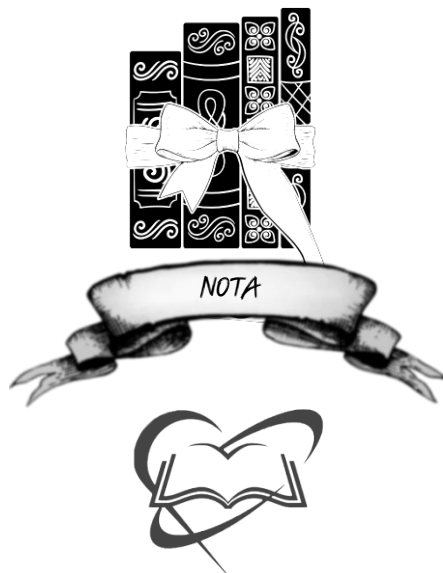


DAVID
COPPERFIELD

Title : David Copperfield
Author : CHARLES DICKENS



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David Copperfield

Charles Dickens

Analysis of Charles Dickens's David Copperfield

In his novel *David Copperfield*, Charles Dickens produced his own favorite work and the favorite of many of his readers. He had honed his style through previous novels, and *David Copperfield* reflects his mature skill, partially accounting for the novel's enduring popularity. In addition, the main character breathes a special life into the novel through first-person point-of-view narration, thanks to a suggestion by Dickens's friend and biographer John Forster. David's perspective delivers naive honesty to the novel's early narrative, something lacking in Dickens's previous books. The novel's autobiographical aspects also add a sincerity and

emotional strength to the narrative, which endears its main character to readers.

Dickens based Mr. and Mrs. Micawber on his own parents, with Micawber's stint in debtors' prison mirroring that of John Dickens. The Micawbers are generally considered the epitome of Dickens's comic characters by virtue of their vitality, seen in Mr. Micawber's imagination and Mrs. Micawber's awareness of her life's tragic-comedic dimensions. Through the novel, Dickens adopts an ironic attitude toward his parents, who, although unable to make a stable life for their family, remained interesting figures for whom he had more compassion as he matured.

David's experience in the wine warehouse exactly matches Dickens's in a blacking warehouse pasting labels on bottles, in an attempt

to support his family. David works as a court reporter for a time, as did Dickens, who, like David, also served as a clerk in a law office. Dickens's first love has been described as a frivolous girl, much like David's first wife, the beautiful but simple Dora Spenlow.

The story appeared in installments between May of 1849 and November of 1850 as *The Personal History, Experience and Observations of David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone Rookery, Which He Never Meant to Be Published on Any Account*. It received immediate positive criticism. William Makepeace Thackeray famously declared on May 4, 1849, after reading the first installment, "Bravo, Dickens," and a piece in the June 1870 edition of *Blackwood's Edinburgh*

Magazine declared *David Copperfield* the Dickens novel in which readers would take the most satisfaction. The novel never lost its popular status both as a novel read for pleasure and studied academically, and in multiple theatrical and screen versions. In the 20th century, it became available in electronic text.

The story begins with David's statement, "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life [. . .] these pages must show." His desire to tell the truth and reflect the life he considers lived in accordance with an ethical code immediately commends him to the reader. What follows is the typical parade of Dickensian characters, all of whom have an effect on the narrator/protagonist. Prior to David's birth, his mother was visited by his eccentric Great Aunt

Betsey Trotwood, who had loved David's father but refused to see him following his marriage to David's mother, a woman she labeled "a wax doll." She declares that she expects the baby will be a girl, and when David is born, she becomes disgusted and stomps out of the house, "like a discontented fairy," never to return.

Raised for his first few years by his widowed mother with the help of his loving nurse, Peggotty, David enjoys a happy childhood. One important episode in that early contentment involves David's visit to the home of Peggotty and her brother, Mr. Peggotty, who live in the hulk of an old ship near the ocean. The family also includes Ham and Little Em'ly, both orphans and relatives that the Peggotts take in to raise. David falls in love with Em'ly, although it soon

becomes clear that Ham intends to marry her. When Em'ly plays a risky stunt, balancing on a timber over the ocean and commenting on the death of her family members at sea, Dickens warns the reader through foreshadowing that death at sea for someone looms in Em'ly's future.

David's brief period of happiness concludes when his mother marries his cruel stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, his symbolic name suggesting a combination of murder and stone, who brings his equally cruel sister to live at David's house. After abusing David, Murdstone decides to send him to Salem House Academy, operated by another bully, headmaster Creakle. David's experiences there are not all negative, as he becomes friends with the older James Steerforth, a young man

whose spirit David finds alluring. He also finds a friend in the less colorful but steady student, Tommy Traddles. David's mother dies, her spirit murdered by her husband and sister-in-law, causing David profound grief when he receives the news on his 10th birthday. Murdstone has him dismissed from school and sent to work in a wine warehouse. The Micawber family with whom he boards provides the only light in his dark existence. Profligate to a fault, Mr. Wilkins Micawber nevertheless cheers David with his kind nature, and David becomes a favorite. Micawber's financial situation becomes so grave that he faces debtors' prison.

Even the cheer of the Micawbers cannot improve the horrible work conditions of the warehouse, and in desperation, David sets out to

Dover to find his Aunt Betsey. After several adventures, he arrives at Betsey's house and soon convinces her to allow him to stay. She contacts Mr. Murdstone against David's wishes, and he arrives to testify against David's character, but angers Aunt Betsey by driving his donkey across her front yard. She astounds him by delivering a sermon against his mistreatment of David's mother, and then asks David whether he wants to return home. He chooses to remain with her, and she fondly refers to him as "Trot," short for her own surname, and his life greatly improves as his aunt formally adopts him. He enjoys school at Dr. Strong's in Canterbury, living there with his aunt's lawyer, Mr. Wickfield, who consumes what seems to David an excess of wine. He meets Wickfield's daughter, Agnes, and one of the most

famous fictional villains, Wickfield's sickly, pale law clerk, Uriah Heep. Ingratiating and pandering, Uriah constantly declares himself "too umble" (meaning "humble") to participate in activities with those better than he, a declaration that serves as part of his manipulating front. He horrifies David with a clammy handshake David describes as "as ghostly to the touch as to the sight," adding that he had to rub his hand "to warm it, and to rub his off." The scene foreshadows Uriah's "touching" all those important to David with financial and emotional ruin.

David develops an easy friendship with Agnes, admitting to himself that although he loves Em'ly, Agnes provides a peace for which he longs. Wickfield gradually seems to lose control

of his law practice and his life, and Agnes eventually turns to David for help. Steerforth resurfaces and joins David in a visit to the Pegottys, where he meets and decides he must possess Em'ly, although she has officially become engaged to Ham. David also learns that a mysterious man has been bothering Aunt Betsey, and that Micawber had made the acquaintance of Heep, who favorably impressed Micawber.

David decides to serve as a proctor in Doctor's Commons for the law firm of Spenlow and Jorkins. He enjoys the post, but is lonely and wants to see Steerforth again. He enjoys a night out with friends, but embarrasses himself before Agnes by making a drunken public appearance. This humorous scene helps to round David's character, exposing a weakness, but making light

of an incident that caused no one any damage. Embarrassed the next day, David wonders how to repair his reputation with Agnes. He understands that she does not bear a grudge when he receives her note, asking him to visit. Grateful for her forgiveness, David refers to Agnes as his “good angel.” That imagery promotes Agnes as a figure who will always serve David in a protective manner, regardless of his actions.

Agnes expresses concern about her father and Heep’s manipulative ways, and the news that he will soon become a partner in the firm shocks David. However, even more shocking to him is Agnes’s warning that Steerforth is David’s “bad angel.” She knows of his reputation for promoting a false sense of goodwill. David does not believe her, but remains troubled by the

warning. Dickens increases foreshadowing of a dark end for Steerforth when his image in David's mind "darkens." When David attends a party the next day, Heep haunts the room. Dickens's choice of terms, such as "writhe" and "snaky undulations" to describe Heep's movements, leave no doubt as to his suspicious character. However, David is distracted when he meets his old classmate, Traddles. Traddles becomes the focus of one of the many subplots that Dickens weaves into the main story. His engagement to marry delights David, as does David's discovery that he works at a publishing firm and boards with Micawber, who is at work in the "corn business" while waiting for something to "turn up." David also continues contact with Steerforth, whose mysterious

behavior heightens David's suspicions about his one-time mentor. David learns that Steerforth has been secretly courting Em'ly, and when they run away, devastating the Peggotts and especially breaking the kind Ham's heart, David feels guilty for having introduced Steerforth to the family.

As David continues to work hard, he falls in love with Spenlow's pretty but nonintellectual daughter Dora. Agnes tries gently to reveal Dora's shortcomings to David, as does his Aunt Betsey, who, due to the loss of her income, which she blames on Wickfield, has moved in with David. David also discovers from Traddles that Micawber has changed his name to Mortimer and assumed a disguise in order to escape his creditors. In the middle of trying to help others with their problems, David marries Dora

following her father's death. Too late, he discovers he has a child bride, one incapable of caring for either herself or her household. Despite her helplessness and tendency to overspend David's small income, David remains devoted to Dora, who seems to hold her dog Jip in higher esteem than her husband. Aunt Betsey refuses to explain housekeeping responsibilities to Dora, gently explaining to David that she lacks the capacity to understand. David embarks on a writing career, with which Dora helps by holding the pen for him. During this time, Wickfield appears to sink into madness, as Heep begins to take control of his practice and makes clear his intention to marry Agnes, who has become close friends with Aunt Betsey.

As the rising action advances, Aunt Betsey stuns David by revealing her mysterious visitor is her husband, a man she has not lived with for some years due to his gambling. Even Aunt Betsey has her faults, as she continues to support her immoral husband. A year and a half after his marriage, David enjoys the positive reception of his first novel, and delights in the news of Dora's pregnancy. He hopes the child will bring stability to a marriage that has remained rocky, not due to a lack of love, but to the constant household disorganization. David thinks of Dora and her nickname, used even by Aunt Betsey, of "Blossom," and admits that his blossom seems to have "withered in its bloom upon the tree!" This foreshadows the deaths of both the baby and Dora. David takes comfort in his love for his aunt

and his friendship with Agnes. He becomes immediately involved with Micawber, who now works for Heep and has discovered his villainous qualities; he feels that he can reveal Heep's fraudulent activity and asks for David's and Tommy Traddles's help. In addition, Em'ly is discovered in London and reunited with her aunt and uncle. A comic scene follows in Wickfield's office, now Heep's, when Micawber reveals the truth about him. He will go to prison, and his victims, including Aunt Betsey, will receive refunds of a portion of their losses, and Agnes no longer has to worry about marrying the despicable Heep. Micawber sees an opportunity to begin a new life in Australia, where Mr. Peggotty intends to move with the disgraced

Em'ly, and Aunt Betsey's wayward husband dies, freeing her of that burden.

More tragedy must strike before Dickens can conclude his plot. In a storm at seaside, Ham dies in an effort to rescue Steerforth, and David realizes he still loved his friend, despite his weaknesses. He decides to go abroad in an attempt to begin a new life. Gone for several years as he works through his guilt, he publishes and becomes a well-known fiction writer. Agnes continues a correspondence with David, and the two at last marry. In a final statement 10 years following his marriage, David fills in details of the surviving characters for readers and declares himself nothing without the presence of Agnes, whom he compares to "a heavenly light."

David Copperfield did not crusade against as many issues or with the ferocity that Dickens's previous novels had. Rather, Dickens focuses on social prejudice and opportunism, two factors that his own family had confronted, mirrored particularly in the situation of Micawber, whose able mind, crippled by a lack of practicality, dooms him. Dickens writes in his preface to later editions of *David Copperfield* that the novel so interested him that he regretted at its conclusion "separation from many companions." When he confesses his sorrow at having to lay down his pen "at the close of a two-years' imaginative task," and describes his feeling of "dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world," readers centuries later can relate to the regret of concluding the reading of a near-perfect novel,

which likely represented Dickens's own life history.

Charles Dickens

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Sweet
Cherry



DAVID GOES TO SCHOOL

David Copperfield never met his father. He died six months before David was born.

Clara, his mother, missed her husband a lot. She had not been expecting to bring David up alone.



Clara and her son lived in a small village in Suffolk. They were lucky to have a kind and helpful servant-girl in the house. She was also called Clara, just like David's mother. For this reason, everyone called her by her surname, which was Peggotty.



When David was a few years old, a handsome but rather stern man began to visit the house, to see his mother. His name was Mr Murdstone. David didn't like him very much.

One day, Peggotty told David that she was going to take him to see her brother. She said that he lived in the seaside town of Yarmouth, but they did not stop in the town. Instead, they walked past boatbuilders and ropemakers and soon found themselves by the shore.

'There's my brother's home, Davy,' said Peggotty.

David couldn't see anything except the silver line of the sea in the distance and what looked like a large, upsidedown wooden boat.



As they drew nearer to the boat, David saw an iron chimney sticking out of the top of it. Smoke was puffing gently out. The boat also had a neat doorway with a porch and some windows cut in the sides.

Inside it was beautifully clean, snug and warm. David and Peggotty were welcomed by her brother. They stayed in the upside-down boat for two weeks. It was the first holiday David had ever been on. He loved every minute of it.



On the return home, Peggotty put her arm on David's shoulder as they reached the garden gate. She looked nervous.

'Peggotty,' said David. 'What's the matter?'



‘Nothing’s the matter. Bless you, Master Davy,’ she answered.

Why hadn’t David’s mother come to meet them at the garden gate, as she usually did? David decided to ask.

‘Something is the matter, I’m sure,’ he said. ‘Where’s Mama?’

‘Well, dear, I really should have told you before now,’ said Peggotty.

‘Told me what, Peggotty?’ said David. He was a little frightened now.

‘You have got a pa! A new one. Come and see him.’

‘I don’t want to see him,’ David replied.

But David didn’t have a choice. Peggotty took him straight to the sitting room. On one side of the fire sat his mother. On the other

side was Mr Murdstone – his new *pa*.



David was not pleased that Edward Murdstone was now his stepfather. There was somehow less space for him in the house now. But at least David was still able to read. Whenever he was unhappy, he would escape inside the pages of a book.

In those days, children often started their education at home. Mr Murdstone was determined that David should learn things properly. He made David read long pages from his schoolbooks then recite them from memory. If David couldn't, he would pay for it.



Once, David had to memorise a history lesson. Taking his history book, his mother tested him. Mr Murdstone sat in a corner, pretending to read. Really, he was listening and watching.



First, David mixed up the names of a couple of dead kings.
Mr Murdstone looked up.
Then David could not recall the date of a battle.



His mother would have given him the answer if she dared.
Instead, she said softly: 'Oh, Davy, Davy!'

'Now, Clara,' said her husband. 'Be firm with the boy. Don't say, "Oh, Davy, Davy!" That's childish. Either he knows his lesson or he

does not know it.'

'Davy, try once more, please,' said his mother.

But the more David tried, the more confused he got. His mother mouthed the date at him. Mr Murdstone spotted her and said in a deep warning voice: 'Clara!'

Mr Murdstone rose from his chair, took the history book from David's mother and threw it at the boy.

Worse was to follow.

David failed again and again at these tests. Finally, after another bad lesson, his stepfather decided to beat the knowledge into him.

Mr Murdstone held David's head still with one hand and raised a cane in the other, ready to hit him. David twisted and caught the hand that was holding him in his mouth. He bit down hard on Mr Murdstone's hand.



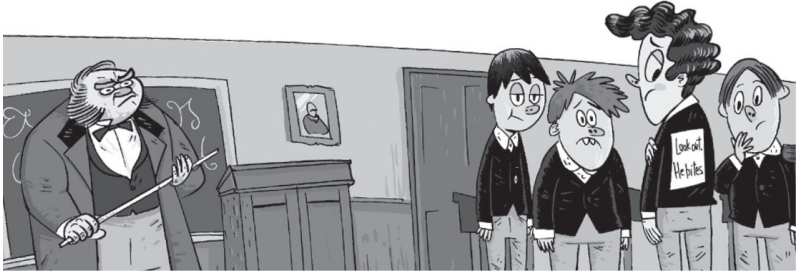
Furious, Mr Murdstone hit David even harder. After he had finished beating him, Mr Murdstone locked David up in his room. For five long days, he saw nothing but the walls of his bedroom. He worried about what would happen. David had never hurt anyone before. And he'd certainly never bitten anyone. Was he going to be sent to jail? On the sixth day, he found out that he would be sent away to school. That was bad enough. Even worse, his mother also believed that David was a wicked boy. Everyone thought it was best that he should leave home.



He was taken by coach to London. There, he was collected by a schoolmaster from Salem House, his new school.

Salem House was a cold, hard place. The headmaster was called Mr Creakle and he loved punishing the boys. He would hit them

with a ruler or a cane if they got even the smallest thing wrong.



To add to David's misery, he was made to wear a sign on his back. The sign said: "Look out. He bites".

David Copperfield was being treated like a bad dog.

David worried what people might think, but, thankfully, he did make friends at school. He had always liked reading. At Salem House he retold stories that he'd read at home. The other boys loved to listen.

In time came the terrible news that Clara, David's mother, had died. When he returned home for the funeral, the only person to comfort him was Peggotty.



But now that Mrs Copperfield was dead, Mr Murdstone got rid of Peggotty. She went to live with her brother in his upside-down boathouse, in Yarmouth.

It seemed Mr Murdstone planned to get rid of David too. Not by sending him back to school, which cost money, but by sending him out to work.

DAVID GOES TO WORK

David Copperfield was now twelve years old. His stepfather had a business that provided wine for ships that sailed from the London docks. David worked in the warehouse. He had to rinse out the empty bottles so they could be reused.



It was dull, lonely work. David thought about the friends he had made at school. Now he was living with a family called the Micawbers. Mr Micawber was a large man with a head as bald and round as an egg. His wife was very thin, and they had four young children.



The Micawbers were very poor so they were glad to have David as a paying guest in their shabby house. Mr Micawber was always waiting for the family's luck to improve, but it never did.

Mr Micawber was hopeless at managing money. But he was kind to David. He was almost like a father to him.



One day, the Micawbers decided to move out of London. They were going to Plymouth, where Mrs Micawber came from. They were hoping that the family's luck would be better there.

The only friends David had in London were leaving. He still hated washing bottles, so he decided that he would leave the city, too.

David remembered that his real father had an aunt called Betsey Trotwood. Perhaps *she* would take him in if he ran away.

But where did she live?

David wrote a letter to Peggotty. She replied and told him that Miss Betsey lived in Dover.

David set off from London. He didn't have much money. He was forced to sell his waistcoat and then his jacket on the way to buy some food and drink. Luckily it was summer, so he could sleep outside without getting too cold.



After many days of travelling, David reached Dover. He had to ask several people where Miss Betsey Trotwood lived before being directed to a neat little cottage facing the sea.



As he stood outside the garden gate, David knew what a sight he must look. His shoes had fallen apart after miles of walking. His shirt and trousers were stained with grass and mud from sleeping outdoors. He was covered from head to foot in dust from the roads.

A woman came out of the house. She was wearing gardening gloves and carrying a knife. She noticed David by the gate.

‘Go away! No boys here.’

She crouched down to dig up a weed with the knife.

With his heart in his mouth, David crept into the garden. He stood beside her, and touched her with his finger.

‘If you please, ma’am—’

She jumped in surprise and looked up.

‘If you please, Aunt, I am your great-nephew.’



‘Oh Lord!’ said Betsey Trotwood. She sat down on the garden path.



Aunt Betsey may have looked fierce but she had a kind heart. Even so, David was worried. His aunt had written to Mr Murdstone. Now his stepfather knew where he was!

Sure enough, within a few days, Mr Murdstone arrived at the neat little cottage that faced the sea. His body blocked the front door.

‘He disgraced himself by running away from his workplace, Miss Trotwood,’ said Mr Murdstone. ‘I am here to take him back.’



‘And what does the boy say?’ said David’s aunt. ‘Do you want to go back, David?’

David pleaded with Aunt Betsey not to send him back to the bottle-washing warehouse.

‘There, you have your answer, Mr Murdstone,’ Betsey replied.

Mr Murdstone looked angry. ‘Very well, I wash my hands of the boy,’ he said, turning and stalking away from the cottage.



DAVID GOES BACK TO SCHOOL

Betsey Trotwood adopted David Copperfield. David went to a new school, near Canterbury Cathedral. This was a much better place than Salem House.

While he was at the new school, David lived at Betsey's friend's house. He was a lawyer called Mr Wickfield. The lawyer had a daughter called Agnes, who took care of her father's house. She had been looking after her father since her mother had died.



The lawyer also had an assistant. He was fifteen years old, and his name was Uriah Heep. He helped Mr Wickfield with everything. He even looked after Aunt Betsey's grey pony when she rode over in her carriage to visit.



David was struck by Uriah's strange looks. He was as thin as a skeleton, with a pinched face and bony arms and legs. The red hair on his head was cut close as stubble.

Uriah often referred to himself as being 'umble – he meant 'humble' – and talked about how good and kind people like Mr Wickfield were to him. But something about the way he talked made David think he was hiding something.

Sometimes Uriah pretended to be impressed by something David said and wrote it down in a little black notebook he carried.

Uriah lived with his mother. He begged David to visit his home for tea. Old Mrs Heep looked like Uriah. She liked to say she was 'umble, too. But David felt they were both trying to find out things about him.



David was glad to leave the Heeps' 'umble house. As he was stepping into the street, he was amazed to hear someone say: 'David Copperfield! Is it possible?'

It was Mr Micawber. Now, David was delighted to see *him*.

The Micawbers hadn't been lucky in Plymouth and now the family were hoping for more luck in Canterbury. They weren't lucky there either and the Micawbers were soon on their way once more. But David was glad see his dear friends again.





The years passed. For the first time in his life, David enjoyed school. He and Agnes Wickfield grew closer, until they were best friends. Agnes told David that she was worried about her father, who seemed to be drinking too much. She was also afraid that Uriah Heep had too much influence over him.

Her fears were all too true.

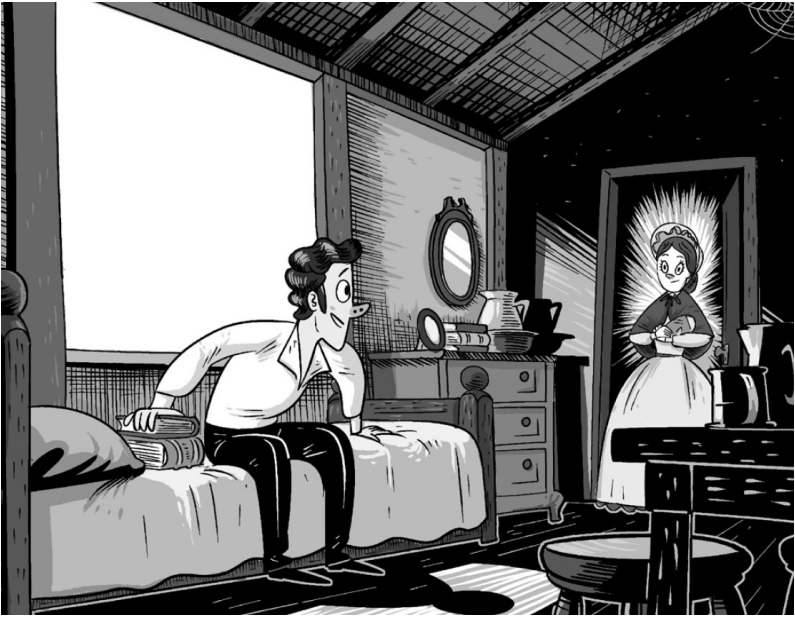


DAVID GOES TO LONDON

Aunt Betsey suggested that David could become a lawyer. She offered to introduce him to a lawyer in London.

David wasn't sure about this plan, but he didn't have any other ideas and he wanted to please Aunt Betsey.

He started work as a clerk at a firm near St Paul's Cathedral. His aunt was paying for him to learn this new profession. He lived in a dark little flat at the top of an old house. Agnes Wickfield came to visit him – she was like a ray of sunshine in his gloomy lodgings.



A much less welcome visitor was Uriah Heep.

Uriah said he was very 'umbléd to be in David's new home. But he had really come to talk about the Wickfields.

'Mr Wickfield,' said Uriah, 'has been very unwise and very careless.'

Uriah pretended to sound sorry about this but, really, he couldn't hide how happy he was.

David thought of what Agnes had said about her father. Mr Wickfield was a good man but he was quite old and he drank too much.

'Anybody else except a low and 'umble person like me,' continued Uriah, 'would have Mr Wickfield under their thumb by now.'

Uriah Heep reached out his bony hand and pressed down hard on the table with his thumb.



Then he continued, 'Master Copperfield, can I trust you to keep a secret?'

David was afraid of what Uriah was going to say next.

'I have always worshipped the ground Miss Agnes Wickfield walks on,' said Uriah. 'She is very close to her father and I believe one day she'll be close to me. She'll be as 'umble as I am.'

It was plain to David that Uriah was using his influence over Mr Wickfield to get to Agnes. It sounded as though he was planning to marry her. In fact, he already called her 'my Agnes', as if everything was fixed and settled.

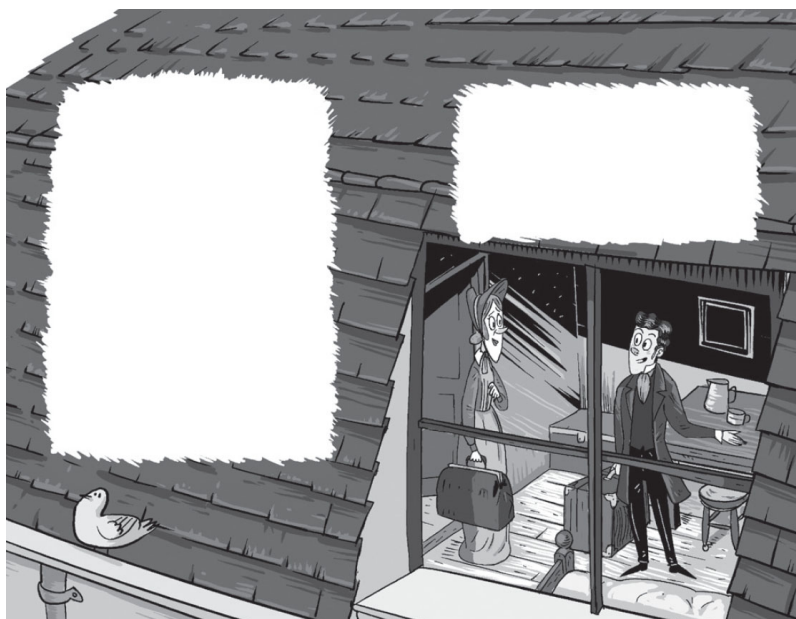
David wanted to hit Uriah, but he controlled himself. He simply nodded his head and shook his hand to say goodbye. Uriah's hand was as damp and slimy as a frog's.



DAVID'S LIFE CHANGES

David's life changed when Betsey Trotwood lost almost all of her money. She said it was because she had made some bad decisions. But David knew that Mr Wickfield advised his aunt about money. He wondered if it was really Mr Wickfield who had been unwise. Aunt Betsey was much too kind to blame anyone else for her bad luck.

Betsey was forced to leave her little cottage by the sea. She came to share David's flat in London.



He was glad to be able to return some of the kindness that his aunt had shown to him.

Even so, David could not continue working as a lawyer's clerk.

David had always loved reading. Ever since he was a young boy he'd escaped into the pages of a book to avoid his troubles. At Salem House, he'd even made friends by telling them the stories he'd read at home.

Now, David began to write. This time he was not copying other people's words out of legal documents. He was writing for himself. His own words, his own stories. He sent these stories to magazines. Some of them were published, and David started to make some money. He only earned a small amount to begin with. But it was enough to give him hope for the future.



Meanwhile, Uriah Heep was worming his way further into Mr Wickfield's law business. Now they were partners: Wickfield and Heep.

Mr Wickfield would always tell David how grateful he was to have Uriah as a partner. But David heard how dull and flat the old man's voice was when he said this. He noticed too how Uriah encouraged Mr Wickfield to drink more than was good for him. Agnes was

powerless to stop Uriah. She saw how her father seemed to be under his spell.



Uriah and his mother moved in to share the Wickfields' house. When David went to visit, he thought they were like two giant vampire bats hanging over the place.

On the other hand, David was happy to see Mr Micawber once again in Canterbury. Luck had finally found them.

The good news was that Mr Micawber was now employed as a clerk in a law firm. The less good news was that he was working for Wickfield and Heep.

Mr Micawber kept his feelings to himself, but David didn't think his friend liked Uriah Heep at all. In fact, David thought Mr Micawber seemed very unhappy indeed. Mr Micawber couldn't say anything, of course, because he and his family needed the wages that Uriah paid him.



One moonlit evening, David was walking in the countryside just outside Canterbury. He had just published a book, and it was doing very well. People were starting to talk about him.





Uriah caught up with David as he was walking. He squeezed David's hand with his damp, sweaty fingers.

'I am pleased to see you, Master Copperfield,' he began.

David said nothing.

'I am very 'umble at the present moment, Master Copperfield, especially to someone like your good self who has been such a success as a writer.' Uriah paused. 'I am very 'umble at the present moment, but I've got a little power!' he continued.

David knew Uriah was talking about the power he had over Mr Wickfield, Mr Micawber, Agnes, and probably others, too.

David glanced at Uriah's face in the moonlight. It looked like a fox's: sharp and cunning, with glinting eyes.

David knew in that moment that Uriah would never use his power to do good. Uriah would not be happy until he destroyed Mr

Wickfield and had Agnes for himself.



URIAH HEEP IS UNMASKED

David received a letter from Mr Micawber. It asked David and his aunt Betsey to meet him in Canterbury in a few days' time. The letter spoke of fraud and lies, and all sorts of horrible things. It also mentioned Uriah Heep. David wasn't sure what Mr Micawber meant, but it was obvious that his friend was very upset about something.



David and his aunt arrived at Wickfield and Heep's office. Mr Micawber pretended to be surprised at their arrival.



‘Is Mr Wickfield at home?’ asked David.

‘He is ill in bed,’ said Mr Micawber, ‘but Miss Agnes will be pleased to see you. I will announce your arrival to Uriah Heep.’

Mr Micawber could hardly bring himself to say Uriah’s name.

He flung open a door to a neighbouring room and announced in a booming voice: ‘Miss Trotwood and Mr David Copperfield.’



Uriah Heep was writing at a desk. He was sitting in Mr Wickfield's chair. He looked up.

'Well,' he said, 'this is indeed an unexpected pleasure.'

Uriah rubbed his bony chin with his hand. He had a suspicious look on his face.

'Things have changed in this office, haven't they, Miss Trotwood, since I was an 'umble clerk, and held your pony?' said Uriah. He made a sickly smile.

'Things may be changed, but you are the same person you always were, Mr Heep,' said Aunt Betsey.

Uriah didn't know what to make of this. Was it a compliment?



Or an insult? Mr Micawber was standing in the doorway.

‘Don’t wait, Micawber,’ said Uriah.

Mr Micawber didn’t move.



‘What are you waiting for?’ said Uriah impatiently. ‘Micawber! Did you hear me tell you *not* to wait?’

‘Yes,’ replied Mr Micawber, still not moving.

‘Then why *do* you wait?’ said Uriah.

‘Because I choose to wait,’ replied Mr. Micawber.

‘If you don’t do as I say, I’ll have to get rid of you,’ said Uriah. ‘I am your employer, you know, Micawber.’

‘No, you are a dishonest man and a villain,’ said Mr Micawber.

The words burst out of Mr Micawber. David could tell that he had been itching to say this for a while now.

Uriah rose from Mr Wickfield’s seat. He writhed like a snake. By now Agnes Wickfield had appeared.

Mrs Heep entered the room. She was about to speak but Uriah said sharply, ‘Hold your tongue, mother. I shall deal with these people.’

Uriah’s little eyes darted from David to Aunt Betsey, to Mr Micawber, and finally to Agnes. Mr Micawber produced several sheets of paper from his pocket.



'Here is a list of your crimes, Heep, you scoundrel—' Uriah made to grab the papers. But Mr Micawber snatched up a ruler from the desk and hit his hand away. It sounded as if the ruler had fallen on wood.



Mr Micawber read aloud.

'Uriah Heep, I accuse you of deliberately taking advantage of Mr Wickfield when he was tired and confused.'

'Mr Wickfield is a drunken old fool!' said Uriah. All his pretence of being 'umble had gone.

Agnes Wickfield gasped. David put out his arm to comfort her.

Mr Micawber continued: 'You tricked your employer into signing important papers, and pretended they were not important. You claimed money for the business, and then stole it yourself.'

'Prove it, you fool,' said Uriah.

'You once had a notebook, a black notebook, did you not, Heep?' said Mr Micawber.



David remembered that black notebook. For the first time, Uriah looked alarmed.

‘So what if I did have such a notebook, Micawber? It is gone now, burnt to ashes.’

At this, Mr Micawber produced the notebook from another pocket.

‘I rescued it from the fireplace in your old house. The notebook is a little battered and burnt, but it’s still readable. All your secrets and tricks are written down in here. For instance if I turn to this page–’



Mr Micawber held up the open book and showed it to David, Betsey and Agnes.

‘–you will see where this villain Heep has practised copying Mr Wickfield’s signature. Again and again, until the forgery is almost perfect. All so he can sign letters and papers in Mr Wickfield’s name.



Uriah Heep has been cheating his employer. He has been taking his employer's money. All he has wanted is power!

By now Agnes was weeping.

Uriah Heep was cornered. He would have slithered from the room if the others hadn't blocked his way.

For the first time Mrs Heep spoke.

'Ury, Ury! Be 'umble, be 'umble. That's the best way.'

'Quiet, mother,' hissed Heep. 'Enough of being 'umble.'

He looked at David and said: 'Copperfield, I have always hated you. You've always been against me.'



‘You have always been against the whole world,’ replied David.





Much more followed. Uriah Heep would have gone to prison, but instead David and Mr Micawber let him go in exchange for returning all the money and property which he had taken from Mr Wickfield.

It turned out that Uriah had also tricked Aunt Betsey. She had thought it was Mr Wickfield who lost her money.



Being kind-hearted, she had said nothing. But Uriah was behind it all!

With the money returned to her, Aunt Betsey was able to move back into her own house again.



Now Uriah was no longer there to trick him, old Mr Wickfield began to make a slow recovery.

Mr and Mrs Micawber decided to leave England altogether. The family sailed to Australia in the hope that they might finally find luck in that great country.

At last, things went well for the Micawbers. Mr Micawber became a magistrate. He was liked and respected by the people around him.

Things went well for David Copperfield, too. He wrote more and more and became famous.

David was not alone in his success. He and Agnes Wickfield had become far more than best friends – they had grown to love each other. Soon enough they were married. They were very happy together, happier than David had ever expected to be. Now he could give his own children the happy childhood he had wished for as a boy.



Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth in 1812. Like many of the characters he wrote about, his family were poor and his childhood was difficult. As an adult, he became known around the world for his books. He is remembered as one of the most important writers of his time.



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