

Fellowship & Fairydust



French Gothic

*Fellowship
&
Fairydust*

Editor-in-Chief

Avellina Balestri

Assistant Editor

Sarah Levesque

Cover by

Byrnwiga

Graphic Designers

See page 94

Questions?

Comments?

Want to read more?

Check out our
website and blog at

**Fellowshipand
Fairydust.com**



TABLE OF

Beauties, Beasts and Phantoms - TK Wilson - 6

Love of a Father - The Ginger - 12

Hidden Beauty - Donna Ferguson Dudley - 14

House Cat - Stephanie Piro - 16

**Making the Bones Live -
Kevin Derby - 20**

**Between Life and Death -
scorpioan - 25**

**Hellfire - Hannah Vincent -
29**

**Bells of Notre Dame -
Amanda Pizzolatto - 31**

Gargoyles - Ewan McTavish - 32

Eponine's Last - Rachel Atterholt - 35

An Emperor's Grudge - Adeel Ahmed - 36



CONTENTS

A Tale of Two Men - Anna Rajagopal - 42

Hemorrhage - littlelonghairedoutlaw - 45

**Notre Dame in 2017: A Picture Walk -
Sarah Levesque - 50**

Reprise - Seth Figment - 60

**La Cité des Cloches -
David Glenn - 65**

**Up in Flames - Amanda
Pizzolatto - 68**

**Les Miserables...
The Title Says It All -
Sarah Levesque - 75**

**Daughters of the Phantom -
Isabella Summitt - 76**

Through My Most Grievous Fault - Avellina Balestri - 86

One Small Star - Avellina Balestri - 93

Next Issue - 96

Fellowship & Fairydust

All articles and artwork belong to their respective creators and may not be copied without permission.

We lay no claim to franchises or characters from franchises mentioned in this magazine; each is copyrighted by its own publishers and/or studios. All are used here for entertainment purposes only. See page 94 for more information and go to our website for complete disclaimers.

Image credits may be found on pg 95



Editor

“To love another person

~ Victor Hugo

Many of the great literary works and folk tales of France have permeated our popular culture by way of film, television, music, and the stage. Over the centuries, these stories have made an impact through their special flavor, a haunting quality that blends the rawness of tragedy, the starkness of reality, and an underlying hope in the powers of goodness that lie within human beings, if only they can be brought to the surface.

In so many of these stories, we see outcasts, either through physical disfigurement or social rejection, go on a spiritual journey and quest to discover the meaning of belonging. In contrast, we see figures who may be perceived as righteous and beyond reproach experience the darkest encounters with their inner demons, a battle in which their own hypocrisy is their undoing. It is not hard to see Biblical parables hidden within the stories of beasts, hunchbacks, phantoms, and convicts.

There is a pathos to their plights that enables us to empathize with them and hope against hope that they may yet find a happy ending, or at the very least some flicker of love in a cruel world. Often enough, such brushes are fleeting, but that makes them all the more poignant, the smallest glimpses of some redemption to come. They help us see inside ourselves and into the hearts of our neighbors with a new insight of compassion and understanding for the complexity of mankind.

In this issue, we hope to bring together this assortment of stories to the forefront as we explore the deeper meanings within and create our expansions of classic literary universes. We will embark to the streets of Paris to engage in the history and drama that awaits us, as well as the characters who have become an integral part of the psyche of Western



's Note

is to see the face of God.”

o, Les Miserables

Civilization and beyond. I will conclude with excerpts from one of Victor Hugo's poems:

*O France, although you sleep
We call you, we the forbidden!
The shadows have ears,
And the depths have cries.*

*Darkness covers the world,
But the Idea illuminates and shines;
With its white brightness it floods
The dark blues of the night.*

*It is the solitary lantern,
The providential ray;
It is the lamp of the earth
That cannot help but light the sky.*

*It calms the suffering soul,
Guides life, puts the dead to rest;
It shows the mean the gulf,
It shows the just the way.*

*In seeing in the dark mist
The Idea, love of sad eyes,
Rise calm, serene and pure,
On the mysterious horizon*

Dieu bénisse!

Avellina Balestri, Editor-in-Chief

Beauties, Beasts, and Phantoms: A Brief History of *Beauty and the Beast*

By T.K. Wilson



Walter Crane's 1901 illustration of *Beauty and the Beast*

The perennially beloved tale of *Beauty and the Beast* has been told in dozens of different ways throughout the years. From its origins in far off days as a myth of a god and a mortal, to its presence on the Broadway stage of today, *Beauty and the Beast* has touched the hearts of men and women for centuries. Because of the tale's origins in those far off days and its molding in the 19th century, the story has continuously been changed according to the times. In *Beauty and the Beast* the reader can get a sense of how a previous era viewed the "other" in society and how a faithful woman could tame the wildness that surrounded her.

One of the first *Beauty and the Beast* stories comes from Norway, and is known as *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. In this story (a version of the even older *Cupid and Psyche*) the youngest daughter of a peasant is given to a bear in exchange for the wealth that the man needs to provide for his family. The bear is revealed to be a handsome prince, placed under this spell by a troll-hag, to be broken only if the woman he loves will not see him for a year.

The girl follows the foolish advice of her mother and looks before the appointed time, thus losing her prince. But instead of mourning her loss, the girl sets out for the palace that lies "east of the sun and west of the moon" to rescue him from marrying an ugly troll princess. Because of her determination, she wins back her husband from the evil trolls (Moe).

The Heroine of *East of the Sun* is among the most tenacious fairy tale heroines. The plight of the girl in *East of the Sun* and its sister tale *The Black Bull of Norway* is summed up by Marcia L. Lieberman this way: "The girls travel to the ends of the earth seeking them, but they cannot make themselves seen or recognized by their men until the last moment." These determined girls are willing to work for their "happily ever afters", and eventually make their way to them through their own cunning.

The story *The Black Bull of Norway* is very similar to *East of the Sun*. In this story, a young girl, the youngest of three sisters sets out to seek her fortune. While her other sisters get fine men as husbands, she is shoved on the back of a black bull. She and the bull travel along for some time, until the bull must fight the "old one" to be free of his enchantment. He tells her not to move until he comes back, else he will not be able to find her.

The girl moves before the bull comes back and she ends up searching for him and working for a blacksmith for seven years to earn a pair of shoes so she can climb up a glass hill to where he is. In the end, after enduring hardship and trickery, the girl and her now human knight are reunited and are married and “are living still” (Jacobs).

Many folklorists see these tales as harkening back to an earlier time, when belief that a human could transform into an animal was widespread. J.A. Macculloch summarizes:

“The idea of enchantment, itself primitive, has been made use of to give an earlier story more interest, especially at a time when beast-marriage pure and simple had become a revolting conception. But before that stage was reached many stories existed in which the hero could transform himself. He was one of a class of animals who are human in their native element.”

Because of shamanic beliefs like having the ability to shapeshift was so widespread, it could be believed that a seemingly ordinary animal could be a handsome suitor in disguise.

In Leprince de Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* it is again the youngest of sisters, known as Beauty, who is given to a beast. This beast is a courteous fellow, and treats Beauty with the utmost kindness and gentility, asking only to dine with her once a day and at this meal he asks for her hand, and every time Beauty says no, but treasures him as a friend. One day, Beauty asks to be allowed to go home, the beast lets her go, but tells her if she stays longer than a week it will be the death of him.

Beauty does go home but almost forgets her promise, and returns just in time to save the beast. The beast is transformed into a handsome prince and marries Beauty and they live in happiness ever afterward.

Because of the wide usage of motifs in each version of *Beauty and the Beast*, and the different cultural trappings, they have been gently molded throughout the years to emphasize different themes of the story. In the Victorian age, for example, it was meant to teach girls how to become ladies, but in the tale revised by Anne Thackeray Ritchie, Beauty is an industrious girl who, when her family is dispossessed, takes it upon herself to make home improvements. Beauty takes up a hammer and makes her adjustments herself, rather than advise safely from the floor (Talairach-Vielmas). This sort of inventiveness and industry were expected of a Victorian lady, but this Beauty's independence is what makes her different and what has always made her unique among fairy tale heroines.



Belle and Beast from Disney's 1991 film



The poster for Jean Cocteau's 1946 film

The Beast in Victorian days was simply a metaphor for the type of man a girl could hope to marry - virtuous and wealthy. It would be expected of a girl to submit to her father's choice of husband, but it would be up to her to make sure the marriage was a happy one, through her industry and good manners (Talairach-Vielmas). This seems like a very old fashioned concept today, but it was the way girls were educated in the Victorian age.

As for the most famous scribe of *Beauty and the Beast*, Madame Jeanne-Marie Leprince De Beaumont was a lady ahead of her time. After an unhappy marriage, Mme. Beaumont was governess to a succession of upper-class French and English young ladies. She wrote essays and stories for them and for several magazines for ladies. In these writings, her heroines take the lead, performing tasks when the men in their lives are powerless to help them, a predicament that her version of Beauty finds herself in. This early feminist-style thought won her both friends and enemies in the literary world, but her writings were popular among the girls she sought to educate (Schaller).



Kevin Cline as *Cyrano de Bergerac*



Baby Piggy and Baby Gonzo as Roxanne and Cyrano in "*Muppet Babies*"

In the realm of other literary forms, the theme of an unattractive man in love with a beautiful woman is a constant, but most of the time it does not end as well as it does in the fairy tale. Beaumont's fellow French author Edmond Rostand wrote about such a pair in his play *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The plot is familiar to many - a man with an enormous nose tries to win the heart of a beautiful woman - but few people realize the explicit connection with *Beauty and the Beast*. In act five, Cyrano is dying in the arms of Roxanne, the beautiful woman he loves and she begs him to stay with her, as she realizes that it is Cyrano that she loved for so long. Cyrano tells her "In the fairy tale, when Beauty said 'I love you' to the prince, his ugliness melted away like snow in the warmth of the sun, but as you can see, those words have no such magic effect on me" (Rostand, 220).

Rostand was very deliberate about his reference, and so people who read his work today recognize the parallels. Elizabeth G. Mascia, a seventh grade English teacher writing in *English Journal*, explained how she did a unit for her students all about the connection between *Cyrano* and *Beauty and the Beast*. She read them Leprince de Beaumont's version of the story as well as several other versions before reading *Cyrano* and the students came to the conclusion that perhaps the prevalence of the *Beauty and the Beast* story can be linked to the fact that all humans have the same needs and feelings (Mascia). The desire to love and be loved yet feeling unworthy of love because of some real or imagined fault is rooted deeply in human beings and this is ultimately where the appeal of this story lies.

The spirit of *Beauty and the Beast* did not stop with *Cyrano*, but lived on in a pulp novel by a man named Gaston Leroux. Leroux's novel, *The Phantom of the Opera*, was the story of a hideously deformed composer with a heavenly voice and the beautiful chorus girl who he trains and grooms to become the prima donna of the Paris Opera.



Ramin Karimloo as the Phantom and Sierra Boggess as the Phantom and Christine.

While the novel was unsuccessful in its original run, it found new life on the Broadway stage. Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical based on the novel became a smash hit on Broadway, popular and beloved wherever it is performed. In the musical, Christine - the Beauty - is being tutored by the Phantom - the Beast - who loves her, but in an obsessive fashion where he will murder or harm anyone who stands in his way to having Christine as his wife or having her triumph on the stage. Playing the part of the handsome prince is Raoul, the man who loves Christine and wants to rescue her from the Phantom's clutches.

Much of the commentary about *Phantom* and its relationship to its folkloric archetypes comes from the realm of psychology. Kathryn E. Wildgen in *Symposium* explains;

“At the end of the play, Erik/Shadow does not die as he does in the novel; he is transformed, defanged, redeemed, and integrated into the whole. Like Death, he has lost his sting. His redemption is at the hands of Christine... He will no longer interfere precisely because he has been unmasked and perceived in all his horror and ugliness and nonetheless embraced. Beauty has tamed the Beast, who no longer has the power to frighten.”

These archetypes make the Phantom a creature that is understood, and the audience comes to understand that there is a little of each of the characters in each of them.

The principal above applies to all the versions of *Beauty and the Beast*, each version presents the audience with the “other”, a shadow that must be faced before the true beauty can be seen. In the stories, the audience comes to realize that the Beast is a reflection of the part of themselves that they would like to keep hidden, their hidden flaws and foibles that make them feel unworthy of love, or even their larger flaws such as a temper or madness that must be faced before they can enter society. Beauty represents the gentling influences of society, smoothing out and confronting the flaws in the audience and unifying all of the aspects of the character so they can rejoin the greater world. These ideas speak to the audience in different ways, to comfort in the case of the Victorian girls the fairy tale was written for, to entertain in the case of *Cyrano* in its comi-tragic tone, and to teach in the case of *The Phantom of the Opera*. The spirit of the tale at its most basic is the lesson of not judging someone by the way they look, but rather judging them by their actions, which is a lesson that every member of the audience can learn from.

Beauty and the Beast is a fairy tale for all time. The universal lessons of acceptance and being able to see past the surface are ones that every generation needs. All the different ways that it is presented, from primitive tale to morality story to play to musical, present slightly different views on a similar theme, but in each they give the audience the feeling that seeing and reading should help them see the world differently. Not so shallow, not judging by their looks, but instead with actions, and loving despite flaws. *Beauty and the Beast* is not just a beautiful story, it is a cultural picture, one that is meant to be shared with every generation.



Works Cited

- Jacobs, Joseph. "The Black Bull of Norrway." *More English Fairy Tales*. N.p.: n.p., 1894. N. pag. *More English Fairy Tales*:. [Http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm). Web. 30 May 2014. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/meft/meft06.htm>>.
- Leprince De Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie. "Beauty and the Beast." *Beauty and the Beast*. Pittsburgh University, 5 Nov. 2011. Web. 30 May 2014. <<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/beauty.html>>.
- Lieberman, Marcia R. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale." *College English* 34.3 (1972): 383-95. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 May 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/375142>>.
- Macculloch, J. A. "Folk-Memory in Folk-Tales." *Folklore* 60.3 (1949): 307-15. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 May 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1256650>>.
- Mascia, Elizabeth G. "Cyrano De Bergerac: Bringing Classics to Young Adolescents." *English Journal* 80.1 (1991): 36. *ProQuest*. Web. 14 May 2014.
- Moe, Jorgen. "East of the Sun and West of the Moon." Trans. George W. Dasent. *East of the Sun and West of the Moon: Old Tales from the North*. By Peter C. Asbjornsen. N.p.: n.p., n.d. N. pag. *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. University of Pittsburgh, 5 Mar. 2001. Web. 30 May 2014. <<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/norway034.html>>.
- Rostand, Edmond. "Act Five." Trans. Lowell Bair. *Cyrano De Bergerac*. New York: Signet Classic/Penguin, 1972. 220. Print.
- Schaller, Peggy. "Jeanne Marie Le Prince De Beaumont (1711-1780): Biographical Essay for Chawton House Library and Women Writers." *Academia.edu*. Chawton House, n.d. Web. 30 May 2014. <http://www.academia.edu/2003603/Jeanne_Marie_Le_Prince_de_Beaumont_1711-1780_Biographical_Essay_for_Chawton_House_Library_and_Women_Writers>.
- Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence. "Beautiful Maidens, Hideous Suitors: Victorian Fairy Tales and the Process of Civilization." *Marvels & Tales* 24.2 (2010): 272,296,192,370. *ProQuest*. Web. 14 May 2014.
- Wildgen, Kathryn E. "Making the Shadow Conscious: The Enduring Legacy of Gaston Leroux." *Symposium* 55.3 (2001): 155-67. *ProQuest*. Web. 14 May 2014.



Dreaming of Somewhere Else
by MariaTeresa Carzon

Love of a Father

By The Ginger



Lightning flashed across the Paris sky, illuminating the dark, stone walls of the cloister of Notre Dame. Thunder echoed off the walls. The wind howled across the stone, sounding like a haunted scream. The only sound that rivalled that of the storm was the soulful wailing of a child.

Now, this child was unlike any other. His name was Quasimodo and he resembled his name, incomplete. He was born with one eye (the other was deformed), he had no neck to speak of, his chest was as round as a barrel, and

his legs were bowed. His deformities produced nothing but horror in those that saw him, even inspiring some to violence. He caused horror and disgust in all but one single person: his adopted father, the young priest Claude Frollo.

The young chaplain led the Sunday Vespers service. He often lost himself in the serenity and peace that he found there. It was one of the few places, besides his books, that he found true peace. After losing his parents to the plague, he tried to lose himself in his work.

When the beautiful service was over and the worshippers left, he walked back to his rooms lost in thought. He heard the cries of the child long before he reached the room that he shared with his adopted son. He found the child cowering in a corner, shielding himself with his tiny hands. His cries grew louder with each crack of thunder and burst of lightening.

Frollo felt his heart melt, watching Quasimodo. The child was obviously terrified. He sat next to the child and gathered him into his arms. He rubbed the young boy's red hair and said, "What are you scared of?"

The boy pointed outside to the rain storm and buried his face in his adopted father's cassock during a clap of thunder, hiding himself from the noise. Frollo only held him tighter and murmured soothing words into his hair. "I'm right here, my son, I'll always be right here. There's nothing to be afraid of."

He stood up and carried the child to the window that looked to the outside. A large display of lightning flashed across the sky and he pointed. "Look at how the lightning lights up the sky. You can see everything around you."

The child did as his father said and noticed the way the lightning made the trees look like shadows. Maybe it wasn't as scary as he thought. A few seconds later, the sky thundered again. He squealed and buried his face in his father's neck.

Frollo laughed to himself and said, "I know the thunder is scary, but it is only a noise. It can't hurt you. It's like the loud bells in the cathedral tower. They may be very loud, but they are beautiful. A thunderstorm is the Lord's way of healing and feeding the earth. See how the rain looks like diamonds falling from the sky? Rain is as precious as diamonds to the plants. Without the rain, the trees and flowers can't grow and we could not enjoy them. Without a storm, we couldn't find the plants we need to heal others. Don't you like the flowers and plants?"

Quasimodo thought of the times when he and his father would go for walks outside to find flowers and herbs. Without the storm, he couldn't enjoy the walks and helping find them. Maybe the rain wasn't so bad. Now, the thunder was. It was loud and hurt his ears.

"Do you know why it is always so loud when the king comes to the cathedral?" Frollo asked him.

He shook his head 'no'. He remembered the loud noises of the trumpets that always marked the entrance of the king the few times when he came to the cathedral.

"It is loud because it announces the arrival of something. The thunder is so loud because it tells the earth that it is time to grow and live."

Quasimodo thought about that briefly and decided that it made more sense to him. He still didn't like the noise, though.

"Be brave, my boy. Hold on to me if you feel afraid. Nothing will happen to you. I won't let it."

He sat down with Quasimodo and rocked him in his arms until the child fell asleep. The child's fears were soothed by his touch as he stroked the poor deformed boy's cheek. This reminded him that Quasimodo was still a child, young and vulnerable. His outward appearance could not negate that fact. He wondered if he ever had anyone to cuddle him and soothe his fears.

He thought of his other child, his brother Jehan. He wondered if the Miller's wife with whom he had left him was holding him the same way. He prayed that Jehan would be shown the love and compassion that he showed this poor soul.

After saying a prayer for the two tiny souls, he fell asleep. They were found the next morning by the other priests who noticed that the young chaplain was late for Lauds. They found Frollo with Quasimodo's head still buried in his father's neck, both fast asleep.

Hidden Beauty

Donna L. Ferguson Dudley
copyright 2019 6/11/19

The ones unprized, unrealized,
the ones who garner gasps, not sighs,
outwardly ugly or deformed,
off' harbor hearts most true and warm.

The hunchback, bullied and despised,
'hind crooked face and haunted eyes,
and bowed 'neath hump on crooked back,
has gifts the lovely often lack.

With steadfast ear that yearned to share,
that longed to show how much it cared,
and hand that reached out for connection
and smallest gesture of affection
was life that Quasimodo lived,
and yet he had so much to give.

Too few are those who even try
to look beyond beseeching eyes
of lonely souls, for treasures' sake,
(to soul to soul connection make).
But when they do, the treasures there
can beauteous be, beyond compare;
'Tis where spark of divinity's revealed
to those who look, to see!





House Cat

By Stephanie Piro

Not everyone at the Opera House knew it was haunted. Perhaps the House cat had no idea beyond looking for the next rat. Cats are wise, after all, and don't believe in ghosts. But most of the staff had seen things, heard things. Things that seemed to appear or disappear. Disembodied voices that laughed madly throughout the halls and ran shivers down the backs of even the most hardened stage hands, and shrieks from the ballet rats, and the prima ballerina alike.

It was hard work, all that haunting, and Erik was actually sick of it. He had to earn his keep, so to speak, his extortion payments or salary as

he preferred to call it. But now he was in need of a few weeks off to relax and think and compose and, of course, maybe give Christine a few extra lessons through the mirror. How he looked forward to those sacred hours, that thrilling voice, so sweet, so pure. And her only thought... to please her Angel. Her Angel of Music.

Why did there have to be this pretense? He was no angel. He was thought a madman by some, a hired assassin, a magician. He was many things...but not an angel. How he longed to let Christine know who he really was. That he was a man who adored her, who watched over her, who loved her with every fiber in his tall, bony, masked body.

"One day," he sighed. "Someday I'll go to her and tell her everything. She won't turn from me like all the others." Not likely, he thought, sardonically. She was just a girl, well, a young woman now, and she would

be no different. Why put himself through that?

He wandered down one of the tunnels thinking his ghostly thoughts in the dark, his catlike eyes able to see even in the darkest depths of the cellars below the Opera House. He noticed the cat, grey as a shadow, stalking something. She heard his approach, though his step was silent to most others. She turned to him and blinked in recognition. He crouched down and called to her softly, "Come here, Shadow, come to me." She moved toward her friend and allowed herself to be petted and fussed over.

It was Erik who found her as a stray kitten and took her home and cared for her, eventually allowing her to come and go and become as familiar a part of the opera scene as any other performer or patron. No one questioned her arrival, as she



proved useful with the ongoing rat problem.

Now Erik had an idea. He scooped Shadow up in his arms and went back through the tunnels till he reached his favorite spot in all the Opera House, the mirror to Christine's dressing room. He undid



the latch and dropped Shadow into the room. Then he watched and waited. Not much later, Christine entered, laughing and pausing to hug a friend or two before she shut the door, locked it and settled in the chair before her vanity. It was then that Shadow leapt to the table

"Oh!" cried Christine with a start. Then regaining her composure, she laughed. "Kitty, how did you ever get in here?"

"The Angel of Music sent me," she replied!

"What!" Christine stood up, startled at the talking cat sent by her teacher. "How can this be? Is it true?" She picked up the cat and cuddled her. "Can you really talk?"

"If you believe in angels, then talking cats shouldn't be such a stretch."

Hmmm...where had she heard that voice? "Angel, are you playing tricks on me?"

"You don't believe my cat can talk?" Erik chuckled. "And yet, you believe in angels."

"You are teasing me. Will you never show yourself to me, Angel?"

"Be careful what you ask for," Erik replied wearily.

"I ask only to see the person, whether angel or not, who matters more to me than any other. The person I have come to care for who

hides from me so cruelly."

Erik paused. He placed his hand on the glass...then reached again for the latch, and letting the mirror swivel open, he stepped through and stood before Christine. "I am not an angel. I am Erik. The man who has longed for this moment, but feared it as well."

"Feared this moment? The one I, too, have longed for and dreamed of! Surely not!" And she studied this tall, cloaked apparition. She studied the mask. "Will you still hide from me behind that mask?"

"Oh, silly Christine. You will never want to be near me again if I show you my face. Why not leave things as they are? I will continue as your teacher."

"Have a little faith in me, Erik. You know me better than anyone." She came closer and stood on her toes to reach the mask.

Erik didn't stop her. He was too tired to hide anymore. She held the mask and looked at his face, his skull-like presence, his yellow eyes that glowed like a cat's. He was deformed from birth and had lived a life hidden from normal society, and he'd had enough.

"I see only the face of my teacher, of my angel...of the man I have come to love."

Erik blinked. He was at a loss for words. Christine embraced him and he found himself embracing her in return.

Shadow, watching it all, leapt down from the dressing table and circled the pair, purring and rubbing against their legs. She had seen it all in her years as Erik's companion, the Opera Ghost's pet. But this...this was definitely something new.





Making the Bones Live:

A Look at Claude Manceron's Epic History of the French Revolution

By Kevin M. Derby

Many history books collect dust on library shelves across the globe--and for good reason. Too many of these books instruct but fail to entertain or even engage readers. Simply put, there are many reasons books should be written, but moving up the academic ladder is one of the least noble. But there remain some exceptions, including Claude Manceron's epic Age of the French Revolution series which serves as the antithesis to the dull and plodding academic histories that have increasingly taken over the discipline and clutter library shelves.

At the start of *Twilight of the Old Order*, the first volume of his series, as he looked over his notes on hundreds of historical figures wondering if he can breathe some life into them, Manceron quoted God's words to Ezekiel. "Son of man, can these bones live?" The answer is an unqualified yes as Manceron proved to be a historical necromancer, conjuring the dead, speaking with them and even restoring life to them. While he did not turn Louis XVI or Lavoisier into Lazarus, Manceron had a bit of the Witch of Endor in him. In his books, the dead speak about their lives to modern readers.


Manceron's life is worthy of a biography. Struck by polio during his childhood and confined to a wheelchair for his entire life, Manceron was deprived of most of the rudiments of formal schooling, but he still pursued an education. An avid reader and movie watcher, Manceron became a leading teacher and writer, even dabbling in politics as an advisor to his friend, Francois Mitterand, who served as president of France for almost a decade and a half. Manceron taught the handicapped and relied on his wife Anne to help him with his research. After decades of writing, his polio proved to be too much when he entered his 70s and Manceron had to retire.

While he might have been forced to retire, Manceron's writing career remains impressive. Besides writing some solid novels and biographies, Manceron's legacy rests on his "Age of the French Revolution. Drawing some inspiration from the great 19th-century historian Jules Michelet, Manceron attempted to capture the tumultuous years that led to the revolution. While most of his focus was on France, Manceron had no problems taking the story to England, Italy and even the Americas as he offers a global look at the era. Manceron guided readers through the gilded halls of Versailles to the Vatican's heated papal elections, to the bloody battlefields of the American Revolution, to dark printing houses in Paris, to the icy steppes of Russia in his magnificent portrait of a changing world.

Above all, Manceron breathed life into the leading figures of the revolution--and plenty of tangential ones as well. In the powerful start of *Twilight of the Old Order*, Manceron laid down his cards, informing readers that he intended to tell the story of the revolution through a series of biographical sketches. This unconventional tactic proved extremely effective as Manceron shed some light on both well-known and obscure figures, showing their importance and offering intimate details ranging from the first signs of Clement XIV's fatal illness to a young Lafayette's annoyance and embarrassment that his new wife was actually in love with him.

In retrospect, Manceron's ambitions far outpaced reality. With plans to write at least ten volumes, Manceron only completed five before he had to abandon the project due to his increased pain after three and a half decades of work. All five books – *Twilight of the Old Order*, *The Wind from America*, *Their Gracious Pleasure*, *Towards the Brink* and *Blood of the Bastille* – have been published in English and can be ordered online. Manceron was only able to take his story to the fall of the Bastille, his series ending just as the drama of the actual French Revolution was about to commence.

The series has some flaws, of course. Like his hero Michelet, Manceron was often overly critical when it came to Catholicism and its role on the public stage. Not surprisingly, considering his background in politics, Manceron was not the type who could remain detached looking down from Mount Parnassus with Clio, the muse of history.



Manceron clearly had his favorites but, to his credit, he had no problem needling them when needed. No matter their politics and roles in the revolution, almost everyone covered by Manceron looks absurd at some point in the series.

Yet even if unfinished and flawed, these books remain some of the finest histories written in the past century. Starting with the death of Louis XV in 1774, Manceron led readers through the lives of scores of historic figures. He showed how they lived, what they valued, who they loved, who they loathed and what guided them as they sped towards one of the most important events in human history. Readers learn new sides to familiar figures like Marie Antoinette, Benjamin Franklin and Talleyrand. They can shake their head at the stupidity of Louis XVI, smile as obscure rural economist Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière meets and falls in love with the much younger Marie-Jeanne Phlipon who--amazingly--reciprocates his feelings, gasp as balloons take to the skies above Paris for the first time, and cheer as Cornwallis surrenders to Washington at Yorktown. These scenes, these people stay with readers, something that can't be said of most academic histories with writers motivated by the Holy Grail of tenure or moving up from an assistant professor to an associate professor. Unlike the scribbling bureaucrats infesting too many colleges and universities, Manceron actually wanted to tell a story and to shine more light on the past.

Manceron died in 1999 and the Age of the French Revolution was far from being complete when he finally had to give up on it. That is a great loss as, despite his sympathy for the revolution, Manceron wasn't the type to celebrate bloodshed. His wit, humanity and humaneness remain evident through the thousands of pages he wrote.

Of course, there are far better books in English for readers wanting an introduction to the French Revolution. Christopher Hibbert's *The Days of the French Revolution* comes to mind. Readers wanting a single in-depth look at the revolution from start to finish should check out Simon Schama's magisterial *Citizens*, a doorstopper of a book clocking in at almost 1,000 pages. But Manceron offered something far different than an overview of events. In more than 2,600 pages stretched across five books, he guided readers through fifteen years from the death of Louis XV to the actual storming of the Bastille and showed the lives of the men and women who tried to guide events and shape politics, economics and culture. We learn about these people--whom Manceron dubbed the "men of liberty"--inside and out, and get to know them as much as possible despite the passing of almost two and a half centuries.

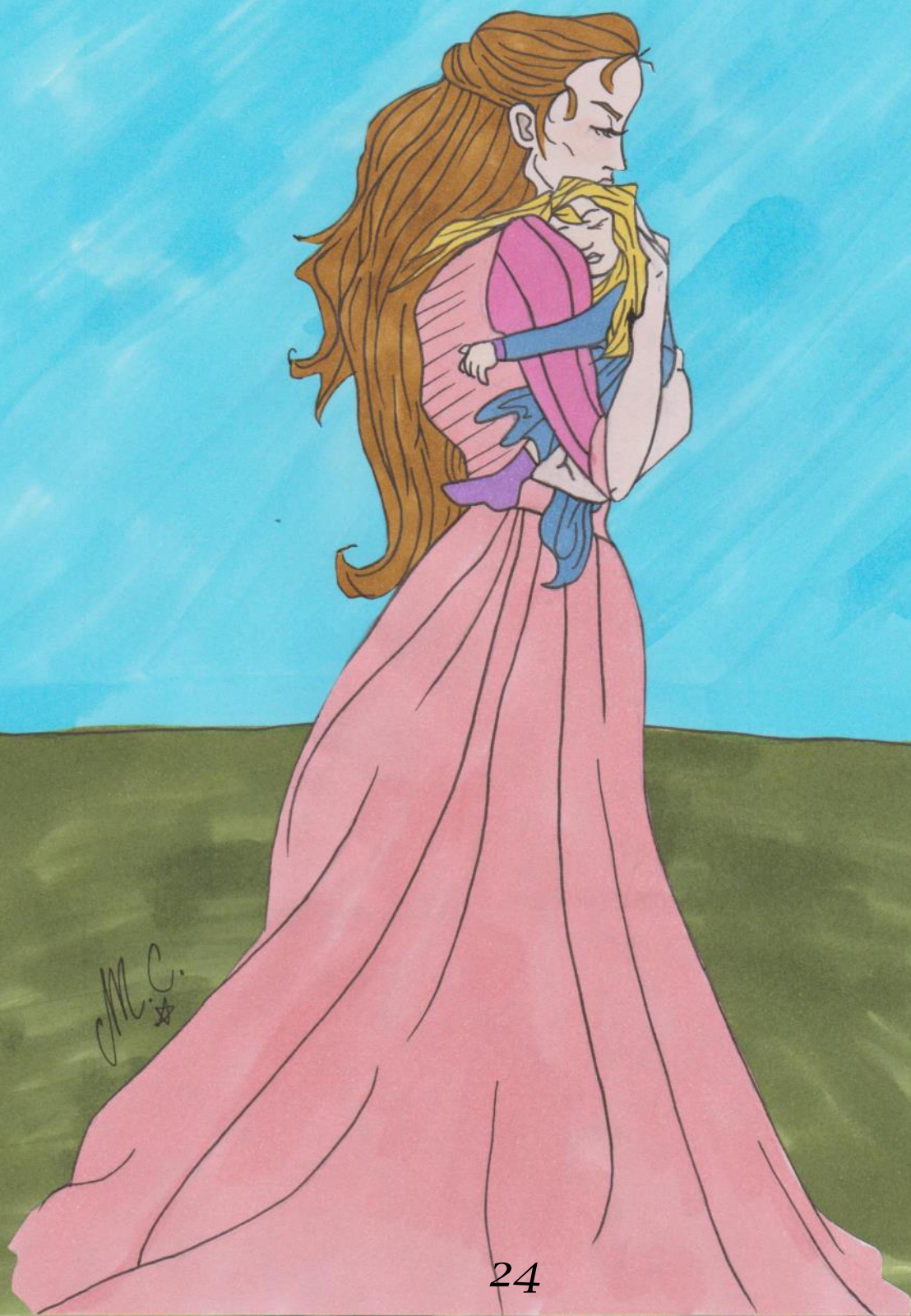
Twilight of the Old Order was published in English for the first time in 1977. The second, third and fourth volumes were released in English in the late 1980s and early 1990s during the bicentennial of the French Revolution. Despite favorable reviews, they never seemed to sell well in America and were a common find at discount stores at outlet malls, which is where I first encountered them during the era of New Jack Swing, Crystal Pepsi and Dan Quayle.

While they might have been a flop in America, Manceron's books continue to instruct, entertain and inspire. These are easily some of the most vivid, exciting and memorable history books that I have ever come across. If you are looking for a basic overview of the French Revolution, look elsewhere. But if you are looking to live in the 1770s and 1780s and get to know the men and women who danced, schemed, marched and blundered into one of the most consequential events in human history, imbibe Claude Mancerson's *Age of the French Revolution*, easily one of the most monumental works of nonfiction of the past half century and a shining example of the historian's art.



Fantine, God Will Hold You

by MariaTeresa Carzon



Between Life and Death

by *Scorpioan*

“I knew well that it was he again! The assassin, the one who killed my Phoebus. Oh, Phoebus!”

The priest mustered all his strength not to break the poor girl's wrist, which had been in his grasp since they arrived at the Grève.

The girl knoweth not what a soldier's name dost to me, the priest reminded himself. “I warn you, gypsy-girl, thou art never to speak that name again, for it is his name that brings death upon thee.”

The young girl seemed as if in a trance of fear and shock, for she continued to cry for her lover: “Phoebus, my Phoebus! Help!”

“You foolish child! to think that a captain will come to save a gypsy. Dost thou not know that he is to be wed with another? Thou art mad to believe that his kindness towards thee was out of his love for thee. Thy captain looked at thee as a wolf upon its prey, hungry to tear its flesh to pieces. Child, thou'rt blinded by thy love! Where is he now when thou art condemned to die? Where is he now to save thee!”

The priest's scornful words had been too much for the gypsy-girl to understand and she felt near fainting. “Phoebus... married! Was not it he who called marriage a too grand affair to be bothered? Alas! what wicked scheme! 'Tis not true, it cannot be. Priest, thou hast heard what my captain said that night, for he had never loved any but me.” A shudder ran down the gypsy's spine as she remembered the moments at Falourdel's.

The priest looked at her with bold eyes. “My child, I would not lie to thee as God is watching us.”

With those words the gypsy sank to the ground and remained motionless except for the sounds of sobbing. “Then shall I die,” said she in a low voice, maintaining her position on the cold floor.

“Die? Child, thou knowest not what thou'rt saying.” The archdeacon clasped her shoulders with both of his hands in an attempt to waken the girl from her miserable reverie. “Dost thou not recall the night thy vagabonds came climbing the walls of Notre-Dame to save thee? Dost thou not remember how the fool Quasimodo came descending from the same walls to save thee? So, thou seest, for thee to wish death upon thyself is as if spitting in their faces to ridicule them. 'Tis as if putting a dagger through my heart, for 'tis I who will save thee; yet still thou callest that soldier's name. Oh, for thee to give all up for one man! Madness! thou art mad, gypsy-girl, mad!”

The priest faltered with anger and dragged the poor girl to her knees. She followed helplessly as if all strength had left her small body.

“There! 'Tis the gibbet! Look, since it is for what thou wisheth. I assure thee, it bringeth certain death.”

The girl's glassy eyes were filled with tears as she looked at the black cross in the middle of the place. In the dark of the night, with only the moonlight in the sky that shone upon them, the gibbet seemed to gape terribly at the frightened girl. She became motionless, frozen in her fear as death appeared closer than it had before.

After receiving only silence from the gypsy, the priest grew impatient upon her hesitation, for he remembered the sergeants approaching them with running and shouting. “Gypsy, if 'tis death that thou wisheth, then it shall not be the gibbet which claims thy neck. Thy sorcery hath made me mad and it shall be thy death that releases me to sanity. If thou must die, thou shalt meet the grave by mine own two hands.”

The priest's eyes sparkled with anger as his raging fingers clenched around the unfortunate girl's neck. Esmeralda struggled and writhed under the furious grip in a desperate attempt to free herself, but it was useless. She wanted to fly, to loosen his hands, for the terror of death was consuming her senses. With every effort to hold him back, the priest's hands wound tighter, grasping the girl's neck with superhuman strength. All at once, she felt the need to breathe grow insufferably strong and shut her eyes, afraid that the last face she was to see was that of the man she despised. Her mind was split between consciousness and unconsciousness, her thoughts getting caught in senseless fragments of memories from the past. Hallucinations of Phoebus' handsome stature struck upon her eyes and her mind recollected the moments of their attempted night together. Blinded by her love for the captain, she had told him that gypsy-girls like her needed nothing more but air and love.

If the poor girl weren't so close to facing the grave, she would have laughed at the irony of her situation.

First, her lover had gone to wed another and left her in the hands of that monstrous priest. Then, when love had betrayed her and she had only air left to survive by, that was taken from the unfortunate creature as well, by the very hands of that priest who claimed to love her, who then brutally choked each breath of life from her body. With all the effort still left, she mustered her remaining strength to cry out in a voice like that of a wounded animal calling for its mother.

“Save me.” It was the broken sound that escaped her lips.

Claude Frolo froze in his motions. He had imagined the gypsy-girl saying those words to him countless times, for in that moment he pondered whether the scene before him was reality or another act of sorcery. It was when he had given up most hope that the girl was to be his, for she had been acting like a wild beast unable to be tamed; then she had called upon him to have pity. Suddenly, the fire within him ceased at the gypsy's words, and the priest felt – for the first time since he had laid eyes on the dancer – the venom in his veins diluting. Casting a glance at the girl lying below him, he shrank back in fear, for his fingers were still wrapped around her delicate neck. Her skin had become paler than the dress she was wearing and her lips had turned a peculiar shade of blue.

The archdeacon removed his hands as if touching red-hot iron. “My child! Oh, what have I done! Forgive me, forgive me. I shall be thy slave, I shall do what thou wishest, but open thine eyes once more!”

Desperate, without knowing what to do, the priest crouched down to embrace the girl's unconscious form and placed a hundred kisses on her face, her shoulders, her arms, until his lips tasted every part of skin exposed to his eyes. “I was a fool to think of thy death as my salvation. Damnation! that thou bringest, in life and in death.”

The unhappy priest's eyes were moistened with tears, and though he believed the girl to be dead, he lifted her from the ground with both his arms, held her close to his rapidly beating heart, and carried her away from that tragic place. He was surprised to find her body lighter than he'd expected, for the girl was no more than a child from the streets. As the soldiers' uproar drew nearer and nearer, the priest remembered that he was in haste to escape the Grève. His fear gradually dispersed, for he found the place to be embedded in darkness so grave that no soldier's torch would be fiery enough to turn the shadows to light. Engaged in the comforts of the night, the priest directed his steps towards the University, onto the Rue de la Cité. It was where his dear brother Jehan had been residing at times when he wasn't lost and idling in one of Paris' many taverns. In the archdeacon's arms rested the young girl, remaining utterly motionless, but his eyes were grimly fixed upon the way ahead of them. His feet moved violently against the pavement, each step bringing him closer to a run, though he seemed to have forgotten what from. It was a long time since he had last visited his brother, and it was then – alone, in the dead of night – that he wished to see Jehan's face again. Nevertheless, the priest wound his way through deserted passages and alleyways until he found himself facing the door of his brother's chambers.

With a creak it opened to a room, which was so poorly lit that the priest stumbled upon his first steps inside. This caused him great panic, as he feared to drop the girl in his arms, and thus his toe had to endure a rather forceful encounter with the wooden table, making him grit his teeth in pain. A string of curses escaped his lips, yet muttered and hissed too lowly for anyone to understand. Once he regained clearness and control of his thoughts, he made a motion to lay the girl down on what appeared to him to be a bed, and rushed to close the door.



It was then when Claude Frolo realized what he had been running from; it wasn't the soldiers, for the girl was dead and hence could not be hanged, but it was the whole city of Paris with its glaring eyes and judging frowns upon the treacherous sins he committed. A bitter laugh grumbled in his throat as he remembered calling the poor girl a fool for believing that a gypsy could be with a captain but, in fact, he – the archdeacon, a man of God – wished nothing more than to be with the Egyptian himself. The sorceress must have driven him mad – although the moment she had given in to him, he felt the happiest man in the world.

Hellfire,

DARK FIRE

BY HANNAH VINCENT

What does a character need in order to be a convincing villain? Is it his words? His actions? How he evolves over the course of the story? In Disney's animated film *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the main antagonist, Judge Claude Frollo, exudes an evil nature that chills the bones of the viewer. Not only do we see the manipulation and darkness of his mind, but we also see traces of humanity in the fictitious man.

The first moments of the movie introduce us to the character of Frollo, who immediately sets the viewer against him due to his cold and calculating nature. Due to his status as a judge, Frollo believes himself exempt from wrongdoing and condemnation. He persecutes the gypsies in the city solely based on their lifestyle and the fact they are not "proper citizens"; however, due to killing a gypsy woman and forcibly taking her child, Frollo ends up raising the boy and keeping him in Notre Dame's bell tower.

Frollo never planned on having a ward, who we know as Quasimodo, but it was demanded of Frollo to keep the boy. Quasimodo is confined to the bell tower his whole life due to Frollo's selfishness and guilt. He attempts to feed Quasimodo with lies about the gypsies, but for all Frollo's desire for control, Quasimodo rebels. Frollo treats his ward with disguised contempt and constantly passively bullies Quasimodo into doing his bidding. Heaven forbid, too, if the public saw Quasimodo! In Frollo's mind, it would be a reflection on him: what judge of Paris would have a hunchback living in the bell tower?

Despite being raised by a cruel man, Quasimodo is a kind and gentle soul. He somehow is the opposite of Frollo, and Frollo cannot stand it. As Frollo sets out to burn the gypsies out of Paris, he simultaneously forms an illicit attraction to a gypsy woman, Esmeralda. Even though *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is technically categorized as a children's film, Disney pushed the boundaries as far as possible with the content. Frollo

has no reservations about his desire for Esmeralda; the song "Hellfire" makes that fact abundantly clear with hooded, faceless figures and images of Esmeralda dancing in a massive fireplace within Frollo's abode. The sensuality and darkness of the scene might pass by children's heads, but any teen and adult who watches it might shudder at the likeness with which Frollo portrays the way humanity handles temptation.

Frollo's obsession with Esmeralda escalates as the film goes on, consuming him with thoughts of nothing else. He is blinded by power and anger, destroying everything in his path to possess a woman he cannot have, and the results are disastrous. Frollo believes he can have it all if he exercises enough power and force. Slowly, the people of Paris begin to turn against him, and in the end, Quasimodo does too. While it seems Frollo might win at the conclusion of the story, he falls to his death chasing after that which he coveted: Esmeralda and power. Too late did Frollo learn that pride goes before the fall and no one escapes judgement.

The intensity of the story of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is lessened to a degree in this movie, but underneath the feel-good songs and eye-catching characters and

costumes, it portrays reality in a stark way. Frollo appears to represent what happens when we allow pride to rule our lives – it makes us blind to our faults and we pay one way or another in the end. Frollo is the quintessential villain: succumbing to the wickedness within until it snuffs out his life.



Bells of Notre Dame

By Amanda Pizzolatto

He waited for some time after the church was locked before emerging from his hiding place among the shadows. He took in the beauty that was Notre Dame. It had been a while since he had been here, but the scents, the sights, and the sounds of candlelight flickering brought him back to the days of his youth. They weren't that much better than where he was now, but at least back then he had the sanctuary of the church to run to. His heart rejoiced to see that the great cathedral remained the same. At least something did in his otherwise crazy and ever-changing life, an oasis in his desert.

He gave a slight bow to the statue of Our Lady before dashing up the stairs to the bell tower. He enjoyed listening to them and wondered who was ringing them nowadays. He smiled sadly as he knew it couldn't be Quasimodo, though he wished he could have met the fellow. It had been about a hundred years since the book came out. It was still his favorite, to this day. Notre Dame and Quasimodo were his favorite parts about it. He glanced at the bells and ran his hand almost lovingly over the ropes connected to them. He longed to ring one, but he knew that doing so would wake the town and bring the bishop scurrying. He didn't want anyone to find him, not yet. But there was one thing he could do; he could sing.

The words came faintly as he searched for them from the years he heard the song repeated. He had begged for their repetition some days, the song soothed him so much. Now, with each passing note, his voice grew steadier and the words came tumbling back into his mind. He paused and started the Ave Maria all over again, this time with a clear, strong voice and an assurance of what the next word was. He sang the song twice, thrice, four



times, and soon found himself singing an entire rosary. The words lifted him like the bells did, to such a height that he felt no one could ever hurt him again. It also awakened a yearning to see the halls of Heaven, to speak to those who, in their lifetime and even now in Heaven, would never have shunned him.

As the final amen died in the air, he stole towards a window and was startled to see the first pink tinges of dawn warming up the night. He had to hurry; the spell had been broken. He dashed down the stairs and

was startled by the passing glimpse of a skeleton. He went back to where he saw it. He sighed as he glanced at himself in a reflective candelabra. No one would accept him, just like Quasimodo. He recalled the reason for his haste and finished his descent into the church. There was one final thing he had to do before he left the church. He didn't know if he would ever come back and figured now was the best time to do it, just in case.

The next morning, when the bishop came into Notre Dame to begin preparations for Mass, he was startled to find a bouquet at the feet of the statue of Mary. The bishop picked it up cautiously and examined it. It was a fresh bouquet of white, pink, and yellow roses surrounding a red rose. The bishop found a note that read, "To the only mother who would never turn me away. Your Aves always soothes me." The bishop smiled as he returned the note and the bouquet. So, the Blessed Mother had taken another wayward child under her care. The bishop decided right then and there that he would say this

morning's Mass with the intentions of this wayward child, that he may find a little peace in this world and that the Blessed Virgin would be sent to welcome him with open arms into the next.



Gargoyles: Sermons of Stone

By Ewan McTavish

Gothic Architecture has shaped our view of the Medieval period. It is my belief that church-building achieved its highest point during the Gothic period, and no Gothic structure would be complete without the classic Gothic gargoyles.

Technically speaking, gargoyles are decorative water-spouts, designed to divert rainwater from

structures. The name either comes from the French word for throat, or from the name of a famous dragon, the Gargouille. The free-standing sculptures of monstrous beings adorning structures like Notre Dame are known as grotesques. Unlike true gargoyles, they have no structural function, other than decoration. Together, gargoyles and grotesques have defined how many people view medieval architecture, particularly churches. But why are such hideous beings found on hallowed ground? While no one knows exactly why gargoyles adorn medieval churches, there are a few guesses.



A true gargoyle



A grotesque on Notre Dame

As the monk Athalstan said in the TV series *Vikings*, “Without the Word of God, there is only darkness”. The gargoyles may have represented the darkness lurking outside the safety of the church’s walls. The ugly, monstrous creatures imagined by medieval artisans stood as a warning to those who ventured outside the church. Another possibility is that the gargoyles represented the exact opposite; the gargoyles may have been meant to frighten off the demons lurking outside. The mythical Gargouille was said to be so hideous that he frightened the devil himself.

Another possibility is that the gargoyles represented medieval humor. Mocking the devil is a longstanding tradition. As Martin Luther said “The best way to drive out the devil, if he will

not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him for he cannot bear scorn.”

The often comical or whimsical features of gargoyles and grotesques lends itself to humor. Such mockery would’ve surely driven the devil back. A related theory may be that the gargoyles and grotesques are meant to represent the pagan gods and monsters defeated and replaced by Christianity, perhaps as a message to newly converted pagans.

In the artistic splendor of Gothic architecture, perhaps the gargoyles stand as a warning to modern men of the tendency of the human soul to regress into ugliness. In the artistic splendor of Gothic architecture, perhaps the gargoyles stand as a warning to modern men of the tendency of the human soul to regress into ugliness. Looking at the past century of artwork, it is easy for me to see that the medievals may have had a point, if that was their point. Once art had become “unhitched” from religion, it quickly descended into chaos. It seems modern art has had a love affair with ugliness, producing works that completely defy any logic or human reason. We’ve gone from producing magnificent cathedrals and stained glass windows, to featureless minimalist boxes, and tossing paint on canvas with no rhyme or reason. We’ve gone from a little lower than the angels, to little more than beasts. Having tossed out all objective standards of beauty, ugliness reigns supreme. Stones can talk, and they’re speaking to us now.



Eponine's Last

By Rachel Atterholt

*The girl with the tattered dress
Thought of Marius
How his smile lit up her heart
How his words ignited the stars*

*The Jondrette girl with the brave brother
Thought of Cosette and how she had wronged her
Yet she was only a child
And how could children know better?*

*The forgotten girl with the bleeding heart
Watched as Marius touched her blood-soaked shirt
And as he cried, she smiled no
It was only a bullet after all*

*The girl named Eponine
No more felt pain
Yet felt the drops of rain
As Marius sang her to sleep*

*He kissed her then on her brow
And laid her down on the ground
She'd be forgotten by all but him
But that was enough*

*And then, she thought, Monsieur Marius
I believe I loved you
I hope you know that
I hope you loved me too*

*And she closed her eyes for the last time
And opened them once more
To a free world, a kind world
Much more loving than before*

*She would see him one day
Singing amongst the brave
She'd sing with him
Sing with the man she died to save*



The Emperor's Grudge

By Adeel Ahmed

Rated PG-13 for violence & suggestive content

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The following is based on a true story about Thomas Dumas, the son of a black slave woman and a French noble father, thus making him of mixed racial heritage, just like his son, author Alexander Dumas. What makes Thomas Dumas incredible was the fact he was the highest ranking black person in the army of a European colonial power. He reached the rank of general and marched with Napoleon on his campaigns abroad.

"Another scimitar," a French soldier announced, placing the weapon into Thomas's hands. The desert sun reflected off the shining metal blade and onto the flaps of their tents near their barracks. "Fine craftsmanship," Thomas remarked. "They don't have the technology we Europeans possess, but they are civilized compared to the other savages we have conquered."

Thomas never knew he could respect an opponent so readily defeated. The French under their Corsican commander Napoleon' barely lost any men, yet these Muslim Mamelukes lost countless soldiers. Yet it was the manner in which they were defeated that was most impressive. They were like him, men descended of slaves that became fierce warriors and leaders of men.

I have dark skin, yet these pale Frenchmen obey my command. I stand out among the rest. I earned this. Just like these Mamelukes.

The Mamelukes did not know how outmatched they were with their medieval blades and shields against the most modern weapons of war. Upon first contact, most armies would have simply broken and shattered. These warriors, however, were filled with bullets before they fell, and only stopped fighting when unable. Those behind them saw the fate of their comrades, yet still attacked. Even Napoleon commented upon their bravery.

But aside from their rise to power and valor in battle, he found little else in common with this strange breed of men. When he rose up through the revolution and that new era, it was these new ideals of *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* that he fought for, not the legalistic will of a god such as these Muslims worshipped. He was a product of the Enlightenment, while these Egyptian Arabs were of an old guard with no place in this modern world. Even the Christians Copts of Egypt were unlike those of Europe, so exotic and Eastern in their forms of worship.

"General Dumas? Your commander wants to see you," announced a messenger from the Bonaparte's tent. Thomas enjoyed living among his men than always staying in his lavish lodgings since the conquest. He did not always know what to make of Napoleon. On one hand the Corsican leader loved luxury and pomp. Yet at the same time he would show incredible grit and steel. Thomas allowed the youth to lead the way to his Napoleon's headquarters. The two of them walked past a long line of tents, the sounds of female voices and laughter coming from the tents. These were prostitutes and camp followers providing pleasure and companionship to the troops.

Thomas shook his head. There was nothing wrong with a little release, but these soldiers he felt wasted so much potential with such frivolities. They tended to wonder aloud how he had managed to become a general, even with his dark skin holding him down. Although his father's influence had helped him climb the ladder, his father was long dead and his climbing still have never been stopped. It was because he only took pleasure where he needed it. He himself had a wife and child, yet he

never sought to bring them to the battle field nor replace them with harlots. Too much to do, too much distraction.

Thomas opened the flap to witness lavish accommodations, including a large king-sized bed, with mirrors and portraits upon the wall. Napoleon and a slender blonde-haired woman frantically put their clothes back on.

You're losing your greatness, Napoleon. It's still there. But it's leaving you...slowly but surely, thought Thomas.

He reminded Thomas of a blade far too accustomed to its sheath.

"Go," said Napoleon dropping gold coins into the harlot's palm. "In the future, you will tell your children that you shared your bed with the greatest of men."

The prostitute stuffed the coins into her bodice, sauntering out of the tent.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" queried Thomas.

"Ah, yes," nodded Napoleon, pulling on his jacket. "You were impressive during yesterday's battle. I thought when they charged us when we first took the city, that would be the end. Now a revolt. But you solved that, didn't you? Knocking down the doors of the Al-Azhar mosque, mounted on your stallion, swinging your saber."

"Once I saw them run fearlessly into musket fire, I knew something more personal would be needed to break their spirits. So it was the mosque I stormed."

"There is something inspiring about higher belief these savages have, and how it marches them to battle. The star of destiny is in their hearts. But belief in any god is a crutch. I will not use this to light my way, but rather depend upon my own fire."

Thomas said nothing. Simply awaiting his orders.

"Some French traders and their women were captured by Arab bandits. The Mamelukes that incited the riots had little to do with it. This band is working on its own." Napoleon handed Thomas a stack of papers.

"There is a woman among the kidnapped. I don't want to think about what is happening with her," stated Thomas. Savage men would want their way with a white woman, to inflict the cruelty of their subjugation upon her as it was done to them.

"Ah. So now you see why I want you for the job." Napoleon then began whispering into his ear. A grin crawled over Thomas's face as the general relayed orders.

"A smile, Thomas? I knew you would enjoy this."



The crowd cleared out of his way as he rode through the streets, out into the countryside. Beside him was his general Napoleon upon his own stallion.

Finally they both arrived at the outskirts of the town.

"I'll wait here, Thomas. You do what we agreed. Understand?"

Thomas nodded, riding forward.

As he rode toward the cave, the sounds of the city behind him grew more and more faint. *I'm alone, thought Thomas. But I've been alone since my father died. He helped me get this far. After that? It was all my skill. My mind. I can do this.*

Thomas noticed a strange breeze flowing through the cave. He could feel the grains of desert sand striking his face, causing him to squint.

Thomas leapt off of his horse as he neared the cave's entrance, pulling the package and lighting a torch from his saddle.

The entrance of the cave was dry, yet windy. Thomas noted the path within the cave, walking slowly down into the depths of the earth.

All of this is clever. A lot of work went into this, he thought observing the well-formed path and the rails made for comfort. The deeper he went down, the more it resembled a stairwell from a large home or even a castle.

"Who goes there?" snarled a voice in Arabic from below.

Thomas looked downward to see a brown bearded face peering up at him.

"A soldier of the French. I bring the ransom you desire," replied Thomas.

"Your accent tells me as much. Drop the ransom here and then leave."

"No. I want to see the hostages first," demanded Thomas.

There was silence for a moment.

"They are down here. Come, slowly. Any sign of aggression, and we will execute the lot of them."

Thomas stepped downwards. The cave grew brighter and brighter as a line of torches blazed upon the walls as if he were meeting dwarves out of childhood fairytales in some grand underground cavern home.

Soon he stepped into a clearing within the cave. Four bandits armed with scimitars stood around the centre of the cave. They surrounded three French prisoners, their faces scraggy and bearded. But one prisoner stood out to Thomas. A woman, her face streaked with dirt, her dress torn and filthy.

"Let me speak to the prisoners first. I must know if you kept your words," said Thomas in Arabic to the captors.

What did they do to her? A woman around these wild men?

"Mademoiselle, tell me, how did they treat you?" asked Thomas in French, his tone seething.

"Your answer determines my next course of action."

"They didn't let us bathe," whimpered the woman.

"That's not what I need to know. Did they beat you? Did they...touch you?"

"No. They were gentlemen in that way. They would look away from me when I relieved myself."

"Let the hostages go. I will stay here with the ransom. You can count it as the four of you surround me," declared Thomas. Suddenly he lost enthusiasm for what must come next.

One of the bandits, taller than the rest, motioned to his men. One of them stood the hostages up and cut their bonds.

"Yallah, yallah," repeated a red-bearded captor as he pointed at the cave entrance. Without a word, the hostages rushed out.

"Napoleon must not think much of you to put you here," remarked the tall one as his companion counted the currency. "We could kidnap you too, you know. Ransom you,"

"Are you planning to capture me?" inquired Thomas.

"No. Any self-respecting Arab has honour. Even criminals. No. You're safe. It seems all the money is here. Leave now."

Thomas drew his sword.

"You are no Mamelukes. You're not trained and seasoned warriors. But you behaved as gentleman toward a woman you captured. You did not try to double-cross me. I'll make sure you die quickly."

The men broke down laughing.

"You're a big man. For so are my friends. Me especially," stated the largest of the bandits.

"There are four of us, but one of you. Don't embarrass yourself with this dishonour. Run."

"You poor man. You don't understand..." Thomas did not put any happiness in his words. His orders now turned to ashes in his heart. This is not what he was meant to do. This is not what he

thought this mission was. But he would always do his duty.

The big man feigned turning away, then drew his scimitar. In the same motion he cut at Thomas.

This one has skill, to draw and strike at the same time, thought Thomas parrying the sword. He then thrust it into his opponent's neck.

"Jahim! He killed Jahim!" cried the bearded bandit holding the money bag. His hand dropped toward his scimitar, along with the other remaining men.

With blinding speed, Thomas flicked his blade across the throat of the bearded man. As he collapsed upon the floor clutching his bleeding throat, Thomas thrust his sabre through the belly of the next closest one.

As the man groaned in pain, Thomas stabbed him in the inner thigh. The femoral artery would make sure he died quickly, unlike a horrible stomach wound. It was the least he could do.

Three opponents down with four strokes. May they die quickly and with honour.

One opponent remained.

The bandit had his scimitar drawn, his hands shaking.

A Mameluke would charge at me despite my work. These are no warriors. I'm not enjoying this, Napoleon. You promised me I would be killing men of violence, vicious cut-throats despoiling innocent French women. Not desperate men looking for money in the midst of hardship...

Thomas Dumas advanced upon his pathetic prey....



Napoleon and his guard

The great leaders waited in the outskirts of the city, watching the cave Thomas had entered. He noticed a figure slowly riding in their direction.

"Well? Is that him?" demanded Napoleon irritably.

"Yes, sir. That's Dumas," confirmed the soldier gazing through his looking glass.

It was then Bonaparte heard the Egyptian crowd chanting his name, "Napoleon! Napoleon! Napoleon!"

He felt his heart grow warm upon the sound of those chants. This was his destiny. This was his name, a name that would echo throughout history.

"He may be an *kuffar* invader," remarked a veiled woman in Arabic, "But look at him. How

strong he is! Napoleon is so tall! Look at his shoulders!”

“He rides so well upon his horse, his sword flashing in the light!” cried a beardless youth, “Death to bandits. They harass us. I will support him in this!”

“He fought them all by himself. The great general! He fights at the front lines,” hollered a fat Egyptian.

““You soldier. You speak Arabic. What are they saying?” demanded Napoleon.

“They think he is you,” remarked the soldier.

“What?” cried the great general, his face growing red. “Tell them who I am.”

The soldier began to point at Bonaparte and yelled in Arabic.

“Him?” blurted the veiled woman in disbelief. She said nothing else. Yet her eyes seemed amused.

“Oh...forgive me. Don’t hurt me,” said the beardless youth. He seemed flustered.

“You’re a liar,” scoffed the fat man.

Bonaparte motioned to the soldier, “What did he say?”

“He’s calling you a liar, sir,” translated the soldier frankly.

Napoleon pulled out his sword. He then threw it to the fat man.

Motioning to his soldiers, he had them bring him another sabre.

“Pick up that sword, slovenly Egyptian. I’m going to fight you!” bellowed Bonaparte. He turned to the veiled woman. “Tell that shrew to stop looking at me with those eyes or I’ll cut them out!”

But the woman was off running in the other direction before the translator could speak.

The fat man began to blubber incoherently. The translator himself did not understand a word. But Napoleon knew this man would understand even without a translator.

“Pick it up and fight me or let me cut you. Either way I will have satisfaction,” said Bonaparte

The fat Egyptian lifted the sword and charged at the great general, swinging in a panic. Napoleon parried the blade to the side then thrust his sabre in between the ribs into the heart.

Napoleon pulled out his sabre as the portly Egyptian fell over.

They may have mistaken you for me, Thomas. But they said I fight on the front lines. This is true. I always have. You too, Thomas. That’s why we could work together. That’s why there cannot be two of us on top, thought Napoleon as they dragged the body away. The other Egyptians looked on in horror and admiration. You never had to murder someone to gain respect, Thomas. All you do is show up. Only me. I had to fight in the front lines every time when I commanded my men for them to love me. You do it once and they love you.

Napoleon did not understand this feeling coming over him. Thomas carried out his orders as he intended. And yet he was coming to despise him for it.

“All taken care of, sir,” said Thomas as he approached Napoleon. He handed the ransom money back to his commander.

“Good,” grunted Napoleon shortly.

“Is everything to your liking? You seem displeased,” Thomas observed, a note of concern creeping into his voice.

Napoleon nodded his head, but said nothing.

“Sir...?”

“You did well. As you always do, Thomas,” Napoleon finally replied, but could hide the bitterness seeping to the surface as he turned his back on his old friend and walked away.

A HISTORICAL NOTE

After Thomas Dumas attempted to return to France, he was captured and imprisoned in the Kingdom of Naples. French forces under Napoleon eventually freed him, but he was partially paralyzed and blind from suspected poisoning in the dungeons. After he finally gained release in 1801, Dumas was not awarded his pension by the French government and consequentially struggled to support his family after his return to France. He repeatedly wrote to Napoleon, seeking back-pay and a new commission in the military, but to no avail. After he died in 1806, his family was plunged into even more desperate poverty, and his children could not get even a basic education. His wife begged the French government to gain her military widow’s pension, but her efforts proved in vain. His family blamed Napoleon’s hatred of Thomas for their hardships. Thomas’s son, Alexander Dumas, would eventually grow up to write *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers* and countless other works.



“Napoleon and his General Staff” by Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1867

A Tale of Two Men

by Anna Rajagopal

One couldn't think of two books more dissimilar than a work of French Gothic fiction such as Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and Agatha Christie's psychological, semi-autobiographical love story that ends badly, *Unfinished Portrait*. But these two novels are alike in the fact that their plots are driven by men whose characters are essential to the culmination of the story. For *A Tale of Two Cities*, it is Sydney Carton. For *Unfinished Portrait*, it is Dermot. Similar in many ways, yet fundamentally different, Sydney ends up being the hero of his piece, while Dermot is the villain.

Most people are familiar with *A Tale of Two Cities*. *Unfinished Portrait* is less well-known. The latter chronicles the life of an English girl named Celia who enjoys an idyllic childhood and happy early married years before she is nearly driven to suicide when her seemingly perfect husband loses interest in her and demands a divorce.

The parallels between the books' male protagonists are quite striking. Sydney is an orphan. Dermot was raised by aunts in the hills of Ireland, indicating that his parents also died. Both men live in England. They are both tall, handsome, and have considerable intelligence. They even love a similar type of girl: blonde-haired, blue-eyed, slender, though the manner in which they treat her is the point of the stories.

What is different about these two men is the matter of their character. Referred to as "Charles Darnay's alter ego," Sydney is the psychological and moral opposite of Dermot. Dermot possesses enormous ambition and drive. Initially a poor subaltern in the British Army, he resigns from the army after World War I, enters the business field, and starts doing what he has been determined to do all along: make money. He is soon described as a successful businessman, who can afford a sports car, a nice house, and a Sealyham terrier.





In contrast to Dermot, who knows what he wants and always seems to get it, Sydney is literature's definition of a failure. Although he has the brains and talent to be a successful lawyer, Sydney is characterised by his lack of success. He lacks the willpower to change his situation; indeed, he doesn't seem to know even how to begin.

He has no goal for his life and considers it a waste. Because of this, he is terribly unhappy. (Dermot, on the other hand, goes beyond being typically happy and laughing, to being unable to stand it when other people are unhappy.)

But the chief and most striking difference between the two men is what, plainly speaking, makes one a criminal and the other a saint. Although apparently kind for the first eleven years of his and his wife's relationship, Dermot is fundamentally selfish. He wants his blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl and marries her, even though she is engaged to someone else.

He isn't happy when he finds out that she is going to have a baby, because he fears the baby will take his wife's attention away from himself. When she asks to have an outing with him on a Saturday when he would rather play golf, he doesn't offer up his game for her. When she begs him to come back while he is on a business trip because she isn't feeling well, he refuses due to the fact that it would be inconvenient for him. In the end, when he takes a fancy to another girl, Dermot demands that his wife divorce him so that he can marry her. And when she won't, he begins to treat her cruelly and almost causes her death.

Compare this attitude, completely lacking in devotion and concern, with the devoted, selfless, sacrificial nature of Sydney, who does not even think himself worthy to marry his love. After he has spoken of it once to her, he is silent on the subject, allowing her to marry another man, and far from running away with another woman, sacrifices himself to save the life of her husband. Dermot doesn't understand why his wife has such a warm affection for her family. He himself won't visit the aunts who raised him and believes that people "grow out of" family. But Sydney cares a great deal for his love's family and becomes like an uncle to her children.

While Dermot's selfishness indicates that he has a very high opinion of himself—only what he wants, and nothing else matters—Sydney has a very low opinion of himself, and others are all that matter. In this way, he rises above himself to immortality while Dermot sinks to the lowest level.

The tales of Sydney and Dermot illustrate the reality that it is the selflessness of a character that counts. Dermot was successful; in common parlance, he "had it all". He was happy and obviously got a lot of fun out of life. He seemed someone to be envied. But in the end, through his selfishness and exclusive attention to his own wants, he caused unhappiness for himself and others and ended up losing his daughter, never mind his wife. Sydney was viewed as the classic failure. He was unhappy, unfulfilled, pitiable, and yet through his selflessness he made his life worthwhile, earned the lasting love and respect of those whose esteem he valued most, gained a namesake, and climbed to the highest pedestal God Himself can create: that of "one who lays down his life for his friends." In this way, the useless lawyer from 18th-century England and the successful businessman from 20th-century England meet and divide.

HEMORRHAGE

By littlelonghairedoutlaw

She'd suspected he was ill for some time, but That Night, the night she tries not to remember, confirmed it for her. Raoul and the Persian trapped in the wall of her room, and the bell rang to summon the siren. She watched as Erik went out, hardly daring to breathe, and had bitten her lip almost through by the time he returned, gasping and clutching his side, soaking wet, blood on his lips. He collapsed into a chair and never looked at her, never spoke, only hacked up his own blood. She poured brandy and pressed the glass into his hand, but he was coughing too hard to sip it, and those coughs were the sort that had haunted her dreams for four years and more.

Consumption.

The gripping fear that came over her that he might die and she would be trapped here forever, forced to listen as Raoul and the Persian died inside the wall and she could do nothing to reach them, was terrible. But he did not die. And when he retrieved Raoul and the Persian from the flooded chamber, and she tended to them, she could hear his choking cough from his room, and it came to her that perhaps that is why he sleeps in a coffin.

It is a year ago, now. A year since that night, a year since he set her free with Raoul, and her heart twists to remember how frail he was at the end of things, sitting in his chair with his head in his hands, her promise to return to him upon his death still fresh on her tongue.

The summons came two weeks ago. The telegram from the Persian, ERIK GRAVELY ILL STOP HAEMORRHAGE STOP PLEASE COME STOP, signed Kazem and she did not know the name Kazem because Erik had always called him that meddling Daroga, but there was only one man it could be. Raoul squeezed her hand when she told him, and insisted on accompanying her. "I will not let you go back alone," he whispered, blue eyes blazing, and she leaned into him and whispered, "I never for a moment thought you would."

It is another Persian who meets them at the train, one she also saw around the opera house a handful of times, a dour man in a heavy coat who nods at her and shakes Raoul's hand, and when they are in the coach and moving through the streets of Paris he introduces himself as Darius.

"Erik is alive," and the pronouncement is dire, "but his time is very short."

"The message said he suffered a haemorrhage." Raoul's hand is steady wrapped around hers, sitting in her lap.

Darius nods. "He suffered a second, more severe one since."

It is all she can do to keep her face impassive. It does not seem so very long since her father's time, too, was growing short, and his lungs were bleeding every night. She leans a little closer into Raoul, and reminds herself to breathe, slow steady breaths. Her father is dead, her father has been dead for so very long, and Erik, too, is dying now, and there is nothing she can do to stop that (does she want to stop it?). She can only be here, like she promised she would be.

"You are still a wanted man, Monsieur." Darius' voice is low, and beside her Raoul lets out a shaky breath. "But they have stopped looking for you."

It was the reason she didn't want Raoul to come back with her, although she knew he would. After what happened to his brother—how could she risk someone recognising him? Someone deciding to bring up the old scandal? True, he does not look so much like the Vicomte he was a year ago. His hair is longer, curling just beneath his ears, his moustache has become a beard, his skin has taken on a faint tan. It might be enough, all together, to leave him unrecognisable, especially when his clothes are of a simpler cut than what he once wore.

How she hopes it is enough.

The journey is at once too long and too short. Any visit to see Erik would always be too soon, but time distorts on the road, through the crowd and the traffic, and almost before she realizes it, they are pulling up in front of a house, on what she thinks is the Rue de Rivoli. She'd heard it said that this is where the

Persian lives, and the look that Darius gives them confirms it. “Kazem insisted on his coming here, several months ago. The damp was making his condition worse.”

Of course the little house on the lake would never suit Erik with his lungs getting worse, but something about Darius’ gaze makes her wonder if there might not be more to it than that. She doesn’t ask. When she left with Raoul, she surrendered her right to know.

The coach door swings open, and Darius steps down first. His hand is warm when he reaches back in and she grasps it, and in a moment she, too, is on solid ground and Raoul is beside her, steadying her. It is a bright summer’s day, the glare almost blinding, and something tugs inside of her. Erik is dying and it is a bright day. Why should it be a bright day?

It was a bright day when her father died too.

She swallows against the tightness in her throat.

The house is dark inside, shadowed with heavy drapes and low lighting, the hallway narrow. Her breath catches, and she grips Raoul’s hand tighter. For a moment, one terrible moment, it is as if she is underground again, as if she is going to visit Erik in the house on the lake, then the hallway coalesces, gold and red strands shining in the carpet, threads of green and blue in the walls and it is different, so very different to that house, and the low lighting makes the colours shine iridescent.

“They’re upstairs,” Darius whispers, and the hush of his voice carries all the solemnity of why they’re here. “Kazem refuses to leave him for long.”

He leads the way, and the echo of their steps is too loud in the stillness of the house. Raoul’s breaths are soft and steadying in her ear, her heart pounding as they climb the stairs and he rubs his thumb over the back of her hand, his touch gentle. They reach the landing, and in the sudden quiet without their footsteps she can hear the ragged breaths from behind the closed door in front of them.

“He’s not wearing his mask.”

Of course he’s not. The mask always made it harder for him to breathe, and with his condition as serious as it is—

She has seen his face in her dreams almost every night for the last year. Seeing it truly before her again can hardly be more difficult than that, when he is before her every morning when she opens her eyes, when it is only when she sees Raoul sleeping peacefully beside her that the memory of Erik fades into the background. He has been a ghost haunting her the last year, even while he still lives.

Maybe in death he can finally free her of himself.

She squeezes Raoul’s hand, and lets it go, nodding at Darius.

He knocks on the door, and at a faint “come in” in a strong accent, opens it. The heady smell of incense drifts to her first, the room suffused with soft candlelight. She swallows a breath, and steps inside.

It is the Persian — Kazem — she sees first, sitting beside the bed. He turns to face her, and his face is drawn and haggard, mouth tight and eyes bloodshot even as he gives her a very faint smile.

But it is to Erik that her eyes are drawn, Erik whose hand — always so strong and elegant, and even after all that happened, she can admit that — is skeletal and limp in Kazem’s. The sheets are pulled up to his chin, a heavy brocade quilt on top, and his face, always so pale, is tinged yellow, the hollow where his nose ought to be a dark gap, his eyes more sunken than ever. He is gaunter than she remembers, his lips thinner, and for all that he has always looked like death, it is the first time he truly looks like he’s dying.

Her heart twists.

She should run, should run while she still can, before he can get a grip on her, before she will have to grieve him. But her feet are rooted to the floor, and Kazem sent for her, *please come, Kazem thought she should be here, Kazem who went with Raoul to rescue her that night, who has taken care of Erik,*



who has been crying and is looking at her with such grief in his eyes already and the grief is more than that of a friend, more than that of an old enemy and her heart twists for him too.

“He was asking for you.” His voice is hoarse, and it’s all she needs to hear.

She goes to the other side of the bed, and settles in a chair across from Kazem, and wraps her fingers gently, carefully, around Erik’s, sitting so still beside him.

He doesn’t wake, but he is breathing, and for now that is enough.

It is hours before he wakes, and she watches the slight shiftings of his face, the slow moving of his eyes beneath their lids, his barely parted lips. Kazem tells her, softly, about the haemorrhages, how the second one came mere days after the first, when he was already so weak, and he could not afford to lose that blood, that lung capacity. How the doctor has been in attendance, and given him morphine for the pain and codeine for the cough to try and keep him from bursting anything else in his lungs.

And Kazem tells her about how Erik has been, outside of his illness. How he stubbornly refused to leave the house on the lake until his chest couldn’t bear it a moment longer, how he composed when he was well enough and how he had just finished a fantastic piece, for violin and piano and a soprano’s voice, just before the first haemorrhage, and her heart lurches because if he composed it for a soprano then surely she must have been on his mind, must have haunted him as he has haunted her.

So much of his music was solely for instrumentation.

Tears well in her eyes, and she bites her lip to keep them at bay.

Several times his fingers stir in hers, and she thinks he might wake, but they still again and she kisses them, a gentle press of her lips to his fingertips, that will never be strong enough to make music again.

Raoul sits beside her for a little while, not speaking, but when he rises to leave she does not ask him to stay. She cannot do that to him, cannot do it to Erik.

Darius brings them tea, flavoured with lemon like how Erik made it for her once, and a bowl of broth for Erik, but it grows cold sitting beside the bed, and eventually he returns and takes it away, and none of them speak. To speak would be to shatter the solemnity of the room, and there are no words that are not dust in her throat.

It is nightfall when Erik wakes at last, nightfall when his fingers tighten in hers and a faint whimper comes from his throat. Kazem whispers to him, words she can’t understand in his native language, and strokes back the thin strands of his hair, and it is enough to soothe Erik, enough to settle his whimpers. His eyes flutter, and open, and those gold eyes that she’s remembered so well are shining with tears, with pain.

She shouldn’t be here, she’ll only make it worse, only upset him, and she’s about to say as much, about to take her leave and come back later, or tomorrow, when he might be more settled, when she catches her name among those hushed words of Kazem’s, and slowly, painfully, Erik turns his head, and pins her with his gaze.

His lips part, and it’s all she can do to smile at him.

“You...came.” His voice is terrible, hoarse with gravel and rattling in his throat. It is so very far from the voice she remembers, the one she, dare she admit it, loved, and her throat tightens so much she can barely answer.

“You asked for me.”

“Didn’t think...you’d come.” He swallows, his eyes closing, and from the side of her eye she sees Kazem rise, and release Erik’s hand, and he slips from the room. It is the first time she has been alone with him, since the night she kissed his forehead.

“Of course I did.”

He is silent a long time, his grip surprisingly strong in hers, and she lets him be. He is too weak for much talking, she knows that, and there are things she might say but they all weigh ashen on her tongue, unnatural shapes when he is dying, when he can say so little to her anymore, when his voice is not his own. She lets him rest, lets him collect himself, and just when she thinks exhaustion and weakness



might claim him again, he whispers, fainter than before, "I loved you."

Loved. Once, but not anymore. And she can understand how it happened. It is written large in Kazem's face, every time he looks at Erik.

"I know." Not, *I loved you, though it is true, to a point, because she did when she thought him an angel and for a time when she knew him a man, but to admit it now, like this, would be the worst act of cruelty.*

He swallows, and sighs. "Can you...forgive me?"

Forgive me for all I did. Forgive me for lying to you. Forgive me for loving you no longer. So many things he might ask her to forgive him for, so many things to absolve him of, but she is not a priest and this is not a sacred confessional and no matter how she wants to forgive him, there are things that he did that are beyond her forgiveness.

"For almost everything," she whispers, "but not for what you did to Comte Philippe." She can never forgive him for taking Raoul's brother from him, for taking Raoul's life from him by making him a wanted man. The grief that lives still in her husband's eyes is beyond anything that she can ever forgive Erik for.

Erik's lips twitch slightly. "More than...I deserve."

His fingers tighten in hers, and he tenses, a low whine slipping from his throat, but in a moment the spasm passes and he gasps, coughs, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth, rattling in his throat. She slips her arm under his neck to raise him so he doesn't choke, and dabs the blood away, holding his hand tighter until the coughing stops and he lies heavy against her, his head on her shoulder. For long minutes there is only the sound of his breathing, too loud in the dim light of the room, his forehead hot and clammy against her neck, and she prays that he'll go back to sleep, prays that he'll speak no more and let his lungs rest, but her prayers are in vain because when he has, at last, regained himself he murmurs, "Your young man...treats you well?"

"All the time."

"I'm glad." He swallows. "I know I have...no right...to ask but," he stops, and for a moment she thinks this is it, thinks he will say no more and simply slip away from her, but his voice is fainter than a moment before when he continues. "Will you...sing? At the end?"

Sing. Of course she can sing. Of course this is what he wanted her here for. "For as long as you want me to."

The smile that twists his lips, is the realest, softest one she has ever seen him wear.

It is not long until he slips back into unconsciousness, and she kisses his forehead and hopes the pain is at bay. Kazem resumes his vigil, and she leaves them in privacy, not wanting to intrude at such a difficult time. Darius surrenders his room to her and Raoul, and when she protests at taking his bed he just gives them a sad smile.

"I might be called on at any time."

They sleep little, that night. Even a floor away from him they hear it every time Erik coughs, and they are both too full of their own thoughts for sleep to take. Instead they lie in each other's arms, and doze a little, and whisper in the sacred sanctity of the darkness, of how Raoul went to visit his brother's grave, and she holds him tighter as he cries; and how she thinks Erik truly is sorry for what he did, and he kisses her and strokes her hair, and when, at last, sleep comes for them, it is short-lived.

Dawn has barely broken, when they are awoken by the choking, gagging cough from upstairs. A third haemorrhage, all the worse for how gravely ill Erik already is. And as Darius runs for the doctor, and Raoul brings water and towels, Christine and Kazem support Erik between them, dab the blood from his lips and mop the sweat from his brow, and keep him warm as he shivers, cold to the bone with fever. They whisper to him to keep his eyes open, and squeeze his hands, and there are tears trickling down Kazem's cheeks even as Christine is hollow and empty inside.

How to sing, at such a time as this?

Unconsciousness claims him at last, and the bleeding, but there is so little blood left in him to lose. The doctor administers morphine and codeine, and his pronouncement is grave as they nestle Erik among fresh linens, and hold his hands, and Kazem whispers prayers and pleas in his own language, and Christine knows that among those words she cannot understand, are his promises of love.

It is shortly after that Erik's breathing begins to fail, pauses between each exhale and inhale, and she knows it is almost time, knows he will never wake again.

Raoul sits beside her, and holds her hand as she sings, and Darius is steadying behind Kazem. And as Erik's breaths grow shallower and shallower, she sings every soft song she knows, every sweet aria, and every half-broken Swedish lullaby she remembers, that she sings to Raoul every night he wakes sweating, dreaming of drowning.

And when, at last, Erik's breath stutters, and he doesn't take another, and Raoul, fingers pressed into his wrist, meets her eyes and shakes his head, she looks away as Kazem kisses Erik's face, and lays his head on his silent chest, and cries.

They bury him beneath the opera house, beneath the temple of music he'd loved so well, because there is no where else he would be happier. She sings, her arm around Kazem, as Raoul and Darius cover over the box that holds Erik.

She sleeps easier, that night, than she has in more than a year.

No nightmares come for Raoul.

They stay a week, and a week becomes two, becomes finally three, but there is no way, now, to clear Raoul's name (though he pays a visit to his sisters, and they welcome him with open arms and promise him that they never believed what it was said he had done), and finally they leave, bound once more for Norway.

The night before they take the train, Kazem presents them with a trunk full of Erik's compositions. "He asked me to give them to you," and his smile is heavy with grief.

And with the promise that they will take good care of the compositions, and will write, and with an invitation for him and Darius to come visit whenever he feels ready, they leave Paris for the last time, on a bright summer's day.

And for the first time in more years than she can remember, for the first time since her father died, Christine's heart is light.



Notre Dame

A Picture-Walk from 2017
By Sarah Levesque



When I got the news that Notre Dame was burning, I was at work. All my coworkers and I were aghast that such a treasure was burning. Thankfully, we soon got the update that all the Eucharist and all the art had been saved, and judging by the pictures of the inside afterward, there wasn't all that much damage to the church proper. I rejoiced greatly at that news, especially because I had gone to see Notre Dame when I went to France on pilgrimage in 2017. Here I will share with you the pictures I have, though some are poor quality and I didn't take nearly as many as I might have, or even as many as I thought I did. I didn't take many notes, either, but hopefully there is enough between the pictures and notes to give you an idea of the grandeur of this Gothic Cathedral and the amazing art I got to see there. And if you got to see it with your own eyes, hopefully this will be a small reminder of your experience.

A little bit of background: Notre Dame de Paris (Our Lady of Paris) is built on a small island in the middle of the river Seine. The island has quite the religious history - it was the home of a Roman temple of Jupiter, and it was the capital of a Celtic area, and saw multiple Catholic churches built and destroyed before the lovely Gothic cathedral we know by sight was begun in 1163. If you look at the picture of the front of the church, it looks symmetrical. However, it is not exactly symmetrical, because (I was told) God doesn't always work in symmetry. You can see the difference in the arches of the side doorways - the archway on the left has an extra arch to it, much sharper than the archway on the right. There's a closer look of these arches on the next page.





The picture to the left shows more clearly the differences in the side archways. You can also see just how small the people are compared to the archways. Each archway has its own scene in the center, surrounded by angels, saints, and devils. This picture in the center of the page is from the

center archway and shows Christ in judgement on the Heavenly throne. Below him is an angel and saints adoring Christ, and two devils, leading people away from Christ.

The bottom left picture comes from the left archway, and shows the Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven. The bottom right picture is of the right archway, and shows Mary and the Christ Child. There are other scenes in the archways, but I don't have good pictures of them. The statues are in the Romanesque style, probably a holdover from an earlier church. As you can see in the top picture, there are statues above the arches. These are the Kings of Judah, and were originally



added - brightly painted - in the 13th century. Interestingly, during the French Revolution, they were mistaken for the kings of France, and they were removed and their heads were chopped off by revolutionaries. They were replaced in the 19th century.

The picture on the left is the nave of the cathedral, the main part of the church. The ceiling is breathtakingly high, with stained glass windows set high in the walls. These windows let in a lot of light, which is augmented by the chandeliers closer to head-level.



On either side of the nave is a section like a hallway, connecting the nave to the side chapels. There are an astounding 27 chapels surrounding the nave. Each of these chapels is unique in the saint it is dedicated to and how it is decorated. Some are simple, others lavish. Each of



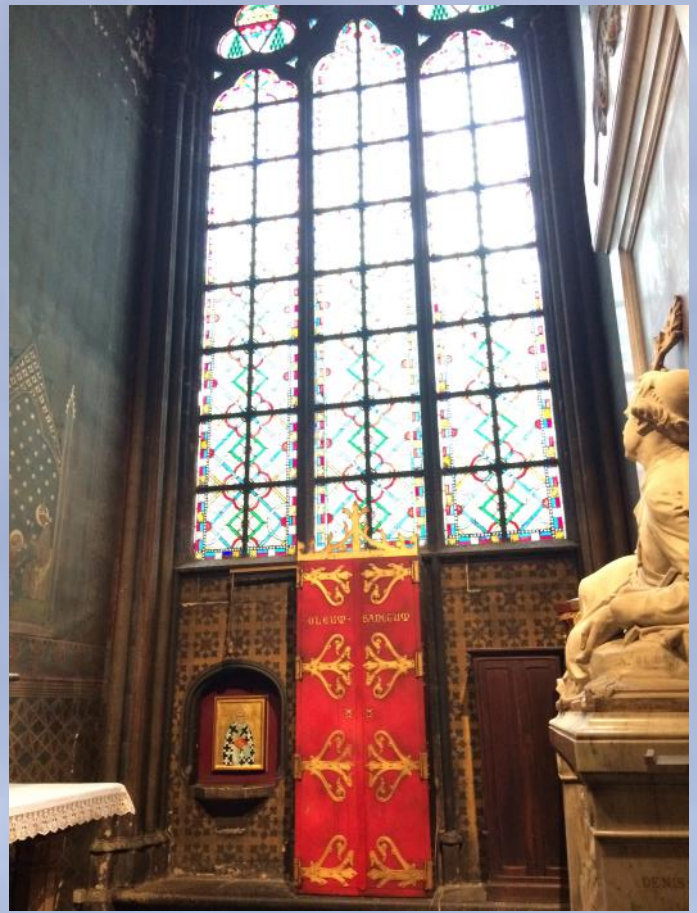
the chapels faced the same direction as the main church, and each had a set of stained glass windows taking up the majority of the outside wall. When I was there, most of the chapels were not used as working chapels, but mostly for places to pray near the artwork (as Catholics, we don't pray to artwork any more than we talk to a phone. Each is a tool for communication). A couple of the chapels were being used simply as storage spaces, and if I remember correctly one or two might have been in renovation. I only have pictures of a few of the chapels and, unfortunately, I didn't mark down which chapels I took pictures of.

(see next page for chapel pictures)

The chapel below is a model of what many looked like. To the right you can see a simple altar (in the old Latin style) with a tabernacle and candlesticks (unlit to denote that the tabernacle is empty). There is a statue of a saint centered under the windows, and a confessional to the left. What made this chapel noteworthy for me was the artwork. I've layered the two best pictures I have, one on top of the other, though the pictures were taken at different angles and so don't line up exactly. However, this should give you an idea of just how big each painting was, each covering just about the entire wall it was on. The figures in them were larger-than-life, and the detail was impeccable.



The next page contains pictures from the Chapel of Saint Denis (luckily I took a picture of the sign!). The altar was on the left, with a beautiful and intricate painting on the wall behind it. Again, the candles were unlit to signify that the tabernacle was empty. You can see the set of stained glass windows covering most of the outside wall - this time with more red and white than blue - with what I believe is a cabinet below, decorated in red. And on the right was a statue of St. Denis, Archbishop of Paris, who was killed in the French Revolution of 1848. The sentence above him, translated, reads "May my blood be the last that is shed."



par Auguste-Hyacinthe Debay, sculpteur (1860)

CHAPEL OF SAINT DENIS
 FIRST BISHOP OF PARIS, MARTYR († 250)

BAPTISMAL FONT AND PASCHAL CANDLESTICK
by Goudji, sculptor and goldsmith (1985)

MURAL OF "THE LIFE OF SAINT DENIS"
 ALTAR
 CUPBOARD CONTAINING THE HOLY OILS
 MURALS
based on drawings by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, architect (between 1865 and 1870)

ICON OF SAINT DENIS THE AREOPAGITE
restored to the cathedral in 2002 by Monseigneur Jérémie, president of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops in France

MEDALLIONS: PELICAN AND ARMS OF MONSIEUR AFFRE
 GRISAILLE STAINED-GLASS WINDOW
*by Alfred Gérente, master glazier (circa 1865)
 supervised by Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, architect*

MAUSOLEUM OF DENIS-AUGUSTE AFFRE († 1848)
 archbishop of Paris from 1840 to 1848,
 mortally wounded by a stray bullet in the riots of June 1848, buried in the choir of the cathedral
by Auguste-Hyacinthe Debay, sculptor (1860)

I suspect the chapel to the right was used for storage, as there are multiple different statues and the painted walls - once brightly colored, now faded - are blocked by other artwork. The dark statue is St. Anthony of Padua.



Another chapel, this one with a kneeler set up in front of a depiction of the crucifixion. To the left was a picture of the Virgin and Child. Both were adorned with flowers. This was an unusual set up, as most of the chapels were focused more on the altar - the place of the Eternal Sacrifice of the Mass - than on a piece of artwork.

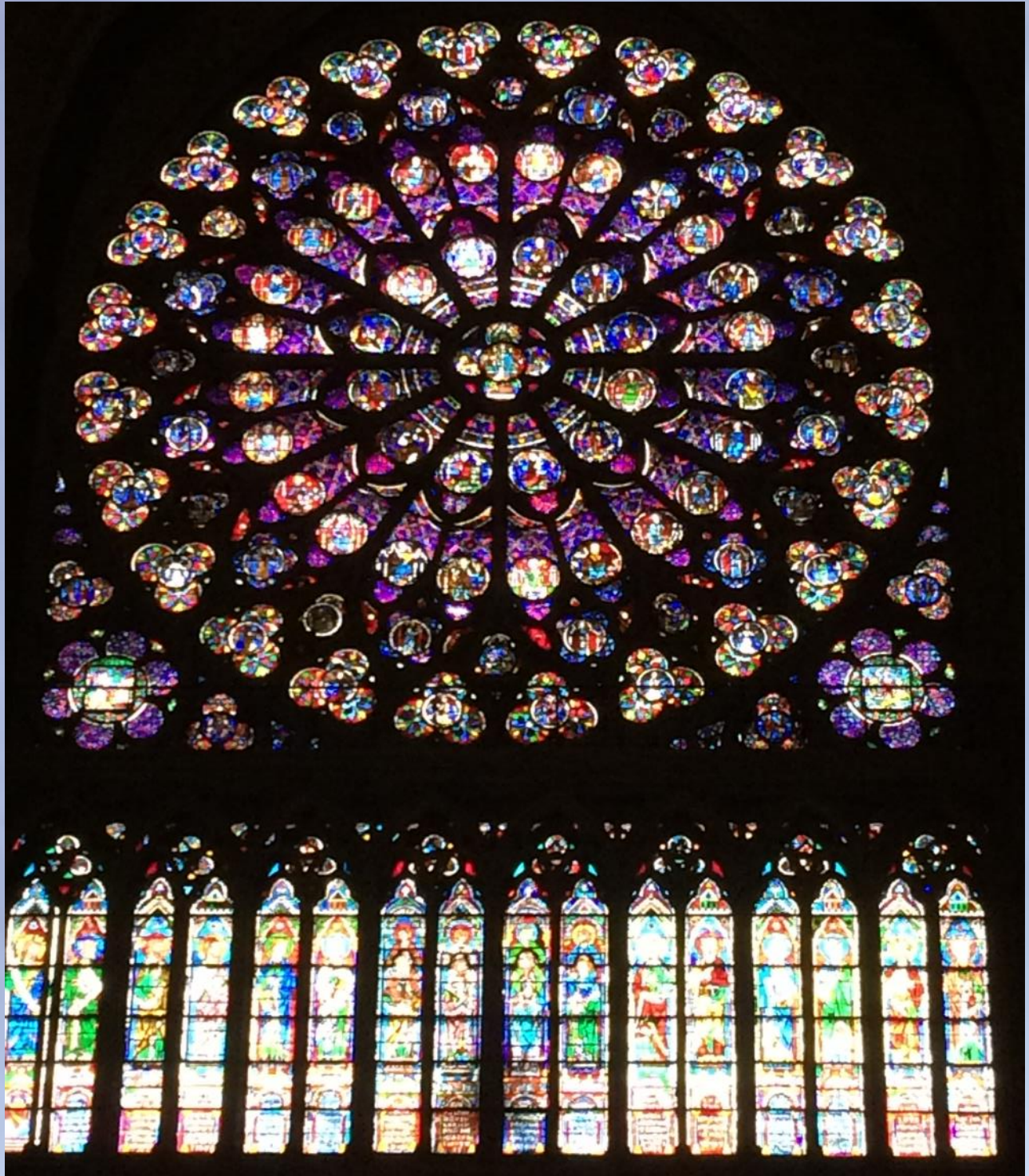
To the right, you can see the main altar, with people praying in the wooden chairs in the nave. Sadly I don't seem to have any pictures of the altar from any closer than this.



Around the altar, separating it from more corridor and more chapels, is a wall known as a “rood screen”. Many rood screens are latticework, but Notre Dame de Paris sports a wall which, like the rest of the cathedral, is highly decorated. Marching along the outside of the rood screen are statues depicting scenes from the Bible. These very detailed both in how they were carved and how they were painted.

Above is a length of the screen; below is a close up of two scenes.





And of course we can't talk about Notre Dame without mentioning the Rose Windows. Each section of this window has its own scene in it. The windows immediately below this Rose Window depict the saints.

I hope that someday you get the chance to see Notre Dame de Paris, as I have only given you a tiny glimpse of the enormity and majesty of this grand cathedral. To learn more from the privacy of your own home, I suggest these two web pages:

frenchmoments.eu/notre-dame-de-paris/
frenchmoments.eu/west-facade-of-notre-dame-cathedral-paris/

REPRISE

by Seth Fiment

Warning: Contains themes of suicide as per Les Mis

After being greeted and brought to the afterlife by Fantine's spirit, Valjean wanders away from the crowd and encounters someone he never thought he would see again. Looking over at the bishop and Fantine, he smiles before turning, withdrawing from the crowd.

Walking through the brightly lit streets of Paris, Valjean can barely believe his eyes. Never before has he seen the city glow like this. Closing his eyes, he simply lets his feet steer him wherever they may go.

"... Jean Valjean..."

Sure that he just heard his name, Valjean stops in his tracks. Opening his eyes, he is met by the dark gloom of a tunnel, the bright ethereal light of the streets completely gone. A shiver races up his spine from the frigid cold seemingly encompassing the place. Shuddering, he feels a sense of heavy uneasiness settle low in his guts. Moving swiftly forward, Valjean hurries through the tunnel in the direction he thinks the voice came from. Reaching the end, he freezes, staring – he can't believe what he is seeing. "Javert?"

As he watches the inspector gaze up at the night sky, Valjean notices that he is standing up on the edge of the bridge. Frowning, Valjean starts to walk towards him. "Inspector, what are you doing?"

Not seeming to hear him, Javert simply lowers his gaze to the river before he starts to lean forward.

"Javert!" Rushing forward, Valjean reaches out, feeling the rush of air from the coat tail graze past his fingers.

Leaning over the parapet, Valjean watches, stunned, as Javert's body gets swept away by the water. For a moment he simply stares before he pushes himself away from the parapet and swiftly moves into action. Running to the stairs leading down to the riverside, he's barely taken three steps when he suddenly hears Javert's voice. "Who is this man? What sort of devil is he? To have me caught in a trap, and choose to let me go free?"

With wide eyes, Valjean looks up to see Javert at the bottom of the stairs. In disbelief, Valjean holds out a hand towards him. "How?"

Staring down at the steps, Javert slowly walks up. "It was his hour at last, to put his seal on my fate."

Lowering his hand, Valjean frowns in confusion. "What?"

"Wipe out the past and wipe me clean off the slate. All it would take was a flick of his knife."

Swallowing, Valjean watches as Javert comes to a stop a couple of steps below him.

"Vengeance was his..." Face turning up, Javert stares grimly straight ahead.

Concerned, Valjean once more reaches for Javert. "Inspector?"

"And he gave me back my life!" Eyes blazing, Javert suddenly starts to move again. Quickly stepping to the side, Valjean presses himself to the wall. "Who did?" He can't help but ask as he turns to follow Javert.

Not answering, Javert strides across the bridge with quick steps. "Damned if I'll live in the debt of a thief. Damned if I'll yield at the end of the chase. I am the law and the law is not mocked. I'll spit his pity right back in his face."

Slowing his step, Valjean feels something horrible start to churn in his stomach.

Stilling, Javert turns to stare out over the river. "There is nothing on earth that we share. It is either Valjean or Javert!"

Taken off guard, Valjean stops completely, looking over at Javert with worried eyes. "Me?"

But before he can contemplate it further, Javert suddenly steps up on the parapet. "Javert!" Rushing forward, Valjean is just about to grab him when Javert turns sharply and they almost collide. Jerking his hand back, Valjean quickly takes a step back, afraid he'll cause the inspector to lose his balance and fall. Looking up, he is met by Javert staring right down at him.

"How I can now allow this man to hold dominion over me? This desperate man whom I have hunted. He gave me my life. He gave me freedom. I should have perished by his hands. It was his right. It was my right to die as well. Instead I live. But I live in hell."

Shaking his head, Valjean hesitatingly starts to reach out. "No, Javert. No."

Closing his eyes, Javert turns his head. "And my thoughts fly apart. Can this man be believed? Shall his sins be forgiven? Shall his crimes be reprieved?"

Slowly edging closer, Valjean tries to reach for Javert once more, but just when he's about to take hold of the inspector's arm, he moves. Withdrawing his hand Valjean watches, concerned, as Javert paces back and forward on the parapet.

"And must I now begin to doubt? Who never doubted all these years? My heart is stone and still it trembles. The world I have known is lost in shadow."

Frowning, Valjean finally takes notice of what Javert is wearing. "That uniform..." Frown smoothing out, he suddenly remembers. "The sewers."

"Is he from heaven or from hell?" Staring down, Javert looks straight at Valjean without actually seeing him.

Swallowing the lump in his throat, Valjean meets Javert's gaze. "When you let me go."

"And does he know, that granting me my life today - this man has killed me even so?"

Unable to break Javert's stare, Valjean feels something clench around his heart, choking him. "I did this to you?"

As if in response to his words, Javert briefly closes his eyes before turning and looking up at the sky. "I am reaching, but I fall. And the stars are black and cold. As I stare into the void. Of a world that cannot hold. I'll escape now from that world. From the world of Jean Valjean. There is nowhere I can turn. There is no way to go on!" Lowering his gaze to the river, he starts to lean forward.

"No!" Rushing forward, Valjean reaches for Javert. Getting a hold of the inspector's wrist, he pulls him back, only for him to fall limply back into his arms. "Javert!" Moving a hand up to the side of the man's pale face, Valjean's fingers meet cold lifeless flesh. Falling to his knees, he stares, devastated, at the blank dead face of the inspector. "No."

Feeling cold water dampen his clothes, Valjean watches as water starts to drip from Javert before he seemingly dissipates, turning into cold river water. Kneeling in the puddle of murky water, Valjean stares blankly at his empty hands before clenching his fist tightly.

Standing up, he determinedly starts to walk over to the stairs leading down to the riverside...

Feeling completely drained, Valjean sits down, slumping exhaustingly against the side of the parapet. Closing his eyes, he rests his head against the cold stone. He has tried everything.

Holding Javert back.

Shouting and begging. Pleading on his bare knees.

Standing in his way.

Walking away. Trying to forget.

He's seen him die so many times.

Seen him turn into nothing but dark river water.

Felt him die so many times

And every death just keeps piling up. Weighing down on him. And he just can't any more.

Taking in a shaky breath, Valjean feels a cold tear fall down his cheek.

Hearing Javert's voice drift over, Valjean swallows heavily and sits still and listens. Since he found the inspector, he never really took the time to truly listen to everything Javert has been saying - never taking the time to think about anything for more than a moment.

It is then that he hears it.

Opening his eyes, Valjean looks up at the stars. "Can it be that simple?"

Standing up, he turns to momentarily stare at the parapet before he swallows and mumbles, "It is either Valjean or Javert."

Stepping up on the parapet, Valjean closes his eyes and starts to lean forward like he's seen Javert do a dozen times over, only to suddenly get grabbed and pulled back. Staring transfixed at the hand holding his arm, Valjean doesn't dare to look up or even move, afraid that it is some kind of trick. An illusion.

Then for the first time since he stepped onto the bridge, he hears that sombre baritone direct a question at him.

"Monsieur, what were you doing?"

Eyes shooting up from the hand, Valjean momentarily stares at Javert's grim face before he promptly pulls the man into a tight embrace. Pressing himself flush up against the inspector, Valjean hugs him tightly. Grinning like a fool, he feels tears sting his eyes. "It's really you."

Not recognising that the man is Valjean, Javert stands stiffly while the stranger hugs him and mumbles nonsense.

"Please let this be it. No more. Don't turn to river water. Please."

For a second, Javert feels cold phantom waves envelop him and a chill travel up his spine. Frowning, he shakes his head at the ridiculous feeling and tries to get out of the stranger's grasp, but he simply tightens his hold.

Placing a hand on the stranger's shoulder, he tries to push him away. "Monsieur, let go of me."

Somehow the man's hold tightens further and Javert hears him desperately plead.

"Please don't jump."

Frown deepening, Javert struggles harder to get out of the stranger's grip when suddenly recognition strikes him and he realises who it is.



“Let go of me, Valjean.”

“Inspector, I-”

At the sound of his name, Valjean's grip loosens and Javert takes the opportunity to push away from him. “Leave me, Valjean.”

“No. I can-”

Seeing Valjean's hand reach out for him, Javert quickly steps back. “Why do you haunt me like this?”

Hand dropping, Valjean hesitatingly takes a step towards Javert. “Inspector, I didn't-”

Closing his eyes, Javert turns away. “Just leave me be.” Pausing briefly, he swallows his last bit of pride. “Please.”

Stepping back, Valjean glances between Javert and the tunnel leading off the bridge when he catches sight of something in the corner of his eye.

Walking over to the parapet, Valjean looks out towards the horizon before softly calling the inspector's name. “Javert.”

Letting out a resigned breath, Javert turns to look at Valjean and is met by the light of the rising sun.

Walking over to the other man, Javert stops next to him.

Gazing at the sunrise, Javert feels the rays warm his face when suddenly an equally warm hand comes to rest atop of his.

“It's a new day, Javert.”

Glancing over at Valjean, Javert takes a moment to inspect the man's face. Eyes closed, Valjean is still facing the sunrise, the light giving his face a warm glow. Inspecting it, Javert can't see a single trace of deceit or malevolence, only a diminutive serene smile in an open honest face.

Briefly Javert wonders if this man is really Valjean, for how could he ever have thought this man irredeemable. Nothing but a thief.

As Javert lets his eyes follow the profile of Valjean's face, he feels something clench in his chest.

Turning back to the sunrise, Javert swallows, clearing his throat. “So it seems.”



The Hunchback of Notre Dame is one of my favorite animated films from Disney.

I love the story and the characters, showing how even the good guys can have flaws in them and how the villains can become evil just by failing to see their flaws. I know it's drastically different from Victor Hugo's originally tale, but it's still a wonderful fantastic story, which is why I was saddened by how it was misused in one of my favorite video game series.

In Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance, the heroes Sora and Riku have to travel to a world based off of the Disney animated film, which in this game is called La Cité des Cloches. Here things get strange, as they are both traveling different versions of the same world, yet the events seem to affect each other. For example, when one character has to face a monster, the other character has to defeat a weaker version of that monster. But the complicated story elements are not the point here.

What makes me sad is how much of the religious elements and darker themes are taken out of the story itself. For example, Quasimodo tells one of the heroes who came to the cathedral that the Archdeacon is away at the moment. That's kind of pointless because where would he have gone in 1400s France that was more important than attending to Notre Dame? Couldn't someone else have been sent to whatever was important? Moreover, it removes the character who served as the polar opposite to Frollo, someone who could've done more in guiding the heroes to where they needed to go. Instead the guiding part was given to the three gargoyles Hugo, Victor, and Larvene, as well as Quasimodo and Esmerelda.

La Cité des CLOCHES

HOW KINGDOM
HEARTS FAILED TO
USE THE
HUNCHBACK OF
NOTRE DAME

By
David
Glenn

Also, as a result of removing the religious elements, they ended up removing a lot of Frollo's motivation. In the film a lot of his self-righteousness came from the fact that he viewed himself as incapable of sin, and when he began lusting after Esmerelda, he became desperate to kill her in order to hide the fact that he was not as perfect as he wanted to be. His own inability to admit he was capable of sin led to him arresting countless gypsies across Paris, even setting fire to the whole city just to try and find Esmerelda, and in the climax he even orders his men to take control of Notre Dame. That in itself was a crime against the Church, and showed that Frollo cared nothing for God. After analyzing his character in the movie, I daresay this villain was putting himself above his maker.

So how was Frollo portrayed in Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance? Well, they still tried to make him self-righteous, but it felt flat and empty. He assumed Sora was a gypsy simply because he wasn't dressed as the locals (might be handy to come up with a spell to have the attire of the characters blend in with wherever the heroes are visiting, Square Enix) and went on a rant about how the city was overrun by gypsies, but neither hero is given an idea of why Frollo hates gypsies so much.

Another problem with removing the religious elements is the monsters in the game. Since technically the world is asleep, it gets visited by creatures called Dream Eaters which are basically dreams given physical form. There are two varieties in the game with the good ones being called Spirits while the bad ones are appropriately called Nightmares. There is a moment in the game which is supposed to be inspired by the Feast of Fools, but feels really empty since you can only hear people cheering but don't see anyone apart from the main characters. Nightmares are supposed to be parading around with Quasimodo before his fear when his master appears makes them go berserk and Sora has to save him.



My problem with that is given how strongly religion was a part of the lives of 1400s Paris, no one in their right mind would've allowed the Nightmares to get close. The people would've appropriately viewed them as monsters or demons, as I'm pretty sure it's safe to say Dream Eaters weren't native to that time or place. I'm pretty sure the first thing people would've done if they saw those creatures would be to run and hide while praying for deliverance. As a result of not having the religious elements or darker themes, the unseen people of La Cité des Cloches came across as being idiots. The only person who saw the Nightmares as a threat was Phoebus, who in different parts of the game referred to them as monsters and demons.

Frollo, as a result of having the religious undertones taken out, was out of character when it came to the Dream Eaters as well. At one point when the final boss shows up, the pompous judge declares that the creature is a holy gift given to him so he can rain judgement down on the city and its people. While it does show how he can't see his own evil (even after Riku calls him out on it) he comes across as more of a Saturday morning cartoon character than the complex and dark villain the film made him out to be. After watching the film several times, I can conclude that Frollo would never in his world or any other see something like a Nightmare as a gift from heaven. With its freaky shape and bright colors, such a monster would've made him see those things as demons from hell.

Overall, it was a shame that the world of The Hunchback of Notre Dame was so poorly used in the Kingdom Hearts series where light and darkness are constantly used. This world could've been a great example of how something good can be twisted around for evil purposes, or how light can be used to defend dark deeds. Sadly, the story and result we got were hollow and empty, as if they had removed its heart.





Bard Judith, 2019

Up in Flames

Amanda Pizzolatto

Erik coughed and gasped as he fled from the smoke into the darkened streets. He stumbled a few feet from the opera house before stopping and turning to look at the billowing clouds rising into the night sky. Years of hard work, his hard work, gone, up in smoke. But he couldn't be mad, for he was the arsonist. The burning desire for companionship had consumed him, and now it consumed what used to be the only home he had ever known. But he was not angry as he watched it burn, as he thought he would have been. No, he almost felt relieved. He had created a cage for himself, a cage to be free of the world's disdain for him, free of the loveless interactions he's had, free to heal from wounds he'd carried all these years, and with Christine's help, he did begin to heal. But that healing only seemed to really begin when he let her go. He finally understood what love was.

He coughed. The smoke was spreading farther down the street. Besides, he needed to get moving if he wanted to be out of the city before they started a city-wide manhunt, if they hadn't already. He knew he needed to walk quickly, but he took his time, savoring every sight, sound, and smell of the streets he used to frequent. Even though he knew the Parisians hated him, he knew he would miss this great city. He kept to the shadows in his scenic route through the city, even though there were very few people awake, and those that were awake were fighting the fires at the opera house. At least, that's where he thought, he hoped, they were. He certainly wasn't going to head back and find out; he had to make it out of the city before the sun was up.

The sky was filling up with pinks, oranges, yellows, and blues as the sun peeked over the horizon when Erik exited the city boundaries and headed into the surrounding farmland. He turned and watched the sun's light bathe the city with a glow, making the city look warmer than he had ever felt within it. A soft smile appeared on his face beneath the mask, a smile that went up to his eyes. He was glad this would be his final view of the city, his final memory. The fire at the opera house had been put out hours ago, the harsh, breath of smoke giving way to soft, wispy clouds. He could pinpoint the tower of Notre Dame, right as the echoing, melodious sound of the bells rang out across the countryside. His smile grew wider as a tear trickled down his cheek. Good, he got to hear the bells of Notre Dame one last time as well. He waited until the bells finished their song before turning and walking away.

He had gone only a few feet into the woods when he noticed a tall, darkly shrouded man looming before him. Erik was startled by the fellow but did not retreat when the dark man approached him.

"You do not shrink away," said the fellow with a hint of awe.

"Was I supposed to?"

"Most do," the fellow said softly, "but since you did not, well, I have a proposition for you. A job, if you will."

"What does it require that I do?" asked Erik.

"You will be hired as a butler for my family," stated the man matter-of-factly. "You will help in caring for the children, since I am unable to, see to it that their needs are met, and they are disciplined well. You will also have to be on the look-out for enemies who will try to kill them, especially once they have figured out whose children they are."

"Whose children are they, if I may be so bold?"

The man smiled thinly at him. "If you do not wish the job, just say so."

"I do wish to know by whom I am employed."

There was a moment's pause before the man spoke. "Are there any other questions you have? I will answer that, but last."

Erik thought a moment. "Will I be able to continue writing my music?"

"Of course, you may. I'm sure the children will be delighted with hearing it, and learning it, if you wish."

Erik nodded and thought some more. "Would I be able to return to Paris for a visit? Not right away, of course."

"It would depend on when you request this visit. It might not happen until the youngest has turned fifteen, or at least he would have to travel with you."

"If these children are delightful to be around, I wouldn't mind that at all."

There was another moment's pause. "Any more questions?"

"I believe that covers it."

The man sighed. "Very well. I am Hades, the Greek Lord of the Underworld."

"Ah," said Erik, "no wonder others shrink from you." He removed his mask. "It is, in a way, the same way others shrink from me, my lord, and why I did not shrink from you."

"And why I sought you out, but it seems that your labyrinth under the opera house proved to be, well, quite the labyrinth for my messengers."

"Ah yes, we are very hard to find once we are at home, it would seem." Erik flashed a grin.

Hades chuckled. "Ah yes, so it would seem. Then I do believe you are indeed the right man for the job. Will you take it?"

"Since I have nowhere else to go, and it is a fine proposition, yes, I shall take it."

"Good." Hades held out his hand. "Then come."

Erik took his hand, and Hades stepped into the shadows. The shadows seemed to expand until they were wrapped around them both. They took a few steps into pure darkness before a sliver of light could be seen. They walked towards it, and they came out onto an island.

"Where are we?"

"An island off Venice."

Erik looked around, impressed. "You have your own little kingdom above ground too, huh?"

"Yes, I must; children should not live in the Underworld."



Erik glanced at Hades. "Though it is rare to hear of you having children. It's usually your brothers who have the demigods."

Hades nodded. "Yes, it is rarer for me, but that is because I am more likely to fall in love with a woman because of who she is, rather than how she looks."

Erik nodded. "True love, you mean."

Hades smiled. "Right. Come, meet my children and their mother." He paused and turned deadly eyes upon Erik. "And under no circumstances are you to touch Maria."

Erik smiled at him, undaunted. "My lord, I have just had my heart broken by a woman, and yet almost healed. It is far too early to think of loving another. But do not worry, she is your love; I could never compete with you, nor would I want to."

Hades nodded. "Good, now come." Erik followed him into an elegant, sprawling Victorian house, the only building on the little island. "Maria! I have returned!" said Hades when the two entered the house.

Erik thought it wise to begin his butler duties at once and helped Hades take off his cloak. Hades nodded with approval.

"Oh Hades, welcome home!" called out a female voice as three pairs of feet came down the stairs. "Have you found a butler?"

Erik followed Hades into the living room, quickly putting back on his mask. This woman might be in love with Hades, but she still might be cautious around a living man who looked like a skeleton. Three people entered the living room at the same time – a lovely young woman and two young children. The eldest, a girl, looked no more than eight, while the youngest, a boy, looked no more than six. The woman raised her eyebrow upon seeing Erik.

"I believe I have," said Hades as he approached the woman and kissed her cheek. "I found him in Paris. He's an excellent musician as well, I understand."

"You are too kind, my lord," said Erik with a humble bow.

"Perhaps an example of your work, if you please?"

"I would be delighted." Erik walked towards the grand piano, sat down, and began to play.

"Are you sure about this, Hades?"

"Of course, Maria, he's the best."

"But, why does he wear a mask?"

"He has a deformity, a deformity that makes so-called polite society deem him unfit to be seen."

"Oh, how horrid!"

Erik relaxed somewhat at hearing those words; maybe they wouldn't mind seeing his face. But his thoughts were turned from that as the softest touch he had ever felt brushed his leg. He paused in his playing and glanced down at the little boy.



"Well, hello there, little master. What can Erik do for you?"

The little boy smiled at him. "Erik plays the pi-ano so beau-beauti . . ."

"Nico, the word you're looking for is 'beautifully,'" said Maria.

"A rather large word for a small boy," said Erik.

"Ah, but Nico is fond of words. He's trying to keep up with his sister." Maria smiled at the girl.

Erik chuckled and patted the boy's head. "Seems to me like he's doing a good job."

Nico lifted his arms. "Sit in lap?" He glanced at his mother before looking back at Erik. "Please?"

"Oh, Nico, Erik might not be able to play with you in his lap," said Hades.

"Oh, I can give it a try." Erik picked up Nico and set him on his lap. He turned to playing again, his fingers flying expertly over the keys. But in a couple of minutes, he was done. Nico let out a little squeal and clapped his hands.

"I am glad the little master enjoyed it," said Erik.

"Again, again, again!" said Nico.

"Hold on," said Erik. He held onto Nico as he turned on the piano bench. "What do your mother and sister think of my music?"

"Wow," said Nico's sister in a whisper, her eyes wide.

Maria clasped her hands. "That was lovely! Yes, I completely agree with you, Hades; he's perfect."

Hades smiled at Maria. "I'm glad you approve."

Maria grinned at Hades before letting out a gasp. "Oh, where are my manners? We haven't been properly introduced! I'm Maria di Angelo, and these are our children, Bianca and Nico."

Erik bowed his head. "A pleasure to meet you all. My name is Erik."

"Do you have a surname?"

Erik shook his head. "I have never had one. My mother abandoned me when I was a baby because of my deformity, and the circus that took me in and raised me only called me Erik."

"Oh, you poor thing," said Maria as she frowned. "It really is a good thing Hades found you and brought you here. Please consider this your new home."

"I am very grateful to you all," said Erik with a catch in his voice. Nico moved on his lap, and his coat button caught Erik's mask.

The mask came off.

Maria gasped while Nico and Bianca stared at him.

"Erik hurt?"

"No, Nico, he was born with it," said Hades softly.

"You look like one of Daddy's skeletons."

"Bianca!"

"But it's true!"

"But does it bother you to look at him?" asked Hades.

The three glanced at Erik.

Maria shook her head firmly. "No."

Bianca scoffed. "Of course not, Daddy."

Nico stood up on Erik's lap and looked

him in the eye. "Are you angry?"

Erik blinked. "Why would I be angry?"

"You had the mask on, and I took it off."

"No, Nico, I'm not angry; it was an accident."

Nico surprised Erik as he wrapped his little arms

around Erik's neck. "I like you, Erik."

Erik smiled as he returned the hug.

"I like you too, Master Nico."

"Well, now that that's settled, why don't we

talk about your duties?" said Hades.

Nico glanced at his father. "Can't he play again?"

"Maybe later, Nico. Right now, I have to talk to him."

Nico pouted. "Fine."

Erik chuckled. "Don't worry, little master, I shall play again for you tonight, if you'd like."

Nico threw his hands in the air. "Yes!!"

"Then shall we show him around the house?" said Hades.

"Right!" Nico grabbed Erik's hand and began to pull him up the stairs. "Come on!"

Erik chuckled as he followed him and learned about what he needed to do to take care of and protect his new home. That night, Erik sang with such joy that the song sounded like it was straight out of heaven. He had entered a new chapter in his life, and he was liking it a lot.



(Characters from The Phantom of the Opera by Gaston Leroux and from the Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan)

Les Misérables... The Title Says It All

A review of the 2012 film, by Sarah Levesque

For most of my life I had heard good things about *Les Misérables* the musical. And I greatly enjoy a good musical. For the last few years I've kept a lookout at the library for a copy, without success. I had heard the audiobook as a pre-teen, so I was sort of familiar with the story. Then, a few months ago, I noticed that one of my best friends had a copy of the 2012 DVD on a shelf with a whole bunch of others. I asked and was allowed to borrow it, so I excitedly took it home. As luck would have it, my parents (who are not musical-lovers) were out for the evening, so I had the tv to myself. I grabbed some food and settled down to be impressed, thinking a good musical would improve my sadness.

I watched and I waited for good music. Hugh Jackman sang and Russell Crowe sang and I don't know if the songwriter failed or if the actors failed. I expected much more from Hugh Jackman, having greatly enjoyed *The Greatest Showman*. Then Mia Thermopolis – I mean, Anne Hathaway – sang, and her song (Fantine's song, "I Dreamed A Dream") was well written. I don't love Anne Hathaway, and I'm not a great fan of her singing, but this song struck me anyway. Epoinine's song ("On My Own") struck rather too close to home, though my circumstances were different and it would have been more painful a few months previously. So I enjoyed it, in a tearful "I feel your pain" sort of way.

The only other song that struck me was the one the

revolutionaries sang as they prepared to fight. I couldn't tell you what they sang, but the tune was stirring – a

heroic echo of "I Dreamed A Dream". Though there's a chance I remember it because Honest Trailers had an episode about Les Mis, and they used that tune.

The film itself was dark, both in theme and often in lighting. I'm okay with the occasional thematically dark movie, but I don't like movies with dark lighting - I fell asleep during each of the last three Harry Potter movies because they lacked light. Granted, this movie was more gray and brown than black, and granted, there was good reason for that, but I was underwhelmed.

The characters were fine when they weren't singing. I'm not quite sure why Russell Crowe liked standing on the edge of parapets, but I recognized Newt Scamander – excuse me, Eddie Redmayne

– and I loved that fearless little kid, Gavroche. As I said, I related to Eponine, but I enjoyed the antics of her parents.

When the movie ended, the sadness that I had started with had deepened, not diminished. Perhaps if I had watched it on a better day, without starting sad, it would have been a good experience. But I found *Les Misérables* to be... well, rather miserable. I have heard that there are better versions of the musical, and I hope one day to come across one and watch it when I'm in a good mood and not by myself. Perhaps then I'll see it in a better light.



Daughters of the Phantom

By Isabella Summitt



PG-13 for violence toward children

Katherine woke in the familiar darkness, sleeping on a bundle of old theater curtains. She felt comfortable in the dark; ‘it was friendly,’ her father always told her. The only light came from dim candles by his piano. Her father raised one of these tapers on a silver candlestick, lighting his way down towards where she and her sisters slept on the island of gravel. He could move easily down the rocky path, but she was too afraid to walk around in the underground grotto by herself.

Katherine sat up while trying not to disturb her sisters. She couldn’t see her father’s eyes, except for the glint from the candlelight behind his powder blue mask. He came close to the island connected by flat stepping stones in the shallow water. He looked over the four sleeping girls.

“Norma...” he called out.

Norma was the tallest one. She sat up immediately, as if she had been pretending to sleep. Their father approached her with his candlestick. He knelt down and caressed her cheek. Katherine couldn’t see his expression.

“Time for another music lesson,” he said in French. That was the only language he taught them to speak, the only one they could read apart from music.

“Can I come too?” asked Katherine.

He ignored her. He raised Norma by one arm and got her walking along with him. He didn’t walk towards the upper ledge where, with his piano and his writing desk, he usually taught the girls music. Katherine’s sister Joan looked at her in confusion. Lauren, the third, was still asleep. They watched him walk Norma off to the central island in the underground grotto up against the far wall. There was a walled structure on the island, like a small mausoleum with stone steps leading up to it. He opened the doors and led little Norma inside and shut them behind him.

“Why is he taking her in there? We’re not supposed to go in there,” said Joan.

“Why doesn’t Norma eat with us?” asked Katherine.

Her father did not answer.

“Did she go up to Paris?” asked Katherine.

Their father quickly spun around angrily, his cape twirling around him. “No! None of you can ever go up there! You are safe here.”

“But where is Norma?” demanded Katherine.

He stared in the direction of the dripping water and the tunnel leading deeper into the sewers. Sometimes he acted like he was somewhere far away or could see something they couldn’t. They just had to wait for him to snap back. Their father had a tiny gondola moored on one of the stone islands, tied with a chain and padlock. Occasionally they had seen him paddling down that tunnel and disappearing into the dark. The girls only knew when it was night or day based on one little storm drain from which light poured through from above. The storm drain was directly over the water-filled tunnel leading deeper into the sewer. They had never seen Paris, but had been told it was terrible and cruel. They had never seen anyone but father.

He looked up at the rocky ceiling of the cave as music came down to them and resonated on the water. “They are rehearsing. Come, we must do the same.”

They quickly followed their father along a stepped-stone path, around the pools and the edge of the cavern, up onto a ledge. Father kept his piano, violin and composition sheets up on this ledge, and it was also where he taught their singing and music lessons.

Katherine, Joan and Lauren stood in an alcove and tried singing along with the music coming down from above. Their father took his place behind the piano, hanging up his cape. The girls knew all the cues; father had taught them the piece ahead of time. He always seemed to know what they would be playing up in the opera house.

He didn’t seem pleased by their singing this time. He banged his fist on the keys of the piano and yelled at them, “NO NO! It’s too sweet!”

The girls cowered in fear. He cupped his head in his hands and sat motionless. The girls watched him nervously. He was prone to sudden changes of mood.

“This is the lament of women watching a man going to the guillotine, it’s not a nursery rhyme!” he insisted.

“I’m sorry, father,” said Lauren. “We’ve never seen a man going to the guillotine. What is a guillotine?”

Their father snapped out of his fit of anger and smiled at them. “Of course, my little ones, you’ve never seen one, have you? You have never seen death. I’ve tried to shield you from such things...” He got up from his piano and approached them, his hand outstretched. “I’ve always kept you safe, haven’t I?”

“Yes, father,” said Lauren, “Could we come up to the opera house and watch

them? Maybe then we would do it right.”

He came up and stroked Lauren’s hair. “No, my dearest, it would be too dangerous. While I would love to show you the opera, if you were caught you would be taken away to Paris. You wouldn’t like that, would you?”

Lauren smiled, but Katherine could see her sister’s hand shaking behind her back. “No, father.”

“No, what?”

“No, we would never want to leave you.”

“Of course, you wouldn’t. You are happy down here, aren’t you? You are safe, far from the cares of Paris. Come, rest while I play for you.”

He led them back to their nest

of old stage curtains. They covered

themselves in the fabric, and

their father picked up his

violin. He played the old

familiar lullaby tune he

always played to lull

them to sleep. Katherine

couldn’t see

him very well from

where she lay, but

she always had the

impression he felt

happiest while

playing it. It made

her feel happy

too, and forget

all about Norma

and living down

in a dark sewer.

It was the first

melody he had

ever taught them

and the one

Katherine knew

best. It was the

only thing she

could remember

from her earlier life.

It put her once more

to sleep.

Katherine woke up
above for their father. She

from her nap and looked
saw him at his piano, but he

looked like he had fallen asleep sitting there. Katherine got up and tried walking over the stones in the dark, tiptoeing along so as not to make any noise. She came up to the small mausoleum-like building with double doors draped with red cloth. The lock on the door was a metal plaque shaped like a musical bar. There were metal musical keys on a track that could make them move up and down along the bar.

“What line of music opens the door?” thought Katherine.

There was still candlelight coming from underneath. She looked back towards the music landing. Father had not moved. Katherine touched the first note key. It was cold to the touch. She moved them to match the opening notes of the lullaby their father loved. The crack between the metal doors became wider and she got it open. She only opened it wide enough that she could slip noiselessly inside. This tiny crypt was filled with candles; they seemed to glow to her. They



were mainly clustered against the far wall on a curved marble altar of sorts. There were dead roses piled in front of a small white bust of a woman. The bust might once have been beautiful. Part of the face had been cracked and broken off. Katherine saw bits of glittering jewelry, moth-eaten scarves, silken gloves and a tiny music box scattered like offerings on the altar. She was so fascinated, she almost forgot why she was there. Then she saw Norma seated on a chair with her back to her.

"Norma!" she called out in a whisper.

She sat motionless. Katherine slowly approached her. She had something around her head tied at the back. She tapped Norma on the shoulder. Norma turned to look at her. Half her face was covered in muslin, including one of her eyes.

"What happened to you?" said Katherine.

"You're not supposed to be here," said Norma in a dead voice.

Katherine reached up and removed the cloth wrap around Norma's face. Norma recoiled. Katherine screamed. Norma's face was now covered in pink scar tissue and one of her eye sockets was black and empty. She backed away in horror and ran into her father, who was standing in the doorway. Her father grabbed her shoulders and forced her back into the crypt.

"You wanted to see?" said her father. "Fine. Look, Katherine, look at what the outside world has done to us!"

He turned Katherine around and made her watch as he removed his own mask. He had never taken off his mask around any of them before. She saw the blistered red scars rippling around his eyes.

"This is what our souls look like! I show you my soul so you will always be a part of me!"

Katherine shut her eyes and refused to look at either of them.

"True art comes from suffering, my little one. You are my children; you should share in my suffering so you can truly appreciate music."

Her father covered Katherine's face in a wet cloth that smelled so strongly of ether that Katherine blacked out. Katherine woke tied to a chair. Norma stood in the corner staring at her without blinking her one eye. Her father was busying himself with something on the altar. He turned around. His mask was back on. He was holding a small cup of sizzling fluid and a tiny brush in the other.

"Norma, let her drink. This will dull the pain for you, my dear."

Norma came up to Katherine with a glass of dark liquid and put it to her lips. Katherine was too woozy to resist.

"It is not a punishment; it is a resurrection." said her father. "The pain you feel will only inspire your soul. Don't worry, Norma was my first try. I've learned from my mistakes."

He brought the small cup to Katherine's face. When he drew out the brush it began smoking and sizzling. Norma held up a canvas with a pattern drawn on it.

He started copying the swirls onto Katherine's face. Katherine's head was still reeling from whatever drug he had given her in that cup; she felt no pain and lacked the will to scream. She only groaned, louder when the brush touched her skin and quieter every time he turned away. He covered her left cheekbone to her ear and her temple to her jaw and then he started down her neck, collarbone, arm and shoulder, parts of her back and her armpit. Katherine lost consciousness again.

She woke up in the mattress of curtains. She instantly felt the stinging pain on her face and reached to touch it. She was bandaged as Norma had been.

"Stop that! You don't want to ruin the pattern!" called her father.

Katherine began crying, relieved to find she still had both eyes. Her father came over to her and set down his candlestick. He took her in his arms and kissed her head.

"Why, Papa? Why did you do this to me?" she wailed.

"Don't cry, my child, it will heal in time. But remember, it is not I who have scarred you, but the world that has scarred us both."

Katherine cried and her tears irritated the open burns on her face. He gave her a sip of liquor from a glass and told her it would make her sleep. Katherine lay down among the musty theater curtains, hoping to die. When she woke again her sister Lauren was sitting over her.

"I didn't get a good look. What did he do to you?" said Lauren.

She felt her touch the bandage. "No!" said Katherine. "Don't take it off! It hurts too much!"

"I'm sorry!" said Lauren.

Lauren sat her up and hugged her sister, letting her sob into her velvet stage costume dress. They looked fearfully up at the rocky ledge where their father practiced his music.

"Why? Why would he do this to us?" asked Lauren.

"You should run away, Lauren! Run away to Paris before he does it to you!" said Katherine.

"I can't leave all of you behind!" said Lauren.

Their father came down from the ledge. Lauren and Katherine held tightly onto each other, looking up at him in fear. He didn't come down all the way, but called to them.

"You should be thankful that I love you both!" their father said. "I didn't have



cognac or bandages when it was done to me!" He went back up to his piano and began playing again, as if nothing had happened.

The girls in the catacombs had no measure of time as the years passed since that day. They knew they were growing, since at times they needed new, bigger costumes, and strange new things happened to their bodies that father said were normal. They ran out of operas they didn't know and their father seemed to be more pleased by their singing. But Katherine didn't care about pleasing him as much, she cared only in so far as it kept him away from her.

He must have been pleased enough to bring them presents. One day father came back from one of his nighttime excursions into Paris. They stood at the boat launch waiting for him to come in on his little gondola. He brought a small chest over and set it down on the top of the grand piano and opened it. He laid out four stage masks not unlike his own.

"There. These are for you. I brought some paints and adhesive. You may decorate them however you like," he said.

The three sisters looked at each other. They all, for a number of years, had a matching pattern in their skin. It was an elaborate design of swirls, music bars, spider webs and treble clefs. It might have been as beautiful as their father said, if it wasn't burnt into them. None of them smiled at him except Norma as he unpackaged the crafting materials from the chest he had no doubt stolen. He set them out on the broken half-column where they ate and stood back to watch their reaction. He looked disappointed by their lack of enthusiasm.

"Thank you, Father," said Norma.

Norma no longer wore a wrapping or anything to cover the extensive burns. She was missing an eye and part of her hairline would not grow back. Katherine seldom had the stomach to look at her. They all took a mask, sat down around the column and started painting. Norma immediately snatched the scissors away from them. The other three stared at her. She smiled back with a look that made Katherine shudder. Norma cut her mask in half and cut around the eye hole in the shape of a heart. She put a little plaster over the eye and glued some black lace to the bottom.

Father headed back down to the boat launch, watching them out of one eye-hole of his mask. He stopped when he saw Katherine looking directly at him.

"Work on your masks." he said.

Katherine didn't feel particularly inspired; she just started gluing little cut-glass diamonds to it. She could hear father getting back into the boat and shuffling around with something. She spent more attention listening to whatever he was doing than on her mask's design. The masks all ended up with the same look. They all copied the heart shape around the eye, but painted various colors and embellishments. They all covered their scars with a spider-web pattern reaching back to the ear. They set the masks on the piano to dry.

“Listen, my children, none but us can dare look at your scars. Never take off your masks except to those to whom you bare your soul.” said their father. “If they betray you after you do, they deserve to die. You cannot show the scars to more than one – that is to be false.”

While they waited for the masks to dry, their father looked back and forth between them and the boat. The girls sat and waited, nibbling on the pastries brought down from Paris.

“Put on the masks,” said their father.

He stood back near the boat, watching them. Norma did as she was told. Her mask was more like an eyepatch, covering her missing eye and hair as well as her scars. The others followed suit. Katherine heard small voices speaking in a language she didn’t understand. When they turned around, they saw their father come towards them with two girls. The two little girls were dressed in the little costumes some of them used to wear when they were smaller. They already had bandages over the left side of their faces. They looked shyly up at the older girls in their masks.

“My daughters, I have found two more sisters for you,” said their father. “This is Scarlett and Betty. They don’t speak French yet, but give them time,” he said, spreading his arms around both of them.

The two small girls came up to them with vacant looks on their faces.

“We’re quite a little choir now, aren’t we?” said father. “We could put on a whole opera by ourselves!”

Katherine looked down at the little girls. ‘Did I look exactly like them when...?’ She didn’t remember when she had first come to the grotto. All she remembered was the lullaby.

“Come and paint with us,” called Lauren.

The little girls looked up at Katherine’s pearly white mask with lace that resembled a frozen spider’s web. Betty was too small to even come up to Katherine’s shoulder. Betty approached her and tried to smile, but she grimaced in pain and touched the bandage over her face.

Katherine walked away in disgust and left the other girls alone. She went to the storm drain, the only way any of them knew when it was day or night. She looked up through it, reaching out in vain to touch it. It was under an arch in Paris, so the sun never directly shone through it, but she could see the light reflecting from other buildings. She jumped up and down, trying to get closer to the opening. She lost her balance after one jump and fell into the disgusting water. She did not know how to swim, especially not in her large costume gown. Her arms reached back up, flailing in the air. She could see one of the walls of the arch through the grate and make out a playbill for the opera stuck on it. They were putting on a new show and all of the singers’ names were printed on it. She saw a Katherine, a Lauren, a Norma and a Joan in the cast list.

‘Those aren’t even our real names,’ thought Katherine. ‘Who are we?’

She heard splashing and voices calling out to her. She saw her father row up to her in the gondola.

“Katherine, come here! That water is poisonous! You’ll die!”

Her father pulled her out of the water and into the little gondola. She tumbled in, rocking the boat.

“What were you trying to do?”

She said nothing, but scowled at him. He paddled back to the rocky islands that were Katherine’s whole world. He held tightly to her arm when they got out of the boat. When he chained it back to its mooring, she pretended to trip so she could see where he stowed the key to the boat’s chain lock. The other sisters all gathered around them on the boat launch.

“You’ve ruined your mask!” He ripped it from her face and shook the water off it.

The new little sisters recoiled from her with a gasp when they saw the elaborate scar. Katherine closed her eyes in shame and bowed her head.

“I wanted to see Paris,” said Katherine.

“NO! You must never go up there!” said her father. “Haven’t you listened to me? It’s lonely and cold and unforgiving!”

Katherine looked up at her father. Her eyes were hard under her dripping hair. “I don’t want to be your daughter anymore.”

Their father stared at her for a moment as if in disbelief. No one moved. He suddenly struck her across the face, knocking her down.

“How can you say that to your father?! I’ve cared for you! I gave you clothes and food, I taught you so much! Where would you go? Paris will eat you up! Look what it did to your face!”

The other girls ran to help Katherine. Their father barked at them and they froze. Katherine picked herself up from the gravel. He had struck the unblemished half of her face so the other half had fallen into the wet gravel.

“The world didn’t burn my face off, you did,” said Katherine. “We live in a sewer! Everything we are, you burned into us! None of it is real!”

“But without me you are nothing,” said their father. He looked at the six of them accusingly. The other girls were too afraid of him to move. “Katherine, you are going to stand by the piano and sing for me all night long.”

The girls all stared at him.

“The rest of you go to bed now!”

He gestured up to the ledge with the piano and ushered Katherine’s sisters over to their bedding of piled curtains. Katherine walked up the steps like a condemned prisoner and stood aloof with her back against the wall. Her father came up the steps to the music ledge, staring at her. He sat down at his piano and said nothing. Katherine waited for him to say something with her face getting hot.



“What are we going to play, father?” she asked.

“You will not speak until I tell you to! Now, while I play you will sing along, no matter what it is? Understand?”

“Yes.” said Katherine.

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, father.”

Their father looked off to the nest of theater curtains and saw many of the girls still awake and sitting up, watching them, then pretending to go back to sleep again. Their father began playing the lullaby all of them knew so well. Katherine sang along with the words, crying, almost screaming. She hoped she could make his ears bleed. Her voice resonated against the walls of the cavern; the candlesticks shook. Father didn't seem to mind at all. He smiled under his mask; his shoulders rolled as his playing became more wild and exaggerated. Katherine raised her voice, trying to get back at him.

“Yes! Sing, Katherine!” he called to her.

His piano playing became so wild that he fell off his bench, but Katherine continued singing. When she stopped, the echoes of her voice still bounced off the walls. Then there was silence. Father had not risen from where he had fallen. Katherine looked around. Her sisters weren't moving, either. Without hesitation, Katherine stepped over to where her father lay and searched his coat for the key to the boat's chain. She found it and hurried over to the dock. She unlocked the chain and got in the gondola. She picked up the oar and tried pushing the boat away from the dock as she had seen him do. She started paddling frantically down the stream, plunging herself into the unknown.

‘Anything in Paris must be better than this,’ was the only thought that crossed her mind.

She tried not to think of his soft voice or of her sisters, nothing that would slow her down. Without looking back, she paddled on into the dark, brushing up against wet stone walls

and rocks. She paddled in the direction farthest from home. This was her only chance and she would take it. She had no plan except to escape.

Suddenly her boat tipped forward, throwing her onto her back. She heard the sound of rushing water and then the boat rocked back and forth. She held on, afraid it would capsize. She closed her eyes, waiting for water to wash over her. She waited a while and then opened her eyes. The rocking had stopped. She had come out of a drain pipe and was sailing down a river. It was night and the stars glittered above her. She looked around and saw glittering Paris, the city of lights.

‘How lovely!’ she thought. ‘I think I will like it here.’



Through My Most Grievous Fault

A Hunchback of Notre Dame Story

By Avellina Balestri

Author's Note: This story is based off a scene in the 1939 film adaptation of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* starring Charles Laughton, Maureen O'Hara, and Cedric Hardwicke.

They say a monster lives in the bell tower on Notre Dame. They say he is hideous to look upon, that his skin is melted like the wax of altar candles, like fire, hellfire, had caressed him. They say a monster huddles in the shadows there, like the gargoyles hunched over the cathedral to scare the demons away. They say he was scalded on the night when the molten led poured from their gaping mouths, splashing on the stones below, bubbling like a searing spring, bubbling welts upon his face and blindness in his eyes...

Claude Frollo remembered the time he first saw her up close, the gypsy Esmeralda. It was not when she danced in the street, as many thought, that something stirred in him. He had been cold to her seductive movements, to the whirling of her colorful skirts, to the rattling sound of her tambourine, the whistling of the men in the crowd. It had been the Feast of Fools, after all; such scandalous entertainment was to be expected. The peasants were vulgar in their choice of diversions, and Frollo had grown dismally accustomed to such lewd displays.

No, that had not been the moment that caused her to become imprinted upon his mind, like the words of a book on the newly invented printing press that Frollo believed to be so dangerous. It had been seeing her inside the cathedral, his cathedral, kneeling before the statue of the Virgin Mary, in her low-cut peasant dress and free-flowing hair, like a common harlot. Yet her eyes were alight with a purity that took him aback, some spotless reality radiating through them, as if she possessed the heart of a saint. And it chilled him to the bone.

"Take all that I have," she whispered, "but help my people, who look to you still. They are in great need, great danger..."

"What are you doing in Notre Dame?" Frollo demanded, staring down at her and hoping that her eyes would reveal some spark of fear.

But there was none there when she met his gaze and replied simply, "I'm praying."

"No prayer can help you here," he ground out icily. "You lead men to sin with your body, dancing shamelessly in the street, awakening the weakness of their sinful natures. You come from an evil race. You desecrate the stones on which you kneel."

"You know nothing of me and my people," she responded. "You cannot read our hearts." "



Oh, yes, he could, and he did. He had learned the scrolls of the clerks, sang the chants of the priests, struck himself in penitence many a night for what he was...a gypsy's son. The blood in him was poison, he was told, wild like fire, hellfire, burning inside him, out of all control. But he had determined to control it. He had mastered it, dominated it, squelched its strength, like ants under a brick. He would be righteous. He would be pure. He would never be rejected again, like his mother's proud family had rejected her and her ill-begotten offspring. He would become God's own, and remain safe in His sanctuary.

"All gypsies should be destroyed by fire and sword," he continued, his voice heightening. "They infest this city with their heathen ways, their robbing, cheating, and plunder...like you infest this church..."

"Don't talk like that," she begged, turning back to the statue of the Virgin. "The Mother of God is listening."

Oh, he knew that too. He had prayed to her often enough over the years, the one who is Notre Dame, that he might imitate her, consecrated in word and thought to chastity. He wanted to be like her, untouchable and statuesque in her niche, and he would imagine the serene smile playing upon her lips was meant for him, the smile his mother had never given him. Yes, this would be his aspiration...but in the meantime, he let her know even his darkest thoughts. In a world of aloneness, the Blessed Mother would be his confidante, his only one. Perhaps he was jealous that anyone else in the world should confide in her as he did...

"You're a witch," he blurted. "You have no recourse to the Virgin! You are sullied, in the flesh and in the soul. You conjure demons with your sorcery, your crystals and charms..."

"If our magic were so strong, do you think my people would choose to be outcasts? Perhaps I should not be here, but was not your Lady an outcast once, her and her poor child...?"

"Enough," he spat. "You defile this place with your evil thoughts." He turned his back on her, preparing to leave her presence.

"I've never prayed before today, but I could stay here all day and never have an evil thought," she told him, and the sincerity of her voice caused him to turn back around. She was looking up towards the great rose window. "I would never even speak, just be here. Look at the window, red and blue...all colors shining as the setting sun breaks through, like a bow in the sky after the rain, and the light dancing around the columns..."

Frollo found himself looking up as well, and realized for the first time that it might indeed be beautiful. This, too, disturbed him – the idea that he was looking through her eyes, seeing such familiar surroundings as something that made his heart beat faster, something that showed him some sparkling gleam of God he had never known before with such intensity. Even as a boy, when he first came there, his thoughts had been more upon safety than beauty. But now the moment gnawed at him, like a longing for that which he could not meditate upon for long, not without it tearing down some wall of security he had built between himself and all others, even between himself and the God he served.

"They're like the high pines in the forest," she continued airily. "It's so quiet and peaceful here,

almost more quiet than the woods where the squirrels chatter and the birds sing when I come. You know, I can feed the deer there right from my hand. They're not at all shy when you're kind to them."

"I know," he let slip out, not even intending to say it. It made him feel sad inside. He rarely let himself feel sad these days. There was just no point in it.

"You like animals too?" she queried, sounding genuinely interested. It took him aback.

He swallowed, looked down. "Yes," he mumbled. "They...trust me."

"You say that? You?" She stood up and looked at him full in the face. "Then you cannot bear the evil eye, as first I thought..." She took his hand, studying his palm. "Strange, strange man..."

"But you do," he spat, pulling his hand away. "You are *evil*..."

He remembered what the gypsies had done to his brother, so unlike him as he grew into a rakish youth, a wastrel quick with rolling the dice and rolling in the arms of women. He was banished from the cathedral, despite Frolo's pleading, and vanished into the darkness of the Paris streets. When he heard from his prodigal brother next, many years had elapsed. While the elder had studied for the deaconate, confirming his chosen path as a celibate, the younger had become proficient in more carnal arts, frequenting the lair of the gypsies and their heathen ways. It ended for him the way it might have been predicted, an ill-fated fight over a game of dice his fortune-telling lover had predicted. And there was a child from him...a child from him and his precious gypsy...

"How is it that I can see the good in you, and yet you cannot see it in me?" she queried.

"It's a trick," he blurted. "Everything you're saying is a trick..."

"How could your own goodness trick you?"

Frolo felt convicted by this. He knew he was *good*, of course...or at least, he never bothered to think of himself as anything but pure in the sight of God. He had sworn away his life to the service of the Church, sworn his perpetual chastity as a deacon. He had always been single-minded in his pursuit, always assured of his own salvation. All except one time, that was. It had to do with that other gypsy, his brother's lover, running through the icy streets with their babe in her arms. He had chased her on horseback, overtaken her and yanked the child from her arms, all on the steps of Notre Dame where she had run for sanctuary. She had fallen...it wasn't his fault; she had run, he pursued, and slipped as an act of providence...now no one would know of his brother's misdeeds...

No one was left but this...thing, this offspring of his brother, who Frolo then saw was hideously misshapen. Surely a punishment fallen on this child born of sin. There was a well nearby, and as the snow swirled in the winter wind, a dark thought made its way into his mind. Yes, he even rode his horse alongside it, suspended the child over it, to bury the past and all its twisted secrets, and the memory of his beloved brother now dead to him...yes, the tears ran down his face as he did so, even as the blood trickled down the dead gypsy's forehead, slain on the stairs. Surely he would be performing some secret mercy to put the creature out of its misery...surely he would act as the scourge of God...

But then he had heard a voice...he knew not where it came from, but it whispered his name, and he turned towards the cathedral. He saw the statues of the saints and apostles gazing down from the

façade, piercing his soul to its depths. But most striking of all was the look upon the very eyes of *Notre Dame, the Virgin Mary, as beautiful as the morning rising, as terrible as an army set in battle array. And in his heart, and perhaps for the first time in years, Frolo feared for his immortal soul. And then and there, he repented his intention. And then and there, he swore to the Virgin he would make restitution by raising this offspring of his brother, make sure he was fed and clothed and catechized.*

And he had kept true to that oath. The boy had been raised in the bell tower, a hunchback who never ventured into the outside world. He was better that way, Frolo decided. If he had nearly drowned the baby as a man of the Church, he could not imagine what the godless masses outside might do if they saw his crooked features and deformed face. They'd no doubt tear him apart, and then how would the deacon have kept faith with his vow? Besides...for better or worse, this half-formed creature, this Quasimodo, was of his blood and was all that was left of his brother who, in spite of everyone, Frolo could not help but pine over. There were even moments when he thought he might come to care for the boy, even just a little bit, when he was teaching him his lessons, and later on helped him read lips when the bells robbed his hearing.

But there was always some underlying loathing that Frolo could not conceal. He might be strong, and indeed Frolo often equated his strength with his worthiness before God, but this creeping sense of disgust made him wonder if, indeed, his "goodness" was tricking him after all. Either way, he didn't feel the need for this gypsy in front of him to point it out.

"It is none of your affair," he growled.

"Tell me about your animals," she prompted him softly, "the ones that trust you."

Frolo twitched at her insistence, but for some strange reason he could not shrug it off, could not break from the look in her eyes gazing into his soul.

"Cats from the street," he replied blearily. "No one wants them. I feed them and take care of them, and they stay because...no one else bothers with them. I keep them safe, and they...keep me company."



"But people outside this place, they run off stray cats, say they are of the devil," she noted, then added pointedly, "Like you say of us gypsies."

"Animals are innocent," he retorted. "It mankind that is evil...evil and cruel..."

"But you are not," she responded. "You are hateful in your words, but not in your eyes, not all the way through and through...you are one who might yet love..."

"I have heard enough of your prattle," he cut her off. "Now, get out of here; I

I don't want to see you here again." He turned his back on her, but something he didn't expect churned in his stomach, and he found himself murmuring oddly, "If you need a meal...you may ask after one from the kitchens. But then you must go away and stay away."

Just then he felt her slip something soft into his hand. When he looked down, he saw it was a scarf, midnight blue, sprinkled with silver stars. "Give this to the Mother of God, will you? It matches her dress..." And with that, he heard her scurrying away towards the doors of the cathedral.

Although he strode away without a second glance, her eyes had already made a mark in his mind which he could not dismiss so easily. He did not know what to make of the feeling she had evoked in him. It was both pleasant and sickening at the same time. It left him occasionally gazing at his hand, the one she had taken in her own, and remembering the feeling of human touch that reached into some recess of himself he typically kept buried. It unnerved him and unmasked him and made him feel very small, very vulnerable, very confused. When was the last time anyone had bothered to tell him he was good? Not righteous, but good... just a human sort of good, that can be seen through apparent flaws, as opposed to heights of aspired sanctity that try to cover up faults in hopes of being flawless.

He found her scarf hard to put down, even at the feet of the Virgin as he had been bidden. At first he convinced himself that was because it was a profane offering to *Notre Dame*, but later he found himself making excuses in his prayers, something about allowing himself even the slightest sense of... something...was it comfort? Something to cling to when he felt even the largeness of the cathedral begin to close around him? It disgusted him, this memory of a gypsy providing him solace, but somehow he hoped the Virgin would understand, and continued to wear it hidden on his arm under his sleeve. Was it a betrayal of his deacon's vow of celibacy? No, certainly not...not something so very small...

The next time Frolo saw the gypsy was two days hence, on the last day of the Festival of Fools. And it was on this day he discovered that the hunchback has escaped the bell tower, contrary to his orders. The world was cruel, and Quasimodo was hideous, and deaf. The Parisians would attack him as soon as they set eyes on him, a monster in their midst. Frolo knew this, and warned his ward time and again never to leave the tower. But now he had disobeyed, and the crowd had indeed attacked him, tied him up on a rotating platform, beat him and mocked him as he begged for water under the midday sun.

But he had disobeyed. And all that was mean and low and unrelenting in Frolo made itself



manifest, and he did nothing to stop the torture, nothing to free the hunchback, nor answer his cries for mercy. No mercy. The hunchback would have to learn about the world the hard way. He had rejected his master's protection, and now would have to suffer the consequences. No mercy...sin does not go unpunished, least of all sin against rightful authority...and that was Frolo's greatest pride, greatest security...being a part of that great, untouchable rightful

authority...

Little did he know it would be his own undoing. For out of the crowd came Esmeralda, like a raven flown up through the throng and onto the platform, that compassion he had glimpsed still radiant in her eyes, but turned towards Quasimodo, an outcast meeting an outcast at the moment of greatest need. Yes, this beauty face-to-face with this beast, and she was busy bringing a drink of water to his twisted, parched lips, and then pulling a knife from her skirts and cutting him free of the ropes. And then her eyes turned on Frolo and they were blazing, yes, blazing with a curse for his own cruelty, the cruelty he had claimed haunted all mankind.

When he lay in his bed that night, Frolo was sweating rivers, his blood pulsing hot, his breath panting. He could not sleep, for the dreams of her would assault him. Surely it was the curse, the silent curse spoken in her look. She knew him now, regretted her words in the cathedral, and was bent on pulling him down from his pedestal, from his pride. She had weakened all his defenses, and now he could think of nothing but her, nothing but...having her. He saw her dancing, like on the first day, and for the first time he found himself just like any vulgar spectator in the crowd, lusting for her as her skirts spun and tambourine beat a rhythm that mirrored his racing heart. It terrified and enticed him.

He took the scarf from under his pillow, the place he hid his forbidden relic when he slept, and went to the burning hearth in the main hall. Still, the dancing flames seemed to conjure up the gypsy's movements, her eyes smoldering and the sun caught in her raven hair. It was as if denying water to the hunchback had set his very soul alight with hellfire. It made him shudder, made him twist the scarf backwards and forwards in his hands, wanting to cast it into the flames, but unwilling to let it go. It must be possessed, he thought...it must have been given out of a desire to destroy him...she had never thought him good at all, it was just a trap, just as he always thought...what good could ever come from a gypsy?

"Beata Maria," he intoned, "you know I am a righteous man...I'm not like my father or my brother...I'm not like the fools outside...weak, amoral, licentious...I know my vows...I have vowed myself to Jesu Christi and to you..." He closed his eyes. "Then tell me why...why do I keep seeing that harlot of a gypsy...dancing...?"

What had caused him to falter now? How had his moorings suddenly been ripped loose, his grounding start to shake? Oh, why were his cries not heard?

"It's like fire...like hellfire...I don't understand...this burning in my skin...oh, why will you not help me?"

No...he would get only as much help from the Virgin as he had been willing to give to the Hunchback in the square. And his vows of celibacy became as weighty as irons. He wondered...had he thought well enough before taking them? It didn't have to be this way. He had imposed it upon himself without giving it a second thought, for he was so certain he was above the need for such earthly cravings. Or more telling yet, above the need even for the touch of a hand in intimacy, or even simple companionship...he thought himself above it, and so sank lower than it, and the scarf of midnight blue seemed to laugh at it as it slipped through his fingers like sea water. And that's how he felt...as if he was drowning in an ocean he could not hold back...yes, drowning in an ocean of sin...

Yes, sin...damning sin...and the wicked would not go unpunished. To his horror, he realized that he was just as wicked as the rest of them outside the sanctuary, deep down...as wicked as the blood running through his veins...and the thought made that blood run cold.

“It’s not my fault!” he shouted in anguish, letting the scarf fall to the floor. “I’m not to blame!” He pressed his hands over his face, like Adam hiding himself in the garden. “It was the gypsy girl, she bewitched me! She set this flame with her curse! I never wanted this! I never sought it out! How can you blame me, Holy Mother, if God allows the devil so many powers over Man? Would you cast me away too?”

He found that there were tears burning in his eyes now, the first time he had let himself cry since the death of his brother. He had not allowed himself to face his own fear of damnation, not since he nearly drowned a baby some twenty years before. He realized that his deepest fear was not that of pain, but rather of silence, the utterly hopeless kind, knowing no one would listen to him, not even the Virgin, that even the Mother of Mercy would grow deaf to him...

“It was her you should damn, not me! I am under her spell! She’s a menace to us all! She is the one who must be punished! She is the one who must be made to answer for her heathenry!”

He staggered backward, and a dark thought crept into his mind. Soon it sank deeper, like poison into his heart. Yes, she was the one to blame for this. Her witchcraft, her wiles, all a trick, a trap, to sear his flesh and bone, and turn his soul to ash. Surely she would try it on others, far weaker than him, who would fall into the pit because of her. She had to be stopped...

“I will put an end to this,” he ground out. “I will be God’s scourge upon this evil! I will save Paris from this demonic race come to plague us. I will drive them out, never to return!”

With that, Frolo seized the scarf from the floor and flung it into the fire in front of him. “Destroy Esmeralda! Let her taste the fires of hell...” He felt his throat constrict, and his lips tremble, and the sinful words, thick with desire, rolled off his tongue, “or else let her be mine...mine alone...”

He shut his eyes tight against the stinging sensation. No, no, no, he would not *feel...he would pull this evil plant out of his heart, root and stem, he would not allow himself to weaken...*

“God have mercy on her,” he rasped as the scarf blacked in the hearth. Then he turned his face to the wall and choked, “God have mercy...on me...”

They say a monster lives in the bell tower on Notre Dame. They say he is repulsive to look upon, that his skin is melted like the wax of altar candles, like fire, hellfire, had made love to him. They say the creature weeps in the shadows there, like the birds crying from their nests in the cathedral to wash the memories away. They say he was scalded on the night when the molten led poured out their songs, spreading on the stones below, gushing like an underground spring. They say he is blind, and his tears are blind, remembering the gypsy girl, burnt at the pyre, and the hunchback who swung forth on a rope and snatched her from the flames, crying “Sanctuary! Sanctuary!” She was doomed to die in that sacred space, and also destined to be avenged by Quasimodo, pouring forth the simmering cauldron in his rage upon those standing below. He would die of a broken heart and be buried with what was left of her, burned flesh and twisted bones.

And the one who would take his place in that bell tower was a righteous man laid low, who could do nothing for himself but beg pity for the ocean of sin that had swallowed him up. And high in his prison, where a sacristan attended to him when he cried out in pain or in the horror of a waking nightmare, there was a statue of the Madonna he could not see. But he felt her face with his fingers, and he talked to her, as he always had, and he had to believe that she heard him still. For now he understand, she was a mother not only of the pure, but of the defiled, just as her Son had come not to call the righteous, but sinners. And so Claude Frolo prayed for mercy. And so Sancta Maria listened, as mothers will do.

“I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the Saints and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the Saints, and you, Father, to pray to the Lord our God for me...”

One Small Star

A Les Miserables Poem by Avellina Balestri

One small star, like the flame of a candlestick
One small star which my blot out the rest
One small star that may heal all enmity
One small star that may make the cursed blest
One small star that disarms all sentinels
One small star that unchains the oppressed
One small star that glows like a musket's glare
One small star brings weary souls rest
One small star like the street light flickering
One small star in the shadows undimmed
One small star soft and white as the falling snow
One small star sings a song from within
One small star that is bright in a dying prayer
One small star in the child's embrace
One small star that will gleam unconditional
One small star of a scandalous grace

One small star that makes all things forgivable
One small star that drowns out revenge
One small star looking down on a desperate plea
One small star that straddles life's edge
One small star that will blaze through the battle's rage
One small star that will guide us in flight
One small star that is richness in poverty
One small star that eclipses the night
One small star that is more than a memory
One small star that is stronger than shame
One small star that sings of a better world
One small star that bestows a new name
One small star that redeems the untouchable
One small star that is dearer than breath
One small that makes life livable
One small star that is stronger than death

About This Magazine

Fellowship and Fairydust Magazine is a publication of Fellowship & Fairydust Publications. F&F is an online literary blog and magazine that aims to inspire faith and creativity and explore the arts through a spiritual lens. F&F came into being when the blog and online magazine The Fellowship of the King merged with the online magazine Ink and Fairydust in January 2017. To learn more, visit fellowshipandfairydust.com.

Copyrights

All articles and artwork belong to their respective creators and may not be copied without permission. Any copyright infringements are purely accidental. The works and characters of Disney and other works are owned and copyrighted by their respective studios, authors and/or publishers; all are used here for entertainment purposes.

There's More Where This Came From!

Did you like what you saw here? There's more where that came from! Plus, these are only a fraction of the many fandoms we cover! To learn more, visit fellowshipandfairydust.com and follow us on Facebook at Fellowship & Fairydust Publications and on Twitter @FandFMagazine.

Graphics Team

Avellina Balestri, Bard Judith, Sarah Levesque, Amanda Pizzolatto, Mariella Warncke, Ian Wilson, TK Wilson

Image Citation

Images not otherwise cited are from the personal collections of the graphic designers.

Cover – historyofeuropeanfashion.wordpress.com (figures); pixabay.com (window); CU scrapbooking clusters courtesy of Bard Judith's purchased collection. **Editor's Note** - wonderopolis.org/wonder/what-is-a-gargoyle (gargoyle/grotesque); **Beauties, Beasts and Phantoms** - Walter Crane, Public Domain; Belle and Beast, Disney; La Belle et la Bete poster, Criterion Collection; Kevin Kline, PBS; Piggy and Gonzo from the Muppets, CBS/Disney; Phantom of the Opera, PBS; Rose, Pexels Stock Photos; **Love of a Father** - thehunchblog.com/2012/09/18/summary-of-the-jetlag-version/ (Frollo & Baby Quasimodo) **Hidden Beauty** - eclecticlight.co/2018/09/15/victor-hugo-on-canvas-quasimodo-and-esmeralda/ (background, bottom) Watercolour Background from Bard Judith's CU collection, artist unknown, & Cloud Brushes, artist unknown; **House Cat** - freepik.com/free-vector/brown-papyrus-paper_2765776.htm (Papyrus Background); d35441a1u8dja.cloud front.net/APHI/Blog/2016/12_December/fun+facts+about+Russian+Blue+cats+_+close+up+of+cat+face+with+green+eyes.jpg (cat); freepik.com/free-vector/white-mask-close-up_4859743.htm (White Mask); cdn-az.allevents.in/banners/7f6c3c8de101313834c9c54a026a4485-rimg-w480-h720-gmir.jpg (Phantom in the Mirror); fineartamerica.com/featured/the-phantom-of-the-opera-nicole-hamilton.html (Christine & Erik); **Making the Bones Live** - airandspace.si.edu/sites/default/files/images/collection-objects/record-images/A20020156000cp03.jpg (sidebar); picryl.com/media/experience-du-globe-aerostatique-du-mm-charles-et-robert-au-jardin-des-thuilleries-1 (hot air balloon); picryl.com/media/military-from-the-french-revolution-of-1789-as-viewed-in-the-light-of-republican-eSaffa (bottom); **Between Life and Death** - pixabay.com (all background images); blouinartsalesindex.com/auctions/John-R-Mcdermott-817020/Man-carrying-unconscious-woman-along-deserted-street (man carrying woman); **Hellfire** - freepik.com/premium-vector/red-vector-burning-embers_3786015.htm (Fire Background); flickr.com/photos/simpli58/4808235116/in/photostream/ (Dancing Fire Gypsy Woman) **Bells of Notre Dame** - travelforkids.com/images/photo-albums/france/paris/notre-dame-cathedral-paris/ (Mary); 4165flower.com/shop/love-romance/summer-rose-special/ (flowers); **Gargoyles** - twitter.com/mental_floss/status/793933963710431232 (Gargoyle); flickr.com/photos/andyhay/2547740707 (grotesque); flickr.com/photos/cathedraljack/14688342887 (church) **Eponine's Last** - Watercolour background from Bard Judith's CU collection, artist unknown; Digital pen sketch by Bard Judith; Spatter brushes, artist unknown; **Emperor's Grudge** - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas-Alexandre_Dumas (Thomas Dumas); napoleonicociety.com/english/tarttelin9a.htm (Napoleon & guard); seanmunger.com/2017/07/27/historic-painting-napoleon-and-his-general-staff-by-jean-leon-gerome-1867/ (Napoleon & his staff); **A Tale of Two Men** - flickr.com/photos/internetarchivebookimages/tags/bookidcharactersketche00inbrew (character woodcuts); **Hemorrhage** - Tangie Baxter, CU scrapbook elements, courtesy of Bard Judith (background); fanpop.com/clubs/le-fantome-de-lopera-leroux-kay/images/7945000/title/phantom-illustrations-photo?card (The Persian); phantompedia.fandom.com/wiki/Erik_(The_Phantom_of_the_Opera) Mask & rose twitter.com/PhantomOpera (Erik); **Notre Dame in 2017: A Picture Walk** - All photos from the author's personal collection; **Reprise** - pixabay.com (all bridge images); commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isambard_Kingdom_Brunel_preparing_the_launch_of_%27The_Great_Eastern_by_Robert_Howlett.jpg (men in top hats); **La Cité des Cloches** - All graphics hand-drawn by Bard Judith, June 2019, based on Kingdom Hearts/Disney characters for the Hunchback of Notre Dame; **Up in Flames** – pixabay.com (masks, Venice, child, labyrinth, phantom face); Pollack's Toy Theatres (no longer hosted) (curtains); **Les Misérables... The Title Says It All** - wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Mis%C3%A9rables_(2012_film) **Daughters of the Phantom** - party city.com/gold-and-white-masquerade-mask-811836.html?cgid=mardi-gras-masquerade-masks (title mask); history.stackexchange.com/questions/20978/why-is-sullas-nose-in-the-bust-in-munich-glyptothek-broken (statue); italymask.co.nz/ (music note mask); cazzbo.blogspot.com/2018/10/candelabra.html (piano & player); hyperallergic.com/309744/how-artists-interpreted-the-transformation-of-paris-into-a-city-of-light/ (Paris at night) **Through My Most Grievous Fault** – All pictures from 1939 film (RKO Radio Pictures); **One Small Star** - space.com/57-stars-formation-classification-and-constellations.html (background); **Image Credits** - sfwallpaper.com/categories/summer-scene-wallpaper.html (background); **Upcoming Mag** - stickpng.com/img/transport/spacecraft/space-shuttle-top-view (space shuttle); BBC (TARDIS); Paramount/CBS (Starship Enterprise); 20th Century Fox (Serenity); Disney/LucasFilms (Millennium Falcon)

Join us Summer 2019



SPACE

Real life & fantasy/sci-fi
Fanfiction, nonfiction, poetry,
fanfiction & artwork



Submissions requested by Sept 1