

**Bleak House – Audition Piece****Esther / Guppy**

- ESTHER: You wanted to see me, Mr Guppy?
- GUPPY: Yes miss, good of you to spare me some time. What I have to say, miss, is without prejudice.
- ESTHER: I don't understand what you mean.
- GUPPY: It's a law term, miss. It means ... in short, it means in total confidence. If what I have to say, miss, should not lead to further proceedings, it would not prejudice my position with my employers, Kenge and Carboy.
- ESTHER: Mr Guppy, I am at a loss to imagine what you have to communicate in confidence to me whom you have met only once. I am not connected with the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. Indeed, I do not know with what family I am connected.
- GUPPY: My present salary, Miss Summerson, is two pound a week. When I first had the happiness of meeting you, it was one pound fifteen shillings and had stood at that figure for some months. A rise of five has since taken place and a further rise of five is guaranteed at the expiration of a term not exceeding twelve months from the present date. My mother has a little property in the form of a small annuity, and has an easy disposition. She has her failings, who hasn't, but has never done it with company present, at which time she can be trusted with all manner of ales, wines and spirits. In short, Miss Summerson, I adore you and implore you to be so kind as to allow me to file a declaration, or in plainer speech, to make an offer!

*He kneels and tries to take her hand. Esther backs away from him*

- ESTHER: Mr Guppy, get up from that ridiculous position or I shall be obliged to break your confidence and ring the bell!
- GUPPY: Hear me out, miss!
- ESTHER: I cannot consent to hear another word unless you get up from the floor and sit down.
- GUPPY: I will, miss, as I love and honour you, so I will obey. Would that I could make thee the subject of that vow before the altar!
- ESTHER: That is quite impossible, and entirely out of the question.

- GUPPY: I am aware, Miss Summerson, that from a worldly point of view, my offer is a poor one. But consider, angel, how I have lived by ferreting out evidence, by discovering that which others would keep hidden. Consider what I might find out about you by way of advancing your interests ...
- ESTHER: Mr Guppy, you address my interests as little as you address my inclination. If you have any regard for me at all, you will please me now by going away.
- GUPPY: In which case, miss, may I assure you that I will nevertheless pursue information which may lead to your advantage, as assiduously as if we were man and wife.
- ESTHER: Mr Guppy, I do not wish you to concern yourself in my life. Please go now and attend only to your own and Mr Kenge's business. If you wish me to keep my promise, and speak nothing of this to my guardian.
- GUPPY: I accept defeat, Miss Summerson. If by any chance you should think better of it, you may find me at eighty seven Penton Place, or if I should be dead, of a broken heart or any such disease, send to my mother's at three hundred and two, Old Street. Good day, Miss Summerson.