

"Have no fear," answered Gringoire. "It's a friend of mine. We've come to save you. Follow us."

"Is that true?" the girl asked nervously.

"Yes, very true. Come quickly. There's danger outside," said Gringoire.

"I will," Esmeralda said, "but why doesn't your friend speak?"

"He is a great thinker, a serious man. Don't worry about him," Gringoire answered.

The writer took Esmeralda by the hand and they followed the man in black down the stairs of the tower, through the dark church to a small door. The man opened this door with a key, and the three people and the little goat were outside next to the river. Esmeralda sat near Gringoire and Djali as they moved silently across the water in a small boat. She was afraid of the man in black. She was also scared by the noise from Notre-Dame. "The gypsy!" the soldiers shouted. "The witch! Death for the gypsy girl!"

These voices scared Gringoire, too. He looked at Esmeralda and at Djali and thought, "I cannot save both of you."

When the boat reached the opposite side of the river, Gringoire jumped out and hurried into the dark night with Djali. Esmeralda was alone now with the terrible man in black. She tried to speak, to call for Gringoire. No sound came from her mouth. The man did not speak either. He took her roughly by the hand and pulled her quickly toward the Place de Grève.

Esmeralda looked around at the dark houses and the empty streets. The only sounds came from the cathedral across the river. "Death to the gypsy!" the voices shouted again and again. Esmeralda's hope was gone.

At the Place de Grève, she saw the place for hangings and she began to shake again. "Who are you?" she cried. "Why have you brought me here?"

The man stopped, turned to her, and uncovered his face.

"I knew it! You! The priest!" cried Esmeralda. "It's the end."

"This is the Place de Grève," the priest said. "It's time to decide. But don't talk to me of your Phoebus. Don't say his name." The priest walked up and down nervously. He held Esmeralda's hand tightly and pulled her along with him.

Then he stopped and said, "Look at me! The soldiers are searching for you. You can hear them. Judge d'Estouteville has given them orders. They will find you soon, bring you here, and hang you today at noon.

"Don't speak. Don't say a word. I love you. I can save you. Look at this place. Choose between me and the hangman."

Esmeralda pulled her hand away from the priest. "I choose death," she said to him. "You are worse than hanging to me."

"But I love you!" cried the priest. "I have lost everything because of you, but still you hate me."

Claude Frollo was crying now. He hung his head and tears ran down his sad face.

"Because of you. Because of you," he repeated quietly. Then he remembered where he was. "You've seen me cry, but you feel nothing for me. I don't want to see you die. Give me one kind word and I'll save you. Say you *want* to love me."

"You're a murderer," Esmeralda said coldly. "I belong to Phoebus. I love him. You're old and evil. Go away!"

"Die then!" the priest screamed. He shook her and threw her to the ground.

Then the priest called out in a loud voice, "Sachette! Sachette! Here's the gypsy girl. Take her and punish her." He pulled Esmeralda to the witch's prison in the Tower of Roland and pushed her against the window in the wall. A thin hand reached out and held the girl's pretty arm.

"Hold tight," ordered the priest. "I will bring the soldiers here. They will hang her at noon. It's finished."

The girl watched Father Claude Frollo hurry toward the river.

