



Sample Pages from Frankenstein Among the Dead

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FRANKENSTEIN AMONG THE DEAD

*Adapted from the novel by
Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS BY
Laramie Dean



Frankenstein Among the Dead
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Characters

7W + 8M + 8 Any Gender

MARY: Female. A novelist.

ELSA: Female. A mysterious woman.

VICTOR: Male. A scientist.

ELIZABETH: Female. Victor's beloved.

HENRY CLERVAL: Male. Victor's best friend.

WILLIAM: Any Gender. Victor's much younger brother.

ALPHONSE: Male. Victor's father.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Female. Victor's mother.

JUSTINE: Female. A servant.

THE MONSTER: Male. Created by Victor.

WALDMAN: Any Gender. Victor's professor.

KREMPE: Any Gender. Victor's professor.

BODY SNATCHER: Any Gender. Employed by Victor.

DELACEY: Male. A blind man.

AGATHA: Female. DeLacey's daughter.

FELIX: Male. DeLacey's son.

COLIN: Male. Recently saw Bride of Frankenstein.

MAE: Female. Recently saw Bride of Frankenstein.

BORIS: Male. An actor. Played by The Monster in voiceover.

GHOULS: 4-6 actors of any gender who can help change scenery in character, interact (silently) with Mary and Elsa, and be a part of angry mob scenes or with the rest of the dead characters at the end of the play.

Time

The early 19th century. Also, the 1930's. Also, today.

A Note on the Text

A backslash (/) indicates a point where one character's line of dialogue interrupts another, i.e., when one character starts speaking before another has finished.

As a writer and director, I tend to write in a style that appears poetic on the page, with line breaks mid-sentence (sometimes mid-word). I have discovered that actors usually, and with little coaxing, place the appropriate, the tiniest pause at the end of a line break, without my necessarily needing to indicate a pause or a beat.

A Note on the Original Production

Because I enjoy offering my students the opportunity to play characters when they perform as running crew, I cast three actors to play "Ghouls," as we referred to them, who, all in black and with ghostly pale faces and sunken eyes, changed scenery and acted, occasionally, as Elsa and Mary's minions.

I also double cast a few of the roles: for instance, the actors who play Colin and Mae also played Felix and Agatha.

Original Cast and Crew

Frankenstein premiered on November 12, 2015 at Hellgate High School in Missoula, Montana with the following cast and crew:

MARY: Brigid Leonard

ELSA: Megan Royce

VICTOR: Nathan Dudden

THE MONSTER: Lee Adler

ELIZABETH: Jalynn Nelson

HENRY CLERVAL/MAN IN CROWD: Hunter White

WILLIAM: Leah Samuels

ALPHONSE/BODY SNATCHER/MAN IN CROWD: Stephen Blotzke

WALDMAN/DELACEY: Evan Smith

WOMAN/AGATHA: Emma Swartz

MAN/KREMPE/FELIX: Luke Nicholson

JUSTINE/WOMAN IN THE CROWD: Tessa Huston

VICTOR'S MOTHER/WOMAN IN THE CROWD: Jorunn Loken

GHOUL: Maddy Albans

GHOUL: Azrad Irwin

GHOUL: Nicolas Crepeau

Stage Managers: Nora Gibbons and Emma Harrison

Stunt Coordinator: Tessa Huston

Light Design: Ryan Young

Sound Design: Azrad Irwin

Costume Design: Jalynn Nelson and Haley Inabnit

Make-up/Hair Design: Iris Jandreau

Set Design: Laramie Dean, Ryan Young, Dawn Larkey

"Monster Box" Design and Construction: Emma Harrison and Nora Gibbons

Poster: Daylin Scott

Dramaturg: Emma Harrison

Photography: Aline Dufflocq Williams

ACT ONE

The flash of lightning. MARY enters after a beat, holding a candle.

MARY: (quickly, to herself, reciting) He sleeps, but he is awakened.

He sleeps, but he is awakened; I must remember.

He sleeps, but he is awakened.

The crash of thunder. It jolts her.

Percy? Doctor John?

Flirtatious.

George? George, is that you lurking around every corner?

Lightning.

I've had the most wonderful idea for a story. I'm saying the words over and over so I don't forget them; isn't that clever? I woke just now –

Where are you?

I woke just now from a *dreadful* nightmare brought on by all those ghost stories you've insisted on terrifying us with; don't you want to hear about it?

Thunder; MARY speaks to herself.

Oh good god, woman. You're giving yourself the horrors.

She hears a sound; spins; listens; no longer quite as flirtatious.

John, it isn't you, is it? You aren't jealous, are you, doctor dear?

Percy?

In my dream, the Creator sleeps, exhausted with his devil's work, all in the name of God.

Lightning; a louder crash of thunder; she doesn't react this time.

But it isn't God for whom he toils; it's in the name of Science, just like we've been speaking about, the four of us!

This damned weather; this damned *rain*.

Lightning. Thunder.

A terrible smile.

Ghosts.

He sleeps, but he is awakened.

THE MONSTER, only a shadow, lurking, appears. We cannot see his face, nor any details about him. He is a shape, menacing.

Behold, the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains and looking on him with yellow, watery eyes that see him;

A woman, ELSA, dressed in the clothes of the mid-1930's, exits a movie theatre, nearly running. She is upset, clearly, close to tears. A long fur covers her throat; her arms by a coat; her legs by dark stockings. She also wears arm-length black gloves. Her face is pale with makeup; her eyes large and dark.

they see him, they burn into him –

and they *know* him.

ELSA stares up at the sky, waiting, watching for the lightning.

ELSA: Damn it.

Come on, come on.

MARY: Darling, wherever are you? I must tell you this story. You'll see; I can frighten my listeners as well as any of you brilliant men.

THE MONSTER reaches for her; she sees it and gasps.

How *perfect!* How *monstrous!* Yes, you'll do. You'll quite do.

She beckons; THE MONSTER recoils, but she continues to beckon until it moves toward her. MARY and THE MONSTER exit; ELSA continues to watch for the lightning.

ELSA: Damn it!

Suddenly: there it is, bright, illuminating, followed by an immediate crack of thunder. She stares at the heavens as if hypnotized.

BORIS, played by the actor who plays THE MONSTER, speaks in a sudden, booming voiceover. ELSA reacts with fear. The voice is distorted, echoing.

BORIS: (voiceover) We belong dead.

ELSA: (glaring up at the stormy sky) No.

BORIS: (voiceover, louder) We belong dead.

ELSA: (covering her ears) Stop it!

BORIS: (voiceover, booming) We belong dead.

We belong dead.

We belong –

Two passers-by, a boy and girl in their teens, COLIN and MAE, dressed in the style of the mid-1930's, exit the theatre, cutting the sound off. ELSA, startled, moves out of the way, watching them.

MAE: It's freezing tonight; put your arm around me.

COLIN: (nodding, humoring her) That movie. *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Even the title is exploitative. Ghoulish. Unnecessary.

MAE: Put your arm around me, please. That's what a good boyfriend does on a date: he pays for dinner and the movie and offers his arm for a snuggle when his girlfriend requires snuggling. *(He does. She snuggles there. Lightning flashes.)* I love a good storm. *(he laughs)* You old monster. It wasn't unnecessary; what does that even mean? *(big, romantic sigh)* It was beautiful, beautiful.

COLIN: Beautiful, was it.

MAE: Romantic, then.

COLIN: *(removing his arm, crossing them, watching her)* What was romantic about that enormous brute lumbering about the countryside murdering people? What was romantic about blowing up a castle?

MAE: Don't be a mook. He loved her, don't you see that? Even if she didn't love him back. The whole movie was about love and what it forces you to do. *(he delicately puts his arm back around her)* Even monsters can love. *(dramatic sniff)* I thought that was perfectly clear. Even a brute like you could see it.

COLIN: *(grinning)* Brute, am I?

He leans in, kisses her. She pretends to be shocked, then, giggling, kisses him back. Crash of thunder. COLIN jumps; MAE is amused by his reaction.

Another crash of thunder. ELSA moves a few steps closer to the couple, cautiously; COLIN and MAE break apart.

MAE: It's going to rain. I was so hoping that tonight would be beautiful.

COLIN: Of course not. This is a night for monsters. There must be thunder, lightning, and rain. (*another boom of thunder*) See? (*she snuggles closer to him*) Anyway, I think you're wrong.

MAE: I am not!

COLIN: Of course you are. *Frankenstein* isn't about the transcendent power of love or any of that rot. It's about playing god, silly girl, and consequences, and repercussions; *everyone* knows that. And the fact that a monster is always a monster no matter what, even when it tries not to be.

MAE: They should have given him a chance, then.

COLIN: Who?

MAE: The Monster. *And* the Bride. She didn't even have the chance to speak, not a single word. She just... hissed a lot. Then they blew her up.

COLIN: She was a monster too. Monsters must be blown up.

ELSA reacts.

MAE: The poor, poor Bride. She was so beautiful, didn't you think? (*COLIN laughs*) Even dressed up like... like *that*, with the hair and everything, she was still a beautiful woman. Like someone out of a painting. A statue in marble.

COLIN: Now admit it. Didn't that movie scare you just the tiniest, the *tiniest* bit?

MAE: Oh... I suppose so.

COLIN: Oh?

MAE: You don't have to look like the cat that swallowed the canary. Fine. The Monster frightened me. Even when he made friends with that blind man, I was still afraid.

COLIN: You're trembling right now.

MAE: So are you.

COLIN: Don't be angry. I'll get you home safely. No ghoulies, ghosties, or long-leggedy beasties *there*, I promise you. (*shaking his head*) Los Angeles in April. Three months 'til graduation. Then...

MAE: (*smiling*) Then Hollywood. And I shall be an actress.

COLIN: And I shall be the boyfriend of an actress.

They laugh; sound of rain intensifies; both look up; ELSA reacts, unsure how to proceed.

There, see? It'll be cats and dogs here in a moment.

MAE: (*snuggling close*) You'll keep me safe.

COLIN: Always. Always.

He kisses her. Laughing, running through the rain, they exit. MARY returns. ELSA sees her, cowers, hiding. MARY doesn't notice her.

MARY: It's brilliant, darling. The story will end far from civilization, in the Arctic wastes, the fire quenched, the spark extinguished, (*THE MONSTER, in silhouette, holds the body of VICTOR in his arms*) Creature and Creator fated to disappear together into the oblivion of that world of white, utter nothingness. The experiment a failure. That's more terrifying than any ghost, don't you think? George? Percy?

ELSA: Put him down.

THE MONSTER: Soon I shall die.

ELSA: You don't have to.

THE MONSTER: Soon these burning miseries will be extinct,

MARY: He'll say...

MARY & THE MONSTER: I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames.

MARY: My ashes will be swept into the winds –

THE MONSTER: My spirit will sleep in peace –

MARY & THE MONSTER: Farewell! I leave you and in you the last of humankind whom these eyes will ever behold.

ELSA: No!

But MARY, THE MONSTER, and VICTOR are disappearing into darkness.

Don't go! It doesn't have to be this way, I'll show you, I can do it!

They are gone.

“Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night...”
Please, come back! Don't leave me!
Don't take the light! *Don't!*

She screams. Blackout. Immediate sound of thunder, but dimmer now, grumbling. Then: the crackling of electricity. Soon the sound fades and we are left only with the driving rain. Then, after a beat, from the darkness comes the distorted, wretched, bitter voice of THE MONSTER.

THE MONSTER: *(unseen, voiceover)*

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould me Man?
Did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me?

ELSA: *(unseen, voiceover)*

When the stars threw down their spears and water'd heaven with their tears;
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

BORIS: *(voiceover)* We belong dead.

Crash of thunder. Lights up on ELSA and MARY, both speaking to the audience.

ELSA: She said it began with a dream.

MARY: It was a wet, uncongenial summer in that year, 1816, and the rain was incessant and confined us for days to the house.

ELSA: But she wasn't entirely truthful.

MARY: Our merry group consisted of me, my husband, the poet Percy Shelley, and our friends –

ELSA: Because the story... it all *happened*.

MARY: George — that is, Lord Byron — and Dr. John Polidori. It was Byron's idea, you know, *really*; I suppose I owe all the credit, as I do for so many, many other things, to him. “We will each write a ghost story,” he said.

ELSA: What I saw in that movie theatre, the images flickering there before my eyes, all silver and shadows –

MARY: A ghost story? (*trilling laughter*) I can do that, I thought.

ELSA: so stark up there, before me on the screen –

MARY: One to make the reader dread to look around –

ELSA: and it gave me –

MARY: to curdle the blood –

ELSA: an idea.

MARY: to quicken the beatings of the heart.

ELSA: You'll see. I'll *show* you.

MARY: Oh, the deep, the many, the terribly *philosophical* discussions we had! Those men. They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin, who, they said, had preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case till by some extraordinary means it began to move –

on its own –

with voluntary motion! And I thought...

*THE MONSTER appears in the shadows, still dimly lit;
MARY acknowledges him*

perhaps a corpse could be reanimated too...

perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured...

she holds out her hand to it

brought together...

THE MONSTER makes a questioning sound

and imbued...

It almost comes to her, then retreats into the shadows

with vital warmth.

ELSA: But the story isn't hers alone any longer.

MARY: Night waned upon this talk, and even the witching hour had gone by before we retired to rest. When I placed my head on my pillow I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination,

unbidden, possessed and guided me and I saw, with shut eyes (*VICTOR and THE MONSTER appear, in silhouette*) but acute mental vision, the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. He sleeps... but then... then he is awakened; he opens his eyes and there it is... the horrid *thing* standing at his bedside, staring at him with yellow, watery eyes —

A quick flash of lightning reveals, just for a moment, the visage of THE MONSTER; VICTOR and MARY shriek; VICTOR and THE MONSTER vanish. MARY giggles breathlessly.

What a ghastly fright! I awoke from the dream and set out to compose the story you all know so well by now. (*clapping, delighted with herself*) And it was a marvellous success!

ELSA: (*regarding MARY, with some distaste*) The story has gotten away from her. That was a long time ago, and she's as dead as anyone else who was there during that dreary summer in the early part of the nineteenth century, but in a way she isn't dead at all. She lives, as the story lives. But the story has *changed*, and she doesn't realize it.

MARY: I can hear you, you know.

ELSA: Oh!

MARY: (*mocking her*) Oh.

ELSA: How long?

MARY: (*cold*) Long enough to know that you know nothing, whoever you are. Go away. I'm warning you.

ELSA: I'm going to tell them.

MARY: You have nothing to tell. You are lower than an insect, beneath even a worm. I can tell just by looking at you.

ELSA: (*stung*) That isn't true.

MARY: Look at your clothes! Trapped forever in your own time, never evolving.

ELSA: As are you.

MARY: (*proud*) I don't need to evolve; I am alive; as the Creature in my story lives eternally, so do I.

ELSA: (*to the audience*) The story begins — (*MARY strikes her*) How dare you!

MARY: The story is mine. You dare not hijack it from me.

ELSA: (*desperately, to the audience*) You've seen the films, just as I have — life, but not life, unreal, flickering, shining, beautiful in front of you! The Monster lives again and again and again, appearing over and over!

MARY: But he is stopped. He is always stopped. He must *always* be stopped.

ELSA: You fool. Playing around with your characters like a child with her dolls, uncaring if you smash them —

MARY: My work has endured over centuries.

ELSA: You didn't tell it truly, not correctly, you left out details, you rearranged, you... you —

MARY: We will see.

Smiling, she gestures. COLIN and MAE reappear, giggling, running through the rain.

ELSA: What are you going to do?

MARY: What I do: create.

ELSA: Horror, bloodshed —

MARY: It is necessary. Watch.

ELSA: I won't let you!

MARY laughs. ELSA waves to the COLIN and MAE.

Excuse me!

They stop, look at her.

Be careful, please!

COLIN: Pardon? Were you speaking to us?

MAE: Oh, ignore her, Colin. She's obviously a crank.

ELSA: You were there tonight, in the theatre, weren't you. You saw the picture.

COLIN: *The Bride of Frankenstein.* (*laughing good-naturedly*) What rot!

MAE: Darling, please. The rain is starting to come down like cats and dogs.

COLIN: Did it frighten you? It frightened my little friend here.

MAE: It didn't!

ELSA: It was wrong. It was all, all wrong!

COLIN: How could it be wrong? It was just a story.

ELSA: But what if it were more than that? Something with its own life—

Thunder; they react. MARY smiles broadly, chuckling to herself.

MAE: Look. I'm sorry, whoever you are, that the film frightened you —

ELSA: But it —

MAE: (*overriding her firmly*) — or didn't frighten you, whichever, but we really must be going now, come on Colin, let's —

COLIN: No, just a moment. (*to ELSA*) We were having an argument, my friend and I, just after the picture's end. She sees it as a woman would, *terribly* romantic

MAE elbows him smartly in the ribs.

—ow —

but it's true! You did.

MAE: (*uncomfortable*) Maybe.

COLIN: And *I* thought it was about the dangers of playing god, that man, unlike that idiot Prometheus, should remain rooted firmly in his place. (*spooky voice*) There are some things man was not meant to know. (*normal voice, amused*) The status quo and all that.

ELSA: Prometheus was a god.

COLIN: Some god!

MAE: He brought fire to mortals, didn't he?

COLIN: And was roundly punished for it! He's chained to a rock for all eternity so that an eagle can tear out his liver and eat it —

MAE: Colin, please.

COLIN: (*enjoying this*) — and because of his immortality, it always grows back! Isn't that a riot?

MAE: No.

ELSA: You're forgetting though. He was eventually freed by Hercules and saved from his torment.

COLIN: But he wasn't. (*firmly, as if she were a child*) Because these are just stories. They have no basis in reality. We tell them to ourselves to teach, to scare, to prove a point. But really, they're nothing. (*taking MAE's arm*) I'm sorry I scared you, Mae. Let's find a cab.

ELSA: (*to MAE*) And you — what did you think the story was about?

MAE: (*flustered*) Well, I...

I...

I suppose I thought it was dreadfully sad.

ELSA: Sad.

MAE: The Monster wanted someone to love him. He was misunderstood.

COLIN: Didn't stop him from running amok and killing all those villagers though, did it.

MAE: He was lonely. (*looking at ELSA closely, seeing something in her eyes*) You can understand that, can't you.

ELSA: I can.

MAE: I'm sorry for you. (*beat*) Take me home, please.

COLIN: (*disappointed*) Home? But the night is —

MAE: Home.

COLIN: Whatever you say. (*tipping his hat to ELSA*) Beware of monsters, kid. This is the night for them.

ELSA: Oh please — you must be careful —

*COLIN laughs, takes MAE's arm, they start offstage.
ELSA runs to MARY.*

You can stop this!

MARY: This is what happens. This is what *always* happens. Watch. Watch; don't look away. You must be taught.

THE MONSTER's arms shoot out suddenly, as if from nowhere; he seizes COLIN and brutally breaks his neck, then tosses him aside. MAE screams and

screams as THE MONSTER grabs her and lifts her into his arms. She continues to scream as he carries her offstage; abruptly her screams are cut off.

ELSA: No! No! No!

MARY: The story is *mine*. This is what happens. Man was not meant to play god. And even if they feel sorry for the Monster — because they do; I know they do — the Monster still destroys. It must destroy.

ELSA: (*sobbing*) You didn't have to do that to them.

MARY: I did.

ELSA: Death is not the end. You taught me that.

MARY: Man was not meant to meddle.

ELSA: (*furious, gesturing to the audience*) I'm going to show them. You can try and try all you want to stop me and I'll find a way.

MARY: (*throwing up her hands*) Fine! Do what you feel you must. But you will fail. It's the same old story; if this is how you must learn...

ELSA: (*out*) This is the story, then; I'll tell it. I'll use the names *she* used—

MARY: Very magnanimous of you.

ELSA: — but you'll see. At the end. You'll see how she's a liar and how she's *wrong*.

MARY: (*out*) I created a man as well. I called him Victor / and —

ELSA: (*hastily, overriding her*) His name / was Victor and —

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN appears. This is the first time we see him clearly, fully lit: confident, young, full of life. MARY and ELSA exit; VICTOR'S MOTHER and his father ALPHONSE enter.

VICTOR: I, Victor Frankenstein, am by birth a Genevise, and my family is one of the most distinguished in the republic. (*he introduces them*) My mother and my father, who doted on me for years as their only child, their plaything...

ALPHONSE: All the riches of this family are at your disposal, my son, when you are ready to acquire knowledge, and then: to change the world!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: And you will change it, Victor. I know it.

ALPHONSE exits.

VICTOR: ...my closest, my dearest friend, Henry Clerval, an actor and a storyteller...

HENRY enters with a wooden sword and mimes a fight.

HENRY: (*grinning and laughing*) Slow, Victor, you are far too slow! Were this more than just playacting, I'd have gutted you twice over by now!

VICTOR: (*as WILLIAM enters*) ...and, when I became a grown man, and as I prepared to leave my parents' house to study at the University at Ingolstadt, they presented me with a sprite, an elf... William, my little brother...

WILLIAM: Victor! Henry! Take me to the theatre with you! I want to see the play, I'm ready to see Henry in the play!

VICTOR: But do you think the theatre is ready for you, young master?

HENRY: Of course it is! Perhaps you'll be an actor someday, little man, and we'll go to see *you* at the playhouse.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Not a sloppy little boy like our William.

WILLIAM: I am not sloppy!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Little boys who break their toys and leave them strewn all about are more than sloppy; they are naughty, they are bad, and they must be punished.

WILLIAM: I'm not bad! Am I, Victor?

VICTOR: You're not bad.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Simply irresponsible, then. Oh look, you've broken this one.

WILLIAM: Victor will fix it, won't you Victor? You're so clever with your hands!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Where is Justine? She should be watching you.

She tries to walk; nearly stumbles; catches herself.

VICTOR: Mother?

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*fanning herself*) It's nothing. I just can't seem to catch my breath.

HENRY: (*exchanging glances with VICTOR; they go to her*) Madame Frankenstein, are you certain / that we —

VICTOR'S MOTHER: It's *nothing*. The weather lately. It depresses me. That is all.

WILLIAM: What's the play tonight, Henry?

HENRY: One you've never heard of, I fear.

WILLIAM: Victor, what's the play?

VICTOR: I'm calling the doctor.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Nothing is wrong. I promise, darling. Nothing a good night's sleep won't conquer.

HENRY: It's called *Prometheus Bound*, by a gentlemen named Aeschylus.

WILLIAM: Esk-uh...?

HENRY: Never mind. If your brother will be so kind as to fill you in on the details... but I fear you'll be bored.

WILLIAM: I am never bored!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Untrue. Put your toys away, darling, and find Justine. She will see to your bath before dinner. (*calling*) Justine!

Even the action of calling weakens her; VICTOR approaches her, concerned, but she waves him away.

It's nothing, I say, nothing.

JUSTINE enters.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry, Madame. I was with Cook, discussing dinner.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*cool*) William needs his bath.

WILLIAM: I always have to take baths.

VICTOR: A fact of the world, Will. Those who love you will always want you clean and sound, up and down, clean and sound from toes to crown.

WILLIAM: You rhymed! Did you hear that, Mother? Victor made a rhyme!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Your brother is clever.

WILLIAM: I'll be clever too, someday. You'll see!

JUSTINE: Come along, young Master Frankenstein. We'll see you're all spic and span by dinnertime!

JUSTINE takes WILLIAM off.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*shaking her head*) I don't know why we keep that woman on.

HENRY: (*grinning*) She is a woman of many talents, wouldn't you agree, Victor?

VICTOR: Shut up, Henry.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*ignoring this*) She drinks, I fear. I should've asked to smell her breath.

VICTOR: Mother!

HENRY: You've shocked your son, Madame.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: I don't know that I trust her with William.

VICTOR: Justine is beyond reproach.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*darkly*) Your father hired her.

VICTOR: Now, mother —

HENRY: We'll keep an eye on the boy, Madame Frankenstein. I promise.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: You're good boys, all of you. Now where on earth has Elizabeth taken herself? She'll be joining you at the theatre tonight, won't she?

HENRY: (*grinning again*) Won't she, Victor? Or is she off with her books again?

VICTOR: (*stiffly*) Elizabeth will be ready for dinner soon.

HENRY: I was only teasing.

VICTOR: She'll be down soon. (*turning out*) This was my family, and I loved them. Even Henry. I couldn't stay angry at Henry, even when he touched a particularly sore spot. But more than anyone else on this earth, and despite her faults, there was —

ELIZABETH enters with a book.

Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Victor! I lost track of time, I think. Is dinner prepared?

VICTOR: Nearly half an hour ago. We've been waiting. William stood outside your door, calling, but you never responded.

ELIZABETH: I'm sorry, darling. I was engrossed in this.

ELIZABETH returns to the book.

VICTOR: (*out*) Look at her. The orphaned daughter of a nobleman. My parents adopted her when we both were five. I loved her in that instant when I first saw her, and I have loved her since.

ELIZABETH: I can't help it, Victor. I am like a sponge. I seek knowledge, just as you do.

VICTOR: I think Mother fears knowledge.

ELIZABETH: That isn't true. They're sending you off to the University at Ingolstadt to study.

VICTOR: *Father* is.

ELIZABETH: She wants you to be a great man, too.

VICTOR: It frightens her.

ELIZABETH: That you'll learn?

VICTOR: Or that you will. Or that together we will.

ELIZABETH: (*laughing softly*) Don't worry about *that*. You are going to be great, Victor. And I'll be there to help you.

VICTOR: Do you mean that?

ELIZABETH: Always. (*takes his hand and kisses it*) I will always be here for you.

VICTOR: You'll never leave me?

ELIZABETH: Never.

He kisses her, then breaks away.

Don't be afraid. We're learning. We're simply learning. Just like we always have. (*she pulls him to her*) And we'll continue to learn. (*she kisses him*) Together.

He kisses her back. He withdraws; the stage darkens; he turns back to the audience.

VICTOR: We were both students, my Elizabeth and I. She was there that night when, together, we witnessed a terrible and violent thunderstorm...

ELIZABETH comes to him; they nestle together.

... that sent forth streams of lightning, fire from the heavens —

ELIZABETH: Victor, the tree! Watch the tree!

VICTOR: — that blasted a beautiful old oak.

An intense flash of lightning, followed immediately by a crash of thunder and the crackling of fire.

ELIZABETH: Look what's happened.

VICTOR: As soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but / a blasted stump.

ELIZABETH: A blasted stump.

VICTOR: The power.

ELIZABETH: Oh, the power. I can *feel* it still, hanging in the air, invisible but *potent*. I've never thought about it before, really, have you?

VICTOR: I've never seen anything so absolutely destroyed.

ELIZABETH: There's a science behind it. (*suddenly excited; taking his hand*) We could study it. We could learn how to harness that power. Don't you think?

VICTOR: Could we?

ELIZABETH & ELSA: Of course we can!

ELIZABETH exits.

ELSA: Why shouldn't we?

MARY appears.

MARY: Because it's the greatest, most prominent theme of the novel, dearest. One should not fly too high; one's wings will melt should one fly too close to the sun; I suppose I might have named it *A Modern Icarus*, in hindsight. Besides, you're ruining it. Elizabeth never helped Victor.

ELSA: (*sneering*) Not in your novel; no, she didn't. She sat there and looked pretty. But that won't play today. Say, don't you have a death scene you should be constructing right about now?

Glaring, MARY retreats.

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*sharply*) Justine!

Trembling, JUSTINE enters.

JUSTINE: Yes, madam?

VICTOR'S MOTHER: William is not with you?

JUSTINE: I was just washing my hands, madam. I only turned my back for a moment —

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Idiot girl! (*slaps her*) My children are precious to me. Can't you understand that? Can't you understand my fear that something... that something will *happen* to them? (*grabs at her heart*) You would if you were me. If your time with them were... Never mind.

JUSTINE: (*near tears*) Madam?

VICTOR'S MOTHER: I'll find him myself. (*striding off*) William? William, where are you?

VICTOR enters.

VICTOR: Mother?

VICTOR'S MOTHER: Your brother is hiding again. Or run off. This wretch — (*she wheels on JUSTINE*) — this vile specimen of a girl / your father insisted

JUSTINE: Madam!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*overriding her*) on hiring despite all of my protestations and worries and fears, / fears

VICTOR: Mother, please!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: about bringing a low, common, deceitful wretch, a harlot —

VICTOR: Mother, my god!

VICTOR'S MOTHER: (*turning on him*) You would take her side? You would take the side of a harlot over your own...

your...

eyes widening, mouth widening

own...

She falls; VICTOR runs to catch her.

JUSTINE: Madam!

VICTOR: Get my father! Don't just stand there, woman, get my father!

JUSTINE flees.

ELSA: (out) She was dying, of course.

A bed is set for VICTOR'S MOTHER. VICTOR, ALPHONSE, WILLIAM, HENRY, ELIZABETH, and JUSTINE gather around her.

Death was inevitable.

She is dead.

VICTOR: (stony, emotionless) Mother.

WILLIAM: Mama? (leaning in, examining her) She isn't asleep. Where is she?

ALPHONSE: She is gone.

ELIZABETH: She's so peaceful.

WILLIAM: Where is she?

HENRY: Victor, my friend — Victor —

WILLIAM: That isn't her. That isn't my mother. It's not (screaming) it's not it's not it's not!

He runs; JUSTINE runs after him. VICTOR stands frozen, staring at his mother's corpse.

HENRY: Victor?

ELIZABETH: (to HENRY) You stay with him. I'll go after the boy. (kissing an unmovable VICTOR on the cheek once, and then again; no reaction) I will see to William, darling.

All exit, save for VICTOR and the body of his mother. He stares down at her.

VICTOR: Where are you? Where did you go?

Reaches out to touch her face, then recoils, covering his own with his hands; lights fade on the body; VICTOR turns back out, attempting to compose himself

But the day of my departure for school at Ingolstadt soon arrived.
(to HENRY and ELIZABETH) And though I loved my brother and
Clerval and Elizabeth...

HENRY: Write to us.

ELIZABETH: I would go, darling, I would give anything to go with you
if I –

They vanish; VICTOR is alone.

VICTOR: (out) I ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge.
I vowed that I would uncover the mysteries of life and death.
The power –
the lightning, the blasted tree –
my mother...
where did my mother go?

MARY: (sneering) Poor Frankenstein. He loved knowledge more than his
betrothed.

ELSA: (ignoring this; out) Once at the University, Victor was presented
with two professors.

KREMPE enters.

MARY: (out) The first, Professor Krempe, was a professor of natural
philosophy.

KREMPE: (reading a paper) Have you really spent your time studying
such nonsense?

VICTOR: Yes.

KREMPE: (crumpling the paper) Worthless. Foolish! Every moment
you've wasted with these charlatans is lost forever. Oh my boy,
my boy! (shaking his head) You will have to begin your studies
anew. Every idiotic notion you've learned from those ridiculous
books of yours must be wiped forever from your brain.

VICTOR: They were Elizabeth's books.

KREMPE: So it's Eve and the apple all over again, is it?

VICTOR: I beg your pardon, sir?

ELSA: (to MARY) Don't be idiotic! You with your classical allusions! As if
Elizabeth were some kind of temptress, a succubus!

MARY: *You* were the one who fashioned Elizabeth into such a voracious reader; *my* Elizabeth, as you pointed out earlier, merely sat there. And looked pretty.

ELSA: (*out*) But Victor encountered other teachers while at University to inspire him, one in particular, quite the opposite of his colleague...

WALDMAN *enters*.

...Professor Waldman.

VICTOR *observes eagerly as WALDMAN lectures*.

WALDMAN: The ancient teachers promised miracles, but very rarely did they deliver. But now, with our modern masters, there lies the possibility of actual discovery.

VICTOR: (*to himself*) Yes.

WALDMAN: These philosophers have penetrated into the recesses of nature itself: they've discovered how the blood circulates and the very essence of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers —

VICTOR: Yes!

WALDMAN: They can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world, those supernatural forces — what do we know of the supernatural?

KREMPE: I spit on the supernatural!

WALDMAN: The supernatural of today becomes the science of tomorrow.

KREMPE: There is this world. The world we see. There is nothing else.

WALDMAN: What lies beyond? What happens after?

KREMPE: That is the true horror of death.

WALDMAN: There is a veil that separates the living from the dead.

KREMPE: Endless darkness. Great nothingness. Forever.

WALDMAN: And what of the veil? What if one should pierce it?

KREMPE: (*sneering*) Death is the / end.

WALDMAN: What if death is not the end?

VICTOR: (*out*) Soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose: I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers...

ELIZABETH enters; VICTOR turns to her

... I will reveal to the entire world the deepest mysteries of creation.

Hungrily, he kisses her; she kisses him back.

ELIZABETH: Creation, Victor? (*teasing him*) That will come later. After we are married. (*He is silent. Her humor fades.*) Darling, I was only teasing. You're so serious all the time now. I thought that my visit would fill you with joy, but since I've come to Ingolstadt you've hardly looked at me.

VICTOR: You dominate my thoughts, I promise you.

ELIZABETH: Not as much as your experiment. When are you going to tell me about it?

VICTOR: ...soon.

ELIZABETH: It's been two years. Henry and I joke that we've lost you forever. Only I wonder sometimes if it isn't a joke at all. Victor, let me help you.

VICTOR: I don't need help.

ELIZABETH: You do. Look at you. You've lost weight; you've grown pale, sickly even. You haven't been home since last summer. Your father is worried; Henry is worried. I'm worried.

VICTOR: I will reveal all to you soon. I promise.

ELIZABETH: Let me help you.

VICTOR: You've helped me just by being here.

ELIZABETH: I will not be distracted, Victor.

VICTOR: You are too intelligent to distract.

ELIZABETH: If we are to be married —

VICTOR: *If?*

ELIZABETH: (*firmly*) If we are to be married, I must know your secrets. All of them.

VICTOR: I...

ELIZABETH: You can tell me anything. I love you.

VICTOR: (*breaking away; out*) I almost told her then. But how could I?

A BODY SNATCHER enters, filthy and grinning. He holds a shovel.

How could I tell her that I had spent the past year scabbling in the churchyards, violating graves, invading tombs?

BODY SNATCHER: I've found a nice one for you this time, Monsieur Frankenstein. Fresher than the others, I expect.

VICTOR: (*cold*) The others... they've been merely food for the worm.

BODY SNATCHER: (*nodding and grinning*) Aye, aye. But not this one. It's for your studies, isn't it? Eh? (*elbowing him, as if they share a monstrous joke*) Eh? (*VICTOR pulls away, disgusted*) What right have you to be so high and mighty with me, *Monsieur*? You got noble blood I figure; so what, I say? I know what you do with your nights, after all, but *she* don't, do she.

VICTOR: She?

BODY SNATCHER: That pretty little thing what I've seen you with these past few afternoons.

VICTOR: You've been spying on me?

BODY SNATCHER: A little less high and mighty, please. I knows me trade; I knows me customers.

VICTOR: I'm merely studying. Anatomy.

BODY SNATCHER: Aye?

VICTOR: To examine the causes of life, we must first understand the dead. And death.

BODY SNATCHER: Death's simple, sir. It comes for everyone; it ain't no respecter of station.

VICTOR: How well I know.

BODY SNATCHER: Lost someone close to you, did you?

VICTOR: My mother.

BODY SNATCHER: Hurts, don't it.

VICTOR: No.

BODY SNATCHER: Liar.

VICTOR: Death is inevitable. Simple, even, like you said. So why then does it always surprise us when it comes?

BODY SNATCHER: It's me stock and trade, sir. You might be asking the wrong man.

VICTOR: What if it isn't the end, though?

BODY SNATCHER: I hope to hell it is. I wouldn't want any of me customers to come back to me, shaking their fists because I robbed them, gave them livers instead of deadders. Or the deadders themselves, I suppose, what come back for revenge...

VICTOR: Now you think of the consequences?

BODY SNATCHER: I never think of consequences. Can't afford to.

VICTOR: No. No, I suppose not. I've made a discovery.

ELIZABETH, hidden, appears, watching and listening.

An important one. Perhaps the most important discovery man has made yet.

BODY SNATCHER: (*bored*) You don't say.

VICTOR: I've spent all these days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. I've seen how the fine form of man is degraded, wasted.

BODY SNATCHER: Worm food, wot?

VICTOR: But I know now.

BODY SNATCHER: You do?

VICTOR: I've found it.

BODY SNATCHER: Found what?

VICTOR: The secret. The cause of generation.

ELIZABETH reacts.

BODY SNATCHER: I don't know what you mean, sir. Look, do you want the body or not?

VICTOR: (*hesitating*) Yes. Yes, I suppose I do.

BODY SNATCHER: I need me payment first, monsieur. Right up front, same as always.

VICTOR hands him a bag of coins, disgusted again at his touch. The BODY SNATCHER grins toothlessly at him.

Many thanks, monsieur, many thanks! I'll be seeing you later tonight. Me... and *him*. (*exits whistling*)

VICTOR: I have to do this. I have to. I have to.

ELIZABETH emerges.

ELIZABETH: Of course you do.

VICTOR: Get out of here.

ELIZABETH: No.

VICTOR: Get out, I said! Go back to my father's house!

ELIZABETH: No.

VICTOR: Tell Henry any pretty lie you want, tell my father I'll be home soon, kiss my brother, go where you please, say what you please, anything, just *leave this place now!*

ELIZABETH: No, I said. I heard what passed between you and that man.

VICTOR: Oh god —

ELIZABETH: It's all right! Darling, it's all right. (*she holds him*) We will perform these miracles together. (*he pulls away*) I am with you. I am always with you.

Light on MARY, scoffing.

MARY: Beautiful. Is it possible that you are so naïve that you don't —

ELSA: What? You're the writer. The creator. You have all the power.

MARY: Of course I do. I set out to tell a ghost story. I wanted to chill the blood of my readers.

ELSA: And you attained immortality. The spark —

MARY: I am not moved by your performance. This is a story about death, and death is no respecter of love. (*mimicking*) "I am always with you"?!!? Idiot.

THE BODY SNATCHER enters, dragging a corpse.

BODY SNATCHER: He's a big'un. (*seeing ELIZABETH, shocked*) Beggin yer pardon, mum.

ELIZABETH: (*cold*) You needn't apologize.

VICTOR says nothing, but drags the body away.

BODY SNATCHER: Don't say much these days, do he?

ELIZABETH hands him a bag of coins.

ELIZABETH: I believe this will suffice.

BODY SNATCHER: What's he doing with all them bodies?

ELIZABETH: We are scientists.

BODY SNATCHER: Scientists. Of course, mum. (*tipping his hat*) I'll be on my way, then.

ELIZABETH turns; VICTOR has wheeled out the body of THE MONSTER, concealed by a sheet. He is attempting to sew at the arm, all we see of it.

ELIZABETH: Darling, let me. You are exhausted.

VICTOR: The thread breaks. Every time, the damnable thread breaks.

ELIZABETH: It needs a woman's touch. Metallic fibers.

VICTOR: You are brilliant.

ELIZABETH: They hold. Oh Victor, we are so close —

VICTOR: I don't know why you stay.

ELIZABETH: Because I love you, you idiot.

VICTOR: How can you stand it? How, when I even I cannot?

ELIZABETH: Victor —

VICTOR: (*at THE MONSTER*) These hands — (*now holding out his own my hands, Elizabeth — they reek of death!*
I have lost my soul —
all hope of salvation in the pursuit of this quest...
and I will not have you lose yours!

ELIZABETH: I am in no danger of losing my soul. We are on the verge of an incredible discovery, one that might transform the entire

human race. It is a boon, Victor, not black magic, not witchcraft. There is no devil here. There is only science.

VICTOR: My beloved Elizabeth, what have I done to you?

ELIZABETH: You have done nothing that I did not already wish for myself. I would know this secret as well.

MARY: (*savagely*) Ah ha! I knew it! That's what you want to know, isn't it.

ELSA: (*seizing MARY suddenly*) Tell me.

MARY: (*laughing wildly*) What would you do with such a secret?

ELSA: Tell me!

MARY shoves ELSA to the ground, then turns to the audience.

MARY: (*out*) My beautiful Victor had discovered the secret of life. You know that already. Wasting away, burnt up from the inside by a slow fever growing ever hotter, nervous to a painful degree, shunning the rest of humanity as if he were guilty of a crime. And then, it was / on a dreary night in November

VICTOR: (*out*) It was on a dreary night in November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils.

MARY: (*out, while simultaneously taunting ELSA*) But how did he accomplish such a feat? Was it chemical? Through his classes with the eminent Professor Waldman, did Victor discover how to use a series of injections to bring about such wonder into the world?

A chemical bath?

Or was it something more... dramatic?

ELSA: Of course... the lightning storm... the destruction of the tree... all that power...

Suddenly, shockingly: electricity crackles, thunder roars, blinding, blazing...

VICTOR: (*nearly lost under the sounds of chaos*) LIFE! LIFE! LIFE!

THE MONSTER trembles.

ELIZABETH & ELSA: It's alive!

ELSA: (*seizing MARY and shaking her*) It is alive, isn't it? It's alive!

BORIS: (*voiceover*) We belong dead.

ELSA: I don't believe that!

MARY: (*smirking*) You heard the man.

BORIS & MARY: We belong dead.

VICTOR: It's alive! It's alive! It's alive!

THE MONSTER is up, moving, stiffly, terrified.

ELIZABETH: He is beautiful!

VICTOR freezes; turns out; MARY mirrors him; together

VICTOR & MARY: I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open.

MARY: It breathed hard...

VICTOR: and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. I had worked for /
two years

MARY: two years for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate
body.

VICTOR & MARY: For this I had deprived myself of rest and health.

VICTOR: But now that I had finished,

MARY: the beauty of the dream...

VICTOR and MARY: had vanished...

MARY: and breathless horror / and disgust

VICTOR: and disgust filled my heart.

*ELIZABETH has approached THE MONSTER. They
look at each other.*

No! Elizabeth! Stay away from there!

MARY ushers in THE BODY SNATCHER.

BODY SNATCHER: It ain't possible!

ELSA: Get him out of here!

MARY: No.

VICTOR: How did you get in here? Go away — get out! GET OUT!

BODY SNATCHER: It's all them bodies...

all them bodies...

but they're together –

they're together holy mother of god they're stitched all up and they're walking and they're moving and that ain't real...

that ain't possible!

Who are you?

WHAT ARE YOU?

He swings his shovel at THE MONSTER, who recoils, then lunges, seizes THE BODY SNATCHER by the throat.

VICTOR: Stop it!

VICTOR attacks THE MONSTER, who knocks him away easily. ELIZABETH rushes to his side. THE BODY SNATCHER tries to scream, but THE MONSTER throttles him.

ELSA: (to MARY) This is your fault! You changed the story again just to suit your twisted purposes, sent this wretched man back here to spy on us, didn't you!

Didn't you!

Mary? Mary, where are you?

VICTOR: What have I done? It's a monster. A monster!

THE MONSTER approaches him. Touches his face gently. VICTOR shoves him away and races offstage.

ELSA: You poor thing. Oh, you poor thing.

She reaches for THE MONSTER. He recoils, making inarticulate sounds, and lunges offstage. THE BODY SNATCHER groans; ELSA turns to him. ELIZABETH approaches him. ELSA follows her, mirroring her movements.

BODY SNATCHER: That thing –

ELSA & ELIZABETH: Oh right. You. I'd forgotten about you.

BODY SNATCHER: That thing –

ELSA & ELIZABETH: You're in sorry shape, aren't you.

BODY SNATCHER: It ain't...

ELSA & ELIZABETH: Yes?

BODY SNATCHER: It ain't *human*.

ELSA: Said the man who makes his living stealing bodies from their graves.

BODY SNATCHER: Help me.

ELIZABETH: Should / I?

ELSA: Should I?

BODY SNATCHER: I gotta tell. I gotta get out of here so's I can tell.

ELSA & ELIZABETH: You would, wouldn't you.

ELSA: Damn you, Mary.

BODY SNATCHER: Help me! Please!

ELSA & ELIZABETH: All right then.

ELIZABETH: I will.

He tries to rise; she forces him back down. Covers his nose and his mouth. He struggles; she presses harder. After a time he dies. She stands uncertainly, looking down at him.

It had to be done.

ELSA & ELIZABETH: It had to be done.

Lights fade on her; rise on VICTOR.

VICTOR: (*out*) The horror forced me from the laboratory to my own chamber, forgetting Elizabeth, forgetting everything, where I passed into a fugue state...

and I beheld visions, wild, majestic...

I thought I saw Elizabeth walking in Ingolstadt...

VICTOR'S MOTHER appears.

but it wasn't Elizabeth at all.

My mother...

Mother! (*rushing to her*)

Oh Mother, you're alive, you're –

VICTOR'S MOTHER reveals that her face is a skull, a death's head; he recoils, screaming, but her arms snake around him, pulling him close

Worms! Worms crawling, crawling –

everywhere there are the worms of the grave!

She vanishes; he awakens from his dream; lightning flashes, revealing THE MONSTER, close to him.

THE MONSTER: Urrrrrrrrrrrrr...

Cccccc....

rrrrreeeaaaaa....

VICTOR: Get away from me, wretch! Vile, hideous fiend...

...monster...

MONSTER!

THE MONSTER: ...torrrrrrrrrrrrrr...

VICTOR: (*out*) And I fled.

THE MONSTER vanishes.

Nursed back to health by my Elizabeth, who, despairing that I would ever regain my own spark of life, finally summoned

HENRY appears.

Henry! How... why...?

HENRY: Victor, Victor old friend, you look like death!

VICTOR: How...?

ELIZABETH: I brought him here, darling.

HENRY: I've been here for nearly a week. This is the first time you've looked at me and saw, well, me!

ELIZABETH: (*quickly*) He means that you were delirious.

HENRY: You talked incessantly of a monster. You've called me many unpleasant names over the course of our friendship, Victor, but never a monster.

VICTOR: (*seizing ELIZABETH's wrist*) Where is it? Is it here? Are you —

ELIZABETH: Shhhh, darling. There is no monster. You've been so feverish...
and Henry —

HENRY: I bring you word from your father and your brother!

VICTOR: They are safe?

HENRY: An odd question, but the answer, fortunately, is yes.
William grows in height and energy and your father...
well, your father is... (*uncomfortable beat*)
Justine takes care of him.

VICTOR: What must my mother think?

HENRY: (*with a quick glance at ELIZABETH*) Victor —

ELIZABETH: Victor, your mother is gone, darling. Remember?

VICTOR: No! I saw her

didn't I tell you that I saw her?

(*remembering*) The worms... oh my god, the worms —

WHERE IS HE? WHERE IS THE LOATHSOME BEAST?

HENRY: We have to get him to a hospital. It is far past time.

ELIZABETH: No! I will take care of him.

I mean we, Henry. Together we can bring him back, I know it. I feel it.

Don't you?

Beat. VICTOR sobs.

HENRY: It is against my judgement. I think we should return him to Geneva this night.

ELIZABETH: He is too ill to travel. The journey would kill him.

You do not love him as I can.

You do not.

HENRY: I will return to my room at the Inn. But I will be back tomorrow. And if he is...

if he is as he is now when I return...

then I will take him. With or without your help.

HENRY exits.

ELIZABETH: Darling, you must remember. Keep telling yourself, no matter what. There is no monster. The monster is gone.

VICTOR: (*weakly*) The monster is gone...

MARY returns.

MARY: Months passed. Henry remained at Ingolstadt, and together he and Elizabeth brought Victor back from the brink of insanity.

HENRY: It is time to return.

VICTOR: Not yet.

HENRY: Your father writes me almost daily now. He worries. And Victor...

I worry too.

VICTOR: You don't need to any longer. Look at me. Don't I look like an entirely new man?

HENRY: Truly.

VICTOR: It's you who are responsible. You've taught me to see the world as a place of sunlight again.

HENRY: And Elizabeth?

VICTOR: We will be married as soon as we all return home.

HENRY: She worries as well.

VICTOR: She has said nothing to me.

HENRY: You don't have to take that tone with me. You know it's true.

VICTOR: And what else have you two conspired about?

HENRY: Oh my god. You can't be jealous. You *can't* be. Are you insane? Sorry. Sorry. Poor choice of words.

VICTOR: I don't know how much I like my best friend and my fiancé discussing / behind my –

HENRY: Discussing how concerned they are for your health? For your wellbeing? How much they love you?

VICTOR: I'm sorry.

Perhaps you're right.

Perhaps a change is exactly what I need to restore myself completely once and for all.

HENRY: That sounds like the old Victor. Now what do you say we find your lovely fiancé and together we can all –

His words are cut off by ELIZABETH's shriek offstage.

Elizabeth? Elizabeth?

HENRY moves to run for the door, but VICTOR is frozen.

Victor, my god! What is the matter with you? That was Elizabeth!

VICTOR: (*whispering*) The Monster...

HENRY: *Victor!*

VICTOR: The Monster has returned...

ELIZABETH enters, a letter in her hand. She is sobbing.

ELIZABETH: Victor... your father... your brother...

HENRY: (*snapping*) Victor!

VICTOR, as if in a daze, walks to ELIZABETH but does nothing to comfort her, does nothing at all. Merely stares. At last HENRY strides over and seizes the letter.

ELIZABETH: (*through her tears*) You read it. Please. I cannot bear to again.

HENRY: It's from your father. (*reading, as ALPHONSE enters*) "My dear Victor: You have probably waited impatiently to settle on the date of your return to us. But / how, Victor, can I relate our misfortune?"

Lights fade on VICTOR, HENRY, and ELIZABETH.

ALPHONSE: How, Victor, can I relate our misfortune?

William is dead.

Sweet William...

William is *murdered*.

VICTOR: No! God, / no!

ALPHONSE: Last Thursday we went for a walk in the countryside. The evening was warm and serene and we prolonged our walk until nearly sunset.

WILLIAM: (*offstage*) Look at me, Justine! Look how fast I can run!

JUSTINE: (*offstage*) You come back here, young master Frankenstein!

WILLIAM: (*offstage*) Not me! I'm faster than a rabbit, you'll see!

ALPHONSE: William ran from his governess and after a time he did not return. We called and called for him, but we received no response. We searched until nearly five in the morning, when at last...

JUSTINE enters, carrying WILLIAM's body.

JUSTINE: Monsieur Frankenstein!

ALPHONSE runs to them. She nearly drops the body; he helps her lower it to the ground.

ALPHONSE: Not my son... not my boy...

JUSTINE: He was just lyin there... he didn't move... he's so *cold* —

ALPHONSE: There are marks on his neck.

JUSTINE: He's been strangled.

ALPHONSE scoops the body up. Sobbing, JUSTINE exits.

ALPHONSE: (*out*) Justine blames herself, as do I. You alone can console us. Return at once. Comfort us, Victor, please. We beg of you. Your affectionate and afflicted father, Alphonse Frankenstein.

ALPHONSE exits, taking the body with him.

VICTOR: (*out*) It was completely dark when we arrived at Geneva. A storm raged over Mount Blanc, the darkness and the ferocity increasing the longer I watched. Lightning forked, shearing the heavens, and thunder followed, inevitably.

ELIZABETH: You blame yourself. You shouldn't.

VICTOR: Of course I should. If I had returned home sooner, as you and Henry wished...

ELIZABETH: That is a losing game, my love. How can we ever know what is to come?

VICTOR: Some things are inevitable.

ELIZABETH: (*gentle*) Fate? I thought you abandoned all of those idiotic ideas. We are masters of our own fate.

VICTOR: You know who the murderer is as well as I do.

ELIZABETH: You don't know that.

VICTOR: No, but I feel it. Here. Don't you?

ELIZABETH: No...

VICTOR: Liar.

ELIZABETH: Don't be cruel to me.

VICTOR: I am too soft already. Too human.

ELIZABETH: Yes. Human. I love you, Victor.

VICTOR: (*as if he hadn't heard*) I feared for my soul, you know, before I truly began my descent into this... this madness.

ELIZABETH: I've never heard you talk like this before. You've never spoken about the soul.

VICTOR: I don't know if I believe in it or not. I thought...

I thought that through my studies –

by becoming a scientist –

I could understand.

I could learn the secrets man has never known.

I could pierce the veil...

uncover the reason behind those mysteries...

seize the soul, whole and beating, if I could and *tear* it from that dark place beyond death...

and then...

replace it.

Put it back.

Put it back where it *belongs*.

I thought I could play god.

I thought I could *be* god.

I was a fool.

I *am* a fool.

ELIZABETH: We have done wonders.

VICTOR: No.

ELIZABETH: If we do not continue to forge ahead –

if we fail to make discoveries –

then we are *blind*, Victor, we are lost in the darkness.

And human kind has spent too much time in the darkness already.

VICTOR: The sun has melted my wings.

ELIZABETH: You are no Icarus. You are Prometheus.

VICTOR: Prometheus was a fool too. He was punished.

ELIZABETH: By greedy, vain, *stupid* gods in a story created by the same human beings who want us to stay in the dark ignorant and content with our ignorance!

VICTOR: The stakes are too high now. We are beyond simple philosophy. People are dying, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: You can bring a gift to the world. You can do it yet. Unmake death. Reach beyond the dark. It isn't too late, my love.

He pushes her away.

VICTOR: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. But I can't be here. I need to be alone.

ELIZABETH: Victor!

She is gone. VICTOR is alone outside in the storm. Lightning flashes. The thunder that follows is ferocious. It begins to rain.

VICTOR: William!

Mother!

Mother!

Where are you? Where have you gone?

Glimpses of THE MONSTER. It moves quickly, never showing itself fully.

Where are you, Monster?

Show yourself!

Show yourself!

I am here! I am your Creator and I am here!

I am here you bastard now you show yourself!

A flash of lightning reveals nothing. VICTOR relaxes, sobbing. Another flash, and THE MONSTER has appeared.

Oh my god.

THE MONSTER laughs.

Murderer!

THE MONSTER roars with laughter.

Filth! Foul demon!

Still laughing, THE MONSTER fades back into the shadows. VICTOR sinks to his knees.

Oh my god, my god, what have I done? What have I done?

ELSA and MARY.

ELSA: She was talking about you, you know.

MARY: I am aware.

ELSA: The gods. Jealous. Fearful. *Stupid.* That's you.

MARY: You can't change the story. No matter how hard you try, no matter how you insult me. The end will be the same. Because it's *always* the same.

ELSA: I will have the secret. You can kill a hundred children, a thousand, and I will find a way.

MARY: And look what you've become, you and your brand new Elizabeth both. Murderers. Even a body snatcher has a mother.

ELSA: (*uncomfortable*) He wasn't there originally. You put him there.

MARY: And so you had to kill him, I suppose.

ELSA: He was going to tell.

MARY: Murderer's logic.

ELSA: He struck out at the Monster! He provoked the attack!

MARY: You dissemble. Haven't you figured it out yet? This story is a tragedy. It doesn't matter what you do or how you try to change it, it will always end tragically. And you're caught up in its web now.

ELSA: *Your web.*

MARY: I set out to tell a ghost story. I wanted to scare, but I also sought to instruct. There is a moral; there must always be a moral to every, every story.

ELSA: This moral is old.

MARY: Timeless.

ELSA: Outdated.

MARY: It lives to this day; into *your* time, for certain.

ELSA: Why must there be suffering? Why must everyone always suffer?

MARY: Don't you mean, why must *you* suffer?

ELSA: That isn't what I meant / at all.

MARY: Of course it wasn't. You're so concerned with bringing a boon to humankind. Saving all the world from death. Consequences be damned.

I. Will. *Show.* You. The *consequences.*

ELSA: Poor Justine...

MARY: Yes, poor Justine. Someone had to pay the price for young William's murder, after all.

HENRY and VICTOR.

HENRY: The murderer has been discovered! Would to god it were not true...

VICTOR: (*quietly*) The murderer is me.

HENRY: (*thrown*) What? Victor... no... the murderer is...

ALPHONSE enters.

ALPHONSE: The murderer is Justine.

VICTOR: That isn't possible.

ALPHONSE: I wouldn't have believed it. But it seems we don't know Justine as well as we thought we did.

Or perhaps your mother knew her true nature after all. And we were too blind to see it –

to see *her* –

for the venomous serpent that she is.

VICTOR: Father, no —

HENRY: She has confessed, Victor.

ALPHONSE: It is my fault. If I had released her when your mother begged me...

if I had never –

if I had never reached for her –

VICTOR: Father, my god!

HENRY: Monsieur Frankenstein, this is no good.

ALPHONSE: The forbidden. Don't all men long for the forbidden?

VICTOR: (*frozen*) Yes. Yes, Father, I think they do.

A cell, where ELIZABETH and VICTOR visit JUSTINE.

ELIZABETH: This is madness. Justine, why have you confessed? You are innocent!

JUSTINE: Am I, Mademoiselle?

VICTOR: Yes.

JUSTINE: I cannot remember that night, not clearly! It's all so jumbled in my mind.

ELIZABETH: They said they found a locket that you were hiding.

JUSTINE: Madame Frankenstein gave it to the boy as a gift before she... before she left us all. They're saying it's of considerable value. Monsieur Frankenstein has already told the police that William was wearing it the morning that he...

that he...

She dissolves into sobs.

VICTOR: It will be all right, Justine. The courts will see your innocence, just as we do.

JUSTINE: Do you mean that, Monsieur? They forced me to confess — they said I would not have absolution unless I did confess! And now the burden of this false confession weighs heavier on my soul than any of my actual sins.

Am I a monster?

I'm not.

I'm not!

Tell me that I'm not a monster, oh please, *please* —

ELIZABETH comforts her. VICTOR reaches for her, then pulls back.

VICTOR: Trust me, Justine. You must trust that we will put this to rights. (*out*) But I am the true murderer, and I felt the never-dying worm alive in my chest, the vile thing that would allow no hope of mercy or consolation.

And I deserved neither.

For I was a liar.

A bag is crammed over JUSTINE's head. She screams. Her hands are bound. She screams again. A noose is thrown over her head. She screams. She is led offstage. We hear her sobs. We hear the sound of her neck snapping. VICTOR covers his face.

And on the morrow, Justine was executed. (*turns to MARY*) My intentions were noble when I began all this madness, you know this.

MARY: Yes.

VICTOR: Yet I am guilty.

MARY: Yes.

ELSA: No, you mustn't listen to her!

VICTOR: I am the author of unalterable evils.

MARY: Oh, yes.

ELSA: No!

VICTOR: What am I to do?

MARY: (*kindly, taking his hands*) What you must to achieve absolution and peace.

You must learn.

ELSA: What *you* consider lessons. What passes as knowledge for *you*. What you consider forbidden, what you consider sinful —

MARY: (*to ELSA*) You listen too. There will be a lesson for you as well. (*to VICTOR*) You must climb. To the highest peak, far from all humanity. To the only place in the whole world where you belong.

He goes. The wind shrieks.

VICTOR: Wandering spirits, restless and ferocious, either leave me to my misery or appear to take me with you, away from all the joys of life! Appear, I beg you, appear!

THE MONSTER appears.

THE MONSTER: Is that really what you wish, Creator?

VICTOR: Oh my god. You speak.

THE MONSTER: You gave me the power to speak, but never the words. I had to take that knowledge for myself.

VICTOR attacks him.

VICTOR: Devil! Murderer of children! Vile insect, you would dare approach me? Oh, that I could end your miserable existence and restore the lives of those innocents you have murdered!

THE MONSTER: I expected this. All men, it seems, hate the wretched. Even you.

VICTOR: You are a monster.

THE MONSTER: I am what you made me.

VICTOR attacks him again.

VICTOR: Then let me extinguish the spark that I gave you! I gave you life, and I will take it...

I will take it...

THE MONSTER strikes him, easily knocking him down.

THE MONSTER: Be calm. Be calm, I say! Have I not suffered enough that you would try to kill me too? Life is dear to me, and hear me well, Creator: I will defend it.

VICTOR: Then kill me.

THE MONSTER: I will not kill you.

VICTOR: Then be gone or let us fight. But there will be an end here tonight.

THE MONSTER: We will not fight.

VICTOR: We can do nothing else.

THE MONSTER: Is that how we shall play? I feared as much. Oh Creator, I ought to have been your Adam, and yet you have fashioned me to be the fallen angel. I am your Lucifer instead.

But God, in all his wisdom, loves Lucifer still, despite everything, despite the war.

And yet, you...

you hate me.

VICTOR: Yes.

THE MONSTER: You hated me from the moment you saw me.

VICTOR: I –

THE MONSTER: You need not deny it. It is true.

How can I move you? How can I make you see when you and your fellow creatures spurn and revile me? Oh god. The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are kinder to me than your fellow beings.

You will / listen to me.

MARY: You will listen to me.

ELSA & VICTOR: No.

THE MONSTER & MARY: Yes.

THE MONSTER: Listen to me, Frankenstein. It is on your head whether I lead a harmless life or become the murderer of your fellow creatures.

MARY: You will hear his story.

THE MONSTER: You will hear my story.

MARY & THE MONSTER: And then you will decide.

VICTOR: Decide... what?

THE MONSTER: If you will try to destroy me. Or give me what I want.

VICTOR: What do you want?

THE MONSTER begins to smile. He begins to laugh. MARY laughs with him. VICTOR covers his face with his hands. ELSA approaches the MONSTER. Reaches for him.

Lights out.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

ELSA paws frantically through a pile of books. She is dressed in a more contemporary style now, though she is still covered at the neck, and arms, and hands, and legs. MARY approaches her.

MARY: I don't think it's in there. What you're looking for.

ELSA: How would you know?

MARY: I guess I don't. I'm just hypothesizing. *(smiling)* What a lovely, scientific word, don't you agree?

ELSA: No.

MARY: Why do you always fight with me? You're just like a willful child.

ELSA: I'm not your child. Please leave me alone.

MARY: The Monster is about to tell his story. I thought you'd like to hear it.

ELSA: It's going to change.

MARY: You don't know that.

ELSA: It always changes. From teller to teller, from stage to screen, no matter where I've gone or where I've heard the story, it *always* changes. *(looking up from the books)* Doesn't that make you even the least bit angry? Even a little?

MARY: Not really.

ELSA: But it's your story! They've taken your story and changed it so much —

MARY: But it still lives. That's the point of all this; *there's* your thesis. Granting life, continuing life — *(sudden realization)* That's what you're looking for in all those books, isn't it.

ELSA: ...yes.

MARY: Because...

because you still don't understand how it's done, do you.

ELSA: No! I don't; I don't have the first *real* clue how to accomplish it. Chemicals or lightning bolts or injections or... or I don't know what else.

MARY: Why do you want to know?

The answer isn't in those books; will you just look at me? I'm honestly asking.

Tell me: why do you want to know?

ELSA: (*pulling away from her*) Why does anyone want such a secret? I want to overcome death.

MARY: Why?

ELSA: That is my business.

MARY: (*gently*) I'm telling you. The answer isn't in those books. I thought they were too, once upon a time.

ELSA: Because of your husband?

MARY: Percy? What about him?

ELSA: He rewrote the story. *Your* story. The actual novel of *Frankenstein*. As you were writing it, he rewrote it. Didn't he.

MARY: He was a poet, more than I was. He understood the magic of words and syntax far more than I ever could.

ELSA: They wanted to give *him* the credit when the novel was first published.

MARY: (*smiling*) They did. I corrected them.

ELSA: He changed words —

MARY: He helped me, you little idiot. Because he loved me.

ELSA: It was *your* work. You're the one people remember. The creator.

MARY: Percy was my everything.

ELSA: And then you lost him.

MARY: Oh, I suppose I did. Long before he died, as it turned out. (*laughing*) We led scandalous lives, my Percy and I. Even before that magical, stormy summer with Lord Byron and that ridiculous doctor friend of his. (*laughter fading*)

We were both fascinated with Lord Byron, everyone was, everyone he met.

But even before that strange summer, it wasn't Percy who disappeared;

it wasn't upon Percy that my mind dwelled.

ELSA: (*guessing*) Your fictional creations weren't enough.

MARY: I lost child after child. I couldn't seem to keep them alive, no matter what I did.

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't...

couldn't...

And to make it worse I dreamed, oh, dreadful dreams –
not because they were nightmares –

but because I always thought they were real while they were happening, and then, upon waking, found that they were just vapors, nothing more. I dreamed one night that my little darling, my baby, my first, that she was alive again, that we were mistaken, that we hadn't buried her without naming her, that she was just cold, not dead, and so we rubbed her body by the fire, we rubbed and rubbed until the warmth of the flames and our hands and our love restored her and she lived –

she lived!

She was alive!

But when I woke I looked and looked and I...

I couldn't find the baby.

Because there was no baby.

Because the baby was dead and buried.

ELSA: I'm sorry.

MARY: You needn't be. Eventually I had my *real* child: *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*. I even saw it on the stage once. Quite thrilling. And now I understand it has a life of its own. Moving pictures? How extraordinary. And how fortunate I am. To live forever through one's words... one's stories... *that*, my dear, is every writer's dream. And I accomplished it. And it's important, essential, actually. Because I am dead, dear. You think I didn't know? I know.

ELSA: I don't want to think about it. I hate death, I hate everything about it, it isn't fair, it isn't!

MARY: You sound like a child again.

ELSA: Why don't you help me? Why don't we work together? We can conquer death; *together* we can overcome it! Beat it back! Why not?

MARY: Because we are at odds. The story I tried to tell is very much about the dangers of reaching too far, the consequences of wanting to know too much, and you...

ELSA: I *want* to reach. I want to continue reaching.

MARY: Exactly.

THE MONSTER and VICTOR appear.

There is still more / I can teach you.

THE MONSTER: I can teach you.

MARY: We can teach you.

VICTOR: Speak, serpent.

THE MONSTER: Why do you call me that?

VICTOR: You are poisonous. You are filled to the brim with venom. And it is obvious now that you possess *fangs*. Tell your foul story and then we will see where we stand.

THE MONSTER: Is that the only reason?

VICTOR: And...

I suppose it is my responsibility. As your creator, at least, to hear you out.

THE MONSTER: Listen then, Creator, and listen well.

They resume their positions from Act One, at the moment of THE MONSTER's birth.

I remember little of my birth.

VICTOR: It's alive!

THE MONSTER: The rush of senses –

warmth –

heat –

and, of course,

immediately,

inevitably,

as if it had to happen this way, it was fated –

VICTOR: (*screaming*) Stay away from me!

THE MONSTER: Your face

VICTOR: Monster! Wretch!

THE MONSTER: staring up into mine, and then –

VICTOR: *Don't touch me!*

THE MONSTER: pain.

I tried to say one word as you fled before me, but my mouth wouldn't work. My *brain* wouldn't work. But I tried anyway:

Creeee.

Aaaaa.

Tor.

I said the word. My first word. I wanted you to be proud of me.

And instead...

you ran from me.

VICTOR: I... I...

THE MONSTER: Yes?

VICTOR: I was... ill.

THE MONSTER: Oh yes, of course. Exceedingly ill, I understand completely. I was a dead thing standing before you, a horror, a *wretch*. Of course my face, my very *being* made you *ill*.

And so you ran from me.

I stumbled from your home as dawn broke, early, but not so early that there weren't witnesses...

A crowd gathers. MARY grabs a reluctant ELSA and they join THE CROWD.

MAN IN THE CROWD I: Good lord!

WOMAN IN THE CROWD I: Its face, its body, the color, the *stitches*—

MAN IN THE CROWD 2: What is it?

WOMAN IN THE CROWD 2: A monster! A devil from hell!

THE MONSTER: Oh, they were quick, Creator. They wasted little time.

MAN IN THE CROWD 2: Kill it! *Kill it!*

THE CROWD attacks the monster. Some pelt him with rocks, some strike him with clubs.

CROWD: Yes, kill it! Destroy it! Send it back to hell!

THE MONSTER: And so I fled the city wearing only the clothes in which you dressed me. (*reveals a battered notebook*) The only clue to my existence contained in the pocket. An old jacket of yours, forgotten. As cold and frightened as I was out there in the wilderness, I clung to that book as if it were salvation itself. I pored over those pages for hours a day until a kind of miracle occurred... and the symbols resolved themselves into letters and then the letters into words. I was reading. And do you know what it was I read, Creator?

VICTOR: My... my journal.

THE MONSTER: Yes. "The Journal of Victor Frankenstein." It didn't come to me all at once, but enough. Enough that I began to understand my origins.

VICTOR: You couldn't possibly. Not completely.

THE MONSTER: Of course, not completely. But I proved a quick learner. Feelings and emotions began to resolve themselves into coherent thoughts in my mind. I was haunted by pain. Why did those I encounter fear me? Why did they scream when they saw my face, why did they run, why did they attack me? *Why?*

So I hid in the woods until one black night I discovered a crumbling hovel attached to a cottage, neat and pleasant, but I dared not enter.

I haunted it instead.

I watched the inhabitants.

I listened to them.

And *learned*.

DELACEY, AGATHA, and FELIX enter.

DELACEY: Lessons will continue after dinner. Agatha, you will clean the dishes. Felix, you will bring in wood for the fire.

AGATHA: Are you certain, Father? You seem tired.

DELACEY: You won't escape me so easily, my dear! I'm as strong as I've ever been.

FELIX: Agatha is the tired one, Father. She's simply exhausted from flirting with the miller's son in the village!

AGATHA: Shut up, you ass!

FELIX: Such language from a woman of virtue and beauty!

AGATHA: I'll show you virtue and beauty, you... you ass!

DELACEY: (*amused, with mock sternness*) Children, children! You must behave!

FELIX: He's talking to you, Agatha.

AGATHA: He's talking to *you*, Felix.

Ass.

They break into giggles.

DELACEY: Was ever any parent cursed with such devils as I must bear?

AGATHA: (*kissing him on the cheek*) We're only playing, Father. We'll clean up and then we'll resume our lessons.

DELACEY: Education is the key to your future success, my dears. It will lead us all away from this cottage and into the city, where you both may prosper as you never could out here, at the edge of such a wilderness.

FELIX: I don't understand, Father. We *like* it here, Agatha and I. We are content.

DELACEY: You must aspire to more than this life, Felix.

FELIX: We only want to care for you.

DELACEY: You may continue to care for me...

in more comfortable quarters than these.

THE MONSTER: It was then I realized that the old man was blind.

And that Agatha...

Agatha was *beautiful*.

VICTOR: You knew that word? In that moment?

THE MONSTER: I did.

You don't believe me.

VICTOR: You were senseless when you awoke.

THE MONSTER: When you brought me to *life*? Aren't those the magic words you meant to say?

VICTOR: You knew no language; you simply stood above me, mewling, like a –

THE MONSTER: Say it.

SAY IT!

Lifts VICTOR and throws him, then stands above him, panting.

A monster. Isn't that right, Creator? A *monster*.

VICTOR: (*small, furious*) A monster.

THE MONSTER: (*defiant, insistent*) I knew the word "beautiful." And as I stood outside that cottage window and watched them, this tiny family, this unit, complete unto themselves, I mouthed the words over and over again. "Agatha." "Felix." And...

"Father."

DELACEY: Felix, retrieve the cards, please.

THE MONSTER: And I watched the little games they played.

FELIX: Here we are, Father.

DELACEY: Place them where they go.

AGATHA: Yes, yes.

FELIX: You enjoy this more than you pretend to.

AGATHA: Shut up. So do you.

FELIX: Maybe.

DELACEY: What is the first?

FELIX: (*sounding it out*) Ch...

cha...

chair. Chair!

DELACEY: Good boy, Felix! Agatha?

AGATHA: W...

win...

window! That's an easy one.

DELACEY: Place it, dearest.

As AGATHA approaches the window, THE MONSTER ducks out of sight. AGATHA freezes.

FELIX: What is it?

DELACEY: Is something wrong?

AGATHA: No... no, nothing. I just...

I thought I saw...

a face. A man's face at the window. But it was...

horrible.

FELIX peers into the darkness.

FELIX: You goose. There's nothing there. Trying to get out of the lesson, I see.

AGATHA: That isn't it at all.

quietly

There was someone there, I swear it.

It was only a glimpse, but the face...

the face, Felix. Like a monster.

FELIX: *(suddenly disturbed)* A monster.

AGATHA: Don't say anything else. I don't want to frighten Father.

DELACEY: What are you two whispering about?

FELIX: Nothing, Father! Just Agatha, trying to weasel out of the game.

AGATHA: That's right!

Lights fade on them, leaving THE MONSTER by himself, outside the window of the cottage.

THE MONSTER: (*sounding out the words, miserably*) Hor-rib-le.

Mon-ster.

Monster.

Monster.

ELSA: He learns so quickly. So easily.

MARY: Yet Agatha was right. He is a horrible monster.

ELSA: Just when I think I can believe you, that I can trust you...

MARY: What? You think I have no sympathy for the Creature?

ELSA: I think you enjoyed creating these torments for him.

MARY: It's tragedy, my dear. Suffering is a part of tragedy. Suffering is a part of life. It teaches us. Helps us to grow.

ELSA: In this version he learns so quickly. In those films, the black and white movies at least, the Monster can barely speak.

MARY: (*darkly*) I know.

ELSA: This bothers you.

MARY: It deflates the power inherent in the tragic course of the story. The more aware the Monster is, the more he can articulate, the deeper is his pain, and thus the tragedy is deeper as well.

ELSA: And for the audience.

MARY: *You fail to learn, girl. For whom do you think I told my story? It left my hands with startling swiftness, a simple ghost story no more. Never, never forget: this is a lesson as well.*

ELSA: Yes. And you'll see. After all this time, the lesson will *change*.

VICTOR: (*to THE MONSTER*) And you killed them, I suppose.

THE MONSTER: Idiot man. Why do you jump immediately to that assumption?

VICTOR: Because I have eyes. Because I have a memory. Because I have knowledge of your capabilities.

THE MONSTER: We will get to your brother, I promise.

As the days passed into weeks and then months, I learned much. I snuck into the cottage in the black of the night and took to myself the books DeLacey used to teach his children. His dream for them was a dream for me as well. I would be a man, I told myself, I would walk through the streets as other men. I would know life. I would know love. But first I must learn to read.

And I did.

growing furious, revealing VICTOR's journal

And then I read *this*.

throws it to VICTOR

Every word laid out, so carefully, so *scientifically*, the description of my loathsome origin. I sickened as I read.

lashing out, knocking VICTOR back

Victor Frankenstein. Your name...

at last I knew it and could say it aloud. Accursed Creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?

VICTOR: I... I didn't know... didn't know...

THE MONSTER lashes out, kicks VICTOR in the gut

THE MONSTER: My body is a filthy imitation of yours;

kick

my face the face of a dead man;

kick

my body stitched together;

kick

stitched together...

one final kick

from corpses! The stolen bodies of the dead and the damned!

THE MONSTER falls away, covering his face, his body wracked with sobs.

VICTOR: (*still writhing in pain*) I wanted you to be perfect...

THE MONSTER: Perfect?

Perfect.

(laughing) You sought perfection.

Even Satan in hell had his fiends and demons for company.

I had no one.

I thought to remedy this.

THE MONSTER approaches DELACEY.

DELACEY: Is someone there? I'm all alone, I fear, though my son and daughter will return soon.

THE MONSTER: Please. Pardon this intrusion. I am a traveller, weary from the road. Might I sit a few moments before your fire?

DELACEY: My fire is your fire, friend.

THE MONSTER: *(trying the word out)* Friend.

DELACEY: That is what you are, yes?

THE MONSTER: Yes. I am your friend.

DELACEY: Excellent. There is bread here, baked by my daughter Agatha, and there is wine. Both are good. Try them. I am blind, so you must help yourself.

THE MONSTER: Thank you.

DELACEY: You are a traveller, sir?

THE MONSTER: Yes. A wanderer.

DELACEY: Does your wandering lead you to a destination?

THE MONSTER: No. I have no home. No family. No friends.

DELACEY: That isn't exactly true now, is it. I am your friend.

THE MONSTER: But I cannot stay here.

DELACEY: Perhaps not. Or perhaps you can. For a little while, at least. Summer is coming, and the fields need to be tilled, and Felix, my son, Felix — he can always use the help that I cannot provide —

THE MONSTER: You don't understand. I am an outcast.

DELACEY: Your voice is so full of suffering. What has caused such suffering?

THE MONSTER: If you could see what I have seen...

DELACEY: Sometimes I feel it is fortunate that I cannot see at all.

THE MONSTER: The faces of the people I encounter... they change when they see me.

DELACEY: How?

THE MONSTER: They transform.

Become hideous.

Monstrous.

DELACEY: People can be cruel.

THE MONSTER: They see me and they immediately believe that I wish to harm them.

DELACEY: I am blind. I cannot judge by how you look, only by your words and the sound of your voice.

THE MONSTER: And?

DELACEY: There is something there that sounds sincere to me. But full of pain.

THE MONSTER: Yes, there has been pain.

DELACEY: Perhaps I can help you.

THE MONSTER: How?

DELACEY: I can persuade others that you are not to be feared.

THE MONSTER: You would do that for me?

DELACEY: I am your friend.

The voices of FELIX and AGATHA approach. THE MONSTER panics.

THE MONSTER: Now is the time, DeLacey!

DELACEY: How did you know my –

THE MONSTER: (*gripping DELACEY's arm*) Save me! Protect me!

DELACEY: You're hurting me!

He touches THE MONSTER's face; recoils.

Good god. Who are you?

What are you?

FELIX and AGATHA enter; AGATHA screams at the sight of THE MONSTER.

FELIX: Father!

THE MONSTER: Please, you don't understand, I –

FELIX: Get away from him!

FELIX attacks, pulls THE MONSTER away from DELACEY.

THE MONSTER: Don't touch me!

THE MONSTER lashes out. FELIX falls. AGATHA screams again.

DELACEY: What's happening? What's happening?

THE MONSTER: Agatha... no... no, please...

He reaches for her. She runs.

Don't run from me!

He chases her.

AGATHA: Help us! Please! Somebody help us!

THE MONSTER approaches.

THE MONSTER: Agatha, please, I would never hurt you!

AGATHA: Stay away from me!

THE MONSTER: Listen! Listen to me! I won't hurt you. I love you.

With a scream, AGATHA stumbles and falls, then lies still. THE MONSTER approaches her.

Agatha... no... no...

He lifts her body. The sound of a gunshot. THE MONSTER roars, drops her body. FELIX approaches with a gun.

FELIX: Stay away from her, monster!

THE MONSTER: So you would turn on me too?

FELIX: You've killed my sister, damn you!

THE MONSTER: I have killed no one.

Yet.

THE MONSTER seizes the gun and hurls it away. He looms over FELIX.

Stupid, weak little man. Foolish man.

FELIX: No... no, please...

THE MONSTER: I could tear you to pieces. Rip you limb from limb. It would be easy. So easy...

FELIX covers his face. THE MONSTER freezes, then turns and walks away. FELIX lifts his arms, sees that THE MONSTER is gone, then runs to AGATHA.

AGATHA: Felix?

FELIX: You're alive! Oh thank god, you're alive!

AGATHA: Felix, take me home... take me away from here, please —

FELIX leads her away. THE MONSTER returns.

THE MONSTER: The wound from Felix's gun was nothing compared to the pain of their betrayal. The bullet hole closed almost immediately. (*shows it to VICTOR, who, despite himself, is intrigued*) See?

VICTOR: Amazing. There's no mark.

THE MONSTER: It would seem that this body you made for me has a remarkable propensity for healing. (*he touches the scars on his face and neck*) Yet these remain.

As do others.

VICTOR: You think you understand pain. What have you ever lost?

THE MONSTER: Why, Creator! I thought that was obvious?

WILLIAM appears as THE MONSTER laughs bitterly.

My innocence.

And yours.

WILLIAM: Look at me, Justine! Look how fast I can run!

JUSTINE: (*offstage*) You come back here, young master Frankenstein!

WILLIAM: Not me! I'm faster than a rabbit, you'll see!

VICTOR: (*whispering*) No.

THE MONSTER: (*savagely, bitterly*) Yes. Watch, Creator. And learn.

THE MONSTER approaches WILLIAM, clutching his shoulder.

WILLIAM: Oh! Hello! Where did you come from?

THE MONSTER: I don't know anymore.

WILLIAM: You're a stranger. And you're *strange*.

giggling

Aren't words fun? I love them. My brother Victor was teaching me to read, but he had to go away.

THE MONSTER: Victor...?

WILLIAM: I should like to learn to read better. Or go on the stage, like Henry.

THE MONSTER: Henry?

WILLIAM: Are you just going to repeat everything I say? Yes, Henry! Henry Clerval! Perhaps you've seen him? He's a famous actor.

begins to mime sword fighting

He's going to teach me to be an actor too! And I'll get to joust and fight and kiss all the girls, all of them! Every girl in the whole world!

THE MONSTER recoils, then approaches, enchanted.

Don't you like to play?

THE MONSTER: I've never played before.

WILLIAM: That's silly. *Everybody* knows how to play. (*as if seeing him for the first time*) What's happened to your face?

THE MONSTER: My —

WILLIAM: Don't repeat what I say *again*. Yes, your face. (*touching it gently*) Were you in an accident of some kind?

THE MONSTER: Yes. An accident. I was in an accident.

WILLIAM: It must have just happened. Look at your poor shoulder!

THE MONSTER flinches.

But there's no wound there! Just *blood*. What happened to you?

THE MONSTER: I wish I could tell you.

WILLIAM: You *are* strange.

I should be getting back now.

THE MONSTER: Why?

WILLIAM: Justine will be cross with me. She's my governess. I don't have a mother anymore, see. She died.

THE MONSTER: Died?

WILLIAM: Yes, died! You know what that word means, don't you? It means she's never coming back, never coming back, never never never never never coming back! (*giggles again; slowly it fades and he becomes more solemn*) I shouldn't laugh. I don't mean to. I miss her. I really miss her.

THE MONSTER: Where did she go?

WILLIAM: I don't know. I don't know where people go when they're not here anymore.

THE MONSTER: Stay. Please.

WILLIAM: I really can't —

He starts to leave, but THE MONSTER seizes him by the arm.

Ow! You're hurting me!

THE MONSTER releases him.

THE MONSTER: I... I didn't mean to.

WILLIAM: You don't know your own strength, do you.

THE MONSTER: I suppose I don't.

Wouldn't you like to come with me?

WILLIAM: I'm not allowed to speak to strangers. I probably shouldn't have talked with you at all. It's just... you look so *funny*.

THE MONSTER: And you aren't afraid of me?

WILLIAM: Of course not!

This decides him. THE MONSTER grabs WILLIAM and lifts him up as if to carry him away. WILLIAM instantly begins to struggle.

WILLIAM: Let me go!

THE MONSTER: I'm not going to hurt / you, listen –

WILLIAM: Let me go, let me go, put me down! Monster!

THE MONSTER: What did you call me?

WILLIAM: Monster!

THE MONSTER: I'm not!

WILLIAM: Yes you are! You *are* a monster! You're *too* strong and you're *too* ugly!

THE MONSTER: (*beginning to glower*) Stop it.

WILLIAM: Ugly, ugly, ugly!

THE MONSTER: (*a whisper*) No.

WILLIAM: Let me go or I'll tell my papa on you!

THE MONSTER: You will never see your father again, boy. You are coming with me.

WILLIAM: Monster monster monster monster *monster!*

THE MONSTER: You will be my companion and my friend, for always—

WILLIAM: Let me go, monster! My papa is powerful;

he is Monsieur Frankenstein, and he will punish you!

THE MONSTER: Frankenstein? (*roaring*) FRANKENSTEIN?

WILLIAM: (*thoroughly terrified*) Oh my god...

THE MONSTER: (*beginning to strangle him*)

You belong to my enemy! Accursed Creator, the man responsible for all my suffering...

Frankenstein, my god! I have sworn vengeance...

18 pages removed from this sample.



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