Oliver Twist

By Charles Dickens

1837

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The Life of Charles Dickens: Childhood Poverty

Who was Charles Dickens?
Charles Dickens, born on the 7th February 1812, was the most famous and most successful English writer of his day. He lived in the Victorian era under Queen Victoria, who was crowned in 1837 – the same year he wrote his novel *Oliver Twist*, aged 25. His epic stories, vivid characters and terrifying descriptions of poverty in London are unforgettable. Dickens had a wider popularity and fame than had any previous writer during his lifetime, and he remains popular for some of the greatest novels and characters ever written. Some say London was his greatest character. He died in 1870 and is buried at Westminster Abbey in London. 2012 was the 200-year anniversary of his birth: in two hundred years, his stories have sold millions of copies worldwide and never gone out of print.

What happened in Dickens' childhood?
Dickens experienced prison and poverty in his own childhood. In 1824, London, John Dickens was locked in Marshalsea debtor’s prison for failing to pay his debts. His son, Charles, aged 11, was sent away to a blacking factory, covering and labelling pots of shoe polish in appalling conditions as well as loneliness and despair. He lived separated from his family, as his younger sister and mother were put in prison with his father. Later, he wrote in a letter with horror: ‘No words can describe the secret agony of my soul as I sank into this companionship... The sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless, fired with grief and humiliation, my lonely vulnerability, my hungry misery, and the knowledge they had willingly put me in this situation. I could not bear to think of myself beyond reach of any honourable success.’ After three years he was returned to school, but the experience was never forgotten. Dickens lived just nine doors down from the workhouse until 1831, when he was 19 years old.

What did Dickens think of the law – and the poor – in England?
When Dickens wrote in 1830s London, English law had been established for several centuries on the principle of justice and a fair trial. However, Dickens found the law did not always practise what it preached. His father had been imprisoned in a debtor’s jail and Dickens separated from his family and sent to work in miserable conditions and lonely isolation when he was 11. Injustice, more often, was what Dickens experienced from the law for those in poverty.

Dickens became a lifelong champion of the poor. For example, in January 1837, a trial was held at London Marylebone workhouse, and Dickens was on the jury. The case was a servant girl accused of killing her newborn baby, with the threat of the death penalty if she was found guilty. Eliza Burgess, weak, ill and frightened, was herself an orphan. Her story was that her baby appeared to be dead, so she hid it under the dresser but confessed to her employer. The jury was ready to find her guilty. That night, Dickens could not sleep: the dead baby, the thought of the terrified, unhappy, ignorant young woman in poverty and in prison. Dickens resolved to take on those who were ready to find her guilty. He argued so firmly and forcefully that he won the argument. The verdict was returned: not guilty. He then went out of his way to help a victim of the law, even though he was under intense pressure himself to write and earn a living, to avoid debt and the debtor’s prison.

How did Dickens’ sister-in-law Mary die aged 17 in 1837?
Dickens’ beloved sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, lived with the writer and his wife. Aged only seventeen years old, she became very ill with fever. Without warning, she died suddenly from it. Her death was a shock and Dickens carried the memory of Mary with him for the rest of his life. Dickens has his characters suffer from fever, but in his books, he can ensure they survive. Mary’s death never allowed Dickens to forget how fragile life is. In Dickens’ stories, as in life, no one is spared: young or old, death is always lurking round the corner.

How and why did Dickens write his books?
Dickens’ books were originally published serially, in monthly installments, and Dickens created each episode just in time to be published, so he could not go back and change anything, but had to plot it all out in his mind. His stories use cliffhangers to keep his readers looking forward to the next installment. He wrote professionally, for a living, and raised himself and his family out of poverty through the popularity of his writing.

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens presents the everyday existence of the lowest classes of English society. He takes us beyond the workhouse, to London’s filthy streets and thieves’ dens. Dickens wrote his books to challenge injustice and expose the impact of poverty in 19th century London.
The Life and Times of Charles Dickens: 19th Century Victorian London

What was Victorian London like in the 19th century?
Dickens lived his life in 19th century London. He explored its underworld, walking the streets up to twenty miles at a time, and his descriptions of 19th century London allow readers to experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the old city. Victorian London was the largest, most spectacular city in the world. While Britain was experiencing the Industrial Revolution, London was both reaping the benefits and suffering the consequences. In 1800, the population of London was around 1 million. That number exploded to 5 million by 1900. This population explosion caused untold poverty, squalor and filth. In early 19th century London, rich and poor alike were thrown together in the crowded city streets. Crime, especially street robbery and pickpocketing, was common in the dark and in the crowds. Thousands of chimney pots belched coal smoke, and black soot settled everywhere. Raw sewage flowed into the River Thames. Street sellers, pickpockets, gangs, drunks and beggars roamed the streets. Many drank water from the very same parts of the Thames that the open sewers flowed into.

What were the poor laws in 19th century Victorian London?
The Poor Laws were passed in 1834 against poverty. Relief for the poor would only be available in workhouses. The conditions of workhouses should be worse than that of the poorest worker outside the workhouse. Workhouses were to be so bad that anyone capable of coping outside them would choose not to be in one. No one was to receive money or other help from the Poor Law authorities except in a workhouse. Conditions were to be made harsh to discourage poverty. Child labour was normal in the 19th century, with children as young as 4 years old working as chimney sweeps or factory workers. The Poor Laws punished the most defenseless and helpless people in society. The idea of workhouses was that poverty was the result of laziness and that the dreadful conditions in the workhouse would inspire the poor to improve themselves. In reality, the workhouse was little more than a prison for the poor.

Who were the Metropolitan Police in 19th century Victorian London?
To prevent crime, in 1829, London established the Metropolitan Police. Their duty was to patrol parts of the city to deter criminal activities like pickpocketing, street robbery, kidnapping, burglary and murder. Dickens wrote Oliver Twist just 8 years after the police were established. Partly due to the efforts of the police, and according to their statistics, murder in Victorian London was quite rare, with only 1 in 100,000 people killed in a year in the 19th century: around 20 murders a year in London.

What did Victorian Londoners think of Jewish people?
When Dickens wrote, he was surrounded by and affected by the prejudices of his time. In 1830s England, many poor Jewish merchants dealt in second-hand goods, and in some cases they took the opportunity to mix stolen goods with their legally purchased items. Anti-Semitic feeling was widespread: if a Jewish merchant was hung for some crime he committed, it seemed to Londoners that all Jewish people were criminals.

What was the class system in 19th century Victorian London?
The class system was very strict in Victorian England. Victorian society can be split up into three classes: upper, middle, and lower. The upper class was the rich aristocracy. The middle class was rich, respectable families, such as doctors. The working class were poor, who often had dangerous jobs that they had to take because of the lack of education. Paupers were a class below the working class. They lived in slums in extreme poverty, often because of old age, unemployment, illness or lost parents.

How did women and children become part of criminal street gangs in 1830's Victorian London?
The backstreets of 1830’s London were full with women and children who worked on the street. Great poverty or despair forced women, young or old, out onto the streets. Women from the higher classes who became pregnant outside of marriage were often cast out onto the streets. Kidnapping in Victorian London was rife, as orphans as young as 3 years old were targeted, abducted into street gangs or sold into slavery in factories. One billion people still live in slums globally today, as crowded with life, poverty and misfortune as Victorian London. Poverty, criminality and despair still exist today.

What did Victorian Londoners think of the death penalty and transportation for life?
Capital punishment, or the death penalty, was accepted in Victorian London. The scaffold was still a public place of execution where Londoners could watch the death penalty take place. Most Londoners thought it was useful to deter and prevent the worst crimes such as murder, which were punishable by death. The penalty for was transportation for life: being permanently shipped to the other side of the world, Australia. Victorian law decided on harsh punishments to prevent crime.
1. The Workhouse

In a little town in England, there was a workhouse, and into the workhouse and this world of sorrow and trouble was born Oliver Twist. The pale face of a young woman was raised feebly from the pillow, and a faint voice feebly articulated the words: ‘Let me see the child, and die.’ The surgeon deposited it in her arms. The patient imprinted her cold white lips passionately on its forehead, gazed wildly around, shuddered, fell back – and died.

For the next eight years, Oliver was the victim of poverty. He was brought up hungry, alongside twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor laws, who grew up without much food or clothing. Oliver Twist’s ninth birthday found him a very pale, thin child, somewhat small in height, and decidedly thin about the waist. But nature or inheritance had implanted a sturdy spirit in Oliver’s chest.

Now, Mr Bumble the beadle was a fat and angry man. He came in to the workhouse and bellowed: ‘The child Oliver Twist is nine year old today. Despite all our supernatural efforts, we have never been able to discover who is his father, or what was his mother’s name or status.’ Mrs Mann, the lady of the house, retorted in astonishment: ‘How comes he to have any name at all, then?’ The beadle drew himself with great pride, and said, ‘I invented it.’ ‘You, Mr Bumble!’ ‘I, Mrs Mann. We name our orphans in alphabetical order. The last was a S, -Swubble, I named him. This was a T, -Twist, I named him. The next will be Unwin, the next Vilkins. I have got names ready made to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again, when we come to Z. Fetch Oliver Twist at once.’

Once fetched, Mr Bumble gave him a tap on the head with his cane, and another on the back to make him lively, and conducted him to a large white room, where eight or ten fat gentlemen were sitting round a table, headed by a particularly fat gentleman with a very round, red face. ‘Bow to the board,’ said Mr Bumble. Oliver brushed away two or three tears that were lingering in his eyes, not knowing what a board was, and seeing no board but the table, luckily bowed to that. ‘What’s your name, boy?’ said the fat gentleman. Oliver was frightened at the sight of so many gentlemen, which made him tremble and answer in a very small and hesitating voice; whereupon a gentleman in a white waistcoat said he was a fool. ‘Boy,’ said the fat gentleman, ‘listen to me. You know you’re an orphan, I suppose?’ ‘What’s that, sir?’ inquired poor Oliver. ‘The boy is a fool – I thought he was,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. ‘I hope you say your prayers every night – and pray for the people who feed you, and take of you – like a Christian.’ And off he was sent.

Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation. At last, they got so wild with hunger that one boy, who was tall for his age, hinted darkly to his companions that unless he had a bit more per day, he was afraid he would eat the boy who slept next to him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. He had a wild, hungry eye: and the boys believed him. Lots were cast for who should walk up to the master after supper that evening and ask for more, and it fell to Oliver Twist.

The room in which the boys were fed, was a large stone hall, with a copper pot at one end: out of which thin, watery gruel was ladled at meal times. Grace was said; gruel was served out; the gruel disappeared; the boys nudged Oliver. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose, and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, and said, alarmed at his own nerve: ‘Please sir, I want some more.’

The master was a fat, healthy man: but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small young rebel for some seconds, then clung for support to the copper pot. The assistants were paralysed with wonder, the boys with fear. ‘What!’ said the master at length, in a faint voice. ‘Please, sir,’ replied Oliver, ‘I want some more.’

The master aimed a blow at Oliver’s head with the ladle; pinioned his arms, and shrieked aloud for the beadle. Mr Bumble rushed into the board in great excitement, and addressed fat gentleman: ‘I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!’

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every face.

‘For more!’ said the fat gentleman. ‘Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me directly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted?’ ‘He did, sir.’ ‘That boy will be hung,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. ‘I know that boy will be hung.’

Nobody challenged this opinion. Oliver was ordered into confinement. A bill the next morning was pasted on the outside gate, offering a reward and five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the parish. ‘I was never more convinced of anything in my life,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, ‘I was never more convinced of anything in my life, than I am that that boy will come to be hung.’
2. The Undertaker

So five pounds and Oliver Twist were offered to anyone who would take Oliver off the parish. Not long after, a chimney sweep went his way down the high street, deeply thinking about how to pay his rent. He could not work out how he could raise the five pounds he needed, and he was cudgelling his brains and his donkey, when, passing the workhouse, his eyes encountered the bill on the gate.

‘This ere boy, wot the parish wants to sell,’ said the chimney sweep. ‘If the parish would like him to learn a right respectable trade in a chimney-sweeping business,’ he said, ‘I am ready to take him.’ ‘Walk in’ said the gentleman with the white waistcoat, and showed him to the board. ‘It’s a nasty trade,’ said the fat gentleman. ‘Young boys have been smothered in chimneys.’

‘That’s all smoke, and no blaze,’ said the sweep. ‘Boys is verry obstinit, and verry lazy, gen’lmen.’

‘Well, I suppose the boy is fond of chimney sweeping?’

‘He dotes on it, your worship,’ replied the Beadle, giving Oliver a sly pinch, to tell him he had better not say he didn’t. The old gentleman looked at the mingled horror and fear on Oliver’s face, and stopped.

‘My boy!’ he exclaimed, as Oliver burst into tears. ‘My boy! You look pale and alarmed. Whatever is the matter?’ Oliver fell on his knees, and clasping his hands together, prayed that they would starve him – beat him – kill him if they pleased – rather than send him away with that dreadful man.

‘Well!’ said Mr Bumble, ‘Well! Of all the artful and deceiving orphans that ever I saw, Oliver, you are the most bare-faced.’ ‘Hold your tongue, Beadle!’ snapped the gentleman. ‘We refuse to sign.’ The next morning, the public were once again informed that five pounds and Oliver Twist would be given to anyone who would take possession of him.

Mr Sowerberry, a tall, gaunt man dressed all in black, an undertaker and coffin-maker, now passed the bill. ‘I think I’ll take the boy’, he thought. And so it was settled.

‘My dear,’ said Mr Sowerberry humbly to his wife, ‘this is the boy from workhouse I told you of.’

‘Dear me!’ said the Undertaker’s wife. ‘He’s very small.’

‘Why, he is rather small,’ looking at Oliver as if it was his fault that he were no bigger. ‘He is small. There’s no denying it. But he’ll grow, Mrs Sowerberry – he’ll grow.’

‘I dare say he will!’ replied the lady pettishly, ‘on our food and our drink. I see no saving in orphans; they always cost more to keep than they’re worth.’ Oliver was given a coffin for his bed, and settled down in awe and dread for the night. Alone and lonely in a strange place, it looked so gloomy and death-like that a cold tremble came over him.

Oliver was awakened in the morning by a loud kicking outside the shop-door, angrily repeated twenty-five times. ‘Open the door, will yer?’ shouted a voice. ‘I spose you’re the new boy, aint yer? How old are yer?’

‘Ten, sir,’ replied Oliver.

‘Ten! I’ll whop yer when you get in, yer just see if I don’t, that’s all, work’us brat! Yer don’t know who I am, I suppose, Work’us?’ said a boy, entering. Oliver replied, trembling: ‘No, sir.’

‘I’m Mister Noah Claypole,’ said the boy, ‘and you’re under me. Take down the shutters, yer idle young ruffian!’ With this, Mr Noah Claypole kicked Oliver, and Mrs Sowerberry said, ‘Let him alone, Noah! What a rum creature you are!’

‘Let him alone!’ said Noah, ‘Let him alone? Why everybody lets him alone. Neither his mother or his father had any trouble at all, to let him alone. Heh, heh, heh!’

As the days passed, Noah Claypole could not think of a worthier purpose than aggravating and tantalising young Oliver Twist. Intent upon amusement, Noah told him he was a sneak and a charity-boy. When this did not produce the desired effect of making Oliver cry, Noah Claypole got personal.

‘Work’Us,’ said Noah, ‘how’s your mother?’

‘She’s dead,’ replied Oliver, ‘don’t you say anything about her to me!’ Oliver’s colour rose as he said this.

‘What did she die of, Work’us?’

‘A broken heart, some nurses told me,’ replied Oliver.

‘Tol de rol lol lol, right lol lairy, Work’us,’ taunted Noah, as a tear rolled down Oliver’s cheek. ‘What’s set you a snivelling now?’

‘Not you’ replied Oliver, hastily brushing a tear away.

‘Oh, not me, eh!’ sneered Noah.

‘No, not you’, replied Oliver sharply. ‘Don’t say anything more to me about her; you better not.’
'Better not!' exclaimed Noah. 'Well! Better not! Now, now, Work’us, don’t be impudent. Yer mother, too! Yer know, Work’Us,' jeered Noah, ‘Yer know, Work’Us, yer must know, it cant be helped now. But yer must know, Work’Us, yer mother was a regular right-down bad’un.’

‘What did you say?’ said Oliver, looking up very quickly.

‘A regular right-down bad-un, Work’Us,’ said Noah, ‘And it’s a great deal better, Work’Us, that she died when she did, or she’d been in prison, or transported for life, or hung, which is more likely than either, isn’t it?’

Crimson with fury, Oliver started up, overthrew the chair and table, seized Noah by the throat, shook him, in the violence of his rage, and collecting his full force into one heavy fist, felled him to the ground. His spirit was roused; the cruel insult to his dead mother had set his blood on fire. He stood glaring over the cowardly tormentor and defied him.

‘Murder! The new boy’s a-murdering me! Help! Help! Oliver’s gone mad!’ blubbered Noah. They all rushed in, pummelling, tearing and beating him, dragging him, struggling and shouting, and locked Oliver in a coffin.

‘Run to Mr Bumble, Noah, and tell him to come here directly, with your black eye!’ said Mrs Sowerberry.

Noah Claypole ran along the streets at his swiftest pace, pell-mell, to Mr Bumble the Beadle.

‘A young boy, almost murdered by young Twist!’ muttered Mr Bumble, as he reached the Undertaker’s shop, and boomed in an impressive tone: ‘Oliver!’

‘Let me out!’ shouted Oliver from inside the coffin.

‘Do you know this here voice, Oliver?! Aint you afraid of it? Aint you a-trembling while I speak?’

‘No,’ shouted Oliver, and thumped ferociously at the coffin. An answer so different from the one he was used to receiving, staggered Mr Beadle. He looked back in mute astonishment.

‘He must be mad, Mr Bumble,’ said Mrs Sowerberry. ‘No boy in half his senses could speak so to you.’

‘It’s not madness, ma’am,’ replied Mr Bumble, with stern emphasis. ‘It’s meat.’

‘Meat?’ exclaimed Mrs Sowerberry.

‘Meat, ma’am, meat,’ replied Mr Bumble. ‘You’ve over-fed him. You’ve raised an artificial spirit in him. What have paupers got to do with spirit? If you’d kept the boy on gruel, this would never have happened.’

‘Dear, dear,’ exclaimed Mrs Sowerberry. ‘This comes of being liberal!’

Mr Sowerberry returned at this instant. Oliver’s offences explained to him, with such exaggerations as thought best to rouse his anger, he unlocked the coffin and dragged the rebellious orphan out, by the collar. Oliver’s clothes had been torn in the beating he had received; his face was bruised and scratched; the angry flush had not disappeared, nor had the scowl: ‘He called my mother names,’ he shouted, undismayed.

‘Well, and what and if he did, you ungrateful little wretch?’ said Mrs Sowerberry, ‘She deserved what he said, and worse.’

‘She didn’t!’ shouted Oliver.

‘She did!’ said Mrs Sowerberry.

‘It’s a lie,’ shouted Oliver. And in a flash, he rushed out through the shutters, and into the open street. Oliver had run away.
3. The Artful Dodger

It was eight o’clock now. Though he was nearly five miles away from the town, he ran, and hid behind the hedges, by turns, till noon: fearing that he might be pursued. Then he sat down to rest by the side of the milestone, and began to think, for the first time, where he had better go and try and live.

The stone by which he was seated read that it was just seventy miles from that spot to London. The name awakened a new train of ideas in the boy’s mind. London! that great large place! nobody not even Mr. Bumble could ever find him there! As these things passed through his thoughts, he jumped upon his feet, and again walked forward.

After days and nights of endless walking, begging in villages and sleeping in the cold, Oliver arrived in London. Upon arriving he met a young boy of his own age. He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age: with rather bowlegs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly, that it threatened to fall off every moment; and would have done so, very often, if the wearer had not had a knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch, which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man’s coat, which reached nearly to his heels. He had turned the cuffs back, half-way up his arm, to get his hands out of the sleeves: apparently with the ultimate view of thrusting them into the pockets of his corduroy trousers; for there he kept them. He was, altogether, as roystering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in his bluchers.

"Hullo, my covey! What’s the row?" said this strange young gentleman to Oliver.

"I am very hungry and tired," replied Oliver: the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. "I have walked a long way. I have been walking these seven days."

"Walking for sivin’ days!" said the young gentleman. "Oh, I see. Come on! You want grub, and you shall have it. Up with you, on your pins. There!"

The boy took Oliver to an inn and fed him handsomely. He offered him lodgings for the remainder of his stay in London, an offer that Oliver could not resist. He soon learned that his new friend was a young Mr Jack Dawkins, and furthermore avowed that among his intimate friends he was better known by the "The Artful Dodger."

Later, they arrived at the lodgings at Islington. A dirtier or more wretched place Oliver had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside.

Oliver was just considering whether he hadn’t better run away, when they reached the bottom of the hill. His conductor, catching him by the arm, pushed open the door of a house near Field Lane; and, drawing him into the passage, closed it behind them. They entered the house and made their way upstairs. In the kitchen they found a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare; and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and a clothes-horse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging. Several rough beds made of old sacks, were huddled side by side on the floor. Seated round the table were four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes, and drinking spirits with the air of middle-aged men. These all crowded about their associate as he whispered a few words to the Jew; and then turned round and grinned at Oliver. So did the Jew himself, toasting-fork in hand.

"This is him, Fagin," said Jack Dawkins; "my friend Oliver Twist."

"You are very glad to see me, Oliver, very," said the Jew. "Dodger, take off the sausages; and draw a tub near the fire for Oliver. Ah, you’re a-staring at the pocket-handkerchiefs! eh, my dear! There are a good many of ’em, ain’t there? We’ve just looked ’em out, ready for the wash; that’s all, Oliver; that’s all! Ha! ha! ha!" Oliver ate his share, and the Jew then mixed him a glass of hot gin and water; telling him he must drink it off directly, because another gentleman wanted the tumbler. Oliver did as he was desired. Immediately afterwards he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks; and then he sunk into a deep sleep.
4. Fagin’s Street Gang

It was late next morning when Oliver awoke, from a sound, long sleep. There was no other person in the room but the old Jew, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast. When the coffee was done, the Jew drew the saucepan to the hob. He then drew forth: as it seemed to Oliver, from some trap in the floor: a small box, which he placed carefully on the table. His eyes glistened as he raised the lid, and looked in. Dragging an old chair to the table, he sat down; and took from it a magnificent gold watch, sparkling with jewels.

"Aha!" said the Jew, shrugging up his shoulders, and distorting every feature with a hideous grin. "Clever dogs! Clever dogs!"

With these, and other muttered reflections of the like nature, the Jew once more deposited the watch in its place of safety. As the Jew uttered these words, his bright dark eyes, which had been staring vacantly before him, fell on Oliver's face; he noted that Oliver had been observing him. He closed the lid of the box with a loud crash; and, laying his hand on a bread knife which was on the table, started furiously up. He trembled very much though; for, even in his terror Oliver could see that the knife quivered in the air.

"What's that?" said the Jew. "What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy! Quick-quick! for your life!"

"I wasn't able to sleep any longer, sir," replied Oliver, meekly. "I am very sorry if I have disturbed you, sir."

"You were not awake an hour ago?" said the Jew, scowling fiercely on the boy.

"No! No, indeed!" replied Oliver.

"Are you sure?" cried the Jew: with a still fiercer look than before: and a threatening attitude.

"Upon my word I was not, sir," replied Oliver, earnestly. "I was not, indeed, sir."

"Tush, tush, my dear!" said the Jew, abruptly resuming his old manner: "Of course I know that, my dear. I only tried to frighten you. You're a brave boy. Hal! hal! you're a brave boy, Oliver!" The Jew rubbed his hands with a chuckle: "Did you see any of these pretty things, my dear?" said the Jew, laying his hand upon it after a short pause.

"Yes, sir," replied Oliver.

"Ah!" said the Jew, turning rather pale. "They- they're mine, Oliver; my little property."

Oliver nodded and asked if he could get up. Fagin showed him to the basin where he washed himself.

Soon, the Dodger returned: accompanied by a very sprightly young friend who was now formally introduced to him as Charley Bates.

"Well," said the Jew, glancing slyly at Oliver, and addressing himself to the Dodger, "I hope you've been at work this morning, my dears?"

"Hard," replied the Dodger.

"As Nails," added Charley Bates.

"Good boys! Good boys!" said the Jew. "What have you got, Dodge?"

"A couple of pocket-books," replied that young gentleman.

"And what have you got, my dear?" said Fagin to Charley Bates.

"Wipes," replied Charley Bates; at the same time producing four pocket-handkerchiefs.

After Charley and the Dodger left, Fagin turned once more to Oliver.

"There, my dear," said Fagin. "That's a pleasant life, isn't it? They've gone out for the day."

"Have they done work, sir?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes," said the Jew; "Make 'em your models, my dear. Make 'em your models. Do everything they bid you, and take their advice in all matters--especially the Dodger's, my dear. He'll be a great man himself, and will make you one too, if you take pattern by him. Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?" said the Jew, stopping short.

"Yes, sir," said Oliver.

"See if you can take it out, without my feeling it: as you saw them do, when we were at play this morning." Oliver held up the bottom of the pocket with one hand, as he had seen the Dodger hold it, and drew the handkerchief lightly out of it with the other.

"Is it gone?" cried the Jew.

"Here it is, sir," said Oliver, showing it in his hand.

"You're a clever boy, my dear," said the playful old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head approvingly. "I never saw a sharper lad. Here's a shilling for you. If you go on, in this way, you'll be the greatest man of the time. And now come here, and I'll show you how to take the marks out of the handkerchiefs'. Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman's pocket in play, had to do with his chances of being a great man. But, thinking that the Jew, being so much his senior, must know best, he followed him quietly to the table, and was soon deeply involved in his new study."
5. Pickpocketing

For many days, Oliver remained in the Jew's room, picking the marks out of the pocket-handkerchiefs, of which a great number were brought home, and sometimes taking part in the game already described. Whenever the Dodger or Charley Bates came home at night, empty-handed, Fagin would curse with great violence about the misery of idle and lazy habits; and would enforce upon them the necessity of an active life, by sending them supperless to bed. But Oliver still wanted to join his new friends. One morning, Oliver obtained the permission he had so eagerly sought. He placed him under the joint guardianship of Charley Bates, and his friend the Artful Dodger.

The three boys sallied out; the Dodger with his coat-sleeves tucked up, and his hat cocked, as usual; Charley Bates sauntering along with his hands in his pockets; and Oliver between them, wondering where they were going. They were just emerging from a narrow court not far from the open square in Clerkenwell when the Dodger made a sudden stop; and, laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again, with the greatest caution and circumspection.

"What's the matter?" demanded Oliver.
"Hush!" replied the Dodger. "Do you see that old cove at the book-stall?"
"The old gentleman over the way?" said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."
"He'll do," said the Dodger.

Oliver looked from one to the other, with the greatest surprise; but he was not permitted to make any inquiries; for the two boys walked stealthily across the road, and slunk close behind the old gentleman towards whom his attention had been directed. Oliver walked a few paces after them; and, not knowing whether to advance or retire, stood looking on in silent amazement. The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking person, with a great coat and gold spectacles. What was Oliver's horror and alarm as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eyelids as wide open as they would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into the old gentleman's pocket, and draw from there a handkerchief!

In an instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs, and the watches, and the jewels, and the Jew, rushed upon the boy's mind. He stood, for a moment, with the blood so tingling through all his veins from terror, that he felt as if he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he took to his heels; and, not knowing what he did, made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground.

This was all done in a minute's space. In the very instant when Oliver began to run, the old gentleman, putting his hand to his pocket, and missing his handkerchief, turned sharp round. Seeing the boy scudding away at such a rapid pace, he very naturally concluded him to be the taker; and, shouting "Stop thief!" with all his might, made off after him, book in hand.

But the man was not the only person to make this cry. Charley Bates and his friend Dodger, being the good citizens that they are, cried "Stop thief!" too.

Stopped at last! A clever blow. He is down upon the pavement; and the crowd eagerly gather around him: each new comer, jostling and struggling with the others to catch a glimpse.

"Make room there for the gentleman!" "Is this the boy, sir?"

Oliver lay, covered with mud and dust, and bleeding from the mouth, looking wildly round upon the heap of faces that surrounded him, when the old gentleman was officiously dragged and pushed into the circle by the foremost of the pursuers.

"Yes," said the gentleman, "I am afraid it is the boy."

A policeman made his way through the crowd and seized Oliver by the collar.

"Come, get up," said the man, roughly.

"It wasn't me indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was two other boys," said Oliver, clasping his hands passionately, and looking round. "They are here somewhere."

"Oh no, they ain't," said the officer. The Dodger and Charley Bates had filed off down the first convenient alley they came to. "Come on, get up!"

"Don't hurt him," said the old gentleman, compassionately.

"Oh no, I won't hurt him," replied the officer.

Oliver, who could hardly stand, made a shift to raise himself on his feet, and was at once lugged along the streets by the jacket-collar, at a rapid pace. The gentleman walked on with them by the officer's side; and as many of the crowd as could achieve the feat, got a little ahead, and stared back at Oliver from time to time. The boys shouted in triumph; and on they went.
6. Mr Fang

The magistrate’s office was a sort of wooden pen where Oliver was deposited, trembling. Behind a bar, at the upper end, sat Mr Fang. Mr Fang was a long-backed, stiff-necked, middle-aged man, with a stern, flushed face, who was in the habit of drinking rather more than was good for him. The old gentleman bowed respectfully and handed his over his business card. Now Mr Fang was in a temper, and looked up with an angry scowl.

‘Who are you?’ said Mr Fang.

The old gentleman pointed to his card, and said, ‘that is my name and address, sir.’

‘Officer!’ said Mr Fang, tossing the card contemptuously away. ‘Who is this fellow?’

‘My name, sir,’ said the old gentleman, ‘is Mr Brownlow.’

‘Officer!’ snarled Mr Fang, ‘what’s this fellow charged with?’

‘He’s not charged at all, sir,’ replied the police officer. ‘He appears against the boy, your worship.’

Appears against the boy, does he?’ said Mr Fang, surveying Mr Brownlow contemptuously from head to foot.

‘Swear him in!’

‘Before I am sworn, I must beg to say one word –’

‘Hold your tongue, sir!’ snapped Mr Fang.

‘I will not, sir!’ replied the old gentleman.

‘Hold your tongue this instant, or I’ll have you turned out of the office!’ said Mr Fang. ‘You’re an insolent, impertinent, impudent fellow. How dare you bully a magistrate!’

‘What!’ exclaimed the old gentleman, reddening.

‘Swear this man!’ said Fang to the clerk. ‘I’ll not hear another word. Swear him!’

Mr Brownlow’s indignation was greatly aroused; but he suppressed his feelings and was sworn at once.

‘Now,’ said Fang, ‘what’s the charge against this boy? What have you got to say, sir?’

‘I was standing at a book-stall –’

‘Hold your tongue, sir,’ said Mr Fang. ‘Policeman! Where’s the policeman? Swear this man. Now, what’s this?’

The policeman related how he had searched Oliver, and found nothing on his person.

‘Are there any witnesses?’ inquired Mr Fang.

‘None, your worship,’ replied the policeman.

Mr Fang sat still for some minutes, then turning to the prosecutor, said in a towering passion: ‘Well, do you mean to state what your complaint against this boy is, man, or do you not? You have been sworn. If you stand there, refusing to give evidence, I’ll punish you for disrespect; I will. Now, what’s your name, you young scoundrel?’

Mr Fang tried to reply, but his tongue failed him. He was deadly pale, and the whole place seemed turning round and round. ‘What’s your name, you hardened scoundrel?’ demanded Fang. ‘Officer, what’s his name?’ Oliver gasped that he needed some water.

‘He says his name’s Sam Waters, your worship,’ said the police officer.

‘Has he any parents?’ asked Fang. ‘He says they died in infancy, your worship,’ replied the police officer.

‘Oh! Yes, I dare say!’ sneered Mr Fang. ‘Come, none of your tricks here, you young vagabond.’

‘No, I think he really is ill, your worship.’

‘Stuff and nonsense!’ said Mr Fang. ‘Don’t try to make a fool of me.’ At which point, Oliver fainted.

‘I knew he was shamming,’ said Fang, as if this was proof. ‘Let him lie there: he’ll soon tire of that.’

‘How do you propose to deal with the case, sir?’ inquired the clerk in a low voice.

‘Summarily,’ replied Mr Fang. ‘He stands committed for three months - hard labour. Clear the court.’

‘Stop, stop! Don’t take him away! For heaven’s sake stop a moment!’

‘What is this? Who is this? Turn this man out. Clear the court!’

‘I will speak!’ cried the man, ‘I will not be turned out. I saw it all. I keep the bookstall. You must hear me.’

‘Swear the man,’ growled Mr Fang. ‘Now, man, what have you got to say?’

‘This,’ said the man, ‘I saw three boys: two others and this here: loitering while this gentleman was reading. The robbery was committed by another boy; this boy was perfectly amazed by it.’

‘Why didn’t you come here before?’ snapped Mr Fang.

‘I hadn’t a soul to mind my shop,’ replied the bookseller. ‘I could get nobody, til five minutes ago, and I’ve run all the way here.’

‘The prosecutor was reading, was he?’ snarled Fang.

‘Yes,’ replied the man, ‘The very book he has in his hand.’

‘Oh, that book, eh?’ sneered Fang. ‘Unpaid for? A likely fellow, to bring a charge against a poor boy!’

‘Damn me!’ cried the old gentleman, ‘Damn me!’

‘Clear the court! Officers, do you hear? Clear the court!’

Mr Brownlow was conveyed out in indignation and rage. Little Oliver Twist lay on his back on the pavement.

‘I’ll help the poor boy. Call a coach, somebody! Dear me, I have this unhappy book still.’ And, carrying little Oliver and the book, away the coach drove.
7. Mr Brownlow

The coach rattled away and stopped before a neat house, in a quiet shady street near Pentonville. Here, a bed was prepared, without loss of time, in which Mr Brownlow saw his young charge carefully and comfortably deposited; and here, he was tended with a kindness and solicitude that knew no bounds.

But, for many days the boy lay stretched on his uneasy bed, dwindling away beneath the dry and wasting heat of fever. Weak, and thin, and pallid, he awoke at last from what seemed to have been a long and troubled dream. Feebly raising himself in the bed, with his head resting on his trembling arm, he looked anxiously around.

"What room is this? Where have I been brought to?" said Oliver. "This is not the place I went to sleep in."

"Hush, my dear," said the old lady softly. "You must be very quiet, or you will be ill again. Lie down again; there's a dear!"

So, Oliver kept very still; partly because he was anxious to obey the kind old lady in all things; and partly, to tell the truth, because he was completely exhausted with what he had already said. He soon fell into a gentle doze, from which he was awakened by the light of a candle: which, being brought near the bed, showed him a gentleman with a very large and loud-ticking gold watch in his hand, who felt his pulse, and said he was a great deal better.

Oliver dozed off again, soon after this; when he awoke, it was nearly twelve o'clock. The old lady tenderly bade him good-night shortly, afterwards, and left him in charge of a fat old woman who had just come: bringing with her, in a little bundle, a small Prayer Book and a large nightcap. Oliver lay awake for some time. The darkness and the deep stillness of the room were very solemn; as they brought into the boy's mind the thought that death had been hovering there, for many days and nights. He turned his face upon the pillow, and fervently prayed to Heaven.

It had been bright day, for hours, when Oliver opened his eyes; he felt cheerful and happy. The crisis of the disease was safely past. He belonged to the world again.

Upon waking, he found the old lady that had been so kind to him previously. She insisted that he took some broth, and his hunger made it difficult to refuse.

"Are you fond of pictures, dear?" inquired the old lady, seeing that Oliver had fixed his eyes, most intently, on a portrait which hung against the wall; just opposite his chair.

"I don't quite know, ma'am," said Oliver, without taking his eyes from the canvas; "I have seen so few, that I hardly know. What a beautiful, mild face that lady's is!"

"Who is it?" asked Oliver.

"Why, really, my dear, I don't know," answered the old lady in a good-humoured manner.

"It is so very pretty," replied Oliver.

There came a soft rap at the door. "Come in," said the old lady; and in walked Mr Brownlow.

"Poor boy, poor boy!" said Mr Brownlow, clearing his throat.

"How do you feel, my dear?"

"Very happy, sir," replied Oliver. "And very grateful indeed, sir, for your goodness to me."

"Good boy," said Mr Brownlow, stoutly. "Have you given him any nourishment, Bedwin? Any slops, eh?"

"He has just had a basin of beautiful strong broth, sir," replied Mrs Bedwin.

"My name is Oliver, sir," replied the little invalid: with a look of great astonishment.

"Oliver," said Mr Brownlow; "Oliver what? Oliver Waters, eh?"

"No, sir, Twist, Oliver Twist."

Mr Brownlow stared at Oliver. The old idea of the resemblance between his features and some familiar face came upon him so strongly, that he could not withdraw his gaze.

"I hope you are not angry with me, sir?" said Oliver, raising his eyes beseechingly.

"No, no," replied the old gentleman. "Why! what's this? Bedwin, look there!"

As he spoke, he pointed hastily to the picture above Oliver's head, and then to the boy's face. There was its living copy. The eyes, the head, the mouth; every feature was the same.

Oliver knew not the cause of this sudden exclamation; for, not being strong enough to bear the start it gave him, he fainted away.
8. Bill Sikes

‘Where’s Oliver?’ said the Jew, rising with a menacing look. ‘Where’s the boy?’
The young thieves eyed him, alarmed at his violence, and looked uneasily at each other. But they made no reply.

‘What’s become of the boy?’ said the Jew, seizing the Dodger tightly by the collar, and threatening him with horrid intimidation. ‘Speak out, or I’ll throttle you!’

‘Why, the cops have got him, and that’s about it,’ said the Dodger sullenly.

‘Why, what the blazes is in the wind now!’ growled a deep voice. ‘I might have know’d, nobody but an infernal, rich, plundering, thundering old Jew. Wot’s it all about, Fagin?’ The man who growled out these words had a black coat, brown hat, dirty handkerchief round his neck, smeared with beer, beard of three day’s growth and two scowling eyes.

‘Wot are you up to? Ill-treatment, you old miser. I wonder they don’t murder you. I would if I was them.’

‘Hush, hush, Mr Sikes. You seem out of humour, Bill,’ pleaded the Jew, trembling. After swallowing two or three glasses of spirits, Sikes heard of Oliver’s capture.

‘I’m afraid,’ said the Jew, ‘that he may say something which will get us into trouble.’

‘That’s very likely. Someone must find out wot’s been done. If he hasn’t peached, and is jailed, there’s no fear til he comes out again. Either that, or we must get hold of him somehow.’ The Jew nodded. Two young lads now entered.

‘The very thing!’ said the Jew, ‘You’ll go, wont you, Nancy, my dear?’

‘Why, you’re just the very person for it,’ reasoned Mr Sikes: ‘nobody knows anything about you.’

‘And as I don’t want ’em to, neither,’ replied Nancy, ‘it’s rather more no than yes with me, Bill.’

‘She’ll go, Fagin,’ said Sikes.

‘No she won’t, Fagin,’ said Nancy.

‘Yes, she will, Fagin,’ said Sikes. And Mr Sikes was right. For Oliver was to be kidnapped.

‘He has not peached so far,’ said the Jew. ‘If he means to blab, we may stop his mouth yet.’

They were happy days, those of Oliver’s recovery. Mr Brownlow gave him new clothes, and summoned him to his study, with a great many books. ‘You shall read them, Oliver, if you like,’ said the kindly Mr Brownlow.

‘Now, I want you to pay great attention, to what I am about to say.’

‘Oh, don’t tell me you are going to send me away, sir!’ exclaimed the alarmed Oliver. ‘Don’t turn me out of doors!’

‘My dear boy,’ said the old gentleman, moved by the boy’s sudden appeal, ‘you need not be afraid of me deserting you, unless you give me cause.’

‘I never, never will, sir,’ said young Oliver.

‘I feel strongly disposed to trust you,’ said Mr Brownlow.

At this moment, there walked into the room, and old gentleman with a long watch-chain, exclaiming: ‘Look here! Do you see this! Orange peel, on the staircase! I’ve been lamed by orange-peel once, and I know orange-peel will be my death at last. It will, sir: it will be my death, or I’ll be content to eat my own head!’

‘This, sir, is the young Oliver Twist,’ said Mr Brownlow.

‘If that’s not the boy who had the orange, and threw this bit of peel on the staircase, I’ll eat my head, sir - and his, too. I never see any difference in boys. I know only two sorts. Mealy boys, and beef-faced boys.’

‘And which is Oliver?’ enquired Mr Brownlow.

‘Mealy. I know a friend who has enquired a beef-faced boy: a horrid boy, with a round head, red cheeks and the appetite of a wolf. The wretch! But now, about that book. Send Oliver with it. He’ll be sure to deliver it safely, you know,’ he said, with a smile.

‘Yes, sir, do let me take it, if you please sir.’ Said Oliver. ‘I’ll run all the way.’

‘You shall, dear boy. I’ll answer for this boy’s truth with my life!’ said Mr Brownlow.

‘And I for his falsehood with my head!’ said Mr Grimwig. So Oliver was given directions to the bookseller.

‘You don’t really expect him to come back, do you?’ enquired Mr Grimwig. ‘If that boy ever returns, I’ll eat my head, sir - and his!’ The two old gentlemen sat, in silence expectation, with the watch between them.

Oliver made his way to the book-stall. He was walking along in his new suit, thinking how happy he felt, when he was startled by a young woman screaming out: ‘Oh, my dear brother!’ And he has hardly looked up, when a pair of arms was thrown tight round his neck.

‘Don’t! Let go of me!’ cried Oliver, ‘Who is it? What are you stopping me for?

‘Oh my gracious!’ said the woman, ‘I’ve found him! Oliver! Oliver! You are naughty! Come home! I’ve found him!’

‘Go home, you little brute! Young wretch!’ said a passer-by.

‘What the devil’s this!’ said a man, bursting out of a beer shop. Young Oliver! Come home to your poor mother, you young dog! Come home directly!’ It was Sikes.
‘I don’t belong to them, I don’t know them! Help!’ cried Oliver, struggling in the powerful man’s grasp. ‘Help!’ repeated Sikes. ‘Yes, I’ll help you, you young rascal. What book is this? You’ve been stealing, have you! Give ‘em here.’ Sikes tore the book from him, and struck him on the head. ‘That’s right!’ cried a looker-on, from a window. ‘That’s the only way of bringing him to his senses!’ ‘It’ll do him good!’ cried the passer-by.

Weak with recent illness; stupefied by the blows and the suddenness of the attack; terrified of the brutality of the man; overpowered by the conviction of the bystanders that he really was a wretch; what could one poor child do? Darkness had set in; no help was near; resistance was useless. In a moment he was dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow courts.

The two old gentlemen sat persevering in the silence, with the watch between them.
9. Robbery

It was a chill, damp, windy night, when the Jew, buttoning up his great-coat, pulling the collar up over his ears so as to completely obscure his face, emerged from his den. He slunk down the street as quickly as he could. The house to which Oliver had been conveyed was in Whitechapel. The Jew struck off in the direction of Spitalfields. The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets, the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it benefited such a being as the Jew to be about. He glided stealthily along, the hideous old man creeping like some loathsome reptile in slime and darkness, until he reached Bethnal Green. He hurried through the alleys, then knocked at a door.

‘Only me, Bill; only me, my dear,’ said the Jew.

‘Bring your body in, then. Lie down, you stupid brute! Don’t you know the devil when he’s got a great-coat on?’ His dog had been deceived by Fagin’s coat.

‘Now, wot about this robbery? I want a boy, and he mustn’t be a big’un,’ growled Sikes.

‘Wot about Oliver? He’s just the size you want. That is, if you frighten him enough.’

‘Frighten him!’ echoed Sikes, ‘If he says anything, you won’t see him alive again, Fagin!’

‘I’ve thought of it all. Once let him feel he is one of us – once fill his head with the idea he is a thief – and he’s ours! Ours for life! Oh! It couldn’t have come about better!’ Fagin rejoiced.

‘So you’ve got the kid,’ said Sikes. ‘Yes, here he is,’ said Nancy guiltily. ‘Did he come quiet?’ enquired Sikes. ‘Like a lamb,’ said Nancy.

‘I’m glad to hear it, or he’d have suffered for it,’ said Sikes, looking grimly at Oliver. ‘Do you know wot this is?’ he asked, taking up a pistol which he layed on the table. Oliver replied he did.

‘Well then, look ’ere. This is gunpowder; that ’ere’s a bullet. Now it’s loaded. If you speak a word, that’ll be in your head. D’you hear me?’

‘The long and short of it is,’ said Nancy, ‘if you’re crossed by him, you’ll prevent him telling tales after by shooting him in the head, and will take your chance of swinging for it.’

‘That’s it. Women can always put things in fewest words,’ said Sikes.

It was a cheerless morning when they got into the street, raining hard. Pubs were already open. Workers went to work: men and women with fish-baskets on their heads, donkey-carts laden with vegetables, horse-carts laden with whole carcasses of meat; milk-women with pails. As they approached the City, the noise and traffic increased: by Shoreditch, it swelled into a roar of sound and bustle, a discordant tumult that filled Oliver Twist with amazement. It was market-morning. Ankle-deep in filth and mire, thick steam mingled with fog and smoke from the chimney tops. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers and vagabonds of every low grade were mingled together in the mass; the whistling of dogs, the bellowing of the oxen, the droning of clocks, the crying of hawking boys, the hideous din that resounded from every corner of the market; the unwashed, unshaven, squalid, dirty figures running to and for, bursting in and out of the throng, rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses. Sikes, dragging Oliver after him, elbowed his way through the thickest of the crowd, until they were clear of the turmoil and into Holborn.

‘Don’t lag behind, lazylegs!’ shouted Sikes. Eventually, after walking all day, they came to a solitary house, all ruined and decayed, dismantled and uninhabited. Toby Crackitt now joined Sikes and Oliver. By now, it was nightfall, intensely dark. The fog was now much heavier than it had been. After walking yet more miles, the church bell struck two. Some hoarse barking of dogs occasionally broke the silence of the night. But there was nobody about. They stopped before a grand house surrounded by a wall. Sikes hoisted Oliver over the wall.

Now, almost mad with grief and terror, Oliver saw that housebreaking and robbery, if not murder, were the aims of the expedition. A mist came before his eyes, his limbs failed him, and he sank to his knees.

‘Get up!’ whispered Sikes in rage, drawing his pistol, ‘Get up, or I’ll stew your brains on the grass.’

‘Let me go,’ cried Oliver, ‘let me run away and die in the fields! I will never come near London, never! Have mercy on me, and do not make me steal!’

Sikes swore a dreadful oath and aimed his pistol, when Crackitt stopped him. Invoking terrible curses on Fagin for sending Oliver on such an errand, used the crowbar to open a little window of the grand house. ‘Get in, and unfasten the door from the inside’, whispered Sikes. Oliver, more dead than alive, gasped out ‘Yes.’ Sikes, pointing at him with his pistol, said that if he faltered, he would fall dead in an instant. Oliver was inside the house.

‘Come back!’ suddenly cried Sikes aloud. ‘Back! Back!’ Scared by the sudden breaking of the dead stillness, Oliver knew not whether to advance or flee.

The cry was repeated – a light appeared – a vision of two terrified half-dressed men at the top of the stairs swam before his eyes – a flash – a loud noise – a smoke – a crash somewhere, but where he knew not, and he staggered back.
Sikes had disappeared for an instant; but he was up again, and had him by the collar before the smoke had cleared away. He fired his own pistol after the men, who were already retreating, and dragged the boy up. ‘Clasp your arm tighter. They’ve hit him. Quick! How the boy bleeds!’

There came the loud ringing of a bell, mingled with the noise of firearms, and the shouts of the men, and the sensation of being carries over uneven ground at a rapid pace. And then the noises grew confused in the distance, and a cold deadly feeling crept over the boy’s heart, and he saw or heard no more.
10. The Fever

‘Wolves tear your throats!’ muttered Sikes, grinding his teeth. ‘I wish I was among you: you’d howl the hoarser for it.’ As Sikes growled this curse, with the most desperate ferocity he was capable of, he rested the body of the wounded boy across his knee, and turned his head, for an instant, to look back at his pursuers. There was little to be made out, in the mist and darkness, but the loud shouting of men vibrated through the air, and the barking of dogs, roused by the alarm bell, resounded in every direction.

‘Stop, you white-liver’d hound,’ shouted the robber to Toby Crackit, who was ahead, ‘Stop!’

‘It’s all up, Bill!’ cried Toby, ‘drop the kid, and show ‘em your heels.’ Crackit, preferring the chance of being shot by his friend, to the certainty of being taken by his enemies, turned tail and darted off at full speed. Sikes clench’d his teeth, took one look round, left Oliver in a ditch, threw his cloak over him, cleared a hedge in a bound, and was gone.

Three round men with their hounds came up in the hedge in hot pursuit.

‘You are afraid, Mr Brittles,’ said one man.

‘I ain’t, Mr Giles,’ said Mr Brittles.

‘You are,’ said Giles.

‘That’s a lie, Mr Giles.’

‘You’re a falsehood, Mr Brittles.’

A third man brought the dispute to a close: ‘I’ll tell you what, gentleman. We’re all afraid.’

Upon which, all three faced about, across the misty moor, and ran back to the grand house.

Morning drew on, and the air became more sharp and piercing, as the light glimmered faintly in the sky. Rain came down, thick and fast, but Oliver felt it not, as it beat against him, for he still lay stretched, helpless and unconscious in the ditch. A low cry of pain broke the stillness, and uttering it, the boy awoke. His left arm hung heavy and useless at his side, saturated with blood. He was so weak, he could hardly raise himself into a sitting posture, and looking round feebly for help, groaned with pain. Trembling in every joint, from cold and exhaustion, urged by a creeping sickness at his heart, which warned him that if he lay there, he would surely die, he got to his feet, and dizzily tried to walk. Staggering and stumbling on, he knew not where, hosts of bewildering and confused ideas came crowding in on his mind. He seemed still to be walking with Sikes, angrily cursing, and felt the robber’s grasp on his wrist. Uneasily, painfully, tormented, he staggered on, till he reached a road and a house. They might take pity on him, and if they did not, it would be better, he thought, to die near human beings, than in the lonely open fields. He summoned all his strength for one last trial, and faltered to the wall. That garden wall! It was the very house they attempted to rob. Oliver felt such fear, that he forgot the agony of his wound, and tottered.

Brittles and Giles came out. ‘A boy!’ exclaimed Mr Giles. ‘Brittles, look here! One of the thieves! Here’s a thief! Wounded, miss! I shot him, and Brittles held the light!’

‘Is the poor creature hurt?’ asked a young lady.

‘Wounded desperate, miss;’ said Brittles.

‘Treat him kindly, Giles, for my sake!’ And so old Giles helped to carefully carry Oliver up the stairs.

‘He doesn’t look very ferocious,’ said the doctor in a whisper. Instead of a dogged ruffian, there lay a mere child, worn with pain and exhaustion, and sunk in a deep sleep.

‘This poor child can never have been the pupil of robbers!’ cried the lady.

‘Crime,’ sighed the surgeon, ‘like death, Miss Maylie, is not confined to adults alone.’

‘But can you really believe that this delicate boy has been the associate of the worst outcasts in society?’ said Rose. ‘But even if he has been wicked, think how young he is: think he may have never known a mother’s love, or comfort of a home, that ill-usage has driven him to men who forced guilt on him.’

For many weeks, Oliver had a fever as well as a broken limb. But slowly he began to get better, and say in a few tearful words how grateful he was with his whole heart and soul. Three months glided by, with the most amiable generosity from Miss Rose Maylie, and the most heart-felt gratitude from Oliver Twist: three months of unmingled happiness.

Spring fled swiftly by, and summer came. Rose fell ill: her face changed to a marble whiteness, and an anxious, wild look came over her soft blue eyes. The doctor said it would be nothing short of a miracle if she recovered. Oliver trembled with cold drops of terror from his brow, to think of something so dreadful. The suspense, the fearful suspense of standing idly by while the life of one we love is trembling in the balance! The racking thoughts that crowd upon the mind, make the heart beat violently, the desperate anxiety to be doing something to relieve the pain, or lessen the danger, the sinking of soul and spirit! What torments can equal these? Oliver’s little heart sank as he heard Rose had fallen into a deep sleep, from which she would either wake, to recovery and life, or bid them farewell, and die. They sat listening, afraid to speak, for hours.

‘What of Rose? My dear child! She is dead!’ cried old Mrs Maylie. ‘No!’ cried the doctor, ‘She will live, for years to come!’ The old lady and Oliver sank to their knees in thanksgiving.
11. Nancy

Lying in bed, weak from the fever after the robbery, Sikes was taking gin, and pushed his glass forward towards Nancy to be replenished for a third or fourth time. Nancy sat by, watching until the housebreaker should drink himself asleep, and there was an usual paleness in her cheek, that even Fagin and Sikes observed with astonishment.

‘Why Nance,’ exclaimed the Jew, ‘how pale you are!’

‘Pale!’ echoed the girl, shading her eyes with her hands, as if to look steadily at him.

‘Quite horrible,’ said the Jew, ‘What have you been doing to yourself?’

‘Nothing that I know of, except being here in this place for I don’t know how long and all,’ replied the girl.

‘Why, burn my body! You look like a corpse come back to life, Nance. Wot’s the matter?’ growled Sikes.

‘Matter!’ replied the girl. ‘Nothing. What do you look at me so hard for?’

‘What foolery is this?’ demanded Sikes, grasping her by the arm, and shaking her roughly. ‘What is it? What are you thinking of?’

‘Of many things, Bill. But lord! What odds in that?’

‘I tell you wot it is,’ said Sikes, ‘if you haven’t caught the fever, now, there’s something more than usual in the wind, and something dangerous too. There ain’t a stauncher-hearted girl, or I’d have cut her throat months ago. She’s got the fever coming; that’s it.’ Sikes’ eyes closed; opened; closed, slumped to sleep.

‘At last - the drug has taken effect,’ murmured the girl, as she rose from the bedside. ‘I may be too late, even now.’ She hastily dressed herself, and looking fearfully around, as if, despite the sleeping drug, she expected to feel the pressure of Sikes’ heavy hand on her shoulder; then, stooping softly over the bed, she kissed the robber’s lips, opening and closing the room door with noiseless touch, hurried from the house.

Nancy’s life had been squandered in the streets, and among the most noisome stews and dens of London, but there was spirit left in her still. She felt burdened with the sense of her own deep shame, but struggling with that was a feeble gleam of pride and humanity that her wasted life had obliterated so many traces of, since Fagin had taken her in as a child. Now at house of Rose Maylie, she was asked in.

‘It’s a hard matter to get to see you, lady,’ said Nancy.

‘I am very sorry if any one has behaved harshly to you,’ replied Rose. ‘I am who you inquired for.’

The kind tone of this answer, the sweet voice, the gentle manner, took Nancy completely by surprise.

‘Oh, lady, lady! If there was more like you, there would be fewer like me – there would – there would!’

‘Sit down,’ said Rose earnestly, ‘if you are in poverty or affliction, I am glad to relieve you, if I can.’

‘Is the door shut? For I am about to put my life, and the lives of others, in your hands. I am the girl that dragged little Oliver back to old Fagin’s, on the night he went from the house to the bookseller. I am the creature you have heard of, who lives among the thieves, and have never from my first moment on London streets known any better life! Thank heaven that you had friends to care for you in your childhood, and that you were never in the midst of cold, and riot and drunkenness, as I have been from my childhood. The alley and the gutter were mine, as they shall be my death-bed!’

‘I pity you!’ cried Rose, in a broken voice ‘it pities my heart to hear you!’

‘Now to the quick. I overheard Fagin striking a bargain with a man named Monks. If Oliver was got back he should have a certain sum of money; and he was to have more for making him a thief. Monks said: “So, the only proofs of the boy’s identity lie at the bottom of the river.” They laughed, and talked of his success, for what a game it was to have brought down the boast of the father’s will, by driving Oliver though every jail in town, then hauling him up to hang for some crime for the death penalty, which Fagin could easily manage, after having made a good profit from him besides. “In short, Fagin,” he says, “Jew as you are, you never laid such snares as I have for my young brother, Oliver.”

‘His brother!’ exclaimed Rose.

‘Those were his words,’ said Nancy, glancing uneasily around, as a vision of Sikes haunted her perpetually.

‘And more. When he spoke of you and if Oliver should come into your hands, he laughed, and said there was some comfort in that too, for how many thousands and thousands of pounds would you give to know who Oliver was. But now I must get back quickly, to avoid suspicion of such an errand as this.’

‘But what can I do?’ said Rose, ‘Back? Why do you wish to return to such terrible companions?’

‘I wish to go back,’ said Nancy, ‘I must go back, because – how can I tell such things to an innocent lady like you – because among the men I have told you of, there is one: the most desperate among them all: that I can’t leave; no, not even to be saved from the life I am leading now.’

‘You came here, at so great a risk, to tell me what you have heard; let me believe you can be saved!’

‘Lady, you are the first who ever blessed me with such words as these, and if I had heard them years ago, they might have turned me from a life of sin and sorrow; but it is too late, it is too late!’ cried Nancy.

‘It is never too late for forgiveness and atonement!’ cried Rose.

‘I promise you, every Sunday night, from eleven until the clock strikes twelve,’ said Nancy, ‘I will walk on London Bridge if I am alive.’ And before Rose could console her, or convince her to stay, she was gone.
12. Murder

Adept as she was in all the arts of concealment and pretence, Nancy could not entirely conceal her mind. Both Fagin and Sikes had confided to her schemes hidden from others, in the confidence that she was beyond suspicion. Her mental struggles between fears for Sikes and her bitterness for Fagin, who had led her, step by step, deeper and deeper, down an abyss of crime and misery, from which there was no escape. She grew pale and thin, silent and dejected.

It was Sunday night, and the bell of the church struck eleven. Nancy got up to leave Sikes’ room.

‘Hallo!’ cried Sikes. ‘Nance. Where’s the gal going to at this time of night?’

‘Not far.’

‘Wot answer’s that?’ returned Sikes. ‘Where are you going?’

‘I say, not far.’

‘And I say where?’ retorted Sikes. ‘Do you hear me?’

‘I don’t know where,’ replied the girl.

‘Then I do,’ said Sikes, ‘Nowhere. Sit down.’

‘I’m not well. I told you that before,’ rejoined the girl. ‘I want a breath of air.’

‘Put your head out the winder,’ replied Sikes.

‘There’s not enough. I want it in the street,’ said the girl. ‘I’m going.’

‘She’s out of her senses, Fagin, or she daren’t talk to me in that way,’ growled Sikes.

‘You’ll drive me on to something desperate,’ muttered Nancy, ‘Let me go – this instant.’

‘No!’ said Sikes.

‘Tell him to let me go, Fagin. He had better. It’ll be better for him. Do you hear me?’ cried Nancy, stamping her foot.

‘Cut my limbs off one by one!’ cried Sikes, seizing her roughly by the arm. ‘If I don’t think the girl’s stark raving mad.’ He locked her in a small room, where she struggled and implored til twelve o clock, and then, wearied and exhausted, ceased to contest the point any further. With a caution, backed by oaths, Sikes left her to recover: ‘Phew!’ said the housebreaker, wiping the perspiration from his face. ‘Wot a precious strange girl that is!’

The following Sunday night, the church clock chimed three quarters past eleven, as two figures emerged on London Bridge. One, with swift and rapid step, was Nancy; the other slunk along in the deepest shadow at a distance: stopping when she stopped; and as she moved again, creeping stealthily on. At the centre of the bridge, she stopped. Her follower stopped too. It was a very dark night. A mist hung on the river. Midnight tolled. A young lady and old gentleman came up in a carriage.

‘Not here,’ said Nancy hurriedly. ‘I’m afraid to speak to you here. Come away, down to the steps!’

‘This is far enough’ said the old gentleman. ‘Many would have distrusted you too much to have come.’

‘Horrible thoughts of death, and coffins, and a fear that made me burn up as if I was on fire, are on me.’

‘You were not here last Sunday night,’ said the gentleman.

‘I couldn’t come,’ said Nancy, ‘I was kept by force.’

‘I firmly believe you. We propose to extract the secret, whatever it may be, from this man Monks. But if he cannot be secured, you must deliver up the Jew.’

‘Fagin! I will not do it! I will never do it!’ Nancy replied. ‘Devil that he is, and worse than devil as he has been to me, I will never do that.’

‘You will not? Tell me why?’

‘For one reason, because, bad life as he has led, I have led a bad life too, and there are many of us who kept the same course together, and I’ll not turn on them, who might have turned on me, but didn’t.’

‘Put Monks into my hands, and leave him to me to deal with. If the truth is forced from him, the rest are free.’

‘And if it is not?’ suggested the girl.

‘Then,’ pursued the gentleman, ‘Fagin would not be brought to justice without your consent.’ After this assurance, she explained the hiding place, and when Monks would be there, and what he looked like: ‘He is tall, with a lurking walk, with deep-sunk eyes, and discoloured teeth, and on his throat there is –’

‘- a broad red mark, like a burn?’ asked the gentleman.

‘How’s this’ said the girl. ‘You know him?’

‘I think I do, said the gentleman. ‘We shall see. It may not be. Now, what can I do to serve you?’

‘Nothing,’ replied Nancy.

‘You will not persist in saying that. Think now. Tell me. Do not put yourself out of hope and safety.’

‘Look before you, at the dark water. How many times do you read of such as I in the tide, who leave no living thing to bewail them? It may only be months, but I shall come to that at last. May it never reach your ears,’ said Nancy.

‘This purse,’ cried the young lady, ‘Take it for my sake, that you have some resource in your our of need.'
'No!' replied Nancy, 'I have not done this for money. Let me have that to think of. Night! Good night!' In violent agitation, and the fear of some discovery that would mean violence, Nancy left in anguish. Rose Maylie lingered, but the old gentleman drew her away. The astonished listener remained motionless, then with cautious glances around, crept slowly away and then, at the utmost speed, the Artful Dodger made for the Jew’s house as fast as his legs would carry him.

In the dead of night, nearly two hours before daybreak, when the streets are silent and deserted, at this still and silent hour, Fagin sat watching in his old lair, with face so distorted, and eyes so bloodshot, that he looked less like a man than some hideous phantom. Mortification at the girl; utter distrust of the sincerity of her refusal to yield him up; fear of detection, ruin and death; and a fierce and deadly rage kindled by all—these were his evil thoughts working at his black heart. The bell rang, and Sikes appeared. ‘Hell’s fire!’ cried Sikes, when he had heard, breaking fiercely, wildly and furiously from the Jew. ‘Let me out,’ bellowed Sikes, ‘Don’t speak to me; it’s not safe. Let me out, I say.’ ‘Hear me speak a word,’ rejoined Fagin, ‘You won’t be too—You won’t be too—violent, Bill?’ There was light enough for the men to see each other’s faces. They exchanged glances: a fire in the eyes of both, which could not be mistaken. ‘I mean,’ said Fagin, ‘not too violent for safety. Be crafty, Bill, and not too bold.’

Looking before him with savage resolution, teeth so compressed that the strained jaw seemed starting through his skull, the robber held on his headlong course, strode up the stairs, entered his room and double-locked the door. The girl was lying half-asleep. She raised herself with a startled look. ‘Get up,’ said the man. ‘It is you Bill!’ said the girl in pleasure. There was a candle burning, but the man hurled it down. ‘So be it,’ said Sikes, ‘There’s light enough for wot I’ve got to do.’ ‘Bill,’ said the girl, in a voice of alarm, ‘why do you look like that at me!’ The robber looked at her for a few seconds with dilated nostrils and a heaving chest, and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and looking towards the door, placed his hand upon her mouth. ‘Bill, Bill!’ gasped the girl, wrestling with mortal fear: ‘I—I wont scream or cry—not once—hear me—speak to me—tell me what I have done!’ ‘You know wot, you she devil!’ returned the robber, suppressing his breath. ‘You were watched tonight; every word you said was heard.’ ‘Then spare my life for the love of heaven, as I spared yours,’ rejoined the girl, clinging to him. ‘Bill, dear Bill, you cannot have the heart to kill me. Save yourself this crime; stop before you spill my blood! I have been true to you, on my guilty soul I have!’

The man struggled violently to release her arms, but the arms of the girl were clasped round his. He freed one arm, and grasped his pistol, and beat it twice with all the force he could summon, on the upturned face that almost touched his own. She staggered and fell; nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead. It was a ghastly figure to look on. The murderer seized a heavy club and struck her dead.
13. The Lynch Mob

Of all the bad deeds that under the cover of darkness had been committed in London, that was one of the worst. Of all the horrors, that was one of the foulest and most cruel.

Sikes got out of London to Hampstead Heath by high-road. Where could he go, that was near and not too public, to get some meat and drink? All people seemed to view him with suspicion. He wandered over miles and miles of ground, and morning and noon passed. Still he rambled to and fro, up and down, round and round. As he passed by, he heard whispers: ‘I heard talk of a murder, down Spitalfields way. And a dreadful murder it was.’ He went on doggedly, but as he plunged into the solitude and darkness of the road, he felt a dread and awe creeping on him which shook him to the core. Every object before him, substance or shadow, still or moving, took the semblance of some fearful thing. Let no one talk of murderers escaping justice: there were twenty violent deaths in one long minute of that agony of fear. There was a shed in a field he passed, that offered shelter from the dark night. Now a terrible vision came before him. Widely staring eyes appeared in the darkness. There were but two, but they were everywhere, torturing him. He was in such terror as none but he can know, trembling in every limb, cold sweat starting from every pore, when suddenly there arose on the night-wind the noise of distant shouting, and the roar of voices mixed with alarm and wonder. Any sound of men in that lonely place conveyed alarm and danger, and he sprang to his feet, and rushed into the open air. He heard voices saying, ‘He’s gone to Birmingham, they say. But they’ll have him yet, for the scouts are out, and by tomorrow night there’ll be a cry through all the country.’ He hurried on, and walked til he dropped, and had a broken, uneasy sleep. He wandered on again, undecided, and oppressed with fear of another solitary night. Suddenly, he took the desperate resolution of going back to London.

‘There’s somebody to speak to there, at any rate,’ he thought. ‘A good hiding place, too. They’ll never expect to nab me there, after this country scent. Why can’t I lie by for a week or so, forcing money out of Fagin, and get abroad to France. Damn me, I’ll risk it.’

White-faced, sunken-eyed, hollow-cheeked, with wasted flesh, and short, thick breath: the very ghost of Sikes arrived in London at Fagin’s den. ‘Damn you all!’ said Sikes, passing his hand across his forehead, ‘Have you nothing to say to me?’ There was uneasy movement among them, but nobody spoke. ‘Tonight’s paper says that Fagin’s took. Is it true, or a lie?’ ‘True.’ They were silent again.

‘Is the body buried?’ he growled. They shook their heads.

‘Why isn’t it?’ he retorted. ‘Wot do they keep such ugly things above the ground for?’

‘Let him go into some other place,’ said the Dodger.

‘Dodger,’ said Sikes, ‘Don’t you – don’t you know me?’

‘Don’t come nearer me,’ answered the boy, looking with horror in the murderer’s eyes. ‘You monster! I’m not afraid of him – if they come after him, I’ll give him up, I will. He may kill me for it, but if I’m alive I’ll give him up. Murder! Help! Murder! To hell with him!’

Pouring out these cries, accompanied with violent blows, the boy actually threw himself single-handed on the strong man, and in the intensity of his energy and suddenness of his surprise, brought him heavily to the ground. The contest was too unequal to last long. Sikes had him down, with a knee on his throat, when the cries and fire from a Lynch mob poured in from outside.

‘Help!’ shouted the boy, in a voice that split the air. ‘He’s in here! Break down the door!’

‘Damn you!’ cried the desperate ruffian, menacing the crowd. ‘Do your worst! I’ll cheat you yet!’

The infuriated mob roared to the officers to shoot him dead. Voices took up the cry for a ladder, and hundreds echoed it. Some called for ladders, some for sledgehammers, some roared and some lit more torches; all pressed forward in a throng of angry madmen.

‘Give me a rope, a long rope,’ cried the murderer. ‘I may drop into Folly ditch, and clear off that way. Give me a rope, or I shall do more murders.’ Panic-stricken, the boys pointed to a rope, and the murderer hurried up to the roof. He looked out over the roof-tops. The tide was out, the ditch a bed of mud. The crowd roared and cursed, and it seemed as if the whole city had poured out its population to curse him. The cries and shrieks of those who were pressed almost to suffocation, or trampled down and trodden under foot in the confusion, were dreadful. The ferocity of the crowd meant the impossibility of escape. He sprang up, determined to make one last effort for his life by dropping into the ditch and escaping in the confusion. Roused to new strength and energy, he set his foot against the stack of chimneys, and rested one end of the rope firmly round it, and with the other made a strong noose, so he could let himself down to the ground. At that very instant, he uttered a yell of terror: ‘The eyes again!’ in an unearthly screech. Staggering as if struck by lightning, he lost his balance and tumbled off the chimney. The noose was on his neck. It ran with his weight, swift as an arrow, twenty metres, and tightened like a bowstring. The old chimney quivered with the shock, but stood bravely before giving way. The murderer hung lifeless, then fell, striking his head against a stone, and dashed his brains out.
14. The Trial

The Artful Dodger sauntered into court for his trial, with his big coat sleeves tucked up as usual, his left hand in his pocket, his hat in his hand, with an indescribable rolling walk across to the dock, where he requested in a loud voice to know what he was placed in this ‘ere disgraceful situation for. He was charged with attempting to pick a pocket, and being found with a silver snuffbox on him - the sentence was transportation for life to Australia if the verdict was guilty. The Artful said he’d never make a lifer.

‘Hold your tongue, will you?’ said the jailer.

‘I’m an Englishman, ain’t I?’ rejoined the Dodger, ‘Where are my privileges?’

‘You’ll get your privileges soon enough,’ retorted the jailer, ‘and pepper with ‘em.’

We’ll see wot the Secretary of State for Home Affairs has got to say to the cops, if I don’t,’ replied the Dodger. ‘Now then! Wot is this ‘ere business? I’ll thank the magistrates not to keep me while they read the paper, for I’ve got an appointment with a gentleman in the city, and as I’m a man of my word, and very punctual in business matters.’

At this point, the Dodger commanded the jailer to communicate the names of those two witnesses. This tickled the spectators’ sense of humour. His partner-in-crime, Charlie Bates, was in the gallery. ‘Ha Ha ha!’ cried Charlie Bates with laughter, ‘Wot a game! Wot a regular game! All the big-wigs trying to look solemn, and Lummy Jack addressing them as intimate and comfortable as if he was the judge’s own son making a speech after dinner! What a distinction, Dodge, to be lagged at that time of life! Ha! Ha! Ha!’

‘Silence there!’ cried the jailer.

‘What is this?’ snapped the judge.

‘A pick-pocketing case, your worship,’ said the police officer.

‘Has the boy ever been here before?’ said Fang.

‘He ought to have been, many times,’ replied the officer. ‘He has been pretty well everywhere else. I know him well, your honour.’

‘Oh! You know me, do you?’ cried the Artful, making a note of the statement. ‘Very good! That’s a case of defamation of character!’

Here there was another uproarious laugh from the gallery, and another cry of silence from the judge.

‘Now then, where are the witnesses?’ said the clerk.

‘Ah! That’s right,’ added the Dodger, ‘Where are they? I should like to see ‘em.’

His wish seemed to be immediately granted, for a policeman stepped forward who had seen the prisoner attempt the pocket of an unknown gentlemen in a crowd, and had taken a handkerchief. For this reason, he took the Dodger into custody as soon as he could get near him, and the Dodger, being searched, had on his person a silver snuffbox, with the owner’s name engraved on the lid. This gentleman was also present as a witness, swore the snuffbox was his, and that he had lost it in the crowd. He had also seen a suspicious young boy, the boy who was the prisoner in the dock.

‘Have you anything to ask this witness, boy?’ said the judge.

‘I wouldn’t stoop so low as to hold conversation with him,’ replied the Dodger.

‘Have you anything to say at all?’ said the judge.

‘Do you hear - his worship asked if you’ve anything to say at all,’ said the jailer, nudging the silent Dodger with his elbow.

‘Excuse me,’ said the Dodger, ‘did you address yourself to me, my man?’

‘I never seen such an out-and-out young vagabond, your worship,’ observed the officer with a grin. ‘Do you mean to say anything, you young shaver?’

‘No,’ replied the Dodger, ‘not here, for this ain’t the shop for justice; besides, my lawyer is a-breakfasting this morning with the Vice President of the House of Commons; but I shall have something to say elsewhere, and so will he.’

‘There! He’s fully committed,’ interrupted the judge. ‘Transportation for life. Take him away’.

‘Come on,’ said the jailer.

‘Eh-oh! I’ll come on,’ replied the Dodger, brushing his hat with the palm of his hand, ‘it’s no use looking frightened; I won’t show you no mercy. You’ll pay for this, my fine fellows. I wouldn’t be you for anything! I wouldn’t go free now, if you was to fall down on your knees and beg me to be released. Here, carry me off to prison! Take me away!’

With these words the Dodger let himself be carried off, threatening, til he got out, to make a Parliamentary business of it; then grinning in the officer’s face, with great glee and self-approval.

Charlie Bates sped off, to announce the animating news that the Dodger was doing full justice to the criminal justice system, giving them a taste of their own medicine, and establishing for himself a glorious reputation, as he was sentenced to be transported for life across the oceans, all the way the other end of the world, Australia.
15. The Condemned Cell

The court was paved from roof to floor with human faces. Inquisitive and eager eyes peered from every inch of space. From the dock to the galleries, all looks were fixed on one man – Fagin. He stood in all this glare of living light, with his hand cupped to his ear to hear every word that fell from the judge who was delivering his charge to the jury. The jurymen considered their verdict. He could see people whispering with looks of abhorrence. In no one face could he read the faintest sympathy. Death-like stillness came. At length there was a cry of silence, and breathless look from all towards the door. The jury returned, and passed him close. He could glean nothing from their faces; they might as well have been of stone. Perfect stillness ensued – not a rustle – not a breath – Guilty.

The building rang with a tremendous shout, and another, and another, then echoed and gathered strength as they swelled out, like angry thunder. It was joy from the people outside, greeting the news that he would die on Monday. They led him to one of the condemned cells, and left him there - alone.

To be hanged by the neck, til he was dead – that was the end. To be hanged by the neck til he was dead. As it became very dark, he began to think of all the men he had known who had died on the scaffold, some of them through his means. They rose up, in quick succession; he could hardly count them. He had seen them die – joked too, because they died with prayers on their lips. How they rattled as they choked! How quickly they changed from men to dangling heaps of clothes! Some of them might have inhabited that very cell – sat on that very spot. It was very dark – why didn’t they bring a light? Scores of men must have passed their last hours there. It was like sitting in a vault strewn with dead bodies – the faces he knew – light, light! At length, his hands were raw with beating against the heavy door. Then came night – dark, dismal, silent night. Other watchers are glad to hear the church-clocks strike, for they tell of life and coming day. To him they brought despair. The boom of every iron bell came with one deep, hollow sound – Death. He had only one night more to live. And as he thought of this, the day broke – Sunday. It was not until the night of this last, awful day, that a withering sense of his helpless, desperate state came in full intensity to his blighted soul. He started up, in such a turmoil of fear and wrath that other prisoners recoiled from him in horror. The tortures of his evil conscience grew terrible in his last night in the condemned cell.

He had been wounded with some missiles from the crowd on the day of his capture, and his head was badly bandaged with cloth. His hair hung down on his bloodless face; his beard was torn, and twisted into knots; his eyes shone with a terrible light; his unwashed flesh crackled with the fever that burnt him up. Eight-nine-ten. If this was not a trick to frighten him, and those were real hours treading on one another’s heels, then where would he be? Eleven!

At the visitor’s entrance to the jail, Mr Brownlow and Oliver appeared. A jailer showed them down the labyrinthine stony passages. The condemned criminal was seated on his bed, rocking himself from side to side, with a face more like a snared beast than a man.

‘Good boy, Dodger, well done – ’ he mumbled. Oliver too, ha! Ha! Ha! Oliver too – quite the gentleman now – quite the gent.’ The jailer whispered to Oliver not to be alarmed. Fagin was muttering: ‘Do you hear me, some of you? He has been the cause of all this. It’s worth the money to bring him up – never mind the girl, Bill. Saw his head off!’

‘Fagin,’ said the jailer, ‘Here’s somebody to see you. Fagin!’

‘That’s me!’ cried the Jew, ‘An old man, my lord, a very old, old man! I Shan’t be one long,’ he mumbled: ‘Strike them all dead! What right have they to butcher me?’

As he spoke he caught sight of Oliver and Mr Brownlow, and shrinking back, asked what they wanted.

‘Oliver!’ cried Fagin, beckoning to him, ‘Here, here! Let me whisper to you.’

‘I am not afraid,’ said Oliver to Mr Brownlow.

‘Say I’ve gone to sleep – they’ll believe you. You can get me out, if you say so. Now then, now then!’

‘God forgive this wretched man!’ cried the boy.

‘That’s right, that’s right! Press on, press on!’ cried Fagin. ‘Softly, but not so slow! Faster, faster!’

The jailors laid hands on him, and disengaging Oliver from his grasp, held him back. Desperate howls sent up cry after cry. Oliver was weak for hours after this most frightful scene. Day was dawning, but the black stage, the cross-beam and the rope all told of the hideous apparatus of death.

Mr Brownlow adopted Oliver as his son. Mr Grimwig contends that Oliver did not come back, so he doesn’t have to eat his own head. And within the altar of the old village church there stands a tombstone, which bears one word: ‘Angela.’ For it was discovered that Mr Brownlow was Oliver’s uncle, and Mr Brownlow’s sister-in-law had died unmarried as Oliver’s mother, leaving a baby born into a poor workhouse. And if the spirits of the Dead ever come back to earth, and love beyond the grave those who they loved in life, then the shade of Angela sometimes hovers round that solemn tombstone.