

FRANKENSTEIN

By

Alexander Utz

Based on

Mary Shelley's

"Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus"

Alexander Utz  
alexander.utz716@gmail.com  
716.392.3418

## Cast of Characters

<u>MARY SHELLEY:</u>	The author of Frankenstein.
<u>PERCY SHELLEY:</u>	Her fiance, the poet.
<u>LORD BYRON:</u>	The poet.
<u>CLAIRE CLAIRMONT:</u>	Mary's stepsister.
<u>DR. POLIDORI:</u>	Lord Byron's physician.
<u>VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN:</u>	A scientist.
<u>CAPTAIN WALTON:</u>	An Arctic explorer.
<u>HENRY CLERVAL:</u>	Frankenstein's best friend.
<u>ELIZABETH LAVENZA:</u>	Frankenstein's fiancée.
<u>JUSTINE MORITZ:</u>	Frankenstein's friend.
<u>PROFESSOR WALDMAN:</u>	A professor at the University of Ingolstadt.
<u>PROFESSOR KREMPE:</u>	A professor at the University of Ingolstadt.
<u>THE CREATURE:</u>	Frankenstein's creation.
<u>WILLIAM:</u>	Frankenstein's brother.
<u>THE COMPANION:</u>	The second creation.

ACT ONE

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

MARY

Another dream-vision. Another nightmare.

*SHELLEY is with her.*

SHELLEY

Again? What did you see this time.

MARY

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

SHELLEY

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

MARY

(Dry.)  
Of course not.

SHELLEY

What?

MARY

You care more about Lord Byron than you do me.

*Pause.*

SHELLEY

I -

MARY

Let's go back to sleep, Percy.

*Pause.*

SHELLEY

We *will* be wed, Mary. Soon.

*Blackout.*

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

SHELLEY (cont'd)

"I sing of Chaos and Eternal Night

Taught by the heavn'ly Muse to venture down

The dark descent, and up to reascend - "

MARY

Percy!

SHELLEY

What?

CLAIRE

He's nearly finished.

BYRON

(To Shelley.)

Milton?

SHELLEY

Who else?

MARY

Do go on, doctor.

POLIDORI

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

CLAIRE

Oh no!

POLIDORI

"Lord Ruthven had disappeared, and Aubrey's sister had glutted the thirst... of a Vampire!"

BYRON

Excellent work, Polidori.

POLIDORI

Bone-chilling?

BYRON

Almost.

CLAIRE

I thought it was.

SHELLEY

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

CLAIRE

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

BYRON

Hopefully you'd fare better than our poor Aubrey.

POLIDORI

So you must think the characters at least were compelling -

CLAIRE

Would you save me, George?

BYRON

Always needing to be saved, aren't they?

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

POLIDORI

At least my story scared someone.

MARY

It was very good, doctor.

POLIDORI

Thank you, Mary.

SHELLEY

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

MARY

Oh, I don't know.

SHELLEY

You woke last night in a cold sweat.

MARY

It was only a dream-vision I had.

BYRON

Well, let's hear it!

POLIDORI

Yes, tell us.

MARY

Truly, it was nothing.

SHELLEY

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

MARY

I told you that in private.

SHELLEY

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

*Shelley moves close and kisses her.*

MARY

Percy -

BYRON

Calm down, you two.

SHELLEY

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

MARY

Why should I like that?

SHELLEY

Because -

BYRON

Because I am a great poet, Miss Godwin!

CLAIRE

You *are*, simply the greatest.

MARY

I don't know that I should share it.

POLIDORI

We could read another story from the 'Fantasmagoriana'.

*The group groans.*

SHELLEY

Not again.

POLIDORI

No?

SHELLEY

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

POLIDORI

Oh, it's not that bad.

BYRON

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

CLAIRE

I wouldn't mind hearing one again, if the words are  
coming from my Lord Byron's lips.

*(She gives him another quick peck, then  
snatches the book from him and begins to  
flip through it.)*

Which one do we want to hear again?

POLIDORI

I think -

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

SHELLEY

That's right! Galvanism!

POLIDORI

What?

SHELLEY

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

BYRON

Oh, yes, yes.

SHELLEY

Have you heard of this, Polidori?

POLIDORI

I think so - Galvani, right?

SHELLEY

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

POLIDORI

Do you remember when they hanged that murderer George Foster?

BYRON

Vaguely.

POLIDORI

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

SHELLEY

And?

POLIDORI

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

CLAIRE

Oh my!

POLIDORI

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

CLAIRE

It sounds like it was.

POLIDORI

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

SHELLEY

Incredible. Any thoughts?

BYRON

The idea of manipulating a corpse is - disturbing, to say the least. But the moral questions it raises are fascinating.



MARY

Squeamish, Lord Byron?

SHELLEY

(To Polidori.)

What do you think?

POLIDORI

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

SHELLEY

Modern science! Bringing creatures back to life!

BYRON

Man's own Adam.

CLAIRE

I don't like it.

SHELLEY

It's scientific advancement, dear.

CLAIRE

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

BYRON

It is man's destiny to rule over the earth.

CLAIRE

But to rule over life and death?

BYRON

She's being dramatic about it.

CLAIRE

George!

SHELLEY

It's alright if you don't understand, Claire.

MARY

I think she understands.

CLAIRE

It's distasteful.

BYRON

I take back what I said about Man's own Adam.

CLAIRE

Thank you, George.

BYRON

No, no - not because I disagree or find it distasteful.

POLIDORI

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

BYRON

Precisely, Polidori. Perfect.

MARY

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

SHELLEY

Why not?

MARY

Because -

BYRON

She doesn't know what she is talking about.

*Shelley laughs.*

MARY

Are you a scientist, Lord Byron?

*Beat.*

BYRON

Miss Godwin-

SHELLEY

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

What?

MARY

It's *exactly* life and death!

BYRON

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

POLIDORI

I have a few.

BYRON

You shall have to tell Shelley and I at a different time.

MARY

A different time when Claire and I won't be here to interrupt?

BYRON

Excuse me?

POLIDORI

I could tell you now, if you -

BYRON

No, never mind.

*Claire tries to hand the open 'Fantasmagoriana' to Byron.*

CLAIRE

I think we should hear this story again.

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

MARY

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

*(Time resumes, and the lightning disappears with a crackle of thunder.)*

I have a story.

SHELLEY

You do?

MARY

Yes.

BYRON

Let's hear it.

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm excited.

BYRON

Polidori, your Vampyre has a contender.

POLIDORI

I suppose so.

SHELLEY

(Pulling Mary aside.)

Are you sure?

MARY

Yes, Percy, I am.

BYRON

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

SHELLEY

Of course not.

BYRON

Well, let's see how she does.

*Beat. Mary looks around the room.*

MARY

The story begins on a gloomy day in June.

BYRON

Ah, like today's gloomy day in June!

CLAIRE

George, let her tell the story.

MARY

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

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

WALTON

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

(He sees something.)

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

*A voice shouts from off.*

VOICE

Captain, we have discovered someone on the ice!

WALTON

Pull him up!

VOICE

He is nearly frozen -

WALTON

Then hurry!

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

VICTOR

Please - I need your help -

WALTON

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

VICTOR

Where are you bound?

WALTON

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

*Victor nods.*

VICTOR

I will join you.

WALTON

No, it isn't safe.

VICTOR

And why are you out here, again?

WALTON

To go where no man has gone before.

*Victor laughs.*

VICTOR

What is your name, Captain?

WALTON

Walton. Yours?

VICTOR  
Frankenstein.

WALTON  
Why have you come so far north, Frankenstein?

*Beat.*

VICTOR  
To seek one who fled from me.

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

VICTOR  
And have you seen it since?

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

*Walton begins to leave.*

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

WALTON  
Thank you.

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

WALTON  
Yes.

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

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

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

WALTON

I will listen.

VICTOR

I am by birth a Genevese -

(The lights shift and Walton has disappeared.)

Captain? Captain!

(Victor looks around for Walton frantically. He is alone. A flash of lightning illuminates the form of something lurking behind him. Victor freezes.)

No -

*We hear voices of Justine, Clerval, and Elizabeth imploring him:*

CLERVAL

Tell the story, Victor.

JUSTINE

Tell the story.

ELIZABETH

Tell your story.

*Lights shift and Victor is with Walton again.*

WALTON

Are you alright, friend?

VICTOR

Where - ?

WALTON

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

VICTOR

I'm sorry, I -

WALTON

Take a deep breath.

(Pause. Victor does.)

You don't have to tell me. You can leave whatever haunts your past behind you.

VICTOR

I cannot leave it behind. This is the future I have created for myself.

WALTON

You can choose a different way.

VICTOR

I cannot.

WALTON

Why? Why is this the only option?

VICTOR

It is a long story to tell.

WALTON

I am listening.

*Pause.*

VICTOR

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

*ELIZABETH and CLERVAL appear.*

VICTOR (cont'd)

Let's play "The Passing of Arthur."

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

It'll be fun.

CLERVAL

Why "The Passing of Arthur?"

ELIZABETH

I get to play the Lady of the Lake.

CLERVAL

I should have known.

ELIZABETH

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

VICTOR

You do a better Arthur, Henry.



CLERVAL

Do you think so?

*Elizabeth bows playfully.*

ELIZABETH

Long live the king!

*Victor joins her.*

VICTOR

Long live the king!

CLERVAL

If you insist.

VICTOR

"I found him in the shining of the stars,

I marked him in the flowering of his fields-"

(Clerval begins to moan.)

My king.

CLERVAL

Dear Sir Bedivere, I am wounded.

VICTOR

You have slain the traitor Mordred.

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

The Round Table has fallen.

CLERVAL

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

*JUSTINE enters hurriedly.*

JUSTINE

Have any of you seen William?

ELIZABETH

No.

JUSTINE

Victor, you don't know where your own brother is?

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

(To Victor.)

We should be looking for your brother, anyway.

ELIZABETH

You haven't seen him at all, Victor?

VICTOR

I haven't.

ELIZABETH

You're such a good brother.

CLERVAL

Should we start over, or-?

ELIZABETH

You're very excited about this, aren't you?

CLERVAL

It's been too long since the we got to do this.

(To Justine.)

Do you remember how we used to play at knights and damsels?

JUSTINE

It felt like we did every day.

ELIZABETH

And you were the one to come up with the stories!

CLERVAL

I miss that.

ELIZABETH

So do I.

VICTOR

I have something to tell you all.

*Beat.*

ELIZABETH

Yes?

VICTOR

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

CLERVAL

Victor, that's excellent.

VICTOR

In Ingolstadt.

ELIZABETH

So, you're leaving.

VICTOR

Yes.

ELIZABETH

When?

VICTOR

Soon. Within the week.

CLERVAL

That soon?

ELIZABETH

It won't be the four of us any longer.

VICTOR

It will be, just less frequently.

JUSTINE

What are you studying?

VICTOR

Natural and 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.

(Pause. Clerval regards Victor.)

I'm sorry.

CLERVAL

I'm so proud of you. I will miss you, but I'm so proud of you.

JUSTINE

You're going to do great things, Victor.

VICTOR

Thank you.

ELIZABETH

Write to us!

VICTOR

Of course.

CLERVAL

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

*Elizabeth, Justine, and Clerval laugh.*

VICTOR

Oh, you think natural sciences are boring, then?

JUSTINE

They are a little.

VICTOR

Well, how's this for boring?

*Victor playfully presses a pressure point on Clerval's neck.*

CLERVAL

Ow ow ow! I surrender! I surrender!

ELIZABETH

Do you need any help packing, Victor?

VICTOR

I've barely begun, so - yes.

*Laughing, they start to exit.*

JUSTINE

What about William?

*Elizabeth and Justine stop.*

ELIZABETH

I'll help you look.

JUSTINE

Thank you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

I wonder where he could be.

JUSTINE

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

ELIZABETH

Does our little William have a girlfriend?

JUSTINE

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

ELIZABETH

That's - cute, right?

JUSTINE

Not when you have to try and find him.

ELIZABETH

You're a saint, Justine.

JUSTINE

I know.

ELIZABETH

What do you think about Victor going to university?

JUSTINE

I was wondering when he'd tell you.

ELIZABETH

You knew!

JUSTINE

I promised to secrecy!

ELIZABETH

It's the farthest away we'll ever be from each other.

(Beat.)

What would you study at university?

JUSTINE

Oh, I don't know.

ELIZABETH

Anything.

JUSTINE

I don't think I'd like to go.

ELIZABETH

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

JUSTINE

Why?

ELIZABETH

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

JUSTINE

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

ELIZABETH

Why would you think that?

JUSTINE

That's what you always play with Victor and Henry.

*Beat.*

ELIZABETH

There isn't anything else.

JUSTINE

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

ELIZABETH

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

JUSTINE

I did not mean -

ELIZABETH

I thought you of all people would agree with me.

JUSTINE

Why does it matter so much to you?

ELIZABETH

It doesn't. I - should help Victor pack.

JUSTINE

What about finding William?

ELIZABETH

I wouldn't be of much use anyway.

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

MARY

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

*Lights shift to Victor, traveling.*

VICTOR

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

(Victor takes a deep breath.)

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

*Byron interrupts the story.*

BYRON

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

MARY

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

BYRON

Perhaps I'd be more respectful, my dear, if your vapid protagonist would give up his poetic musings and do something?

MARY

I would prefer if you let me tell the story.

BYRON

Now let's not get too emotional, Mary.

MARY

You want the protagonist to do something?

BYRON

Yes.

MARY

You want to be scared by the story?

BYRON

Please!

MARY

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

BYRON

What is it - ?

MARY

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

BYRON

I wouldn't know.

MARY

Guess.

BYRON

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

MARY

No.



BYRON

What, then?

MARY

Something far worse.

BYRON

Tell us.

MARY

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

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

You're not squeamish, are you?

BYRON

I - how dare -

MARY

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

BYRON

And he brings it to life?

MARY

You can quote Milton, yes?

BYRON

Yes.

MARY

"O miserable Mankind?"

*Beat. They have locked eyes.*

BYRON

"O miserable Mankind, to what fall

Degraded, to what wretched state reserv'd?"

*The lights shift and Victor is in his workshop. The sound of rain falling outside. Professors WALDMAN and KREMPE appear as shadows in the background, voices in Victor's head. Victor connects instruments and wires to the CREATURE, referring to his journal as he does so.*

WALDMAN

Excellent! Another student of this wonderful field of science.

KREMPE

Have you really wasted your time on such nonsense?

*Victor gazes at his work for a moment.*

VICTOR

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

BYRON

"Better end heer unborn. Why is life giv'n

To be thus wrested from us? rather why

Obtruded on us thus? who if we knew

What we receive, would either not accept

Life offer'd, or soon beg to lay it down,

Glad to be so dismiss'd in peace."

WALDMAN

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

VICTOR

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

KREMPE

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

VICTOR

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

BYRON

"Can thus th' image of God in man created once

So goodly and erect, though faulty since,

To such unsightly sufferings be debas'd  
Under inhuman pains?"

VICTOR  
Live -

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

KREMPE  
You must begin your studies entirely anew -

WALDMAN  
There are worlds of mysteries yet to uncover!

VICTOR  
Live! (Screams.)  
(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. The Creature notices Victor's journal lying on the floor. It struggles to stand, and finally is able to get to its feet. Its movements are awkward and stilted as it learns how its muscles move. It picks Victor's journal up. When it hears Clerval's voice come from offstage, the Creature exits.*

CLERVAL

(Offstage.)

Victor! Where are you running to, friend?

VICTOR

(Offstage.)

Henry -

CLERVAL

(Offstage.)

Come here.

(Victor and Clerval enter.)

I'm glad I finally have a chance to visit you.

(Victor sees the Creature is not in the workshop anymore.)

How are your studies going?

VICTOR

They are - um - well.

CLERVAL

This is your workshop, I take it.

VICTOR

Yes.

CLERVAL

Where you perform your nature-defying acts of -

VICTOR

Chemistry.

CLERVAL

Ah, that's right, chemistry.

(Pause.)

My dear Frankenstein, you seem a little off. Is everything alright?

VICTOR

Yes.

CLERVAL

What are you looking for?

VICTOR

A tool.

CLERVAL

I'll help you look. What does it look like?

VICTOR

Horrifying.

CLERVAL

What?

VICTOR

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

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

CLERVAL

What? What is it?

VICTOR

Nothing - nothing.

CLERVAL

Did you see something?

VICTOR

No!

CLERVAL

Victor, what in God's name is the matter?

VICTOR

I cannot tell.

CLERVAL

You can tell me.

VICTOR

No, Henry. I'm sorry.

*Pause.*

CLERVAL

Very well. But you do need some rest. You look as if you've been awake for weeks.

VICTOR

Some rest, yes.

CLERVAL

Come with me.

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

*Lights shift to Victor and Clerval, some weeks later.*

VICTOR

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

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

I will try.

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

What is that?

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

I am always thinking of her.

CREATURE

(Hiding, to listen.)  
Thinking of -

CLERVAL

You need to write to her. You promised.

CREATURE

Promised.

VICTOR

Why do you care?

CLERVAL

I'm only concerned.

VICTOR

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

CLERVAL

Thoughts are different than letters.

VICTOR

I have been too weak to hold a pen.

CLERVAL

So once you've recovered -

VICTOR

I will write.

CLERVAL

Good.

(Beat. Clerval pulls a letter out of his  
pocket.)

She has written to you.

VICTOR

That letter - it's from her?

CLERVAL

Yes.

VICTOR

May I hear it?

CLERVAL

Of course.

(He reads:)

"My dearest cousin,

You have been ill, very ill, and even the constant  
letters of kind Henry are not sufficient to reassure me

(MORE)

CLERVAL (cont'd)

on your account. But one word from you, dear Victor, is necessary to calm my apprehensions. Clerval writes that you are getting better, and I eagerly hope you will confirm this soon in your own handwriting." See?

VICTOR

I see, I see.

CREATURE

I see -

CLERVAL

(Continuing:)

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

VICTOR

Get that smug look off your face.

CLERVAL

I'm not smug.

VICTOR

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

CLERVAL

(Playfully:)

"Do not keep me waiting, Victor."

VICTOR

I get the point, Henry.

CLERVAL

Do you want to try standing today?

VICTOR

Yes.

*Clerval helps Victor out of the bed, and with some difficulty, to his feet.*



CLERVAL

How does this feel?

CREATURE

This feel -

VICTOR

Better. Thank you.

CLERVAL

Good.

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

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

CREATURE

Words.

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

Victor - Frankenstein.

VICTOR

Is someone there?

CREATURE

Victor - Frankenstein.

*Victor tries to look but can barely stand.*

VICTOR

Hello?

CREATURE

Hello.

*Victor sees the Creature.*

VICTOR

No - haunt me no more, you monster!

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

*The lights shift as William, Victor's younger brother, enters. He looks for and finds a place to hide.*

JUSTINE

(Offstage.)

William! Where are you?

(Justine enters.)

I don't like this game, William. Now I know why Elizabeth won't play it anymore.

(Pause. She jumps around a corner.)

Found you!

(She's wrong. William giggles.)

Uh-oh...

(She finds him.)

Got you!

WILLIAM

You cheated!

JUSTINE

How did I cheat?

WILLIAM

I don't know. It's your turn now!

JUSTINE

Are you ready?

(William covers his eyes.)

You'll never find me.

WILLIAM

I will!

JUSTINE

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

WILLIAM

One - two - three - four -

(Justine exits.)

Five - six - seven - eight - nine -

*The Creature appears, behind William.*

CREATURE

Eyes closed.

WILLIAM

Who's there?

CREATURE

Help. I need your help.

WILLIAM

Who are you?

CREATURE

Friend. A friend.

WILLIAM

Why can't I open my eyes?

CREATURE

I am - ugly.

(William opens his eyes.)

No!

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

WILLIAM

Help! Help!

CREATURE

Do you know Victor Frankenstein?

*Pause.*

WILLIAM

He is my brother.

CREATURE

Brother?

WILLIAM

Why? Why can't I look at you?

CREATURE

Talk to him for me.

WILLIAM

I don't know who you are.

CREATURE

I can be his - brother - too.

(William twists free and looks at the Creature. He screams.)

No - quiet!

WILLIAM

Help! Help me! Justine!

(The Creature puts its hands on William's mouth and throat. William's struggle slows down.)

Help -

*William dies. Justine enters.*

JUSTINE

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

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

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

I knew you would be.

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

Oh no.

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

Read.

*Clerval picks up the letter and reads.*

CLERVAL

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

VICTOR

Found with the murderer's mark still on his neck.

CLERVAL

He was murdered?

VICTOR

That's what it says in the letter.

CLERVAL

I didn't get that far. Who could have done such a  
thing?

VICTOR

I don't know.

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

CLERVAL

She says Justine found him.

(Victor stands and goes to the window.)

I can't imagine.

VICTOR

(Out the window:)

*Demon!*

CLERVAL

What do you intend to do?

VICTOR

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

CLERVAL

I'll travel with you.

(They travel by train during Clerval's speech about William. Victor hears but barely registers his friend's words.)

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

VICTOR

Oh, Mont Blanc!

CLERVAL

What?

VICTOR

Familiar mountains of Geneva! How do you welcome your wanderer? Your summits are clear, the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to suggest peace, or to mock at my unhappiness and unrest?

CLERVAL

William's passing was indeed unfortunate, but -

VICTOR

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

CLERVAL

It looks like home.

VICTOR

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

*Pause. Lightning and thunder.*

CLERVAL

We've stopped.

VICTOR

Have we arrived?

CLERVAL

I don't know.

VICTOR

Perhaps the storm stopped us.

CLERVAL

Hopefully we aren't stopped for long.

VICTOR

I'll walk the rest of the way.

CLERVAL

It's too far.

VICTOR

It is close enough.

(Clerval moves to go with him.)

Stay. I'd like to be alone.

CLERVAL

I would like to be with you.

VICTOR

Henry, I must.

CLERVAL

You don't have to be so stubborn.

(Victor gives him a look. Clerval smiles.)

(MORE)

CLERVAL (cont'd)  
Stay safe, Victor.

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

VICTOR

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

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

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

(The Creature is gone.)

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

(Victor collapses.)

William - I am sorry, I am sorry -

*Elizabeth appears.*

ELIZABETH

Victor?

VICTOR

Elizabeth? No, it is not safe -

ELIZABETH

Henry told me you were walking and I -

VICTOR

Please -

ELIZABETH

You need help, Victor.

*She helps him to his feet.*

VICTOR

William -

ELIZABETH

I know.

*They embrace.*

VICTOR

I wish I had come sooner.

ELIZABETH

I wish you had too.

VICTOR

I have to tell you about the murderer, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

About Justine?

*Beat.*

VICTOR

Justine?

ELIZABETH

Yes, I can still hardly believe it.

VICTOR

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

ELIZABETH

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

VICTOR

Some sort of monster -

ELIZABETH

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

VICTOR

Didn't you speak on her behalf?

ELIZABETH

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

VICTOR

Made up? You didn't try hard enough.

ELIZABETH

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

VICTOR

Something else can be done, must be done -

ELIZABETH

Victor, it is impossible.

VICTOR

Nothing is impossible.



ELIZABETH

What is wrong with you? You're acting wild.

VICTOR

I care about our friend!

ELIZABETH

So do I!

*Pause.*

VICTOR

What is her sentence?

ELIZABETH

She is to be executed.

VICTOR

Hanged?

*(Elizabeth nods.)*

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

ELIZABETH

I will take you.

VICTOR

No -

ELIZABETH

I owe it to her too, Victor.

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

VICTOR

Justine.

ELIZABETH

Oh, my dear.

JUSTINE

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

ELIZABETH

Stand, stand.

*(Elizabeth helps Justine to her feet.)*

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

JUSTINE

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

(MORE)

JUSTINE (cont'd)

me? They think I am a monster, Elizabeth - and they have made me think I was the monster itself. All looked on me as a liar, a wretch doomed to hell.

ELIZABETH

You are not a wretch -

JUSTINE

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

ELIZABETH

Do not mourn, Justine.

JUSTINE

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

ELIZABETH

But a monster - ?

JUSTINE

I know what I saw.

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

VICTOR

Oh -

JUSTINE

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

*Victor works up the courage to tell her.*

VICTOR

I know who the murderer is.

*Beat.*

JUSTINE

Do you come here to mock me too?

ELIZABETH

No. He is convinced of your 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. Victor is alone with  
Elizabeth.*

ELIZABETH

What did she say?

VICTOR

Goodbye.

ELIZABETH

That's all?

VICTOR

When is she to be -?

ELIZABETH

Tomorrow.

VICTOR

She is brave.

*Elizabeth gives him a hug.*

ELIZABETH

We need to be brave too.

*Victor does not return it - he is lost in thought.*

VICTOR

Yes. We need to be brave.

(Victor breaks away from her.)

Excuse me.

ELIZABETH

Where are you going?

VICTOR

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

ELIZABETH

Victor, I need you here.

VICTOR

I think I need to be alone.

ELIZABETH

You don't have to -

VICTOR

I'll be back soon.

(Elizabeth exits, and Victor is alone.)

Mont Blanc, we meet again. Your precipitous slopes around me, your icy wall of the glacier above me, your few broken pines scattered around, your solemn silence broken only by the fall of some vast fragment in the distance - the thunder sound of the avalanche, the jagged lightning bolts in cracking ice.

(Beat.)

I need to be brave.

(Is he alone?)

Are you following me, devil?

(A shadow passes behind him.)

Yes, hide - you should fear the fierce vengeance that I will bring on your miserable head! Show yourself, that I may trample you to dust! Oh, I wish killing you could bring back William and Justine!

*The Creature appears. Victor recoils.*

CREATURE

Hello, Victor.

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

BYRON

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

POLIDORI

It learned from listening to Victor and Henry.

BYRON

I mean anatomically.

CLAIRE

Is it important?

BYRON

I think so, yes!

POLIDORI

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

MARY

I'm concerned with the story.

BYRON

I don't believe it to be possible.

POLIDORI

Then let us revel in the impossible, no?

CLAIRE

(To Byron.)

Are you determined to be sour this entire evening?

BYRON

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

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

VICTOR

You - you speak.

CREATURE

Yes, I speak. I am not mute, I can respond to your hatred. And what hatred! You detest me, your own creation. We share a closer connection than any living beings and yet you hate me and want to kill me. You want to kill me! How dare you toy with with with life. I have only one request, and if you agree I will leave you at peace. But if you refuse, I will not hesitate with my revenge on you and your remaining friends.

VICTOR

Monster! Hell itself is too mild a punishment for your crimes, and already you want more victims? No, I must take back the life I gave -

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

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

Am I made from dead body parts?

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

Give me my answer, Victor!

VICTOR

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

*Pause.*

CREATURE

So you can do it again.

VICTOR

What?

CREATURE

You can make another, like me.

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

Are you pleased?

VICTOR

Pleased? No. I've created a murderer.

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

Who could possibly show *you* compassion?

CREATURE

My creator.

*Beat.*

VICTOR

To the murderer of my brother? No.

CREATURE

No?

VICTOR

Never.

CREATURE

Then send me away. Banish me to the extreme corners of the globe - to South America - never never to be seen again.



VICTOR

Then begone! Plague me no more, villain!

CREATURE

On one condition.

VICTOR

And what is that?

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

Another -

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

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

(Pause.)

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

VICTOR

How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, live in this proposed exile? You will return and again seek man's kindness, and you will meet with his hatred - your evil passion will be renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in your murders. This cannot be, I cannot consent.

CREATURE

I swear to you, by the earth which I inhabit, and by you that made me, that with this companion I will leave behind man's civilization forever. My evil passions will have fled, for I shall have been finally met with sympathy! My life will flow quietly away, and in my dying moments I shall praise my maker.

*Pause.*

VICTOR

You will praise me.

CREATURE

For bringing me to a peaceful life.

VICTOR

And that is what you want?

CREATURE

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

*Pause.*

VICTOR

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

CREATURE

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

VICTOR

I will need time.

CREATURE

Of course.

VICTOR

It is then determined.

*They shake hands. The Creature doesn't let go.*

CREATURE

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

*The Creature disappears.*

VICTOR

Oh - what have I done?

(Lightning and thunder.)

Stars and clouds and winds, if you pity me, crush me  
and let me become nothing! If not, depart, depart, and  
leave me in darkness.

*Blackout.*

*END OF ACT ONE.*