

Bleak House – Audition Piece

Lady Dedlock / Jo

JO: Who's there?

LADY DEDLOCK: Come here, boy.

Jo obeys, slightly reluctantly

LADY DEDLOCK: Are you the boy I've read about in the papers?

JO: I don't know nothink about no papers.

LADY DEDLOCK: Were you not called to give evidence at the inquest?

JO: That's right, the beadle called me. I knowed him wot died. He was wery good to me.

LADY DEDLOCK: Did he look very ill and poor at the end?

JO: Wery, your ladyship.

LADY DEDLOCK: Don't call me ladyship. I am not a lady, I am a servant.

JO: You're a funny sort of servant.

LADY DEDLOCK: Did he look ... as bad as you?

JO: As me? Oh, no, your ... servanthship, not so bad as me. I'm a reg'lar one, I am. Did you know him too?

LADY DEDLOCK: How dare you ask me if I knew him!

JO: No offence, I'm sure.

LADY DEDLOCK: I want you to show me where he lived and where he worked and then where they buried him. All those dreadful places. Can you do that for me? I will pay you well.

JO: That's where he lived, that winder up there, in Krook's Court. As to where they buried 'im, that's in the berryin' ground, in the pauper's grave.

Music. The lights change, and we see the shadow of the iron gates. Jo points with his broom.

JO: Mind you doesn't step on a rat, miss, they gives nasty bites. There goes one!

A squeaking as the rat runs off Lady Dedlock screams.

LADY DEDLOCK: It's horrible. Is this place of abomination consecrated ground?

JO: I don't know nothing of consequential ground, miss.

LADY DEDLOCK: Is it blessed?

JO; Blest if I know, miss, it ain't done much good if it is. I should think it was cursed more like. That grave they put him in was jolly full, they had to stamp on all the other bodies to git him in and he's not so deep now. I could uncover him with my broom. Course, that's why they keep the gates locked, to keep stray dogs out.

LADY DEDLOCK: Which is the spot?

JO: *(Pointing)* Over there.

Lady Dedlock stares at the place, then turns to Jo and hands him a coin

LADY DEDLOCK: Take this for your trouble, and remember, if anyone asks, you never saw me. Now, point to the spot again, I can't see where you mean.

JO: It's there, miss, right in the comer.

He points his broom. When he turns back to her she is gone. He looks at the coin in his hand.

JO: A sovring! Rum sort o' servant she wos!