Chapter 21-23

As Mr. Pickwick and Sam sit in Mr. Perker’s law offices, an old man regales them with tales of lonely men who die and haunt the next tenants of their dwellings. He tells “The Tale of the Queer Client”: A man named Heyling has been imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtor’s prison. His wife and child come to visit him every day. Heyling sees his family suffering and starving, forced to move to ever cheaper lodgings. One day his wife comes alone; their son has died. Soon, she also dies in Heyling’s arms. As her body is carried out of the prison, Heyling vows to avenge the deaths of his family, which were caused by the cold-heartedness of his wife’s father. When he is released, Heyling visits his father-in-law just in time to stand by and let the old man’s son drown. He haunts the old man until his father-in-law is as lonely and bereft as he has been. Then Heyling confronts the old man, stating his intentions to pay him back for the deaths of his wife and child. The old man dies, and Heyling disappears.

Mr. Pickwick and Sam leave the next day on the coach, which is driven by Mr. Tony Weller, Sam’s father. Another passenger, Peter Magnus, is amazed at the coincidences that he sees between his journey and Mr. Pickwick’s. When the coach arrives at the Great White Horse Inn, Magnus tells Pickwick that he is there to meet a lady to whom he means to propose. Pickwick wants to escape Magnus’s meanderings, so he goes to his room in the very large and convoluted inn.

Just as Pickwick is ready to go to bed, he remembers that he left his watch on the table downstairs. After some difficulty finding the way down to the ground level, Pickwick retrieves his watch, but he gets lost on his way back to his room. He enters what he believes is his chamber and prepares for bed until the door is opened by a middle-aged woman in yellow curl papers. Pickwick is uncertain how to proceed but eventually announces his presence. The woman screams and orders him out of the room; Pickwick is eager to go. He finds Sam in the hall and has his servant escort him pack to his proper bedchamber.

Pickwick and Sam continue to Ipswich in search of Alfred Jingle. After bidding his father good-bye, Sam Weller strolls along the street, examining the sights and the ladies. He is surprised to see Job Trotter, who tells him that Alfred Jingle is once again in the process of attempting to seduce a wealthy woman.