

ACT ONE

Scene Two

The Widows Parlour

MR BUMBLE

Mark my words Mrs Corney. That boy was born to be hung, I've never been so shocked in all my days.

WIDOW CORNEY

Hush, Mr B, you've had quite a turn and I fancy you might enjoy a little drop of something special.

MR BUMBLE

What is it?

WIDOW CORNEY

Why it's what I'm obliged to keep a little of in the house to put into the blessed infant's medicine when they ain't well and I'll not deceive you Mr B,

CORNEY fumbles in pocket to reveal a bottle of gin.

It's gin.

MR BUMBLE

Well, you are a humane woman Mrs Corney. It's nice to be appreciated, Mrs Corney. These paupers in this parish they don't appreciate me. Anti-parochial they are, ma'am, anti-parochial. We have given away, Mrs Corney, a matter of twenty loaves and cheese-and-a-half this very afternoon, and still them paupers is not contented.

BUMBLE drinks gin and offers to Corney.

WIDOW CORNEY

Of course they're not. When would they be? Sweet, Mr Bumble?

MR BUMBLE

Very sweet, indeed, ma'am

(Bumble Sneezes)

WIDOW CORNEY

Bless you .

CORNEY drops two lumps of sugar in the gin, and stirs. BUMBLE spreads his pocket handkerchief over his fat knees, heaves a deep sigh and looks at the cat basket)

MR BUMBLE

Do you still keep a cat, ma'am.

WIDOW CORNEY

Yes, and kittens too, I'm so fond of them you can't imagine Mr Bumble. They are so happy, so cheerful, so frolicsome that they are quite companions for me.

MR BUMBLE

(loudly)

Very nice animals indeed, ma'am, and so very domestic.

WIDOW CORNEY

So very fond of their home too, that it's really quite a pleasure, I'm sure.

MR BUMBLE

Mrs Corney, Ma'am.

(marking time with a teaspoon)

I mean to say this... that any cat... or kitten... that could live with you ma'am... and not be fond of it's home... must be an idiot, ma'am, and don't deserve to live in it.

WIDOW CORNEY

Oh, Mr Bumble!

MR BUMBLE

It's no use disguising facts ma'am. An h'idiot! I would drown it myself with pleasure!

WIDOW CORNEY

Then you're a cruel man. And a very hard hearted man besides.

MR BUMBLE

Hard hearted, Mrs Corney? Hard? Are you hard hearted Mrs Corney?

WIDOW CORNEY

Dear me, what a very curious question coming from a single man. What can you want to know for Mr B.?

BUMBLE drinks his gin, wipes his lips and kisses CORNEY.

Mr Bumble, I shall scream!

#6 - I Shall Scream!

YOU'RE A NAUGHTY BAD MAN
IF YOU THINK I CAN'T BE PROPER
PRIM AND HAUGHTY I CAN
AND YOU'LL PARDON IF I MENTION
YOU MUST STATE YOUR TRUE INTENTION

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.