

Bleak House – Audition Piece**Jarndyce / Ada / Richard + Esther**

- JARNDYCE: Rick, my boy, Esther, my dear, what have you been doing? (*Richard and Esther are silent*) Come, Rick, come, I must settle this before I sleep ... you two made the money up between you ... oh, it's in the east again, surely!
- RICHARD: Mr Jarndyce, I don't feel it would be honourable to tell you. Mr Skimpole relied on us ...
- JARNDYCE: Lord bless you, dear boy, he relies upon everyone. He'll be in the same scrape again next week, indeed, he was born in a scrape. I really believe that the day Harold Skimpole was born, the bailiffs were waiting for him when he emerged from the womb!
- ESTHER: Even so, sir, it would not be right to ...
- JARNDYCE: It wasn't right of Skimpole to get hold of you two and squeeze you like a couple of oranges ... to be sure, he's a child, he has no knowledge of money, or of consequences. He would have taken a thousand pounds from you just as easily, no sense of money at all ... but Rick, and Esther, there must be no repeat of this, no more advances, not so much as a sixpence!
- ESTHER: I understand, Guardian.
- RICHARD: And I.
- ADA: And I have no money to give even if I wanted to. I am like Mr Skimpole.
- JARNDYCE: I hope you will be more prudent, Ada. Esther, here is your fifteen pounds back, and Rick, your ten.
- RICHARD: Thank you sir. Naturally I will obey your wishes, but I cannot regret my generosity to Skimpole, for indeed, I have made ten pounds from it!
- ADA: But Rick, Mr Jarndyce only gave you back what you gave to Mr Skimpole.
- RICHARD: Ah, but you don't deny that I was quite content to lose that ten, and never expected to see it again.
- ESTHER: Perhaps not, but ...

RICHARD: So, in receiving this ten, I have ten pounds more than I expected to have, and thus have gained ten pounds!

J ARNDYCE: It is a happy outlook, Rick. But this leads us to another matter, the matter of your career. That ten pounds won't go far, and there's no point in hoping for a fortune from Chancery. You'll be dead and gone before that's settled. No, we must find you a respectable profession.

RICHARD: What profession do you suggest, sir?

JARNDYCE: Have you ever considered medicine?

RICHARD: Medicine sounds just the thing, sir.

ADA: Oh Rick, only yesterday you were talking about the Law.

RICHARD: Ah, no Ada, medicine's what I really want to do. Dr Richard Carstone, MRCS!

JARNDYCE: Take some time to consider, Rick ...

RICHARD: Why take time sir? There's no time to be lost when your mind is once made up. When can I start?

JARNDYCE: I have a friend who is a very eminent surgeon, Mr Bayham Badger. He has always taken pupils from time to time. We shall call on him tomorrow, and then if he likes you and you like him and the Chancellor agrees, perhaps you can give it a try. You can lodge in London with Mrs Jellyby. Doctoring, eh? It's an honourable enough profession, I suppose.

ADA: Do you wish to be a doctor, Rick?

RICHARD: I never wanted anything more in my life. Except ...

JARNDYCE: If Rick has other wishes, perhaps they are best left till his first has been granted, and he can earn his living.

RICHARD: Indeed, sir. I take your meaning very well.

JARNDYCE: It is well that you do, Richard. But come, Skimpole would tell us we are all far too serious. Let us be happy, all of us, let us laugh in the face of the family curse!

Jarndyce / Richard (2)

RICHARD: The court case in Chancery, Jarndyce and Jarndyce. What's the meaning of it?

JARNDYCE: It's about a will, Rick. A will made by a certain Jarndyce more than half a century ago. The will provided for certain trusts, and in the question of how the trusts should be administered. The entire fortune has been squandered away in costs, fees and corruption. Not the least little thing can be discussed, let alone resolved, without a solicitor instructing, and a counsel appearing for A, and the same for B, and so it has dragged on and on through the years. We who are parties to the suit can neither conclude it nor escape it; no good will ever come of it.

RICHARD: But surely sir, if only one could find out what ought to be done with the will, the case could be concluded and the money released.

JARNDYCE: Don't dare to think of it, Rick. Many of our family, including old Tom Jarndyce, who blew his brains out in this very house, have entertained false hopes of settling the case, but none has ever succeeded. Young men such as yourself have grown old before their time in trying. Live life, Rick, make a new fortune for yourself by your own endeavour, but don't try to reclaim that which belongs to the dead. Let me show you to your room, Rick.