

to break in? Remember, the precious gold plate is in there!"

"There is a way," Sikes said, "but I will need a boy. A small boy will be able to crawl through a window and unlock the door for us."

"That is no problem at all dear," Fagin said, looking at Oliver. "I have the perfect boy for the job!"

Oliver realised that Fagin meant him. Terrified, he jumped up and ran to the door, banging on it and screaming for help. Bill Sikes' dog got to his feet, growling.

"Keep the dog back, Bill!" Nancy said suddenly, taking Bill Sikes' arm. "He'll tear the boy to pieces!"

"That would serve him right!" Sikes shouted. "Let go of my arm or you'll be very sorry!"

Nancy usually obeyed Sikes, but not now. With Oliver, she felt something she had not felt for a long time: pity for someone who was weak. She shouted at Sikes. "No! You'll have to kill me first!"

Fagin and the Dodger dragged Oliver back to his chair. "So you thought you would get away, didn't you," Fagin said to him, picking up a club.

Nancy let go of Sikes and grabbed the club. "No! I brought the boy here, but I won't let you hurt him!" she cried. "You'll make him a thief and a liar, just like you made me. Isn't that bad enough?" And saying this, Nancy burst into tears.

Sikes seized Nancy roughly and she fainted.

Now, Oliver didn't have any chance to escape. They kept him locked in the house. He kept thinking of Mr Brownlow. If only he could find him again!

