At first, I chose to ignore the faint knocking upon the door – whoever it was could wait. Or better still, they would simply depart. The knock became louder. The stranger wouldn’t back off.

“Who is it?” I asked, more harshly than I should have.

When I spun around, I saw a young timid looking boy. His ruffled hair was a dirty brown colour; his dull orange shirt complimented his murky green trousers. His look was finished off by cheap, lace-up school shoes.

“Pip ma’am,” he replied in a quiet shaky voice.

“Pip?”

“Mr Pumblechook’s boy ma’am. Come to play.”

I could tell he was nervous by the way he paused – was he scared of me?

“Come nearer; let me look at you. Come closer.”

He slowly edged towards me, purposely avoiding my eyes. His gaze moved towards my wrist watch and my table clock which had both stopped at twenty minutes to nine.

“Look at me,” I said.

Pip turned his head towards me, his eyes not quite reaching mine.

“Surely you are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?”

He looked around at the faded white room. Cobwebs hung in all corners. The ripped curtains let through small shards of light; the only light. The small dressing table on which the shattered looking glass lay was matching the low stool that I sat on. The ancient dining table and chairs were pushed aside in the corner of the room. The faint candle light flickered in the soft breeze from the broken window.

“Well, go on boy, play,” I pointed to an empty part of the room. He uneasily walked over there, unsure of what to do.

“Um ma’am, is there someone I can play with? Please?” He said looking scared as if I would be annoyed with hime. I tried not to be.