



Great Expectations

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TIMELESS CLASSICS



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A Convict on the Marsh

My last name is Pirrip. My first name is Philip. I put both names together. I call myself Pip.

I lived with my sister and her husband. He was a blacksmith. My first clear memory was when I was seven. I visited my parents' graves. I started to cry.

“Stop that noise!” cried a terrible voice. “Or I’ll cut your throat!”

I saw a man. He was scary. He had a leg chain. He grabbed me.

“Please don’t cut my throat, sir!”

“Tell me your name!” said the man.

“Pip, sir.”

“Where do you live?”

I pointed to our village.

“Where are your mother and father?”

I pointed to their graves.

“Who do you live with? That is, if I *let* you live!”



“My sister. She’s married to the blacksmith. Joe Gargery.”

“Blacksmith, eh?” he said. “Get me a file. And get me food. Or I’ll kill you! Bring them here tomorrow morning. Don’t tell anyone about me.”

I said I’d do it. Then I ran home.

Joe was in the kitchen. He was a nice man. My sister, Mrs. Joe, wasn't so nice. She beat me. And she beat Joe too.

“Mrs. Joe is very angry,” Joe warned. “She’s coming! Get behind the door.”

My sister found me. “Where have you been?” she asked, hitting me.

I was afraid. But I was more afraid of the man I had met. I thought about stealing the file and the food.

Suddenly I heard loud noise. “Are those guns?” I asked Joe.

“A convict ran off last night. The shot is to warn us. One more has escaped.”

“Who’s firing?” I asked.

“Guards on the prison ships!” cried my sister. “Criminals are put on those ships. Now go to bed!”

I went up to my room. I was afraid.

At dawn, I went downstairs. The floorboards creaked. I was afraid I’d be caught. I stole some brandy. And bread and cheese. I took a pork pie too. I got a file from Joe’s toolbox. Then I ran.

Before long, I saw a man. I touched his shoulder. He jumped. He was not the man I had met! But he *was* a convict. I ran.

Then I found the right man. I gave

him the brandy and food. He ate and drank. I felt sorry for him.

“I’m glad you liked the food. Will you save any for the other man?” I asked.

“What other man?” the convict asked.

“Over there. He’s dressed like you. He’s got a chain on his leg,” I said.

He grabbed me. “Show me where he went. I’ll get him! Give me the file!”

He filed the chain like a madman. I was afraid again. I left him working at the metal.

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The Capture

I thought I'd be arrested for stealing the food. But Mrs. Joe was busy getting ready for Christmas.

“Where have you been?” she asked.

I told her I'd been down at the village to hear Christmas songs. She hadn't noticed anything missing.

Mr. Pumblechook came for dinner. He was a well-off village merchant.

We all sat down to eat. My sister talked about the trouble I'd caused her. Then she stood up. "You must taste my pork pie," she said.

She went to get the pie. I ran for my life. I hurried to the door. There, I ran into some soldiers. They had guns. One had handcuffs. Mrs. Joe came running.

"I need the blacksmith to fix these handcuffs," said a soldier.

"Are you after the convicts?" asked Mr. Pumblechook.

"Two of them! Has anyone seen them?" the soldier asked.

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

Joe fixed the handcuffs. He got his coat. He said we should all go and help with the hunt.

Joe and I kept to the back. “I hope we don’t find them,” I whispered.

“I hope they’ve escaped,” Joe said.

I rode on Joe’s shoulders. I looked around. Would my convict see me? Would he think I turned him in?

Suddenly, we stopped. There was shouting. The soldiers ran. Joe ran too.