

Plot

Chapter 1

The Creature in the Shop

Dr Frederick Treves sees a strange picture of a man in a shop window. The man looks like an elephant. He pays the shopkeeper, Simon Silcock, extra money to see the deformed man.

Dr Treves meets Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man, in a cold, dark room at the back of the shop. The doctor studies the deformed man's appearance. He is surprised that the Elephant Man's left hand is as beautiful as a woman's. Fascinated, he asks Silcock to let him take Merrick to the London Hospital. For that, he offers Silcock a sum of money. They discuss how to take the Elephant Man to the hospital without people seeing him.

Chapter 2

The Card

Early in the morning, Dr Treves brings a cab to take Joseph Merrick to the hospital. Merrick covers himself completely to avoid being seen. His misshapen body makes it difficult for him to climb into the cab. A postman stops to help. Dr Treves' quick thinking saves Merrick from being discovered when he tells the postman that Merrick is a lady. He lets the postman hold Merrick's left hand which is like a woman's hand.

At the hospital, Dr Treves examines Merrick and makes notes. After that, he takes Merrick back to the shop. The next day, Dr Treves discovers that the shop is empty.

Chapter 3

Letter to 'The Times'

After two years, the police find Merrick abandoned on the street. They find Treves's card on him and take him to the London Hospital. The doctor wants to keep him in the hospital, but Merrick is not ill. Dr Treves asks the Chairman of the hospital, Mr Carr Gomm, for help.

The Chairman writes to the editor of *The Times* newspaper. He tells the story of Merrick's life from the time Dr Treves met him and his misfortunes. The letter describes Merrick's deformity and explains that he is an interesting man; a good, quiet man who can read and write and who thinks a lot. The letter appeals to the readers to help give Merrick a home.

After a week, the hospital receives fifty thousand pounds from generous readers. The hospital is now able to give Merrick a home for the rest of his life.

Chapter 4

Merrick's First Home

Merrick is given two rooms at the back of the hospital. Merrick's physical condition improves. Dr Treves visits him every day and talks to him. He finds out that Merrick likes reading and talking about books.

Merrick is very happy although there are a few occasions when he faces rejection from people in the hospital. A new nurse who does not know about his condition is shocked and frightened by his appearance when she brings him food. She drops the food on the floor and runs out screaming.

Merrick expresses his wish to stay in a place that is far away from people, such as a lighthouse or a home for the blind, so that no one can see him. He is sure he will not be able to stay at the hospital for long as he has no money. Then, Dr Treves tells him about donations from the public.

Chapter 5

An Important Visitor

Dr Treves wants to help Merrick lead a normal life and have a normal relationship with women. He introduces Merrick to his friend, a beautiful young woman. When she meets Merrick and shakes his hand, he weeps. He is moved because no woman has ever smiled at him like that, other than his mother.

The young lady visits him again and even brings a friend with her. Merrick is very happy to have friends and no longer talks about living in a lighthouse. Merrick gets a lot of visitors once people learn about him through the newspaper.

One day, he has a very important visitor. It is Queen Alexandra. She asks him whether he is happy and talks to him about his books. She gives him a little book and some red flowers before she leaves. Merrick is so happy that he sings all day.

The queen visits him regularly. On Christmas, she sends him a card with a picture of herself as a gift. Merrick writes to the queen, his first letter ever, and tells her how happy and grateful he is.

Chapter 6

Outside the Hospital

Merrick now has a lot of friends, but he is more like a child than a man. He is not able to go out and learn new things. Dr Treves takes him to the theatre to watch a children's Christmas play. Mrs Kendall, a kind lady from the theatre, helps arrange for Merrick to watch the play. Merrick enjoys the play very much. He thinks that what is acted out on stage is true. He asks questions about the characters of the play as if they were real people.

Merrick longs to visit the countryside. One of his new friends offers him her summer house in the country, Apple Tree House in West Wickham. Dr Treves takes him there, making sure no one sees him. Merrick stays in the countryside for six weeks with no one to disturb him. He enjoys being close to nature. He writes to Dr Treves every week telling the doctor what he has done.

Chapter 7

The Last Letter

Six months after his summer holiday in April 1890, Dr Treves finds Merrick dead in his bed. Merrick normally sleeps sitting in bed with his heavy head on his knees. That night, he wanted to sleep on his back like a normal person. When his heavy head slipped off the bed, his neck broke.

The next day, the Chairman of the London Hospital, Mr Carr Gomm, writes to the editor of the newspaper again. He recounts what happened three and a half years ago when he wrote about the sad story of the Elephant Man. He tells the editor about Merrick's death. He also informs the editor that the remainder of the donation will be given to the hospital.