

The Nineteenth Century Novel
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Lecture - 37
Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities Book III: Chapters 7 - 9

Hello and welcome to week 9's lectures. Today, we will be looking at chapter 7 to 9 from Book III. If you remember the last session which was part of week 8, we saw the victory of Dr. Manette, in the sense that he was able to get the acquittal for his son-in-law Charles Darnay. So we get the sense that ideologically, Dr. Manette is part of the revolutionary plot.


And since the regime kind of celebrates Dr. Manette, and since his word has a lot of influence, Darnay gets off, and things start to change for the worse from these chapters which are part of Book III. Let us see how they change.

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Chapter 7: A knock at the door

- “Her father, cheering her, showed a compassionate superiority to this woman’s weakness, which was wonderful to see. No garret, no shoemaking, no One Hundred and Five, North Tower, now! He had accomplished the task he had set himself, his promise was redeemed, he had saved Charles. Let them all lean upon him.”

a powerful patriarch.



Chapter 7 is titled A Knock at the Door. This can be a reference to the drastic incident which is going to remove Darnay from his home back to the prison once again, so it is kind of a literal indication of what is going to happen. But if you want to interpret it thematically, we can see that there is a knock at domesticity itself, and domesticity is kind of being besieged through the attack on Charles Darnay. So there are two ways you can interpret this.

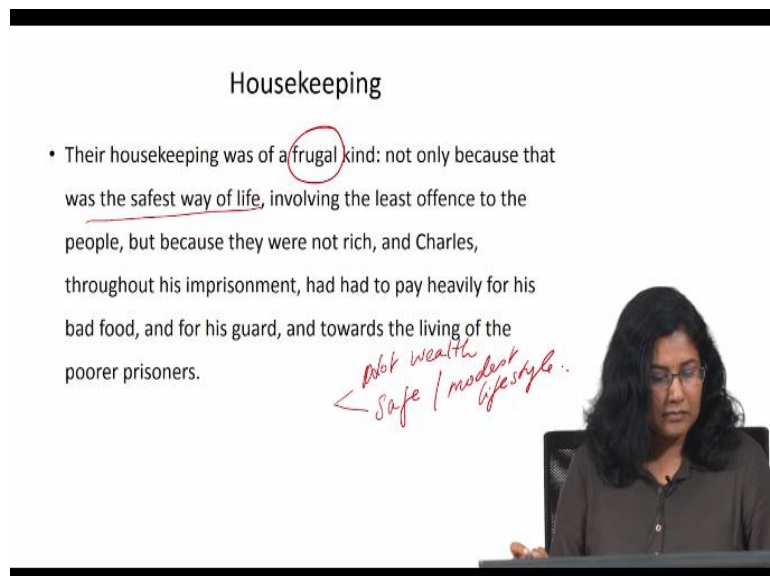
Now let us look at how Dr. Manette fares at his French home. “Her father, cheering her, showed a compassionate superiority to this woman's weakness, which was wonderful to see.

No garret, no shoemaking, no One Hundred and Five North Tower now. He had accomplished the task he had set himself, his promise was redeemed, he had saved Charles. Let them all lean upon him.”

So Dr. Manette is in the ascendancy. He has reached the pinnacle of his power at this point in A Tale of Two Cities. Look at the word superiority, which is used in his context, and this happens for the first time in the novel, because we know that all along he is not a very superior sense, because he had to lean on others in order to regain his senses and regain his equilibrium so to speak.

So for the first time, you know, he is able to command a lot of influence and other people are leaning on him, especially Lucie and Charles Darnay. So he has become a powerful patriarch, and he also feels that he has redeemed his promise that he made to Lucie by himself, which was that he would get back the dearest part of herself, which is Charles Darnay. So, you know, he is not at all in a vulnerable state of mind at this moment in the narrative.

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Housekeeping

- Their housekeeping was of a frugal kind: not only because that was the safest way of life, involving the least offence to the people, but because they were not rich, and Charles, throughout his imprisonment, had had to pay heavily for his bad food, and for his guard, and towards the living of the poorer prisoners.

*Not wealthy
Safe / modest lifestyle..*

How do they keep house in Paris, how does Lucie Manette run her household? “Their housekeeping was of a frugal kind, not only because that was the safest way of life involving the least offense to the people, but because they were not rich, and Charles, throughout his imprisonment, had had to pay heavily for his bad food and for his guard and towards the living of the poor prisoners.”

So they led a very frugal life, a bare life, and they did not lead a lavish lifestyle for two reasons. Firstly, they are not wealthy, and secondly, Charles needs a lot of money in order to maintain himself. So how does he do that? He has to pay for his food, prison food is not free, we need to remember that in the 19th century context, and in the late 18th century context as well.

And he has to pay for his security, the people who are put at his door to protect him, and then he has to pay for the poorer prisoners as well. So he has to show charity there too. So maintaining Charles is also very expensive. Therefore, Lucie Manette and her family leads a bare, spartan lifestyle. And one other point that we need to remember is that leading a frugal lifestyle is the safest way of life, if you display a lot of money and luxury then you would attract a lot of attention from the Republicans, and that would entail a lot of complications as well. So it is also safe to lead a modest lifestyle.

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A fairy tale?

- Little Lucie sat by her grandfather with her hands clasped through his arm: and he, in a tone not rising much above a whisper, began to tell her a story of a great and powerful Fairy who had opened a prison-wall and let out a captive who had once done the Fairy a service. All was subdued and quiet, and Lucie was more at ease that she had been....
- I thought...that I heard strange feet upon the stairs."

“Little Lucie sat by her grandfather with her hands clasped through his arm, and he, in a tone not rising much above a whisper, began to tell her a story of a great and powerful fairy who had opened a prison wall and let out a captive who had once done the fairy a service. All was subdued and quiet, and Lucie was more at ease than she had been.” This narrative gives us a picture of peaceful domestic hearth.

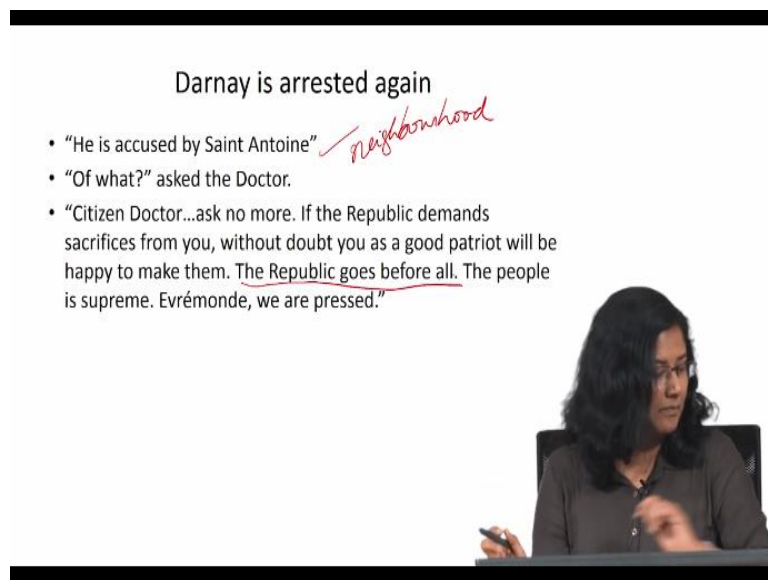
We have the grandfather of little Lucie telling her a fairytale, and in that tale he describes how a fairy had released a captive who had once done a good deed for the fairy, and there is indirectly of reference to the good deeds that, you know, Charles Darnay perhaps did towards

Dr. Manette, and in return Dr. Manette is doing Darnay a service. We can also interpret it in this way, that is, he is doing a favour for Lucie for her service to Dr. Manette.

So it is a very peaceful, subdued, quiet moment at home for the Manettes, and Lucie kind of is at ease for the first time than she had ever been since she had come back to Paris, and suddenly there is sound of strange feet upon the stairs. And this reference echoes the hundreds of feet, that hundreds of footsteps that Lucie kind of imagines coming towards her when she is in Soho Square, London.

So you know, this is that foreshadowing coming into fruition at this moment in the tale. So she has strange people coming into her home, and let us see what happens.

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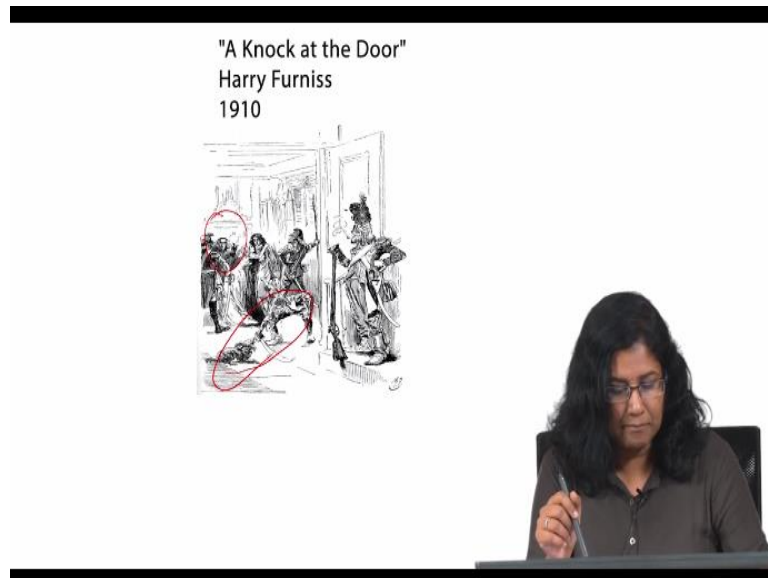
Darnay is arrested again

- "He is accused by Saint Antoine" *neighbourhood*
- "Of what?" asked the Doctor.
- "Citizen Doctor...ask no more. If the Republic demands sacrifices from you, without doubt you as a good patriot will be happy to make them. The Republic goes before all. The people is supreme. Evrémonte, we are pressed."

And these men are guards and they have come into Lucie's home to take back Charles Darnay to the prison. And, you know, the doctor asks what crime has he committed, and the guards answer that he is accused by Saint Antoine. And Saint Antoine is the neighborhood where we have the wine shop and the Defarges, and the doctor asks what is the nature of his crime, and the man responds by saying "Citizen Doctor, ask no more. If the Republic demands sacrifices from you, without doubt you as a good patriot will be happy to make them. The Republic goes before all. The people is supreme. Evremonde we are pressed." So the doctor does have a lot of influence with the new regime, but the influence only goes so far. He cannot expect, you know, answers to every question that he has towards the Republic.

And the guard says that, you know, if the Republic demands sacrifices from you, you have to offer that sacrifice because the Republic is supreme, the people go before any particular individual in France and they hurry Evremonde out of the home. And before they do that, the doctor gets to know that the Defarges are the two people who have accused Charles Darnay, and there is one other man who has accused Evremonde, and he wants to know who that person is but he does not get an answer.

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This is the illustration, A Knock at the Door by Harry Furniss for the 1910 edition, and look at the guards, the attitude of the guards there. One of them is kind of trying to scare the spaniel, the family spaniel there, and then Lucie is trying to hang on to Darnay, and the guards are, you know, in a hurry to bring him back to the prison, and this is Dr. Manette here. And the guards somehow tower above everybody here in the scene.

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"Evrémonde called Darnay", John McLenan, 1859



*in shadow
vs
"lighter"*



This is another illustration titled Evremonde called Darnay by John McLenan for 1859. And you can see that the guards are all sort of ragamuffins, they are a motley crowd, and they look like someone who is not from the middle or the upper classes, they are obviously from the peasantry. And they are in shadow, most of them, and then we have Lucie and her husband in lighter shade.

So there is a contrast between the shadow and the brighter colors, the lighter colors, and that is also symbolic in terms of morality.

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Chapter 8: A Hand at Cards



Symbolic title

Illustration by John McLenan



Now we come to chapter 8 which is titled A Hand at Cards, and again a symbolic title, and we would know who is the man who is playing his hand at cards as the chapter unfolds. And

this illustration is by John McLenan, and we have a bunch of the french people and they are kind of interested at a newspaper catching up with the news.

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Chapter 8: A hand at Cards

- “If you expect me to be surprised,” said her brother Solomon, “I am not surprised; I knew you were here; I know of most people who are here. If you really don’t want to endanger my existence—which I half believe you do—go your ways as soon as possible, and let me go mine. I am busy. I am an official.”

Miss Pross & her brother

This excerpt tells us that there is a meeting between Miss Pross and her brother Solomon Pross. Miss Pross is surprised to meet her brother in Paris, and she acknowledges the relationship to him, and Solomon does not want that information to get about. So Miss Pross and Jerry Cruncher are out shopping for provisions, and when they are out and about, they come to meet Solomon near a wine shop.

And Solomon says “‘If you expect me to be surprised,’ said her brother Solomon, ‘I am not surprised, I knew you were here; I know if most people who are here. If you really do not want to endanger my existence, which I half believe you do, go your ways as soon as possible and let me go mine. I am busy, I am an official.’”

So he says that I know that you are in France, so I am not surprised to see you here in the streets, and please do not endanger my existence by acknowledging our relationship, the fraternal bond between you and me. And he says that let me go my way, I am very busy because I am an official of the state.

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Mr Cruncher's query

- "You was a spy-witness at the Bailey. What, in the name of the Father of Lies, own father to yourself, was you called at that time?"
- "Barsad," said another voice, striking in. *Sydney Carton: John Barsad, the Spy*
-I lighted on you, Mr. Barsad, coming out of the prison of the Conciergerie while I was contemplating the walls, an hour or more ago. You have a face to be remembered, and I remember faces well."



And Cruncher recognizes him, he tells Solomon that you were a spy, you was a spy witness at the Bailey, at the Old Bailey, the Criminal Court, and he says "what in the name of the Father of Lies, own father to yourself, was you called at that time?" So Jerry knows that he is not called as Solomon then in England, and that Solomon had a different name and he is trying to recollect that name.

And suddenly another voice intervenes, interrupts their conversation and offers the name Barsad. So Solomon Pross is actually John Barsad, the spy, said another voice striking in and the voice belongs to Sydney Carton. "I lighted on you, Mr. Barsad, coming out of the prison of the Conciergerie while I was contemplating the walls, an hour or more ago. You have a face to be remembered and I remember faces well."


So Sydney Carton offers the name that Cruncher was searching for, and Sydney tells Barsad that I followed you from the prison Conciergerie, and I remember your face because I have a good memory and I can remember faces very well.

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Very high stakes Sydney Carton *accomplished the task*

- This is a desperate time, when desperate games are played for desperate stakes. Let the Doctor play the winning game; I will play the losing one. No man's life here is worth purchase. Any one carried home by the people today, may be condemned tomorrow. Now, the stake I have resolved to play for, in case of the worst, is a friend in the Conciergerie. And the friend I purpose to myself to win, is Mr Barsad."

figurative language - same of cards.

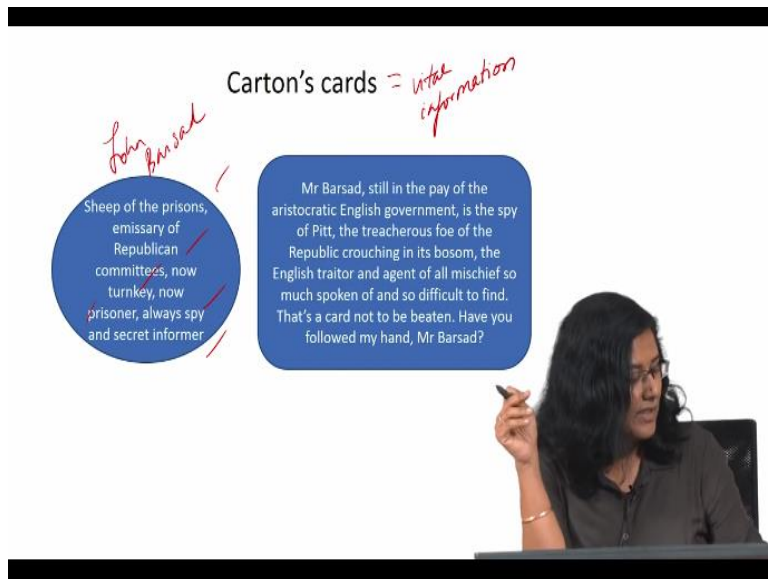


Now once Sydney Carton sees Barsad here pretending to be an official, he kind of formulates a strategy quickly and he is trying to use that, you know, fact of Barsad's presence in France for his own personal benefit. Let us see what that benefit is soon. "This is a desperate time and desperate games are played for desperate stakes. Let the Doctor play the winning game; I will play the losing one. No man's life here is worth purchase. Any one carried home by the people today, may be condemned tomorrow. Now the stake I have resolved to play for, in case of the worst, is a friend in the Conciergerie. And the friend I purpose to myself to win, is Mr. Barsad."

So Carton is talking in a figurative language here, and he is using the metaphor of the game of cards, and he says that I am going to play a game of my own. And he says that I am going to play a losing game. We will know the significance of this kind of statement towards the end of the novel. And he says that the Doctor is trying to play the winning game, and he is kind of referencing the earlier victory that the doctor had when he got Darnay acquitted the first time. And Carton says that you know these are difficult times, desperate times and desperate times require desperate games to be played for desperate stakes, so the stakes are very high.

And we will know what those high stakes are quite soon. And he says that, you know, I have a friend to win in the Conciergerie, and the name of the friend is Mr. Barsad, and let us see how he goes about winning that friend.

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Now Carton has a lot of information and he calls that his cards, so the cards mean vital information. And these information are quite significant in these desperate times, and this is how he describes John Barsad. He calls him the “Sheep of the prisons, emissary of Republican committees, now turnkey, now prisoner, always spy and secret informer.” Sometimes, he is the guard and sometimes he is the criminal who is inside the prisons.

But he is always a spy, and he informs against people. So that is the nature of John Barsad. And “Mr. Barsad, still in the pay of the aristocratic English government, is the spy of Pitt, the treacherous foe of the Republic crouching in its bosom, the English traitor and agent of all mischief, so much spoken of and so difficult to find. That is a card not to be beaten. Have you followed my hand, Mr. Barsad?”

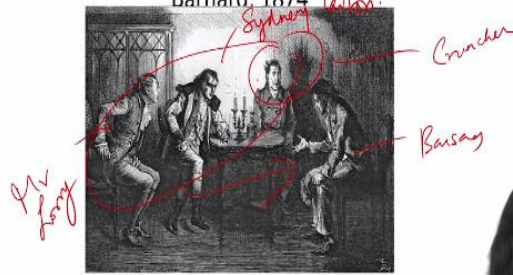
So Carton lays his cards on the table for Barsad to look at. He says that you are a spy, you are in the pay of the English government, and you are a traitor to the Republican government. So you know, you are in a difficult position. But Barsad is giving out that he is an official who is part of the French regime. So it is now very clear who is working for right now, is he working for the English government? Is he working for the Republican government genuinely?

So his position is extremely vulnerable, and if Carton offers these information to the French regime then it is quite clear that he would be killed at the guillotine. So Carton is trying to push Barsad into a corner for a specific reason.

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Here Mr. Lorry became aware, from where he sat, of a most remarkable goblin shadow on the wall, Fred

Barnard, 1874



And this is the scene at the rooms of Mr. Lorry at Tellson's French branch, and this is Barsad, this is Jerry Cruncher, we have Sydney Carton, Mr. Lorry. And it is titled, Here Mr. Lorry became aware from where he sat of a most remarkable goblin shadow, which is the shadow of Jerry Cruncher, on the wall. And this is done by Fred Barnard in 1874. So there is a kind of a gothic touch to this scene with this eerie shadow of Cruncher's head on the wall.

So that is one aspect of this particular scene. The other is that all three of them are trying to corner John Barsad into doing something for them, especially Sydney Carton.

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Inquiry

Rogney

Fellow Sheep: "Cly! Disguised, but the same man. We had that man before us at the Old Bailey."

...dead several years...buried in London, at the church of Saint Pancras-in-the Fields. His unpopularity with the blackguard multitude at the moment prevent my following his remains, but I helped him to lay him in his cottin.

How does Sydney know?

"he warn't never in it. No! Not he! I'll have my head off, if he was ever in it."

Jerry Cruncher

So there is an inquiry going on of John Barsad, and Sydney Carton kind of recollects another figure whom John Barsad left at the Conciergerie, and he realizes that it is another fellow sheep. So who could that be? And he quickly comes up with the name, and that name is that

of Roger Cly. And if you remember the novel well, you will know that Roger Cly was a spy whose funeral procession was very disruptive.

And Cruncher was part of the funeral procession, and you know that procession turned very riotous and then he disappeared after the burial. So Carton says that “Cly! Disguised, but the same man, we had that man before us at the Old Bailey.” So Cly is the man who was with you at the Conciergerie when you left the place, and Carton is absolutely certain that that was the man who was at the Old Bailey accusing Charles Darnay along with John Barsad.

And Barsad denies that fact, he says that Cly had had been “dead several years, buried in London at the Church of St. Pancras-in-the-Fields. His unpopularity with the blackguard multitude at the moment prevent my following his remains, but I helped him to lay him in his coffin.” Barsad says that you are quite wrong because, you know, he had been dead for several years, and he was buried in this particular churchyard, but then I helped him put him in his coffin. Literally that is what John Barsad claims, but Jerry Cruncher pitches in. He interrupts the conversation, he interrupts the testimony of John Barsad by saying that “he was never in that coffin. No, not he! I will have my head off, if he was never in it.” He says that I lose my head if you say that he was actually in that coffin but he was not. So the big question is how does Jerry know?

He knows because Jerry is a resurrection man, he steals bodies and sells them to the doctors, for the doctors to experiment with. So that is also his secondary job that he does at night. So that is how he knows.

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"So you put him in his coffin!"

John McLenan, 1859



So this is another illustration. We have, you know, Barsad who is here, Jerry Cruncher, and then we have Mr. Lorry and then Sydney Carton. And Jerry Cruncher asks him “So you put him in his coffin!”, and the answer is obviously, the real answer is no, because Roger Cly is not dead, he is living and he is a spy and he is working in the French prison Conciergerie.

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Another card

- “Impossible, here in raging Paris, with Suspicion filling the air, for you to outlive denunciation, when you are in communication with another aristocratic spy of the same antecedents as yourself, who, moreover, has the mystery about him of having feigned death and come to life again! A plot in the prisons, of the foreigner against the Republic. A strong card—a certain Guillotine card! Do you play?”



And this is the final card that Sydney Carton has to play against John Barsad. He says “impossible, here in raging Paris, with Suspicion filling the air, for you to outlive denunciation, when you are in communication with another aristocratic spy of the same antecedents as yourself, who, moreover, has the mystery about him of having feigned death and come to life again! A plot in the prisons, of the foreigner against the Republic, a strong card, a certain guillotine card! Do you play?”


The simple meaning of this set of statements is that in this state in which Paris is in, in these revolutionary times where there is a lot of suspicion milling about in the air, it will be difficult for you to outlive the denunciation, to outlive the accusation that you are a spy for another country, and that you are working with another man inside the prison, and especially a man who had this reputation of having been dead and come back to life, and people will think that you are plotting against the French Republic.

And it is a card which will put you to death by guillotine. And he asks do you play? So what is your answer? Do you want to proceed further in this game of cards?

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Carton and Barsad

- Now, what do you want with me?
- Not very much. You are a turnkey at the Conciergerie?
- "I tell you once for all, there is no such thing as an escape possible," said the spy, firmly.



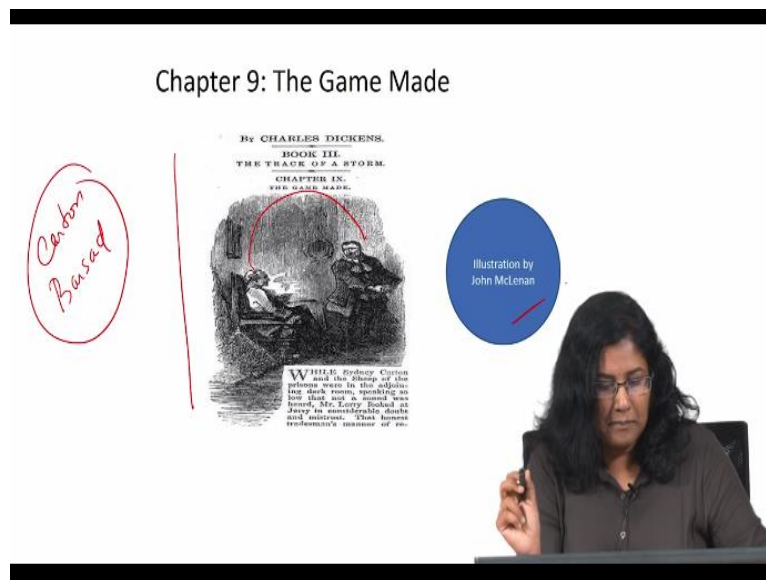
- "...I am sometimes"
- "You can be when you choose?"
- "I can pass in and out when I choose."

Barsad caves in, he says what exactly do you want with me, what help do you need of me in order for you to keep quiet and not talk about me to anybody, and Carton says not very much, you are a turnkey at the Conciergerie? Are you a person who is at the door in the prison Conciergerie? And he says that it is, "I tell you once for all, there is no such thing as an escape possible" said the spy, firmly.

And you know, Carton says who talks of escaping, and I am just asking are you a turnkey at the Conciergerie, and he says I am sometimes, and he asks you can be when you choose. Can you choose the time of your being there as a turnkey? And he says I can pass in and out when I choose. So Carton is plotting a plot which will gain him something within the prison, and you know, when he has had this conversation with Barsad, he has a kind of a private moment with him as well in the absence of Mr. Lorry and then he comes back and then sends Barsad away.

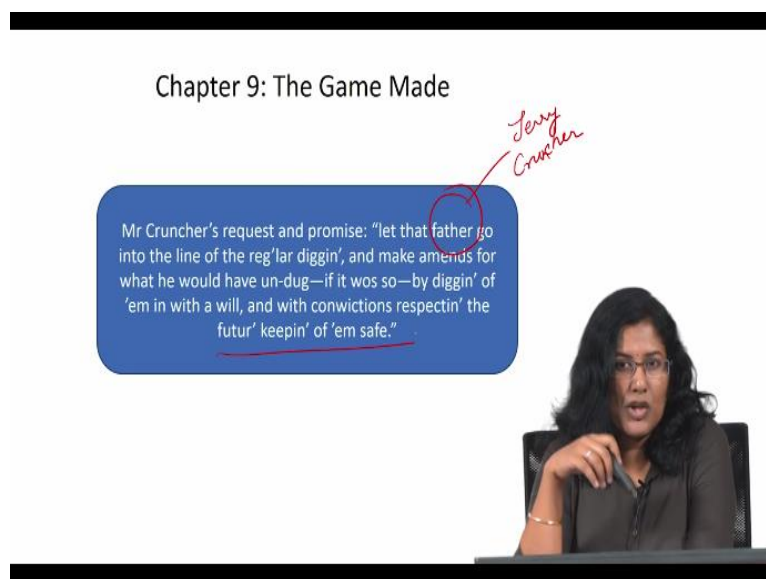
And once he has sent him out of this room, out of the bank, Mr. Lorry asks him, what do you try to gain out of this man? And Carton says that if worse comes to worse, I will at least get to see Charles Darnay, and seeing Charles Darnay will not help him, and you know, Carton says that yes it will not, but it will get me a kind of a meeting with him.

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And this is the conversation that is happening between Mr. Lorry and Jerry Cruncher. So while Carton and Barsad are talking privately, this scene is happening in the living room of Mr. Lorry at the bank. And Mr. Lorry is taking him to task for being a resurrection man, for being a gravedigger, for robbing the bodies from the churchyard. And this illustration is by John McLenan.

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The chapter is entitled The Game Made, so the game is made, resolutions are you know, kind of made between Sydney Carton and John Barsad. And a different kind of resolution is also made between Mr. Cruncher and Mr. Lorry. So Mr. Cruncher has a promise to make and a request to make of Mr. Lorry, and this is that request and promise. He says that let that father go, that father being Jerry.

So he is speaking of himself in the third person. "Let that father go into the line of the regular digging and make amends for what he would have un-dug, if it was so, by digging of them in with a will, and with the convictions respecting the future keeping of them safe." He says that, allow me to go into the grave digging business in the proper way, I will dig bodies in and I will protect them from being un-dug.

So I will be a regular gravedigger associated with the churchyard. And he says that I will keep them safe in the future, that is his promise. And he also has another promise, he says that please let my son continue to work for you, and I will go into this kind of business. So he is kind of offering a tradeoff, and that tradeoff is that young Jerry Cruncher would work for Tellson's Bank and the older Cruncher would go into the grave digging business.

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Carton and Lorry

- "Not much. If it should go ill with the prisoner, I have ensured access to him, once."
- "But access to him", said Mr Lorry, "if it should go ill before the Tribunal, will not save him."
- "I never said it would."

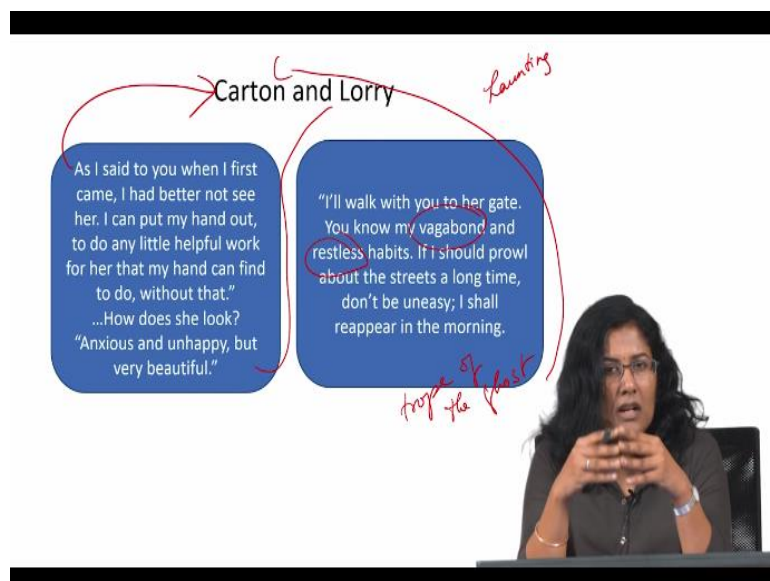
Carton continues to remain mysterious aura of indifference.

And as I said, when Carton comes back to meet Mr. Lorry, Lorry questions him as to what he hope to gain by this interaction with John Barsad, and Carton says not much. "If it should go ill with the prisoner, I have ensured access to him once." So I will get to meet him once. "But access to him," would not save him, said Mr Lorry, "if it should go ill before the Tribunal, will not save him." "I never said it would."

So Carton continues to remain mysterious, and he also gives an aura of indifference. He does not reveal all to Mr. Lorry for reasons of his own, but those who have read the novel would know that Carton is planning something very serious in order to save Charles Darnay, and he is keeping it very quiet. And in order to keep up the narrative of secrecy and mystery alive in this novel and also for security reasons.

So even if he can inform Lorry, he would not want to do that so that you know, his plan does not come to light to anybody.

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So Carton and Lorry are the two figures who are conversing with one another, and “as I said to you when I first came, I had better not see her.” says Carton. These are uttered by Sydney Carton, and he is talking about Lucie. “I can put my hand out to do any little helpful work for her that my hand can find to do, without that.” How does she look? And the answer by Lorry is that “anxious and unhappy, but very beautiful.”

So Carton does not want to see Lucie Manette, he just says that if I can get some help for her, I would do it without looking at her, without meeting her. And Carton says that “I will walk with you to her gate. You know my vagabond and restless habits. If I should prowl about the streets a long time, do not be uneasy, I shall reappear in the morning.” So this set of words by Carton once again affirms the trope of the ghost that Carton embodies.

And he is constantly haunting the streets where Lucie lives. So he is always already a ghostly figure, and he is completely restless, he is like a vagabond with no home, and he says that I will just be out and about and then I will reappear in the morning to get the work done. So Carton is a man who is a kind of a nomadic figure, and at the same time he is like a guardian spirit to the family of Lucie Manette. Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next

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