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THE ELEPHANT MAN

A hundred years ago, the world was very different. Poor people lived in cold, dark homes, and never saw a doctor when they were ill. And if you were poor and very, very ugly ...

This is the story of a poor, ugly man. Nobody loved him, everyone laughed at him. They put him in a cage, like an animal at the zoo. Then one day a doctor saw him and thought, 'This poor man is interesting. I want to study him.' Slowly, the Elephant Man became famous, and everyone wanted to meet him. Even the Queen visited him!

But what was the Elephant Man really like? Did he think and feel like other people? Was he a sad, angry man? Could he ever smile and laugh, and forget his ugly face and his strange, ugly body?

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TIM VICARY

The Elephant Man



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CONTENTS

STORY INTRODUCTION	i
1 The Creature in the Shop	1
2 The Card	8
3 A Letter to 'The Times'	13
4 Merrick's First Home	16
5 An Important Visitor	22
6 Outside the Hospital	29
7 The Last Letter	35
GLOSSARY	39
ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	44
ACTIVITIES: While Reading	45
ACTIVITIES: After Reading	48
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	52
ABOUT THE BOOKWORMS LIBRARY	53

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Chapter 1
THE CREATURE IN THE SHOP

My name is Dr Frederick Treves. I am a doctor at the London Hospital. One day in 1884, I saw a picture in the window of a shop near the hospital. I stopped in front of the shop and looked at the picture. At first I felt interested, then I felt angry, then afraid. It was a horrible, ugly picture. There was a man in the picture,



*One day, Dr Treves saw a picture in a shop
near the hospital.*

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The Elephant Man

but he did not look like you and me. He did not look like a man. He looked like an elephant.

I read the writing under the picture. It said:

Come in and see the Elephant Man. Two pence.

I opened the door and went in.

There was a man in the shop. He was a dirty man in an old coat with a cigarette in his mouth. 'What do you want?' he asked.

'I'd like to see the elephant man, please,' I said.

The man looked at me angrily. 'Well, you can't,' he said. 'The shop's closing now. You can come back tomorrow.'

'I'm sorry,' I said. 'But I would like to see him now. I have no time tomorrow – I have a lot of work to do. But I can give you more than two pence.'

The man looked at me carefully. Then he took the cigarette out of his mouth and smiled with his yellow teeth.

'All right, sir,' he said. 'Give me twelve pence then.'

I gave him the money and he opened a door at the back of the shop. We went into a little room. The room was cold and dark, and there was a horrible smell in it.

A creature sat on a chair behind a table. I say a creature, because it was not a man or a woman, like you or me. The creature did not move or look at us. It sat very quietly on the chair in the cold, dark, dirty

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The Creature in the Shop

room, and looked at the table. The creature had a cloth over its head, because of the cold. On the table in front of it, there was a dead flower.

‘Stand up!’ said the shopkeeper, loudly.

The creature stood up slowly. It took the old cloth off its head, and put it on the chair.



It sat very quietly on the chair in the cold, dark, dirty room.

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The Elephant Man

I looked at the creature and felt sad. I am a doctor, so I know a lot about accidents and ill people. I see horrible, ugly things every day. But this creature, this thing, was the worst of all. There were no men or women in the hospital like him.

He wore some old trousers, but no shirt, coat, or shoes, so I could see his body very well. His head was the most interesting thing. It was very, very big – like an enormous bag with a lot of books in it. The head did not have much hair, and there was another bag of brown, dirty skin at the back of it. This skin came down below his neck. I could not see one of his eyes very well, because a lot of skin came down in front of his face, too.

An enormous red tooth came out of his mouth, under his nose. It looked like an elephant's tooth. The mouth and nose were like holes in the face. The face could not smile or laugh or look angry or sad, because the skin could not move. It was dead, like an elephant's face.

There were more bags of dirty skin on the front and back of the creature's body. These bags came down to his legs. The right arm was enormous, and there were bags of skin on it, too. The right hand was like a man's foot.

But the left hand – the left arm and the left hand

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The Creature in the Shop

were beautiful! The left arm had wonderful skin, and the fingers of the left hand were long and beautiful. It was like a young woman's hand!

'Walk, Merrick!' said the shopkeeper angrily. 'Come on, quickly, move!' He hit the creature with his hand.

Slowly, the creature walked across the room. But he could not walk well. His legs were very big and fat, and he had a bad back. He could not walk far without a stick.

'All right, thank you,' I said. 'Let him sit down. I don't want to see any more.' I felt ill, and the smell in the room was very bad.

'Yes, sir,' said the shopkeeper. 'Sit down, Merrick.'



The left hand was like a woman's hand; the fingers were long and beautiful.

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The Elephant Man

We went out of the room and closed the door. The shopkeeper smiled at me with his yellow teeth.

‘Wonderful, sir, isn’t it?’ he said. ‘The best Elephant Man in England! Hundreds of people come to see him, you know, hundreds! I take him all over the country, I do!’

‘Yes, very interesting,’ I said. ‘Can I sit down?’

‘Yes, sir, of course. Here’s a chair.’ He looked at me, smiling. ‘Would you like a glass of water, sir?’

‘Yes, please,’ I said. Then I looked at the things in the dirty shop. There were two or three bad apples and some old black bananas: that was all. ‘Er, no ... no, thank you. I’m all right,’ I said. ‘Did you ... did you call the creature Merrick?’

‘That’s right, sir. Joseph Merrick. The best Elephant Man in England! I take him all over the country, you know. Lots of people want to see him.’

‘Yes, I see. Do you get a lot of money?’

‘Well, sometimes we do, sir, yes. But it’s difficult, you see, sir, because of the police. The police don’t like us, you see, sir. So we can’t stay in a town very long. We usually move every week.’

‘Yes, I see. Well, anyway, Mr ... er?’

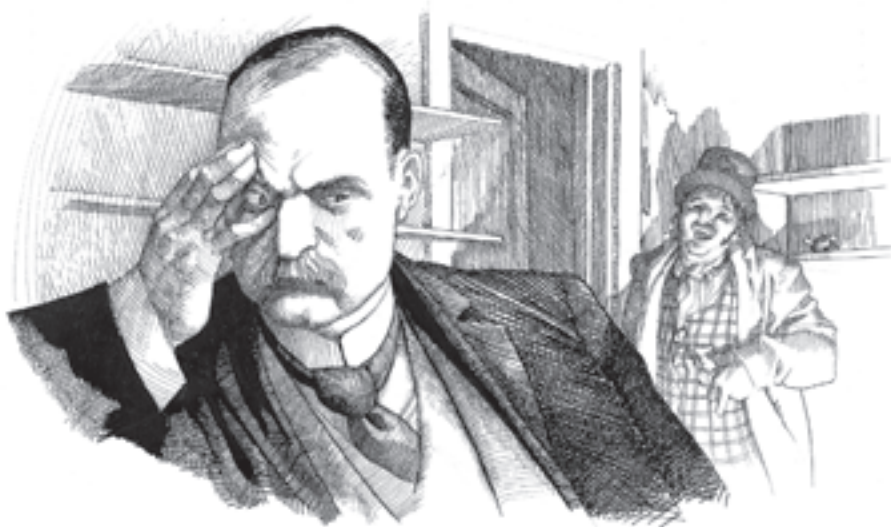
‘Silcock, sir. Simon Silcock.’

‘Yes, well, Mr Silcock, I’m a doctor at the London Hospital. My name is Dr Treves. I think this ... er ...

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The Creature in the Shop



Then I looked at the things in the dirty shop.

this man Joseph Merrick is very interesting, and I would like to see him at the hospital. I want to look at him more carefully, you see.'

'Yes sir, I see. But how can he get to the hospital? It's going to be difficult.'

'Why, man? The hospital's not far from here.'

'Well, yes, sir. I know. But, you see, Merrick can't walk very well. He needs help.'

'You can come with him. Do you want more money? Is that it?'

'Well, yes, sir, I do. But, you see, people are afraid of him too ... In the road, little boys always run after him

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The Elephant Man

and hit him. Then the police get angry because people are afraid. Sometimes they take us to prison.'

'I see,' I said. 'Well, how can he come to the hospital, then?'

'Bring a cab, sir,' said Silcock. 'You can take him to the hospital in a cab.'

Chapter 2

THE CARD

So next day, at seven o'clock, I came to the shop in a cab. There were not very many people in the road, because it was early in the morning. In November it is dark at seven o'clock in the morning, and I could not see the shop very well. I waited five minutes. A postman walked past. Then the door of the shop opened, and the creature, Merrick, came out.

I could not see his face or his body. He had an enormous black hat on his head, like a big box. A grey cloth came down from the hat, in front of his face. There was a hole in the cloth in front of his eyes. He could see out of the hole but I could not see in. He wore a long black coat, too. The coat began at his neck, and ended at his feet, so I could not see his arms,

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE SAMPLE.

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