

**THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF  
DAVID COPPERFIELD**

Adapted from the novel by  
Charles Dickens

Written by  
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SHOOTING SCRIPT  
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1

INT. LONDON THEATRE - EARLY EVENING

1

A buzzing, busy theatre. So busy that some PEOPLE stand in the aisles. DAVID, dressed smartly, walks onto a stage to applause. He goes to a reading desk, carrying a book. On the spine is: "The Personal History of David Copperfield", obscured by DAVID's hands.

He's nervous, never done this before. Takes a quick, deep breath, for confidence. Puts the book on the desk. Opens it. The words on the page look fuzzy.

DAVID

Whether I turn out to be the hero  
of my own story...

The words on the page look clearer now.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(more confident)

...or whether that station will be  
held by anybody else...

On the backcloth, the outline of some buildings on the horizon: THE ROOKERY and a CHURCH.

DAVID (CONT'D)

...these moments must show.

DAVID wipes across screen.

SEAMLESS CUT TO:

2

EXT. FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE - SALTMARSH - EVENING

2

We are suddenly in the middle of flat, Norfolk countryside. YOUNG HAM runs ahead. Some of the theatre still physically present in the field: lights, the front row of audience, part of the red boxes and seats.

DAVID turns and walks towards the horizon. Shape of THE ROOKERY (David's Childhood Home) and a CHURCH in silhouette on the horizon. Loud sea and heavy winds heard in the distance.

Swift intercutting, with build-up of music, of the following (with the occasional O.S. YELP of CLARA COPPERFIELD):

3

EXT. YARMOUTH - KINGS STAITHE LANE - EVENING

3

A man in his mid-50s - PEGGOTTY's older brother, DANIEL PEGGOTTY, whizzes past on his HORSE-DRAWN CART.

- 4 EXT. FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE - SALTMASH - EVENING 4  
DR CHILLIP runs across a field.
- 5 EXT./INT. ROOKERY - EVENING 5  
PEGGOTTY runs out of The Rookery, and then into a back-room.
- PEGGOTTY  
I'll be three seconds! Two! Don't  
fret! Peggotty's still here! One  
second!
- 6 EXT. FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE - HORIZON - EVENING 6  
YOUNG HAM, a boy of about nine, running, carrying a bucket.
- 7 EXT. NORFOLK - COUNTRY ROAD - EVENING 7  
DANIEL PEGGOTTY's carriage riding down a path.
- DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
(to himself)  
Keep calm, Daniel. Be quick but  
keep calm.
- 8 EXT. ROOKERY - EVENING 8  
DAVID walking into The Rookery gardens, through an open gate.
- 9 EXT. FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING 9  
The figure of BETSEY TROTWOOD appearing over the horizon.
- 10 EXT. FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE - HORIZON - EVENING 10  
YOUNG HAM now running back followed by a NURSE.
- 11 INT. ROOKERY - EVENING 11  
PEGGOTTY running through the house, carrying towels.
- PEGGOTTY  
Here come the towels! And here  
comes the baby! Oh my Lord!
- 12 EXT. ROOKERY - EVENING 12  
DAVID now nearly at the house.  
*MUSIC increases, a sense of ticking time.*



PEGGOTTY opens the door. BETSEY steps sideways from the steamed window, into the door frame.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Well now you see her.

Flustered, CLARA makes a meaningless half-bow half-curtsey, and sits down. BETSEY enters, hangs up her bonnet. Lopsided. Straightens it. Does it again. As she speaks, she shifts various hats, coats and umbrellas into a more symmetrical position. Notices name-plate by the door: THE ROOKERY.

BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)  
In the name of Heaven, why Rookery?

CLARA  
When my husband bought the house,  
he liked to think there were rooks  
about it.

BETSEY glances about her, as if the rooks might lie in wait.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
And are there?

CLARA  
(contraction)  
...Noooooooooooo!

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(constantly moving things)  
My brother all over! Calls a house  
a rookery and takes the rooks on  
trust! A better name would be  
"Gullible Manor".

BETSEY sits down. PEGGOTTY's had enough. She steps between BETSEY and CLARA.

PEGGOTTY  
(to CLARA, eye-balling  
BETSEY)  
Will this... person be stopping,  
Ma'am?

CLARA  
Now, Peggotty...

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(incredulously)  
Peggotty? You mean to say a human  
being has gone into a church and  
got herself named 'Peggotty'?

Moves a china ornament - a fisherman - a fraction of an inch.

BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)  
 Did your mother sneeze your name  
 when you were being christened?

PEGGOTTY  
 It's a normal name. And do you not  
 think 'Trotwood' is a big glass  
 house to be chucking stones from?

PEGGOTTY moves the ornament a fraction of an inch back.

CLARA  
 (in pain)  
 Aaargh!

PEGGOTTY hurries to CLARA. BETSEY moves the fisherman again.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 Aha! The girl! Here comes the girl!

PEGGOTTY gets CLARA to her feet.

CLARA  
 Or it could be...  
 (mid-contraction, very  
 low, guttural)  
 ...a booooooooooy...

PEGGOTTY and BETSEY taken aback by this noise.

BETSEY TROTWOOD (cont'd)  
 It's certain to be a girl. And I  
 beg you to call her Betsey Trotwood  
 Copperfield and have me as her  
 godmother.  
 (gets up, points at  
 CLARA's bump)  
 There must be no mistakes in life  
 with *this* Betsey Trotwood. There  
 must be no trifling with *her*  
 affections, poor dear.

CLARA yelps. BETSEY takes a good look at her face, moving  
 CLARA's hair away from her eyes.

BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)  
 Why bless my soul, you're so young.

PEGGOTTY can't support CLARA alone.

PEGGOTTY  
 Ham!

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 'Ham'? No no. Hot water. She's  
 birthing, not dining.

YOUNG HAM appears at her elbow.

YOUNG HAM  
 (to BETSEY)  
 I'm Ham. Ma'am. It's my nam...name.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 Lunacy.

PEGGOTTY  
 Get the nurse and the doctor!

DR CHILLIP and the NURSE arrive.

DR CHILLIP  
 We're here!

They help CLARA upstairs. Screams.

PEGGOTTY (O.S.)  
 Let's get you upstairs. Hurry!

CLARA (O.S.)  
 Yeeees! Hurry!

BETSEY sits and produces a large package of jeweller's cotton. She inserts a strand in either ear. The chair's between two potted plants, one a big geranium. But not exactly mid-way. BETSEY shifts her chair until it is.

A shot of BETSEY from the PENDULUM's POV.

CUT TO:

18

INT. ROOKERY - FOOT OF STAIRS - NIGHT

18

A beat of BETSEY's POV: ears stuffed, the panic in silence as people run up and down the stairs, fetching water. She fiddles with her BROACH. The clock, approaching midnight. HAM has gone.

DAVID  
 (hidden away in a corner)  
 ...I record that I was born on a  
 Friday, at twelve o'clock at night.

PEGGOTTY runs down signalling to BETSEY. BETSEY uncorks her ears. We hear mayhem, shouts, and a BABY. The clock chiming midnight, in perfect rhythm to the BABY DAVID's cries.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 (getting up)  
 How is she?

She starts walking towards PEGGOTTY, who legs it back upstairs as DR CHILLIP, flushed, comes down.

DR CHILLIP

As comfortable as we can expect a young mother to be.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

No - she. How is *she*? The baby?

DR CHILLIP

It's a boy, ma'am. I'm happy to congratulate-

BETSEY TROTWOOD

(walking towards CHILLIP)

Why congratulate? Is the boy the first of twins with his sister being born as we speak?

DR CHILLIP

Er...

DR CHILLIP shakes his head. BETSEY grabs her bonnet and looks like she may hit DR CHILLIP hard with it. Thinks better of it off PEGGOTTY's look, exits, still with one long piece of cotton dangling from her ear. PEGGOTTY reappears and, almost in one move, rearranges the coats etc as they were.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE - HORIZON - NIGHT 19

WIDE on BETSEY walking off, at speed.

20 INT. ROOKERY - BABY DAVID'S POV - DAY 20

Sounds of the BABY DAVID gurgling. Screen fills with light. Gradually, indistinct shapes appear. Over these, we can, on occasion, vaguely see DAVID and BABY DAVID's hands, and the edge of a crib.

Suddenly CLARA's face comes in close, blowing a raspberry.

PEGGOTTY

Look at you, Baby Davy. Face like a peach. I'm very fond of peaches.

She playfully leans in, as if to eat him. We briefly see DAVID:

DAVID

I remember Peggotty's rough fingers, like a pocket nutmeg-grater...

C/U of PEGGOTTY's huge coarse fingers.

CUT TO:



21 EXT. ROOKERY - YARD - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 21

A flow of images from FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID'S POV; indistinct, fuzzy. Trees, a garden, a box with St Paul's on the lid.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID peeks through the spindly legs of hugely tall hens.

A strange hedge. FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID fighting it with an oversized toy sword.

22 INT/EXT. ROOKERY - LANDING/CHURCHYARD - DAY 22

DAVID inside, at the window. From his POV we see the church, and distant gravestones. Trees seem to bend over it, like giants. As he speaks, FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID joins him.

DAVID (O.S.)

I see my father's gravestone,  
shadowed by trees bending to one  
another in the wind, like giants  
whispering secrets...

23 INT. ROOKERY - PARLOUR - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 23

The lights dim, a winter fire in the parlour. FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID, and PEGGOTTY in a corner of the room.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID

(reading to PEGGOTTY)

The crocodile can be found in  
Africa, the Americas and Australia.

A CROCODILE scuttles out the door; stop-frame paper/wooden animation.

PEGGOTTY

What a remarkable vegetable.

FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID

(laughing)

Not *vegetable*! Reptile!

PEGGOTTY

So I said. One of them. What a  
world of gammon and spinnage it is!

Stood by the window, DAVID looks to CLARA, who sits now with YOUNG DAVID, and PEGGOTTY.

YOUNG DAVID

(to CLARA)

A world of gammon and spinnage!

CLARA writes it down. YOUNG DAVID copies her.

24 INT. ROOKERY - PANTRY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

24

The figure of MURDSTONE approaches. PEGGOTTY picks up a basket of washing.

PEGGOTTY

The gentleman is here, ma'am, with the black hair and particular manner, who walked home with you from church last Sunday.

MURDSTONE comes through the doorway, a big towering figure, carrying a RIDING CROP. CLARA immediately delighted.

MURDSTONE

(re a plant by the door, pulling a bit off)  
Now, is this your famous geranium?  
(spotting DAVID)  
Ah, and you must be the man of the house?

YOUNG DAVID

I am a boy, sir.

YOUNG DAVID holds on to CLARA, with his right hand.

MURDSTONE

Dear boy. Come! Shake hands!

MURDSTONE has thick black hair in his ears. His hand, with signet ring, looms huge. YOUNG DAVID goes to shake it, but with his left hand.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)

(loud, mocking)  
That's the wrong hand, boy!

YOUNG DAVID sticks with his left hand. Extends it even further.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)

(drops his hand, with a look to CLARA)  
Maybe your way will catch on.  
You're a brave fellow.

YOUNG DAVID stares at MURDSTONE's hand. CLARA gives PEGGOTTY a conspiratorial nod. PEGGOTTY understands. She still holds the washing basket. Putting it down, we now see it's a CRAN full of HERRING. She takes YOUNG DAVID's hand.

PEGGOTTY

Davy, my sweet little pudden, let me take you to Yarmouth. My brother can drive us...

A SAILOR walks by with a LARGE FISH.

YOUNG DAVID  
 "Yar-muth?"

The walls of the house fall, like tarpaulin, that is picked up by FISHERMEN, establishing Yarmouth Harbour, where we suddenly are:

25 EXT. YARMOUTH HARBOUR SIDE - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 25

A 16-year-old young woman - EMILY - is among a group of other WOMEN standing at a long workbench, gutting herring. Hard, messy work. EMILY seems broken down by her tough job.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. YARMOUTH ROAD - DAY 26

A cart, driven by DANIEL PEGGOTTY. YOUNG DAVID and PEGGOTTY are beside him surrounded by the flat NORFOLK LANDSCAPE.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 Look at all that sky Davy boy! Too much sky even for a bird.

YOUNG DAVID  
 (wriggling, never still)  
 If the world is really as round as my geography book says it is, how can this bit of it be so flat?

PEGGOTTY  
 It's not to your liking, Davy?

YOUNG DAVID  
 I certainly think it might be improved by a small hill.

They drive over a small bump.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 That do you?

CUT TO:

27 EXT. YARMOUTH HARBOUR SIDE - DAY 27

We're into town. A busy harbour.

As HAM arrives, now a young man in his late teens, EMILY pulls off her apron.

EMILY  
 It's 4. I'm done gutting.

She walks off.

A few moments later, DANIEL PEGGOTTY's cart pulls up beside HAM.

PEGGOTTY  
(Leaps off, hugs HAM)  
My Ham! I turn my back and you  
sprout like a beanstalk!

HAM  
I'd forgotten how hard you squeeze,  
Peggotty. You'll have the marrow  
out my bones.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
She's a human mangle that woman.  
Master Davy, this is Ham. Ham,  
Master Davy!

YOUNG DAVID  
Pleased to meet you, Ham.

HAM  
Likewise.

PEGGOTTY  
Is Emily here?

HAM  
No, it's 4-

HAM (CONT'D)  
-She's done gutting.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
Ah, she's done gutting.

\*

HARD CUT TO:

28 EXT. YARMOUTH - DEVIL'S ALLEY - DAY 28

All smiles - HAM, with YOUNG DAVID on his back, walks  
PEGGOTTY, DANIEL PEGGOTTY and the luggage under an archway,  
down a little lane, and onto...

29 EXT. YARMOUTH CLIFFTOP / BEACH - DAY 29

Vast blue skies and flat shingle, sharp in the Norfolk light.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
That's where we all live, Davy.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY points to an UPTURNED BOAT on the beach.  
Smoke comes from a funnel in the roof. A couple more  
BOATHOUSES sit further up the beach.

HAM  
Look at that. It's no mansion.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
It's a downside-upside capsized  
boat.

YOUNG DAVID grins, jumps down.

YOUNG DAVID  
It's Aladdin's Palace! We'll be  
like spiders trapped under a  
teacup!

He runs towards the boathouse.

PEGGOTTY  
Digs for joy that boy, finds it  
too.

HAM  
But can he pick crabs out a bucket  
without losing a finger?

CUT TO:

30 INT. BOATHOUSE - DAY

30

Feels enormous. Table, framed biblical scenes. From a former  
bench hangs an oil lamp. Boat's wheel is a clothes airer.

PEGGOTTY  
Davy...

PEGGOTTY pulls across a curtain and reveals a small  
whitewashed room with a bed, a little window, a mirror framed  
with oyster-shells. Clean, bright, perfect.

YOUNG DAVID  
Peggotty! This is the most  
desirable bedroom I've ever seen!

PEGGOTTY  
Desirable! I love your words Davy.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY is behind them with EMILY and HAM.

EMILY  
(to YOUNG DAVID)  
Peggotty says your mother's a lady.

PEGGOTTY  
Emily! Too bold by half.

YOUNG DAVID  
(aside, to DANIEL  
PEGGOTTY)  
Are Ham and Emily your children?

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 Adopted. Both their fathers were  
 drowned.

In an armchair in the corner, knitting, sits MRS GUMMIDGE.

MRS GUMMIDGE  
 (re DAVID)  
 Oh, *Ham!* Not another mouth to feed!  
 Let me die and be a riddance!

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 Come now Mrs G, your funeral would  
 be a far greater nuisance than an  
 extra place at the table!

YOUNG DAVID  
 (to PEGGOTTY, re MRS G)  
 Is she upset?

PEGGOTTY  
 (quietly)  
 That's Mrs Gummidge. Her husband  
 was drowned too.

PEGGOTTY hands MRS GUMMIDGE fish and potatoes.

PEGGOTTY (CONT'D)  
 How's that then? You can't complain  
 about a nice bit of kipper.

HAM  
 You just watch her.

MRS GUMMIDGE  
 The potatoes are burnt like  
 coals...

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 Here she goes...

MRS GUMMIDGE  
 These taters could be my last.

EMILY  
 Can I go out on the beach, uncle?

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 You done your gutting?

EMILY  
 Yes, I've done my gutting.

HAM  
 There's a lot of gutting to do...  
 Fish go off, you know.

EMILY shoots him a 'thanks for nothing' look.

EMILY

I've been gutting fish since dawn.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

Go on then. But take young Davy with ya.

HAM

Quickly, mind, we should be getting on with the next batch.

YOUNG DAVID

(as they leave)

What's gutting?

CUT TO:

31 EXT. FENLAND - DAY.

31

Wide on YOUNG DAVID and EMILY. YOUNG DAVID picking up bits of ferns/a stick.

EMILY

Is your mother really a lady?

YOUNG DAVID

Yeah, I think so.

EMILY

Does she attend to her correspondence and receive callers in the drawing room?

YOUNG DAVID

I don't know.. A gentleman with big hands calls to admire our geranium.

EMILY

I should like to become a lady.

YOUNG DAVID

He had two eyebrows. I say eyebrows, rather than eyes, because they're much more important in his face.

EMILY

(what?)

Yes...

CUT TO:

32 EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

32

YOUNG DAVID and EMILY leave the boathouse together.

Later. EMILY skimming stones across the water's surface, expertly. YOUNG DAVID impressed, excited, nervous.

YOUNG DAVID  
I like the seaside very much.

EMILY  
The sea is cruel and brutish. I've seen it tear a boat as big as our house all to pieces.

She skims a stone. YOUNG DAVID, more awkward, carries on.

YOUNG DAVID  
I hope it wasn't the boat that your father was drowned in?

EMILY  
'Drowned'. Uncle says 'drownded' and he's wrong. It's a silly, Yarmouth way of speaking. The word is drowned.

YOUNG DAVID  
(gabbling now)  
I never saw my father. He's... normal dead. My mother and I and Peggotty are by ourselves. But in the happiest state imaginable.

Tries to skim a stone. He's rubbish, ends up accidentally flinging it behind him instead of out to sea.

He attempts to skim again. Terrible - it hits the shingle, doesn't even make the water.

SEAMLESS CUT TO:

33

EXT. YARMOUTH HARBOUR SIDE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

33

A busy harbour, boats creaking in the high wind. MEN unload fish. WOMEN work at the long workbench, gutting herring. YOUNG DAVID and EMILY walk along.

YOUNG DAVID  
Seems a fair life, to work on a boat, or in the harbour.

EMILY  
Your hands get red raw and you can't ever - ever - escape the smell.

YOUNG DAVID  
(distracted by the boats)  
Your hands... have nice skin.



Then suddenly...

EMILY  
Look! Look at this, Davy!

EMILY is already climbing up a mast, near to the top. If she falls she'll be crushed between boats.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
You can see past Yarmouth.

From EMILY's height, we see the FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRYSIDE. HAM is below, concerned and angry.

HAM  
Come down! You'll smash in twenty pieces if you slip off there.

EMILY  
I'm not scared!

HAM  
I know. But come down! Uncle and Peggotty are asking for us.

34 EXT. BOATHOUSE - DAY

34

YOUNG DAVID with HAM and EMILY, crossing the shingle.

EMILY  
You won't mention the mast, will you?

HAM  
No, I won't mention it.

YOUNG DAVID  
It was very high.

EMILY  
It's not high. Nowhere is high around here.

35 INT. BOATHOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

35

YOUNG DAVID enters with HAM and EMILY to a cheer. DANIEL and PEGGOTTY grinning. Cakes and beer - a celebration.

HAM  
(beaming, to EMILY)  
I told them. What we decided between us. Our 'news'.

EMILY  
Getting engaged.

HAM  
Getting engaged, yeah.

EMILY  
Just say getting engaged, Ham.

HAM  
We're uh, we're engaged.

EMILY  
Are you happy for us, uncle?

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
Happy? I'm happy as a dog with two bones!

They think he's finished. PEGGOTTY is about to speak but-

DANIEL PEGGOTTY (CONT'D)  
-And! And as his owner who discovers the hole the bones were dug from is full of gold watches and money!

PEGGOTTY rushes past and hugs HAM.

PEGGOTTY  
You two engaged to be married. Oh Lord, I'm going to cry.

She hugs HAM. Then PEGGOTTY starts dancing with YOUNG DAVID, and HAM starts dancing with EMILY.

YOUNG DAVID  
Everybody should get married!

C/U on smiling YOUNG DAVID, smiling PEGGOTTY, smiling DANIEL PEGGOTTY, smiling EMILY, smiling HAM. Then, MRS GUMMIDGE:

MRS GUMMIDGE  
Let me die, as a favour to myself.

Suddenly: A SHADOW looming, and then RUMBLING from the roof of the boathouse. It begins to shake. Looking up, we see the wood splintering, the boathouse beginning to tear and split. Everyone watches, debris falling on them. DAYLIGHT shines through the hole.

Close on YOUNG DAVID. The roof now seems to be made partly of paper. Some MASSIVE FINGERS come in through the hole. The characters now appear to be frozen in happy party-mode as life-sized drawings, but in their clothes. Some bits of paper fall around them.

The boathouse is made entirely of paper. The full HAND (with SIGNET RING) of MURDSTONE coming through the roof. The life-size paper people now appear to have been drawn by a child.

MURDSTONE (O.S.)  
Hello, what have you got there?

SEAMLESS CUT TO:

36 INT. ROOKERY - LANDING / KITCHEN - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 36

From YOUNG DAVID'S POV, MURDSTONE reaches down and picks up the drawing. YOUNG DAVID, on the floor with his toys and books, has been drawing boathouses. On other pieces of paper he's written words and phrases he heard in Yarmouth.

MURDSTONE  
A house made from a boat? Draw a boat, or draw a house, none of this nonsense!

CLARA behind MURDSTONE: weaker, sheepish.

PEGGOTTY  
(to CLARA)  
Mrs Copperfield - is it all...? Is that a new ring or your proper one?

CLARA  
(unconvincing happiness)  
Yes! You must congratulate me!

PEGGOTTY does not do so.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
You've got a Pa, David! A new one.

Astonished and upset, YOUNG DAVID glances round for him.

YOUNG DAVID  
A new Pa?

MURDSTONE  
Your mother and I are now married.

PEGGOTTY  
I meant to tell you sooner Davy...

YOUNG DAVID glances out the window to the churchyard - his expression changes as, a moment later, the CHURCH and his FATHER'S GRAVESTONE are next to the window, as if looking in.

PEGGOTTY goes towards YOUNG DAVID, MURDSTONE blocks.

MURDSTONE  
(sotto, to PEGGOTTY)  
You addressed my wife by a surname that is not hers. She is now Mrs Murdstone. Will you remember that?

PEGGOTTY gives a curtsey of loathing as we hear the front door, and they head downstairs: MISS JANE MURDSTONE, Murdstone's sister, has arrived. PEGGOTTY helps a COACHMAN with the luggage: black boxes, with the initials JM on the lids in brass nails. JANE pays out of a hard steel purse that clicks loudly.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)

My sister, Jane Murdstone. My wife,  
Clara Murdstone.

PEGGOTTY hushes YOUNG DAVID before he speaks out...

MISS MURDSTONE

A fair choice. I regret I missed  
the wedding, and the chance to meet  
you at the peak of your beauty.

CLARA curtseys... waits for MURDSTONE to introduce Davy, who watches her from the foot of the stairs. He does not. CLARA pushes DAVID forward.

MISS MURDSTONE (CONT'D)

A boy? I presume it is named?

YOUNG DAVID

I am David, Miss Murdstone. Pleased  
to meet you.

MISS MURDSTONE

(fake-smile)

My question was not directed at  
you, child.

(to MURDSTONE, no smile)

Wants manners.

She picks up the china fisherman, looks at it, and then to MURDSTONE. Puts it back down. CLARA hovers; a look of "told you so" from PEGGOTTY.

PEGGOTTY

Can I help you at all, Miss?

MISS MURDSTONE

No.

(to CLARA)

If you'll be so good as to give me  
your keys, my dear.

CLARA gets them from her purse. Gives them to MISS MURDSTONE, who moves off. PEGGOTTY, aghast, follows. CLARA embraces YOUNG DAVID.

CLARA

Please, David. Love your new father  
and be obedient to him.

YOUNG DAVID

Why are you whispering and saying  
this so hurriedly and secretly, as  
if it's wrong?

She puts her hand in his, and leads him into the parlour,  
their hands behind YOUNG DAVID's back so as not to be seen.

37

INT. ROOKERY - PARLOUR - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

37

JANE opens and shuts cupboards, using the keys. Sniffs one.  
Doesn't like it. PEGGOTTY trailing behind her.

MURDSTONE

The parlour's rather bright.

MISS MURDSTONE

I'll take care of it.

(to PEGGOTTY)

You have a man secreted somewhere  
about the place, do you not?

PEGGOTTY

No, Madam! Who keeps a man in a  
cupboard? What's in it for him?

JANE makes her way back towards the china fisherman.

CLARA

(starts to cry)

Am I not to be consulted on  
decoration? In my own house...

MURDSTONE

"My own house"? Clara?

CLARA

Our own house, I mean...

Tense stillness. Then a burst of energy: MISS MURDSTONE picks  
up her bag, drops the keys on the floor.

MISS MURDSTONE

It's clear my status in this house  
is lower than I anticipated. I  
shall go immediately.

MURDSTONE

Jane Murdstone, be silent!

YOUNG DAVID picks the keys up. MURDSTONE snatches them off  
him, without even looking down. Gives them to JANE. She puts  
the keys away, and her bag down.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)  
 (calm, to MISS MURDSTONE)  
 It is not my fault so unusual an  
 occurrence has taken place tonight.

MISS MURDSTONE  
 Let us both try to forget it. Boy,  
 up to bed this instant!

YOUNG DAVID, close to tears, is ushered out by PEGGOTTY. The door shuts on us.

CUT TO:

38

INT. ROOKERY - FOOT OF STAIRS / PANTRY - DAY

38

A rainy morning. YOUNG DAVID and PEGGOTTY watch MISS MURDSTONE through the open door. Dressed in a black velvet gown she's still opening and slamming cupboards.

PEGGOTTY  
 She looks like she's made of wax.

YOUNG DAVID  
 Or Dutch cheese.

Muffled laughter from them.

PEGGOTTY  
 Is she searching for somewhere  
 secret to sleep, so she can jump  
 out and terrify us?

YOUNG DAVID  
 I reckon she doesn't sleep. She  
 just... hangs. Like a bat.

He impersonates Miss Murdstone as a bat, 'wings' folded, teeth biting lower lip. PEGGOTTY stifles a laugh.

YOUNG DAVID (CONT'D)  
 (as the "bat")  
 "I presume it is named?"

Suddenly MR MURDSTONE is behind them. CLARA smiling beside him.

MURDSTONE  
 Davy, boy. Time for your lesson.

CUT TO:

CLARA reading at her desk, MURDSTONE in an armchair by the window, MISS MURDSTONE stringing noisy steel beads. They stare at YOUNG DAVID, standing up reciting his lesson.

YOUNG DAVID  
...and verbs have two voices: one,  
active; two... er...

CLARA closes her book, and tries to mouth the word 'passive'.

MISS MURDSTONE  
CLARA!

MURDSTONE  
(instant)  
Jane!

YOUNG DAVID focuses on the beads. CLINKING. The CLOCK ticking unbearably loudly.

MISS MURDSTONE  
We should switch to a less  
enjoyable activity.

MURDSTONE  
Jane!

CLARA  
Oh, Davy, Davy!

MURDSTONE  
Don't say, "Oh, Davy, Davy." He  
either knows his lesson, or he does  
not.

MISS MURDSTONE  
He does *not*.

MURDSTONE  
Jane!

MURDSTONE goes to the bookshelf, takes the crocodile book, flings it at YOUNG DAVID's head. Dodges. It hits the floor.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)  
Pick it up. Read it to me.

YOUNG DAVID opens it. The words look normal, but each time we see the book they're out of order, gibberish, or only a few on the page, some on the floor. YOUNG DAVID can't speak. Looks at MURDSTONE, who has a stray letter on his face.

YOUNG DAVID  
Sorry, sir. The words have skates  
on and skim away. I'm very stupid.

He looks to CLARA. She shakes her head.

MISS MURDSTONE  
You'd soon as teach the furniture.

MURDSTONE  
Jane Murdstone, silence!

CLARA  
Not 'stupid', perhaps, just-

MURDSTONE  
Clara Murdstone, silence!

YOUNG DAVID  
(innocent, instinctively)  
Clara *Copperfield*, Sir!

A terrible hush. MURDSTONE takes a cane from the bookshelf.

CLARA  
Edward! No, please...

MURDSTONE  
Clara!

YOUNG DAVID backs up to a wall, cornered by MURDSTONE.

Taking YOUNG DAVID's arm, MURDSTONE leads him towards the door. CLARA runs towards them. MISS MURDSTONE stops her.

MISS MURDSTONE  
Let your husband improve your son!

MURDSTONE  
Jane!

CLARA grapples for YOUNG DAVID's hand, blocked by JANE. MURDSTONE pulls back - on YOUNG DAVID's other arm. YOUNG DAVID violently pulled in both directions. CLARA lets go. Murdstone drags YOUNG DAVID upstairs, stepping on and destroying the paper/wooden crocodile we saw earlier.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)  
If I have an obstinate horse or dog  
to deal with, I beat him.

40 INT. ROOKERY - DAVID'S BEDROOM / STAIRWELL / LANDING - DAY 0  
(CONTINUOUS)

MURDSTONE shuts the door, drops his cane and puts YOUNG DAVID in a headlock.

MURDSTONE  
I conquer him, even if it costs him  
all the blood he has.



YOUNG DAVID  
I've tried to learn sir, but I  
can't when you and Miss Murdstone  
watch me.

MURDSTONE  
Can't you indeed?

From within the headlock, YOUNG DAVID bites down hard on  
MURDSTONE's hand/wrist.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)  
(pathetic yelp)  
Aagh!

MURDSTONE stumbles back. A pathetic yelp as he hits his head  
on a cupboard. He pushes YOUNG DAVID, and YOUNG DAVID pushes  
back. YOUNG DAVID scuttles under the bed. MURDSTONE lunges  
for his cane and follows YOUNG DAVID, but can't reach. YOUNG  
DAVID kicks a chamber pot in MURDSTONE's direction. MURDSTONE  
rears up with the bed on his back. Scrambling out, YOUNG  
DAVID jumps on the bed. MURDSTONE grabs YOUNG DAVID, throws  
him to the floor and starts caning him.

CLARA, PEGGOTTY and JANE are on the Landing.

CLARA  
Edward! Please stop!

MURDSTONE  
Clara, enough!

PEGGOTTY  
Let me break down the door, Mrs  
Copperfield!

MISS MURDSTONE  
Mrs Murdstone!

MURDSTONE  
Jane!

MISS MURDSTONE  
Edward is teaching. Let him teach.

The beating continues. YOUNG DAVID on the floor, curled up.

SEAMLESS CUT TO:

41 INT. ROOKERY - DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

41

It's dark now, other than a small candle. YOUNG DAVID lies in  
the same position. He's scribbling on a piece of paper:  
"Conquer him." Downstairs, a muffled conversation between the  
MURDSTONES, with CLARA weeping. Then a nearer voice...

PEGGOTTY (O.S.)  
 (whispered)  
 Davy.

YOUNG DAVID kneels by the keyhole with a candle. Light leaks in beneath the door.

INTERCUT WITH:

42 INT. ROOKERY - LANDING / DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 42

PEGGOTTY's side of the door is well-lit. In some shots we see both sides at once, as a WIDE.

YOUNG DAVID  
 What's to become of us, Peggotty?

YOUNG DAVID has kept his mouth to the hole, not his ear to listen.

PEGGOTTY  
 My brother will...

YOUNG DAVID  
 Pardon?

He puts his ear to the keyhole. But so does Peggotty.

PEGGOTTY  
 Say again Davy?

YOUNG DAVID  
 What?

Then they get back into sync.

PEGGOTTY  
 My brother will take me in. I can look after Mrs Gummidge and gut fish. Or the other way round.

YOUNG DAVID  
 What's going to be done with me?

A CLINK of keys, the light cutting out momentarily, and the door is suddenly open. A BURST of light as MISS MURDSTONE stands in the doorway. The open door lets light into the room, briefly showing that YOUNG DAVID has been writing and drawing over pieces of paper, which entirely cover the floor.

MISS MURDSTONE  
 You're to be sent away.

YOUNG DAVID  
 To school?

MISS MURDSTONE  
 (laughs bleakly)  
 'To school!'

YOUNG DAVID smiles, until he sees PEGGOTTY, who shakes her head. MR MURDSTONE looms behind her, his hand elaborately bandaged. We're close on him, as he says:

MURDSTONE  
 Education, boy, is costly.

There's the sound of a distant rumbling. A gust of wind blows out YOUNG DAVID's candle. A wisp of smoke trails in the air as YOUNG DAVID tries to gather his scraps of paper.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)  
 What is before you, is a fight with  
 the world.

MURDSTONE glances right, and we catch a glimpse of: An open-back cart blitzing towards the room, coming from darkness. An oil lamp burning. The cart barrels through the room. YOUNG DAVID's papers are sent flying.

MURDSTONE (CONT'D)  
 (shouting)  
 The sooner you begin it the better!

SEAMLESS CUT TO:

43 INT/EXT. ROOKERY / FLAT NORFOLK LANDSCAPE - NIGHT 43

We're outside, bits of debris and paper falling as the cart travels over us and rushes into the night. YOUNG DAVID sits beside THE DRIVER.

Inside, the MURDSTONES smile from the bedroom window. JANE is playing with her steel beads: clink, clink. The further away, the louder the clinking. Close on her hand, clinking beads. CLINK! CLINK! From the side, we push in CLOSE on beads moving through her hand, on a chain...

CROSS DISSOLVE  
 INTO:

44 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY 44

A row of bottles, chinking along a production line. MASSIVE NOISE of clinking bottles. A hot, busy warehouse. Filthy BOYS and GIRLS.

Hands going in and out of machinery, grabbing hot bottles. A CHILD with one arm. Some boys wash empties at a trough. Others at workbenches pasting labels, fitting seals, packing cases. A huge structure containing countless bottles stands impressive and vulnerable.

YOUNG DAVID's with an older boy, MICK WALKER, and MEALY POTATOES, YOUNG DAVID's age.

MICK WALKER  
 (shouting over the noise)  
 Cork with the hand corker - yeah?  
 (hands him a bottle)  
 Pass it to Mealy Potatoes, he  
 seals. Five a minute or old Creakle  
 hangs your guts out for bunting.

They look to CREAKLE, sitting at the desk in his office. YOUNG DAVID tries to cork the bottle. Can't pull down the lever. MEALY laughs. As do some other boys.

MICK WALKER (CONT'D)  
 Where you living?

YOUNG DAVID  
 I'm to lodge with the Micawber  
 family, whom I've yet to meet.

MEALY POTATOES  
 "Whom I've yet to meet." Where was  
 you brung up, Windsor Castle?

MICK/MEALY tosses YOUNG DAVID a bottle. CRASH! A whoop from the boys. A grubby man, TUNGAY, comes out fast.

TUNGAY  
 Quiet! Quiet!

He grabs YOUNG DAVID, drags him to...

45 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - CREAKLE'S OFFICE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

MR CREAKLE stares out the window, his back to YOUNG DAVID. Speaks in a whisper so low some words are repeated by TUNGAY.

CREAKLE  
 You know my rules. Half a day's pay  
 per bottle...

TUNGAY  
 (repeating)  
 ...per bottle.

CREAKLE turns. He is a stout, balding, red-faced man.

CREAKLE  
 Oh! The famous biting boy. Here.

TUNGAY  
 ...biting boy. Here.

YOUNG DAVID walks over to CREAKLE.



## MEALY POTATOES

Look at the writing on his back!

Ha!

(to Mick)

What's it say?

CUT TO:

47 EXT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON 47

YOUNG DAVID, minus placard, drags a trunk printed with "DC".

48 EXT. LONDON COACHING INN - STREET - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON 48

Busy street. From YOUNG DAVID's height: loud traffic, horse legs, crowds. Carriage wheels whizz past like fast cars. He crosses the dangerous road, pulling his trunk.

He has a piece of paper with an address. Looks around. One side of the Athenaeum looks safe; a clean open road. YOUNG DAVID shows a MAN the paper, and is sent towards a dark, scuzzy, scary alleyway (Long Lane). Dodgy-looking MEN lurk around the entrance.

49 EXT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS). 49

YOUNG DAVID approaches. A COALMAN and BOOTMAKER bang the door.

COALMAN

Swindler! Open the door!

BOOTMAKER

Pay up, you weasel! Pay your debts!

Suddenly, a VOICE calls from a dark alleyway next to him:

MICAWBER

Hsst! Are you Master Copperfield?

YOUNG DAVID

Er... yes. Is that... Mr Micawber?

MR MICAWBER peers out from behind a water butt.

MICAWBER

Master Copperfield, it would be of material assistance to me if you'd join those gentlemen, echo their slanderous cries, and then enunciate the following: "Ere! Round the back! 'E's flitting!"

YOUNG DAVID  
 (practicing)  
 '...Here.'

MICAWBER  
 'Ere'. As in the aural organ.

YOUNG DAVID  
 'Round the back. He's...'

MICAWBER  
 Flitting.

YOUNG DAVID  
 'Flitting'.

MICAWBER  
 Precisely! Splendid. Well, no time  
 like the present!

Gives YOUNG DAVID a friendly shove. He approaches the MEN.

YOUNG DAVID  
 Yes... pay up please. Pay the money  
 or else...I'll be out of pocket...

MICAWBER makes an encouraging gesture: 'Now!'

YOUNG DAVID (CONT'D)  
 'Ere! Round the back! He's...

The word's gone. But the BOOTMAKER is staring at him.

BOOTMAKER  
 What, scarpering?

The word comes back to him.

YOUNG DAVID  
 ...Flitting!

With a roar they charge down the lane. MICAWBER races out from his hiding place to the front door. But the BOOTMAKER sees MICAWBER and he and the others roar past YOUNG DAVID to thump on the door, which slams shut just in time.

Suddenly MICAWBER opens the window, grabs YOUNG DAVID, hoiks him in, slams the shutters closed.

After a pause, the shutters are opened again, and MICAWBER and YOUNG DAVID lean over and pull the trunk in too.

50 INT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 50

YOUNG DAVID a bit shocked at being manhandled.

MR MICAWBER  
 (tense, attempting normal)  
 A bravura performance Master  
 Copperfield! Welcome to our home!

Banging on the window. YOUNG DAVID shakes MICAWBER's hand.

YOUNG DAVID  
 Who are...?

MR MICAWBER  
 Business acquaintances. Whom I  
 believe may have a disagreement  
 with the previous tenant.

CREDITOR (O.S.)  
 Pay up Micawber!

MRS MICAWBER emerges. She shakes YOUNG DAVID's hand.

MRS MICAWBER  
 Jackals, is what they are! Hyenas!  
 A pleasure to make your  
 acquaintance.

A sparsely furnished room. MRS MICAWBER now feeding one of her BABY TWINS. The other is in a cot. There are two other children - a young BOY and a GIRL of three. Throughout the film we're never sure how many CHILDREN the MICAWBERS have.

MR MICAWBER  
 This woman is the apple of my eye,  
 Master Copperfield, the lodestar  
 upon whom the sextant of my heart  
 is set... in short, my wife.

YOUNG DAVID bows to her.

YOUNG DAVID  
 How do you do.

A face at the living room window - a new CREDITOR.

CREDITOR  
 I'm owed for candles! Pay me!

At another window, the COALMAN's hand reaches in for a carriage clock on a table. MICAWBER grabs the clock, puts it on a dresser, struggles with the hand, closes the window. Pull out to see a smaller window near the dresser. A HAND comes in, grabs the clock.

MR MICAWBER  
 Right! That's it. This is too much.  
 I shall end it. Where's my razor?!

He hands the BABY to MRS MICAWBER.



MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
 (miming a razor to throat)  
 Swift! Final! Let them have their  
 blood!

MRS MICAWBER  
 Never! If you are to exit, then so  
 am I!

She in turn hands the BABY to DAVID. They hug, emotional,  
 dramatic. The TODDLERS run in to join the hug. YOUNG DAVID  
 confused. The BOY takes the BABY off him.

YOUNG DAVID  
 If it would help, I have some money  
 from Mr Murdstone for my supper.

Half a smile from MICAWBER. They all look starving. Even the  
 BABY seems to look at DAVID with wider eyes in anticipation.

HARD CUT TO:

51 INT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING 51

MR MICAWBER and the CHILDREN are with DAVID, sitting at a  
 table, napkins tucked into their collars.

MRS MICAWBER  
 Would you have your concertina  
 about you, Wilkins? He has a gift,  
 Master Copperfield.

MR MICAWBER reaches into his bag and produces a concertina,  
 puts his fingers in place, readies himself. A beat. Then  
 produces the worst music anyone has ever made: a nightmarish  
 rendition of *Auld Lang Syne*.

MRS MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
 (heading to the kitchen)  
 Angels in his fingertips!

MRS MICAWBER comes out with a dish of potatoes and chops. She  
 pours beer from a jug into a glass, in front of MR MICAWBER.  
 He stops playing and looks at the beer, frowning.

YOUNG DAVID  
 Is something wrong, Mr Micawber?

MR MICAWBER  
 Cloudy. Some individuals whose  
 peregrinations in this metropolis  
 have not as yet been extensive - in  
 short, those who are new to London -  
 can find the local ale upsetting to  
 the point of nausea.  
 (staring at the ale)  
 I could try it, if you like?

YOUNG DAVID  
Only if it may be consumed safely.

MR MICAWBER  
I don't think it'll hurt me if I  
throw my head back and take it off  
quick.

He takes a huge gulp. He's fine.

MRS MICAWBER  
There you go.

MR MICAWBER  
I think it's quite safe.

YOUNG DAVID  
I am happy for the remainder to  
take the same route.

MICAWBER nods his thanks, downs the rest. He eyes YOUNG  
DAVID's plate.

MR MICAWBER  
Ah, Mrs Micawber is renowned for  
her way with a mutton chop.

YOUNG DAVID  
Would you care for one?

MR MICAWBER  
Oh no no. They are *your* particular  
chops and *your* specific taters.  
There is nourishment enough for us  
in honest cabbage leaves.

YOUNG DAVID  
You would be very welcome. This is  
like a royal banquet.

MR MICAWBER takes a chop by the bone and a potato, eats them.  
The two KIDS spot this, take a chop each and some potatoes,  
until all that's left is a tiny scrap. YOUNG DAVID eats this.

52 INT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - A VERY VERY SMALL ROOM - NIGHT 52

YOUNG DAVID puts his box down on a hard floor. There's a  
double bed frame, but no mattress.

YOUNG DAVID  
Did you sell the bedding?

MR and MRS MICAWBER appear.

MR MICAWBER

I believe we may have, temporarily,  
liquidated the capital. In the  
meantime, you may take the sofa.

MRS MICAWBER

We exchanged it for some spoons.

MR MICAWBER

Then you shall spend the night on  
my bed, our two dining chairs. I  
have, in any case, very little use  
for sleep.

MRS MICAWBER

It's true. He simply can't rest. Mr  
Micawber's mind is a machine of  
perpetual motion.

MICAWBER gravely acknowledges the truth of this.

CUT TO:

53 INT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - A VERY VERY SMALL ROOM - NIGHT 53

YOUNG DAVID lies across two tatty dining chairs at the centre  
of the empty bed frame, covered with an overcoat. He looks at  
his "He Bites" sign and starts scribbling on the back of it.

YOUNG DAVID

(mimicking MICAWBER)

"They are your particular chops and  
your specific 'taters."

54 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MICAWBER'S HOUSE - DAY 54

MR MICAWBER leads YOUNG DAVID out of an alley, to work. A  
carriage passes.

MR MICAWBER

London - fuller of wonders and  
wickedness than all the cities on  
earth. And it's ours, to go  
wherever we choose.

(reads colour-coded map)

But not down there. Creditors make  
that road impassable. A baker and a  
cook's shop.

They take a different route.

55 EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 55

We now see the grand, exciting London David only caught  
glimpses of before: the city is confident.

Cranes and building everywhere. MICAWBER and YOUNG DAVID round a corner, and run towards us. MICAWBER concluding a speech to YOUNG DAVID.

MR MICAWBER  
 ..annual expenditure twenty pounds  
 nought and six, result - misery! We  
 are still pursued...!

Behind them come more CREDITORS. We keep up with MICAWBER and YOUNG DAVID. Then they do an about-turn.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
 Two tailors and a most unreasonable  
 muffin man.

They cross the road, walking in unison behind carriages and carts to stay hidden from view.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
 You find us fallen back financially  
 but something shall turn up.

YOUNG DAVID  
 Won't you run out of roads?

56 EXT. LONDON - MARKET - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 56

One of the market stalls has pig carcasses on hooks. YOUNG DAVID on MICAWBER's shoulders wearing MICAWBER's hat. They duck behind a carcass as it slides along the rack. From one angle they're a mad pig-boy-man hybrid.

BUTCHER  
 I know you! You come here!

MICAWBER starts to run. As does YOUNG DAVID.

57 EXT. LONDON - EXCHANGE ALLEY - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 57

MICAWBER and YOUNG DAVID chased at full pelt down a narrow alleyway. Hurtling round a corner.

MR MICAWBER  
 St Paul's is over there!

We can just see the dome peeping out from above the wall.

58 EXT. LONDON - BISHOPS LANE - DAY 58

MICAWBER and YOUNG DAVID reach the end of the alley, now back out onto the street, past MARKET STALLS.

MR MICAWBER

Factory is that way, hundred yards,  
right, second left. Work hard!

(running backwards now)

Procrastination is the thief of  
time, my young friend - collar him!

MICAWBER grabs an onion from a stall, spins round the corner.

59 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY

59

YOUNG DAVID looks into a bottle, at his reflection.

YOUNG DAVID

(mimics MICAWBER)

In short, sir, something shall turn  
up.

A vague image of MICAWBER in the bottle, mouthing the words.

CREAKLE (O.S.)

Cork and cork and cork again!

TUNGAY (O.S.)

...and cork again!

60 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY

60

Some months have passed. YOUNG DAVID is looking ragged, in  
the scruffy outfit we later see in scenes 103, 190 & 214.

YOUNG DAVID now more sure of himself:

He fills two crates with bottles at the same time, one on  
either side of him.

YOUNG DAVID eats a sandwich with one hand while pasting a  
label on a bottle with the other.

YOUNG DAVID carries two or three crates so he can't see where  
he's going - MEALY calls instructions...

MEALY POTATOES

Forward, forward, right, stop...

YOUNG DAVID climbs on the bench and leaps off, pulling the  
lever with all his weight. It works. Cork is in. Big reaction  
from the watching BOYS.

MEALY POTATOES (CONT'D)

He's a corker of a corker!

61 INT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - EVENING 61

YOUNG DAVID opens the front door and runs into the house. The MICAWBERS upbeat and happy. The room full of furniture. Brand new, distinctive curtains and a BUST of MICAWBER on a plinth. A big, oval-framed photographic portrait of the family on the wall.

MR MICAWBER

My friend, something has turned up!  
Sherry? I've ordered a rosewood  
chiffonier for the parlour.

MRS MICAWBER

And we should calculate the cost of  
putting bow-windows to the house.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. LONDON - MANORS STREET - DAY 62

MICAWBER and 14-YEAR-OLD DAVID (played by an S/A) being  
chased by a MARKET-STALL OWNER.

MICAWBER

If these persons don't remain in  
their appointed premises, I'm not  
sure it's quite playing the game.

63 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY 63

DAVID, now adult, sees a YOUNG GIRL struggling with a lever.

DAVID

Jump! Imagine you're an acrobat.

The GIRL jumps from a bench on to the lever, corks the  
bottle.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Good. Five a minute.

DAVID spots a BOY failing to keep up the pace.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Keep at it Wilson, else I have to  
cork six to make up for your four.

64 INT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - DAY 64

DAVID comes in through the front door. He looks tired.

CUT TO:

House looking barren. Hard times. The MICAWBERS and DAVID eating a small chicken.

MR MICAWBER

I pray your day was more remarkable than mine?

DAVID

It certainly involved a remarkable number of bottles.

MRS MICAWBER

If Mr Micawber had but a shilling for each bottle corked in your warehouse today...

MR MICAWBER

I should still face a disheartening debt.

There's a knock at the door.

MRS MICAWBER

Are we expecting visitors?

Suddenly louder banging on the door.

MR MICAWBER

Bailiffs! Hide the spoons!

A BABY is in a cot in the hall. The cot starts to slowly move sideways. MR MICAWBER runs over - the hall carpet is being dragged under the rotting bottom of the front door, the cot riding on it. The BABY has a very large look of surprise on its face. The BABY tries to grab at the THIN PLINTH holding Micawber's BUST. MICAWBER goes to grab both the bust and the BABY: Does he go for baby or bust, baby or bust, baby or... the bust topples and falls as he grabs the BABY. It smashes.

The door bursts open and BAILIFFS storm in.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)

We are undone! The sun goes down upon us! The debtors' prison awaits!

The BAILIFFS start to carry furniture out, loading it onto a hand cart, including the chairs they're sitting on.

One CHILD pulls down one of the distinctive curtains and rolls it up under their arm.

65

EXT. MICAWBER'S HOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

65

MR MICAWBER is manhandled out by TWO CONSTABLES. DAVID follows.

DAVID  
At least let him finish his meal  
you malicious apes!

MRS MICAWBER  
Leave him be! Take your hands off  
that precious man!

A roast chicken is brought out. MR MICAWBER grabs a leg.

MR MICAWBER  
This is not your chicken! You are  
stealing an honest man's chicken!

DAVID  
Have a heart! Are your mothers  
proud of you?

66 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MICAWBER'S HOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 66

They spot another CHILD who's clambered onto a Bailiff's cart. They get him/her off in time. DAVID, at the last minute, spots his trunk being driven away on the cart, his jacket sticking out.

DAVID  
Stop! Forgive my earlier comments!

He runs and just manages to get his jacket with the St Paul's tin in the pocket. The cart disappears with everything else.

CUT TO:

67 EXT. MARSHALSEA DEBTORS' PRISON - EVENING 67

Establisher of the awful prison. The MICAWBERS are being bundled out of the carriage.

MR MICAWBER  
This is a calumny! This isn't  
legal!

MRS MICAWBER  
Hands off Micawber! He bruises like  
a peach!

68 INT. MARSHALSEA DEBTORS' PRISON - EVENING 68

DAVID with the MICAWBERS. End of a meal. Using the family portrait (now frayed) as a table. DAVID uncomfortable and keen to get out of the cell.



MR MICAWBER

We've eaten off our own faces. It seems that should be some sort of profound metaphor.

DAVID hurriedly seizes the pause to take his leave.

DAVID

I'll visit again tomorrow.

DAVID begins to head off.

MRS MICAWBER

Now the house is seized, where will you live?

DAVID's reaction. This hadn't occurred to him.

DAVID

Oh. I hadn't thought...

MRS MICAWBER

Is your gruff auntie whats-her-name still alive?

DAVID

Betsey. I don't know. I just recall my mother saying she lived at Dover and was...

MR MICAWBER

(interrupting)

My dear young friend! You have not been a lodger. To Mrs M and I, you've been a friend.

DAVID

Thank you.

He goes to leave, but MICAWBER keeps hold of his hand.

MR MICAWBER

It behoves me to do something to help you out of your current difficulty.

MICAWBER scribbles and hands a note to DAVID with ceremony.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)

A Wilkins Micawber IOU. As good a promissory note as any issued from Threadneedle Street.

DAVID

I honestly don't know how to thank you for this.

DAVID finally walks away.

MR MICAWBER  
Master David!

DAVID pauses yet again.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
I only wish it could be more.

DAVID  
Yes.

MR MICAWBER  
(gives a little wave)  
Until something turns up.

CUT TO:

69 INT. MARSHALSEA DEBTORS' PRISON - HALLWAY - EVENING 69

Someone closes and locks the cell door behind DAVID, who rounds a corner and walks away.

We hear concertina 'music' again. DAVID flinches.

70 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - NIGHT 70

DAVID beds down among the bottles, using his St Paul's box as a pillow and his jacket as a blanket.

CUT TO:

Wide TOP SHOT of DAVID: Asleep, surrounded by bottles. He turns, and knocks a bottle which falls and smashes.

CUT TO:

71 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY 71

DAVID at work. Gazes up and see the sombre face of MURDSTONE.

72 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - CREAKLE'S OFFICE - DAY 72

Both MURDSTONES stand grimly with CREAKLE and TUNGAY. Beside DAVID, MURDSTONE seems shorter now. He carries a walking cane.

CREAKLE  
Your stepfather informs me-

TUNGAY  
Me.

CREAKLE  
-that your mama is ill.

TUNGAY  
Ill.

DAVID  
How ill is she?

MISS MURDSTONE  
Tell him.

MURDSTONE  
Jane!

TUNGAY  
Jane!

DAVID  
Tell me, please.

MR CREAKLE  
I won't deceive you. Very ill.

TUNGAY  
Very ill.

DAVID  
Very ill?

TUNGAY  
Very ill?

CREAKLE  
She's dangerously ill.

TUNGAY  
She's dead.

MURDSTONE and CREAKLE both turn admonishingly to TUNGAY, who realises he's made a mistake. DAVID tries not to cry.

MURDSTONE  
(almost tearful)  
I'm very sorry.

DAVID  
And her funeral?

MURDSTONE  
On Saturday.

TUNGAY  
Saturday.

DAVID  
Saturday. Ought I to come back with you now, or take a later coach?

MISS MURDSTONE  
No, it was this Saturday just gone.  
She's buried.

MURDSTONE  
We didn't want a fuss.

TUNGAY  
Fuss.

A terrible beat. DAVID picks up a nearby empty bottle and approaches MURDSTONE, who cowers slightly.

73 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - STAIRS - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 73

DAVID storms out, lets the bottle drop - SMASH - to the floor. A whoop from the other BOYS. CREAKLE and co rush out to stop him.

CREAKLE  
Copperfield! I will allow you that,  
you are upset, but do not...

TUNGAY  
Do not..

CREAKLE exits the office with TUNGAY.

David picks up another.

DAVID  
I've got no-one. I've got nothing!  
D'you hear me? Nothing!

Smash.

CREAKLE  
Right, that's half a day's pay.

TUNGAY  
...pay.

DAVID  
Half of nothing is nothing.

DAVID smashes another bottle after pouring the oily contents all over the floor. MURDSTONE and MISS MURDSTONE emerge.

MISS MURDSTONE  
Given the manner of your  
overreaction, it's a good thing you  
were not at the funeral.

And another bottle - smash!

DAVID  
You can't take something from some  
one who has nothing.

TUNGAY  
Nothing.

MURDSTONE  
Think about your future.

MISS MURDSTONE  
Apart from your aunt Betsey you are  
without blood relatives.

DAVID smashes another bottle.

DAVID  
I've got you, and you are nothing!

DAVID sweeps a whole shelf of bottles onto the floor with an  
almighty SMASH! The other BOYS yell with delight. It's chaos.  
DAVID runs out the building, calling out..

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I want more! I want more than this!  
Far more! I deserve something! I  
will be something!

TUNGAY  
Something.

DAVID  
This is nothing!  
(to the MURDSTONES, who  
cower)  
You two are ghosts. You've always  
been dead!

MURDSTONE makes the same undignified noise he made earlier  
with Young David, as DAVID leaves, taking his St Paul's box.

CREAKLE  
Quiet!

TUNGAY  
QUIET!

74 EXT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON 74

DAVID rushes out of the warehouse, pushing past some BOYS.

75 EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON 75

DAVID walks down a narrow London street.

- 76 EXT. LONDON - CROWDED WESTMINSTER BRIDGE - DAY 76  
 WIDE as DAVID walks across a busy bridge. No pedestrians, but he threads through horses and carriages in a traffic jam. The PALACE of WESTMINSTER and ELIZABETH TOWER being constructed in the background.
- 77 EXT. LONDON SUBURB - DAY 77  
 DAVID walking through parkland. On the horizon in the distance is London, that DAVID has left behind.
- 78 EXT. TRACK OUTSIDE FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY 78  
 A long well-maintained path stretches into a forest. DAVID large in the foreground, walking away from us.
- 79 EXT. DRIVEWAY WITH DOVER SIGN - DAY 79  
 Sign in foreground. Dover, 23 Miles. The road now poorly maintained. We can just see the small figure of DAVID, walking with his jacket over his shoulder. A quick altercation with a MAN in his 30s who is coming the other way. He runs off, towards us, with DAVID'S jacket.
- 80 EXT. DOVER DOWNS - NEXT DAY 80  
 The bare, wide downs. Vast image of sea and sky. DAVID, a small dot, no shoes, stops, stares to sea.  
 END OF MONTAGE.
- 81 EXT. A DOVER STREET - DAY 81  
 DAVID, now very dirty, with a STREET SWEEPER, who points.  
 STREET SWEEPER  
 Used to be Mrs Collins, but she's Miss Trotwood again now. Good luck, she's as fierce as a birthing badger.  
 DAVID heads off, apprehensive.
- 82 EXT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - DAY 82  
 An exhausted DAVID approaches a house on a green. The sea in the distance. He's staggering slightly, his feet bleeding, but still carrying the St Paul's box. A WOMAN RIDER and a CHILD ride donkeys on the green. BETSEY is outside, gardening. Then...

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Janet! Donkeys! DONKEYS!

She runs inside as a housemaid, JANET, runs out banging a pan with a ladle.

JANET  
Go on! Go away!

Then BETSEY reappears, smashing a dinner gong.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Shoo! Off my green or I'll box  
your ears!

The donkey refuses to move, so BETSEY kicks its front leg. It buckles and the WOMAN RIDER slides off onto BETSEY.

A man appears at an upper window - MR DICK.

MR DICK  
(calls to BETSEY)  
Somebody! Quick question. King  
Charles the First - we're certain  
that he's dead?

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
When last seen in public his head  
was no longer attached to his body.

MR DICK  
Good. Thank you. Much obliged.

He disappears. JANET leads the donkeys away. BETSEY dumps her gong on the floor and gets back to gardening.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(to DAVID, not looking at  
him)  
No young men needed here. Shoo  
shoo! I've got a garden fork!

DAVID  
I am not just a young man, ma'am...

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
I'll summon a constable.

DAVID snaps, grabs the pan and ladle. Clangs loudly.

DAVID  
No. Listen! Listen! You're my aunt!

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Janet!

DAVID  
I'm your nephew! I'm David  
Copperfield...

BETSEY drops to the ground in astonishment.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Sorry.  
(begins helping her up)  
I'm David Copperfield. From the  
Rookery.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
JANET!

DAVID  
I've been ill-used and put to work  
not fit for me and you're the only  
family I have...

BETSEY  
Mr DICK!

She leads DAVID towards the house.

DAVID  
I have walked all the way here from  
London, and I was robbed, and I've  
barely eaten, and haven't slept in  
a bed since I set out...

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Come inside. Do not touch anything.  
Mr Dick! Janet! Mr Dick!

83 INT/EXT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - PARLOUR - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

BETSEY leads DAVID in through the French doors. The house is  
bright, fresh.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Stand there, yes.

DAVID  
(staggering)  
I'm sorry... Everything is  
circular... I'm going to drop...

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
He's about to collapse! Janet! Mind  
the settee, it's Viennese! No -  
there, there, go there!



JANET throws a rug on the sofa where DAVID looks like he'll fall, but, now unconscious, he falls into a very smart armchair, to BETSEY'S distress.

HARD CUT TO:

DAVID briefly fainted. From DAVID'S POV: BETSEY now has some bottles and pours the contents into DAVID'S mouth.

DAVID  
What are you doing?

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Medicine. Reviving you.

DAVID  
This is salad dressing.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Ah. I thought it was Armagnac. No spectacles on.

DAVID  
Do you have a lettuce somewhere, doused in medicine?

MR DICK shouts from the stairs.

MR DICK (O.S.)  
Head entirely removed? We're sure?

He appears at the door.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(signalling - 'Not now')  
Let's leave Charles's head to one side for now.

MR DICK  
Pick it up later. Understood.  
(to DAVID, smiling)  
How do you do?

BETSEY and MR DICK begin talking over DAVID'S head.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(signals for MR DICK to look at her)  
Now, Mr Dick, don't be a fool because nobody can be more discerning than you, when you choose.

MR DICK is immediately serious and solemn.

BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)  
 (a lacy shawl round DAVID)  
 You have heard me mention my  
 brother David Copperfield?

BETSEY takes DICK aside. JANET back in now. She picks up a plate of cakes.

MR DICK  
 (doesn't remember at all)  
 Yes, just now. Oh, you mean you  
 mentioned it before this moment? Of  
 course you did, I remember it well.  
 I'm hungry.

DAVID  
 (focusing on cakes)  
 Cakes. Those are cakes.

JANET beside DAVID with the plate, at his head height. Grabs a cake and gives it to MR DICK. DAVID looks on eagerly.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 Well, this is his son, who's run  
 away. What shall we do with him?

DAVID looks hungrily at the plate of cakes. Almost takes one.

DAVID  
 One thing you could do is...

MR DICK  
 If I were you - I should wash him!

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 (relieved to have an  
 answer)  
 Janet! Heat the bath!  
 (she's right behind her)  
 Oh, you're there.

DAVID about to take a cake as JANET moves off. She leaves the cakes on a small table.

DAVID  
 The thing is, I haven't eaten  
 since...

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 (to DAVID)  
 Mr Dick cracks it every time!  
 (glancing out the window,  
 hands DICK the salad  
 dressing)  
 More donkeys! Good Lord, there must  
 be fifty. Janet!!

DICK takes a seat, inspecting the salad dressing, as BETSEY runs out with JANET through a side door. Through the French doors we see, played out in silence, BETSEY arrive with a broom and swing it at the riders. DAVID and DICK, each eating a big slice of cake, watch. A TALL TEENAGE BOY leads a donkey.

DAVID  
Is my aunt really going to...

MR DICK  
Visit violence upon the boy? Yes.

BETSEY  
(faint, through the  
window)  
I've warned you. Don't say you  
weren't warned...

From their POV we see BETSEY grab the TALL TEENAGE BOY with one hand, and slam his head against a signpost which reads "NO DONKEYS!" He runs off, she turns, strolls back towards the house. MR DICK laughs.

MR DICK  
Remarkable woman. Very kind.

He turns to DAVID, but he's now sound asleep on the sofa.

CUT TO:

84 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY 84

Morning. DAVID dressing in Mr Dick's clothes, in front of a long mirror. Tentatively, he acts out some characters.

DAVID  
(as MR DICK)  
"Head taken off? We're sure?"  
(as BETSEY)  
"Donkeys. I've got a fork!"  
(as Tungey)  
"Donkeys..got a fork "

Delighted, he gets confident. The mirror seems to contain the actual character, not DAVID. The face of MICAWBER appears.

DAVID/MICAWBER  
You're stealing an honest man's  
chicken!

His sole possession - the St Paul's box - sits on the window ledge.

85 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - LANDING - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 85

Through a doorway, MR DICK - dressed almost identically - is writing with a long pen, his head almost laid upon the paper.

DAVID  
Good morning, Mr Dick.

MR DICK  
Ah, young man. Can you form a queue?

David unsure of how to do this on his own.

MR DICK (CONT'D)  
The capital letter Q. I'm trying different forms.

86 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - MR DICK'S ROOM - DAY 86  
(CONTINUOUS)

A cluttered room. Piles of paper, pens, inkpots, pen-knives, paperweights. The bed at a mad angle. A small model of the room made from scavenged items, or straw and string. Donkeys made of straw. One side (with the models) is quite neat, the other a chaos of papers. A big kite prominent in the corner. MR DICK writes, trying different formations of a capital 'Q'.

MR DICK  
I like this: a cigar in an ashtray.

DAVID  
Or a kite with a string.

MR DICK  
(distracted)  
"The executioner's blade is cold and sharp..."

DAVID  
I'm sorry...?

MR DICK  
(normal, points at kite)  
Your aunt me that kite, to get me out the house while she drinks coffee and is quiet.

DAVID  
Are you writing stories, Mr Dick?  
About King Charles the First?

MR DICK  
(alarmed, amazed)  
Why? What makes you say that?

DAVID  
 (gesturing to papers)  
 There seems to be the occasional  
 reference to him on...

We see MR DICK's papers are full of drawings of Charles, his signature 'CHARLES R', chopped heads, complicated doodles. There are piles of these scraps of paper, looming over MR DICK, close to falling over.

MR DICK  
 (reassured)  
 Oh yes. King Charles. He does creep in. You see, I'm trying to draft a petition calling for improved housing conditions for the labouring poor. I work hard at it but the thoughts in King Charles' head keep intruding.

DAVID  
 I understand.  
 (a beat)  
 Sorry, no I don't. King Charles's head?

MR DICK nods. Points to his own nodding head.

MR DICK  
 I believe, owing to a disagreement, they cut off Charles's head.

DAVID  
 In 1649. That's well documented.

MR DICK  
 Well, for some reason I don't fully understand, they removed all the troubling thoughts from his head and put them, instead, into mine.  
 (becoming more agitated)  
 Look at this...  
 (shows DAVID)  
 ...I write them down! It's most disruptive.  
 (to himself)  
 "I mount the scaffold, wearing two shirts so shivers aren't mistaken for fear."

MR DICK looks away, upset, then into the mirror. Seems to correct himself. DAVID sees, on a table, a vase of flowers with the heads cut off and arranged around the bottom.

MR DICK (CONT'D)  
 I know it must all sound peculiar?

DAVID

By no means. Something similar happens to me.

MR DICK

(excited / suspicious)  
Really? Who do you get? Not Charles?

DAVID

No, no. But I find when I've been in the company of some person of strong character, their voice becomes... lodged in my head. I often wonder whether I'm...

DAVID (CONT'D)

Different in some way.

MR DICK

Out of your mind.

DAVID jumps up, runs out the room. A beat, then he's back with his St Paul's box. Opens it. Full of scraps of paper.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I too write down the thoughts I have, and the things I observe.

MR DICK reads some of DAVID's writing.

MR DICK

"Miss Murdstone's sleepless eyes, like two red suns." Very good. "The bottles are propelled by iron pistons that nod up and down like melancholy mad elephants."

DAVID

What d'you think?

MR DICK

Oh, just right. And excellent calligraphy. Your 'L' here looks like the handle of a butter-churn and the 'K' like a folding chair.

The dinner gong is banged downstairs.

JANET (O.S.)

Breakfast! Breakfast!

MR DICK

That'll be breakfast.

(he starts to turn away from DAVID, troubled)

"At my final breakfast I hear the mob gather to witness my death..."

DAVID  
 (excited)  
 We'll banish that mob, Mr Dick!

87 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - PARLOUR - DAY 87

BETSEY at breakfast, eating boiled eggs. Severing the top of one. DAVID runs down.

DAVID  
 Aunt - Mr Dick. Is he at all...?

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 Did he mention Charles the First?

DAVID  
 A little. Actually, quite a lot.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 That's his allegorical way of expressing it. He connects his illness with great disturbance and agitation. But his mind is sharp as a surgeon's lancet, make no mistake.

DAVID has a sudden thought.

DAVID  
 I think I may be able to help him.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 Then go back up, Trotwood. Janet can soft-boil an egg in a flash.

DAVID goes to exit, comes back.

DAVID  
 ...um...sorry, Trotwood?

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 I've been thinking that I might call you Trotwood. If I'm to financially support my nephew I want to like his name.

CUT TO:

88 INT. BESTEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - MR DICK'S ROOM - DAY 88  
 (CONTINUOUS)

DAVID comes back in. MR DICK is writing like a demon, piling up scraps of paper. He's upset and agitated.

DAVID  
 (excited)  
 Mr Dick! The troubling thoughts  
 from King Charles's head - they  
 weigh you down?

MR DICK  
 (looking at the pile)  
 (to himself)  
 "As I die I go from a corruptible  
 to an incorruptible crown."  
 (holds up his pen)  
 I throw them in there-  
 (nods to overflowing  
 wastepaper basket)  
 But they pile up and oppress me.

DAVID  
 (trying to copy Betsey's  
 gesture to snap Mr Dick  
 out of it)  
 But we can release them, Mr Dick.  
 We can cast them to the wind.

David looks at the kite. MR DICK follows his gaze.

HARD CUT TO:

89 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - PARLOUR - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 89

BETSEY is reading while having coffee. Wondering what the  
 commotion is upstairs, but smiling.

MR DICK (O.S.)  
 Kite time!

MR DICK and DAVID power through the room and out into the  
 garden, brushing past a large vase of flowers / greenery on  
 the way.

90 EXT. BETSEY'S HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER 90

DAVID is with MR DICK. The kite is now plastered with MR  
 DICK's writing and drawings. Dense text all over it. We go up  
 in the air with it.

MR DICK  
 The sky is absorbing the troubling  
 words. And...

DAVID  
 The higher the words go...

MR DICK  
 The more clear my mind becomes. Oh,  
 the clarity!



MR DICK changes, seem to become less tense, less twitchy, warmer, more naturally conversational.

MR DICK (CONT'D)

It's like I'm reading for the bar again, just before it all... and I shared a staircase with Tommy Traddles, who had a comic head of hair and was such a terrific fellow - "un camarade tres formidable," as the French say. There's a thing - I'd completely forgotten I can speak French! This is a remarkable day.

DAVID

It's a delight to see you so liberated.

MR DICK

What will you do?

DAVID

About what?

MR DICK

Your thoughts? What will you do with them?

DAVID

Oh, I like my thoughts.

MR DICK

But the voices. They are real?

DAVID

Yes. It's as if my head were a room with many visitors. They come and go, like...a breath.

MR DICK

We're going to be the best of friends.

(looking up, the kite is falling)

Oh dear. Oh dear.

(to himself, reverting to old Mr Dick)

"I can hear them build the scaffold and hone the axe's blade..."

DAVID

Let's run faster to keep it in the air. Look, it's rising.

They run faster.

MR DICK

Up it goes again. Three hundred hurrahs plus half a dozen imperial woo-hoos! My mind is clear...

DAVID

...As a soap-bubble!

They continue to run in the summer sunshine.

91 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - PARLOUR - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 91

They come back in past BETSEY, as she and JANET are putting the greenery/flowers back into a fresh arrangement.

MR DICK

This boy is terrific. Thank you, erm...

BETSEY

Trotwood. David's son.

MR DICK

Thank you, Trotwood Davidson.

DAVID

A pleasure, sir. Lovely flowers.

CUT TO:

92 EXT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - DAY 92

A set of WIND CHIMES tinkle in the breeze.

MR DICK (O.S.)

Kite time!

93 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - STAIRWELL - DAY 93

Passage of time. We watch a military manoeuvre from BETSEY and JANET. The table moved to one side, a HUGE VASE full of ferns held, standard lamp secured. Then MR DICK comes haring down the stairs with his kite, covered in writing and drawings of Charles 1st, and out through to the parlour. DAVID follows.

94 EXT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - DAY (MID SUMMER) 94

Passage of time. Outside BETSEY'S. A SMALL BOY on a donkey is being led over the green by a BOY.

DAVID (O.S.)

Donkeys!

DAVID comes out, clanging the pan with the ladle. A wild gesture to scare them off. Slightly undignified.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Shoo! I'll tan your hide and put  
you in a stew! I'm a huge maniac!

He clangs, not noticing a white-haired man and his daughter - MR WICKFIELD and AGNES have appeared.

DAVID pauses clanging, turns, sees them, is deeply embarrassed. Drops the ladle. A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
We suffer from a plague of donkeys.  
You may think I am exaggerating,  
which perhaps I am.

AGNES smiles.

WICKFIELD  
Very ferocious shoo-ing. You must  
be Trotwood. I'm Wickfield. I act  
for your aunt in matters of  
finance. My daughter Agnes...

DAVID goes for a handshake with WICKFIELD, but turns it into a bow to AGNES, quite low.

AGNES  
A bow! I am so rarely bowed to.

DAVID  
I hope I've started a new fashion.  
Unless you deem it inappropriate?

AGNES  
Not at all Trotwood! I shall demand  
it at our every meeting from now  
on, as if I am an Empress. Or mad.

BETSEY comes out.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Ah, Mr Wickfield! Please, come  
in...

WICKFIELD  
That was quite the journey. Is it  
too early for sherry?

AGNES/BETSEY  
A little early.

WICKFIELD  
Port then? It's seven in the  
evening in Singapore. I imagine.

AGNES  
 But scarcely dawn in  
 Newfoundland...

A look between AGNES and BETSEY, which DAVID clocks.

95 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - PARLOUR - MOMENTS LATER 95

AGNES and DAVID are sat close to the hallway door. BETSEY rushes past WICKFIELD, picks up a bottle of sherry and hands it to JANET without WICKFIELD seeing. JANET subtly sticks it in a drinks cabinet on wheels, shaped like an antique globe. Closes it. WICKFIELD stands, restless.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 (sitting down)  
 Mr Wickfield owns the freehold of a  
 very good educational establishment  
 in Canterbury.

She nods to JANET to start wheeling the Globe off.

WICKFIELD  
 It's snapping at the heels of the  
 better known establishments.

DAVID  
 I have a thirst for education that  
 sadly has never been quenched.

AGNES  
 Really? You give the impression of  
 having a very well watered  
 intellect.

There's a CLINK from the Globe. AGNES subtly gestures to JANET to stop.

WICKFIELD  
 All this talk of thirst is making  
 me thirsty...

The clinking attracts WICKFIELD's attention. BETSEY stands up, to block him.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 How is business, Mr Wickfield?

WICKFIELD skirts around her. JANET is forced to move aside.

WICKFIELD  
 (too quick)  
 All is well.  
 (a beat of reflection)  
 There are, of course, challenges -  
 reduced tariffs, the retreat from  
 mercantilism.  
 (MORE)

WICKFIELD (CONT'D)  
 (he's by the globe now)  
 Here and in Europe, the Americas...  
 (pokes the globe, hoping  
 to open it)  
 ...Africa. I could go on.  
 (he does)  
 India...

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 'All is well' would have sufficed.

MR DICK appears at the door.

MR DICK  
 (to AGNES)  
 Good afternoon, I'm Mr Dick. I am  
 very partial to gingerbread.

AGNES  
 As am I Mr Dick. I adore the fiery  
 taste. Delighted to meet you.

MR DICK  
 (to DAVID, pleased)  
 "Delighted."  
 (to the room)  
 Could you confirm something for me,  
 if you wouldn't mind?

DAVID, JANET and BETSEY do the 'not now' gesture to MR DICK.  
 He doesn't notice.

MR DICK (CONT'D)  
 My head...

AGNES  
 Yes?

MR DICK  
 It remains- does it not? - attached  
 to my body?

AGNES  
 (totally unfazed)  
 I'm looking at you now Mr Dick and  
 I can confirm without any doubt  
 that they are.

MR DICK  
 Good to hear. Would you like to see  
 an amazing kite?

HARD CUT TO:

The chaos of MR DICK'S room. DAVID and AGNES excited and busy on the floor, cutting up bits of manuscript, handing them to MR DICK. DICK pasting by dipping paper into a SAUCER full of glue, and turning to slap it onto the kite. Occasionally pausing to write down a thought.

DAVID

He believes that when Charles the First was executed, the King's troubles flew from his head to nest in Mr Dick's own.

AGNES

Is that why you fly them on your kite, Mr Dick, to rid yourself of them?

MR DICK

Precisely.

AGNES

Well, it is the obvious course of action.

MR DICK

Trotwood suggested it. He is a marvel.

Watches MR DICK swivel from notes to kite.

AGNES

Mr Dick, you look like you're playing the kettle-drums.

DAVID laughs.

DAVID

He does, of course!  
(to AGNES)  
You should write that down.

AGNES

Yes, ready for the next time I see someone pasting things at speed to a kite.

MR DICK

Oh - I like you.

AGNES

What a happy coincidence, because I like you too!

97

INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - PARLOUR - DAY

97

BETSEY and MR WICKFIELD now sitting down. The Globe has been moved over to the French doors.

WICKFIELD

(staring at the Globe)  
I will arrange for Trotwood to board with Mrs Strong. This possibly calls for a celebration...

BETSEY TROTWOOD

(claps)  
Hooray!

WICKFIELD

I was thinking more along the lines of...

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Tea? Janet!

WICKFIELD

(resigned)  
Tea would be fine.

MR DICK (O.S.)

Kite time!

JANET rushes out. A moment later, MR DICK leads AGNES and DAVID through. DICK steps back in for a moment, and opens the Globe.

MR DICK (CONT'D)

Why not have a big glass of port wine, Mr Wickfield, you do love it so.

WICKFIELD

I do, Mr Dick. I'm touched that you remember.

98

EXT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - GREEN - DAY (END OF SUMMER) 98

A picnic, which includes a bowl of soft-boiled eggs. BETSEY, MR DICK (his kite flying), DAVID and AGNES. BETSEY has a letter of admission from the school (or a Good Luck card), signed by Wickfield.

MR DICK

I shall miss our picnics when you go away to board, and a certain monarch starts to creep into my head.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Trot will visit, and we can visit  
him...

MR DICK  
(cuts in)  
I meant Charles The First.

DAVID/AGNES  
Yes.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(ignoring)  
..and there will be plenty more  
picnics. And dinners, and teas,  
with...

AGNES  
Buttered toast, piled  
high...in...haystacks.

MR DICK  
Haystacks! Very good.

AGNES  
So huge we'll serve them with  
pitchforks!

DAVID  
And coffee, tar-black and hissing  
hot.

This is now a game. BETSEY enjoying it.

MR DICK  
Hissing hot. Excellent. Good words.  
Agnes?

AGNES  
And fine dinners. Pot-bellied  
baskets of blackened chestnuts and  
long wreaths of sausages...

DAVID's turn - a new sense of focus.

DAVID  
(cuts in)  
Bottles of straw-coloured drinks,  
ripened long ago in lands where no  
fogs are, sparkling after their nap  
and pushing at their corks to help  
the corkscrew, like prisoners  
helping rioters force their gates.

Everyone goes quiet for a beat: he's won.



BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 Your mind operates at a rolling  
 boil, Trot. You'll enjoy Mrs  
 Strong's establishment - it's not  
 in an ideal condition, but means  
 well.

AGNES  
 (a joke, but meant)  
 A little like my father.

MR DICK laughs. BETSEY frowns.

99

EXT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - FRONT - DAY

99

A carriage pulls up. DAVID helps AGNES out. Goes to pick up  
 his trunk but URIAH HEEP rushes over to take it.

DAVID  
 Don't trouble yourself...

URIAH  
 It's not even a bit of trouble to  
 help. It's pure Christian pleasure.

MRS STRONG, principal of the establishment, arrives to see MR  
 WICKFIELD unsteadily and inelegantly descend backwards. URIAH  
 helps him, getting very close to AGNES.

URIAH (CONT'D)  
 This way sir...

MR WICKFIELD  
 Steady there, steady! These steps  
 are lethal. Very, very high...

AGNES  
 Uriah, please, there's no need...

MR WICKFIELD  
 I can't do it. I'll get back in.

AGNES  
 You're getting close. Come on - one  
 foot...then...that's it.

WICKFIELD lands awkwardly, turns to MRS STRONG.

WICKFIELD  
 Mrs Strong. Welcome. No, sorry, I'm  
 welcome aren't I? You're already  
 here. Sorry, my head is muddled...

AGNES  
 From the bumpy journey.

URIAH  
Very bumpy, seemingly.

WICKFIELD  
This is Cropwood Trotterfield.

DAVID  
Trotwood Copperfield.  
(shakes her hand)  
Pleased to meet you, Mrs Strong.  
What do you have in your hand?

AGNES  
(quietly, to DAVID)  
It's nothing.

MRS STRONG  
(upbeat)  
It's a very small piece of wall.  
But all is well. Come this way.

As she turns away, the smile leaves MRS STRONG's face.

100 INT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 100

MRS STRONG and DAVID walk through a dilapidated wreck of a building. URIAH trails behind them.

Several holes in the wall. MRS STRONG straightens a portrait to go over one, moves a bench to hide another. Fits the bit of plaster she's carrying into a third.

MRS STRONG  
The place may need a little  
decoration, once Mr Wickfield's  
funds are more fluid.

DAVID  
It's very...

He looks up. A BOY peers down through a hole in the ceiling.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
...airy.

MRS STRONG opens a door by booting the bottom with force. She then swaps a full bucket catching a drip with a BOY, who swaps it for an empty one.

She catches DAVID's reaction to this routine.

MRS STRONG  
Like many of the great old  
establishments, we have our little  
traditions.

101

INT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

101

The class, in long pews facing inwards over a table, chat. Most eyes on an older boy - STEERFORTH - smart, expensively styled hair. He has a cane which is slightly too short. He talks to another boy, MARKHAM, and the class in general.

STEERFORTH

Happens on this day once a month.  
Twelve o'clock on the dot, Mr Sharp  
pretends to visit the barber...

MRS STRONG and DAVID enter.

STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

...and then comes back an  
hour later wearing the  
shortest of his three wigs!

MRS STRONG

(to DAVID)  
We'll wait until Mr  
Steerforth finishes his funny  
story about the geography  
master.

MARKHAM and the other BOYS laugh at STEERFORTH's story. STEERFORTH sees MRS STRONG, stands. On his cue, so do the others. DAVID suddenly feels all eyes are on him.

MRS STRONG (CONT'D)

This is Copperfield. He's new.

STEERFORTH looks DAVID up and down, inspecting him.

STEERFORTH

I'd surmised as much, Mrs Strong,  
but appreciate the confirmation.

MRS STRONG

Haha. Very good Mr Steerforth.

STEERFORTH

(continues to study DAVID)  
Good buttons on that jacket...

MRS STRONG

(to DAVID)  
As you see, we currently aren't at  
capacity. A variety of things  
keeping students away - holidays,  
family events, influenza...

STEERFORTH

But certainly not a better  
education elsewhere, eh Mrs Strong?

The class laugh. URIAH arrives with DAVID's bags.

MRS STRONG

Very good. Again. Hahahaha.

STEERFORTH  
 (slightly mocking of MRS  
 STRONG's laugh)  
 Hahahaha.

MARKHAM  
 Haha!

URIAH has pushed through to DAVID, shakes his hand.

URIAH  
 Thrilled to make your acquaintance,  
 Master Copperfield.

MRS STRONG exits.

MRS STRONG  
 (exiting, to URIAH)  
 Bring those to the dorm please.

URIAH  
 (bowing low to DAVID)  
 I am in deep humility.

He exits, leaving the door open. We occasionally see him pass with bits of luggage.

STEERFORTH  
 And with that, Uriah Heep rubbed  
 himself out of the room.  
 (offers his hand)  
 Steerforth. James Steerforth.

DAVID  
 (nervous)  
 Davidson...no, David Copper...no,  
 sorry, Trotwood. Copperfield.

STEERFORTH  
 Is that all hyphenated?

Laughs from the class. DAVID unsure of how to respond.

DAVID  
 You see, my aunt calls me...

STEERFORTH  
 (interrupting)  
 And what do you make of our friend  
 Heep?

DAVID  
 He's perplexing.

MARKHAM  
 Perplexing.

STEERFORTH

An interesting word. Perplexing  
how?

MARKHAM

It's difficult to describe.

Half a beat, eyes on DAVID, who is unsure of his ground.

DAVID

He twitches his mouth like a  
curious lizard.

STEERFORTH

(big laugh)

Ha! He does. Tell me another thing.

DAVID

He stands so close by that he's  
nearer to you than your own shirt.

STEERFORTH

Perfect! You're sharp as a whip, I  
like you. Sit here. Markham, shift  
over, don't be a lump.

DAVID

(to MARKHAM)

Sorry.

MARKHAM, peeved, shuffles down the bench. The BOY on the end  
has to get up and go to the other side. DAVID now beside  
STEERFORTH. A notch more relaxed.

STEERFORTH

Heep was once a pupil here. Charity  
case. One feels sorry for boys of  
such background of course...

DAVID

(too quick)

Indeed. I do. Very sorry.

A bit of plaster drops from the ceiling.

MARKHAM

Heads!

STEERFORTH

Forgive the collapsing. Old  
Wickfield's funds are drying up.

MARKHAM

Unlike the man himself.

STEERFORTH

Loves his drink. Do you know  
Wickfield?

DAVID  
 (impersonating WICKFIELD)  
 "Is it too early for a sherry?"

DAVID mimes Wickfield drinking. STEERFORTH laughs. DAVID's tension eases further.

STEERFORTH  
 Here's Wickfield threading a  
 needle!

STEERFORTH mimes Wickfield's hand-shaking. Cruel, but funny. URIAH peers round the door. DAVID half-stands.

URIAH  
 Master Copperfield, I have left  
 your bags next to...

STEERFORTH  
 Boring. Not interested. Off you  
 creep, Heep!

The class laugh. Including, guiltily, DAVID. URIAH is humiliated but angry as hell. Slinks out as MRS STRONG re-enters. DAVID stands; he's the only one.

MRS STRONG  
 Isn't Mr Mell supposed to be taking  
 you for Latin?

STEERFORTH  
 (pulling DAVID down)  
 He's not here, Mrs Strong.

MRS STRONG  
 Oh no - not...?

STEERFORTH  
 Yes. Last seen halfway to  
 Broadstairs with a barmaid.

MRS STRONG closes her eyes briefly. Then re-composes herself.

102

INT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - DORMITORY - NIGHT

102

DAVID with STEERFORTH, unpacking. The St Paul's box is in DAVID's new trunk, with the 'HE BITES' placard and a lot of IOUs from Micawber. MARKHAM speaks to another couple of BOYS in the background. As DAVID sits on his bed, it wobbles. STEERFORTH grabs two bricks, smashes one with the other, props it up.

STEERFORTH  
 I'm glad you've arrived. I'd become  
 so bored of the same tedious fools  
 spouting their predictable noise.

STEERFORTH and DAVID realise MARKHAM has heard this. A beat.

DAVID

But no offence meant, Markham.

Big laugh from STEERFORTH. MARKHAM feigns a laugh.

STEERFORTH

Nice cut to that waistcoat - who's your tailor?

DAVID

Just - a man in Dover. My aunt took me...

STEERFORTH

So your aunt brought you up?

DAVID

Well, she...um...

(wants to end this...)

...she's certainly brought me up sharp a few times! She's a tartar!

STEERFORTH

Ha! The very daisy of the field is not fresher than you are. I shall call you Daisy - will you mind?

DAVID

(Yes)

Not at all.

MARKHAM

Why on earth would you...'Daisy'?

STEERFORTH

I have currant wine here and some almond cakes, if you'd like?

DAVID

Thank you.

DAVID goes over to STEERFORTH's area. It's like a private room, made of scavenged items: a pile of big old books as a wash-stand; a dead grandfather clock, the inside of which is full of waistcoats and shirts, the clock face removed, stood on bricks to act as a bedside table. And where the clock face was, a shaving kit. A smart jacket hangs on a tailor's dummy.

STEERFORTH pours some wine.

STEERFORTH

You haven't got a sister, have you Daisy?

DAVID

No.

STEERFORTH  
Oh. That's a pity.

Hands the glass to DAVID.

HARD CUT TO:

103 INT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - DORM - NIGHT

103

The dorm is quiet. Most boys asleep, including MARKHAM. Embers glow in the fireplace. DAVID reading by candlelight, his bed near STEERFORTH's.

STEERFORTH  
(restless)  
What are you reading?

DAVID  
Peregrine Pickle. I found it in the library here.

STEERFORTH  
We have a library?

DAVID  
Well, the stack of books propping up the cricket scoreboard.

STEERFORTH  
Ah. Then read to me. I can't sleep.

DAVID suddenly nervous. The book's words start to wobble and slide as they did with Murdstone.

DAVID  
This book's quite long. Why don't I tell you a story of mine? Perhaps one about a kindly nurse and her charge...

PEGGOTTY and YOUNG DAVID appear.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
...who slept in an upturned boat...

STEERFORTH  
No. I don't care for whimsy. Sorry.

PEGGOTTY and YOUNG DAVID slope off.

STEERFORTH (CONT'D)  
Do you have a scary story?

DAVID  
I have one about...an evil schoolmaster?



STEERFORTH

Yes! What does he look like?

A hideous one-eyed version of MURDSTONE emerges from STEERFORTH's tailor's dummy, wearing a similar jacket.

DAVID

He has but one eye when the popular prejudice runs in favour of two...

MURDSTONE has an eye patch. STEERFORTH laughs.

DAVID (CONT'D)

His hair...  
(he thinks)  
...he has none at all.

MURDSTONE now completely bald. This is DAVID controlling him.

STEERFORTH

What's the man's name?

DAVID

It's Murd-i-stone! Oh, he is cruel. He viciously beats any boy who doesn't know his lesson.

STEERFORTH

The monster! Is there vengeance? Is he himself thrashed and battered?

DAVID

He has an equally cruel sister.

STEERFORTH

Ah, you see, *he's* got a sister!

DAVID

She hangs a hard steel bag on her arm by a heavy chain, and is a cold and metallic lady...

A metal pillar or a water pipe with valve becomes JANE MURDSTONE holding her metallic bag. She looks a complete mess.

DAVID (CONT'D)

She takes no care of her appearance or hygiene and she punches her brother, to goad him on to further savagery!

JANE MURDSTONE punches the bald MURDSTONE in the side of his head. He whimpers.

MISS MURDSTONE

Be a man!

MURDISTONE

Jane!

STEERFORTH hears something outside.

STEERFORTH

Heep's up. Into bed.

DAVID jumps back into bed just before URIAH HEEP silently opens the door and looks in. The MURDSTONES have gone. URIAH creeps around, counts the boys, and then begins opening the odd drawer and trunk, peering in.

URIAH

Good. Fine. All fine.

Then he exits. A beat. MR MICAWBER appears in the shadows.

DAVID

Shall I tell you the tale of the insolvent but ever-hopeful...

STEERFORTH

No. No more stories Daisy. Sorry, but I need to sleep.

STEERFORTH turns over in bed as MICAWBER scratches his head and wanders off.

104 INT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY

104

DAVID and STEERFORTH stand in the factory, watching the earlier scene of bottle-smashing, but fictionalised and more stylized now by DAVID. Thick shards of light break across the room. MURDSTONE, JANE MURDSTONE, CREAKLE and TUNGAY are all present, but it's YOUNG DAVID who holds a bottle.

YOUNG DAVID

I shall smash it!

MISS MURDSTONE

Then I shall smash you!

MURDSTONE

Jane!

TUNGAY

Jane!

CREAKLE

(quietly)  
Be quiet.

TUNGAY

QUIET!

MURDSTONE

Tungay!

TUNGAY

Tungay! Me!

CREAKLE

(quietly)

Be quiet.

TUNGAY

QUIET!

YOUNG DAVID smashes the bottle.

MISS MURDSTONE

Right...

MURDSTONE

Enough!

TUNGAY

ENOUGH!

MURDSTONE approaches YOUNG DAVID. YOUNG DAVID punches MURDSTONE in the jaw and he falls into a cart full of bottles, taking JANE with him. They both scream. The cart starts to move towards the huge rickety-looking structure of bottles. Instead of crashing into the structure the cart curves away, tips over and bottles fall in two directions. One bottle hits a strut, which props up the huge structure. The strut falls, and the huge structure collapses immediately. A terrible, hilarious CRASH.

STEERFORTH

And you make these tales of the factory boy up out of thin air?

DAVID

Invented, yes.

The MURDSTONES and a horrified TUNGAY and CREAKLE watch, as YOUNG DAVID escapes.

SEAMLESS  
TRANSITION TO:

105

EXT. CANTERBURY STREETS - DAY

105

DAVID and STEERFORTH walk through shelves of bottles and step out into the middle of the street. Rows of bottles can be seen in the foreground, on a MARKET STALL.

STEERFORTH

I could see the boy like he was actually there, Daisy. You truly are the Eighth Wonder.

DAVID

Thank you.

STEERFORTH

You seem to know all the details about the factory - was your father in manufacturing?

DAVID

My stepfather...

STEERFORTH

(suspects something?)

You have a stepfather but were brought up by an aunt...?

DAVID

(changes subject,  
pointing)

Who is that, Steerforth?

A young lady, MISS LARKINS, is climbing into a carriage.

STEERFORTH

Ah - that's the eldest Miss Larkins. Pretty, isn't she?

DAVID

She is a blaze of beauty.

STEERFORTH

She's engaged to an army captain.

DAVID

Only because she has yet to meet me...

They laugh, then...

BUTCHER'S BOY (O.S.)

Look out! Couple of Mrs Strong's prize poodles have got loose!

Across the road, behind a MEAT STALL is a BUTCHER'S BOY, DAVID's age, hair greased flat. Looks like a boxer.

BUTCHER'S BOY (CONT'D)

Oi! Ladies! Come here! I'll beat you with one hand tied behind me.

DAVID is aware that MISS LARKINS is clocking this.

DAVID

(shouts to BUTCHER'S BOY)

You want to fight do you? Then sir - name your time!

STEERFORTH

Don't fight him. Promise me you  
won't fight him.

106 EXT. BUTCHER'S SHOP YARD - DAY

106

DAVID ready to fight. Surrounded by meat detritus, off-cuts, bits of hooves, blood in metal buckets, and PEOPLE.

STEERFORTH

You can box, I take it Daisy?

DAVID

After a fashion, certainly...

REFEREE BOY

Gentlemen! No eyeball-gouging,  
no...actually everything else is  
allowed. Get set...fight!!

The crowd roars. DAVID starts dancing around, loosening up, raises his fists to...BANG!! BUTCHER'S BOY has run and smashed a fist into his face. DAVID flailing.

STEERFORTH

Hook, feint, uppercut!

DAVID turns, hazy and staggering, towards STEERFORTH.

DAVID

What?

Wallop! The BUTCHER'S BOY slams in for a sudden, crunching punch that knocks DAVID out. Brief blackness. DAVID comes to. He's fallen into a pile of straw and meat off-cuts. He's just missed a SHEEP'S HEAD. STEERFORTH, anxious to avoid the filth, helps him up by offering him his cane. Pulling himself up, DAVID nearly knocks over a sloshing bucket of blood.

STEERFORTH

You did, in some ways, very well  
Daisy. But a gentleman shouldn't be  
beaten by a Butcher's Boy.  
Presumably we must buy steak for  
your eye from the self-same fellow.

DAVID, covered in mud and some animal blood, looks through the arch into the street. MISS LARKINS is walking by with a FRIEND. She pauses, looks at him, horrified.

STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

Let's get you to Wickfield's house.

107 EXT. WICKFIELD'S HOUSE - DAY

107

Establisher of Mr Wickfield's townhouse. STEERFORTH brings DAVID inside.

STEERFORTH

Come on. I'm afraid you've been  
butchered, dear Daisy.

108 INT. WICKFIELD'S HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - DAY

108

A SMALL BOY with a bandaged head walks past STEERFORTH. DAVID on a sofa. URIAH, perched on the arm, tends to DAVID's black eye with a piece of steak, his cut lip with hot water and iodine.

URIAH

There's a degree of animal blood,  
from the meat-

(to STEERFORTH)

-as well as Master Copperfield's  
own essence.

STEERFORTH

Try not to die or anything boring  
like that Daisy.

DAVID

I'll try my be-

URIAH places a big piece of cotton on DAVID's lip. STEERFORTH exits.

URIAH

What a confident gentleman he is.  
(dabbing the cut lip)  
Mother has taught me the medical  
rudiments. She's the laundress  
here. Washes your bedsheets.

DAVID

Always very clean. Relatively.

URIAH

Oh! She will burst with gratitude  
that you've acknowledged her  
spontaneously, Master Copperfield.  
(getting closer to DAVID)  
Miss Wickfield, she's - she's  
very...do you not think?

DAVID

(taking the meat off)  
Very...? What? Tall? Pleasant? Good  
at backgammon?

URIAH gives DAVID a look. Then AGNES enters. URIAH exits.

AGNES

My dear Trotwood, they told me you were here. Oh dear, look at you.

(then)

But I imagine the other fellow must be dreadfully injured.

DAVID

Oh yes - close to death. Measured for his coffin.

She sits beside DAVID on the sofa and begins tending to his injuries.

AGNES

How were Uriah's ministrations?

DAVID

He's like a human cold in the head! He gets so close...

AGNES

Yes! It's as if he lives up your nose and is keen to get home.

They laugh.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Did he mention his mother?

DAVID

His mother?! Oh, Agnes! I burst with gratitude that you should ask me such a question spontaneously!

They laugh harder.

AGNES

So is this Steerforth's doing, getting you into fights?

DAVID

No! He tried to stop me. Doesn't think a gentleman should be seen fighting a butcher's boy.

AGNES

A gentleman!

DAVID

Yes. Steerforth thinks of me as a gentleman.

AGNES

You are.

(pause)

So I'm assuming you haven't told him...?

DAVID

No. I fear he might...This is the first time someone like that has regarded me as an equal. Except you, Agnes. And I think of you as...

Special?

AGNES

A sister.

DAVID (CONT'D)

DAVID (CONT'D)

A special sister.

Micro reaction from AGNES. Suddenly, URIAH has appeared between them, behind the sofa. AGNES gets up, putting space between herself and URIAH.

URIAH

Might I be bold enough to ask you to come to tea? With me and mother.

DAVID

What a shame! I fear I have a prior engagement on that date.

URIAH

On which date? I don't believe I mentioned a date.

AGNES

(holding in laughter)  
I don't believe you did.

URIAH

I understand. It's not my place to invite the likes of you to tea.

DAVID stands.

DAVID

No, no! I would...I would be glad to come, Mr Heep.

URIAH

Uriah, please. Oh, Mother will go off like a rocket! Like a rocket! On the 14th, perhaps, at four?  
(laying a hand on AGNES' shoulder)  
And if Miss Wickfield would care...?

AGNES

Sadly...  
(teasing DAVID)  
On the 14th at four...I have a prior engagement.



DAVID

Of course! I am meant to join you  
in that engagement, am I not Agnes?

AGNES

I don't believe so, no.

DAVID

Good, then I can definitely come to  
tea...Uriah!

URIAH

Oh! I am so proud to be noticed by  
you! I'm in ecstasy!

URIAH does another very low bow.

URIAH (CONT'D)

I will arrange things with mother.

AGNES visibly relaxes as URIAH heads for the door. She begins  
to move back towards the sofa.

URIAH (CONT'D)

(re steak)

Are you done with that? It's a  
tolerably nice bit of rump.

(to AGNES)

No offence meant, I'm sure.

DAVID nods. URIAH takes the steak, bows low, exits.

109

INT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

109

DAVID now much more confident. Lounging around with  
STEERFORTH on a bench. All the BOYS chatting, relaxed.

STEERFORTH

Tell me more about the impecunious  
debtor hiding behind carcasses.

(impression of DAVID)

"There's something on the way!"

DAVID

(as MICAWBER)

"Something will turn up!"

STEERFORTH

That's it!

As if by magic, MICAWBER's voice is heard.

MICAWBER (O.S.)

An excellent precept, young man!

A beaming MICAWBER comes through the door. He's wearing a second-hand suit too big for him, a waistcoat made of the distinctive curtains, and a pair of pince-nez. YOUNG DAVID walks to his side, smiling. A story is coming alive again. Then MRS STRONG and URIAH HEEP come in behind him.

MRS STRONG

We have a new master joining us:  
Professor Micawber, MA Cantab!

YOUNG DAVID disappears. Nod from MICAWBER to an amazed DAVID, who has his head down, avoiding eye contact.

MR MICAWBER

(fiddles with glasses)  
Good morning boys. Be seated.

STEERFORTH

(whispering to David)  
Oh dear Lord, this place really  
must be short of money.

MRS STRONG

You lived with the Professor when  
you were in London I believe, Mr  
Copperfield?

DAVID

The Professor, yes. Briefly, and at  
the same time lengthily.

URIAH

Very nice! Very genteel.

URIAH exits. Followed by MRS STRONG.

MR MICAWBER

Now! Which particular dish from the  
great feast of knowledge will it be  
our mutual privilege to partake in  
at this current juncture?

The boys look at him blankly.

MR MICAWBER (cont'd) (CONT'D)

In short... what lesson is it now?

The BLACKBOARD behind him contains mathematical sums and equations (but there's enough room for MICAWBER to write).

STEERFORTH

(enjoying this)  
It's Latin grammar now, sir.

A look from DAVID: no it isn't!

MR MICAWBER

(oh dear)

Ah! Latin. Good. Conjugations!  
Active indicatives! Amo, amas,  
amat. Aquarium, aquarius, gymnasium  
and omnibus. Etcetera.

STEERFORTH

And how does that ode continue?

MR MICAWBER

In much the same vein, before  
reaching its apposite end. Or  
Terminus! To use the Latin word.

(hastily)

But we linger too long in the  
ancient world. Let us diversify.  
Mathematics!

MICAWBER turns to the blackboard, finds a space on which to  
write, picks up some chalk.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)

Behold, the most important  
numerical lesson a man can learn.  
Annual income twenty pounds...

He chalks '£20' on the board.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)

...annual expenditure nineteen  
nineteen and six...

He chalks '£19.19s.6d ='

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)

...result:

MARKHAM

Sixpence!

MR MICAWBER

No, smarty-pantaloon. Result:  
happiness!

STEERFORTH begins grinning widely. The others follow suit.  
DAVID torn between his two friends.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)

But, conversely, annual income  
twenty pounds...

(chalks '£20')

...annual expenditure twenty pounds  
nought and six...

(chalks '20.0s.6d =')

...result - misery! Or at least  
until something turns up.

STEERFORTH turns wide-eyed and smiling to DAVID.

STEERFORTH  
(mouths, points)  
It's him!

DAVID  
(mouths)  
Don't say anything...

MR MICAWBER  
Please copy that in your best hand.

The boys get to work. Silence. Close on DAVID. We hear the wheeze of a concertina being taken out of a bag. DAVID's eyes widen with horror. Then: terrible music. Everyone looks up. MICAWBER is playing. Nods to DAVID - "Great, isn't it?"

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
(over the music)  
There is a belief among a good many  
medical men that music may help in  
the absorption of knowledge.

MICAWBER plays on. Sniggers begin, then laughing.

STEERFORTH  
Enough! I'm tempted to burst my ear  
drums with a pair of pencils.

MR MICAWBER  
I beg your pardon, sir?

DAVID  
Steerforth meant that possibly the  
instrument might have developed a  
leak, or...

STEERFORTH  
Not at all. I meant he is a dismal  
musician.

MR MICAWBER  
Be quiet please, Mr Steelforge. Who  
are you to insult a gentleman...?

STEERFORTH  
(heads to MICAWBER, looks  
around the room)  
Where is he, this gentleman? I see  
only an impudent beggar. Put that  
damned contraption down.

He tries to grab the concertina. MICAWBER holds on to it. Tiny squeaks as each refuses to let go. DAVID gets up - unsure of whom to help. Funny, but then STEERFORTH grabs the concertina and throws it violently across the room. MRS STRONG enters, with URIAH.

MRS STRONG

I heard some manner of mad wheezing Professor. Is there a squirrel trapped in the pipes again?

STEERFORTH

He's no professor. Ask him about debtors' prison. Ask him about the scores of IOUs in Copperfield's trunk.

STEERFORTH looks to URIAH. The smallest of nods from URIAH.

DAVID

'Scores' is an exaggeration. A few. Five or six...ten at most...

STEERFORTH

He's extorted money for years and has followed Daisy here to continue his efforts.

MICAWBER

Mr Steepgorge is correct in that I did, to my shame, reside within prison walls after pecuniary...

MRS STRONG

Even we draw the line at employing former convicts!

(realises...)

...and indeed, much higher than that is where we actually draw the line. We'll part, if you please. Mr Heep, show him out.

URIAH leads out MICAWBER. DAVID goes to object but MICAWBER places a hand on his shoulder.

MICAWBER

It's no matter, my friend...

MICAWBER picks his concertina up, stuffs it, unlocked, in his bag, so it emits a small, muffled tuneless sigh as he walks.

110

EXT. CANTERBURY STREET - NEXT MORNING

110

DAVID runs through the streets. People boarding the coach, luggage stowed. DAVID sees the MICAWBERS. A pregnant MRS MICAWBER - wearing a cape made from a curtain, the curtain tie with tassels around her neck - sees him, gives him a hug.

MRS MICAWBER

No sooner are we reunited than we must part again. Like the Bible story. I'm sure there has to be a Bible story where that happens.

DAVID  
 (to MR MICAWBER)  
 Were you aware I studied at Mrs  
 Strong's before you came here?

MR MICAWBER  
 Not as I recall. I had perhaps a  
 dim awareness of the more recent  
 chapters in your odyssey, but...

DAVID  
 But your being here as a professor,  
 in the same building as me...?

MR MICAWBER  
 Pure kismet and happenstance. "As  
 flies to wanton boys are we to the  
 gods," to quote our ultimate poet.

COACH DRIVER  
 All aboard who's going aboard!

MRS MICAWBER boards with the CHILDREN. MR MICAWBER puts a  
 hand on DAVID's shoulder. It's fatherly.

MR MICAWBER  
 I do wonder... I have found the  
 funds to pay for my family's  
 travel, but my own fare is lacking.

Behind MICAWBER is a chalked sign: 'Canterbury to London £1'.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
 Might I possibly trouble you...

DAVID  
 ...no trouble...

MR MICAWBER  
 ...for the exact sum...

DAVID  
 ...of course...

DAVID takes out a pound note.

MR MICAWBER  
 ...of four pounds ten and  
 thruppence?

MICAWBER clocks the £1 sign, and makes a too-late attempt to  
 cover it. He aborts the mission half way through putting his  
 hand up. A weary beat from DAVID, who hands over the money.

DAVID  
 Safe travels.

A beat of recognition, they both know what just happened. Then MICAWBER is back to his old self.

MICAWBER  
 (climbing onto the coach,  
 it pulls away)  
 We are quadrilaterally concluded!  
 In short, square!

MRS MICAWBER  
 (pleased)  
 Geometry. Goodbye young sir! Until  
 we meet again!

As the coach disappears DAVID sees URIAH across the street. Traffic keeps passing so they have to wait to speak.

URIAH  
 I imagine you have forgotten!

DAVID  
 Tea? No I...

Traffic.

URIAH  
 Why on earth should you remember  
 people of our station? We have a  
 nerve to expect it.

DAVID  
 I haven't forgotten...

Traffic. Then when the traffic clears, URIAH is gone. DAVID, depressed, angry. Rips up MICAWBER's IOU. Turns to see the BUTCHER'S BOY and his ASSISTANT delivering meat from a handcart further down the street. DAVID, fired up, goes over. Pulls back his arm to thump the BUTCHER'S BOY, but immediately gets a shoulder of lamb in the face.

CUT TO:

111 EXT. THE HEEPS' HOUSE - DAY 111

Establisher of the Heeps' humble home.

MRS HEEP (O.S.)  
 You say he hit you with a joint of  
 meat?

112 INT. THE HEEPS' HOUSE - DAY 112

URIAH and his MOTHER in their sparsely furnished, but neat and clean house, sat on a large round table covered in tea things, including a bottle of milk. A pile of law books. The odd ornament. DAVID has a red mark on one side of his face.

DAVID

A leg of lamb I believe.

MRS HEEP

(checking the mark)

No. That looks more like a half  
shoulder. Or a big bit of brisket.

(offering cake)

Cake? It's quite heavy.

URIAH

I like a heavy cake. I like to know  
I've had a cake.

MRS HEEP

He can't abide a light sponge.

DAVID

I see...

(takes a piece, struggles  
to cut into it)

Well, this looks very...

(eats - Jesus)

...good Lord. That's wonderfully  
dense.

MRS HEEP moves her chair closer to DAVID. A moment later, so  
does URIAH. DAVID uncomfortable. Looks around...

DAVID (CONT'D)

I see you're studying, Mr Heep?

URIAH

Uriah, if you can bear to. Yes,  
improving my legal knowledge. I am  
hopeful that Mr Wickfield might be  
willing to take me on as an  
apprentice at law.

DAVID

Perhaps you'll become a partner!

URIAH

Do you mock me?

DAVID

You seem to search for mockery.  
That was meant sincerely, Uriah.

URIAH

(overexcited)

"Uriah"! Did you hear that? He  
called me Uriah!

MRS HEEP

I did!



URIAH  
Spontaneously!

MRS HEEP  
And him a gentleman!

URIAH  
It's like the blowing of old  
breezes to hear you say Uriah.  
It thrills me to the very stomach.

DAVID  
(checking the clock)  
I'm happy for you.

URIAH  
Time is a concern? Are you worried  
humbleness is an infectious  
disease?

DAVID  
No, no, I just can't stay too  
long...

MRS HEEP  
You can if I bar the door!

URIAH  
We could keep him as our little  
pet.

DAVID  
I beg your pardon?

URIAH realises he's gone too far.

URIAH  
Sorry, it's a joke! Forgive me,  
I've been attempting to learn  
Gentlemen's Humour from a book.

MRS HEEP  
He has! What do you think of Mr  
Wickfield?

Both HEEPS shift chairs in exact unison closer to DAVID.

DAVID  
He is...a good man, I feel.

URIAH  
He takes wine with an enviable  
degree of enjoyment, don't he?

DAVID  
I've seen him take wine, but...

URIAH  
 You've seen him. That's good to know, interesting to know - that you've witnessed the deed.

DAVID  
 'Witnessed the deed'?

URIAH and MRS HEEP nudge closer. This time they move the place settings they left behind with previous shifts.

URIAH  
 Your associate, the Professor. He's a sort, isn't he?

DAVID  
 Is he?

MRS HEEP  
 Lodging with a beggar, is that a London particular?

DAVID  
 Mr Micawber isn't a...

MRS HEEP  
 (off a look from URIAH)  
 More tea?

MRS HEEP exits to the kitchen with the teapot. URIAH nudges even closer. A beat.

URIAH  
 I had an interesting talk with Micawber as I was showing him out.

DAVID  
 Did you?

URIAH  
 Fascinating, your time in London.  
 (calling, clinking milk)  
 Mother! Bring another *bottle* of milk through. This *bottle* is almost empty and another *bottle* is needed.

DAVID  
 You seem very vexed by this bottle.

URIAH  
 Your friend Steerforth is damning of the humbler classes. A veritable *factory* of damnation. How would you like to help me secure a position with Mr Wickfield?

DAVID  
 (gets close)  
 I know you told Steerforth about  
 Micawber's IOUs. I've a mind to  
 throw this cake at you and break a  
 rib.

URIAH  
 You're very fond of violence,  
 aren't you?

DAVID gets up to leave. MRS HEEP comes in with a tray of tea,  
 milk, huge fruitcake.

MRS HEEP  
 More heavy cake!

URIAH  
 Ahh! Lovely.

MRS HEEP  
 (to DAVID)  
 You must take some home with you!

113 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE HEEP'S HOUSE - DUSK 113

DAVID leaves the Heep house, with a large slice of cake. He's  
 angry. Throws the cake into a metal bucket with a massive  
 clang. He strides back towards school with some  
 determination.

114 EXT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - SIDE OF BUILDING - DUSK 114

A little later. The mark on DAVID's face has gone down.

DAVID storms up to STEERFORTH. Some hand-carts taking boys'  
 luggage away. LITTIMER, Steerforth's Butler, carries out some  
 of his bags through a side door.

DAVID  
 Steerforth! Micawber's harmless. He  
 cared for my well-being for years.

STEERFORTH  
 The rogue was exploiting your  
 charitable nature. You should be  
 thanking me Daisy.

DAVID  
 My name is David. Not Daisy, not  
 Trot, my name is David Copperfield.

STEERFORTH  
 Then why not go by it? What else  
 are you hiding, David?

DAVID

Well I can't hide anything when  
you've got your spindly little spy  
Heep searching my possessions.

STEERFORTH

My instinct is to protect you,  
because you can't protect yourself.

DAVID

Yes I can!

STEERFORTH

A malnourished apprentice knocked  
you out cold!

DAVID goes to hit STEERFORTH. BOYS watch from the windows.

STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

What was that? It was like you were  
reaching for a Chelsea bun.

DAVID strikes STEERFORTH again, who instinctively hits DAVID  
back on the bottom, with his cane. DAVID yelps.

DAVID

And that was like an ageing dowager  
poking a fire.

STEERFORTH

What does that even mean? You're  
just a bag of words.

DAVID

What is it? What's in you that  
makes you like this?

STEERFORTH

I don't know.  
(drops arms to his sides)  
Go on. Hit me. I deserve to be hit.

DAVID

I don't want to hit you.

STEERFORTH

Hit me. In the face.

DAVID

No!

STEERFORTH

I'm sorry. I'm forever doing this -  
I make a dear friendship and then I  
tread it into the dirt...

DAVID  
No. We're still dear friends. We  
always shall be.

They sit on a trunk/bench.

STEERFORTH  
Forgive me if I went too far with  
the Pretend Professor. Truly. It's  
upset you and I'm sorry.

DAVID  
Thank you.

STEERFORTH  
I'm fretting. And angry. Mother is  
due and I always get this odd  
feeling, which...I don't know...

DAVID  
...smoulders within you like smoke  
from damp logs.

STEERFORTH  
Yes.

HARD CUT TO:

115 EXT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - FRONT - DUSK 115

MRS STEERFORTH - an imperious, well-dressed woman with an old  
scar on her lip - appears out of a carriage, head first, in  
SLOW MOTION. The wind catches her shawl.

116 INT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DUSK 116

SLOW MOTION: MRS STEERFORTH strides through the hallway  
accompanied by a nervous MRS STRONG. LITTIMER holds an  
umbrella over MRS STEERFORTH to shield her from drips. She  
glares at the interior as she goes.

They pass holes in the walls. There are BOYS behind sections  
of the wall holding it up, and covering holes with similarly  
coloured material. These are removed a moment after MRS  
STEERFORTH passes - we catch a glimpse of a LITTLE BOY's head  
through a hole, before it disappears.

As they turn the corner, we return to a normal frame rate:

MRS STRONG  
We intend, when further funds  
clear, to improve the building.

MRS STEERFORTH  
How? By demolishing it?

MRS STRONG  
 Haha. Very droll, Mrs Steerforth.

MRS STEERFORTH  
 Any wit was unintentional.  
 (glancing into a room)  
 Someone has left a clarinet in that  
 pantry.

MRS STRONG  
 That's actually the Music Room.

117 EXT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - SIDE OF BUILDING - DUSK 117

Back with DAVID and STEERFORTH, now sat down.

STEERFORTH  
 If Micawber is real, does that mean  
 the others from your stories are  
 too? The factory boy?

DAVID  
 Look, I can't do this any more. Now  
 seems as good a time...

MRS STEERFORTH (O.S.)  
 James?

MRS STEERFORTH and LITTIMER appear in the doorway. MRS  
 STEERFORTH folds her umbrella, hands it to DAVID without  
 looking at him.

STEERFORTH  
 Mother! This is-

DAVID  
 David Copperfield. My very great  
 pleasure to...

MRS STEERFORTH  
 What is your background, Mr  
 Copperfield? Who are your people?

DAVID  
 My people?

MRS STEERFORTH  
 Your family. Are they anyone?

DAVID nervous under this scrutiny.

DAVID  
 My parents died when...

MRS STEERFORTH  
 Prep school?

DAVID  
Yes. In, um...in London.

MRS STEERFORTH  
I'll probably know it. Which one?

DAVID  
Creakle's?

MRS STEERFORTH  
Creakle? Is that a saint? I don't think so. Who was the headmaster?

DAVID  
Mr Murdstone.

Quick look to STEERFORTH to see if he's recognised the name.

MRS STEERFORTH  
What was the uniform?

DAVID  
Uh...trousers, certainly, and...

MRS STEERFORTH is bored now...

MRS STEERFORTH  
(straightening  
STEERFORTH's collar)  
Anyway, James - I'm here. Since you bleated and bleated. I'll see you at Mrs Strong's interminable speech. I've brought a book. And a pillow.

She takes the umbrella from DAVID without a thank-you, exits with LITTIMER.

STEERFORTH  
My mother.

DAVID  
I see. Good lord.

STEERFORTH  
Did you notice her scar? As a young boy she once exasperated me. So I threw a hammer at her.

DAVID  
(thinks he's joking)  
Ha ha!  
(realises he isn't)  
Oh.

STEERFORTH  
So, where did you school? And was Murdstone a master there?

DAVID  
There was no prep school.

STEERFORTH  
Ah.

DAVID  
My classroom was a bottling factory  
and my bed was two of Micawber's  
dining chairs. I'm here because my  
aunt saved me.

STEERFORTH  
Admirable.

DAVID  
Do you mean it?

STEERFORTH  
Of course! Self-made man. Picked  
life up by the scruff and shook it.

DAVID  
Thank you.

STEERFORTH  
Kicked misfortune in the britches!  
May I still call you Daisy?

DAVID  
No.

STEERFORTH  
Ha.

118 EXT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - SCHOOL FIELD - DAY

118

The next day. MRS STRONG stands on a log on the lawn. The school is partly hidden behind a thick hedge. The leaving party looks very cheap. Lots of PARENTS and BOYS are heading for their carriages, through a gap in the hedge. WICKFIELD is with AGNES, who looks different, new dress and hairstyle.

MRS STRONG  
(aware nobody is  
listening)  
...as our reputation strengthens,  
so our intake of new boys for the  
coming year will be more select and  
exclusive than ever before.

STEERFORTH nudges DAVID, holds up three fingers. DAVID sniggers.

MRS STRONG (CONT'D)  
Thank you all for coming to  
Leavers' Day!  
(MORE)



MRS STRONG (CONT'D)

Do stay for refreshments. We're  
delighted to-  
(as PEOPLE leave)  
-oh, good-bye!

Loads of PEOPLE continue to exit.

MR WICKFIELD approaches URIAH and MRS HEEP, who watch AGNES.  
URIAH fills his glass.

MR WICKFIELD

(proud)  
My daughter, Agnes.

MRS HEEP

She's lovely.

MR WICKFIELD raises his glass to AGNES and wanders off.

MRS HEEP (CONT'D)

Very pure. Skin like alabaster.

URIAH

Mother, am I not growing too old  
for a bachelor?

BETSEY, with MR DICK, leads MR SPENLOW - prosperous, late 40s  
- towards DAVID, who is distracted by DORA, standing off to  
one side.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Trotwood! This is Mr Spenlow. Your  
future employer.

DAVID

What am I to be?

MR DICK

A Brazier!

BETSEY TROTWOOD

A proctor. You know this Trot.

DAVID

(distracted, pushing past)  
Yes. Sorry. Good afternoon, Mr  
Spenlow.

MR DICK was about to say something but DAVID's gone. MRS  
STRONG approaches with a tray of food.

MRS STRONG

Would you like a small sausage? Or  
lots of them? We have so many.

As SPENLOW heads off with BETSEY we see what's been  
distracting DAVID - DORA, the most beautiful woman he's ever  
seen. She's holding a small dog, JIP.

DORA

You were staring slightly. Is there something wrong with me?

DAVID

No. Goodness me no. I apologise for my rudeness.

DORA

He is apologising Jip. Shall we forgive him?

(nothing from JIP)

He says we shall.

DAVID

Thank you Jip.

DORA

(doing Jip's voice, low)

Think nothing of it, sir.

DAVID

He speaks very well.

DORA

It was actually me! I like to pretend he speaks. Some people think it idiotic.

They're next to an apple tree.

DAVID

Oh, I do it myself, all the time. Don't I Mr Apple Tree?

(tree's voice)

Yes-

(loses confidence)

-you do.

Awkward beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'm David Copperfield.

DORA

Are you still being the tree?

DAVID

No.

He offers his hand.

DORA

I'm Dora. Spenlow.

DAVID

Spenlow! Dora Spenlow!

DORA  
 Yes, I don't know why I said it  
 like that. "Dora. Spenlow." I don't  
 usually stop in the middle.

They just stop and stare at each other. Then:

BETSEY TROTWOOD (O.S.)  
 Trotwood!

DAVID heads off.

DORA  
 (as JIP)  
 Good-bye sir!

DAVID  
 Sorry. What was that?

DORA  
 Oh, it was...it was Jip.

DAVID  
 Ah, yes!  
 (as the tree)  
 Good-bye!  
 (points to the tree)  
 Tree.

DORA  
 I know.

119 EXT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - FRONT - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 119

STUDENTS are being congratulated by MRS STRONG, and  
 collecting their Leavers Books.

DAVID passes MRS STRONG.

MRS STRONG  
 Good luck Mr Copperfield. I hope  
 this establishment has lived up to  
 your expectations?

DAVID  
 It is, I'm afraid, a crumbling  
 disgrace. But I've been happy.

MRS STRONG  
 That's lovely to hear. Thank you.

DAVID hurries off.

MRS STEERFORTH and STEERFORTH go over to MRS STRONG. She  
 assumes they'll say something.

MRS STEERFORTH

Don't speak.

MRS STEERFORTH shakes MRS STRONG's hand and brushes past. As does STEERFORTH.

MRS STRONG

It's an emotional time, I understand.

120 EXT. MRS STRONG'S SCHOOL - SCHOOL FIELD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)120

WICKFIELD walks with BETSEY. He has an empty wine glass. AGNES is nearby, talking to some TEACHERS, glancing occasionally at her father to make sure he's okay.

MR DICK

I should like to go home.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Just another two hours.

MR DICK

What if the donkeys are back?

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Forty-five minutes, then.

WICKFIELD, a bit drunk, stumbles.

BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)

Very uneven ground here. I almost stumbled myself a moment ago.

WICKFIELD

Very dangerous indeed. There should be signs up.

URIAH approaches with a bottle of wine.

URIAH

Some more wine sir?

MR WICKFIELD

No. I don't need it.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

He doesn't need it. Thank you.

URIAH

I see. You want me to take it away, sir? The delicious, tannic, deep-red wine?

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Yes please.

WICKFIELD

Actually - I will have the smallest amount. An ounce. Less.

HEEP fills WICKFIELD's glass, exits as MRS STRONG approaches.

MRS STRONG

Ah, Mr Wickfield, while I've got you cornered - not cornered but 'at bay', may I talk about roofs? And our ever-so-slight lack of them...?

BETSEY leaves them to talk as DAVID, excited, approaches with MR DICK.

DAVID

(to BETSEY)

Aunt - where's Agnes? I want to tell her something.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

She's just there Trot. Looking very beautiful I think. Go speak to her.

DAVID heads off. DICK goes to follow but BETSEY holds him back, and steers him away.

MR DICK

(re kite)

Useless. Without a breeze it's just wood and paper. Stupid kite.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

It's not a stupid kite, Mr Dick. It's a splendid kite.

MR DICK

(mumbled)

It's quite stupid.

DAVID nods an apology to the TEACHERS as he pulls AGNES away from them.

DAVID

Agnes!

(notices her new look)

You look very striking.

AGNES

Why thank you...

DAVID

I am in love!

AGNES

(hang on - with me?)

You're in love...?

DAVID  
Utterly. With Dora. Spenlow. I  
don't know why I said it like that.

AGNES  
(right)  
Ah! The girl with the yapping dog.

DAVID  
What a face.

AGNES  
What a voice that comes out of it.

DAVID  
Do you mock me Agnes?

AGNES  
I do. With affection, but entirely  
without mercy.  
(DAVID now distracted)  
Do you know, Papa and I are also  
moving to London?

DAVID  
(looks for MR SPENLOW)  
I see...

He sees DORA showing an ARMY OFFICER JIP's trick.

AGNES  
You'll think I'm following you.  
(tickling DAVID)  
"Help me! I'm being followed by  
Agnes!" She's as persistent as a  
bluebottle in a sash window!  
Persistent as a...what...?

DAVID's gaze still locked on to DORA.

DAVID  
As persistent as...a thing...can't  
think of the word...  
(sees SPENLOW)  
Sorry.

Leaving AGNES, he runs over to SPENLOW, BETSEY and MR DICK.  
Shakes SPENLOW's hand vigorously.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Mr Spenlow! Apologies for my  
earlier distracted state. I am  
looking forward tremendously, Mr  
Spenlow, to joining Spenlow &  
Jorkins. Mr Spenlow.

MR SPENLOW  
Excellent. Ready to become a  
proctor?

DAVID  
Eager to become a proctor!

MR SPENLOW  
(heading off)  
That's the attitude!

MR DICK  
(to DAVID)  
What's a proctor?

121 EXT. LONDON COACHING INN - DAY 121

A busy, hectic coaching inn. Horses, parked coaches, kiosks.  
DAVID alights off a coach, looking grand: He owns this city.

DAVID (V.O.)  
I haven't the faintest idea....

122 EXT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - DAY 122

DAVID arriving outside his first apartment.

DAVID (V.O.)  
But I'll take possession of my own  
apartments.

123 INT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - DAY 123

DAVID looks out the window, sees ST PAUL'S. A modern, rich  
part of town. A few cranes in the distance.

DAVID (V.O.)  
..and soon I'll find out.

MRS CRUPP, his landlady, drags his trunk in. DAVID smiles a  
thank you. She doesn't move. He reaches into his pocket for  
some money.

DAVID  
I don't suppose you know what a  
proctor is?

MRS CRUPP  
Ooh. Now you're asking. Do they  
make hats?

124 EXT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 124

SPENLOW leads DAVID up King's Bench Walk, into No.3 North.

SPENLOW

A proctor is a sort of monkish attorney. Our existence...

125 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 125

SPENLOW leads DAVID through the silent room. Busy CLERKS.

MR SPENLOW

...in the natural course of things would have terminated 200 years ago. But there we have it. Mind these floorboards, they squeak.

SPENLOW hopscoches a dance over part of the floor. DAVID tries to emulate him, but treads on every squeaky floorboard. The squeaks are very loud and the CLERKS all look up angrily.

126 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - DAY (A NEW DAY) 126

DAVID - with a new look to his hair - is listening to DORA's angelic singing (the last few bars of *The Madman*, 1846) from upstairs.

HEAD CLERK

Oi - do some work, Romeo.

127 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - DAY (LATER) 127

As DORA leaves, DAVID skips across the creaky floorboards, trying to avoid squeaks, but failing. CLERKS mutter.

DAVID

Miss Spenlow, I was convinced a famous soprano was practicing upstairs!

DORA

(excited)

Oh! Exciting. Who?

DAVID

No, I mean to say...it turned out to be you!

DORA

Oh dear. How disappointing for you.

DAVID

No, I-

DORA

Oh! No, I see! A compliment! Thank you!



DAVID  
Not at all.

DORA  
I am relieved to hear that my voice  
is not tiresome.

DAVID  
'Not tiresome' is an  
understatement. And 'angelic' is  
not an overstatement.

DORA  
Oh, thank you! Again.

DAVID  
Not at all! Again.  
(awkward pause)  
You have just come home from Paris,  
I believe?

DORA  
Yes.

DAVID  
Paris. What a city.

DORA  
Have you ever been there?

DAVID  
No.

DORA  
I hope you'll go soon.

DAVID laughs. Doesn't know why he laughed.

DAVID  
I won't go to Paris. I won't leave  
England under any circumstances  
while you...

SPENLOW (O.S.)  
Copperfield! Please search the  
birth records of Putney for one  
Jemima Poole. She was born some  
time last century.

DAVID  
I have to go.

He begins to step back across the squeaky floor.

DORA  
Would you like to come up after my  
next lesson? I can sing you a  
piece.

DAVID

I will bring something to throw at you. As in a bouquet. Of flowers.

DORA smiles, exits. DAVID skips back across the floorboards, and makes slightly fewer squeaks. CLERKS still mutter.

HEAD CLERK

Did you get your shoes fitted at a blacksmith's?

128 INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - DAY 128

MONTAGE: With DORA singing *Woodman Spare That Tree*, played on the forte piano.

Quick cuts of DAVID choosing, trying on, buying various items of clothing. All are bright, garish, dandyish, colourful. Looking in a mirror, helped by a TAILOR.

INTERCUT WITH:

129 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - DAY 129

DAVID getting better at the floorboards, even while balancing a big pile of ledgers. Just one SQUEAK at the end.

HEAD CLERK

Fell at the last fence. Sadly going to have to shoot you.

CUT TO:

130 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICE - UPSTAIRS ROOM - DAY 130

Intercut with moments of listening to DORA singing. DAVID following every syllable, nodding along, lightly swaying to it, maybe a single tear forming.

CUT TO:

Her dog, JIP, playing tricks.

CUT TO:

131 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICE - DOWNSTAIRS - DAY 131

DAVID watches DORA leaving from one side of a large central chimney. He hurries to the other side of the chimney to watch the second half of her journey. Avoids all the squeaky boards.

HEAD CLERK

That's what I want to hear -  
nothing.

132 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - DAY 132

DAVID presenting DORA with flowers and bows as she comes down the stairs. She makes him a small origami flower in return.

INTERCUT WITH:

Small vignettes of awkward conversation with DORA, getting slightly more confident:

133 EXT. LONDON - CHEQUER SQUARE - DAY 133

DAVID and DORA walking. Her hat blows off, DAVID leaps and retrieves it, hands it back to her.

DAVID

Lovers have loved before but no  
lovers shall ever love as we love.

DORA

That's very complicated, but thank  
you.

134 EXT. LONDON STREETS - CHEQUER SQUARE - EVENING 134

DAVID walks home. The clouds seem to form into DORA's face. All the adverts on the side of an omnibus say 'DORA'. An inn has a painting of DORA on its sign: 'THE DORA'S HEAD'. A CHIMNEY SWEEP bumps into someone, drops his brushes. On the ground, the broken up poles and heads spell 'DORA'. A COACH passes by: the COACH DRIVER has Dora's ribbon and curls.

135 INT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - NIGHT 135

DAVID stares at St Paul's dome. It has DORA's curls and ribbon. Behind him, young men shouting, laughing, singing. The moon shines bright.

The SONG ends.

136 INT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - NIGHT - LATER 136

A roar of laughter. DAVID is having a party with STEERFORTH, MARKHAM, and his Oxford friend GRAINGER. It's smokey, raucous and everyone is tipsy. We're at the start of dinner.

DAVID

I never saw such curls! How could  
I, for there never were such curls!

MRS CRUPP appears with a large piece of mottled re-formed meat. Plonks it down.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Now I know this thing resembles a  
 slab of marble, but-  
 (to MRS CRUPP)  
 -I'm assured it is what they term  
 'Mock Turtle'?

Nothing from MRS CRUPP.

STEERFORTH  
 Look at the size of it!

DAVID confident, a man about town.

DAVID  
 Could you warm the Mock Turtle up  
 please, Mrs Crupp?

MRS CRUPP  
 You want me to warm this up?

DAVID  
 ...yes.

She gestures for the meat, and STEERFORTH passes it over. With a huff, MRS CRUPP heaves the meat over her shoulder, grumbling as she staggers into the pantry.

STEERFORTH  
 (re wine)  
 A rather extensive order, eh  
 Markham?

MARKHAM  
 Enough for a decent headache,  
 certainly.

DAVID  
 They look so numerous I am almost  
 frightened by them.  
 (counts the bottles)  
 Two missing.

DAVID sees MRS CRUPP's shadow cast from the pantry onto a wall. The shadow uncorks a bottle, then takes a long swig.

GRAINGER  
 What's the grape? And the vintage?

DAVID's confidence drains. STEERFORTH spots this. DAVID studies the label. It's in French and the words become jumbled.

DAVID  
 (pouring)  
 The merest sip should give you  
 these answers.

GRAINGER sips. He has no more idea than DAVID.

GRAINGER  
 ...Ah yes. Unmistakeable.

DAVID  
 (quietly victorious)  
 Quite so.

STEERFORTH  
 (knocks back a full glass)  
 It's a red wine. Almost certainly.

HARD CUT TO:

HUGE LAUGHS. DAVID getting drunk to get his confidence back.  
 Snacking on quails eggs and celery salt.

GRAINGER  
 I'm starving.

MRS CRUPP reappears, also quite drunk, with a grubby pan  
 containing a liquid slop: the Mock Turtle now a shrunken,  
 bleak nub.

MARKHAM  
 Where's the rest of it?

GRAINGER  
 You gentlemen tuck in. I'm full.

STEERFORTH  
 Is this a burnt offering to the  
 pagan gods, Daisy? Hoist it high!

DAVID stabs the meat with a fork, holds it above his head.

DAVID  
 I shall have a dinner party like  
 this once a week until I die! Where  
 are the lobsters? I want lobster!

CRUPP doesn't move, stands drunk and swaying.

MRS CRUPP  
 If you'll just give me two minutes.

DAVID  
 I am very familiar with the lobster  
 people of Yarmouth.

MARKHAM

Do they worship lobsters, or take  
on their characteristics?

DAVID

They're hardworking toilers of the  
sea.

GRAINGER

The lobsters, or the people?

DAVID

Both!

MRS CRUPP wanders off.

STEERFORTH

If you're thinking of travelling to  
Yarmouth soon, might I join you?

DAVID

Of course.

STEERFORTH

It would be fun to be part of that  
world. I love to sail, and fish. In  
the city I can be prone to a heavy  
mind.

DAVID

(finds this hilarious)  
You have a heavy mind?

He bangs his head on the table. A big laugh from the others.

STEERFORTH

Sometimes - yes, like lead. A lead  
head. I feel my...

The moment is interrupted by a CRASH! A bottle has smashed.

MRS CRUPP (O.S.)

Sorry! My fault! I'll lick the wine  
up and try to avoid the glass...

CUT TO:

DAVID looking in the mirror. In the background we see MRS  
CRUPP is sat with the boys, singing a maudlin song to the  
tune of 'Old 1812'. MARKHAM is trying to harmonize.

MRS CRUPP (CONT'D)  
 Westminster is full of wigs,  
 Lawyers heads, and briefs and bags,  
 Lords and Commons, carts and gigs,  
 Silks and satins, rogues and rags,  
 Covent Garden, Drury Lane,  
 Pidcock's show is very grand,  
 Piazzas keep from the rain,  
 The One Bell Inn is in the  
 Strand...

STEERFORTH on his own, bored. GRAINGER eating some gravy and potatoes.

DAVID  
 I am very ill. And my hair looks  
 drunk.  
 (calling to the others)  
 I say! I have drunken hair.  
 (to himself)  
 Drunken hair.

DAVID stares. Faints out of shot. STEERFORTH lifts him.

STEERFORTH  
 Up! I'm bored up to my eyeballs!  
 Let's give your drunken hair a  
 night to remember. To the theatre!

They all get up to go to the theatre. MRS CRUPP thinks she's coming. But the door is closed on her. Then DAVID pops his head back in.

DAVID  
 (v. politely)  
 Could you tidy up? Thank you.

137 INT. LONDON THEATRE - SECOND TIER BOX - NIGHT

137

It's dark. A play is on: 'BLACK-EYED SUSAN' (see addendum for content). DAVID and the boys tumble into a box, shushing each other. DAVID peers at his ticket.

DAVID  
 Is this Box 12. Or 14? Or - it  
 can't be Box 120 can it? That would  
 make this an *enormous* theatre.

He gets to the front row and peers over the edge. AUDIENCE MEMBERS turn disapprovingly towards them.

STEERFORTH  
 I can't hear. Speak up!  
 (re play dialogue)  
 Who's Susan? I don't know who this  
 Susan is. Stop saying Susan!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1  
Silence, please.

DAVID  
He is being silence please, so hold  
your tongue!

DAVID looks down to the first tier. In a corner box, is AGNES. Some other people are with her - we can't see the faces, but a hint it could be MR WICKFIELD, HEEP and MRS HEEP.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
(very loud)  
Agnes! Ha haa! Good lord.

AGNES  
Trotwood! Please! Lower your voice.

Another AUDIENCE MEMBER looks towards AGNES.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2  
Hush!

AGNES  
I'll thank you not to hush me,  
madam! Hush your own loud hushing.

DAVID  
Don't huss Agnesh. She's sort of my  
kind of sister in a sort of way.

STEERFORTH  
So you do have a sister!

MARKHAM and GRAINGER laugh. The whole audience now hate DAVID. AGNES indicates - meet outside. She exits, and so does DAVID, clambering over chairs.

138 INT. LONDON THEATRE - HALLWAY OUTSIDE BOXES - NIGHT 138

DAVID and AGNES. DAVID trying to appear sober. AGNES has lost a spark, is troubled and tense.

AGNES  
Trotwood...

DAVID  
I'm terribly not drunk.

AGNES  
If I know one thing it's what a  
drunken man looks like. Did  
Steerforth get you into this state?



DAVID

No he didn't. I mean, he was there while it was happening, but...

AGNES

I fear he's a bad influence.

DAVID

The only person who suffers from Steerforth's influence is himself...oh hello!

Suddenly STEERFORTH, MARKHAM and GRAINGER are there. They head past, towards the bar.

STEERFORTH

This is a very poor play. I wanted a play about ghosts or a murder.

MARKHAM

Or a horse.

STEERFORTH

(to AGNES)

Hello sis!

They go into the bar.

AGNES

You were saying...?

DAVID

Please don't lecture me about Steerforth.

AGNES

A lecture would be futile - in your current state you barely understand English.

DAVID

Let's not argue, please.

AGNES

I haven't the energy to argue. I've barely the energy to...

WICKFIELD, URIAH - dressed very smartly - and MRS HEEP come out into the hallway.

URIAH

Mister Copperfield! Look at us - from Canterbury to London, a reverse pilgrimage!

MRS HEEP

(finds this hilarious)

Oh very good...

DAVID  
Good evening everyone.

WICKFIELD  
My dear Trotwood! Good evening.  
(to MRS HEEP)  
Did I fall asleep at one point? Are we all still understanding the play do we think? 'Susan', etcetera?

URIAH  
Agnes, have you told him of my new position?

A beat. DAVID looks to AGNES.

AGNES  
Uriah has joined the firm. He has some very promising ideas with regards to our future prosperity...

MRS HEEP  
Ury couldn't be making faster progress if he was steam-powered.

URIAH  
Mother, please - I redden in the face.

The HEEPS head to the bar with WICKFIELD. An awkward beat between AGNES and DAVID.

AGNES  
They live with us now. I hear their snores, like... love-lorn toads calling across a swamp.

AGNES (CONT'D)  
(half a beat)  
And how's Dora?

DAVID  
Wonderful. Sweet. Curly. In fact, I propose to intend to marriage her in the morning.

AGNES  
(hides her deflation)  
What pleasing news.

URIAH  
(peering from the bar)  
Agnes - a soda water?

She nods a thank you as STEERFORTH, MARKHAM and GRAINER head out from the bar, and leave the theatre.

DAVID  
 (to AGNES, but looking at  
 his departing friends)  
 Be very careful of the Heep and his  
 cake-mother.

AGNES  
 They're becoming a fixture. Don't  
 follow your companions Trot, you  
 need to go to bed. Good night.

She heads back into the box. The HEEPS and WICKFIELD are  
 returning too - WICKFIELD draining a glass of wine, MRS HEEP  
 replacing it immediately with a full one.

MR WICKFIELD  
 Very generous, but I may be nearing  
 the limits of my capacity.

MRS HEEP  
 It'll be soaked up by my dense  
 sponge.

DAVID  
 (to URIAH)  
 Wait...you called her Agnes, just  
 now, not Miss Wickfield...

URIAH  
 I must get back to the dramatics.

URIAH heads back in. DAVID left standing on his own. He feels  
 very dizzy.

139

INT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - BEDROOM - NIGHT

139

Now DAVID is face-down in bed. Drifting in and out of drunken  
 sleep, and dribbling. DAVID'S POV: Suddenly looming over him  
 is URIAH HEEP, between the railings. The moon shines brightly  
 through an open window behind URIAH. The floor is covered in  
 scraps of paper, DAVID's notes and ideas.

URIAH  
 Early moon. Peaceful, ain't she?

DAVID  
 (startled awake)  
 What?

URIAH  
 Your landlady let me in. I thought  
 you might need some help. And I  
 love to help.

DAVID  
 You called Agnes by her Christian  
 name, not Miss Wickfield...

URIAH

Did I? Too fast? I can wait.  
 (leans closer to DAVID,  
 staring through the bars  
 of the bed)  
 Ever tried to pluck a pear before  
 it was ripe? They all ripen in the  
 end. They only want attending to.

DAVID tries to grab URIAH, misses.

DAVID

You're not worthy of that woman.  
 (slightly incoherent)  
 I hold Agnes so far above you and  
 your aspirations as that moon  
 herself.

URIAH

I have as good a right to her as  
 any other man. Better! I pulled  
 myself up, with no help from you,  
 doing whatever it is...what is it  
 you're being trained to become?

DAVID

A proctor.

URIAH

Indeed. Now, I'm hardly whatever  
 one of them is, but I deserve her.  
 I will go to any ends for her!

DAVID

(inaudible mumble)  
 You may go to the devil!

He falls on to the bed, passes out. URIAH puts the cushion on  
 his seat, rests.

URIAH

Don't say that! I know you'll be  
 sorry afterwards!

DAVID

(barely audible)  
 I'm a proctor...

URIAH

We are like two carved figures in a  
 weather house, Copperfield; as one  
 arrives, the other departs.

David is asleep - CUT TO BLACK. Then...

140 INT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - BEDROOM - MORNING 140

DAVID wakes, bleary-eyed, hungover. Hauls himself upright - ouch, he has a headache, falls back on the bed. Gathers himself, staggers up, lunges for some trousers, lies back down on the bed, tries to put on his trousers lying down.

Some QUICK CUTS of him dressing - in pain from his headache as he leans down to pull on his socks, having to lie back on the bed and stick his legs in the air to pull them on.

Goes to put an engagement ring in his waistcoat pocket. Drops it on the floor. Can't find it. Then can. Bends down to pick it up. Stands up too quickly, staggers and falls back on the bed.

141 EXT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - DAY 141

Establisher. We hear DORA's (very good) singing.

142 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - UPSTAIRS ROOM - DAY 142

DAVID, dressed garishly, hungover and looking nauseous, is listening, spellbound, as DORA finishes singing "*The Madman*", accompanied by a PIANIST. She finishes, and he applauds.

DORA

Do you like my voice, Doady? I'm going to call you Doady. Do you mind?

DAVID

I love being called by other names.

He takes a breath, hand goes in his waistcoat pocket to grab the ring.

DAVID (CONT'D)

And... in return... I have a new name it is my heart's desire to offer you...

DORA

Oh, no, I like 'Dora'. It reminds me of doors, and doors are such jolly and useful things! Do you earn a lot of money working for Papa?

Takes his hand out his pocket again - not the right moment.

DAVID

I'm currently articled, training to be a proctor. So I pay him.

DORA

That doesn't sound right. But I don't fully understand money. It's all nonsense isn't it?

DAVID

(not really, no)  
Yes.

DORA

Jip likes you. Don't you, Jip?  
(does Jip's voice)  
Indeed I do.  
(back to normal)  
Jip never lies.

DAVID

Dora, may I be frank?

DORA

I don't like hearing frank expressions. Say it like Jip.

DAVID

Really?

DORA nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(attempting a Jip voice)  
I am intoxicated with joy whenever I see you. I love you.  
(own voice)  
Can I...?

DORA

Yes. That just seemed odd.

DAVID

I idolize and worship you. If you would like me to die for you, say the word, and I am ready.

DORA

No, don't die. If you were dead you'd miss Jip's new trick. Look.

JIP stands for a nano-second/rolls over. DAVID charmed.

DAVID

Dora, I'd like to ask you, if...

SPENLOW approaches, coming up the stairs.

MR SPENLOW (O.S.)

Message from your landlady: "A man with a kite and a severe lady have arrived and need to see you now."

SPENLOW peers in, expecting DAVID to follow. He heads out.

DORA  
You would like to ask me if...

DAVID  
If you would wait for my question  
later.

DAVID reluctantly follows SPENLOW.

143 EXT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - DAY 143

DAVID runs home.

144 EXT. LONDON - CHEQUER SQUARE - DAY 144

DAVID walks briskly through London streets. More squalid than ever. BAILIFFS' carts are being loaded with furniture. More HOMELESS PEOPLE sleeping on the streets.

145 INT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - LIVING ROOM - DAY 145

DAVID arrives home, slightly irritated and sweaty. BETSEY and MR DICK are in the living room, surrounded by their luggage. MR DICK clutches his kite to him. There is tea and toast on a table, and BETSEY's huge VASE from earlier. BETSEY is clearing up dozens of bottles and dirty glasses from David's party. DAVID begins to help with the clean-up.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(avoiding eye-contact)  
Trotwood, I am ruined.

MR DICK  
Like a castle.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
So Mr Dick suggested we come here.

DAVID  
Ruined? How can you be ruined?

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Because I've lost everything Trot.  
In the mining way and the banking  
way. We've had to close up the  
house, say farewell to lovely Janet  
and walk away from our beautiful  
garden.

MR DICK  
The green will become a paradise  
for donkeys.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

I have now only my clothes, and a picture or two. And Mr Dick.

As they speak, we see projected on to the walls: BETSEY's cottage (Sc 131A). MR DICK and BETSEY leave the house with their bags as some PEOPLE on DONKEYS come across the green. BETSEY is unable to do anything about it.

BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)

My shares have plummeted like lead droppings from a stone goose.

DAVID

(realising it's serious)

No, no, this can't happen. I won't let all the light and goodness that you've brought me turn to gloom, not like it did before...

BETSEY TROTWOOD

We're not the only ones to suffer. Two bailiffs' carts in this one street alone...

She gestures out the window: two hand carts and a horse loaded with possessions, protesting/crying DEBTORS, dismissive BAILIFFS.

DAVID

Surely Mr Wickfield has been monitoring your affairs?

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Mr Wickfield has troubles of his own just now.

MR DICK

He very often sleeps during the day.

DAVID

Because of...

(mimes drinking, with a wine bottle, to MR DICK)

BETSEY for once looks at him with disfavour. He has accidentally shown her a version of himself he keeps for Steerforth, and she doesn't like it.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

(very cross)

I've no notion what that spasmodic gesture indicates. But if we're speaking of over-indulgence...

(indicates the sea of empty bottles)

(MORE)



BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)

Have you returned to the bottling  
business of your youth?

DAVID

I entertained some friends...

BETSEY TROTWOOD

...who seem to number the entire  
population of the city.

BETSEY takes the bottles outside. MR DICK left with DAVID,  
who paces back and forth, troubled.

DAVID

Mr Dick, can you cast any more  
light on what has happened?

MR DICK

Well, the day before yesterday she  
said, "Dick, I am ruined." And I  
said, "Oh, indeed!" And then we  
travelled here and had bottled  
porter and sandwiches.

DAVID

(frustrated with MR DICK)  
That's not a lot of light. Do you  
understand what ruin means?

MR DICK smiles and nods. Then stops smiling, shakes his head.

DAVID (CONT'D)

It means distress, and want. And  
starvation.

DAVID immediately regrets what he said. MR DICK starts taking  
pieces of buttered toast and putting them in his pockets.

MR DICK

Oh dear. What can we do, Trotwood?  
(to himself)  
"By what earthly power do you  
condemn me? By what authority?"

DAVID

We'll get your kite in the air Mr  
Dick, and banish any sad thoughts  
to the skies. Agreed? Now, let's  
try to keep a cheerful countenance.

MR DICK

Agreed. Cheerful.

BETSEY enters. MR DICK tries a cheerful countenance while  
putting some sugar cubes in his breast pocket.

146 EXT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - DAY 146

[NOTE: To be projected over a section of the previous scene.]

BETSEY's old cottage. MR DICK and BETSEY leave the house with their bags on hand carts as some PEOPLE on DONKEYS come across the green. BETSEY is unable to do anything about it.

147 EXT. WICKFIELD & HEEP OFFICES - DAY 147

Establisher of the offices. A sign reads 'WICKFIELD & CO'.

148 INT. WICKFIELD & HEEP OFFICES - DAY 148

DAVID is opposite MR WICKFIELD, who sits behind his desk. A subdued AGNES enters the room carrying a tray covered with a cloth, which she sets down.

WICKFIELD

We will ensure this cannot happen again. Although that's problematic, given I've no idea how it happened in the first place - I'd never authorise such a reckless document.

DAVID

(gently)  
And yet...this is your signature.

AGNES

You did all you could. Currently we all have to do the dutiful thing.

DAVID

What does that mean? Do you feel some personal duty towards Uriah?

No answer from AGNES.

WICKFIELD

I can offer you a crumb of comfort, Trotwood. In fact more than a crumb, an entire batch loaf - we'll approve a loan to tide you over...

DAVID

Thank you. And I promise repayment will occur just as soon as...

URIAH

'Something turns up'?

URIAH has entered, holding a square object wrapped in cloth and a DISTINCTIVE BRIEFCASE, which he then locks in a bureau.

URIAH (CONT'D)  
 (locking the bureau)  
 With respect, Mr Wickfield, a more  
 sober judgement is required when  
 considering a loan of this nature.

WICKFIELD  
 I am sober.

URIAH  
 Mast...Mister Copperfield, a loan  
 is out of the question. Apologies.

WICKFIELD  
 (getting up)  
 Mr Heep, we should discuss this...

DAVID  
 Do you have authority here, Uriah?

URIAH  
 (sits in WICKFIELD's seat)  
 I do. And it's Mr Heep. As in  
 'Wickfield & Heep'. I'm a partner!

He reveals a new PLAQUE from beneath the cloth: 'WICKFIELD &  
 HEEP'. 'HEEP' is a font-size bigger.

URIAH (CONT'D)  
 Agnes? Could you...?

AGNES uncovers the tray, which has a decanter of sherry and  
 some glasses. WICKFIELD feigns enthusiasm.

WICKFIELD  
 We are drinking to the firm hand of  
 Mr Heep grasping - or co-grasping -  
 the tiller.

URIAH  
 All of us, man and woman, can  
 benefit from having a partner, do  
 you not agree Agnes?

AGNES  
 In times of trouble we must all  
 do...that which we must do.

AGNES starts to pour. MRS HEEP enters with a tray of cakes.

MRS HEEP  
 Small heavy cakes to go with the  
 sherry! Like tasty billiard balls.

MR WICKFIELD goes to take a sherry. A look from URIAH to  
 AGNES and she takes it off him. Takes a sherry to DAVID.

URIAH and MRS HEEP drink and celebrate, marveling at the new sign. MR WICKFIELD remains in his seat away from the desk. DAVID whispers to AGNES.

DAVID

(re URIAH & MRS HEEP)

Those two are weeds. I've seen their like before. Unchecked, they'll overrun and choke all life and joy from this place. They must be stopped.

AGNES

I fear the time for that has passed. Now we must all make what shift we can.

URIAH proposes a toast.

URIAH

To partnerships!

He crosses to AGNES, gets very close. MRS HEEP gives DAVID her mini cakes.

MRS HEEP

I've given you two cakes. I know how you love my cake.

DAVID

Cake.

URIAH

I'm far too humble to say I've saved this firm, but...

A beat.

AGNES

...Uriah has been very good for our business.

WICKFIELD

He has been diversifying into smaller rental properties...

URIAH

...in parts of London that aren't necessarily first choice.

DAVID

And this is to be my only choice?

URIAH

There is a category of persons who famously cannot be choosers.

CUT TO:

149 INT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - LIVING ROOM - DAY 149

BETSEY and MR DICK in David's lodgings surrounded by luggage.

URIAH (O.S.)

It is into this category that your  
aunt currently falls.

They're pushed closer together as the walls close in and the  
apartment shrinks. BETSEY grabs the huge VASE.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Janet!

URIAH (O.S.)

And you with her.

Quickly packing before they lose their belongings to the  
walls. Last thing to be grabbed is MR DICK's kite.

URIAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Now this property is maybe not the  
most spacious of city abodes...

The room has now turned into...

150 INT. DAVID'S SECOND LODGINGS - LIVING ROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)

DAVID and URIAH are with BETSEY and MR DICK in the much  
smaller, scruffier set of rooms. DAVID's stuff in boxes,  
piles of his notes everywhere. DICK and BETSEY sit on their  
luggage, beside the GIANT VASE. BETSEY hangs the WINDCHIMES  
(from earlier) on a nail.

URIAH

It will suit someone in your  
circumstances very well indeed.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

I am not someone in my  
circumstances.

URIAH

Of course.

DAVID

At least we won't get lost in here.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

There isn't room enough to swing a  
cat.

MR DICK

Good. I don't want to swing a cat.

BETSEY gives DICK a little smile.

URIAH

You can't fly your kite in here!

MR DICK

I don't fly it indoors anyway. It can't fly in a house. No breeze.

URIAH

I bow to your expertise.

DAVID

He can't fly his kite, but he could swat an irritant.

URIAH

Well, enjoy your lodgings. If any problems arise, I suggest you tend to them yourselves.

He exits. MR DICK tries to stretch, but can't.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

We'll make do. Ale for me now. It's a great deal better than wine anyway. Not half so bilious.

MR DICK

I wish to make a contribution.

MR DICK puts out a handkerchief, dumps it into BETSEY's lap. Some coins, buttons, bits of string, marbles and sweets spill out. BETSEY is moved. DAVID still pacing.

MR DICK (CONT'D)

I'd have been shut up to lead a dismal life these many years, but you took me in, like David's friend took his family in, in Yarmouth...

DAVID

Wait! Yarmouth? What's today?

MR DICK

(confidently)

I know this. It's Wednesday.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

It's Tuesday, Trot.

DAVID

Tuesday! I should be meeting Steerforth to take him to Yarmouth.  
(really wants to get away)  
I can postpone. Easily.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

(gently taps DICK's hand)

Go!

(MORE)

BETSEY TROTWOOD (CONT'D)  
 Meanwhile Mr Dick and I will try to  
 make this the most desirable  
 mousehole in London.

DICK leans over as if to put his hand on hers, but touches  
 the kite instead.

Quick JUMP CUTS of DAVID hurriedly packing two bags.

151 EXT. LONDON - EXCHANGE ALLEY - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 151

DAVID rushes down an alleyway with two travel bags.

152 EXT. LONDON - LONG LANE - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 152

DAVID runs through the lane with two travel bags.

153 EXT. LONDON - BISHOPS LANE - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 153

DAVID runs through a market, with two travel bags.

BUTCHER  
 Mr Copperfield? I'm your butcher.  
 About our outstanding invoice...

But DAVID does the old MICAWBER trick of walking in step with  
 moving coaches to cross the street without being spotted. The  
 BUTCHER looks for him in vain.

154 EXT. BOTTLING WAREHOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 154

DAVID passes the entrance to the BOTTLING WAREHOUSE. Some  
 BOYS and GIRLS stare out at him as he hurries past. These  
 include the 4-YEAR-OLD DAVID, but dressed much shabbier than  
 before.

155 EXT. DAVID'S FIRST LODGINGS - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 155

STEERFORTH checks his watch, waiting. DAVID approaches  
 STEERFORTH from the side without being spotted, hidden behind  
 a horse pulling a cart full of building material and ladders:  
 using the Micawber trick we saw in scene 55.

DAVID  
 Apologies for lateness. I've just  
 been in my apartment. In there.

STEERFORTH just has the one bag.

STEERFORTH  
 Two bags! Such extravagance given  
 how much the coach people charge.

DAVID

Ah, no - this contains laundry for Mrs Crupp. I said I'd leave it here for her to collect.

He puts it on the step.

STEERFORTH

Curious arrangement. But we should get to the Spread Eagle, our coach is due to leave in 10 minutes.

They head off. DAVID looks back as a HOMELESS MAN picks up his bag, walks off with it.

156

EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - DUSK

156

Cold, windy. DAVID and STEERFORTH walk with a lantern.

DAVID

What might appear as rough charms were magical to me as a child...

STEERFORTH

What a delightful residence.

DAVID

In my recollection it was more colourful.

STEERFORTH

Nonsense! Every colour in the rainbow jostles for our attention.

157

INT. BOATHOUSE - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

157

DAVID and STEERFORTH enter. It's small, smelly, dilapidated, cluttered. Low ceiling. DAVID immediately deeply embarrassed.

A big cheer from PEGGOTTY, DANIEL PEGGOTTY and HAM.

PEGGOTTY

Davy!

She hugs and kisses him.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

(shaking hands)

Look at you! Grown out of all knowledge! You in good kelter boy?

DAVID

(struggling to know which voice to use)

Good kelter. Aye. Arr. Yes.

(MORE)



DAVID (CONT'D)

I'm very well thank you. This is my dear friend James Steerforth.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

Ah, right...

STEERFORTH

This young man's affection for you is such that I feel I know you all.

(shaking hands)

Mr Peggotty, I presume.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

Alright then.

STEERFORTH

And Ham-

HAM

Yes.

STEERFORTH

-and Peggotty. An honour to meet you.

PEGGOTTY

(charmed)

You have a lovely speaking voice.

HAM

That's a very bright waistcoat.

STEERFORTH

It's brocade. Savile Row.

PEGGOTTY

(to the others,  
knowledgable)

That's a street in London.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

(re DAVID)

We mardled plenty with this 'un when he was a nipper and we're uncommon proud of him, thankee.

STEERFORTH

That's dialect, isn't it? I'm fascinated by how language changes around the country.

HAM

We can write it down for you if it's too difficult. We can write.

An awkward laugh from STEERFORTH. DAVID senses tension from HAM, tries to move things on.

DAVID  
Ham and Mr Peggotty are expert  
lobster catchers.

STEERFORTH  
Do you trawl or use pots?

DAVID  
(trying to help)  
I think probably...trawling?

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
Pots.

DAVID  
Or pots.

STEERFORTH  
Wire and wood, or netting?

HAM  
Bit of net, bit of wood, bit of  
wire. Old Mr Lobster wanders in to  
eat in the kitchen, we catch him in  
the parlour.

STEERFORTH  
Well I'm sure you are very polite  
to the fellow when both you meet!

There are some boiled lobsters in a pot.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
We try to be sir! Save for the  
boiling, eh!?  
(pulls lobster out)  
Because we boils 'em, you see!

DAVID steps back and BANGS his head.

HAM  
Mind your head!

DAVID  
Steerforth, come and look through  
here. It's the perfect little  
bedroom I told you about.

DAVID pulls the curtain to what was his whitewashed room. The  
whitewash is damp and peeling, the room is dirty, and there  
in the bed is MRS GUMMIDGE, coughing up phlegm into a bowl.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Oh, I'm so sorry.

PEGGOTTY arrives.

PEGGOTTY

Mrs Gummidge ain't well. She brings more up than she eats, these days.

MRS GUMMIDGE

They say it can't be done. But I does it.

DAVID

My apologies, Mrs Gummidge.

MRS GUMMIDGE

Oh, it don't signify. I'll be dead soon, so please the Lord.

They head back into the boat. DAVID bangs his head hard.

HAM

Mind your head!

PEGGOTTY

Watch your head, Davy!

PEGGOTTY, HAM and DANIEL go and deal with MRS GUMMIDGE's sick.

EMILY enters. She seems worn out, older than her years. She smiles at DAVID, then STEERFORTH. Embarrassed that she isn't better dressed and that her hands are a bit herring-y. She clasps her hands behind her back.

EMILY

It's good to see you again Davy.  
And to meet you, sir.

STEERFORTH

Ah! Emily?

He offers a hand to shake. EMILY keeps her hands behind her back, curtseys instead.

STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

Daisy here tells me you climb the masts of sailing boats.

EMILY

You can see for miles from up there. You can see all the ladies off to the ball at Browston Manor.

HAM

(going over to STEERFORTH)  
Did you just call Davy 'Daisy'? Is that dialect?

DANIEL PEGGOTTY comes back from MRS GUMMIDGE, who we hear coughing up mucus, then...

MRS GUMMIDGE (O.S.)

We've no food so don't expect food.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
We do have some food.

EMILY  
Fish.

STEERFORTH laughs.

DAVID  
I imagine you and Ham will have  
been married for some years now.

HAM  
No.

EMILY  
No.

DAVID  
Oh.

HAM  
Still engaged. Still not married.

EMILY  
We've been saving up though,  
haven't we? And deciding where we  
want to live...

HAM  
We want to live here. Knock up our  
own boathouse, couple of hundred  
yards up the coast.

EMILY  
Or...we could go further?

HAM  
Of course we could. Half a mile,  
three-quarters even.

PEGGOTTY  
Listen to them. Lovebirds.

MRS GUMMIDGE (O.S.)  
Peggotty! I fear I'm going to be  
sick in a substantial way.

PEGGOTTY  
No matter, our floor is a beach!

PEGGOTTY hurries past. DAVID moves aside, bangs his head  
again. We hear MRS GUMMIDGE heaving. A look between  
STEERFORTH and EMILY, both as distressed as each other by  
life in the boat. PEGGOTTY comes back out to get clean linen.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 (to DAVID)  
 Now, mind your head.

DAVID bangs it again.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY (CONT'D)  
 You both staying at the Star Hotel?

STEERFORTH  
 I am. I hear it is very good.

HAM  
 Very grand. But very expensive.

DAVID  
 Expensive?

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 Of course you're welcome to a  
 hammock here but I imagine you'd...

DAVID  
 I'd love a hammock here.

PEGGOTTY smiles, hugs DAVID, who steps back and bangs his  
 head again. Then PEGGOTTY heads back to the noisy GUMMIDGE.

158 EXT. YARMOUTH HARBOUR SIDE - DAY

158

STEERFORTH gutting herring with all the women of the town,  
 including EMILY and PEGGOTTY. Doing brilliantly. He's very  
 quick at it. HAM watches.

PEGGOTTY  
 Look at him...

EMILY  
 Faster than me!

PEGGOTTY  
 That's very good knife work, Mr  
 Steerforth.

STEERFORTH  
 Thank you. I could be a murderer!

PEGGOTTY and EMILY laugh loudly. STEERFORTH grins.

159 EXT. BOATHOUSE - DAY

159

STEERFORTH repairing the BOATHOUSE. He's roped in a lot of  
 other BOATMEN to help. DANIEL watches, pleased.

STEERFORTH

That stern looks like new, my friend. Splendid. Have you made fast the chimney there? Excellent! Good work, mates!

160 INT. YARMOUTH PUB - EVENING

160

A packed pub. STEERFORTH just finishing a story. DAVID at the bar watching him.

STEERFORTH

...so the hotel manager turns to me and says...

HAM and EMILY join DAVID.

STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

"I've had thirty guests use that towel before you sir, and you're the first one to complain that it's dirty!"

HAM

Everyone's fond of your friend, eh Davy? Life and soul, isn't he?

Massive laugh from the crowd. STEERFORTH grins.

DAVID

You seem to mean that with sarcasm Ham, but I know it to be true...

EMILY

Ham, stop snipping and sniping like one of your lobsters. Can we go?

STEERFORTH

Another round of drinks for my friends!

HAM

See - what a benevolent gentleman.

STEERFORTH

Daisy will do the honours - won't you Daisy?

DAVID

(oh dear)  
Of course.

HAM gives him and EMILY a smile.

EMILY

Why are we always here anyway? What about the Anchor in Gorleston?

HAM

Who wants to go all the way to Gorleston? What's wrong with here?

Everyone is now heading over to get their drinks, crowding round the bar, yelling orders. DAN PEGGOTTY is among them.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

Two pork pies Bob, one for me and then the other one for me after that.

DAVID

(to BARMAN)

Would you take an IOU?

(off his look)

No, of course not.

The BARMAN shakes his head. DAVID gives him the last of his money. Sees STEERFORTH suddenly left alone on the other side of the pub. Leaves the crowd, heads over. Out of the spotlight, STEERFORTH is down and deflated.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Ham and Emily have just been saying the same as me - that everyone loves James Steerforth!

STEERFORTH

Everyone except James Steerforth, my friend.

(he downs a glass of rum)

Did you have enough cash for the drinks?

DAVID

Plenty.

STEERFORTH

Are you sure?

DAVID

Yes, I...

STEERFORTH

(interrupting)

Promise me Daisy, won't you, that you'll think of me at my best?

DAVID

What do you mean?

STEERFORTH

Whatever might happen, please promise me that.

DAVID

Of course. You seem low - where's this sudden cloud come from?

STEERFORTH

Oh, it hovers over me from time to time, glowering...

(seemingly sincere)

I suppose I'm just, as they say around these parts -

(exaggerated accent)

"All in a jiffle like a spizzard up a crowpipe."

Big, big laugh from DAVID.

DAVID

(joining in)

"Lolloping down the..."

STEERFORTH

(interrupting)

Sorry, I don't mean to insult these people - your people.

DAVID

They're not necessarily my...

But STEERFORTH has jumped up, full of energy again.

STEERFORTH

(loud, to the pub)

Who's up for singing a shanty!?

Cheer from the crowd at the bar.

STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

(sings)

One Friday morn when we set sail,  
Not very far from land,  
We there did spy a pretty maid...

EVERYONE joins in.

EVERYONE

(sings)

With a comb and a glass in her  
hand, hand, hand,  
A comb and a glass in her hand...

161

INT. BOATHOUSE - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

161

DAVID's hammock is rigged. PEGGOTTY is pulling down a gauze.

PEGGOTTY

There you go. You can have some privacy.

DAVID

Well, that's all I do have at the moment.



PEGGOTTY

I know. But you had nothing, then you had something, now you've got nothing again. So stands to reason you'll have something again.

DAVID

I wish I could be so sure it worked like that.

PEGGOTTY

I could let you have...

DAVID

No, no...

PEGGOTTY

It wouldn't be...

DAVID

I couldn't possibly...

PEGGOTTY

You're sure now?

Half a beat.

DAVID

Well, if it was...

The moment is interrupted as DANIEL PEGGOTTY enters.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

You seen all that herring out there, with its guts still intact? What's Emily been up to?

HAM runs in with an envelope. In the background, we might spot Steerforth's HAT and CANE, left on the side.

HAM

Emily's written you a note, Uncle. It was in the cart.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY takes the envelope, opens it, reads. As he reads, images (scenes 148A & B) play out on the wall behind him, as if projected.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

"When you, who love me better than I deserve, read this, I shall have gone far away, and won't come back unless he brings me back a lady."

HAM

Emily. And Steerforth. They'll be in the boat he rented!

He rushes out. DANIEL PEGGOTTY follows. PEGGOTTY and DAVID follow.

162 EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - BOATHOUSE - AFTERNOON 162

*[NOTE: To be projected on the inner wall of the boathouse, over Daniel Peggotty reading out her letter.]*

EMILY and STEERFORTH walk away from the boathouse, with their bags.

163 EXT. YARMOUTH HARBOUR SIDE - SMALL BOAT - AFTERNOON/EVENING 163

EMILY and STEERFORTH hurry through the quiet, empty harbour side to board the small boat, and begin their journey.

164 EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - EVENING 164

HAM, PEGGOTTY, DANIEL PEGGOTTY. DAVID runs to catch up. In the very far distance at sea is a boat.

165 EXT. SMALL BOAT - EVENING 165

POV: STEERFORTH and EMILY, from behind, looking to DAVID, PEGGOTTY, HAM and DANIEL PEGGOTTY on the distant beach.

EMILY

They all look so small.

STEERFORTH puts his arm around her.

166 EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - EVENING 166

DANIEL PEGGOTTY in shock. DAVID ashamed, close to tears. PEGGOTTY weeping. HAM furious, trying to contain his rage.

HAM

Emily! Emily jump! Swim to me!

HAM runs to the water, he's about to wade in, but DAVID restrains him.

DAVID

No!

PEGGOTTY

Ham, don't - in the dark - these currents - it's not safe...

DANIEL PEGGOTTY is mumbling. PEGGOTTY goes to comfort him.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

This won't make you a lady my love.

HAM  
I'll find her. I'll go find her,  
bring her back.

DAVID  
Where will you search?

HAM  
I'll search everywhere... The world.  
Wherever she is, I'm going to find  
her. I'm nothing without her.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
You and me, Ham. You won't go  
without me.

HAM and DANIEL PEGGOTTY start to run over to Daniel's CART.

HAM  
(calling back to DAVID)  
Send word if that louse's mother  
knows where they've gone.

They jump on the cart and set off.

167 EXT. LONDON COACHING INN - DAY 167

DAVID, soaked, arrives with the tattier coaches. Unties the ropes that held him in place. Climbs down from the roof.

COACHMAN  
Cheap seats in this weather? Did  
you pull your hat down tight?

DAVID  
Yes. As you can see, it really  
helped.

168 EXT. MRS STEERFORTH'S HOUSE - DAY 168

DAVID walks up to the door, and knocks.

169 INT. MRS STEERFORTH'S HOUSE - STAIRCASE - DAY 169

DAVID and LITTIMER. A silent, long walk up a grand staircase.  
DAVID tries to make conversation.

DAVID  
Uh... stairs.

LITTIMER ignores him.

170

INT. MRS STEERFORTH'S HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - DAY

170

DAVID with MRS STEERFORTH, in an armchair reading the letter.  
LITTIMER lays out a table for tea.

MRS STEERFORTH

"A lady!" She is far below him. A lady! As if one may become a lady merely by latching on to my poor good-natured son.

She shoots DAVID a poisonous look.

MRS STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

Any more than a bottling boy can become a gentleman that way...

MRS STEERFORTH gestures LITTIMER over, not really listening to DAVID. She hands LITTIMER the letter.

DAVID

All I have chosen to ignore in your son of snobbery and an unyielding, wilful spirit, I see in you madam.

She's focussed on DAVID again.

MRS STEERFORTH

Do you see this?

DAVID

Tea.

MRS STEERFORTH

Each Wednesday James joins me here for tea, and this tea will not be removed from the table until he returns. That will be his welcome.

LITTIMER, off MRS STEERFORTH's signal, stands over DAVID, who gets up.

DAVID

Well, he will find it stale and cold.

(to LITTIMER)

Door.

LITTIMER gives DAVID the letter. He strides off.

MRS STEERFORTH

(after him)

But as for her - if there was any word of comfort that would be a solace to her in her dying hour, and only I possessed it...

CUT TO:

171 INT. MRS STEERFORTH'S HOUSE - STAIRCASE - DAY 171

DAVID comes down the stairs, followed by LITTIMER. He speeds up a bit when he hears:

MRS STEERFORTH (O.S.)  
 (shouting after him)  
 ...I wouldn't part with it for life  
 itself!

172 EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY. 172

DAVID walks home. Even more HOMELESS FOLK, more desperate poverty. A COACH passes.

COACHMAN  
 (shouts as he passes)  
 Looking for a lift, sir?

DAVID  
 (dejected)  
 No.

173 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - UPSTAIRS SIDE ROOM - DAY 173

DORA and DAVID are side by side on a sofa, with JIP.

DORA  
 I think I know what you are about  
 to say. Will you pose your question  
 in Jip's voice?

DAVID  
 I don't think that's appropriate.

DORA  
 You have no reason to worry about  
 my answer.

DAVID  
 I need to tell you: I have no  
 money.

DORA  
 I don't fully understand.

DAVID  
 I'm poor.

DORA  
 No matter! What need have we of  
 money when I have my singing, and  
 you have...the tremendous thing you  
 do...

DAVID  
(cuts in)  
Proctor.

DORA  
Although, Jip must have a mutton  
chop every day at twelve, or he'll  
die...

DAVID  
Precisely - so how, my love, will  
we get meat?

DORA  
Silly - I'll ask the butcher. We  
shall live in a pretty cottage with  
a lovely cook and be very happy.

HARD CUT TO:

174 INT. DAVID'S SECOND LODGINGS - DAY 174

DORA stands with DAVID. She holds a BABY. Behind them a sour-  
faced COOK in an apron. JIP barks and barks, the BABY cries.

COOK  
We've no food.

CUT BACK TO:

175 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - UPSTAIRS SIDE ROOM - DAY 175

Back with DAVID and DORA.

DAVID  
I won't let Jip suffer. Nor us.  
I'll work extremely hard...

DORA  
Why should you work?

DAVID  
Because...the meat? And so on. How  
should we live without working?

DORA  
So you are to be a labourer now,  
you bad boy? Balancing on a plank  
all day with a wheelbarrow? It's  
all nonsense!  
(kissing DAVID)  
So - my answer is yes! I will marry  
you, Doady. Let us go to find Papa!

DAVID  
 (looking dazed)  
 Let's do that, for I am so happy!

She pulls a confused DAVID out of the room...

176 INT. SPENLOW & JORKINS OFFICES - STAIRWELL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)  
 ...and down the stairs. MR SPENLOW peeks round a door.

MR SPENLOW  
 Did he...?

DORA  
 YES HE DID!!

A massive "HOORAY!" and the room fills with people - DORA's FAMILY, GIRLFRIENDS, SERVANTS, CLERKS, all cheering, shaking a stunned DAVID by the hand.

MR SPENLOW  
 Congratulations! Dora and Trotwood!

177 EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY 177

DAVID in a busy street with MR DICK and his kite.

MR DICK  
 You'll have a happy lifetime together.

DAVID  
 Lifetime?

MR DICK  
 Sixty years at least! Barring... accidents.

He mimes an axe blow to the back of the neck.

MR DICK (CONT'D)  
 But then of course you're not a king. Are you?

DAVID  
 No, I'm not.

MR DICK  
 I mean, more particularly, you're not...

DAVID  
 King Charles the First.

MR DICK

So you'll probably be fine.

(a beat)

The street is too full with people  
to get a good run with my kite.

At a road junction, MR DICK goes to carry straight on.

DAVID

Ah - can't go that way Mr Dick. The  
gentleman who makes my waistcoats  
is up there and I haven't been able  
to fully clear my debt with him.

They turn the corner, and DAVID trips over some feet. It's MR  
MICAUBER, half asleep in a doorway. He looks awful,  
malnourished.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(shaking his hand)

Mr Micawber!

MR MICAUBER

(trying to look upbeat)

My dear young friend! And, I  
believe, Mr Dixon?

DAVID

Are you...well?

MR MICAUBER

Never better!

He remains on the ground. DAVID notices MICAUBER's pocket  
square is what remains of the distinctive curtains.

MR DICK

And Mrs Micawber...?

MR MICAUBER

In even finer fettle than myself.

(through DICK's legs)

There she is! With our happy tribe  
of dependents.

He points to MRS MICAUBER and their KIDS, who wave from a  
doorway further down the street, by some fruit boxes.

MR MICAUBER pulls himself up slightly, now lounging like a  
Roman.

DAVID

Do you live on the streets now?

MR MICAUBER

We do currently exist primarily al  
fresco, with all the advantages  
that entails.



MR DICK gets down beside MICAWBER, lounging next to him.

MR DICK

Outside is so much better than  
inside. Every meal is a picnic.

DAVID notices that the HOMELESS MAN whom we saw take DAVID'S bag is now lying in the doorway along from MICAWBER. He is covered in a filthy quilt made of DAVID'S fancy waistcoats.

MR MICAWBER

David. Might you help me?

DAVID

(crouches down)  
What assistance do you need?

MR MICAWBER

I popped my concertina with the  
Floral Street pawnbroker. I'd like  
it back, but he knows me and he'll  
charge much more than the six bob  
it's worth. I require a surrogate.

DAVID and MR MICAWBER both turn to MR DICK, who's happily eating a tangerine.

178

INT. DAVID'S SECOND LODGINGS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

178

BETSEY is with DORA and JIP in David's tiny new flat. It's been subdivided, with cloths and one of BETSEY'S dresses hanging for privacy. BETSEY'S VASE taking up too much room.

DORA

(looking around)  
I preferred, I think, the larger  
apartment.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

We were sadly not able to express a  
preference.

DORA

I'm sure it's only so small because  
Doady is saving for a castle!

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Is he really, do you think?

DORA

When we're married I should like  
lots of children. Five. Or ten. Or  
twenty - is that even possible?

BETSEY TROTWOOD

If one is disciplined. Or a frog.

DORA  
Doady likes children.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Doady?  
(re JIP)  
Is that this little fellow?

DORA  
No, this is Jip.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Chip?

DORA  
Jip.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Chip.

DORA  
Jip.  
(doing JIP's voice)  
"Doady is my name for David."

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Trotwood.

DORA  
Doady.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Trotwood.

A beat of confused silence.

DORA  
Will the lady come in soon with the  
tea?

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
I will make some tea. The lady does  
not exist.

BETSEY gets up to make tea.

DORA  
I'm sorry to hear that. Will she  
ever?

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Bless me, you're very young.

DORA  
I am. Very.

BETSEY sits down again. Leans in. Last roll of the dice.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Dora: when I was your age I married  
an unsuitable man and lived to  
bitterly regret it. We were too  
young, and simply incompatible.

Half a beat.

DORA

I'm so sorry you found the wrong  
man, but it makes me doubly happy  
that I've found the right one -  
dear Doady!

BETSEY TROTWOOD

(gives up)

I'm very glad for you both.

179 INT. PAWNBROKER'S - DAY

179

Betsey's WINDCHIMES are in the window, with the CONCERTINA.  
DICK is with the PAWNBROKER. He's ready to haggle.

MR DICK

How much for the concertina?

PAWNBROKER

Ten bob.

MR DICK

What if I said six shillings?

PAWNBROKER

No, but I can let you have a  
fishing rod for six shillings.

HARD CUT TO:

180 EXT. LONDON STREET - ALLEY BESIDE PAWNBROKER'S - DAY

180

MR DICK stands with DAVID and MICAWBER, with a fishing rod.

MR MICAWBER

No, that's not what we need.

HARD CUT TO:

181 INT. PAWNBROKER'S - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

181

MR DICK and the PAWNBROKER. MR DICK holds the fishing rod.

MR DICK

You tricked me!

PAWNBROKER

Alright, you can have the damned  
squeezebox. For eleven shillings.  
Hang on - no - twelve shillings!  
Haha! Thirteen! A pound!

MR DICK grabs the concertina, runs out of the shop.

PAWNBROKER (CONT'D)

Oi!!

CUT TO:

182 EXT. LONDON STREET - OPPOSITE PAWNBROKER'S - DAY (CONTINUED) 182

MR DICK rushes out, concertina in one hand, kite in the  
other. As he runs the concertina wheezes chords in and out.

MR DICK

Run! I am a criminal!

Half a beat as DAVID and MICAWBER take it in, then they too  
run, chased by the PAWNBROKER. Wide as they run, and the kite  
lifts in the air. DICK grinning.

183 EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY 183

DAVID, MR DICK and MICAWBER sit in the MICAWBER FAMILY'S  
doorway, laughing. MICAWBER has his concertina.

MR MICAWBER

If anything, it plays sweeter than  
ever.

MR DICK

What an adventure! Like something  
from a book!

DAVID spies PEGGOTTY, with a big basket of crabs, lobsters  
and herring. She looks sadder and wearier. He jumps up.

DAVID

Peggotty!

She looks over, immediately brightens.

PEGGOTTY

Davy! My precious potato!

DAVID runs to meet her and they embrace. PEGGOTTY looks  
across at MR DICK and MR MICAWBER, sitting on the street.

PEGGOTTY (CONT'D)

Davy, when you said you had to move  
to smaller premises...?

DAVID

Don't worry, I don't live on the street. I'm not yet that desperate.  
 (remembers Micawber)  
 ...or unlucky. What brings you to London?

PEGGOTTY

Dan and Ham asked me to come...

CUT TO:

184 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY 184

MONTAGE: HAM and DANIEL PEGGOTTY. Their horse and cart relentlessly travelling, like David's walk to Dover.

Travelling along a COUNTRY ROAD.

PEGGOTTY (V.O.)

They've been searching all this time for Emily.

185 EXT. FLAT NORFOLK COUNTRY SIDE - DAY 185

Smaller in the frame, against a vast, wide, flat LANDSCAPE.

PEGGOTTY (V.O.)

Mostly it's been like us playing blind man's buff when you was tiny - darkness and confusion, everything just out of reach. They've been all over the country - I'd tell you the places but I haven't heard of half of them.

186 EXT. LONDON - CROWDED BRIDGE - DAY 186

With HAM and DANIEL PEGGOTTY as they cross a busy BRIDGE.

Then: Tiny in frame crossing the bridge into London. Cranes nod over the city.

PEGGOTTY (V.O.)

Ham even sailed to France when he heard she and...that man had been seen. But they've narrowed it down now to some streets to the east. Blindfold's coming off, Davy.

CUT BACK TO:

187 EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

187

PEGGOTTY, DAVID, MR MICAWBER, MR DICK.

MR MICAWBER

An arduous expedition. I doff what remains of my hat to them.

PEGGOTTY

You need to love those folk who help you out, and help out the ones you love. That's a Peggotty Proverb.

MR MICAWBER

You're a most charitable woman.

A pregnant pause. The slightest of looks from MICAWBER to DAVID.

DAVID

Mr Micawber...

MR MICAWBER

I'd love to.

DAVID

Would you - and please don't feel under any obligation to say yes -

MR MICAWBER

Understood...

DAVID

...but would you and your family, temporarily, like to stay, for a very short time, with me? You can say no.

HARD CUT TO:

188 INT. DAVID'S SECOND LODGINGS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

188

Later. DAVID, DICK, BETSEY, PEGGOTTY and the MICAWBERS, crammed in. MICAWBER plays his concertina. It's awful.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

And you've never given a professional recital?

MR MICAWBER

A perceptive question! I have sadly yet to be seriously approached.

PEGGOTTY has the basket of seafood open.

PEGGOTTY

Where shall I put all these?

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Thank you, but despite our losses  
we are all adequately fed.

MR DICK

Are we?

(off BETSEY's look)

Oh my word we are.

The MICAWBER KIDS are running around.

MRS MICAWBER

(shouting to the KIDS)

Leave that kite! Right - who needs  
to answer the call of nature?

MR DICK goes to put his hand up, then thinks better of it.

MRS MICAWBER (CONT'D)

(to the KIDS)

No volunteers? Then I'll take three  
of you at random...

She grabs some KIDS. DAVID looks around at his cramped flat.  
He's pained by the chaos he sees, and what has happened to  
his life. BETSEY and MR DICK clock his distress.

MR DICK

You really should write a story  
about our adventure at the pawn  
shop, Trotwood. It would make a  
cracking tale.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

What adventure at the pawn shop?

MR MICAWBER

There was no adventure at the pawn  
shop.

DAVID

Yes, I should try to write...

BETSEY TROTWOOD

No - no 'should'. No 'try'. You are  
a writer Trot.

PEGGOTTY

You're a great one for surprising  
words. I understand them of course,  
but they surprise my brother.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

We unpacked all your slips of paper while you were in Yarmouth. All your ideas and characters...

DAVID

No - you didn't use them for kindling?

MR DICK produces a little kite-shaped BOOK, with DAVID's slips of paper carefully sewn together.

MR DICK

Never. We made them into a book. You really have a talent to...

MR DICK is interrupted by MICAWBBER learning a new concertina tune, as MRS MICAWBBER yells...

MRS MICAWBBER

Next batch of children for the chamber pot! Come on! Chop-chop!

DAVID looks at the book. Incredibly touched by the gesture.

HARD CUT TO:

189 EXT. LONDON - EXCHANGE ALLEY - EVENING 189

Establisher of David's second lodgings. A few HOMELESS PEOPLE on the street outside.

190 INT. DAVID'S SECOND LODGINGS - SMALL DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

DAVID has set up a desk. Surrounded by scraps of paper. Outside we hear BETSEY, MR DICK, but mostly the MICAWBERS. We stay on DAVID looking into a mirror. The room is dark behind his reflection. DAVID trying out facial expressions, mouths words, eyes sparkling. He becomes MRS STEERFORTH.

DAVID

This tea will not be removed from the table until he returns.

MRS STEERFORTH herself now appears, beside a tea table covered in cobwebs, wearing a cobwebbed dress. The room now matches the colour of her home. She says the words simultaneously.

MRS STEERFORTH

This tea will not be removed from the table until he returns.

With her now is YOUNG DAVID, scared. MRS STEERFORTH touches her heart.



DAVID  
What do I touch?

MRS STEERFORTH (CONT'D)  
What do I touch?

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Your heart.

YOUNG DAVID  
Your heart.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Broken! They shall lay me on  
this table when I am dead!

MRS STEERFORTH  
Broken! They shall lay me on  
this table when I am dead!

A light on his younger self in a partial bottling-factory  
set, but dirtier and more ragged and begging for food:

YOUNG DAVID  
I'm desperate with hunger. I want  
more sir! Please, sir...

Then STEERFORTH appears, in another area, looking slightly  
different:

STEERFORTH  
I wish to God I had been guided to  
a far, far better fate...

Then a light on Murdstone, in yet another area:

MURDSTONE  
What I want is Facts. No  
boathouses! Facts! Facts alone are  
wanted in life.

Then MICAWBER is conjured brandishing an IOU.

MR MICAWBER  
As good a promissory note as any  
issued from Threadneedle Street!

A knock on the door. A head comes round. It's the real  
MICAWBER. David embarrassed, like he's been caught. Checks  
that the fictional Micawber isn't still there.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
Cup of tea? Or shall I leave you be  
with your pen? Any silence after I  
finish speaking I'll take as a sign  
to leave you be.  
(short silence)  
I'll...

Suddenly a loud knocking on the front door.

MR MICAWBER (CONT'D)  
Bailiffs! Hide the spoons!

BETSEY TROTWOOD (O.S.)  
Trot! It's Agnes.

191 INT. DAVID'S SECOND LODGINGS - LIVING ROOM - (CONTINUOUS) 191

MICAWBERS, MR DICK, PEGGOTTY, BETSEY. [MRS MICAWBER sings *Little Jimmy Murphy*.] The door opens - AGNES carries Uriah's BRIEFCASE in one arm, a MICAWBER CHILD in the other. She arrives with purpose but is taken aback by the cramped scene.

AGNES

The door was open - is this...?

MRS MICAWBER

(taking the CHILD)

That's one of ours I think, yes.

AGNES

Goodness - so many people. Will the floor hold up?

MR MICAWBER stands, bows. PEGGOTTY stands, curtseys. AGNES smiles back at both but she wants to talk to BETSEY.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Miss Trotwood, do you have...

(sees MR DICK)

Oh! Good morning Mr Dick.

MR DICK

Good morning Agnes! Please do come in, join the choir.

AGNES

Miss Trotwood, do you have a letter bearing my father's signature?

BETSEY TROTWOOD

Yes, I believe I do.

Searches a box/bag as DAVID enters from his writing room.

DAVID

Agnes! Is something wrong?

AGNES

Something's about to be made right.

DAVID crosses to her, BETSEY's there with the letter, PEGGOTTY, the MICAWBERS, MR DICK all close around Agnes.

AGNES (CONT'D)

(re briefcase)

Uriah Heep's fate is in here. But I need your help. Gather around.

A beat. They're basically already gathered around. A slight shuffle from MR DICK to show willing.

192 EXT. WICKFIELD & HEEP OFFICES - DAY 192

Establisher of the offices. The sign outside is now the one we saw in scene 133 - it reads 'WICKFIELD & HEEP'.

193 INT. WICKFIELD & HEEP OFFICES - EVENING 193

URIAH works at his desk. A knock, DAVID and AGNES enter. DAVID has his coat over his arm. A brand new plaque is propped up on the table: 'HEEP & CO'.

URIAH  
Mr Copperfield and Miss Wickfield.  
Two fields. Neither laying fallow,  
I hope?

AGNES  
(to DAVID)  
Clever.

DAVID  
Tiresome.

AGNES  
Yes, I was being polite.

DAVID  
You are not busy, Uriah?

URIAH  
(suspicious)  
Mr Heep is very busy. Doing the  
work of two men-  
(pointedly, at AGNES)  
-sadly.

AGNES  
Well, we are here, *Mr Heeeeeep*, to  
speak to you about Miss Trotwood's  
investments.

Through the door now comes BETSEY.

URIAH  
More people - it's a party!

WICKFIELD and MR DICK enter.

WICKFIELD  
This doesn't feel like a party.

URIAH  
Should I make us a bowl of punch?  
We need a lemon - Miss Trotwood,  
you look like you're sucking one.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

If I had a lemon, Heep, I'd squirt  
the juice in your eyes. You've  
embezzled funds from this firm.

URIAH

Slander! Who else wishes to defame  
me?

MICAWBER enters, with PEGGOTTY.

MR MICAWBER

I do! I put it to you that - for  
your own pecuniary aggrandisement -  
you falsified documents to mystify  
an individual whom I will designate  
in code as 'Mr W'.

URIAH

Wickfield.

MR MICAWBER

...Maybe.

AGNES

There's no need for the code, Mr  
Micawber.

URIAH

Prove it. You can't.

AGNES

To prove it we would need access to  
certain documents...

DAVID

But Agnes - wherever might we find  
such documents?

AGNES

I believe they *used* to be in that  
bureau.

DAVID

Used to be.

URIAH gets up and rushes to a bureau in the corner, unlocks  
it, looks for his briefcase. Roots around, panicky. Nothing.

URIAH

(trying to appear calm)  
All you've proved is that you're  
thieves. You stole those documents.

DAVID

Stole? Can Mr Wickfield's daughter  
not tidy up her father's papers?

URIAH  
They were in a locked drawer!

AGNES  
I'm a very enthusiastic tidier.

PEGGOTTY  
(re BETSEY)  
You stole this lady's house you  
greasy stain!

From under the coat he is carrying, DAVID produces URIAH'S  
DISTINCTIVE BRIEFCASE.

DAVID  
Mr Dick, what do you think?

DAVID theatrically takes a signature page from the briefcase,  
hands it to MR DICK. BETSEY does the same with the letter she  
found. Everyone crowds around DICK. He turns them upside  
down.

MR DICK  
Swans.

Swans?	URIAH	PEGGOTTY (looking out the window) Where?	*
--------	-------	--	---

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
(is he going to blow it?)  
Swans?

MR MICAWBER  
(nods sagely, but not a  
clue)  
Swans.

MR DICK  
I was studying these last night.  
(pause, as if that was it)  
Oh yes. When Mr Wickfield signs his  
name, the 'W' looks like a swan.  
But when Mr Heep mimics the  
signature, his 'W' is more like a  
church bell. Or an upturned hip  
bath.

A cheer from the room. The attention off him, URIAH moves to  
AGNES, gradually making his way towards the door.

DAVID  
Well done, Mr Dick!

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
Mr Dick cracks it again!

WICKFIELD

You are the source of all this calamity, Heep? A thousand curses on you. I take that back. A thousand and four!

MRS HEEP comes in.

URIAH

(close to AGNES)

Agnes, if you've any love for your babbling father you'd better leave this gang and marry me. I'll ruin him if you don't. The old ass will end his own life, I guarantee it!

MRS HEEP

Ury, make terms! Be humble, my boy.

URIAH

(making for the door)

No. No more pulling off our caps mother, making bows, knowing our place and abasing ourselves before our betters. No more of that.

PEGGOTTY and MICAWBER block the door. BETSEY runs over to URIAH, grabs him by the lapels.

BETSEY

You know what I want?

URIAH

A strait-jacket? A wig?

BETSEY TROTWOOD

My property.

URIAH

I ain't got it. You and your kind have always hated me and mine. Kept us down. And who are you? A fine set of people. You, Copperfield, were pure scum before anyone had charity on you. And you, Miss T: you're a grim old prospect, no wonder your old man abandoned you.

BETSEY slaps URIAH. Then URIAH slaps BETSEY. Then BETSEY slaps URIAH. Then URIAH goes to slap BETSEY again but DAVID floors him with a punch.

PEGGOTTY

Now stove his head in with a cake!

MRS HEEP goes to tend to URIAH.

MICAWBER

(over unconscious URIAH)  
Approach us again and, if your head  
is human, I'll break it.

WICKFIELD

And in case it wasn't clear, you're  
dismissed. With immediate effect!

DAVID

I expect to hear you went to a  
dentist on Monday to have a tooth  
out. And I hope it's a double one.

URIAH

(recovering)  
You were always a puppy with a  
proud stomach. Riding on the coat-  
tails of that vile creature who  
called you Daisy.

BETSEY TROTWOOD

His name is Trotwood.

PEGGOTTY

Davy!

At that moment DORA appears from nowhere with JIP.

DORA

Doady!

DAVID

I'm David Copperfield. And a  
constable is already on his way to  
take you to a magistrate, Heep.

MRS HEEP

Make sure you get put away in  
Pentonville, Ury. Not Millbank. You  
get accountants and doctors in  
Pentonville, it's a lovely prison.

URIAH

I forgive you Mr Copperfield. I  
forgive all of you.

DORA

It is not for you to forgive  
anyone, Mr Heep. Isn't that right,  
Jip?

(Jip voice)

Yes it is.

MR DICK

Why is she here?

DORA (V.O.)  
 There's no reason for me to be  
 there.

CUT TO:

194 INT. DAVID'S SECOND LODGINGS - SMALL DRESSING ROOM - DAY 194

David's writing room. DORA standing, reading the early pages  
 of a manuscript by DAVID. No JIP.

DORA  
 I wasn't there. This happened  
 yesterday and I was away.

DAVID  
 I know, but I'm writing it now and  
 I want you to be in it.

DORA sits.

DORA  
 I fear I don't properly fit.

He offers his hand to DORA, which she takes.

DAVID  
 I want you to be in all my stories.

DORA  
 No - take me out of it. I don't  
 belong. But I still want to be of  
 some use. May I hold your pens?

DAVID  
 Of course.

He hands DORA his bundle of pens.

DORA  
 Do tell me when you need a new pen.

DAVID  
 (writing)  
 Mm.

They drop hands. DORA looks at the manuscript again. She puts  
 the pens down, moves to the door.

DORA  
 I really don't fit. Write me out,  
 Doady.

She exits. Hold for a beat on DAVID. He doesn't pause  
 writing, but he has noticed what just happened. He crosses  
 through Dora's name.



A beat. Then a knock at the door. DAVID puts his hand over the crossed-out name.

DAVID

Yes?

PEGGOTTY pokes her head round the door.

PEGGOTTY

(nervously excited)

Davy - you need to come with me now. I think we've found Emily.

HARD CUT TO:

195 EXT. MRS STEERFORTH'S HOUSE - EVENING 195

MRS STEERFORTH emerges from her house, gets into a carriage. It drives off.

196 INT/EXT. MRS STEERFORTH'S CARRIAGE - EVENING 196

MRS STEERFORTH taps the top of the carriage with her umbrella.

MRS STEERFORTH

Quicker! This isn't a funeral cortège.

197 EXT. ROUGH LONDON STREETS - EVENING 197

DAN's cart and PEGGOTTY/AGNES/DAVID's carriage enter a rough and deprived part of London. Barely lit, people living on the streets, cries and shouts and screams.

MRS STEERFORTH's carriage pulls up. She gets out and hurries down an alleyway.

Moments later, DAN's cart and DAVID's carriage pull up from the opposite end of the street. Everyone leaps out. DAVID catches a glimpse of MRS STEERFORTH.

DAVID

That's Mrs Steerforth.

HAM

Does that mean her son's here?

DAVID tries to hide his excitement at this thought.

198 EXT. LONDON STREET - EVENING 198

Wind howls, stormy. A crowded, slum area. Addicts and prostitutes. The most sordid and terrible part of London.

A TOP SHOT of MRS STEERFORTH hurrying past, from through a window... followed moments later by DANIEL PEGGOTTY, DAVID, HAM, AGNES and PEGGOTTY.

MRS STEERFORTH heads through a door, followed by DANIEL PEGGOTTY, DAVID, HAM, AGNES and PEGGOTTY. A MAN scurries across a rickety balcony above the entrance.

PEGGOTTY

Emily's here. I can feel it. It's a Peggotty Premonition.

199

INT. EMILY'S BOARDING-HOUSE ROOM - EVENING

199

A grim room. Heavily subdivided with cloths. A fireplace is split halfway across two 'rooms'. EMILY sits on a grubby bed. MRS STEERFORTH stands over her. Wind rattling outside.

MRS STEERFORTH

Do you ever think of the home you wrecked?

EMILY

Of course. Every day. Poor uncle...

MRS STEERFORTH

Not your home! His. Mine. A veil of shame hangs over me because of what you made my son do. Where is he?

EMILY

All I know is he's a long way from you and, I believe, happy to be so.

MRS STEERFORTH

How dare you say that! Where is my James, you worthless creature?!

200

INT. EMILY'S BOARDING HOUSE - STAIRWELL/HALLWAY - EVENING 200

DAVID, AGNES, PEGGOTTY, DANIEL PEGGOTTY and HAM run up the busy stairwell and through a hallway. Pushing open doors, knocking on others. A succession of sordid vignettes.

HAM

If Steerforth is there with her, I'll kill him.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

You can't kill him, Ham.

(a beat)

You can really hurt him though, that's allowed.

Then...

EMILY (O.S.)  
I don't know! Leave me alone!

They burst through the third door into...

201 INT. EMILY'S BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - EVENING

201

DAVID, AGNES, PEGGOTTY, MR PEGGOTTY and HAM run in. A beat. EMILY and HAM stare at each other. Then EMILY runs into PEGGOTTY's arms. Wind louder now. House creaking and straining, rickety, shaking.

MRS STEERFORTH  
I imagine you want this discarded toy? She was just a trifle for the occupation of an idle hour...

EMILY  
No. When James was at his truest he loved me. If he's ruined, it's because you pampered his pride.

MRS STEERFORTH  
Find a doorway girl, and die in it.

DAVID  
No! Enough, madam. That is vile.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
I'd never hit a lady, so you'd best get out this room while you've still got some teeth in your head.

MRS STEERFORTH  
I'll leave when I have news of my son, and not before.

HAM  
Tell her Em, and then let's leave. Please. I'll have you back. We'll build that boathouse.

The walls of the rickety building seem now like fragile tarpaulin in the strong wind.

PEGGOTTY  
Let's get going. This house feels like it's going to get blown away.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
Big storm on its way. Best leave now.

AGNES  
I've only been in rooms like this in my worst nightmares.

MRS STEERFORTH

They've kept you in pretty ribbons  
and gowns though, haven't they?

AGNES

What do you mean?

MRS STEERFORTH

You see all of this, all these  
filthy, partitioned dens...?

DAVID

Make your point or don't.

MRS STEERFORTH

Very well - all of these rooms are  
owned by Wickfield & Heep, or  
whatever you call yourselves now...

AGNES

No...

MRS STEERFORTH

The foulest dregs of London, denied  
accommodation elsewhere, will find  
a room here, gladly assisted with a  
high-interest loan from your firm.

AGNES

You're lying. I know nothing of  
this.

MRS STEERFORTH

Why don't you know? Why?

AGNES is silent.

MRS STEERFORTH (CONT'D)

Whatever your knowledge, you and  
your father have supped very well  
off the backs of these wretches.

DAVID puts an arm around AGNES. For the first time we see her  
lose her composure.

AGNES

Dear God. Even in a magistrate's  
cell Uriah can get to me. Even  
miles away from me he is breathing  
in my face.

HAM approaches EMILY.

HAM

At least tell me, Em, if you won't  
tell her - is that snake with you?

EMILY looks to MRS STEERFORTH, who's anxious to hear.

EMILY  
No. Fled from me, in France.

DAVID  
Steerforth abandoned you?

One side of the tarpaulin building blows away with a roar.  
Emily turns and we see:

202 EXT. FIELD - CLIFFTOP - DUSK (CONTINUOUS) 202

From within the Boarding House, we see STEERFORTH with a HORSE on a gloomy, wet landscape. EMILY, in the foreground, watches.

STEERFORTH  
(to EMILY)  
I'm no good for you. No good for anyone. Think of me at my best.

STEERFORTH mounts the HORSE and rides off.

HAM (O.S.)  
How can you do that and still call yourself a man?

203 INT. EMILY'S BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - EVENING (CONTINUOUS) 203

It's more dark now, the tarpaulin torn to shreds.

EMILY  
I've been here since, scared I might never be forgiven.

PEGGOTTY  
Oh, you are forgiven my love...

DAVID  
Do you know - does Steerforth plan to return?

A beat. MRS STEERFORTH can hardly bear it.

EMILY  
Yes he does. Tomorrow night. He's sailing into Yarmouth.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
Tomorrow? That's mad. The storm will be at its peak. It's suicide.

Another side of the tarpaulin, with a boarded-up window, howls away in the fierce storm. The window splinters and blows off into the night. When it goes, we're left on a WIDE SHOT from the top of a cliff - looking out onto a beach, with crashing waves.

The dying embers of DAY as HAM, DAVID, EMILY, AGNES, PEGGOTTY and DANIEL PEGGOTTY run across the beach below.

204 EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

204

A raging storm. Thunder, lightening. Lights shine from the boathouse, and lots of burning torches and small fires are dotted across the shingle. Two beacons burn from the top of the cliff. DAVID struggles to move forward against high winds and sea spray. DAVID takes his overcoat off, wraps it around himself and AGNES, hugging her close. A BOATMAN approaches.

BOATMAN

Wreck close by, sir. Two men saved, one still out there. She'll go to pieces any moment.

Lots of people run across the beach. The sea is wild. DAVID spots the wreck, one mast broken, leaning to one side, beaten by waves. ONE SAILOR lies on the beach, half-drowned but alive, being tended to by some BOATMEN. Another SAILOR is dragged out of the sea. One sailor is still on board, clinging to the broken mast as the boat sinks. It's STEERFORTH, who sees DAVID.

HAM, DANIEL PEGGOTTY and PEGGOTTY walk through the crowd. HAM approaches the BOATMEN.

HAM

Mates, make me ready. I'm going in.

DAVID

You can't. You know who that is?

HAM

If my time has come, then it's come. I hope it hasn't. But I can't watch a man die, Davy. Not even that man out there.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

It looks like he's taunting us.

DAVID

No. Not taunting us. Maybe taunting himself.

205 INT. LONDON THEATRE - EARLY EVENING

205

DAVID is on stage, telling the story of Steerforth's boat being wrecked at sea.

DAVID

The wind was rising, then with an extraordinary great sound there came a tremendous retiring wave...

He continues.

DAVID (CONT'D)

The wild moon seemed to plunge  
headlong through the clouds, as if  
she had lost her way and was  
frightened.

206 EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - NIGHT

206

DAVID watches the BOATMEN tie ropes to HAM, who waits until a wave recedes, then runs in. A BOATMAN gets dragged out with HAM, who is immediately buffeted. The BOATMEN haul him back in. HAM bleeds from a head wound. Runs back in. Fights the waves, swims to the wreck. Climbs aboard. Over these visuals we hear DAVID's reading.

DAVID (V.O.)

...he was lost beneath the rugged  
foam.

STEERFORTH clings to the mast, terrified. HAM reaches out to him and STEERFORTH flinches, scared of HAM. STEERFORTH mouths something inaudible, maybe 'I'm sorry.' HAM tries to tether his rope to STEERFORTH just as a huge wave swallows them.

Screams and cries from the shore. A beat of stillness. The BOATMEN haul HAM in. It takes forever. Then HAM emerges from the waves. DAVID, DANIEL PEGGOTTY and PEGGOTTY run over. One Boatmen checks HAM's pulse, giving him the kiss of life. A beat of DAVID, and the PEGGOTTYS staring, helpless. Then HAM splutters, opens his eyes, gets up and is copiously sick.

BOATMAN (O.S.)

Sir! Come yonder. He's come ashore!

207 INT. LONDON THEATRE - EARLY EVENING

207

DAVID reading.

DAVID

I stood, unable to move a step.  
"Does he live?" I asked. "Does  
Steerforth live?" The answer came  
back:

On the page from which DAVID is reading the word "Yes!" is printed, but the word swims and slips.

DAVID (CONT'D)

No.

208 EXT. YARMOUTH BEACH - DAWN

208

DAVID follows the BOATMAN, with AGNES.

BOATMAN

I am sorry to say it sir.

The BOATMAN leads DAVID to a crowd, surrounding STEERFORTH'S body. DAVID crouches, weeps. Tries to revive Steerforth, hopelessly. HAM pushes his way through to DAVID. PEGGOTTY follows.

AGNES

Stop now Trotwood. He can't be revived...

DAVID

He isn't dead. This isn't...he can't be...look at him. Look. He isn't dead.

PEGGOTTY

Agnes is right, Davy, my love. Come away...

HAM

I tried to save him. Davy, believe me I did. I wanted him to live, whatever he's done...

He sees EMILY at a distance, staring at STEERFORTH. DANIEL PEGGOTTY arrives.

HAM (CONT'D)

...but by God, I wish you'd never brought him here. Into our world, to ruin it.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

I brought you here. And Emily here. And Mrs Gummidge. Have a care, Ham, this isn't Davy's fault.

HAM stalks off. MRS STEERFORTH looks at her son.

MRS STEERFORTH

From his cradle he was better than anyone. Better than his father. Better than me. He was everything.

She starts to cry. EMILY approaches. Puts her hand on MRS STEERFORTH'S shoulder. She doesn't shrug it off.

EMILY

I'm sorry.

MRS STEERFORTH

I should curse you...

EMILY

He did love you. Very much indeed.



Half a beat.

MRS STEERFORTH  
I'm dead now. I am dead.

MRS STEERFORTH weeps. EMILY's hand stays on her shoulder.

209 EXT. YARMOUTH CLIFF TOP - DAY - MORNING 209

DAVID walks with AGNES. They hold hands. Then stop.

DAVID  
(confused, stunned)  
Agnes...sometimes in my writing I  
can say things that I can't ...

AGNES  
(interrupting, confidant)  
I will love you all my life.

They touch their heads together and look as if to never let  
each other go.

CUT TO:

210 INT. LONDON THEATRE - AUDITORIUM - EARLY EVENING 210

DAVID, on stage, completes his story.

DAVID  
And now, I have nothing left to  
tell... unless, indeed, I were to  
confess that this narrative is far  
more than mere fiction - it is my  
written memory... The people within  
it are as real as earth and my  
truest hope is that I might grow  
half as strong and wise in the  
telling of their lives, as they  
have grown in the living of them.

He closes the book, and bows to applause.

CUT TO:

211 INT. LONDON THEATRE - AUDITORIUM - EARLY EVENING (LATER) 211

On the stage. The painted backdrop from Sc1.

The last remaining AUDIENCE are leaving. DAVID steps off  
stage, to the left hand corner box, where AGNES stands.

AGNES  
Steerforth. You changed the ending.  
You said what happened.

DAVID

I know. That's the story I had to tell. Nothing can make it otherwise than as it was.

We see AGNES is pregnant. PEGGOTTY is there, with a LITTLE GIRL of two or three.

They walk off.

AGNES

The punching of Heep though...

DAVID

I wanted it to be me who punched Heep, so...

AGNES

But the reality was just as good - Betsey...

DAVID

No, I know, but I really wanted to punch Heep.

HARD CUT TO:

212 INT. WICKFIELD & HEEP OFFICES - DAY (FLASHBACK) 212

We're back in the unveiling of HEEP. AGNES, DAVID, PEGGOTTY, WICKFIELD, MICAWBER, MRS HEEP and DICK (but no DORA) watch as URIAH makes a dash for the door but is knocked out cold by BETSEY, with the 'HEEP & CO' plaque.

CUT TO:

213 EXT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY 213

DARKNESS.

DAVID (O.S.)

This is your sister, Betsey Trotwood.

Fade up to...

A bright sunny day in the garden. DAVID is introducing his new SIX-MONTH-OLD SON to the TODDLER GIRL we saw at the theatre. Shapes and colours, like in the opening scene. They form into a crowd of people eating and drinking - including AGNES, WICKFIELD, the MICAWBERS, BETSEY and MR DICK (with his kite from earlier), and others we don't know played by as many of the cast who can make it.

A SMALL BOY hangs a sign on the back of MR DICK. It's DAVID's old 'He Bites' sign, amended to read 'He Kites.'

MR DICK  
Kite as a verb. Splendid.

We drift past PEGGOTTY and DANIEL PEGGOTTY eating snacks.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
What are these again?

PEGGOTTY  
Hors d'oeuvres. Davy has them all  
the time.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
Nice. I'll put some in my hat for  
Mrs G. You don't need teeth for  
them.

With DAVID and WICKFIELD.

WICKFIELD  
(to DAVID)  
Congratulations on the book!

DAVID  
Odd to think my words bought this  
house.

WICKFIELD  
A fine depiction of that villain  
Heep. I think we both played a  
pretty clever game to catch that  
fellow. Canny minds, you and I.

DAVID  
Well done us.

WICKFIELD beams a confident smile. DAVID hands the BABY to  
PEGGOTTY - now wearing BETSEY'S BROACH - who stands with  
DANIEL PEGGOTTY.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
You could have made me taller and  
younger, Master Davy.

PEGGOTTY  
He writes you as twenty, in feet  
and years.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
Really?

PEGGOTTY  
He's not read it Davy.

BETSEY is there, with the MICAWBERS.

BETSEY TROTWOOD  
 You saved my home Trot. I don't  
 think I can ever...DONKEYS!!

BETSEY has spotted something:

INSERT SHOT: two DONKEYS being ridden over the green.

MR DICK makes the 'not now' signal to BETSEY.

MRS MICAWBER  
 You also saved myself, Wilkins and  
 our angels from the streets.

DAVID  
 Your presence in my writing has  
 repaid me many times over.

MR MICAWBER  
 Luckily I'm at present between paid  
 jobs, so that has allowed us the  
 freedom to travel down to your  
 beautiful home. The coach fare...

MRS MICAWBER  
 Well, we barely considered the  
 cost.

MR MICAWBER  
 Indeed. Barely considered it.

DAVID gives a bank note to MICAWBER, who goes to write an  
 IOU. DAVID shakes his head, no need. He heads into the house.

In a corner, PEGGOTTY and DANIEL PEGGOTTY survey the crowd.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY  
 (to PEGGOTTY)  
 Tell you this much, not one of  
 these could gut a herring to save  
 their lives.

AGNES crosses, looking efficient. DANIEL PEGGOTTY considers.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY (CONT'D)  
 ...Well, maybe her.

214 INT. BETSEY TROTWOOD'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

214

A light-coloured room, with plenty of natural light. DAVID  
 walks in and sits at his desk. Thinks. Turns.

CUT WIDE: There is the 12-YEAR-OLD YOUNG DAVID, looking dirty  
 in his old bottling factory outfit.

DAVID

Don't worry, you'll make it  
through. And you'll have quite the  
ride on the way.

DAVID picks up a pen. YOUNG DAVID disappears. DAVID starts to  
write. We hold on him for ten seconds.

END.