



David Carlin
FRANKENSTEIN'S CHILDREN

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Characters

4 f, 4 m (or 5 f, 3 m)

PENNY DREADFUL, street balladeer
BRANSBY COOPER, surgeon, the son of
SIR ASTLEY COOPER, surgeon
LADY PORTER
MRS. SHERIDAN; mother of Anne
ANNE SHERIDAN / JAMES SELFRIDGE
ELISABETH HARE, a poor woman
MR. HARE, her husband
ANGEL
DEMON
WILLIAM HARE; the Hares' son
WEASEL, the undertaker
POLLY CHAPMAN, prostitute
MIDWIVES
BODYSNATCHERS
SEXTON
MARTHA, graveyard mourner
JANE, graveyard mourner
EDWINA PLACE
IMPORTER of bodies
GUTHRIE, surgeon
KNOX, surgeon
SPARKS, surgeon
GHOSTS, MEN AND WOMEN IN THE STREETS

Note: The play is set in England in 1832. In the original production the setting was a Victorian graveyard, which was constructed amidst the ruins of an old fruit and vegetable market. The audience sat in the graveyard and the play was performed in and amongst them, promenade style. Various of the tombs and monuments were used to represent different locations within the play, such as the Anatomy school and the Hare's house.

Original Music for songs written by Marianne Permazel and Justin Posa (except "The Unquiet Grave", which has a traditional melody). Words taken from original 18th and 19th Century Ballads.

First night

01.03.90, Red Shed Company, AU-Adelaide at East End Market (part of the 1990 Adelaide Festival); director Tim Maddock; 🎵 original music soundtrack: Marianne Permazel, Justin Posa

ACT I
Prologue

Penny Dreadful.

PENNY Here is a dreadful tragedy, most horrid to unfold
The bare narration is enough to make your blood run cold
The blood-stain'd chronicle of crime how dark so e'er it be
Can scarce produce an instance of such barbarity

A ghastly procession of ghosts enters, making a cacophony of rough music with pots and pans, whistles and bells and bearing the effigy of a doctor in blood-stained frock-coat. In the centre of the space they hold aloft the effigy and the noise stops.

MRS. HARE'S GHOST Three cheers for the good doctor!

ALL Hip hip hooray!
Hip hip hooray!
Hip hip hooray!

Each time they cheer they toss the effigy up in the air, its empty limbs flailing.

POLLY'S GHOST And may the bastards suffer that made us suffer!

Without a sound they rip apart the effigy, tearing it limb from limb.

PENNY 'Twas in the middle of the night
To sleep young William tried
When Mary's ghost came stealing in
And stood at his bedside ...

O William dear! O William dear!
My rest eternal ceases
Alas! My everlasting peace
Is broken into pieces

I thought the last of all my cares
Would end with my last minute
But tho' I went to my long home
I didn't stay long in it

The bodysnatchers they have come
And made a snatch at me
It's very hard them kind of men
Won't let a body be!

You thought that I was buried deep
Quiet decent like and chary,
But from the grave in Mary-Bone
They've come and boned your Mary.

The arm that used to take your arm
Is took to Dr. Vyse;
And both my legs have gone to walk
The hospital at Guys

I vow'd that you should have my hand
But fate gates us denial
You'll find it there T Dr. Bells
In spirits and a phial.

As for my feet, the little feet
You used to call so pretty
There's one, I know, in Bedford Row,
The t'other's in the city

I can't tell where my head is gone
But Doctor Carpue can;
As for my trunk, it's all pack'd up
To go by Pickford's van.

I wish you'd go to Mr. P.
And save me such a ride;
I don't half like the outside place
They've took for my inside.

The cock it crows – I must be gone!
My William, we must part!
But I'll be yours in death, altho'
Sir Astley has my heart.

Don't go to weep upon my grave
And think that there I be
They haven't left an atom there
Of my anatomy.

Blackout.

SCENE 1

Anatomy school. Sir Astley and Bransby Cooper. They are dressing to attend an execution.

| | |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BRANSBY | Executions! Ugh! |
| SIR ASTLEY | Ghastly business. |
| BRANSBY | Come and see a murderer launched into eternity and then dissected by the doctors! A nice day out. |
| SIR ASTLEY | Not my idea of culture. |
| BRANSBY | As surgeons we belong in the enlightened realm of scientific research, not bespattered with blood amidst crowds of savages. |
| SIR ASTLEY | We need the bodies, Bransby, for our work to go ahead. The shortage is bad enough as it is. |
| BRANSBY | But we'll never survive on murderers. Unless they hang ten a day. |

SIR ASTLEY Ten a day does sound an awful lot.

BRANSBY We all know where most of our bodies come from.

SIR ASTLEY We do indeed.

BRANSBY On the third day he rose from the grave.

SIR ASTLEY Exactly. Don't be vulgar.

BRANSBY There must be a more rational solution.

SIR ASTLEY But not today. Come on, let's get it over and done with.

BRANSBY I hope there's not a riot. Last time they tore my coat.

They go.

SCENE 2

Upper class garden. Sweet noise of birds. Mrs. Sheridan and Lady Porter drinking tea.

LADY PORTER These really are exquisite flowers, Edith. Your garden's looking quite superb.

MRS. SHERIDAN Who can she marry? Her father has his eyes on that young man with mills in Birmingham. I fancy not, he's rich but thick.

LADY PORTER What about a surgeon?

MRS. SHERIDAN Any likely types?

LADY PORTER Sir Whatsisname at Guys has several sons, all following the trade. Profession I should say.

MRS. SHERIDAN Once upon a time it was a trade. Surgeons and barbers, the very same blade and clippers. Very coarse, it wasn't done, scorned by the physicians. Snotty mob.

LADY PORTER Profession of the future now. Big openings ahead.

Loud bangings, thumping heard off.

MRS. SHERIDAN That must be her. With every step she breaks a piece of furniture. Back me up about Sir Whatsit. She's hopelessly impractical about these things. Time is marching on I say, you'll be sorry if you're not fixed up by twenty-five.

Bang. Crash.

That'll be the Wedgewood in the hall.

ANNE *(off)* Mother!

MRS. SHERIDAN Anne, Lady Porter's come for tea.

ANNE *(storms in)* Mother I've made the most astounding discovery. Hello Lady Porter, how do you do, isn't Bentham fine. Mother, that mouse I trapped, I cut it open. What a strange and fascinating world was beholden to my gaze. Webs and trails of tubes and wires, murky bags and bones. A pattern of veins across the brain exactly the form of a tree in winter. I looked at it and thought: This is the enlightenment! This mouse is a machine! And we too are machines. Much more complex than a steam train I would say, much more interesting. Do you think anyone has ever thought like this before? I've left a bit of mess around the kitchen. Mrs. Sims was trying to do the supper, she wasn't pleased, I said it was experimental science.

LADY PORTER Extraordinary girl.

MRS. SHERIDAN Sit down, Anne, please. We've got something to –

ANNE No time Mother. Things to do. But Lady Porter, what do you think of Bentham's concept of utility? Radical, isn't it?

LADY PORTER Mr. Bentham has many supporters now –

ANNE I think it's very scientific. "That property in any object whereby it tends to produce pleasure, good or happiness", there you are, utility. Sorry, sorry, I interrupted.

MRS. SHERIDAN Anne, what would tend to produce the greatest happiness for me would be for you to stop hopping about the place and SIT DOWN!

LADY PORTER When I think of utility I can't help wondering, for example, what's in it for the mouse you just cut up? How much utility, how much pleasure does it receive?

ANNE But Lady Porter, don't you see the mouse is the object.

LADY PORTER Not from the mouse's point of view.

ANNE It doesn't have a point of view, it's the object!

MRS. SHERIDAN Anne! *(motions to chair)*

ANNE But Mother where is the utility – *(catches her mother's glare and sits down. Her mother tries subtly to indicate to Anne how to sit with poise and grace)*
Now what?

MRS. SHERIDAN *(angrily)* Now nothing, just sit. *(calms)* We may engage in civilized debate on any topic.

Pause.

ANNE Bentham's invented a "felicific calculus" which enables him to mathematically calculate amounts of happiness. Do you think that's possible?

LADY PORTER According to La Place there are mathematical all phenomena. Including laughter and tears, I presume.

ANNE *(leaping up)* How could you use such laws for the further benefit of humanity? I suppose in a world governed by reason – Is reason defined my mathematical law?

Pause.

MRS. SHERIDAN Anne, please sit down. Please.

ANNE *(does so)* New topic.

MRS. SHERIDAN Marriage.

ANNE Anatomy.

LADY PORTER I don't mind what they do as long as they don't dissect me. What do you say, Elizabeth?

MRS. SHERIDAN Yes, I've asked for a lead coffin inside oak. There are so many ghastly stories. But on the topic –

LADY PORTER It seems these bodysnatcher people make absolutely no discrimination. Lord Alford's uncle they dug up last week – from the family vault! Dragged him off to God knows where. Ruined the vault completely.

MRS. SHERIDAN Yes, what a waste –

LADY PORTER Oh it's so awfully unfair. You know, honestly I don't think the lower classes feel so sensitive about these things as we. I don't think some of them would even notice or feel a thing to be dissected.

ANNE You make them sound just like my mouse.

LADY PORTER I know, Anne, it's a wicked thing to say, but the way some of them behave you really start to wonder. It's the new industrial life; it's had a degenerative effect upon the race. They're heading back the way of savages and animals. And now they want the vote! With no respect for property! How can they possibly contribute to rational government?

MRS. SHERIDAN I fear we're straying from the topic.

LADY PORTER Dissection, wasn't it?

MRS. SHERIDAN No –

LADY PORTER I have nightmares about dissection. All those leering men with their hands on my body, poking and joking and me absolutely powerless to stop them.

MRS. SHERIDAN Yes it does seem somehow disgusting that men should have the right over our bodies. Still, we mustn't put her off, Lady Porter. They're not all like that, are they!

LADY PORTER Oh no, not at all. Only in one's nightmares.

MRS. SHERIDAN Anne, Lady Porter and I have been discussing your future.

ANNE I've decided to be a surgeon.

Lady Porter laughs dryly.

MRS. SHERIDAN Very understandable dear, but you know you can't so we thought why not marry one?

ANNE What?! But you –

MRS. SHERIDAN Sit. You would still have the stimulation of a scientific atmosphere. Through your husband.

ANNE Yes, but I want to do it, not just sit and be charming about it.

MRS. SHERIDAN *(strongly)* One thing you will learn in life is that there is no point in having impossible desires. As your Mr. Bentham would say, they are not useful.

Anne is silent.

LADY PORTER Nor rational, I'm afraid, in this world.

Pause.

MRS. SHERIDAN We'll introduce you to Sir Thingummy's lads anyway. You'll find them highly intelligent. Now, Elizabeth, before you go I must show you the exotic prints we bought from Mr. Banks. Australian botany. Quite remarkable.

They go out.

ANNE I shall become a surgeon. Even if I have to be a man, I shall do it.

SCENE 3

The deathbed of Mr. And Mrs. Hare

MRS. HARE The art of dying well, Mr. Hare. That's what it's all about. That's what my mother told me. Heaven and hell. Neck 'a' neck. Because we all sin in little ways don't we. Despite ourselves. They'll be here soon. I must say I'm a little nervous. Mr. Hare?

He is very still. Has he died? She shakes him. He rouses, snores, mounds something unintelligible. She wipes the dribble of his mouth.

I'm sure you've got nothing to worry about. Fifty years in a flour mill. Couldn't do much harm there, could you? Half dead, too tired. It was like that Cobbett said, a hell on earth. That's good in a way. You haven't got so much resting on the current decision, have you? *(laughs nervously)*
You'll be alright. Didn't traipse off through the fog to church for nothing every Sunday. You probably should never have joined that union, God's not in favor of unions, or so the vicar told me. But honest work and complaints and don't expect too much, he said. There'll be riches for all up there for decent folk like us, stinking great platters of it, I imagine. Where can they be? Now they'll want to take me first, I'm older. In any case you'd be hopeless up there without me, you wouldn't know where to put yourself.

A glorious heraldic trumpet fanfare sounds, announcing the arrival of the Solemn Angel.

ANGEL By the grace of the Lord God our heavenly Father we come to collect the eternal soul of Mrs. Elizabeth Hare.

MRS. HARE I'm sorry about the state of the house, it's such a mess ... we've nothing to offer you. Would you like a cup of tea?

ANGEL She has led a simple goodly life on earth and shall be rewarded with everlasting wealth in the Fields of Plenty.

MRS. HARE *(whispers)* What did I tell you, Mr. Hare?

ANGEL If any else have claims upon this soul, they must speak up now, for the time is nigh.

Pause. They look around.

For the very last time, is there anyone who contests for the soul of Elizabeth Hare?

A foul demon appears.

DEMON Yes. I do. Chain her to my breast and we will fly forever downward!

ANGEL Vile demon of the darkest pit.

DEMON Sanctimonious sycophant.

ANGEL What say you against this woman?

DEMON She's a wicked sluttish whore.

MRS. HARE I am not. Don't listen Mr. Hare. A young boy in the summer grass. I didn't know then that it was wrong.

DEMON Her flesh is defiled, her teeth lie rotting in her jaw.

MRS. HARE What do you expect when I live in this filthy muckhole? Not that I'm complaining, praise the Lord.

ANGEL *(announcing her verdict)* Her soul is pure and white. Have you anything more than frothy ranting, Beelzebub?

DEMON She asked for charity!

MRS. HARE It's true. I have sinned.

ANGEL We should give to charity, but never seek it for ourselves.

MRS. HARE But I did, I sought it. William was a babe, you were sick Mr. Hare, I went and begged for alms. I know it was wrong for honest souls –

DEMON To beg like muck.

MRS. HARE God helps those who are self-reliant, the vicar said –

ANGEL The world doesn't owe you a living.

Enter Mrs. Hare's son William with Mr. Weasel, the undertaker.

MRS. HARE But it was only just the once I did it, only just the once. Don't send me to the everlasting flames! Please, please ... *(breaks down sobbing)*

WEASEL Now we can do the coffin in a beautiful pine, all in black of course, you even get four pall-bearers. In every way a Respectable Funeral as the times demand. Very modern, proper and decent. Something a bit special at a price you won't find anywhere. And the beauty is you don't have to do a penny now. Just as you can afford it. Is she alright, sir?

WILLIAM Mother –

DEMON Another lost soul on the gruesome road to oblivion.

WILLIAM Mother this is Mr. Weasel, the undertaker.

MRS. HARE Vanish, demon!

WILLIAM Mother –

WEASEL Perhaps I should wait outside.

WILLIAM No wait. Mother calm down. Mr. Weasel's come –

ANGEL God is a stern Father whose word cannot be crossed.

MRS. HARE We tried our best not to be so poor, Lord.

WEASEL I did want to measure them up. We at Respectable Funerals pride ourselves on accuracy. No waste you see. It's a bit difficult.

ANGEL But his mercy is infinite!

MRS. HARE We are saved, Mr. Hare!

WEASEL Perhaps my visit was a little premature. I'll come back later.
(leaves)

The Angel sings a hymn of praise. Mrs. Hare sings along. The demon fades away.

ANGEL/ MRS. HARE A pilgrim on her dying bed
With glory in her soul
Lifts up her longing eyes on high
Towards the blissful goal

While friends and children weep around
And loth to let her go

WILLIAM *(screams)* Mother! Mother!

The Angel leaves. Mrs. Hare is left singing on her own.

MRS. HARE She shouts with an expiring breath
And leaves them all below. *(stops, listens)*
I thought today was the day. Apparently not. *(sits down gently)*

WILLIAM Mother that was Mr. Weasel. The Mr. Weasel of Respectable Funerals. He had an extremely kind and beneficial offer and you frightened him off with your rantings.

MRS. HARE Vision.

WILLIAM How many people in our street can say they're having a Respectable Funeral? I try to do my best.

MRS. HARE Undertaker scum.

WILLIAM Better than the pauper's drive. Six inches under. Very dignified that is, very safe.

MRS. HARE My mother was buried in a pauper's grave. They were very kind. Gave her free flowers on the parish.

WILLIAM That was then and this is now. It's the modern world. People look after themselves nowadays. They get ahead. That's why we are a Civilized Nation and Africa is Savages.

MRS. HARE Don't give me your philosophy. Learnt to read all of a sudden have you?

This shuts him up.

(turns to her husband)

Oh dear. I think he's – *(listens for heartbeat)* Quick, get the glass.

William brings over the mirror.

(holds it against Hare's mouth to test for breath)

Can you see anything?

WILLIAM

No.

MRS. HARE

No breath, no life. Quietly snuck off, didn't you, Mr. Hare? Off with the angels. Oh dear. *(gets up, walks around the tom vaguely, sits down again, rocks gently)* Oh dear. Oh dear. *(repeats the same action)* Stop the clocks. Cover all the mirrors. Send out invitations to accompany the corpse. I'll watch him.

WILLIAM

I'll send for Mr. Weasel. *(leaves)*

She is still for a long time, then slowly starts to rock again.

SCENE 4

The anatomy school.

SIR ASTLEY

(enters, sees Polly) Why are there still cleaners here at this hour? Get out, get out! We are trying to do some serious work.

POLLY

I'm not a cleaner –

SIR ASTLEY

This isn't a home for waifs and strays you know, it's a school for the study of anatomical science.

POLLY

I thought it was a hospital.

SIR ASTLEY

We are *attached* to the hospital – You haven't stolen anything, have you?

POLLY

I'm looking for a Mr. Astley Cooper, Sir. I'm sick, sir.

SIR ASTLEY

If you're sick, then go to the hospital. You enter – *(breaks off because she has gone into an awful fit of coughing and shivering, helps her to sit down)*

POLLY

I have to see him. I'm afraid I'm dying.

SIR ASTLEY

(softer) I'm Astley Cooper. I'll take you to –

POLLY

No! Oh Sir Astley, I am glad. Name of Polly Chapman. If you'll give me just a moment to hear a proposition ...

SIR ASTLEY

A proposition?

POLLY Nothing like you might be thinking, sir, nothing that would sully your clean frock and reputation, nothing untoward or otherwise unsavoury, but you see, the fact is – *(coughs horribly)* – I do think I'm dying, Sir Astley, got the tuberculoidal fever, cough blood into me hands. Do you want to see?

SIR ASTLEY No! No! But let me examine –

POLLY I wouldn't get too close. It's catching.

SIR ASTLEY Tuberculosis can't be spread –

POLLY I fear that's only just the tip of the iceberg. Sometimes it feels this whole body's full of fevers. You should see the air where I live. The winds sweep up the pestilential dust from seven continents and blow it down our street, I swear. Can't breathe. *(starts gasping)*

SIR ASTLEY Yes you can, you must relax. *(puts his ear to her chest)*

POLLY Can you hear my heart? It jumps. It's always jumped. We've got it in our family.

SIR ASTLEY Hmmmm ... *(frowns. Then remembers)* So what exactly – you said a proposition?

POLLY This is it. I want you to buy my body when I die. I want to make a contribution in the name of science.

SIR ASTLEY Buy it?

POLLY I know you face an everlasting crisis for the lack of things to work on, and all the midnight dramas and extortionist ruses of the resurrectionists, so I'm offering you a bargain. I'll sign away my body to you here and now. Then at my final hour I'll call you to my bedside for final offices and beyond. Four guineas only, take me straightaway, it's half you'd pay a bodysnatcher to go and dig me up. What do you say?

SIR ASTLEY Impossible. The idea appalls me.

POLLY Just four guineas, Sir. I'm saving for a monkey. *(starts to cry)* My brother's blind, sir, grinds an organ down the High Street on a Saturday morning. But no one cares without a monkey. When I'm gone, he'll be alone. Unless he has a – *(breaks off sobbing)*

SIR ASTLEY That's really none of my concern. These palpitations in your heart. You say you've always had them?

POLLY Since a child, it's always jumped.

SIR ASTLEY And your family has a history?

POLLY Sister died of it, both my parents. They say it's in the blood.

SIR ASTLEY Hm. Very interesting.

POLLY Will you make a deal then, Sir?

SIR ASTLEY Since it could be for the benefit of science, I suppose I have a duty.

POLLY Good. *(shakes his hand, pulls out piece of paper)* I had a friend draw up a contract. Absolutely legal-like and proper. That's my mark there, you just sign here.

SIR ASTLEY Well, apart from the grammar it seems clear enough. *(signs)* Fine. Now I suggest you can rest, can you see yourself out?

POLLY Sorry, I need the money first.

SIR ASTLEY Oh yes, four guineas. *(digs in pocket or drawer)* One, two, three, four. There we are. *(puts the rest of the money back)* I shall see you, um ...

POLLY On my deathbed, I expect. *(smiles grimly, goes off coughing)*

SIR ASTLEY *(distracted)* Yes. Coronary palpitations ...
(goes off in deep thought)

SCENE 5

Anne is now James. She is combing her hair to look like a man.

JAMES *(practicing nervously)* My name is James. James Selfridge. Pleased to meet you, Sir Astley. *(holds out hand to imaginary person)* I've been abroad, studying with a private tutor. My father lives in India, with the navy. He's an admiral *(rethinks)* – a major. Perhaps you knew him up at Oxford? He's seen a lot of elephants out there. From his ships. I've read all of Galen and I know where William Harvey proved him wrong about the circulation of the blood. Father's got a pith-helmet.

SCENE 6

Laying out Mr. Hare.

MIDWIFE 1 I knew it was coming. Poor old Mr. Hare.

MIDWIFE 2 So did I.

MIDWIFE 1 I knew it when Aunt Alice fell off the wall. No explanation. Slid down. Smashed on the floor.

MIDWIFE 2 Kitchen door opened wide. Slowly. No one there.

MIDWIFE 1 Fire spat cinders. Shape. (*traces with one finger the shape of a coffin*)

MIDWIFE 2 Coffin.

MIDWIFE 1 (*nods*) Coffin.
If the dog howl at night
Or mournfully cry
Or if the cock should crow
Someone will die.

SCENE 7

Anatomy School. James, Sir Astley.

JAMES My father is –

SIR ASTLEY Yes, yes, good, and you're enrolling I suppose. Something quite extraordinary is happening over here. I have extracted all the cardio-vascular fluids from this rat and transfused it directly into the arterial system of the other. What, according to time-honored theory, would one expect to observe?

JAMES The animal's central nervous system would reject the transfused fluid.

SIR ASTLEY Correct. But in fact – How did you know that?

JAMES I've read all of Galen and I know where –

SIR ASTLEY But in fact, what does one observe?

JAMES One observes –

SIR ASTLEY Look closely.

JAMES One observes the heart of the second rat appears to be functioning normally, although perhaps with intermittent palpitations.

SIR ASTLEY Excellent. Very sharp indeed. And what does that prove?

JAMES It proves in general that the transfusion of blood –

SIR ASTLEY Rubbish! It proves in general nothing! What kind of scientific theory can be proved by a casual glance at the behavior of a single rat? You must assume you know an awful lot about that rat, not to mention every other rat.

JAMES Well, I've done a lot of work with mice.

SIR ASTLEY (*laughs*) Your lesson number one is don't jump to conclusions. The truth of science must be totally objective. Fleeting whims and passions not allowed! We spend our days in steady step by

step, edging forward. That's how we make our giant leaps, Galileo, Newton! Step by step and the objective view. Does that sound dull?

JAMES No, of course not, it sounds –

SIR ASTLEY Good, we're going to get on famously. What's the time? My god, half past. Did I show you what I'm working on next door? Heaven knows what could have taken place by now. Come on, let's have a look. (*charges out, James in his wake*) By the way, do I know your father?

SCENE 8

Mr. Hare's wake.

PENNY (*sings in a melancholy tone*)

There's a grim one horse hearse in a jolly round trot
To the graveyard a pauper is going I wot;
The road is rough and the hearse has no springs
And hark to the dirge that the sad driver sings –
 Rattle his bones over the stones
 It's only a pauper nobody owns.

Oh where are the mourners? Alas there are none;
He has left not a gap in the world now he's gone,
Not a tear in the eye of child, woman or man
To the grave with his carcass as fast as you can
 Rattle his bones over the stones
 It's only a pauper nobody owns.

What a jolting and creaking and splashing and din
The whip how it cracks! And the wheels how they spin
How the dirt, right and left, o'er the hedges is hurled
The pauper at length makes a noise in the world
 Rattle his bones over the stones
 It's only a pauper nobody owns.

... But a truce to this strain for any soul it is sad
To think that a heart in humanity clad
Should make, like the brutes, such a desolate end,
And depart from the light without leaving a friend
 Bear softly his bones over the stones
 Though a pauper, he's one whom his Maker yet owns

Everyone claps appreciatively.

MRS. HARE (*a little drunk*) You lie in bed and press yourself up against that warm body. You trace with your finger down every little crack and wrinkle and you know it like a map of a town you've always lived in. You think there's plenty of time, too much time, because half of it you're hating, because he grizzles and screams and mopes like a baby. Then suddenly it's all too fast

and you haven't prepared for any of it. You just want a simple thing, like holding hands, it's silly, isn't it. But it's all gone. Cold. Dead. You wonder where it went. What's the meaning of this big cold lump you used to love and hate so much. It's a mystery.

PENNY We're just lucky we've got God and Heaven and all that so we can stop thinking about it, aren't we?

MIDWIFE 1 Drink anyone?

MIDWIFE 2 Piece of cake?

PENNY Oh my god. He moved. His hand.

MIDWIFE 1 What?

PENNY He moved. He sort of twitched. Oh my God.

All but Mrs. Hare crowd around the coffin.

MIDWIFE 2 He's not moving now.

PENNY Are you sure he's dead?

MIDWIFE 1 Don't touch him.

MRS. HARE The touch of the dead can bring good luck.

PENNY Wouldn't that be awful if we buried him alive. To wake up and hear the heavy thud of sand hitting wood above your face. Gasping for breath.

MIDWIFE 1 In thirty years I've never yet laid one out that wasn't absolutely dead. The body has a totally different feel to it.

WILLIAM Rubbery.

Mrs. Hare has started to cry.

PENNY Have a nice piece of cake, Liz. Got to eat up all his sins, you know what they say.

MIDWIFE 1 Did I ever tell you the story of Mrs. Halfpenny, used to live around the corner?
Mrs. Halfpenny. Had a daughter, one and only. Who used to write to her from far away. She kept the letters at her bedside in a drawer. Her treasure chest, everything she loved in it. One day a different letter came. A stranger's hand, with terrible news. The daughter had caught the cholera and died. Cruelly young. Mrs. Halfpenny opened up the drawer and cried. And all the letters got a little smudged. But she kept them. To stay in touch. And one day she said to me: "When I die, I want to take Joy's letters with me." Joy the daughter. "I want you to gather them up from the drawer where they sit by my

bedside and lay them with me in my final bed.” Coffin. So I said: “I’ll do that for you, Joan.”, and she said: “Thank you dear, I know you won’t forget.” And that was that for many years. Every time we met she said: “Now don’t forget. You know what.” And I said “No, I won’t forget.” And then two months ago she died. And I forgot. We had her in the ground, and the clods, you know, and I suddenly thought. Too late. Worst moment of my whole life. There she was, with nothing to read. And what would she say to her daughter? When they met up. It felt awful. It was only luck that got me out of it. Because two days later, who else dies? Old Jimmy White, the postman. He was such a good one, never known to fail in forty-seven years of it. So I thought, here we are, I’ll stick the letters in with Jimmy, if he’s half as quick with letters on the other side she’ll get them in a flash. So I did.

All very impressed. Penny laughs.

MIDWIFE 1 What are you laughing about?

PENNY I can’t believe I thought he was alive. *(mimics his voice)*
Excuse me. All help yourself to a drink but don’t offer me one.

MIDWIFE 2 Penny really.

MRS. HARE *(laughs)* You just shut up, Mr. Hare. You’ve had all your getting, so don’t spoil the party.

MIDWIFE 1 How are you feeling, Mr. Hare?

PENNY *(as Hare)* I’m bloody freezing. Has someone left the door open?

Uproarious laughter.

MIDWIFE 2 Mr. Hare tell me. Do you believe in ghosts?

PENNY Nope. Bloody ridiculous. Except in so far as I am one myself.

MRS. HARE Your manners have gone right downhill, Mr. Hare.

PENNY Bloody manners!

MRS. HARE Bloody manners yourself, you good for nothing bag-o-bones.

Laughter. They are all quite pissed.

WILLIAM You smelly old wheeze-bucket.

PENNY One more insult and I’m leaving.

They fall about.

MIDWIFE 2 Go on then. *(mimics death walk)*

MIDWIFE 1 In Wales I was at a wake. They dragged the dead one up the chimney, poked the head out, how do you do, and down again. Deadly serious. Something to do with helping the soul on it's way.

MIDWIFE 2 Bloody superstitious mob, the Welsh.

A horrible wailing is heard. The all scream in panic and run out. Two bodysnatchers climb in through the window. They bundle up the body out of the coffin and into a sack.

BODYSNATCHER 1 What did I tell you? Easier than digging them up.

BODYSNATCHER 2 Just what the doctor ordered.

They take out the body.

SCENE 9

Penny Dreadful in the street.

PENNY "Horrible crime in the metropolis! An event of a most truly disturbing nature has occurred. We fear the criminals responsible may never be brought to justice. While listening to a distressing broadsheet account of the violent anatomy riots taking place in Scotland, an eminent member of the House of Lords, Lord Althorp, was afflicted with a sudden and dramatic choking upon a fishbone! The entire domestic staff has been brought in for questioning, as have several South Coast fishermen. However suspicion now centres upon the shadowy figure of the broadsheet reader, who it appears employed a most upsetting tone of voice, and who has since mysteriously disappeared. "Just a penny for all the news! "Princess Sophie falls from her carriage!" Just a penny!

SCENE 10

The operating theatre. Sir Astley lecturing his students, a body under a sheet upon the slab. James stands nearby.

SIR ASTLEY Gentlemen, welcome to the theatre. Nice to see the smiling faces of students again. I hope you are all here because, like me, you love your work. You will learn to operate with all the delicacy and grace with which you would peel a piece of fruit. I have here, gentlemen, a man's body. *(removes the sheet)*

The body is Mr. Hare.

He is dead, I assure you. *(smiles)* Today I am going to perform for you a dissection of his body. I trust you will all place yourselves in positions from which you can see clearly everything I do. Now, I will make the first incision in a long straight line from the oesophagus all the way down the sternum

to the pubis. Chalk, James. *(looks up)* James Selfridge will assist me.

James steps out nervously.

Then I will stretch back the skin and flesh –

James knocks off the tray of instruments by mistake – scalpels, saws, etc. clatter to the floor.

Pick them up please – and saw around the ribcage so it may be removed, thereby exposing the heart and lungs. Now, that's right, James, thank you, if you could just pass me the scalpel. Please, all of you, observe closely. Ah, one moment while I adjust the blade. *(walks away from the body to the other table)*

James stands over the body. Suddenly Mr. Hare stretches up and grabs him.

MR. HARE *(pleading, scared)* You're not going to be hurting me, are you? I was bodysnatched, you know!

James flings him down and he is still. Sir Astley turns back and he is ready to make the cut.

JAMES Stop!

SIR ASTLEY What?

JAMES Stop!

SIR ASTLEY What on earth are you talking about? Is the building on fire?

JAMES No. He –

Pause.

SIR ASTLEY He what, James?

JAMES He – I can't say it, it doesn't make sense, he –

SIR ASTLEY We are all dying to find out. A small tapdance on the table? *(laughing)* A song?

James flinches in horror.

James, try to pull yourself together. I know it's very difficult the first time, you'll find it gets easier as time goes on. The objective view. It's a kind of necessary inhumanity we all must learn, I'm afraid. I've marked in chalk the exact boundaries of the three primary incisions. I'll talk through the process with you as we go. Fundamentally it's the same procedure you will all have tried yourselves by now on rats.

JAMES He's a human, not a rat.

SIR ASTLEY *(with ironic good humour)* Well spotted, James. We are interested in observing humans because we are humans. If you

like, we can stop now. Lay down our scalpels. Let's all go home, gentlemen. There's nothing to be afraid of. Let's close the book. The limit of human knowledge has been reached!
(pauses)

Quiet, isn't it? I think there's plenty to be afraid of. The past weighs heavy on our backs, with ghosts, myths, superstitions. The moon is a piece of cheese, it whispers. We start to sink. Without knowledge we have no control over reality. *(pauses again)*

So now we have the choice. We can slowly sink, or we can see what we may discover when we open up this body. Science or superstition, James?

JAMES

Science.

SIR ASTLEY

Right. We begin at the oesophagus ... *(makes the first incision)*

SCENE 11

At the Hares. Mrs. Hare banging on door.

MRS. HARE

Come out you scrawny bugger. I know you've got the money. It's hid under your snotty pillow. Four months you owe me. What a hide.

WILLIAM

(enters with crowbar) Shall I break the door down, Mother.

MRS. HARE

No. There's one last thing. The money box. *(picks up old piggybank, to door)* You're making me do this you know. This is a priceless family heirloom you know. I do not do this lightly.

WILLIAM

I remember it from my earliest years.

MRS. HARE

Comes from oriental China. Brought across by Marco Polo, mother said.

They listen. Silence.

Damn you, then. *(smashes it with a hammer)* That's what you've done to my hospitality.

It shatters.

WILLIAM

(examines the rubble) Buttons, Mother.

MRS. HARE

Should have known none of our ancestors would have thrown money away.

WILLIAM

Buttons.

MRS. HARE

That's it then. If you won't come out, we're going to batter down the door

Silence.

Get the crowbar, William.

WILLIAM *(picks it up, jemmies it against crack of door, eventually gets it open)* I don't think she's in there.

MRS. HARE Go and have a look.

WILLIAM *(gasps, reappears)* She's dead.

MRS. HARE Oh Christ. Poor thing. Better bring her out here.

WILLIAM I don't want to touch her.

MRS. HARE Wrap her in the sheet.

He brings out the body.

Must have been very recent. Hardly smells. Can you get the money now?

WILLIAM Mother there's none there. I looked.

MRS. HARE *(looks at him in disbelief, to the corpse)* How could you do this to us? What are we left with now? Eh? What good are you to us now? It's the workhouse beckons, William. I can see its black shadow cast across our furniture. What do we do now? Sell the furniture? What have we left to sell? Sell ourselves? Sell –

A long pause.

WILLIAM Do you think? – ... we could –?

MRS. HARE I don't know.

WILLIAM She has no relatives, no friends.

MRS. HARE It's a horrible situation to be in.

WILLIAM Not as if we've got much choice.

MRS. HARE If she didn't owe us money.

Pause.

WILLIAM It's not as if we murdered her, is it?

SCENE 12

Anatomy school. Morning. James and Bransby have been in discussion. Sir Astley enters, breathes the fresh air in deeply. The tone is very light.

SIR ASTLEY How perfectly clear the air is this morning. (*pauses to enjoy the moment, then briskly*) Ten o' clock. Dissection class. Come on James. Time to go.

JAMES I'm not coming.

BRANSBY He's not coming.

SIR ASTLEY You're not coming? Why's that?

JAMES Because ...

BRANSBY He has a problem.

JAMES An ethical problem.

BRANSBY With bodysnatching.

SIR ASTLEY Oh for God's sake. Really?

JAMES Yes.

BRANSBY Absolutely.

SIR ASTLEY Oh. I feel the air becoming muddy.

BRANSBY Where do you start?

SIR ASTLEY Where do I start?

JAMES I'm in favour of bequests.

SIR ASTLEY James, I'm in favour of bequests. I'm also in favour of eternal life.

BRANSBY But at ten o clock.

SIR ASTLEY In the morning.

BRANSBY I told him.

SIR ASTLEY If one wants to learn, one has to be ...

BRANSBY Practical.

SIR ASTLEY So come along.

JAMES I won't.

BRANSBY He won't.

JAMES Because it's wrong.

SIR ASTLEY (*sighs*) James – we've been through this. (*short pause; walks about*)

You're a brilliant young man.

BRANSBY I told him.

SIR ASTLEY You mustn't let this – problem hold you back.

JAMES It's not a problem.

SIR ASTLEY It certainly is a problem.

BRANSBY At ten o'clock in the morning it's a problem.

SIR ASTLEY On such a clear day. (*sighs*) Bransby haven't you tried to tell him –

BRANSBY He won't listen.

SIR ASTLEY This new idea of yours – what is it?

BRANSBY The Anatomy Act.

SIR ASTLEY The Anatomy Act, James. There you are. No more problems. Bransby has some very clever friends in Parliament, and they're writing this new Anatomy Act.

BRANSBY I told him.

SIR ASTLEY It's going to make us all feel a lot better.

BRANSBY He doesn't listen.

JAMES Because it's not about bequests. About people giving their bodies freely to science.

SIR ASTLEY Oh I'm sure it is, have you read the fine print? Have you read it?

JAMES No. They haven't finished writing –

SIR ASTLEY Well there you are. Storm in a teacup. Honestly, James, you are sulking like a child. I am now late, so I am going.

BRANSBY And I shall come along.

SIR ASTLEY (*lightheartedly*) James, we live in a free country. You are free to stay behind here and I am free to fail you. (*beckons to the door*)

James hesitates, then complies.

(slaps him on the back in fatherly good humour, as they go out)
You must learn to relax a bit, James.

SCENE 13

Outside the Anatomy School. William and Mrs. Hare carry on the lodger's body, wrapped in a sack.

WILLIAM Quick. Put it behind this tree.

MRS. HARE I don't like this. I can feel God's eyes on us.

WILLIAM Don't be silly, Mother, it's not Sunday. Look. Here comes a doctor now.

MRS. HARE How do you know he's a doctor?

WILLIAM Neck tie and swagger. Leave it to me.

Bransby approaches.

(steps out to meet him.)

Excuse me, Sir. Would you be interested by any chance –?

BRANSBY Get out of my way, ruffian, or I'll call the police. *(walks on)*

MRS. HARE *(claps from the side)* Very good, William. Very polished.

WILLIAM Alright, mother. You think of something!

MRS. HARE Don't get in a huff.

WILLIAM I am in a huff.

MRS. HARE Help me drag it out there.

WILLIAM What are you – If someone sees it we'll be torn apart by all our friends and neighbours.

MRS. HARE Yes, but if NO ONE sees it, it'll just sit in the bag and get worms *(dumping it right on the path)* Here's someone else. Let's hope another necktie and swagger.

They hide.

SIR ASTLEY *(approaches, sees bundle on road, stops, looks around, examines it)* What the devil?

MRS. HARE *(jumps out)* For sale, sir. No strings. Good evening. You are a doctor, aren't you?

SIR ASTLEY *(looks at her warily)* I don't recognize you. Why don't you follow the usual –?

MRS. HARE We've never done it before. We don't know.

SIR ASTLEY This isn't some kind of game?

MRS. HARE We're risking our mortal souls, it's not a game. She's got very funny skin, but I'm sure she's alright underneath. Have a look, Sir.

SIR ASTLEY *(has a look)* Hmm, I see.

MRS. HARE Looks awful, doesn't she?

WILLIAM Mother.

SIR ASTLEY No, no, she's excellent. Very unusual skin irregularity. For our work, you see, anything strange is useful. Knowing what is normal, we analyze the freak. I'll give you seven pounds and seven shillings for her.

MRS. HARE Seven pounds!

WILLIAM And seven shillings!

MRS. HARE Hmmm.

WILLIAM Mother!

MRS. HARE We'll take it. But we're not happy.

WILLIAM Yes, we are.

MRS. HARE No, we're not.

WILLIAM We're overjoyed.

MRS. HARE On account of our mortal souls.

SIR ASTLEY Oh, you don't have to worry about that. You are contributing in your own tiny little way, to the March of Intellect. Progress!

WILLIAM See!

SIR ASTLEY It's a new way of thinking.

MRS. HARE I see.

SIR ASTLEY Using reason.

MRS. HARE Yes.

SIR ASTLEY You'll catch on.

WILLIAM We'll catch on, don't worry, Sir.

SIR ASTLEY Could you carry her inside for me. And can you get any more? Next time meet me at the tradesman's.

SCENE 14

Street. James standing next to Penny. A Man is listening to her.

PENNY Broadsheets! Penny-gaffs! Reality greater than romance.
A burglar bitten by a skeleton! Truth stranger than fiction.
Fatal case of elephant teasing! Stern facts triumphant over the
products of imagination. Wife driven insane by husband tickling
her feet! Every word is true, and just a penny.

The man buys one and goes.

Thank you, Sir. *(to James)* Your turn.

JAMES People of the city, I appeal to your rational minds –

PENNY Boring! You've lost them already! Got to catch them with the
first word.

JAMES First word.

PENNY Yeah.

JAMES Bequests! I want bequests please!

PENNY No, more like this. Guts and gizzards! Sign up now. Allow us to
cut you open and take apart your insides!

MRS. HARE *(enters, shouts across)* What are you going on about, Penny?

PENNY See, look. Got their interest already.

JAMES You make it sound like a nightmare.

PENNY People love a good nightmare. Hello, Mrs. Hare.

JAMES This isn't some cheap fiction, this is real!

PENNY What's the difference?

MRS. HARE *(approaches)* What's he selling? Religion?

PENNY Science.

MRS. HARE O, you must be on the March then.

JAMES Sorry?

MRS. HARE The March. Of intellect. I'm on it, never felt better.

Pause.

Well are you?

JAMES What?

MRS. HARE On it?

JAMES I'm asking for bequests.

MRS. HARE Oh well never mind. You'll catch on. Penny, husband still not back?

PENNY No; just popped out.

MRS. HARE You know, I don't think I've clapped him for three years now. Series of freak coincidences.

PENNY *(smiles)* Mmmm.

MRS. HARE Well, I am here for one reason only, Mrs. Dreadful. The latest Dickens! Do you like Dickens, Mr. Science?

JAMES It's hardly literature but –

MRS. HARE I love it. Will Oliver be dragged back to the workhouse? Why does Bill still love Nancy? Why does Nancy still love Bill? There's three whole pence. I've got a lot to catch up on.

PENNY Three whole pence? *(examines money)* Picture of the king. Looks like real money.

MRS. HARE It is real money. Luckily I am above petty insult.

PENNY I thought you were scraping at the workhouse door?

MRS. HARE We've been very lucky. We won the lottery.

PENNY How did you afford the ticket?

MRS. HARE *(short pause)* We found it. Crumpled in a gutter.

PENNY Really?

MRS. HARE So if the cross-examination's over I'd like to hear my Dickens. Come on.

PENNY Right. *(reads)* The Story of David Copperfield –

MRS. HARE Who?

PENNY David Copperfield. That's who it's about.

MRS. HARE That's not Dickens.

PENNY Yes, it is.

MRS. HARE No, it's not. What about Oliver stuck in the workhouse? That horrible Fagan?

PENNY That was Oliver Twist. This is a new story.

MRS. HARE I don't want a new story. I want the Dickens!

PENNY This is the Dickens!

MRS. HARE Not the real Dickens.

PENNY Bloody hell.

MRS. HARE You could make up any old rubbish and say it was Dickens, couldn't she, Mr. Science?

JAMES I suppose so –

MRS. HARE Not like that in science. It's all True Facts there isn't it?

JAMES Yes.

MRS. HARE Like you can tell a criminal by the shape of his head. That's a True Fact of science.

JAMES Ah yes, phrenology.

MRS. HARE Isn't it.

JAMES I – I think so, yes, but –

MRS. HARE You can tell he's just a learner, he hasn't got his full confidence yet. Then he'll say: Excellent! Precisely!

PENNY Exactly!

MRS. HARE Brilliant!

PENNY Let's have a drink at the Club!

They laugh. Polly comes in.

MRS. HARE What are you selling anyway? Is it entertaining?

Penny roars with laughter.

JAMES It's to help us with our work in the hospitals –

POLLY Never heard of anyone yet go into a hospital and come out again alive.

PENNY Polly I can smell you from here.

POLLY I smell of happiness.

PENNY Happiness in a bottle.

POLLY That's right. It's called Stink of Drink.

MRS. HARE Hello Polly.

POLLY Mrs. Hare.

MRS. HARE And this is Mr. Science.

JAMES James Selfridge.

POLLY Visiting the plebs?

JAMES I'm –

PENNY How come you've got money, too?

POLLY Me?

PENNY Where did you get it?

POLLY If I told you how I arrived at my recent wealth you would not believe me, Penny.

PENNY Just give it a go.

POLLY *(looks around to see if anybody is listening, in a low voice)*
Won the lottery.

PENNY What?

POLLY Unbelievable, isn't it?

PENNY Fairly.

POLLY I found the ticket –

PENNY Don't tell me, I can see it. Crumpled. In a gutter.

POLLY No. In a rosebush.

PENNY Well, what do you say to that, Mrs. Hare.

MRS. HARE I say good luck to her.

JAMES I'm asking people to donate their bodies to science. To stop the bodysnatchers.

MRS. HARE The what? Oh my god, I've got to go. I don't feel well at all.
(goes)

PENNY Hey! What about the Dickens? *(goes after her)*

Pause.

POLLY I'll sign up.

JAMES You will?

POLLY Since it's for a good cause.

JAMES Thank God for that. I was starting to lose all faith.

POLLY One small condition.

JAMES What?

POLLY Small signing fee. Four pounds.

The deal is contracted.

PENNY *(sings)*
Of all the mots here in this jug (women; prison)
There's none like saucy Polly;
And but to view her dimber mug (pretty face)
Is e'er excuse for folly.
She runs suck precious cranky rigs
With pinching wedge and locket (stealing plate)
Yet she's the toast of all the prigs
Though stealing hearts and pockets.

 Just twig Miss Polly at a hop (see; dance)
She tries to come the graces! (act)
To gain her end she will not stop
And all the swells she chases
She ogles, nods and patters flesh (talks slang)
To ev'ry flatty cully (susceptible fellow)
Until she frisks him at a splash (robs, entirely)
Of rhino, wedge and tully. (money)

SCENE 15

Anatomy School. Astley and James at work. A piercing scream is heard, off.

JAMES *(alarmed)* What's going on in there?

SIR ASTLEY Lithotomy.

Bransby enters, wiping blood-stained hands.

SIR ASTLEY *(still working)* How was it, Bransby?

BRANSBY Got a headache from his screaming. *(sighs)* I think I demonstrated very clearly the physiology of the gall.

SIR ASTLEY Diagrams on the board.

BRANSBY All that. Bloody hard to get the stone out. Size of a small apple. The students were astounded. Took an hour.

JAMES Don't you mean a minute? With the Chiseldon technique?

Pause.

BRANSBY Oh no. I was trying something rather more advanced.
Couldn't rush it.

SIR ASTLEY It is only by brave experiment that science may proceed.
How's the victim now?

BRANSBY Didn't long survive it, I'm afraid. I must wash up. James, how
are you doing with the bequests?

JAMES Badly. People are afraid.

BRANSBY The Anatomy Act is really catching on. I'm giving a speech on it
tomorrow night. Why don't you come?

JAMES Perhaps I will.

BRANSBY Father, can I have the body?

SCENE 16

The Hares.

WILLIAM We are poor again, mother.

MRS. HARE I know.

WILLIAM There's no change left in the tin.

MRS. HARE I know.

WILLIAM What shall we eat for supper?

MRS. HARE I don't know.

WILLIAM Seven pounds and seven shillings. I thought that would last
forever.

MRS. HARE It was your drinking.

WILLIAM It was your Dickens. We have to think rational.

MRS. HARE What's rational?

WILLIAM It's a word, Mother. It means if we are more rational, we will end
up with more rations. I have a plan. You remember what he
said. He wants more bodies. I met a man today who works in
the graveyard up the hill. He said it's easy. He'll be there if we
go tonight.

MRS. HARE Tonight? Us? Snatching bodies up from their graves?

WILLIAM *(nods his head grimly)* Yes.

MRS. HARE No.

WILLIAM Yes.

Pause.

MRS. HARE Hmmmm.

SCENE 17

Graveyard. Two mourners with sexton.

MARTHA No moon tonight.

SEXTON I'm sure you've nothing to fear from resurrectionists, Madam. We have a very good record here at Rotherhithe.

MARTHA What's with the madam? I don't like this darkness creeping on. Did you bring the things, Jane?

JANE Yes, two shells and a flower.

MARTHA Give me the flower.

JANE *(placing on grave)* Upside down, both pointing towards that tree.

MARTHA Straight below the cross, stem partly buried.

JANE I'll remember.

MARTHA Anyone lifts a finger to get at Mrs. Simpson, we'll know about it. *(to Sexton)* What about watching?

SEXTON The Lord watches over all of us.

MARTHA I was thinking of something a bit more immediate for Mrs. Simpson.

JANE Protection.

SEXTON Oh I see. I'd have to ask a small donation.

MARTHA How much?

SEXTON Cold night, chilly wind. Three shillings.

MARTHA Bastard!

JANE We've only got one and a half.

MARTHA And that's for bread.

JANE Will that do?

SEXTON Since God is charitable, so am I. *(takes the money, counts it)*
Thank you.

MARTHA Don't go away.

SEXTON I'll sit right here.

MARTHA Goodnight then, Mrs. Simpson.

The two mourners leave. The sexton sits with his lantern. Looks around in the dark, wary. Starts to doze off. After a time, he hears a noise.

SEXTON Who's that? *(peers into the dark)* Come out. Who are you?

A cat screeches and runs away.

Psst. Get out of here, mangy devil. Scare the life out.
(sits again)

MALE VOICE *(behind him)* Nice night for it.

SEXTON *(jumps up, fiddles in his coat pocket)* Stand back. I've got a gun, you know.

FEMALE VOICE Bloody hell. That's all we need.

SEXTON Come an inch and you'll be as dead as any here. *(still fumbling with gun)* Bodysnatchers!

They approach.

(threatening with gun) Back I say. What brought you here?

WILLIAM You invited me. "Nice night for it", remember? That's what we planned.

SEXTON Maybe. Mr. Hare, is it?

WILLIAM That's right. And this is my mother. Midnight, here we are.

SEXTON Pleased to meet you. You look different in black. I thought you were from Chapman's gang.

MRS. HARE No, we're from Hare's gang.

WILLIAM We passed some shady types towards Euston.

SEXTON Pancras churchyard. They won't get far there. There's a new watch with dogs.

MRS. HARE Let's get a move on *(picks up shovel)*

SEXTON Wait a moment. See this. It's a trap. *(clears away the shell and flower carefully)*

They begin digging.

MRS. HARE Tell me, Sexton, how do you reconcile this with God?

SEXTON God takes the soul at death. Doesn't mind so much about the body.

MRS. HARE What about the last trump? The body also rising?

SEXTON That's all gone out now. Most people don't seem to realize. God's very modern. He knows it's for a good cause.

MRS. HARE What's that?

SEXTON Doctors. Respectable Men. Learning.

MRS. HARE You know what I've learnt. Most of us are worth a lot more dead than alive.

SEXTON It's true. Bodies are good for business.

WILLIAM You do pretty well out of souls too, I reckon.

MRS. HARE It's a new way of thinking, isn't it? We are helping humanity and that's why we do it.

WILLIAM Apart from the money.

MRS. HARE Or so the doctor told me.

WILLIAM Right. It should come now. Hope he's not rotten or poxy.

SEXTON Good as gold.

MRS. HARE Good as eight quid anyway.

They yank on the crowbar to lever off the lid. Finally it comes, sliding sideways. They peer inside.

WILLIAM What the hell? *(reaches inside the coffin, pulls his hand out, full of sand, drains it through his fingers)*
Fucking sand!

MRS. HARE Bastard!

SEXTON Oh dear.

WILLIAM What have you done with him?

SEXTON Didn't touch him. I had no idea.

MRS. HARE Just dissolved, did he?

SEXTON It must have been that undertaker took him out before the burial. Come to think of it, he did look shifty. Name of Weasel.

MRS. HARE That'd be right.

SEXTON Must have been. Because I assure you, I'm as horrified as you are. We sang a hymn to a pile of sand.

SCENE 18

Meeting of local branch of the Methodist Progress Society. Bransby, James and Edwina Place, the chairwoman, on dias. Bransby giving a speech. Polly and Penny in the audience.

POLLY AND PENNY Boo! Get off! Boo! What a load of rubbish!

EDWINA PLACE Order! Please! Please go on, Dr. Cooper.

BRANSBY Actually I've finished. But in conclusion, let me say again, in the interest of science and a more rational future, we must all support the Anatomy Act. Thank you. Thank you Edwina.

Edwina claps loudly. The audience is stony silent. Polly grumbles. Penny puts her hand up.

POLLY Murderous toad.

EDWINA Bravo, sir, and thank you for taking the time to come here to the Leadenhall Methodist Progress Society.

JAMES Ah, I think there's a question.

PENNY Yes sir, thank you sir, for bothering to listen, sir, I'm deeply humbled, sir.

EDWINA Do get on with it!

PENNY A simple question. This Anatomic Act – who's going to get dissected?

BRANSBY Well, as I did explain, legal custodians of people who have died without being claimed by friends or relatives will be able to hand those bodies over to science –

PENNY What?

EDWINA Legal custodians look after people in places like workhouses, hospitals, prisons –

POLLY In other words, a simple answer. Poor people.

BRANBSY It is an absolute fallacy to believe that discrimination will take place on the basis of poverty.

POLLY Better watch out. Your nose'll grow.

EDWINA Order! Dr. Cooper is speaking as a scientific expert!

POLLY I don't care if he's speaking as a lamp-post.

BRANSBY It's not just the poor, it's anyone unclaimed. It might be any rich person.

PENNY But a rich person will put it in his will. P.S. Don't dissect me.

BRANSBY That's an option open to any of us. Nobody will be forced –

POLLY What a load of bollocks! What if you can't even read? How are you ever going to know you've got this right?

BRANSBY Listen, O.K., in fact, you're absolutely right, the people most affected will be the very poorest of the poor. But who are these people?

POLLY Us!

BRANSBY They are not you, they are not the respectable working classes, they are vagrants, sots and whores.

PENNY *(to the audience)* I'm a vagrant.

POLLY Yes, and I'm a sot.

PENNY Yes and Edwina is a Methodist.

BRANSBY They are people we support by the charity of the workhouse. Dissection is a small way in which they can repay the debt of society.

POLLY Debt? It's anybody, who's been forced off their land or can't get a job in a factory. That's who ends up in the workhouse.

BRANSBY And that's not good, is it? They're no good to anyone in there, are they?

POLLY No, but –

BRANSBY So fear of dissection might just help to keep them out.

POLLY To starve on the streets?

BRANSBY It is an unfortunate mathematical fact that there are too many poor people in this country anyway. As with many species, we have to find a natural balance.

POLLY Listen to him! The pleasant voice of reason sticking in the knife. You know what I think they should dissect? I think they should go right to the top. Set an example. Dissect the Royal Family, starting with the King.

Cheers from the crowd.

EDWINA You shut up with your treason!

BRANSBY I don't have to put up –

POLLY But first of all, why not the doctors? You could dissect each other!

PENNY Yes, you might enjoy it.

BRANSBY How dare you! Come on, James, lets –

James is smiling.

(fumes) You find this funny, do you? You'd better wake up to yourself, old boy. *(leaves the dias and storms off through the hall)*
You are rabble, all of you. Don't expect us to ever give you the vote! *(exits)*

EDWINA *(crying)* Now look what you've done. Some people don't have manners at all. Dr. Cooper – *(chases after him)*

POLLY Good riddance to you. Why don't you run along with him, Mr. Science? Go on.

James doesn't move. Polly breaks into a terrible coughing fit.

JAMES Your cough is getting worse.

POLLY Don't need a doctor to tell me that.-

JAMES Can I just talk to you for a moment? I – I was interested –

POLLY Talk to me at the pub if you want to.

JAMES No, I don't think that would be appropriate.

POLLY No, toff like you might catch cholera off a barstool. See you then. *(exits)*

JAMES *(following her)* Wait – *(exits)*

SCENE 19

The Hares.

MRS. HARE Well. So much for that great idea.

WILLIAM I have another one, Mother. This one cannot fail.

Pause.

MRS. HARE I know what you are thinking. We cannot do it.

WILLIAM Think of the fruit, mother. Dickens.

MRS. HARE Think of the gallows, William. The cheering, jeering mob, spitting in your eyes.

WILLIAM It's for science, Mother. I am not thinking of – I am thinking of people who are about to die anyway. Those who stumble in the street. We offer them a place to lie.

MRS. HARE To die.

WILLIAM If they are in great pain, we could perhaps give them laudanum in tea to help them sleep.

MRS. HARE And then?

WILLIAM I don't know. Perhaps – we could stop them breathing.

MRS. HARE *(horrorstruck)* Do you know what you are saying, William? Do you hear yourself speak?

Pause.

(screams at him) We cannot do it. It is murder!

WILLIAM *(screams back)* It is eight pounds, mother!

MRS. HARE I see us walking through the mouth of hell.

billowing in the air. We know that we can do it, we can fly if we have to. All around the world we go, in leaps and bounds. By nightfall we can see the lights of home, but everything is different from when we left. Newton and Da Vinci and Margaret Cavendish have been cleaning up the place so the shit doesn't flow along the streets, and all the giant rats of the plague have been dyed pink and white and are running happily through little mazes.

POLLY That's nice. Not true though, is it?

JAMES Not yet. One day.

POLLY When?

JAMES I don't know.

Short pause.

You have to believe in progress. Things are a lot better than a hundred years ago. We have steam trains and factories.

POLLY *(laughs)* I've got tuberculosis.

Pause.

Used to be a lot of ghosts in the graveyard, when I was a kid. We'd come up to visit our dead grandma. You could feel them watching you. Every step you took. When you looked you couldn't see them, but you knew they were there. It was very scary. You felt they had a power over you. That's what I don't like about your science, doctor. The feeling that I'm being watched. I feel like I'm an object. Feel my heart. *(puts his hand on her heart)* The beats are strange, aren't they. Your Dr. Astley's very interested in me because I'm a freak. He can't wait to cut me up and have a look.

JAMES I'm sure he doesn't think like that.

POLLY By the way. You've got very nice hands.

JAMES *(defensive)* What do you mean?

POLLY Soft skin. You'd better be careful. He'll be watching you next. Especially if he thinks you might be – a freak.

James stares at Polly.

SCENE 22

The Anatomy School. Auction for bodies.

IMPORTER Sixteen new things, fresh from Ireland! Adults, children, all sizes, all clean. Guaranteed no pox. Last shipment for a month.

Here they are, gentlemen. Raw material to the knife of knowledge.

GUTHRIE How much? How much?

IMPORTER Adults fifteen guineas. Children a guinea for the first foot and a shilling every inch on top.

KNOX Fifteen guineas?

SPARKS Scoundrel!

GUTHRIE Thief!

IMPORTER What can I do? My overheads are high. I'm hardly making anything.

GUTHRIE No way we'll pay that much.

SPARKS No way.

KNOX More like four.

IMPORTER I can go elsewhere, you know. I'm doing you a favor. What's an anatomy school without anatomics? These are very special every one. Here a man seven foot. A freak, a giant, bones like trees. Very rare indeed, take a look.

Murmurs of approval.

GUTHRIE He's massive.

SPARKS Huge.

KNOX A splendid size.

GUTHRIE I'll give ten guineas, I have it here.

SPARKS Here, take eleven.

KNOX No, twelve, twelve, twelve.

GUTHRIE Say fifteen then and let's be done.

IMPORTER Fifteen we have.

GUTHRIE A tidy sum.

IMPORTER I fear we've only just begun.

KNOX Nineteen, nineteen, nineteen, nineteen.

IMPORTER I think I've understood your point.

GUTHRIE Oh damn it I'll go twenty one.

SCENE 23

Graveyard. James and Polly.

JAMES I must be getting back.

Polly says nothing.

(moves off, stops) It's a relief actually that someone knows.

POLLY Don't you have any friends?

JAMES No, I have colleagues. One doesn't talk about –

POLLY One's body.

JAMES *(blushes)* In any case it's been very nice.

POLLY To meet me.

JAMES Yes.

POLLY Do you know what I do for a living?

Short Pause.

JAMES Yes.

POLLY *(without any bitterness)* I have this one man who kneels behind me and shouts "I want to penetrate to the heart of the most secret mysteries of nature!" Then he comes and wipes his dick with a handkerchief. I'm tied to the bed. He pays extra for that. He's a doctor just like you.

JAMES Different.

POLLY Sometimes I like to imagine that he's really quite a sweet man. Somewhere underneath. And that he just has this problem with language. Then I imagine that I try to help him. I sit him down calmly with a cup of tea and say to him: "Knowledge doesn't have to be violent. Just talk to me. I can probably tell you quite a few of the most secret mysteries of nature, just off the top of my head. The rest we can work out as we go along." That's what I imagine. Then I remember. He can't really ever relax until he's tied me to the bed.

JAMES Why is that? Why is there this connection between knowledge and violence?

POLLY *(shrugs)* I dunno. Fear? Power? Let's just say it's a problem you need to look at.

JAMES *(frozen in thought)* Mmmm.

Pause.

SIR ASTLEY There's one other item of business I'd like to discuss with you.

MRS. HARE What would that be?

SIR ASTLEY It's about a woman I understand lives in a street near here.
Name of Polly Chapman. You don't happen to know her, do
you?

MRS. HARE What's she done?

SIR ASTLEY Nothing. But I'm afraid she hasn't long to live. She wanted to
make sure she was useful after death. Unfortunately she's
afraid her relatives may not be so progressive. That's where
you come in.

SCENE 25

Street. Penny Dreadful with Polly, who looks very ill.

PENNY You alright, Polly?

POLLY Sing me a song.

PENNY Any money?

POLLY Sing it for love.

PENNY Got to be kidding.

POLLY I'm not kidding.

PENNY What kind of song?

POLLY About ghosts.

PENNY My daddy and mammy they liv'd in a cott,
They bought me a horse that would ramble and trot,
And at each market day it fell to their share,
To go to the market with eggs and such ware.

Scarce seventeen summers were over my head,
When over and round the village was spread,
There was not a lane, or a mile at the most,
But was haunted by something they said was a ghost.

My mammy she'd never once scrupled to swear,
She'd often seen ghosts and she knew what they were,
So she spoke to my father, for he rul'd the roast,
To go in my stead, lest I should meet the ghost.

Being balk'd of my ride I was vex'd in my mind,
And resolved I was this secret to find,
I look'd out of doors and I see a clear coast,
I peep'd down the lane to discover the ghost.

JAMES You amaze me. You are so arrogant.

SIR ASTLEY James, shut up, before you say something you regret.

JAMES You see the world as a giant machine, don't you? It is messy, inefficient. You think you could design a much better machine, based on mathematical certainties. It would be sharp and shiny, neat and tidy. A purely rational object. In the perfect centre would be found the control tower. The eye of the machine, the brain. That's where you will sit, Sir Astley, with your colleagues. You will sit and watch us as we whirr and click our way into the future.

BRANSBY *(enters)* James, someone brought a message. Polly Chapman on her deathbed. Does that mean anything to you?

JAMES *(shocked)* I have to go. Thank you, Bransby. *(exits)*

SIR ASTLEY Polly Chapman? I had better go, too. I'll have to miss the Royal Society. Can you go for me? Thank you, Bransby. *(exits after James)*

SCENE 27

Polly on her deathbed.

POLLY I face death calmly. It's the sort of thing that happens to other people. It's very hard to imagine your own flesh dead. Imagine. Touch your own cheek. It's cold. Once I pictured myself in a valley of dead people. They had blue faces from the cold, red lips, they walked fast in heavy coats. They seemed very handsome and aloof. I wanted to kiss one. I wanted touch. One in particular caught my eye. Tall, high cheekbones. Red lips. I grabbed him by the lapels and thrust my face against his, not noticing the empty black eyes that would not look at me. Those lips were icy against mine but I wanted to devour them. They shrank away, the whole face shrank back inside the coat against my touch, leaving me with nothing but the two lapels to kiss and spit at. That's when I learnt that the dead cannot kiss. *(a tear on her cheek)*
 No crying, either. No kissing, no crying. Then I think when's the last time I kissed or cried anyway? What am I doing here? I should have done a lot more while I had the chance. So I go kissing strangers, kissing babies, kissing my own body up and down the arms, bawling my eyes out in a park or down the shops or at the theatre watching something funny, something really, really funny I'm bawling, 'til I have to wring my hanky in a torrent onto the stage so that they on a stage are singing and they are cheering and I am bawling in a flood, with everybody cheering. And then the kissing starts again. *(sighs, closes her eyes with head back, arms stretched wide, is hit by a racking cough and huddles back in bed, looks frightened and anxious)*

JAMES *(bursts in)* I came as soon as I could.

POLLY No time to waste, I'd say. Death's tried to get in the house half a dozen times already. Rattling at the windows. I've had to be firm. You'll have to wait at least until James arrives. Not so much the others.

JAMES Others?

POLLY It's a long story, James. I never got around to telling you.

JAMES Don't worry. I'll stay here and look after you.

SIR ASTLEY *(enters)* Miss Chapman, here I am. *(under breath)* James, if you'll excuse me. She needs an experienced hand in her final hour.

JAMES Sir Astley, what the hell –?

SIR ASTLEY She's my patient, James.

JAMES No she's not. Get out. She's my patient.

SIR ASTLEY Now James, James calm down. It's a warm night.

There is a knock on the door.

GUTHRIE Mind out you lot. I'm Miss Chapman's personal –

SIR ASTLEY Guthrie!

KNOX Like hell you are, Guthrie.

SIR ASTLEY Knox!

GUTHRIE You really all can go now. I'll take care –

JAMES What are you pack of vultures doing here?

GUTHRIE – of her. I've known Miss Chapman for years.

KNOX Known her all my life.

JAMES You lying sods. What is going on, Sir Astley?

SIR ASTLEY Wish I knew.

GUTHRIE This is just what I'd expect from someone went to Saints.

KNOX Well! At least we won the rugby. More than I can say for your school.

SIR ASTLEY We won the rugby! I was in the First Fifteen.

KNOX We won the rowing four years straight. It became a joke.

SIR ASTLEY What are you talking about? We won the bloody rowing too.

KNOX No, we won the rowing.

GUTHRIE Cricket! That's what made our school great.

ALL *(apoplectic)* Cricket! Hundred and ten before lunch I made ...
Expert on a sticky wicket ... I was straight bat, forward
defensive ... Used to swing the ball both ways ... etc., etc.

Polly has a severe coughing fit, which eventually gets their attention.

POLLY James, I'm dying.

JAMES No you're not. You're not.

POLLY Someone left a window open. *(dies)*

SIR ASTLEY *(subdued)* It appears we are all too late now. It's alright. I have
made arrangements for her burial in accordance with her
wishes.

OTHERS But so have I.

SIR ASTLEY What on earth is going on here?

POLLY *(opens her eyes and speaks)* I knew there was one last thing I
forgot to say. As you may know, I've been very poor these last
few years. I made a little bargain with a certain gent about my
last remains.

SIR ASTLEY That was me, you see.

POLLY Four guineas did not quite suffice.
And so I sold my body twice

SIR ASTLEY What?

POLLY Twice would not do – I sold it thrice
Forgive my crimes
In shot I have received its price
Half a dozen times

SIR ASTLEY Bloody nerve!

POLLY Here comes a handsome one. I'll see if I can kiss – *(her eyes
close again)*

SIR ASTLEY So you –

GUTHRIE And you –

KNOX And you –

SIR ASTLEY And you, James?

JAMES Yes.

SIR ASTLEY She's cheated us.

GUTHRIE She has, you know.

KNOX I'm flabbergasted.

GUTHRIE Shocked.

SIR ASTLEY I was here first.

GUTHRIE You were not.

KNOX I was.

GUTHRIE My carriage got here first.

SIR ASTLEY There's only one thing for it. We'll have to share her out by long division.

GUTHRIE From head to toe.

4th S Inch by Inch

5th S By power of mathematics.

JAMES You can't!

SIR ASTLEY We can.

GUTHRIE We will.

KNOX We are.

SIR ASTLEY James, don't be so sentimental. She's only dead meat now.

GUTHRIE Not much joy in kissing that.

KNOX Oh I don't know.

DOCTORS *(laugh)* Ha ha he ha!

James rushes out.

SIR ASTLEY We'll need pen and paper for the sums. Let's retire to the public house below and quickly do the calculations over something cold.

They all go out, leaving the body alone. A loud crash is heard from the other side. Wailing. Two women enter dressed in mourning, wailing loudly.

WOMAN 1 Oh poor, poor Poll.

WOMAN 2 Poor, poor dear.

WOMAN 1 Oh, woe, oh woe, oh woe.

WOMAN 2 Alack, alas, alack.

Whilst they wait around, they are checking all the doors, windows, under the bed to see if anyone's around.

WOMAN 1 *(whispers, in a low male voice)* No-one around.

WOMAN 2 Right.

They both whip off their shrouds. We see it's the Hares. They bundle up Polly's body in the clothes they've taken off, or a sack, and sneak out with her the way they came. Another loud crash is heard.

MRS. HARE *(off)* Watch out.

WILLIAM *(off)* Sorry.

All the surgeons re-enter, rubbing their hands.

SIR ASTLEY Right then.

They see she's gone.

(dumbfounded) What?

GUTHRIE Where's she gone?

KNOX Off and walked away.

SPARKS I've never seen the like.

SIR ASTLEY I must say this is most peculiar.

SCENE 28

BRANSBY *(at the Royal Society)* On behalf of my father I would like to thank the Royal Society, and I take great pleasure in accepting this award. The trophy will join the many others in his drawing room. Although you might say I'm biased, I think Sir Astley Cooper will be remembered as one of the great men of medical history. I am writing his biography, which I am calling simply: "Cooper: The Search for Truth". A funny story: I once asked my father whether he would ever be dissected. He said to me: Dissected? When I die, I want my skin to be tanned and used to cover armchairs, my bones to be made into knife-handles, and my softer mass of flesh to be collected in a vase and planted with a rose. I said: father, you're not serious, are you? He said: not bloody likely, you can bury me at Westminster. *(smiles)* Thank you. Support the Anatomy Act. Thank you.

SCENE 29

Anatomy School. Sir Astley at work, humming Bach to himself. There is something on the slab covered in a cloth. The door opens slowly and James pokes his head in. Silently he creeps in – he is carrying a notebook. Unseen by Astley he takes notes. Astley does something careless – the sort of thing you do when no-one's watching. James takes note of it.

- JAMES *(to himself, shaking his head)* Hmm. Tch-Tch-Tch.
- SIR ASTLEY *(jumps)* What the hell are you doing here? You're on suspension. *(calls)* Bransby!
- JAMES I am studying you. You interest me. As a phenomenon. A genius at work.
- SIR ASTLEY You are drunk, I can smell it.
- JAMES *(noting)* White Caucasian, male, approximately fifty years old, five foot ten, grey hair, wearing spectacles –
- SIR ASTLEY *(rips of his glasses)* You are crazy!
- JAMES *(notes)* Aggressive when challenged in his natural environment ...
- SIR ASTLEY I am not aggressive!
- JAMES *(notes)* He pounds fist on table.
- SIR ASTLEY What do you want from me?
- JAMES Your objectivity.
- SIR ASTLEY Here is my objectivity! *(pulls the cloth from the slab)*

Underneath are the severed limbs and head of Polly. The limbs begin to move. The head slowly turns to look at James. They eyes open. They are full of tears.

POLLY James –

James screams and staggers out, very distraught. Sir Astley pulls the cloth back over the head and the screaming stops.

SCENE 30

Cold, dark night.

MRS. HARE Where are you, William? You shouldn't leave me alone like this at night. The demon might come back. That Sir Astley.

He doesn't care. He knows we murder them. But he doesn't care. I can't get used to that. I hope I live to see the brave new world he's building. I'm sure there'll be a part for me to play. I know you're out there demon. With your pointy ears and sulphur breath. You're in trouble demon. Hell won't even exist soon. You'll see. There's going to be a cure for demons soon. Make you shrivel up and die. (*shivers*) I'm going out. See if I can earn something for the Dickens. (*smiles grimly, puts her coat on*) Dark and miserable night.

SCENE 31

Later, in the street. Penny Dreadful, James very drunk.

JAMES

You have to numb yourself. That's what I was told, when I first began in there. It was difficult at first. The smell went up my nose. My stomach churned. I was worried I was doing something wrong. I read up in books and looked at diagrams but they didn't tell me what I needed. Then one day it just started happening, in my body. I woke up and my feet were numb. I was glad to be finally making progress. As the days and weeks went on, I lost my hands, my arms, my knees, my thighs. But it took many years before the numbness reached my heart. I welcomed it when it came. Now I don't feel nothing at all. It helps me in my work.

PENNY

(sings – the Unquiet Grave [see child melody])

The wind doth blow today, my love,
And a few small drops of rain;
I never had but one true-love,
In cold grave she was lain.

“I'll do as much for my true-love,
As any young man may;
I'll sit and mourn all at her grave
For a twelve month and a day.”

The twelvemonth and a day being up,
The dead began to speak:
“Oh who sits weeping on my grave,
And will not let me sleep?”

“T is I, my love, sits on your grave,
And will not let you sleep;
For I crave one kiss of your clay-cold lips,
And that is all I seek.”

“You crave one kiss of my clay-cold lips;
But my breath smells earthy strong;
If you have one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
Your time will not be long.”

James has passed out.

SCENE 32

Outside the anatomy school. Astley and Bransby meet.

SIR ASTLEY Bransby! Bransby, there you are. You must try and find James. He's gone to pieces. He came in very drunk, screamed abuse up and down the corridors, and now he's wandered off. If he gets arrested there's sure to be a scandal. We'll have our names splashed all across the gutter press. You must find him and bring him home. In the morning, we'll pack him off to one of those places by the seaside for a rest.

SCENE 33

Dismal dark night. Street. Distant rumbling thunder. Drizzle. A lone figure – James – staggering through the cold in great distress. Well-dressed folk hurry past under huge umbrellas. James begs for help; they ignore her and hurry on. Mrs. Sheridan and Lady Porter from Scene Three enter.

JAMES Excuse me, please.

They do their best to ignore her and keep walking.

MRS. SHERIDAN *(feeling guilty)* You can't stop and give them all something.

JAMES *(cries after them)* Please!

LADY PORTER *(stops Mrs. Sheridan)* I will give you a penny, but first you must show that you deserve it. Here it is. You must run and get it.

JAMES *(takes a step, staggers, falls)* Please –

LADY PORTER You are an idle dog to be sure. Deserving nothing.

They go off.

MRS. HARE *(comes in; helps James up)* Come on love. All too much? You come along with me. Nice cup of tea at home.

They go out. Bransby enters. He peers around in all directions, than goes out in the same direction taken by Mrs. Hare and James.

SCENE 34

Mrs. Hare with James.

MRS. HARE There you are. Take your time. Nice cup of tea. Winter coming on outside. Not a pleasant time, is it?

Pause.

Don't drink the second cup, if you don't want to. What's your name?

WILLIAM

(off) Mother, I'm home. No problem. They didn't ask a single question. Eight pounds fifty this time. I bought some eggs and cheese. Eight pounds fifty! That's the best so far. What's that, nine now – or ten? I don't think that surgeon even cares where they come from. No scruples. Is that what they are called? I think we should be more careful though, Mother, with the neighbours. They've seen us several times with people coming in. They must wonder why they never see anybody going out.

James is looking at Mrs. Hare.

You know what I think is the cleverest thing. The tea. No-one ever dreams of it, because you can't taste the laudanum.

James drops the teacup. It shatters.

Mother have you knocked something off? I'll bring a cloth in a minute. Shall we do another one tonight? If you invite one in tonight, I'll do the rest, Mother. You're not getting queasy about this, are you. You're being awfully quiet.

James gets up.

I've decided to learn to read, Mother. I can pay Penny to teach me. Maybe one day I can be a surgeon. All you need is money.

James is groggy. He lunges and grabs Mrs. Hare by the neck, but in the next instant falls unconscious from the drug.

I bought you one of your favourite treats, Mother. *(enters, sees James on the floor, Mrs. Hare crouching in the corner)* Do you ever feel the future is a trap you can't escape? *(kneels down to the body)* Hold the feet, mother.

He closes the nostrils and suffocates the body. It struggles for a while, then is still. There is a knock on the door. Panic. They hide the body in the coal pit.

MRS. HARE

Who is it?

There is another knock. Mrs. Hare opens the door. It is Bransby.

BRANSBY

Sorry to disturb you at this late hour. My name is Bransby Cooper. May I come in? *(enters)*

MRS. HARE

What do you want?

BRANSBY

I'm looking for a friend. I thought I saw him with you in the street.

MRS. HARE

Unlikely.

WILLIAM

Mother doesn't go out often. Not with strangers.

BRANSBY I thought I saw him come inside with you.

Silence.

Mind if I sit down?

MRS. HARE Yes.

WILLIAM No! Not at all. Sit – over here.

Away from the body.

BRANSBY Ah yes, I think I understand. Convenient. *(smiles)*

Pause.

(musing) How do you people live in a house like this?

Mrs. Hare says nothing.

WILLIAM We're moving up soon. Something much better.

BRANSBY *(as he looks about the room)* Do you know why the poor suffer?

WILLIAM Not really, no. Do you?

BRANSBY Surplus population. In a natural state those must weak and poor die off, leaving only the strong to survive. But we in our folly defy nature with our poor relief and charity to fight starvation. I say all poor relief and charity should be abolished. It only prolongs an artificial state of misery. Don't you agree? Is that a cellar over there?

WILLIAM Just a coal pit.

BRANSBY My vision is of shady groves. Mothers in the workhouse, who have too many unwanted babies, shall give them up. They will be placed in a chamber which utilizes the surreptitious invasion of a gas which contains not the element of life. It is a theory of painless extinction. To thank the mothers for their help in controlling the surplus population, we shall plant memorial groves of shady trees. Broad green leaves.

Pause.

MRS. HARE Was there anything else you wanted?

BRANSBY No, I don't think so. *(picks up his hat)* You two are an unlikely pair, aren't you? An unlikely pair of murderers.

SCENE 35

Penny in the street.

PENNY

Burkers discovered in the metropolis. Horror story of fifteen victims, the last a reputable doctor. Monster Hares on trial, sentenced to the gallows. The elder Elizabeth Hare suffers fatal heart attack in court, the younger William Hare to be launched into eternity this Saturday at Newgate. Still just a penny.

SCENE 36

Anatomy School.

SIR ASTLEY

Who would have known it was going to end so tragically? Such a waste of a brilliant mind. I'm going to meet all the costs for a very dignified funeral. A good undertaker, perhaps even a small mausoleum. It's the least thing I can do. I don't think there's any need for an autopsy. There's proof enough they did him in. Obvious marks of suffocation. You can see the here, Bransby, on the jaw. *(examining them)*

Pause.

Wait a minute. That's very odd. He doesn't appear to have any –

BRANSBY

What?

SIR ASTLEY

Facial hair. You don't think – He can't be – *(looks at the body)* A woman! He's – she's – a woman! I don't believe it. What an extraordinary discovery. Cancel that undertaker, Bransby. We are going to have to examine her. This is totally unique in medical history. She has the body of a woman, but yet the brain of a man!

SCENE 37

Graveyard. The ghosts of Mrs. Hare and Polly.

MRS. HARE

Can you see anything yet? Can you see the gallows?
My William?

POLLY

I dunno. You're the one with the long sight.

MRS. HARE

In life, that was, in life. I'm dead now, aren't I. My faculties have slipped.

POLLY

We're all dead now, Mrs. Hare. Go on, have a look.

MRS. HARE

(climbs up into a tree and peers into the distance) I can see thirty thousand merry heads.

SCENE 38

Anatomy School. The doctors.

GUTHRIE What's Astley doing? Has he explained any of this to you?

KNOX Not at all. Just received an invitation to attend.

SPARKS I hear he's finally opening his museum.

GUTHRIE Wish he'd get on with it, whatever it is.

BRANSBY *(enters)* Sorry to keep you waiting gentlemen. Sir Astley will be with us very shortly.

GUTHRIE Hmmp. I see you got your bill through, Bransby. Put an end to bodysnatching.

BRANSBY That's right.

KNOX Put an end to dissection too, from what I heard.

BRANSBY Did you mean the wording? Yes, dissection's out. Inflames the passions too much. Conjures up a ghastly picture for the uninformed. We've changed it so we now say "anatomically inspected". Much more soothing, don't you think?

SPARKS More accurate.

KNOX Scientific language. What a good idea.

SPARKS Yes, for instance death should more properly be described as Terminal Respiratory Failure.

KNOX Chronic corporeal dysfunction.

GUTHRIE Abrupt arbitrary cessation of total physiological function.

SPARKS Much clearer.

BRANSBY You know what you're talking about now.

ALL Mmmm.

GUTHRIE Ask another.

BRANSBY How about "body"?

SPARKS Sounds naked.

KNOX Sounds like my mother.

GUTHRIE I think of things I shouldn't.

MARCUS It bears the unmistakable odour of the irrational.

ALL Mmmm.

SPARKS Physiognomy?

KNOX Ontological incorporation.

GUTHRIE Discrete unified amalgam of diverse morphological features.

ALL Mmmm.

GUTHRIE This is excellent. I'm good at crosswords, too.

SCENE 39

Mrs. Hare looking at William's execution from the hilltop graveyard.

MRS. HARE Thirty thousand merry heads. No angels. No sound. William is up there on the scaffold. Cloth bag over his face. He's buttoned up his coat the wrong way. They drop the hatch. He doesn't move, he floats there in the air perfectly still, two feet above his own death. He was always a stubborn boy. In a sudden flash of inspiration he reaches to untie the noose above his head, but the momentum causes him to fall. He falls for a long time, until all the slack has gone, the rope pulls taut and wrenches with unbearable force against the inside of his neck. I hear a loud crack which I know is the sound of his body breaking under the discipline of the law of gravity. They didn't always have gravity, you know, Galileo found it. William just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Polly?

Instead, the demon is standing there.

SCENE 40

Penny sings. Other ghosts join in.

PENNY A lord of iron and steel am I
 A monster in the land
 While puny men of bone and blood
 Are slaves at my command

The monster science is my name
 And I trample on the free
 I laugh at the sight of human tears
 And Death is my Victory

I love the knell of the factory bell
 On the long dark winter night
 With hail and storms and shivering forms
 Who toil by candlelight

The monster science is my name

And I trample on the free
I laugh at the sight of human tears
And Death is my Victory

Of Iron and Steam I reign supreme
But a partial King am I
The few by stealth I heap with wealth
While the masses sicken and die.

The monster science is my name
And I trample on the free
I laugh at the sight of human tears
And Death is my Victory

SCENE 41

Sir Astley, in blood stained frock coat, holding in each hand a glass jar. One contains the brain of James, the other the heart of Polly.

SIR ASTLEY

Gentlemen all, as you know, the Anatomy Act is now law. A new era dawns. From the chaos behind us we look forward to order. I am proud today to open my museum and present to you two of my finest exhibits. A woman's heart, strange in itself but this one stranger beyond belief, deformed and twisted. A man's brain, perfect, but taken from the body of a woman. These exhibits and many more like them lay the foundations for the knowledge of tomorrow. One day so much will be discovered, we will seem but children, savages. Think then, how much understanding will be extracted from these jars. *(holds them in the air)* Welcome, gentlemen. With hope, and with arms outstretched to embrace the future, I welcome you all to the House of Reason!

Awful music sounds.

T H E E N D