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Mary Shelley

# Frankenstein

## Or The Modern Prometheus

*Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay*

*To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee*

*From darkness to promote me?*

*Paradise Lost [X, 743-51]*

Adaptation and activities by Elizabeth Ferruti

Illustrated by Rodolfo Brocchini Studio Kojae

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MAIN CHARACTERS



THE MONSTER



ALPHONSE FRANKENSTEIN



VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN



ROBERT WALTON



HENRY CLERVAL



ELIZABETH LAVENZA



MARGARET



VICTOR'S MOTHER



ERNEST



CAPTAIN



JUSTINE



FELIX



AGATHA



ELDERLY FATHER



JUDGE



MR. KIRWIN



MR. WALDMAN

# A Mysterious Visitor

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## Letter I

To Mrs Saville, England

St Petersburg, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 17–

My dear Sister,

You will be pleased to learn that I arrived in St Petersburg safely yesterday. You do not need to worry any more! I am confident that my expedition\* to the North Pole will be a success in spite of the dangers. I feel the north wind here and the smell of it increases my excitement at my new adventure. I am going to a place where the sun does not set, where I will discover a new and wonderful land, where I can carry out\* experiments to find out how compasses\* work.

It is a dangerous, unknown land, but I feel as happy and safe as a little child setting off in a boat on a lake. One day, dear Margaret, one day I will be famous.

I am so grateful for your love and kindness.

Your affectionate\* brother,

Robert Walton



**expedition** journey to make scientific discoveries  
carry out do, perform

**compass** magnetic instrument you use to find direction  
**affectionate** loving

Letter II  
To Mrs Saville, England  
Archange, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 17–

Everything is ready for my expedition to the north. I have hired a whaling boat\*, have an excellent crew\* and as soon as the weather improves, will set off on our historic voyage of discovery. There is one thing missing, however, and it makes me suffer: I do not have a friend to share the difficulties and excitements of my journey with.

I am hopeful of success, but ask you to remember me with affection if you never hear from me again.

Your affectionate brother,

Robert Walton



Letter III  
August 5<sup>th</sup>, 17–  
Something so surprising and strange has happened to us since my last letter to you.

The southern gales\* made our journey to the north quicker than I expected, but our ship has been almost completely stuck in the ice for the past two days and the crew and I are beginning to become very worried. There is nothing we can do but wait.

Yesterday afternoon the mist\* lifted and we had a clear view of the huge areas of ice around us. Suddenly there was a shout from one of the crew. We ran to him and looked to where he was pointing. There, only half a

**whaling boat** small boat for catching whales  
crew (here) people who work on a ship

**gales** very strong winds  
mist thin fog

mile\* from us, a gigantic figure wearing furs\* was riding at full speed on a sledge\* pulled by eight dogs. We watched him as he disappeared towards the north.

Last night, the ice around the ship broke, and we were free to continue our journey. Next morning when I woke up, I saw the crew pulling something up onto the ship from the ice below. To my surprise, I saw a man, thin and ill from the cold and lack of food. He spoke English but had a European accent. What was even stranger, in my view, was that he only allowed us to bring him onto the ship when I told him we were searching for the North Pole, because that was where he wanted to go too! When I looked over the side of my ship, I saw his sledge was half broken and only one of his dogs was left alive to pull it.

After that, he collapsed\* and we carried him to my cabin. We looked after him as well as we could, but he was very weak and I was worried that he would die. His eyes gave an expression of wildness\*, even madness\*, but he is so grateful for everything we do for him, he gives us the sweetest smiles. It was many days before he was well enough to speak to us. We had a lot of questions to ask him.

'Why have you come so far north on that strange sledge, risking your life in this way?' I asked.

'I am following someone who is running away from me,' he replied.

'Is this person also travelling on a sledge pulled by dogs?' I asked, and when he nodded I told him of the gigantic man we had seen.

'That is him,' the stranger said.

half a mile a little less than one kilometre

furs skins of animals

sledge vehicle pulled by horses or dogs across ice and snow

collapsed fell down

wildness (here) violent, extremely intense

madness insanity, craziness



The stranger became agitated\*. He wanted to go immediately on deck\* and look for this giant man on his sledge, but he was still too ill and I would not let him, though it took me all my strength\* to stop him. I told a member of the crew to watch for the gigantic man instead.



August 13<sup>th</sup>, 17-

During the time I have spent with my strange guest I have begun to like him more and more. In fact he has become my very good friend. He speaks so well, is so educated, seems to know so much. Now that his health has improved, he spends as much time as he can on deck looking for the sledge and the gigantic traveller.

There is one thing which really worries me – he seems more unhappy than anyone I have ever seen. He spends his days lost in misery\*. I cannot imagine what has happened to make him so sad.

To make him feel a little better I told him how happy I was to have him as my new friend.

'Yes,' said the stranger, 'a friend is indeed\* a great gift. I had a friend once, the best friend a man could wish for: I envy\* you, Captain Walton, you have hope, your whole life in front of you, but I, I have lost everything. All that I have left is despair\*.' He became extraordinarily agitated and his face was full of grief\*.

Yesterday, the stranger said to me, 'You see how much I suffer, and of course you are curious about why. Before I met you, I had decided that my terrible story would die with me and remain a secret. I have

agitated extremely anxious, nervous  
deck (here) 'floor' on a ship  
strength power  
misery great sadness

indeed in fact, in truth  
envy want what someone else has  
despair without hope of any kind  
grief deep sadness, usually when someone you love dies

changed my mind. You have told me of your expedition to the north pole, your great desire\* for knowledge, but I hope with all my heart that in your search for knowledge you do not make the same mistakes as I have done. I do not want your story to end in tragedy and evil as mine has done. I hope that my tale may serve as a warning to you.'

He has promised to start telling me his story tomorrow. I feel sure it will be terrible and tragic. I have decided to write it down for you in this journal, dear Sister. I am impatient for this story to begin.



#### Victor's Story

I come from an important and well-known family in the city of Geneva in Switzerland. I had a happy childhood, my mother and father loved each other very much. After they were married, they travelled in France, Germany and Italy, where I was born, in Naples. My first memories\* are my mother and father's love for me. I was an only\* child for many years. I was the centre of their world and they taught me above all to be patient, kind and to have self-control\*. My mother was very happy but often said how much she wanted a daughter.

My mother liked to help poor families and would visit them when we travelled, to give them money. It was on one of these visits that she found a child who had the most beautiful blond hair. Indeed, her hair was of the brightest gold. She looked so adorable and sweet. My mother asked the family about this child. When she discovered that the child's parents had died and that these poor people were only

desire strong wish/want  
memories things or events that you remember

only child no brothers or sisters  
self-control not showing your emotions, reactions etc

looking after her, my mother persuaded\* them to let us take her to our home to live with us.

The next day, my mother said to me, 'Victor, I have a surprise for you. A pretty present.' And so it was that Elizabeth Lavenza came to live with us as part of the family and she became my adored\* playmate\*, sister and companion.

Elizabeth and I were almost the same age, but our characters were very different. She was calm and poetic, and I wanted to find out how things worked. From an early age I looked at the world with the eyes of a scientist and more than anything I wanted to understand the hidden\* laws\* of nature.

When I was seven my mother gave birth to a son and some time later to another boy. My family decided to live permanently in Geneva. I was not happy about this as I did not have many friends there, I preferred to be alone. I did have one good friend though, he was heroic, loved danger and was a wonderful storyteller and writer. His name was Henry Clerval.

No one could have had a happier childhood. I was full of energy and had a strong temper\*, but Elizabeth always found a way to calm me, and in time I learnt to put all my energies into my scientific studies. I did not go to school, but instead studied the books in my father's library. I was free to choose what I read; my father was not scientific and did not follow me in my studies. By chance, I started to read the scientific texts of ancient Greece. At the time, no one explained to me that the ideas in these books were completely wrong and that

persuaded convinced  
adored much loved  
playmate person you play with (as a child)

hidden not visible  
laws rules, general principles  
temper tendency to anger

modern science had made many new discoveries. I was fascinated by what I was learning and did not realise I was wasting\* my time.



One night, when I was fifteen, something happened which made me abandon\* the ancient Greeks. There was a terrible thunderstorm over the mountains of my home. Lightning lit up the mountains, thunder echoed around me.

I was standing watching this incredible sight from the front door of our house, when suddenly, I saw fire coming out of a beautiful old oak tree which stood close to the front of our house. It had been struck by lightning. When we went to inspect\* the tree next morning, there was nothing left but a black stump\*. It had been completely destroyed.

Until then I had not studied the laws of electricity, but a scientist friend of my father was staying with us then and he told me everything that science had discovered about electricity at that time. I was fascinated and excited by what I heard. From that time on, I threw all my old study books away and studied only subjects relating to mathematics. I thought that these were the only things worth studying. My life was changed by lightning striking a tree. Although at the time it seemed such an unimportant event\*, it was to lead to the complete destruction of everything I loved.



When I was seventeen, my father decided I should go to study at the University of Ingolstadt. However, before I could leave, the first of the

wasting losing for no good reason  
abandon leave completely  
inspect have a close look at

stump base of a tree that has been cut down  
event anything which happens or occurs

great tragedies of my life occurred. I should have seen it as an omen\*, should have realised that my life was doomed\*. Elizabeth became seriously ill with a terrible infection\*. We begged\* my mother not to visit her, however, when it seemed as if Elizabeth might die, my mother insisted on looking after her. In fact Elizabeth did recover, but it was my mother who then caught the disease and died of it in only a few days. We were all devastated\* by her death.

It came to the time when I had to leave to go to Ingolstadt. My friend, Henry Clerval, had asked his father if he could come and study with me, but his father had refused\* and so I had to go on my own. I was not at all happy about leaving my father, Elizabeth and my two brothers, my dear Clerval, so soon after the death of my mother. For the first time in my life, I found myself alone.



Once I arrived at university, I started to organise my new life. I found somewhere to live and I began to study with some of the most intelligent men of the age. I studied all aspects of science. Chemistry, in particular, I found of great interest. One of my favourite teachers was Mr Waldman, a professor of chemistry at the university.

One day, I was sitting listening to one of Mr Waldman's lectures\* when he said something which I can remember to this day. 'Scientists are able to perform miracles,' he said to us. 'They are uncovering the deepest secrets of nature, they are showing us how things work. They have discovered how the blood circulates around the body, and we now know so much about the air that we breathe. Through their

hard work and the discoveries they have made, they have gained new and almost unlimited powers. They can command the thunders of heaven, make the earth shake\*. Nothing is beyond their capabilities.'

Such was the effect of these words that I did not sleep at all that night. The next day I went to visit Mr Waldman and told him of my strong desire to study chemistry. He talked to me about the wonders of chemistry and gave me a list of books to study.

When I left him that day, I was filled with ambition\*, inspired\* by my wonderful teacher. I decided that in my life as a scientist, I would do so much more than those who had gone before me. I would find a new way to explore the unknown powers of science, I would show the world the mysteries\* of creation\*. And so ended a day I will never forget. It was the day that decided my destiny.



omen bad sign or prophesy

doomed without hope

infection disease caused by viruses or bacteria

begged ask someone desperately

devastated felt great sadness, grief and shock

refused said no

lecture formal lesson at a university in front of many students

shake move violently

ambition strong desire for success or to do great things

inspired interested and encouraged (here to begin his studies)

mysteries things that are unknown or cannot be explained

creation (here) the living world