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Victor Hugo, Les Misérables (Simplified Edition by ChatGPT)

Part 1

In the year 1815, Bishop Myriel lived in a quiet town among hills and narrow streets. His house stood near the church, simple and open, without guards or strong doors. People often said, “The Bishop lives like a poor man,” and this was true. He believed comfort should belong first to those who suffered. Each morning he walked through the town and greeted people by name.

“Good morning, Madame,” he would say.

“Good morning, Monseigneur,” they answered, smiling.

He carried coins in his pocket but rarely kept them long. When a hungry man appeared, the Bishop would stop and ask, “Have you eaten today?” If the answer was no, he would reply, “Then we must fix that at once.”

One evening the wind blew hard, and darkness came early. Inside the Bishop’s house, supper was ready. His sister said, “Brother, the night feels dangerous.”

The Bishop smiled gently. “Every night is dangerous for someone,” he said. “That is why our door must remain open.”

A loud knock struck the door.

The old servant woman jumped. “Who knocks so late?” she asked.

She opened the door a little and gasped. A large man stood outside, covered in dust and cold. His face was rough, and his eyes watched carefully, like those of an animal ready to flee. This man was Jean Valjean.

“What do you want?” she asked sharply.

Jean Valjean held out a paper. "Food," he said. "A place to sleep. I will pay."
She read the paper and stepped back in fear. "Go away," she said. "We do not take prisoners here."

The Bishop approached. "What is the matter?" he asked.

"A convict," she whispered.

The Bishop looked at Jean Valjean calmly. "Sir," he said, "please come inside."

Jean Valjean frowned. "You did not hear? I am a former prisoner."

"I heard," the Bishop replied. "You are still welcome."

Jean Valjean hesitated. "You are not afraid?"

The Bishop answered, "No. Hunger is more frightening than a man."

Slowly, Jean Valjean stepped inside. The warmth of the fire touched his face, and he seemed unsure where to stand.

"Sit," said the Bishop. "You must be tired."

Jean Valjean sat but kept his bag close. "Every door closed to me today," he said. "They told me I was dangerous."

The Bishop replied softly, "Tonight you are a guest."

At the table, food was placed before him. Jean Valjean began to eat quickly.

"Slowly," the Bishop said kindly. "There is enough for all."

Jean Valjean stopped. "No one says that," he muttered.

"Then hear it now," the Bishop answered.

After a while the Bishop asked, "What is your name?"

"Jean Valjean."

"And where have you come from?"

Jean Valjean looked at the table. "From prison. Nineteen years."

The Bishop's sister gasped quietly.

Jean Valjean added bitterly, "Five years for bread. The rest for trying to escape."

The Bishop said only, "That is a long suffering."

Jean Valjean laughed harshly. "It teaches a man one thing: hate."

The Bishop shook his head gently. "Perhaps tonight will teach another lesson."

After supper the Bishop showed him a small room. "You will sleep here," he said.

Jean Valjean asked, “You leave your silver out in the open?”

“Yes,” the Bishop replied.

“You trust me?”

The Bishop smiled. “I trust that kindness is never wasted.”

Jean Valjean lay on the bed, staring into darkness. “This is foolish,” he whispered. “He does not know the world.”

His eyes moved toward the shining silver in the next room. Hunger and anger rose together. “The world owes me,” he said under his breath.

In the deep night he rose quietly. The house slept. He took the silver pieces and placed them into his bag.

“This will buy freedom,” he whispered.

He left silently.

Morning came with loud voices at the door. Officers entered with Jean Valjean between them.

“Monseigneur,” one officer said, “we found this man with your silver.”

Jean Valjean stood still, waiting.

The Bishop looked surprised—but not angry. “Ah, Jean Valjean,” he said warmly, “you returned so soon.”

The officers frowned. “He claims you gave it to him.”

“Of course I did,” said the Bishop. “But he forgot the silver candle sticks.”

Jean Valjean lifted his head suddenly.

The Bishop took the candle sticks and placed them in his hands. “You must take these also,” he said.

The officers exchanged looks. “Then there is no crime?”

“None,” the Bishop answered.

They released Jean Valjean and left.

Silence filled the room.

Jean Valjean whispered, “Why... why did you save me?”

The Bishop stepped close and said softly, “I did not save you. I remind you who you can become.”

“I am a thief,” Jean Valjean said.

“No,” the Bishop replied. “You belong to good now. Promise me you will use this gift to become an honest man.”

Jean Valjean’s voice shook. “I do not know how.”

“You will learn,” said the Bishop.

Jean Valjean walked away in confusion. Outside he stopped and cried out, “What does he want from me?”

Later, alone in a small room, he threw his old bag into the fire.

“Jean Valjean must die,” he said. “A new man must live.”

He lifted the candle sticks toward the flames, then stopped.

“No,” he whispered. “I cannot destroy this mercy.”

Years passed. Under another name, he worked and helped others. Yet fear followed him. At night he sometimes woke and said aloud, “Do not take me back.”

One day his path crossed with a young woman named Fantine. She stood weak and pale, her eyes full of worry.

“Sir,” she said faintly, “I must speak with you.”

Jean Valjean answered gently, “Sit. Tell me what troubles you.”

She clutched his hand. “I have a daughter. Her name is Cosette. I cannot care for her now.”

“Where is she?” he asked.

“With people who demand money,” she said. “Please... bring her to me.”

Jean Valjean looked into her desperate eyes and said clearly, “I promise. I will find your child.”

Fantine began to cry softly. “Then I am not alone,” she said.

Jean Valjean replied, “You are not alone anymore.”

Part 2

Fantine’s illness grew worse as winter deepened. The small room where she lay felt quiet and heavy, as if time itself moved more slowly there. A weak light came through the window each morning, and she would turn her head toward it, hoping for news.

When Jean Valjean entered, she tried to smile. "You came," she said softly.

"Of course," he answered, pulling a chair close to her bed. "How do you feel today?"

She gave a faint laugh. "I feel like a leaf that will soon fall."

"You must not speak that way," he said gently. "You will see your child again."

Fantine's eyes brightened. "You truly believe that?"

"Yes," he replied. "I have already begun to search."

She closed her eyes in relief. "Tell me," she said, "does she still remember me?"

Jean Valjean paused before answering. "A mother's love does not disappear," he said. "She carries you in her heart."

Fantine whispered, "I used to sing to her at night. She would hold my dress and refuse to sleep unless I stayed." Her voice trembled. "I was happy then."

Jean Valjean said quietly, "You will be happy again."

She reached for his hand. "Promise me once more."

"I promise," he said firmly.

At that moment the door opened sharply. Heavy steps entered the room. Javert stood there, tall and still, his face cold as stone.

"Monsieur Madeleine," he said, "we must speak."

Jean Valjean rose slowly. "This is not the right place."

Javert replied, "The law chooses its own place."

Fantine looked between them. "What is happening?" she asked.

Javert stepped forward. "This man is not who he claims to be. His true name is Jean Valjean. He is a fugitive."

Fantine shook her head weakly. "No... you are wrong. He is kind. He helps everyone."

Jean Valjean spoke calmly. "Javert, wait outside."

"No," Javert said. "Jean Valjean, you are under arrest."

Fantine cried out, "Arrest? But he promised to bring my child!"

Jean Valjean turned to Javert. "Give me three days," he said quietly. "Only three. I must bring Cosette."

Javert answered, "The law grants no delay."

Fantine struggled to rise. “Sir,” she begged Javert, “please let him go. My daughter needs him.”

Javert remained unmoved. “The law is above personal feeling.”

Fantine’s breathing grew fast. She looked at Jean Valjean with fear. “You said she would come,” she whispered. “You said I would see her.”

Jean Valjean leaned close. “Listen to me,” he said softly. “Your child will be safe. Trust me.”

“You swear?” she asked.

“I swear.”

Her face relaxed slightly. “Then I am not afraid,” she murmured.

Javert said sharply, “Enough. Come now.”

Fantine cried, “Do not take him!” She reached out but fell back onto the bed. Her strength was gone.

Jean Valjean turned again to Javert. “Look at her,” he said. “She is dying.”

Javert answered, “My duty does not change.”

Fantine’s voice became faint. “Cosette... is she here?”

Jean Valjean held her hand. “She is coming,” he said gently. “Rest.”

Fantine smiled weakly. “I hear her steps,” she whispered. “She is laughing.”

Her breathing slowed. She said softly, “My little Cosette... do not be cold...”

Her head turned slightly, and the light left her eyes.

Jean Valjean bowed his head. “Sleep peacefully,” he said.

The room fell silent.

Javert spoke after a moment. “Now you will come with me.”

Jean Valjean answered quietly, “Yes. But first allow me a moment.”

He leaned near Fantine and whispered, “I will keep my promise. Your child will live.”

That night Jean Valjean escaped. Moving through dark streets, he repeated to himself, “Cosette must be saved. I gave my word.”

After many days of travel, he reached a roadside inn owned by Monsieur and Madame Thénardier. Loud voices came from inside. Laughter mixed with harsh shouting.

Jean Valjean entered. Madame Thénardier looked at him sharply. “What do you want?”

“I seek a child,” he said. “Her name is Cosette.”

Monsieur Thénardier smiled in a false friendly way. “Many children pass here. Why this one?”

“Her mother sent me,” Jean Valjean replied.

Madame Thénardier called loudly, “Cosette! Come here!”

A small girl appeared, carrying a heavy bucket nearly as large as she was. Her hands shook from cold.

Jean Valjean felt a deep pain at the sight. “You carry that alone?” he asked gently.

Cosette nodded without speaking.

Madame Thénardier laughed. “She must earn her keep.”

Jean Valjean knelt slightly. “What is your name?” he asked.

“Cosette,” she whispered.

“Are you tired?”

She nodded again.

He turned to the innkeepers. “I will take her with me.”

Monsieur Thénardier raised his eyebrows. “That is costly. We care for her.”

“Name the price,” Jean Valjean said.

The man named a large sum. Jean Valjean placed the money on the table at once.

Madame Thénardier stared. “You pay without question?”

“Yes,” he answered. “She leaves tonight.”

Cosette looked up in surprise. “With you?” she asked.

“Yes,” Jean Valjean said softly. “Would you like that?”

She hesitated. “Will I still work all day?”

“No,” he replied. “You will rest and learn and play.”

She stepped closer slowly. “Did my mother send you?”

Jean Valjean answered gently, “Yes. She loves you very much.”

Cosette took his hand carefully, as if afraid he might disappear.

As they left the inn, she asked quietly, "Will you leave me too?"

Jean Valjean wrapped his coat around her shoulders. "Never," he said.

She whispered, "Then... may I call you father?"

He paused, deeply moved. "If you wish," he answered.

Cosette smiled softly. "Thank you, Father."

They walked into the cold night together, beginning a new life shaped by a promise made beside a dying bed.

Part 3

The road stretched far into the dark countryside as Jean Valjean and Cosette walked together. The wind moved through bare trees, and the sound followed them like a quiet voice. Cosette held his hand tightly, afraid that if she let go he might vanish like a dream.

After some time she asked, "Father, where are we going?"

Jean Valjean answered gently, "To a place where you will be safe."

"Safe means no shouting?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "No shouting."

"And no heavy buckets?"

He smiled faintly. "No heavy buckets."

She walked in silence for a moment, then said, "I do not feel cold anymore."

Jean Valjean looked down at her small face. "That is good."

She added softly, "I think my mother would like you."

He felt a deep pain and warmth at the same time. "I hope so," he said.

In the years that followed, they lived quietly under new names. Jean Valjean worked each day and avoided attention. Cosette learned to read and write. She often sat beside him in the evening with a book.

"Listen," she would say, reading slowly. "Did I say the word correctly?"

"Yes," he answered patiently. "Very well."

Sometimes she asked, "Was I always this happy?"

Jean Valjean replied, "You were always meant to be."

She would then lean against him and say, "I remember little of before. Only that I was afraid."

"You do not need to be afraid anymore," he said.

Yet Jean Valjean never forgot danger. When footsteps sounded outside at night, he would rise quickly and look through the window. More than once he whispered, "We may need to move again."

One afternoon, while walking in a garden, Jean Valjean suddenly stopped. Across the path stood a tall figure watching carefully. The man's face was firm and controlled. It was Javert.

Cosette noticed the change in him. "Father, what is wrong?"

Jean Valjean answered quietly, "We must go home now."

That evening he packed their belongings. Cosette asked, "Are we leaving again?"

"Yes," he said gently. "Only for safety."

She nodded. "Then I will not complain."

Years passed, and Cosette grew into a young woman. Her voice became calm and warm, and her laughter filled their home with light. One spring afternoon she sat alone in a garden reading when a young man approached hesitantly. His name was Marius.

"Excuse me," he said. "I hope I do not disturb you."

Cosette looked up. "You do not disturb me," she answered politely.

Marius removed his hat. "I often walk here," he said. "But today I noticed you."

She smiled slightly. "It is a peaceful place."

"Yes," he said. "Peaceful."

After that day, their meetings became frequent. They spoke first about books and weather, then about dreams and fears.

One evening Marius said quietly, "When I do not see you, the day feels empty."

Cosette lowered her eyes. "I wait for your steps as well," she admitted.

Their love grew slowly, gentle and sincere.

Jean Valjean soon noticed her happiness. At supper he asked, "You seem thoughtful lately. Is something on your mind?"

Cosette hesitated. "I have met someone," she said at last.

Jean Valjean felt both fear and tenderness. "Is he kind?"

"Very kind," she said. "He speaks with respect."

Jean Valjean nodded slowly. "Then one day I will meet him."

Meanwhile, the city itself changed. Groups of young students gathered in cafés and streets, speaking about justice and hope. Among them stood Enjolras, calm and bright-eyed, whose voice carried quiet strength.

"People must live with dignity," Enjolras said to his friends. "We cannot ignore suffering."

A small boy listened nearby. It was Gavroche, cheerful even in poverty.

"Will there be a fight?" Gavroche asked.

Enjolras answered, "Perhaps. But we fight for a better future."

Gavroche grinned. "Then I will help. I know every street."

Enjolras smiled faintly. "You are brave, little brother."

Not far away stood Éponine, dressed in worn clothes. She watched Marius from a distance. One day she approached him.

"Marius," she said, trying to sound casual, "the streets are not safe these days."

He replied kindly, "Thank you for warning me."

She looked at him carefully. "You think often of the girl in the garden, do you not?"

Marius blushed slightly. "Yes."

Éponine forced a small smile. "Then protect her happiness," she said. After he left, she whispered to herself, "Even if it breaks my own heart."

Soon unrest filled the city. Barricades rose from broken carts and stones. Enjolras stood at the center, directing the young fighters.

"Place the stones higher," he said calmly. "We must hold as long as we can."

Gavroche ran between them laughing. "I bring news!" he shouted. "Soldiers are coming from the west!"

One fighter asked nervously, "Are we ready?"

Enjolras answered, "Courage makes us ready."

Marius arrived, determined to join them. Éponine followed secretly, unwilling

to leave him alone.

The first shots echoed through the street. Smoke rose, and fear mixed with excitement.

Gavroche shouted, "They shoot badly! I am too fast for them!"

Marius called, "Stay behind cover!"

Gavroche laughed. "Cover is boring!"

The battle had begun, and none of them knew how soon death would walk among them.

Part 4

Morning light struggled to reach the barricade through thick smoke. Broken stones, torn wood, and fallen carts formed a rough wall across the street. The young fighters moved quietly now. The excitement of the first clash had passed, replaced by deep tension.

Enjolras stood at the center, watching every movement beyond the barricade. His face remained calm, but his eyes showed the weight of responsibility.

"Check the ammunition," he said. "We must not waste a single shot."

One student answered, "We have little left."

Enjolras nodded. "Then we use courage where bullets fail."

Gavroche climbed onto a pile of stones and looked toward the soldiers in the distance. "They are waiting," he said. "Like cats watching birds."

"Come down," Marius called. "You make yourself a target."

Gavroche laughed. "If they hit me, they will be lucky!"

Éponine stood nearby, her eyes fixed on Marius. She spoke quietly. "You should not stay here."

Marius shook his head. "I cannot leave."

She answered softly, "I knew you would say that."

The sound of marching grew louder. Soldiers advanced slowly, their steps steady and controlled.

Enjolras raised his voice. "Friends," he said, "this moment will test us.

Remember why you stand here.”

One young man asked, “Do you believe we can win?”

Enjolras replied, “Victory is not always survival. Sometimes victory is refusing to surrender what is right.”

The attack began again. Gunfire echoed through the street. Smoke covered everything. Fighters shouted orders and warnings.

Gavroche moved quickly between them. “More cartridges here!” he cried. “Who needs powder?”

A fighter shouted, “We are running out!”

Gavroche looked beyond the barricade and saw fallen soldiers’ ammunition scattered on the ground.

“I will get more!” he said.

Marius grabbed his arm. “No! It is too dangerous.”

Gavroche pulled free with a grin. “Danger and I are old friends.”

He slipped through an opening and ran into the open street. Bullets struck the stones around him.

“Come back!” several voices shouted.

Gavroche bent down, gathering cartridges and singing loudly as if to challenge fear itself.

“They cannot hit me!” he laughed.

A shot rang out. He stopped suddenly, surprised.

“Ah,” he whispered, touching his chest. “That hurts a little.”

He tried to stand again and took another step, still holding the cartridges.

A second shot sounded. Gavroche fell onto the stones. The cartridges rolled from his hands.

Silence spread for a brief moment.

Marius whispered, “He was only a child...”

Enjolras closed his eyes briefly, then said firmly, “His courage belongs to us now. Hold your positions.”

The battle grew fiercer. Soldiers pushed closer. The defenders fought with growing desperation.

Suddenly Éponine saw a soldier raise his weapon toward Marius.

“Marius!” she cried.

Without thinking, she ran forward and placed herself between them.

The shot fired.

Éponine fell into Marius’s arms.

“Why?” he cried. “Why would you do this?”

She smiled faintly despite the pain. “Because... I wanted to protect you.”

“You must not speak,” he said urgently.

She shook her head slightly. “Let me speak... just once honestly.”

He held her carefully. “I am here.”

“I was happy,” she whispered, “whenever you spoke kindly to me. Even when you loved another... I was still happy.”

Tears filled Marius’s eyes. “You are brave.”

She gave a small laugh that turned into a cough. “No... only foolish.”

She placed a folded letter into his hand. “This was meant for you. I kept it too long.”

“You will live,” he said desperately.

Éponine looked at him gently. “No. But it is enough... that I die near you.”

Her breathing slowed. “Do not feel sad,” she added softly. “I am not alone anymore.”

Her hand slipped from his, and her eyes closed peacefully.

Marius lowered his head. “Farewell,” he whispered.

Around them the fight continued without mercy.

Amid the chaos, a new figure appeared climbing over the barricade. Jean Valjean stepped forward, his face calm but determined.

Marius stared in surprise. “You?”

Jean Valjean said quietly, “I came because Cosette loves you.”

Gunfire interrupted further words. Jean Valjean picked up a weapon and joined the defense without hesitation.

Enjolras observed him briefly and said, “Every man who stands for another is welcome here.”

The final assault soon began. Soldiers rushed forward in great numbers.

“Hold fast!” Enjolras called.

One by one the defenders fell. Smoke and shouting filled the air.

Earlier, the fighters had captured Javert, discovered as a spy. Now he stood tied against a wall, watching everything with calm eyes.

Enjolras turned to Jean Valjean. “You may carry out the execution,” he said. “Take him away.”

Jean Valjean led Javert behind the barricade into a quiet alley.

Javert said, “You hesitate. Why?”

Jean Valjean answered, “Because I will not kill you.”

He cut the ropes.

Javert stared in disbelief. “You release me?”

“Yes,” Jean Valjean said. “Go.”

“You know I will hunt you again,” Javert said.

Jean Valjean replied calmly, “Perhaps. But tonight I choose mercy.”

Javert stepped back slowly, unable to understand.

Jean Valjean returned just as the barricade fell. Enjolras stood alone at the top, straight and fearless.

A soldier shouted, “Surrender!”

Enjolras answered clearly, “No.”

Shots rang out. Enjolras fell, still standing upright until the final moment, as if refusing defeat even in death.

Marius was struck soon after and collapsed unconscious.

Jean Valjean rushed to him. “You must live,” he said. “She waits for you.”

He lifted Marius onto his shoulders and moved through smoke and chaos toward escape, carrying hope away from the fallen barricade.

Part 5

Smoke still covered the streets as Jean Valjean carried the unconscious Marius away from the fallen barricade. The sounds of battle faded behind him, replaced

by distant echoes and silence. Marius's head rested against his shoulder, and his breathing was weak.

"Stay alive," Jean Valjean murmured. "Cosette is waiting for you."

He searched for a path where soldiers would not see him. Finding a hidden entrance, he descended into the dark sewer tunnels beneath the city. The air was heavy, and water moved slowly along the ground.

Each step was difficult. The weight of Marius pressed down on him, and the path was long and confusing. Still he continued.

"I have carried heavier burdens," he said quietly to himself. "But none more important."

Marius stirred slightly and whispered without waking, "Cosette..."

Jean Valjean answered softly, "Yes. You will see her again."

The tunnel twisted again and again. At times Jean Valjean nearly fell, yet he refused to stop. Memories of Fantine's dying face returned to him.

"I promised," he said aloud. "I keep my promises."

After many hours he reached an exit and climbed into the open air. Night had fallen. As he stepped forward, a figure appeared from the shadows.

It was Javert.

Jean Valjean stopped at once. "I am ready," he said calmly. "But allow me first to bring this young man to safety."

Javert looked at him in silence. His face no longer held its old certainty.

"You freed me," Javert said slowly. "Why?"

Jean Valjean replied, "Because hatred ends nothing."

Javert's voice trembled slightly. "You should fear me."

"I do not," Jean Valjean answered. "Do what you must."

Javert stepped aside.

"Go," he said quietly.

Jean Valjean hesitated. "You will not arrest me?"

Javert shook his head. "I no longer understand what justice is."

Jean Valjean nodded once and carried Marius away.

Javert remained alone near the river. The night air was cold, and the water

moved below the bridge with endless motion.

He spoke softly into the darkness. "All my life I believed the law was clear."

He walked slowly along the edge. "A criminal showed mercy... and I cannot condemn him."

He pressed his hands together tightly. "If the law demands punishment for goodness, then what is the law?"

The question echoed without answer.

"I cannot live divided," he whispered. "I cannot betray duty... and I cannot betray truth."

He climbed onto the edge of the bridge and looked into the dark water.

"There is no place for me now."

With that, he stepped forward and disappeared into the river.

The water closed above him, silent and final.

Meanwhile, Jean Valjean brought Marius to safety. Doctors cared for him through many long days. Cosette waited anxiously beside the bed.

"Will he live?" she asked again and again.

Jean Valjean answered gently, "He is strong."

At last Marius opened his eyes. "Cosette?" he whispered.

She rushed forward. "I am here!"

He smiled weakly. "I thought I had lost you."

Jean Valjean stood quietly nearby.

Marius looked toward him. "You saved me... from the barricade."

"Yes," Jean Valjean said simply.

Marius said with emotion, "I owe you my life."

Jean Valjean replied, "Live well. That is enough."

As Marius recovered, love between him and Cosette grew stronger. Soon they were married. The day was filled with light, laughter, and hope.

Cosette held Jean Valjean's arm and said, "Father, everything I have comes from you."

He smiled gently. "Your happiness is my greatest joy."

Yet after the wedding, Jean Valjean began to withdraw. He visited less often

and spoke more quietly.

One evening he asked Marius to meet him alone.

“There is truth you must know,” he said.

Marius listened carefully.

“My name is Jean Valjean,” he continued. “I was once a prisoner who escaped.”

Marius stared in shock. “You... a convict?”

Jean Valjean nodded. “I wished you to know. Cosette must not suffer because of my past.”

“But you are a good man,” Marius said.

Jean Valjean answered, “The world does not always see that.”

After this confession, Jean Valjean moved into a small room alone. The silver candle sticks stood beside his bed, shining softly.

He often looked at them and whispered, “You gave me a new life.”

His strength slowly faded. One evening he said quietly, “My time is ending.”

When Marius finally understood the depth of Jean Valjean’s sacrifices, regret filled him. He ran to Cosette.

“We must go to him,” he said urgently. “He gave us everything.”

They hurried through the streets and entered Jean Valjean’s room.

Cosette cried, “Father!”

Jean Valjean opened his eyes slowly. A peaceful smile appeared. “Cosette... you came.”

She took his hand. “Forgive us. We did not understand.”

“There is nothing to forgive,” he said softly. “Seeing you happy is enough.”

Marius stepped forward. “You saved my life and gave me love. I thank you with all my heart.”

Jean Valjean nodded gently. “Care for her always.”

He looked toward the candle sticks. “A good man once showed me mercy. Because of him, I learned how to love.”

Cosette wept. “Do not leave us.”

Jean Valjean said calmly, “Death is peaceful when one has tried to do good.”

His breathing slowed. Holding Cosette’s hand, he whispered, “Live... and love.”

The room grew quiet. His face rested in calm peace as his breath stopped.

Cosette whispered through tears, "Father..."

The candle light shone beside him, steady and warm, as if guarding the end of a long and difficult life.