

## **Oliver Asks for More: A Scene from Chapter 2 of *Oliver Twist***

The room in which the boys were fed, was a large stone hall, with a copper at one end: out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the **gruel** at meal-times. Of this **festive** composition each boy had one porringer, and no more -- except on **occasions** of great public **rejoicing**, when he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides. The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation (which never took very long, the spoons being nearly as large as the bowls), they would sit staring at the copper, with such **eager** eyes, as if they could have **devoured** the very bricks of which it was composed; employing themselves, meanwhile, in sucking their fingers most **assiduously**, with the view of catching up any stray splashes of gruel that might have been cast thereon. Boys have generally excellent **appetites**. Oliver Twist and his **companions** suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so **voracious** and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook-shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another **basin** of **gruel** *per diem*, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age. He had a wild, hungry eye; and they **implicitly** believed him. A council was held; lots were cast who should walk up to the master after supper that evening, and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist.

The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper; his **pauper** assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served out; and a long grace was said over the short commons. The **gruel** disappeared; the boys whispered each other, and winked at Oliver; while his next neighbours nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and **reckless** with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own **temerity**:

"Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed in **stupefied** astonishment on the small **rebel** for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralysed with wonder; the boys with fear.

"What!" said the master at length, in a faint voice.

"Please, sir," replied Oliver, "I want some more."

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arms; and **shrieked** aloud for the beadle.

The board were sitting in **solemn** conclave, when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said,

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"Mr. Limbkins, I beg your **pardon**, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!"

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every **countenance**.

"For *more*!" said Mr. Limbkins. "Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?"

"He did, sir," replied Bumble.

"That boy will be hung," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. "I know that boy will be hung."

Nobody **controverted** the **prophetic** gentleman's opinion. An **animated** discussion took place. Oliver was ordered into instant **confinement**; and a bill was next morning pasted on the outside of the gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the **parish**. In other words, five pounds and Oliver Twist were offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business, or calling.

"I never was more convinced of anything in my life," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, as he knocked at the gate and read the bill next morning: "I never was more convinced of anything in my life, than I am that that boy will come to be hung."

As I purpose to show in the **sequel** whether the white-waistcoated gentleman was right or not, I should perhaps **mar** the interest of this **narrative** (supposing it to possess any at all), if I ventured to hint just yet, whether the life of Oliver Twist had this violent **termination** or no.

What elements of this scene would be considered **Dickensian**?

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