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OLIVER TWIST

Charles Dickens

Among other public buildings in a certain town there is a workhouse, and in this workhouse was born Oliver Twist.

For a long time it remained a matter of doubt whether the child would survive to bear any name at all. Oliver and Nature fought out the point between them. The result was, that after a few struggles, Oliver breathed, sneezed and set up as loud a cry as could reasonably have been expected.

If he could have known he was to be left to the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder.

At last, the carriage stopped. A moment later, Oliver and Nancy were in a house.

So you've got the kid. Did he come quiet?

Like a lamb.

Sikes pulled off Oliver's cap and threw it into a corner. He sat himself down by the table, stood the boy in front of him and took up a pocket pistol which lay on the table.

Do you know what this is?

Yes, sir.

The robber grasped Oliver's wrist and put the barrel close to his temple.

Well, if you speak a word when you're out-of-doors with me, except when I speak to you, the loading will be in your head without notice.

It was a cheerless morning when they got into the street. Oliver kept up with the rapid strides of Sikes as well as he could.

Come, don't lag behind already, lazylegs!

At nightfall, they stood before a solitary house, all ruinous and decayed, some miles from London. The door yielded to pressure, and Sikes and Oliver passed in together.

Bill, my boy! I'm glad to see you. I was almost afraid you'd given it up.

Toby, this is one of Fagin's lads. Oliver, sit down by the fire and rest yourself. You'll have to go out with Toby and me tonight.