

Bleak House – Audition piece

Krook (Doubles with the part of Mr Vholes) / Tulkinghorn / Jo

TULKINGHORN : Good evening. Am I addressing Mr Krook?

KROOK: You are, and what of it'?

TULKINGHORN: My name is Tulkinghorn. I am solicitor to one of the families connected with the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce.

KROOK: You don't have to tell me. I know Jarndyce and Jarndyce, and I know you, Mr Tulkinghorn, as well as the Lord Chancellor. I know who you have to do with. Dedlock, now there's a name. Barbary, there's another, and Carstone, Clare, there's two more. Make of 'em what you will!

TULKINGHORN: On this occasion my business does not concern Jarndyce and Jarndyce. I am looking for a man who I believe is your lodger, a man they call Nemo. Judging from the old woman's remarks, I am correctly informed.

KROOK: Indeed you are, but as to where he is, I couldn't tell you.

JO: Beggin' your pardon, sir...

TULKINGHORN: Yes, boy, what is it?

JO: Beggin' your worship's pardon, I seed Mr Nemo tonight. He's 'allus good to me. He give me a penny and went on up to his room.

KROOK: There's your answer, Mr Tulkinghorn. Did you wish to see him?

TULKINGHORN: Indeed, yes.

KROOK: In which case, you'd better come up. Through the door there, Mr Tulkinghorn.

Music. The door seems mysteriously to open of its own accord. A dim light shines through. Tulkinghorn hesitates, then passes through. The door shuts. Lights up on Lady Dedlock sitting on the sofa reading her letters. Through the scene which follows we hear the voices of Tulkinghorn and Krook and the sound of them in Krook's house. There is no dialogue onstage.

KROOK: Second floor. Take the candle. Up there.

TULKINGHORN: It's very dark. I can't see the stairs.

KROOK: Banister rail on the left, sir. Top of the stairs, second door. I wouldn't annoy him if I was you, he's that black humoured sometimes ...

TULKINGHORN: There's a stench up here, tobacco, but also ... something else.

KROOK: That'll be the opium. It's Mr Nemo's weakness.

Onstage Lady Dedlock becomes agitated She rises and paces. Tulkinghorn knocks on the door.

KROOK: You'd best knock again. If he's been on the opium, he'll take a deal o'waking.

TULKINGHORN: *(Bangs hard on the door)* Hello! Hello!

KROOK: Push the door, sir, he seldom locks it.

Sound of the door creaking open

TULKINGHORN: He's asleep. Mr Nemo! Does he generally sleep like this?

KROOK: I know nothing of his habits, Mr Tulkinghorn.

TULKINGHORN: God save us, the man is dead!

Another window is flung open

KROOK: Dead! Quick, send for the doctor! Miss Flite! A man's dead in here!

KROOK: Quick as you can, run round to the doctor!

TULKINGHORN: Here you, boy!

JO: I didn't do nothing, sir! Twasn't me!

TULKINGHORN: Nobody's accusing you of anything, boy. Do you know the way to Snagsby's?

JO: The stationer's, sir? It's over the other side of the Lane.

TULKINGHORN: Run round and ask Mr Snagsby to step this way. Here's a shilling.
Jo gasps, looks at the money, throws down his broom and bolts

KROOK: A doctor! Send for a doctor!

He emerges from the door with Miss Flite, who scuttles off in the other direction. People are

beginning to gather from nearby houses, murmuring to one another. Tulkinghorn turns to Krook.

TULKINGHORN: Mr Krook, I have a request for you. Before the doctor arrives, would you be kind enough to go through Mr Nemo's room, remove any papers you find there, and keep them safe for me. You shan't lose by it. I give you my word.

KROOK: Whatever you wish, Mr Tulkinghorn. It can't hurt him now. Funny thing, despite all, he must have been a good figure when a youth, good-looking too, I dare say.

TULKINGHORN: Tell me, Mr Krook, can you read?

KROOK: Read? Not like other folks reads, sir, but if you was to show me a word and ask me to point it out where it occurred in a doccymnt, I'd know it again, sir.

TULKINGHORN: Just so. Mr Krook, if anywhere on those papers, you should happen to see this word, or this one, I want you to bring that paper straight to me. Do we agree?

KROOK: Just so, Mr Tulkinghorn, just so.

TULKINGHORN: Quickly, Mr Krook, before they come.