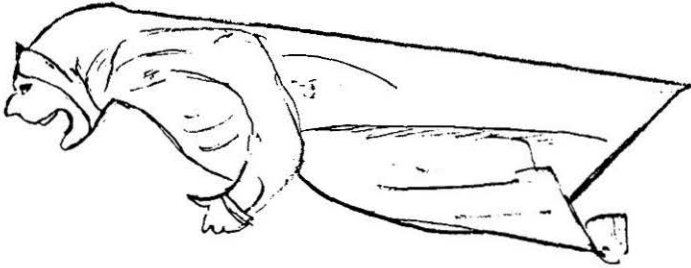


Richard Cumyn

La Gargouille



George Lewis was sitting up a full thirty seconds before he remembered where he was. The red eye of the digital clock blinked 11:43, mocking him to discover the correct time. The power must have failed momentarily in the night. Or the dream had been so desperate, George's thrashings so violent, that he might have jarred the plug. The sheets lay heaped at the far end of the bed, a snail's foot, and he lay back, wet, wondering vaguely whether it was sweat or urine.

Sand first for drainage. That came back to him, then gravel and peat moss. He concentrated on the layers. He and Karla had been setting the layers to the garden. The rich black earth last. Alison looked two or three and was crouched at one corner where old planking was ready to be used as partitions. She had spread her own little sheet of chicken wire over the ground and was dropping a single pebble in each hole, calling out the names of the vegetables with a conjurer's conviction. Karla continued to rake, even after George whispered to her to stop and watch their daughter at play. "You can't just block her out. Look!" Fascinated with the make-believe, George tried to move closer to the game. Alison had finished with her seeding and was struggling to lift a flat rock which lay partially covered with a matting of winter rot. "It's in the way, for-crying-out-loud!" she mimicked. George called out to her to let him help but his Kodiaks slid without traction in the muck. Like a powerlifter George had seen on *Wide World of Sports*, the child willed the flagstone onto its flip side. In the damp depression a slug curled and uncurled, slick and black against the humus. She squatted

to reach for it. George thought he could see alternating flashes of terror and delight in her eyes. He was revulsed but could only stand and watch. Karla was hoeing seed rows and the slug was beginning to grow fat in the child's hand, a writhing, underbelly creature. "Oh God Allie No!" Screaming now, a madman's voice. He was seeing George the Scarecrow planted in the middle of the garden, his stuffing pillowing out from a gash-mouth. Allie's tiny hand flowed to her mouth in bursts of still-frame shots and the creature grew. And it grew.

George shook himself awake and switched on an AM station for the time. It was after seven. The paper would be there already, so he decided to shower after the headlines and a first cup of coffee. He could smell the automatic drip machine at work; at least its timer hadn't failed in the night. For an instant he considered diving back beneath the covers to begin the day again. He was about to call Alison down when he remembered that she was sleeping over at a neighbour's. Better she hadn't heard him. Better she take things calmly for the next little while. He padded out to the front hall and snatched in the morning edition before anyone could see.

The front page blared its expected message of depression and restraint. The government needed nine billions more yet to spend. The census takers predicted a similar number to strain the earth's bounds by the end of the century. Fourteen hundred killed in a train derailment in Djakarta. A shooting and fire in the north slums of the city. George turned to the bizarre one-frame cartoon on the last page, snorted a nasal laugh he would never have made in public, and gulped the last of his coffee.

He arrived at his first class of the day looking rumpled but composed. It wasn't that he tried consciously to adhere to a stereotype. When Karla was still around he had been a snappy dresser, almost vain. Now the secretaries in the department were incessantly fussing over him. At least he knew his tie was straight. It was a small seminar of bright graduates, mostly female. He recalled the intangible rewards of having been a male student of English and it made him smile. Then he remembered a class in which he had blundered blindly through a discussion of overt sexism in Virginia Woolf. All those knives and knitting needles! He had barely made it out alive.

The student at the helm was handling Honoré de Sommes with an expertise that allowed George to settle into his seat. He wandered back seven years. Karla was overdue with Alison. George showed at the hospital at five as he had done for a week, full of mums and short-lived enthusiasm. The doctor was there with her when he arrived and had sneered openly at the flowers. Finally, the man's practised ignorance of George's very existence drove him out into the corridor for a smoke.

Four nurses converged on him at once, herding him further down the hall to a lounge. When he returned the pediatrician was still there, chatting about induced labour as if he were about to manoeuvre a stock portfolio. George edged by him in the tiny room, making awkward good-byes, and then retreated for the night. He recalled walking back down the exact centre of the corridor, pretending the walls to be sidelines to a football field and that he should be out of bounds on touching them. He always wondered at men who became baby doctors. Didn't they know they would be out of bounds?

"... and the third episode of *Les Romains du Graal* takes place in the ancient city of Amiens, site of a majestic cathedral of Notre Dame, the largest in France. For your enlightenment, I've brought along an illustrated book of the gothic in architecture. You will recall that de Sommes mentions a tale, *La Gargouille*, told by mothers in Thirteenth Century France to frighten their children to bed. It is also set at Amiens but more I am unable to give you. The page showing the cathedral is flagged. Sorry boys and girls, no ghost story this time."

This brought groans of mock disappointment from the room. When the book reached George he added a few points of his own, academic patter on the relationship between de Sommes' oral tradition and French landscape gardening, and then let the girl continue. He was about to pass the book on when one of the detailed illustrations caught his attention. It was a close-up of one of the church's gutterspouts which directed rainwater from the roof to the ditch below. The gargoyles was human in figure, grotesque, its sex barely discernible. But it was definitely a woman. From beneath her cowl an improbable head and neck shot forward, the mouth set in a silent scream. The image kept nagging all through the remainder of the seminar. One of the more objectionable scholars challenged him on a point he had made the week before and he mumbled something semi-coherently from the depths of his funk. *Deja-vu*. He promised himself more sleep.

Karla's novel snared her a national first book award of \$100,000. They had been married a year and a week later to the day of the announcement it was confirmed that she was pregnant. George remembered her feeling of profound guilt for the way in which they had celebrated when the news came. They closed out each pub in manic succession, George heralding his author's success to all from the tops of tables and bar stools. He left a piece of clothing in each establishment until he was running after Karla in only tie and boxer shorts. It would forever be their Night of Summer Madness. She kept threatening to get a tattoo, dashing away into the night with him tucked into her slipstream. Once she had stopped, briefly, to write

“Ronald Reagan Needs a Cruise-Cut” in soap on a barbershop window. And in the park, in the shadow of a statue of the Reverend John Strachan, they made love; she let him keep his tie on.

He couldn't say the money changed them. It came in steadily but in dribbles. They used it to expand the south room and finish the common wall in rough brick the way he always said he wanted. She let him buy the old Steinway to fill the room only when he consented to Rain-in-the-Pants, the cigar store Indian, in a prominent corner. The money was incorporated into her frenzy the same as a change of hair colour or a drop to a lower dress size. He raised eyebrows with some expensive French suits which fit. Luncheon dates began to fill his formerly solitary noon hours in his office. Principal Von Meck invited him for golf one Saturday. But mostly he plodded on as always, burrower in an alien age, scholar accessible to all but inspiring to few. Still, at home in the new room, his rendering of Dvorák began to sound surprisingly good.

Karla stopped writing completely. She seemed to him to be obsessed less with the baby as with coping, making it natural and uncomplicated, remaining Karla. Classes became the daily observance instead of mass. When George inquired, she told him she didn't think the incense was healthy for the fetus. And suddenly George wasn't doing enough, wasn't happy enough, wasn't sharing the experience with her. She bought him a pair of Nikes and presented them gift-wrapped to him at the table. “I'm not a runner, I hate running,” he had blurted out at dinner and she blew up at him. The word ‘slob’ slipped from under her breath; they raged like cats well into the morning. And if she hadn't been pregnant, she'd have looked like a dancer, all litheness and sculptured neck. A woman, Monica from the dance theatre troupe, became mentor and coach. George once jokingly asked if she was a midwife also, this tearing open a gash between them; Karla began sleeping in her studio. Each day, as the baby grew contrary to her leanness, Karla seemed to her husband more and more neither woman nor man but a third sex, a warrior sex training for survival.

After class, George wandered back to his office and closed the door. He began with the Britannica and found half a page on Amiens, with short references to the treaty of 1802 and to the cathedral. The reference to the legend was not difficult to find in de Sommes, but aside from a cursory mention of the anonymous author, there was nothing. Nothing in the Oxford Companion, nothing in Chichester's massive anthology of Old French verse. He kept the volume which the student had brought to class, and which he had borrowed, open to the illustration of the gargoyle and was fixed on it even as he dialled the telephone.

“Marge, George Lewis. Would you happen to have a copy of this morning’s news? Please. Thanks.”

The secretary was at the door by the time he had rung up the second number. She slid the paper across the coffee stained desk and left. The Harrisons next door would be glad to have Allie stay for supper. George felt negligent and promised his daughter he would be home in time for two chapters of *Anne of Green Gables* instead of their customary one. Then he was alone.

He picked up the newspaper and found the local story on the front page. He had missed the picture that accompanied it; the quality was unusually good. The photographer had framed a woman from mid-torso up in what looked like a second storey window. Her hands were planted defiantly on the sill, her elbows locked. The whole was a portrait of strain, almost as if she was holding herself in against an unseen force. The house was clearly burning. Her neck showed its sinews in ghastly strings and it was thrust out beyond the glassless opening; a portrait à la Munch, thought George. He skimmed the story. Apparently the picture was taken seconds before the woman was killed by police. ‘Welfare Mother Goes Berserk’ ran the heading, tactless but precise. At 4:15 in the afternoon she took a .303 caliber hunting rifle and began shooting at passing cars. Four people died and ten more were injured before police arrived at the dilapidated rooming house. She would have killed more if she had been able to see straight, thought George. Strange eyes. There had been a brief exchange of shots. A stray bullet was thought to have ignited leaking gas from the woman’s stove, turning the clapboard structure into an inferno within minutes. Her last act was to lower a boy out of the window and then drop him to the ground. When she refused to jump herself and continued firing, a marksman put a bullet between her eyes.

George followed the story to the fifth page where an over-zealous reporter had attempted to capture the pathos behind the horror. They had been living in the basement of another building — windowless, dank and mouldy (water ran down the walls whenever an upstairs toilet was flushed) — until the landlord hiked the rent, forcing them further north. This information had been imparted by the present tenant, a man who plucked the feathers from two pigeons while he talked to the newsman.

“She was here maybe four months with the boy and the runt dog. Scared the landlord would put her out for having a dog. Never let the thing out, not even to crap. I seen her out on the streets with those kids, the ones she took in, maybe seven or eight at a time, in any weather, screaming and cuffing them in the head. The oldest of them couldn’t be more than four. Foulest language I ever heard. She was bug-eyed, too.

Scared the living shit out of me. I bet she could tell you what's in two opposite corners of the room at the same time. Ugly little witch, she was."

The woman's new residence was a single room, rent paid daily. She continued to take in the children of working mothers, now parading them through the streets and parks for the whole day because there was no room for them all at the new address. Gradually, as the days shortened, her charges diminished in number until she was left alone with the boy.

The story continued for several more columns but George stopped reading here. He placed the photograph from the first page beside the illustration in the architectural volume. It was growing dark, so he switched on a goose-neck reading lamp on the desk, letting the twin images play on his imagination. An hour was gone, then two. He wanted to make nothing more of it, to dismiss it as a trick of coincidence. They were similar, certainly, but perhaps his mind was drawing an association that wasn't really there. Synapsis malfunction, thought George. He wanted to make the connection, so his brain deferred to the suggestion. But beyond the coincidence there was something missing, a third rhomboid that would complete the triangle, solve the puzzle. The annoyance became frustration which in turn became a throbbing hammer as he strained for the piece which lay just out of reach. Nothing. George pushed back from the desk, rubbing his eyes now ringed and sore. He decided on a new tack. "Jibe ho", he said aloud, rather feebly, and phoned the library to check on their closing time. Then he shut off the light and walked the hundred yards to the stacks.

Honore de Sommes wrote his *Romans* in 1320, some fifty years after the cathedral was complete. George wasn't even sure the legend had been written down. If it had, would it be translated? His grasp of Old French was slippery at best. Methodically, he began to wade through the history of the area. There was little to suggest that the church was anything but a very large and very costly structure both to build and to maintain. Construction had been initiated by the bishop of the region, one Tresor de L'isle, who brought architects from Italy to design the vaulting ribs of the ceilings and the mammoth carved portals. Tresor died in 1213, at the age of 70 and was to see only five years of the cathedral's growth. Of his life George found almost nothing except a brief mention of his rather advanced policies concerning the participation of women in the church. It seemed that nothing was known of his parents, although he was raised in the local seminary under the direction of an Irish monk, Ephraim. The structure stood unfinished for

thirty-five years after Tresor's death. No reason was given for this lapse.

The warning chimes told George there remained ten minutes until closing. Fellow moles were gathering together their papers, preparing to leave. Although it had uncovered little, George's diggings had not left him disappointed. He hadn't expected to turn up anything. It had been merely a hunch. The double image of the woman, the snapshot and the caricature, still haunted him, though. Nagging. Like fairies that dance on the tip of the tongue. He was certain it was something much closer to memory than anything else. Fatigued, he pulled himself up the four flights of stairs to ground level and the midnight air.

The previous autumn, when Alison was six and just beginning grade school, her teacher suggested she be enrolled in a special school to help correct a dysphonic tendency in her speech. Karla was well into her third novel and editing for a local publishing house. George thought he had never seen her so relaxed and healthy. She was still thin but no longer gaunt and Monica had long since been dismissed as athletic guru. "Hyperactive Valley Girl" was Karla's condemning label for the dancer; "Fer sure, fer sure," had been George's reply, throwing each into the other's arms as allies, raucous conspirators briefly recapturing the laughter which had so defined their courtship. And then came the news from school.

It was not that George took it any better than the average parent who is told that his child is abnormal. Karla simply let it out-distance her. There was a stormy meeting with the teacher and then an evening when neither left the table after supper. Allie made her way to bed alone.

"What do you mean, George? You can't possibly know what I'm feeling."

"Look," replied George, "the child has a slight and correctable learning problem. You're taking this as some kind of personal affront."

"But why didn't we notice before now?"

"It could be that the problem wasn't manifest until now."

"Nine months, George. Not a smoke, not a polluted party, not one drink in nine months."

"What about our *grande soiree*?"

"That's not fair. We couldn't have known then. You know how guilty..." Karla's voice drifted to silence, her face ashen.

"All I'm saying is you couldn't have controlled every factor. So stop blaming yourself. You are not the target here."

"Let's not get trite, shall we, George? You can't make me believe you're not angry about this. This is not some other person's child we're

talking about. This is us: you and me, our blood. Don't tell me you don't feel like hurting someone!"

"What would you have me do, Karla?"

"Feel something, for-crying-out-loud! You'll never know. You're a man."

"You haven't made it back yet, have you, Karla? So you're angry. But do you know what? I think this is just a cover for something deeper. You can't accept the fact that I'm better with her. I always have been."

"Cheap shot, George."

"It's true." He wanted to twist her arm up behind her back and rub her face in it. "Face it, love, you burnt yourself out preparing for the delivery. You had nothing left for her. You were the perfect laboratory for gestation..."

"At least I was here for her and not grubbing around in filthy, useless parchment all day!"

"You were in your studio, Karla. You were making love to your typewriter. Allie made it on her own."

George wanted to let up here and tell his wife that it was all right, that there had been no harm done. But he kept pushing. A shadow had fallen across his face.

"You didn't have to have her, you know."

"What?"

"You could have gone to Montreal. Or New York."

"You are dangerously close to having this fork stuck in your eyes. You had better explain yourself, George."

"Steve, the bricklayer, the Adonis who did the wall in the south room...among other things. Was he good enough to invite back?"

He knew it wasn't true but did not get up when Karla fled the table. All he could think, as he listened to the sound of the car engine fade, was that he couldn't believe he had said it.

Perhaps the walk home did it or the cool of the night air. Like a jammed template which defies human forces only to bow to gravity at the oddest moment, the piece fell into place. It was the night George's washing machine had ground its bearings into an arthritic seizure. It was the same night he had fled from the hospital, its sneering doctors and prowling nurses, more anxious about Karla than he had let on. He decided to do a wash. Of all the household tasks, the washing had always tried him the least. That was why the evening shifted sickeningly beneath him when the machine died. The robot noises had soothed his hackles, a moment of opium. Now the sudden silence turned the kitchen into a pressure tank, white nothingness pounding out of his ears.

The clothes did not come out easily. They were tangled, heavy with Tide-scented water. George pulled them out of the bowels of the machine and they tumbled like pillow-lava to the basket on the floor. Coloured intestines from a Maytag with a hernia; Karla would have laughed at him. He did not bother to wring them out but hurried the pile out the back steps and down the old access lane where no one would see him. When he arrived at the laundromat, the front of his pants were soaked and he was hyperventilating.

Shabby dryers with cracked glass windows and thick with chipped, yellowing paint lined one wall of the pre-fab building. Brown suds gurgled out of a drain in the floor. George panicked for an instant, wondering what he would do if he were to meet one of his students. The building was almost deserted, so he pushed backward through the door and deposited the sopping load at the first washer. Three quarters pumped into the machine, it came to life, and George seated himself at the nearest backless bench. When he had entered he made an automatic, almost uncognitive record of the others present: a woman and a small boy at the far end. The distancing set, George let the churning of the washer guide his breathing. The other two might not have been there at all.

The cycle had just switched to rinse when his abdomen was wrenched down into the base of his spine, hard against the coccyx. The paroxysm forced all of his air out in an involuntary grunt and now he was fighting for it back. Once, as a boy, he swam two hundred metres underwater on a bet, the last twenty a struggle of will against the pain of lungs caving inward. This was worse. This was panic without an object. He tried to run through the list of what could be wrong but could not get beyond heart attack and stroke. Soon he could hear himself chanting the two over and over in breathless barks between surges of the pain. He remembered a man's voice crying for help and then feeling the cool of the concrete floor soak up into his back.

The next sensation was of complete darkness and a hand pressed firmly into his abdomen. A voice was telling him to breathe, to blow out in gunfire puffs through his mouth.

"Relax, mister." A female voice. Another hand pressed a wet rag to his forehead. In between pains they rested until the next attack when his head would fly up to vertical, his mouth a fish oval. Then she would guide him through it again. He was not sure how long this continued. Finally, it was like watching a photograph develop in its chemical bath. A tiny woman's face floated above his and a small wretched boy hovered nervously in the background. Her head was turned to one side to allow a single bulging eye to remain focussed on George's face. He

couldn't remember saying anything. Possibly "thank you" emerged while he was pulling the still damp clothes from the washer. He felt cold and embarrassed and looked at neither of them. The thought of staying to dry the load was beyond consideration. All the way back to the house, a vague suggestion of sewage wafted from the laundry basket.

At 3:00 a.m., the hospital called, waking him, to say that the baby had come in the evening. They had tried to reach him earlier. Could he come? George began to apologize because he thought the voice sounded accusing, but stopped himself and said, instead, that he would be right over.

Weeks after this recollection, a cassette tape arrived in the mail. There was no return address on the plain brown wrapper and no post mark. At first George thought it might be a message from Karla and he felt a surge of hope as he walked to the stereo. Her lawyers had contacted him about the proceedings but there had been no word from her. Neither one was contesting the divorce.

The voice on the tape, a man's, was calm and eloquent. It struck George as a cross between Allister Cooke and Orson Wells. *The War of the Worlds* on *Masterpiece Theatre*? The thought made George chuckle nervously. He sat in a padded armchair by one speaker and listened. The narrator began with the title, giving no introduction.

La Gargouille

In a year of great famine in his savage land, a monk, Ephraim, set forth from Ireland on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to pray for food. A godly man he was, of resolution firm and pious conviction. Attending him and looking to his special needs, for Ephraim suffered from a painful disorder of the stomach, was his manservant, Joachim. They made the crossing to France — a perilous journey wracked by tempest — and, after a short delay, continued south along a route well travelled by pilgrims and journeymen alike.

The two men, stout monk and devoted manservant, made their halting way from village to village. Their passage was ponderous, slowed by continuous stops almost every hour. The ritual would be repeated thus: the two would stop, Ephraim atop his donkey, Joachim leading the animal on foot, and the serf would help his master to the ground. And then, regardless of where they found themselves, by fallow field or rocky pass, the holy man would loosen the leather girdle which bound his girth and lie upon his back. For it was that the motion of the ride did cause his inner organs to work themselves through the ruptured lining of his gut and push his belly out over the sturdy belt, so

making him to cry out in agony. This can be nought but true, for Joachim did recount the story many times afterward, and with each telling the poor man's belly grew to even more alarming proportions.

His master then flat upon the road, Joachim would attend a second mule tethered behind the first and unstrap a great flat rock carried with their meagre supplies. So heavy was this stone that it staggered Joachim with its weight. With every care did goodman Joachim place the flagstone down upon his master's belly, thus to push the errant organs back into their place, as is God's design — though be there those who swear that such is tampering with the Lord's work. And then the desperate party would remount, so further on their way to pass until the next attack.

For many weeks, from town to village they made their way southward until at a river port, Amiens, the pair did find themselves. The day had but an hour of light left for travel, so it was agreed that they should find accommodation for the night and continue in the morning. At each inn and hostel and household where they inquired, the response was ere the same: "No room", though neither monk nor man could divine a reason for this lack of vacancy. They had encountered few other travelers and knew of no event at the tiny village that should cause such a congregation. Later, Joachim would say that he saw great fear in the faces of those who opened their doors, fear of a holy man in such visible agony, a monk with belly so protruding that he looked to be with child. So through the town to its very outskirts did they wend their way, at each door, "No room" or no response at all.

Outside the town, in a deep gulley hard by an ancient culvert said to be a remnant of the Roman rule in Gaul, there barely stood a hovel made of stone. Its roof of thatched weeds and grasses blended with the hill, so that a passerby would hardly notice its presence. The drain was still used; it carried the effluent of the village from a common dumping well in the square to the open sewer and on to the river. A vile and devilish stench arose from this depression to the path above.

And in this lightless place there dwelt a woman, a shrew so ugly it was said that one glance from her would turn a man to stone. With such tales of witchery did the mothers of the hamlet frighten their children to bed before the sun would sink behind the sea. One brash inn-keeper directed the travelers there, to this abode, saying with a heartless laugh that should they find no place with her for the night, they would have no choice but to bed down with the goats!

And so the monk and his man arrived at this wretched door and were greeted by the woman. As she looked upon them, Joachim covered his face in fear and shrank away. He begged his master to leave, not to enter lest he succumb to her wicked powers. But Ephraim

stood firm. He begged a humble place by her fire for the night, able to promise her nothing but the blessing of the Lord. And she did usher them into her dwelling place, though Joachim would not enter and made his bed instead with the mules in a tiny lean-to outside.

The woman offered what food she had: a skin of goat's milk, some tubers and two small quails which she plucked and cleaned before her guest. The two ate the simple repast together in silence and when they had finished, the holy man asked his hostess how she lived. She told him that in the summer she tended the sheep of the village, taking them high into the lush mountain meadows to graze and returning with the first frost. She owned no sheep of her own, only one black goat, and was paid enough in food and firewood to keep her through the winter.

Just before dawn, when all were deep asleep and the fire had shrunk to faintly glowing embers, the monk cried out a scream so shrill it awoke Joachim outside. The serf was so startled that he swore it was the cry of a demon soul burning in Hell's fire. The rupture in the monk's abdomen was flaring anew and he cried out to God to spare him such horror or to take his life right there. A fever descended upon his poisoned bulk, making the holy man to babble and moan and speak in nonsensical tongues. Meanwhile, it was the woman who tended to him. She bathed his burning skin in putrid water and bound his abdomen in a poultice of noxious herbs covered with the bladder of a pig. As morning broke, Joachim overcame his fear and entered the cottage to see the woman bent over his master's now silent form. He could not hear the words of her mumbled prayer and took these to be the incantations of evil.

Fearing Ephraim to be dead and the witch to be vying with God for his soul, Joachim rushed headlong into the village. There he called together a goodly number of men and found the words to convince them of his master's horrible death. These men did form into a mob and, driven by Joachim's story (although it took very little to convince them that the woman who tended their sheep in summer was an evil spirit), they made their way to the stone hut. The monk was lying without a single sign of life by the darkened hearth and the woman had not moved from her position of prayer over his body. And so with swift vengeance these men bound her hands and feet and, held aloft like some trophy of the hunt, she was paraded back into the village. Faggots of sticks and thick grasses were heaped around a single stake erected in the square. There they burned her as a witch and a murderess and through it all she muttered not one word in her defence.

When Joachim returned in sorrow to tend to his master's remains, he was transfixed with joy to find Ephraim awake and the fever lifted.

A colour of pink blossoms had spread to his face and his stomach no longer strained against his simple habit. A dark miracle it was, verily, for not only was the monk healed of his affliction but beside him, wrapped in fleece, was a new born babe, a boy. Joachim bent his head to the stone floor giving thanks to God, though this unnatural conception made him confused and sore afraid. He left his master then and returned to his homeland alone, never to see Ephraim again.

The monk raised the boy as his own, calling him Tresor, yet never telling him of his miraculous birth. Instead, Tresor grew up in the school which Ephraim established in the town, never suspecting that he was but an orphaned foundling. Ephraim taught him scripture and writing and the way of God with the other boys of the region; Tresor excelled at each of his studies. Above all he loved Ephraim as a father. When Tresor was a young man ready to begin his calling, for he swore to continue his guardian's work, the monk died. Tresor mourned alone in the mountains for more than a month, fasting. And when his grief had passed, the young priest journeyed to Rome and then to Galilee as his father would have done, and with every step his father's spirit was with him.

Tresor returned after many years to build a monument to his guardian's memory, a grand cathedral of Notre Dame in the place of his boyhood. He brought with him the finest artisans and craftsmen in Europe, workers in wood and stone and glass, and they came inspired by his enthusiasm and conviction. Alas, it was that Tresor, now an old man, would die many years before the completion of his majestic, soaring church. Perhaps that was best, for he was not witness to the oddest occurrence of all.

One day, some months after the funeral of the great bishop, as the workmen were fashioning the drainage ornaments which would pass rainwater from the roof to the cathedral, a stone gargoyle appeared where none had been before. So ugly was this statue and so ominous its appearance, that the workmen fled in dire fright and the structure was left to stand, unfinished, for many years after.