

THE HUNCHBACK

written by

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inspired by the work of

Victor Hugo

OVER BLACK, WE HEAR: MAJESTIC BELLS of CATHÉDRALE NOTRE-DAME routinely striking the morning hour.

And one man's RASPY VOICE apprehensively counting along:

CLOPIN (OFF)
Un. Deux. Trois. Quatre. Cinq. Six.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT. ÎLE DE LA CITÉ. EARLY MORNING.

A FINAL BELL resounds before reverberating back into SILENCE.

CLOPIN
Sept.

CLOPIN TREMBLAY, 40, sits in the dark, fully clothed, pack on his shoulders, prepared for an excursion.

A hint of the day's first sunlight reveals his face: his left eye milky white, *half-blind*, a large scar on his eyelid. With an unkempt beard, and expression betraying hidden melancholy, a well-worn soul is sketched into his appearance.

One final self-motivating breath. And Clopin is out the door.

EXT. THE DAMP STREETS OF PARIS. DAY.

Clopin moves with purpose studying the early-rising **PARISIANS** milling about. It's drizzling and depressing, and their faces unapologetically reflect that.

A bench broadcasts, in French and English: a *NATIONAL CURFEW* and *OUR DUTY TO REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY AND ILLEGITIMATES*.

SUPER: PARIS, FRANCE - ONE HEARTBREAK AFTER TOMORROW.

Clopin descends slick stairs to the Métro station, passing a gang of **OFFICERS** gripping service rifles, warily watching as he shuffles by, hands in pockets.

France is a police-state. And Paris is its capital.

INT. MÉTRO STATION. DAY.

Eluding the heavy **MILITARY PRESENCE**, Clopin stealthily breaks into a locked service door, darts down more stairs, and comes upon a concealed track for the HIGH-SPEED INDUSTRIAL-LINE.

He approaches a **STERN CONDUCTOR**, slipping him an envelope of unusual drab currency, and slinks on board the train.

INT. GRAFFITIED FREIGHT TRAIN. DAY.

Clopin forges a makeshift seat, settling in for a long trek.

CLOPIN (V.O.)

My loves, there aren't many trips left. The borders are dangerous. I promised to help beat this system, but not to die in the fight.

He stares out a small window covered in metal mesh, and Paris speeds by. He glances at his watch: the eighth hour of today.

And, faintly, EIGHT FAMILIAR CHIMES of Notre Dame's BELLS.

CLOPIN (V.O.)

When I hear the bells, I hear hope. If only for a new hour. A new day. Hope changes the world. People kill because they lose it. Some survive because they find it.

Clopin pulls out a SLEEK ELECTRONIC DEVICE, a large crack on its screen. It easily connects to signal and bursts to life:

GRINGOIRE

(on the device)

Bonjour, Paris! Pierre Gringoire at your service with today's chatter!

ON THE SCREEN: the primped and polished **PIERRE GRINGOIRE**, 27, his hair almost too perfect, his teeth almost too white. Very clearly the public face and personality for a troubled time. He speaks in a mannered ARISTOCRATIC ACCENT:

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

This morning's fashion segment is sponsored by GENEXX. *Très chic!*

Clopin recalibrates the frequency, scanning for new channels, yet each one has Gringoire's all-too-idyllic mug on it.

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

GENEXX insemination eliminates the risk of diseased genes, so parents can start a healthy, happy family! *Au revoir* illegitimate births! The French future is through GENEXX.

Clopin rests the gadget in his lap as he begins to doze off, garnering strength for the journey ahead. Train speeding.

As he slips into slumber, his device slips into STATIC. Then, the screen flashes: *DISCONNECTED. RECONFIGURING.*

And begins picking up earnest REAL-WORLD NEWS, now outside of France's media blackout:

NEWSCASTER VOICE

...the Pacific confederation of the United States will commence an army draft, the first of its kind since 1972, in effort to regain territory lost as their border war rages on--

The train hurtles through armed, wired fences until reaching a DECAYING SUBURB.

NEWSCASTER VOICE (CONT'D)

...world health officials announced the ZK7 virus to be a pandemic, now on three continents, infected women give birth to deformed offspring--

The romanticism of Paris has quickly evaporated.

NEWSCASTER VOICE (CONT'D)

...the disbanded E.U. continues its suspension of migrant processing as a staggering amount of refugees are turned around--

Clopin stirs momentarily at REBEL YELLS from **YOUNG ANARCHISTS** in hoodies, setting BOOKS and the EUROPEAN FLAG on fire.

One of many reasons Clopin has grown exhausted with living.

Pushing off his device, and through ROARING FLAMES, over the anarchists, we begin moving...

RAPID-FIRE: away from the train, soaring above France, flying over rooftops, the Eiffel Tower on the Seine in the distance, through the impoverished countryside, over seas, as daylight shifts to dark, across black water, until we stop...

LOST IN THE EMERALD EYES OF: a **ROMA WOMAN** just shy of thirty, dark features, clutching the hand of her daughter, beautiful, a teenager with those same emerald eyes, **GUDULE**, inside...

INT. A REFUGEE DINGHY. NIGHT.

Gudule huddles beside her MOTHER for warmth, traveling with a dozen **REFUGEES**, in the close quarters of a small boat shakily parting the dark sea.

Gudule's emerald eyes close, exhaustion weighing on them.

CLOPIN (V.O.)

It begins and ends with us gypsies.

QUICK CUT: VILLAGES BURN, and ROMA FAMILIES flee as RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS tear through streets firing off assault rifles and automatic weapons. Unlucky ones left behind are slaughtered.

CLOPIN (V.O.)
Homelands ravaged by civil war. An
end to our freedom. Forcing people
west, and praying for sanctuary.

QUICK CUT: a GYPSY CHILD lies face down in the dirt.

CLOPIN (V.O.)
Many died. And those who made it to
Europe found persecution waiting.

QUICK CUT: Gudule and her mother embrace an OLDER MAN, crying as they're forced to disassemble their family.

BACK IN THE DINGHY, Gudule wakes up from that nightmare, in a panic, and tears, horrified. Her mother whispers gently:

GUDULE'S MOTHER
It was only a dream.

GUDULE
I dreamt we did it all over. That
we were being hunted.

GUDULE'S MOTHER
Just a dream.

GUDULE
Will it ever get better?

GUDULE'S MOTHER
We call one another mother, father,
brother, daughter. They call us --

GUDULE
-- gypsies.

GUDULE'S MOTHER
But they are no more flesh, blood,
and soul than us, Gudule. They can
take our pride, our homes, but they
cannot take our memories. All those
stories we pass down. Our history.
About the people who loved us. And
when you have a daughter, you will
tell her these stories. About me.
And our people will live -- I will
live -- forever in your hearts.

She removes her TRINKET BRACELET fastening it around Gudule's wrist, kissing her forehead, and sweetly HUMMING.

EXT. A DARK JETTY. NIGHT.

Their boat has safely reached shore. Some **TRAVELERS** hug, cry and curse obscenities across the sea at the land they fled.

Our family, Gudule and her mother, are far more pragmatic.

They patiently wait for information.

LATER THAT NIGHT, smoke billows from fires across the beach. Our refugees are burning all they have to keep flames alive, and themselves warm, until morning.

Gudule glances at a photograph of her father, struggles hard with the decision.

GUDULE'S MOTHER

There's nobody alive to go back to.

Gudule tosses the picture into the dwindling flame.

GUDULE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

We need to move forward. With love.
And with that love we'll defeat the
people who choose hatred.

AMONGST THE REFUGEES: **ONE MAN** messages for their next steps.

QUICK CUT: PING! A **SECOND MAN** receives the text, and crafts a response, sitting in his car by a railway somewhere.

QUICK CUT: PING! A **THIRD MAN**, in another country, drinking at a café, is looped into the chain, discloses his location.

INT. AN ITALIAN HOSTEL. NIGHT.

QUICK CUT: PING! And a **FOURTH MAN**, **OUR CLOPIN** reclined at his hostel, scrolls through the chain of these *Guardian Angels* on his cracked device.

CLOPIN (V.O.)

We're driven off by fire and death.
Or kept as slaves. Churches do not
bury our bodies, nor christen our
children. We starve in the streets.

Clopin begins SPEAKING OUT LOUD now...

CLOPIN

I'm dedicated to our cause. To defy that establishment, so everyone has freedom for a better life.

Clopin holds a CRUMPLED PHOTOGRAPH at his side.

CLOPIN (CONT'D)

To live in this world I couldn't save you from, my loves...

We realize Clopin has been wavering between thoughts in his head and his spoken word, as he speaks down to a PICTURE of his WIFE AND SONS.

He recites his self-assuring mantra:

CLOPIN (CONT'D)

I need another chance to do good.

EXT. ITALY. TRAIN STATION. DAY.

Clopin stands with an **ITALIAN COMRADE** on a station platform.

THE COMRADE

(in Italian)

Some skinny fucker tried mugging me for my passport. Begging to get to Berlin for his brothers. Refused to believe when I told him that --

CLOPIN

(also Italian)

Right. There's nobody left.

INT. HIDDEN GYPSY COMMUNE. NIGHT.

Gudule and her mother share a blanket on a cold, wooden floor of the attic. Gudule is awake staring at the trinket bracelet on her wrist, again listening to her mother:

GUDULE'S MOTHER

They say in Paris, there are bells ringing through the city. The most beautiful music you will ever hear in your life. And Roma women are free to work. To make a life. Fall in love. Start a family. A world away from any bloodshed.

GUDULE

I can't wait to get there, Mamma.

GUDULE'S MOTHER

And I can't wait to see your face
when you hear the bells, Gudule.

A FEW HOURS LATER: Gudule awakes to chaos. **ITALIAN POLICEMEN** storm their hidden Romani commune. A RAID. Women SCREAM. Men FIGHT. Gypsies are arrested.

Children are yanked from the hands of their parents. Gudule's mother is dragged to her feet by her hair, and removed.

GUDULE

MAMMA!!--

Gudule is last. She catches eyes with AN OFFICER, who flashes a filthy smirk, while unbuttoning his trousers.

THE NEXT DAY: Gudule wakes up, finding herself alone. Crying. Her body in pain, violated, she stares down at the trinket on her wrist. And prays.

A door CREAKS OPEN revealing CLOPIN, shocked at the mess, and finding Gudule the last refugee left in the ransacked room.

CLOPIN

(in Italian)

Come with me, child.

A communication barrier. Gudule can't decipher, scared.

CLOPIN (CONT'D)

(in French)

Please. Trust me.

And still nothing.

CLOPIN (CONT'D)

You have to trust me. Please.

He extends a hand. Gudule hesitates, but the kindness in his eyes convinces her to accept it.

EXT. ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE. DAY.

A PASSENGER BUS travels through Italy's lush spring country.

INT. PASSENGER BUS. ITALY. DAY.

Gudule sits by Clopin on a long journey. Through windows, she witnesses **JAILED ROMANI** in forced labor on the fields. Shaved heads, simple frocks, numbers branded on their shirts.

GUDULE
 (in Romani)
*I miss my mother humming. I miss my
 grandfather's laugh.*

Sadly, to himself, under his breath:

CLOPIN
 I'm so sorry I couldn't save all of
 you. I'm only one man.

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN DEPOT. ITALY. DAY.

Clopin and Gudule, holding FAKE PASSPORTS trying to blend in,
 nervously move through a security queue.

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN. FRENCH BORDER. DAY.

OUT THE WINDOW: in the distance Gudule witnesses mass graves.
 Nameless victims of these conflicts.

Then, they pass a graffitied billboard: *BIENVENUE À FRANCE!*

Entering French borders should be idyllic, but bleak sunlight
 bleaches their sullen afternoon.

It's all so hollow. Echoing Gudule's now-empty existence.

EXT. SOME FILTHY ARRONDISSEMENT. PARIS. DAY.

Clopin escorts Gudule through a maze of alleyways, and into:

INT. A ROMA BOARDING HOUSE. DAY.

Gudule is met by a kind **FRENCH MATRON**. Clopin pays the woman.

INT. GUDULE'S ROOM. ROMA BOARDING HOUSE. DAY.

Gudule is shown her room. Teary-eyed, and feigning strength,
 she pretends to settle in.

THE MATRON
 (in French)
Do you speak French?

Another communication barrier.

THE MATRON (CONT'D)
 English?

Gudule still just stares blankly.

THE MATRON (CONT'D)
 (in Romani)
*Learn to speak their languages, or
 they'll make sure you don't speak
 at all.*

Then, Gudule hears the most beautiful sound in the world --

THE BELLS OF CATHÉDRALE NOTRE-DAME.

Moved, she darts outside, ducking down the alleys, to find:

EXT. CATHÉDRALE NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS. DAY.

The Notre-Dame Cathedral. Our first glimpse. This sacred spot has barely withstood the test of time. The man-made traces of destruction litter its once pristine facade, although most of its architecture still breathtaking: gargoyles keeping guard, flying buttresses, stained glass. A Gothic icon.

Every stone of its surface is a page of Parisian history.

Hearing its CHIMES, Gudule admires her mother's bracelet, and collects her courage.

CLOPIN (V.O.)
 All emotions in the world are heard
 in those bells.

INT. GUDULE'S ROOM. ROMA BOARDING HOUSE. DAY.

A NEW DAY: Gudule at her window, listening to HOURLY MUSIC.

CLOPIN (V.O.)
 They speak for the gypsies. Give us
 a voice since we are silenced. The
 tolls of life. The reasons to live.

ANOTHER DAY: Gudule, with a *baby-bump*, listens at the window.

AND ANOTHER DAY: Gudule on her bed, the Matron at her side as she gives birth to HER DAUGHTER.

CLOPIN (V.O.)
 And the life we create gives us one
 more reason. To keep fighting.

EXT. CATHÉDRALE NOTRE DAME DE PARIS. DAY.

Gudule sits outside the splendid building cradling a newborn, her gorgeous **BABY GIRL**, blessed with the same EMERALD EYES.

GUDULE

Agnes. You have your grandmother's name. Names, and memories, are the history we pass down. About people who loved us. The people who live forever in our hearts.

The baby grasps for the trinket bracelet on Gudule's wrist.

INT. ROMA BOARDING HOUSE. NIGHT.

Gudule quietly opens the front door, revealing **A STRANGE MAN**.

INT. GUDULE'S ROOM. ROMA BOARDING HOUSE. DAY.

Gudule writhes in faux-ecstasy in bed with **A SECOND STRANGER**.

CLOPIN (V.O.)

Selling ourselves to build a better future. Suffering today so there is none left for tomorrow.

ANOTHER DAY, with **ANOTHER STRANGER**. As time goes by, the men have decreased in status and looks. This one finishes, pulls up his jeans, and leaves money near her on the mattress.

SOME NOT-SO-SPECIAL DAY: Gudule and a **GYPSY MAN** tumble on the sheets, atop a tarot reading, growing distracted by the sound of her BABY CRYING.

Gudule, fearing the financial duress of losing a client, runs to the closet where her child sleeps. She dangles her trinket bracelet over the crib, leaves it, for the baby's adoration.

It calms the girl.

Gudule returns to her suitor. He lends her a **GENEROUS SWIG** of his flask, and the two fall into bed undressing the other.

THE NEXT MORNING: Gudule rises with the worst headache of her entire life, hazy. She was drugged. Her door wide open.

Panicked, Gudule runs to her child's crib and moves aside the blanket revealing the baby...

And the hideous, deformed face of someone else's child.

Her baby girl, so rosy and fresh, a gift from Heaven, swapped for some diseased little monster, crippled, and one-eyed.

Gudule recoils, uncontrollably weeping. The cruelest crime.

INT. ROMA BOARDING HOUSE. DAY.

Gudule stumbles down the stairs into the common room, holding the baby away from her heart, unable to look at it.

GUDULE

Who has taken my baby from me?

She suddenly realizes how little she trusted the **GYPSIES** that shared the home with her, as they stare at her blankly: faces sun-burnt, silver rings in ears, tattered clothing.

EXT. THE DAMP STREETS OF PARIS. DAY.

Gudule scurries down streets, now maniacally beating her head against her own fist, breathless, disheveled.

GUDULE

My child! My beautiful little girl!
What have you done with her?!

People move aside, frightened, as she searches every door, in every window, growing mad.

INT. CATHÉDRALE NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS. DAY.

Gudule, cheeks wet, enters the cathedral, setting the monster infant upon the altar steps.

Turning, she is startled at the sight of **CLAUDE FROLLO**, 30's, the ARCHDEACON. Angular features, though a hint of ambiguous kindness in his eyes masks his scowl.

GUDULE

Please don't report me, sir.

FROLLO

You can't abandon your child.

GUDULE

But he is not mine. He's a monster.

Frollo catches glimpse of the baby's deformities.

FROLLO

A monster?

GUDULE
He's one of the diseased.

FROLLO
You have to hide him, then. They'll
kill the boy. He's criminal.

GUDULE
But it is not my crime! The gypsies
stole from me. My sweet baby girl.

FROLLO
Have a heart.

GUDULE
I have no heart in my body.
(a final whimper:)
They have taken it.

Gudule flees into the night.

Frollo picks up the baby. And though he grimaces at its half-formed face, he is inspired by the grace of God to spare him. To secretly adopt him as his own. And he names him:

FROLLO
Quasimodo.

EXT. THE DAMP STREETS OF PARIS. NIGHT.

Gudule stumbles out of the cathedral, sprinting through brisk night, she hears the BELLS CHIME. And pauses. To absorb them. Her only symbol of hope.

CLOPIN (V.O.)
As long as those bells ring we must
not lose our faith that better days
will come for all of us.

We flash forward in time: different days, different seasons, Gudule staring up at the cathedral wide-eyed, growing older, wiping away tears, faith fading, but never gone.

CLOPIN (V.O.)
These bells are the songs of life.
Hope. Love. Anger. Defeat. Faith.

TITLE: "THE HUNCHBACK"

CLOPIN (V.O.)
And heartbreak.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN-AIR MARKET. A DILAPIDATED GREEK CITY. DAY.

The remnants of a Mediterranean shopping district. Buildings falling apart. Ground littered with debris. Tents are strewn along the sidewalk. Whether war or natural disaster tore the place apart is anyone's guess. And yet life goes on.

SUPER: TWENTY-OR-SO YEARS LATER.

SOLDIERS WITH GUNS are positioned around this ruined market. The same uniforms from our opening: the men are French, and its military occupies this region.

One soldier is a handsome fellow to whom all the women take a liking: **CAPTAIN PHOEBUS CROSIER**, 35. Large eyes, blonde hair, strong jaw, devastating charm, ego for days.

And there's a beautiful **GREEK WOMAN'S** hand on his torso:

PHOEBUS
Come on just feel.

GREEK GIRL
No!
(totally into it:)
You're ridiculous.

PHOEBUS
Just feel them.

Phoebus guides her fingers over his abdomen.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
Through the jacket, right?

He pulls aside clothing to reveal his well-honed six-pack.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
I take it by your red cheeks that
you're impressed?

Phoebus suddenly senses something is off. The bustling square eerily has **FALLEN SILENT**. A hair-raising concern.

Windows that were prior open have closed. Everybody has left. A **SHADOWY MAN** stands in a second-story window on the phone.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
(to the girl)
Get behind me.

He grips his service rifle.

Phoebus signals down to a **SECOND LIEUTENANT**.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
Something's--

BOOM! Before he finishes his sentence a PARKED YARIS near the soldier EXPLODES sending shrapnel dicing through the wind and knocking Phoebus back.

A hole in the ground under the charred car. No physical sign of that second soldier.

The soldiers recalibrate and shoot at the SHADOWY WINDOW MAN.

Gunfire is returned. The square chaotic. People running and screaming. Others bleed, crying in pain, over loved ones.

Instincts kick in. Phoebus dodges bullets. Repositions. Gets his shot. And PELTS the window man between the eyes.

BOOM! A second VEHICLE EXPLODES further down the street. More bullets erupt from other windows, showering the soldiers.

This is a coordinated attack.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
(to panicked locals)
Off the road - OFF THE ROAD --

BOOM! A third EXPLOSION sends Phoebus hurtling to the ground so quickly he can't trace the source. Skin burnt. Shattered femur. Leg mangled and horrific to look at.

He closes his eyes, wishing he could wake up from this:

INT. PHOEBUS' APARTMENT. MORNING.

And he does. Phoebus jolts upright from his nightmare, sweat mixing with tears. Eyes haunted. A textbook case of PTSD.

His vision blinks back into focus. His ears stop ringing. He angles his head at his PHONE ALARM BLARING.

Phoebus reaches for anxiety medication. Chases the pill with a sip of beer his drunk-self left out for his hungover-self.

His morning routine begins.

MOMENTS LATER: Phoebus pivots himself to step out of bed. His left foot rests on the tile floor. His right foot does not.

Phoebus pulls a device from under the bed that straps tightly above his right knee.

And with it, he stands.

EXT. THE STREETS OF PARIS. DAY.

Phoebus weaves through pedestrian traffic, a confident walk. His red eyes locked ahead of him in a distant gaze, avoiding any human connection until his lips touch caffeine.

Walls and bus terminals are plastered with PROPAGANDA POSTERS of French children with bruised, dirty faces standing amongst dead bodies and smoldered buildings: *SAVE OUR FUTURE*.

Phoebus struts by a newsstand, lined wall-to-wall with A BOOK bearing Claude Frollo's ANGULAR FACE on its cover: *MY LEGACY*. Since we last saw him, Frollo has become a public figure.

Most **PARISIANS** sneer at his portrait on the book jacket. Some man spits at the cover. Another puts out his cigarette on it.

Clearly, Claude Frollo is only liked in certain circles.

INT. A CHIC CAFÉ. DAY.

Phoebus squeezes through a **SMALL CROWD** that gathered to watch a **LARGE TELEVISION** hung above the register. Phoebus routinely exchanges money for a large cup of coffee.

ON THE SCREEN: is media personality **PIERRE GRINGOIRE**, now 52. We remember him from our opening. Time has been very kind to him, hardly aged, thick hair now gray. A total silver-fox.

He still speaks in that **AFFECTED ARISTOCRATIC ACCENT:**

GRINGOIRE

You went from Archdeacon to one of the single most prominent political figures of modern French history.

Gringoire is interviewing **CLAUDE FROLLO**, now 55, and France's **MINISTER OF JUSTICE**. That ambiguous kindness in his eyes lost over the past two decades. The pair sits comfortably in a...

WARM, NEWS STUDIO: Gringoire excitedly displaying a hardcover copy of **FROLLO'S BOOK**.

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

Your new autobiography, *MY LEGACY*, chronicles your fascinating career, but doesn't shy from those personal tragedies you faced.

FROLLO

Indeed. My parents were murdered in the Marais bombing. My brother died last spring.

GRINGOIRE

Just awful.

FROLLO

So you can imagine, I have a deep, personal commitment to the safety of this country.

GRINGOIRE

And, as such, your legacy launched.

FROLLO

I never aspired for the public life of a politician. It found me.

GRINGOIRE

Claude Frollo. 'The Chosen One?'

FROLLO

When I published my first book, the people hoisted me into a spotlight. I was a voice they wanted to hear. A voice with power to change minds, and the Prime Minister recognized that. So I realized it was my duty. I was placed on this earth to serve our country. To protect its values. France belongs to the French. It's a pretty, simple concept to me. Why should we put our families at risk? I invested the greater part of my life building this movement. It's what the people want.

GRINGOIRE

One might argue *some* of the people, at least.

FROLLO

Half is all you really need. That's how the game is played.

BACK IN THE CAFÉ: Phoebus shakes his head, speaking aloud to nobody in particular:

PHOEBUS

Snarky bastard.

SOME WAITRESS NEARBY

I hate him. But I think he's kind of hot, you know?

PHOEBUS

Small talk's really not necessary.

EXT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Phoebus approaches NOTRE DAME. The military presence stronger than ever. Doors to the cathedral are retrofitted with steel. He flashes credentials. **GUARDS** respectfully let him pass.

INT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

The iconic cathedral is used as a WAR ROOM, but the beauty of the church is still breathtaking. The vivid colors of stained glass windows, candelabras, magnificent vaulted ceilings.

Phoebus finds our Claude Frolo amidst a busy work afternoon, but he halts the agenda to greet him. Phoebus turns on a fake smile. Uses sarcasm and charm as a disarmer.

FROLLO

Captain Phoebus Crosier. Pleasure.

PHOEBUS

Fabulous offices you got here! They came with that fancy title?

FROLLO

As Minister of Justice, the Prime Minister felt I should continue...

PHOEBUS

Working from home?

FROLLO

Where I was most inspired.
(a smirk:)
A war hero with personality.

PHOEBUS

You'll get sick of stroking my ego soon enough.

FROLLO

Sooner than you might expect.

Phoebus follows Frolo as they walk upstairs to his office:

FROLLO (CONT'D)

You have done truly incredible work leading our city guard.

PHOEBUS

With my medical discharge it's been mainly a paperwork position.

(MORE)

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

But as long as it's simple, mostly small words, couple boxes to check, yes, no, maybe, some doodles in the margins, and I'll get by fine.

FROLLO

Thank you for your service.

PHOEBUS

Don't thank me yet. I've seen every side of humanity on the front and have yet to see a side I like.

FROLLO

You see what people are made of.

PHOEBUS

It's never what you would hope.

REACHING FROLLO'S OFFICE, the conversation continues:

FROLLO

I wanted to meet face-to-face since the Festival begins tonight, and I cannot stress how important it is that your men monitor and report, Captain. France is on the verge of greatness, and we cannot afford any fantasy of revolution --

PHOEBUS

Revolution?

FROLLO

-- from the illegals --

PHOEBUS

The gypsies? I personally just call them scapegoats.

FROLLO

Any anti-political dissent must be pursued and punished.

PHOEBUS

With respect, sir, refugees barely speak the same languages let alone conspire. And classifying them *all* gypsies doesn't help identify which culture to surveil. Plus it's a bit insulting, I mean, at the gym last week some Spaniard called me Welsh.

(dryly)

So I called him an ambulance.

FROLLO

They invited themselves in and it's time to weed them out. If we lead, Europe will follow. The borders are closed now so our nationalism is on the line. Anyone without paperwork should be deported or jailed.

PHOEBUS

Paris already is an open-air jail.

FROLLO

In fifty years those of us who have known Paris any differently will be gone. That's what we do. We die but life keeps on. Children don't think the world's falling apart. It's the only world they are born knowing.

Phoebus bites his tongue.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

That's all, Captain.

Lost for words, Phoebus bows his head politely and exits.

STARING OUT THE WINDOW: Frolo spies a governmental billboard littered with graffiti, in LARGE RED LETTERS: **SANCTUARY.**

Frolo fumes at its sight. Revolution is his growing concern.

JEHAN (O.S.)

Claude, it's just once a year.

Frolo turns to see his younger brother **JEHAN**, 30, miscreant, gluttonous, charming, and wild. Everything Frolo is not.

JEHAN (CONT'D)

The Festival happens *once a year*, you can't ask me to sit it out.

FROLLO

I plan to feast on civility, Jehan.

JEHAN

While I feast on wine and women.

FROLLO

That diet will kill you someday.

JEHAN

Our parents died from much less. We owe ourselves our right to the only days of sin. It's liberating.

FROLLO

Authorizing forty-eight hours of vile debauchery does not free us from God's judgment.

JEHAN

Religion was invented to keep the simple-minded in line. Look around. Any god forgot we were here. Might be why this world is shit. Without sin the devil doesn't have release other than total destruction.

FROLLO

If we can't fix the world, then it is God's fault for not making man and devil of equal strength. We're on high alert and I forbid you --

JEHAN

It's my right as a citizen --

FROLLO

Then I'm begging you, Jehan, please not this year.

Frollo stands, stern and annoyed:

FROLLO (CONT'D)

If you'll excuse me --

But Jehan has already gone, seemingly vanished.

INT. THE BELLTOWER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Frollo ascends the extensive spiral staircase to the tower.

INT. THE BELLCHAMBER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Frollo unlocks the door and enters the chamber, warmly lit by the sun. He finds **QUASIMODO** sitting cross-legged, his back to us. Grotesquely hunched. He needs very little introduction.

The infant from our opening is now twenty-five. And Frollo is two-and-a-half decades more senior.

One grew older. The other grew old.

A tray of food sits on a ledge by the door, untouched.

FROLLO

Quasimodo. You need to eat.

But Quasimodo doesn't see, consumed with his PAD OF PAPER and CHARCOAL PENCILS, passionately drawing.

Frollo glances around, admiring the CHARCOAL SKETCHES hanging from the beams: portraits of the bells, the gargoyles, bird's eye views of Paris, its citizens, Frollo and Jehan.

Notre Dame is Quasimodo's entire world, his sanctuary, hidden away from intolerance. His existence etched across the Gothic architecture. And now, quite literally, it is sketched.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

Your artwork has become quite good.

Frollo steps closer, eyeing what Quasimodo draws in his lap: his self-portrait. A wildly deformed monster. Scorned with a forlorn, ashamed expression trapped on his face.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

Quasimodo.

Quasimodo turns. *Our first look*. Not an exaggerated malformed young man like the picture but still: hunchbacked, ugly, sad.

Yet despite his over-pronounced brow we can see his eyes. His kind eyes. The windows to his soul. And that's all we need to see he is capable of beauty. An inner purity radiates.

QUASIMODO

(garbled)

I felt your footsteps.

The moment he opens his mouth, we sense that he *communicates* differently. His tongue is stiff and awkward, like a door on rusty hinges as he speaks. He is mostly deaf.

Quasimodo lost much of his hearing due to his bells. One more door his existence left open for him now closed forever as he plunges further into internal darkness.

FROLLO

Can you see my lips?

QUASIMODO

Yes.

FROLLO

Why are you drawing those pictures?
I told you not to think of yourself
that way.

QUASIMODO

They're not of me. They're just of
my friend, Emmanuel.

Quasimodo rushes up to the biggest bell: EMMANUEL.

QUASIMODO (CONT'D)
It's who she is when I'm with her.

He smiles into the bell, a distorted reflection smiling back.

FROLLO
Do you know what tonight is?

QUASIMODO
The Festival. Emmanuel and I talked all day. At five I ring her for the holiday.

A nervous beat as Quasimodo rings his hands.

QUASIMODO (CONT'D)
And you're going?

FROLLO
It's my job, but I don't enjoy it.

QUASIMODO
Then I should go this year also. To look after you.

FROLLO
It's far too dangerous for you out there. Everything is legal at that festival. You don't know what man is truly capable of until they let their inner-beast free.

Quasimodo struggles to understand Frollo. Or perhaps he's too anxious. He attempts to SIGN WITH HIS HANDS to better express himself, but Frollo SMACKS his wrists.

FROLLO (CONT'D)
With words! I taught you to speak. And write, and read, the languages that are the law of our country.

QUASIMODO
But Jehan taught me my hands are able to--

FROLLO
Jehan isn't here. You said you see my lips? Read them then.

QUASIMODO
Yes, sir.

FROLLO

When our guards and servants notice you do they not run away? These are the people at the Festival. And the people are hateful.

QUASIMODO

But I need to protect you. I should have protected Jehan. If I disguise myself, nobody will see my face.

Frollo loses his temper and SLAMS his hands down on the table HARD. Quasimodo shamefully lowers his head.

FROLLO

The world won't understand you. God cursed women with deformed children as a penance for our sins. The cost of globalization: viruses on every continent, tearing humanity apart. And you scare them. You remind them what's outside our borders. A world we keep out so we're safe in here.

Frollo picks up Quasimodo's chin, encouraging.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

And you are safe *in here*. This is your home.

QUASIMODO

I'd be lonely if something happened to you. If I lost you --

Quasimodo lulls. His attention is now pulled to the commotion outside: **EXCITED PEOPLE** traveling in packs, dressed in garish attire, metallic chic, for the annual festival.

FROLLO

You are inherently good because you haven't been corrupted by them. I protected you from this evil world. In their eyes you are illegitimate. You are illegal. Refugees. Muslims. Homosexuals. And the diseased. They must be kept off of these streets. France is stronger with perfection.

He pivots Quasimodo's face so he can see him say...

FROLLO (CONT'D)

You will never lose me, Quasimodo.

As Frollo exits, Quasimodo turns back to Emmanuel and studies his reflection again, *contemplating something*.

EXT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Frollo leaves, flanked by **BODYGUARDS**. A public figure in such desolate times gets an infantry on taxpayers' dimes. His gang ducks into a caravan of **UNMARKED TOWN CARS**.

ABOVE THE CARAVAN: a **FIGURE** spies from the cathedral rooftop.

It is our Quasimodo, misty-eyed, concerned and anxious.

INT. THE BELLCHAMBER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

The clock hits five and after a pre-programed **ELECTRONIC BELL SYMPHONY**, Quasimodo thrusts his weight behind Emmanuel's rope to rhythmically **RING HER CHIMES**.

Overjoyed and **SIGNING TO HER** with his hands, she reverberates back into **SILENCE**:

QUASIMODO
(overjoyed)
Thank you, Emmanuel. Beautiful!

He spots his sketches of Jehan and Frollo. A final incentive.

EXT. THE STREETS OF PARIS. NIGHT.

Concealed in a cloak, Quasimodo moves through the streets. He closely trails **TWO YOUNG MARRIED COUPLES**, holding hands, they laugh and chat, ecstatic, dressed in bright festival garb.

INT. MÉTRO. NIGHT.

On the train, **ELECTRONIC BILLBOARDS** flash government warnings of **TERRORISM** and **ILLEGALS BREEDING ILLEGITIMATES**.

Quasimodo lurks near those two young couples in a crowded car of Parisian **FESTIVAL GOERS**.

WIFE
He wants a kid, but a society where
we can only have a baby by draining
our savings to manufacture it isn't
a society to raise one in.

HUSBAND

Well if our option is fake baby or no baby at all, I pick fake baby.

WIFE

God's telling us to stop trying. I am not a test tube.

EXT. FESTIVAL GATES. NIGHT.

As the Métro doors open, people exit directly into a station on sand dunes, at the lip of the festival's entrance.

Quasimodo follows the two young couples out, entering a crowd shuffling through METAL DETECTORS and past **MILITARY PERSONNEL** cradling service rifles.

An intoxicating POUNDING BASS of LIVE MUSIC is faintly heard.

This is the FESTIVAL OF FOOLS.

EXT. FESTIVAL OF FOOLS. NIGHT.

Quasimodo follows the young couples through security and into the festival where **TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE** flood the dry, pebble beaches bordered by barbed-wire fences.

The young couples un-link hands with their significant others and coyly swap partners. The men head off together. The women share a kiss, lace fingers, and strut the opposite direction.

The festival does not reflect our time. It is in fact, almost a reversion back to a raw, primitive state.

If the world came to an end *these are the survivors*. Creating a new community. Rules of society changed. There are no laws. The tight bonds of society shattered to expose the bleak side of existence we long forgot about.

Disconnecting from the civilization they were born into, this new populace is built. Real estate is carved into sand. Tents erected as small businesses: tarot readings, fortune tellers, tattoo parlors, brothels, bathhouses, drug dispensaries.

All pleasures are now legal.

But only for these two days.

On sensory overload, Quasimodo gets a startling look at these eclectic people. Many nude. Others wear avant-garde dystopian fashions. Some are costumed: Women in bikinis with gas masks. Men in singed shorts and Gladiator helmets.

Meanwhile, peaceful protests surround the fun: **GYPSIES** parade with muzzles over their mouths, symbolically displaying their forced silence by the government.

Elsewhere, **YOUNG PARISIANS** "play dead" in a Die-In, as twelve naked bodies, painted blue, form a circle with their heads at the center, yellow stars on chests, littered with fake bullet holes and blood. A morbid depiction of the EUROPEAN FLAG.

Quasimodo gets lost in the disorienting fun of it all, caught in a throng of people, dancing and laughing. Connecting.

Quasimodo feels the GROUND VIBRATE. The PULSATING BASS of the music moves his feet.

He looks up into the large...

LCD SCREEN: finding the too idyllic face of PIERRE GRINGOIRE. Primped and polished, his hair almost too perfect, his teeth almost too white, he is still the face for troubled times.

Dozens of these WIDE ELECTRONIC SCREENS line the perimeter of the festival so everybody has a vantage point.

GRINGOIRE

Paris, je t'aime! Pierre Gringoire
at your service with the latest
chatter: that tonight is for you!

The heavily intoxicated crowd around Quasimodo CHEERS WILDLY.

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

This weekend any pleasure is legal.
Your vices. Your dreams. *Ton amour!*
We thank you for behaving during
the governing year.

Gringoire's suspenders hug his bald chiseled torso as topless **CAN-CAN DANCERS** begin their risqué routine beside him while a grimy **PUNK BAND** strums instruments.

Quasimodo scurries between the stages featuring local **ARTISTS** and **MUSICIANS**.

One stage has a marionette performance of a WOMAN DRESSED AS HITLER dangling a puppet-inspired CLAUDE FROLLO on strings.

The sight is hard for Quasimodo to watch, but reminds him to resume his search to protect his Master.

NOT FAR OFF: it is equally hard for our real FROLLO to watch, escorted through civilians by PHOEBUS and his BODYGUARDS.

Festival attendees HISS and BOO while Frollo is paraded by.

Frollo spies a tent where **VAGRANT ADDICTS** shoot heroin.

CLOSE ON: FROLLO'S EYES as we see from his perspective --

FLASHBACK... ONE YEAR PRIOR, Jehan struts into Frollo's Notre Dame office. This scene that we witnessed moments earlier was actually just a memory replayed (again) in Frollo's head:

JEHAN

It's my right as a citizen --

FROLLO

Then I'm begging you, Jehan, please
not this year.

QUICK CUT... Jehan partakes in an orgy with gypsies, smoking, shooting up, a blend of Woodstock and witchcraft.

Suddenly, he clutches his chest, convulsing rapidly, foaming. His oversized drug-addled heart finally giving out for good.

One GYPSY WOMAN rushes to help Jehan, crying for assistance.

QUICK CUT... Frollo is helpless as his brother's limp, dead, body is carried out of the festival by apathetic officers.

SMASH BACK TO: our reality. And Frollo snaps out of it --

PHOEBUS

Everything alright, sir?

FROLLO

This place is filled with pests.
Too many bad memories.

Frollo swallows the ghosts of his imagination.

That living nightmare he's doomed to remember forever.

BACK TO QUASIMODO: still searching for Frollo among the faces in the crowd, when he notices:

ESMERALDA, 25, a gorgeous, raven-haired, olive-skinned beauty with **PIERCING EMERALD EYES**, mesmerizing and confident.

The one-and-only. She dances with her **TAMBOURINE**, on a raised platform allowing her clear sight lines to the entire arena.

Ogling her body, the **MEN** around her throw money at the stage. Their jealous **WOMEN**, on the other hand, make barbed comments, scathing racial remarks, and spit.

But Esmeralda's attention seems to be focused elsewhere...

ON PHOEBUS: who doesn't let it go unnoticed that she noticed him standing guard. The sight of her stirs something inside. A familiar smile. He offers a smug tip of his hat.

Both Quasimodo and Phoebus stare at Esmeralda, smitten.

And ANOTHER GUARD, **OLIVIER**, 30, Phoebus' closest friend and confidante, moves beside him, also gawking, jaw-dropped:

OLIVIER

I'd love to get into trouble with that one.

PHOEBUS

When you're on my clock, let's keep your pants zipped, Olivier. Already have one snake to worry about, and his name's Claude Frollo.

OLIVIER

Well done!

The two share a laugh, continuing along with Frollo's rank.

BACK ON THE SCREENS: Frollo steps on stage next to Gringoire, flanked by the officers. The MUSIC CEASES.

GRINGOIRE

Ladies and Gentlemen, it's time to crown the Pope of Fools! Presiding over the coronation, let's hear it for our Minister of Justice!

A less than enthusiastic response of hands.

FROLLO

Your sacrifice doesn't go unnoticed by me, or your government, and with that sacrifice and your patience we are able to build a better France. Restore France to the great country it once was. Our world can be ugly. But France is beautiful. And it is with my great honor that you help us crown the next Pope of Fools.

Quasimodo pushes through the crowd, drawing nearer to Frollo.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

Bear your ugliest expression, your foulest mask, wear the hideousness of sin on your skin so that we all remember, for one more year, why we must live without it --

THE CAMERAS CUT TO: Pierre Gringoire moving through the mass of patrons surrounding the stage.

GRINGOIRE

Our contest begins! Who can repulse
us enough for the title?

Flirting with a cute, but totally **UNDERAGE GIRL**, who scowls:

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

Ugly faces need only apply. But you
can find me after the contest. Just
don't tell my wife.

He kisses her on the cheek. The crowd LAUGHS.

The festival's extensive **CAMERA CREW** moves like a well-oiled machine, and Quasimodo gets caught in the middle.

MEN and WOMEN line up with their lurid costumes, and homemade masks, as Gringoire travels the line pulling off their cloaks to reveal intricate designs of their faux-faces, broadcast on those large screens.

Quasimodo, confused, claustrophobic, can't get himself out of their way.

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

(revealing one mask:)

Horrifying! Well done.

(and the next:)

Reminds me of my mother-in-law's
plastic surgery. Poor thing.

(onto another:)

And you: my father-in-law.

Finally, Gringoire reaches Quasimodo, pulls off his hood, and reveals to the crowd: his horrific, fleshy, mangled face.

A MURMUR OF SHOCK echoes along the festival as he's displayed on each electronic screen of the amphitheater.

The FESTIVAL GOERS back away in horror, keeping at a distance forming a circle.

Even Gringoire is frightened at first, stepping to the side.

BACK ON THE STAGE: Frolo sees Quasimodo on the screens. Then in the crowd. He silently seethes. Phoebus smirks widely.

PHOEBUS

That's certainly a face you'd wanna
be drunk to stare at.

ELSEWHERE, Esmeralda studies Quasimodo, an empathy behind her gaze, yet wheels actively turning in her head.

BACK ON QUASIMODO, Gringoire apprehensively steps forward to him again, holding out the POPE OF FOOLS CROWN.

GRINGOIRE

Do you have a name?

WE FADE INTO QUASIMODO'S POV: briefly, the festival's SOUNDS become MUTED as Gringoire attempts to interact with him.

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

(Can you speak?)

BACK TO THE CAMERAS, Quasimodo, scared, does not respond.

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

Paris, we are here to mock the vile face of the world and I don't think we'll find anyone else's face quite as -- *unique*. This is the rarest ugliness any of us have beheld in our born days. And the boy deserves to be our Pope of Fools!

Gringoire places the crown on Quasimodo, but, disoriented, he aggressively LASHES OUT at Gringoire. Startling the crowd.

MAN IN CROWD

He's a monster! Arrest him!

WOMAN IN CROWD

The devil himself.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Let all pregnant women beware!

ANOTHER MAN

As wicked as he is ugly.

ANOTHER QUICK FLASH TO QUASIMODO'S POV: their SHOUTS fade in and out. Truly frightening for one whose world is silent, to be suddenly ambushed.

The men move in with rope, tackling him, stripping off parts of his clothing, trying to tie him down. Quasimodo, startled and fearful, becomes hostile. He grows savage.

The faces we earlier saw celebrating life, love, and ecstasy, are now the faces of anger, rage, and hate.

How quickly we can turn on each other.

And, sickeningly enough, they're proud of what they tap into. Quasimodo looks out onto a whirlpool of faces laughing at him and giddily smiling, having fun.

They succeed in tying him down. Quasimodo YELLS, foams at the mouth, bites them. Though he's not usually violent, his face, ugly enough as it is, is even uglier with the flavor of rage.

Quasimodo looks up to Frollo on the arena stage:

QUASIMODO

Master --

But Frollo turns his back on him, walking off with his guard.

FROLLO

More than enough excitement for one day. Take me back.

PHOEBUS

We should stop this cruelty before it gets out of hand.

FROLLO

No. There is a lesson to be learned here. For everyone. Your guard will bring this monster boy to me in the morning. I will handle him.

ON THE SCREENS: Quasimodo, failing to break free of the ropes that bind him, is showered with stones and garbage.

The festival cameras PUSH IN on his teary, pleading face:

QUASIMODO

Forgive me!! --

QUICK CUT TO:

LATER THAT NIGHT: Quasimodo is still tied, left in the cold, covered in piles of trash. Crowds around him have parted.

He WHIMPERS, a heartbreaking, exhausted cry. He looks around for somebody to free him. Most people are asleep now. Others off in the distance still party, but ignore him.

Suddenly, Esmeralda appears, tilting a canteen of water into his mouth. He ravenously drinks.

She raises her fingers to her lips:

ESMERALDA

Don't make a sound. And don't be scared. I'm your friend.

In a matter of seconds Quasimodo is released from his ropes.
And a BURLAP SACK thrown over his head.

THROUGH THE DARKNESS: we can hear WHISPERED VOICES:

CLOPIN (OFF)
We'll drop him off in the suburbs.

ESMERALDA (OFF)
He's harmless.

CLOPIN (OFF)
Everyone is until they're not.

The BURLAP SACK is YANKED off of Quasimodo's head.

CLOPIN (OFF) (CONT'D)
I said no!

INT. CLOPIN'S RICKETY JEEP. NIGHT.

Quasimodo squints to refocus sight on his captors. Perched in the back of a jeep, he glances out at sand dunes speeding by. Festival lights growing distant behind them.

ESMERALDA
I promise you he's not dangerous.

CLOPIN
Let's leave him. Treat him with the kindness we've been given.

ESMERALDA
He's a disabled young man. You used to stand for more than that.

The **CLOPIN** from our prologue, *half-blind*, his left eye milky white, scar on his eyelid, is now 65, with a full gray beard, and drained, hardened expression. He steers the vehicle.

Quasimodo WHIMPERS. Esmeralda lovingly touches his hand.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry for what happened.

QUASIMODO
I have to go back for my Master.

Esmeralda is surprised by the *sound of his speech* noticing he strains to study her lips.

ESMERALDA

Clopin, give us light so he can see
my face.

Clopin flicks on the dash brights.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Can you understand me now?

Quasimodo nods. His breath flees him at the sight of her face illuminated, beautiful, almost an angelic halo. The prettiest thing he has ever seen.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

You read lips but cannot hear?

QUASIMODO

Not well. The bells took my ears.

ESMERALDA

Bells?

QUASIMODO

Notre Dame.

ESMERALDA

That's your home?

CLOPIN

The Minister's pet. So it's true? I
imagined that was all myth.

Intrigued, Esmeralda delicately wipes Quasimodo's tears.

ESMERALDA

I'm Esmeralda. What's your name?

QUASIMODO

Quasimodo.

ESMERALDA

That means 'partly-made.'

CLOPIN

Fucked up. Witty, though.

ESMERALDA

Do you know how important you are?

Quasimodo honestly doesn't, shakes his head, frazzled.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Quasimodo, you can save us. You can
save all of France.

EXT. DECAYING SUBURB. GAS STATION. NIGHT.

Quasimodo remains in the jeep, cloaked, as Clopin pumps gas. Nearby, Esmeralda argues with her surrogate father, pacing, displaying her rebellious passion --

ESMERALDA

History repeats. We'll be ambushed, jailed, murdered. You just want to wait in the shadows?

CLOPIN

I promised to beat this system, but not to die in the fight.

ESMERALDA

Exactly why we need him. Ten years ago assaulting a gypsy was a major offense. And now it's a pastime. We've been waiting for our symbol. And he found us.

CLOPIN

It's not the moment we planned.

ESMERALDA

Clopin, you've saved so many lives. Show them the establishment has fed them lies. Fueling their panic of illegitimates, yet raising them as family behind closed doors.

Clopin holsters the gas-pump, more resolute:

CLOPIN

Thousands of people saw his face. They're going to talk.
(admitting:)
And now he has seen ours.

ESMERALDA

Sometimes it's not the failure that scares us the most. What happens if we succeed. To be heard. Then what?

CLOPIN

Then we can't turn back.

EXT. HIGH-RISE CONDOMINIUMS. ALLEYWAY. NIGHT.

Clopin texts on his device. PING! And moments later, a window opens and a CARD-KEY is thrown down to the street.

INT. HIGH-RISE CONDOMINIUMS. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

After climbing the stairwell to the top floor, out of breath, our trio reaches their destination. Clopin quietly KNOCKS.

The apartment door opens, revealing:

PIERRE GRINGOIRE, the government drone, holding his finger to his lips, checking the hallway, then letting them inside.

GRINGOIRE
Who's your friend?

Quasimodo steps into view. Gringoire's eyes widen recognizing and understanding.

ESMERALDA
We needed to be somewhere safe.

INT. GRINGOIRE'S PENTHOUSE CONDO. NIGHT.

Gringoire pops open a bottle of champagne as our three settle into his luxurious living room. In this environment we notice Pierre Gringoire loses his FAKE ARISTOCRATIC ACCENT:

GRINGOIRE
You should stay through dawn. The guard changes just after. Not many eyes will be on the road if anyone is looking for him.

Gringoire obliges Clopin and Esmeralda with a glass.

CLOPIN
You think they'd kill him?

ESMERALDA
They won't if Paris knows his name.
If we inspire them.

CLOPIN
Revolution isn't peaceful. Those of us who understand what is happening are dangerous to them.

GRINGOIRE
I can help. To fear death, you have to have a life of value. Not one as fake as mine.

LATER THAT NIGHT: Esmeralda brings water and medication to an ailing Clopin, hitting his laptop keys in Gringoire's office, focused, but coughing up blood, choking back pain.

ESMERALDA

Take your pills.

CLOPIN

My cancer isn't killing me any more
than this cheap medication.

Through the cracked door Quasimodo watches Esmeralda care for Clopin. He registers the beautiful humanity in this world.

MOMENTS LATER: leaving Clopin to his work, she sees Quasimodo staring, leads him back to Gringoire in the living room.

ESMERALDA

We can't find him proper care since
it's illegal to treat illegals.

Esmeralda briefs her new friend:

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Clopin created the underground. The *Guardian Angels* who rescued orphans like me and families torn apart by the war. He brought sanctuary to so many but is still haunted by faces of the ones that he couldn't save. He may seem gruff, but he's filled with so much good.

QUASIMODO

What happened to your family?

ESMERALDA

I'd give anything to know that.

She holds up her wrist, flashing *that* TRINKET BRACELET:

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

My mother's. The only piece of her
that I have.

QUASIMODO

Then my Master's *my* guardian angel.
He's the only family I have.

GRINGOIRE

But how could you want to return to
a man so cruel?

ESMERALDA

He let you be tied and beaten.

QUASIMODO

I'm just a beast.

ESMERALDA

Claude Frollo is the actual beast.
You just haven't heard him yet.

Gringoire holds up his ring finger, flashes his WEDDING BAND.

GRINGOIRE

This ring is only for show. I was fifteen when my father sent me away after he found me under sheets with my tutor. Marcus. Spent the rest of my youth in conversion therapy. He called it a boarding school. It was an asylum. To cure me of my godless sins. And by the time they released me, the law had changed. Marcus was one of the unlucky ones. Ironically enough so was my father. This apple didn't fall far from the tree.

Gringoire takes another swig of champagne, CLINKS his ring on the glass:

GRINGOIRE (CONT'D)

This ring was my means of survival. Believe me when I say I understand what it's like to be thought of as a monster. Every day I look down at this band and am reminded of it.

ESMERALDA

Three orphans. Three criminals.

GRINGOIRE

We're a sad bunch.

Stepping from the other room, Clopin summons Esmeralda:

CLOPIN

Breached the system. We're in. Time to prep the video.

Gringoire and Esmeralda excuse themselves from Quasimodo.

CLOPIN (CONT'D)

You really sure about this?

ESMERALDA

Yes.

As she closes the door, she SIGNS with her hands:

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Good night.

Excited to respond, BY SIGNING, finally understood:

QUASIMODO
Good night.

His friends retreat behind closed doors. Quasimodo eases into these new surroundings, now comfortable. And rests.

INT. CLOPIN'S RICKETY JEEP. DAWN.

Esmeralda drives through empty city streets. Quasimodo is her shrouded passenger. She clocks the time: 8:30AM.

Esmeralda unclasps her TRINKET BRACELET, hands it to him.

ESMERALDA
I want you to hold onto this. I'll get it next time I see you. That's how you know to not be afraid.

EXT. FESTIVAL OF FOOLS. DAWN.

THE NEXT MORNING, the festival folk arise, hungover and hazy, untangling themselves from their orgies, gossiping, gathering awestruck near where Quasimodo was tied and abandoned.

Now, around the loose ropes, painted in LARGE RED LETTERS, is the graffitied anthem of this revolution:

SANCTUARY. SANCTUARY. SANCTUARY.

CUT TO NEWS FOOTAGE: the shock upon Quasimodo's deformed face spliced with those scrawled words of anarchy.

PEELING BACK: we see Frollo fuming, watching the newscast, in a meeting led by **PRIME MINISTER LOUISE DEETE**, 60's, hardened, wiry, focused, and intense, sitting inside...

INT. THE PRIME MINISTER'S BOARD ROOM. DAY.

The Prime Minister at the head of the table, Frollo her right hand man, and the **COUNCIL OF MINISTERS** are neatly assembled.

The **CITY GUARD**, including Phoebus, at attention behind them.

PRIME MINISTER
This is mutiny.

FROLLO
A blatant attempt to spark rebels.

CLOSE ON: GRAINY SECURITY FOOTAGE of Esmeralda, rescuing and untying Quasimodo, as Clopin sprays the words on the ground. We can't quite make out any of their faces.

But Phoebus' uneasy expression tells he recognizes the woman:

PHOEBUS

Madam Prime Minister, my guard will track them. Let's not cause panic.

ANOTHER CLOSE UP: the trio climbs into a jeep. Pulling out of the festival, Clopin clicks a DEVICE and pole-mounted cameras around them go offline. Cutting to STATIC.

PRIME MINISTER

They hacked the network.

FROLLO

And will be arrested at once.

PHOEBUS

We can't arrest them for behavior at the Festival.

FROLLO

Then you smoke them out of whatever hole they hide in. Sedition doesn't stop at the gates to the party.

PRIME MINISTER

We need a preemptive strike.

PHOEBUS

We can find them discreetly.

PRIME MINISTER

I don't care about discretion. Make an example out of them.

Her eyes still locked on the security footage, icily:

PRIME MINISTER (CONT'D)

Keep Paris in line by reminding our nation that the threat of terrorism is still very real.

FROLLO

I suggest that we extend our state of emergency: authorize the guard to exercise judicial discretion in national security.

PRIME MINISTER

Approved. Seek and eliminate.

INT. COURT OF MIRACLES CYBER DEN. DAY.

In a boarded-up, defunct laundromat, Clopin sits at a desktop behind three monitors, his eyes red, worked through the night alongside his fellow **HACKER ACTIVISTS**. Fervently coding while drinking wine, he eyes the progress of a HEFTY FILE UPLOAD.

Ethernet cables, monitors, and HUMMING SERVERS stretch across the den, a bleak contrast to the Prime Minister's War Room.

EXT. FESTIVAL OF FOOLS. DAY.

Gringoire stands before his skeleton **CAMERA CREW**, perspiring from nerves, takes calming breaths. He catches the time. Ten seconds to 11:00AM. Then seven. Then six.

CAMERA OPERATOR

We're live in five-four-three-two--

Gringoire flips into his character:

GRINGOIRE

Bonjour, Paris! Pierre Gringoire at your service with today's chatter!

INT. COURT OF MIRACLES CYBER DEN. DAY.

Just as the file finishes the upload, the clock hits 11:13AM. Clopin pounds ENTER. It's done.

He glances down at a PHOTO of his WIFE AND SONS at his side. Sadly smiling. Waiting.

EXT. FESTIVAL OF FOOLS. DAY.

Back in the festival, all of the ARENA SCREENS cut to STATIC.

CAMERA OPERATOR

We lost input signal.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The authentication changed.

GRINGOIRE

(playing his part:)

What's going on? I swear you're all a bunch of bloody amateurs. What is this a non-union show?

Then, each screen bursts to life with ESMERALDA. Silhouetted, preserving her identity, against a GREEN BACKGROUND...

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN)
 Citizens of Paris. We are blind. We are lame. But we can see and run if we fight our real enemy. This is a broadcast of the *Court of Miracles*. And, together, we are the miracles for our future.

LINING THE FESTIVAL: these WIDE ELECTRONIC SCREENS across the perimeter shower **THOUSANDS OF ATTENDEES** with her message. And her audience doesn't stop there...

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 Yesterday, a boy with the ZK7 virus was crowned Pope of Fools. His name is Quasimodo. He lives inside Notre Dame as the adopted son to Minister of Justice, Claude Frollo. The man who tells us by day to loathe the human he cares for at night.

TELEVISED IN A CAFE: where an **ELDERLY COUPLE** eats breakfast.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 Frollo gains power because we spill each other's blood in his name.

ELECTRONIC MÉTRO SCREENS: broadcasting to curious **COMMUTERS**.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 Look where hatred blindly leads us. Remember our families, who died for their country, not knowing this was the France they'd bleed for.

THE RUNDOWN HOME SET: of an impoverished **REFUGEE FAMILY**.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 It is the Festival of Fools because we've been fooled into believing we are the enemy. To hate our friends.

MOBILE DEVICES: of **YOUNG PEOPLE**, lulling in the streets.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 Let Quasimodo be a reminder of the monsters they have made of us all. Twisting our hope for survival into a fear of living. Making us believe we are only as worthy as death.

THE SITUATION ROOM TELEVISION: as Frollo, the Prime Minister, and Ministry Council stare daggers. Phoebus shakes his head.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 We can restore power to the people.
 Restore our right to vote. Or else
 we will resist. And we will fight.

THE CYBER DEN: as Clopin silently views, dirgelike.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 We will no longer beg for liberty.
 We demand sanctuary! Sanctuary.

BACK IN THE FESTIVAL: Esmeralda's message clearly resonates.
 A group of **REFUGEES** push forward, compelled to chant along:

THE CROWD (WITH ESMERALDA)
 Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

And **PARISIANS** join. All ages and races. A show of solidarity.

THE CROWD (CONT'D)
 Sanctuary! Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

Gringoire shuffles away, a nervous wreck, just as **GUARDS** move in to defuse the mayhem. Displaying a lawless authority, they push into the **PROTESTERS**, whip out **BATONS**, and discipline the unruly masses. The protesters fight back, a domino effect, as those officers are quickly outnumbered:

THE CROWD (CONT'D)
 SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COURT OF MIRACLES CYBER DEN. DAY.

Clopin removes the external hard drive from his port, feeding it to the shredder, destroying data, and powering down.

CLOPIN
 There's no turning back now.

INT. THE PRIME MINISTER'S BOARD ROOM. DAY.

The Situation Room has turned chaotic, with Ministers arguing while **INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS** desperately scan data.

FROLLO
 These are outright lies!

PHOEBUS
 Who is approving overtime? This is
 feeling like an overtime scenario.

INTELLIGENCE AGENT

The *Court of Miracles* has a history of hacktivism and vandalism. Never anything of this sophistication.

SECOND INTELLIGENCE AGENT

Traced the firewall breach to an IP address in Montmartre.

FROLLO

Scan the plates on that car.

INTELLIGENCE AGENT

There aren't any.

PRIME MINISTER

And the woman?

SECOND INTELLIGENCE AGENT

Unclear. Running vocal recognition.

PRIME MINISTER

This bitch wants a witch hunt, I'll give her one.

FROLLO

Fight the devil with fire.

Another guard SLAMS a phone down...

SECOND GUARD

Madame, we just received reports of a suspicious vehicle parked outside Notre Dame. Matches our description of the suspects' jeep --

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREETS. DAY.

Police cars breeze down boulevards with SIRENS WAILING.

EXT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Once peaceful streets are now frantic. Police vehicles lined up with lights flickering, **OFFICERS** hiding behind open doors, rifles drawn, aimed at:

CLOPIN'S RICKETY JEEP, abandoned, on the sidewalk. We vaguely discern, through tinted windows, A HUNCHBACKED FIGURE slumped in the passenger seat, blindfolded by a scarf.

The **CITIZENS** stand behind barricades with morbid excitement.

A government van SCREECHES into the scene. Phoebus and Frolo jump to the asphalt, SLAMMING their doors behind them.

Frolo recognizes Quasimodo's silhouette, suddenly panicking that his boy's life may be at risk, and loses composure.

FROLLO

I demand you stand down at once.

LEAD OFFICER

No, sir. We have higher authority.

A SECOND OFFICER inches forward with his MEGAPHONE:

MEGAPHONE OFFICER

Step out. Hands in the air.

There is no response. Quasimodo is as still as stone.

MEGAPHONE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Exit the vehicle.

Several OTHER OFFICERS raise their firearms, primed to shoot.

YOUNG OFFICER

He's resisting arrest.

MEGAPHONE OFFICER

STEP OUT OF YOUR VEHICLE NOW!

Frolo eyes **SNIPERS** on rooftops, hearing their muffled VOICES through the troop's two-way TRANSMITTERS:

ROOFTOP SNIPER (OFF)

I have a clear shot.

SECOND SNIPER (OFF)

Copy. Clear shot here also.

Raising his fingers, the armed officers await their go:

MEGAPHONE OFFICER

You have five seconds. Three. Two --

Frolo pushes through the ranked officers, hysterical:

FROLLO

THE BOY CAN'T HEAR! THE CHILD CAN'T
HEAR YOU!! HE IS INNOCENT.

The arched officers stand down, conflicted by what they see.

Frollo runs to the car, yanks open the passenger door, pulls the blindfold off to reveal:

QUASIMODO, tears fill his eyes, clutching Esmeralda's trinket bracelet in his palm so hard it has broken his skin.

The crowd at the barricades have grown visibly upset. Filming on MOBILE DEVICES: the prophecy of the speech they heard this morning has come true. Their government is corrupt.

And Quasimodo with Frollo is the proof. Lured into the open.

The officers shove spectators along, but they refuse to move. Standing their ground. Rebelliously. Angered by this blatant display of violent aggression.

FRENCH WOMAN

He didn't have a weapon.

BRITISH MAN

He wasn't even a threat. You had no reason to draw guns, you pussy.

SMACK! A guard busts the man in his jaw, throws him down, and arrests him.

BRITISH MAN (CONT'D)

Fuck you! Miserable cock.

People at the scene SHOUT. Mobile phones capture this entire incident. Other officers traipse through the crowd with guns raised, hurling people to the ground, into handcuffs.

GYPSY MAN

Lower your weapons. Lower them.

Frollo, embarrassed, escorts Quasimodo through the chaos, up the cathedral stairs, and into Notre Dame.

And THREE SHOTS ARE FIRED. People SCREAM, scattering. Crying.

The GYPSY MAN crumples, bleeding from his chest. Shot dead.

QUICK CUT... A CLOSE UP on Phoebus' HAUNTED EYES brings us to that dilapidated Greek City: SHOTS ARE FIRED. THE EXPLOSION. Phoebus falls to the ground wounded. We've seen this before.

SMASH BACK TO... REAL LIFE, as Phoebus shakes himself of that brief day-terror. He fumbles for his anxiety medication, then follows Frollo into Notre Dame. Trying to numb himself to the horrible mayhem around him.

BUT MEANWHILE, A RIOT ENSUES. And it's filmed. By the people.

INT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

SLAM. Frolo bursts through the cathedral door, Quasimodo few paces behind, followed by the guard and Phoebus. Frolo halts them all before he and Quasimodo climb the belltower.

INT. THE BELLCHAMBER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Reaching the chamber, Frolo is so relieved they brought him back safely, that he allows tears to escape.

QUASIMODO

I disobeyed you. I will never do it again, I'm so sorry.

FROLLO

You're back. I wasn't sure.

QUASIMODO

Of course I'd come back. This is my home. It's my sanctuary.

Frolo stops. Mood turns on a dime. Eerily cold now.

FROLLO

Where did you learn that word?

Something in him snaps.

Frolo SLAPS Quasimodo, a brutal pain he's not accustomed to.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

My parents were torn from this life by those gypsies. Jehan was next. I will not have you follow. Don't you realize the trouble you caused us?

He HITS him again. Quasimodo WHIMPERS. An incredibly visceral reaction to this abuse. Never having seen this side of Frolo before, Quasimodo feels utterly betrayed.

Frolo notices Quasimodo is gripping the TRINKET BRACELET and yanks it from his hands, studying its facets, before throwing it across the chamber. To him, a repulsive foreign symbol.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

I protect you! And for what?!

INT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Phoebus is surprised by Frolo's wet cheeks as he wanders by, never having witnessed this man bear any emotion before.

PHOEBUS

We need to take him into custody.

FROLLO

I'm handling the boy. You will find the group responsible and burn them until they're underground.

EXT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Phoebus approaches a huddle of guards near the **FORENSICS TEAM** cautiously conducting the analysis of CLOPIN'S JEEP. The **BOMB SQUAD** with their **SNIFFER DOGS** investigate the block.

LEAD OFFICER

No explosives found.

PHOEBUS

Any identification?

FORENSICS TECH

Not a hair. Not a fingerprint.

PHOEBUS

And the vehicle?

FORENSICS TECH

Never registered. They're ghosts.

NOT FAR OFF: the **GYPSY MAN** who earlier perished is placed in a body bag. The people continue to film on their devices, an unforgiving authority of public documentation.

EXT. DAMP STREETS OF PARIS. DAY AFTER DAY.

DAYS LATER: **RIOTS ERUPT**. Impassioned **PROTESTERS** parade signs. **CHANTING** outside government buildings.

ARROGANT OFFICERS fight back. After a brief bout with **CHAOS:** another innocent **UNARMED GYPSY** is attacked in the streets.

ANOTHER DAY: and, yet, **ANOTHER INJURED MAN** forcefully cuffed.

ONE NOT-SO-SPECIAL DAY: we find those **FRENCH OFFICERS** cockily pacing in the tenements, spitting at **CHILDREN** playing ball as **GYPSY WOMEN** stand by, helplessly watching the abuse.

COCKSURE OFFICER

Show your papers. Or we deport you.

A **TEENAGER** steps up to the officers defensively. Immediately he is beaten. Then **SHOTS** ring out. He falls to the ground.

EXT. SOME FOGGY ALLEYWAY. NIGHT.

Our Phoebus, in his street clothes, struts down the alleyway. A **LONELY WOMAN** stands in a doorway, watching him closely.

PHOEBUS
I can feel your eyes.

LONELY WOMAN
I have more to feel.

PHOEBUS
And I'm an officer.

LONELY WOMAN
An officer who knows exactly which street he walked down.

Phoebus reaches a nondescript door. **KNOCKS**. A peephole opens.

PHOEBUS
Code word: *DJALI*. With a 'D.'

Phoebus flashes his winning, wide and toothy grin.

INT. UNDERGROUND TAVERN. NIGHT.

Phoebus descends narrow stairs into this dank basement pub. A sea of **ODD-CHARACTERS** populate the smoky joint, all eyes upon him, met with **SILENCE**. His aristocratic looks out of place.

Phoebus moves to the bar, takes a stool, and the room returns to their conversations.

Next to him at the bar, we recognize: **OUR ESMERALDA**.

PHOEBUS
I come down here every other night looking for you.

ESMERALDA
I'm not a creature of habit.

PHOEBUS
We loved this place.

Phoebus signals to the **BARTENDER** for a drink. Make that two. Returns with a few tumblers of whiskey.

Esmeralda quickly swallows hers. Phoebus is slower.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
You're good.

ESMERALDA
Not sure what you mean.

PHOEBUS
How did you know that Frollo would
intervene before they'd kill him?

ESMERALDA
I didn't. Was a happy accident.

It takes her a somber beat. Then it surprises her:

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)
You knew it was me?

PHOEBUS
I recognize every last inch of you.

Now Phoebus takes a sobering pause.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
It's really good to see you.

ESMERALDA
Don't say that.

PHOEBUS
That's more than I should say. You
were the one who disappeared.

ESMERALDA
Look at my baggage. You wanted to
put yourself at risk?

PHOEBUS
I did. Yes.

ESMERALDA
And I knew better. You'll thank me.

PHOEBUS
Maybe just a silly fantasy of mine.
The happiness we'd have on Earth if
you were not born a gypsy. And if I
weren't a daft soldier.

ESMERALDA
And if war did not exist.

PHOEBUS
And if true love had.

ESMERALDA

Didn't take you long to propose to another girl.

PHOEBUS

I was getting deployed.

ESMERALDA

Didn't take you long.

PHOEBUS

Well, it ended when I came back in pieces. War is cruel. And marriage is the worst war of all.

ESMERALDA

Why are you here?

PHOEBUS

I've been ordered to arrest you. On the charges of sedition, terrorism, and murder: which brings an instant sentence of death.

ESMERALDA

Bastard.

PHOEBUS

Just doing my job.

ESMERALDA

You're going to detain me?

PHOEBUS

I didn't say I was good at my job.

Esmeralda scoots her fingertips over to grip his hand:

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

Remember the day we met?

ESMERALDA

That was four years ago.

PHOEBUS

So you don't?

ESMERALDA

The rally at the mall. Police came. We ran like cowards. Hiding in the bathroom stalls. Our first kiss.

PHOEBUS

And then vowed to never be cowards
again.

ESMERALDA

I held up my end of the bargain.

PHOEBUS

But I didn't.

Esmeralda's gorgeous green eyes meet his.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

And I feel guilty every day.

ESMERALDA

You're a good man.

PHOEBUS

Maybe. But everyone else isn't.

ESMERALDA

What did they think would happen if
we raised little white boys to hate
gypsy boys? Then we promote them to
officers, give them power, and give
them guns --

PHOEBUS

I thought I could be the change we
needed. But I'm not.

(beat)

You are.

ESMERALDA

If only.

PHOEBUS

I still care about you.

ESMERALDA

And I think about you.

PHOEBUS

I missed your fire.

ESMERALDA

I miss yours.

She grabs her jacket, taking his hand:

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Follow me.

EXT. VACANT PARIS STREETS. NIGHT.

Esmeralda and Phoebus stealthily navigate a series of alleys, duck through a hole in a fence, and descend into an abandoned Métro station.

INT. ABANDONED MÉTRO TUNNELS. NIGHT.

Esmeralda leads Phoebus along the deserted subway tracks, mud sloshing beneath their boots.

PHOEBUS

Where are you taking me?

ESMERALDA

When we were forced off the street, we created our own arteries. After all, immigrants are the heartbeat of Paris.

PHOEBUS

How extensive is the underground?

ESMERALDA

Depends. People or place?

PHOEBUS

Both?

ESMERALDA

You have no idea. The revolution is only beginning.

SOME TIME LATER: they reach a SERVICE DOOR. Esmeralda enters a code into the KEYPAD. The dead bolt unlocks.

They climb stairs back to surface level, another KEYPAD, then Esmeralda pushes open the steel door, revealing:

A WARM AND INVITING LIVING ROOM: eclectic mix-and-match decor with TOYS and CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS strewn about...

INT. THE UNDERGROUND FOSTER HOME. NIGHT.

Esmeralda has led Phoebus into their underground group home. Their hidden orphanage for undocumented children.

ESMERALDA

If the *Court of Miracles* was a real place, this would be it.

An **ELDERLY MATRON** fondly acknowledges her.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

We give young lives their chance.

A few **CHILDREN** run around playing, in pajamas. One young girl with a LARGE PINK BOW, hops into Esmeralda's arms.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

My way of giving back to children like myself. Who don't know where they came from.

Her compassion further stirs all of Phoebus' old feelings.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

When the people you work for babble about *illegitimates*: here are their faces. This is who they're scared of. Without GENEXX papers, without citizenship, born to gypsies. These children are made outlaws once they take their first breath.

As she speaks the weight of this world bears down on her. And Phoebus wipes her tears with a gentle flick of his thumb.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

They are just somebody's child.

PHOEBUS

They're looking for these hideouts. To raid and destroy them.

Phoebus moves in to kiss her, tenderly. Then, pulls away.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

Sorry --

Pressing hands on his shoulders she looks at him intently, as if hypnotized by his handsome face:

ESMERALDA

I'm not.

INT. AN INTERROGATION ROOM. DAY.

Frollo stands on the transparent side of a two-way mirror, a furrowed brow, dark bags under his eyes, hardly slept.

THROUGH THE GLASS: Quasimodo is examined in an interrogation room, sitting cross-legged on his chair, eyes lowered to the table, nervously sketching.

Pacing around the room is an **INTERROGATION OFFICER**, elderly, wearing a hearing aid, who speaks down at Quasimodo, getting very little in response.

PULLING BACK: Frollo is joined by Madam Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER
It's never ending, Claude.

She holds PRINTED PROPAGANDA: "*STEP DOWN! - FREE THE VOTE!*"

PRIME MINISTER (CONT'D)
They're everywhere. They're in our network. All our printers have been spitting this garbage out on loop.

FROLLO
Quasimodo is just their pawn.

PRIME MINISTER
The pawn that turned France against their government.

FROLLO
I told you he knows nothing. It's not his fault.

PRIME MINISTER
No. It's yours for harboring him.

FROLLO
I took Quasimodo in before this was written into law. I was Archdeacon of Notre Dame. It was my chore.

PRIME MINISTER
And now you're above the law?

FROLLO
Don't we make it?

A beat. Then a smile. Touché.

PRIME MINISTER
Unless you find the gypsy or *Court of Miracles*, I expect your signed resignation. Don't let everything you worked so hard for fall apart. Tick. Tick. Tick.

The interrogation officer bursts into their room, red-faced, huffy, and frustrated.

INTERROGATION OFFICER
It's impossible to get any answers
out of him! He ignored every other
word, making a fool out of me.

FROLLO
He's deaf.

INTERROGATION OFFICER
He's infuriating.

MOMENTS LATER: Frolo steps in to collect Quasimodo. His mood
has very clearly negatively shifted against Frolo.

FROLLO
Quasimodo.

Quasimodo barely looks up, concealing HIS BLACK EYE from when
Frolo struck him earlier.

QUASIMODO
I told that man. I don't even know
their names.

Trying to earn back his trust, Frolo SIGNS WITH HIS HANDS:

FROLLO
I believe you. Let's go home.

Frolo notices the small sketch Quasimodo drew to pass time:
roughly resembling the silhouette of ESMERALDA. Hatred burns
in his eyes at the lascivious art. He snatches it.

FROLLO (CONT'D)
You are just the moth. And when she
returns to the Hell she came from,
you must not follow her flame.

He backs away. Another icy mood shift. Commands his guards:

FROLLO (CONT'D)
Lock the boy back up. Sleeping with
the rats ought to remind him where
his true loyalty lies.

EXT. HÔTEL MATIGNON. DAY.

YOUNG PARISIAN PROTESTERS erupt, wearing shirts branded with
caricatures of Quasimodo and the silhouetted Esmeralda.

PROTESTERS
FREE THE VOTE! FREE THE PEOPLE!
FREE THE HUNCHBACK! FREE PARIS!

POWER-HUNGRY OFFICERS elbow through the crowd arresting these disrupters where they can, forcing them onto military busses. Aggressively. And quite visibly enjoying themselves.

A GOVERNMENT AD on the bus reminds, in French and English, of a *BOUNTY ON THE COURT OF MIRACLES*.

Officers are heard plotting through two-way TRANSMITTERS:

OFFICER (OFF)
We're about full--

SECOND OFFICER (OFF)
Sending in the next bus.

Suddenly, the officers lurch in pain, scrambling to yank out their ear pieces, transmitters now BLASTING LOUD PUNK MUSIC, the frequencies-hacked, psychological warfare.

And then, from an open doorway: GUNFIRE ERUPTS. THWAP. THWAP.

The protesters run for their lives. Scrambling. SCREAMING.

But it's the *officers who fall lifeless* onto the street, like the gypsies that died before them. A targeted retaliation.

OFFICER
(into his radio)
Backup. Shots fired.

But their RADIOS don't work. Still playing that LOUD MUSIC.

SECOND OFFICER
Radio's offline!

OFFICER
(still trying)
Officers down. Repeat, offi--

THWAP. In a quick instant he's taken from this world.

One GUARD, the last to survive, raises his hands, frightened:

PLEADING OFFICER
Please! I was just doing what I had
been told. It's my job. PLEASE.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PHOEBUS' APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Phoebus lies in bed with Esmeralda, their bare skin brushing against the linens. And each other.

ESMERALDA
We shouldn't be doing this.

PHOEBUS
Why not? It's fun.

ESMERALDA
It's dangerous.

PHOEBUS
Don't you trust me?

ESMERALDA
I can't trust anybody.

PHOEBUS
Every year, I looked forward to the Festival. I thought, maybe, this is the one you'll see her again.

ESMERALDA
Lucky you.

PHOEBUS
I also love seeing those beaches. I was raised by my grandparents along that coast. They would tell me the stones on those sands took hundreds of years to wash ashore. Slowly pushed along by the current. Yet, with one simple toss: you can throw that all away. Back to the waves.

Phoebus sits up, allowing the sheets to fall, cascading over his torso. Esmeralda kisses his muscular shoulders.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
And that's what we've done to our history. To our own people. Threw everything back.

ESMERALDA
A stone hitting the water causes a ripple. It's a fight for survival.

PHOEBUS
And I fought hard, believe me. Ten thousand times over I should have died on the front. But we do what we can to be the lucky ones.

He repositions his body: *revealing his legs*. We may remember from his introduction that he requires a device to stand.

On his right leg, he wears that ARTIFICIAL LIMB. Amputated at the knee. His personal sacrifice to the cost of these wars.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
Better to be judged by twelve than
carried by six.

Phoebus confidently admits:

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
They've arrested Quasimodo. And I
want to finally do my part.

ESMERALDA
Then I have another favor to ask.

INT. A GOVERNMENT HOLDING CELL. NIGHT.

Quasimodo huddles for warmth under a small blanket on a stiff cot. He HUMS to himself, frightened and cold.

Suddenly his cell door clicks and swings open. Quasimodo sits up, curious, as Phoebus enters, wearing all-black, cloaked to the best of his ability. With a kind wink, he raises a finger to his lips, speaks in a HUSHED WHISPER:

PHOEBUS
Follow me.

QUASIMODO
Why should I trust you?

PHOEBUS
Your friend Esmeralda sent me.

INT. A DIMLY LIT STAIRWELL. NIGHT.

Quasimodo quietly follows Phoebus down the service stairwell.

AT THE BOTTOM: Phoebus forces open a door. The security wall panel beside it BLINKS IN GREEN: **DISARMED.**

EXT. GOVERNMENT BUILDING. NIGHT.

Phoebus and Quasimodo dart across the property, right through a loading gate where another guard, OLIVIER, loyal to a fault for his friend Phoebus, anxiously waits.

PHOEBUS
Olivier. You're always there when I
need you most. You're a gem.

OLIVIER
You almost didn't make it--

PHOEBUS
Piss off! Fifteen seconds to spare.

OLIVIER
Nothing to brag about.

PHOEBUS
(eying his watch:)
Five-four-three-two...

On the final count the SECURITY GATE reactivates, electronic locks trigger, and the surveillance panel is armed again.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
Pays to have friends in low places.

OLIVIER
You need to go. I'll hold them off
as long as playing stupid can buy.

PHOEBUS
You were always great at that.

OLIVIER
Take care of yourself.

Olivier takes his friend in a long embrace.

OLIVIER (CONT'D)
They'll kill us if they find out.

PHOEBUS
Well, then we shouldn't let them.

OLIVIER
Goodbye, Phoebus.

PHOEBUS
'Til next time, Olivier.

As Phoebus leaves, Olivier calls out one last time:

OLIVIER
You have more courage inside of you
than generations of men. I hope you
find what you're looking for.

PHOEBUS
I found her.

Quasimodo follows Phoebus down the dark street and into...

INT. AN UNMARKED VEHICLE. NIGHT.

Phoebus jumps into the SUV. With Quasimodo as his passenger.

PHOEBUS

Buckle up.

ESMERALDA (OFF)

He's really the worst driver.

WE REVEAL: Esmeralda in the backseat, leaning forward to kiss Quasimodo's cheek (who can barely contain his excitement).

QUASIMODO

Esmeralda!

ESMERALDA

I'm sorry I couldn't come sooner.

She smiles blithely, then brushes his bruised eye, from where Frollo hit him.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Frollo did this to you?

QUASIMODO

I disobeyed.

ESMERALDA

You deserve so much better.

Quasimodo presents her with the TRINKET BRACELET he borrowed. Hidden in one of his pockets.

QUASIMODO

I have this for you. Was waiting to give your bracelet back.

ESMERALDA

(truly touched:)
You remembered.

QUASIMODO

Of course. We're friends.

INT. A GOVERNMENT HOLDING CELL. NIGHT.

LATER THAT NIGHT: Frollo enters as **FORENSIC AGENTS** check for prints. OLIVIER, the officer-on-duty, paces the jail cell.

FROLLO

Get me the security footage.

OLIVIER

The cameras went dark for an hour
while this happened.

Frollo fumes. Turns to see, above the door, the one word that
seers his soul: **SANCTUARY.**

FROLLO

So they've stolen him. My poor boy.

OLIVIER

There's a bounty on anyone involved
with the crime --

FROLLO

It's not enough. Forget the others.
(a hard decision:)
Put a bounty on Quasimodo instead.
The people at least recognize *him*.
Let him lead us to the gypsies.

OLIVIER

Yes, sir.

FROLLO

And who was the officer responsible
for guarding the cell?

OLIVIER

(covering his tracks:)
Lieutenant Pascal, I believe.

FROLLO

He is wildly incapable.

OLIVIER

Yes, sir.

FROLLO

Put a bullet in his head. And never
make his same mistakes.

EXT. PARIS STREETS. NIGHT.

Phoebus drives their nondescript unmarked vehicle cautiously.
Police cars lurk on street corners. Scattered checkpoints.

IN THE SUV: Phoebus calls to Quasimodo and Esmeralda, huddled
flat under blankets in the back.

PHOEBUS

Streets are closing. I thought we'd
have more time. They're everywhere.

ESMERALDA
Get off the road.

Phoebus makes a left turn, driving RIGHT INTO THE CHECKPOINT.
The avenue barricaded. **OFFICERS** poised with flashlights.

PHOEBUS
Shit. Stay down.

ESMERALDA
Be discreet.

Phoebus approaches the line. A pudgy officer approaches.

STOUT OFFICER
Where you heading tonight?

PHOEBUS
Home, sir.

STOUT OFFICER
There's a fugitive situation on our
streets. You aware?

PHOEBUS
Straight home, then.

STOUT OFFICER
It's not that simple. The city is
on lockdown. I need to ask you to
step out of your vehicle.

His lean partner illuminates the back of the SUV, draped with
piles of linens that the others hide beneath.

PHOEBUS
I'm a hoarder.

The officer catches glimpse of Quasimodo curiously peeking.

LEAN OFFICER
You need to step out of the vehicle
with your hands on your head. Now!

Phoebus shifts the gear into REVERSE. And FLOORS IT. Swerving
around the cars behind him in the lineup.

SHOTS ARE FIRED piercing their windshield but Phoebus doesn't
lose focus. Steering backwards.

The officers rush to their car. DOORS SLAM. TIRES SQUEAL.

And the chase is on.

IN REVERSE: Phoebus navigates the SUV onto the sidewalk, then flips it around, careening down a tight alleyway. The mirrors on both sides knocked clean off. DING. Sparks fly.

BEHIND THEM: LIGHTS FLICKER, the officers nearing.

BACK IN THE CAR: Esmeralda rises from her hiding spot.

ESMERALDA

Remember when I said be discreet?

PHOEBUS

I'll lose them.

ESMERALDA

Get us to the crypt and we can go underground.

PHOEBUS

If I don't get to the crypt, we'll be underground anyway.

Phoebus tries another major avenue. Again barricaded by cops. He veers down a second tight alleyway. The officers still on their tail, gaining.

ESMERALDA

A few blocks east.

PHOEBUS

Behind this building?

ESMERALDA

Yes. Just don't turn left--

But Phoebus' mind can't catch up with his hands on the wheel.

He turns left.

And they're met with concrete walls. A complete dead end.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

You are just no help tonight.

PHOEBUS

If we can't go under, then--

QUASIMODO

--we go up.

MOMENTS LATER: the officers SCREECH on the scene, DOORS SLAM, guns are drawn, approaching, to find their now-empty SUV.

They inspect the area. Only one direction left to go.

The officers look up to spot our trio SCALING THE BUILDING.

Quasimodo climbs with Esmeralda laced around his neck, moving quickly. Years of scaling the Notre-Dame towers have built up his strength. Phoebus is not far behind, though less agile.

The officers FIRE IN THE AIR. Quasimodo yanks Esmeralda up to safety. Then lends Phoebus a hand. Before the cops can better their aim, our heroes are on the roof, and out of range.

ON THE ROOFTOP: Esmeralda recalibrates her sense of direction leading them east to the crypt.

Dozens of police cars have now arrived on the scene, tinting the evening with their flickering blue.

Our trio traverse along LATIN QUARTER rooftops, dodging stray bullets from officers on the street.

Hopping the final rooftop: Phoebus's luck runs out. He lulls. Shot in the side. But he makes the last leap and keeps on.

The others don't notice. A few yards away, Esmeralda halts--

She points to the ground, then shimmies down the gutter pipe. Quasimodo follows suit. Phoebus a few paces behind.

ON THE STREET BELOW: Quasimodo yanks open a MANHOLE COVER as the three descend into...

INT. PARISIAN CATACOMBS. NIGHT.

The underground tunnels are coated in death: skulls and bones of the vintage deceased painted over by layers of graffiti.

Knee deep in city sludge, Esmeralda keeps leading their way. They scurry through this dark and dreary labyrinth.

Phoebus visibly struggles to continue.

Without skipping a beat, Quasimodo hoists him into his arms, effortlessly cradling him, like a damsel-in-distress.

PHOEBUS

I got it. I got it--

But Quasimodo doesn't listen, keeps running for their lives.

INT. THE UNDERGROUND FOSTER HOME. NIGHT.

LATER THAT NIGHT: very out of breath, and worse for wear, our heroes have reached their safe haven.

As Quasimodo sets Phoebus down, he notices that his hands are covered in Phoebus' blood.

Phoebus has been shot, straight through his left leg.

PHOEBUS

It's fine. Just a scratch. Nothing
a glass of bourbon won't fix.

But his squirming and discomfort suggest otherwise.

ESMERALDA

I need to get you out of these. Let
me stitch it up.

Esmeralda removes Phoebus' trousers, then hurries away --

Quasimodo goes wide-eyed when Phoebus' right leg is revealed to be capped with THAT ARTIFICIAL LIMB.

PHOEBUS

I told you. You can trust me 'cause
I'm just like you. Half-formed. But
you're better than me. You're brave
enough to wear it on your face.

Quasimodo isn't sure what to say. He somberly smiles.

Phoebus motions towards Esmeralda:

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

You really like her don't you?

QUASIMODO

Nobody ever looked at me the way
she does.

PHOEBUS

Like what?

QUASIMODO

Like I deserve to be loved.

Esmeralda returns, tending to Phoebus' open wounds. Something about their shared connection, and intimate moment, similarly wounds our Quasimodo. His eyes lower in jealousy.

INT. UNDERGROUND TAVERN. NIGHT.

Esmeralda, Phoebus and Quasimodo congregate among the couple of **ODD-BUT-FRIENDLY FACES** in the hidden speakeasy. Everybody in the joint either a distant friend or like-minded outlaw.

Phoebus fumbles with his crutches as he stands, bandaged, on the mend, near a **GYPSY FELLOW** with a mostly-toothless grin.

GRINNING FRIEND

(re: his injury)

Brother, you're really driving that body hard.

PHOEBUS

I aspire to have no limbs when I'm done with this life.

GRINNING FRIEND

That's how y'know you did it right.

Phoebus motions to the **BARTENDER**. Three fingers raised.

PHOEBUS

Lady's choice. The usual.

She obliges him with tumblers and his routine whiskey pours.

A FEW STEPS AWAY, Esmeralda and Quasimodo are immersed in the other's company. Quasimodo absolutely captivated.

ESMERALDA

Where are all the places you'd love to see? When the world is restored.

QUASIMODO

I -- don't know. I've never thought of life outside my towers before.

ESMERALDA

It's called daydreaming.

QUASIMODO

I'm happy in Paris.

ESMERALDA

Nobody's happy in Paris. Come on. No wrong answers here. Where?

QUASIMODO

Where the sea turns into the sky.

ESMERALDA

Or does the sky turn into the sea?

QUASIMODO

I heard there are cities outside of France with -- people like me.

ESMERALDA

There might be.

QUASIMODO

Then I'd also like to see that.

ESMERALDA

That would be beautiful.

He cracks a smile at the thought.

QUASIMODO

What about you?

ESMERALDA

Oh, I'm never good at planning.

QUASIMODO

That's not fair--!

ESMERALDA

Sunlight.

QUASIMODO

We have sunlight.

ESMERALDA

Not *real* sunlight. The clouds might part but the rain stays. You see it on all of our faces.

QUASIMODO

Maybe down here on the streets. But not from above. I can bring you, up to Notre Dame, and you'll see. From my tower you see everything. In the clouds, even if the streets are in shadow, you can feel the sun.

ESMERALDA

You'll take me?

QUASIMODO

Yes.

ESMERALDA

You have to promise. We're family now. And family keeps promises.

QUASIMODO

Yes. Yes. Cross my heart.

Phoebus returns with the tumblers of whiskey. One for each of them. Quasimodo looks concerned.

PHOEBUS

There are too many things you've never tried.

Phoebus sips his. Then Esmeralda. Then Quasimodo. He chokes.

QUASIMODO

--like fire.

Phoebus and Esmeralda share a smile.

LATER THAT EVENING: Quasimodo is dancing near a reconditioned JUKEBOX playing POP CLASSICS. Traded from partner to partner. Making friends. Experiencing the beauty of connection.

Esmeralda finishes a conversation with the grinning toothless man before she returns to Phoebus at the table, shoveling his food into his mouth.

PHOEBUS

How bad is it? Our faces must be all over Paris by now.

ESMERALDA

They're not.

PHOEBUS

That can't be.

ESMERALDA

Only his.

Esmeralda motions at Quasimodo:

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

They're turning Paris against him.

PHOEBUS

They made him the whipping boy?

ESMERALDA

Yes. And preying on our compassion.

(beat)

Which really fucking works on me.

Their body language and uninterrupted gaze are all we need to see. These two have fallen in love again.

PHOEBUS

What if we left here then?

ESMERALDA

How?

PHOEBUS

There's a colony outside of London.
Near Dartford. We can go and start
everything over.

ESMERALDA

And then what?

PHOEBUS

Take a stab at a life. We never had
that chance together.

ESMERALDA

Run off. Get married. Own property.
Be totally ordinary.

PHOEBUS

How wonderful does that sound?

ESMERALDA

We'd bring Quasimodo?

PHOEBUS

He could scare the crows.

ESMERALDA

Phoebus--

PHOEBUS

Sorry.

ESMERALDA

And we would have children?

PHOEBUS

Yes. Three. Because we can. Because
it's our right.

ESMERALDA

I really hope they'd have my sense
of direction.

PHOEBUS

And my temperament.

ESMERALDA

And your swagger.

PHOEBUS

And your everything else.

She smirks, but clearly dismisses the notion before he wanted
her to. Disappointment melts Phoebus' smile.

ESMERALDA

It's fun to daydream. Another life maybe. Give me a call. I promise I won't forget about you.

EXT. DAMP PARIS STREETS. NIGHT.

Phoebus moves through the dark streets, his face concealed as he swerves through aimless human traffic.

On every street corner: ELECTRONIC ADVERTS display footage of Quasimodo from the Festival, yelling, biting, enraged.

And below it: *DEAD OR ALIVE. INFORMATION IS REWARDED.*

INT. PHOEBUS' APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Phoebus hurries around his ransacked apartment, gathering his belongings as silently as possible. In the doorway, a YOUNGER WOMAN slinks in, taking him by surprise.

They share a comfortable familiarity. This is his **EX-FIANCÉE**.

FIANCÉE

Some officers came looking for you. Scared me. Where have you been?

PHOEBUS

They think I've gone missing?

FIANCÉE

Gone rogue.

PHOEBUS

If only it were so black and white.

FIANCÉE

Why would you throw your life away like this? We were happy.

PHOEBUS

Lilian, we really weren't.

FIANCÉE

But you were alive.

PHOEBUS

You sent them away?

FIANCÉE

I told them I hadn't seen you since the breakup.

PHOEBUS

But they asked you to stay here and
notify them next time you did.

She sadly nods.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

And so you just did---?

FIANCÉE

I thought you should know.

PHOEBUS

Class act.

FIANCÉE

Phoebus, if you're in trouble, then
turn yourself in. They're pardoning
anybody with information--

PHOEBUS

You need to promise me you'll tell
them you never saw me.

FIANCÉE

I can't lie to them.

PHOEBUS

Here's the thing, Lilian. I'm going
to walk out that door and get away
from this. I have before. And will
again. And they'll take that out on
you. If you ever loved me, you have
to believe me.

(beat)

You saw a ghost. A burglar. A stray
dog. Anything but me. These men are
unhinged. They will make sure that
was the last call you'll ever make.

Phoebus pushes by her. One last kiss. Then is out the door.

INT. NOTRE DAME. NIGHT.

IN THE WAR ROOM: Frolo is eclipsed by A DOZEN MONITORS. His
INTELLIGENCE STAFF scrolls through SECURITY FOOTAGE from the
car chase with Quasimodo. Freezing on IMAGES of the outlaws.

Zooming in, they focus on PHOEBUS' face.

Frolo recognizes him. And CACKLES a bit to himself.

FROLLO

Of course. Vermin on a salary. I'm now employing the terrorists.

Then, they focus in on Esmeralda.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

Who is this? Who is that girl?

The AGENTS clicks through different pictures of her. All the security footage. Each one displaying her undeniable beauty. Her raven hair. Her emerald eyes. Her enticing body.

SERVICE AGENT

Not a citizen. A gypsy. They call her Esmeralda.

FROLLO

Give me a minute. Leave.

His staff obliges. In a second, they're all out the door.

And Frolo remains, standing amongst a DOZEN PICTURES of the haunting Esmeralda. His siren. Suddenly thoroughly obsessed.

Frolo focuses in on them. Infatuated by her body, her eyes, her beauty, and the alluring, carnal effect she has on him.

He snaps himself out of it:

FROLLO (CONT'D)

She is the devil! Born to make men weak in the knees. Driven mad!

LATER IN THE EVENING: Frolo kneels at the altar, consumed in his prayers. Panning around him we are reminded again of the BREATHTAKING BEAUTY of Notre-Dame Cathedral.

That glowing stained-glass rose window. Majestic grand organ. The vaulted ceilings. Faded Renaissance artwork.

Frolo creases his eyes closed, tight, as if he is trying to lock out his prior sinful thoughts.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

Holy Mary, Mother of God. Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death--

Or unwanted, painful memories:

QUICK CUT: our younger FROLLO and JEHAN, as teenagers, watch through tears as TWO CASKETS are lowered into fresh dirt.

QUICK CUT: Frollo soothes his sobbing brother, sitting in the chapel of Notre-Dame. New orphans awaiting a new direction in their lives. Frollo filled with hope. Jehan with rage.

QUICK CUT: Frollo with GUDULE, taking in the deformed infant, and with the grace of God, deciding to adopt him.

QUICK CUT: Frollo and Jehan with a growing QUASIMODO, raising the boy as their own. A new bond for the brothers.

QUICK CUT: Frollo in his office, begging Jehan not to attend the Festival of Fools.

QUICK CUT: Frollo watches in horror as Jehan is carried dead from the Festival.

AND FROLLO IS FINALLY PULLED FROM THAT TRANCE.

Tears brim his eyes as he stands, arms-wide, screaming at the altar and crucifix. Descending into an internal madness.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

Why do you test me with this life?!
Why must I stay alive when everyone
I love dies?!

Frollo catches his breath, collecting himself. Then sneers.

INT. THE BELLTOWER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Frollo climbs the spiral staircase of Notre Dame.

INT. THE BELLCHAMBER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Frollo inspects, now despises, the CHARCOAL SKETCHES swinging from the beams: portraits of the bells, gargoyles, bird's eye views of Paris. Quasimodo's self-portrait. And Jehan.

FROLLO

(touching the portrait)

It was a fool's mission trying to
save you both.

Frollo recognizes a new detailed portrait: one of the radiant ESMERALDA, a stunning specimen. Frollo crosses to Quasimodo's bed. Sifting through drawings. Picture after picture, sketch after sketch, of the gypsy fugitive. Hatred clouds his eyes.

Then one familiar face appears in a drawing. Frollo registers it: a PORTRAIT of PIERRE GRINGOIRE drinking champagne sitting on his sofa.

Another clue. Frolo flashes a wicked grin.

Off the sketch, we TRANSITION INTO--

INT. GRINGOIRE'S PENTHOUSE CONDO. NIGHT.

CLOSE ON: a TELEVISION SCREEN playing ESMERALDA silhouetted against a RED BACKGROUND...

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN)

We demand the immediate resignation of Prime Minister Louise Deete, and her Cabinet of Ministries including Claude Frolo. In their place, the citizens will elect new leadership.

PULLING BACK: Gringoire watches in his luxurious condominium.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

Leadership that is not appointed. Leadership not afraid to eliminate the criminality of gypsy families, and that, with open arms, embraces illegitimates including Quasimodo: the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

Gringoire restlessly paces, in his robe, drinking his nightly bottle of champagne. A routine well tended to.

ESMERALDA (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

Frolo's only ambition is the glory of war in his name. His greed stole our government from us. So what are we going to do? Take it lying down? No. Help us take France back. They won't listen. Let them suffer.

The broadcast CUTS OUT. Then the REGULAR PARISIAN PROGRAMMING returns to his television.

Suddenly, there is a LOUD CRASH. Gringoire drops his glass on the floor. SHATTERING IT. Startled.

IN THE LIVING ROOM: Gringoire finds Claude Frolo, flanked by Olivier and his guard, who obliterated the locked front door.

A deliciously evil smirk kisses Frolo's lips.

FROLLO

Sorry to let myself in. You must understand it isn't safe outside anymore for government officials.

GRINGOIRE
What do I owe the pleasure, sir?

FROLLO
Please, Pierre. Call me Claude.

Frollo throws down, onto the coffee table, A FEW PHOTOGRAPHS.

FROLLO (CONT'D)
I need to know what you know about
the underground.

GRINGOIRE
Nothing.

FROLLO
(prying:)
The Court of Miracles.

GRINGOIRE
I don't know anything. Claude.

Frollo holds up ONE PICTURE of a lovely **REDHEAD** woman kissing
an equally lovely **BRUNETTE** in public.

FROLLO
This is?

Caught, Gringoire drops his ARISTOCRATIC ACCENT:

GRINGOIRE
Marion.

FROLLO
Your wife.

GRINGOIRE
My wife.

Frollo pulls out A SECOND PHOTOGRAPH. This time of Gringoire
himself, huddling lips near **ANOTHER MAN**.

FROLLO
And this -- this is not your wife.

GRINGOIRE
No.

FROLLO
I could go on?

GRINGOIRE
No need. I spent enough time bowing
my head in shame about it.

FROLLO

A man of your celebrity maintaining this masquerade leads me to believe that you are, in fact, aware of the underground. Now you have a choice. They can kill you. Or I can pardon you. If you tell me where--

GRINGOIRE

I said I don't have information.

FROLLO

I really liked you, Pierre. Perhaps even respected you. And that's why I turned a blind eye to all this. You think there's anything in this city that I don't know about?

GRINGOIRE

Clearly not the *Court of Miracles*.

And off Gringoire's defiant expression, we **SMASH TO:**

INT. THE UNDERGROUND FOSTER HOME. DAY.

Esmeralda cares to a bedridden Clopin. Struggling to breathe. Not an encouraging scene. His time very clearly running out. Their eyes are red, witnessing BREAKING NEWS about:

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN)

Pierre Gringoire, Parisian treasure and adored television personality, was found murdered in his home.

(sadly:)

Pierre was 52 years young.

QUICK CUT: footage of Gringoire on the tile of his condo, dry blood sticks to his colorless forehead. A bullet wound.

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

The terrorist organization known as the *Court of Miracles* has turned on the media--

Esmeralda's eyes moisten. Emotionally helpless.

ESMERALDA

This isn't the people.

CLOPIN

No. This means they know.

ON THE SCREEN: Quasimodo's WANTED MUGSHOT again appears.

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN)

The Hunchback of Notre Dame and his gypsy fugitives are armed. And very dangerous. Illegals may be rewarded and pardoned for their crimes if they come forward with intelligence leading to the *Court of Miracles*--

BACK IN THE BEDROOM: Clopin has a COUGHING FIT. He endeavors to find the energy to stand.

CLOPIN

They're getting warmer. It's only a matter of time before they find us.

ESMERALDA

Then we need to get the children to safety.

CLOPIN

There's a bunker in Belleville that Pierre never knew about.

ELSEWHERE, Quasimodo and a recovered Phoebus sit with a pair of **TWIN BOYS**. Quasimodo is touched by their kindness towards him as he sketches NOTRE-DAME and tells a story:

QUASIMODO

Emmanuel's the oldest. And one of my closest friends. She plays the most beautiful music.

TWIN ONE

You watch the city from up there?

QUASIMODO

Yes. And when the clouds part, it's an amazing view. The Seine sings as beautifully as the bells!

TWIN TWO

In the daylight?

Quasimodo lulls. Nodding, and sadly reminiscing:

QUASIMODO

Yes. Especially then.

INT. ROMA BOARDING HOUSE. NIGHT.

An elderly **HOUSE MATRON** is weeping on her knees, a gun placed against her sweaty forehead.

PULLING BACK: Olivier holds the weapon, with conflicted eyes, standing with Claude Frollo and the **CITY GUARD**.

Frollo displays a device with FOOTAGE OF THE FUGITIVES.

FROLLO

This gypsy's name is Esmeralda. And we can spare your life. If you tell us where she is hiding.

HOUSE MATRON

I don't know who she is.
(desperate)
I promise.

Frollo struts the lengths of the hallways, wood floors CREAK beneath his boots. Doors lead to rooms on both sides of him. He peeks in their frames at neatly-tucked beds.

FROLLO

Not the best business you run. If a perfectly respectable hotel doesn't have any patrons.

IN ONE ROOM: Frollo spots a CHILD'S SHOE dropped on the floor carelessly. And on closer inspection, a bookcase which seems to be slightly slanted.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

A glass of water would be nice.

The matron enters with a glass, followed by the guard. Frollo places it on the bookcase. It slides, SCRAPING ALONG the top, until it reaches the edge, and SHATTERS on the floor.

On Frollo's cue, the guards SHOOT THROUGH THE BOOKCASE.

The house matron bursts into tears, part-mourning, part-fear, as blood seeps from underneath.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

You will let me know where the rest are, or my men won't stop.

MOMENTS LATER: **GYPSIES** are pulled from hiding places. Men are beaten. Women are manhandled. Olivier looks disgusted.

OLIVIER

Easy. That's enough. Enough.

But his guard doesn't listen. The gypsies are dragged outside and thrown into LARGE MILITARY BUSES, bars on the windows.

Who knows where they'll be disposed of.

INT. A SEEDY, UNDERGROUND DISCO. NIGHT.

Debauchery and happiness as **CLUB PATRONS** grind on each other. All races. All genders. All sexualities.

Without warning, the **MILITARY**, led by Olivier, bursts inside, guns drawn, thrusting panicked people into handcuffs.

SHOTS ARE FIRED by some heartless guards, taking down people desperately trying to flee them.

Despite his best efforts, Olivier fails to restrain his men.

EXT. DAMP PARIS STREETS. NIGHT.

More **PRISONERS** are loaded into LARGE MILITARY BUSES, shipped out of the country or jailed.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE. NIGHT.

Exhausted **GOVERNMENT WORKERS** fling DRAPED BODIES into graves.

INT. A RUNDOWN CAFÉ. DAY.

Olivier, in his street clothes, slides a MANILA ENVELOPE over to a very incognito Phoebus.

OLIVIER
Dozens of hideouts. Set to raid.

PHOEBUS
I don't know how to repay you.

Phoebus smiles, appreciative. Olivier somberly nods back.

INT. UNDERGROUND TAVERN. NIGHT.

BURSTING through doors of our speakeasy, Frolo and his guard are surprised to discover the gypsies are one step ahead.

The stench of spilt alcohol is fresh. Beer mugs on the tables perspire. **SANCTUARY** sloppily scribbled on coasters.

Frolo can hardly conceal his disappointment.

FROLLO
Good for them. It's almost cute.

And a relieved smile graces Olivier's lips.

INT. COURT OF MIRACLES CYBER DEN. NIGHT.

The guard shatters through the door of the defunct laundromat turned cyber-studio, fire arms raised only to find:

There is no equipment. The servers, monitors, and cables have been removed. Instead, words of the revolution are graffitied on every wall: **SANCTUARY. SANCTUARY.**

Frollo's lips contort grotesquely in anger.

INT. THE UNDERGROUND FOSTER HOME. NIGHT.

Frollo wanders around our underground foster home, empty and recently vacated, other than some strewn children's toys and clothes abandoned in a haste.

Words again mock them upon the walls: **SANCTUARY. SANCTUARY.**

FROLLO

I know gypsies are fortune tellers.
But something tells me they're just
not *this good* at it.

Suspicious, Frollo sneers at his guard. Olivier numb to him.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

I will find out which one of you is
responsible. Mark my words.

INT. A STUFFY MANSION. NIGHT.

CLOSE ON: a moustached **PORTLY MAN**'s horrid orgasm face.

He removes himself from his bed, climbing off of a young and battered **GYPSY WOMAN**. She forces a smile as he moves to the bathroom, ripping off the condom, and relieving himself.

PORTLY MAN

Oh don't pout, chicken. As long as
you're keeping my bed warm, nobody
will find out you're here.

He washes his hands, looks up into the mirror--

And written on the SHOWER CURTAIN opposite him, reading in a reflection, is our rebel yell: **SANCTUARY.**

PORTLY MAN (CONT'D)

--fuck me.

BURSTING FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN is a **MAN IN A QUASIMODO MASK** quickly pulling wire around the portly man's fat neck.

His eyes go wide. Blood vessels pop. He stops breathing.

EXT. MÉTRO STATION. NIGHT.

CLOSE ON: a MOBILE DEVICE streaming a BREAKING NEWSCAST...

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN)
 Leon Tan, Minister of the Interior,
 is the seventh from our Council of
 Ministers to be assassinated by the
Court of Miracles. And the eleventh
 French diplomat.

PULLING BACK: the device is held by a **SLIM WOMAN** waiting for her train. She suddenly realizes she's alone.

She hears a rustle in the distance and moves further down the platform. Another rustle, and she yanks a knife from her bag.

SLIM WOMAN
 I'm armed. I'm warning you.

Nobody is there. The train SCREAMS in and she hurries into an empty car. The doors close behind her.

She sighs a breath of solace.

A short-lived calm. Turning to her left, approaching her, she spots a **MAN IN A QUASIMODO MASK**.

She leaps to her feet and darts to the right, finding another **MAN IN A QUASIMODO MASK**. Cornered by her assailants.

SLIM WOMAN (CONT'D)
 I didn't ask to be appointed to the
 council. I'm still a patriot--

INT. THE NEW UNDERGROUND SOMEWHERE. DAY.

IN A DIM OFFICE: Phoebus hovers with Clopin over a FLOOR PLAN of Notre Dame. Red checks signify where guards are stationed.

Behind them, Esmeralda is occupied by the TELEVISION:

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN)
 Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cindy
 Moreau taken too soon--

Clopin smirks. Phoebus and Esmeralda aren't as delighted.

CLOPIN

And then there were eight.

PHOEBUS

But still the Prime Minister isn't stepping down.

Clopin refocuses their attention back to the floor plan.

CLOPIN

The citizens see Notre Dame as our symbol of oppression. Frolo's hub. They'll stand beside us and fight. We can take it back for the people or we'll burn it to the ground.

PHOEBUS

Burn it?

ESMERALDA

We inspire people to preserve our past not destroy it.

CLOPIN

I'm dying, Esmeralda. But I sure as Hell am not going before I see the change we fought for. If Notre Dame is the casualty for the future then I can go peacefully knowing that.

IN THE OTHER ROOM: Quasimodo watches the same fear-mongering NEWSCAST and '*The Hunt for the Gypsy Fugitives.*'

His picture is displayed on the television:

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN)

Quasimodo is a national threat. At risk of spreading disease, fueling terrorism, and capable of murder. Paris is on lockdown --

ON THE SCREEN: are flashes of death and war. The underground found and destroyed. Gypsies dragged from their homes. Taken into custody. Killed. A horrific new array of information.

QUASIMODO

Me. It's me. Because of me.

Quasimodo, nervously wrings his hands. He peeks into...

THE OFFICE: where a now fiery argument between Esmeralda and Clopin runs its course.

CLOPIN

This is going to sound crazy to you
but hear me out.

ESMERALDA

Great start to win me over.

CLOPIN

It's only a matter of time before
somebody gets to Quasimodo.

ESMERALDA

Your point?

CLOPIN

Let's embrace that. Put him at the
front of the battle.

ESMERALDA

And our human casualty.

CLOPIN

What did you think the cost would
be to change the world?

ESMERALDA

I'd rather my life than his.

CLOPIN

You've always been special. Even at
birth I saw you for what you were:
a beautiful soul. A fighter.

(beat)

History remembers the fighter that
falls. Let them remember Quasimodo
as the martyr that restored France.
We can't afford that to be you.

(honest:)

You're too important. You can help
us rebuild.

Esmeralda looks down at her TRINKET BRACELET.

ESMERALDA

I won't let Quasimodo die for the
choices I've made.

CLOPIN

Esmeralda.

ESMERALDA

My mother would've wanted me to--

CLOPIN

Gudule.

ESMERALDA

What?

CLOPIN

Your mother's name was Gudule. You were stolen, Esmeralda. As a child. Don't forget that.

Eyes-moistening, knowing for the first time:

ESMERALDA

Gudule? My mother--

CLOPIN

She couldn't care for you.

ESMERALDA

You said you never knew her name.

CLOPIN

Because I couldn't let you go back. That wasn't your destiny. This is. You were meant for so much more.

ESMERALDA

That wasn't your decision to make.

CLOPIN

No. And that decision changed your life. But we're just going to have to live knowing that.

ESMERALDA

Is she dead now? My mother--

Clopin doesn't respond. And now Esmeralda has her answer.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Then I refuse to let Quasimodo die for the choices you've made.

PHOEBUS

Listen. Guys--

Phoebus motions over at the door, and all three spy Quasimodo eavesdropping, quickly piecing everything together.

Conflicted, Quasimodo turns around and darts out of the room.

Esmeralda chases after him, following up the stairs, through the upper hallways, right up to--

THE FRONT DOOR: where Quasimodo throws his weight behind its rusty latches, peeling them open, tears brimming his eyes.

ESMERALDA

Quasimodo, calm down! Wait--

QUASIMODO

I'm the reason everyone is dying.

ESMERALDA

That's not true.

QUASIMODO

You promised me a better life. You promised I deserved more than what my Master gave me. Now you hide me under the streets. No sunlight. No beauty. No music. It's no better than my prison at Notre-Dame.

Esmeralda can't argue with him.

QUASIMODO (CONT'D)

You said that I would save Paris.
But who will save me?

ESMERALDA

We will. Fighting right beside you.

QUASIMODO

You made me do the wrong thing! You made me turn my back on Frollo. MY FAMILY. You said you were family. And you lied to me.

ESMERALDA

I didn't!

QUASIMODO

(teary-eyed:)

There is so much I've never lived.
Never *felt*. I don't want to die.

(resolute:)

But I don't want you to die for me.

Quasimodo flings open the front door, and runs outside into:

EXT. SOME FILTHY ARRONDISSEMENT. PARIS. DAY.

Quasimodo storms through the alleys. He struggles to pull his cloak over his face. Then discards it. Enjoys the feel of the day's sunlight on his skin.

Esmeralda is directly behind, right on his tail, panicking.

ESMERALDA

Stop! Wait. Please don't--

She reaches him, a hand on his arm, but he flings her away.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Don't do this!

Quasimodo abandons her, happening into a BUSY INTERSECTION.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Come back--!

But it's too late. Traffic SCREECHES to a halt. **DRIVERS HONK**, nearly colliding with him, swerving around each other.

The motorists, gradually, notice the *face* of the disrupter.

DRIVER ONE

It's the Hunchback!

DRIVER TWO

Call the police.

DRIVER THREE

Hide your children!!--

It's a panic. Many people flee in all directions at sight of their monster. Fearing for their lives. Believing the media.

And Quasimodo, calm, just remains still, non-confrontational. Standing in the traffic. Revealed in public.

Waiting for anything. To be taken down. Or taken back.

Police cars speed into the square, doors SLAM, weapons out:

OFFICER

Don't move! Don't move!

But of course, Quasimodo can't hear them.

IN A MATTER OF MINUTES: their **BACK-UP** arrives, with military vehicles. The guard poised, guns drawn. Helicopters circling in the air, searchlights aimed.

And Quasimodo still remains tranquil. An inner peace.

A **LARGE CROWD** has gathered, encircling the scene. As officers try to clear the area, passionate protests erupt amongst the witnesses on the street.

PEDESTRIAN
The Hunchback is innocent!

PEDESTRIAN TWO
Arrest him. He's a walking plague.

PEDESTRIAN THREE
He's just as human as any of us.

PEDESTRIAN TWO
He's a disgusting monster.

PEDESTRIAN
No more than you, asshole.

Fists fly. Officers are quick on the scene to intervene.

BACK IN THE ALLEY: Phoebus arrives, tries to escort Esmeralda further back into the shadows. Away from the chaos.

PHOEBUS
Please, just let him go.

ESMERALDA
They'll kill him.

PHOEBUS
Maybe not. We've gotten ourselves out of worse messes.

She turns. Meets his eyes. Hers are incredibly determined.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)
Don't do this. I know what you're thinking. And I beg you. Don't.

ESMERALDA
I hoped I'd live to see that day of change. As long as those bells rang I had faith. Maybe I was wrong--

Phoebus leans in and kisses her deeply...

PHOEBUS
In case I don't get another chance to do that.

ESMERALDA
What would happen if we could live forever?

PHOEBUS
We'd melt into each other's arms.

ESMERALDA

Love is only a tree blooming green
leaves over ruined hearts.

PHOEBUS

But leaves eventually fall. And the
heart is left in ruins again.

Esmeralda unclasps her TRINKET BRACELET, hands it to him:

ESMERALDA

I want you to hold onto this. I'll
get it next time I see you. That's
how you know to not be afraid.

A long, sad moment. They break hands.

PHOEBUS

Esmeralda, I--

But she leaves him, elbowing through the **CROWD OF SPECTATORS:**

ONTO THE CHAOTIC STREET, to protect Quasimodo, shielding him
with her own body. Her back is to him so he cannot understand
what she requests.

ESMERALDA

I am the gypsy fugitive, Esmeralda.
Of the *Court of Miracles*.

Around her, the spectators FILM ON THEIR MOBILE DEVICES.

Meanwhile, the perplexed, but fascinated, guard watch as she
extends her hands outwards, peacefully asking to be cuffed.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

I am exchanging my life for that of
Quasimodo. Turning myself in.

A buzz of excitement reverberates among the crowd.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

You promised any illegals bringing
the *Court of Miracles* into custody
merited a pardon. And, in front of
the eyes of all of Paris, Quasimodo
brought me forth. And I expect your
decency to honor those words.

The officers inch forward, service rifles expertly aimed, but
timid and unstable on their feet, fearful, quite the contrast
to Esmeralda's confident posture.

Her wrists still exposed.

She is quickly handcuffed and taken without any struggle. Our Quasimodo is next. And dragged in the opposite direction.

No words are exchanged or spoken between the two as they go.

INT. ESMERALDA'S ISOLATION UNIT. DAY.

A LONG BUZZ. The cell door slides open. Rifles are trained on Esmeralda, the guards protecting and covering--

CLAUDE FROLLO as he struts inside. He can hardly believe the sight of her. Overcome with joy to have her finally arrested. And, at first glance, completely intoxicated by her beauty.

Esmeralda sits in the corner of her cell, on the cold floor, stripped mostly bare. Still, all grace, even in danger.

FROLLO

I'm surprised. I really thought you had more fight left in you.

He chuckles to himself.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

How sad that we all have hearts. An unfortunate fate to have compassion kill you. And for some monster.

She refuses to take his bait. Remains confidently aware.

ESMERALDA

Your men have tortured us. Beat us. Murdered our families. Destroyed my people. But the fight is not over.

FROLLO

You think you are miserable, gypsy? You don't know misery. My parents were ripped to shreds by your kind. My brother. My sanity.

He lulls closer, menacing, yet deeply taking in her scent.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

Do you know what it's like to pray to trade their lives for your own? Your salvation? Your immortality? To sell your soul to some god that can not bring them back?

ESMERALDA

I've known more loss, and love, in my lifetime than you ever will.

FROLLO

You know love? The affection that ugly hunchback feels for you? You call *that* -- love?

ESMERALDA

You are the ugly one. I know every person on our streets. And you are the only monster among them.

(venomous:)

You are a murderer. You are ugly. And old. And will die alone.

Frollo hasn't removed his eyes from her body. Wheels turning in his head:

FROLLO

And to think, I was about to offer to spare your life. The body they carry away in the casket doesn't have to be yours. Lead me to the rest of them. You can be hidden. With me. Just like Quasimodo was.

She spits in his face. Frollo, actually, smiles at this.

ESMERALDA

Death horrifies me less than you.

FROLLO

Suit yourself. Let's put on a show. Let them see you die tomorrow.

(proudly:)

Then no one will have you.

Frollo removes himself. The jail cell SLAMS SHUT behind him. His bodyguard on his tail.

Esmeralda is left alone with her final thoughts.

INT. THE NEW UNDERGROUND SOMEWHERE. NIGHT.

Clopin's reclined in the dark, with a dim lamp light his only source to catch Phoebus entering, head bowed respectfully.

Clopin grimaces at his company. Mourning Esmeralda's capture.

PHOEBUS

I can't believe that I never told her how much I loved her.

CLOPIN

Why would you let her go?

PHOEBUS

There wasn't a thing that either of us could have done to stop her.

CLOPIN

You have balls coming back here.

PHOEBUS

Tomorrow at noon. Place du Parvis. They're executing her.

CLOPIN

I won't bring myself to watch.

PHOEBUS

I don't plan to. I plan to stop it. I plan to take back Notre Dame like you and I designed. I have a group of men ready to fight with us.

Clopin notices Phoebus gripping onto her TRINKET BRACELET:

CLOPIN

It's all my fault. All of her pain. I'm just a foolish man that tried rewriting fate. Maybe France wasn't meant to be saved. Maybe Esmeralda was destined to survive.

PHOEBUS

Maybe.

CLOPIN

And I'm just a coward.

PHOEBUS

I know a way you can fix that.

INT. BELLTOWER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Quasimodo's legs and arms are shackled to the balcony of his belltower. Frollo paces around him. Then lulls, right in his line of sight, unavoidably smiling wide.

Frollo motions to a **GUARD**, who swings up a LEATHER WHIP, and **CRACKS IT DOWN HARD**. Lashing Quasimodo. He barely winces.

FROLLO

It really does pain me that you've lost your way, my sweet boy.

Quasimodo doesn't meet his eyes. Another LASH. And ANOTHER.

FROLLO (CONT'D)
 Your punishment. For disobeying me.
 Is watching your friend die.

He is LASHED again. Quasimodo numbly WHIMPERS.

FROLLO (CONT'D)
 May that inspire you, Quasimodo, to
 choose a more righteous path.

EXT. PLACE DU PARVIS. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

It is the day of reckoning. In the square outside Notre Dame, a RAISED WOODEN STAGE was erected to present this execution. Several LARGE WIDE ELECTRONIC SCREENS line the perimeter, so everybody has a vantage point, much like at the Festival.

THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS are crammed into every available space. It seems as if all of Paris has come out to witness the gypsy revolutionary be executed. Is it out of morbid fascination?

Or is it out of respect?

Many have their MOBILE DEVICES out, filming, posting on their private pages. Above them, a drone flies, darting in and out, filming the spectator event from the skies.

UP IN THE TOWER: Quasimodo remains chained, doomed to witness the death of his friend. Emotionally exhausted. Helpless.

NOT FAR AWAY: in a secure government viewing booth, the Prime Minister has an unobstructed sight line.

DOWN IN THE PLAZA: Esmeralda is escorted out of a police van, hands cuffed behind her back. She is shepherded to the stage, and bound, tightly, to a post.

IN THE CROWD: we spy Phoebus, veiled, a tear gently contours his cheek, nervous but slyly tranquil. Oddly still.

Elsewhere, we spot Clopin. Wheels steadily turn in his head. Something up their sleeves.

BACK IN THE PLAZA: Notre Dame's doors lurch open, and Frollo sweeps down the steps, flanked by Olivier, and his guard.

Frollo grabs Esmeralda's jaw, sensually, taking an unusually close inspection of her, whispering in her ear:

FROLLO
 Any last words?

He means her acceptance for his offer. But instead, she frees her face from his grip, and addresses her final crowd:

ESMERALDA

My name is Esmeralda. Of the *Court of Miracles*. I am a gypsy, like so many of you and our parents before us. My blood will be spilled today. Let that be symbolic of the blood of our people who fought for this country. For our future.

Her face is BROADCAST LIVE onto the LARGE ELECTRONIC SCREENS.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

We cannot allow this to be the end of the fight. That better day will come, for all of your children, as long as we never let them win. So, think of me. Think of Quasimodo. As the faces of civil war. The faces of displaced families and children everywhere. We must fight for our justice. Until we are no longer a country that marks our friends as our enemies because of the color of their skin, their religion, or the hunch in their back. We are human. And that is our one shared truth.

UP IN THE TOWER: Esmeralda's speech energizes Quasimodo. He pulls at the chains that bind him, flailing, trying to free himself with his brute strength.

DOWN IN THE PLAZA: the people of Paris are equally inspired. They RAISE THEIR FISTS. A silent protest. In solidarity.

Frollo rolls his eyes. Firmly addressing his guard.

FROLLO

Captain Olivier.

Olivier and his officers spread out: forming a FIRING SQUAD. Their rifles aimed at Esmeralda.

Another tear escapes Phoebus' eyes. Heavily breathing. Clopin also chokes back emotion. Though they both do not move.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

On your call, Captain.

ABOVE THEM: Quasimodo BREAKS FREE OF THOSE CHAINS. His wrists sore and bloody.

He throws his leg over the balustrade of the gallery, fastens a rope upon a column, and shimmies down the Cathedral's side, like a raindrop.

DOWN IN THE PLAZA: Esmeralda stares straight into the barrels of the guns, unwavering, wide-eyed.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

I will not ask again. Captain.

Olivier pauses. Glances around at the CROWD OF PARISIANS who stand in unity with this revolutionary.

He locks eyes with Phoebus in the audience, who nods at him. Olivier nods back. A kind wink.

And he lowers his weapon. He ejects the magazine from his gun and empties the rounds from their chambers as they CLINK onto the pavement.

Olivier then raises his fist into the air.

One after another, his fellow guards do the same. Ammunition on the ground. Fists in the air, rebellious. Standing down.

Esmeralda smiles, relieved.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

How dare you disobey a direct order
from your government. Such a shame.
You would have had a fine career.

Frollo pulls a HANDGUN from a holster beneath his jacket, and aims at ESMERALDA'S CHEST.

Quasimodo hits the ground, darts to the stage, and pounces on Frollo, overpowering him as the GUN FIRES.

THWAP.

Reflexively, some guards move to defend Frollo, but Quasimodo quickly debilitates them with terrific blows of his fists.

Quasimodo flings Esmeralda on his back, carrying her past the firing squad, and straight through the doors of Notre Dame.

Just past the threshold, he SHOUTS OUT AT THE CROWD:

QUASIMODO

SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY!

This was all so rapidly accomplished, Frollo barely has time to register the events. Not until he notices the crowd riled up and roaring does he realize Quasimodo's effect on them.

CROWD
SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY!

On that cue, Clopin and Phoebus lead forward their **GYPSY ARMY** to storm Notre Dame in revolution:

CLOPIN
Attack! Save Esmeralda! Save Paris!

The gypsy army charges into the Place du Parvis, pouring onto the steps of Notre Dame. Some revolutionaries pull over their faces the now-iconic QUASIMODO MASKS.

Some officers try defending Notre Dame though, realizing they spilled their bullets on the ground, are mostly helpless. The people attack. Bloodying them. Tying up those who resist.

Frollo FIRES OFF A FEW SHOTS at the crowd before successfully retreating with a couple members of his guard back into Notre Dame, shutting its LARGE REINFORCED STEEL doors loudly.

Clopin provides the rebels and tramps with weapons. Some they were able to smuggle into the scene. Others they forge out of heavy items lying around.

CLOPIN (CONT'D)
Kill the Minister! Save Quasimodo!

Proving their loyalty to the cause, the MUTINOUS GUARDS strip off their uniforms, joining the REVOLTING CROWD, and pounding on the now-sealed Cathedral door.

NOT FAR AWAY: Madam Prime Minister is led away, to safety, by her private infantry.

INT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

Frollo starts to trail Quasimodo and Esmeralda up the towers, but Quasimodo has deadlocked those doors behind him.

FROLLO
Quasimodo! Open these doors now!

POUNING ON THE CATHEDRAL DOOR terrifies Frollo. That massive steel door is the only thing preventing his certain death.

Frollo spins around to the cowardly guards that followed him inside the church.

FROLLO (CONT'D)
Are you going to just stand there,
and allow them to rip us apart? Or
do you plan to escape?

The soldiers reluctantly help Frollo try to break through the sealed belltower doors.

INT. BELLTOWER. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

HIGH IN THE BELLTOWER: Quasimodo gently rests Esmeralda down. He discovers her blood has painted his hands red.

QUASIMODO

Oh, Esmeralda --

She reveals she was shot in her torso, choking back her pain, and tears, but still demonstrating incredible strength.

ESMERALDA

I'm fine. Quasimodo. You need to make sure that you're safe.

QUASIMODO

I need to protect you. Protect us!

Quasimodo runs to the balcony edge, horrified to find:

IN THE PLAZA BELOW: the MOB has advanced to the main entrance of the church, ascended the stairs, and started to dismantle the steel doors with their levers and makeshift weapons.

FIFTY STRONG-LIMBED MEN, with hammers and crowbars over their shoulders, step from their ranks to destroy the front door.

CLOPIN

If the church is sacred, our people are also. If our people are not sacred, then neither is the church!

But Quasimodo cannot hear any of it!

BACK ON THE BALCONY: Quasimodo panics, assuming the GYPSY MOB exists to harm Esmeralda and him. In his desperate moment, he eyes the TWO LONG STONE RAIN-GUTTERS which discharge over the front entrance.

This sparks an idea.

He rushes into the south belfry, which has been used to store some FRENCH MILITARY ARMORY, and finds a LARGE VAT to light a fire under, throwing in the vat any lead ammunition he finds.

Quasimodo returns to the balcony edge, glancing over, nervous to see that the mob is making progress, and has begun peeling off pieces of metal.

QUASIMODO

We're running out of time! TIME!

His brute strength multiplied tenfold by the consciousness of danger, he sprints back to the belfry, finds a long and heavy loose beam, and drags it outside to the balcony edge.

Quasimodo heaves the beam over the balustrade surrounding the platform, allowing it to drop into the abyss below.

CLOSE ON: its two-hundred foot fall. The enormous beam grazes the cathedral wall and obliterates sculptured figures on its gravity-fueled journey to the pavement.

IN THE PLAZA BELOW: only a FEW LUCKY PEOPLE glance up in time to see a growing shadow cover them and safely move out of the way before--

SMASH. CRUNCH. CRACK.

TWO DOZEN MEN are FLATTENED ON THE STEPS of the church by the heavy beam, which doesn't lose momentum, and rebounds off the steps into the LOITERING CROWD, mauling and breaking the legs and arms of OTHER VAGABONDS retreating in all directions with gut-wrenching CRIES OF TERROR.

Phoebus glances up alarmed, realizing only one man is capable of such strength:

PHOEBUS

Quasimodo doesn't know it's us. He thinks we're attacking them.

CLOPIN

We have to get to him before Frolo does. Keep going.

Clopin stays at the front. The mutinous guards have reloaded their weapons, and SHOOT at the reinforced shut steel doors, destroying the facade of the Cathedral, but bullets ricochet away wildly.

PING. PING. PING.

PHOEBUS

The beam over there --

OLIVIER

Yes. Help me.

The rebels pluck up their courage and hoist the weighty beam, like a feather with one hundred vigorous arms, and thrust it into the door furiously.

As the beam strikes the door it DRONES like an ENORMOUS DRUM. Notre Dame shakes top to bottom, rumbling echoes reverberate from its deepest depths.

SUDDENLY FROM ABOVE: a SHOWER OF BRICKS begin assaulting upon our REBEL ASSAILANTS. One by one, very specifically targeting them. Pelting arms. Shoulders. Heads.

Now lies a heap of dead and wounded. Bleeding and panting. As every eye now is directed to the top of the cathedral.

BACK ON THE BALCONY: Quasimodo pivots to check on Esmeralda, who has propped herself up, bandaging her own wound.

Devoted to saving her life, Quasimodo further descends into a state of panic and chaos. He sprints along the gallery, for a minute, looking for other weapons to throw.

Then he remembers: the MELTING LEAD IN THE BELLCHAMBER.

Quasimodo races to grab the vat of boiling metal, then brings it across the towers to the TWO LONG STONE RAIN-GUTTERS.

BELOW IN THE PLAZA: the rain of bricks has ceased. Our REBELS crowd again at the battering ram. Each man holds their breath and gathers their strength to give ONE FINAL DECISIVE BLOW.

They jolt the door hard enough to loosen its hinges, allowing a small opening.

CLOPIN

Phoebus!!--

The men use their remaining strength to peel the opening wide enough for Phoebus to squeeze his way inside.

Just as Phoebus extends a hand for Clopin to join him--

Clopin and the rebels surrender HEART-RENDERING SHRIEKS, and HOWLS more agonizing than any we have ever heard.

Those who were not screaming, lucky enough to be alive, stare up to find TWO STREAMS OF MOLTEN LEAD pouring from the top of the edifice onto the crowd.

Once the lead ceases, the SCREAMS SUBSIDE and, laying on the steps, burned and dying, are our fallen revolutionary heroes. MOANING IN AGONY from the red-hot hailstones that penetrated their bodies.

Throwing down weapons and the heavy beam by the dead bodies, many of the survivors flee Notre Dame in a complete panic.

Phoebus spies, through a sliver in the door, Olivier rushing to the aid of the wounded, stepping over his friend, Clopin, lifeless on the steps. His final resting place.

BACK IN THE BELLTOWER: Quasimodo is overjoyed that they won. He rushes to Esmeralda's side.

QUASIMODO

Esmeralda, we did it! They're gone.
Are you alright?

ESMERALDA

You are so brave, Quasimodo. Truly.
You're the savior of Paris.

Behind Quasimodo, she spies that BREATHTAKING VIEW of Paris he mentioned to her.

Esmeralda can hardly stand its splendor, totally misty-eyed.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Look at that view! You were right.

QUASIMODO

The sunlight.

ESMERALDA

It's enchanting. You really can see
everything from up here.

Quasimodo helps prop her up, angle her to see our lovely city unadulterated. The Seine glistening in this daylight. Traffic crawling along. Majestic rooftops. The distant Eiffel Tower.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

You kept your promise to me.

QUASIMODO

You love it?

ESMERALDA

I've never seen anything. Anything
this beautiful.

Amongst the splendor are patches of darkness. Areas destroyed by fires. By rebellions. Scars on the face of Paris much like scars on the face of Quasimodo. Obstructing so much beauty.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry we couldn't spend more
time together.

QUASIMODO

We won. We can be here forever.

ESMERALDA

When you look out at our city every morning. Walk in our streets. Don't forget that I'm out there. Even if you don't see me. I am thinking of you. I am so blessed I got to call you my friend. My family.

She sadly reaches out, SIGNING WITH HER HANDS:

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

It's not goodbye that way.

She raises her lips to kiss his cheek. Then brushes his hair, gently, with her fingertips.

Her strength fades and, after a breath: *her hand is lifeless.*

QUASIMODO

Esmeralda? Esmeralda, please!--

He shakes her. Tears fills his eyes. Her blood on his hands.

QUASIMODO (CONT'D)

Please wake up. Esmeralda?

Quasimodo's own strength fades. Breaks down. CRIES. WHIMPERS.

ENTERING FROM THE BELLTOWER: Frollo charges out, gun prepped. Ready to defend himself. Ready to attack.

But he lulls. He is pleased to learn Esmeralda, the fugitive gypsy, is dead. Lying motionless at last after all the havoc she caused. His mission is complete. He is satisfied.

And in this moment, a DEMONIC LAUGH escapes. A laugh that can only come from a man who lost all semblance of humanity.

FROLLO

Well there you have it, my boy.

Quasimodo can't control his weeping.

FROLLO (CONT'D)

All that fighting. And you're left with nothing. You turned your back on me. On your country. And you're repaid with death.

QUASIMODO

I loved her.

FROLLO

Gypsies are not capable of love.

Raising his furious eyes at him:

QUASIMODO
Neither are you.

Enraged, Quasimodo rushes at Frollo, gun flung to the ground, hoists him into the air, and with hands upon his back dangles him over the edge:

FROLLO
(panicked)
Quasimodo. Don't. You don't want to hurt me. I took you in. Raised you. Tried to spare you from this pain.

QUASIMODO
You don't know what man is truly capable of until they let their inner-beast free.

And with that, Quasimodo thrusts Frollo furiously, into the abyss below.

FROLLO
Damnation! DAMNATION!

A stone gargoyle under the balustrade breaks his fall. Frollo clings to it with a frantic grip, begging for help. Quasimodo peers over the edge, seething. A tear descends his cheek.

Frollo desperately scrambles to climb on the gargoyle, making incredible efforts to gain his footing, but his hand slips on the smooth granite.

And Quasimodo watches him plummet.

Frollo falls, head downward with arms outstretched, spinning several times, until he hits the pavement. Barely resembling his evil self, like a crushed insect on the ground.

There, Frollo is motionless at last.

Quasimodo's eyes move from the Notre Dame steps, and Frollo's body in a shapeless heap, to the beautiful eternally-sleeping Esmeralda on the balcony.

QUASIMODO
All that I ever loved lies on the ground before me.

To the gargoyle nearby:

QUASIMODO (CONT'D)
Why was I not made stone like you?

ENTERING FROM THE BELLTOWER: our Phoebus reaches the balcony. Sets eyes upon his dead love, Esmeralda, for the first time.

Phoebus inches over to her body, crumpling on top of her. His SOBS are a painfully guttural sound.

Quasimodo moves to comfort Phoebus. Holds his hand tightly.

EXT. NOTRE DAME. DAY.

MOMENTS LATER: the steel doors of Notre Dame Cathedral swing open. Stepping out, squinting in the sunlight are our heroes: Phoebus. And Quasimodo, who cradles Esmeralda.

Quasimodo, carrying Esmeralda's limp, body is displayed upon the LARGE ELECTRONIC SCREENS lining Place du Parvis.

Phoebus and Quasimodo carefully step over the bodies of their fallen comrades, the litter of destruction in the plaza.

THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS witness the scene. Some survivors from the gypsy army. Some spectators. Some officers. Some gypsies.

All are human. And that is their shared truth.

As Esmeralda had so eloquently inspired in them.

The CROWD parts, making way for Quasimodo to carry Esmeralda through, with Phoebus a few steps behind. As they part, they gradually begin to kneel. Bowing their heads in reverence.

Again, they RAISE THEIR FISTS into the air. Showing the fight is not over. But this battle has been won.

SMASH TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK, WE HEAR: MAJESTIC BELLS of CATHÉDRALE NOTRE-DAME routinely striking the morning hour.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

It begins and ends with the bells.
A gypsy. And a hunchback.

EXT. CATHEDRALE NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS. DAY.

CLOSE ON: Phoebus's LARGE EYES, staring up at the Notre-Dame Cathedral. Thoroughly enjoying the CHIMES as they sound.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

The bells are our hope. If only for
a new hour. A new day.

PULLING BACK: Phoebus is as handsome as ever. Just wiser now. Worldlier. A well-worn soul is sketched into his appearance.

Phoebus is among a SMALL THRONG of people who have stopped to listen to the BELLS. Almost paying a respect, before keeping on with their days.

SUPER: A FEW TOMORROWS THEREAFTER.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)
A new Paris. And our new France.

As Phoebus continues down an avenue of Île de la Cité, behind him, we earn a crisper view of the Notre-Dame wreckage, under an extensive restoration to its former glory.

Its architecture is wounded, but still, undeniably stunning.

EXT. DAMP STREETS OF PARIS. DAY.

Phoebus wanders through the bustling streets of Paris. A warm day. He wears shorts, proudly revealing his artificial limb.

GYPSY AND PARISIAN KIDS laugh and safely play together in the streets. **OFFICERS** stand on each corner, positioned with their service rifles, but their judicial aggression abandoned.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)
Hope changes the world. Gives us a reason to fight. To survive. Build a better future.

On every street corner: **ELECTRONIC ADVERTS** display footage of Quasimodo from the attack on Notre-Dame, hurling objects down to the streets below, delivering fatal blows.

And below it: *THE HUNCHBACK. WANTED FOR MURDER.*

Quasimodo is still considered an active fugitive.

INT. A CHIC CAFÉ. DAY.

Phoebus squeezes through a **CROWD** that has gathered to watch a **LARGE TELEVISION** hung above the register...

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN)
Our open election was scheduled for the first Tuesday of next month. We will elect the first Prime Minister after Louise Deete who was arrested for treason and sentenced to death.

Men and women, Parisians and gypsies alike, smile with hope.

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

Polling shows Socialist Kent Marcus with a sweeping lead, whose popular platform promises opening borders, advancing paths to citizenship, and dismissing the controversial GENEXX insemination process--

Phoebus buys a large cup of coffee. And continues on his way.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

As long as those bells ring we must not lose our faith that better days will come for all of us.

The recognizable sound of CHILDREN LAUGHING pulls us into...

INT. A PARISIAN FOSTER HOME. DAY.

A WARM AND INVITING LIVING ROOM: eclectic mix-and-match decor with TOYS and CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS strewn on the floor. As our Phoebus emotionally, and sweetly, tells his stories to...

A **GROUP OF ORPHANS** gathered at his feet. We recognize some of the children from our journey. From the underground home: the TWIN BOYS, and THE GIRL WITH THE LARGE PINK BOW. Now older.

We realize Phoebus has been wavering between thoughts in his head and his storytelling:

PHOEBUS

Those bells gave a gypsy courage to change the world. The gypsy moved a Hunchback to inspire the people.

The future of Paris now given the chance to build a life for themselves. Above ground.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

And the Hunchback rang the bells.

EXT. MONTMARTRE. DAY.

Phoebus stands on Montmartre, top of their world, overlooking this glorious city. And just how far his people have come.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

Nobody has seen the Hunchback since the day Esmeralda died.

Looking down, he holds Esmeralda's TRINKET BRACELET. Twirling its facets between his fingertips.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

Quasimodo became our great legend.
A symbol of peace.

Phoebus takes it all in, enjoying warm sunlight on his face.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

Some people say the groundskeepers found Esmeralda's crypt unsealed. Inside, two skeletons were clasped in the arms of the other. One: the gypsy Esmeralda. The other: a man with a crooked spine, who crawled in to spend eternity holding hands with his lost love.

Quasimodo steps up next to Phoebus. A fond smile exchanged.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

When they pulled their hands apart, the Hunchback's skeleton is said to have turned to dust.

The two revolutionary friends marvel at the view. Misty-eyed.

PHOEBUS (V.O.)

But that's a story for another day.

PULLING OFF OUR HEROES RAPID-FIRE: we're soaring above Paris, flying over rooftops, stalled traffic, parks, Champs-Élysées, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and off in the distance, on the Seine, our Cathedrale Notre-Dame watches over it all.

SMASH TO BLACK.