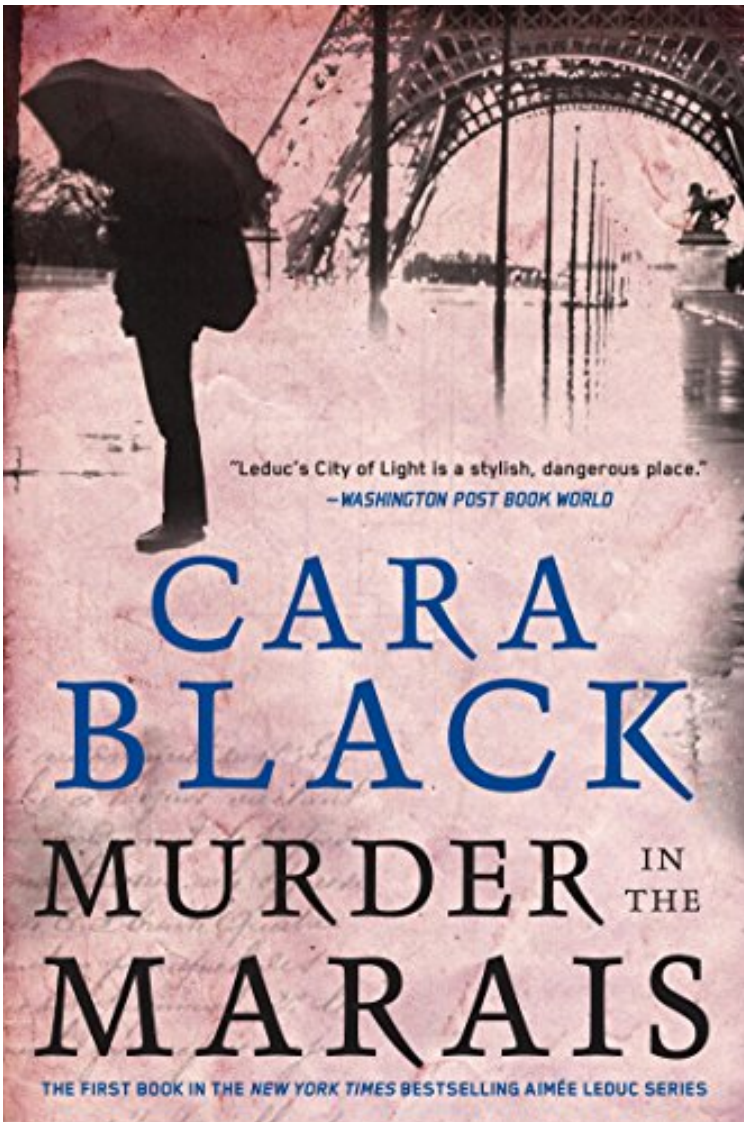


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Murder in the Marais



Par Cara Black
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurMeet Aime Leduc, the smart, stylish Parisian private investigator, in her bestselling first investigationAime Leduc has always sworn she would stick to tech investigationno criminal cases for her. Especially since her father, the late police detective, was killed in the line of duty. But when an elderly Jewish man approaches Aime with a top-secret decoding job on behalf of a woman in his synagogue, Aime unwittingly takes on more than she is expecting. She drops off her findings at her clients house in the Marais, Pariss historic Jewish quarter, and finds the woman strangled, a swastika carved on her forehead. With the help of her partner, Ren, Aime sets out to solve this horrendous murder, but finds herself in an increasingly dangerous web of ancient secrets and buried war crimes.From the Trade Paperback edition.ExtraitAime Leduc felt his presence before she saw him. As if ghosts floated in his wake in the once

elegant hall. She paused, pulling her black leather jacket closer against the Parisian winter morning slicing through her building, and reached for her keys. The man emerged from the shadows by her frosted paned office door. A babys cry wafted up from the floor below, then the concierges door slammed. Mademoiselle, I need your help, he said. Leathery, freckled skin stretched over his skull and his ears pointed out at right angles. He wore a crumpled navy blue suit and leaned crookedly on a malacca cane. No missing persons, Monsieur, she said. As winter settled, the days gray and the memories vivid, old survivors revived hopes of lost ones. She slid her tongue across her teeth to check for anything stuck, smoothed her short brown hair and smiled. She stuffed the chocolate croissant back in the bag. I dont find lost relatives. My field is corporate security. Thirty-four years old, Aime, at five feet eight inches, loomed above him. Je suis dsolé, Monsieur, but computer forensics are my speciality. Thats what I want. He straightened his posture slowly, his large eyes fearful. My name is Soli Hecht. I must talk with you. Behind his fear she saw sadness tinged by keen perception. She tried to be polite. Walk-in clients were rare. Most came through corporate connections or by word of mouth. Its not that I dont want your business, but were carrying a full caseload. I can refer you to someone very good. I knew your father, an honorable man. He told me to come to you if I needed help. Startled, she dropped her keys and looked away. But my father was killed five years ago. As always, he is in my prayers. Hecht bowed his head. When he looked up, his eyes bored into hers. Your father and I met when he was in Le Commissariat. She knew she had to hear him out. Still she hesitated. The cold seeped from the floorboards but it wasnt the only thing making her shiver. Please come inside. She unlocked the door that read Leduc Detective that led to the office shed taken over after her fathers death, flipped on the lights, and draped her jacket over her armchair. Nineteenth-century sepia prints of Egyptian excavations hung on the walls above digitally enhanced Parisian sewer maps. Hecht moved his cadaverous frame across the parquet floor. Something about him struck her as familiar. As he lifted his arm onto her desk, she saw faint blue numbers tattooed on his forearm peeking out from his jacket sleeve. Did he want her to find Nazi loot in numbered Swiss bank accounts? She scooped ground coffee into the filter, poured water, and switched on the espresso machine, which grumbled to life. Specifically, Monsieur Hecht, what is the job? Computer penetration is your field. His eyes scanned the equipment lining the walls. He thrust a folder at her. Decipher this computer code. The Temple Emanuel is hiring you. Regarding? We need proof that a womans relatives avoided deportation to Buchenwald. But I dont want to raise her hopes. He looked away, as if there was more he could say, but didnt. Ive stopped doing that kind of work, Monsieur Hecht. That was more my fathers field. To be honest, if I kept his promise youd get less than the best. I knew your father, I trusted him. Hecht gripped the edge of her desk. How did you know him? A man of honor, he told me I could rely on you. Soli Hecht hung his head. We had many dealings before the explosion. I need your expertise. She drummed her chipped red nails on her desk and pushed the painful memories aside. Steaming muddy liquid dripped into the waiting demitasse cup. Monsieur, un petit caf? Non, merci. He shook his head. Aime unwrapped a sugar cube and plopped it in her cup. I do computer security, she repeated. Not missing persons. He said you would help me . . . that I could always come to you. Short of going back on her fathers word, one path remained. Daccord, she relented with inner misgivings. Ill show you my standard contract form. My word must be enough. He extended his hand. As far as you are concerned, you dont know me. Agreed? She shook his gnarled hand. This will take several days? I was told it could be slow work. Maybe a few hours. I type one hundred and twenty conventional words a minute. She smiled and sat down, shoved last nights faxes to the side of her desk, and leaned towards him. You were in school in America when I knew your father. Full of hope, shed searched for her American roots and the mother whod disappeared when she was eight. She hadnt found either. Briefly. I was an exchange student in New York. Your father articulated his casework philosophy to me and Ive always remembered it. Things werent usually what they seemed or hed be out of business? Hecht nodded. Youre independent, no ties or affiliations to anyone. His crooked fist drummed the table. I like that about you. He knew a lot about her. She also had the distinct impression he was leaving something out. Our fees are seven hundred and fifty francs a day. Hecht nodded dismissively. Now she remembered. Shed seen his photo years ago when his evidence helped bring Klaus Barbie to trial. Look inside the folder, Hecht said. Aime opened his file, noticing the digits and slash marks, a distinctive trademark of Israeli military encryption. Her expertise was in hacking into systems, huge corporate ones. But this code spoke of the Cold Wara slippery tunneling job. She hesitated. Two thousand francs are in the folder. Deliver your results to 64 rue des Rosiers to Lili Stein. Shes home after her shop closes. Ive told her to expect a visitor. Aime felt she had to be honest; breaking an encrypted code had never taken her that long. Youve given me too much. He shook his head. Take it. She has a hard time getting

around. Remember, give this only to Lili Stein. She shrugged. No problem. You must put this in Lili Steins hands. Hechts tone had changed, from fervent to pleading. Swear to me on your fathers grave. On his honor.

His eyes locked on to hers. What kind of Holocaust secret was this? Slowly she nodded in agreement. We will have no more contact, Mademoiselle. Soli Hechts joints cracked as he rose. His face wrinkled in pain.

You could have faxed me this query, Monsieur Hecht. It would have saved you this trip. But weve neither talked nor met, Mademoiselle Leduc, he said. Aime bit back her reply and opened the door for him. Warped floorboards, a tarnished mirror, and scuffed plaster adorned the unheated landing. She buzzed for the turn-of-the-century wire elevator grating noisily up the shaft. Slowly and painfully he made his way to the hall. Back in her office, she stuffed the francs into her pocket. The overdue France Tlcom bill and horse meat for Miles Davispronounced Meels Daveez, her bichon frisewould wait until shed done the promised work. Eurocom, the cable giant, had royally screwed up her finances by breaking Leducs security service contract and hiring a rival Seattle firm, the only other firm that did the same work as she and her partner. She hoped thered be enough money left to spring her suits from the dry cleaners. Her standard software keys enabled her to crack coded encryptions. They opened information stored in a database, in this case, she figured, a military one.

After punching in her standard key, Access denied flashed on the screen. She tried another software key, Rseau Militaire, an obscure military network. Still the screen flashed Access denied. Intrigued, she tried various other keys but got nowhere. Morning turned into afternoon, shadows lengthened, and dusk settled.

After several hours she realized she would earn her francs on this one. So far, nothing worked.From Publishers WeeklyThe initial installment of a projected series of mysteries set in Paris, this standout first novel introduces dauntless private investigator Aim?e Leduc. The French-American, whose specialty is computer forensics, is confronted with a seemingly mundane task: to decipher an encrypted photograph from the '40s and deliver it to an old woman in the Marais (the historic Jewish quarter of Paris). When Aim?e arrives at the home of Lili Stein to present the photo, however, she finds the woman dead, a swastika carved into her forehead. Thus begins a thrilling, quick-paced chase involving neo-Nazis, corrupt government officials and fierce anti-Semitism. With the help of her partner, Ren?, a computer hacking expert, Aim?e uncovers tantalizing clues relating to German war veteran Hartmuth Griffe, the Jewish girl he saved from Auschwitz, a French trade minister and other enigmatic figures. But the data Aim?e and Ren? come up with only takes them so far. In order to understand the true motive behind the killing, Aim?e must delve into history, confronting older residents of the quarterAwho'd prefer she leave the past aloneAand doing some undercover work. The suspense is high as she fraternizes dangerously with the enemy, even becoming briefly involved with an Aryan supremacist. Black knows Paris well, and in her first-rate debut she deftly combines fascinating anecdotes from the city's war years with classic images of the City of Lights. (July)

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