

The curtain opens on the sinister interior of the workhouse with a bare dining table, center stage, where the boys will sit. These pale-faced wretches can be seen peering through the bars of a door at the back. Looming above two curving stairways glows the legend "God Is Love" in rough letters. The door is opened and the boys file to the table and sing *Food, Glorious Food*. At the end of the song, the Widow Corney, who runs the workhouse and Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle, enter and a thin gruel is served. Wolfing the meagre fare, the boys hopelessly stack their bowls, but the hapless Oliver approaches Bumble with the entreaty, "Please sir, I want some more." He is instantly subdued. Oliver is locked behind the barred door as the rest of the boys exit upstairs.

Oliver is brought forward, bag and baggage, and is led off by Bumble who sings the haunting *Boy for Sale*. Walking through the streets of London, they arrive at Mr. Sowerberry's, the undertaker. Oliver is "sold" to the undertaker. Alone and frightened and surrounded by coffins on stage, he sings the plaintive *Where Is Love?*

Oliver runs away the very next morning, and is picked up hungry and tired in the streets by the Artful Dodger who cheers him up with *Consider Yourself*. The Dodger leads him through crowded streets to Fagin's kitchen. The boys come in and Fagin himself appears and, with a mock solemn welcome to Oliver, sings the fantastic *You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two*. Nancy, Bill Sikes' girl and Bet arrive. The two of them, accompanied by the boys and Fagin, celebrate their way of life in *It's a Fine Life*. The action moves to the next morning when Fagin sends the boys off on a pocket-picking expedition, Oliver among them. The stage now displays a city scene and we witness the capture of Oliver, not for picking pockets, but for simply looking guilty.

In the second act the curtain rises on the "Three Cripples"-an underworld tavern-where Nancy is being encouraged to sing a music hall number, *Oom-Pah-Pah*. Fagin's boys pour down the stairs telling of Oliver's apprehension by the police, at the same time revealing that his innocence has been established and that he is presently ensconced in the home of a rich old gentleman. Fearful lest he give away their set-up, Fagin and Sikes dispatch Nancy to get Oliver back.

Meanwhile, at the home of his new-found benefactor, the erstwhile ragged Oliver has become a well-tailored, well-cared for little lad. Looking out of his bedroom window he observes some passing street vendors crying their wares; he sings *Who Will Buy?* A plea that his good luck and new situation in life will be permanent. However, the moment he sets foot outside his benefactor's house, Oliver is seized and dragged off by Nancy to Fagin's.

In the next scene Fagin occupies the empty stage and considers going straight in *Reviewing the Situation*. Subsequently, Bumble and Mrs. Corney, now uncomfortably married, discover that Oliver is the scion of a rich family. Their scheme to get him back fails and Nancy, regretting her part in the capture of Oliver, plans to return him to his benefactor at night on London Bridge. Fearful of Sikes, she reprises *As Long as He Needs Me*. Sikes stalks her and kills her. He grabs Oliver and, after a chase, is himself shot dead. Oliver is restored to his benefactor and Fagin, now without boys, home and money, reprises *Reviewing the Situation*.