

The phantom of the opera
Chapter 2

Meanwhile, Christine Daae uttered a deep sigh, which was answered by a groan. She turned her head, saw Raoul and started. She looked at the doctor, on whom she bestowed a smile, then at her maid, then at Raoul again.

"Monsieur," she said, in a voice not much above a whisper, "who are you?"

"Mademoiselle," replied the young man, kneeling on one knee and pressing a fervent kiss on the diva's hand, "I AM THE LITTLE BOY WHO WENT INTO THE SEA TO RESCUE YOUR SCARF."

Christine again looked at the doctor and the maid; and all three began to laugh.

Raoul turned very red and stood up.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "since you are pleased not to recognize me, I should like to say something to you in private, something very important."

"When I am better, do you mind?" And her voice shook. "You have been very good."

"Yes, you must go," said the doctor, with his pleasantest smile. "Leave me to attend to mademoiselle."

"I am not ill now," said Christine suddenly, with strange and unexpected energy.

She rose and passed her hand over her eyelids.

"Thank you, Doctor. I should like to be alone. Please go away, all of you. Leave me. I feel very restless this evening."

The doctor tried to make a short protest, but, perceiving the girl's evident agitation, he thought the best remedy was not to thwart her. And he went away, saying to Raoul, outside:

"She is not herself to-night. She is usually so gentle."

Then he said good night and Raoul was left alone. The whole of this part of the theater was now deserted. The farewell ceremony was no doubt taking place in the foyer of the ballet. Raoul thought that Daae might go to it and he waited in the silent solitude, even hiding in the favoring shadow of a doorway. He felt a terrible pain at his heart and it was of this that he wanted to speak to Daae without delay.

Suddenly the dressing-room door opened and the maid came out by herself, carrying bundles. He stopped her and asked how her mistress was. The woman laughed and said that she was quite well, but that he must not disturb her, for she wished to be left alone. And she passed on. One idea alone filled Raoul's burning brain: of course, Daae wished to be left alone FOR HIM! Had he not told her that he wanted to speak to her privately?

Hardly breathing, he went up to the dressing-room and, with his ear to the door to catch her reply, prepared to knock. But his hand dropped. He had heard A MAN'S VOICE in the dressing-room, saying, in a curiously masterful tone:

"Christine, you must love me!"

And Christine's voice, infinitely sad and trembling, as though accompanied by tears, replied:

"How can you talk like that? WHEN I SING ONLY FOR YOU!"

Raoul leaned against the panel to ease his pain. His heart, which had seemed gone forever, returned to his breast and was throbbing loudly. The whole passage echoed with its beating and Raoul's ears were deafened. Surely, if his heart continued to make such a noise, they would hear it inside, they would open the door and the young man would be turned away in disgrace. What a position for a Chagny! To be caught listening behind a door! He took his heart in his two hands to make it stop.

The man's voice spoke again: "Are you very tired?"

"Oh, tonight I gave you my soul and I am dead!" Christine replied.

"Your soul is a beautiful thing, child," replied the grave man's voice, "and I thank you. No emperor ever received so fair a gift. THE ANGELS WEPT TONIGHT."

Raoul heard nothing after that. Nevertheless, he did not go away, but, as though he feared lest he should be caught, he returned to his dark corner, determined to wait for the man to leave the room. At one and the same time, he had learned what love meant, and hatred. He knew that he loved. He wanted to know whom he hated. To his great astonishment, the door opened and Christine Daae appeared, wrapped in furs, with her face hidden in a lace veil, alone. She closed the door behind her, but Raoul observed that she did not lock it. She passed him. He did not even follow her with his eyes, for his eyes were fixed on the door, which did not open again.

When the passage was once more deserted, he crossed it, opened the door of the dressing-room, went in and shut the door. He found himself in absolute darkness. The gas had been turned out.

"There is some one here!" said Raoul, with his back against the closed door, in a quivering voice. "What are you hiding for?"

All was darkness and silence. Raoul heard only the sound of his own breathing. He quite failed to see that the indiscretion of his conduct was exceeding all bounds.

"You shan't leave this until I let you!" he exclaimed. "If you don't answer, you are a coward! But I'll expose you!"

And he struck a match. The blaze lit up the room. There was no one in the room! Raoul, first turning the key in the door, lit the gas-jets. He went into the dressing-closet, opened the cupboards, hunted about, felt the walls with his moist hands. Nothing!

"Look here!" he said, aloud. "Am I going mad?"

He stood for ten minutes listening to the gas flaring in the silence of the empty room; lover though he was, he did not even think of stealing a ribbon that would have given him the perfume of the woman he loved. He went out, not knowing what he was doing nor where he was going. At a given moment in his wayward progress, an icy draft struck him in the face. He found himself at the bottom of a staircase, down which, behind him, a procession of workmen were carrying a sort of stretcher, covered with a white sheet.

"Which is the way out, please?" he asked of one of the men.

"Straight in front of you, the door is open. But let us pass."

Pointing to the stretcher, he asked mechanically: "What's that?"

The workmen answered:

"'That' is Joseph Buquet, who was found in the third cellar, hanging between a farm-house and a scene from the ROI DE LAHORE."

He took off his hat, fell back to make room for the procession and went out.