



MODERN
CLASSICS

Georges Simenon Maigret Sets a Trap



PENGUIN MODERN CLASSICS

Maigret Sets a Trap

‘Extraordinary masterpieces of the twentieth century’
– John Banville

‘A brilliant writer’
– India Knight

‘Intense atmosphere and resonant detail . . . make Simenon’s
fiction remarkably like life’
– Julian Barnes

‘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

‘Compelling, remorseless, brilliant’
– John Gray

‘A writer of genius, one whose simplicity of language creates
indelible images that the florid stylists of our own day can
only dream of’
– *Daily Mail*

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

‘One of the greatest writers of our time’
– *The Sunday Times*

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

‘One of the great psychological novelists of this century’
– *Independent*

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

‘Simenon ought to be spoken of in the same breath as
Camus, Beckett and Kafka’
– *Independent on Sunday*

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 Sets a Trap

Translated by SIÂN REYNOLDS



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 as *Maigret tend un piège* by Presses de la Cité 1955

This translation first published 2016

This edition first published 2017

Published in Penguin Classics 2025

001

Copyright © Georges Simenon Limited, 1955

Translation copyright © Siân Reynolds, 2016

GEORGES SIMENON and   **Simonon.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: 978-0-241-29764-3

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.



MIX

Paper | Supporting
responsible forestry
FSC® C018179

Contents

1. Commotion at Quai des Orfèvres 1
2. Professor Tissot's Theories 23
3. A Neighbourhood under Siege 44
4. The Policewoman's Encounter 66
5. The Cigarette Burn 86
6. Sharing Out the Tweed Suit 108
7. In the Lap of the Gods 129
8. Moncin's Show of Temper 148

Copyrighted Material

1. *Commotion at Quai des Orfèvres*

From half past three on, Maigret began to look up now and then at the clock. At ten to four, he initialled the last sheet he had been annotating, pushed back his chair, mopped his brow, and hesitated over his choice from the five pipes in the ashtray which he had smoked without bothering to tap them out afterwards. His foot had pressed the bell under the desk and there was a knock at the door. Patting his face with his voluminous handkerchief, he called out gruffly:

‘Come in!’

It was Inspector Janvier who, like him, had taken off his jacket but had kept on his tie, whereas Maigret had removed his.

‘Give this to the typist. Have someone bring it for me to sign when it’s ready. It has to go to Comélieau this evening.’

It was the 4th of August. The windows were wide open but brought no relief, since they allowed in even more warm air, which seemed to be rising from the melting tarmac, the burning hot stonework, and even the Seine itself: one could imagine the river steaming like a pan of water on a stove.

The taxis and buses on Pont Saint-Michel were moving more slowly than usual, seeming to drag themselves along, and it was not only in the Police Judiciaire that people were in shirt-sleeves: men walking past on the streets were carrying their jackets over their arms, and

Copyrighted Material

Maigret had even noticed one or two wearing shorts, as if they were at the seaside.

Only about a quarter of Parisians had stayed in the capital, and all of them must be thinking with identical longing of the others, the lucky ones who were at this very moment paddling at the edge of the waves, or fishing in the shade on some quiet riverbank.

‘Have they got over there yet?’

‘Haven’t seen them. Lapointe’s watching out for them.’

Maigret, as if it took some effort, chose one of the pipes and tapped it out, then conscientiously started packing it, before finally moving over to the window, where he stayed standing, his eyes fixed on a certain café-restaurant on the opposite embankment, Quai des Grands-Augustins. The café façade was painted yellow. Two steps led down into it from the street: the interior would be almost as cool as a cellar. The bar still had a genuine zinc counter of the old-fashioned kind, a slate on the wall with the menu chalked up on it, and inside there was a perpetual smell of calvados.

Even some of the booksellers’ stalls along the embankments were padlocked for the holidays!

He remained without moving for four or five minutes, drawing on his pipe, then saw a taxi pull up not far from the little restaurant: three men got out and headed for the steps. The most familiar of the silhouettes was that of Inspector Lognon, from the 18th arrondissement, who, from a distance, seemed even smaller and thinner than usual, and who was, for the first time in Maigret’s experience, wearing a panama hat.

What would the three men be drinking? Beer, no doubt.

Copyrighted Material

Maigret pushed open the door of the inspectors' office, where the same torpid atmosphere reigned as in the rest of the city.

'Is the Baron out in the corridor?'

'Has been for half an hour, boss.'

'No other journalists?'

'Young Rougin's just arrived.'

'Any photographers?'

'Just the one.'

The long corridor of the Police Judiciaire was almost empty, with a mere two or three clients waiting outside the doors of Maigret's colleagues. It was at his request that Bodard from the Fraud Squad had summoned for four o'clock the man all the newspapers were talking about, a certain Max Bernat, unknown two weeks ago, and suddenly the central figure in the latest financial scandal, one relating to billions of francs.

Maigret had no business with Bernat. Bodard had no reason to call him in either, at the present stage of the investigation. But because Bodard had casually mentioned that he would be interviewing this known criminal figure at four p.m. that day, at least two reporters who specialized in crime would be there with a photographer. They would stay until the interrogation was over. Perhaps, if word got around that Max Bernat was at Quai des Orfèvres, a few more journalists would turn up.

From the inspectors' office, a slight commotion could be heard at exactly four o'clock, heralding the arrival of the fraudster, who had been brought there from the Santé prison.

Maigret waited another ten minutes, pacing up and

Copyrighted Material

down, smoking his pipe, mopping his face from time to time, and glancing across at the little restaurant on the far side of the Seine, then finally he snapped his fingers and said to Janvier:

‘Go ahead!’

Janvier picked up the telephone and dialled the restaurant number. Over there, Lognon must have been waiting next to the cabin, ready to tell the café proprietor:

‘It’ll be for me. I’m expecting a call.’

Everything was going according to plan. Maigret, treading heavily, and a little anxiously, went back into his own office where, before sitting down, he drew himself a glass of water from the tap over the enamel basin.

Ten minutes later, a familiar scene was unfolding in the corridor. Lognon and another inspector from the 18th, a Corsican by the name of Alfonsi, were slowly climbing the stairs, with a man between them who appeared ill at ease, and was concealing his face with his hat.

The Baron and his colleague Jean Rougin, waiting outside Chief Inspector Bodard’s door, needed no more than a glance to take in the scene. They rushed across, as the photographer was already levelling his camera.

‘Who’s that?’

They knew Lognon. They knew the names of the Paris police almost as well as the staff of their own newspapers. If two inspectors who did not belong to the Police Judiciaire but were stationed in Montmartre were bringing in to Quai des Orfèvres some individual who was hiding his face before he had even seen any journalists, that could only mean one thing.

Copyrighted Material

‘Is he for Maigret?’

Lognon did not reply, but headed straight for Maigret’s office and knocked discreetly at the door. It opened. The three figures vanished inside. The door closed.

The Baron and Jean Rougin looked at each other with the expressions of men who had just discovered a state secret, knowing that they were both thinking the same thing, but felt no need to comment.

‘Get a good snap?’ Rougin asked the photographer.

‘Except that the hat was hiding his face.’

‘All the same. Send it off fast to the paper, and get back here. We don’t know when they’re likely to come back out.’

Alfonsi emerged almost at once.

‘Who was that?’ they asked.

The inspector looked awkward.

‘I can’t tell you anything.’

‘Why not?’

‘Orders.’

‘Where’s he from, where did you pick him up?’

‘Ask Detective Chief Inspector Maigret.’

‘A witness?’

‘Don’t know.’

‘A new suspect?’

‘I promise you, I don’t know.’

‘Thanks a lot for your help!’

‘I suppose if it *was* the killer, you’d have handcuffed him?’

Alfonsi walked away with a regretful expression, like a man who would like to say more, the corridor returned

Copyrighted Material

to its calm, and for half an hour there were no further comings or goings.

The crook, Max Bernat, came out of the Fraud Squad office, but he had already been relegated by the journalists to secondary importance. They nevertheless put questions to Bodard, as a matter of duty.

‘Has he given any names?’

‘Not yet.’

‘He’s denying that certain politicians are involved?’

‘He didn’t deny anything, and didn’t admit anything. He’s giving nothing away for now.’

‘When will you be questioning him again?’

‘When certain facts have been checked.’

Maigret emerged from his office, still without jacket or tie, and headed for the commissioner’s office, looking pre-occupied.

This was another sign: despite the holiday season, and despite the heat, the Police Judiciaire was about to experience one of its critical evenings, and the two reporters were thinking about certain interrogations that had lasted all night, in some cases over twenty-four hours, without anyone being able to discover what was going on behind the closed doors.

The photographer was back.

‘You didn’t tell them anything at the paper, did you?’

‘Just told them to develop the film and to keep the prints ready.’

Maigret spent half an hour in the chief’s office and returned to his own room, brushing the reporters aside with a weary gesture.

Copyrighted Material

‘Can you at least tell us if this is to do with—?’

‘I’ve got nothing to say for the moment.’

At six o’clock, the waiter from the Brasserie Dauphine brought over a tray laden with beers. They had seen Lucas leave his office and go into Maigret’s, but he had not re-emerged. They had seen Janvier hurry out, hat on head, and get into one of the police cars down below.

A more unusual development was that Lognon appeared once more and, as Maigret had done, headed for the chief’s office. True, he stayed there only ten minutes, after which, instead of leaving, he entered the inspectors’ office.

‘Did you notice anything?’ the Baron asked his colleague.

‘The hat he had on when he got here?’

It was hard for them to think of ‘Inspector Hard-done-by’, as everyone in the police and press corps called him, wearing an almost jaunty straw hat.

‘Better than that.’

‘He didn’t smile though, did he?’

‘No. But he’s wearing a red tie.’

Lognon invariably wore dark-coloured neckties, fixed on to a celluloid clip.

‘So what does that mean?’

The Baron knew everything, and communicated other people’s secrets with a thin smile.

‘His wife’s away on holiday.’

‘I thought she was an invalid.’

‘She was.’

‘Cured, then?’

For years, poor Lognon had been obliged, when not on duty, to do the shopping and cooking, and to clean his

Copyrighted Material

apartment on Place Constantin-Pecqueur, as well as taking care of his wife, who had declared herself to be a permanent invalid.

‘She’s met a new tenant in their building. And this woman told her about the spa at Pougues-les-Eaux, and persuaded her to try taking the waters. Strange as it may seem, she’s gone off there, not with her husband, who can’t leave Paris right now, but with this neighbour. They’re the same age, and the neighbour’s a widow . . .’

The shuttling to and fro between offices was becoming more and more frequent. Almost all the men belonging to Maigret’s squad had dispersed in different directions. Janvier had returned. Lucas was bustling about, sweat dripping from his brow. Lapointe appeared from time to time, as did Torrence, the newcomer Mauvoisin, and several other officers, whom the reporters tried to buttonhole, but it was impossible to get a word out of any of them.

Young Maguy, a reporter on a morning daily paper, soon arrived: she was looking as fresh as if the temperature had not been 36 degrees in the shade all day.

‘What are you doing here?’

‘Same as you.’

‘And that is?’

‘Waiting.’

‘How did you know anything was happening?’

She shrugged her shoulders and applied some lipstick.

‘How many of them are in there?’ she asked, pointing at Maigret’s door.

‘Five or six. Hard to count them. They keep coming and going. They seem to be taking turns.’

Copyrighted Material

‘Putting the screws on him, are they?’

‘Well, the man in there must be getting pretty hot under the collar.’

‘Did they have beer sent up?’

‘Yes.’

That was significant. When Maigret sent for a trayful of beers, it indicated that he thought they would be there for some time.

‘Lognon still with them?’

‘Yes.’

‘Does he look pleased?’

‘Hard to tell with him. He’s wearing a red tie.’

‘Why?’

‘His wife’s gone off to some spa.’

They understood each other. They belonged to the same confraternity.

‘Did you see him?’

‘Who?’

‘The one they’re putting through it.’

‘Yes, but not his face. He was hiding behind his hat.’

‘Young?’

‘Not young, not old. Over thirty at a guess.’

‘Dressed how?’

‘Like anyone else. What colour was his suit, Rougin?’

‘Grey.’

‘I’d have said beige.’

‘What’s he look like?’

‘Ordinary, man in the street.’

Steps were heard on the stairs and Maguy murmured as the others looked round:

Copyrighted Material

‘Must be my photographer.’

By half past seven, there were five of them from the press in the corridor, and they saw the waiter from the Brasserie Dauphine come up with more beer and some sandwiches.

This time it must be really serious. One after another, the reporters went to a small office at the end of the corridor to telephone to their paper.

‘Shall we go and eat?’

‘What if he comes out while we’re away?’

‘What if they’re going to be here all night?’

‘Shall we send out for some sandwiches too?’

‘Good idea!’

‘And beer?’

The sun was vanishing behind the rooftops, but it was still light, and if the air wasn’t exactly sizzling now, the heat remained just as sultry.

At half past eight, Maigret opened his door, looking exhausted, a lock of hair plastered across his brow. He glanced into the corridor, made as if to walk over to the reporters, but changed his mind and the door closed once more behind him.

‘Looks like things are hotting up.’

‘I told you we’d be here all night. Were you here when they questioned Mestorino?’

‘I was still in short pants.’

‘It lasted twenty-seven hours!’

‘In August?’

‘I don’t know what month it was, but . . .’

Maguy’s flowered cotton dress was clinging to her figure, dark patches had appeared under her arms and

Copyrighted Material