

The American Drama Group Europe presents:
TNT Theatre Britain

OLIVER TWIST.

By Paul Stebbings & Phil Smith based on the novel by Charles Dickens.
Original score by Thomas Johnson.

CAST: Five performers, two men three women.
One to play Fagin, Mrs CORNEY, fox, a policeman.
Two to play Oliver, Agnes.
Three to play Nancy, Charlie Bates, Old Sally, workhouse boy.
Four to play Artful Dodger, Dick the workhouse boy.
Five to play Bill Sikes, Lord Brownlow, the Beadle.

As the audience enter they see a scaffold and gallows on the stage. They are a crowd arriving for a public execution in 1840's London. Among them are a flower seller. She banters with the audience – looking forward to the arrival of Fagin for hanging.

FAGIN is dragged on and stripped of his distinctive costume, these along with his toasting fork are lain on the coffin awaiting Fagin's corpse after the hanging.)

FLOWER SELLER: Hang the Devil! Wicked Jew! Swing him!

BROWNLOW: Wait! This wicked and evil dog, brought here by true justice, to this fatal tree, did in his lifetime hold an unnatural sway over the minds of young people. Including my dear Grandson here, Oliver Twist. Fagin, you have one last chance in your life. Use it! Speak to the young people here, speak to the poor citizens. Confess your evil crimes. Beg forgiveness from our Christian God above before it is too late.

FAGIN: I will speak to these people but I have nothing to confess. It is not I should die here today, but him – Lord Brownlow, if you please!! It is he, murderer and hypocrite, that led so many of us to an early death.

Brownlow: This is outrageous!! This is preposterous!! Hang this wicked Jew!!

Flower seller: Hang him! Hang him!!

Fagin: O, you want a little entertainment, do you? You'll laugh soon enough when I'm dangling on that rope!!

Flower seller: Hang him! Hang him!

Fagin: Wait!! If I am to die I have the right to speak!! So, listen!! It was ten years ago that HE committed HIS first crime ... ten years from that first savagery to this last – ten years ago.... Since god was out of his heaven and Lucifer rode the winter clouds

and rattled at the doors of Lord Brownlow and his doomed daughter Agnes...

(OLIVER dresses as AGNES and she forms a tableau with her father - Brownlow - a SERVANT holds a portrait of AGNES aloft and MRS GRIMWIG, LORD BROWNLOW'S Housekeeper, hovers ready to open the door. The door is in fact the coffin which has been stood on its end. The scene is played at floor level watched by FAGIN. EXECUTIONER exits.).

FAGIN: The story of...

All: (Sing) Oliver Twist!

SCENE TWO.

AGNES kneeling before her father, LORD BROWNLOW, then sudden action).

BROWNLOW: Throw her out, Mrs Grimwig!

AGNES: (Screams) No! No, I am your daughter!

BROWNLOW: You are no daughter of mine! See, see this portrait, this beautiful, pure and innocent girl upon this canvas, why that is my daughter!

AGNES: That IS me, father. I am your loving and dutiful daughter.

BROWNLOW You hussy! Look at your swollen stomach! Has my daughter a stomach swollen with shame? No. No. Has my daughter fornicated with a married man? No, no. Such a thing would be beyond the wildest fantasy of my pure and angelic daughter. She would not take the good and ancient name of Brownlow and drag it through the mud of scandal! Where is my Agnes?

AGNES: She's here, helpless before you. (She throws her self down and grabs his ankles).

BROWNLOW Get away from me! Take your fingers off me, my flesh creeps to think of your hands upon him that impregnated you with his bastard child!,

AGNES: This is your grandchild, feel, feel, he kicks against my belly.

BROWNLOW (Pulling hands away) Away, away! Never lay your hands on me again. I retch to think of it. Out, out woman, demon out and never return to darken my door again!

AGNES: Lost, lost! (Going to door which is the coffin.).

BROWNLOW Wait!

AGNES: Papa?--

BROWNLOW You gave me this, Agnes, it contains your picture.

AGNES: Yes!

BROWNLOW: It's of no use to me now, young hussy, I would not recognise it!
(Throws it to AGNES who takes it.).

AGNES: You are cruel, sir! Cruel! May you get what you deserve!! (Exits through Coffin).

(The servants 'tick tock' like the slow sound of a large clock.)

BROWNLOW: (Puts head in hands and staggers.) O, Sweet Lord, what have I done? My daughter, my only child, my one blood, my one family. What have I done? O, Agnes. (Goes to coffin/door and shouts through it). Agnes! Agnes! Come back! Agnes! Forgive me, let us all be forgiven. Agnes! (Goes out and down to audience)

FAGIN: Look at him! Trying to make us feel sorry for him! That's the very murderer there! Now watch the consequence of h4s crime! Agnes fled through the storm, life in her belly but death close behind, hard upon her heals!

ALL SING:

Nature bled on Heath and Moor, Nature red in tooth and claw,

Only seen by the eye of the storm

Blackened sky, rolling thunder

Nature's daughter, see her wander

Wonder where she can find shelter

Helter skelter through the storm

Raising eyes for help from heaven

But the eye of the storm is blind

To pity and fear

And the rain drowns her tears

The clouds swirl above

Where is hope, where is rest, where is love?

(AGNES staggers to the coffin/door and knocks).

Wind is moaning,

Wind is moaning, Wind is moaning.... Aaah.

AGNES: Let me in, let me in! Give me sanctuary, please God. Mercy! mercy! For pity's sake! (The lid of the coffin opens and Mrs CORNEY appears. The branches have been attached to the scaffold to give the sense of countryside throughout the workhouse scenes).

MRS CORNEY: Apply here between the hours of nine and noon tomorrow. The workhouse is closed!. (Tries to shut the coffin, AGNES grabs the lid).

AGNES: No, please let me enter for the sake of the child!

CORNEY: Nine O'clock!

AGNES: We shall be dead at nine!

CORNEY: Dead or alive, you'll be treated the same! We don't favour the living here! At nine!

AGNES: Wait! This, this! (Holds out locket).

CORNEY: Gold?

AGNES: Gold.

CORNEY: Let me see! (CORNEY grabs the locket but AGNES has a spasm and cannot release it).

AGNES: Ah, the child is coming!

CORNEY: Damn you, you'd better come in! And at this hour of the night! (Pulls her in by the hand) Ah, no wedding ring! Sinner!

(Inside the workhouse)

CORNEY: Sally, Sally! Where are you, you old fool?

SALLY (enters with empty bottle, drunk) Shall I fetch another bottle? It's almost dry. My, (of rain-soaked AGNES) she's wet. Wish my bottle were as wet as her.

CORNEY: Listen, you half dead crone, fetch the Beadle. I want the Beadle!

SALLY: (She nods) I want a bottle, she wants the Beadle.(Mutters and exits).

AGNES: I feel it! I am going to burst!

CORNEY: That's God's way, woman. The pain's your punishment.
(SALLY returns with the BEADLE).

BEADLE: What's to do, Mrs CORNEY, what's to do? Can't a man take his tea in peace?? (He has

a tray of tea in his hand)

CORNEY: Mr Bumble, I've a woman with no husband here as is about to have a baby. We require the Parish Beadle (said with pride) to register the child.

BEADLE: Oh the burden of office, Mrs CORNEY. The burden of responsibility. (She wipes his brow and sighs). I must say, Mrs CORNEY, you look the very picture of rude health. May I tweak your cheek?

CORNEY: (Leaning towards him then pulling back) Mr Bumble, there are ladies present.

BEADLE: I see no ladies, Ma'm. Merely paupers, dregs and dross.

CORNEY: (To Sally) Stop gawping and do your women's thing! (SALLY grunts and attends to AGNES by lowering the coffin and laying AGNES on it for a bed and pulling a sheet over her). You shall be able to return to your tea and comfort very soon, Mr Bumble.

BEAD: You are an angel, Mrs CORNEY, a regular angel.

CORNEY: And you are a Devil to flash your eyes so at a widowed woman.

BEAD: Tis nature, Ma'am, nature. And not to be denied.

AGNES: It comes, mercy! (SALLY has lit her pipe and has her beneath AGNES's

skirts.)

CORNEY: Sally, put down that pipe and help the woman!

BEADLE: Mrs CORNEY, you have a silver tongue! (Flicks two sugar cubes into the air and catches them in his mouth, pours in a little milk and then fills his mouth with tea from the teapot). Quite refreshed, quite restored, quite robust and ready to perform my official and unofficial duties! (Squirting tea as he speaks).

I shall fetch the Parish register, call me when the child is born. (Exits).

AGNES: Agh! Mercy!!

CORNEY: Well?

SALLY: Wipes hands on her filthy skirt) The Doctor says that it ain't safe to deliver unless I scrubs me hands with alcohol.

CORNEY: You're as foul as the night. (Woman screams) Can't you tie a rag around the thing's mouth? I'll have a headache soon!

SALLY: There, there. Push! Push! Must I do everything!! (Gags woman, pulls her legs apart. Swigs from alcohol bottle and breathes on her hands). All disinfected now. Where's its little head? (SALLY delivers the child, then nurses the bottle instead of the child - CORNEY grabs the child. Sounds of child's cries.)

(Next lines sung)

AGNES: Can I see the child?

CORNEY: It's a boy!

BEADLE: It's a boy!

CORNEY: He would cry louder if he knew what a world he was born into.

AGNES: I must tell you something.

CORNEY: I've no time for you!

AGNES: I beg of you.

BEADLE & CORNEY: We've no time for you!

AGNES; He's richer than he seems! This golden locket!

SALLY: (Waking) Gold?

(Next lines spoken.)

(SALLY hides and listens).

AGNES: This child is not the poor child he seems, the golden locket. Open it.

CORNEY: A picture, a painting of...you.

AGNES Take it to, take it to- the boy's grandfather. He is a ...a respectable man, a Lord.

CORNEY: A Lord? Is there a reward?

AGNES: oh yes!

CORNEY: Yes?!!

AGNES: In heaven!

CORNEY: What? Is there no money in this?

AGNES: His grandfather is rich.

CORNEY: Where is his grandfather, who is it? Who is this Lord, answer me!
(Shaking AGNES.)

AGNES: Take the locket to...

CORNEY: Speak, stupid woman - ah! Wake up! Speak! Give me that bottle!
(Dumps child and seizes bottle - forces alcohol down AGNES's throat who chokes and dies) Speak, you stupid woman!! Ah, what! Dead! Mr Bumble!

BEADLE: (Enters) Is the child alive?

CORNEY: Yes. But the mother's dead.

BEADLE: A lesson to us all. A punishment from God. She was not married you know. And, Mrs CORNEY, neither am I. If you get my meaning...

CORNEY: And the meaning of this, Mister Bumble, according to the dead mother, is to prove the child's nobility. Hmm, see it has a name engraved upon it: Agnes.

SALLY: (hidden) Agnes!

BEADLE: Sh - hush. Did the crone see or hear anything? (SALLY has in fact overheard everything as the audience can see but CORNEY shakes her head). Let us be philosophical, M'am and keep this golden locket and let the secret of the child's birth die with his mother. We cannot go a wasting time on paupers. Will this scrap of a child live?

(Sounds of child's cries throughout this.)

CORNEY: He seems healthy enough.

BEADLE: Hah! Another burden on our charity. Born selfish! Well. I have the register and I shall name him. A boy you say?

CORNEY: He is.

BEADLE: I am strictly alphabetical in these matters. The last orphan was an S ~so I called him Swubble. This thing is a therefore a T - (pondering the problem of a name the BEADLE notices the way he is twisting his pen in thought) - Twist I shall call him, Oliver Twist.

CORNEY: Oh, Mr Bumble, what a poet lies inside your mighty form! (Snuggling up to him. OLIVER cries. The BEADLE uses the opportunity to sneakily relieve MRS CORNEY of the golden chain).

SALLY: (Knocking and entering) 'scusing me. There is work to be done. (Sticks empty gin bottle in child's mouth).

CORNEY: Well, do it!!

SALLY: O good lord, in heaven above, how is it that things turn out so bad for the poor and the vicious rich alike?

(Song: "It's a shame.")

(Characters form a tableau and then blackout, lights up on FAGIN on the scaffold).

FAGIN: So Oliver Twist grew up in the Workhouse. If only the child had died at birth I might be alive tomorrow, but it was not to be and Oliver Twist grew up to be a pale and sickly youth of nine years of age. He grew up in the parish workhouse: , what an institution: invented and organised for the systematic murder of poor children by gradual starvation! And they want to hang me for teaching a trade to poor urchins! Murdering hypocrites! They've got the wrong man!

(The BEADLE enters and beckons on two WORKHOUSE BOYS whose heads he clouts, the second boy ducking to avoid the blow.)

BEADLE: Work.

(The WORKHOUSE BOYS join OLIVER around the coffin. This is one of the coffins that they are made to construct at the workhouse.)

BOYS & OLIVER: (in rhythm). Two four six eight. Two four six eight. Eight out of ten will be dead. Eight out of ten will be dead.

Two four six eight, two for six eight. Starved, burnt, scalded, whipped. Two four six eight. Beaten, broken, left to die. Two for six eight out of ten, two four six eight out of ten! Dead, dead, dead, dead, dead! Two four six eight out of ten. Two four six eight out ten. Two four six eight out of ten. Two four six eight out of ten.

BEADLE: Oh wonderful work, what a marvellous and improving philosophy! Aren't you boys grateful?

BOYS: (Working feverishly sanding and polishing the coffin) Two four six eight. Thank you, Sir. One hundred, two hundred, two thousand thank yous! Thank you. Thank you! Thank you!

BOY ONE (6'ICK): Please, Sir, I don't think I can work no more.

BEADLE: I beg your pardon?

BOY ONE: I. my chest..(coughs) I can't work no more.

BEADLE: No more! No more! You'll work no more when you are in your wooden bed deep in the grave! What is life but work? Work illuminates! Work educates! Work liberates! Work makes us free!

BOYS: (Chanted at double speed) Two four six eight educate and liberate. Two four six eight eight out often are dead, eight out of ten are dead to date. Hate Hate hate! (x8) (BEADLE turns. Sick boy keels over and collapses in a coffin they have been polishing.)

BEADLE: Get that boy out of that coffin!

BOY: Please, Sir, I think he's dead, Sir.

BEADLE: Oh, very well – you might as well leave him in there. Nail down the lid. But you'll have to build an extra one for old Sowerby. We've ten to make today! You boys will do anything to get out of a bit of work!

OLIVER: Shall we take him to the cellar and bury him by the other boys?

BEADLE: Oh running the workhouse are you now, Oliver Twist? Sit still and wait for your dinner. What a holiday you have here. It's a regular hotel! Here comes your sweet Matron with your dinner. (Enter Mrs CORNEY with a bucket. of soup and a piece of salt. Bowls are handed to the surviving WORKHOUSE BOY, OLIVER and members of the front row of the audience.)

MRS CORNEY: Bow - els!!

ALL SING:

A hotel for the poor
A tavern for the lazy
Free tea, breakfast, supper, and dinner
Aah, for every beggar, criminal and sinner!
To hell with moral fashion
Cut down the general ration
We may be bluff old buffers
But by God the poor will suffer!
We may be bluff old buffers
But by God the poor will suffer!

CORNEY: Lick, lick the salt. (Holds out the salt for the boys to lick).

BEADLE: I hope the soup is not too thick, Mrs CORNEY?

CORNEY: It's thin, Sir, very thin. (Ladles water from bucket, the boys kneel in prayer and hold out bowls. The boys quickly finish their food). I makes a profit with my food allowance.

BEADLE: I makes a profit with me coffins. We must have profit.

(The boys weep from hunger.)

MRS CORNEY: The boys are crying again!

BEADLE: Crying is good for boys, Mrs Corney. It opens their lungs, washes their faces, and exercises their eyes. Oh there's a little soup left, I think I might, with your permission...

CORNEY: Oh it would be a pity to waste it, Mr Bumble.

(BEADLE drinks from the bucket, while the ghost of the dead WORKHOUSE BOY appears from the coffin.)

OLIVER: Dick! Alive?

GHOST: Dead, starved. Oliver, Oliver do something! Ask for more. Ask for more. Ask for more.

OLIVER: (As Beadle drinks from the bucket) Please, Sir. I want some more.

ALL: MORE!

OLIVER: More.

(BEADLE spits out soup and swings at OLIVER with the bucket. Mrs CORNEY screams and OLIVER runs round her to escape the BEADLE who charges after him. He's tripped up by the boy, frightened by the GHOST and OLIVER escapes but he

can only run round in circles and finally into MRS CORNEY who hammers the soup bucket over his head.)

MRS CORNEY: Boy!! Fetch me the Beadle's whipping canes!

BEADLE: Come my dear, we have our duties to perform. (To Mrs CORNEY) (Pulls OLIVER onto box & BEADLE raises his arm to cane OLIVER in a violent duet with MRS CORNEY. MRS CORNEY holds him by the biceps, he flexes with pride).

BEADLE: This monster dared to ask for more! Why the very state would crumble were the rabble to ask for more and receive it! He must be thrashed to within an inch of his life.

MRS CORNEY: Oh careful, my sweet, you might strain your arm.

BEADLE: O, no, my dear – this calms me!

(MRS CORNEY and BEADLE deliver the first blows to OLIVER's rump. The blows make a tinny sound. MRS CORNEY retrieves. OLIVER's bowl from the seat of his trousers

(They sing a duet as they beat OLIVER)

BEADLE: O, Mistress Corney, you are so in luck, luck, luck

CORNEY: You are an irresistible duck, duck, duck

BEADLE/CORNEY: What an opportunity for joining hearts in housekeeping

BEADLE: Don't cry

CORNEY: Don't sigh

BEADLE: Don't sigh, but help me sing:

BEADLE: (Sings) You were meant for me

CORNEY: I was meant for you

BEADLE: Nature patterned you and when she had done

CORNEY: I was all the sweet things rolled up in one

BOTH: We are a plaintive melody.
That never sets us free.
Oh we're content the angels must have sent us
And they meant you just for me!

CORNEY: Sally! Fetch this wretch and throw him in the coal cellar! Come, my precious jewel, let us have tea.

BEADLE: Will there be buttered muffins, Mrs C.?

CORNEY: Everything is melting, everything. (Exit hand in hand as SALLY drags OLIVER aside).

SALLY: (Loud, swigging from her bottle). You young criminal, asking for more, why one day you'll hang for murder. (Forces spirits down his throat). Listen Oliver, you've got to get away from here.

They stole your birthright, the Beadle and his woman. I saw it, you're a gentlemen, an aristocrat. Your mother's name was Agnes...

OLIVER: Agnes?

SALLY: Agnes! Put your hat on. Take this penny. But get away tonight or they'll kill you. Mark my word. (LOUD) Filthy beggar. In the coal cellar with you!

OLIVER: I love you, Sally.

SALLY: I love you too, Oliver, but you must go!! (She improvises pretending to be Oliver's voice in the cellar and her own voice castigating him.)(Whispers to Oliver.) Good luck and God bless you, little master! Go! Go!

OLIVER: Thank you, Ma'am.

SALLY: (Finger to her lips) Get away now. They'll kill you, mark my words. (Loud:) You stay in your cupboard!! (Whispered:) God bless you, Oliver. Enjoy your fortune when you find it, master. (SALLY abases herself before OLIVER. OLIVER is horrified and creeps out.)

OLIVER: I'll be back for you, Sally, I'll be back... (Exits.)

(When SALLY sees OLIVER has gone:)

SALLY: All these years and never found a good master. (Grasps her chest in agony.) I'll never find one now. My heart! God save my soul and damn yours, Beadle! May I meet you in hell! (SALLY collapses and dies melodramatically.)

BEADLE: (Poking head out of door) What the dickens was that?

CORNEY voice off: What is it, dear?

BEADLE: Oh nothing, must have been my imagination. Great Scott, Mrs CORNEY, I have an imagination! Extraordinary!

CORNEY: (Seductive) Oooh, Miss -ter Bum-bull...!! Come and use it on me!!!

BOTH: Aah.

BLACKOUT.

FAGIN: Oh Oliver, Oliver. You think you are escaping but you were only plunging deeper and deeper into a living Hell! The English countryside!

SCENE FOUR

(OLIVER on the road to London. A green sheet is run across the stage horizontally as a hedge, OLIVER runs on the spot while a bush moves from one end of the hedge to the other to simulate movement. Behind the hedge a man rides by as if on a horse. Oliver approaches him):

OLIVER: Could you spare a penny for a loaf of bread, kind Sir?

MAN: What! Begging on the King's Highway? Young criminal you should be in the workhouse! Away with you before I send for a Beadle. In fact I think I shall. Beadle! Beadle! (Oliver runs off in terror.

CHORUS: (sing)

Beadle , Beadle, Beadle, Beadle!

Run for your life

Coming to punish you

Run run run run

Run and run and run and run and

Getting tired

And getting thirsty

Tired so tired

The thirst is killing me!

Oliver!

Hungry! Alone! Tired! Dying! Alone! Oliver!

OLIVER: Should I die here tonight I commend my soul to the angels and trust I meet my mother – Agnes - in the arms of loving Jesus.

CHORUS: (Bugle like) View halloo! View halloo! Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill! (The sound of a hunt in the distance starts, half realistic half musical. The fox appears and OLIVER runs in terror with him as the hunt approaches. OLIVER collapses and sleeps.)

MALE HUNTSMAN: O, I say, look what I've got – a fox's tail! What shall we do with it?

FEMALE HUNTER: Let's go home and have tea and foxtail sandwiches!

(They ride off. Red dawn. Enter ARTFUL DODGER with a swagger of a whistle - he plays with the bird song. Luring a bird over he knocks it off the hedge with a brick - reversing our jolly expectations).

DODGER: Stone the crows! Oh my oh my – two birds with one stone!
Is you alive? 'Cos if you're not I'll turn your pockets out if you don't mind? (Does so).
Uhuh – empty. And just a penny

(OLIVER stirs) Saints alive! (Vaults over hedge) Is you a ghost? No offence, I was just warming my hands in your pockets. Well- what else is pockets for?

OLIVER: You are not Jesus?

DODGER: Hardly! (Pops back over hedge) And you is not a ghost. Though you will join the 'ost of ghosts if you don't get a cup of hot coffee and a slice of bread inside you. Well, I ain't got the coffee but I do have the bread. Tara! (Produces the ham and makes a sandwich. OLIVER wolfs it down).

OLI: You're as kind as Jesus.

DODGER: Going to London?

OLIVER: I hope so.

DODGER: Got anywhere to stay?

OLIVER: No.

DODGER: Money?

OLIVER: Oh yes! (Feels in his pocket for the penny, but it has gone, turns out his pocket) Oh no...

DODGER: Whew. (Whistles - another bird pops up, bounces along the wall and is calmly stoned by a good shot from the DODGER. OLIVER and DODGER laugh themselves silly.)

DODGER: I suppose you would want some place to sleep tonight?

OLIVER: I do indeed. (DODGER palms the stolen penny back into OLIVER's pocket.)

DODGER: Well, don't worry, I know a respectable London gentleman, what'll give you a place to stay for nothink. Not a penny. Not that my friend, the respectable gentleman knows me - oh no. If we passed each other in the street we would walk staright by! (Makes a hand movement and winks at Oliver). Know what I mean?

OLIVER: You talk very like a Christian.

DODGER: So you get my meaning?

OLIVER: What meaning?

DODGER: Oh you are green.

OLIVER: No, my name is Oliver, Oliver Twist.

DODGER: My Christian name is Jack, if I was a Christian! But the merry Old gentleman wot I talked about: he's given me a devil of a name: the Artful Dodger. (Bows and holds out his hat to OLIVER. OLIVER finds the penny in his pocket and is delighted. He offers the penny to DODGER.) My penny's back!

DODGER: You keep it.

OLIVER: Oh thank you, Mister Dodger. (laughs) Pleased to meet you, Mister Dodger. (Bows and laughs again).

DODGER: Come on, lad, London's waiting.

OLIVER: Is London beautiful?

DODGER: Oh yeah, it's like heaven but smoky.

(Three other cast members with cigars inside huge cigar tubes puffing smoke that will catch in the theatre lights- enter and sing LONDON SONG.)

CHORUS: O London oh London town
London town is falling down
But it's all they've ever known
Yes, it's all they've known
Yes, it's all they've ever blessed known.

The beggars in the street offend our gaze
The Poor Law Act got in their way
And it's all they've ever known, etc.

(DODGER leads OLIVER into the audience which is suddenly lit.)

OLIVER: So many people! Why are they all gathered here?

DODGER: They are here to see some fun.

OLIVER: Is there to be a puppet show?

DODGER: No!! There's to be a hanging. A boy called Little Joe.

OLIVER: A boy? They are going to kill a boy?

(The EXECUTIONER drags a boy, LITTLE JOE WHITE, to the scaffold, struggling).

OLIVER: He must be a terrible criminal that the people hate him so.

DODGER: (bitter) Oh yeah, he broke down a door and stole two candlesticks and a silver plate. What a villain. (LOUD) Hang 'im! (CROWD OOH as blackout on stage.) That's the lad gone, and he never said a word. Clever dog. (Soft) Poor lad. Damn 'em.

OLIVER: Mr Dodger, I do believe you cry?

DODGER: Nah, nah, just the smoke in me eyes. Come on Oliver. Let's go home.

OLIVER: Home? Oh I never had a home.

(DODGER leads OLIVER back to the stage which is now lit again but as HELL .

FAGIN emerges.)

FAGIN: It's a Hell of a place; London. And every Hell must have its Devil. Let's meet him now: the old gentleman, a master criminal, a perverter of justice, a beast that dips his bread in the blood of Christian children, a murderer of religion! That's right! Me! (FAGIN is in the same stripped down costume as for his execution. In the half light, lines of elastic hung with red and yellow handkerchiefs are pulled horizontally across the stage. DODGER leads OLIVER to the entrance of Fagin's Den, for which they use the trap of the scaffold.)

(DODGER knocks at the outer using special knock.)

FAGIN: Who's there?

BATES: (to the door) Who goes there?

DODGER: Plummy and slam.

BATES: It's the password!

FAGIN: (Still fearful) Look and see!

(CHARLIE BATES opens the trapdoor a little.)

DODGER: What are you messing about at, Charlie! I've got a new boy!

BATES: (Shutting the trap) He's got a new boy, Fagin!

FAGIN: My dear, hold him at the door! Charlie, help me, help me into my things! (CHARLIE BATES helps Fagin into a huge coat and round wide brimmed hat. FAGIN arms himself with a toasting fork. He stokes fire and lights illuminate the red and orange handkerchiefs as though they were flames. FAGIN uses a devil shape on a stick to give his silhouette a demonic shape. Then gives the signal to BATES to let OLIVER and DODGER in. FAGIN takes a pose. CHARLIE BATES opens the door. OLIVER and DODGER enter. When OLIVER sees the demonic silhouette he reels back. From it emerges the friendly face of FAGIN.)

OLIVER: Ah! The devil!!

FAGIN: Who have we here?

DODGER: This is him, Fagin; my friend Oliver Twist.

BATES: Oliver Twist!

FAGIN: Hahaha! Oliver Twist! Welcome, welcome! My dear, my dear, come in! What a surprise! I hope to have the honour of your lasting friendship.

OLIVER: Pleased to meet you , sir.

BATES: Oooo! Pleased to me yooooooooo! Mister Twist, Charlie Bates is hhhhonoured!

(BATES shakes OLIVER's hand and whirls him around and start to frisk him, turning his pockets inside out.)

DODGER: I've already searched out his character, Charlie!

(BATES and DODGER come to blows. FAGIN strikes them with his toasting fork.)

FAGIN: There, there, my dear. Take no notice of my impolite boys! There's a sausage for you!

OLIVER: A sausage! I've never seen a sausage before!

BATES: We've better than sausages, we've got gin!

FAGIN: Good boy, good boy! Have a swig of that!!

(DODGER: Gin! (DODGER holds out a glass to OLIVER who tastes it and chokes. FAGIN pats his back.)

FAGIN: Let's have the dice out! Do you play dice, Oliver?

OLIVER: No, sir! It wasn't allowed in the Workhouse!

FAGIN: You've not been properly educated!

DODGER: I'll teach him a lesson!

(A game of dice, in which GATES loses to DODGER and then DODGER kicks the

(4

table - in fact the open lid of the coffin - so that OLIVER wins.)

DODGER: Oliver! It's all yours!

BATES: But it was mine!

(FAGIN hits BATES.)

OLIVER: (holding the money) Nine! (He sees the handkerchiefs)

FAGIN: We have better and quicker ways of making pennies here. You admiring our pocket handkerchiefs, Oliver? Eh, my dear, there are a good many of them, ain't there? They are a drying after washing, my dear?

OLIVER: Is this a laundry, sir?

(BATES and DODGER Howl with laughter.)

FAGIN: You could say that - we do launder goods! Speaking of which! Dodger! Have you been working?

DODGER: Hard. Hard as nails. (Empties his pocket of wallets and handkerchiefs.)

FAGIN: Good boy! (Lifting wallets) Pretty work, pretty work. (Running handkerchiefs through his hand.) How would you like to be able to make things like the Dodger? Eh, Oliver?

OLIVER: The Artful Dodger must be a fine worker to make so many things!

(BATES and DODGER in fits of laughter)

FAGIN: Clear these dice away! We've got a better game to play!

OLIVER: Is this like heaven, sir?

(BATES and DODGER laugh.)

FAGIN: No, Oliver! In heaven there are no poor people! Now, you watch! You've got to have a go next Watch and learn! Watch the Dodger, he's the master craftsman! (FAGIN picks up glasses, book and stick and pretends to be a rich man walking in town. DODGER and BATES attempt to pickpocket him. BATES fails, but DODGER succeeds spectacularly. OLIVER finds the game hilarious.)

OLIVER: We won! We won! (Yawns. They all yawn.)

FAGIN: My dear, you're overtired.

BATES: It's the gin.

FAGIN: Mister Bates, show Oliver Twist to his brand new bed.

BATES: Come along with me...

FAGIN:(to OLIVER:) You're safe with us, Oliver Twist. Safe as the Bank of England.

OLIVER: Thank you, sir.

FAGIN: get some rest – we'll need your talents in the morning.

FAGIN: (Once OLIVER has gone:) What happened with Little Joe? Did he talk before he(grabs scarf round DODGER's throat and lifts it as if it is the rope hanging him.)

DODGER: Nothing. Not a word. They asked him if he had anythink to say, but he kept his trap shut!

FAGIN: It's a pity the hangman didn't keep his trap shut. Here's a sixpence for your work today, Dodger. Clever dog, little Joe, to die so quiet. Clever dog, Little Joe, to die so quiet. It's an excellent thing, for our trade - hanging. God bless the government , eh? (bitterly) Always got the welfare of poor folk like us at heart. Dead dogs don't

bark. Dead boys don't tell tales. (DODGER and BATES are now settling down to sleep. They exchange uneasy glances.)

FAGIN:(sings while checking the boys) Clever dogs never speak
Always lying here at your feet
Clever dogs never cheat
The hand that let's them eat
Clever dogs never bark at their master
Clever dogs bark and sound the alarm
Keeping their master out of harm
Clever dogs die before their master
Dead dogs corpse lying in the gutter
Dead dogs never speak.
(speaks)

(FAGIN settles down to sleep. Night passes. As dawn light appears FAGIN wakes with a start. FAGIN searches out his hidden box of stolen goods)

FAGIN: Safe! Safe! We're safe! You clever dog, Little Joe, keeping the dirty hands of the law of your Fagin's things. Clever dog to. die' so quiet. Safe. (Sees that OLIVER is awake and watching him.) What7s that! (Snatches up his toasting fork and leaps on OLIVER, holding the fork to his throat:) Why do you watch me? Speak out! Quick! For your life!

OLIVER: I wasn't able to sleep any longer, sir. I didn't mean to disturb you.

FAGIN: (Softening) O you didn't disturb me, my dear! Tush, tush, my dear, you won't disturb old Fagin! I only tried to frighten you, my dear. There's so much stealing these days, Oliver, why an honest man is afraid for his property. Did you see any of my pretty things, my dear?

OLIVER: Yes, sir.

FAGIN: They belong to me, Oliver. All I have to live on when I get old, Oliver. The folks call me a miser, my dear, only a miser. Because I hide my pretty things. But it doesn't do well for a 3ew to display his gold, my dear. It's not safe, believe me.

OLIVER: It must cost a good deal of money to look after so many boys.

FAGIN: Eh? O , yes! I'm a father to them! And to you too, dear boy! Dodger! Bates! It's the start of another working day!)Groans from DODGER and BATES as they get up.) Now, Oliver, Dodger and Charlie are going to teach you how to make pocket handkerchiefs!

OLIVER: Thank you, sir!

FAGIN: And we'll have sausages when you get back!

OLIVER: Back?

FAGIN: O, you must learn in the fresh air! It's good for your cheeks! (Tweaks

Oliver's cheeks.-

DODGER: Come on, Oliver!

FAGIN: And I want him back!!

(DODGER, BATES and OLIVER exeunt.)

FAGIN: And now, ladies and gentlemen, it is time for us to become reacquainted with our old hypocritical and murderous friend – Lord Brownlow – some nine years have past since we saw him – nine years since we saw him and his daughter Agnes...

(LORD BROWNLOW appears in the street, looking at old books at a stall. FAGIN retires behind the scaffold to watch).

DODGER :(Spotting BROWNLOW) Ooh look, a warm pocket! Are your hands cold, Oliver?

OLIVER: Na, thank you, Dodger. Quite warm.

DODGE: And you, Charlie?

BATES: Proper freezing cold.

DODGE: You'd better warm them in some pockets!

BATES: (Sneezes)Or I'll catch a cold!

DODGER: Then you'll need -

DODGE & BATES: A handkerchief. Ha ha!

DODGE: Watch and learn Mr Green.

(They go to BROWNLOW and pick his pocket, Charlie BATES pretending to be a blind boy as decoy. But BROWNLOW notices. The astonished OLIVER starts with horror).

OLIVER: Oh Mother! That's their game, thieves! Tricked! Tricked! Oh mother!

BROWNLOW: By Gad, I've been robbed! Give that here!!

OLIVER: Oh no! (OLIVER turns to run and at that moment is spotted by BROWNLOW).

DODGER: (Pointing to OLIVER.) There's the young thief!

BATES: Catch him, stop thief!

OLIVER: I didn't do it. It's a trick!

DODGER: There's the thief.

BATES & DODGE: Stop thief! (OLIVER turns and runs)

ALL CAST but OLIVER: STOP THIEF!

BROWNLOW: (pursuing the pursuers who now include a POLICEMAN:) Stop!
Stop!

That's not him! That's the wrong boy! (They chase round the auditorium until the policeman grabs OLIVER and beats him unconscious with truncheon. DODGER & BATES break off the chase and disappear through a side door).

POLICEMAN: Got you!

BROWNLOW: I've been robbed, Officer.

POLICEMAN: And I have arrested the young thief.

BROWNLOW: Dear, dear, that is not the correct boy.

POLICE: Now Now, Sir, I think we have the criminal, don't 'you?

BROWNLOW: But it was the other two boys.

POLICE: And where are these two other boys?

BROWNLOW: Half a mile away by now.

POLICE: In that case I never saw them! Come along young devil.

BROWNLOW: This boy is not a thief!

POLICE: Oh come along, Sir, they are all as bad as each other. Now how would it look if I'd have knocked an innocent boy to the ground? (To OLIVER:) What's your name, boy? (Pokes OLIVER with a truncheon) Wasting police time, that's a fine of one shilling or seven days in jail! Come on, boy!

BROWNLOW: Can't you see he's unconscious!

POLICEMAN: Please don't interfere, sir.

(POLICEMAN shakes OLIVER who mumbles something.)

POLICEMAN: Roger Mist? (to audience) You, witnesses? Do any of you know this boy's name? Oliver Twist! See! The boy's a hardened liar!

BROWNLOW: He can't speak properly! He's groggy!

POLICEMAN: Loitering on the public highway! That's a fine of twenty shillings or forty days in the jail!

BROWNLOW: What about solving a real crime, constable? What about the criminals who tried to steal this valuable book?

POLICEMAN: Attempted thievery of an article of more than five pounds! That's twenty years in jail or transportation to the colonies! How much does the book cost?

BROWNLOW: Damn and blast this book! The real criminal has already escaped! I don't know how much it costs. In the rush U didn't have time....I forgot to pay for it.

POLICEMAN: And you expect me to act on the evidence of a book thief?

BROWNLOW: WHAT! WHAT! Do you know who I am!!!! I am Lord Brownlow!!

(POLICEMAN: (Realising he has gone too far) Well, on this occasion I shall turn a blind eye to these crimes, there being just as much wrong on one side as on another. Now, go about your business. Good day, My Lord. (He exits, turning away and cringing, his fingers crossed.)

BROWNLOW: Come back here! I have never heard of anything like it! (to Oliver) Are you all right?

OLIVER: Not really... my ribs...

BROWNLOW: What a noble face! Come, boy, we will find you a home. My servant Mrs Grimwig will look after you at my home in Pentonville... (After POLICEMAN:) And a curse upon the law! Blind! Stupid! Corrupt! And vicious! The law is a ass! A ass! A blind and brutal ass!

FAGIN: Listen to the truth from the mouth of the respectable gentile!

BROWNLOW: The Law is a blind and brutal ass!

(Back at Fagin's den, Bates and Dodger enter.)

FAGIN: Wot's this? Only two of you? Where's Oliver you young dogs. Where's the boy? Speak or I'll skewer you? (Grabs Bates and hold fork to his throat).

DODGER: The police have got him. (Sullen).

FAGIN: Police!

DODGER: Let go of me! (FAGIN goes to stab Bates, Dodger grabs Fagin's arm. Bates twists out his big coat, leaving it in Fagin's grip. Dodger knocks the fork out of Fagin's hand and Bates catches it. Bates tries to stab Fagin who defends himself with his coat round his arm. Throwing off Dodger Fagin grabs the gin bottle/tankard. Bates escapes through the coffin/door pursued by Fagin's curses and Fagin flings the tankard/bottle after him but it is caught by BILL SIKES as he enters).

BILL: What the blazes is in the wind now! It's as well the beer/gin hit me and not the bottle or I'd have settled someone with me fist! What the Devil's going on here, Fagin. I'll treating the boys again? It's a wonder they don't murder you! I would if I was them, I'd slit your throat from ear to ear while you slept at night. Fwit! (Makes knife gesture).

FAGIN: Hush, Hush Mister Sikes.

BILL: None of your Mister this and Mister that. Give me a gin. And mind you don't poison it.

FAGIN: Bill, Bill you seem out of humour?

BILL: Not as out of humour as Little Joe who you sent to his death... Give me that gin!

(Bill Sits down on the coffin and puts feet up as FAGIN examines the loot and DODGER serves gin). What are going to give me for this? (Empties swag bag on the coffin lid.)

FAGIN: I'm going to give you some bad news first, Bill. I am afraid the police have taken my new boy, Oliver Twist.

BILL: What's that to me?

FAGIN: I'm afraid that he might say something that gets us into trouble.

BILL: (Laughs) Very likely. You're finished Fagin. (Makes hanging gesture).

FAGIN: I'm afraid, you see, that if the game was up with us and the police, it might be up with you and the police. If you get my meaning, my dear?

BILL: (Leaps up and grabs FAGIN) Why you – don't you threaten me!!

(BILL ATTACKS FAGIN.)

DODGER: When you two great gentlemen have finished, you might ask me if Oliver is still with the Police.

BILL: Speak up.

FAGIN: What?

DODGER: I saw the whole thing. The Policeman let him off, a fine gentleman took him home to Pentonville if you please. So, there's the news all about it!.

FAGIN: Oh you're a clever boy, Dodger, the best, the best. A model to the young.

BILL: (Drinking) Then we have to go to Pentonville and get back the boy.

FAGIN: No, Bill, you have to go to Pentonville and get back the boy.

BILL: I wish you were a dog, Fagin.

FAGIN: And why do you wish me a dog, Bill?

BILL: Because the government allows a man to kill a dog when he pleases.

FAGIN: You are a wit, Bill!

(There is a knock. Fagin and Dodger sweep the stolen goods into the bag and hide it, all pretend to be normal but hide a pistol - Bill - fork Fagin or knife, Dodger behind their backs so the audience see. It is only NANCY at the door and she enters through the trap door when DODGER slides the bolt.)

NANCY: Allo, Dodger! Allo, Fagin! I've come to steal my man, Fagin. You can't have him.

BILL: I thought you was supposed to be whoring tonight?

NANCY: I'm sick of those greasy paws on me. I'm taking the night off to be with my Bill.

FAGIN: I'm afraid, my dear, your Bill's busy tonight. He has an appointment in Pentonville.

DODGER: Bill and I are droppin' in on a Lord Brownlow. If you please.

NANCY: Oh not a burglary tonight, Bill. It's not safe - there's too much "pale moonlight".

BILL: It's not a burglary, Nancy. It's a kidnapping. One Oliver Twist.

FAGIN: One of my boys, Nancy, he's been dragged away. Bill here means to rescue him. He's such a wonderful charitable man!

BILL: It's to save 'is filthy neck, and mine too. Come on Dodger. We better go now!

NANCY: Bill, listen to me, that old devil is going to be the death of you!(TO Fagin:) How can he work tonight? Don't let him go! Can't you see he's too drunk?

Bill: I'm not deaf!! This drink fires me!! What's it to you, anyway? Come on, Dodger!

(DODGER throws him stick, he misses it and collapses drunk).

NANCY: Bill! Bill! Get up, get up, you drunkard! Fagin, for god's sake, look at the state of him!! He can't go anywhere like that!

FAGIN: Well, the Dodger will go with him...

DODGER: I'm not going out with him tonight...

FAGIN: You will!

DODGER: I won't!!

NANCY: Stop it, Fagin! He doesn't have to go. I'll go.

FAGIN: You?

NANCY: Yes, me. I'll get your precious Oliver Twist for you – after all, Dodger, he's my little brother, ain't he!

Dodger: Who?

NANCY: Oliver Twist, my little brother who ran away from home: "Oliver, Oliver, come back to the bosom of your family..."

FAGIN: (To audience.) Bosom? Family? Family is the word! When Lord Brownlow buys back his family he will destroy mine! My family of poor street children! Let's go take a look at Lord Brownlow's sweet family!!

(Brownlow and Oliver enter. OLIVER taking in the big house.)

OLIVER: Oooo!

BROWNLOW: Well, then, Oliver Twist, how are you feeling, are you fully recovered?

OLIVER: O, yes thank you, Lord Brownlow. I'm fit as a fiddle., but, please, sir, can I tell you my story now...

BROWNLOW: O, there'll be plenty of time for you to tell me and Mrs Grimwig how you fell among thieves, but right now, Oliver Twist, I have a task for you – I want you to go to the bookshop on chancery lane and take back this valuable book and this money – four pounds and ten shillings.

OLIVER: O yes, sir.

BROWNLOW: Now listen o me, Oliver Twist. I trust you. Do you understand?

OLIVER: Well, of course, Lord Brownlow. Four pounds and ten shillings. Chancery Lane bookshop.

BROWNLOW: That's the one.

OLIVER: Cheerio.

BROWNLOW: Cheerio. (OLIVER GOES>) What an angel! He's no thief. If God is in his heaven Oliver Twist will return, you see... Mrs Grimwig, (GOING) would you fancy cutting my toenails, they are terribly long...

(OLIVER enters whistling.

NANCY and DODGER tail him.)

DODGER: That's him! That's Oliver Twist!

NANCY: All right, let's get him!

OLIVER: Excuse me, lady, I'm supposed to be in Chancery lane...

NANCY: Olivber, Oliver, my dear little brother (Grabbing him) ... come home, dear, come home, to the bosom of your family...

OLIVER: There's a mistake – help, help!!

Woman: (Appearing at window.) What's going on here!!

NANCY: O, ah, Oh Ma'am – why it's my little brother here - he ran away a month ago and went and joined a set of thieves and bad characters!

FLOWER SELLER O, shame on him!!

OLIVER: That's not true! Madam! I am an orphan. My mother's name was Agnes. I live with a rich man in Pentonville!

NANCY: Hear how he lies! I don't know how he thinks them up!

OLIVER: Dodger!

NANCY: See, he knows us. We are his family.

WOMAN: How sweet!

NANCY: Say hello to your brother, Dodger.

OLIVER: I haven't got a brother!

WOMAN: Oooo, you liar!! Whack him one for me!

Chorus: Whack him one! Whack him one! Thief! Liar! Don't you love your mother!

(OLIVER breaks away and runs into BILL SIKES who grabs OLIVER).

BILL: Bullseye! Come and give your Uncle Bill a big hug! (Crushes OLIVER).

OLIVER: You're crushing my ribs!

BILL: It's because I'm so pleased to see you, Oliver Twist! I can't control my feelings! (OLIVER passes out and is thrown across BILL's shoulder like a sack).

NANCY: (LOUD) His mother will be so pleased to see him!

BILL: Eh? O, yeh, you are a sharp one, Nancy.

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NANCY: Soft for you, Bill. Anythin' for you, Bill. (She leans towards him. Bill kisses her passionately. DODGER looks away all coy goes "Strewh..").

BILL: Little girls shouldn't kiss their uncle like that. Come on, Oliver Twist. Let's go to the Jew. (They move off. A bell strikes - SIKES freezes).

DODGER: What's with you, Bill?

SIKES: Shut up! It's eight o'clock. That's when they move the dead men to the death cells. Look up there, that's Newgate Prison. That's where you and me will end, Dodger, swinging by the neck until we are dead. You, me and little Joe, one big dead family.

CHORUS: (sing) the bell tolls, the bell tolls, the bell tolls,
Eight bells toll, the knell tolls
The iron bell, one deep hollow sound
Stillness, guilty, death!

DODGER: You're stark ravin' mad, Bill.

SIKES: Dead men's bells! Murderers! (Shakes fist in direction of Newgate Prison.)

NANCY: Come on, love. (Bells end.)

(Fagin's Den - the group enter and push OLIVER forward in his smart clothes).

FAGIN: (Bowing low) My, my!! Delighted to see you looking so well, my dear. (All laugh) Why didn't you write and say you were coming? We'd have cooked more sausages. (SIKES pushes him towards the fire - he recoils into the arms of FAGIN and DODGER who strip him of coat, books and five pound note).

SIKES: (Seeing money) What's that, Fagin?

FAGIN: Mine, my dear, mine. You shall have the books. (Hands them to BILL)

BILL: The money's mine, mine and Nancy's that is.

FAGIN: This is hardly, fair, Bill, hardly fair.

BILL: Give it here you avaricious old skeleton! (Takes note) That's for our share of the trouble. You keep the books if you're so fond of reading.

NANCY: Let me look after the money, Bill. Like a wife, eh?

BILL: What yer talkin' about? Wife? Talkin' talkin', talkin', talkin' - I hates talkin'. Give me the money. Who ever heard of a tart handlin' her own money?

DODGER: They are very pretty. ('Reading' a book upside down). Bootiful writing

ain't it, Oliver. Which way up does it go? (Laughs).

OLIVER: That belongs to the old gentleman who took me into his house. Oh please send them back1 send him back his books and money, keep me here all my life (ALL: OOh!") but send them back. Or he will think I stole them. He will think I am a thief!(On knees to Fagin)

FAGIN: (As if moved) O, poor Oliver! You're right, Oliver. (Shakes head then exclaims with glee) You are right! They will think you are a thief! Ha ha! It couldn't have worked out better if we'd planned it! You're one of us now!

(At which Oliver makes a dive to escape through BILL's legs).

OLIVER: help! Help! police! (DODGER chases after OLIVER and BILL takes up his stick).

NANCY:(Grabs stick) Don't beat him, Bill. Not the stick, Bill, he's too young.

BILL: Stand off me, or I'll split your skull against the wall!

NANCY: I don't care, Bill, I don't care what you do to me! Kill me, but not the child!

BILL: I'll do the both of you! (Throws Nancy to the floor and takes up stick as FAGIN and DODGER return with OLIVER who they have caught with ease,playing with him as if in a game - cat and mouse).

FAGIN: What's the matter here?

BILL: The girl's gone mad!

NANCY: (Shaking with rage). No she hasn't Fagin, don't you believe it!

FAGIN: (Shrugging to BILL and turning to OLIVER held captive by DODGER) So you wanted to get away, my dear, did you? Called for the police, did you? Well, we'll soon cure you of that. (Taking stick from BILL with deference)-

NANCY: (Interceding) I won't stand by and see it done, Fagin. You've got the boy, what more do you want. Let him be, or I shall go to the precious police, I shall put the mark on some of you even if it leads me to hang!

FAGIN: Bill!

BILL: Woman! (Grabs he throat, but she kicks him in the balls. Dodger laughs. FAGIN tries to calm things down).

FAGIN: Why Nancy! You're more clever than ever tonight! You are acting beautifully.

NANCY: O? Am I? Take care I don't overdo the 'acting', Fagin! Or it will be the worse for you, Jew.

BILL: Damn your eyes! Do you know what kind of dirt you are?

NANCY: God help me, I know how low I am. And I wish I had been struck dead in the street before I had tricked this child with my talk of 'sister'. Look at him - from tonight he is a thief, a liar, a devil - forever in terror of the hangman's rope around his neck, no life, no love. Isn't that punishment enough for you sods without the stick?

FAGIN: (To all) Come, come we must have civil words.

Nancy: Civil words!

Fagin: Civil words.

NANCY: Why you deserve them from me! When I was half his age I thieved and stole for you. And worse (offers her own breasts in disgust).

FAGIN: Well, well, if you have that's your living.

NANCY: Some living!! Waiting for the hangman's rope!! Some living! I've had it with your kind of living! Let's get it over with – I'm taking this child to the police! And neither you nor him is stopping me! (She runs to coffin door).

BILL: What's going on?

(BILL gets up, swings Nancy round as if to hit her, she cowers, he kisses her on the mouth - she pulls away and then sobs and hugs him as a protector).

NANCY: Bill, Bi-ill.

FAGIN: I- I didn't mean no harm, my dears.

BILL: She's alright now. But she's strong when her temper is up. You're too sharp with her, Fagin, you should soften your tongue with gin.

FAGIN: It's the worst of having to deal with women, but they're clever and we need them. Dodger, show Oliver to bed.

DODGER: He had better not wear his best clothes?

FAGIN: Certainly not. The Dodger shall take off that best Sunday suit, my dear, for fear it might get stolen! (Rubs hands and caresses Oliver's cheek - DODGER takes him off)

OLIVER: Get off me!!

DODGER: Temper, temper!! Eh!

BILL: (Leaves with Nancy) Good night Jew. (Nancy makes sign of the cross against Fagin who smiles and opens the coffin door for them).

FAGIN: Good night, my dears.

(Door shuts, FAGIN draws his own fingers down the door. DODGER reappears).

DODGER: (Lights pipe) What a lark, eh!

FAGIN: Dodger, I don't like the look of that Nancy. How would you like to earn yourself a bright shining, golden guinea?

DODGER: (Takes money) Just tell me what to do.

FAGIN: I want you to follow Nancy and tell me where she goes, who she sees and what she says. A golden guinea if you do it well, and that's more than I ever gave for such a pleasant piece of work.

DODGER: Like falling off a log. (Exits).

FAGIN: That was the worst thing I ever did in my whole life

(THE THREE Cripples pub. A pub sign hung on the gallows.)

FAGIN: And now, ladies and gentlemen, I call on you all to be witnesses to Nancy's betrayal of her own family, of her very own gang.

BILL: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Three Cripple, one of the finest pubs in London and tonight, you are in for a treat!! Because tonight you are going to hear one of the finest singers in England – put yer hands together for Cockney Nancy!!

(NANCY enters. The rest with beer mugs stand in front of the stage using the coffin as a raised stage and an opportunity to look up Nancy's dress as she sings her song. They join in the chorus.

NANCY: My mother said always look under the bed
Before you blow the candle out
In case there is a man about!
I always do, you can make a bet
But its never been my luck to find a man there yet!

All: Tra la la, tra la la! It's never her luck to find a man there yet!

NANCY: (Serious & drunk) What a life, boys, what a life! What a disappointment!
(Sings) The girl next door had burglars in
Beneath her bed one tarried,
She caught him and reformed him
In two weeks they were married!
But oh it did up set me girls
Lord knows how I did fret
Though I poked beneath my bed
There was no man there yet- tra la la tra la la!

ALL: Though she poked beneath her bed there was no man there yet!

(DODGER lies down as if to sleep. Puts hat over his face.)

BILL: That's enough now, nancy – come home to bed.

NANCY: I'll follow you – you go on. I won't be lonmg...

BILL: Very well...

(BILL goes.)

NANCY: Staying the night, Dodge?

DODGER: (From under hat.) Yeh.

NANCY: Goodnight, then.

DODGER: 'night.

NANCY looks around her and leaves furtively out, followed by DODGER as BROWNLOW takes the stage sighing over the portrait of Agnes.

BROWNLOW: O, Agnes. I feel like I have lost another child. Oliver Twist won't return now. He stole my book and he stole my money. I thought I recognised some honesty in his face, in his voice. How could I be so wrong.

(Knocking at the door – it's Nancy.)

BROWNLOW: Mrs Grimwig, would you answer the door?

NANCY: Let me in! I have information for Lord Brownlow!!

(NANCY is being tailed by DODGER.)

BROWNLOW: What is the meaning of this!

NANCY: Let me in, please! Hear me, I beg you or you will never see young Oliver again.

BROWNLOW: Oliver? Oliver Twist? Speak in heaven's name!

(As NANCY enters DODGER sneaks through the door and eavesdrops.)

NANCY: I am the woman who stole Oliver from you when he went to pay for the books.

BROWNLOW: Mrs Grimwig – call for the police!!

NANCY: No, sir, not the police. Do not judge me.(Standing) Thank heaven on your knees that you were never born to cold, hunger, drunkeness and worse as I have been.

BROWNLOW Yes, yes but what of Oliver, where is he?

NANCY: I will try and bring Oliver to you, tomorrow night.

BROWNLOW What do you want?

NANCY: I don't want anything. I don't want anything – except a promise: you must promise me solemnly that any information you gain from the boy will not be used against any of us that have held him? Devils they are, but I will not betray them to the police. Promise me now or I cannot save Oliver.

BROWNLOW I promise you most solemnly.

NANCY: Then meet me on London Bridge tomorrow night, at midnight - and come alone.

DODGER: Blimey!

BROWNLOW I shall be there. At midnight. Wait, do you know anything more about Oliver Twist?

NANCY: He was raised in a workhouse. His mother's name was Agnes.

BROWNLOW: Agnes! Agnes? Are you sure?

NANCY: Yes. Let me go! Tomorrow night.

BROWNLOW Goodnight.

NANCY: I must go. I've stayed too long.

BROWNLOW: I shall be there. (NANCY goes.) This is remarkable. Oliver Twist is my grandson! The child of my Agnes. But that means those kidnappers know the shame of my family!! Mrs Grimwig! Mrs Grimwig, tell the houseboy to follow her. And send for the police. We will hang the lot of them. Thieves, whores and kidnappers. Death to them all! And I shall have my sweet Oliver again - the face, the features, the smile I should have known, he is the child of my Agnes! I shall hold him in my arms! Death to those that stand in my way! Mrs Grimwig! Mrs Grimwig!

(Nancy runs furtively across the stage. To the same melody/form as NATURE BLED ON HEAT!! AND MOOR - a menacing song is sung. BILL SIKES staggers on stage and collapses. FAGIN and DODGER meet.)

Fagin: Well?

DODGER: (Nods) Nancy!

(FAGIN and DODGER are searching for BILL. Nancy vanishes).

Bleeding skies and lashing rain

Smog and cloud hide London's shame
Blackened sky and rolling thunder
London's laughter see him stagger
Wonder where he can find shelter
Helter skelter through the rain
Only gin will numb his brain -
Ease the nagging..pa-a-a-ain. (BILL falls).

DODGER: (Finding him) Here 'e is. In the gutter! (DODGER splashes water in BILL's face. BILL grabs DODGER and attacks him. FAGIN and DODGER wrestle BILL to the ground.)

FAGIN: Listen, Bill, Bill, can you hear me?

BILL: 'Ere, Fagin? (incoherent) Are you dead and become a ghost?

FAGIN: What do you mean, Bill?

BILL: How is it you're out of your den?

FAGIN: Bad news, Bill. We have been betrayed to the police.

BILL: Blabbin? (Pulling himself up suddenly) Who? How? Why?

FAGIN: It was one of our own gang, Bill, our own family. Dodger saw them, heard them going to the Police. One of our own.

BILL: Traitor! I'll tear out their heart. Who? Who! (Grabbing DODGER).

DODGER: It wasn't quite like that.

FAGIN: (Silencing him) Sold us to the Police, sold us to Death!

BILL: Who!

DODGER: Leave off! (Pulls away and then spitefully) It was Nancy. (Pause)

FAGIN: It was Nancy.

BILL: Hell's teeth! (Lets out inhuman roar).

FAGIN: A word, Bill, only a word. (Catches hold of him). You won't be too violent, will you, Bill? I mean not too violent for safety? (Bill moans and pushes FAGIN aside and exits).

(NANCY enters and lays the coffin down as a bed, singing snatches from "My Mother Said" she does look under the bed. But "No Bill" she sighs. This is cross referred to "MURDER" chorically sung as BILL swings across the Scaffold and enters as if through a window).

NANCY: My, Bill, you gave me a fright! Come to bed, love.

BILL: Get up!

NANCY: Let me light a lamp.

BILL: Leave it be. There's enough light for what I've got to do?

NANCY: Bill, why do you look at me like that?(BILL who has been watching her)

BILL: You know, you she-devil! You were watched tonight. Every word you said was heard. Traitor!

NANCY: No! I never betrayed you, Bill. (He hits her). I have been true to you! Even to Fagin, Dodger, the boys. I never said a word against all of us. We are all the scum, the mud, the dregs we stick together. What else have we got? charity? The Police? I hate 'em Bill as much as I loves you, I-

BILL: Talkin'! I hates talkin'! Traitor!(He hits her again1 knocking her behind the curtain, raining blows and blood seeps across the cloth. The chorus rises to a climax then silence, he pulls back the curtain and light floods in - he starts. The dog howls and cries, hanging his head he creeps out. DODGER enters and sees the body, retches and cries under breath: "Nancy! Nancy! Murder!" the sung chant builds, then Dodger wraps the bloody body in a sheet and drags it away as FAGIN speaks):

FAGIN: Of all the crimes that have been committed under the cover of darkness within great London since night first hung over the city, was this really the worst? What of the workhouse? What about the children whose lives were crushed in the mines and in the factories. Was the mob and the law sent out after those responsible for those crimes? No! o, no! But it comes to the deeds of a common criminal like Bill Sikes then the likes of Lord Brownlow call for the police, the police will call for the newspapers, the newspapers will be sold in pubs and in the gutters and very soon a great mob will gather in the streets of London baying and screaming for blood, justice, truth and revenge – a mob, a riot , a pogrom even ... and where else would I find a mob than here before me? (Indicates audience). I need you to all howl and cry: BLOOD! The blood of Bill Sikes, Dodger, Fagin and all the gang! Let us try it out my dears. (Improvise if they are not loud enough he can accuse them of being liberals and Christians.)And now the chase is on! Justice!
(Raises handkerchief all shout: BLOOD!)

(BILL is caught in a follow spot in the theatre balcony or on the lighting grid, a Policeman chases. BLOOD! Allowing time for a quick change BROWNLOW runs through audience to the front of the stage, as Police whistles sound):

(Rushes off as DODGER, OLIVER and FAGIN take the stage. "Oliver alone" theme sung. There is a frantic knocking at the door).

BILL: Let me in, damn you! Let me in, damn your eyes. (FAGIN lets in BILL. BILL searches the den.) Have you nothing to say to me? They're after my blood! (Pause) Do you mean to sell me, or let me lie here till the hunt is over?

FAGIN: You may stop here, if you think it's safe, my dear.

BILL: Is Nancy..buried? (All shake heads). No? Why isn't she? Why do you keep such ugly things above the ground? (All silent) Say something can't you?

Dodger, Dodger, don't you know me?

DODGER: Don't come near me, monster!

FAGIN: We have all been made into monsters.

DODGER: All I ever done was steal handkerchiefs! Listen to them: BLOOD! They'll have our blood, damn you (To Bill:) Get back, Bill! I ain't afraid of you. Witness me Oliver, I ain't frightened of him. (Runs to top of scaffold and shins up it). Murder! Murder! Help! Sikes is here. Bill Sikes is here! Help! Murder!

FAGIN: (Sadly) Now, Oliver Twist, it is time for us to die so you can live happily ever after. (Unties Oliver raises handkerchief). BLOOD! BLOOD!

DODGER: Here, in here, Police!

BILL: I'm not finished yet, and neither is that damn Oliver who brought us to this. Come here vermin. (DODGER jumps off the scaffold and escapes.) (TO Oliver) Come here you, take this rope and onto the roof!

OLIVER: Fagin, help me....

BILL: Do your worst I'll cheat you yet! Murderers! (Shakes fist at public)

BLOOD! (Climbs up gallows with the unwilling help of OLIVER.

BILL: Curse you all, the whole world! Damn life! Damn you, Dodger! Damn you all!

OLIVER: (On gallows still) Help! Help!

Policeman: (Played by Fagin actor) There he is! There's the murderer! There's Sikes!

(Policeman fires rifle - BILL he is hit, he screams staggers back and drops to the floor).

FAGIN: Dead! Bill dead! Nancy dead! Little Joe dead! And now it is time for Fagin to die. Death: that is the story of Oliver Twist! And I'm not guilty! I'm not ready to go yet! Let me go! (Struggling as he is tied and hooded) Let me go, let me go back to the children! Who will look after them? Lord Brownlow? If I'm so bad why am so poor? You have no right to kill me! What right have you to butcher me? No right! (Fading as hood put on) No right! No right! Please, the murderer is Brownlow!! Please, please! (The Hangman connects Fagin to the harness/noose and stands back. Fagin begins to move. He dances out his innocence with the rope around his neck a lament is sung.)

CHORUS: (sung) A poor man, a poor man, a poor man.
Not a rustle, not a breath.
Stillness, guilty, death.

Death death. Guilty guilty.

(The trapdoor is sprung and FAGIN hangs. His arm jerks up and the red handkerchief waves for a moment then drops).

THE END.

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