

ACT TWO

SCENE THREE

THIEVES KITCHEN

Enter SIKES twisting OLIVER's arm, followed by NANCY and BET.

NANCY hangs respectable shawls, hats etc around the fireplace.

FAGIN

Aaah! So you've come home again, have you Oliver my dear?

DODGER

Look at his togs, Fagin!

All the boys laugh and sneer.

CHARLEY

E's got books too. Quite the little gent, ain't he?

He grabs the parcel of books from OLIVER. The other boys are pulling OLIVER about. One pulls his cap off, puts it on himself at a rakish angle and struts around the room. The other boys roar with laughter. Meanwhile, DODGER is systematically going through OLIVER'S pockets.

FAGIN

(with an ironical bow)

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

DODGER

Cor! Look at this!

DODGER draws forth the five-pound note from one of OLIVER's pockets. BILL SIKES steps forward, but before he can get there, FAGIN grabs the note.

SIKES

Hullo, what's that? That's mine, Fagin.

FAGIN

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

BOYS laugh but SIKES glares at them and they stop as one. He gives Sikes the books but he throws them to the ground in disgust. Dodger picks them up.

SIKES

If that ain't mine - mine and Nancy's, that is, I'll take the boy back again!

FAGIN stops in his tracks.

SIKES

Come on, 'and over

FAGIN

(imploringly)

This is hardly fair, Bill - hardly fair, is it, Nancy?

SIKES

Fair or not fair, 'and it over you avaricious old skeleton, Give it 'ere!

At which he plucks the note from between FAGIN's finger and thumb.

That's for our share of the trouble and not half enough neither.

He takes the books from Dodger and gives them to Fagin.

Here. You can 'ave the books. Start a library.

He laughs and makes to exit.

OLIVER

You can't keep the books or the money! They belong to Mr Brownlow and if he finds out you've got them he'll be down here after you.

There is a silence as OLIVER's words sink in.

SIKES

(Advancing towards OLIVER menacingly.)

So 'e'll be down here, will 'e?

NANCY

Leave 'im alone, Bill!

SIKES

(glares at NANCY, then turns to OLIVER)

What did you tell him about us?

OLIVER

Nothing.

THE BOYS, sensing impending violence, hide themselves in corners.

SIKES

That remains to be seen - but if we found out you said anything - anything out of place. . . Fagin, I'll wager that young scoundrel's told him everything.

OLIVER

(as he tries to escape)

Help! Help!

BILL grabs him, OLIVER hits BIL across the face.

BILL

Hit me would you?

He pushes off OLIVER and makes for his cudgel. NANCY rushes forward and grabs BILL'S arm.

NANCY

No leave him alone Bill!

BILL

Stand off me, or I'll split yer head open!

NANCY

Go on, then kill me! You'll have to before I'll let you lay a hand on that boy!

BILL

Keep out o'this - I'm warnin' you.

He flings her across the room

FAGIN

All right, all right! We've got him back! What's the matter with you?

NANCY rises to her feet.

SIKES

The girl's gone mad, I think, Fagin.

NANCY

No she hasn't Fagin, don't think it.

FAGIN

Then keep quiet, will yer. All this violence.

SIKES

Tell 'em all about us would you?

NANCY

I won't stand by and see it done, Bill.

FAGIN

Why Nancy, you're wonderful tonight. Such talent! What an actress!

NANCY

Am I? Take care I don't overdo it. 'Cos if I do, I'm goin' to put my mark on some of you, and I don't care if I hang for it!

SIKES

You? Do you know who you are, and what you are?

NANCY

(hysterically)

Ah, yes, I know all about it. You don't have to tell me!