

of us. I'm your judge. You're not a thief, so we'll punish you. We'll hang you. We'll enjoy that."

"But, good sir..." Gringoire tries again, "I wrote a play. Maybe you saw it today in the Great Hall."

"Yes, I did. It was boring, but your death will be amusing. Is everything ready for a hanging?" the king asks his men.

But then the king thinks of something. "I forgot one of our laws," he says. "Is there a woman here who wants this man for her husband? A man for nothing. If you marry him, he won't die."

"No! No! Hang him! We'll enjoy it," shouts the crowd.

But then a pretty voice is heard at the back of the room. "Are you really going to hang that man?"

"Yes, sister," answers the King of Thieves. "Or will you take him for your husband?"

Esmeralda stops and thinks. "I'll take him," she says.

Gringoire cannot believe his luck. Is this beautiful gypsy really going to save him?

Esmeralda takes his hand, and the king says, "Brother, she is your wife. Sister, he is your husband for four years. Now, go!"

In a few minutes, Gringoire is sitting at a table opposite the beautiful gypsy in a warm little room. There is food in front of him and a good bed in the next room.

The writer looks at the girl and thinks, "She saved my life and married me. She clearly loves me a lot, doesn't she?" With this idea in his head, he touches Esmeralda's hand.

"What do you want with my hand?" she asks, and moves away from Gringoire.

"But you love me. You're my wife," explains the writer.

"Don't be silly. You have no reason to touch me," says Esmeralda.

"But why did you marry me?"

"I didn't want you to die. We can be friends. That's all. Like brother and sister and nothing more. Remember that."

"That's fine for me," says Gringoire. "I'm happy to be alive and warm, and this bread and cheese is delicious. Don't you want something to eat?"

"No, I'm thinking about love," answers Esmeralda.

"What's love?" asks the writer. He always enjoys this kind of conversation.

"Love!" the girl says. "That's when two become one. A man and a woman are joined."

"What kind of man will you love, Esmeralda?" asks Gringoire.

"A soldier on a horse. A man who can protect me. You know about words. What does *Phoebus* mean?" she asks.

"It's a Latin word which means 'sun'," explains Gringoire.

"The sun! How wonderful!" says Esmeralda. Then she forgets about Gringoire and begins to dream. In a minute or two, she disappears into her bedroom and locks the door behind her.

"This isn't a very romantic wedding night," Gringoire says to himself, "but it's much better than dying in the City of Thieves."

Chapter 2 Broken Hearts and Broken Lives

Father Claude Frollo was not an ordinary child. He was born in 1446, and from an early age he was interested in books and learning. He started college very young, learned quickly, and graduated at the age of eighteen. His greatest interests in life were science and religion.

The important men in the Church noticed this serious young man. When he was only twenty years old, they made him a priest. People heard stories of Claude's great learning and, as usual in those days, it worried them. They began to ask themselves if Father Claude was a good priest or an evil sorcerer.

This question was asked openly on Quasimodo Sunday (the first Sunday after Easter), 1467. On that fine morning, a box was left at