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**LES
MISÉRABLES**
A NEW DRAMA

Script, By
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Inspired by the classic novel, "Les Misérables" by Victor Hugo

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Jean Valjean	(40s-50s) Convict pursued by the law and his conscience. Also known as M. Madeleine and M. Leblanc
Inspector Javert	(40s-50s) Righteous, unerring and unforgiving police inspector.
Fantine	(Late 20s-early 30s) World-weary and broken in spirit. Mother of Cosette.
Cosette	(16-20) Sweet and beautiful of face and spirit.
Marius	(Early 20s) Headstrong revolutionary who is in love with Cosette.
Fauchelevant	(50s-60s) Saved by Jean Valjean, he is a kindly gardener who hides Valjean and Cosette.
Bishop	(50s-60s) Saintly Bishop
Gavroche	(8-10) Precocious street urchin
Young Cosette	(5-6) Downtrodden and abused daughter of Fantine.
Baptistine	(50s-60s) Chatty Bishop's sister.
Sister Simplicity	(Age variable) A nun who works for M. Madeleine.
Thénardier	(Late 20s-early 40s) Scheming Inn owner.
Mme Thénardier	(Late 20s-early 30s) Wife of Thénardier, ugly and cruel.
Champmathieu	(40s) A thief mistaken for Jean Valjean, must have similar height and build to Jean Valjean.
Judge	(Age variable)
Prefect of Police	(Late 30s)
Sgt. Lefebvre	(40s) Affable young Sergeant serving in the police at Montrieu-sur-mer.

Various Gendarmes, Prisoners, Nuns and Peasants

"Les Misérables"

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ACT I

Prelude

(Lights down, mournful music)

Valjean V.O. As a man lays dying, he thinks back on his life. I need not confess to a priest, for God knows all the secret things of my past, but I must lay them bare, for honor, for my conscience, and as a testament to His mercy on the least of His creatures. To live I once stole a loaf of bread; today, to live, I will not steal a name. Here is my story...

(Music fades)

My name is Jean Valjean...

(Heartbeat sound effect, lights up)

SCENE 1: PRISON

(Judge behind podium with a gavel, bangs it three times. The back of young Jean Valjean towards the audience as he awaits his trial. Gendarmes off to the side)

Judge Name?

Valjean Jean Valjean.

Judge Age.

Valjean Twenty-five.

Judge Occupation: Thief.

Valjean No, Your Honor. Please monsieur, I am a gardener. I prune trees at Versailles, but there is no work.

Judge You are brought here on charges of "burglary at night," in an uninhabited house."

Valjean Monsieur, I look after my sister. She has seven children, and I have no work. There is no food...

Judge It says here, you stole a loaf of bread and broke a window pane.

Valjean What am I to do? The children are sick, starving. *(Hopeful)* If only I could find some work, I would pay for the bread and the window, Sir...

Judge The penal code is explicit in this case. For the act of theft, five years in prison, to be served at Toulon. *(Bangs gavel)*

Valjean No, please, please! I am a pruner, I am not a thief! If I go, who will feed my sister— her family? They will die!

Judge Next case. *(Bangs gavel again)*

(During the following voice-over, lights fade to blue, silhouetting a young weeping Valjean being hammered into his collar lights out)

(Various sound effects are heard: Whips cracking, moans, and dragging chains)

Valjean V.O. I was chained like a dog. As they struck the hammer blows on the bolt of my iron collar, I wept like a child. Like my sister's children whom I forgot after a time. I even forgot who I was. The days blended together, more a series of horrific moments than of time passing— the ball and chain, a plank to sleep on, the heat, the cold, the work gang, back to the prison ship every night, the lash, the double chain for nothing, solitary confinement for one word. A man can be driven mad by it, so when my chance came to escape— I took it!

(Sound of heavy cell door. Lights up. Javert behind desk, Valjean held between two Gendarmes awaiting punishment. Valjean is slightly older and disheveled)

Javert Prisoner 24601, the maritime tribunal has extended your sentence three more years for your attempted escape. I see you have served four of your five years. Your total sentencing is now 8 years. Do you have anything to say?

Valjean Please, Inspector Javert, I was only a year from being released.

Javert Then you should have had the good judgment to stay in place.

Valjean I give you my word I will not attempt to escape again.

Javert What has your word to do with it? What is the word of a convict worth? Take him away.

Valjean I am a man, a man like you. But what was I to do? Lack of work made me this! It is not my fault

—

Javert This is tiresome— take him away.

Valjean Inspector Javert, I am like you! I am a man!
(As Valjean lightly struggles, lights go out)

Valjean V.O. Outraged, I judged society, condemned it and found it guilty. I has seen no truth in the law, only the wrathful face she calls justice. I became convinced that life was a war, and in it my only weapon was hatred. And with that weapon I stood in judgment of Almighty God, who had let this happen. Only one thought permeated my mind: escape!
(Sound of heavy breathing, footsteps running in tall grass, dogs, and rifle shot)
(Lights up. Javert behind desk, an even more haggard and dirty Valjean held between two Gendarmes)

Javert Prisoner 24601, this is your second escape attempt. You should have learned by now, that such attempts are futile.

Valjean The next escape will prove you wrong.

Javert There will not be a next escape for a dog like you. Another three years will be added on to your sentence as well as an additional two with the double chain for resisting arrest.

Valjean *(Quietly)* I'll kill you.

Javert *(Leaning forward)* What did you say?

Valjean *(Vehemently, with gritted teeth, leaning forward)* I'll kill you.
(Valjean spits in Javert's face. A brief scuffle ensues with Valjean struggling against the Gendarmes to get to Javert)

Javert *(Controlled)* Thirty days in the black hole. *(Javert takes out a pocket handkerchief and calmly wipes his face)*

Gendarme 1 Inspector Javert, is it wise to waste such a man in solitary confinement? He does the work of four men.

Javert There are brutes who only thus can be brought to submission.

Gendarme 1 But our quotas will go down.

Javert The law must be upheld, there is no flexibility in this matter.
(Lights down)
(Lights up during next voice-over: Valjean is silhouetted in blue light and overlaid with a cell bar gobo. His physicality should represent that of a pacing caged beast, alternating between screams and guttural sounds to underscore the voice-over dialogue)

Valjean V.O. I escaped two more times and each time more years were added to my sentence. You might see it all as an exercise in futility, but when a man is caged, he gradually, by a slow numbing process turns from a man into a wild animal. I escaped like a wolf on seeing my cage door open. Instinct said "Go!". The beast alone was reacting. When I was recaptured, the ever harsher punishment inflicted on me only made me more fierce...
(Lights down)

Valjean V.O. ...and more determined.

Gendarmes Stop him! Fire at him you idiot! Sound the alarm!
(Rifle shots heard. An accelerated heartbeat with heavy breathing, then a large intake of breath; heartbeat continues, ending in a large splash. Indiscriminate yelling and commotion is heard in the blackout)

Gendarmes He jumped! The fool jumped! Search the beaches!
(A loud gasp is heard, ending in one slow heartbeat)

SCENE 2: THE BISHOP

(Lights up. Bishop sitting at table reading several books. During the beginning of the scene his sister, Baptistine, is fluttering about the table, trying to set it for dinner: Laying down a

tablecloth, putting out the candlesticks, food, etc., all the while the bishop remains unfazed, lifting his books casually to avoid plates and pulling books from underneath the tablecloth)

Baptistine Brother, I have heard news from the Fruitier that a convict at work on a ship in harbor has escaped. Well, they say he drowned, but they never found a body. He could be stalking about the countryside looking for his next victim... which could be us! We should take precautions and lock our doors this evening.

Bishop Have no fear of robbers or murderers. The greater danger is inside of us. Why worry about what threatens our purses or our heads? Let us think about what threatens our souls.

Baptistine Clearly, you have your own way of judging things. *(Suspiciously)* I suspect you acquire it from the Gospels.

Bishop Gooseberries. *(Hands her a bowl of berries from the table)*

Baptistine *(Eating one)* Oh, gooseberries yourself. I'm being serious.

Bishop My sister, a priest must never lock his doors against a neighbor. Instead, let us pray when we feel danger looming.

(A loud, fast knock is heard offstage)

Bishop Who could that be at this late hour?

Baptistine A brigand, that's who... or Monsieur Magloire saying the chickens have gotten out again...

(Bishop walks to the side of the stage as a weathered and haggard Valjean enters. He is wearing clothes which are ill-fitting and obviously stolen, his long hair and beard are matted and unkempt. Baptistine gives off a frightened squeak and backs behind a chair at the table)

Valjean I passed a man on the road and he said I could find shelter here.

Bishop He was correct. Monsieur, please, sit down and warm yourself. We are having supper. Would you like some wine? Baptistine, the good Mauve's wine please.

Baptistine I'll... I'll show him to the kitchen.

Bishop No, not the kitchen. He will eat at our table this evening. Do set another place, ah, with the good silver, the set that lies in the cupboard next to my bed.

Baptistine Yes, brother.

(Baptistine exits and returns shortly with a basket containing silver utensils, as well as two tall silver candlesticks and sets about serving dinner to the Bishop and Valjean)

Valjean What is this place? Is it an inn?

Bishop No, it is a place of refuge and reflection.

Valjean *(Eating voraciously)* And who are you, then?

Bishop I am a priest.

(Valjean laughs bitterly)

Bishop *(Eating)* Is that funny?

Valjean *(Eating and drinking)* A bit. I saw a priest once, he said mass in the middle of the place on the altar; he had a pointed gold thing on his head. He spoke, but he wasn't near enough; I couldn't understand him.

Bishop Yes, some priests are too far away... You look tired monsieur, have you a place to sleep tonight?

(Valjean grunts and shakes his head "no." he does not talk because his mouth is stuffed with food)

Bishop Ah, Baptistine?

Baptistine Yes, brother?

Bishop Put some sheets on the bed in the alcove for our guest, will you?

Valjean You will let me stay? Without even knowing my name? Without knowing anything about me?

Bishop You don't have to tell me who you are. This is not my house; it is Christ's. It is the home of no man, except the one who needs a refuge. I tell you the truth traveler; whatever is here is yours. Besides, I already know your name.

Valjean *(Going very still, alarmed)* You know my name?

Bishop Yes, your name is **brother**. After you are finished eating, you may retire to the alcove bed, located down the hall.

Valjean So now you let me stay in your house, as near to you as that? Have you thought I might be a murderer?

Bishop Go will take care of that. I believe my sister and I must retire for the evening. Sleep well, monsieur.

(The Bishop raises two fingers of his right hand and murmurs something in blessing before he

departs. *Valjean who is left at the table, picks up a silver candlestick and turns it about in his hands*

(Lights down)

Valjean V.O. Sleep was elusive; ironically the thing which woke me was too much comfort, for I had not slept on a bed in nineteen years...

(During the following dialogue, blue lights fade up on Valjean, stuffing a sheet with the silver on the table, leaving the candlesticks. He has a piece of wood, or something he can use as a club in his hand as well and quietly advances toward the sleeping priest on his couch)

...though perhaps what really woke me was the devil inside me. All I could think of was the set of silver. Instinct rose within me again and greed drove me to creep into the priest's room for the remaining silver. Under my frightful gaze, the priest slept in the profoundest peaceful sleep. I could not help contrasting how different this man was from me. I who had not know peace for nineteen years and this man who seemed to radiate light made my anger burn. I hovered over him, watching. It was as though I was hesitating between two realms; ready either to crack his skull or to kiss his hand.

(Lights down)

(Heartbeat)

(Lights up. Baptistine enters, while the Bishop is deep in thought, staring at the empty basket laying on the stage)

Baptistine Do you know where the silver basket is?

Bishop Yes. Here it is. *(Picking up the basket and handing it to Baptistine)*

Baptistine God be praised! But there's nothing in it? Where is the silver?

Bishop Oh, so it's the **silver** you're worried about... I have no idea where **that** is.

Baptistine That man! He's stolen **all** of our silver then. That traveler has stolen our silver!

Bishop No, he didn't. The silver never really belonged to us, it belonged to the poor. Who was this man? A poor man, quite clearly.

Baptistine But to take in a person like that— it is a blessing he did nothing but steal! Oh, good Lord it gives me chills just to think of it!

(A knock is heard offstage, and in walks three guards carrying Valjean and the bed sheet full of silver)

Gendarme 2 Monseigneur, sorry to trouble you at this early hour, but we found this man in the woods...

Bishop *(Interrupting and taking Valjean's hand)* I'm glad to see you. You forgot to take the candlesticks; they would bring you two hundred francs, at least. Why didn't you take them along with your cutlery?

Gendarme 2 *(Startled)* Monseigneur, then what this man said was true?

Bishop I'm sure he told you that the silver had been given to him by a kind old priest at whose house he slept last night. And you brought him back here? It's all a mistake.

Gendarme 2 If that is so, then we can let him go. We are sorry to have troubled you. Good day.

(The Gendarme politely bows to the Bishop and nods to Valjean, then he and his guards exit)

Valjean Why?

Bishop I know there is more joy in heaven over the tears of a repentant sinner than over the white robes of a hundred just men. I do not know you, but I know you carry a heavy burden. If you leave your past with hatred and anger against men, you deserve pity; if you leave it with goodwill, gentleness and peace, you are better than any of us. You must use this silver to become an honest man. My brother, you no longer belong to evil, but to good. It is your soul I am buying for you and I give it to God.

(Blackout)

SCENE 3: BREAKING

Valjean V.O. I left the city as if escaping. I was angry, without knowing at whom. I couldn't decide whether I was touched or humiliated. I felt that the priest's pardon was the hardest assault, the most formidable attack I had ever sustained.

(Lights up, Valjean spotlighted on a side stage)

Valjean I'm such a miserable man! *(Valjean falls to his knees and he burst into tears)* What has happened to me, what has that priest done to me? No, I will not yield to this kindness; God has not sustained

me, my hatred has. If I lose that, I lose myself. If I am a beast it is because **You** have made me so! And now, you are asking me to come into the light when I have been too long in darkness? I cannot! My soul is blinded. I cannot... I cannot... Oh, my Lord, I cannot...
(Blackout)

SCENE 4: MONTRIEU-SUR-MER

(Lights up. Javert and Sgt. Lefebvre walk on stage as a bustling town fills the background. Fauchelevent and his cart are off to the side)

Sgt Lefebvre I'm afraid you'll be bored here at your new post, Inspector Javert. There's not much crime to report. Most people are happy and well fed; plenty of work to keep them busy and all that.

Javert Then perhaps you are not paying close enough attention Sergeant. It is precisely when work is abundant and the country rich and happy when the lazy and greedy run rampant.

Sgt Lefebvre I hate to disagree with you, Sir, but I don't think that's the case here. Anyone who wants to work will be paid a fair wage at one of Monsieur le Mayor's factories and those who can't work can go to his home for infirm laborers or the charity house he set up.

Javert The Mayor owns so much? He must be a very ambitious man.

Sgt Lefebvre Father Madeleine, ambitious?! *(Laughs)* No, he's as humble as they come.

Javert Father Madeleine?

Sgt Lefebvre Yeah, that's what everyone calls the Mayor. He's always helping people; givin' out toys for the little ones, a bit of coin for the needy.

Javert This Monsieur le Mayor seems perfect.

Sgt Lefebvre Well, I don't know about perfect, but he's all right for here. The town has never been so alive, trade has never been so healthy, and the people have never been more cared for.

Javert I've found that the more altruistic the man, the more things he has to hide. What is his history?

Sgt Lefebvre Why do you ask?

Javert If I am to work for him to my fullest capacity, I must know his character.

Sgt Lefebvre Well, Father Madeleine showed up about three years back. He started as a laborer, but came up with a new way of making beads for the factory cheap-like, less money to make them, but bigger profit. He bought the business soon enough. The whole town got wealthy almost overnight, all thanks to Father Madeleine. Ah, here he is now. *(Calling)* Monsieur le Mayor!
(Valjean, who has been off to the side giving alms to a beggar, turns and affably greets Sergeant Lefebvre in a warm, familiar manner grasping his hand patting him on the back)

Valjean Sergeant Lefebvre, how is your wife? Is she feeling better?

Sgt Lefebvre Much better, Father Madeleine, thanks to your doctor. I expect she'll be bringing by some of her pickled eggs as soon as she's up and about.

Valjean She doesn't need to do that.

Sgt Lefebvre She will anyway. Oh, I'm being rude. Father Madeleine, allow me to introduce you to your new Chief of Police, Inspector Javert.
(At the name, Valjean stiffens and quickly puts his hand in his coat pocket. Javert bows slightly and holds out his hand)

Javert Monsieur le Mayor, I am at your service.
(Valjean hesitates, then haltingly takes his hand out of his pocket and shakes Javert's hand)

Valjean Welcome to Montrieu, Inspector.

Javert Thank you, Monsieur Mayor.

Valjean I trust you like your new posting?

Javert I find the garrison lax in discipline, but I assure you, in a fortnight I will make order out of the chaos.

Valjean Indeed.

Javert It would do me great honor if you would come and inspect our Gendarmes at your earliest convenience.

Valjean Yes, well—

(Loud horse whinny is heard as well as some shouts as the cart is knocked over on top of a yelling Fauchelevent on the side of the stage)

(Javert, Valjean, and Sgt. Lefebvre elbow their way through the gathering crowd)

Valjean What happened?

Peasant 1 It's Fauchelevent, monsieur. His horse got spooked and the wheel slipped on the cobblestones.

Valjean Fauchelevent!? Can you hear me? It will be all right! It's pressing on his chest— does anyone have a jack?!

Peasant 1 They've gone to the blacksmith in Flauchot for one; but it will take at least a quarter of an hour.

Valjean We can't wait that long! There is still room enough for someone to crawl in and lift it with his back.

Peasant 1 A man like that would have to risk getting crushed.

Javert Sergeant! Send back to the garrison for a company of men!
(Sgt Lefebvre runs off stage. Valjean, impatient to help Fauchelevent hurriedly takes off his coat and throws it on the ground)

Valjean There's no time!

Peasant 1 Father Madeleine, come out of there! You'll be crushed!
(Valjean situates himself close to the fallen cart, crouching, bearing the weight of it on his back and with great strain slowly lifts it enough so Fauchelevent can be dragged from underneath it by a couple of bystanders. The Gendarmes then come running in with Sgt Lefebvre. Valjean kneels on the ground, exhausted while Javert looks at him with keen interest)

Sgt Lefebvre *(Out of breath)* They are here Inspector!

Javert They are no longer needed.

Valjean Yes, there are— Quick! Take him to the infirmary.
(Fauchelevent is quickly carried off by the Gendarmes and the crowd dissipates slowly. Valjean, trembling slightly, gets to his feet and looks about for his coat. Javert picks Valjean's coat up off the ground and a pistol falls out of the pocket. Valjean goes still. Javert reaches down and picks up the pistol as well)

Javert Monsieur Mayor, your coat, *(Suspiciously)* and your pistol.

Valjean Thank you.
(Valjean takes the coat and puts it on, then grasps for his pistol, holds it for a moment, then puts it in his pocket)

Valjean I... keep it for defense.

Javert Surely not in the city?

Valjean I take long walks in the countryside... wild game, you know. Excuse me, I should see to Fauchelevent's care.
(Valjean exits quickly. Javert stares after him and Sgt Lefebvre comes to Javert's side)

Javert Get some men to clean up this cart, it is blocking the thoroughfare.

Sgt Lefebvre Yes, Inspector.

Javert Sergeant, when did you say Monsieur Madeleine arrived here in Montrieu?

Sgt Lefebvre Three years ago.

Javert Are you sure?

Sgt Lefebvre Can't hardly forget it; that was when the city hall caught fire. Father Madeleine turned up. Risked his life and rushed into the building; he saved two children that night.

Javert Did anyone see his passport? Papers?

Sgt Lefebvre Huh, guess in all the excitement, no one thought to ask. Does it matter?

Javert *(Dismissive)* Clean up this mess, and find me a courier, I need to send a letter to the Prefect of Police.
(Blackout)

Javert V.O. To Monsieur Chabouillet, Secretary to Monsieur the Prefect of Police. I have reason to believe that one convict, number 24601, named Jean Valjean, who was previously thought to have died in an escape attempt from Toulon prison, is in fact alive. Nicknamed Jean the Jack, in physical strength he far surpassed all the other inmates; he was the equal to four men. I once witnessed Jean Valjean hold up a fallen support on his shoulders till the workmen came to repair the damage. I believe I have witnessed a similar circumstance today that has aroused my suspicious. I wish to resume investigations regarding his whereabouts...

SCENE 5: SUSPICIONS

(Lights up. A worn-looking Valjean is sitting at his desk writing a letter; His coat hangs on the back of his chair; the Bishop's candlesticks, unlit, are on the desk. Sister Simplicity enters the room)

- Valjean** *(Distracted)* Ah, Sister Simplicity, can you please take this letter to Fauchelevent at the infirmary. And make sure he keeps the thousand francs, I will not take it back. *(Valjean stands up and walks around the table to hand her the letter, which she takes)*
- Sister Simplicity** He is a proud man, Sir, I do not know if he will accept it.
- Valjean** Tell him it's in exchange for his horse and cart. It will also help pay his moving expenses for the new position I've secured for him. He is to be a gardener at a convent in the Quartier Saint Antoine in Paris. I will visit him myself soon, but there are some matters I must attend to.
- Sister Simplicity** It has been an eventful day, hasn't it?
- Valjean** Yes... yes, it has.
- Sister Simplicity** Supper will be served at six.
- Valjean** No, thank you, Sister Simplicity, I will not require any dinner tonight.
- Sister Simplicity** Will you be needing anything else this evening Monsieur Madeleine?
- Valjean** No. Oh, yes, please post this letter to Layfeets as well. *(Valjean grabs a second letter off his desk and hands it to Sister Simplicity)*
- Sister Simplicity** Your bank, Sir?
- Valjean** Yes. I have some instructions I need them to carry out for me. Thank you.
- Sister Simplicity** *(Troubled)* Good night then. *(She exits)*
(Valjean walks back to his desk, sits and lights the Bishop's candlesticks. He raggedly draws in his breath and removes the pistol from his coat pocket and stares at it in his hands, defeated)
- Valjean** God, three years ago I battled against You and You won. I shrank and faded away till I was but a shadow in your radiant light. But one look at Javert, one reflection of my former life and I felt as if I'm back in that place again, but it is no longer who I am, is it? Why do I carry this pistol if not for that moment? *(Ashamed)* I almost... I wanted to... *(Ashamed)* Am I a new creation or not?! If I am set free, why do I feel such fear? *(Valjean looks into the light of the candles for a moment, then blows them out)*
(Blackout)

SCENE 6: FANTINE

(Lights up. Stage is set with podium and stool behind it. Javert enters the stage followed by Sgt. Lefebvre and a Gendarme holding a struggling Fantine who is dirty, disheveled, and obviously suffering from a horrific illness. Javert sits behind the podium and begins to write out orders)

- Fantine** Please! Monsieur, I swear to you by the good Lord that I was not in the wrong!
- Javert** Put her over there until I have completed her paperwork. *(Javert indicates to a spot near the podium at which he sits. The Gendarme roughly releases her)*
- Fantine** If you had been there from the beginning you would understand. I wasn't immodest with him, I didn't speak to him!
- Javert** You are a prostitute who has assaulted a citizen. The punishment for your crime is six months in prison.
(Valjean enters the stage, but stays out of sight during the following dialogue)
- Fantine** Six months?! I ask for your pity! I was doing nothing wrong. The man threw snow down my back; he made me wild! What right does he have to do that?! *(Fantine advances towards the podium on her knees and clutches at Javert's feet)*
- Javert** Are you through?
- Fantine** I have a child, monsieur, I cannot go to prison! How will I pay the Thénardier's for her? They look after her, but how can I send them money if I cannot work?
- Javert** So is that what they call it now? Work? Six months, that is final. The Eternal Father couldn't help you now. Sergeant Lefebvre, take her.
(Sgt. Lefebvre gently picks up Fantine)
- Valjean** One moment if you please!
(Valjean approaches Javert. Javert stand up, takes off his hat, and places it under his arm. He

bows slightly to Valjean)

Javert Excuse me, Monsieur Mayor—

Fantine Monsieur Mayor?! *(Spits on Valjean)* I sold my hair for ten francs! I sold my teeth for forty to buy my Cosette a wool skirt so she would be warm! I have done all this because I was pushed out of your factory! You turned me out because a pack of beggars gossiped about me in the workshop! Now who will pay for my poor daughter's medicine? You have killed my daughter!

Valjean Inspector Javert, set this woman free.
(Sgt. Lefebvre lets her go. Fantine staggers and leans on the podium)

Javert Sergeant, who told you to let her go?

Valjean I did.

Javert Monsieur Mayor, that cannot be done. This wretched woman has assaulted a citizen.

Valjean Inspector Javert, I was on my way through the square when you arrested this woman; there was still a crowd there and I heard everything. It was the citizen who was in the wrong. It is he who, with proper police work, should have been arrested.

Javert This wretch has just insulted Monsieur the Mayor.

Valjean That is my concern alone. The insult is to me and I can do what I please about it.

Javert I beg your pardon, but the insult does not belong to you, it belongs to justice.

Valjean Inspector Javert, the highest justice is doing what is right. I have heard this woman's story. I know what I'm doing.

Javert *(Incredulous)* I do not believe what I am hearing.

Valjean Then be satisfied with obeying.

Javert I obey my duty. My duty requires that this woman spend six months in prison.

Valjean Listen to me carefully, she will not spend **one day** there.

Javert I am very sorry to resist, Monsieur Mayor; it is the first time in my life, but you will permit me to observe that I am within the limits of my own authority. I was **there**. The girl attacked the citizen — a man who can vote, who owns a fine house; some things in this world must be considered. This matter belongs to the police, not to you.

Valjean The matter of which you speak resides with the municipal police. But the terms of articles nine, eleven, fifteen, and sixty-six of the code of criminal law, that is within **my** jurisdiction. I order that this woman be set free.

Javert But Monsieur Mayor—

Valjean Not another word.

Javert However—

Valjean You may go.
(Javert stands to attention, clicks his heels, bows deeply and exits. Valjean takes a step toward Fantine at the podium)

Valjean *(Speaking softly)* I beg your forgiveness, Madame.

Fantine *(Ashamed)* Mademoiselle.

Valjean Let me help you.
(Valjean gathers Fantine to him and they proceed to walk down the stairs)

Valjean I didn't know your circumstances. I had every confidence in my overseer, I thought she was firm and upright, though I now see she is lacking in understanding and charity. I will pay your debts, I will have your child come to you. You will not have to work anymore if you do not want to. I will give you all the money you need.
(Fantine, who has been weeping softly, faints)

SCENE 7: THE STRUGGLE

(Lights fade slowly up. Valjean is sitting on a chair reading passages of a book out loud while caring for Fantine who is ill and laying on a couch next to him. Sister Simplicity is fussing about with Fantine's pillow and blankets)

Valjean *(Haltingly)* "Tell her, whose goodness is my bane,
Whose looks have smiled my peace away,
Oh! Whisper how she gives me pain,

Whilst under... undesi..."

(Looks up at Sister Simplicity) ... undesigning?

(Sister Simplicity leans over his shoulder to look at the word in the book)

Sister Simplicity

(Nodding) Undesigning.

Valjean

"Whilst undesigning, frank, and gay.

'Tis not for common charms I sigh,

For what the vulgar beauty call;

'Tis not a cheek, a lip, an eye,

But 'tis the soul that lights them all!"

Fantine

(Softly) Beautiful.

Sister Simplicity

Your reading is improving.

Valjean

I've had a fine tutor.

Sister Simplicity

It's a rare treat you are getting Mademoiselle Fantine. Monsieur Madeleine rarely reads aloud to anyone.

Fantine

(Weakly) He should do it more. He has a nice voice.

Sister Simplicity

That's what I keep telling him. Maybe he'll listen to you.

Valjean

I'm still in the room.

Sister Simplicity

I can see that. Best get you some fresh water. *(She takes a bowl of water that was by Fantine's couch and bustles out of the room)*

Fantine

(Weakly) Who was it that wrote it? The poem?

Valjean

A man by the name of Thompson.

Fantine

(Weakly) I like him. Cosette's father liked poetry. He used to sing... I was young and pretty once... I was foolish. *(Starts to cry)*

Valjean

Shhh— that's all in the past.

Fantine

(Weakly) No, no listen... I have been a sinner, but when I have my child with me, that will mean God has forgiven me. It was for her, though, that I sinned and that's why God has forgiven me.

Valjean

If everything is as you say, and I do not doubt it, then you have never ceased to be virtuous and holy before God.

Fantine

(Hopeful) Will I see Cosette soon?

Valjean

I have sent a letter with the debt you owe to the Thénardiens. If they don't send her right along, I will go myself and bring her back to you.

Fantine

(Weakly) Hmm... you'll like her. My Cosette, she's an angel... so innocent, so... not like me... not like— *(Fantine breaks into spasms of rough coughing. Sister Simplicity quickly comes back in with a fresh bowl of water and a cloth. She runs over to the couch and feels Fantine's head)*

Sister Simplicity

Her fever's returned. I'll see to her now.

Valjean

No, I can—

Sister Simplicity

No, out. I'll see to it she gets some rest. Besides, you have a visitor. Inspector Javert is here and wishes to speak with you.

(Valjean reluctantly leaves Fantine's side. Lights fade on Sister Simplicity and Fantine. Valjean walks to the other side of the stage where Javert is waiting, his hat under his arm.. When he sees Valjean, he bows)

Javert

Monsieur Mayor.

Valjean

Inspector Javert. It is late. What is it?

Javert

A criminal act has been committed, Monsieur Mayor.

Valjean

What act?

Javert

A subordinate of the government has been lacking in respect to a government official. It is my duty to bring that fact to your attention.

Valjean

Who is this subordinate?

Javert

I am.

Valjean

You? And who brought the complaint against you?

Javert

You, Monsieur Mayor. I come to ask you to be so kind as to make charges and procure my dismissal. I cannot tender my resignation, that is not enough. To resign is honorable; I have done wrong. I ought to be punished. I must be dismissed.

Valjean

I don't understand.

Javert

Monsieur Mayor, six weeks ago, after that scene with the woman, I was enraged and I denounced

you to the Prefecture of Police in Paris.

Valjean Because I countermanded your order?

Javert No, because I named you as a former convict. I had suspected it; the way you lifted that cart, your unknown background, the timing of your arrival here in Montrieu— and actually, I do not know what other stupidities but I took you for a man named Jean Valjean.

Valjean *(Startled)* What was his name?

Javert Valjean. He was a convict I had under my authority over twenty years ago when I worked at the prison of Toulon. We believed this Valjean to be dead, but he escaped. For eight years his whereabouts have been unknown. I imagine that anger convinced me you were him and I denounced you to the Prefect.

Valjean And what answer did you get?

Javert That I was crazy, for the real Jean Valjean has been found. Not that he confesses to being Jean Valjean you understand, but we have witnesses who say that he is the man. He was caught stealing apples in the city of Champmathieu. He will be tried there in Arras tomorrow. So you see, I have been in error and must be dismissed.

Valjean Javert, you are a man of honor and I esteem you. You exaggerate your fault. Besides, this is an offence that concerns only me.

Javert *(Impatient)* You are being kind. Such kindness disrupts society. Good God, it is easy to be kind, the difficulty is to be just.

Valjean You deserve a promotion, not disgrace. I want you to keep your job.

Javert *(Unmoved)* I will continue to be of service until I am replaced. Good evening.
(Javert gives his customary bow, places his hat on his head and exits. Valjean stares after him and slowly makes his way to the chair next to the sleeping Fantine)

Valjean *(To himself)* Then that is it? Is such a gift given to me? God, have you provided a scapegoat, a sacrifice on the altar that I might go free? Well, why not? This man is a thief. He'll go to prison no matter what I do. After all, haven't I done what the Bishop urged? Yes, to become what You wanted me to be. To remain Monsieur Mayor, remain honorable and honored, enrich the city, feed the poor, bring up the orphans, live happily in joy and in light... But there will be another man wearing my chains. *(Angrily)* But if I did turn myself in— if I'm arrested, this other man released, I'll be sent back to prison, and what then? What happens here? It all dies! And don't I owe something to this woman too? Why should I go to Arras? All I have to do is leave things alone. Javert has caught Jean Valjean!

Valjean V.O. I wrestled with my natures the entire night, when at last I realized, that I would be the robber. I would rob another man of his existence, his life...
(Blackout)

SCENE 8: A TRIAL

Valjean V.O. In the morning I set out to hire a carriage for Arras; it broke down. There were no other carriages or horses to be hired. God had given me a reprieve. Oh, the relief I felt, but no. A passing peddler asked, did I need a ride? My heart sank as I climbed in the cart, every wheel turn bringing me closer and closer to my fate. As I arrived at the courthouse, I could barely force my feet to approach the steps, all they wanted to do was turn in the opposite direction.
(During the end of the voice-over, the lights on the floor slowly fade up. Valjean enters on the floor and is seen approaching the steps to the stage where a Gendarme is standing guard)

Valjean Excuse me. But is this the courtroom for the case of Champmathieu?

Gendarme 3 Don't know the name of the accused, only the crime. Thief, second offender. He looks like a bandit, I'll tell you. *(Laughs)* For his face alone, I'd send him to prison.

Valjean Is there any way to get in there?

Gendarme 3 The session's just resumed, but the door won't be opened again.

Valjean Why not?

Gendarme 3 Because the hall is full.

Valjean What! There are no more seats?

Gendarme 3 Not a one. The door is closed. No one can enter.
(Valjean stares at the Gendarme for a moment, then turns to walk down the stairs)

Gendarme 3 Unless of course, you happen to be a government official.

(Valjean stops dead in his tracks)

Gendarme 3 The judge always keeps a seat or two behind him for government functionaries.
(Valjean takes a beat, sighs and turns around, utterly defeated and walks back up the stairs to the Gendarme. He puts his hand in his pocket and withdraws his papers and hands them to the Gendarme)

Valjean I am the Mayor of Montrieu-sur-mer.

Gendarme 3 Well, that's a different matter, then.
(During the following voice-over, the Gendarme hands him back his papers and stand aside to let him through to the stage. The stage is set with a viewing gallery off to one side, the prisoner in chains, three dirty and disheveled convicts, and the judge behind the podium. All are visibly active during the following voice-over in which Valjean takes his seat to the side of the podium behind the judge)

(The only sound besides the voice-over that can be heard is a heartbeat)

Valjean V.O. Whether it was God or the devil that kept giving me opportunities to turn back, I don't know. But my soul undertook a testing and by the time I sat in the gallery of the superior court in Arras, my emotions were raw.
(The crowd adds auditory comments to their visible activity. The judge bangs his gavel. During the following dialogue, Champmathieu gets noticeably more agitated and confused— Like a child who does not know what's going on)

Judge Order, order! Jean Valjean, do you think that we are fools? I have here the sworn testimony of your jailer, Inspector Javert. There before you sit three of your fellow convicts who swear that you are Jean Valjean! You were born in Toulouse—

Champmathieu That is news to me... I never knew where I was born...

Judge Your mother's name is Jeanne Mattieu

Champmathieu I never knew I had a mother...
(The courtroom laughs. Judge bangs his gavel)

Judge You will not make a mockery of this court! You are charged with scaling a wall and stealing a branch of apples.

Champmathieu I... found them on the ground... I...

Judge And to that you are a second offender, a convict punished for the crime of stealing a loaf of bread.

Champmathieu I thought I was here for... the apples...

Judge But to this there is still a far graver charge! You are accused of resisting arrest and escaping from prison, not once, not twice, but **five times**. You are a dangerous criminal, Jean Valjean!

Champmathieu No...

Judge And still you persist in denying it! You are either a half-wit or a conniver!

Champmathieu *(Looking around, confused)* I... I am... Champmathieu; I do not know... I... think I am...
(Valjean, who has become agitated and grief stricken watching the abuse of this innocent man nearly leaps to his feet)

Valjean *(Addressing the convicts)* Brevet! Chenildieu! Cochepaille! Look this way! Don't you recognize me?
(Every head turns in Valjean's direction and the room is silent)

Judge Monsieur Madeleine?
(Valjean steps up beside the bewildered Champmathieu and convicts, looks hard at them and then turns to the judge)

Valjean Your Honor, release the accused and order my arrest. He is not the man you seek— I am Jean Valjean.

Judge Is there a doctor in the hall?

Valjean I thank you, Your Honor, but I am not mad as you will soon see. You were on the point of committing a grave error; release this man and take me,

Judge Monsieur Madeleine, even I know who you are, you are the Mayor of Montrieu-sur-mer, not a convict.

Valjean Am I the only one who can see this clearly? I am telling the truth, though I see you don't believe me. I have hidden my name, become rich, become mayor! I hoped to live among honest people again, but I see now that there are some things that are not possible. I see you think I'm mad.
(Gesturing to convicts) How is it you don't recognize me? If Javert were here he'd recognize me!

Well, I recognize you, Brevet. Do you remember the checkered knit suspenders you used to wear in prison? Or you, Chenildieu— your left shoulder is burned from a stove top because you were trying to remove the letters T.F.P., which still show there. And you, Cocheville—

You have a date tattooed on your left arm— the date of the Emperor's landing at Cannes, March 1st, 1815!

(With each startling revelation given by Valjean, the convicts one by one become convinced that this is the real Valjean. When told of the tattoo, Cocheville rolls up his sleeve and reveals the date to the crowd)

Valjean So you see...it's true.

(The crowd is stunned. Valjean looks around)

Valjean I do not wish to interrupt this court any further. If you are not arresting me now, I have some affairs to put in order. Your Honor, you know where I live. I am at your disposal.

(Valjean takes a few steps under the watchful crowd and exits. The crowd erupts in noise as the judge bangs his gavel and tries to call the court to order. The lights slowly fade down to a blackout)

SCENE 9: THE DECISION

(During Valjean's line above, Javert, who is on a side stage (or floor) lights a candle, holding it close as he is reading a letter. When the monologue is finished, Javert smiles, clutches the letter tightly and exits, blowing out the candle)

Javert Inspector Javert, in light of new testimony, the court has no recourse but to acquit the man, known as Champmathieu of all charges against him. Due to this new evidence, your testimony has been overruled. However, Inspector Javert, you are now authorized to arrest Monsieur Madeleine, Mayor of Montrieu-sur-mer, who this day has been identified in court as the escaped convict, Jean Valjean.

(Lights up on stage. Valjean's desk sits off to the side. Fantine is laying on her couch, Valjean is sitting at her bedside, his head in his hands. Fantine stirs)

Fantine *(Weakly, in delirium)* Cosette? My Cosette?

Valjean Mademoiselle Fantine, I am here.

Fantine I thought I heard my Cosette.

Valjean No, just me.

Fantine You went away... did you fetch my Cosette? Is she here? Bring her to me, please.

(Fantine tries weakly to sit up and Valjean feels her forehead and tries to ease her back into the bed)

Valjean You are not well, please lie down.

Fantine *(Weakly struggling)* Did you have a good trip? You must have been cold in the coach. Couldn't they bring her here for just a moment... so I could see her... so I could know I've been forgiven? *(Ends in a fit of coughing)*

Valjean Cosette is well, you'll see her soon. But you must stop talking, it will only make you cough.

Fantine *(Becoming more agitated)* Why won't you bring her to me?! I can hear her! Why are you keeping her from me? Why are...

(Fantine suddenly has a hard time breathing and stares madly at the side of the stage. Valjean looks in the direction as well where Javert has entered and is standing by the desk, arms crossed, with an air of superiority. Valjean gently disentangles himself from Fantine and approaches Javert)

Valjean Do not be afraid; he hasn't come for you. *(To Javert)* I know what you want.

Javert Hurry up. Hurry up! *(Seizing Valjean by the collar)*

Fantine Monsieur Mayor!

Javert *(Laughing)* There is no Monsieur Mayor here anymore!

Valjean *(In an undertone)* Javert—

Javert Call me Monsieur Inspector!

Valjean Monsieur, I would like to speak a word with you in private.

Javert Aloud, speak out loud! People speak out loud to me.

Valjean It is a request that I have to make of you...

Javert I tell you to speak up.
Valjean But this should not be heard by anyone but yourself.
Javert What do I care? I will not listen.
Valjean Give me three days! Three days to go for the child of this unhappy woman! I'll pay whatever it takes. You may accompany me if you like.
Javert Are you laughing at me! I did not think you were that stupid! You are asking for three more days to get away, and you tell me you're going for this woman's child?!

Fantine *(Slowly pushing herself up, agitated)* My child! Going for my child? Then she is not here yet?!

Javert *(With the glow of righteousness)* Now there is the other one! Hold your tongue, whore! Miserable town, where convicts are mayors and prostitutes are nursed like countesses! But all that will be changed; high time! I tell you that there is no Monsieur Madeleine here— there is only a thief, a liar, a convict named Jean Valjean!
(Fantine opens her mouth as if to speak, a guttural sound comes from her throat, suddenly her teeth clamp shut and she falls from the couch, dead. Valjean forcibly removes Javert's hand from his collar)

Valjean You have killed this woman.
Javert *(Smiling)* I see no woman, I see only trash.
(Enraged, Valjean quickly grabs one of the Bishop's silver candlesticks on his desk and knocks Javert over the head with it. Javert falls to the ground. Valjean vacillates between anger and grief, then puts the candlestick back on the desk, goes to Fantine, picks her up and gently arranges her body on the couch. Sister Simplicity quickly enters in her nightclothes and shawl, carrying a candle)

Sister Simplicity Monsieur Madeleine? What has happened?!

(Sister Simplicity nearly trips over Javert. She bends down to examine him)

Sister Simplicity Is he... ?
Valjean He is alive, But Fantine is not.
(Valjean leans over and whispers something in Fantine's ear and kisses her forehead. He places the blanket over her head, then sets about gathering things from the room: a knapsack, the candlesticks, some papers, etc.)

Valjean I must leave. I made a vow to care for Fantine's child and I will not break it now.
Sister Simplicity I don't understand...
Valjean They came to arrest me. Here, take this, see that she gets a proper burial. *(Valjean hands her a small pouch of coins)* As soon as I leave, sound the alarm for the Gendarmes. Do you understand?

Sister Simplicity Monsieur, what if they ask me where you have gone? I cannot lie!
Valjean I do not expect you to. I am sorry to have put you in this position, dear lady. Pray for me.
(The lights fade to blackout as Valjean exits)

SCENE 10: ON THE RUN

Valjean V.O. I ran. I left Montrieu-sur-mer behind, I left my life as Father Madeleine, the man that he was, the good he had done; I knew I could never go back. And to my shame, almost unwillingly, I left Javert alive, a serpent who I knew would strike at me again if I was not vigilant.
(Lights up. Javert is holding a cloth to his head, sitting in a chair, while various Gendarmes are milling about the room searching through papers on the desk. Fantine lays dead on the couch covered by a blanket)

Sgt Lefebvre We have found no sign of him in the house.
Javert *(Angrily)* Of course you will not find him in the house, he has escaped! *(Regaining his composure)* Search the town, watch the roads, comb the forest if you have to.

Sgt Lefebvre Inspector Javert, we don't have enough men to look for Father Madeleine—
Javert His name is **Valjean**. He is a dangerous convict. The sooner you realize that, the better.
Sgt Lefebvre Yes, Inspector.
Javert Where is his servant? The one who found me?
Sgt Lefebvre Sister Simplicity? She's just outside.

Javert Bring her in.
(Sgt. Lefebvre exits. Javert stands up and paces over to dead Fantine on the couch. He roughly pulls aside the sheet that covers her head and stares at her. Sgt. Lefebvre comes back in with Sister Simplicity who is still in her nightclothes and shawl. She is fingering a rosary. Javert turns to face her)

Javert You were the one who found me?
Sister Simplicity Yes.
Javert And I was alone in the room at the time?
(Sister Simplicity nods slightly)

Javert Excuse me if I persist, it is my duty— we are searching for a convict. Have you seen the man Jean Valjean this evening?
Sister Simplicity No.
Javert Your pardon, then. She may leave.
(Sister Simplicity exits. A Gendarme enters and walks quickly to Javert)

Gendarme 2 Inspector Javert, we just received word from Valjean's banker, Monsieur Laffete. The convict withdrew half a million francs a month ago.
(Javert paces slowly toward Fantine's body, studying her with interest)

Javert *(To himself)* Where are you going...?
Sgt Lefebvre Inspector? Your orders?
Javert Find out everything you can about this woman... especially about her child.
Sgt Lefebvre What's the child's name?
(Blackout)
(Mme. Thénardier's voice is heard yelling off stage. A young, emaciated Cosette, in tattered rags with bruises on her skin, labors down the aisle from the back of the audience. She is carrying a heavy bucket of water. Sound effects of crickets and the occasional owl are heard)

Mme Thénardier *(Offstage)* Cosette! You little toad! Where are you with that water?!
Young Cosette Coming Madame Thénardier!
(Young Cosette is met by Valjean who approaches her cautiously. Valjean is wearing the clothes of a poor laborer and carrying a knapsack)

Valjean My child, that bucket looks heavy. Give it to me. I'll carry it for you.
(Valjean takes the bucket and they start to walk toward the other side of the stage)

Valjean Little one, where do you live?
Young Cosette At the Waterloo Inn, if you know where that is.
Valjean Who sent you out into the woods for water at this time of night?
Young Cosette Madame Thénardier.
Valjean What does she do, Madame Thénardier?
Young Cosette She is my mistress, she keeps the tavern.
Valjean The tavern; well, I'll be staying there this evening. Can you show me the way?
Young Cosette We are headed there. Will you let me take the bucket now?
Valjean Why?
Young Cosette Because, if Madame sees that someone carried for me, she will be angry.
(Valjean reluctantly hands her back the bucket. Lights up on the stage. It is set with a rough table, perhaps a rough bench. Valjean and Young Cosette both walk on stage. Madame Thénardier enters)

Mme Thénardier Oh! It's you, you little beggar! My Lord, but you've taken your time!
Young Cosette Madame, there is a... a gentleman who has come for lodging.
Mme Thénardier Has he? Looks like a beggar to me. Off with you now, out of my sight!
(Mme Thénardier takes the bucket from Cosette and roughly shoves her. Cosette cowers under the table, knees drawn up against her chest)

Valjean I can pay.
Mme Thénardier Thirty sous— in advance.
(Valjean pulls out his billfold and starts counting out money. Monsieur Thénardier enters, looks quickly at the exchange and joins his wife and Valjean)

Thénardier I'm afraid the price has gone up my dear, it's forty sous for you, monsieur. I don't lodge poor people for less.

Mme Thénardier That's true, it ruins the reputation of an inn to house your sort.
(Valjean takes out the additional ten sous and hands them to Madame Thénardier, who counts it voraciously. Valjean sits at the table)

Thénardier Can I interest monsieur in something to eat?

Valjean Some bread and cheese.

Thénardier Three francs.
(Valjean gives them the additional money. Mme. Thénardier kicks Young Cosette under the table)

Mme Thénardier You heard— get the monsieur some bread and cheese, and quick!
(Young Cosette scurries out from under the table and exits, returning a short time later with a plate of bread and cheese, which she puts before Valjean)

Valjean Is she your daughter?

Mme Thénardier Who? That little toad? No.

Thénardier She's our ward. She has to work, since she eats. Times are hard, monsieur, for an honest innkeeper like myself.

Valjean And what of her mother?

Mme Thénardier Her good for nothing mother dropped her like a hot bun on our doorstep. We've kept her out of charity like the God-fearing people we are. But what good does it do us, eh? She eats us out of house and home.

Thénardier We've written in vain to her mother; for a month we haven't had an answer. We think she must be dead.
(Cosette, who has crawled back under the table, takes a sort of rag doll out of her apron pocket. She rocks it, singing in a low voice)

Young Cosette *(Under dialogue)* My mother is dead, my mother is dead, my mother is dead.

Mme Thénardier I don't need to pay for other people's children.

Valjean Suppose you were relieved of her?

Mme Thénardier Who? Cosette? Ah, monsieur, take her, carry her off...

Thénardier *(Cutting off his wife, with mock sincerity)* Monsieur, listen, you seem to be an honorable man, so I will be frank with you. In truth I adore the child and I couldn't possibly let her go. Unless...
(Valjean pulls out his billfold. Thénardier, who is expecting more money, is disappointed when Valjean produces a letter instead. Thénardier quickly scans it)

Thénardier What's this?

Valjean A letter from the girl's mother, entrusting her to my care. Do you know that signature?

Thénardier It could be a fake. Even so, monsieur—I-don't-know-your-name, it says that all debts will be paid. There is a large amount due me— one hundred and twenty francs...

Valjean Which was sent to you a **month ago**, Monsieur Thénardier, along with the request that you send her child to her at once. I have now come to collect her.

Thénardier I don't even know your name. If you should take her away, I would say "Where has the little lark gone?" I must, at least, see some passport...something.

Valjean Monsieur Thénardier, people do not take a passport to come fifteen miles from Paris. If I take Cosette, I take her; that is the end of it. You will not know my name, you will not know my address, you will not know where she is going, and my intention is that she shall never see you again in her life. Do you agree to that? Yes or no?

Thénardier *(Calculating)* Monsieur, I must have fifteen hundred francs.
(Valjean pulls out the money from his knapsack and throws it on the table. Mme. Thénardier looks on shocked, while her husband is seething in quiet anger)

Valjean That is the end of it. Come with me, Cosette.
(Valjean stands and holds out his hand to coax Cosette out from under the table. Cosette hesitates, then takes his hand. The two exit the stage. Mme. Thénardier rushes to the table and starts stuffing the money down her shirt)

Mme Thénardier *(Laughing)* Fifteen hundred francs!?! For that little brat! We're well rid of her!

Thénardier *(Slams fist on table)* No, no!

Mme Thénardier What's the matter?

Thénardier He would have paid three times that amount for her!

Mme Thénardier Well, he's long gone now.

Thénardier Perhaps there's a way we can get the girl back, and keep the money...

(Lights down on stage. On the side stage [or floor] Lights go up on Valjean, kneeling by Cosette)

Valjean Cosette, what if I told you that we could leave this place?

Young Cosette Leave the Thénardiens?

Valjean Yes, and come with me, where you will have new dresses and pretty things.

Young Cosette It is not allowed. I would be punished.

Valjean Cosette, do they hurt you?

Young Cosette Only when I'm bad. I try to be good, but I never manage it.

Valjean I believe you are good. And I would like to give you something.
(Valjean opens his knapsack and pulls a beautiful porcelain doll out and hands it to Cosette. She holds it like it is the most precious thing she has ever touched)

Young Cosette *(Disbelieving)* Is it true, monsieur? Is the lady for me?

Valjean Yes.

Young Cosette Thank you. *(Pause)* Monsieur, are you my papa?

Valjean No, but you could call me "Papa" if you like.
(Cosette gives a little nod and Valjean picks her up. They start walking)

Young Cosette Papa? Where are we going?

Valjean To Paris.
(Lights go down on side stage/floor. Lights up on stage. Thénardiens are talking to Javert and a Gendarme)

Javert You filed a report that the child had been kidnapped, is that not so?

Thénardier Yes, indeed. A mysterious vagrant who stopped to warm himself by the fire took an interest in our little Cosette. We don't normally allow his kind in here, but we are God-fearing people and too kind to turn anyone away. In the morning when she went missing, we knew it had to be him, a peddler said...

Mme Thénardier *(Interrupting, sugary-sweet)* We were beside ourselves with worry, monsieur, we'd promised to take care of the little lark, for her mother, you see—

Javert Her mother is dead. What was the name of this vagrant?

Thénardier As I was about to say, we heard from a peddler that a man and child had been seen on the road heading to Paris.

Javert *(To Gendarme)* Send dispatches to the Prefecture of Police in Paris immediately. Tell them to set up blockades. He cannot be allowed to go into the city.
(Javert and Gendarme begin to exit, but are stopped by Thénardier)

Thénardier Monsieur Inspector, please find our little Cosette, and that bandit... and, if by chance there's a reward—

Javert You most likely already have one. If I were to take a closer look, would I find that this man had already paid you?

Mme Thénardier What do you take us for, Sir?

Javert I've spent my life around criminals, I believe I know the measure of a man when I see him. We shall find the child and return her to you— **that** will be your only reward... not that you deserve one. *(Javert exits)*
(Blackout)

SCENE 11: MANHUNT

Valjean V.O. The trip to Paris was grueling and long; going by cart, switching directions, walking short distances. I could see it was hard on little Cosette, but she never complained. When we arrived in Paris, we took rooms and our lives began to settle into a simple pattern. I taught her to read and she called me Papa.
(Lights fade up slowly. Valjean is sitting beside a couch, next to the sleeping form of Young Cosette. No longer in rags, she wears a simple dress, she clutches her doll as she sleeps. Valjean is smoothing the hair from her face).

Valjean V.O. Never have I loved anything. For the last twenty-three years, I had been alone in the world. I had never been a father, lover, husband, or friend. When I rescued Cosette, I felt my heart move again.
(Young Cosette starts as if awaking from a nightmare)

Young Cosette Yes, Madame! Here I am! Oh, what shall I do? Where's my broom?

Valjean Shhh, you were dreaming. It's all right, child.

Young Cosette *(Looking around, finally focusing on Valjean)* Oh, I forgot; good morning, Papa.

Valjean Good morning, Cosette.

Young Cosette Papa, is Madame Thénardier really very far away?

Valjean Yes, she is. Paris is a big place. She'll never find you here, I promise.

Young Cosette Can I have another lesson today?

Valjean *(Chuckling)* Yes, you can, but later. You just woke up.

Young Cosette But I must do something. Now that we have a home, shouldn't I sweep?

Valjean No... you should play!
(Valjean scoops Young Cosette, doll and all into the air and twirls her around. He puts her on his shoulders and they bounce around a bit, laughing and making a lot of noise. Valjean stops suddenly when he hears pounding and raised voices off stage. Young Cosette is still giggling. Valjean sets Young Cosette down and puts his fingers to her lips, indicating she should be quiet. He walks to the side of the stage, listening for a moment. Valjean then starts gathering his possessions. His dialogue continues over the following lines said offstage)

Gendarme 4 *(Offstage)* Open this door. Under the authority of the Prefect of Police, open this door! We are searching for an escaped convict and a young child. Have you seen them?

Peasant 2 There's a man that rents a room down the hall; he might have a child, but I think it's his granddaughter. But he doesn't cause any trouble.

Javert *(Offstage)* Gather the men, quick, down the hall.

Valjean Cosette, would you like to play a game?

Young Cosette Oh, yes. I like games.

Valjean In this one, you need to be very quiet, do you understand?

Young Cosette Yes, Papa.
(Valjean slings his knapsack over his shoulder and picks Cosette up)

Valjean Now, hold onto your doll very tightly. We are going to sneak out through the alleyway, all right?
(Cosette nods. A loud pounding knock is heard just offstage)
(Tense music begins)

Gendarme 4 Under the authority of the Prefect of Police, open this door!
(Valjean quickly exits away from the sound of the Gendarmes)
(A loud crashing sound effect of a kicked-in door is heard)
(Javert, a couple Gendarmes and a woman quickly step into the room. Javert briefly looks around, then directs his attention to the woman)

Javert Who did you say rents this room?

Peasant 2 An older gentleman and his granddaughter— they paid in advance, two months rent.

Javert When did they leave?

Peasant 2 I haven't seen them go out yet today.

Javert Then they must still be in the area. Search the streets!
(Lights down on stage, lights shift up on the floor where Valjean and Young Cosette are quickly stealing across the floor. They quickly duck out of sight as Javert and his Gendarmes come into view)

Javert Block off the Petit-picpus. Set the patrols on the Rue Droit-Mur. Now!

Gendarme 4 Yes, Inspector.
(They all move off quickly, splitting in different directions. The lights follow Valjean and Young Cosette as they clandestinely travel up and over the stage. Unintelligible shouting is heard offstage at a distance. Before Valjean exits completely, a Gendarme spots him and sounds the alarm)

Gendarme 4 I've found him! I've found him!
(Valjean runs off the stage quickly followed by the Gendarme. Lights change, Valjean quickly enters from the floor and climbs onto the stage. He sets down Young Cosette and looks around in every direction, seemingly cornered)

Young Cosette Papa, I'm scared. Who is coming down the street?

Valjean Shhh! You must be brave, it will be all right.

Javert *(Offstage)* Down the alleyway!

(Valjean looks around desperately and feels the wall on one side of the stage, seemingly looking for a handhold. He kneels down to Young Cosette)

Valjean Cosette, can you hold on to me very tightly?

Young Cosette Yes, Papa.

Javert *(Offstage, but louder)* Search the cul-de-sac!

Valjean And don't look down.

(Valjean looks toward the direction of Javert's voice, then back at the wall. He picks up Young Cosette. Blackout)

(Heartbeat sound effect)

(Lights back up. Javert and several Gendarmes rush onto an empty stage, looking around, perplexed)

Gendarme 4 He was here— I saw him enter, I'm sure of it!

Javert Check the buildings, the doors; break them down if you have to!

(The Gendarmes exit the way they came, leaving Javert to seethe alone. Blackout)

(Music fades)

SCENE 12: CONVENT

(Lights up. Low light through foliage gobos filters down on the stage. A small box garden of squashes is on one side of the stage. Valjean enters with Young Cosette, who is clinging to his back, arms around his neck on the other side of the stage. Valjean is breathing heavily out of exhaustion and exertion. He sets Young Cosette down and kneels on the stage beside her. He starts to massage and flex his arms, obviously in pain)

Young Cosette Where are we Papa?

Valjean We've climbed over the wall into a garden little one.

Young Cosette Whose garden?

Valjean I don't know.

(There is movement from the other side of the stage. Fauchelevent enters with a wheelbarrow and tools and sets about 'tisking' over a box garden of squashes. Valjean tenses)

Young Cosette *(Quietly)* Are we still playing the game? Should I still be quiet?

Valjean *(Whispering)* Yes. Stay hidden, don't come out till I tell you.

(Young Cosette crouches slightly out of sight. Valjean starts to approach Fauchelevent, who reacts to the stranger's presence by brandishing a gardening implement)

Fauchelevent Who's there? Show yourself!

Valjean I mean you no harm, monsieur.

Fauchelevent What are you doing here?

Valjean Please— a hundred francs for you if you give me refuge for the night.

Fauchelevent *(Astonished)* Father Madeleine? Oh, heavens! How did you get in here? And what has happened to you? No tie, not hat, no coat?

(Fauchelevent lowers the garden implement and advances towards Valjean)

Valjean I know you, don't I?

Fauchelevent It's me, Fauchelevent! You saved my life— the cart? Remember?

Valjean Yes, I remember you. What are you doing here?

Fauchelevent Covering my squashes, there will be a frost tonight.

Valjean No, I mean, what are you doing **here**?

Fauchelevent I am the gardener here. Surely you remember. You were the one who recommended me for the position. This is the Convent of the Petit-Picpus!

Valjean Gracious Providence!

Fauchelevent But, now really, how the devil did you manage to get in? No matter if you are a saint, you are still a man; and no men come in here, except for myself.

Valjean I can't say. Fauchelevent, please, I need somewhere safe to stay.

Fauchelevent Oh, well, I have a small shanty, over there, behind the ruins of the old convent. No one ever goes there.

Valjean Thank you. Can I ask another favor?

Fauchelevent Father Madeleine, you saved my life— you can ask for anything and I would do it, with a joyful

heart.

Valjean Hear me out before you answer. I have a child with me who needs to be cared for and I need shelter for more than just one night. But I cannot answer any questions and you must not tell anyone that I am here.

Fauchelevant A child?

Valjean Yes. *(Calling)* Cosette, come out.
(Cosette walks toward Valjean and clings to his leg, slightly hiding behind him, gazing wide-eyed at Fauchelevant)

Fauchelevant *(Sighs heavily)* That's a large favor.

Valjean I wouldn't ask if it weren't necessary.

Fauchelevant Well, explaining the child will be easy enough. Many young girls are taught in the convent by the sisters. But you... you wouldn't happen to know anything about gardening?

Valjean *(Chuckling)* I was a pruner once.

Fauchelevant *(Astonished)* How would you feel about being my brother then? Come to help me with the gardens?

Valjean It would be an answer to prayer.
(Fauchelevant kneels down to be eye level with Young Cosette)

Fauchelevant And that would make you my niece... What is your name little mademoiselle?
(Young Cosette looks up at Valjean who gives her a little nod of the head. She releases Valjean's leg and shyly walks toward Fauchelevant)

Young Cosette Cosette.
(Fauchelevant holds out his hand and Cosette solemnly takes it in greeting)
(Blackout)

(Musical transition as stage is cleared)

SCENE 13: THE VOW

(Lights up. Javert enters and stands at attention, hat under his arm, in front of a desk; behind which sits the Prefect of the Police. The Prefect is engaged in paperwork)

Javert Inspector Javert, reporting as ordered.

Prefect Yes, Inspector. I've called you here regarding your recent case. The, uh, escaped convict was it?

Javert Yes, Monsieur le Prefect. We have reports that he was seen along the Rue...

Prefect *(Interrupting)* Yes, well, that is no longer your concern.

Javert Monsieur le Prefect?

Prefect I am reassigning you.

Javert But...

Prefect I've reviewed your record. You have been a competent Inspector, despite your parentage.

Javert I do not see what relevance my parentage has with the current case.

Prefect You are gypsy are you not? You were born and grew up in a prison, I understand. Perhaps it is natural to feel sympathetic with the plight of a convict.

Javert *(Stiffening)* I assure you, Monsieur le Prefect, had my mother or father ever broken their parole, I would have turned them in myself. I do not feel sympathy for those who disrespect the law, I feel contempt for them. They deserve to be caught. They deserve punishment.

Prefect I applaud your zeal, but in this circumstance, I am forced to curb it. You are hereby reassigned to the district of La Buse.

Javert And what of Jean Valjean? He is in the city, Monsieur le Prefect, I saw him!

Prefect *(Angry)* You think you saw him! For three months you have disrupted this city on this mad chase and you have not found this "phantom" convict. You are perhaps too single-minded in your pursuit of this man— too passionate in your duty.

Javert *(Defensive)* Duty is my only passion, Monsieur le Prefect; the pursuit of order, discipline, and justice are the only things in this world that matter. Reason, authority, and vengeance of the law **must be upheld**. Without it we are animals.

Prefect Are you quite through? I do not need a lecture on legal conscience from you! You will be transferred, you will give up this Jean Valjean matter. Do I make myself clear?!

Javert Yes.
Prefect You are dismissed, Inspector.
(Javert snaps to attention and executes a low bow, turns and walks to the side stage. Lights down on stage, specialized light on Javert. Javert uncharacteristically has a tantrum: He makes a guttural sound and throws his hat on the ground, or hits the wall repeatedly with it)
Javert I will find him! No matter the cost—I will find him!
(Blackout)

End of ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1: LEAVING THE CONFINEMENT

(Lights up, filtered through a foliage gobo. Valjean is on stage, dressed in work clothes which are dirty from gardening, with hoe in hand)
Valjean Cosette? Cosette, is that you?
(Grown Cosette, wearing a plain gray convent dress, runs onstage)
Cosette *(Breathless)* Yes, Papa, who else would it be? I'm so sorry, I had to help Sister Celestine with the supper dishes and well, I know how you worry about me when I'm late...
Valjean No, no, I don't worry about you... I just miss you, that's all; your smiling presence brings with it a little piece of paradise to this old man...
Cosette *(Laughing)* You'll never be old. You know, I could feel myself perfectly content to stay in a garden forever.
Valjean What about in a convent?
Cosette *(Sobering)* Reverend Mother has talked to you then?
Valjean Your schooling is almost done and she thinks you would make a good nun. It is a peaceful life...
Cosette But is it the only life? I'm sorry Papa—I—I **am** grateful for everything, to be here and to learn, but my only happy times are when I visit with you and Uncle in the gardens. The birds fly over the walls and even the flowers get to climb over, but I cannot remember a time when I did not live inside them.
Valjean It's not safe outside.
Cosette Papa, you always say that—it's not safe... is there something I should be afraid of?
Valjean No, I wish that you were never afraid. I would wish for you to have everything your heart desires, but it is different outside the convent.
Cosette Is it so wrong to be different?
Valjean Cosette, you must trust my judgment in this. You will see I am right in time.
Cosette *(Quietly)* If you think it is best that I take my vows, then I will. And we shall be happy all our days.
(A bell sounds in the distance)
Cosette It's time to retire. Goodnight Papa.
(Cosette gives Valjean a kiss on the cheek and starts to exit. She passes by Fauchelevent on the way out)
Fauchelevent Cosette—
Cosette Goodnight, Uncle.
Fauchelevent What's wrong with her?
Valjean Nothing.
Fauchelevent Something's wrong—I usually get a hug. And something is wrong with you, too.
Valjean How can you tell that? I never hug you.
Fauchelevent No, but you're usually glowing and smiling after Cosette visits. Did she bring a storm cloud around today?
Valjean She is always sunshine to me. But, I told her she should stay at the convent and take vows to be a nun.

Fauchelevant How long do you think that sunshine will last if she's not shrouded in a black habit all the time? She may not be my real niece, but I know her well. She will **say** she is content here, she will stay for you— she would give her life for you. But this is no place for a lovely young woman.

Valjean Is she a woman already?

Fauchelevant Well, you may not have noticed, but it's been ten years. It's time for her to leave.

Valjean I don't want her to be hurt, I don't want her to know pain or fear— she still has her wings on. I don't want the world to ruin her like it did her mother... I am **afraid** for her.

Fauchelevant Pain and fear are a part of life, and life will happen without your consent, you **cannot** guarantee that she will ever be happy **or** not happy. What you can do, is go with her, dry her tears...

Valjean I cannot leave. You don't understand.

Fauchelevant I understand you are afraid for Cosette. But are you not also afraid for yourself?

Valjean What?

Fauchelevant I am not ignorant of the world **Monsieur Madeleine**. You can be thankful that the nuns never leave their cloisters. A week after I found you in the garden, gendarmes arrived at the gate, looking for a convict with a child.

Valjean And you never reported me?

Fauchelevant I pay attention to actions and I've never seen anything but kindness from you. I don't need to know your past to know that you are a good man or to know that you genuinely care for Cosette.

Valjean So you see why I cannot leave.

Fauchelevant It seems to me that you've just traded one prison for another. That is all well and good for you, but Cosette has a right to know what life is before she gives it up; and to cut her off in advance, from all pleasures of the world, under pretense of saving her from trials, that is taking advantage of her ignorance and isolation. I don't tell you these things to get rid of you, you know. I only speak the truth.

Valjean I didn't know that my "brother" was such a philosopher...

Fauchelevant And I didn't know **my** "brother" was so stubborn... It's time. Time for her to find a husband and have fat, happy children.

Valjean *(Chuckling)* If we **don't** go, will you ever stop nagging me?

Fauchelevant No.

Valjean Then we will leave within the week.

Fauchelevant Will you keep the name Fauchelevant?

Valjean *(Sobering)* I would be honored. It is a good name.

(The two exit, the following line is said as lights fade down)

Fauchelevant Yes it is. Much better than Madeleine— really, whatever persuaded you to take that name?

SCENE 2: REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE PARK

Marius Change! That is what is needed now! Change! France is rotting for want of it! It is time to step out of the darkness of tyranny into the light!
(Lights up. The Luxembourg gardens. Marius is standing on a crate off to one side of the stage, Gavroche at his side. A small crowd of peasants are gathered around Marius as some more wealthy individuals pass by)

Marius From childhood, I was indoctrinated, like you to favor the views of the crown— but I have shed my aristocrat heritage and I have become one of the people! I see their trials and suffering, the starvation, the injustice! I am reminded of a story:
"Two starving children were in the park, so cold and hungry they could barely move. Then came a bourgeois man and his fat-cheeked son. The boy, who had been eating cake, was stuffed full. "You do not need to be hungry to eat cake," said the father. They threw the remaining cake to the swans in the lake because they thought it humane to take pity on animals. When they left, the two starving children ran into the water. That day they ate and drank their meal in that soggy piece of cake."
That is what the bourgeois can offer you! That is how little they care for humanity— they would put you on a rung lower than the animals! Is that the France you would live in? My friends, there is a radiance that is building in the hearts and minds of men and that is revolution! Vive la revolution! Vive la république!