

But Mr Rigaud did not appear the next day. Mr Flintwinch went to look for him at the hotel where he had been staying, and found that he had paid his bill early that morning and gone back to France. But Mr Flintwinch had a feeling that Mr Rigaud would keep his promise, and would return.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **The Marshalsea Wall is Down**

One morning, Pancks arrived at Arthur's rooms very early, when he was still in bed.

'I think I have made a discovery,' said Pancks, taking a packet of papers from his pocket. He turned the pages feverishly, and then held one out to Arthur.

'There, sir!' he cried, pointing at it. 'That man's your Father of the Marshalsea! He is heir to a great fortune, which has been waiting for him untouched for many years. He inherited a great house with land that had once been owned by the Dorrits of Dorset. Mr Dorrit just needs to sign a few papers, and he will be free - and extremely rich!'

'How have you discovered this?' asked Arthur in astonishment.

'When I first heard the name Dorrit, it meant something to me,' said Pancks. 'So I started to visit Mr Dorrit in the Marshalsea. When I learned about his family history, I was then able to make my own investigations.'

'Do the Dorrits know anything about this?' asked Arthur, smiling and shaking Pancks's hand.

'Not yet. I have only today heard from the bank and the lawyers,' said Pancks, biting his fingers. 'But Miss Amy Dorrit will be working at Mr Casby's house this morning, and I can now permit you to bring this news to the family in the way you think best. The sooner the better.'

Arthur, of course, decided to go at once to Mr Casby's house, and he was shown upstairs by a servant to the small room where Little Dorrit was sewing. When she saw the look on his face, she dropped her work.

'Mr Clennam! What's the matter?' she cried.

'I have come to tell you something: a piece of great fortune.'

They stood at the window, and her eyes, full of light, were fixed on his face. 'Dear Little Dorrit! Your father can be free within this week. We must go and tell him.'

Little Dorrit's face was pale, and her heart was beating fast.

'Shall I tell you more?' said Arthur, gently. 'Your father will be a rich man. You are all now very wealthy. Bravest and best of children, my dear Little Dorrit, you are now rewarded.'

'Father! Father!' was all she could say, before her eyes closed and she fainted onto the sofa.

Mr Casby's servants came and took care of her, but her concern to get to her father and to bring the news to him made her very quickly well again.

And so Little Dorrit came out of the house with Arthur and went in a coach to the Marshalsea. It was a strangely unreal ride through the old dirty streets and across the bridge. She felt that she was rising out of them into a world of wealth. Arthur told her that her father would ride in his own coach, a great and grand man, and she cried tears of happiness and innocent pride.

When Little Dorrit opened the door to her father's room, he was sitting in his old grey gown, reading his newspaper in the sunlight by the window. He turned around, surprised to see Little Dorrit was home, and surprised again to see Arthur Clennam. As they came in, the look on both their faces made his heart beat faster. He did not get up or speak, but quietly put down his glasses and newspaper on the table beside him.

Little Dorrit sat down close to him. 'Father! I've been made so happy this morning. Mr Clennam brought me such wonderful news about you.' Tears rolled down her face.

Mr Dorrit put his hand to his heart, and looked at Arthur. 'Mr Clennam? What surprise is waiting for me?'

'Tell me the best surprise you can imagine,' said Arthur.

As Arthur watched him, Mr Dorrit seemed to change into a very old man. The sun was bright on the wall outside and on the spikes along the top.

Silently, Mr Dorrit pointed at the wall.

'The wall is down,' said Arthur. 'Gone! Mr Dorrit, within a few days you will be free, and very wealthy. I congratulate you with all my heart on this change of fortune and the happy future ahead of you, into which you will carry your daughter - the best of all riches.'

Mr Dorrit began to shake, and Little Dorrit put her arms around him. 'I shall see you as my poor mother saw you long ago!' she told him. 'My dear, dear father.'

But Mr Dorrit could say nothing. Arthur and Little Dorrit helped him into a comfortable chair and brought him a drink. Then, as Arthur explained to him how Pancks had discovered the Dorrits' fortune, the Father of the Marshalsea sat back in his chair and cried.

After a while, he stood up and began to move around the room. 'He shall be - ha - Mr Pancks shall be generously rewarded, Mr Clennam,' said the Father. 'Everyone shall be - ha - rewarded and repaid. I will pay you, my dear sir, everything you have given me and my son. Chivery shall be rewarded. Young John shall be rewarded.'

He stopped for a moment to kiss Little Dorrit. 'We must send for Fanny and Tip. And for my brother.'

Little Dorrit was deeply anxious that her father should lie down and calm himself, but for another half hour he could only walk around the room, talking. At last, he lay down and slowly fell asleep, tears on his face. Little Dorrit had been sitting by his side, and now, exhausted by her own feelings, she dropped her head on his bed and fell asleep, too. Arthur got up quietly, left the prison, and went out into the noisy streets.

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The next few days were busy. Mr Dorrit met his lawyers, signed all the papers, and complained greatly about the delay in his departure from the Marshalsea. Many prisoners asked Mr Dorrit for a few pounds, and he gave generously, although he always wrote first asking them to come and see him in his room. He gave them a great deal of advice, and hoped that they would remember the Father of the Marshalsea with respect.

Although Frederick Dorrit showed little interest in the family's changed fortune, Mr William Dorrit arranged for him to be measured for smart new clothes, hats, and boots; and ordered Mr Chivery to burn Frederick's old clothes. Fanny and Tip moved into the best hotel in the area, but complained that the best was very indifferent.

At last, the day arrived when Mr Dorrit and his family were to leave the prison for ever. As the clocks struck twelve o'clock, a coach was waiting at the gate. Not one of the prisoners stayed indoors; not one of the jailers was absent. All were wearing their best clothes. Near the gate stood Pancks, and Young John, with his broken heart.

'My dear Frederick,' said Mr Dorrit to his brother, as they left the room for the last time, 'give me your arm. I think we should go out together. And if you could throw a little brightness on your usual manner -'

'William, William,' said Frederick, shaking his head, 'you do all that. I don't know how. All forgotten!'

'But my dear Frederick, your position as my brother is now a fine one, and you must try to behave proudly.'

The brothers walked down the stairs and into the yard, and Mr Edward Dorrit (once known as Tip) and Miss Dorrit (once known as Fanny) followed them in their smart, new clothes.

There were three cheers as the Father of the Marshalsea went through the gate, and before the noise had died away, the family had climbed up into the coach that was waiting outside. Then, and not before - 'Goodness!' cried Miss Fanny. 'Where's Amy?'

They had expected to find her, as they always had done, quietly in the right place at the right moment. This going away was, perhaps, the very first thing in their family life that they had managed to do without her.

Miss Fanny looked out of the coach window into the prison, and her face turned red with anger. 'Now, I do say, Father,' she cried, 'this is too bad. That child Little Dorrit is being carried out in that ugly, old dress which I begged her to change. And by that Mr Clennam, too! She is making us all look foolish!'

Arthur appeared at the coach door, holding Little Dorrit in his arms. 'She has been forgotten,' he said, pity and blame in his voice. 'I ran up to her room and found that she had fainted on the floor, dear child. She was going to change her dress, and then it all became too much for her. Take care of this poor, cold girl, Miss Dorrit.'

'Thank you, sir,' replied Fanny, bursting into tears. 'Dear Amy, open your eyes, there's a love! Oh, Amy, I really am so annoyed and ashamed! Why are they not driving on? Please, Father, do tell them to drive on.'

The coach door was shut at last, and the Dorrit family drove away from the Marshalsea Prison.

## PART TWO

## **Riches**

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **On the Road**

It was autumn, and darkness and night were rising up the highest mountains of the Swiss Alps, and at last came to the walls of the great, old castle. A line of horses walked slowly up the steep, narrow path, led at the front by two guides who spoke to each other as they walked. There was no talking among the riders - two grey-haired gentlemen, two young ladies, and their brother - who were quietened by the sharp cold and the exhaustion of the journey. At last, they arrived at the castle door, and hurried into the building.

When they had seen their rooms, the Dorrit family came downstairs, where a bright fire shone red and high. A stranger was sitting near the fire, pulling at his black moustache. He had a long nose, and strange, frightening eyes.

'Are you on your way to Italy, sir?' the stranger asked Mr Dorrit.

'Yes,' Mr Dorrit replied. 'We are visiting the castle just for tonight, and return tomorrow to our hotel in Martigny. From there we continue to Italy.'

'Ah, yes,' said the stranger.

A servant came to tell them that dinner was ready, and the Dorrits moved through into the dining room. As they passed the stranger, Little Dorrit held her father's arm closely, trying to hide how much she trembled. With that high nose, and those eyes that were too near it, he was particularly disagreeable to her. He got up to follow them, and looked at the guest book, which lay open on the table.

There he read:

William Dorrit

Frederick Dorrit

Edward Dorrit - From France to Italy

Miss Dorrit

Miss Amy Dorrit

Then, in small, complicated writing, he added his own name:

Rigaud, Paris

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The sun was warm as the travellers came down slowly from the mountains and found themselves once more among the green fields, rocky rivers, and little wooden houses of the Swiss countryside. When they arrived at their hotel at Martigny, the hotel owner rushed out, hat in hand, apologizing endlessly. He wished he had not allowed it, he said, but a very important lady had begged him to let her and her son have their lunch in the Dorrits' rooms. They had promised to be very quick, and their coach was ready, but they had not yet gone.

Mr Dorrit's anger rose higher and higher as he heard these apologies. He felt that the family dignity had been attacked.

'A thousand apologies!' the hotel owner said again. 'Please do not be angry, sir. If you could possibly use another dining room for just five minutes...' the man begged.

'No, sir,' said Mr Dorrit, full of heat. 'I will not go into your hotel. I will leave without drinking or eating or stepping inside. You have insulted me! How dare you?'

At that moment, a man came out into the yard with a lady. 'My apologies,' said the rather heavy young gentleman. 'The lady - my mother - is extremely anxious to avoid an argument.'

The lady came forward. 'Edmund, I hope you are explaining that it is all my fault,' she said loudly. 'The hotel owner is not to blame!'

She walked slowly towards Mr Dorrit. 'I promised this man that we would be gone before you came back, but I had no idea that you would return so soon. I do apologize, and hope you will forgive the owner.'

The lady was Mrs Merdle, and her husband Mr Merdle was extraordinarily rich. He was in everything, from banking to building, and he turned all he touched to gold. All the best people in London - lawyers, doctors, politicians, government officials - wanted to know Mr Merdle. Mr Dorrit made a polite reply, and said that what he had first seen as an attack on his dignity, he now recognized as an honour. Hearing this, the lady smiled winningly.

'Are you on your way to Italy?' she asked.

'Yes, madam,' replied Mr Dorrit. 'We have just returned from a two-day excursion into the mountains, and from here we continue to Italy.'

'My son and I are also going to Italy,' said the lady. 'Perhaps we will have the pleasure of seeing you again there.'

Mrs Merdle's first husband had died a few years before, and Edmund Sparkler was her only son. He showed so little intelligence that some people said he had fallen out of a high window as a baby and landed on his head. He had asked any number of unsuitable young ladies to marry him, and was standing now staring at Miss Fanny Dorrit, as his mother tried to take his arm. She almost had to pull him into their coach, and he continued to stare back through the window until the coach disappeared.

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As the family travelled on through Italy, Little Dorrit felt more and more that her present life was like a dream. All that she saw was new and wonderful, but it was not real. She felt that the pretty countries she saw from the window of the coach might disappear at any moment; and that, turning a corner, they might stop suddenly at the old Marshalsea gate.

They arrived at last in Venice, where they were to stay for some months in a palace on the Grand Canal. To Little Dorrit, Venice was more unreal than anywhere else, with its streets made of water, and the stillness of the days and nights that was broken only by the sound of bells and the cries of the gondoliers.

The family began a busy life, going here and there - but Little Dorrit asked only to be left alone. It was strange to have no work, no one to care for, nothing to plan. But strangest of all was the distance between her and her father. When she tried to take care of him, as she always used to, he reminded her that she was a lady now, who should behave with dignity. She often wanted to put her arms around his neck, and tell him how she loved him; but she knew that he would not like it, and that Fanny would be angry.

She spent a lot of time now with her uncle Frederick. He had begun to visit art galleries, and spent hours looking at the pictures, wiping his old blue nose. Little Dorrit had found him at a gallery one day, and after that she often joined him. He carried a chair for her, from picture to picture. He stood behind her, not speaking, but clearly happy to be with her.

Sometimes, Little Dorrit stepped into a gondola and went all over that strange city in her quiet, scared, lost manner. She looked into other gondolas, almost hoping to see the faces of the dear friends she loved.

But her favourite place was at the window of her own room, where in the evenings she watched the sun going down, purple and red, shining on the walls. She watched the stars appear, and she thought of the old prison.

The Dorrits had been in Venice for a month or two, when Mr Dorrit sent for his youngest daughter.

'Amy!' he began. 'I feel that you don't - ha! - seem at home here. Why is this?'

'I think, Father, I need a little time.'

'You disappoint me. I - ha, hum - am not pleased with you. You need to - hum - behave in the right way and do what someone in your position should.'

'I'm sorry that you have not been pleased with me, dear Father,' said Little Dorrit. 'I will try, more than ever, to fit into this new world around me.'

'You - ha - continue to hurt me. There are some past events which I wish - ha - to forget. Your sister understands; your brother understands. Everyone understands - ha, hum - except you. You, Amy - hum - constantly remind me of the past. Though not in words.'

He looked down at Little Dorrit, who had put her hand on his arm. Her head was down, and he could not see her face, but her touch was soft and quiet, and there was only love in her sad little figure. He began to cry quietly, then said he was a hopeless old fool even with all this wealth, and took her in his arms. But his tears were soon dried.

With one remarkable exception, this was the only time, in his life of freedom and fortune, when he spoke to his daughter Little Dorrit of the old days.

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Little Dorrit had been out with her sister one afternoon when, as they came back to the hotel by gondola, she noticed that another gondola was following them. Fanny opened the window near her, and watched as the other boat came up beside them.

'Did you ever see such a fool?' Fanny said, laughing.

'Who is it?' Little Dorrit asked.

'How slow you are!' said Fanny. 'Mr Sparkler, of course.'

Little Dorrit was silent for a moment, and then she asked, 'Are you going to encourage Mr Sparkler, Fanny?'

'I shall make him do what I want, my dear. I shall make him fetch and carry for me.'

'But dear Fanny, where do you think that will lead?'

'I haven't thought that far ahead yet,' said Fanny.

They climbed out of the gondola and walked up to the hotel, where Mr Sparkler joined them.

'Good day, Mr Sparkler,' said Fanny. 'I do hope your mother is well.'

'Thank you,' said Mr Sparkler hesitantly, 'she is very well.'

'Is she here in Venice?' asked Fanny.

'No, in Rome,' Mr Sparkler answered. 'I'm here by myself. I came to call on Mr Edward Dorrit. In fact, on the family.'

Turning politely to the hotel servants, Fanny asked whether her father and brother were in. Then, hearing that they were both at home, she took Mr Sparkler's arm and went with him upstairs to the Dorrits' grand rooms.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **A Letter from Little Dorrit**

Daniel Doyce had been asked to go and work abroad for a while, and before he went, Arthur went through the business papers with him.