

Christine in Giverny

Christine Daaé smiled at the warm summer sunlight touching her face. Eyes still closed, she kicked off her white slip on shoes and raised her arms over her head, feeling soft grass entwined around her fingers. She was placidly lying on a hill in Giverny, her childhood home.

When Christine and Daddy Daaé moved there twenty years ago, Giverny was a small village with just three hundred and forty people. Its population had decreased since then... while the visitors had *increased!*

It was all because of an Impressionist artist named Claude Monet. He had been renting a house in Giverny for the past five years. The village was now known as an art colony thanks to American artists who were inspired by him. To Christine, however, it would forever be known as the place where she grew up. Many of her happiest memories were in Giverny, including the one she was experiencing now. She opened her eyes, squinting at the sunlight before turning her head to see her two best friends lying beside her. A peaceful smile was on Erik Carrière-Destler's face as he soaked in the sun's rays.

He definitely deserves some sun, Christine thought. Especially since he hasn't gotten any in so long!

Last week, Christine had taken Erik to the opera

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house rooftop, his first time out of doors since going into hiding fourteen years earlier. Although he was still anxious about being outside, it was clear that he loved every bit of light and fresh air. Raoul de Chagny, Christine's other best friend, sat up to take his shoes off. He and Christine had relaxed on the hill hundreds of times throughout their childhood. Even though a decade had passed since their last ascent, not much had changed (besides his mustache, of course!).

"*Ah*, that's more like it. There's nothing like feeling grass in between your toes!" Raoul remarked once his shoes were off.

"Oui," Christine agreed. "It reminds me of when we were kids! Lower your voice a bit."

Raoul smiled as he asked, "Why should I use my *indoor* voice *outdoors*?"

Christine pointed to Erik. His eyes were still closed.

"You think he's asleep?" Raoul asked.

"I don't know, but we should probably keep quiet just in case," Christine replied before looking out at the world beyond the hill. "All those houses are just as magical as they were when we were kids."

"They sure are."

As Christine gazed at the cluster of homes, she thought of times past. She had lived in Giverny with her father until they moved to Paris six years ago. Every June, they had left the city behind and lived in their little house until September.

Those summers were so peaceful, Christine thought. I wish I could go back to that, but things are different now that he's gone.

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She felt a drop of water slide down her face and wiped it away. But she was surprised to discover that it wasn't a tear...

Christine looked up, wincing as another water droplet nearly fell into her eye. She squinted at the sky. Dark gray clouds were quickly covering the blue above.

"Darn it," Raoul muttered. "I thought we were done with all that rain."

A storm had followed the trio during half of their trip to Giverny. Sunny skies had prevailed... until now!

"We'd better get inside," Raoul said. "Looks like the storm is coming fast!"

The amount of raindrops escalated as he spoke. Christine nudged Erik and said, "Erik, open your eyes!"

"Or wake up," Raoul added. "I can't really tell."

"We need to get moving!"

Erik squinted, quickly closing his eyes as a drop fell near his eye. It slid down his white leather mask as he turned his head and fully opened his eyes to look at Christine.

"Why can't we stay here?" he asked. "It's so nice out."

"It is, but it could turn into a storm. You know, like the one in Paris."

"That was nice, too," Erik sat up. "*But if you insist...*"

His head jerked up to the sky as a 'boom' of thunder echoed through the air.

"Come on!" Raoul called as he scrambled up. Christine followed him. Together, they ran down the hill. Their bare feet slipped on the wet grass,

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causing her to tightly grab onto his arm.

"Our shoes!" Christine turned back to Erik, who was still at the top of the hill. "Can you get them for us? The grass is too slippery."

Erik bent down to pick up Christine's shoes. He emptied out the water that had pooled up inside and started going down the hill.

"I have shoes too, you know." Raoul reminded him.

"I only have two hands," Erik said. "Guess they'll have to stay here."

"Get his shoes and come down here!" Christine said urgently.

The rain fell harder as Erik tried to hold two pairs of shoes in both hands. While Christine and Raoul ran through the grassy valley, he took his time.

"Isn't this beautiful?" Erik asked. "I- It's like we're flowers getting a refreshing bath."

"Yes, refreshed flowers that could catch a cold if we stay out here any longer," Christine replied.

"Please hurry!"

Suddenly realizing how wet he was getting, Erik walked faster to catch up with her and Raoul, who were at the end of the grassy pathway. The couple ran on the dirt road, which was still hot from the summer sun. It made Christine wince.

Once the trio reached the cottage, she undid the door latch and they hurried inside.

Erik's Very Special Birthday

The sound of an angel filled the auditorium of Palais Garnier.

...Or, it was *supposed* to.

In Erik's eyes, the woman singing Marguerite's *Jewel Song* was Christine Daaé, the love of his life and one who should've been on stage. But when he opened his eyes to see reality, Flora was singing instead. He sighed and lowered his head onto the velvet lining of Box Five.

If only-

Erik's thoughts stopped right in his tracks when a sour note caught his ear. A few seconds later, a

pebble knocked into Flora's side. She immediately got its message- 'Too shrill'! She tried again.

Much better, Erik thought with a smile. *The Opera Ghost expects only the best from seasoned singers.*

The next aria was sung by Oroyeso. He had played Mephistopheles over a hundred times, so he was the most seasoned of all the actors! The Opera Ghost didn't need to worry about him messing up. Erik left Box Five and ran across the hall to one of the long velvet benches. He was nervous about being out here, but Christine wanted him to get used to not using a secret passageway.

I don't have to hide anymore, Erik thought as he stroked the velvet seating. ...*Well*, not as much. *I'm still The Opera Ghost after all. But I'm not completely in darkness like I was before.*

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Erik strolled down the hallway, passing by busts of composers and numerous doors leading to other boxes. Then he looked down at the colorful mosaic pattern on the floor.

Living in the light is daunting as hell, but at least it's pretty. Erik thought with a smile.

One of the prettiest sights was just down the hall. The Grand Foyer glittered with its golden curtains, shiny wooden floor and dark gold chandeliers.

But none of that could compare to the angel sitting in one of the chairs by the entranceway.

"The Angel of Music is watching you..."

Christine jerked her head up at the low voice in her ear. She looked up, smiling at the sight of Erik.

"Bonjour! Is practice going well?" she inquired.

"Yes. There have been a few hiccups here and there, but everything is fine now," Erik replied. "Is sewing going well?"

Christine nodded and looked down at the *Faust* outfit she was repairing. "The stitches on this one are so tiny, but I think I did a decent job," She looked at the ten chandeliers surrounding them. "There's *plenty* of light in here. It's better than the electric lamp in my dressing room!"

Erik gently touched the clothing. "Ah, Valentin's undershirt. Also used for Sibel and Wagner depending on the actor. It looks very nice," He heard Oroyeso's booming final note echo through the hallway. "If only you were on that stage." Christine sighed. "For the last time, *I'm not acting*. I'm perfectly fine with costuming."

Erik's Very Special Birthday

"I know, I know. I hope someday you'll consider playing Marguerite again," Erik smiled. "I'm proud of you for doing this."

"Thank you." Christine said with a blush.

An awkward silence suddenly filled the air. Erik touched the curtain beside him and got an idea. He asked Christine, "Why don't you stop by for dinner? Spaghetti is awfully lonely when there's just one person to eat it."

Christine smiled. "I'd like that very much! As Meg might say, 'It's a date!'"

Now it was Erik's turn to blush.

"W- Well, if she'll say that, then I guess I should say, 'See you at eight!'"



A few hours later, Erik and Christine were sharing a spaghetti dinner.

"*Mmm*, this hits the spot!" Christine declared. Ayesha, Erik's black cat, meowed from his bed, causing Christine to giggle.

"I'm glad you think so, too!"

She winced as she used the salt shaker. Erik noticed and asked, "Are you alright?"

"Oh, my fingers hurt a little. I've been sewing nonstop for weeks! Good thing there are just four days left until the show premieres."

Erik gave a knowing smirk. "Something else is coming up too. Something *very* special."

Christine set the salt down. "What is it?"

"Guess. I mentioned it in June," Erik glanced at Ayesha when she squeaked. "Don't give it away!"

"You expect me to remember something you said three months ago?"

"I remember everything you say! When we met in-

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person, you said Palais Garnier was a work of art. That was *four* months ago."

"Well, not everyone has a photographic memory. Tell me what it is!"

"Alright... My birthday is in three days!"

"*Oh!*" Christine exclaimed, her eyes shining. "Now you can officially say you're thirty!"

Erik grinned. "Yes! Looks like you *do* remember everything I say."

"Not *everything*. A twenty-nine year old claiming to be thirty is memorable."

"I've felt thirty for years," Erik rose from the table, showing Christine his bony hand as he did. "My hand feels *sixty!*" He wandered over to the window, gazing out at the water cellar. "I've been looking forward to this birthday for quite a

while..." He sighed. "But I've also been dreading it."

"Why?" Christine asked.

Raoul's Shadowy Sleepover

Over six thousand people subscribed to the telephone service in Paris. Many of them were wealthy, but the richest was certainly the de Chagny family! There were two top box phones in their three-story mansion- one in the butler's office and one in the parlor. Raoul thought the latter was the most used phone in all of Paris. His sisters were always talking to friends on it!

...And arguing over who would use it first.

"I want to call her!" Garcelle said.

"I got here first!" Estelle shot back. "Go use the butler's telephone!"

Garcelle gasped. “How *dare you!* I’d rather send a letter than do that!”

“Then go to the post office and do it! Give them a letter in your awful handwriting.”

“Be sure to spill some ink on your dress on the way out.” someone said.

The sisters were silenced at the sight of Raoul standing by the doorway.

“What are you two arguing about now?” he asked.

“I need to call Lisolette!” Garcelle said. “She’s staying over tonight.”

Raoul’s face paled slightly. “...Oh. I assume you’re calling Suzette, too.”

“And don’t forget about Suevone!” Estelle exclaimed.

“The whole gang’s coming over,” Raoul remarked ruefully. “I assume you’ll be kicking me out,

then?”

“Of course not, Baby Brother. We’ll just block the stairways so you can’t intrude.”

“Get comfortable with climbing out of windows or whatever it is you boys do.” Garcelle said with a dismissive wave of her hand.

Raoul groaned. He walked down the hallway and bumped right into Marie the maid.

“Oh!” she exclaimed. “My apologies, Vicomte.”

“It’s alright. That was my fault,” Raoul said. “Did you know the twins are having a night party?”

“Indeed I do, Vicomte. I’ve been making macrons and cookies all day! I still need to cut the bread for tea sandwiches, but I’m taking care of linens for the guest bedrooms first. I need a break from the kitchen.”

“Oh no, the *guest rooms*? Between fun on the ground floor and sleeping on the second, they truly have me blocked,” Raoul sighed and muttered, “What a fun Friday night I’ll have.”

“Couldn’t you stay with Christine?”

Raoul looked at the maid in surprise. “Hey, that’s a great idea! I’ll go ask her. Thanks, Marie!” He started walking away, but stopped to ask her, “Do you want to join us?”

“Thank you for offering, but I’ll stay here,” Marie smiled. “I’m afraid I can’t resist a party no matter how many treats I need to bake!”



A while later, Raoul was strolling through the dressing room hallway at Palais Garnier. He soon reached the end of the hall and knocked on the door.

Raoul's Shadowy Sleepover

“Come in!” Christine's sweetly called.

When Raoul stepped inside, he saw Christine and Meg cutting up pieces of paper.

“What’s going on here?” he asked.

“We’re making paper snowflakes!” Meg replied.

“But it’s November.”

“Yeah, but it’s starting to feel like winter. I can taste the snow already!”

“Let’s hope it doesn’t taste like paper.”

Meg giggled alongside Christine, who told Raoul,

“She saw a Christmas window display at one of the department stores yesterday and now it’s all she can think about. But I don’t mind starting early with decorations. It’s fun!”

“And a bit challenging.” a voice said.

Raoul looked up. He didn’t see his own reflection in the mirror, but The Opera Ghost! Erik was

sitting cross-legged on the floor of his home, which was in the lowest cellar of the opera house. Raoul shivered slightly at the thought of that place. That dark, dingy labyrinth had scared him half to death a few months back. He hadn't returned since...

And he hoped he never would.

“Let me see your snowflake.” Christine was telling Erik.

Erik held it up and said, “Look, it’s terrible. I’m *pretty* sure snowflakes aren't square.”

“It looks fine for a first try! I’m proud of you.”

Erik’s face turned pink at Christine’s praise.

“Maybe you’re not a paper guy,” Meg told Erik before asking Raoul, “What about you?”

“I don’t know, but maybe I can try it out tonight,” Raoul looked at Christine and Meg. “I was

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wondering if I could bunk with you. My sisters are having friends over and there's no way I'm climbing out of a window to get a snack."

"That would be so much fun! You should definitely come over!"

Christine smiled. "I'd like that! But there's only room for two in our bedroom."

"Maybe he could sleep on the floor."

"Pretty boys sleep on the couch." Erik said.

Raoul frowned. "I'm not much of a floor- Wait, what did you just call me?"

"Oh!" Christine exclaimed. "What if we all slept here?"

"In the opera house?"

"Oui! Tonight is when I stay here. ...Well, I go to *Erik's house*."

"Same thing." Erik said with a shrug.

“*Ooh*, now *that* would be fun!” Meg said with a grin. “An opera house night party!”

Raoul grinned as well. “It *would* be fun! It’ll be a much better party than my sisters’, that’s for sure!”

Erik and the Missing Voice

It was the third day of January. 1889 had arrived with great zeal, which could still be felt as afternoon rehearsals for *Roméo et Juliette* went on in the auditorium. Erik had never heard *O Nuit Divine, Je T'Implore* sung so exuberantly before! The actors playing Romeo and Juliet sounded truly in love.

That was why The Opera Ghost was being put to rest today. Everything was going perfectly. Erik didn't want to spoil the company's pleasure.

"Beautiful job!" Gabriel, the chorus master, said.

"Let's take a break. When we come back in ten minutes, we'll start on act three."

That was Erik's cue to leave Box Three. He returned to the water cellar and turned on the mirror.

Christine was in her dressing room, placidly dusting her vanity table. She softly sang *Plaisir d'amour* while she worked. Erik smiled as he watched her. The soprano's angelic voice filled him with bliss.

"No offense, but you'd make a great Juliet." he said.

Christine looked up in surprise. "Oh! I didn't know you were there."

"I didn't know I was here until a minute ago. Enjoying your time off?"

Erik and The Missing Voice

"Oui. I didn't realize how dusty my vanity was!" Christine gave her father's framed photograph a swipe with the duster before setting the feathered tool on the edge of the table and saying, "Now I'm ready to rest. Shall we read?"

"We shall! I know just the book..." Erik's voice trailed off into a smirk.

"Yes, I found *Romeo and Juliet* in my drawer earlier. Isn't the opera enough?"

"I suppose so, but you can't beat Shakespeare's original. Besides, it's fun to compare adaptations."

"That's true. I suppose we could try it out."

"Skip to act two, scene two. That's where it gets good."

Christine sat on her divan and flipped through the small volume. She frowned while asking, "How am I supposed to read this? It's a play! It would

sound strange if I said the character's name each time they spoke."

"You don't need to," Erik held up another copy of the play. "I'll act alongside you!"

Christine gasped and giggled. "How clever!"

Erik read Romeo's soliloquy. "'See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!'" He chuckled as

Christine did the action. "'O, that I were a glove upon her hand... That I might touch that cheek!'"

He touched the mirror. "Well, I can get pretty close."

Christine read, "'Aye, me!'"

"'She speaks- O, speak again, bright angel of music!'"

Erik and Christine burst out laughing. Before they could continue, a knocking was heard behind the door. The giggles instantly left Erik. He took in a

Erik and The Missing Voice

sharp breath and hoped whoever was there hadn't heard him. That someone said, "Mademoiselle Daaé? We'd like to see you, please."

It was Firmin. Judging by the 'we', Armand was with him.

"Come in, messieurs!" Christine called, glancing at Erik.

He turned off the mirror and pressed the silver and white buttons on the control box. Those would allow him to see and hear the other side without the managers knowing he was there.

"Bonjour, Miss Daaé!" Armand greeted Christine as he strode into her dressing room along with Firmin. "As I'm sure you know, the first masquerade ball for Mardi Gras season is coming up on the nineteenth."

Erik nodded alongside Christine. There would be four masquerades from now until March fifth, which was Mardi Gras.

"The ball will double as a gala for Poligny and Debienne, the former managers. They're quite excited to return for a couple nights."

"They will be viewing a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* the preceding day. It's one of their favorite operas," Firmin added. "We were wondering if you would like to sing Juliet's first aria at the gala."

Christine frowned in surprise. "M- Me? Why?"

"You're one of the greatest sopranos we have."

Firmin said, making Christine blush.

"And we'd love to hear your voice again," Armand added. "It's been cut terribly short and deserves a chance to fully shine!"

Erik and The Missing Voice

Christine had sung in *Faust* and a test run of Erik's *Don Juan Triumphant*, but both performances had ended in disaster. That was why she had relegated herself to costuming instead of acting.

"Oh, I don't know..." Christine's voice trailed off in great uncertainty.

"Do it!" Erik whispered (even though she couldn't hear him).

Christine thought for many hesitant moments. Erik's bony hand hovered over the black button on the control box. He was so close to having The Opera Ghost demand that...

"I'll sing." Christine decided at last.

"Ah, wonderful!" Armand and Firmin exclaimed together.

"We'll see you at the gala!" Armand said.

Then the managers left. Erik turned on the mirror as Christine closed the door. He smiled while saying, "Well, look at that, Miss I'm Not Acting!" "I'm *not* acting!" Christine exclaimed, her face turning a cute shade of pink upon realizing what she said. "I'm just singing, that's all."

"Your voice needs to project emotion during the song. Thus... *acting*."

Christine rolled her eyes before sighing. "I just hope something won't happen."

"I'm sure everything will go smoothly. The Opera Ghost will make sure of it!"

"The Opera Ghost messed up my previous performances." Christine said, giving Erik a look. Erik felt his face warm. "W- Well, *I* will make sure of it, then!"

Christine the Love Detective

Christine was dreaming. She was with Papa, Raoul, Meg and Erik, all of them clad in white clothes. They laughed while sitting in a field of dandelions. A gentle breeze flew by.

Just then, the breeze picked up and a dandelion became caught in Christine's throat! She coughed it out while sitting up in bed. To her surprise, *a flower petal* floated out of her mouth!

"Happy Valentine's Day!" Meg exclaimed, standing on the bed next to her.

"Wha- What was that for?" Christine asked, trying to catch her breath.

"It's a gentle shower of tulip petals! You rolling over wasn't part of the plan."

Christine took the wet yellow petal with two fingers. "Why did you choose tulips? Roses are the Valentine's Day flower."

"And tulips are the friendship flower! And my favorite. Valentine's Day isn't just about romance, you know," Meg gave a sly smile. "Although I bet you'll be kissing Mr. E lots today..."

Christine felt her face flame. "No, I won't! Just once or twice."

"You'll do it so passionately that you'll have dozens of kids when you let go!"

"*Stop it!*" Christine exclaimed, playfully hitting Meg with her pillow. "That's not how it works,

silly!"

Meg squealed as she fell down, her foot nearly hitting Christine in the face.

"I'm not interested in having children, not with Erik or Raoul or anyone else," she told Meg. "I'm not even interested marriage!"

"As Mama says, maybe you'll change your mind one day. But if not, that's okay. You have your friends!" Meg said as she sat up. "Valentine's Day is for all types of love- friendship, family..." She jumped out of bed. "And *especially* romance! Race you to the bathroom!"

She dashed out of their bedroom, but Christine stayed put. She slowly got out of bed as one word floated through her mind- 'romance'.

I've always enjoyed singing and reading about romance, and it's fun to think about others falling

in love, she thought. But me falling in love? I can't imagine it! I know what romance is, but I don't know it. I've never felt it for myself.

Christine wandered to the kitchen, her mind lost in thought. She smiled at the smell of blueberry crepes.

"Good morning, Madame Giry." she greeted the matriarch, who was standing at the stove.

"Good morning, Christine," Madame Giry replied.

"Did you sleep well?"

"Oui," Christine fiddled with a strand of her bedhead hair while watching Madame Giry carefully cut the crepe into a heart shape. "When you fell in love with Meg's father... What was that like?"

"Oh, falling in love with Jules was wonderful," Madame Giry responded with a smile. "When I

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saw him for the first time... why, I felt a light sensation that I had never felt before. My world felt new," She sighed dreamily. "It was a time I'll never forget."

"It sounds lovely." Christine said softly.

Madame Giry looked over at Christine. "Don't fret. I'm sure you'll find that special someone eventually."

Christine gave a small smile as the bathroom door opened. Meg sneakily tried to get a bite of breakfast while Christine took a couple plates to the living room table. The blueberry crepes were wonderful (especially when they looked like hearts!), but uncertain thoughts slightly dulled the taste.

'You'll find that special someone'... Christine spit toothpaste out of her mouth in a scoff before

rinsing her toothbrush. *Madame Valerius said the same thing when I was teen-aged. I don't think I'll ever find anyone more special than my friends!* She splashed water on her face as a realization came to her. *What if that means I'll never find true love? That's fine by me, but it means I'll never truly understand!*

She worriedly turned off the sink and dried her face before going to the girls' bedroom.

As Christine made the bed, she thought back to when she saw her friends for the first time. She felt relieved upon seeing Raoul save her red scarf as a kid and was overjoyed to reunite with him years later. Meg made her feel welcome in the opera house and Erik was a surprising (and awkward) sight when they met in person!

Christine the Love Detective

But I didn't feel any light sensation, Christine thought. I've never felt that way with anyone. She gave a frustrated sigh as she wrapped her corset over her torso. It was light pink... the color of love.

I feel love, but not romance. It sounds so wonderful! And yet... Christine laced her corset as she thought, *Romance is such a mysterious thing. I want to know exactly what it is so I can feel it for myself someday. Everyone else has, so why can't I? I'm going to figure it out once and for-* She winced as she accidentally pulled her corset laces too tight. ...*all.*

Christine loosened the laces, determined to solve the mystery of love.

Meg the Fooler

It was morning in Paris. Meg gave a big yawn and stretched. When she rolled over, she saw Christine- her best friend and Sister Not Sister- lying beside her. Her hair was a mess, but the rest of her was neat and peaceful. She didn't stir as Meg got out of bed and went the calendar on the wall in front of her. She flipped the page from March to April and grinned. Then she slyly looked over at Christine.

Meg didn't make a sound as she crossed the living room and part of the hallway. She grabbed a bowl

from the kitchen, filled it with water and returned to the bedroom. Christine had rolled over.

Perfect! Meg thought.

She lowered Christine's left hand into the bowl...

"*Eek!*" she squeaked, sitting up with wide eyes.

"April Fools'!" Meg exclaimed. "Made you pee your pants!"

"Made me *what?*" Christine asked in alarm before checking her drawers. "No, you didn't! All you did was scare me half to death! That water was freezing."

Meg laughed before drinking the water in the bowl. "Ooh, you're right! It's refreshing! Want a taste?"

Christine squinted at her. "I think I'll get a glass, thank you very much."

Meg the Fooler

Meg giggled as Christine got out of bed. She followed her through the hallway, but stopped when Christine closed the door. A few moments later, she heard a scream.

“What’s wrong?” Madame Giry asked as she came out of her room, which was near the bathroom.

“Oh, nothing, Mama,” Meg replied nonchalantly.

“Christine just peed her pants.”

“I did *not*!” Christine insisted as she opened the door. “Look!”

She took Madame Giry inside the bathroom and they looked inside the toilet bowl. The water was *green!*

“Happy St. Patrick’s Day!” Meg exclaimed.

“...Even though that was last month. I’ll say *April Fools’* instead!”

Madame Giry sighed. “This trick again. You could have used purple like a couple years ago.”

“The bakery was all out of purple food coloring. Besides, green is funnier!” Meg said before leaving the bathroom.

Maybe I could put dye in Mama's coffee, she thought while going to the cabinets in the kitchen. Wait, is that poisonous?

Instead of an answer coming to her, it was a realization. The cabinet doors were locked shut! “I'm not letting you turn our food green.” a voice said.

Meg turned around to see Madame Giry standing in the doorway. “Not even purple?” she asked.

“That's your favorite color.”

“It is... but not even purple is enough to persuade me.”

Meg the Fooler

Meg sighed. “*Okay*. I’ll try again next year. You didn’t fool me, though. That was a safety precaution. No one can *truly* fool me!”

“Are you sure about that?” Christine asked as she walked into the kitchen.

Meg gave a firm nod. “Absolutely. I’m the fooler, not the foolee.”

A twinkle was in Christine’s eye as she said, “Oh, we’ll see...”



Meg hummed a happy tune while walking to Palais Garnier with Christine and Madame Giry. Her thoughts went chanted to the tune of her humming.

A little surprise here, a little mischief there, a little fishie-

“The fish!” Meg exclaimed. “We need to see the fish!”

Instead of going to the opera house, the trio went to Rousseau’s first. They bought fish at the shop... *chocolate* fish! They were made every year on April Fools’ Day.

Hundreds of years ago, New Years’ and Lent occurred on the same day, so gifts often featured fish. When the New Year was changed to January first, many people weren’t happy. The hesitators were given fake fish, most often paper ones. All this time later, the fishy tradition continued.

Meg had secretly taped a paper fish to Christine’s back last year. Luckily, the fooler had never been struck by the April Fish... except in chocolate!

Now, Meg licked the yummy treat off her fingers as she went to the ballerinas’ dressing room. She

Meg the Fooler

peeked inside, finding it empty. The others were eating breakfast in the Grand Foyer. That left her with plenty of time to concoct a little prank.

With a sneaky grin, Meg hid behind Sorelli's big vanity tale. She waited for what seemed like forever until she heard a certain someone's footsteps. The door creaked open...

"*BOO!*" Meg yelled, running out from the vanity. "*AHHH!*" a dancer screamed as she put a hand on her heart. "You got me, Meg!"

Meg laughed. The foolee was none other than Cécile Jammes, her pranking partner. They had pulled many tricks throughout the years on the other dancers, the singers, the stagehands, the managers... no one was safe from their pranks on April Fools' Day!

...No one except The Opera Ghost, that is.

“I have a little something for my partner in crime!” Meg said.

“Oh!” Cécile’s brown eyes sparkled as Meg handed her a little chocolate fish and popped it in her mouth. “Mmm, thank you. Are you ready to start?”

“I’ve been ready since last night!”

Cécile smirked and tossed one of her caramel brown ringlets over her shoulder. “I know *exactly* what we can do first.”