

SCENE ONE

The bell tower. QUASIMODO is joyfully ringing the bells, speaking to them.

START QUASIMODO

Marie! You're in a good voice today! Jacqueline, we need to fix your clapper! Go on, Gabrielle! Pour your flood of sound into the square! It's a holiday! Sing, my bells! Sing until you are all quite out of breath!

The bells toll out as QUASIMODO peers over the ledge of the tower.

QUASIMODO

Morning, my little birdies!

Six STONE CHIMERAS, STATUES, and GARGOYLES – EUGÈNE, BAPTISTE, NICODÈME, ANGÉLIQUE, CÉLESTINE, and LUCRÈCE – perched around the bell tower begin to move and speak to QUASIMODO; they are his inner thoughts, companions, and only friends.

CÉLESTINE

Don't you wish you could be like those birds and just fly away?

QUASIMODO

Me? No!

NICODÈME

But how wonderful it must be out there!

QUASIMODO

No, not for me.

LUCRÈCE

Why not?

QUASIMODO

Too dangerous.

BAPTISTE

The boy is right. Don't encourage him.

EUGÈNE

Why shouldn't we?

The GARGOYLES narrate to the audience:

NICODÈME

(Narrating:) For Quasimodo, the Cathedral was not only his home, but his universe.

CÉLESTINE

(Narrating:) It was peopled with figures of marble—

BAPTISTE

(Narrating:) With kings and saints—

EUGÈNE

(Narrating:) Monsters and demons.

ANGÉLIQUE

(Narrating:) The saints blessed him.

LUCRÈCE

(Narrating:) And the monsters protected him.

QUASIMODO

Today is the Feast of Fools!

CÉLESTINE

Quasimodo, wouldn't you like to join in the festivities?

QUASIMODO

You know I've never gone outside.

EUGÈNE

You can leave any time you want.

BAPTISTE

Master won't allow it.

QUASIMODO

Last year, he said "Someday, perhaps."

NICODÈME

He always says "someday" – never "today!"

LUCRÈCE

You shouldn't have to ask for permission to go outside.

EUGÈNE

Just put one foot in front of the other...

GARGOYLES

And sneak out!

QUASIMODO

I can't!

FROLLO

(Entering and beginning to ascend the steps.) Quasimodo...?

The GARGOYLES resume their frozen positions as FROLLO enters the bell tower. He carries a basket with him containing a piece of bread, a small cup of wine, and a strawberry.

FROLLO

Good morning, Quasimodo.

QUASIMODO

Good morning, master...

FROLLO

Were you talking to someone?

QUASIMODO

N-no. Just my – friends.

FROLLO

Ah. Your friends. *(A frequent reminder:)* What are your friends made of?

QUASIMODO

Stone.

FROLLO

And can stone talk back?

QUASIMODO

N – no...

FROLLO

That's right. What kind of conversation is that? It takes two people to communicate, my boy. *(He looks at QUASIMODO with a mix of disdain and affection.)* That's what I'm here for.

QUASIMODO

Yes, master. *(He kneels.)*

FROLLO

(Taking a piece of bread of the basket and offering it to Quasimodo.) Corpus Christi.

QUASIMODO

Amen. *(He eats the bread.)*

FROLLO

(Offering the cup of wine.) Sanguis Christi.

QUASIMODO

Amen. *(He sips the wine from the cup.)*

FROLLO

(Crossing QUASIMODO.) In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.

QUASIMODO crosses himself. FROLLO reaches into the basket.

FROLLO

I've brought you a special treat this morning. Strawberry? *(He offers it. QUASIMODO goes to grab it.)* Ah, ah, ah. Self-control, Quasimodo. It's an important art to master. *(He offers it again, this time allowing QUASIMODO to take it gently.)*

QUASIMODO

Th-thank you, master. *(He eats the strawberry.)*

FROLLO

Shall we tell today's story?

QUASIMODO

Yes, yes!

FROLLO

(Looking around at the carvings of the cathedral.) Stories from our home's beautiful artwork. And we were up to...

QUASIMODO

Flight into Egypt! *(He points to a stained-glass window depicting a martyred saint.)*

FROLLO

That's right. And what do you remember about that story?

QUASIMODO

J-J-Joseph fled to Egypt—

FROLLO

With his wife Mary and...?

QUASIMODO

B-baby J-Jesus...

FROLLO

Yes, and who hid them? Who protected them?

QUASIMODO

Saint Aph—Aphro... *(He can't remember.)*

FROLLO

Aphrodisius. Saint Aphrodisius – as I have hidden and protected you.

From far below in the town square, a fanfare of trumpets. Commotion, music, crowds, all heard very distantly. FROLLO sighs.

FROLLO

Well, I suppose I must stop stalling. Look at them down there, like horrible vermin scuttling about. And all to see the Gypsies sing and dance!

QUASIMODO

Gypsies...? You told me Gypsies are not allowed to sing and dance.

FROLLO

They aren't, except for today. The Feast of Fools! Fools, indeed.

QUASIMODO

The Feast of Fools!

FROLLO

This will be the last festival, if I have anything to say about it.

QUASIMODO

Last one...?

FROLLO

I've petitioned the King to stop next year's.

QUASIMODO

(To himself, quietly.) Then I could never go...

STOP