

1 The Jolly Sandboys was a small roadside inn of pretty ancient date, with a sign, representing three
2 Sandboys increasing their jollity with as many jugs of ale and bags of gold, creaking and swinging
3 on its post on the opposite side of the road. As the travellers had observed that day many
4 indications of their drawing nearer and nearer to the race town, such as gipsy camps, carts laden
5 with gambling booths and their appurtenances, itinerant showmen of various kinds, and beggars
6 and hikers of every degree, all wending their way in the same direction, Mr Codlin was fearful of
7 finding the accommodations forestalled; this fear increasing as he diminished the distance between
8 himself and the hostelry, he quickened his pace, and notwithstanding the burden he had to carry,
9 maintained a round trot until he reached the threshold. Here he had the gratification of finding that
10 his fears were without foundation, for the landlord was leaning against the doorpost looking lazily at
11 the rain, which had by this time begun to descend heavily, and no tinkling of cracked bell, nor
12 boisterous shout, nor noisy chorus, gave note of company within.

13 'All alone?' said Mr Codlin, putting down his burden and wiping his forehead.

14 'All alone as yet,' rejoined the landlord, glancing at the sky, 'but we shall have more company to-
15 night I expect. Here one of you boys, carry that show into the barn. Make haste in out of the wet,
16 Tom; when it came on to rain I told 'em to make the fire up, and there's a glorious blaze in the
17 kitchen, I can tell you.'

18 Mr Codlin followed with a willing mind, and soon found that the landlord had not commended his
19 preparations without good reason. A mighty fire was blazing on the hearth and roaring up the wide
20 chimney with a cheerful sound, which a large iron cauldron, bubbling and simmering in the heat,
21 lent its pleasant aid to swell. There was a deep red ruddy blush upon the room, and when the
22 landlord stirred the fire, sending the flames skipping and leaping up—when he took off the lid of the
23 iron pot and there rushed out a savoury smell, while the bubbling sound grew deeper and more
24 rich, and an unctuous steam came floating out, hanging in a delicious mist above their heads—
25 when he did this, Mr Codlin's heart was touched. He sat down in the chimney-corner and smiled.
26 Mr Codlin sat smiling in the chimney-corner, looking at the landlord as he held the cover in his
27 hand, and, feigning that his doing so was needful to the welfare of the cookery, suffered the
28 delightful steam to tickle the nostrils of his guest. The glow of the fire was upon the landlord's bald
29 head, and upon his twinkling eye, and upon his watering mouth, and upon his pimpled face, and
30 upon his round fat figure. Mr Codlin drew his sleeve across his lips, and said in a murmuring voice,
31 'What is it?'

32 'It's a stew of tripe,' said the landlord smacking his lips, 'and cow-heel,' smacking them again, 'and
33 bacon,' smacking them once more, 'and steak,' smacking them for the fourth time, 'and peas,
34 cauliflowers, new potatoes, and sparrow-grass, all working up together in one delicious gravy.'
35 Having come to the climax, he smacked his lips a great many times, and taking a long hearty sniff
36 of the fragrance that was hovering about, put on the cover again with the air of one whose toils on
37 earth were over.

38 'At what time will it be ready?' asked Mr Codlin faintly.

39 'It'll be done to a turn,' said the landlord looking up to the clock—and the very clock had a colour
40 in its fat white face, and looked a clock for jolly Sandboys to consult—'it'll be done to a turn at
41 twenty-two minutes before eleven.'

42 'Then,' said Mr Codlin, 'fetch me a pint of warm ale, and don't let nobody bring into the room even
43 so much as a biscuit till the time arrives.'

44 Nodding his approval of this decisive and manly course of procedure, the landlord retired to draw
45 the beer, and presently returning with it, applied himself to warm the same in a small tin vessel
46 shaped funnel-wise, for the convenience of sticking it far down in the fire and getting at the bright
47 places. This was soon done, and he handed it over to Mr Codlin with that creamy froth upon the
48 surface which is one of the happy circumstances attendant on mulled malt.

49 Greatly softened by this soothing beverage, Mr Codlin now bethought him of his agreeable
50 companions, and acquainted mine host of the Sandboys that their arrival might be shortly looked
51 for. The rain was rattling against the windows and pouring down in torrents, and such was Mr
52 Codlin's extreme amiability of mind, that he more than once expressed his earnest hope that they
53 would not be so foolish as to get wet.

54 At length they arrived, drenched with the rain and presenting a most miserable appearance,
55 notwithstanding that Short had sheltered the child as well as he could under the skirts of his own
56 coat, and they were nearly breathless from the haste they had made. But their steps were no
57 sooner heard upon the road than the landlord, who had been at the outer door anxiously watching
58 for their coming, rushed into the kitchen and took the cover off. The effect was electrical. They all

59 came in with smiling faces though the wet was dripping from their clothes upon the floor, and
60 Short's first remark was, 'What a delicious smell!'
61 It is not very difficult to forget rain and mud by the side of a cheerful fire, and in a bright room.
62 They were furnished with slippers and such dry garments as the house or their own bundles
63 afforded, and ensconcing themselves, as Mr Codlin had already done, in the warm chimney-corner,
64 soon forgot their late troubles or only remembered them as enhancing the delights of the present
65 time.

Passage adapted from *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Charles Dickens