

MRS SOWERBERRY

MRS SOWERBERRY enters. A thin squeezed up woman with a vixenish countenance.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Well! What do you want? What is it? Oh, Mr Bumble!

SOWERBERRY

My dear, I have told Mr Bumble that we may consider taking in this boy to help in the shop.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Dear me! He's very small.

OLIVER goes onto tip-toe

MRBUMBLE

Yes, he is rather small - there's no denying it. But he'll grow, Mrs Sowerberry - he'll grow.

MRS SOWERBERRY examines OLIVER doubtfully.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Ah, I dare say he will, on our vittles and our drink. They're a waste of time, these workhouse boys. They always cost more to keep than what they're worth. Still, you men always think you know best.

She gives a short hysterical laugh.

SOWERBERRY

But there's an expression of melancholy on his face, which is very interesting. He would make a delightful coffin-follower.

They all eye OLIVER speculatively

MRS SOWERBERRY

Yes it's a possibility. Very well, then, boy - what's your name?

OLIVER

Oliver - Oliver Twist, ma'am.

MRS SOWERBERRY

A singular name.

MR. BUMBLE

Aye, ma'am, and one of my own choosing.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Yours, Mr Bumble?

MR. BUMBLE

Mine, Mrs Sowerberry. We name our fondlings in alphabetical order. The last was an S-Swubble I named him. This was a T - Twist I named him.

MRS SOWERBERRY

An orphan then, Mr Bumble?

MR. BUMBLE

Indeed Mrs Sowerberry. The child's mother came to us destitute. .. brings the child into the world. .. takes one look at him, and promptly dies without leaving so much as a forwarding name and address.

MRS SOWERBERRY

(to OLIVER)

Well then, Oliver Twist, do you think you could look like that gentleman up there?

Points to sign near door.

OLIVER

Maybe. Perhaps if I had a tall hat ...

SOWERBERRY

(lost in imagining great things)

Never mind about tall hats ...

MRS SOWERBERRY

(interrupting)

The boy is quite right. These things must be done proper and correct.

Get the boy a tall hat. Stand underneath the picture, boy.

OLIVER moves over to the picture. SOWERBERRY puts the top hat on OLIVER's head

SOWERBERRY

Delightful.

MR. BUMBLE

(enthusiastically)

Very becoming.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Yes ... yes. For once Henry, you might have had a decent idea. Can you keep that expression for a long time, boy, with a crowd watching you?

OLIVER

Yes, ma'am, I think so.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Very well then, that's your job. Junior coffin-follower ... have you eaten yet?

OLIVER

No, ma'am, not since ...

MRS SOWERBERRY

Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE

Yes?

MRS SOWERBERRY

Bring in some of them cold bits we put out for the dog. It hasn't been in all day, so it can go without 'em. I daresay the boy ain't too dainty to eat 'em - are you boy? Charlotte, this is the new boy ... give them to him.