne sat down slowly.

“So the countess believes she has her necklace.”

“Yes.”

Jeanne looked at him with troubled eyes.

“That is still theft.”

Lupin did not deny it.

“Of course.”

Silence filled the room for a moment.

At last Jeanne spoke again.

“Why keep one diamond here?”

Lupin smiled gently.

“Because it belongs to you.”

Jeanne looked startled.

“To me?”

“Yes.”

He placed the diamond carefully on the table.

“A wedding gift.”

Jeanne stared at the stone without touching it.

“A stolen wedding gift,” she said quietly.

Lupin laughed softly.

“You see the problem very clearly.”

Jeanne rose and walked slowly across the room.

Her thoughts were confused.

She loved this man. Yet he was a criminal known throughout France.

At last she turned toward him again.

“Will you continue this life?” she asked.

Lupin considered the question seriously.
“Perhaps,” he said.
Jeanne shook her head.
“Then I cannot share it.”
Lupin looked at her sadly.
“I expected that answer.”
Jeanne spoke quietly.
“You must leave.”
Lupin nodded.
“Yes.”
He took his hat and coat.
At the door he paused.
“Jeanne,” he said gently.
She looked up.
“I never lied about loving you.”
Jeanne’s eyes filled with tears.
“I know.”
Lupin gave a small bow.
Then he left the room.
Jeanne remained alone beside the table.
After several minutes she picked up the small diamond.
It sparkled brightly in the light.
Somewhere in Paris that night, Arsène Lupin was already disappearing into the darkness.
And once again the famous gentleman-thief had vanished without a trace.

The Seven of Hearts

Part 1

One afternoon a young man named Jean Daval hurried into the apartment of his friend Gilbert.

Jean's face was pale, and his expression showed clear anxiety.

"Gilbert," he said as soon as the door opened, "I need your help."

Gilbert looked surprised.

"What has happened?"

Jean stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

"Something very strange."

Gilbert invited him to sit down.

"Tell me."

Jean reached into his pocket and placed a small object on the table.

It was a playing card.

The seven of hearts.

Gilbert looked at it with confusion.

"A card?"

Jean nodded.

"Yes."

Gilbert examined it more closely.

"Where did you find it?"

Jean took a deep breath.

"On my uncle's desk."

"Your uncle?"

"Yes. Monsieur Daval."

Gilbert remembered the man immediately. Monsieur Daval was a banker and a respected figure in Paris.

"Why is the card important?" Gilbert asked.

Jean leaned forward.

“Because my uncle disappeared last night.”

Gilbert stared at him.

“Disappeared?”

“Yes.”

Jean explained quickly.

“Yesterday evening my uncle left his office. He never returned home.”

“Have you searched for him?”

“Of course. I visited his office this morning.”

Gilbert pointed at the card.

“And you found this there?”

“Yes. It was lying on his desk.”

Gilbert thought for a moment.

“Perhaps it belongs to someone who visited him.”

Jean shook his head.

“There is more.”

He took a folded letter from his coat and handed it to Gilbert.

Gilbert opened the letter and read the message silently.

The words were short and clear.

“If you wish to see your uncle again, bring fifty thousand francs tonight to the old house beside the river.”

Gilbert looked up slowly.

“This is blackmail.”

Jean nodded.

“Yes.”

Gilbert read the letter again.

“Did the message mention your uncle by name?”

“No.”

Gilbert placed the letter beside the card.

“And the seven of hearts?”

Jean shrugged.

“I do not understand its meaning.”

Gilbert studied the card carefully.

“Perhaps it is a signal.”

Jean looked worried.

“Do you believe my uncle has been kidnapped?”

Gilbert did not answer immediately.

Instead he stood up and began walking slowly around the room.

After several moments he stopped.

“We must go to the meeting place tonight.”

Jean looked nervous.

“With the money?”

Gilbert nodded.

“Yes.”

Jean hesitated.

“Do you think the police should know?”

Gilbert shook his head.

“Not yet.”

Jean sighed.

“Very well.”

Gilbert picked up the card once more.

“The seven of hearts,” he murmured.

Jean looked at him anxiously.

“Do you recognize it?”

Gilbert shook his head slowly.

“No.”

But he could not stop thinking about the strange card.

Because somewhere in Paris the name Arsène Lupin had already become connected with many mysteries.

And sometimes Lupin liked to leave behind small and curious signs.

Part 2

That evening Jean Daval and his friend Gilbert left the city and walked toward the old house beside the river.

The place was quiet and lonely. The building stood at the edge of a small field, and the dark water of the river flowed slowly nearby.

Jean carried a small leather case in his hand.

Inside was the money demanded in the letter.

Fifty thousand francs.

Jean looked nervous as they approached the house.

“This place is deserted,” he said quietly.

Gilbert examined the building carefully.

“Yes. That is probably why it was chosen.”

The door of the house stood slightly open.

Gilbert pushed it gently.

The door moved with a soft sound.

Inside the room a lamp burned on a small table.

A tall man stood beside it.

His face remained partly hidden in the shadows.

“You have the money?” he asked calmly.

Jean stepped forward and lifted the leather case.

“Yes.”

The man nodded.

“Good.”

Gilbert studied the stranger carefully.

Something about the man’s manner seemed unusual. He did not appear nervous or dangerous. Instead he seemed calm and almost amused.

Jean spoke quickly.

“Where is my uncle?”

The man did not answer.

Instead he raised his hand slowly.

Between his fingers was a playing card.

Another seven of hearts.

Gilbert's eyes narrowed slightly.

Jean stared at the card.

"What does that mean?" he demanded.

The stranger smiled faintly.

"Patience."

Jean grew angry.

"You promised to return my uncle if we brought the money!"

The man looked at the leather case.

"Yes."

Gilbert suddenly spoke.

"Before we give you anything, we must see Monsieur Daval."

The stranger nodded calmly.

"Of course."

He turned toward a door at the back of the room.

A moment later the door opened.

Jean gasped.

His uncle stood there.

"Uncle!"

Monsieur Daval smiled.

"Good evening, Jean."

Jean rushed toward him.

"Are you hurt?"

"Not at all."

Jean looked confused.

"But you were kidnapped!"

Monsieur Daval laughed quietly.

"No, my boy. Nothing like that."

Jean looked from his uncle to the mysterious man beside the table.

"Then what is happening here?"

Gilbert folded his arms and watched the stranger carefully.

"Yes," he said. "Perhaps monsieur will explain."

The tall man removed his hat.
His eyes shone with quiet amusement.
“Gentlemen,” he said politely.
“Allow me to introduce myself.”
He placed the seven of hearts on the table.
“My name is Arsène Lupin.”
Jean stared at him in astonishment.
The famous gentleman thief stood calmly before them.
And suddenly the strange card began to make sense.

Part 3

Jean Daval stared at the man in disbelief.
“Arsène Lupin?” he repeated.
The stranger bowed politely.
“At your service.”
Jean turned quickly toward his uncle.
“What is happening here?”
Monsieur Daval placed a reassuring hand on his nephew’s shoulder.
“Do not worry, Jean. No crime has been committed tonight.”
Jean looked confused.
“But the letter... the money... the card...”
Gilbert stepped closer to the table.
“Yes,” he said calmly. “I believe Monsieur Lupin will explain.”
Lupin smiled.
“Very well.”
He sat down and began speaking in a relaxed voice.
“Several months ago Monsieur Daval discovered that someone in his bank was stealing money.”
Jean looked shocked.
“Stealing?”

His uncle nodded.

“Yes. Small amounts at first. But the losses continued.”

Lupin continued the explanation.

“The thief worked inside the bank. He believed no one suspected him.”

Jean asked quickly:

“Did you find him?”

Lupin nodded.

“Yes.”

Gilbert raised an eyebrow.

“And the seven of hearts?”

Lupin placed the card on the table.

“A signal.”

Jean frowned.

“A signal?”

Lupin explained calmly.

“Each time we discovered new evidence against the thief, we left this card where he could see it.”

Jean began to understand.

“To frighten him.”

“Exactly.”

Monsieur Daval continued the story.

“The thief believed Arsène Lupin was watching him.”

Jean looked at Lupin with amazement.

“And he panicked.”

Lupin smiled.

“Very quickly.”

Gilbert nodded.

“So he made a mistake.”

Lupin leaned back in his chair.

“Yes.”

Jean asked:

“What mistake?”

Lupin answered simply.

“He tried to move the stolen money.”

Jean looked surprised.

“And the police arrested him?”

“Immediately,” said Lupin.

Jean slowly looked at the leather case of money on the table.

“Then the fifty thousand francs...”

Lupin shrugged.

“A small experiment.”

Gilbert laughed softly.

“You wished to see whether Jean would follow the instructions.”

Lupin nodded.

“Exactly.”

Jean sighed with relief.

“So my uncle was never in danger.”

“Never,” said Lupin.

Silence filled the room for a moment.

Jean looked at Lupin thoughtfully.

“Why did you help us?”

Lupin stood up and took his hat.

“Because sometimes justice is interesting.”

Gilbert smiled.

“You are a strange man, Monsieur Lupin.”

Lupin laughed quietly.

“Perhaps.”

He walked toward the door.

Jean called after him.

“Wait.”

Lupin turned.

“Yes?”

Jean hesitated for a moment.

“Thank you.”

Lupin bowed politely.

“You are welcome.”

Then he stepped outside into the quiet night.

A moment later Arsène Lupin disappeared into the darkness, leaving behind only a small playing card on the table.

The seven of hearts.

Madame Imbert's Safe

Part 1

One afternoon a woman arrived at the office of the famous detective service in Paris. She appeared extremely nervous. Her face was pale, and her hands trembled as she spoke.

"I must see someone immediately," she said.

The clerk looked at her with mild curiosity.

"May I ask your name, madame?"

"Madame Imbert."

"And what is the problem?"

Madame Imbert lowered her voice.

"It concerns a safe."

A few minutes later she was shown into a private room where several officials listened to her story.

Madame Imbert sat down and tried to calm herself.

"This morning," she began, "something terrible happened in my house."

One of the officials nodded.

"Please explain."

"My husband and I own a large safe," she said. "Inside it we keep important documents, jewelry, and a considerable amount of money."

"Yes?"

"But today the safe refused to open."

The official frowned.

"Refused?"

"Yes. The lock will not move. The door remains completely closed."

"Perhaps the mechanism is damaged."

Madame Imbert shook her head quickly.

"No. The safe worked perfectly yesterday evening."

Another official asked:

“Did anyone attempt to force it open?”

“No. We have touched nothing.”

The officials exchanged glances.

“And what exactly is inside the safe?”

Madame Imbert hesitated.

“Approximately one hundred thousand francs.”

The men in the room looked more serious now.

“One hundred thousand?”

“Yes.”

“And important documents as well?”

“Very important.”

The officials considered the problem.

A locked safe was not normally a police matter. Yet the amount of money involved made the situation more interesting.

One of the men spoke again.

“Have you called a locksmith?”

Madame Imbert nodded.

“Yes. Two locksmiths examined the safe.”

“And?”

“They say it cannot be opened without destroying the lock.”

“That may be necessary.”

Madame Imbert looked distressed.

“But the documents inside are extremely delicate.”

The officials thought for a moment.

Then one of them said quietly:

“There is a man who might help you.”

“Who?”

“Arsène Lupin.”

Madame Imbert looked shocked.

“Arsène Lupin? The thief?”

The official smiled slightly.

“Sometimes he is more useful than the police.”

Madame Imbert hesitated.

“Do you believe he would help?”

“If the problem interests him.”

Later that same day Arsène Lupin arrived at the Imbert residence.

The house stood in a quiet street and appeared comfortable and respectable.

Madame Imbert welcomed him anxiously.

Lupin bowed politely.

“Madame.”

He was dressed with his usual elegance and calm confidence.

“You have a problem with a safe,” he said.

“Yes,” Madame Imbert replied quickly. “Please come with me.”

She led him into a small office where the safe stood against the wall.

It was a large steel safe with a heavy door and a complex lock.

Lupin examined it carefully.

“When did the problem begin?” he asked.

“This morning.”

“And yesterday evening it worked normally?”

“Yes.”

Lupin touched the lock gently and turned the handle.

The mechanism did not move.

He studied the safe quietly for several minutes.

Then he asked:

“Who knows the combination?”

“Only my husband and I.”

“And your servants?”

“They know nothing.”

Lupin nodded slowly.

He continued examining the door, the hinges, and the lock.

At last he stepped back.

“Interesting,” he murmured.

Madame Imbert looked at him anxiously.

“Can you open it?”

Lupin smiled slightly.

“Perhaps.”

Then he added calmly:

“But first, madame, I must ask you several questions.”

Madame Imbert suddenly looked uneasy.

Because Arsène Lupin had already begun to suspect that the safe was hiding more than money.

Part 2

Arsène Lupin stood quietly in front of the safe.

Madame Imbert watched him nervously.

“What questions do you wish to ask?” she said.

Lupin turned toward her with a polite smile.

“Very simple questions, madame.”

He pointed toward the safe.

“You say that this safe refused to open this morning.”

“Yes.”

“And yesterday evening it worked perfectly?”

“Exactly.”

Lupin nodded slowly.

“Did anyone visit your house yesterday evening?”

Madame Imbert hesitated.

“No one important.”

Lupin noticed the hesitation.

“No one important,” he repeated calmly.

“Only a friend of my husband.”

“His name?”

“Monsieur Dautrec.”

Lupin thought for a moment.

“And this morning you tried to open the safe?”

“Yes.”

“Using the correct combination?”

“Of course.”

Lupin examined the lock again.

Then he asked another question.

“Madame, where is your husband now?”

Madame Imbert looked uncomfortable.

“He is traveling.”

“Traveling?”

“Yes.”

“Since when?”

“Since last night.”

Lupin smiled faintly.

“That is interesting.”

Madame Imbert quickly said:

“But surely that has nothing to do with the safe!”

Lupin did not answer immediately.

Instead he knelt beside the safe and studied the metal surface carefully. His fingers moved slowly along the edges of the door.

After several moments he stood again.

“Madame,” he said quietly, “this safe has not been forced.”

“Of course not!”

“Nor has the lock been damaged.”

“The locksmiths told us the same thing.”

Lupin nodded.

“Which means that the safe is not broken.”

Madame Imbert looked confused.

“Not broken?”

Lupin turned the handle once more.

The door remained closed.

“No,” he said calmly. “It works perfectly.”

Madame Imbert stared at him.

“But it will not open!”

Lupin smiled.

“Not with the combination you used.”

Madame Imbert suddenly became pale.

“What do you mean?”

Lupin looked directly at her.

“Someone has changed the combination.”

Madame Imbert gasped.

“Changed it?”

“Yes.”

“But that is impossible!”

Lupin raised an eyebrow.

“Is it?”

He walked slowly around the room.

“Let us imagine the situation,” he said calmly.

“Yesterday evening the safe opened normally.”

“Yes.”

“Later someone opened it again.”

“But no one could—”

Lupin interrupted gently.

“Someone who knew the combination.”

Madame Imbert looked away.

Lupin continued speaking in a thoughtful tone.

“That person removed the money and the documents.”

Madame Imbert’s hands began to tremble.

“Then he changed the combination before closing the door.”

Silence filled the room.

At last Madame Imbert whispered:

“You believe my husband did this?”

Lupin smiled slightly.

“I believe your husband and you planned it together.”

Madame Imbert stared at him in shock.

“That is absurd!”

Lupin spoke calmly.

“You told the police that one hundred thousand francs were inside the safe.”

“Yes.”

“But there was no money inside at all.”

Madame Imbert said nothing.

Lupin continued:

“Your husband removed the money yesterday evening.”

“No!”

“And then he left Paris.”

Madame Imbert suddenly sat down in a chair.

Lupin’s voice remained calm.

“This morning you pretended that the safe refused to open.”

“That is not true!”

Lupin smiled again.

“It is a clever plan.”

Madame Imbert looked at him desperately.

“What plan?”

Lupin spoke slowly.

“When the safe is finally opened, it will be empty.”

Madame Imbert’s face turned white.

Lupin continued:

“You will accuse the locksmiths... or the police... or perhaps Arsène Lupin.”

Madame Imbert buried her face in her hands.

She had no answer.

Arsène Lupin looked at the safe once more.

“In fact,” he said quietly, “the safe is doing exactly what you wanted.”

Madame Imbert raised her head slowly.

Lupin finished his sentence with a gentle smile.

“It is protecting the truth.”

Part 3

Madame Imbert sat silently in her chair.

Her face was pale, and her hands trembled slightly. For several moments she could not speak.

Arsène Lupin watched her calmly.

At last she raised her head.

“You are wrong,” she said weakly.

Lupin smiled politely.

“Am I?”

Madame Imbert stood up suddenly.

“Yes! My husband would never do such a thing.”

Lupin walked slowly toward the window.

“Perhaps,” he said quietly.

Madame Imbert continued nervously.

“The money was in the safe. I am certain of it.”

Lupin turned back toward her.

“Then let us open the safe.”

Madame Imbert stared at him.

“You said the combination was changed.”

“Yes.”

“Then how can you open it?”

Lupin shrugged lightly.

“There are always methods.”

He knelt again beside the safe and began examining the lock more closely. His fingers moved slowly across the metal surface.

After several minutes he stood again.

“Madame,” he said calmly, “please watch carefully.”
He turned the dial of the safe with slow and precise movements.
Once.
Twice.
Three times.
Then he pulled the handle.
The heavy door opened.
Madame Imbert gave a small cry.
The safe stood empty.
Not a single document remained inside.
No jewelry.
No money.
Nothing.
Madame Imbert sank into her chair again.
“It cannot be...” she whispered.
Lupin closed the safe door gently.
“Exactly as I expected,” he said.
Madame Imbert looked at him helplessly.
“What will happen now?”
Lupin spoke calmly.
“You and your husband hoped that someone else would be blamed for the disappearance of the money.”
Madame Imbert said nothing.
Lupin continued.
“But the plan was not perfect.”
“Why not?”
Lupin smiled faintly.
“Because you invited Arsène Lupin.”
Madame Imbert covered her face with her hands.
“We were desperate,” she said quietly.
Lupin’s voice became slightly kinder.

“I understand.”

She looked at him with tired eyes.

“My husband lost a great deal of money in business. We thought that if the safe appeared to be robbed, the insurance company would pay.”

Lupin nodded slowly.

“Yes. A common solution.”

Madame Imbert whispered:

“What will you do now?”

Lupin walked toward the door.

“Nothing.”

She looked surprised.

“Nothing?”

Lupin turned back.

“The safe is empty. Your husband has already disappeared with the money.”

“Yes.”

“And you will soon follow him.”

Madame Imbert did not deny it.

Lupin picked up his hat.

“Madame,” he said politely, “next time you plan such a scheme, do not invite Arsène Lupin to investigate.”

Madame Imbert managed a weak smile.

“That was our mistake.”

Lupin bowed slightly.

Then he left the house.

A few minutes later he walked slowly along the quiet street.

The case of Madame Imbert’s safe was finished.

And once again Arsène Lupin had solved a mystery that the police would probably never understand.

The Black Pearl

Part 1

Monsieur Daniel was a wealthy man who lived in a large house in Paris. He loved beautiful objects and spent much of his fortune collecting rare jewels, paintings, and works of art. Among all his treasures there was one object that he valued above all the others.

It was known as the Black Pearl.

The pearl was famous throughout Europe. It was larger than most pearls and perfectly round. Its surface shone with a deep dark color that seemed almost mysterious. When light touched it, the pearl reflected a soft glow that made it appear alive.

Visitors who came to Monsieur Daniel's house always asked to see it.

"There is nothing like it in the world," Monsieur Daniel often said proudly.

The pearl rested inside a small velvet box, which he kept locked in a heavy safe in his study.

His daughter Hortense sometimes laughed at her father's pride.

"You speak of the pearl as if it were a living creature," she said one evening.

Monsieur Daniel smiled.

"Perhaps it is," he replied. "A treasure like this has a life of its own."

Hortense was a kind and intelligent young woman. She admired the pearl, but she did not share her father's obsession with valuable objects.

One morning something happened that disturbed the peaceful life of the Daniel household.

The servant brought a letter to Monsieur Daniel.

The envelope contained only a few lines written in elegant handwriting.

Monsieur Daniel read the letter and suddenly turned pale.

Hortense noticed his expression immediately.

"Father, what is wrong?"

He handed her the letter without speaking.

Hortense read it slowly.

The message said:

“Monsieur Daniel,

Your Black Pearl interests me greatly. I advise you to place it tomorrow morning in a small package and deliver it to the railway station at Saint-Lazare. If you do not follow this request, I will come personally to collect it.

Arsène Lupin.”

Hortense looked up in shock.

“Arsène Lupin!”

Monsieur Daniel nodded grimly.

“Yes. The famous thief.”

Hortense tried to smile.

“Surely this is only a joke.”

“No,” her father replied. “Lupin never jokes about such things.”

For several minutes they remained silent.

At last Hortense said quietly:

“What will you do?”

Monsieur Daniel stood up and walked across the room.

“I will call the police.”

Within an hour several police officers arrived at the house. They listened carefully as Monsieur Daniel showed them the letter.

One of the officers laughed confidently.

“Do not worry, monsieur. Arsène Lupin enjoys sending these dramatic messages.”

“But what if he truly comes?” asked Monsieur Daniel.

The officer shrugged.

“Then we will be waiting for him.”

The police quickly prepared a plan.

Several officers would remain hidden inside the house during the night. Others would watch the street outside. Every door and window would be guarded.

The Black Pearl remained inside the safe in Monsieur Daniel’s study.

“Let him try,” one officer said proudly.

Monsieur Daniel felt slightly reassured.

But Hortense was not completely calm.

That evening she stood alone in the study and looked at the safe where the pearl rested.

“Arsène Lupin,” she murmured softly.

The name carried a strange mixture of fear and fascination.

Somewhere in Paris the famous gentleman-thief had already begun planning his next move.

And the Black Pearl had already attracted his attention.

Part 2

That evening the house of Monsieur Daniel became as quiet as a fortress.

The police officers took their positions carefully. Two men remained in the study where the safe stood. Others waited in the corridor and near the doors. Outside the house several officers watched the street.

Every entrance was guarded.

Monsieur Daniel tried to appear calm, but his anxiety was obvious. He walked through the rooms again and again, checking the doors and windows.

“Everything is secure,” one officer assured him.

“Yes,” Monsieur Daniel replied, “but this is Arsène Lupin.”

The officer smiled confidently.

“Even Lupin cannot enter a house that is watched like this.”

Meanwhile Hortense sat quietly in the living room. She tried to read a book, but she found it difficult to concentrate.

From time to time she listened carefully for any unusual sound.

The hours passed slowly.

Ten o’clock.

Eleven o’clock.

Midnight.

Nothing happened.

The police officers began to relax. Some of them whispered quietly together. Others watched the doors with tired eyes.

In the study the two guards remained beside the safe.

“Do you think he will come?” one of them asked.

The other shrugged.

“Perhaps he has already changed his mind.”

Suddenly a soft sound came from the corridor.

The guards looked at each other.

“Did you hear that?”

“Yes.”

One of them opened the door and looked outside.

The corridor was empty.

“Probably nothing,” he said.

He closed the door again.

Inside the study the safe stood against the wall exactly as before.

The two guards continued their watch.

Another hour passed.

At last one of the guards stretched his arms and yawned.

“This is a waste of time,” he said.

“Perhaps,” the other replied.

Then he suddenly frowned.

“Wait.”

“What?”

The man pointed toward the safe.

The door was slightly open.

Both guards stared in disbelief.

“Impossible!”

They rushed toward it and pulled the door wide open.

The velvet box inside the safe was empty.

The Black Pearl had disappeared.

The alarm spread through the house immediately. Police officers hurried into the study.

Monsieur Daniel arrived a moment later.

When he saw the empty safe, he turned pale.

“My pearl!” he cried.

The officers examined the room quickly.

The doors were still locked.

The windows remained closed.

No one had entered.

And yet the Black Pearl was gone.

One officer spoke in a low voice.

“It must be Lupin.”

Monsieur Daniel looked at him in despair.

“But how?”

No one could answer that question.

The police searched every room in the house.

They examined the garden and the street outside.

They questioned the servants and inspected the walls, the floor, and even the ceiling.

Nothing.

The famous Black Pearl had vanished.

And Arsène Lupin had once again defeated the police.

Part 3

The police searched the house for hours.

Every room was examined again and again. The officers inspected the windows, the doors, and the walls. They even checked the furniture and the carpets.

Yet no trace of the Black Pearl could be found.

Monsieur Daniel sat in the study with his head in his hands.

“It is impossible,” he repeated again and again. “The pearl was inside the safe.

The police were watching the room.”

One officer spoke quietly.

“There must be some explanation.”

But no one could discover it.

Meanwhile Hortense remained strangely calm.

She listened carefully as the police discussed the mystery.

At last she spoke.

“Perhaps Arsène Lupin never entered the house.”

The officers looked at her with surprise.

“What do you mean?”

Hortense pointed toward the safe.

“Perhaps the pearl was removed earlier.”

The officers exchanged doubtful glances.

“That is unlikely,” one of them said.

But Hortense continued thinking quietly.

Later that evening, when the police had finally left the house, she walked alone into the study.

The safe stood open.

Hortense looked at it thoughtfully.

Then she walked to the window and opened it slightly.

A shadow moved outside.

A moment later a man stepped silently into the room.

He was tall and elegant, and his eyes shone with quiet amusement.

Hortense looked at him calmly.

“Good evening,” she said.

The man bowed politely.

“Good evening, mademoiselle.”

Hortense smiled faintly.

“You created quite a disturbance tonight.”

The man laughed softly.

“The police worked very hard.”

Hortense looked at him seriously.

“Did you really take the pearl while the guards were watching the safe?”

The man shook his head.

“Of course not.”

Hortense nodded slowly.

“I thought so.”

The man reached into his pocket and removed a small object.

The Black Pearl.

Its dark surface shone beautifully in the light.

Hortense looked at it with admiration.

“It is magnificent.”

The man smiled.

“Yes.”

She studied him for a moment.

“Tell me the truth. When did you take it?”

The man answered calmly.

“Yesterday afternoon.”

Hortense laughed softly.

“So the safe was already empty before the police arrived.”

“Exactly.”

“And tonight’s drama was only a trick.”

The man nodded.

“A small performance.”

Hortense looked at him thoughtfully.

“Why return now?”

The man placed the pearl gently on the table.

“Because the pearl belongs to your father.”

Hortense looked surprised.

“Then why steal it?”

The man smiled.

“To prove that I could.”

Hortense sighed.

“You enjoy these games too much.”

The man bowed slightly.

“Perhaps.”

She picked up the pearl and placed it back inside the velvet box.

“The police will never understand what happened tonight,” she said.

The man laughed quietly.

“They rarely do.”

Hortense looked at him one last time.

“Good night, Monsieur Lupin.”

Arsène Lupin placed his hat on his head.

“Good night, mademoiselle.”

A moment later he disappeared through the window and vanished into the silent streets of Paris.

The Black Pearl returned safely to the safe the next morning.

And once again Arsène Lupin left behind only a mystery and a legend.

Sherlock Holmes Arrives Too Late

Part 1

One morning Baron d'Imbleville received a letter that immediately disturbed his peace of mind.

The baron was a wealthy collector who lived in a large country house near Paris. His home contained many valuable objects—paintings, rare books, and precious jewels gathered from across Europe.

Yet one object in his collection was especially famous.

It was a small golden casket.

The casket had belonged to a French queen many centuries earlier. Its surface was covered with delicate carvings, and several rare jewels were set into the gold. Collectors and historians admired it greatly.

The baron kept the casket inside a glass case in his private gallery.

Visitors often came to see it.

On that particular morning the baron opened the letter and read the message inside.

His face quickly changed from curiosity to alarm.

The letter said:

“Monsieur le Baron,

Your golden casket interests me very much. I advise you to send it tomorrow morning to the railway station at Batignolles. If you do not follow this suggestion, I will come personally to collect it.

Arsène Lupin.”

The baron dropped the letter onto the table.

“Arsène Lupin!” he cried.

His secretary, who stood nearby, looked surprised.

“The famous thief?”

“Yes!”

The baron walked nervously across the room.

“Everyone knows that Lupin never makes empty threats.”

The secretary spoke carefully.

“Perhaps the police should be informed.”

“Of course,” the baron replied immediately.

Within a few hours several police officers arrived at the house. They examined the letter and discussed the situation.

One officer smiled confidently.

“Do not worry, monsieur. Arsène Lupin enjoys frightening collectors with such messages.”

“But what if he truly comes?” the baron asked.

The officer shrugged.

“Then we will be ready.”

The police began preparing security around the house.

Guards were placed at the entrances. Servants were warned not to allow strangers inside. The windows and doors of the gallery were locked carefully.

Still the baron remained uneasy.

“This man Lupin is extremely clever,” he said.

One of the officers nodded.

“That is true.”

Another officer added:

“But there is someone who understands criminals like Lupin.”

“Who?” asked the baron.

The officer smiled.

“Sherlock Holmes.”

The baron had heard that name many times. The famous English detective was known across Europe for his extraordinary intelligence.

“Is he in France?” the baron asked.

“Yes. He is currently in Paris.”

The baron immediately sent a message asking for Holmes’s help.

Two days later a tall, thin man arrived at the house.

His sharp eyes studied everything around him with quiet attention.

“Monsieur Holmes,” said the baron, greeting him nervously, “I am honored that you came.”

Sherlock Holmes nodded politely.

“You have a problem involving Arsène Lupin.”

“Yes.”

Holmes asked to see the gallery.

The baron led him into a large room filled with paintings and sculptures. In the center stood the glass case containing the golden casket.

Holmes examined the object carefully.

“Beautiful workmanship,” he said.

Then he began studying the room.

He inspected the doors, the windows, and the locks. He even examined the floor and the walls.

After several minutes he turned to the baron.

“Your security is good,” Holmes said calmly.

“But Lupin is clever.”

“Yes,” Holmes replied.

The baron looked anxious.

“Do you believe he will attempt the theft?”

Holmes folded his arms.

“If Arsène Lupin truly desires this object,” he said quietly, “he will certainly try to take it.”

The baron swallowed nervously.

“Can you stop him?”

Holmes looked again at the golden casket.

Then he spoke calmly.

“That depends on one important question.”

“What question?”

Holmes’s eyes narrowed slightly.

“When does Lupin intend to steal it?”

The baron looked confused.

Because the letter clearly said tomorrow.

But Sherlock Holmes was already beginning to suspect that Arsène Lupin might not follow his own rules.

Part 2

Sherlock Holmes spent the rest of the afternoon examining the house.

He walked slowly through the gallery again, studying every object and every corner of the room. From time to time he stopped and asked the baron a question.

“Who usually enters this gallery?” Holmes asked.

“Myself, my secretary, and occasionally visitors,” the baron replied.

“Visitors?”

“Collectors and friends who wish to see the casket.”

Holmes nodded.

“And yesterday?”

The baron thought for a moment.

“Yes. Two gentlemen visited yesterday afternoon.”

“Do you remember their names?”

The baron turned to his secretary.

“Please check the guest list.”

The secretary opened a notebook and read the names aloud.

Holmes listened carefully.

Suddenly he raised his hand.

“Repeat the last name.”

“Monsieur Floriani.”

Holmes smiled faintly.

“Interesting.”

The baron looked puzzled.

“Do you know him?”

Holmes did not answer directly.

“Perhaps,” he said quietly.

He returned to the glass case and examined the golden casket once more. The object appeared perfectly safe inside the locked case.

“Tell me,” Holmes asked, “when was the case last opened?”

“Yesterday evening,” said the baron. “I inspected the casket myself.”

Holmes nodded slowly.

“And since then?”

“No one has touched it.”

Holmes looked thoughtful.

After a long silence he finally said:

“Monsieur le Baron, I believe your casket is already gone.”

The baron stared at him in astonishment.

“Gone? Impossible!”

Holmes pointed toward the glass case.

“Please open it.”

The baron hurried forward and unlocked the case.

When he lifted the glass cover, he suddenly froze.

The golden casket was still there.

“You see?” he said.

Holmes leaned closer and examined the object carefully.

Then he spoke quietly.

“That is not your casket.”

The baron gasped.

“What do you mean?”

Holmes pointed toward one corner of the object.

“Look closely at the jewels.”

The baron bent forward.

After several seconds his face turned pale.

“They are false!”

Holmes nodded.

“Exactly.”

The baron stepped back in shock.

“Then the real casket...”

Holmes finished the sentence calmly.

“Was taken yesterday.”

The baron collapsed into a chair.

“But the letter said tomorrow!”

Holmes smiled slightly.

“Yes.”

The baron stared at him helplessly.

“Then Lupin tricked us.”

Holmes walked slowly across the room.

“Arsène Lupin often announces a theft after he has already completed it.”

The baron shook his head in despair.

“But how did he enter the house?”

Holmes picked up the guest notebook again.

He tapped one name with his finger.

“Monsieur Floriani.”

The baron whispered:

“Lupin...”

Holmes nodded.

“Almost certainly.”

Silence filled the gallery.

After several minutes the baron asked quietly:

“Then there is no hope?”

Holmes looked toward the empty case.

“No.”

He took a small card from the table.

The card contained only a few words.

“Arsène Lupin thanks you.”

Holmes examined it calmly.

Then he said quietly:

“I am afraid that I arrived too late.”

Part 3

Baron d'Imblevalle remained seated in silence.

The discovery that the casket had already been stolen seemed almost unbelievable.

"But the guards," he said weakly. "The police... the locks..."

Sherlock Holmes walked slowly around the gallery.

"None of those measures matter if the thief enters openly as a guest," he said calmly.

The baron looked up.

"You believe that this Floriani was Arsène Lupin?"

Holmes nodded.

"Yes."

"But he appeared completely respectable."

Holmes smiled faintly.

"That is one of Lupin's greatest talents."

The baron looked again at the false casket.

"Then the real one may already be far from France."

Holmes folded his arms.

"Very likely."

The baron sighed deeply.

"And the police?"

Holmes looked at the small card Lupin had left behind.

"They will search," he said.

"But they will not find him."

The baron shook his head sadly.

"This man Lupin seems unstoppable."

Holmes remained thoughtful for a moment.

"Not unstoppable," he said quietly.

"Only... unpredictable."

The baron looked at him with hope.

“Then you will pursue him?”

Holmes considered the question.

At last he shook his head slightly.

“No.”

“No?”

“In this case the contest is finished.”

The baron stared at him.

“Finished?”

Holmes placed the card back on the table.

“Because Lupin has already won.”

Silence filled the gallery.

Outside the evening sun was beginning to set, and long shadows stretched across the garden.

After a moment Holmes spoke again.

“There is one thing about Arsène Lupin that people often misunderstand.”

“What is that?” asked the baron.

Holmes looked at the empty display case.

“He does not always seek money.”

“Then what does he want?”

Holmes smiled slightly.

“Victory.”

The baron sighed.

“Then he has it.”

Holmes picked up his hat.

“Yes.”

As he walked toward the door, he paused for a moment.

“Arsène Lupin enjoys challenging his opponents,” Holmes added.

“But he also chooses the moment of the game.”

The baron nodded slowly.

“And this time he chose it well.”

Holmes gave a small bow.

“Indeed.”

A few minutes later Sherlock Holmes left the house and walked quietly down the long road toward the station.

Somewhere far away at that same moment, Arsène Lupin was traveling comfortably toward another adventure.

The golden casket rested safely in his possession.

And once again the famous gentleman-thief had defeated the police... and even the great Sherlock Holmes.