He “saw a cadaverous face appear at a small window on the ground floor,” Unknowing that in shaking its “long, lank, skeleton hand” he was greeting a true villain (Dickens, 15,191). Not his first unfortunate encounter, Dickens’ *David Copperfield* flows the journey of David, orphaned in his early childhood, who battles fate to become a renowned author. Throughout the novel, conflict arises as David encounter several antagonists – a stepfather, friend, schoolmaster, and finally, the scheming Uriah Heep. A wolf in sheep’s clothing and self-proclaimed “umble” man. Uriah Heep uses manipulation to help himself, and proves that a man is defined by countenance over circumstance.

After a period of rough living in the streets of London, David enters the custody of his aunt and is sent to board with Uriah’s employer, Uriah Heep is serpentine in his wickedness, with a “snaky undulation pervading his frame” and so hungry for wealth that when it seemed within his reach. “Uriah writhed with such obtrusive satisfaction and self-abasement” (25,316). Repeatedly proclaiming himself and his mother as among the “umblest persons”. Uriah saw himself as above all others, a paradox in and of itself (25,321). Both Uriah and his widowed mother were educated in a “public, sort of charitable, establishment” where they were taught to always to know our place, and abase ourselves before our better” (39.479-480) With this type of conditioning, it is understandable that Uriah would want to climb the socioeconomic ladder, but he always felt that this could not be done through education. Upon declining David’s offer to teach him Latin, Uriah explained that there were enough people treading upon him in his “lowly state” without doing outrage to “their feelings by possessing learning” (17,220). Instead, he encourages his boss, Mr. Wickfield’s daily intoxication, and became involved in “falsification of business” signing over large sums of money to himself and keeping his boss “imposed upon, kept in ignorance, and deluded in every possible way” (52,625) Driven to the point of insanity by his addiction, sudden change in business, and confusion, Mr. Wickfield is all the more susceptible to Uriah’s tactics. Under the guise of good will, Uriah lends the desperate man back the large sums of money that had disappeared, securing partnership in Wickfield’s firm. Heep even goes as far as to intoxicate Wickfield in an attempt to coerce him onto fiving his daughter’s hand in marriage, the epitome of manipulation.

Dickens intentionally juxtaposes the unethical methodologies of Heep with the honesty and hard work of David and his long-time friend, Mr Micawber. David meets Mr. Micawber when he is freshly orphaned and

working in a bottling factory in the slums of England. Due to frivolous spending and lack of a stable occupation, Mr. and Mrs. Micawber lived in both extreme poverty and debt. The situation escalated to the point where the entire Micawber family was tucked away in a debtor's prison, and financial troubles persisted even after their release. Recognizing the Micawber's dilemma, Uriah Heep decided to hire Mr. Micawber under his service, making him an unwilling participant in Uriah's frauds. Uriah had expected Micawber to be a complicit partner, knowing he had been a "victim, from the cradle, of pecuniary liabilities to which" he was "unable to respond". and. like Uriah, had been the "sport and toy of debasing circumstances" (52,624). However, Micawber refused to let his want of resources and his wish to support his family take precedence over his morals, choosing to expose Heep's fraud and "welcome misery, welcome houselessness, welcome hunger, rags, tempest, and beggary" – a small price to pay for his own integrity (52.632), Because of his commendable actions Micawber finds himself wealth and finally debt-free, both were flawed, but Micawber's honest intentions drove him alone to success. David too gains his success through the trials put forth by Mr. Uriah Heep. When Uriah had signed away properties, he had also signed away that of David's aunt, leaving them both destitute. As a result, David took two jobs and learning upon himself, working industriously to provide for his loves ones, in short, while David and Micawber were looking to provide for their beloved friends and family through hard work, Heep sought to help himself through treachery and faced an entirely different outcome. In connecting the contrasting methodologies with distinct results, Dickens comments on the power of morals and intention in determining one's future, regardless of one's beginnings.

After being exposed as a cheat by Mr. Micawber, Heep went on to plan a larger fraud against the Bank and was sentenced to time in prison. As Micawber and Copperfield flourished, he again put on his façade, playing the role of head boy at a prison meant to lead "to sincere contrition and repentance" (61, 706). While commended as a "Model Prisoner", Uriah actually maintains the same "old writhe" and proclaims himself a "very umble" man (61, 706-707) . He manipulates the prison magistrate, an old and once cruel schoolmaster of David's, by praising the prison reform systems in a way that "gave unbound satisfaction" (61, 710) His intentions become clear when he claims himself changed to the point of deserving release. Unlike a true repentant, he refused to apologize to those he has wronged and maintains himself "umble among them that was proud, and meek among them that was violent" (61,710).

Although Uriah has seen no change in disposition, Dickens' message can be seen in his circumstances. While Uriah remains lost in his ambitions, continuing to manipulate those above him, he also at best the king of the wretched, locked away as unfit for society. The cadaverous face never regains life, it skeleton hand never submits to a truly honest day's work, and Mr. Heep remains morally dead.

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