

FRANKENSTEIN

by Mary Shelley

Abridgment by Jeffrey Jackson

Note from Jackson:

This abridgment is approximately one-fifth the length of the original novel. The vast majority of the words—over ninety percent, I would estimate—are Mary Shelley's, although rearranged in some passages. I have omitted only one minor character (Safie, the daughter-in-law to be of the blind man) and a few others who do not actually appear in the novel but are only spoken of by other characters (i.e.: Walton's first mate). I placed priority on the preservation of the style of the original language, the words actually spoken by the characters, and key descriptions of moods, actions and settings. No changes have been made to the events of the story whatsoever.

1.

Speaker: Captain Walton

September 2, 17—

My beloved sister,

I write to you encompassed by peril and ignorant whether I am ever to see you again. My ship is surrounded by mountains of ice which allow it no escape.

Yet I write to you not of my own fate, but of another's. For I have gained knowledge of a tale so strange and frightful that, although it is highly probable that these papers may never reach you, I cannot forbear recording it.

Last Monday, as the ice closed in on all sides of our vessel, I witnessed a strange sight upon the vast plains of white. At a distance of half a mile, I perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north. A being which had the shape of a man—but of gigantic stature—guided the sledge.

It seemed impossible—we were, I am certain, many hundreds of miles from land. My comrades and I watched his rapid progress with our telescopes until he was lost to us among the ice. Trapped, as we were, it was impossible to follow his track.

The next morning, we encountered a second improbable traveler. A sledge, like that we had seen before, had drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice. A man was lying still upon it, his limbs nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated.

We carried him aboard and restored him to animation by wrapping him up in blankets and placing him near the warmth of the stove. Two days passed in this manner before he was able to speak.

I asked him why he had come so far upon the ice. He replied, “To seek one who fled from me.” When I told him of the man we had seen the day before, his eyes grew wild with an expression of madness. He asked which route the demon—as he called him—had pursued. I replied that I could not know.

“Whither are you bound?” said he. I replied that we were on a voyage of discovery toward the northern pole—one that I hoped would benefit all mankind by discovering a passage near the pole, and that I would gladly sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise.

As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over his countenance.

“Foolish man!” he cried. “Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating potion? Hear me; let me reveal my tale and you will dash the cup from your lips!”

At length, he calmed and spoke then with a settled grief:

“I had determined that the memory of these evils should die with me, but as you seek knowledge and wisdom, as I once did, allow my tale to direct you as you stand before the unknown.”

He then told me his story.

2.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

I was born in Geneva, and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My father had filled several public offices with honor and reputation. My mother possessed a mind of uncommon mould, soft and benevolent, yet steeled by great courage.

When I was born, they seemed to draw inexhaustible stores of affection from a very mine of love to bestow upon me. I was their plaything and their idol.

When I was five, my parents encountered a peasant family who could no longer care for a girl who had been placed in their charge. My mother fixed eyes of wonder and admiration on this girl—a child fairer than pictured cherub. Elizabeth Lavenza became my parents’ ward and more than my sister—the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and pleasures. She was my mother’s gift to me—and until death she was to be mine only.

In time, my parents were to have two more sons. But my true brother in spirit was one of my schoolfellows. Henry Clerval was the son of a local merchant; a boy of singular talent and fancy and a lover of chivalry and romance.

The three of us—Henry, Elizabeth, and myself—were thicker than blood, though each quite unique. I thirsted for knowledge, often with obsessive intensity; Clerval yearned for adventure; and the saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a beacon of kindness and tenderness, tempering our boyish passions. In this manner, harmony was the soul of our companionship throughout our childhood.

As we grew, while my companions delighted in the magnificent appearance of things, I investigated their causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine.

Books of natural philosophy became the friends of my adolescence. I endeavored to teach myself the wonders of science, mathematics, and anatomy. When I was thirteen, I discovered the writings of several ancient alchemists, not yet knowing that their teachings had been entirely discredited by the modern system of science. To my childish imagination, the wild fancies of these men appeared to me treasures of discovery. I sought with the greatest of diligence the raising of ghosts and devils, visions promised by my favorite authors. I searched for the Philosopher’s Stone and the Elixir of Life—that legendary potion that would bestow upon its drinker eternal youth. What glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!

When I was fifteen, I witnessed a most violent and terrible thunderstorm. I beheld a sudden stream of fire issue from a mighty oak tree—splintering it into thin ribbons of wood. Before this, I was not unacquainted with the laws of electricity, but I had recently read of a theory linking this great force with the essence within all living creatures. As I beheld the blasted stump, my mind stirred with ideas which were at once new and astonishing to me.

3.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

When I attained the age of seventeen, my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt. But before the day of my departure could arrive, the first misfortune of my life occurred—an omen of my future misery.

My mother had caught the scarlet fever, and was soon near death. In her last hour, she joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself. “My children,” she said, “my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father. I will endeavor to resign myself cheerfully to death.”

She died calmly. How could she whom we saw every day and whose very existence appeared a part of our own have departed forever?

My departure for Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events, was again determined after a respite of some weeks.

Clerval had tried to persuade his father to permit him to accompany me and become my fellow student, but in vain. When I descended to the carriage which was to convey me away, they were all there—my father, Clerval, and my Elizabeth to bestow the last feminine attentions on her playmate and friend, and renew her entreaties that I would write often.

Upon my arrival at Ingolstadt, I paid a visit to some of the principal professors. To the first, I carelessly mentioned the names of my alchemists as the principal authors I had studied. “Every instant that you have wasted on those books is entirely lost,” he said. “My dear sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew.”

I became distraught and agitated. I had nothing but contempt for modern science. The forgotten alchemists had pursued immortality and power, and although futile, it was grand! How could I exchange that for realities of little worth?

I soon after attended a lecture by another of the university’s professors. This gentleman proved very unlike his colleague. “The ancient teachers of science,” said he, “promised impossibilities and performed nothing. But the modern masters have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how she works in her hiding-places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they

can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows.”

As he went on, I felt as if my soul was being transfigured; soon my mind was filled with one thought, one purpose: I, Frankenstein, will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

I soon paid this learned professor a visit. I told him that his lecture had removed my prejudices against modern scientists. “I am happy,” he said, “to have gained a disciple; and if your application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success.”

He then took me into his laboratory and explained to me the uses of his various machines, instructing and advising me as to how my course of study should continue.

It was surely a day memorable to me; it decided my future destiny.

4.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

From that day, science became nearly my sole occupation. My application was at first fluctuating and uncertain; it gained strength as I proceeded and I soon became so ardent and eager that the stars often disappeared in the light of morning whilst I was yet engaged in my laboratory.

Two years passed in this manner, during which I paid no visit to Geneva, but was engaged, heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries which I hoped to make. I improved so rapidly that it soon seemed that I had attained all that could be learned at Ingolstadt. Then, an incident happened that sparked my imagination.

My attention had always been peculiarly attracted by the structure of the human frame and the question of whence the principle of life proceeded. But to examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I was led to spend days and nights in cemeteries and morgues. I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. From the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me—a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that I was surprised that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret.

After days and nights of incredible labor and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter. Yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibers, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labor. I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a human form; but I was too exalted by my first success to doubt my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man.

As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved to make the being of a gigantic stature, that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionately large. After having spent some months in successfully collecting and arranging my materials, I began the creation of a human being.

My enthusiasm bore me onwards, like a hurricane. Life and death appeared to me a prison wall, which I alone should break through and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator. I even thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in time renew life where death had already wrought its destruction.

Months passed as I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber at the top of the house I kept my workshop of filthy creation.

I had long neglected those friends and family who were so many miles absent, and whom I had not seen for so long a time. I knew my silence disquieted them, but I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination.

5.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With great anxiety, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my shock, or how delineate the wretch whom I had endeavored to form? I had selected his features as beautiful. His hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, his shriveled complexion and straight, black lips. His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath. Horror and disgust filled my heart when I gazed upon the being I had created.

I rushed out of the room and collapsed in my bedchamber. From sheer exhaustion, I slept, but a sleep disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health. I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held her dead corpse; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel.

I started from my sleep with horror when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed;

and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. One hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs.

I took refuge in the courtyard below, where I remained during the rest of the night, pacing nervously. I jumped at the slightest sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse.

No mortal could endure the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly, and nearly sank to the ground from exhaustion. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment. The dreams I had held for so long were now a hell to me!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned. The porter opened the gates of the court and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to flee the wretch. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

I traversed the streets for some time. My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear, and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me.

I came at length to the inn at which the various carriages usually stopped. A coach was coming towards me from the other end of the street. It was the Swiss diligence, and it stopped just where I was standing. Upon the door being opened, Henry Clerval instantly sprung out.

“My dear Frankenstein,” exclaimed he, “how fortunate that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!”

Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval; his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and for a moment forgot my horror and despair. As we walked towards my college, Clerval told me his good fortune in being permitted to come to Ingolstadt, having finally persuaded his father towards his education.

Then he stopped suddenly and gazed full in my face. “My friend,” he exclaimed, “how very ill you appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been awake for several nights.”

“You have guessed right; I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest; but I sincerely hope that all these employments are now at an end.”

I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to allude to, the occurrences of the preceding night. I walked with a quick pace, and we soon arrived at my college. I feared that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be there. I dreaded to behold this monster, but I feared still more that Henry should see him. Entreating him, therefore, to remain at the bottom of the stairs, I darted up towards my room. I then paused,

and a cold shivering came over me. I threw the door forcibly open, but nothing appeared. I stepped fearfully in: the apartment was empty! Had it all been a dream, or had the beast simply fled? Relieved and overjoyed, I ran down to fetch Clerval.

We ascended into my room, but I was unable to contain myself. I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud. Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival, but when he saw a wildness in my eyes for which he could not account, my loud, joyless laughter frightened him.

“My dear Victor,” cried he, “what, for God’s sake, is the matter?”

It was then that I thought I saw the dreaded specter glide into the room. “Save me!” cried I, putting my hands before my eyes. I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously and fell down in a fit.

It was the commencement of a nervous fever which confined me for several months. During all that time Henry was my only nurse. The form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was forever before my eyes, and I raved incessantly concerning him. Henry, no doubt, believed this to be the wanderings of my disturbed imagination.

By very slow degrees, I recovered.

“Dearest Clerval,” exclaimed I, “how very good you are to me. This whole winter, instead of being spent in study as you promised yourself, has been consumed in my sick room. How shall I ever repay you?”

“You will repay me entirely,” he replied “if you get well as fast as you can; and take pleasure in this letter that has been lying here some days for you; it is from your cousin, I believe.”

6.

Speaker: Elizabeth

My dearest Cousin,

You have been ill, very ill, and even the constant letters of dear, kind Henry are not sufficient to reassure me on your account. How I wish I might have sojourned there myself, as no nurse could ever minister to your needs with the care and affection of your poor cousin.

Get well—and return to us. You will find a happy, cheerful home and friends who love you dearly. Your brother Ernest is now sixteen and full of activity and spirit. I wish you could see your younger brother, our little darling William; he is very tall of his age, with sweet laughing blue eyes. At seven years of age, he has already had one or two little wives.

Since you left us, but one change has taken place in our little household. Justine Moritz has rejoined our family—do you remember her? She had been a servant in your father’s employ.

A few months after your departure for Ingolstadt, Justine was called home by her mother. Alas, Madame Moritz died this last winter. Justine has returned to us, and I assure you I love her tenderly. She is very clever and gentle and reminds me of your dear mother.

Adieu! My cousin, take care of yourself, and, I entreat you, write, dearest Victor—one line—one word will be a blessing to us.

Elizabeth Lavenza
Geneva
March 18th, 17—

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

Winter approached and my return to Geneva was fixed for the ensuing spring. I spent the intervening months in endeavoring to restore my strength and help Clerval become properly acclimated before I took leave of him.

One day, a letter from my father arrived.

Speaker: Alphonse Frankenstein

My dear Victor,

I write you with woeful news. William is dead! That sweet child, whose smiles delighted and warmed my heart, is murdered!

Last Thursday, I, my niece, and your two brothers went for a walk. It was already dusk when we discovered that William and Ernest, who had gone on before, were not to be found. Presently Ernest came and inquired if we had seen his brother; he said that he had been playing with him, and that William had run away to hide himself but did not return.

We searched for him until night fell, and continued still with torches, for I could not rest when I thought that my sweet boy had lost himself and was exposed to the night.

About five in the morning I discovered my lovely boy, stretched on the grass livid and motionless; the print of the murderer's finger was on his neck. Your dear mother! Alas, Victor! I now say, thank God she did not live to witness the cruel, miserable death of her youngest darling!

Come, dearest Victor; you alone can console Elizabeth. She weeps continually. Enter the house of mourning, my son, but with kindness and affection for those who love you, and not with hatred for your brother's murderer.

Your affectionate and afflicted father,
Alphonse Frankenstein
Geneva, May 12th, 17—

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

I threw the letter on the table and covered my face with my hands. I motioned to Henry to take up the letter and tears also gushed from his eyes as he read the account of my misfortune.

“What do you intend to do, my friend?” he asked of me.

“To go instantly to Geneva.”

7.**Speaker: Victor Frankenstein**

My journey was very melancholy. It had been nearly six years since I had last seen my loved and sorrowing friends. A strange fear overcame me; I dreaded a thousand nameless evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them.

It was completely dark when I arrived in the environs of Geneva; the gates of the town were already shut, so I resolved to visit the spot where my poor William had been murdered.

During this short voyage I saw lightning playing on the mountain summits in the most beautiful figures. The storm approached rapidly, and I perceived in the gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees near me; I stood fixed, gazing intently; I could not be mistaken. A flash of lightning illuminated the object and revealed its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly assured me that it was the wretch—the filthy demon to whom I had given life.

What place did he have here? Could he be the murderer of my brother? No sooner did that idea cross my imagination than I became convinced of its truth; my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for support. The figure passed me quickly, and I lost it in the gloom.

I thought of pursuing the devil, but it would have been in vain, for another flash revealed him high among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mont Salève. He soon reached the summit and disappeared.

I revolved in my mind the events which I had until now sought to forget: the whole train of my progress towards the creation, the appearance of the work of my own hands alive at my bedside, its departure. Two years had now nearly elapsed since the night on which he first received life. Had I turned loose into the world a depraved wretch whose delight was in carnage and misery?

In anguish, I spent the remainder of the night cold and wet in the open air. But I did not care; my imagination was busy in scenes of evil and despair.

Day dawned, and I directed my steps towards my father's house. My first thought was to tell them all what I knew of the murderer. But I paused when I reflected on the story that I had to tell. If any other had communicated such a story to me, I should have looked upon it as the ravings of insanity. Besides, the strange nature of the animal would elude all pursuit. Who could arrest a creature capable of scaling the overhanging sides of Mont Salève? I resolved to remain silent.

I entered my father's house and gazed on the picture of my mother which stood over the mantelpiece. Below this picture was a miniature of William, and my tears flowed when I looked upon it. Ernest entered; he had heard me arrive and welcomed me with sorrowful delight.

"Welcome, my dearest brother," said he. "Your presence will, I hope, revive our father, who seems sinking under his misfortune." Tears, unrestrained, fell from my brother's eyes and I tried to calm him; I inquired concerning Elizabeth.

"She most of all," said Ernest, "requires consolation; But now that the murderer has been discovered—"

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "I saw him too; he was free last night! But who could pursue him? It is impossible."

"I do not know what you mean," replied my brother in wonder, "but to us the discovery we have made completes our misery. Who would credit that Justine Moritz was capable of so frightful, so appalling a crime?"

"Justine Moritz! Is she the accused? But it is wrongfully; no one believes it, surely, Ernest?"

"No one did at first, but the evidence of facts, I fear, leaves no hope for doubt. But she will be tried today, and you will then hear all."

He related that, one of the servants, happening to examine the apparel Justine had worn on the night of William's murder, had discovered in her pocket the picture of my mother, which had been judged to be stolen from William by the murderer. The servant went to a magistrate; and, upon her deposition, Justine was apprehended.

We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had altered her since I last beheld her; it had endowed her with loveliness surpassing the beauty of her childish years.

"Your arrival, my dear cousin," said she, "fills me with hope. You perhaps will find some means to justify my poor guiltless Justine. If she is condemned, I shall never again know joy."

"She is innocent, my Elizabeth," said I, "and that shall be proved; fear not." She then wept in my embrace.

8.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

At eleven o'clock, the trial commenced. During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice I suffered living torture. It was my lawless devices which caused the death of my brother. And now Justine was to be more dreadfully murdered!

The trial began and Justine was called on for her defense. In a clear, but trembling, voice, she said, "I rest my innocence on a plain and simple explanation of the facts and hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a favorable interpretation."

She then related that she had passed the evening on which the murder had been committed at the house of her aunt at a nearby village. On her return, she met a man who asked her if she had seen anything of the child who was lost. She was alarmed by this account, and passed several hours looking for him, until after the gates of Geneva were shut, and she was forced to remain several hours of the night in the only shelter which presented itself—a barn. At dawn, she resumed the search for my brother.

Concerning the picture she could give no account. "I have no power of explaining it," continued the unhappy victim. "Did the murderer place it there? I have no enemy on earth, and none surely would have been so wicked as to destroy me wantonly."

Could the demon, who had (I did not for a minute doubt) murdered my brother, also in his hellish sport have betrayed the innocent to death and disgrace? I could not sustain the horror of the situation; and when I perceived that both the spectators and the judges had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony.

In the morning, Justine was condemned; and on the following day, she perished on the scaffold as a murderess!

9.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

In the days that followed Justine's death, I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, and a hell of intense tortures. Sleep fled from my eyes; I wandered like an evil spirit. I was often tempted to plunge into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my calamities forever.

From the tortures of my own heart, I turned to contemplate the deep and voiceless grief of my Elizabeth. This also was my doing! And my father's woe, and the desolation of our happy home—all was the work of my accursed hands!

I lived in daily fear, lest the monster whom I had created should perpetrate some new wickedness. When I thought of him and his crimes and malice, I became filled with hatred and revenge.

Sometimes I could cope with the sullen despair that overwhelmed me: but sometimes the whirlwind passions of my soul drove me to seek some change of place. It was during an episode of this kind that I suddenly left my home, and bending my steps towards the near Alpine valleys, sought in their magnificence to forget myself and my sorrows.

For several days, I journeyed far into the mountains. When I arrived at the summit, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. It was the wretch whom I had created! I trembled with rage and horror.

“Devil,” I exclaimed, “do you dare approach me? Begone, vile insect! or rather, stay, that I may trample you to dust!”

“I expected this reception,” said the demon. “All men hate the wretched; yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will leave you and the rest of mankind at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends.”

My rage was without bounds and I sprang on him. He easily eluded me, and said, “Be calm! I entreat you to hear me, before you give vent to your hatred. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.”

“I will not hear you!” I shouted. “Begone, or fight me until one of us is dead.”

“How can I move thee, Frankenstein? Listen to my tale; and then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands. My tale is long and strange. Come to the hut upon the mountain. The sun is yet high in the heavens; before it descends, you will have heard my story, and can decide.”

He led the way across the ice. As I followed, I weighed his words, and determined at least to listen to his tale. I was partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my resolution. I had hitherto supposed him to be the murderer of my brother, and I eagerly sought a confirmation or denial of this opinion. For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I cursed his wickedness.

We entered the hut, and with a heavy heart, I seated myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted. He thus began his tale.

10.

Speaker: the Creature

It is with considerable difficulty that I remember my first hours and days: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time. I walked, and, I believe, descended; but the light was oppressive to my eyes; and, the heat wearying me as I walked, I sought a place where I could receive shade. This was the forest near Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook. I felt tormented by hunger and thirst, and I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook. I felt cold also, and half-frightened. Before I had quitted your apartment, I had covered myself with some clothes; but these were insufficient. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.

Soon I beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees: the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon. I gazed in wonder as it enlightened my path. Under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which I covered myself. No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rung in my ears, and on all sides various scents taunted me.

Several changes of day and night passed. I began to distinguish my sensations from each other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink, and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that the pleasant sound I had heard came from the throats of the little winged animals. Sometimes I tried to imitate their songs, but was unable; the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

While I remained in the forest, each passing day my mind received additional ideas. My eyes began to perceive objects in their right forms; I distinguished the insect from the herb, and, by degrees, one herb from another.

One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects! I examined the materials of the fire, and to my joy found it to be composed of wood. I quickly collected some branches, that I might have a plentiful supply of fire.

I found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat. Food, however, became scarce; and I often spent the whole day searching in vain for a few acorns to assuage the pangs of hunger. I resolved to seek a place where the few wants I experienced would be more easily satisfied. Wrapping myself up in my cloak, I struck across the wood towards the setting sun. I passed three days in these rambles, and at length discovered the open country. A great fall of snow had taken place the night before, and the fields were of one uniform white; I found my feet chilled by the cold damp substance that covered the ground.

Longing for food and shelter, I perceived a small hut on a hill. Finding the door open, I entered. An old man sat in it, near a fire, over which he was preparing his breakfast. He

turned on hearing a noise; and, perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and, quitting the hut, ran across the fields. His flight surprised me; but I was enchanted by the appearance of the hut: here the snow and rain could not penetrate, and the ground was dry. I greedily devoured the remnants of the man's breakfast.

I determined to recommence my travels, and proceeded across the fields for several hours until, at sunset, I arrived at a village. How miraculous did this appear! the huts, the neater cottages, and stately houses, engaged my admiration. I entered one of the cottages, but I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones they hurled at me, I escaped to the open country.

I fearfully took refuge in a low hovel, adjoined to a cottage. My place of refuge was constructed of wood, but so low that I could scarcely sit upright in it. The floor was of dirt, but it was dry, and it provided adequate asylum from the snow and rain. Here I retreated from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man.

As soon as morning dawned, I crept from my kennel, and beheld a young creature passing by. The girl was of gentle demeanor, yet she was coarsely dressed. As she walked along, a young man met her, and they entered the cottage together.

I found a tiny crevice through which the small room was visible. In one corner, near a small fire, sat an old man. The young girl sat down beside the old man and handed a strange object to him. Taking up an instrument, he began to play, and to produce sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight; the silver hair and benevolent countenance of the aged cottager won my reverence, while the gentle manners of the girl enticed my love.

Night quickly shut in. The young man began to utter sounds that were monotonous, and I since found that he read aloud, but at that time I knew nothing of the science of words or letters. I longed to join these gentle people, but dared not.

I soon perceived that the old man was blind; but, by degrees I made a still greater discovery. I found that these people possessed a method of communicating with one another by articulate sounds. This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was baffled in every attempt I made. By great diligence, however, and after having remained in my hovel for several cycles of the moon, I discovered the names that were given to some of the most familiar objects; I learned and applied the words, "fire," "milk," "bread," and "wood." I learned also the names of the cottagers themselves. The old man was called "father". The girl was "sister," or "Agatha"; and the youth "Felix," "brother," or "son."

I also perceived that this family bore great unhappiness. A considerable period elapsed before I discovered the cause of their suffering: it was poverty, and they often suffered the pangs of hunger. This moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption; but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained, and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots.

I discovered a means through which I was enabled to assist their labors. I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in collecting wood for the family fire; and, during the

night, I often took his tools, the use of which I quickly discovered, and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days, and I cleared their path from the snow. These labors, performed by an invisible hand, greatly astonished them; and once or twice I heard them utter the words “good spirit,” “wonderful”; but I did not then understand the significance of these terms.

I spent the winter in this way. The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me: when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys. I saw few human beings beside them.

At times, Felix read to the old man and Agatha. This reading had puzzled me extremely at first; but, by degrees, I discovered that he uttered many of the same sounds when he read as when he talked. I conjectured, therefore, that he found on the paper signs for speech which he understood, and I ardently longed to comprehend these also. I perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language.

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification.

I looked upon these lovely creatures as superior beings, and I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanor and conciliating words, I should first win their favor, and afterwards their love.

These thoughts exhilarated me, and led me to apply with fresh ardor to the acquiring the art of language. My voice was indeed harsh; yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease.

Soon spring came and my spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope and anticipations of joy.

The book from which Felix often read provided a cursory knowledge of history; it gave me an insight into the manners, governments, and religions of the different nations of the earth. My days were spent in close attention, that I might more speedily master the language. While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters, and this opened before me a wide field for wonder and delight.

Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me. The strange system of human society was explained to me. The words induced me to assess myself. Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man.

What was I?

12.

Speaker: the Creature

Near the end of summer, I found in the woods a leathern valise containing several articles of dress and some books. I eagerly seized the prize and returned with it to my hovel, and now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories. They produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings.

Soon after my arrival in the hovel I discovered some papers in the pocket of the dress which I had taken from your laboratory. At first I had neglected them, but now that I was able to decipher the characters in which they were written, I began to study them with diligence. It was your journal of the four months that preceded my creation. You minutely described in these papers every step you took in the progress of your work; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances of my accursed origin. The minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible. I sickened as I read.

Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? These were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; but when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues they would show me compassion and overlook my personal deformity.

One day, the old man was left alone in the cottage. He took up his guitar and played several mournful but sweet airs. My heart beat quick; this was the moment. I knocked upon the door.

“Who is there?” said the old man. “Come in.”

I entered. “Pardon this intrusion,” said I; “I am a traveler in want of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me if you would allow me to remain a few minutes before the fire.”

“Enter,” he said, “and I will try in what manner I can to relieve your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are away, and as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.”

“Do not trouble yourself, my kind host; I have food; it is warmth and rest only that I need.”

I sat down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious to me, yet I remained irresolute in what manner to commence. “I am in search of some long lost friends, whom I sincerely love,” I finally offered. “I fear these amiable people will reject me. A fatal prejudice clouds their eyes. Where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.”

“That is indeed unfortunate; but if these friends are good and amiable, cannot you persuade them?”

“I am about to undertake that task; but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.”

“Where do these friends reside?”

“Near this spot.”

The old man paused and then continued, “If you will confide to me the particulars of your tale, I may be of use in petitioning them. I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere.”

“Excellent man! How can I thank you? From your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness.”

“May I know the names and residence of your friends?”

I paused. At that moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. Seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, “Save and protect me, I beg you! You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not desert me in my hour of need!”

At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror on beholding me? Agatha fainted, and Felix darted forward and tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung; he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, but my heart sank within me, and I refrained. Overcome by pain and anguish, I quitted the cottage and escaped unperceived to my hovel.

13.

Speaker: the Creature

When night came I wandered in the wood. I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken its chains.

I declared everlasting war against mankind, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.

The next day, I returned to the cottage, but found it dark and empty, and stripped of all possessions. The cottagers had quitted it for ever. The only link that held me to the world was now broken. When I thought of how they had spurned and deserted me, feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom for the first time, and I did not strive to control them. I collected straw, and heath, and bushes and placed them around the cottage, and with a loud scream I lit it ablaze. The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames,

I fled into the woods, and resolved to fly far from the scene of my misfortunes. At length the thought of you crossed my mind. I learned from your papers that you were my father, my creator; and to whom could I apply with more fitness than to him who had given me life? You had mentioned Geneva as the name of your native town, and towards this place I resolved to proceed.

My travels were long and the sufferings I endured intense. I traveled only at night, fearful of encountering the visage of a human being. As winter advanced, rain and snow poured around me, and I found no shelter.

One morning, I came upon a deep and rapid river. I heard the sound of voices, and a young girl came running along the precipitous sides of the river. Suddenly, her foot slipped, and she fell into the rapid stream. I rushed from my hiding-place and saved her, and dragged her to shore. She was senseless, and I endeavored by every means in my power to restore animation, when I was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a man. On seeing me, he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from my arms, hastened into the wood. I followed speedily, I hardly knew why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun at my body and fired. I sank to the ground, and my injurer escaped into the wood.

This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and as a recompense I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound which shattered the flesh and bone. Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind.

After some miserable weeks in the woods, my wound healed, and I continued my journey. In two months time I reached the environs of Geneva. It was evening when I arrived, and I retired to a hiding-place among the fields. I was soon disturbed by the approach of a beautiful child, who came running into the recess I had chosen. Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me that this little creature was unprejudiced and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate.

I seized on the boy and drew him towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his hands before his eyes and uttered a shrill scream; I drew his hand forcibly from his face and said, "Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me."

He struggled violently. "Let me go," he cried; "Hideous monster! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre. Let me go, or I will tell my papa."

"Boy, you will never see your father again; you must come with me."

"Let me go. My papa is a powerful man—his name is Frankenstein. He will punish you!"

"Frankenstein! You belong then to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge."

The child still struggled and scorned me with words that wounded my heart; I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet.

I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with hellish triumph. "I too can create desolation," I exclaimed. "My enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him."

As I fixed my eyes on the child, I saw something glittering on his breast. I took it; it was a locket bearing the portrait of a most lovely woman. I left the spot and, seeking a hiding-place, entered a barn which had appeared to be empty. A woman was sleeping on some straw; she was young and beautiful. Here, I thought, is one of those whose joy-imparting

smiles are bestowed on all but me. And then I bent over her and whispered “Awake, fairest, thy lover is near; my beloved, awake!”

The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she indeed awake, she would assuredly see me, and curse me. The thought stirred the fiend within me—not I, but *she*, shall suffer for the murder I have committed. Because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone!

I bent over her and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress. She moved again, and I fled.

For some days I wandered these mountains, consumed by a burning passion which you alone can gratify. I am alone and miserable; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. You must create a female for me with whom I can live. This you alone can do, and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse to concede.

14.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

The latter part of his tale had kindled anew in me the anger that had died away while he narrated his peaceful life among the cottagers, and as he said this I could no longer suppress the rage that burned within me.

“I do refuse it,” I replied; “Shall I create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness might desolate the world? Begone!”

“Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?” replied the fiend. “Why I should pity man more than he pities me? Let him live with me in the interchange of kindness, and instead of injury I would bestow every benefit upon him with tears of gratitude at his acceptance. But that cannot be; the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union. If I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear, and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because you are my hated creator. I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you shall curse the hour of your birth.”

A fiendish rage animated him as he said this; his face was wrinkled into contortions too horrible for human eyes to behold; but presently he calmed himself and proceeded, “What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but our lives will be harmless and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! My creator, make me happy; do not deny me my request!”

I was moved. I felt that there was some justice in his argument. Did I not as his maker owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow? He continued, “If you consent, neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again; I will go to the vast wilds of South America. I will quit the neighborhood of man and dwell only in the most sav-

age of places. The love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes, and my virtues will arise when I shall feel the affections of a sympathetic being—an equal.”

I paused some time to reflect on all he had related. I thought of the promise of virtues which he had displayed on the opening of his existence and the subsequent blight of all kindly feeling by the loathing and scorn he had suffered. His power and threats were not omitted in my calculations; a creature who could exist in the ice caves of the glaciers and hide himself from pursuit among the ridges of inaccessible precipices was a being possessing faculties it would be vain to cope with. After a long pause of reflection I concluded that the justice due both to him and my fellow creatures demanded of me that I should comply with his request. Turning to him, therefore, I said, “I consent to your demand, on your solemn oath to quit Europe forever, and every other place in the neighborhood of man, as soon as I shall deliver into your hands a female who will accompany you in your exile.”

“I swear,” he cried, “that if you grant my prayer, you shall never behold me again. Depart to your home and commence your labors; I shall watch their progress; and fear not but that when you are ready I shall appear.”

Saying this, he suddenly quitted me. I saw him descend the mountain with greater speed than the flight of an eagle, and quickly lost sight of him among the sea of ice.

15.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

Day after day, week after week, passed; but I could not collect the courage to recommence my work. I feared the vengeance of the disappointed fiend, yet I was unable to overcome my repugnance. I could not compose a female without again devoting several months to profound and laborious study. I had an insurmountable aversion to the idea of engaging in my loathsome task in my father’s house, as I knew that a thousand fearful accidents might occur, the slightest of which would disclose my horrible secret. I must absent myself from all I loved while thus employed. Once commenced, it would quickly be achieved, and I might be restored to my family in peace and happiness. My promise fulfilled, the monster would depart forever.

I had heard of some discoveries having been made in England, the knowledge of which was material to my success, so I expressed a wish to visit that country, but concealed the true reasons of this request under a guise which excited no suspicion. One paternal precaution my father took was to secure a companion for my journey. He had, in concert with Elizabeth, arranged that Clerval should join me. This interfered with the solitude I coveted for the prosecution of my task; yet I truly rejoiced that thus I should be saved many hours of lonely, maddening reflection. Nay, Henry might stand between me and the intrusion of my foe. If I were alone, would he not at times force his abhorred presence on me to remind me of my task or to contemplate its progress?

To England, therefore, I was bound, and it was understood that my union with Elizabeth should take place immediately on my return; this was the one reward I promised myself — one consolation for my unparalleled sufferings; that one day I might claim Elizabeth and forget the past in my union with her.

It was in the latter end of September that I again quitted my native country, this time with Clerval at my side. How stark was the contrast between us! He was happy and alive to every new scene, while I was instead occupied by gloomy thoughts, haunted as I was by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment.

It was on a clear morning, in the latter days of December, that I first saw the white cliffs of Britain. In London, I immediately sought the information necessary for the completion of my promise and we continued north into Scotland; I resolved to finish my labors in some obscure nook in the northern highlands. As we traveled, I was embittered both by the memory of the past and the anticipation of the future. I had now neglected my promise for some time, and I feared the demon's disappointment. He might remain in Switzerland and wreak his vengeance on my relatives; or he might punish my procrastination by murdering my companion. When these thoughts possessed me, I would not quit Henry for a moment, but followed him as his shadow.

So it was with the greatest of difficulty that I told Clerval that I wished to continue my tour of Scotland alone. "I may be absent a month or two; but leave me to peace and solitude for a short time; and when I return, I hope it will be with a lighter heart."

Henry tried to dissuade me, but seeing me bent on this plan, he acquiesced, and, after entreating me to write often, begged my swift return.

I traversed the northern highlands and fixed on one of the remotest of islands as the scene of my labors. I hired a small, miserable hut which contained but two rooms. In this retreat I set to my task, but as I proceeded in my labor, it became every day more horrible to me. Sometimes I could not prevail on myself to enter my laboratory for several days, and at other times I toiled day and night in order to complete my work. It was, indeed, a filthy process in which I was engaged.

Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor.

16.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

One evening, when my labor was already considerably advanced, I considered the effects of what I was now doing. Three years before, I was engaged in the same manner and had created a fiend whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart forever. I was now about to form another being of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant; she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness.

He had sworn to hide himself in deserts, but she had not; she might refuse to comply with a pact made before her creation. They might even hate each other; she also might turn with disgust from him; or they might propagate a race of devils upon the earth who might threaten the very existence of mankind. I shuddered to think that future ages might curse me, who in selfishness valued his own peace above the existence of the whole human race.

I trembled and my heart failed within me, when, on looking up, I saw by the light of the moon the demon at the window. A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me. He had indeed followed me in my travels, and he now came to mark my progress and claim the fulfillment of my promise.

As I looked on him, I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature, and with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew.

I soon heard the sound of footsteps along the passage; the door opened, and the wretch whom I dreaded appeared. He approached me and said in a trembling voice, "You have destroyed the work which you began. I left Switzerland with you and have endured many months of fatigue, and cold, and hunger; do you dare to break your promise?"

"Begone! I do break my promise; never will I create another like yourself, equal in deformity and wickedness."

"Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!"

"Shall each man," cried he, "find a wife and each beast have his mate, and I be alone? Are you to be happy while I grovel in the intensity of my wretchedness?"

"Devil, cease; I have declared my resolution to you. Leave me."

"I go; but remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night."

He then fled the house with great speed. In a few moments I saw him in his boat, which shot across the waters with an arrowy swiftness and was soon lost amidst the waves.

All was again silent, but his words rang in my ears—"I will be with you on your wedding-night."

That, then, was the period fixed for the fulfillment of my destiny. In that hour I should die and at once satisfy and extinguish his malice. I thought of my beloved Elizabeth, of her endless sorrow should her lover be so barbarously snatched from her. Tears streamed from my eyes, and I resolved not to fall before my enemy without a bitter struggle.

17.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

The next morning, at daybreak, I again entered my laboratory. The remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor. With trembling hand I put them into a basket, with a great quantity of stones, and binding them up, determined to throw them into the sea that very night.

Between two and three in the morning the moon rose; and I then, putting my basket aboard a little skiff, sailed out about four miles from the shore. I felt as if I was in the commission of a dreadful crime. When the moon was overspread by a thick cloud, I took advantage of the moment of darkness and cast my basket into the sea.

Fatigue and the dreadful suspense I had endured the night before overcame me and I stretched myself at the bottom of the boat. In a short time I slept soundly. I do not know how long I remained on the water, but when I awoke the wind was high, and the raging waves threatened the safety of my little skiff. The wind must have driven me far from the coast from which I had embarked. I endeavored to change my course but quickly found that if I again made the attempt the boat would be instantly filled with water.

I might be driven into the wide Atlantic or be swallowed up by the roaring waves. Some hours passed and the wind died away, when suddenly I saw a line of high land towards the south. As I approached nearer I saw the traces of civilization. It was a small, neat town and a good harbor, which I entered, my heart bounding with joy at my unexpected escape.

As I was occupied in docking the boat, several people crowded around me with frowning and angry countenances. Then, an ill-looking man grabbed me by the shoulder and said, "Come, sir, you are to give an account to the magistrate of the death of a gentleman who was found murdered here last night."

This startled me, but I did not despair. I was innocent; I was certain that could easily be proved. Accordingly, I allowed myself to be led to the town where I was introduced into the presence of the magistrate.

Several men gave account of having discovered, the night before, the body of a man on the beach. He had apparently been strangled, for there was the black mark of fingers on his neck.

A second man swore that just before that, he saw a boat, with a single man in it, at a short distance from the shore; and that it was the same boat in which I had just landed.

The magistrate, on hearing this evidence, desired that I should be made to see the body of the victim. I was conducted to the inn where the body lay, and was led up to the coffin. The lifeless form of Henry Clerval was stretched before me. I gasped for breath, and throwing myself on the body, I exclaimed, "My dearest Henry, my friend, my benefactor! Have my murderous machinations deprived you also of life?"

So great was my agony, that I had to be carried out of the room in strong convulsions.

18.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

A fever succeeded to this. I lay for two months on the point of death; my ravings were frightful; I called myself the murderer of William, of Justine, and of Clerval. Sometimes I felt the fingers of the monster already grasping my neck, and screamed aloud with agony.

In two months, I found myself as awaking from a dream, in a prison, surrounded by jailers. I soon learned that the magistrate, having discovered all the papers that were on my person, among them being a letter from my father, wrote to Geneva. My father had immediately journeyed here to see to my defense.

He was presently brought to me and when he entered the room, I embraced him and cried, "Father! Are you, then, safe—and Elizabeth—and Ernest?"

My father calmed me with assurances of their welfare, and sought to raise my desponding spirits; but when he, with sorrow, spoke the name of Clerval, I broke down and wept.

Days later, I was brought before the court and, its being proved that I was on the Orkney Islands at the hour the body of my friend was found, I was liberated from prison. My father was enraptured on finding me freed, but I did not share his joy, for to me the walls of a dungeon or a palace were equally hateful. The cup of life was poisoned forever, and I saw around me nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon me—the watery, clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw them in my chamber at Ingolstadt.

In the days ahead, I often endeavored to put an end to the existence I loathed, and it required unceasing vigilance to restrain me from committing some dreadful act of violence. Yet one duty remained to me, the recollection of which finally triumphed over my selfish despair. It was necessary that I should return without delay to Geneva, there to watch over the lives of those I so fondly loved and to lie in wait for the murderer, that if any chance led me to him, I might put an end to his monstrous existence.

My father desired to delay our departure for home, fearful that I could not sustain the journey, for I was a shattered wreck—fever night and day preyed upon my wasted frame. His care and attentions were indefatigable, but he did not understand the origin of my sufferings.

"I am a murderer," said I. "William, Justine, and Henry—they all died by my hands." My father sometimes appeared to consider these rantings as the offspring of delirium, but at others he seemed to desire an explanation.

I avoided disclosure and maintained a continual silence concerning the wretch I had created. I could not bring myself to disclose a secret which would fill my hearer with fear and horror, though I would have given the world to have confided the fatal secret.

Despite my father's concerns, at my urging, we took our passage on board a vessel bound for home.

A few days before we left for Switzerland, I received the following letter from Elizabeth:

19.

Speaker: Elizabeth

My dear Friend,

How much you must have suffered! I have been tortured by anxious suspense; yet I hope to see peace in your countenance and to find that your heart is not totally void of comfort and tranquility.

I would not disturb you at this period, when so many misfortunes weigh upon you, but there is something I have often wished to express to you but have never had the courage to begin.

You well know, Victor, that our union had been the favorite plan of your parents ever since our infancy. We were told this when young, and taught to look forward to it as an event that would certainly take place.

When I saw you last autumn so unhappy, flying to solitude from the society of every creature, I could not help supposing that you might regret our engagement, and are only fulfilling it out of duty. Tell me, dearest Victor—do you not love another?

I confess to you that I love you dearly and that, when I dream of my future, you are my constant friend and companion. But it is your joy I desire as well as my own. I have too sincere a love for you to become an obstacle to the love and happiness which would alone restore you to yourself.

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. If I see but one smile on your lips when we meet, I shall need no other happiness.

Elizabeth Lavenza
Geneva, May 18th, 17—

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

This letter revived in my memory what I had before forgotten, the threat of the fiend—"I will be with you on your wedding-night!"

Such was my sentence; he had determined to consummate his crimes by my death on the eve of my happiness. Well, be it so; a deadly struggle would then assuredly take place.

Sweet and beloved Elizabeth! I read and reread her letter, and some softened feelings stole into my heart. I would die to make her happy. If the monster executed his threat, death was inevitable. My marriage might hasten my fate, but if I postponed it, my torturer would surely find other and perhaps more dreadful means of revenge.

I resolved, therefore, that the wedding should take place as soon as possible. I wrote to Elizabeth. "My beloved girl," I said, "all that I may one day enjoy is centered in you. Chase away your idle fears; to you alone do I consecrate my life."

We returned to Geneva. The sweet girl welcomed me with warm affection, yet tears were in her eyes as she beheld my emaciated frame and feverish cheeks.

Soon after, preparations were made for the wedding, and all wore a smiling appearance. I concealed my feelings of dread, but when I thought of what had passed, I was furious and burnt with rage. I took every precaution to defend my person in case the fiend should openly attack me. I carried pistols and a dagger constantly about me and was ever on the watch for a surprise assault.

Curiously, as the period approached, the threat appeared more as a delusion, while the happiness I hoped for in my marriage was a far greater reality with each day that it drew nearer.

We were wed in my father's house, and after the ceremony was performed, Elizabeth and I commenced our journey to spend our first days of happiness in a villa beside the beautiful Lake Como. As we journeyed by water, we enjoyed the scenic beauty of the mountains. Those were the last moments of my life during which I enjoyed the feeling of happiness.

The sun sank beneath the horizon as we landed, and as I touched the shore I felt those cares and fears revive which soon were to clasp me and cling to me forever.

20.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

It was eight o'clock when we landed; we walked for a short time on the shore, enjoying the fading light, and then retired to the inn. The wind suddenly rose with great violence, and a heavy storm of rain descended.

As darkness fell, a thousand fears arose in my mind. I was anxious and watchful, while my right hand grasped a pistol which was hidden in my bosom; every sound terrified me, but I resolved that I would sell my life dearly and not shrink from the conflict until my own life or that of my adversary was extinguished.

Suddenly I reflected how fearful the combat which I momentarily expected would be to my wife, and I earnestly entreated her to retire.

She left me, and I continued some time walking up and down the passages of the house and inspecting every corner that might afford a retreat to my adversary. But I discovered no trace of him and was beginning to conjecture that some fortunate chance had intervened to prevent the execution of his menaces—when suddenly I heard a shrill and dreadful scream. It came from the room into which Elizabeth had retired.

As I heard it, the whole truth rushed into my mind: As if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions. While I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim.

I rushed into the room and found Elizabeth, lifeless, thrown across the bed, her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair.

I fell senseless on the ground. When I recovered I hastened to where lay the body of Elizabeth, my love, my wife, and embraced her. The murderous mark of the fiend's grasp was on her neck.

While I hung over her in the agony of despair, I happened to look up. I saw at the open window a figure the most hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife.

I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, fired; but he eluded me, running with the swiftness of lightning.

The report of the pistol brought a crowd into the room. We proceeded to search the country, parties going in different directions among the woods and vines. I attempted to accompany them, but my head whirled round, my steps were like those of a drunken man, and I fell at last in a state of utter exhaustion.

I was carried back and placed on a bed, hardly conscious of what had happened. I was bewildered, in a cloud of wonder and horror. A fiend had snatched from me every hope of future happiness; no creature had ever been so miserable as I was; so frightful an event is single in the history of man. One by one, my friends were snatched away; I was left desolate. The death of William, the execution of Justine, the murder of Clerval, and lastly of my wife; even at that moment I knew not that my only remaining friends were safe; my father even now might be writhing under the fiend's grasp. I started up and resolved to return to Geneva with all possible speed.

I arrived at Geneva soon afterward to find my father and Ernest yet lived, but the former sunk under the tidings that I bore. His eyes wandered vacantly—his Elizabeth, his more than daughter, whom he doted on with every affection, was struck down like his sweet William before her. He could not live under the horrors that were accumulated around him; he was soon unable to rise from his bed, and in a few days he died in my arms.

21.

Speaker: Victor Frankenstein

What then became of me? I know not; I lost sensation, and chains and darkness were the only objects that pressed upon me. I awoke and found myself in a dungeon. I had indeed been deemed mad, and for many months, as I understood, I had been confined to a solitary

cell. Melancholy followed, but by degrees I gained a clear conception of my situation and was then released from my prison.

As the memory of past misfortunes pressed upon me, I began to reflect on their cause—the monster whom I had created. I was possessed by a maddening rage, and ardently prayed that I might have him within my grasp to wreak revenge on his cursed head.

I began to reflect on the best means of securing him, and I approached a criminal judge in the town. I told him that I knew the destroyer of my family, and that I required him to exert his whole authority for the apprehension of the murderer.

The magistrate listened as I related my history briefly but with firmness and precision, never deviating into invective or exclamation. He had heard my story with that half kind of belief that is given to a tale of spirits and supernatural events. When he was called upon to act officially, he dismissed me, having not believed one word of my tale.

I broke from his chamber, hurried away by fury. My thoughts were confused, but revenge alone endowed me with strength and composure. My first resolution was to quit Geneva forever; my country, which I once loved dearly, was now hateful to me. I needed to gain some clue by which I might trace the steps of my fiendish enemy. But my plan was unsettled, and I wandered many hours round the confines of the town, uncertain what path I should pursue. As night approached, I found myself at the entrance of the cemetery where William, Elizabeth, and my father reposed. I entered it and approached the tomb which marked their graves. Everything was silent except the leaves of the trees, which rustled in the wind.

I knelt on the grass and kissed the earth and with quivering lips exclaimed, “By the sacred earth on which I kneel, I swear to pursue the demon who caused this misery. I call on you, spirits of the dead, to aid and conduct me in my work.”

I was answered through the stillness of night by a loud and fiendish laugh. It rang in my ears and echoed from the mountains, and I felt as if all hell surrounded me with mockery and laughter. Then a well-known and abhorred voice, apparently close to my ear, addressed me in an audible whisper, “I am satisfied, miserable wretch! As long as you remain alive to suffer, and I am satisfied.”

I darted towards the spot from which the sound proceeded, but the devil eluded my grasp. Suddenly the moon shone full upon his ghastly and distorted shape as he fled with more than mortal speed. I pursued him—and for many months I have pursued him still.

I have traversed a vast portion of the earth and have endured all manner of hardship. How I have lived I hardly know; many times have I stretched my failing limbs upon the sandy plain and prayed for death. But revenge kept me alive; I dared not die and leave my adversary in being.

Guided by a slight clue, I followed the windings of the Rhone to the Mediterranean, but in vain. By a strange chance, I saw the fiend enter by night and hide himself in a vessel bound for the Black Sea. I took my passage in the same ship, but he escaped, I know not how.

Amidst the wilds of Asia and Russia, I have ever followed in his track. Sometimes the peasants, scared by this horrid apparition, informed me of his path; sometimes he himself left

some marks to guide me in writing on the barks of the trees or cut in stone. “My reign is not yet over.”—these words were legible in one of these inscriptions— “Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am immune. Come on, my enemy; we have yet to wrestle for our lives, but many hard and miserable hours must you endure until that period shall arrive.”

Again I vowed vengeance. Never will I give up my search until he or I perish! As I still pursued my journey to the northward, the snows thickened and the cold increased in a degree almost too severe to withstand. The triumph of my enemy increased with the difficulty of my labors. One inscription that he left was in these words:

“Prepare! Your toils only begin; wrap yourself in furs and provide food, for we shall soon enter upon a journey where your sufferings will satisfy my everlasting hatred.”

I continued with unabated fervor to traverse immense stretches of barren earth, until I reached the ocean. Covered with ice, it was barely distinguishable from land. I procured a sledge and dogs and thus traversed the snows with speed.

I now gained on him, so much so that when he was now but one day’s journey in advance. I arrived at a wretched hamlet on the seashore and inquired of the inhabitants concerning the fiend. A gigantic monster, they said, had arrived the night before and carried off their store of winter food, and placed it in a sledge. To draw it, he had seized on a large team of trained dogs and set out across the sea in a direction that led to no land.

I despaired. He had escaped me, and I must commence a destructive and almost endless journey across the mountainous ices of the ocean, amidst cold that I could not hope to survive. Yet at the idea that the fiend should live and be triumphant, my rage and vengeance returned, and like a mighty tide, overwhelmed every other feeling.

I exchanged my land-sledge for one fashioned for the the frozen ocean, and departed from land. I passed three weeks in this journey, alternating miserably between hope and despair. Immense and rugged mountains of ice often barred up my passage, and I often heard the thunder of the ground sea, which threatened my destruction. But again the sea would freeze and allow me passage.

Once, after the poor animals that conveyed me had struggled to gain the summit of a sloping ice mountain, and one, sinking under his fatigue, died, I viewed the expanse before me with anguish, when suddenly my eye caught a dark speck upon the dusky plain. I uttered a wild cry of ecstasy when I distinguished a sledge and the distorted proportions of a well-known form within.

I continued my route, perceptibly gaining on my enemy. After nearly two days’ journey, I beheld him at no more than a mile distant.

But now, when I appeared almost within grasp of my foe, my hopes were suddenly extinguished, and I lost all trace of him more utterly than I had ever done before. The thunder of shifting ice was heard, and the sea roared; and, as with the mighty shock of an earthquake, it split and cracked with a tremendous and overwhelming sound. In a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of

ice. In this manner many appalling hours passed; several of my dogs died, and I myself was about to lose consciousness when I saw your vessel.

Thank Heavens you took me on board before I expired, for my task is unfulfilled. If I die, swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape—swear that he shall not triumph. Should he appear, thrust your sword into his heart. I will hover near and direct the steel aright.

22.

Speaker: Captain Walton

You have read this strange and terrific story, my sister; and do you not feel your blood congeal with horror, like that which even now curdles mine? Sometimes, seized with sudden agony, Frankenstein could not continue his tale; at others, his voice broken, he uttered with difficulty the words so replete with anguish. Sometimes he commanded his countenance and tones and related the most horrible incidents with a tranquil voice; then, like a volcano bursting forth, his face would suddenly change to an expression of the wildest rage as he shrieked out curses on his persecutor.

The only joy that he can now know will be when he commends his shattered spirit to peace and death. Yet he enjoys one comfort; he believes that when in dreams he holds converse with his friends and derives from that communion consolation for his miseries. To him, they are not the creations of his fancy, but the beings themselves who visit him from the regions of a remote world.

“The forms of the beloved dead pass before me,” began his last words to me; “I hasten to their arms. Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility and renounce your ambitions; they will bring you aught but misery.” He then pressed my hand feebly, and his eyes closed for ever.

His final words moved me deeply, and I resolved, if ever the ice were to set my ship free, that I would not subject my men to a moment’s further jeopardy. I would turn our vessel round and fix our course for return to England.

Yet before this could happen, one final, fantastic event occurred.

Last night, at midnight, I was interrupted by the sound of a human voice, but coarser, coming from the cabin where the remains of Frankenstein still lie.

I entered the cabin and over his body hovered a form which I cannot find words to describe—gigantic in stature, yet crude and distorted in its proportions. His face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in color and texture like that of a mummy. When he heard the sound of my approach, he ceased his speech and sprung towards the window. Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face. Still, I called out to him, imploring him to stay.

He paused, looking on me with wonder, then turned towards the lifeless form of his creator.

“Oh, Frankenstein! In your murder my crimes are consummated; the miserable series of my being is brought to its close!”

His voice seemed choked with remorse, and my first impulse, which was to obey the dying request of my friend and destroy his enemy, was now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion. I approached this tremendous being; I dared not again raise my eyes to his face, there was something so scaring and unearthly in his ugliness.

I gathered the courage to address him: “Your repentance,” I said, “is now meaningless. If you had listened to the voice of conscience before you had urged your diabolical vengeance to this extremity, Frankenstein would still live.”

“Do you think,” said the demon, “that I feel not the agony of remorse? Think you that the screams of his loved ones were music to my ears? My heart was once capable of great love and sympathy, and when hardened by misery and hatred, it was with torture such as you cannot even imagine.

Seeing anger in my countenance, he continued: “I do not expect your sympathy. I am content to suffer alone; I deserve nothing but abhorrence and scorn. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. I have murdered the lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept and grasped to death his throat who never injured me or any other living thing. I have devoted my creator, the select specimen of all that is worthy of love and admiration among men, to misery; and I have pursued him to irremediable ruin. There he lies, white and cold in death. You hate me, but your abhorrence cannot equal my hatred of myself. I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived and can scarcely believe it.

“Fear not that I shall be the instrument of future destruction; my work is nearly done. I shall quit your vessel and seek the most northern extremity of the globe; there I shall collect my funeral pyre and ascend it triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. My ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds, and my spirit will finally sleep in peace.

With these words, he wept, and through his tears, bid “Farewell, Frankenstein!”

He sprang from the cabin window and onto the ice floe which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance, never to be seen by human eyes again.

The End.