

**NELL DASH**  
The Gruesomely Merry Adventures of  
An Irrepressibly Sensible Capitalist With A Vengeance

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by  
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Nell Dash	A cheerful but sensible pie-maker	32	F
Lady Fanny Dashwood	A selfish, evil, upper-crust woman	36	F
<b>Nance /</b>	<b>Nell's younger sister, a prostitute</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Estella</b>	<b>Adopted child of Miss Havisham</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>F</b>
Celia Peachum /	Polly's ambitious, conniving mother	35	F
Miss Pross /	An elderly customer of Nell's	75	F
Wackford Squeers	A hospital attendant	30	M
<b>Dodger /</b>	<b>A teenage pickpocket</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Edward Ferrars /</b>	<b>Fanny's gentle younger brother</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Mr. Todd /</b>	<b>A socially awkward barber</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Executioner</b>	<b>An executioner</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>M</b>
Fagin /	An old Jewish leader of thieves	60	M
Mr. Brownlow /	The Dashwood family solicitor	60	M
Dr. Grimwig /	A grumpy doctor	60	M
Abel Magwitch	Another elderly thief	60	M
<b>Toby Muzzle (or just Muzzle) /</b>	<b>A dim-witted but gentle footman</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>Miss Aurelia Havisham /</b>	<b>A recluse</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>The Beadle /</b>	<b>An unctuous minor official</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>King Stanley V8</b>	<b>The King of this alternate England</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>M</b>
Polly Peachum /	A crafty little girl, very pretty	8	F
Bill Sikes /	A notoriously violent thief	35	M
Tiger Brown /	An ambitious but genial policeman	40	M
Mr. Jaggers	The Havisham family solicitor	40	M

**CAST:** 4 Women, 4 Men

The actresses playing Nell and Fanny do not cover any other roles; the rest of the cast play multiple roles as indicated above.

**SYNOPSIS:** In an alternate London of 1820 during the joyous reign of King Stanley V8, Elinor and Marianne Wood, the illegitimate daughters of Sir Henry Dashwood and his cook, have become Nell Dash and Nance. Their vile half-sister-in-law Lady Fanny Ferrars Dashwood stops at nothing to keep them from getting a single penny of the annuity they have inherited, whilst at the same time trying to attain the two strands of pearls given the girls when they fled Devonshire, pearls which have mysteriously disappeared and have a strange history of their own.

## **SCENE BREAKDOWN**

There are many locations throughout the play; the set can be as elaborate or as sparse as the producer and/or director wishes. The only necessities are a table and a couple of chairs. Projections noting time and place between scenes would be helpful.

LONDON, 1820

### **ACT ONE**

1. Lady Dashwood's Drawing Room in Berkeley Square
2. Nell's Pie Shoppe, Fleet Street
3. Fagin's Lair on Saffron Hill
4. Lady Dashwood's Drawing Room
5. Nell's Pie Shop
6. Nell's Pie Shop
7. A Dark Alley
8. Lady Dashwood's Drawing Room
9. In Front of St. Dunstan's In The West
10. Nell's Pie Shop
11. Nell's Pie Shop
12. Nell's Pie Shop
13. A Hospital in Southwark
14. The Thames Embankment

### **ACT TWO**

1. The Thames Embankment
2. Miss Havisham's Mansion, Rochester, Kent
3. Nell's Pie Shop
4. Fagin's Lair on Saffron Hill
5. Nell's Pie Shop
6. The Hospital
7. Mr. Jagger's Office in London
8. Lady Dashwood's Drawing Room
9. Nell's Pie Shop
10. Epilogue: The Courtyard in Newgate Prison, One Year Later

**BOOK ONE, CHAPTER ONE: IN WHICH LADY FANNY DASHWOOD PUTS THINGS IN IRREVOCABLE MOTION.**

A drawing room in Berkeley Square. Fanny is sealing an envelope. She rings for Muzzle, her footman. He enters.

FANNY

You do know where to deliver this, Muzzle?

MUZZLE

Yes, Lady Dashwood. If you please, mum, / your

FANNY

/ Ma'am, Muzzle. How many times must / I

MUZZLE

/ Ma'am, your solicitor has been waiting nearly a quarter of an hour now.

FANNY

Oh, yes. Please send him in as you leave to deliver this most urgent message. Hurry, now, Muzzle. Wait for a reply.

MUZZLE

Yes, mum Ma'am.

FANNY

And do not partake of her gin this time, Muzzle.

MUZZLE

No, Ma'am. (He exits. Off:) If you please, sir, her Ladyship will see you now.

He shows Mr. Brownlow into the room, then exits.

FANNY

Mr. Brownlow, thank you for coming so quickly. You were the first person I contacted after the death of my husband this very morning.

MR. BROWNLOW

May I offer my sincere condolences on the / loss

FANNY

/ Yes, yes, yes, thank you.

MR. BROWNLOW

He was not yet 40, was he? So young, compared to his father, the late Sir Henry.

FANNY

Yes. So sad. You have brought my newly late husband's last will and testament?

MR. BROWNLOW

Yes, yes, yes of course.

FANNY

I am to be left everything, then? The estates, the lands, the jewelry, the Dashwood meat packing business, everything will now be in my name?

MR. BROWNLOW

As you have no male heirs... Well, nearly everything, yes.

FANNY

Nearly?

MR. BROWNLOW

The terms of the late Sir John Dashwood's will, may he rest in peace, are quite clear: in the event he were to die childless, and as his legitimate younger sister Mrs. Margaret Ferrars has predeceased him, also childless, he wished to leave an annuity of two thousand, five hundred pounds per annum to each of his sisters, Elinor and Marianne Wood, as his sole remaining blood relations.

FANNY

Half-relations, Mr. Brownlow, half-relations. Do remember: their name was Wood, and not *Dashwood*.

MR. BROWNLOW

Nonetheless, they are his blood relations.

FANNY

I am quite assured they are dead. Nothing has been heard of them for years.

MR. BROWNLOW

Quite assured is not completely certain, now is it, Lady Dashwood? Every effort must be made to ascertain whether or not Miss Elinor and Miss Marianne Wood are still living.

FANNY

They nearly broke their father's heart when they ran away. They are hardly deserving of an enormous annuity of two thousand five hundred pounds a year. Each!

MR. BROWNLOW

My dear Lady Dashwood, what are 5,000 pounds a year compared to the 60,000 a year you stand to inherit?

FANNY

5,000 less than 65,000, Mr. Brownlow. And those ungrateful girls were given two quite expensive strands of pearls by their half-sister Margaret, may she also rest in peace. Those pearls should stand them in good stead. IF they have not succumbed to disease or drink. The last I heard they had become whores.

MR. BROWNLOW

Nonetheless, these are your newly-late husband's wishes, and as his solicitor, I shall undertake an extensive effort to locate his half-sisters.

FANNY

An impossible task, as I am sure they are dead or irrevocably missing. And if they are still alive, they will then never die.

MR. BROWNLOW

I beg your pardon?

FANNY

People live forever when there is an annuity involved. And if those exquisite pearls have not disappeared with them, they will, by all rights, be returned to me, will they not, as the sole surviving member of the Dashwood family?

MR. BROWNLOW

Unless one or both of them has had a surviving male child, and that child, or children, as it were, be still alive. The terms of Sir John's will are quite clear, and quite incontestable.

FANNY

A surviving male child? Or more?

MR. BROWNLOW

It's very possible, Lady Dashwood. I myself had nearly given up hope I would ever find my beloved niece Emily, and while my hopes were dashed to find she had, indeed, died, how overjoyed was I to discover she had not died before giving birth to my great-nephew, a delightful young man recently restored to me.

FANNY

How wonderful for you, Mr. Brownlow, but not every story has a happy ending. I would hate to be the cause of you wasting your time, which I know is quite a valuable – and expensive – commodity. I am grief-stricken enough by the death of my beloved Sir John.

MR. BROWNLOW

My expenses are not drawn from the principal sums of your accounts, Lady Dashwood, and as for your grief, well... I leave you to it. Good day, Ma'am.

He exits.

FANNY

A surviving male child? Or more? Good heavens, I had not thought of that. Will there be no end to the hell those two illegitimate harlots are to put me through?

**CHAPTER TWO: IN WHICH NELL VOWS HER VENGEANCE, AND MUZZLE PARTAKES OF HER GIN.**

Nell's Pie Shop in Fleet Street. Later that morning. Nell, stirring dough with a big wooden spoon. Muzzle enters.

MUZZLE

If you please, Ma'am, a note for you. Oops. The wax broke.

NELL

I see. What's she want now, eh, Muzzle?

MUZZLE

I'm quite sure I can't say, Ma'am.

NELL

Oh, I'm quite sure you can, Muzzle.

MUZZLE

Your brother, Sir John Dashwood, has passed away this morning.

NELL

Half-brother, Muzzle. I guess I must go pay my respects to his widow.

MUZZLE

She don't want you comin' round, Ma'am. And she's taking the opportunity, now she figures she's running things, to cut your meat supplies and charge you for 'em.

NELL

And they say you can't read well.

MUZZLE

That's what they say, Ma'am.

NELL

My own father's meat business she's using against me now? I must say I saw this coming.

MUZZLE

I'm to wait for a reply, Ma'am.

NELL

(Quickly scanning the note.) Yes. No. No. And GOD no. Have you got that?

MUZZLE

Yes, Ma'am. Yes. No. No. And GOD no. She won't like that.

NELL

(Pouring him some gin.) Here, she won't like this either.

MUZZLE

Thank you, Ma'am. She's not a very nice woman, is she?

NELL

You shouldn't be talking about your employer that way, Toby Muzzle, you know that. But... Yes, she is a hard one, ain't she?

MUZZLE

I'm so afraid now, what with both the Mr. Dashwoods gone, she's going to sack me. I'm not really a very good footman, you know, but Mr. Dashwood, the elder, kept me on after my mother, the housekeeper, passed. He was a kind man, wasn't he?

NELL

Yes, he was. My father was a very kind, loving man, with a heart big enough for all God's creatures. I wish I could take you on here, Toby, but times is hard. (Gives him a pie.) You can always count on me for tot of gin and a pie or two, so you'll never go hungry, at least.

MUZZLE

You're a good Christian woman, Nell Dash, that you are. You and your sister were such sweet affable little things, I always had a soft spot for the two of you, and your mum, too. (He takes a bite of a pie and makes a face.) She was a good cook, your mum. You remember her secret? Stir for an hour, with a big wooden spoon. Makes the dough nice and smooth.

NELL

Mum never had to bake 12 dozen pies at a time.



MUZZLE

She used to let me lick that big wooden spoon. Then she'd hit me with it. I liked her.

NELL

We were all almost like family below stairs there in Devonshire, now weren't we?

MUZZLE

Yes, Ma'am.

NELL

Now off with you. And remember, you don't know who I really am. Fanny would sack you quicker'n a greased pig at the Devonshire fair if you ever let it slip.

MUZZLE

I'll remember, Ma'am. (He goes, muttering to himself.) Yes. No. No. And GOD no. Yes. No. No. And GOD no. Yes. No. No. And GOD no.

Nell goes back to stirring her dough, a little less cheerfully.

NELL

I must now go tell my sister there are but three blood-related Dashwoods left in this world. (She pours a gin and re-reads the note. She speaks in a more refined accent now.) Fanny Dashwood, you are a piece, aren't you? You can keep my sister Marianne and me from paying respects to our departed half-brother. You can make my beloved Edward, your brother, marry my half-sister Margaret instead of marrying me like he wanted. You can force me to change my name from Wood to Dash. And with my half-brother John now gone, you can even try to charge me for the rotten bits of beef you will "condescend" to sell me from my own late father's business. But as God is my witness, Lady Fanny Ferrars Dashwood, you will never, ever, ever get your greedy little hands on my string of pearls, the only worldly reminder of my past life of quiet half-gentility. But first I must get them back myself.

**CHAPTER THREE: IN WHICH PLEASANT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN FAGIN, CELIA PEACHUM, AND THE ARTFUL DODGER HAVE FAR REACHING CONSEQUENCES.**

Fagin's lair on Saffron Hill. Shortly after. Fagin, Celia Peachum, and her pretty little daughter, Polly.

FAGIN

Equal partners, eh?

CELIA

Equal partners, Fagin. I've been pimpin' your girls and motherin' your brats for fifteen years. It's me due.

FAGIN

Celia Peachum, dear lady! Time's bein' so hard, the law breathin' down our necks, and you want to take the bread out of our mouths?

CELIA

What about the bread for me own little Polly over there, what's soon to grow into a fine young lady, worth somethin' to us?

FAGIN

I don't doubt she'll make us both a small fortune, me dear, yes, a small fortune.

CELIA

That she will. But listen, you old skinflint: 50% now, or you ain't gettin' me Polly later.

DODGER

(Popping in from a hidden entrance.) Fagin! I got your news!

FAGIN

Not now, Dodger me dear. We're conducting a little business.

DODGER

Right you are.

Dodger lurks in the shadows. Polly stares at him lovingly.

CELIA

You heard me, Fagin. You know what I want. Think it over carefully. Very, very carefully.

FAGIN

I'd hate to think it's come to threats after all I've done for you since you were but your little Polly's age. Always been one of my favorites, you have.

CELIA

And after all I've done for you, too. C'mon, Polly, we're goin'. POLLY! Stop your moonin' afore I cuff you one!

Celia grabs Polly and exits, then motions for Polly to sneak back in. She hides in a corner, watching.

DODGER

She's your favorite?

FAGIN

You're all me favorites, Dodge, you're all me favorites. So? The news?

DODGER

Me half-crown?

FAGIN

You'd take the bread out of our mouths?

DODGER

That's a laugh. C'mon, Fagin, me half-crown.

FAGIN

Turn around.

He does. Fagin goes to a dark corner, takes out a chest and removes a coin. He puts the chest back, slaps Dodger's butt, and hands him the coin.

DODGER

The kid is with the old gentleman.

FAGIN

The one you pinched the tenner from?

DODGER

He's his grand-dad, or uncle, or something like that.

FAGIN

This is bad, Dodge, this is bad. If he peaches, it's the drop for all of us then, me dear.

DODGER

For you maybe, Fagin, but not for me. They don't call me the Artful Dodger for nothing.

FAGIN

Now, Dodger, me boy, how can you talk to your old Fagin like that? Ain't I took care of you like you was me own from almost the cradle to now, ever since you were dropped on me doorstep? Always given you the least moldy sausages?

DODGER

Not for less than a sovereign.

FAGIN

A POUND, DODGE!?! I ain't even asked you yet!

DODGER

But I can always tell when you need me for something big. A sovereign. Or nothin'.

Dodger holds out his hand. They repeat the business.

FAGIN

Find out how we can get the kid back from the old gentleman.

DODGER

See you tomorrow.

Making sure he's gone, Fagin takes out the chest, pulling out piece after piece of jewelry, ending with two necklaces – two lovely strings of pearls. He studies the clasps.

FAGIN

Ah. "M." And "E." ME! Me beauties. Me fortune. Me security. Me legacy.

Polly sneaks back out.

CELIA

Well? Did you see where he hides his stash?

POLLY

Yes.

CELIA

And?

POLLY

I want a string of pearls, mummy.

**CHAPTER FOUR: IN WHICH THE GRIEVING FANNY INVITES HER BROTHER EDWARD TO PARTAKE OF HER SPECIAL BLEND OF TEA.**

Fanny's drawing room. A week later. Fanny and her brother Edward Ferrars.

EDWARD

Dearest sister Fanny, I came as soon as I heard about my poor unfortunate brother-in-law.

FANNY

We are all we have now, Edward. Tea?

EDWARD

No, thank you. I did not know that John also suffered from acute stomach problems.

FANNY

Yes, apparently the Dashwoods are not a hearty lot. My poor dear father-in-law, Sir Henry Dashwood, your poor, sweet wife, Margaret, and now my beloved husband, Sir John. All... Gone. Leaving us only their fortunes, and yours.

EDWARD

Yes, dear sister. Unless we each remarry and have sons, we are each other's heirs.

FANNY

Where is that useless Muzzle? I've ordered a lovely tea for you.

EDWARD

No, thank you, Fanny.

FANNY

But Edward, it's the special blend you like from Fortnum & Mason. I ordered it especially when I received your letter telling me you were coming. Dear Brother.

EDWARD

Dear Sister. Thank you, but no.

FANNY

But I insist. You've traveled so far; that journey all the way from Plymouth / must

EDWARD

/ Bath.

FANNY

I beg your pardon?

EDWARD

I live in Bath now, Fanny.

FANNY

How extraordinary. Well. Your journey all the way from Bath must have been exhausting. (She pulls the servant's cord, and calls out in a hearty, guttural bleat) MUZZLE!!!

(Back to her more “refined” voice.) Honestly, Edward, my late father-in-law was a lovely, generous man, but he was entirely too kind when it came to retaining his family retainers.

EDWARD

He was loyal to the people who served him, Fanny. I don’t see what is so wrong with that.

FANNY

At least my late husband’s half-sisters had the good sense to leave after their mother, the cook, passed away. Imagine how awful it would have been for the poor girls to continue living in a house where they had no real social standing?

EDWARD

What of the Misses Wood? Our half-sisters-in-law? Marianne, and... and... Elinor?

FANNY

Dearest Edward, your late brother-in-law spent much of his time and our resources trying to find the dear girls, but they disappeared so quickly after their mother died and you married Margaret, leaving not a trace. I very much fear they are dead.

EDWARD

Oh, dear.

FANNY

You need tea.

EDWARD

No, Fanny, I’ll be fine. It’s just... I had always hoped...

FANNY

(A louder bark) **MUZZLE!!!**

He instantly enters with the tea.

MUZZLE

Is there anything else you require, mum?

FANNY

Ma’am.

MUZZLE

Ma’am?

She dismisses Muzzle, and begins preparing the tea.

EDWARD

I never should have listened to you and mother. I loved Elinor, not Margaret.

FANNY

Mother was right, Edward. Margaret was entirely the better match. Look at the fortune she brought you on your wedding day!

EDWARD

What do I care about a share in the Dashwood Meat-packing fortunes? I have my own comfortable income and inheritance, Fanny. Oh, my poor, dear Elinor.

He turns away. She quickly pulls a locket from her pocket, and drops a pellet into his tea.

FANNY

This is where we are different, dear brother. You have never understood the utter importance of money and social standing. Tea?

EDWARD

If you insist.

FANNY

I do. Now that you are back in London, we shall have tea every afternoon. Dear brother.

Smiling sweetly, she hands him the tea. He takes a sip.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: IN WHICH NANCE, THE WHORE, VISITS HER SISTER NELL, THE PIE MAKER, WITH A RISKY PLAN.**

The pie shop. Evening, the same day. A scattered customer or two. Nell and Nance having a whispered conversation.

NELL

And he gave you what for? Again?

NANCE

I asked for it, he says.

NELL

They always do, Nance, they always do.

NANCE

He was drunk, again.

NELL

They always are, Nance, they always are. Look at that eye! And that lip! You need to see a doctor, Nance. Have you got any money?

NANCE

(Shaking her head “no.”) I’ll be fine. He’s given me worse’n this before.

NELL

Course, if you hadn’t given Fagin our pearl necklaces what our rich half-sister Mags gave us before we left Devonshire, we wouldn’t both be so hard up all the time.

NANCE

The kid, Nell! I need a safe place to stash the kid ‘til I can bring the uncle to him.

NELL

You want me to keep the kid here? A kid what your Bill stole? With Constable Brown and the Beadle already snoopin’ round the place?

NANCE

What’s they got on you?

NELL

Nothin’, Nance, nothin’. But ever since that crooked Mrs. Mooney was caught stuffin’ pussy cats into her pies, they been lookin’ at all us legitimate bakers. How’m I going to explain a kid to the Beadle?

NANCE

I’m tryin’ to do right by the kid, Nell, ain’t I, bringin’ him back to the uncle?

NELL

Why you stick with that Bill Sikes, I’ll never understand.

NANCE

He needs me. And as long as he needs me, I know where / I must be

NELL

/ Save your sad song, Nance, I’ve heard it too many times now.

NANCE

You ain’t got a lick of romantic sensibility in you anymore, Nell.



NELL

And you ain't got a lick of common sense, Nance, you never had. So where am I supposed to stash this kid? This ain't exactly a private, out of the way little nook, you know.

NANCE

You got plenty of hidin' places here. Down in the bakehouse?

NELL

Ain't you been listenin' to me? That's the first place his high and mightiness looks.

NANCE

What about upstairs? You ain't been able to rent that place for years.

NELL

A barber's movin' in. I hope it improves me own business. A shave and a pie, eh, Nance?

NANCE

Then how about down in the tunnels between here and St. Dunstan's?

NELL

I suppose that could work. Let me think on it.

NANCE

That's all I'm askin' Nell, that's all I'm askin'.

NELL

When do you need me to hide the brat?

NANCE

Next week, I told the uncle.

NELL

Beadle was here day before yesterday, usually don't come back but every five days. If you can bring him the day after, it might work. But what's in it for me, eh?

NANCE

Do your little sister a good turn?

NELL

I'm always doin' me whore sister a good turn.

NANCE

We're both whores, in a way, ain't we, Nell?

NELL

Like our mum, God rest her soul. Except she was able to keep her whoring off the streets.

NANCE

And she could really make a pie. Don't you remember her rule? Stir for an hour!

NELL

Who's got time for that, Nance? Get me string of pearls back.

NANCE

How can I do that? Even if I could find where Fagin keeps his stash, the old miser'd miss 'em in an instant.

NELL

You had no right givin' the old Jew me pearls in the first place.

NANCE

I had to, Nell. I can't tell you why, but I had to.

NELL

Me string of pearls, nothin' less. Then I'll hide the kid for you. Lord, look at the time! I got to be closin' up me shop in a minute.

NANCE

I better get goin' meself, Nell. Me Bill gets suspicious when I ain't with a customer.

NELL

Wait a bit, I'll give you a savory and a sweet pie to take with you.

NANCE

One of your pies? The only thing harder up than us are your pies, Nell.

NELL

At least they ain't made of pussy. Can you imagine stirring a pussy cat for an hour?

They laugh. The one remaining customer leaves.

NELL (CONT'D)

HERE! WHERE YOU GOING? (In a quieter voice) You poor, old, cheap, deaf thing.

MISS PROSS

YOU OUGHT TO BE PAYING ME, EXPECTING ME TO EAT THIS SHIT YOU CALL A PIE. I'LL BE UP ALL THE NIGHT WITH THE STOMACH CRAMPS.

NELL

AND YOU'LL BE PASSED OUT ALL THE DAY FROM ME GIN. HAND IT OVER.  
ME MONEY!

The customer pays and exits.

MISS PROSS

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK, NELL?

NELL

NEXT WEEK, THEN, MISS PROSS. Heh, heh, heh, Prossy's a sweet old thing. We do that every week. Lost most of her hearing, poor dear, in a cat fight with a French revolutionist in Paris, years ago. She got the better of it, though; I heard she killed the Frenchie. (As they are now alone, she drops the cockney and speaks in her Devonshire accent.) Look what we've come to, dearest Marianne.

NANCE

(Drops the cockney, too.) Oh, Elinor, if only mum had been his wife, instead of his cook...

NELL

We still would not have inherited, dearest.

NANCE

But we'd have had social standing, and been able to marry well.

NELL

And lived a nice, prosperous life in blissfully quiet anonymity. Perhaps by the sea. Just us, our husbands, our children, and our pearls. As our older half-sister Mags might have, had she lived.

NANCE

Dear Margaret. A purer heart never beat so sweetly.

NELL

Poor dead thing.

NANCE

She was good to us when she was alive. Not like our older half-brother John and that dreadfully selfish wife of his.

NELL

Mags was more like our dear father. John was more like his mother. He was weak and vain. Ah, well, there's no profit in crying over our now dead half-relations.

This is the hand we've been dealt, (she resumes the cockney accent) so we've got to play it for all it's worth.

NANCE

I suppose. I'll come by next week with the kid.

NELL

And me string of pearls.

NANCE

The kid's name is Oliver. And the uncle's name is Brownlow.

NELL

Brownlow. Why is that name familiar to me?

Nance shrugs, puts her shawl over her head and darts off. Dodger pops out of the shadows and follows her. Bill Sikes appears and follows them at a discreet pace.

BILL (OFF)

Bullseye!

A small pit bull races across the stage. Constable Tiger Brown, genial but ambitious, enters. Nell curtsies.

TIGER BROWN

Good evening, Nell Dash. Locking up for the night, are you?

NELL

Yes, Constable Brown.

TIGER BROWN

Good thing. Unsavory types around here lately.

NELL

Yes, sir.

TIGER BROWN

Just you be careful, Nell Dash, but not to worry. Me and the Beadle, we're looking out for our friends and neighbors.

She darts to the counter and returns with a pie.

NELL

Here you are, sir, a nice sweet pie for you. Black currant, just as you like, and on the house as usual.

TIGER BROWN

Good night, and thank you, Nell Dash.

He exits.

**CHAPTER SIX: IN WHICH NELL IS VISITED BY A THIEF, A BEADLE, AND A BARBER.**

The pie shop, morning. Three days later. Nell is stirring.

NELL

20 minutes to go. No wonder mum had such strong arms. (She looks up expectantly as Fagin enters.) Oh, it's you, the old Jew.

FAGIN

Now Nell, is that any way to speak to your old friend Fagin?

NELL

Since when have I ever been friends with the likes of you? You wouldn't even be here if you didn't want somethin' from me.

FAGIN

A simple exchange of favors, perhaps? If a child, say a small boy, were to wander into your shop askin' to be hidden, you might not be predisposed to help him? For anyone?

NELL

Now what business have I got hidin' brats? (Fagin pulls out a string of pearls.) My pearls!

FAGIN

It would be such a shame if word got out that the respectable Nell Dash was really Miss Elinor Wood, the unmarried mother of a boy she had with her late, half-sister's future husband, and who was paid to "disappear," now wouldn't it me dear?

NELL

Only my sister Nance knew about my boy... She told you, didn't she! That's why she gave you our pearls, ain't it?

FAGIN

Sad, the love of the gin, no? One sip, one slip of the tongue... And hard earned respectability can just pffft, disappear. Now, I might be willin' to keep me silence. Just a simple exchange of favors...

NELL

You're afraid the kid's gonna peach, ain't ya?

The Beadle, oozing puffed up oily charm, enters. Fagin quickly stuffs the pearls back into his vest pocket.

BEADLE

Ah, my lovely Nell Dash, it's time for another poke around your ovens and larder. The highlight of my week.

NELL

Ah, The Beadle! Your worship!

FAGIN

We do understand each other, Nell?

Fagin quietly sneaks out.

NELL

Shall we inspect the bakehouse, or will you be wantin' your sweetie first?

BEADLE

My sweetie first. Do you have cherry, perchance? I'd dearly love to pop a cherry into my mouth, especially a cherry what's been baked into a pie made by your lovely little hands.

NELL

I'm afraid cherry season is well past, your worship.

BEADLE

Ah, but Mrs. Mooney has a cherry pie on her menu.

NELL

That's all very well if you like your cherries dried and sour. (Mr. Todd enters carrying a barber pole.) Oh, Mr. Todd! Almost ready for your business to start?

BEADLE

A business?

NELL

Mr. T is opening a “Tonsorial Parlor upstairs, your worship. Shaves, haircuts, nail trimmings, all sorts of lovely things for your gentlemanly splendors.

BEADLE

Do you massage the feet, Mr. Todd? I do dearly love a good massage of the feet.

NELL

Of course he does! And all on the house, too.

BEADLE

Oh, how lovely. Just like you, Nell Dash. Isn't she lovely, Mr. Todd?

MR. TODD

(Clearly, intensely smitten) Lovely, yes.

BEADLE

Well then, I shall be round before the end of the week, Mr. Todd.

MR. TODD

An honor, sir, to number you among my clients.

BEADLE

It very well could be. Shall we go down in the bakehouse, my dearest Nell Dash, and then after, perhaps, a bit of gooseberry pie?

He “gooses” Nell. Mr. Todd caresses his razor.

NELL

Oh! Your worship!

BEADLE

I look forward to meeting you again, Mr. Todd, perhaps in your chair?

Nell and the Beadle exit.

MR. TODD

My chair, yes.

He exits. The barber pole appears next to Nell's sign.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: IN WHICH NELL RENEGES ON A PROMISE MADE, AND POLLY PEACHUM MAKES A PROMISE.**

A dark alley, late that night. Nell enters.

NELL

(Whispering) Nance?

NANCE

(Also whispering) What you doin' here, Nell? I'm workin'.

NELL

You told Fagin about my boy, Nance. How could you?

NANCE

He threatened to ruin us both.

NELL

Well, everyone has their limits. Even me with you.

NANCE

What do you mean, Nell, what do you mean?

NELL

The kid? I'm out. Here's five pounds. Get yourself out too. They're on to you.

NANCE

I promised the uncle I'd bring him the kid.

NELL

This ain't about the kid anymore, it's about our lives! I'm out of it, I tell you.

NANCE

What if it were yours, Nell? What if it were your own little Maxwell in danger?

NELL

My Maxwell ain't in danger. Is he?

NANCE

Your Mackie's too smart to get himself into a corner like that. But little Oliver ain't. He don't belong in this world.

NELL

Neither did we, yet here we are. Ain't my problem.



NANCE

But it is mine, Nell. Please!?!

NELL

I ought to have my head examined, I ought, but you are my sister, my own flesh and blood. Now listen to me – don't you be bringing him, they're all watchin' you. Send him on his own, and I'll have Mr. Todd sneak him into the tunnels through the sewer opening. He's small enough, ain't he?

NANCE

He's a little slip of a thing.

NELL

Good. Tell the uncle to meet Mr. Todd in front of St. Dunstan's, and they can bring him up from the tunnels and out through the sanctuary. Thank God it's always open. Now get the kid, get my pearls, and get the devil out of here before Bill does us both bad.

NANCE

Tomorrow midnight.

NELL

Tomorrow midnight. God bless us both.

They exit in opposite directions. Dodger pops out.

DODGER

Maxwell? What kind of a name is Maxwell? (Leaving, he is intercepted by Polly.) Here, what you doin' out this time of night, young Polly Peachum?

POLLY

I'm followin' you, Jack Dawkins.

DODGER

Get lost.

POLLY

But I likes you.

DODGER

Tough luck. And I don't need some moonfaced kid taggin' me all night.

He darts off.

POLLY

I'm as quick as you, and just as quiet!

A hand reaches out and pulls Polly aside. It's Celia.

CELIA

Polly! Fagin's at the Inn of the Three Cripples, nearly passed out from the gin. And I got everybody out workin' the crowds in the West End. You know what that means?

POLLY

No, mummy.

CELIA

Don't play dumb with me, Polly Peachum. Get yerself up to his lair and get me that stash!

Polly hurries to the hiding place in Fagin's lair, looks around to make sure she's alone, removes handfuls of loot, including the pearls, hides them in her apron, and sneaks back out.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Well, me little Polly?

POLLY

I got most of it, mummy.

Celia places fistfuls of cash and jewels in a sack.

CELIA

What's this? Where are the pearls, eh?

POLLY

They weren't there, mummy! And I want them so! (To the audience.) And I'm going to keep them!

**CHAPTER EIGHT: IN WHICH FANNY CONTINUES HER PLANS, AND MR. BROWNLOW FORMS ONE OF HIS OWN.**

Fanny's drawing room, the next afternoon. Mr. Brownlow and Fanny. She is signing documents.

FANNY

(Signing the last one with a flourish.) Is there anything else?

MR. BROWNLOW

Just this last, then all titles and funds will be transferred into your name, and you will be one of the wealthiest widows in London.

FANNY

How lovely!

MR. BROWNLOW

Just one question, if I may? While going over the family papers and accounts at Tellson's Bank, I noticed a payment of 3,000 pounds made to one Nell Dash, and a contract signed by her for large meat deliveries from the Dashwood Meat-packing Company, free of charge in perpetuity.

FANNY

I left all business matters to my father-in-law, and after he passed, to my husband.

MR. BROWNLOW

I see. And yet there is a more recent directive to begin charging this Nell Dash, whilst decreasing the size of her meat order, signed by Sir John on the very morning he passed away. "20 pounds of cheap cuts of the experimental variety at a cost of 20 pounds per week."

FANNY

How very fascinating, Mr. Brownlow.

MR. BROWNLOW

What's even more fascinating is this was all done without my knowledge. Doesn't that strike you as somewhat peculiar?

FANNY

I don't know if it strikes me at all, Mr. Brownlow, as I have no head for business and little interest in affairs such as those. When can I expect the land titles and funds transferred?

MR. BROWNLOW

I will get these papers to Mr. Lorry at Tellson's Bank. Everything will be in order no more than a day or two from now. Good day, Lady Dashwood. (He stops in the doorway.) I must say I found it interesting that the original contract drawn up with this Nell Dash was made just about the time Miss Elinor and Miss Marianne Wood disappeared. And it was signed by your husband, not your father-in-law who was, as you know, very much alive at the time.

FANNY

How extraordinary. You must tell me more. Tea, Mr. Brownlow? I have a very special blend I'd love to share with you.

MR. BROWNLOW

No, thank you, Lady Dashwood. I don't wish to trouble you.

FANNY

Oh, it's no trouble at all. My dear younger brother Edward takes tea with me every afternoon, and shall be here presently.

MR. BROWNLOW

Thank you, but I have an appointment to retrieve my great-nephew this evening and must prepare for our joyous reunion.

FANNY

Ah, yes, I was so saddened to hear he has become a thief.

MR. BROWNLOW

He has not become a thief, he was abducted by thieves, and is being returned to me by a very kind young woman. Strange, but her countenance seemed familiar to me.

FANNY

How lovely for you. We must celebrate his return and your mutual good fortune. With tea.

MR. BROWNLOW

Another time, perhaps. Good day, Lady Dashwood.

Muzzle enters.

FANNY

Mr. Brownlow requires his hat and topcoat, Muzzle. And please be ready to serve the tea as soon as Mr. Ferrars arrives.

MUZZLE

Yes, mum.

FANNY

MA'AM!

MUZZLE

MA'AM!

Muzzle holds the door open.

MR. BROWNLOW

(Whispering, and giving him a sealed envelope.) Mr. Muzzle? I have a most important errand for you. Tomorrow, you must take the person named in this envelope to the address I have written down. And say nothing to anyone.

MUZZLE

Yes, sir.

MR. BROWNLOW

If my hunch is correct, I may have found the Misses Wood. At least one of them.

MUZZLE

Oh, my lady won't like that. She'll think I said something...

MR. BROWNLOW

What's that?

MUZZLE

Nothing, sir, nothing.

MR. BROWNLOW

Yes. Well. It will be our secret. This is for your trouble.

MUZZLE

Ten pounds! Oh, thank you sir. And may I say, sir, I never once for a second believed your nephew was a thief, and I am glad you will both enjoy a joyous reunion this very evening.

MR. BROWNLOW

Thank you. (A pause.) You know I will be reunited with my nephew this evening?

MUZZLE

(Mumbling quietly.) Yes, sir.

MR. BROWNLOW

Mr. Muzzle, sometimes I think you know more than you let on.

MUZZLE

Sometimes I think so too, sir.

Edward enters.

MR. BROWNLOW

Good afternoon, dear Mr. Ferrars. You're looking a little pale. Is our London weather not as agreeable to you as that which you're used to in Bath?

EDWARD

I think perhaps not.

MUZZLE

This way, Mr. Ferrars. You know how Lady Dashwood hates to be kept waiting.

Brownlow exits. Edward enters the drawing room.

FANNY

Ah, dear brother. So punctual. The tea, Muzzle. Now.

**CHAPTER NINE: IN WHICH A HAPPY NEW BEGINNING FOR MR. BROWNLOW CAUSES A SAD ENDING FOR SOMEONE ELSE.**

In front of St. Dunstan's, midnight that evening. Mr. Brownlow is pacing back and forth. Mr. Todd enters.

MR. BROWNLOW

Ah! You are the gentleman who will bring me to my great-nephew?

MR. TODD

Your great-nephew. Yes.

MR. BROWNLOW

And what of the kind young woman who was to bring my nephew here? Where is she?

MR. TODD

I know nothing of that, sir. Come. Quickly.

Todd motions for Brownlow to follow him. Nance appears from the shadows.

NANCE

There's that part of the story done now. Goodbye little Oliver, and God bless us all.

She darts out, followed by Bill Sikes.

BILL

You did betray me, Nance, you did. (Exits, whistling and calling the dog.) Bullseye!

The dog races across. Dodger pops out and follows.

NANCE (OFF)

NO, BILL, DON'T!

Now a muffled scream, a struggle, then silence. Dodger quickly and quietly goes to investigate.

**CHAPTER TEN: IN WHICH BILL SYKES MEETS MR. TODD, AND NELL HAS A POSSIBLY PROFITABLE IDEA.**

The pie shop, a short while later. Nell, stirring with one hand, gin in the other. A bloody Nance appears outside the shop, but she falls before entering. Dodger pops on.

DODGER

(Whispering) He'll finish her off for sure if he sees her here.

Dodger pulls Nance's body off.

NELL

What was that!?! Who's out there?

Nell looks out, sees nothing, and continues stirring. Bill races into the shop in an insane rage.

BILL

The kid! Where's the kid?

NELL

Bill! What the devil are you doin' here and it's bloody almost daylight?!

BILL

I saw me own Nance, that filthy betraying whore, bring him here.

NELL

Don't you call my sister a whore, you sorry excuse for a man!

BILL

Plenty's the time I've heard you call that whore a whore yerself.

NELL

She's my sister, I can call her what I like, it don't mean you can.

BILL

Well that whore ain't gonna whore no more now, is she? And if you don't stop tryin' to distractify me, you won't either. Where's the damn kid, Nell!?!

NELL

You're all covered with blood! Where's my sister? Where's my own Nance?

BILL

I'll kill you too, makes no never mind to me.

NELL

If you kill me, how're you gonna find the kid, eh? (Bill begins to shake her. She hits him with her wooden spoon.) Help! Mr. T! Mr. T! Help!

Bill raises his knife to cut her. Todd races in and slices Bill's throat. Bill falls and dies.

NELL

Nasty bugger he was, killed my beloved sister he did, and Lord knows how many others. I dare say no one'll miss the evil bastard. Coo, what a lot of blood to clean up before my customers start comin' in the morning.

MR. TODD

Customers, yes.

Nell takes Bill's knife and goes through his pockets.

NELL

There must be 50 pounds here! Well, the Lord does provide, as I always say. Here, help me get the body downstairs and into the oven.

MR. TODD

The oven. Yes.

NELL

Such a big brute of a man...

MR. TODD

Big Brute. Yes.

NELL

(Pause.) You know, Mr. Todd, I've just been thinkin' ... With my meat supplies dwindlin', and not enough money comin' in to refresh my stores of beef I now have to pay for, I ain't been able to provide my customers, such as they are, with any savory pies.

MR. TODD

Savory. Yes.



NELL

How about you and me start a little business arrangement? I send up some customers for you, strangers like, what won't be missed, and you send down some supplies for my pies?

MR. TODD

Pies. Yes.

NELL

I can't believe I've come to think like this, but you have to play the hand you're dealt, that's what I always say. (She kicks Bill.) That's for my Marianne. A piece of shit you were, a piece of shit you'll be.

MR. TODD

Shit. Yes.

They drag Bill's body off, his head thumping against the stair treads. Nell returns, and begins to scrub the floor.

NELL

Oh, Marianne. I'll find you I will, and make sure you get a proper burial, at least.

Tiger Brown enters.

TIGER BROWN

You're up late, Nell Dash! And bloody, too?

NELL

Bill Sikes! He was here, all covered in blood. Said he killed me sister Nance. He tried to kill me too! But lucky thing, Mr. T upstairs heard the commotion. He came runnin' down in the nick of time and chased him off, he did!

TIGER BROWN

Which way did he go? Which way did he go?

NELL

Down towards the embankment! Quick, maybe you can get him!

TIGER BROWN

Bill Sikes! I catch him, it's a promotion for me for sure!

Brown exits, blowing his whistle as he goes.

**CHAPTER ELEVEN: IN WHICH BOTH NELL AND MISS PROSS SEE GHOSTS.**

The pie shop, next morning. There is a large metal trash can with a lid. Nell is stirring. Dodger pops in.

DODGER

‘Scuse me, Nell Dash?

NELL

Jack Dawkins? What are you doing here?

DODGER

I come to... well...

NELL

Come on, dear, spit it out, I got to get my pies into the oven, then I got to go find...

DODGER

...Yer Nance?

NELL

Here, what do you know ‘bout that?

DODGER

I saw her almost come in ‘ere last night, but Bill was fast after her so I dragged her off.

NELL

She’s still alive? Where is she, Dodge? Where’s my sister, where’s my Nance?

DODGER

She come to, but she was all crazed in the head like, and ran off cross’t the bridge. She fell, there was a splash, and she just went down like a stone...

He removes his cap. Nell pounds on the trash can.

NELL

Damn you, Bill Sikes, may you rot in a stinking chamber pot for all eternity.

DODGER

I’m sorry, mum.

NELL

Ah, tweren’t your fault, young Jack. You tried to help her.

DODGER

She saved me life once. I'd have done anything for her. Now I gots to go before anybody knows I'm 'ere. Don't want Bill Sikes comin' after me.

He races out quickly and quietly.

NELL

Oh, Marianne, you poor thing. Never did have much sense about you, all romantic sensibility but not a lick of common sense. (She sits on the floor, sobbing and stirring.) A fat lot of good this is going to do me, with everything else that's going on. Play the hand you're dealt, Elinor, play the hand you're dealt.

Muzzle appears with a now much weakened Edward.

EDWARD

Oh, I'm quite puffed, I must sit down. I don't know what's come over me, I seem to be so weakened lately.

MUZZLE

We're here, sir. You can rest inside.

EDWARD

A pie shop in Fleet Street? Why on earth would Mr. Brownlow wish for you to take me to a pie shop in Fleet Street?

MUZZLE

You'll see, sir, you'll see. Nell Dash, I've got a surprise for you!

NELL

Cor blimey, Toby Muzzle, you startled me! I thought you was a... ghost... Edward? Edward Ferrars?

MUZZLE

And my work is done.

He leaves discreetly, as they rush into each others arms.

EDWARD

Dearest Elinor! How can this be so? You were dead, you know.

NELL

Dearest Edward, most assuredly I was not. I am not. As you can see.

Edward notices the blood on her apron.

EDWARD

Blood?

He clutches his stomach.

NELL

Oh. My. Yes. Late shipment of beef last night, a surprise, it was! All still on the bone.

EDWARD

Oh, dearest Elinor, I am so sorry it has come to this, and all because of my weakness.

He again clutches his stomach.

NELL

What's wrong, dearest? How about a nice cup of tea? Nothing like a nice cup of tea!

EDWARD

Oh. Heavens. No! ... I'm sorry, but I have tea every afternoon with Fanny. I am tired of her tea. Her special blend of... tea. I am just... so... tired. But no matter, my love. We're together again, and all will be well for us. At last.

NELL

At last. But one thing you must know, Edward. ... We have a son. I've named him Maxwell, but in my mind I've always called him Mackie.

EDWARD

I have an heir! Not yet legitimate, of course, but soon to be made so if you will agree, dearest Elinor. ... Where is my son? I so want to meet him.

NELL

That's the rub, now isn't it? I gave him up. Up until recently, only my sister Marianne knew where he was. And now... she was... she was killed last night by a big, thieving brute of a man. A man she loved.

EDWARD

There is then no hope of finding our son... Mikey?

NELL

Mackie.

EDWARD

Mickie?

NELL

Maxwell.

EDWARD

There is no hope of finding our son? (He coughs.) Maxwell?

NELL

Never fear, dear one, I shall find our son, now that you have found me.

EDWARD

And now that I have found you, I shall never let you and our son, my heir, go. Fanny and her “social standing” be damned. We shall lead a nice, moderately prosperous life together in blissfully quiet anonymity. Perhaps with more children. Perhaps in Bath, or perhaps in Newbiggin-By-The-Sea.

He is wracked with violent spasms, and faints. A tiny bit of blood trickles out of his mouth. Muzzle rushes in.

NELL

EDWARD!?! MY DEAREST! MUZZLE! TOBY MUZZLE! Quick, Muzzle, he must be taken to the doctor. Doctor Grimwig. Round the corner on Chancery Lane.

MUZZLE

There, there, sir, you’ll be alright, I won’t let nothin’ harm you. Not while I’m here.

He half-drags, half-carries Edward off. Miss Pross enters.

NELL

Hurry now. I’ll be along directly, I just need to close up my shop.

MISS PROSS

(To Muzzle, as she passes him) HEY! DON’T I KNOW YOU? MISTER!

NELL

NOT NOW, PROSSY!

MISS PROSS

BUT I NEEDS ME GIN, NELL!

Nell grabs a bottle of gin and pushes Pross out the door.

NELL

HERE, IT’S ON THE HOUSE.

MISS PROSS

WHO WAS THAT? HIS FACE SEEMED FAMILIAR TO ME!

NELL

NEVER MIND, PROSSY. I'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO ATTEND TO NOW!

MISS PROSS

(As she goes) I KNOW THAT FACE FROM SOMEWHERE...

NELL

Mr. T! I've got an emergency to attend to. You going to be alright alone for a while?

MR. TODD (OFF)

Alone. Yes.

We hear the sound of his razor stopping.

NELL

He's an odd little man, but I do feel a strange sort of kinship with him.

Grabbing her shawl, Nell runs headlong into the Beadle.

BEADLE

Ah, the lovely Nell Dash. As excited to see me as I you?

NELL

Beadle! You give me a fright! Today's not your usual day to inspect me bakehouse?

BEADLE

No, dear lady, it is not. But I come on a matter of great importance, concerning your future!

NELL

My future?

BEADLE

I saw something last night, as clear as through the glass of the shop window you keep so sparkling clean, that made me feel it was my business to dash over here first thing this morning and confront you about it. My stomach was all aflutter.

NELL

Oh, your worship, whatever it is you think you saw, I'm sure it's probably just a bit of undigested beef, or a bit of potato left over from your last night's dinner.

BEADLE

Oh, no, it is a much greater feeling than that. I just had to come by today to see if my shocking presentiment was true.

NELL

I'm sure it was just a bad dream, your worship.

BEADLE

It might be a dream, but how can it be bad when undying devotion and love are involved?

NELL

I beg your pardon?

BEADLE

I love you madly, Nell Dash. I love you.

NELL

Johannes Bumbleford, have you lost your mind?

BEADLE

Only for the love of you. Please tell me you love me just a little, and our future happiness will be secured. Marry me, Nell Dash!

NELL

WHAT!?!

BEADLE

Marry me! (He takes 2 documents from his pocket.) See, I have our marriage license – and a copy – both signed by my dear friend The Judge. They just want our names and signatures, then we can go 'round to see the little priest at St. Dunstan's this afternoon!

NELL

Good lord, you've gone off your chump, you have! Why would you want to marry me?

BEADLE

I'm lonely, dearest Nell. You're lonely. I'm a respectable Parish Beadle, with a respectable, steady position. You're a respectable single lady, with a respectable, modestly profitable business. Think of the modest heights we can climb together!

He grabs her; she tries to fend him off with her spoon.

NELL

Beadle! You must stop this nonsense, immediately!

BEADLE

Marry me, marry me, Nell Dash, oh marry me if you would!

NELL

Absolutely not! I feel you, Johannes, are like a brother perhaps, but hardly more. (To herself.) A big, bullying brat of a brother.

Lunging, he knocks over the trash can. Bill's head rolls out in a shower of bloody bones. She grabs a leg bone, clonks the Beadle, then Todd jumps in and slits his throat.

NELL

Oh, we're in deep now! Killing Bill Sikes was one thing, but the Beadle will be missed, I'm sure!

MR. TODD

Shit he was. Shit he'll be.

NELL

Shit. Yes. That he was. But he was still a man of importance, and will be missed...  
WAIT!

MR. TODD

What?

NELL

Well, you know me... Always having to live by my wits, always having to think me way round life's gruesomely merry little pranks...

She takes Bill's distinctive knife out of her pocket.

MR. TODD

What is that?

NELL

It's Bill's knife. See? Carved in the handle? B.S. (She mimes slicing off the Beadle's head.) Leave his head someplace... they'll think he was murdered... by Bill Sikes... See?

MR. TODD

Ha! Nell Dash, you're a bloody marvel.

NELL

Now, I've got to run to Dr. Grimwig's for an urgency. I'll take care of his high and mightiness later, and after midnight we can take what's left down to the Embankment.

MR. TODD

The Embankment. Yes.



She grabs both licenses as Todd drags the body off.

NELL

Just hold on, Edward, hold on until I get there, my dearest, long lost love. Hold on!

Muzzle enters, cap in hand and looking very glum.

MUZZLE

I'm sorry, Ma'am.

NELL

What?

MUZZLE

Mr. Edward, Ma'am. Dr. Grimwig... He couldn't do anything. He... he's gone...

NELL

What?

MUZZLE

He's gone / to

Todd comes back in.

NELL

/ I've lost him. Again. My Edward. Gone. My Marianne. Gone. My son Mackie. Gone. My pearls. Gone. It's almost more than I can bear.

She faints. Todd catches her.

MUZZLE

Oh, no, no, no, Ma'am. He's not *gone* gone, he's just gone to hospital. St. Thomas, cross't the bridge in Southwark.

Nell revives. Miss Pross enters, peers at Muzzle closely.

MISS PROSS

HOW OLD ARE YOU, MY GOOD MAN?

MUZZLE

41 or thereabouts.

MISS PROSS

SPEAK UP, I'M DEAF, SON! HOW OLD DID YOU SAY?

MUZZLE

41 OR THEREABOUTS.

MISS PROSS

THE EXACT AGE HER POOR LOST LITTLE BOY WOULD BE!

NELL

Who's... WHO'S LITTLE BOY?

MISS PROSS

MY COUSIN AURELIA. AURELIA HAVISHAM. HE'S HER EXACT LIKENESS!

MUZZLE

I DON'T KNOW ANY MRS. HAVISHAM, MA'AM.

MISS PROSS

NOT MRS! MISS! MISS HAVISHAM! LEFT AT THE ALTAR BY THAT SCOUNDREL, SHE WAS, AND ALREADY WITH CHILD, TOO! HIS CHILD, TAKEN FROM HER AFTER HIS BIRTH! WHAT'S YOUR NAME, BOY?

MUZZLE

MUZZLE, MA'AM. TOBY MUZZLE.

MISS PROSS

I ALWAYS SUSPECTED SHE WAS THE ONE WHO TOOK YOU FROM MY POOR DELUSIONAL COUSIN.

NELL

WHO?

MISS PROSS

HIS HOUSEKEEPER!

MUZZLE

WHO'S HOUSEKEEPER?

MISS PROSS

THE SCOUNDREL WHO LEFT MY COUSIN AT THE ALTAR. SIR HENRY DASHWOOD.

NELL

Well. I did not see that coming. Muzzle, you are my half-brother!

MISS PROSS  
AND MY FIRST COUSIN, ONCE REMOVED.

MR. TODD

Removed. Yes.

Nell nods toward the bakehouse, and Todd exits.

NELL

Come, Toby Muzzle, half-brother, take me to Edward. And this time tomorrow we will all be one happy half-family, at last.

## CHAPTER TWELVE: MARRIED! AT LAST!

The hospital, later that evening. Edward, in a wheelchair, Nell by his side. Brownlow, Muzzle, and a one-eyed hospital attendant next to them.

MR. BROWNLOW

And by the powers vested in me by His Majesty King Stanley V8 of our beloved United Kingdom, here at the hospital of St. Thomas in Southwark, I pronounce you husband and wife. (Handing Nell one of the marriage licenses.) I shall hold this second marriage license for safekeeping. And with that, I must leave to attend to my beloved great-nephew. Every moment spent away from him is a moment spent away from him. Good night, and congratulations.

Brownlow exits.

NELL

Dearest Edward. We are finally united.

EDWARD

Until death us do part. (He coughs, and clutches his stomach.)

MUZZLE

Many congratulations, Ma'am, I mean, dear newly-discovered half-sister Elinor. I must take my leave too, as I am to go with my dear newly-discovered 1st cousin once removed Miss Pross to Satis House, in Rochester, to meet my newly discovered mother by 8:40 tomorrow morning, which Miss Pross believes to be the optimal time for a reconciliation. (To Wackford) Excuse me, sir, but before I go, I have to... (Muzzle whispers.)

WACKFORD

(Steering Muzzle off.) Down the hall on the right. But I ain't cleaned it out yet, it gets sticky this time of night. Excuse me, mum, happy felicitations and all, but I gots me orders: all visitors, even blissfully newly-wedded ones, are to be out by 10:00 p.m.

NELL

Oh, yes, of course. Dearest Edward, husband, I shall be back tomorrow morning.

They exit. Grimwig and Fanny enter from the other side.

FANNY

Yes, Dr. Grimwig. I do appreciate that when my dear brother was so suddenly taken ill this was the closest hospital but... (She whispers.) I appreciate even more your alerting me before things took a turn for the irrevocable worse and too many questions asked.

DR. GRIMWIG

Once I realized who he is, dear lady, I knew he'd be better off at your home than here.

FANNY

Edward, dearest brother! Come, you shall recuperate at my home, where I can give you all the loving attention you deserve.

EDWARD

(He can barely speak.) But... but... Elinor... my wife...

FANNY

Margaret was your wife, dearest, and she's dead. Elinor was not your wife, and she is dead. They are both dead. Dead. Dearest. Dead.

EDWARD

No... no... married... Elinor...

FANNY

What are you talking about?

DR. GRIMWIG

Merely the effects of the medicine he has been given. He will most likely ramble this way for several days hence.

FANNY

Ah, I see. I think tea may be a helpful answer, Dr. Grimwig?

DR. GRIMWIG

Yes, of course. No one has ever doubted the curative power of a good, strong cup of tea.

FANNY

Then come, Edward, we shall go home this instant, and have your special blend of tea.

DR. GRIMWIG

Let me help you with this chair, as my assistant seems to have deserted his post, yet again.

They exit with Edward. The attendant wheels in a bruised, wet, and barely alive... Nance! Grimwig re-enters.

WACKFORD

I'm spongin' her like you said, Dr. Grimwig, although she's still mighty wet.

DR. GRIMWIG

I'm surprised she even had the strength to crawl up onto the riverbank. I'll eat my head if she lasts another night. Let me know when she passes. I need that wheelchair. (To the audience.) We only have the one.

Dr. Grimwig goes. Wackford resumes sponging Nance.

WACKFORD

Such a pretty little face. Who would do such a thing to such a pretty little face? Even with me one good eye, I can see you've got a tender, pretty little face. Don't you worry, you tender little thing, I'll take you home I will, I'll dry you off, and I'll nurse you back to health meself. I'm not going to let what's left of a pretty little thing like you be sent off to become an "experimental cut of beef" like all those others the doctor don't care nothin' for.

NANCE

(Weakly.) My name is Marianne. But you may call me... Nance.

WACKFORD

There, there, me pretty little Nance. Rest easy knowin' I'll be takin' care of you for the rest of your long life if you'll do me the honor of becoming Mrs. Wackford Squeers.

### **CHAPTER THIRTEEN: IN WHICH THE FOG, LIKE THE PLOT, THICKENS.**

The embankment, even later that night. In the gathering fog, Mr. Todd removes the Beadle's head from a sack, placing it just beyond the tide line. He puts Bill's knife near the head, and throws the sack into the river. Bullseye wanders on, and starts to howl, then bark. Todd turns.

MR. TODD

Who are you? What are you doing here?

NELL (OFF)

(Whispering loudly.) Mr. T! What's going on down there?

Todd pulls Polly out of the shadows.

MR. TODD

Whatever it is you've seen, your cheeks are as much in need of a shave as any man's.

Nell enters as the pearls tumble out of Polly's apron.

NELL

Polly!?! Mr. T! No! No children! ... My pearls!

POLLY

Let me go!

TODD

Pearls! Yes!

Nell grabs the pearls.

POLLY

BETTER GIVE ME THOSE PEARLS, THEY'RE MINE! GIVE THEM BACK TO ME, NELL DASH! YOU. GIVE. THEM. BACK!

The pearls go flying; Bullseye jumps and swallows them.

NELL

OH NO!

NELL AND POLLY

MY PEARLS!

A whistle blows.

NELL

It's Constable Brown! Oh, the turkey's in the oven now!

She scoops up Bullseye and races out, followed by Todd and Polly as the fog engulfs everything.

**END OF BOOK ONE**

**BOOK TWO, CHAPTER ONE: IN WHICH MUZZLE MUST GO. WITHOUT STOPPING.**

A tiny coach and four is seen racing across the stage.

MUZZLE (V.O.)

PLEASE, CAN'T WE STOP? I REALLY HAVE TO... YOU KNOW...

MISS PROSS (V.O.)

YOU JUST HAD FIFTEEN MINUTES TO TAKE CARE OF THAT!

MUZZLE (V.O.)

PLEASE, COUSIN PROSSY! THE LINE WAS TOO LONG!

MISS PROSS (V.O.)

WE CAN'T STOP NOW, WE'RE MORE THAN HALFWAY THERE. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO HOLD IT A LITTLE WHILE LONGER. DRIVER, CONTINUE!

**CHAPTER TWO: IN WHICH TIGER BROWN ROARS WITH DELIGHT AT HIS PROSPECTS FOR PROMOTION.**

The embankment. A distant church bell chimes 6:00 am. Tiger Brown is inspecting the scene.

TIGER BROWN

Daylight at last. Now let's see what we've got here! ... (He picks up the Beadle's head.) What's this? Beadle Bumbleford? Can't say I'm surprised. Can't say I'm sorry, either. (He sees the knife.) And this knife. (Looking at the handle.) B.S. Bill Sikes! I got you now!

Celia Peachum enters.

CELIA

Only if you can find him, Tiger Brown. Only if you can find him.

TIGER BROWN

I think you'll be able to help me with that now, won't ya, Celia Peachum? If you know what's good for you.

CELIA

I think I know what's good for both of us. (She pulls a fistful of cash from a pocket.) You want Bill Sikes? I'll give you Bill Sikes. I'll give you Bill, Fagin, and all the rest of 'em.

TIGER BROWN

Even yer thievin' little brat Polly?

CELIA

You leave her to me, and leave me to be the new Queen of the Beggars. Deal?

TIGER BROWN

Deal. (The burlap sack washes up.) Here, what's this? (Sees the printing on the sack.) Dashwood Meat Packing? (Looks inside.) Bloody bones? (Now a few loose bones wash up.) More bloody bones? (Bill's soggy head now washes up.) Another head? Bill Sikes? (He looks across the river to the factory.) HA! I wonder... Maybe, just maybe, they both got what they deserved from a different murderous wretch? Dashwood Meat Packing, just what kind of meat are you packing?

CELIA

Well, that explains those bloody awful pies Nell Dash makes.

TIGER BROWN

It just might, Celia Peachum, it just might. Serving up Fagin's gang and a cannibalistic meat scandal all in the same morning! I smell a promotion to Chief of Police comin' me way by breakfast, for sure!

They exit. A moment, then Dodger pops out and follows.

### **CHAPTER THREE: IN WHICH THE DARKNESS SHEDS SOME LIGHT IN A PUFF OF SMOKE.**

Miss Havisham's mansion in Rochester. 8:40 the same morning. The stage is completely dark, we see nothing.

MISS HAVISHAM

And you tell me, Prossy, this is my long-lost child, my Tobias Henry Should-Have-Been-Dashwood?

MISS PROSS

WHAT!?! I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING, I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING!!! LET ME LIGHT A MATCH AT LEAST, AURELIA.

MISS HAVISHAM

ABSOLUTELY NOT! (To Muzzle) Come nearer. Let me look at you. Come close. Look at me. You aren't afraid of a woman who has never seen light since before you were born?

We hear a few hesitant footsteps, and a slight stumble.



MISS PROSS

OUCH! THAT'S MY FOOT, YOU BIG CLUMSY LUMMOX!

MISS HAVISHAM

QUIET, PROSSY! Yes, come nearer. I can see you. ... Yes, the resemblance to both my younger self, and my despised beloved, is remarkable. You even sound like me. Yes. You are my son. My beloved, long-lost Tobias.

MUZZLE

My beloved, unknown real mother! I cannot see you, yet I know you're you.

MISS HAVISHAM

Go to the mantle, and bring me that box, Tobias.

MUZZLE

Yes, mother.

A bit more stumbling, the sound of material ripping.

MISS HAVISHAM

Be careful, Tobias, you're ripping my train. ...

MUZZLE

Is this what you mean, mother?

MISS HAVISHAM

Yes, that's the box. Bring it to me.

A loud, sharp crack, then chunks smashing on the floor.

MUZZLE

Ouch!

MISS HAVISHAM

Dear, you're breaking my wedding cake!

The sound of a key in a lock, the creaking of a lid being raised, the rustling of some papers. Miss Pross screams.

MISS PROSS

GOOD GOD! WHAT IS THAT RUNNING ACROSS MY FEET!?!

Miss Pross gropes around, finds a match, and lights it.

MISS HAVISHAM

PUT THAT OUT, PROSSY!!! PUT IT OUT! THERE MUST NEVER BE LIGHT IN THIS ROOM EVER AGAIN WHILST I AM ALIVE!

Miss Pross drops the match. A whoosh of flame, and Miss Havisham screams. Muzzle opens a window. A shaft of morning light reveals a chair with its back to the audience, broken pieces of stale, hardened wedding cake, and the long, long, long, charred and smoking train of a wedding dress wrapped around the room. A badly charred sleeve with a badly charred hand holding a slightly charred piece of paper falls off the arm of the chair. Miss Pross gingerly reaches for the paper. The hand detaches as Miss Pross tries to pry it from the still grasping fingers.

MISS PROSS

HERE, TOBY, DRAW THOSE DRAPES! ... HELP ME WITH THIS!

Muzzle takes the hand as Miss Pross tugs at the paper. After a short battle, the fingers relax, Miss Pross removes the paper, and the hand disintegrates in a cloud of ash, leaving only a charred finger wearing a ring. Muzzle goes to look at Miss Havisham, whilst Miss Pross reads the document.

MUZZLE

Mother? Oh, my, it's like looking in a mirror! A dirty, cracked, smoke-stained mirror!

MISS PROSS

NEVER MIND THAT NOW. LOOK AT THIS DOCUMENT!

Muzzle scans the paper.

MUZZLE

I don't understand?

MISS PROSS

WE MUST SEE THIS MR. JAGGERS, WHO HAS SIGNED AND NOTARIZED THIS, IMMEDIATELY UPON OUR RETURN TO LONDON. WHAT TIME IS IT?

MUZZLE

(Looking at a clock on the mantle piece) 8:40 IN THE MORNING.

MISS PROSS

IT'S ALWAYS 8:40 IN THE MORNING IN THIS HOUSE! COME, WE MUST FIND THIS MR. JAGGERS. DRIVER, TAKE US BACK TO LONDON AT ONCE!

They exit. Estella, 23, emerges from one of the darkest corners of the room. She picks up the charred finger.

ESTELLA

And I am finally free to leave this place to be what you made me, dearest, despised, adopted mother: cold, heartless, and as unfeeling as the jewels you have left me which, I believe, rest with Mr. Jagers in London, wither I now shall go.

The coach and four races back across the stage, followed and then surpassed by a young woman on horseback.

MUZZLE (V.O.)

Who is that enchanting creature racing past us!

MISS PROSS (V.O.)

Never mind that now! Driver, continue!

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: IN WHICH CELIA PEACHUM'S LONG PLANNED TRAP IS SPRUNG!**

Fagin's lair. Another bell tolling 9:00 am. Celia enters.

CELIA

My daughter! My beauty! My security! GONE! Where is she, Fagin? What have you done with her? You ain't tryin' to sell her already, is ya?

FAGIN

Why Celia, dear lady? Me? Exploit a mere child?

CELIA

You're holding her hostage, ain't ya? Don't want to give me my 50% like I asked for, do ya? (She might look at the audience here.) You think that was forgotten, don't ya?

Dodger races in.

DODGER

FAGIN! IT'S A TRAP. WE GOTTS TO GET OUT OF HERE / BEFORE

CELIA

/ SHUT UP, YOU! CONSTABLE BROWN! NOW!

Dodger pulls Fagin toward a back exit. We hear trudging up a creaky staircase. Fagin stops for his stash.

DODGER

AIN'T GOT TIME, FAGIN! Whatever, it's your neck!

Dodger races out the back way.

FAGIN

My jewels? My beauties! My security! My legacy! Gone. GONE. **GONE!**

TIGER BROWN

Fagin, the Jew, I arrest you in the name of King Stanley V8 for thievery, whoremongering, exploitation of children, and suspicion in the murder of Nance the whore.

FAGIN

Murder? I ain't done no murder!

TIGER BROWN

C'mon, it's off to the Old Bailey for you, then Newgate, and then... The Drop. And a promotion to Chief of Police by lunchtime.

He and Celia nod to each other as he leads Fagin off. Celia returns the stash to the hiding place, lights a cigar and makes herself at home in her new digs. Polly enters.

CELIA

Oh, it's you. Where you been? We got lots to do now. I got plans. Big plans. With Fagin out of the way, I'm gonna start a new business trainin' and organizin' the beggars of London. We're goin' to be richer than we ever dreamed. Go out and get our boys, bring 'em back here, and let's get to work!

POLLY

(To the audience as she goes.) I'm going to get those pearls! And keep them this time!

## **CHAPTER FIVE: IN WHICH NELL HAS A VERY CLOSE CALL.**

The pie shop, an hour later. A church bell chimes the hour: 10:00 am. Nell and Mr. Todd, watching Bullseye anxiously as Polly glares at them through the window.

NELL

He's just sitting there. I've got to go to my Edward in hospital, and he's just sitting there!

MR. TODD

Go. Yes.

NELL

I'm not leaving until that dog pukes up or craps out my pearls. That little Polly Peachum is just waitin' to swoop in here and grab 'em back again. (Todd strops his razor. Polly flees in fright.) Now Mr. T, we agreed: no children. No animals, and no children. It's true Polly ain't the nicest little girl, but it's hardly her fault growin' up without a bit of motherly affection.

MR. TODD

Affection, yes.

NELL

Now, now, Mr. T, you know I'm married now.

MR. TODD

Married. Yes.

NELL

Never you fear, Mr. T. One day you'll find your love. It will happen, rest assured. C'mon you stupid mutt, I ain't got all day!

Tiger Brown enters.

TIGER BROWN

Nell Dash! I need to inspect your meat supplies. NOW! Beadle Bumbleford is dead, and I have suspicions about the meat in your larder.

Nell and Todd look at each other uneasily.

NELL

Suspicious?

TIGER BROWN

When did you get your last delivery?

NELL

Night before last, I think?

TIGER BROWN

And you get the meat for your pies from the Dashwood Meat Packing Company?

NELL

Yes?

TIGER BROWN

Have you made any pies since?

NELL

Well, to tell the truth, Constable, I've been rather busy with my husband...

TIGER BROWN

Oh, you're married, Nell Dash? When did that happen?

NELL

Last night.

TIGER BROWN

Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Todd.

NELL

Oh, no, I didn't marry Mr. T! I married my long-lost love, Edward Ferrars.

TIGER BROWN

Many congratulations then, Mrs. Ferrars!

NELL

My husband is in hospital. I was just on my way there, to cheer him up. With this dog.

She strokes Bullseye gently. Almost like she means it.

TIGER BROWN

Isn't that Bill Sike's dog, Bullseye?

NELL

Oh, is it? He just sort of wandered in here last night, all lonely like, and settled in as if it was home or something.

TIGER BROWN

AHA!

NELL

AHA WHAT!?!

TIGER BROWN

I strongly suspect Bill Sikes, or what's left of him, is in your larder! The Beadle, too!

NELL

The Beadle, too?

MR. TODD

The Beadle. Yes.

NELL

Not now, Mr. Todd.

MR. TODD

The Beadle. No.

NELL

No. No, no, no, no, no.

TIGER BROWN

I also strongly suspect the Dashwood Meat Packing Company is not selling you what you think they're selling you. I must see your larder to confirm my dark suspicions.

NELL

You mean you think *The Dashwood Meat Packing Company* ... !?!

TIGER BROWN

That's exactly what I think.

NELL

Oh, my, no!

MR. TODD

Oh, my. Yes.

NELL

Yes! Ain't it a good thing I ain't baked in a day and a half! If it's as you suspect, Constable Brown, I'll be canceling my business with The Dashwood Meat Packing Company this very afternoon. Imagine! Just imagine!

TIGER BROWN

I'd rather not, but I must, Mrs. Nell Dash Ferrars.

NELL

Didn't I just read that Sir John Dashwood has recently died, leaving everything to Lady Dashwood? Lady Fanny Dashwood? Perhaps you should seek her out in her townhouse at Number 50, Berkeley Square?

TIGER BROWN

Lady Dashwood?

NELL

Number 50, Berkeley Square. Mr. T, why don't you give the Constable a nice tot of gin or two, and then show him the larder while I pop off to hospital? (To herself) Coo, that was a close one.

And holding firmly onto the dog, she races out.

**CHAPTER SIX: IN WHICH A MISSED CONNECTION SEALS FANNY'S FATE.**

The Hospital, a short while later. Wackford slowly pushing the wheelchair.

WACKFORD

Come, me pretty little Nance, we gots to get out of here before the doctor gets back.

Nell enters behind him, and taps him on the shoulder.

WACKFORD

Lord God have mercy, you frightened me, mum. If you don't mind, I got me business to attend to here.

NELL

Yes, I understand, of course, but I can't seem to find my husband.

WACKFORD

Your husband, mum?

NELL

Yes. We were married, here, last night. You were one of the witnesses?

WACKFORD

Oh, yes, that I was. Well, cheery felicitations and all, but as I said I gots me work to do.

Bullseye begins to get a little anxious.

NELL

Settle down, you stupid mutt. Do you know where my husband is?

WACKFORD

I believe he went off with a fine lady, late last night.



NELL

Lady Dashwood!

WACKFORD

That's right. They were going to have tea. A special blend, I think I heard the Lady say.

NELL

A special blend? Oh. ... No! ... It's all starting to make sense now. I must get to Edward!

Bullseye scratches at the wheelchair.

WACKFORD

Please, mum, can you control your dog?

NELL

So sorry, sir. (She gives him a coin.) Here's for your troubles.

WACKFORD

Thank you, mum..

NELL

What's gotten into you, you little beast? Besides my pearls? Enough of all this.

She grabs the dog and exits.

NANCE

Elinor? Is that you?

WACKFORD

Now, now, rest easy my pretty little Nance. Nothin' for you to be worryin' about. C'mon, let's get you out of here before old Dr. Jiggery-Pokery gets back and sends you out to be a Sunday roast. Then we'll be off to Yorkshire to open me school fer boys, me dream like I been tellin' ya about. Oh, Nance, yer gonna love Yorkshire. Our school will be out from the village, away from most society, we'll be just ourselves, our students, our future children, little Nance and Wackford Jr., and the wuthering of the wind on the moors... Ain't nothin' lovelier, 'ceptin' maybe you, Nance.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: IN WHICH THE PLOT BECOMES AS THICK AND LUMPY AS NELL'S PIECRUST.**

Mr. Jagers office in London. That afternoon. Jagers, a lawyer of around 40, and Estella. Jagers is wiping his hands on a rather damp towel.

JAGGERS

And you have evidence she is quite dead? After all, Estella, your word is just your word.

Estella shows him the charred finger, the ring still on it.

ESTELLA

I did not remove the ring purposely, Mr. Jagers, so that I could prove to you this was all that was left.

JAGGERS

Ah, yes, I see that it is. The ring the scoundrel gave her, which is now, legally, yours. (Removes the ring, handing it to Estella.) Am I to assume you are here to claim her jewels?

ESTELLA

More specifically, the pearls which, she hinted, would establish my true identity.

JAGGERS

Yes. Well, all of the jewels, including the pearls, are hidden safely with your father.

ESTELLA

He is alive, then?

JAGGERS

Yes.

ESTELLA

I must meet him.

JAGGERS

No, Estella. He does not wish you to know him.

ESTELLA

His name, at least? My real name?

JAGGERS

I can only reveal the clasp of each strand is engraved with the letters E and M. E for Estella, of course. I cannot reveal what the M stands for until we have the pearls in hand.

ESTELLA

And what of this Toby Muzzle? Is he truly her son?

JAGGERS

I cannot tell you that either, Estella, until I have further evidence.

ESTELLA

The resemblance in looks, voice and manner was unquestionable.

JAGGERS

Which you saw and heard for less than five minutes, in a dark room. I can assure you the M does not stand for Muzzle. In this strange world of coincidences, that would be just too, too much.

Muzzle, and Mr. Brownlow enter.

MR. BROWNLOW

YOU WAIT OUT HERE, MISS PROSS. Mr. Jagers, I assume?

JAGGERS

And you are Mr. John Brownlow. I have long admired your standing in the courts.

MR. BROWNLOW

And I have long been astounded by yours.

JAGGERS

Are not the poor entitled to their defense, Mr. Brownlow, and by any means possible as long as the evidence points to their innocence?

Jagers washes his hands again.

MUZZLE

(Staring at Estella.) Who is this enchanting, beautiful creature?

JAGGERS

This is Miss Havisham's daughter, Estella. I assume you are Mr. Muzzle? Yes, I can see the resemblance. A startling resemblance to the newly-late Miss Havisham.

MR. BROWNLOW

And to the not-so-newly late Sir Henry Dashwood as well. I see that now. This letter is verifiably true, then? You have the matching documents?

Mr. Brownlow shows Jagers the letter from Miss Havisham, and Jagers produces a similar document.

JAGGERS

Yes. This man is the son of my client and the late Sir Henry Dashwood.

MR. BROWNLOW

And legally entitled to a share in the Havisham estates?

JAGGERS

Technically, yes.

MUZZLE

I don't understand. I'm her brother, too?

ESTELLA

Miss Havisham adopted me. I am your sister in the legal sense, only.

JAGGERS

And as you are not blood-related, I see no reason why you shouldn't get acquainted and possibly finally unite the Havisham and Dashwood fortunes.

ESTELLA

He has rough hands and thick boots. I can not unite with a man like that.

MUZZLE

I work pretty hard for a sufficient living, but I'm a gentleman even without nice boots or soft hands and despite being twice your age and half your rank. You're a hard little thing, despite your enchanting beauty.

JAGGERS

See. Evidence of true love in the making. Now go. Mr. Brownlow and I have a great many things we need to discuss. Alone. (He pushes them out.) 18 years ago, as a young lawyer, I was retained by Miss Aurelia Havisham to track the activities of Sir Henry Dashwood, and in those 18 years I have accrued drawer after drawer of evidence. I was instructed not to divulge anything until after her death, which evidently occurred this morning.

He shows Brownlow the charred finger.

MR. BROWNLOW

Oh.

JAGGERS

Yes, most unfortunate.

MR. BROWNLOW

But why would she not want any of this information divulged until after her death?

JAGGERS

Aurelia Havisham was quite deranged. If she hadn't had money, she would have been consigned to bedlam years ago.

But as you well know, a client's wishes must be respected, especially when the depths of their bank account rivals the depths of their insanity.

He once again washes his hands.

MR. BROWNLOW

Then the line of male heirs to the Dashwood fortune must extend well beyond 60.

JAGGERS

Yes. Judging by the face of things, the evidence shows Mr. Henry Dashwood was a prodigiously successful little meat-packer. Which is why we need to have this private discussion, Mr. Brownlow, and work together to sort out this mess. In the name of the King.

**CHAPTER EIGHT: IN WHICH IT ALL FALLS APART IN A POOL OF PUKE AND PEARLS.**

Fanny's drawing room, shortly after. Fanny and an ever more weakened Edward.

FANNY

There, dearest brother, just one final sip.

He protests, but he is no match for Fanny. Nell bursts in.

NELL

Fanny Ferrars Dashwood. We meet again!

FANNY

Lady Dashwood, to you.

NELL

MRS. Edward Ferrars to you, if you please, and I've come to collect *my* husband.

FANNY

You couldn't possibly be his wife, he's been far too ill to have gotten married, much less even found you.

NELL

Take a look at this.

Fanny grabs the license, reads it, and tosses it in the fire.

FANNY

Without this, you have no proof. It would be your word against mine. And who's going to believe the bastard daughter of a deceased cook with several names to her discredit?

NELL

Do you think I'm an idiot, Fanny? Mr. Brownlow has a copy, signed, sealed and notarized.

FANNY

What? Edward, is this true?

Edward struggles to speak, but the effort is, alas, too much. With one final gasp he drops his teacup and dies.

NELL

EDWARD! My love!

FANNY

EDWARD! My carpet!

NELL

You're worried about your carpet at a time like this?

FANNY

Slut! You killed my brother!

NELL

Wench! You killed my husband!

FANNY

Harlot! If you think for one minute you're inheriting his money...

NELL

Bitch! We have a son. Aha, you did not know that, did you now, Fanny!?!

Fanny lunges at Nell, as Tiger Brown bursts in.

TIGER BROWN

What's goin' on? Bullseye in the hall? Mrs. Nell Dash Ferrars and Lady Dashwood on the floor? A dead gentleman dripping tea?

FANNY AND NELL

SHE KILLED HIM. I DID NOT. YOU DID TOO!

Muzzle, Miss Pross and Mr. Brownlow enter.

FANNY

(Standing with as much dignity as she can muster.) Muzzle, just where in the world have you been!

NELL

I hardly think that should be your biggest concern right now, Fanny dear. You have a dead brother on the floor of your drawing room. A dead brother who is also my husband.

FANNY

Your dead husband over my dead body!

NELL

That can be arranged.

And they go at it again, Fanny swatting at Nell's head as Nell smacks her with her wooden spoon. Miss Pross tries to join the fight.

MUZZLE

COUSIN PROSSY, NO!

Nell rips at Fanny's dress, and the locket falls out. Mr. Brownlow picks it up.

MR. BROWNLOW

What is this?

Tiger Brown takes it, removes a pellet.

TIGER BROWN

I do believe there's poison in these pellets from the locket in your pocket, Lady Dashwood. And I now strongly suspect that teacup held a brew that was gruesome. I think I'd better send for reinforcements.

He steps over both women and exits, blowing his whistle.

MR. BROWNLOW

Come Mr. Muzzle, let's try to separate these cats.

MUZZLE

No, that's okay, sir, I'm fine right here thank you very much.

Bullseye bounds in and begins to choke and heave.

MISS PROSS

THE DOG! THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE DOG!

Bullseye hurls up the pearls. Estella enters.

FANNY / NELL / ESTELLA

MY PEARLS!

FANNY AND NELL

Who are you?

ESTELLA

The rightful owner of those pearls!

Bullseye craps out the second set of pearls. Nell, Fanny, and Estella lunge for them. Nell wins.

NELL

These are my pearls. Mine and my dear late sister Marianne's. See the clasps? E, for Elinor, my given name, and M, for Marianne.

FANNY

They are my pearls regardless of the clasps, as they are a part of the Dashwood estate, of which I am THE. SOLE. LEGAL. HEIR!

Jaggers enters.

ESTELLA

They are my pearls, created for me by my late adoptive mother, stolen from her by agents of the late Sir Henry Dashwood. They are engraved with the initials of my first name, Estella, and that of my real father's surname, which you may now tell me, Mr. Jaggers?

JAGGERS

Magwitch.

ESTELLA

Magwitch?

JAGGERS

Magwitch.

ESTELLA

Oh.



FANNY

I shall require proof.

JAGGERS

It's all here, in these notarized letters.

NELL

(Perhaps to the audience.) There's always a letter or two, isn't there?

JAGGERS

And now, as I have no wish to have any knowledge of what is about to transpire, for legal and evidentiary reasons, I shall leave before the Constable comes back. (He glances at Edward's body.) Someone should send for a mortician. I recommend Mr. Sowerberry. Fine old chap. Lovely wife.

He exits.

FANNY

Mr. Brownlow, you will please explain just what is going on here, now that you and your crowd have wrecked my drawing room?

MR. BROWNLOW

It would appear from the evidence you have a lot to answer for, Lady Dashwood. You'd best find yourself another solicitor, for I cannot in good conscience defend you any longer. Perhaps Mr. Jagers. He takes cases for the indigent and hopelessly vile.

FANNY

I am hardly indigent. I am the wealthiest widow in London.

MUZZLE

Not anymore, you're not. I'm your brother-in-law. Mum.

FANNY

MA'AM!

MUZZLE

MUM!

MR. BROWNLOW

As these letters detail, there are more than 60 male heirs to the Dashwood fortune, your own former footman Mr. Muzzle being the first born.

FANNY

But I will have Edward's money. And I am still Lady Dashwood.

NELL

Edward's money rightfully goes to our son, Mackie.

FANNY

Mackie!?! How vulgar. Let me see that letter.

She grabs it. Nell gets between her and the fireplace.

NELL

Oh no you don't. You're not trying *that* again.

FANNY

I don't believe any of this! Why, Dr. Grimwig's assistant, that awful, malodorous, one-eyed Wackford Squeers is on this list!

MR. BROWNLOW

How do you know Dr. Grimwig? And his assistant?

And Tiger Brown conveniently walks back in the room.

TIGER BROWN

The now former Lady Dashwood has been in league with Dr. Grimwig. He has been supplying dead bodies from the charitable hospitals for Dashwood Meat Packing to pass off as prime cuts of "experimental" beef at exorbitant prices.

Everyone reacts: "EWWWWW."

NELL

Whew!

TIGER BROWN

Fanny Dashwood, in the name of the King you are under arrest for the murder of your brother, Mr. Edward Ferrars, under suspicion for the murders of your husband, sister-in-law and father-in-law, complicity in the murders of several hundred other poor unfortunate souls, as well as violating innumerable health laws. I shall send the rest of my men to remove Mr. Ferrars' body. And I shall definitely be Chief of Police by tea time.

He takes Fanny firmly and leads her out.

NELL

(Holding his limp hand in hers.) Dearest Edward. At least we were united at the last, and our son, wherever he may be, will be guaranteed a future.

MR. BROWNLOW

We will find him. Trust me, dear Mrs. Ferrars, we will find him.

ESTELLA

Mr. Brownlow, have you any idea who my father is? Mr. Jagers told me he was alive.

MR. BROWNLOW

Dear Miss Magwitch... Your father is still alive, posing as the infamous leader of a gang of thieves, whores and pickpockets who goes by the name of Fagin. It is best you do not meet him.

ESTELLA

But he has my jewels.

NELL

You got the pearls, dear.

MUZZLE

And my share of the Dashwood and Havisham estates, dear Estella, if you will have me.

MR. BROWNLOW

Which, by the way, does include this house. As Sir Henry's first born, legitimate or not, you are entitled to this house, and the lands in Devonshire. The rest, I'm afraid, must be shared with as many of the other male heirs as we can find. And it seems, Mrs. Ferrars, your late parish beadle, Johannes Bumbleford, was one of them.

NELL

Good lord! Who didn't my father father?

ESTELLA

It would appear he didn't father me. Toby Muzzle Havisham Dashwood, as we are not related by blood, I shall consider your hand. But know that as I have no heart, I will probably break yours.

MUZZLE

Estella Havisham Magwitch, I am a man of great expectations now, and I will endeavor to make you happy, if not love me.

ESTELLA

You are a pip, aren't you?

They exit, arm in arm.

MR. BROWNLOW

Come, Mrs. Ferrars, let us give our statements to the policemen who are waiting in the hall, and then we will find your son.

They exit, leaving Miss Pross forgotten and alone in the room with Edward's dead body.

MISS PROSS

(Peering down at Edward.) ... WHAT?

**CHAPTER NINE: IN WHICH IT ALL STARTS TO MAKE SENSE.**

The pie shop, the next day. Nell is sitting with Mr. Todd.

MR. TODD

Your brother. No.

NELL

My half-brother, yes, Mr. Todd. I always said I felt a strange kinship to you.

MR. TODD

And I you, but more than fraternal. This is disappointing.

Nance enters, with Wackford.

NANCE

Hello, Nell.

NELL

Good Lord in Heaven! Nance! I thought you were lost and dead forever!

NANCE

I almost was.

WACKFORD

Hello, Missus. I didn't know the lovely Nance was yer sister!

NELL

You know Mr. Squeers?

NANCE

From hospital. He pulled me from the river and brought me there. We are to be married.

NELL

Oh, but you can't marry him, Nance.

NANCE AND WACKFORD

Why not?

NELL

Because he's our half-brother.

NANCE

Ewww!

WACKFORD

Oh?

MR. TODD

Ewww. Yes.

WACKFORD

Here, who are you?

NELL

He's your half-brother too. I guess you haven't been alerted yet, Mr. Squeers, but it appears that our father was also your father, and you are an heir to the Dashwood fortunes.

NANCE

I don't understand.

NELL

It's a long story, Nance, dear, actually, as we can go by Elinor and Marianne again, it's a long story, dearest Marianne.

NANCE

We both have long stories to share then, dearest Elinor.

MR. TODD

I believe I have a bearded customer who wishes to alter his appearance with a shave due in 15 minutes. I must go prepare.

Todd exits as Mr. Brownlow enters.

MR. BROWNLOW

Good day, Mrs. Ferrars.

NELL

Mr. Brownlow, look: it appears my sister Marianne is alive and well.

MR. BROWNLOW

Ah, the young lady who restored my great-nephew Oliver to me! Who, as it turns out, is also your half-brother.

NELL

Now that's a twist I should have seen coming.

NANCE

I'm so confuzzled.

MR. BROWNLOW

(Unrolling a long, long piece of paper.) I have made a chart detailing how you are all related, Miss Marianne. I'd be happy to share it with you. (To the audience.) I'm happy to share it with anyone, actually. (Noticing Wackford.) Who is this strange one-eyed man?

NELL

Another of our half-relations: Mr. Wackford Squeers. Apparently he has not been informed of his newly elevated status.

MR. BROWNLOW

Mr. Squeers. Yes. (Handing Wackford his card.) Will you be so kind as to come by my office tomorrow, and we will sort all of this out for you?

WACKFORD

Is there any money involved? Can I keeps me name? I likes me name.

MR. BROWNLOW

A small but nonetheless substantial yearly sum is involved, yes. And yes, I suppose you can keep your name, if you feel you must.

WACKFORD

Then I'll be there. Oh, me pretty little Nance, even though ye be me half-sister, I'd still marry ye in a heartbeat. (To Brownlow.) I shall see you tomorrow, sir, and then I shall take my broken heart to Yorkshire, far away from this stinkin' cesspool called London, and open a school fer indigent boys of low expectations, which I feel is me life's callin'.

He exits.

NANCE

I should be broken-hearted, but I'm not.

NELL

Marianne, before we tell each other our stories, please, tell me: where is my Mackie?

NANCE

Honestly, Elinor, I do not remember. My memory is coming back, but / I'm still

NELL

/ You must remember, Marianne. You must!

MR. BROWNLOW

Patience, Mrs. Ferrars, patience. I found Oliver. We'll find Master Maxwell Ferrars.

The Dodger pops in.

DODGER

Master Maxwell Ferrars? My name is Jack. Mother.

NELL

JACK is my Mackie? I should have guessed! Look at that face under all that dirt! You're the spitting image of your father!

DODGER

I only come to tell you I don't want to be a member of the upper class. I want to join the army. And since the army don't give a bugger who you are, from now on, I'm going by Heath. Heath Cliff.

NELL

How about Mack Heath? For me, your poor old mum?

DODGER

Macheath. ...I like it. Thanks, mum! And you ain't gonna be me *poor* old mum. (To Brownlow.) You... You! What do I got to do to give me mum me father's money?

MR. BROWNLOW

I shall be most happy to arrange an annuity for you, Mrs. Ferrars, and restore the Dashwood annuities to both you and Miss Marianne. Securing your long and rightful futures is the least I can do for your helping to secure my great nephew his.

**EPILOGUE: IN WHICH ALMOST EVERYONE FINDS THEIR PERFECT ENDING.**

The courtyard of Newgate prison, one year later. Nell, Muzzle, Estella, Wackford, and Polly. Estella is wearing the pearls. Muzzle whispers in Estella's ear.

ESTELLA

What, again?

MUZZLE

But I have to, Estella. I really, really have to.

ESTELLA

Very well. Go on. But do not complain to me if you miss them drop.

Muzzle races off.

WACKFORD

(To Nell.) I don't understand, Missus, what you wanted *me* 'ere for. I enjoy a good hangin' as much as anyone, but what makes it so important I gets meself all the way from Yorkshire for this one?

NELL

Patience, half-brother Squeers, and you'll find out.

Polly sidles over to Estella.

ESTELLA

Stop staring at my pearls. You will never get your grabby little hands on them again.

Estella puts the pearls in her purse.

POLLY

I wouldn't be so sure about that if I were you.

A drum roll. Fanny and Fagin enter, followed by the Executioner. He places a noose over each of their heads.

EXECUTIONER

Fanny Ferrars Dashwood and Abel Magwitch, also known as Fagin, as your appeals have all been denied, you are now to be hung by the neck until dead for the high crimes of theft, extortion, abuse and exploitation of children, conspiracy to murder, and in the case of the former Lady Dashwood, actual murder. Have you any last words?

Fanny defiantly steps forward.

FANNY

Oh, yes, I have plenty to say about this whole disgraceful business. First of all, I am a lady of rank and distinction and to be publicly executed as if I were a common criminal...



FAGIN/ABEL

But you are a common criminal. Just like me, my dear.

A trumpet blast. King Stanley V8, enters.

NELL

(Under her breath, to herself.) Good lord, how he does resemble my half-brother, Toby Muzzle Dashwood.

Stanley motions for the crowd to be quiet.

KING STANLEY V8

My good people of London, I, King Stanley V8 of England, have come here personally to greet you with the news of my benevolent decision to spare the lives of these prisoners. Abel Magwitch, also known as Fagin, your daughter Lady Estella / Dashwood

FANNY

/ I AM LADY DASHWOOD!

KING STANLEY V8

Hold yourself! Abel Magwitch, your daughter Lady Estella Havisham Magwitch Dashwood pleaded most eloquently for your life. And Fanny Dashwood, the *former* Lady Dashwood, your late father-in-law gave great service to my mother and father in a time of crisis; it is doubtful without the meat he so generously supplied my starving mother on several occasions, I would even have been born to become your beloved and benevolent King. So with enormous gratitude to the entire, extended Dashwood family, I commute your sentence, Abel Magwitch, to deportation to Botany Bay for life. And it will be my pleasure that you, Widow Dashwood, be united in marriage with a one Mr. Wackford Squeers of / Yorkshire

WACKFORD

/ I'M A BRIDEGROOM!

KING STANLEY V8

And you shall spend the rest of your life until natural death do you part in helping him run Do-the-boys Hall ... (He looks at Wackford.)

WACKFORD

Yes, your Majesty, Do-the-boys Hall, Yorkshire's number one school for indigent young men of low expectations, Sir. Your Highness. Your Majesty. Your Kingship. Sire.

KING STANLEY V8

Oh, you enchanting commoners! How the dickens do you invent these wacky names? Live long, live well, live far from here, never to return to our great London town.

WACKFORD

Happy to comply, your Majesty, happy to comply.

ESTELLA

Thank you, your Majesty.

Nell mouths “Thank You” to Stanley.

KING STANLEY V8

You are welcome.

He mouths “And thank you” to Nell, pressing a finger to his lips. Nell nods. Another great fanfare as he exits.

ABEL

My daughter. How can I thank you?

ESTELLA

You cannot. I’ve given you your life, as you once gave me mine, and as our history has dictated, we must live those lives entirely apart. Use this gift well. Now go.

WACKFORD

Do you believe in love at first sight, dearest... Fanny, is it? I do. Me one eye is instantly besotted! You know how to cook, don’t you, mix up big batches of brimstone and treacle for our students, eh, Fanny? (He slaps her on the butt) Oh, Fanny, yer gonna love Yorkshire. Our school is out from the village, away from most society, we’ll be just ourselves, our students, our future children, little Fanny and Wackford Jr., and the wuthering of the wind on the moors... Ain’t nothin’ lovelier.

NELL

(Handing Fanny a large wooden spoon.) Best thing for stirring, Fanny, is a large wooden spoon. As my mum used to say: stir for an hour, it will make everything nice and smooth.

FANNY

As God is my witness, Elinor Wood, I will have my revenge on you.

NELL

Mrs. Elinor Wood *Ferrars*, dearest Mrs. Squeers. A word of advice, dear Mr. Squeers: do not partake of her tea.

The Executioner leads them off. Muzzle enters.

MUZZLE

Ah, I feel much, much better. Where are your pearls, dearest?

ESTELLA

In my purse, for safekeeping.

Polly inches closer. Muzzle takes the purse.

MUZZLE

Come, dear Estella, let's begin our life anew, managing our lands in Devonshire. Goodbye, dearest half-sister Elinor. I wish you well. I hope our paths will cross again.

He and Estella exit. Polly follows them off. Dodger enters wearing an army uniform. Polly follows a moment later.

DODGER

Well, I'm off, Mum.

POLLY

Mackie!

DODGER

I told you I ain't interested in ya, young Polly Peachum. I'm a second lieutenant now, and off to join the troops in Cooch Behar to live under the cannon's thunder!

POLLY

Here, I got a present for you, you might need it there in Cooch Behar or wherever.

She hands him Bill Sike's knife.

DODGER

Bill Sike's knife? Where'd you get that?

POLLY

Never you mind. I'm as quick as you, remember? And as good!

She shows him the pearls, then puts them in her pocket.

DODGER

You be careful, Polly Peachum. You ain't as good as you think you are.

NELL

And you be careful out there in India. It's all fun and games until the natives go wild and chop you up like so much raw hamburger meat.

DODGER

That seems to be a family trait, don't it? (He winks at her.) I'll be fine, Mum. I got me wits, and I got protection. (He shows her Bill's knife.) And I'll be back.

POLLY

And I'm going to marry you, you see that I don't. (Nell gives Polly a tight hug.) Here, what's that for?

NELL

Just a welcome-to-the-family for my future daughter-in-law. Now go on, dearest Maxwell Mackie Jack Dodger Macheath. (She gives him a parcel.) Some pies for your journey.

DODGER

(As he goes, followed by Polly.) See ya, Mum!

NELL

And once again, I must say goodbye to the baby boy I've always, yet never really known.

Nance enters with Bullseye on a leash, Miss Pross behind her with a baby in her arms.

NANCE

Did I miss it? We had to change the baby's nappy.

NELL

The King sent Fagin off to Botany Bay for life, and packed Fanny off to Yorkshire to marry Mr. Squeers.

NANCE

Fanny, married to a one-eyed half-Dashwood, living in Yorkshire, and running a school for boys? That's worse than death for her. But I feel more sorry for any child who must be educated in one of England's institutional schools.

NELL

The strong will survive any challenge, and triumph. Even a challenge as great as Fanny. Aren't we proof of that, dearest Marianne?

NANCE

I suppose.

NELL

So. You and your new husband Reed are happy?

NANCE

So very happy, Elinor. Reed and I and our beloved daughter are so very, very happy.

MISS PROSS

MY NEW LITTLE LADYBIRD.

The loud voice causes the baby to cry.

NANCE

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TAKE HER HOME, MISS PROSS?

MISS PROSS

I SHOULD THINK SO. COME, MY SWEET LITTLE LADY BIRD, DON'T YOU FRET, YOUR PROSSY SHALL SING YOU TO SLEEP! (She exits singing.)  
LULLABY, AND GOOD NIGHT, AND WITH ROSES BEDIGHT...

Nell takes the pearls out of her pocket.

NELL

We shall wear these together one last time, dearest Marianne, as we did when we first came to London, and then I shall have them returned to our new half-sister-in-law Estella, who is sadly, but truly, the rightful owner of these magnificent pearls.

NANCE

She's welcome to them, for I shall have no need of pearls where I am going next.

NELL

I am sorry we must now live our lives apart, dearest sister. Whatever happened in the past, I wish you all the best now as you begin your new life as a missionary with Reed and your darling baby, little Elinor Jane Eyre.

NANCE

And you, dearest Elinor? You've sold your shop, then?

NELL

Yes. A young widow, Mrs. Marjorie Lovett, bought it. And I will be sailing on the Bennett D'Arcy next week, to live in a little seaside town in America – Boston, it's called – where they don't know my story and I can begin anew. I will make pies and other good solid British fare for the Americans, who I am sure miss and crave the food of their ancestors.

NANCE

And who, I am sure, won't realize you can't really cook, either.

NELL

(Giving her a pie from her bag.) You will eat those words, dearest Marianne.

NANCE

That's a good bake!

NELL

Mum was right.

NELL AND NANCE

“Stir for an hour.”

NELL

Yes, I shall continue baking savory and sweet pies, stirred for an hour, and flavored with my own special blend of seasonings. “Mrs. Dash,” I shall call the new business, and I will work and prosper in quiet anonymity. Which is all I've ever really wanted, even more than these pearls: to just live a moderately prosperous life in blissfully quiet anonymity, by the sea.

They look forward, their arms entwined, as the lights fade.

**END OF PLAY**