

**Bleak House – Audition Piece****Lady Dedlock / Guppy**

- GUPPY: Excuse me, your Ladyship.
- LADY DEDLOCK: Do I know you, sir?
- GUPPY: I wrote to you, Lady Dedlock, a week or two ago. Name of Guppy.
- LADY DEDLOCK: I see. You are Mr Guppy.
- GUPPY: Without prejudice, ma'am, I am Mr Guppy.
- LADY DEDLOCK: You are strangely importunate, Mr Guppy. If it should appear after all that what you have to say does not concern me, and I don't know how it can, and don't expect that it will, you will allow me to cut you short with little ceremony. Say what you have to say, if you please.
- GUPPY: Ahem! As I told your ladyship in my first letter, I am in the law. Being in the law, I have learnt the habit of never committing myself in writing, which is why I have not so far indicated the name of the firm for whom I work. The firm, Lady Dedlock, is Kenge and Carboy, the name of which may well be familiar to you in connection with the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce.
- LADY DEDLOCK: Go on.
- GUPPY: May I also say that what I have to relate is in no way associated with the case. Had it been so, I should have gone directly to your Ladyship's solicitor, Mr Tulkinghorn.
- LADY DEDLOCK: Please come to the point, Mr Guppy.
- GUPPY: Indeed, quite so. I saw from a distance, ma'am, that you have recently been introduced to one Miss Esther Summerson.
- LADY DEDLOCK: Just this minute, what of it'?
- GUPPY: Did it strike your Ladyship that she was like anybody?
- LADY DEDLOCK: No.
- GUPPY: Not like your ladyship's family?
- LADY DEDLOCK: No.

- GUPPY: I think perhaps your ladyship didn't get a good look at Miss Summerson's face.
- LADY DEDLOCK: I saw her face clearly. What has this to do with me?
- GUPPY: Your ladyship, I have Miss Summerson's image printed on my heart, which I mention in confidence, and while I was in your house recently on some matter of business not unconnected with the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, I happened to catch sight of your ladyship's portrait which hangs above the staircase, and the resemblance between your ladyship and Miss Esther Summerson struck me very forcibly, indeed, it almost knocked me over. And now that I have the honour of beholding your ladyship close to, I find it's really more astonishing than I thought even then.
- LADY DEDLOCK: Mr Guppy, have you forced me to listen to you merely because you detect a resemblance between me and a young lady with whom I have no more than the briefest acquaintance?
- GUPPY: I am coming to that, your ladyship. You see, there is a mystery about Miss Summerson's birth. I have known that since I first came to Kenge and Carboy's as a clerk. My firm, you see, not only represents Mr Jarndyce, but also at one time represented Miss Summerson's former guardian, one Miss Barbary.
- LADY DEDLOCK: Barbary?
- GUPPY: Did your ladyship ever happen to hear of Miss Barbary?
- LADY DEDLOCK: I don't know ... I think so ... yes.
- GUPPY: And was this Miss Barbary connected with your Ladyship's family?
- LADY DEDLOCK: I have no knowledge ...
- GUPPY: Possibly then. Possibly connected. It may interest you to know that in a letter Miss Barbary sent to the firm shortly before her death, she revealed that the little girl (as she was then) was not in actual fact Esther Summerson, but that her real name was Esther Hawdon.