

# FRANKENSTEIN

By

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Based on

Mary Shelley's

*"Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus"*

### **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:	Victor's friend.
ELIZABETH LAVENZA:	Victor's fiance.
JUSTINE MORITZ:	Victor's friend.
PROFESSOR WALDMAN:	A professor at the University of Ingolstadt.
PROFESSOR KREMPE:	A professor at the University of Ingolstadt.
THE CREATURE:	Victor's creation.
WILLIAM:	Victor'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

Of course not.

SHELLEY

What?

MARY

You care more about Lord Byron than you do me.

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 heavn'ly Muse to venture down  
The dark descent, and up to reascend — "

MARY

Percy!

SHELLEY

What?

CLAIRE

He's nearly finished.

BYRON

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

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.

MARY

Are you a scientist, Lord Byron?

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

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?

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.

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. Breathing. 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.)*

Let's play "The Passing of Arthur."

CLERVAL

Wow, it's 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?

VICTOR

I don't, I'm sorry —

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

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 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.

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 philosophical 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. 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.

JUSTINE

What about William?

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.  
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.

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.

CREATURE

Mons-ter.

*VICTOR runs out, slamming the door. 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. A flash of lightning and clap of thunder frighten the CREATURE, and it exits.*

*Next, we hear VICTOR breathing heavily.*

VICTOR

What have I done? What have I done?

*The appearance of CLERVAL startles him.*

CLERVAL

Victor! Where are you running to, friend?

VICTOR

Henry —

CLERVAL

Come here. I'm glad I finally have a chance to visit you. Show me your workshop, I want to see what you've been up to all this time!

*(VICTOR and CLERVAL enter the workshop; the door creaks open.)*

How are your studies going?

*VICTOR sees the CREATURE is not in the workshop anymore.*

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.*

MARY

During the following weeks, Henry helped Victor recover. The monster he had created slowly began to leave Victor's mind. But it was still out there — learning how to walk, eat, shelter itself. Always observing.

*The CREATURE, alone. It breathes raggedly. 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 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

"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. Thunder and lightning — a storm is approaching.*

*Until it's not. We're with WILLIAM, VICTOR's younger brother. It's a calm, peaceful day outdoors. He looks for and finds a place to hide.*

JUSTINE

William! Where are you?

*(JUSTINE enters.)*

JUSTINE (cont'd.)

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... Got you!

*(She finds him.)*

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?

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.)*

JUSTINE (cont'd.)

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 correspondence 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. The storm is getting closer.*

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.)*

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.)*

VICTOR (cont'd.)

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?

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 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.

JUSTINE

Do you come here to mock me too?

ELIZABETH

No. He is convinced of your innocence.

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. Her cell door clangs shut. 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

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.

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. The storm is upon us.)*

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?

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

You won't have to wait that long, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Where are you going?

CLERVAL *exiting*

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?

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.)*

CLERVAL (cont'd.)

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 equaled. 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. He is back in the Arctic with WALTON.*

WALTON

Go on.

VICTOR

I can't continue.

WALTON

Don't stop your story now — you've come all this way.  
Out to the Artic tundra, for god's sakes.

VICTOR

No. 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 in the morning. It is getting late.

WALTON

I don't mind.

It's a good story, I'd like to hear more.



VICTOR

It's not just a story, Captain. 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 his story is true, 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.)*

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.

Yours, Elizabeth.

*Lights shift back to VICTOR, reading the letter from ELIZABETH.*

VICTOR

Elizabeth, my love —

*The CREATURE appears in the window, watching VICTOR.*

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

I do not hesitate.

CREATURE

Then complete the task.

*The CREATURE enters VICTOR's lab to get a closer look at the companion.*

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.

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.)*

CREATURE (cont'd.)

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 creating a murderer, when just now you murdered 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.)*

VICTOR (cont'd.)

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 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.  
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

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 —

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 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 something — 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.)*

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?

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.)*

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

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 rushes to her side and cradles her body.*

VICTOR

No!

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.)*

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

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 everything 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.

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 W

hat?

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.

*(SHELLY 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

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.**