

THE BEST OF TIMES

A musical adaptation of Charles Dickens's  
A Tale of Two Cities

by

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

ERNST DEFARGE.....a wine merchant of St. Antoine, Paris

SIDNEY CARTON.....an English lawyer

GASPARD.....a peasant of St. Antoine

SMALL BOY (inanimate)....his infant son

LUCY MANETTE.....a young woman of London

C.J. STRYVER.....CARTON'S law partner

CHARLES DARNAY.....a French ex-patriot

GABELLE.....military steward to the MARQUIS

MARQUIS D'EVREMONDE.....Lord of St. Antoine

MADAME DEFARGE.....DEFARGE'S wife

BUTCHER.....a merchant of St. Antoine

MAKER OF CANDLES.....a merchant of St. Antoine

JOHN BARSAD.....a French jailor

DR. ALEXANDER MANETTE....LUCY'S father

JERRY CRUNCHER.....groundskeeper to STRYVER and CARTON

MISS PROSS.....the MANETTE housekeeper

LITTLE LUCY (inanimate)..infant daughter of LUCY MANETTE

TOWNSPEOPLE OF PARIS

Scenes and musical numbers

Act I

Prologue and Scene I

The St. Antoine Square in Paris, 1785. THE BEST OF TIMES

Scene 2

Cell #105, North Tower of the Bastille, immediately following  
THE COBBLER'S SONG (A BETTER PLACE)

Scene 3

The law offices of Stryver and Carton, London. Two years later.  
THE LION AND THE JACKAL  
IT IS GIVEN TO US

Scene 4

The living room of the Manette house, London. Shortly thereafter.  
IF I WERE HE

Scene 5

The Defarge's wine shop, St. Antoine, Paris. A few days later.  
THE WINE SHALL FLOW

Scene 6

The Manette living room. Two years later.  
THE INNOCENT FELLOW  
A COMPROMISE

Scene 7

A church altar in London and the St Antoine Square (split stage).  
One month later, spring of 1789.  
IF I WERE HE (Reprise)

Scene 8

The study of the MARQUIS D'EVREMONDE, Paris. July of 1790.  
THE WINE SHALL FLOW (Reprise)

Scene 9

The law offices of STRYVER and CARTON. A few weeks later.  
IT IS GIVEN TO US (Reprise).

ACT II

Scene 1. The St. Antoine Square, Paris. One year later.  
THE CITIZEN'S PRAYER

Scene 2. The DEFARGES wine shop. Immediately following  
MY COUNTRY, MY LIFE

Scene 3. The Manette living room and cell #105, North Tower (split  
stage). Immediately following.  
THE COBBLER'S SONG (Reprise).

Scene 4. Carton's apartments in London. A few days later.  
A HAND OF CARDS  
IT IS GIVEN TO US (Reprise)

Scene 5. Cell #105. Later that night and a darkened Manette window,  
simultaneously.  
A BETTER PLACE (Reprise).

**THE BEST OF TIMES**

ACT I

PROLOGUE AND SCENE I

Early morning on the day of the tally in the St. Antoine district of Paris. The peasant, GASPARD, and his CHILD are huddled asleep in a corner of the St. Antoine Square. A bell chimes in the distance. The year is 1785.

Entering from a wine shop is ERNST DEFARGE, a purposeful man of forty whom life has made to look twenty years older. He is accompanied by SIDNEY CARTON, a man of about the same age. CARTON is slovenly dressed for a lawyer. He has been drinking. Both men wear coats against the night's chill. There is music under throughout the scene.

CARTON (raising a flask to his lips): They said they'd be here at three.

DEFARGE: Monsieur Carton, he is not going anywhere.

CARTON: It is not him I'm worried about. Times being what they are, any coach is fair game for robbers and cutthroats.

He returns the flask to his coat. GASPARD, awakened by the voices, approaches carrying his CHILD.

GASPARD: Is there anything for us today?

DEFARGE: I cannot give you anything, my friend, until the Marquis makes his tally.

GASPARD nods in understanding and returns to his original place. As he does so, LUCY MANETTE, C.J. STRYVER, and CHARLES DARNAY enter hurriedly. LUCY is a beautiful woman in her early twenties; STRYVER, a rotund, genial man of forty. DARNAY is a young man of thirty. Except for the fact that he is impeccably dressed, he and CARTON could pass for brothers.

STRYVER: Ah! Sidney! Sidney! Thank the Lord you're still here.

CARTON (with whimsical sharpness): Stryver, where have you been? When you say three, I should think it means three, not twenty minutes past.

STRYVER (ignoring him): Sidney, you remember Charles Darnay? He worked with us on the Barsad affair? I thought he would be of use here in France.

DARNEY (stepping forward): Sidney. (There is no reaction from CARTON.)

STRYVER (continuing): And this is Miss Manette.

LUCY (extending her hand): Mr. Carton. (He takes it obligingly.)

STRYVER: And you must be Monsieur DeFarge. Forgive our lateness, sir.

DEFARGE (coldly): It was hardly noticed, Monsieur. I am happy to see so many concerned for the well being of the young lady's father. However, I must warn you all--do not be alarmed at the good doctor's condition.

DARNAY: Exactly what is his condition?

DEFARGE: Why waste time? Twenty years is enough wasted time. You shall see for yourselves. Follow me;

DARNAY (offering his arm): Miss Manette.

LUCY: Thank you, Mr. Darnay.

STRYVER (as the others exit): Sidney, watch yourself. We're here to help the girl and her father, not to cause an incident. Have you been drinking?

CARTON (lying): No.

STRYVER (exiting with CARTON): Good Because after twenty years I'd hate to have an old friend meet a drunken lawyer from Fleet Street.

CARTON: You can rest your case now...

The lights change indicating a passage of time to Scene 1. It is now morning. A hand bell is heard offstage. It accompanies the voice of GABELLE, military steward of the court. He is middle-aged, affluently dressed, and cruel in his manner.

GABELLE (singing):  
ARISE FOR THE MARQUIS!  
ARISE FOR THE MARQUIS!

(Brandishing a whipping crop which he uses liberally on GASPARD, he speaks.) Arise!...Get up, you!...It is the day of the tally. Arise and prepare the street for your Lord!

Several Parisians, three of whom we will recognize as MADAME DEFARGE, the BUTCHER, and the MAKER OF CANDLES, enter. Purposefully but without emotion, they prepare for the arrival of the MARQUIS. A regal banner is draped out, a throne-like chair and counting table are brought on, and one or two oaken wine casks are moved into view. At last the MARQUIS enters.

There is immediate silence. He makes his way to the counting table and sits. The music which has underscored the entire scene continues.  
MARQUIS (singing): MONSIEUR...THE BUTCHER...200 FRANCS!

(The BUTCHER makes his way to the table, pays his tally, and rejoins the others.)

MONSIEUR...THE MAKER OF CANDLES...300 FRANCS!

(He does likewise.)

MONSIEUR...THE VENDOR OF WINE...600 FRANCS!

(MME. DEFARGE steps forward. She is a stern woman of 40 who carries her knitting in one hand and sports a red rose in the kerchief about her head.)

MME. DEFARGE: My husband is not here, My Lord. (She gives him her money.)

MARQUIS: It is all the same, Madame. 600 francs is 600 francs from the purse of a woman as it is from the purse of a man...

HERE IS MY HAND THAT I SHALL TAKE IT.  
HERE IS MY HAND THAT YOU SHALL GIVE.  
IS IT NOT RIGHT THE LORD SHOULD MAKE IT  
PART OF THE LIVES THAT WE LIVE?

(MME. DEFARGE retreats to the others whom the MARQUIS now addresses en masse.)

IS IT NOT ALL THE LAW'S COMMANDING  
THAT I SHALL ASK WHILE YOU OBEY?  
IS IT NOT GOD'S OWN UNDERSTANDING  
THAT YOU SHOULD PAY AS YOU PAY?

WHY DO YOU WEEP AND MOURN YOUR STATION?  
CAN YOU NOT SEE WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE?  
THIS IS A HOLY CONSECRATION  
GIVEN TO ME!

IT IS THE BEST OF ALL GOD'S SEASONS!

ALL: YES, MY LORD.

MARQUIS: IT IS THE NOBLEST OF HIS CLIMES!

ALL: YES, MY LORD.

MARQUIS: IT IS THE GREATEST OF HIS REASONS!

ALL: YES, MY LORD.

MARQUIS: IT IS THE BEST OF ALL HIS TIMES!

(The music continues.) This is a great day, people of St. Antoine!  
Celebrate it! Celebrate it!

ALL:  
HERE IS OUR HAND THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE IT  
HERE IS OUR HAND THAT WE MAY GIVE.

MARQUIS:  
PAY ME MY FEE.  
GIVE INTO MY HAND  
NOW.

YES IT IS RIGHT THE LORD SHOULD MAKE IT  
PART OF THE LIVES THAT WE LIVE.

YES IT IS ALL THE LAW'S COMMANDING  
THAT YOU SHOULD ASK WHILE WE OBEY.  
YES IT IS GOD'S OWN UNDERSTANDING  
THAT WE SHOULD PAY AS WE PAY.

INTO MY HAND NOW.  
PAY ME MY FEE NOW.

LET US NOT WEEP AND MOURN OUR STATION  
LET US OBEY THAT WE MIGHT SEE.

WHY DO YOU WEEP...  
CAN YOU NOT SEE WHAT  
YOU MUST...

THIS IS A HOLY CONSECRATION  
GIVEN TO THEE.

THIS IS...  
GIVEN TO ME.

IT IS THE BEST OF ALL GOD'S SEASONS  
IT IS THE NOBLEST OF HIS CLIMES.  
IT IS THE GREATEST OF HIS REASONS  
IT IS THE BEST OF ALL HIS TIMES.

IT IS...

(The music continues under. GASPARD now approaches the MARQUIS,  
improvising cries for bread and food. The MARQUIS looks at him  
disdainfully.)

GASPARD: Food, My Lord. Bread...for the hungry...for my child...

MARQUIS: Silence! Am I now to return what I have just earned? (GASPARD  
lowers his head, backing away, while the MARQUIS turns to GABELLE.) From  
whom are we purchasing, Gabelle?

GABELLE: Monsieur and Madame DeFarge, My Lord.

MARQUIS (spying the wine casks and turning to GASPARD): You there! If you  
wish to eat, take up those casks!

GASPARD: But they are heavy, My Lord, and I cannot leave my child  
unattended.

MARQUIS: If they are heavy, then set the child aside.

GASPARD: But My Lord...

MARQUIS: Set the child aside, I say! (He reaches for GABELLE'S whip.)

GASPARD: I cannot, My Lord.

MARQUIS (to GABELLE): They are all worthless. They do nothing but beg. (to GASPARD) I warn you, fellow, do as I bid. Set the child down!

GASPARD (defiantly): I will not, My Lord!

MARQUIS (striking him): How dare you answer me! How...dare... you...answer!...

The MARQUIS continues his assault, adding libbing epithets and expressions of anger. The blows of his whip make their way from GASPARD to the infant he has continued to hold in his arms. Finally, GASPARD utters a retaliatory cry, grabs the whip from the MARQUIS and without thinking strikes him back. As he does so, he realizes what he has done and freezes. GABELLE rushes to him and removes the whip from his hands. The MARQUIS rearranges his clothing with exceptional coolness.

MARQUIS (calmly): Gabelle, dispatch the child.

GABELLE: My Lord?

MARQUIS (with sudden fury): I said dispatch the child! (GABELLE hesitates.) Must I do everything myself? (He draws his sword.) Fetch the child!

GABELLE sets the infant before the MARQUIS, then holds the others at bay with his own sword.

GASPARD (as the MARQUIS prepares to strike): No! No, My Lord! I'll do as you say!

The MARQUIS casts a glance at him and thrusts his blade home. GASPARD cries out but is again restrained by GABELLE'S sword. He is now quickly approached by MME. DEFARGE who has been restrained with the others.

MME. DEFARGE: No, my friend. No. You must be a brave man. It is better for the child to die so than live. It has died in a moment without pain. Could it have lived an hour as happily?

MARQUIS: You are a philosopher, Madame DeFarge, vendor of wine. (He tosses a coin at her.) Here, for the wine you will not sell today. (He turns.) Come, Gabelle. (They both exit.)

The lights dim. GASPARD is led gently away by the others, holding the dead infant in his arms. MME. DEFARGE remains in a center spot and draws out a dagger which she clutches to her breast.

MME. DEFARGE: It could not have lived an hour as happily.

The spot dims to black as the music segues to Scene 2.

Scene 2.

A single ray of light coming from above rises slowly on cell #105, North Tower, Bastille. Outside the cell door stands JOHN BARSAD, turnkey.

Inside, sitting at a makeshift cobbler's bench, is DR. ALEXANDER MANETTE. He has an unfinished shoe before him along with miscellaneous tools and scraps of material. He is a man of sixty who bears the physical and emotional scars of twenty years of solitary confinement.

MANETTE (to BARSAD): Have you seen my leather?... (BARSAD ignores him, glances at his watch and exits. MANETTE searches among his scraps and finds a piece of leather.) Ah...now...the needle... (He takes up his sewing and begins to work. The music becomes more rhythmic. Mechanically and with a forlorn voice, he sings.)

I TAKE MY THREAD AND DRAW IT SO...  
I TIE IT FAST AS I HAVE DONE BEFORE...  
IT IS THE ONLY WORK I KNOW...  
AND IT SHALL LAST...  
UNTIL I SEE MY HOME ONCE MORE.

The orchestra picks up his strain and continues it while he hums intermittently, buried in his work. BARSAD returns accompanied by STRYVER, DARNAY, LUCY, CARTON, and DEFARGE. DARNAY takes out a wallet and hands BARSAD a clip of money. BARSAD gives DARNAY his keys, shakes his hand, and exits. DARNAY unlocks the door. MANETTE is now aware of their presence but he continues to work as if a recognition of them would bring him harm.

DEFARGE (from the doorway): Good day.

MANETTE (still looking down at his work): Good day...

DEFARGE: You are hard at work, I see.

MANETTE: Yes...I am working...

DEFARGE: I want to let in more light. Can you bear a little more?

MANETTE (looking up): What did you say?...

CARTON (impulsively, from the doorway): He wants to let in more light.

STRYVER (whispering): Sh! Sidney!

DEFARGE: I say, can you bear more light?

MANETTE: I must bear it, if you let it in...

DEFARGE crosses to the window, then to MANETTE who has resumed his work.

DEFARGE: Are you going to finish that pair of shoes today?

MANETTE: What did you say?

DEFARGE: Do you mean to finish that pair of shoes today?

MANETTE: I can't say that I mean to...I suppose so...I don't know...

DEFARGE: You have visitors. You see? (He motions to STRYVER and DARNAY.)  
Come.

They step forward.

STRYVER: Good day, Monsieur. (pause, no reaction) It is a lovely shoe you  
have there. Who made it?

MANETTE (looking up again) Did you ask my name?...

STRYVER: Assuredly, sir. I did.

MANETTE (to STRYVER): 105 North Tower.

DEFARGE: Is that all?

MANETTE (to DEFARGE): 105 North Tower.

He resumes his work. DARNAY steps to him.

DARNAY: You are not a shoemaker by trade?

MANETTE (turning to the new voice): I am not a shoemaker by  
trade?...No...I am not a shoemaker by trade. I...I learned it here. I  
taught myself. I asked leave to...(His thoughts trail away and he goes  
back to his sewing.) I asked leave to teach myself, and I got it with much  
difficulty after a very long while...And I have made shoes ever since...

CARTON (impatiently): Dr. Manette, do you remember nothing of  
Monsieur Stryver?

STRYVER (annoyed): Sidney, please!

LUCY (crossing to her father): Wherever you learned, Monsieur, it is a  
beautiful shoe.

The others are startled by her manner. They retreat, leaving her alone  
with MANETTE.

MANETTE: What did you say?...

LUCY: It is a beautiful shoe. Will you show me how you did it?

MANETTE (singing): I TAKE MY THREAD...

LUCY (singing): YOU TAKE YOUR THREAD...

MANETTE: AND DRAW IT SO...

LUCY: AND DRAW IT SO...

BOTH: AND TIE IT FAST AS I (YOU) HAVE DONE BEFORE...

LUCY takes the work from his hands as if from a child's and begins to pack his things as she continues the song. Fascinated by her gentleness and the strength of her aria, MANETTE watches her in silence.

LUCY:

I KNOW THAT IT IS ALL YOU KNOW  
BUT THAT IT PAST NOW, THAT IS PAST NOW.  
AND I CAN SEE A BETTER PLACE  
BEYOND THESE WALLS, BEYOND THIS DOOR  
WHERE YOU WILL WALK AMONG YOUR FELLOW MAN  
AS YOU HAVE DONE, AND YOU WILL KNOW THE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN  
BEFORE.

(The music continues under.)

(spoken) I know a place where you can make shoes even more beautiful than these. Would you like that?

MANETTE: I suppose so...

STRYVER: Pardon me, but is he fit for the journey?

DEFARGE: More fit for that, I think, than to remain here.

STRYVER: In that case, it is business, Monsieur, and we had better arrange for a coach.

He exits, taking CARTON and the others with him. LUCY and MANETTE are now alone. LUCY picks up her father's tools and places her shawl on his shoulders. MANETTE is somewhat frightened. He turns to her.

MANETTE: May I hold my work...please?...

LUCY gives him his unfinished shoe and takes his hand as she guides him toward the cell floor.

LUCY:

COME TAKE MY HAND  
AND HOLD IT SO  
AND LET US WALK BEYOND THIS PRISON DOOR  
IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER PLACE  
TO WHICH WE GO...

MANETTE (interrupting her song): I knew a lawyer once by the name of Stryver...It was in London...

LUCY (hiding her joy): Yes. Yes. In London. (She finishes the song as they exit.)

THAN YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN BEFORE.

The lights dim on an empty cell.

Scene 3.

Two years later. The dingy offices of STRYVER and CARTON, ESQ. A law firm shingle is visible as are the simple desk and chairs which furnish the office. The desk is strewn with papers and empty liquor bottles.

As the lights rise, CARTON is asleep in his chair with his feet on his desk. STRYVER is asleep in his chair. There are used glasses next to each. After a moment there is a pounding on the front door.

JERRY (from offstage): Mr. Stryver! Mr. Carton! (No reply. He pounds again, then tries the doorknob and enters. JERRY CRUNCHER is the lawyers' Cockney, middle-aged errand boy.) Well...looky here! The two of ya a-bloody sleeping on the job! (He crosses to CARTON and shakes him gently.) Ten o'clock, sir.

CARTON (waking): What's the matter?

JERRY: Ten o'clock, sir.

CARTON: Ten at night?

JERRY: Morning, sir. Ten in the morning.

CARTON: Ah yes, morning. I remember morning.

JERRY: Can I get ya anything, sir?

CARTON: Some damp towels, Jerry...

TOGETHER: ...and the washbasin.

JERRY exits. CARTON slowly crosses to STRYVER.

CARTON: Stryver? (no reaction) Stryver! (no reaction)

JERRY re-enters with basin and towels and hands them to CARTON who promptly dumps the water on STRYVER'S face, turns, and nonchalantly walks back to his desk, wrapping the towels around his head.

STRYVER (sitting up brightly): Good morning, Sidney...Jerry...

JERRY: Can I get ya anything, sir?

STRYVER: How about some...

TOGETHER: ...damp towels and a washbasin.

JERRY exits again.

STRYVER: Had a cupful, did we?

CARTON (back in his original position): We did.

STRYVER: But now it's morning. (He looks at his watch.) Ten o'clock.

CARTON: Do you chime, too?

STRYVER (rising and arranging papers) Work's to be done, Sidney. You've got some boiling down to do on the Williams, and I've got to go to the Old Bailey on the Richardson.

JERRY (re-entering): Where shall I put them, sir?

STRYVER (motioning to his desk): Right here is fine. Now, Jerry, please have a look at the outside and announce any visitors to Mr. Carton. I'll be off shortly...

TOGETHER: ...to the Old Bailey for the Richardson case...

STRYVER (without a beat): Very good, Jerry, very good.

JERRY: Impressed, are ya?

STRYVER: You should do as well with the groundskeeping. Now off with you! (JERRY exits. STRYVER glances over at CARTON who has not moved.) Sidney, would you help me with these? If I'm to be at court soon, I'd best be sound. (CARTON grunts and crosses slowly. During the following he arranges the towels about STRYVER'S face and head.) We've got to put an end to these Bachanalian revels.

CARTON: Why?

STRYVER (stumbling a bit): Because...well...for one thing...how would it look if a client were to walk in now?

CARTON: I don't care.

STRYVER: What has roughened your temper, Sidney? I can remember the old Shrewsbury days when we could drink all night, work all day, and still laugh at the headmaster.

CARTON: You were laughing because the old fool never realized that I was doing your work for you.

STRYVER: Tut! Tut! It was of your own choosing.

CARTON: That was always my way, I suppose.

STRYVER: A lame way, Sidney. It summoned no energy or purpose for yourself. (He is now covered with towels.) Look at me.

CARTON (suppressing a laugh): Don't force me. You look like a damn mummy.

STRYVER (pulling the towels from his face): How have I done what I've done? How do I do what I do?

CARTON: Partly by paying me to help you.

STRYVER: That's not what I mean, Sidney. A man can choose to be either of two things in this world. He can choose to be a jackal... (music beings under) or he can choose to be a lion.

CARTON: Please save your metaphors for a time of day when my brain can comprehend them.

STRYVER (packing his briefcase as he goes): Oh, look here...

A JACKAL, DEAR SIDNEY, IS A CURIOUS BIRD  
OF A VERY AMBIVALENT SORT.  
CONTENTED HE IS TO REMAIN IN HIS NEST  
WHILE THE HUNTING AND STALKING ARE DONE BY THE REST  
TILL THE QUARRY IS FINALLY CAUGHT.

CARTON: And very smart of him, too.

STRYVER: Is it?

BUT THE LION, DEAR SIDNEY, IS NOT A BIRD  
CONTENTED TO REST IN A TREE.  
HE ROAMS THE FOREST IN SEARCH OF HIS PREY  
ASSERTING HIS PROWESS IN A LIONLY WAY  
TILL HE CATCHES HIS QUARRY AT THE END OF HIS DAY.  
THE JACKAL IS YOU, AND THE LION IS ME!

CARTON: In the first place, a jackal is not a bird. And in the second, it is not worth the air to chastise me. One is born to do what one does. You were always in the front rank, and I was always behind.

STRYVER: I had to get into the front rank. I wasn't put there.

CARTON (sitting up and fixing himself a drink): We were all put there, and none of us had any say in the matter...

SO PLEASE DON'T TELL ME THAT A BIRD OR A BEAST  
CAN CHOOSE WHAT HE WISHES TO BE.  
I SIMPLY DON'T BELIEVE THAT THE CREATURES ON EARTH  
HAVE THE POWER TO RECKON FROM THE DAY OF THEIR BIRTH  
THE EXTENT OF THEIR NATURE OR THE STATE OF THEIR WORTH.  
AND THE THING THAT IS TRUE FOR THEM  
IS THE THING THAT IS TRUE FOR YOU AND ME!

Cheers! (He gulps down the drink.)

STRYVER: Ah, Sidney, Sidney. Why do you choose what you choose?

CARTON: My dear Stryver, that we are what we are is no fault of mine. You were always somewhere, and I was always nowhere.

STRYVER: And whose fault was that?

CARTON: I'm not sure it wasn't yours. (changing the subject) Now I cannot think of a gloomier way to start the day than talking of our past. Unless...it's starting the day without another drink. (He pours himself a second glassful.) Now say "good morning" while I work on the Williams.

STRYVER (rising to go): Good morning, my friend. I guess I'm off. (exiting) Keep an eye on Jerry and an eye on your work. (over his shoulder) And an eye on yourself.

CARTON (calling after him): You're a damn good lawyer, Stryver, but you can't count.

He resumes his original position once more. The door opens. JERRY enters with LUCY.

JERRY: Mr. Carton, sir?

CARTON (eyes close): Yes...

JERRY: You've a visitor, sir.

CARTON: No visitors...Can't you see I'm resting?

LUCY: No. But I can see you're drunk and look like a creature from I-don't-know-where.

CARTON (still in the same position): Well, I do know where, and I'm going back there if you don't mind. Good day.

LUCY: If you won't stand up and greet me like a gentleman, I've a good mind to tell you exactly where you can go.

CARTON (removing his towels and rising): Miss Manette?

LUCY: Good day, Mr. Carton.

CARTON: My apologies. I didn't realize it was you.

LUCY: Is Mr. Stryver here?

CARTON: No. He's at the Old Bailey.

LUCY: Then he knows.

CARTON: Knows what?

LUCY: That Charles has been arrested.

CARTON (flippant): Charles Darnay arrested? For what?

LUCY: Treason, I think.

CARTON: That's ridiculous. Against whom?

LUCY: The French court. He's being detained for extradition.

CARTON (more seriously): Who's charging him?

LUCY: Do you remember the guard at my father's cell?

CARTON: Barsad. But that was two years ago. Don't tell me Darnay was foolish enough to see him again.

LUCY: He hasn't I'm sure of it.

CARTON: How do you know?

LUCY: Because he's been here in London teaching French.

CARTON: And now you want to help him.

LUCY: Of course. If someone doesn't, he'll be convicted and quartered.

JERRY: Quartered? Isn't that when they draw ya onto a rack to be half hung? Then they takes ya down 'n slices ya up before her own face? Then yer insides are taken out 'n burnt while ya looks on? 'N then yer head is chopped off 'n yer cut up into four parts?

CARTON: Jerry, have a look at the outside. (JERRY exits.)  
(to LUCY) It's out of the question, Miss Manette. We used him as an operative in a clandestine matter. To acknowledge him now would bring great danger to you and your father--not to mention this law firm.

LUCY: How can you be so calculating about it?

CARTON: He knew the risks when he joined us.

LUCY: This is not a jungle where one turns away from one's fellow man.

Music begins under.

CARTON (fixing another drink): Don't be too sure.

LUCY: No, Mr. Carton...

I WON'T BELIEVE WE WERE PLACED ON THIS EARTH  
TO DO AS THE ANIMALS DO.  
THE JACKAL MAY PREY AND THE LION MAY KILL,  
BUT A MAN, MR. CARTON, CAN EXERT HIS OWN WILL.  
I'VE BEEN TAUGHT IT ALL MY LIFE.  
I BELIEVE IN IT STILL,  
AND I KNOW THAT YOU DO, TOO.  
YOU MUST BELIEVE IT, TOO.

The music changes character, and she addresses him directly in a voice more plaintive now than angry.

FOR WHY DID YOU GO TO A FAR AWAY SHORE

FOR A MAN YOU HAD NEVER KNOWN?  
WAS IT SIMPLY YOUR WORK, OR THE WORTH OF YOUR FEE,  
WHICH PROPELLED YOU THAT DAY THROUGH AN ENEMY SEA?  
OR WAS IT THE THOUGHT THAT THE MAN WOULD BE FREE,  
THAT HIS TORTURE WAS SOMEHOW YOUR OWN?

IT IS GIVEN TO US TO HOLD OUT OUR HAND  
WHETHER HERE IN OUR HOME OR A FAR AWAY LAND,  
WHETHER DESTINED TO WIN OR DESTINED TO LOSE.  
IT IS GIVEN TO US,  
BY THE GRACE OF OUR GOD,  
TO CHOOSE.

The music continues under.

CARTON (much softened): It would have to be a brilliant defense to save him.

LUCY: Then you will have to find it, Mr. Carton.

She exits. CARTON sips his drink slowly.

CARTON: ...A brilliant defense...(calling) Jerry! (JERRY enters.) Jerry, prepare a coach at once...

TOGETHER: ...for the Old Bailey.

JERRY (as CARTON looks at him amazed): Two years, sir, and you haven't been able to refuse her yet.

JERRY exits. CARTON finishes his drink slowly as the lights fade, and the music segues to Scene 4.

Scene 4.

The lights rise on the living room of the Manette house. The furniture is usual except for a rude cobbler's bench which lies almost unnoticed in a corner. There are exits leading to a second floor, a kitchen, and the street.

We hear a knock at the front door. MISS PROSS, LUCY'S buxom but proper governess, enters from the kitchen, stirring a bowl of batter.

PROSS: Who is it?

JERRY (offstage): It's me...Jerry Cruncher.

PROSS (dropping to her knees, face toward the heavens, but still stirring): Dear Lord above, they're reached a verdict.

She puts the bowl down and starts to pray. After a pause, JERRY opens the door and enters. He stares at her for a moment.

JERRY: Bust me if ya ain't at it again!

PROSS (eyes closed, hands clasped): Just tell me, Jerry...is he innocent or guilty?

JERRY: I haven't got a notion! They only sent me on to tell you they'd be here with the verdict shortly. So get up off-a yer knees, 'n save yer floppin' for Sundays. It's none of His business anyway.

PROSS (rising and resuming her stirring): I'm only saying my prayers (aiming the spoon at him) as we all should! There's no harm in that!

JERRY (indicating spoon and bowl): And what's this, then, yer Bible?

PROSS: I'm making muffins for my Ladybird's tea, if you don't mind. You know they always calmed her so when she was little.

JERRY (dipping his fingers in the batter): Did you say muffins, Prossie? Hot muffins? (His eyes are riveted to the bowl which she clutches to her bosom.) All big...'n round...'n just a-waitin' for me hands?

PROSS (shoving the bowl into his midriff): The only thing your hands are going to do, Mr. Cruncher, is stir this batter! (JERRY takes the bowl and promptly flops down on his own knees.) Now what are you doing?

JERRY: You pray for what you want, dear Lady, 'n I'll pray for what I want.

There is another knock at the front door.

PROSS: Dear Lord above, they're here. Jerry, get up off your knees and take that into the kitchen. (calling upstairs) Miss Lucy? Miss Lucy, the word's come!

JERRY exits. PROSS crosses toward the front door. LUCY hurries down the stairs.

LUCY: I'll get it, Miss Pross. (She opens the door.)

CARTON (stepping in): Well, you got your brilliant defense.

LUCY: Acquitted?

CARTON (taking off his coat): On all counts.

PROSS (dropping to her knees once more): Thank the Lord above!

CARTON: You're welcome.

PROSS (rising): Oh, and you, too, Mr. Carton.

LUCY: Miss Pross, will you take Mr. Carton's things into the other room, please? (PROSS takes his coat and exits. LUCY ushers him to a chair.) Indeed, Mr. Carton, thank you, too.

CARTON: You may thank me with a drink.

LUCY: Port?

CARTON: As good as any.

LUCY (pouring his wine): I hope this will have some good effect on Father.

CARTON: Is his condition still unchanged, then?

LUCY: On the contrary. I have new hopes every day. Charles has been doing wonders for him.

She hands him the glass.

CARTON: Thank you.

LUCY: Where is Charles?

CARTON: Oh, Stryver's bringing him. There are always papers to fill out after one of these things.

LUCY: I hope it won't take too long.

Again there is a knock at the door.

CARTON: Apparently not.

LUCY (opening the door to admit STRYVER and DARNAY): Oh, Charles, I've heard! (she embraces him) It's wonderful! (to STRYVER) Thank you!

STRYVER: You may thank me with a drink.

LUCY: I think we all deserve a drink.

STRYVER (as LUCY pours wine for everyone): If it's not too boastful, I think my idea of using Sidney to claim a case of mistaken identity was the key.

LUCY: What do you mean?

STRYVER: Why, just look at them, Miss Manette. (indicating CARTON and DARNAY) If Sidney would dress a bit more neatly, they could pass for brothers. All I had to do was establish that, and then no jury in the world would have convicted Charles beyond a reasonable doubt.

By this time the wine has been served.

LUCY: Then I propose a toast. To you, sir, for your brilliant defense, to Charles for his freedom, and to Mr. Carton for having the good sense to look like a brother.

ALL: Cheers!

LUCY (to STRYVER and DARNAY): Let's tell Father.

DARNAY (as LUCY and STRYVER move toward the stairs): I'll be there in a minute. (They exit. He turns to CARTON.) Stryver may take the credit, but I know it was really you. (offering his hand) Thank you.

CARTON (refusing the hand and taking another drink): It serves Barsad right for trying to cover up the fact that he accepted a bribe by accusing you. So I neither want your thanks nor merit any.

DARNAY: Nevertheless, you have it. (trying to force his way past CARTON'S coldness) You know, when I agreed to help you get the doctor out of prison, I never realized how dangerous it might become. (CARTON continues to drink.) How did you and Stryver get involved with him in the first place?

CARTON: It was the doctor's own doing. His wife died shortly before he was sentenced, so he entrusted the guardianship of Lucy to Stryver's father. Stryver and I simply inherited the responsibility when we took over the firm.

DARNAY: Then when did Miss Pross come along?

CARTON: Stryver's father engaged her to raise the child.

DARNAY: Well, you all did an admirable job.

CARTON: I don't believe I did anything.

He fixes another drink.

DARNAY: Well, I believe you did a great deal.

CARTON: We are not much alike in that respect. (He drinks the entire glass and pours another.) Indeed I begin to think we are not much alike in any respect. A toast, Mr. Darnay?

DARNAY: I...I think not. They're expecting me upstairs. Thank you again.

He exits. CARTON toasts himself, downs the drink and fixes yet another. PROSS enters.

CARTON (to PROSS): She's a fair young lady to be pitied by and wept for. I wonder how it feels.

PROSS (seeing his condition): Shall I call you a coach, sir?

CARTON (continuing) Is it worth being tried for one's life, Miss Pross, to be the object of such sympathy?

JERRY enters.

PROSS: Jerry, please fetch a coach for Mr. Carton.

JERRY exits.

CARTON: Do you think I'm drunk, Miss Pross?

PROSS: I think you've been drinking, Mr. Carton.

CARTON: You know I've been drinking. (He swallows what is left in his glass.) You should also know that I am a disappointed drudge, Miss Pross. I care for no man on earth and no man cares for me.

PROSS: That is much to be regretted, sir. You might have used your talents better.

CARTON: May so, maybe not. (He fills his glass again. Music begins under.) Do you think I like him? Why should I like a man just because he resembles me? And if I were to change places with him, would she have cared as much? (He moves downstage into a solo spot.)

IF I WERE HE,  
IF I WERE SOMEONE ELSE  
WOULD SHE HAVE PITIED ME?  
IF THINGS WERE CHANGED,  
AND CIRCUMSTANCES FOUND  
THAT THEY WERE REARRANGED,  
WOULD SHE HAVE PITIED ME?

FOR WERE I IN HIS PLACE  
I WOULD NOT HAVE HIS WISDOM.  
NOR COULD I FACE THE WORLD  
WITH HALF THE GRACE  
HE SHOWED TO ME.  
IF THINGS WERE CHANGED  
AND I WERE HE.

(The music continues under.) So you see, Miss Pross, (he drinks) the simple fact that we look alike means very little, for there is very little in me to love. I am, as I say, no more than a disappointed drudge.

FOR WERE I IN HIS PLACE  
I WOULD NOT HAVE HIS WISDOM.  
NOR COULD I FACE THE WORLD  
WITH HALF THE GRACE  
HE SHOWED TO ME.

IF I WERE HE,  
THOUGH ALL THAT HE COMMANDS  
WERE ISSUED FORTH INTO MY HANDS,  
I WOULD NOT LOVE HER STILL  
AND SHE WOULD NOT LOVE ME.

Blackout.

Scene 5.

The lights rise on the interior of the DeFarges' wine shop. Two days have passed. Present are MADAME DEFARGE, the BUTCHER, and the MAKER OF CANDLES. The men wear their characteristic stocking caps in a mixture of drab colors. There is a table with a vase of red roses at which MME. DEFARGE sits knitting. A door leads to the street. The customers are talking loudly. GABELLE enters, ringing his hand chime.

GABELLE:

Your Lord, the Marquis d'Evremonde!

The talking stops as the MARQUIS enters, pushing GASPARD ahead of him with the ever-present whipping crop.

MARQUIS: Move, will you? Move! You are forever in my way! Why don't you get off the street? Why don't you go home to your children?

GASPARD: My child is dead, Your Grace.

MARQUIS: Then find yourself a job or you may find yourself in prison as a vagrant.

MME. DEFARGE (interrupting but still looking down at her knitting): Gaspard, you are late. I was expecting you two hours ago. Get an apron and prepare the wine. (looking at the MARQUIS) You will join us, My Lord? Gaspard, a glass for His Grace.

GASPARD obeys her directions.

MARQUIS (crossing to her): I did not come here to drink, Madame. My funds are low this month. You owe me a surcharge.

MME. DEFARGE: It was not posted that our tax would be raised, You Grace.

MARQUIS: The law does not require me to post anything, Madame. If you are wealthy enough to hire this useless beggar (indicating GASPARD), then you are wealthy enough to pay me. (There is a stir through the others. He turns to them.) Take care, citizens. Today it is the wine shop. Tomorrow it could be any of you...the Butcher...the Maker of Candles...

MME. DEFARGE has collected some coins and placed them in a purse.

MME. DEFARGE: It is an honor to be the first to contribute, My Lord. (She gives him the money and raises her own glass.) Will you join us?

The MARQUIS picks up the glass which GASPARD has prepared for him and faces her. There is an awkward silence.

MAKER OF CANDLES: A toast, Your Grace...(sings unaccompanied)

AS THE TREE IN THE FOREST  
SHALL BEAR US OUR FOOD

(The BUTCHER joins him.)

AS THE FLOW IN THE MEADOW  
SHALL STAND

(The others join in. The tempo picks up.)

AS THE HARVEST IS GOOD  
SO THE WINE SHALL FLOW.  
THE WINE SHALL FLOW  
THROUGH THE LAND.

(All are now standing, arms extended toward the MARQUIS, singing louder and louder.)

ALL:

AS THE TREE IN THE FOREST  
SHALL BEAR US OUR FOOD,  
AS THE FLOW IN THE MEADOW  
SHALL STAND,  
AS THE HARVEST IS GOOD  
SO THE WINE SHALL FLOW.  
THE WINE SHALL FLOW  
THROUGH THE LAND.  
AS THE HARVEST IS GOOD  
SO THE WINE SHALL FLOW,  
THE WINE SHALL FLOW  
THROUGH THE LAND.

At the end they remain with their glasses pointed toward the MARQUIS who drinks uneasily, puts his glass down, and exits with GABELLE. As he does so, ALL follow him with extended arms, not drinking their own wine until he has gone. The music fades out, and the normal chatter resumes.

MAKER OF CANDLES: The drink is bitter today, Madame DeFarge.

MME. DEFARGE (knitting again): The drink is bitter every day, my good friend.

MAKER OF CANDLES (crossing to her, his voice low): Any word yet?

MME. DEFARGE: Not yet.

MAKER OF CANDLES: When will we know?

MME. DEFARGE: Soon. (GASPARD moves toward the door.) Gaspard! I have only wine, my friend, but you are welcome to it. Stay and be warm.

GASPARD: You have always been kind to me, Madame DeFarge.

He pours himself a glassful.

MME. DEFARGE: Kind, my friend? Kind? This is not kind. Kind would be to give you bread. How can I be kind when our money is swallowed up in taxes?

BUTCHER: We must be patient. Wait. I see a feast for us in the future.

MME. DEFARGE (knitting faster) A feast! A feast indeed!

ERNST DEFARGE enters with BARSAD, both in drab stocking caps.

GASPARD (finishing his wine and moving toward the door): Thank you again.

MME. DEFARGE: No, my friend. Stay. There are things for you to hear.

She reaches for one of the roses and places it in her hair.

DEFARGE (to the BUTCHER, as he turns his cap inside out to reveal a red lining): Good day, Jacques.

BUTCHER (turning his hat so that it too is red): Good day.

At this point all except GASPARD, BARSAD, and the DEFARGES begin to drift out gradually.

DEFARGE (to the BUTCHER as they pass): I am happy to see that even in these times we have so many customers...Jacques...

BUTCHER: Indeed...Jacques...

He exits.

DEFARGE (crossing to his wife): My dear, we have walked a long distance in the cold. Have you no wine for use?

MME. DEFARGE (without looking up from her knitting): Gaspard, would you pour Monsieur Barsad and my husband some wine? And another glass for yourself.

He does so.

BARSAD: You work hard, Madame.

MME. DEFARGE: Yes. I have a good deal to do.

BARSAD: What do you make?

MME. DEFARGE: Many things.

BARSAD: For instance?

MME. DEFARGE: For instance...(she looks at him) shrouds. (GASPARD serves the wine.) To shrouds, Monsieur Barsad?

BARSAD (toasting): To shrouds.

They drink.

MME. DEFARGE: What news from abroad, Monsieur?

BARSAD: You are a vendor of wine, Madame. I am a vendor of information.

MME. DEFARGE: Then where is the money for my wine, Monsieur?

BARSAD (tossing a gold coin onto the counter): Here. And where is the money for my information?

DEFARGE (tossing the coin back): Here...Monsieur.

BARSAD: Unfortunately, my information is of a vintage year-- which is more than I can say for your wine. (He gestures for more money.)

MME. DEFARGE: Be careful, Monsieur Barsad. The shroud I knit could easily bear your name. Tell us what we wish to know.

BARSAD (finishing his drink): Acquitted.

MME. DEFARGE (still knitting): Good. By what reason?

BARSAD: By reason of a clever lawyer.

MME. DEFARGE: Clever in what way, Monsieur?

BARSAD: When they took the doctor, did you not notice that Carton and Darnay looked remarkably alike?

DEFARGE: In stature, yes, Monsieur. But not in dress.

BARSAD: Ah, but in the darkness of the tower...could you have sworn to the difference?

MME. DEFARGE: And how did you swear?

BARSAD: Vendors of information take no sides, Madame. We only protect ourselves.

MME. DEFARGE (angrily): You need not have protected yourself, Monsieur, against the charge of allowing a prisoner to escape, Monsieur, by accusing a good Frenchman like Darnay. He is one of us.

BARSAD: I merely told them that Darnay had posed as an official for the court with orders to take Manette away for questioning, Madame. It was a harmless enough statement and one difficult to disprove. As you see, Darnay was easily acquitted.

MME. DEFARGE: You said too much. You are not as clever as the lawyer. Is that all you have to tell us?

BARSAD: For the present.

MME. DEFARGE: Then there is the door.

BARSAD (with mock courtesy): It is always a pleasure doing business with you.

As he exits and during the ensuing dialogue, the customers whom we saw earlier re-enter. Each now wears a red stocking cap.

MME. DEFARGE: I think I will register his name.

GASPARD: In what register, Madame DeFarge?

MME. DEFARGE: I knit the names of the enemies of France into this register, my friend. (She holds up her needlework.) And I pray that I will live to see the register fulfilled.

DEFARGE: Patience, my dear. Nothing we do is done in vain. I, too, wish to see our work completed, but the list is long and we are few in number.

MME. DEFARGE (turning to the room): Not so...Jacques...(She holds up her glass in a toast to comrades.)

AS THE TREE IN THE FOREST  
SHALL BEAR US OUR FOOD,  
AS THE PLOW IN THE MEADOW  
SHALL STAND, AS THE PEOPLE ARE STRONG  
SO THE GRAPE WILL BE CRUSHED  
AND THE WINE SHALL FLOW THROUGH THE LAND!

(Music continues under.) Barsad has informed us that our Frenchman is still free! The day will soon come when we can deliver our message!

MAKER OF CANDLES: Let us deliver it to Gabelle!

Voices assent.

BUTCHER: To Gabelle, then to the Marquis! And all his heirs!

Again, the assent.

MME. DEFARGE (with greater and greater intensity): And the messenger, my friends?

ALL: Gaspard! Gaspard!

They surround him and prepare a mock coronation for him, removing his tattered jacket and clothing him in one of their own. They form a procession and lead him to a chair which has been placed on one of the tables. As the music builds, he ascends it majestically, bearing in his hand not a scepter but a knife. Their voices rise triumphantly in song.

ALL:

AS THE PEOPLE ARE STRONG  
SO THE WINE SHALL FLOW  
THE WINE SHALL FLOW

THROUGH THE LAND!

GASPARD holds the knife aloft while behind him the tri-color of the Revolution is unfurled as the music ends.

Blackout.

Scene 6.

Two years later. The lights rise on the MANETTE living room. It is early evening. JERRY and MISS PROSS are seated. There is a tray with tea and muffins in front of them. PROSS is wailing.

PROSS (crying): Ohhh! My ladybird! My little ladybird! Ohhh!

JERRY: Come on, now, Prossie. Ya gotta stop that cryin'.

PROSS (pulling away): Men! They've all been trying for years to take my Lucy's affection away from me. First the doctor...

JERRY: But he's her father!

PROSS: Nevertheless, he's been trying to take her from me. And now... (She starts to cry again.) Ohhh!

JERRY: Bust me, Prossie. She's just growin' up!

PROSS (crossing herself): Growing up! Ugh, those words!

JERRY: If it weren't for those words--growin' up, 'n gettin' married, 'n havin' children--you wouldn't be here today, unless yer mother was an easy one...which is difficult to believe considerin' you're such a hard one.

PROSS (crossing herself again and dropping to her knees): God rest her soul. (turning on JERRY) And you stop talking about my mother like that or I'll pour this hot tea all over you!

JERRY: Couldn't make me any warmer than I am just a-sittin' next to ya.

PROSS: What?

JERRY: I'm wild for ya, Prossie. Couldn't ya tell? I'm wild about every inch of ya...except yer floppin' 'n prayin', of course.

PROSS: You are?

JERRY: I think you should forget about yer little ladybird 'n get yerself hitched up, if ya know what I mean.

PROSS: What do you mean, Mr. Cruncher?

JERRY: I mean you 'n... (He points to himself.)

PROSS (crossing herself): Dear God!

JERRY: Not Him! Me!

PROSS: Out of the question!

JERRY: What's wrong with you 'n me?

PROSS: It would never work! I'm a religious, upstanding woman with great social ties in the community. And besides, you don't understand the slightest thing about the male-female relationship!

JERRY: I could learn to be upstandin', Prossie (he rises)...and religious (he drops to his knees), goddam it! (he crosses himself) And I've been tryin' to be social with ya. Ya just won't let me! Now as for me understandin' women, I understand all I need to know. A man has to be strong, at all times.

PROSS: Put it out of your head and have another muffin.

JERRY (rising) But I want you, Prossie. You and yer muffins...as often as possible.

PROSS (sternly) Have some tea!

JERRY: Don't change the subject with food! I won't be taken in. I tell you a man can choose to be either of two things in this world. He can be innocent 'n weak (music beings under)...or 'e can be strong 'n wise.

PROSS: Do tell!

JERRY: It's the truth, Prossie...

THE INNOCENT FELLOW IS A CURIOUS BIRD  
OF A VERY SUSCEPTIBLE LOT.  
CONTENTED HE IS TO BE FED 'N CAJOLED  
BY THE WOMAN HE'S PROMISED TO HAVE 'N TO HOLD  
FROM THE DAY THAT HE FASTENS THE KNOT!

PROSS: Nonsense!

JERRY: Is it?

BUT THE WISE MAN, MADAME,  
HAS A HOLD ON HIS LIFE  
WITH AS IRON A GRIP AS CAN BE.  
YOU WON'T FIND HIM QUAKIN'  
ON THE DAY THAT HE'S WED,  
WITH HIS HEAD FULL OF RUBBISH  
'N HIS HEART FULL OF DREAD  
'CAUSE HE KNOWS HE'LL BE THE STRONGER  
TILL THE DAY THAT HE'S DEAD  
'N THAT'LL BE THE WAY IT IS  
FOR YOU 'N ME!

Now what do you think of that, Prossie?

PROSS: I think you should have a muffin and sit down, Jerry.

JERRY: No. I mean about men and women.

PROSS: You have a lot to learn, Jerry. (She hands him a muffin. He sits. She rises.)

NOW LET ME BEGIN BY SAYING FROM THE START  
JUST EXACTLY WHAT A MARRIAGE SHOULD DO.  
IT ISN'T A MATTER OF STORM AND STRIFE  
WHERE THE HUSBAND IS HIGHER THAN HIS INNOCENT WIFE,  
MOLESTING HER BODY FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE!  
IT'S A COMPROMISE!  
A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE TWO!

JERRY: A compromise? I think I understand...a compromise.

PROSS:

WHEN A MAN AND A WOMAN MEET  
AND ALL OF THE WORLD IS SWEET AS A BERRY,  
DEAR JERRY,  
IT IS CERTAIN THEY'LL GET ALONG MUCH BETTER  
WITH THE OTHER'S POINT OF VIEW.  
IT'S A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE TWO.

She sits. He rises.

JERRY: You mean...

IF HIS MANNER IS ALWAYS MILD  
INSTEAD OF IT BEIN' WILD 'N BOSSY,  
MISS PROSSIE,  
IT'S FOR CERTAIN THEY'LL GET ALONG MUCH BETTER  
THAN THEY OTHERWISE MIGHT DO  
WITH A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE TWO.

PROSS: Exactly!

IF SHE SHOULD ASK TO SIT...

JERRY (sitting):

HE'LL SIT.

PROSS:

OR ASK TO STAND...

JERRY (standing):

HE'LL STAND.

PROSS:

OR WISH A LITTLE LADYLIKE ROMANCE...

JERRY:

HE'LL ASK TO DANCE.

(Extending his arm) Miss Pross..

PROSS (rising): Mr. Cruncher...

They dance, JERRY making a tiny bit of progress. As they whirl into the last few bars, they sing again...

BOTH:

IT'S A COMPROMISE,  
A COMPROMISE,  
A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE TWO.

They end with PROSS on his lap. He moves to kiss her. She pops a muffin into his mouth, flops to her knees, and crosses herself.

JERRY: What are ya askin' Him for now?

PROSS: A sign. Some sign to tell me what to do with you. You're quite incorrigible.

There is a knock at the door.

JERRY: Well, I'm sure it's not what ya had in mind, but it'll have to do. I'll get it.

He crosses to the door. CARTON enters. He is somber and sober.

CARTON: Hell, Jerry.

JERRY: You're early, Mr. Carton.

CARTON: I've been walking.

JERRY: We was expectin' you 'n Mr. Stryver later on.

CARTON: Good evening, Miss Pross. What are you doing down there?

JERRY: Askin' Him for a last blessin'.

PROSS: What do you mean, a last blessing?

JERRY: No more floppin' afterwards, Prossie. Only in church.

PROSS (rising): What do you mean, no more flopping?

JERRY: I want me house run proper.

PROSS: What? I never said anything...

JERRY: You're not goin' to bless me vittles 'n bless me bacon.

PROSS: You haven't learned a thing, Jerry Cruncher!

She starts toward the kitchen.

JERRY: Ya bless everything! Ya bless the food 'n ya bless the Bible!

PROSS: Not one thing!

She exits slamming the kitchen door.

JERRY (picking up nearby salt and pepper shakers and waving them at the door) Ya bless the salt 'n ya bless the pepper!

He spills some pepper and sneezes.

PROSS (ducking her head out): God bless you!

JERRY: There ya go again! (He exits slamming the front door.) Bust me, Prossie! Just bust me!

CARTON is now alone. LUCY enters down the stairs.

LUCY: What is going on down here? Oh, Mr. Carton.

CARTON: Good evening, Miss Manette.

LUCY: Sit down, please.

She crosses and sits next to him.

CARTON: Thank you. (He pauses.) Might I...might I have some tea?

LUCY (surprised): Tea?...Certainly.

She pours.

CARTON: Thank you for asking me to dinner, Miss Manette.

LUCY: Thank you for coming. (She hands him the tea.) Forgive me for saying so, but you don't look well, Mr. Carton.

CARTON: The life I lead is not conducive to good health.

LUCY: Then why not lead a better life?

CARTON: It's too late for that. I shall never be better than I am. I shall merely sink lower and be worse. (He pauses, nursing his tea.) I'd like to say something to you, Miss Manette. I pray you hear me out.

LUCY: Of course, Mr. Carton.

Music under.

CARTON (after another pause): If it had been possible, Miss Manette..that you could have returned the love of the man you see before you...that wasted, drunken creature...he would be aware right now, in spite of how happy you would make him, that eventually he would bring you to sorrow and..and to misery...I know very well you can have no tenderness for me...

LUCY (interrupting): But that's not so.

CARTON (continuing)...and I ask for none. I'm...I'm thankful in a way...

LUCY (concerned): Why are you telling me this?

CARTON: Please hear me a little longer. (He pauses.) I want you to know that you have been like...the last dream of my life. The sight of you has stirred old shadows that I had thought long dead in me. Since I've met you, I have heard the whispers of old voices compelling me upward. But when I rise to meet them it is all a dream...a dream that ends in nothing and leaves the sleeper where he lay. I only wanted you to know that you inspired it.

Music ends.

LUCY: I'm very moved, Mr. Carton.

CARTON: I hope you let this knowledge go no further.

LUCY: Of course.

CARTON: Not even to your closest and dearest.

LUCY: The secret is ours, and I promise to respect it.

DARNEY (calling from the stairs): Lucy, what are you doing down there?

CARTON (softly): God bless you, Lucy.

LUCY: It's Mr. Carton, Charles.

DARNAY (entering): Carton. I'm glad you're here. Has Lucy told you yet?

CARTON: Told me what?

LUCY: I was hoping to wait until dinner, Charles. Besides, we've been talking about other matters.

CARTON: What is it?

DARNEY: Why, we've decided to be married.

CARTON (suddenly sullen): Married?

DARNEY: Yes. Next month.

CARTON: Congratulations. This calls for a drink. I'll pour. (He does so.)  
To...Mr. and Mrs. Darnay.

DARNAY: Charles and Lucy, Sidney.

CARTON: To their happiness and their future. Cheers.

DARNAY: Thank you.

LUCY: Thank you, dear Sidney.

DARNEY (raising his glass): And to our best man?

LUCY: Please. We've both grown quite fond of you during your visits these  
past few months.

DARNEY: What do you say, Sidney?

CARTON (without harshness): I'd...I'd rather not. Let Stryver take care of  
it. Please.

DARNAY: I wish you'd reconsider...

LUCY (cutting in): I understand, Sidney. Just having you for a friend is  
honor enough.

CARTON: Thank you.

DARNAY (to LUCY): My dear, Sidney and I have some legal affairs  
to discuss. Why don't you go up and say good night to Father.

LUCY: Of course, Charles. (She offers her hand.) I'll see you at dinner,  
Sidney.

CARTON (taking it): Congratulations. (She exits. DARNAY refills their  
glasses.) Cheers.

They both drink.

DARNEY (after a pause): Now that I'm to be married, I think there are some  
things you should know. Can I trust you?

CARTON: I'm your lawyer. Our communications are privileged.

DARNAY: It was no sudden whim that allowed me to help you with the  
doctor's escape.

CARTON: What was it, then?

DARNAY: I am the heir to the Marquis d'Evremonde. (CARTON puts his drink  
down.) It is a title I did not ask for and do not want now. I despise what

my uncle and his kind have done to the people of France. Look what they did to Doctor Manette simply for treating a few peasants.

CARTON: What do you wish of me?

DARNEY (taking out some papers): These are the deeds to my property in France.

CARTON (taking the papers): Stryver tells me there's trouble in St. Antoine.

DARNAY: There is trouble all over France.

CARTON: For the sake of your own safety then, and the safety of your wife, I suggest you do not return there.

DARNAY; I shall go back once more.

CARTON: Why?

DARNAY: To secure the papers of my birth. They must be destroyed.

CARTON: Why can't you have the Marquis send them?

DARNAY: He doesn't know my sentiments and would certainly not approve of them if he did. He's counting on me to take over the Estate after his death. He would never send them. If anything, he would expose me as his heir.

CARTON: When will you leave?

DARNAY: As soon after the wedding as I can arrange.

CARTON (raising his glass): Then I shall drink to your success.

DARNAY: I feel very close to you tonight, Sidney. Almost as if we were brothers. And I know Lucy feels as I do. I pray you find for yourself the happiness we have found. (He drinks. There is a knock at the front door.) Ah, that must be Stryver.

The lights begin to change. CARTON steps forward into a spot and turns to watch the others as STRYVER enters and LUCY descends the stairs in her wedding gown. The lights fade behind them and music starts as we segue to Scene 7.

Scene 7.

STRYVER, DARNAY, and LUCY make their way to the altar of a chapel which appears through the change of lights. CARTON moves downstage and begins a reprise of the song he sang in Scene 4 while the wedding takes place behind him.

CARTON:

FOR WERE I IN HIS PLACE  
I WOULD NOT HAVE HIS WISDOM  
NOR WOULD I FACE THE WORLD  
WITH HALF THE GRACE  
HE SHOWED TO ME.

IF I WERE HE,  
THOUGH ALL THAT HE COMMANDS  
WERE ISSUED FORTH INTO MY HANDS,  
I WOULD NOT LOVE HER STILL  
AND SHE WOULD NOT LOVE ME.

The song and ceremony end together. DARNAY takes LUCY'S face in his hands. ALL freeze as CARTON exits and the lights crossfade to the darkened street outside the wine shop. The music changes.

GABELLE enters strolling slowly toward the palace. GASPARD appears behind him, knife drawn. In movements timed to the music, he kills GABELLE and exits.

The lights crossfade again. DARNAY completes his kiss. The music ends and all the lights fade to black.

Scene 8.

July 1789. The lights rise on the study of the MARQUIS. He is seated at a drawing table with CHARLES DARNAY. It is early evening. A decanter of wine and two glasses sit before them. Sounds of a commotion in the street below can be heard. They are faint at the beginning of the scene but build throughout.

MARQUIS (shaking his head): Well... (he rises and paces around looking at DARNAY) Well...you have been a long time coming.

DARNAY: On the contrary, I came as quickly after the wedding as I could.

MARQUIS: The wedding! You should have had it here with your family in attendance.

DARNAY: With your family in attendance. I hardly think you would have given Dr. Manette a proper welcome after imprisoning him for twenty years.

MARQUIS: We are generous, nephew. Things can be forgotten. Things can be forgiven. I would accept an heir to our family name whatever source you would choose.

He serves the wine.

DARNAY (after a pause): And I believe that name to be more detested than any name in France.

MARQUIS: Let us hope so, my nephew. The detesting of the high is the involuntary homage of the low.

DARNAY: There is not a face you can look at in this whole country which looks back at you with anything but fear and anger.

MARQUIS: A compliment to the grandeur of the family merited by the manner in which the family has sustained its grandeur. Ha! (He takes a pinch of snuff.) Repression is the only lasting philosophy. Fear and anger shall keep the dog obedient to the whip as long as this roof shuts out the sky.

DARNAY (quietly): Sir, we have done wrong, and we are reaping the fruits of wrong.

MARQUIS: We have done wrong? (He laughs, pointing first to DARNAY, then to himself.)

DARNAY: Our family...an honorable family whose honor means so much to both of us in such different ways. Even in my father's time we did a world of wrong, injuring everyone who came between us and our pleasure.

MARQUIS: Why speak of your father's time when it is equally mine?

DARNAY: Because I wish to separate him from his brother.

MARQUIS (taking some snuff): Death has done that quite well. (He walks to the window, peering out to investigate the growing noise.) You know, I told the new steward that we were not to be disturbed.

DARNAY (continuing): And death has left me bound to a system that is frightful to me. I am responsible for it but powerless in it.

MARQUIS: Be patient and your time will come. If you wish to change the world, you would do it far better as my successor. As for me, I will die perpetuating the system under which I have lived. Be a rational creature and accept your natural destiny...Or are you lost, Charles?

DARNAY (rising): This property and France are lost to me. I renounce them.

MARQUIS: Oh? Are they both yours to renounce? You may renounce France but the property...

DARNAY (interrupting and building in intensity): Even if it passed from you to me tomorrow...

MARQUIS: Which is not at all probable...

DARNAY: ...Or twenty years from tomorrow...

MARQUIS: You do me too much honor! But still I prefer that supposition.

DARNAY: ...I would abandon it and live elsewhere! It is little to relinquish. It is nothing but a wilderness of misery and ruin. (The MARQUIS laughs.) To eye it is fair enough. But I know it as a crumbling tower of waste, mismanagement, extortion, debt, hunger, disease, oppression, suffering...(The MARQUIS interrupts with laughter and again

takes his snuff.)...And if it ever were to be mine, I would give the land back to the people to let them make it good and honorable again.

MARQUIS (turning on his sharply): And where do you intend to live now? Nations may be renounced. Property may be shed. But a name is a name no matter where you go. If I died tonight, you would still be an Evremonde! My heir and successor!

DARNAY: I shall live in England...

There is a loud burst of noise from outside.

MARQUIS: What the devil was that? (He moves toward the window.)

DARNAY (following him and continuing):...Where my family name is unheard of and not condemned to be hated.

There is now a fiery glow filtering through the night. The MARQUIS crosses toward the door.

MARQUIS: Steward! What was that noise?

DARNAY (continuing)...And to do that I need the papers of my birth!

MARQUIS (opening the door): Steward!

The DEFARGES and GASPARD burst in, weapons drawn. The following lines come quickly and may overlap.

MARQUIS: What are you doing here?

MME. DEFARGE: Take him, Gaspard!

GASPARD (stabbing him): You killed my child! You killed my child!...

MARQUIS (falling): Nephew!

GASPARD kneels limply over the MARQUIS'S body. The BUTCHER and MAKER OF CANDLES enter.

MME. DEFARGE (after a long pause, to DARNAY): Nephew? (She looks at the body.) And heir? (There is no reaction from DARNAY. She curtsies to him.) Your Grace? (She turns to her companions.) Take him away!

The BUTCHER moves to lead GASPARD out while the MAKER OF CANDLES manacles DARNAY.

MAKER OF CANDLES: Where, Citizen?

MME. DEFARGE: The North Tower. (Music begins under. It is a reprise of the song of Revolution sung in Scene 5. It begins slowly and builds in intensity as MME. DEFARGE speaks. DARNAY passes her. She stops him with a hand to his shoulder.) You have lived secretly as a member of the Evremonde family. Your death will not be as secret.

They exit.

DEFARGE: It is very strange to me that after all his help in rescuing the doctor, he should find himself in the same tower.

MME. DEFARGE: Stranger things will happen yet. (She crosses to the MARQUIS'S body, taking his wine glass and raising it aloft.)

(Speaking) The harvest was good tonight, your Grace!  
And the people were strong!  
And the wine has filled the land!

She drinks. The music builds to a crescendo as the lights dim to black. The music then lessens its tension and segues slowly to Scene 9.

Scene 9.

Six months have passed since the wedding. It is afternoon as the lights rise on the offices of STRYVER and CARTON, ESQ. CARTON is asleep at his desk in his customary position. A half bottle of wine and an empty glass lie next to him.

STRYVER bursts in.

STRYVER (entering): Sidney, where are you? (There is no reaction from CARTON. STRYVER crosses to the desk and shakes his partner gently.) What are you doing here? It's after two! (Again, there is no reaction.)

JERRY (ducking his head in the door): Some damp towels and a washbasin, sir?

STRYVER: If you please. (JERRY leaves. STRYVER shakes CARTON a bit more violently.)

CARTON (stirring): Leave me alone.

STRYVER: I will not leave you alone! You were due in court three hours ago, and I've had to go through the embarrassment of an adjournment to come and fetch you! That's the third time this week.

CARTON; That's your business.

STRYVER: Our business, Sidney!

JERRY re-enters with the basin and towels, handing them to STRYVER.

JERRY: Here are the towels, sir.

CARTON: I don't want any towels.

STRYVER: You shall have them, nevertheless! (He begins wrapping CARTON'S head.)

JERRY: Why don't I go outside and tend the grounds?

STRYVER: Good idea.

He exits. STRYVER finishes wrapping CARTON'S head. As he does, CARTON deliberately unwraps his head, STRYVER watching him intently.

STRYVER (after a pause): What is it, Sidney?

CARTON: What is what?

STRYVER: What is it that is making you so bloody disagreeable lately?

CARTON: According to you, I've always been disagreeable.

STRYVER: Don't both defending yourself to me. Ever since Lucy's wedding you've been hell to be with. You're depressed; you're morose; you're drunker than ever; you stay asleep past noon every day--and that's no way to conduct a law firm. People at the Old Bailey are already talking.

CARTON: Stop. You flatter me.

STRYVER: No. You stop. This firm has been in my family for fifty years. We've always taken great pride in our work. I won't have it ruined by your lack of self control! (softening) I need Sidney Carton the lawyer, and Sidney Carton the friend. I don't want to, but if I'm forced, I will survive without either. (gathering his papers and walking to the door) We'll talk more later, if you like. I'll handle it alone this afternoon. (exiting) Be good, Sidney.

CARTON (softly): Be good, Stryver.

He rises slowly and pours a glass of wine. After a moment, JERRY enters.

JERRY: Mr. Carton, Miss Manette is here. She insists on seeing you.

CARTON: Well, show her in.

LUCY (entering quickly): Sidney! You must help me. Charles has been arrested in France.

CARTON: How do you know?

LUCY: I received this today.

She produces a letter. CARTON takes it from her.

CARTON: May I? (he reads it silently, folds it and puts it into his pocket.) I told him not to go.

LUCY: What do you mean, you told him?

CARTON: I told him it would be dangerous.

LUCY: How so?

CARTON: Don't you know why he went?

LUCY: He said it was family business.

CARTON: I should say. Charles is the nephew of the Marquis d'Evremonde. He went to renounce his title. (He takes a drink of the wine.) A noble gesture.

LUCY: But why would that endanger him?

CARTON: These are times of Revolution, Miss Manette, and when people engage in Revolution they often become what they set out to destroy. There is a thirst for blood in France which does not understand noble gestures.

LUCY: You must help him, Sidney.

CARTON: How? His letter says they've denied him counsel. They haven't even set a date for the trial.

LUCY: He says they might allow him a consultant.

CARTON: They've already judged him guilty.

LUCY: But he claims his jailer is understanding. Maybe he would be willing to help.

CARTON: The only thing Monsieur Barsad understands is money. It probably cost Charles half of what he has just to smuggle this letter out.

LUCY: There must be something we can do.

CARTON: I tell you it's hopeless. As long as he lives, he remains a symbol of the old order--an order they are sworn to exterminate. I'm sorry, but for them the mere fact that he exists is enough to convict him.

LUCY: I won't let you bury him before he's dead! It was hopeless once before.

CARTON: There is nothing I can do for him.

LUCY: If not for him, then for his child. (CARTON turns toward her and stares.) Yes, Sidney. His child...

Music begins under.

I WON'T BELIEVE  
YOU WERE PLACED ON THIS EARTH  
TO TURN AWAY AS YOU DO.

I KNOW THERE ARE PEOPLE  
WITH THE POWER TO KILL,  
BUT YOU, MISTER CARTON,

CAN EXERT YOUR OWN WILL.

I'VE BELIEVED IN YOU BEFORE,  
I BELIEVE IN YOU STILL,  
AND I KNOW THAT YOU DO, TOO.  
YOU MUST BELIEVE IT, TOO.

(She moves toward the door.) I shall wait for your answer.

She exits. CARTON pours another drink.

CARTON:

ANY WHY SHOULD I GO  
TO A FAR AWAY SHORE  
FOR A MAN I HAVE HARDLY KNOWN?

IS IT SIMPLY MY WORK  
OR THE WORTH OF MY FEE  
WHICH WOULD SEND ME THIS NIGHT  
THROUGH AN ENEMY SEA?

OR IT IS THE THOUGHT  
THAT THE MAN MIGHT BE FREE?  
THAT HIS TORTURE  
IS SOMEHOW MY OWN?

He puts down the drink, takes out the letter, and begins packing it into his briefcase.

IT IS GIVEN TO ME  
TO HOLD OUT MY HAND,  
WHETHER HERE IN MY HOME  
OR A FAR AWAY LAND,  
WHETHER DESTINED TO WIN,  
OR DESTINED TO LOSE...

(calling) Jerry! Fetch the coach for Dover!

IT IS GIVEN TO ME  
BY THE GRACE OF MY GOD  
TO CHOOSE.

The music swells to a final chord. CARTON exits as the curtain falls on ACT I.

Act II

Scene 1.

One year has passed. The lights rise on the square of St. Antoine. There is a carnival-like atmosphere. The square is in the process of being converted to a courtroom. There are seats for the judges, a witness stand, prisoner's dock, etc. In a corner of the square stands a guillotine, blade raised and poised for use.

GASPARD, ERNST DEFARGE, and the BUTCHER enter robed as judges. They are joined by the MAKER OF CANDLES, dressed as a prosecutor. They make their way solemnly to their places in the "court". Following closely are CARTON and BARSAD, leading a manacled DARNAY. At their appearance MME. DEFARGE, who has been sitting to one side, picks up her knitting, rises, and turns to the procession. ALL sing as they move.

ALL:

AND NOW THE TIME IS HERE  
THAT WE MAY BUILD A BETTER LAND.  
WE BUILD IT NOT IN FEAR  
BUT WITH THE LORD'S OWN GUIDING HAND.

WE ASK HIS HOLY GRACE  
THAT HE MAY BLESS THIS THING WE DO  
THAT HERE MAY BE A PLACE  
IN WHICH OUR CHILDREN LIVE  
TO SEE THEIR FATHER'S WORLD REBORN ANEW.

TO THIS WE BOW OUR HEAD,  
TO THIS WE FALL ON BENDED KNEE,  
TO THIS WE PLEDGE OUR DEAD,  
THAT HERE AMONG US ALL,  
UPON THE BLOOD WHICH WE HAVE SHED,  
FOREVER MORE,  
OUR LAND SHALL BE FREE.

The judges sit, DEFARGE rings a bell and calls the court to order. The music continues under, gradually fading into the dialogue.

DEFARGE: The people against Charles Evremonde. (turning to the dock) Monsieur Evremonde, you are charged with the crime of returning to France as an emigrant of noble birth and of parading under the name of Darnay. For this, the people demand your head. How do you plead?

DARNAY: Not guilty, Monsieur le President.

DEFARGE (turning to the "prosecutor"): Do the people have any witnesses?

MAKER OF CANDLES: One, Your Honor. The people call Madame Therese DeFarge.

MME. DEFARGE takes the stand, knitting in hand.

MAKER OF CANDLES: Do you know the defendant?

MME. DEFARGE (looking down at her needlework): Yes.

MAKER OF CANDLES: Did you have occasion to see him on the evening of July 14th last?

MME. DEFARGE: I did, Monsieur.

MAKER OF CANDLES: Under what circumstances?

MME. DEFARGE (putting her knitting down): I witnessed him in the study of the Marquis d'Evremonde and as the good Gaspard sought his just revenge upon the late Marquis!

MAKER OF CANDLES: Continue.

MME. DEFARGE: I witnessed the Marquis utter in his last breath the word "nephew". And the man to whom he spoke was none other than that man! (She turns and points to DARNAY.)

MAKER OF CANDLES: And did you have occasion to find anything that night which might have a bearing on the charges against him?

MME. DEFARGE (resuming her knitting): I did, Monsieur.

MAKER OF CANDLES: And have you brought it with you now?

MME. DEFARGE: I have it here.

She produces two documents. The "prosecutor" takes them from her and walks to the bench.

MAKER OF CANDLES: Your Honor, I wish to introduce as evidence a passport bearing the name Charles Darnay...(There is a murmur through the court)...and a certificate of birth bearing the name Charles Evremonde!

DEFARGE: Have you any further questions of this witness?

MAKER OF CANDLES: No, Your Honor. The people rest.

MME. DEFARGE rises and starts to leave but is checked by CARTON'S voice.

CARTON (interceding): May I begin my examination, Monsieur le President?

DEFARGE: Good citizens of France...Our English friend has spent many months in preparation for his defense, and even though his credentials are from a foreign court, we owe him the opportunity of presenting that defense. For it must never be said that the people of France have spilled their blood only to become what they set out to destroy. (MME. DEFARGE sits.) Proceed, Monsieur.

CARTON: Thank you, Your Honor. (To MME. DEFARGE) How long have you known the defendant?

MAKER OF CANDLES: Objection! The question is irrelevant.

DEFARGE: Sustained.

CARTON: Then let me ask you, Madame DeFarge, if you have had occasion to work with the defendant in the past?

MAKER OF CANDLES: Objection, Your Honor. The past is not on trial here.

DEFARGE: Sustained.

CARTON (quickly): Have you known him to aid the people of France?

MAKER OF CANDLES: Objection!

DEFARGE: Sustained. Monsieur Carton, the activities of the defendant for or against the people of France are not at issue here. The issue is the matter of his birth. Have you any questions of Madame DeFarge relating to that?

CARTON: No further questions, Your Honor.

DEFARGE (to MME. DEFARGE): You are excused. (She takes her seat.) Are there any witnesses for the defense?

CARTON: I wish to call Charles Darnay.

DEFARGE: Charles Evremonde! You are summoned to the bench.

DARNAY takes the stand.

CARTON: Do you consider yourself an emigrant, Monsieur Darnay?

DARNAY: Not within the sense and spirit of the law, I hope.

CARTON: Why not?

DARNAY: Because I came here voluntarily to relinquish a title and station which were distasteful to me.

MAKE OF CANDLES: Objection! The defendant's motives do not make him any less an Evremonde!

DEFARGE: Sustained.

CARTON: Your Honor, if I am not permitted to introduce any testimony which would shed light on my client's innocence, then the defense which you have granted me will have been in reality denied. (A murmur goes through the court. CARTON continues.) Five years ago, Monsieur Darnay agreed to risk his own life in order to rescue Dr. Alexander Manette, a hero of your own people. (Another murmur.) He has since married the only daughter of Dr. Manette and has chosen to live by his own industry in England rather than on the industry of the overburdened people of France. He did in fact on the eve of his engagement direct me to will his entire estate in France to the people of St. Antoine, the very people who now demand his head. (The court reacts as he withdraws the document.) I have here that will, and if the words "equality and fraternity" have any meaning, I beg you to accept it as evidence of his innocence.

DEFARGE: I do not doubt the authenticity of his will, but it does not alter the certificate of his birth or his illegal re-entry into this country. Have you any questions relating to that?

CARTON (after a long pause): The defense rests.

DEFARGE: You may leave the stand, Monsieur Evremonde.

DARNAY moves back to the dock. CARTON sits beside him. DEFARGE turns to the other judges.

DEFARGE: Are you ready to retire, Citizens?

BUTCHER: There is no need to retire.

DEFARGE: Then how do you vote?

BUTCHER: Death within four and twenty days.

Music begins under.

DEFARGE (calling the court to order with his bell): Charles Evremonde! Charles Evremonde...(DARNAY rises.) I sentence you to be taken from here to the North Tower from whence you have come and from there to the place of your execution on the day appointed. This court is adjourned.

As the music continues, ALL exit except CARTON. The lights change to evening. CARTON appears to walk alone through the streets of Paris. Finally, the lights fade to black, then come up on the interior of the wine shop. During this CARTON has left the stage. We are now in scene 2.

Scene 2.

The lights rise on the wine shop of the DEFARGES. The revolutionaries, wine glasses in hand, sit in a group with MME. DEFARGE. ERNST is standing with his glass next to her. The atmosphere is jovial.

DEFARGE: Jacques!...Jacques!...A toast! To my wife and favorite soldier! The best friend of the people! Therese! Our thanks for bringing an end to Charles Evremonde!

ALL (banging their glasses): Here, here! (etc.)

MME. DEFARGE: An end to but one!

ALL: Here, here! (etc.)

DEFARGE: Enjoy the wine, my friends. Tonight there will be no charge!

They react. As they do, CARTON enters. Almost immediately MME. DEFARGE places a red rose in her hair and takes her place knitting. ERNST takes his place beside her as one by one the others leave. There is silence until all have gone.

CARTON (who has been standing, watching the procession): I hope it wasn't anything I said.

DEFARGE (starting to clear away the glasses): We were just closing, Monsieur.

CARTON: Do I have time for one bumper-full, perhaps?

DEFARGE: Monsieur, we are closed.

CARTON: Monsieur, where I come from, wine shops and taverns open right back up again when I come in. You see (he whispers), I single-handedly support the wine business there.

DEFARGE: France is not England, Monsieur.

CARTON: Ah, but there's no more wine in England. Not a drop left. I drank it all.

MME. DEFARGE (quickly): Surely you didn't come here for wine. Make your point, Monsieur Carton.

CARTON: My point?

MME. DEFARGE: Let us not fence. Englishmen of business do not visit the DeFarges unless they have a point. Now what is yours?

CARTON (after a pause): A retrial.

DEFARGE: Impossible!

MME. DEFARGE: My husband is right. It is out of the question.

CARTON: You know Darnay's trial was unjust. He deserves to be heard again.

MME. DEFARGE: Monsieur Carton. You are a lawyer, true?

CARTON: That is true.

MME. DEFARGE: How can a simple working woman like myself obtain a retrial? I'm a vendor of wine, my good man. You are the lawyer.

CARTON: But they listen to you.

MME. DEFARGE: They listen to the truth.

CARTON: How can you turn your back on a man with whom you've worked so closely? Five years ago you risked your lives together. Now you don't even blink an eye at taking his.

MME. DEFARGE: I'm not taking anyone's life.

CARTON: Perhaps not personally, but you can influence the people who are.

MME. DEFARGE: I influence no one, Monsieur! (Music beings under.) I simply love these people. And if you think they kill for the lust of blood, you are wrong. They are answering for a hundred generations of injustice! (She rises and crosses to CARTON. The lights begin to change as she starts to sing.)

I'LL TELL YOU A TALE, MONSIEUR,  
A TALE OF A GIRL, MONSIEUR.  
HER CLOTHING WAS RAGGED,  
HER FEATURES WERE DRAWN.  
AND THERE ON HER FACE  
WHERE THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ROSES  
THE ROSES WERE GONE.  
SHE WAS BUT TEN, MONSIEUR.

The lights dim behind her. She is now highlighted by a spot.

SHE WORKED IN THE FIELDS, MONSIEUR,  
HER MOTHER BESIDE HER, MONSIEUR.  
A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, A DUTIFUL WIFE,  
TILL ONE DAY A NOBLEMAN  
PASSING THE MEADOW  
APPROACHED WITH HIS KNIFE.

SHE WAS SO YOUNG, MONSIEUR,  
SO WEAK, MONSIEUR,  
THAT WHEN THE MAN BEAT HER AND BEAT HER  
SHE SCARCELY WOULD SPEAK, MONSIEUR.  
HE TOOK OF HIS PLEASURE  
ALONE IN THE FIELD,  
AND AT LAST WHEN SHE CRIED OUT  
HE KILLED HER,  
WHERE ONCE SHE HAD KNEELED.

HE LEFT HER ALONE, MONSIEUR,  
FOR HER HUSBAND TO FIND HER, MONSIEUR.  
THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, THE DUTIFUL WIFE.  
AND I WAS HER DAUGHTER,  
THE HUSBAND, MY FATHER,  
THE WOMAN, MY MOTHER,  
MY COUNTRY, MY LIFE, MONSIEUR!

(The music continues under.) And we must have justice for the wrongs which have been committed.

CARTON (softened): You can't knit away all the wrongs of the past hundred years. You can't kill until there are no more left to kill.

MME. DEFARGE (after a pause): I cannot guarantee a retrial, Monsieur Carton. If, however, the request came from Dr. Manette...

CARTON: But he is in no condition to address the people.

MME. DEFARGE: Perhaps then the wife and young daughter can make the request. That and an appearance from the doctor might just sway the court.

CARTON: When shall I have them come?

MME. DEFARGE: At once, Monsieur. Time is very important.

CARTON: Thank you. Thank you both.

He exits. ERNST crosses to his wife.

DEFARGE: Therese! What are you doing?

MME. DEFARGE (resuming her knitting): There will be no retrial. We will simply have them all!

DEFARGE: Ah, you are a great woman, Therese. A frightfully great woman.

MME. DEFARGE (putting down her knitting once again):

SHE WAS SO YOUNG, MY LOVE.

DEFARGE:

I KNOW.

MME. DEFARGE:

SO YOUNG, MY LOVE.

DEFARGE:

I KNOW.

MME. DEFARGE:

AND HE LEFT HER ALONE, MY LOVE.  
FOR MY FATHER TO FIND HER, MY LOVE.  
THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, THE DUTIFUL WIFE.

BOTH:

AND WE ARE THE CHILDREN,  
AND THEY WERE OUR FATHERS,  
OUR MOTHERS, OUR COUNTRY,  
OUR LIFE!

The lights black out as the orchestra continues to segue into the next scene.

Scene 3.

The lights rise on a split stage. To one side is the MANETTE home; to the other, DARNAY's cell. DR. MANETTE is seated at his bench working on a pair of shoes. LUCY is busy with the baby. DARNAY is seated at a table writing a letter. It is early evening. The door chimes in the MANETTE home.

PROSS (from the kitchen): I'll get it, Miss Lucy.

LUCY: Thank you, Miss Pross.

PROSS bustles from the kitchen to the front door.

PROSS: Who is it?

JERRY (out of breath): It's me, Jerry Cruncher!

PROSS (opening the door): And what do you want, Jerry Cruncher?

JERRY: I don't want nothin'. Mr. Stryver sent me here to give Miss Lucy this. (He draws out an envelope.)

LUCY (jumping to her feet): Is it from France?

JERRY: I think so. Mr. Stryver just received it off the Dover coach.

LUCY (taking the envelope): Let me see it.

The lights rise on DARNAY's cell. Music begins under.

DARNAY (reading his letter as LUCY reads it): Dearest...Take courage. I am well. Sidney has arranged for a retrial but only if you and Father and Little Lucy can come to testify. Please go at once to Sidney's quarters in Paris. Had he been my own brother he could not have done more for us. You cannot answer this. Kiss our child for me.

The lights dim on the cell.

LUCY (to JERRY): Tell Mr. Stryver to make all the arrangements at once.

JERRY: He said we could get a coach tonight.

LUCY: Will he accompany us?

JERRY: He said he would.

LUCY: Tell him we'll be ready within the hour.

JERRY exits. PROSS crosses to the stairs.

PROSS: I'll start packing.

LUCY: Thank you, Miss Pross.

PROSS (pausing on the stairs): Don't worry, Miss Lucy. I'm sure Mr. Charles will be home with us soon.

She exits. LUCY crosses to her father and sits next to him on the bench.

LUCY: We're going to France, Father. Paris. We're going to see Charles! (There is no reaction from him.) If only you could speak, I'm sure you would know the right words to say for him. Perhaps your being there will be good enough. It will have to be.

She rises and gets his coat as the music continues under. Slowly she begins to dress him.

COME TAKE MY HAND  
AND HOLD IT SO  
AND WE SHALL TRY  
TO BRING HIM HOME ONCE MORE.  
HOME FROM THE LAND  
SO FAR AWAY TO WHICH WE GO...

MANETTE (as the orchestra continues:) Paris?

LUCY: Yes, Father. Paris.

MANETTE picks up the baby, cradling it in his arms. With LUCY guiding them, they walk toward the door as the orchestra plays the last line of the song and the lights fade to black.

Scene 4.

Afternoon, two days later. The lights rise on the drawing room of CARTON's suite in Paris. There are two doors, one leading to the bedroom, the other to the street. The room is simply furnished with a table and chairs and, of course, the ever-present brandy and glasses. CARTON is seated playing solitaire. He appears slightly nervous. He glances at his watch, paces to a window, and looks out. He pours himself a glass of brandy. There is a knock at the front door. He downs the brandy, then rushes to the door.

CARTON: Lucy?

BARSAD (from offstage): Let me in...quickly.

CARTON (opening the door): John Barsad! What are you doing here? (BARSAD crosses to the brandy and pours himself a glass.) Help yourself to some brandy.

BARSAD (staring back at him): Thanks. (after gulping the brandy) You are defending Evremonde?

CARTON: I am.

BARSAD: I have some information which might be of value to you.

CARTON: What is it?

BARSAD: It is expensive, Monsieur.

CARTON: Barsad, if I were caught paying you for anything, they'd be sharpening their blade for me next.

BARSAD (rising and crossing): If you don't want the information...

CARTON (stepping in his way): I never said I didn't want it. I just said I wouldn't pay for it.

BARSAD: Well, it doesn't come for nothing.

CARTON: Of course it doesn't. I know you better than that. (crossing to his solitaire game) Perhaps a hand of cards, Monsieur?

Music begins under.

BARSAD: I didn't come here to play games.

CARTON: But so many interesting things are discussed over a hand of cards. Take poker, for example, Monsieur. (He deals out a hand of five-card poker and sings.)

A HAND OF CARDS,

A BIT OF CONVERSATION.

WHAT COULD BE NICER THAN

A FRIENDLY GAME OF CARDS?

What would you say, for example, if I were to open for...two hundred francs?

BARSAD (looking warily at his hand): I would bet four hundred francs.

CARTON: And I would call you, Monsieur. What have you got?

BARSAD: Eights.

CARTON: What a pity. I have only threes, and it's the best hand I've seen all week. (Taking out 400 francs and placing it near BARSAD) You would have just made yourself four hundred francs. (He deals a second hand.)

A HAND OF CARDS, A BIT OF INFORMATION.  
FOR INSTANCE, I RECALL, MONSIEUR,  
YOU WORK AMONG THE GUARDS.

At the prison, Monsieur? In the North Tower?

AND PRISONS ARE SUCH INTERESTING PLACES.  
ONE CAN SEE SO MANY INTERESTING FACES,  
AND HEAR SO MANY INTERESTING STORIES  
IN THE PRISON YARDS.

What stories have you heard, Monsieur?

BARSAD: Rumor has it that Madame DeFarge has lied to you. There isn't going to be a retrial.

CARTON: Nonsense! Why then would she tell me to send for Dr. Manette and the others?

BARSAD: Perhaps to...execute them too, Monsieur?

A HAND OF CARDS,  
AN EXCELLENT DIVERSION,  
WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN  
A FRIENDLY GAME OF CHANCE, SIR?

I think it's your bid.

CARTON: I open for one hundred francs. (He places his money on the table.)

BARSAD (betting with the money from the first hand) Three hundred.  
CARTON (adding 200 francs): If you insist, three hundred. What have you got?

BARSAD: Eights again, Monsieur.

CARTON: What a coincidence! Again I have only threes.

BARSAD (collecting the money and dealing a third hand):

A WINK. A NOD.  
A CASTING OF ASPERSION.  
HERE AND THERE, A QUESTION, SIR,  
AND HERE AND THERE, AN ANSWER.

To all sorts of puzzles, Monsieur.

AND AN ANSWER IS AN INTERESTING THING, SIR.  
AN ANSWER HAS A FINAL KIND OF RING, SIR.  
WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY THE FATALISTIC STING  
OF TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCE, SIR.

For instance, if you were to ask me how one might confirm such a rumor, I would reply that there are lists, Monsieur, of those scheduled for the next day's execution to which occasionally I myself have access. Your bid.

The music fades into the dialogue.

CARTON: Two hundred francs.

BARSAD: Six hundred, Monsieur. This is an excellent hand.

CARTON: Six hundred, then. (He pays.) I have only king high.

BARSAD: A pair of jacks. (He collects the money and tries to stuff the bills into his pocket.) I seem to have no room for my winnings. (Taking out the execution list) Do you mind if I leave this list of names on the table?

CARTON picks up the list, reading it as he walks to the cabinet. BARSAD deals a fourth hand.

CARTON: Are you sure of this?

BARSAD: Yes.

CARTON (pouring a drink): Tell me something. Could an English lawyer visit a prisoner of the French government on short notice?

BARSAD: That depends.

CARTON: On what?

BARSAD: On whether or not he has a friend in the prison.

CARTON: Are you my friend?

BARSAD: I am no one's friend, Monsieur. I am a card player, and another hand awaits you.

CARTON (crossing and examining his cards): I bet one hundred francs.

BARSAD: This hand will cost one thousand francs, Monsieur.

CARTON (after a pause): Let me play these open. I hold five very interesting cards. (pulling one out and laying it face up on the table) Let us call this card (with a French accent) Jean Barsad. A Frenchman. A man of the prisons. Now turnkey, now prisoner. Always spy and secret informer. This is a good card, Monsieur?

BARSAD: Perhaps.

CARTON (pulling out the second card): And this is (with an English accent) John Barsad. An Englishman. Most probably under a false name, whom one can assume is still on the payroll of the aristocratic English government. An excellent card!

BARSAD (nervously): Go on...

CARTON (turning up a third card): And here, a man. Now in the employ of the Republican Government of France, selling information to the attorney of an aristocrat. An enemy of France and freedom! Perhaps a winning card?

BARSAD: Perhaps...

CARTON (pulling the fourth): And now! The man who five years ago accepted a bribe from this aristocrat to release one Dr. Alexander Manette from prison! Only to turn and falsely accuse the aristocrat of treason in an English courtroom! That is a card not easily beaten, is it, Monsieur? (There is no reply.) And I play my ace! (He turns the last card.) It is a document in the office of an English law firm awaiting delivery to the nearest Citizens Committee, explaining the circumstances of the bribe...

BARSAD (interrupting): Don't go on.

CARTON: You reconsider this hand, Monsieur?

BARSAD: I have won enough.

CARTON: Then visits are possible?

BARSAD: Yes, Monsieur. But not escapes.

CARTON: Can you arrange to be the turnkey tonight?

BARSAD: Yes, but there can be no escapes. I am accountable for a prisoner in each cell.

CARTON: Leave here quickly, Barsad. And remember...tonight.

BARSAD (gathering the remainder of his winnings and exiting): I don't know what you're up to, Carton, but I hope to God you don't get me killed.

CARTON (alone): Don't worry, my friend. I won't get you killed.

Music begins under. He crosses to the cabinet, downs a quick brandy, pours another, then slowly starts a game of solitaire but cannot concentrate. He messes up the cards, then takes out BARSAD's execution list and stares at it.)

IT IS GIVEN TO US  
TO HOLD OUT OUR HAND,  
WHETHER SAFE IN OUR HOME,  
OR A FAR AWAY LAND,  
WHETHER DESTINED TO WIN,  
OR DESTINED TO LOSE...

A knock at the door brings him back. He crosses to the door. The music continues for a bit, then fades into the dialogue.

CARTON: Who's there?

STRYVER (from offstage): It's us, Sidney!

CARTON (opening the door): Stryver!

STRYVER, PROSS, JERRY, MANETTE (carrying the baby), and LUCY enter with luggage. The reunion is joyous but restrained as they ad lib greetings. MANETTE finds a chair away from the action.

LUCY; What news of Charles? What about the retrial?

CARTON: I've got news and plans for all of us. First, Jerry. Take the bags downstairs again.

JERRY grunts in dismay but begins to re-collect the luggage.

PROSS (interceding): Not that one. (She takes a carpet bag away from him.) That's for the little one.

CARTON: And I don't think we've been introduced.

LUCY (crossing to the baby): That's right. Sidney, this is Lucy.

CARTON (staring at both of them): She's lovely.

LUCY: Thank you.

CARTON (embarrassed): You can put her to sleep now, Miss Pross...or whatever you do to little babies.

PROSS (leading MANETTE and the baby away): Sleep will do just fine, Mister Carton.

They exit into the other room.

STRYVER (taking CARTON aside): Sidney! What is going on?

CARTON: There's been a change in plans. I believe we are all in great danger.

LUCY (overhearing): What?

CARTON (covering up): I said they haven't set the date for the retrial yet. In the meantime, I have another plan. Now none of you ask any questions. Just do as I say. Stryver, tell Jerry to seek out a coach that will take you to the North Tower tonight after dark. Lucy, what was the last thing you saw Charles wearing?

LUCY: I believe it was his traveling suit and topcoat. Why?

CARTON: No questions. Go with Stryver and find a clothier who has anything similar. You can leave the doctor here.

STRYVER (starting to exit): I hope you know what you're doing.

CARTON: Wait! Before you go...I want to have a word with you.

LUCY (diplomatically): I'll look in on the baby.

CARTON (as she exits toward the bedroom): Tell Miss Pross that Jerry will fetch her and the baby when the coach arrives.

STRYVER(when LUCY has gone): Sidney!

CARTON: Before you start lecturing, I have everything under control.

STRYVER: I never doubted it.

CARTON (handing him his passport): I want you to keep this, Stryver. It's my pass to enter and exit France.

STRYVER: What good will it do you with me?

CARTON: I promise you, it will be used. When the coach arrives, load everyone on it--Pross, Jerry, the doctor, Lucy, the child...

STRYVER: What about you?

CARTON: Wait for no one. No one. Do you understand me? Take the coach to the North Tower. I will meet you there.

STRYVER: But what of your pass?

CARTON: I tell you, my place will be occupied.

STRYVER: I pray you know what you're doing.

CARTON (putting his arm around him): You know prayer has never worked for me.

LUCY re-enters, closing the door behind her.

LUCY: You'll never guess what Miss Pross is doing.

STRYVER: We don't have time for that. Let's go.

They exit. PROSS enters after a moment of silence with a tray in her hands.

PROSS: Muffins for anyone? (looking around) Oh, dear! They've all gone!

She sits down and begins to eat a muffin. There is a knock at the door. She is startled but goes to open it.

PROSS: Jerry?

MME. DEFARGE (as the door opens and she steps inside): The wife of Evremonde! Where is she?

PROSS: Who are you?

MME. DEFARGE: I am a citizen of France!

PROSS: You might, from your appearance, be the wife of Lucifer!

MME. DEFARGE: I am a friend of the Manettes. I have come to pay my respects.

PROSS: I don't believe you. No one was to know we were here. And if your intentions are evil, you can depend on the fact that I will hold my own against them.

MME. DEFARGE: It will do her no good to keep herself concealed from me at this moment. Let me see her! (PROSS doesn't respond.) Go tell her I wish to see her!

PROSS: She is not here!

MME. DEFARGE: Then what is behind that door?

MME. DEFARGE begins to cross to the inner door. PROSS places herself in the way.

PROSS: None of your concern!

MME. DEFARGE: I demand you open that door!

PROSS: If those eyes of yours were a hatchet and I were a mere tree in the forest, they wouldn't get a splinter from me! No! You wicked, foreign woman! I am your match!

MME. DEFARGE: I will take no answers from you! Now move!

PROSS (taking a step forward): I am desperate, Madame! I don't care a tuppence for myself, but I'll not leave a handful of hair upon your head if you put one finger on my Ladybird!

MME. DEFARGE: I have always been in the streets! Nothing has stopped me thus far, and nothing will! (She draws a Derringer.) If I have to kill you, I will have you from that door!

A struggle ensues during which PROSS shows amazing strength in almost lifting MME. DEFARGE from the floor into her arms. As she does so, the pistol falls.

PROSS (as they fight): You shall not shoot me! I am stronger than you, and I bless Heaven for it! (MANETTE appears from the other room, holding the baby. He picks up the gun and aims it at the struggling women.) I will hold you till one or the other of us faints or dies! (The gun goes off. Both women freeze. We are not sure who has been shot until a stunned MISS PROSS releases the body of MME. DEFARGE which crumples to the floor.) Oh, my God! (She looks at MANETTE.) What have we done! (She picks up the limp wrist of MME. DEFARGE and drops it with a thud.) We've killed her! (She

crosses herself and looks upward.) We didn't mean to do it! Do you believe us? (turning to MANETTE) We must get the baby out of here! Go to the door! (He begins to move slowly as she gathers her things together. They gingerly sidestep the body.) Oh, dear! Oh, dear me! (Finally, they exit. There is a moment when nothing happens, then MISS PROSS re-enters the room. Again, she gently steps over the body, gathers her tray and muffins, and as gently, exits for the last time.)

The lights fade slowly to black and, with music under, rise slowly on cell 105, North Tower.

Scene 5.

It is late that evening. Moonlight filters into the cell. DARNAY is seated, writing. He hears footsteps and muffled voices outside the cell.

BARSAD (from the shadows): I've been keeping out of his way. Go in alone. I'll be waiting out here.

DARNAY rises to look out through the bars as CARTON steps out of the shadows. They are almost identically dressed.

DARNAY: Carton?

CARTON (opening the cell door with BARSAD's keys): Of all the people on earth, you least expected to see me.

DARNAY (embracing him): I can scarcely believe it! (He pauses.) You're not a prisoner?

CARTON: No. No...I seem to possess a strange power over your jailkeeper, John Barsad. And by reason of that, I stand before you.

DARNAY: You've come to discuss the retrial.

CARTON: There will be no retrial. I've come to get you out of here.

DARNAY: How?

CARTON: You have no time to ask me how. And I have no time to tell you. You must simply do as I say. Take off your boots. (DARNAY stands motionless.) Put your hands to them, man...don't just stand there! Get on with it!

CARTON sits and begins to undo his boots.

DARNAY (still watching him): Carton, there is no escaping from this place. It cannot be done. You will only die with me. This is madness.

CARTON (looking up): If you think it is such madness, when that door opens and ahead of you lies a tunnel of light leading to your wife and child, then refuse to go. Here. (handing him the boots) Put these on. (DARNAY begins to comply.) The ribbon in your hair next. (DARNAY undoes the

ribbon.) Shake it out so it looks like mine. (He does so.) Here, put this coat on. (They exchange jackets.)

DARNAY (trying to thank him): Carton...

CARTON (crossing to unlock the cell door): Get on your way.

DARNAY (hesitating): It is impossible! What will happen to you after I leave?

CARTON (forcefully): I will be looked after. No, please, get out of here!

He holds the door open. DARNAY crosses to it, starts to leave, and then turns.

DARNAY: God be with you.

He exits. CARTON slowly paces the cell, taking in every inch. He ties his hair back to look like DARNAY's. When he is done...

CARTON: Barsad?

BARSAD (stepping out of the shadows): Carton? Are you alone?

CARTON (handing BARSAD his keys): Yes.

BARSAD: Where is Evremonde?!

CARTON (coyly): I haven't a clue.

BARSAD (panicking): By God, Carton. Someone had better be here in the morning. There were fifty-two names on that list and fifty-two heads had better fall or...

CARTON (interrupting): Always concerned about yourself, Barsad. Be at ease. You will have your quota.

BARSAD (after a pause): You are going? In his place?

CARTON: What was his number?

BARSAD (confused): Twenty three...

CARTON crosses to the table, moves DARNAY's papers aside, and begins to write.

(staring at him) You know, no one would doubt that these are strange times. Two countries...a revolution...the rich, the poor...I've seen it all from the beginning. And I've never known anyone who wasn't looking after himself first. But you. You walk in here, get a number tagged on you, and just sit there? Writing? (He pauses.) Carton? (There is no reaction.) Carton!

CARTON (looking up): You had better call me Evremonde.

BARSAD looks at him, shakes his head, and slowly walks off into the shadows. CARTON finishes his letter, rises, and begins to read it softly. Music starts under.

CARTON; Dearest Lucy...Please do not question what I have done...because...for the first time I am at peace...I see no darkness ahead of me. Rather I see the lives for which I lay down my life peaceful and happy. I see that I hold a sanctuary in their hearts and in the hearts of their descendants. The wasted years are at an end...

AND EVERYTHING I KNEW BEFORE  
WILL ALL BE PAST NOW,  
ALL BE PAST NOW.

FOR I CAN SEE A BETTER PLACE  
BEYOND THESE WALLS,  
BEYOND THIS DOOR,  
WHERE I WILL WALK AMONG MY FELLOW MAN  
AS I HAVE DREAMED.  
AND I WILL KNOW THE THINGS  
THAT I HAVE NEVER KNOWN BEFORE...

The music continues. The lights change to reveal the dawn. BARSAD enters. CARTON quickly seals the letter.

BARSAD: It is time, Monsieur.

CARTON (handing his letter to BARSAD): Here. Make sure that this gets to Stryver in London. He'll know what to do with it. (BARSAD is reluctant to take it. CARTON presses him.) Take it!...In exchange for the dossier we've been keeping on you.

BARSAD accepts the letter and offers his hand.

BARSAD: Goodbye, Monsieur.

He turns and exits. CARTON looks one last time about the room.

CARTON:

IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER THING  
THAT I SHOULD LIVE  
TO SEE MY HOME NO MORE.  
IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER REST  
TO WHICH I GO...

He exits. The music builds behind him. The lights change again to reveal the shadow of a guillotine. A voice from offstage is heard.

VOICE: Number twenty-one! (We hear the whir of a blade falling and then the cheers of the citizens of Paris.) Number twenty-two! (Again a blade falls and the crowd cheers.) Number twenty-three!

Now the blade, visible to the audience, falls. There is a deafening roar from the peasantry, then silence. The music subsides. LUCY appears with the letter in her hand. She stands in a spot at the foot of the guillotine shadow, a shadow which now retreats to black.

LUCY (with music under):

...THAN YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN BEFORE.

The lights slowly fade to black.