

"Please, tell me your name," the officer says quietly.

"Esmeralda," the girl answers.

The young ladies laugh at this strange name, but Phoebus notices only Esmeralda.

"Monsieur Torterue gave that ugly hunchback a good flogging. I hope you aren't afraid now in the streets at night."

"No, sir," Esmeralda says, smiling at Phoebus. She looks more beautiful than ever.

"Call for me if you are. I will help you, day or night," Phoebus says bravely.

"You seem happy with this gypsy girl," says Fleur-de-Lys.

"And why not?" asks Phoebus.

The other young ladies laugh at these words. But Fleur-de-Lys turns her face away from Phoebus as her eyes fill with tears.

Bérangère calls, "Sister, come and see the goat's trick." The little girl has been in a corner of the yard, playing with Djali. Around its neck, the goat always carries a little bag of letters on pieces of wood. Bérangère has thrown the letters on the ground and the goat has made a word with them.

The young ladies hurry over to look at the little goat's trick.

"Did the goat do that?" asks Fleur-de-Lys when she sees the word on the ground.

"Yes, sister."

The letters spell P H O E B U S.

"The goat has written your name, Phoebus!" cries one of the young ladies to the officer. "She's a witch."

"You have a wonderful memory," Fleur-de-Lys says to Esmeralda. Then she begins to cry and hurries through a door into the house.

"Leave us immediately, gypsy witch," shouts one of Fleur-de-Lys's friends.

Esmeralda hurries through the gate into the street, followed by Djali.



"The goat has written your name, Phoebus!"

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



Father Claude Frollo 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 Frollo 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 Frollo 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 Frollo'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

is not afraid. He is young and strong, and he has had a lot to drink. He calls to the stranger.

"Sir, if you are a thief, go home. I don't have any money."

"Officer Phoebus de Châteaupers, I don't want your money. I know you're going to meet a girl at seven o'clock," the mystery man in the long black coat says.

"How do you know my name and my plans? Are you a sorcerer?" Phoebus asks. Then he takes out his knife and says, "Leave or fight."

"Sir," says the priest, "have you forgotten your meeting with the beautiful gypsy girl? We can fight tomorrow, or next week. But first, meet your girl."

Phoebus is really quite a stupid young man and quickly forgets about fighting. "You're very kind, sir," he says. "I don't want to miss this girl. Goodbye."

"Wait! Where are you going to meet her?" asks the priest.

"On the Saint-Michel bridge, then I'll take her to a small hotel. I can pay the old woman for an hour for one of her dirty little rooms." Then Phoebus checks his pockets. "Oh, no. I've spent my last penny."

"I'll give you the money," the priest says, "if you do something for me."

"What do you want?" Phoebus asks.

"I'm looking for a gypsy girl. I want to hide in the hotel room and see your girl. Maybe she's the one I'm looking for," explains the priest.

"All right. Give me the money and we'll be friends for tonight," agrees Phoebus.

The men go to Madame Falourdel's small hotel and pay for a room. The priest hides in the closet and waits.

Soon the door opens and the two young people walk in. Father Claude watches everything through a hole in the rough closet door. The picture in front of him makes his heart burn.

Phoebus sits next to Esmeralda on an old sofa near a broken window. The river runs below the window. The soldier looks very handsome in his fine clothes. Esmeralda is nervous and very excited about this meeting.

"At last we're alone, my pretty one," says Phoebus.

"Are you happy with me?" asks the girl.

"Of course!" says Phoebus. "You're wonderful!"

"No, I'm not. I will break a promise tonight," says Esmeralda. She touches the little bag she wears around her neck. "But if I have you, I won't need a mother or a father."

"I don't understand you," Phoebus says.

"Oh, sir, I love you! You saved my life. You're good and brave and strong. I love your name, too. My dear Phoebus, do you love me?" asks the girl.

"Of course I love you, dear girl. My body, my heart, my blood—all belong to you. I have loved nobody except you." Phoebus says these words very easily because he has said them to many girls before. But Esmeralda believes every word.

"I want to die at this minute," she says.

Phoebus sees how happy she is. He steals a kiss.

"Die!" he cries. "No, Esmeralda... excuse me, your name is difficult for me. No—now is the time to live!"

As he talks about his love for her, Phoebus tries to take off Esmeralda's belt and then her little jacket.

"What are you doing?" she asks him.

"You're with me now. You don't need these strange gypsy clothes," says Phoebus.

"I'm with you," says Esmeralda dreamily. She touches the little bag at her neck and says, "Take all of me. I'm yours."

Phoebus puts his arm around her waist and kisses her again.

The priest can see Esmeralda's beautiful shoulders and he can see the light of love in her eyes. He has never touched a woman, and this is making him crazy.

Suddenly, above Phoebus's head, Esmeralda sees an angry face. It is the priest who always follows her. In his hand is a knife and he pushes it into Phoebus's neck. Esmeralda's eyes close, and she falls to the floor. But just before everything goes black, she feels a terrible burning kiss on her mouth.

When Esmeralda wakes up, the little room is full of soldiers from the King's Guard. The window is open and the priest has disappeared. The soldiers carry Phoebus's bloody body down the stairs. One of them looks back at Esmeralda and says, "There's the witch who did this to Officer Phoebus."

Chapter 4 One Honest Heart

It is now May and nobody in the City of Thieves has seen Esmeralda and her little goat for more than a month. The gypsies are worried, and Pierre Gringoire is, too. One morning he is walking past the Tournelle, a prison for criminals, when he sees a large crowd at the gates.

"What's happening?" he asks a young man in the crowd.

"There's a woman in court today. They say she murdered an officer of the King's Guard. Some people say she's a witch."

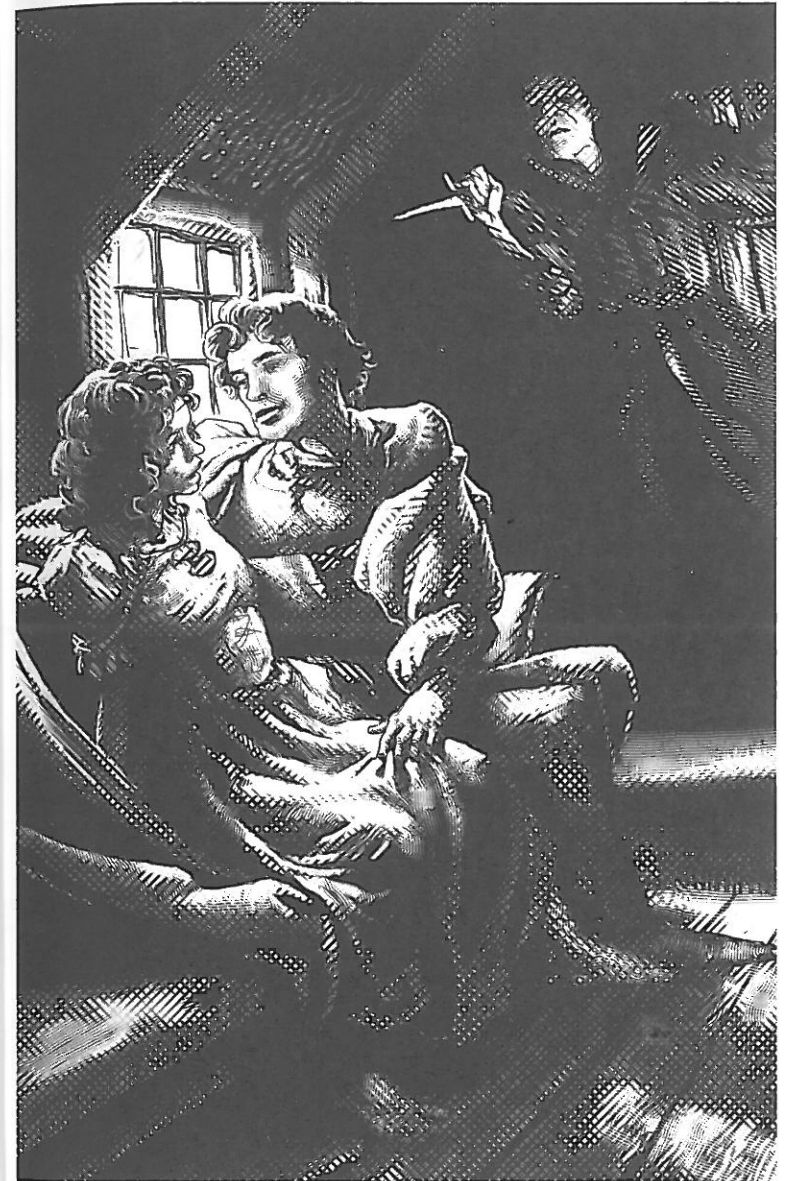
Pierre Gringoire has always enjoyed listening to judges and lawyers, so he follows the crowd into the courtroom. He is pleased to see a large group of lawyers at a big table with piles of papers around them. Their chief is Monsieur Jacques Charmolue, the King's lawyer, and the main judge is Robert d'Estouteville.

"Who's the criminal?" Gringoire asks his neighbor.

"It's a woman, sir. You can't see her face from here."

"Silence!" shouts the officer of the court. "Madame Falourdel will now speak to the court."

"Judge, sir," the poor old woman begins, "I'm an honest woman. I own a small hotel—it's my house, also—on the Saint-Michel



Suddenly, above Phoebus's head, Esmeralda sees an angry face.