

Characters

(Where {grouped}, these roles are doubled)

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|--|---|
| {Mary Godwin (F) Elizabeth Lavenza} (F) | author of <i>Frankenstein</i> and fiancée of Percy adopted sister and fiancée of Victor. |
| {Percy Shelley (M) Victor Frankenstein} (M) | poet and fiancé of Mary natural philosopher and fiancé of Elizabeth. |
| {Lord Byron (M) Robert Walton} (M) | poet and adventurer natural philosopher and arctic explorer. |
| {John Polidori (M) Henry Clerval} (M) | private physician to Byron Victor's closest friend. |
| {Claire Clairmont (F) Justine Moritz} (F) | stepsister of Mary au pair for William Frankenstein. |
| The Creature, (M) | the artificial man created by Victor. |
| Caroline Frankenstein (F) | mother of Victor. |
| {Liam (M) DeLacey} (M) | servant at Villa Diodati & groundskeeper at the Frankenstein estate blind aristocrat living in exile in Bavaria. |
| Anna (F) | servant at Villa Diodati & the Frankenstein Mansion. |
| {Old Male Servant (M) Voice of the Magistrate (M) Old Sailor} (M) | at Villa Diodati and Frankenstein Mansion aboard Robert Walton's ship. |
| {Young Male Servant (M) Felix DeLacey, (M) Young Sailor} (M) | at Villa Diodati and Frankenstein Mansion DeLacey's son aboard Robert Walton's ship. |
| {Young Female Servant (F) Safie} (F) | at Villa Diodati and Frankenstein Mansion Turkish exile adopted by DeLacey. |

Note: Double casting suggest that Mary bases her characters on people in her life.

Act 1

Scene 1 - The drawing room of Villa Diodati, Geneva, Switzerland, 1816.

(Lights up. Lord Byron stands center stage before a pair of French doors, reading aloud from a book titled *Fantasmagoriana*. His performance is dramatic, paced to build anticipation. Percy Shelley and John Polidori sit close, listening. Mary Godwin and Claire Clairmont sit at a side window, apart from the men. Mary has a heavy cloak draped over the back of her chair, perhaps suggesting she is anxious to leave. Opposite Mary and Claire, Servants clear the remains of an evening meal from a large table. VFX. Lightning flashes through the French doors. SFX. Thunder roars.)

Byron: (reading) Petrified with horror, I watched the ghost peer through the glass. And then, with a roar of thunder, it passed through the casement to stand beside the sleeping child. No words can depict the horror I felt as that hellish specter knelt and softly planted a kiss on the young boy's forehead. Then it stood, met my gaze, and vanished as suddenly as it had appeared. It was not a dream! There can be no doubt, for the instant the apparition vanished from the room, the child began to change.

(Servants stop work, listen to Byron.)

Byron: Blood drained from the youth's cheeks. His skin turned ashy gray. His body shriveled. And then before my horrified gaze—for I could neither close my eyes nor look away—the rosy-faced child shrank and withered like a flower snapped from its stalk! And so it was that a parent's love—withheld too long—became a germ of death to his long-abandoned child.

(Byron closes the book with a snap, regards his stunned audience, smiles a devilish grin. Servants return to work, then exit.)

Percy: I dare say, Byron. You are apt to give John Polidori nightmares.

Polidori: Me? What about Mary and Claire?

Percy: They're made of sterner matter, I assure you. But tell me, Byron, wherever did you find that book?

Byron: In the study. This villa has quite a collection. (Reads the cover) *Fantasmagoriana*. A book of ghostly tales. Translated from the German.

Polidori: A frightening story, to be sure. But not entirely logical.

Byron: Not logical!

Percy: In what way?

Polidori: If I follow it correctly, the father had abandoned the child in infancy?

Byron: So goes the tale.

Polidori: But why?

Byron: It is what fathers do.

Polidori: Hardly.

Byron: Our dear Percy might disagree.

Percy: I?

Byron: You had a falling out with your father, didn't you? Something to do with blasphemy?

Percy: He doesn't approve of my atheism.

Byron: And Mary's father?

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Percy: He doesn't approve of me. In any event, neither father has left me shriveled and dead.

Byron: They must return and kiss you first.

Percy: A frightening prospect!

Byron: Sarcasm from the great poet!

Percy: Would that more people held your view of my greatness. But I intend no sarcasm, only to comment on the irony that withheld love can be like a poison.

Byron: Yet parents do withhold it. Your father. Mary's father. Even you, remaining here while an au pair sits in your cottage attending to your infant son.

Percy: That's hardly the same thing?

Byron: What says Mary?

Mary: As little as possible, it would seem.

Polidori: Come, Mary. You and Claire are welcome to speak.

Mary: We learn more by listening.

Percy: I assure you, Byron. Mary and I would have returned to our cottage before dark were it not for this infernal storm.

Byron: Yes. It is a frightful one.

Claire: We will all be spending the night if it doesn't let up.

Byron: Really, Miss Clairmont. Inviting yourself?

Claire: No. Not at all. I only mean to say --

Byron: Perhaps you could go check on Shelley's son and take our dear *Polly-Dolly* with you.

Polidori: *Polidori.*

Byron: Really? Did I say it wrong?

Polidori: You have been baiting me all evening, sir.

Percy: I think we need another story.

Byron: Yes. But I fear the ones in this collection will not meet the good doctor's approval. (**Sets the book aside**) I would like to propose a challenge!

Polidori: Please, no. We know of your challenges.

Byron: No pistols, I assure you. This will be a challenge of the pen. To wit! Since three of us are writers, I propose we each compose a ghost story, or some such tale of horror to rival the one we heard tonight. It may be written in prose or verse as the author chooses, with the resulting texts to be shared anon.

Polidori: Mary and Claire can be our judges. What say you, ladies?

Mary: We will listen.

Byron: Not at all. When I say three of us are writers, I mean Percy and me, of course. But also Mary.

Mary: I have published nothing.

Byron: One need not publish to be a writer.

Polidori: I am published!

Byron: Oh yes. I forgot. You write dictionaries.

Polidori: That was my father. You know that full well. You've read my play.

Byron: Forgive me. It must have slipped my mind. So you wish to join the challenge?

Polidori: Once I know the stakes.

Percy: A good tale should be its own reward.

Byron: Well said! Tell me, Percy. Do you have a frightening story in mind?

Percy: Perhaps. Something loosely autobiographical, founded on the experience of my early life.

Byron: Your marriage to Harriet Westbrook?

Percy: Not that frightening.

(The men laugh)

Byron: And what of *Dr. Dolly*.

Polidori: Please, sir. It is *Polidori*. You treat me as a stranger.

Byron: Yet you are stranger than most. But to the question. Do you have a notion for a story? Something logical?

Polidori: I have a few things. Something about a vampire, or maybe a death-head ghost.

Byron: (**sarcastically**) I feel my heart pounding already. And Mary, what of you?

Mary: You put me on the spot, Lord Byron.

Claire: I should like to write something too.

Byron: Yes. I'm sure you would. Mary, what have you?

Mary: What would I write? Something more modern than vampires or ghosts. Perhaps a tale inspired by the science of physiology, the story of a natural philosopher who creates a living being.

Percy: Artificial procreation?

Byron: Perish the thought!

Mary: Do you not recall the account of Dr. Erasmus Darwin who coaxed a piece of vermicelli to move with voluntary motion?

Polidori: You wish to write about a living noodle?

Mary: Something bigger. I have in mind the story of a modern Prometheus, a man who shapes a creature out of clay, brings it to life with fire stolen from the heavens.

Claire: Lightning!

Mary: Electricity.

Percy: You must write it, Mary.

Byron: Indeed, and we will publish our stories together! But first, you will share it with us here. What say you all? Tomorrow night?

Polidori: Tomorrow!

Byron: Too soon?

Polidori: I must get started. **(Standing)** Good night, all—ladies, friends ... Lord Byron. My muse awaits. **(Exits)**

Byron: Well! I'd best get to work as well. I cannot let the good doctor best me at my own game. Percy and Mary, you are welcome to stay. The main guest room is yours.

Claire: And what of me?

Byron: Yes. A question I have been asking as well. **(To Percy and Mary)** Good night, dear friends ... and Claire. **(Exits)**

Mary: Your muse awaits, dear Percy. I shall join you presently. For now, I would like to sit and watch the storm.

Claire: And I shall sit with you since it seems Byron has tired of me.

Percy: He gets that way. It's the weather.

Claire: But he treats you and Mary with deference. It is only me and poor Polidori that he shuns.

Percy: The good doctor brings it on himself.

Mary: Good night, Percy. I will come to you if the storm breaks.

Percy: Please, Mary. Come to me either way. I will be waiting. Goodnight, Claire.

Claire: Goodnight, Percy *dear*.

(Percy exits)

Mary: Percy *dear*?

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Claire: Don't you be cross with me too. Why should I not call my sister's husband *dear*?

Mary: *Stepsister*. And Percy and I are not yet married.

Claire: In which case, it should not matter how I regard him as dear. But let us talk of other things. The story challenge!

(VFX. Lightning flashes. SFX. Thunder roars.)

Claire: I have heard of an Italian doctor who uses electricity to reanimate dead frogs, sets them twitching as if alive. What if that same science were used to reanimate a corpse?

Mary: I may have something more fantastic in mind—a creature fashioned wholly from man-made matter, brought to life through chemistry and galvanism.

Claire: You have such a story?

Mary: The bones of one.

Claire: You must tell me.

Mary: I would if I knew where to begin.

Claire: With a monster spawned from lightning!

Mary: Yes. That will be part of it, but first, we must have a proper setting.

(Servants enter, wheel away the dining table, replace it with one covered with lab equipment and another with a shroud-draped form. They also place four crates center stage. Two of the crates are open, lids resting beside them. In one of those open crates, a pile of human bones is visible.)

Mary: It will not be the medieval castle of a sorcerer or alchemist, but the workspace of a natural philosopher—a rented house fitted with all manner of instruments, beakers, tubes, batteries, coils, generators, switches, and heavy cables. And there will be an operating slab, its ends equipped with electric terminals, its surface covered with a shroud. And beneath the shroud, a gigantic figure—supine and motionless.

Claire: A corpse?

Mary: Perhaps not. A corpse is a dead human. This form is as yet neither living nor dead. And it is certainly not human. For now, its classification is known only to the natural philosopher who assembled it.

Claire: A mad genius?

Mary: Not so mad as driven. Nor shall he be a grizzled Faust or ancient Merlin, but a student— young, sensitive, small in stature—big in vision.

Claire: Like your Percy?

Mary: Yes. But not a poet. He does not create with words. His is a world of chemicals and compounds, terminals and wires. Yet, like a poet, he is sometimes haunted by ghosts from his past.

(Mary, Claire, and Servants exit)

Scene 2 - Victor's laboratory in Ingolstadt, Bavaria, 1796.

(Victor Frankenstein enters. He carries an open journal, writes in it as he crosses to the four crates in the room's center. He puts the journal in his lab coat pocket, lifts the lid on one of the closed crates, and takes out a jar of blood-red fluid. He pours the fluid into a beaker mounted on a table covered with an array of tubes and vials. The ghost of Caroline Frankenstein enters, watches Victor as he works.)

Victor: Mother? Is that you?

Caroline: A piece of me.

Victor: Am I dreaming?

Caroline: No. Merely working too hard. A tired mind can trick the eye.

Victor: Is that what you are? A trick of the mind?

Caroline: Perhaps a little more. So this is how you've spent your years at the university, conducting experiments, keeping a journal?

Victor: Recording my progress.

Caroline: Your family misses you, Victor.

Victor: And I them ... when I have time for such things.

Caroline: Is it so easy to forget them?

Victor: No. Not at all. It is not that I have pushed them from my thoughts. It is only that my work here has consumed me.

(Victor lifts three more jars of colored fluid from the crate.)

Caroline: Fluids and tubes? Engines and wires?

Victor: All to help realise the promise I made when you....When our family gathered at your.... Even now I cannot speak it.

Caroline: Perhaps that's the problem, Victor. You cannot face the reality of my death.

Victor: No. Quite the opposite. I have spent two years facing that reality—even visited graveyards, vaults, and charnel houses to better understand the process of death and decay.

Caroline: Generalities, Victor. You may have faced death in general, yet you have done everything to deny the reality of mine. How else can you account for me standing before you? Two years dead, Victor—yet you deny that death as readily as you have broken contact with the living who love you.

Victor: My work requires solitude.

Caroline: Yet if something were to happen to you—

Victor: I am safe here, Mother. This house is secure, and I still have the breechloader Father and I used for hunting.

Caroline: I am pleased you remember him.

Victor: Father? I do indeed—and Elizabeth, Ernest, and William as well. They are the reason I am here. All part of the promise I spoke of. I am doing this for them ... for you.

(Victor sets about filling the table's beakers with colored fluid, resulting in a line of vessels containing red, black, yellow, and green liquid.)

Victor: These fluids are the culmination of my quest to animate lifeless matter, to imbue it with the spark of life that might someday restore the dead.

(Caroline turns away.)

Victor: Mother! Do not leave. Let me show you. You will see!

(Victor connects IV lines to the shroud-covered figure.)

Victor: This figure is yet lifeless—inanimate clay stitched and molded into human form. These fluids are the chemical equivalents of the four humors of life—blood, yellow bile, black bile, phlegm—each more rarified than those found in the human body. But they alone do not hold the secret.

(Victor attaches two heavy cables to the terminals on the ends of the table.)

Victor: Electricity is the key! The spark of life. And now, Mother! For you and our family—and for all who live under the tyranny of death—I give you my promise ... now realised!

(Victor throws a switch. VFX. Sparks flash, play across the cloth-covered form. The form twitches as if coming alive. Victor cuts the power. The current stops. The room falls silent.)

Victor: Mother! Do you see!

Caroline: A form as lifeless as before?

Victor: But the process has begun. Even now organs are forming. Soon the heart will come alive, blood will flow, the brain awaken. And sometime after that—within the hour if my calculations are correct—the Creature will stir, open its eyes, and meet its creator.

Caroline: And what then, Victor?

Victor: What then? Why—I will have succeeded.

Caroline: And after that?

Victor: More experiments, bigger and grander. Once I have animated lifeless matter, what can stop me from doing the same with the dead? Think of it, Mother. A world where death no longer separates husbands from wives, mothers from --

Caroline: But what of *him*?

Victor: Who?

Caroline: The one who lies beneath this shroud. What duties will you have to the life you have created?

Victor: I'm not sure I understand.

Caroline: (Turns to leave) Think on it.

Victor: Mother?

(Caroline exits. SFX. Thunder rumbles, accompanied by a rhythmic beating, barely perceptible. Victor removes his lab coat, hangs it on a wall hook, then returns to the figure to place an ear to its chest. SFX. The heartbeat grows louder.)

Victor: It's alive. Mother? Do you hear? It's alive! It's --

(A hand rises from under the shroud, grabs Victor's wrist. VFX. Lightning flashes. SFX. Thunder roars. Victor panics, pulls free, stumbles back as the Creature sits up. The shroud falls away to reveal a mane of long, black hair, bare shoulders, bandaged torso. His skin is scorched from the electric current that gave him life. Yet he is not the stitched-together monstrosity of horror films; rather, he is the muscular, artificial man of Mary Shelley's novel. Victor stares in horror, momentarily frozen as the Creature bellows, then looks around—eyes wide with wonder. Victor crosses to the fireplace, takes a sword from the wall. The Creature turns, sees Victor, stumbles toward him, arms extended. It is the gesture of a child reaching for a parent, but in one so large it looks threatening.)

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Victor: Get back! Get away!

(Victor swings the sword. The Creature catches the blade in its hand, snaps it from the hilt. Victor flees, exits toward his bedchamber to get his breechloader. The Creature stumbles, catches himself on Victor's hanging lab coat, pulls it from its hook, then stumbles again to catch himself on the handle of an outside door. Wind blows the door inward. The creature, still gripping the lab coat, looks out at the storm. SFX. Thunder roars. Wind howls. The creature bellows as if answering the storm, then exits through the door.)

Caroline: (Offstage, softly) Victor. (Louder) Victor!

(Victor enters with his father's breechloader.)

Caroline: (Offstage) Victor. What have you done?

(Victor sees the open door, runs to it, looks out, closes it against the gale, bolts it tight.)

Victor: An experiment! A failed experiment. Science is a process of trial and error. I will learn from this failure.

Caroline: (Offstage) And where is that failure now, Victor?

Victor: The Creature? It will not survive the night. Not as it is, naked and hungry.

Caroline: (Offstage) And what if you are wrong? What if it returns?

Victor: (Still holding his father's breechloader) Then I will be ready. I will --

(A fist bangs hard against the door. Victor turns in terror as the pounding grows louder, more frantic.)

Henry: (Offstage) Victor! It's Henry. Are you there?

Victor: Henry? Henry Clerval?

Henry: (Offstage) Victor. Please open the door! It's raining terribly!

(Victor opens the door to see Henry standing in the storm.)

Victor: Henry? Is it you? In the flesh?

Henry: Do you think me a ghost?

Victor: It has been a strange night, stranger than you can imagine. Are you alone?

Henry: I am.

Victor: Not followed? Are you certain?

Henry: Victor?

Victor: Did you see anyone on your way?

Henry: No one! Please, Victor. It's dreadful out here. May I come inside?

Victor: Sorry. I forget myself. My dear friend! Come in! Your coat is soaked. I'll dry it by the fire.

Henry: The innkeeper advised me to wait out the storm before coming to see you, but I felt certain I could beat the rain.

Victor: One should always trust the advice of locals.

Henry: I was eager to come, though I did not anticipate an armed reception.

Victor: (Puts down the breechloader) Sorry. Your knocking startled me. I was working. Lost in my experiments.

Henry: Chemistry?

Victor: Yes. And natural philosophy. I fear it has consumed me. Sit. I'll make tea, and you can tell me what business brings you from Geneva. (Hangs Henry's coat by the hearth, sets a kettle on the fire) It's good of you to come. I have been a hermit here in Ingolstadt. When one is far from home, it is easy to lose touch, to get lost in one's work.

(They sit by the fire.)

Victor: You have no doubt been sent by my father. And Elizabeth. I have been away too long. My experiments are to blame.

Henry: You must tell me about them.

Victor: Something of them, at least. But first, what news from Geneva? How is my father?

Henry: Good as can be under the circumstances.

Victor: Still grieving?

Henry: In a way, though not so much for the death of your mother. The past two years have given him time to make peace with that. The grief he feels now is for the loss of his son.

Victor: Ernest!?

Henry: No. Ernest is well. He has entered the foreign service. Your father was reluctant to let him go, but Ernest writes often, and his letters quell your father's sense of loss. Rest assured; Ernest is fine.

Victor: William?

Henry: Fine as well. A nine-year-old whirlwind.

Victor: Nine!

Henry: Did you think he would stop growing in your absence?

Victor: He was barely seven when I left. Does he remember me?

Henry: Your dear Elizabeth has seen to that. She gave him your mother's locket, the gold one.

Victor: An expensive gift for a child.

Henry: She placed a miniature portrait of you inside, next to the likeness of your dear mother. He wears it constantly, will not take it off. So you could say, you remain close to his heart.

Victor: Thanks to Elizabeth.

Henry: Who misses you most of all. It was she who insisted I come.

Victor: Elizabeth! I sometimes think.... But returning to the point. You said my father grieves --

Henry: For you, Victor. Absent two years without a word. Imagine how that wears on a father.

Victor: Then you must tell him I am well, that my studies have progressed, and that my experiments --

(The kettle bubbles over.)

Victor: The tea! **(Takes the kettle from the fire)** You will excuse me, Henry. I've been lost in my work. But I promise to set things right with my family, to write them and pledge to return as soon as I can.

(Victor sets the kettle on the table, goes in search of cups, settles for a pair of beakers.)

Victor: **(Pours)** I fear I am out of cream and sugar.

Henry: Are you getting enough to eat?

Victor: Yes. Quite enough. When I remember to do so.

Henry: You're so thin.

Victor: From excitement. I tell you, I am on the verge of making good the promise that brought me here.

Henry: To banish disease from the human frame.

Victor: And render man invulnerable to any but violent death!

Henry: A noble quest.

Victor: And even more challenging than I imagined. Here. I will show you. I have it all documented in my journal. I dare not show you everything, just enough to— **(Reaches as if to take it from his pocket)** I had it with me. **(Remembers)** In my lab-coat pocket! **(Looks toward the empty wall hook)** Strange.

(Henry takes a jar from the open crate.)

Henry: Is this blood?

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Victor: Something similar. Richer. More refined.

(Victor takes the jar from Henry, puts it back in the crate.)

(Henry notes the contents of the other open crate)

Henry: Are these bones? Human bones?

Victor: Specimens. Borrowed from charnel houses, for study.

Henry: Charnel houses lend bones?

Victor: It is my policy, not theirs. Come. Let me show you what I have been doing.

(Victor carries the crate of bones to the operating slab, lays out a few of them to form the approximation of a human form, one that does not cover the length of the table.)

Victor: At first, I considered using dead matter, infusing life back into a reassembled frame, but as the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature. **(Rearranges the bones to suggest the larger size)** That is to say, a creature about eight feet in height.

Henry: Eight feet!

Victor: Approximately. And proportional, unlike this arrangement here.

Henry: But wherever would you find such parts?

Victor: I had to make them. Artificial life, Henry. Think of it. An artificial being fabricated entirely of incorruptible matter, components impervious to decay! And stronger, too!

Muscles, bones, heart—even brain—all greater and more powerful than anything bestowed by God.

Henry: Is that blasphemy, Victor?

Victor: No, my good friend. It is science!

Henry: And you propose to make such a man?

(Victor looks toward the door, momentarily lost in thought.)

Henry: Victor?

Victor: I ... I promised to tell you something of the work that has consumed me these two years. And so I have.

Henry: But do you truly think you can make such a creature?

Victor: In time, good friend, I will tell you more. For now, take word to my father and Elizabeth. Tell them I am well and that I promise to return home soon. **(Picks up his beaker of tea)** Until then, a toast to our friendship.

(Henry stares in surprise at Victor's raised hand.)

Henry: Victor! Your arm. It's bruised. What happened?

Victor: Nothing.

Henry: Let me see.

Victor: It is nothing. I—I must have bumped it.

Henry: It goes all the way around, as if someone grabbed you. **(Looks closer)** Good Lord, Victor!

Victor: **(Pulls away)** We were toasting. **(Raises his beaker)** To your speedy and safe return to Geneva.

Henry: You're sending me away?

Victor: The storm has passed. The inn will offer you better accommodation than I can offer.

Henry: What aren't you telling me?

Victor: You can leave from the inn, return to Elizabeth and my father, assure them that I am fine—

Henry: But are you?

Victor: Yes. You must trust me on that. Tell them I will return presently. A few weeks at most. Please. If our friendship means anything—

Henry: It means everything!

Victor: To friendship then. And trust. I shall see you in Geneva.

(Blackout. Victor and Henry exit.)

Scene 3: A hovel in the Bavarian forest.

(DeLacey, Felix, and Safie enter to sit on the center stage crates. Servants enter with a pair of windowed flats, which they angle behind the DeLaceys to suggest the hovel's walls. Lights up on the DeLacey family. Mary and Claire enter, consider the scene.)

Claire: So Henry leaves to deliver the message to Victor's family in Geneva. But surely, this is not the Frankenstein estate.

Mary: A crude shelter, erected in the Bavarian forest, outside Ingolstadt.

Claire: And these people?

Mary: Former aristocrats living in exile, rejected by their fatherlands, forced to fend for themselves in the wilderness.

Claire: And what do they have to do with Victor and his family?

Mary: Nothing yet. But I have an idea—a notion that may compound the horror that is to come.

(Mary and Claire exit. DeLacey plays the guitar. The music, slow and mournful. Felix and Safie sit across from him. Felix places a bundle on the crate between them, opens it to reveal a simple meal of bread and cheese. SFX. Lightning flashes. The Creature appears at a window. He listens to the music, moans at the sound. DeLacey stops playing. SFX. Thunder booms.)

DeLacey: **(Stops playing)** Is someone there?

(SFX. Wind and rain.)

Felix: It's only the wind.

DeLacey: No. Someone is at the window.

(The Creature exits.)

Felix: No one could be out on a night like this.

(Felix goes to the window, looks out.)

Felix: Only the wind. Play something less mournful, Father. A happy tune to celebrate Safie's escape from prison. Something from her homeland.

Safie: *Evet! Türk!*

Felix: Yes. A Turkish tune.

(DeLacey launches into an up-tempo tune. The music is infectious. Safie claps along, adding percussion. Felix joins in. The Creature enters, still in shadow, again watching and listening through the window. DeLacey finishes playing. Felix and Safie applaud.)

Safie: *Sağol!*

Felix: Yes. But how would we say it in *my* language?

Safie: **(Hesitating)** Thank ... thank you!

DeLacey: You are welcome, Safie.

Felix: Let's practice some more.

(Felix takes a piece of cheese from the table as DeLacey plays softly. The music continues through the lesson.)

Felix: What do I have here?

Safie: Bread.

Felix: No. **(Takes up a piece of bread)** *This* is bread. And this?

Safie: Cheese.

Felix: Very good. Would you like some cheese?

Safie: Yes.

Felix: **(Hands her the cheese)** And now you say?

Safie: Thank you.

Felix: You are welcome.

Safie: **(Takes a bite)** It is ... delicious.

DeLacey: **(Stops playing, smiles approvingly)** You are learning, Safie!

Safie: Thank you!

Felix: Now, suppose we have a visitor. How would you introduce me?

Safie: You?

Felix: Yes. Tell the stranger who I am. What would you say?

Safie: That is my name. But put it in a sentence.

Safie: His ... his name is Felix.

Felix: And how would you introduce yourself?

Safie: Me? My name is Safie. And he— **(Pointing to DeLacey)** *His* name is Father.

Felix: He is *my* father.

Safie: Yes, yes! He is Felix father.

Felix: Soon to be yours as well, now that we are to be married.

DeLacey: A family!

Felix: Yes. We are a family. Let me show you.

(Felix takes a slate and piece of chalk from a satchel in the floor beside him. The Creature moves to another window to better study the slate as Felix writes.)

Felix: Our alphabet is different from yours. This is your name. This is mine. And *this*. Look at *this*. The first letter is the same one that begins my name. Can you read it? Sound it out?

Safie: *Fffrr ... fffrr-ah ... Friends! Felix ... Safie ... Friends!*

Felix: **(Writes another word)** And *this*. Also starting with *F*.

Safie: Father!

Felix: **(Writing again.)** And *this*?

Safie: Fff-ahh—Family!

DeLacey: You'll be reading books in no time!

Felix: Yes. And to help with that— **(Reaches into the satchel, takes out a leather-bound volume, shows her the cover)** Volney's *Ruins of Empires*!

DeLacey: A fine book!

Felix: From it, you can learn our language, laws, and customs.

(Felix holds the book open between him and Safie while the Creature continues to watch and listen.)

Felix: **(Running his finger along the page as he reads)** Did the heavenly Father not make man after his own image? Did he not give mankind free will? Yet mankind lives in exile, abandoned to wander the wilderness. Is it any wonder that such an exile might rage against his creator, saying: "Behold, thou hast driven me out, made me a fugitive, and abandoned me to violence in unknown lands!"?

DeLacey: So it is with earthly rulers as well. Displease them, and they reject you. It is why we live in exile.

Safie: And me?

DeLacey: Yes. We are all exiles.

Felix: **(To Safie)** Yet you are farther from your homeland than we. Here. I'll show you. **(Takes a map from the satchel, opens it to show her)** Here is Bavaria, where we are now. And here is Geneva ... and France. Father and I had a fine estate there. And you are from beyond these lands, farther from home than either of us.

Safie: But you—you are my home now.

DeLacey: Yes. There are no borders here. No strangers. All are welcome in this home of exiles.

(Blackout. DeLacey's exit.)

Scene 4: The DeLacey's hovel, some time later.

(The DeLacey's are gone. The Creature sits alone on a crate inside the hovel. Bandages still wrap his legs and torso, though they are now frayed and dirty. The coat from Victor's lab stretches taut across his shoulders. He unwraps the bundle that rests on the crate before him, examines the bread and cheese inside.)

Creature: Bread! (Picks it up) Would you ... like bread?

(He pulls off a small piece. The action is hesitant, surprisingly delicate for one so large.)

Creature: (Turns to the empty space beside him.) Thank you! Thank you for ... for the bread.

(He takes a bite, puts down the bread, considers the cheese.)

Creature: Would you like.... (Concentrating, remembering) Cheese! Would you like cheese! (Picks it up) Thank you! (Takes a bite) Delicious!

(He puts the cheese down and again considers the empty space beside him.)

Creature: You ... your name is Felix. (Turns the other way) You ... you are Father. (Gestures to himself) Me. My name.... My name.... My name is—

(He picks up the open copy of *Ruins of Empires* lying face down on the crate across from him.)

Creature: (Reading slowly) Make man ... own image. (Considers) Make man?

(He pulls Victor's journal from the lab-coat pocket, pages through it, and sets it down next to the open edition of *Ruins*.)

Creature: (Reads from *Ruins*) Make man. (Reads from the journal) Make a man! (Softly, full of wonder) Make ... a man!

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(He closes the journal, runs a finger over the name and address written on the cover.)

Creature: *Fff ... rrr ... ahh ... Fraahh-kh... Fraahh-kh-stein.* Frankenstein!

(DeLacey enters, feeling his way with a cane, stopping at the sound of the Creature's voice.)

Creature: (Still reading, not seeing DeLacey) Frankenstein! (Runs a finger over the name, then on the word written below it.) *Jah ... Jah ... Geneva!*

DeLacey: Who is here?

(The Creature looks up, terrified at having been discovered.)

DeLacey: I cannot see you. (Steps closer) But I hear you.

(The Creature waves a hand before the DeLacey's eyes, realizes he is blind.)

DeLacey: Are you the man who has been watching us?

Creature: I... I am not.... I am not a—

DeLacey: But I have sensed your presence. Who are you?

Creature: Me?

DeLacey: You sound afraid. Please don't be. All are welcome here. Come. Sit with me. Tell me your name.

Creature: Me? My name ... I—I am ... exile.

DeLacey: From what country?

Creature: No. None.

DeLacey: But every man has a country.

Creature: But I am not a—

(The Creature bows his head, cannot continue.)

DeLacey: Your hesitance suggests you have not mastered the language of my homeland.

Creature: I—I am ... still learning.

DeLacey: Someone is teaching you?

Creature: Yes. He speaks. I listen. He reads. I watch.

DeLacey: He is a good teacher?

Creature: Yes. And you ... you are a good man!

DeLacey: I try, but I am nothing compared to my son. It was he who saved young Safie, a woman whose only crime was being a stranger in a cruel land. He freed her from prison, and now she is his fiancée. You will not find a more selfless man than Felix.

Creature: He is ... a good son?

DeLacey: And a hard worker! Even now, he and Safie are tending the field so we will have food this winter. But tell me—what can I do for you? I have little to offer but will gladly share what I have with one such as yourself.

(SFX. Thunder rumbles.)

DeLacey: Rain is returning. So much rain. Felix and Safie will be home soon.

Creature: Then I ... I must go.

DeLacey: No. Please. They will welcome you as I have. Now tell me, what can I do for you?

Creature: I ... I want only ... a father.

DeLacey: You have lost yours?

Creature: No. He has made me ... made me lost.

DeLacey: How do you mean *made you lost*? Has he turned you away? Rejected you?

Creature: Yes. That too.

DeLacey: But why?

Creature: I ... I do not know.

DeLacey: Kindred soul! I feel your pain. I too know what it is like to lose a father, lose a home.
(SFX. Thunder roars—louder, closer.)

DeLacey: This hut is small, but there is room enough for one more exile.

Creature: Me?

DeLacey: Yes. If that will help you.

Creature: **(Haltingly, choking with emotion)** A ... a family.

DeLacey: Yes. Like a family.

Creature: **(Sets a hand on DeLacey's shoulder) Father! (Embraces him.)**
(Felix and Safie enter, each with an armload of firewood. They see the Creature clutching DeLacey.)

Felix: Father!

DeLacey: Felix! We have company.
(The Creature lifts his head from DeLacey's shoulder, looks at Felix. Felix and Safie drop their firewood. Safie screams.)

Felix: Monster! **(Picks up a large stick)** Get away from my father!
(The Creature draws back as Felix swings.)

Creature: No! Friend!

DeLacey: Felix! What are you doing? This man is—

Felix: Not a man!

Creature: But I am a friend!

Felix: Devil! **(Felix swings again, strikes the Creature hard.)**

DeLacey: Felix! He is our guest!

Felix: A monster!
(Felix swings once more. The Creature grabs the stick, returns the blow. Felix falls to the floor, motionless.)

DeLacey: What is happening?

(Safie screams. The Creature turns toward her, prepares to strike her, then stops.)

DeLacey: *Safie! Felix! What is happening?*

(The Creature drops the stick, grabs the books and map, runs into the storm. VFX. Lightning. SFX. Thunder. Rain. DeLacey, Safie, and Felix in tableau as Mary and Claire enter the scene.)

Claire: Is Felix dead?

Mary: Perhaps not. But the family is terrified. They leave their hovel, flee deeper into the wilderness for fear the Creature will return.

(The DeLaceys break tableau, exit with the crates while servants remove the flats representing the hovel walls.)

Mary: And the Creature is also on the move, seeking the location identified on the cover of Victor's journal, guided by Felix's map.

Claire: Searching for Victor?

Mary: Yes. Southwest, across the frontier—toward the Frankenstein family home in Geneva.

Scene 5 – The parlor of the Frankenstein mansion.

(It is morning. Golden light streams through the windows, contrasting with the darkness and storms of the previous scenes. Anna enters.)

Claire: **(regarding Anna)** Is this the woman Henry spoke of, the one who sent him to visit Victor in Ingolstadt?

Mary: No. This is Anna. A servant, though she is regarded as a member of the family, as is everyone who works on the Frankenstein estate. It is a welcoming place, a loving home.

Claire: But what of Elizabeth? Is she Victor's sister?

Mary: No, though they were raised together. She is Elizabeth Lavenza, the fair-haired daughter of an Italian father and German mother—both deceased.

Claire: An orphan!

Mary: Taken in by the Frankensteins and raised as their own.

Claire: And what of Ernest and William?

Mary: Brothers by birth, but only William remains at home. But here. Let me tell it. It has been three weeks since Henry delivered Victor's promise. The family awaits his return.

(Polite knocking at the front door. Mary and Claire exit. Anna opens the door to find Henry standing in the morning sunlight.)

Anna: Mr. Clerval.

Henry: Good morning, Anna. **(Steps inside)** I've been out enjoying the sunshine. There was a chill earlier, but it's warming nicely. And no rain in sight!

Anna: We're all thankful for that, Mr. Clerval. Young William especially. Justine has taken him to the lake.

Henry: A good day for it. I was passing by and thought I'd stop to see if Victor has returned.

Anna: Not yet, Mr. Clerval.

Henry: Has there been any word?

Anna: Yes. It came two days ago from Hotel d'Angleterre in Secheron. He said he expected to arrive soon. Indeed, we hoped to see him yesterday.

Henry: Surely today then.

Anna: We all hope so. Shall I get Elizabeth?

Henry: If she's not busy.

Anna: She's upstairs with Papa Frankenstein. He had a difficult night, insisted on waiting up should Victor arrive, and now he's fallen ill again. Victor's long delay has dimmed his spirits.

Henry: Then let us hope he arrives today. I'm sure—

(Justine enters in a panic from outside.)

Justine: Anna! Where is Elizabeth?

Anna: With Papa Frankenstein.

Henry: Justine! What's wrong?

Anna: Where is William?

Justine: Mr. Clerval, will you help me? **(Pulls him toward the door)** To the lake. We must find him!

Henry: William?

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Justine: I looked away for ... a moment. Only a moment, I swear! When I looked again, he was—

(Elizabeth enters.)

Elizabeth: Justine?

Justine: Elizabeth! William is missing!

Elizabeth: You took him to the lake?

Justine: Yes. The usual spot.

Elizabeth: Then I am sure he is only hiding. You know how he plays.

Justine: But I searched!

Henry: I will find him. He cannot be far.

Elizabeth: Thank you, Henry.

(Henry exits.)

Elizabeth: Anna, go attend to Papa Frankenstein. He must wonder at this commotion. Tell him it is nothing. See that he stays in bed.

Anna: Yes, ma'am. **(Exits.)**

Elizabeth: Justine, you're panicked over nothing. Sit down. Calm yourself. The boy has hidden from you before.

Justine: Never like this.

Elizabeth: Panic always makes things worse than they are.

Justine: I swear, I only looked away for a moment.

Elizabeth: Then he is close.

Justine: But ... there is something else. God help me, I am frightened to say it, but I think there was something in the woods. I didn't see it. It kept to the shadows. But I felt it watching as I searched.

Elizabeth: I am sure it was none other than William himself.

Justine: But I sensed evil in it. A dark and terrible evil.

Elizabeth: Your imagination.

Justine: I would never imagine such a thing. I would sooner—**(glances through a window)** Is that Mr. Clerval? Returning so soon!

Elizabeth: So he has found William! I told you there was nothing to—

Justine: Who is that with him?

Elizabeth: A constable?

Justine: He is carrying something. Elizabeth, I fear something dreadful—

(Henry and the Constable enter. The Constable carries a woman's coat folded in his arms.)

Elizabeth: Such grave expressions! Henry, what's wrong?

Henry: Elizabeth, I—I cannot say it.

Elizabeth: Did you find William?

Henry: That much I can tell you. He's been found.

Constable: Justine Moritz, is this your coat?

Justine: Yes. It is. I left it on the ground by the lake. I ... I must have forgotten it. The day grew warm. William was playing. I thought I ... I thought I might lie down. It was only a moment. Elizabeth, I swear! It was but a moment!

(Victor enters, watches unnoticed from the doorway.)

Constable: The coat was not found by the lake.

Justine: But that is where I left it. I am sure of it.

Constable: It was in the forest, hidden in the hollow of a tree not far from the child.

Elizabeth: I cannot listen!

Henry: **(glances toward the door)** Victor!

Elizabeth: Victor! Something terrible—

Victor: I have heard. Word has already spread through town. **(To the constable)** I understand the magistrate wishes to question Justine. Will you give us an hour. Take my pledge that I will escort her myself before noon.

Constable: On your honor, sir?

Victor: As the son of a syndic, you have that oath. Within the hour. Please.

Constable: I will tell the magistrate.

(Constable exits.)

Victor: Elizabeth, I had hoped my homecoming would mark a happier occasion.

Elizabeth: I have looked forward to this day. But now, glad as I am to see you, I tremble at what I have heard. Tell me plainly. I need to know. Is—

Victor: William is dead.

Justine: God save us!

Victor: They say he was strangled.

Justine: I cannot listen.

Elizabeth: Who would do such a thing?

Victor: Suspicion is on Justine.

Justine: Me? How could I? I was sleeping when—

Henry: Sleeping?

Elizabeth: You said you looked away but a moment.

Justine: Barely a moment.

Elizabeth: So you were not sleeping?

Justine: The day grew warm, and I was up so late last night with Papa Frankenstein. I spread my coat on the ground. William played close by. Such a beautiful day. I lay back, closed my eyes. I did not mean to sleep.

Victor: You will explain it to the magistrate. And we will go with you. We know your heart, know you could not harm the child. Be assured, we will attest to your innocence. Elizabeth, where is my father?

Elizabeth: In bed. Unwell. I had hoped your return would be his remedy. But I fear this news will—

Victor: I will tell him myself. But first, I need a word with Henry. Go. Take Justine to your room. Make ready.

(Elizabeth and Justine exit.)

Victor: It seems the dark fruit of my studies has followed me home.

Henry: How do you mean?

Victor: I cannot explain more, only to say I sensed something terrible tracking me from Ingolstadt. And now it seems to have arrived ahead of me. They say William was strangled. Some in the village have already decided Justine is guilty.

Henry: What motive?

Victor: His gold locket was taken from his neck. The chain alone is worth many times an au pair's wage.

Henry: But Justine was more than the child's caretaker. Your father regarded her as his own daughter. William was like a brother to her.

Victor: True. But rumors in the town speak of a piece of irrefutable evidence—a detail that, if true, will surely be revealed when Justine stands before the magistrate. Namely, the missing locket was found within the folds of her coat.

Henry: But surely you do not believe—

Victor: The presumptions of guilt are not mine. I only repeat what I have heard.

Henry: And what do you believe?

Victor: Only that my desire to do good has brought a terrible evil into the world. Now I must bury my brother, comfort my father and Elizabeth, stand by Justine ... and return to Ingolstadt.

Henry: Leave again?

Victor: I brought the darkness with me. I must lead it away, destroy it if possible.

Henry: You speak in metaphors.

Victor: Only because the reality is unspeakable. Indeed, I fear I cannot reveal it to the magistrate. But this I know: if any person is to blame, it is I. I have set the horror in motion. I alone can stop it.

(Blackout.)

Scene 6 - A prison cell.

(Lights up on Justine. She kneels upstage, center. Behind her, two flats with barred windows suggest the walls of a prison cell.)

Justine: **(praying)** Lord, you know I am innocent of the charges levied against me. I cannot pretend to understand why this is happening ... or why the testimonies of my adoptive brother and cousin have been so thoroughly ignored.

(The Creature enters, peers through a barred window.)

Justine: The gallows are ready. Dawn is coming, and soon the guards will lead me to my death. I only pray that I might understand what kind of fiend would kill a child and leave me to face the consequences. What kind of man could be so heartless as to—

Creature: No man.

Justine: Who's there? **(Turns toward the window)** Who is out there?

Creature: An exile.

Justine: Do I know you?

Creature: You know my work.

Justine: You speak in riddles.

Creature: No. No riddles. I am the fiend who took the locket, stole your coat, hid them with the body of the child.

Justine: Dear Lord!

Creature: Why do you do that?

Justine: Do what?

Creature: Call out to one who is not here.

Justine: You mean ... to God?

Creature: Does he hear?

Justine: Yes. Of course!

Creature: Does he answer?

Justine: Sometimes.

Creature: What can he give you?

Justine: Strength.

Creature: To bend these bars, break free?

Justine: Not that kind.

Creature: What kind?

Justine: Strength of the soul. Understanding.

Creature: You wish to know why the child was killed. Why you must die.

Justine: Yes. Those things. And more.

Creature: Why not ask me?

Justine: You are the murderer!

Creature: No.

Justine: But I feel it. Your presence! The same dread I sensed hovering close as I searched for William. It is you. The murderer!

Creature: Humans murder. I am but a device, man-made—no more capable of crime than a noose. Yet it was I who wrung his neck, took the locket, stole your coat so you would hang.

Justine: Dear God!

Creature: Still praying?

Justine: God will answer.

Creature: And what of the priest? The man of God I saw come to you last night. Did he bring answers?

Justine: **(Softly)** No.

Creature: What then?

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Justine: He came to hear my confession.

Creature: What did you tell him?

(Justine hesitates.)

Creature: That you killed the child?

Justine: The priest threatened me with excommunication.

Creature: I do not know that word.

Justine: He told me there would be no chance for me to enter heaven if I did not confess.

Creature: So you lied?

Justine: To save my soul!

(SFX. Rooster crows. The light silhouetting the bars turns blood red with the dawn. SFX. Footsteps approach. Keys rattle.)

Justine: They are coming for me.

(SFX. Distant voices murmur, growing louder.)

Creature: A crowd gathers in the square. I must go.

Justine: But you haven't answered me. Why did you do it? Why kill William? And why implicate me? What does it gain you? **(Shouting)** What kind of monster are you?

(Fade to black. SFX. Voices grow louder.)

Constable: **(Offstage)** Justine Moritz, you have been sentenced to death for the murder of young William Frankenstein. May God have mercy on your soul!

(SFX. The snap of a trapdoor flying open.)

Scene 7 - The parlor of the Frankenstein family home, night.

(Lights up on Victor standing by French doors, looking out at the darkness. Elizabeth enters from another room.)

Elizabeth: Victor? Please! Your father is asking for you. Victor? Do you hear me?

Victor: Elizabeth? Sorry. I was lost in thought.

Elizabeth: He is fading, Victor. This latest tragedy has taken its toll. I doubt he will survive the hour.

Victor: I will come presently. I need a few more minutes to collect my thoughts.

Elizabeth: He may not have a few more minutes. I know the signs. I saw them in your mother the night she passed ... and in my own father before he was taken away. Your father is dying, Victor.

(Victor turns away, studies the night.)

Elizabeth: Victor? Do you hear what I'm saying?

Victor: Another minute is all I need. I will come once I have steadied myself for what I must do.

Elizabeth: I don't understand.

Victor: I must to Ingolstadt.

Elizabeth: Go back?

Victor: I have unfinished business there.

Elizabeth: Some other attachment?

Victor: No. Believe me. My only attachment is to this family and to you.

Elizabeth: What is it then?

Victor: I cannot tell you. I can only say it is something that I alone can remedy, a dreadful error that when revealed will make you wonder how I ever harbored such a secret. It is why I cannot face my father until I have steadied my nerves. If I go to him now, he will see the dread in me, know something is amiss.

Elizabeth: Surely you can tell me what it is.

Victor: Not until it is behind us.

Elizabeth: And your father. What would you have me tell him?

Victor: Something hopeful.

Elizabeth: Alas, Victor. You offer precious little of that. What can I possibly—

Victor: There is one thing. It is something I had intended to discuss with you when I first returned. You will recall my mother's plan for us, a desire that she and my father first spoke of when they lifted you from poverty, saved you from a life on the streets, brought you here to live as my adopted cousin. You were barely five. I was seven. She told us we

were bound by charity but not by blood, but it was her wish even then that we might one day be joined by something more.

Elizabeth: I remember.

Victor: We need each other, Elizabeth. Now more than ever. Together we may yet guide this family out of its darkest days and into the light of a new tomorrow.

Elizabeth: If you are saying what I think you are—

Victor: I am. Let the date be set a month from now. You can make the arrangements in my absence. I will return within a fortnight to help finish the plans.

Elizabeth: We must tell your father at once.

Victor: You tell him.

Elizabeth: But it will mean so much more if he hears it from you.

(Anna enters.)

Anna: Excuse me, Elizabeth. Victor, it is your father. He is calling for you both.

Elizabeth: Thank you, Anna. Tell him we are coming.

(Anna exits.)

Victor: Go. Lift his spirits.

Elizabeth: We will tell him together.

Victor: As you wish. But first... **(glancing warily toward the French doors)** I need one minute alone. Trust me. I will join you in a moment.

(Elizabeth exits. Victor opens the French doors, calls into the night.)

Victor: Are you there? I feel the weight of your gaze, the malice in your eyes. There! In the shadows by the wall.

(We see nothing. Victor seems to be talking to a phantom of his imagination.)

Victor: My intentions were to make a creature more than human, a being of superior strength and intellect. You have demonstrated the former by killing my brother, the latter by implicating Justine. But what of language? Do you comprehend my words? Take one step toward me if you understand.

(The Creature enters, one step into the light. He stands erect, lab coat buttoned across his chest while the bandages on his legs have been reworked into a pair of makeshift trousers. His feet are shod in animal hides fashioned into a pair of large, thick-soled boots. He looks taller. Perhaps he has grown, or maybe it is confidence. He takes another step through the French doors, into the parlor.)

Victor: Far enough! Come no closer!

(The creature stops.)

Victor: You understand me!

Creature: Yes.

Victor: And you speak!

Creature: That ... and more!

Victor: Yes. I have seen what more you can do. Your senseless cruelty.

Creature: Men have taught me. And you.

Victor: I have taught you nothing.

Creature: And yet I learn. Learn fast. I watch. See how you live ... how you love. I can take that from you. All of it! Or ... you can help me.

Victor: Is that a threat?

Creature: I need ... a friend.

Victor: I would sooner befriend the devil.

Creature: Not you. You will not be that friend. I know that. But ... you could make a friend. One like—

Elizabeth: **(Offstage)** Victor!

Creature: Like her.

Victor: **(To Elizabeth)** Stay! I am coming! **(To the Creature)** What are you asking?

Creature: For you ... to make a friend. A mate. One like her ... but for me.

Victor: You're mad!

Creature: Give me a friend, and she and I will go, leave you in peace.

Victor: And go where?

Creature: North. Far from the world of man.

Victor: Never to return?

Creature: You have my word.

Victor: Your word? The word of a.... **(Considers)** But even if I were to agree, all of my equipment... **(Thinking)** My materials ... chemicals—everything I would need is in Ingolstadt.

Creature: Our home?

Victor: My laboratory. **(Scheming)** Yes. Go! Return there. I will ride ahead and meet you.

Creature: To make a friend!

Elizabeth: **(Offstage, approaching)** Victor!

Victor: (To the Creature) She is coming. Go! To Ingolstadt. I will meet you.

(The Creature exits. Victor shuts the French doors. Elizabeth enters, shaken.)

Elizabeth: Victor.

Victor: Yes. I know. I will go to him now.

Elizabeth: Alas, Victor. It is too late. Grief has run its course. He has passed.

Victor: Another blow! But mark me. (To the night outside) It will be the last.

(Blackout. End Act 1. INTERMISSION)

Act 2

Scene 1 - Victor's Ingolstadt laboratory.

(Lights up dim on a cloth-covered form lying on the operating slab. Lab equipment stands on an adjacent table. The four crates lie as before. Two opened. Two Closed. A lighted lamp lies on the floor beside them, apparently the only source of light in the dim room. Mary and Claire enter.)

Claire: So we return to Victor's laboratory? With another creature on the slab? It seems Victor is delivering on his promise.

Mary: We shall see.

Claire: **(Notes the crates)** More chemicals?

Mary: Yes. And other things, to be revealed anon.

Claire: But where is Victor? And the Creature?

Mary: One of them has arrived and is even now attempting to rest in a bedchamber beyond that archway. The other is still approaching.

Claire: Is it the Creature? The Creature is approaching?

Mary: We shall see.

(Mary and Claire cross to the edge of the scene. Victor enters from outside.)

Claire: It is Victor! That means the Creature is in the bedchamber!

Mary: Softly, sister. That is the least of the surprises I have in mind.

(Victor notices the lighted lamp, crosses to it warily, senses all is not as he left it. Mary and Claire exit. Victor peers inside the open crates. Then, looking troubled, he turns to see the shroud-draped form. Taking the lamp with him, he crosses to the form and lifts the cloth. We do not see what he finds beneath, but the lamp projects the grotesque silhouette of a misshapen head onto the fabric. Frightened now, Victor drops the cloth.)

Victor: Who has done this? Is someone here?

Creature: **(Offstage)** Father!

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(The Creature appears, silhouetted just beyond the lamp's glow.)

Victor: You! Here already! But how? I left by coach after my father's funeral. And you—

Creature: Left before you. Walked. Day and night. No sleep.

Victor: Four hundred miles?

Creature: I am strong. Strong body. Strong mind. More than man!

Victor: And this ... this monstrosity— **(gestures to the shrouded figure)** You assembled it?

Creature: Yes.

Victor: But how could you?

Creature: I learn. **(Holds up Victor's journal)** From your book.

Victor: So you've learned to read as well as speak?

Creature: Learn from people. Watch and learn.

Victor: And these people? They taught you to kill children?

Creature: I had no choice. The boy saw me. Would have called for help. I had to stop him.

Victor: By wringing his neck?

Creature: It is what people do.

Victor: We call such people criminals. Murderers. There are laws for punishing such evil. Just and moral laws.

Creature: Man's justice! I know man's justice. Men shun me ... try to kill me.

Victor: And what of Justine? What did she ever do?

Creature: Not what she did. What she would do if she had the chance. All people hate me. You most of all.

Victor: I never should have made you.

(Victor tries leaving the room. The Creature blocks his path.)

Victor: Let me pass.

Creature: To get your gun?

Victor: And do what I should have done the night I gave you life.

Creature: **(Like thunder.)** No! **(Softer)** There is another way. No more killing. No more hate. I will leave. Vanish forever. If you help me.

Victor: You're asking me to give life to that ... that horror?

Creature: A friend.

Victor: It is ... an abomination!

Creature: Like me.

Victor: No. I saw its face. It is worse. A hundred times worse. You had my journal to guide you but not my skill.

Creature: That is why you must help.

Victor: It is a female?

Creature: Yes.

Victor: That compounds the problem.

Creature: Only if we stay. But we will leave. As I told you. You have my word.

Victor: The word of a monster?

Creature: Of a son.

Victor: **(Looks toward the crates)** I had packed those materials before leaving for Geneva, vowed to have them carted off and destroyed when I returned.

Creature: My way is better.

Victor: All right. Agreed. But first.... **(Scheming)** I must rest. I'm exhausted. What about you? Do you sleep?

Creature: Yes. Like a man. And dream.

Victor: Then we should both rest. There is a spare room.

Creature: We do this first.

Victor: **(Still scheming)** Perhaps. Yes. All right. We can start the process, administer the chemicals and spark of life. After that, it will be another ... another twelve hours before the thing is conscious.

Creature: So we will work first, then rest.

Victor: Yes. Very well. Agreed. **(Crosses to the crates)** I nailed these crates shut before leaving for Geneva. You unsealed two. I will need a bar to pry open the others.

(The Creature crouches beside Victor, pries off the lids with his bare hands.)

Victor: Careful. This material is more fragile than the others.

Creature: Brain?

Victor: It will be. As yet, it remains like the components you have assembled on that slab—lifeless, awaiting transformation.

(Victor removes some packing, then lifts out a large jar containing a gelatinous mass suspended in fluid.)

Victor: Bring the lamp.

(The Creature follows with the lamp as Victor carries the jar to the shroud-draped figure.)

Victor: Lift the shroud.

(The Creature lifts the shroud. Again, we do not see what lies beneath, only the lamp's projection of a misshapen silhouette on the fabric. Victor opens the jar, lifts out the gelatinous mass.)

Victor: Placement need not be precise. The materials will fuse and align after the current flows.
(We watch him work, his hands silhouetted on the fabric as he kneads the brain and head together like malleable clay. When Victor finishes, the creature lowers the shroud, tucks it gently into place.)

Victor: Now the chemicals. Bring them to the table.
(The Creature leaves the lamp on the lab table and retrieves the crate of chemicals from the floor.)

Victor: **(Ponders the equipment)** Everything is as I left it, clean and ready.
(The creature sets the crate of chemicals on the lab table. Victor takes out four large jars of red, yellow, black, and green fluid. He arranges the jars on the table while the creature takes out a fifth container filled with a milky substance.)

Victor: Not that one. It is a powerful acid for cleaning the equipment.

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(The creature returns the container to the crate. Victor pours the other fluids into the beakers on the table, then inserts the feed tubes into the lifeless form.)

Victor: Attach the cables, one pair at either end of the slab.
(The Creature attaches the cables.)

Victor: Now I start the fluids.
(Victor opens the valves. The colored fluids flow.)

Victor: Finally ... the current.
(Victor cranks the generator. VFX. Sparks flash. Victor throws the switch. VFX. Sparks ignite on either end of the slab. SFX. Electricity crackles. The form twitches as if coming alive. Victor cuts the current. The writhing form lies still as fluids continue to flow.)

Victor: **(Still scheming)** That ... that *begins* the process. Germination will continue on its own, internal organs reaching full function within the hour, pre-consciousness following sometime after midnight, animation by mid-morning. Not before. You should rest now, be ready when it awakens. You may use the guestroom.

Creature: I do not care for beds. I tried the one in your room. It did not suit me. I sleep best on the earth, among rocks and trees. They are my home.

Victor: You will leave then?

Creature: For a while. A few hours, then return

Victor: I will remain close until then. Monitor the fluids. Honor my part of the bargain as I trust you will honor yours.

(The Creature exits. Victor crosses to the table of instruments, ponders the fluids flowing through the tubes as the beating of a giant heart becomes audible—soft at first, getting louder.)

Caroline: **(Enters)** You lied to the Creature.

Victor: It was the only way to salvage my plan. I had intended to have my breechloader charged and loaded when it arrived. Now, I will be ready for its return.

Caroline: But why not honor the agreement. Give him the companion he seeks, let them vanish together into the wilderness?

Victor: No. The Creature may keep its word and remain in exile, but it will spawn. What then? Will its children honor the promise? Will its children's children? I cannot risk subjecting mankind to an infestation of giants.

Caroline: So you will destroy the Creature?

Victor: And its mate. For the sake of mankind.

Caroline: But why create life only to kill it?

Victor: Because it did not turn out as intended. I had envisioned a Creature of great strength, superior intellect—but my attention to the process blinded me to the outcome until it stood before me.

Caroline: But why should your responsibility have ended with the animating spark? Think of it. What if I had recoiled from the sight of your newborn form—shriveled and toothless. What if I had ignored your cries, pushed you away when you reached out, abandoned you to an indifferent world?

Victor: Hardly the same thing.

Caroline: Are you sure? Other than its size—which you yourself deemed necessary—the Creature was but an infant when you gave it life.

(The shroud-draped form stirs with a feral moan.)

Caroline: And now a new creation calls to you. Will you make the same mistake?

Victor: No! Indeed. No more mistakes.

(He crosses to the instrument table, takes a pair of insulated gloves from a drawer.)

Victor: I know what I must do.

(He takes the container of acid from the crate.)

Caroline: It pains me to think that it was my own death that put all this in motion. Victor? Do you not find it strange that your quest to create life has led to so much death?

Victor: That was the monster's doing.

Caroline: But who is the monster, Victor?

Victor: It is no use arguing, Mother! My mind is set. It ends tonight!

(He pours acid into each beaker. The fluids bubble, change colors. SFX. The shrouded form screams. Victor covers his ears. The form falls silent, lies still. VFX. Black stains appear on the shroud, oozing from the ruptured form.)

Victor: It is done.

Caroline: But those screams surely carried into the night. The Creature must have heard them.

Victor: I will be ready.

(Caroline exits. Victor starts toward his bedchamber. The front door flies open. The Creature enters, stands in the doorway, sees the lifeless form, the black stains, the open jar of acid, the changed colors of the fluids bubbling through the tubes. He roars, wordless rage. Victor runs to get his gun. The Creature grabs Victor, throws him across the slab.)

Victor: Kill me! It changes nothing!

Creature: Not here. For now, I stay my hand. But hear me. Fear me, live in dread, and know this! I shall be with you on your wedding-night!

(The Creature exits. Lights dim as Victor exits and servants enter to replace the crates, table, and slab with streamers, flowers, and gifts.)

Scene 2 – The parlor of the Frankenstein mansion.

(Lights up as servants continue arranging the remains of a wedding celebration. Elizabeth enters in a wedding dress.)

Elizabeth: **(To the servants)** You may leave clearing until tomorrow. Let me savor the remains of this perfect day.

(Servants exit.)

Elizabeth: Victor enters from outside, calls to Henry who remains offstage.

Victor: Good night, Henry. Dear friend and best man! I will call on you in the morning.

(Victor closes the door, turns to Elizabeth.)

Elizabeth: Henry seemed to enjoy the wedding more than you.

Victor: He is happy for us.

Elizabeth: But you, my husband, you seem to be living under a cloud.

Victor: Yet I am happy beyond measure.

Elizabeth: Truly?

Victor: I am. It is only that I wish Father could have joined us. And William. And Justine.

Elizabeth: And your saintly mother.

Victor: Indeed. If only she could have lived to see her greatest wish fulfilled.

Elizabeth: And yet today, as we spoke our vows, I felt her smiling down on us. And the others as well. Did you not feel it? That glow of love that never dies.

Victor: Yes. My mother most of all. I must confess, there were nights in Ingolstadt when ... when I almost believed she was still—

(Victor looks toward the open French doors as if expecting someone to enter.)

Elizabeth: Victor?

Victor: Sorry, I—

Elizabeth: There it is again. That clouded expression, uneasy look.

Victor: It is nothing. Believe me, Elizabeth. It is as I said, merely a longing for those who can be with us only in spirit.

Elizabeth: It is good to remember them. But let us put all melancholy behind us and welcome a new beginning. A life with children, a son to call you father, a family rekindled through love. And know this, dear Victor. I love you more than life itself.

Victor: And I you.

(Elizabeth tries leading him toward the stage-right arch.)

Elizabeth: Come with me then.

(Victor holds back, still looking toward the French doors.)

Victor: Go make ready. I will join you in a moment.

Elizabeth: I recall the last time you said that.

Victor: This time I promise. Only a moment.

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(Elizabeth exits. Victor crosses to the French doors, stares into the night.)

Victor: Are you here? Have you come for me? There! By the wall! Show yourself!

(Liam the groundskeeper enters, steps into the light.)

Liam: Sorry to startle you, sir. I was just returning from checking the stables. The horses were stirring.

Victor: Liam! Of course. I should have recognised you.

Liam: It is dark, sir.

Victor: But you have been with the family all my life.

Liam: Longer, sir. Your father took me in when I was a child, found me orphaned, brought me here to work the stables. He was a great man, generous to a fault.

Victor: Indeed he was.

Liam: It was the same with your mother, was it not?

Victor: Even more so.

Liam: It was she who insisted on adopting your dear Elizabeth. And now, with the estate passing to both of you, I have no doubt the Frankenstein mansion will continue to be a haven for the unwanted.

Victor: Thank you, Liam. But I fear I am an unworthy heir.

Liam: You are humble, sir.

Victor: If only it were so. But it is late, and I detain you. Good night, Liam.

Liam: To you as well, sir.

Victor: And, Liam! One more thing. You said the horses were stirring. Did you determine the cause?

Liam: Nothing I could see. In any event, they are quiet now.

Victor: And the rest of the estate. Is all in order?

Liam: Rest assured, sir. All as it should be. Are you troubled, sir?

Victor: No. Merely tired. It has been an eventful day.

Liam: Yes. For all of us. Till tomorrow, sir.

(Liam exits. Victor closes and locks the French doors, proceeds to check the windows, pauses at one to study the night.)

Victor: You are close. I feel you watching. But from where?

Creature: **(Offstage)** Father!

Victor: **(Looks around)** Here? Inside? So be it. Come for me. I will not resist. Come and put an end to this torment once and for all!

Creature: No. I do not come for you.

(The Creature enters carrying Elizabeth's body wrapped in a sheet. He places her on the sofa, backs away. She lies still, shrouded like the inanimate form in Victor's lab.)

Victor: What horror is this? **(Lifts the shroud from Elizabeth's face)** Horrid fiend! This is beyond cruel.

Creature: When you are done there, you might take a walk along the road to town. You will find more of my work there.

Victor: What new threat is this?

Creature: I met your friend on the way.

Victor: Henry?

Creature: So he was called. In life.

Victor: God save me.

Creature: He did not save Henry.

Victor: Fiend!

Creature: So you have made me.

Victor: Heartless demon!

Creature: Yet I have a heart. Made by you.

(The Creature crosses to the French doors.)

Victor: I will destroy you!

Creature: Why? To what end. Why destroy what you have made?

Victor: Not what I have made. What you have!

Creature: **(Regards the shroud-wrapped body)** Then why not unmake what I have done. Do you lack the skill? The will?

Victor: Do not question my will, Demon. Do not doubt what I can do!

Creature: **(Opens the doors, steps out)** Good night, Father. My revenge is done.

Victor: But not mine.

Creature: As you wish. The choice is yours. For my part, I will go north to live among the rocks and ice. If you seek me ... seek me there.

(The Creature exits.)

Victor: Fiend! I will find you! I will pursue you to the ends of the earth if need be, but I will destroy you! **(Raving)** Do you hear me? On the souls of my family, my friend, my dearest wife—I vow not to rest until I have unmade the horror I created!

(Lights dim. Victor Exits. Claire enters.)

Claire: **(As if to dead Elizabeth)** I did not expect the tale to become so bleak.

(The body comes alive, opens its eyes, unwraps the sheet to reveal the plain costume that we associate with Mary's character, elegant but simple attire to contrast with the elegant ones worn by the aristocratic Elizabeth).

Mary: Nor did I. And yet, Byron's challenge did call for a tale of horror. But perhaps Victor's search for the Creature will lead to a note of hope ... or at least a glimmer of redemption.

Claire: So Victor follows the Creature?

Mary: To the ends of the earth, he said. And we have seen how determined he can be.

(Mary and Claire step aside as servants enter to transform the Frankenstein home into the captain's quarters of Robert Walton's ship. A captain's table and bed, along with a few other bits of set dressing: maps, ship's log, writing utensils, hourglass, sextant, etc. fill out the scene. More importantly, a barometer, microscope, and specimens show that Walton is a scientist as well as a captain. The set takes shape as Mary speaks.)

Mary: With the single-mindedness that sent him to Ingolstadt after his mother's death, Victor is now spurred on by Elizabeth's murder to track the Creature through Germany, Poland, and Russia—then on to the Barents Sea where he procures a sledge to continue the chase through the frozen north. Sometime after that, starving and dying from exposure, he finds himself adrift on a massive ice floe. And it is there that he is rescued by Arctic explorer Robert Walton.

(Servants, Mary, and Claire exit.)

Scene 3 – The captain's quarters of the sailing ship Prometheus.

(SFX. Wind and creaking timbers. Lights up on the captain's quarters. Robert Walton enters, followed by Sailors carrying Victor's unconscious body. Walton clears the top of the captain's table, making room.)

Walton: This way, men. Place him here. Gently.

Old Sailor: He's dead, Captain.

Walton: No. Not dead. Note the color of the skin, the purple hue of lips and lids. His blood is damaged by the cold, aggravated by asphyxia. We might try extraglottic ventilation. But first this.

(Walton takes a bottle of smelling salts from his desk, holds it to Victor's nose.)

Victor: (Gasps, coughs) The fiend!

Young Sailor: He's alive!

Victor: (Louder, hysterical) The demon! (Grabs Walton's wrist) Must stop him!

Old Sailor: He is mad!

Walton: As any man would be in his condition.

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Victor: (Raving) I must find him!

Walton: (To the sailors) Go have the cook make this man some food. No hardtack and gruel. See that it is wholesome, from my private stores.

Old Sailor: Aye, aye, sir.

Walton: And fresh clothes. His coat is riddled with ice.

(Sailors exit.)

Victor: The fiend!

Walton: Easy now. You'll find no fiends here.

Victor: (Rising, looking around) Where is here?

Walton: The ship Prometheus, out of Archangel.

Victor: Whither bound?

Walton: We seek the pole.

Victor: Northward! The frozen wastes?

Walton: And beyond if possible. I'm afraid it will be some time before we reach a known port.

Victor: Yes. North. He was riding north.

Walton: The fiend you spoke of?

Victor: Traveling by sledge. Have you seen him?

Walton: We did see someone yesternight.

Victor: Gigantic?

Walton: Too far off to determine size. We spied him through the glass.

Victor: A hideous demon?

Walton: He rode with his back to us, wrapped in furs.

Victor: It must be him.

Walton: He was traveling at prodigious speed, is surely many leagues away by now.

Victor: I must catch him!

Walton: You must rest.

Victor: No. No time. I have tracked him for months. I cannot lose him now!

(Victor stands, stumbles. Walton catches him, helps him into a chair by the table.)

Walton: You are in no condition to go anywhere.

Victor: But the fiend is getting away.

Walton: And you are frozen half to death. If you leave this ship now—

Victor: I must stop him!

Walton: The man you speak of?

Victor: Not a man! A creature of my own making!

Walton: In what way?

Victor: The most literal sense. Made! Through chemistry and galvanism.

Walton: A startling claim.

Victor: Yet true.

(Walton crosses to his writing desk, takes a flask and two glasses from a drawer.)

Walton: You are a man of science?

Victor: Was.

(Walton pours. Victor watches, taking note of the barometer and microscope sitting on the desk.)

Victor: Those instruments. Yours?

Walton: Yes. As you see, I too am a scientist.

Victor: Unhappy man! You share my madness.

(Walton carries the glasses to the table, places one before Victor.)

Walton: Is it madness to quest for knowledge?

Victor: It can be. My life is testament to that. I reached for things beyond my grasp, created a horror beyond my control.

Walton: Must one control his creations?

Victor: How else can one understand them?

Walton: Such understanding may come with time.

Victor: Not for me. My time is finished. I am spent, barely able to.... **(Looks around, disoriented)** Tell me again. Where are we?

Walton: My ship. Prometheus. We seek the Northwest Passage.

Victor: And you?

Walton: Robert Walton.

Victor: An Englishman?

Walton: There are no countries here, sir. We are all citizens of the sea. Please. Take up your brandy. It will warm you.

(They drink.)

Walton: Now your coat. We must get it off. It is frozen through.

Victor: I must be ready when the fiend is sighted.

Walton: Not with this coat. **(Removes the coat, sets it aside)** It must thaw and dry before it will be of any use. And you, sir. You must rest. **(Helps Victor to his feet)** Come. My bed. I seldom use it. My studies occupy my nights.

Victor: **(Confused, fading)** Northward, you say? You are sailing northward?

Walton: **(Helping Victor into bed)** As I told you.

Victor: And your men will keep watch? Let us know the instant the fiend is sighted.

Walton: You have my word.

Victor: **(Looks around the cabin)** Your lamps, sir. You must tend to your lamps.

Walton: My lamps?

Victor: They've all gone out.

Walton: To the contrary, sir. They burn as brightly as before.

Victor: Darkness. I see only darkness!

Walton: You are exhausted. You need to sleep.

Victor: Promise to wake me ... wake me when you see him. Do not approach him on your own. He is a demon, a monster.

Walton: I promise.

Victor: And your lamps. Tend to your lamps.

Walton: Sleep.

(Victor lies still. Old Sailor enters.)

Old Sailor: Sir! The ice is breaking. We'll soon be under sail. First mate requests your presence on deck.

Walton: **(Considers Victor)** He will keep for now.

Old Sailor: Sleeping?

Walton: Exhausted and starving. What word from the cook?

Old Sailor: Kidney stew from your stores, sir. Preparing it now.

Walton: I will bring it to him when I return.

(Walton and Old Sailor exit. Victor sleeps in the captain's bed. Dressed in heavy furs, the Creature appears, forces a window, and enters the cabin with a blast of Arctic wind.)

Creature: It ends here.

(Victor wakes with a start.)

Creature: Peace, Father. Rest.

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Victor: Who is there?

Creature: Can you not see?

Victor: Only darkness.

Creature: But you hear me?

Victor: Faintly. As if ... from far away.

Creature: **(Approaches the bed, drops to his knees.)** Yet I am close.

Victor: Is it you? The demon?

Creature: Your son.

Victor: I have no son.

Creature: Yet you gave me life. Now ... I have something to give you.

Victor: Death?

Creature: No need to give you that.

Victor: I can barely hear you!

Creature: Then it is time.

Victor: **(Fading)** I feel a creeping stillness. It moves through me, a silence beyond—
(The Creature waits for him to continue, then places a hand on Victor's chest.)

Creature: Rest, Father. Peace. This is for you.
(The Creature bends close, kisses Victor's forehead. Walton enters with a tray of food.)

Walton: Is it you? The fiend he spoke of?

Creature: He told you of me?

Walton: He called you a fiend.

Creature: And so I was ... to him. Now that he is dead, I am nothing.

Walton: He is dead?

Creature: Not by my hand.
(The Creature crosses to the open window.)

Walton: Wait! Tell me! He claimed he made you. Is that true?

Creature: Yes. Made me ... what I was ... what I am.

Walton: And what are you? What species?

Creature: **(Considers)** Tell me? Do men of science give their names to their creations. Is that done?

Walton: Yes. It is the practice.

Creature: Then I will take that from him. When you speak of me ... you may call me *Frankenstein*.
(The Creature retreats toward the open window.)

Walton: But wait. Please! I have more questions.

Creature: And I have no answers. I must go.

Walton: Where?

Creature: Farther north. Away from here. A place with no men. I will gather wood, build a fire, die in the flames.

Walton: But there is no need for that! You are welcome here. I can learn from you ... and you from me. We will—

Creature: Too late. I am gone!

(The Creature exits through the open window. Lights dim. Walton Exits. Servants enter, begin returning the set to the interior of Villa Diodati. Lights up on Mary and Claire, standing by a window. Morning light shines in. The rest of the set remains dim as the servants continue to work.)

Claire: So the monster dies?

Mary: As we have seen. He dies in the captain's chamber.

Claire: No. Victor dies there. The monster dies in the frozen wastes.

Mary: Are you sure?

Claire: It is as you told it?

Mary: The Creature makes that promise. That is true. But is he the monster?

Claire: I don't understand.

Mary: What would you call a father who abandons a child?

Claire: A father? You mean Victor? Are you saying Victor is the monster?

Mary: I shall let the story speak for itself.

Claire: Then to my first question. Does the monster—that is, the Creature—does he make good his promise to destroy himself with fire?

Mary: He says as much. But kindling is a scarce commodity in the frozen wastes. Surely Walton realises that.

Claire: So Walton will search for the Creature?

Mary: Or maybe, after reflecting on Victor's fate, he will give up his pursuit of new discoveries and return home.

Claire: Which will it be?

Mary: I do not know.

Claire: Then you must continue the tale.

Mary: Or revise it.

Claire: And write it down for others to read!

Mary: Perhaps, though the prospect of sending such a creation into the world makes me uneasy. The horror may not bear the light of day.

(Servants exit. Mary and Claire return to the seats where they were sitting at the beginning of the play.)

Scene 4 - The drawing room of the Villa Diodati, Geneva, Switzerland, 1816.

(Lights up full as Polidori enters.)

Polidori: Good morning, ladies. You are up early.

Mary: Or late, as the case may be.

Polidori: I've been thinking of a story for Byron's challenge.

Claire: I should like to hear it.

Polidori: It is still only an idea. One cannot rush these things, you know.

Byron: **(Enters)** I thought I heard voices.

Polidori: We were discussing your challenge.

Byron: I have been doing more than that. I rose early, labored over a few lines before coming down. Would you like to hear them?

Polidori: Indeed!

Claire: Please!

(Byron strikes an oratory pose, begins reciting with a dramatic sweep of his hand.)

Byron: **(reciting)** The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars did wander darkling in the eternal space, rayless and pathless. And the icy earth swung blind and blackening in the moonless air!

(Byron holds the pose, awaits approval.)

Polidori: Is that all?

Byron: A good tale is not written by the yard, *Polly-dolly*.

Polidori: Still sporting with my name?

Byron: The story will follow apace. It will center on a world dying in the darkness of an extinguished sun. I need only time to set it down.

Claire: But Mary has already—

Percy: **(Enters)** What is this? Mary holding court?

Claire: I was just about to say—

Percy: I missed you last night, Mary.

Mary: I was here with Claire.

Claire: Mary has a story!

Percy: As do I. Or at least the outline of one. I managed a few notes before sleep overcame me.

Polidori: So not one of us has a tale to meet the challenge.

Claire: But Mary does!

Mary: Not quite.

Claire: It held me spellbound.

Percy: A complete story?

Byron: From Mary?

Polidori: Bested at our own game!

Claire: I have never heard a more frightening tale.

Mary: But what you heard was not quite what I had in mind at the outset. Indeed, it quickly assumed a life of its own, grew into something rather unexpected.

Percy: Such is the nature of creation.

Mary: So you have told me. And yet, I would like to think it through a little more before letting it stand on its own.

Byron: Tonight then!

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Mary: Perhaps. But for now, as the storm has passed, I must to our cottage and check on little William.

Claire: William! That's right! Your son is William. Like in the story!

Mary: Indeed, he was on my mind as I told it. As were all of you.
(Mary dons the cloak that has been draped across her chair.)

Mary: Will you come with me, Percy?

Byron: Yes, Percy! Do not withhold that fatherly love any longer.

Claire: No good can come of that!

Percy: I will need my coat.

Byron: Anna! Shelley's coat!
(Anna enters with Percy's coat.)

Percy: Mary, I have a proposition.
(Percy reaches into his coat, takes out a notebook resembling Victor's journal.)

Percy: You can tell me the tale as you care for William. I shall write it down.

Mary: **(Considers)** Better still, dear Percy— **(Takes the journal)** You may tend to our son while *I* write. **(Turns to the others)** Tonight, we shall have a story.

(Mary and Percy exit. Blackout. Curtain.)