

**ACT ONE**

**Scene Three**

**Inside the Undertaker's Parlour**

*MR SOWERBERRY a gaunt man, attired in a suit of black, with darned cotton stockings to match and shoes to answer. His features are not naturally intended to wear a smiling aspect, but he is in general rather given to professional jocosity. His step is elastic and his face inward pleasantry.*

*Enter MR BUMBLE with OLIVER.*

**MR BUMBLE**

Liberal terms, Mr Sowerberry... Liberal terms? Three pounds!

**SOWERBERRY**

Well, as a matter of fact, I was needing a boy...

**MR BUMBLE**

Good! Then it's settled. One parochial 'prentis. Three pounds please!

**SOWERBERRY**

If you don't mind! Cash upon liking, Mr Bumble! Cash upon liking!

*He calls out to MRS SOWERBERRY.*

Mrs Sowerberry!

**MRS SOWERBERRY**

*(off)*

What is it!

**MR BUMBLE**

*(To Oliver)*

Oliver! Pull that cap off your eyes and hold up your head, sir!

*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.*

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## MR BUMBLE

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.

*MRS SOWERBERRY stops.*

I don't mean a regular coffin-follower to attend the grown-ups, but only for the children's practice. It would be very novel to have a follower in proportion my sweet

*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.

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