

ACT ONESCENE ONE - OLIVER ASKS FOR MORE

Lights up only on a Mother. She
rocks her child, we cannot see her
face clearly but we hear her.

The child cries softly. She shushes
it.

AGNES FLEMMING

(sung)

Hush now my child, no more anger or fear.
Hush now my baby, your mother is here.
Hush now, oh hush.
Know this to be true, wether near or far,
My Love will be here in your heart.

The child calms. We hear the melody
softly behind.

|| AGNES'S LULLABY ||

Agnes speaks to her child, softly
and with great care.

AGNES FLEMMING

Now Oliver, I will not be here to guide you as you grow up.
Please, be good, treat everyone with kindness and be strong
my beautiful boy. I love you.

She kisses her child on the head.
The melody fades, and with it the
light.

Lights back up. In a different
place.

The workhouse. The boys sleep,
crowded up in rows.

Oliver cries to himself.

OLIVER

I'm ten today mum, and I want to be grateful, I do, but it
is so hard here at the workhouse. There's hardly enough food
to go around and it's so crowded. I wish you were here with
me mum...

Another boy stirs,

BOY 1
Shush over there, you'll get us all in trouble.

BOY 2
We need to sleep, Oliver.

OLIVER
I can't help it, I'm hungry.

BOY 3
We're all hungry,

BOY 1
You don't see any of us crying.

BOY 4
I swear, If I don't get another bowl of gruel I might as well eat one of you.

BOY 2
What?!

OLIVER
That's not a nice thing to joke about.

BOY 4
I'm not joking, I can feel it...

BOY 3
We have to do something, we aren't going to survive like this.

OLIVER
But what can we do?

BOY 4
I don't know, but I need more food.

BOY 1
No one's ever tried asking for more.

OLIVER
Asking for more?

BOY 2
That won't go well, the beadle will have our heads.

BOY 3
How do you know? No one has ever tried.

BOY 4
But which one of us will ask?

BOY 1

Here,

The boys all huddle up.

BOY 1

We'll draw straws, the shortest straw will ask for more.

They take turns drawing straws.
Oliver ends up with the short one.

BOY 1

Oliver, you'll be the one to ask tomorrow.

OLIVER

But what if-

BOY 2

Please, someone has to.

OLIVER

Okay, I will.

Lights down. The scene shifts. We are now in the dining hall of the workhouse. Boys sit crowded at one long table eating their bowls of gruel.

Standing aside, beside a large pot is Ms. Corney and a Chef who holds a ladle.

Oliver finishes his bowl.

OLIVER

Are you sure that-

BOY 4

We're so hungry.

OLIVER

Okay...

Oliver approaches the Chef holding out his bowl.

OLIVER

Please, sir, I want some more.

CHEF

More?

OLIVER

Yes, sir, I want some more.

CHEF

What?!

The chef hits Oliver with his
ladle.

MS.CORNEY

Oliver Twist has asked for more!

OLIVER

I'm sorry--I am just hungry still-

MS.CORNEY

Am I to believe that after your meal that you are still
hungry?

OLIVER

I only--

MS.CORNEY

Greedy child!

CHEF

Greedy indeed!

MS.CORNEY

Let Oliver Twist be an example to all of you! You should be
grateful for what we provide for you, as you're lucky to
have food at all!

OLIVER

Miss, I'm really sorry, I only meant-

MS.CORNEY

Hush you!

CHEF

Call upon the beadle and the board, we'll not have him any
longer.

OLIVER

What?

MS.CORNEY

I will, and Oliver will be locked away until they can do
away with him.

OLIVER

No, no please, I promise I'll cause no more trouble- I'll be
good-please just don't lock me away.

MS.CORNEY

Come now greedy child.

Ms.Corney drags Oliver offstage.

Lights down.

SCENE TWO - AN OFFER FROM THE
PARISH

Lights up outside of the workhouse.

Mr.Bumble posts a notice, an offer,
Oliver Twist and five pounds to
anyone who will take him.

Enter, Mr.Gamfield, a chimney
sweep. He peruses the notice.

MR.GAMFIELD

You there, what do you know of this boy that the parish
wants to 'prentice.

MR. BUMBLE

Much, good sir, as I christened his name. He's a small boy,
not very strong but very nimble.

MR.GAMFIELD

Well, if the good parish wants him to learn a good trade, a
respectable art such as chimney sweeping, I happen to run a
right respectable service. And I am much in need of a
'prentice myself.

MR. BUMBLE

Well then, I might bring you before the board and have you
meet the boy. He's a right'un for something like that.

Mr.Bumble leads Mr.Gamfield inside.

The setting shifts. Mr.Gamfield
waits by the board, three old, rich
looking, men.

Mr.Bumble enters opposite, with
Oliver. They stop, just out of
earshot of the board.

MR. BUMBLE

Now listen here boy, there is a man just there who wants to
'prentice you. Lord knows just why, but if we cannot find
you a new home in a month you'll be sent out to sea. And
(MORE)

MR. BUMBLE (cont'd)
they don't have much use for whining boys out at sea. Do you know what happens to boys your age out there?

OLIVER
No sir, I don't sir,

MR. BUMBLE
They often don't return, you understand?

Oliver starts to cry.

MR. BUMBLE
Stop that whimpering boy, you'll make your eyes all red. Come on now, and smile.

Mr.Bumble brings Oliver before the board.

MR. BUMBLE
Bow to the gentlemen now Oliver.

Oliver bows.

MR.LEDWELL
Nice young boy here, isn't he?

MR.TAPPENDEN
Don't you think so Mr.Gamfield?

MR.GAMFIELD
I suppose so, scrawny little thing he is, he'll fit just right.

MR.HOLTON
I do have a few concerns Mr.Gamfield,

MR.GAMFIELD
There's nothing to be concerned about, I assure you.

MR.HOLTON
Sweeping is a nasty trade, I'm sure you know.

MR.TAPPENDEN
Young boys have been known to be smothered in chimneys every now and then...

OLIVER
Smothered?!

MR.GAMFIELD
Yes, that's cause they wet the straw before lighting it, that's all smoke. And smoke don't do anything to get the boys down again, it only sends him to sleep. But a little
(MORE)

MR.GAMFIELD (cont'd)
 fire, roasting the feet gets them out of there nice and quick.

OLIVER
 Smoke and fire?

MR. BUMBLE
 Hush now boy!

MR.LEDWELL
 What was that he said?

MR. BUMBLE
 Nothing but words of his excitement!

MR.HOLTON
 Suppose he's fond of sweeping?

MR. BUMBLE
 Oh he dotes on it he does!

MR.HOLTON
 So he will be a sweep then?

MR. BUMBLE
 Absolutely sir, I couldn't have him in another profession if I tried. If he was given anywhere else he'd run away!

MR.LEDWELL
 You sir, Mr.Gamfield, you'll take good care of him? Treat him well, feed him, and that sort of thing?

MR.GAMFIELD
 When I says I will, I will.

MR.TAPPENDEN
 You're a rough speaker my friend, but I have no doubt that you are good of heart.

MR.GAMFIELD
 Thank you sir, I assure you I am.

MR. BUMBLE
 Well then, suppose the boy shall go with you then?

MR.HOLTON
 Wait one moment, that boy looks positively pale with fear. Mr.Bumble step away from him, tell us what's the matter child.

Oliver drops to his knees,
 pleading.

OLIVER

Oh please don't make me go with that man, I don't want to be a chimney sweep. I'll do anything, you can lock me away again, anything--just don't make me go with him!

MR.HOLTON

Well then...he doesn't dote on sweeping I suppose?

MR. BUMBLE

Well--I--I had thought--

MR.LEDWELL

He'll not go with you Mr.Gamfield,

MR.GAMFIELD

But--

MR.LEDWELL

We'll not hear another word of it,

OLIVER

Oh thank you sirs, thank you.

Enter Mr.Sowerberry.

MR. BUMBLE

But this boy must be placed immediately! The matron has decreed it so!

MR.TAPPENDEN

I'm sure somewhere will be found in no time.

MR.SOWERBERRY

Excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt, but I saw your notice.

MR.TAPPENDEN

Yes, sir, come forward at once. Mr.Gamfield, your services are no longer required.

Mr.Gamfield exits.

MR.HOLTON

To your feet boy, greet the nice new gentleman.

OLIVER

Yes, hello sir, nice to meet you.

Oliver bows to Mr.Sowerberry.

MR.LEDWELL

This is the boy from the notice good Mr--

MR.SOWERBERRY

Sowerberry,

MR.LEDWELL

Mr.Sowerberry, what line of work are you in then?

MR.SOWERBERRY

I am but an undertaker, I make coffins.

MR.TAPPENDEN

A respectable trade,

MR.HOLTON

Safe too.

MR.SOWERBERRY

This is the boy?

MR.HOLTON

Yes sir, you may look on him.

MR.SOWERBERRY

Such a melancholy face...he will be perfect as a mute.

MR. BUMBLE

A mute?

MR.SOWERBERRY

Yes, in a funeral procession there must always be a mute.
But a child mute, now that is a specialty.

MR.LEDWELL

You understand the needs of a young boy Mr.Sowerberry? He must be fed and treated well.

MR.SOWERBERRY

I understand, I've kept work boys in the house before.

The board confers to themselves for
a moment.

MR.HOLTON

It is decided, young Oliver Twist shall become your
apprentice, being you are a respected member of this Parish.
But he will be on a trial period, if in one month you've
decided he is not to your liking you may return him to our
care.

MR.SOWERBERRY

Come then Oliver,

OLIVER

Yes, thank you sir!

They exit, lights down.

SCENE THREE - THE SOWERBERRYS

Lights up in The Sowerberry's home.

One half should consist of a small dining area, the other should have a counter and a few chairs. These should be two distinct rooms within the house, not interconnected.

Oliver sleeps beneath the counter.

Someone pounds hard at the door, stirring Oliver from his sleep.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

(off)

Open the door will ya?

OLIVER

Yes, I will directly, sir!

Oliver rushes and opens the door.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

Suppose your the new boy aren't ya? How old are you?

OLIVER

Ten sir. Would you like to buy a coffin?

Noah Claypole enters.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

You don't know who I am work'us?

OLIVER

No.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

Well I'm Mister Noah Claypole, and I'm your better. So that means you've ought to do what I say, you understand?

OLIVER

Yes sir.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

Now take down the shutters you young ruffian!

Oliver rushes to take down the shutters, letting light into the parlor.

Noah makes his way to the other room, where Charlotte pours him a glass of tea. Oliver follows.

CHARLOTTE

Here, there's some bacon left from master's breakfast for you Noah. And I've poured you some tea but you've ought to take it in with you. They'll want you minding the shop.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

Hear that work'us?

CHARLOTTE

Lord a mercy Noah, let the boy alone.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

People leave him well enough alone, all they do is leave him alone, better he know his place.

CHARLOTTE

Sit and eat, both of you.

Noah eats his bread and bacon.

CHARLOTTE

Here Oliver, have Tripp's leftovers. No use in letting them go rotten.

Charlotte hands Oliver a bowl of odds and ends from the floor.

Mrs.Sowerberry enters.

CHARLOTTE

Mornin ma'am,

MRS.SOWERBERRY

Help me pick up the shop Charlotte will you?

CHARLOTTE

Of course ma'am.

Charlotte and Mrs.Sowerberry go in the other room, cleaning.

NOAH CLAYPOLE

They both think you're so nice, soon they'll see ya for the sneak you are.