

# Oliver Twist

By Charles Dickens

## EPISODE TEN

**BROWNLOW** *I know you have a brother.*

**MONKS** *What!*

**BROWNLOW** *And his name is Oliver. Oliver Twist.*

**NARRATOR** Monks leaps from his chair and paces up and down. What proof can Brownlow have? None. For hasn't he, Monks, destroyed it all?

**MONKS** I have no brother. You know I was an only child.

**BROWNLOW** Attend to what I do know and you shall see. Before your father went abroad, he came to me.

**MONKS** I never heard of that.

**BROWNLOW** He left with me, among other things, this picture - a likeness of this poor young woman. I went, when all was over, when he died, to the place where she lived. But her family had left a week before, whither none could tell. When your brother -

**MONKS** I have none!

**BROWNLOW** When your brother - a feeble, ragged, neglected child - was cast in my way by Fate and rescued by me from a life of vice and infamy -

**MONKS** What?

**BROWNLOW** By me. I told you I should interest you before long. When he was rescued by me - and lay recovering from sickness in my house - his strong resemblance to this picture struck me with astonishment. I need not tell you he was snatched away again before I knew his history -

**MONKS** You - you - can't prove anything against me. I defy you to!

**BROWNLOW** We shall see. I lost the boy and no efforts of mine could recover him. Your mother now being dead, I knew that you alone could solve the mystery, if anybody could.



- MONKS                    And now you do see me. What then? You don't even know that a child was born of this sorry pair - you don't even know that!
- BROWNLOW              I did not. But within the last fortnight I have learnt it all. There was a will, which your mother destroyed. It contained a reference to a child likely to be the result of the relationship between your father and this young woman. The child, Oliver, was born. You found that proofs of his birth and parentage existed. Those proofs were destroyed by you. And now, in your own words to your accomplice - the man called Fagin: 'the only proofs of the boy's identity lie at the bottom of the river, and the old hag that received them from the mother is rotting in her coffin.'
- MONKS                    No!
- BROWNLOW              Unworthy son, coward, liar - you, Edward Leeford, do you still brave me!
- MONKS                    No, no, no!
- BROWNLOW              Every word that has passed between you and this detested villain, is known to me. And murder has been done, in which you played a part, morally if not actually.
- MONKS                    No, no. I - I knew nothing of that. I didn't know the cause. I thought it was a common quarrel.
- BROWNLOW              It was the partial disclosure of your secrets that was the cause. Will you now disclose the whole?
- MONKS                    Yes, yes I will.
- BROWNLOW              Sign a statement of truth and repeat it before witnesses?
- MONKS                    That I promise too.
- BROWNLOW              You must - and you must do more than that. You must make amends to an innocent and unoffending child, for such Oliver is, whatever his start in life. You will not have forgotten the provisions of the will. Carry them out so far as your brother is concerned, and then go where you please. In this world you two need meet no more. Who is there?
- LOSBERNE                Losberne! The man will be caught! He'll be caught tonight!
- BROWNLOW              The murderer?



- LOSBERNE Yes, yes. His dog has been seen lurking about some old place in Folly Ditch, by the river. I have spoken to the men who are charged with his capture and they tell me he cannot escape. A reward of a hundred pounds has been put up by the Government -
- BROWNLOW I will give fifty more. My blood boils to avenge Nancy - poor murdered creature. You, Monks! Remain here till I return. It is your only hope of safety.
- \* \* \* \* \*
- NARRATOR Outside a ruinous, old house at Folly Ditch, a creek by the River Thames.
- CROWD *He's in there!*  
*Murderer!*  
*Hang him!*  
*Set the building on fire!*  
*Fetch a ladder!*  
*Open the door in the King's name!*  
*There's a boy up there!*
- NARRATOR There is a boy. It is Charley Bates. Sikes has locked him in the room at the top of the house.
- CHARLEY Break down the door! I tell you, he'll never open it. Break it down.
- NARRATOR By means of a door in the attic Sikes the murderer emerges on the roof-top and crawls over the tiles.
- CHARLEY Monster!
- SIKES Quiet you Hell-Child!
- CHARLEY Help! He's here! He murdered Nancy. Help! Quick. He's on the roof. He's got a rope! He's going to get away!
- VOICE *Twenty pounds to the man who brings a ladder!*
- SIKES Do your worst! I'll cheat you yet!
- CHARLEY He's a going round the back. Round the back! You won't escape, Monster! You know they got Fagin? You should have seen him - all muddy and bleeding. Monster!



- SIKES Hell-child!
- NARRATOR The houses on the opposite side of the ditch have been entered by the angry crowd: window sashes are thrown up, or torn out. Faces watch from every building.
- VOICE *They've forced the door!*
- VOICE 2 *They have him now!*
- NARRATOR Sikes springs upon his feet, determined to make one last effort to save himself by using the rope to drop from the roof-top down to the ditch. At the very instant when he brings the loop of the noose over his head - the murderer, looking behind him on the roof, throws his arms above his head and utters a yell of terror.
- SIKES No! The eyes! The eyes again!
- NARRATOR The noose is on his neck. He loses his balance and tumbles. A sudden jerk, a terrific convulsion of the limbs - and there he hangs, with the open knife clenched in his stiffening hand.
- These events were but two days old when Oliver found himself, at three o'clock in the afternoon, in a carriage rolling fast towards the town of his birth. Mrs Maylie, Rose, Mrs Bedwin, and the good doctor are with him. Mr Brownlow follows in another carriage, accompanied by one other person whose name has not been mentioned to them. They drive straight to the door of the chief hotel.
- Mr Brownlow does not join them at dinner, but remains in a separate room. Once Mrs Maylie is called away and - after being absent for nearly an hour - returns with eyes swollen with weeping. All these things make Rose and Oliver nervous and uncomfortable. At length, Mr Losberne and Mr Brownlow enter the room, followed by a man who Oliver almost shrieks with surprise to see. They tell him that he is his brother, his half-brother - and it is the same man Oliver had seen looking in with Fagin at the window of the cottage.
- Monks has a look of hatred for the astonished boy as he sits down near the door. Mr Brownlow, who has papers in his hand, walks to a table, near which Rose and Oliver are seated. With the papers now signed in London, before many gentlemen as witnesses, Monks is to make his revelations to Oliver.
- MONKS Mongrel child!



**BROWNLOW** The term you use reflects disgrace on no one living, except you who use it! Oliver is your half-brother; the illegitimate son of your father, my dear friend Edwin Leeford, by poor young Agnes Fleming, who died in giving him birth.

**NARRATOR** Yes, Monks and his mother had found a letter and a will after his father's death, both of which they destroyed. The letter was addressed to Agnes Fleming, Oliver's mother. The will stipulated a sum of money to Monks and his mother - but that the bulk of the estate should be divided into two equal portions: one for Agnes Fleming and the other for their child: Oliver. If the child were a girl, she should inherit the money without conditions. But if a boy, he would inherit the money only if, while still a boy, he should never stain his name by a guilty or dishonorable act - as his brother Monks had done, to the father's lifelong despair.

Yes, Monks's mother had found out where the father of Agnes lived and told the truth with every last detail that her violent hate could add. Filled with shame, Agnes's father had fled with his two daughters to a remote corner of Wales. Then Agnes had run away, to save her family from further shame and her father, searching for her, had died of a broken heart. Yes, the mother of Monks was convinced that the child of Agnes had survived.

**MONKS** I swore to my mother, on her death bed, that if ever that child crossed my path, I would hunt him down. She was right. Fagin - I knew Fagin, he was an accomplice and confidant of old - I gave him a large reward for keeping the boy ensnared!

**BROWNLOW** Enough! Rose, my dear, give me your hand and do not tremble for you, Rose, are the sister of Agnes Fleming.

**MONKS** Ha! My mother found that out as well! It was she that spread the rumours of a stain on her name!

**BROWNLOW** Enough!

**OLIVER** You, Rose, are my aunt? No. I'll never call you aunt - sister, my own dear sister. Rose, dear, darling Rose!

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**NARRATOR** Fagin: sentenced by the judge to be hanged by the neck, until he is dead. On the night of his last, awful day, two visitors come to the prison cell of the condemned man.



- FAGIN                    Ha! ha! ha! Oliver - quite the gentleman now - quite the - take that boy away to bed!
- BROWNLOW             Do not be alarmed, Oliver.
- FAGIN                    Take him away to bed! He has been the – the - somehow the cause of all this.
- BROWNLOW             Fagin.
- FAGIN                    That's me! An old man, my Lord; a very old, old man! Strike them all dead! What righthave they to butcher me? What do you want here!
- BROWNLOW             We believe there may still be some papers, which were placed in your hands, for better security, by a man called Monks. Papers taken by Monks from the place of Oliver's birth that prove this boy's identity.
- FAGIN                    It's all a lie. I haven't one - not one.
- BROWNLOW             For the love of God, do not say that now, upon the very verge of death; but tell me where they are.
- FAGIN                    Oliver. Here, here! Let me whisper to you.
- OLIVER                  I am not afraid.
- FAGIN                    The papers are in a canvas bag, in a hole a little way up the chimney in the top front-room. I want to talk to you, my dear. I want to talk to you.
- OLIVER                  Yes, yes. Say a prayer with me and we will talk till morning.
- FAGIN                    Pah! Outside, outside. Say I've gone to sleep - they'll believe you. You can get me out, if you take me so. Now then, now then!
- OLIVER                  Oh! God forgive this wretched man!
- NARRATOR              Day is dawning when they emerge again from the prison and a great crowd is already assembled - pushing, quarreling, joking, playing cards to pass the time. Everything tells of life and animation except for one dark cluster of objects in the center of all: the black stage, the cross-beam, the rope and all the hideous apparatus of death.

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NARRATOR

Little remains now to be told. Before three months have passed Rose Fleming and Harry Maylie are married in the village church which was henceforth to be the scene of the young clergyman's labours. Yes, Harry has renounced the ambition of his rich relatives and become a clergyman and Mrs Maylie joins them in their new and happy home.

The little money that remained of Oliver's father's estate - after the plunder of Monks and his mother - was divided at Mr Brownlow's recommendation - between Monks and Oliver. Perhaps Monks would pursue at last an honest career? He did not - and after squandering his portion of the inheritance and falling once more into his old habits of fraud and knavery, he was to die in prison, overseas.

Mr Brownlow has adopted Oliver as his son and moved with him and Mrs Bedwin, the housekeeper, to a new home within a mile of the parsonage-house, where his dear friends live.

And here, standing before the altar of the old village church, are Oliver and Rose. They look at the white marble tablet, which bears as yet but one word: AGNES.

ROSE

My sister.

OLIVER

My mother.

NARRATOR

If the spirits of the dead ever come back to earth to visit spots hallowed by the love - the love beyond the grave - of those whom they knew in life, I believe that the shade of Agnes sometimes hovers round that solemn nook.