



# The Judge's House

*Georges Simenon*

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Exiled from Paris, Maigret discovers some disturbing secrets in a sleepy coastal town in this new translation, book twentytwo in the new Penguin Maigret series.

*A short, sprightly man appeared in the doorway, looked left and right, and went back into the passage. A moment later, the improbable happened. The little man reappeared, bent over, clinging to a long mass that he now started dragging through the mud.*

*It must have been heavy. After four metres, he stopped to catch his breath. The front door of the house had been left open. The sea was still twenty or thirty metres away.*

Penguin is publishing the entire series of Maigret novels in new translations. This novel has been published in a previous translation as Maigret in Exile.

'Compelling, remorseless, brilliant' John Gray

'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 supreme writer . . . unforgettable vividness' Independent

Georges Simenon was born in Liège, Belgium, in 1903. Best known in Britain as the author of the Maigret books, his prolific output of over 400 novels and short stories have made him a household name in continental Europe. He died in 1989 in Lausanne, Switzerland, where he had lived for the latter part of his life.

## The Judge's House Details

Date : Published August 6th 2015 by Penguin Books (first published 1940)

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Author : Georges Simenon

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## From Reader Review The Judge's House for online ebook

### Carlo Cattivelli says

Non si sa bene cosa abbia combinato a Parigi, ma ritroviamo Maigret confinato in Vandea ad annoiarsi finchè un'anziana donna, Didine, non denuncia un crimine nella casa del giudice che le abita vicino. Lei e il marito sono due incalliti spioni nonché pettegoli – benchè sgradevole, il ritratto della vecchia impicciona che sa tutto di tutti in paese è riuscitissimo – ma alla notizia il nostro sente nuova vita rifluire in sè come il sergente delle Sturmtruppen e si mette a indagare anche se ufficialmente non ci sono né vittima né delitto. La faccenda implica il trasferimento a L'Aguillon, ennesimo borgo marinaro per Simenon in cui raccontare di un porto e di pescatori che si alzano all'alba (qui con l'aggiunta degli allevatori di cozze): appena arrivato si apposta e sorprende il giudice Forlacroix nell'atto di trascinare un cadavere fuori dalla sua casa per sbarazzarsene in mare. Tra i due uomini si instaura subito una corrente di simpatia, ma Maigret, seppur piacevolmente avvolto dall'ospitalità ricevuta, indaga partendo dalla famiglia, ovvero i figli Lise, malata di mente e affetta da ninfomania, e Albert che suggerisce all'investigatore di volgere la sua attenzione su Marcel Airaud, ingenuo e rozzo pescatore, padre del figlio della cameriera dell'albergo nonché amante di Lisa. Se i sospetti cadono sul magistrato, questi si proclama innocente confessando in cambio l'omicidio, perpetrato anni prima a Versailles, di uno dei numerosi amanti della moglie. Uno di essi è il vero genitore di Albert mentre la paternità di Lise resta incerta: l'antica tragedia c'entra però poco con la banale quotidianità del nuovo fattaccio, la verità sul quale il commissario porta a galla seguendo una successione di complicati incroci interpersonali (si spiega pure la fissazione di Didine per il benestante vicino di casa) che rivelano come le situazioni siano ingarbugliate e come ognuno abbia qualche segreto da nascondere. Pieno di figure che compaiono per poche pagine eppure si dimostrano indimenticabili - oltre a Forlacroix almeno la cameriera Therese, l'imbrillantinato e mediocre ispettore Mèjat, il codazzo di notabili che segue il giudice istruttore – il romanzo che vede il suo protagonisti risolvere due omicidi al prezzo di uno si fa apprezzare come uno dei migliori della serie anche perché il po' po' di roba sopra descritto sta in centocinquanta facciate scarse.

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### Steven says

This is one of the most entertaining Maigret books I have read, and quite possibly because it was written later (1940) than the earlier novels (penned circa 1932) that I have been consuming. It is tautly plotted and swiftly moving, and the characterizations are amazingly deft and economical. Maigret finds himself exiled to the provinces because of some unspecified disciplinary problem, and he is greatly bored. To his rescue comes an elderly, sharp-eyed local woman named Didine. She is most definitely one of the more memorable Simenon characters I have encountered. She alerts Maigret to the presence in the town judge's house of a dead body, which she has seen through her window. In all truth, Maigret should have put her on retainer, because she feeds him clue after clue that helps him assemble a clear picture of the psychology of the townsfolk and the circumstances underlying seemingly disconnected events. The ultimate unraveling of the mystery is very satisfying and really rather brilliant. Highly recommended.

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### Ivonne Rovira says

An observant old lady alerts Detective Chief Inspector Maigret to some strange goings-on at her neighbor's house in the 1942 novel *The Judge's House* (also published as *Maigret in Exile*). And what Didine Hulot has seen at Judge Forlacroix's house in L'Aiguillon is a dead body. She ensures that Maigret is on the scene

when the retired judge tries to dispose of the corpse. And that's just the beginning of this suspenseful novel, full of twists and turns. One of the best of Georges Simenon's wonderful novels. And if you get to listen to the book narrated by Gareth Armstrong, so much the better.

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### **Tony Fitzpatrick says**

This was rather hard work. Maigret has been exiled to a sleepy French port - we have no idea why he is in disgrace (and apparently neither does Madam Maigret). A local busybody tells him that she has seen a body in the village "Judge's" house, and bored he goes to investigate. The Judge is caught red-handed trying to dispose of the body, and what then follows is a rather over complex tale involving mentally disturbed daughters, an ex-wife's infidelity, an old murder, jealous girlfriends, local goings on amongst the fishermen, and a bit more. Maigret thoroughly enjoys himself - having a real problem to solve in this otherwise dull posting. It is OK, but you can get horribly lost with the multiple threads of the plot. The most amusing character for me was Maigret's side kick in this backwater - Megat - who turns out to be rather good at his job, despite Maigret despising him for his hair brilliantine and dress sense. Huge amounts of smoking and rather too much drinking - I suppose that is part of the colour of 1940s however.

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### **Jean-François Lisée says**

On ne se trompe jamais avec Maigret.

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### **Padmin says**

Simenon non sbaglia un colpo e riesce a raggiungere sempre livelli altissimi. Un solo appunto mi sento di muovergli: talvolta è troppo "esclamativo". Cioè, a mio modesto avviso, utilizza i punti esclamativi in maniera eccessiva, tanto che mi verrebbe la voglia di tirar fuori la matita rossa e correggerlo. Ecco, l'ho detto ;-)

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### **Travis says**

Maigret gets in trouble with his superiors and ends up in a small seaside town, as head inspector until the trouble dies down.

Of course, he gets involved in a murder investigation and caught up in local, small town politics.

As always, Simenon shows us a very real feeling world that may not be anymore real than Christie's or Flemming's England, but he it portrays so matter of factly that you are drawn in.

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### **John says**

Although quite short, like many of his books, this is an excellent read.

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Maigret, out of favour, is banished to a small coastal town where he is out of place. As you would expect an unusual murder takes place and we are privy to Maigret's thought processes as he solves the crime.

I am continually amazed at the quality of Simenon's books considering the rate at which he knocked them out. Highly recommended.

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### **Seán Rafferty says**

Another terrific offering from Simenon. What separates this from other thriller/mystery offerings is the prose and atmosphere. We're not told exactly why Maigret has been banished from Paris. Although hooked from the start I thought I was reading a standard though excellent 'Maigret'. However, in chapter 6, Simenon suddenly changes style and adds a delicious twist to the plot. The prose becomes even more sparse: 'A brasserie. A fat woman at the cash desk. The railway timetable. A nice cold glass of beer'. He's writing like Beckett or Kafka! He always manages to stay one step ahead of the reader and keep you hooked right until the end. I have to say I'll be sorry when I've finished the series. Thankfully, there's lots more to read!

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### **Richard Brand says**

I find these Maigret novels disappointing. Simenon does not really care whether the read is able to find the solution. Half the story is in things he does that we are not informed of what action he asks for. The conversation of the judge with Maigret about his murder is not revealed until several events later. I will say that this story had a little more rationality than many of the others I have read and it has an acceptable ending

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### **Jim says**

Superintendent Jules Maigret has somehow offended his bosses in Paris, so he is sent out to the town of Lucon, where he is mightily bored -- until an interesting murder case turns up. Georges Simenon is one of my two or three favorite mystery writers, and I have now read over a score of his Maigret novels, plus a handful of his *romans durs*, which do not feature the great detective.

In the nearby oyster port of l'Aiguille, a man has been murdered and lies on the floor of a retired judge's house, and is noticed by two nosy neighbors. These, knowing the Parisian from one of his previous cases, go to Maigret and whet his interest. In *Maigret in Exile*, we have a body, a judge who doesn't know who the murder victim is, a somewhat mentally disturbed daughter who has been sleeping around with the locals, and a large and angry son who is estranged from his father.

As he is about to begin the interrogation which solves the crime, the Superintendent is like a vibrating wire:

Maigret switched on the lights, took off his coat and hat, and refilled the stove. Then he began pacing up and down the room, and, as he did so, a faint flicker of anxiety crossed his face from time to time. He paced back and forth, his glance resting on this object or that; he moved things about, smoked, and grumbled, and generally behaved as if he were waiting for something which eluded him.

And that something was inspiration, though he preferred to call it a sense of well-being.

It was that inspiration, that sense of well-being, that is this detective's *modus operandi*: Simenon's books are not tales of ratiocination, but of a very French sense of muddling through a forest of unrelated details until a picture emerges that leads to a solution.

**Maigret in Exile** was written in 1940, just as France was to be invaded by the German army. Perhaps he author wanted to set this story in *la France profonde* because he had a sense of what was about to happen.

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### **Bill says**

I've enjoyed the Inspector Maigret mysteries I've read so far. *Maigret in Exile* by Georges Simenon, originally published in 1942, finds the irrepressible inspector banished from Paris to a small coastal town, for some unknown reason. An elderly woman shows up at his office and tells him that there is a body at her neighbour's house in a nearby town.

In his meandering way, Maigret begins his investigation. There seems to be no particular reason for what he is doing, but in his way, he slowly gathers the inspiration to solve the crime.

Maigret relies more on instinct than facts in working through the crime. There are many interesting characters in the story, especially the neighbour, Didine, and her husband, who seem to know everything that goes on in the village. Maigret is a grumpy soul but also very intuitive. As he investigates he pretty well has everything sorted out but seems also to fly by the seat of his pants. It's interesting how he works through things, basically keeping things to himself until he comes to his resolution. An enjoyable series and story. (3.5 stars)

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### **Richard says**

A sojourn away from Paris for some unspecified disciplinary reason leaves Maigret bored out in the sticks. However, a fascinating mystery and the lure of the sea sends him off to investigate in the provincial L'Aiguillon with its mussel beds, wild marshland and variable tides.

Having just delighted in the move to a focused detective series this is more like his earlier books; dependent on runners, telegrams and meeting people.

It is interesting in the aspects of how the Chief Inspector works, assimilates clues, whether spoken or observed.

As usual the reader is carried along with wonderful dialogue, uncertain plot developments and descriptive landscape. Maigret seems to understand people at a time when class and one's station in life determined so much.

Some noisy neighbours catch a glimpse of a body within the house of a local official and seek out Maigret. With their help, he waits as the suspect seems ready to dispose of the body.

A thoroughly good read and an interesting insight into one of my favourite all time detectives; and not just because he loves beer and sandwiches.

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### **John Frankham says**

In a mussel-harvesting seaside village in the marshy Vendee in the Atlantic south of France, Maigret is temporarily exiled after falling foul of police politics in Paris.

At the top of a ladder, pruning his hedge, a man sees a man (a body?) lying in a room in the Judge's house

next door. It is still there the next day. Maigret is informed and is involved in a case involving adultery, madness, murder and deception, with its seeds going back many years.

A wonderful novel, with a real insight and exposition of the lives and characters of all social classes within the community, in addition, of course, to the plotting and denouement. Great.

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### **Fredsky says**

This is a wonderful book. Maigret and Madame Maigret have been ordered to a remote province, having offended the judicial system in Paris. Because he is in unknown territory, Maigret is really starting from scratch. As he is led to a secret corpse about to be released at high tide, he works from his open mind... but his habits are intact. He directs his fellow policemen, the switchboard mademoiselle, the Flying Squad, the hotel staff, the witnesses and their families, and eventually the suspects with unwavering self-assurance. He drinks white wine for breakfast, beer, brandy, cordials, port, and marc as his investigation develops. And he delivers a breathtaking denouement, turning everyone around and around as they attempt to follow his reasoning, or his logic, or his random tirade, whatever is driving this lumbering phenomenon to a conclusion.

What I love is how Maigret's vast experience is available to him but very little else. He has none of his faithful inspectors, his well-trained assistants. He is forced to create the staff, the atmosphere, and the energy required to finish the investigation. As he does all this, we are able to watch how he does it. Masterfully.

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