

# | 1 |

## 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.