

Bill Sikes and Nancy have already met their end when Oliver and Mr. Brownlow visit Fagin in the condemned cell in Newgate prison, shortly before the latter is executed.

(Poem)

His Last Hour

Eyes flicker,
Live as rats in the slime darkness of a city's sewers;
Roach-legged memories scurry about in frantic succession:
Two corpses, bruised a beautiful hyacinth blue,
Carrying prophecies of a third;
And one pale boy.

*Twist returned, eh? With a nob called Brownlow?
Dear Twist (sweet, little swine, making his peace with the good-as-dead).*

Eyes glitter,
Bright and hard as new-minted coin,
Five fingers sift through the spun gold
Of Oliver's hair.
He weighs it in one clever palm,
Like an option....

*Here's the boy, now,
Witness to glad games played
With silken handkerchiefs knotted end to end
Like – no! Not That!
And the comfort of hot sausage,
On a cold London morning.*

*What harm was there in an old gentleman,
Who let you lodge with him,
And never asked for change, eh what?
String him up now - on a length of rumour,
How's that?*

*Now, one kind word, my boy,
(One mealy-mouthed little plea),
Put in for a dear, old man,
Who fed you well on eggs and ham;
Assisted you in your learning,
Stoked the fires, kept them burning....*

The hing-hang-hung of metal,
Grinding-grumbling, on metal.

Gates opening? Al...rready?
Too late! Too late!
The cling-clang-clung,
Of footfalls on coffin row.

The hand falters; fingers that picked clean
The gold veins of London,
Grove one last time at pockets of air;
The wobble-wobble of a loose contact,
Lights dip and dim,
And eyes turn,
Cold, hard and dead as pebbles.
