

said. "Perhaps he never had a mother to love or protect him! Is it right for us to send him to prison, where he will meet worse people? Think of me! I was an orphan, but you took me in and raised me like your own child. But if you hadn't, I might have been in the same position as this boy." As she said this, Rose began to cry.

Mrs Maylie took Rose in her arms and held her. "My dear girl," she said, "I wouldn't harm a hair on his head."

At that moment Oliver woke up. Slowly he told Rose and Mrs Maylie his story about the workhouse, the thieves, Mr Brownlow, and finally about the robbery. When he finished he was so tired that he fell asleep.

"Do you believe his story?" Rose asked Mrs Maylie.

"I do," she replied, "but a policeman might not believe it. So I think we should not tell the police about Oliver. We'll just take care of him till he is better."

Oliver needed a lot of care to get well. In addition to his broken arm, he had caught a fever after lying outside in the rain. But slowly he felt stronger, and the first thing he did was to thank Rose.

"Oh, you will have many chances to thank me," Rose said.

"I will be glad to do something for you," Oliver said.

Oliver liked living with Rose and Mrs Maylie. They liked to read books and play music, or just talk and laugh together. Rose offered to teach Oliver to read, and he agreed. Surrounded by happiness and love, Oliver thought less and less of his old life with Fagin, the Artful Dodger, Nancy and Sikes.

