

Les Miserables, Prologue - Work Song

1815, Toulon, France. The chain gang, overseen by brutal warders, works in the sun.)

Prisoners

Look down, look down
Don't look 'em in the eye
Look down, look down,
You're here until you die
The sun is strong
It's hot as hell below
Look down, look down,
There's twenty years to go
I've done no wrong!
Sweet Jesus hear my prayer!
Look down, look down,
Sweet Jesus doesn't care
I know she'll wait,
I know that she'll be true!
Look down, look down,
They've all forgotten you
When I get free ya won't see me
Here for dust!
Look down, look down
Don't look 'em in the eye
How long O Lord
Before you let me die?
Look down, look down,
You'll always be a slave
Look down, look down,
You're standing in your grave

Javert

Now bring me prisoner 24601
Your time is up
And your parole's begun
You know what that means

Valjean

Yes, it means I'm free

Javert

NO!

It means you get
Your yellow ticket-of-leave
You are a thief

Valjean

I stole a loaf of bread!

Javert

You robbed a house!

Valjean

I broke a window pane!
My sister's child was close to death
And we were starving!

Javert

And you will starve again
Unless you learn the meaning of the law.

Valjean

I know the meaning of these 19 years
A slave of the law

Javert
Five years for what you did
The rest because you tried to run
Yes 24601

Valjean
My name is Jean Valjean

Javert
And I am Javert
Do not forget my name
Do not forget me
24601

Chorus
Look down, look down
You will always be a slave
Look down, look down
You're standing in your grave.

Valjean
Freedom is mine. The earth is still.
I feel the wind. I breathe again.
And the sky clears, the world is waiting.
Drink from the pool. How clean the taste
Never forget the years, the waste.
Nor forgive them, for what they've done.
They are the guilty, everyone.
The day begins...
And now lets see

What this new world
Will do for me!

(He finds work on a farm.)

Farmer
You'll have to go
I'll pay you off for the day
Collect your bits and pieces there
And be on your way. Valjean
You've given me half
What the other men get!
This handful of tin
Wouldn't buy my sweat!

Laborer
You broke the law
It's there for people to see
Why should you get the same
As honest men like me?

Valjean
Now every door is closed to me
Another jail, another key, another chain
For when I come to any town
They check my papers
And they find the mark of Cain
In their eyes, I see their fear:
'We do not want you here.'

(He comes to an inn.)

Innkeeper's Wife

My rooms are full
And I've no supper to spare
I'd like to help a stranger
All we want is to be fair

Valjean
I will pay in advance
I can sleep in a barn
You see how dark it is
I'm not some kind of dog!

Innkeeper
You leave my house
Or feel the weight of my rod
We're law-abiding people here
Thanks be to God.

(They throw him out.)

Valjean
And now I know how freedom feels
The jailer always at your heels
It is the law!
This piece of paper in my hand
That makes me cursed throughout the land
It is the law!
Like a cur
I walk the street
The dirt beneath my feet.

(He sits down despairingly outside a house from which emerges the Bishop of Digne.)

Bishop
Come in, Sir, for you are weary
And the night is cold out there.
Though our lives are very humble
What we have, we have to share.
There is wine here to revive you,
There is bread to make you strong,
There's a bed to rest till morning,
Rest from pain, and rest from wrong.

Valjean
He let me eat my fill
I had the lion's share
The silver in my hand
Cost twice what I had earned
In all those nineteen years
That lifetime of despair
And yet he trusted me.
The old fool trusted me -
He's done his bit of good
I played the grateful serf
And thanked him like I should
But when the house was still,
I got up in the night
Took the silver
Took my flight!

(Taking the silver cup, he runs off, but is brought back by two constables.)