

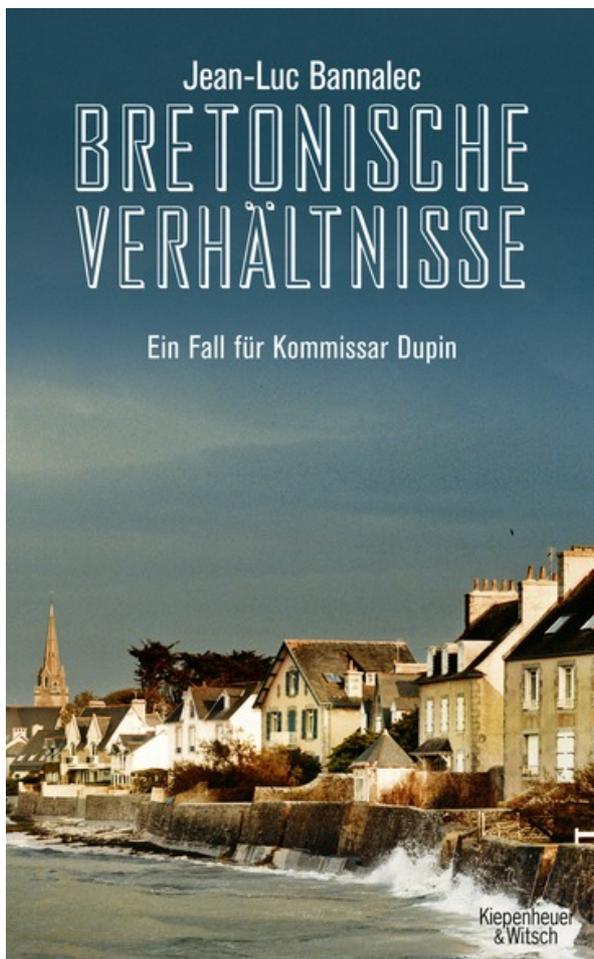
**Sample Translation (Pages 9 - 25)**

**Murder Breton-style  
by Jean-Luc Bannalec**

novel

**Translated by John Reddick**

Jean-Luc Bannalec: Bretonische Verhältnisse. Ein Fall für Kommissar Dupin  
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“Une mer calme n’a jamais fait un bon marin.”

“Calm seas never made a good sailor.”

*Breton proverb*

## DAY ONE

It was fabulous summer weather that day — the seventh of July. One of those big Atlantic days that normally made Commissaire Dupin feel really happy. There seemed to be blueness wherever you looked, and though the morning was still young the air was unusually warm by Breton standards, but crystal clear as well, so that everything was sharply, precisely defined. Only the previous evening it had seemed as if the Apocalypse were near: heavy masses of lowering black clouds had raced menacingly across the sky, producing violent squalls and a deluge of rain like the second flood.

Concarneau — known even today as the magnificent ‘Blue City’ because of the gleaming blue fishing nets that adorned its quayside in the previous century — was simply radiant. Commissaire Georges Dupin was sitting in the *Amiral*, right at the end of the bar, a newspaper spread out in front of him as usual. It was 7.30 according to the round-faced clock above the venerable façade of the fish market, where every day you could buy the freshest of fish, caught only hours before by local fishermen. Rich in tradition, the café and restaurant — which once had been a hotel as well — lay right on the quayside, directly opposite the famous mediaeval heart of the city. Protected by mighty walls and towers, the *ville close* had been built on a small, elongated island situated picturesquely in the large dock basin that was also the estuary of the slow-moving River Moros. Precisely two years and seven months earlier Dupin had found himself compulsorily transferred from Paris — that glamorous metropolis where he had spent his entire life — to this utterly remote corner of the provinces as a consequence of “various disputes”, as the internal records put it, and every morning since then he had come to the *Amiral* to drink his *petit café*: a ritual at once unbreakable and highly pleasurable.

The rooms of the *Amiral* had lost all their charm some years earlier when they had been done up at vast expense — “comprehensively modernised” as Paul Girard, the gregarious owner, proudly described it. There were few signs left of the great days of the late nineteenth century when world-

famous artists had lodged there, to be followed later by Maigret. Gauguin had got into a serious fight directly in front of the restaurant when a bunch of rough-hewn sailors insulted his Javanese slip of a girlfriend. Tourists rarely strayed into the *Amiral*, preferring the “prettier” cafés further along the square, so that the regulars had the place more or less to themselves.

“Another coffee. And a croissant.”

The commissaire’s muttered words were barely audible, but his glance and curt gesture were all Girard needed. It was Dupin’s third coffee.

“Thirty seven million! Did you see that, Monsieur le Commissaire? Thirty seven million in the pot now!” Girard was already standing at the espresso machine — one of those that emitted all the right noises, and was a source of wonder to Dupin every time he saw it.

The owner of the *Amiral* was around sixty and had an impressively elongated face, characterised above all by an enormous moustache that had already turned the same gleaming shade of grey as the very few hairs still left on his head. His eyes were everywhere — he never missed a thing. Dupin liked him, even though they never spoke much. Perhaps *because* they never spoke much. Girard had accepted him right from the very first day, which was quite something in these parts at the best of times, but was all the more unusual in this case given that Parisians are regarded by Bretons as the outest of all outsiders.

“Damn!”

Dupin had suddenly remembered that doing the lottery was an absolute must. The gigantic jackpot that was keeping the entire nation on the edge of their seats hadn’t been cracked the previous week either. In a fit of boldness Dupin had filled out twelve whole lines, and had scored two correct numbers, but in different rows.

“It’s already Friday, Monsieur le Commissaire.”

“I know, I know.”

He’d pop in and do it at the *tabac* next door.

“Last week all the tickets had gone by Friday morning.”

“I know.”

Dupin had slept abysmally — he’d been sleeping badly for weeks — and he tried hard to concentrate on his newspaper. In an average June there were normally 145 hours of sunshine in

northern Finistere, but this year there had been a miserable 62 percent of that figure. Southern Finistere had managed 70 percent, and Morbihan next door, only a few kilometres away, had achieved no fewer than 82 percent. The article was the lead story in *Ouest-France*. Amazing weather statistics were one of the paper's specialities — in fact they were a speciality of *all* Breton newspapers, indeed of Bretons in general. “No other June for decades has given us such a disastrously pitiful ration of sunshine and warmth”, the paper ranted — not for the first time — before coming to its predictable conclusion: “That's Brittany for you: great weather — just five times each day.” It was a sort of patriotic mantra. But it was only Bretons themselves who were allowed to bemoan or ridicule Breton weather: anyone else who did so was regarded as plain uncouth. That's the way it was with all things Breton — as Dupin had discovered in the course of his almost three years in these parts.

The shrill ring of his mobile made him jump. It was always the same, and he detested it. It was Kadeg. Kadeg was one of his two Inspectors. Dupin's mood darkened. He let the phone ring. He'd be seeing him in the station in half an hour. In Dupin's view, Kadeg was small-minded, servile and insufferably industrious, but also repellently ambitious. He was in his mid-thirties, a touch on the small side, with a round baby-face, slightly protruding ears and a bald patch that didn't suit him at all — and yet he regarded himself as utterly irresistible. He had been allocated to Dupin right at the start, and the latter had taken various steps to get rid of him. He had tried pretty well everything, in fact, but without success.

His mobile rang again. Kadeg was always pushing himself forward. Then it rang yet again. Dupin was on edge by now — he couldn't deny it.

“Yes?”

“Is that you, Monsieur le commissaire?”

“Who else d'you think would answer my phone?” Dupin snapped.

“The *préfet* rang just now. Monsieur Locmariaquer said you're to stand in for him at a do this evening. It's the Friendship Committee from Staten Stoud in Canada.”

Kadeg's smarmy tone of voice was repulsive.

“As you know, Monsieur le Préfet is Honorary President of our own Friendship Committee. The official delegation from Staten Stoud are in France for a week, and they're guests of honour at the Breton Festival in Trégunc Plage this evening. Monsieur le Préfet has unexpected business in Brest, so he's asking you to do the honours on his behalf by welcoming the delegation and their president, Dr de la Croix. Trégunc's on our patch, as you know.”

“What do you mean?”

Dupin hadn't the faintest idea what Kadeg was talking about.

“Staten Stoud, near Montreal, is twinned with Concarneau, Monsieur le Préfet has distant relatives there who...”

“It's a quarter to eight, Kadeg. I'm having my breakfast.”

“Monsieur le Préfet regards it as highly important, he rang specially. And he asked me to pass on his instructions straightaway.”

“His *instructions*?”

Dupin hung up. This was a matter he wasn't going to bother himself with for even a single second. He was far too tired to get worked up about it, thank heavens. Dupin couldn't stand Locmariaquer. And quite apart from anything else he still didn't know how to pronounce the man's name, a difficulty he quite often encountered in his dealings with Bretons, and since his profession entailed many such dealings, he not uncommonly found himself in embarrassing situations.

Dupin returned to his newspaper. *Ouest-France* and the *Télégramme* were the two big newspapers hereabouts, both of them dedicated to Brittany and its affairs with an often curious mixture of pride and affection, with a single page of perfunctory items of national and international interest giving a rapid rundown of world events, followed by thirty pages of regional and local news — much of it extremely local. Commissaire Dupin was fond of both papers. Once transferred from Paris he had embarked on a study of the Breton soul — reluctantly at first, but then with ever increasing fascination. Besides his face-to-face dealings with individual people, it was these tiny, seemingly insignificant stories in the papers that had taught him the most; stories about life at the “end of the world”, *finis terra* as the Romans had called this furthest extremity of the jagged peninsula jutting far out into the raging waters of the Atlantic — a name that had stuck right through to the present day.

His phone rang yet again. It was Kadeg — yet again. Dupin felt anger rising up in him despite his tiredness.

“I can't do this evening, I've got stuff on, official engagements, pass that on to Loccarm..., pass that on to Monsieur le Préfet.”

“A murder. There's been a murder.”

Kadeg's tone of voice was thin and even.

‘What?’

‘In Pont Aven, Monsieur le Commissaire. Pierre-Louis Pennec, proprietor of the *Hôtel Central*, was found dead in his restaurant a few minutes ago. Someone rang the local police.’

‘Is this a joke, Kadeg?’

‘Our two Pont Aven colleagues are probably already at the scene.’

‘In Pont Aven? Pierre-Louis Pennec?’

‘What do you mean, Monsieur le Commissaire?’

‘What else do you know?’

‘Only what I’ve told you.’

‘And you’re sure it’s murder?’

‘Looks like it.’

‘How so?’

Dupin was irritated by his question almost before it had passed his lips.

‘I can only tell you what the caller — the hotel chef — told the local police, and they in turn...’

‘Okay, that’s fine. But what’s it to do with us? Pont Aven belongs to Quimperlé — it’s Dercap’s business.’

‘Commissaire Dercap went on leave on Monday. Anything major, and it’s our pigeon. That’s why the Pont Aven police...’

‘Yes, yes, alright... I’m on my way. So are you. And ring Riwal, I want him right now.’

‘He’s already on the move.’

‘Good. — I don’t believe it. What a pain in the arse.’

‘Sorry, Monsieur le Commissaire?’

‘I have to go’, he called out to Girard, who was watching him full of curiosity. Dupin put a few coins on the counter and left the *Amiral*. His car was in the large quayside car park, just a few short steps away.

“It’s crazy,” thought Dupin as he sat in his car, “it’s completely crazy.” A murder in Pont Aven! At the height of summer, just before the start of the tourist season that would turn the whole place into an open-air museum, as the mocking folk of Concarneau never tired of saying! There was nowhere more perfectly idyllic than Pont Aven. It must have been an eternity since the last murder in the picturesque little village — much *too* picturesque for Dupin’s taste — which had become world-famous around the end of the nineteenth century thanks to its artists’ colony, and thanks especially to Paul Gauguin, its most prominent member, and which now figured large in every tourist guide to France and every book on the history of modern art. And on top of all that: Pierre-Louis Penneec of all people! A doddering old man — but a legendary hotelier and an institution in his own right, just like his father before him, and also, of course, his famous grandmother, Marie-Jeanne Penneec, the founder of the *Hôtel Central*.

Dupin stabbed away at the ridiculously small buttons on his car telephone — how he detested the thing!

“Where are you, Nolwenn?”

“On my way to the station. Kadeg just rang. I’m in the picture. You’ll want Dr Lafond presumably?”

“As soon as possible.”

For a year now there had been a second pathologist in Quimper, a man Dupin couldn’t stand: Ewen Savoir, a callow little left-wing know-all. Lots of impressive techno gear, but plain stupid with it, and infuriatingly fastidious to boot. Not that Dupin could claim to be particularly fond of crusty old Dr Lafond either: they, too, got into one another’s hair from time to time when things were going too slowly for Dupin’s liking, and Lafond would then swear like a trooper — but he did brilliant work.

“Savoir drives me completely crazy.”

“I’ll see to it.”

Dupin loved this expression of Nolwenn’s. She’d been secretary to his predecessor and *his* predecessor, and she was brilliant. Tops, absolutely tops.

“Good. I’m at the last roundabout on my way out of Concarneau. I’ll be there in ten minutes.”

“It’s got a bad ring to it, Monsieur le Commissaire. I knew old Pennec. My husband did a few jobs for him, years ago.”

It was on the tip of Dupin’s tongue to ask what these “few jobs” were, but he let it go. There were more important things to think about. He had never really worked out what Nolwenn’s husband did for a living. He seemed to pop up everywhere in some vague capacity or other, doing “a few jobs” for all manner of different people.

“Yes, it’ll cause quite a stir: he was a real icon for Finistere, for Brittany, for France in general. My God... I’ll be in touch.”

“Good. I’m by the police station right now.”

“Talk to you later.”

Dupin drove fast — much too fast for the narrow roads. It was scarcely credible: this was the first time old Dercap had taken a holiday in ten years. He was away for a week and a half. His daughter was getting married — in La Réunion of all places, which even Dercap himself thought was a completely crackbrained idea, seeing that his future son-in-law hailed from the same sleepy little dump as they did, three kilometres from Pont Aven.

Dupin keyed another number into his phone.

“Riwal?”

“Sir?”

“Are you already there?”

“Yes. I’ve just got here.”

“Where’s the body?”

“Downstairs in the restaurant.”

“Have you been down there yet?”

“No.”

“Don’t allow anyone in. Absolutely nobody’s to enter until I get there. That includes you. Who found Pennec?”

“Francine Lajoux, an employee.”

“What did she say?”

“I haven’t talked to her yet. I’ve only just arrived.”

“Good. Fine. I’ll be there any minute.”

The pool of blood seemed fabulously big to Commissaire Dupin. It had spread in numerous different directions, following the unevennesses of the stone floor. Pierre-Louis Pennec was a tall man, thin and sinewy, with short grey hair. He was an imposing figure, even at ninety one. His curiously contorted corpse was lying on its back, his left hand buried in the hollow of one knee, his hip starkly displaced, his right hand covering his heart. His features were horribly distorted, and his open eyes stared up at the ceiling. He had clearly suffered numerous wounds to his neck and upper body.

“Someone’s really done him over. An old man like Pierre-Louis Pennec. Who would do such a thing?”

Riwal was standing a couple of metres behind Dupin; they were alone in the room. There was horror in his voice. Dupin didn’t respond. Riwal was right. Dupin had seen a good few murder victims, and this killing was indeed brutal.

“Just my bloody luck!” Dupin ran his hands through his hair in sheer exasperation.

“Stab wounds presumably. No sign of a knife, though.”

“One thing at a time, Riwal, one thing at a time.”

“Two officers from Pont Aven have secured the hotel, Monsieur le Commissaire. I know one of them, Albin Bennec. He’s been in post quite a while. Really good at his job. The other one’s called Arzhvaelig. I didn’t get his first name. Very young.”

Dupin couldn’t help smiling. Riwal was young himself, early thirties, still only in his second year as an inspector. He was painstaking, fast and clever, though in both manner and speech he always gave the impression of being stolid and ponderous. He sometimes had a mischievous look on his face that really appealed to Dupin. And he never thrust himself forward.

“And no one’s been in here?”

This was the fourth time Dupin had asked the same question, and it was beginning to irritate Riwal.

“No one. But it won’t be long before the pathologist and the crime scene people get here.”

Dupin knew what he meant. Riwal was well aware that his boss liked looking around in complete peace before the usual mob arrived.

Pennec was lying in the furthest corner of the room, immediately in front of the bar. The room was L-shaped, with the restaurant in the main part at the front, and the bar in the limb that went off towards the back. A short passageway led from the restaurant to the kitchens located in an annexe at the back of the building. The door to it was locked.

The bar stools were neatly lined up, just one of them set slightly back from the rest. A single glass stood on the bar-top, together with a bottle of lambig, the cider brandy that the Bretons were so intensely proud of — just as they were intensely proud of all things truly Breton, or which they chose to regard as truly Breton. Dupin liked it too. The glass was almost empty. There was not the slightest sign of a struggle, and not a single thing was out of place in this area of the room, which had clearly been thoroughly cleaned and tidied by the staff the previous evening, along with the remainder of the restaurant. The tables and chairs were aligned with military precision, the tables themselves sported colourful rustic tablecloths and were already fully laid, the floor was as clean as a new pin. The restaurant and bar area must have been fairly recently renovated, everything looked new. It was well insulated, too: nothing could be heard from outside, absolutely nothing — neither from the street, despite three windows, nor from the room beyond, which also served as the hotel foyer. The windows were all locked shut: Dupin had checked them one by one.

The punctilious order and cleanliness, the utter normality of the room stood in disturbing contrast to the gruesome spectacle offered by the corpse. As was the case throughout the village, the whitewashed walls were hung with copies of paintings from the great days of the artists’ colony around the end of the nineteenth century. They were there to be marvelled at in even the smallest shops and cafés. The whole of Pont Aven seemed to be plastered with them.

Dupin walked slowly back and forth throughout the entire room, not looking for anything in particular, and not finding anything of interest. Somewhat clumsily, he extricated his little red notebook from his trouser pocket and jotted down a few more or less random entries.

Someone tried barging open the door that Dupin had locked from the inside, then started banging on it loudly. Dupin was inclined to turn a deaf ear, but didn’t object when Riwal threw him a questioning glance and went over to unlock the door. It opened with a crash. Reglas came bounding into the room to the accompaniment of Kadeg’s zealous tones: “Dr Lafond is here, so are the scene of crime people — René Reglas and his crowd.”

Dupin gave a deep sigh. He kept forgetting about Reglas. All that scene-of-crime stuff. René Reglas, the greatest forensic investigator in the world. He had arrived with three minions, slinking along silently in his wake. Dr Lafond was the last to enter, and headed straight for the corpse. He muttered a scarcely audible “Bonjour M’sieur” in Dupin’s general direction. It sounded reasonably friendly.

“Gentlemen, I must ask you to leave the room until we’ve done our work. For the time being the only people allowed in here are the Commissaire, Dr Lafond, and me and my team. Kindly see to it that the restaurant is cordoned off. Good morning, Monsieur le Commissaire, good morning, Doctor.”

Dupin had considerable difficulty suppressing his irritation. He kept his mouth tight shut. He and Reglas had never had much time for each other.

“Dr Lafond, would you also please take the utmost care not to contaminate the crime scene. Thank you.”

Reglas had unpacked his huge camera. “My colleagues will begin their dactyloscopic investigations forthwith. Lagrange, what I want first are any fingerprints from the bar, the glass, the bottle, and from everywhere in the immediate vicinity of the corpse. Be systematic.”

Lafond calmly dumped his bag on one of the tables near the bar; it was impossible to tell whether he had even heard what Reglas had said.

Dupin walked towards the door. He just had to get out of there. He left the room without a word.

By now there was quite a hubbub in the foyer of the hotel where the small reception desk was situated. The news had clearly begun to spread, both within the hotel and within the village as a whole. Several guests were standing at Reception, all talking at once in animated tones; behind the desk stood a rather gaunt little woman with short hair and a sharp nose of considerable size. She was doing her best to show an air of calmness.

“No, no. Don’t worry about a thing. We’ll sort it all out.”

A murder in the very hotel in which you were hoping to spend the happiest weeks of your entire year: Dupin understood the guests’ concern, but he also felt sorry for the woman. Here they were with the peak season just about to start; half the rooms were already booked up, so Riwal had told him. Twenty four guests, including four children, were already in residence, most of them foreigners: the French didn’t tend to go on holiday at this time of year. The main rush would start in a week’s time. But even with the hotel not yet being completely full, the guests who were already

there went in and out at all times of the day, and in the evenings and at night as well: anyone carrying out a murder would have to reckon on being spotted by someone — being glimpsed in the foyer, for instance, while leaving the hotel; or someone might hear the sound of a struggle, a cry for help, a scream from Pennec as he battled for his life. There will surely also have been staff on duty in the hotel throughout the night. Carrying out a murder in such circumstances was a risky business.

Riwal came down the stairs with a questioning glance at Dupin.

“That’s how it is, Riwal. The crime scene belongs to the pros for now.”

Riwal made to say something, but let it go. Dupin had weaned him off his habit of constantly asking him what he was up to and what his plan was. This habit was the only thing that had bothered him about Riwal, and it still came through from time time to time. Riwal was desperately keen to work out Dupin’s methods.

“Where are the local police? Reception needs to be moved elsewhere. I don’t want anyone in here.”

“Kadeg took them upstairs with him. He wanted to start interviewing the guests about last night.”

“I want only guests and staff to be allowed in and out of the hotel. Someone needs to stand guard in the entrance area. Not you. One of the local people. You said a member of staff found Pennec?”

“Yes, Francine Lajoux. She’s been here for more than forty years. She’s upstairs in the Breakfast Room, there’s a chamber maid sitting with her. She’s in shock. We’ve called a doctor.”

“I need to talk to her.” Dupin hesitated for a moment, as if unsure of his next move, then brought out his notebook.

“It’s now 9.05. Kadeg rang at 7.47. He’d just been put in the picture by the Pont Aven police. They’d received a phone call from the hotel here. So Madame Lajoux must have found Pennec around 7.30. That’s less than two hours ago. So far we know absolutely nothing.”

Riwal couldn’t imagine that his boss was writing all this down, even if it was common knowledge that Dupin had what might be termed a highly idiosyncratic way of making notes.

“Pierre-Louis Pennec has a son, Loic. There’s a brother, too, a half-brother. He lives in Toulon. The next-of-kin should be informed pretty soon, Monsieur le Commissaire.”

“A son? Where does he live?”

“Here in Pont Aven, down by the harbour, with his wife Catherine. No children.”

“I’ll go and see him right away. But I’ll talk to Madame Lajoux first.”

Riwal knew there was no point objecting. Her knew what the Commissaire was like when there was a “real case” on the go. And this was definitely a real case.

“I’ll find out Loic Pennec’s address for you. And his half-brother’s phone number. He’s a well-known politician down south, André Pennec, he’s been in parliament on the conservative side for twenty years or so.”

“Is he around at the moment? I mean up here in this part of the world?”

“No, not so far as we know.”

“Good. I’ll call him later. Any other family?”

“No.”

“Get Reglas to tell you everything he knows once he’s through. And tell Lafond to ring me. Even if he says he won’t reveal a single word until he’s prepared his report.”

“Fine.”

“And I want to talk to Dercap. Get someone to track him down straightaway.”

Dercap surely knew Pont Aven inside out. His knowledge would be useful. And anyway, it was really his case.”

“Bonnec’s already on the job, I believe.”

“What does the son do? Does he work in the hotel as well?”

“It seems not. All Kadeg knows is that he runs a small firm.”

“What kind of a firm?”

“Honey.”

“Honey?!”

“Yes, *miel de mer*. The hives have to be within twenty five metres of the sea. The best honey in the world, according to...”

“Fine, fine. Priority number one, Riwal: I want to know everything Monsieur Pennec has done over the last few days and weeks, the more detailed the better. I want a day by day log of absolutely everything. Everything, even the boring stuff: his routines, his habits.”

One of the guests at Reception suddenly raised his voice.

“We’re getting a full refund. We’re not putting up with this.” He was a sleazy, repellent little runt of a man. His wife’s eyes were fixed meekly on his face.

“We’re leaving this instant, that’s what we’re doing.”

“I don’t think you *will* be leaving this instant, Monsieur. No one will be leaving.”

The man turned towards Dupin, snorting with rage and ready to let rip.

“Commissaire Dupin. Concarneau police. Along with all the other guests you will first have to submit to police questioning.”

Dupin spoke very quietly. More a hiss than anything else. This and his imposing stature did the trick. The nasty little man immediately stepped back a few paces.

“Inspector Riwal,” — Dupin’s voice was louder now and more formal — “Monsieur...”, he paused and looked enquiringly at the man, who mumbled “Galvani”, “Monsieur Galvani and his wife are to be questioned about the events of last night. Exhaustively questioned. Full personal details. Have their identities verified.”

Dupin was tall, stocky and strong-looking, with shoulders that cast a massive shadow. He cut a rather coarse figure, so his detractors claimed, with the result that no one ever expected the sheer speed, skill and precision that he was capable of exhibiting at a moment’s notice. He certainly didn’t look like a senior detective, especially not in the jeans and polo shirts he routinely wore — and this too was a misestimation that Dupin was very happy to exploit.

Monsieur Galvani mumbled something or other that no one could catch, and sought refuge with his wife, who was a good head taller than he was. Dupin turned his head to one side and noticed the receptionist giving him a furtive smile. He smiled back. He then turned to Riwal once again, who was standing there with an embarrassed expression on his face.

“You and Kadeg are to concentrate on reconstructing the events of yesterday and yesterday evening in the fullest possible detail. What did Pennec do? Where was he, and when? Who was the last person to see him alive?”

“We’re already on it. The chef seems to have been the last person to see him.”

“Fine. Which employees are in the hotel this morning?”

Riwal pulled a tiny black notebook out of his pocket. “Two chamber maids, Mademoiselle Kann and Mademoiselle Denoelalig, both of them very young, and Madame Mendu, who — if I have understood things aright — is being lined up as a sort of successor to Madame Lajoux. She’s also responsible for breakfasts. Madame Mendu is right here.”

Riwal gave a polite nod in the direction of the reception desk.

“Then there’s Madame Lajoux and the chef, Edouard Glavinec, and one of the lads from the kitchen.

Dupin wrote everything down.

“The chef? This early?”

“They bring stuff from the wholesale market in Quimper very early each day.”

What’s the kitchen lad’s name?”

Riwal leafed through his notebook.

“Ronan Breton.”

“Breton? His name’s Breton?”

“Breton.”

Dupin was going to make a remark of some sort, but thought better of it.

“And the chef was the last person to see Pennec alive?”

“So it seems at the moment.”

“I want a quick chat with him as soon as I have talked to Madame Lajoux.” Dupin turned away and set off up the stairs. Without looking round he called out “Whereabouts on the first floor?”

“Turn right; it’s the first door.”

- end of sample -