

A TALE OF Two CITIES

A 4x1H LIMITED SERIES



FEDERATION
STORIES Ltd.

FEDERATION
studios

A THRILLING, ROMANTIC AND THOROUGHLY MODERN ADAPTATION
OF DICKENS' BELOVED REVOLUTIONARY EPIC.





THE NOVEL

“ IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES ... ”

At over 200 million copies sold, *A Tale of Two Cities* is the best-selling English language novel of all time. It is taught in schools and universities the world over. Yet there has never been a major screen adaptation to do it justice. It has remained entirely untouched by TV and filmmakers for over thirty years.

The themes are timeless, universal. Redemption through sacrifice. The agony of unrequited love. The inevitable, furious uprising of an oppressed people. And above everything, the power of family. Those we're given, and those we choose.

PITCH

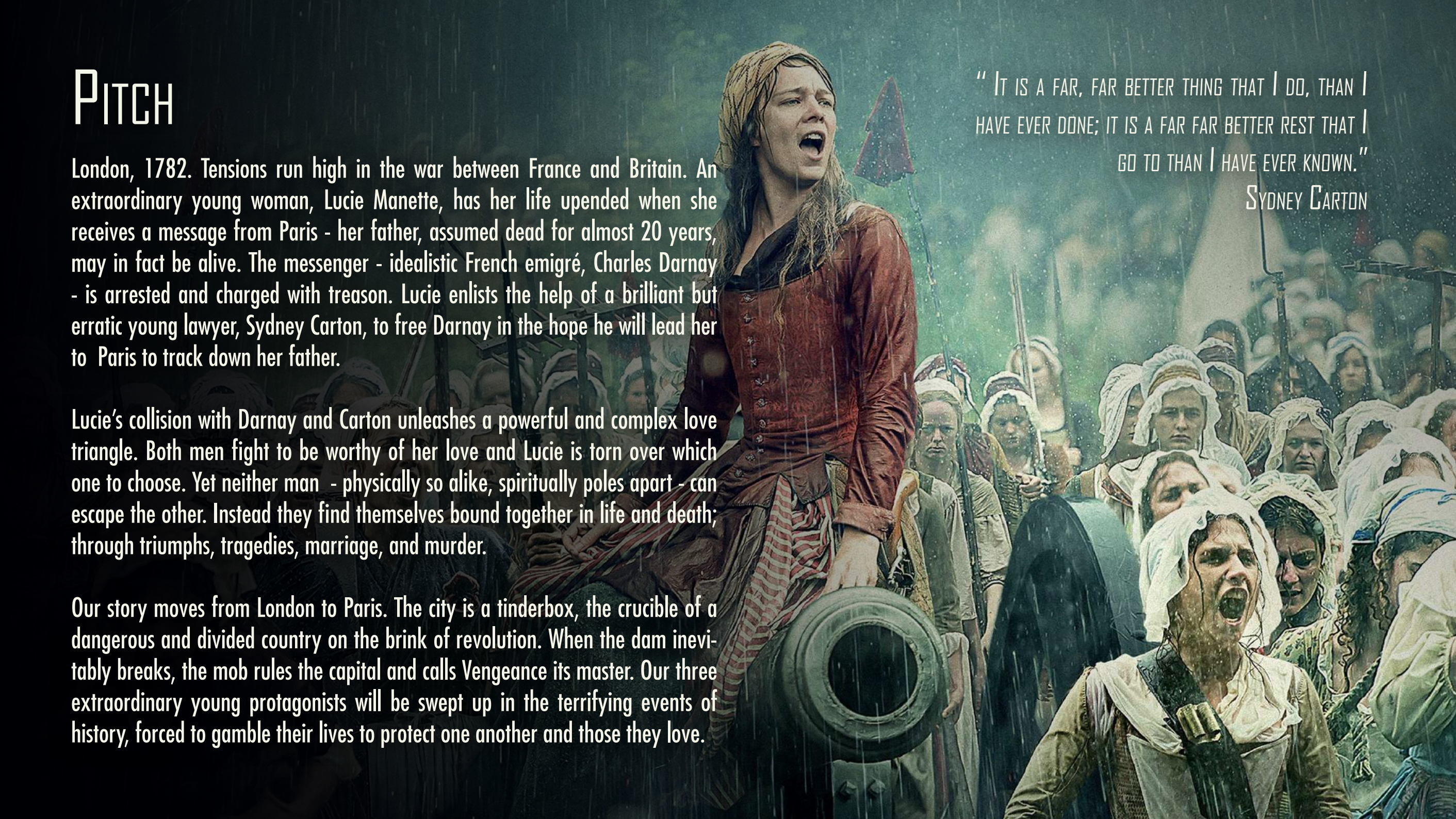
London, 1782. Tensions run high in the war between France and Britain. An extraordinary young woman, Lucie Manette, has her life upended when she receives a message from Paris - her father, assumed dead for almost 20 years, may in fact be alive. The messenger - idealistic French emigré, Charles Darnay - is arrested and charged with treason. Lucie enlists the help of a brilliant but erratic young lawyer, Sydney Carton, to free Darnay in the hope he will lead her to Paris to track down her father.

Lucie's collision with Darnay and Carton unleashes a powerful and complex love triangle. Both men fight to be worthy of her love and Lucie is torn over which one to choose. Yet neither man - physically so alike, spiritually poles apart - can escape the other. Instead they find themselves bound together in life and death; through triumphs, tragedies, marriage, and murder.

Our story moves from London to Paris. The city is a tinderbox, the crucible of a dangerous and divided country on the brink of revolution. When the dam inevitably breaks, the mob rules the capital and calls Vengeance its master. Our three extraordinary young protagonists will be swept up in the terrifying events of history, forced to gamble their lives to protect one another and those they love.

"IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER THING THAT I DO, THAN I
HAVE EVER DONE; IT IS A FAR FAR BETTER REST THAT I
GO TO THAN I HAVE EVER KNOWN."

SYDNEY CARTON



CREATORS' STATEMENT

" Audiences think they know Dickens. Sunday evenings at 8pm. Bonnets and whimsy. Safe. Our **Tale of Two Cities** is a very different beast. Murder, abduction, false imprisonment. Political refugees and people smugglers crossing the Channel. Families ripped apart. Children run down in the street. And that's just Episode One.

A Tale of Two Cities is a project we have been dying to bring to the screen for years. We love the book. It's unlike any other Dickens. International in scope, epic in sweep, full of violence, romance, passion and heart-break. It's a true historical blockbuster, mapped on the landscape of a deeply fractured French society and a country at war with itself. Surely its message has never been more starkly apposite than in 2024.

We're excited to take the bones of Dickens' story and expand on it liberally. We'll modernise our protagonists - the three central spokes in the wheel of our narrative - adding complexity, danger and a contemporary unpredictability to their doomed love triangle.

We love stories that move, that grab us by throat and never let go - so this **Tale of Two Cities** will be less a period drama, and instead a period thriller. Shocking, enthralling, always surprising. A visceral, terrifying chronicle of the Revolution and the depths of human darkness. A powerful love story of three broken characters finding and saving one another.

We can't wait to bring it to life. "

DANIEL WEST (WRITER), KIT HARINGTON (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)



Why Now?

In the last four years alone we've seen riots and police brutality on the streets of Paris; a deadly insurrection at the US Capitol; ordinary people in London and the world over taking to the streets to speak truth to power. Our democracies are in as precarious a state as they have been for decades. But time and again we have seen good people rise up and risk everything to turn the tides of injustice.

We'll preserve the novel's social chronicle of the times, but we'll intertwine it with an epic, intoxicating love triangle between three compelling protagonists. When our characters are caught up in the grim realities of Britain's brutal overseas war and the bloodthirsty Reign of Terror in France, our 21st century audience will recognise their own world, and the inevitable endpoint of a fractured society riven by politics of anger and division.

MAIN CHARACTERS



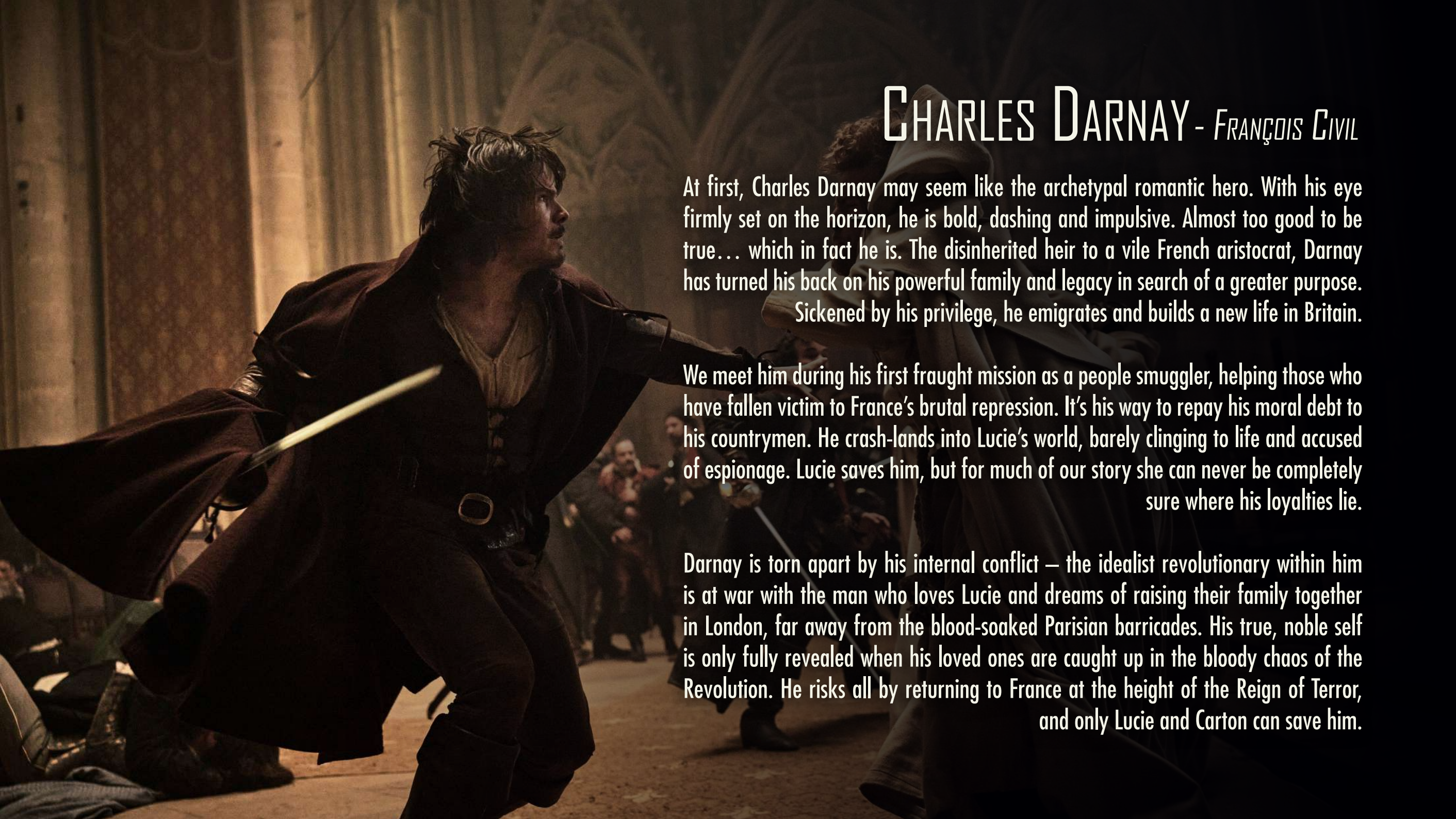
LUCIE MANETTE

For too long a passive ingenue, our adaptation will give Lucie - one of Dicken's most iconic women - a distinct voice and a purpose. Despite living a comfortable, safe life in London, Lucie has always felt a piece of her was missing; a piece left behind on the bloody streets of Paris where she has long believed her father was murdered. She is lonely, stateless; adrift in a city she has had to fight to make her home.

Lucie's suppressed rage, passion and longing for life give her great courage but can also make her reckless. With her prohibited dreams of becoming a doctor like her father, she's more comfortable mixing it with the back-street surgeons of Soho than she is in the ballrooms of Belgravia.

Lucie is a woman who has suffered huge loss and spent years yearning for true connection. Suddenly she finds it with both Darnay and Carton. The two men appeal to very different parts of her spirit, meaning she can never truly let either of them go.



A cinematic still from the 2015 film 'Les Misérables' featuring Hugh Jackman as Charles Darnay. He is shown in profile, running through a dusty Parisian street. He wears a dark, long coat over a light-colored shirt and a dark vest. His expression is one of urgency and determination. In the background, other figures in period clothing are visible, suggesting a chaotic scene. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

CHARLES DARNAY - *FRANÇOIS CIVIL*

At first, Charles Darnay may seem like the archetypal romantic hero. With his eye firmly set on the horizon, he is bold, dashing and impulsive. Almost too good to be true... which in fact he is. The disinherited heir to a vile French aristocrat, Darnay has turned his back on his powerful family and legacy in search of a greater purpose.

Sickened by his privilege, he emigrates and builds a new life in Britain.

We meet him during his first fraught mission as a people smuggler, helping those who have fallen victim to France's brutal repression. It's his way to repay his moral debt to his countrymen. He crash-lands into Lucie's world, barely clinging to life and accused of espionage. Lucie saves him, but for much of our story she can never be completely sure where his loyalties lie.

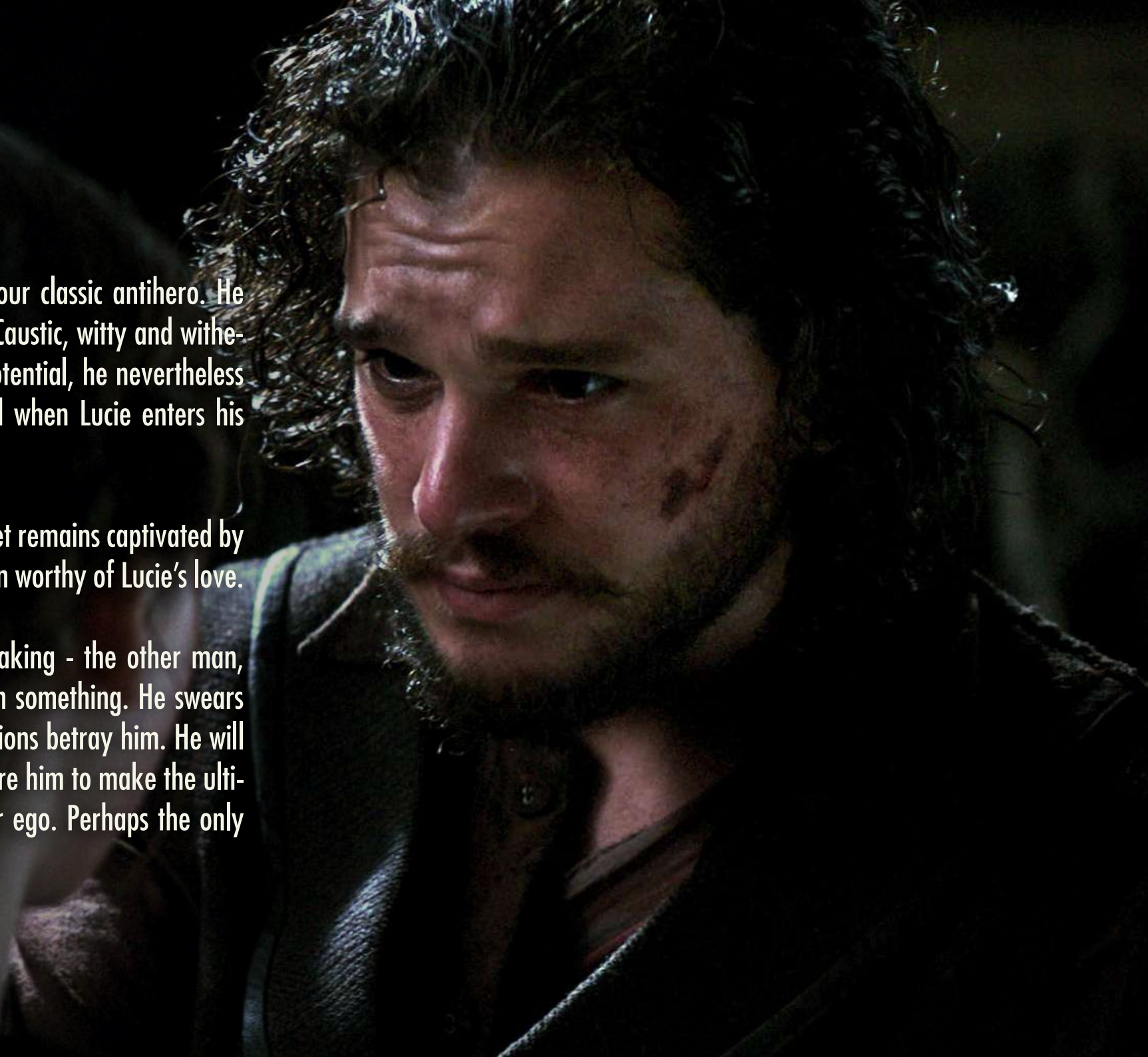
Darnay is torn apart by his internal conflict — the idealist revolutionary within him is at war with the man who loves Lucie and dreams of raising their family together in London, far away from the blood-soaked Parisian barricades. His true, noble self is only fully revealed when his loved ones are caught up in the bloody chaos of the Revolution. He risks all by returning to France at the height of the Reign of Terror, and only Lucie and Carton can save him.

SYDNEY CARTON - *KIT HARINGTON*

A brilliant, tortured English lawyer - on the surface he's our classic antihero. He drinks, lies, cheats and only picks bar-fights he can't win. Caustic, witty and withering in his disenchantment with life and his own wasted potential, he nevertheless carries a hidden thirst for love, which is suddenly ignited when Lucie enters his world.

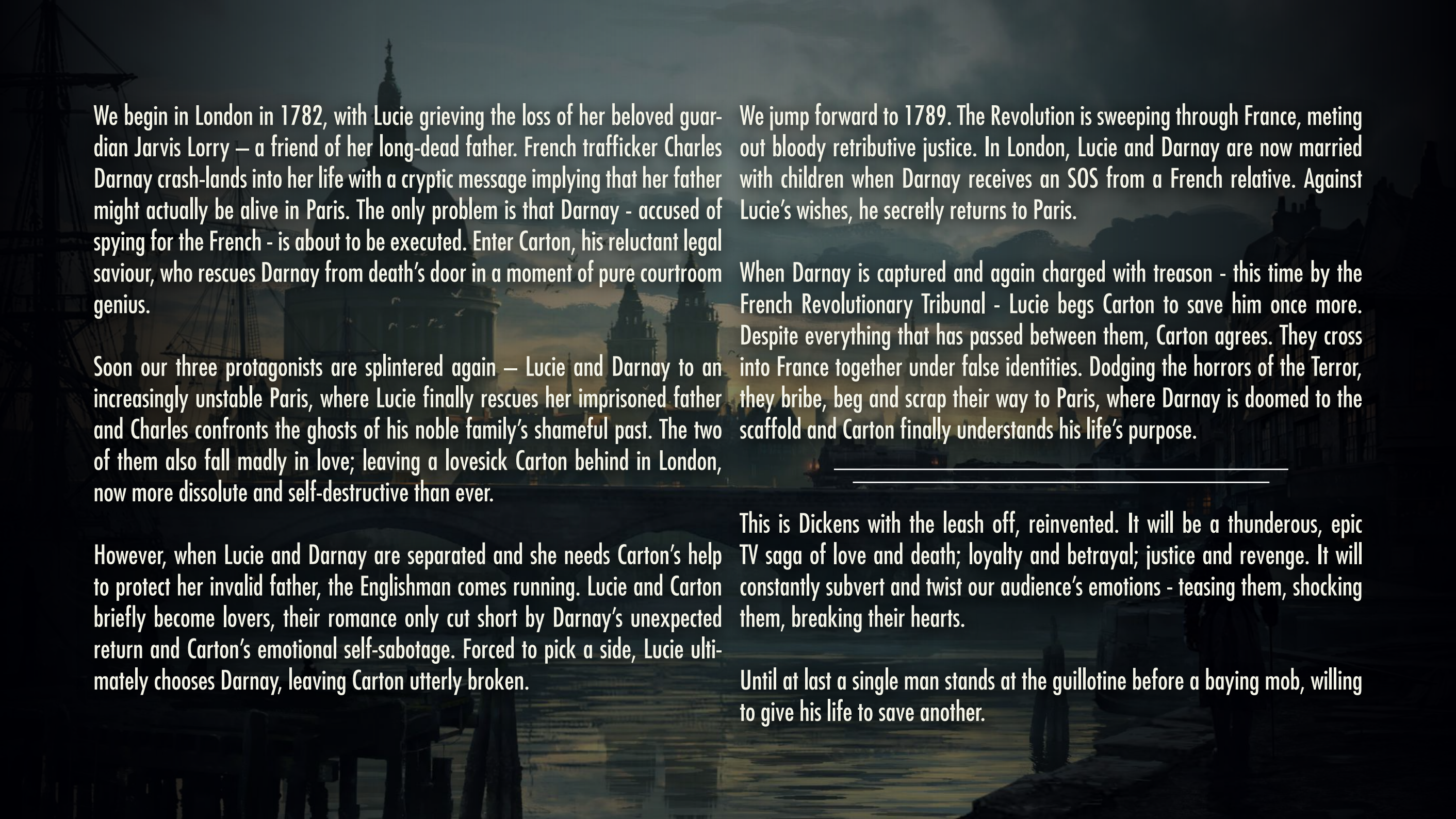
He loathes Darnay - the ray of light to his darkness - and yet remains captivated by his rival. Darnay is the man Carton could have been. A man worthy of Lucie's love.

Carton's emotional journey will be beautiful yet heartbreaking - the other man, the outsider, desperate to be seen and for his life to mean something. He swears he doesn't need anyone, doesn't love anything, but his actions betray him. He will always come when Lucie calls and his love for her will inspire him to make the ultimate sacrifice; to save Darnay, his brilliant, idealistic alter ego. Perhaps the only person who truly knows him.



THE STORY





We begin in London in 1782, with Lucie grieving the loss of her beloved guardian Jarvis Lorry — a friend of her long-dead father. French trafficker Charles Darnay crash-lands into her life with a cryptic message implying that her father might actually be alive in Paris. The only problem is that Darnay - accused of spying for the French - is about to be executed. Enter Carton, his reluctant legal saviour, who rescues Darnay from death's door in a moment of pure courtroom genius.

Soon our three protagonists are splintered again — Lucie and Darnay to an increasingly unstable Paris, where Lucie finally rescues her imprisoned father and Charles confronts the ghosts of his noble family's shameful past. The two of them also fall madly in love; leaving a lovesick Carton behind in London, now more dissolute and self-destructive than ever.

However, when Lucie and Darnay are separated and she needs Carton's help to protect her invalid father, the Englishman comes running. Lucie and Carton briefly become lovers, their romance only cut short by Darnay's unexpected return and Carton's emotional self-sabotage. Forced to pick a side, Lucie ultimately chooses Darnay, leaving Carton utterly broken.

We jump forward to 1789. The Revolution is sweeping through France, meting out bloody retributive justice. In London, Lucie and Darnay are now married with children when Darnay receives an SOS from a French relative. Against Lucie's wishes, he secretly returns to Paris.

When Darnay is captured and again charged with treason - this time by the French Revolutionary Tribunal - Lucie begs Carton to save him once more. Despite everything that has passed between them, Carton agrees. They cross into France together under false identities. Dodging the horrors of the Terror, they bribe, beg and scrap their way to Paris, where Darnay is doomed to the scaffold and Carton finally understands his life's purpose.

This is Dickens with the leash off, reinvented. It will be a thunderous, epic TV saga of love and death; loyalty and betrayal; justice and revenge. It will constantly subvert and twist our audience's emotions - teasing them, shocking them, breaking their hearts.

Until at last a single man stands at the guillotine before a baying mob, willing to give his life to save another.

DANIEL WEST - SCREENWRITER

Daniel is a screenwriter and producer with a passion for thrilling, propulsive stories led by flawed but compelling protagonists.

He was Co-Creator, Co-Writer and Co-Executive Producer of the critically-acclaimed ***Gunpowder*** (BBC, HBO). He was also Writer of numerous episodes of the groundbreaking and BAFTA-winning ***Top Boy*** (Netflix), for which he also served as Associate Producer.

Daniel is joint Director of **Thricker Films** alongside his producing partner, Kit Harington. Daniel and Kit have several projects in development for TV and film, both within the UK and overseas.

KIT HARINGTON - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Kit is an actor and producer who has received multiple Emmy nominations and a Golden Globe nomination for his work.

He starred as Jon Snow for eight seasons of the critically acclaimed and multiple-award-winning TV show ***Game of Thrones*** (HBO). He has worked across the US, UK and international TV and film industry for the past 15 years on projects as varied as ***Testament of Youth*** (Sony Pictures Classics), ***Criminal*** (Netflix), ***Eternals*** (Marvel Studios) and ***Industry*** (HBO, BBC).

Along with his producing partner, Daniel West, Kit was Co-Creator and Co-Executive Producer of the critically acclaimed ***Gunpowder*** (BBC, HBO) and has numerous projects in development with their company **Thricker Films**.



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