

## Bleak House – Audition Piece

### Chadband / Mr & Mrs Snagsby

CHADBAND: No, my young friend, I will not let you alone. And why because I am a harvest-labourer, because you are delivered unto me, and are become as a precious instrument in my hands. We have among us, my friends, a gentile and a heathen a dweller in the pit of Tom-all-Alone's. Devoid of all family devoid of flocks, of precious stones, of gold and silver. Why should this be?

SNAGSBY: I don't know, I'm sure.

MRS SNAGSBY: Sshhh!

CHADBAND: My friends, it is because he is devoid of that light which shines in some of us. What is that light, you ask, I will tell you, it is the light of terewth!

*Mrs Snagsby begins to cry quietly*

CHADBAND: Say not to me it is not the lamp of lamps, for I say unto you that it is. Suppose a man goes forth into the city, and sees there an eel and comes back and says unto his wife, I have seen an elephant. Would that be terewth?

*Mrs Snagsby cries louder*

CHADBAND: Or if this same man saw an elephant, and returned saying to his wife, I have seen an eel. Would that be terewth? Or if the unnatural parents of this heathen, after casting him forth to the wolves and vultures and the wildebeest and gazelles and serpents, went back to their pipes and liqour, would that be terewth?

*Mrs Snagsby has hysterics. Snagsby and Chadband comfort her, then help her off. Snagsby hurries back on.*

SNAGSBY: Jo old chap, it wasn't for this I brought you here tonight. There's a gentleman wishes to speak to you. He's sending a cab. When we get where we're going, I want you to do exactly as you're asked, and answer any questions Mr Tulkinghorn puts to you. If you do it right, you'll get a reward. What do you reckon?

*Jo is about to reply, then starts to cough. Sound of a horse-drawn cab drawing up outside.*

SNAGSBY: He's here, Jo. Don't be afraid, it's just a matter of a question or two. Just answer according to the terewth that s all. This way Jo.

*They exit.*

MRS SNAGSBY: *(Enters)* It's his child! His child by another woman! Why else would he invite the boy here, a filthy little urchin like that. I've followed him, when he's been out and I see where he goes. I know it as well as if a trumpet had spoken it!

*Sound of the carriage pulling away. Snagsby re-enters.*

SNAGSBY: My dear, surely you ...

MRS SNAGSBY: Don't you talk to me! My eyes have been opened, by the words of our beloved Mr Chadband. Do not shrink from the truth, says he and be you assured I shall not shrink!

*She falls in a dead faint*

SNAGSBY: Dear one, this is most irregular!

*Chadband re-enters, munching, with a glass in his hand. Mrs Snagsby recovers.*

CHADBAND: My friends, we have partaken in moderation of the comforts which have been provided for us. *(He belches)* May this house live upon the fatness of the land, may it grow, may it thrive, may it prosper. But my friends, have we partaken of anything else? We have. My friends, of what else have we partaken? Of spiritual profit, my friends, of spiritual profit.

MRS SNAGSBY: *(Recovering)* I wish you'd tell him that, Mr Chadband, for he's a long way from the truth, far away indeed!

*Exit Mrs Snagsby, sobbing*

CHADBAND: *(Sips his wine ponderously)* The power of the terewth works slowly and surely to spread its light throughout the land; We cannot build Rome in a day nor breach the walls of Jericho with one trumpet-blast. Mr Snagsby, who was that boy?

SNAGSBY: He's a crossing sweeper, Mr Chadband. Mr Tulkinghorn wished to speak with him.

CHADBAND: Mr Tulkinghorn is also, it seems, a seeker after terewth. There is a great light shining through our darkness, Mr Snagsby

SNAGSBY: There's some truths as had better stay hid, Mr Chadband.