

"I'm sorry, I don't have any information about her. Isn't she in your cathedral?" asks Gringoire.

"Yes, that's correct. But Judge Robert d'Estouteville has ordered the King's Guard to get her out of the church. She'll be hanged in three days. She saved your life. Don't you want to help her?" asks the priest.

"It's true—she did save my life," says the writer. "But there's nothing I can do for her. I don't want them to hang me, too."

"You're friends with the thieves and gypsies. Can't they help?" suggests the priest.

He clearly has an idea in his head, but Pierre Gringoire does not notice this.

Gringoire stops and thinks for a minute. "Yes... they're fine people and they love Esmeralda. Maybe they can attack the cathedral and save her. And the goat, of course. I'll ask them to do it tomorrow evening. It's a good plan, isn't it?"

"A very good plan, but listen to me," the priest says coldly. "Find out everything about the attack and come to me tomorrow with this information. You aren't a soldier. But while they're fighting, you and I will help your poor wife."

That evening, Pierre Gringoire meets with the King of Thieves and tells him about his plan. The king is happy to help Esmeralda, and to help himself, too. If the thieves get inside the old church at night, they will not only find the girl, but also the cathedral's gold and silver. The thieves and gypsies quickly prepare for the attack.

At midnight on the following day, the King of Thieves calls his people together. "Our sister, Esmeralda, is alive and safe, but in the morning the King's Guard will come for her. They want to hang her tomorrow at noon in the Place de Grève. Follow me and we'll save her!"

A great crowd of thieves and gypsies follow the king silently through the dark streets of the capital to Notre-Dame. They are carrying knives, sticks, and all kinds of tools.

At the same time, Quasimodo is walking through the great church. He cannot sleep. He has locked the big door and has checked every corner of Notre-Dame. Esmeralda is sleeping safely in her little room, but the hunchback feels nervous for some reason. Is there a new danger in the world outside the cathedral? Will Father Claude try to hurt Esmeralda again?

Since his attack on Esmeralda, the priest has stayed away from the girl's little room. But he has acted badly toward Quasimodo. He has given him more work and sometimes he even hits him. Quasimodo is patient and follows the priest's orders. He will not make any trouble for Father Claude, but he watches him. The hunchback will stop him if he goes near Esmeralda. But the priest has not been near her room again.

Quasimodo climbs to the top of the north tower as the party of thieves and gypsies comes closer. With his one good eye, he sees them moving toward Notre-Dame. The bellringer is afraid now. Why are they coming toward him and toward Esmeralda? He imagines that the people of Paris hate her as much as they hate him.

Quasimodo thinks quickly. He cannot escape from the church with the gypsy girl, so he will fight. Some workers have been in the south tower and he runs there. He will use their heavy tools, their wood, their stones, and their metal to stop his enemies.

He looks out and sees the crowd of people arrive at the great door.

"Our sister is not a murderer!" the King of Thieves shouts. "Give her to us or we will break the doors of this church. We will take her and your gold!"

Quasimodo cannot hear these words. He believes that these people are Esmeralda's enemies. When they attack the great doors, the hunchback begins to throw the heavy builders' material on their heads. He kills a great number of the thieves and gypsies, but they continue to fight. They find ladders and begin to climb up the

sides of the church. But Quasimodo is as strong as a hundred men. He throws men off the building and pushes ladders into the square below. He pours red hot metal on their heads, but the gypsies and thieves continue to attack. Poor Quasimodo! He needs help. Suddenly, he sees soldiers on horses arriving at the square. The King's Guard, with Officer Phoebus de Châteaupers at the head, have come to stop the fight. The gypsies and thieves disappear down every narrow street near the cathedral, leaving a pile of dead bodies in the square.

Quasimodo cannot believe his luck. He falls to his knees and thanks God for this help. Esmeralda is safe again and he runs to her room. But when he gets to the girl's sanctuary, it is empty.



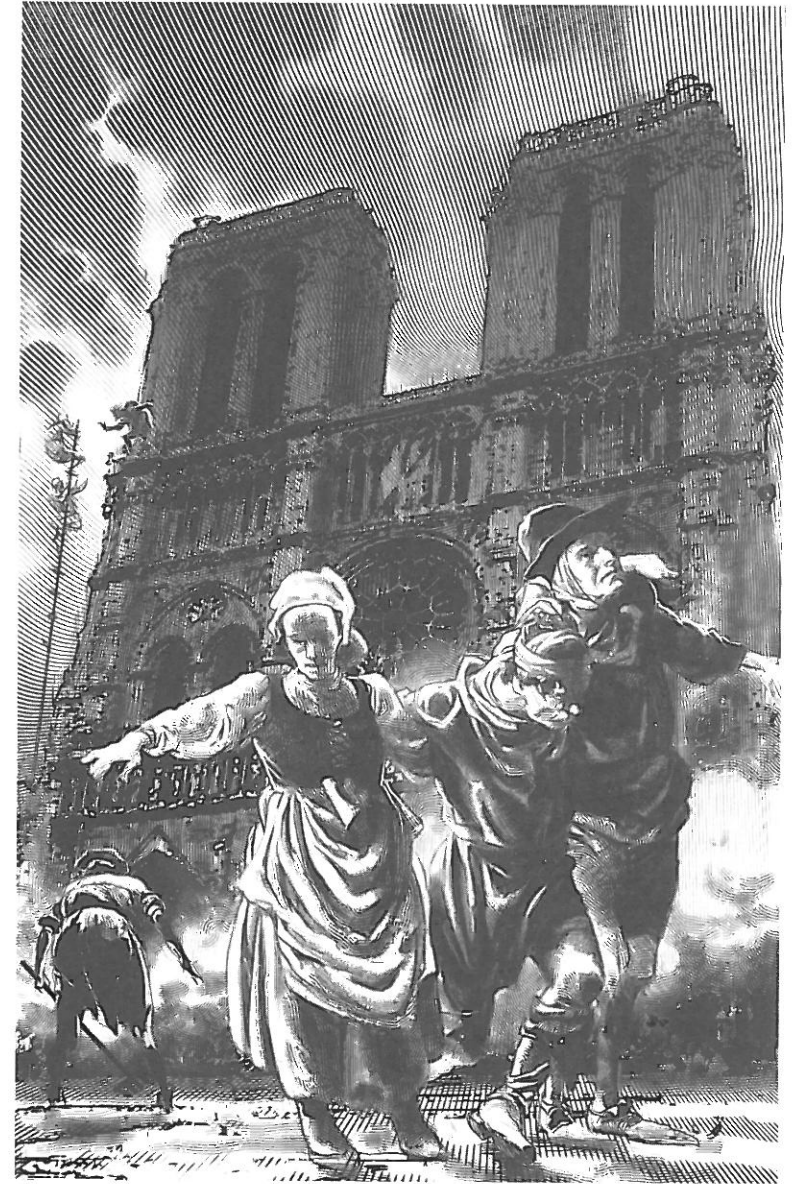
When the King of Thieves and his men began their attack on the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Esmeralda was sleeping. But the noise outside soon woke her. She ran to the window, and in the moonlight she saw the crowd of men. Some were trying to break down the doors of the church. Others were climbing the walls. The noise became louder and the gypsy girl was afraid. She believed that the men wanted to take her from the church. They wanted to hang her. She hurried back to her room and hid from these enemies.

As she shook with fear on her bed, Esmeralda heard the sound of footsteps coming toward her room. Suddenly, two men walked through her door. The girl cried out for help.

"Don't be afraid," said one of the men. "It's me, Pierre Gringoire, your husband and your friend."

Esmeralda was calmer when she heard this name. She looked up and saw the writer. But she also saw the other man behind Gringoire. He was dressed in black from head to toe and his face was covered.

"Who's that with you?" Esmeralda asked.



*Quasimodo throws men off the building.*

"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.



Now, as the dark sky begins to lighten, Esmeralda sees the face of Sachette on the other side of the window. The witch's thin fingers hold Esmeralda's arm tightly and her eyes are full of hate for the gypsy. The girl falls against the wall. She knows that Sachette will never help her. She knows that this is the day of her death.

"What have I done to you?" she asks the old woman.

"You know your crime. I had a pretty little child, my Agnès," she begins. "Your people—the gypsies—stole her from me. They stole her and ate her. That's what you did to me."

"But maybe I wasn't born then," Esmeralda answers.

"Oh, yes. You were one of them. They came fifteen years ago to my little house in Rheims. Agnès was the most beautiful baby in the world. You took her and you took my life. Poor little child! Now I'll watch you hang."

There is more light in the sky now and Esmeralda hears the soldiers coming toward the Place de Grève.

"I've done nothing to you. Please don't hold me here. I don't want to die," says the girl.

"My Agnès didn't want to die!" screams Sachette. "Give me back my child and you can live. Look, this little shoe is the only thing that the gypsies left me."

"Show me that shoe!" cries Esmeralda. With her free hand she pulls the little bag from around her neck. She takes out a baby's shoe and a small note. It says, *When you find the other shoe, your mother will open her arms to you.*

Sachette's eyes grow wide. She looks at the shoe and reads the note. "My daughter! My daughter!" she cries.

"Mother!" answers Esmeralda.

The witch opens the door and pulls the girl into her dark prison. Then she kisses Esmeralda's hands and holds her in her arms. The tears of fifteen years run down her face, but now they are tears of happiness.

"My child, my daughter," she repeats again and again. "How

beautiful you are! We'll leave here and return to Rheims. We'll be happy again. I'll love you and protect you."

"Mother!" says Esmeralda. "I'm so happy!"

Suddenly, the two women hear the sound of horses. Esmeralda throws her arms around Sachette and cries, "Save me, Mother! They're coming for me. They want to kill me."

"They can't take you from me. I've only had you for a minute," cries Sachette. She looks out the window. "They're almost here. I'll talk to them. Hide in that corner. I'll say that you've escaped."

Esmeralda hurries to the dark corner and Sachette covers her with an old sheet and a big stone. Then she hears the voice of Father Claude Frolo as he passes her door. "This way, Officer Phoebus de Châteaupers!" the priest shouts.

Esmeralda hears this name and tries to move.

"Don't move!" orders Sachette.

A group of soldiers on horseback now arrive. Sachette stands in the door, so nobody can look inside.

"Old woman," says an officer, "we're looking for a young gypsy. The priest says you have her."

"I don't know anything about a gypsy. I hate all of them," says Sachette.

"He told us, 'The girl is with the witch,'" says one of the soldiers.

"She was here," Sachette says quickly, "but she bit me and ran away."

"Which way did she go?" asks the officer.

"Toward Mouton Street, I think," Sachette says.

"We've been on Mouton Street and we didn't see a gypsy girl."

"Maybe she went toward the river," says Sachette.

"Old woman, you're lying! Let's take her to the torturer and get the true story," shouts one of the soldiers.

"Yes, take me! Quick! Let's leave now," says the witch. She wants to guide the soldiers away from Esmeralda.

"She really is crazy," says one of the soldiers.

"She's lived here for fifteen years," the officer says. "She hates gypsy women. She can't help us. Let's go."

Sachette watches the soldiers return to their horses. She thinks her daughter will be safe. Now they will be happy together.

Then another officer arrives on horseback.

"Sir, gypsies are not my business. With your permission, I will return to my company." The voice belongs to Phoebus de Châteaupers, officer of the King's Guard.

Esmeralda hears the voice and lifts her head. Before her mother can stop her, the girl runs to the window.

"Phoebus! Here I am, my Phoebus!" she shouts.

Phoebus has already ridden off, so he does not hear Esmeralda's cry. But the other soldiers are still there.

"The witch was lying. I thought so," says the officer. "Take the girl away and hang her now. It's the King's order."

Sachette cannot speak. She puts her arms around her daughter's waist and holds tight.

"Mother! Protect me!" cries Esmeralda, as the soldiers pull the two women out of the prison.

The sun is climbing into the sky. There is nobody in the Place de Grève, but two men are watching this terrible picture. They are at the top of one of the towers of Notre-Dame, on the other side of the river.

The hangman is waiting for the girl with his rope as the soldiers carry her and her mother to his ladder. When Sachette sees the rope, she begins to cry. The soldiers pull her away and the hangman carries Esmeralda up the ladder.

"No! No! I don't want to die!" the girl screams.

The hangman, with tears in his eyes, places the rope around Esmeralda's beautiful neck. Sachette tries to climb the ladder. She tries to stop the hangman, but he pushes her to the ground. Sachette hits her head on the hard earth and dies immediately. Then the hangman finishes his job.



Earlier at the cathedral, Esmeralda's empty room made Quasimodo crazy. Where was she? Was she in danger? The poor bellringer ran through the cathedral calling her name. When the soldiers arrived, he opened the big door for them. He did not realize that they, not the gypsies, were Esmeralda's enemies.

After searching every corner of the great church, the soldiers left. Quasimodo returned to Esmeralda's little room and tried to think. Who took Esmeralda? There was only one possible answer: Father Claude Frollo. He was the only person with a key to Esmeralda's room. The hunchback remembered the priest's attacks on the girl. But even now Quasimodo's love for Father Claude was very deep.

Quasimodo climbed to the top of Notre-Dame and saw Father Claude disappear behind the door of the north tower. From this tower, a person can see the Place de Grève. Fearful and angry, the hunchback silently followed the priest.

When he reached the tower, Quasimodo found Father Claude. He wanted to ask him about Esmeralda. But the priest was in another world. He did not hear or see the hunchback. He was watching something, and only this existed for him. Quasimodo stood behind him and followed his eyes to the Place de Grève.

A group of soldiers was in the square at the hanging place. A man was pulling something white along the ground, with something black on top of it. Suddenly the sun shone brightly and Quasimodo could see clearly. A soldier pulled a woman in black away from a girl in white. Then another man, the King's hangman, began to climb the ladder with the girl over his shoulder. There was a rope around her neck. The girl was his Esmeralda.

Claude Frollo climbed on to the wall that goes around the north tower. He wanted to see better. Suddenly, the hangman kicked the ladder away, and Esmeralda hung in the air at the end

of the rope. Her body shook with terrible pain before her neck broke.

An evil laugh came from the priest. Quasimodo did not hear the laugh, but he saw it and ran toward the priest. With his two big hands, he pushed Claude Frollo over the side of the tower to his death a hundred meters below.

The poor bellringer looked again at Esmeralda's dead body, hanging from the rope. A river of tears fell from his single eye. Then he looked down at the body of Father Claude Frollo. "All that I ever loved!" he cried.

That same evening, Quasimodo disappeared and was never seen again. Stories about the Cathedral of Notre-Dame and the hunchback and the priest passed from person to person through Paris. Was Quasimodo the devil? Did he mysteriously carry his evil sorcerer, the real Claude Frollo, away in the night?



The writer, Pierre Gringoire, returned to Esmeralda's little house and lived happily with Djali. He tried many different jobs and finally wrote another play. It was a success, and many more after it were successful, too. The writer's dream came true: he was rich and famous.

Phoebus de Châteaupers also became rich, but he did not live happily. He married Fleur-de-Lys de Gondelaurier.

After Esmeralda's death, her body was thrown into the ground with the bodies of other murderers killed by the state. About two years later, when another body was added to the pile, the police discovered something interesting in the ground. They found two skeletons: one was a woman with a little bag around her neck; the other, a man with a hump on his back and some red hair near his head. The male skeleton was holding the female in his arms. The man's neck was not broken by the hangman's rope. He took himself to this place and died there.



*He pushed Claude Frollo over the side of the tower to his death a hundred meters below.*