

## CHAPTER 6

**T**HE MORNING WAS COLD AND WET. A MIST LAY ON THE fields, and the rain fell softly. Oliver lay in the ditch half awake, his arm broken. He tried to get up, but he was dizzy and he fell down again. He had a feeling that if he didn't move, he would die.

So he rose, feeling like he was in a dream. He crossed the fields and came to a road. Further down he saw a house. Oliver decided to go there for help. It wasn't until he got close to the house that he realised it was the same house he had broken into! Terrified, Oliver thought of running away. But he had no strength left to run, so he forced himself to go forward and knock on the door. Then he collapsed.

Inside, the people of the house had been awake since the break-in. Two of the servants sat in the kitchen with their guns on the table. There was also the mistress of the house, Mrs Maylie, an elderly widow, and a beautiful young woman called Rose. Rose was an orphan whom Mrs Maylie had adopted. When they heard the knock, they all jumped with fright. Finally, they agreed to all go and see who was at the door so early in the morning. When they opened it, they saw Oliver lying on the step.

"It is a child!" cried Rose. "He is hurt; we must help him!"

"Wait!" cried one of the servants. "That is the boy who was with the burglars!" Mrs Maylie said: "Nevertheless, he is very young, and he is very ill. We must help him first and find out his story later."

Oliver was carried to a warm room and put to bed. He was exhausted and fell into a deep sleep. Rose and Mrs Maylie stayed by his bed.

"What are we going to do?" Rose asked. "The boy can't be a criminal! He is too young!"

Mrs Maylie sighed. "The young as well as the old can die, and the young as well as the old can be criminals."

"Perhaps the robbers forced him to come with them," Rose

