

## Chapter 1 I Am Told to Steal

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip. Having lost both my parents in my infancy, I was brought up by my sister, Mrs Joe Gargery, who married the local blacksmith.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within 20 miles of the sea. My earliest memory is of a cold, wet afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this windy place under long grass was the churchyard; and that my father, mother and five little brothers were dead and buried there; and that the dark flat empty land beyond the churchyard was the marshes; and that the low line further down was the river; and that the distant place from which the wind was rushing was the sea, and that the small boy growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry was Pip.

'Hold your noise,' cried a terrible voice, as a man jumped up from among the graves. 'Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat.'

A fearful man, in rough grey clothes, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old piece of cloth tied round his head. He moved with difficulty and was shaking with cold as he seized me by the chin.

'Oh! Don't cut my throat, sir,' I begged him in terror. 'Please, don't do it, sir.'

'Tell me your name,' said the man. 'Quick!'

'Pip, sir.'

'Once more,' said the man, staring at me. 'Speak out.'

'Pip. Pip, sir.'

'Show me where you live,' said the man. 'Point out the place.'

I pointed to where our village lay, a mile or more from the church.

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread, which he took and began to eat hungrily.

‘You young dog!’ said the man, talking as he ate noisily. ‘What fat cheeks you’ve got!’

I believe they were fat, though I was at that time small for my years, and not strong.

He asked me where my father and mother were. When I had pointed out to him the places where they were buried, he asked me who I lived with. I told him I lived with my sister, wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith.

On hearing the word ‘blacksmith’ he looked down at his leg and then at me. He took me by both arms and ordered me to bring him, early the next morning at the old gun placements, a metal file and some food, or he would cut my heart out. I was not to say a word about it all. ‘I’m not alone,’ he said, ‘as you may think I am. There’s a young man hidden with me, in comparison with whom I am kind and friendly. That young man hears the words I speak. That young man has a secret way, particular to himself, of getting at a boy, and at his heart. No boy can hide himself from that young man.’

I promised to bring him the file, and what bits of food I could, and wished him goodnight. He moved away towards the low church wall, putting his weight on his one good leg, got over it, and then turned round to look for me. When I saw him turning, I set my face towards home, and made the best use of my legs.