

18th century PARIS. The eve of the New Year. A boisterous tavern where handsome young CLAUDE FROLLO and his cronies have gathered to swill beer and celebrate Frolo's appointment to a position in the Royal Court. Frolo is brash and ambitious. He tells his friends that although the King may rein, it is he, Claude Frolo, who will someday rule. His friends laugh at his arrogance.

Outside the tavern, a blind old GYPSY WOMAN advances from the shadows and offers to tell Frolo's fortune. Frolo scoffs at the old woman but his friends goad him on and he finally relents. The gypsy produces a small crystal ball and gently strokes it while the others crowd around. A strange and magical glow emanates from the crystal. It seems to have a hypnotic effect on the others. Frolo is impatient. "Well?", he demands. "What have you to say, old woman?" The gypsy turns her dead eyes on Frolo and intones rather ominously-

OLD GYPSY

You will attain the power you
desire, this I have seen.

Frolo's chest swells. He beams at his friends.

OLD GYPSY (cont'd)

But take heed. This man consumed
by ambition will wield his power
against the lowly and outcast.
They will be his undoing. This I
have also seen.

Her words hang in the air for a moment. One of Frolo's cronies suddenly chimes in- "Perhaps you'd better reconsider your appointment, Frolo!" The others roar with laughter. Frolo turns red with anger. "Old witch!" he yells. He grabs the crystal ball from the blind woman and smashes it on the cobblestones. He shoves past his friends, leaps aboard his waiting stallion and gallops away. The old gypsy listens to him go from the shadows.

OLD GYPSY

So it begins...

Frolo rides along the narrow street. The road has become increasingly crowded with New Year's revellers. Frolo kicks at the partygoers, yells for people to get out of the way. He gallops away from the crowd down a deserted alleyway. A poor YOUNG WOMAN dressed in tattered clothes and carrying a wrapped bundle unwittingly steps into the path of Frolo's horse. Frolo hauls back on the reins but it's too late. The horse rears, there is a scream... Frolo leaps off the stallion. Nothing can be done for the woman.

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Knowing that the hint of scandal could ruin his career, he prepares to leave the woman where she lay and ride off. Just then, a noise issues from the bundle lying nearby -- the unmistakable sound of a baby crying. Frollo ignores the crying and starts for his horse, but he stops short. Even he can't bring himself to be so callous. He picks up the bundle, unwraps it and gasps, shocked by what he sees. He rewraps the child, mounts his stallion and gallops away.

NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL. A gothic jewel rising from the center of Paris. Frollo's stallion is tied outside. Snowflakes are beginning to swirl. Inside the darkened cathedral, Frollo confesses what has happened to the aging ARCHDEACON who agrees to give the poor child sanctuary on one condition -- that Frollo provide for the child's welfare and raise him as his own. Frollo is left with little choice. He agrees and quickly turns to leave. The Archdeacon calls to him. "You must give him a name, Frollo." Frollo pauses for a moment. "Call it Quasimodo," he sneers. He leaves the child in the arms of the kindly Archdeacon and steps out into the chill night air. It is snowing harder now. Frollo mounts his horse and gallops away just as the bells of the cathedral ring in the New Year...

TWENTY YEARS LATER

NEW YEAR'S DAY -- FEAST OF FOOLS. Parisians are crowded into the streets, celebrating the new year with music and dancing. A group of children playing near the cathedral tell stories of the 'monster' living high in the belltower. Just then, one of the children points to a silhouette of someone or something peering down at them from the belltower. The children scream and scatter away into the crowd.

THE BELLTOWER. A misshapen and deformed hulk watches the festival in the streets below -- QUASIMODO, now grown. His view from the belltower encompasses all Paris. Although monstrously ugly on the outside, he has a gentle and loving heart. But alas, he is an outcast. As he turns sadly away from the celebration, Quasimodo's enchanted world of the belltower is slowly revealed to us. It is a world of outcasts like himself, populated by gargoyles, stain-glassed windows that come to life, a bat that can't fly -- all brought to life by Quasimodo's childlike imagination.

Among Quasimodo's friends:

-BORIS and BELA, two winged gargoyles who are constantly arguing and trading 'ugly' insults ("You're so ugly, when you were born the doctor slapped your face instead of your butt!").

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The two gargoyles have perched for centuries on the ledge of the belltower, their job to protect the sanctity of the cathedral by warding off evil with their grotesque appearances. Problem is, there hasn't been any evil to ward off in over four hundred years. They're bored! So they argue, and argue, and argue...

-a bat named BONAPARTE whose radar is so haywire he's constantly flying into things.

-the giant cathedral bells, SOPHIA and MARIA. They communicate to the Hunchback through different tones.

His friends sense Quasimodo's unhappiness. He tells them that just once he'd like to venture down from the belltower and join in the celebration, to go out amongst the people and be accepted for who he is. "Impossible!" states Boris. "Have you looked in a mirror lately? You're different. We're all different. Do you think I would be welcome in the Louvre, home to the most beautiful statues in the world? Hah!" "He's right," agrees Bela. "There's nothing but trouble waiting for you down there." The bells suddenly chime in, reminding Quasimodo that it's time for them to be rung in recognition of the New Year. At the appointed moment, Quasimodo, the hunchbacked bellringer of Notre Dame, pulls on the ropes and the sweet sound of the bells carries out over the city of Paris, over the crowded streets, to-

THE KING'S PALACE. In the royal palace, FROLLO watches the festivities from his balcony with utter contempt. He has attained the position of Duke of Justice. Older now, and with a heart twisted by bitterness, he's convinced his slow rise to power is due to a curse laid upon him by the old gypsy woman so many years before. He detests gypsies and their superstitious ways. "Beggars and thieves, all of them," he mutters. He calls upon the KING, a benign and slightly crackpot character who is easily manipulated by the sinister Frollo. Using all his false charm and guile, Frollo succeeds in tricking the King into signing an edict banishing gypsies from the city of Paris. He will finally have his revenge.

PHOEBUS, a dashing young Captain of the guard, is on patrol when word reaches him that all gypsies are to be arrested on sight. In his own way, Phoebus too is an outcast. He's unhappy being a soldier. His heart just isn't in his work. He confides to his fellow soldiers that what he really wants to be is a poet. He believes in compassion and romance, not Claude Frollo's ways of brutality and force. He prides himself in never once having drawn his sword. "The pen," he reminds them, "is mightier than the sword." Unfortunately, Phoebus's poems are so bad that even his horse cringes when he insists on reciting an example of his work.

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He is laughed at by the other soldiers who divide up to search for gypsies and carry out Frollo's directive.

In the belltower, Boris and Bela are having yet another argument. Bonaparte excitedly tries to get their attention. "What is it??" yells Boris. Bonaparte points to the street below. The two gargoyles look around and suddenly notice Quasimodo has disappeared. They look at one another. "He didn't..." They rush to the wall and peer down. Far below they see a familiar figure taking his first tentative steps outside the cathedral. "He did!" they moan in unison.

STREETS OF PARIS. Quasimodo strolls unnoticed along the crowded streets. Unnoticed because many Parisians are wearing clownish and grotesque masks (a la Mardi Gras) and they assume that Quasimodo must be as well. His first outing is an adventure in sight and sound. The things he's only seen from high above are now at his fingertips. He is dazzled by the colorful costumes, the singing and dancing -- and the people! All shapes and sizes! Someone thrusts an ale into his hand and he gulps it down. He smiles, happy and lightheaded.

MARKET PLACE. In the market place, he approaches a crowd of revellers who have gathered to watch a beautiful young gypsy girl performing with her pet goat. Her name is ESMERALDA. She embodies youth and all its unbridled passion along with an air of mystery and enchantment that we associate with gypsies. Quasimodo is spellbound. Esmeralda captivates the audience by showing them how the goat, DJALI, can spell using blocks. She asks questions, Djali answers. Quasimodo claps along with the rest of the crowd. Esmeralda begins a free spirited dance. People toss coins. She laughs, playfully pulling off peoples' masks and tossing them into the air. She grabs for Quasimodo's 'mask', suddenly screams and draws back, horrified. "That's no mask!" somebody gasps. "It's his real face!" exclaims another. Several women faint dead away. The crowd moves away from the Hunchback. Quasimodo is confused. He doesn't understand that his ugliness is repulsive to them. Someone suddenly shouts that it's time to crown the King of Fools. Someone else points at the Hunchback. "What about him?" The mood of the crowd swiftly changes. They rush forward, laughing, and surround the Hunchback. A silly crown is placed upon Quasimodo's head and he's borne into the air on a makeshift throne and carried away. Esmeralda feels guilty about her reaction to the Hunchback. She is swept along with the sea of people.

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CATHEDRAL SQUARE. The crowd swells as Quasimodo is carried through the streets of Paris. He laughs, waves to people hanging from balconies and street lamps. This is the happiest day of his life. He's been accepted by the citizens of Paris as one of their own. They've even made him a King! In the square at Notre Dame, Quasimodo is escorted up onto a stage. He happily allows himself to be strapped to a pillory. "Time for the Feast of Fools!" shouts a tall man dressed as a Court Jester. He winks at Quasimodo. "Hope you're hungry, sire." The crowd roars with laughter. The pillory slowly spins. People start throwing garbage at the Hunchback. Quasimodo sadly begins to understand -- they're not laughing with him, they're laughing at him. A rotten tomato hits him in the face. He lowers his head in shame. The pillory continues to turn to the sound of the laughing and jeering crowd.

Frollo arrives in the square with Phoebus and a company of soldiers. He's incensed by what he sees. He's about to order Phoebus to disperse the people when a hush suddenly falls over the crowd. A woman has stepped up onto the pillory. It is the gypsy Esmeralda. She approaches the Hunchback, unafraid.

ESMERALDA

This is all my fault.

Compassion fills her eyes.

ESMERALDA (cont'd)

I'm so sorry.

Using her dress, Esmeralda wipes Quasimodo's face clean. Then she releases him. Phoebus watches, moved by her act of kindness. He falls instantly in love with her. Frollo too is enchanted by Esmeralda's beauty and secretly determines to have her.

"Gypsy! Arrest her!" one of the soldiers suddenly shouts. More soldiers storm into the square, scattering the people! Esmeralda and Djali flee into the crowd. Frollo turns to Phoebus. "The girl! Bring her to me!" Phoebus rides off in pursuit of Esmeralda. Lost in the shuffle is Quasimodo. He limps over to where Frollo waits atop his stallion, glaring down at him.

FROLLO

I warned you never to leave the belltower. What were you thinking??

Quasimodo lowers his eyes.

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Go home. FROLLO (cont'd)

Yes, father. QUASIMODO

And don't call me that! FROLLO

Frollo spurs his steed away. Quasimodo shuffles sadly back to the cathedral and the sanctuary of the belltower...

PHOEBUS AND ESMERALDA. Esmeralda hides from the soldiers as they thunder past on their mounts. She emerges with Djali from her hiding place only to be confronted by Phoebus. As she turns to flee- "Wait!" he calls to her. "I'm not going to arrest you. I simply want to know your name." Esmeralda hesitates, suspicious. She tells Phoebus her name. When Phoebus makes no move to arrest her she pleads with him to allow her people to stay in Paris.

ESMERALDA
We've been banished from every
city in Europe. All we want is a
place to call home. We're not
beggars and thieves by choice.
We do what we do to survive.

Phoebus tells her that it is not his decision but that he will see what he can do. The sound of soldiers' voices draw near. "You'd better go," Phoebus warns. She turns to leave. "Wait!" he calls after her. "How can I see you again?" Esmeralda pauses. "Leave a message with Joan of Arc." "Joan of Arc!?" exclaims Phoebus. Before he can say another word, Esmeralda disappears. More soldiers arrive. Phoebus leads them away at a gallop. Esmeralda watches him go from the shadows. She's smitten with the dashing young Captain.

FROLLO AND QUASIMODO. Frollo is becoming obsessed with Esmeralda and frustrated by his attempts to locate the gypsies. His soldiers complain that every time they think they have a gypsy cornered they seem to "vanish into thin air". In the belltower, Quasimodo's friends console the Hunchback. He tells them of Esmeralda's act of kindness and feels a bond with her. "She's an outcast, just like me." Frollo suddenly intrudes. Quasimodo's friends quickly disappear into the background. "Who were you talking too?" Frollo demands. "Nobody," says Quasimodo. Frollo looks around suspiciously but the belltower is empty. Satisfied, he orders Quasimodo to go out into the streets of Paris and discover where the gypsies are hiding. Find the gypsies and he will find Esmeralda.

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"Go under the cover of darkness," he orders. "Gypsies aren't going to be suspicious of a deformed bellringer."

PARIS AT NIGHT. Quasimodo searches along the cobblestoned streets. Warm lights and happy voices emanate from the houses he passes. He hides in the shadows while a carriage whisks past. Hours pass. He pauses to rest in a small park along the river Seine. Someone moves out of the shadows nearby -- one of Frollo's soldiers. Quasimodo remains hidden and watches. The soldier approaches a bronze statue in the center of the deserted park and places a note in one of its hands. He then leaves and soon after Quasimodo hears a horse galloping away. His curiosity piqued, Quasimodo comes forward to the statue -- a statue of Joan of Arc. He takes the note and is surprised to see that it is addressed to Esmeralda. He opens it and reads a corny love poem -- "Roses are red, violets are blue, etc." It is signed Phoebus. A sudden breeze whisks the poem out of Quasimodo's hand! He watches mortified as it drops into the Seine and is carried away by the current. He hears someone approaching. Quasimodo hurries back to his hiding place. Within moments Esmeralda steps cautiously out of the shadows.

QUASIMODO AND ESMERALDA. Esmeralda approaches the statue of Joan of Arc. She looks all about but can find no message. Her shoulders slump in disappointment. She's turning to leave when-

QUASIMODO

Excuse me...

Esmeralda is startled to see Quasimodo.

QUASIMODO (cont'd)

Please don't be afraid.

ESMERALDA

(gently)

I'm not afraid of you.

She comes forward.

ESMERALDA (cont'd)

It's dangerous for me to be here.

There are soldiers everywhere.

QUASIMODO

(blurts out)

I-I have a message from Phoebus.

Esmeralda perks up.

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ESMERALDA
You know Phoebus??

QUASIMODO
(nervously)
Oh yes. We're great friends.

Quasimodo looks upon the beautiful Esmeralda and recites a heartfelt love poem to her right off the top of his head. Esmeralda is astonished.

ESMERALDA
Phoebus wrote that for me??

Quasimodo nods. Esmeralda is starry-eyed.

ESMERALDA (cont'd)
A soldier poet -- imagine that!

A voice suddenly rings out. "Search the riverbank!" More voices approach. Esmeralda grabs Quasimodo's hand.

ESMERALDA (cont'd)
Follow me!

CATACOMBS AND THE COURT OF MIRACLES. Esmeralda leads Quasimodo along a narrow cobblestoned street. Soldiers appear at the far end and shout for them to "Halt!" More soldiers converge behind them. They're trapped! "This way!" whispers Esmeralda. She leads Quasimodo over to a large empty wooden barrel and begins to climb inside.

QUASIMODO
(afraid)
They'll surely catch us!

The soldiers fast approach at a hard gallop.

ESMERALDA
(a knowing smile)
Trust me.

Quasimodo climbs into the barrel after her. The soldiers surround the barrel and point their lances. "Come out! We know you're in there!" When there is no response, the soldiers come forward and peer into the barrel. They're astonished to find it empty! "Gypsy witchcraft!" one of them exclaims.

Esmeralda is hiding with Quasimodo in a small tunnel beneath the street. She smiles at the word 'witchcraft' and whispers to Quasimodo-

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CONTINUED: 9

ESMERALDA

I'm not much of a witch but there
is a bit of craft involved.

She pats the false bottom of the barrel above them. Esmeralda leads Quasimodo along the tunnel which soon opens up into a series of large chambers -- the medieval catacombs of Paris. It is in one of these old underground chambers where the gypsies have sought refuge, a place they call the Court of Miracles. The gypsies are warm and friendly. They welcome the Hunchback with open arms, accepting him for who he is. CLOPIN, leader of the gypsies, invites Quasimodo to stay with them. But alas, he must return to Notre Dame. Esmeralda gives Quasimodo a note to deliver to his 'good friend' Phoebus. Quasimodo says goodbye and promises to return. He's excited at the prospect of these new friends and has never been happier. Upon his return to Notre Dame, Quasimodo is confronted by Frollo who demands to know what he has found out. Quasimodo feigns ignorance, hiding Esmeralda's note from view. "Keep looking," bellows Frollo and storms away.

QUASIMODO AND PHOEBUS. The next night, Quasimodo waits again near the statue of Joan of Arc. Sure enough, Phoebus arrives. Quasimodo comes forward and produces the note from Esmeralda. Phoebus reads it and is overjoyed. "Such lavish praise for such a simple sonnet! I must write her another!" Phoebus sets about penning another ode to Esmeralda which he gives to Quasimodo for delivery. Upon reading it, Quasimodo is mortified. The poem is awful! What has he done? He quickly retires to the belltower where, with the help of his friends, he composes yet another beautiful poem to Esmeralda.

FROLLO'S REVENGE. His suspicions mounting, Frollo follows Quasimodo out on his nightly foray. At the Court of Miracles, Quasimodo delivers Phoebus' latest poem to Esmeralda which she reads aloud. She is so moved by the words that she proclaims her love right then for the poet Phoebus. Quasimodo is happy for Esmeralda, yet heartbroken as well. Although in love with the gypsy girl, he realizes that Phoebus is the better choice for her. Frollo has been watching unseen from the shadows, boiling with jealous rage. Phoebus! And right under his nose! Once again a gypsy has been his undoing. A cold, evil determination floods into his eyes...

As Quasimodo prepares to take leave, soldiers suddenly storm the Court of Miracles! He watches in horror from a hiding place while his new friends are arrested. Esmeralda is stunned to see Phoebus among the soldiers. Phoebus tries to explain that he has no choice but Esmeralda won't listen. Phoebus gives her a chance to escape but she refuses, choosing to stay with her people instead.

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phoebus is crushed as he watches Esmeralda taken away. Suddenly, he too is seized by soldiers! Frollo accuses Phoebus of treason, of aiding and abetting the gypsies. He orders Phoebus dragged away to the dungeon to await execution. Quasimodo is left standing alone in the Court of Miracles...

FROLLO AND ESMERALDA. Esmeralda is brought to Frollo's chamber in the Royal Palace. Frollo turns on the charm but Esmeralda is on to him. She knows that Frollo is the reason her people are persecuted and hunted like animals. "I'm bewitched!" agonizes Frollo. "I must have you as my bride!" "Never!" replies Esmeralda. Frollo's cold, calculating self returns. He offers Esmeralda a deal -- become his bride and her people will be given sanctuary. They will have the home they've longed for. Esmeralda is torn. She finally agrees to marry Frollo on one other condition, that Phoebus be spared as well. Frollo smiles. "Of course, my dear." He holds out his hand. Esmeralda forces herself to take it. It's like touching a snake.

BORIS AND BELA GO BACK TO WORK. Quasimodo remains despondent over Esmeralda's impending marriage to Frollo. He can't understand how this has come to pass. Worst of all, it seems there is nothing he can do to stop it. Meanwhile, Boris and Bela are arguing per usual when they suddenly stop. Their senses tingle.

BORIS
You feel what I feel?

BELA
Yeah...
(excited)
Come on!

The two gargoyles search Notre Dame for the source of their discomfort. They discover Frollo holding a secret meeting with several of his top soldiers in the basement of the cathedral. The two gargoyles listen in as Frollo hatches his insidious plan. The day following the wedding he intends to drive the gypsies from Paris and hang Phoebus for treason!

BORIS
(slowly)
Now I know that feeling...

The two gargoyles look at one another in panic-

BORIS AND BELA
EVIL!!!

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They trip over one another in their race back to the belltower! They relay what they've overheard to Quasimodo. The Hunchback is saddened to think that Frollo, his adopted father, could be so cruel.

WEDDING DAY. All of Paris has turned out. Ominous storm clouds gather overhead. Clopin and the gypsies watch sadly from a hiding place as their Esmeralda stands with Frollo before the priest. Just as Esmeralda is about to say "I do", Quasimodo suddenly swoops out of nowhere on a rope and rescues her from a fate worse than death! He carries her away to the sanctuary of the belltower while an enraged Frollo screams out his name.

In the belltower, Quasimodo's enchanted world opens up to Esmeralda. He introduces her to all his friends. The more she learns about the Hunchback, the more it dawns on her what a truly special person he is. And when Quasimodo slips up and uses a familiar sounding line, he finally has to admit that it was he who authored the love poems to Esmeralda. He didn't mean to hurt anyone, he tells her. All he wanted to do was repay Esmeralda for her act of kindness. He saw a way to do it by playing matchmaker. Esmeralda fumes at the mention of Phoebus's name.

ESMERALDA

I should have known he was a fraud!

QUASIMODO

Oh no. You musn't think that. Phoebus is a poet, in his heart -- a heart that belongs only to you, Esmeralda.

What Quasimodo doesn't tell her is that his heart belongs to her as well...

FROLLO'S SEIGE. Frollo and his soldiers arrive and lay seige to the cathedral which Quasimodo has barricaded shut. The Hunchback is determined to protect Esmeralda at all cost. The soldiers try breaking through the front doors with a battering ram. High in the belltower, Quasimodo, Esmeralda and friends rush to battle stations. Down below, the soldiers bash through the front door. Frollo leads the charge up the narrow flight of steps leading to the belltower.

PHOEBUS'S ESCAPE. Meanwhile, Clopin and the gypsies are able to trick the guards and free Phoebus from the dungeon. They relay to Phoebus what has transpired and the immediate danger Esmeralda and Quasimodo are in. Phoebus knows what he has to do. For the first time in his career, he removes his sword from its sheath...

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DESTINY FULLFILLED. Frollo confronts Quasimodo in the belltower and demands that he hand over his bride-to-be. Finally seeing him for the evil man that he truly is, Quasimodo defies Frollo for the first time in his life.

FROLLO

How dare you defy me! I, who
plucked you from the street and
raised you as my own!

QUASIMODO

(sadly)

I was never your son. I loved
you but I was never loved. I
know that now. You couldn't look
past my face.

FROLLO

Stand aside!

QUASIMODO

No.

FROLLO

Then have it your way-

Frollo raises his sword and advances on Quasimodo.
Suddenly-

PHOEBUS (os)

Frollo!

Phoebus is standing at the entrance to the belltower, sword
raised.

PHOEBUS (cont'd)

Why don't you pick on somebody
your own size.

Frollo engages Phoebus in a spectacular sword fight. Sparks
fly as metal crashes against metal! There is little doubt
that it's a duel to the death. At a critical moment, Frollo
knocks Phoebus's sword away and backs him into a corner.
Just as he's about to do him in-

QUASIMODO

Let him go!

Frollo turns to find Quasimodo wielding Phoebus's sword.
Frollo is amused.

FROLLO

You wouldn't dare raise a hand to
me, your protector.

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Frollo turns back to Phoebus and raises his sword. Quasimodo attacks! Frollo easily fends off the Hunchback but the fight is soon joined by the other tenants of the belltower, most notably Boris and Bela who scare the evil Duke so badly that he slips and plunges from the belltower to the ground below. As soldiers and Parisians crowd around Frollo's body, we recognize a familiar face -- the old blind gypsy woman from the beginning.

By now, the King himself has arrived and after sorting out the mess, offers Phoebus the position of Duke of Justice. Phoebus hesitates, thinking perhaps he'd rather pursue his poetry. But Esmeralda and Quasimodo pull him aside and convince Phoebus that he can do more good as the new Duke. Phoebus sees their point and decides to accept the King's offer. Esmeralda and Quasimodo share a huge sigh and a knowing smile.

ESMERALDA

(winks)

I'll tell him...some day.

Phoebus immediately welcomes all the gypsies to live freely as citizens of Paris. Clopin and his people finally have a home! They crowd around Phoebus, Esmeralda and Quasimodo, cheering and clapping!

A SECOND WEDDING. All of Paris turns out once again, only this time the gypsies are there as well. And this time it is Phoebus and Esmeralda who are getting married in storybook fashion. And just as they kiss, the sweet sound of the bells of Notre Dame ring out over the city. Esmeralda and Phoebus look up and smile.

Up in the belltower, Quasimodo jumps from Maria to Sophia and back again, happily riding the bells as they chime out their sweet music...

THE END