

bridge. I've done nothing wrong, but evil things happened in my house on the night of March 29."

"Please, tell the court," orders Judge d'Estouteville.

"Two men knocked at my door. A young, handsome soldier and a man in a long black coat and hat. I couldn't see his face. The soldier paid me for my best room at the top of the house. Then the two men climbed the stairs. Soon the soldier came down again and left. He returned with a pretty gypsy girl and a goat.

"After about half an hour I heard a terrible scream. Something fell on the floor above me and the window up there opened. I ran to my window and looked out. I saw the man in black drop from the window into the river below. The moon was very bright and I saw him clearly. He was wearing a priest's clothes. He swam toward the city."

"And what did you do?"

"I shouted for the King's Guard. When they came, I followed them upstairs. There was blood everywhere. The handsome soldier was lying on the floor with a knife in his neck. The girl wasn't hurt. She was lying on the floor with her clothes half on and half off. The guards found a knife in her pocket."

"Madame Falourdel," the judge says, "do you have anything more to tell us?"

"I think the priest and the girl were working together," says the old woman. "They planned to rob the handsome soldier. I think she's a witch and he's a sorcerer."

"Enough," says the judge. "We will decide that."

"Judge d'Estouteville," Monsieur Charmolue begins, "we talked to Officer Phoebus de Châteaupers in the hospital. He didn't know the man in black until the night at Madame Falourdel's hotel. This mysterious man, possibly an evil priest, gave the soldier the money for the hotel room. It was a trick."

The prisoner hears the name *Phoebus* and seems awake for the first time. "Phoebus!" she cries. "Where is he? Is he alive?"

"Woman, be silent," orders the judge. "That's not our business. He's dying. Now, please, be quiet."

Pierre Gringoire cannot believe his ears. He realizes now that the prisoner is his wife.

The judge turns to Esmeralda. "Girl, you're a gypsy. You know about evil ways. On the night of March 29, did you murder Phoebus de Châteaupers, officer of the King's Guard?"

"No, never. I love Phoebus. I didn't hurt him."

"Then explain the facts," says the judge.

"I did nothing wrong. It was that terrible priest. He follows me everywhere. I'm only a poor girl," Esmeralda says.

"A gypsy girl," says the judge.

"Judge," Monsieur Charmolue says, "she isn't honest. I suggest torture. That will give us the true story."

"Yes," the judge agrees. "Take her to the King's torturer. This court is closed for today."

The guards guide Esmeralda down many dark stairs to the torture room below the courthouse. There is a large open oven at one end of the room. The torturer, Monsieur Pierrat Torterue, keeps his tools red hot in this fire.

Esmeralda has tried to be brave during her walk from the courtroom, but now she is nervous. She sees the smiling, ugly face of the King's torturer. She also sees Monsieur Charmolue. He is sitting at a long desk with lawyers to his right and priests to his left.

"My dear child," says Monsieur Charmolue, "I will repeat my question. Did you murder Phoebus de Châteaupers, officer of the King's Guard, on the night of March 29?"

"No, sir. I love Phoebus."

"If that is your answer, Monsieur Torterue will have to do his job. Put her on the table," orders Monsieur Charmolue.

Esmeralda begins to shake with fear. Two guards lift her and tie her to the torture table. Esmeralda looks wildly around the room. Will nobody help her?