

Fantine's Arrest from the novel *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo

"Six months! Six months in prison! Six months, to earn seven sous a day! But what will become of Cosette! My daughter! My daughter! Why, I still owe more than a hundred francs to the Thenardiers, Monsieur Inspector, did you know that?"

"Monsieur Javert, I beg your pity. I assure you I was not in the wrong. If you had seen the beginning, you would have seen. I swear to you by the good God that I was not in the wrong. That gentlemen, whom I did not know, threw snow in my back. Have they the right to throw snow in our backs when we are going along quietly like that without doing any harm to anybody? That made me wild. I am not very well, you see! And then he had already been saying things to me for some time. 'You are homely!' 'You have no hair, no teeth!' I know this too well. I did not do anything; I thought; 'He is a gentleman who is amusing himself.' I was not immodest with him, I did not even speak to him. It was then that he threw the snow at me. Monsieur Javert, my good Monsieur Inspector! Was there no one there who saw it who could tell you this is true! I perhaps did wrong to get angry. You know, at the first moment, we cannot master ourselves. We are excitable. And then, to have something so cold thrown in your back when you are not expecting it. I did wrong to spoil the gentleman's hat. Why has he gone away? I would ask his pardon. Oh! I would beg his pardon. Have pity on me now this once, Monsieur Javert. Stop, you don't know how it is, in the prisons they only earn seven sous; that is not the fault of the government, but they earn seven sous, and just think I have a hundred francs to pay, or else they will turn away my little one. O my God! I cannot have her with me. What I do is so vile! O my Cosette, O my little angel of the good blessed Virgin, what will she become, poor famished child! I tell you the Thenardiers, they have no consideration. They must have money. Do not put me in prison! Do you see, she is a little one that they will put on a highway, to do what she can; in the very heart of winter, you must have pity for such a thing, good Monsieur Inspector. If she were older, she could earn her living, but she cannot at such an age. I am not a bad woman at heart. It is not laziness and appetite that has brought me to this! When I was happier, one would only need to take a look into my wardrobe to see that I was not a disorderly woman. I had linen, much linen. Have pity on me, Monsieur Javert."