Name: _____ Date: _____

Great Expectations

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My father's family name was Pirrip, and my Christian name was Philip, but my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip, so I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip. I was an orphan, brought up by my sister, who was twenty years older than I, and by her husband Joe Gargery, a gentle and long-suffering blacksmith, magnanimous in disposition and extremely modest in his opinion of his own importance. On a raw afternoon toward evening, I was sitting among the gravestones in the churchyard on the lonely marshes, studying my parents' tombstones, when a fearsome, ragged man in coarse gray clothing, with a heavy iron shackle on his leg, sprang out from among the graves and seized me by the chin. The churchyard, the dike and the gloomy flat country beyond it lay in the damp, while the distant river was a leaden line and the cold wind rushed in from the sea.

"Hold your noise!" cried the man, who threatened, in a hoarse and menacing whisper, to cut my throat unless I secretly brought him a file and some provisions from the forge. He was famished, he was trembling convulsively with the cold and the dampness, and he had escaped from the prison ships anchored in the river. I was thoroughly terrified, and I solemnly promised that I would fetch whatever he demanded, and I ran home through the dusk with my heart thumping like a hammer. At daybreak I crept into the pantry and stole a pork pie, some bread, a bottle of brandy, and a file from Joe's tools, and I carried them across the misty marshes to the man, who devoured the pie with ravenous greed, like a famished dog, and who never forgot what I had done. He limped away across the marsh, and I watched him hugging himself in the fog, while I felt his hungry gaze upon my back long afterward.

Soon afterward a party of soldiers, carrying torches, discovered two convicts struggling violently in a muddy ditch, and one of them confessed, in front of everyone, that he had stolen some food from the blacksmith's house. It was my convict, who looked at me for a moment without any sign of recognition, and I understood that he was protecting me. Joe, who was the most compassionate man alive, only remarked that the poor fellow was welcome to the food, and that he would never have wished any creature to perish of hunger. I was too young and too petrified to confess, and the secret lay upon my conscience for many years, a weight that I carried every day, as though I had swallowed a stone. I loved Joe with all my heart, and the burden of my deception, which grew heavier every day, became a punishment that I could not escape, and that I deserved.

When I was about seven or eight, a wealthy and eccentric lady named Miss Havisham, who lived in a decaying mansion called Satis House, sent word that she required a boy to come and entertain her there, and I was chosen. I found her seated in a darkened room, illuminated

by candles, wearing a bridal gown that had once been white and had now turned yellow, with one shoe upon her foot and the other lying upon the table. Every clock in the house had been stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and on the table lay a rotting wedding cake, thick with dust and infested by spiders. She had been cruelly abandoned on her wedding morning, and she had resolved that nothing in her house should ever advance beyond that moment. Her hair was white, her face was withered, and her eyes burned with a strange and feverish brightness that petrified me, though she appeared at times almost kind.

She had adopted a beautiful and haughty girl of about my age, named Estella, and she ordered us to play cards together. Estella laughed at me. She contemptuously called me a common laboring-boy, and she ridiculed my coarse hands and my thick boots, and for the first time in my life I felt ashamed of everything I was. When I returned to the forge that night, I could not look at Joe's honest face, and the home that I had loved seemed suddenly mean and shabby. Miss Havisham watched with sinister satisfaction while her pupil practiced her cruelty upon me, and she whispered to Estella that she should break my heart, as though that were an accomplishment. "He calls the knaves Jacks, this boy!" she declared disdainfully, and she won every game we played, while I sat there, hot with mortification, and stared at the tablecloth.

On a later visit, I was confronted in the overgrown garden by a pale young gentleman, who insisted, with the most elaborate politeness, that we should fight, and who knocked me down repeatedly in the most courteous manner, although I contrived to win the battle in the end. Estella watched from a window, and when it was over, she allowed me to kiss her cheek, which I took for a sign of affection, although it was merely a reward that she gave to a dog. I did not know that the pale young gentleman, whose name was Herbert Pocket, would one day be the truest friend I ever had. I walked home bruised and bewildered along the dark lanes, and I said nothing of it to anyone, for I could not possibly have explained the strange mixture of delight and humiliation that I felt.

Joe's forge had always been my home, and Joe the most devoted companion I ever knew, but after those humiliating visits I yearned to become a gentleman, so that Estella could no longer despise me. I told Joe so, and he listened with patient affection, and I was bound apprentice to him in the usual manner. My sister, who governed the household with a stern and tireless hand, was one night attacked by a concealed assailant, and she never recovered her faculties. Biddy, an intelligent and good-natured girl, came to nurse her, and she taught me, quietly and without any vanity, that the people who loved me deserved more gratitude than I was giving them, although in my youthful conceit I did not heed her, and I thought her merely a village girl of limited ambition. She answered my arrogance only with patient and affectionate silence, and that silence ought to have shamed me.

One evening, as I sat in the kitchen, a formidable London lawyer named Jaggers arrived with astonishing intelligence. A mysterious benefactor, who wished to remain anonymous,

intended to transform me into a gentleman, with a generous income, and I was to depart at once for London to be educated, under the guidance of a tutor. I assumed, quite naturally, that my fairy godmother was Miss Havisham, and that she intended me for Estella. I said farewell to Joe, who stood at the door of the forge with tears on his cheeks, and I trudged off down the road without once looking back. It was not until I was out of sight that I turned around, and wept, and wished that I had taken his hand. Jaggers had a habit of washing his hands with scented soap, as though he wished to cleanse himself of the troubled lives that passed through his office every day, and he never revealed anything he did not wish to reveal.

In London, I shared lodgings with Herbert Pocket, and we became inseparable companions. He kindly instructed me in the correct use of a knife and fork, and I learned to squander money in a reckless and ridiculous manner, until I was hopelessly in debt. Jaggers' clerk, Wemmick, who was a dry and silent man at the office, turned out to live in a tiny wooden castle at Walworth, with a drawbridge, a flagstaff and a small cannon that he fired every evening at nine, for the enjoyment of his deaf old father. Wemmick, indeed, insisted that his office self and his castle self were two entirely different persons, and he could not be persuaded to discuss one while he was in the other. I never forgot how much happiness he found in that little home, which he guarded so jealously from the cold world of the law.

I grew vain and arrogant, and I became ashamed of the forge. When Joe himself came to visit me, awkward in his best clothes and clutching his hat, I received him coldly, and I saw his face fall, and I did not apologize. It is one of the things that I most regret. Joe observed gently, before he left, that London was not his proper place, and that he was only honest and plain at the forge, and that he would always be glad to see me. I watched him descend the stairs, and I knew, with a sinking conscience, that I had behaved like a snob, and that he, and not I, was the true gentleman in that house. Joe, in his impoverished and honorable simplicity, had understood in an instant everything that I had refused to understand in a year.

Estella came to London as well, more beautiful and more disdainful than ever, and I followed her about with a hopeless, obstinate devotion. She warned me honestly that she possessed no heart to give, since Miss Havisham had trained her to wound men and never to love them, and her indifference, I came to see, was not an insult but a sort of terrible, inherited blindness, which I pitied even as I suffered from it. On a tempestuous and gloomy night in my twenty-third year, I sat alone in my lodgings, listening to the gale rattle the shutters and the rain drum upon the glass, when I heard heavy footsteps laboring up the staircase, and a weathered stranger, who looked as though the sea and the sun had made him, stood in my doorway and held out both his hands to me.

It was the convict from the marshes, whom I had not seen in almost twenty years, and he was no beggar now. His name was Abel Magwitch, and he had been transported across the world to Australia, where he had labored and prospered through the long years, and he had never forgotten the shivering boy who gave him food and a file. He announced, with unspeakable

pride, that he had made my fortune, and that it was he, and not Miss Havisham, who had made me a gentleman. I was horrified. My illusion of the fairy godmother, and of Estella, collapsed in an instant, and I realized that every luxury I had enjoyed had been provided by a hunted criminal who would be executed if he were discovered on English soil. He had grown old and weathered by the sun and the sea, and there was something touching in the roughness of his hands, which trembled as they closed upon mine.

Yet I could not turn him away. He had endangered his life to return to England, merely to behold the gentleman whom he had created, and as I listened to his history I began to perceive how much sorrow lay behind his rough and uncultivated manner. I learned something else, which astonished me: Estella was his own daughter, though she did not know it, and she had been entrusted as an infant to Miss Havisham to be adopted and educated. Herbert and I resolved to help him escape from the country before he was recognized, and we devised a plan to row him down the River Thames to a steamer that was bound for Hamburg. Estella's own history, which Jaggers revealed with great reluctance, was that her mother had been a wild and unfortunate woman who had been acquitted of a terrible crime.

Before we left, I went to Satis House for the last time, and told Miss Havisham that Estella was about to marry a brutal man, and that I had never stopped loving her. She perceived, for the first time, what she had done to the child whom she had made so hard, for she had meant, in her bitterness, to teach Estella never to suffer as she herself had suffered, and she had succeeded only in making her unhappy. She fell upon her knees and begged for my forgiveness, crying out in anguish, "What have I done!" I forgave her freely, and I told her so. But as I left the room, a spark from the fire caught the old yellow dress, and she was wrapped in flames before I could smother them with my coat. She survived for some weeks, and in her last days she asked me to write beneath her name the words, "I forgive her."

On the appointed morning, we rowed down the river through the cold fog, with Magwitch wrapped in a heavy overcoat in the stern, and Herbert and I pulling steadily at the oars. The river seemed vast, and silent, and pitiless, and Magwitch gazed about him at it with a kind of calm, almost cheerful resignation. We were almost within reach of the steamer when a police boat shot suddenly out from the shore, and the officers seized him. In the struggle, his old enemy, who had betrayed him, fell overboard and was drowned, and Magwitch was dragged from the river badly hurt and carried to prison, where he lay too feeble to endure his trial. I visited him every day. In his last hours I told him that his daughter was alive, and a lady, and that I loved her, and he pressed my hand and died.

I was ill for many weeks afterward, and I was arrested for debt, and would have been utterly ruined. But through all my fever and my delirium, the figure that bent over my bed was Joe, who had traveled from the village to nurse me like a child, as he had once been so patient with me when I was a child. He had paid my debts, and when I was well, he left me quietly, with a note which said that I was well again, and would do better without him. I had been, I

now saw, a foolish and ungrateful creature, and I felt in every nerve of my body the shame of my past conduct, and I resolved to go to the forge at once and ask for his pardon. No humiliation could be too great, for I had at last perceived the vast difference between mere refinement and true nobility.

I hurried to the forge, and found Joe in his best clothes, standing in the kitchen with Biddy, for they had been married that very morning. I confessed everything, in the most abject humiliation, and I begged them both to forgive me, and I promised that I would repay every penny of Joe's money, and they pardoned me as simply as they would have pardoned a child. There was no anger in either of them, only love. Joe took my hand, as he had so often done when I was small, and asked me nothing at all, although his eyes were bright with a tenderness that he did not try to hide, and Biddy, standing beside him, smiled through her tears. I walked out through the village in the clear light, and for the first time since my childhood I felt that I had come home, and that no fortune could ever have been worth the loss of such a friend.

I went abroad to work with Herbert in a trading house in the East, and for eleven years I toiled honestly and became, at last, a partner, and in time I repaid every debt that I owed. When I returned to England, I visited the forge, where Joe and Biddy had a small son named Pip, in my honor, and I seated him upon my knee beside the cheerful fire, just as I had once sat beside Joe. Then I walked to the old garden of Satis House, which was empty now, with the house torn down and the ground bare, and there, in the evening mist, I saw a figure standing alone. It was Estella, who had been married unhappily and was now a widow. She was greatly changed, her arrogance softened and her eyes melancholy. She told me that suffering had taught her what my heart used to be, and I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place. In the broad expanse of tranquil light, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.

Questions

1. What did Pip bring to the frightened man on the marshes?

A. A file and food from the forge

B. A map and a coat

C. A pistol and a rope

2. Why had every clock in Satis House been stopped?

A. They were broken beyond repair

B. Miss Havisham was abandoned on her wedding morning and would not let time move on

C. Estella had been sent away

3. Who was Pip's secret benefactor?

A. Miss Havisham

B. The convict, Abel Magwitch

C. The lawyer, Mr. Jaggers

4. Why did Pip's feelings about Joe change after he came to London?

A. Joe asked him for money

B. He grew proud and ashamed of where he came from

C. Joe moved away

5. Estella is described as "haughty." What does haughty mean?

A. Proud and scornful

B. Kind and shy

C. Tired and ill

6. What does Pip's story suggest about what makes a person a true gentleman?

A. Wearing fine clothes

B. Kindness, loyalty and honesty, like Joe's

C. Having a great deal of money

Words to know

benefactor: secret giver
convict: jailed criminal
haughty: proud, scornful
apprentice: trainee
forgiveness: pardon

Answer key: Great Expectations

1. A. A file and food from the forge
2. B. Miss Havisham was abandoned on her wedding morning and would not let time move on
3. B. The convict, Abel Magwitch
4. B. He grew proud and ashamed of where he came from
5. A. Proud and scornful
6. B. Kindness, loyalty and honesty, like Joe's