

Oliver Twist
by
Charles Dickens

Adapted for the stage by
Piers Beckley

Oliver Twist was first performed at the
Lion and Unicorn Theatre, London, on
30 November 2009 with the following
cast:

FAGIN	Edward Kingham
OLIVER	Gemma Sandzer
NANCY	Amy Merrutia
SIKES	Sam Nicholl
CHARLEY	Grant Sterry
JACK	Mark Gillham
NOAH	Neil Chinneck
CHARLOTTE	Hannah Redfern
MR SOWERBERRY/FANG	Terrence Mustoo
MRS MAYLIE	Kim Driver
MR BUMBLE	Anthony Kernan
MRS CORNEY	Bethany Thompson
GRIMWIG	Rupert Bates
BROWNLOW	Alex Hunter
ROSE	Jennifer Laine
BET	Jennifer Oliver
MONKS	Stuart Mansell
ENSEMBLE	Tamzin Paskins
	Lulu Fish
	Sharea Samuels

Directed by Ray Shell

This play may not be acted by professionals or amateurs without
written consent. For performance or other inquiries, please
contact piers.beckley@fatpigeons.com

ACT IScene 1

Inside the Workhouse.

Bumble presides over the inmates picking old rope apart into oakum. He stops at one and examines her work.

BUMBLE

What do you call that? These strands are nowhere near small enough! Would you like sailors to die because you cannot do your work properly, you idle good-for-nothing! Pick harder if you wish to eat tonight.

Enter Sowerberry.

SOWERBERRY

Mister Bumble! Good afternoon. I have taken the measure of the two women who died, and am ready to begin work.

BUMBLE

You'll make your fortune, Mr Sowerberry.

SOWERBERRY

Think so? The prices allowed are very small.

BUMBLE

So are the coffins. There's hardly anything to 'em.

SOWERBERRY

While it's true that we don't have many stout customers from here, we must have some profit.

BUMBLE

Well, well, every trade has its drawbacks. I suppose you must have some return. You don't know anybody who wants a boy, do you? A parochial prentice who is at present a deadweight. A millstone, for we can find nothing to do with him. Liberal terms, Mister Sowerberry, liberal terms! Five pounds to take him off our hands!

SOWERBERRY

Five pounds, eh? It tempts, Mister Bumble, it tempts. But what if I don't like the look of him, or he's not fit for the job?

BUMBLE

Try before you buy, Mister Sowerberry. If you take him for a month and don't like him, just bring him back and we'll send him to sea. For he'll be hanged or drowned, that's for sure.

SOWERBERRY

And his name?

BUMBLE

We call him Oliver Twist. His mother died in giving birth to him, and so the parish must look after him, despite the terrible cost.

SOWERBERRY

And the father?

BUMBLE

We could not locate the man at all, despite a quite comprehensible reward.

SOWERBERRY

So how did you know what the boy's name was, then, if his mother died?

BUMBLE

I invented it, Mister Sowerberry. Alphabetical order, that's the secret. The one before him was Swubble, and the next one an Unwin. Then Vilkins for the one after that. I have names all to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again. They won't find me unprepared when another foundling arrives. Would you like to inspect the little fellow?

SOWERBERRY

I suppose it couldn't hurt to have a look at him.

BUMBLE

I shall just unlock his cell...

SOWERBERRY

Is he dangerous? I can't have a dangerous boy around the house. Mrs Sowerberry wouldn't stand for it.

BUMBLE

Dangerous? No. But he asked for more gruel after the supper allotted by the board - not just for himself, but for all the children there! If those paupers was to find that they could ask for more food and just get some, why they'd be asking for it all the time! That's our money what's feeding 'em, Mister Sowerberry, yours and mine. He's kept away from the others now. I makes sure he's kept warm by frequent application of the cane, and is flogged again every dinnertime as a warning to the others. I swear to you, sir, he comes from the manufactory of the very devil himself. But if he were to be kept by a God-fearing man, close to the churches and vicary - why I'm sure he'll turn right around. Also, there's five pounds to the good, and in times like these, that will not go amiss, eh?

SOWERBERRY

All right then. I'll take a look at the boy. But I'm not promising anything.

BUMBLE

Very good! You sha'n't regret this!

Bumble goes to a door and unlocks it; Oliver emerges.

BUMBLE

Get out. Now make a bow, Oliver. And be thankful. You're a-going to be made a prentice to this man.

OLIVER

A prentice sir?

BUMBLE

Yes, Oliver. The kind and blessed gentlemen which is so many parents to you when you have none of your own, are a-going to set you up in life and make a man of you, though the expense to the parish is five pounds. Five whole pounds, Oliver! One hundred shillins, two hundred sixpences, and all for a naughty orphan which nobody can't love. So you mind your manners and mind you don't do anything like a-talking back to your new master now.

He leads Oliver over to Sowerberry.

BUMBLE

Here you are.

SOWERBERRY

He's not very big, is he?

BUMBLE

He is small, there's no denying it. But he'll grow, Mister Sowerberry - he'll grow.

SOWERBERRY

I dare say he will, on our food and our drink... All right. I'll take him. He can bed down with the coffins.

SCENE 2

The Undertakers.

Lights up the next morning on Oliver, sleeping among the coffins. Enter Noah, who kicks him awake.

NOAH

You don't know who I am I suppose, work'us, do you?

OLIVER

No sir, I'm afraid I don't. Mister Sowerberry is not around at the moment. Do you want a coffin?

NOAH

You'll want one afore long if you cut jokes with your superiors that way.

OLIVER

I didn't mean to offend.

NOAH

I'm Mister Noah Claypole, and you are under me. Which means you'll be doing the work to my direction, and it better be good work, or I'll tan your hide for it. Now get those shutters down and open the place up. Go on, get to it.

Enter Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Is this him, then, Noah dearest?

NOAH

That's him right enough.

CHARLOTTE

Not much to him is there?

NOAH

Look at him sideways there, he's gone. No wonder either, for a work'us brat. Was you born there, or was you sent there for bein' a no-good failure? For it must be one or the other. Well, answer me work'us!

OLIVER

I was born there.

NOAH

Ho, born there, was you? How's your mother think of you, she still in there picking oakum is she?

OLIVER

She's dead.

NOAH

Gone to her just rewards I reckon.

CHARLOTTE

What did she die of then?

OLIVER

Of a broken heart, the nurses said.

NOAH

Tol de rol lol lairy, a broken heart. Just as well she can't see you now, cos you'd break it again, wouldn't you work'us?

OLIVER

Don't.

NOAH

Don't, eh? Don't what, work'us? Going to make me do something, are you?

OLIVER

Just don't, that's all.

NOAH

Ooh, look at you gone all impudent for a mother like yours. Oh yes, work'us. I heard of her, and you must know it. I'm very sorry for it, but it can't be helped. You ought to know the truth about it. Your mother was a regular right-down bad'un.

OLIVER

What did you say?

NOAH

A regular right-down bad'un, work'us. And it's a great deal better for us all that she died when she did or she'd be hard labouring down the Bridey, breaking those rocks up. Or maybe she'd be transported, lagged right way across the ocean. Maybe she'd have left you here with another brother or sister and no father? Cos that's what gets a little brat like you in the work'us, ain't it? When there's no husband and she puts it about. Nah. I don't think so. I don't think she'd be lagged at all. I think she'd be hung. That's the more likely of it, isn't it work'us? If she din't find a way to get out of that.

Oliver attacks him with a scream.

NOAH

Help! He's a-murdering me! Help!

CHARLOTTE

Help! The new boy's gone mad!

They wrestle Oliver to the ground and beat him.

CHARLOTTE

You ungrateful, murderous horrible villain! Help!

Enter Bumble.

BUMBLE

Did I hear you a-calling?

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Mister Bumble. Thank goodness you're here! He attacked poor Noah!

BUMBLE

I was afraid that something like this would happen. He comes of a bad family, you understand. Excitable natures! That mother of his made her way here against difficulties and pain that would have killed any well disposed woman weeks before.

Bumble lifts Oliver from the ground and pins him against the wall.

BUMBLE

What is this about?

OLIVER

He called my mother names.

BUMBLE

And what if he did, you ungrateful wretch? She deserved what he said.

OLIVER

She did not!

CHARLOTTE

You must not spare him, sir. Stripes and bruises is the only way to teach a lout like that.

BUMBLE

Now Oliver, the only thing to do is apologise to your betters and take your punishment like a man. Are you a man, Oliver? Or are you a base coward? I thought as much. Come, Noah, you must hold him if he won't stand.

OLIVER

I shall stand.

BUMBLE

But you will not apologise. Very well.

Bumble draws his cane.

Lights down. The sounds of a cane against flesh.

BUMBLE

Scream, you little devil. Scream.

Lights slowly rise on Oliver, alone on stage. In pain, watching the sun rise.

He gets up. Gently undoes the fastening of the door.

OLIVER

It's a cold dark night tonight. The shadows of the trees are skeletal fingers crossing the grass, grasping at it, sucking the life out of it. They said

(MORE)

OLIVER (cont'd)

in the workhouse that it wasn't the worst place in the world and they were right. They were right. But I know there must be somewhere out there where I sha'n't be beaten and ill-used. London is just sixty-five miles off. A clean shirt is a comfortable thing, and who knows what fortune awaits me in London. Where I shall have friends, and a trade, and be ill-used no more.

Exit Oliver.

SCENE 3

Barnet, London.

Enter Jack Dawkins and a crowd. Jack moves through the crowd, stealing handkerchiefs from pockets and watches from within waistcoats, slitting the ladies' purses and removing the money from within.

He is a master of the pickpocket's art.

As he works, enter Oliver, un-noticed, quietly sitting on a step opposite.

Exeunt the crowd. Jack sits and counts his takings.

Eventually he notices Oliver.

JACK

Hullo, my covey? What's the row?

OLIVER

I am very hungry and tired. I have walked a long way.

JACK

Yus? And how long's that then?

OLIVER

Seven days.

JACK

Walking for seven days! Beak's order, eh? You don't know what a beak is, do you, my flash companion.

OLIVER

The mouth of a bird, is it not?

JACK

Ho dear, what will we do with you my friend. A beak is a magistrate, and when you walk by a beak's order it's always going up and never coming down again.

OLIVER

That makes no sense.

JACK

It does if you're on the mill. The treadmill? You are a new one aren't you? When you walk by a beak's order you're set a-walking till he says you've walked far enough. But come, you're hungry and it's been a good day's work, so I shall fork out and stump up.

He shares his lunch with Oliver.

OLIVER

Thank you.

JACK

You going to London?

OLIVER

Yes.

JACK

Got lodgings I suppose.

OLIVER

No.

JACK

Money?

OLIVER

None.

JACK

[whistles]

OLIVER

Do you live in London?

JACK

I do when I'm at home. I've got to be in London to-night, as it happens, and I know a respectable old gentleman as lives there what'll give you lodgings for nothing and never ask for the change - that is, if any gentleman he knows introduces you. And I am just such a gentleman.

OLIVER

Would you do that?

JACK

Sure as my name's Jack Dawkins. Known to my most intimate of buddies and pals as the Artful, or the Dodger, or both together.

OLIVER

I am sure we will become most excellent friends.

SCENE 4

Fagin's House.

Fagin stands at a small stove, cooking sausages. Various other youngsters sit about. Enter Jack and Oliver.

JACK

Evening Fagin. Brought a pal to see you.

FAGIN

Well well. And who is this, my dear Dodger?

JACK

This is my friend Oliver Twist. Just in from the country.

FAGIN

Delighted to meet you young sir! I look forward to having the honour of your acquaintance.

CHARLEY

Here, let's just relieve you of those heavy things.

The youngsters rush forward and start taking Oliver's possessions from him - cap, overcoat, small bundle. Fagin slaps them down with his toasting fork.

FAGIN

There, give the boy a chance to settle! And how was the day, my dears? I hope that you have been hard at work.

JACK

Hard as nails.

FAGIN

Good boys, good boys! What have you got for dear old Fagin?

JACK

A couple of pocket-books.

FAGIN

Mm, not so heavy as they might be. But very neat and nicely made. Ingenious workman, ain't he Oliver?

OLIVER

Very indeed, sir.

FAGIN

And what do you have, my dear?

CHARLEY

Wipes.

He passes four pocket handkerchiefs to Fagin.

FAGIN

Very nice, my dear. But look at these terrible marks - they shall have to be picked out with a needle and done again. We shall teach Oliver how to do it. Would you like that?

OLIVER

If you please, sir.

FAGIN

You'd like to be able to make pocket-handkerchiefs as easily as Charley Bates, wouldn't you my dear?

OLIVER

Very much, sir, if you'll teach me.

FAGIN

Yes, yes. We shall teach you everything. Dodger, take off the sausages, and draw a space near the fire for young Oliver. Now dig in, and we'll all have a supper before bedtime.

Lights down.

SCENE 5

Lights up. Mid-morning. Oliver is asleep while Fagin boils some coffee on the stove, whistling softly to himself.

FAGIN

(quietly)

Oliver...

(beat)

There's a good lad.

He fastens the door, and draws forth a box from a hidden place. Fagin opens the box and pulls from it gold watches, chains, jewellery, each of which he examines in turn.

FAGIN

Ah! Clever dogs... Staunch to the last. Never told the old parson where they were. Never peached upon old Fagin. And why should they? It wouldn't have loosened the knot, or slowed the drop a minute longer. What a fine thing capital punishment is for the trade! For dead men can never repent and bring awkward stories to light. Five strung up in a row, and none left to turn white-livered.

He closes the box and turns to put it away - and notices Oliver is awake now, and watching him. Fagin grabs the bread-knife.

FAGIN

What's that! Why do you watch me? Why are you awake? Speak out boy, quick!

OLIVER

I wasn't able to sleep any longer, sir. I'm sorry if I disturbed you.

FAGIN

You were not awake an hour ago?

OLIVER

No sir. No indeed.

FAGIN

Ha! Tush tush. Of course I knew that, my dear. I only tried to frighten you. You're a brave boy, ha, a brave boy, Oliver. Did you see any of these pretty things, my dear?

OLIVER

Yes sir.

FAGIN

Ah! They're mine, Oliver. My little property. All I have to live upon, in my old age. The folks call me a miser, all because I save these things to support me.

There's a knock at the door.

FAGIN

Well, let our friends in!

As Oliver opens the door Fagin quickly returns the box to its hiding place. Enter Nancy and Bet.

NANCY

Hallo Fagin!

FAGIN

Nancy, my dear! And young Elizabeth, what a pleasure it is...

NANCY

We was just passing through and couldn't help but notice how bitter cold it was out.

BET

Bitter cold.

NANCY

Which has made its way through to our very insides.

BET

So we thought we might come by for a hot gin and water.

NANCY

If you have some to spare.

FAGIN

And can your young gentleman not provide you with such?

NANCY

He ain't my gentleman no more.

FAGIN

Then of course we must help! Here, my dears, let this warm you.

NANCY

Who's the little lad?

FAGIN

This is Oliver Twist, who has come to stay with us for a while. Oliver, these are my good friends Nancy and Bet. My dear, is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket?

OLIVER

Yes sir.

FAGIN

How annoying. How distracting. How vexing. Perhaps you could take it out without me feeling it. Is it gone?

OLIVER

Here it is, sir.

FAGIN

Oh, you're a clever boy, my dear. I never saw a sharper lad. Here's a shilling for you. If you go on this way, why you shall become as good a man as the Dodger himself.

OLIVER

Thank you sir. I should like that very much indeed.

FAGIN

Indeed you should, my young friend. Indeed you should.

SCENE 6

Mrs Corney's room at the Workhouse.

*A bitterly cold night. Mrs Corney is making tea.
A knocking, and enter Bumble.*

MRS CORNEY

Oh, Mister Bumble! Come in with you, don't stand there letting the cold air in. Hard weather.

BUMBLE

Hard indeed, ma'am. But here, I have the port wine, what the board ordered for the infirmary - see, it's clear as a bell and no sediment neither. Well.

Bumble goes to leave.

MRS CORNEY

You'll have a very cold walk, Mr Bumble.

BUMBLE

It blows, ma'am, enough to cut one's ears off.

MRS CORNEY

Perhaps - well, it's just boiled anyway - perhaps you would take a cup of tea?

He's got his coat off and is at the table almost as soon as it's mentioned. Mrs Corney makes the tea.

MRS CORNEY

Sweet, Mr Bumble?

BUMBLE

Very sweet indeed, ma'am. Mm. Is this a cat-basket?

MRS CORNEY

I am so fond of cats, Mr Bumble. So delightful. So frolicsome.

BUMBLE

Very nice animals, ma'am. So very domestic.

MRS CORNEY

Oh yes! So fond of their home.

BUMBLE

Mrs Corney ma'am. I mean to say this: Any cat, or kitten, that could live with you, ma'am, and not be fond of its home. Well it must be an ass, ma'am.

MRS CORNEY

Oh, Mr Bumble!

BUMBLE

It's of no use disguising facts, ma'am. I would drown such a cat myself, with pleasure.

MRS CORNEY

Then you're a cruel man, and hard-hearted besides.

BUMBLE

Hard-hearted, Mrs Corney? And you? Are you hard-hearted?

Bumble grabs Mrs Corney and they kiss.

MRS CORNEY

Why, Mister Bumble! If Mister Corney were alive...
Why, Mister Bumble, I may scream.

Bumble puts his arm around her waist and moves in for another kiss.

There's a knocking at the door, and suddenly Bumble is as far away from Mrs Corney as it is possible to get.

Enter Old Woman.

OLD WOMAN

If you please, mistress, old Sally is a-going fast.

MRS CORNEY

Well, what's that to me? I can't keep her alive, can I?

OLD WOMAN

No, she's far beyond the reach of help. But she's troubled in her mind, and she says she has something to tell which you must hear. She'll never die quiet till you come, mistress.

MRS CORNEY

A plague on you old women who can't even die without purposely annoying your betters! Mr Bumble, I shall only be a moment.

Exit Mrs Corney and Old Woman.

Mr Bumble carefully inspects the furniture and drawers.

BUMBLE

Six teaspoons. Sugar-tongs. A silver milk-pot - genuine. Three seats, horsehair stuffed.

He picks up a lock-box and shakes it gently to the sound of chinking coin.

BUMBLE

By God, I'll do it!

SCENE 7

Clerkenwell.

Enter Jack, Oliver, Charley, and a crowd of shoppers. Oliver gawks.

OLIVER

It's so busy here... So big. It's even bigger than I imagined.

JACK

This is London, my pal. No bigger or better city in the world. Why a man of pluck can do anything he wants to here, rise to the rank of gentleman, if he choose.

OLIVER

It's good of Mister Fagin to let me out.

CHARLEY

You've done well with picking the marks out of those wipes. Coming along nicely, I'd say.

JACK

And the swiping too. I dare say you could get an easy mark all by yourself.

OLIVER

Thank you. What's a mark?

CHARLEY

Ho, isn't he sweet?

JACK

And now, my peculiar friend, our hesteemed colleague Mister Fagin has decided that it's time to earn your keep properly. And thus and therefore our little trip today.

CHARLEY

Watch carefully now, cos the Dodger's a master in action. What do you think of that one there?

JACK

Hardly a challenge at all. This one?

CHARLEY

Young Oliver needs to be shown the simple things before he moves onto cuts.

JACK

I have it. Watch and learn, young Oliver.

Jack and Charley move dextrously through the crowd, swooping through them and up to an elderly gentleman - BROWNLOW - browsing from a STALLHOLDER at a bookstall. Jack takes a handkerchief from Brownlow's pocket in one smooth motion, bows to Oliver, and hands it off to Charley who pockets it. The two of them melt into the crowd.

Oliver watches agawp.

OLIVER

Jack? Charley?

Brownlow checks his pocket and finds his handkerchief gone. He turns to see Oliver looking guilty as sin.

BROWNLOW

You, lad!

Oliver, panicking, turns and runs.

BROWNLOW

Stop! Thief!

The mob grab him.

BYSTANDER

Here, into the magistrate's court with him.

SCENE 8

They take Oliver into the magistrate's office and hand him over to an Officer. Exeunt all but Brownlow, Oliver, and the Officer

OFFICER

Are you the party that's been robbed, sir?

BROWNLOW

Yes, yes I am. But I am not sure this is the boy that took the handkerchief. I would rather not press the case.

OFFICER

Must go before the magistrate now, I'm afraid. His worship will be disengaged in half a minute.

BROWNLOW

Boy.

OLIVER

Yes sir?

BROWNLOW

Do I know you?

OLIVER

No sir.

BROWNLOW

I could swear that I know you from somewhere...

Enter Fang

FANG

Well? Officer, what is this fellow charged with?

OFFICER

He's not charged at all, your worship. He appears against the boy.

BROWNLOW

Before the boy is charged, I must beg to say one word...

FANG

Hold your tongue this instant, or I'll have you turned out of the office! You impertinent insolent fellow. How dare you attempt to bully a magistrate! Now, what's the charge against this boy? What have you got to say, sir?

BROWNLOW

I was standing at a bookstall...

FANG

Hold your tongue, sir! Policeman!

OFFICER

I recovered this scoundrel, your worship, from the street, where he had stolen a pocket handkerchief from the gentleman before you now.

FANG

And what is your part in this?

BROWNLOW

I saw the boy run after I realised my handkerchief was missing and pursued him. Though I did not see him actually take the handkerchief.

FANG

But you were suspicious, were you not?

BROWNLOW

Yes, at first. He ran away, you see, and...

FANG

Well there you have it. Fleeing a gentleman when accused? A sure and certain sign of guilt! What is your name, you hardened scoundrel.

OLIVER

Please, sir, I...

FANG

Well, out with it!

OLIVER

I don't feel so well. May I have some water?

FANG

No you may not! Criminals deserve no comfort.

OFFICER

I think he really is ill, your worship.

FANG

The rascalion is faking his illness to avoid his just sentence!

BROWNLOW

Please take care of him, officer. I think he's going to fall.

FANG

Let the ruffian fall if he likes.

Oliver faints.

FANG

And let him lie there. He'll soon grow uncomfortable on the ground and get tired of it.

OFFICER

How do you propose to deal with the case?

FANG

Summarily. We must make an example of him and make the streets safe for decent people once more. The boy stands committed to three months of hard labour. Clear the office.

Enter Stallholder.

STALLHOLDER

Sir, I beg you, let me in!

FANG

What have you to say?

STALLHOLDER

Mister Brownlow - you still have my book!

BROWNLOW

What? So I do! I am so sorry, in all the confusion...

STALLHOLDER

The thieves got away, then.

FANG

What is this foolery?

BROWNLOW

It was not this child?

STALLHOLDER

No - I saw it all. Two other boys committed the crime, and this boy was astonished by it. He is innocent.

BROWNLOW

Innocent!

FANG

Nonsense. We have our thief - take him to serve his sentence.

BROWNLOW

Sir, you have heard from myself and my friend - this is clearly not the boy in question.

FANG

Why, you... A false charge, then, preferred against an innocent child. And you with stolen property in your own hands! Sir, do you wish to press charges against this gentleman?

STALLHOLDER

No, no, no. No.

FANG

You may think yourself very fortunate that the owner of the property declines to prosecute. Let this be a lesson to you, my man, or the law will overtake you yet. The boy is discharged.

OFFICER

What of the boy, your worship?

FANG

Throw him out on the street. He'll be back again soon enough.

Exit Fang.

BROWNLOW

You would just leave him unconscious in the cold?

OFFICER

What else should we do with him?

Exeunt.

SCENE 9

Fagin's House. Fagin and Nancy.

FAGIN

What can be keeping Charley and the Dodger?

NANCY

They could be distracted looking at the ladies in Haymarket.

FAGIN

Perhaps. And have you a man to be looking at young Nancy?

NANCY

Not right now, Fagin.

FAGIN

We must find you a new friend, my dear.

Enter Jack and Charley.

FAGIN

How's this, only two of you? Where's Oliver? Where's the boy? Speak out, or I'll throttle you!

JACK

Why the traps have got him. Come, let go of me, will you?

Enter Sikes.

SIKES

What are you up to? Ill-treating the boys, you covetous, avaricious, insatiable old fence? I wonder they don't murder you! I would if I was them. If I'd been your prentice I'd've done it long ago. And who's this lady with you?

FAGIN

Nancy. This is Bill Sikes. You seem out of humour, Bill.

SIKES

Perhaps I am. I should think you was out of sorts too, unless you mean as little harm when choking the life out of small boys as you do when you blab.

FAGIN

Are you mad?

SIKES

Right. Must'n't spook the help now with tales of

Sikes gestures hanging so Jack and Charley cannot see.

SIKES

Give me a glass of liquor. Whatever you've got. And mind you don't poison it now!

FAGIN

Nancy. Some genever for my friend Mister Sikes. And perhaps yours too, my dear... Here you are, Bill. It has all passed safe through the melting-pot, and this is your share. It's rather more than it ought to be, but as I know you'll do me a good turn another time...

SIKES

This is all, is it?

FAGIN

All.

SIKES

You be careful you look after me, Fagin. If I go, you go; so take care of me.

FAGIN

I know all that. We have a mutual interest, Bill - a mutual interest.

NANCY

Gin and water. It'll keep the cold out.

SIKES

Lovely.

FAGIN

But the boy... The boy may say something which will get us into trouble.

SIKES

That's very likely, ain't it? You're blowed upon, Fagin. See what happens when you take people in off the streets?

FAGIN

And I'm afraid, you see, that if the game was up with us... Well, that might not be in our mutual interest either.

SIKES

Somebody must find out what's been done. If he hasn't peached yet, he must be taken care on. You must get hold of him somehow.

FAGIN

How, Bill, how?

NANCY

Oh! My brother! My poor, sweet, innocent, dear little brother! Have pity, and tell me what's been done with the dear boy!

FAGIN

Ah! She's a clever girl, my friends.

SIKES

An honour to her sex. Here's her health, and wishing they was all like her!

Exeunt.

SCENE 10

Brownlow's study.

Enter Brownlow. Enter Oliver.

BROWNLOW

Oliver. I'm glad to see that you seem better.

OLIVER

Thank you for looking after me, sir. I am in your debt.

BROWNLOW

There is no debt... I wished to help. Now you are well, though, we must find out more about you. Let me hear your story. You remind me of one I used to know. Speak the truth and you shall not be friendless while I live.

OLIVER

I am an orphan, sir. My mother died giving me birth, in the town of [Mudfog]

Enter Grimwig, interrupting.

GRIMWIG

Look here! Do you see this? Isn't it a most wonderful and extraordinary thing that I cannot call at a man's house but I find a piece of this poor surgeon's-friend on the staircase. Orange peel has lamed me once, and it will be my death at last. It will, sir: Orange peel shall be my death, or I'll be content to eat my own head! Hallo, what's that?

BROWNLOW

Good afternoon. This is Oliver Twist, about whom we spoke. Oliver, this is my good friend Mr Grimwig who likes to call around unexpectedly. To what do I owe the pleasure?

GRIMWIG

Have you muffins in the house?

BROWNLOW

Yes.

GRIMWIG

Then I have come to tea. So that's the boy who had the fever, eh? Wait a minute - and he's the boy who had the orange, too, no doubt. If that's not the boy, sir, who had the orange and threw this bit of peel upon the staircase I'll eat my head! And his too.

BROWNLOW

No, no, he has not had one. Come, put down your hat and speak to my young friend.

GRIMWIG

How are you, boy?

OLIVER

A great deal better, thank you, sir.

GRIMWIG

Hm.

BROWNLOW

Oliver, will you go down and tell Mrs Bedwin that we are ready for tea. And muffins.

OLIVER

Yes sir.

Exit Oliver.

GRIMWIG

A young boy, in the court system, finds the opportunity to get in with the well-to-do through a chance resemblance? You are deceiving yourself, my friend. Or he is deceiving you.

BROWNLOW

I'll swear he is not.

GRIMWIG

If he is not, I'll eat my head.

BROWNLOW

I'll answer for that boy's truth with my life.

GRIMWIG

And I for his falsehood with my head!

BROWNLOW

We shall see!

GRIMWIG

We shall!

They take snuff and shake hands.

Enter Oliver.

OLIVER

The tea is on its way. And Mrs Bedwin asked me to remind you that you had not paid the bookseller again.

BROWNLOW

Most forgetful. I shall do it first thing tomorrow.

GRIMWIG

Why not send Oliver? He is trustworthy, is he not?

OLIVER

Yes, do let me help, sir. I am much better.

BROWNLOW

You shall go. Tell him that you have come to pay the four pound ten I owe him, and to return these few books. Here, this is a five pound note, so you will have to bring me back ten shillings change.

OLIVER

I won't be ten minutes, sir.

BROWNLOW

Good boy.

Exit Oliver.

BROWNLOW

He shall be back in twenty minutes at the latest.

GRIMWIG

Oh! You really expect him to come back, then?

BROWNLOW

Don't you?

GRIMWIG

No. I do not. The boy has a new suit of clothes on his back, a set of valuable books under his arm, and a five-pound note in his pocket. He'll join his old friends the thieves and laugh at you. If ever that boy returns to this house, sir, I'll eat my head.

The two of them sit down to wait.

They do not move as in silence, slowly, the lights go down and night falls upon them both.

SCENE 11

Lights up on a crowded street. Oliver makes his way through it, when from the crowd comes the cry of:

NANCY

Oh, my dear brother! Come here!

OLIVER

Let go of me. What are you stopping me for?

NANCY

Oh, Oliver, you naughty boy, to make me suffer such distress on your account. Come home directly!

OLIVER

Help! Please help me, ma'am, I beg you.

WOMAN ON STREET

What's the matter?

NANCY

Oh, ma'am, he ran away from his parents.

OLIVER

I don't know her!

NANCY

Only hear him, how he braves it out? It almost broke his mother's heart when he left.

OLIVER

Nancy?

NANCY

You see, he knows me! He can't help himself. Make him come home, good people, or he'll kill his mother.

Enter Sikes.

SIKES

What the devil's this? Young Oliver! Come home to your poor mother, you dog.

OLIVER

I don't belong to them! I don't know them! Help! Help!

SIKES

Help? Yes, I'll help you, you young rascal. What's this - books? You've been a-stealing, have you?

Sikes strikes Oliver.

BYSTANDER

That's right. That's the only way to bring him to his senses.

WOMAN ON STREET

It'll do him good, causing his mother to worry so.

SIKES

And he shall have it, too. Come, you young villain.

Sikes and Nancy drag Oliver away.

Exeunt crowd.

SIKES

Hold miss Nancy's hand. If you let go I'll strike you again, do you hear?

A church bell strikes eight.

NANCY

Eight o'clock, Bill.

SIKES

I can hear it, can't I?

NANCY

I wonder if they can hear it.

SIKES

Of course they can. It was September when I was shopped and there was nothing I couldn't hear outside.

NANCY

Poor fellows. Such fine young chaps as them.

SIKES

That's all you women think of. Fine young chaps! Well they're as good as dead, so it don't much matter. Step to, boy.

NANCY

I wouldn't hurry by, if it was you that was coming out to be hung the next time eight o'clock struck, Bill. I'd walk around and round the place till I dropped, if the snow was on the ground and I hadn't a shawl to cover me.

SIKES

And what good would that do? Unless you could pitch over a file and twenty yards of good stout rope, you might as well be walking fifty mile off for all the good it'd do me. Come on, and don't stand preaching there.

Exeunt.

SCENE 12

Fagin's House.

Charley, Fagin, and Jack are present. Enter Nancy and Sikes, bearing Oliver.

CHARLEY

Oh, Fagin! Look at him, look who it is! Look at his togs, superfine cloth and look at the cut. Nothing but a gentleman, Fagin.

Jack begins to rifle Oliver's pockets.

FAGIN

Delighted to see you looking so well, my dear. The Artful shall give you another suit, for fear you should spoil that Sunday one. Why didn't you write, my dear, and say you were coming? We'd have got something warm for supper.

Jack pulls a five-pound note from Oliver's pockets.

SIKES

Hallo! What's that? That's mine, Fagin.

FAGIN

No, no, my dear. Mine, Bill, mine. You shall have the books.

SIKES

If that ain't mine - mine and Nancy's that is - I'll take the boy back again. Come, hand over, will you?

FAGIN

That is hardly fair, Bill. Hardly fair, is it Nancy?

SIKES

Fair or not fair, hand it over I tell you! Do you think me and Nancy has got nothing else to do with our time but to spend it kidnapping every young boy as gets grabbed through you? Give it here, you avaricious old skeleton. There. That's for our share of the trouble, and not half enough either.

Oliver makes a break for it, trying to escape, but is quickly captured.

FAGIN

So you wanted to get away, my dear, did you? Wanted to get assistance? We shall have to cure you of that, young master.

Fagin starts to beat Oliver, but Nancy comes between them.

NANCY

No! I won't stand by and see it done, Fagin. You've got the boy - what more would you have? Let him be, or I shall put that mark on some of you that will bring me to the gallows before my time.

SIKES

Damn your eyes - what do you mean by this? You know what you are.

NANCY

Oh yes, I know all about it.

SIKES

Well then, keep quiet. Or I'll quiet you for a good long time to come. You're a nice one to take up the humane and genteel side. A pretty subject for the child to make a friend of!

NANCY

God Almighty help me, I am! And I wish I had been struck dead in the street or had changed places with them we passed so near tonight before I lent a hand in bringing him here. He's a thief, a liar, a devil, all that's bad from this night forth. Isn't that enough for the old wretch, without blows?

FAGIN

Come, come. We must have civil words. Civil words.

NANCY

Civil words! I thieved for you when I was a child not half as old as this! I have been in the same trade for twelve years since.

FAGIN

And what if you have? It's your living!

NANCY

Aye, it is! It is my living, and the cold, wet, dirty streets are my home; and you're the wretch that drove me to them long ago, and that'll keep me there, day and night, day and night till I die.

FAGIN

I shall do you a mischief worse than that if you say more.

Nancy attacks Fagin. Sikes intervenes, smacking her into a corner. She stays down.

SIKES

Why'd you make me do that, Nance?

FAGIN

It's the worst of having to do with women. Unreliable. But the storm has passed...

SCENE 13

Fagin's House. Fagin and Oliver.

FAGIN

Well, my boy. I hope that you're proud of yourself, subjecting young Nancy to a scene like that. Why look! Here you are, fed and cherished, when without my aid you might have perished from hunger or thirst. You may thank the Lord that the Artful found you when he did, and brought you here, and that Nancy was able to discover you again. And yet you sit here, ungrateful, despite wanting for nothing. Here's food, here's gin-and-water, and you silent in the corner. You're not the first I've rescued from the street, you know. There was one last year who proved unworthy of my confidence. He was hanged, in the end. A terrible affair. I don't seek to conceal my blame in it. I trusted that young man with my confidence, and was rewarded with nothing but wrong-headedness and treachery! Why he even evinced to me - to me! - a desire to communicate with the police! It was my own mistake, of course, placing my trust in a young man so clearly unworthy of it. Naturally, after that it became necessary for him to become the victim of certain evidence for the crown. He could not exactly deny that he'd spent time with thieves and ne'er-do-wells, could he? And though that evidence wasn't what you might call precisely true, it was indisputably necessary for the safety of myself and my true, good friends. As you are a good friend, aren't you, Oliver? He was hanged in the end. Do you know what happens when they hang you? The noose is slipped around your neck and you can hear the roar of the crowd below as they know that another prisoner will soon take their last breath. Then the trap drops open and the rope snaps taut. Some go quick. If you were one of the lucky ones, you might cease to struggle in a few moments. But then there's the hard ones, the ones that don't go so easy, the ones that kick and swing for minutes while they slowly strangle. Such a disagreeable prospect, my dear. Disagreeable and unpleasant for all concerned. But you won't ever be put in that situation, will you my dear? For we are all friends here, and look out for one another's best interests. I can see it in your eyes, young lad - you sha'n't betray old Fagin, shall you? If you keep yourself quiet, young Oliver Twist, and apply yourself thoroughly to business, I dare say that we shall be very good friends yet.

SCENE 14

Sikes' Apartment. Sikes and Nancy, kissing.

SIKES

You're a good girl, Nance - that's why I like you.

NANCY

Do you, Bill?

SIKES

Course I do. Best girl in the town, that's what you are. Don't know what I'd do without you here. Couldn't do it without knowing I've got you here to come home to.

There's a knocking at the door.

SIKES

Get that, Nance, then wait upstairs for me. You're a good girl.

He pours a drink of brandy and knocks it back in one gulp as Nancy shows Fagin inside.

SIKES

Upstairs, I said.

Exit Nancy.

SIKES

There. I'm ready for business. So say what you've got to say.

FAGIN

About the Maylie crib, Bill. When is it to be done? Such plate, my dear, such plate!

SIKES

Flash Toby Crackit has been hanging about the place for a fortnight, and he says it's barred up at night like a jail, and the servants can't be got.

FAGIN

There must be some way to do it, Bill. I'm sure you can think of some way. Did he see nothing else there? No other ways in?

SIKES

Nothing he or I could fit through.

FAGIN

You need someone small... I have just the boy for you, my dear. Young Oliver. It's time he began earning his bread.

SIKES

I suppose he is just the size I want...

FAGIN

And he will do everything you want, Bill my dear. If you frighten him enough.

SIKES

If there's anything goes wrong once we get into the work you won't see him alive again, Fagin.

FAGIN

He's just the boy for you. Once let him feel that he is one of us; once fill him with the idea that he has been a thief; and he's ours. Ours for his life... He must be in the same boat with us. Never mind how he came there, it's quite enough that he be in a robbery.

SIKES

Bring the boy here tomorrow. Then you hold your tongue and get the melting-pot ready for when we come back.

Exit Fagin. Enter Nancy.

SIKES

I told you to go upstairs.

Exeunt.

SCENE 15

Fagin's House.

*Oliver is there, praying beside a lit candle.
Enter Nancy, wearing a scarf.*

NANCY

Put down the light. It hurts my eyes.

He does so.

OLIVER

Has anything happened? Can I help you? I will if I can. Nancy, what is it?

NANCY

I don't know what comes over me sometimes. It's this damp, dirty room, I think. Nolly, dear, are you ready?

OLIVER

Why have you come?

NANCY

I have saved you from being ill-used once, and I do again. For those who would have fetched you if I had not would have been far more rough than me. I have promised for your being quiet and silent; if you are not you will do more harm to yourself and me too.

Nancy pulls back the scarf to reveal livid bruises on her neck.

OLIVER

You're hurt.

NANCY

Bill is a good man, except when his blood is up. Don't let me suffer more for you. Every word from you is a blow for me.

Enter Sikes. Nancy leads Oliver to him.

NANCY

Here he is, Bill.

SIKES

Come here, young 'un, and let me read you a lecture. Do you know what this is?

OLIVER

Yes sir. It's a pistol.

SIKES

Good lad. And inside here is powder. And a bullet. And a bit of old hat for wadding. And that means it's loaded. If you speak a word when you're out of doors with me except when I speak to you, that loading will be in your head without notice. So if you do make up your mind to speak without leave, say your prayers first. You understand?

OLIVER

Yes sir.

SIKES

Good. Time to go.

SCENE 16

Outside the Maylie household.

A church bell strikes two. Enter Sikes, Toby, and Oliver.

TOBY

Bill, my boy! I'm glad to see you. I was almost afraid you'd given it up; in which case I should have made this a personal venture. Hallo, what's this?

SIKES

A boy for getting in the lattice. One of Mister Fagin's lads.

TOBY

Small enough. He'll do.

SIKES

Got everything?

TOBY

Crape, keys, centre-bits, jemmies. Nothing forgotten.

SIKES

All right. This is it, boy. Cross the grass here quiet and keep your mouth shut. See that little window? You're going through it and you'll let us in at the front.

OLIVER

Please don't make me.

SIKES

Get up! Get up or I'll strew your brains upon the grass.

OLIVER

For the love of all the angels in heaven, have mercy!

TOBY

Hush! It won't answer here. Say another word and I'll do your business myself with a crack on the head. That makes no noise and is quite as certain, and more genteel. Here, Bill, wrench the shutter open. He's game enough now. I've seen hands of his age took the same way for a minute or two on a cold night.

SIKES

You only walk away from here by going through there, you understand? Take this light. Go softly along the little hall to the street door, unfasten it, and let us in. I shall have you in pistol-shot the whole way. Falter but once, and you'll fall dead that instant. Go now.

Oliver crawls through the window. There's the sound of a gunshot. Sikes and Toby flee.

A moment later, Oliver appears, bleeding, and exits.

SCENE 17

Outside Fagin's House.

Enter Fagin. MONKS steps from the shadows.

MONKS

Fagin! I have been lingering here these two hours.
Where the devil have you been?

FAGIN

On your business, my dear. On your business all
night.

MONKS

Well? What's come of it?

FAGIN

Nothing good.

MONKS

Then tell me of it inside.

*Fagin lets the two of them in. Nancy, inside,
hides.*

MONKS

You failed me, Fagin. The boy would be a thief, you
say. Did I not pay you enough? What happened!

FAGIN

He was put to work. There were... Complications.

MONKS

It was badly planned. Why not have kept him here
among the rest and made a sneaking, snivelling
pickpocket of him at once?

FAGIN

Only hear him!

MONKS

Why, do you mean to say you couldn't have done it if
you had chosen? Haven't you done it with others,
scores of times before? If you had patience for but a
year, at most, couldn't you have got him convicted
and sent safely out of the kingdom?

FAGIN

Whose turn would that have served, my dear?

MONKS

Mine! If he cannot be turned to villainy, the papers
must be destroyed immediately. There must be nothing
to link he and I. Nothing!

FAGIN

Now, my dear, there is no call for that. It was not easy to train him to the business, that's all. I needed a hold upon the boy to make him worse. He has a certain charm about him. Why I got him back for you by means of the girl; and then she begins to favour him.

MONKS

Throttle the girl.

FAGIN

We can't afford to do that just now, my dear. No, I know what these girls are, Monks. As soon as the boy begins to harden she'll care no more for him than a block of wood. You want him made a thief. If he is alive, I can make him one. And if - it's not likely, mind - but if the worst comes to the worst, and he is dead...

MONKS

It's no fault of mine if he is! Mind that, Fagin! I had no hand in it... Anything but his death. I won't shed blood. It's always found out, and haunts a man besides... If they shot him dead, I was not the cause, do you hear me?

FAGIN

Of course not, my dear. You are completely blameless if the worst has happened. Come, my dear. A glass or two at the Cripples will soon restore your health.

MONKS

No hand in it, Fagin. None at all.

Exit Monks and Fagin.

Reveal Nancy, from hiding. She watches them leave.

SCENE 18

The Maylie Household.

The servants are gathered listening to Mr GILES tell the story of the robbery.

GILES

That was when I heard the noise. I says at first: This is illusion, and was composing myself off to sleep, when I heard it again, quite distinct.

COOK

What sort of noise?

GILES

A kind of a busting noise. I sat up in bed and heard it again, quite apparent. Somebody, I says, is forcing a door or window. So I seized the loaded pistol and went downstairs... And saw a shadow in the pitch dark! I aimed and then....

A loud knocking interrupts.

GILES

It was a knock. Open the door, somebody. It seems a strange sort of thing, a knock at this time of morning, but the door must be opened. Do you hear, somebody?

The knocking again.

GILES

Anybody?

He opens the door to reveal Oliver, who promptly faints.

GILES

Here he is! That's the villain I shot last night! Look at the blood on him.

Enter ROSE MAYLIE.

ROSE

Giles! Have the robbers returned?

GILES

I'm here, miss Rose. Don't be frightened, I ain't much injured. He didn't make a very desperate resistance - I was too much for him, I dare say.

ROSE

Why he's barely a child. Lay him down here, Giles. Is the poor creature much wounded?

GILES

Wounded desperate miss.

Rose examines Oliver.

ROSE

The arm is not much hurt. And this is your terrifying robber?

GILES

He was much bigger in the dark.

ROSE

He's but a child.

GILES

A robber, madam. Or their apprentice.

ROSE

Can you really believe this boy a hardened criminal?
Are you sure it was this little child that you shot?
On your most sacred oath, Giles?

GILES

I think it's the boy.

ROSE

Though it was dark, of course. And the robber must
have been terribly frightening.

GILES

Now you draw it to mind, the actual robber was
awesome fierce in the hallway. Twice the size of this
little thing. No, no, it can't have been him.

ROSE

I am most glad to hear it. Come, Giles, send for the
doctor.

Exeunt.

SCENE 19

The Workhouse.

Enter Bumble.

BUMBLE

And to-morrow two months it was done! I sold myself
for six teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a milk
pot; with a small quantity of second-hand furniture
and twenty pound in money. I went very reasonable.
Cheap. Dirt cheap.

*Enter Mrs Corney (technically Mrs Bumble now,
but let's not make things difficult for
ourselves).*

MRS CORNEY

Cheap! You would have been dear at any price; and
dear enough I paid for you, Lord above knows that.

BUMBLE

Mrs Bumble.

MRS CORNEY

Well! Are you going to sit snoring there all day when
there's work to be done? The workhouse is ours now,
and we must pay attention to those terrible paupers!

BUMBLE

I am going to sit here as long as I think proper, ma'am. And although I was not snoring, I shall snore, gape, sneeze, laugh, or cry, as the humour strikes me; such being my prerogative!

MRS CORNEY

Your prerogative!

BUMBLE

I said the word, ma'am. The prerogative of a man; which is to command.

MRS CORNEY

And what's the prerogative of a woman, then?

BUMBLE

Why, to obey, ma'am! Your late unfortunate husband should have taught it you; and then, perhaps, he might be alive now! I wish he was, poor man.

MRS CORNEY

You hard-hearted brute!

Mrs Corney starts to sob.

BUMBLE

Why, yes, ma'am. Cry your hardest! It opens the lungs, washes the countenance, exercises the eyes, and softens down the temper, all of which, may I add, could stand in you some improvement. So cry away!

Mrs Corney stops her tears, knocks the hat from Bumble's head, and pushes him over, knocking him down again when he tries to get up.

MRS CORNEY

Get up! And take yourself away from here, unless you want me to do something desperate. Are you going?

BUMBLE

Certainly, my dear, certainly. I didn't intend to - I'm going, my dear! You are so very violent, that really...

Exit Bumble, at speed.

SCENE 20

The Three Cripples.

Monks is seated at a table. Enter Bumble.

BUMBLE

A gin and water.

MONKS

I have seen you before, I think. You were beadle here once, were you not?

BUMBLE

I was.

MONKS

Just so. And now?

BUMBLE

Master of the workhouse.

MONKS

I see. You have the same eye to your own interest now that you always had, I doubt not. Don't scruple to answer freely.

BUMBLE

I suppose a married man is not more averse to turning an honest penny when he can than a single one.

MONKS

I see. Barman! Fill this man's glass again... Now listen to me. I want some information from you. I don't ask you to give it for nothing, slight as it is. Put this towards it to begin with. The workhouse that you now rule - a boy was born there twelve years ago.

BUMBLE

A many boys are born in the workhouse. Why I have my own system for naming 'em...

MONKS

A death on the young devils! I am only interested in one... A meek-looking palefaced boy who was apprenticed to a coffin maker - I wish he had made his own coffin and screwed himself in it - and who afterwards ran away to London.

BUMBLE

Why, you mean young Oliver Twist. I remember him, of course. There wasn't an obstinater young rascal...

MONKS

It's not of him I wish to hear. It's of the last words of his mother... The hag that nursed her on her death-bed. Where is she?

BUMBLE

Where is she? It would be hard to tell... But I suppose she's out of employment anyway, as whichever place she's gone to there would be no midwifery there.

MONKS

What do you mean?

BUMBLE

She died two months hence.

MONKS

Ah. Then it is no great matter.

BUMBLE

But one woman was with her when she died.

MONKS

How can I find this woman?

BUMBLE

Only through me.

MONKS

Then bring her to me tomorrow. At nine in the evening, at this place.

He writes an address on a slip of paper and hands it over.

MONKS

It is in your interest to keep secret about this matter.

Exeunt.

SCENE 21

A ruined house, by the river.

It is raining heavily. Bumble and Mrs Corney stand outside.

MRS CORNEY

Mind what I told you, and be careful to say as little as you can.

Monks opens the door and lets them in.

MONKS

This is the woman, is it?

BUMBLE

Hem. That is the woman.

MONKS

Then the sooner we come to our business the better for all. He is right in saying you were with the hag the night she died, then? And that she told you something?

MRS CORNEY
Yes.

MONKS
Then the first question is this: what was the nature of her communication?

MRS CORNEY
No. That is the second. The first is, what may the communication be worth?

MONKS
Who the devil can tell that, without knowing what it is?

MRS CORNEY
Nobody better than you, I am persuaded. You had better bid. I have heard enough already to assure me that you are the man I ought to talk to. What's it worth to you?

MONKS
It may be nothing. It may be twenty pounds. Speak out and let me know which.

MRS CORNEY
Five and twenty pounds. In gold. Then I'll tell you all I know. Not before.

MONKS
Five and twenty pounds!

MRS CORNEY
It's not such a large sum as that.

MONKS
For a paltry secret that might be nothing when it's told, and which has been lying dead twelve years or more?

MRS CORNEY
Such matters keep well, and like good wine will often double their value in the course of time.

MONKS
And if I pay such a sum for nothing?

MRS CORNEY
You can easily take it away again. I am but a woman. Alone here, and unprotected.

BUMBLE
Not alone, my dear, nor unprotected neither. Mister Monks is aware that I am not a young man and am a little run to seed. But I am a very determined officer with uncommon strength when I am roused. I only want a little rousing, is all.

MRS CORNEY

You are a fool and had better hold your tongue.

MONKS

So, he's your husband, eh?

MRS CORNEY

He? My husband?

MONKS

I thought as much when you came in. So much the better. I have less hesitation in dealing with two people when I find there's only one will between 'em. Here.

He counts out money.

MONKS

There's twenty-five sovereigns. Let's hear your story.

MRS CORNEY

An old woman died in the workhouse, and on her deathbed she told me of the birth of the child you named last night. And the mother, this nurse robbed. She stole from the corpse when it had hardly become one that which the dead mother had prayed her to keep for the infant's sake. Gold, that might have saved her life. The only thing she had, for she lacked clothes and food - just this she held.

MONKS

Where is it! I must know.

MRS CORNEY

Here. A gold locket and a gold ring. And inside one, two locks of hair. And inside the other...

Monks examines the inside of the ring.

MONKS

Agnes. A space left blank for the surname. And this was all?

MRS CORNEY

All. I know nothing other than that of it, and I want to know nothing more, for it's safer that way. Is that what you expected to get from me?

MONKS

It is.

He opens a window, and the sound of the river running intensifies.

MONKS

If you flung a man's body down into the river there,
where would it be tomorrow?

BUMBLE

Twelve miles downstream, and cut to pieces besides.
What do you intend with us?

MONKS

That will do.

He throws the ring and locket into the stream.

MONKS

There! If the sea ever gives up its dead as the books
say it will, it will keep its gold and silver to
itself. The last proof is destroyed. And with it the
last chance of my brother finding the truth of his
birth. Oliver will worry me no more!

Lights out.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOSCENE 1

Outside the Three Cripples.

Enter Noah and Charlotte, who carries most of their baggage.

CHARLOTTE

Where do you mean to stop for the night, Noah?

NOAH

Somewhere out of the way. A pretty thing it would be to stop at the first public-house outside of town and have old Sowerberry find us and take us back in a cart with handcuffs on. And serve you right for being a fool.

CHARLOTTE

I know I ain't as clever as you are, but don't put all the blame on me, and say I should be locked up. For they'd be after the both of us.

NOAH

You took the money from the till, you know you did.

CHARLOTTE

I took it for you, Noah.

NOAH

Did I keep it?

CHARLOTTE

No, you trusted in me to look after it for us both.

NOAH

That's right. It's all yours if anyone asks, and don't you forget it. We shall put up here for the night.

They enter the Three Cripples and are shown to a table.

NOAH

Give us a bit of cold meat and a drop of beer, will you?

Enter Fagin.

LANDLORD

Strangers in the next room. Something in your way, or I'm mistaken.

Fagin listens.

NOAH

So I mean to be a gentleman, Charlotte. And if you like you shall be a lady.

CHARLOTTE

I should like that. But tills ain't to be emptied every day, and then people to get clear off after it.

NOAH

Tills be blowed! There's more things besides tills to be emptied. Pockets, houses, mail-coaches, banks.

CHARLOTTE

But surely you can't do all that by yourself, dear.

NOAH

I shall look out to get into company with them as can.

FAGIN

Here is the beer that you ordered. As I was passing this way myself, I thought that I might save you a journey.

NOAH

Mmm. Good stuff that.

FAGIN

Yes, but dear! Why a man need always be emptying a till, or a pocket, or a house, or a mail-coach, or a bank, if he drinks it regularly. Oh, don't mind me, my dear! It was lucky it was only me that heard you.

NOAH

I didn't take it! It was all her fault...

FAGIN

No matter who's got it or who did it. You may make your minds easy. I'm in that way myself, and I like you for it. And at that, I have a friend that I think can gratify your wish, and put you in that business yourself.

NOAH

Is he in a good way of business, your friend?

FAGIN

The top of the tree! He employs a power of hands and has the very best society in the profession. I don't think he'd take you, even on my recommendation, if he didn't run rather short of assistants right now.

NOAH

Wages?

FAGIN

Board and lodging, pipes and spirits free... Half of all you earn, and half of all the young woman earns.

NOAH

I think that would suit me. And where should I start?

FAGIN

Something in the spy way, perhaps? My friend wants somebody who would do that, very much.

NOAH

Then let us drink to it.

FAGIN

Indeed, my dear. Indeed.

Exeunt.

SCENE 2

A hotel room in London.

Four maids are cleaning. Enter Nancy.

NANCY

I wish to see Miss Maylie.

FIRST MAID

What name am I to say?

NANCY

It's of no use saying any.

SECOND MAID

On what business are you bound?

NANCY

Nor that neither. I must see the lady!

THIRD MAID

None of this, take yourself off!

FOURTH MAID

You're a disgrace to your sex.

FIRST MAID

A slattern.

SECOND MAID

A wanton.

THIRD MAID

A hussy.

FOURTH MAID
A whore.

FIRST MAID
Get out of here.

SECOND MAID
You're not wanted.

THIRD MAID
She won't see such as you.

FOURTH MAID
You should be thrown in a kennel.

NANCY
Do what you like with me, but I beg of you, let me see Miss Maylie!

Enter Rose.

ROSE
What's the matter?

NANCY
Miss Maylie? I must see you.

ROSE
Of course.

FIRST MAID
It's no good being proper in this world.

SECOND MAID
Brass can do better than gold.

THIRD MAID
Makes you wonder what ladies is made of.

FOURTH MAID
You're shameful.

Exeunt maids.

NANCY
It's a hard matter to see you, lady.

ROSE
I am very sorry if anyone has behaved harshly to you. Please tell me why you wished to see me, and how I can help.

NANCY
Oh, lady. If there was more like you, there would be fewer like me.

ROSE

If I can help you, I will.

NANCY

Do not speak so kindly until you know me better. Is that door shut?

ROSE

Yes. Why?

NANCY

Because I am about to put my life and that of others into your hands. I am Nancy, the girl that dragged little Oliver back to old Fagin's. I am that infamous creature you heard of, that lives among the thieves, and never from the first moment I can recollect have known any better life or kinder words than what they have given me. Do you know a man named Monks?

ROSE

No.

NANCY

He has been plotting against Oliver all along. A bargain was struck between him and Fagin, that if Fagin should make Oliver a thief, he should be rewarded well for it.

ROSE

For what purpose?

NANCY

I do not know. But Monks returned, last night, and boasted to Fagin of having the young devil's money safely - though he would rather have done it the other way, driving Oliver through every jail in town and then hauling him up for some capital felony.

ROSE

Why do you tell me this?

NANCY

I discovered some affection for young Oliver, and thought that I might do some right by him, even at this late stage. Perhaps - perhaps there is yet some part of me that can be touched by innocence.

ROSE

If you repeat this information to a gentleman who I can summon from the next room, you may be consigned to some place of safety within half an hour.

NANCY

I must go back. Among the men I have told you of, there is one who I cannot leave. Not even to be saved from the life I am leading now.

ROSE

Please - you've risked so much to come here, to tell me this. You can escape this life. Let me save you.

NANCY

I would not be his death.

ROSE

Where can I find you again?

NANCY

Every Sunday night, from eleven until the clock strikes twelve, I shall walk on London Bridge, if I am alive.

ROSE

Will you return to this gang of robbers and to this man, when a word can save you? How can I appeal against this terrible infatuation?

NANCY

Those such as I have no certain roof but the coffin-lid. Our hearts are blank, and when we find one who fills the space we thought empty, who can blame us for clinging there?

ROSE

Please do not close your heart against me. I wish to help.

NANCY

You would help best, if you would take my life at once. It would be something not to die in the hell in which I have lived.

Exit Nancy.

SCENE 3

Sikes' Apartment.

Enter Sikes, and Fagin.

SIKES

An hour this side of midnight. Dark and heavy it is too. A good night for business.

FAGIN

Ah! What a pity, Bill, that there's none quite ready to be done.

SIKES

You're right, for once. It is a pity, for I'm in the humour too.

Enter Nancy

SIKES

Well, Nance? Where've you been this time?

NANCY

Nowhere Bill. Just walking.

SIKES

Walking, eh? Did you find anything?

NANCY

Nothing, Bill. I was just walking.

SIKES

What you want to go walking for when there's me in here, I'll never know.

FAGIN

Well my dears, I must be going now.

SIKES

Light him to the door, Nance. It's a pity he should break his neck himself and disappoint the sight-seers.

Nancy shows Fagin to the door.

FAGIN

What is it, Nancy dear?

NANCY

What do you mean?

FAGIN

Where have you been, on a night like this? I saw your face as you was talking to Bill. He's hard on you, Nancy, I know he is. You needn't spend your time with him, you know...

NANCY

Have you got something to say to me?

FAGIN

No matter just now. We'll talk of this again, but don't forget this: You have a friend in me, Nance. A staunch friend. I have the means at hand, quiet and close. If you want revenge on those that treat you like a dog, come to me. He is the mere hound of a day, but you know me of old, Nancy.

NANCY

I know you well. Good night.

FAGIN

Good night.

Exit Fagin.

SCENE 4

Brownlow's Study.

Brownlow and Grimwig are present. Enter Rose.

ROSE

Mister Brownlow, I believe, sir?

BROWNLOW

That is my name. And this is my friend Mister Grimwig. Please excuse our disarray, as we have but recently returned to the country.

ROSE

Indeed. My friends and I have been seeking your company for some time now. When we were informed you had returned to town, I resolved to call upon you without delay.

BROWNLOW

Really? And to what do I owe your interest?

ROSE

You once showed great benevolence and goodness to a very dear young friend of mine, and I am sure you will take an interest in hearing of him again. His name is Oliver Twist.

GRIMWIG

A bad one. I'll eat my head if he is not a bad one.

ROSE

He is a child of a noble nature and a warm heart. His affections and feelings would do honour to many who have numbered his days six times over.

GRIMWIG

I am only sixty-one. And as the devil's in it if this Oliver is not twelve years or more old, I don't see the application of that remark.

BROWNLOW

Do not heed my friend, Miss Maylie. He does not mean what he says.

GRIMWIG

Yes he does.

BROWNLOW

No he does not.

GRIMWIG

He'll eat his head if he doesn't.

BROWNLOW

He would deserve to have it knocked off if he does.

GRIMWIG

And he'd uncommonly like to see any man offer to do it!

They take snuff and shake hands.

BROWNLOW

Now, Miss Maylie. Please let me know what intelligence you have of this poor child.

ROSE

He has been with us for the past few months. Indeed, his only sorrow has been being unable to meet you and thank you for all your taking care of him.

BROWNLOW

Thank God! This is great happiness to me, great happiness. For a while I believed... Continue.

ROSE

I was visited by Nancy, one of his former associates last night... Oliver has a brother, it seems; a man named Monks who has cheated him from his inheritance.

BROWNLOW

May I speak with this Nancy?

ROSE

She will meet me this Sunday.

BROWNLOW

Then we have time to prepare... But what of Oliver? Where is he now?

ROSE

He is waiting in a coach outside. He wanted to see you so.

BROWNLOW

At this door! I must see the child.

Exit Brownlow.

Grimwig stands... and dances around the room, stopping in front of Rose, who he sweeps up and gives a big chaste Mwah of a kiss.

GRIMWIG

Hush. You're a sweet girl, but I'm old enough to be your grandfather.

SCENE 5

Fagin's House.

Enter Fagin and Noah.

FAGIN

My friend will see you now.

He seats himself in a chair and gestures to himself.

NOAH

So it was you that was your own friend, was it? I thought as much.

FAGIN

Every man's his own friend, my dear. He hasn't as good one as himself anywhere. Some conjurers say that number three is the magic number, and some say number seven. It's neither, my friend, neither. It's number one.

NOAH

Ha! Number one for ever!

FAGIN

And yet we must depend upon each other. It's this mutual trust that we have in each other that consoles us. Especially at this point, my dear. My best hand was taken from me, yesterday morning.

NOAH

You don't mean to say he died?

FAGIN

No. He was charged with attempting to pick a pocket, and they found a silver snuff-box upon him. Ah! He was worth fifty boxes and I'd give the price of as many to have him back. You should have known the Dodger, my dear. You should have known the Dodger.

NOAH

You'll get him back, sha'n't you?

FAGIN

If they get no fresh evidence, it'll be a summary conviction and we shall have him back after six weeks; but if someone claims to be the owner of the Dodger's snuff-box... Well, if they do it's a case of lagging. They know what a clever lad he is; he'll be a lifer. They'll make the Artful nothing less than a lifer.

Enter Charley.

CHARLEY

It's all up, Fagin.

FAGIN

What do you mean?

CHARLEY

They've found the gentleman as owns the box, and the Artful's booked for a passage out. I must have a full suit o'mourning, Fagin, and a hatband, to visit him in afore he sets out on his travels. To think of Jack Dawkins - the Artful Dodger - going abroad for a common tuppenny-ha'penny sneeze-box! I never thought he'd a done it under a gold watch, chains, and seals at the lowest! Oh, why didn't he rob some rich old gentleman of all his valuables and go out as a gentleman, instead of just a common prig, with no honour or glory?

FAGIN

What are you talking about, no honour or glory? Wasn't he always the top-most of you all? Was there a one of you that could touch him or come near him?

CHARLEY

Not one.

FAGIN

Then what are you blubbering for?

CHARLEY

Cos it isn't on the record, is it? It can't come out in the indictment, and nobody will ever know the half of what he was.

FAGIN

See what a pride they take in their work, my dear. Ain't it beautiful? But never mind, Charley. It'll be sure to come out. They shall all know what a clever fellow he was. Think how young he is, too! What a distinction, Charley, to be lagged at his time of life!

CHARLEY

Well I suppose that is an honour that is.

FAGIN

We must see him off in style, my dear. In style!

Exeunt.

SCENE 6

The court, Mr Fang presiding.

Fagin, Noah, and Charley watch as part of a crowd. Enter Jack and Officer.

FANG

Bring the miscreant here!

JACK

Miscreant, indeed? And might I ask for what exactly I am being placed in this here disgraceful situation. Disgraceful, I say!

OFFICER

Hold your tongue, will you?

JACK

I'm an Englishman, ain't I?

FANG

But you will not be on English soil much longer.

JACK

Ha! We shall see what the secretary of state for Home Affairs - who is a personal friend of mine I'll have you know - has to say about that. Now then, what is this here business, for I have my paper to read.

OFFICER

Silence there!

FANG

What is this?

OFFICER

A pick-pocketing case, your worship.

FANG

And has the boy ever been here before?

OFFICER

He ought to have been, many times, your worship. For he's been pretty much everywhere else. I know him of old.

JACK

Well, there's a case of defamation of character right there!

FANG

Where are the witnesses?

WOMAN ON STREET

I saw him, your honour, taking a handkerchief from this gentleman's pocket.

JACK

What, like this?

WOMAN ON STREET

Yes, exactly like that.

JACK

Ah, but you see, then I put it straight back again, like this. Cos it weren't no great shakes as a wipe. Bit dirty, too.

WOMAN ON STREET

Yes, he did that too. But when the officer seized him, he found a silver snuff-box upon his person.

OFFICER

This gentleman swears that it is his.

An old gentleman stands, passing close to Jack.

OLD GENTLEMAN

Indeed it is, sir. See, it has my initials upon it. I had it but a moment ago.

He pats his pockets, but the snuff-box is no longer there. Jack produces the snuff-box and returns it to him.

JACK

Are you looking for this, my man?

OLD GENTLEMAN

Will you stop that!

OFFICER

I never saw such a vagabond your worship.

FANG

Have you anything to ask this witness, boy?

JACK

I wouldn't abase myself by descending to hold a conversation with a man that can't even look after his own snuff-box.

Again, Jack returns the snuff-box.

FANG

Guilty, guilty! Remove him from the court!

JACK

Oh, it's no good looking frightened. Why this is a travesty. I wouldn't go free now if you was to fall down on your knees and beg me to. Here, carry me off to prison! Take me away! No, like this.

He demonstrates the proper way to take him away.

SCENE 7

The streets outside the Three Cripples.

Fagin and Noah.

FAGIN

Now, my dear, I want you to do a piece of work for me that requires great care and caution.

NOAH

Don't you go shoving me into danger. That don't suit me one piece.

FAGIN

There's not the smallest danger in it - not the very smallest. It's only to dodge a woman.

NOAH

I can do that pretty well, I know. I was a regular cunning sneak when I was at school. What am I to dodge her for?

FAGIN

Not to do anything, but to tell me where she goes, who she sees, and, if possible, what she says. To bring me back all the information you can of her business tonight.

NOAH

And what'll yer give me for it?

FAGIN

If you do it well, a pound, my dear. One pound and that's what I never gave yet for any job of work where there wasn't valuable consideration to be gained.

NOAH

Then I'm your man.

FAGIN

The girl has been alone all day, and the man she is afraid of will not be back much before daybreak. Follow her, lad, and see who she meets. I must have intelligence of this man, and with it I shall be rid of Bill at last. Hst - here she comes.

Nancy exits the pub, and Noah follows her through the dark night.

Nancy looks behind her as she walks, but Noah is unobserved... Soon the sounds of water let us know that we are on a bridge.

The clock strikes midnight, and Nancy halts, looking around her. Noah walks straight past.

NOAH

Mind where you are! No need to take up the whole pavement.

Noah passes by and conceals himself by the stairs leading from the bridge.

Enter Brownlow and Rose.

BROWNLOW

Is this the lady?

ROSE

This is she.

BROWNLOW

Then you have intelligence for us.

NANCY

Soon. I have such a fear and dread upon me tonight that I can hardly stand.

BROWNLOW

A fear of what?

NANCY

I scarcely know... I wish I did. Horrible thoughts of death, and shrouds with blood upon them, and a fear that has made me burn as if I was on fire.

ROSE

Please, be calm. Do not allow yourself to become the prey of such fearful fancies. You came here safely?

NANCY

Yes. None of them suspect me.

BROWNLOW

Good. We propose to extort the secret of Oliver's birth, whatever it might be, from the fears of this man Monks. But if he cannot be delivered to us, you must deliver up this man Fagin.

NANCY

I will not do it. Devil that he is, and devil as he has been to me, I will never do that.

BROWNLOW

Tell me why.

NANCY

As bad a life as he has led, I have led a bad life too. There are many of us who have kept the same courses together, and I'll not turn upon them who didn't turn upon me.

BROWNLOW

Then put Monks into my hands.

NANCY

What if he turns against the others?

BROWNLOW

There the matter will rest. We will not pursue them, and Fagin shall not be brought to justice without your consent. Where can we find Monks?

NANCY

He can often be found at the Three Cripples public-house. He is a tall man, strongly-made but not stout, of perhaps six and twenty years. On his throat, so high you can sometimes see it, is a broad red mark.

BROWNLOW

Like a burn or scald?

NANCY

You know him?

BROWNLOW

I think I do... I think I do. We shall see. Many people are singularly like each other. Now - what can I do to serve you?

NANCY

Nothing. I am past hope.

BROWNLOW

You put yourself beyond its pale. The past, however mis-spent, is gone, but for the future you may hope. It is never too late. While it may not be in our power to offer you peace of heart and mind, we can give you a quiet asylum, either in England or in some foreign country, and perhaps you may discover them there yourself. Before this river wakes to the first glimpse of daylight you can be as entirely beyond the reach of your former associates as if you were to disappear from the earth this moment.

NANCY

I am chained to my old life. I loathe and hate it, but I cannot leave it. I cannot leave him. The fear comes upon me again - I must go home.

ROSE

Home?

NANCY

To such a home as I have raised for myself with the work of my life... Let us part. Go! If I have done you any service, all I ask is that you leave me and let me go my way alone.

ROSE

Please - this purse. Take it for my sake, that you may have some resource, at least, in an hour of need or trouble.

NANCY

No! I have not done this for money. Let me have that to think of at least. Please, leave me now.

Exeunt.

SCENE 8

Fagin's House.

Noah sleeps. Fagin seems to hear something outside.

FAGIN

At last. At last.

Enter Sikes with a bundle, which he lays down on the table.

SIKES

There! Take care of that and do the most you can with it. It's been trouble enough to get. I thought I should have been here three hours ago. What now? What do you look at a man so for?

Fagin tries to say something. Can't.

SIKES

Damme, he's gone mad at last.

Sikes moves his pistol into a more convenient pocket.

FAGIN

No, no. It's not... You're not the person, Bill. I've no fault to find with you.

SIKES

Oh, you haven't, have you? That's lucky. For one of us.

FAGIN

I've got that to tell you, Bill, which will make you worse than me.

SIKES

Aye? Tell away! Look sharp, or Nance will think I'm lost.

FAGIN

She already does, Bill. She has pretty well settled that in her own mind already.

SIKES

Speak, will you! Open your mouth and say what you've got to say in plain words. Out with it, you thundering old cur, out with it!

FAGIN

Suppose that lad that's lying there... Suppose that lad was to peach. To blow upon us all. First seeking out the right folks for the purpose, and then having a meeting with 'em in the street to paint our likenesses, describe every mark that they know us by, and the crib where we might be most easily taken. Suppose he was to do all this of his own fancy. Not grabbed, trapped, tried, earwigged by the parson and brought to it on bread and water, but of his own fancy, to please his own taste, stealing out at nights to find those most interested against us, and peaching to them. Do you hear me! Suppose he did all this, what then?

SIKES

I'd grind his skull under my boot.

FAGIN

What if I did it! I, that know so much, and could hang so many besides myself?

SIKES

I'd do something in the jail that'd get me close to you, and I'd beat your brains out afore the people.

FAGIN

You would?

SIKES

Try me.

FAGIN

And if it was Charley! Or the Dodger! Or Bet!

SIKES

I don't care who! Whoever it was, I'd serve them the same.

Fagin shakes Noah awake.

FAGIN

Noah. Noah, wake up. Tell me that again - once again, just for him to hear. Tell me about Nancy.

NOAH

I followed her.

FAGIN

To London Bridge.

NOAH

Yes.

FAGIN

Where she met two people. A gentleman and a lady that she had gone to of her own accord.

NOAH

So she did.

FAGIN

And asked her to give up all her pals, and Monks first. And to describe him, and where he went. Which she did. To tell them at which house we were to meet at, where best to watch from. Which she did. To tell them what time the people would be there. Which she did! She did all this. She told it all, every word, without a threat, without a murmur, she did all this did she not?

NOAH

That's just what it was. All of that. She told all.

SIKES

Let me go!

FAGIN

Only a word, Bill. Only a word.

SIKES

Let me out. Let me out, I say!

FAGIN

Hear me speak a word. Just one word, Bill.

SIKES

Well!

FAGIN

You won't be - too - violent, Bill? I mean. Not too violent for safety. Be crafty, Bill, and not too bold.

Exit Sikes.

SCENE 9

Sikes' Apartment.

Nancy is asleep. Enter Sikes. He locks the door behind him.

SIKES

Get up.

NANCY

Bill?

SIKES

Get up.

NANCY

Let me draw the curtain.

SIKES

It's light enough for what I've got to do.

NANCY

Bill. Why do you look like that at me?

He grabs her and pulls her towards the centre of the room.

NANCY

Bill, Bill! I won't scream, or cry - not once! Hear me - speak to me - tell me what I have done!

SIKES

You know, you she devil. You were watched to-night. Every word you said was heard!

NANCY

Then spare my life, for the love of heaven, as I spared yours. Bill, dear Bill, you cannot have the heart to kill me. You say you know everything - then think of everything I have given up to-night for you. I will not let you go, you cannot shake me loose. Bill, Bill, for dear God's sake, for mine, for your own, stop before you spill my blood. I have been true to you, on my guilty soul I have.

SIKES

Get up.

NANCY

Bill. They said tonight that they would take me away to a foreign country where I could end my days in solitude and peace. Let me see them again. I'll beg them, Bill, on my knees, that they may show the same mercy and goodness to you. We can both leave this dreadful place, and far apart from here lead better lives. It is never too late to repent, they told me so, I feel it now, but we must have just a little more time, Bill, just a little more time!

Bill takes his pistol. Aims it at her. Does not fire. He reverses it, and hits her in the face with the pistol butt, knocking her to the floor.

NANCY

I love you.

He raises the pistol to hit her again.

Lights down.

SCENE 10

Brownlow's House.

Monks is deep within the room, while Brownlow and Officer are between him and the door.

OFFICER

They found her in Sikes' house, with a rug half-covering her body. They say it was just as well, as her face had been smashed. The girl... The girl who identified the body had to be taken away, screaming. They say that she can't have lasted for more than a couple of minutes after the attack began, but he kept beating her even after she was dead. The policeman said that he had never seen blood like it, pooling on the floor and reflecting the dawn light onto the ceiling.

BROWNLOW

And the murderer? Sikes?

OFFICER

Fled. But people saw him go - to Rotherhithe. People are gathering around there, even as his associates are being taken into custody.

BROWNLOW

Go there. If the murderer can be brought to justice, do so.

Exit Officer.

MONKS

Let me go.

BROWNLOW

You are free to go. But I warn you by all I hold solemn and most sacred that the instant you set foot in the street I will have you apprehended on a charge of fraud and robbery.

MONKS

This is pretty treatment, sir, from my father's oldest friend.

BROWNLOW

It is because I was your father's oldest friend that you have the chance ahead of you. It is because of the name that you share, Edward Leeford, that I am moved to treat you gently now, despite your unworthiness to bear it.

MONKS

What has the name to do with it?

BROWNLOW

Nothing. I am glad you have changed it. Very glad. You have a brother.

MONKS

I was an only child.

BROWNLOW

Then why did his name, whispered into your ear, cause you to accompany me here without demur?

MONKS

And you accuse me of fraud and robbery, based on this? You have nothing! I am leaving now.

BROWNLOW

You have lived on a stolen inheritance. Every word that has passed between you and your accomplice is known to me. Shadows on the wall have caught your whispers and brought them to my ears. You have a brother; you know it, and him. Unworthy son, liar, coward, you who hold your councils with thieves and murderers in the dark, you whose plots have brought a violent death on the head of one worth millions such as you; do you brave me! Murder has been done on your behalf! The disclosure of your secrets, Edward Leeford, has done this! Do you want this placed in front of a judge? Will you plead innocence of this foul murder in court? For then we should see true justice.

MONKS

What do you want of me?

BROWNLOW

The truth! Set out the facts of your inheritance before witnesses, and make restitution to an innocent and unoffending child - for such he is, though the offspring of a guilty and miserable love. Carry the provisions of your father's will into execution; and then go where you will. Well? Have you made up your mind?

Exeunt.

SCENE 11

A safe house on the first storey.

The sound of the mob outside. Charley inside, looking out the window. Enter Toby.

TOBY
Fagin? Anyone?

CHARLEY
He ain't here. They got him. The mob.

TOBY
They aren't after us, are they?

CHARLEY
Not if we keep quiet. They all formed a ring around him, Toby. Kicked at him, and called him a dirty Jew. He looked round at 'em, muddy and bleeding, and begged for mercy, and they just kept kicking and punching him down on the ground. The officers came then. Who'd a thought old Faguey'd be glad to see the traps? Clung to 'em, he did, like they were his dearest friends, and all the time the crowd spitting and screaming and swearing they'd tear his heart out.

TOBY
What about the others?

CHARLEY
Bet went to speak to the body, but she din't come back out. I tried the Cripples, but they was rounding 'em all up as I went by, so I drew me cap down and walked past. Felt their eyes on me the whole way down the street. They're taking everybody in.

TOBY
Damn you, Bill. What have you done to us all.
A knocking without.

CHARLEY
Who's that?
Toby opens the door. Enter Sikes.

SIKES
I've been followed the whole way... They're on me tail. She's leading them to me, I tell you. Right behind me, but when I turn she ain't there. I need space, got to get away from 'em all, somewhere she won't follow... Damn you both! Have you nothing to say to me?

CHARLEY
Don't come near me. You monster. I'm not afraid of you. Witness, Toby, if they come here for him I'll give him up. Kill me for it if you like or if you dare, but if I'm here I'll give you up. Murderer. Murderer!

He flings himself on Bill, who backhands him across the room.

SIKES

Shut up.

CHARLEY

Help! Murderer!

A knocking at the door.

CHARLEY

He's here! Break down the door!

Sikes shouts out the window at the mob.

SIKES

Damn you! Do your worst! I'll cheat you yet! Give me a rope - they're all in front. I'll drop into the Folly Ditch and clear off that way. Give me a rope, or I shall do two more murders and kill myself.

TOBY

Here.

Sikes climbs from the window and along the roof. He makes the rope fast to a chimney, and ties the other end into a noose.

Nancy appears behind him.

SIKES

Ha, you can't take Bill Sikes. I'll see you all in hell.

NANCY

(quietly)

Bill...

SIKES

No! You ain't real! Look away from me!

He steps back off the roof and falls; the rope twines itself around his neck; his neck snaps with a crack.

Nancy watches on as he dies.

SCENE 12

The Workhouse.

Brownlow, Oliver, Grimwig, and Monks.

BROWNLOW

And so we return to the beginning. Oliver, do you know this place?

OLIVER

The workhouse where I was born. It seems smaller, now.

BROWNLOW

Oliver, you have not yet been introduced to your brother, Edward. Edward, this is your half-brother by poor Agnes Fleming.

MONKS

Yes. That is their bastard child.

BROWNLOW

That term reflects disgrace on no-one living except you who use it. Let that pass. The full story to he who you have wronged. Then, as agreed, you may go. Are you ready now to tell the whole truth, so help you God?

MONKS

If it will satisfy your pathetic sense of justice. Let us be done with this.

BROWNLOW

Tell Oliver of your father.

MONKS

My father was forced into a loveless marriage. He grew bitter, as did my mother, and they separated. He provided for my mother and I, but always despised us.

BROWNLOW

Your own conduct saw to that. Later, he met a young girl who loved him with a great passion, and they contracted to be married. She trusted patiently to him - until she trusted too far, and gave him that which none can ever give back.

MONKS

He ruined her, and yet he claimed that I was dissipated. I hope that haunted him while he died.

BROWNLOW

Then word came that your father was to inherit a substantial sum. He left immediately to receive the bequest. But he did not return.

MONKS

A sudden illness overtook him. My mother hurried to his side, but was too late. He died before she arrived.

BROWNLOW

His fortune was to go to Agnes Fleming and their child, with one stipulation: that the child should never have stained its reputation as his first son had. If it did, then he would recognise Edward's prior claim upon the inheritance.

MONKS

I deserved it! So my mother hid the will and told the family of Agnes Fleming the truth about their precious daughter. The girl was disowned, and the family fled. I was to have all.

BROWNLOW

But there were questions. Suspicions. And how much better to have the money truthfully. When Edward returned to his old haunts and criminal friends, he found out about his brother and conceived a plan: to turn the boy to villainy and reveal the will.

MONKS

And why not? He is no better than me. You are no better than me!

BROWNLOW

Some, perhaps, are not. Mister Grimwig?

Grimwig goes to the door and brings in Bumble and Mrs Corney.

BUMBLE

Do my eyes deceive me or is that little Oliver? Oh Oliver, if you knew how I've been a-grieving for you...

MRS CORNEY

Hold your tongue, fool.

BUMBLE

Isn't nature nature, Mrs Bumble? Can't I be supposed to feel - I, as brought him up - when I see him a-sitting here among ladies and gentlemen of the very affablest description! Why I loved that boy as if he'd been my own.

GRIMWIG

Come, sir. Suppress your feelings.

Brownlow points to Monks.

BROWNLOW

Do you know this person?

MRS CORNEY

No.

BROWNLOW

And you?

BUMBLE

I never saw him before in all my life.

BROWNLOW

A pity. I thought perhaps even at this late stage you may have some decency in you. He has told us of the locket and ring.

MRS CORNEY

If he has been coward enough to confess, I have nothing to say. I sold the trinkets and they're where you'll never get them. What then?

BROWNLOW

Nothing more - except for us to ensure that the two of you are never again employed in a situation of trust. You may leave the room.

BUMBLE

I hope this unfortunate little circumstance will not deprive me of my parochial office?

BROWNLOW

Indeed it will. You may think yourself well off that is all.

BUMBLE

It was all Mrs Bumble. She would do it.

BROWNLOW

That is no excuse. Indeed, you are the more guilty of the two in the eye of the law; for the law supposes that your wife acts under your direction.

BUMBLE

If the law supposes that, then the law is an ass. An idiot. If that's the eye of the law, then the law is a bachelor. And the worst I wish on the law is that his eye may be opened by experience. By experience!

Exeunt Bumble and Mrs Corney

MONKS

And that is all then? Is the farce over, and your justice satisfied?

BROWNLOW

Yes. Go now, and look to your own salvation.

OLIVER

Sir?

MONKS

What more indignities would you have me suffer?

OLIVER

I wish to share what I have with my brother.

BROWNLOW

Oliver. Are you certain of this? After all he has done, and tried to do?

OLIVER

In different circumstances, might I not have done the same? Yes. I am sure.

BROWNLOW

Very well. Then there is but one more task for you and I to complete.

Exeunt.

SCENE 13

Lights up on Fagin, hunched in a corner in his cell, rocking himself from side to side.

Enter Oliver, Brownlow, and a Jailer.

JAILER

Whatever you need to say, you shall have to be quick. It is almost eight o'clock.

FAGIN

Good boy, Charley. Well done. Oliver too! Quite the gentleman now, quite the gentleman... Take him away! Do you hear me? He has been, somehow, the cause of all this. It's worth the money to bring him to it. Never mind the girl, Bill. Claypole's throat, as deep as you can cut. Saw his head off!

JAILER

He has been like this since he arrived here. Fagin?

FAGIN

That's me! An old man, my Lord. A very old man.

JAILER

Here's somebody to see you, to ask you some questions.

FAGIN

Strike them all dead! What right have they to butcher me?

He catches sight of Oliver and Brownlow.

FAGIN

What do you want here?

BROWNLOW

You have some papers which were placed in your hands, for better security, by a man called Monks.

FAGIN

It's all a lie. I haven't one - not one.

BROWNLOW

For the love of God, do not say that now, on the verge of death, but tell me where they are. Sikes is dead; Monks has confessed. There is no hope of any further gain. Where are those papers?

FAGIN

Oliver. Here, here. Let me whisper to you.

OLIVER

I'm not afraid.

Oliver takes Fagin's hand.

FAGIN

The papers are in a canvas bag, in a hole a little way up the chimney in the top front-room. I wish to talk with you, my dear. I wish to talk to you.

OLIVER

Let me say a prayer with you. Let me say one prayer.

The clock outside chimes eight.

FAGIN

Yes, but outside, outside. We'll go out together, silently. Here, hold my hand. You can tell them that I've gone to sleep. They'll believe you. You can get me out, if you take me so.

OLIVER

Oh, God forgive you. God forgive you.

FAGIN

That's right, that's right. That'll help us on. This door is first. If I shake and tremble as we pass the gallows, don't you mind, but hurry on. It will be for but a moment, and then we can pass by.

JAILER

Have you anything else to ask him, sir?

BROWNLOW

No. There is nothing more.

FAGIN

Press on, Oliver, press on. Softly and quietly, yes, but not so slow. Faster, that's it. Soon we shall both be free.

Lights down.

END OF ACT TWO

CURTAIN