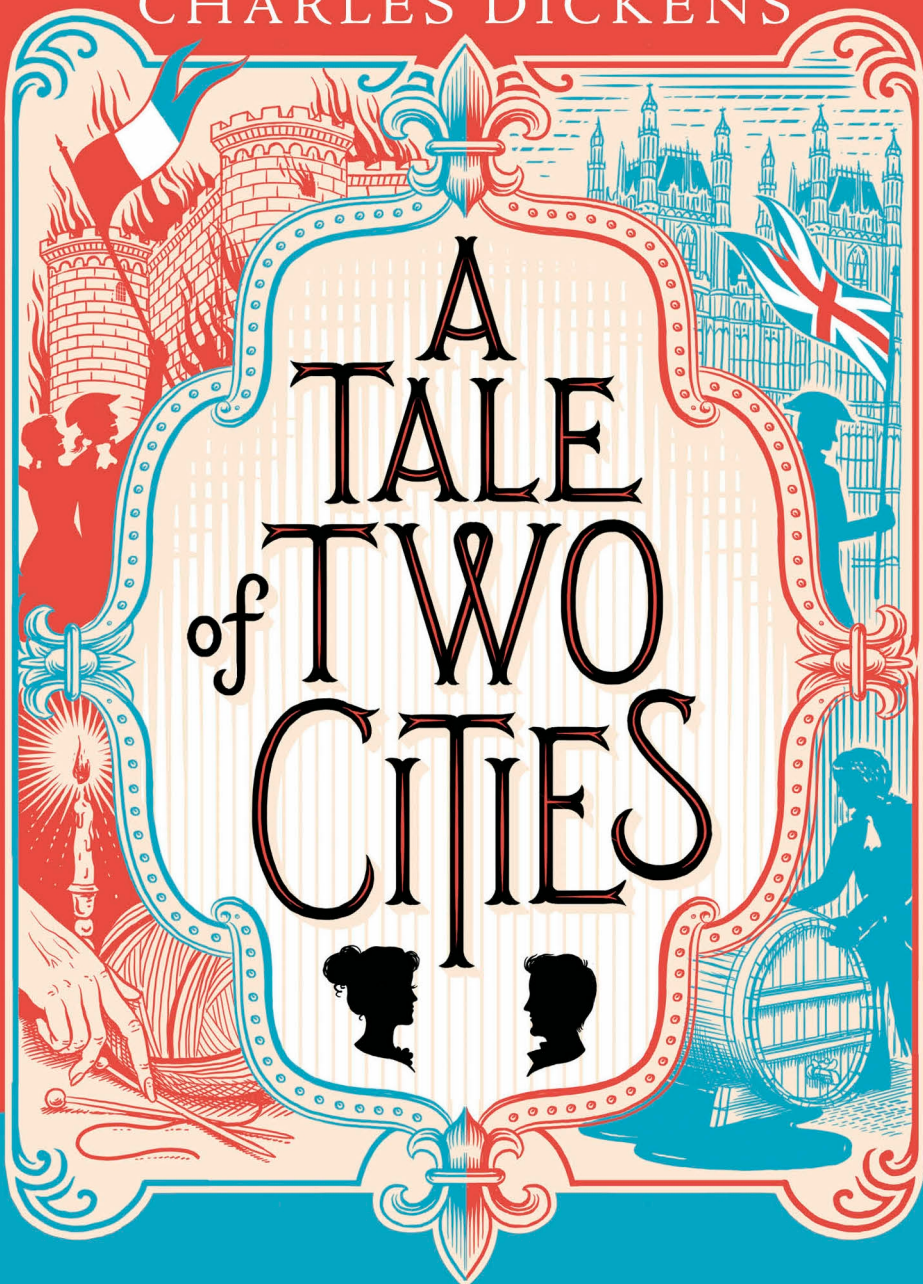


Penguin  Readers

CHARLES DICKENS

A
TALE
of TWO
CITIES





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CHAPTER ONE

Recalled to life

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the age of **wisdom**, it was the age of **foolishness**. It was the season of light, it was the season of darkness. It was the spring of hope, it was the winter of **despair**. We had everything before us, we had nothing before us.

A king and an ugly queen ruled England; a king and a beautiful queen ruled France. In both countries, it was clear to those who ruled that nothing could ever change. It was the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five.

France rolled smoothly downhill, making paper money and spending it. To keep **order**, judges gave out **cruel** punishments in the **courtrooms**. A young man had his hands and tongue cut off, and his body burned alive, for not kneeling in the dirt when **monks** passed by. In England, there was less order. There were **robberies** every night in London and on the highways. Men shot at each other as they searched for stolen goods. Nobody thought any of this was extraordinary.

These things, and a thousand like them, happened that year. Meanwhile, the two kings and the two queens carried on their great business, and the millions of ordinary little people, the people of this story among them, travelled the roads that lay before them.

On a Friday night in late November, three passengers walked up the hill beside their carriage. The hill was too **steep** and the carriage was too heavy for the horses to manage the passengers' extra weight. None of the three men looked at or spoke to the others, for in those days anyone on the road might be a **robber**. No one could be trusted.

At last, the horses reached the top of the hill and stopped to rest. Suddenly, the three passengers, the driver and the **guard** heard the sound of a horse hurrying up the hill behind them.

The guard pointed his gun and shouted, "You there! Stop! I'll shoot!"

The horse stopped at once and a man's voice called out of the darkness, "Is that the coach to Dover?"

"Why do you want to know?" answered the guard.

"I want a passenger. Mr Jarvis Lorry."

"Who wants me?" one of the passengers asked. "Is it Jerry?"

"Yes, Mr Lorry," replied the man. "I have a message for you."

The horse approached and the rider handed the passenger a note.

"There's nothing to fear," Mr Lorry said to the guard. "I work for Tellson's Bank and I'm going to Paris on business. I'll read this message quickly."

He opened the paper and read:

Wait at Dover for the young lady.

Then he looked at the **messenger** and said, "My answer is 'Recalled to life'. Take that message back to Tellson's and they will know I've received this. Thank you, Jerry, and goodnight."



With those words, Mr Lorry climbed into the coach behind the other two passengers and the horses set off again. The messenger was left alone, wiping the dirt from his face with a **cloth** and shaking his head.

"That's a very strange message, wouldn't you say, Jerry?" he said to himself.

Inside the Dover coach, Mr Lorry slept, dreaming that he was on his way to dig someone out of a **grave**. "How long have you been **buried**?" the sleeping Mr Lorry asked in his dream. "Eighteen years," the answer came back.

The sun rose and Mr Lorry awoke. "Eighteen years!" he said to himself, looking at the sun. "Buried alive for eighteen years!"

The coach arrived at Dover and stopped outside the Royal George Hotel. A **servant** opened the door and Mr Lorry got out.

"I'll take the boat to Calais tomorrow," he said. "Until then, I'd like a bedroom and breakfast."

When Mr Lorry had washed his face and changed his clothes after his long journey from London, he appeared at breakfast. He was dressed in a formal brown suit and wore a tidy little **wig**. He was 60 years old and, although his face was lined with age, it looked healthy and untroubled.

"I'm expecting a young lady here sometime today," he told the servant. "Please prepare a room for her and let me know when she has arrived."

It was not until the evening, just as Mr Lorry was finishing his dinner, that the servant came to announce that Miss Lucie Manette had arrived from London.

Mr Lorry followed the servant to Miss Manette's room. Standing by the fire was a young lady of no more than 17, still holding her travelling hat in her hand. Her golden hair and blue eyes reminded him at once of the young child he had brought from France to England fifteen years earlier.

"Please sit down, sir," she said. "I received a letter from Tellson's Bank yesterday, asking me to meet you in Paris on business. The letter said that something has been discovered there that you'll explain to me. I only know that it's connected with my poor father, who died before I was born. But I wanted to travel with you to Paris, sir, for protection, so I asked the bank to send you a message to wait for me here."

"And I was happy to agree," said Mr Lorry. "Now, it's very

difficult to begin . . ." He stopped, looking uncomfortable, and pulled his wig down a little. "You must prepare yourself for a shock. I'll tell you the story of one of Tellson's customers, a French gentleman and a well-known doctor in Paris. Twenty years ago he married an English lady."

"I know this is my father's story," she interrupted. "And I believe it was you who brought me to England when I was just two years old, after the death of my mother."

"Yes, it was me," said Mr Lorry. "And, since then, I've known nothing about you. Now, I must tell you the truth about your father. Your mother suffered very greatly before you were born. For this reason, and for your own happiness, she decided to bring you up to believe that your father was dead. But the truth is he was suddenly taken away and thrown into prison without a **trial**."

Miss Manette dropped to her knees beside Mr Lorry's chair.

"Be brave, Miss Manette," he said, taking her hands. "What has been discovered in Paris is . . ." She held his hands tightly. "It is your father. He has been found. He is alive. He is probably greatly changed after eighteen years, but he is alive. He has been taken to the house of an old servant in Paris and we're going there to find him."

The young woman began to **tremble** as she spoke. "I'm going to see his ghost, not him!"

Mr Lorry comforted her as best as he could. "It's all right," he said. "The best and worst are known to you now. We're going to bring your father back to England."