

# The Phantom of the Opera



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF GASTON LEROUX

After growing up in Normandy, Gaston Leroux returned to his city of birth, Paris, at the age of eighteen. There, he became a lawyer and wrote accounts of trials for a newspaper to supplement his earnings. His account of an anarchist attack on the Chamber of Deputies earned him a strong reputation as a journalist, allowing him to become the judicial columnist for the most important Parisian newspaper. Already known as a talented reporter, he was then sent to Russia in 1905, where he covered the 1905 Russian Revolution, a bloody premise to the 1917 Russian Revolution. Two years later, he published a detective novel, *The Mystery of the Yellow Room*, in serial installments. This story, in which the protagonist seeks to discover how an assassin could escape a room that was locked from within, became so successful that Leroux decided to abandon journalism and dedicate himself to fiction. His experience as a lawyer and a journalist allowed him to recount crimes and mysteries with striking detail, and he became known as a writer specialized in detective stories. He wrote *The Phantom of the Opera* serially in 1909 and 1910, and published over forty novels and short stories throughout his life. In 1909, he was made a “Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur,” the highest honor for extraordinary contributions to the French nation.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The 1871 Paris Commune, a two-month-long revolutionary government, serves as a historical backdrop to *The Phantom of the Opera*. After France surrendered in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, the Prussians besieged Paris for four months, causing famine to erupt in the city. When the French government signed an armistice with the occupying forces, members of the Parisian working class and middle classes, supported by the National Guard, began to fight their own army, using their pent-up anger and frustration about losing the war to demand radical change: democratic elections, which they had consistently been denied over the past century. The National Guard succeeded in taking control of key government buildings and thus launched the Paris Commune, a revolutionary government organized around socialist ideals of power redistribution. The Commune launched radical, innovative programs promoting democracy, women’s rights, freedom of speech, and a greater separation between Church and State. However, the Commune lasted little over two months, from March to May 1871. It ended when the national army re-entered Paris, launching a series of massacres later known as “Bloody Week,” to suppress any resistance. The

bodies of the “Communards,” the participants in the Commune, were buried in unmarked graves throughout the city. *The Phantom of the Opera* references this historical period various times. Construction work on the Paris Opera House, the Palais Garnier, began in 1861 but ceased during the siege of Paris. Later, it was occupied by the pro-Commune National Guard. As a journalist, Gaston Leroux documented the presence of an underground cell in the Palais Garnier that was used to hold prisoners of the Commune—a likely inspiration for his novel. According to *The Phantom of the Opera*, mass graves of Communards were later found beneath the building.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

*The Phantom of the Opera* has inspired numerous stage and novelistic adaptations. It was adapted into a play, a ballet, numerous films, and, most famously, the 1986 British musical. Although the musical follows a similar plot as the novel, certain differences remain. For example, in the musical, Erik is simply called “The Phantom” and only suffers from partial disfigurement, which allows his mask to cover only half of his face. Other renditions depict events not detailed in Leroux’s novel. In a 1990 novel, *Phantom*, writer Susan Kay focuses on the physical and psychological abuse Erik endures during his childhood years. Other works by Leroux, such as his first novel *The Mystery of the Yellow House*, propose to solve crimes by providing rational explanations for seemingly supernatural events. More generally, Leroux’s life-long work can be compared to that of British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who penned detective novels featuring Sherlock Holmes, such as [The Sign of the Four](#) and [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#), and American short-story writer Edgar Allan Poe, who wrote many stories centered around morbid, supernatural occurrences.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Phantom of the Opera*
- **When Written:** 1909-1910
- **Where Written:** Paris, France
- **When Published:** Serially from September 1909 to January 1910. Published as a novel in March 1910.
- **Literary Period:** Realism
- **Genre:** Novel
- **Setting:** The Paris Opera House, the Palais Garnier
- **Climax:** Christine agrees to marry Erik so that he will not blow up the Opera House.
- **Antagonist:** Erik
- **Point of View:** First person

## EXTRA CREDIT

**Underground Lake.** Although the Phantom of the Opera is a fictional character and there is no secret lake beneath the Paris Opera House, Gaston Leroux discovered during his years as a journalist that an underground river does run beneath the city of Paris. This river, which passes near the Palais Garnier, even made the construction of the Parisian subway difficult.

**Gambling.** A crucial motive behind Gaston Leroux's decision to become a journalist—the profession that would later lead him to develop his skills as a novelist—is that he spent all of his inheritance money on gambling, which almost led him to bankruptcy and forced him to take on a second job.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Gaston Leroux's 1910 novel, *The Phantom of the Opera*, follows a narrator's investigation into the actions and identity of the mysterious Phantom of the Opera. In the 1880s, strange events have been unfolding at the Paris Opera House, convincing people that the Opera must be haunted. The Opera Ghost or Phantom has been said to appear as a black figure with a skull face covered in yellow, rotten skin with burning eyes. From the beginning, the narrator affirms that the Phantom does exist, but is in fact a human being, not a ghost.

In the 1880s, on Debiegne and Poligny's last night as Opera directors, chaos erupts when ballerinas claim to have seen the Opera ghost. Moments later, chief stage machinist Joseph Buquet is found dead, hanging beneath the stage. Although his death is attributed to "suicide under natural circumstances," when people arrive to retrieve his corpse they can find no sign of the rope. The narrator concludes that these can hardly be considered "natural" circumstances, and that there must be another explanation besides suicide.

On the same evening, Christine Daaé, a little-known soprano, replaces her colleague Carlotta, who is ill. Christine sings so beautifully that the public remains astonished, wondering why her talent has been hidden for so long. In the audience, Viscount Raoul de Chagny, Christine's childhood friend, who is deeply in love with her, goes to talk with her backstage. However, Christine pretends not to recognize him, and later, Raoul hears her talk to a man in her dressing-room. The man declares his love for her, and Christine, in turn, tells him that she has given him her soul. Overcome by jealousy, Raoul waits for Christine to leave so that he can confront this rival, but when the room opens, Raoul is shocked to discover that Christine's dressing-room is empty.

Raoul writes Christine many letters, and Christine finally replies, saying that she does remember him after all. She tells him Raoul she will be at Perros-Guirec, the village in Normandy where they first met as children, and Raoul hurries to meet her

there. During the journey, Raoul recalls their childhood. Christine's father was a musical prodigy in Sweden, considered the best violin player in Scandinavia. After a man named Professor Valerius discovered his talent, he brought Daaé and Christine to Paris, where Christine soon developed her own musical talent as a singer. During trips to Normandy, Christine became acquainted with Raoul. Together, they listened to local Breton legends and to Christine's father's stories. One story in particular remained impressed on Christine's mind: the story of the Angel of Music, who can turn musicians into prodigies.

At Perros, Raoul declares his love to Christine but she laughs at him. He then attacks her for talking to a man in her dressing-room. Distressed, Christine leaves. Later, however, she tries to explain her situation to Raoul. She tells him that she has been visited by the Angel of Music, whom her father has sent her after his death. When Raoul realizes that Christine is not talking metaphorically, but about someone who gives her music lessons in her dressing-room, he bursts out laughing. Furious at the thought that Raoul no longer believes her to be a respectable woman—that is, one who does not welcome men in her dressing-room alone—Christine leaves.

That night, Raoul hears Christine leave the inn to go to the cemetery. He follows her, though she is too absorbed in her task to notice him. At the cemetery, in front of Christine's father's tomb, Christine suddenly raises her arms to the sky and music emerges from nowhere: the beautiful, heart-wrenching rendering of *Lazarus*, which Daaé used to perform on his violin when they were children. Once the music ends, Raoul pursues a mysterious man, whom he believes to be the musician, all the way to the church. There, Raoul grabs the man's coat and, when the man turns around, Raoul sees a skull with burning eyes. Trusting that this must be a vision of Hell, Raoul faints and is found the next morning unconscious by the church.

Meanwhile, at the Opera, new directors Richard and Moncharmin are frustrated to receive the Phantom's letters, which they believe to be a prank. They fire Mme Girya, the box attendant, who claims to have personal interactions with the ghost, which the directors believe to be a proof of her insanity. In the Phantom's letters, however, he makes various requests: to leave his private box, Box Five, empty; to let Christine sing Marguerite in *Faust*, since Carlotta will be ill; and to make sure his box attendant, Mme Girya returns. The Phantom threatens to curse the theater if his desires are not respected. The directors ignore the Phantom's demands. Carlotta, who has received an anonymous letter enjoining her not to perform, decides to sing anyway. As a result, the Phantom punishes her by causing her voice to croak in the middle of the performance—a shocking occurrence that the audience understands as some kind of conspiracy, since Carlotta's voice is too perfect to break on its own. The Phantom then causes the chandelier to fall from the ceiling. One person dies from being

crushed by it: Richard's concierge, the woman with whom he planned to replace Mme Giry.

After this evening, Christine disappears. Raoul searches for her everywhere. When he interrogates Mme Valerius (Professor Valerius's wife, who has taken care of Christine since she was a child), she says that Christine is spending time with her guardian spirit, the Angel of Music, who gives her music lessons and has forbidden her to marry. Raoul concludes that the old woman is crazy and might also have influenced Christine with her deluded belief in fairytales. However, Raoul's emotions oscillate between fury and pity for Christine. He wonders if Christine is the victim of someone's manipulation or if she herself is an expert manipulator, intent on deceiving him to hide a romantic affair.

Raoul then receives a letter from Christine enjoining him to meet her at the masked ball that evening. There, Christine invokes her love for him and declares that she wants to share her story with him. However, even though Raoul knows that he might be overreacting by distrusting her, he is too overcome with jealousy and insecurity to contain himself. He lashes out at Christine, accusing her of being deceitful. Upset, Christine leaves. Raoul then hides in her dressing-room, where he hears her pity a man called Erik and sees her disappear suddenly through the mirror, as in an act of magic. Utterly confused, Raoul nevertheless succeeds in meeting with Christine at the Opera again. There, Raoul tells Christine that he plans to leave on an expedition to the North Pole soon. He discovers that they do, in fact, share reciprocal love, and the two of them thus decide to become secret fiancés for the short time they have left together.

One night, Christine takes Raoul to the roof, where she tells Raoul her entire story. She explains that, when she first heard a beautiful voice talk and sing to her, she believed it to be the Angel of Music her father had promised to send her. However, on the night the chandelier fell, Christine magically found herself transported to the other side of her dressing-room mirror. When she found herself in a dark, damp tunnel, a masked figure took her to his lair on the other side of an underground lake. Realizing that this man was the same person as "the Voice," and must also be the Opera ghost, Christine was deeply disappointed; the man was not an angelic figure but a mere human, Erik, who then declared his love to her. Although she concluded that he must be mad, she couldn't help but be moved by his music. On one occasion, while Erik was singing, she forgot her promise never to touch his **mask** and removed it. With horror, she discovered a monstrous, skull-like face, whose ugliness terrified her. Furious and sad at Christine's reaction, Erik planned to keep Christine with him forever. However, he ultimately let her leave after a couple of weeks, though he gave her a **ring** as a symbol of her faithfulness to him and made her promise to visit him regularly.

After hearing this story, Raoul concludes that they must leave

together immediately, but Christine says that this would cause Erik too much grief. She agrees to escape with Raoul the following night, although she admits that she might lose her resolve and will then need Raoul to force her to follow him. During this conversation, neither character knows that Erik has been eavesdropping and is aware of their plans.

Raoul thus prepares his carriage to leave with Christine the following night. Aware of Raoul's plan to marry Christine, Raoul's older brother, Count Philippe, a respectable nobleman attached to social norms, tells Raoul that he disapproves of his relationship with Christine, a mere singer, not a member of the nobility. This leads the two brothers to fight—a circumstance that later convinces criminal investigators Inspector Mifroid and M. Faure to conclude (mistakenly) that Philippe's later death and Raoul's disappearance must be connected to the brothers' disagreement.

That night, Christine is suddenly abducted in the middle of her performance. Desperate to find her, Raoul joins forces with a mysterious character, "the Persian," who knows Erik intimately. The Persian leads Raoul to Erik's secret retreat, although they fall in a torture chamber, a room whose walls are covered in mirrors, capable of creating strange illusions. There, they find a Punjab cord, the rope that the Persian concludes must have been used to murder Joseph Buquet. He assumes Buquet discovered Erik's lair and thus caused his wrath, which led Erik to kill him. The Persian also recounts important aspects of Erik's life. He explains that, after leaving his family, who rejected him because of his horrible appearance, Erik worked as an illusionist and an assassin for the Shah in Persia, where he became an expert at torture techniques. The Persian notes that Erik was one of the workers who built the Paris Opera House, the Palais Garnier. In this way, he was able to build a complex system of walls and traps that would allow him to come and go at will, without being seen, like a ghost.

In the torture chamber, Raoul and the Persian hear Erik give Christine the choice either to marry him or to die. Although Christine initially plans to die, so as to remain faithful to her love for Raoul, she later discovers that Erik plans to blow up the entire Opera House if she rejects him. As a result, she agrees to become Erik's wife. She asks Erik to release Raoul and the Persian from the torture chamber, which he does. Despite being horrified by Erik's appearance, Christine remains committed to her promise to be Erik's wife. When Erik removes his mask and kisses her on the forehead, he begins to cry, saying that no other woman has ever let him touch her like this. Christine begins to cry as well. Convinced that this must be a sign of Christine's love, Erik is deeply moved and realizes that he no longer wants to keep Christine captive against her will. He decides to free her, allowing her to escape peacefully with Raoul. He makes her promise to put the ring he gave her on his finger when he dies.

Dying of love, Erik visits the Persian, to whom he recounts

these events—and the Persian, in turn, later tells the narrator about them. Erik says that Count Philippe died while trying to rescue his brother by crossing the underground lake. However, Erik says that he played no part in Philippe's death, as the Count was dead before he found him. Erik then dies, and the Persian places an announcement in the newspaper about it. When the narrator later discovers a body under the Opera wearing this ring, he realizes that Christine has obeyed the Phantom's dying wish and that this body constitutes unequivocal proof that the Phantom of the Opera actually existed.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Christine Daaé** – The protagonist of the novel, Swedish soprano Christine Daaé is a talented, compassionate woman capable of sacrificing herself for others. While growing up in Brittany in the company of her father, her friend Viscount Raoul de Chagny (whom she has loved since they were children) and Mme Valerius, Christine develops her talents as a singer from an early age. However, her literary childhood leaves her with a distorted view of reality as a magical place. As a result, she proves overly naïve in trusting that her father's promise to send her the Angel of Music after his death has proven true when the "Phantom" Erik comes to visit her. If her innocence can thus allow others to deceive her, it also constitutes one of her greatest strengths, as she is an honest, straightforward person. Indeed, despite her fiancé Raoul's accusations of dishonesty, she proves unusually candid and kind in her statements, often taking great care not to hurt other people's feelings. Her moral virtue gives her strength in difficult moments, as she proves courageous enough to sacrifice her own happiness in order to help others, for example delaying her escape with Raoul to protect Erik's feelings and later agreeing to marry Erik, despite the repulsion he inspires in her, to save Raoul's life. Her energy and compassion keep her from being seen as a victim, as she remains true to her moral commitments and emotions even in the most difficult, life-threatening situations.

**Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice** – Known as "P. of the Opera," "the ghost," "the Voice" and "the Master of the Traps," Erik is the antagonist of the novel and a tragic, violent, and ultimately mysterious figure. Although the narrator asserts that Erik is a human being, he displays characteristics that suggest he might be more supernatural than purely human: his appearance as a skeleton covered in rotten skin, his extraordinary singing abilities, and his capacity for ventriloquism, which allows him to project his voice anywhere he pleases, making it seem as though he is in various places at once. Although seen as a sublime, irresistible singer capable of expressing his emotions in heart-wrenching ways,

Erik has grown up in an environment marked by rejection and manipulation—in particular because people are so horrified by his appearance—and proves violent himself. Having apparently never been loved, he seems incapable of giving others love and freedom, preferring to resort to brutality in order to assert his authority. Killing Joseph Buquet, taking part in various misdeeds at the Opera, and trying to eliminate his friend the Persian and his rival Raoul even seem to bring him satisfaction, thus suggesting that he has a sociopathic appreciation for murder. At the same time, Erik also demonstrates a desire to change and live a normal life. His brutal, possessive attitude toward Christine ceases once he realizes that she is a loving, honest being who feels sincere compassion for him. This realization encourages him to change his ways, confirming his belief that he only needed to receive love—instead of fear, hatred, and rejection—to become a better person. He apparently dies of love at the end of the novel and is buried with the **ring** he had given Christine.

**Viscount Raoul de Chagny** – Christine's love interest and Erik's rival. A member of one of the noblest families in France, Raoul is a surprisingly innocent and passionate young man, willing to prioritize his emotions over his social duties. Overwhelmed by his feelings of love for Christine, Viscount Raoul is well-intentioned, but often alternates between states of wild love, despair, and anger. These conflicting emotions reveal his passionate yet fickle personality, as well as his inexperience with relationships—since, as the narrator notes, his upbringing among women caretakers has maintained a child-like attitude in him. His insecurity can make him behave in insensitive ways, as his focus on his rivalry with Erik keeps him from trusting in Christine's sincerity. However, Raoul reveals his nobility of spirit and his devotion to Christine on various occasions. He does not hesitate to put his life at risk for her, thus demonstrating his courage as much as his capacity to put her well-being before his own. His confrontation with his brother Philippe about marrying Christine, who is not of noble birth and is merely a singer, also reveals that he cares less about social decorum than following his heart.

**Daroga of Mazenderan / The Persian** – The Persian is a mysterious character who appears various times in the novel before being given a clear identity. At the beginning of the novel, it seems as though the Persian might be one of Erik's allies. The Daroga (the Persian term for "chief of police") is one of Erik's longtime friends, having saved Erik from capital punishment during Erik's early days as an illusionist for the Shah of Persia. However, even though Daroga admires Erik for his talent and ingenuity, he often refers to Erik as a "monstrous fiend," thus proving highly aware of Erik's cruel instincts. The Persian's alliance with Raoul, in which he puts his own life at risk, reveals that Daroga's main goal is a noble one: to keep Erik from causing harm to others. Although Inspector Mifroid and M. Faure consider Daroga insane, the narrator and Raoul both

conclude that he is an honorable man. The reader is thus encouraged to trust the Persian's testimony, which plays a crucial role in revealing the actions and motives of the titular Phantom of the Opera.

**Count Philippe de Chagny** – Count Philippe proves a deeply responsible, conscientious adult through the commitment he demonstrates to raise his younger brother, Raoul, and introducing him to the world of high society. A well-educated, noble man, Philippe, who is ballerina Sorelli's lover and enjoys the musical entertainment at the Opera, remains attached to upper-society norms. As a result, although he is initially amused by Raoul's infatuation with Opera singer Christine Daaé, he ultimately disapproves of his brother's desire to marry her, since Christine does not belong to nobility. When he hears Raoul rave about a mysterious Erik, he worries about his brother, wondering if Raoul has gone insane. However, Philippe still proves devoted to his brother's cause when he remembers Raoul's claim and enters Erik's secret retreat to follow his brother. He ultimately dies while trying to cross the underground lake that sits beneath the Paris Opera House. It remains ambiguous whether Erik actually meant to kill Philippe or whether, as Erik claims, the man was already dead when Erik found him on the lake.

**Christine's Father** – Often referred to in the novel simply as "Daaé," Christine's father, an extraordinarily talented musician, plays in fairs and ceremonies throughout his home country of Sweden, where he is admired as the best "fiddler" or violin player in Scandinavia. After Professor Valerius discovers Daaé talent, Christine's father and his daughter move to France, where Daaé becomes deeply nostalgic for his homeland, finding comfort only in the landscape of Brittany, which reminds him of home. A caring father, Daaé gives Christine music lessons and encourages her to develop her talent. He also enjoys telling the young Raoul and Christine fantastic stories. His promise to send Christine the "Angel of Music" after his death reveals the trust he has in his daughter's musical potential, but it also suggests that he is responsible for convincing Christine that fairytales are a realistic part of life, as she initially assumes that Erik is not the Phantom or a human, but the Angel of Music.

**Mme Valerius** – Professor Valerius's wife, benefactress of the Daaé family, plays an important part in Christine's upbringing. A kind, caring woman and a lover of music, she treats Christine like her own daughter and encourages her to develop her artistic skills. After Professor Valerius and Christine's father die, Mme Valerius lives with Christine in Paris, and it is to please her that Christine, though unmotivated, pursues her musical studies. Mme Valerius proves just as likely as Christine to believe in fairytales, and Raoul concludes that she is a credulous old woman who has had a negative impact on Christine's life, encouraging Christine to believe in the supernatural. When Raoul and Christine run away at the end of the novel, Mme Valerius vanishes as well, suggesting that she is

probably happily living with them.

**Firmin Richard** – One of the new directors of the Paris Opera House, after Debiegne and Poligny, Richard differentiates himself from his partner, Moncharmin, through his extensive knowledge of music as well as through his irritable personality. Increasingly frustrated by the Phantom's letters, which Richard considers to be a prank, he treats staff members terribly and proves unable to contain his rage. His brutal, clumsy behavior becomes apparent when he fires Mme Giry and kicks her in the rear to get him out of his office. When Moncharmin doubts Richard's honesty, accusing him of stealing the money meant for the Phantom, Richard proves honest and willing to demonstrate his integrity by following all of his colleagues' demands. However, like Moncharmin, Richard's stubborn skepticism keeps him from admitting that some events are beyond his understanding. Therefore, he never understands the Phantom's role in the events at the Opera House.

**Armand Moncharmin** – Moncharmin is one of the new directors of the Paris Opera House, after Debiegne and Poligny. Unlike his colleague Richard, Moncharmin is a charismatic, patient man who knows nothing about music. He writes extensive *Memoirs* about his time at the Opera, which provide a window into his various states of mind. Like Richard, Moncharmin refuses to believe in the existence of the Phantom and even becomes suspicious of Richard after they give the Phantom his monthly due of twenty thousand francs. When the directors receive the Phantom's money back, Moncharmin concludes that this proves that the Phantom did not exist and that they were victims of a prank. Therefore, despite the strange, violent episodes that have taken place at the Opera, Moncharmin's skepticism keeps him from uncovering the truth.

**Mme Giry** – Little Meg's mother is an honest, yet credulous box attendant at the Opera House. Although she is the only person to have direct interactions with the Phantom of the Opera, her frank, unselfconscious manner of speaking gives her little credibility, as she does not understand that other people might doubt the existence of an Opera ghost. In her cooperation with the Phantom, she is motivated both by respect for the Phantom's elegant, polite attitude, as well as his promise to make her daughter an Empress—a fact that gives her little credibility in the eyes of directors Richard and Moncharmin, even though it later proves partially true. However, she is outspoken and unafraid to defend herself. She expresses her thoughts freely, convinced of her own righteousness and of the Phantom's existence.

**Carlotta** – The leading soprano at the Paris Opera House has a beautiful, yet emotionless voice, which both the narrator and the Phantom criticize harshly for its lack of feeling. It is Carlotta's absence one evening, because of illness, that allows Christine Daaé to triumph at a gala performance. Carlotta becomes one of the Phantom's victims herself after she disregards the Phantom's anonymous note enjoining her not to

perform that evening. Jealous of Christine's success and suspicious of her motives, Carlotta assumes that Christine is plotting against her. However, when Carlotta performs, she is affected by a mysterious, Phantom-induced "croak" that causes her voice to break, disrupting her performance and causing dismay in the audience. Traumatized, Carlotta disappears for a period but, moved by a vengeful desire to sneer at Christine, returns briefly to the Opera on the night of Christine's disappearance—in which some people accuse Carlotta (mistakenly) of taking part.

**M. Poligny** – One of the former directors of the Paris Opera House with his partner, Debienne, M. Poligny is a superstitious, libertine man who is forced to accept the Phantom's existence and abide by his demands. As the narrator discloses at the end of the novel, the Phantom exerted particular pressure upon Poligny because he led an immoral life, which allowed the Phantom to blackmail him. Fearful and overwhelmed, both Poligny and Debienne chose to abandon their posts instead of having to deal with the Phantom's threats.

**M. Debienne** – Although little is said about former Opera director M. Debienne, he shows the same fear and respect as his partner, Poligny, for the Phantom of the Opera. He encourages the new directors, Richard and Moncharmin, to take the Phantom's demands seriously and is grateful to leave the Opera as soon as he can, so as to escape the Phantom's pernicious influence.

**Inspector Mifroid** – Inspector Mifroid is the first person to arrive on the scene after Christine's disappearance. Mistrustful of staff members' descriptions of the Phantom, Mifroid becomes convinced that Viscount Raoul and directors Richard and Moncharmin must be crazy. Although he shows determination and meticulousness in his approach to crime-solving, his skepticism keeps him from considering the possibility of the Phantom's existence and thus from solving the case. Instead, the most convincing possibility, according to him, is that Count Philippe abducted Christine to keep his brother Raoul from marrying her. Fittingly, Inspector Mifroid's name in French means "half-cold," perhaps highlighting the inspector's only partial understanding of events.

**M. Faure** – Like Inspector Mifroid, the incompetent, unimaginative examining magistrate for the de Chagny case is unable to reach satisfying conclusions about the mysterious events that took place at the Opera. Faure's inability to believe that a ghost or Phantom ever existed leads him to assume that Raoul must have gone crazy, and that Count Philippe's death was accidental. His shallow, skeptical attitude causes him to dismiss the Persian's testimony and conclude that Daroga, like Raoul, must be insane.

**Mercier** – The administrator Mercier is often shocked by the events taking place at the Opera, as he is one of the first people to discover Joseph Buquet hanging beneath the stage and to hear that Maclair, the chief gas-man, cannot be found (as the

Phantom has given him a narcotic in order to control the lights on the night that Christine Daaé disappears). Following the directors' orders, he locks Mme Giry up to keep her from interacting with the Phantom.

**M. Rémy** – Firmin Richard's secretary. Rémy generally demonstrates skepticism toward the possibility of the Phantom's existence, laughing along with directors Richard and Moncharmin at Mme Giry's description of her interactions with the Phantom. However, he takes his job seriously and is frustrated when he does not understand the directors' behavior on the night of Christine Daaé's disappearance, when Richard and Moncharmin are secretly fighting about giving the Phantom money.

**Gabriel** – Unlike his colleagues Mercier and Rémy, the chorus-master is superstitious and open to the possibility of supernatural events such as the Phantom's existence. Believing that the Persian has the "Evil Eye," Gabriel hurts himself while frantically trying to flee from him. On the evening of Christine Daaé's disappearance, he concludes that this must be the Phantom's doing. Like Mercier, he takes part in locking up Mme Giry so that she will not interfere with Moncharmin and Richard's efforts to discover the Phantom's tricks.

**Joseph Buquet** – The chief machinist Joseph Buquet is the Phantom's first fatal victim. Although not much is known about Buquet's life, it is likely that, after describing the Phantom's appearance in detail, he discovered Erik's secret passageway behind the Roi de Lahore scenery. After entering it, Buquet must have fallen in the torture room, where Erik then killed him with a Punjab cord, later trying to make this death seem like a suicide. The strange circumstances surrounding Buquet's death—since he dies by hanging yet no cord can be found—convinces the narrator that it is not a natural death, but must be related to the other strange events taking place at the Opera.

**Baroness de Castelot-Barbezav / Little Meg Giry** – Mme Giry's daughter eventually becomes the prima ballerina in the Opera's *corps de ballet*. She tells other ballerinas a secret: that her mother, the box attendant, interacts with the Opera ghost on a regular basis, and that he is invisible. Although Meg Giry does not become an Empress, as the Phantom once promised her mother, she does marry into the aristocracy, thus suggesting that the Phantom might actually have the power to see into the future.

**Professor Valerius** – Professor Valerius discovers Christine's father's exceptional musical talent and takes him with him to the Swedish city of Gothenburgh, then to Paris. This kind, thoughtful man, who cares about Christine and her father's happiness and musical education, provides for their well-being. After he dies, Mme Valerius, his wife, is left to take care of Christine alone.

**Papin** – Papin, a fireman who makes rounds around the theater

to prevent any catastrophe, is once terrified by a floating head of fire that he believes to be the Phantom. Some people believe that Papin must have gone mad. However, Raoul and the Persian later discover that this mysterious creature Papin saw is not the Phantom but the rat-catcher, a man in charge of keeping rats away from the Opera building.

**Lachenal** – The Paris Opera House’s chief groom tells directors Richard and Moncharmin that César, one of the Opera’s twelve horses, has been stolen. He accuses members of his staff of incompetence, but, when he mentions that he saw the Phantom ride the horse in an underground tunnel, the directors assume that Lachenal is insane. However, Lachenal’s connections to important members of society keep him from being fired like Mme Giry. His assertions about the Phantom’s kidnapping of César later prove correct, when Erik uses the horse to take Christine to the lake.

**Mauclair** – The Opera’s chief gas-man, in charge of the building’s electricity, is found unconscious, due to the effect of a narcotic, on two occasions: on the night of Carlotta’s croaking and on the night of Christine Daaé’s disappearance. Although Inspector Mifroid is unable to draw satisfying conclusions from these events, they serve as an indication to the reader that the Phantom must have drugged him to control the electricity and manipulate lighting for his own purposes.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Sorelli** – A beautiful, yet unintelligent ballerina, Sorelli is Count Philippe’s lover. Though she tries to appear severe and rational, she is intensely superstitious, and is terrified by the young ballerinas’ claims that they have seen the Phantom.

**Cécile “Little” Jammes** – One of the young ballerinas mentioned at the beginning of the novel, Little Jammes claims to have seen the Phantom, a skeletal figure, and is utterly terrified.

of young Swedish soprano Christine Daaé, he uncovers a surprising truth: these strange events *do* derive from the actions of a mysterious being known as the “Phantom,” but this person is a human being named Erik, not an immaterial ghost. While the novel concludes that the bizarre occurrences at the Opera can be explained rationally—as they are the result of Erik’s tricks—it also becomes clear that Erik is no ordinary human being. Instead, Erik is characterized by extraordinary singing abilities and a corpse-like, monstrous appearance. Therefore, although the novel embraces logical analysis, it does not completely renounce the supernatural: seemingly unexplainable events *are* ultimately explained rationally as the consequences of Erik’s actions, yet Erik’s very existence requires accepting his fantastical nature as a “living corpse.”

Although certain characters deny the existence of the Opera ghost, it soon becomes clear that the strange phenomena taking place at the Paris Opera House cannot be explained in ordinary ways. Following the narrator’s investigations, the reader is encouraged to believe in the existence of a mysterious Phantom. The narrator insists that the events taking place at the Opera are highly unusual and should not be treated in a routine manner. The death of Joseph Buquet, the chief stage machinist, remains particularly mysterious; although the police concludes that Buquet hanged himself, committing “suicide under natural circumstances,” when people approach to release Buquet, they are unable to find the rope that he supposedly used. The narrator ironically notes that the disappearance of a hanged man’s rope can hardly be called “natural circumstances”—and, therefore, that the true circumstances surrounding Buquet’s death seem to defy logic and remain unexplained.

A second phenomenon, Swedish soprano Christine Daaé’s transformation from an unremarkable singer to an extraordinary performer, is also tinged with mystery. After the performance, her childhood friend Raoul de Chagny overhears her talking to a man, saying that she has given him her soul, and that she sings only for him. Once the door to the dressing-room opens, however, Raoul notices that Christine is alone. Christine later tells Raoul that she has been visited by “the Angel of Music,” who gives her private music lessons. These circumstances suggest that Christine might be interacting with an invisible, supernatural being, perhaps the same one who haunts the Opera. The literary environment in which Christine and Raoul grew up in Brittany, France, provide context for Christine’s claims about the Angel of Music. As children, the two friends spent most of their time learning about Breton legends. The story of Little Lotte, who is visited every night by the Angel of Music, remains so deeply impressed in Christine’s mind that she later argues “that all great musicians, all great performers were visited by the Angel of Music at least once in their lives.” These fairytales give credibility to Christine’s seemingly implausible assertions about the “Angel of Music,”



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don’t have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### THE NATURAL VS. THE SUPERNATURAL

Gaston Leroux’s 1910 novel, *The Phantom of the Opera*, follows a series of mysterious events that took place at the Paris Opera House in the 1880s and were popularly attributed to the actions of a ghost. As the narrator investigates occurrences such as the death of chief stage machinist Joseph Buquet and the musical transformation

and encourage the reader to entertain the possibility of a supernatural explanation for the mysteries that punctuate the Opera.

As the narrator's investigation continues, the reader discovers that, although a figure known as the "Phantom" or "Angel of Music" does in fact exist, he is not a ghost but a human being capable of particularly ingenious tricks. The strange events taking place at the Opera might seem mysterious, but they can ultimately be explained rationally as the human "Phantom" Erik's tricks. Both Christine and a mysterious opera-goer, the Persian, confirm to Raoul that the Opera Ghost is nothing but a human being named Erik. Erik's ability to move from one area of the building to another without being seen can be explained by an ingenious system of traps, which he has installed throughout the Opera. These traps and secret passageways allow Erik to move across floors and behind walls, invisible to others, as though he were an immaterial being. His talent for ventriloquism also allows him to pretend that his voice is everywhere at once, seemingly severed from a human body. Finally, it is his use of elaborate killing techniques (itself the legacy of Erik's past life as an assassin) that allows him to kill Joseph Buquet with a special rope, making the man's murder appear as suicide. As the novel goes on, the seemingly supernatural events begin to unravel, suggesting to readers that logic reigns supreme after all.

However, despite the novel's focus on rationality, certain aspects of Erik's character remain elusive, seemingly beyond ordinary human capacity. Although the narrator insists that Erik existed "in flesh and blood," Christine argues that "what [Erik] does, no other man could do; and what he knows is unknown to the living world." This paradoxical characterization is central to the Phantom's existence. Indeed, although readers discover that Erik is a human being, some of his characteristics are not purely human: he has a corpse-like appearance (his skull is covered in rotting flesh) and can sing more enchantingly than any other human being. It remains ambiguous whether Erik's voice and body are truly super-human, or whether he simply suffers from a congenital deformity and has a particularly beautiful voice. The novel never makes this distinction explicit, allowing for Erik to be seen alternately as a human and as a quasi-celestial being. This mystery of Erik's true nature gives the tale its fantastic quality. Although many events at the Opera are ultimately explained in terms of logic and rationality, the puzzle of Erik's existence separates this tale from ordinary mystery novels, adding an element of the fantastic to a multilayered story of murder, kidnapping, and musical talent.



### LOVE VS. JEALOUSY

Admired by both her childhood friend the Viscount Raoul de Chagny and by the mysterious "Phantom" Erik, opera singer Christine Daaé soon finds herself stuck in a love triangle. However, despite each character's

frequent professions of love, no character proves perfectly trustworthy or upright in their romantic pursuits: Erik strives to control Christine through violent domination, Raoul often doubts of innocent Christine's honesty and chastity, and Christine proves partially unwilling to leave her violent captor Erik and escape with her childhood love Raoul. In the end, the novel suggests that love sometimes gets distorted into jealousy (as embodied by both men vying for Christine's affections), which is unproductive and harmful. In contrast, the supreme expression of love is self-sacrifice: the desire to put another person's happiness before one's own.

Caught in the messy tangle of a love triangle, Christine sometimes demonstrates ambiguity in her choice of lovers, though at other times she seems sincere. Regardless of how Christine acts, though, Erik and Raoul respond by default with jealousy, which damages both men's respective relationships with their beloved. Fearing rejection, Erik does not hesitate to kidnap Christine, force her to remain loyal to him (using a **ring** as a signal of their bond), and threaten to kill her if she does not accept him as her husband. Through these violent actions, he reveals himself to be domineering and possessive, unable to actually form a relationship of mutual trust with Christine. Although less violent, Raoul also proves unable to trust Christine. Christine explicitly declares her love to him (which she has borne him since their childhood in Brittany), yet Raoul still doubts the sincerity of her feelings. Raoul does not understand that Christine occasionally ignores him so as to protect him from Erik's wrath, instead interpreting Christine's actions as manipulation. Raoul's recurrent angry outbursts, at odds with Christine's good intentions, depict him as a fickle lover, unable to trust in Christine's sincerity. Both Erik and Raoul thus reveal an ability to conceive of their relationship with Christine as a mutual relationship of love and trust. Instead, they resolve to take her away—Erik through violent means, kidnapping her to keep her under his control, and Raoul by running away with her, far from Erik.

Throughout these episodes, Christine's attitude remains partially ambiguous. When Raoul asks her if she would love Erik were he not so ugly, Christine finds herself at a loss to answer. She also acknowledges that, despite agreeing to escape with Raoul, part of her might actually *not want* to leave Erik and that her resolve might fade. These anecdotes do not prove that Christine harbors feelings of love Erik, but they prove sufficient for Raoul to doubt her love for him. Overwhelmed by their jealousy, neither Raoul nor Erik is able to see Christine for who she is: a sincere person who has found herself in a complex situation and is trying to hurt others as little as she can.

While Erik and Raoul's jealousy certainly speaks to the sheer intensity of their passion for Christine, all of the characters learn to express their love in more constructive, respectful ways through self-sacrifice—the capacity to sacrifice one's self for the person they love. Despite his occasional fits of jealousy

and mistrust, Raoul puts his life in danger in order to save Christine from Erik's grasp. When he enters Erik's cave to save Christine, Raoul knows Erik will probably try to kill him. However, his attitude throughout this ordeal remains faithful and committed, and his capacity for self-sacrifice reveals his noble intentions to love and protect Christine as best he can. Christine, in turn, proves willing to sacrifice herself for her beloved, Raoul. When Erik forces her to choose between marrying him or dying, Christine is inclined to sacrifice her own life to remain faithful to her childhood love, Raoul. However, when she discovers that she can use her clout over Erik to save Raoul's life, she decides, instead, to renounce her own happiness. She agrees to marry Erik on the condition that he will free Raoul. In the wake of her previously ambiguous feelings, Christine now highlights her love and compassion for Raoul through self-sacrifice: she would rather live a miserable life by Erik's side than take part in Raoul's death.

Finally, even Erik, who has so often been driven by violence and control, ultimately decides to sacrifice a wedded life with Christine so that she can live happily. After Christine agrees to be his wife, she lets him kiss her on the forehead, which no other woman has ever let him do. In this moment, Erik realizes that Christine is an honest, noble person who remains steadfast in her commitments (in this case, to behave as Erik's wife). This episode moves him, and he realizes that he no longer wants to keep Christine captive against her will. Therefore, he decides to let Christine and Raoul free, allowing them to live a happy life together. In this moment, Erik shows enough love and respect for Christine to understand that he must sacrifice his own selfish desires in order to honor hers. The novel's resolution thus highlights the characters' love and respect for each other, despite earlier moments of ambiguous or jealous behavior. It suggests that self-sacrifice—actions that put the beloved's life and happiness before one's own—is the ultimate act of genuine love.



## VIOLENCE, REVENGE, AND REDEMPTION

The narrative of *The Phantom of the Opera* is driven by the “Phantom” Erik's misdeeds, which range from intimidation and blackmail to abduction and murder. Erik's past as an assassin in Persia puts these crimes in context, portraying Erik as a callous individual whose life work centers around violence. At the same time, Erik's difficult childhood and his history of rejection also reveal his vulnerability, suggesting that his violent deeds might be an expression of anger and frustration more than a gratuitous desire to cause harm. Erik himself argues that he could be reformed if only he received sincere love—in particular, if Christine agreed to love him—which would compensate for a life spent stewing in fear and hatred. Although Erik's motives in forcing Christine to be faithful to him are initially suspicious, his final act of kindness

reveals that love *can* actually reform a violent man, showing him the path toward justice and morality.

Erik initially seems driven by violence and the desire to dominate over others—even Erik's longtime friend Daroga “the Persian” denounces Erik as a “monstrous fiend” and cold-blooded assassin. At the Opera, Erik does not hesitate to harm other people in order to assert his authority. To take revenge on the new Opera directors Moncharmin and Richard, who do not believe in his own existence, he makes a chandelier fall over the crowd at a performance, thus killing an innocent concierge. He also kills stage machinist Joseph Buquet, who discovered Erik's traps and thus put Erik's livelihood at risk. In addition, he does not hesitate to kidnap Christine to force her to obey his will. These actions highlight the ease with which he undertakes violence, along with his deep desire for domination, painting him as an irrational and destructive monster.

However, although these circumstances present Erik as unfeeling, much of his evil behavior can be understood in light of the harm he has suffered at the hands of others throughout his life. Because of this, Erik believes that receiving love as an adult will be sufficient to compensate for the pain he has suffered—and thus encourage him to change his ways. From Erik's birth, his parents found him repugnant and treated him terribly, ultimately forcing him to run away from home. Other adults later did not hesitate to use the young boy's deformity for their own benefit, such as when a showman exhibited Erik in fairs as a “living corpse.” Later, in Asia, when Erik worked for the Shah and the Sultan as an illusionist and assassin, both leaders tried to kill him—not because Erik had done anything wrong, but because he simply knew too much. This atmosphere of manipulation, domination, and revenge has a formative influence on Erik, convincing him that he must use violent tricks to survive. As the Persian explains: “[Erik] employed the extraordinary skills and imagination that nature had bestowed upon him, in compensation for his monstrous ugliness, to prey upon his fellow-man.” Unable to be taken seriously as a singer because of his appearance, Erik turned to violence as a form of self-expression, a means to display his wit and intelligence. In Persia, he created elaborate torture and killing methods for local rulers' enjoyment—a practice he later carried with him to Paris, as he keeps a torture room in his underground abode.

Aware of the impact of his environment on his actions, Erik claims that all he needs is to receive love in order to change. He invokes his cruel family as an explanation for his deep internalization of rejection—and his desire to make Christine love him: “My own poor, unhappy mother [...] never let me kiss her – she recoiled from me and made me cover my face – nor did any other woman!” This history of rejection convinces him that he behaves badly because he has never been loved. “You're afraid of me!” he tells Christine. “And yet, deep down, I am not a bad man. Love me and you'll see! To be good, all I ever needed was to be loved for myself.” Although Erik's desperation seems

sincere, he uses it to pressure Christine into acquiescing to his desires—thus using Christine’s compassion as a means to satisfy his desires.

However selfish or manipulative Erik might appear, his belief that love will make him a better person does ultimately prove correct. The novel concludes that love can be a powerful force for moral behavior, capable of reforming even the most twisted of criminals. When Christine lets Erik kiss her forehead without expressing horror (unlike his own mother used to), Erik is so moved that he decides to set Christine free. According to Erik’s interpretation, love—or, what readers might see as Christine’s stoic tolerance of his ugliness—*does* change him, compensating for his past history of rejection and neglect. From then on, he abandons his habit of kidnapping her and understands that he is capable of performing selfless deeds, such as letting the young woman he loves live a happy life far away from him.

The novel thus concludes that the moral nature of one’s actions depends on one’s past and present circumstances, specifically highlighting the power of love to reform morally corrupt and broken people. As long as Erik believed that no one would ever love him, he expressed his anger and frustration at the world, harming others in the process—in the same way that he believed others harmed *him*. However, as soon as Erik received love and compassion, he was able to pay these emotions forward, proving more noble and kind-hearted than ever before. In this way, his circumstances and human relationships served as the foundation for his moral (or immoral) behavior.



### BEAUTY VS. UGLINESS

The “Phantom” Erik’s tragic situation as a man forced to live in a cave derives from his repulsive, skeleton-like appearance, which proves too horrific

for others to witness. Although the novel takes pity on Erik’s circumstances, highlighting the injustice of being forced to live in solitude, it also offers no viable alternative: Erik is forced to accept that his talents as a singer will never come to light, and that he will never be forgiven for his ugliness. In this way, the novel denounces nineteenth-century theories about beauty, according to which physical deformity could be considered a reflection of one’s moral character. Ultimately, it is only in death that the novel offers some hope of justice: when Erik is dead, his skeleton resembles that of any other mortal, thus finally allowing him to be “normal”—the very status he tragically aspired to achieve throughout his life. The novel thus exposes the judgmental nature of society, which keeps perfectly admirable—yet unattractive—individuals from expressing themselves and contributing to the social and artistic life of humanity.

Erik’s extraordinary gift as a singer sets him apart from ordinary human beings, but the beauty of his voice is only apparent to others as long as he hides his physical deformity. This gestures to society’s preoccupation with appearances, as it

conflates external beauty with moral goodness and ugliness with evil. On the one hand, Erik’s voice is so strikingly beautiful that it seems imbued with the divine: Raoul describes his voice as “a tranquil and pure fountain of harmony,” an expression of “musical grace.” On the other hand, the hideousness of Erik’s face associates him with the devil. When Raoul discovers Erik’s face, a skull covered in yellow, rotten flesh, he links this ugliness to evil: Erik’s eyes, he describes, “burned with the fire of Hell. I thought I was face to face with Satan himself.” Characters thus prove not only incapable of accepting Erik’s ugliness, but they can also conflate Erik’s physical repulsiveness with his moral worth, demonstrating a narrow understanding of the link between human behavior and appearances.

Affected by constant public rejection, Erik forgoes his artistic aspirations and dreams only of living a normal life. However, his inability to thrive in the human world condemns him to solitude—thus forcing him to live neither as a successful artist, nor as an ordinary human being. This tragic, unfair situation leads the narrator to conclude that readers must pity Erik and condemn society’s double standards. Following this idea, some characters do understand that Erik should be admired, not hated. Although Christine is horrified by Erik’s face, she pities him and understands his sadness. When she hears him sing his self-composed piece, *Don Juan triumphant*, Christine is overwhelmed by the power of Erik’s rendition, in which “Hideousness, soaring on the wings of Love, had dared to face Beauty.” In this moment, Christine temporarily grasps that Erik is a subversive figure, standing for something beyond what society usually allows: the potential for physical ugliness to be just as morally valid and acceptable as traditional beauty.

Nevertheless, unable to succeed by expressing the full range of his intelligence and talent, Erik is forced to survive by resorting to tricks and cunning. The narrator notes the injustice of this situation. He denounces society’s hypocrisy, which causes Erik “to hide his genius or squander it on tricks, whereas, with an ordinary face, he would have risen to greatness among his fellow-men! He had a big heart, large enough to embrace the entire world; but, in the end, he had to confine himself to a dismal cellar.” Echoing Christine’s frequent outbursts of compassion, the narrator concludes that, despite Erik’s misdeeds, readers must focus on his vulnerable side: “Poor, poor unhappy Erik! Should we pity him or should we curse him? He simply longed to be ‘someone’, someone normal. [...] Yes, all in all, the Phantom of the Opera deserves our pity.” Implicitly, the novel thus determines that Erik is immoral not because of his ugliness but, rather, because society’s harsh judgment has caused him to become immoral. In other words, it is society’s rejection of unconventional appearances that breeds injustice and immorality—not the appearance of individuals.

Erik’s failure to integrate ordinary human life makes death—a state beyond social judgment—his only salvation. At the end of the narrative, when the narrator finds Erik’s skeleton (which he

recognizes because of Erik's distinctive **ring**), he realizes that Erik finally looks like everyone else, since "all men who have been long dead are the same." In this way, Erik's ugliness finally disappears and, in death, he can be considered equal to any other human being. This dismal ending, which highlights Erik's humanity and vulnerability, underlines society's intolerance for physical disability. It provides a pessimistic vision of society as a potentially cruel, exclusive group that condemns outsiders to suffering and death, as it superficially judges people on appearances alone.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### THE RING

The ring that Erik gives Christine Daaé represents the difficult situation the young singer is in:

although the ring signals her entrapment, as she is forced to obey the Phantom's demands, it also highlights the compassion and respect she feels for him. After Erik discovers that Christine loves the handsome Viscount Raoul de Chagny, her childhood friend, he gives her a wedding ring and makes her promise two things: to visit him regularly, and to never marry. This ring thus instills fear in Christine, for when she understands the depths of Erik's jealousy, she realizes that both her life and Raoul's are in danger. However, when Erik finally decides to set her free, asking her to put the ring on his finger after he dies, Christine abides by his request, even though she is no longer under Erik's direct influence. The ring thus acquires various, complex meanings according to the characters' attitudes in the narrative. To Erik, this ring is associated with his noble aspirations—his love for Christine and his desire to live a normal wedded life, instead of being treated like a monster—as well as his basest behavior, as he must resort to violence and manipulation to keep Christine under his control. In turn, for Christine, this ring becomes a symbol of external obligation, as Erik could prove violent if she does not respect his wishes, as well as personal obligation, since she wants to respect her promise and not hurt Erik's feelings, thus showing moral commitment and compassion. The various meanings that characters assign to this ring thus reflect their fluctuating, sometimes paradoxical behaviors, oscillating between love and control, freedom and oppression.



### MASKS

The mask that the "Phantom," Erik, wears over his face symbolizes his vulnerability and the injustice he suffers from, as he is forced to hide his face because it

causes too much horror in other people. Although the mask gives Erik some control over his life, as it allows him to decide when to reveal his real face, it also signals that he has no control over one crucial factor: other people's reactions. The removal of masks occurs at crucial moments in the narrative; on one such occasion, overwhelmed by the beauty of the Phantom's singing, Christine spontaneously decides to disobey Erik's orders and remove his mask, which causes Erik fear, pain, and anger. This moment marks a turning point in the narrative, as Christine will remain scarred by the horrifying face she has seen. On another occasion, during the masked ball, Christine finally shows Raoul her anguish when she removes her mask. In both cases, removing one's mask reveals one's vulnerability. Therefore, the success of this operation depends on other characters' good will—in Erik's case, Christine's ability to show him compassion and admiration despite his ugliness, and, in Christine's case, Raoul's willingness to trust her and take her feelings seriously despite his intense jealousy.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *The Phantom of the Opera* published in 2012.

### Prologue Quotes

●● The Phantom of the Opera did exist. He was not, as was long believed, born out of the fertile imagination of the artists, the credulity of the directors, or the ludicrous fancy and overexcited brains of the young ladies of the *corps de ballet*, their mothers, the ushers, the cloakroom attendants and the concierge. Yes, he did exist in flesh and blood, although he assumed in every respect the appearance of a ghost – that is, of a shadow.

**Related Characters:** Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 5

### Explanation and Analysis

These opening lines of *The Phantom of the Opera* serve a crucial role: to present the story that the narrator is about to relate as a factual, credible tale. By mentioning people's tendency to believe fanciful tales and give in to paranoia, the narrator distances himself from such a phenomenon, thus signaling that his conclusion—that the Phantom exists—relies not on rumor or naïveté but on concrete facts.

The narrator's comment that the Phantom existed "in flesh

and blood” signals that the Phantom was not a ghost but a human being. However, the narrator never says so explicitly. In fact, despite having certain human characteristics, the Phantom exhibits so many seemingly supernatural traits, such as his skeletal appearance and his incredible musical and engineering talents, that it remains ambiguous what exactly he is. Erik might not be immaterial, but he certainly does not easily fit into the human category either. Therefore, while highlighting the narrator’s knowledge and credibility, these opening lines also build suspense, elucidating part of the mystery (by confirming the Phantom’s existence) without solving it entirely (since the Phantom’s nature remains elusive).

fallen prey to it, and that his understanding of the Phantom’s actions and motives is much deeper than that of these naive Opera-goers.

“He is extraordinarily thin and his black coat hangs loosely off his skeletal frame. His eyes are so deep-set that you cannot make out his pupils: all you can see are two big black holes, as in a skull. His skin is stretched over his bone structure like a drumhead, and is not white but an ugly yellow. His nose is almost non-existent when seen sideways; and this absence is a horrible thing to behold. As for his hair, it consists of no more than three or four long dark strands on his forehead and behind his ears.”

## Chapter 1 Quotes

When he did not actually show himself, he signaled his presence or his passage with disastrous or comic occurrences for which he was more often than not blamed, so rife were the feelings of superstition. Had there been some accident, had one of the girls been the butt of a practical joke by a friend, or lost a powder-puff, the culprit must be the ghost, the Phantom of the Opera!

**Related Characters:** Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 12

### Explanation and Analysis

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes the ballerinas’ terror after seeing a dark, skeletal figure they assume to be the ghost. The narrator notes that the girls’ reaction is typical of the atmosphere at the Opera, where people have become so obsessed with the ghost that they tend to see him everywhere, assuming that any strange occurrence might be his doing. Even though members of the Opera might exaggerate the ghost’s presence, their understanding of the Phantom as a prankster is at least partially correct. Although the Phantom takes part in violent acts to defend his livelihood and keep others from discovering his identity, he also enjoys scaring people in a playful way and impressing them with his feats. His capacity to move around the Opera unseen, through his system of traps, makes him potentially omnipresent, and thus explains why any minor disruption could be attributed to him.

The narrator’s mocking criticism of the paranoia at the Opera once again suggests that he is aware of it yet has not

**Related Characters:** Joseph Buquet (speaker), Papin, Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 13

### Explanation and Analysis

Joseph Buquet is one of the early witnesses to describe the Phantom of the Opera’s appearance. Although his testimony differs from that of Papin, the fireman, it is later proven to be a correct depiction of Erik’s body. Buquet’s description is particularly terrifying not only because it portrays a body at the limit between life and death, incomparable with any other human face, but also because Buquet has *not* fallen prey to the general paranoia at the Opera. Rather, the narrator describes Buquet as a serious, practical man, unlikely to let his imagination roam. Therefore, his testimony is particularly credible and presents the Phantom as a fearful, inhuman being.

Although little is known about Buquet’s experience with the Phantom, it is likely that his first sighting of him led him to investigate the Phantom’s whereabouts, ultimately causing him to crawl through the secret passageway behind the *Roi de Lahore* scene. This caused him to fall into the torture room, where he met his death for trying to uncover Erik’s secrets. His experience highlights the danger of showing too much curiosity for the Phantom’s existence, as it is likely to breed terrible consequences.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

Some claimed that it was a mark of immeasurable pride; others spoke of her saint-like modesty. Yet, as a rule, artists are rarely so modest; in truth I am rather tempted to ascribe her actions to sheer dread. Yes, I believe that Christine Daaé was frightened by what had just happened to her, and was as taken aback by it as everybody else around her. [...] To suggest that Christine was taken aback or even frightened by her triumph is in fact an understatement: having reread the letter, I would say that she was terrified. Yes, yes, terrified. "I am no longer myself when I sing," she wrote.

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé (speaker), Carlotta, Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 56

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Christine's extraordinary gala performance, which impresses all critics and members of the public, Christine disappears. Without giving any explanation, she refuses to sing in public again. The narrator's conclusion that Christine's behavior derives from fear highlights the supernatural quality of what has happened to her: the visits from Erik (whom she believes to be the Angel of Music) and his capacity to make her sing beautifully. Christine's lack of control over her own voice suggests that Erik might have the power to control *other people's* singing—as he perhaps does later with Carlotta, when he causes her to croak in the middle of a performance. This suggests that, in addition to a beautiful voice, Erik might have special powers over others. At the same time, the narrator never solves this problem, leaving it ambiguous whether Erik is simply an excellent teacher or a person capable of controlling other people's performances.

Paradoxically, Christine's success thus brings her little joy and pride, since she is not convinced that she is in control of her own voice, which Erik might have influence over. Her comment suggests that she might be expressing emotions never before felt—the emotions that her characters express or, perhaps, those that Erik has communicated to her.

The Angel was never seen but could be heard by those who were meant to hear. This often happened when you least expected it, when you were sad and down-hearted. Then your ears would suddenly hear celestial harmonies, a divine voice, which you would remember for ever. Those who had been visited by the Angel were stirred. They experienced a thrill unknown to other mortals and henceforth could not touch an instrument or open their mouths to sing without producing sounds that put all other musicians to shame. The people who knew nothing about the angelic visitation called them geniuses.

**Related Characters:** Christine's Father, Christine Daaé, Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 60

**Explanation and Analysis**

The narrator recounts the story of Little Lotte and the Angel of Music, a fairytale Christine's father used to tell her when she was a child. This story leads her to believe, upon first hearing Erik's voice address her in the Opera, that Erik must be the Angel of Music, visiting her upon her father's request. The description of the Angel of Music in fact blends two separate ideas: the possibility of musical inspiration, which allows artists to compose works with beauty and exhilaration, and the more fanciful idea that this inspiration is personified by an actual person, an Angel. Christine's belief in the concept of musical genius thus remains tied to her understanding of a fairytale.

Although Erik later disappoints her for having hidden motives (namely, wanting her as his wife), he still embodies the musical elements of this fairytale: he spends his time pretending to be invisible, inspires Christine to sing better at a period of her life when she is demotivated, convinces people that there is something "celestial" about his singing, and is considered a musical genius. As often in the narrative, this suggests that Erik might not be fully human, but has angelic characteristics. Later, Christine argues that Erik might in fact be an angel if he weren't so horribly disfigured. At times, she wonders if he truly is a human or a supernatural being sent to Earth to express his anguished emotions through song. The novel never solves the mystery of Erik's presence on Earth, leaving it up to the readers to discern if he is human or not.

“As I would not let go of the cloak, the shadow turned round and beneath the hood I saw a terrifying skull, whose staring eyes burned with the fire of Hell. I thought I was face to face with Satan himself. It was like a vision from beyond the grave.”

**Related Characters:** Viscount Raoul de Chagny (speaker), Christine Daaé, Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 60

### Explanation and Analysis

One night in Perros-Guirec, the village where Christine and Raoul used to meet as children, Raoul follows Christine into the cemetery, where she stands before her father’s grave while someone, hidden in the darkness, plays a mournful song on a violin. Raoul attempts to confront the mysterious man who is responsible for this music, and realizes that it is not an ordinary human being but a terrifying, skeletal figure.

Raoul’s vision confirms other people’s descriptions of the Phantom, thus confirming that the Phantom does exist, but also associates the Phantom with pure evil. Raoul’s reaction is not only horror and fear at such ugliness, but mortal and existential terror, since, to Raoul’s mind, the Phantom’s face is indicative of malicious intent. Although Raoul’s terror is understandable, his reaction also underlines the pressure that Erik has experienced all his life, as people have seen him as a monster and encouraged him to develop his violent impulses instead of his more peaceful, artistic sensibility. This situation thus reveals a certain helplessness and inevitability: Raoul’s unintentional, yet overwhelming fear, and Erik’s tragic inability to control the terror he inspires in others.

## Chapter 8 Quotes

“Terror struck, followed by a general stampede. My intention here is not to revive the memory of that momentous event, for the curious reader can easily consult the accounts that appeared in the press at the time. Suffice it to say that many people were wounded and one died.

The chandelier had crashed upon the head of a poor woman who had come to the Opera that evening for the very first time in her life, and killed her instantly. She was the concierge whom Richard had chosen to replace Mme Giry, the Phantom’s preferred attendant. The next day one of the headlines read: ‘Two hundred thousand kilos hit concierge!’ That was her sole obituary!

**Related Characters:** Carlotta, Armand Moncharmin, Firmin Richard, Mme Giry, Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 92

### Explanation and Analysis

After Opera directors Richard and Moncharmin fail to abide by the Phantom’s demands, such as leaving his opera box empty for him to watch the show and allowing Mme Giry to return to her post, the Phantom takes his revenge. He makes the singer Carlotta croak on stage, thus ruining her performance, and then causes the chandelier to fall on the audience, killing Richard’s concierge. This episode highlights the Phantom’s callousness, as he does not hesitate to kill innocent people, such as Richard’s concierge, in order to assert his authority and force others to obey his wishes. The injustice of this act casts the Phantom in an evil light, showing him as an individual deprived of compassion or respect for others.

On a lighter note, this episode also allows the narrator to mock the press, which also shows little compassion for the concierge, instead focusing on the sensationalism of the event. The narrator, by contrast, is not interested in detailing the terror of the event to satisfy readers’ morbid curiosity, but on illustrating the purpose of this event in the Phantom’s actions. The narrator thus highlights his seriousness as a reporter and his focus on the mystery at hand.

## Chapter 9 Quotes

☹☹ To think that he had believed in her innocence, in her purity! That he had tried for a moment to explain everything by her naivety, her simplicity of mind and her extreme candour. The Spirit of Music! He knew him now! He saw him! Surely he was some minor singer at the Opera, some good-looking Lothario, some coxcomb all smiles and sweet talk. He felt ridiculous and pitiable. Ah, what a wretched, insignificant and foolish young man you are, Viscount de Chagny! he raged to himself. As for Christine, what a brazen, devilishly cunning creature!

**Related Characters:** Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice, Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 98

### Explanation and Analysis

After Carlotta's terrible croaking on stage, Christine disappears for a while. Trying to solve this mystery, Raoul visits Mme Valerius, who tells him that Christine is with "the Spirit of Music," a mysterious being who has been giving Christine music lessons. When Raoul hears this, he becomes convinced that Mme Valerius is a delusional old lady. He assumes that Christine must have lied to her caregiver, inventing a fairytale to justify her clandestine relationship with a man.

Raoul's reaction, however, is contradictory. Part of his anger toward Mme Valerius derives from the influence he assumes her credulous attitude must have had on Christine, who now believes in stories involving the "Spirit of Music." From this perspective, Christine can be seen as a victim of her family environment. On the other hand, Raoul also accuses her of intentional manipulation and deceit. Frustrated, unable to understand Christine's behavior, he thus oscillates between accusing and excusing his beloved. His reaction highlights his jealousy and grief at the thought that Christine might not love him, but also underlines his tendency toward impetuous behavior, which can lead him to make mistaken conclusions about Christine's intentions.

☹☹ His heart was cold, frozen solid: he had loved an angel and now he despised a woman.

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 100

### Explanation and Analysis

Full of doubt and anguish after discovering that Christine receives private music lessons in her dressing-room from a man, Raoul does not know whether to trust in Christine's goodness or to consider her a manipulative traitor. Concluding that she must be deceiving him, he realizes that he now feels hatred for her. His reaction to what he (mistakenly) believes to be Christine's deceit mirrors Christine's own relationship with Erik "the Phantom." Although she initially believed him to be a literal "angel," the Angel of Music, she is later forced to learn that he is only a man who is in love with her. Mirroring this decline, though on a less literal level, Raoul's idealization, too, leads to (temporary) disappointment. Indeed, it is only later in the narrative that Raoul discovers that Christine is in fact as faithful and pure as he believed her to be. Instead of misleading him, she has always meant for her actions to minimize harm and protect him from the Phantom's jealous wrath.

## Chapter 10 Quotes

☹☹ Christine simply took off her mask and said: "It is a tragedy, Raoul!"

He now saw her face and could not suppress a cry of surprise and shock. Gone was her fresh, glowing complexion. No longer a reflection of her tranquil disposition and untroubled conscience, her face—so charming and gentle in former days—was deadly pale. How anguished she looked now! Her features were cruelly furrowed by sorrow and her beautiful, limpid eyes—Little Lotte's eyes—had become wells of deep, dark, unfathomable mystery and were bordered with terribly doleful shadows.

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé (speaker), Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice, Viscount Raoul de Chagny

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 109

### Explanation and Analysis

When Christine asks Raoul to meet her at the masked ball, so that she can assure him she loves him and tell him about her relationship with the Phantom of the Opera, Erik does not let her speak, instead accusing her of lying to him and inventing a fanciful story about an “Angel of Music.” After he argues that this must be a farce, Christine argues that, on the contrary, this is a tragedy—referring both to her situation under Erik’s control and to the injustice from which Erik suffers. This moment represents the first, unequivocal signal to Erik that Christine is suffering and not intentionally deceiving him. Although the Phantom is capable of improving Christine’s singing, this scene signals the toxic effects of the Phantom’s presence in Christine’s life. Indeed, when Christine removes her mask, her anguish causes her to appear strikingly similar to the Phantom in appearance. As with the Phantom, her eyes seem sunken, she is surrounded by mystery and secrets, and her face causes shock in the person who sees her. This physical and psychological suffering highlights the danger and emotional strain she is exposed to. The impression of decay that emanates from her foreshadows the life-and-death choice she will later be forced to make between dying or becoming Erik’s wife—and thus, in both cases, becoming more like him: either dead or the companion of a living corpse.

It was a tranquil and pure fountain of harmony from which the faithful could safely and piously assuage their thirst, secure in the knowledge that they were partaking of musical grace. Having touched the Divine, their art was transfigured.

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny, Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 111

### Explanation and Analysis

While hiding in Christine’s dressing-room after the masked ball, Raoul hears beautiful music emerge from the walls. Amazed by such sounds, which he finds impossible to resist, Raoul finally understands how Christine’s singing could have improved enormously with the help of such a musical master. Raoul’s inability to deny the beauty of Erik’s singing even though he hates and despises Erik highlights the absolute power of the Phantom’s voice. Unlike Erik’s appearance, which Raoul has previously described as a

vision of Hell, the man’s voice evokes another aspect of the divine: Heaven. The capacity for these dual entities—the greatest evil and the greatest good—to coexist in Erik, even though he has little control over them, highlights the tragic quality of his life. His ugliness has kept him from expressing other, nobler qualities, and, in this case, he is even forced to use his greater talent for a baser purpose than the mere expression of art: the manipulation of a vulnerable, naïve singer, Christine Daaé.

### Chapter 11 Quotes

“When a man,” resumed Raoul, who felt his strength draining away from him, “adopts such a romantic stratagem to seduce a girl...”

“Either he is a villain, or she is a fool?” she interrupted.

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny (speaker), Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 116

### Explanation and Analysis

After the masked ball, during which Raoul sees Christine disappear through a mirror after pitying Erik out loud and smiling to his voice, Raoul confronts Christine about her relationship with the Phantom. When he discovers that the “Angel of Music” has forbidden her to marry, he concludes that this man must be manipulating her. Instead of realizing that Erik is indeed forcing her to promise things that do not accurately reflect her desires (for example, to become Raoul’s fiancée), Christine defends Erik. Her interruption of Raoul’s speech suggests that she is just as lucid as he is but that she is not “a fool” and that Erik is not “a villain.” She tries to suggest that the situation is more complex than it may seem—namely, that she is aware of Erik’s problems yet still feels compassion for him and does not hate him.

Although Christine is correct to suggest that human beings are not as simple as Raoul suggests, she also seems blind to her own predicament, in which she is forced to abide by another man’s desires instead of benefiting from his love *and* her independence. This paradox in Christine’s personality, which makes her inclined to put other people’s feelings before her own, is both a strength and a weakness, as it reveals her moral virtue but also puts her life in grave

danger.

## Chapter 13 Quotes

“If Erik does not hear me sing tomorrow, he will be devastated.”

“It can only be thus if you want to escape him for ever.”

“You are right, Raoul. At all events, he will certainly die of grief if I run away.” ... And then she added in a muted voice: “On the other hand, he could just as easily kill us.”

“Does he love you so much?”

“Yes, he would stop at nothing for me, not even murder.”

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny (speaker), Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 140

### Explanation and Analysis

Hidden on the roof of the Opera (although they are secretly followed by Erik), Raoul and Christine share their feelings for each other, enjoying their time together as clandestine fiancés. When Christine tells Raoul that Erik once kidnapped her, Raoul argues that the only logical solution would be to flee from Erik at once, so that he might lose his influence over Christine and no longer harm her. As usual, however, Christine is moved more strongly by compassion for Erik’s feelings than by an instinct for self-preservation, even though she is aware of Erik’s murderous tendencies. Although this irritates Raoul, both characters seem to accept that, even if it might not be socially acceptable, Erik’s desire to kill his beloved and her fiancé is a form of “love.” This assessment downplays the brutality of Erik’s behavior, justifying his controlling, brutal attitude by arguing, implicitly, that it is normal for someone who is so deeply in love not to control his own actions. This conflates love with jealousy and possessiveness, keeping Christine (and Raoul) from realizing that trust and independence are crucial to any romantic relationship.

“Oh, how I hate him!” cried Raoul. “And you, Christine, tell me: do you hate him too? I need to know so that I can listen to the rest of your extraordinary tale with some peace of mind.” “No, I do not hate him,” said Christine simply.

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny (speaker), Daroga of Mazenderan / The Persian, Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 140

### Explanation and Analysis

Like the Persian, who is also aware of Erik’s crimes, Christine finds herself unable to say that she hates Erik when Raoul asks her. Raoul thus realizes that his hatred stems from jealousy and a feeling of personal harm, whereas Christine has either forgiven Erik or does not believe to have been too horribly harmed by him. Raoul’s question is not disinterested, because he is afraid Christine might be secretly in love with Erik. However, he is unable to realize that, in the same way Christine feels no hostility toward her captor, she is also incapable of other types of uncaring behavior such as manipulation and deceit. In this sense, although Christine’s tolerance for Erik’s behavior can be difficult to understand, it is also clear that Christine is an honest, warmhearted person who is devoted to her fiancé. Meanwhile, Raoul’s interrogation, despite Christine’s emotional openness to him, reveals his insecurity and, as a result, his inability to trust Christine, since he cannot accept that she is indeed as benevolent as she portrays herself.

Hideousness, soaring on the wings of Love, had dared to face Beauty.

**Related Characters:** Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice, Christine Daaé

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 149

### Explanation and Analysis

After Christine removes Erik’s mask in his cave, Christine remains too shocked to react after witnessing his horrific, skeletal face. In turn, overwhelmed by anger and pain, Erik

retreats to his room, where he performs the *Don Juan Triumphant* musical piece he has been working on for years. Although still scarred by the sight of Erik's face, Christine finds Erik's music irresistibly moving. In that moment, she realizes that Erik is capable of conveying emotions that are more powerful and sincere—and more uncomfortable and heart-wrenching—than those found in typical operas. This leads Christine to realize that, through such intense singing, Erik is subversively trying to overturn conventions: he is suggesting that his painful emotions—the result of his violent life and his social rejection—are just as emotionally powerful as the traditional ideals of beauty promoted by society.

Christine's observation about "Hideousness" and "Beauty" thus carries two meanings. Not only does Erik's love for Christine lead him to hope that she might love him despite his ugliness (that his "Hideousness" might appeal to her "Beauty" through his "Love"), but his skill and passion for music ("Love") also allows him to challenge aesthetic conventions, suggesting that the intensity of "Hideousness" might possibly match (or surpass) the conventional intensity of "Beauty" as it has been defined until then. This moment highlights the attraction and fascination that the Phantom is able to exert on others through his singing. Although Christine cannot forget his horrible face, she cannot forget, either, the incredible feelings he is able to provoke in whoever listens to him.

☝ "You are afraid of him, but do you love me? If Erik were handsome, would you love me, Christine?"

"Why do you raise questions that I have pushed to the back of my mind as if they were sinful?"

She rose too and wrapped her beautiful, trembling arms round the young man.

"Oh, my betrothed, if I did not love you, I would not offer you my lips! Kiss them, for the first and last time."

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny (speaker), Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 151

### Explanation and Analysis

After Christine tells Raoul the various details about her

interactions with Erik over the past few months, Raoul understands that she has been the victim of Erik's manipulation. On the other hand, he also realizes that Christine does not harbor hatred for Erik—a surprising reaction given Erik's occasionally brutal, cruel attitude toward her. Although Raoul's interrogation stems from his own fear of not being loved, it does suggest that, if Erik's ugliness is sufficient to push people away from him, the beauty of his singing is capable of drawing people to him. Therefore, it remains possible that his musical qualities and intelligence would be sufficient to compensate for his ugliness.

Christine's reply does not imply that she does not love Raoul, since her willingness to kiss him—the only moment in the entire novel in which Raoul and Christine are shown to have physical contact—reveals that she wants to be *his* fiancée, not Erik's. At the same time, her inability to answer Raoul's question in a direct manner suggests that a small possibility remains that she *might* indeed be capable of loving Erik, were their circumstances different. However, the impossibility of such a hypothesis makes Raoul's question irrelevant. Christine, instead, prefers to focus on the present, in which she *does* love Raoul exclusively, as she demonstrates through her words and her actions.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

☝ "Are people always unhappy when they're in love?"

"Yes, Christine, they are unhappy when they love but are unsure of being loved in return."

"Are you speaking for Erik, here?"

"For Erik and for myself," said the young man shaking his head, thoughtful and forlorn.

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny (speaker), Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 153

### Explanation and Analysis

In one of the many moments in which Raoul doubts of Christine's love and sincerity, he compares his situation to Erik's. Despite hating Erik as a romantic rival, Raoul is capable of understand that Erik, too, must be suffering. This demonstrates Raoul's sense of empathy—a characteristic that makes him similar to Christine, in its ability to take

someone else's feelings in consideration along with one's own. Erik, by contrast, is unable to experience compassion and pity for anyone beyond himself.

At the same time, this scene underlines Raoul's insecurity—which, unlike Erik's, is largely unfounded, since Christine has already told him she loved him, which she never did with Erik. It suggests that Raoul, like Erik, is not fully capable of trusting Christine, and needs her to prove or confirm her sincerity before he can feel entirely comfortable. Christine's own reaction (her assumption that Raoul must be speaking about Erik) is a signal that she does not understand why Raoul would possibly doubt her—since she does, as she has already said, love him.

These interactions, however, do not actually decrease the intensity of these characters' love for each other. Both Raoul and Christine prove equally dedicated to the other's well-being, willing to sacrifice themselves for the other person's happiness.

☝☝ “Let me tell you why I would like to see you leave tonight.”  
“Yes, tell me, Raoul.”

“Because tomorrow, all your resolve will be gone!”

“Then, Raoul, you must take me away. Are we not agreed on that?”

**Related Characters:** Christine Daaé, Viscount Raoul de Chagny (speaker), Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 154

### Explanation and Analysis

After Christine tells Raoul about all the interactions she has had with “the Phantom,” including the moments in which Erik kidnapped her, Raoul understands that the only way to escape Erik's pernicious influence is to flee from him immediately. Raoul also understands that something prevents Christine from leaving Erik. However, his conclusions, as are typical of his character, rely more on his jealousy and insecurity than on his correct analysis of Christine's feelings. He assumes that Christine might be attached to Erik and might not love Raoul enough to want to escape with him. By contrast, at other moments in the story Christine admits that the reasons she does not want to leave are that she does not want to cause Erik harm, that she is afraid that leaving before completing her promise to

perform the next day will bring bad luck, and that Erik might find a way to keep her against her will.

This scene thus highlights the implicit misunderstandings that can exist between Raoul and Christine. It also suggests that Christine does not feel in control of her destiny, as her life depends on the will and powers of the two men who are in love with her. In the end, though, when Christine is forced to make a bold decision about whether to die or marry Erik, she proves that she is capable of expressing strong resolve and of remaining committed to her decisions, however unpleasant they might be.

## Chapter 23 Quotes

☝☝ “You're afraid of me! And yet, deep down, I am not a bad man. Love me and you'll see! To be good, all I ever needed was to be loved for myself. If you loved me, I would be as gentle as a lamb; and you could do with me as you pleased.”

**Related Characters:** Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice (speaker), Christine Daaé

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 235

### Explanation and Analysis

After abducting Christine a second time to keep her from running away with Raoul, Erik tells her that she must make a choice between dying or living as his wife. Feeling threatened and overpowered, Christine begins to cry. To soothe her, Erik says that he is capable of changing and abandoning his violent habits if she agrees to love him. Although Erik's speech can be seen as a manipulating device to convince Christine to marry him, his belief in his capacity to change suggests that he might not be as cruel and evil-bent as he appears. He argues that his brutal behavior has been the result of violent, unjust circumstances; having always been denied love, even by members of his own family, he has never been able to give love in turn. This optimistic theory does prove correct. After Christine lets him kiss her, Erik decides to release her, understanding that true love does not involve keeping someone captive against their will. This suggests that love is a powerful force, capable of redeeming even the most seemingly evil people.

## Chapter 24 Quotes

“I don’t express myself like other people. I don’t do anything like other people. But I am very tired of it! Tired of having a forest and a torture chamber in my home! Sick of living like a mountebank, in a house full of tricks! Yes, I am sick and tired of it all! I want a nice, quiet apartment like everyone else, with ordinary doors and windows, and a proper wife.”

**Related Characters:** Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice (speaker), Daroga of Mazenderan / The Persian, Viscount Raoul de Chagny, Christine Daaé

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 244

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Erik launches the torture in the torture chamber, where Raoul and the Persian are trapped, he tries to distract Christine from her despair at knowing that her friends will die by launching into a long monologue about marriage and love. He denounces the injustice he has been suffering from, as someone who has been forced to live underground, far from the comforts of social life. However, Erik’s speech cannot be fully trusted, since his goal is not only simply to express his emotions, but to make Christine pity him and, perhaps, want to marry him. For example, despite claiming to despise his “house full of tricks,” Erik has just activated the torture chamber—an action that directly contradicts his desire to live a peaceful life. Erik’ despair is thus paradoxical, since he claims to want to better without actually doing so. This contradiction between his words and his actions makes him a suspicious character. Since all of his words seem subject to doubt, it remains ambiguous whether the events he details at the end of the novel—his liberation of Christine and Raoul—are actually true, or whether he might be, once again, trying to dissimulate some hidden evil deed.

## Epilogue Quotes

Poor, poor unhappy Erik! Should we pity him or should we curse him? He simply longed to be ‘someone’, someone normal. But his hideous appearance would not allow it! And he had to hide his genius or squander it on tricks, whereas, with an ordinary face, he would have risen to greatness among his fellow-men! He had a big heart, large enough to embrace the entire world; but, in the end, he had to confine himself to a dismal cellar. Yes, all in all, the Phantom of the Opera deserves our pity.

**Related Characters:** Erik / The Phantom of the Opera / The Ghost / The Voice

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 282

**Explanation and Analysis**

At the end of the novel, the narrator reflects on Erik’s deeds and his moral worth. Although the narrator does not excuse Erik’s past crimes, he does conclude that Erik should be pitied and not condemned. The greatest injustice, the narrator notes, is Erik’s social isolation. Even if he had done nothing wrong throughout his life, Erik still would have been rejected and treated as an outcast, perhaps even mocked and bullied because of his appearance. This injustice suggests that neither his confinement nor the suffering that derives from it are Erik’s fault.

However, even if certain aspects of Erik’s life do indeed invite compassion, the narrator does not address the issue that Erik did behave in a way that also justifies condemnation, as his various violent acts demonstrate. It remains ambiguous to what extent Erik’s crimes can be attributed to his free will and to what extent they are a natural expression of his past suffering. It is ultimately readers’ assessment of these two factors that will determine their emotional reaction to Erik’s life and their moral evaluation of the character.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## PROLOGUE

The narrator recounts the different stages of his investigation on the Phantom of the Opera. He asserts that this Phantom did exist, though he was not a fanciful ghost but, rather, a full human being. The narrator recalls consulting the archives of the National Academy of Music and realizing, after putting together various forms of evidence, that the ghost's existence could explain three mysterious events: Christine Daaé's kidnapping, Viscount Raoul de Chagny's disappearance, and the death of Raoul's elder brother, Count Philippe.

Although the narrator often felt that his research was leading nowhere, he was finally rewarded when he was able to confirm that the Phantom truly existed. This happened when, after a conversation with M. Faure, the examining magistrate for the Raoul and Philippe de Chagny case, the narrator learned that mysterious witness known as "the Persian," once claimed know the Phantom. The narrator was able to meet with the Persian, who gave him ample proof of the Phantom's existence, such as letters written by Christine Daaé. The narrator was later able to confirm that this was indeed Daaé's writing, and, after investigating the Persian's past, concluded that he was an "honorable man," worthy of trust.

Friends and family members of Raoul and Philippe de Chagny encouraged the narrator to publish his results, even if this meant accepting that the Phantom of the Opera did exist. The final confirmation arrived one day when the narrator was walking around the Phantom's underground domain. There, while digging to build additional storage for the Opera, workmen found a dead body, which the narrator confirmed to be the Phantom's corpse. Although the press claimed that this body was that of a member of the Paris Commune, the narrator argues that those men's bodies were not buried on this side of the building. He notes that he will return to the issue of the body later, but that he must now recount the chronological series of events that led to such mysteries.

*From the beginning of this story, it is clear that the narrator's purpose is twofold: to solve the mystery of certain events, as in any detective investigation, and to determine whether supernatural forces are at play. Although the narrator concludes that this story revolves exclusively around human beings, the actual nature of the titular Phantom of the Opera remains ambiguous through the rest of the work, as he displays both human and extra-human characteristics.*



*Although his connection to the Phantom is only detailed much later in the novel, the Persian plays a crucial role in unveiling the Opera ghost's identity and motives. However, both Raoul and the narrator's trust in this mysterious character derives from nothing more than a subjective interpretation—the feeling that the Persian is a man worthy of trust, even though authorities have deemed him insane. This introduces an element of uncertainty and tension in the narrative, as the resolution of this entire story relies on the Persian's credibility. Were one to choose not to believe the Persian, then the respective fates of the Phantom, Christine, and Raoul would remain subject to doubt.*



*The fact that people who care about Raoul and his brother want the narrator to publish his story suggests that no account has so far explained the mystery of the former's disappearance and the latter's death. This serves to give credibility to the narrator, suggesting that he has found a way to tie together all the mysterious occurrences at the Opera in a rational way. His mention of the Paris Commune, a historical event, gives a realistic tone to this story, thus suggesting that the Phantom's existence should be seen as equally realistic and historical—not a fantasy created by deluded Opera-goers.*



## CHAPTER 1

On the evening of Messrs. Debiegne and Poligny's last night as directors of the Paris Opera House, an overexcited group of ballerinas storm into dancer Sorelli's dressing-room. Little Jammes, who quickly locks the door, tells Sorelli, a beautiful yet—according to the narrator—unintelligent ballerina, that they have seen the ghost. Although Sorelli reacts skeptically (even though she is secretly scared and superstitious), the girls all begin to talk at once, defending what they have seen, explaining that a mysterious, ugly figure cloaked in black suddenly appeared out of nowhere, scaring them all.

The narrator notes that for the past several months, everyone at the Opera House has been discussing the matter of this ghost, who sometimes appears in person and sometimes causes strange occurrences. People have become so paranoid that any strange trick or surprising event is attributed to the ghost's doing. Nevertheless, the girls in Sorelli's room insist that they have seen the ghost, who has a skull-like head.

The narrator notes that this description fits the one that Joseph Buquet, the chief stage machinist, shared. According to Buquet, the ghost is skeletal, has neither eyes nor nose, and has yellow skin. Since Buquet is not prone to fanciful stories but is considered serious and reliable, people paid attention to his description, even though some people claimed that Buquet must have been the victim of a joke.

Another episode also created an uproar. One of the firemen on duty, Papin, almost fainted after his safety rounds below stage. He claimed to have seen a floating head of fire come toward him, which terrified him beyond measure. Defending Papin's experience, the narrator ironically notes that firemen are not usually scared of fire. Although this description did not necessarily conform to the ballerinas' and Buquet's depiction of the ghost, people concluded that the ghost might have several heads.

These events help explain everyone's fright in Sorelli's room. When Sorelli interrogates the girls about what they have seen, Little Jammes defends their narrative by explaining that Gabriel, the chorus-master, saw the ghost the day before: The Persian, a mysterious man whom everyone believes to have the "Evil Eye," entered the office and the ghost's face appeared behind him, terrifying Gabriel and causing him to hurt himself while running away. After Little Jammes's story, Sorelli tries to hide her fear and a silence settles in the dressing-room.

*The fact that young ballerinas are the first witnesses of the Phantom that the novel mentions suggests that the ghost's apparition could be the result of collective panic and paranoia, more than a credible occurrence. It immediately immerses the reader in the atmosphere at the Opera, in which people's awareness that a ghost might exist creates an atmosphere of superstition and fear, far from the rational approach that the narrator seeks to adopt.*



*The narrator's acknowledgment of the atmosphere of collective hysteria at the Opera shows that he is capable of distancing himself from such phenomena and witnessing them from the outside. This display of emotional disengagement gives greater weight to his assertion that the Phantom does, in fact, exist, since the reader knows his conclusion is not based on peer influence.*



*The skeletal appearance of the ghost associates him with death and danger, suggesting that he is probably not an harmless apparition. It also suggests that this ghost could not possibly be human, since this description is more reminiscent of a corpse than a living person. Buquet's first scary vision of the ghost can be seen as an eerie prelude to his later death.*



*Papin's alternative description of the ghost creates uncertainty, suggesting that the ghost might be capable of shifting shapes—as Raoul himself later believes—and that he is therefore definitely non-human. The narrator's comment about firemen's mental strength aims to show that readers should take Papin's testimony seriously, since—unlike other people's reactions—it cannot be interpreted as the result of fear or collective paranoia.*



*Little Jammes's association of the Persian with the Phantom raises suspicion about the figure of the Persian, suggesting that he might be one of the Phantom's allies. However, it also suggests that not all stories about the Phantom are equally credible. Indeed, her story does not actually support the ghost's existence. It merely shows that fear and superstition is strong enough for people to hurt themselves in the absence of an actual threat.*



Little Meg Giry then notes that Joseph Buquet should keep quiet, because her mother, Mme Giry, says the ghost should be left in peace. Pressed to explain herself, Meg reveals the secret her mother has asked her to keep: that her mother interacts with the ghost in his private box, Box Five. She notes that the ghost is invisible, and that Buquet's description thus makes no sense. She adds that her mother has told her Buquet would suffer for his revelations.

In that very moment, Little Jammes's mother calls her daughter, wild with fear and excitement. To everyone's horror, she announces that Joseph Buquet has been found hanging down the stage in the cellar. The machinists who found the body claimed to hear music for the dead at the same moment. All the ballerinas whisper to each other that this must be the ghost's doing. The narrator himself notes that, although the press claims that Buquet committed "suicide under natural circumstances," when the co-directors ran down to look for Buquet, they found him dead on the floor, with no rope to be seen. The narrator notes ironically that a hanging without a rope can hardly be called "natural circumstances." The narrator adds that the disappearance of the rope will later become more understandable, in light of later events.

## CHAPTER 2

After leaving Sorelli's dressing-room, the ballerinas run into the Count Philippe de Chagny. Unusually emotional, the Count eulogizes the night's performance, while warning the excited ballerinas not to tell the outgoing Opera directors about Joseph Buquet's death, which would agitate them too much on their last night. The narrator notes that the Count is correct in lauding the night's performance, because Christine Daaé, who was replacing her ill colleague Carlotta, performed exquisitely as Juliet in [Romeo and Juliet](#) and as Marguerite in [Faust](#). Critics are bewildered to hear Christine's extraordinary performance and wonder why the directors have kept her talent hidden for so long.

In his box, forty-one-year-old Count Philippe listened rapturously. After the death of his parents, Philippe became the head of one of the noblest French families. He managed the estate and took care of his younger brother, Raoul, along with their sister and two aunts. Fascinated by the sea, Raoul joined the navy and took part in various trips. His family upbringing, among so many women, left him shy and "pure," as though he were still a child. Philippe, by contrast, enjoys the various aspects of Parisian society, spending time with the ballerina Sorelli, who is universally known for her beauty. Despite his innocence, Raoul himself frequently insists on being taken backstage, to the Ballet Room.

*This third description of the ghost (as an invisible being) heightens the mystery of the ghost's identity, suggesting that the narrator's conclusions will have to account for these three contradictory descriptions. Mme Giry's warning suggests that the ghost is fearful and dangerous, since he might react negatively if disturbed.*



*Joseph Buquet's death alone does not necessarily have anything to do with the Opera ghost. However, the mysterious circumstances surrounding his hanging suggests that he might have been the victim of paranormal activity—since he hanged himself without a rope. This also suggests that he might have been the victim of a murder, disguised as suicide. The narrator's ability to note the abnormality of Buquet's death without concluding on the ghost's involvement suggests that he does not yet have enough information to implicate the Phantom. This once again gives the narrator credibility, suggesting that his knowledge of the Phantom is based on evidence, not mere supposition.*



*Although Christine's extraordinary performance is not visibly tied to the ghost's existence, it constitutes an abnormal event in itself—on par with more violent occurrences such as Buquet's death. Christine's participation in [Romeo and Juliet](#) and in [Faust](#) serves as a symbol of her involvement with the Phantom: as in both operas, she is part of tragic love story capable of leading her to her death, because—as the reader discovers later—of the Phantom's desperate efforts to seduce her, even if this causes her harm.*



*Raoul's innocent vision of love contrasts with his brother's experience, since Philippe has a mundane, socially rigid conception of love, according to which romantic relationships must follow decorum and divisions between social classes.*



That evening, in Philippe's box, Raoul panics when he notices that, after such an intense performance, Christine is about to faint. He urges his brother to go see her. Raoul's agitation makes Philippe smile, as he finally understands why his brother shows so much enthusiasm for the Opera House. As Raoul boldly advances through the crowd, feeling the overwhelming mix of pain and tenderness that his feelings for Christine Daaé bring, the two brothers finally reach Christine's room. Raoul succeeds in approaching Daaé, despite her throng of admirers, and convinces the doctor to tell everyone else to leave. Count Philippe leaves for Sorelli's room with a smile on his lips, finding Raoul particularly cunning.

When Christine finally wakes up, she is startled to see Raoul. After she asks him who he is, Raoul says that he is the little boy who jumped into the sea to catch her scarf. Everyone laughs, and Raoul is shocked that Christine does not recognize him. He asks to speak to her privately but Christine then stands up with unexpected energy and asks everyone to leave.

Raoul decides to remain by Christine's door, hoping that he might be able to talk to her alone. He wonders if she has sent everyone away so that they might speak in peace. Then, he suddenly hears an authoritative man's voice emerge from within the room. The man tells Christine that she must love him, and, shaking, she replies that she sings for him alone. Pained to the core, Raoul listens to the rest of the conversation. Christine tells the man that she has given him her soul and is exhausted.

Full of hatred, Raoul waits to confront his rival. When Christine opens the door and leaves, Raoul quickly jumps into her dressing-room and calls out to the man. Hearing no response, he strikes a match but notices that the room is empty. Bewildered, he searches everywhere, wondering if he has gone mad. He finally leaves the room but, as he is about to exit the theater, he comes across a procession of workmen carrying a stretcher. He then discovers that the man underneath the stretcher is Joseph Buquet, who was found hanging below the stage, between elements of stage scenery, by a scene from *Le Roi de Lahore*.

*Raoul's determination to see Christine reveals his desire to satisfy his own desires as much as to help her and stay by her side. His willingness to protect Christine will remain a defining feature of his personality throughout the novel, as he does not hesitate to put his reputation and his life in danger, in the name of his love. His forcefulness and determination suggest that he is perhaps not as innocent as he may seem, as he is capable of taking control of a chaotic situation and asserting his authority over an entire crowd.*



*Christine's unexpected regain of energy suggests that she might be under the influence of a strange phenomenon—in this case, the Phantom's influence. Christine's sudden outburst can also be seen as an attempt to protect Raoul—sending him away from her so that the Phantom will not be jealous.*



*Raoul's assumption that Christine is actually trying to find time to speak to him on her own is one of the many occasions on which Raoul misinterprets Christine's actions. Instead of taking them at face value, he often tries to interpret them according to his own beliefs. This keeps him from trusting that Christine is a sincere, direct person, but sometimes convinces him, instead, that she is cunning and devious.*



*Although these two episodes seem disconnected, Raoul's effort to find his rival—the Phantom—and Joseph Buquet's death are intimately related. Indeed, as the narrator later explains, Buquet dies because he succeeded in uncovering the Phantom's lair, thus threatening the Phantom's secret life. This suggests that Raoul's search, which has only just begun, is likely to be marked by violence and death. The mention of the Roi de Lahore scenery, a recurrent motif, serves as a first clue about the location of the Phantom's many traps.*



## CHAPTER 3

During the farewell ceremony for outgoing directors Debiegne and Poligny in the Ballet Room, Little Jammes suddenly cries out that she has seen the ghost, although the figure—who has a skull head and hollow eyes—quickly disappears in the crowd. People laugh and offer to toast the ghost. Debiegne and Poligny then head upstairs for a meeting with the new directors, Messrs. Armand Moncharmin and Firmin Richard. After a lively dinner, some guests suddenly notice a mysterious, thin, and dark figure seated at the table. Although no one knows exactly when he appeared, everyone assumes that this gloomy man is someone else's friend, and do not ask who he might be.

It is only once the strange man speaks that Debiegne and Poligny notice him. The man says that Buquet's death is not natural. Shocked to learn about Buquet's death, the two ex-directors turn pale and become extremely agitated. The narrator then quotes from Moncharmin's memoir to describe the rest of the evening. Moncharmin explains that Debiegne and Poligny, who had turned utterly serious, told Richard and him to change the locks of any cabinet or room they want to keep safe. They also begin to instruct them about the ghost.

Although Moncharmin and Richard believe this must be a joke, the ex-directors inform them that they have received specific instructions on the Phantom's behalf. They hand the new directors a copy of the memorandum of terms of the Opera House. There, in addition to the black ink, someone has added in red ink, with a childish handwriting, instructions to pay the Phantom of the Opera twenty thousand francs per month. In another clause, the same handwriting states that Box Five should be reserved for the Phantom of the Opera at all times.

Still believing that Debiegne and Poligny are joking, Moncharmin and Richard stand up and thank them. However, the ex-directors keep on saying that the ghost exists, although they have never seen him, and that he is part of the reason they have decided to leave. Unconvinced, the new directors simply say that they will rent the box anyway, despite the ex-directors' admonition.

*People's joking reactions to the ghost's appearance suggests either that they do not believe he exists at all or, on the contrary, that they know he exists but do not feel threatened by him. The Phantom's willingness to appear at a table with the directors highlights his provocative nature, as he enjoys inspiring fear and awe in others. It also suggests that he trusts enough in his capacity to appear and vanish at will that he is not afraid of being caught.*



*The Phantom's mention of Joseph Buquet's death suggests not only that he enjoys inspiring fear and confusion in others, by making mysterious comments about Buquet's death, but also that he feels no guilt about his own involvement in the affair, since he is later proven responsible for killing Buquet. The men's reaction to the Phantom's presence is ambiguous. It suggests, perhaps, utter resignation: the directors have accepted that they can do nothing about him and must simply treat the Phantom with deference.*



*The directors' unwavering belief in the Phantom suggests that their experience has taught them to do so. In addition, the Phantom's very concrete demands suggest that he might be more human than it initially appears, since an immaterial being would hardly need money or a box of his own, let alone write in a childish scrawl. These actions also reveal the Phantom's desire for power and authority, as he expects others to simply obey everything he asks.*



*The new directors' skepticism is understandable, since they have not yet had experiences of their own to confirm the Phantom's existence. However, their nonchalant attitude shows that they are unaware of the dangers they actually face. As the story evolves, their belief in a joke, instead of seeming rational, proves preposterous given the numerous signs that extraordinary, potentially dangerous events are taking place at the Opera.*



## CHAPTER 4

The narrator describes the two new Opera directors. Though a charming man, Moncharmin knows little about music. His colleague Firmin Richard, by contrast, is a famous composer and musician, beloved by most artists of the time. Richard, though, is prone to fits of temper. One morning, when Richard arrives at the office, he receives a letter written with the same red ink and handwriting as the notes in the memorandum he consulted with the ex-directors. In the note, signed “P. of the Opera,” the author, who claims to have extensive musical experience, notes that Carlotta is a terrible singer and that Christine Daaé should be allowed to take on new roles.

The Phantom asks for Christine to sing Siebel and also demands that his box be liberated, since it has been occupied in the past few days. He initially failed to complain, because he thought that the ex-directors might have failed in their duty to communicate his demands, but has now learned differently after exchanging letters with them. He concludes his letter with a threat, saying that the directors will only be granted peace if they give the Phantom his box.

Richard and Moncharmin both believe that this is a prank. Instead of agreeing to the letter-writer’s demands, they decide to reserve Box Five for Debieulle and Poligny, who they assume want it. That night, though, they fail to check whether the ex-directors have come. The next day, they receive a note from “P. of the O.” extolling last night’s performance and demanding the money that the new directors owe him. They also receive a note from the ex-directors, who explain that they cannot possibly occupy Box Five, which belongs to the ghost. Annoyed by this seemingly endless joke, Richard and Moncharmin make the box available for the public the next night.

The next morning, the directors receive a report from the house manager, who explains that he had to force the spectators in Box Five to leave, because they frequently disrupted the performance with rambunctious behavior. Richard tells his secretary, M. Rémy, to call the house manager. When the manager arrives, he says that, upon entering, the spectators in Box Five heard a voice saying that the box was occupied. They called the box attendant, Mme Giry, who could see no one in the box or on either side of it. The manager notes that the attendant believed this to be the ghost’s doing. Furious at this series of events, Richard demands for the attendant to come and says that he plans to dismiss anyone who has not seen the ghost, since he expects his staff to do their job more thoroughly.

*In this episode, the Phantom of the Opera suggests that he knows more about music than the directors themselves. Christine’s previous success gives credibility to his assertions and suggests that the new directors are perhaps not as capable of running the Opera as it may seem. This letter thus highlights the Phantom’s experience as a musician and suggests that he—not the directors themselves—plans to assert his power by taking control of life at the Opera House.*



*Although threatening violence, the Phantom proves logical and polite in his note. This gives him an aura of respectability and intellectual elevation. It also suggests that he does not necessarily use violence indiscriminately, for gratuitous purposes, but that he considers it fair punishment when his demands are not met.*



*The contrast between the old directors and the new directors’ attitudes suggests that Richard and Moncharmin are behaving foolishly and are unable to learn from their predecessors’ experience. Although the new directors’ behavior is understandable, since they do not want to believe in the supernatural, their efforts to hold onto reality seem foolish in light of the narrator’s earlier assertion that the Phantom does exist—and thus, that he is capable of causing harm.*



*Although the Phantom is not yet behaving violently, the spectators’ disruptive behavior is highly unusual in such an elevated, well-behaved setting. This, combined with their assertion that they heard the ghost speak, suggests that they were probably under the ghost’s influence. It seems that the ghost might be capable of controlling other people’s minds—or, perhaps, that he was the one disturbing the performance. Richard’s anger at being the victim of a prank or at having incompetent staff keeps him from reflecting on the situation rationally and realizing that all members of his staff cannot possibly be insane or misguided.*



## CHAPTER 5

The box attendant, Mme Giry, mother of the ballerina Little Meg Giry, finally arrives. Richard talks to her in a brusque way, which shocks her, and leads Moncharmin to take charge of the interrogation. Mme Giry explains that someone has upset the ghost. Moncharmin asks her if she has ever spoken to the ghost herself, and she confirms that she has. She notes that the ghost always asks her to bring him a footstool. Moncharmin, Richard, and Rémy all laugh, but Mme Giry warns them that they must listen to the ghost, because Poligny himself was once his victim. She recalls a night in which Poligny abruptly left the ghost's box, with a terrified, lost look on his face.

Undisturbed by the directors' skeptical attitudes, Mme Giry describes the ghost's voice as a kind, yet authoritative masculine voice. She notes that the ghost asks for a footstool not for himself, but for his lady—whom Mme Giry has never seen either. She comments on the ghost's generosity, as he always leaves a few francs for her at the end of the performance. Now that he is upset again, however, she has received nothing. She notes that once, when the ghost's lady forgot her fan, she brought it back in the box the next day and received a box of sweets as a gift. Judging that Mme Giry is crazy, Moncharmin and Richard decide to dismiss her. They also establish a plan: to spend time in Box Five themselves.

## CHAPTER 6

For various reasons, which the narrator promises to disclose later, Christine Daaé takes a break from the stage before performing beautifully again at a Duchess's soirée. Later, though, she cancels all her scheduled performances, making it seem as though she were afraid to be too successful. Some said that Christine was too modest or, on the contrary, too proud, but the narrator asserts that Christine's behavior can be explained by sheer terror, which a letter from the Persian's collection confirms.

The Viscount de Raoul Chagny sends Christine many letters, and finally receives an answer from her, in which she explains that she does remember the child who caught her scarf in the sea. She tells him that she will be in Perros-Guirec, in Brittany, the next day, to honor the anniversary of her father's death. Without a moment of doubt, Raoul hurries to take the train to Perros. Overwhelmed by his love for Christine, he is excited by the prospect of speaking to her alone.

*Mme Giry's certainty about the Phantom's existence clashes with the directors' certainty that the ghost cannot possibly exist. This leads both sides to conclude that the other side is crazy. Mme Giry's attitude does not make her particularly credible. Instead of realizing that what she says is highly unusual and likely to be construed as incredible, she bluntly asserts facts about the Phantom with naïve confidence. Her inability to understand her public's skepticism and expound her case in a more convincing way makes her seem foolish.*



*Once again, Mme Giry does not realize that her assertions, however true they might be, are unaccompanied by concrete proof. As such, they can easily be dismissed as the ravings of a madwoman. Her depiction of the ghost, however, suggests that he is polite and well educated. This makes him seem more human, endowing him with a noble personality, but only as long as his desires are obeyed. The Phantom's capacity to alternate between refinement and pure aggression confirm that he is probably a complex human being, prone to emotional instability.*



*The narrator's frequent mention of mysteries that he plans to explain later builds suspense, allowing the reader to follow the action like other characters—without quite understanding the reasons and motives for which certain events take place. Christine's fear at singing again can be seen as her realization that she depends too much on the Phantom—and that this could lead to terrible consequences.*



*Christine's letter shows that Christine is behaving in contradictory ways, first pretending not to know Raoul, then admitting that she does. Instead of revealing dishonesty or an effort at deception—which Raoul sometimes believes—this behavior reflects the Phantom's influence over her, as he forces her to hide her love for Raoul out of jealousy.*



During his journey on the night train, Raoul recalls Christine's life story. Christine's father was a Swedish peasant farmer who was passionate about music. His talent as a musician made him famous as the best fiddler in Scandinavia. After his wife died, he played in many fairs, where a professor, Professor Valerius, noticed him and took the father and his daughter with him to Gothenburg then to Paris. There, Christine pursued her musical education, and Mme Valerius treated her as a daughter. Christine's father, however, was so homesick that he barely left his room, where he played the violin softly. The man only showed enthusiasm and energy during their trips to Perros-Guirec, a fishing village in Brittany, where the ocean reminded him of home. During the religious festivals, Christine and her father would take part in celebrations, sleeping in barns yet asking for no money for their performances.

A young boy, Raoul found himself fascinated by Christine's voice. Once, when a gust of wind scarf threw Christine's scarf toward the sea, he ran into the water to fetch it. Christine's father agreed to give an insistent Raoul violin lessons, and the two children grew up together. They loved asking locals to share Breton legends with them.

One story in particular, in which a little girl, Lotte, is visited by the Angel of Music every night before falling asleep, remained impressed in their minds. The Angel of Music appeared in various stories, and gave characters striking musical talent in the most unexpected times, like when characters were sad and depressed. From that moment on, such people became genius musicians, making every melody divine. Although Christine's father told the children he had never heard the Angel of Music himself, he promised his daughter to send it to her after his death.

Three years later, Raoul met Christine again at Perros. Christine's father welcomed him graciously, saying that Christine talked about him all the time, but Christine behaved in a shy, cautious way. On his way out, Raoul told Christine that he would never forget her, although he regretted this action later, as he knew that a Viscount could never marry a mere singer. Christine, on her part, tried to forget Raoul. When her father died, she seemed to lose all of her musical passion and talent. She still entered the Paris Conservatoire, but did not prove to be a particularly talented student.

*Christine's father's success as a violinist serves as a counterpoint to the Phantom's tragic story of rejection. While Christine's father was immediately accepted, not only because he played beautifully but because people enjoyed his presence, the Phantom was forced to hide his talent because people found him repulsive. The contrast between these two stories highlights the injustice of which the Phantom is victim. It also suggests that music and success alone do not necessarily bring happiness, but that the feeling of home is crucial in one's life, as Christine's father's sadness at leaving Sweden suggests.*



*This episode highlights the depth of Raoul's love, as it becomes apparent that he has felt it since childhood. Raoul's lack of hesitation in seeking Christine's scarf mirrors his later willingness to sacrifice himself for her and to protect her as best as he can.*



*The legend of the Angel of Music crosses the boundary between the natural and the supernatural. Although the Angel of Music could be seen as a metaphor for musical inspiration and talent, Christine interprets her father's promise to send it to her after his death in a literal way, believing that an actual figure—which she initially believes to be the Phantom—is going to visit her from the heavens. This highlights Christine's innocence and naïveté, as she fails to separate fairytales from reality.*



*Raoul's willingness to put his feelings before his status as a nobleman highlights his spontaneity, as well as his capacity to disregard societal rules in favor of courage and honesty. This attitude will later cause Raoul trouble, as members of high society, including his own brother, will disapprove of his plans with Christine. On another note, Christine's musical decline is unexplained, although it seems tied to the disappearance of strong bonds of love, of the kind she shared with her father.*



When Raoul first heard Christine sing at the Opera, he was mesmerized by her beauty but slightly disappointed by her singing, which seemed emotionless and detached. He often followed her to her dressing-room, but she always seemed indifferent and never recognized him. Now, Raoul wonders why she pretended not to know who he was and why she has suddenly written to him.

*The reasons for Christine's aloof behavior will later become apparent, when she explains that she was trying to protect Raoul from the danger of the Phantom's jealousy. In this light, Christine's decision to write to Raoul can be seen as a brave act, overcoming her fear of the Phantom in order to communicate her true feelings to Raoul.*



When Raoul finally reaches Perros, he goes to the only inn in the village. There, he sees Christine and is overwhelmed by her beauty. The two of them look at each other for a long time, and Christine says that her father told her he would come. Raoul then confesses his love to her, adding that he cannot live without her. However, Christine tells him he is crazy and says that she does not know why she wanted him to come.

*Although Christine never mentions speaking to her father again, this episode suggests that she has deep faith in the supernatural—believing that she can communicate with the dead and that her father has sent her the Angel of Music. Christine's negation of her feelings reflects the alternation of fear and love she is exposed to, under the influence of the Phantom.*



Raoul is dismayed by Christine's behavior, which he describes as both tender and full of pain. Christine admits that she had noticed Raoul previously at the Opera, but does not explain why she never addressed him. Furious, Raoul then tells her that he knows she was talking to a man in her dressing-room. When he tells her everything he heard, Christine is overcome with emotion and begins to cry. Although Raoul tries to comfort her, Christine suddenly leaves the room, visibly distressed.

*Christine's inability to explain her situation to Raoul derives from her fear of disclosing her connection with the Phantom—which Raoul might not believe and which might bring both of them trouble. Raoul's inability to listen to Christine without bursting out in jealousy highlights the alternation of trust and mistrust that characterizes his attitude toward Christine in these difficult situations.*



Raoul feels jealous and confused by Christine's attitude. However, he still feels convinced of Christine's purity and virtue, and doesn't understand why she ran away from him. In the afternoon, he walks around the graveyard, where he sees fresh flowers on Christine's father's grave. He also notices a corner of the graveyard where skulls are piled up, which he finds gloomy and disturbing. He goes to sit on top of a hill, looking out at the scene, and Christine walks up to him. Shaking, she tells him she has something important to say. She tells Raoul that her father has sent her the Angel of Music, who has been visiting her. Raoul does not understand what she means, but Christine insists that this is the Voice that Raoul heard in her dressing-room, where the Angel of Music gives her music lessons.

*Raoul's attitude is highly contradictory. Although he knows that Christine is a good person—and that her "purity" indicates that she has not been with another man—he cannot control his jealousy, which leads him to attack Christine instead of the Phantom pursuing her. Although Christine decides that she trusts Raoul enough to tell him the truth about her interactions with the Voice, her understanding of the Angel of Music as an actual being contrasts with Raoul's understanding of it as a metaphor, a symbol of the inspiration that musicians can experience.*



When Raoul laughs at such an idea, Christine becomes furious. She accuses him of forgetting who she is—a woman who would never be alone in her dressing-room with a man—and tells him he must have changed. However, Raoul, still unconvinced, simply says that someone must be playing a joke on her. Unnerved, Christine cries out and runs away again, telling him to stay away from her.

Back at the inn, Raoul learns that Christine has locked herself in her room. Confused, he wonders what she might be thinking and doing. Late at night, he suddenly hears Christine's footsteps and hears her exit the room silently. He listens to the landlady give Christine a key and then hears nothing but silence. Raoul then decides to leave the inn through his own window, so as not to attract the landlady's attention.

The narrator then transcribes Raoul's interview with Inspector Monfroid, who investigated the mysterious events taking place at the Paris Opera. Raoul explains that he followed Christine through the snow into the churchyard, though she was so concentrated on her task that she did not notice him. In the cemetery, despite being surprised by Christine's behavior, Raoul feels confident and unafraid. When the church bells strike twelve, however, Christine ecstatically raises her arms toward the sky and Raoul hears music emerge from nowhere—*Lazarus*, the same music that Christine's father used to play on his violin when they were children. Remembering Christine's story about the Angel of Music, he becomes fascinated, entranced, as though he were entering another world and Christine's father might suddenly revive.

When the music stops, Raoul heads toward the collection of skulls, where he believes to have heard a sound. At the same moment as Christine is leaving the cemetery, all the skulls start tumbling down, rolling toward Raoul and terrifying him. He suddenly sees a shadow emerge from the skulls and rushes after him, grabbing hold of the man's dark cloak after they enter the church. When the man turns around, Raoul sees a skull face with burning eyes, which he compares to Hell and Satan. Raoul then faints and is found the unconscious the next morning by the church altar.

*Raoul's belief in a prank mirrors the directors Moncharmin and Richard's protracted denial of the Phantom's existence. Although this reaction is natural, given that it is difficult to believe in the existence of supernatural beings, they both lead to dangerous situations—such as, in this case, Christine's isolation and powerlessness before the Phantom.*



*Christine's nighttime escape is eerie, building an atmosphere of danger and suspense, suggesting that there are still many mysteries that Raoul must uncover. Unaware of any danger, Raoul single-mindedly decides to follow her—revealing his fearless determination, which remains his personal trademark throughout the novel.*



*The transcription of Raoul's interview with the police inspector serves as a reminder that this is not a mere adventure story, but the retelling of a tragic narrative that had serious consequences. This serves to build suspense in this particular episode. The events in the cemetery highlight the extraordinary quality of the Phantom's singing, as he is capable to evoke not only emotions, but a particular time and place: the past period of Raoul and Christine's childhood. Raoul's inability to resist the Phantom's music underlines its hypnotic power, capable of manipulating people's imagination.*



*The fall of the skulls serves as a gloomy foreshadowing of danger and death, which the Phantom's actions will cause. Raoul's fearlessness and determination once again come to light, as he overcomes his fear to pursue the mysterious man, despite the possibility of danger. It remains ambiguous whether Raoul's horror at seeing the man's face is the direct cause of his fainting, but this moment certainly highlights the inhumanness of the Phantom's appearance, capable of convincing a brave young man like Raoul that he has seen Satan himself.*



## CHAPTER 7

At the Opera, Messrs. Moncharmin and Richard decide to examine Box Five for themselves. In the silent, half-lit theater, the directors find the atmosphere gloomy, making them prone to fanciful ideas. In his *Memoirs*, Moncharmin admits that they were both agitated and apprehensive. Suddenly, when they look up to Box Five, they both witness a strange shape there and hold each other's hand for support.

When the shape is gone, the directors realize that their visions were not identical: while Moncharmin saw a skull, Richard perceived the figure an old woman. They both conclude that they must have suffered from some kind of illusion and laugh about the entire episode. When they finally reach Box Five, they conclude that there is nothing to be seen. They examine the various elements of furniture but notice nothing unusual about them. They conclude that they will watch *Faust* from this very box on Saturday, as to prove to their tricksters that they cannot be fooled.

## CHAPTER 8

On Saturday morning, Moncharmin and Richard receive a letter from the Phantom reminding them of his conditions. He tells them that his box must be liberated; that Christine Daaé should sing Marguerite, since Carlotta will be ill; that Mme Girya must return; and that he wants to make plans about receiving his money. He threatens to “curse” the performance of *Faust* if these terms are not respected.

Moncharmin and Richard are then told that Lachenal, the Opera's chief groom, in charge of the twelve horses in stables, is upset. Lachenal tells the directors he wants the stablemen fired, because a horse called César has been stolen. When asked for his opinion, Lachenal says he believes the ghost did it, because he saw a black figure riding the white horse in an underground gallery. After Lachenal leaves, Richard tells the administrator Mercier to fire him, but Moncharmin intercedes, noting that Lachenal has important connections.

*The influence of the quiet Opera on the directors' minds mirrors the previous episode, in which the eerie atmosphere in the cemetery made the Phantom's actions all the more terrifying, likely to make people believe that the supernatural exists. The directors' fear suggests that they are not immune to such phenomena and, under the right circumstances, might actually be inclined to believe in the supernatural.*



*It remains ambiguous whether the directors actually saw something—if Erik wanted to scare them—or whether their anxious minds did, in fact, play a trick on them. The directors' inability to notice anything out of the ordinary highlights Erik's impressive skill, as he is able to design traps and illusions in environments that appear ordinary, but which he has adjusted to serve his own purposes.*



*The Phantom's threats reveal, once again, his willingness to use violence in order to assert his authority over others. It also suggests that one of his primary goals is to satisfy his artistic passion and listen to beautiful music, which he knows that Christine—not Carlotta, who sings without true emotion—will be able to deliver.*



*The directors' assumption that anyone who mentions the ghost must be crazy appears increasingly foolish, since several staff members have mentioned him in so many different contexts. Instead of solving the problem, the directors assume that firing everyone will put an end to the chaotic situation at the Opera. It will later be confirmed that the Phantom did, in fact, steal César.*



In that moment, Mme Girya enters, handing the directors a letter from the Phantom. Furious, Richard suddenly grabs Mme Girya and kicks her out by kicking her squarely on the rear. Indignant, Mme Girya storms out. Around the same time, Carlotta receives an anonymous letter in red ink warning her not to sing tonight, as “a misfortune worse than death” might affect her. Reflecting on this situation, Carlotta concludes that she must be the victim of a conspiracy. Resentful about Christine Daaé’s extraordinary performance when she herself was last ill, Carlotta concludes that Christine must be responsible for this threat.

The narrator notes that, although Carlotta has a powerful technique, her singing lacks emotion and is nothing but a well-tuned instrument. Referencing her past as a dancer in Spanish brothels and a singer in squalid Parisian music-halls, the narrator wonders how she could have lost her soul and why she was never “purified by art,” through the wonderful roles she played at the Opera.

Angry at this threat, Carlotta resolves to sing and to invite all her friends to the Opera that night, so that they might defend her against what she assumes to be Christine’s followers. In Box Five, Moncharmin and Richard wait to hear or see the ghost. After the end of the first act, Richard says that he invited his concierge to the performance, who has never been to the Opera, so that she might agree to take on Mme Girya’s job.

During the next act, when Christine begins to sing, Carlotta’s friends assume that Christine’s friends will cheer her on, but nothing happens. Carlotta, by contrast, receives enthusiastic applause, which surprises the other spectators. During the interval, the directors try to find out more about this supposed machination against Carlotta. When they return, they notice a box of sweets under the ledge and, suddenly serious, feel a strange, cold air swirl around them.

When Christine begins to sing again, she sees Raoul in his brother’s box and loses some of her confidence, as Raoul begins to cry. Upset that Christine is making his brother suffer, Count Philippe also feels resentful toward his brother for loving this singer who only had one extraordinary performance. In the meantime, Raoul recalls the letter that Christine left him, in which she begged him to never seek her out again. She assured him that she would never forget him and that her own life was at stake.

*It remains unclear whether the reason for Carlotta’s past illness, which allowed Christine to triumph at the gala performance, was also the result of the Phantom’s manipulation. However, the Phantom’s threat suggests that he takes pleasure in scaring others and that he knows that, in certain situations, violence is less of a punishment than other events—such as, in Carlotta’s case, the ruining of her voice, on which her livelihood depends.*



*The narrator’s comments suggest that emotion is the essence of art, beyond technique itself. It also assumes that art has moral value and is capable of elevating people—and, perhaps, redeeming them. Erik is both an illustration and a counterexample of this, since he expresses emotion beautifully but often behaves violently toward others.*



*This moment of anticipation before the Phantom’s actions highlights the characters’ lack of adequate information. As will later become apparent, Carlotta is wrong to believe that Christine will attack her, and the Richard is wrong to think that the Phantom will allow Mme Girya to be replaced. None of these characters understand that they are exposed to a danger beyond their understanding.*



*Instead of being reassuring, the lack of action on Christine’s part only highlights the danger that awaits the characters, as the Phantom—not Christine—will seek revenge on the people who have not obeyed him. His placement of sweets in Box Five serves to confound the directors and make them panic, since they know that that is a sign of the Phantom’s presence.*



*Christine’s distress at seeing Raoul suggests that she sees him not as an enemy, but as someone she loves and whom she cannot bear to disappoint or make suffer. Her letter highlights the contrast between her sincere feelings of love and her necessity to distance herself from Raoul for their own good. Philippe’s frustration with Raoul’s love for Christine is connected to their status as noblemen, which dictates that men of high rank should not accept mere singers as acceptable partners.*



Carlotta then sings confidently, knowing that she has so many friends in the audience. Suddenly, though, her voice croaks, producing a horrible sound. The entire audience rises in indignation, knowing that such a sound could never leave the mouth of such a well-honed voice. Instead of booing her, they are convinced that some strange, unfair phenomenon must be taking place, as Carlotta's voice is too perfect to suffer such an accident.

In Box Five, while the public is in uproar, Moncharmin and Richard are struck with horror, convinced that this is the prelude to other catastrophes. At the same time, they can also feel that someone is present with them in the box, even though they cannot see him. When Carlotta tries to sing again, unable to contain more croaking, the directors then hear a voice in their ear whispering that the chandelier is about to fall. In that instant, the chandelier crashes to the ground. Everyone runs away in terror and panic, except the woman who has been killed on the spot by the weight of the chandelier: Richard's concierge, the very woman he had planned to make their new box attendant in place of Mme Giry.

## CHAPTER 9

After this horrific evening, Carlotta becomes sick, and Christine disappears. Worried and confused, Raoul searches for her everywhere. When he goes to see Moncharmin and Richard, who are unrecognizable after the previous tragic events, having given in to gloom and anxiety, they simply tell Raoul that Christine has said she is sick. Convinced that Christine is the victim of some mysterious person or phenomenon, Raoul determines to go see Mme Valerius, with whom Christine lives.

When Raoul enters Mme Valerius's bedroom, where she is stuck in bed, she greets him warmly and tells him that Christine is with her guardian spirit, the Angel of Music. This news depresses Raoul, though Mme Valerius then says that Christine is fond of Raoul and speaks of him every day. After laughing at Raoul's past declarations of love, which outrages Raoul, Mme Valerius explains in a conciliatory tone that the Spirit of Music prohibits Christine from marrying. She tells him that this guardian spirit met with Christine at the churchyard in Perros, where he played *Lazarus* for her. However, when Raoul asks to meet this man, Mme Valerius says that he lives in Heaven.

*Although Carlotta's singing defect might seem normal in any other set of circumstances, the public immediately understands that it is not an accident. Their interpretation of these events as a sign of some evil intention underlines the Phantom's supernatural powers, as he is able to manipulate other people's voices. It remains ambiguous whether the Phantom achieves this through ventriloquism or through some extra-human mechanism.*



*The Phantom's callousness and lack of compassion is evident not only in his treatment of Carlotta, who did not intentionally mean to upset him, but also in his decision to punish the entire audience for the directors' failure to respect his conditions. He appears to take pleasure in torturing others, since his announcement in the directors' ears serves no practical purpose beyond increasing their fear and anxiety. The concierge's tragic death suggests that the Phantom does not mind killing innocent people, and serves as vengeance against Richard for trying to replace Mme Giry, despite the Phantom's clear demands.*



*Raoul's determination to find Christine reveals that he is incapable of staying away from her, despite her adamant request, since he wants to protect her at all cost. His perspective also shifts as he realizes that Christine is probably not behaving out of her own volition, and that she might be suffering more than him. Raoul's inability to associate the man in the cemetery at Perros with these mysterious events, however, highlights his lack of perceptiveness.*



*Like Christine, Mme Valerius is unable to reconcile the contradictory aspects of the Angel of Music: his heavenly nature, which gives him extraordinary powers, and his human concerns, such as keeping Christine from marrying. It is only once Christine discovers that the Angel of Music or Phantom is a human being that his manipulative nature will become apparent—and, along with it, his human weakness for jealousy. Mme Valerius, however, confirms to a jealous, suspicious Raoul that Christine does care enormously for him.*



Shocked by such naïveté, Raoul concludes that this must explain Christine's agitated state, as Christine has lived for so long with a lady prone to fanciful ideas. Mme Valerius then tells Raoul that Christine has been receiving lessons from the Angel of Music for three months, although she has now left with him. Taking his leave from Mme Valerius, Raoul enters in a state of uncontrollable rage. He concludes that this Spirit of Music must be Christine's lover, a musician, and that Christine has deceived Raoul, proving that she is neither pure nor honest. He insults Christine but, by the time he reaches his house, he falls on his bed sobbing.

To calm his brother down, Count Philippe then tells Raoul that, the previous evening, by the race-course, Christine was seen in a brougham with a man, a dark shadow by her side. Eager to catch Christine in the act, Raoul hurriedly leaves the house and takes a cab to the race-course. There, after waiting for half an hour, he finally sees a carriage and assumes it must be Christine. As soon as he notices Christine's face in the moonlight, he calls out to her, but the carriage suddenly speeds ahead, disappearing in the night.

After this, Raoul feels lonely and miserable, concluding that he used to idealize Christine, but now feels contempt for her. He realizes that she has played with his feelings, but also knows that he has behaved foolishly, since she explicitly told him not to see her again. After considering suicide, Raoul wakes up the next day with a note from Christine asking him to meet her at the Opera's masked ball the next day. She tells him to wear a white domino, a hooded costume, and something to hide his face.

## CHAPTER 10

After receiving Christine's letter, Raoul realizes that she might in fact be as innocent as he imagined. He wonders if she has fallen under someone's pernicious influence, through the means of music. He realizes that the influence of an extraordinary singer could indeed explain Christine's extraordinary transformation into a triumphant singer. Unsure of Christine's true feelings, Raoul experiences a mix of pity and resentment for her.

*Although Raoul's attitude seems foolish and harsh, since the Phantom does exist and is capable of controlling Christine, it nevertheless highlights Christine's naïveté in believing that her father's fairytales have come true and that the Angel of Music is well-intentioned. Raoul's reaction to this news is contradictory. On the one hand, he understands that Christine might be too innocent and trusting. On the other hand, he is unable to understand that she must be the victim of a greater power, and concludes that she must be manipulating Raoul himself. His inability to focus on the sincere, honest aspect of Christine's personality underlines the deep, harmful effects of jealousy.*



*Instead of reassuring Raoul, Philippe's assertion confirms Raoul's suspicion that Christine must be deceiving him. However, Raoul's spontaneous decision to follow her once again highlights his foolhardiness and innocence, as he believes that Christine is still free to decide whether or not to see him—instead of understanding that she has little control over her present circumstances.*



*Raoul's alternation between idealization and condemnation of Christine reveals his unstable, extreme personality, as he is too overcome by jealousy to understand that Christine might be in a complex, difficult situation. Christine also gives him mixed signals; instead of repudiating him entirely, she shows that she still loves him by writing to him on various occasions and thus breaking her own vow not to see him again.*



*Raoul goes through the same thought processes many times, seeing Christine alternately as a victim and a manipulator. However, his intuition that her strange behavior can be explained by music is correct, since Christine's only attraction to the Phantom is based on his extraordinary voice and musical prowess, not on any romantic attachment.*



That evening, Raoul wears a white hood and a **mask**. He waits for Christine as instructed, and a black hooded figure touches his hand, telling him to follow her. Confused by these circumstances, Raoul nevertheless realizes that he does not hate Christine, but is ready to show understanding and submission. As he follows Christine, he notices a mysterious figure dressed in scarlet and with a skull head calling himself the “Red Death.” When a man tries to touch him, a skeletal hand grabs the man and causes the man to cry out in pain. When Raoul sees this, he recognizes the skull he had seen at Perros-Guirec.

Raoul and Christine walk up a few floors and enter an empty box, where she tells Raoul to stay in the darkness. When Raoul suddenly sees the Red Death walk by, he tries to attack him but Christine holds Raoul back. Raoul then says that he is ready to **unmask** this mysterious figure he saw at Perros, Christine’s friend, whom she calls the Angel of Music.

Christine then invokes their love and tells him to stop. Shocked by her admission of love, Raoul stops in his tracks. However, he concludes that she must be lying to him, because she had plenty of occasions earlier to reveal her feelings to him and must be trying to give the Red Death time to escape. He lashes out at her, calling her a liar and expressing his contempt for her, and begins to cry.

Christine then calmly tells Raoul that she will one day forgive him for these words. In an intensely emotional voice, she tells him that she will never sing again and that she came to give him explanations, but that he no longer believes her. Removing her **mask**, she tells Raoul that the situation she is in is tragic. Christine’s anguish, visible on her face, upsets Raoul, who asks her to forgive him for his harsh words. However, Christine walks away, telling him authoritatively not to follow her.

*Raoul’s inability to establish a connection between the skull he saw in Brittany, Christine’s fear and confusing behavior, and the skull’s reappearance suggests that he is too overwhelmed by jealousy and confusion to see the other man as an actual threat—and not simply as an irritating rival. The Red Death’s skeletal hand confirms that this is probably not a mere disguise, but his true nature as a semi-human, skeletal figure bent on protecting his anonymity by causing pain to others.*



*Raoul’s boldness is usually admirable yet misguided, since he fails to actually protect Christine because he does not understand the true magnitude of the Phantom’s powers. His choice to act before reflecting keeps him from hearing the truth from Christine and taking her confessions seriously.*



*Once again, Raoul’s pain and jealousy keeps him from believing Christine’s own words, despite Christine’s efforts to show good will through her letters. His tears highlight his confusion and thus make him pitiable, but his unfounded accusations against Christine show a darker side of him, surprisingly similar to the Phantom’s, as both are sometimes willing to harm their beloved in order to express their pain.*



*Raoul’s surprise at Christine’s despair highlights how little he has been paying attention to her emotions, since he has been too overwhelmed by his own jealousy to actually listen to Christine and understand the cause of her ambiguous behavior. Christine expresses her inability to communicate with him by walking away, knowing that she is on her own against the Phantom and that Raoul cannot help her unless he knows the entire story.*



After running around to search for either Christine or the Red Death, Raoul finally sees Christine enter her dressing-room, and he quickly hides in her closet. There, he notices the despair on her face and, thinking that she must be upset about Raoul, is shocked to hear her say: “Poor Erik!” Indignant, Raoul cannot believe she has said someone else’s name. Christine then begins to write a letter, hiding it inside her dress, and beautiful music suddenly emerges from the walls. Christine then smiles, greets Erik, and Raoul is shocked both by the fact that no one is there and by the absolute beauty of the singing, which he finds imbued with divine grace. Raoul understands how Christine could have been seduced by such singing.

*It remains unclear why Christine pities Erik—the Phantom’s real name—over herself in this moment, since she realizes that Raoul’s lack of understanding has left her alone, under the influence of someone more powerful than her. This attitude reveals Christine’s capacity to put others’ feelings before her own—sometimes, as in this case, to the point of putting her own life in danger. Christine’s joy at hearing the Phantom’s voice reveals that his singing has an intensely emotional effect on her—one that could perhaps be mistaken for love.*



As the Voice then sings verses from [Romeo and Juliet](#): “Fate has united my heart for aye unto thine!” Christine walks toward the mirror, entranced. Raoul tries to grab her but suddenly witnesses a magical sight: the multiplication of Christine into various reflections, which swirl and suddenly vanish. Raoul rushes in, trying to understand what has happened, but he does not understand how she could have disappeared through a mirror. Overwhelmed by these events, he wonders if Christine will ever return, and whose heart claims to hold hers.

*The Phantom’s singing of [Romeo and Juliet](#) is reminiscent of the night in which Christine triumphed on stage and later told Erik that she had given him her soul, suggesting that the powerful connection between them hinges on music. It also reveals the Phantom’s intention to make her his romantic partner at all cost, even if this leads to death and destruction. Christine’s disappearance, although apparently supernatural, is later explained by the Phantom’s talents as an illusionist and his expert knowledge of traps.*



## CHAPTER 11

The next day, Raoul goes to ask Mme Valerius about what has happened. He is startled to see Christine by the old woman’s bedside. Refusing to answer both Raoul and confused Mme Valerius’s questions, Christine claims that the Angel of Music does not exist. However, Raoul tells Mme Valerius that Christine is under the influence of an impostor. Raoul then points to a [ring](#) that Christine is wearing and argues that she must be married. Upset by such insinuations, Christine simply says that the ring is a present.

*Christine’s sudden denial of the Angel of Music’s existence is probably meant to protect both Raoul and Mme Valerius, since Christine knows that Erik is extremely protective of his identity and his secret lodgings. Christine’s anger at Raoul’s assumption that she must be married to Erik proves that she does not actually love Erik, even if she is willing to respect his commands.*



Raoul then describes what he saw the previous night, focusing in particular on Christine’s enchantment at hearing the singing in her dressing-room, and asks her to give him the name of the man who was singing. However, Christine says she will never do so. She is angry to hear that Raoul believes she is foolish to love this man, who must be evil if he uses such means to keep her under his control. When Raoul finally reveals that he knows that man’s name is Erik, Christine cries out, telling Raoul that he is putting his own life at risk. She warns Raoul not to try to elucidate the mystery of “the Voice,” saying that it is unfathomably terrible.

*Christine’s anger at Raoul’s insinuation that Christine is either foolish to put herself in this situation or that Erik must be evil is understandable, since she pities Erik and does not actually love him. However, Raoul does show perceptiveness, since he understands that Erik is less interested in establishing a loving relationship of trust with Christine than in maintaining control over her.*



This confession distresses Raoul, who falls silent. He agrees never to go to Christine's dressing-room uninvited again, in exchange for occasional visits from Christine.

*Raoul's willingness to compromise reveals that he finally takes Christine's words seriously, and that it might indeed be dangerous for him to keep on spying on her without asking for her permission to see her.*



## CHAPTER 12

The next day, Raoul meets with Christine at the Opera. He tells her that he is going to the North Pole on an expedition in three weeks, which he might not survive. Christine, in turn, says that she might not survive either. When they reflect that they might never see each other again, Raoul suggests that they pledge themselves to each other. Although Christine tells him to keep quiet, she is overwhelmed by happiness. Reflecting some more, she tells him that, instead of marrying, they could simply become secretly engaged. She notes that her happiness would have no bounds and that it would be harmful to no one. She then calls him her fiancé and Raoul, in secret, resolves to use these next weeks to solve the mystery of the Voice.

*Christine's gloomy prediction shows that she is aware of Erik's propensity for violence. Raoul's failure to ask her questions about this once again suggests that he is too self-involved to give due credit to Christine's thoughts and feelings. In turn, Christine's unwillingness to ask for help or try to escape her situation suggests that she is perhaps too compassionate, proving ready to put Erik's feelings before her own life and happiness. Her joy at being Raoul's secret fiancé confirms that she loves him, not Erik, but is still unwilling or unable to pursue this love freely—perhaps because she fears Erik's reaction.*



In the next few days, Raoul and Christine feel free to express their love to each other in her dressing-room. However, when Raoul mentions that he no longer wants to leave, Christine realizes that they are playing a dangerous game and disappears for two days. On her return, she performs extraordinarily at the Opera, repeating her previous triumph. Raoul runs to see her in her dressing-room and the two of them embrace passionately, while Raoul confirms that he will indeed respect the rules of their game and leave to the North Pole. At the same time, he notices the **ring** on her finger and feels a pang of intense jealousy.

*Christine's disappearance suggests that she has accepted that her love for Raoul can never exist in real life, but only in this temporary fantasy. Her unwillingness to leave the Phantom shows that she feels trapped, perhaps fearing that Erik will never leave her in peace if he discovers that she has run away with Raoul. Raoul does not yet understand this, but cares too much about spending time alone with Christine to put these few weeks in jeopardy.*



During the next few days, Christine shows Raoul around the Opera. Sometimes, though, Christine grows anxious and breathlessly leads Raoul to different spots in the theater. When Raoul mentions that she wants to explore the basement, Christine says that she cannot go there, because everything underground belongs to "him." When a trap where they were standing suddenly closes, Raoul wonders if that might be *him*, but Christine explains that he is busy working and would not be around the Opera. At the same time, Christine shudders and fears that it might have been *him* indeed.

*Christine's occasional outbursts of fear shows that she does not trust the Phantom to protect either her life or Raoul's. This constitutes a crucial difference between her suitors. Indeed, even though Raoul often proves incapable of taking the time to listen to what Christine says, he always puts her safety and well-being first. The Phantom, by contrast, is ready to go to greater, violent lengths to maintain his possessive grasp over her.*



In that moment, Raoul boldly swears to protect her. Understanding the futility of such bravery, Christine nevertheless finds his reaction touching. As Raoul insists that he will find a way to free Christine from Erik's influence, Christine experiences a moment of hope in which she wonders if that would be possible. However, she leads Raoul upstairs with frantic energy, looking behind her on various occasions without noticing that they are indeed being followed by a mysterious shadow.

*Raoul's fearlessness is admirable, but unable to contend with the Phantom's extraordinary powers. Christine's inability to imagine a life beyond the Phantom's control highlights how trapped she must feel, since she has accepted that she will have to obey Erik's commands for the rest of her life. The shadow following them proves not only that Erik is aware of her love for Raoul, but also that he is more interested in behaving secretly to achieve his goals than in confronting the situation outright.*



## CHAPTER 13

After frantically running upstairs, Christine and Raoul finally reach the roof without noticing that a shadow is following them. On the roof overlooking the city, they admire the sunset together. Christine calls Raoul by her side and tells him that they will soon escape together. She warns him that if she ever refuses, Raoul should force her to go with him. Christine is then overwhelmed with emotion as she explains that she does not know what this "demon" is capable of and that horrible things could happen if she does not visit him (Erik). She explains that she has only one day left to return to him, otherwise he will take her with him. She expresses horror at the tears that fall from his empty eyes, noting that she cannot stand them anymore. Moved by her words, Raoul encourages her to leave at once, but she says it would be too cruel.

*As Christine later explains, she does not mention Erik's name outright because he is capable of hearing her and thus discovering that she is with Raoul. Her description of Erik as a demon contrasts sharply with her previous notion of him as the heavenly Angel of Music. In either case, it highlights her understanding that Erik is not fully human, but is moved by supernatural powers. Her unwillingness to leave him, though, is the result of both fear and pity. Raoul, who only sees Erik as a threat, does not understand Christine's attachment to her oppressor. Christine herself seems at a loss to explain it, noting that she needs external guidance to make the final decision to leave.*



Christine suddenly turns around, believing she might have heard a noise. She says that she and Raoul belong here, in the sunlight, and that the first time she saw *him* (Erik) she thought she would die, because the sight was so unbearable. Both Raoul and Christine then turn around, hearing a howl of pain, although they can see no one.

*Christine does not realize that she is failing in her attempt to hide from Erik, since he is actually hiding nearby, listening to her recollections about his face with pain and sadness. Her enigmatic mention of his face suggests that it is horrible beyond human limits.*



Christine then recalls her experience with him. After hearing the beautiful Voice for three months, she asked him if he was the Angel of Music her father had promised to send. When he confirmed that he was, she trusted him entirely, and allowed him to give her music lessons in the morning, when no one was yet at the Opera. During this period, the quality of her singing increased considerably, to the point of reaching the same quality as the Voice.

*Christine's early relationship with the Phantom relies on her naïveté, the result of the deeply impactful fairytales she heard as a child. It remains ambiguous whether her musical improvement is the result of Erik's seemingly extra-human singing abilities, which he somehow communicates to her, or of a more mundane explanation, such as hard work and intense private lessons.*



When Christine saw Raoul in the audience one evening, though, she told the Voice about her feelings for her childhood friend. Overcome with jealousy, the Voice left. Though fearful that he might never come back, Christine also realized that she loved Raoul. On the roof, when Christine says this, she leans against Raoul. Immersed in their feelings of love, neither of them notices dark, black wings looming over them, threatening to crush them. Christine then describes the noticeable despair in the Voice the next day. Her trust in her father-sent Angel of Music and her ignorance of Raoul's feelings led her to swear to the voice that she did not love Raoul.

Christine then describes her triumphant gala performance, and explains that she pretended not to see Raoul so that the Voice would not be jealous. Days later, when the chandelier fell, Christine felt afraid both for Raoul and for the Voice. That night, however, she was transported to the other side of the mirror, without knowing how. She found herself in a dark, musty passageway that terrified her. A cold, skeletal hand then led her through the tunnel, lifting her off the ground. Christine saw that the man wore a **mask** on his face, and, as she was about to scream, he put his hand on her mouth. Christine noticed that he smelled of death and fainted.

When Christine woke up, the man was taking tender care of her, which revolted her even more than his earlier violence. She demanded an explanation for this situation and noticed that César, the stolen horse, was by her side. The man lifted her up on the horse and, after rejecting for so long the idea of the ghost while accepting that of the Voice, Christine began to wonder if they might not be the same person. Reflecting, she realized that she must be beneath the Opera House. The man then led her past demonic figures in front of fires, and more secret passageways. When they reached an underground lake, they entered a boat and pushed out onto the silent, dark waters.

The man, who spoke in the Voice that Christine knew so well, assured her that no harm would come to her as long as she did not touch his **mask**. Realizing that the Voice was nothing but a man, Christine began to sob, while the man knelt in front of her. He told her that he is neither an Angel nor a ghost, but a man named Erik. Back in the present, before Christine can resume her story, Raoul encourages her to leave with him right away, so that they might escape from Erik, but Christine refuses, saying that Erik might die of sorrow. At the same time, she knows that he is capable of killing them both, because he loves her too much.

*It remains ambiguous whether the black wings oppressing Raoul and Christine are a bird of prey, a metaphor for the intense atmosphere of the night, or one of Erik's transformations—which would confirm that he is indeed superhuman, capable of taking on different shapes. The Phantom's efforts to make Christine deny her love for Raoul implies that the Phantom probably is human, and not an immaterial being focused exclusively on her musical improvement.*



*Christine's fear for both Raoul and the Voice suggests that, in her idealization of the Angel of Music, she did not yet understand that the Phantom was responsible for the fall of the chandelier—and would therefore not be one of its victims. Her description of the feeling and smell of Erik's hands once again suggests that he is not fully human, as he is more easily comparable to a living corpse. The Phantom's appearance, then, is probably not the result of a mere facial deformation.*



*Christine's horror at the Phantom's mix of tenderness and violence highlights Christine's sense of personal violation, as she is helpless to fight against the Phantom's actions, which seek to restrain her body and her mind. It confirms that, in kidnapping Christine and revealing his love for her, Erik does not pause to take Christine's feelings into account but—as he did when forcing her to deny her love for Raoul—prefers to put her in a situation in which she has no other choice but to obey his own wishes.*



*Raoul's frequent repetition of his desire to run away immediately with Christine suggests that he understands the gravity of their plight more than Christine herself does. Although Christine acknowledges Erik's violent impulses, she seems resigned to suffer from them. Her indecision, the result of fear and compassion for Erik, keeps her from running away before Erik kidnaps her a second time. Her notion that Erik loves her so much that he might kill her once again shows that Erik's conception of love is based on possession and control.*



Overwhelmed by this story, Raoul asks Christine if she hates Erik but is astounded when she says she does not. Raoul accuses her of loving Erik, but Christine replies that Erik merely inspires horror in her. She says she cannot hate him because he confessed his love to her and offered to release her immediately. However, hearing his singing, Christine decided to stay, entranced by the intense emotions that Erik was able to evoke.

The next day, when Erik told Christine that he would purchase everything she might need to live down there with him, Christine concluded that he must be mad. At the same time, she resolved to hide her feelings from him, so that he might free her. Erik then informed her that he would release her in five days, but that she must later return to visit him out of her own free will. Erik showed her around his home, where he has a tomb as a bed, and told her that he has spent years composing an original work, *Don Juan Triumphant*, which will be infinitely deeper and more transformative than what he contemptuously calls “opera music.”

The two of them then sang *Othello*, and Christine was amazed by how well she was able to sing. Fascinated by Erik’s talent, she began to find him appealing and, moved by a spontaneous desire to see his face, removed his **mask**. In that moment, she felt intense, unparalleled horror. Shaking, Christine interrupts her narrative, and she and Raoul hear her expressions of horror echoed across the roof, repeated by a third listener.

Christine then resumes her story, saying that Erik has a “thing” instead of a face. She describes Erik’s hollow nose, eyes, and mouth, noting that his eyes only shine at the heart of darkness. The sight filled her with horror and Erik lashed out at her while laughing hysterically at the same time. Forcefully grabbing her by the hair, he told her to look at him, and ironically compared himself to Don Juan, making comments about his irresistible beauty. He then forced Christine to touch him and made her nails dig into the dead flesh on his face. He explained that he is “entirely made of death” and is a corpse. Then, he began to cry, explaining that Christine will never want to return to him now that she has seen his face. Still sobbing, he left and locked himself in his bedroom.

*Christine and, later, the Persian, both claim not to hate Erik, revealing that they are able to separate the Phantom’s evil deeds from the nobler aspects of his personality. This suggests that they do not conceive of Erik’s harmful deeds as personal affronts but as an expression of victimhood, which they are willing to forgive.*



*Christine’s attitude toward Erik is ambiguous. She is moved both by deep admiration for his music and compassion for feelings and his difficult situation, but also finds him horrible and cannot stand the idea of staying with him. Her inability to leave him, which she knows will cause him pain, and her lack of desire to stay leads her to confusion and indecision. More than anger at the Phantom’s manipulative attitude, her only constant reliable, constant feeling is the horror she feels for his appearance.*



*This moment epitomizes the struggle for people to separate the beauty of Erik’s voice from his ghastly appearance. It also serves as an ambiguous illustration of Christine’s relationship with Erik, since just before she removes his mask she seems intensely drawn to him, in a musical and, perhaps, romantic way.*



*Erik’s uncontrollable alternation of anger and anguish reveals that he is unable to express his pain in a nonviolent way. His brutal attitude toward Christine and his ironic laughter reveals his own helplessness, as he knows that he is horrible to look at, yet can do nothing about it. His attitude, though indicative of the grief and self-loathing he feels, once again highlights his self-centeredness, as he chooses to brutalize Christine instead of trying to reason with her or reassure her, thus proving unable to take her own feelings into account.*



Christine explains to Raoul that, despite being a monster, Erik nevertheless reasons logically. She realizes, too, that Erik might have been an Angel of Music if he were not so hideous to look at. She then continues her narrative. After a while, she heard the sound of an organ and immediately understood why Erik looks down on “opera music.” Erik played a heart-wrenching lament, which, after seeing the manuscript, Christine wondered if Erik had written in blood. She concluded that the piece was so phenomenally captivating and forceful that it represented the effort of “Hideousness” to confront “Beauty” through “the wings of Love.”

Entering Erik’s room, Christine then called him “the most unhappy and sublime of men” and said that the only thing she would feel when looking at him is fascination for his genius. Believing Christine’s words, which she now tells Raoul were nothing but lies, Erik proved submissive toward her. He took her around his home and, through a secret entrance on the Rue Scribe, drove her around in a carriage. After two weeks, he finally let Christine go, and Christine was so touched by his despair that she agreed to return to him.

After this long narrative, Raoul cannot keep himself from questioning Christine’s true feelings. He argues that she returned to Erik right after their meeting at the masked ball, but Christine replies that seeing Raoul put both of their lives at risk. Insistent, Raoul asks her if she would love Erik if he were not so ugly, and Christine simply says that such a hypothesis cannot be imagined. Finally, she tells him that she will prove her love by letting Raoul kiss her. When Raoul kisses her, they suddenly hear a dark, thundering sound, and flee from a dark bird of prey with flames in his eyes.

## CHAPTER 14

Raoul and Christine run away from a pair of frightening eyes and suddenly come across a mysterious man, the Persian, who leads them forward. While they run, wondering if they might both have imagined Erik’s presence, Raoul once again insists that they could leave tonight. However, Christine says that she has promised Erik not to see Raoul outside of the Opera, and does not want to bring them bad luck by breaking her pledge. Raoul, however, expresses his fear that she might not actually love him.

*Instead of condemning Erik for his violent behavior toward her, Christine puts her feelings aside and focuses on his grief and his sublime qualities. She describes Erik as a rebel attempting to overturn social and musical conventions: to present ugliness as beauty’s equal in the eyes of love. This highlights Erik’s wish to be loved, despite his horrible appearance—instead of inspiring admiration only while he wears a mask that hides his ugliness.*



*Christine’s lies to Erik are not necessarily a form of manipulation, as they are her effort to soothe him so that he might let her escape. Although this might indeed be part of her plan, she also shows a constant concern for Erik’s feelings, which she does not want to hurt. Her inability to feel resentment toward him for the way he has treated her is compassionate and generous, but also suggests that she is not capable of protecting herself from Erik’s manipulation.*



*Although Raoul has occasionally proven extreme in his reactions of jealousy toward Christine, his current interrogation does highlight certain contradictions in her attitude—such as her claim that she wants to leave Erik but is unable to do so. Similarly, her unwillingness to reflect on what she would feel for Erik if he were beautiful does not invalidate her love for Raoul, but does suggest that she might not have an answer to that question herself.*



*Once again, it remains ambiguous whether Erik has shifted shapes, turning into a bird of prey, or simply appears to be one in the confusion of the night. Once again, Christine’s inability to run away immediately highlights her lack of knowledge about the danger that awaits them, now that Erik has discovered her true feelings for Raoul.*



Christine says that they could go to her dressing-room, where Erik has promised never to listen. She also says that Erik can hear her anytime she calls, because he has talents beyond human capacities. She also insists that Raoul should take her with him by force if she refuses to leave. While Christine prepares to leave to return to Erik's abode, she suddenly panics, realizing she has lost the gold ring Erik once gave her, which he told her was a sign of her faithfulness to him. However, instead of looking for it, however, she decides to leave at once.

That night, Raoul sees two burning eyes at the foot of his bed. Shaking, Raoul strikes a match but does not notice anything unusual. He begins to wonder if he has lost his mind. However, when he blows out the light, the eyes return. Raoul then slowly grabs hold of his pistol, takes aim, and shoots. Servants and Count Philippe immediately come running and, noticing Raoul's feverish face, they wonder if he has gone mad. However, Raoul stands up and sees blood on the floor, concluding that the ghost is indeed a normal human being. Count Philippe argues that Raoul must have shot a cat, as the trail of blood goes down the balcony through a drain-pipe, and Raoul laughs, saying that Erik can indeed take whatever form he wishes. The count—and, later, the examining magistrate M. Faure—becomes convinced that Raoul must have gone mad.

When the servants leave, Raoul yells that he plans to take Christine Daaé away with him. Later, during police investigations, the servants told M. Faure, the examining magistrate, that such fights were not uncommon between the two brothers. The next morning, Count Philippe hands a paper to Raoul, in which someone has written that Christine Daaé and Viscount Raoul de Chagny are engaged, despite Count Philippe's resistance. Philippe tells Raoul that he must have gone mad, to want to leave with this girl, but Raoul refuses to answer. Instead, he spends the entire day preparing for his escape with Christine.

In the evening, Raoul goes to the Opera, leaving his carriage by the entrance, ready for his escape. That night, Christine Daaé is welcomed coldly on stage, as the public considers that, as a mere singer, she is not fit to marry into the French nobility. Although this initially makes Christine uncomfortable, she soon immerses herself in the beauty of the moment in *Faust* in which she ascends to the sky, calling up to the angels. In the middle of her heartrending performance, the lights suddenly go out for a few seconds and, when they return, Christine is no longer there. Although it seems as though Christine has been taken up by the angels, the audience turns toward Raoul, to figure out if he might be involved in this disappearance. The conductor then steps onto the stage and announces that Christine has vanished through some mysterious, unknown means.

*Despite Raoul's fears, Christine proves that she does love him by showing him her trust and explaining that he should decide what is best for them by taking her away. Although Christine does not hate Erik, the fear he inspires in her expresses itself through her anguish at losing the ring, which also highlights Erik's desire to control her—despite adopting a seemingly compromising attitude by promising not to spy on her in one specific location of the Opera.*



*Although Raoul apparently wounds the Phantom, no other mention is made of this fact later in the narrative. This creates uncertainty about Raoul's state of mind. Indeed, it remains ambiguous whether Raoul actually wounded the Phantom or whether the events of the day left his mind scarred, making him more paranoid than usual. After hearing Christine's story, though, Raoul now seems to accept that the Phantom truly has supernatural powers, such as the capacity to shift forms. However, the Count and M. Faure's belief that Raoul is mad is misguided, since Raoul is correct in accepting the Phantom's existence and understanding him as a violent threat.*



*The servants' mention about the fights between Raoul and Philippe serve to (wrongly) convince M. Faure that the Count's death and Raoul's disappearance must have something to do with their disagreement about Raoul's relationship with Christine Daaé. Raoul reveals his determination and rebelliousness when he rejects societal standards about marriage, preferring instead to give more weight to his feelings of love.*



*The society's reaction to Christine's rumored plans to marry Viscount Raoul highlights the extent to which social judgment can lead one to isolation—as has happened, in a more extreme manner, which Erik, who has always been rejected because of his appearance. The beauty of Christine's singing and her subsequent disappearance are symbolic. Her call to angels is reminiscent of her belief in Erik as the Angel of Music. Exercising his talent as an illusionist, Erik thus makes her abduction seem like a divine deed, instead of a merely human, jealousy-driven action, meant to keep her under his control.*



## CHAPTER 15

As the audience erupts into chaos, alternately accusing Raoul, Carlotta, or the ghost of abducting Christine, members of the staff attempt to communicate with the directors, who have given orders not to be disturbed. When their door finally opens, Moncharmin angrily asks for a safety pin. Gabriel, the chorus-master, notes that this situation must be the Phantom's doing. Rémy, the secretary, adds that the directors have been acting strangely all evening. He saw them walking backwards up the stairs. Moncharmin got angry whenever people tried to approach Richard, whom he said should not be touched.

Noticing that Gabriel is pretending not to know what Rémy is talking about, Rémy finally says that he saw Mercier, the administrator, take Mme Giry away, thus creating a second "disappearance" for the night by locking her up in Mercier's office. Mercier then arrives, telling the two men that he was finally able to tell Moncharmin and Richard about Christine's disappearance. However, they failed to show any reaction, merely saying "Good for her," putting a safety pin in Mercier's hand and closing the door. As the three men mutter about the strangeness of this situation, a desperate Raoul suddenly greets them, asking about Christine's whereabouts.

*Although the directors' behavior suggests they might have gone mad, or are under the influence of the ghost, it later appears that there is a logical reason for their behavior: they are trying to recreate the exact actions they performed the previous night, when they gave the Phantom an envelope full of his money, so that they might discover how the Phantom took the money without them noticing. Although many events are indeed the ghost's doing, here Gabriel's superstitious attitude suggests that it is difficult to discern what constitute human (if unusual) actions, as opposed to paranormal events.*



*Once again, Mme Giry's disappearance is not actually connected to the Phantom's doings, since it later appears that the directors ordered Gabriel and Mercier to lock her up, so that she would not interrupt their efforts to understand the Phantom's actions. The mystery of the safety pin can also be explained by the directors' strange proceedings. In this way, the novel proves that it is focused on rational explanations for mysterious events and that not all strange events are necessarily supernatural in nature.*



## CHAPTER 16

Convinced that Erik must have kidnapped Christine, Raoul calls her everywhere in the Opera, hoping she might hear him. He fears that Christine might be lost forever and despairs at not forcing her to leave earlier. Running everywhere, he wonders if he might be able to find the secret passage in Rue Scribe that Christine had mentioned, when he suddenly comes face to face with Inspector Mifroid. The inspector asks Raoul to follow him and searches for the directors. When they finally succeed in making Moncharmin and Richard open the door, Raoul hears someone whisper in his ear that Erik's secrets belong only to him, he turns around and sees the Persian, who silently tells him to keep quiet before disappearing.

*The ambiguity of Christine's previous statements, enjoining Raoul to force her to escape with him if ever she showed hesitation or weakness, makes it difficult for Raoul to determine what is best for her, since he does not know if he should actually have listened to her or followed what he believed was best—to take her with him the previous night, before the Phantom could kidnap her himself. The Persian's mysterious attitude makes him appear as one of Erik's allies, thus creating tension and suspense.*



## CHAPTER 17

The narrator interrupts the narrative to recount then night's previous events. The day before Christine's performance, the directors agree to pay the Phantom his due. Following the Phantom's new instructions by letter, they give Mme Girya an envelope with twenty thousand francs. Mme Girya leaves the envelope in the Phantom's box and, after a few hours, when it has not disappeared, Richard and Moncharmin open it again, breaking the seal. They initially believe their money is still there, but soon find out that these are now fake francs. They do not understand how this illusion has come to pass, although Moncharmin begins wondering if his colleague Richard is playing a trick on him.

The morning of Christine's disappearance, Richard and Moncharmin receive a second letter from the Phantom congratulating them for the previous exchange and asking them to proceed anew in the same way. This time, though, they interrogate Mme Girya about her dealings with the Phantom. She explains that the Phantom gives her ten francs for this service, but has also promised her to make Little Meg, her daughter, Empress in 1885, following a long line of dancers who have integrated nobility.

Mme Girya, however, does not know what is in the envelopes. When the directors show her that it contains twenty thousand francs, she is astonished. Richard then says that he plans to arrest her for stealing this money. Indignant, Mme Girya spontaneously slaps him, retorting angrily that the twenty thousand francs are nowhere but in Richard's own pocket. Hoping that the Phantom will forgive her, Mme Girya divulges his secret technique. She explains that she puts the envelope the director gives her in Richard's pocket and the envelope with the fake money in the Phantom's box, after hiding it in her sleeve. She explains that she slips it in Richard's pocket when he least expects it. Then, later on, the Phantom can easily retrieve it from Richard's pocket, since Richard has no idea that it is there.

*Although the directors initially prove willing to respect the Phantom's demands, thus finally admitting that they believe he exists, their skepticism is powerful, and they are more likely to accuse each other of making a prank than to accept the mystery of what is happening to them. On the other hand, to the reader, who is aware of the Phantom's tricks, this demonstrates Erik's ingeniousness and playful attitude, as he enjoys tricking the directors in addition to simply receiving his money.*



*Although the Phantom apparently takes advantage of Mme Girya's credibility, since it seems highly unlikely that her daughter would ever become an Empress, the directors are actually wrong to see this as pure manipulation—or as one Mme Girya's delusions. Indeed, "Little Meg" is described at the beginning of the novel as a Baroness. Although she is not an Empress, she has successfully entered aristocracy, thus proving that the Phantom was partially right—although it remains ambiguous what role he might have played in this affair.*



*The logic of Mme Girya's explanation—as well as her boldly violent action against her employer—suggests that she is neither as credible nor as meek as she may seem. Rather, she proves to be an honest, dutiful worker, capable of performing her job without giving in to natural curiosity or greed, such as the desire to know what is in the envelopes. This episode once again highlights the Phantom's cunning and ingenuity, suggesting that he is indeed skillful enough to make his illusions appear unexplainable or supernatural. In this way, although the Phantom's nature still remains ambiguously extra-human, he also contrives to make his actions seem fantastic and ghostly.*



## CHAPTER 18

Since Moncharmin still proves mistrustful of his partner, Richard agrees to do whatever Moncharmin desires to put his mind at ease. Moncharmin concludes that Richard should repeat the exact same movements he did the night before, while Moncharmin keeps track of the envelope in his pocket. He orders Gabriel and Mercier to lock Mme Giry up so that she will not be able to interact with the Phantom in any way.

That evening, Moncharmin and Richard thus repeat the previous night's movements, making sure that no one touches Richard. However, Richard soon becomes irritated by his colleague's suspicions and tells Moncharmin that he, too, could suspect him. The two of them thus conclude that they will need to attach the envelope to Richard's pocket with the help of a safety pin, which they succeed in getting from a staff member at the same time as Rémy attempts to tell them about Christine's disappearance.

In the office, Richard and Moncharmin wait anxiously for midnight. As soon as they hear the bells toll, they sigh with relief. However, when Moncharmin searches Richard's pocket, he finds an empty safety pin. The envelope has disappeared. Richard then attacks Moncharmin, arguing that only Moncharmin had access to that envelope. When Mercier once again knocks on the door, Moncharmin, thoroughly confused, paying little attention to his surroundings, hands Mercier the safety pin and closes the door.

## CHAPTER 19

When Inspector Mifroid enters the directors' office, he asks whether they have seen Christine Daaé. Utterly confused—since Moncharmin now knows that neither Richard nor he took the money—Moncharmin finds himself unable to reply. Richard asks why Mifroid is asking this and, when he discovers that Christine has disappeared, is overcome by anguish.

*Once again, Moncharmin's inability to believe Mme Giry and to trust in the Phantom's existence leads him to behave in absurd ways. Although the novel does show that superstition and paranoia can reach extreme levels, it also highlights the absurdity of certain characters' efforts to deny that there is anything unusual or suspect about their circumstances—which would involve accepting the existence of unknown actors such as the Phantom.*



*These series of actions explain why, from the outside, Moncharmin and Richard's behavior might have seemed completely crazy. These explanations once again highlight the narrator's credibility, as he shows that he is just as capable of explaining mysteries by referring to the Phantom's existence as he is by describing perfectly human actions—and must therefore be correct in asserting the Phantom's existence when it constitutes the most satisfactory explanation.*



*The narrator later discovers that the Phantom achieves this trick, in which it seems as though the envelope has dissolved mid-air, by reaching into Richard's pocket through a hole in the director's desk. The directors' confusion once again suggests that they might finally be ready to accept the Phantom's existence, since they now realize that they have run out of rational explanations to describe their situation.*



*The directors' anguish and fear suggests that they finally understand that forces they cannot explain are at play. However, although Mifroid's intervention forces them to confront reality, Mifroid himself will prove unable to solve the mystery of Christine's disappearance.*



In the meantime, Raoul intervenes, saying that Christine has been abducted by an angel, the Angel of Music. Richard adds that the Phantom has also stolen money from them. As Raoul describes Erik's actions in the churchyard at Perros, the Inspector wonders if everyone at the Opera has gone crazy. After a fellow detective enters and whispers something to Inspector Mifroid, the Inspector begins to interrogate Raoul about his plans to run away with Christine. He says that Count Philippe has left the Opera, heading toward Brussels, and must be the one who abducted Christine, to keep Raoul from marrying her. When Raoul says that he will chase his brother, Inspector Mifroid is satisfied by Raoul's idea. However, once in the hallway, Raoul is stopped by a tall, imposing man: the Persian.

## CHAPTER 20

The Persian tells Raoul that he hopes Raoul has not revealed Erik's secret, since that could put Christine's life in danger. Raoul shows impatience, wanting to pursue Philippe, but the Persian asserts that Christine must be in the Opera, since no one but Erik—whom he calls a “monstrous fiend”—could have organized such an ingenious kidnapping. He offers to help Raoul search for both of them and, when Raoul accepts, realizing that it is unlikely his brother could have organized such an abduction, the Persian says they must not refer to Erik by name, so that he might not grow suspicious. The Persian tells Raoul to leave his hat in Christine's dressing-room, which he opens with a master key.

The Persian tells Raoul that his servant has brought him two pistols so that they might defeat Erik. After he hands one to Raoul, Raoul wonders if hatred might explain the Persian's willingness to put his life in danger—since, unlike Raoul, he is not in love. However, the Persian replies that he does not in fact hate Erik, having long forgiven him. In Christine's dressing-room, the Persian presses his hand against Christine's mirror, explaining that a counterweight allows for a mechanism to turn the mirror, shifting it to the other side of the wall.

The Persian explains that, in his country, Erik is called “the Master of the Traps” because of his extraordinary skills with walls and secret entrances. He notes that Erik once took part in building the walls of the Paris Opera House himself. Finally, the Persian succeeds in making the mirror revolve, after first warning Erik to hold his pistol ready.

*Inspector Mifroid's shock at hearing so many people refer to a ghost represents the natural reaction of an outsider, who has not followed closely the strange events taking place at the Opera. However, his skepticism will prove crippling, since it will keep him from understanding the complexity of the situation and discovering the truth by trusting that some unknown, powerful actor must be involved. Raoul's decision to follow Philippe is paradoxical, since he was by Philippe's side during Christine's performance, but highlights his despair, and his willingness to follow any clue in order to save Christine.*



*Although the Persian has helped Raoul and Christine escape from Erik's grasp in the past, he remains a mysterious figure, whom some people believe to be associated with the Opera ghost. His sudden appearance, at such an opportune moment, makes him seem suspicious—even if his condemnation of Erik's actions and his logical reasoning gives him some credibility. The Persian's sudden appearance thus creates tension and suspense, making his true allegiance ambiguous, since he could also be trying to distract Raoul and keep him away from the right path.*



*Although the Persian's lack of hatred toward Erik might make him seem less trustworthy, as it remains possible that he is trying to trick Raoul, it later becomes apparent that he is moved by a desire for justice and, most pressingly, the need to stop Erik for causing harm to others. His explanations and his visible efforts to turn the mirror make him seem a bit more credible, although Raoul still only follows him based on blind trust.*



*The Persian's explanations about Erik's involvement with the Opera House provides a rational explanation for Erik's capacity to move around unnoticed, and thus suggests that one need not be a ghost to perform Erik's tricks and misdeeds.*



## CHAPTER 21

The two men enter a dark passage, and the Persian reminds Raoul to keep his hand raised, with his pistol ready. The Persian then lights a lantern and the two of them walk through the passage, which Raoul later learns was built by insurgents during the period of the Paris Commune to carry prisoners straight to prison. The Persian then kneels and searches the floor, finally finding the opening of a trap leading onto mezzanine floors beneath the stage. The two men step in and fall down to the floor.

Raoul notes that, although he does not actually know the Persian, he fully trusts him, assuming that they both intend to defeat Erik. He concludes that the Persian would not have given him a pistol if he were against him, and that any hesitation on his part would make him a coward, since his goal is to save Christine.

The two men then find themselves behind a screen. In front of them, Raoul notices two dead bodies, whom the Persian says must be Erik's fault. Moments later, they watch as the stage manager finds the bodies of Mauclair, the man in charge of electricity, and his assistants. Mauclair, however, is not dead, but under the influence of a narcotic. As Inspector Mifroid, who has arrived, concludes that this must be the abductor's work, the stage manager notes that the only other time he found Mauclair in this position was on the night that Carlotta's voice broke.

As the men leave, Raoul and the Persian keep on walking. The Persian tells Raoul that, if his pistol is too heavy to carry at this height, he can put it in his pocket but must keep his hands in front of his face at all cost, as this is "a matter of life and death." Raoul finds himself in an incredible maze of passageways, where he follows the Persian, who seems to know the Opera extremely well. They walk downwards, trying to keep out of sight of the various workers walking around, carrying out their tasks.

As the men make their way through different floors, the Persian suddenly tells Raoul to stop and lie down, because a shadow is moving toward them. When it crosses them, the Persian says he knows him but does not give Raoul any details. Suddenly, the two of them then see a shining head of fire float toward them. Remembering Papin's description, the Persian and Raoul attempt to flee. However, the fast-moving head keeps on moving toward them.

*The narrator's mention of a historical event such as the Paris Commune—which author Gaston Leroux was able to investigate retrospectively through his role as a journalist—gives credibility to his narrative, suggesting that this is not a fanciful tale about a ghost but, as he has often insisted, a true story about a human "Phantom."*



*Raoul's trust in the Persian derives from his desperate situation. Wanting to find Christine at all costs, Raoul has no choice but to trust him. Raoul's fearlessness and determination highlight his noble, chivalric attitude, as well as his devotion to Christine, whom—unlike Erik—he wants to keep from harm.*



*Although Erik is capable of murderous deeds, his principal preoccupation is succeeding in his enterprise of kidnapping Christine, and he thus adopts a practical attitude toward the necessity to get rid of the electrical staff. The mention of Carlotta's voice suggests that Erik might have influenced it (or the fall of the chandelier) through mysterious electrical manipulation. This current deed is thus different from Erik's treatment of Joseph Buquet, who was considered not a mere obstacle but a threat after he entered Erik's abode and thus threatened his secrecy.*



*The Persian's injunction to Erik to keep his arm by his neck is later explained by the fact that Erik could kill them by strangling them with a Punjab cord—an outcome the men can prevent by keeping an arm in front of their neck. The Persian's knowledge of the Opera does not necessarily make him Erik's ally, but, rather, suggests that he has been successful at uncovering Erik's tricks and techniques.*



*The identity of the man the Persian sees remains mysterious and suggests that the Persian might be aware of other intrigues beyond Erik's. The terrifying head of fire adds an element of supernatural mystery to this scene, suggesting that Erik might in fact be capable of paranormal tricks.*



When the floating head finally reaches them, the terrified pair realizes that he is nothing but a man leading waves of rats away from the Opera. The man cries out that he is the “rat-catcher” and that they should make way. The narrator notes that the man must use a special technique to guide rats away from the Opera House, where they could cause damage. Raoul and the Persian sigh in relief, as the Persian notes that he thought this was one of Erik’s many tricks.

Despairing at being so far from Christine, Raoul asks the Persian to take him straight to the lake. However, the Persian says that the lake is terribly dangerous, because a siren lives there. The Persian tries to reassure Raoul, telling him that they can reach Erik’s abode through the third mezzanine, through a secret passage behind the *Le Roi de Lahore* cloth—the very spot where Buquet was found hanging. As Raoul and the Persian keep on moving, the Persian taps a wall, saying that this could be part of Erik’s home. The narrator notes that the Opera walls were built with a double shell, inside of which Erik was able to build his retreat.

Finally, they reach the cloth from *Le Roi de Lahore*. The Persian slips behind it. He presses against a section of the wall and, as a stone gives way, uncovers a hole. Concentrated, he cocks his pistol and tells Raoul to do the same. The two of them crawl into a narrow passageway, as the Persian tells Raoul to make as little noise as possible. The Persian then slides through a hole in the floor, telling Raoul that he will help him down. The two of them fall down and stay quiet. Knowing that he is in Erik’s abode, Raoul has to force himself not to call out to Christine and reveal their presence.

The Persian lights the lantern and turns back, shocked to see that the hole they opened is closed again. Looking down, he picks up a rope and exclaims in horror that this is a Punjab cord—the instrument that must have killed Buquet. The two men then begin to examine the walls around them and, as they realize that they are mirrors, the Persian begins to panic, saying that they now found themselves in the “torture chamber.”

## CHAPTER 22

In the next few chapters, the narrator transcribes Daroga the Persian’s written narrative about his relationship with Erik and the later, mysterious events taking place at the Opera. Apprehensive about some of Erik’s somber, violent comments, yet knowing that Erik would not let him enter his retreat, Daroga (the Persian term for “chief of police”) resolves to see Erik’s abode in secret. Therefore, he describes once trying to enter Erik’s retreat through the lake

*The mundane explanation behind the head of fire suggests, once more, that all events that appear supernatural can be explained in rational ways. However, this seemingly reassurance focus on the human does not make the possibility of violence any less likely, as Erik’s pleasure at pranking others in terrifying ways does not make his tricks—however logical—any less threatening.*



*Although it remains ambiguous whether this siren is a supernatural being or a machine invented by Erik, it is later confirmed that this is indeed one of Erik’s tricks. The fact that Buquet was found hanging so close to the Roi de Lahore scenery confirms the Persian’s later hypothesis that Buquet must have discovered Erik’s hiding place and was punished for this. The narrator’s rational explanations about the building’s construction once again insists that Erik’s ghost-like movements can be explained purely in terms of engineering and intelligence.*



*This scene builds suspense and anticipation, as the two characters are coming closer to Christine, whom they might be able to save, but also, as a result, to Erik and the possibility of violence. Raoul’s desire to call out to Christine reveals his desperation to help her and be near her—an indication of his tendency toward impulsive actions, but also of his deep love for her and his desire to protect her.*



*Trapped, the two characters are now at Erik’s mercy, as will become apparent through Erik’s skillful design of the torture chamber. The discovery of the Punjab cord finally solves the mysterious event of Joseph Buquet’s death, proving that it was not an ordinary suicide but, on the contrary, a revenge-motivated murder.*



*Daroga’s intuition of Erik’s desire to create a violent scenario that would harm and kill people comes true at the end of the novel. Through his narrative, Daroga shows his good will, as he demonstrates that his goal has always been to stop Erik from causing harm to others.*



Taking the boat to cross the lake, Daroga suddenly hears enchanting singing all around him. He fears that he might be under the spell of a siren but also knows that Erik is capable of many tricks, and that this might be one of them. However, irresistibly attracted by the sound, he leans out of the boat and is soon caught by two giant arms, which drag him into the water. Erik then hears the Daroga's cry and, recognizing his voice, saves him from certain death. He warns the Daroga not to try his patience again, saying that his gratefulness to the Daroga for once saving his life might fade one day, as not even Erik has control over his own violent impulses.

Admitting that Erik is undoubtedly a "fiend," the Daroga adds that Erik is also proud and arrogant. This leads Erik to show Daroga how he uses a reed and hides under water to lure his visitors, thus imitating a siren. The Daroga then reminds Erik of his promise not to murder any more people, but Erik says that the Daroga must know Erik never keeps his promises. Daroga interrogates him about the chandelier and, laughing in a sinister manner, Erik dismisses the issue, saying that it was old and fell down on its own. Erik concludes their conversation by telling Daroga never to enter his abode again, or he might have to sing the Requiem Mass for him.

From that day on, Daroga gives up on the idea of reaching the inside of Erik's lair through the lake. However, the Daroga still worries about Erik's misdeeds, which could prove fatal to others. At the same time, Erik claims that he has changed because he is now "loved for himself." Knowing that this is highly unlikely, given Erik's appearance, the Persian fears disastrous consequences. Having noticed Erik's interactions with Christine Daaé, he assumes that, however enraptured Christine might be with Erik's singing, she will probably change her mind about him once she sees his true face.

A few days later, still spying on Erik, Daroga sees him take an unconscious Christine Daaé to his abode, using César the horse to transport her to the lake. Hours later, Erik returns alone and angrily tells the Persian that he knew he was there—and that, instead of following Erik, Erik was the one following the Daroga. Enraged, Erik warns Daroga that, if ever his personal secrets are revealed, all of humanity will suffer. However, Daroga retorts that he is simply trying to find Christine, as she has not chosen to follow Erik out of love but is being kept there against her will. Annoyed by Daroga's assertions, Erik assures him that Christine will later choose to return on her own and thus prove her love for him.

*Daroga's ability to separate supernatural occurrences from Erik's tricks reveals his intimate knowledge of Erik as a man, before he pretended to be the Phantom or ghost at the Opera. However, the particularity of Erik's tricks is that they can be successful even if the victim knows that they might be a mere mechanical trick—as the torture room will soon reveal. Erik's willingness to save Daroga shows that he is not as callous as he seems, and that he is capable of kindness and gratitude.*



*In his description of Erik, Daroga is aware of his murderous instincts as well as other defects and qualities, such as his intelligence and his pride. This provides a complex depiction of Erik as a human being moved by sometimes contradictory desires and painful emotions. However, Erik's supposed inability to keep promises presents him as a treacherous being. This potential unreliability is capable to cast doubt on all of Erik's actions—such as his promise to have freed Christine at the end of the novel.*



*Erik's illusion and optimism about his relationship with Christine suggests that, despite his hardened attitude, he is capable of hope and innocence. The tragic ending of this love story—in which Christine admits that she loves Raoul—suggests that Erik is doomed never to find true love. At the same time, it also highlights Erik's lack of awareness that seducing someone is best achieved through mutual communication, not Erik's one-sided efforts to deceive and abduct Christine.*



*Despite his apparent love for Christine, Erik does not understand that he cannot instill love in Christine by force—for example, by kidnapping her and keeping her underground against her will. At the same time, he is correct in assuming that his beautiful voice might make Christine want to stay with him for a while. However, Erik's reference to his plan to make more people suffer suggests that he has not abandoned his violent ways, and is still keen to seek brutal revenge on those who offend him.*



Although Erik is later proven right, since Christine does return to him, Daroga cannot help but feel anguished about Erik's threats against humanity. After days of trying to uncover Erik's comings and goings, Daroga finally sees him enter the Opera through a hole behind the *Roi de Lahore* backdrop. He examines the wall himself and is able to find an opening. After more days of investigation, Daroga discovers that Christine does *not* love Erik but Raoul. He fears that, if Erik ever discovers this, this situation might turn into a disaster.

On the day on which the newspapers announce Christine's engagement to Raoul, Daroga considers denouncing Erik to the authorities but concludes that this could lead to further problems. Arriving at the Opera, he is glad to see that it has not been destroyed. After Christine's abduction, however, Daroga concluded that her life and that of many others is probably at stake. He seeks Raoul's help, although he knows that this will be no ordinary duel, since they will be fighting an expert illusionist.

When Daroga later found the Punjab cord, he remembers Erik's talent with it. In particular, he recalls the painful period of *Rosy Hours of Mazenderan*, in which the young sultans asked for entertainment, which consisted of a duel between Erik and a man condemned to death armed with dangerous weapons. Using only the Punjab cord, Erik could kill the man when spectators least expected it, which prompted enthusiastic applause from the public. The sultana also learned to use the cord and used it against some of her companions and friends.

Unwilling to reflect any longer on this distressing topic, the Persian focuses on his role at the Opera. Aware of Erik's talents, he knows that he and Raoul will have to protect their necks at all costs, so that the cord will surround the protective arm as well as the neck. The Persian notes that Erik's knowledge of the building derives from the work he performed as one of the chief contractors for the Opera, which also allowed him to build secret passages for himself.

When Raoul and the Persian finally enter the torture room, a replica of the torture chamber in the *Rosy Hours of Mazenderan*, the Persian panics. Recalling that torture chambers are meant to attack any intruder, the Persian concludes that the torture in this room could begin automatically.

*Christine's mixed admiration and pity for Erik does not replace love, although Erik does not yet understand this himself. Daroga's intuition about Erik's violent behavior suggests that even the feeling of love for another human being cannot change Erik's brutal ways, since Erik is more inclined to force Christine to obey him than to let her express her emotions freely and build a relationship based on mutual trust.*



*Authorities' inability to handle this situation highlights the fact that, even though the mysterious occurrences at the Opera can be explained rationally, their connection to a mysterious ghost or Phantom renders them incredible to officers who deal with ordinary crimes. The fact that the Persian is later considered a madman confirms his intuition that traditional justice will be of no help.*



*Despite Erik's skeletal appearance, he is evidently capable of impressive physical feats, in addition to the design of intelligent traps and tricks. This highlights Erik's training as a murderer, which undoubtedly impacted his vision of life, turning him into a cold-blooded assassin, used to considering other people's deaths a potential source of entertainment.*



*The Persian's technical explanation about his advice to Erik shows that it did have clear logic (despite his seemingly absurd suggestion that they put their pistol in their pocket) and was based on an intimate understanding of Erik's killing techniques. Erik's role as a builder serves as the final, most convincing explanation for Erik's extremely detailed knowledge of the Opera.*



*The automatic nature of the torture room proves that it is indeed made to ward off intruders—although it does so in an extremely violent, cruel way, inspired by an understanding of murder as a form of entertainment.*



## CHAPTER 23

The Persian's narrative continues. He describes the torture chamber as a room made of six walls, covered in mirrors. In a corner, an iron tree allows the trapped prisoners to hang themselves if they become too desperate. Raoul and the Persian suddenly hear a door open to their left, and Erik tells someone to choose between the Wedding Mass and the Requiem Mass. After hearing the interlocutor's moan, the men conclude that this must be Christine. Erik then explains that, now that he has finished *Don Juan Triumphant*, he wants a normal life, far from violence—a life that he hopes to share with Christine if she agrees to be his wife. His threatening tone makes Christine cry, but Erik tells her that he is not a bad man and simply needs to be loved in order to change.

Hearing an intense, overwhelming lament of despair, the men realize that it comes from Erik's own voice, while Christine is probably too shocked to say anything. Erik begins to yell that she doesn't love him and asks her why she is crying, which he says breaks his heart. After a moment of silence, Erik suddenly hears the sound of an electric bell and goes to see who is at the door.

As soon as Erik leaves, Raoul calls out to Christine. He tells her that he is on the other side of the wall, and she explains to him that, driven crazy by love, Erik is ready to kill everyone, including himself, if Christine does not agree to marry him. She has until eleven o'clock the next day to make a decision. She adds that she is completely bound and that there are only two doors in the room, one of which leads to the torture chamber. The Persian tells her that she must open that door for them, but Christine says that Erik has forbidden anyone to use his keys, which he calls "keys of life and death."

Desperate, Christine then tells Raoul to flee immediately, but Raoul says that he will not leave without her. She says that she tried killing herself earlier by hitting her head against the wall, which is why Erik tied her up. Suddenly, they hear Erik return and keep quiet. Erik returns apologizing for his appearance, saying it is the man's fault, as well as the siren's. Christine tells him that these ropes hurt and asks her to release her. Erik concludes that, if they are going to die together, he could do so. He says that he, too, is tired of this life. Freeing Christine's ropes, he notices her staring at him and begins to ramble, saying that the man who came is now safely at the bottom of the lake. He adds that he must sing the Requiem Mass for him.

*The design of Erik's torture room highlights his callousness, as he does not feel guilty forcing people to reach atrocious levels of despair before killing themselves. In this episode, Erik's vengeful, manipulative tendencies reveal themselves, as he no longer wants Christine to love him spontaneously, but prefers to give her the choice between love (the Wedding Mass) and death (the Requiem Mass, which is a Mass for the dead). At the same time, his admission that he does not necessarily want to keep on being so tyrannical suggests that he, too, is trapped—physically, in an underground cellar, but also psychologically and socially, since he cannot easily escape his life as a recluse.*



*Erik's willingness to force Christine to marry him despite her lack of love for him shows that he is more intent on controlling her and forcing her to abide by his wishes than on allowing her to express herself freely. His sincere despair suggests that his only way to express his grief is by making others suffer as well.*



*Christine's assumption that Erik is behaving in this violent manner out of love is misguided, since Raoul—who also loves her—wants to protect her, not harm her. Her conflation of love with brutal possession explains her attitude toward Erik: she cannot hate him, does not judge him too harshly and, in fact, pities him. Erik's willingness to kill himself highlights his isolation and desperation, as he has lost all will to live after being rejected by all of mankind.*



*Although Christine sometimes seem naïve and weak, as well as too forgiving of Erik, her attempt to kill herself reveals the depths of her anguish and her horror for her captor. It also signals that, like Raoul, she, too, is capable of acting impulsively, to the point of putting her own life at risk. Erik's mention of the "siren"—which he himself controls—suggests that someone has perished because of him, and that he is still just as willing to kill off intruders as before. This highlights the danger that Raoul and the Persian face.*



At this information, the Persian is moved by anguish, wondering who has been trapped in Erik's lake. However, they all now hear Erik singing his Requiem, an incredibly moving, furious and powerful *Dies Irae*. To Daroga, Erik sounds like the God of Thunder. However, all of a sudden, Erik stops and, enraged, asks who has taken his keys.

*Later, it appears that the drowned man was Count Philippe. Erik, however, claims that Philippe's death was accidental and that he found him when he was already dead, although the lack of details Erik relates leaves ambiguity about his actual role.*



## CHAPTER 24

The Persian continues his narrative, explaining that they then hear Christine running toward them as Erik interrogates her, furious. Erik says that he does not like inquisitive women and, when Christine cries out in pain, the Persian concludes that Erik must have forcefully taken the keys from her. At this sound, Raoul cries out and Erik immediately becomes suspicious. After concluding that this must be Christine's lover, he explains, laughing, that a light indicates whether someone is in the chamber. Erik mockingly says that Christine should not be scared, since her husband is so close to her, on the other side of the wall.

*Once again, Erik does not hesitate to use violence against Christine in order to assert his authority over her. In addition, the evident pleasure he demonstrates at knowing that he has discovered Christine's secret and that she is trying to trick him highlights his propensity for cruelty. Dissatisfied with killing others in an expedient way, he enjoys making everyone suffer in the process. By contrast, Raoul's concern for Christine reveals the peaceful, protective nature of his love.*



Suddenly, the torture chamber is illuminated with light, and the Persian understands that the torture has now begun automatically. Erik continues to tease Christine aggressively, asking her about Raoul's beautiful face. He makes her climb up a ladder and look into the room. Christine says that there is no one there, but Erik notes that she is about to faint.

*Erik enjoys demonstrating his superiority over Raoul by emphasizing that he holds the man's life in his hands. His lack of concern either for Christine's or for Raoul's life suggests that he has very little empathy for others, focused as he is on achieving his own goals.*



Still trying to pretend that there is no one there, Christine asks Erik how the torture chamber works, saying that all she can see is a forest. Erik laughs, explaining that one of the branches in the forest is meant for prisoners to hang themselves. However, Erik then begins to lament his life, saying he is tired of living in a house full of illusions, with a torture chamber. He says that he wants a normal life, with a wife and ordinary activities. The Persian concludes that Erik's long monologue about love and marriage must be meant to divert Christine's attention from the torture chamber.

*Erik's laughter at the thought of violence once again underlines his callousness. His sudden change of subject, although potentially sincere, can be interpreted—as the Persian understands—as a diversion. This suggests that Erik's eloquence is not necessarily genuine, and that he enjoys torturing others more than aspiring to normality—since, instead of stopping the torture in the room next door, he keeps it active.*



Impervious to Christine's pleas to put out the light in the torture chamber, Erik uncovers his mouth, showing her that it is closed and that his voice comes from his stomach, through ventriloquism. He shows her that he is capable of projecting his voice everywhere. Erik begins to speak threateningly, from everywhere at once, imitating his own voice as well as Carlotta's croak. The Persian is amazed to note that it feels as though Erik were speaking to them, right by their side.

*Instead of acknowledging the fact that he is torturing people in the next room, Erik continues to distract Christine. His revelations about his extraordinarily talent at ventriloquism explain some past mysteries, which made him seem like a ghost—for example, his capacity to speak to people through walls while remaining invisible, and his manipulation of Carlotta's voice.*



Noticing that it has become very hot, Christine panics and asks what is happening. Laughing, Erik tells her that the forest in the torture room is a forest from Congo. Raoul then yells and hits the wall, though he is unable to drown out Erik's laughter. Then, they hear the sound of fighting, a body falling, and the door closes, leaving them alone.

*Although there are no typical torture instruments in Erik's chamber, the torture process derives from the creation of illusions: in this case, the virtual transposition of Raoul and the Persian into a dangerous forest, capable of causing their death.*



## CHAPTER 25

The Persian then notes that the hexagonal room in which they are trapped is a hall of mirrors that Erik invented during his time in Persia. A single object, such as a branch, is capable of creating infinite variations—in this case, an entire forest. This causes the Persian and Erik to gradually suffer from extreme heat, as though they were in the middle of an African forest.

*The Persian's explanations about the torture room do not necessarily explain all of Erik's devices, such as the extreme heat and lighting. However, it highlights Erik's engineering skills—which, instead of using for benign purposes, he uses to cause harm to others.*



Used to Erik's tricks, the Persian knows that he must retain his sanity, so as not to fall prey to the illusion. Noticing marks on the wall, he concludes that someone must have already undergone this ordeal, and assumes that it must have been Joseph Buquet. The Persian tries to reassure Raoul, so that he might stay calm and search for a solution, but Raoul is disturbed by everything they have witnessed and begins to behave crazily, yelling at Erik and pointing his pistol. In the meantime, the Persian tries to convince him that they are in a room and runs his fingers against the mirrors, searching for a weak spot that might be one of Erik's typical traps. He knows that he must act rapidly because the heat could soon overwhelm their faculties and, perhaps, kill them.

*Despite his lucidity about the dangers of Erik's tricks, throughout the next few hours the Persian himself often slips from rationality to irrationality, forgetting that he is inside a room, feeling as though he is actually immersed in a dangerous forest. As is typical of his character, Raoul proves more vulnerable to psychological weakness. Although he has remained steadfast throughout his search for Christine, his rash, impetuous, angry behavior keeps him from maintaining the calm attitude necessary to escape the room unscathed.*



Over time, Raoul and the Persian attempt to battle the heat, although they begin to suffer from thirst and, suddenly, hear a lion roar near their ear. After a while, they find themselves by a desert of sand and stone. Exhausted, the Persian lies down by Raoul, who seems to have lost all will to live. Realizing that Erik must be in the next room, imitating wild animals' cries, the Persian tries to speak to him by yelling, but fails to arouse a response.

*This episode highlights the mix of lucidity and confusion that the Persian has to suffer, as he tries to remain levelheaded while experiencing the psychological effects of Erik's cunning construction. The Persian's failure to instill compassion in Erik suggests that Erik is in a state in which he can no longer feel empathy for anyone.*



Suddenly, the two men notice an oasis in the distance. Although the Persian knows that this is an illusion, he finds it irresistible. They then begin to hear rain but, their throats completely dry, despair at not being relieved from thirst. The Persian now understands why the iron tree can seem so alluring to a captive. Raoul himself seems inclined to use his weapon to put an end to his suffering. However, still looking around the room, the Persian finds a nail on the floor by the Punjab cord. Pushing on it, he is relieved to find that it is a trap door.

*The worst torture in the torture is not violence or the threat of external violence, but the psychological suffering it causes, inspiring its victims to kill themselves instead of living in these conditions any longer. This highlights, once again, not only Erik's violent nature, but his propensity for cruelty and psychological torture. This reveals that violence, to him, serves as a form of protection, but also an amusing way to assert his intelligence.*



The Persian then feels cold air from underneath and wonders if there might be water below. He and Raoul walk down a staircase leading to a cellar, where they find a series of barrels. The Persian struggles to open one but, when Raoul set his hand underneath to receive liquid, they are both shocked to discover that the barrels contain gunpowder.

*Despite being momentarily free from Erik's grasp, the two characters are forced to suffer even more, as their hope to quench their thirst is soon disappointed. The discovery of gunpowder suggests that Erik's violent ambitions extend well beyond his torture room.*



## CHAPTER 26

After discovering that Erik's barrels contain gunpowder, the Persian understands that he plans to destroy the Opera through a grand explosion. Raoul and Daroga panic, realizing that their own lives are not the only ones at risk, and that Christine's decision will determine the fate of everyone in the Opera. The two of them quickly crawl back into the torture chamber, wondering whether there is time left to tell Christine about Erik's plan.

*The Persian establishes a connection between this present discovery and Erik's past, obscure statements—the very comments that had prompted Daroga to keep a watchful eyes on Erik's actions. Erik's plan highlights his misanthropy and desire to take revenge on society—probably because of his own suffering.*



Back in the chamber, they suddenly hear footsteps and an alarmed Christine calls out to Raoul, saying that she only has five minutes left before eleven o'clock. She explains that Erik has given her a bronze scorpion and grasshopper. If she turns a pivot on the scorpion, she will be accepting Erik's offer, but if she turns the grasshopper, they will die, like a grasshopper jumps into the air.

*The image of the grasshopper jumping in the air confirms that Erik's plan is to make the Opera explode (thus making it burst in the air) if Christine rejects him. This puts an enormous pressure on Christine, as she must choose to sacrifice the rest of her life in order to save innocent people in the building.*



Regaining strength, Raoul then tells Christine to turn the scorpion, but the Persian intervenes, saying that Erik could have lied to her—and that the scorpion might make everything explode. They all suddenly hear footsteps approaching, and Daroga tries to talk to Erik, who tells him to keep quiet. Erik explains to her that, if she chooses the grasshopper, they will all die, whereas the scorpion will flood the gunpowder-filled barrels, thus averting disaster. In a gentle voice, which the Persian interprets as a sign of Erik's cold-bloodedness, Erik tells Christine to make her decision in silence.

*Daroga's fear about Erik's dissimulation suggests that Erik's violent impulses are not only physical, but also psychological, since he might take pleasure in deceiving Christine and forcing her to die anyway. Unlike Raoul, who often becomes agitated and overwhelmed by emotions in complex situations, Erik's coldness signals a total lack of concern for others and a certain detachment for the world, on which he has chosen to take revenge—either through Christine's submission or by causing the deaths of others.*



As Erik threatens to turn the grasshopper if Christine does not make a decision, Christine suddenly cries out that she has chosen the scorpion. After everyone waits in silence to see what will happen, the Persian suddenly perceives a hiss of water flooding the basement. At the same time, the water begins to rise, soon covering the basement as well as the torture room. Christine then begs Erik to stop the flow, so as not to kill Raoul and his companion. The Persian tries to swim upward but soon loses consciousness.

*Christine's empathy serves as the perfect counterpoint to Erik's total lack thereof, since she decides to accept unhappiness in order to save others from harm, whereas Erik's only way to express his unhappiness is by harming others. Even though Christine has just abandoned her freedom to become Erik's wife, she remains true to her feelings and compassion by begging for her friends' lives.*



## CHAPTER 27

After transcribing the Persian's narrative, the narrator explains that Christine's elevated sense of self-sacrifice saved both Raoul and the Persian's lives. The narrator explains that he was able to meet with the Persian, who was gravely ill. The Persian became agitated while recounting his memories, overwhelmed by the trauma of what he experienced.

Daroga recalls waking up next to Raoul on a sofa in a small, well-decorated room. Erik whispered in Daroga's ear when he awoke, telling him that this furniture was all he had left from his mother. Meanwhile, Christine remained silent, behaving obediently. Erik told Daroga that both Raoul and he were safe, and that he would soon take them outside to please his wife. Erik then gave Daroga a potion that made him fall asleep again.

When the Persian woke up once more, he found himself in his own apartment. He learned that Count Philippe was dead, having been found by the lake under the Opera. Daroga concluded that Count Philippe must have remembered Raoul's stories about Erik and searched for him, dying in the lake in an attempt to save his brother.

Appalled by this series of events, the Persian contacted the authorities. However, the examining magistrate, M. Faure, believed Daroga to be mad. Daroga thus resolved to write down his memories, hoping that the press might be interested in it. Later, though, Daroga suddenly received a visit from Erik.

Although Erik looked extremely weak, Daroga immediately attacked him, accusing him of murdering Count Philippe. Erik replied that that was why he came—he wanted to tell Daroga that Count Philippe's death was an accident, as Philippe was dead before the siren began to sing. Daroga called him a liar and interrogated him about Raoul and Christine's fate, but Erik avoided the question and claimed to be dying of love. While Daroga asked him various questions about Christine, Erik simply said she was not dead. He explained that she saved Daroga's life, because she promised, with full sincerity, to live a happy wedded life with Erik instead of killing herself. Then, she begged for him to release Raoul and the Persian.

*The Persian's emotional trauma highlights the extent of Erik's cruelty, which Christine's capacity for forgiveness has occasionally obscured. Although he claims not to help Erik, he remains highly aware of the injustice of Erik's deeds and the long-term, pernicious effects of his actions.*



*Although Erik's mention of his mother recalls the suffering he has been forced to endure his entire life, as he has never been loved like other human beings, his mention of Christine as his wife serves as a reminder of his inability to express his suffering in benign ways, since he seems intent on forcing others to suffer.*



*Despite Count Philippe's irritation with Raoul's decision to run away with Christine, he proved deeply committed to his family. His capacity to trust Raoul and go to the lake, despite the seemingly crazy stories he used to tell about Erik, reveals the Count's intelligence and devotion, as well as his desire to protect his younger brother.*



*The authorities' inability to trust Daroga emphasizes the fantastical nature of this tale for people who do not understand Erik's complex intelligence, and explains why the police couldn't solve the mysteries that took place at the Opera.*



*It remains ambiguous whether Erik's desire to justify himself for Philippe's death is sincere, since the actual circumstances of Philippe's death (namely, why he would have died during a harmless boat trip) remain unexplained. Erik's initial unwillingness to answer Daroga's questions about Christine and Raoul make him seem even more suspicious, as it appears that he might be trying to distract the Persian in the same way he once tried to divert Christine's attention from the torture room. However, Erik's narrative is made more credible by the fact that he did actually release the Persian, as Christine asked.*



Erik initially locked Raoul up but an extraordinary event happened: Christine let Erik kiss her on the forehead without recoiling in horror. Since no one had ever done that for Erik—not even his own mother, who found him too hideous to contemplate—he was deeply moved. As both of them began to cry together, Erik removed his **mask**, once again noticing that Christine did not flee or react negatively. Instead, she said: “Poor, poor unhappy Erik!” and took his hand.

Erik then gave Christine the **ring** she had lost, which he had searched for himself. He told her that this was a wedding present for her and Raoul. Knowing that Christine loved Raoul, not him, Erik decided to let the two of them go. However, he made Christine swear that, once she heard of Erik’s death, she would bury him with the gold ring. Erik then goes silent, and the Persian feels reassured by Christine and Raoul’s fate. Erik then tells the Persian that he will deliver his possessions to him, including Christine’s papers, and that Christine and Raoul planned to marry in the North, where they would stay. Three weeks later, according to Erik’s wishes, Daroga posts an announcement in a newspaper saying that Erik was dead.

## EPILOGUE

After telling the end of the story of the Phantom of the Opera, the narrator concludes that it should be sufficient to prove the Phantom’s existence and his role in the tragic events of that time. Although people have often mused about Christine’s disappearance, the narrator notes that no one ever suspected that she had run away with her fiancé Raoul. He says that he might one day go in search of them and hear Christine sing. He also notes that Mme Valerius disappeared around the same time.

Reading Moncharmin’s *Memoirs*, the narrator also learned that the Phantom ultimately returned all the money he had ever received from Richard and Moncharmin. This convinced Moncharmin that they were indeed the victims of a prank, and that the Phantom did not necessarily exist.

The narrator notes that he will leave the corroborating evidence he has found about the Phantom’s deeds in the archives of the Paris Opera House. He tells readers to enter Box Five and tap the pillar there. This will allow them to realize that it is hollow, and thus big enough to fit a grown man such as Erik, who could then project his voice anywhere in the room.

*In this scene, Christine’s compassion reaches extreme heights, since she shows compassion for the man who has just tried to kill her, her lover, and the rest of the people in the Opera House. At the same time, since the reader only hears Erik’s perspective, it remains impossible to determine how much Christine is dissimulating.*



*Erik’s decision to free Christine derives from his understanding that Christine is a kind, honest, respectful being—and that he will probably never receive more from her, since she loves Raoul, not him. However, once again, the reader’s capacity to trust Erik’s narrative relives exclusively on whether or not one decides to believe in Erik’s sincerity. Indeed, no concrete proof of Raoul and Christine’s existence remains, besides the narrator’s recollection of the Persian’s testimony.*



*Although the narrator insists that his narrative is truthful, he admits that he has no concrete proof that Christine and Raoul are still alive. His mention of Mme Valerius’s disappearance suggests that she probably followed the happy couple to a peaceful place far from Paris, but it does not serve as unequivocal proof. In the end, it is up to the reader to decide whether or not to trust Erik’s narrative and the Persian’s rendition of it.*



*Richard and Moncharmin’s skepticism lasts until the end, since even the variety of mysterious events they have witnessed at the Opera keeps them from questioning their own certainties. However, the Phantom’s decision to give the money back suggests that he might indeed have changed for the better thanks to Christine’s kindness.*



*Unlike the Opera directors and the authorities, the narrator makes his depiction of events all the more credible because his detailed analysis explains every single mysterious event that took place at the Opera, and does not depend on mere hypotheses or incomplete information, but on concrete facts, visible in the building itself.*



The narrator also found a trap by the desk chair in the directors' room, big enough for a hand to fit in. This, the narrator concludes, must explain how the Phantom could steal from Richard's coat. When he asked the Persian about Erik's financial motives, Daroga simply explained that Erik probably needed money, and used his tricks to obtain it, since he could never use his talents in ordinary society in any profitable way. When his marriage with Christine dissolved, however, he must have realized that he no longer needed so much money.

The Persian explained to the narrator that Erik grew up near Rouen but soon ran away from his parents, who were horrified by him and did not treat him well. After being exhibited in fairs as a "living corpse," Erik lived with gypsies before reaching the Mazenderan Palace in Persia where, once people discovered his talents, he became popular in court. Following Erik's instructions, the Shah built his palace as a building full of tricks. However, concluding that Erik now knew too much, the Shah resolved to execute him. The Daroga, who enjoyed Erik's amusements, decided to save his life. Because of this, the Daroga himself was banished from his own country and fled to Paris.

Erik then left for Constantinople, where he entertained the Sultan. However, like the Shah, the Sultan also ultimately threatened his life, saying that he knew too much. Tired and longing for an ordinary life, Erik settled in Paris. There, however, he became excited about creating new tricks and illusions and thus became known as the Phantom of the Opera, while hiding from the rest of humanity.

The narrator concludes that, despite Erik's various crimes, everyone should pity him. He argues that Erik suffered from injustice, since he was kept from expressing his artistic talents in any productive manner, instead being forced to develop them in violent, harmful ways. By contrast, if he had been beautiful, he could probably have had a successful career as an extraordinary artist. The narrator prays to God to forgive Erik, since God himself is responsible for giving Erik such a hideous body.

The narrator notes that, when he discovered Erik's body in the underground section of the Opera, he looked just like any other human corpse—thus finally achieving normality in death. However, the narrator knew it was Erik because of the **ring** around his finger, which Christine must have put there, as she had promised. The narrator argues that, given Erik's unique status, his bones should be taken to the archives of the National Academy of Music, instead of being buried in a public grave.

*Erik's decision to give the directors their money back suggests that he is not always cruel, and adopts a practical attitude in all of his misdeeds. His behavior also suggests that he has indeed changed by the novel's end, as he claims to have been transformed by Christine's compassion for him. Once again, the narrator bases his analysis on concrete evidence, thus proving that he is correct in affirming that Erik is not a ghost but a cunning human being.*



*It is only at the end of the novel that the Daroga discloses remaining details about Erik's life. Erik's immersion in a world of psychological and physical violence, visible in the way other adults treated him as a mere instrument, gives context to his own callous behavior, in which he is apt to treat others as objects he can discard instead of as full human beings worthy of respect. This personal history highlights the injustice of Erik's life, as his appearance has kept him from forming deep connections with others.*



*Erik's inability to live a normal life derives not only from his appearance, which causes revulsion in others, but also in his extraordinary talents, which encourage him to become famous and admired—even if he might never openly be able to disclose his identity beyond his disguise as a ghost.*



*The narrator proposes that Erik is a victim of his circumstances more than a true evil-doer. Furthermore, the narrator argues that the fault lies in society for having strict standards about appearances, which keeps people from loving each other indiscriminately.*



*The fact that Erik achieves normality only in death underlines the inherently tragic nature of his life, in which he was doomed to solitude when all he wanted was to be accepted by others. If one is to believe Erik's final account, Christine's willingness to put the ring on his finger after his death highlights her honesty and commitment, and her capacity to honor her promise, even if the man she has made it to has harmed her in the past.*





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