

Chapter 3

Oliver Makes a Decision

After a month as an apprentice, an event that seemed small and petty at the time would end up changing Oliver Twist's future. One day, Oliver and another worker, Noah, had started to eat their evening meal. Noah had been jealous of Oliver's attention from Mr. Sowerberry. Noah started to tease Oliver in his usual ways. But this day, he felt more hateful than ever. "How's your mother, Oliver?" "She's dead," replied Oliver. "Don't say anything more about her." Oliver's breathed quickly. His eyes started to tear. "What did she die of?" asked Noah, smirking. "A broken heart. That's what some of the nurses told me." Oliver appeared to be talking to himself. "I think I know what it may mean to die of that." Tears streamed down his face. "What are you sniffing about?" asked Noah. "Your mother was a bad one, you know. You

must know that." "What did you say?" asked Oliver. "I said she was a bad one," said Noah. "Good thing she died when she did or she would have probably been hung." Crimson with fury, Oliver overturned a table and some chairs. He grabbed Noah by the throat and shook him. With a heavy blow to the head, he knocked Noah to the ground. Just a minute before, Oliver had looked like a quiet, meek, dejected creature. But his spirit was roused at last. His blood was on fire. "He's going to murder me," screamed Noah. "Oliver's gone mad! Someone help me!" Charlotte and Mrs. Sowerberry rushed into the room. "You little wretch!" screamed Charlotte as she grabbed Oliver's arm. "You ungrateful, murderous boy!"

Noah was able to regain his footing and, with the help of Mrs. Sowerberry, they subdued Oliver. They dragged a kicking, screaming Oliver into a closet and locked him inside. Mrs. Sowerberry fell into a chair. "We would have all been murdered. He's mad! I hope this teaches my husband not to bring any of that kind

into our home again." She called Noah over to her. "He'll kick down that door in ten minutes time. Run and get Mr. Bumble. He'll know how to handle that beast." She gave him a shove. "Don't bother to get your hat. Be off with you and get us help at once." Noah took off, without his hat, tearing through the streets until he reached the workhouse gate. When Mr. Bumble saw him, he knew something was terribly wrong. "Has Oliver run away?" he asked. "No, sir. No. But he has turned vicious. He tried to murder me," said Noah. "He tried to murder Charlotte and the Misses, too."

Noah continued to exaggerate the extent of what had happened. "He would have killed the master too but he's out and about town. Mrs. Sowerberry needs you to come at once." When they arrived back at the undertaker's home, Oliver was still screaming and kicking at the door. Bumble walked toward the door and gave it a swift kick himself. "Oliver! Do you know who this is?" "Yes," replied Oliver. "Are you afraid of my voice? Are you trembling?" asked Bumble. "No!"

shouted Oliver. Bumble took a step back and straightened himself up. It was an answer he had not expected. By the look of the three others in the room, they were just as surprised. "He must be mad," said Mrs. Sowerberry. "No boy in his right mind would speak to you that way."

"It's not madness," said Bumble. "It's meat!" He scowled at her. "You've overfed him. You raised a spirit in him, I'm afraid. If you kept him on gruel, this would never have happened." Mrs. Sowerberry felt ashamed. "I only fed him what no one else would eat. Even the dog wouldn't eat what Oliver ate." It was at this moment that Mr. Sowerberry returned. Upon hearing the news that Oliver tried to murder everyone, he knew what he must do. He opened the door and pulled Oliver out of the cellar. "Now, you're a nice fellow, ain't you? Why did you go about threatening everyone?" Oliver pointed to Noah. His face was still full of rage. "He called my mother names." "So what?" said Mrs. Sowerberry. "She deserved what she was called." "That's a lie!" screamed Oliver. Mrs.

Sowerberry burst into tears. Mr. Sowerberry knew that if he didn't punish Oliver this instant or hesitated in any way, there would be a price to pay with his wife. He at once gave Oliver a beating that satisfied all. Oliver was then sent to his drab room. He sat silently for a long time. Finally, he rose to his feet and opened the door. He stood looking out at the vastness of the cold world. He looked up at the stars which seemed so far away. He closed the door softly. He

gathered up the few belongings he had, tied them up in a handkerchief, and sat down on a bench to wait for the morning light to appear.



Early the next morning, Oliver Twist ran away. He headed back the way he came. He paused at the workhouse when he saw his old friend Dick outside. "Oliver!" cried Dick. "Hush, Dick. No one can know I've stopped by. You mustn't tell anyone. I've been treated poorly and I'm running away to seek my fortune." He touched his friend's cheek. "You look so pale, Dick." "I'll be alright, Oliver. I won't tell a soul I saw you. You must go now. Be safe." He kissed Oliver on the cheek. "God bless you, Oliver." The blessing was from a young child's lips, but it was the first that Oliver had ever heard said upon him. During all the struggles and troubles that came from that day forward, he never once forgot the blessings of young Dick.

