

## CHAPTER 4

**“W**ELCOME BACK, DEAR OLIVER,” FAGIN SAID MOCKINGLY. “Thank you for bringing him home again, Nancy,” he added to the young woman who had kidnapped

Oliver. Nancy was about twenty and very pretty. Like the Artful Dodger, she had been one of Fagin’s pupils. She was very good at lying and deceiving people.

Oliver knew he was in trouble, but spoke up bravely. “Please let me return these books! I owe this to Mr Brownlow. He took me in, and fed me, and was so good to me. Keep me here with you forever, but let me take them back! He will think I have stolen them!”

“No, it took a lot of effort to find you and bring you back, and I shall keep the books as payment,” Fagin said.

Before Oliver could reply, there was a call of “Plummy and slam!” “Open the door, Nancy, dear,” Fagin said. “And Oliver, you sit in the corner and don’t make any trouble. Or Bill Sikes will deal with you!” He laughed nastily, pointing at the door.

Bill Sikes was thirty-five, a big, strong man. His trousers were muddy, and he wore a dirty handkerchief around his neck. A white dog, with his face scratched and torn in twenty places, was following him. “Hurry up!” Sikes said to the dog, and gave him a kick.

“Good day, Bill dear,” said Fagin in a friendly tone to this unpleasant man. “Very cold day, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Sikes unpleasantly, “as cold as your heart.”

“Hush now, Mr Sikes,” Fagin said gently. Mr Sikes was in a very bad temper. He was a professional burglar who often worked with Fagin, so they began to discuss a house burglary that Sikes had been planning.

“There’s a big problem,” said Sikes. “We’ve got nobody to help us from the inside. The servants are all very loyal to their mistress.”

“That is unfortunate,” said Fagin. “But isn’t there another way

