

Summaries: *A Tale of Two Cities*

Book 2, Chapters 17, 18 and 19

Book 2

Chapter 17

- London. The night before Lucie's wedding.
- Lucie sits by her father's side underneath a tree in their yard.
- She's very, very happy. She worries, however, that her father will be made unhappy by her upcoming marriage.
- Asking to be reassured that nothing will be changed by her marriage, she begs her father to tell her if he will be at all unhappy in the future.
- Dr. Manette assures Lucie that he will be happier if she's fully happy.
- After all, he realizes that she's devoted herself to him. He wouldn't want her life to be spent completely in tending for an old man.
- As he sits looking at the moon, Dr. Manette remembers the times that the moon was the only thing he could see from his prison window.
- He tells Lucie that he used to look at the moon and dream of the child whom he'd abandoned when he was sent to prison.
- Imagining that she'd forgotten him completely, the doctor used to think that the child would grow up without any thought of him troubling her mind.
- Lucie interrupts him. She's troubled by the thought that he could imagine her to be uncaring.
- Dr. Manette gently stops her.
- At other times, he explains, he would imagine his daughter leading him out of his prison cell into the world.
- This vision, he insisted, was a specter.
- Lucie struggles to understand all of this.
- Continuing, the doctor says that, at other times, he imagined his child with a full and happy life—one that he came into when he left prison.
- That, Lucie recognizes, was his dream of her.
- The next day, Lucie will get married.
- No one is invited to the ceremony but Mr. Lorry. Miss Pross will be there, as well.
- That night, Miss Pross, Lucie, and the doctor have a cheerful supper together.
- After the doctor goes to bed, Lucie creeps into his room to check on him.
- He's sleeping soundly.
- Relieved, she goes to sleep herself.

Chapter 18

- It's the day of the wedding.
- Everyone is ready to head to the church.
- Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross chat amicably together. By now, they're actually pretty good friends.

- Darnay is in the doctor's room, having a last-minute discussion before the wedding.
- Suddenly, the doctor emerges from his room. He's white as a sheet.
- Nothing else seems to be the matter, however. He doesn't say anything.
- Lucie takes his arm. Together, they head to the church.
- After the wedding, Lucie and Darnay leave for their honeymoon. Dr. Manette helps Lucie into the carriage, and then the three older people walk back to the Manettes' house.
- Mr. Lorry glances worriedly at the doctor. The old scared look has returned to his face.
- Advising Miss Pross to leave the doctor in peace for the time being, Mr. Lorry decides that he'll return later in the night to check on the doctor.
- Sure enough, when he comes back later that evening, Dr. Manette is holed up in his room, working furiously at making shoes.
- When Mr. Lorry tries to call out to him, the doctor doesn't even recognize his old friend.
- Miss Pross and Mr. Lorry hold a hurried conference.
- They don't want to disturb Lucie on her honeymoon, so they send her a letter supposedly written by her father.
- They also agree to keep a constant watch on the doctor for a few days.
- Maybe he'll snap out of it.
- On the first night, however, that doesn't happen.
- Dr. Manette takes food when it's given to him, but otherwise he just works at his bench.
- He doesn't recognize anyone.
- The same thing happens the next day.
- And the next.
- Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross try to talk to the doctor. He listens...but he never replies.
- After nine days, the doctor hasn't shaken out of his relapse.
- If anything, he's gotten more and more skillful at making shoes.
- With growing terror, Mr. Lorry watches his old friend regress further and further into his prison-identity.

Chapter 19

- It's the tenth day after Lucie's wedding.
- Mr. Lorry enters the doctor's bedroom and finds the doctor sitting by his window, reading.
- He's a bit pale, sure, but otherwise he seems to be completely back to normal.
- The change is so drastic, in fact, that Mr. Lorry begins to doubt his own eyes.
- When Miss Pross arrives, she's equally astonished.
- Dr. Manette seems to have healed himself completely overnight.
- Because the doctor doesn't make any reference to his scary relapse, Miss Pross and Mr. Lorry decide not to mention it immediately, either.
- They all head down to breakfast.

- While they're sitting down, Mr. Lorry tells Dr. Manette that he needs an expert's opinion for a hypothetical case.
- We all know how much Mr. Lorry loves "hypothetical" cases.
- Asking the doctor how good friends should deal with the case of a man who relapsed for nine days, Mr. Lorry tries to gauge how much the doctor actually remembers of his relapse.
- As it turns out, the doctor doesn't remember anything.
- He quickly catches on to Mr. Lorry's ruse; finally, he asks if the daughter of this hypothetical man has been told of his illness.
- When Mr. Lorry says that the daughter hasn't been told of her father's condition, Dr. Manette breathes a huge sigh of relief.
- Actually, he says, the man probably has been expecting a relapse of this sort for some time.
- Puzzled, Mr. Lorry asks why.
- Dr. Manette pauses for a bit before replying.
- He finally says that the man had probably been anticipating some information from someone he knew well.
- Actually, anticipating is too nice a word. He'd been dreading the information.
- When it finally came, his mind crumbled entirely.
- Surprised, Mr. Lorry asks what the information was.
- The doctor, of course, can't say. After all, it's a hypothetical case.
- He does reassure Mr. Lorry that another relapse seems highly unlikely.
- After all, there are no more big shocks in store. Thank goodness.
- Now comes the tricky part: Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross have come up with a plan.
- They're pretty sure that the doctor won't like it at all.
- Nevertheless, they decide to give it a go.
- Mr. Lorry gently tells the doctor that the case they'd been discussing also involved some tools: the man who relapsed began working again at shoemaking.
- The doctor seems more disturbed than before.
- Mr. Lorry asks if it wouldn't be best for the friends of the man to take the shoemaking bench away.
- After all, couldn't the very presence of the bench in the man's room help to incite another relapse?
- Pained by this thought, the doctor explains that the bench was once the only thing that kept him sane.
- He worked with his hands (making shoes) so that he wouldn't go crazy while he was in prison.
- In some ways, then, the bench symbolizes his strength, not his weakness.
- Mr. Lorry understands this, but he still presses the doctor to get rid of the bench.
- Finally, the doctor agrees that if the bench could be taken away while the man was out of the house, it might be okay.
- Accordingly, a few days later the doctor heads out to the country to meet up with Darnay and Lucie.
- As soon as he leaves, Miss Pross and Mr. Lorry dismantle his workbench and bury the tools in the yard.

