O restless night! Restless if I ever did know it. Although I cannot feel it, I suppose it is quite cold – the miserable kind that can chill anything from the tip of a nose to a good mood. London is in quite a mood this December, and she seems quite intent on taking it out on her residents.

The wind is in a fit, tossing and turning and churning through the darkened street. While exhausted, I cannot say I envy its agitated sleep – I myself was in the most peaceful rest just hours ago, wrapped in a wooden blanket and blissfully unaware of the stench of sewage-soaked English soil. I lament being awoken; an old man deserves his rest, and death from old age has a finality about it which should really be respected.

It is this perversion of respect that has me wondering to whom I owe my awakening, for he shall receive an onslaught of angry thoughts (I am sadly, yet expectedly, unable to speak). Unfortunately I am still held by quite an onset of rigor mortis, which prevents my seeing much but the charcoal-smudged sky.

I am strewn across a rickety cart and it is bumping along with all the vigour of an overpaid moneylender; my head against the wood just the same. This, I imagine, hurts a lot. Careful with the goods, sir! Another bump brings my poor head to the side and into my vision a strong hand, an arm clad (ironically) in mourning black, a torn shoulder seam and, finally, a man. Looking up to compensate for his towering height, I can’t make out his features but for a dusty top hat and an aura of casual confidence. It is not a stretch to imagine that he frequents the grave-robbing trade. Hardly a respectable gentleman!

It has just occurred to me to wonder to whom I might be sold – and for how much! I’d like to think myself valuable, but in these hard times I do not truly believe it to be so. I’ll probably end up with a doctor – I cannot imagine any other use for a body and I should like to keep my imagination quite inactive in that respect. (I’m not one for horror: Shelley’s Frankenstein was quite enough fright to last my lifetime.)
I think I can see a figure across the street; this must be my purchaser. He’s a small fellow, tiny in fact. Just a shadow from the night’s thick blackness, floating across the night. As he draws closer, I see the physics behind this; not gliding, but wearing a dress. Not he, but she. How very surprising!

A robust laugh erupts above me, nearly stopping my heart, if you’ll pardon the irony.

“‘Ello swee’hear’. Bit lost is we?”

His accent is painfully vulgar, especially in contrast to the floral reply:

“No sir, quite the opposite.”

She exudes a very different kind of confidence to him; she too has done this many times before.

“Old on. I’se told I was selling to doctor. ’Oo’re you then?”

“Elizabeth Garrett is my name. What might yours be, sir?” She says this with poorly concealed disdain and mocking undertones. But, educated gentleman that he is, he completely overlooks it.

“I’d be Bill. And I don’ apprecia’e bin’ lied to, Miss. I’se expecting a doc’or, I was.”

“I am a doctor, sir,” she scowls, “an aspiring one at least. I do not appreciate your misogyny.”

He forces out another shocking, mirthless laugh. “You aint scarin’ me with your big words, swee’hear’. Wha’s a woman be doin’ as a doc’or anyways?”

“With any luck, good sir, earning enough money to avoid a career such as yours. Also, I would be partial to overthrowing gender conventions and promoting feminism.”

He stares blankly for a short while, then kicks the cart in what I suppose is a futile attempt at reinstating his control over the situation. Unfortunately, this causes my left arm to flop over the side of the cart. That Dickens was a wishful fellow; I would much enjoy being able to travel
in time, fly and see the future, as opposed to not being able to do so much as lift my arm. Stay alive, ladies and gentlemen. And try not to take mobility for granted.

“Look ’ere Miss. If you ain’t able to be payin’ me—”

She produces a large wad of cash, making me wish I could smile both for the wit of this woman and the affirmation of my being significantly valuable.

“This will be sufficient, I presume?”

Without awaiting a reply, she takes the cart handle and pulls me away, leaving Bill with a mouth so open, I fear, he might contract diptheria. The aura of confidence has dissipated into the nearby air. She’s much gentler than he, and I wish I had the ability to thank her for it. My head has lollled to the side, and I cannot see but I can feel her elegant yet purposeful walk. With my lifeless eyes staring ghoulishly at her hand, I am stuck by the blatant simplicity of the matter: such long, slender fingers surely have much greater precision with a scalpel than male claws. London really should be employing women as doctors! I do hope Elizabeth becomes employed as such. This is, I suppose, really worth being woken for. What a time to be alive! (Abem). I would, however, be lying if I said being dissected appealed to me, but there is hardly anything I can do about it. Ah, well. All in the name of science I suppose.