THEATRE THREE presents *Oliver!* The sides do NOT have to be memorized.

(BUMBLE and CORNEY's courtship.)

BUMBLE. Yes, you're quite right, Mrs. Corney. We must get rid of this canker in our midst. That boy was born to be hung, Mrs. Corney. I've never been so shocked in all my days.

CORNEY. Hush, Mr. Bumble, you have had quite a turn. Sit down and have a nice cup of tea. *(Pours tea.)*

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

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

BUMBLE. *(Sips tea.)* Very sweet, indeed, ma'am. *(Sneezes.)* You have a cat, ma'am, I see … and kittens, too, I declare.

CORNEY. I'm so fond of them you can't imagine, Mr. Bumble. And they're fond of their home, too.

BUMBLE. Mrs. Corney, ma'am. I must say … that any cat … or kitten … that could live with you, ma'am, … and not be fond of its home … must be an idiot, ma'am, and don't deserve to live in it.

CORNEY. Oh, Mr. Bumble!

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

CORNEY. Then you're a cruel man … a very hard-hearted man and all.

BUMBLE. Hard-hearted, Mrs. Corney? Hard-hearted, ma'am? Are you hard-hearted, Mrs. Corney?

CORNEY. Mr. Bumble, I shall scream!

*

(BUMBLE and CORNEY after they've wed.)

BUMBLE. Married. And two weeks ago tomorrow it were done. Oh, God, it seems like an age. *(Sighs.)* I sold myself for six teaspoons, a pair of sugar tongs, and a milk-pot, with a small quantity of second-hand furniture and twenty pounds cash. I went very reasonable. Cheap, dirt cheap. *(Enter CORNEY—who is now MRS. BUMBLE.)*

CORNEY. Cheap! You would have been dear at any price; and dear enough I paid for you, the Lord above knows that! Are you going to sit there snoring all day?

BUMBLE. I am going to sit here as long as I think proper, madam. And, although I was not snoring, I shall snore, sneeze, gape, laugh, or cry as the humour strikes me—such being my prerogative.

CORNEY. Your prerogative.

BUMBLE. I said the word, madam. The prerogative of a man is to command.

CORNEY. And what's the prerogative of a woman, in the name of Goodness?

BUMBLE. To obey, madam, to obey! *(CORNEY laughs.)* Your late unfortunate husband should have taught it to you, and then, perhaps, he might have been alive today, and I wish he was—poor man!

CORNEY. Ooooh! You hard-hearted brute! *(Screams and cries.)*

BUMBLE. Cry away, madam. It opens the lungs, exercises the eyes, washes the face, and softens the temper—so cry away, madam, cry away.

CORNEY. *(She accosts him.)* How dare you speak to me like that, you great big lump. Now talk about your prerogative, if you dare! *(BUMBLE doesn't dare.)* Shut up! And take yourself away from here, unless you want me to do something desperate.

THEATRE THREE presents *Oliver!* The sides do NOT have to be memorized.

(SOWERBERRY contemplates engaging Oliver as an apprentice.)

SOWERBERRY. My dear, I have told Mr. Bumble that we may consider taking in this boy to help in the shop. There's an expression of melancholy on his face, my dear, which is very interesting. He could make a delightful coffin-follower. I don't mean a regular coffin-follower to follow grown-ups, but only for the children's practice. It would be very nice to have a follower in proportion, my sweet. A superb effect, the more I think about it.

*

(MR. BROWNLOW ponders Oliver. This side will be used for MRS. BEDWIN as well.)

BROWNLOW. Do you know, I haven't the faintest idea. He was arrested for stealing my pocket handkerchief. When the shopkeeper told us what really happened—that there were other boys involved, that it wasn't his fault—he was released by the magistrate. I brought him here to make what amends I could. But I must confess I find myself strangely attached to the child. I know he's an orphan. There's something in that boy's face … I can't explain it—somewhere I seem to have seen it before. Somewhere a long time ago.

THEATRE THREE presents *Oliver!* The sides do NOT have to be memorized.

(NANCY enters the Thieves Den.)

NANCY. *(Off.)* Plummy and slam! *(BOYS wake up. NANCY enters with BET.)*

FAGIN. It's Nancy! Wake up, boys. The ladies are here.

NANCY. We'll have less of that if you don't mind! Where's the gin?

FAGIN. All in moderation, my dear. Too much gin can be a dangerous thing for a pure young girl.

NANCY. What's wrong with a drop of danger, then, Mr. Fagin? After all, that's the only bit of excitement we have around here. And who would deny us that small pleasure? Would you? *(Sees OLIVER.)* Who's he, Fagin?

FAGIN. Oh, ladies, I forgot to introduce you to our new lodger—Mister Oliver Twist Esquire—Nancy and Bet.

NANCY. Charmed to meet you!

FAGIN. Oh, yes, we're all ladies and gentlemen 'ere. We're all quality …

NANCY. You wouldn't know quality if you saw it—none of yer! 'cept Dodge. Have you seen the way them quality gentlemen treats their ladies? Shall we show them how it's done?

*

(OLIVER has been taken in by MR. BROWNLOW. SIKES, FAGIN, and NANCY discuss what is to be done.)

SIKES. Fagin looks worried …

FAGIN. One of us, Bill. A new boy—went out on his first job today with Dodger. I'm afraid that he may say something which will get us into trouble.

SIKES. That's very likely … You're blowed upon, Fagin!

FAGIN. I'm afraid, you see, my dear, that if the game was up with us, it might be up with a good many more … and it would turn out rather worse for you, my dear, than it would for me.

SIKES. Why you old—*(Stops himself. To CUSTOMERS.)* Get out, all of you! *(CUSTOMERS leave.)* Somebody must find out what's been done or said. If he hasn't talked yet, there's still a chance we can get him back—wivout suspicion. We'll nab him the very moment he dares to step out of that house. Now who's gonner go?

NANCY. No use a-trying it on with me.

SIKES. And just what do you mean by that remark?

NANCY. I said, Bill, I'm not going. Why can't you leave the boy alone; he won't do you no harm.

SIKES. You'll get'em back here, my girl, or you'll feel my hands on your throat.

NANCY. Why can't you leave him where he is—a chance for a decent life.

SIKES. She'll go, Fagin.

NANCY. No, she won't, Fagin.

SIKES. Yes, she will, Fagin!

*

(Oliver has been recovered.)

NANCY. I won't stand by and see it done, Bill.

FAGIN. Why, Nancy, you're wonderful today. Such talent. What an actress.

NANCY. Am I? Take care I don't over do it. 'Cause if I do, I'll put my mark on some of you and I don't care if I hang for it.

SIKES. You? Do you know who you are? And what you are?

NANCY. Ah, yes, I know all about it! You don't have to tell me.

SIKES. You're a fine one for the boy to make a friend of, you are.

NANCY. Lord help me, I am, and I wish I'd of been struck dead before I lent a hand in bringing him here. After today, 'e's a thief, a liar, and all that's bad from this day forth, isn't that enough for you, without beating him to death!

FAGIN. Come, come, Nancy, we must have civil words, civil words.

NANCY. Civil words, yes, you deserve them from me. I thieved for you when I was a child, half his age and for fifteen years since. Don't you forget it!

SIKES. Well, if you have, it's your living.