

ACT ONE  
Scene 4

UNDERTAKER'S SHOP  
The next morning.

/87 NEXT MORNING - (Orchestra)

(Music continues as there is a loud kicking on the outside of the shop door. OLIVER steps from behind the counter and begins to undo door chain. The kicking desists and a VOICE begins...)

NOAH

(Off)

Open the door, will yer? Open up the door. Open the door.

OLIVER

(Undoing the chain and turning the key)

I will directly sir.

NOAH

(Through the keyhole)

Are you the new boy?

OLIVER

Yes sir.

NOAH

(Still outside)

How old are yer?

OLIVER

Thirteen, sir.

(Music fades out)

NOAH

Then I'll wop you one when I get in, you just see if I don't you little workhouse brat!

(NOAH begins whistling. OLIVER draws back the bolts, opens the door. NOAH CLAYPOLE is framed in the doorway. HE is eating a thick slice of bread and butter)

OLIVER

Did you knock sir?

NOAH

(Between mouthfuls)

I kicked.

OLIVER

Did you want a coffin sir?

NOAH

(Very angry)

NO! But you'll be wanting one before very long if you start cheeking your superiors.

(HE enters majestically)

Yer don't know who I am, I suppose, Workhouse.

OLIVER

No sir, I can't say as I do.

NOAH

(Punctuating)

I'm Mis-ter - No-ah - Clay-pole - and - you're - under - me! So open up the blind, you idle young scallywag.

(NOAH kicks OLIVER where it hurts most. OLIVER begins taking down the shutters, and CHARLOTTE enters with a tray of food)

CHARLOTTE

Hello, Noah, I saved a nice little bit of bacon for you from master's breakfast. Oliver! Shut the door!

(OLIVER shuts the door)

And take them bits and your tea and go over there and eat 'em. And make haste, 'cos they'll want you to mind the shop. D'you hear?

(THEY all begin eating)

NOAH

D'you hear? Work'us?

CHARLOTTE

Lor Noah! What a tease you are! Let the boy alone.

NOAH

Let him alone? I'm giving the boy a change, you silly thing! Ev'ryone lets him alone. His father left him alone - his mother left him alone - they all left him alone except dear old, kind old Noah. Eh, Charlotte? He, he, he!