

Auction: Sir Philip

ACT ONE

SIR PHILIP BIN sits in a leathery armchair, holding a leathery book and has a large but not leathery brandy glass on a table next to him.

SIR PHILIP. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, boys and/or girls. Conjurers, clowns, fire-eaters, gin-drinkers, sword-swallowers, cutlass-consumers, flying elephants, trampolining tigers and a chorus line of one hundred and seven tap-dancing kangaroos! *(Pause.)* None of these will you see tonight. But you will see me, which is even better. I am a man who needs no introduction... but for the hare-brained and mutton-minded, I shall deign to refresh your memories. I am Sir Philip Bin, one of the most revered figures of the Victorian age and a man who achieved many great things in life. I was a bestselling novelist; a world-changing inventor; a three-time winner of Most Emotionally Repressed Gentleman of the Year; and I once made Belgium cry. But though my later accomplishments are well known, such as my invention of the steam-powered underpant and my discovery of the source of the Nile – it was just a tap – my early years have, until now, been a subject shrouded in mystery, cloaked in ambiguity and swaddled in secrecy. Drink!

A white-gloved hand appears from behind the chair and raises the brandy glass to SIR PHILIP's lips. He drinks and the hand puts the glass down as he continues.

Alas, recently there has been much tawdry speculation about those early years. Hence I have invited you here tonight to hear my story, in the hope that I may put paid to those sordid rumours. Parts of my life are to be found in my novels: *A Story of Two Towns*, *Miserable Mansion*, *The Old Shop of Stuff*, *Graham Grambleby* – all my works contain clues. Apart from *Lusful Killer Bees from Mars*, which I'll grant you is almost entirely fictional. But now I shall finally tell

the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the bits of the truth that make me look good. So. Let us begin, as we travel back now through the mists of time...

Mist fills the stage around SIR PHILIP. He crossly waves it away.

...the incredibly annoying mists of time... to one of the most significant moments of the Victorian age: my birth. As was traditional then, I was the product of two people: my mother Agnes and my father Thomas.

AGNES and THOMAS appear standing next to each other. *He kisses her on the cheek.*

AGNES. And now I am pregnant.

SIR PHILIP. I came into this world, like all male babies of the time, fully grown and properly dressed.

Young PIP BIN emerges from beneath AGNES's skirts.

PIP. Mother. Father. Delighted to meet you.

He shakes THOMAS and AGNES's hands.

SIR PHILIP. I was rapidly joined by two sisters, Pippa...

PIPPA BIN emerges from beneath AGNES's skirts and stands next to PIP.

PIPPA. Excellent cervix, Mother.

SIR PHILIP....and Poppy.

POPPY now pops out and joins PIP and PIPPA.

POPPY. Whee! Hi, everyone!

All three curtsy to the audience.

SIR PHILIP. And with our family complete, my mother took up a new hobby of total chastity.

AGNES. And that's quite enough of that, thank you, Thomas.

AGNES puts an apron round her waist with a 'No Entry' sign on it.