

Pip
and the
Zombies

by
Charles Dickens
and
Louis Skipper

Introduction

When teaching the novel *Great Expectations* to my students,
which I did for fifteen years,
I heard the same complaint repeated by each class:
too many words, not enough Zombies.

I've fixed that.

Chapter I

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the Blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them, my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "Also Georgiana Wife of the Above," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. My five brothers were buried along side my parents, for they, too, had been killed by the marauding Zombies that had once ravaged our land.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a creature started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

He was fearful looking, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.

I knew at once I was in the grip of a Zombie.



“I tell ye, I’m not a Zombie. Would I have captured him if I was?” proclaimed my acquaintance, pointedly.

We turned. The Zombie was livid to look at and seemed to be bruised and torn all over.

“Ganmbzhagh hrbbarh hgha mnazra hrmngb gbhrg!” were his first words.

“I took him, and giv’ him up; that’s what I done,” said my acquaintance. “I not only prevented him getting off the marshes, but I dragged him here, dragged him this far on his way back. I got your Zombie back for ya!”

The Zombie still struggled and gasped, “Mnazra gbhrg hrbbarh!”

“Lookee here!” said my acquaintance to the sergeant. “Single-handed I got clear of the Zombie Ship; I made a dash and I done it. I could ha’ got clear of these death-cold flats likewise - look at my leg; you won’t find much iron on it - if I hadn’t made the discovery that he was loose. I was not going to let a Zombie escape by the means as I found out. If I had died at the bottom there,” and he made an emphatic swing at the ditch with his manacled hands, “I’d have held to him with that grip, that you should have been safe to find him in my hold.”

The Zombie continued to struggle and pull against his new restraints.

“Look at him. He’s the Zombie. I was caught up in a Sweep and mistaken for one infected due to a miserable condition that betook me, but it wasn’t the Zombie Plague; surely you can see I’m not like him!”

The Zombie tried to collect the nervous working of his mouth into any set expression, looking at the soldiers, and looking about at the marshes and at the sky, but was unable to look like anything other than what he was - undead.

Mr. Pumblechook and I breakfasted at eight o'clock in the parlor behind the shop, while the shopman took his mug of tea and hunch of bread and butter on a sack of peas in the front premises. I considered Mr.

Pumblechook wretched company. Besides being possessed by my sister's idea that a mortifying and penitential character ought to be imparted to my diet, besides giving me as much crumb as possible in combination with as little butter, and putting such a quantity of warm water into my milk that it would have been more candid to have left the milk out altogether, his conversation consisted of nothing but Zombies. On my politely bidding him Good Morning, he said, pompously, "How do you kill a Zombie, lad?" And how should I be able to answer, dodged in that way, in a strange place, on an empty stomach! I was hungry, but before I had swallowed a morsel, he went on: "Why do Zombies favor our marshes? How long did the Zombie War last? Who gets sent to the Zombie Ships?" And most disconcertingly, "Why must orphans be locked up?" It was as much as I could do to get a bite or a sup, before the next question came; while he sat at his ease eating bacon and hot roll, in, if I may be allowed the expression, a gorging and gormandizing manner.

For such reasons, I was very glad when ten o'clock came and we started for Miss Havisham's, though I was not at all at my ease regarding the manner in which I should acquit myself under that lady's roof. Within a quarter of an hour we came to Miss Havisham's house which was of old brick and dismal and had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up; of those that remained, all the lower were rustily barred. There was a courtyard in front and that was barred; so we had to wait, after ringing the bell, until some one should come to open it. While we waited at the gate, I peeped in and saw that at the side of the house there was a large brewery. No brewing was going on in it, and none seemed to have gone on for a long time.

Bawling "Estella" to a scornful young lady neither visible nor responsive, and feeling it a dreadful liberty so to roar out her name, was almost as bad as fighting furniture with a broom handle. But she answered at last and came along the passage like a star moving across the sky.

Miss Havisham beckoned her to come close and took up a jeweled dagger from the table. "Your own, one day, my dear, and you will use it well. Let me see you spar with this boy."

"With this boy? Why, he is a common laboring boy!"

I thought I overheard Miss Havisham answer, only it seemed so unlikely, "Well? You can break his arm."

“What is your weapon, boy?” asked Estella of myself, with disdain. I knew not how to reply, nor could I, for I found myself speechless in her presence.

“Hand-to-hand then,” said Miss Havisham to Estella. And we moved to the center of the room.

It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. As Estella took her position, I glanced at the dressing-table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud.

So she sat, corpse-like, as we sparred; the frillings and trimmings on her bridal dress, looking like earthy paper. I knew nothing then of the discoveries that are occasionally made of bodies buried in ancient times, which fall to powder in the moment of being distinctly seen; but, I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust.

“Look how he holds his hands, this boy!” said Estella with disdain, before our first match was out. “And what coarse hands they are! And what thick boots!”

I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt for me was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it.

She won the round, and I tried moving about more. I stumbled, as was only natural, when I knew she was lying in wait for me to do wrong, and she denounced me for a stupid, clumsy laboring-boy.

“Biddy,” said I, after binding her to secrecy, “I want to be a Slayer.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t, if I were you!” she returned. “It doesn’t suit you.”

“Biddy,” said I, with some severity, “I have particular reasons for wanting to be a Zombie Slayer.”

“You know best, Pip; but don’t you think you are happier as you are?”

“Biddy,” I exclaimed, impatiently, “I am not at all happy as I am. I am disgusted with my calling and with my life. I have never taken to either, since I was bound. Don’t be absurd.”

“Was I absurd?” said Bidley, quietly raising her eyebrows. “I am sorry for that; I didn’t mean to be. I only want you to do well and to be comfortable.”

“Well, then, understand once for all that I never shall or can be comfortable, or anything but miserable! unless I can lead a very different sort of life from the life I lead now.”

“That’s a pity!” said Bidley, shaking her head with a sorrowful air.

Now I, too, had so often thought it a pity, that, in the singular kind of quarrel with myself which I was always carrying on, I was half inclined to shed tears of vexation and distress when Bidley gave utterance to her sentiment and my own. I told her she was right, and I knew it was much to be regretted, but still it was not to be helped.

“See how I am going on. Dissatisfied, and uncomfortable, and what would it signify to me, being coarse and common and destined to be merely a Swordsmith, if nobody had told me so?”

Bidley turned her face suddenly towards mine, and looked far more attentively at me than she had looked at the sailing ships.

“It was neither a very true nor a very polite thing to say,” she remarked, directing her eyes to the ships again. “Who said it?”

I was disconcerted, for I had broken away without quite seeing where I was going to. It was not to be shuffled off now, however, and I answered, “The beautiful young lady at Miss Havisham’s, and she’s more beautiful than anybody ever was, and I admire her dreadfully, and I want to be a **Zombie Slayer** on her account.”

“Do you want to be a **Zombie Slayer** to spite her or to gain her over?” Bidley quietly asked me, after a pause.

“I don’t know,” I moodily answered.

“Because, if it is to spite her,” Bidley pursued, “I should think that might be better and more independently done by caring nothing for her words. And if it is to gain her over, I should think she was not *worth* gaining over.”



coming soon

What of those intervening years spent abroad? Stay tuned to www.pipandthezombies.com for news regarding Book 2, *Phillip Pirrip, Zombie Slayer*. Pip joins Herbert in Egypt where he discovers the truth behind the building of the pyramids, travels to Texas to battle zombies, meets Huckleberry Finn in Missouri, and stumbles upon the lost village of Roanoke.

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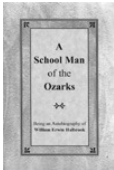


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