

# The Dolly Boys

*by* Tabatha Stirling

## **Dolly Boys.**

There once was a band of dolly boys that lived in Fagin's kitchen. They were a lively lot if not a little stained about the edges and gined around the liver. The dolly boys were girls who were boys and there was a mighty taste for that sort of thing in the grand mansions that loomed over Regent's Park and the silky, slippery swells that resided within.

Fagin treated them like Queens because they provided the largest share of earnings, much more than the little thieves, blags and broadsmen that owed Fagin their lives and breath. All the notes and coins he added gracefully and sneakily in the space behind the brick behind the grate behind the stove.

The dolly boys would crowd about the large, pockmarked mirror that lay sharply, at all sorts of angles, against the far wall. Annie

Waltz would do their eyes and brows. Very good she was too. Sugar Flurry was in charge of lips. Drawing lines and arches and dips and dives like a charcoal Master in La Patee.

And Volequeen, Fagin's secret love, whose skin was darker than honey but lighter than bronze and whose eyes flashed violet on a stormy night and amber with the sun, well, she did the dolly boys hair.

Beautiful creations which she copied from pamphlets on style that she nicked from a rich Mercers wife whilst dabbing it up with the Mercer 'imself. Nice regulars is what they all wanted and Volequeen, she had many.

Sometimes Nancy would come over and dance a bit before Bill dragged off and beat her too much for anything to be comfortable for a week.

And Fagin would watch, a look of ... let's call it love to be kind, slopped on his face as his 'Voley' danced a lively polka with girls who were boys and the little thieves, blags and broadsmen that owed Fagin their lives and their breaths. And he would look down at his

surprisingly supple hands and remember how many he had killed  
and how to distract himself from the pain.

