

The Lone House

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and she had left Pip as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

But now her attention wandered; the talk about Canada had excited her, while the disappointment about the box was depressing.

Presently she pushed her work aside, and went down the ladder to the lower room. The box containing the things which had belonged to her dead mother stood there. It was only a small box, but strongly made and clamped with iron. Nell had not seen inside it since her father died, but she knew what it contained. There were frocks and coats belonging to her mother, a gold watch and chain, a gold bracelet, and some brooches. The jewelry was of no great value from a monetary point of view, but it was precious beyond price to the girl, whose memory of her mother grew every day more faint and indistinct.

"Just to think that granfer should lose the key, when I wanted it so badly!" she murmured to herself, as she leaned over the box, touching it with caressing fingers.

At that moment the sound of a deep-drawn sigh caught her ear, and lifting her head she saw a strange man standing on the threshold and clinging to the door-frame.