

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?

The guards roughly take off the girl's right shoe and sock. They place an ugly-looking tool on her pretty foot and begin to turn it.

"Oh, my Phoebus!" cries Esmeralda in a quiet, weak voice.

She sees Monsieur Torterue coming near the table with another tool, this time hot from the fire. Fear makes her strong, and she shouts, "Stop! Please, stop!"

Monsieur Charmolue holds his hand up and asks his question again. "Did you kill Phoebus de Châteaupers?"

"I did not, good sir."

"Continue the torture!"

The guards turn the tool on her foot again. The pain is very bad. Her foot is ready to break.

"Wait!" screams Esmeralda.

"Are you the murderer?" asks Charmolue again.

"Yes," cries the poor child. She cannot be brave. The torture is too terrible.

"Then you must die."

"Yes, I want death." Esmeralda falls back on to the table.

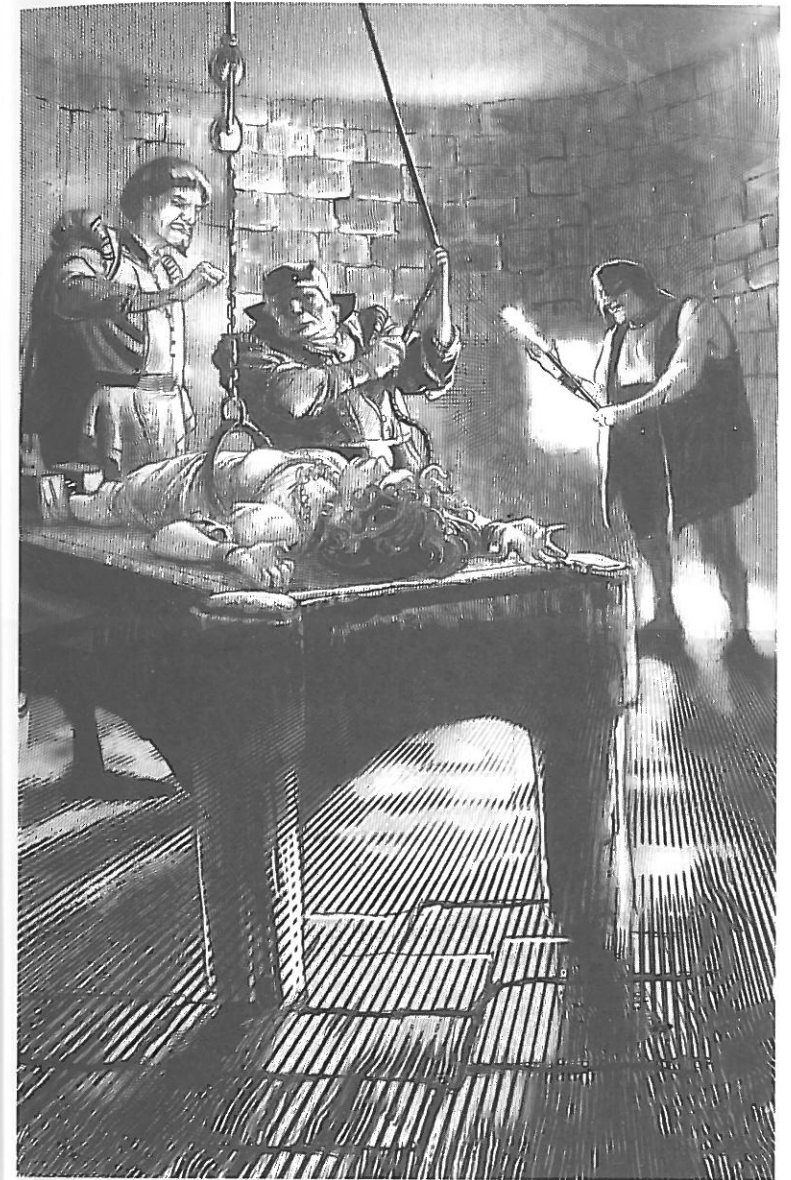
Jacques Charmolue turns to the lawyers and says, "Write it down. We now have the gypsy girl's true story. She's a murderer and a witch. She's in the service of the devil. This is true, isn't it?" he asks Esmeralda.

"Yes," she answers weakly. She has stopped fighting.

"Take her back to the judge," orders Charmolue.

In the crowded courtroom, Judge d'Estouteville hears Monsieur Charmolue's report. Then the judge says, "Gypsy girl, we find that you're a murderer and a witch. In two weeks' time you'll go to the Cathedral of Notre-Dame and prepare yourself for death. Then at noon on that day, we will hang you and your goat in the Place de Grève for your crimes."

Esmeralda is thrown into a wet, dark prison. She is completely alone. The only sound is cold water dropping into a dirty pool at her feet.



The pain is very bad.

Finally, one day or night—they are the same to Esmeralda—she hears a noise at the heavy door. She looks up, and the light hurts her eyes. She sees a man come through the door. He is dressed in black. Esmeralda cannot see his hands or face.

After a long silence, the girl says, "Who are you?"

"A priest."

At the sound of this voice, Esmeralda shakes with fear.

"Are you prepared?" the priest asks.

"For what?"

"For death. It will be tomorrow. Do you understand why you are here?"

"I did once, but now I don't." The girl begins to cry. "Sir, I'm cold and afraid. This is no life without light, without fire, without friends."

"Follow me," says the man. He touches the girl's arm.

"Oh, it's the icy hand of death. Who are you?" Esmeralda asks.

The priest takes his hat off and the girl sees Father Claude Frolo. She saw this face in Madame Falourdel's dirty little hotel above Phoebus's head. She remembers his burning kiss. This man killed Phoebus and he wants to kill her.

"It's you! The evil priest. Why do you follow me? You've tortured me, and you've killed my Phoebus. Why do you hate me?" Esmeralda asks.

"I cannot hate you. I love you!" cries the priest.

"What kind of love is this?" the girl shouts.

"It's a painful, secret love. It has destroyed my life. Before I met you, I was happy."

"And I was, too!" says Esmeralda.

"Quiet! I must tell my story. I was a good priest, an honest man. I was proud. I walked through the streets of Paris with my head high. I had religion and science, and those were enough. But then one day, when I was in my tower, I heard your music in the square below. I looked out and saw you—the most beautiful thing in the

world. I watched, and I was lost. My books held no interest. The cathedral became a prison. I wanted only to see you, to touch you, to love you.

"From that day, I was a different man. When I opened a book, I saw your face. I went into the cathedral, and I heard your voice. I followed you because I cannot live without you. I waited for you on street corners. I watched you from the top of my tower. Every day I became crazier with the idea of you in my head.

"Then one day I heard that soldier say your name. He laughed and joked about you. I followed him, and you know the rest."

"Oh, my Phoebus!" Esmeralda cries softly.

"Don't say that name. He didn't love you. He didn't even know your name. Look at me! I was with you in the courtroom. I saw you on the torturer's table. You suffered, but do you understand *my* torture? I watched you smile at that stupid soldier in that dirty room. I watched him touch you and kiss you. He wanted to use you and throw you away. But I love you and I can help you. They'll hang you tomorrow, but I can stop them. You can live. Touch my hand. Follow me out of this prison. Learn to love me. Learn to forgive me. Please! Please!"

Esmeralda looks into the priest's eyes and says, "What has happened to my Phoebus?"

"He's dead!" cries the priest.

"Dead!" Esmeralda says. She feels even colder now. "Then do not talk to me about living."

The priest is not listening. "The knife went deep," he says quietly to himself. "He's surely dead."

"Go! Leave, murderer! Love you? Forgive you? ~~Never!~~ My blood and the blood of Phoebus de Châteaupers are on your hands. You're a devil!" Esmeralda screams.

She falls to the floor. Father Claude takes his light, slowly climbs the stairs, and shuts the door. The room is black again.



But the handsome officer is not dead. Phoebus de Châteaupers left the hospital after a few weeks. Nobody thought this information was important to the court. Phoebus quickly forgot about Esmeralda. In fact, on the day of her hanging, he is in Paris again. He is at the Gondelauriers' house, enjoying the conversation of Mademoiselle Fleur-de-Lys.

"Where have you been for two months?" the young lady asks.

"I'm a soldier," answers Phoebus. "I work for my king. We were at Queue-en-Brie. Look, what's happening in the square?" He does not want to answer any more questions.

The young lovers stand at the big open window and look across the square at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame.

"They are going to hang a witch at noon. She's preparing herself at the church," Fleur-de-Lys explains.

"What has she done?" asks Phoebus.

"I don't know. Listen, Phoebus. We're getting married soon. Have you ever loved another woman?" asks Fleur-de-Lys.

"My dear, of course not," Phoebus lies. "You're my one true love." Even he believes his own words at that minute. But then he sees Esmeralda outside the church, on her knees. "Let's go into the other room and talk to your mother," he suggests.

"No," says Fleur-de-Lys, "I want to watch."

Esmeralda is at the front of the cathedral. She is wearing a simple white dress and no shoes. Her beautiful black hair falls over her shoulders and around her neck is the little bag with her secret inside.

The priests carry the cross to Esmeralda, but she does not look up. One priest goes near her and puts his mouth very close to her ear.

"Will you have me?" the priest asks. Only the girl can hear his words. "I can save you right now."

Esmeralda looks at him and says, "You're a devil. Go away or I'll tell everyone your story."

Father Claude smiles a terrible smile. "They will not believe you. But answer me quickly. Will you have me?"

"Where's my Phoebus?"

"He's dead!" answers the priest. But he looks up at that minute and sees Phoebus de Châteaupers at the window of the Gondelauriers' great house. He cannot believe his eyes. "Die then! Nobody will have you!"

Claude Frollo turns his back on the girl and returns to the cathedral with the other priests.

After the doors of the cathedral close, the guards move toward the girl. Suddenly, Esmeralda looks up and cries happily, "Phoebus!" She, too, has seen him at the window. He is alive! The judge and the priest lied to her!

Esmeralda's eyes meet the officer's eyes. His handsome face changes when he sees her. He takes Fleur-de-Lys by the arm and quickly moves away from the window.

Esmeralda understands everything. She is going to die for the murder of Phoebus de Châteaupers. But he is alive! And he does not love her. He does not want to know her or help her.

Everyone is looking at the girl. They have not noticed a man in one of the lower towers of the cathedral. He has seen everything. As the guards pull Esmeralda away from the church, this man jumps to the ground. He knocks down the guards, and with one hand he picks up Esmeralda. He carries her over his shoulder and runs inside the church. A little goat runs out from the crowd and follows them. In a loud voice, the man cries, "Sanctuary!" Esmeralda is safe.

The crowd is silent. Then everyone shouts, "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!" They wanted a hanging, but now they are happy for Esmeralda. Nobody can touch her inside the walls of Notre-Dame.

Inside the church, Esmeralda sees that her friend, her helper, is Quasimodo, the hunchback. But now he is not ugly. To Esmeralda, and to the crowd outside, he is brave and good—the best man in

Paris on this day. The people watch him carry the girl to the top of the cathedral. Each time they see him run past one of the church windows, they shout, "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!"

In the cathedral, Quasimodo looks after Esmeralda. He gives her his own bed and his own food. He brings her warm clothes, and she has Djali with her for company. She is safe, but she cannot leave the cathedral. If she does, the guards will take her to the Place de Grève and hang her.

Father Claude Frollo did not see Quasimodo save Esmeralda. After his last private conversation with the girl at the door of the cathedral, he suffered more than ever. He left the city and walked through the fields, thinking about his lost love. He imagined the guards taking Esmeralda to her death in the Place de Grève. It is after noon now, the hour of her hanging. His only love, the only important person in his world is dead. Why did he destroy her? Why did his love for her drive him crazy?

The priest returns to Paris and to Notre-Dame at midnight. He falls to his knees and thinks of Esmeralda, now dead and cold in the ground. At last, he gets up and begins to climb the steps to his tower.

Suddenly, the priest feels a cold wind. He turns and looks into a dark corner. There he sees a sad woman in a long white dress with a white goat next to her. It is Esmeralda! "She's free," thinks Father Claude. "She's dead." He does not speak and the girl disappears without seeing him.

Next morning, Esmeralda's first in the cathedral, the sun is shining, and for the first time in months she is not afraid. Then she sees a terrible face at her door, and she turns her head away.

"Don't be afraid. I'm your friend," Quasimodo says. "I'll stand behind the wall. I don't want to scare you."

The voice is rough, but it is also kind. Esmeralda goes to the door and softly says, "Come here." She touches his arm and he looks up at her. She wants him to stay and to talk.



Esmeralda goes to the door and softly says, "Come here."

"I'm sorry," Quasimodo says. "I cannot hear you."

The girl looks at his ugly face and body. She is sad for him, but she is beginning to like him.

"Why did you save me?" she asks.

Quasimodo watches her mouth carefully. "I understand," he answers. "You're asking me why I saved you. Don't you remember? One night in January, I tried to carry you off. That was wrong, very wrong. But the next day, I was tied to the torturer's wheel. You brought water to me. You were my only friend. Now I'll help you if I can."

"You saved my life!" Esmeralda says and smiles at him. "We'll always be friends."

"I have something for you," says Quasimodo happily. "I cannot be near your room all the time. But take this whistle. If you need me, whistle for me. I can hear that."

The long days pass slowly for Esmeralda. Father Claude Frollo, of course, learns that she is not dead. She has found sanctuary in his cathedral. His mind cannot rest, and he walks through the dark, silent church for hours each night.

One night, the priest cannot stop himself, so he climbs to Esmeralda's little room. He steps across something at her door and silently goes in. Then he hurries to her bed and takes her in his arms.

Esmeralda sits up and tries to push the priest away. "Go away! Devil! Murderer!" she screams with hate.

"Please, please! Love me!" the priest shouts. He kisses her neck and shoulders. "I need you. I can't live without you."

"Let me go!" cries Esmeralda. She tries to escape.

But the priest holds her down and shouts, "Be quiet! I'll have you!"

Esmeralda reaches out, finds Quasimodo's whistle on the floor, and puts it to her mouth. It makes a loud, clear sound.

"What's that?" asks the priest.

Suddenly, the priest is lifted up and thrown to the floor outside Esmeralda's room. As usual Quasimodo was sleeping at her door. He lifts a large knife above his head to kill this evil attacker. But the light from the moon shows Quasimodo the face of Father Claude Frollo. The hunchback drops the knife, but stands between him and Esmeralda.

"Father Claude, I will not hurt you. But you'll have to kill me before you touch this girl!"

The priest runs down the stairs. His only thought is, "She loves Quasimodo and he defends her. But nobody will have her if I can't."

Chapter 5 Together in Death

Pierre Gringoire, the poor writer, has continued to live near the City of Thieves in Esmeralda's little house. He has heard that his wife is now safe in Notre-Dame. He is quite happy to live without her. In fact, he has begun to forget about Esmeralda, but sometimes he thinks about Djali, his little friend.

One afternoon, Gringoire is walking near the river when he feels a hand on his shoulder.

"Monsieur Gringoire, how are you?" asks Father Claude Frollo.

"I'm very well, Father," answers Gringoire. "My health is not excellent—but good."

He is surprised by the changes in the priest. The older man's hair is almost white now, his skin is very pale, and his eyes are deep in his head.

"Then you have no problems?" asks the priest.

"No, not I."

"But you are still poor?"

"Poor, yes, but not unhappy."

"And what about your pretty wife?" asks the priest.