

# The Daily Line

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## UNUSUAL PORTRAIT:

# “The King of the Freaks”

Today, our bestselling reporter Manon Gazaix brings us an interview on the sad life of one of the most famous 'freaks': Francesco Lantini. We discover the life of this sideshow performer, a perfectly normal person except for a physical anomaly. We discover that he was ostracised from society, but made the best of his situation and got a job as a circus and sideshow performer. We'll learn about the lives of many performers who often started out on the margins of society, but who also tried to make the best of their situation.



### Manon Gazaix

Our finest journalist, who you may know from her award-winning and compelling book

'Breaking Chains of Injustice' and her many great interviews with the biggest stars, is the perfect person for this kind of unusual interview. Born in London in 1911, she has always had a brilliant way of bringing to light interesting subjects and people who have been forgotten by society. But as well as her beautiful writing, she is a genuinely committed person, determined to shed light on the world issues she cares about, such as women's issues and social inequality. And today she will be shedding light on the life of Francesco Lantini.



“ I have three legs, and I think they saved me. ”

M.G: Thank you so much for coming all the way to London and accepting this interview ! Could you start by introducing yourself ?

F.L: Hi, of course ! My name is Francecso Lantini and I was born in Rosolini, Sicily, on 18 May 1889. I am 62 years old today.

M.G: Thanks, so first of all, I know you've been asked to do a lot of interviews, but why did you only do mine?

F.L: You know, I'm getting old now and I think it's good that people know about my background because they'll soon understand that you can turn your imperfections into great qualities.

M.G: Thank you. Can you tell us about your physical abnormality and how you got it?

F.L: The reason I'm here today is that I was born with a third leg. And that leg is the leg of my twin, which I absorbed during my mother's pregnancy. So I'm 3 legs, 3 feet and 2 genitals. I can tell you that my birth was a shock to everyone, even my midwife ran out of the room in horror at the way I looked. As a child I felt misunderstood and neglected in my family because I have 12 normal brothers and sisters.

M.G: If I understand correctly, it wasn't always easy to live with that, so how did you manage to overcome it?

F.L: I think I accepted my legs very quickly, at the same time as my parents, when they wanted to have them amputated, but it didn't work on me, I quickly realised that they were an asset and that I was a normal person who could move, jump or run. What's more, when I went to a school for disabled people, I realised how lucky I was compared to other children.

M.G: I saw that you were good at football when you were young, is that how you got into the circus?



F.L: Yes, it was Magnano, a professional showman, who took me to shows in the United States when I was just 9 years old, and that was the start of a long and wonderful career where people finally admired me. The crowd watched me jump rope and kick a balloon and I got paid for it.

M.G: In fact, you've had many nicknames, such as "the only three-legged football player in the world", "the greatest medical wonder of all time", or sometimes just "The Great Lantini". So I can see why fame has been good to you!

F.L: Yes, and I can even say that **I have three legs, and I think they saved me !**



M.G: You've toured with various circuses, including Barnum's & Coney Island and Ringling Bros, and you've become so respected. I think it's great that you've gone from a life of ridicule to a life admired by your many fans! I have one last question for you; what advice do you have for people like you?

F.L: I think a person with a big deformity like me should turn it into a strength and not be discouraged by scoffers. My friends, go and perform in circuses and you'll be very well received by people like me. And know that you can be happy, I am married to a beautiful woman and have 4 normal children today. Believe in yourself !

M.G: Thank you Frank !

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