

OPENING

Begin in blackness, lights coming up dimly as though around a campfire.

MADAME CLOPIN

But why would anyone build a church made of cheese?

FROLLO

They just did! It's part of the story!

GRINGOIRE

Before we Roma finished our church of stone, the gadjo asked to trade.

LADY DE GONDELAURIER

We will give you our church made of cheese for yours made of stone.

GERARD

Throw in five coins of gold and you have a deal.

FROLLO

So we traded the churches...

JACQUES

And we ate the church made of cheese for supper! Everyone had their fill.

GERARD

But the gadjo would not give us the coins.

VIOLET

This is why we steal—we are only trying to get back what is ours.

MADAME CLOPIN

Well, if there were a church made of cheese here now, I would eat it. I am hungry.

FROLLO

Share my meal with me. Perhaps we will do better tomorrow.

MADAME CLOPIN

Perhaps we will. And is that the end?

GRINGOIRE

That is the end of that story!

SCARLET

I like the one about the hook in the door better.

FRANCOIS

Tell another!

CLOPIN

That, too, is where the story begins.

MADAME CLOPIN

But perhaps the story begins in many places.

GRINGOIRE

Perhaps it begins here.

Go to Carnival scene.

COPPENOLE

I tell you all, the end of the world has come!

GRINGOIRE

The 6th of January, 1482 is not a day which most histories recall.

COPPENOLE

These accursed inventions...artilleries, bombards, printing!

JEHAN

Yet the whole of Paris was in commotion. It was Epiphany and the Carnival of Fools.

COPPENOLE

It will kill the book as we know it.

MADAME CLOPIN

On such a day, who could not revile the name of God a little

JACQUES

In such good company as members of the church

PHOEBUS

and loose women.

Bells ringing three times

GERARD

An open square, where on any normal day one could buy fish heads or stale wine or a chance in a game filled with chances.

JACQUES

An open square, where on any normal day one could see jugglers and tricksters, nuns and soldiers, lovers and those not in love, all going about their business.

GRINGOIRE

An open square, crowded with flesh pleasing and otherwise, expectant faces, waiting for folly to reign openly for a change, waiting for their lives to become more interesting. Waiting.

Jehan, I should have known. Look for lawlessness and stupidity and you are sure to be found.

JEHAN

And good day to you, too, brother.

FROLLO

Put your teeth together and swallow your tongue, but do not speak! My son...

The crowd gasps as QUASIMODO leaps to go to FROLLO. They are puzzled when the two embrace tenderly if awkwardly. QUASIMODO signs to him (Have I done wrong, Father?), FROLLO signs back and speaks.

FROLLO

No, son. You are innocent.

FROLLO Turns to the crowd. He helps to remove the "vestmants" of the Pope of Fools from QUASIMODO.

FROLLO

How often must you so-called Christians mock this creature of God's? His life has been hard enough without your taunts. Such a twisted body, left on the doorstep of Notre Dame for me alone to raise. Deaf now from ringing his beloved bells. If he shows his face among you, you scream or throw stones. Or you make him the Pope of your blasphemous Carnival.

GERARD (*semi-rushing FROLLO*)

Who are you to break up our Carnival of Fools, priest?

QUASIMODO grabs GERARD. JACQUES grabs him but is instead also siezed and QUASIMODO would kill them both. FROLLO gently lays one hand on his shoulder and QUASIMODO calms down.

FROLLO

Carnival of Fools? I say you are idiots, sinners, wastrels, lechers, and a stain on the earth! (*Signing to QUASIMODO*) Come my son. Let us go home.

Music is heard

I.1.D: Esmeralda the enchantress

FROLLO

I wish that... I wish.

FROLLO is hypnotized. ESMERALDA is singing.

ESMERALDA (*singing*)

Don't come down the weary stairs
Don't ask about all my tears
I went through the alleys, dark and alone

GRINGOIRE

Or we are simply the tellers of the tale,

MADAME CLOPIN

That is simple enough.

JACQUES

You have met the Hunchback and the Priest,

PHOEBUS

The handsome Captain Phoebus and the mad recluse Sister Gudule.

VIOLET

You have met the gypsy girl Esmeralda.

GRINGOIRE

The rest will tell itself.

MADAME CLOPIN

With a little help.

GRINGOIRE

Agreed. With a little help.

SCARLET

May we go on? May we continue?

GRINGOIRE

The same square, almost deserted now some hours later, the play hopelessly abandoned, the Carnival has moved on without us.

Scene Three

Notre Dame, ESMERALDA's room. ESMERALDA is sleeping; FROLLO enters without her seeing.

JEHAN

Claude Frollo's nights...Dreadful. Endless. To think she was so near to him he could almost smell her. He would close his eyes and see her, the blood of Phoebus staining her lovely throat. Or stripped to her shift, almost naked, almost a fallen Eve, the rope about her neck, vulnerable, ripe for the taking. Ready to be beaten, punished, chastised, flayed, tormented for tormenting him, made to suffer as she had made him suffer. But he would save her soul! And now, her protector gone, only a door between them...And he had the keys.

FROLLO leaps on her, binding ESMERALDA. They will struggle, perhaps with him shushing as he tries to rape her. She will knee him and he will crumple from it. He will recover enough to overpower her again. If he is trying to mount her from behind, she would head butt him in reverse. Then she gets the whistle to her lips. FROLLO will get her onto her back and do a back-handed cuff. Before he is able to actually rape her, QUASIMODO will enter and grab him. As before, FROLLO is spun so that QUASIMODO does not see his face at first. Finally he will get his head back. QUASIMODO will see his face. FROLLO will pass out.

FROLLO

Your protector is gone. You must have sent him, regardless of the danger he faces in leaving this place. It is his sanctuary, too. It was mine, until you came here. Go ahead, try to scream for him. Not a word? He wouldn't be able to hear you even if he were hovering over you. Struggle, yes. I love the way you writhe helplessly. Squirm for me, witch!

ESMERALDA

I am no witch. But you are a demon.

FROLLO

You have found your tongue? Let me do that.

He violently kisses her. She manages to knee him.

FROLLO

You will pay for that. You will suffer. That will please me very much.

But she manages to kick him again.

ESMERALDA

Quasimodo!