

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

*Adapted by Craig Sodaro
From the novel by Charles Dickens*

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

- Scene 1: Royal George Hotel, Dover, England, 1775.
- Scene 2: Defarge Wine Shop, Paris, two days later.
- Scene 3: A courtroom in the Old Bailey, London, 1780.
- Scene 4: Mr. Stryver's office at the Old Bailey, that night.
- Scene 5: Dr. Manette's apartment, London, that night.
- Scene 6: Defarge Wine Shop, Paris, four months later.
- Scene 7: Chateau of Marquis St. Evremonde, outside Paris, that night.
- Scene 8: Dr. Manette's apartment, London, a year later.
- Scene 9: Defarge Wine Shop and the Bastille, Paris, July, 1789.

ACT II

- Scene 1: Mr. Lorry's office, London, 1792.
- Scene 2: A checkpoint outside of Paris, two days later.
- Scene 3: Tellson's Bank, Paris, several days later.
- Scene 4: The Tribunal, Paris, months later.
- Scene 5: Tellson's Bank, Paris, that night.
- Scene 6: The Tribunal, Paris, the next day.
- Scene 7: Defarge Wine Shop, Paris, that night.
- Scene 8: A cell in La Force Prison, Paris, the next day.
- Scene 9: Tellson's Bank, Paris, a short time later.
- Scene 10: Scaffold of the guillotine, Paris, immediately after.

CASTING NOTE: *The peasants can play as many of the minor roles (*) as desired. A mere change of hat or coat can indicate their new role. The number of peasants can be reduced simply by combining lines. In the cases of guards and crowd figures, the roles can be played by either men or women with no danger to historical accuracy. Women played as significant a role in the French Revolution as men, and thus they were often found in traditionally male roles.*

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(18 m, 17 w, 8 flexible; doubling possible. *Indicates minor role.)*

MARIE: Peasant who also serves as a narrator.
JACQUES: Another.
COLETTE: Another.
ANNIE: Another.
PHILLIPE: Another.
SUZANNE: Another.
INNKEEPER: At English pub (role can be either gender).*
JARVIS LORRY: An English banker.
LUCIE MANETTE: A young Frenchwoman.
EARNEST DEFARGE: A wine shop owner in Paris.
MADAME DEFARGE: Wife of the wine shop owner; she knits.
MADAME GASPARD: A customer. *
VENGEANCE: A devoted friend of Madame Defarge.
ALEXANDRE MANETTE: An old French physician, father of Lucie.
BAILIFF: At the Old Bailey, London.
JUDGE: At the Old Bailey, London. *
CHARLES DARNAY: A young Frenchman.
MR. STRYVER: A defense attorney.
ATTORNEY GENERAL: A prosecuting attorney at the Old Bailey.
JOHN BARSAD: A witness.
MRS. CLY: Another witness. *
SYDNEY CARTON: Mr. Stryver's aide.
HORACE BATTLE: A witness. *
MISS PROSS: Dr. Manette's housekeeper.
MAN 1-2, WOMAN 1-2: Members of the crowd; either gender. *
DRIVER: Of the Marquis' coach. *
MARQUIS ST. EVREMONDE: A noble, uncle of Charles Darnay.
MARQUIS' WIFE: Wants her son, Charles, to be different.*
GABRIELLE DEBOIS: A servant of the Marquis. *
OLD WOMAN: Seeks a favor from the Marquis. *
GOVERNOR: Of the Bastille.*
GUARD 1-3: Genders can be interchanged. *
MADAME ST. AMAND: A judge and member of the crowds. *
MADAME L'ENFANT: Another. *
MONSIEUR GASTON: President of the Tribunal. *
FEMALE VICTIM: A young woman. *
MALE VICTIM: Her young brother. *
SEAMSTRESS: An innocent victim for the guillotine.*

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SETTING

A series of UPS platforms form the basis of the set. Outlined against the back curtain or wall are lines forming a cityscape - mere suggestions of buildings, churches, towers. A door stands USR, perhaps a few steps up from the stage floor. At CSL is the highest platform with a stairway going up to the top. Another stairway is needed on the UPS side, unseen by the audience. The higher this platform is, the better. Here and there, poles extend up from the platforms. These will hold fabric pieces, pictures, banners, and so on throughout the play.

As the various scenes unfold, it is important to keep the show fluid and moving. The peasants have set-up lines, delivered as they change the furniture for each set, although other non-speaking characters may be needed to help complete the change. Most of the time the changes should be simple and quick.

NOTE: See back of script for more detailed information about scene settings and a complete list of props.

SOUND EFFECTS

Knock on door
Horses and carriage clattering along a road
Scream of terror
Roll of drums
Crowd noises
Revolutionary music; bells ringing joyously
Music for wedding
Sound of key in door
Gun shot

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ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Royal George Hotel, Dover, England, winter, 1775. LIGHTS spot the PEASANTS here and there about the stage as each speaks his or her lines.)

MARIE: It is the best of times.

JACQUES: It is the worst of times.

COLETTE: It is the age of wisdom.

ANNIE: It is the age of foolishness.

PHILLIPE: It is the season of Light.

SUZANNE: It is the season of Darkness.

MARIE: The spring of hope.

JACQUES: The winter of despair.

COLETTE: A king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face sit on the throne of England.

ANNIE: A king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face sit on the throne of France.

PHILLIPE: And to both kings and queens things are settled forever.

SUZANNE: Oh, so they think! But the underbellies, the parts they don't see, are writhing, seething, bleeding with discontent.

MARIE: In France they didn't know the youth whose hands were cut off and his body burned alive because he had not kneeled down in the rain to do honor to a procession of monks passing in his view.

JACQUES: They do not know the widow who lives with her three children in a barn where pigs lie.

COLETTE: Or the milkmaid who died from cold because she could find no wood to build a fire or food to warm her soul.

ANNIE: In England, the King and Queen fail to see the highwaymen preying on travelers within sight of the capital!

PHILLIPE: Or prisoners in London fighting viciously with turnkeys just so they might get bread without mold and water without the slime of the sewer on top of it.

SUZANNE: The hangman says all things to all people: a murderer on Tuesday, a housebreaker on Wednesday, a wretch who robbed a farmer's boy of sixpence on Thursday.

(The PEASANTS now begin to enact the role of guests at the Royal George Hotel, taking seats at tables, standing about talking brightly about fine things.)

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(INNKEEPER enters SL with tray of mugs, which she serves.)

MARIE: Nor do they see on the coast of England -

JACQUES: A man arrive at the Royal George Hotel -

COLETTE: A frigid winter's night, the year of our Lord, 1775.

(MR. JARVIS LORRY enters SR, bundled up against the cold. INNKEEPER, carrying empty tray, moves SR.)

INNKEEPER: Welcome to the Royal George, sir! Bit frosty out there tonight.

LORRY: Even the gulls aren't flying tonight.

INNKEEPER: How about a table by the fire so you can warm up?

LORRY: In a moment. Did a woman arrive sometime this afternoon? Seventeen years old or so?

INNKEEPER: You must be the gentleman she's waiting for. She said he'd have fine manners and a fine coat. Have a seat and I'll fetch her. She's anxious to meet you.

(INNKEEPER exits up the stairs as LORRY takes a seat at an empty table set with two stools.)

ANNIE: A stranger on a night like this.

PHILLIPE: Must be serious business. Perhaps the King's own business.

SUZANNE: You've got it wrong! It's romance. He looks like he could use a bright spot in his life.

(LUCIE enters atop stairs and descends. INNKEEPER follows her down.)

JACQUES: And it looks like this fair lady would be the brightest spot in anyone's life!

LUCIE: *(Moves to LORRY.)* Mr. Lorry? I am Lucie Manette.

LORRY: How do you do! How I've longed to meet you, my dear. Please, take a seat. Sit right here. Innkeeper!

INNKEEPER: *(Moves to LORRY.)* There, now, you two getting acquainted? What can I get for you?

LORRY: Two brandies. *(INNKEEPER exits SL.)* You are as fair as I was told.

LUCIE: Thank you, Mr. Lorry, but I'm anxious to hear the information you've brought me.

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LUCIE: (*Cont'd.*) I received a letter from Tellson's Bank yesterday informing me of some discovery regarding the small property my poor father, so long dead, left behind. It said I must go to Paris immediately, but as I wrote in answer, I cannot take a journey like that alone.

LORRY: Which is why I have come. The bank has seen its way to send me along with you in this matter.

LUCIE: I can't help but think I've seen you before, sir.

LORRY: Oh, dear...perhaps I had best start at the beginning and tell you the story of one of our customers...a French gentleman, a scientific man of accomplishment. A doctor.

LUCIE: Of Beauvais?

LORRY: Yes, of Beauvais. And as I was in our French house at the time, I handled this fine man's business. He met an English lady and together they had a child, a little girl, you understand. But then a darkness clouded their life and this French gentleman disappeared one night leaving his wife, child, and affairs in the hands of Tellson's. As no trace of him was ever found, his wife and child, assuming he was dead, returned to England.

LUCIE: Mr. Lorry, that is my father's story. And mine as well.

LORRY: Yes, Miss Manette, it is. And I accompanied your mother and you back to England 16 years ago.

LUCIE: But what is this new discovery?

INNKEEPER: (*Returns with two brandies.*) Here you go, now. (*SHE hesitates, then retreats.*)

LORRY: It seems that...your father has been found. He is alive, Miss Manette! I must go to Paris to identify him, if I can...and you...to restore him to life.

LUCIE: But it will be his ghost. It will be his ghost, not him!

LORRY: Courage, Miss Manette! You know the best and worst of it. Your poor father, if indeed it is him, has suffered wrongly in prison all these years...and your presence will do more to heal him than anything.

LUCIE: But what if he doesn't know me...

LORRY: How could a father forget you? You will accompany me, won't you?

LUCIE: I don't have a choice, do I? All these years I've been free...and happy. But his ghost has always haunted me.

LORRY: Then you must understand, he was found under another name, his own long forgotten or concealed. We must not make any inquiries in France, for it may endanger our chance to get him out. Is that clear?

LUCIE: He is in danger?

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