FRANKENSTEIN

By
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Based on
Mary Shelley’s
"Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus"

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Cast of Characters

MARY SHELLEY: The author of Frankenstein.
Percy Shelley: Her fiance, the poet.
Lord Byron: The poet.
Claire Clairmont: Mary’s stepsister.
Dr. Polidori: Lord Byron’s physician.
Victor Frankenstein: A scientist.
Captain Walton: An Arctic explorer.
Henry Clerval: Frankenstein’s best friend.
Elizabeth Lavenza: Frankenstein’s fiancee.
Justine Moritz: Frankenstein’s friend.
Professor Waldman: A professor at the University of Ingolstadt.
Professor Krempe: A professor at the University of Ingolstadt.
The Creature: Frankenstein’s creation.
William: Frankenstein’s brother.
The Companion: The second creation.
ACT ONE

Lightning and thunder: a storm. In the flashes of lightning which illuminate the stage, we see glimpses of WALTON looking out with a telescope, CLERVAL helping VICTOR stand, JUSTINE and WILLIAM playing hide and seek, and VICTOR cradling ELIZABETH’s dead body. A loud clap of thunder awakens MARY from her dream, center, gasping for air.

MARY

Another dream-vision. Another nightmare.

SHELLEY is with her.

SHELLEY

Again? What did you see this time.

MARY

I cannot describe the – there were images of people, but fragmented –

SHELLEY

Let’s go back to sleep. We don’t want to be unkempt around Lord Byron tomorrow.

MARY

(Dry.)

Of course not.

SHELLEY

What?

MARY

You care more about Lord Byron than you do me.

Pause.

SHELLEY

I –

MARY

Let’s go back to sleep, Percy.

Pause.

SHELLEY

We will be wed, Mary. Soon.

Blackout.
Another flash of lightning brings a sitting room to light. Shelley stands by the window, watching the storm. Byron sits in an armchair, idly flipping through a copy of 'Fantasmagoriana'. Mary and Claire sit side by side on a chaise. Polidori stands before the group, clutching a handful of papers. Inspired by the thunderstorm and the flash of lightning, Shelley exclaims:

SHELLEY (cont’d)  
"I sing of Chaos and Eternal Night  
Taught by the heav’nly Muse to venture down  
The dark descent, and up to reascend - "

MARY  
Percy!

SHELLEY  
What?

CLAIRE  
He’s nearly finished.

BYRON  
(To Shelley.)  
Milton?

SHELLEY  
Who else?

MARY  
Do go on, doctor.

POLIDORI  
"Aubrey’s weakness increased; the effusion of blood produced symptoms of the near approach of death. He desired his sister’s guardians might be called, and when the midnight hour had struck, he related composedly what the reader had perused - he died immediately after. The guardians hastened to protect Miss Aubrey; but when they arrived, it was too late."

CLAIRE  
Oh no!

POLIDORI  
"Lord Ruthven had disappeared, and Aubrey’s sister had glutted the thirst... of a Vampyre!"
BYRON
Excellent work, Polidori.

POLIDORI
Bone-chilling?

BYRON
Almost.

CLaire
I thought it was.

SHELLEY
This storm is bone-chilling. I wish we could be out on the water.

CLaire
I don’t know what I would do if I were to encounter a Vampyre.

BYRON
Hopefully you’d fare better than our poor Aubrey.

POLIDORI
So you must think the characters at least were compelling -

CLaire
Would you save me, George?

BYRON
Always needing to be saved, aren’t they?

  He playfully pulls Claire onto his lap. She kisses him.

POLIDORI
At least my story scared someone.

MARY
It was very good, doctor.

POLIDORI
Thank you, Mary.

SHELLEY
What about you, Mary? Do you have a story for us?

MARY
Oh, I don’t know.
SHELLEY
You woke last night in a cold sweat.

MARY
It was only a dream-vision I had.

BYRON
Well, let’s hear it!

POLIDORI
Yes, tell us.

MARY
Truly, it was nothing.

SHELLEY
Mary, you told me it was something unbelievable. I think the group may like to hear.

MARY
I told you that in private.

SHELLEY
(Quieter, so only Mary can hear.)
That wasn’t the only thing you told me in private —

Shelley moves close and kisses her.

MARY
Percy -

BYRON
Calm down, you two.

SHELLEY
I simply thought you may like to have Lord Byron hear a story of yours.

MARY
Why should I like that?

SHELLEY
Because -

BYRON
Because I am a great poet, Miss Godwin!

CLAIRE
You are, simply the greatest.

MARY
I don’t know that I should share it.
POLIDORI
We could read another story from the 'Fantasmagoriana'.

    The group groans.

SHELLEY
Not again.

POLIDORI
No?

SHELLEY
I would wager that I could recite that book by heart.

POLIDORI
Oh, it’s not that bad.

BYRON
It did inspire our good doctor’s Vampyre story, Shelley.

CLAIRE
I wouldn’t mind hearing one again, if the words are coming from my Lord Byron’s lips.
    (She gives him another quick peck, then snatches the book from him and begins to flip through it.)
Which one do we want to hear again?

POLIDORI
I think -

    Another flash of lightning and thunder. Polidori jumps in fright.

SHELLEY
That’s right! Galvanism!

POLIDORI
What?

SHELLEY
Galvanism, that’s what I wanted to tell you about.

BYRON
Oh, yes, yes.

SHELLEY
Have you heard of this, Polidori?

POLIDORI
I think so - Galvani, right?
SHELLEY
Yes. Scientists like Galvani have found that electricity, when channeled correctly, can cause muscles to move. Electrical currents have been used to make the muscles of dead animals twitch and contract. And who knows how much farther beyond that it could go.

POLIDORI
Do you remember when they hanged that murderer George Foster?

BYRON
Vaguely.

POLIDORI
Well, Luigi Galvani’s nephew Giovanni Aldini took the idea of galvanic electricity and began applying it not only to animals but to people as well. So after Foster was hanged, Aldini took the corpse and attached electrodes to the forehead, arms, legs, and chest. Then he turned the battery on.

SHELLEY
And?

POLIDORI
And Foster began to move. His jaw quivered, his muscles contracted, his eye opened. His hand even clenched and then opened again, slamming against the table.

CLAIRE
Oh my!

POLIDORI
Yes! They thought the body was coming back to life!

CLAIRE
It sounds like it was.

POLIDORI
But, the battery ended up giving out and Foster remained dead. Aldini had nearly succeeded, but the dead battery left him in defeat.

SHELLEY
Incredible. Any thoughts?

BYRON
The idea of manipulating a corpse is – disturbing, to say the least. But the moral questions it raises are fascinating.
MARY
  Squeamish, Lord Byron?

SHELLEY
  (To Polidori.)
  What do you think?

POLIDORI
  I don’t know. It seems odd. But it’s a good story.

SHELLEY
  Modern science! Bringing creatures back to life!

BYRON
  Man’s own Adam.

CLAIRE
  I don’t like it.

SHELLEY
  It’s scientific advancement, dear.

CLAIRE
  But why would you want to bring dead - things - back to life?

BYRON
  It is man’s destiny to rule over the earth.

CLAIRE
  But to rule over life and death?

BYRON
  She’s being dramatic about it.

CLAIRE
  George!

SHELLEY
  It’s alright if you don’t understand, Claire.

MARY
  I think she understands.

CLAIRE
  It’s distasteful.

BYRON
  I take back what I said about Man’s own Adam.

CLAIRE
  Thank you, George.
BYRON
   No, no – not because I disagree or find it distasteful.

POLIDORI
   Because it would be a repurposing of life, not a creation of it.

BYRON
   Precisely, Polidori. Perfect.

MARY
   But we would still be taking some of God’s power. Is it Man’s place to do that?

SHELLEY
   Why not?

MARY
   Because –

BYRON
   She doesn’t know what she is talking about.

   Shelley laughs.

MARY
   Are you a scientist, Lord Byron?

   Beat.

BYRON
   Miss Godwin–

SHELLEY
   It’s only conversation, Mary. It’s not life and death. (Mary lets out a short, loud laugh.)

   What?

MARY
   It’s exactly life and death!

BYRON
   Personally, I would love to hear more of the doctor’s thoughts on the subject.

POLIDORI
   I have a few.

BYRON
   You shall have to tell Shelley and I at a different time.
MARY
A different time when Claire and I won’t be here to interrupt?

BYRON
Excuse me?

POLIDORI
I could tell you now, if you -

BYRON
No, never mind.

Claire tries to hand the open ‘Fantasmagoriana’ to Byron.

CLAIRE
I think we should hear this story again.

Another lightning flash illuminates the room and time freezes in the bright light. Mary steps forward.

MARY
A dream-vision. A pale student of unholy arts, kneeling beside the thing he put together. A hideous phantasm of a man, stretched out, stitched together, and then with a spark beginning to show signs of life. An eye opens. An uneasy, frightful motion of the chest. An uneasy, frightful human endeavor to mock the Creator of the world. A family torn apart as soon as it is started. A great man’s fall, by his own hand. A frozen wasteland in a monster’s wake. A frozen stare with no depth, no soul. I was terrified to see it in my mind’s eye. I could not escape this monstrous phantom. It haunted me. I saw the other eye open, and -
(Time resumes, and the lightning disappears with a crackle of thunder.)

I have a story.

SHELLEY
You do?

MARY
Yes.

BYRON
Let’s hear it.

CLAIRE
Oh, I’m excited.
BYRON
Polidori, your Vampyre has a contender.

POLIDORI
I suppose so.

SHELLEY
(Pulling Mary aside.)
Are you sure?

MARY
Yes, Percy, I am.

BYRON
Are you going to keep her all to yourself, Shelley?

SHELLEY
Of course not.

BYRON
Well, let’s see how she does.

Beat. Mary looks around the room.

MARY
The story begins on a gloomy day in June.

BYRON
Ah, like today’s gloomy day in June!

CLaire
George, let her tell the story.

MARY
A studious and fervent explorer, Captain Walton, is making an expedition to the North Pole when he sees a figure crossing the tundra.

The lights shift and we are in the story. WALTON stands center, gazing out with his telescope.

WALTON
Surrounded on all sides by ice. It stretches out from the boat in every direction, seeming to have no end.

(He sees something.)
What is that? A dog-sled passing on toward the north, and fixed on it a being with the shape of a man of gigantic stature, it appears? Damn – it has disappeared on the horizon, past a ridge of ice.

A voice shouts from off.
VOICE
Captain, we have discovered someone on the ice!

WALTON
Pull him up!

VOICE
He is nearly frozen -

WALTON
Then hurry!

VICTOR appears, kneeling on the ground. He is shivering from the cold.

VICTOR
Please - I need your help -

WALTON
We’re here to help you, traveler. You won’t last long in the cold like that.

VICTOR
Where are you bound?

WALTON
The opposite direction of the warmth you need. We are on an expedition of discovery to the North Pole.

Victor nods.

VICTOR
I will join you.

WALTON
No, it isn’t safe.

VICTOR
And why are you out here, again?

WALTON
To go where no man has gone before.

Victor laughs.

VICTOR
What is your name, Captain?

WALTON
Walton. Yours?
VICTOR
Frankenstein.

WALTON
Why have you come so far north, Frankenstein?

Beat.

VICTOR
To seek one who fled from me.

WALTON
I may have seen him, the day before you were picked up, in a dog-sled on the ice.

VICTOR
And have you seen it since?

WALTON
I haven’t. Who is it? Why do you pursue him?
(Pause.)
I apologize, I shouldn’t trouble you with my questions.

Walton begins to leave.

VICTOR
I once had a friend, Captain, the most noble of men, the most good-hearted. You remind me of him.

WALTON
Thank you.

VICTOR
His name was Henry.
(Walton nods. Pause.)
I am in this mortal pursuit because it is my fate. You are an explorer, correct?

WALTON
Yes.

VICTOR
You seek knowledge and wisdom, as I once did. It was my ambition that brought me my ruin. I hope your ambition does not do the same.

WALTON
If it is too painful for you to talk about –

VICTOR
No - my fate is nearly sealed. Nothing can alter my destiny. Listen to my story, and you will see how inevitably it has been determined.
WALTON
  I will listen.

VICTOR
  I am by birth a Genevese -
  (The lights shift and Walton has disappeared.)
Captain? Captain!
  (Victor looks around for Walton frantically. He is alone. A flash of lightning illuminates the form of something lurking behind him. Victor freezes.)
No -
  We hear voices of Justine, Clerval, and Elizabeth imploring him:

CLERVAL
  Tell the story, Victor.

JUSTINE
  Tell the story.

ELIZABETH
  Tell your story.

  Lights shift and Victor is with Walton again.

WALTON
  Are you alright, friend?

VICTOR
  Where - ?

WALTON
  For a moment there, it was like you couldn’t see me - I was worried for you.

VICTOR
  I’m sorry, I -

WALTON
  Take a deep breath.
  (Pause. Victor does.)
  You don’t have to tell me. You can leave whatever haunts your past behind you.

VICTOR
  I cannot leave it behind. This is the future I have created for myself.
WALTON
You can choose a different way.

VICTOR
I cannot.

WALTON
Why? Why is this the only option?

VICTOR
It is a long story to tell.

WALTON
I am listening.

Pause.

VICTOR
No person could have passed a happier childhood than myself. My parents possessed a secluded country home by the lake, where we spent most of our time. I was the type of child who avoided crowds, but attached myself fervently to a small circle of close friends. Chief among these were my dear Elizabeth, and my friend Henry Clerval.

*ELIZABETH and CLERVAL appear.*

VICTOR (cont’d)
Let’s play "The Passing of Arthur."

CLERVAL
Wow, it has been a while since we’ve played that.

VICTOR
It’ll be fun.

CLERVAL
Why "The Passing of Arthur?"

ELIZABETH
I get to play the Lady of the Lake.

CLERVAL
I should have known.

ELIZABETH
Victor, do you want to be Arthur or Sir Bedivere?

VICTOR
You do a better Arthur, Henry.
CLERVAL
  Do you think so?
    
    *Elizabeth bows playfully.*

ELIZABETH
  Long live the king!
    
    *Victor joins her.*

VICTOR
  Long live the king!

CLERVAL
  If you insist.

VICTOR
  "I found him in the shining of the stars,
    I marked him in the flowering of his fields-"
    
    (Clerval begins to moan.)
    My king.

CLERVAL
  Dear Sir Bedivere, I am wounded.

VICTOR
  You have slain the traitor Mordred.

CLERVAL
  And in doing so, he has all but slain me.

VICTOR
  The Round Table has fallen.

CLERVAL
  Behold, then, I seem but King of the dead. I think that we shall never more delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds, walking the gardens and halls of Camelot -

    *JUSTINE enters hurriedly.*

JUSTINE
  Have any of you seen William?

ELIZABETH
  No.

JUSTINE
  Victor, you don’t know where your own brother is?
JUSTINE
Are you playing "The Passing of Arthur"?

CLERVAL
Yes.

JUSTINE
Without me?

CLERVAL
You weren’t here, so we had to skip the Mordred part -

JUSTINE
You could have found me.

ELIZABETH
Sorry, Justine.

JUSTINE
(To Victor.)
We should be looking for your brother, anyway.

ELIZABETH
You haven’t seen him at all, Victor?

VICTOR
I haven’t.

ELIZABETH
You’re such a good brother.

CLERVAL
Should we start over, or-?

ELIZABETH
You’re very excited about this, aren’t you?

CLERVAL
It’s been too long since the we got to do this.
(To Justine.)
Do you remember how we used to play at knights and damsels?

JUSTINE
It felt like we did every day.

ELIZABETH
And you were the one to come up with the stories!
CLERVAL
   I miss that.

ELIZABETH
   So do I.

VICTOR
   I have something to tell you all.

      Beat.

ELIZABETH
   Yes?

VICTOR
   It has been determined that I will continue my studies at university.

CLERVAL
   Victor, that’s excellent.

VICTOR
   In Ingolstadt.

ELIZABETH
   So, you’re leaving.

VICTOR
   Yes.

ELIZABETH
   When?

VICTOR
   Soon. Within the week.

CLERVAL
   That soon?

ELIZABETH
   It won’t be the four of us any longer.

VICTOR
   It will be, just less frequently.

JUSTINE
   What are you studying?

VICTOR
   Natural and philosphical sciences.
ELIZABETH
You were always good at the sciences.

CLERVAL
How long have you known?

VICTOR
A few weeks now. I was nervous to tell you.
(Pause. Clerval regards Victor.)
I’m sorry.

CLERVAL
I’m so proud of you. I will miss you, but I’m so proud of you.

JUSTINE
You’re going to do great things, Victor.

VICTOR
Thank you.

ELIZABETH
Write to us!

VICTOR
Of course.

CLERVAL
Yes, write us all about your natural sciences - I’ll have Elizabeth read me your letters when I’m having trouble falling asleep.

   Elizabeth, Justine, and Clerval laugh.

VICTOR
Oh, you think natural sciences are boring, then?

JUSTINE
They are a little.

VICTOR
Well, how’s this for boring?

   Victor playfully presses a pressure point on Clerval’s neck.

CLERVAL
Ow ow ow! I surrender! I surrender!

ELIZABETH
Do you need any help packing, Victor?
VICTOR
   I’ve barely begun, so – yes.

   Laughing, they start to exit.

JUSTINE
   What about William?

   Elizabeth and Justine stop.

ELIZABETH
   I’ll help you look.

JUSTINE
   Thank you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
   I wonder where he could be.

JUSTINE
   Probably off to find that Louise girl he’s so fond of.

ELIZABETH
   Does our little William have a girlfriend?

JUSTINE
   Two or three at the last count, but he likes this one best.

ELIZABETH
   That’s – cute, right?

JUSTINE
   Not when you have to try and find him.

ELIZABETH
   You’re a saint, Justine.

JUSTINE
   I know.

ELIZABETH
   What do you think about Victor going to university?

JUSTINE
   I was wondering when he’d tell you.

ELIZABETH
   You knew!

JUSTINE
   I promised to secrecy!
ELIZABETH
   It’s the farthest away we’ll ever be from each other.
     (Beat.)
   What would you study at university?

JUSTINE
   Oh, I don’t know.

ELIZABETH
   Anything.

JUSTINE
   I don’t think I’d like to go.

ELIZABETH
   I would study literature. Homer and Plutarch, the
   Arthur legend, Dante, Cervantes -

JUSTINE
   Why?

ELIZABETH
   To find out why stories get passed down, what makes the
   ones that survive so special. Don’t you find that
   interesting?

JUSTINE
   I would have guessed you liked those stories for the
   chivalry and romance. Helen of Troy launching her
   thousand ships and Guinevere -

ELIZABETH
   Why would you think that?

JUSTINE
   That’s what you always play with Victor and Henry.
     Beat.

ELIZABETH
   There isn’t anything else.

JUSTINE
   Well, it’s a good thing Victor is the only one who has
   to worry about university. He’s very talented.

ELIZABETH
   Why do you say that? You think I couldn’t handle
   university?

JUSTINE
   I did not mean -
ELIZABETH
I thought you of all people would agree with me.

JUSTINE
Why does it matter so much to you?

ELIZABETH
It doesn’t. I - should help Victor pack.

JUSTINE
What about finding William?

ELIZABETH
I wouldn’t be of much use anyway.

Elizabeth exits. After a moment, Justine exits in the opposite direction.

MARY
Victor, for the first time outside the comfort and familiarity of home, begins his travels to university in Ingolstadt.

Lights shift to Victor, traveling.

VICTOR
Travel calmed my nervous spirit - the familiarity of nature eased my fear of the unknown that awaited me. I contemplated the lakes - placid waters, all around was calm. And the snowy mountains, the “palaces of nature,” were not changed. These calm and heavenly scenes restored me.

(Victor takes a deep breath.)
So much has already been done, but I will achieve far more - I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of -

Byron interrupts the story.

BYRON
What kind of story is this supposed to be, Mary, horror or science?

MARY
What kind of audience are you supposed to be, Lord Byron, respectful or petulant?

BYRON
Perhaps I’d be more respectful, my dear, if your vapid protagonist would give up his poetic musings and do something?
MARY
I would prefer if you let me tell the story.

BYRON
Now let’s not get too emotional, Mary.

MARY
You want the protagonist to do something?

BYRON
Yes.

MARY
You want to be scared by the story?

BYRON
Please!

MARY
Well, I will tell you what Victor does - at university, he becomes fascinated with the study of life and death. What makes a living creature be alive. And to understand this, he must study death. He decides to observe the decay of dead creatures. He stalks forests and churchyards to collect rotting fragments and probe the flesh with his questioning fingers. He seeks the reason why death’s corruption always succeeds over life’s bloom. And after years of this labor - years, Byron - he finds his answer. He understands the secret.

BYRON
What is it - ?

MARY
Quiet. He understands the secret, and he becomes capable of imbuing dead flesh with life. All it takes is a spark. Could you imagine that? To have the power of life and death in your fingertips? What do you think he does with this ability, Lord Byron.

BYRON
I wouldn’t know.

MARY
Guess.

BYRON
He raises a loved one from the dead, or something of the like.

MARY
No.
BYRON

What, then?

MARY

Something far worse.

BYRON

Tell us.

MARY

Do you ever get the feeling, Lord Byron, that you are being followed? Late at night, on a dimly lit path? Suddenly you have the faintest sensation on the back of your neck that there are eyes on you. Tracking. Preying. And you turn your head, only to see a hurried and ominous movement in the shadows. That feeling, Lord Byron?

(Beat. Byron is somewhat shaken. He doesn’t respond.)

You’re not squeamish, are you?

BYRON

I - how dare -

MARY

Of course not, right? Let me tell you what our protagonist does. He collects body parts from rotting corpses. He disturbs graves and pries open coffins. He disrespects the rest of the dead for his own selfish and grandiose purposes. He begins to assemble his great project. A human – no, a creature – stitched together, piece by piece. Like Prometheus, he fashions a living being, but instead of using clay he uses death.

BYRON

And he brings it to life?

MARY

You can quote Milton, yes?

BYRON

Yes.

MARY

"O miserable Mankind?"

Beat. They have locked eyes.

BYRON

"O miserable Mankind, to what fall
Degraded, to what wretched state reserv’d?"
The lights shift and Victor is in his workshop. The sound of rain falling outside. Professors WALDMAN and KREMPE appear as shadows in the background, voices in Victor’s head. Victor connects instruments and wires to the CREATURE, referring to his journal as he does so.

WALDMAN
Excellent! Another student of this wonderful field of science.

KREMPE
Have you really wasted your time on such nonsense?

Victor gazes at his work for a moment.

VICTOR
Good God - beautiful. The muscles and arteries visible beneath skin -

BYRON
"Better end heer unborn. Why is life giv’n
To be thus wrested from us? rather why
Obtruded on us thus? who if we knew
What we receive, would either not accept
Life offer’d, or soon beg to lay it down,
Glad to be so dismiss’d in peace."

WALDMAN
The labors of men of genius, however misguided, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind.

VICTOR
The lustrous black hair, the white teeth, the watery eyes -

KREMPE
Every minute you have wasted on those books is utterly and entirely lost.

VICTOR
So much has already done, but I will achieve far more -

BYRON
"Can thus th’image of God in man created once
So goodly and erect, though faulty since,
To such unsightly sufferings be debas’d
Under inhuman pains?"

VICTOR
Live -

BYRON
"Why should not Man,
Retaining still Divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free?"

KREMPE
You must begin your studies entirely anew -

WALDMAN
There are worlds of mysteries yet to uncover!

VICTOR
(Screams.)
Live!
(A spark, and the Creature is brought to
life, screaming along with Victor. After
a moment, the Creature opens its eyes.
It takes in a sharp breath, then lets
out a soft groan.)

Dear God -

The Creature lolls its head over to look at
Victor. He is frozen, stunned. The Creature is
taking short, quick breaths.

BYRON
"Awake, arise, or be for ever fall’n."

Pause. Lights have gone out on Byron.

VICTOR
What have I done? What are you?

The Creature tries the word.

CREATURE
You -

VICTOR
I’m Victor. Victor Frankenstein.
(The Creature tries to move towards
Victor, but ends up falling to the
ground. Victor recoils.)

No - I have created a monster.
VICTOR runs out. The Creature notices Victor’s journal lying on the floor. It struggles to stand, and finally is able to get to its feet. Its movements are awkward and stilted as it learns how its muscles move. It picks Victor’s journal up. When it hears Clerval’s voice come from offstage, the Creature exits.

CLERVAL
(Offstage.)
Victor! Where are you running to, friend?

VICTOR
(Offstage.)
Henry -

CLERVAL
(Offstage.)
Come here. (Victor and Clerval enter.)
I’m glad I finally have a chance to visit you. (Victor sees the Creature is not in the workshop anymore.) How are your studies going?

VICTOR
They are - um - well.

CLERVAL
This is your workshop, I take it.

VICTOR
Yes.

CLERVAL
Where you perform your nature-defying acts of -

VICTOR
Chemistry.

CLERVAL
Ah, that’s right, chemistry. (Pause.) My dear Frankenstein, you seem a little off. Is everything alright?

VICTOR
Yes.
CLERVAL
What are you looking for?

VICTOR
A tool.

CLERVAL
I’ll help you look. What does it look like?

VICTOR
Horrifying.

CLERVAL
What?

VICTOR
Oh. Um - a small, a glass test tube.

Clerval begins to look. The Creature passes the window, hesitating for a moment to catch eyes with Victor. Victor drops to the floor and the Creature disappears. Something in Victor has changed - he is weakened and can barely stand.

CLERVAL
What? What is it?

VICTOR
Nothing - nothing.

CLERVAL
Did you see something?

VICTOR
No!

CLERVAL
Victor, what in God’s name is the matter?

VICTOR
I cannot tell.

CLERVAL
You can tell me.

VICTOR
No, Henry. I’m sorry.

Pause.

CLERVAL
Very well. But you do need some rest. You look as if you’ve been awake for weeks.
VICTOR
Some rest, yes.

CLERVAL
Come with me.

Clerval helps Victor out of the workshop. The lights shift and we see the Creature, alone. It wanders the stage, feeling the form of its body, its eyes adjusting to the light. It feels the earth under its feet. Then it takes out Victor’s journal and flips through the pages, trying to understand the words. It traces letters with its fingers, until it gets distracted by the sound of a bird’s song. It stands and listens intently. After a moment, it attempts to mimic the bird, and in doing so hears its own voice. This brings it much joy, and it experiments with the different sounds it can make. It holds its own throat to feel the vibrations, then discovers the seams holding its body together. It probes its own joints in confusion. Then, it hears voices:

Lights shift to Victor and Clerval, some weeks later.

VICTOR
You are too good to me, Henry. This whole winter spent in my sick room with me to help me recover. How can I ever repay you?

CLERVAL
You will repay me entirely if you get well as fast as you can, yes?

VICTOR
I will try.

CLERVAL
Since you appear to be in good spirits today, I have a question to ask you.

VICTOR
What is that?

CLERVAL
I won’t bring it up if it agitates you, but - why have you not written to Elizabeth? She hardly even knows how ill you have been.

VICTOR
I am always thinking of her.
CREATURE  (Hiding, to listen.)
          Thinking of -

CLERVAL
         You need to write to her. You promised.

CREATURE
         Promised.

VICTOR
         Why do you care?

CLERVAL
         I’m only concerned.

VICTOR
         Why would my first thought not immediately be of my
dear Elizabeth?

CLERVAL
         Thoughts are different than letters.

VICTOR
         I have been too weak to hold a pen.

CLERVAL
         So once you’ve recovered -

VICTOR
         I will write.

CLERVAL
         Good.
         (Beat. Clerval pulls a letter out of his pocket.)
         She has written to you.

VICTOR
         That letter - it’s from her?

CLERVAL
         Yes.

VICTOR
         May I hear it?

CLERVAL
         Of course.
         (He reads:)
         "My dearest cousin,

You have been ill, very ill, and even the constant
letters of kind Henry are not sufficient to reassure me
(MORE)
CLERVAL (cont’d)
on your account. But one word from you, dear Victor, is
necessary to calm my apprehensions. Clerval writes that
you are getting better, and I eagerly hope you will
confirm this soon in your own handwriting." See?

VICTOR
I see, I see.

CREATURE
I see -

CLERVAL
(Continuing:)
"Get well and return to us! I can only imagine how
quickly you would get better if you had Justine there
to help. I recollect you once remarked that if you were
in an ill humor, one glance from Justine could
dissipate it. I’m sure you would also love to see your
brother William. He is very tall for his age, with
sweet blue eyes, dark eyelashes, and curling hair. When
he smiles, two little dimples appear on each cheek. He
asks for you almost daily. Do not keep him waiting! And
do not keep me waiting, Victor. Write, my dear – one
word will be a blessing to us. Take care of yourself
and adieu!"

VICTOR
Get that smug look off your face.

CLERVAL
I’m not smug.

VICTOR
I will write to her as soon as I am well.

CLERVAL
(Playfully:)
"Do not keep me waiting, Victor."

VICTOR
I get the point, Henry.

CLERVAL
Do you want to try standing today?

VICTOR
Yes.

Clerval helps Victor out of the bed, and with some
difficulty, to his feet.
CLERVAL
How does this feel?

CREATURE
This feel –

VICTOR
Better. Thank you.

CLERVAL
Good.

(Clerval sits Victor carefully back onto the bed. He throws a sheet of paper and pen into Victor’s lap.)

In that case, I think you can manage a few words.

CREATURE
Words.

(Clerval exits, leaving Victor alone with the paper. Victor begins to write. The Creature watches the writing, and sees the letters are the same as the ones in Victor’s journal.)

Victor - Frankenstein.

VICTOR
Is someone there?

CREATURE
Victor - Frankenstein.

Victor tries to look but can barely stand.

VICTOR
Hello?

CREATURE
Hello.

Victor sees the Creature.

VICTOR
No - haunt me no more, you monster!

Victor throws his pen at the Creature, who runs off. Victor collapses.

The lights shift as William, Victor’s younger brother, enters. He looks for and finds a place to hide.
JUSTINE
  (Offstage.)
  William! Where are you?
  (Justine enters.)
I don’t like this game, William. Now I know why
Elizabeth won’t play it anymore.
  (Pause. She jumps around a corner.)
Found you!
  (She’s wrong. William giggles.)
Uh-oh...
  (She finds him.)
Got you!

WILLIAM
  You cheated!

JUSTINE
  How did I cheat?

WILLIAM
  I don’t know. It’s your turn now!

JUSTINE
  Are you ready?
  (William covers his eyes.)
You’ll never find me.

WILLIAM
  I will!

JUSTINE
  I don’t know - I have a pretty good hiding spot in
  mind.

WILLIAM
  One - two - three - four -
  (Justine exits.)
  Five - six - seven - eight - nine -

    The Creature appears, behind William.

CREATURE
  Eyes closed.

WILLIAM
  Who’s there?

CREATURE
  Help. I need your help.

WILLIAM
  Who are you?
CREATURE
    Friend. A friend.

WILLIAM
    Why can’t I open my eyes?

CREATURE
    I am - ugly.
      (William opens his eyes.)
    No!

    The Creature grabs William and puts its hand over his eyes.

WILLIAM
    Help! Help!

CREATURE
    Do you know Victor Frankenstein?

      Pause.

WILLIAM
    He is my brother.

CREATURE
    Brother?

WILLIAM
    Why? Why can’t I look at you?

CREATURE
    Talk to him for me.

WILLIAM
    I don’t know who you are.

CREATURE
    I can be his - brother - too.
      (William twists free and looks at the Creature. He screams.)
    No - quiet!

WILLIAM
    Help! Help me! Justine!
      (The Creature puts its hands on William’s mouth and throat. William’s struggle slows down.)
    Help -

    William dies. Justine enters.
JUSTINE
    William! Get away from him, you monster -
    (Justine tries to attack the Creature, but it strikes her, knocking her to the ground. The Creature runs off.)
    No - no, no, no - help! Someone help!

    The lights shift back to Victor, who has almost fully recovered. Clerval enters with a letter.

CLERVAL
    I’m glad to see your correspondance with Elizabeth is picking up.

VICTOR
    I knew you would be.

CLERVAL
    This is from her, of course.
    (He hands Victor the letter, who opens and reads it.)
    Victor - I think once you are recovered, we should -

VICTOR
    Oh no.

CLERVAL
    What is it?
    (Victor covers his face with his hands.)
    Victor, what has happened?

VICTOR
    Read.

    Clerval picks up the letter and reads.

CLERVAL
    William’s dead. Oh, Victor. I can offer no consolation.

VICTOR
    Found with the murderer’s mark still on his neck.

CLERVAL
    He was murdered?

VICTOR
    That’s what it says in the letter.

CLERVAL
    I didn’t get that far. Who could have done such a thing?
VICTOR
I don’t know.

Beat. Maybe Victor does know. Clerval has continued reading.

CLERVAL
She says Justine found him.
(Victor stands and goes to the window.)
I can’t imagine.

VICTOR
(Out the window:)
Demon!

CLERVAL
What do you intend to do?

VICTOR
I will return to Geneva. I need to see Elizabeth. I need to tell her something.

CLERVAL
I’ll travel with you.
(They travel by train during Clerval’s speech about William. Victor hears but barely registers his friend’s words.)
William, poor boy. He sleeps now with the angels. All of us that have known him bright and joyous in his young beauty must weep over his untimely loss. To die so miserably, to feel the murderer’s grasp! It is unthinkable. And how much more of a murderer, to destroy such innocence! Only one consolation can we find; we mourn and weep, but he is at rest. The pang is over, his sufferings are at an end forever. Dirt covers his little gentle form, and he knows no pain. He must no longer be a subject for pity - we must reserve that for his miserable survivors, to have lost someone so dear.

VICTOR
Oh, Mont Blanc!

CLERVAL
What?

VICTOR
Familiar mountains of Geneva! How do you welcome your wanderer? Your summits are clear, the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to suggest peace, or to mock at my unhappiness and unrest?
CLERVAL
William’s passing was indeed unfortunate, but -

VICTOR
Night is closing in, Henry. I can hardly see the mountains now. Doesn’t it appear to be a vast and dim scene of evil?

CLERVAL
It looks like home.

VICTOR
I feel I am destined to become the most wretched of human beings.

    Pause. Lightning and thunder.

CLERVAL
We’ve stopped.

VICTOR
Have we arrived?

CLERVAL
I don’t know.

VICTOR
Perhaps the storm stopped us.

CLERVAL
Hopefully we aren’t stopped for long.

VICTOR
I’ll walk the rest of the way.

CLERVAL
It’s too far.

VICTOR
It is close enough.
    (Clerval moves to go with him.)
    Stay. I’d like to be alone.

CLERVAL
I would like to be with you.

VICTOR
Henry, I must.

CLERVAL
You don’t have to be so stubborn.
    (Victor gives him a look. Clerval smiles.)
    (MORE)
CLRerval (cont’d)
Stay safe, Victor.

*Clerval is gone, and Victor is alone. Another lightning strike.*

Victor

Oh William, this is your funeral, this is your dirge!

(A third lightning strike illuminates the shape of the Creature in the fog.
Victor freezes.)

You! No, you do not frighten me, demon. I will not run this time. You cannot hide yourself from me. I see you in all your hideous deformity!

(The Creature is gone.)

Stay, villain! No! Stay! I know it was you! It was you who murdered that sweet innocent soul!

(Victor collapses.)

William - I am sorry, I am sorry -

*Elizabeth appears.*

Elizabeth

Victor?

Victor

Elizabeth? No, it is not safe -

Elizabeth

Henry told me you were walking and I -

Victor

Please -

Elizabeth

You need help, Victor.

She helps him to his feet.

Victor

William -

Elizabeth

I know.

They embrace.

Victor

I wish I had come sooner.

Elizabeth

I wish you had too.
VICTOR
I have to tell you about the murderer, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
About Justine?

Beat.

VICTOR
Justine?

ELIZABETH
Yes, I can still hardly believe it.

VICTOR
But she is innocent! You are mistaken, she is innocent.

ELIZABETH
She kept crying out about some sort of monster in the woods. The judges said it was clear she was lying, and condemned her.

VICTOR
Some sort of monster -

ELIZABETH
I don’t know what she was talking about. She didn’t seem like herself.

VICTOR
Didn’t you speak on her behalf?

ELIZABETH
I did, but it was too late. The judges’ minds were made up.

VICTOR
Made up? You didn’t try hard enough.

ELIZABETH
I did everything I could. You were not even there!

VICTOR
Something else can be done, must be done -

ELIZABETH
Victor, it is impossible.

VICTOR
Nothing is impossible.
ELIZABETH
What is wrong with you? You’re acting wild.

VICTOR
I care about our friend!

ELIZABETH
So do I!

*Pause.*

VICTOR
What is her sentence?

ELIZABETH
She is to be executed.

VICTOR
Hanged?

(Elizabeth nods.)

I’d like to visit her. I owe her a few words.

ELIZABETH
I will take you.

VICTOR
No -

ELIZABETH
I owe it to her too, Victor.

*Pause. Victor nods. The lights shift to Justine’s cell.*

VICTOR
Justine.

ELIZABETH
Oh, my dear.

JUSTINE
Why have you come? Are you here to join with my enemies, to condemn me a murderer?

ELIZABETH
Stand, stand.

(Elizabeth helps Justine to her feet.)

Why kneel if you are innocent? I am not one of your enemies. I believed you were innocent, until -

JUSTINE
Until what? I am not making up what I saw. I don’t know what it was, but - why don’t you, my friend, believe

(MORE)
JUSTINE (cont’d)  
me? They think I am a monster, Elizabeth – and they have made me think I was the monster itself. All looked on me as a liar, a wretch doomed to hell.

ELIZABETH  
You are not a wretch –

JUSTINE  
And to think you believed me guilty of a crime as terrible as this. I loved that boy. I loved him as a brother. And if I must be condemned, then my only consolation is that I will see him soon in heaven.

ELIZABETH  
Do not mourn, Justine.

JUSTINE  
I mourn that you thought me a liar, a murderer.

ELIZABETH  
But a monster –?

JUSTINE  
I know what I saw.

Victor has sunk to the ground, his face in his hands. He lets out a soft groan.

VICTOR  
Oh –

JUSTINE  
Victor, it is kind of you to visit me. I hope you do not believe me guilty.

Victor works up the courage to tell her.

VICTOR  
I know who the murderer is.

Beat.

JUSTINE  
Do you come here to mock me too?

ELIZABETH  
No. He is convinced of your innoncence.

JUSTINE  
You believe me?

Victor nods.
ELIZABETH
   He does.

JUSTINE
   Victor, how can I prove what I saw when everyone believes me a liar?

ELIZABETH
   There is no way to prove there was a monster -

JUSTINE
   If you believe me guilty, Elizabeth, then please leave.

ELIZABETH
   I spoke to defend you! I spoke of the goodness of your character and your love of William! But then you -

JUSTINE
   I know what I saw. And if your disbelief discredits me, then so be it.

ELIZABETH
   I wish that I were to die with you. I cannot live in this world of misery.

       Pause. Elizabeth exits. Victor stands to go.

JUSTINE
   What aren’t you telling me?

VICTOR
   There is nothing.

JUSTINE
   And yet you say you know the murderer. Who?

VICTOR
   I cannot -

JUSTINE
   Was it a man, or the monster I saw?

VICTOR
   No, it - I -

JUSTINE
   What? What did it?

VICTOR
   I cannot say.
JUSTINE
    It could save my life, Victor. You could defend me. Tell me what you know.

VICTOR
    I’m sorry.

JUSTINE
    You would let me die? Victor – we’ve known each other all our lives. I loved your brother and want justice for him as much as you do! But you need to help me!

VICTOR
    There is – no way to prove there was a monster.

    Pause.

JUSTINE
    I thought you were my friend.

VICTOR
    Justine –

JUSTINE
    Goodbye, Victor.

    Lights fade on Justine. Victor is alone with Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
    What did she say?

VICTOR
    Goodbye.

ELIZABETH
    That’s all?

VICTOR
    When is she to be –?

ELIZABETH
    Tomorrow.

VICTOR
    She is brave.

    Elizabeth gives him a hug.

ELIZABETH
    We need to be brave too.

    Victor does not return it – he is lost in thought.
VICTOR
Yes. We need to be brave.
   (Victor breaks away from her.)
   Excuse me.

ELIZABETH
Where are you going?

VICTOR
I - I need to take a walk. Clear my head.

ELIZABETH
Victor, I need you here.

VICTOR
I think I need to be alone.

ELIZABETH
You don’t have to -

VICTOR
I’ll be back soon.
   (Elizabeth exits, and Victor is alone.)
Mont Blanc, we meet again. Your precipitous slopes around me, your icy wall of the glacier above me, your few broken pines scattered around, your solemn silence broken only by the fall of some vast fragment in the distance - the thunder sound of the avalanche, the jagged lightning bolts in cracking ice.
   (Beat.)
I need to be brave.
   (Is he alone?)
Are you following me, devil?
   (A shadow passes behind him.)
Yes, hide - you should fear the fierce vengeance that I will bring on your miserable head! Show yourself, that I may trample you to dust! Oh, I wish killing you could bring back William and Justine!

The Creature appears. Victor recoils.

CREATURE
Hello, Victor.

   *Byron interrupts again, and lights shift to the sitting room.*

BYRON
I’m confused - how would it be able to speak, again?

POLIDORI
It learned from listening to Victor and Henry.
BYRON
I mean anatomically.

CLAIRE
Is it important?

BYRON
I think so, yes!

POLIDORI
One can only assume that Frankenstein created the monster with the ability to breathe, which means it has the air that is necessary to produce sound. It would also have working vocal folds to vibrate and create pitch. Frankenstein must have tested dozens of stolen parts to assemble such an intricate system. But I don’t think that is what Mary is concerned with.

MARY
I’m concerned with the story.

BYRON
I don’t believe it to be possible.

POLIDORI
Then let us revel in the impossible, no?

CLAIRE
(To Byron.)
Are you determined to be sour this entire evening?

BYRON
Let’s get on with it, then. What does our ambitious doctor do when he sees his own creation speak?

Lights shift to the mountain, with Victor and the Creature facing each other.

VICTOR
You – you speak.

CREATURE
Yes, I speak. I am not mute, I can respond to your hatred. And what hatred! You detest me, your own creation. We share a closer connection than any living beings and yet you hate me and want to kill me. You want to kill me! How dare you toy with with with life. I have only one request, and if you agree I will leave you at peace. But if you refuse, I will not hesitate with my revenge on you and your remaining friends.
VICTOR
Monster! Hell itself is too mild a punishment for your crimes, and already you want more victims? No, I must take back the life I gave -

_Victor lunges at the Creature but his attack is easily avoided. Victor falls to the ground._

CREATURE
Be calm! Please hear me - I will not fight you. I am your creation -

VICTOR
No, we are enemies. Begone, or let us fight to decide which of us survives.

CREATURE
I will not fight you! You accuse me of murder, and yet you would destroy your own creature without hesitation. Oh, praise the eternal justice of mankind!

VICTOR
Yes, I accuse you of murder! You murdered my brother. Deny it.

CREATURE
I wanted to find you to ask about my own creation. Am I - constructed from dead body parts?

VICTOR
You cannot deny it! William is dead by your hand! Justine is dead by your hand! Abhorred devil -

CREATURE
Am I made from dead body parts?

VICTOR
Cursed be the day you first saw light! You have made me miserable beyond compare -

CREATURE
Give me my answer, Victor!

VICTOR
Yes! Are you content? Yes, you are stitched, cobbled together from various corpses! That is your answer, wretch!

_Pause._

CREATURE
So you can do it again.
VICTOR

What?

CREATURE

You can make another, like me.

VICTOR

No - creating you, I did not realize what horror - I did not think -

CREATURE

No, you did not think. What did you expect to happen, Victor? You would bring me to life and there would be nothing after? You abandoned me to the wilderness, with no one and nothing.

VICTOR

And yet here you stand before me, capable of thought and speech. I cannot believe it.

CREATURE

Are you pleased?

VICTOR

Pleased? No. I’ve created a murderer.

CREATURE

If I had been shown compassion I would not have murdered.

VICTOR

Who could possibly show you compassion?

CREATURE

My creator.

Beat.

VICTOR

To the murderer of my brother? No.

CREATURE

No?

VICTOR

Never.

CREATURE

Then send me away. Banish me to the extreme corners of the globe - to South America - never never to be seen again.
VICTOR
Then begone! Plague me no more, villain!

CREATURE
On one condition.

VICTOR
And what is that?

CREATURE
Here is my request, creator: I am alone and miserable, the only one of my species. Man detests me. But if I had a companion, as deformed and horrid as myself, then I would be at peace.

VICTOR
Another -

CREATURE
Another, so that I may not be so miserable. This you alone can do, and I demand it of you.

VICTOR
I refuse. To create another like you? It is impossible - together you would destroy the earth. I will never consent.

CREATURE
Listen, so I can reason with you - I am malicious because I am miserable. You, my creator, would tear me to pieces and triumph. I will have my revenge - if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear, and chiefly towards you. I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you shall curse the hour of your birth. What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate - I demand another creature like myself. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world, but we will be happy together. Oh! My creator, make me happy!

(Pause.)

If you consent, neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again - we will go to the vast wilds of South America to live out the rest of our days in peace.

VICTOR
How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, live in this proposed exile? You will return and again seek man’s kindness, and you will meet with his hatred - your evil passion will be renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in your murders. This cannot be, I cannot consent.
CREATURE
I swear to you, by the earth which I inhabit, and by you that made me, that with this companion I will leave behind man’s civilization forever. My evil passions will have fled, for I shall have been finally met with sympathy! My life will flow quietly away, and in my dying moments I shall praise my maker.

Pause.

VICTOR
You will praise me.

CREATURE
For bringing me to a peaceful life.

VICTOR
And that is what you want?

CREATURE
Isn’t that what everyone wants? I am no exception.

Pause.

VICTOR
On your solemn oath to leave behind forever the neighborhood of man, I will consent to create a companion for you.

CREATURE
I swear, with this wish fulfilled, you shall never behold me again. Go and commence your labours – I will watch your progress closely. And when you are ready, I shall appear.

VICTOR
I will need time.

CREATURE
Of course.

VICTOR
It is then determined.

They shake hands. The Creature doesn’t let go.

CREATURE
But remember, Victor – if you break your promise to me, you will become the author of your own speedy ruin. I will make sure of it.

The Creature disappears.
VICTOR
Oh - what have I done?
   (Lightning and thunder.)
Stars and clouds and winds, if you pity me, crush me and let me become nothing! If not, depart, depart, and leave me in darkness.

  Blackout.

  END OF ACT ONE.
ACT TWO

Lights come up on Mary and Shelley, after her dream-vision from Act I.

SHELLEY
   We will be wed, Mary. Soon.

MARY
   I know.

SHELLEY
   I don’t care more about Lord Byron than you.

MARY
   You admire him more.

SHELLEY
   As a poet.

MARY
   Can we go to sleep?

SHELLEY
   I love you.

MARY
   I know you do. But when will you start putting me first, Percy?

Lights shift to Lord Byron’s sitting room once again. The group has just listened to the confrontation between Victor and the Creature.

CLAIRE
   Will Victor really make another creature? I think I may faint with terror.

BYRON
   I thought we were letting her tell the story, Claire.

CLAIRE
   Did they really hang Justine?

MARY
   Unfortunately -

BYRON
   So many questions!

CLAIRE
   Will the Creature kill Victor?
POLIDORI
At this rate, the question should be ’When will the Creature kill Victor?’

CLAIRE
But the Creature only wants to be shown kindness. It doesn’t want to cause harm.

BYRON
Doesn’t it?

CLAIRE
Well –

BYRON
I think the real question is how these disturbing visions found their way into the brain of an innocent young girl.

MARY
It is only my imagination.

BYRON
A strange imagination.

SHELLEY
A fascinating imagination. The story is incredible, Mary.

MARY
Thank you. You have only heard the beginning.

SHELLEY
But, leaving aside the monster’s ability to speak – how did the doctor even create life from nothing?

BYRON
Yes, I’m curious, how did he?

Pause.

MARY
He used a form of advanced electricity.

POLIDORI
Ah, like Galvanism, then.

MARY
Yes.

BYRON
Dr. Polidori – do you think that is possible?
POLIDORI  
    I am uncertain - in all likelihood, no.

BYRON  
    No?

MARY  
    It is only a story.

CLAIRE  
    I’m enjoying it.

BYRON  
    That is because you have no eye for detail, dear.

CLAIRE  
    I -

SHELLEY  
    Would you like to continue, Mary?

POLIDORI  
    Please do.

BYRON  
    Yes, I’m fascinated to hear more about the 
    life-bringing electricity Dr. Frankenstein uses on this 
    second creation.

MARY  
    What do you want this story to be, Lord Byron, horror 
    or science?

SHELLEY  
    Would you excuse us a moment?  
        (Shelley pulls Mary aside.)  
    What are you doing?

MARY  
    Defending myself.

SHELLEY  
    Lord Byron is a very important man.

MARY  
    So?

SHELLEY  
    So we don’t want to upset him.  
        Beat.
MARY
    (A smile.)
    Of course not.

SHELLEY
    Right?

MARY
    Right.

SHELLEY
    Good.

    They return to the others.

MARY
    I apologize if I was beastly, Lord Byron. I certainly did not mean to be.

BYRON
    Not to worry, it’s forgotten. Now, shall we hear another story?

POLIDORI
    Mary hasn’t finished hers.

BYRON
    Right, of course.

CLAIRE
    We want to hear what happens next.

MARY
    You won’t faint?

CLAIRE
    Not me.

MARY
    I was asking Polidori.

BYRON
    No guarantees there.

POLIDORI
    I am – I would not –

SHELLEY
    They’re only teasing, doctor.

POLIDORI
    Yes – I – of course.
CLAIRE
   Enough teasing, let’s hear more of the story!

BYRON
   Enough story, let’s have more of the teasing! My dear Polidori, I must say –

MARY
   (Interrupting.)
   More of the story it is!

BYRON
   Determined to ruin the fun, I suppose –

MARY
   (Overlapping.)
   The Creature has left Victor Frankenstein alone with his thoughts and a promise he cannot break. After this fateful confrontation with his creation, Victor returns to his home and loved ones – those that remain. His mind is fractured between his promise to the Creature and his fear of creating more destruction. He is nearly deprived of all strength. He sees no way forward.

   *Victor has collapsed, finally home. Elizabeth enters.*

ELIZABETH
   Victor! There you are!

VICTOR
   Elizabeth –

ELIZABETH
   What happened to you?

VICTOR
   I –

ELIZABETH
   You were away for hours. I thought you might not return. I was worried.

VICTOR
   I was too.

ELIZABETH
   You’re home now.

VICTOR
   Yes.
ELIZABETH
We’ve missed having you here. Myself, Clerval, -
Justine - it felt like something was wrong without you
around.

VICTOR
It is good to be back.

ELIZABETH
You must tell me about your studies. Everything you
learned.

VICTOR
Of course - another time.

ELIZABETH
It’s always "another time" with you, isn’t it Victor?

VICTOR
It is not.

ELIZABETH
Name one instance.

VICTOR
That isn’t - I -

ELIZABETH
See, you can’t do it.

VICTOR
I feel ambushed.

ELIZABETH
Yes, you’re in such danger.

VICTOR
I always am with you.

She takes him by the arm and kisses him.

ELIZABETH
I missed having you here.

VICTOR
I did write -

ELIZABETH
I missed having you here in person.

VICTOR
Writing is the next best option.
ELIZABETH
The "next best option"! You only wrote after I reminded you, through Henry -

VICTOR
I would have remembered.

ELIZABETH
I’m sure you would have.

VICTOR
Eventually.

ELIZABETH
Victor.

VICTOR
Yes, you can keep teasing -

ELIZABETH
Will you marry me?

Pause.

VICTOR
You’re asking me - ?

ELIZABETH
I’m allowed to ask you. Will you marry me?

VICTOR
Elizabeth -

ELIZABETH
I don’t want to wait anymore. I’m tired of waiting - I want to be with you.

VICTOR
I want to be with you too.

ELIZABETH
I’ve been thinking about this for so long, Victor. There’s no one else I’d rather be with.
(Pause.)
What do you say?

VICTOR
Yes, I say yes.

Elizabeth, overcome with joy, wraps him in a hug. The shadow of the Creature passes behind her - Victor sees it and remembers.
ELIZABETH
When shall the wedding be?

VICTOR
There’s one thing I have to do first.

ELIZABETH
There are a lot of things we have to do first.

VICTOR
No – there is something else I have to do. Alone.

ELIZABETH
What is it?

VICTOR
I cannot say.

ELIZABETH
Victor –

VICTOR
I cannot, I’m sorry.

ELIZABETH
We will be married, yes?

VICTOR
Yes. Yes, of course. I only need one year.

ELIZABETH
One year?

VICTOR
You waited for me while I was in Ingolstadt, and while
I continued my studies – one more year is not too much
to ask.

ELIZABETH
I am not an object you can simply leave behind, Victor.
I will not wait for you forever.

VICTOR
Listen to me –

ELIZABETH
What do you have to say – Do you take it back? Will you
stay with me?

Beat.
VICTOR
I’m sorry.

ELIZABETH
I cannot believe -

VICTOR
One year. That’s all.

ELIZABETH
What do you need to do for an entire year that is more important than me?

VICTOR
I will tell you at another time. I’m sorry. I must go.

ELIZABETH
Where?

VICTOR
To England.

ELIZABETH
England! Of course!

VICTOR
Then it will be only us.

ELIZABETH
Do you love somebody else?

VICTOR
Do I - ?

ELIZABETH
You have travelled - you have spent several years of your life at Ingolstadt, and now you flee to England. Is there someone else that you love?

VICTOR
No, Elizabeth, no.

ELIZABETH
Then why do you insist on being apart from me?

VICTOR
I have work to complete.

ELIZABETH
What work, Victor? What do you have to do?
VICTOR
I will tell you when I return.

ELIZABETH
In one year.

VICTOR
I promise.

ELIZABETH
Don’t do this to me.

VICTOR
I must.

(Elizabeth drops her head and closes her eyes. She nods slightly.)

Goodbye, Elizabeth.

He kisses her cheek and exits. She watches him go.
Once he is out of earshot, she continues.

ELIZABETH
No, Victor, I will not accept this! Did you even think to take me with you? I would love to see England! I would love to learn about natural sciences and chemistry! I would love to be with you, just be near you.

(Beat. Clerval has entered and listens.
Elizabeth does not realize he is there.)
Come back here so I can say all of this to you. Come back, Victor.

CLERVAL
Go after him.

ELIZABETH
Henry! I did not hear you come in.

CLERVAL
Go after him. Say what you need to.

ELIZABETH
He will not listen.

CLERVAL
He might.

ELIZABETH
No - he had that look in his eyes.

CLERVAL
The determined look.
ELIZABETH
You know him as well as I do.

CLERVAL
Sometimes it feels like I don’t really.

ELIZABETH
You’re his best friend.

CLERVAL
Where’s he going?

ELIZABETH
England.

CLERVAL
Did he say why?

ELIZABETH
No.
(Pause.)
We’re to be married when he returns.

CLERVAL
Are you? Congratulations.

ELIZABETH
Thank you, Henry.

CLERVAL
When will that be?

ELIZABETH
When he returns. One year.
(Pause.)

CLERVAL
You won’t have to wait that long.

ELIZABETH
He said he needed the time to— to do something.

CLERVAL
(Exiting.)
You won’t have to wait that long, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
Where are you going?

CLERVAL
I’m getting him back for you!
ELIZABETH
Henry, no -

CLERVAL
You shall be Mrs. Frankenstein soon enough!

   Clerval is gone. The lights shift to Victor with his suitcase, preparing to leave.

VICTOR
To England, Victor. One last task, then you are free from this nightmare. Free from this nightmare of a creature, and finally peace!

   Clerval enters.

CLERVAL
Where are we going? England?

VICTOR
Henry! Yes, excuse me - I’m on my way now.

CLERVAL
I’ll go with you, of course.

VICTOR
What? No - I must go alone.

CLERVAL
You know I won’t take no for an answer, friend.

VICTOR
Henry -

CLERVAL
I love to travel! I love England especially! How long will you travel for?

VICTOR
One -

CLERVAL
A year, right?

VICTOR
Yes.

CLERVAL
Why?

   Beat.
VICTOR
There’s work I need to do.

CLERVAL
What about Elizabeth?

VICTOR
She will have to wait.

CLERVAL
Does she have to?

VICTOR
What does it matter to you? I have no choice.

CLERVAL
What work is so important you cannot be married first?

VICTOR
Why are you so interested in my work?

CLERVAL
I’m not interested in your work – I’m interested in you. What has happened to the Victor I grew up with?

VICTOR
You’re looking at him.

CLERVAL
Right. (Beat.)
Victor, I think we both know you need to marry Elizabeth.

VICTOR
I know.

CLERVAL
Then why wait?

Pause.

VICTOR
I need to fulfill a promise.

CLERVAL
It must be an urgent promise.

VICTOR
More than you know.
CLERVAL
What aren’t you telling me, Victor?

VICTOR
It’s better that you don’t know.

CLERVAL
But you must travel to England.

VICTOR
Yes.

CLERVAL
Well, we leave today?

VICTOR
I told you -

CLERVAL
You did tell me, and I won’t take no for an answer. It will be fun - two friends traveling together, seeing the world. When was the last time we traveled together?

VICTOR
I don’t -

CLERVAL
That’s right, we haven’t. Let’s see the world, Victor!

VICTOR
I must focus on my work.

CLERVAL
Your work, of course, yes. I will let you focus on your work.

VICTOR
Good.

CLERVAL
So when do we leave?

VICTOR
Immediately.

CLERVAL
Wonderful.

VICTOR
I did not agree -
CLERVAL
What happened the last time you were alone with your work, friend? Who had to nurse you back to health over the course of weeks while you regained your strength? Do you really think I will let that happen to you again?

Pause.

VICTOR
No.

CLERVAL
You seem to refuse to look after yourself, so I’ve taken it as my own responsibility. Now, we were ready to depart?

VICTOR
Yes.

CLERVAL
Good.

(They begin to travel. Clerval admires the sights.)

I love to travel. I have seen the most beautiful scenes of my own country - I have visited the lakes of Lucerne and Uri, where the snowy mountains descend almost perpendicularly to the water, casting black and impenetrable shadows. This would cause a gloomy and mournful appearance were it not for the most beautiful islands that relieve the eye by their vibrant appearance - I have seen this lake agitated by a tempest, when the wind tore up whirlwinds of water and gave you an idea of what the water-spout must be on the great ocean! I have seen the mountains of La Valais, and the Pays de Vaud; but this country, Victor, pleases me more than all those wonders. The mountains of Switzerland are more majestic and strange, but there is a charm in the banks of this divine river that I have never seen equalled. Oh, surely the spirit that inhabits and guards this place has a soul more in harmony with man than those who pile the glacier or retire to the inaccessible peaks of the mountains of our own country. Doesn’t it make you feel so alive?

VICTOR
I suppose.

CLERVAL
"I suppose." Victor, how can you be so miserable with such beautiful country surrounding you?
VICTOR
    I’m sorry, I am preoccupied thinking of -

CLERVAL
    Your work, yes, I know. Forget your work for a moment
    and look at this view.

VICTOR
    What is it?

CLERVAL
    Nature, in all her splendor. Take it in, friend.
    (They look out for a moment.)
    It is incredible, no?

VICTOR
    It is.

CLERVAL
    Nature is always best when undisturbed by man’s
    meddling touch.

    Pause. Victor turns away.

VICTOR
    I can’t continue.
    (Lights shift and Victor is with Walton again.)
    I cannot bear to think of Henry any longer - it breaks
    my heart.

WALTON
    Why?

VICTOR
    How could I bring this fate upon my friend, who showed
    me nothing but love? What misery did I create?

WALTON
    Dr. Frankenstein, what happened to your friend?

VICTOR
    Where does this unmatched soul now exist? Is this
gentle and lovely being lost forever? Has this mind, so
full of ideas -- has this mind perished? Does it now
only exist in my memory? No, it cannot be so. Henry -
your body has decayed, but your spirit still lives with
your unhappy friend.

WALTON
    Henry died.
    (Pause.)
    How did he -?
VICTOR  
I’m sorry - these words are but a slight tribute to the unparalleled worth of Henry, but they soothe my heart.

WALTON  
Please - what happened to him?

Pause.

VICTOR  
I must rest now, Captain.

WALTON  
No, first tell me -

VICTOR  
I will resume the story in the morning. It is getting late.

WALTON  
I don’t mind.

VICTOR  
No. I will continue tomorrow.

Victor turns away from Walton and closes his eyes. Walton regards the sleeping Victor.

WALTON  
What could have possibly -  
(Walton sees something outside the ship, and looks out to investigate.)
Dr. Frankenstein?

(No response from Victor.)
There it is again. The distant traveler - or monster, if that is what he pursues. I can hardly make out its form.

(He reaches for his telescope.)
No - I do not want to see the wretch up close. Rather let it stay far, far away.

(Pause.)
It is so far away. It does not move. Or if it does, I cannot tell. Does it approach?

(He takes the telescope and hesitatingly puts it to his eye.)
Dear God -  
(He lowers the telescope.)
Doctor, what have you done? What desire compelled you to form such a being? It is unimaginable. That is no creation of man, but must be the work of the devil himself. No man’s imagination could create such -  
(He puts the telescope to his eye again and immediately drops it.)

(MORE)
WALTON (cont’d)
   It sees me.
   (He rushes to Victor’s side and shakes him awake.)
   Dr. Frankenstein!

VICTOR
   What? What?

WALTON
   The monster – it is out there and it sees us!

VICTOR
   You saw it?

WALTON
   Look.

   Victor looks through the telescope.

VICTOR
   Demon.

WALTON
   What do we do?

VICTOR
   There is nothing.

WALTON
   We must confront it, then.

VICTOR
   Maybe.

WALTON
   Doctor, you must finish the story. If we are to confront this – thing – then I must know what it is capable of.

VICTOR
   You do not want to know.

WALTON
   I must hear it. And once this is completed, you can regain your life!

VICTOR
   Do not make the same mistake that I did –

WALTON
   What mistake?
VICTOR
You’re becoming obsessed.

WALTON
Only so I may better understand, and help you!

VICTOR
No, I cannot -

WALTON
You and Henry were traveling to England, so you could create a companion for your monster. What happened next?

VICTOR
Captain -

WALTON
No! No excuses, doctor. Do you want to be redeemed?
(Pause.)
Or, if you prefer, you may take the truth of Henry’s death to the grave.

Pause.

VICTOR
Henry accompanied me to England, but I needed to continue to Scotland on my own. I was to work alone on my dreaded task.
(Lights shift and Clerval is with Victor again.)
I may be absent a month or two - but please do not interfere with my work. Leave me to peace and solitude for a short time - and when I return, I hope it will be with a lighter heart.

CLERVAL
Victor, I would rather be with you in these travels than spend a month or two on my own.

VICTOR
It is something I must do.

CLERVAL
When you return, will we begin our journey back to Geneva?

VICTOR
Yes, back home - and to Elizabeth.

CLERVAL
And that will be that.
VICTOR
I love her, Henry.

Pause.

CLERVAl
Shall I write her, telling when to expect us?

VICTOR
No - I am not certain how much time I will need.

CLERVAl
Very well. I hate to take my leave of you, friend, but I look forward to seeing you again.

VICTOR
And I you.

They shake hands and Clerval exits. Victor begins to assemble his work, which includes the body of the creature’s companion. As he does so, the lights shift and Elizabeth is writing a letter.

ELIZABETH
Dear Victor,

I don’t want to disturb you, while you travel and work with misfortunes weighing upon you, but some thoughts of mine make writing you necessary before we meet. You know, Victor, that our marriage had been the plan of your parents ever since we were children. We were told this when young, and taught to look forward to it as an event that would certainly take place. We were affectionate playmates during childhood and, I believe, dear and valued friends as we grew older. But as brother and sister often share a lively affection towards each other without desiring a more intimate union, could this not also be our case?

After you left me so abruptly to go to England, I could not help supposing that you might regret our relationship. I love you and in my dreams of the future you have been my constant friend and companion. But it is your happiness I desire as well as my own when I declare to you that our marriage would be useless, unless we are both made happy by it. I am terrified to think I may increase your miseries by being an obstacle to what you truly want. Therefore, if you desire not to marry, so be it. Do not let this letter disturb you – do not answer tomorrow, or the next day, or even until you come, if it will give you pain. Though, if I see but one smile on your lips when we meet again, I shall need no other happiness.
Lights shift back to Victor, reading the letter from Elizabeth.

VICTOR
Elizabeth, my love -

CREATURE
Why do you stop your work, creator? Do you hesitate?

VICTOR
I do not hesitate.

CREATURE
Then complete the task.

VICTOR
Stay back, villain.

CREATURE
I come no closer.

VICTOR
You have been watching me?

CREATURE
I told you I would follow.

VICTOR
I am horrified to think -

CREATURE
I needed to make sure you kept your promise.

VICTOR
Look at where we are! The promise is kept!

CREATURE
Not yet. Not fully.

VICTOR
You pursued me all the way here, to England - like my own terrifying shadow.
CREATURE
    I thought you may run away again.

VICTOR
    Have I run? Have I fled?
    (Pause.)
    No. I have kept my word to a monster.

CREATURE
    Your word is kept once it is alive.

    Pause.

VICTOR
    I need only a moment more.

    Victor completes his preparations as the Creature watches on.

CREATURE
    It is beautiful.

    The Creature cautiously touches the companion.

VICTOR
    What did I -

CREATURE
    It is just like me.

    Victor pauses.

VICTOR
    Just like you.

CREATURE
    We will exile ourselves together and live in peace.

VICTOR
    Another monster -

CREATURE
    Is it nearly done?

VICTOR
    Yes - yes.

CREATURE
    I will teach you to speak, and reason, and read. I will teach you what I have learned about the world. You will not be alone, as I was.
    (To Victor.)
    Please.
(Victor ignites the spark of life. The companion begins to convulse, slowly, as the process begins.)

Yes - live -

VICTOR
What am I doing -

CREATURE
Look at it, creator! Another, like me!

VICTOR
I cannot make the same mistake twice -

CREATURE
Live!

VICTOR
No!

Victor stops the process and smothers the little remaining life out of the companion.

CREATURE
What are you doing? What is this?

VICTOR
I cannot - I will not allow another monster to roam the earth!

CREATURE
Stop!

VICTOR
You coerced me into your heinous plans -

CREATURE
Bring her back - please -

VICTOR
I shall not create another murderer.

CREATURE
You are afraid of of of of creating a murderer, when just now you you murderered your own creation!

VICTOR
I refuse to make the same mistake twice.

CREATURE
Bring her back. There’s still time.

The Creature tries to revive the companion.
VICTOR
No!

_Victor tries to pull the Creature away from the companion’s body, but the Creature turns on him and begins to strangle him._

CREATURE
You you you broke your promise -

VICTOR
Please - please -

CREATURE
You are determined to destroy me too, aren’t you? I am resigned to my fate. But, creator, I will destroy you first.

_A loud knock on the door. The Creature drops Victor and turns._

Who is that?

CLERVAL
(From off.)
Victor, it’s Henry!

VICTOR
(Barely audible.)
Henry -

_Clerval enters._

CLERVAL
What is this? Who are you?

VICTOR
Henry -

CREATURE
You know this man, creator?

CLERVAL
What kind of monster -

_The Creature has begun to approach Clerval._

VICTOR
(Still hoarse, but louder now.)
Henry - run -

_(Clerval, terrified, backs out of the doorway and runs off. Blackout. We hear footsteps, then Clerval’s screams and the Creature’s grunts of effort. The screams get weaker and weaker until_
there is only the sound of the Creature breathing, and then footsteps. Lights come back up on Clerval’s body, severely mangled. Victor stumbles on, still weakened by the strangulation. He sees Clerval’s body.)

No, no, no - Dear Henry, not you, not you.

(Pause.)

Behold, then, I seem but King of the dead. I think that we shall never more delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds, walking the gardens and halls of Camelot -

(His eye catches a scrap of paper nearby and he picks it up to read it.)

"Creator - I will be with you on your wedding night."

(He drops the paper.)

With me on my wedding night? Oh, curse you, demon, curse you! You mean I am next - Henry, I follow close in your footsteps!

(A shadow passes, and footsteps are heard.)

I must leave this place - the villain is close.

A clap of thunder startles Victor, who quickly exits. Blackout. Lights come back up on Victor writing a letter to Elizabeth.

VICTOR (cont’d)

Dear Elizabeth,

I am returning home. We shall be married immediately. (He lifts up the gun in his hand and regards it.)

It is time to take action and see this to the end - something I should have done a long, long time ago.

All my love,

Victor.

Lights shift to Lord Byron’s sitting room.

BYRON

He’s going back to get married?

CLAIRE

It’s such a gripping story, isn’t it?

BYRON

No, that isn’t what I mean - if he gets married, he’ll be killed. He’s leading himself into the monster’s trap.
MARY
Is he?

BYRON
Do not play coy with me, Miss Godwin. This story is clearly a tragedy – pride, or ambition, whatever you call it, is Victor’s tragic flaw. He can only die, that is the only outcome.

POLIDORI
He wants to ambush the monster. That’s why he has the gun.

BYRON
If that’s his plan, then Victor is a fool. And if you believe it will work, then you are as well.

CLAIRE
Victor is being brave – finally.

POLIDORI
I think he’s just as cowardly as ever.

SHELLEY
Would you be willing to face a monster, Polidori?

POLIDORI
That decision is only an extension of his cowardice – he refuses to accept the Creature as a rational being, as an equal.

BYRON
The Creature is an irrational being – it is a murderer.

POLIDORI
And what does that make Victor?

BYRON
Brave.

CLAIRE
I agree with George.

POLIDORI
Don’t you see? Victor is a murderer as well – he killed the companion, he plans to kill the Creature –

SHELLEY
To prevent more deaths, yes –

POLIDORI
If he wanted to prevent deaths, then perhaps Victor shouldn’t have made the Creature in the first place!
CLAIRE
But then we’d have no story.

BYRON
I think Polidori has perhaps become too caught up in
the story.

(To Polidori.)
These are big ideas, friend – don’t strain yourself too much.

POLIDORI
I don’t think I am alone in saying I have had enough of
your arrogance, Lord Byron.

Pause.

BYRON
Excuse me?

POLIDORI
I am a doctor. I am your intellectual equal in
everything, except perhaps writing. I am your equal as
a human being. I refuse to be berated or demeaned any longer.

BYRON
You are not my equal!

CLAIRE
George –

BYRON
(To Claire.)
You be quiet.
(To Polidori.)
No, you are not my equal – you are my employee. Did you
forget that, Polidori? You are not here by invitation, you are here out of necessity. You are not my traveling companion, as you have convinced yourself, rather you are my hired physician. I do not care which degrees you hold or what titles precede your name, doctor – I am Lord Byron! I am the greatest poet of my generation! Please, do me a favor and remind me what authority you have in telling me who my equals are?

(Pause. Polidori turns away.)
Right. Would you like to finish your story, Miss Godwin?

MARY
I think –
SHELLEY
Mary.
(Mary turns to Shelley. He looks away.)
You should proceed.

Pause. Mary looks around the room.

MARY
Victor returns to Geneva to wed Elizabeth. After some preparation, the wedding day arrives.

Lights shift to Victor and Elizabeth on the morning of their wedding.

VICTOR
I have been looking forward to this day, more than you know.

ELIZABETH
Have you?

VICTOR
To finally be with you? Absolutely.

ELIZABETH
I have looked forward to it as well. You were gone so frequently and for so long, I feared -

VICTOR
I know.

ELIZABETH
But by this evening, we shall be husband and wife - can you believe it?

VICTOR
Hardly.

ELIZABETH
It is only a few short hours away.

VICTOR
A few hours -

Pause.

ELIZABETH
What is troubling you, Victor?

VICTOR
Troubling? Nothing.
ELIZABETH
    You have gone back and forth between joyous and melancholy since you returned from your trip to England. What are you thinking of?

VICTOR
    There is nothing. I am perfectly content.

ELIZABETH
    Is it Henry?

    Pause.

VICTOR
    That is part of it.

ELIZABETH
    I wish he could be here with us, too.

VICTOR
    Yes.

ELIZABETH
    If only that storm hadn’t surprised his ship -

VICTOR
    Damned weather.

ELIZABETH
    Or if he wasn’t on the deck to admire it. That is what you said he was doing, right?

VICTOR
    That is what I said.

ELIZABETH
    He always loved the wonder of nature. I can’t imagine a more fitting way for him to go.  
    (Beat.)
    It is tragic that the body was never found.

VICTOR
    Yes.

ELIZABETH
    Am I upsetting you?

VICTOR
    No - I -

ELIZABETH
    Tell me if I am. I miss our friend, is all.
VICTOR
    So do I.

ELIZABETH
    He likely would have written a poem or song for our celebratory day.

VICTOR
    What a singular talent he was.

Pause. Victor covers his face in his hands and begins to weep quietly. Elizabeth wraps him in a hug.

ELIZABETH
    I know, Victor. I feel the same way.

VICTOR
    No - it isn’t - I -

ELIZABETH
    What? Tell me.

VICTOR
    I cannot.

ELIZABETH
    Victor, look at me.
        (She takes his face in her hands.)
        Tonight we will be married. You can tell me anything.

VICTOR
    I - I am partly responsible for his death.

ELIZABETH
    Henry’s?

VICTOR
    Yes.

ELIZABETH
    How? Did you cause the storm?

VICTOR
    There was no - he -
        (Victor shakes his head and turns away.)
        No, no.

ELIZABETH
    Victor, you’re worrying me. How are you responsible.
VICTOR
I must tell you after we wed.

ELIZABETH
No, you may tell me now. There will be no secrets between a husband and wife.

VICTOR
And there won’t be. I must explain everything to you after the wedding, though.

ELIZABETH
Why must it wait?

VICTOR
It will be explained tonight. Then I will reveal what weighs on me. You have to trust me until then.

ELIZABETH
Victor -

VICTOR
Do you trust me?

   Pause.

ELIZABETH
Yes.

VICTOR
Thank you.

ELIZABETH
I should - get dressed now.

VICTOR
I will as well.

ELIZABETH
And you will tell me what troubles you.

VICTOR
At the end of today, there will be nothing to trouble me. I will know only happiness and peace.

   He kisses her.

ELIZABETH
I will see you soon.

VICTOR
Yes - yes.
Elizabeth exits. Victor is alone. He prepares for the wedding. Lastly, he pockets the gun and exits. Once he is gone, the Creature emerges from hiding. It has been in the room the entire time. It peers out the door after Victor.

CREATURE
Until death do us part, creator.

The Creature resumes hiding. The lights shift as the day turns into evening. Victor and Elizabeth enter again, joyous.

ELIZABETH
I love you.

VICTOR
Elizabeth, this is the happiest I have been in a long, long time.

They kiss.

ELIZABETH
I feel so - light, as if I were only a cloud. Or nothing at all.
(A flash of lightning and clap of thunder. Victor is reminded of his task.)
It is late, husband - shall we go to bed?

VICTOR
Yes - though, there is something I must do first.

ELIZABETH
You would leave me on our wedding night?

VICTOR
I will be back shortly. It will feel like I never left.

Victor takes out the gun and begins to exit.

ELIZABETH
Victor! Why do you have a gun? What do you have to do?

VICTOR
There is someone - or, rather somthing - that seeks to kill me. I must defend myself.

ELIZABETH
Who? Who would want to kill you? And why now?
VICTOR
I will explain once I return. I must go.

ELIZABETH
Victor -
(He is gone. She shuts the door after him. Another lightning strike lights up the stage.)
It is only the storm, Elizabeth. Do not be frightened.

The Creature emerges from hiding, behind Elizabeth. She does not see it.

CREATURE
Do not be frightened.

ELIZABETH
Who’s there?

CREATURE
Don’t turn around!

The Creature hides again as Elizabeth turns.

ELIZABETH
Who are you? What are you doing here?

CREATURE
I came to see Victor - and you.

ELIZABETH
Are you the person that wants to kill him?

Pause.

CREATURE
No.

ELIZABETH
Come out so I can see you.

CREATURE
No - you will be frightened.

ELIZABETH
No more than I am now.

CREATURE
I am ugly.

ELIZABETH
I do not care what you are. Come out so I can see you.
(Pause. Slowly, the Creature emerges.)
(MORE)
ELIZABETH (cont’d)
   What – what are you?

CREATURE
   A living being.

ELIZABETH
   A human?

    Pause.

CREATURE
   I don’t know. I was created by Victor.

ELIZABETH
   Created?

CREATURE
   Victor. He made me out of nothing, out of flesh.

ELIZABETH
   He – made you? How?

   (The Creature takes out Victor’s journal and offers it to her.)
   Victor Frankenstein. This is his journal.

CREATURE
   Yes.

ELIZABETH
   This is how he made you.

CREATURE
   He writes that he gave the – spark of life, that is all.

ELIZABETH
   I don’t believe it. He could not have created life. It’s impossible.

CREATURE
   Yet here I stand.

ELIZABETH
   But – why? Why do – this?

CREATURE
   Why make something so terrible, you mean.

ELIZABETH
   Is that what he has been doing all this time? Working on – you?
CREATURE
   He did not tell you about me?

ELIZABETH
   That he could keep such a secret from me -

CREATURE
   He did not mention that I I I existed, that he brought
   me into existence?

ELIZABETH
   No, he never mentioned you.

CREATURE
   He hates me. He abandoned me.

ELIZABETH
   Why?

CREATURE
   (Roars.)
   Look at me!
   (Elizabeth takes a step back.)
   You hate me, too.

ELIZABETH
   No -

CREATURE
   You think I’m hideous? Horrifying?

ELIZABETH
   I did not say that -

CREATURE
   You thought it, that is enough. Do you know who else
   thought I was hideous?
   (Pause.)
   The boy William. I killed him. Victor’s friend Henry. I
   killed him too. And now you -

ELIZABETH
   Please -

   The Creature catches her and holds her throat.

CREATURE
   Do you think I’m hideous?

ELIZABETH
   I - please -
CREATURE
I tried to be reasonable. I tried to learn the ways of
man. I tried to converse with my creator, to have him
understand. I tried to be accepted.
(Pause. Elizabeth is desperately
struggling.)
Do you accept me?

ELIZABETH
(Barely audible.)
Yes -

Pause.

CREATURE
Do you really?

The Creature hesitates. Victor bursts into the
room.

VICTOR
Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH
Help -

The Creature looks from Victor to Elizabeth.

CREATURE
No - you lie.

The Creature snaps Elizabeth’s neck. She falls,
dead.

VICTOR
No!

Victor rushes to her side and cradles her body.

CREATURE
I kept my word, creator.

VICTOR
No, no, no.
(The Creature makes its way to the
window to exit. Victor stands and fires
a shot after it.)
Stay and fight, villain!
(The Creature is gone. Victor shouts
into the dark.)
Stay with me! I will destroy you! Stay, monster!
(Victor turns his attention back to
Elizabeth’s body.)

(MORE)
VICTOR (cont’d)
Oh, my love, my love.

    Victor stands slowly. Something has changed. He exits, following the Creature. Blackout.

    Lights come back up on the Creature, in the tundra of the Arctic. Wind and ice. Almost a dream-vision.

CREATURE
Do you think we can make it to the pole, creator? The top of the world? Where no man has ever gone, creator — I will lead you there. There, you may destroy me.

    Lights up on Walton and Victor, separate.

VICTOR
That is my story. My Creature is the one I pursue.

WALTON
And when you catch it?

VICTOR
Time will tell.

    The Creature begins stacking firewood, almost a funeral pyre.

CREATURE
Out here in the ice, it almost seems like death. Don’t you agree, Victor? Look around — there is nothing. Breathe in — only cold. Come out and feel the cold, creator!

VICTOR
Did you hear that?

WALTON
What?

VICTOR
It is calling to me.

    Walton looks out.

CREATURE
Shall I light the fire? Will it help you find me, creator? Will you destroy me in the fire? How poetic, no? Created with a spark, destroyed with a spark. Ashes, though, cannot be reanimated.
WALTON
I don’t hear anything.

VICTOR
It is out there. It is always out there.

Walton takes his telescope and scans the horizon, looking.

WALTON
Frankenstein, there is nothing -

VICTOR
(Exiting.)
It is time for this to end.

WALTON
No - you will freeze.

VICTOR
Maybe.

WALTON
Were you listening to your own story? It took from you everthing you held dear, yes. But now it is gone - it pursues you no longer. Instead, you pursue it. If you stop, doctor, it will be no more. You will have your future back. You may live in peace.

VICTOR
I will never live in peace! Not until it is destroyed! Not until it pays for what it has done!

WALTON
It doesn’t have to be this way - there is still hope! Don’t throw your life away over this one error! You are a doctor - join me on this expedition. Start anew.

VICTOR
No. It must be this way, Captain. After everything it has taken from me - I cannot rest until it is torn limb from limb. It deserves to be destroyed.

Pause.

WALTON
You are not the man I thought you were.

(Victor digests this, then turns and exits. Walton puts the telescope to his eye and watches the horizon.)

With a gust of wind, snow, and fog, he disappeared into the frozen waste. I have seen neither man nor creature again. It is possible they are still out there, lost in darkness and distance.
Lights out on Walton as the sound of wind intensifies. Lights come up on Byron’s sitting room.

CLAIRE
Is that the end?

MARY
The end.

CLAIRE
Wow.

Pause.

SHELLEY
Very good, Mary.

CLAIRE
Incredible, isn’t it?

SHELLEY
It is. I could help you get that published.

BYRON
You think that should be published?

SHELLEY
Why not?

BYRON
It’s horrifying. And to come from the mind of a young lady, even -

SHELLEY
What does it matter whose mind it comes from? It’s a good story, no?

Pause.

BYRON
It is a good story.

POLIDORI
You said it was horrifying.

BYRON
What?

CLAIRE
You did! You haven’t been scared by a story yet, but this one disturbed you!
POLIDORI
   It is a disturbing thought, man and creature roaming
   the Arctic tundra.

CLAIRE
   What if the Creature looks for more victims?

SHELLEY
   Thank you, Mary. I won’t be sleeping tonight because of
   your story.

MARY
   You’re very welcome.

CLAIRE
   I think I should like to try writing. I think I would
   be good at it.

BYRON
   You don’t have the capacity for it.

POLIDORI
   Why wouldn’t she?

CLAIRE
   Mary did it, and so can I.

MARY
   I’d be interested to hear what you come up with,
   Claire.

BYRON
   I’m sure Shelley agrees with me.

SHELLEY
   On what?

BYRON
   Claire. A writer?

SHELLEY
   I don’t see why not.

CLaire
   I will be a great poet! Better than you, maybe, George.

BYRON
   Very well. Let’s hear a story, then.

CLaire
   It won’t be as good as Mary’s.
MARY
It might.

CLAIRE
How should I start?

POLIDORI
"Once upon a time."

BYRON
Oh, please -

POLIDORI
And where is your story, Lord Byron? I had "The Vampyre", Mary has just told hers, Claire is going to tell one now. I thought you were the one who challenged us to this in the first place.

BYRON
I do not stoop to the level of monsters and -

POLIDORI
No, sir. You are a poet. You stoop only to the level of children’s rhymes and liquor, isn’t that right? You have no time for silly stories told on a dare.
(To Mary.)
When your story is published, I will be the first one to buy it.
(Shelley takes Mary’s hand. She smiles. Polidori turns to Claire.)
I think we were at "Once upon a time." That is, if our host would like to hear a story.
(To Byron.)
Do you have the capacity for it?

   Beat. They look at Byron.

BYRON
Go on, Claire.

CLAIRE
"Once upon a time -"
(Lightning and thunder. Byron is startled.)
See? I’ve already scared you.

   Pause. Then, Byron smiles.

BYRON
Yes, I suppose you have.
POLIDORI
Do go on, Claire.

BYRON
Yes, scare us.

Pause.

CLAIRE
I’m pregnant, George.

Pause. The room freezes and Mary steps forward.

MARY
A dream-vision. Two figures trapped out on the ice. The end of a story. Or the beginning of one.

The sound of wind. The Arctic. Victor enters, freezing and struggling to stand. The Creature stands near the funeral pyre.

VICTOR
I have come to end this, villain.

CREATURE
I know, creator - I have built myself a funeral pyre in preparation.

VICTOR
You want me to burn you?

CREATURE
No. But I have no choice - you are determined to destroy me.

VICTOR
You are not afraid to die, then.

CREATURE
Are you?

Pause.

VICTOR
Light it.

CREATURE
I have one question to ask, first.

VICTOR
You have no apologies to make? For the people you murdered?
CREATURE
Do you?

VICTOR
I am no murderer.

CREATURE
No, you only create life. You do not take it away. What did you come here to do, Victor?

Pause.

VICTOR
Ask.

CREATURE
Why did you make me, if only to kill me?

(Victor, nearly frozen, does not answer.)

Creator?

VICTOR
I bested death.

(Long pause.)
And, in return, death bested me.

Victor lunges to attack the Creature, but falls in his weakened state. He does not get up.

CREATURE
Creator!

(The Creature kneels at Victor’s side.)
Do not leave me. What am I without you? I am nothing.
Do not leave me to be nothing.

VICTOR
(Barely audible.)
I will destroy you.

CREATURE
Yes! Destroy me! I knew you wouldn’t leave me yet. You must destroy me first.

(Pause.)
But, creator, you are so cold.

The Creature lights the fire.

VICTOR
I will burn you.

CREATURE
Yes, yes - burn me. Kill me.
The Creature, kneeling, watches Victor. Victor lets out a guttural scream of pain as he lifts himself to his hands and knees. They regard each other for a moment. The lights have dimmed so that they are barely visible, illuminated only by the fire. Neither moves. A strong gust of wind.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY