

The Elephant Man

A new version by **Mark Jowett**

Cast

Sc.	Male Actor A	Female Actor	Male Actor B
1	Various characters in Fairground Scene	Various characters in Fairground Scene	Various characters in Fairground Scene
2	Treves <i>Frederick Treves, eminent surgeon and lecturer, aged 31 in 1884</i>	Merrick <i>Joseph Merrick - The Elephant Man aged 22 in 1884 (covered in scene, no dialogue)</i>	Norman <i>Tom Norman – a showman in his mid to late 40s</i>
3	Treves	Matron <i>A formidable but good-hearted woman in her 50s</i>	Merrick <i>(covered in scene, no dialogue)</i>
4	Treves	Assistant Scientist 2	Merrick <i>(Only seen in silhouette behind screen)</i> Scientist 1
5	Treves	Matron <i>(voice backstage only)</i>	Norman
6	Announcer Porter Young Man Treves	Passenger Boy Policeman	Merrick <i>(covered at first but then seen fully for the first time)</i>
7	Treves	Matron Miss Howell	Merrick
8	Treves	Nurse Vickers	Merrick
9	Nightmare Voice 1 Treves	Nightmare Voice 2 Matron Mrs Maturin	Merrick
10	Treves	Mrs Maturin	Merrick
11	Lowlife Treves	Nurse Vickers	Merrick
12	Treves	Matron	Merrick

13	Treves	Matron	Merrick
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Scene 1 (Fairground in the Midlands - Aug 1884)

Opening film of Victorian England, moving onto a scene of live fairground attractions. Lots of sounds – crowds of excited people, screams, laughter, music from barrel organs. Two PERFORMERS wheel on a curtain rail with curtains pulled shut. A SHOWMAN (1) arrives to attract the punters.

SHOWMAN 1

Roll up Roll up! Ladies and Gentlemen... I give you the most amazing woman you have ever seen! We brought her all the way from a remote island in Greece for you to experience this fine evening! I give you... Barbina, the Amazing Bearded Lady!

The Amazing BEARDED LADY peeps out from between the curtains and waves. SHOWMAN 1 gestures to the audience to applaud. The BEARDED LADY, gives a nodding bow a couple of times and withdraws behind the curtains. Another SHOWMAN (2) has entered and is unimpressed.

SHOWMAN 2

That's nothing, Ladies and Gentlemen... Don't waste your money on her! Over here I can show you something far more fascinating, more exciting! Indeed electric! I give you – none other than – Mademoiselle Electra – a woman born with electricity inside her! The only electric lady on earth! Now don't go too close – or you'll get a nasty shock!

We see the ELECTRIC LADY. She is drinking from a gin bottle. When she sees the audience she quickly puts the bottle down, wipes her mouth and adopts an austere pose. A CUSTOMER gets too near and gets a nasty shock.

CUSTOMER

Ow! That hurt!

SHOWMAN 2

I did warn you, sir! Roll up, roll up Ladies and Gentlemen – only a penny to see the Electric Lady! Roll up! Roll up!

SHOWMAN 3 enters and drags the curtain in front of SHOWMAN 2 and his ELECTRIC LADY.

SHOWMAN 2

Hey! Who did that?

SHOWMAN 3

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen! Prepare not for a single spectacle! No: I give you a double spectacle! Only a penny each to see the World's Shortest Man!

SHORTEST MAN pokes head out of curtains very low down.

SHOWMAN 3

And... The World's Tallest Woman!

TALLEST WOMAN stands on a chair behind curtains so we see her head peeping over the top. She waves. SHOWMAN 3 encourages audience to applaud.

SHOWMAN 3

Thank you! Thank you! Never seen anything like it, have you! And that's not all, Ladies and Gentlemen. Believe it or not, at this very same fair, I present to you, the World's Shortest Woman and the world's Tallest Man!!

Behind the curtain they swap and briefly we see the SHORTEST WOMAN peep through the curtain low down and the TALLEST MAN peep over the curtain before he looks alarmed and disappears. There is a clatter behind the curtain. The SHORTEST WOMAN shrieks and disappears from view. SHOWMAN 3 looks alarmed.

SHOWMAN 3

And... That's all for tonight! Good night!

SHOWMAN 3 runs behind the curtains. SHOWMAN 1 springs out to address the audience.

SHOWMAN 1

Lay – deez and Gentlemen! And now, from the wilds of Africa I bring you an amazing giant beast. The only one of its kind at this fair... Baba the Elephant! (*nothing*) Baba... come out now... the audience is waiting. He's a bit shy, you see... Come on Baba! Show yourself!

We see just the trunk pushing through the curtains for a moment and then it disappears.

SHOWMAN 1

There you go, Ladies and Gentlemen. A stunning sight, wasn't it?

SHOWMAN 1 makes a hasty exit, to be replaced by SHOWMAN 2.

SHOWMAN 2

Roll up, roll up everyone! This way! Come this way for the magnificent Signor Arcana, gifted with second sight! That's right, Ladies and Gentlemen, he can read your minds! He knows what you're thinking! He knows what you're going to do next! Only a penny to see Signor Arcana!

SIGNOR ARCANA is revealed, wearing elaborate headgear. He gets up and approaches the front of the stage.

ARCANA

Good evening.

SHOWMAN 2

Good evening, Signor Arcana. Tell me, what colour am I thinking of... right now!

ARCANA

Blue!

SHOWMAN 2

That's right! And now what vegetable am I thinking of?

ARCANA

A... carrot!

SHOWMAN 2

Right again! Isn't that amazing, Ladies and Gentlemen?

SHOWMAN 2 encourages the audience to applaud.

ARCANA

And now, may I have a volunteer? Yes, you young lady. What is your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Sophie.

ARCANA

Exactly! That's right! It is Sophie! I knew it! Wait a minute... there's more... I can feel it... yes... You are not from these parts... You... come from a foreign country... from... the North of France! Am I right?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yes!

ARCANA

Of course I'm right! I'm always right!

SHOWMAN 2

Well that's all we have time for today. But come back tomorrow for more amazing mind-reading from... Signor Arcana!!!

SHOWMAN 2 gestures for applause again. He and ARCANA bow grandly and exit. Another showman, TOM NORMAN enters. He is very imposing.

NORMAN

Come this way, Ladies and Gentlemen, Come this way! I guarantee you won't be disappointed!

NORMAN beckons customers to enter through the gap in the curtains to the "tent" behind. He collects coins from them as they pass by.

NORMAN

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to introduce you to a man, the likes of which you have never seen before. That's it... come on through please. Hurry along please... But before I do so, I ask you all to prepare yourselves. Brace yourselves to witness the man who is probably the most remarkable human being ever to live! Now he does look quite alarming so prepare yourselves please! He does look frightening but no need to be afraid... Ladies and Gentlemen, I present, Mr Joseph Merrick... also known as... The Elephant Man!

Almost immediately we hear customers start to scream and shriek.

CUSTOMER

That's disgusting!

CUSTOMER 2

I feel ill. Help me someone...

CUSTOMERS run out through the gap in the curtains and flee in horror. NORMAN smiles and prepares himself for another viewing.

NORMAN

Come this way, Ladies and Gentlemen, Come this way! I guarantee you won't be disappointed!

Before he can say any more, a POLICEMAN arrives and interrupts him.

POLICEMAN

Move along now. We don't want your sort of attraction at the fair. Move along.

NORMAN

What are you talking about?

POLICEMAN

There have been complaints. Your exhibit has upset a lot of customers. Several have told me it has made them feel quite ill.

NORMAN

But this is the best act in the whole fair!

POLICEMAN

Never mind that now. Move along! And take your "exhibit" with you! *(Waving handcuffs)* Unless you want to spend the night in jail!

NORMAN

Very well, very well! We're going! We're going!

POLICEMAN

If you're not gone in five minutes... be warned!

NORMAN

Yes, Officer. You've made your point.

NORMAN watches as the POLICEMAN exits. He sighs and goes back inside the "tent". We hear his voice:

NORMAN

Come along, old fellow. Well, it seems we're on the move again.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

Scene 2 (A Shop in Whitechapel Road, Nov 1884)

Another film, showing the East End streets of Victorian London. LIGHTS FADE UP on the interior of an old, derelict shop used as a showplace by Tom Norman. TREVES, enters, a little tentatively, and looks around at the dusty surroundings. It is cold and damp inside. He coughs... and waits for a moment to see if anyone will come.

TREVES

Hello...?

He notices a small bell on a counter. After a moment's hesitation, he picks the bell up and gives it a shake. After a couple of seconds, he hears a grunt and a shuffling sound. NORMAN enters with a cane. He is an imposing presence.

NORMAN

We're closed.

TREVES

You are?

NORMAN

Yes.

TREVES

But your door is open.

NORMAN

Is it?

TREVES

Yes.

NORMAN

It shouldn't be. We're closed.

TREVES

Ah. It's just that I saw your sign.

NORMAN

Sign?

TREVES

The sign in your window. "The Elephant Man".

NORMAN

Ah... Yes... The Elephant Man. They all want to see him. He's... very special. *(Sudden change of mood)* We'll be displaying him again at the end of the week. Why don't you come then?

TREVES

Well, I was just passing by and I wondered... Is he here now?

NORMAN *(teasing)*

Who?

TREVES

The... Elephant Man... Is he here?

NORMAN (*smelling money*)
He might be... For a price.

TREVES
How much?

NORMAN
One shilling!

TREVES
One shilling? That's a lot! ... Very well...

TREVES searches in his pocket, and hands over a coin to NORMAN, who tests the weight of the coin in his hand, and is satisfied. NORMAN motions to TREVES.

NORMAN
Step this way, please... sir.

TREVES takes a couple of steps over towards a darker corner where there is a blanket over a huddled shape. NORMAN prods the blanket with his cane.

NORMAN
Up you get!

The blanket moves. TREVES is startled to see this.

NORMAN
Come on, stand up! We have a visitor!

Slowly, awkwardly, a figure under the blanket (MERRICK) moves. MERRICK gets up, his back to the audience. TREVES is upstage of the figure and can see what the audience cannot. TREVES takes a step back and stares at him in amazement.

NORMAN
Never seen anything like it before, have you, sir?

TREVES
No, I haven't. Is he English?

NORMAN
As far as I know, yes. English.

TREVES
How... old is he?

NORMAN
Don't know exactly... 21... 22?

TREVES
Is that all? He looks much older. Poor man.

NORMAN
Nothing poor about him. He's making a small fortune. Aren't you?

TREVES
Do you know how he came to be in this condition?

NORMAN
Ah. That's a sad story. When his mother was pregnant with him, there was a fair in town with several wild animals as attractions, see? Well, one of the elephants decided to escape and walk down the high street, where Mary, his mother, was walking. Suddenly, the elephant started to charge and poor Mary tripped and fell right in the path of the giant creature. Luckily for her, she was not trampled to death, but you can see what happened to the poor child as a result.

TREVES (*not believing a word of it*)

Ah, I see. A... terrible story. How long have you known him?

NORMAN

Oh, we've... known each other a few months now, haven't we?

NORMAN taps his stick on the ground. MERRICK grunts.

NORMAN

See?

TREVES takes a tentative step closer, but is overcome by the strong stench coming from the man. He lets out a gasp and steps back again.

NORMAN

Ah, the smell. It takes some getting used to.

TREVES

Yes, I imagine it does. Poor chap can't help it, I suppose... Do you... ever... hire him out?

NORMAN

Hire him out? What do you mean?

TREVES

What I mean to say is... I work just over the road there. At the medical college...

NORMAN

Yes... Had a few visitors come over from there, we have. Curious students and the like...

TREVES

Really? Well, I give lectures there on anatomy... and I would very much like the opportunity of doing a full medical examination of him, and I would also like to present... this person... at one of my lectures...

NORMAN

You are asking if you can... borrow him? ... Rent him?

TREVES

Err, well, I suppose, yes... if that's possible.

NORMAN

So that you can put him on display?

TREVES

For medical purposes. People studying anatomy rarely get to see a... living specimen like this... like him...

NORMAN

Well, I don't know about that... I don't make a habit of lending him out.

TREVES

I'll pay of course. (*Rummaging in pockets*) Would this be enough?

NORMAN

When did you want him?

TREVES

Next week. Tuesday morning.

NORMAN

I'll send him over.

TREVES

Won't that cause... a disturbance?

NORMAN
A disturbance?

TREVES
Doesn't he get upset going around outside? I would imagine large crowds would gather round him – and that would be very upsetting for him...

NORMAN
Oh, don't you worry, sir, we have special clothes for him to wear, so people don't stare at him. Well, not as much, anyway...

TREVES
Why don't I send a cab round for him? I know it's only a journey across the road, but I think that would be the best thing, to avoid him drawing too much attention.

NORMAN
Very well. Whatever you say.

NORMAN holds his hand to suggest a bargain done. Slightly reluctantly, TREVES shakes his hand. NORMAN holds on to his hand a bit longer than expected.

NORMAN
We understand each other, you and I.

TREVES
Next Tuesday, then.

TREVES is about to leave, when a thought occurs to him. He pulls a card out of his pocket and hands it to NORMAN.

TREVES
Here's my card. You will need to show that when you bring him over.

NORMAN
I won't be going. The boy will take him over. You might as well give it to him.

TREVES
To... the boy...? Where is he?

NORMAN
Not the boy. To him.

TREVES
Oh, you mean...?

NORMAN
That's it. Go on. He won't bite.

Bracing himself for the stench, TREVES steps towards MERRICK, who breathes heavily, nervous of the stranger. TREVES holds out the card to MERRICK, who, at first, does nothing.

NORMAN
Well go on! Don't just stand there! Take the card from the gentleman. He's just a bit nervous, sir, you being a stranger...

Still breathing heavily, MERRICK reaches forward with his left hand and takes the card off TREVES, and stows it under the blanket. TREVES changes pace now, and can't wait to get out. He strides over to the door. At the last moment, he pauses by the exit.

TREVES
Oh, one last thing... What's his name?

NORMAN
Merrick. Joseph Merrick.

TREVES

Ah. Merrick. *(Pause)* Good day, sir.

TREVES exits. NORMAN watches him go.

NORMAN

"Good day" indeed! And a good day's business, wouldn't you say, old fellow?

NORMAN is lost in thought for a moment as he stares at the door.

NORMAN

Yes. Understand each other, we do...

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

Scene 3 (Treves's Office, Nov 1884)

TREVES is sitting at his writing desk, downstage to one side. It is years later, and he is writing his memoirs. He looks up, holding a memory and then puts pen to paper. He speaks the words out as he writes:

TREVES *(narrating)*

The card I gave him was destined to play a critical part in the young man's life. I had arranged for him to visit my office first, so that I could talk to him a little and make a preliminary examination, before taking him to the lecture theatre for the demonstration. Talking, however, proved to be difficult...

There is a knock at the door.

TREVES

Yes?

NURSE *(off-stage)*

A... gentleman... to see you, sir.

TREVES

Send him in!

After a few seconds, there is a shuffling sound, and MERRICK enters, entirely covered in a cloak. He is wearing a large cap, and his face is covered by a sack, with a hole cut out at eye level for him to see through. TREVES looks alarmed and composes himself, then smiles at the young man.

TREVES

Ah, yes. Do come in. I'm very grateful to you for... coming over today... Now in a while, I'll be taking you to the lecture theatre, where I intend to make the... demonstration, but first I thought it would be good if I could get to know you a little. Or rather, if we could get to know each other. Just a little chat. *(Pause)* Do come in. Don't stand by the door. I won't bite you know! Do sit down...

TREVES moves forward a bit too suddenly and MERRICK backs away, startled. TREVES, realising the effect he has had, slows down and pulls a chair out for MERRICK and gestures towards it.

TREVES

Don't be afraid... No need to be afraid... Do sit down... I mean, if you would like to... Perhaps you prefer to stand. My name is Frederick Treves. This is where I work. This is the London Hospital. Have you ever been here before? *(Pause)* But it is also a medical college and I give lectures here, on anatomy. Do you know what that is? *(Pause)* Are you sure you wouldn't be more comfortable sitting down? No? Very well. So... as I said, my name is Frederick Treves, and your name is...? What is your name? Do you understand me? *(Pause)* I know: I'll ask you a question, and you nod your head if the answer is "yes" – is that all right? So, to begin with-

There is a sharp knock and the MATRON enters briskly, almost colliding with MERRICK. MERRICK hurries away to a different space where he is as far from both others as possible. The MATRON looks at him with alarm.

MATRON

Oh, I'm sorry, sir, I didn't realize you were... I'll come back later.

The MATRON exits, looking troubled. TREVES sighs at the interruption.

TREVES
Sorry about that. Just one moment.

TREVES pops his head out of the door.

TREVES
Matron? Can you make sure nobody else comes in here until I say, please? Thank you.

While his head is turned, MERRICK takes the opportunity of moving away again, so he won't be near TREVES when he comes back inside. TREVES turns and sees MERRICK at the opposite end of the room.

TREVES
Ah, you're... more comfortable over there, are you? Now, where were we? Oh yes. So, if the answer is yes, nod your head. Do you understand? *(Pause)* That was my first question. Do you understand me? *(Pause)* Right, well, in that case, I think we had better move on to the examination itself. I would like to examine you now. Will that be all right? Errm, what I think would be best is if I just get someone to help us... Yes, that would be best. Just one moment. *(Popping head out of door again)* Matron? Can you come in here and... assist me for a moment? Thank you...

The MATRON comes in, looking wary.

MATRON
Yes, Mr Treves?

TREVES
Matron, this is Mr Merrick, whom I wish to examine now. Could you please prepare the... err... patient? Prepare him for examination?

MATRON
Prepare him? You mean remove his clothes?

TREVES *(embarrassed)*
If you would, please, Matron. Thank you.

MATRON
Very well, sir. Now then, Mr Merrick. Kindly come this way.

The MATRON points to the curtain rail that she wants him to undress behind. MERRICK stays in his corner, breathing heavily in fear.

TREVES
It's all right, Mr Merrick. Matron won't hurt you.

MATRON moves towards MERRICK, who hesitates a moment, then sidles round the back to get past her and TREVES. MATRON moves across sharply and takes MERRICK by the arm. MERRICK lets out a groan of anxiety. TREVES instinctively stands where he will block off any escape. MATRON leads him to the screen.

MATRON
Come now, sir. Everything will be fine. No need to worry!

The MATRON leads MERRICK firmly behind the screen. TREVES remains on stage a moment, looking troubled at the way things have turned out. LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

Scene 4 (Lecture Theatre, same day, Nov 1884)

LIGHTS UP: TREVES is on the stage of a lecture theatre. He is holding up a jar containing a specimen.

TREVES
In conclusion, it is my view that the only way to cure a patient suffering from an inflamed appendix – the one here is twice the normal size – is by performing surgery. Although there

are always risks when operating, it is my opinion that this will be the way we solve the problem of appendicitis in the future. Thank you. If you could bring in Mr Merrick, please?

An ASSISTANT removes the jar. A blackboard is brought on, on which is drawn the outline of Merrick's body. On the other side, a curtain rail is brought in to centre stage. MERRICK, entirely hidden by a large blanket, hobbles on, led in by the ASSISTANT and taken to a point behind the screen so he is hidden from view. During the lecture, TREVES points either to the hidden figure behind the screen, or to the blackboard with a stick, and also makes chalk sketches on the board to illustrate points.

TREVES

And now, from the dead to the living! Can you all see clearly? In the course of my profession I have seen many unfortunate deformities of the face due to injury or disease, as well as mutilations of the body; but at no time have I seen such a degraded version of a human being as this man. He is English and his name is John Merrick. From the way he is standing and the way he walks, it is clear to see that he has a pronounced limp, caused by disease of the hip, which, I suspect, he developed as a child.

TREVES puts a chalk ring around the relevant hip on the blackboard.

TREVES (*cont'd*)

The right arm, as you can see, is much larger than normal, as is the right hand, which is almost unusable. But the left arm and hand are smooth and much smaller. Much of his skin is thicker than normal, and in places, hangs down in folds. The head is exceptionally large and has several, cauliflower-like growths. If you measure the circumference of the head, you will find it is the size of the average person's waist. (*To assistant*) Could you take Mr Merrick back to my room? Thank you.

The ASSISTANT wheels the screen away so that MERRICK exits without being seen.

TREVES (*cont'd*)

So far, I have not heard the subject speak one word – although given the shape of his mouth and jaw, it must be very difficult indeed for him to speak clearly. In conclusion: The appearance of his skin – its shape and colour – combined with the size of his head has resulted in him being given the name, The Elephant Man.

Applause as his lecture finishes. TREVES gives a small bow. A moment later, two SCIENTISTS, members of the lecture audience, enter and sit at the side on a bench.

TREVES (*cont'd*)

Thank you. Well, I imagine you have some questions for me? So who would like to go first? You, sir, yes you, sir. What is your question?

SCIENTIST 1

How old is the subject? I am guessing he is younger than he looks.

TREVES

Quite right. Although he looks much older, he is only in his early 20s. 21 or 22, I have been told.

SCIENTIST 2

What do you think is the cause of his deformities?

TREVES

Ah, now that is the main question, isn't it? What made this poor fellow look the way he does? Well the simple answer is that I have not yet discovered the cause. The subject is currently in the charge of a showman, who exhibits him as a freak. This showman claims that his condition is a direct result of his mother being struck by an elephant while she was pregnant. I imagine you will agree that this explanation makes no scientific sense whatever, and yet the real cause remains to be discovered. Any more questions?

SCIENTIST 1

Is the subject educated? Is he able to understand the situation and condition he is in?

TREVES

Judging from his apparent inability to communicate and the lack of emotion or expression of his features, I would say that he is an imbecile. *(After a moment)* Pray to God he's an imbecile!

Scene 5 (Treves's Office, Early 1885)

LIGHTS UP: TREVES is sitting at his writing desk. It is years later, and he is writing his memoirs again.

TREVES *(narrating)*

Pray to God he's an imbecile! The thought that the young man might actually be aware of his circumstances, conscious of how different he was to all others, would be too terrible to consider. I had some photographs taken of the man's body for scientific records and then he was taken back across the street to the disused shop. A few weeks later, wanting to present him at another lecture, I sent a message across to see if he could come to the hospital again. It was a cold day, early in 1885...

There is a knock at the door.

TREVES
Yes?

NURSE *(off-stage)*
A... gentleman... to see you, sir.

TREVES
Thank you. Send him in!

TREVES looks towards the doorway, expecting to see Merrick, but instead, NORMAN standing there.

TREVES
Oh... Good morning.

NORMAN *(curt)*
Morning.

TREVES
I trust you are well? I was expecting to see...

NORMAN
Your prize exhibit?

TREVES
I thought you would be happy to send... Mr Merrick over again for the same sum as last time?

NORMAN
That's what you thought, eh?

TREVES
Perhaps you wanted a little more?

NORMAN
That's not why I came. I have come here today, sir, to say I take great exception to the article you wrote in the paper. You say that Mr Merrick has been mistreated while under my care.

TREVES *(surprised)*
Oh, you read that?

NORMAN
Yes. Some of us can read, you see.

TREVES
Well, I-

NORMAN

He's better off with me in the fairgrounds and freakshows than locked away in the workhouse! What future is there for him there? Just waiting for death. But in our world, he is a free man, and earning a living – earning good money! And while he works and travels with my fair, he is no burden on any of his family! How else do you suggest he spends his life? Do you have a job for him in your hospital, Mr Treves?

TREVES

Well, no, I-

NORMAN

And his life is far more interesting. The work is not difficult, but he travels to places full of colour and life up and down the country. I bet he has seen more places than most others have – maybe even you. But you write that I have been a cruel master and imply that the best thing for him would be to escape!

TREVES

I simply supposed that, given his behaviour when he visited my room. The man was in a terrible state... most afraid...

NORMAN

Of course he was afraid! Afraid of visiting a strange man in a strange building!

TREVES

Now you can't compare our hospital to-

NORMAN

And now you ask for him to be sent over again, as soon as it suits you, for another of your fine lectures! Perhaps you plan to insult me again in front of all your fine colleagues!

TREVES

Now that's enough. I am a man of medicine, and my aim is purely to discover the cause of his condition.

NORMAN

While making a name for yourself in the process!

TREVES

I see no point in continuing this conversation. Is Mr Merrick still staying with you? *(Pause)* Look, if I have offended you, then... I apologise. I was hoping to see Mr Merrick again to see if there is any way in which I can help him. So, for his sake, please answer me: Is Mr Merrick still staying with you?

NORMAN

Well, that's the thing. No, he isn't.

TREVES *(downcast)*

Oh...

NORMAN

He was. Until just a few days ago. Things have been hard lately. The police keep closing the shows down. We had to move out of the shop over the road. We discussed the situation, and decided that he would be better off working with another showman I know.

TREVES

Can you arrange for me to meet this person?

NORMAN

No.

TREVES

I will make it worth your while.

NORMAN

That's not what I mean. I mean I don't know where he is any more. This person took Mr Merrick abroad, in the hope of getting more work over there – but I have no idea where he is.

TREVES

Oh. That's a great pity.

NORMAN

For him, or for you?

TREVES

Good day, sir.

NORMAN gives a curt nod and exits. TREVES sits down and stares out, dejected. TREVES returns to his desk and writes down a few notes for his memoirs.

TREVES (*narrating*)

Naturally, I thought that I would never see the Elephant Man again and concentrated on other projects. But a year later fate brought us together again. One afternoon in June I received a message that the police had saved a man from being taunted by a crowd at Liverpool Street Station. I wondered how the police had located me...

Scene 6 (Liverpool Street Station, 24th June 1886, 7.20am)

LIGHTS FADE UP DIM: Dry ice swirls around to suggest steam trains. Station sounds, whistles, train engines crowd noises. Passengers come and go. An ANNOUNCER arrives.

ANNOUNCER

Last call for the seven twenty-five to Cambridge! All Aboard! All Aboard. Last call for the seven twenty-five to Cambridge! Cambridge train! All aboard! All aboard!

A PASSENGER rushes on and sees the ANNOUNCER.

PASSENGER

Excuse, me...?

ANNOUNCER

Yes Madam, can I help you?

PASSENGER

Where's the train for Cambridge?

ANNOUNCER

Platform 1 – just over there. If you hurry you might just make it!

PASSENGER

Oh!

The PASSENGER runs off, The ANNOUNCER puts his megaphone down and becomes a PORTER, carrying luggage. A BOY appears and deliberately gets in the way of the porter.

PORTER

Out of the way lad! Out of the way now or I'll-

The PORTER waves his fist and the BOY runs over to a corner on the other side. MERRICK enters, covered up in his usual disguise. He is in a terrible state and his health has deteriorated. His hip is giving him a lot of pain and he makes slow progress through the station. MERRICK approaches the PORTER, to ask him directions.

MERRICK

Ex – cuse me...

PORTER (*Disgusted*)

What the hell? Get out of here! Out of my way!

The PORTER exits in a hurry. The BOY has seen this and goes over to MERRICK. He follows Merrick around:

BOY
Hey! Hey Mister! Why are you all covered up?

MERRICK ignores him, hoping he'll go away. But the boy continues pestering him.

BOY
Oi, Mister! I asked you a question. Why don't you answer me, eh?

A YOUNG MAN enters and sees MERRICK coming towards him, followed by the BOY. MERRICK hesitates, then tries to go round the young man, but the YOUNG MAN steps sideways to block his path. MERRICK tries on the other side, but the YOUNG MAN blocks him again.

YOUNG MAN
Now what on earth have we here, eh? (Sniffs) Pwarr, You stink! Did anyone tell you you smell bad, Mister?

BOY
It's true, he stinks! Like an animal!

YOUNG MAN
Why are you covered up Mister?

BOY
Where are you going, eh?

YOUNG MAN
I hope it's the bathroom for a wash! Well, answer the boy, no need to be rude!

BOY
Ha, ha! No need to be rude, Mister!

With a great effort MERRICK breaks free and tries to amble away, but the YOUNG MAN and BOY catch up with him easily.

BOY
Where are you going?

YOUNG MAN
Who told you you could leave?

BOY
Not me!

YOUNG MAN
We haven't finished with you yet.

MERRICK tries to move off in another direction, but the BOY and the YOUNG MAN work as a team, herding him into a corner, where MERRICK is trapped. MERRICK groans and wheezes in terror and exhaustion.

YOUNG MAN
You're not going anywhere. Not till we've seen what you look like!

BOY
Pull his hood off! Pull his hood off! Go on!

YOUNG MAN
Here goes! Open sesame!

The YOUNG MAN pulls off MERRICK's hat and hood. MERRICK is revealed. The YOUNG MAN backs away and the BOY takes cover behind him, terrified.

YOUNG MAN
What on earth? What the hell are you?

BOY
It's a monster! Don't touch it!

YOUNG MAN
Disgusting!

MERRICK
STOOOOOOOOOOOOOOPPPPP!

The force with which Merrick does this dumbfounds the YOUNG MAN and BOY.

MERRICK *(after a pause)*
Stop. I am not a monster! I am not an animal! I am a human being! A man!

MERRICK sags down in complete despair. The YOUNG MAN and the BOY take more steps back, away from MERRICK, at a loss. Suddenly, the BOY rushes off.

YOUNG MAN *(Quieter now, to himself)*
Never seen anything like it! Never in my whole life!

MERRICK continues to groan in abject misery. The YOUNG MAN takes further steps backwards. A whistle is blown – a shrill blast. A POLICEMAN enters. He blows his whistle again.

POLICEMAN
Get back everyone! Clear this area! Come on, out of the way now! *(To YOUNG MAN)* That means you, too, young man. Move it!

The YOUNG MAN comes out of his trance and rushes off.

POLICEMAN
Oh, my, my, what do we have here? Are you all right sir? Do you need help? Can you understand me, sir? Must be some foreigner off the boat train. Doesn't speak a word of English! Come – with – me – sir.

The POLICEMAN leads MERRICK slowly over to the other side towards the Waiting Area.

POLICEMAN
That's it. This way. That's it, sir. Just over here. Now take a seat.

The POLICEMAN and MERRICK reach the Waiting Area. The POLICEMAN pulls out a chair. MERRICK slumps down awkwardly into the chair, breathing heavily, holding his head in his hands.

POLICEMAN
That's it. That's better now, isn't it, sir? It's all right now. Those young devils have gone away now. No one's going to hurt you. What – is – your – name?

MERRICK
M – Merrick... J-Jo – seph... M-Mer – rick...

POLICEMAN
Oh! So you do understand me. Sorry if I called you a foreigner earlier! Now where do you live, sir?

MERRICK
No... No – where...

POLICEMAN
Nowhere? You must have some place to stay?

MERRICK
No... Nowhere.

TREVES enters, watching the scene as he imagines it being written in his memoirs. He approaches slowly, watching the proceedings from a distance. He is not there as far as the policeman and Merrick are concerned – yet.

POLICEMAN

Do you have a ticket to catch a train? Were you going somewhere? Or have you just arrived?

MERRICK

Arrived... I have... just arrived... from Belgium.

POLICEMAN

Belgium, eh! So why did you come here if you have nowhere to stay?

MERRICK

I... was... robbed... in Belgium. All the money I had was taken. I had nothing. So I came back. But now...

POLICEMAN

Oh dear. What do you have on you, then?

MERRICK

Just this...

MERRICK slowly fumbles in his pockets, producing, one by one, a ticket...

POLICEMAN

Your ticket for the boat journey...?

The POLICEMAN hands the ticket back. MERRICK next produces a handkerchief.

POLICEMAN

Your handkerchief. I don't need to see that, sir. You keep hold of that. Anything else?

Finally, MERRICK produces a wallet.

POLICEMAN

Aha! Your wallet! Now then, let's see...

The POLICEMAN inspects the wallet, opening up the main section for banknotes and shaking it out – it is completely empty. Then he inspects the smaller sections and pulls out a card.

POLICEMAN

Wait a minute! What's this?

The POLICEMAN holds the card up and examines it. TREVES takes a step closer to the action.

TREVES (*narrating*)

It was my card. The card I had given to him almost two years earlier that the policeman was holding. Luckily, the London Hospital isn't too far from Liverpool Street Station and I was able to come immediately. And there he was– the man I never expected to see again.

TREVES takes another step forward: The POLICEMAN acknowledges his presence.

POLICEMAN

Ah, are you Mr Treves?

TREVES

I am.

POLICEMAN

Thank you for coming so quickly. I believe you know this gentleman?

TREVES

I do indeed. Hello, Mr Merrick.

MERRICK has remained slumped with his head in his hands – but on hearing his name, he looks up and recognises Treves.

MERRICK
Oh! M-Mr Treves. Thank you so much for coming!

TREVES
Not at all. *(To policeman)* I think we'll be all right now, Officer. Thank you for your help.

POLICEMAN
Don't mention it, sir. Good morning to you.

The POLICEMAN exits. TREVES takes a step closer and looks at MERRICK.

TREVES
Are you all right?

MERRICK
Just... a little tired. I have had... a... long journey.

TREVES
Yes. Well don't worry. You're safe now.

MERRICK
Thank you! Thank you s-so much!

TREVES
Well. Let's get you back to the hospital, shall we?

MERRICK
Very k-kind of you. Very kind... Very kind...

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK as TREVES leads MERRICK away.

Scene 7 (Isolation Room, London Hospital, 24th June 1886, late morning)

A small attic space with a single bed, partitioned off from the other side of the stage by the curtain rail. The other side is the landing at the top of a staircase. TREVES enters, as though having climbed stairs and MERRICK follows, looking exhausted. TREVES ushers MERRICK into the room with a somewhat furtive, urgent manner.

TREVES
There you go... in you come... that's it. We've got a nice bed for you over here... That's it.

MERRICK
Th-thank you.

TREVES
You're welcome. Very welcome. Now you rest. You must be exhausted. I'll come back in a few hours and make sure you are all right. Are you thirsty?

MERRICK
Yes... thirsty.

TREVES
Yes. Of course you must be. Here's some water. There you go. Easy does it.

MERRICK drinks with difficulty. TREVES holds the glass for him. MATRON enters and looks startled.

MATRON
Oh. You're here, Dr Treves. I was told you had a... new patient.

TREVES
Oh. You were, were you? I'd hoped I had sneaked him in without anyone noticing.

MATRON
Well word reached me quite quickly – and without meaning to be rude, your patient is hardly inconspicuous. Same fellow you saw a year or so ago, isn't it?

TREVES
Yes, that's right. Year and a half perhaps...

MATRON
And what seems to be wrong with him?

TREVES
Well... That's what I intend to find out. Exhaustion, clearly, is one thing.

MATRON
Yes, I can see that. Well why doesn't he lie down? *(To Merrick)* You'd be better lying down, sir. Here, let me-

MATRON approaches MERRICK, about to help him lie down fully. MERRICK becomes very agitated and hunches up.

MERRICK
No!

MATRON
I'm not going to hurt you sir; just help you to lie down.

MERRICK
I can't.

TREVES
What can't you do?

MERRICK
I can't... lie down. I can't sleep... like normal people.

MATRON
What's this all about? I can get another pillow if that helps.

MERRICK
If I lay my head down... the way others do... it would kill me. It's my head, you see. It's too heavy. I just... can't lie flat.

TREVES
Oh, I see! That must make things very difficult for you.

MERRICK
Oh, you get used to it. I don't need another pillow, thank you, nurse.

MATRON
Matron.

MERRICK
Matron. But if you could just... prop this against the...

TREVES
Headboard.

MERRICK
Yes... The... headboard. That's it...

MATRON puts the pillow against the headboard as instructed and MERRICK sits with his back to it, hunches his knees up to his chin and rests his head on his knees.

TREVES
Ah – that's how you sleep?

MERRICK
Yes.

TREVES

Well, we'll leave you too it. Sleep well.

MERRICK seems to be asleep already, his head on his knees. TREVES beckons MATRON to the landing area, outside the room.

TREVES

Poor chap.

MATRON

Hmmm.

TREVES

You're not happy, are you, Matron?

MATRON

Since you ask, Mr Treves, I'm not sure why you've brought him here.

TREVES

Well, I wanted to help him.

MATRON

But is this the place? This is a place to cure people. Looking at... that fellow... I doubt there's going to be any way of curing... what he has. Unless you know different?

TREVES

No, you're probably right. As I can't even say what has caused his... condition...

MATRON

So you agree. This is not the right place.

TREVES

What would you have done, though? He was in a place with no home, no money, no friends or family...

MATRON

You could say that of many in the city.

TREVES

True. But I couldn't just leave him there. Sometimes, you have to break the rules.

MATRON

Maybe, Mr Treves, but rather you than me. I can't afford to lose my job!

TREVES (*kindly*)

What do you suggest?

MATRON

Well, I suppose it won't do any harm for him to stay here a while... But sooner or later... if someone has a fever... or if someone becomes dangerous, we will need this room. That's what it's for, after all.

TREVES

Yes, you're quite right. We will have to try and find somewhere else for him.

MATRON

I would have thought a home for the incurables would be more... suitable.

TREVES

I'll make some approaches.

MATRON (*Softening*)

I'll check up on him a bit later.

TREVES

Thank you, Matron.

MATRON exits. TREVES walks across to his writing desk. He sits down, but, before he starts writing, he turns and looks back, at his memory of his patient.

TREVES (*narrating*)

I wrote to several places in the city, stressing the urgency of the case. In a matter of days, I received three replies – all refusals. Everywhere was full, apparently.

TREVES picks up an envelope from his desk. He stands to open it.

TREVES (*cont'd*)

A day later, another reply arrived. This time it was a far more positive response from the Royal Hospital for Incurables.

TREVES hurries across to the landing and calls “down” at someone approaching.

TREVES

I'm right at the top, Miss Howell. That's it. Just a few more stairs now.

MISS HOWELL appears, a prim, austere woman in her 40s. TREVES remains with her on the landing to start with, which she finds odd.

TREVES

Good day, Miss Howell. Thank you so much for coming. I am Treves.

MISS HOWELL

Good day, Mr Treves. My, my – that was a lot of stairs. I am surprised your patients survive the climb!

TREVES

Ha, ha. It is a bit of a climb, but the isolation ward does need to be... isolated. But do not fear, our patient is not contagious. It's just for convenience.

MISS HOWELL

I see. Well I am pleased to say we do have room. Two of our patients passed away this week and one room in particular has a lovely view of the rose garden.

TREVES

That sounds perfect. When would Mr Merrick be able to move?

MISS HOWELL

Oh, very soon. Perhaps tomorrow.

TREVES

That's wonderful news.

MISS HOWELL

I just have a few questions about the patient...

TREVES

Well why don't you come in and let him answer for himself?

TREVES shows the way and they move across to the other side into the isolation room. MERRICK is awake, with his back to them, reading a book.

TREVES

Merrick? This is the lady I was telling you about. Miss Howell, allow me to introduce you to Mr Merrick. Miss Howell is from the Royal-

MERRICK has turned at this point. MISS HOWELL sees him and starts to retch. She turns away, clutching at her chest and mouth.

TREVES

Is everything all right, Miss Howell? ... Miss Howell?

MISS HOWELL

I'm sorry... Mr Treves... I just have to... go outside for some air...

TREVES

Come with me. This way...

TREVES guides MISS HOWELL from the room. MERRICK watches grimly, all too aware of what has caused her reaction. Once they reach the landing area, she stops and breathes in.

TREVES

Are you feeling unwell, Miss Howell?

MISS HOWELL

I'm afraid there has been a misunderstanding, Mr Treves.

TREVES

There has?

MISS HOWELL

Yes. I'm afraid your patient is unsuitable. We will not be able to offer him a place.

TREVES

But you said- Oh... I see... He'll be most disappointed.

MISS HOWELL

Well, I'm sorry, but I mustn't be late for my next appointment. Good day, Mr Treves.

MISS HOWELL exits hurriedly. TREVES returns to the isolation room, where MERRICK is waiting.

TREVES

I'm sorry about that.

MERRICK

Don't worry. I'm used to it. I take it there is no place for me?

TREVES

I'm afraid not. She left in rather a hurry...

MERRICK

Well, thank you for all your help and letting me stay here for a few days. I am much recovered and will be on my way now.

MERRICK makes to get up and leave.

TREVES

What do you mean? Where on earth would you go?

MERRICK

I'll find somewhere. I'm used to moving on.

TREVES

No, no, no. Sit down. We can't have that. We'll think of something. There has to be another solution.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 8 (Merrick's Room, November 1886)

On the screen we see the words of a letter written by Mr Carr Gomm, Chairman of the London Hospital management committee, asking for help in Merrick's case. Then we see/hear responses offering donations to help find Merrick a home. LIGHTS UP. TREVES enters followed by MERRICK. MERRICK looks around in wonder.

TREVES

Here we are... Welcome to your permanent quarters!

MERRICK
All of this is for me?

TREVES
And your own private bathroom is just through there.

MERRICK
Private bathroom? Just for me?

TREVES
Just for you.

MERRICK
How often do I... can I have a bath?

TREVES
Whenever you want!

MERRICK
How marvellous.

TREVES
Of course the nurses will visit every day and help you with whatever you need, and I'll come in each day, to see how you're getting along.

MERRICK
But this is... beyond words! Is this really all for me?

TREVES
Yes.

MERRICK
For how long, did you say?

TREVES
For as long as you want. Forever. It's yours!

MERRICK
But... how can this be possible?

TREVES
Well, as you know, we managed to keep you in the isolation room for several months, but, in the end, the management committee of this hospital discussed your case...

MERRICK
They took the time... to discuss me?

TREVES
Yes, and the Chair of that committee, Mr Carr Gomm, decided to write a letter to The Times...

MERRICK
Oh! I've heard of that.

TREVES
...Which he did earlier this month, requesting help from the readers. He asked them for money.

MERRICK
Oh... I see...

TREVES

But we were all surprised by the generosity of those who responded. One man alone, a Mr Singer, promised to pay 50 pounds every year to make sure you can stay here. And now we have collected more than enough and the donations keep coming in. So your future is secure.

MERRICK

But this is all so... wonderful! How kind people have been...

TREVES

Well, I should leave you in peace now. I'll get one of the nurses to bring you some lunch.

MERRICK

Thank you! Thank you so much!

TREVES moves across the front of the stage to his writing desk. He rings his bell. NURSE VICKERS arrives and stands by his desk. Meanwhile, during the scene, MERRICK takes his large coat out of his bag and looks around. He sees the coat stand and hangs it there. Then he does the same with his hat and hood. Finally he pulls out his bible and looks around, deciding where to keep it. TREVES looks up and sees NURSE VICKERS.

TREVES

Ah. You've just started, haven't you? Nurse Vickers, isn't it?

NURSE VICKERS

That's right, sir.

TREVES

Well I want you to take lunch to Mr Merrick in his room.

NURSE VICKERS

Yes, sir. Straight away.

TREVES

Before you go, I should warn you. You might be... shocked by his appearance.

NURSE VICKERS (*simpering*)

It's very thoughtful of you to think of me, sir

TREVES

I'm not thinking of you; I'm thinking of the patient. If he sees you looking alarmed at his appearance he'll be very upset. Imagine living your whole life with people screaming when they see you... people staring at you wherever you go... Must be awful. So smile at him. Understood?

NURSE VICKERS

Yes, sir. I understand, sir.

TREVES

Now go along. He'll be hungry!

NURSE VICKERS disappears round the back while TREVES writes some notes. NURSE VICKERS appears on the other side and enters Merrick's room carrying a tray. MERRICK has his back to her.

NURSE VICKERS

Mr Merrick...? I've brought your lunch...

When she sees him, NURSE VICKERS lets out a scream, drops the tray and runs off. MERRICK watches her go, wearily. TREVES has listened from his desk and shakes his head in disappointment.

Scene 9 (Merrick's Room, March 1887)

LIGHTS FADE UP DIM: It is night. MERRICK is in his usual hunched position for sleeping. He is having a nightmare. He hears voices and looks up and around him. Murky figures appear, taunting him. MERRICK tries to avoid them.

VOICE 1

There he is!

VOICE 2
Look at him!

VOICE 1
What happened to his face?

VOICE 2
Disgusting!

VOICE 1
Like an animal!

VOICE 2
Or a walking vegetable!

VOICE 1
What a stink!

VOICE 2
And he's useless! What can he do? Nothing!

VOICE 1
A waste of space!

VOICE 2
Put him back in the workhouse.

VOICE 1
Yes, the workhouse!

VOICE 2
Lock him up and throw away the key!

They move in ever wider circles, laughing at him, until they exit. MERRICK cries out and wakes up with a start. LIGHTS UP FULL. MATRON rushes in.

MATRON
You all right, Mr Merrick?

MERRICK
Oh... I... just had the most... terrible nightmare. They were laughing at me... and threatening to take me back to the workhouse!

MATRON
Oh. You've been there, have you?

MERRICK
When my illness became worse, I couldn't work any longer, so I had to go to the workhouse.

MATRON
Where was this?

MERRICK
In Leicester, where I grew up. I was there for over two years. It was the worst time in my life. But I was lucky: I got out. Most people never get out. They die there. I'm never going back there. Never.

MATRON
Well don't worry. You don't have to. You're safe with us now.

During the scene, TREVES has entered and goes to his writing desk. MATRON tidies a couple of things up, picks up a plate, nods goodbye at MERRICK and exits. MERRICK sits slumped on his bed slowly beating out a rhythm on the mattress.

TREVES (*narrating*)

Matron told me about his nightmares and the workhouse. And it also struck me how lonely he was. True, he was now in a safe place with a secure future – but what sort of life did the poor chap lead? He had me for company for a while each day, and nurses who tolerated him. Hardly a happy life. I thought about this for a while and came to a decision. There was some risk involved, but if it worked, things might change for the better...

During this, MERRICK has slowly got up and moved across to the window. The curtains are closed. He pulls back one curtain to create a chink which he peers through. He looks down at life on the street, knowing he won't be seen. TREVES crosses over and enters his room.

TREVES

Good morning, John. How are you today?

MERRICK

Better today, thank you.

TREVES

What were you looking at?

MERRICK

I was just watching the people walk past.

TREVES

It's a nice square down there, isn't it?

MERRICK

Oh yes, with a lovely garden. It must be wonderful to walk through it.

TREVES

Why don't you some time?

MERRICK

Me? Go down there?

TREVES

When it's dark. There would be fewer people around and you would be less... conspicuous. Let me take you down one night.

MERRICK

That would be wonderful.

TREVES

Matron was telling me you've been feeling a bit lonely here...

MERRICK

Oh, no. You mustn't think I'm complaining! I just-

TREVES

There's nothing to explain. It's perfectly understandable. Apart from me you have no visitors to speak to, so I thought you might like to have one. As it happens, there is someone here now who would like to meet you, if you don't mind...

MERRICK

Someone here to see me? Who could it be?

TREVES

A lady. Shall I show her in?

MERRICK

Oh yes, by all means!

TREVES smiles and exits for a second. He re-appears with MRS MATURIN. She does her very best to smile and be gracious.

TREVES
Mrs Maturin, allow me to introduce you to Mr John Merrick.

MRS MATURIN
It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr Merrick.

MERRICK
I... I...

MRS MATURIN holds her hand out and MERRICK manages to shake hands, but by then he is so moved by being treated kindly by a lady that he breaks down and sobs.

TREVES
I think Mr Merrick is a little tired. Perhaps we should come back another day.

MRS MATURIN
Yes, yes, of course! That would be lovely. Goodbye, Mr Merrick.

TREVES exits with MRS MATURIN.

MERRICK
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!

MERRICK shakes uncontrollably as the lights FADE TO BLACK.

Scene 10 (Merrick's Room, April 1887)

LIGHTS FADE UP DIM. It is night time. TREVES enters.

TREVES (*narrating*)
A few days later, when it was dark, I took Merrick down to the square and we walked through the garden. His delight was evident. In the days that followed, his confidence grew and he went to the garden on his own.

MERRICK takes his coat from the coat stand and walks along the front of the stage as though in the gardens. We hear sounds of birds and distant traffic.

TREVES (*cont'd*)
After months of being stuck inside his little room, it must have been an amazing feeling to be free to move outside, smell the flowers and listen to the sounds of the city at night.

Sounds slowly change to morning. MERRICK returns to his room and hangs his coat up. LIGHTS FADE UP SLOWLY as MERRICK moves across to his window. He opens the curtains and looks out. This time he sees someone, gives a start and then waves timidly down at someone outside.

TREVES
Good morning! How are you?

MERRICK
Very well thank you. Someone on the street just waved up at me! Must have very poor eyesight!

TREVES
Nonsense. Just being friendly. I have something for you. It came in the post today.

MERRICK
For me? What on earth could it be?

TREVES
Well you'd better open it and find out!

Avidly, MERRICK opens the package, pulls out a letter and a book. He examines the book with awe for a moment and then looks at the letter.

MERRICK

It's from a... Mrs Kendal. She says she has read all about me and wanted me to have this book! She says she is an actress!

TREVES

What's the book?

MERRICK

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare! How marvellous. I can't wait to start reading it.

TREVES

Well, we must get you some more books. Where did you learn to read?

As MERRICK leafs through the book, a photograph falls out. MERRICK picks it up and holds it reverentially.

MERRICK

I don't know when I started exactly, but- Oh! It's a photograph! It's of her – Mrs Kendal! Oh look, she's signed it! "To Mr Merrick, with Best Regards, Mrs Kendal". I've never had anything like this before!

TREVES

Oh, yes. Very nice. If you like, I can have it framed.

MERRICK

Could you? That would be wonderful... but not just yet... I'll give it to you in a few days, if that is all right.

TREVES

Whatever you like! Now do you remember what is happening today?

MERRICK

Yes. Today, Mrs Maturin is paying me a visit again.

TREVES

Are you sure you are ready?

MERRICK

Yes. I'm ready.

TREVES

Well, she should be here any minute now...

MERRICK

How do I look?

TREVES

You look just fine. Just fine.

MERRICK

Oh good. I do want to look my best for her.

TREVES

Well I'll just go and see if she's here. Excuse me for a moment.

TREVES exits. MERRICK practices greeting an imaginary lady, taking her hand and bowing.

MERRICK

Good day, Madam... How are you?... Good day, Madam... The weather is very fine today, don't you think?... What a pleasure to see you again, Mrs Maturin! How-

The sound of TREVES returning makes him jump and he stands up straight, readying himself. TREVES enters with MRS MATURIN. MRS MATURIN approaches and smiles.

MERRICK

Mrs... Mrs Maturin... How wonderful to see you again!

MRS MATURIN

How do you do, Mr Merrick? It is a pleasure to see you again too!

MERRICK

You must forgive me for the last time. You see... it was such a shock. I have never met a... lady like you before, and never one who was so... kind and... charming to me.

MRS MATURIN

Not at all, Mr Merrick. There is nothing to forgive.

MERRICK

Err... please... take a seat.

MRS MATURIN

Thank you.

An awkward pause. MERRICK taps out a rhythm.

TREVES

Mr Merrick has just received a gift from Mrs Kendal.

MRS MATURIN

From Madge Kendal? How lovely. I have seen her perform on the stage several times. Such a gifted actress.

MERRICK

She gave me this, you see.

MRS MATURIN

Shakespeare! My favourite is "Romeo and Juliet"!

MERRICK

In that case, I shall start by reading that one.

MRS MATURIN

Have you been to the theatre, Mr Merrick?

MERRICK

Oh no... I...

TREVES

It is not easy for Mr Merrick to go out...

MRS MATURIN

Oh... I see...

MERRICK

But I often go down into the garden at night time. And I can sit at my window and look down at the street. So I am very fortunate, really. But, forgive me, we were talking about the theatre. Have you been, Mr Treves?

TREVES

To the theatre? Oh yes... once in a while.

MERRICK

What's it like?

MRS MATURIN

Oh it is the most magical thing... a place of wonder where anything can happen!

MERRICK

It must be truly amazing. Are you an actress?

MRS MATURIN (*laughing*)

Oh, Mr Merrick, no! I would be a terrible actress! How they remember their words is a mystery to me.

MERRICK

Well, I only asked because you are... so beautiful. The most beautiful lady I have ever seen!

MRS MATURIN

Well thank you Mr Merrick. How charming of you to say so.

MERRICK

Apart from my mother of course...

TREVES (*surprised*)

Your mother?

MERRICK

She was... most beautiful. It must have been such a disappointment to her when I... turned out the way I did... She never showed it of course. She was so kind and gentle.

TREVES

I never knew that.

MERRICK

She died when I was quite young, tragically, and I grew up with my father and stepmother...

MRS MATURIN

Ah.

MERRICK

That was not such a good time.

MRS MATURIN

No... I read Mr Carr Gomm's article in The Times a while ago...

TREVES

Mrs Maturin was one of those kind enough to make a donation...

MRS MATURIN

Being... exhibited at all those fairs must have been awful.

MERRICK

Oh no. Not really.

TREVES

No? But surely-

MERRICK

At the time, getting a job in a freak show was the best thing that could have happened to me.

TREVES

That was what Mr Norman said to me. But I didn't believe him.

MERRICK

Mr Norman was always very decent to me. He made sure I was comfortable... and I was well paid. Imagine you have been trapped in the workhouse, and then suddenly you have the opportunity to travel and earn your own living, working with people who talk to you and don't stare at you. Sometimes I miss it...

TREVES (*beside himself*)

You miss it? Really? I must invite you again soon, Mrs Maturin. In your company I am discovering the most interesting things about Mr Merrick!

MRS MATURIN

That would be a pleasure. And if your clock is right, I ought to be going now. I have been invited to tea.

MERRICK

Well you must have tea here one day.

MRS MATURIN

I would like that. Goodbye, Mr Merrick.

MERRICK

Goodbye, Mrs Maturin. Please do come again.

MRS MATURIN

I shall, I promise.

TREVES

I'll show you out.

TREVES exits with MRS MATURIN. Alone, MERRICK is in a very excited state. For a while he has been holding his hand out in the position where Mrs Maturin last held it. He looks down at it in wonder, then sniffs it...

MERRICK

Her perfume!

MERRICK moves about the room, picking his new book up and leafing through it and stops at a page at random. He reads a couplet aloud.

MERRICK

So may the least deserved be the most rewarded;
The world is e'er deceived by outer show.

MERRICK snaps the book shut and places it carefully next to his bible. He sees the photograph and picks it up. TREVES comes back in.

TREVES

That went very well, I thought.

MERRICK

I cannot remember being happier.

TREVES

Even when you were in the funfair? *(Pause)* I was surprised to hear you remember that time with some fondness! I would have thought your time in the freak shows would have been a living hell.

MERRICK

Given the choices available to me, that life was far better than any alternative.

TREVES

Yes... I see... Well, I suppose I was wrong about Mr Norman... But the man in Belgium – he must have been a villain.

MERRICK

That was terrible. To be robbed and abandoned in a foreign country... All I could think of was to try to come back to London.

TREVES

It was lucky you still had my card.

MERRICK

Yes! Wasn't it? *(Pause)* Do you think...?

TREVES

Yes?

MERRICK
Do you think I can ever be cured?

TREVES
No, John, I'm afraid there's no cure. Not yet, anyway...

MERRICK
No. I thought not. What do you think is wrong with me?

TREVES
We're not certain, yet. We think it may have something to do with the nerves in your body.

MERRICK
I see. *(Pause)* What about when my mother was almost trampled by an elephant? Don't you think that played a part?

TREVES
It might have... but it... doesn't seem likely to me.

MERRICK
Ah. That's a pity.

TREVES
Why?

MERRICK
I liked to know the reason. The cause. I could tell people why I am the way I am. It was reassuring, somehow... Now I will just have to say that I do not know. Hopefully one day you will find out. Even if I'm long gone.

TREVES
I will certainly try. Meanwhile... we will do everything we can, of course.

MERRICK
Yes, of course... But I don't imagine I shall last much longer. I suppose I shall end up in a giant jar of alcohol as an exhibit.

TREVES
Don't say that...

MERRICK
Don't be upset, my friend. There is no need to be concerned. I'm used to being an exhibit!

TREVES
I admire your courage. I really do. *(Pause)* Well, I must be off. See you tomorrow, John.

MERRICK
See you tomorrow.

TREVES moves across to his writing desk. MERRICK sits on his bed, suddenly tired.

TREVES *(narrating)*
More presents arrived... more books...

MERRICK suddenly looks up as if there has been a knock at the door. He gets up and limps over to the edge of the set where he is handed a present.

MERRICK
Oh, thank you.

As TREVES continues, other deliveries arrive and MERRICK starts populating his room with more objects – books, ornaments, framed photographs, paintings...

TREVES *(cont'd)*

More photographs – and other gifts. He also received more visitors, culminating in a visit by Her Royal Highness, Alexandra, the Princess of Wales, who was opening a new wing in the hospital. She spent several minutes with Merrick and later sent him a signed photograph, which became his most treasured possession. He told me he had never been happier, which I believed. But I did still sometimes wonder... if my actions were not so different from that showman... In his case, people paid a penny to see the display, in my case, ladies and gentlemen paid generous amounts to charity and came to pay him a visit. I hoped I was right in thinking there was a difference and that I too was not exploiting the poor fellow...

Scene 11 (Merrick's Room, February 1888)

On the screen we see nightmarish images. LIGHTS UP DIMLY to show MERRICK in his usual sleeping position, rocking back and forth. Sounds of whispering and giggling. NURSE VICKERS creeps on, shushing someone out of sight. She moves towards MERRICK and checks to see if he is asleep. Then she goes back to fetch someone. She re-enters with a LOWLIFE, who is very drunk. They approach the bed. The LOWLIFE makes drunken sniggering sounds and swigs from a bottle.

NURSE VICKERS
Shhh! Not yet! Give me the money first.

LOWLIFE
After!

NURSE VICKERS
No, now!

LOWLIFE
All right then. Here you are.

NURSE VICKERS *(taking coin)*
Good. Now watch this. Wakey wakey!

NURSE VICKERS prods MERRICK sharply and he wakes up with a start. When he sees his face, LOWLIFE backs off in alarm. NURSE VICKERS laughs.

LOWLIFE
Wooaarr. That's disgusting!

NURSE VICKERS
Told you, didn't I?

MERRICK
W-what are you doing? What's going on?

NURSE VICKERS
Never you mind, sir. You're just having a bad dream!

LOWLIFE *(laughing)*
Bad dream! I like that! That's a good one!

MERRICK
Why are you here?

NURSE VICKERS
Sir often gets nightmares.

LOWLIFE
Aww. Poor thing needs a drink to cheer him up! Grab his head!

NURSE VICKERS
Eurrggh! I don't want to touch him!

LOWLIFE
Go on, hold him still!

MERRICK
Leave me alone! Stop this!

NURSE VICKERS holds MERRICK'S head as LOWLIFE pours a large slug of cheap whiskey into MERRICK'S mouth. MERRICK splutters and groans.

MERRICK
Please... No!

NURSE VICKERS
And for my final trick... Watch this!

With evil glee, NURSE VICKERS produces a small mirror.

NURSE VICKERS
Your turn to hold him still.

LOWLIFE
All right.

MERRICK struggles with alarm as LOWLIFE holds him firmly so that NURSE VICKERS can hold the mirror up in front of his face. MERRICK sees his reflection for the first time in years and screams.

NURSE VICKERS
Take a good look at yerself, sir. Not a pretty picture, eh?

LOWLIFE
Ha, ha. That's a good one!

NURSE VICKERS (*mood changing*)
Quick now, we'd better be going before we're caught!

LOWLIFE
Good night, Mr Elephant!

NURSE VICKERS
Sweet dreams, sir!

LOWLIFE and NURSE VICKERS exit, leaving MERRICK a terrified wreck, hunched on his bed, clasping his sides. He still splutters and chokes from the whiskey. Slowly he moans himself back to sleep. LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE UP TO FULL. MERRICK wakes up and looks around, alarmed – then relieved to find he is alone and it is daytime. TREVES enters.

TREVES
Good morning, John!

MERRICK (*muted*)
Good morning.

TREVES
And how are you today? You look a little pale. Are you all right?

MERRICK
My... throat is sore...

TREVES
Oh dear. We can get you something for that...

MERRICK
I was wondering...

TREVES
Yes?

MERRICK

Next time you move me, perhaps it could be to a lighthouse or an asylum for the blind?

TREVES

I beg your pardon? What are you talking about, old chap? You're not going anywhere! You have a home here! *(Pause)* Why did you ask that?

MERRICK

Well... in a lighthouse, I would be alone and no one would have to see me... and if I lived with blind people I could talk to them and they wouldn't see any difference between me and anyone else.

TREVES

Yes, I see that... But don't you want to stay here? Aren't you happy here? Aren't the staff being kind to you?

MERRICK

Oh yes! Most of them are... but I still wonder if they are only being... polite. I become anxious sometimes and have terrible dreams. Last night, for example I had the worst nightmare...

TREVES

Oh, really?

MERRICK

It felt so lifelike... as if they really were in the room with me...

TREVES

Who?

MERRICK

Nurse Vickers and some drunk man, laughing at me and forcing me to drink whiskey.

TREVES

Forcing you to...? Wait a minute... *(Sniffing)* Do you mind?

TREVES steps nearer to MERRICK and sniffs his breath.

TREVES

I really can smell whiskey! You weren't dreaming; this actually happened!

MERRICK

Oh dear... oh dear... that means...

TREVES

Nurse Vickers really was here last night, displaying you to some drunkard!

MERRICK

You do believe me then?

TREVES

Of course I do! Now don't you worry, my friend, leave this to me. I'm going to sort this out!

BLACKOUT. In the darkness we hear various sounds. Footsteps and shuffling in the room, then people approaching, then sniggers and voices whispering. We hear NURSE VICKERS's voice in the darkness.

NURSE VICKERS

Have you brought the money? You better have! No! Wait there, you idiot! Don't come in until I tell you to!

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE UP TO DIM to reveal NURSE VICKERS creeping into the room. The sleeping figure is in the usual hunched position on the bed, but this time, unusually, covered with a sheet. NURSE VICKERS creeps towards the figure and stares at the sheet.

NURSE VICKERS

Hiding under here, are we? Silly thing! Just because you can't see me doesn't mean I can't see you!

NURSE VICKERS pulls the sheet away, deliberately taking her time. The sheet comes off and TREVES is revealed. NURSE VICKERS jumps back like a scalded cat. TREVES looks at her sternly.

TREVES
Nurse Vickers. I think you have some explaining to do!

NURSE VICKERS
Oh... no... You don't understand, sir, I was just-

TREVES
Don't lie to me, Nurse Vickers. I know precisely what you were up to. Leave this hospital and never come back. If I ever see you here again I will call the police. Now get out.

NURSE VICKERS hurries out. TREVES pulls the rest of the sheet off and puts it down on the bed beside him. He gets up and goes over to the corner.

TREVES
John? You can come out now.

MERRICK emerges from a dark corner.

MERRICK
Has she gone?

TREVES
Yes. Gone for good. Sorry I made you stay in the bathroom for so long. Hope it wasn't too uncomfortable – but I needed to catch her in the act.

MERRICK
What will happen to her?

TREVES
Nurse Vickers? No idea. That's her problem. Now don't you worry about her. She behaved abominably and I shall be having words with all my staff to make sure nothing like this ever happens again. You must be tired now. You rest. And I promise there will be no more nightmares.

TREVES exits and lights FADE TO BLACK.

Scene 12 (Merrick's Room, Christmas 1889)

On the screen we see images of Victorian Christmas and wintry London accompanied by Christmas carols. LIGHTS FADE UP to show MERRICK sitting at his window, looking at the street below.

MERRICK
Yes, it is, isn't it? ... and I was given this yesterday by Mrs Kendal...

MERRICK goes over and picks up a book. He takes it over to the window and hold it up.

MERRICK
It's Beeton's Christmas Annual from a couple of years ago and it contains a story with a character who is a detective! Most interesting... Pardon? The detective's name... Oh, he's called Sherlock Holmes... Quite a character!

TREVES enters.

MERRICK
Oh, I must go now. Nice speaking to you. Goodbye. *(To Treves)* Good afternoon, my friend.

TREVES
Good evening. I see you are getting to know the locals!

MERRICK
Oh, yes. There are some very friendly people out there.

TREVES
Well, are you ready? It's nearly time to go.

MERRICK
Yes, of course! My first visit to the theatre! So kind of Mrs Kendal to organise it. What is the name of the Theatre?

TREVES
The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

MERRICK (*savouring the words*)
The Theatre... Royal... Drury Lane! It sounds like a wonderful place.

TREVES
Oh, it is. And, since you are something of a gentleman about town these days, I thought you might like this.

TREVES hands MERRICK a very long, thin wrapped present. MERRICK takes it and unwraps it carefully. It is a good quality walking cane.

MERRICK
Oh... but it's beautiful... Thank you!

TREVES
Merry Christmas.

MERRICK walks up and down the room, holding the cane, trying to look as elegant as possible.

MERRICK
Do you really think I am a gentleman now?

TREVES
I do.

MERRICK
Yes! I do too! But there is no mirror, so I cannot see the effect myself...

TREVES
Well, I-

MERRICK
No need to explain, my friend. I understand it is no accident there has never been a mirror in this room. But you have been a very flattering mirror for me!

TREVES
I like to think I reflect your inner self, rather than your outer appearance.

MERRICK (*musings on this*)
My inner self... Yes, I like that. I think that's very true, you know. It reminds me of my favourite poem.

TREVES
Oh really?

MERRICK
Would you like to hear it?

TREVES
Yes, I would.

MERRICK

It goes like this:

'Tis true my form is something odd,
But blaming me is blaming God
Could I create myself anew
I would not fail in pleasing you.

If I could reach from pole to pole
Or grasp the ocean with a span,
I would be measured by the soul;
The mind's the standard of the man.

TREVES

That's beautiful. Very nicely delivered, too. It sums you up perfectly.

MATRON enters.

MATRON

The cab is here.

TREVES

Good. Right on time. Shall we?

A musical sequence follows with images on the screen. LIGHTS DIMMER. TREVES and MATRON guide MERRICK on a journey. TREVES and MATRON pull the bed forward and cover it with red velvet cloth and invite MERRICK to sit in the middle. The sit on each side and watch the theatre show. MERRICK is entranced and, as he becomes more involved, the three of them get up and move around the stage, as if involved in the action, waltzing around as various characters. MERRICK's movement is fluid during this time as if he is no longer himself. The show comes to an end. There is applause. The red cloth is whisked away. TREVES sits in a chair and MERRICK sits on the bed, staring ahead, entranced. MATRON exits. LIGHTS UP FULL. It is the next morning.

MERRICK

I wonder what the prince did after we left?

TREVES

Lived happily ever after, I'm sure.

MERRICK

But what about that poor man they put into prison? Do you think he is still there?

TREVES

He's all right now. It was just an actor pretending. He took his costume off and went home.

MERRICK

But it was all so real to me! I have never seen anything like it!

MATRON enters, holding a large envelope.

MATRON

Good morning, Mr Treves. Good morning Mr Merrick. Happy Christmas to you!

MERRICK

Happy Christmas!

MATRON

There's a delivery for you, Mr Merrick. Hand delivered, if you please!

MERRICK

Oh. I wonder what it could be... It's a Christmas card from the Princess of Wales! And there is a new photograph of her as well! Well this must take pride of place! Oh! And I must write a thank you letter. Straight away, before I forget!

MERRICK fetches a pen and writing paper and sits with them at a desk and starts to write, speaking the words as he writes them down:

MERRICK

"Dear Princess Alexandra... Many thanks for the card and the signed photograph you kindly sent. They are both splendid. With much gratitude I am yours truly,
Joseph Merrick
London Hospital, Whitechapel."
There! What do you think?

MATRON

Very nice, Mr Merrick. Just the right tone.

TREVES

It's very good... but don't you want to sign it "John"?

MERRICK (*a bit embarrassed*)

Oh... well... my name is Joseph... actually...

TREVES

Joseph? But I have been calling you John all these years...

MATRON

Oh no – it's Joseph. I could have told you that.

TREVES

Well... I... don't know what to say. I must apologise. I must have misheard and then repeated the mistake.

MERRICK

Don't concern yourself. I just thought that was what you preferred to call me.

TREVES

Ah... well... I'd better be getting along.

MATRON

We'll be bringing up some Christmas turkey for you later.

MERRICK

How wonderful. I look forward to that!

TREVES and MATRON exit. MERRICK looks at the card and photograph, then crosses over to the window and looks out. LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

Scene 13 (Merrick's Room, April 1990)

On the screen we see images of nature in the English countryside – streams, wild flowers, birds, butterflies. Then we see a steam train (on its way back to London). LIGHTS UP to reveal MERRICK in the middle of unpacking. TREVES is seated. They are in the middle of a conversation.

MERRICK

...and you should have seen the butterflies! I counted more than ten varieties!

TREVES

You're becoming quite an expert!

MERRICK

And bluebells in all the woods... So many spring flowers! In fact I pressed some for you. Here you are.

MERRICK presents TREVES with some pressed flowers.

TREVES

Thank you. That's very thoughtful of you. I shall have them framed and keep them at home. Mrs Treves will like them. She's very fond of flowers.

MERRICK

Then I shall send her some more soon!

TREVES

Well, I'm so glad your trip to the English countryside was such a success. We will have to arrange another one.

MERRICK

Yes please! I'd love that! Perhaps in a different season?

TREVES

I'm sure that can be arranged.

MERRICK

I consider myself to be so lucky! Think of the things I have done in my life... I have travelled, read many books, visited the theatre, been given wonderful gifts and met so many interesting people – and I have had the honour to be visited by the Princess of Wales! How many could say the same?

TREVES

Very few I should imagine! Very few.

MERRICK yawns.

TREVES

You must be very tired after your trip. I'll leave you to rest for a while.

MERRICK

Actually I think I will rest for a bit. But do come by later if you have time.

TREVES

Certainly. I'll see you later.

MERRICK

Thank you.

TREVES

Sleep well... Joseph.

TREVES exits. MERRICK takes his time to move around the room, picking up treasured objects, losing himself in memories for a moment before moving on to another item. He picks up his cane and takes a few steps with it, before putting it down near the bed. He picks up the signed photograph of the Princess of Wales, then puts it back and looks at the bed. He comes to a decision. Slowly and methodically he arranges the bed with the pillows in the conventional sleeping position. He sits on the bed, removes his boots and slowly eases himself onto the bed, still in a seated position. Then slowly, he lowers his head onto the pillows. LIGHTS CROSS FADE to show time has passed. MERRICK is in the same position. MATRON comes in with a tray.

MATRON

Good afternoon, Mr Merrick. I thought you might be thirsty so I brought some... Oh... Mr Merrick? Time to wake up now. I've brought you some tea... Mr Merrick? You've always been a heavy sleeper, haven't you?

MATRON goes nearer to MERRICK and realises that he is lying flat.

MATRON (*concerned*)

Mr Merrick...?

Suddenly aware that something is wrong, she feels for his pulse.

MATRON

Oh dear.

MATRON exits, calling out for Mr Treves.

MATRON (*off*)

Mr Treves! Mr Treves!

The LIGHTS FADE slightly as TREVES enters and stands near his writing desk.

TREVES (*narrating*)

Joseph Merrick died on April 11th, 1890. He was only 27 years old. We all knew he did not have much longer to live, but no one could have expected him to depart so suddenly – from one moment to the next. Whether it was a deliberate decision or not, he had, for once, rested his head on the pillows and slept, as he would have put it, “like a normal person”. His head was so heavy that doing this must have dislocated his neck – and I like to think it was a very quick end for him. But before that, at least for once, just for a moment, he must have felt he was just like everyone else.

LIGHTS FADE SLOWLY TO BLACK.