

the main doors of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. As they were leaving the early church service, two old women looked inside the box.

“What’s *that*?” asked the first old lady. “Is it a strange animal? It can’t be a child. It’s too ugly!”

“Throw it in the river,” suggested the second old lady.

By this time, a crowd was looking at the poor little boy. He was crying and was probably hungry and afraid. But nobody wanted to touch the ugly little red-haired, one-eyed hunchback, and clearly nobody wanted to take him home.

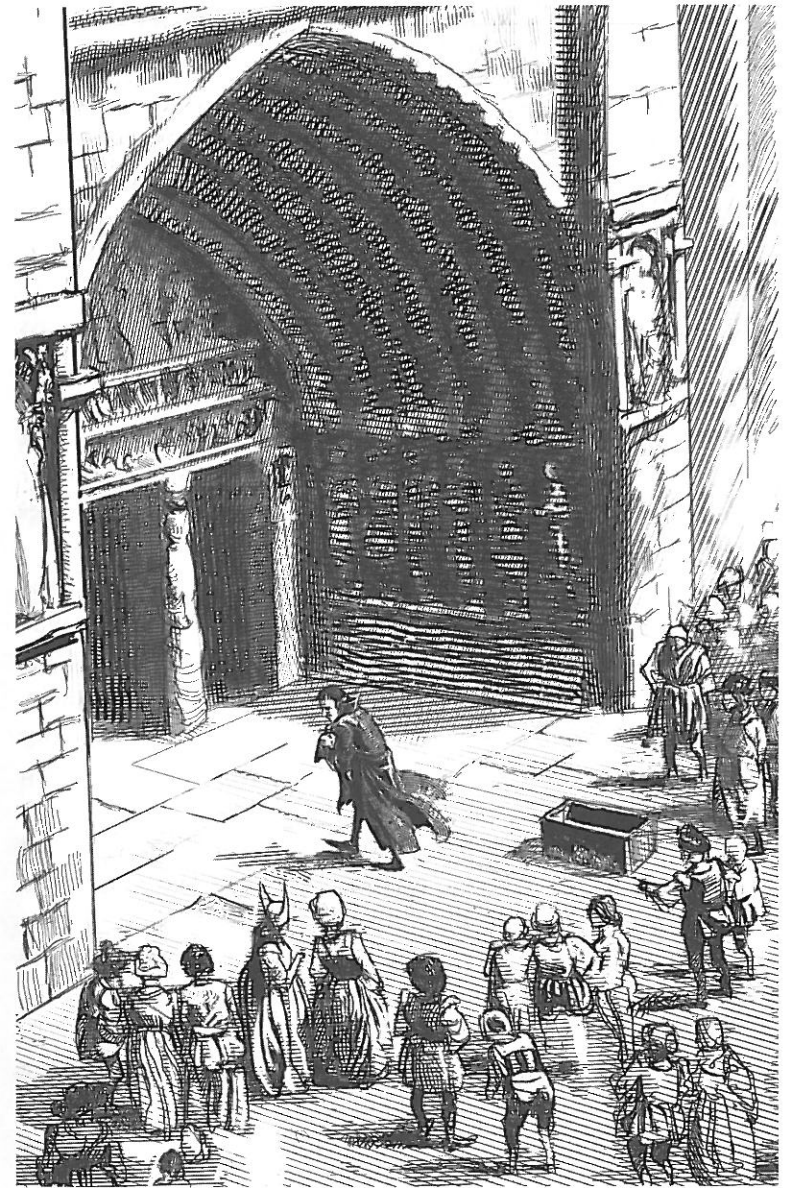
Then the young priest, Father Claude Frolo, pushed silently through the crowd. His face was serious and his eyes looked very bright. He put his hand on the forest of red hair and the child stopped crying.

“I’ll have this child,” said the priest. He picked the boy up and carried him into the cathedral.

After the door closed, one of the old ladies said, “I told you that young priest was a sorcerer. Now do you believe me?”

Father Claude named the poor child Quasimodo and gave him a home in the cathedral. The boy could not exist in the outside world, but with the priest’s help he made a life inside the walls of Notre-Dame. Father Claude was very patient and taught the boy to speak, to read, and to write. Quasimodo became part of that great church. He climbed into every corner and knew every piece of wood, glass, and stone.

Ten years after their first Sunday together, when Quasimodo was fourteen, Father Claude found a job for the boy. He became one of the bellringers up in the highest part of the cathedral. Quasimodo loved his job and soon became the chief bellringer, but as usual life was not kind to the hunchback. The sound of the great bells destroyed his hearing. Another door closed for him, and he fell deeper into his own dark world. He stopped speaking and only talked to Father Claude in hand signs.



“I’ll have this child,” said the priest.