AI-Generated Graded Readers
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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.
The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

Content Note

This adaptation is based on a historical literary work. It may contain expressions, attitudes, or depictions that some readers may consider inappropriate or offensive by today's standards. Such elements have been retained or reflected where necessary in order to preserve the historical and literary character of the original work.

Source Text

Original work: Great Expectations
Author: Charles Dickens

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Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1: The Boy in the Churchyard

My father's family name was Pirrip, and my first name was Philip. When I was very small, I could not say those names well. I called myself Pip, and everyone began to call me Pip too. I never knew my father or my mother. I only knew their names from the stone over their grave.

My sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery, told me about them, but she was not a gentle woman. She was more than twenty years older than I was, and she was married to Joe Gargery, the blacksmith. Near my parents' grave were five little stones for my five dead brothers. As a child, I looked at those stones and made strange pictures in my mind. I thought my father, mother, and brothers were all silent people who belonged to that cold place.

We lived in the marsh country, near the river and not very far from the sea. The land was flat and wet, with dark water, low banks, and rough grass. One cold evening, I stood in the churchyard and looked at the graves. The sky was dark, the wind came across the marshes, and I felt very small. I began to cry, because everything around me seemed dead, cold, and lonely.

Then a terrible voice cried, "Be quiet! Keep still, you little devil, or I will cut your throat!" A man came up from among the graves. He wore rough grey clothes, and there was a heavy iron on his leg. His shoes were broken, his head was wrapped in an old cloth, and his body was wet and covered with mud. He caught me by the chin, and I shook with fear.

"Please don't cut my throat, sir," I said. "Please don't do it." The man stared at me with hard eyes and said, "Tell me your name. Quick!" I answered, "Pip, sir." He made me say it again, and then he asked where I lived. I pointed across the flat land toward our village, where the trees stood low and dark in the distance.

The man turned me upside down and emptied my pockets. I had only a piece of bread. He put me on a high grave stone and ate the bread very fast, like a

starving animal. Then he looked at my face and said I had fat cheeks. I held tightly to the stone, because I was afraid he might really eat me.

He asked where my mother was, and I pointed to her grave. For a moment he looked frightened, as if I meant that she was standing near us. Then I explained that she was dead and buried there. He asked who I lived with, and I told him about my sister and Joe the blacksmith. When he heard the word "blacksmith," he looked down at the iron on his leg.

He came close to me and took both my arms. He bent me backward until I felt I would fall. "You know what a file is?" he asked. I said yes. "And you know what food is?" I said yes again. Each time I answered, he bent me farther back, so that I felt more helpless.

"You must bring me a file," he said. "And you must bring me food. Bring them to the old Battery tomorrow morning. If you do not, I will cut out your heart and liver." I was so afraid that I could hardly speak. I told him I would bring the file and all the food I could find. I promised I would come early in the morning.

Then he told me something even worse. He said he was not alone. He said there was a young man hidden with him, and that this young man was much more terrible than he was. The young man, he said, could find any boy, even if the boy locked his door and hid under the bed clothes. The young man would come softly and tear him open. I believed every word, because I was only a frightened child.

The man made me swear that I would not tell anyone. Then he let me go. I said good night in a shaking voice, and he moved away toward the marshes. He held his cold body with both arms, as if he might fall apart. When he climbed over the low church wall, he turned to look back at me. I ran home as fast as I could.

When I reached home, Joe was sitting alone in the kitchen. He was a large, strong man, but he was gentle and kind. He and I were friends because we both feared my sister. Joe told me that Mrs. Joe had been out looking for me many times. Worse still, she had taken Tickler with her, which was the stick she used to beat me.

Soon Mrs. Joe came in and found me behind the door. She beat me, scolded me, and threw me toward Joe. Joe quietly protected me with his great leg and kept

me near the fire. I told her I had been in the churchyard. She said that, if she had not brought me up, I would have been in the churchyard long ago and stayed there. I cried and rubbed my sore body.

At supper, my sister cut bread and butter for Joe and me. I was hungry, but I did not dare eat my piece. I needed food for the terrible man on the marshes. When Joe looked away, I pushed my bread and butter down the leg of my trousers. Joe saw that it had disappeared and thought I had swallowed it whole. He became very worried, and my sister punished us both with bitter medicine.

That night was Christmas Eve. I had to help stir the pudding for Christmas Day, but I could think only of the convict, the file, and the food. I also thought of the young man who, I believed, wanted my heart and liver. Outside, guns sounded across the marshes. Joe told me that another convict had escaped from the prison ships. My fear grew worse, because I understood that the man I had met was one of those escaped men.

I went to bed in the dark, but I could not rest. I was afraid of the convict, afraid of the young man, and afraid of myself. I knew I had promised to steal. Before dawn, I got up and went down the stairs. Every board seemed to cry, “Stop, thief!” In the pantry I stole bread, cheese, mincemeat, brandy, a meat bone, and a pork pie.

Then I went into the forge and took a file from Joe’s tools. I shut the doors behind me and ran out toward the marshes. The morning was cold, wet, and full of mist. The gates, banks, and cattle seemed to rush at me through the fog. Even an ox looked at me so strongly that I cried, “I could not help it, sir! I did not take it for myself!”

I knew the way to the old Battery, but the mist confused me. I went too far to one side and had to turn back along the river. At last I climbed a bank and saw a man sitting with his back to me. I thought it was my convict, sleeping from cold and hunger. I touched his shoulder softly. He jumped up, and I saw at once that he was another man.

This second man also wore grey clothes and had an iron on his leg. But his face was different, and he had a low hat. He tried to strike me, missed, stumbled,

and ran into the mist. My heart seemed to stop. “It is the young man!” I thought. Then I hurried on, more frightened than before.

At the Battery I found the right man. He was walking up and down, holding himself, shaking with cold. I gave him the file and opened my bundle of food. His eyes looked wild with hunger. He ate the mincemeat, bread, cheese, meat, and pork pie as fast as he could. He looked around all the time, as if someone might come and take it from him.

I told him I was glad he liked the food. He stopped for a moment and thanked me. Then I asked, with fear, whether he would leave any for the young man. He turned sharply and asked what I meant. I told him about the other man I had seen in the mist. I said he had the same kind of iron on his leg and that his face was badly hurt.

The convict became fierce at once. He asked where the other man had gone. He seemed to forget me, the food, and the cold. He pushed the last pieces of food into his coat and took up the file. Then he sat down on the wet grass and began to cut at the iron on his leg. He worked like a madman, and I was afraid of him again.

I told him I had to go, but he did not answer. He only bent over the iron and moved the file again and again. The sound went on through the thick mist. I slipped away quietly and began to run home. Behind me, I could still hear the file, hard and sharp, cutting at the chain.

Part 2: Christmas, Soldiers, and the Marshes

When I came back from the marshes, I expected to find a policeman waiting in the kitchen. I thought he would take me away at once for stealing the food and the file. But no one had found out anything. Mrs. Joe was busy making the house ready for Christmas dinner, and Joe was sitting where she had put him, out of her way. I said I had been out listening to Christmas songs, and Mrs. Joe accepted this without much care.

The house was full of work and heat and sharp words. There was pork, greens, fowls, pudding, and other good food for the guests. But I could not feel any joy in

it. I knew that the pork pie was gone, and I knew where it had gone. Every time Mrs. Joe went near the pantry, my heart seemed to jump up into my throat.

Joe and I went to church, because Mrs. Joe was too busy to go. Joe looked very unhappy in his Sunday clothes, because they did not fit him well and made him feel strange. I was unhappy too, but for a different reason. I wondered whether I should tell the truth in church. I thought that perhaps the church might protect me from the terrible young man, but I did not speak.

When we came home, the guests arrived. Mr. Wopsle came, full of his deep voice and his own importance. Mr. and Mrs. Hubble came too, and then Uncle Pumblechook arrived with wine, as he did every Christmas. I was not allowed to call him uncle, though everyone else spoke as if he were a very important man. I sat at the table in fear, squeezed into a small place and watched by everyone.

The dinner was hard for me. The grown people kept talking about children and how ungrateful they were. They pointed their words at me again and again, as if I were worse than any other child in the world. Joe tried to help me in his gentle way by giving me more gravy. But even his kindness made me feel worse, because I knew I had stolen from his house.

Then Uncle Pumblechook drank from the brandy bottle. I had filled that bottle with tar-water by mistake, after taking the brandy for the convict. He swallowed it and suddenly jumped up in a terrible state. He coughed, turned, rushed out, and made horrible faces by the window. Everyone was alarmed, but he only gasped one word: “Tar!”

For a little while, this saved me. Mrs. Joe became busy with hot drink for him, and no one thought much about the missing things. I began to hope that I might get through the day alive. Then Mrs. Joe said they must have clean plates for the cold food. I knew at once that she meant the pork pie.

She praised the pie as a fine present from Uncle Pumblechook and went to the pantry to get it. I saw Mr. Pumblechook ready with his knife. I saw Mr. Wopsle looking ready to eat again. Joe kindly said, “You shall have some, Pip.” I could bear no more, so I sprang from the table and ran toward the door.

At the door I ran straight into a group of soldiers. One of them held out

handcuffs and said, “Here you are. Come on.” For one dreadful moment, I thought the handcuffs were for me. Then the sergeant explained that he wanted the blacksmith. The soldiers were hunting two escaped convicts, and one pair of handcuffs needed repair.

Joe took off his Sunday coat and went into the forge. The fire was lit, the bellows blew, and the soldiers stood around while Joe worked. The bright fire, the hammering, and the talk of the hunt filled the house with excitement. Mrs. Joe gave the soldiers beer, and Uncle Pumblechook tried to act generous with the wine he had brought. Everyone seemed to enjoy the danger, as if the two poor men on the marshes were part of the Christmas entertainment.

At last Joe finished the work on the handcuffs. He asked if some of us might go with the soldiers to see what happened. Mrs. Joe allowed Joe, Mr. Wopsle, and me to go, because she wanted to hear the full story afterward. Outside, the air was raw and cold. Joe whispered to me that he hoped the convicts had escaped, and I loved him for saying it.

We followed the soldiers toward the churchyard and then out onto the marshes. The wind blew sleet into our faces, and Joe carried me on his back. I remembered that I had been there that very morning with the food. Now I feared that my convict would think I had brought the soldiers to him. I wanted him to know that I had not betrayed him.

The soldiers spread out in a line and moved across the dark, wet land. The Battery, the river, and the old place of hanging could be seen in the red evening light. I listened for the sound of the file and started when I heard a small bell, but it was only a sheep bell. Then, through the wind and rain, we heard a long cry. Soon there were more cries, and the soldiers began to run.

Joe ran with me on his back, down banks, over gates, and through wet ditches. The cries grew clearer. One voice called for help, and another cried that the escaped convicts were there. At last the soldiers rushed into a ditch. Mud and water flew up, and two men were dragged out, fighting and breathing hard.

I knew them both. One was my convict, and the other was the man I had seen that morning. My convict was bleeding and wild, but he cried, “I caught him!

Remember that!" He wanted everyone to know that he had stopped the other man from escaping. The other convict said my convict had tried to murder him, but my convict called him a liar and looked at him with deep hate.

The two men were put in handcuffs and kept apart. My convict looked around and saw me. I shook my head a little, trying to tell him that I had not brought the soldiers. I do not know whether he understood me. His look was deep and strange, and then the moment was gone.

The soldiers lit torches, and we all marched toward the river. The night became very dark, and the fire from the torches fell in red drops on the ground. The prisoners limped between the soldiers with guns around them. We came at last to a rough hut near the water, where more soldiers waited. The other convict was taken away first.

Then my convict spoke to the sergeant. He said he wanted to confess something about the escape, so that no one else would be blamed. He said he had stolen food from the blacksmith's house in the village. Joe stared, and I stared too. The convict said he had taken broken food, drink, and a pie.

Joe was not angry. He said, "You were welcome to it, as far as it was ever mine. Whatever you have done, we would not want you to starve." The convict turned away, and something seemed to catch in his throat. Soon the boat came, and he was taken out to the prison ship. The dark ship lay on the water like a great black cage, and I watched him disappear into it.

On the way home, I was so tired that Joe carried me again. I wanted to tell him the truth, but I could not. I loved Joe, and I was afraid he would think badly of me forever. At home, everyone was talking about how the convict had stolen the pie. Mr. Pumblechook made a grand story of how the man must have climbed into the house, and no one guessed the truth.

Mrs. Joe took me up to bed, and the day ended at last. But my mind did not rest. I had been saved from discovery, yet I was not free from guilt. I knew I had done wrong, and I knew I had been too afraid to confess it. That secret stayed with me long after the talk of the missing pie had passed away.

Part 3: Satis House

When I was still a child, I was already meant to become Joe's apprentice one day. Until then, I did small jobs when people needed a boy. I also went to an evening school in the village, though it was not a very useful school. The old woman who kept it often slept, and the children learned only a little. Biddy, who was the old woman's granddaughter, helped us more than anyone else.

One winter night, I sat by the fire with my slate and tried to write a letter to Joe. Joe was sitting beside me, so there was no real need for a letter. Still, I felt proud when I gave it to him. Joe looked at the letters with wonder, especially when he saw the J and the O of his own name. To him, even those few marks seemed like a great piece of learning.

I soon found out that Joe himself could hardly read. When I asked why he had not gone to school, he told me about his father. His father had drunk too much and beaten Joe and Joe's mother. Sometimes they ran away, and Joe's mother tried to send him to school. But his father always found them, brought them back, and the beatings began again.

Joe spoke of these hard things gently, as he spoke of most things. He even tried to say that his father had been good at heart. After his father died, Joe worked and cared for his mother until she died too. Then he met my sister. When he asked her to marry him, he also asked her to bring the poor little child with her. That child was me, and Joe said there was room for me at the forge.

I was so moved that I began to cry and put my arms around his neck. Joe held me and said we were always the best of friends. From that night, I looked up to Joe in a new way. He was not clever with books, but he had a kind heart. I felt that he was better than many people who could read and write.

Later that evening, Mrs. Joe came home with Uncle Pumblechook. She brought strange news. Miss Havisham, a rich lady in town, wanted a boy to come and play at her house. Uncle Pumblechook said he could take me there. My sister at once began to think that my fortune might be made by this visit.

Before I could understand what was happening, Mrs. Joe washed me with

terrible force. She rubbed my face, pulled my clothes, and put me into my tightest suit. Then I was handed over to Uncle Pumblechook, who spoke to me as if he had done some noble act. I said good-bye to Joe from the cart. I had never been parted from him before, and the night stars looked strange above me.

Uncle Pumblechook kept a shop in the market town. It was full of seeds, grain, and little drawers, and I wondered about all the things hidden inside them. In the morning, he gave me a poor breakfast and asked me many sums. He seemed to think children existed so that adults could ask them numbers. I was very glad when it was time to go to Miss Havisham's.

Her house was called Satis House. It was old, dark, and shut away from the street. A young lady opened the gate, and this was Estella. She was beautiful, but she looked at me as if I were something low and dirty. She called me "boy" and led me through the dark house without kindness.

Inside, I met Miss Havisham. She sat in a room where there was no daylight, only candles. She wore a rich white dress, but it was old and yellow with age. One shoe was on her foot, and the other lay near her. The clocks in the room had all stopped at the same time, and everything around her seemed to have stopped too.

Miss Havisham looked at me and said she wanted me to play. I did not know how to play in such a place. She put her hand on her heart and said it was broken. Then she told Estella to play cards with me. Estella did not want to, but she obeyed.

We played a simple card game, and Estella watched me with cold eyes. She laughed at my thick boots and my rough hands. She also laughed because I called the knaves "Jacks." I had never thought my hands or boots were shameful before. But after she spoke, I began to feel ashamed of them.

Miss Havisham seemed to enjoy Estella's pride. She whispered to her and looked at me closely. She told Estella to break my heart. I did not understand everything, but I felt that I had been brought there to be hurt. When the game was over, Estella took me away and gave me food in the yard, as if she were feeding a dog.

I ate alone outside among old buildings and empty barrels. The place felt dead, like the room inside the house. I began to cry, because Estella had made me feel

common and poor. I was angry with myself for crying, so I kicked the wall and tried to stop. Still, her words stayed in my mind.

While I was there, I thought I saw something terrible. I looked up and imagined Miss Havisham hanging from a beam in the old building. The figure was dressed in yellow-white, like her wedding clothes. I ran away in fear, then ran back and saw nothing. The vision passed, but it left a cold feeling in me.

Estella came back with the keys and let me out. She saw that I had been crying and asked why I did not cry again. I said I did not want to. She laughed and pushed me through the gate. I walked back to Uncle Pumblechook's shop, then started the long walk home, thinking of my coarse hands, thick boots, and poor learning.

When I reached home, Mrs. Joe wanted to know everything. I did not know how to describe Miss Havisham's house. I felt that Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook would not understand it. I also felt it would be wrong to bring that strange room and that proud girl into our kitchen talk. So I said very little, and my sister became angry.

Uncle Pumblechook came at tea-time to hear the story too. He asked many questions and watched me with his round eyes. I did not want to tell the truth to him. So I began to invent wild things. I said Miss Havisham sat in a black velvet coach, that we played with flags and swords, and that there were dogs fighting for meat.

Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook believed much of this nonsense, or at least they wanted to believe it. They talked about what Miss Havisham might do for me. My sister thought I might receive property. Uncle Pumblechook thought I might be helped into a better trade. Joe came in and listened with wide, honest eyes, and then I felt deeply ashamed.

Later, when Mr. Pumblechook had gone and Mrs. Joe was busy, I went to the forge and told Joe the truth. I said all the grand stories were lies. Joe was shocked, but he was not cruel. He told me that lies were lies, and that no one could become uncommon by going crooked. I went to bed thinking of his words, but I also thought of Estella. That day changed me, because it made me feel for the first time that I was common and wanted to be something else.

Part 4: Wanting to Be Uncommon

After my visit to Miss Havisham, I wanted more than ever to become uncommon. I thought the first step was to learn everything Biddy knew. So, one evening at school, I told her that I had a special reason for wanting to rise in life. Biddy was kind and promised at once to help me.

Our school was not a good place for learning. The children made noise, stepped on one another's feet, and read from old dirty books without understanding much. Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt, who was supposed to teach us, often slept or moved about in anger. Still, Biddy helped me as well as she could, and I began to copy letters and words at home.

That same evening, I had to go to the Three Jolly Bargemen and bring Joe home. Joe was there by the fire with Mr. Wopsle and a stranger. The stranger looked at me in a secret way, with one eye half shut. He spoke to Joe about the marshes and the escaped convicts, and I soon felt cold inside.

Then the stranger did something that only I could see. He stirred his drink not with a spoon, but with a file. I knew at once that it was Joe's file, the file I had stolen for the convict. I sat still and stared at him, unable to speak. The old fear came back, and I felt that my past secret had followed me into the room.

When we left, the stranger gave me a shilling wrapped in paper. At home, Mrs. Joe opened the paper and found two one-pound notes inside. Joe ran back to return them, but the stranger had gone. My sister kept the money safely, but to me it was not a gift. It was a sign from the convict world, and it troubled my sleep for many nights.

On the next appointed day, I returned to Satis House. Estella let me in and took me by a different way. I stood in a gloomy room where Miss Havisham's relations were waiting. They spoke with soft false words, but I felt that they were all waiting for Miss Havisham's money.

Estella soon took me upstairs. On the stairs, we met a dark, strong-looking gentleman with sharp eyes and a large hand. He took my chin and looked hard at

my face. He told me to behave myself, because he knew a great deal about boys and thought they were a bad set. I did not know then how important he would become in my life.

Miss Havisham did not want me to play cards at first. Instead, she made me walk her round and round a dark room, with her hand on my shoulder. In that room stood a long table covered with dust and spider webs. She pointed to it and said that, when she was dead, she would be laid there.

On the table was her old wedding cake. It had been there for many years, growing dry and ruined like everything else in the house. Miss Havisham said the day was her birthday, but no one was allowed to speak of it. Her relations came to visit her on that day, but she knew they were really thinking of what they might gain from her death.

After the visitors left, Estella and I played cards again. Miss Havisham watched Estella and placed jewels on her, making me notice her beauty more and more. Estella was cold to me, but I could not stop admiring her. When the game ended, I was sent outside to eat in the old way, like a boy who did not belong inside the house.

While I wandered in the garden, I looked through a window and saw a pale young gentleman. He came out and told me to fight him. I did not understand why, but he pulled my hair and hit his head into my stomach. Then he led me to a quiet corner, took off his coat, and prepared for the fight as if it were a serious ceremony.

I was afraid at first, because he seemed to know the rules of fighting. But when I struck him, he fell down at once. He got up again and again, with a bloody nose and then a black eye. He was brave, but he was weak, and at last he gave in and said I had won.

I did not feel happy after the fight. I felt rough and almost cruel, though I had not asked for it. When I returned to the courtyard, Estella was waiting, and her face was bright as if the fight had pleased her. She let me kiss her cheek, but I felt that the kiss was given to me like a coin given to a poor boy.

After that, I went to Satis House many times. I walked Miss Havisham through her rooms, played cards with Estella, and heard the song “Old Clem” when Miss

Havisham wished me to remember the forge. At home, Mrs. Joe and Uncle Pumblechook talked foolishly about what Miss Havisham might do for me. Joe did not join in, but I knew he still hoped I would become his apprentice.

One day, Miss Havisham looked at me and said I was growing tall. Soon after that, she asked the name of the blacksmith and told me to bring Joe with my papers. When I carried the message home, Mrs. Joe became wild with excitement. She thought something great was about to happen, though no one knew what it would be.

Joe put on his Sunday clothes to go with me, and I felt pain seeing him so uncomfortable. Estella opened the gate, and Joe stood holding his hat as if it were something difficult to manage. In Miss Havisham's room, he could hardly speak to her directly. Whenever she asked him a question, he answered me instead.

Miss Havisham asked whether Joe meant to take me as his apprentice. Joe said that this had always been planned, unless I had any objection to the trade. I was ashamed of him because Estella was watching and smiling. Yet Miss Havisham seemed to understand his honest heart better than I did at that moment.

She gave Joe twenty-five guineas as my apprentice money. Then she said I had been a good boy there and that this was my reward. She also made clear that Joe must expect nothing more. I asked if I should come again, and she answered no. Gargery was my master now.

We went to the Town Hall, and I was formally bound as Joe's apprentice. After that, Mrs. Joe, Uncle Pumblechook, and the others held a dinner at the Blue Boar. They all acted as if the day were a great success, but I felt miserable. That night, in my little room, I knew with a heavy heart that I should never like Joe's trade as I once had.

Part 5: Ashamed of the Forge

It is a very sad thing to be ashamed of home. I knew this from my own heart. Our home had never been an easy place, because my sister was hard and angry. But Joe had made it good to me, and once I had believed that the kitchen, the forge,

and Joe's work were all honest and fine.

Now everything had changed inside me. The forge seemed dirty, common, and low. I was afraid that Estella might one day look in through the wooden window and see me with a black face and rough hands. I imagined her laughing at me. That thought made the fire, the tools, and even Joe's kind voice feel painful.

I did not complain to Joe, and that is one of the few good things I can say about myself then. I worked because Joe worked, and I stayed because Joe was faithful to me. He was patient and steady, even when I was restless and unhappy. Any good in my apprentice life came from him, not from me.

I had grown too old for Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt's school, so my lessons there ended. Biddy had already taught me almost everything she knew. I also tried to learn from Mr. Wopsle, but his lessons were not useful. He only used me as a body in his speeches and scenes, and I soon stopped asking him for help.

Whatever I learned, I tried to teach Joe. This sounds generous, but my reason was not truly kind. I wanted Joe to seem less common, so Estella would not laugh at him in my thoughts. Joe came with me to the old Battery on Sundays, smoked his pipe, and listened with a serious face. But he never remembered much from one week to the next.

One Sunday, while we sat near the river, I told Joe that I wanted to visit Miss Havisham. Joe slowly asked why I wished to go. He thought she might believe I wanted more from her. I said I only wished to thank her and ask after her, but Joe was not sure this was wise.

Still, I could not stop thinking about it. At last Joe gave me a half-holiday, and I went to town. In the forge that day, Orlick, Joe's worker, heard about my half-holiday and asked for one too. Orlick was a dark, heavy, unfriendly man, and he had never liked me. When Joe agreed to give him the afternoon off too, my sister looked out and began to scold.

Orlick answered her with ugly words. My sister called him names, and he called her a sharp woman who wanted to rule everyone. Joe told him to be quiet, but Orlick would not stop. At last Joe took off his apron and stood before him. The two men fought in the forge, and Joe beat Orlick with calm strength.

After the fight, Joe washed himself and made peace as well as he could. I went to Miss Havisham's, but Estella was not there. Miss Havisham said Estella had gone abroad to be educated like a lady. This news hurt me more than I expected. The house seemed darker and emptier without her.

Miss Havisham asked me again to walk her round the room. The old cake still stood on the table, and the stopped clocks still marked the dead hour of her life. I felt that I had come there for almost nothing. When I left, I was full of sadness, because Estella was far away and I was still only Joe's apprentice.

That evening I went with Mr. Wopsle to hear him read and act in a village performance. Orlick went near us on the road, heavy and slow in the dark. The guns from the prison ships sounded again across the marshes, because convicts had escaped. The night was wet, black, and full of mud, and the sound of the guns made me remember my first secret fear.

When we came near the village, we saw lights and people at the Three Jolly Bargemen. Mr. Wopsle ran in to ask what had happened. He came out quickly and said something was wrong at our house. We all ran, and when we reached the kitchen, it was full of people, with Joe, the doctor, and many neighbours standing there.

My sister lay on the floor without sense or movement. Someone had struck her on the back of the head while her face was turned toward the fire. She did not die, but she was never the same again. Her strong angry voice was gone, and the woman who had ruled our house could no longer rule it.

People searched for the person who had attacked her. There were signs that someone had entered the house, and the weapon was found near by. It was a strange iron, like the one that had once been on the convict's leg. When I saw it, old fear and guilt came back to me. I wondered whether my secret from the marshes had somehow returned to harm my home.

No one could prove who had done the attack. Some people thought escaped convicts were to blame. I thought of Orlick, because he had quarrelled with my sister that same day. Yet I had no proof, and I did not speak clearly against him. The matter remained dark and heavy over us.

My sister lived, but she became weak and helpless. She could not speak as before, and she used a slate to make signs. She often drew a hammer, and we slowly understood that she wanted Orlick to come. This surprised me, because I expected her to hate him. Instead, she seemed pleased when he stood before her, as if she wished to be kind to him.

Biddy came to live with us and help in the house. She cared for my sister, managed our daily life, and made the home quieter than it had ever been. She was not beautiful like Estella, but she was good, clean, gentle, and clever. I began to notice her thoughtful eyes and her calm way of understanding things.

My apprentice life went on. Each year, on my birthday, I visited Miss Havisham, and she gave me a guinea. The old house never seemed to change, though I was growing older outside it. I still hated my trade and still felt ashamed of home. The stopped clocks in Satis House seemed to have stopped part of my heart too.

One Sunday, I walked with Biddy and told her some of my trouble. I said I wished I could like the forge as I once had, because then Joe and I might have been happy partners one day. I also told her about Estella, and said I admired her terribly and wanted to become a gentleman for her sake. Biddy listened kindly, but she said Estella was not worth winning if she made me so unhappy.

I knew Biddy was right, yet I could not change my heart. I even said that, if I could make myself love Biddy, it would be better for me. She answered quietly that I never would. As we walked home, Orlick appeared near the gate and followed us. Biddy whispered that she did not like him, and I became angry when I learned that he watched her with interest.

After that, my mind was more confused than ever. Sometimes I knew that Biddy was better than Estella and that Joe’s honest life was nothing to be ashamed of. At other times, one memory of Estella destroyed all these good thoughts. I still hoped, in some hidden part of myself, that Miss Havisham might one day make my fortune. Before my apprenticeship could run its full course, that hope suddenly took a new and dangerous shape.

Part 6: Great Expectations

In the fourth year of my apprenticeship, I was at the Three Jolly Bargemen on a Saturday night. A group of men sat around the fire, listening to Mr. Wopsle read from the newspaper. He was reading about a murder, and he enjoyed every dark word of it. He gave voices to the people in the story and acted as if he were on a stage. Everyone listened with great interest, and I sat there among them.

When Mr. Wopsle finished, I noticed a strange gentleman watching us. He leaned over the back of the seat opposite me and looked at us with sharp eyes. He spoke to Mr. Wopsle in a cold way and asked whether he thought the prisoner was guilty. Mr. Wopsle said yes, but the gentleman quickly showed that he had spoken too soon. He said the law must think a man innocent until he is proved guilty.

The stranger asked question after question, and Mr. Wopsle became smaller under his words. The room, which had been so warm and easy, became uncomfortable. We all began to feel that Mr. Wopsle had made a mistake. The stranger seemed to know the law, and he seemed to know how to make other people afraid of him. Then he asked whether Joseph Gargery, the blacksmith, was there.

Joe stood up, and the gentleman asked about his apprentice, who was called Pip. I cried out that I was there. When he put his hand on my shoulder, I knew him. He was the dark gentleman I had once seen on the stairs at Miss Havisham's house. He said he wanted to speak to Joe and me in private, so we left the inn and walked home in silence.

We went into the best room, which was cold and hardly ever used. The gentleman sat at the table with one candle near him. He said his name was Jaggers and that he was a lawyer in London. He had come on business for another person, but he would not name that person. He made it clear that he was only doing what he had been told to do.

Then Mr. Jaggers turned to Joe. He said he had come with an offer to free me from my apprenticeship. He asked whether Joe would want money for letting me go. Joe stared at him and said no. He would not take anything for standing in my

way, because he did not want to stand in my way at all.

Mr. Jaggers then turned to me. He said that I had great expectations. I was to be brought up as a gentleman, and I would receive money for that purpose. My benefactor's name must remain secret. I must keep the name Pip, and I must not ask who the person was. I felt as if the whole room had opened before me into a bright new world.

I at once thought of Miss Havisham. I believed she must be the person behind this fortune. I thought she meant me to become a gentleman for Estella. I did not say this, but the idea filled my mind. Every old hope I had kept hidden suddenly seemed true.

Mr. Jaggers said he would be my guardian. He also said that I should go to London and study with Mr. Matthew Pocket. I tried to thank him for his advice, but he stopped me at once. He said it was not advice, only a statement. I learned then that he was a man who chose every word carefully and made others do the same.

He counted out money for me and said I should buy new clothes before going to London. Then he offered Joe money as payment for losing my work. Joe became deeply hurt. He put his hand gently on my shoulder and said that I was welcome to go to honour and fortune. But no money could pay him for losing the little child who had come to the forge and had been his best friend.

Dear Joe was full of feeling, but I did not answer him as I should have done. I was already lost in dreams of my new life. Mr. Jaggers looked at Joe as if Joe were foolish, and this made Joe angry. Joe said that no man should come into his own home and trouble him in that way. Soon after that, Mr. Jaggers left, saying I should come to London in one week.

I followed him for a moment to ask whether I might say good-bye to people before I left. He said there was no objection. When I returned, Joe, Biddy, and my sister were in the kitchen. I asked Joe to tell Biddy the news, and he said, "Pip is a gentleman of fortune, and God bless him." Biddy and Joe congratulated me, but I felt there was sadness in their words.

I explained that no one must ask about my benefactor. Biddy said she would

be careful, and Joe said he would be careful too. They were kind, but I was easily offended that night. When they looked at me, I imagined they did not trust me. Even the stars outside seemed poor and common to me, because they shone over the village I was about to leave.

Before bed, I told them I would get my new clothes in town and not show myself in them at home. I said people in the village would make too much of it. Joe tried to speak kindly, but I answered in a proud and uneasy way. Biddy asked whether I would show the clothes to them, and I became sharp with her. That night, in my little room, I felt lonely, though my fortune had just begun.

In the morning, everything seemed brighter. Joe brought out my apprenticeship papers, and we burned them in the fire. I felt free when I saw them turn black and fall into ash. Later, I walked alone to the marshes, as if I were saying farewell to the low wet land of my childhood. I thought I was leaving all that behind for London and greatness.

At the old Battery, I lay down and began to think about Miss Havisham and Estella. I wondered whether all this had been planned for Estella's sake. Then I fell asleep. When I woke, Joe was sitting beside me, smoking his pipe. He said he had followed me because it was our last time there together.

I told Joe I would never forget him. He believed me at once, and this somehow displeased me. I wanted him to be more moved by my promise, but he was simply faithful. Then I said it was a pity he had not learned more when we had lessons together. Joe answered that he was only master of his own trade, and that this was no more a pity now than it had been before.

After tea, I spoke with Biddy in the little garden. I asked her to help Joe improve after I was gone, especially in learning and manners. Biddy quietly asked whether Joe might be proud in his own way. She said he might be proud to stay in the place where he worked well and was respected. I was angry and said she was envious, though in truth she had seen more clearly than I had.

On Monday, I went to town and ordered new clothes from Mr. Trabb, the tailor. As soon as he heard of my fortune, his manner changed completely. His boy, who had first treated me carelessly, was ordered to behave with great respect. I enjoyed

this change more than I should have done. Later, Uncle Pumblechook also treated me as his dear young friend and made much of me in public.

On Friday, I put on my new clothes at Mr. Pumblechook's and went to say good-bye to Miss Havisham. Sarah Pocket was shocked when she saw me. Miss Havisham received me beside the old wedding cake and seemed to enjoy Sarah's envy. I told her I was going to London, and she said I must be good and follow Mr. Jaggers's instructions. I believed more strongly than ever that she was my secret benefactor.

On my last evening at home, I dressed in my new clothes for Joe and Biddy. We had a special supper, but no one was truly cheerful. I had said I wished to walk alone in the morning, because I did not want Joe to come with me to the coach. In my room that night, I knew there was shame in this wish, but I did not go down and ask him to come. I slept badly and dreamed of strange journeys that went wrong.

In the morning, I kissed my sister, kissed Biddy, and put my arms around Joe's neck. Then I took my small bag and walked away. Behind me, Joe and Biddy threw old shoes after me for good luck, and Joe called out with a rough, loving voice. I tried to feel brave and light as I left the village. But at the finger-post I broke into tears and said good-bye to my dear old friend.

After I cried, my heart was softer. I thought I might still go back and make a better farewell. But the coach went on, and each change of horses carried me farther away. The mists rose from the land, and the world spread out before me. So ended the first stage of my expectations.

Part 7: London and Herbert

The journey to London took about five hours. I reached the city a little after midday, and at once felt lost in its noise and size. The streets were crowded, dirty, and dark, and the houses seemed to press close together. I had dreamed of London as the bright beginning of my great life. But my first sight of it was not beautiful.

Mr. Jaggers had sent me his address in Little Britain, near Smithfield. I took a

coach for the short way there, though the coachman acted as if it were a long journey. When we stopped before Mr. Jaggers's office, I asked the price. The man said it was a shilling, unless I wished to make it more. I said I did not wish to make it more, and he looked at Mr. Jaggers's name as if he knew better than to trouble that house.

I went in with my small bag and asked for Mr. Jaggers. A clerk told me that he was in court and that I must wait in his room. The room was dark and unpleasant, with light coming from above. There were strange things inside, including an old pistol, a sword, boxes, and two terrible face shapes on a shelf. I sat there and felt that everything in the room had something to do with crime, fear, and secrets.

Another man had been waiting in the room before me, but the clerk sent him out roughly. His name seemed to be Mike, and no one treated him with respect. I began to understand that people came to Mr. Jaggers when they were in trouble with the law. The office did not feel like the doorway to a noble life. It felt like the doorway to a prison.

After a while, I went outside to walk while I waited. I came to Smithfield, where there was dirt, blood, and the smell of animals. Then I walked near Newgate Prison, a dark and heavy building. A dirty man offered to show me a trial for money, and then showed me where people were hanged. I was far from Joe's forge now, but London did not make me feel cleaner or better.

When I returned to Little Britain, I saw that many people were waiting for Mr. Jaggers. There were men with secret faces, women in shawls, and other anxious people. They all seemed to need him, fear him, and hate him at the same time. At last Mr. Jaggers appeared, and all of them rushed toward him. He put his hand on my shoulder and walked on, as if I were already part of his business.

Mr. Jaggers spoke to the waiting people sharply. He would not let them explain too much, and he stopped them whenever they tried to think for themselves. He asked again and again whether they had paid Wemmick. When one woman cried about her Bill, he told her that Bill was in good hands and that she must not bother him. His words were hard, but everyone obeyed him.

Then another man begged him to help a person named Abraham Lazarus. Mr.

Jaggers said he was already on the other side of that case and would not change. The man tried to offer more money, but Mr. Jaggers pushed him away. I watched all this in silence. My guardian seemed powerful, but there was no warmth in his power.

Back in the office, Mr. Jaggers dealt with Mike and a witness he had brought. The witness was dressed like a respectable maker of pies, but he looked rough, drunk, and false. Mr. Jaggers was angry and ordered him to be taken away. Then he brought me into his own room and ate his lunch quickly while he spoke. Even his food seemed to be afraid of him.

He told me what had been arranged. I was to go to Barnard's Inn and stay with young Mr. Pocket until Monday. Then I would visit Mr. Matthew Pocket, his father, and see whether I liked living and studying there. Mr. Jaggers gave me cards for tradesmen and told me that my credit would be good. He also said he would watch my bills and stop me if I spent too much.

When I asked for a coach, he said I was close enough to walk. He called Wemmick, the clerk who kept the money. Wemmick was a short, dry-looking man with a square face and small bright eyes. He wore several rings and little signs of dead friends on his watch chain. He looked as if feeling had been locked away in him and only business had been left outside.

Wemmick walked with me through London. I asked whether the city was a very wicked place, and he answered in a calm way. He said a person could be cheated, robbed, or murdered in London, but people could do those things anywhere. He did not seem troubled by this idea. He spoke as if danger were only part of the day's work.

I asked him about Mr. Matthew Pocket. Wemmick said he lived at Hammersmith, about five miles away. He seemed to know him, but his voice did not make the news sound encouraging. Then we came to Barnard's Inn. I had imagined a fine inn, grander than anything in my town. Instead, I found a poor, dark group of old buildings, with dirty windows, sad little trees, and rooms that looked empty and tired.

We climbed the weak stairs to young Mr. Pocket's rooms. A sign on the door

said that he would return shortly. Wemmick left me there, after remembering with some surprise that people sometimes shook hands. I waited alone and looked out through the dirty window. London, I thought, had been greatly overpraised.

At last I heard footsteps on the stairs. A young man came up, carrying bags of fruit and breathing hard. He was polite, friendly, and sorry that I had waited. He said he had gone out to buy fruit for me, because I had come from the country. The door stuck badly, and while he fought with it, I helped him by holding the bags.

When we stood face to face, we both stared. He knew me, and I knew him. He was the pale young gentleman I had fought at Miss Havisham's house. He cried out that I was the prowling boy, and I said he was the pale young gentleman. For a moment we could only look at each other, and then we both laughed.

His name was Herbert Pocket. He shook my hand warmly and said he hoped the old fight was over. He had gone to Miss Havisham's long ago because she had wanted to see whether she liked him. She had not liked him enough to help him or make him important to Estella. Herbert did not seem bitter about it. He said Estella was hard and proud, and that Miss Havisham had brought her up to hurt men.

I asked how Estella was related to Miss Havisham. Herbert said she was not related by blood, but had been adopted. Then he said Miss Havisham's own story was a strange one, and he would tell it at dinner. While we ate, he also helped me with my table manners. He did it so kindly that I did not feel badly hurt, though I saw that I had much to learn.

Herbert then told me Miss Havisham's history. She had once been a rich young lady with a half-brother who wasted money and behaved badly. A handsome man came and made her love him. On the day fixed for the wedding, at twenty minutes to nine, she received a letter and learned that she had been betrayed. From that moment, she stopped all the clocks, shut out the daylight, and kept the wedding things around her like a dead world.

Herbert said the man who betrayed her had been helped by her half-brother. Miss Havisham had never recovered. She adopted Estella afterward and raised her

to be beautiful, proud, and cold. I listened with a strange pain, because I loved Estella more after hearing this, not less. Herbert spoke plainly, but I still kept my own hopes hidden inside me.

Before long, Herbert and I became friendly. He gave me the name Handel, because of a piece of music about a blacksmith. I liked the name, though it reminded me of Joe and the forge. The next day Herbert showed me some of London, and I began to feel less alone. His kindness made Barnard's Inn seem a little less dark.

On Monday, Herbert took me to Hammersmith to meet his father. We walked there, and he told me that he had little money and was trying to make his own way. At Mr. Pocket's house, I found many children and much disorder. Mrs. Pocket seemed more interested in books about noble families than in the children around her. When Mr. Pocket came out to meet me, his grey hair looked as if his own home had confused him beyond repair.

Part 8: The Pocket World

Mr. Pocket received me kindly and made me feel that he was not a frightening man. He had grey hair, but his face still looked young, and his manner was simple and natural. He seemed worried by many small things at once, as if life in his own house was always too much for him. Yet he spoke to me with real kindness, and I soon felt that I could learn from him without fear.

Mrs. Pocket was very different. She sat with a book and seemed to live partly in another world. She had been brought up to believe that she should marry some great titled man. Because of that, she knew almost nothing about ordinary household life. She thought this made her noble, but it only made her helpless.

Mr. Pocket showed me my room, which was pleasant and comfortable. Then he introduced me to two other young men who were studying with him. One was Bentley Drummle, a heavy, proud, slow young man from a rich family. The other was Startop, who looked gentle and bright. I liked Startop far more than Drummle, though I did not yet know how much trouble Drummle would bring.

The Pocket house was ruled less by Mr. and Mrs. Pocket than by the servants. Meals appeared, children appeared, and problems appeared, but no one seemed truly in charge. Mrs. Pocket could hold a book about great families, but she could not hold her baby safely. When the baby cried or bumped its head, one of the little girls had to help. The child Jane seemed wiser than many of the grown people around her.

At dinner, a neighbour named Mrs. Coiler sat near me and spoke in a sweet, false way. She praised everyone and pitied everyone, but there was something unpleasant in her kindness. She told me how sad it was that Mrs. Pocket had not married a title. I did not answer much, because I was busy watching my knife, fork, glass, and manners. I was still learning how a gentleman was expected to eat.

Life at Mr. Pocket's house was strange, but I settled into it. Mr. Pocket taught me with patience and knew much more of my future than I knew myself. He understood that I was not being prepared for a profession. I was only to become educated enough to stand among other young men of my supposed rank. This was not a very clear aim, but it was the aim given to me.

I kept my room at Barnard's Inn, too, because Herbert was there. Herbert and I became close friends, and his company helped me more than any formal lesson. We walked between London and Hammersmith, talked about everything, and began to share our lives. I bought part of his boat, and he shared part of his rooms with me. In that way, we became almost like brothers.

I also began to spend money more freely than I should have done. I bought clothes and things for my rooms, and I grew used to expenses that would once have seemed impossible. Mr. Jaggers gave me money when I asked, but he always did it in a way that made me feel caught. He asked exact questions, made me name a sum, and then had Wemmick pay it. Nothing with Mr. Jaggers ever felt easy.

Wemmick worked at the office with a dry face and a hard mouth. He spoke of money and property as if they were the only safe things in life. He showed me things connected with criminals, including objects left by men who had been hanged. He called such things "portable property," and he seemed proud of always taking what could be taken and kept. In the office, he was almost as hard as Mr.

Jaggers.

One day Wemmick invited me to visit his home at Walworth. As we walked there, he became less dry and more human. His house was a tiny wooden place, but he called it his Castle. It had a little bridge, a small garden, a tiny gun, and many odd details that he had made himself. I saw at once that this small home was dearer to him than any large rich house.

Inside the Castle lived his old father, whom Wemmick called the Aged Parent. The old man could hardly hear, so Wemmick told me to nod at him often. Each nod pleased him very much. Wemmick, who was so hard at the office, became gentle and playful with his father. I began to understand that he had two selves: one for Mr. Jaggers's office, and one for home.

We drank punch in the garden and talked until the time came for the evening gun. Wemmick heated a poker and fired the little gun with great ceremony. The house shook, the glasses rang, and the Aged Parent was delighted because he could hear the bang. After supper, Wemmick showed me his small collection of strange things. I slept there that night in a little room under the flagstaff, and I was very pleased with the whole visit.

In the morning, Wemmick became dry again as we walked back to Little Britain. The nearer we came to the office, the tighter his mouth became. By the time he put his key into the office door, the Castle seemed to have disappeared from his mind. He had asked me not to speak of his home there, and I understood why. His private heart had to be kept separate from his public work.

Soon after that, Mr. Jaggers invited Herbert, Startop, Drummle, and me to dinner. We went to his house in Gerrard Street. It was large and dark, with a cold, official feeling. The rooms were solid and comfortable, but there was no warmth in them. Even the books were about law, crime, trials, and punishment.

Mr. Jaggers looked closely at my three companions and quickly became interested in Drummle. He called him the Spider because of his heavy, sulky way of spreading himself in a room. I did not like Drummle at all, but Mr. Jaggers seemed to enjoy drawing out his worst nature. He talked to him more than to the others, as if he found something real in his cold pride.

During dinner, the housekeeper came in. Her name was Molly. She was pale, quiet, and strong-looking, with large eyes and dark hair. She watched Mr. Jaggers all the time, as if every movement of his hand mattered. Wemmick had told me to notice her, and now I understood that there was something hidden and powerful in her history.

Mr. Jaggers made us show our weaknesses without seeming to do so. I spoke too much about money and my bright future. Herbert showed his cheerful hope. Startop showed his open good nature. Drummle showed his pride, his bad manners, and his dislike of us all. Mr. Jaggers watched everything as if we were people in a case before him.

Then he called Molly forward and told her to show us her wrists. She begged him not to, but he made her obey. One wrist was deeply scarred, and both looked very strong. Mr. Jaggers spoke of her strength as if she were a strange animal he had studied. I felt uncomfortable, because she stood before us in silence while we all looked at her.

After Molly left, the evening became more unpleasant. Drummle grew rude, and Herbert, Startop, and I became angry with him. We spoke too freely and drank too much wine. At half past nine, Mr. Jaggers ended the dinner exactly, as if shutting a door. Startop soon became friendly again, but Drummle walked away on the other side of the street, heavy and dark.

I went back upstairs to tell Mr. Jaggers I was sorry for the quarrel. He was already washing his hands, as he often did. He said it was nothing and that he liked Drummle. Then he warned me not to have too much to do with him. About a month later, Drummle left Mr. Pocket's house, and almost everyone there was glad to see him go.

Part 9: Joe Comes to London

One Monday morning, I received a letter from Biddy. She wrote that Joe was coming to London with Mr. Wopsle and wished to see me, if I agreed. She wrote in a careful, respectful way and called me Mr. Pip. At the end, she added that Joe

especially wanted her to write “what larks,” because he said I would understand. Those old words should have warmed my heart, but they made me uneasy.

I must tell the truth about my feelings. I did not look forward to Joe’s visit with simple pleasure. I was ashamed to think of him coming to my rooms in London, with his country clothes, large boots, and honest rough manner. I was glad he was coming to Barnard’s Inn and not to Mr. Pocket’s house, because I feared Bentley Drummle might see him. That was a low thought in me, but it was truly what I felt.

I prepared the room as grandly as I could. I had already spent much money making my poor rooms look better than they were. I even had a boy servant in bright clothes, though he was more trouble than help. Herbert kindly thought about what Joe might like for breakfast. I thanked him, but I also felt foolishly annoyed, as if his kindness showed too clearly that Joe was not used to such things.

On Tuesday morning, I heard Joe coming up the stairs. I knew him by the heavy sound of his boots and by the slow way he stopped to read the names on the doors. When he came in, he looked uncomfortable at once. His hat seemed to trouble him more than anything in the room. He kept passing it from hand to hand, and every small movement made me feel more ashamed and more sorry.

Joe called me “sir” and “Mr. Pip,” and that hurt me, though I had helped to make the distance between us. Herbert was gentle and friendly, but Joe could not become easy. He sat on the edge of his chair, and his hat slipped or fell or got in his way again and again. I wanted the visit to be over, even while part of my heart wanted the old Joe back. The room felt too small for both my new pride and his old kindness.

Joe had come with a message. Miss Havisham wished me to know that Estella had returned and would be glad to see me. When I heard Estella’s name, all my discomfort changed into excitement. Joe also gave me a paper about Mr. Wopsle, who had become an actor and was to appear in London. This small piece of news seemed unimportant beside Estella’s return.

Then Joe stood to go. At the door, he became more himself than he had been during the whole visit. He said that he and I were not made to be seen together in

London clothes and London rooms. He said he was wrong in those clothes and wrong away from the forge. If I ever wished to see him rightly, I should come to the old forge window and see him there, with his hammer in his hand.

His words had a simple dignity that no fine clothes could give and no rough clothes could take away. He touched my forehead gently and said, “God bless you, dear old Pip, old chap.” Then he left. I hurried after him as soon as I could move, but he was already gone. I stood in the street and felt that I had lost something good through my own shame.

At first, I decided that I must go home and stay at Joe’s house. That would have been the right thing to do. But by the time I had arranged my place on the coach, I had begun to invent excuses. I told myself that Joe’s house would not be ready, that I might trouble Biddy, and that the Blue Boar would be more convenient for Miss Havisham. In truth, I was lying to myself because I still did not want to face home.

On the coach, two convicts rode behind me, guarded by others. I could not see their faces at first, but I heard their talk. One of them had once been connected with the man who had given me the two one-pound notes in the inn long ago. When I understood this, the old fear returned. It seemed that the dark world of the marshes and prisons could still come near me, even on the road to my new life.

When I reached the Blue Boar, I found that people in the town were already making stories about me. Uncle Pumblechook had told everyone that he was the first cause of my fortune. A local newspaper even printed words that almost made him my guide and founder. I was angry, but I also cared too much about what people thought of me. My new life had not made me free from small pride.

The next morning, I walked early toward Satis House. I was full of bright dreams. I believed Miss Havisham had planned everything and that Estella was meant for me. In my mind, I saw myself restoring the dark house, opening the windows, bringing light into the rooms, and marrying Estella. I did not see that these were only dreams built by my own desire.

Estella was there, grown more beautiful than before. She treated me as if I were still a boy, yet she also drew me on. Miss Havisham watched us with eager

eyes and seemed to feed on my love and pain. She told me to love Estella, love her, love her. Those words entered me like fire, though Estella herself remained calm and cold.

Estella and I walked in the old garden. She remembered the fight I had once had with the pale young gentleman, who was now my dear friend Herbert. She spoke of it lightly and said she had enjoyed seeing it. I felt small beside her, because she seemed so sure of herself. She also said that people who had been fit company for me once might not be fit company now, and this thought pushed Joe even farther from my mind.

Later, Miss Havisham had me push her chair around the old room, as I had done when I was a boy. Mr. Jaggers was there too, and I hated having my feelings near his cold, sharp eyes. Miss Havisham told me again to love Estella, whatever she did to me. Estella did not promise love, kindness, or pity. She only stood beautiful and proud, and I loved her more because I was foolish.

It was arranged that I should meet Estella when she came to London. I left Satis House that night with her face and Miss Havisham's words burning in my mind. At the Blue Boar, Mr. Jaggers slept in the next room. I lay awake and repeated to myself, "I love her, I love her, I love her." I did not think then how wrong it was that, only the day before, Joe had made me cry and I had already let those tears dry.

In the morning, I told Mr. Jaggers that Orlick was not a safe man to have at Miss Havisham's gate. Mr. Jaggers at once agreed and said he would pay him off. I feared Orlick might be dangerous, but Mr. Jaggers had no fear of him. While he went to do this, I left the Blue Boar quickly, because I did not want to meet Pumblechook again. I walked along the road until the London coach overtook me.

Before I left town, I suffered one more shame. Trabb's boy followed me in the street and made fun of my gentlemanly manner. He bowed, walked, and acted in a foolish copy of me, while other boys laughed. I was angry and hurt, but I could do nothing without looking still more foolish. His mockery showed me something true and ugly about myself, though I did not want to see it.

Back in London, I told Herbert about Estella. He listened kindly, but he did

not pretend that my hopes were safe. He reminded me that Miss Havisham had raised Estella to hurt men. Then he told me his own secret. He loved a young woman named Clara, but he had no money to marry her yet. His hope was simple and honest, very different from my dark hope around Estella.

As we sat by the fire, I found the paper Joe had given me about Mr. Wopsle's play. The performance was that very night. Herbert and I quickly decided to go. We had spoken of Estella, Clara, love, money, and the future, but now the evening turned toward the theatre. We put out the candles, locked the door, and went out to look for Mr. Wopsle and his Denmark.

Part 10: Debts and Restlessness

Herbert and I went to see Mr. Wopsle act in London. He had changed his name for the stage and wished to be known as Mr. Waldengarver. The play was Hamlet, but the theatre was poor, the actors were weak, and the people in the gallery were noisy. From the first scene, I felt sorry for my old townsman. He tried to look dark and noble, but the audience found many reasons to laugh.

The ghost carried his paper in a way that made people shout advice to him. The queen's costume looked strange and heavy, and the people laughed at that too. Poor Mr. Wopsle had to speak great words while the crowd answered him with jokes. When he asked deep questions, voices from above gave foolish answers. The whole evening became less like a sad play and more like a rough game.

Herbert and I tried to behave kindly, but we could not think the play was good. After it ended, we went behind the stage to see Mr. Wopsle. He was full of his own ideas and did not seem to know how badly the night had gone. He spoke as if the audience had not understood him. I felt sorry for him and asked him to come home with us for supper.

He came to Barnard's Inn and stayed very late. He talked about his future on the stage and how he would raise the whole theatre to a new height. Herbert and I listened as kindly as we could. When at last I went to bed, I was tired and sad. I dreamed of Estella, of Miss Havisham, and of myself standing before a great

crowd without knowing what to say.

Soon after that, I received a note in a hand I did not know but at once guessed. It was from Estella. She wrote that she was coming to London by the midday coach and that I was expected to meet her. She did not write warmly, but I read the note again and again. My peace disappeared, and I could think of nothing but the hour of her arrival.

On the day she was to come, I went to the coach office far too early. I walked up and down the street and could not stay still. While I waited, Wemmick met me and asked why I was there. I told him I was waiting for someone by coach. He said he was going to Newgate Prison and asked me to walk with him.

I did not wish to go to a prison on the day Estella was coming, but I went with him. Newgate was dark, dirty, and full of fear. Wemmick moved through it as if it were only another room in his office. Prisoners knew him, guards knew him, and he spoke to them all in his dry business way. I felt the old shadow of crime around me again.

Wemmick showed me the prison and spoke of the people there as clients or cases. He was useful, careful, and hard. He seemed to know how every man stood with the law and what might happen next. I admired his sharpness, but I also wished I had not come. I wanted to meet Estella clean and free from the smell and thought of prison.

When I returned to the coach office, I tried to shake the prison from my clothes and my mind. I felt as if Newgate had left dust on me. Then the coach arrived, and I saw Estella’s face at the window. In that moment, everything else faded. Yet even then, some dark feeling passed across my heart, though I could not name it.

Estella looked more beautiful than ever in her travelling dress. She gave me her luggage to arrange and told me that she was going to Richmond. Miss Havisham had planned everything, and I was to take her there in a carriage. Estella handed me her purse and told me to pay the charges from it. She said that neither she nor I was free to do as we liked.

Her words made me hope there was some secret meaning in them. I thought perhaps Miss Havisham was guiding us toward a future together. We went into a

private room while the carriage was prepared, and Estella drank tea. The room was poor and smelled unpleasant, but I hardly noticed it because she was there. I thought I could have been happy anywhere with her, though in truth I was not happy even then.

I asked where she would stay in Richmond. She said she would live with a lady there and be brought into society. She would meet many people, and men would admire her. She spoke of this calmly, as if it were a lesson she had been taught. I listened with pain, because every new admirer seemed like a danger to me.

Estella spoke of Miss Havisham and of the way she herself had been formed. She told me I must not think she had a soft heart. I said I could not believe she had no heart, but she did not change her answer. She allowed me to admire her, and she allowed me to suffer. Yet she gave me no promise and no real hope.

When the carriage was ready, we drove toward Richmond. I sat near her and felt both proud and miserable. She was kind enough to keep me near her, but cold enough to keep me unsure. Every look from her seemed important to me. Every quiet word seemed to hide a meaning I wanted to find.

At Richmond, the house was old and fine. The servants came out to take her boxes, and the door soon received her and shut her away from me. She gave me her hand and smiled before she went in. I stood outside, looking at the house and thinking how happy I would be if I lived there with her. At the same time, I knew that I was never really happy when I was with her.

I returned to Hammersmith with a heavy heart. At the Pocket house, even the children’s small joys made me feel lonely. I thought of speaking to Mr. Pocket about my trouble, because he was wise and kind. But Mrs. Pocket sat there with her book about noble families, and the house was full of its usual disorder. I decided to say nothing.

By this time, my expectations had begun to harm me. I knew this, though I tried not to see it clearly. I was uneasy about Joe and uneasy about Biddy. Sometimes at night I thought I might have been better and happier if I had stayed at the forge. But then I thought of Estella, and all simple peace went away again.

My way of life also harmed Herbert. I spent money carelessly, and because we lived together, he began to spend more too. We joined a club called the Finches of the Grove, where young men ate costly dinners and quarrelled afterward. I did not even know the real purpose of the club. It seemed to exist mainly to waste money and make young men feel important.

Herbert and I fell into debt. To make ourselves feel better, we made careful lists of what we owed. We put papers in order, counted the sums, and left what we called a margin. This meant that, if the debt was one amount, we wrote down a larger amount to feel safe. Then, because we felt safe, we soon spent up to the larger amount too.

These careful meetings made me feel wise for a short time. Herbert praised my order, and I sat with the papers before me as if I were a great man of business. One evening, while we were in this calm mood, a letter came through the door. It had a black border and a heavy black seal. It was from Trabb and Co., and it told me that Mrs. Joe Gargery had died on Monday evening, and that I was asked to attend her funeral.

Part 11: Loss, Money, and Estella

My sister’s death disturbed me more than I had expected. I had not loved her with much tenderness, because she had been hard to me for most of my childhood. Still, when she was gone, I felt a strange empty place in the world. I kept imagining her face, her chair by the fire, and the sharp sound of her voice.

I wrote to Joe and told him I would come to the funeral. When I walked from the Blue Boar to the forge, the summer fields looked soft and bright. Memories of my childhood came back, but they seemed less hard than before. I thought that one day others might remember me more kindly too, after I was gone.

The house had been taken over by Mr. Trabb and his funeral men. Everything was black cloth, black ribbons, and stiff ceremony. Joe sat in strange black clothes and looked deeply uncomfortable. Biddy moved quietly through the room, neat and helpful, and I felt again that she belonged naturally to kindness and order.

Pumblechook was there too, full of false sadness and real self-importance. He ate and drank while trying to catch my attention. The funeral procession went through the village, and people came out to watch us as if it were a show. At the churchyard, near the graves of my parents, my sister was laid in the earth while birds sang above the marshes.

After the funeral, the house felt cleaner when the visitors and funeral men had gone. Joe, Biddy, and I ate a cold dinner together, but the best parlour made us stiff and uneasy. Later, Joe and I went near the forge, and he became more natural when he had his pipe and was partly back in his working clothes. I asked to sleep in my old little room, and Joe was pleased.

In the evening, I walked in the garden with Biddy. I told her she should have written to me sooner about my sister's illness and death. Biddy answered quietly that she would have written if she had thought I wished it. Her calm answer troubled me, because I knew she saw through me more clearly than I liked.

Biddy told me that she could not stay at the forge now. She planned to work at the new school and to support herself by teaching. She also told me about my sister's last hour. My sister had spoken Joe's name, put her arms around his neck with Biddy's help, said "Pardon" and "Pip," and then died peacefully.

We also spoke of Orlick. Biddy had seen him near the house on the night my sister died, and she had seen him watching again since then. I became angry and said I would use money to drive him out of the country. Biddy slowly brought me back to calmer talk. Then she spoke of Joe, his quiet duty, his strong hand, and his gentle heart.

I said that of course I would come often to see Joe. Biddy did not answer, and her silence hurt my pride. I asked what she meant, and she asked whether I was quite sure I would come often. I was offended and called this a bad side of her nature. But the next morning, when I left and saw the mist rising, I knew in my heart that Biddy was probably right.

Time passed, and Herbert and I fell deeper into debt. Then I came of age, and we both expected that Mr. Jaggers would tell me something important. On my twenty-first birthday, I went to his office at five o'clock. He congratulated me in

his dry way and called me Mr. Pip.

Mr. Jaggers asked how much money I was spending each year. I could not answer, because I had made my accounts so confused that I no longer understood them. He then gave me a banknote for five hundred pounds. This money was mine as a birthday gift, and I was to live on five hundred pounds a year until my secret benefactor appeared.

I asked whether my benefactor would soon be known. Mr. Jaggers would tell me nothing. He only repeated that, when that person chose to appear, my business with that person would become my own. I still believed Miss Havisham was behind everything. I thought Mr. Jaggers perhaps knew less of her plan for Estella and me than I did.

When I left Mr. Jaggers's room, I spoke quietly with Wemmick. I wanted to help Herbert begin in business without Herbert knowing. Wemmick, in the office, gave me very cold advice. He said helping a friend with money was like throwing money into the river. But when I asked whether that was also his opinion at Walworth, he said Walworth was different from the office.

So I went to Wemmick's Castle on Sunday. There I met the Aged Parent again and also Miss Skiffins, a lady whom Wemmick clearly liked. The little house was warm, funny, and peaceful, with its tiny bridge, small garden, and evening customs. Away from the office, Wemmick became a different man, and I trusted his private heart.

I told Wemmick all about Herbert. I said Herbert had helped me when I first came to London and that I feared my own way of life had harmed him. I wanted to use some of my money to buy him a place in a business, slowly and secretly. Wemmick listened and then said it was a very good thing to do. He promised to think about it and to ask Miss Skiffins's brother to help.

The plan was managed very cleverly. A young business man named Clarriker needed help and money, and secret papers were made without Herbert's knowledge. I paid part of the money and promised more later. Soon Herbert came home full of joy, saying that Clarriker had offered him a real opening. When I saw his happy face, I felt that my expectations had done some good at last.

Yet Estella still ruled my heart. I went often to Mrs. Brandley's house at Richmond, where Estella was staying. She had many admirers, and I suffered every time I saw men near her. She used me as a familiar friend, but not as a loved one. I was close enough to be hurt every day, but never close enough to be happy.

One evening Estella warned me again. She asked whether I would never take warning from her. I said that she herself had written for me to come, and she answered with a cold smile. Then she told me Miss Havisham wanted her at Satis House for a day. I was to take her there and bring her back, paying all costs from her purse.

At Satis House, nothing had truly changed. Miss Havisham clung to Estella with a fierce, hungry love. She asked me again how Estella used me, as if my pain gave her life. That night, I saw clearly that Estella had been sent into the world to attract men and hurt them. Still, I foolishly believed that, after this work was done, she was somehow meant for me.

Then, for the first time, I saw Estella and Miss Havisham quarrel. Miss Havisham accused Estella of being cold and hard. Estella answered calmly that she was what Miss Havisham had made her. She said she could not give what she had never been taught to feel. Miss Havisham cried for love, but Estella stood like stone before the very woman who had shaped her into stone.

I slept that night in a room across the yard, but I could not rest. The house seemed full of Miss Havisham's ghostly presence. I got up in the dark and saw her moving with a candle, crying softly as she went. She walked through the old rooms again and again, like a soul that could not leave its own sorrow.

Later, Bentley Drummle came into the story more darkly. At the club, he gave a toast to Estella of Richmond, and I was furious. He later proved that he knew her and had danced with her. Soon I saw that he was following her, and worse, that she allowed him to follow. He was dull, proud, and cruel, yet he waited like the Spider Mr. Jaggers had once called him.

At a ball in Richmond, I spoke to Estella about Drummle. I said he was disliked, stupid, and unworthy of her. She answered that she could bear what people said, and that I should not be foolish about its effect on me. When I asked whether she

deceived and trapped him, she said yes, and many others too. Then she added that she deceived all of them except me, and Mrs. Brandley came before she would say more.

Part 12: The True Benefactor

I was twenty-three years old, and still I had not learned who had given me my fortune. My birthday had passed a week before. Herbert and I had left Barnard's Inn and now lived in the Temple, near the river. Mr. Pocket and I were still friendly, but I no longer lived under his care. I read many hours each day, yet my life had no clear work, no clear aim, and no peace.

Herbert was away on business in Marseilles, and I missed him greatly. Our rooms felt empty without his cheerful voice. The weather was terrible, with wind, rain, and deep mud in the streets. For many days, a heavy dark sky had pressed over London. That night was the worst of all, and the wind shook the house as if the river itself were striking it.

I sat alone with a book and meant to stop reading at eleven o'clock. When the clocks of the city struck the hour, their sound came broken through the storm. I was listening to the wind when I heard a footstep on the stairs. At first I started with a foolish fear, as if my dead sister had somehow come back. Then I listened again and heard the step coming slowly upward.

The lamps on the stairs had gone out, so I took my reading lamp and went to the top of the stairs. "Is someone there?" I called. A voice answered from below. The man said he wanted the top floor and Mr. Pip. I held out the lamp and watched him climb toward me.

He was a strong man of about sixty, dressed roughly like someone who had come from a long sea journey. His hair was long and iron-grey at the sides, and his face was brown and worn by weather. When he saw me, he looked strangely pleased, as if the sight of me touched his heart. He held out both hands toward me. I did not know him, and his look made me uncomfortable.

I asked his business coldly, and he said he would explain. I let him into the

room, though I did not want him there. He looked around at my rooms with wonder and pride, as if the furniture, books, and fire belonged partly to him. Then he sat near the fire and covered his face with his hands. Still I could not understand who he was.

He asked whether anyone was near. I answered sharply, because a stranger had no right to ask such a question. Then he called me brave and seemed pleased that I had grown up so. He warned me not to seize him. At that moment, something in his voice, his manner, and his old power over me broke through the years. I knew him. He was the convict from the marshes.

The wind and rain seemed to carry me back to the churchyard of my childhood. I saw again the rough grey clothes, the iron on the leg, the wet mud, and the hungry eyes. He held out his hands, and I gave him mine only because I did not know what else to do. He kissed my hands and said I had acted nobly long ago. I drew back from him with fear and dislike.

I told him to keep away from me. I said that, if he had come only to thank me, it was not needed. I hoped he had changed his life, and I wished him well. But I also told him that our lives were different now. He was wet and tired, so I offered him something to drink before he went away.

He took hot rum and water, and I saw tears in his eyes. That sight softened me a little, and I tried to speak more kindly. I asked how he had lived. He said he had gone far away across the sea and had done very well as a farmer and in other work. I then offered to repay the two one-pound notes he had once sent me through a stranger. He took the new notes, folded them, burned them in the lamp, and dropped the ashes into the tray.

Then he began to ask how I had done well. He asked whether my income began with the number five. My heart beat hard. Then he asked whether I had a lawyer whose name began with J. The room seemed to move around me. I understood everything before he said it clearly, and the truth came down on me like a heavy weight.

He caught me as I nearly fell and helped me to the sofa. Then he knelt near me and told me the truth. He had made me a gentleman. He had sworn long ago that,

if he ever earned money, it would go to me. He had worked hard and lived rough so that I could live easily. He had sent the money through Mr. Jaggers, and no one else had been behind it.

My dream broke at once. Miss Havisham had not meant me for Estella. Satis House had not been the beginning of a grand plan for my happiness. I had left Joe and Biddy, not for a lady's secret kindness, but for the money of a transported convict. The shame of this was worse to me than the fear. I felt that the whole ship of my life had gone to pieces.

The man, whose real name was Abel Magwitch, called himself my second father. He said I was more to him than any son. He looked at my watch, my ring, my clothes, and my books with deep pride. He said I should spend money like a gentleman and stand among rich men. I felt cold whenever he touched me, yet his love for me was real and strong.

Then he told me the worst danger. He had been sent away for life, and if he was caught in England, he could be hanged. He had risked death to come and see me. That knowledge trapped me. I disliked him and feared him, but I could not betray him. His life was now in my hands.

I shut the shutters so no light could be seen from outside. I locked the doors and gave him Herbert's room, because Herbert was still away. When Magwitch took my hands again to say good night, I could hardly bear it. After he slept, I sat by the fire, too shocked to go to bed. The first clear thought that came to me was that all my hopes about Miss Havisham and Estella had been only a dream.

Near morning, I went downstairs in the dark to find help with a light. On the stairs I stumbled over a man crouching in a corner. He did not answer me and slipped away silently. I ran to the watchman, and we searched the stairs, but no one was there. The watchman said that, when my visitor had come, another person seemed to come in near him. This made the danger feel closer.

I decided to tell the people who cleaned my rooms that my uncle had arrived in the night. When Magwitch came out for breakfast, I asked what name he had used on the ship. He said he had taken the name Provis. I asked his real name, and he whispered that it was Abel Magwitch. He ate in a rough, hungry way that

reminded me painfully of the marshes, and I could hardly sit at the same table.

We spoke about how to keep him safe. He thought he could stay in England for good, but I knew this was impossible. I found rooms for him nearby in Essex Street and decided to call him my uncle, Mr. Provis. We also spoke about clothes and a change in his appearance. But no clothes could truly hide him from my eyes, because I still saw the convict in every movement.

I went to Mr. Jaggers and asked carefully whether what I had learned was true. Mr. Jaggers would not let me say too much, but he confirmed the fact. Abel Magwitch in New South Wales was my one and only benefactor. Miss Havisham had not been involved at all. Mr. Jaggers had kept strictly to the facts, and my mistake had been my own.

For several days, I lived in fear and misery with Provis in my rooms. He admired me, asked me to read to him, and watched me with pride, but his love made me feel more trapped. I could not leave him, because he might be taken and killed because of me. At last, one evening, Herbert came back. When Provis saw him, he took out a small black book and made Herbert swear never to tell the secret.

Part 13: Magwitch's Story

Herbert was deeply shocked when I told him the whole secret. He sat with me and Provis before the fire, and I saw my own fear and dislike in his face. Provis did not understand our feelings at all. He was proud of what he had done and thought we must be proud too.

He spoke to Herbert as if Herbert were already part of his plan. He said that he had once behaved in a low way after coming back, but that he would not do so again. He promised to keep himself proper for my sake. He seemed to think this would comfort us, but it did not comfort either of us.

Provis stayed late, because he did not want to leave Herbert and me alone. He watched us with a kind of jealous care. At last, near midnight, I walked him to his lodging in Essex Street. I looked carefully around me as we went, because I could

not forget the man I had met on the stairs. The streets seemed quiet, but danger still seemed to hide in every dark place.

When I came back, Herbert opened his arms to me. I had never felt more thankful for a friend. We sat down to talk about what must be done. The chair where Provis had sat still stood near the fire, and Herbert accidentally took it. A moment later he rose from it and pushed it away, and I knew he felt toward Provis as I did.

I said that I could not take more money from Provis. I had already taken too much without knowing where it came from. My debts were heavy, and I had no useful work. I felt that I was fit for nothing, and in my misery I said I might become a soldier. Herbert gently stopped me and said that would not help me repay anything or build a future.

Then Herbert spoke of the greater danger. Provis was a strong, fierce, fixed man, and he had risked death to come to England. If I broke his dream too suddenly, he might grow reckless. He might even let himself be taken. If that happened, I felt I would be almost like his murderer.

Herbert said the first thing was to get Provis out of England. I would have to go with him, at least for a time, so that he would agree to leave. Only after he was safe could I break away from him and think about my own life. This plan was hard, but it was the only plan that seemed possible. We shook hands on it, and that small act gave me some strength.

We also needed to know more about Provis and his past. I knew almost nothing except the terrible scene on the marshes when I was a child. Herbert said I must ask him directly. Provis was coming to breakfast the next morning, so we decided to ask him then. That night, I slept badly and woke again with the same fear: if he was found in England, his life was in danger.

Provis came at the appointed time and sat down with his knife, his food, and his rough ways. He was full of plans for me to live more grandly. He spoke of horses, carriages, and a fine house near Hyde Park, as if these things would make his dream complete. When he finished breakfast, I asked him about the other convict and about himself. He made sure Herbert’s oath covered everything, and

then he began.

He said his life could be told very simply: in prison, out of prison, in prison, out of prison. He had been locked up, driven away, punished, and beaten from the time he was very young. He did not even know where he had been born. His earliest memory was stealing turnips in Essex, cold and hungry, after a man had left him with no fire.

He knew his name was Abel Magwitch, but he knew almost nothing else about himself. People had seen him as a bad child before anyone had helped him become good. They called him hard, measured his head, gave him papers he could not read, and spoke to him about evil. But, as he said, he had to eat. Hunger had been his first teacher.

As he grew up, he begged, stole, worked when he could, and wandered from place to place. Sometimes he was a labourer, sometimes a seller of small things, sometimes a poacher, and sometimes worse. He learned a little reading from a soldier and a little writing from a travelling giant who wrote his name for money. His life was rough, poor, and always near punishment.

Then, more than twenty years before, he met Compeyson at the Epsom races. Compeyson looked like a gentleman, with fine clothes, a watch, a chain, and smooth manners. He had been educated and knew how to speak to better people. He saw that Magwitch was poor and unlucky, and he offered him money. The next night, Magwitch went back to him and became his man.

Compeyson’s business was crime, but it was clever crime. He used false writing, stolen notes, tricks, and lies. He planned the danger so that another man would be caught while he stayed safe. Magwitch was strong and useful, but Compeyson was clever and cold. So Magwitch became a tool in his hands.

There was another man with Compeyson, named Arthur. He was sick, weak, and near death. Arthur and Compeyson had once tricked a rich lady and made money from her sorrow. Now Arthur was poor and afraid, and his mind was full of terrible sights. Compeyson had no pity for him or for anyone.

One night Arthur came rushing down from his room, shaking and wet with fear. He said a woman in white was upstairs beside his bed. She had white flowers

in her hair and something like a death cloth over her arm. She said she would put it on him at five in the morning. Compeyson called him a fool, but he would not go near the room himself.

Compeyson's wife and Magwitch took Arthur back upstairs. Arthur cried that the woman was standing in the corner and looking at him with mad eyes. He said she was coming closer with the cloth. The fear held him until almost five o'clock. Then he screamed, lifted himself from the bed, and died.

Compeyson did not care that Arthur was dead. He soon had Magwitch working with him again, and he made Magwitch swear loyalty on the little black book. After that, Magwitch was caught in Compeyson's nets. He was always in debt to him, always under him, and always in danger for him. Compeyson used his education and fine look to keep himself cleaner than the men he used.

At last both men were arrested for passing stolen banknotes, with other charges behind that one. They were tried together, but Compeyson insisted on separate defences. In court, everything seemed to favour Compeyson. He looked like a gentleman, while Magwitch looked like an old criminal. Witnesses and lawyers made Magwitch appear the worse man.

Compeyson's lawyer showed the two men side by side and used their appearance against Magwitch. Compeyson had school friends and respectable connections. Magwitch had old prison records and a rough face. Compeyson could speak softly and look sorry, while Magwitch could only say that the man beside him was a great villain. In the end, Compeyson received seven years, and Magwitch received fourteen.

Magwitch hated him for that and swore to break his face. Later they were both on the same prison ship, but Magwitch could not get near him for a long time. At last he struck him, was seized, and then escaped from the ship. He hid among the graves on the marshes, wishing almost that he were dead. That was when he first saw me.

From me, he learned that Compeyson had escaped too. He believed Compeyson had run away in fear of him, without knowing Magwitch was already on shore. Magwitch hunted him, fought him, and meant to drag him back even if

he had to pull him through the water by the hair. That was the fight the soldiers had found on the marshes. Afterward, Compeyson was punished lightly, while Magwitch was sent away for life.

When the story ended, Provis filled his pipe and stood smoking by the fire. I asked whether Compeyson was dead. Provis said he did not know, but if Compeyson was alive, he surely hoped Provis was dead. Herbert had been writing quietly in a book. He pushed it toward me, and I read his message: Arthur was Miss Havisham's half-brother, and Compeyson was the man who had pretended to love her.

Part 14: Estella's Choice

After Provis told us his story, a new fear took shape in my mind. If Compeyson was still alive and learned that Provis had returned to England, he would surely inform against him. Compeyson had feared Provis for many years, and such a man would not miss a safe chance to destroy an enemy. I knew then that Provis was in even greater danger than before.

I also thought of Estella, though I tried not to connect her with Provis. I could not bear the thought of her beauty and pride standing beside the rough man who had made my fortune. I decided that I would never speak of Estella to Provis. But before I could go abroad with him, I had to see Estella and Miss Havisham once more. I told Herbert this, and he agreed that I should go.

The next day I went first to Richmond. At Mrs. Brandley's house, Estella's maid told me that Estella had gone into the country. I asked where she had gone, though I already feared the answer. She had gone to Satis House. The maid also seemed to know more than she would say, and I felt shut out from some plan that had already begun.

That night Herbert and I spoke again after I had taken Provis safely back to his lodging. We decided not to tell Provis anything yet about leaving England. First I must return from Miss Havisham's. Then Herbert and I would find the best excuse for taking Provis abroad. We thought he might agree if I spoke of travel, buying

things, or living like a gentleman on a larger scale.

I told Provis that I had promised to go down to Joe. It was a mean lie, and I knew it. I was still able to use Joe's good name when it helped me, though I had treated him badly so many times. Provis accepted the excuse at once. Herbert promised to watch him while I was away, and I left by the early coach before daybreak.

The morning was cold, wet, and grey. The coach moved through mist and rain, and the country looked tired and poor. When we reached the Blue Boar, I saw Bentley Drummle standing under the gateway with a toothpick in his hand. He pretended not to see me, and I pretended not to see him. But we both knew very well that we had seen each other.

I went into the coffee-room and ordered breakfast. Drummle stood before the fire, taking all the warmth for himself. I sat with an old dirty newspaper before me, but I could not read. I knew why he was in that town. The thought that he had come for Estella made the room seem poisonous.

At last I stood and went to the fire too. We pushed each other slightly with our shoulders, each refusing to move. Drummle spoke first, asking whether I meant to cut him. I answered coldly and said I had wondered who was keeping the fire from me. Our words were polite on the surface, but hatred lay under every one of them.

He spoke of the marshes and small village houses, and I knew he meant Joe's forge. Then he called the waiter and said the young lady would not ride that day because of the weather. He added that he would not dine at the inn, because he was dining with the young lady. His dull face showed triumph. I wanted to strike him, but I held myself still.

We stood there in a foolish battle for the fire until other men came in and pushed us both aside. Drummle went out to his horse. Then he returned to ask for a light for his cigar. A man in dusty clothes came forward with the light, and when I saw his bent shoulders and rough hair from behind, I thought of Orlick. I was too miserable to be sure, and too sick at heart to care much then.

I left the inn without eating and walked to Satis House. In the old room with

the candles, I found Miss Havisham and Estella together. Miss Havisham sat near the fire, and Estella sat at her feet, knitting. When they looked at me, I knew they saw that something in me had changed. I believed Estella guessed that I had learned the truth about my benefactor.

Miss Havisham asked what wind had blown me there. I said I had gone to Richmond to see Estella and had followed her when I found she was at Satis House. Then I sat near the old dressing table, among the ruined signs of Miss Havisham's dead wedding day. I told her I had discovered who my patron was. I also said the discovery brought me no honour, no happiness, and no hope.

I asked whether I had first come to her house only by chance, like any poor village boy chosen to serve her wish. She said yes. I asked whether Mr. Jaggers had arranged that first visit, and she said no. His being her lawyer and my patron's lawyer had been only a chance. Then I asked whether she had let me continue in my mistake about her. She answered that she had.

I asked whether that had been kind. Miss Havisham struck her stick on the floor and cried out that she was not a person who could be kind. I did not press that question further. Instead, I spoke of Matthew Pocket and Herbert. I said they were honest and generous, and that she wronged them if she confused them with her selfish relations.

Miss Havisham watched me closely and asked what I wanted for them. I said I wanted only one thing. If she would give money to help Herbert in business, I could show her how to do it secretly. I explained that I had begun the help myself long ago and did not want Herbert to know. Miss Havisham turned her eyes to the fire and thought for a long time.

Then I turned to Estella. My voice shook, but I spoke plainly. I told her that I loved her, and that I had loved her from the first day I saw her in that house. I said I had once hoped Miss Havisham meant us for one another, but now I knew that was only my mistake. Estella looked at me calmly and went on knitting.

She told me that she could understand my words as words, but not as feelings. She said there was nothing in her heart that answered them. She had warned me before, and I had refused to believe her. I said I had hoped she could not mean

what she said. She answered that it was in her nature, or rather in the nature formed inside her.

Then I spoke of Bentley Drummle. I asked whether it was true that he followed her, rode with her, and dined with her. She said it was true. I cried that she could not love him. For the first time, her fingers stopped. She looked at me and asked whether I still did not understand.

Then she told me the truth. She was going to marry Drummle. The preparations were already being made, and the marriage would happen soon. I covered my face with my hands, but when I looked up, I saw something terrible in Miss Havisham's face. She looked not proud, but frightened and full of pain.

I begged Estella not to throw herself away on such a cruel, stupid man. I said she might put me aside forever, but she should choose someone worthier than Drummle. Estella answered that it was her own act. Miss Havisham had wanted her to wait, but Estella was tired of her life and wanted a change. She said we would never understand each other.

Estella gave me her hand as if this were our parting. I kissed it while bitter tears fell on it. I told her she was part of my life, part of everything I had seen and felt since childhood. I said she would remain part of my character to the last hour of my life. Even in that pain, I blessed her and asked God to forgive her.

Estella looked at me with wonder, but not with love. Miss Havisham sat like a ghost, with her hand on her heart, staring at us in pity and remorse. I left them and went out through the gate. The daylight seemed darker than before. I could not return to the inn and see Drummle, so I walked toward London, trying to tire my body enough to quiet my mind.

It was past midnight when I crossed London Bridge. I came to the Temple by the riverside gate, muddy, tired, and full of sorrow. The night porter looked at me carefully before he let me in. Then he gave me a note and said the messenger had asked that I read it there by the lantern. I opened it and saw Wemmick's writing: "Don't go home."

Part 15: Watched in London

After I read Wemmick's warning, I turned away from the Temple gate at once. I did not go home. I went into Fleet Street and found a late carriage. It took me to a place in Covent Garden where a man could get a bed at any hour of the night.

The room they gave me was low, dark, and airless. A huge bed filled almost the whole space, and the little night-light made round marks on the walls. I was tired from walking and full of pain from Estella, but I could not sleep. The words of the note seemed to stare at me from every wall: "Don't go home."

I lay awake and wondered what had happened. Was Provis taken? Was Herbert in danger? Was someone waiting for me in my rooms? Even when I thought of Estella and our final parting, the same warning came back and pushed every other thought away.

In the morning, I went straight to Wemmick's Castle at Walworth. He was making breakfast for himself and the Aged Parent when I entered. He was pleased that I had come, but more pleased that I had not gone home. He had left notes at both Temple gates, hoping one would reach me before I made a mistake.

Wemmick spoke to me in his private way, not in his office way. He said that, in a certain place he did not name, he had heard something important. A certain person, also not named, had disappeared from a far country where many people were sent against their will. People were talking about it, and my rooms had been watched. He would not speak too openly, but I understood him.

I asked whether this danger had anything to do with Compeyson. Wemmick became very serious. I asked if Compeyson was alive, and he nodded. I asked if Compeyson was in London, and he nodded again. Those small movements told me more than many words could have done. The man most dangerous to Provis was near us.

Wemmick then told me what he had done. He had gone to my rooms and had not found me. Then he had found Herbert at Clarriker's business place. Without naming Provis, he had warned Herbert that any hidden friend near my rooms must be moved. Herbert had been confused at first, but then he had thought of a plan.

Herbert's plan was to hide Provis near the river, in the house where Clara lived

with her father. Clara's father had once worked with ships and now lay sick in a room from which he could see the river. The house was out of my usual way, and I could hear news of Provis through Herbert. Later, when the time came, Provis might be put on a foreign boat from that part of the river.

Wemmick approved of the plan. He said Herbert had moved Provis safely the night before. The old lodging had been told that Provis had gone toward Dover, so anyone watching might be led the wrong way. This was why Wemmick had told me not to go home. My absence made the matter more confusing for anyone who followed us.

Wemmick gave me the address and told me to visit that evening, but not before dark. He advised me not to go there often afterward. He also advised me, in his usual practical way, to get hold of Provis's money and papers while I could. I did not like that advice, because I was thinking of Provis's life, not his money. Still, I knew Wemmick meant to help.

I stayed at the Castle for the rest of the day. I was so tired that I slept often by the fire, and the Aged Parent slept too. We ate pork from Wemmick's little garden and passed the hours quietly. This rest helped my body, but not my mind. When darkness came, I left Walworth and went toward the river.

The place was called Mill Pond Bank, near Chinks's Basin. I did not know that part of London and lost my way among shipyards, old boats, rope-walks, mud, wood, and water. The river air was cold but cleaner than many London streets. At last I found the right house, a wooden-fronted house kept by Mrs. Whimple.

Herbert opened the door before Mrs. Whimple could speak much. He took me into the parlour and shut the door. He said all was well and that Provis was satisfied, though he wanted to see me. Then I heard a terrible growling sound from above. Herbert smiled and said that was Clara's father, Mr. Barley.

Mr. Barley was sick with pain and angry with the world. He lay upstairs, drank rum, kept food in his room, and shouted when his pain troubled him. Herbert called him old Gruffandgrim, though that was not his real name. The noise was awful, but the house itself was clean and kindly kept. Mrs. Whimple cared for Clara like a mother.

Then Clara came in. She was young, gentle, dark-eyed, and very pretty. She carried a basket of food that her father had measured out for her. Herbert looked at her with love, and she trusted him with all her heart. Seeing them together made me feel both glad and sad. Their love was poor and troubled, but it was true.

Herbert took me upstairs to see Provis, who was now called Mr. Campbell in that house. His rooms were at the top, fresh and airy, and the river could be seen near by. Provis seemed calmer and softer than before. I did not tell him that Compeyson was alive and in London, because I feared he might rush out to find him.

I told him instead what Wemmick had advised. He must stay hidden for a time. I must stay away from him as much as possible. When the right time came, we would help him leave England. Provis listened more reasonably than I had expected and agreed that he must not make his danger worse.

Herbert then suggested a better plan. He and I could keep a boat at the Temple stairs and often row on the river, so that people would grow used to seeing us there. Later, when the time came, we could take Provis down the river ourselves. No hired boatman would need to know anything. Provis liked the plan, and I liked it too.

We agreed on a signal. When Herbert and I rowed past Mill Pond Bank, Provis would lower the blind in his east window if all was well. Then Herbert and I left him upstairs with his light. As I looked back at him, I remembered the night he had first come to my rooms. I had feared him then, but now I feared for him.

After that, I began to keep a boat at the Temple stairs. Sometimes I rowed alone, and sometimes Herbert rowed with me. At first we stayed near the upper river, but little by little we went farther down, even past London Bridge and among the ships. We passed Mill Pond Bank many times, and the blind was always lowered. Still, I never felt safe.

Weeks passed in this anxious way. I waited for Wemmick's signal, but no signal came. My money troubles grew worse, and creditors pressed me. I would not take more money from Provis after learning who he was, so I had little ready money. I sold some small valuable things and lived uneasily from day to day.

I was also almost sure that Estella had married Drummle. I was afraid to see the news, so I avoided newspapers and asked Herbert not to speak of her. My hope was already broken, but I still held one last small piece of it in my heart. That little piece hurt me more than if it had been gone.

One foggy evening, after rowing down the river, I came ashore near the Custom House. I was cold and lonely and decided to eat dinner nearby. After that, because I did not want to go home to my empty rooms, I went to the theatre. Mr. Wopsle was acting there in a poor show, now far below his great dreams of Hamlet.

During the performance, I noticed that Mr. Wopsle was staring toward me in a strange way. After the play, he waited for me outside. As we walked together, he asked who had been sitting behind me. I felt cold at once, but I answered carefully and asked what he meant.

Mr. Wopsle reminded me of the Christmas Day long ago, when soldiers had come to Joe's house and we had gone to the marshes after two convicts. He remembered the torches, the ditch, and the two men fighting. Then he told me that one of those two prisoners had sat behind me in the theatre that night. He meant Compeyson. I tried to appear calm, but inside I knew the danger had come very close.

Part 16: Molly, Fire, and Estella's Secret

About a week after Mr. Wopsle's warning, I was walking in Cheapside. I had left my boat below London Bridge and did not know where to dine. My mind was still full of fear, because Compeyson had been so near me in the theatre. While I walked among the busy people and the shop lights, a large hand touched my shoulder. It was Mr. Jaggers.

Mr. Jaggers asked where I was going. I said I thought I was going to the Temple, though in truth I had not decided. He asked whether I was going to dine, and whether I was free. Then he told me to come and dine with him. I might have refused, but he added that Wemmick would be there, so I went with him.

At Mr. Jaggers's office, the day's work was ending. Wemmick was dry, exact,

and official, just as he always was in Little Britain. No trace of Walworth could be seen in him. He did not look at me in the friendly way I knew from the Castle. He kept his eyes on Mr. Jaggers, as if the warm private Wemmick had never existed.

At dinner, Mr. Jaggers gave me a note from Miss Havisham. She wished me to come to Satis House about the business I had mentioned to her. I understood that she meant Herbert. I put the note away, because it might help me explain my visit if she changed her mind or forgot what she had promised to think about.

During dinner, Mr. Jaggers spoke of Estella's marriage. He called her Mrs. Bentley Drummle and seemed almost amused by the match. He said that between Estella and Drummle, the question of power would never be settled to both their liking. The words hurt me deeply, but I tried not to show it. Then Molly came into the room with a dish.

As Molly moved her hands, I suddenly noticed something. Her fingers made a small action like knitting. I had seen that movement before. I looked at her eyes, her hands, her dark hair, and the shape of her face. In a flash, I thought of Estella.

The likeness was not simple, but it was certain to me. Estella was finer, younger, and far more beautiful, but the same signs were there. I remembered how Estella's fingers had moved when she sat at Miss Havisham's feet. I felt cold and excited at once. I became sure that Molly was Estella's mother.

Mr. Jaggers saw that something had moved me, but he did not ask directly. He went on with the dinner in his usual hard way. Molly came in only once or twice more, and each time I watched her closely. After dinner, when Mr. Jaggers had left us for a moment, I asked Wemmick about her. I wanted to know her history.

Wemmick told me that Molly had once been tried for murder. Long ago, she had been a wild, jealous young woman. She had been accused of killing another woman, a woman who was connected with the man she loved. Mr. Jaggers had defended her in court. He had made the case turn in her favour and saved her life.

Wemmick also told me something darker. People had believed that Molly had destroyed her own little child to punish the child's father. The child was said to have been a girl. But she was not tried for that, and nothing was proved. After the

trial, Molly went into Mr. Jaggers's service and had remained there ever since.

I left Wemmick with more thoughts than before. I now believed that Estella's mother was Molly. But I did not yet know who Estella's father was. The pieces of the story lay near one another, but I could not yet join them. My old pain about Estella was now mixed with a new and strange fear.

The next day, I went down to Satis House. I did not enter the town by the usual way, because I wished to avoid people. The old streets and quiet courts seemed sadder than before. Estella was gone, and the place felt emptied of its last living hope. Even the sounds from the church seemed like funeral music.

A servant opened the gate, and I went up with a candle. Miss Havisham was not in her old dressing room. I found her in the larger room across the landing, sitting close to the low fire. She looked lonely, broken, and afraid. When she saw me, she asked in a low voice whether I was real.

I told her that Mr. Jaggers had given me her note and that I had come at once. She said she wanted to speak about Herbert. She wished to show me that her heart was not wholly stone. I explained the plan carefully. If she gave the money through the proper hands, Herbert would be helped in business and would never know who had helped him.

Miss Havisham agreed. She wrote a note that would give Mr. Jaggers instructions. Then she asked me whether there was anything else she could do. Her voice was full of pain. I looked at her and saw that she was no longer the proud woman who had fed on my love for Estella. She was a ruined old woman who had begun to understand the harm she had done.

She asked me again and again to forgive her. I told her I did forgive her. She said that, when Estella first came to her, she had meant to save the child from suffering like her own. But little by little, she had turned the child into a tool for revenge. She had stolen Estella's heart from her, and now she knew it.

I left her and went to the old ruined garden. I walked there for a while, full of heavy thoughts. Then I remembered that I had not looked carefully around the old brewery buildings before leaving. A strange fear came over me, and I went back toward the room. As I entered, I saw Miss Havisham standing near the fire.

In one terrible moment, the fire caught her old dress. The dry, yellow clothes burned at once. She ran toward me with flames rising above her head. I threw my coat around her and held her down, trying to beat out the fire. Her cries filled the room, and the smoke and heat blinded me.

Servants came running, and at last the flames were put out. I did not know at first that my own hands and arm were badly burned. I only knew that Miss Havisham lay hurt and helpless. The doctor came and said her burns were serious, but the greater danger was the shock to her mind and body. They laid her on the great table where the old wedding cake had once stood.

Later that night, she began to speak again, but her mind wandered. She repeated the same words many times. She said, “What have I done?” Then she said that, when Estella first came, she had meant to save her from misery. Then she said, “Take the pencil and write under my name, ‘I forgive her.’” She said these words again and again, always in the same order.

I stayed through the night, but I could do little for her. I asked the doctor to write to Estella, who was in Paris. I also sent word to Matthew Pocket through Herbert. Early in the morning, I bent over Miss Havisham and kissed her. She was still repeating the words about forgiveness when I left.

Back in London, my hands were dressed, and Herbert cared for me with great kindness. My left arm was burned badly, and my right hand was hurt too. I could not wear my coat properly and had to carry one arm in a sling. But the pain in my mind was worse than the pain in my body. Whenever I closed my eyes, I saw Miss Havisham running toward me in fire.

Herbert tried to keep my thoughts steady. He told me he had sat with Provis for two hours while I was away. Provis had grown softer, Herbert said, and had spoken more about his past. He had once lived with a woman who loved him fiercely. She was jealous and dangerous, and she had a little girl.

Herbert said this woman had been accused of killing another woman. She had also been suspected of killing her own child, though that was never proved. Provis had hidden himself because he feared that speaking in court might lead to the woman’s death. After the trial, he lost both the woman and the child. Compeyson

later used that secret to keep power over him.

I listened with growing excitement. I asked when this had happened. Herbert said it was about twenty years before, not long after Provis first became connected with Compeyson. I thought of my own age when I met the convict in the churchyard. I thought of the little girl who had been lost and would have been about my age.

Then the truth came together in my mind. Molly was Estella's mother. Provis, the man hidden down the river, was the father of the lost little girl. That lost little girl was Estella. I asked Herbert to look at me and touch me, to be sure I was not feverish or out of my senses. Then I said what I now knew: the man we were hiding down the river was Estella's father.

Part 17: The Last Preparations

After Herbert and I understood Estella's true parentage, I felt that I could not rest. I did not clearly know what good I hoped to do. Estella was married, and Provis did not know that his daughter lived. Still, the secret burned in my mind. I felt I had to go to Mr. Jaggers and make him face the truth.

Herbert tried to stop me from going that very night. My burned arm was painful, and I was still weak from the shock at Satis House. He reminded me that Provis's safety might soon depend on me. If I made myself ill, I would be useless when the time came. At last I agreed to stay quiet until the morning.

Early the next day, Herbert and I went out together. At Smithfield, he went toward his business, and I went to Little Britain. When I reached Mr. Jaggers's office, Wemmick was not in his usual place. Another clerk was there. I understood that Wemmick and Mr. Jaggers were inside, going over accounts.

I was not sorry to find them together. I wanted Wemmick to hear that I would say nothing that could harm him. I went into Mr. Jaggers's room with my arm bandaged and my coat hanging loose over my shoulders. Mr. Jaggers already knew of the fire, but he made me tell the whole story. Wemmick sat watching me, and Mr. Jaggers stood before the fire in his usual place.

When I had finished, I gave Mr. Jaggers Miss Havisham's written order for Herbert's money. It was for nine hundred pounds, to complete the help we had begun for Herbert's business. Mr. Jaggers looked at it and then gave it to Wemmick. Wemmick wrote the cheque, and Mr. Jaggers signed it. When I put it in my pocket, Mr. Jaggers said he was sorry they were doing nothing for me.

I answered that Miss Havisham had asked if she could do anything for me, and I had said no. Mr. Jaggers said every person should know his own business. Wemmick, in his dry office way, seemed to think I had missed a chance to get property. I did not care for that. My mind was fixed on Estella.

I then told Mr. Jaggers that I had asked Miss Havisham about her adopted daughter. I said that I now knew more of Estella's history than Miss Havisham did. Mr. Jaggers looked at me more sharply. I told him that I knew Estella's mother and that he knew her too. Then I said that I knew Estella's father.

Mr. Jaggers became still. He did not show surprise openly, but something in him stopped. I knew then that he had not known who Estella's father was. I told him the father's name was Provis, from New South Wales. Even Mr. Jaggers started a little at that, though he tried to hide it with his handkerchief.

He asked what proof Provis had. I said Provis had no proof, because Provis did not know his daughter was alive. That answer surprised Mr. Jaggers even more. Then I told him all I knew, carefully and slowly. I did not say that Wemmick had told me Molly's story. I let Mr. Jaggers think that I had learned that part from Miss Havisham.

When I finished, Mr. Jaggers tried to return to business as if the matter were over. I could not allow that. I begged him to be more open with me. I said I had loved Estella for many years, and though I had lost her, everything about her still touched me deeply. Then I turned to Wemmick and asked him to speak for me, because I knew he had a gentle heart at home.

This changed the room in a strange way. Mr. Jaggers looked at Wemmick, and Wemmick looked at Mr. Jaggers. They both seemed almost caught in a private weakness. Mr. Jaggers smiled and asked whether this hard office clerk truly had an old father and a pleasant home. Wemmick grew bold and said that, because he

did not bring those things into the office, they did no harm.

Then Mr. Jaggers spoke more openly, though he still said he admitted nothing. He put the matter as a case. Suppose a lawyer had saved a woman from death in a murder trial. Suppose that woman's child had disappeared, and the father was lost in crime and punishment. Suppose the lawyer later found a rich, lonely woman who wanted a little girl to adopt. Would it not be better to put the child into that safe place, rather than leave her in danger and shame?

I understood his meaning. Mr. Jaggers had taken Molly's child and placed her with Miss Havisham. He had not done it with soft feeling, but he had perhaps saved the child. Wemmick also spoke carefully, saying that no one could now prove anything and that it would do no good to stir the matter. I saw that they were right. Estella's past could not help Estella now.

Mr. Jaggers said the truth, if told, would only hurt people. Provis might be destroyed by it, Molly might be broken by it, and Estella would gain nothing. I had wanted a clear answer, and I had received as much of one as he would give. I was not happy, but I was quieted. The secret was now no longer only a wild thought in my own mind.

A poor client named Mike came in just then, full of trouble about his daughter. He began to show feeling, and Wemmick sharply told him not to bring feelings into the office. Mr. Jaggers also ordered him out. The moment of human softness was gone. The office had closed over again, hard and cold, as if nothing unusual had happened.

From Little Britain, I went with the cheque to Miss Skiffins's brother, the accountant. He took me at once to Clarriker, and the business for Herbert was completed. This was the only good thing I had fully done since my expectations began. I could not save myself from ruin, but I had helped my friend. That thought gave me one clean comfort.

Clarriker also told me that Herbert's future was opening well. The firm would soon send him to the East to manage a small branch house. This meant that Herbert and I would soon be parted. When Herbert came home in the evenings, he spoke happily of taking Clara away to a brighter life. He did not know that I already

knew the cause of this good news.

By this time it was March. My left arm was still too bad for me to wear a coat properly, though my right hand could be used again. One Monday morning, Herbert and I were at breakfast when Wemmick's letter arrived. It told us to burn it after reading. It said that early in the week, perhaps Wednesday, we might do what we knew of, if we wished to try.

We read the note and then burned it, but we both remembered every word. The time had come for Provis's escape. Herbert said we should not use a river boatman. Instead, we should ask Startop to help us. Startop was honourable, fond of us, and good with a boat. I agreed, because he was the safest person we knew.

We decided that Herbert and Startop would row, and I would steer. Provis would sit still and keep quiet. We did not need great speed. We only needed to move steadily down the river, pass the dangerous places, and meet a foreign steamer. Hamburg seemed the best choice, but any safe foreign port would do if it took Provis out of England.

Herbert and I spent the morning making plans. We learned when the steamers would leave, what they looked like, and where we might meet them. I got the needed papers, and Herbert went to speak to Startop. By one o'clock, all was arranged. Herbert would go to Mill Pond Bank that evening and prepare Provis. Then no more messages would pass before Wednesday.

When I returned to our rooms, I found a dirty letter waiting for me. It said that, if I was not afraid, I should come to the old marshes that night or the next night at nine. It named the little sluice-house by the limekiln. It also said that, if I wanted information about my uncle Provis, I must come alone and tell no one. The name Provis decided me.

I had very little time to think. The coach would leave within half an hour. Tomorrow night would be too close to the escape, and the letter might contain something that mattered to Provis's safety. I wrote a note for Herbert, falsely saying that I had gone down to ask about Miss Havisham's condition. Then I locked the rooms, caught the coach, and travelled alone toward the old marsh country.

It was dark when I arrived. I avoided the Blue Boar and went to a smaller inn. While dinner was being prepared, I went to Satis House and asked after Miss Havisham. She was still very ill, though a little better. Later, at the inn, the landlord told me the old false story that Pumblechook had made my fortune. That lie struck me hard, because Joe had done so much for me and had never claimed anything.

I sat by the fire, full of shame about Joe and Biddy. Then the clock reminded me of the hour. I looked for the letter, but it was gone, perhaps dropped in the coach. Still, I remembered the place and time well enough: the little sluice-house by the limekiln, on the marshes, at nine. I fastened my coat around my hurt arm and went out into the dark.

Part 18: Orlick’s Trap

The night was dark when I went out toward the marshes. The full moon had risen, but clouds soon covered it. The wind moved over the flat land with a sad sound. I knew the way well, but even to me the marshes felt heavy and frightening that night. For a moment I wanted to turn back, but I had come too far to use fear as an excuse.

I was not going toward the old Battery or toward Joe’s house. The little sluice-house by the limekiln was in another direction, far across the dark flats. Now and then I could see the distant lights on the sandbanks, but they were behind me. I passed through gates and along narrow wet paths. Sometimes cattle rose in front of me and moved away slowly into the reeds.

At last I came near the limekiln. The lime was burning, and a thick, choking smell hung in the air. No workmen were there, and the place looked empty. Close by was a small stone quarry, and the path went through it. Tools and barrows lay about, showing that men had worked there during the day.

When I climbed back up to the level of the marsh, I saw a light in the old sluice-house. I went faster and knocked at the door. No one answered. I knocked again, then pushed the door, and it opened. Inside, a candle burned on a table, but

I saw no person in the room.

I stepped in and looked around. There were old tools, ropes, and broken things near the walls. The place smelled of damp wood, smoke, and lime. I called out, but no one replied. Then, before I could turn fully, something dropped over me and tightened around my body.

A strong hand caught me from behind. I struggled, but my burned arm gave me little strength. The door was shut, and I was pulled back with terrible force. In a few moments, I was thrown down and tied fast. My hands, arms, and body were held so tightly that I could hardly move.

Then the man came into the candlelight. It was Orlick. His dark face looked larger and heavier than ever, and his eyes were full of hate. He had been drinking, but he was not too drunk to know what he was doing. He called me “wolf,” as he had called me before, and laughed in a low, ugly way.

I asked what he wanted. He said he wanted my life. He said he had written the letter and had brought me there alone. He had watched me and waited for his chance. Since my sister’s funeral, he had fixed his mind on killing me.

I tried to speak calmly, though I was shaking inside. I told him that if he harmed me, he would be found out. Orlick laughed and said no one would find me. He would throw me into the limekiln, and there would be nothing left for anyone to know. The burning lime was close by, and I understood that he meant every word.

Then he began to tell me why he hated me. He said I had always stood between him and what he wanted. He hated me at the forge, hated me for Joe’s favour, and hated me for the way Biddy had looked away from him. He said Biddy liked me and never liked him. I could not answer, because his jealousy was dark and senseless.

He came close with the candle and held it near my face. I turned away from the flame, because my burns still hurt. He laughed and said that a burned child feared fire. He knew I had been burned at Satis House. He knew more than I had believed any enemy knew. I felt then that he had followed me more closely than I had ever guessed.

Then he told me something worse. He said he was the man I had fallen over

on the stairs in London on the night Provis came. The dark figure in the stairway had been Orlick. He had watched my rooms and learned about my uncle Provis. He knew that we were trying to send Provis away from England.

I thought of Mill Pond Bank, Herbert, Clara, Mrs. Whimple, and Provis in the top room. All of them seemed to pass before my eyes. Orlick said that there were others who were a match for Provis, just as he was a match for me. I understood that he meant Compeyson and those who watched for him. My own danger was terrible, but Provis's danger seemed to grow at the same time.

Then Orlick confessed what had long been hidden. He had struck my sister down years before. He had used the old leg-iron that had once been on the convict. He said this with cruel pride, as if it proved his power. I remembered the kitchen floor, Joe's grief, Biddy's care, and my sister's broken life. Rage and horror rose in me, but the ropes held me still.

Orlick drank again and again while he talked. Sometimes he sat, sometimes he stood, and sometimes he came near to look at me. The candle shook in his hand, and the shadows moved on the walls. I tried to loosen the rope, but every movement only hurt my burned arm more. I knew I could not free myself.

I thought of all the people I might never see again. I thought first of Joe, and my heart was full of shame. I had treated him badly, yet he had loved me with the same faithful love. I thought of Biddy too, and of how clearly she had seen my faults. I also thought of Herbert, who would wait for me and fear that something had gone wrong.

Orlick said he would soon finish it. He looked toward the door and listened to the wind outside. I gathered all the strength I had and cried out. My voice sounded weak in the dark house. Orlick rushed at me and struck me, but I cried again as loudly as I could.

Suddenly there was an answering shout outside. Orlick stopped and turned. More voices came, and feet ran over the ground near the house. The door was forced open, and Herbert rushed in, followed by Startop and Trabb's boy. Orlick struck at the candle, knocked it down, and escaped into the darkness.

Herbert cut the ropes and held me up. I could hardly stand, and my whole body

shook. Startop helped search the house and the ground outside, but Orlick had vanished among the marshes. Trabb's boy was full of life and excitement, though he did not understand how near I had been to death. I never disliked him again after that night.

Herbert explained how he had found me. He had read the letter I left and had become uneasy because its tone did not match my sudden journey. He and Startop followed me down in a post-chaise, but they found no news of me at the Blue Boar. Trabb's boy had seen me going from Miss Havisham's toward my inn, so he became their guide. Herbert had come quietly to the sluice-house first, fearing he might interrupt some real message about Provis.

When I cried out, he knew I was inside and in danger. That cry saved my life. At first Herbert wanted to go straight to a magistrate and get a warrant for Orlick. But we soon saw that this might delay us and ruin the plan for Provis's escape. Wednesday was very near, and nothing must keep us from the river.

We therefore made the matter seem smaller than it was, especially before Trabb's boy. I gave him two guineas, and he was satisfied with that reward. Then Herbert, Startop, and I left the marshes by night. We returned to London in a post-chaise, tired and silent. I had escaped death, but the danger around Provis had not passed.

Part 19: The River Escape

After the night at the sluice-house, I passed Tuesday in great unrest. I slept, woke suddenly, and believed each time that a whole day had gone by. I feared that Wednesday had passed and that we had lost our chance to save Provis. Herbert and Startop tried to quiet me, but the fear would not leave me. Only near midnight did my body give way and let me sleep deeply.

On Wednesday morning, I woke before the others and looked out of the window. The lights on the bridges were growing pale, and the sun was rising over the river. The water was still dark at first, but soon it began to shine with thousands of bright points. It seemed as if a veil had been drawn away from the world. A veil

seemed to be drawn away from me too, and I felt stronger than I had felt for many days.

Herbert was sleeping in his bed, and Startop was sleeping on the sofa. I could not dress myself easily because of my arm, but I made up the fire and prepared coffee. Soon they woke, and we opened the windows to the sharp morning air. The tide was still coming in, but it would soon turn. Herbert looked at the river and said cheerfully that, when it turned at nine, Provis must be ready at Mill Pond Bank.

We took our thick coats with us, and I carried a small bag. I took only a few necessary things, because I did not know where I might go or when I might return. My whole mind was on Provis's safety. Before leaving, I looked back once at our rooms. I wondered in what changed state I might see them again, if I ever saw them again at all.

We walked slowly down to the Temple stairs, as if we were not sure whether to go on the water. The boat was ready, and everything had been prepared. After a little delay, which only the river people near the stairs saw, we got in and pushed off. Herbert sat in the front, Startop took the other oar, and I steered. It was about half past eight.

Our plan was simple. The tide would run down the river from about nine until three. We would use it to carry us below Gravesend, into the wider and quieter parts of the river. There we would rest for the night at some lonely public house near the water. The next morning, when the foreign steamers came down from London, we would pull out and put Provis on board one of them.

The day was bright but cold. In the sun, it almost felt like summer; in the shade, it was still winter. We passed slowly down the river, under bridges and beside busy banks. Ships, boats, wharves, and houses moved past us. London seemed to follow us for a long time, as if it would not let us go.

When we came near Mill Pond Bank, we kept our manner easy and careless. Herbert looked toward the house. The blind came down in the window, as agreed. A little later, we saw Provis come down quietly to the stairs, dressed like a river traveller. He got into the boat without noise and sat still, as we had told him to do.

I was greatly moved when I saw him there. I had once feared his touch and hated his rough nearness. Now, as he sat silent in the boat, trusting us with his life, I felt pity and duty stronger than dislike. He looked at me with deep feeling, but he did not speak much. He knew the danger, though he did not yet know how near Compeyson was.

We rowed on. The tide helped us, and the boat went steadily down the river. Provis sat with his cloak around him and his eyes on the water. Sometimes he looked at the ships and seemed to think of far countries. Sometimes he looked at me, and I knew he was proud of the gentleman he believed he had made. That pride had once hurt me; now it hurt me in another way.

We passed Greenwich and other places along the river. The banks became less crowded, and the river opened wider before us. We did not hurry, because speed might have made us noticeable. Herbert and Startop rowed evenly, and I kept the boat in the right water. Every boat that came near made me watch and listen.

I looked often behind us. I saw many boats, but none seemed to follow us. Still, I could not feel safe. The river was open, and anyone might see us. If Compeyson had friends watching, they might be watching from some other boat or from the shore. The clear daylight made me feel more exposed than darkness would have done.

In the afternoon, the tide turned against us. Herbert and Startop kept rowing, but the work became harder. We moved more slowly, passing long quiet reaches where there were few houses and only wide water, mud, and sky. The air grew colder as the sun lowered. Provis remained patient and still, and that helped us all.

Toward evening, we found a lonely public house near the river, below Gravesend. It was a rough place, but it suited our purpose because few people were there. We brought the boat in and went ashore. We acted like ordinary men on a river trip, tired and ready for food and rest. Still, I felt that every eye in the place might be watching us.

We took a room and ordered what we needed. Provis stayed close to us and kept his manner quiet. The people of the house seemed interested in us, but not suspicious. A servant girl talked about the steamers that would pass in the morning.

From her words, we learned that the Hamburg steamer should come down at a useful hour.

That night I did not sleep well. I lay awake and listened to the river outside. Every sound seemed to have meaning: the water against the bank, a step below, a voice, an oar, a chain. Provis slept near us, breathing heavily. Herbert and Startop also slept, worn out by rowing, but I turned again and again in the dark.

Morning came grey and cold. We rose early, ate quickly, and returned to the boat. The river looked broad and quiet, but I felt no peace in it. We knew the steamer would soon come down, and we meant to row out at the right moment. If all went well, Provis would be taken on board, and England would fall behind him forever.

At last we saw the smoke of a steamer. We pushed from shore and rowed out toward the middle of the river. The boat moved well, and my heart beat fast. Provis sat ready, holding the small things he would take with him. Herbert and Startop bent to the oars, and I watched the steamer's course.

But then I saw another boat. It was a galley, rowing strongly and coming in our direction. There were several men in it, and one man sat wrapped in a cloak. At first I tried to tell myself that it meant nothing. Then I saw how steadily it came toward us. My hope began to fail.

The galley came close, and a man in it called out. He said he arrested Abel Magwitch, also known as Provis, and called on him to surrender. At the same moment, the galley ran across our boat and held us fast. Everything happened at once. The steamer was still coming down, the river pulled at us, and voices shouted from every side.

Provis started up. He looked at the man in the cloak and knew him. In one quick movement, he leaned forward and pulled the cloak away. I saw the face beneath it. It was Compeyson, the other convict from long ago, the enemy who had ruined him. Compeyson's face went white with terror.

There was a cry, a rush, and a great splash. Our boat was struck and went under us. For a moment, water, light, noise, and fear were all mixed together. I struggled and was taken into the galley. Herbert and Startop were there too, but our boat

was gone. Provis and Compeyson had both disappeared under the water.

The men in the galley watched the river behind us. No one spoke. Then a dark shape came toward us on the tide. It was Provis, swimming badly and with great pain. They pulled him in and put irons on his wrists and ankles at once. He was badly hurt, with an injury in his chest and a deep cut on his head.

The men kept looking for Compeyson, but he did not rise. Another steamer came near and had to be stopped. The water was rough for a time, and then all became still again. Everyone knew that searching was useless. Compeyson was gone, and Provis was taken.

We rowed back toward the public house we had left. There I got what comfort I could for Provis, who was no longer safe under any false name. He told me he thought he had gone under the steamer and been struck when he came up. He also said he had not meant to kill Compeyson, though he would have fought him. I stayed beside him, and whatever had once stood between us was changed by that terrible morning.

Part 20: Wemmick's Wedding and Magwitch's Trial Draws Near

The next day, Magwitch was taken before the Police Court. If Compeyson had lived, the matter would have moved very quickly, because he had meant to speak against him. But Compeyson was dead in the river, and no officer in London could at once prove that Magwitch was the same prisoner who had escaped from the prison ship years before. So the court had to wait for an old officer to be sent for. No one truly doubted who Magwitch was, but Mr. Jaggers would admit nothing unless it was proved.

I had gone to Mr. Jaggers as soon as I returned to London. I asked him to act for Magwitch. He did what could be done, but he did not give me false hope. He said that, when the witness came, the case would be over in a few minutes. No power on earth, he said, could stop it from going against us.

I also told Mr. Jaggers that I did not want Magwitch to know what would happen to his money. If Magwitch was found guilty, everything he owned would

be taken by the Crown. Mr. Jaggers was angry with me and said I had let the property slip through my fingers. He said we might later try to ask for some of it back. But he did not hide the truth. In this case, there was almost no hope.

I understood that very well. Magwitch had made no written gift to me before he was taken. I was not his son in law or blood. I had no clear legal claim to anything. I decided then that I would never hurt my own heart by trying to get his money. The money had already brought me enough shame and pain.

It seemed that Compeyson had known about Magwitch's property and had hoped for a reward when it was taken. When Compeyson's body was found far away on the tide, it was badly marked by water and death. But papers were still found in his pockets. They named a bank in New South Wales and land that Magwitch owned. Poor Magwitch did not know this. He still believed that his money would come safely to me.

For three days, we waited for the old prison-ship officer. When he arrived, he proved what the court needed. Magwitch was then sent for trial at the next Sessions, which would come in about a month. I went to him whenever I was allowed. He was very weak, and his wounds still troubled him, but he seemed calmer because I stayed near him.

He never knew that his dream of making me rich had ended. I was careful about that. He had lived for years with the thought that I would be a gentleman because of him. I could not take that thought from him now. It was almost the only comfort left to him.

Around this same dark time, Herbert came home one evening looking sad. He told me that he feared he must soon leave me. His business chance in Cairo could not wait much longer. If he delayed, the chance might be lost. He was full of sorrow, because he knew I was in great trouble and did not want to leave me alone.

I told him I would always need him because I would always love him. But I said my present need was not greater than at other times. All my free hours were spent with Magwitch, and when I left him, my thoughts stayed with him. Herbert understood this, but he still wanted to speak of my future. I had been afraid to think of any future at all.

Herbert then made me a generous offer. He said that the branch house in Cairo would need a clerk. Perhaps that clerk might later become something more, just as another clerk we knew had risen in life. Then he stopped trying to speak like a serious business man and held out his hand like the dear friend he was. He asked me to come to him.

He said that Clara had spoken of this too. She wished me to live with them when they could be married, and she would try to make me happy. I thanked him with all my heart, but I could not promise yet. My mind was not clear enough. Also, there was still something unfinished in my own story, though I could not yet name it.

I asked Herbert to leave the offer open for a little while. He said he would leave it open for six months or even a year. I said two or three months might be enough. This pleased him greatly, and we shook hands on it. He then told me that he believed he must leave at the end of that very week.

Clara could not go with him yet, because her father was still alive. But Mr. Barley was growing worse and would not live long. Herbert spoke of Clara with deep love and joy. He said she came from no great family and knew nothing about titles or grand relations. To him, that was one of her greatest blessings.

On Saturday, I went with Herbert to the coach that would take him toward the seaport. He was bright with hope, but sad to leave me. I watched him take his place and go away. Then I went to a coffee house and wrote a note to Clara, telling her he had left and sending his love again and again. After that, I returned to my rooms, which felt less like home than ever.

On the stairs, I met Wemmick coming down. He had knocked at my door and found no one there. I had not spoken with him alone since the river plan had failed. He had come in his private way, not his office way, to explain what he knew about the failure.

Wemmick said that Compeyson had slowly learned much of the business around Magwitch. Wemmick had heard things from people connected with Compeyson, and he had waited until he believed Compeyson was away. That was why he had given us the signal to act. Now he thought Compeyson had tricked

even his own helpers and had been closer than anyone knew. Wemmick asked whether I blamed him, and I told him I did not.

He had truly tried to help us. I thanked him warmly for his friendship. He was troubled by the loss, though he spoke most of all about the lost property. To him, the property was something that might have been saved, while Magwitch himself perhaps could not. I thought of the poor man, not the money. But I knew Wemmick's heart was better than his words made it sound.

I asked him to come upstairs and drink something before he walked back to Walworth. While he sat with me, he suddenly asked what I thought of his taking a holiday on Monday. He said he had not taken one for many years. Then he asked me to walk with him early that morning. I almost refused because I was so low in spirit, but he had helped me many times, so I agreed.

On Monday morning, I went to the Castle at half past eight. Wemmick looked neater and tighter than usual, and his hat seemed especially smooth. Inside, two glasses of rum and milk and two biscuits were ready. The Aged Parent was already out of bed. After we had eaten and drunk, Wemmick took up a fishing rod. I asked whether we were going fishing, and he said no, but he liked to walk with one.

We walked toward Camberwell Green. Suddenly Wemmick saw a church and acted as if this were a surprise. He suggested that we go in. Inside, he found two pairs of white gloves in his pocket, as if by chance. Then the Aged Parent entered from a side door, bringing Miss Skiffins with him. Wemmick said, in the same calm way, "Here is Miss Skiffins. Let us have a wedding."

The wedding took place at once. I stood as Wemmick's best man, though I had not known I was coming for that purpose. The Aged Parent had to give Miss Skiffins away, but he could not hear the question properly. When Wemmick called to him, he answered cheerfully, "All right, John!" The clergyman looked troubled for a moment, but the wedding was completed.

Afterward, Wemmick put his white gloves into the church font as if he had no more use for them. Mrs. Wemmick kept hers carefully and put on her green gloves again. Then we all went to a pleasant little tavern for breakfast. Wemmick was happier than I had ever seen him, and Mrs. Wemmick no longer moved his arm

away when he put it around her. For a few hours, I was glad to be in a small, warm world where people loved one another simply.

When I left, Wemmick walked to the door with me. I wished him joy and shook his hand. He thanked me and spoke softly, reminding me that this was a Walworth feeling. It must not be mentioned in Little Britain. I understood. Mr. Jaggers knew Wemmick as a hard clerk, but that morning I had seen the other Wemmick: the man with a father, a home, a wife, and a heart.

Part 21: Magwitch's Death

Magwitch lay in prison, very ill, while he waited for his trial. His ribs were broken, and one of his lungs had been hurt. Every breath caused him pain. He could speak only in a low voice, and even a few words tired him. Because of this, he listened more than he spoke.

He was soon moved from the common prison to the prison infirmary. This was better for him, and it gave me more chances to be with him. If he had not been so ill, he would have been kept in heavy irons, because the officers thought of him as a dangerous man. But he was too weak for that now. He lay in bed, growing thinner and weaker every day.

I went to see him as often as I could. Each time I saw him, some small part of his strength seemed to have gone. He did not complain. He seemed like a man who had fought too long and was at last too tired to fight any more. Sometimes I thought he was asking himself whether he might have been better if his life had been kinder to him.

But he never tried to excuse himself. He did not blame the world in my hearing. He did not say that hunger, prison, or Compeyson had made him what he was, though all those things had shaped his life. He accepted the past as something that could not be changed. This quietness made him seem more human to me than all his old rough pride had done.

Sometimes the people near him spoke of his bad name. They called him a hard prisoner and a desperate man. When he heard this, a faint smile came over his

face, and he looked at me. It was as if he believed I had seen something better in him, even when I was a small child on the marshes. That look hurt me, because I remembered how long I had hated and feared him.

When the time for the Sessions came, Mr. Jaggers tried to have the trial delayed. He knew, and we all knew, that Magwitch could not live long. If the trial were delayed, death might come before the law could strike him. But the request was refused. The trial had to go forward at once.

Magwitch was carried into court and placed in a chair. He could not stand for long. No one stopped me from standing near the dock, outside it, and holding his hand. He stretched his hand toward me as soon as he saw me. I took it, and he kept it in his weak grasp through the trial.

The trial was short and clear. Some good things were said for him. It was said that he had worked hard in the country where he had been sent, that he had become prosperous, and that he had lived there by honest labour. But none of this could remove the central fact. He had returned to England after being sent away for life, and the law gave only one answer to that.

The jury found him guilty. I had expected it, but still the words fell heavily on me. Magwitch did not cry out or resist. He looked at me, and I pressed his hand. His face was pale and tired, but not wild. The old fierce man from the marshes had almost disappeared.

On the day of sentence, many prisoners were brought before the judge. They stood together, some hard, some frightened, some almost empty of feeling. Magwitch was among them, still sitting because he could not stand. The scene was terrible to me. It seemed as if the court had become a place where human lives were counted and closed.

The judge spoke, and sentence of death was passed. I saw Magwitch lift his eyes, but he did not show fear. His body was already near death, and perhaps the sentence could add little to what he felt. Still, the law had spoken its last word over him. When he was taken away, I felt that the shadow around him had grown darker.

After the sentence, I went on visiting him. No one now pretended that he would

recover. His breathing became harder, and his voice became lower. Sometimes he held my hand and seemed content simply to know I was there. I read to him and spoke gently, choosing words that might bring him peace.

I also thought of trying to save him by petition. I asked what could be done, but there was almost no hope. The case was too clear, and his past was too heavy in the eyes of the law. Even if people felt pity for his illness, they would not forget that he had returned against his sentence. I understood that the only mercy likely to reach him was death before punishment could be carried out.

This thought was dreadful, yet I knew it was true. I could not honestly wish him to live long in that pain and fear. If he lived, he would only move closer to the day fixed by the court. If he died naturally, he would escape that final public shame. So I sat by him with a heart full of sorrow and prayed silently that his end might be gentle.

In those last days, my feeling for him changed completely. I no longer saw him as the rough convict who had frightened me in the churchyard. I saw a lonely man who had loved me in his own strange way for many years. He had worked, hoped, and risked death to see me. His dream had been mistaken, but the love behind it had been real.

I did not tell him that his money was lost. I did not tell him that the Crown would take everything. I let him believe that I would still benefit from what he had earned. It would have been cruel to take that belief from him. He had little enough left, and I would not destroy the last good shape of his dream.

One evening, I found him weaker than before. His eyes looked clearer, but his body seemed almost finished. He knew me at once and smiled faintly. I sat beside him and took his hand. For a while, neither of us spoke, because speech cost him so much.

Then I knew that I must tell him one thing before he died. I bent close to him and said that he had once had a child, a little daughter whom he loved and lost. His eyes opened wider, and he tried to move his hand. I told him she had lived. I told him she had found powerful friends and had grown up safely.

He listened with all the life that was left in him. I said that she was living still,

that she was a lady, and that she was very beautiful. Then I told him the deepest truth I could give him. I said that I loved her. As I spoke, his face changed with a peace I had never seen there before.

He lifted my hand a little and put it near his lips. His breathing was very weak now. He looked upward, and his lips moved in prayer. I heard him ask God to be merciful to him, a sinner. Then his hand grew still in mine, and I knew that Magwitch was dead.

Part 22: Joe Saves Pip

After Magwitch died, I was left alone with my own ruined life. I gave notice that I would leave my rooms in the Temple as soon as I legally could. I put notices in the windows, hoping to let the rooms to someone else. I was deeply in debt, had very little money, and was beginning to understand how bad my affairs were. Yet even this trouble did not fully reach me, because my body was failing too.

For a day or two, I lay wherever I fell, on the sofa or on the floor. My head was heavy, my arms and legs ached, and I had no strength to think clearly. Then one long night came, full of fear and confused dreams. In the morning, I tried to sit up and remember what had happened. I could not put the pieces together.

I thought I had gone down in the night to look for the boat that was no longer there. I thought I had been on the stairs, frightened and not knowing how I came there. I thought I had lit a lamp because someone was coming up in the dark. I heard talking, laughing, and groaning, and sometimes I feared those sounds came from myself. Then the smoke of the limekiln seemed to cover everything, and through that smoke I saw two men looking at me.

I asked them what they wanted. One of them touched my shoulder and said I was arrested. The debt was a jeweller’s bill, more than one hundred and twenty pounds. The man said I had better come to his house, because he kept a very nice house. I tried to get up and dress, but I could not. I told them that, if they took me away in that state, I thought I would die on the road.

I do not clearly know what they answered. Perhaps they talked together, or

perhaps they saw that I truly could not be moved. They did not take me away. After that, fever came over me completely. Time lost its shape, and real people mixed with dreams. I fought kind hands because I thought they were murderers, then fell back because I knew they were trying to help me.

In my fever, faces changed into strange forms. I felt as if I were a brick in a wall, begging to be taken out. I felt as if I were a piece of iron in a great machine, moving above a dark place and crying for the machine to stop. But one thing slowly became steady in all this confusion. Whoever came near me, sooner or later, became Joe.

At night, I opened my eyes and saw Joe sitting in the great chair beside my bed. In the day, I saw Joe by the open window, smoking his pipe quietly. When I asked for a drink, Joe's dear hand gave it to me. When I lay back on the pillow, Joe's face looked down at me with hope and care. At last I found courage to ask, "Is it Joe?"

Joe's old home voice answered that it was. I was overcome and begged him to be angry with me. I told him to strike me, to speak of my ingratitude, and not to be so good. But Joe only put his head near mine and placed his arm around my neck. He was full of joy because I knew him again.

He said that he and I had always been friends. He said that, when I was well enough to go out for a ride, we would have fine times again. Then he turned to the window and wiped his eyes. I was too weak to go to him, so I lay still and whispered a prayer for him. I called him a gentle Christian man, and in my heart I knew the words were true.

When I could talk a little more, I asked how long I had been ill. Joe told me it was the end of May and that the next day would be the first of June. He had been with me almost the whole time. A letter had told him that I was ill, and Biddy had told him to go to me at once. He repeated her words with great care, saying that she had told him not to lose a minute.

Joe became my nurse and master in everything. He told me I must speak little, eat a little at set times, and obey him. I kissed his hand and lay quietly while he wrote a letter to Biddy with my love. Biddy had clearly taught him to write. He

sat at my table with deep pride, chose his pen as if it were a heavy tool, and worked at each word with his whole body.

The room had been made fresh and clean for my illness. My bed had been moved into the sitting-room, where there was more air. The carpet had been taken away, and small bottles stood on the table. Joe had hired a decent woman to do the housework. He said he had sent away the old laundress because he believed she was stealing feathers, coal, wine, and anything else she could carry.

The next day, I asked about Miss Havisham. Joe tried to tell me gently, but the truth was clear. She had died about a week after I became ill. Most of her property had been settled on Estella. But she had also left four thousand pounds to Matthew Pocket, because of what I had said of him. This news gave me real joy, because it completed the only good thing I had done.

Joe also told me about Miss Havisham's other relations. Some received small sums, and Joe explained each gift in his own confused but loving way. Then he told me another piece of news. Orlick had broken into Pumblechook's house, stolen money, drunk wine, eaten food, beaten him, tied him up, and stuffed his mouth so he could not cry out. Pumblechook had known him, and Orlick was now in the county jail.

As I slowly grew stronger, Joe stayed with me and cared for me like a child. He sat and talked in the old way, simply and faithfully. Sometimes I almost believed that everything since the old kitchen had only been part of my fever. When the day came for me to go out in a carriage, Joe wrapped me up and carried me down the stairs. He placed me in the carriage as tenderly as he had once carried me across the marshes.

We drove into the country on a Sunday. The trees were rich with summer leaves, and the air smelled sweet. Birds sang, flowers grew, and the whole world seemed to have moved on while I lay burning in bed. I felt that I was not thankful enough for life, for health, or for Joe. I laid my head on his shoulder as I had done when I was a child.

That evening I asked Joe whether he knew who my patron had been. He said he had heard that it was not Miss Havisham. Then he said he had heard it was the

man connected with the banknotes at the Jolly Bargemen long ago. I asked whether he knew that the man was dead. Joe answered carefully, as if Biddy had prepared him to be gentle with me. He did not ask for the full story.

I began to offer to tell him more, but Joe stopped me kindly. He said that we were always the best of friends, and that some subjects were not needed between such friends. He spoke of my childhood and of Tickler, my sister's stick. He said he had always tried to protect me, though he had not always been able to do it. Biddy had helped him understand that, if I had kept some secret as a child, it was likely because I had been afraid.

Joe's kindness touched me more deeply than any blame could have done. He would not force me to open old wounds. He only told me not to do too much, to take my supper, and to rest. I could not tell whether he knew how poor I now was. I also could not tell whether he knew that all my great expectations had disappeared like mist.

As I became stronger, I noticed a sad change in Joe. When I was helpless, he had called me "old Pip" and "old chap," and I had been glad to hear those names. But little by little, as I recovered, he became less easy with me. Sometimes he called me "sir," and the word hurt me. I understood that the fault was mine, not his.

One day in the Temple Gardens, I tried to show Joe that I could walk alone. He said he was glad to see me able, sir. That last word cut me again. I walked only a little way, then pretended to be weaker than I was and asked for his arm. Joe gave it to me, but he was thoughtful, and I was thoughtful too.

I wanted to stop this growing distance between us. I was ashamed to tell Joe how poor I was and how low I had fallen. I feared he would try to help me from his small savings, and I knew I must not let him do that. I decided that on Monday morning I would tell him everything. I would also tell him about my new thought, which was to go back home and speak to Biddy.

On Sunday, Joe and I spent a quiet day together. We rode out and walked in the fields. I told him I was thankful that I had been ill, because that time with him had changed me. Joe seemed troubled and said only that what had been between

us had been. That night he came to my room as usual, asked if I was still improving, and said good night in a thick voice.

In the morning, I rose early, full of my plan to speak to him before breakfast. I went to his room, but he was not there. His box was gone too. On the breakfast table, I found a letter. Joe had written that he did not wish to intrude, that he had gone because I was well again, and that I would do better without him. At the end he wrote that we were ever the best of friends.

Inside the letter was a receipt for the debt and costs on which I had been arrested. Until that moment, I had thought the creditor had waited because I was ill. I had never imagined that Joe had paid the debt. But there was the receipt, and it was in Joe's name. He had saved me again, and had gone away quietly before I could stop him.

There was only one thing left for me to do. I must follow Joe to the dear old forge and open my heart to him there. I would tell him everything I had held back and ask his forgiveness. Then I would go to Biddy, humble and sorry, and ask whether she could care for me again. After three more days of recovery, I went down to the old place to carry out that purpose.

Part 23: Home Too Late

News of my fallen fortune had reached my old village before I arrived there. The Blue Boar knew it, and the inn changed its manner toward me at once. When I had been thought rich, the place had welcomed me with great care and respect. Now that I was poor, it became cool, slow, and almost careless.

I arrived in the evening, very tired from the journey. The journey had once seemed easy to me, but now my body was still weak from illness. I took some food and went to bed, hoping for rest. But sleep did not come easily, because my mind was full of Joe, Biddy, shame, and hope.

In the morning, I decided not to go openly through the town. I wanted quiet, and I did not want people to stop me and look at my changed state. I left the inn by a side way and went toward the schoolhouse. I had hoped to see Biddy there

before she saw me. I imagined her busy with her children, calm and good as always.

But the schoolhouse was shut. It was a holiday, and no children were there. Biddy's little house was closed too. This small disappointment made me feel strangely lonely. I had come back with a plan, but even the first step of that plan had failed.

The forge was close, so I walked toward it under the green lime trees. I listened for the sound of Joe's hammer. Long before I reached the place, I thought I should hear it. I even imagined I heard it once or twice. But each time I stopped, there was only the sound of leaves in the soft summer wind.

When the forge came into sight, I saw that it was shut. There was no fire inside, no red light, no sparks, and no sound of the bellows. The stillness frightened me, though I did not know why. The forge had always seemed alive when Joe was there. Now it looked as if the heart had gone out of it.

But the house was not empty. The best parlour window was open, with white curtains moving in the air and flowers bright on the sill. That room had once been opened only on special days. I went softly toward it, meaning to look in without being seen. Before I could do so, Joe and Biddy appeared together before me, arm in arm.

At first, Biddy cried out as if she thought I was a ghost. Then she was in my arms, and we both wept. She cried because I looked worn, white, and ill. I cried because she looked so fresh, peaceful, and happy. Joe stood near us, dressed neatly and looking at me with his old love.

I looked from Biddy to Joe and from Joe to Biddy. They were both dressed as if for a great day. I said that Biddy looked very smart, and then I said that Joe looked very smart too. Then the truth came out. Biddy cried happily that it was her wedding day, and that she was married to Joe.

They took me into the kitchen, and I put my head down on the old table. Biddy held one of my hands and kissed it. Joe laid his hand on my shoulder with the same strong, gentle touch I had known since childhood. They were not sorry to see me, though my coming had surprised them. They were glad, proud, and deeply

moved that I had come on the day of their marriage.

My first feeling was thankfulness that I had never told Joe my hope about Biddy. During my illness, I had almost spoken of it more than once. If Joe had stayed one hour longer in London, he might have known my foolish plan. Now that plan was impossible, and I saw how selfish it had been. Joe and Biddy belonged together far more truly than Biddy could ever have belonged to me.

I told Biddy that she had the best husband in the whole world. I said that, if she had seen him by my sickbed, she would have loved him even more. Then I stopped, because she could not love him more than she already did. Biddy answered that she truly could not. Joe stood by us, simple and happy, and there was no pride in him except the quiet pride of love.

Then I told them that I had come to ask forgiveness. I said that I was deeply sorry for all my unkindness and all my pride. I said I had been blind, selfish, and ungrateful. I asked them to say the words aloud, so that I could carry the sound away with me. I wanted to believe that they could trust me and think better of me in the future.

Joe answered first, with his old dear voice. He said God knew he forgave me, if there was anything to forgive. Biddy said the same. Their forgiveness was so full and free that it almost hurt more than blame. I had brought them so little good, yet they gave me peace without asking anything from me.

After that, I asked to go up to my old little room for a few minutes alone. I wanted to look at the poor small place where I had once been a frightened child. The room seemed smaller than ever, but it held more truth than many rich rooms I had known. I thought of the boy who had left it with proud dreams. I thought of the man who had come back with those dreams broken.

Then I came down and ate and drank with Joe and Biddy. They were gentle with me, but not sad. Their happiness filled the house, and I was thankful that I had not brought a shadow over it. When the time came for me to leave, they walked with me as far as the finger-post. There we said good-bye, and I went away with their forgiveness in my heart.

After that, I sold everything I had. I put aside as much money as I could for

my creditors. They gave me time, and I meant to pay them fully. I no longer wished to live by false show. I had learned too painfully what debt, pride, and useless hopes could do.

Within a month, I left England and joined Herbert. Within two months, I was working as a clerk for Clarriker and Co. Within four months, I was given my first real responsibility. Herbert had gone to marry Clara, because old Mr. Barley had died and Clara was free at last. Until Herbert returned with his wife, I was left in charge of the Eastern Branch.

I worked hard and lived simply. Many years passed before I became a partner in the business, but I did not expect quick success. I lived happily with Herbert and Clara and kept my expenses low. Little by little, I paid my debts. I also kept writing to Joe and Biddy, and their letters were among the best things in my life.

At last, when I became third in the firm, Clarriker told Herbert the old secret. He told him that I had helped to buy his place in the business long ago. Herbert was both surprised and deeply moved. But our friendship was not harmed by the secret. If anything, the truth made our friendship warmer.

We were never a great rich business. We did not make piles of money, and we did not live grandly. But we had a good name, worked steadily, and did well enough. Much of that good came from Herbert's cheerful energy and ready mind. I later wondered how I had ever thought him unfit for business, until I understood the truth: perhaps the weakness had never been in Herbert at all, but in me.

Part 24: The Ruined House and Estella

Eleven years passed before I saw Joe and Biddy again with my own eyes. During those years, I had often seen them in my thoughts while I was far away in the East. Their home, the forge, the kitchen fire, and the marshes often came back to me in memory. One December evening, an hour or two after dark, I reached the old kitchen door. I lifted the latch very softly and looked in without being heard.

Joe sat in his old place by the fire, smoking his pipe. He was a little greyer than before, but he looked strong, healthy, and good. Near him, protected by his

great leg, was a little child sitting on my old stool and looking into the fire. For a moment, my heart stopped. It seemed to me that I was looking at myself as a child.

Joe was full of joy when he saw me. The little boy was named Pip, for my sake. Joe said they hoped the child might grow a little like me, and they thought he did. I looked at the boy and felt a strange tenderness. I hoped, more deeply than I could say, that he would be better and happier than I had been.

The next morning, I took the little Pip out for a walk. He talked to me freely, and we understood each other very well. I took him down to the churchyard where my own story had begun. I set him on the same kind of tombstone on which I had once sat in fear. From that high place, he showed me the stones for Philip Pirrip and Georgiana, the parents I had never known.

After dinner, Biddy and I talked together while her little girl slept in her lap. Biddy looked peaceful, kind, and wise, just as she had always been at her best. I asked her to give little Pip to me one day, or at least lend him to me for a time. She smiled gently and said no. Then she told me that I must marry.

I said that Herbert and Clara told me the same thing, but I did not think I would marry. I had settled down in their home and had become, I said, quite an old bachelor. Biddy looked down at her child and touched the little hand to her lips. Then she put her own hand into mine. Her wedding ring pressed softly against my hand, and that small touch spoke more than many words.

Biddy asked whether I still suffered because of Estella. I said no, or at least I thought not. She asked me, as an old friend, whether I had quite forgotten her. I answered that I had forgotten nothing in my life that had ever held a deep place there. But I said that the old dream had passed away, all gone by.

Even while I said this, I knew it was not wholly true. I had already decided to visit the place where Satis House had stood. I wished to go there alone, before leaving the village again. It was still connected with Estella in my heart. Though the dream was gone, the place had not lost its power over me.

I had heard something of Estella's life. She had been very unhappy with her husband. Drummle had treated her cruelly, and people knew him as proud, greedy, brutal, and mean. Later, he had died after an accident caused by his bad treatment

of a horse. This had happened about two years before, but I did not know whether Estella had married again.

The early dinner at Joe's house gave me enough time to walk to the old place before dark. I did not hurry, because I kept stopping to look at old paths, old trees, and old views. Each familiar thing brought back part of my past. The day slowly faded while I walked. By the time I reached the place, evening had nearly come.

Satis House was gone. The house, the brewery, and the buildings had all been pulled down. Only the old garden wall remained. A rough fence stood around the cleared ground, and some ivy had begun to grow again over the low ruins. The gate in the fence was open a little, so I pushed it and went in.

A cold silver mist lay over the ground. The moon had not yet risen high enough to clear it, but the stars were shining faintly above. I could still make out where the old house had stood, where the brewery had been, and where the gates and casks had once been. I walked slowly through the empty space. Then, in the old garden walk, I saw a single figure.

The figure saw me and stopped. I went nearer and saw that it was a woman. At first she seemed ready to turn away, but then she stopped again and let me come close. She looked at me with surprise and spoke my name. I cried out, "Estella!"

She said she was greatly changed and wondered that I knew her. She was changed. The fresh beauty of her youth was gone, but her grace and dignity were still there. More than that, something new was in her face. The old proud eyes had become sadder and softer, and the hand she gave me was no longer cold and without feeling.

We sat together on a bench near the ruined garden. I said it was strange that, after so many years, we should meet again in the place where we had first met. I asked whether she often came there. She said she had never been there since the old days. I told her I had not come there either.

The moon began to rise, and for a time we were silent. I thought of Magwitch's peaceful face after I had told him his daughter lived. I thought of Miss Havisham, lying still after her fire and asking again and again for forgiveness. All these lives

seemed to meet in that ruined place. The mist, the moon, and the broken ground made the past feel near.

Estella spoke first. She said she had often meant to come back, but many things had stopped her. Then she looked around the place and called it poor and old. Tears fell from her eyes, though she tried to hide them. She told me the ground still belonged to her. It was the only possession she had kept.

Everything else had gone from her, little by little. But she had held this ground, because it was the one thing she had strongly refused to give up. Now, at last, it was going to be built on. She had come to say good-bye to it before it changed forever. Then she asked whether I still lived abroad.

I said I did. She asked whether I was doing well, and I answered simply. I said I worked hard enough to earn a living, and so I was doing well. She told me that she had often thought of me, especially in later years. There had been a long hard time, she said, when she kept the memory of me away because she did not want to know what she had thrown away.

But later, when she could face that memory, she had given it a place in her heart. I told her that she had always held her place in mine. We were silent again after that. The words were simple, but they carried many years of pain. Neither of us was young in the old way now, and neither of us could return to what had been lost.

Estella said she had not thought she would say good-bye to me while saying good-bye to that place. She was glad, she said, that it had happened so. I asked whether she was glad to part again, because to me parting had always been painful. I remembered our last parting, when I had blessed and forgiven her, though my heart had been broken. She remembered it too.

She said that I had once told her, “God bless you, God forgive you.” If I could say that then, she believed I could say it now. Suffering, she said, had taught her what her heart had not understood before. She had been bent and broken, but she hoped she had been bent and broken into a better shape. Then she asked me to be as kind to her as I had been long ago and to tell her we were friends.

I stood and bent over her as she rose from the bench. I told her that we were

friends. She said we would continue friends, even if we were apart. I took her hand in mine, and together we walked out of the ruined place. Long ago, when I first left the forge, the morning mists had risen before me. Now the evening mists were rising, and in the wide quiet light, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.