

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

CHARLES DICKENS



SADDLEBACK
Classics

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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

CHARLES DICKENS

ADAPTED BY

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S **1** **A Convict on the Marsh**

My family name is Pirrip, and my first name is Philip. As a baby, I put both names together and called myself Pip.

I lived with my sister and her husband, the blacksmith, in the marsh country. My first clear memory is of one cold day in my seventh year. I was in the lonely churchyard visiting my parents' graves. I knew that the dark flat land past the churchyard was the marshes. I knew that the gray line was the river and that the wind came in from the sea. And I knew that the sad bundle of shivers starting to cry was Pip.

“Hold your noise!” cried a terrible voice. A man stood up among the graves. “Keep still, you little devil, or I’ll cut your throat!”

The frightful man was dressed in rough gray clothes. A great iron was on his leg and

a rag was wound around his head. He seized me by the chin.

“Oh! Don’t cut my throat, sir!” I begged. “Pray don’t do it, sir.”

“Tell me your name!” growled the man. “Quick!”

“Pip, sir.”

“Where do you live? Point out the place!”

I pointed to our village, a mile or more away. I tried not to cry.

“Now,” said the man, “where are your mother and father?”

“Why, over there, sir!” I said, pointing to their gravestones.

“Then who do ye live with—that is if I *let* ye live?”

“My sister, sir—wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith.”

“Blacksmith, eh?” said he, looking at the iron on his leg. Then he took down my arms and tipped me back. “Get me a file,” he says. “And get me food, or I’ll have your heart and liver out! Bring them to me there tomorrow morning.” He pointed to a bank of earth in the distance. “Don’t say a word



about me — or your heart and your liver shall be roasted and ate!”

I said I would get him the file. And I promised to get what food I could. Then I ran home without stopping.

At home the blacksmith forge was shut up. Joe was alone in the kitchen. He was a goodnatured fellow with blond hair and blue eyes. My sister, Mrs. Joe, had black hair and eyes and was tall and bony. As she so often said, she had “brought me up by hand.” This meant that she often laid her heavy hand

upon me—and upon Joe, too.

“Mrs. Joe is out looking for you, Pip,” Joe warned me. “And she’s got Tickler with her!”

I hung my head. Tickler was a piece of cane, worn smooth by raps on my frame.

“Listen! She’s a-coming!” said Joe. “Get behind the door, old chap.”

My sister threw the door open. Grabbing my arm, she put Tickler to work. “Where have you been, you monkey? It’s hard enough for me, being the blacksmith’s wife, without being a bad boy’s mother!”

All evening I pictured the man on the marshes. I thought about the file and food I must soon steal.

Because it was Christmas Eve, I was put to stirring pudding for the next day. “Hark!” said I as I stirred. “Was that *guns*, Joe? What does it mean?”

“There was a convict off last night,” said Joe. “They fired warning of him. Now it seems another one must have escaped.”

“Who’s firing?” said I.

“Guards on the prison ships!” cried my

sister. She pointed her needle and thread. “Right across the marshes. People are put in those ships because they murder and rob. Now get off to bed!”

I went up to my dark room. I was in terror of my promise to the man with the iron!

At dawn, I went downstairs. Every board seemed to cry, “Stop, thief! Get up, Mrs. Joe!” I stole bread and cheese and took brandy from the stone bottle. I took a beautiful round pork pie. I got a file from Joe’s toolbox. Then I ran for the marshes.

It was a damp morning. The marsh mist was thick. Before long, I saw a man sitting with his back toward me. When I touched him on the shoulder, he jumped up. It was *not* the man I had met!

This man was also dressed in rough gray clothes. He too had an iron on his leg. He swore at me and then ran into the mist. I felt my heart turn over. I dare say I should have felt a pain in my liver, too, if I had known where it was!

Then I saw the right man, limping to and fro. He grabbed the bottle of brandy and

poured it down his throat. After gobbling the food, he smeared his ragged sleeve over his eyes.

I felt sorry for him then, and I made bold to say, "I am glad you enjoy the food."

"Thanks to you, my boy, I do."

"Will you leave any for him?"

"Him? Who's him?"

"The other man I saw just now, over yonder. He was dressed like you, only with a hat," I explained. "And with the same reason for needing a file."

He grabbed me by the collar and stared. "*Where is he?* Show me the way he went. I'll pull him down! Give me the file, boy!"

Then he was down on the wet grass, filing at his leg iron like a madman. I was very much afraid of him again. I told him I had to go, but he took no notice. The last I saw of him, his head was bent and he was working at the iron on his leg. The last I heard of him, the file was still rasping away.

The Capture

I expected someone would be waiting at home to arrest me for stealing the food. But Mrs. Joe was busy getting ready for Christmas.

“And where have *you* been?” she asked. Joe secretly crossed two fingers and showed them to me. It was our warning sign that my sister was in a cross temper.

I said I had been down at the village to hear the Christmas carols.

Mrs. Joe was fixing a fine dinner of a pickled pork leg and roast stuffed fowls. The pudding was on to boil. Clearly no discovery had been made of the missing food and file.

At half past one, I opened the door. Mr. Pumblechook, a well-to-do grain merchant in the village, had come to dine.

As we sat down to Christmas dinner, old

Pumblechook laid an eye on me. "Be grateful, boy," he said, "to them which brought you up by hand."

With that, my sister began to list the problems I had caused. Just when I felt I might get through the day, my sister stood. "You must taste," she said, "a nice pork pie."

As she went out to get it, I ran for my life. But I got no farther than the door. There I ran into a party of soldiers. They all carried muskets. One held a pair of handcuffs.

At the strange sight of soldiers on our doorstep, the dinner party rose. Mrs. Joe came back from the pantry and stared. She quickly forgot the missing pork pie.

"Excuse me," said a soldier, "but I want the blacksmith. These handcuffs are broken. Can you fix them?"

"Are you after convicts, sir?" asked Mr. Pumblechook.

"Two of them!" answered a soldier. "They're out on the marshes. Anybody here seen anything of them?"

Everybody, except me, said no. No one noticed me.

Joe put on his leather apron and took the handcuffs into the forge. Soon he began to hammer and clink, hammer and clink.

When Joe's job was done, he got his coat. He said that we should go down with the soldiers and help with the hunt.

Joe and I were told to keep to the rear. I whispered, "I hope we don't find them." And Joe whispered to me, "I'd give a shilling if they had escaped, Pip."

I rode on Joe's broad shoulders. As we moved to the marshes, I looked about. Would *my* convict see me? Would he believe that I had turned him in?

All of a sudden we stopped. On the wings of the wind and rain, there came loud shouts. The soldiers ran forward like deer, and Joe too.

"Here are both men!" panted a soldier. He pointed his gun at the bottom of a ditch. "Give up, you two!"

Water was splashing about, mud was flying, and blows were being struck. Some of the soldiers went down into the ditch. They dragged out my convict and the other one as well. Both of them were bleeding and

panting and swearing loudly at each other.

“He tried to murder me!” said the other convict.

“He lies!” my convict said. “He’s a liar born, and he’ll die a liar.”

“Enough of this!” one soldier ordered. “Light those torches.”

Then my convict looked round him and saw me. I shook my head, hoping to show that I had not turned him in. He gave me a look that I did not understand. But I knew I would remember his face ever after.

My convict never looked at me, except that once. He turned to the soldiers. “I wish to say something. I took some food from the blacksmith’s, over yonder.” My convict then turned his eyes on Joe. “Are you the blacksmith?” he said. “I’m sorry to say, I’ve eaten your pie.”

“God knows you’re welcome to it,” said Joe. “We don’t know what you have done, but we wouldn’t have you starved to death, poor fellow. Would we, Pip?”

We followed the soldiers and their prisoners to the landing. We saw the black

prison ship lying offshore like a wicked Noah's ark. We saw the two convicts rowed out and taken up the side and disappear. Then the torches were flung hissing into the water.

I never told a single living soul about my convict. I loved Joe, and the fear of losing his trust tied my tongue. First I had been afraid to avoid doing wrong. Now I was afraid to do what I knew to be right.

* * * *

When I was old enough, I was to work with Joe in the forge. Until that time, I did odd jobs. Any money I earned went into a box on the kitchen shelf.

A village school for children met each evening. It was run by an older lady who napped through most classes. With the help of a girl named Biddy, the lady also kept a little store. Biddy was an orphan, like myself. Her hair always wanted brushing, and her shoes always wanted mending. With Biddy's help I learned the alphabet.

One night, sitting in the kitchen with my slate, I wrote a note to Joe. I think this was a year after our hunt upon the marshes. I

worked an hour to print this message:

*mI deEr JO i opE U r KrWitE wEll
p i P*

Joe looked at the note with pride. "I say, Pip, old chap! What a scholar you are! Why, here's a *J*. And a *O*. *J-O, Joe!* Why don't you take me in hand, Pip, and teach *me* to read? But Mrs. Joe mustn't see what we're up to. Oh, no, she would not be happy about my being a scholar!"

Mrs. Joe had gone to market with Uncle Pumblechook that day. Joe made the fire and swept the hearth. Then we waited for the carriage. It was a dry, cold night.

"Here comes the mare," said Joe, "ringing like a peal of bells!"

Mrs. Joe and Mr. Pumblechook rushed into the warm little house.

"Now," Mrs. Joe cried out, "if this boy ain't grateful this night, he never will be! Miss Havisham wants him to go and play there. So of course he's going—and he had *better* play there!" My sister frowned at me.

I had heard of old Miss Havisham.

Everybody had heard of Miss Havisham. She was a grim old rich lady who lived in a big gloomy house. She never came out.

“I wonder how she comes to know of our Pip!” said Joe, surprised.

“Whoever said she *knew* him?” cried my sister. “Uncle Pumblechook rents his office from her. She asked if he knew a boy. Indeed, he knows that *this* boy’s fortune may be made by his going to Miss Havisham’s. He will take Pip to town tonight and to Miss Havisham’s in the morning.”

With that, she pounced on me like an eagle on a lamb. My head was put under water. I was soaped and toweled. Then I was put into a tight, stiff suit and handed over to Uncle Pumblechook.

“Goodbye Joe,” I cried out sadly.

“Goodbye, Pip, old chap!”

I had never parted from Joe before. The stars twinkled above the carriage, but they could not throw any light on my questions. Why on earth was I going to play at Miss Havisham’s? And what on earth was I supposed to play at?

3 Miss Havisham and Estella

At ten o'clock the next morning, Mr. Pumblechook and I stood outside Miss Havisham's gate. Her house was of old, dark brick. The windows had rusty bars. After ringing a bell, we waited.

A pretty young lady came across the courtyard. "So this is Pip, is it?" she said in a proud voice. "Come in, Pip."

"Come along, boy," she said. Though she called me "boy," I saw that she was about my age. She was beautiful. We went up some dark stairs. At last we came to a door. "Go in," she said. Then she walked away.

I was half afraid. I knocked and a voice from within told me to enter.

I found myself in a room lighted with candles. I saw a draped table with a gold framed looking glass. It seemed to be a fine

lady's dressing table. In an armchair sat the strangest looking lady I have ever seen.

She was dressed in rich lace and silks that were all of white. She wore a long white veil. There were wedding flowers in her white hair. Bright jewels sparkled on the dressing table. Half-packed trunks lay all about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on.

But everything that should have been white was faded and yellow. And the bride within the wedding gown had grown old and wrinkled. The dress hung loose upon a figure that was now skin and bone.

“Who is it?” said the lady at the table.

“It's Pip, ma'am—Mr. Pumblechook's boy. I'm here to play.”

“Come close. Let me look at you.”

It was then I saw that her watch had stopped at exactly 8:40. A clock in the room had stopped at the same time.

“Look at me,” said Miss Havisham. “Are you afraid of a woman who has not seen the sun since you were born?”

“No,” I lied.

She laid her hands upon her chest. “Do you know what I touch here?”

“Your heart?” I asked.

“Yes—and it’s *broken!*” she said with a strange smile. “Now, I want to see some play. Go to the door. Call Estella!”

I called. The proud young lady came along the dark hall.

Miss Havisham called her close. She took a jewel from the table and held it against the girl’s pretty brown hair. “Yours, one day, my dear. And you will use it well. Let me see you play cards with this boy.”

“With *this* boy? Why, he is nothing but a common working boy!”

I thought I heard Miss Havisham whisper, “Well? You can break his heart.”

Miss Havisham watched as we played.

“What coarse hands he has!” said Estella. “And what thick, ugly boots!”

I played the game to its end. Estella easily won. Then she threw down the cards.

“Go now, Pip,” Miss Havisham said. “You shall come here again after six days. Estella, take the boy downstairs and give