

Oliver Twist

By Charles Dickens

EPISODE THREE

- NARRATOR** Mr Fang, the police magistrate, sits at one end of the room and at the other, in a sort of wooden pen, Oliver stands, trembling. The old gentlemen, whose pocket had been picked by the Dodger and Charley Bates, stands before the magistrate's desk, looking anxiously towards the trembling boy. Mr Fang is looking sternly at the gentleman.
- FANG** Who are you?
- BROWNLOW** My name sir, is Brownlow.
- FANG** Officer! What's he charged with?
- OFFICER** He's not charged at all, your worship. He appears against the boy.
- FANG** The charge?
- OFFICER** Stealing a handkerchief. Though upon careful examination, I have found nothing on the boy's person.
- BROWNLOW** I saw him running away - though I do not believe him to be the actual thief, but perhaps connected with the thieves. I ask that you deal as leniently with him as justice will allow. The poor boy has been hurt already. And I fear that he is ill.
- FANG** Come, none of your tricks here, you young vagabond. What's your name? Eh?
- OFFICER** He looks like he's a' goin to faint, sir.
- FANG** Stuff and nonsense!
- BROWNLOW** Take care of him, officer he'll fall down.
- FANG** Stand away, officer; let him fall, if he likes.
- OFFICER** He's availed himself of your permission, sir.



- FANG He's shamming. Let him lie there; he'll soon be tired of it. Clerk of the court! The boy is sentenced to three months - hard labour! Clear the office!
- BOOK-SELLER Stop, stop! Don't take him away! For Heaven's sake stop a moment!
- FANG Who is this? Turn this man out. Clear the office!
- BOOK-SELLER I will speak. I saw it all. I am the book-seller. I am a witness, sir. I saw three boys: two others and the prisoner here. They were loitering on the opposite side of the way, when this gentleman was reading. The robbery was committed by another boy. I saw it done - and I saw that this boy was perfectly horrified by it.
- FANG The boy is discharged. Clear the office!
- BROWNLOW I'll -
- FANG Clear the office! Do you hear? Clear the office!
- NARRATOR Outside in the yard, Mr Brownlow finds little Oliver Twist lying on his back on the pavement, with his shirt unbuttoned, and his face a deadly white.
- BROWNLOW Poor boy! Call a coach, somebody, pray. Directly!
- NARRATOR A coach is called and it stops at length before a neat house in a quiet, shady street. Here Mr Brownlow instructs his housekeeper to prepare a bed in which Oliver is carefully and comfortably placed.
- BROWNLOW Poor boy, poor boy. Why, bless my soul! There is something in his face. No, no. It must be imagination.
- NARRATION For many days Oliver remained insensible to all the goodness of his new friends. Until, weak and thin, he awoke at last from what seemed to have been a long and troubled dream. A motherly old lady, very neatly and precisely dressed, was sitting at needle-work in an arm-chair close by.
- OLIVER Thank you, thank you.
- MRS BEDWIN What a grateful little dear. What would his mother feel if she had sat by him as I have and could see him now!
- OLIVER Perhaps she does see me; perhaps she has sat by me. I almost feel as if she had.
- MRS BEDWIN That was the fever, my dear.



- OLIVER I suppose it was, because heaven is a long way off.
- MRS BEDWIN Oh, save us! The poor child!
- NARRATOR In three days' time Oliver was able to sit in a chair, well propped up with pillows, in the room of the housekeeper, Mrs Bedwin. On the wall, just opposite his chair, hung a portrait from which Oliver could not take his eyes.
- OLIVER What a beautiful, mild face that lady's is! Is that a picture of a real person, ma'am?
- MRS BEDWIN Yes. That's a portrait.
- OLIVER Whose, ma'am?
- MRS BEDWIN Why, really, my dear, I don't know.
- OLIVER It is so pretty. But the eyes look so sorrowful.
- MRS BEDWIN Let me wheel your chair round to the other side and then you won't see it.
- BROWNLOW Poor boy! Ahem I'm rather hoarse this morning, Mrs Bedwin. I'm afraid I have caught cold.
- MRS BEDWIN I hope not, sir.
- BROWNLOW Indeed. How do you feel, my dear?
- OLIVER Very happy, sir. And very grateful indeed, for your goodness to me.
- BROWNLOW Good boy. Why! What's this? Mrs Bedwin, look there!
- NARRATOR Mr Brownlow is pointing to the picture over 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.
- But what of Oliver's young companions: The Dodger and Charley Bates? Fagin's den.
- FAGIN Tell me Dodger! Where's Oliver?
- DODGER You're throttling me!
- FAGIN Speak out!
- DODGER The police got him. And that's about it all. Come, let go o' me, will you!



- FAGIN Stop that roarin', Charley!
- SIKES Why, what the blazes is in the wind now!
- FAGIN Is that you, Bill? You boys - get out! Off you go!
- SIKES Come in, you sneaking warmint; wot are you stopping outside for, as if you was ashamed of your master! Come in!
- NARRATOR The man who growled out these words to his dog is a stoutly-built fellow of about five-and-thirty, in a black coat and very soiled, drab breeches. He has a beard of three days' growth, and two scowling eyes - one of which displays symptoms of having been recently damaged by a blow.
- SIKES What are you up to, you covetous, avaricious, in-sa-ti-a-ble old fence? I wonder they don't murder you!
- FAGIN Hush! Hush! Mr Sikes; don't speak so loud!
- SIKES None of your mistering. You know my name: out with it! I shan't disgrace it when the time comes.
- FAGIN Well, well, then - Bill Sikes. You seem out of humour, Bill.
- SIKES Perhaps I am. Fetch me a drink. And mind you don't poison it.
- NARRATOR After swallowing two of three glasses of spirits, Mr Sikes listens to the Dodger's account of the cause and manner of Oliver's capture.
- FAGIN I'm afraid, that he may say something that will get us into trouble, Bill.
- SIKES What? If he hasn't peached on us and is put away, there's no fear till he comes out again. And if he isn't put away, then he must be taken care of. You must get hold of him somehow.
- FAGIN We must.
- SIKES And somebody must find out wot's doing at the police office.
- FAGIN But who?
- NANCY Bill?
- SIKES/FAGIN Nancy.
- SIKES She'll go, Fagin.



- NANCY No, she won't, Fagin.
- SIKES Yes, she will.
- NARRATOR And by dint of alternate threats, promises, and bribes, the lady in question was persuaded to undertake the task. Accordingly, with a clean white apron tied over her gown and her untidy hair now neatly turned up, Miss Nancy made her way to the police-office to enquire with piteous lamentations of her 'own dear brother'. And the officer taking pity, told Nancy that her 'brother' had been taken by a gentleman to a house somewhere near Pentonville.
- FAGIN We must know where he is, my dears, he must be found. If he means to blab on us among his new friends we'll have to stop his mouth.
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- NARRATOR A room in the house in Pentonville. Now that Oliver is feeling better Mr Brownlow would like a word with him...
- OLIVER Oh, don't tell you are going to send me away, sir! Don't turn me out to wander the streets again!
- BROWNLOW My dear child, you need not be afraid of my deserting you, unless you give me cause.
- OLIVER I never, never will, sir.
- BROWNLOW You say you are an orphan, without a friend in the world. Let me hear your story where you come from who brought you up and how you got into the company in which I found you. Speak the truth, and you shall not be friendless while I live.
- NARRATOR Oliver is on the point of beginning his tale, when, as fate would have it, Mrs Bedwin enters with a small parcel of books, which Mr Brownlow had that morning purchased from the identical book-seller who has already figured in this story.
- BROWNLOW Stop the shop-boy, Mrs Bedwin! There is something to go back.
- MRS BEDWIN He has gone, sir.
- BROWNLOW Call after him. He is a poor man and the books are not yet paid for. There are some books to be taken back, too.
- OLIVER Let me take them, if you please, sir. I'll run all the way, sir.



- BROWNLOW Then here are the books and a five pound note. Put that in your jacket pocket. And remember, you will bring me back ten shillings change.
- OLIVER I won't be ten minutes, sir.
- NARRATOR Mr Brownlow pulls out his watch and places it on the table.
- BROWNLOW He'll be back in twenty minutes, at the longest.
- NARRATOR Oliver, with the books under his arm, is walking along, thinking how happy and contented and fortunate he is when he is startled by a young woman screaming out very loud.
- NANCY Oh, my dear brother!
- NARRATOR Hadn't Oliver seen this young woman before? Yes: in Fagin's den!
- OLIVER Don't. Let go of me. Who are you? Why are you stopping me?
- NANCY Oh my gracious! I have found him! Oh! Oliver! Oh, you naughty boy, to make me suffer such distress on your account! Come home directly, you cruel boy! Come!
- VOICE 1 What's the matter, ma'am?
- NANCY He ran away, near a month ago, from his parents, who are hard-working and respectable people.
- VOICE 2 Young wretch!
- VOICE 3 Go home you little brute!
- OLIVER I don't know her. I haven't got a sister, or a father or mother either. I'm an orphan; I live at Pentonville.
- NANCY Only hear him, how he braves it out!
- SIKES What the devil's this? Oliver! Come home to your poor mother. Come home directly.
- OLIVER I don't know them. Help! Help!
- SIKES Come here! Help! Oh yes, I'll help you, you young rascal!
- NARRATOR In another moment Oliver is dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow streets and forced along them at a pace which renders the few cries he dares to make unintelligible.



NARRATOR	The gas-lamps are lighted now. Still the old gentleman, Mr Brownlow, sits with his watch before him.
	Fagin's den.
CHARLEY	Oh my!
SIKES	Get in!
OLIVER	Please. Let me go back -
NANCY	Don't hurt him!
CHARLEY	Here he is, Fagin! Look at him! Look at his togs and his books, too! Nothing but a gentleman, Fagin!
FAGIN	Off with these.
OLIVER	No! They are clothes they bought for me; please!
FAGIN	Delighted to see you looking so well, my dear. The Artful shall give you another suit, my dear, for fear you should spoil this Sunday one. Oh, and a five pound note!
OLIVER	No!
SIKES	That's mine, Fagin.
FAGIN	No, no, Bill, my dear. Mine, Bill, mine. You shall have the books.
SIKES	Give it here, you avaricious old skeleton. You can keep the books.
OLIVER	No! They belong to the good, kind gentleman who took me into his house. Please - send them back - he'll think I stole them!
FAGIN	You're right, Oliver, you're right: he will think you have stolen 'em. Ha! Ha! It couldn't have happened better if we'd planned it!
OLIVER	No! Help! Help! Police!
FAGIN	Get him boys!
CHARLEY	Stop thief!
NANCY	Keep back the dog, Bill!
SIKES	Let them get him.



- NANCY Keep back the dog; he'll tear the boy to pieces.
- SIKES Serve him right! Stand off from me, Nancy – or I'll split your head against the wall.
- NANCY I don't care, Bill, the child shan't be torn down by the dog unless you kill me first!
- SIKES Shan't he! I'll soon do that, if you don't keep off.
- NARRATOR Sikes flings Nancy across the room just as Fagin and the boys return, dragging Oliver with them.
- FAGIN So Oliver. You wanted to get away, my dear, did you? Wanted to get assistance; called for the police, did you? We'll cure you of that, my young master!
- NANCY No! I won't stand by and see you hurt the boy. You've got him, what more would you have? Let him be - or I shall put that mark on some of you that will bring me to the gallows before my time.
- FAGIN Why, Nancy! Ha! Ha! My dear, you are putting on an act.
- NANCY Am I!
- FAGIN Bill?
- SIKES Burn my body, keep quiet or I'll quiet you for a good long time to come.
- NANCY I wish I'd been struck dead in the street before I had lent a hand in bringing him here. The boy'll be a thief, a liar, all that's bad, from this night forth. Isn't that enough for you, without hurting him?
- FAGIN Come, Sikes, we must have civil words; civil words.
- NANCY 'Civil words'! Civil words, you villain! I thieved for you when I was a child not half as old as this boy! And I've been in the same trade for twelve years since.
- FAGIN Well, well, and, if you have, it's your living!
- NANCY Aye, it is my living! And you're the wretch that drove me to it!
- FAGIN Charley, take the boy's clothes and lock him in the back.
- NARRATOR Oliver is bundled into a back room where, sick and weary, he finally falls sound asleep. But, still in the house in Pentonville, Mr Brownlow sits with his watch before him.