

Phoebus de Châteaupers stands alone in the yard. He stops and thinks, then he follows the gypsy girl.



Father Claude Frolo heard Esmeralda's music in the square before she and her goat disappeared into the Gondelauriers' yard. He went to a high window in a tower in the cathedral and, as usual, watched the gypsy girl with great interest. On this morning, he also noticed a young man with her. The priest hurried down the stairs. Esmeralda was gone, but now he saw the young man's face clearly.

"Pierre Gringoire!" Claude Frolo said. "What are you doing here? You haven't been in church for months. Why are you going around with that gypsy girl?"

"For the very good reason that she's my wife and I'm her husband," answered Pierre Gringoire.

The priest's eyes turned to fire. "Are you really her husband? Have you touched her? Has *any* man touched her?"

"Please, calm down. Neither I nor any other man has touched the beautiful Esmeralda." Gringoire told the priest about his strange wedding in the City of Thieves.

"My wife," the writer continued, "never knew her mother or her father. She wears a little bag tied around her neck. It holds a secret, and it will help her find her parents one day. But the secret will not help her if she sleeps with a man."

"Are you sure that she has never known a man?" the priest asked. His eyes were wild and his voice was deep and quiet.

"Esmeralda is good, like a child. She believes that the world is good, too. She loves her gypsy friends, her music, and Djali, her goat. She's afraid of only two people. First, there's Sachette, the witch who hates gypsy women. She shouts at Esmeralda when she's near the Tower of Roland. And, second, there's a terrible priest who watches her all the time."

"And you? Do you love her?" asked Father Claude.

"She's very kind to me. She gives me a place to sleep and food every day. And have you seen Djali? She's the most wonderful goat in the world. *She* loves me, and I love her. She can tell the time and the date, and now she can spell. My wife gives her letters, and she spells *Phoebus*."

"Phoebus?" asked the priest. "Why Phoebus?"

"It's a mystery to me," answered Gringoire. "But Esmeralda often says this word quietly to herself."

"Listen, Pierre," said the priest before returning to the cathedral, "don't touch that girl. She's dangerous."



A few days later, Father Claude Frolo is walking through one of the noisy squares near the cathedral in the late afternoon. As usual, he is wearing his long black coat, closed tightly around his neck, and he is studying the ground. He looks up suddenly when he hears loud voices and the name *Phoebus*.

"Phoebus, my good man, tell us more about this gypsy girl," shouts a man.

A group of soldiers is drinking inside a dark bar.

Officer Phoebus de Châteaupers laughs and says, "I can't tell you very much now. She's very beautiful and has a little white goat. I'm meeting her at seven o'clock. After tonight, I'll tell you everything about her."

The soldiers laugh and buy Phoebus another drink. Claude Frolo's eyes burn with an angry fire. He hides in the shadows outside the bar and waits for Phoebus de Châteaupers.

At six thirty, the soldiers push their officer out the door. "Good luck! Tell us everything tomorrow!" they shout.

After a block or two, Phoebus notices that someone is following him. There is a shadow moving along the walls. He stops. The shadow stops. He continues. The shadow continues, too. Phoebus