Chapter 11

Monks Destroys Evidence

So it came to be that Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney married. Bumble was promoted to master of the workhouse. It had only been two months since the marriage, but it was two months too much. Bumble missed his old life. "I sold myself for six teaspoons, two pair of silver sugar tongs, fi ne furniture, and a coin," he said as he sat across from Mrs. Bumble. Mrs. Bumble growled. "You were cheap then. Lord knows I paid for you!" The two had another fight that ended with Mr. Bumble finding his way to the town pub. He seated himself at the bar. There was a stranger sitting next to him.

Mr. Bumble couldn't help staring at the sores that covered his hands.

"I know you, don't I?" said the man. "Aren't you the master of the workhouse?" "I am, I am," Mr. Bumble replied. "What luck," said the man. "I came to town today to find you. But you found me first." He slid a few coins over to Bumble. "Think back quite a few years ago. Twelve to be exact. To a time when a woman gave birth in your workhouse and died." "We had lots of those women," said Bumble. "All the same to me." "The baby was a boy. He was later sent to live with a coffin maker." "You mean Oliver Twist," said Bumble. "I knew of him. A rascal. A menace." "I know enough about him," said the man. "I want to know about the nurse who helped deliver that baby. Where is she? I must find her." "Out of work," laughed Bumble. "She's dead. Died last spring."

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Bumble wasn't sure if the man looked disappointed or relieved at the news. The stranger stood up to leave. But Bumble was cunning. He remembered the night of Sally's death. Mrs. Corney knew something and had promised to tell him when they married. "I know someone who knew her," said Bumble. "She was with her the day she died. She could help you . . . for a price." The stranger smiled. "Meet me tomorrow evening at nine o'clock." He took out a piece of paper and scribbled an address on it. "Tell no one." The man started to go out the door as Bumble looked at the address. It was by the waterside. He noticed the man had forgotten to write down his name. "Sir," said Bumble, "what is your name?" The man stared at him. "I need to know who to ask for tomorrow." "Monks," said the man. "Ask for Monks."

The next evening was dry and humid. Mr. and Mrs. Bumble disguised themselves in long cloaks and made their way to a rickety house on the water. "Hello there," said a voice from above. "Come inside. Don't keep me waiting." The two made their way inside to the cramped, dirty house. "Is this the woman?" demanded Monks. "This is the woman," replied Bumble. "As promised." Monks smiled. "The sooner we do our business the better." "You want information about the nurse who helped bring Oliver Twist into this world?" asked Mrs. Bumble. "What's it worth to you?" "Maybe nothing or maybe twenty pounds," said Monks. "Depends on what you tell me." "It's worth more than that," said the woman. "I want twenty-five pounds. In gold." "Twenty-five pounds in gold!" exclaimed Monks.

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"I assure you it's a small sum for such a large secret," said Mr. Bumble. Monks hesitated before shoving his hand in his pocket. He took out a canvas bag. He handed Mrs. Bumble twenty-five pounds in gold. Mrs. Bumble smiled. "When Nurse Sally died, we were alone. She spoke of a young boy that she brought into the world. In fact, she brought him into the world in the very room she slept in. The nurse robbed his mother." "In life?" asked Monks. "In death," replied the woman. "She stole from the corpse. She had given Sally something meant for the son, but Sally kept it herself. Then she sold it for money." "Who did she sell it to? What was it?" asked Monks. Before she could explain more," said Mrs. Bumble, "she fell back onto her pillow and died." "Without saying more?" asked Monks. "It's a lie! You're lying to me! I will not be played by you or your husband."

"It's the truth," said Mrs. Bumble. "But she clutched my hand and slid something into it as she died. It was a pawn ticket. The ticket was about to expire in two days. So, I went and retrieved the object." "Where is it now?" asked Monks. She threw a bag on the table. "Right here." She pulled out a small gold locket. "Inside were two locks of hair and a plain gold wedding ring." She held the locket out for Monks to inspect. "It has the name Agnes on it," said Mr. Bumble. "The date is the year before the child was born." "Anything else?" asked Monks. "That's all I know," said Mrs. Bumble. Mr. Bumble prayed it was enough. He didn't want Monks to take the twenty-five pounds back. "Is that the information you wanted?" asked Mrs. Bumble. "It's exactly what I needed," said Monks. "But now I must do this." He jumped up and slid the table aside. He grabbed an iron ring

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on one of the floorboards and threw it back. The Bumbles quickly gathered around the trapdoor. "Look down," said Monks. The water was below them racing rapidly. Monks took the contents of the bag, wrapped them back up, and threw the bag into the water below. He closed the door. "Our business is done. Leave at once. You will do well to forget my name." The Bumbles rushed out of the dank house happy to travel far away from this crazy man.



Chapter 12

A Warning for Rose

The next evening, Bill Sikes woke up from a nap. "How do you feel tonight?" asked Nancy. "As weak as water. Lend me a hand and help me off this bed." His mood was foul and didn't improve when Fagin dropped by for a visit. "I've brought something for you, Sikes." Fagin had the Dodger open a bag and hand the food and drink to a sickly looking Bill. "This is good but I need money," said Sikes. "If I don't get some, I could die." Sikes sent Nancy home with Fagin to get some money. While she was there, a knock came

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at the door. It was Monks. Nancy stared at him.

"It's only Monks. One of my people," said Fagin. He turned toward Monks. "When did you return to town?" "Two hours ago," said Monks. "Did you see him?' asked Fagin. Monks looked at Nancy and back at Fagin. "Yes." He hesitated. "Why don't we talk in private?" As soon as the men disappeared up the steps, Nancy slipped off her shoes. She drew her gown over her face so her shape wouldn't betray her. She glided silently up the stairs to listen to Monks and Fagin. When she had heard all she needed to, she quickly and quietly returned downstairs. Fagin and Monks followed shortly. "I've been waiting for Bill's money, Fagin. I want to be getting home now," Nancy said. Once Fagin dropped the coins into her hands, she was off with one last look at Monks. By the time Nancy reached Sikes, she felt pale and weak. She tried to hide her mood from Sikes. It turns out he wouldn't have noticed her mood or feelings. All he cared about was Fagin's money. The next night, Nancy waited for Sikes to drift off to sleep before she dared leave the room. She dressed quickly and slipped out the door. She walked to a fancy hotel in the West End of London. She prayed she wasn't too late. When she reached the fanciest hotel near Hyde Park, she stood at the door. A woman poked her head out. "Who do wish to see here?" She frowned as she looked Nancy over. "Miss Rose Maylie," said Nancy. "I must see her." The woman turned up her nose. "She will never see someone like you." "Please tell her it's important," begged Nancy. "Won't someone help a poor

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girl like me? I mean no harm!" Finally, a sweet cook stepped forward. "I'll give her your message."

Five minutes later, Nancy stood in front of Rose. "I beg of you," said Nancy with tears streaming down her eyes. "I beg your forgiveness." Rose was confused and took Nancy's hands in hers. "Don't be so sad. Tell me what's troubling you." "I am the one who kidnapped Oliver from Mr. Brownlow and brought him back to Fagin's place." "You!" said Rose. "Why?" "There's so much to tell and I am sure I will be killed if they find out I'm here. We don't have much time. I must know something. Do you know a man named Monks?" "No," said Rose. "He knows you," said Nancy. "He knows you're here and that's how I found out about you." Rose sat down upon hearing this news. "After Oliver was put into your house on the night of the robbery, I listened in on a conversation between him and Fagin. Monks had seen him accidentally with two of our boys. It was on the first day we lost him. He knew about the boy but I couldn't figure out why. "A bargain was struck between him and Fagin that if Oliver came back, Monks would pay Fagin. If Fagin could make him a thief, he'd get even more money." Rose was confused. "Why would he want Oliver to be a thief?" "I could never find out. Last night, they almost caught me listening. But I did hear one more thing. Monks said that the only proof of the boy's identity was at the bottom of the river and the nurse that had the proof was rotting in a coffin." "This is all so strange," said Rose. "He said he rather have Oliver dead and if he had the chance to do it himself, he would.

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Then he said he was Oliver's brother!" Rose gasped. "His brother?"

Nancy nodded. "He was planning on getting you to pay hundreds of pounds for him once you discovered who Oliver really was." Nancy started to walk toward the door. "I must leave. If they know I've come, then I won't have many breaths left." Rose rushed over to her. "You are a brave woman to help Oliver. Please take this money. Use it to escape that way of life." Nancy refused the money. "It is the only life I know." As she was leaving, she cautioned Rose. "Have someone you can trust help you with Oliver. I am afraid what Monks will do. If you need me for anything else, I go for a walk on the London Bridge every Sunday night. You can find me there at midnight." Nancy rushed home and prayed the entire way that Bill Sikes had not noticed her missing.



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Chapter 13

The Return of Mr. Brownlow

Not long after, Rose was playing the piano when Oliver raced into the room. "I've seen him! It was him! I've prayed that I'd see him again." "Who, Oliver?" asked Rose. "Mr. Brownlow! The gentleman who was so good to me. He was getting out of a coach. I was too shocked to say anything but I wrote down his address." He held a scrap of paper in his hand. Rose took the paper. "Craven Street isn't too far from here," said Rose. "Let's go at once." In no time, they were in front of Mr. Brownlow's house. "Wait until I call for you, Oliver. You will soon talk to your beloved angel," said Rose.

Once Rose was permitted to enter, she met Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Grimwig. "Gentleman, I have come to tell you that I know of someone who you showed great kindness to. I believe you'd very much like to see him again." Mr. Brownlow was curious. "Who?" "Oliver Twist," said Rose. Mr. Grimwig grunted and looked disappointed. Mr. Brownlow gasped. "How I've wondered about that boy! I've tried to find him. Please tell me that you know something that will change my unfavorable opinion of him." "He is a bad one," said Mr. Grimwig. "A bad one indeed." Rose ignored Grimwig. "He's a boy of a noble nature and a warm heart." Then Rose told Mr. Brownlow what had happened to Oliver. She kept certain information to herself, for Grimwig was in range. "Where is he now?" cried Mr. Brownlow.

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"He is waiting in the coach at the door," said Rose. Before she finished her sentence, Mr. Brownlow was out the door. When Rose peeked out the window, she saw a joyous reunion. The two came back in the house with smiles and hearty laughters. Mr. Brownlow hugged Oliver and said, "I know someone else that is going to be just as happy to see you. Mrs. Bedwin, could you come in here please?" Mrs. Bedwin curtseyed at the door. "What can I do for you?' "Put on your glasses. There is someone here to see you." After Mrs. Bedwin put her glasses on, she rushed over to Oliver. "I knew my good, fair boy would be back. Look at you! In fancy clothes!" It was a joyous reunion indeed. When Rose had a chance, she spoke to Mr. Brownlow privately about her visit from Nancy.

"We must get this Monks alone," said Brownlow. "We must have justice for Oliver and give him back his good name." Then he scratched his head. "How do we know what this Monks looks like?" "Nancy walks on the London Bridge each Sunday around midnight. She'll help us." "Sunday is still five days away," sighed Mr. Brownlow. "But I suppose waiting for a few more days won't hurt. We don't want to betray Nancy's trust in you." It was agreed that Dr. Losberne, Mr. Grimwig, Mrs. Bedwin, and, at Dr. Losberne's request, Harry, would be involved in bringing back to Oliver what he had lost so many years ago—his good name.

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