GREAT ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS

OLIVER TWIST

Charles Dickens

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Printed in the United States of America

A Mother Dies in Childbirth.

CHAPTER 1

A Lonesome Childhood

In the workhouse of a parish in England, on a date long forgotten, a baby boy was born. His mother died in childbirth.

"The mother was so young and pretty! Who was she?" asked the doctor.

"I don't know," replied the nurse. "Someone found her lying in the street last night and brought her inside. She must have walked a long way because her shoes are all worn out. But no one knows where she came from."

"I guess she wasn't married," said the doctor. "There's no wedding ring on her finger." With that, the doctor left the baby in the care

of the workhouse people who looked after orphans such as that baby who was named Oliver Twist.

Before he was a year old, Oliver was sent to another workhouse. He spent the next eight years there with 25 other children. Some were troublemakers and some, like Oliver, simply had no parents to take care of them. Mrs. Mann, who ran the workhouse, received money from the parish to buy food and clothes for the children. However, she kept most of the money for herself. The only time she bathed the children and gave them enough to eat was when an official from the parish church came to inspect the workhouse.

Such an inspection took place on Oliver's ninth birthday. The child was thin and pale and always hungry and unhappy. The parish official, Mr. Bumble, came to see Mrs. Mann about him. Mr. Bumble was a fat, middle-aged man with a bad temper.

"So Oliver Twist is nine years old today?"

Money for Food and Clothes