

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME

A STAGE ADAPTATION IN TWO ACTS BASED ON THE
NOVEL BY VICTOR HUGO

By Craig W. Stump

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THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME

By Craig W. Stump

From the author...

I had a great time writing this play. I enjoy the story of “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” and am amazed at the movies which have been made about it. Although the story is serious in nature, I have incorporated humorous characters and scenes. Remember to have fun with your production! I have offered some suggestions below for your review.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(12+ MEN, 12+ WOMEN, VERY FLEXIBLE)

SOUFFLÉ (M/F)The narrator of the play, SOUFFLÉ is a character in his/her early twenties and the older sibling of CHEESE. Though referred to as a male in the script, SOUFFLÉ may be played by either gender. SOUFFLÉ has a French accent and uses many hand gestures while speaking. He/she is well dressed in the style of the 13th century. (*Approximately 108 lines*)

CHEESE (M/F)CHEESE assists his/her older sibling, SOUFFLÉ, in narrating the play. Though referred to as a male in the script, CHEESE may be played by either gender. He/she is a funny, lovable and hyperactive teenager, though he/she acts younger. CHEESE uses exaggerated speech and gestures and is sloppily dressed in the style of the 13th century. (*104 lines*)

GUARDS (M/F)Five or six guards are used throughout the play, though only three have speaking parts. A few of these should be large individuals, as they must take ESMERALDA prisoner at one point in the play. (*Some GUARDS have lines, some do not*)

- GYPSY MOTHER (F)QUASIMODO'S GYPSY MOTHER is poor and dressed in rags. Her baby is taken away by the GUARDS. (5 lines)
- SISTER MARIE (F)A funny and fun-loving nun of Notre Dame, SISTER MARIE acts more like an excitable teenager than an adult. She is one of QUASIMODO'S good friends and always appears with SISTER ANTOINETTE. (59 lines)
- SISTER ANTOINETTE (F)Though also a nun at Notre Dame, SISTER ANTOINETTE is more conservative than SISTER MARIE. She would like to let loose occasionally, but always restrains herself. SISTER ANTOINETTE always appears with SISTER MARIE. (61 lines)
- CARDINAL (M)As the head of the church of Notre Dame, the CARDINAL is an older man, stately in nature and appearance. (11 lines)
- (DOM CLAUDE) FROLLO (M) FROLLO is at first a reverend, but becomes an arch-deacon during the course of the play. He is angry, cruel, and resentful of his duty to raise QUASIMODO. He also lusts after ESMERALDA. (49 lines)
- QUASIMODO (M)The main character of the play, QUASIMODO is a deformed hunchback but a gentle, caring person. He speaks with his mouth hanging off to the side in a slow, slurred fashion. He makes friends with ESMERALDA and protects her. (105 lines)
- (PIERRE) GRINGOIRE (M)A poet, playwright, and orator, GRINGOIRE always speaks with flair. His entire life is overacted. Throughout the course of the play, GRINGOIRE falls in love with ESMERALDA and is stabbed by FROLLO. (37 lines)

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- CROWD (M/F).....The CROWD has no limit in size – the more the merrier. These roles include shouting out lines, juggling, and doing acrobatics. There are 18 speaking parts available, though some of these may be doubled. The CROWD can also double as PEASANTS.
- QUEEN (F).....The QUEEN of France is an older woman, reserved in mannerism. (13 lines)
- KING (M).....KING Louis XI of France is an older man, almost humorous at times. He enjoys watching ESMERALDA dance. (20 lines)
- ACTOR (M)The ACTOR is the 40-50 year-old father of the ACTRESS. (2 lines)
- ACTRESS (F).....The ACTRESS is the mid-twenties daughter of the ACTOR. (2 lines)
- CLOPIN (TROUILLEFOU) (M) The leader of the Court of Miracles and Bishop of Fools, CLOPIN is a rough individual with a likable personality. He is loved by the PEASANTS and possesses a bold voice. (35 lines)
- LA ESMERALDA (F)The queen of the gypsies, ESMERALDA is a great dancer and a kind and gentle person. She becomes friends with QUASIMODO. (74 lines)
- UGLY FOOLS (M/F).....These poor souls compete for the “honor” of being crowned King of Fools for possessing the ugliest face at the Festival of Fools.
- PEASANTS (M/F)There are several PEASANTS, all dressed in rags and friends of ESMERALDA and QUASIMODO. They dislike aristocrats and may double as the CROWD. There are

17 speaking parts available, though some of these may be doubled.

JUDGE (M/F).....The JUDGE is an old, deaf individual with humorous difficulties due to his/her hearing problem. Though referred to as male in the script, the JUDGE may be played by either gender. (12 lines)

JUDGE'S ASSISTANT (M/F)....The JUDGE's ASSISTANT's sole purpose is to loudly repeat misheard phrases for the JUDGE. Though referred to as male in the script, the JUDGE's ASSISTANT may be played by either gender. (7 lines)

ARISTOCRATS.....The ARISTOCRATS are the well-dressed observers of certain scenes in the play.

ARISTOCRAT CHILD (M/F)....The ARISTOCRAT CHILD is a young individual between six and 10 years old. The ARISTOCRAT CHILD may be played by either gender. (1 line)

EXECUTIONERS.....These men or women have the duty of hanging ESMERALDA in one of the final scenes of the play.

SUMMARY OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1:

Location: Steps of Notre Dame

- The GUARDS take a baby from its GYPSY MOTHER.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2:

Location: Steps of Notre Dame

- Two nun of Notre Dame find the gypsy baby. FROLLO must raise it.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3:

Location: Top of Notre Dame

- The nuns tell QUASIMODO to go to the Festival of Fools.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4:

Location: Festival of Fools

- GRINGOIRES's play is performed; ESMERALDA and the gypsies dance; QUASIMODO is crowned King of Fools to FROLLO's fury

ACT ONE, SCENE 5:

Location: Inside Notre Dame

- FROLLO lambasts QUASIMODO; the nuns comfort him; ESMERALDA visits and FROLLO interrupts

ACT ONE, SCENE 6:

Location: Steps of Notre Dame

- FROLLO pays the GUARDS to find ESMERALDA.

ACT ONE, SCENE 7:

Location: A Parisian street

- GUARDS find ESMERALDA; GRINGOIRE tries to help; QUASIMODO rescues ESMERALDA; but is taken away by the GUARDS; GRINGOIRE is taken to the Court of Miracles

ACT ONE, SCENE 8:

Location: The Court of Miracles

- GRINGOIRE is tried at the Court of Miracles; GRINGOIRE and ESMERALDA are married

ACT TWO, SCENE 1:

Location: Courtroom

- The JUDGE sentences QUASIMODO.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2:

Location: Public Square in Paris

- QUASIMODO on public display; ESMERALDA gives him water

ACT TWO, SCENE 3:

Location: A Parisian street

- FROLLO stabs GRINGOIRE; ESMERALDA is arrested

ACT TWO, SCENE 4:

Location: Steps of Notre Dame

- QUASIMODO saves ESMERALDA from hanging.

ACT TWO, SCENE 5:

Location: Bell Tower and top of Notre Dame

- QUASIMODO takes care of ESMERALDA and shows her the bells.

ACT TWO, SCENE 6:

Location: Bell Tower

- QUASIMODO brings GRINGOIRE to Notre Dame

ACT TWO, SCENE 7:

Location: Bell Tower

- GRINGOIRE and ESMERALDA talk; FROLLO attacks GRINGOIRE

ACT TWO, SCENE 8:

Location: Top of Notre Dame

- FROLLO fights QUASIMODO and falls

ACT TWO, SCENE 9:

Location: Festival of Fools, King's box

- GRINGOIRE pleads for ESMERALDA's innocence

SETS:

You can make the sets as involved or simple as desired. Always start simple with your ideas and progress from there. The brief descriptions in the body of the script are suggestions only and may be altered as needed. Sets do not have to be three-dimensional to be effective. Flat "stand-up" pieces frequently work well. Also, if sufficient props are used, large set pieces may not be necessary. Some suggestions:

Steps of Notre Dame: Act One, Scenes 1, 2, 6; Act Two, Scene 4

- The actual steps to Notre Dame can be eliminated, using only a doorway to represent the cathedral.

Top of Notre Dame: Act One, Scene 3; Act Two, Scenes 5, 8

- If raised platforms are not possible, some sort of waist high stone wall will work. The gargoyles can be flat cut-outs or three-dimensional figures.

Festival of Fools: Act One, Scene 4; Act Two, Scene 9

- Two platforms, raised if possible, will suffice. For the KING and QUEEN's box, a raised platform with a railing or two royal chairs is desirable.

Inside Notre Dame: Act One, Scene 5

- Any sort of curtain, backdrop, flats, stand ups, or any combination of these will work.

A Parisian Street: Act One, Scene 7; Act Two, Scene 3

- Any sort of curtain, backdrop, flats, stand-ups, or any combination of these will work.

Court of Miracles: Act One, Scene 8

- This can be played as an underground sewer area or as a deserted back alley. Lots of old stools, chairs, wooden crates, barrels, etc. work well. The hanging of CLOPIN can be done with two long poles holding a cross piece on the top, with a rope thrown over it and a noose on the end. As the noose is placed over GRINGOIRE's neck, a bunch of PEASANTS grab the other end waiting to pull on the rope and hang him.

Court Room: Act Two, Scene 1

- Place the JUDGE and JUDGE'S ASSISTANT on an elevated platform or have them SR or SL with the crowd on the opposite side of the stage.

Public Square in Paris: Act Two, Scene 2

- A raised “lazy Susan” platform is impressive, but any location where QUASIMODO is tied up and people are able to walk by works. If you prefer, you can tie him to a pole with his hands above his head or off to the sides.

Bell Tower: Act Two, Scenes 5, 6, 7

- In front of a curtain or backdrop four to six long, thick ropes should be hanging from above at different locations.

NARRATORS:

SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE are designed to offer comic relief, as well as time for set changes.

COSTUMES:

These can be as elaborate or as simple as available. Watch a “Hunchback” movie for good ideas. I have always made the actors responsible for their own costumes, which has worked out well. For coordinated costumes (i.e. both SISTERS), make the same individual responsible. I have had a lot of success borrowing costumes from local schools and colleges. Renting costumes can also be worthwhile, depending upon your budget and desires. It is beneficial to call around to several rental places before choosing one. Most will ship to your location. Finally, plan early. Start on costumes as soon as the play is cast or even earlier for rentals and coordinated costumes.

MAKE-UP:

With a little direction, most actors can be responsible for putting on their own make-up. Involved make-up (i.e. QUASIMODO), will require assistance. There are many great make-up books worth purchasing. Since QUASIMODO's hump is never exposed, a firm stuffing attached with straps will work.

“I would like to dedicate this play to my son, Jason A. Stump. I wrote this play with you in mind as Quasimodo, and I am truly sorry that you were not able to play the part.”—*Craig W. Stump*

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: A GYPSY'S BABY

The narrators, SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE, can be blocked in any location which works for you. They must be able to exit between scenes. SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE enter.

SOUFFLÉ: Ladies and gentlemen, young men and young women, children of all ages! My name is Soufflé, and I will be telling you a story, a most magnificent story, one of my favorite stories, a story for all ages, one that has been and will be told for years to come! You might be wondering what story I am referring to. Well, it is none other than the classic tale of...

CHEESE: *(Holding his hands up and cutting off SOUFFLÉ.)* Stop the presses! *(Whispers into SOUFFLÉ's ear.)*

SOUFFLÉ: But, of course! My humblest apologies! *(Motioning to CHEESE.)* May I introduce my friend of friends, my accomplice in the adventures of life, my confidant during times of despair, my companion when the sun shines on my bodily existence, my chum, my pal, my associate, my partner in the telling of tales, my brother: Charles Henri Emile Eric Sebastian Elloquoise. *(If CHEESE is played by a female actor, change the names to Caroline Henriette Eleonore Elisabeth Sophie Emilie.)*

CHEESE: *(Whining.)* And why did you have to tell them my entire name?

SOUFFLÉ: It is a powerful name! It has character. You should be proud of your name.

CHEESE: Oh, it is soooo long! It used to take me three pages of paper to write it in first grade. You know, with those giant pencils that you had to rest upon your shoulder. *(Demonstrating.)* Charles... Henri... Next page... Emile... Eric... It was ridiculous! *(To the audience.)* Everyone calls me Cheese.

SOUFFLÉ: Cheese... Oh, I can still hear Mom yelling your name when you were young...

CHEESE: Ohhhhh, not Mom stories! Do you have to tell Mom stories?

SOUFFLÉ: *(In a motherly voice.)* "Cheese! You didn't eat your ham. You must eat your ham! Do you want your ham in a sandwich, Cheese?" *(Normal voice.)* And my favorite one... *(Back to motherly tones.)* "Cheese! Get up and do something! All you do is sit around all day! I am surprised mold doesn't grow on you!"

CHEESE: *(Sarcastically.)* Thank you for sharing some of my fondest memories with the audience.

SOUFFLÉ: Do not mention it. What are older brothers for? So, why do you not like to be called Charles Henri Emile Eric Sebastian Elloquoise?

CHEESE: *(With bodily emphasis.)* It doesn't fit me. It is too long and fancy. Cheese is short and to the point, just the way I am. It fits me!

SOUFFLÉ: But remember, my dear brother...a rose by any other name still smells as sweet.

CHEESE: *(Confused.)* I smell like a rose?

SOUFFLÉ: No, no! What I meant is that you need to be satisfied with the way you are, no matter what you are called. Which brings me to the story. *(To the audience.)* Today, I will regale you with a classic of classics, a story of stories, a tale to end all tales, an emotionally gut-wrenching account of a deformed human's existence. My story is none other than... *(Pauses for dramatic emphasis.)* "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"! Our story begins in the late 1400s, six hundred years ago. We are in the city of Paris, the largest city in France.

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CHEESE: Paris? That's the place with the stiffer tower, isn't it?

SOUFFLÉ: It is the Eiffel Tower, and yes, that is the place, but the Eiffel Tower was not yet built. At this time, Paris was the grandest of all cities in Europe. It was a time when people believed that the world was flat. Flat like a...like a...blintz!

CHEESE: A blintz? What's a blintz?

SOUFFLÉ: Oh, blintzes are wonderful. They are made from batter poured onto a hot griddle. As the batter spreads out, it forms flat, round disks.

CHEESE: You mean, like pancakes?

SOUFFLÉ: Yes! But thinner, lighter! Some people like to put fruit on them.

CHEESE: Well, if the world is flat like a blintz, what would the mountains be? Wait! Wait! I got it. The mountains would be piles of blueberries on the blintz. And the snow on top of the mountains would be like whipped cream. And the oceans would be like syrup splashing up on the edges of the blintz. And, oh boy, am I getting hungry! I need to eat.

SOUFFLÉ: Later, Cheese, later. France had just finished one hundred years of war. It was a time of rebuilding, of prosperity, and of hope. The aristocrats...

CHEESE: Aristocrats?

SOUFFLÉ: Aristocrats were the rich people.

CHEESE: Thank you.

SOUFFLÉ: ...and the peasants...

CHEESE: The peasants were the poor people!

SOUFFLÉ: Very good, Cheese! The aristocrats and the peasants did not get along. The peasants were mistreated, abused, picked on, and basically treated like they were bothersome little bugs. Bugs that showed up everywhere. Bugs that ran around trying not to be swatted by the aristocrats.

CHEESE: The aristocrats swatted the peasants?

SOUFFLÉ: As often as they could!

CHEESE: Already, I don't like rich people.

SOUFFLÉ: The Church was almost as powerful as the government. Both the Church and the government thought that they were in control over the other. The country's ruler at the time was King Louis XI.

CHEESE: King Louie! The orangutan from Disney's "Jungle Book" movie? That's a great movie! King Louis is the king over all the monkeys, and he squishes bananas into Mowgli's mouth, and he wants to be a man, and he's tired of monkeying around, and he sings...

SOUFFLÉ: (*Cutting him off*) No, no, no! King Louis XI of France! Not King Louie from the "Jungle Book"! King Louis of France believed it was time for Paris to change, for Paris to embrace new ideas, for Paris to look toward the future. And since the Church did not like new ideas, the King and the Church frequently did not see eye to eye.

Our story begins outside of Notre Dame, the most magnificent cathedral in the world and the tallest building in all of Paris. Late at night, a young woman was running from the King's Guards. Running for her life.

SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE exit. Curtain opens on the stage set as the steps of Notre Dame. It is night. A water well is downstage. GUARDS hurriedly enter, pausing to look out at the audience, searching for someone.

GUARD 1: *(Pointing off stage.)* This way! I think she went this way. *(All the GUARDS hurry off stage.)*

A gypsy woman (QUASIMODO's mother) enters, dressed in rags and carrying a baby wrapped in blankets. She is breathing heavily, crying and sobbing.

GYPSY MOTHER: I must keep running. I can not let the King's Guards catch me. Surely they will throw me in jail. *(Looking skyward.)* Why? Why us? I am innocent. The only crime I have committed is being a gypsy. I can never let them take my baby. *(She looks down at her baby.)* They would show you no mercy.

GUARDS enter, surrounding the GYPSY MOTHER. She hides her baby under her clothes.

GUARD 1: *(This is the head GUARD. He is not holding the GYPSY MOTHER.)* Another stinking gypsy! No one is allowed on the streets of Paris after sunset, especially gypsies.

GYPSY MOTHER: I know! Please have mercy on me. I was just searching for some food to eat.

GUARD 1: That is not my concern. Take her away! *(GUARDS begin to drag her away. GUARD 2 notices the baby.)*

GUARD 2: Sir, she has a baby!

GUARD 1: A baby? *(Addressing the GYPSY MOTHER.)* How can dirt like you have children? We do not need any more gypsies in Paris.

GUARD 1: *(Pointing to the baby.)* Take the baby... *(Trails off, thinking.)*

GUARD 2: *(Thinking that GUARD 1 is done speaking.)* Yes, sir!

GUARD 1: ...and dispose of it.

GYPSY MOTHER: NO! NO! YOU CAN'T TAKE MY BABY!

GUARD 2: *(In disbelief.)* Sir? I do not understand.

GUARD 1: You heard me. I said, get rid of it!

GYPSY MOTHER: Please! Please! Take me, but don't harm my baby!

GUARD 1: *(To the GYPSY MOTHER.)* And let it grow up to be another filthy, thieving gypsy like you? I will not let it live long enough to cause any trouble. *(To GUARD 2.)* Take it away! Make sure its body is not found.

GUARD 2: How am I to do that, sir?

GUARD 1: *(Angrily.)* How? I don't care how! Just do it. *(Motioning with his hand to the other GUARDS.)* Take her away.

GYPSY MOTHER: *(She feverishly attempts to retrieve her baby as she is being dragged off. Sobbing, screaming.)* NO! NO! You can't! You mustn't! NOT MY BABY! Have mercy on my baby!

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The GUARDS drag off the GYPSY MOTHER. GUARD 2 is left standing with the baby. He looks at the bundle, walks to the water well, stretches out his arms like he is going to drop the baby into the well, hesitates, and changes his mind. He notices the steps of Notre Dame, then places the baby on the top step and crosses himself.

GUARD 2: *(As he backs away, looking at the baby.)* May God be with you. *(Looking up.)* And may God forgive me. *(He exits in the same direction as the other GUARDS. BLACKOUT.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: FINDING THE GYPSY'S BABY

SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE enter.

CHEESE: Can you believe it? Just because she was a gypsy, that Guard wanted to take that lady's baby!

SOUFFLÉ: Unfortunately, my brother, that was the way that it was in the 13th century. Almost all of the aristocrats despised the gypsies. The gypsies were nothing more than pieces of trash to the aristocrats. Some believed that the only good gypsy was a dead gypsy.

CHEESE: *(Anxiety increasing with each sentence.)* But the poor little baby is all alone! What is going to happen to it now? Who is going to take care of it? Will anyone find it on the steps of Notre Dame? *(Mimicking a dog taking the baby bundle.)* A big, stray dog might come along and think that it is a toy. It might pick the baby up and throw it around and try to rip it apart. I can't stand the suspense! Go on! Go on!

SOUFFLÉ: So you are enjoying the story?

CHEESE: Yes, yes! A good beginning! More! More!

SOUFFLÉ: As you wish. The next morning, as the sun was rising, two nuns came out of Notre Dame...

SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE exit. Lights come up slowly on the same set as the last scene. It is dawn. The baby bundle is still at the top of the steps. The door opens and two nuns come out. The baby is crying.

SISTER MARIE: *(Bends over and looks at the bundle. SISTER ANTOINETTE watches. The baby cries again. SISTER MARIE nudges SISTER ANTOINETTE and points at the bundle.)* Sister Antoinette, it sounds like a baby!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: *(Sarcastically, but without venom.)* Nothing gets past you, Sister Marie, now does it? *(Pause.)* Well, go on, take a look.

SISTER MARIE: *(Takes a quick peek.)* It looks like a baby.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Well, pick it up.

SISTER MARIE: *(Picks up the bundle.)* It feels like a baby. Here's its arm, and here's its leg... *(Giggling a little.)* Oh, here's its cute little bottom... *(Feeling the hump.)* And I have no idea what this is!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Yes, yes... Let me see. It sounds like a baby, it looks like a baby, and it feels like a baby...

SISTER MARIE: And one more thing just to make sure... *(She sticks her nose into the bundle and takes a big whiff. Stumbles back with an awful face.)* And wow-eee does it ever smell like a baby!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Where did it come from?

SISTER MARIE: Its bottom, I would imagine.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: No! Not the smell! Where did the baby come from?

SISTER MARIE: *(Hands the baby to SISTER ANTOINETTE. Using hand motions, she speaks quickly, acting out her explanation.)* Well, Sister Antoinette, a lady and a man fell in love. And they loved each other enough that they got married. Once they were married, well, nature just took its course. The mommy-to-be started to eat, and eat, and eat, telling everyone that she had to eat a lot to keep up her strength to make the baby big and strong. And the daddy-to-be, well, he just walked around wondering how fat the mommy-to-be was going to get, hoping that maybe all that food was turning his son into Hercules!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Sister Marie... *(Hands the baby back to SISTER MARIE.)* I know where babies come from, but how did this baby end up on our steps?

SISTER MARIE: Oh! I have no idea.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Let's have a better look at the cute, though smelly, bundle of joy.

SISTER MARIE and SISTER ANTOINETTE unwrap the bundle a bit. They look at each other in disbelief.

SISTER MARIE: Sister, it may have a cute bottom, but that is one ugly face!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: *(Stammering.)* Now...now...now Sister Marie, how can...how can you say such a thing? You know that...that all of God's creatures are beautiful.

SISTER MARIE: Well, I think maybe God sneezed or something when he made this one. Beautiful, it is not. Ugly, it is! Its one eye is crooked, its head is shaped all goofy, and its mouth hangs off to the one side. Actually, if you cover up the one half of its face... *(She covers one half of the face with her hand.)* ...it sort of looks okay. See what I mean? *(SISTER ANTOINETTE looks.)*

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Yes. It does look a good deal better. *(Pauses.)* Is it a boy or girl?

SISTER MARIE: *(Flustered, embarrassed.)* No, no, no! You want me to look and see if it has a...a... I'm not looking. I couldn't! We are Sisters of the Church. You look! *(She shoves the bundle towards SISTER ANTOINETTE.)*

SISTER ANTOINETTE: *(Gently pushing the baby back.)* Now, Sister Marie! Really! It will only take a brief peek to see if it is a boy or girl.

SISTER MARIE: Oh, I know how to tell them apart, but I am not looking. After seeing its face well... Who knows what might be in store. Nope, the job is all yours! *(Again, she shoves the baby toward SISTER ANTOINETTE.)*

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Fine, fine. *(She takes the bundle and, as SISTER MARIE looks over her shoulder, takes a look. SISTER ANTOINETTE hesitates, both nuns' eyes get wide, and SISTER ANTOINETTE quickly wraps the baby back up. Both are a bit flustered and flushed.)* Yes, a boy!

SISTER MARIE: *(Nodding in agreement.)* Yes, definitely a boy!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: No question! Clearly, very clearly, a boy!

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SISTER MARIE: No doubt about it, a boy! Absolutely, positively, wouldn't you say? I would certainly say. *(Pointing at the bundle)* That is a boy! *(Pause as they both calm down.)* So what are we going to do with this ugly-on-one-side, smelly bundle of a baby?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: That is not for us to decide. We must ask the Cardinal.

The CARDINAL and FROLLO come out of the door as this is being said.

CARDINAL: Good morning, Sister Antoinette, Sister Marie. Did you have something to ask me?

The SISTERS bow to the CARDINAL and FROLLO.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Well, yes. You see, Cardinal, we found this baby on the steps this morning.

CARDINAL: A baby? Where did it come from?

SISTER MARIE: Well, a woman and a man fell in love and they loved each other so much...

SISTER ANTOINETTE quickly nudges her.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: What Sister Marie is trying to say is that we do not know how it got here, Cardinal.

CARDINAL: Was there a note with the child?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: No, sir. Nothing.

CARDINAL: That is very strange indeed.

SISTER MARIE: Cardinal, what are we to do?

CARDINAL: *(Pauses and thinks.)* There is nothing else we can do, we must take the child in and care for it. *(Looks towards the sky.)* The child is a gift from God.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Begging your pardon, Father, you might want to look at the child before committing to anything.

CARDINAL: What do you mean, Sister Antoinette?

SISTER ANTOINETTE gently pushes the bundle towards the CARDINAL. The CARDINAL and FROLLO look into the bundle. They both gasp in horror, cross themselves, and look up to heaven, mumbling a prayer.

CARDINAL: Sisters... is the child a boy or a girl?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Definitely...

SISTER MARIE: A boy.

CARDINAL: Good! Reverend Frollo!

FROLLO: Yes, my Father.

CARDINAL: I want you to raise this child...

FROLLO: *(In disbelief.)* Raise the child? But sir, the child is deformed.

CARDINAL: *(Cutting off FROLLO.)* I want you to raise this child here, in the cathedral of Notre Dame.

FROLLO: Father, surely there must be a better place...

CARDINAL: (*Cutting off FROLLO.*) You can prove your worth to the church by being the child's guardian. Teach him well. Teach him the ways of the church. The Sisters, here, will assist you.

FROLLO: (*Unhappily.*) Yes, Your Excellency, as you wish.

The CARDINAL exits back into Notre Dame.

FROLLO: (*Clearly not pleased with his new duty.*) Sisters, take the child inside. Make a place for it in the...bell tower. I do not want the people of Paris to lay their eyes upon this hideous creature, ever.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: (*Nodding after each sentence.*) Yes, Reverend. As you wish. (*Pause.*) Will you be naming the child, Reverend? The child should have a name.

FROLLO: Yes, I guess this creature should have a name. (*Pauses.*) Its name will be...Quasimodo.

SISTER MARIE: Quasimodo? Why Quasimodo? Why not Andre, or Victor, or Bernard? I have always liked Bernard! What do you think, Sister Antoinette?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: (*SISTER ANTOINETTE glares at SISTER MARIE to keep quiet.*) Whatever name you would like, Reverend.

FROLLO: Quasimodo. It means "almost human". A perfect name for this...this thing. Now, take it away.

SISTER MARIE and SISTER ANTOINETTE bow and exit with the baby into Notre Dame.

FROLLO: (*Looking up.*) What have I done to deserve this? (*BLACKOUT.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 3: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE enter.

SOUFFLÉ: That reminds me of when you were born.

CHEESE: What do you mean?

SOUFFLÉ: When I saw you for the first time, I thought you were...well...not exactly the cutest baby in the world.

CHEESE: Mom told me I was a cute baby.

SOUFFLÉ: Did she? I guess she just did not want to hurt your feelings.

CHEESE: How much "not cute" was I?

SOUFFLÉ: Do you know the story of the Ugly Duckling?

CHEESE: The Ugly Duckling? I looked like a duck?

SOUFFLÉ: No, no, you looked like an ugly.

CHEESE: (*Stunned.*) An ugly? I was an ugly baby? (*Pauses, says thoughtfully...*) What do you mean by "ugly"?

SOUFFLÉ: You know...not pretty, homely, unpleasant to look at, an unlikely candidate for winning the cutest baby of ____ (*Insert your town's name here: e.g. "West Grove"*) contest.

CHEESE: I couldn't have been ugly! Mom would have told me if I had been ugly.

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SOUFFLÉ: Do you really think Mom would have told you that you were ugly? What was she going to do? Sit you down on her knee and say *(In motherly tones.)* "Cheese, you are one ugly child! Now be a good little ugly boy and go out and play"?

CHEESE: *(Wailing.)* My mother thought I was ugly. Ugly! *(Looking up.)* Mom, how could you? Me, your baby! Ugly! Oh, I need to lie down. *(Lies down.)* I am going to need therapy, years and years of therapy.

SOUFFLÉ: *(Pulling him up.)* Would you please get up off the ground so I can finish the story?

CHEESE: *(Suddenly cheerful.)* Yes, the story! Okay! Where were we?

SOUFFLÉ: We're going to move ahead twenty-five years to when Quasimodo had grown up. He was on top of Notre Dame looking out over Paris..

SOUFFLÉ and CHEESE exit. Lights up on stage set for the top of Notre Dame. QUASIMODO is looking out upon Paris (at the audience). He has a wooden bird cage with a small bird in it.

QUASIMODO: *(Stretching and speaking directly to each respective item.)* Good morning, clouds! Good morning, sun! Good morning, sky! Good morning, Paris! *(Speaking to a gargoyle.)* Monsieur François Gargoyle, how are you this especially fine morning? *(Turning to another gargoyle.)* And Monsieur Jacques Gargoyle, do you know why this is an especially fine morning?

The SISTERS of Notre Dame enter as QUASIMODO says the last line.

BOTH SISTERS: *(Said together, but not necessarily in unison.)* Good morning, Quasimodo!

QUASIMODO: Why, good morning, Sister Marie, Sister Antoinette! I was just about to tell François and Jacques why this is an especially fine morning.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: And why is this an especially fine morning?

QUASIMODO: You don't know? *(Both Sisters shake their heads "No".)* Well then, you must guess!

SISTER MARIE: *(Excitedly.)* A game! Oh, I like games! They are so much fun, and I am so good at them!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: *(Excitedly.)* Me first...it is an especially fine morning because...it is spring and the sun is shining and the birds are singing...

QUASIMODO: *(Cutting her off.)* No, those make it a fine morning, not an especially fine morning.

SISTER MARIE: Okay! Okay! My turn! It is an especially fine morning because...King Louis XI, the King of France is coming to visit you!

QUASIMODO AND SISTER ANTOINETTE: He is?

SISTER MARIE: No, but that would make it an especially fine morning, wouldn't it?

QUASIMODO and SISTER ANTOINETTE shake their heads in disbelief.

QUASIMODO: It looks like I will have to give you a clue.

SISTER MARIE: Good, a clue! A clue is always helpful. I am sure that I will be able to guess it with a clue.

QUASIMODO: People will be dancing today.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: We are going to dance today?

SISTER MARIE: Oh, just give me a tune and these golden feet will dance like you have never seen them dance. (*Lifts her skirt, and starts to dance a bit.*) I better be careful, these feet can move so quickly that I might burn a hole in the floor! (*Pauses looking at the floor.*) Burn a hole in the... (*Stomping on the floor.*) ...solid rock floor... Well, maybe not burn a hole...

QUASIMODO: No, no! Another clue...

SISTER MARIE: (*Looking at SISTER ANTOINETTE.*) Okay, Sister Antoinette, we missed it on the first clue. The pressure is on now.

QUASIMODO: There will be singing.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: You are going to sing for us! That would make it an especially fine day.

SISTER MARIE: Oh, I was born to sing! My mother always said that I should have been a nightingale. (*She breaks into a song, very out of tune. SISTER ANTOINETTE winces.*)

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Are you sure she said nightingale? Might she have said seagull?

QUASIMODO: No, no, no! One last clue...

SISTER MARIE: Sister Antoinette! What are we doing? We have not guessed correctly after two clues! We only have one more clue. (*As she dramatically backs up to one of the walls.*) Our backs are against the stone walls of Notre Dame. It is our time to guess correctly and triumph!

QUASIMODO: There will be lots of juggling.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Dancing, singing, and juggling... It sounds like... It sounds like fun! That's what it sounds like. It's an especially fine day because we are going to have fun. (*SISTER MARIE enthusiastically nods in agreement.*)

QUASIMODO: No! Well, yes, we are going to have fun, but no. There's more!

SISTER MARIE: So we have not failed entirely. There is still some hope for success. Let me see... (*Pauses.*) Oh, wait, I have it! Master Frolo is going to dance and sing and juggle for us! (*They all laugh at the mere thought of it.*)

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Now that would be ripe! Can you see Master Frolo dancing or singing or juggling, much less all three? (*They all laugh again.*)

QUASIMODO: Today is the day that all of Paris celebrates the Festival of Fools!

SISTER MARIE: The Festival of Fools! Is that today?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Of course! My favorite day of the year.

SISTER MARIE: A day with something for everyone!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Even you, Quasimodo. Are you going this year?

SISTER MARIE: Yes, are you going this year?

QUASIMODO: You know Master Frolo forbids it. I am not allowed out of Notre Dame.

SISTER MARIE: We know, we know. But you can not stay in Notre Dame forever.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: It is time for you to experience Paris from down there... (*Looking over the railing and pointing to the ground.*) ...face to face!

QUASIMODO: See Paris face to face? (*Motioning to his face.*) Not with this face, I can't.

SISTER MARIE: Yes, with that face you can! You can mingle with the people.

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SISTER ANTOINETTE: See the shows! Watch the jugglers!

SISTER MARIE: Dance, sing, have fun!

QUASIMODO: Oh, that would be beyond my wildest dreams! To go to the Festival of Fools! But I must not. I can not. Master Frollo...

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Won't even know!

SISTER MARIE: You can sneak out of the side exit.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: He will never suspect a thing.

QUASIMODO: All right, I will! I will go to the Festival of Fools.

SISTER MARIE: Today!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: And an especially fine day it will be.

FROLLO enters while SISTER ANTOINETTE is speaking.

FROLLO: And why will this be an especially fine day?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: *(Immediately quiets down and bows her head.)* No reason, Archdeacon Frollo.

FROLLO: *(To the SISTERS.)* Just as well. You may leave, Sisters. I want to talk to Quasimodo.

Both SISTERS speak at once.

SISTER MARIE: Of course, Archdeacon Frollo.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: As you wish, Archdeacon Frollo.

SISTERS MARIE AND ANTOINETTE: Good day, Archdeacon Frollo.

The SISTERS exit. QUASIMODO never looks directly at FROLLO, keeping his head lowered throughout the conversation.

FROLLO: Quasimodo?

QUASIMODO: Yes, Master Frollo.

FROLLO: Why is today an especially fine day?

QUASIMODO: *(Excited.)* The Festival of Fools is today, sir.

FROLLO: *(Somewhat startled and confused, growing in anger as he speaks.)* The Festival of Fools makes it an especially fine day? The Festival of Fools is a blemish on Parisian society. A day when every gypsy, vagrant, thief, pickpocket, beggar, and vagabond come into the streets and act like...act like...fools! They should all be thrown in jail. The whole day should be outlawed!

QUASIMODO: Yes, Master Frollo. *(Pauses.)* But they always look like they are having so much fun! There is dancing and singing and juggling...

FROLLO: *(Cutting him off.)* And you may watch all of it from up here.

QUASIMODO: *(Dejectedly.)* Yes, Master Frollo.

FROLLO: Quasimodo, you must understand that although it might look like "fun", they are cruel, evil people. If they saw someone that looked like you, they would be merciless. Your face would terrify them. They would mock you. They would ridicule you. Some would scream and run away. *(Pauses.)* Quasimodo, I took you in when your mother deserted you on the steps of Notre Dame. Even she could not stand the sight of you. I clothed you, I fed you, I raised you. I sheltered you from the cruelty of society. I know what will happen if you venture into the streets of Paris. *(Pauses again.)* I am protecting you, Quasimodo. I am your only true friend. Don't ever forget that. Do you understand?

QUASIMODO: Yes, Master Frollo, you are my only true friend. You are my protector. I will not forget. Thank you, Master Frollo, for all that you have done for me.

FROLLO: I must be off. As much as I abhor attending this charade, it is necessary that I attend the Festival. The King has requested my presence, and it is my duty as Archdeacon to attend.

QUASIMODO: Yes, Master Frollo.

FROLLO exits the way he came in. As QUASIMODO looks longingly out on the city, the SISTERS reenter.

SISTER MARIE: *(Angry, showing and shaking her fists.)* Who does he think he is? He gets me so angry sometimes. He is your only friend? What are we, chopped liver?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: We are your friends too, Quasimodo! We have been and always will be your friends.

SISTER MARIE: Who taught you how to tie your shoes? *(Acting out tying shoes.)* Make a bunny ear in your left hand; make a bunny ear in your right hand; now flop the bunny ears over each other, and there you have it. One tied shoe! Did Master Frollo teach you that? No sir-ee-bob he didn't, it was me. No one is better at bunny ears than me.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: And who takes care of you when you are sick? Is Master Frollo up here wiping your nose when you have a cold? Or bringing you extra blankets when you have a fever and chills?

SISTER MARIE: Or comforting you when you are puking your guts up and all the stuff starts coming through your nose?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Sister Marie, please!

SISTER MARIE: *(To SISTER ANTOINETTE.)* Oh, sorry. *(To QUASIMODO.)* And who beats your pants off playing checkers?

QUASIMODO: You don't beat my pants off! I win sometimes.

SISTER MARIE: *(With a big smile.)* Only when I let you win.

QUASIMODO: You don't let me win! I win fair and square.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: *(Interrupting them.)* And who taught you how to ring the bells?

QUASIMODO: I do love the bells! All of Paris can hear the bells when I ring them.

SISTER ANTOINETTE: And who reads to you at night?

QUASIMODO: You do, Sister Antoinette!

SISTER MARIE: I read to him sometimes, too!

QUASIMODO: Yes, and you too, Sister Marie! You are my friends. Thank you! I am grateful for everything that you do for me.

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SISTER MARIE: So how about the Festival of Fools? Are you going?

QUASIMODO: You heard Master Frollo! He would be so angry...

SISTER ANTOINETTE: But he does not have to know.

QUASIMODO: How would I get out? He would know if I walked out.

SISTER MARIE: So don't walk out!

QUASIMODO: If I don't walk out, how am I to get out? I can not fly!

SISTER ANTOINETTE: You can not fly, but you can...climb down a rope.

QUASIMODO: (*A little confused.*) Climb down a rope? (*Then realizing he could.*) Sure! I could do that! I have plenty of ropes. (*Motioning to the gargoyles.*) I could tie them onto François or Jacques!

SISTER MARIE: So what are you waiting for? Get going!

QUASIMODO: Really? I should go?

SISTER ANTOINETTE: Of course you should go! You can't be in here forever.

SISTER MARIE: It is time that you see Paris, Quasimodo.

QUASIMODO: Okay! Okay! I will! I will! I will go to the Festival of Fools.

BLACKOUT.

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