

# SYNOPSIS

## ACT ONE

### PROLOGUE: 1815, DIGNE

After 19 years on the chain gang, Jean Valjean finds that the ticket-of-leave he must display condemns him to be an outcast. Only the Bishop of Digne treats him kindly and Valjean, embittered by years of hardship, repays him by stealing some silver. Valjean is caught and brought back by the police and is astonished when the Bishop lies to the police to save him. Valjean decides to start his life anew.

### 1823, MONTREUIL-SUR-MER

Eight years have passed and Valjean, having broken his parole and changed his name to Monsieur Madeleine, has become a factory owner and Mayor. One of his workers, Fantine, has a secret illegitimate child. When the other women discover this, they demand her dismissal.

Desperate for money to pay for medicines for her daughter, Fantine sells her locket, her hair, and then joins the whores in selling herself. Utterly degraded, she gets into a fight with a prospective customer and is about to be taken to prison by Javert when 'The Mayor' arrives and demands she be taken to hospital instead.

The Mayor then rescues a man pinned beneath a cart. Javert is reminded of the abnormal strength of convict 24601 Jean Valjean, who, he says, has just been recaptured. Valjean, unable to see an innocent man go to prison, confesses that he is prisoner 24601.

At the hospital, Valjean promises the dying Fantine to find and look after her daughter Cosette. Javert arrives to arrest him, but Valjean escapes.

### 1823, MONTFERMEIL

Cosette has been lodged with the Thénardiens, who horribly abuse her while indulging their own daughter, Eponine. Valjean pays the Thénardiens to let him take her away to Paris.

### 1832, PARIS

Nine years later, there is unrest in the city because of the likely demise of the popular leader General Lamarque, the only man left in the government who shows any feeling for the poor. A street-gang led by Thénardier and his wife sets upon Jean Valjean and Cosette. They are rescued by Javert, who does not recognise Valjean until he has gone.

The Thénardiens' daughter Eponine, who is secretly in love with the student Marius, reluctantly agrees to help him find Cosette, with whom he has fallen in love.



News of General Lamarque's death circulates in the city and a group of politically-minded students stream out into the streets to whip up support for a revolution.

Cosette is consumed by thoughts of Marius, with whom she has fallen in love. Eponine brings Marius to Cosette and then prevents an attempt by her father's gang to rob Valjean's house. Valjean, convinced it was Javert lurking outside his house, tells Cosette they must prepare to flee the country.

## ACT TWO

The students prepare to build the barricade. Marius, noticing that Eponine has joined the insurrection, sends her away with a letter to Cosette, which is intercepted by Valjean. Eponine decides to rejoin her love at the barricade.

The barricade is built and the revolutionaries defy an army warning to give up or die. Javert is exposed as a police spy. In trying to return to the barricade, Eponine is killed.

Valjean arrives at the barricade in search of Marius. He is given the chance to kill Javert but instead lets him go. The students settle down for a night on the barricade and, in the quiet of the night, Valjean prays to God to save Marius. The next day the rebels are all killed.

Valjean escapes into the sewers with the unconscious Marius. After meeting Thénardier, who is robbing the corpses of the rebels, he comes across Javert once more. He pleads for time to deliver the young man to hospital. Javert lets Valjean go and, his unbending principles of justice having been shattered by Valjean's own mercy, he kills himself.

Unaware of the identity of his rescuer, Marius recovers in Cosette's care. Valjean confesses the truth of his past to Marius and insists he must go away.

At Marius and Cosette's wedding, the Thénardiens try to blackmail Marius. Thénardier says Cosette's 'father' is a murderer and as proof produces a ring which he stole from the corpse the night the barricade fell. It is Marius's own ring and he realises it was Valjean who rescued him that night. He and Cosette go to Valjean where Cosette learns for the first time of her own history before the old man dies.

