

Oliver Twist

Charles Dickens

Written in 1838, this is the story of a young orphan, Oliver, who runs away to London and meets up with another boy, Jack Dawkins, known as the ARTFUL DODGER. The DODGER introduces Oliver to the sinister Fagin, who runs a Thieves Den, sending out young boys to pick the pockets of the rich.

In this scene, Oliver is on his knees cleaning the DODGER's boots for him, while DODGER explains the advantages of joining Fagin's gang. Although the DODGER is young and only four foot six tall, he has all the airs and manners of a man about town.

DODGER

(Sighs and resumes his pipe) I suppose you don't even know what a prig is? ... I am. I'd scorn to be anything else. So's Charley. So's Fagin. So's Sikes. So's Nancy. So's Bet. So we all are, down to the dog. And he's the downiest one of the lot! He wouldn't so much as bark in a witness-box for fear of committing himself; no, not if you tied him up in one, and left him there without wittles for a fortnight. He's a rum dog. Don't he look fierce at any strange cove that laughs or sings when he's in company! Won't he growl at all, when he hears a fiddle playing! And don't he hate other dogs as ain't of his breed! - Oh no! He's an out-and-out Christian . . . Why don't you put yourself under Fagin, Oliver? And make a fortun' out of hand? And so be able to retire on your property, and do the gen-teel; as I mean to, in the very next leap-year but four that ever comes, and the forty-second Tuesday in Trinity-week ... Go! Why, where's your spirit? Don't you take any pride out of yourself? Would you go and be dependent on your friends? . . . Look here. *(Drawing forth a handful of shillings and halfpence)* Here's a jolly life! What's the odds where it comes from? Here, catch hold; there's plenty more where they were took from... You've been brought up bad. Fagin will make something of you, though, or you'll be the first he ever had that turned out unprofitable. You'd better begin at once; for you'll come to the trade long before you think of it; and you're only losing time, Oliver ... If you don't take pocket-handkerchiefs and watches, some other cove will; so that the coves that lose 'em will be the worse, and you'll be all the worse too, and nobody half a ha'p'orth the better, except the chaps wot gets them - and you've just as good a right to them as they have.