



CHAPTER
16

Little Sword



Dom Claude Frollo had locked himself away after Esmeralda rejected him. He had barely stirred from his small chamber. But then he found out that the gypsy was alive and hidden within the walls of the cathedral. There were many days when he would sneak up and watch her as she played with her goat.

At night he thrashed back and forth in bed. He could think of nothing but her. She was so close!

One night he came to a breaking point. He could take it no longer. His eyes glared like fire as he leaped from his bed, flung on his black cloak, and rushed out.

Esmeralda was tucked in her room, sleeping lightly. She woke with a strange feeling that someone was watching her. She turned toward the window and a dark, twisted face peered in at her. All the horrors of the past came flooding back.

Then something touched her. She trembled with terror as he grabbed her arms.

“Go away!” she raged.

“No. I won’t go. I love you.”

She struggled and kicked. “Get out of here, you murderer!” She snatched up the metal whistle and blew. The sound trilled through the room.

Within moments, something grabbed the priest. It was too dark to see, but he was sure it was the hunchback.

“Quasimodo, no!”

Quasimodo drew a sword. He threw the Archdeacon to the floor and pressed his knee against the priest’s chest.

Dom Claude tried to signal to the hunchback

that it was his master he'd pinned down, but he was hidden beneath his black cloak. Quasimodo raised the sword high, brought it down toward his head, and stopped.

The hunchback glanced at Esmeralda. "No. I will not let her see me shed blood." He grabbed the priest by his legs and dragged him outside.

Once he was in the light, Quasimodo saw who he'd overpowered and trembled with fear. "Master, I did not know it was you." He handed Dom Claude the sword. "I am sure you wish to kill me now."

But Esmeralda snatched the sword away before the Archdeacon could take it. She held the point of the blade to his nose.

"How dare you come here! You attacked Phoebus and let me believe that he was dead. But I know that he is alive!"

Without a word, the priest dodged away, rushing down the spiral stairs. He locked himself back in his cell, thinking, *If I can't have her, no one shall.*



CHAPTER 17

The Little Shoe



Pierre Gringoire had spent the last few months at the Court of Miracles. He continued performing his balancing act for what little money he could make.

One day as he crossed the square, someone tapped his shoulder. When he spun around, there stood the Archdeacon. Pierre almost didn't recognize him. The man's eyes were sunken and hollow, and his hair had turned the color of snow.

"How are you?" Dom Claude asked.

"So-so," Pierre replied.

The priest nodded. "And how are you earning money these days?"

"With a chair between my teeth," the poet joked.

Dom Claude smiled and Pierre could see the heavy wrinkles creased around the man's mouth. "And what about the gypsy girl?" Dom Claude inquired.

Pierre was stumped by all these questions? "I have not seen her."

"But isn't she your wife? Surely you have tried to speak to her."

"Well, uh, I've been busy," Pierre stammered.

Dom Claude glared into his eyes. "But she saved your life. Now is your chance to save hers. They are still planning to hang her."

Pierre couldn't believe it. "But she has the protection of the church. They can't touch her."

"Yes, they can," Dom Claude said. "Someone has requested a special order from the King."

Pierre stopped to think. "But how can I save her?"

The Archdeacon moved closer and whispered, "You can smuggle her out."

"What? No! They will hang me instead." But then he had an idea. "I know a way. I'll get

help from my friends at the Court of Miracles. We will storm the cathedral.”

With Pierre’s help, King Clopin organized a mob. That night the crowd of thieves and beggars marched to the church, carrying torches, sticks, and an assortment of weapons.

Up in the bell tower, Quasimodo peered over the North Tower and saw them thundering toward Notre Dame. He panicked. Were they here to take Esmeralda? He had to stop them.

When Clopin reached the cathedral door, he shouted, “Bishop of Paris! You have wrongfully accused one of our sisters. Surrender her to us!” And with that, the mob charged the door.

Quasimodo had no way of knowing that they wanted to save Esmeralda. He attacked them, heaving large stones and beams from the roof.

But the army of thieves burst through the door, taking the church on all sides. Quasimodo knew he couldn’t fight them off, but he had to protect Esmeralda. He hurried to her room and opened the door . . . but she was no longer there.

When the attack had started, Esmeralda had been sleeping. Then two men had burst in. She was about to scream when, "Esmeralda, wait! It's me, Pierre. Your husband." A mysterious man stood behind him. His cloak and hood covered his face.

"Who is that?" she asked.

"Don't worry," Pierre assured her. "He's a friend. But come with us. You are in danger."

The three of them took Djali and hurried out of the church. They wound through the back streets of Paris until they reached the river.

"There," the stranger said, pointing to a small boat. They all climbed inside and pushed away into the current.

Esmeralda watched the dark stranger. He seemed familiar, but she couldn't be sure. With a gentle bump, the boat reached the opposite shore. The man offered his hand to Esmeralda, but for some reason she couldn't bring herself to touch him. She stepped out of the boat on her own.

She stood for a moment, then turned back toward the water. "Pierre?" But he was gone. He had rowed away, taking Djali with him.

"Now!" the man snapped, grabbing her arm.

"Wait! Who are you? What do you want?" she cried.

He dragged her along until they reached the Place de Grève, where a scaffold and gallows awaited her. It was then that he lowered his hood.

"No!" Her worst nightmare had come true. The wicked Archdeacon stood before her. He leaned in close. She could feel his foul breath on her ear.

"This is where you will hang, my dear. Unless you let me help you. Run away with me. Run away with me now."

She fought to push him off. "Never! I could never be with you. I love Phoebus."

His eyes flashed and his face filled with rage. "Then die!" He latched onto her once again and yanked her across the square.

"Stop! Please!" she begged, trying to keep up with his pace.

He pulled her up to the cell of the old recluse. "Here, old woman!" he shouted, shoving Esmeralda inside. "Here's the gypsy girl. Now you can have your revenge."

Esmeralda stumbled in and fell. Dom Claude sneered. "You have sealed your fate, gypsy girl." He then turned and ran off into the dark night.

The old recluse clasped Esmeralda's wrist and held tight. She was much stronger than she looked.

"I'll call the soldiers now," the woman said. "This time you will hang. I'll see to it."

Esmeralda hung her head, sobbing. "I don't understand. What have I ever done to you?"

"You're a gypsy," the woman answered. "I hate gypsies. You stole my child!"

"But it wasn't me! I've never taken someone's child."

"Then who was it? Have you seen her? Have you seen my little girl?" The old recluse held

up the small shoe that she treasured. "This is all I have left of her."

Esmeralda gasped. She opened the little green bag that she wore around her neck. She pulled out a little shoe, identical to the one in the old woman's hand.

The woman trembled. Tears poured down her cheeks. "I don't believe it. You are my daughter!"

Esmeralda threw her arms around her mother and wept. "After all this time I've found you."

But their happy reunion was interrupted by the sound of soldiers' horses.

"I must hide!" Esmeralda cried. "They're coming for me." She crouched in a dark corner.

The soldiers stopped in the square. One of them spoke. "The Archdeacon said she's in there, Captain Phoebus."

She had nothing to fear now. Her Phoebus would save her. "Phoebus!" she called. But her mother place a hand over her mouth. "Shhh!"

A loud crash echoed through the room as a soldier kicked in the door. "Where is she?"

Esmeralda still hovered in the dark. Her mother blocked her from the soldier's view.

"She ran away. Toward the river."

Esmeralda couldn't wait. Her Phoebus was here. She had to see him. She hurried out to where he sat atop his horse. "Phoebus, it's me!"

The captain glared at her as though she were a stranger. He turned to the guard. "Get it over with." And with that, he rode away.

Esmeralda was stunned. The hangman came forward and placed a noose around her neck. "Wait! No!" she begged.

The old woman sprang at the hangman. Like a wild beast, she bit and clawed. He shoved the old recluse so hard her head struck the pavement. In an instant she was dead.

Esmeralda couldn't believe it. There was no one left to save her. With the noose heavy around her neck, the hangman led her up the steps, to the waiting gallows.



The Marriage of Quasimodo



When Quasimodo saw that Esmeralda was gone, he grasped his head in his hands and stamped with rage. He rushed about the church, top and bottom, over and over, in search of her. But she was gone, leaving him all alone.

He cried out in anguish and fell upon her bed. His lovely gypsy girl had been stolen away. Who could've taken her? *Only one person*, Quasimodo reasoned. *The Archdeacon. He had a key.*

Quasimodo descended the staircase to a gallery below. He saw the Archdeacon leaning against a balcony, intently watching some activity. The hunchback followed his gaze.

That's when he saw it—the body of his beautiful gypsy dangling from the end of a rope.

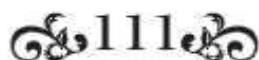
A devilish rage filled him. He rushed the priest, and with his two huge hands, thrust him over the balcony.

Dom Claude grabbed a gutter and held tight. He dared not look at the distant ground below. He tried swinging himself up onto the gutter, but it was too much of an effort. So he hung there, frightened, not sure what to do. The gutter sagged, threatening to break. His fingers began to slip and then the gutter broke, sending Dom Claude plunging to his death.

Quasimodo, torn with grief, still gazed at Esmeralda's lifeless body. Heaving a deep sigh, he cried out, "You are all I have ever loved!"



On that day, Quasimodo disappeared. No one in Notre Dame knew where he'd gone. That evening, the hangman and his assistants cut down Esmeralda's body and placed her in a



tomb at Montfaucon—one of the most ancient cemeteries in the kingdom.

About a year later, men were sent to Montfaucon to retrieve the body of a prisoner who had been pardoned after death and allowed a decent burial. But once inside, they came upon something quite odd.

There were two skeletons in the tomb, one entwined with the other. One skeleton was a woman wearing a small green bag around her neck. The other was a dwarf with a bumpy, crooked spine. It appeared as though he came there to die.

When the men tried to pull that skeleton apart from the one it held, its crooked old bones buckled and crumbled into dust.