

Must they! Let them not hope to taste it!

'You must know,' said my sister, rising, 'it's a pie: a tasty meat pie.'

My sister went out to get it. I heard her steps proceed to the pantry. I saw Mr Pumblechook balance his knife. I felt that I could bear no more, and I must run away. I released the leg of the table, and ran for my life.

But I ran no farther than the front door, for there I ran straight into a party of soldiers with their guns, one of whom held out a pair of handcuffs to me, saying, 'Here you are, come on!'

Chapter 5 The Convicts Are Chased

The arrival of the soldiers caused the dinner party to rise from table in confusion, and caused Mrs Joe, reentering the kitchen empty-handed, to stop short and stare, shouting, 'Goodness me, what's happened to the pie?'

'Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen,' said the sergeant, 'I am on a chase in the name of the King, and I want the blacksmith.' The sergeant then explained that the lock of one of the handcuffs had gone wrong, and as they were wanted for immediate service, he asked the blacksmith to examine them. On being told by Joe that the job would take about two hours, the sergeant asked him to set about it at once, and called on his men to help.

I was extremely frightened. But, beginning to realize that the handcuffs were not for me, and that the arrival of the soldiers had caused my sister to forget about the pie, I pulled myself together a little.

Mr Wopsle asked the sergeant if they were chasing convicts. 'Ay!' returned the sergeant. 'Two. They're pretty well known to be out on the marshes still, and they won't try to get clear of them

before dark. Anybody here seen anything of them?'

Everybody except myself said no, with confidence.

Nobody thought of me.

Joe had got his coat off, and went into the forge. One of the soldiers lit the fire, while the rest stood round as the flames turned the coals red. Then Joe began to hammer and we all looked on.

At last, Joe's job was done, and the hammering stopped. As Joe put on his coat, he suggested that some of us should go down with the soldiers and see the result of the hunt. Mr Wopsle said he would go, if Joe would. Mrs Joe, interested in knowing all about it and how it ended, agreed that Joe should go, and allowed me to go with him.

Nobody joined us from the village, for the weather was cold and threatening, with darkness coming on, and the people had good fires indoors and were staying in. A cold rain started to fall as we left the churchyard and struck out on the open marshes, and Joe took me on his back.

The soldiers were moving on in the direction of the old gun placements, and we were moving on a little way behind them, when, all of a sudden, we all stopped. For there had reached us on the wings of the wind and rain, a long shout. It was repeated. There seemed to be two or more shouts raised together. As we came nearer to the shouting, we could hear one voice calling 'Murder!' and another voice, 'Escaped convicts! Runaways! Guard! This way for the runaway convicts!'

Then both voices would seem to be drowned in a struggle, and then would break out again. When they heard this, the soldiers ran in the direction of the voices, and Joe too.

'Here are both men!' shouted the sergeant, struggling towards two men fighting like animals. 'Give up, you two! Come apart!' Water and mud were flying everywhere, and blows were being struck, when some more men went down to help the

sergeant, and dragged out, separately, the convict I had spoken with and the other one. Both were bleeding and shouting and struggling; but of course I knew them both at once.

'Remember!' said my convict, wiping blood from his face with his torn shirt, and shaking hair from his fingers. 'I took him! I give him up to you! Remember that!'

'It's not much to be particular about,' said the sergeant. 'It won't do you much good, my man, being a runaway convict yourself. Handcuffs there!'

The other convict looked in a terrible state.

'Take notice, guard — he tried to murder me,' were his first words.

'Tried to murder him?' said my convict. 'Try, and not do it? I took him, and gave him up; that's what I did. I not only prevented him from getting off the marshes, but I dragged him here — dragged him this far on his way back. He's a gentleman, if you please. Now the hulk has got its gentleman again, through me. Murder him? Not worth my while to murder him when I could do worse and drag him back!'

The other one still cried, 'He tried — he tried — to murder me. Bear — bear witness.'

'Look here!' said my convict to the sergeant. 'Single-handed I got clear of the prison ship; I ran for it and I did it. I could have got clear of these death-cold marshes too — look at my leg; you won't find much iron on it — if I hadn't discovered that he was here. Let him go free? Let him profit by the means I found out? Let him make me look foolish again? Once more? No, no, no. If I had died at the bottom there, I'd have held on tightly to him, so that you would have been sure to find him in my hold.'

'Enough of this dispute,' said the sergeant. 'Light those torches.'

My convict, looking round for the first time, saw me. I had got down from Joe's back when we came up, and had not moved

since. I looked at him eagerly when he looked at me, and slightly moved my hands and shook my head. I had been waiting for him to see me, that I might try to assure him that I was not guilty of giving him away. He gave me a look I did not understand, and it all passed in a moment.

The torches having been lit, the sergeant gave the order to march. After an hour or so we came to a rough wooden hut, and a landing place. There was a guard in the hut, who made some kind of report, and some entry in a book, and the younger convict was taken away with his guard, to go on board first.

Suddenly, my convict turned to the sergeant, and — to the amazement of all — said that he had stolen from the blacksmith's house some bits of food, a pie and a little whisky.

The boat had returned, and his guard was ready, so we followed him to the landing place and saw him put into the boat, which was rowed by a crew of convicts like himself.

Somebody in the boat shouted, 'Give way, you!' which was the signal to start rowing. By the light of the torches, we saw the black hulk lying out a little way from the mud of the shore.

Barred and tied by massive, old chains, the prison ship seemed in my young eyes to be in irons like the convicts. We saw the boat go alongside, and we saw him taken up the side and disappear.

Chapter 6 I Am to Go and Play at Miss Havisham's

When I was old enough, I was to start learning to be a blacksmith by working with Joe, and until then I did odd jobs around the forge. Also, if any neighbour happened to want an extra boy to frighten birds, or pick up stones, or do any such job, I was often given the employment.

During this period I attended an evening school kept by Mr

Wopsle's great-aunt. Her method of education was odd, for she usually went to sleep from six to seven every evening, leaving her pupils to improve themselves as best they could by seeing her do it.

Mr Wopsle's great-aunt, besides keeping this Educational Institution, kept – in the same room – a little general shop. She had no idea what stock she had, or what the price of anything in it was; but there was a small notebook kept in a drawer, which served as a catalogue of prices, and by means of it Biddy, who was a distant relation of Mr Wopsle's, arranged all the shop's selling and buying. She, like me, had lost her parents. She too had been brought up by hand.

More by the help of Biddy than by Mr Wopsle's great-aunt, I struggled through my A to Z, getting very worried about every letter. But at last I began to read, write and calculate on the very smallest scale.



Joe had never gone to school in his childhood. One evening, as we were sitting alone by the fire, I wrote him a letter on a slate which I handed to him. Although he could only read his name, he declared me to be very intelligent, and expressed his admiration for my learning. He then told me part of his life story. His father had been a heavy drinker, and he had often struck Joe and his mother, who ran away from him several times and had to work to earn their bread, but he always brought them back. Joe had to work as blacksmith in place of his lazy father, and kept his father until he died, and then his mother died soon after.

Joe then met my sister and asked her hand in marriage, and begged her to bring me with her, saying that there was room for me at the forge.

'So you see, Pip, Joe said ending his story: there we are! Now, when you help me in my learning, Pip, (and I tell you now I am

awfully dull), Mrs Joe musn't see too much of what we're doing. It must be done without her knowing. For your sister is given to government, and she wouldn't like to have clever people in the house, and in particular would not like my being clever, for fear I might rise.'

I was going to ask him, 'Why?' when Joe stopped me.

'Stay a bit. I know what you are going to say. You want to know why I don't rise. Well, your sister's got a good mind and I haven't. And besides, Pip – I see so much in her of my poor mother, a woman slaving and breaking her honest heart and never getting any peace in her life, that I'm afraid of not doing what's right by a woman, and I'd much rather be a little uncomfortable myself. I wish it was only me that got put out, Pip; I wish there were no Ticker for you, old chap; I wish I could take it all on myself; but this is how the matter stands, Pip, and I hope you'll forgive my faults.'

Young as I was, I believe that a new admiration of Joe started that night.

Mrs Joe made occasional trips with Uncle Pumblechook on market days, to assist him in buying such household goods as required a woman's judgment. This was market day, and Mrs Joe was out on one of these trips.

Soon they arrived.

'Now,' said Mrs Joe, unwrapping herself quickly and with excitement, and throwing her hat back on her shoulders, where it hung by the strings, 'If this boy isn't grateful this night, he never will be!'

I looked as grateful as any boy possibly could, who was completely uninformed why he should be so.

'It's only to be hoped,' said my sister, 'that he won't be spoiled.'

'But I have my fears.'

'She is not likely to spoil him,' said Mr Pumblechook. 'She knows better.'

She? I looked at Joe, making the motion with my lips and eyes, 'She?' Joe looked at me, making the motion with *his* lips and eyes.

'Well?' said my sister, in her ill-tempered way. 'What are you staring at? Is the house on fire?'

'Some individual,' Joe said politely, 'referred to – she.'

'And she is a she, I suppose?' said my sister. 'Unless you call Miss Havisham a he. And I doubt if even you'll go so far as that.'

'Miss Havisham up town?' said Joe.

'Is there any Miss Havisham down town?' returned my sister. 'She wants this boy to go and play there. And of course he's going. And he had better play there,' said my sister, shaking her head at me, 'or I'll work him.'

I had heard of Miss Havisham up town – everybody for miles round had heard of Miss Havisham up town – as an extremely rich and strict lady who lived alone in a large dark house.

'Well, to be sure!' said Joe, amazed. 'I wonder how she came to know Pip!'

'Fool!' cried my sister. 'Who said she knew him?'

'Some individual,' Joe again politely continued, 'said that she wanted him to go and play there.'

'And couldn't she ask Uncle Pumblechook if he knew of a boy to go and play there? Isn't it just possible that Uncle Pumblechook may be a tenant of hers, and that he may sometimes go there to pay his rent? And couldn't Uncle Pumblechook, being always kind and thoughtful for us, then mention this boy that I have for ever been a willing slave to?'

'Good again!' cried Uncle Pumblechook. 'Well put! Prettily pointed! Good indeed! Now, Joseph, you know the situation.'

'No Joseph,' said my sister, 'you do not know that Uncle Pumblechook, knowing that this boy's fortune may be made by his going to Miss Havisham's, has offered to take him into town tonight, in his own carriage, and to keep him tonight, and to take

him with his own hands to Miss Havisham's tomorrow morning. With that, she suddenly seized me, and my head was put under the water tap, and I was soaped, and rubbed until I really was quite beside myself.

I was then put into a clean shirt with a collar and was dressed in my tightest suit, and delivered over to Mr Pumblechook, who started the speech that I knew he had been dying to make all along:

'Boy, be for ever grateful to all friends, but especially to those who brought you up by hand!'

'Goodbye, Joe!' I said.

'God keep you, Pip, old chap!'

I had never parted from him before, and what with my feelings and the soap, I could at first see no stars from the carriage. But they shone out one by one as we moved off, without throwing any light on the question of why on earth I was going to play at Miss Havisham's, and what on earth I was expected to play at.

Chapter 7 I Visit Miss Havisham and Meet Estella

Mr Pumblechook and I breakfasted at eight o'clock in the sitting room at the back of his shop, and at ten we started for Miss Havisham's house, which we reached within a quarter of an hour. It was of old brick, and unwelcoming, and had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up; of those that remained, all the lower ones were barred. There was a courtyard in front with a big iron gate; so we had to wait, after ringing the bell, until someone came along to open it. While we waited at the gate, I looked in and saw that at the side of the house there was a large brewery.

A window was raised, and a clear voice demanded, 'What