

An excerpt from A Tale of Two Cities, adapted by Dwayne Hartford. End of Act One.

(PROSS AND LORRY SIT, HAVING TEA. THESE CHARACTERS REMAIN ON STAGE AS THE MARQUIS APPEARS IN ANOTHER AREA, HIS BEDROOM. DEFARGE AND MME. DEFARGE APPEAR ON THE BALCONIES.)

CARTON

Monsieur the Marquis was upset. These days Monsieur the Marquis was always upset.

MARQUIS

Charles.

CARTON

Upset that he was apparently powerless in stopping his nephew from giving away the entire Evrémonde estate to the local rabble.

MARQUIS

Pearls before swine.

CARTON

It seemed that the only hope for the House of Evrémonde was the birth of another heir and the early death of his nephew.

MARQUIS

This entire business is most upsetting.

CARTON

The trials of life, filled with the guilty and the innocent.

DEFARGE

She was innocent.

MME. DEFARGE

He is guilty.

CARTON

The perpetrators and the victims.

DEFARGE

He must be punished.

MME. DEFARGE

Vengeance is yours for the taking.

(THE SCENE SHIFTS BACK TO THE MANETTE DRAWING ROOM. LORRY STANDS.)

LORRY

Perhaps I should check in on the Doctor before I take my leave.

MISS PROSS

Let him be. A good night's rest does wonders for the body and soul.

LORRY

You are a wise woman. I will stop by in the morning, just to make sure all is well.

(HAMMERING IS HEARD FROM MANETTE'S BEDROOM.)

MISS PROSS

What is that?

LORRY

I don't know. It's coming from the Doctor's room. It sounds like. . . Oh, no.

(SCENE SHIFT TO THE MARQUIS' BEDROOM. THE MARQUIS IS LYING IN BED. HE SITS UP.)

MARQUIS

What was that? Who's there?

(GASPARD STEPS OUT OF THE SHADOWS. HE HOLDS A KNIFE.)

GASPARD

It is I.

MARQUIS

How dare you enter my bedchamber? Who are you?

GASPARD

Do you not recognize me, Monsieur the Marquis?

MARQUIS

Should I? The dogs in my kennel are many.

GASPARD

This dog is holding a knife on the master. Think, Monsieur the Marquis. Think about a trip to Paris. An accident in the street.

DEFARGE

She was innocent

MME. DEFARGE

He is guilty

MARQUIS

An accident? The child that got under my carriage! You are its father!

GASPARD

Yes. Its father.

MARQUIS

What? Now you want money? Here, take it. (THROWS A BAG OF COINS TO HIM) Now get out and crawl back into your sewer.

(SCENE SHIFT TO MANETTE'S BEDROOM. LORRY AND MISS PROSS STAND BY THE DOOR. MANETTE IS AT WORK AT THE SHOE MAKER'S BENCH.)

LORRY

Stay back, Miss Pross. Allow me to speak to him. (APPROACHING MANETTE) I say, old friend, it seems quite late to be working.

MANETTE

I must finish this shoe.

LORRY

Doctor, are you all right? (NO RESPONSE) Doctor, do you recognize me?

(MANETTE LOOKS AT LORRY. GOES BACK TO WORK.)

MISS PROSS

Mr. Lorry!

LORRY

Please, Miss Pross. Silence. (TO MANETTE) What is your name, sir?

MANETTE

My name?

LORRY

Yes, sir. What is your name?

MANETTE

One hundred and five, North Tower.

(MISS PROSS EXITS IN TEARS. LORRY FOLLOWS HER. THE LIGHTS STAY UP ON MANETTE HAMMERING AT THE BENCH. LIGHTS UP ON GASPARD AND THE MARQUIS. THOSE NOT IN THIS SCENE APPEAR ON THE BALCONIES WATCHING THE ACTION.)

GASPARD

I am Jacques.

DEFARGE

I am Jacques.

MARQUIS

Do you plan to murder me?

GASPARD

Did you murder my child?

MME. DEFARGE

I am Jacques.

MARQUIS

I didn't murder anybody. My coachman was driving my carriage.

GASPARD

You ordered him to drive fast through the crowded streets.

DARNAY

I am Jacques.

MARQUIS

I wanted to get home.

GASPARD

And whatever the nobles want, they get.

LUCIE

I am Jacques.

MARQUIS

I didn't make me who I am or what you are. It is the Divine Order.

MISS PROSS

I am Jacques.

GASPARD

That order is yours. It is not Divine.

LORRY

I am Jacques.

MARQUIS

You realize of course that you are a dead man.

ALL ON BALCONIES

I am Jacques.

GASPARD

What do I care? We are already dead.

(ALL ON BALCONIES REPEAT "I AM JACQUES" UNTIL END OF THE SCENE.)

GASPARD

But, we are rising from the grave. The dogs will eat their masters. I will not live to see it, but I will have my own vengeance.

MARQUIS

I gave you money.

GASPARD

And I give you this. Let it drive you fast to your grave. I am Jacques!

(THE LIGHTS BLACKOUT ON THE SCENE AS GASPARD STABS THE MARQUIS. MANETTE'S HAMMER HITS LOUDLY THE MOMENT THAT THE MARQUIS IS STABBED. THE LIGHT ON MANETTE SLOWLY FADES. THE LIGHTS ON CARTON AND THE OTHERS FADE. END ACT ONE.)