

After nineteen years as a prisoner on the chain gang, Jean Valjean is released on parole with his yellow ticket-of-leave, which he must always carry with him, always branding him as a thief. As they settle in for the night, they reflect on their friendships and toast to days gone by. Valjean realizes the depth of Marius's love for Cosette and prays for his safety in the battle that is to come. Marius begs Eponine to help him find Cosette, and, heartbroken, she agrees. One of his factory workers, Fantine, has a secret illegitimate child who lives with innkeepers in another town. Valjean saves him by lifting the cart, a feat that requires extraordinary strength. Gavroche, a street urchin, mingles with beggars and prostitutes. Eponine grudgingly brings Marius to Cosette's home, and then stops an attempted robbery by her father's gang at Valjean's house. When Javert does eventually find him, Valjean entreats him for time to deliver Marius to a hospital before surrendering to Javert. Marius also grieves over the loss of his friends, and wonders about his rescuer as he recuperates. He is grateful but confesses the truth about his past to Marius, explaining that Cosette knows nothing about his real identity and to stay would disgrace and endanger them both. Only the Bishop of Digne invites him in and treats him with compassion. Eight years pass and Valjean, now known as Monsieur Madeleine, is now a factory owner and the mayor of a small town. The foreman, whose advances she has rejected, fires her. Valjean, who has not told Cosette of his past, prepares to move them away, afraid that Javert has finally discovered him. Javert pretends to ally with the students, Gavroche identifies he as a spy and he is tied up, to be dealt with later. Valjean takes the unconscious Marius down a manhole into the sewer to protect him. Javert returns to the barricade to look for Valjean's body. Javert reluctantly agrees and says he'll be waiting. As a result, Marius learns that it was Valjean who saved him the night the barricade fell. In desperation, Valjean steals some silver. Valjean realizes he has given him a chance to regain his soul. The other women at the factory discover this and demand her discharge, insisting she will be nothing but trouble. Now without an income, Fantine is desperate for money to pay for medicines for her supposedly sick daughter. She sells her locket, then her hair, and eventually becomes a prostitute. Her new trade disgusts her, and, when she refuses a prospective customer, he claims she attacked him. Suddenly, an elderly man is pinned under a runaway cart. Javert remembers the unusual strength of Prisoner 24601 (Valjean), a parole-breaker whom he has been hunting for years. Valjean refuses to let an innocent man go to prison for him, and confesses to the court that he is Prisoner 24601. At the hospital, as Fantine is dying, Valjean promises to take care of her daughter, Cosette. Eponine returns, but has been shot crossing the barricade.