

CHAPTER THE FIRST:
A LEAP INTO... WHERE?

Where have I landed?

Dizzying disorientation in this lightless place tosses me this way and that.

How did I arrive in this... this state of absolute silence?

My most recent memory?

Ah, yes, summer. July. Of the year 1832.

Balmy post-midnight darkness. Standing atop the concrete parapet above France's signature River Seine as it flows through the heart of Paris. Staring into a barely visible whirlpool below. Earlier events this day threw me into a state of confusion. Had I, Inspector Javert, who not once in his life entertained a second thought about any decision, allowed unaccustomed—dare I speak the word?—doubt to creep into a dark, unmapped corner of my soul? My intention peering into the hissing abyss?

To seek a ray of light as I sorted through decisions and actions of earlier this day. Did I intend to take my own life? Never! Inspector Javert freely choosing suicide? Such a horror never entered the equation. Ever. I swear it.

What dark force, then, brought me to that isolated spot?

I needed time to repair damage to my lifelong singleness of mind. Long ago, on a rain-soaked but to me glorious day, I swore a sacred oath to serve my country as a proud member of its police service. I considered my vow to uphold and enforce the laws of France as solemn as any monk had ever sworn to God and pope. No matter the cost. Even to surrender my life in the service of law and order. I imagined no more honorable way to die than for my country and the security of its patriotic, law-abiding citizens.

How to explain, then, my behavior and decisions taken earlier on this fateful night, when I—when I failed in my duty to spy on a band of ragtag scoundrels who dared to revolt against the underpinnings of French society.

Narrowly escaping a brush with death this night, I swore to renew my allegiance to our glorious tricolor flag and the country it heralds. With reviving spirit and resolution, I mapped a way forward in my otherwise impeccable career.

Of a sudden, I feel—How to put it? A need to review my life, revive my dedication, reaffirm my priorities. But where to begin?

I find myself... adrift... in an uncharted sea.

Inspector Javert: at the Gates of Hell

(fiction)

by

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Book 3 in the Wisdom of Les Miserables trilogy
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