



MODERN
CLASSICS

Georges Simenon Maigret



PENGUIN MODERN CLASSICS

Maigret

'I love reading Simenon. He makes me think of Chekhov'
– William Faulkner

'A truly wonderful writer . . . marvellously readable – lucid, simple, absolutely in tune with the world he creates'
– Muriel Spark

'Few writers have ever conveyed with such a sure touch, the bleakness of human life'
– A. N. Wilson

'One of the greatest writers of the twentieth century . . . Simenon was unequalled at making us look inside, though the ability was masked by his brilliance at absorbing us obsessively in his stories'
– *Guardian*

'A novelist who entered his fictional world as if he were part of it'
– Peter Ackroyd

'The greatest of all, the most genuine novelist we have had in literature'
– André Gide

'Superb . . . The most addictive of writers . . . A unique teller of tales'
– *Observer*

'The mysteries of the human personality are revealed in all their disconcerting complexity'
– Anita Brookner

'A writer who, more than any other crime novelist, combined a high literary reputation with popular appeal' – P. D. James

'A supreme writer . . . Unforgettable vividness' – *Independent*

'Compelling, remorseless, brilliant'
– John Gray

'Extraordinary masterpieces of the twentieth century'
– John Banville

Copyrighted Material

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Georges Simenon was born on 12 February 1903 in Liège, Belgium, and died in 1989 in Lausanne, Switzerland, where he had lived for the latter part of his life. Between 1931 and 1972 he published seventy-five novels and twenty-eight short stories featuring Inspector Maigret.

Simenon always resisted identifying himself with his famous literary character, but acknowledged that they shared an important characteristic:

My motto, to the extent that I have one, has been noted often enough, and I've always conformed to it. It's the one I've given to old Maigret, who resembles me in certain points . . . 'understand and judge not'.

GEORGES SIMENON

Maigret

Translated by ROS SCHWARTZ



PENGUIN BOOKS

Copyrighted Material

PENGUIN CLASSICS

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Penguin Classics is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies
whose addresses can be found at global.penguinrandomhouse.com.

Penguin Random House UK
One Embassy Gardens, 8 Viaduct Gardens, London SW11 7BW
penguin.co.uk



Penguin
Random House
UK

First published in French in *Le Jour*, in instalments from 20 February to 15 March 1934

First published in book form by Fayard 1934

This translation first published 2015

Published in Penguin Classics 2025

001

Copyright © Georges Simenon Limited, 1934

Translation copyright © Ros Schwartz, 2015

GEORGES SIMENON and



® **Simenon.tm**®, all rights reserved

MAIGRET ® Georges Simenon Limited, all rights reserved



original design by Maria Picassó i Piquer

All rights reserved

The moral rights of the author and translator have been asserted

Penguin Random House values and supports copyright.

Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes freedom of expression and supports a vibrant culture. Thank you for purchasing an authorized edition of this book and for respecting intellectual property laws by not reproducing, scanning or distributing any part of it by any means without permission. You are supporting authors and enabling Penguin Random House to continue to publish books for everyone. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems. In accordance with Article 4(3) of the DSM Directive 2019/790, Penguin Random House expressly reserves this work from the text and data mining exception.

Typeset by Palimpsest Book Production Limited, Falkirk, Stirlingshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-141-39704-7

Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future
for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from
Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.



Copyrighted Material

Maigret

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

1.

Maigret struggled to open his eyes, frowning, as if distrustful of the voice that had just shouted at him, dragging him out of a deep sleep:

‘Uncle!’

His eyes still closed, he sighed, groped at the sheet and realized that this was no dream, that something was the matter, because his hand had not encountered Madame Maigret’s warm body where it should have been.

Finally he opened his eyes. It was a clear night. Madame Maigret, standing by the leaded window, was pulling back the curtain while downstairs someone was banging on the door and the noise reverberated throughout the house.

‘Uncle! It’s me!’

Madame Maigret was still looking out. Her hair wound in curling pins gave her a strange halo.

‘It’s Philippe,’ she said, knowing full well that Maigret was awake and that he was turned towards her, waiting. ‘Are you going to get up?’

Maigret went downstairs first, barefoot in his felt slippers. He had hastily pulled on a pair of trousers and shrugged on his jacket as he descended the staircase. At the eighth stair, he had to duck to avoid hitting his head on the beam. He usually did so automatically, but this time he forgot

Copyrighted Material

and banged his forehead. He groaned and swore as he reached the freezing hall. He went into the kitchen, which was a little warmer.

There were iron bars across the door. On the other side, Philippe was saying to someone:

‘I won’t be long. We’ll be in Paris before daylight.’

Madame Maigret could be heard padding around upstairs. Maigret pulled open the door, surly from the knock he had just given himself.

‘It’s you!’ he muttered, seeing his nephew standing in the road.

A huge moon floated above the leafless poplars, making the sky so light that the tiniest branches were silhouetted against it while, beyond the bend, the Loire was a glittering swarm of silvery spangles.

‘East wind!’ thought Maigret mechanically, as would any local on seeing the surface of the river whipped up.

It is one of those country habits, as is standing in the doorway without saying anything, looking at the intruder and waiting for him to speak.

‘I hope I haven’t woken Aunt up, at least?’

Philippe’s face was frozen stiff. Behind him the shape of a G7 taxi stood out incongruously against the white-frosted landscape.

‘Are you leaving the driver outside?’

‘I need to talk to you right away.’

‘Come inside quickly, both of you,’ called Madame Maigret from the kitchen where she was lighting an oil lamp.

She added to her nephew:

‘We haven’t got electricity yet. The house has been

Copyrighted Material

wired, but we're waiting to be connected to the power supply.'

A lightbulb was dangling from a flex. People notice little details like that for no reason. And when they are already on edge, it is the sort of thing that can irritate them. During the minutes that followed, Philippe's eyes kept returning to that bulb, which served no purpose other than to emphasize everything that was antiquated about this rustic house, or rather everything that is precarious about modern comforts.

'Have you come from Paris?'

Maigret was leaning against the chimney breast, not properly awake yet. The presence of the taxi on the road made the question as redundant as the lightbulb, but sometimes people speak for the sake of saying something.

'I'm going to tell you everything, Uncle. I'm in big trouble. If you don't help me, if you don't come to Paris with me, I don't know what will become of me. I'm going out of my mind. I'm in such a state I even forgot to give my aunt a kiss.'

Madame Maigret stood there, having slipped a dressing gown over her nightdress. Philippe's lips brushed her cheek three times, performing the ritual like a child. Then he sat down at the table, clutching his head in his hands.

Maigret filled his pipe as he watched him, while his wife stacked twigs in the fireplace. There was something strange in the air, something threatening. Since Maigret had retired, he had lost the habit of getting up in the middle of the night and he couldn't help being reminded of nights spent beside a sick person or a dead body.

Copyrighted Material

‘I don’t know how I could have been so stupid!’ Philippe suddenly sobbed.

He poured out his tale of woe in a sudden rush, punctuated by hiccups. He looked about him like a person seeking to pin his agitation on something, while, in contrast to this outburst of emotion, Maigret turned up the wick of the oil lamp and the first flames leapt up from the fireplace.

‘First of all, you’re going to drink something.’

The uncle took a bottle of brandy and two glasses from a cupboard that contained some leftover food and smelled of cold meat. Madame Maigret put on her clogs to go and fetch some logs from the woodshed.

‘To your good health! Now try to calm down.’

The smell of burning twigs mingled with that of the brandy. Philippe, dazed, watched his aunt loom silently out of the darkness, her arms filled with logs.

He was short-sighted and, seen from a certain angle, his eyes looked enormous behind his spectacle lenses, giving him the appearance of a frightened child.

‘It happened last night. I was supposed to be on a stake-out in Rue Fontaine—’

‘Just a moment,’ interrupted Maigret, sitting astride a straw-bottomed chair and lighting his pipe. ‘Who are you working with?’

‘With Chief Inspector Amadiou.’

‘Go on.’

Drawing gently on his pipe, Maigret narrowed his eyes and stared at the lime-plastered wall and the shelf with copper saucepans, caressing the images that were so

Copyrighted Material

familiar to him. At Quai des Orfèvres, Amadiou's office was the last one on the left at the end of the corridor. Amadiou himself was a skinny, sad man who had been promoted to divisional chief when Maigret had retired.

'Does he still have a drooping moustache?'

'Yes. Yesterday we had a summons for Pepito Palestrino, the owner of the Floria, in Rue Fontaine.'

'What number?'

'Fifty-three, next to the optician.'

'In my day, that was the Toréador. Cocaine dealing?'

'Cocaine initially. Then something else too. The chief had heard rumours that Pepito was mixed up in the Barnabé job, the guy who was shot in Place Blanche a fortnight ago. You must have read about it in the papers.'

'Make us some coffee!' said Maigret to his wife.

And, with the relieved sigh of a dog who finally settles down after chasing its tail, he leaned his elbows on the back of his chair and rested his chin on his folded hands. From time to time, Philippe removed his glasses to wipe the lenses and, for a few moments, he appeared to be blind. He was a tall, plump, auburn-haired boy with baby-pink skin.

'You know that we can no longer do as we please. In your day, no one would have batted an eyelid at arresting Pepito in the middle of the night. But now, we have to keep to the letter of the law. That's why the chief decided to carry out the arrest at eight o'clock in the morning. In the meantime, it was my job to keep an eye on the fellow . . .'

He was getting bogged down in the dense quiet of the room, then, with a start, he remembered his predicament and cast around helplessly.

Copyrighted Material

For Maigret, the few words spoken by his nephew exuded the whiff of Paris. He could picture the Floria's neon sign, the doorman on the alert for cars arriving, and his nephew turning up in the neighbourhood that night.

'Take off your overcoat, Philippe,' interrupted Madame Maigret. 'You'll catch cold when you go outside.'

He was wearing a dinner-jacket. It looked quite incongruous in the low-ceilinged kitchen with its heavy beams and red-tiled floor.

'Have another drink—'

But in a fresh outburst of anger Philippe jumped up, wringing his hands violently enough to crush his bones.

'If only you knew, Uncle—'

He was on the verge of tears, his eyes stayed dry. His gaze fell on the electric lightbulb again. He stamped his foot.

'I bet I'll be arrested later!'

Madame Maigret, who was pouring boiling water over the coffee, turned around, saucepan in hand.

'What on earth are you talking about?'

And Maigret, still puffing on his pipe, opened his night-shirt collar with its delicate red embroidery.

'So you were on a stakeout opposite the Floria—'

'Not opposite. I went inside,' said Philippe, still on his feet. 'At the back of the club there's a little office where Pepito has set up a camp bed. That's where he usually sleeps after closing up the joint.'

A cart rumbled past on the road. The clock had stopped. Maigret glanced at his watch hanging from a nail above the fireplace. The hands showed half past four. In the

Copyrighted Material

cowsheds, milking had begun and carts were trundling to Orléans market. The taxi was still waiting outside the house.

‘I wanted to be clever,’ confessed Philippe. ‘Last week the chief yelled at me and told me—’

He turned red and trailed off, trying to fix his gaze on something.

‘He told you—?’

‘I can’t remember—’

‘Well I can! If it’s Amadieu, he probably came out with something along the lines of: “You’re a maverick, young man, a maverick like your uncle!”’

Philippe said neither yes nor no.

‘Anyway, I wanted to be clever,’ he hastily went on. ‘When the customers left, at around 1.30, I hid in the toilet. I thought that if Pepito had got wind of anything, he might try and get rid of the stuff. And do you know what happened?’

Maigret, more solemn now, slowly shook his head.

‘Pepito was alone. Of that I’m certain! Suddenly, there was a gunshot. It took a few moments for it to dawn on me, then it took me a few more moments to run into the bar. It looked bigger, at night. It was lit by a single light-bulb. Pepito was lying between two rows of tables and as he fell he’d knocked over some chairs. He was dead.’

Maigret rose and poured himself another glassful of brandy, while his wife signalled to him not to drink too much.

‘Is that all?’

Philippe was pacing up and down. And this young man,

Copyrighted Material