

Where Does Life

Come From?

I often studied late into the night. Sometimes I would work so long into the night that the stars would disappear into the new day. I learnt a lot and I was admired* by the students and teachers at the university for my hard work and the progress* I made.

Two years passed in this way. In all that time I did not go home, but concentrated only on my studies. In other subjects you can only study up to a certain point, there is nothing more to know, but there are no limits in the study of science. We will never stop making wonderful discoveries.

Once the two years ended, I began to think about going home to visit my beloved* family, but something happened to stop me.

During my studies I had become interested in human anatomy* and in how the human body worked. I asked myself, 'Where does life come from?' This question had always been a mystery – a mystery which most people thought we would never be able to answer, but I believed that science could discover the secret of life. I decided to try to find the answer myself. In my opinion, people were afraid to ask

admired looked at me with respect or pleased surprise
progress improvement

beloved much loved
anatomy study of the body

the question or did not work in the correct way and that was the only reason why no one had found the answer.

To find out how life is created, I first had to discover everything I could about death. I had an almost supernatural* passion for the subject.

My father had always taught me not to be afraid of death or the dead. I was not superstitious. For me, graveyards* were simply a place to put the bodies of the dead, where the corpses* would be eaten by the worms*. So without fear, I studied how the bodies of the dead decay. I spent my days and nights at the city morgues*, studying death and its effect on the body. No detail was too terrible, nothing could shock me. I watched how the eye became food for the worms, how the brain decayed in death.

It was then that I had a moment of inspiration*. What I discovered seemed so simple to me then. How had no other scientist before me seen what I now understood? I was the only man to find the answer to this incredible secret.

This discovery was not the idea of a mad man. I could not explain where my inspiration had come from, but I had worked hard on this and my discovery was based on good science. After many more days and nights of study, I discovered exactly how life was created. With this knowledge I became the first man in history to have the power to create life from death.

I was incredibly happy! After all those years of sacrifice, determination and hard work, I had discovered the secret of the creation of life.



supernatural unexplained
graveyards places where dead people are buried
corpses dead bodies

worms small invertebrates which live underground
morgues places where dead bodies are kept
inspiration sudden, brilliant idea or thought

After my discovery, I spent a long time thinking about what to do with this new power I had. It looked difficult, but nothing could stop me. At first, I decided to create a simple animal, but I was ambitious and believed I had the knowledge to bring to life a more complicated animal. I did not doubt myself. I started studying how to put together a body and I began my experiment* to create a human being*.

The human body is complex, made up of very many tissues, muscles and veins which are very small. To make it easier for myself I decided to make my new human being much bigger than I was, eight feet tall, so that I could work more quickly. I worked harder than I had ever done. I became pale and thin. I was exhausted*, but I continued because I never lost hope. Soon, I would create a man. I wanted to understand life and death. The light of knowledge would shine onto our world.

I thought about the new type of human I was about to create. These new people would thank me for creating them, they would love me more than a child loves its father. I saw that if I could create a new life, I might, in the future, be able to bring the dead back to life.



I visited morgues and slaughter houses*. I collected together the parts to make a complete body. Even I was sometimes horrified by what I had to do, but I was enthusiastic and I felt that I was getting near to the end of my experiment.

The closer I came to completing my work, the more worried and nervous I became. My obsession* almost made me ill, but I kept

experiment scientific work
human being person
exhausted extremely tired

slaughter house building where animals are killed for meat
obsession idea that you think about constantly

going. I never stopped. I believed I would be able to rest soon, once I had given life to the being I was creating.



It was on a dark night in November when everything was ready at last. I collected what I needed and began my experiment to bring life into the things that lay in my laboratory. Heavy rain hit the windows. My candle was almost burnt out, but I saw the dull* yellow eye of the creature open, it breathed hard and its arms and legs convulsed*.

I cannot describe the disaster I saw before me. I had tried to create the perfect being, had chosen every part of him carefully. I had tried to make him beautiful. Beautiful! How could I have been so wrong? His yellow skin was pulled tight across his body, you could see all the muscles and veins underneath. His hair was dark and black and his teeth were white, but this only created a more terrible contrast with his watery eyes, his shrivelled* complexion and straight, black lips.



I had worked without stopping for two years to create this! Now I had finished, the beauty of my dream disappeared instantly and instead, I was filled with horror. I could not look at the creature I had created and ran out of the room. I walked up and down my bedroom all night. I was not able to sleep. In the end, I lay down on my bed, but I had the most terrible dreams.

dull not bright or light
convulsed muscles moved violently

shrivelled made smaller, (reer) with lines on the skin of the face

In my dream I saw my lovely Elizabeth. I was happy, but as I kissed her, I saw that her lips had turned the colour of death, her face changed and I found myself holding the body of my dead mother. Worms were crawling* over her. I woke up suddenly, terrified and covered in sweat*. As I opened my eyes, I saw the creature at the end of my bed. He was making sounds I could not understand, and he was grinning*. He reached out a hand as if to stop me but I escaped and ran from my rooms.

I spent the night completely terrified. My horror was made worse by my disappointment. My dreams had turned in an instant into a living hell*.

The clock on the church showed six in the morning and so I walked through the streets of Ingolstadt trying to keep calm, trying to find some peace within me, but my heart beat with fear. I did not even see where I was walking, but some time later I found myself at the coaching* inn* and saw a coach arriving.



The door opened and Henry Clerval stepped out. On seeing me he said, 'My dear Frankenstein, how glad I am to see you! And how lucky that you are here at the exact time of my arrival.'

I was so happy to see my dearest friend that I forgot about the monster. For the first time in many months I felt calm and full of joy*.

Clerval told me how his father had given him permission to come and study in Ingolstadt. I asked him about my brothers, my father and Elizabeth. I wanted to know everything about how they were when he left them.

crawling moving slowly
sweat water your body makes when you are hot, or doing sport
grinning smiling, showing your teeth
hell (Christian mythology) place where bad people go when they die

coach vehicle with wheels pulled by four or more horses
inn small hotel or pub where you stay the night
joy great happiness

'They are well and very happy. But they are worried because you almost never write to them.' At that point, he looked closely at me. 'But, my dear Frankenstein,' he said, suddenly worried, 'You look so ill. You look as if you haven't slept for many nights.'

'You are right, my friend, I have been working on something for a long time, but I hope I have come to the end of it. I am free now.'

When I thought about what had happened in my laboratory the night before, I could not stop shaking. Clerval and I walked quickly back to my rooms. The closer we got, the more terrified I became. I tried to hide my agitation* from my friend as I imagined the creature still in my apartment, walking about my rooms.



I was horrified at the idea of Clerval seeing the monster. I told him to wait downstairs while I went into my apartment. I gathered* all my courage*, went up the stairs and opened the door expecting to see the terrible monster in front of me, but it was not there. I searched the whole apartment but I could not find it anywhere. I could not believe my luck and I ran down the stairs to tell Clerval to come up.

We had breakfast. I was very happy. At first, Clerval thought I was happy because he was there, but when he looked at me more closely he saw a wildness* in my eyes which he could not explain. I laughed so long and loud that I frightened him.

'Victor,' he cried, 'what, for God's sake*, is the matter? Stop laughing like that. What is this all about?'

agitation extreme worry
gathered collected
courage strength to face danger or fear

wildness madness
for God's sake in God's name

'Don't ask me,' I said and covered my eyes with my hands. In my terror I thought I saw the creature* standing in the room with us. 'I will tell you. Oh save me! Save me!' I shouted. I thought I felt the monster grab hold of* me and I tried to fight him, but then I fell down unconscious to the ground.

I was ill for many months. During all that time Henry looked after me better than anyone can imagine, he never left me on my own. I did not want my family to worry about me and so he did not tell them how ill I was, but I was close to death.



I had started to feel better when I received a letter from Elizabeth. She told me all the news of home, about how my brothers were growing up and about a new friend, Justine, who worked with her and helped her with the running* of the house. Elizabeth sounded happy and full of hope.

I wanted to get well, I wanted to go back to the people I loved!

Then I received another letter. It was from my father.

'My dear Victor,

Your brother William is dead! William has been murdered!*

I must tell you how it happened. Elizabeth and your two brothers were walking one evening when they decided to play a game of hide and seek. William ran off to hide, but did not return. We spent the night looking for him. At about five in the morning I discovered the lifeless body of my lovely boy. He had been strangled.**

creature (un-named) animal or person
grab hold of take violently
running managing
murdered killed

hide and seek game where children hide and one person looks
strangled killed by putting the hand around the neck to stop
the victim breathing

Earlier that evening, William had asked Elizabeth if he could wear her gold necklace. When Elizabeth came in to the room to see the William's body, she saw that the necklace had gone, she cried out 'Oh God! I have murdered my darling child!'

You must come home, Victor, you are the only one who can console* Elizabeth. She says William was killed because the murderer wanted the necklace. You must come and tell her it was not her fault*.

Your affectionate father,
Alphonse Frankenstein'

console make someone feel better

fault mistake you are responsible for