



# The Strange Message

9 Herbert and I often rowed our boat on the river. I was still worried that someone was watching us, but I was never sure. We waited for a message from Wemmick to tell us that everything was safe. Then Abel and I could leave England.

One evening, we came home from the river. We were cold and tired and we needed to relax. We decided to have dinner and then go to the theatre. After dinner, we washed and changed and went out. The play was a comedy and the audience was noisy, as usual. All through the play, I knew there was someone behind me. He didn't laugh when everyone else laughed. He didn't clap\* when everyone else clapped. At the end of the play, I got up and looked behind me. The seat was empty. There was no-one there. Herbert and I went towards the door. Then I saw him. It was the *other* convict from the churchyard. It was Compeyson! I felt as cold as ice.

About a week later, Mr Jaggers invited me to have dinner with him. I wanted to say no, but Wemmick was invited too. I said yes.

I went to Mr Jaggers' office, as usual and then we all went to his house together. Dinner was ready soon after we arrived.

'Have you got Miss Havisham's message for Pip with you, Wemmick?' asked Mr Jaggers. 'Give it to him.'

*to clap* to make a noise by hitting your hands together

I took the message and read it.

*I want to see you, Pip. Please come as soon as you can.*

I decided to go the following day.

At dinner, Mr Jaggers talked a lot about Estella and the horrible Bentley Drummle. I felt uncomfortable and Mr Jaggers knew it. However, he went on and on. At one point, I became bored and I stopped listening to him. Molly, the housekeeper, was in the corner of the room and she looked sad. I looked at her. She reminded me of someone. She reminded me of Estella. Was she Estella's mother?

She left the room and only came back twice during the dinner. Each time I looked at her, and each time I saw how similar to Estella she was. I was right. She really was Estella's mother.

The dinner was quite boring. Wemmick and I left as soon as we could. On the walk home, I asked Wemmick about Molly.

'Tell me her story, will you? You know I won't tell anyone else about it. You know you can trust me.'

'Yes, that's true, Pip, I know I can. Well, I don't know all her story, but I'll tell you what I know. About twenty years ago, she was arrested for murder. They said she murdered another woman because she was jealous\*. There was a small child. They said she killed the child, too. Molly was a very beautiful woman and everybody talked about the murder. Mr Jaggers was her lawyer and he did a very good job. She was innocent\*, they said. Mr Jaggers was quite young then and not many people knew him. It made him famous. After that he got lots of clients. Nobody knows for certain, but I believe she is a murderer. 'Immediately after the trial\*, she went to work for Mr Jaggers. Nobody knows what happened to the child.'

*jealous* unhappy because someone has something and you want it

*innocent* (here) didn't do the crime

*trial* a legal process to decide if someone did something wrong or not



'Was the child a girl or a boy?'  
A girl. That's all I know about Molly's story.'



The next day, I put Miss Havisham's message in my pocket and took the coach. I got off the coach and walked to Satis House.

The servant opened the gate for me and I went up to Miss Havisham's room.

'Who is it?' she said, as I went in.

'It's me, Pip. I got your message from Mr Jaggers yesterday. I came immediately.'

'Thank you. Thank you,' she said as she looked up.

She looked tired and sad. She also looked a little afraid. 'I want to show you, Pip, that I'm not all bad. Perhaps you won't ever believe me now, but I want to try to show you.'

I took her hand and it made her feel better.

'I know you want to help your friend, Herbert. Tell me. What can I do to help him? I very much want to try.'

'He needs nine hundred pounds, to help him with his business. I can help him with some of it, but I don't have enough to give him all he needs.'

'Then I'll give it to him. I'll write a message for Mr Jaggers and you can take it to him when you return to London. But, what about you, Pip? Is there anything I can do for you?'

She looked kind when she asked.

'Thank you for asking and thank you for the way you asked. But, yes. Perhaps there's one thing you *can* do. Tell me about Estella. When did she come here? Who are her parents?'

'I don't know exactly when she came here. You know what time the clocks say here, so I don't know. It was two or three years after my wedding day. I asked Mr Jaggers to find me an orphan child to help me feel better. I don't know who her parents were, but Mr Jaggers found her for me. She came here when she was two or three years old.

'What have I done? Oh, what have I done? Can you ever forgive\* me, Pip, for what I did to Estella and to you? Can you, Pip?'

Miss Havisham's face was soft and sad.

'Of course I can forgive you. Of course I can,' I said gently.

'Oh, what have I done?' she cried over and over, forty or fifty times.

'But, Miss Havisham, don't cry about what you have done, because there is something you can do. You have put ice in Estella's heart. Perhaps you can start to make her heart softer. Make Estella start to feel. Make Estella soft. That's what you can do.'

I went downstairs and out into the evening air. I walked around the gardens for a short time. I had a feeling that this was my last visit to Satis House. The place was sad and lonely. I felt strange and a little afraid. Suddenly, I felt cold. I was worried about Miss Havisham. Was she all right? Perhaps I should check. I decided not to. I walked back towards the gate. I looked up at Miss Havisham's window for the last time. I could see her in the candlelight\*, sitting in her chair by the fire. She was there, in her usual place. Suddenly, I saw the fire jump up around her. She too, jumped up and ran towards the window. Her clothes were on fire! Miss Havisham was on fire! I ran up the stairs as fast as I could. I took off my coat and covered her with it. I tried to stop the fire. She was screaming\* and shouting all the time. The fire finally stopped. The servants came running in. I told one of them to get the doctor. Then I looked down at my hands. They didn't hurt

**to forgive** to say you will not be angry any more about something someone has done to you

**candlelight** the light from a candle  
**to scream** to shout because you are afraid or in pain



and I didn't remember burning\* them. I was surprised to see that they were burnt.

The doctor came and told the servants to make Miss Havisham a bed on the long table.

I asked about Estella and the servants said she was in Paris. The doctor promised to write to her immediately.

I stayed with Miss Havisham for the rest of the night. She kept saying over and over again, 'What have I done? Please forgive me.'

Every two or three hours, one of the servants came to put new cooling\* liquid and bandages\* on my burnt hands and arm.

When morning came, I kissed Miss Havisham gently on the cheek, to say goodbye and I took the coach back to London.



My hands were quite badly burnt and my left arm was badly burnt too. The doctor came to see me and left more cooling liquid for them. It was important to make them better as quickly as possible. At the moment, I couldn't row the boat with Herbert and Abel Magwitch, so Abel couldn't leave the country. Herbert knew it was important too. He was an excellent nurse. Every few hours, he woke me up. He put new bandages into the cooling liquid, took off my old bandages and put on new ones. Then he left me on the sofa to try and sleep.

It was very difficult. I closed my eyes but I just saw the picture of Miss Havisham and the fire. My hands and arm hurt a lot. It was difficult for me to sleep. Herbert was very good. He came to talk to me, to stop me thinking and to stop my arm from hurting.

'Come on Herbert. Tell me about Abel. That'll help me to stop thinking. How is he?'



'I stayed with him for about two hours last night. I think he's getting softer and kinder. I like him.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I thought the same the last time I saw him.'

'You did, Pip. You did. Well, he told me more about his life, too.

Do you remember he told us about a woman he had some problems with?'

'I do, but he didn't finish his story. Did he tell you more about her?'

'It seems the problem he had with her was murder, Pip! Yes, murder! She was Mr Jaggers' client. That was when Abel first met Mr Jaggers. And the woman was set free\*. But that's not all. There's a blacker side to the story.'

'What else, Herbert? Tell me, what else is there?'

'It seems that Abel and the woman had a child. A little girl. Abel loved her very much. The woman came to him after her trial. 'I'll kill the girl,' she said.

She went away and Abel never saw her, or the child, again.'

I couldn't believe my ears. If Abel's story was true, then I knew all about this child. 'Herbert, please believe me. I'm not mad. Please believe me.'

'I believe you, Pip. Of course I do.'

'I know all about this child, Herbert. The child is Estella. Abel is Estella's father!'



I needed to find out more about Abel Magwitch's story and I decided to visit Mr Jaggers as soon as my hands were better. But, before I had the chance to see him, a letter arrived.

*If you aren't afraid to come to the marshes tonight or tomorrow night*

**to burn** (here) to hurt yourself with fire

**cooling** it makes something cold

**bandage** something that you use to cover a cut or a burn

**to set someone free** to let someone leave prison



*at nine, I'll tell you some information about Abel Magwitch. Come to the old farmhouse on the marsh. Don't tell anyone about it. Come alone and bring this letter with you.*

There was no name.

I decided to go to the marshes that night. I left Herbert a message.

*I'm going to see Miss Havisham. I'll be back tomorrow.*

I took the afternoon coach. When I arrived, I went to Satis House to ask about Miss Havisham. She was still ill, very ill, but everyone said she was a little better than before.

When it was nearly nine o'clock, I went to the marshes. It was dark and raining. When I arrived at the farmhouse, I looked for the letter in my pocket, but I couldn't find it. I went inside and saw a candle on the table. 'Hello. Is there anyone there?' I shouted, but there was no answer.

I looked at the time and realized it was a little after nine. Perhaps I was too late. So I decided to leave and try again the following night. I turned towards the door. Suddenly, I heard a noise and the candle went out\*. I couldn't see anything, but I felt a strong hand around my neck. I couldn't fight properly because my hands still hurt too much. It was easy for my attacker\*. He threw me on the floor and tied my hands. They hurt terribly. A few moments later, my attacker went to light the candle. Then I saw him. It was Orlick. He had a hammer in his hand.

'I'm going to kill you,' he said.

**to go out** (there) to stop giving light

**attacker** a person who hits or hurts someone else

