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SF PERUSALS

THE ELEPHANT MAN

HALF MAN HALF ELEPHANT

BY

BERNARD POMERANCE

SERVING THEATRE

SF

SINCE 1830

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Elephant Man was suggested by the life of John Merrick, known as The Elephant Man. It is recounted by Sir Frederick Treves in *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences,* Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1923. This account is reprinted in *The Elephant Man, A Study in Human Dignity,* by Ashley Montagu, Ballantine Books, 1973, to whom much credit is due for reviving contemporary interest in the story. My own knowledge of it came via my brother Michael, who told me the story, provided me with a copy of Treves' memoirs until I came on my own copy, and sent me the Montagu book. In Montagu's book are included photographs of Merrick as well as of Merrick's model of St. Phillip's Church. Merrick's bones are still at London Hospital.

I believe the building of the church model constitutes some kind of central metaphor, and the groping toward conditions where it can be built and the building of it are the action of the play. It does not, and should not, however, dominate the play visually, as I originally believed.

Merrick's face was so deformed he could not express any emotion at all. His speech was very difficult to understand without practice. Any attempt to reproduce his appearance and his speech naturalistically—*if* it were possible—would seem to me not only counterproductive, but, the more remarkably successful, the more distracting from the play. For how he appeared, let slide projections suffice.

If the pinheaded women are two actresses, then the play, in a pinch, can be performed with seven players, five men, two women.

No one with any history of back trouble should attempt the part of **MERRICK** *as contorted. Anyone playing the part of* **MERRICK** *should be advised to consult a physician about the problems of sustaining any unnatural or twisted position – Bernard Pomerance.*

The London production of *The Elephant Man* opened at the Hampstead Theatre, co-produced by the Hampstead Theatre and the Foco Novo Company, with the following cast:

CELLIST	Pat Arrowsmith
FREDERICK TREVES / BELGIAN POLICEMAN	David Allister
CARR GOMM	William Hoyland
CONDUCTOR / ROSS / BISHOP WALSHAM HOW	Arthur Blake
SNORK	
JOHN MERRICK	David Schofield
PINHEAD / NURSE SANDWICH /	Judy Bridgland
PRINCESS ALEXANDRA / DUCHESS / JELLY WILLOW	
PINHEAD / MRS. KENDAL / COUNTESS	Jennie Stoller
PINHEAD MANAGER / ENGLISH POLICEMAN	Ken Drury
PORTER / LORD JOHN / WILLOW	

This production was directed by Roland Rees; set and costumes by Tanya McCallin; costumes made and supervised by Lindy Hemming; lighting by Alan O'Toole; stage management by Clive Thacker, Neil Barnett, and Diana Goodman.

The Elephant Man was produced on Broadway at The Booth Theatre, on April 22, 1979, with the following cast:

FREDERICK TREVES	Kevin Conway
BELGIAN POLICEMAN / CARR GOMM	Richard Clarke
CONDUCTOR/ ROSS	I. M. Hobson
BISHOP WALSHAM HOW / SNORK	
JOHN MERRICK	Philip Anglim
PINHEAD MANAGER/ LONDON POLICEMAN	John Neville-Andrews
WILL / EARL LORD JOHN	
PINHEAD / MISS SANDWICH / COUNTESS	Cordis Heard
PRINCESS ALEXANDRA	
MRS. KENDAL / PINHEAD	Carole Shelley
ORDERLY	Dennis Creaghan
CELLIST	David Heiss

This production was directed by Jack Hofsiss; set by David Jenkins; costumes by Julie Weiss; lighting by Beverly Emmons; produced by Richmond Crinkley, Elizabeth I. McCann, and Nelle Nugent; Ray Larsen and Ted Snowden, associate producers.

The Elephant Man was produced on Broadway at The Booth Theatre, on December 7th, 2014, with the following cast:

JOHN MERRICK	Bradley Cooper
MRS. KENDALL	Patricia Clarkson
FREDERICK TREVES	Alessandro Nivola
ROSS/BISHOP WALSHAM HOW	Anthony Heald
SNORK / PINHEAD MANAGER / LORD JOHN	Scott Lowell
MISS SANDWICH / PRINCESS	Kathryn Meisle
CARR GOMM / CONDUCTOR	Henry Stram
JOHN MERRICK STANDBY	Lucas Calhoun
WILL / ORDERLY /PINHEAD /TRAIN STATION MAN	Chris Bannow
ORDERLY / BELGIAN POLICEMAN / DUKE	Peter Bradbury
ORDERLY / ENGLISH POLICEMAN	Eric Clem
NURSE / PINHEAD / COUNTESS	Amanda Lea Mason
DUCHESS / NURSE	Marguerite Stimpson
NURSE	Emma Thorne

Creative Team

DIRECTOR	Scott Ellis
SET AND PROJECTION DESIGNER	Timothy R. Mackabee
COSTUME DESIGNER	Clint Ramos
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Philip Rosenberg
ORIGINAL MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGNER	John Gromada

The London production of *The Elephant Man* opened at the Theatre Royal Haymarket on May 19th, 2015, with the following cast:

JOHN MERRICK	Bradley Cooper
MRS. KENDALL	Patricia Clarkson
FREDERICK TREVES	Alessandro Nivola
ROSS/BISHOP WALSHAM HOW	Anthony Heald
SNORK / PINHEAD MANAGER / LORD JOHN	Scott Lowell
MISS SANDWICH / PRINCESS	Kathryn Meisle
CARR GOMM / CONDUCTOR	Henry Stram
JOHN MERRICK STANDBY	Lucas Calhoun
WILL / ORDERLY /PINHEAD /TRAIN STATION MAN	Chris Bannow
ORDERLY / BELGIAN POLICEMAN / DUKE	Peter Bradbury
ORDERLY / ENGLISH POLICEMAN	Eric Clem
NURSE / PINHEAD / COUNTESS	Amanda Lea Mason
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LIGHTING DESIGNER	Philip Rosenberg
ORIGINAL MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGNER	John Gromada

CHARACTERS

FREDERICK TREVES, *a surgeon and teacher*
CARR GOMM, *administrator of the London Hospital*
ROSS, *Manager of the Elephant Man*
JOHN MERRICK, *the Elephant Man*
THREE PINHEADS, *three women freaks whose heads are pointed*
BELGIAN POLICEMEN
LONDON POLICEMAN
MAN, *at a fairground in Brussels*
CONDUCTOR, *of Ostend-London boat train*
BISHOP WALSHAM HOW
PORTER, *at the London Hospital*
SNORK, *also a porter*
MRS. KENDAL, *an actress*
DUCHESS
COUNTESS
PRINCESS ALEXANDRA
LORD JOHN
NURSE, **MISS SANDWICH**

1884–1890. London. One scene is in Belgium.

Scene One

He will have 100 guinea fees before he's forty

The London Hospital, Whitechapel Rd. Enter **GOMM**, *enter* **TREVES.**

TREVES Mr. Carr Gomm? Frederick Treves. Your new lecturer in anatomy.

GOMM Age thirty-one. Books on Scrofula and Applied Surgical Anatomy—I'm happy to see you rising, Mr. Treves. I like to see merit credited, and your industry, accomplishment, and skill all do you credit. Ignore the squalor of Whitechapel, the general dinginess, neglect and poverty without, and you will find a continual medical richesse in the London Hospital. We study and treat the widest range of diseases and disorders, and are certainly the greatest institution of our kind in the world. The Empire provides unparalleled opportunities for our studies, as places cruel to life are the most revealing scientifically. Add to our reputation by going further, and that'll satisfy. You've bought a house?

TREVES On Wimpole Street.

GOMM Good. Keep at it, Treves. You'll have an FRS and 100 guinea fees before you're forty. You'll find it is an excellent consolation prize.

TREVES Consolation? I don't know what you mean.

GOMM I know you don't. You will. *(exits)*

TREVES A happy childhood in Dorset. A scientist in an age of science.

In an English age, an Englishman. A teacher and a doctor at the London. Two books published by my thirty-first year. A house. A wife who loves me, and my god, 100 guinea fees before I'm forty.

Consolation for what?

As of the year AD 1884, I, Freddie Treves, have excessive blessings. Or so it seems to me.

Blackout.

Scene Two

Art is as nothing to nature

Whitechapel Rd. A storefront. A large advertisement of a creature with an elephant's head. **ROSS**, *his manager.*

ROSS Tuppence only, step in and see: This side of the grave, John Merrick has no hope nor expectation of relief. In every sense his situation is desperate. His physical agony is exceeded only by his mental anguish, a despised creature without consolation. Tuppence only, step in and see! To live with his physical hideousness, incapacitating deformities and unremitting pain is trial enough, but to be exposed to the cruelly lacerating expressions of horror and disgust by all who behold him—is even more difficult to bear. Tuppence only, step in and see! For in order to survive, Merrick forces himself to suffer these humiliations, I repeat, humiliations, in order to survive, thus he exposes himself to crowds who pay to gape and yawp at this freak of nature, the Elephant Man.

Enter **TREVES** *who looks at the advertisement.*

ROSS See Mother Nature uncorseted and in malignant rage! Tuppence.

TREVES This sign's absurd. Half-elephant, half-man is not possible. Is he foreign?

ROSS Right, from Leicester. But nothing to fear.

TREVES I'm at the London across the road. I would be curious to see him if there is some genuine disorder. If he is a mass of papier-maché and paint however—

ROSS Then pay me nothing. Enter, sir. Merrick, stand up. Ya bloody donkey, up, up.

They go in, then emerge. **TREVES** *pays.*

TREVES I must examine him further at the hospital. Here is my card. I'm Treves. I will have a cab pick him up and return him. My card will gain him admittance.

ROSS Five bob he's yours for the day.

TREVES I wish to examine him in the interests of science, you see.

ROSS Sir, I'm Ross. I look out for him, get him his living. Found him in Leicester workhouse. His own ma put him there age of three. Couldn't bear the sight, well you can see why. We—he and I—are in business. He is our capital, see. Go to a bank. Go anywhere. Want to borrow capital, you pay interest. Scientists even. He's good value though. You won't find another like him.

TREVES Fair enough. *(he pays)*

ROSS Right. Out here, Merrick. Ya bloody donkey, out!

Lights fade out.

Scene Three

Who has seen the like of this?

TREVES *lectures.* **MERRICK** *contorts himself to approximate projected slides of the real Merrick.*

TREVES The most striking feature about him was his enormous head. Its circumference was about that of a man's waist. From the brow there projected a huge bony mass like a loaf, while from the back of his head hung a bag of spongy fungous-looking skin, the surface of which was comparable to brown cauliflower. On the top of the skull were a few long lank hairs. The osseous growth on the forehead, at this stage about the size of a tangerine, almost occluded one eye. From the upper jaw there projected another mass of bone. It protruded from the mouth like a pink stump, turning the upper lip inside out, and making the mouth a wide slobbering aperture. The nose was merely a lump of flesh, only recognizable as a nose from its position. The deformities rendered the face utterly incapable of the expression of any emotion whatsoever. The back was horrible because from it hung, as far down as the middle of the thigh, huge sacklike masses of flesh covered by the same loathsome cauliflower stain. The right arm was of enormous size and shapeless. It suggested but was not elephantiasis, and was overgrown also with pendant masses of the same cauliflower-like skin. The right hand was large and clumsy—a fin or paddle rather than a hand. No distinction existed between the palm and back, the thumb was like a radish, the fingers like thick tuberous roots. As a limb it was useless. The other arm was remarkable by contrast.

It was not only normal, but was moreover a delicately shaped limb covered with a fine skin and provided with a beautiful hand which any woman might have envied.

From the chest hung a bag of the same repulsive flesh. It was like a dewlap suspended from the neck of a lizard. The lower limbs had the characters of the deformed arm. They were unwieldy, dropsical-looking, and grossly misshapen. There arose from the fungous skin growths a very sickening stench which was hard to tolerate. To add a further burden to his trouble, the wretched man when a boy developed hip disease, which left him permanently lame, so that he could only walk with a stick. *(to* **MERRICK***)* Please. *(***MERRICK** *walks)* He was thus denied all means of escape from his tormentors.

VOICE Mr. Treves, you have shown a profound and unknown disorder to us. You have said when he leaves here it is for his exhibition again. I do not think it ought to be permitted. It is a disgrace. It is a pity and a disgrace. It is an indecency in fact. It may be a danger in ways we do not know. Something ought to be done about it.

TREVES I am a doctor. What would you have me do?

VOICE Well. I know what to do. *I* know.

Silence. A policeman enters as lights fade out.

Scene Four

This indecency may not continue

Music. A fair. **PINHEADS** *huddling together, holding a portrait of Leopold, King of the Congo. Enter* **MAN.**

MAN Now my pinheaded darlings, your attention please. Every freak in Brussels Fair is doing something to celebrate Leopold's fifth year as King of the Congo. Him. Our King. Our Empire. *(they begin reciting)* No, don't recite yet, you morons. I'll say when. And when you do, get it *right*. You don't, it's back to the asylum. Know what that means, don't you? They'll cut your heads. They'll spoon out your little brains, replace 'em in the dachshund they were nicked from. *Cut you.* Yeah. Be back with customers. Come see the Queens of the Congo! *(exits)*

Enter **MERRICK, ROSS**.

MERRICK Cosmos? Cosmos?

ROSS Congo. Land of darkness. Hoho! *(see* **PINS***)* Look at them, lad. It's freer on the continent. Loads of indecency here, no one minds. You won't get coppers sent round to roust you out like London. Reckon in Brussels here's our fortune. You have a little tête-à-tête with this lot while I see the coppers about our license to exhibit. Be right back. *(exits)*

MERRICK I come from England.

PINS Allo!

MERRICK At home they chased us. Out of London. Police. Someone complained. They beat me. You have no trouble? No?

PINS Allo! Allo!

MERRICK Hello. In Belgium we make money. I look forward to it. Happiness, I mean. You pay your police? How is it done?

PINS Allo! Allo!

MERRICK We do a show together sometime? Yes? I have saved forty-eight pounds. Two shillings. Nine pence. English money. Ross takes care of it.

PINS Allo! Allo!

MERRICK Little vocabulary problem, eh? Poor things. Looks like they put your noses to the grindstone and forgot to take them away.

MAN *enters.*

MAN They're coming. *(people enter to see the girls' act)* Now.

PINS *(dancing and singing)*
WE ARE THE QUEENS OF THE CONGO,
THE BEAUTIFUL BELGIAN EMPIRE
OUR NIGGERS ARE BIGGER
OUR MINERS ARE FINER
EMPIRE, EMPIRE, CONGO AND POWER
CIVILIZUZU'S FINEST HOUR
ADMIRE, PERSPIRE, DESIRE, ACQUIRE
OR WE'LL SET YOU ON FIRE!

MAN You cretins! Sorry, they're not ready yet. Out please. *(people exit)* Get those words right, girls! Or you know what. *(***MAN** *exits.* **PINS** *weep)*

MERRICK Don't cry. You sang nicely. Don't cry. There there.

Enter **ROSS** *in grip of two* **POLICEMEN.**

ROSS I was promised a permit. I lined a tour up on that!

POLICEMEN This is a brutal, indecent, and immoral display. It is a public indecency, and it is forbidden here.

ROSS What about them with their perfect cone heads?

POLICEMEN They are ours.

ROSS Competition's good for business. Where's your spirit of competition?

POLICEMEN Right here. *(smacks* **MERRICK***)*

ROSS Don't do that, you'll kill him!

POLICEMEN Be better off dead. Indecent bastard.

MERRICK Don't cry girls. Doesn't hurt.

PINS Indecent, indecent, indecent, indecent!!

POLICEMEN *escort* **MERRICK** *and* **ROSS** *out, i.e., forward. Blackout except spot on* **MERRICK** *and* **ROSS**.

MERRICK Ostend will always mean bad memories. Won't it, Ross?

ROSS I've decided. I'm sending you back, lad. You're a flop. No, you're a liability. You ain't the moneymaker I figured, so that's it.

MERRICK Alone?

ROSS Here's a few bob, have a nosh. I'm keeping the rest. For my trouble. I deserve it, I reckon. Invested enough with you. Pick up your stink if I stick around. Stink of failure. Stink of lost years. Just stink, stink, stink, stink, stink.

Enter **CONDUCTOR**.

CONDUCTOR This the one?

ROSS Just see him to Liverpool St. Station safe, will you? Here's for your trouble.

MERRICK Robbed.

CONDUCTOR What's he say?

ROSS Just makes sounds. Fella's an imbecile.

MERRICK Robbed.

ROSS Bon voyage, Johnny. His name is Johnny. He knows his name, that's all, though.

CONDUCTOR Don't follow him, Johnny. Johnny, come on boat now. Conductor find Johnny place out of sight. Johnny! Johnny! Don't struggle, Johnny. Johnny come on.

MERRICK Robbed! Robbed!

Fadeout on struggle.

Scene Five

Police side with imbecile against the crowd

Darkness. Uproar, shouts.

VOICE Liverpool St. Station!

Enter **MERRICK, CONDUCTOR, POLICEMAN.**

POLICEMAN We're safe in here. I barred the door.

CONDUCTOR They wanted to rip him to pieces. I've never seen anything like it. It was like being Gordon at bleedin' Khartoum.

POLICEMAN Got somewhere to go in London, lad? Can't stay here.

CONDUCTOR He's an imbecile. He don't understand. Search him.

POLICEMAN Got any money?

MERRICK Robbed.

POLICEMAN What's that?

CONDUCTOR He just makes sounds. Frightened sounds is all he makes. Go through his coat.

MERRICK Je-sus.

POLICEMAN Don't let me go through your coat, I'll turn you over to that lot! Oh, I was joking, don't upset yourself.

MERRICK Joke? Joke?

POLICEMAN Sure, croak, croak, croak, croak.

MERRICK Je-sus.

POLICEMAN Got a card here. You Johnny Merrick? What's this old card here, Johnny? Someone give you a card?

CONDUCTOR What's it say?

POLICEMAN Says Mr. Frederick Treves, Lecturer in Anatomy, the London Hospital.

CONDUCTOR I'll go see if I can find him, it's not far. *(exits)*

POLICEMAN What's he do, lecture you on your anatomy? People who think right don't look like that then, do they? Yeah, glung glung, glung, glung.

MERRICK Jesus. Jesus.

POLICEMAN Sure, Treves, Treves, Treves, Treves.

Blackout, then lights go up as **CONDUCTOR** *leads* **TREVES** *in.*

TREVES What is going on here? Look at that mob, have you no sense of decency. I am Frederick Treves. This is my card.

POLICEMAN This poor wretch here had it. Arrived from Ostend.

TREVES Good Lord, Merrick? John Merrick? What has happened to you?

MERRICK Help me!

Fadeout.

Scene Six

Even on the niger and ceylon, not this

The London Hospital. **MERRICK** *in a bathtub.* **TREVES** *outside. Enter* **MISS SANDWICH**.

TREVES You are? Miss Sandwich?

SANDWICH Sandwich. Yes.

TREVES You have had experience in missionary hospitals in the Niger.

SANDWICH And Ceylon.

TREVES I may assume you've seen—

SANDWICH The tropics. Oh those diseases. The many and the awful scourges our lord sends, yes, sir.

TREVES I need the help of an experienced nurse, you see.

SANDWICH Someone to bring him food, take care of the room. Yes, I understand. But it is somehow difficult.

TREVES Well, I have been let down so far. He really is—that is, the regular sisters—well, it is not part of their job and they will not do it. Be ordinarily kind to Mr. Merrick. Without—well—panicking. He is quite beyond ugly. You understand that? His appearance has terrified them.

SANDWICH The photographs show a terrible disease.

TREVES It is a disorder, not a disease; it is in no way contagious though we don't in fact know what it is. I have found however that there is a deep superstition in those I've tried, they actually believe he somehow brought it on himself, this thing, and of course it is not that at all.

SANDWICH I am not one who believes it is ourselves who attain grace or bring chastisement to us, sir.

TREVES Miss Sandwich, I am hoping not.

SANDWICH Let me put your mind to rest. Care for lepers in the East, and you have cared, Mr. Treves. In Africa, I have seen dreadful scourges quite unknown to our more civilized climes. What at home could be worse than a miserable and afflicted rotting black?

TREVES I imagine.

SANDWICH Appearances do not daunt me.

TREVES It is really that that has sent me outside the confines of the London seeking help.

SANDWICH "I look unto the hills whence cometh my help." I understand: I think I will be satisfactory.

Enter **PORTER** *with a tray.*

PORTER His lunch. *(exits)*

TREVES Perhaps you would be so kind as to accompany me this time. I will introduce you.

SANDWICH Allow me to carry the tray.

TREVES I will this time. You are ready.

SANDWICH I am.

TREVES He is bathing to be rid of his odour. *(they enter to* **MERRICK***)* John, this is Miss Sandwich. She—

SANDWICH I— *(unable to control hereself)* Oh my good God in heaven. *(bolts room)*

TREVES *(puts* **MERRICK***'s lunch down)* I am sorry. I thought—

MERRICK Thank you for saving the lunch this time.

TREVES Excuse me. *(exits to* **MISS SANDWICH***)* You have let me down, you know. I did everything to warn you and still you let me down.

SANDWICH You didn't say.

TREVES But I—

SANDWICH Didn't! You said—just words!

TREVES But the photographs.

SANDWICH Just pictures. No one will do this. I am sorry.
(exits)

TREVES Yes. Well. This is not helping him.

Fadeout.

Scene Seven

The English public will pay for him to be like us

The London Hospital. **MERRICK** *in a bathtub reading.* **TREVES**, **BISHOP HOW** *in foreground.*

BISHOP With what fortitude he bears his cross! It is remarkable. He has made the acquaintance of religion and knows sections of the Bible by heart. Once I'd grasped his speech, it became clear he'd certainly had religious instruction at one time.

TREVES I believe it was in the workhouse, Dr. How.

BISHOP They are awfully good about that sometimes. The psalms he loves, and the book of Job perplexes him, he says, for he cannot see that a just God must cause suffering, as he puts it, merely then to be merciful. Yet that Christ will save him he does not doubt, so he is not resentful.

Enter **GOMM**.

GOMM Christ had better; be dammed if we can.

BISHOP Ahem. In any case Dr. Treves, he has a religious nature, further instruction would uplift him and I'd be pleased to provide it. I plan to speak of him from the pulpit this week.

GOMM I see our visiting bather has flushed the busy Bishop How from his cruciform lair.

BISHOP Speak with Merrick, sir. I have spoken to him of Mercy and Justice. There's a true Christian in the rough.

GOMM This makes my news seem banal, yet yes: Frederick, the response to my letter to the *Times* about Merrick has been staggering. The English public has been

so generous that Merrick may be supported for life without a penny spent from Hospital funds.

TREVES But that is excellent.

BISHOP God bless the English public.

GOMM Especially for not dismembering him at Liverpool St. Station. Freddie, the London's no home for incurables, this is quite irregular, but for you I permit it—though god knows what you'll do,

BISHOP God does know, sir, and Darwin does not.

GOMM He'd better, sir; he deformed him.

BISHOP I had apprehensions coming here. I find it most fortunate Merrick is in the hands of Dr. Treves, a Christian, sir.

GOMM Freddie is a good man and a brilliant doctor, and that is fortunate indeed,

TREVES I couldn't have raised the funds though, Doctor.

BISHOP Don't let me keep you longer from your duties, Mr. Treves. Yet, Mr. Gomm, consider: is it science, sir, that motivates us when we transport English rule of law to India or Ireland? When good British churchmen leave hearth and home for missionary hardship in Africa, is it science that bears them away? Sir it is not. It is Christian duty. It is the obligation to bring our light and benefices to benighted man. That motivates us, even as it motivates Treves toward Merrick, sir, to bring salvation where none is. Gordon was a Christian, sir, and died at Khartoum for it. Not for science, sir.

GOMM You're telling me, not for science.

BISHOP Mr. Treves, I'll visit Merrick weekly if I may.

TREVES You will be welcome, sir, I am certain.

BISHOP Then good day, sirs. *(exits)*

GOMM Well, Jesus my boy, now we have the money, what do you plan for Merrick?

TREVES Normality as far as is possible.

GOMM So he will be like us? Ah. *(smiles)*

TREVES Is something wrong, Mr. Gomm? With us?

Fadeout.

Scene Eight

Mercy and justice elude our minds and actions

MERRICK *in the bath.* **TREVES, GOMM.**

MERRICK How long is as long as I like?

TREVES You may stay for life. The funds exist.

MERRICK Been reading this. About homes for the blind. Wouldn't mind going to one when I have to move.

TREVES But you do not have to move; and you're not blind.

MERRICK I would prefer it where no one stared at me.

GOMM No one will bother you here.

TREVES Certainly not. I've given instructions.

PORTER *and* **SNORK** *peek in.*

PORTER What'd I tell you?

SNORK Gawd almighty. Oh. Mr. Treves. Mr. Gomm.

TREVES You were told not to do this. I don't understand. You must not lurk about. Surely you have work.

PORTER Yes, sir.

TREVES Well, it is infuriating. When you are told a thing, you must listen. I won't have you gaping in on my patients. Kindly remember that.

PORTER Isn't a patient, sir, is he?

TREVES Do not let me find you here again.

PORTER Didn't know you were here, sir. We'll be off now.

GOMM No, no, Will. Mr. Treves was precisely saying no one would intrude when you intruded.

TREVES He is warned now. Merrick does not like it.

GOMM He was warned before. On what penalty, Will?

PORTER That you'd sack me, sir.

GOMM You are sacked, Will. You, his friend, you work here?

SNORK Just started last week, sir.

GOMM Well, I hope the point is taken now.

PORTER Mr. Gomm—I ain't truly sacked, am I?

GOMM Will, yes. Truly sacked. You will never be more truly sacked.

PORTER It's not me. My wife ain't well. My sister has got to take care of our kids, and of her. Well.

GOMM Think of them first next time.

PORTER It ain't as if I interfered with his medicine.

GOMM That is exactly what it is. You may go.

PORTER Just keeping him to look at in private. That's all. Isn't it?

SNORK *and* **PORTER** *exit.*

GOMM There are priorities, Frederick. The first is discipline. Smooth is the passage to the tight ship's master. Merrick, you are safe from prying now.

TREVES Have we nothing to say, John?

MERRICK If all that'd stared at me'd been sacked— there'd be whole towns out of work.

TREVES I meant, "Thank you, sir."

MERRICK "Thank you sir."

TREVES We always do say please and thank you, don't we?

MERRICK Yes, sir. Thank you.

TREVES If we want to properly be like others.

MERRICK Yes, sir, I want to.

TREVES Then it is for our own good, is it not?

MERRICK Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Gomm.

GOMM Sir, you are welcome. *(exits)*

TREVES You are happy here, are you not, John?

MERRICK Yes.

TREVES The baths have rid you of the odour, have they not?

MERRICK First chance I had to bathe regular.

TREVES And three meals a day delivered to your room?

MERRICK Yes, sir.

TREVES This is your Promised Land is it not? A roof. Food. Protection. Care. Is it not?

MERRICK Right, Mr. Treves.

TREVES I will bet you don't know what to call this.

MERRICK No, sir, I don't know.

TREVES You call it, Home.

MERRICK Never had a home before.

TREVES You have one now. Say it, John: Home.

MERRICK Home.

TREVES No, no, really say it. I have a home. This is my. Go on.

MERRICK I have a home. This is my home. This is my home. I have a home. As long as I like?

TREVES That is what home is.

MERRICK That is what is home.

TREVES If I abide by the rules, I will be happy.

MERRICK Yes, sir.

TREVES Don't be shy.

MERRICK If I abide by the rules I will be happy.

TREVES Very good. Why?

MERRICK Why what?

TREVES Will you be happy?

MERRICK Because it is my home?

TREVES No, no. Why do rules make you happy?

MERRICK I don't know.

TREVES Of course you do.

MERRICK No, I really don't.

TREVES Why does anything make you happy?

MERRICK Like what? Like what?

TREVES Don't be upset. Rules make us happy because they are for our own good.

MERRICK Okay.

TREVES Don't be shy, John. You can say it.

MERRICK This is my home?

TREVES No. About rules making us happy.

MERRICK They make us happy because they are for our own good.

TREVES Excellent. Now: I am submitting a follow-up paper on you to the London Pathological Society. It would help if you told me what you recall about your first years, John. To fill in gaps.

MERRICK To fill in gaps. The workhouse where they put me. They beat you there like a drum. Boom boom: scrape the floor white. Shine the pan, boom boom. It never ends. The floor is always dirty. The pan is always

tarnished. There is nothing you can do about it. You are always attacked anyway. Boom boom. Boom boom. Boom boom. Will the children go to the workhouse?

TREVES What children?

MERRICK The children. The man he sacked.

TREVES Of necessity, Will will find other employment. You don't want crowds staring at you, do you?

MERRICK No.

TREVES In your own home you do not have to have crowds staring at you. Or anyone. Do you? In your home?

MERRICK No.

TREVES Then Mr. Gomm was merciful. You yourself are proof. Is it not so? *(pause)* Well? Is it not so?

MERRICK If your mercy is so cruel, what do you have for justice?

TREVES I am sorry. It is just the way things are.

MERRICK Boom boom. Boom boom. Boom boom.

Fadeout.

Scene Nine

Most important are women

MERRICK *asleep, head on knees.* **TREVES, MRS. KENDAL** *foreground.*

TREVES You have seen photographs of John Merrick, Mrs. Kendal. You are acquainted with his appearance.

MRS. KENDAL He reminds me of an audience I played Cleopatra for in Brighton once. All huge grim head and grimace and utterly unable to clap.

TREVES Well. My aim's to lead him to as normal a life as possible. His terror of us all comes from having been held at arm's length from society. I am determined that shall end. For example, he loves to meet people and converse. I am determined he shall. For example, he had never seen the inside of any normal home before. I had him to mine, and what a reward, Mrs. Kendal; his astonishment, his joy at the most ordinary things. Most critical I feel, however, are women. I will explain. They have always shown the greatest fear and loathing of him. While he adores them of course.

MRS. KENDAL Ah. He is intelligent.

TREVES I am convinced they are the key to retrieving him from his exclusion. Though, I must warn you, women are not quite real to him—more creatures of his imagination.

MRS. KENDAL Then he is already like other men, Mr. Treves.

TREVES So I thought, an actress could help. I mean, unlike most women, you won't give in, you are trained to hide your true feelings and assume others.

MRS. KENDAL You mean unlike most women I am famous for it, that is really all.

TREVES Well. In any case. If you could enter the room and smile and wish him good morning. And when you leave, shake his hand, the left one is usable, and really quite beautiful, and say, "I am very pleased to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Merrick."

MRS. KENDAL Shall we try it? Left hand out please. *(suddenly radiant)* I am *very* pleased to have made your acquaintance Mr. Merrick. I am very *pleased* to have made your acquaintance Mr. Merrick. I am very pleased to have made your *acquaintance* Mr. Merrick. I *am* very pleased to have made *your* acquaintance Mr. Merrick. Yes. That one.

TREVES By god, they are all splendid. Merrick will be so pleased. It will be the day he becomes a man like other men.

MRS. KENDAL Speaking of that, Mr. Treves.

TREVES Frederick, please.

MRS. KENDAL Freddie, may I commit an indiscretion?

TREVES Yes?

MRS. KENDAL I could not but help noticing from the photographs that—well—of the unafflicted parts—ah, how shall I put it? *(points to photograph)*

TREVES Oh. I see! I quite. Understand. No, no, no, it is quite normal.

MRS. KENDAL I thought as much.

TREVES Medically speaking, uhm, you see the papillomatous extrusions which disfigure him, uhm, seem to correspond quite regularly to the osseous deformities, that is, excuse me, there is a link between the bone disorder and the skin growths, though for the life of me I have not discovered what it is or why it is, but in any case this—part—it would be therefore unlikely to be afflicted because well, that is, well, there's no bone in it. None at all. I mean.

MRS. KENDAL Well. Learn a little every day don't we?

TREVES I am horribly embarrassed.

MRS. KENDAL Are you? Then he must be lonely indeed.

Fadeout.

Scene Ten

When the illusion ends he must kill himself

MERRICK *sketching. Enter* **TREVES, MRS. KENDAL.**

TREVES He is making sketches for a model of St. Phillip's church. He wants someday to make a model, you see. John, my boy, this is Mrs. Kendal. She would very much like to make your acquaintance.

MRS. KENDAL Good morning Mr. Merrick.

TREVES I will see to a few matters. I will be back soon. *(exits)*

MERRICK I planned so many things to say. I forget them. You are so beautiful.

MRS. KENDAL How charming, Mr. Merrick.

MERRICK Well. Really that was what I planned to say. That I forgot what I planned to say. I couldn't think of anything else I was so excited.

MRS. KENDAL Real charm is always planned, don't you think?

MERRICK Well. I do not know why I look like this, Mrs. Kendal. My mother was so beautiful. She was knocked down by an elephant in a circus while she was pregnant. Something must have happened, don't you think?

MRS. KENDAL It may well have.

MERRICK It may well have. But sometimes I think my head is so big because it is so full of dreams. Because it is. Do you know what happens when dreams cannot get out?

MRS. KENDAL Why no.

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