

# Oliver Twist

By Charles Dickens

## EPISODE EIGHT

- NARRATOR** Rose passed a sleepless and anxious night. What course of action should she take? Should she seek assistance from Dr Losberne? But the good doctor might be too impetuous. Harry? She had just arrived at the desperate conclusion of writing to Harry when Oliver burst in...
- OLIVER** I've seen the gentleman! The gentleman who was so good to me!
- NARRATOR** Mr Brownlow had been found! Rose and Oliver hastened in a carriage to Mr Brownlow's home - and you can imagine the tears and embraces from the housekeeper, Mrs Bedwin, as she folded her dear boy Oliver in her arms.
- Rose, meanwhile, told Mr Brownlow in private everything that had befallen Oliver since he was seized from Mr Brownlow's care. She told him too of her interview with Nancy. What should she do? Mr Brownlow promised to call at the hotel at eight o'clock that evening. He would speak to the doctor, and Mrs Maylie too should be informed of all that had occurred.
- That night: eight o'clock at the hotel...
- LOSBERNE** Hang 'em all!
- ROSE** No, Dr Losberne!
- LOSBERNE** Well what's to be done? Are we to beg all these vagabonds to accept a hundred pounds or so apiece, as a mark of our esteem and some slight acknowledgment of their kindness to Oliver? Hang 'em all, I say!
- NARRATOR** Once Mr Brownlow has calmed the good doctor, he suggests they should decide a stratagem.
- LOSBERNE** With what object?
- BROWNLOW** To discover Oliver's parentage and regain for him the inheritance of which, if this story be true, he has been fraudulently deprived.
- LOSBERNE** Ah! I almost forgot that.



- BROWNLOW** It is quite clear that we shall have extreme difficulty in getting to the bottom of this mystery unless we can bring this man - Monks - upon his knees. That can only be done by a stratagem and by catching him when he is not surrounded by these people. For, suppose he were apprehended, we have no proof against him. He is not even so far as we know concerned with the gang in any of their robberies.
- LOSBERNE** Then, what is to be done?
- BROWNLOW** Before we can resolve upon any course of action it will be necessary to see this Nancy - to confirm she's willing to point out Monks for us, on the understanding that he is to be dealt with by us, and not by the law. Or, if she will not, or cannot do that, to have from her such a description of his person as will enable us to identify him. She cannot be seen until next Sunday night; this is Tuesday. I would suggest that in the meantime we remain perfectly quiet and keep these matters secret - even from Oliver himself.
- LOSBERNE** Should we call back Harry?
- NARRATOR** Rose blushes deeply, but does not make any audible objection to this motion. Nor does his mother, Mrs Maylie.
- On the Great North Road, advancing into London, come a long-limbed and knock-kneed male and a perspiring young woman. It is Noah Claypole and Charlotte, formerly of Sowerberry's, The Undertakers...
- NOAH** Come on, can't yer? What a lazybones yer are, Charlotte.
- NARRATOR** Charlotte is of a robust and hardy make: she needs to be to carry the heavy bundle strapped to her back. Her companion, Noah, is not encumbered with much luggage - merely a stick over his shoulder, from which dangles a small parcel wrapped in a handkerchief.
- NOAH** Come on, or I'll kick yer. Yer don't want Sowerberry catching up after us and having us taken back in a cart with handcuffs on. No! Though it were you took the money from the till. And I'm trustin' you with it. Ha ha! They won't find it on me. No. This 'ere public-house will do; and don't yer speak, except when yer spoke to.
- NARRATOR** The public house: 'The Three Cripples'.
- LANDLORD** Fagin. Strangers in the next room. From the country, but something in your way, or I'm mistaken.
- FAGIN** A ha!



- NOAH                    Yer know, Charlotte, I should like to be the captain of some band - that would suit me...
- FAGIN                    I like that fellow's looks!
- NOAH                    And if we could only get in with some gentleman of that sort. A gentleman as knows the business. Oh. Evening to yer, sir.
- FAGIN                    My dears, my dears!
- NARRATOR              And thus young Noah's wish comes true, for Fagin has now entered the bar and invites them to join him in his den.
- NOAH                    Now Mr Fagin, sir, what do you think would suit me now? Something not too trying for strength and not very dangerous, you know. Something in the sneaking way?
- FAGIN                    The sneaking, then. Ha, ha! Some conjurers, my friend, say that number three is the magic number, and some say number seven. It's neither. It's number one.
- NOAH                    Ha! Number one for ever!
- FAGIN                    You can't take care of yourself number one, without taking care of me, number one.
- NOAH                    Number two you mean?
- FAGIN                    No, I don't! I'm of the same importance to you, as you are to yourself.
- NOAH                    I say, yer a very nice man, and I'm very fond of yer but we ain't so thick together as all that.
- FAGIN                    Only consider. You've done what's a very pretty thing and what I love you for doing but what at the same time would put the cravat around your throat what's so very easily tied and so very difficult to unloose - in plain English, the halter, the rope, the hangman!
- NOAH                    No!
- FAGIN                    The gallows. To keep it at a distance is object number one with you.
- NOAH                    Of course it is. What do yer talk about such things for?



- FAGIN                    Only to show you my meaning clearly. To be able to do that, you depend upon me. To keep my little business all snug, I depend upon you. The first is your number one, the second my number one. The more you value your number one, the more careful you must be of mine; so we come at last to what I told you at first - that a regard for number one holds us all together.
- NOAH                     Oh! Yer a cunning old codger!
- FAGIN                    It's this mutual trust we have in each other that consoles me under heavy losses. My best hand was taken from me yesterday morning.
- NOAH                     You don't mean to say he died?
- FAGIN                    No, no, not so bad as that. Not quite so bad.
- NOAH                     What, I suppose he was –
- FAGIN                    Taken. Yes, he was taken and charged with attempting to pick a pocket and they found a silver snuff-box on him. Ah! He was worth fifty boxes and I'd give the price of as many to have him back. You should have known the Dodger, my dear; you should have known the Dodger.
- NOAH                     Well, but I shall know him, I hope.
- FAGIN                    I'm doubtful about it. If they don't get any fresh evidence it'll only be a summary conviction and we shall have him back again after six weeks or so. But, if they do, it's a case of lagging.
- NOAH                     Transportation.
- FAGIN                    They know what a clever lad he is. They'll make the Artful nothing less than a lifer. Ah Charley! What news?
- CHARLEY                Ee's a lifer! They found the gentleman that owns the snuff-box. To think of Jack Dawkins - the Dodger - the Artful Dodger - going away for a twopenny-halfpenny sneeze-box! Wot a blow it is!
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- NARRATOR              Sykes' - the house-breaker's - room. Sunday. Past the hour of eleven at night. Adept as she was in the arts of cunning, Nancy could not wholly conceal the effect which the knowledge of the step she had taken wrought upon her mind. She has grown pale and thin.
- SIKES                    Be midnight soon. Dark and heavy it is too. A good night for business.



NARRATOR Sikes and Fagin are talking...Nancy is crouched on a low seat...

FAGIN Ah! What a pity, Bill, my dear, that there's none quite ready to be done.

NARRATOR Agitated, Nancy rises from the chair and goes towards the door.

SIKES Nance? Where's the gal going to at this time of night?

NANCY Not far.

SIKES What answer's that? D'you hear me?

NANCY I don't know where.

SIKES Then I do. Nowhere. Sit down!

NANCY I want a breath of air.

SIKES Put your head out of the winder.

NANCY I want it in the street.

SIKES Then you won't have it. Take your bonnet off!

NANCY Let me go, will you!

SIKES No!

NANCY Bill, you don't know what you are doing. You don't. Only for one hour!

SIKES Cut my limbs off one by one, if I don't think the gal's gone stark raving mad. Go on with yer. Yer can stay in there! Whew! Wot a strange gal! Wot did she take it into her head to go out for, do you think? Wot does it mean, Fagin?

FAGIN Obstinacy; woman's obstinacy, I suppose, my dear.

SIKES I thought I'd tamed her, but she's as bad as ever.

FAGIN Worse. I never knew her like this.

SIKES Nor I. I think she's got a touch of fever in her blood yet, and it won't come out - eh?

FAGIN Like enough.



- SIKES I'll let her a little blood, without troubling the doctor, if she's took that way again.
- NARRATOR Too late. Too late now to meet Miss Maylie on London Bridge. Nancy re-enters the room and, with eyes swollen and red, rocks herself to and fro in her former seat. Fagin takes up his hat.
- SIKES You going? Show him a light, Nancy.
- NARRATOR Nancy follows the old man down stairs, with a candle. When they reach the passage, Fagin lays his finger on his lips and draws Nancy close to him.
- FAGIN What is it, Nancy, dear?
- NANCY What do you mean?
- FAGIN The reason of all this. If he is so hard with you - he's a brute, Nance, a brute - why don't you -
- NANCY Well?
- FAGIN You have a friend in me, Nance; a staunch friend. I have the means at hand. If you want revenge on those that treat you like a dog - like a dog - come to me. I say, come to me. You know me, Nance.
- NANCY I know you well. Goodnight.
- NARRATOR Fagin walks towards home. Was Nancy weary of the housebreaker's brutality? Had she entered into some new relationship? And was this the cause of her impatience to leave home at that particular hour? He would lay a watch. Discover the cause of her altered regard. The ruffian Sikes knew too much. Would she, with a little persuasion, consent to poison him?
- FAGIN Poison the man I hate!
- NARRATOR Fagin was up early the next morning...
- FAGIN Bolter!
- ...and waiting impatiently for the appearance of his new associate, Noah Claypole, now otherwise known as Bolter.
- NOAH What's the matter? Don't yer ask me to do anything till I've done eating. That's a great fault in this place. Yer never get time enough over yer meals.



- FAGIN I want you, Bolter, to do a piece of work for me, my dear.
- NOAH Don't yer go shoving me into danger.
- FAGIN There's not the smallest danger in it, not the very smallest - it's only to dodge a woman.
- NOAH Dodge?
- FAGIN Trail, my dear.
- NOAH I can do that pretty well, I know. I was a regular cunning sneak when I was at school. What am I to dodge her for? Not to -
- FAGIN Not to do anything, but to tell me where she goes and who she sees and to bring me back all the information you can.
- NARRATOR Six nights pass - on each Fagin has watched to see Nancy leave home but every time he comes back with a disappointed face, for Sikes is keeping Nancy close. But on the seventh, Sunday, Fagin returns earlier and unable to conceal his excitement.
- FAGIN She goes out tonight, Bolter, and on the right errand, I'm sure for she has been alone all day, and the man she is afraid of will not be back much before daybreak. Come with me. Quick! And put on your country clothes.
- NARRATOR 'The Three Cripples' public house. Eleven at night.
- NOAH Is that the woman?
- NARRATOR Later the same night. London Bridge.
- A mist hangs over the river. A young lady, accompanied by a grey-haired gentleman, gets down from a carriage. They have scarcely set foot upon the pavement, when the girl, Nancy, immediately makes towards them.
- NANCY Not here. I am afraid to speak to you here. Come away - out of sight - down the steps yonder!
- BROWNLOW Take my arm Rose, these steps are treacherous.
- ROSE Thank you, Mr Brownlow.



- NARRATOR            The steps form a landing-stairs from the river. To this spot, the man bearing the appearance of a countryman hastens unobserved and conceals himself in an angle of the wall.
- BROWNLOW            This is far enough. Why not have let me speak to you above there, where it is light, instead of bringing us to this dark and dismal hole?
- NANCY                 I was afraid to speak to you there. I don't know why it is, but I have such a fear and dread upon me tonight that I can hardly stand.
- BROWNLOW            A fear of what?
- NANCY                 I scarcely know of what. Horrible thoughts of death have been upon me all day.
- BROWNLOW            Imagination!
- ROSE                    Speak to her kindly, Mr Brownlow. Poor creature! She seems to need it.
- NANCY                 Oh lady.
- BROWNLOW            You were not here last Sunday night.
- NANCY                 I couldn't come; I was kept by force.
- BROWNLOW            By whom?
- NANCY                 Him that I told the young lady of before.
- BROWNLOW            You were not suspected of holding any communication with anybody on the subject which has brought us here tonight, I hope?
- NANCY                 No. It's not very easy for me to leave him unless he knows why. I couldn't have seen the lady when I did but that I gave him a sleeping draught before I came away.
- BROWNLOW            Did he awake before you returned?
- NANCY                 No - and neither he nor any of them suspect me.
- NARRATOR            The astonished listener, Noah Claypole, draws himself upright against the wall. What more is the unsuspecting Nancy about to reveal?