

Summaries: *A Tale of Two Cities*

Book 2, Chapters 14 and 15

Book 2

Chapter 14

- Jerry and his son (also Jerry) are sitting outside Tellson's Bank late one afternoon.
- All of a sudden, a small crowd of people pass by the bank.
- Jerry (the elder) sternly informs his son that what they're about to see is "a buryin'."
- In other words, the crowd is a funeral procession.
- Young Jerry's pretty psyched about the prospect of a little bit of entertainment.
- He cheers for the oncoming funeral. His father promptly boxes his ears.
- A funeral may be exciting, after all, but one should still respect the dead.
- As it turns out, there's only one person who's officially mourning the dead body.
- The rest of the crowd is just there to cheer that person on.
- C'mon, there weren't movies back then. What else were you supposed to do on a long, boring afternoon?
- As the crowd gets closer, the Crunchers realize that they aren't exactly cheering the mourner on.
- In fact, they're booing the dead guy.
- They seem to think that the dead guy was a spy. Nobody likes spies.
- Come to think of it, the crowd hates spies more than most other people.
- In fact, they hate spies so much that they turn into a mob. The plan, it seems, is to overturn the funeral carriage, take the body out, and derail the parade.
- Luckily, this plan doesn't work so well.
- Instead, the mob decides to become part of the funeral procession. They all load into the carriage (which begins to smell strongly of alcohol) and head off toward the graveyard together.
- Oh, and did we mention that the dead guy (or the dead spy, if you will) was named Roger Cly? Hmm. We didn't really mean to rhyme there. We're just too good.
- Cruncher and son (aka Jerry and Jerry) stick around after the funeral to chat a bit with the undertaker.
- When they get back to the bank, it's closed.
- Accordingly, they set out toward home.
- Arriving just in time for tea, the Crunchers meet up with Mrs. Cruncher on the road.
- Jerry immediately tells his wife that if his business ventures as an "honest tradesman" go wrong tonight, he'll know it was because she was "flopping" against him.
- Flopping = praying, remember?
- Hmm...what do business ventures have to do with funerals? This is all very mysterious.
- Jerry announces that he's going out tonight.

- He's going fishing.
- Jerry (the younger) immediately points out that his father's fishing rod is pretty rusty, which is strange, considering all the times that it's supposedly used.
- His father doesn't answer.
- Late that night, Young Jerry waits until his father leaves the house.
- He slips on his boots and follows his father down the road.
- Jerry Sr. meets with two other men; they head down toward...the graveyard.
- Jerry Jr. waits breathlessly as the three head into the graveyard.
- When they've gone in, he creeps up to the gate.
- Watching through a crack in the wall, Young Jerry sees the three men begin to "fish."
- Funnily enough, though, they're not using fishing rods.
- In fact, they're using spades.
- And they're digging up the graves.
- Astonished, Jerry Jr. jumps up and runs down the road. He doesn't stop until he reaches his home.
- In the morning, Jerry Jr. awakens to the sound of his father beating his mother's head against the table.
- Lovely. Just lovely.
- Apparently, something went wrong the night before.
- Jerry, of course, blames his wife for the failure.
- As Jerry Cruncher and Young Jerry walk to Tellson's, Young Jerry asks his father what a "Resurrection-Man" is.
- Startled, the older man stops abruptly in the middle of the street.
- After thinking for a minute, he tells his son that a resurrection man is a tradesman.
- Young Jerry ponders over this information for a while.
- Finally, he declares that he'd like to be a tradesman when he grows up.
- Relieved, Jerry says that with hard work and a bit of luck, Young Jerry might just turn out to be a decent adult, after all.

Chapter 15

- Folks are coming into the Defarges' wine-shop as early as six in the morning today.
- Our narrator reflects that it can't be because of the wine (which is watered down and sour).
- There must be something else going on.
- In fact, there is. Monsieur Defarge walks into his shop, where everyone is drinking quietly.
- Once he greets his customers, however, the entire shop erupts into conversations.
- Defarge saunters over to a table where a man from the country sits silently.
- Pulling his wife over to the table, he announces that the man is a mender of roads from the country.
- Defarge calls the man "Jacques." We all know what that means.

- Soon the man is headed out toward the back of the shop, ostensibly to visit an apartment that the Defarges can lease to him.
- Once he's outside, Defarge calls the other three Jacques. They all follow the mender of roads into the garret where Dr. Manette stayed when he was in Paris.
- Nervous, the mender of roads asks Defarge where he should begin his tale.
- Defarge tells him to start at the very beginning. It's a very good place to start.
- The mender of roads tells the assembled men that, a year ago, he was working on the road when he saw the Marquis' carriage pass by.
- That wasn't too unusual. What was unusual, however, was that a man was hanging off of the bottom of the carriage.
- Later, the Marquis asked the mender of roads what the man looked like. The mender recounts that he answered truthfully, saying that the man was tall as a ghost.
- The Jacques group scoffs at the honesty of the mender of roads.
- *They* would have lied to the Marquis.
- Enough interruptions already. Back to the mender's story:
- Later the next day, the mender of roads was working on roads again.
- (His title's pretty descriptive, huh?)
- While he was working, he saw the same stowaway.
- This time, however, the tall man was a prisoner. Six guards hauled him down the road in chains.
- Describing the way that the soldiers tortured the prisoner, the mender of roads finally says that the prisoner was sent to the jail.
- He didn't remain there long, though.
- Before the mender of roads continues with the story of the prisoner, he spends some time discussing the way that rumors about the prisoner's fate circulated through the village.
- Execution? An official stay of execution? Life imprisonment? No one knew what his fate was going to be.
- After a few days, the prisoner was dragged into the village.
- The guards hanged him at midday.
- The gallows was erected over the town well. Because official orders insisted that the body remain where it was hanged, the town well is now polluted.
- Telling his tale, the mender of roads seems to get disgusted and angered all over again.
- He erupts in a violent declaration of anger at the injustice of this hanging and the injustice of polluting the well.
- Defarge pauses for a second, then asks the multiple Jacques what they think.
- They agree that the perpetrators of this crime should be "registered" in their records as people who should be destroyed.
- Jacques Two pauses to ask if anyone will ever be able to steal the group's register.
- Defarge scoffs. Madame Defarge keeps the register in her knitting.
- No one could decipher it, even if they knew what it was supposed to be.
- Defarge announces that the mender of roads plans to stay in Paris for a few days.

- Apparently he wants to see the King and Queen.
- The rest of the group is aghast. The mender of roads is a fan of royalty? How can he be trusted?
- Defarge calms the group down. Give the man a little taste of the way the royals behave, he reminds the Jacques group, and he'll be a fierce soldier against them in the future.
- The next day, the mender of roads and the Defarges head over to the royal procession.
- The mender cheers wildly as the King and Queen pass.
- Defarge mutters in Madame Defarge's ear that this man is exactly the sort of peasant they need around.
- He'll convince the King and Queen that their reign will last forever.
- That way, they'll be all the more surprised when revolution comes.