The First Stage of Pip's Expectations

Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* opens as seven-year-old Philip Pirrip, known as "Pip," visits the graves of his parents down in the marshes near his home on Christmas Eve. Here he encounters a threatening escaped convict, who frightens Pip and makes him promise to steal food and a file for him. Pip steals some food from his brother-in-law, the blacksmith, Joe Gargery, and his cruel sister "Mrs. Joe," with whom he lives, and takes it to the convict the next day. The convict is soon caught and returned to the "Hulks," the prison ships from which he had escaped.

Pip is invited to visit the wealthy Miss Havisham, and to play with her adopted daughter, Estella. Miss Havisham lives in the gloomy Satis House, and Pip discovers her to be an extremely eccentric woman. Having been abandoned on her wedding day many years earlier, Miss Havisham has never changed out of her wedding dress since that time, and nothing in the house, including the rotting wedding cake covered with spider webs, has been touched since she discovered that her fiancé had left her and had cheated her out of a great deal of money. Miss Havisham has raised Estella to be a cold and heartless woman who will avenge her adopted mother by breaking the hearts of men.

Pip continues to visit Satis House to play with Estella, and he begins to fall in love with her, despite the fact that she is rude and condescending to him. Because of Miss Havisham's interest in him, Pip's family and friends speculate on his future prospects, and Pip attempts to improve those prospects by asking his friend, the orphaned Biddy, to tutor him. Eventually, Miss Havisham gives Pip some money, tells him his services are no longer needed, and that it is time for him to be apprenticed to his brother-in-law, Joe. Pip is disappointed.