

# Oliver Twist

By Charles Dickens

## EPISODE FIVE

- NARRATOR Evening. Fagin's den. He sits, brooding over a dull, smoky fire.
- TOBY Faguey?
- FAGIN Toby Crackit? What alone?
- TOBY How are you, Faguey? Don't look at me like that. I can't talk till I've eat and drunk; so produce the sustenance, and let me have a fill for the first time these three days!
- FAGIN What we have is on the table.
- TOBY First and foremost, Faguey...
- FAGIN Yes, yes!
- TOBY First and foremost, Faguey, how's Bill?
- FAGIN What!
- TOBY Why, you don't mean to say -
- FAGIN Mean! Where are they? Sikes and the boy! Where are they hiding? Why have they not been here?
- TOBY We failed.
- FAGIN I know it. The newspapers have it. What more?
- TOBY They fired and hit the boy.
- FAGIN *(Gasp)*
- TOBY We cut over the fields at the back, with him between us - straight as the crow flies - through hedge and ditch. They gave chase. The whole country was awake and the dogs upon us.
- FAGIN The boy!?



TOBY Bill had him on his back. We stopped to take him between us. His head hung down and he was cold. They were close upon our heels every man for himself. We parted company and left him lying in a ditch. Alive or dead, that's all I know about him. Faguey?

NARRATOR The Three Cripples Public House, Saffron Hill. Breathless, Fagin enters: he needs to find out if 'he' has been here. Who is this 'he'? Someone we've not met before; but Fagin has...

FAGIN Is he here?

LANDLORD No. He won't stir till it's all safe.

FAGIN Will he be here tonight?

LANDLORD Monks, do you mean?

FAGIN Hush! Yes.

LANDLORD Certain. I expected him here before now. If you'll wait ten minutes, he'll be -

FAGIN No, no. Tell him I came here to see him and that he must come to me tonight. No, say tomorrow. Tomorrow will be time enough.

LANDLORD Nothing more?

FAGIN Not a word now.

NARRATOR Then, to Sikes's residence.

FAGIN Nancy?

NANCY You.

FAGIN Toby is back. But not Bill.

NANCY He's not here.

FAGIN And where do you think Bill is now, my dear? And the poor little child! Left in a ditch, Nance. Only think!

NANCY I'll be glad to have him away from my eyes and to know that the worst is over. The sight of him turns me against myself and all of you.



- FAGIN Listen to me, Nance. If Bill comes back and leaves the boy behind...if Bill fails to restore him to me murder him yourself if you would have him escape the hangman. And do it the moment he sets foot in this room, or mind me, it will be too late!
- NANCY What is all this?
- FAGIN What is it? When the boy's worth hundreds of pounds to me! Am I to lose what chance has given me through the whims of those that I could whistle away the lives of! Bah!
- NARRATOR Later, Fagin turns his face homeward, leaving Nancy asleep, with her head upon the table. Or is she asleep? No. Nancy, wrapped in her shawl, is hurrying to follow the old man. It was within an hour of midnight when, as Fagin fumbled in his pocket for the door-key, a dark figure emerged from the projecting entrance, which lay in deep shadow.
- MONKS Fagin!
- FAGIN Ah! Is that -
- MONKS Yes! I have been here these two hours. Where the devil have you been?
- FAGIN On your business, my dear. All night.
- MONKS Oh, of course! Well; and what's come of it?
- FAGIN Nothing good. Follow me, my dear.
- MONKS But nothing bad, I hope? It's dark as the grave in here.
- FAGIN Shut the door.
- FAGIN Hush!
- MONKS Where are you?
- FAGIN Here. Follow me up the stairs.
- NARRATOR Though nothing of the conversation was distinguishable beyond a few disjointed words here and there, a listener might easily have perceived that Fagin appeared to be defending himself against some remarks of the stranger - and that the latter was in a state of considerable irritation. Were they talking about Oliver? Of what interest was Oliver to the stranger? And why did he seem to hate him so?



- MONKS                    Why not have kept him here among the rest and made a sneaking pick-pocket of him?
- FAGIN                    Only hear him!
- MONKS                    Why, do you mean to say you couldn't have done it, if you'd chosen? Haven't you done it with other boys, scores of times? If you had patience for twelve months, at most, couldn't you have got him convicted and sent away - perhaps for life?
- FAGIN                    Who would that have served, my dear?
- MONKS                    Me!
- FAGIN                    What could I do? Send him out with the Dodger and Charley? We had enough of that the very first time, my dear; I trembled for us all.
- MONKS                    That was not my doing.
- FAGIN                    No, no, my dear! And I don't quarrel with it now because if it had never happened you might never have clapped eyes on the boy to notice him and so led to the discovery that it was him you were looking for. Well! I got him back for you by means of the girl and then she begins to favour him.
- MONKS                    Throttle the girl!
- FAGIN                    As soon as the boy begins to be like the others she'll care no more for him than for a block of wood. I know her. You want him made a thief. If he is alive, I can make him one from this time. And, it's not likely mind, but if the worst comes to the worst and he is dead -
- MONKS                    It's no fault of mine if he is! Mind that, Fagin! I had no hand in it. Anything but his death, I told you from the first. I won't shed blood - it's always found out and haunts a man besides. If they shot him dead, I was not the cause: do you hear me? Fire this infernal den! What's that?
- FAGIN                    What! Where?
- MONKS                    There! The shadow! I saw the shadow of a woman, in a cloak and bonnet, pass by the doorway like a breath!
- FAGIN                    It's your imagination.
- MONKS                    I'll swear I saw it!

FAGIN Pah! Besides ourselves, there's not a creature in the house except Toby Crackit and the boys and they're safe enough: locked in below.

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NARRATOR Oliver, on the spot where Sikes had left him, awakes. His left arm, bandaged in a cloth, hangs heavy and useless at his side. The bandage is saturated with blood. He is so weak that he can scarcely raise himself. But urged by a creeping sickness at his heart, which seemed to warn him that if he lay there he must surely die, he gets upon his feet.

At no great distance there is a house. They might have pity on him there and if not, it would be better to die near human beings, than in the lonely open fields. But that garden wall! It is the very same house they had attempted to rob. Oliver totters across the lawn, climbs the steps and knocks faintly at the door.

GILES A boy! T'is he! Here he is! Here's one of the thieves, ma'am! One of the thieves, Miss! Wounded! I shot him, miss and Brittles held the light.

BRITTLES I did. A lantern, miss.

ROSE Giles!

GILES Don't be frightened, Miss; I ain't much injured. He didn't make a very desperate resistance, miss! I was soon too many for him. You stay where you are up there, Miss.

ROSE Hush! You frighten my aunt as much as the thieves did. Is the poor creature much hurt?

GILES Wounded desperate, miss!

ROSE Poor fellow. Wait quietly a moment while I speak to aunt.

NARRATOR With a footstep as soft and gentle as the voice, the speaker trips away. She soon returns, with the direction that the wounded person is to be carried, carefully, upstairs to Mr Giles's room and that Brittles is to saddle the pony and take himself instantly to Chertsey from which place he is to send, with all speed, a constable and a doctor.

GILES But won't you take one look at him, first, miss? Not one little peep, miss?

ROSE Not now, for the world. Oh! treat him kindly, Giles for my sake!

- NARRATOR                    In a handsome room two ladies sit at a well-spread breakfast table. Mr Giles, the butler, now dressed with scrupulous care in a full suit of black, is in attendance upon them. Of the two ladies, one is well advanced in years; the younger, not past seventeen, is in the lovely bloom and spring-time of womanhood.
- The doctor arrives and is taken up immediately. He was absent, much longer than either he or the ladies had anticipated. At length he returns, looking very mysterious, and closes the door, carefully.
- LOSBERNE                    This is a very extraordinary thing, Mrs Maylie.
- MRS MAYLIE                 He is not in danger, I hope, Doctor Losberne?
- LOSBERNE                    Why, that would not be an extraordinary thing, under the circumstances; though I don't think he is. Have you seen this thief?
- MRS MAYLIE                 No.
- LOSBERNE                    Nor heard anything about him?
- MRS MAYLIE                 No.
- GILES                         I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I was going to tell you about him.
- NARRATOR                    The fact is that Mr Giles had not been able to bring himself to the admission that he had only shot a boy. He had been given such praise for his bravery that he could not help but postpone the explanation...
- MRS MAYLIE                 Rose wished to see the man, but I wouldn't hear of it.
- LOSBERNE                    There is nothing very alarming in his appearance. Have you any objection to see him in my presence?
- MRS MAYLIE                 If it be necessary, certainly not.
- LOSBERNE                    Then I think it is necessary.
- NARRATOR                    The doctor, with Mrs Maylie on one arm and Rose beside him, opens the door to the room where Oliver is sleeping.
- LOSBERNE                    Now, let us hear what you think of him. He has not been shaved very recently but he don't look at all ferocious notwithstanding.
- ROSE                         Oh!
- MRS MAYLIE                 It's a child.



- ROSE                      The poor boy.
- NARRATOR                Upon the bed, in place of the ruffian they had expected to behold, lies Oliver: worn with pain and exhaustion and sunk into a deep sleep. His wounded arm, bound and splintered, is crossed upon his breast.
- MRS MAYLIE              What can this mean? This poor child can never have been the pupil of robbers!
- LOSBERNE                Crime like death, dear ladies, is not confined to the old and withered alone.
- ROSE                      But even if he has been wicked, think how young he is. Think that he may never have known a mother's love or the comfort of a home -
- LOSBERNE                Vice takes up her abode in many temples.
- ROSE                      But just think of the ill-usage - or the want of food or comfort - that may have driven him to herd with men who have forced him to guilt.
- LOSBERNE                My dear, crime and vice...
- ROSE                      Aunt, dear aunt, for mercy's sake, think of this, before you let them drag this sick child to a prison which must be the grave of all his chances of amendment.
- MRS MAYLIE              My child.
- ROSE                      Oh! As you love me and know that I have never felt the want of parents in your goodness and affection I might have been equally helpless and unprotected as this poor child. Have pity upon him before it is too late!
- MRS MAYLIE              My dear love, you think I would harm a hair of his head? Dr Losberne, what can I do to save him, sir?
- LOSBERNE                Let me think, ma'am; let me think. If you give me full permission to bully Giles and confound the constable then I can manage it. When the constable arrives he should be told the boy mustn't be moved or spoken to, on peril of his life. But I make this condition: that I shall examine him in your presence and that, if from what he says we judge that he is a real and thorough bad one (which is more than possible), he shall be left to his fate, without any farther interference on my part.
- ROSE                      Oh no, aunt!
- LOSBERNE                Oh yes, aunt! Is it a bargain?



- NARRATOR            It was evening when Oliver awoke. And though he was still very weak his mind was so troubled to disclose something that Dr Losberne deemed it better to give him the opportunity, rather than to insist upon his remaining quiet until the next morning, which he would otherwise have done.
- The conference was a long one. Oliver told them all his simple history and was often compelled to stop, by pain and want of strength. It was a solemn thing to hear the feeble voice of the sick child recounting a weary catalogue of the evils and calamities which hard men had brought upon him.
- GILES                    The constable has arrived, ma'am.
- NARRATOR            But what to do about Giles and the constable? Both gentlemen were sitting in the kitchen with Brittles, mugs of ale in their hands.
- GILES                    How is the patient tonight, sir?
- LOSBERNE            So-so. I am afraid you have got yourself into a scrape there, Mr Giles.
- GILES                    I hope you don't mean to say, sir, that he's going to die. If I thought it I should never be happy again, sir.
- LOSBERNE            That's not the point.
- GILES                    It's not, sir?
- LOSBERNE            Can you tell me - and the constable here this. Both of you! Can you swear that that boy upstairs is the boy that was put through the window last night? Out with it! Come! And pay attention to the reply, constable, will you? It's a simple question of identity, you will note.
- GIILES                  It is?
- LOSBERNE            I ask you again, are you on your solemn oaths able to identify that boy?
- GILES                    I am sure I thought it was the boy.
- LOSBERNE            Thought it was what boy? The housebreaker's boy?
- GILES                    I don't know; I really don't know. I - I couldn't swear to it.
- NARRATOR            The constable, finishing his ale, and concluding that Mr Giles was a precious, muddle-headed chap, departed the house. And that night, Oliver's pillow was smoothed by gentle hands and loveliness and virtue watched him as he slept.