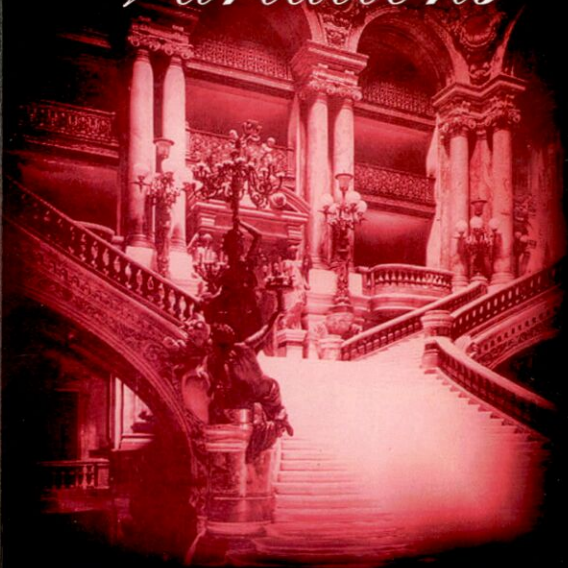


Phantom Variations



Tales from the World of the
Opera Ghost
Edited by H. D. Kingsbury

An Ode to Phan Fiction

By Jacqueline Booher

Oh Phan Fiction, how you strive to give Erik the happiness and peace he was denied in the books, the plays, the movies, the mini-series, the animated cartoon, and the comic books. (Except for you people who write stories where he dies some ghastly, horrible way, alone and sad and dreaming about how his life sucked...really, wasn't his story sad enough for you to begin with?!)

You make us revel in how you let Erik find love with the person of his dreams. (Sometimes it's Christine or Meg or Madame Giry or sometimes it's Christine's daughter—that's kinda creepy—or some other new woman that we pray won't turn into a 'Mary Sue'...sometimes it's a man, ya know...whatever, as long as Erik is happy...right?)

It is because of you that Erik is able to understand, and overcome, the tragedies of his past and evolve from the shadow of a ghost into a fully functional man of flesh and blood. (Unless of course he is still extorting, terrorizing, murdering people right and left and living in a hole somewhere, hiding because he's a criminal.)

You allow the authors to use their imaginations to set Erik in any time or place—the 1800's in France, ancient Rome, historic Persia, Medieval times, the Civil War in America, the Wild West, the 1940's, anywhere modern day. Not so sure about Erik on a space ship in the future, but hey...whatever floats your boat...er, space craft).

And you redeem Erik by showing he can mingle with the masses and obtain gainful employment—composer, architect, magician, mason, artist, business tycoon, music shop owner, inventor, author, tutor, dairy farmer, vampire hunter, hit man, kidnapper, terrorist...ok, so maybe all his job choices aren't for the best, but he's really trying to be a useful member of society and participating in capitalism.

Oh Phan Fiction, how you make us swoon at the various proposals of marriage Erik gives his lady loves. (Unless, of course, it's the kind where he forces her to choose him or the guy she is engaged to dies...that's not overly romantic! Or those ones where her father sells her off to Erik to pay some kind of debt...not exactly giving me the warm fuzzies with those either. Or the kind where he has to kill the chick for them to be together...that's just gross!)

You are able to show that Erik can be a true hero—rescuing the damsel in distress, saving the Opera House from various disasters

beyond our imaginations, being a friend to wayward and injured animals, stopping evil and nefarious plots, and even saving Raoul's neck a time or two...though this I'm sure was done to either impress or to placate a woman.

And you give us Erik in all his monstrous and/or sexy glory, from his glowing gold, deep green, sea blue eyes to his midnight black, sandy brown, almost gray, wispy hair to his tall, gaunt, muscular, wiry, powerful body, to his deformed, skeletal, missing an eyebrow, slightly sunburned and bumpy, where is your nose, bone popping out of stretched yellow skin, totally F.U.B.A.R. face. Yet the one thing you always agree on...the man has **GOOD** hands!

You provide a forum where authors can flex their creative muscles and make Erik say and do anything they want him to. (But for you people who make him do weird things like have sex with Christine while she is asleep, or turn him into a Manwhore...that's just not cool! You will only make us rant about you in chat rooms and on message boards later.)

More than anything, you give us what we want—Erik loved spiritually, emotionally, and physically. (Yes, we really, really, really like to read about Erik being loved physically...in his swan bed, in the Louis Philippe room, on his organ bench, in the lake, on the stage, in a bathtub, and for you really sick puppies...in his coffin.)

It is through you, Oh Phan Fiction, that we can enter the world of the Phantom, with its romance and mystery, and live out our fantasies about that place and all that it encompasses. (And Erik...who will most likely be making an appearance in our fantasies sometime very, very, soon!)

Here's to you, Phan Fiction, because without you, what would we do with ourselves? (Spend time with our spouses, boyfriends, children, friends, get work done around the house, pay the bills on time, take the dog out, play with the cats, feed the fish, pay attention when someone is talking to us on the phone, not be on the internet more hours than we get sleep, not pretend to be doing something really important at work when in truth we are reading the "yummy" chapter and hoping not to get busted by our boss, not be sneaking into the other room to get on the computer when we have guests over, and in general living in the real world?)