

Wednesday's Child

by [Angela Alaimo O'Donnell](#) in the [September 2025](#) issue

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Proteus Syndrome, the disease that afflicted Joseph Merrick, the so-called Elephant Man, is a rare genetic condition that leads to severe deformities of the face, limbs, and skin. —from Wikipedia

for Will

What seared him was his pity, not his horror.
My young son on Wednesday mornings would shop
with me for groceries. He loved the thrill
of just us two, without his older brothers,
choosing apples, pears, plums. We would fill
our cart with cheese and bread, and we bought
treats, as well, for the sweet ride home.
Until one day we saw the Elephant Man
hobbling down the cereal aisle.
Will clapped his hands over his eyes
while the man, undeterred, limped on by
the Cheerios, Corn Flakes, and Apple Jacks.
His face appalling to every eye,
we stared, but that man didn't look back.
I never saw anyone so alone.
Will cried in the car the whole way home.