GRADED READERS

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

GASTON LEROUX



Student's Book

LEVEL 4

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The Phantom of the Opera
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CHAPTER 1

IT WAS THE EVENING ON WHICH MONSIEUR DEBIENNE AND MONSIEUR Poligny, the managers of the famous Paris Opera House, were giving a gala performance of *Faust* to celebrate their retirement. Sorelli, one of the principal dancers, was sitting in her dressing room. She was practising the speech that she was going to give at the farewell party. Suddenly, the door burst open and a group of young ballerinas rushed in. The girls were chattering loudly. Some were laughing nervously, while others looked terrified.

"What's going on?" asked Sorelli. "I said I didn't want to be disturbed."

"It's the ghost!" said little Cecile as she locked the door. "We just saw him in the passageway!"

"He just appeared out of nowhere," said another girl.

Sorelli was not completely convinced. "And what did the ghost look like?" she asked.

"He's as thin as a skeleton," said Cecile. "He has big black holes for eyes, his skin is yellow and he hardly has a nose! He's very ugly!"

The other girls nodded in agreement and they all began to talk excitedly. For several months, this mysterious phantom had been the main topic of conversation at the opera house. Some people claimed that they had seen him. He moved like a shadow, they said. He spoke to no one and no one dared speak to him. He vanished as soon as he was seen, but no one knew how.

Suddenly, the girls heard a loud scratching noise in the corridor. "Listen!" said Cecile. "It's him!"

Sorelli stood up and walked to the door. "Who's there?" she asked.

There was no answer.

"Don't open the door!" begged little Meg.

Sorelli unlocked the door and peered into the dark passageway. It was empty. "There's no one there," she said, as she slammed the door shut. "You girls imagined it all. The opera ghost doesn't exist."

"But we saw him!" cried Cecile.

"He must be wandering around somewhere," said Meg. "I'm not going back to my dressing room alone."

Sorelli sighed. "Well it's almost time for the speeches to begin in the foyer. Why don't we go upstairs together?"

The girls crowded around Sorelli as she opened the door. Then, they ran as fast as their little legs could carry them through the dark passages and up the narrow staircases.

The foyer was full of people. As Sorelli made her way through the crowd, she heard someone call her name. It was Raoul, the Count of Chagny.

"Sorelli! I was just coming to congratulate you! What a magnificent show! And Christine Daae was remarkable!"

"Yes, no one expected Christine to give a performance like that," said Sorelli. "She sang like a frog six months ago!"

"Well, she was wonderful tonight; the best Margarita I've ever seen," said the count.

It was true. Christine Daae's performance surprised everyone. Carlotta, the singer who usually played the part of Margarita, had fallen ill and Christine had taken her place. She sang like an angel and at the end of the show the audience stood up and cheered enthusiastically. Christine was so overwhelmed by emotion that she fainted and had to be carried to her dressing room.

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"I'm going to congratulate her, please excuse me," said the count. He walked briskly to Christine's dressing room and knocked on the door. The maid opened the door and Raoul peered over her shoulder. Christine was lying on a couch with her eyes closed.

"May I come in?" he asked.

Christine opened her eyes when she heard Raoul's voice. "Monsieur," she whispered, "who are you?"

Raoul walked into the room and kneeled down next to Christine. Then he kissed her hand and said, "I am the little boy who went into the sea to rescue your scarf."

Christine looked at the maid and they both burst out laughing. Raoul's face turned bright red.

"You don't recognise me," said Raoul. "Can I speak to you in private?"

"I don't feel well, I need to rest." said Christine. "Could you both leave me, please?"

Raoul nodded and walked out into the passageway. The maid followed him. He said good night to her and waited in the dark corridor for a few minutes. He was about to knock on Christine's door when he heard a man's voice coming from inside the dressing room.

"Christine, you must love me!" said the voice.

"You know that I sing only for you," said Christine.

Raoul was stunned. He couldn't believe his ears. He returned to his dark corner and waited for the man to come out of the dressing room.

A few minutes later, the door opened and Christine came out alone. Raoul was hiding in the shadows. Christine didn't see him and she walked past him. Raoul walked to the door and pushed it open. The room was dark. He lit a match and saw that the room was empty. "Who's here? Why are you hiding?" he asked.

There was silence.

"Where are you? Am I going mad?" Again, no one answered. Raoul waited for about ten minutes, then he returned to the foyer.



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CHAPTER 2

At around the same time, the farewell party for Debienne and Poligny was taking place upstairs. After dinner, Sorelli delivered a beautiful speech, thanking the managers for their hard work. Then, Debienne and Poligny handed over the master keys to the opera house to the new managers, Armand Moncharmin and Firmin Richard. Later in the evening, Debienne and Poligny accompanied the new managers to their offices to discuss the daily workings of the opera house.

When they got to the office, Poligny handed Moncharmin a copy of the memorandum book, which contained all the rules regarding performances at the opera. The book was written in black ink, but as Moncharmin looked through it, he noticed a line written in red ink at the bottom of one of the pages.

"Box Five will be permanently reserved for the Opera Ghost."

Moncharmin read the line aloud and both he and Richard burst out laughing.

"Oh, that's very funny, gentlemen! You both have a very good sense of humour!" said Moncharmin as he removed his glasses and wiped his eyes with a handkerchief.

"This is no laughing matter," said Debienne. "The ghost is real and he insists that we reserve Box Five for him. Of course, he doesn't pay us for it. We've lost a lot of money because of him."

"Well," said Richard, "it seems to me that you were too kind to the ghost. Why didn't you have him arrested?"

"But, how?" cried Poligny. "We've never seen him."

"Arrest him when he's in his box."

"We have never seen him in his box!" said Debienne.

"Then sell it!" said Richard.

"Sell the opera ghost's box? Well, gentlemen, why don't you try it?" said Poligny.

"We certainly will!" said Moncharmin.

In the days that followed, the new managers completely forgot about the ghost, until one morning Richard found a letter addressed to him on his desk. The letter had been written in red ink:

Dear Mr Manager,

I know you're very busy and I'm sorry to trouble you, but there are two things that I would like to bring to your attention. Firstly, I want Christine to play the part of Margarita in Faust again. Secondly, I was quite upset to hear that you're planning to sell Box Five. You know that Box Five is permanently reserved for me. I should warn you, sir, if you wish to live in peace, you will give me back my box.

Opera Ghost

At that moment, Moncharmin walked in holding the exact same letter. "You have to admit, it's quite amusing," he said with a smile.

"Well, I think that Debienne and Poligny have taken their joke a little too far," said Richard. "Tonight, we are selling the box."

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