Arts & Life

The Docs are in

Season two of 'The Artful Dodger' was full of yearning and angst

By LILLIAN CURTIN
Opinion Editor

Lady Belle Fox (Maia Mitchell) and Jack "Artful Dodger" Dawkins (Thomas Brodie-Sangster) have blessed our screens once again in season two of "The Artful Dodger."

I already love a good period piece. But to whoever thought of putting two of my favorite icons of the 2010s in one: I hope you got laid.

You may know Mitchell from "The Fosters" or the absolute masterpiece that is the "Teen Beach Movie" franchise. And you may know actor Brodie-Sangster from "Nanny McPhee," "The Maze Runner" and the voice of Ferb from "Phineas and Ferb."

The first season of "The Artful Dodger" came out in late 2023, and it knocked it out of the park for me right away. It immediately reminded me of "Enola Holmes." In fact, in my mind, they're somewhat sister stories.

Like "Enola Holmes," "The Artful Dodger" is a unique take on a classic novel. In this case, it's Charles Dicken's "Oliver Twist."

In the novel, a side character, Jack, better known as Artful Dodger, is a cunning child pickpocket during the 1830s. The show is his own adaptation, along with Norbort Fagin (David Thewlis), another character from the book. The show takes place 15 years after the book, now in Australia.

In the first season, Jack meets Belle, the governor's daughter, who wants to be a doctor, like Jack. Reminder, we're in the 19th century here. A few problems: Belle's a woman and Jack is a criminal. Under these circumstances, you can probably gather that it's a bit difficult for either of them to seriously practice medicine.

You can also probably guess that it doesn't stop either of them.

It's an enemies-to-lovers plotline, with angst. I love shows where I can tell the characters want to jump each other's bones. We ended season one with Jack being arrested after saving Belle from her aortic aneurysm with experimental heart surgery. Well, while probably not the way he wanted, he ended up inside her one way or another. To get to her heart, of course.

It's the classic trope of a stubborn, independent woman and a man who basically worships her. So, in other words, it's perfection, and I will not be hearing any arguments on the matter.

In season two, we start with Jack being taken to the hanging block. Here's the thing about having two years between seasons of a show: when you start the second season with the main character about to get hanged, viewers probably have to go back because you can't remember how the hell we got here.

Long story short, no, he didn't die. I think I would've lost it if I had to see Brodie-Sangster die on my screen, again, but I digress.

Norbort set up a decoy. While this is great and all and "Yay, he saved his life," Norbort has to be one of the stupidest, irrational-thinking characters ever.

One, Norbort tries constantly to sabotage Jack and Belle's relationship, and I will have none of it. Leave my babies alone.

Two, the whole second season is Jack and Belle struggling to stay away from each other. Why do they have to stay away from each other? Oh, because this imbecile ruined Jack's chance at a pardon.

Lady Jane Fox (Susie Porter), Belle's mother and a bitch who seemingly hates her daughter and refuses to see her happy, requested that Jack have two years' probation. This includes Jack and Belle not being able to be together for two years, in exchange for Belle's chance at a medical career.

Meaning, Belle has to choose between Jack and her career.

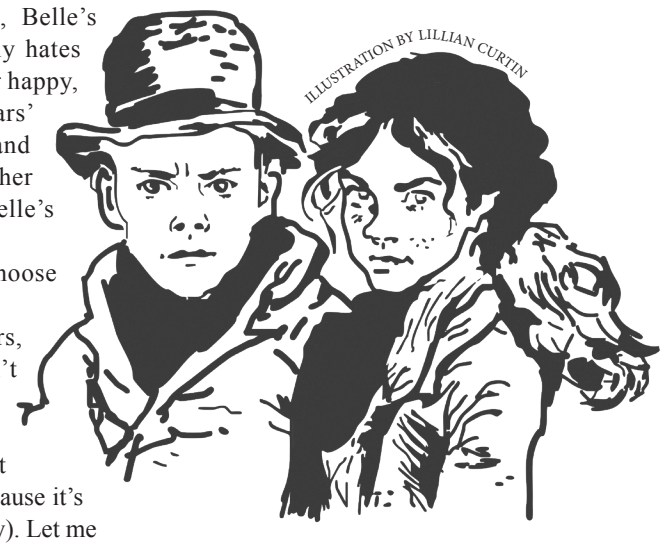
She decides to do the two years, but of course, Jack apparently can't stay away. If they're caught, he's executed immediately.

Who would carry this warrant out? Oh, I'm so glad you asked, because it's Inspector Henry Boxer (Luke Bracey). Let me tell you that man could cuff me any day.

I'm an apologist for the Inspector. At the beginning of the season, he was genuinely trying to help Jack. But then Jack got sassy and was being rude. Hell, you want to be ungrateful while I'm trying to save your life? Yeah, I'd have the same attitude as the Inspector.

It was an amazing season overall. I'm incredibly grateful because I didn't even know if this show would have a second season.

As a firm believer in bringing back yearning, Mitchell and Brodie-Sangster did not disappoint. The yearning, the story and everything in between were just perfect.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Lick the bowl

A reminder to live your life

By EMILY ADORNO
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Have you ever stopped and tasted something without guilt?

Like licking the mixing spoon from the bowl when baking with your mom? Loading up your plate with spaghetti and fresh Italian bread? Or even enjoying ice cream right out of the carton, not because you earned it, but because you wanted it.

For me these moments became a time to put on an act. I'd rehearse the lines ahead of time: "I'm still full from dinner." "I'll have some later." "I don't really like that anyways."

I knew exactly how to decline another slice of bread without raising concern, how to smile while saying "no" so it sounded effortless. There was always a pause around food, a split second where I reminded myself to choose control. That pause followed me everywhere. It became proof, in my mind, that I was doing something right.

The voice in my head didn't sound cruel. It sounded disciplined. It told me that living well meant living carefully, that restraint was maturity, that pleasure should always be justified. I learned to measure my worth through control, through how little I needed, how composed I appeared and how "healthy" I seemed. Discipline was praised. My ability to say no was admired. And slowly, without realizing it, joy became conditional.

I stopped tasting my life and I started managing it.

Licking the bowl changed that. Besides the food, it represented a moment where I did not negotiate with my brain some made up rules.

I remember standing at the counter hesitating longer than anyone noticed. No one was watching. Hours of therapy taught me that these rules I was following only existed in my head.

At that moment, putting my finger in the bowl and bringing it to my mouth, I was saying yes without justification. Yes to a moment without explanation. Yes to connection instead of control. Yes to being present in my own body and trusting that nothing bad would happen if I let myself enjoy something fully.

It was a quiet moment, almost insignificant, but it cracked something open.

It reminded me that living is not something you earn once you are perfect enough. It is something you are allowed to do now.

That moment didn't fix everything. It was just the beginning. But it surely made room for more.

I get to choose overpriced Ben & Jerry's ice cream in the dining hall because it sounds good, not because it fits into a plan. I recognize I am safe to enjoy a meal made by someone else cooking with butter or oil. Ordering fries at a restaurant without apologizing or explaining myself. These moments weren't dramatic. They didn't feel like breakthroughs at the time. But they were honest. They were proof that my life was expanding instead of shrinking.


ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY ADORNO

This time last year, during National Eating Disorder Awareness Week, I began to understand how much I had lost to fear disguised as productivity and health. I didn't recognize myself in the awareness campaigns at first. I thought they were for other people, people whose struggles looked obvious, extreme, undeniable.

Mine looked like success. My behaviors were praised. My discipline was rewarded. My exhaustion was invisible.

Eating disorders often hide in plain sight. They are normalized, encouraged and overlooked, especially when they align with social media's ideas of diet culture and achievement. When suffering looks like self-discipline, it rarely raises alarms.

That is why NEDA Week matters.

NEDA Week is about more than awareness. It is about recognition. In sharing my story, I want to name what many people quietly live with but rarely say out loud. If you see yourself in any part of this and feel unsure of what to do next, know this: you do not need a diagnosis, a label or a crisis to deserve support.

Support can look like talking to a trusted friend, seeking campus counseling services or exploring resources through the NEDA and other recovery-focused organizations. There is no failure in seeking help.

Recovery, for me, has meant choosing life in small, repeatable ways. It has meant moving my body because it feels powerful, not because it needs to be controlled. I've had the privilege to teach fitness classes and speak in a way that honors effort, presence and self-respect rather than punishment. It has helped me remind others, and myself, that showing up is enough.

We live in a culture that rewards perfection and calls it virtue. But perfection has never made anyone whole. Joy has. Connection has. Presence has. Licking the bowl is not a failure of discipline. It is a declaration of values.

Honoring your desires does not need permission, and our worth is not earned by holding back. Nor does control equal a perfect life.

NEDA Week asks us to pay attention to the moments we dismiss as insignificant. To question the rules we follow without asking who they serve. It also asks what we feel the eating disorder is protecting us from and what it might be taking away.

Sometimes, choosing recovery looks like something as simple as tasting what is right in front of you and deciding that you deserve to be here for it.