

A reader's foreword

Pardon me, but your dramatizations are no dramatizations. They are rather personal interpretations and arrangements of the works alluded to, always adding something extra to the originals and sometimes regulating them by new thoughts and ideas, giving them another direction and style by also ignoring parts of the original text. The result is a complement to the original, more often than not enriching the original by underlining what's written between the lines that isn't obvious to the general reader, thus making of the original a sometimes totally different work of literature. Some may object to this, but I regard it as more of a kind of flattery to the original authors by enhancing qualities they weren't aware of themselves, like Plato was accused of putting words into Socrates' mouth that he never spoke, but which nevertheless add to the quality of Socrates. This play is a typical example of this special art of yours: it is the entire "Les Miserables" story but concentrated to essentials in a kind of condensation, which only succeeds in pointing out the original quality by giving it a clearer and more concise form with austerely clearcut characters. No offence please, and no flattery, just an observation.



The Dregs of Society

tragedy in five acts

by Christian Lanciai

after Victor Hugo's greatest novel "*Les Misérables*".

The characters:

Digne 1815:
Bishop Myriel
Baptistine, his sister
Mme Magloire, their housekeeper
Jean Valjean, alias father Madeleine
gendarmes

Montreuil-sur-mer 1823:

Javert, policeman
an officer
Fantine, a fallen woman
a policeman
a doctor
Sister Simplice, father Madeleine's aid

Arras:

A lawyer
A judge
A prosecutor
Champmathieu, tramp
Brevet, Chenildieu, Cochepaille, convicts
A policeman

Toulon:

an officer of Toulon

Montfermeil:

Thénardier, landlord with a doubtful past
His wife
Their daughters Azelma and Éponine
Their son Gavroche
Cosette (as a girl)
three guests at the inn

Paris:

An old woman, hostess of the Gorbeau shed
Four policemen
Old Fauchelevent
Marius de Pontmercy, poor student, later baron
Patron Minette, a bunch of gangsters
Courfeyrac, Enjolras, Combeferre, students, rebels for the republic
other young rebels for the republic
an officer
Gillenormand, Marius' grandfather
a portress
a doctor
a maid

The action is in France 1815-1831.

In the dramatization of Victor Hugo's texts certain liberties have been taken with the dialog, which often is very sparse in Hugo's novels: Jean Valjean speaks extremely little after Arras, while here the dialog has been expanded with a number of monologues, among other things. Among the characters, especially Thénardier has been developed into an even more outrageous villain if possible. The fidelity to Victor Hugo's story has been total however and not even been cut in any parts, no matter how much it has been concentrated instead, since this story perhaps is the most wonderful of all novels and entirely Victor Hugo's own.

The work was commenced in Darjeeling (India) in November 1992 and finished after a normal pregnancy of nine months.

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The Dregs of Society

Act I scene 1.

Baptistine You know, dear Madame Magloire, the nature of my brother. He is absolutely hopeless. It doesn't matter what terrible truths you tell him. He will do nothing about it anyway.

Magloire But now it's really high time for him to wake up and do something about it! It simply can't go on any longer like this! Now the whole town is talking about this terrible criminal who is roaming about beating people to death and plundering little children both here and there, and then the bishop sleeps with two defenceless ladies in his home without any lock on his door!

Baptistine Of course it's terrible, but I don't think my brother will do anything about it. (*enter the bishop*)

Myriel Good evening, my good ladies. You seem disturbed tonight.

Magloire And don't we have reasons for it! There is a murderer on the loose out there, and we can't lock the door!

Myriel Dear Madame Magloire, it has always been like that. There is nothing new about it.

Magloire But now there is a real murderer out there!

Myriel And how do you know? Do you know him? Or are you judging him without evidence? I am quite positive, that if all the facts were known in all criminal cases, there would neither be anyone pronounced guilty nor be any criminals at all. I witnessed the whole French revolution and learned from it, that crimes only occur by stupidity and injustice, and that criminals become criminals only by becoming victims of a vicious circle of the stupidity of justice and the injustice of stupidity. And behind all stupid injustice there is nothing but human prejudice.

Baptistine You always preach so well, my brother, but wouldn't it be about time that we at last got a lock on our door? As it is now really anyone could get in at any moment to do whatever he would please.

Myriel Dear sister, isn't that the very thing what a home exists for? Haven't we always done whatever we liked here at home? And isn't it mean and petty to insist on keeping such a privilege just to ourselves?

Baptistine (to Mme Magloire) Didn't I tell you, madame Magloire?

Magloire You almost wish the murderer to come here and create a scandal just to wake up the bishop.

Myriel You should send him a written invitation, Madame Magloire, and you would be consistent.

Magloire God bless me, your excellency! You are not even afraid of the devil!

Myriel No, for I am not even afraid of man. (*A hard knock on the door.*)

Come in!

(*The door is opened. Jean, a wild figure with a backpack and a cudgel, vagabond clothes, unshaved and unkempt, large and heavy, appears. He brutally bangs open the door. The ladies are terrified.*)

Jean I am Jean Valjean. I have been in prison for nineteen years. I was released four days ago. Since then no one has wanted anything to do with me. I was lying on a bench in the square when a good woman passed by and advised me to try it here. Do you accept such a one as I?

Myriel You are welcome, my friend. My good sister and housekeeper are just preparing the supper. You will need a good meal and then a nice and warm bed, since you must be very tired. Where did you sleep last night?

Jean I was thrown out of every inn. I wasn't even allowed to sleep in the stables. I have been sleeping outdoors or in haystacks or on benches.

Myriel Then you have come to the right place indeed. I am happy that you have honoured my humble home with your visit. This is your home as long as you wish. Baptistine, make room for another setting. For once we will now be as many gentlemen as ladies at table. (*to Jean*) The ladies are used to completely dominate me by their conversation. I long needed an ally against their female supremacy.

Jean (carefully laying aside his backpack and cudgel) Naturally I will pay.

Myriel Out of the question! You are now one of the family, and we will never even try throwing you out.

Jean And how do you know I am not a murderer?

Myriel My friend, your past should be of as little concern for you as it concerns me. You don't know for sure that I am not a murderer either.

Jean But you are a bishop!

Myriel Also gentlemen like Talleyrand and Fouché are bishops and priests. Nevertheless they are part of a government where hardly anyone has kept his hands clean and they perhaps least of all.

Jean You seem to find life amusing, your excellency.

Myriel For what other reason are we alive? You have to make the best of it, and if you can smile at what is funny you have already reached somewhere. But please be seated. The soup is ready. – You don't say anything, my ladies, to our honoured guest. Shouldn't you give him a welcome greeting?

Baptistine (makes an effort at politeness) We are not exactly used to guests.

Magloire No, we certainly aren't.

Myriel A little more politely, madame Magloire, please.

Jean I shouldn't have come here disturbing the idyll.

Myriel On the contrary, my friend, such an idyll as ours is made for being disturbed. The worst thing that could happen to a man is that he would get used to his own comfort. There is no deadly sin except self-satisfaction.

Baptistine (serving) My brother always had dangerous tendencies towards free-thinking.

Myriel That's how I became a bishop.

Baptistine Oh no, not just because of that. You were also always a saint.

Myriel I would rather leave that unsaid.

Magloire (to Jean) There were always no limits to his modesty.

Myriel Oh no, Madame Magloire! Now you forget that I actually was married once.

Jean And what happened to your wife, your excellency?

Myriel She died.

Jean I am sorry.

Magloire The revolution took his wife and executed all his relatives.

Baptistine No, Madame Magloire, Madame Myriel's death was natural.

Magloire That is debatable.

Myriel She died. How she died is therefore of no consequence, whether she attracted her illness by the force of circumstances or by nature. We mortals can never fully understand which.

Jean I regret your loss, your excellency.

Myriel I don't. That grief brought me on the only true path of suffering, which turned me into a man of harmony. By that experience I have nothing to fear, neither of death nor of man.

Jean And you are not afraid of me?

Myriel Why should I be if I am not even afraid of death?

Jean Your ladies don't seem equally pleasantly unaffected by my presence.

Myriel (jokingly) You know how ladies are. – But now you are tired and need some rest. You need a good night's sleep, and no one will wake you up tomorrow. You may sleep your fill.

Jean Yes, I am really very tired.

Magloire It's the food in the stomach. You were starved, and now the stomach has got plenty of work. Then the brain needs sleeping.

Myriel A perfectly correct observation, madame Magloire. Our ladies will show you the guest room.

Jean (rising) Is it just for my sake that you laid the table with such precious silver?

Myriel (laughs) I wish it had been that way. No, we actually sup on silver every evening. That's all that remains of my family, its fortune and its memories.

Jean Were they really extirpated by the revolution?

Myriel Yes, every one.

Jean And you, the last one, turned a priest?

Myriel Like I said, I was married, but fate decided otherwise.

Jean You are a remarkable man, your excellency.

Myriel No, I am just a man. Forget the title, and I am just your servant.

Jean Good night, your excellence.

Myriel Good night, my friend. Sleep well.

(Madame Magloire locks up the silver in the cupboard. Baptistine shows the way to Jean, but he observes the silver and the cupboard and the key in it.)

Magloire *(when they have left)* Did you mark how he observed the silver?

Myriel Madame Magloire, you yourself regard this silver so carefully every day, that you of sheer jealousy doesn't want anyone else to see it. Who is the worse sinner – you or our guest?

Magloire I just know I will not be able to get a good night's sleep tonight.

Myriel Madame Magloire, I can promise you that you will not be strangled in your sleep even if you fall asleep.

Magloire No, it's not likely that I will, but you never know what such a vagrant might do.

Myriel Say rather, that you can never know what God might do.

Magloire That sounds better, but it's the same thing. Good night, your excellency.

Myriel Good night, madam. *(Madame Magloire leaves.)*

Thus comes the night with dreams of terror and fear, of strange tones and wonders, of everything impossible and unfathomable. But at times even our reality may offer you pranks that are better than dreams. I know, that God has crossed our threshold by thins wanderer with the purpose of trying us. That test promises to be interesting and perhaps a quite decisive lesson to many. *(retires)*

(The light fades. When everything is dark, Jean is seen coming stealing.)

Jean O spiteful life replenished with cursed bitterness! What a bad, grotesque and distasteful practical joke you are! You twist everything around by a cynical fortune of injustice into just a grotesque cesspit of cruelty and villainy of a vicious circle constantly getting worse, forcing more and more into resignation from the natural evil of life! Here I found a bishop who in spite of a long life has not been dragged into the perpetual evil circus of everything, and therefore it will be my natural task to break his heart and ravage his soul. On that set of silver I could live handsomely for months. I should give the old man a proper and resounding thanks for his gift by clubbing him to death, but it will be an even crueller revenge on all injustice to let him live with my malicious perpetual joyful scorn. *(opens the cupboard)* Here is my retribution for the nineteen years of my life bereft of me by the state. It's the cheapest indemnity in the world. *(takes the set and puts it in his backpack)* It's not worth much money, but if it liberates the old man's soul of all his goodness, it was worth the price. Farewell, illusion of a good home and a heart of goodness. I don't believe in you, so I bid the glimpse of this mirage farewell. *(disappears through the window.)*

(Light starts returning on stage as the day begins to break.)

(Mme Magloire enters, opens the window and does some cleaning, then discovers the open cupboard, clasps her hands in despair.)

Magloire What did I tell you! Baptistine! Mademoiselle Baptistine!

Baptistine *(comes rushing)* Yes, what is the matter?

Magloire The cupboard! Burglars! That's what we thought! I just hope he hasn't murdered his excellency as well!

Baptistine O no! What a disaster! (*opens the door to the guest room*) The bed is untouched! He hasn't used it! He has just been lying *on* it without removing his shoes! What a barbarian!

Magloire This is the worst thing that has ever happened to us!

Myriel (enters) But what kind of an uproar is this?

Magloire He has escaped! The murderer has escaped! And he has taken the entire set of silver!

Baptistine He has outright plundered us! God be praised that he didn't murder us all in our beds!

Myriel But come to your senses, dear Baptistine and madame Magloire! No harm is done! We are all still alive!

Baptistine Yes, but the silver, brother! Our last family heirloom! The last remains of our entire family!

Myriel But he still left the candle sticks.

Magloire Then he will be sure to come back just to beat us to death and take them as well!

Myriel I also think he will be back but hardly to beat us to death.

(Hard knocks on the door.)

Magloire Here he comes with all the hoodlums in the neighbourhood to burn down the vicarage!

Myriel Come to your senses, Madame Magloire. Come in!

(A group of gendarmes open the door and make their appearance. They have caught Jean.)

gendarme 1 We found this vagrant on the road. He looked suspicious, so we arrested him. He was loaded with silver which he claims he received from you. We aren't that stupid that we buy that kind of stuff.

gendarme 2 Do you know him?

Myriel Of course I know him! Jean, my good man, you did well in coming back. You forget to take along the candlesticks.

gendarme 1 So what he says is true? You gave him the silver?

Myriel Of course.

gendarme 2 Then the accusation falls. Pardon us for disturbing.

gendarme 3 We leave him to you and wish you a good day.

(The gendarmes raise their hats and leave.)

Myriel Don't just stand there now like a confused child, my good Jean. Come in and sit down.

Jean (stunned and overwhelmed) I don't understand.

Myriel No, there is much you don't understand, but one day you will understand it.

Jean (sits down) But why are you so good to me? What have I done to deserve your goodness?

Myriel Plenty, my friend, if I know you correctly. Now tell me your story, and I will see if I judged you right.

Jean It is quite simple.

Myriel The more important then in all its details. Please tell me.

Jean I was a simple woodcutter from Faverolles. I lived with my sister. Her husband died, she had many children, and winter was hard. We didn't have money for bread, and her smallest children were ill. We starved. Then I stole a bread from the baker, but he saw me and followed me. Thus I was caught the first time and got three years prison labour while my sister ended up in the almshouse with all her children. They took away from her the only one who could help her.

Myriel Go on.

Jean I escaped from prison but was caught again, but I always escaped again and was always caught again. Each time my prison sentence was prolonged. Finally I was released after nineteen years. Here you see the result of these nineteen years because I wanted to save the lives of my nephews by stealing a bread: a hard and bitter ruffian who doesn't flinch from giving thanks for received charity by plundering his benefactor of all his silver. (*buries his face in his hands*).

Myriel My friend, my assessment of you was correct. You are redeemed. I have bought your soul. Your years of trial are over. The world tried to make you evil, but it has failed, for providence sent you to me. Your sufferings are not yet over, you have a long and difficult path ahead of you, but now you know the direction. From now on you will never again be able to do anything evil even if you tried, and if you still would try the result would turn out good anyway. This gift is what I bequeath to you. Live well, my son, and use the life you have left to transcend all the evil you suffered by doing good. I have relieved you of your evil, and now there is only good left in you.

Jean You sound so convincingly certain.

Myriel Am I not right?

Jean It remains to be seen.

Myriel Look, I send you out into the world. Bring the candlesticks with you. Do with them whatever you please, but never forget that from now on you are your true self and a good man.

Jean You are too good for this world.

Myriel If everyone who is too good for this world would be as good as they really are, all evil in the world would cease to exist. Overcome the world, Jean, and show that even such an oppressed victim as you of its injustice, could make it a good world at least for some.

Jean I can never forgive myself any more for my past.

Myriel Forget yourself and your past. Now begins the future.

Jean You give me a life, father.

Myriel I give you yourself. I just happened to the good fortune of being able to bring it out.

Jean I thank you.

Myriel Don't thank me but fortune, these ladies and gendarmes who all were helpful. But I will always be here if you ever again would need my help.

Jean I will never forget you. (*kisses his hands*)

Myriel Neither will I ever forget you. There, go now. The future is expecting you, and you have a world to take care of.

Jean (rising) I will do my best.

Myriel That's all I ask for.

Jean Farewell, my ladies, and pardon me that I made you upset.

Magloire Nothing could upset us, for nothing could upset his excellency.

Myriel That's right, Madame Magloire. Now you have come to your senses. Farewell, my son.

Jean Farewell. (*leaves*)

Magloire Do you really think such a fallen man could become a good man?

Myriel Why not? Man is basically good, and this man is no more than a child of nature. Therefore he could turn out better than most.

Baptistine I hope you are right, my brother. That was our only set of silver.

Myriel I know. But it has come to good use.

Scene 2. Montreuil-sur-mer

Javert What do you really know about your mayor? Did you ever investigate his background? He seems to me a rather doubtful person.

officer But how can you say such a thing, inspector Javert? Everyone regards him as a saint, and it's only he who by his invention has given our city such a welfare which he maintains.

Javert But he is not from here.

officer No, that's true. He came here as a stranger.

Javert How did it really happen? How did he make his incredible reputation?

officer He came here one day almost ten years ago. There was a great fire happening then, and the police chief's house was on fire with both his daughters inside. The stranger risked his life and saved both the children. Thus father Madeleine's career started here with us. The whole city became deeply indebted to him from the start.

Javert And he got a job and made progress, made his invention and started his own business, built up his industry and employed many people and ended up a mayor.

officer Yes, that was about how it came to pass.

Javert And you still know nothing about this man or his background?

officer What do we need to know? From the beginning he preferred a retired life, and we respected him. He lives like a hermit with only an old housekeeper as his only company.

Javert Sister Simplice?

officer Yes.

Javert I have today seen your respected mayor, the saintly father Madeleine as you call him, on a totally different level. The old man Fauchelevent, you know?

officer Yes.

Javert A cart loaded with bricks fell over him when a wheel of it was stuck in a mudpool. He was stuck under the cart, which constantly went deeper down in the mud and threatened to squeeze and crush the old man to death. Then father Madeleine came by. He immediately took the initiative and called for a strong man who could crawl under the cart and lift it by his back. There was still enough space. There was no such strong man in that crowd. Then I came forth.

officer You don't seem very robust yourself.

Javert No, I am just skin and bones, but I knew such a man once. I approached your mayor, whom I seemed to recognize from some distant past, and told him while I observed him coldly: "Lord mayor, I have only known such a strong man once in my life. It was a convict by the galleys of Toulon."

officer And the mayor then crept himself under the cart and lifted it.

Javert Yes. The whole town is talking about it. When no such man was available he did it himself. But isn't it strange, that this your mayor should both be so remarkably like the unforgettably strong convict at the galleys of Toulon and be equally strong?

officer So you want to make father Madeleine and your convict Jean Valjean into the same person?

Javert I can't get that suspicion out of my head.

officer You must, inspector. Such a suspicion is unthinkable to every honest citizen of our town. To express it could only be interpreted as the lowest form of slander.

Javert Have you ever checked father Madeleine's papers?

officer I can assure you they are in perfect order.

Javert Yes, because he issued them himself. I mean those papers he had when he arrived here.

officer That's hardly necessary any more.

Javert But were they checked at the time?

officer Inspector, if a chief of police sees both his daughters burning inside a house and finds how a stranger rescues their lives, does he then ask this stranger for his documents?

Javert That's what I suspected. (*trouble outside*)

Now the order is upset again.

(*Enter a police patrol with Fantine in despair.*)

What's the matter now?

police This lady assaulted, scratched and bit a gentleman on the street.

Javert (*forms a prejudicial opinion of the prostitute Fantine*)

Six month's penal servitude will teach her to behave.

Fantine Six months! You don't know what you are doing! How could I then pay for the maintenance of my little girl with the Thénardiens in Paris? It was *he* who insulted me! Give *him* six months instead! It was *he* who behaved cruelly against me!

Javert Such as you should not be allowed to walk the streets. You not only spread moral corruption around you (*enter father Madeleine unnoticed*) but also pernicious diseases. Be content for receiving a roof over your head for six months! That's more than you deserve!

Fantine And who shall pay for the maintenance of my little girl in the meantime? They let her starve to death! It's only because of her you see me in this condition! I never walked the street if it wasn't to support my little daughter! (*breaks down weeping*)

Javert And why then don't you have an honest work instead like everybody else? I guess you got sacked from a number of working places for the sake of your seditious way of life! You belong to the dregs of society, miss! Take her out!

Madeleine One moment, inspector Javert. Shouldn't you have the matter examined first? Who are you to sentence her without a trial?

Javert Lord mayor, is it your intention to defend harlots and give prostitutes human rights?

Madeleine This accused lady has made a counter accusation against the gentleman who caused the incident. Where is this gentleman? Did anyone even ask her what he did to her?

Fantine He mocked me for not getting any clients for being so ugly for having sold my hair and my front teeth hoping still to get paid by blokes like him although I should have been free of charge! And then he let go a snowball down my spine inside my dress. And you (*to the police*) call him a gentleman!

Madeleine And you, inspector Javert, suggest that a woman has no right to defend herself against such provocations?

Javert Father Madeleine, with all respect...

Fantine So, you are father Madeleine! Then you are to blame for everything! It was from your factory that I was discharged for having a daughter but no husband! You alone are to blame for all my sufferings! Pfui!

(spits Madeleine straight in his face)

Madeleine (after the deadly silence immediately falling down on everyone)

Inspector Javert, release this woman.

Javert (shocked) I don't understand what you mean. How could you...?

Madeleine She falls under my jurisdiction, and I acquit her. It's as simple as that. Or do I have to read the law to you?

Javert As you wish, lord mayor, but it seems utterly absurd, senseless and incomprehensible that you would release a slut who spat you straight in your face.

Madeleine (ignores Javert, takes care of Fantine) My child, I know nothing about your misfortunes, but it is evident that you suffered some injustice from the start which I indirectly and unknowingly was responsible for. I will do what I can to repair this. You will have back your employment, and your daughter will be provided for. Trust me. (*Fantine faints.*)

A doctor! Quickly! (*A doctor hurries to examine her.*)

Doctor Overstrain, exhaustion and malnutrition. (*Fantine recovers, coughs.*) And obviously also tuberculosis.

Madeleine Bring her home to me. I will personally take care of her. Sister Simplice can give her the best care possible in town.

Javert Lord mayor, I hope you know what you are doing.

Madeleine Inspector Javert, I never hesitated to act when you preferred staying outside just watching. Thus it was earlier today when the cart fell over old Fauchelevant, and so it is now, when you in your prejudicial ignorance were bent on sending an unhappy mother to her death. I hope you learn something from this. (*leaves with the policemen and the doctor, who carry out Fantine.*)

Javert Is it the convict Jean Valjean or is father Madeleine his double? If it is the same man he has risen from the social bottom of the country oaf of total ignorance to the social top of integrity and qualified erudition. It seems incredible, but we shall investigate the matter. (*sits down*) But if it is the same man, who could in that case accomplish such a human miracle? For you can't accomplish such a total personality change on your own. (*resumes his desk work.*)

Scene 3.

(Father Madeleine sitting by Fantine's sickbed.
She wakes up and looks around.)

Fantine Where am I?

Madeleine You are at home with me.

Fantine It really feels like being at home. Why do I feel so safe here?

Madeleine I am pleased that you feel safe here. That's the intention.

Fantine Where am I?

Madeleine You are at home. You have come home.

Fantine (*has a slight attack of crying*) No, I am not at home here! I am only at home with my daughter! Why isn't she here?

Madeleine I have made inquests. I have sent for your daughter. You owe the Thénardiens a hundred francs for rent and expenses. I have paid that.

Fantine If you have paid it, why doesn't she come here?

Madeleine (*sighs, has all the time kept Fantine's hand in his own*) They didn't want to release her. They demanded five hundred francs for clothes and other expenses in the past. If they don't want to release her, I will go myself down to them and collect her.

Fantine (*calmed*) I believe in you. You are the only person I believe in. All others have been trampling me down, including that horrible police inspector Javert.

Madeleine Forgive him. He believes he is doing his duty when he interferes with unhappy people's concerns.

Fantine But why do you take on my case? You are a mayor, and I am just a fallen woman who sold her hair and her teeth for the sake of her daughter. Anyone could

have had me cheap, but you treat me for nothing as if I was an honourable woman. Why?

Madeleine It was my fault that you became insolvent.

Fantine You didn't know about it. You were not responsible.

Madeleine But now I know about it. Now I am responsible.

Fantine Without you I would have died in prison.

Madeleine As soon as you have your daughter you will get well again. The doctor has promised that.

Fantine When do you intend to fetch her?

Madeleine As soon as possible.

Fantine I believe in you. You have saved my life.

Madeleine It's my intention to do so.

Fantine You make me feel so calm.

Madeleine No one will ever make trouble for you again. Sleep, my child.

(There is a tender silence. Fantine falls asleep. Enter sister Simplice with caution.)

Yes, what is it, sister Simplice?

Simplice That gloomy policeman is here.

Madeleine Javert?

Simplice Yes.

Madeleine What does he want? Does he insist on taking my patient again?

Simplice No, he comes for you personally. It seems he wishes to apologise.

Madeleine Apologise? For what? Since when does a policeman apologise?

Simplice I don't know, but he looks very remorseful.

Madeleine I shall receive him. But he must not see Fantine.

(moves to his desk and sits down at work. Fantine's bed is protected by a screen: she is out of the scene.)

Sombre policeman with your gloomy looks, you could turn anyone into a very bad temper without noticing it yourself. But we have to bear with you in spite of all your unmistakable ulcer vibrations.

Javert (enters, waits. Madeleine ignores him.)

Hrm.

Madeleine What is it this time, Javert?

Javert I come to turn in my resignation.

Madeleine (surprised) How come?

Javert Your excellency, I have committed an unforgivable crime of insubordination and have to take the consequences.

Madeleine Explain yourself.

Javert Your excellency, it's a long story. I have mistaken you for another, a convict at the galleys of Toulon called Jean Valjean, whom I had an experience of twenty years ago, when he demonstrated physical powers which no other convict could vie with. He was a quiet and dangerous type. I remembered him when I saw you by the man who was nearly crushed under that stranded cart. Suddenly I thought you were the man, and therefore I told you I once had known a convict who

could have lifted the cart the way you did. Admit it was a striking coincidence: you were like Jean Valjean, and you had the same considerable physical powers. That made me start brooding. I dispatched a written enquiry to Paris if anything was known about Jean Valjean lately. It showed he had been released after nineteen years' prison labour and then relapsed into base criminality. Among other things he had plundered an old bishop of his silver and a wandering journeyman boy of a golden florin.

(pause)

Madeleine Well?

Javert When I received this message I answered that this very Jean Valjean was living here under a false name as the mayor of Montreuil-sur-mer.

Madeleine (collects himself) You acted quite correctly in communing your suspicions. And what did Paris reply?

Javert They said I was mad.

Madeleine And do you yourself consider yourself mad?

Javert No, but I admit I committed a fatal mistake. I maintained my view and insisted on an examination of your true identity. Then Paris laughed me to scorn and suggested I suffered from an unsound fixation.

Madeleine You lacked evidence perhaps?

Javert It was worse than that. The real Jean Valjean was traced and caught in the meantime.

Madeleine So?

Javert He lived under the assumed name of Champmathieu and was caught red-handed stealing apples. The crime is a trifle, but after nineteen years' penal servitude he is a flagrant repeat offender and will get sentenced for life. He is proven, and so I am proven.

Madeleine Proven? How?

Javert Three of his old fellow convicts have recognized him and assure his true identity.

Madeleine And what does he say himself?

Javert He acts stupid and denies it.

Madeleine (turns his attention back to his papers) Is he already condemned?

Javert No. The trial will be in Arras tomorrow. But nothing can save him from a life sentence.

Madeleine I regret the poor devil's fate. Well, that's all then, inspector Javert. You may go.

Javert Your excellence, you haven't answered my chief issue.

Madeleine (turns to him again) What chief issue?

Javert You haven't accepted my resignation.

Madeleine (rising) Inspector Javert, I can impossibly accept it. You acted according to your conscience and did what you thought was right. That's no crime. It is impossible not to commit mistakes at times. Forget it. You may go.

Javert Your excellency, my crime is not having communicated my misdirected suspicions. My crime is that I tried to compromise my highest superior by mistaking his background and trying to open a process against him. This is my unpardonable crime, and I can impossibly remain as a stipendiary civil servant directly under him. It is not proper.

Madeleine (smiles) You mean you would try to drag me back down into the mud?

Javert Certainly not, but you must understand that by my mistake I made my position impossible.

Madeleine Remain until further, Javert. You can't leave your position anyway before we have found a replacement, which will be difficult after your zest.

Javert I thank my lord mayor and beg your leave. I maintain though that you will never see me on duty again.

Madeleine (sits down at his desk again) Good night, Javert.

(Javert bows stiffly and leaves.)

Jean Valjean. A lost name out of the past. Champmathieu. Whoever could that be? Curious. My mother's maiden name was Mathieu, and Champmathieu is just like Jean Mathieu. By this odd circumstantial evidence they have charged the poor fellow. And who is he? Probably a poor nobody who can't even pinch apples without being caught red-handed. And for that he will get prison labour for life. The world must appear singularly strange to him. A judicial murder among too many others. Jean Valjean, you don't exist any more. I have excluded you from this constructive life of welfare, responsibility and charity for an entire town, which before father Madeleine was established was a sleeping and forgotten den for petty complacency. I can't cease to exist as father Madeleine. That would be letting down this entire small world of thriving goodness. It would never be able to forgive father Madeleine for such a desertion.

And should I then be part of a gross judicial murder? Only I know the truth and could save the man by killing father Madeleine and the life's work of the exemplary man. Is it worth it? This unfortunate policeman Javert! If only he hadn't started nosing about! If he had allowed Jean Valjean to be forgotten, I would never have learned about this poor fellow Champmathieu! But that policeman has messed it up for good.

And Fantine? What will then become of her and the little daughter whom I promised to return to the ailing mother's heart? If I became the condemned Jean Valjean again no one would be able to save neither mother nor daughter. The mother would die, and God knows what would become of her daughter. Champmathieu, by clumsily pinching apples you have brought a brilliant career, a town, an exemplary life's work and the unhappiest of mothers and a small unknown daughter to the brink of an abyss. And I am the miserable fellow who has to decide if everything has to be destroyed for the sake of a goofing fool or if this innocent nobody shall be the victim of a cruel judicial murder.

The case is clear objectively. Our Champmathieu weighs nothing to everything else. But what will then be the result of the judicial murder?

Only one will be affected besides Champmathieu – your own conscience and for life. You will live on, mayor Madeleine. But only on the condition that your life will be smeared for all future by one single cruel judicial murder, for which you will never have peace any more. Your establishment as a good representative for a humanitarian beneficial society will be a painful lie for the rest of your life, you self-satisfied and detestable fool in a costume of perfect sanctimoniousness! Advise me, o God! What is right in this impossible legal case?

Myriel (enters prudently) Brother, are you in distress?

Madeleine My bishop! But you are dead!

Myriel I don't forget those whose lives I once saved. Who saves someone's life is thereby responsible for that life forever. You called for me. How could you then believe that I would not answer?

Madeleine But what a surprise!

Myriel Don't talk rubbish, and don't be sentimental. Let's get down to what matters instead.

Madeleine But you already seem to know all about it.

Myriel And you seem to have solved the case already.

Madeleine Have I?

Myriel Try to think for once only of yourself. What would be the result of a possible judicial murder of Champmathieu? You said it yourself – eternal unrest for your own part. Consider the alternative. What would be the result if you sacrifice yourself for Champmathieu? You would not only save Champmathieu, but also your soul would be saved for good. You have done what you could for Montreuil-sur-mer. You have a beautiful life's work behind you, and I am satisfied with you. But in order to proceed from here, you now have to leave all the good work behind. Your life's mission is to fight evil. But your worst danger lies in your very own fantastically good position. Nothing is more dangerous to the good initiative than to get stuck in its own gains. That's what is called self-satisfaction, the most dangerous of all self-deceits. You are Jean Valjean. It was Jean Valjean to whom I gave my testament. Father Madeleine is in spite of all his excellence just a lie.

Madeleine Then we have Fantine and the child.

Myriel (leans towards him and smiles) Leave them to God. You do have a fortune. You can save it from the justice of the world even if your father Madeleine perishes in it. As a convict you are an expert on escaping routines.

Madeleine My father, the challenge you offer me is incredible.

Myriel I know. That's why I do it.

(rises and leaves as quietly as he appeared.)

Madeleine So be it. I have no other choice.

Scene 4. The court in the municipality of Arras.

(The court proceedings are just about to be concluded. The court is packed.)

Lawyer Who then is this man whom you members of the jury are prepared to send to his death by hard prison labour for life? No one really knows who he is, and nothing is proved against or about him. He was walking on a country road with a broken apple branch with apples. That's all anyone knows about him. No one can confirm that he is an unknown Champmathieu from nowhere, and four witnesses recognizing him as Jean Valjean, whom none of them has seen in twenty years, is not evidence enough. The accused stubbornly denies that he is anyone else than himself. He knows no Jean Valjean and has never heard of such a name. The only thing he admits is that he is Champmathieu.

This is the deadlock in which we are stuck and can get nowhere out of. Lacking any trace of evidence it is your duty to acquit this poor ignorant man gone astray, who doesn't know anything besides his own name. And this only thing that he knows, justice wants to deprive him of. It is not fair, for it would be a cold and cruel judicial murder for no good and no one's profit or benefit. (*sits down*)

Judge Has the prosecutor anything more to add?

Prosecutor (rising) I only wish to remind you of a few things. The eloquent defence questions the four witnesses, who recognized Champmathieu as Jean Valjean. I wish to call to mind that the first witness, inspector Javert, is well known as reliability itself who never committed a mistake. He lived close to the said Jean Valjean for several years, many years ago by all means, but he has a confirmed infallible memory for faces and people. His testimony carries heavy weight in this case. The other three witnesses were also close to Jean Valjean for a number of years as prison comrades, and they confirm the definite waterproof testimony of inspector Javert.

Then we have Jean Valjean's obstinate denial. His prison comrades have testified to his silence and clever penchant for sly calculation. He escaped four times from the penitentiary of Toulon, which is regarded as one of the safest in France. His silence is a concealment of dangerous scheming, clever calculation and conspiracy. Javert has clearly testified to this matter. Now he keeps his silence and consistently denies being the quiet scheming rebel, who only thinks of revenge and new crimes. Of course, since he has everything to gain from denying everything, since there is no clear evidence! And will you then allow this dangerous criminal to get away so easily? Consider, I beg you honoured members of the jury, before you release this recidivist, who has been locked up behind bars for nineteen years. He has plundered a pious bishop in his vicarage of his silver, he has plundered a journeyman, a small boy of the country, of his only golden coin, he attacks old people and children, and now you intend to release him and let him loose on the country? (*sits down*)

Judge Gentlemen of the jury, you have a difficult issue to solve, since this case is very tricky. On one hand the risk is imminent that a completely innocent and harmless man will be condemned for nothing to a life sentence of hard labour. As the defence pointed out, it would be sending him down to certain death. He wouldn't

even have been caught if he hadn't been observed with this broken branch of apples, which doesn't prove anything and not even that he pinched the said apples. But on the other hand the prosecutor is right that the accused has everything to gain from keeping quiet and denying everything. The entire case has been severely complicated by the silence of the accused. I will therefore give him a chance and ask him to at last try to help us sort things out. Champmathieu, your silence can only harm your case and lead to your conviction. Now tell us straight. What about your real name, the stolen silver from a vicarage of a bishop, the boy you robbed of forty sous, and where did you take the branch with apples?

Champmathieu (somewhat older than Madeleine but of the same type and build if more stupid and coarse) I know nothing.

Judge Are you the convict Jean Valjean? Three of your prison companions are sitting here and have recognized you.

Champmathieu I know nothing. I don't know any Jean Valjean. My name is Champmathieu. I always had that name. I have never changed my name. I have never seen any bishop. I have never stolen. The branch with apples I found broken in a ditch. It had probably blown off or fallen off some cart. But for the sake of that apple branch I have been sitting here for three months in prison waiting for a trial. A trial for what? Is it forbidden to pick apples from a ditch in the country just because they are stuck to a branch? I can't understand anything of all this mess.

Prosecutor He only fakes stupidity to escape punishment.

Lawyer Could you act stupidity so convincingly?

Judge We have to hear the witnesses again. Call inspector Javert.

Prosecutor Unfortunately he has been obliged to leave the city to mind his duties.

Judge Damn it! Well, the others then? Brevet! Consider it carefully! A word from you could deliver or condemn this man. Do you have any doubts? Are you absolutely sure about your testimony?

Brevet (rises, an old former convict) I fully recognize Jean Valjean. He came to Toulon in 1796 and was released 1815. I was released one year later. We lived together like brothers for nineteen years. He has grown feeble and slow of mind with the years, in those days you were always afraid of him, you can't fear him now, but he certainly is the one.

Judge Chenildieu! What do you have to say as your last word in the case?

Chenildieu (lifetime prisoner, in chains) I am sentenced to penitentiary hard labour for life and have nothing to gain neither from protecting or sacrificing my old pal Jean Valjean, with whom I was linked in chains for five years. So, Jean Screwjack, you still believe you have any chance? When you come home again we will all give you hearty greetings of welcome back.

Madeleine (has arrived unnoticed) My God, shall I then become like that again?

Judge Cochepaille! What have you to say?

Cochepaille (like Chenildieu, but larger) Sure it is our old pal Jean Screwjack. No doubt about it.

Judge Champmathieu or Jean Valjean, what have you to answer these three witnesses?

Champmathieu (consistently stupid and amazed) This is neat indeed. I have never seen them in all my life, while they have known me all their life. You are all daft. You collected them from all the country, but you didn't collect Monsieur Baloup, who could stand up to me. I was a farrier journeyman with him in Paris thirty years ago, and my daughter became a laundress, but she is dead now. My wife disappeared and didn't even say goodbye. In Paris you disappear so easily. But Monsieur Baloup could bear me witness. I was a farrier journeyman with him thirty years ago in Paris. You can find everyone but not him. You are a fine set of trash all of you concocting such a plot just to nail me. I don't understand anything of all this darned unnecessary plot against me. What have I done? I don't even know who those apples belonged to, but no one claimed them, so I took them. I admit that. But is it such a horrendous crime that you must raise all France against me?

Prosecutor The accused is just trying to wriggle himself out of it.

Judge I assure you that we have done all we could to find Monsieur Baloup in Paris, but he is nowhere to be found. We haven't even found any proof of his existence.

Prosecutor It is obvious that the accused invented him to get away.

Champmathieu You are a fine set of scoundrels! I have never seen such meanness!! You only take advantage of that I am a totally uneducated man to put me in a jam! Just because I can't defend myself you want to turn me in! Just because I am a poor incompetent vagrant you want to fence me in! You just harass me! I haven't stolen anything! I know of no Jean Valjean or Jean Mathieu and don't want to know him either, for he must be stupid indeed to get himself so many enemies. I worked with Monsieur Baloup in Paris, and my name is Champmathieu. I have never had any other name. I don't even know who my parents were, but you seem to know more than I, for you seem to know where I was born. I never knew that. I have perhaps been to Auvergne and Faverolles, but what of that? You could have been both here and there without having been to any penitentiary labour in Toulon? I have never been to Toulon. That much I know. Neither have I been to Digne, because I don't know where it is. So there! But you just want to nail me for nothing to be nasty! Very neat indeed! I can't understand that so many clever people could find it worth wasting so much energy and money just to harass me. Now I'll say nothing more.

(silence)

Judge Honoured members of the jury, now the entire case rests with you. If you doubt that the accused has stolen 40 sous from a wandering journeyman boy, and if you doubt that he is Jean Valjean, you must acquit him.

Madeleine One moment, your honour. There is another witness.

Judge Monsieur Madeleine, mayor of Montreuil-sur-mer, your arrival here to the trial has raised our attention since you are well appreciated here in Arras as a welcome guest. Do you know anything about the strange case of Jean Valjean?

Madeleine (comes forth) I know as much as that chief inspector Javert has committed his life's first mistake, which was no actual mistake from the beginning.

Judge Go on.

Madeleine I am Jean Valjean.

(Commotion in the entire court. The judge hammers the mallet.)

Judge Lord mayor, you are overstrained.

Madeleine Perhaps, but Champmathieu is innocent. Brevet, Chenildieu, Cochepaille, watch me! Don't you recognize me?

(The general dismay of the court increases.)

Many shake their heads and whisper between themselves.)

Judge (sadly) Is there no doctor around here?

Prosecutor (rises) We all know the mayor of Montreuil-sur-mer and his outstanding reputation for his humanitarian contributions in every field, but now he seems to need a doctor. If there is a doctor among you here, I ask him to step forth.

Madeleine Believe me, gentlemen, I am not insane. It just so happens unfortunately that I am the only one among you who knows the entire truth. Brevet, look here! You will no doubt recognize me. Do you remember those stitched braces you wore in the galleys with a chequered pattern? *(Brevet reacts.)*

And Chenildieu, don't you have on the right shoulder a deep burn, which you got when you pressed it against a kettle with burning tar to obliterate the three letters T.T.P. which still are there? Is it true or not?

Chenildieu (gasping) It is true.

Madeleine Cochepaille, on your left arm you have a date which you yourself tattooed to commemorate the first of March 1815, when Napoleon embarked at Cannes. Show your arm.

(Cochepaille shows his arm. A policeman inspects it.)

policeman It is actually true. It is hereby confirmed to this court.

(Now everyone is in uproar. A riot is threatening.)

Judge (applies the mallet several times repeatedly) Silence, or the court will be vacated!

Madeleine (when order is restored) If inspector Javert were here, at least he would retract his testimony against Champmathieu and instead testify to my true identity, which he suspected from the start, why all this mess started. Even if I can't prove here and now that I really am Jean Valjean, I think everyone here by now should be convinced enough about it.

(emotional silence)

Judge (clears his throat) Since new sensational facts have appeared in the case by the fact that obviously the true Jean Valjean has appeared only to avert the condemnation of an innocent man, Champmathieu is hereby acquitted. There will be a new trial in legal order. Do you fully realize the width of your self-exposure and its consequences, Jean Valjean, alias father Madeleine, mayor of Montreuil-sur-mer?

Madeleine I have carefully considered the matter. I thought I could become a good citizen again after the galleys, I thought I could draw a line to Jean Valjean's nineteen years of imprisonment, but fate decided otherwise, just by the chance of a

Champmathieu finding a branch of apples in the ditch. I plead guilty to the burglary at the house of the bishop of Digne. I stole all his silver, even if he said he had given it to me to save my soul, in which intention he actually was successful. I stole a coin from a small savoyard boy even if I had no intention to. He dropped it on the ground, I was sitting on a bench half asleep, he saw it roll in under my shoe, which I didn't notice, he demanded it of me, I asked him to leave me alone, when he didn't I rose up, then he was afraid and ran away, not until then I discovered the coin, I tried to run after him, but he was gone. I have cried many times over both the silver and the coin. The bishop's candlesticks, which I never sold, are still standing on my altar at home. There is also the coin, which I never could return. But most of all I am guilty of being the convict Jean Valjean. That is actually my only crime. You know where to find me. I am at the disposal of justice and the law at any time. If you will excuse me, I now must go home to attend to a patient. (*bows politely, puts on his hat and leaves without turning around.*)

Judge We have just been witnessing an upsetting revelation of something as unique as the complete self-sacrifice of a man for another man. Monsieur Champmathieu, you are free and may go.

Champmathieu (more amazed than ever) Well, I say.

Judge What do you say?

Champmathieu I just mean that all you people must be out of your minds.

Judge That accusation, Monsieur Champmathieu, you will have to file to a higher court. I cannot comment on it.

Champmathieu No matter.

Judge That was perhaps the wisest thing anyone said here today. The court is adjourned.

(applies the mallet and rises.

All rise and break up under agitated discussions.)

Scene 5. Father Madeleine's home. Sister Simplicie by Fantine's sickbed.

Fantine (wakes up) This is intolerable! Where is father Madeleine? He should have been here with my girl a long time ago!

Simplicie He will surely come any moment, my child. Go to sleep again and take it easy.

Fantine How could I sleep when neither my girl nor father Madeleine is here? Something could have happened to them! How can you sleep suspended in uncertainty, the cruellest condition of all? They are all I have! (*lower*) If I sleep I will only have terrifying nightmares about that horrible commissar Javert.

Simplicie Keep awake then, but lie still and take it easy. You have to rest, my child, so that you may see your daughter and have strength enough to receive her.

Fantine I will get well the moment I may see her.

Simplicie You would rather get well before. (*a key in a lock outside*)

Fantine O, is it he?

Simplice It has to be. (*enter Madeleine, worn out.*)

You look tired, my lord.

Madeleine Your diagnosis is correct, sister *Simplice*. (*removes his hat and coat*)

Fantine (*prepared for the worst*) Where is my daughter?

Madeleine (*sits down with Fantine*) My child, fate called me to important court proceedings at Arras. I haven't been able to go to Montfermeil yet. But I promise to do so as soon as I get the opportunity. Yes, I swear to do so.

Fantine You must be very burdened by your duties, father.

Madeleine (*smiles*) Sometimes they get heavier than usual.

Simplice (*cautiously, to Madeleine*) Has anything happened, my lord?

Madeleine (*back*) They will come and get me any moment. But don't worry. I have had time to take all safety precautions.

Simplice Safety precautions? Why would they come to get you?

Madeleine They have discovered that I have been living under a false name for eight years. I will probably be charged with serious fraud.

Simplice Great heavens! But all you did was good!

Madeleine The law does not take that into consideration. In the law no human factors exist. The law is blind and sees only its own letter. All its power is in its paragraph numbers, which lives on suffocating and sucking all humanity out of humanity.

Simplice Yes, you should know, who is a mayor.

Madeleine That is unfortunately my experience. The only thing I still have power to do is to try to get this young lady's child before it is too late. The question is if the law will allow me to do it.

Fantine You have promised to get my child, and I know you will do it. You will save her like you saved me. I know it. I can never lose my faith in you.

Madeleine I swear to get your child, *Fantine*, even if the collected pettiness of the entire world would try to interfere. (*enter Javert without a sound.*)

Fantine (*the only one to see him at first, puts her hand to her mouth and is terrified.*)

Madeleine What is it, my child?

Simplice New fever hallucinations?

Fantine Father *Madeleine*, save me!

Javert (*ice cold*) I have not come for *you*. I have come to collect the so called father *Madeleine*.

Madeleine So, you are already here. You do not waste any time.

Javert I wanted to make sure that you wouldn't have time to escape again. I also wanted to make sure that all your papers were still here, so you wouldn't have time to embezzle the fortune which now falls to the state. But I have come too late anyway. You have had time to withdraw all your money. Well, you will not be able to enjoy it anyway.

Simplice Inspector, you are in the room of a dying patient. Would you please be so kind as to lower your voice.

Javert I haven't come for the patient. I have come for Jean Valjean.

Simplice I warn you, inspector. The patient is mortally ill and can endure no hard voices.

Javert Get out with the patient then and let me take care of Jean Valjean!

Madeleine Sister Simplicite, leave us alone. (*Sister Simplicite leaves.*)

(*to Javert*) I beseech you. Give me three days to collect the child of this unhappy woman. You may follow me if you want.

Javert Now I recognize the old scheming Jean Valjean, who only thinks of how to cheat justice! So, you want to collect the child of that slut! And I may follow if I like, so that you could have the pleasure of escaping right in front of me! No way, my man!

Fantine Father Madeleine!

Javert There is no father Madeleine! Do you see this impostor? (*grabs Jean Valjean's collar*) He is an escaped convict, a simple thief who has attacked old decrepit bishops and little children, a galley slave who has been for nineteen years behind locks and bars, to which he is returning! Father Madeleine never existed! It was just the fake show of a cheat!

Fantine Father Madeleine! You promised to get my child!

Javert Someone else will have to collect your bastard! This tramp has to face trial now! For eight years he has lived with a false identity! For a convict with nineteen years behind bars it is a relapse into criminality securing him a sentence for life! Do you hear that, young lady? Your father Madeleine will be sentenced for life! He belongs to the dregs of society as much as you, who can neither keep husband nor child!

Fantine O! (*dies*)

Javert There. Now she has fainted. Now you can come with me. She will not even notice it.

Madeleine Allow me... (*examines her*) She is dead. You have just taken the life of this human being.

Javert One less. You should have let me lock her up as I now will have the pleasure of locking you up.

Madeleine Sir, this is not a proper moment for intolerably malicious joy.

Javert I am not maliciously joyful. I just state things as they are.

Madeleine Still you know nothing. (*kneels beside Fantine.*) Fantine, I promise you by all thing sacred that your daughter will be mine and that I will be responsible for her education.

Javert No further nonsense! The woman is dead!

Madeleine But her soul is alive, and you will never get rid of it. Come, let's go. I have given her my last word. I am now at your disposal.

(*Javert takes hold of Jean Valjean's arm and brings him out.*
Fantine remains alone and dead.

Enter Sister Simplicite who examines the dead, pulls her sheet and sits down beside her in grief.)

Scene 6. The judge of Arras, alone.

Domaren It is our regrettable and painful duty to sentence Jean Valjean, more known as father Madeleine, former mayor of Montreuil-sur-mer, to prison labour for life for serious fraud and embezzlement, since he during eight years under a false identity managed to acquire a position with so great influence that he could make himself a considerable fortune, which now on the grounds of his denouncement and lifetime sentence rightly falls to the state. Since he swiftly managed to embezzle this fortune he is also guilty of embezzlement of state property. That he during these years of a faked identity did a lot of good and initiated a considerable humanitarian activity can unfortunately not be taken into account by this mundane court. Since the accused pleaded guilty himself of both fraud and embezzlement of state property, the sentence will not be harder than just prison labour for life for relapse into criminality.

(applies the mallet and rises.)

Act II scene 1.

Javert What happened? Give me an exact report of the matter!

officer It was a most dangerous incident which had a most dangerous conclusion. The entire harbour held their breaths. The warship Orion was anchored in the harbour of Toulon for repairing damages, and the quays were filled with curious crowds, when the exciting matter occurred in the sight of everyone.

Javert Go on.

officer A sailor fell down from one of the top yards of the mainmast but succeeded in getting hold of a rope end. There he was hanging dangling, and everyone expected him to lose his grip and fall down. He couldn't very well stay hanging there for very long. Then that old convict climbed up the ropes, an incredibly agile man with long white hair and beard. He had been permitted to try to save the sailor and therefore been relieved of his chains.

Javert Go on.

officer Up there he swayed down to the sailor by a rope and grabbed hold of him by one arm while he kept hold of his rope with the other. Then both could be saved. It was a dangerous situation, for the sailor was hanging right over the water and would not have survived a fall. The entire harbour cheered. Then the old man fell down. And the general cheer immediately changed into loud outcries of dismay.

Javert He didn't jump intentionally?

officer Impossible. He just lost his balance and fell straight down into the water between Orion and another ship. There were hardly two meters in between. He never resurfaced. They dragged for him but found nothing.

Javert So he saved the sailor's life and perished himself in the effort. Most suspicious. Could he have survived?

officer It was a fall of more than twenty meters. He must have been crushed against the water surface or at least lost consciousness. They assume his body got stuck in the pilings on the arsenal beach.

Javert And it was the convict Jean Valjean?

officer Yes, convict number 9430, sentenced for life, 56 years old.

Javert So he is pronounced dead?

officer Yes.

Javert You don't know Jean Valjean. He doesn't die that easily. He has simply made his sixth successful escape, and this time he has succeeded, for now he is even declared dead. But let him think that we believe him dead. The more satisfying it will be to catch him again.

officer Who is he? What has he done?

Javert He is the most dangerous of all criminals, for he has really done nothing but petty things, but he has always succeeded in escaping from the most rigorous prisons and always been caught and sentenced to longer punishments. That has made him a public enemy number one, an incurably hateful person who only lives to revenge himself on the society order, which we exist to protect. Such as he it is especially important for us to watch carefully and make sure they are kept locked up.

officer He is an old man.

Javert But the tougher and more dangerous. Just you wait.

officer He saved the sailor's life, and all the spectators demanded his release.

Javert He saved the sailor's life only to be able to escape.

officer And if he really died?

Javert Sergeant, you don't know Jean Valjean.

officer Do *you* know him then?

Javert I have known him for twenty-seven years. He has always foiled me, but I always caught him again. I am probably the only one who knows him and who still is able to catch him.

officer And what if he is dead? Is it then worth while to search for him?

Javert Sergeant, you may leave. (*the sergeant leaves.*)

Dead? Never. He pretends to be dead to survive, he saves lives just to abscond justice, everything he does is insidious calculation. And now he can even collect his money. No, such a fish has too strong motives to live to be able to accept death. The sea, which apparently took his life, became his liberation and renewal of life. Of that I am sure if anything.

Scene 2. The inn at Montfermeil.

(Sordid environment, shabby inn, a termagant for a matron, the patron Thénardier a small mean man, their two daughters fat and spoiled, and the customers aren't very nice either: shabby coachmen and doubtful merchants. Little Cosette is sitting at the further end under a ramshackle table, worn and emaciated, like a Cinderella, keeping away and invisible. She is coughing.)

A guest (entering) Didn't you say you were going to water the horses?

Matron Didn't Cosette do it?

guest No devil has been doing it.

matron (at her worst) Cosette! Where is that shit kid now?

Thénardier I can hear her coughing under the table.

Matron (applies the broom) So there you are, you whore fry! Trying to dodge your duties, eh? Didn't I tell you to go watering that gentleman's horses!

Cosette (coughs) But I did.

matron You didn't, you slacker! You are trying to play hooky!

Cosette (in despair) But the water is finished!

matron Go for it then, you little liar!

Cosette But it is already dark outside, and it is a long way to the river!

matron Don't you think I know it, you cockroach! There! Get out now! Start working and earn your living! (*drives her out from under the table with the broomstick and then further on. Cosette is forced out into the night with an enormous bucket. She is coughing helplessly.*)

another guest You are sending the girl to her grave the way you go on.

matron Don't you think I have tried? But she is much healthier than my girls! They are constantly ill and have colic, but Cosette never gets ill no matter how much she keeps coughing. She is just pretending.

The other guest Children don't pretend like that.

matron She is always pretending!

guest 3 Isn't she your daughter?

matron No, she is a changeling. Her mother was a whore who couldn't take of her herself. We agreed to take care of the wretch with some compensation. That compensation stopped almost a year ago. She has probably forgotten all about her or died.

first guest Yes, whores easily forget and die. And they are easily forgotten and wasted. She is probably dead.

Thénardier So we take care of the girl just by charity. Then we are perfectly right in keeping her at work.

second guest It's just that she seems to be the only one working in the house. You owe me three thousand five hundred francs, my good Thénardier, and you don't seem to be able to make it.

Thénardier Patience, my good sir! Consider that I am a Waterloo veteran and that I saved the life of a French sergeant!

Second guest I doubt that story, my good friend. You might just as well have had that medal for bravery by grave-robbing. That would fit your slippery character better.

Thénardier (pretends being upset) Do you doubt my sincerity?

Second guest To a hundred percent.

guest 3 You had better pay your debts.

Secoind guest Or else you could make a career as a beggar in Paris.

Thénardier (plays deeply hurt) Gentlemen, you hurt my feelings.

guest 3 It's intentional.

Second guest No, we just present you with the facts.

Thénardier Facts based on inadequate information are not relevant.

Second guest (knows his man) No, we know how slippery you are, my good Thénardier.

guest 3 But not even an eel could at length evade ending up in a kettle.

Second guest There, Dominique, so far we have patience.

guest 3 Yes, so far your inn is worth more than your debts.

Thénardier (eloquently) I beg of you gentlemen, trust me.

(guest 2 and 3 laugh ruthlessly.)

(Suddenly the door opens, and Cosette shows up with a new guest, a white-haired white-bearded man who carries her bucket.)

matron What is this? Does she let others work for her now? Why don't you carry the bucket yourself, you bastard? *(grabs the broom)*

guest Madame, the bucket was too heavy for her. Another word, and I pour the water over you. *(threatens to follow the intention.)*

matron Who are you?

guest A guest. I want food and lodging.

Thénardier (observes the stranger suspiciously) Can you afford it?

matron (hasn't finished with Cosette yet) You imagine yourself some primadonna, eh? I will teach you how to work!

guest You had your water. I advise you to be content with that.

Thénardier Food and lodging is twenty francs a day.

guest (calmly) I pay cash. *(puts some coins on the table)*

guest 2 (to 3) Profiteering!

3 (back) Indeed!

2 A rich tramp.

3 Indeed!

Matron (to Thénardier) You had better not argue. He is rich. *(to the guest)* Take a seat, Monsieur! Dinner will soon be ready! *(fawning)*

guest Thank you. *(sits down.)*

matron The water was for the horse. Where is that little bitch now?

Thénardier Under the table.

matron (can't control herself, takes the broom and advances) Get out, you flea-bitten primadonna! You are to water the horse!

guest Pardon me, madam, but is it your intention to torture your undernourished child to death?

matron My child? Thanks for that! Don't interfere! She has to work! (*Cosette coughs.*)

guest Can't you see she is cold?

Matron (yells) This is no charity institution!

guest How much do you want for her?

Matron (doesn't get it) What?

guest I asked: How much do you want for her?

guest 2 Mrs Thénardier, the beggar wants to buy your tattered changeling.

matron And who will then do her work?

Thénardier Shut up, you dull-witted cow! – (*cajoling*) Sir, we could impossibly part with our dear and sweet little Cosette. We adore her.

(muffled ironic laughter among the other guests)

guest As you see, you are not very convincing. If you adore her, why do you then let her starve and be harassed by a "dull-witted cow" who is physically rather superior to your dear and sweet little but ailing and terrified Cosette?

Thénardier We are responsible for her but only to her mother. How do we know you don't intend to be her pimp?

guest (produces a paper) I am authorized by her mother.

(Mr and Mrs Thénardier squeeze wide-eyed to study the paper)

Thénardier It is actually Fantine's handwriting! And we believed her dead!

guest You have no right to believe that as long as you haven't obtained a confirmation of it. And even if she were dead the document would be legally valid.

Thénardier Sir, we have to demand fifteen hundred francs for all the expenses for the girl since nine months.

guest 3 Speaking of procuring!

guest You shall have it. (*takes out three bills of 500 francs from his wallet. The Thénardiens make even wider eyes.*)

Thénardier Sorry, I said wrong. I meant five thousand francs.

guest Monsieur Thénardier, this document grants me the right to take care of the girl for nothing. You have had fifteen hundred francs. You will never see me nor the girl again. Be happy with that.

matron Fifteen hundred francs covers all our debts.

guest 2 You get away easily, Thenardier!

Thénardier (finds himself locked) Very well, take care of the girl.

guest Cosette, come here. (*offers her his arms. Cosette comes out from under the table with hesitation and caution.*) Come. Don't be afraid. (*She comes up to him. He puts his hands on her small shoulders.*) You will never again have to cough. Do you understand that? (*Cosette nods after some consideration.*) Come. Let's go. We are finished here.

matron But your lodging? And the food?

Thénardier Do you bring Cosette out with you into the dark?

guest (rising) Yes, good folks, for I will do something for her which no one has done before.

matron What?

guest I will buy her a doll. Come, Cosette.

(Cosette is immediately happy and follows Jean Valjean gladly, who softly takes her hand. They leave. Silence falls after them.)

guest 2 Now you can pay your debts, Thénardier!

guest 3 But I don't think your inn will be any better for that. The whole neighbourhood will soon be talking about the girl who was saved from certain death under your wife.

guest 1 May I remind you, that my horse still hasn't got any water?

Thénardier To work, wife!

(The matron is reluctantly and morosely compelled walk out with the bucket.

She is a regular thundercloud.)

Thénardier (yells to the guests after she has left) And you, gossip mongers, get out! The inn is closed for tonight!

guest 3 (rising) Don't shout, Thénardier.

guest 2 (rising) You could lose your customers.

guest 1 (rising) I think I will ride on as soon as my horse has got its water.

guest 2 Goodnight, Thénardier.

guest 3 Next time we'll go to another inn.

guest 1 You just lost your only three customers. *(They leave.)*

Thénardier (sits down, beside himself of anger) Merde!

(Curtain.)

Scene 3. The Gorbeau hovel.

(A miserable dwelling-place, only one large room with a wooden floor, mattress on the floor, a basic wooden table with two wooden chairs, a dark cupboard and one spare room, where you trace a camp bed.)

(Jean Valjean arrives home with Cosette sleeping on his back.)

Jean There, my girl, now we are at home. Are you asleep? Good. I will try not to wake you up. *(lets her carefully slide down his back, but she wakes up. By one arm she firmly holds on to her doll.)* Sorry to wake you up. We are home now.

Cosette (rubs her eyes, looks around, then looks at Jean) Shall I do some cleaning?

Jean (understands that she hardly ever was allowed to do anything else in her life, brings her closer) No, my child, play with your doll. You will never again have to do any cleaning. Here someone else will do the cleaning for you.

Cosette Who?

Jean We rent the room from an old lady, who does both the cleaning and the cooking for us.

Cosette So I am really allowed to play?

Jean Yes, my child. You are.

(Cosette immediately gets going but first makes sure about her security: she brings the doll under the table and takes her place there. But then she plays with the doll with her heart's delight: takes off her clothes and puts them on again, and so forth. Jean watches her thoughtfully and wipes a tear from his eye but will not interrupt the game. Instead he rises after a while, walks out into the corridor the same way he came and knocks on a door. The old lady opens.)

Old lady So, you are back now. Is everything to your satisfaction?

Jean Yes, Madame, and my grandchild is with me now.

Old lady You came home very late.

Jean Tell me, I saw a light in one of the other rooms for rent.

Old lady Yes, you have got a neighbour. I have got my second tenant.

Jean Who is it?

Old lady How should I know? He is as fishy and reticent as yourself. He is also some kind of rentier, I suppose! *(closes the door)*

Jean (steals cautiously to the door of the other tenant, tries to listen, hears nothing, peeps through the keyhole, sees nothing, while Cosette all the while keeps on playing. Then there is a sound, a door is closed, and someone approaches with hard steps. Jean hurries back to his place, closes the door and sits by the keyhole.)

Cosette What is it, father?

Jean Nothing, my child. Just play on. *(reacts)* What did you say?

Cosette May I not call you father?

Jean Oh yes, of course you may, my child! Of course you may!

(peeps through the keyhole.)

The hard steps make a halt, and you hear the rattling of keys.)

Jean *(to himself)* Javert! It was he then! He has discovered that I am alive!

(The man in the corridor knocks on the door of the old lady, who opens. You hear their voices.

Jean listens intently.)

Javert *(outside)* Has the old man returned yet?

Old lady Yes, and he has collected his grandchild.

Javert A grandchild?

Old lady Yes. How he could consider my hovel a home for a child I can't imagine.

Javert It's probably just temporary.

Old lady Yes, perhaps it is.

Javert Goodnight, Madame.

Old lady Good night, Sir. *(Doors are closed.)*

Jean *(to himself)* We can't stay here, not for a single night. But how will the girl manage? But we have no choice. We must get away from here. Or else I have failed in rescuing her.

(You hear another door open and the same heavy steps that walk out.)

Thanks goodness! He leaves! But probably to get a patrol. As usual he takes no risks.

(rises and walks to the girl.) Cosette!

Cosette Yes, father?

Jean Unfortunately we have to get out again. But only for a walk.

Cosette May Catherine come with us?

Jean Catherine?

Cosette (*shows her doll*) Yes?

Jean (*calmed*) Of course. She *shall* come with us! But we have to dress now. We haven't much time. (*dresses hurriedly and Cosette, then listens by the door. Nothing is heard.*)

Cosette What are you listening to, father?

Jean My girl, could you keep absolutely quiet?

Cosette I could hold my breath, if father wants it.

Jean It's enough if you just keep absolutely quiet.

Cosette I can almost make myself invisible.

Jean No need. Come now.

(Very quietly they leave for the corridor and steal by the doors. The old lady has not heard them. Jean recalls something, puts a finger on his mouth for Cosette, returns and closes the door.)

After a while there are many heavy men's feet clamping in and knocks on the old lady's door.)

Javert's voice Open up! The police!

Old lady (*opens*) Oh, it's you, Sir. Have you been robbed?

Javert No, Madame, I happen to be the police superintendent for the entire district. I just wanted to inform you, that we are here to arrest Jean Valjean, the old man with the child.

Old lady My tenant? What has he done?

Javert None of your business! To the point!

(They proceed and bangs the door to the stage.)

Open in the name of the law!

A policeman It seems quiet.

another There was no light in the window.

A third It's after midnight. They are probably sleeping.

Javert (*bangs again*) Open up! In the name of the law! Or we will smash the door open!

Old lady Oh no, don't destroy my door!

Javert Smash the door!

(The door is forced, is smashed at the second try, and a bunch of policemen tumble into the room.)

policeman 1 No one is here.

Javert Search!

Policeman 2 Not a soul is here.

Policeman 3 They must have gone out.

Javert Damn! He must have heard my voice and recognized it! Quickly! We must scan the entire area!

policeman 2 In the middle of the night?

Javert No silly questions now! Action!

Old lady And what about my door? You chase out my tenant and tear down my house! What kind of justice is that?

Javert Pardon us, Madame, but we have to do our duty. (*salutes her politely and departs with all the policemen.*)

Old lady Hrmph! What trash! Then beggars are better than policemen!
(*walks back in to her place and bangs the door. Jean Valjean's demolished door is left open.*)

Scene 4.

(As an intermezzo you could show as a pantomime Jean Valjean's escape with the child, how he at times leads her by the hand and at times carries her on his back and on his shoulders, and how Javert with the other policemen frenetically chase a fugitive difficult to catch.)

Finally Jean stops at a lamp-post, catches sight of its rope, cuts it, binds it under the arms of Cosette, climbs the high wall with the rope-end between his teeth and then hoists her up to then vanish with her behind the wall.

A moment later Javert with the policemen arrive at the spot.)

police 1 The area is surrounded. He must be here. This is a blind alley.

police 2 But he isn't here!

police 3 And neither is the child!

Javert Don't you think I can see it, you blockheads! You have allowed him to escape!

police 2 Impossible!

police 1 All other roads are closed.

police 3 You conducted the entire operation yourself, inspector!

police 4 The chase of an old man with a child who is presumed a former convict who was declared dead a number of months ago.

Javert Don't make fools of yourselves!

police 1 (honestly) Inspector, we never make fools of ourselves.

Javert But you have bungled the entire operation!

police 4 Pardon me, inspector, but being angry doesn't help, and you directed the entire operation.

Javert (very angry) Don't you think I know! And we are not angry! Know your place, you blackguard! Back to the station! Recall all orders!

police 3 Three dozen policemen out at night at three o'clock chasing an old man with a grandchild, a mortally dangerous criminal, for no use at all! My congratulations!

Javert And no discussion on the way!

police 1 No, chief inspector.

(*Javert alone is left.*)

Javert I know he is here somewhere! He is not dead and continues to cheat justice as long as he lives! But justice never gives up, Jean Valjean!

(*raises his fist to the sky, as if accusing God*)

You will have your punishment and stay imprisoned for life! Or else there is no justice!

(controls himself and leaves after the others in perfect anger.)

Scene 5. The monastery garden.

(enter Jean Valjean, carrying Cosette on his back.)

Jean My girl! We are saved! Here is an untroubled garden, where we can hide for the time being! What luck! *(lets Cosette down on the ground. She is still holding on to her doll.)*

Cosette (half asleep) I am cold.

Jean Don't feel cold any more, my girl. Here is my coat. *(wraps his cloak around her)* Now you can sleep comfortably. No one will trouble us any more. We have left the nightmares behind at Montfermeil and the streets of Paris. No mean police or greedy old man can reach us here. Sleep, my child. *(lays her down. She instantly falls asleep.)*

Poor child, how tired you must be! If only she could forget all this. But all depends on where we have landed. This environment seems fabulous for being at the heart of Paris. This is no city quarter. *(A tiny bell tingles at a distance.)*

Still there is life here. Could it be a goat wandering around? *(looks around)* Something is moving over there. It's a small man. Could it be a gardener? Is she asleep? *(touches Cosette.)* She is ice-cold. She can't lie here. We have to find a roof over our heads and a fire. – The gardener is moving here. I have to wage everything on him.

(The gardener has just entered with his back to the stage. Jean approaches him and lays his hand on his shoulder from aback.)

My friend, a hundred francs for a roof over our heads and a fire.

Fauchelevant (turning around, astounded) Father Madeleine! Is that you!

Jean (equally surprised) Do you know me? Do I know you?

Fauchelevant But how did you get here? Did you fall down from the sky?

Jean I seem rather to have fallen into paradise. Who are you?

Fauchelevant Don't you recognize me then?

Jean (sadly) It was a long time since I was father Madeleine.

Fauchelevant But I can never forget you! You saved my life! Don't you remember the old man Fauchelevant under the cart?

Jean (wonderstruck) Fauchelevant... Of all people...

Fauchelevant You then got me a position here.

Jean But what kind of a position? What kind of a place is this? Why do you walk around with a bell around your knee?

Fauchelevant It's the nunnery Petit-Picpus in Paris. I am a gardener here and just went out on a round to check my melons. There could be frost tonight, so I must cover them.

Jean And the bell?

Fauchelevant It's to keep the nuns at a distance, at their own request.

Jean I see.

Fauchelevant But how on earth did you get here? There is only one gate, it is always locked, no man is allowed, and the walls are too high. But how you have aged!

Jean (*sadly*) It is a long time since. The police also probably thought the walls were too high.

Fauchelevant Good God! Have you happened to Justice?

Jean You could say that perhaps. My good man, I saved your life once. Now you have the opportunity to do the same for me.

Fauchelevant I would love to! But how?

Jean (*brings Fauchelevant to the sleeping girl*) She must have a fire. Or else she will freeze to death.

Fauchelevant That's easy. She is of the right gender. Your case is worse. What can I do for you?

Jean I would rather like to stay here incognito for a few years.

Fauchelevant (*thoughtful*) That's more tricky. You could of course act like my elder brother. But how do we explain that you entered? Father Madeleine...

Jean Stop calling me that. I am rather your brother Jean.

Fauchelevant Very well, brother Jean, in order to enter here as my brother, you first must get out. And there is only way for you to get out without being noticed.

Jean Well?

Fauchelevant Corpses arrive here to be buried. You will be carried out in a coffin. Then I have to see to it that you get out of it again. Unless you can't climb back the same way you came...

Jean These walls are too high on the inside. There is no point of attachment here.

Fauchelevant So you just flied across.

Jean I jumped. I was desperate. I had no choice.

Fauchelevant With the girl?

Jean She gave me wings.

Fauchelevant Well, now she will get warm. (*lifts her up*) We could hide her for a few days. The nuns never enter my place. But you must get out of here as soon as possible. Then I will persuade the nuns to let my brother with his grandchild come and live and work here. For she is hardly your daughter, is she?

Jean No, but she calls me father.

Fauchelevant Then we will have to call her your daughter anyway. Then she can become a novice here. That will please the nuns. This is the best girls' school in all Paris.

Jean We seem to have landed in the right place.

Fauchelevant (*takes him around the arm*) Brother Jean, it is indeed a pleasure for me that you did. (*They go out together with Cosette.*)

Act III scene 1.

The Gorbeau hovel. You see the room of Marius, a miserable place .

Marius (poor and worn) Misery of miseries – what is all life besides only misery? Woe betide you, mother, for having given birth to me! What thanks do I owe life but for struggle and despair? My parents, denounced by their families, perished in dirt and misery and poverty, tortured to death by their surrounding world and especially by their families. My only relation is my grandfather, rich and wealthy as a troll, but I denounce him for what he did to my mother. His money stinks to me more than the entire world, which for me is just replenished with disgust. Every day I wonder why I don't commit suicide. *(a knock on the door)* There's our neighbours again. I guess I will have to open. *(opens)*

Good day, Azelma. What's on?

Azelma (dressed in rags, dirty and disgusting) Forgive us, master Marius, but we wonder if we could borrow some sugar.

Marius Unfortunately I have no sugar today.

Azelma Well, some tea, then?

Marius Some tea I can manage. Are you that poor?

Azelma We haven't even enough money for shoelaces. Thanks for the tea. *(curtseys, flirts and leaves)*

Marius Poor ragamuffins! Let's see now how they are doing.

(climbs a stool and peeps out through a hole. The stage turns and shows the neighbours, the family Thénardier.)

Matron Well, you endless disaster, did you get any sugar?

Azelma No, but he gave me some tea.

Thénardier What the hell do we do with some tea? Is that supposed to fill our bellies? Does that fill our pockets? Can it fatten anyone of us?

Matron You were supposed to get some sugar, you worthless goose, not tea.

Azelma He had no sugar. He is almost as poor as we.

Thénardier And you fell for that, you failure of a beggar? He is just mean like everybody else who owns anything. His name is Pontmercy, so he must have an outrageously rich family. He wants to keep his sugar for himself, that lucky pig, for he knows sugar is better than bread. It gives life a sweetness which no food can give, in the same way as meanness gilds life for the poor. Sugar flatters the belly and gives energy, and if he then gives you tea it is just an insult.

Marius (to himself) Wrong, old man, I am poorer than yourself, who can afford being mean, which I can't.

Azelma I can hear sister Èponine coming.

Matron That's luck for her. Had she stayed away longer I would have beaten her up with the crowbar.

Èponine (a perfect slut) Cheers, folks! We have them on the hook!

Thénardier What pimps have you caught on now?

matron Shut up, old man! She is never that gay on the job. She has managed to catch some benefactors.

Thénardier Is that true, my devil's kid?

Éponine Yes, they will be here within fifteen minutes.

Thénardier Don't tell me it's that naïve benefactor from Saint Jacques?

Éponine Yes, the very man, that pious idiot. He would just go home and fetch his daughter.

Thénardier Wife, we are lucky today. Now it's time for business. Break a window, so that the winter cold blows into the room! It is far too clean here. Dirty the house, for hell's sake! What kind of a disgustingly clean and intact dress is that, Éponine? (*tears her dress and sullies her thoroughly*) You should actually have a blue eye as well. We have to be *pitiable!* Break that armchair! (*breaks glasses on the floor*) Walk here, girls, so that your feet start to bleed! There! Now we are are ready for the benefactors!

Matron And if they don't turn up?

Thénardier (angry) Then Éponine will have to run out barefoot and drag them here, and I will not let her in again until she brings them! (*a prudent knock*)

Quiet! Be pitiable now and whine! (*opens. Jean Valjean is outside with a lovely, young and well dressed Cosette.*)

Noble benefactor! We are not worthy that you enter under our roof! But your mere presence immediately transforms my humble abode into a castle.

Marius She!

Valjean We brought some clothes. They could serve you against the chill. Aren't you cold here?

Thénardier Alas, noble benefactor, unfortunately we are hardened by the ordeals of many winters.

Marius My angel, my beloved, my life's only light from the Luxembourg garden! That this sacred beauty would appear here in this rogues' nest!

Cosette Here is both flannel and cotton which should serve you well. These socks are especially warm.

Thénardier Alas, noble benefactor, what have we done to deserve such overwhelming charity!

Valjean To me duty is a pleasure when it shows I can make a difference.

Thénardier Thanks infinitely, noble sir! You come like Santa Claus to the almshouse! Look around! No bread, no fire! My poor children are cold! My only chair is broken, and one window is broken in this winter cold, and I haven't got one sou to pay for all the repairs! And look how mortally ill my poor only wife is!

Matron (has gone to bed and rattles demonstratively)

Valjean Poor woman! Are these your only children?

Thénardier No, I have a small son as well. He is out begging. He has probably frozen to death now without obtaining anything in his poor open fist.

Cosette Father, we have to give them some money.

Thénardier Alas, Sir, I am four months behind my rent. No, what am I saying? Four quarters, an entire year!

Valjean How much is it?

Thénardier (quickly) Sixty francs.

Valjean (takes out his wallet and presents a bill) I haven't any more now, but I will be back later with some more.

Thénardier Thanks, gracious lord! What charity! What magnificence!

(aside) Five francs! What a base miser!

Cosette Father, it smells around here.

Valjean Yes, we are leaving now. – That is all, Monsieur Jondrette, but I will return later to cover all your immediate debts. Come, Cosette, Let's go.

Thénardier (bows deeply) Thanks for the visit, noblest benefactor! *(closes the door behind them.)*

Damned hypocrites and sanctimonious idiots! Wife! Did you recognize him? We have seen him before!

Matron (back to normal, leaves the bed) When? He didn't look like one of your old accomplices.

Thénardier It's a number of years ago. Remember! Think of the last Christmas at Montfermeil! Think of the little girl Cosette and how we got rid of her!

matron There was a stranger who came for her...

Thénardier It is eight years ago, but I recognize him!

matron Is he the one?

Thénardier Yes, he is the one, and that "daughter" is our own abducted whorechild Cosette!

matron By the devil's own grandmother! That fine young lady!

Thénardier Yes, that very fine young lady was our own bastard Cosette!

matron I can't believe it!

Thénardier There is nothing to believe. That's just the fact.

matron And that infernal kidnapper dares to place his foot in our noble house and fake a benefactor!

Thénardier Just wait! This time we shall fix him for sure!

matron What are your plans?

Thénardier I associate with the right kind of people. I will let Patron Minette come here when he returns, and then we will give him some treatment.

matron Flay him alive!

Thénardier We will do better. While he is here we'll kidnap his daughter.

matron Let me flay her alive!

Thénardier It will be my pleasure. We shall brand them and fry them until they have paid everything they owe us with interest!

Marius I have to do something. *(leaves his watch and sits down to write a letter.)*

Matron Don't forget that his abduction of Cosette ruined us!

Thénardier That's what I never could forget.

Matron But why are you standing here loitering? Make speed and organize your gangsters before that fake father Christmas turns up again!

Thénardier It will be my pleasure. (*puts on his clothes. Enter Gavroche.*)

Gavroche! What are you doing here?

Gavroche Nothing special. (*Thénardier leaves.*) But what have you done? Have you been fighting again?

Matron Get away, you sniveling bastard! Didn't I tell you to stick to the streets? We are expecting some fine people here at any minute.

Gavroche Yes, I can see that from the cleaning. Is it the usual trash?

Matron It is Patron Minette who will teach an old man a lesson who once cheated us of a lot of money.

Gavroche That old man will probably then not get out of here alive.

Matron That's the intention. That's why we invited Patron Minette.

(*Marius returns to his watch.*)

Gavroche Yes, I'll keep to the streets. They are cleaner than your household.

matron Yes, go to blazes, you bloody bastard! (*chases him out*)

Marius (*opens the door when Gavroche is on his way out*)

Tsst! Gavroche!

Gavroche Yes, master Marius?

Marius Come here a moment. Could you deliver a message for me?

Gavroche If you give me ten sous.

Marius You'll get twenty. Give this letter to inspector Javert at the police station.

Gavroche Will you turn in my parents?

Marius No, I will just save the lives of an innocent old man and his only daughter.

Gavroche The ones who my parents will try to blackmail?

Marius And what's worse. Hurry on.

Gavroche I get it. Trust me. I'll make speed. (*runs out.*)

Marius Only the boy is good in that family, for he is free and sticks to the street. But what monsters greed has turned all the others into! And of that kind is the greater part of our humanity. Where acquisitiveness occurs the mental abilities decline. And that my beloved would come into contact with such slimy vultures! I would rather go on living than allow such an abomination! Humanity may be a snakepit of abyssal monsters, but the individual could always find some way to fight them. But now there are some appearing again. Could it already be my hair-raising neighbour returning with his benefactor with no suspicion of evil? Yes, that's just what it is!

Thénardier (*outside*) Our heavenly benefactor! You come like an angel to our house! Imagine that this grace would befall us! You can't guess how welcome you are! Come in, my dear friend, and enter our simple and humble home to us poor and prostrate people! (*enters with Jean Valjean*)

Valjean You really are badly off here. You should be surprised that your children are surviving. Here is in any case your rent for the rest of the year. (*puts some gold coins on the table*)

Thénardier Oh. It's far too much, dearest benefactor! You do overwhelm us with your goodness!

Valjean Your wife looks somewhat better.

Thénardier Oh no, not at all! She is definitely mortally ill, aren't you, dear wife?

Matron (*has quickly gone back to bed, rattles loudly for an answer*)

Thénardier You can hear how she sounds, the poor dear! She hasn't far left to go, the poor thing!

Valjean You said you had three children. I have only seen two.

Thénardier Alas, my poor son, he almost lives out in the street. He almost never comes home.

Valjean Isn't he at school?

Thénardier What school? Who can afford any education in our family? Look for yourself! My daughters! They are ragamuffins walking the streets! My wife mortally ill! Myself chronically out of work since ten years! How could I give my only son an academic education, no matter how highly educated I am myself?

(*enter some weird types*)

Valjean Who is that?

Thénardier Just some craftsmen. Don't let them bother you.

(*Gavroche returns, drops in to Marius*)

Gavroche Tsst! Master Marius!

Marius Gavroche! Did you give the police the letter?

Gavroche Inspector Javert read it himself. Now my dear family will have to like it hot! Here! (*produces a gun*) When you fire it all the cops will come running like fired off!

Marius Bravo, Gavroche! Now go home to yours and don't say anything.

Gavroche It will be fun! (*goes in to his own*)

Thénardier But there you are, my lost son, my darling boy Gavroche! (*hugs him theatrically to his bosom.*) Where have you been all day long? Have you earned something for your poor starving family?

Gavroche Yes, here are some stolen wallets. I also got hold of a watch and then we plundered an offertory box. (*hands over coins and watches.*)

Thénardier Ah, the dear boy, he always has to joke! Fie, Gavroche! Clever boy! Isn't he an adorable boy, mister benefactor?

(*enter some more weird types.*)

Valjean Is it more craftsmen?

Thénardier No, they are just good friends and neighbours. Don't bother about them.

Valjean Have they come to take a look at me?

Thénardier Not at all. They are admirers of my art. They always come here when I have some customer and want to display some picture.

Valjean You are an artist then and want to show me a picture?

Thénardier Yes, and not just any picture! This is unique! It is historical and has a remarkable story to tell. (*shows an old tavern sign with glowing eyes*) What do you think?

Valjean Is that a painting?

Thénardier It's a perfectly genuine tavern sign from a historical inn.

Valjean And you wish to sell it to me? For how much?

Thénardier (*fanatically*) Ten thousand francs!

Valjean (*rises*) This daub? This meaningless nonsense, which a child could have dabbled down? My good man, you are pulling my leg.

Thénardier Not at all! I am dead serious! This is the autobiography of my entire life! Don't you recognize the sign? It is even the very 'Sergeant of Waterloo', the sergeant whose life I saved! That inn was my life's accomplishment!

Valjean You tell it as if it was an obvious truth that all the world should know and especially I. That's all a distraction. You have lost all your soundness of detachment to life, my good man.

Thénardier You are the one who is distracted! You are the one who has lost everything! Get him, boys!

(*All at once attack Jean Valjean, who immediately throws himself on the window. The mobsters pull him back into the room. More weird types come barging in to join the struggle.*)

Various voices Ouch! Help! Get him! There! Just hit him! Knock him down! Ouch! Groan! (*etc.*)

(*Jean Valjean is pinioned and bound to the bedpost.*)

Thénardier There, my good man, now we can talk! Do you recognize me? (*Valjean says nothing.*) We met before, eight years ago. Do you really not recognize the famous sign of my inn? (*shows his picture boastfully again*) The inn of Montfermeil! I recognized you at once! I know all about you, but you know nothing about me! You didn't even recognize me! But I even recognized the girl you stole from us! But I have observed you! You are quiet, and although you are attacked you don't cry for help! You are a criminal yourself escaping from justice! Ha-ha! As you see! I have seen you through! But we will certainly come to some agreement!

Valjean What do you want from me?

Thénardier You didn't want my picture for ten thousand francs. Very well, I offer you freedom – for twenty thousand francs! Or else I will go to the police and hand you over to them!

Valjean And if I don't want to?

Thénardier Then it will be the worse for yourself – and for the girl!

Valjean Monsieur, you are mistaken if you believe you can make me do something I don't want to. (*has suddenly released himself.*)

Thénardier (*pulls back*) Get him!

(*Marius has all the time squeezed his pistol but not been able to fire off because of indecision, since he constantly has been tensely following the development and not wished to interrupt it. Suddenly the door is burst open and lots of policemen break in – with Javert. There is a*

complete confusion with whistleblowings and fisticuffs, but Valjean succeeds in jumping out of the window.)

Javert Bring on the handcuffs! On to them all!

(enter Marius with the revolver in his hand, loaded and triggered but not fired.)

We didn't have patience to wait for the signal.

Marius I forgot to give it. It was so exciting.

Javert Are they all here?

Marius Yes, all except one.

Javert Who is missing?

Marius Their benefactor and victim.

Javert How did he get away?

Marius Through the window.

Javert *(goes to the window and looks out)* Bly me, that was perhaps the most precious bird.

Marius Why? He if anyone was innocent.

Javert You can't guess what black holes of criminality and perversion innocence could serve for a cover. Keep out of it if you wish to preserve your own soul.

Marius I will gladly heed your warning. *(leaves)*

(The prisoners are taken out including the wife, six felons and the Thénardier couple. The children are left alone.)

Gavroche Don't forget that I was the one who nailed them.

Javert You will have your reward.

Thénardier He is the greatest bandit of all of us! Lock him up!

Javert What is your accusation? What is your evidence?

Thénardier Gavroche, I will see to it that you end up in the gallows!

Gavroche It will pass, daddy. One month in the cooler, and you will be normal again. Didn't you say, that penitentiaries are only good for those who are stupid enough to get locked up?

Thénardier Believe me, commissar! He is the most criminal of all of us!

Javert Are you accusing a child, who even is your own son? That's enough! Take them away!

(exit all with happy cheers from Gavroche.)

Scene 2. A garden. Cosette on a bench.

Cosette Who is he, this soft, gloomy, brooding and handsome stranger? He regards me with such longing, when we exchange secret stolen looks there in the happy greenh of the Luxembourg garden, as if he most of all in life wanted to become dependent on me. And what am I to him? I only know that as soon as I see him I leave the earth to start hovering like one intoxicated. Only father is a man with power enough to still keep me linked on earth.

(enter Valjean.)

Father, I was just thinking of you. How are you? You look troubled.

Valjean (somewhat tousled) I come from a row.

Cosette Have you been attacked then?

Valjean No real bother. But we have to move.

Cosette Again?

Valjean I am sorry, my child, and pretty soon. I do regret it.

Cosette This overgrown house with this secretly romantic and hidden garden has in these brief weeks had time to become dearer to me than any home. Is it really necessary for us to move out?

Valjean I am afraid so.

Cosette Then it will be as you wish. I will follow you wherever you are driven by your destiny, even if I never may learn anything about your secrets.

Valjean It is best that way, dear child. I will now start packing.

Cosette Are we moving at once?

Valjean It's just as well. (*walks inside*)

Cosette So we leave our safety and all our comfort once again behind to err further on to the next harbour on the eternal escape from farther's implacable unreasonable pursuers, whom we never may stop and wait for to give me a chance of looking them in their eye and ever knowing who they are.

Marius (behind a bush) Tsst!

Cosette Yes, who is it?

Marius (shows himself) It is only me.

Cosette My strange friend from the Luxembourg garden! Are you one of our enemies?

Marius No, not at all. On the contrary.

Cosette That's what I thought. But what gives me the honour?

Marius (sits down on the bench beside her) Only that I love you.

Cosette But dear me, I don't even know your name.

Marius Marius. And you?

Cosette Cosette.

Marius Cosette. Then we know each other.

Cosette Do we?

Marius Yes. What more do we need to know about each other?

Cosette I am just a simple girl of no descent.

Marius I am simpler still and just a poor miserable student.

Cosette You can't really be that miserable?

Marius Yes, when I am without you.

Cosette Then you are not miserable at all at the moment.

Marius No, your guess is right.

Cosette (laughs) You amuse me. (*They go on entertaining each other. Jean Valjean shows, invisible to them, observes them gravely at some distance.*)

Valjean So this is the young man that Cosette has found, who has been stealing on me, pursuing me and done everything to get hold of our address – all only out of love. Yes, it just had to one day also catch up with my Cosette. Well then, a sweet innocent infatuation I should be able to grant them. Play, butterflies, as long as the day lasts, but when night falls I will jealously carry away my daughter far from love to never let it reach her again. She is all I've got, and if I have any duty in life at all, it is to protect her from all evil, and the greatest evil thing in this world is the unsurveyable destructive consequences of incalculable love. (*leaves*)

Marius I have to go. I must not be seen here.

Cosette But will you be back?

Marius With delight.

Cosette When? Tomorrow?

Marius Of course.

Cosette I forgot... It's possible that we have to move.

Marius When?

Cosette I don't know. Any time.

Marius Then I shall find you again.

Cosette But come tomorrow. We will surely still be here.

Marius I will come. Trust me until you die. (*gives her a quick kiss and departs.*)

Cosette He is serious. He is not dangerous, only faithful. Well, he appears quite certain of my own fidelity already.

Valjean (appears) It is time, Cosette.

Cosette Already?

Valjean Yes. We have no choice. You have to start collecting your things. We will depart as soon as it gets dark.

Cosette (rises) If you have no choice, neither have I.

Valjean Come, my daughter. (*takes her out with his arm fatherly around her.*) Thus we escape the daylight to hide in the dark from the society that threatens all the small and kind poor people for not being able to defend themselves against the arbitrary machinery and inhuman automatic stone-breaker of the law.

Scene 3. At the barricades.

Courfeyrac We are all mortal. But few of us are courageous enough to live with death and for death. We live for death, for we live for the republic! For the republic is the only life we can accept!

several Hurray! Live Courfeyrac! Live the republic! Down with the bourgeoisie kingdom!

Courfeyrac For what is life without ideals? Our ideal is liberty. Without liberty we cannot live. If we can't have liberty we don't want to live, for without liberty life isn't worth living. If liberty must die, we must die with it!

Several (like before) Hurray! Hurray! To arms! To arms!

(Marius joins the rebels.)

Courfeyrac Marius! What are you doing here?

Marius Isn't this the place where you come to die?

Courfeyrac But you have your love to live for.

Marius Not any longer. She has moved with her father to an unknown address. I will never find them any more. The old man will never do without his daughter. He is too jealous for that.

Courfeyrac If you don't have any better reason for dying, you have nothing here to do.

Marius I have disconnected from my grandfather.

Courfeyrac Why? Isn't he the one who has supported you?

Marius That's just why.

Courfeyrac A stupid motive.

Marius He is a reactionary. He was always against my parents and never forgave my mother. I will never forgive him. He always wished to buy my affection for money. Now it's all over. He knows I have left for the barricades to die with you.

Enjolras That sounds better!

Courfeyrac Better and better. Very well, you are accepted. But the entrance test is more difficult than any academic exam!

Marius That's why I came here.

Courfeyrac The doomed welcome you. *(gives him a friendly pat on the shoulder)* You know we have nothing to hope for.

Marius Why do you think I came here?

Courfeyrac To earn your last merit.

Marius The highest possible: death and martyrdom as a ritual.

Combeferre Don't just talk of death all the time but come and give us a hand!

(struggles with fixing the barricade. Enter Gavroche.)

Courfeyrac Gavroche! What do you want here?

Gavroche Give a hand.

Courfeyrac With what? With dying? This is no playground for children.

Gavroche I am small. I can get around everywhere. I can spy. I can collect enemy bullets.

Marius Where is your family?

Gavroche The sisters are walking the streets as usual. Mummy almost beat the old man to death after the latest fiasco. They had to be put in different cages. But the old man has managed to escape.

Marius Then he should be active robbing corpses as usual?

Gavroche I suppose so.

Courfeyrac Well, Gavroche, since you don't seem to have any future either considering how your family pushed you on, I think we could make use of you. Be our spy. You know the cops. If you discover anyone in disguise, report to me.

Gavroche I already know one.

Courfeyrac Out with it! (*Gavroche whispers in Courfeyrac's ear.*) Enjolras, come here! (*He whispers in Enjolras' ear. Enjolras discreetly retires to the other part of the stage. He turns to a shabbily dressed spectator.*)

Enjolras Citizen, I am afraid I have to arrest you.

citizen Why so?

Enjolras Because you are police inspector Javert disguised as a spy to be able to betray the defenders of liberty to the oppressors! I am holding a gun in my pocket! Come with me to the café. (*removes Javert's hat to uncover him. Javert complies passively. Courfeyrac follows them in to the café.*)

Courfeyrac The police inspector himself! What an honour! Are there more policemen in disguise?

Javert No, I am alone.

Enjolras No one else dared, eh?

Javert (coldly) Exactly.

Courfeyrac Police inspector, unfortunately we have to tie you up and keep you under observation. We can't let you go to the Bourbons.

Javert I understand that very well. In your lawless country I am a criminal. What will be my sentence?

Courfeyrac You came here to betray liberty at the barricade. When the barricade falls you will be shot.

Javert I am the law, you are lawlessness. If the law has to die because lawlessness falls, the law has died for a good cause.

Courfeyrac No insults, please!

Javert It would be more sensible of you to ask for peace and life instead dying for a constipation of justice and development.

Courfeyrac Get lost, you damned pedant!

Javert You are not reasonable.

Enjolras Courfeyrac! They are coming!

Courfeyrac (watching Javert) The last man to leave this room will shoot this man. (*leaves with the others. Some remain behind.*)

(*The soldiers advance slowly. The shootings are increasing. Five soldiers fall for every man falling at the barricade.*)

Marius (appears with a torch) Soldiers! Halt!

Enjolras (to Courfeyrac and the others) He is standing by the powder barrel.

Marius If you come closer I will blow up the entire barricade!

an officer (stops the others) Then you will blow yourself to pieces as well.

Marius Yes, I will! (*approaches the torch to the powder barrel*)

officer They are all mad and desperate! (*The soldiers run away.*)

Courfeyrac Thank you, Marius!

Enjolras Now you are definitely one of us!

Marius But they will bring a cannon next time, and we don't even have ammunition.

Gavroche I can collect! All Paris is full of wasted bullets!

Courfeyrac Good, my brave boy! Carry on like that! Now the street is free, and you have the opportunity!

Marius What did I tell you? They are rolling forth their first cannon!

Combeferre Take cover!

(The cannon booms. The barricade is gravely damaged.)

Courfeyrac If it goes on like this the fight will be short.

(The cannon booms again. The barricade is shattered.)

Enjolras Mattresses! We must have mattresses!

Courfeyrac Yes, that's the only thing that could help.

Marius I think I see one coming up.

(Jean Valjean is seen carrying a mattress through the consistent bullet rain.)

Courfeyrac Not only the young ones are ready to die for freedom.

Enjolras We get the hole repaired in the last minute.

(Jean Valjean covers the barricade hole with the mattress. He gets behind the barricade.)

Courfeyrac Citizen, the republic owes you thanks.

Jean Just tell me if you need some more.

Enjolras Not for the moment.

(The cannon roars. No damage this time.)

Combeferre The cannon is powerless! The bullets bounce from their mattress! They roll it away!

Courfeyrac Then they will probably soon bring the storm troops.

Jean Is there anything I can do?

Courfeyrac Guard the prisoner at the café. He is a police spy. We need all young forces here. *(Jean enters the café.)*

Javert Naturally *you* are here.

Jean We meet again, inspector. I have done you no harm.

Javert But you certainly would like to, wouldn't you?

Jean On the contrary. I always tried to have as little as possible to do with you.

Javert On my side it was always the other side around. It was long since I had you this close. Unfortunately I can't arrest you this time.

Jean Fate is generally unfair, but sometimes it can also be ironic.

Javert How is your daughter, the wretched Fantine's bastard?

Jean She is in safety.

Javert And you? Why are you not in safety with her? It could only be because I am here and you want to see me dead.

Jean Gentlemen freedom fighters, I ask for a reward.

Enjolras Name it.

Jean The privilege of shooting this man.

Enjolras Granted. Everybody out. Leave the old man alone with the police inspector.

(Exeunt all except Jean and Javert.)

Javert (with disdain) That's what I thought.

Jean (takes out a knife, cuts all Javert's ropes except those that keep him pinioned.)

Come, let's go.

Javert Yes, I gather you will dispose of the corpse as well.

(The stage is turned, following the men out into an alley.)

Here we are alone in all Paris – a perfect place of execution; the most zealous servant of justice in France alone together with its most infamous fugitive from justice, a galley slave and thief, who deceived all France as a mayor.

Jean You never seem to be able to regard me as anything less than a criminal. I suppose you could never regard me as a human being?

Javert The law can only regard a criminal as a criminal. But you are only sentenced for life as a thief and galley slave. You will not be a murderer until now.

Jean My only escape ever was from unfair justice. The law must sometime learn that it is not always just in its blindness. An unjust law has no credibility. And one good thing my perpetual escape has imparted: it could also include others. *(cuts his last ropes.)* You are free like myself. You can go.

Javert (looks at him astonished)

Jean I said go!

(Javert leaves, stops after a while to look stupidly at Valjean, who fires his gun in the air in a completely different direction. Javert disappears. Jean returns to the barricade.)

Thus have I also saved the life of my only enemy. The society he represents will not likely thank me for it nor the law persecute me any less for that.

(He returns to the barricade just as the dying and completely blooded Gavroche is carried into the café.)

Are they now also shooting children?

Enjolras They shot him for his songs about Voltaire.

Jean Is it the final fight?

Enjolras It is the final fight.

Jean Give me a gun.

Enjolras (gives him a gun) Old man, you seem to have experienced some revolutions before. Unfortunately there is not much ammunition left.

Gavroche (whines) I collected as much as I could.

Enjolras You did it *too* well. *(Gavroche dies.)*

There our liberty died, the child within us, who dared everything.

Courfeyrac (outside) Enjolras, where are you? We have no time to bury our dead! We have to maintain our initiative! *(gets shot. Marius hurries to his side.)* I am done for, Marius.

Marius I die with you for the republic, to ensure its survival.

Courfeyrac The republic will always come back. It never dies but must always resurrect. *(dies)*

Combeferre There are not many left of us now.

Enjolras It's enough for the last stand.

(The shootings increase. The republicans fight constantly more ferociously. Combeferre falls. Enjolras falls. When Marius falls Jean hurries up to him, takes his body on his back and

moves out from there. Directly afterwards the soldiers storm the barricade and kill everyone still remaining.)

Act IV scene 1. In the sewers.

(Complete darkness, stinking sewer, only dirt and mud. Jean keeps dragging the unconscious Marius through mire and water.)

Jean Why am I saving you, dangerous stranger and threat to my life? Why did I not allow you to die as you wished? That would have been more logically relevant and rational. But you are Cosette's beloved. You have taken her away from me. Therefore I really should have let you die, and instead I am trying to rescue you – perhaps in vain. You might die anyway and vanish here in the dark like a lump of waste for the rats to gnaw on among other unidentifiable objects – that would be the easiest thing in the world to just drop you and let you disappear in the black water, so that I would be able to keep my Cosette. Still I am not doing it. Why? I have never been less rational in all my life.

(Slowly a distant light is increasing, and you hear distant voices.)

They search for fugitives in the sewers. All barricades must have fallen, and many find their only chance in trying desperately to abscond by the sewers. I am one of them – a sewer fugitive trying to escape from a society which has nothing better to do than to search for doomed fugitives in the sewers, who should be the most worthless people in the world, - at least for society. It's probably Javert himself who dispatched justice to ransack the sewers.

(The light is decreasing and fading away.)

Yes, fade away, you faint light, and forget all about the creatures dwelling down here that can't endure scrutiny . They neither desire nor deserve being observed, for all they want is to vanish with the contents of the sewer. If this corpse now is dying I wish to turn into another corpse with it, so that no one ever will learn about my fiasco – that I tried to rescue my daughter's lover because he wanted to take her away from me, and that I failed in saving him – because that my daughter would never be able to forgive me.

But she is not your daughter. She is just as Javert so correctly put it another bastard and whore's kid of an unknown father. But I brought her up. I have lived with her. I have saved her life. And she is my life's only company.

Marius, you cursed wastrel of an inconvenient burden, make sure you survive this journey of the sewers, or else it would cheating a good novel. You don't deserve to live, you really made a mess for yourself and my girl, but I will not forgive you if you die. That would be supremely unacceptable.

(He approaches a light and reaches a grating.)

Padlocked! The authorities have locked all the exits, to make it impossible for any fugitive to escape... They make it through all the sewer systems of Paris to then get caught when they reach their goal, which is just a death trap... Oh, you society, who

treat your subjects like rats, tempting them with freedom just to close in on them and have them locked up in the final trap of inescapable execution! (*shakes the grating in despair, sits down with his head in his hands, completely washed up. Another thin and tousled and ragged character approaches. It's Thénardier, alias Jondrette.*)

Thenardier (touches Valjean most gently) Fifty-fifty?

Jean (wakes up like with a hangover) What?

Thénardier Split in half? You must have murdered this young man. He must have had quite some dough in his pockets.

Jean (gradually recognizing him) Why should I give you anything?

Thénardier I have got the key for the lock.

Jean (aside) O phantom, constantly popping up like a rat out of the wreck of my life, you are one of my life's two implacable persecutors, but if one of them only follows the law, you just follow your own greed and egoism. - You can have all I have got.

Thénardier That sounds more like it. (*Jean gives him his wallet.*) Lovely! A bit soaked but still fat enough! I will let you out! (*unlocks the gate*) Bon voyage! But hadn't you better leave the corpse here?

Jean No, my good man, it has to face the daylight, so I may see who it is. It's after all important that he is the right one, isn't it?

Thénardier No matter. That's no concern of mine. Farewell, and thanks for the toll fee! (*Jean carries out Marius.*)

(aside) Then the border police is waiting for you, who looks forward to take care of you with relish and joy. (*giggles with satisfaction.*)

Scen 2. A desolate sandbank.

(Jean is sitting with the still unconscious Marius.)

Jean This is as far as I could get but no further. I am older than I thought. All my strength is wasted. I could manage the martyr through the catacombs, but when I got him well out into the fresh air of freedom I was finished. (*Javert appears.*)

My life's second persecutor. Monsieur inspecteur, I think I have to suppose that I won't get away this time.

Javert The rebellion in Paris is over. All barricades are taken. We have policemen at every exit of the sewers. You would have been caught by someone else if not by me.

Jean This situation seems familiar – all muddy, taken red-handed like a convict in a mud-pool – wasn't it under some cart with bricks? This time I have also saved someone's life out of sheer foolhardiness, - the dregs of life, straight out of the sewer, eh, Javert? And he who let me out by his key, - was he in your pay as well?

Javert A notorious double spy, who always worked both as an informer for us and as an initiated member of the underworld.

Jean Was that why you released him from jail?

Javert Yes. It was not just to get at you.

Jean I ask nothing for myself. But this young man is badly wounded. I know where his grandfather lives. Let me bring him back to his own. Then you may do with me whatever you will.

Javert Granted.

Jean For the rest I am entirely at your disposal.

Javert I am inclined to not suspect any tricks on your side since you actually held my life in your hands and saved it.

Jean As a thief and galley slave sentenced for life I am still a man only and as such not a totally hopeless case.

Javert I believe you. Let's go. My prison cart is waiting. (*Jean carries Marius himself.*) Let me assist.

Jean No, inspector, this man is in my care, and he has no case with justice.

(They leave.)

Scene 3.

Javert (shows himself by a railing far above the stage. Everything else is darkness.)

I have pursued a man all my life because the law and justice demanded it. But this man was a good man, who not only saved the lives of others but also even of his persecutors. And this man is at my mercy. He has turned his life over into my hands. The justice and law that I served all my life demands that I now imprison him in his old age to make him die as a galley slave in complete dishonour and oblivion. Still this man was once a mayor and the most respected man I have ever known.

(removes his hat and lays it down beside him on the rail. He stares down into the deep.)

You black and evil all consuming fateful waters, will you be the final goal of my life, my escape from the suffocating corner of despair and strain of conscience which this murderous spiritual conflict has forced me into like a blind alley? *(climbs the rail)*

No one can say that I didn't do my duty. I fulfilled my human duty. I allowed the criminal to save the fallen rebel from the blind hysteria of the republican barricades; certainly I knew well the depairing youth who is now returned to his reactionary grandfather. So far I could help the criminal in his unfathomably good work. But my duty to the state I can't fulfil any longer. I can't imprison an old man, who has done more good than anyone I have known, to make him die as a galley slave in disgrace. Justice, claim me instead, who persecuted this man and completely ruined his life completely without cause and outrageously blind like a demented fool.

(throws himself out into the darkness. A loud splosh is heard.)

Act V scene 1. Marius' sickbed at his grandfather's.
(The grandfather sits by the bed. Marius is writhing in fever.)

Marius Cosette! Cosette! (*wakes up suddenly.*) Where am I?

Gillenormand You are at home, my son.

Marius What am I doing here?

Gillenormand You have been hovering between life and death for two weeks. At last the crisis seems to be over.

Marius How did I get here?

Gillenormand A policeman brought you here. You were badly wounded and had a broken collar bone.

Marius The last thing I remember is that I fell at the barricade. Then I felt a strong hand grabbing hold of me. Then I remember nothing more.

Gillenormand It was your saviour.

Marius No, my saviour was Cosette. She was the only thing I had to live for.

Gillenormand Then you lived for the right person. She hasn't forgotten you. Every day she has made her presence felt here.

Marius Every day?

Gillenormand Yes. Her father has come here every day to ask about your condition.

Marius The old man. I saw him at the barricade. What was he doing there? Why did such an old man take sides with young rebels? He ought to have understood that we all were enemies of the state...

Gillenormand The rebellion is forgotten now. In France you easily overlook political mistakes, especially if they are committed by young people.

Marius I am glad that you are not angry with me, father.

Gillenormand I am glad that you are calling me father again. (*a soft knock on the door*)

Come in! (*An old serving lady enters.*)

servant The old man is here with his daughter.

Gillenormand Show them in at once. (*The servant enters Jean and Cosette.*)

Marius Cosette!

Cosette Marius! (*rushes to his side, falls on her knees by his bed, and they embrace.*)

Marius My beloved!

Cosette You are well!

Marius Not quite, but better.

Cosette But you are awake!

Marius If I am!

Cosette You haven't forgotten me?

Marius Never!

Cosette This is the happiest day in my life!

Marius Do we deserve this happiness?

Jean Yes.

Gillenormand (*to Jean*) I assume we may regard them as betrothed.

Jean Without doubt.

Marius When may we get married? Do you want to be mine, Cosette?

Cosette If I want!

Gillenormand As soon as you are well enough, Marius.

Marius It's a wonder that I am alive. Who could have saved me at the barricade, and why? And how could he have found this address? He must have known us.

Gillenormand The police of today know their business.

Marius There was no police at the barricade (*looks at Jean*) except the one who was shot.

Jean I can inform you and Marius, Monsieur Gillenormand, that Cosette has a dowry of six hundred thousand francs.

Gillenormand That's enormous.

Marius Cosette! Do you have money?

Cosette It's the first time I hear anything about it. Is it true, father?

Jean Yes, it is quite true. I am not your real father, Cosette. I am just your guardian whom your mother trusted with her inheritance, which would be yours on your wedding day.

Cosette And what about you, father? You always were so economic. Some part of it must belong to you.

Jean No, Cosette. It is all yours. That was your mother's wish.

Cosette And my real father?

Jean Unknown.

Cosette No, father, no one has ever been my real father except you. (*rushes up and embraces him.*)

Jean (touched) I am most grateful to you. (*releases himself*) Cosette, I must have a talk with your fiancé alone.

Cosette Yes, father.

Gillenormand Then we'll leave in the meantime, my dear daughter-in-law.

Cosette Tell me when you are finished.

Jean When I leave, Cosette, Marius is yours for the rest of your life.

(*Cosette and Gillenormand leave.*)

Monsieur Marius, Cosette must never know who I am. But you have the right to know it.

Marius I always wondered about that matter.

Jean Have you suspected anything?

Marius I was very surprised to see you at the barricade. When you asked to be the executioner of the police spy and also executed him I realized your position had to be precarious.

Jean I no longer have anything to fear from the state. Only one man knew who I was, and he was fished up dead from the Seine ten days ago. He was a servant of the law who must have committed suicide as a consequence of a confused mind.

Marius That is not uncommon among the most ardent servants of the state. But what was your argument with the state? Who are you?

Jean My name is Jean Valjean, escaped prisoner from the galleys of Toulon, sentenced for life as a thief.

Marius Thus you are – a galley slave?

Jean Yes. I have been locked up behind bars for nineteen years.

Marius And– Cosette?

Jean Her mother died. She got into trouble when she got pregnant without a husband. On her deathbed she made me promise to take care of Cosette. I managed to fulfil her wishes.

Marius And the money?

Jean All Cosette's, well managed and multiplied with rents by a bank.

Marius So her father is really unknown?

Jean Yes, by you she will at last get a name. She will be baroness of Pontmercy, a well respected name, which she will honour.

Marius And you?

Jean My part as her guardian is finished. You will now take over. And I hope you understand the importance of her never learning who I am.

Marius Of course.

Jean What do you think of me now when you know all this?

Marius I will be completely frank. My admiration of you is limitless. As a state fugitive you still have managed to make a real lady out of Cosette. You couldn't have accomplished any nobler life's work. But you still remain what you are – an escaped lifetime convict. I will never give you away. But for the sake of Cosette and her future family, I hope you'll understand it would not be proper for you to show yourself here any more.

Jean I understand that completely.

Marius Unfortunately I was a witness of how you murdered that police spy. That's what ruins everything between us. I could have tolerated just a convict, but a murderer... You certainly must have had your reasons with all the sufferings you've had to go through... A murder is a murder. I hope you understand.

Jean Your judgement is milder than that of the state would have been.

Marius So I must ask you to get out of our lives.

Jean (rising) I promise to do so after the wedding.

Marius Even before the wedding we had better see each other as little as possible.

Jean Of course, Monsieur le baron. I will find my way out myself. *(leaves with calm.)*

Marius A galley slave! Now I understand why I always felt such a disgust for him! A hopeless criminal case! An escaped galley slave sentenced for life! And such a man was trusted with the care of Cosette! A princess grown up in the custody of a toad! *(beats his fist into the cushion)*

Cosette (enters) Has he left?

Marius (collects himself) Yes, he had some urgent business.

Cosette How strange. Why did he leave without me?

Marius You are mine now, Cosette. *(pulls her closer.)*

Cosette I will take tender care of you.

Marius Without your presence I would never have come alive again.
Cosette At least he could have said goodbye.
Marius Perhaps he didn't come to think of it.
Cosette It's not like him...
Marius It's all about us now, Cosette. Don't think any more of him. He wasn't even your father.
Cosette You speak of him as if he were dead.
Marius Forgive me. But don't let him come between us. Nothing is more important now than our wedding.
(He doesn't let her go. They remain together.)

Scene 2. Jean Valjean's place.

Portress I don't like it. He says nothing and is declining. He is not normal any more. He has been like that since his daughter's wedding.
doctor What should we do about it then?
Portress If it goes on like this he will break down. He isn't eating anything any more.
doctor Call on me in that case if he breaks down. Before that we haven't got a patient.
Portress Believe me, when I call for you next time it will be too late.
(enter Jean, shrunk, worse dressed and neglected.)

So there you are, Monsieur Jean! You haven't eaten anything all day again.

Jean Leave me alone.
Portress You could almost believe your daughter was unhappily married.
Jean I have no daughter, and she is very happily married.
Portress How do you know when all contact between you is broken?
Jean (getting angry) Get lost! *(drives her out)* Leave me alone!
Portress (outside) Yes, yes, the main thing is that you are alive. *(Her steps disappear.)*
(Jean sits down on his bed and buries his face in his hands. Gradually he returns to life. He looks around, like looking for something to do. He has turned into an old man. Then he leaves the bed and pulls out something from under the bed, and old worn suit-case, which has been lying there. With the greatest care and tenderness he puts the suit-case on the bed and opens it. He picks out every single item with the greatest love. It is Cosette's child's clothes. He holds them up, regards them with great melancholy, puts them beside him and goes on regarding them, as if he fancied he still had the little girl with him.)
Jean You were sweet then, little Cosette. Who could imagine you would come home to me as a comfort after my life in Montreuil-sur-mer? You became more for me than all my industries. A hundred times more. My small invention with all the profits it gave was worth less than than these tiny girls' clothes. Your mother would have been pleased with our life, Cosette.
(He falls silent. Suddenly he starts crying. His crying increases and becomes unstoppable. He cries bitterly and can't stop. He lies down on the bed and continues crying. Then he suddenly is silent and glides out of the bed down on the floor. He has fainted.)

The portress is heard approaching. She knocks, has no answer and opens the door.)
Portress I heard a thud. (*comes in.*) That's what I thought. There he lies lifeless already. Now we will have to fetch the doctor all the same.

(lifts him up and starts bedding him down.)

Scene 3. A fine salon in the house of baron de Pontmercy.

Marius (*sitting comfortably in an enormous armchair, vail dressed and well off, when the old lady servant enters bringing a letter.*)

Servant Who wrote the letter is waiting in the hall.

Marius (*examines the letter, smells it, exclaims:*) Jondrette! (*opens the letter eagerly and reads:*)

"Since I happen to possess important information concerning a person closely related with you I will first offer my services to you before I turn to anyone else.

With sincerest welfare wishes to the happy bridegroom,
His former neighbour,
Jondrette."

Show him in at once!

(The servant enters Jondrette, alias Thénardier, well shaved and chic but still equally sly and unmistakably insidious.)

Thénardier Allow me to congratulate you to your marital happiness.

Marius Have a seat. – What do you have to say?

Thénardier (*sits down comfortably and at ease*) I have information concerning a certain Jean Valjean.

Marius You know of course he was my wife's guardian?

Thénardier That is why I am here. He is also an escaped convict sentenced for life at the galleys of Toulon.

Marius I know that. What more do you know?

Thénardier He is still alive, I gather?

Marius As far as I know.

Thénardier My information is worth money.

Marius (*gives a note*) Here is a beginning, until we learn what you know and what it's worth.

Thénardier I intend to emigrate to Panamá with my last living daughter. My wife and my other children are sadly dead, as you know. But what I know is worth a journey to Panamá.

Marius How do I know that?

Thénardier I can assure you that I know more of Jean Valjean than you do.

Marius Your stench of blackmail has always been felt at a far distance. I will only listen to you for the sake of my wife, since everything related to her honour concerns me. (*gives another note*) Now out with it.

Thénardier Jean Valjean is a murderer.

Marius That's no news. He shot a police spy at the barricade of Corinthe just before it fell.

Thénardier A police spy?

Marius A certain inspector Javert.

Thénardier Inspector Javert committed suicide. He drowned himself. The man who Jean Valjean murdered was another.

Marius Did he never shoot the police spy?

Thénardier No, because the day after I worked for him as a guard at the great aperture of the Paris sewer by the Invalid Bridge. I unlocked the sewer for fugitives from the barricades, who then inspector Javert would take care of, and one of these fugitives was Jean Valjean. He was carrying a corpse. Do you want to know more? Then I'll need more money.

Marius One moment. Was this corpse a young man?

Thénardier Yes, probably of good family, whom he had murdered and robbed. I took the liberty to keep a souvenir of the young man for possible future eventualities. Here is a piece of his coat. (*shows it*)

Marius (*can't believe his ears*) One moment. Jean Valjean had then carried this young man through the sewers of Paris? (*rises and goes to a cupboard which he opens.*)

Thénardier Yes, probably of good family, whom he had murdered and robbed. He probably wanted to get the corpse out of the sewer to be able to drop it in the Seine.

Marius (*has taken out a torn article from the cupboard*) Here is the rest of the coat. (*throws it to Thénardier*) Isn't it the same coat?

Thénardier (*compares his piece with the coat*) It undoubtedly is. (*uncertain*) But how could you have come into possession of the coat?

Marius (*attacks him*) You miserable swindler and abuser! You came here just to drag an honourable man down the drain, but instead you have exonerated him! That young man was no corpse! It was me! He saved my life for the sake of his daughter, for he knew that we loved each other! Oh, what a rotten beast you are, and that such a disgusting creature still can be of such tremendous good value! Out of my house, damned parasite and deceiver, and get lost to your Panamá before I batter you to death! And be quick!

Thénardier (*escapes terrified*) Yes, yes, but this was not intentional at all! (*disappears*)

Marius Yes, I'll warrant that! And I believed he had murdered Javert!

(*calls*) Cosette! Cosette! Where are you, Cosette!

Cosette (*enters*) Yes, my darling? What is the matter?

Marius I have committed the most dreadful mistake of my life! We have to go to your father immediately! Are you ready?

Cosette (*shines up*) Of course!

Marius (*embraces her*) Forgive me, Cosette, that I have kept him away from you!

Cosette I did wonder why, but if we now go and fetch him, couldn't he live with us?

Marius There is nothing I want more in the world! Come! Let's hurry!

(*They hurry out.*)

Scene 4. Jean Valjean's room.

Jean is in bed, hardly conscious.

The portress and the doctor are on both sides of his bed.

Portress What's the matter with him?

doctor (examines him) He really is in a bad shape. You can almost feel his pulse diminishing. Has he lost someone dear beloved?

Portress No, but his daughter married recently.

doctor And he hasn't seen her since?

Portress No, she has never come here.

Doctor (shakes his head) She should come here pretty quick before it is too late.

(A knock at the door.)

Portress Entrez! *(enter Cosette and Marius The stop as they see the sickbed.)*

Doctor Is it the daughter?

Portress Yes.

doctor She came like by order. Then there is no need of me any more. *(packs his things.)*

Cosette How is it with him?

doctor He is still alive. *(makes a sign to the portress.)*

Portress We leave him to you.

Marius Is he very weak?

doctor The portress found him here on the floor. He hasn't had any heart attack but is very weak.

Cosette He is waking up!

doctor Then we leave in the meantime.

Marius No, remain, please! We know nothing!

doctor My young ones, just before you arrived I told the portress here that only you could cure him, that you were the only possible medicine. Now you are here. Do what you can. *(leaves with the portress)*

Cosette Father!

Jean (awakes) My children!

Cosette Now we shall never let you leave us again!

Jean You have come back!

Marius To stay.

Cosette Why did you send a message that you had gone away? That is a lie!

Jean I thought it best to leave you alone. You were freshly married, you know.

Cosette We have no children yet. What is a family without a father?

Jean But I am not your real father, Cosette.

Cosette No father in the world could have been more real.

Jean That was very kind of you, Cosette. Then you'll forgive me?

Cosette For what?

Jean For being what I was? For not being anything better?

Marius We are to ask *you* of forgiveness. You have given us everything and completely forsaken yourself. And you have saved my life.

Jean (smiling to Marius) So you know that now, Marius?

Marius I was at last informed about it.

Jean It was a dreadful ordeal to drag you along, you should know, Marius.

Marius I believe you.

Cosette You will come home with us now, father.

Jean No, I will enter an even better home. I will go away but not with you. You arrived just in time to say good-bye.

Cosette What are you saying, father?

Jean Don't worry. I have played out my role, and it couldn't have been acted better. It will now even have a happy ending thanks to you. I wished to just disappear, but now I can do so in good company, yes, in the best possible company. Just don't imagine that I intend to die. That's the last thing I will do. I will leave you but remain with you. My soul and my life will live on with you forever. That's always the case with those who love unto death. They don't die. They go on loving. Alas, how sweet it is to leave now! Your mother loved you very much, little Cosette. I never told you her name. She was called Fantine. She was very unhappy, as unhappy as you will be happy. Farewell, my dears.

(The doctor and portress have returned. They wait at the door.)

No matter how unhappy someone's life has been, it doesn't matter if he dies happy. I die happy, my children. Remember me a happy man.

Marius (a questioning glance at the doctor)

doctor I am sorry. You were too late.

Jean No, they did not come too late. They arrived just in time. Now I take them along, while at the same time I remain with them. Be blessed, my dears, with all your children. Now it's over. *(dies)*

(Cosette and Marius sink down to the bed, embracing the dead one.)

Curtain.

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