

RUN LIKE THE DICKENS

A one-act comedy by Jonathan Dorf

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Cast of Characters

CORPORATE MOMMY
CORPORATE DADDY
OLIVER TWIST, late teens, orphan turned pitchman
COMMERCIAL NARRATOR, female, narrates Oliver's commercial
SMACK BLACKWELL, female director, tough and fresh out of film school
NANCY, female, about Oliver's age
COSTUME AND MAKEUP PEOPLE
FIRST PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
SECOND PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
TINY TIM, mid to late teens, just younger than Oliver
MRS. CRATCHIT, Tiny Tim's mother
PHILISTINA, female, late teens to early 20s, the kind of young woman who can snare a man in her web
YOUNG NEWSPAPER CARRIER
PINK SLINK, female, photogenic news reporter
CHORUS OF CHARACTERS, played by members of the ensemble
ARTFUL DODGER, male, just older than Oliver, fallen on hard times
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD, female, mid-teens, youngest Fairy Tale Combo member
CINDERELLA, female, leader of the Fairy Tale Combo
SNOW WHITE, female, older than Little Red Riding Hood
SERIES OF TINY TIM SUPPORTERS, played by members of the ensemble
NEW CORPORATE DADDY
PUBLIC ADDRESS ANNOUNCER
TELEVISION CREW MEMBERS and RUNNERS, played by members of the ensemble.

While there are over 20 speaking roles, and the play can easily accommodate a cast of 40 or more actors in school productions, with a bit of imagination, a heavy dose of multiple casting and an eye toward theatricality, it can be done with as few as 9 performers.

Notes on Small Cast Version

While you should feel free to multiple cast as per the needs of your production, I have compiled a detailed set of notes to facilitate a smaller cast production. In this version, the actors' major roles are noted below, with suggestions for multiple casting after that:

Actor 1: Corporate Daddy
Actor 2: Corporate Mommy
Actor 3: Oliver Twist
Actor 4: Nancy
Actor 5: Cinderella
Actor 6: Tiny Tim
Actor 7: Artful Dodger
Actor 8: Philistina
Actor 9: Smack Blackwell/Pink Slink

For minimum cast and maximum cast, feel free to get as creative as can be, which could mean using hand puppets (with Little Red and Snow White, for example) or, in the case of Mrs. Cratchit for example, having actors rotate through this role, so that one actor might play her in Scene 3 and another in another Scene 6, for example.

Setting Notes

The play takes place in a variety of suggested settings including a corporate office, a television production set, a dressing room, the street, a hill, a marathon course and a rooftop. Because the scenes change quickly, almost cinematically, sets should be kept as minimal as possible. Depending on your stage, it may be possible to use area staging.

Production Notes

It's extremely important to keep the pacing of your production brisk. To this end, try to avoid blackouts between scenes if at all possible. Instead, embrace theatricality.

Productions may wonder whether to use British accents, but given that the play features a crashing together of mythologies (Dickens, fairy tale characters and a variety of fictional people), accents are optional. If your production does use accents, I'd only give them to the Dickensians, and not to the fairy tale characters. Sometimes they're more distracting than they're worth.

When two speakers' names appear on the same line, they are meant to speak simultaneously.

Acknowledgements

The full-length version of the play premiered under its original title of ***Tiny Tim Runs the Marathon*** at Hoover High School (Glendale, CA).

SCENE 1

The present, sort of. A corporate headquarters. A light comes up on a solitary crutch, being held aloft (if your production has the technical capability to do so). More lights come up to reveal CORPORATE DADDY holding the crutch - ideal for a small teenage boy. CORPORATE MOMMY looks on in horror.

CORPORATE DADDY

He wants to run the marathon.

CORPORATE MOMMY

He can't do that.

CORPORATE DADDY

But think of how many people he could inspire to eat right, get enough sleep, exercise regularly-

CORPORATE MOMMY

We are the ones who inspire people. We've invested millions, and we will not be run out of the game by some upstart who throws down a crutch.

(Beat.)

Your golf clubs are next.

CORPORATE DADDY

My clubs?!

CORPORATE MOMMY

Philistina will take care of this.

CORPORATE DADDY

Nobody goes after my clubs.

CORPORATE MOMMY

She has a certain...charm.

CORPORATE DADDY

Defend my clubs at all costs.

CORPORATE MOMMY

There's always the girls...

End of scene.

SCENE 2

Lights up on OLIVER TWIST, late teens, no longer as waif-like as in his childhood. He's barefoot, walking in exaggerated fashion through a phony desert. It's a television studio. All around are COSTUME and MAKEUP PEOPLE, PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS, CAMERA OPERATORS - under the watchful eye of director SMACK BLACKWELL, female, fresh out of film school and more than a little cutthroat.

The COMMERCIAL NARRATOR, female, young and beautiful, reads off cue cards or a teleprompter as Oliver reenacts his journey.

COMMERCIAL NARRATOR

Exhausted. Starving. Facing scorching heat.

SMACK BLACKWELL

Where's the sweat? Somebody get me sweat...

A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT swoops in and sprays sweat on Oliver, with some of it getting into his eyes.

COMMERCIAL NARRATOR

Facing scorching heat...

OLIVER

I will get to London. I will.

SMACK BLACKWELL

More determined.

COMMERCIAL NARRATOR

Alone...

OLIVER

(Trying to sound determined:)

I will get to London. I will.

SMACK BLACKWELL

As if your life depended on it. When in doubt, just be louder.

OLIVER

(louder)

I will get to London! I will!

I believe! Wardrobe!

SMACK BLACKWELL

DRESSERS descend on Oliver, literally holding up a tuxedo shirt in front of him in a high-speed, makeshift transformation from ragamuffin to a superspy.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS holding cue cards scramble into position.

OLIVER

(Like James Bond:)

Twist. O Twist. And I've got the juice. With the Dickens Company's O Twist Juicer and Processor. Juice an orange in the blink of an eye. Berries, melons - it'll even juice a coconut in under 15 seconds. And if you call tomorrow-

SMACK BLACKWELL

What? Cut!

OLIVER

What did I-

SMACK BLACKWELL

If you call *today!* *Today!* Not tomorrow!

OLIVER

And if you call today, I will personally autograph the cap.

SMACK BLACKWELL

And cut. Wardrobe!

The James Bond outfit goes away, and he's back in rags.

OLIVER

Can I just have a minute?

Oliver rushes off the set, but he remains onstage: he's in his dressing room. He's having a panic attack, pulling out a too conveniently available paper bag, sitting on the ground and rocking back and forth.

Smack Blackwell snaps her fingers at NANCY, a young PA, not much older than Oliver, and gestures for her to follow him.

Beat. Nancy enters Oliver's dressing room.

NANCY

Mr. Twist?

Oliver is too busy rocking back and forth to answer.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Mr. Twist, Ms. Blackwell needs you back.

(Beat.)

Oliver?

OLIVER

Nancy, don't let Bill Sikes take me!

NANCY

He's dead, remember? Swinging by his neck.

(Beat - Oliver snaps out of it:)

You had one of your attacks.

OLIVER

They're getting worse.

NANCY

Do you want me to tell her you're sick?

OLIVER

I don't know if I can do this anymore.

NANCY

I can't tell her that.

OLIVER

What am I selling this time?

NANCY

Cereal, I think.

OLIVER

(Beat.)

Why do they buy it?

NANCY

Who?

OLIVER

All those people. Just because some kid walks miles in his bare feet or asks for more food at the workhouse or hangs on for dear life on the rooftop with a cold-blooded killer, how does that make him an expert on cereal?

NANCY

People believe in you, Oliver. Isn't that what matters?

She holds out her hand. He takes it. Together they go back to the commercial shoot. Beat.

OLIVER

There's something about the rooftop. Bill Sikes and the rooftop...

SMACK BLACKWELL

Thank God. Touch up the rags!

Dressers and makeup descend like ants at a picnic. They do their job as fast as a pit crew, and Oliver is ready.

OLIVER

Need to fuel up in the morning? Whether you work in a workhouse or it just feels like one, after your first bowl of Orphan O's, you'll be saying, "Please sir, I want some more."

SMACK BLACKWELL

Rags off, speedo on!

A PA hurtles toward Oliver holding a tiny speedo as another pulls out a fake palm tree branch. Beat. Oliver bolts.

Lights down on the television studio.

SCENE 3

Elsewhere on stage, lights up on TINY TIM, mid-teens, wearing sweatpants, running in a circle. His mother, MRS. CRATCHIT, "runs" with the aid of a cane in a much smaller circle within the one that Tim runs. "Looking out" on the training area are giant photos of Bob Cratchit and Scrooge.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Not this time, Timmy Cratchit!

Mrs. Cratchit is spinning so fast she's getting dizzy - and when she collapses from dizziness, Tim beats her to the "finish line." Tiny Tim towels off, as does Mrs. Cratchit, still on the ground.

TINY TIM

Finally, Mother!

(Beat.)

When Dad and Uncle Scrooge are watching me, I feel like I can do anything. They inspire me, and if I could do that for just one person...if a little girl in a wheelchair sees me run and takes one tiny step, or a drunk vomits on my shoes and it makes him want to put down the bottle, or a blind man hears me pass and is inspired to make out blurry shapes...it would all be worth it.

Mrs. Cratchit hobbles off, as Tiny Tim towels off. Beat. Enter PHILISTINA, female, late teens, sexy and used to snaring unsuspecting - and even suspecting - men.

PHILISTINA

I like how you run.

TINY TIM

You saw? Thanks.

PHILISTINA

Philistina.

Philistina offers her hand so that Tim can kiss it.

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He's not entirely sure what to do, but she gestures, making lip-smacking sounds, and he gets the idea and kisses her hand.

TINY TIM
(Holds out his hand:)

Hi. I'm Tim.

PHILISTINA
You're sure it's not Tiger?

TINY TIM
(Beat - tries playing:)
Rawr.

PHILISTINA
You sweaty running man.

TINY TIM
I'm in training.

PHILISTINA
I'll bet you are.

TINY TIM
It's kind of a long story.

PHILISTINA
I love stories.

TINY TIM
(Beat.)
Well, when I was little-

PHILISTINA
A good story always starts with "once upon a time."

TINY TIM
Got it.
(Beat.)
Once upon a time, there was a boy named Tim-

PHILISTINA
Who meets the girl of his dreams and lives happily ever after?

TINY TIM
Who walked with a crutch and called out "God bless us, every one"-

PHILISTINA
That's so...hot.

TINY TIM

Until he got better, thanks to Mr. Scrooge-

PHILISTINA

Yay, Mr. Scrooge!

TINY TIM

Only Mr. Scrooge gets run over by a drunken city bus driver and dies, but not before the medical bills eat up his life savings, and that same bus driver, blinded by his own tears, runs over the boy's loving father on his way to drive his bus off a cliff.

PHILISTINA

That's so tragic. What do you think of this outfit?

TINY TIM

It's...uh...I like it.

She gets much more aggressive, perhaps taking his hand, cuddling with him or more, depending on the needs of your production.

PHILISTINA

Don't you think I'm beautiful.

(Beat.)

I made myself beautiful just for you.

TINY TIM

Of course you're beautiful.

PHILISTINA

Then come away with me.

TINY TIM

OK. Right after the marathon. Where are we going?

PHILISTINA

No! You have to come now.

TINY TIM

I can't.

Philistina begins to cry.

TINY TIM (CONT'D)

Philistina, don't cry.

PHILISTINA

It's not too late, Timmy the Tiger. My Tiger. You can still prove your love, your eternal love for me.

TINY TIM

Sorry - I have to run this marathon first. It's just something I have to do.

Philistina cries and exits dramatically and painfully slowly, almost in slow motion, giving Tiny Tim ample time to change his mind. He doesn't. The lights dim.

SCENE 4

Oliver is holed up in his dressing room, breathing into the paper bag that he holds with one hand while trying to pack his things with the other. It's not going well. Enter Nancy.

OLIVER
You will not give me another pep talk.

His attempt to pack with one hand is a disaster.

NANCY
I'm not giving you a pep talk.

OLIVER
(Continuing his previous thought:)
Tell me I'm inspirational or some line like that.

NANCY
You are. But OK.

She watches as he futilely tries to pack.

Nancy finally gives up and moves to help him. As she moves, Oliver has an episode.

OLIVER
Don't come closer! I'll jump - I'll do it!

NANCY
Oliver, you're in a-

OLIVER
I'll step off this ledge before I break into another house.

NANCY
Help! Someone, help!

Enter Smack Blackwell and a phalanx of Crew Members from earlier with all possible speed.

OLIVER
You'll never take me alive, Monks!

SMACK BLACKWELL
(Sotto:)

Roll on this...

NANCY

But-

SMACK BLACKWELL
We'll CGI this Monks character together with Sikes on the
roof-

OLIVER

Stay where you are!

SMACK BLACKWELL
(To Nancy:)
Say something Monks would say.

NANCY

I...uh...

SMACK BLACKWELL
Do it or you're fired.

The Costumer plops a villainous
looking hat on Nancy's head.

NANCY

I...killed Nancy.

OLIVER

You monster!

FIRST PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
I thought Sikes killed Nancy.

SECOND PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Maybe they killed her together.

SMACK BLACKWELL
I could cry this is so good.

NANCY
I'll get you my pretty orphan, and your little dog too.

Beat. The "little dog too" snaps
Oliver out of it.

OLIVER
Nancy, why are you wearing that hat? Bill Sikes' hat.
(Beat.)
You're filming me?

NANCY

I was...I was just...

SMACK BLACKWELL

She was just helping you achieve your full inspirational potential.

OLIVER

(To Nancy:)

I thought you were my friend.

NANCY

I am.

OLIVER

Then why'd you let them do this to me?

He exits.

SMACK BLACKWELL

(To Nancy:)

Get him back or you'll never work in this town again.

Blackout.

SCENE 5

Lights up on PINK SLINK,
attractive female reporter.

PINK SLINK

This is Pink Slink with breaking news out of London, where Oliver Twist, inspirational figure to millions across the globe, is missing. Ten Downing Street has vowed to dedicate every resource to achieving the safe return of the beloved former orphan.

A CHORUS OF CHARACTERS, some we've heard, others we may have not, chime in. Each line should be delivered by a different actor.

CHORUS OF CHARACTERS

Is he really gone?
Who's gonna inspire my Mommy and Daddy to buy me toys if Oliver's gone?
Who's gonna inspire my boyfriend to get me those diamond earrings?
What if he left us?
Oliver would never leave us.
What if he's dead?
Oliver Twist will never die.
He's larger than life.
I have all his movies, TV specials, infomercials and commercials. My house is all Oliver, all the time. But I like the old movies better.
I think he was more inspiring last year.
In his last movie, I heard all his lines were dubbed.
Everything's gonna change now.

Lights up on Corporate Mommy.

CORPORATE MOMMY

I only met him once. The day he came in to sign the papers. He's one of those people who looks very much like he does in his photos. He's not imposing. Just real. A real human being. And as I walk in to the conference room, our eyes meet. There's something sad about them, just below the surface, like if you scraped off the cornea, it would all come crying out.

(Beat.)

I want to hug him. No - I want to kiss his forehead, because I can tell in an instant that he's a good person, and good people deserve a kiss on the forehead before we betray them. As he walks out, I say to myself, "He will make you rich, and he doesn't even get a kiss."

CORPORATE MOMMY (CONT'D)

(Beat.)

Almost keeps me awake sometimes.

Tiny Tim, in training, enters with Mrs. Cratchit lurking in the background. He jogs around the stage, periodically stopping to orate. The chorus begins to respond and root him on.

TINY TIM

I know that I speak for an entire country when I say that the name Oliver Twist makes me want to stand up and shout, "I will do better. I will be better." But if the rumors are true, and the worst has come to pass, I will be ready. I will catch aside my crutch, and I will take up Oliver Twist's mighty mantle.

Mrs. Cratchit holds up giant pictures of Scrooge and Bob Cratchit. They're even bigger now.

TINY TIM (CONT'D)

And now it's your turn. Stand. Cast aside your crutch and stand.

Lights up on Corporate Mommy and Daddy. Corporate Daddy, stroking a golf club like a safety blanket, turns off the TV, driving Tiny Tim into darkness. Beat. Blackout.

SCENE 6

Oliver, upscale jacket thrown on hastily over his rags costume, is outside trying to calm himself. On the ground, a ragamuffin sits with a cup. On one foot, a plastic bag. It's the ARTFUL DODGER, slightly older than Oliver, fallen on hard times.

ARTFUL DODGER

Spare some change, sir?

OLIVER

Sorry.

ARTFUL DODGER

I also take major credit cards, cashier's checks, personal checks with photo ID... But I'd know that saintly mug anywhere, Oliver Twist.

OLIVER

Dodger...?

ARTFUL DODGER

In the flesh. Well, most of it. Lost a toe last year, but you can't tell.

Dodger wiggles his bag-wrapped foot.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

(Points at the bag:)

Regular human glider, I am. I'm thinking of mass producin' 'em. Maybe get me a gang of orphans like in the old days, only this time we're going legit.

OLIVER

(Thinking that's awful:)

That sounds great.

Dodger coughs - he sounds terrible.

ARTFUL DODGER

With your name on the project, we'd all be on easy street.

Dodger coughs again.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

Don't worry. Pretty sure it's not TB. Maybe whooping cough. But I'm still a wizard where it counts.

Dodger makes a show of tiptoeing behind Oliver and pretending to pick his pocket.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

You inspire me, Oliver.

Oliver pulls out a few bills.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

With Twist and the Artful Dodger together again, we'd be-
(Stops to cough:)
unstoppable.

He has another coughing spasm.

OLIVER

Take care of yourself, Jack.

Oliver starts to walk away.
Beat.

ARTFUL DODGER

My hands... They don't work right anymore.

(Beat.)

They're slow, and sometimes my right has a little shake.
It's nothing - a tiny shake you can barely see. I don't know
how to make it stop.

OLIVER

(Beat.)

I have to go.

Oliver walks away reluctantly.
Dodger walk-slides with him.

ARTFUL DODGER

Don't ever be nobody, Oliver.

Beat. Oliver exits. Dodger
shuffles back to his spot. And
then he hears something offstage.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

Who's there?

CINDERELLA (OFF)

You know who, Dodger.

ARTFUL DODGER

I just need a few more days.

SNOW WHITE (OFF)

Didn't he say a few more days a few days ago?

Dodger searches his bags
frantically for something with
which to defend himself.

ARTFUL DODGER

Don't come closer. I have a...

He comes up with a plastic spoon.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

a...spoon.

LAUGHTER from the offstage trio.

CINDERELLA (OFF)

It's just one toe, Dodger.

(Beat.)

You'll be like my honorary step-sister.

ARTFUL DODGER

Please, not another one!

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD (OFF)

He whines like granny.

Enter CINDERELLA, fairy tale
character turned vicious
enforcer, their leader; SNOW
WHITE, carrying a large pair of
garden shears, and LITTLE RED
RIDING HOOD, the junior member of
the gang. All are dressed in
fairy tale regalia, though their
outfits could be modernized.

SNOW WHITE

(Sing-song:)

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, cut off the toe we go.

ARTFUL DODGER

Wait!

He pulls out three plastic bags
that look like the one on his
foot.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

I've only got enough for one foot each, but I can get you
more.

CINDERELLA

These are plastic bags.

ARTFUL DODGER

No, no, no. These are the transportation revolution.

He tries to run. At first it looks like he's just demonstrating, but then it becomes clear he's trying to escape. He doesn't get far before they grab him - he really can't run speedily with the bag on his foot.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

You shouldn't have done that.

ARTFUL DODGER

No - you've got it all wrong.

CINDERELLA

(To Little Red and Snow White:)

Cut off another one.

The Artful Dodger launches into a coughing fit.

ARTFUL DODGER

Plague. Very contagious.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

I don't want to catch his germs.

Cinderella holds up one of Dodger's bags.

CINDERELLA

Glad you brought these. Put it over his head.

SNOW WHITE

I see dead people.

(Trying to remember:)

Who said that?

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Why does she always get to do the suffocations?

ARTFUL DODGER

Wait! Oliver Twist won't like this one bit.

Snow White puts the bag over his head and starts to suffocate him.

CINDERELLA

Twist is gone.

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ARTFUL DODGER
(Shaking his bagged head:)

I just saw him.

Dodger thrashes about, trying to escape.

CINDERELLA
Stop suffocating him for a minute.

Little Red Riding Hood sticks her tongue out at Snow White.

Beat. Snow White takes the bag from his head. Dodger gasps for air.

CINDERELLA (CONT'D)
Where is Twist?

ARTFUL DODGER
He's, uh...that way?

CINDERELLA
Bag him.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD
My turn!

ARTFUL DODGER
He'll be back. We got big plans. He'll back sure as I'm standing here.

Lights up on Corporate Daddy and Corporate Mommy. They look miserable.

CORPORATE DADDY
It'll take 1000 years to move all the Oliver merchandise we stockpiled.

(Beat.)
If he were a martyr, we could work with it.

CORPORATE MOMMY
We'll talk to Tiny Tim's people. People can always be reasoned with. Or bought.

Lights up on Mrs. Cratchit, as if she is in mid-conversation with Corporate Mommy and Daddy.

MRS. CRATCHIT
Timmy doesn't need you.

CORPORATE MOMMY

We're not talking about need. We're talking about opportunity.

MRS. CRATCHIT

My son doesn't need opportunity. He's a movement.

Mrs. Cratchit exits abruptly.
Tiny Tim appears spotlit, alone,
in a tracksuit. CROWD NOISE, as
if he's surrounded by throngs.
He holds up his arms for silence.

Tiny Tim begins jogging in place.
From here until the end of the
scene, the various groups on
stage interact independently but
simultaneously.

TINY TIM

I can feel myself getting stronger with every step.

ARTFUL DODGER

When Twist comes back, I'm the most valuable man you got.

TINY TIM

I will fly over the course...

SNOW WHITE

I want to see dead people.

ARTFUL DODGER

I'm like his right hand.

TINY TIM

Lift your knees with me.

CINDERELLA

(To Artful Dodger:)

We need proof. Of your loyalty.

TINY TIM

Lift your hopes with me.

Lights up on Oliver elsewhere on
stage, in the street, where he
runs into Nancy.

NANCY

Oliver?!

CINDERELLA

We'll even let you pick which one.

NANCY
The whole world's looking for you.

TINY TIM
Run with me.

OLIVER
Are they angry with me?

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD
(Grabbing the shears from
Snow White:)
My turn for damage!

TINY TIM
Let me inspire you.

CORPORATE DADDY
If he can't be turned...

NANCY
They just want you to come back.

TINY TIM
I am the messenger and the message.

CORPORATE MOMMY
He'll have to be stopped.

Snow White picks up the shears.
Dodger struggles, but Cinderella
and Little Red hold him.

NANCY
They need you.

TINY TIM
I am all that you need.

The Artful Dodger screams.
Blackout.

SCENE 7

The day before the marathon. The stage turns into a maelstrom of activity. Enter a YOUNG NEWSPAPER CARRIER.

YOUNG NEWSPAPER CARRIER

Extra! Extra! Tiny Tim fathers alien love child!

Enter Philistina, who holds a press conference.

PHILISTINA

I'm an alien, and Tiny Tim is the father of my alien love child.

Tiny Tim jogs on. Pink Slink and other REPORTERS - or it could just be Pink Slink - jog on following him.

PINK SLINK

Tim, do you have any comment?

TINY TIM

Pink, we were so poor that my parents couldn't even afford a doctor to tell them that I would be lucky to live to be a teenager. But I've dedicated every waking moment to being on that starting line tomorrow morning, so that I can be the inspiration I know my dad and Uncle Scrooge wanted me to be. I go to bed early, always wear sunscreen and never tell lies. Why would I throw all that away over an alien love child?

Pink Slink and the Reporters abandon Philistina.

PHILISTINA

Did I say "alien love child"? I meant I gave him performance enhancing drugs.

Her attempts to keep their attention aren't working.

PHILISTINA (CONT'D)

(Reaching:)

He offered no bid contracts to crooked corporations, clubbed baby seals and he...he...litters.

YOUNG NEWSPAPER CARRIER

Tiny Tim vindicated!

The Reporters and hangers-on jog off, leaving Tiny Tim alone with Philistina, who sits on the ground, disconsolate.

PHILISTINA

I'm a horrible person.

TINY TIM

Can I inspire you to be a better one?

She throws herself into his arms sincerely. He's still trying to jog. They jog off together.

SCENE 8

Shortly afterward. Just outside the film set. Oliver, with Nancy, stops short.

OLIVER
(To himself:)
I am Oliver Twist. I have...

NANCY
They want you back.

OLIVER
I have survived the workhouse, being beaten and locked in a coffin, walking miles and miles in my bare feet...

NANCY
They need you.

OLIVER
A battle on a rooftop with a vicious murderer...

NANCY
Yes!

OLIVER
(Beat.)
I keep trying to remember the rooftop, but it's like there's a hole in my head where the rooftop should be.

Beat. Nancy pushes Oliver across the threshold and into the television studio. It's quiet. Smack Blackwell sits alone in her chair.

SMACK BLACKWELL
The prodigal orphan returns.

NANCY
Where is everyone?

SMACK BLACKWELL
Jogging.

(To Nancy:)
Would you give us some alone time? I'm sure he's got some outfits that need dirtying up.

Beat. Nancy exits to the costume area. Beat. Smack Blackwell leaps at Oliver, trying to strangle him.

SMACK BLACKWELL (CONT'D)

This is all your fault, you crazy little-
 (Mocking Oliver as she chokes
 him:)

I'm having a panic attack. Waaa! I can't remember my life.
 Boo hoo hoo hoo hoo!

Oliver pushes her off, but she's
 relentless and back on him in
 seconds. Enter Nancy, who
 immediately rushes to pull Smack
 Blackwell off.

NANCY

What are you doing? Get off him!

Nancy pulls Smack Blackwell off.
 Oliver gasps for air.

SMACK BLACKWELL

Not even worth it anymore.

NANCY

Don't listen to her. You're Oliver Twist. People will
 always love you.

SMACK BLACKWELL

You're done. Fifteen minutes - over.

Oliver pulls out his
 hyperventilation bag.

OLIVER

Nancy?

NANCY

People are working on this, Oliver. You have people behind
 you.

SMACK BLACKWELL

Oh, they'll be behind you all right.

The lights dim on the television
 studio.

SCENE 9

Corporate headquarters.
Corporate Daddy presents to a group of new INTERNS, who we don't see. Pictures of the subjects he mentions come up as projections, or in a more low tech production, he can use an easel.

CORPORATE DADDY

All this talk about thinking outside the box, inside the box - they're all boxes. It's just about deciding the size and shape of the box.

(Beat.)

"Heroes"...

He points at pictures of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and General Patton.

CORPORATE DADDY (CONT'D)

Box. "Experts"...

Projections of Einstein and Benjamin Franklin come up.

Nearby on stage, several GOONS dump a giant laundry bag on the ground in front of them. The Artful Dodger works his way loose during the presentation, poking his head out, coughing and gasping for air. When he finally gets out, he has plastic bags on both feet.

CORPORATE DADDY (CONT'D)

another box. "Heartthrobs"...

Projections of Frankie Valli, Paul Newman, Zac Efron - or whoever may be current - pop up.

Enter Corporate Mommy.

CORPORATE DADDY (CONT'D)

"Inspirational Figures"...

Projections of Oliver and Tiny Tim come up.

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Corporate Mommy hovers, looking less than patient.

CORPORATE DADDY (CONT'D)

"Martyrs"...

Up come projections of Martin Luther King, Joan of Arc, Thomas a Becket.

CORPORATE DADDY (CONT'D)

Hard to come by, but a long-term winner when you can find one.

Corporate Mommy clears her throat.

CORPORATE DADDY (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

Corporate Daddy and Corporate Mommy step into the Artful Dodger's area.

CORPORATE MOMMY

I trust you had a pleasant trip.

ARTFUL DODGER

You trust I had a pleasant trip? Thrown in a sack like a piece of meat, and you trust I had a pleasant trip?

CORPORATE DADDY

We wouldn't know anything about that, because you're not here right now.

ARTFUL DODGER

I'm not here-

CORPORATE DADDY

There's a thing.

ARTFUL DODGER

(Beat.)

I always say, you need a thing done right, the Dodger's your man.

He has a coughing fit.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

What sort of thing are we talking about?

CORPORATE MOMMY

(Beat.)

We need Oliver Twist back on top.

ARTFUL DODGER

I live for him being on top.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

(Beat.)

So this thing...

Corporate Daddy works his way around Artful Dodger's latest coughing fit and unshowered smell to lean in and whisper in his ear.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

You want me to-

CORPORATE MOMMY

We said nothing.

CORPORATE DADDY

But it's best for all involved.

Beat. The Artful Dodger reaches into a little pouch at his waist.

ARTFUL DODGER

I want the toes back on.

He opens his pouch and pulls out two badly decaying toes - the ones that have been cut off.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

You'll be needin' the Dodger's special touch on this job.

The Goons begin bagging him again.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

No toes, no touch!

The lights dim.

SCENE 10

Tiny Tim's training area. Tiny Tim is with Philistina, who holds a stopwatch. Enter Mrs. Cratchit with a large jar.

MRS. CRATCHIT
(To Philistina:)

Who are you?

TINY TIM
Philistina, this is my mother-

PHILISTINA
I was a bad person, but just sitting there, sipping egg whites with Timmy, I could feel all of that bad just draining away.

MRS. CRATCHIT
Step right up and support Tiny Tim! No donation is too small!

Various FANS jog in, deposit money and then jog off.

TINY TIM
What are you doing?

MRS. CRATCHIT
Don't worry - we're 100 percent grassroots.

TINY TIM
Mom, we can't-

MRS. CRATCHIT
People want to help.

PHILISTINA
I want to help.

MRS. CRATCHIT
See?

TINY TIM
But it's wrong.

MRS. CRATCHIT
Everything your father and Uncle Scrooge left us is gone.
(Back to her barker mode:)
Tiny Tim needs your help! No amount is too large.

More and more FANS enter and put
donations into the jar.

TINY TIM

Mom, I can't-

A SERIES OF SUPPORTERS

Tim, we'd like to supply the eggs for your egg white shakes.
We'd like to be your official drink.
Will you be endorsing a shoe?

MRS. CRATCHIT

I don't want my son corrupted.

NEW CORPORATE DADDY

That's why we're ready to sell these Tiny Tim dolls.

A SERIES OF SUPPORTERS

It's for a good cause.
Continue your mission.
Take care of your mother and sister.
Buy a few things for yourself.
A few nice things.
You've worked hard.
Take the money.

End of scene.

SCENE 11

Oliver Twist and Nancy stand on a hill. The sounds of people chanting "Tiny Tim" come from below.

OLIVER
(Indicating the chants:)

That was me.

(Beat.)

But there's gotta be something else besides inspiring people, right? Like why can't I be a teen idol?

NANCY
Do you really want to get chased around by a pack of girls trying to cut off a lock of your hair or steal your underwear?

OLIVER
Yes.

(Beat.)

Just once, I want a girl to think I'm cute. Not even hot. Just cute. And maybe she takes my hand...

Nancy takes his hand.

NANCY
Like this?

OLIVER
Maybe both hands.

She takes the other hand too.
Beat. She kisses him on the lips. Beat.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Please, miss, I want some more.

Lights up on Corporate Mommy, not actually there.

CORPORATE MOMMY
'Atta girl.

Corporate Mommy quickly vanishes into the dark.

Before anything else can happen, enter the Artful Dodger, bag slung over his shoulder.

ARTFUL DODGER

Wow. These bags are not meant for steep climbs.

NANCY

I should go.

OLIVER

But-

NANCY

Dodger's here. He'll take care of things.

OLIVER

But you-

NANCY

I did my job.

Nancy exits.

ARTFUL DODGER

I hate it when they kiss you and it turns out they only did it 'cause they got paid.

Oliver feels a panic attack coming on and pulls out his paper bag.

The Artful Dodger, positioned in such a way that Oliver doesn't notice what he's doing, goes into his bag and pulls out a series of potentially lethal instruments: a baseball bat, a wrench, hammer, a frying pan and a trumpet or something similarly ridiculous.

OLIVER

I thought she was the one.

ARTFUL DODGER

Do you remember when we used to fish in the workhouse gutters?

OLIVER

You were in the workhouse with me?

ARTFUL DODGER

I said no sir, we're not gonna catch even a sardine up there, but every time it rained, up you'd go, and I had to go to look out for you and all.

(Beat.)

No - I guess you're right. I wasn't there.

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OLIVER

(Beat.)

What happened on the roof?

Artful Dodger takes a solid practice swing with the bat. He has a little shake in his hands, but it'll do.

ARTFUL DODGER

What roof?

OLIVER

Bill Sikes - the roof. Was I even there?

ARTFUL DODGER

Is anybody ever really anywhere?

OLIVER

And what about Monks?

Oliver hyperventilates into the bag - he's losing it completely.

ARTFUL DODGER

Why you worryin' your head about this?

OLIVER

Did any of my life even happen to me?

Artful Dodger lines up the bat with Oliver's head. He winds up, his hands shaking badly, then Oliver finally sees him.

The Artful Dodger tries to hide the bat behind his back as Oliver forgets about hyperventilating and tries to get behind him. Given that the Artful Dodger isn't very maneuverable, Oliver succeeds and finds not only the bat but the entire stash of death-dealing instruments.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Jack, what are you doing?

ARTFUL DODGER

I says to myself, Dodger, what Oliver needs to lift his spirits is a picnic with a view. So I go and get me this frying pan, only it's dented, and how do you fix a dented frying pan? With a bat to bang it back into place.

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ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

And if that don't work, get yourself a hammer and a wrench and...

(Beat.)

It's the only way, they said. Tiny Tim's closin' in for the kill. But you take Oliver martyr, and Twist stays on top forever. Don't matter how inspirational Tiny Tim gets, he can't touch you.

He has a coughing fit.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

I just wanted to see you get what you deserve, but I ain't no good at anything.

(Beat.)

Now you're finished, and it's all my fault.

End of scene.

SCENE 12

Halfway down the hill, Nancy meets up with Cinderella, Snow White, and Little Red Riding Hood, who peers through binoculars.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

There's all this crying and hugging. Ick. Oliver Twist is so not dead.

NANCY

(Under her breath:)

Thank you.

SNOW WHITE

What?

NANCY

Nothing.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

"Thank you." That's what she said.

NANCY

Thank you, as in thank you for telling me what you saw.

Beat.

CINDERELLA

Mount up.

The three of them - not Nancy - put on their packs. Snow White pulls out the huge pair of shears from earlier.

Snow White holds up a hand for silence. She appears to be visualizing something in front of her.

SNOW WHITE

I love chopping off loose ends.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

This time it's my turn. No matter what.

Little Red Riding Hood mimes practice whacks, looking covetously at Snow White, who holds the actual shears.

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NANCY

Not Oliver - please!

CINDERELLA

Dodger getting rid of Oliver would have been perfect. The betrayal by the trusted friend-

SNOW WHITE

Et tu, Dodger-

CINDERELLA

We're talking major martyrdom. But we do him, it could blow right back on corporate, and then who's gonna buy the brand? So don't worry. Your boy's safe.

NANCY

You're not just saying that to make me feel better.

CINDERELLA

You led him to slaughter. Bit late to be having feelings.
(To Snow White and Little Red:)

Let's get there before they start with the hugging again.

They start to move in the direction from which Nancy came.

NANCY

I'll do it.

They stop.

CINDERELLA

Doing it is different than just letting it happen. This time, you have to get your hands dirty.

NANCY

My hands got dirty the second I took this job.

Snow White proffers a pair of gloves and a suffocation-ready bag. End of scene.

SCENE 13

Nancy returns to find the Artful Dodger bawling like a baby, his head resting in Oliver's lap, while Oliver strokes his hair and tries to calm him.

ARTFUL DODGER

And then I stole the puppy and the kitty and the-

They see Nancy. Beat. The Artful Dodger picks himself up.

ARTFUL DODGER (CONT'D)

Speck 'a dust in my eye.

NANCY

(To the Artful Dodger:)

I'm supposed to kill you.

The Artful Dodger turns to flee, but his bagged feet are going to be the death of him.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'm not going to do it.

OLIVER

(To Nancy:)

Get out of here.

Dodger, still trying to escape, falls. He's a turtle on his back.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Me and Dodger don't need you.

ARTFUL DODGER

Maybe just a little helping hand-

NANCY

I know you're angry-

OLIVER

Angry?! You tried to have me killed!

NANCY

They're going to kill Tiny Tim. And I love you.

OLIVER

(Beat.)

That's a lot to take in.

NANCY

Don't take it in. Say you'll help me.

OLIVER

He ruined my life. And you - you tried to-

NANCY

Have you killed. I know. I don't know how many times I can say I'm sorry.

OLIVER

Actually, that was the first time you said you were sorry.

NANCY

Oh.

(Beat.)

I'm sorry. I really and truly am. But the marathon starts any minute, and they're going to kill him.

OLIVER

Why should I help him? He ruined my-

NANCY

Your life. I know. But it's not like he did it on purpose. And what life? You sold juicers and cereal and...

OLIVER

Toasters. Steak knives. Bed pans.

NANCY

You hated all that.

OLIVER

I don't know how to do anything else.

NANCY

You're rich. You don't need to do anything. But Tiny Tim needs your help.

OLIVER

The money's gone.

NANCY

The money is gone?

ARTFUL DODGER

The money is gone?

Like what you see? Hit the back button and follow the instructions to order a perusal copy of the full script!

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