

CHAPTER 1

Rescued from the Frozen Sea

The floating sheets of Arctic ice were slowly freezing together, threatening to crush the small sailing ship.

Robert Walton, its young English captain, stood on deck, wondering if he were wrong risking the lives of his brave crew for his own ambitions—to explore oceans ships had never sailed on and land men had never walked on.

He dreamed of the benefits this discovery would have for all mankind if he were to discover a sea route near the North Pole from Europe to Asia.

FRANKENSTEIN

Walton had been born into wealth and could have chosen to spend his life in ease and luxury. Instead, he had spent the last six years at sea, working as a common sailor, enduring cold, hunger, thirst, sleeplessness, and often brutal discipline, just to prepare his body and mind for this long and dangerous voyage.

But now, with the ice threatening his ship and the lives of his crew, it was doubtful whether or not any of them would ever see their homes and families in England again!

At about two o'clock in the afternoon, the thick, heavy fog that had surrounded the ship all morning began to lift. As it did, a strange sight appeared on the ice.

"Look, Captain!" called a crewman, pointing to a dark spot a half-mile away. "It's a sledge, sir. And those dogs are pulling it as if their feet had wings!"

Walton lifted his telescope to his eye. "And look at that driver!" he cried. "He has to be

FRANKENSTEIN

the most gigantic man I've ever laid eyes on! What on earth is he doing here, out in the middle of the frozen sea, hundreds of miles away from any land?"

Within minutes, though, the mysterious traveler had disappeared on the ice, leaving Walton and his crew stunned and speechless!

The next morning at dawn, Walton came up on deck to find his sailors leaning over the rail, apparently talking to someone on the ice below.

"What's happening, lads?" he asked as he joined them at the rail.

"It's a sledge, sir," said a sailor, "much like the one we saw yesterday."

Walton looked out over the rail. There, frozen into a block of ice drifting towards the ship was a sledge, a dog team, and a driver. All the dogs were dead except one, and its reins were being held limply by a frost-covered man as he paddled the block of ice with a piece of wood. He appeared to be barely alive.

FRANKENSTEIN

“This isn’t the same sledge we saw yesterday,” Walton told his men, “and this man is nothing at all like that gigantic creature that sped past us.”

“Here is our captain,” called one of the sailors to the man below. “Perhaps he can persuade you to come aboard.”

“Good Lord, man! You’re near death!” called Walton. “Let my men bring you up.”

“Thank you, sir,” answered the man in a weak voice, “but first I need to know where your ship is headed.”

Walton was amazed that anyone so near death should ask such a question of anyone interested in saving his life. But he decided to humor the man by explaining, “We’re exploring the seas near the North Pole.”

The man nodded and whispered, “North is good.” And he let the sailors come down to carry him up to the ship.

Once the man was on deck, the ship’s doctor reported, “His legs are nearly frozen, sir,

FRANKENSTEIN

and his body is so thin that his bones are coming through his clothing.”

“Wrap him in blankets and lay him gently near the stove,” ordered Walton. “When he warms up, feed him a little soup, then put him in my cabin. He’ll be comfortable there, and I will take care of him myself.”

For two days, the man didn’t speak. The wild expression in his eyes and the frequent gnashing of his teeth made Walton fear that the man’s suffering had driven him mad. Yet there were moments, when someone was kind or helpful to him, that his eyes shone with kindness and gratitude.

When the man was finally able to utter a few words, Walton asked him, “What were you doing out there on the ice in a sledge?”

The man’s face immediately turned gloomy as he replied, “I’m looking for someone in a sledge very much like mine.”

“We saw him,” Walton explained, “only the day before we picked you up.”

FRANKENSTEIN

At that news, the stranger's eyes opened wide, and he raised himself off the pillow. "Which way did that demon head?" he gasped. "How many dogs did he have? How much food? I must know! I must find him!"

"Calm yourself, my friend," cautioned Walton. "You've been very ill, and you mustn't have this kind of excitement."

"You're right," said the stranger with a sigh. "You've rescued me from near death, and I'm certain that you must be curious about me. My grief is so deep that I can't talk about it yet, but please be patient. I have a terrible secret which I promise to share with you very soon."

Days passed, and the man's strength returned. He insisted on spending his time on deck searching for the sledge, but he also enjoyed hearing Captain Walton talk about his dreams of exploration.

"Yes, my friend," explained the young Englishman, "I would gladly sacrifice my fortune

FRANKENSTEIN

and even my life to gain the knowledge that this voyage could bring. They would be a small price to pay for something that could benefit all mankind.”

The stranger covered his eyes with his hands, and tears fell from beneath his fingers. “Don’t talk that way! You’ll be an unhappy man!” he cried. “As I tell you my story, you’ll see how I devoted my life to seeking knowledge that I believed would benefit mankind. As a result, I brought misery and death to everyone I loved, and I’m now near death myself. Don’t let that happen to you.”

“Perhaps talking about your misfortune will help you,” Walton said gently. “And perhaps I can do something to help also.”

“I thank you for your sympathy,” said the man, “but nothing can change my destiny. I have to do one more thing while I’m alive, then I’ll be able to die in peace.”

They went below and he began his story.

CHAPTER 2

The Frankenstein Story Begins

My name is Victor Frankenstein, and for generations my family has been one of the most respected in the government of Geneva, Switzerland. My devoted parents raised me and my two younger brothers, Ernest and William, with patience and love, and even brought into our family Elizabeth Lavenza, the orphaned daughter of a noble Italian family.

Elizabeth was a year younger than I, and I truly loved her as my sister, even though we called her my cousin. We spent many happy

FRANKENSTEIN

hours together as we grew up. Elizabeth loved the wonderful sights of nature in the mountains and lakes of Switzerland . . . while I was more interested in investigating *why* things in nature happened . . . what secrets the heavens and earth were hiding from me!

When I started school, I formed a lifelong friendship with Henry Clerval. Henry was a hard-working but spirited boy. He enjoyed writing adventure stories of heroic knights, then getting me to act them out with him.

What a happy childhood I had! Kind, generous parents, a loving sister, two happy, young brothers, and a devoted, fun-loving friend. All this . . . before my life was ruined . . . before my wild ambition drove me to unlocking the secrets of nature that had been hidden from man since life on Earth began.

But at the age of thirteen, my only interest in science was to discover a way to cure disease, to stop people from dying.

How noble were these childhood dreams!

FRANKENSTEIN

When I was fifteen, a violent thunderstorm added to my scientific curiosity. A sudden, frightening burst of lightning struck an old oak tree near our house. In moments, the tree was gone, leaving only thin ribbons of wood in its place.

I had never before seen anything so completely demolished. At that moment, I suddenly realized what incredible but destructive powers electricity had. From then on, I began to wonder what other unknown powers electricity might be hiding from the world!

This curiosity was still with me when I was seventeen and preparing to leave home to study at the University of Ingolstadt, a small school in Germany.

Before I left, however, I was faced with the first misfortune of my life. Elizabeth had caught a serious case of scarlet fever, and her life was in great danger. Although we had servants to care for her, my mother insisted on caring for Elizabeth herself, in

FRANKENSTEIN

spite of the fact that she was exposing herself to this terrible disease. Within three days, my mother came down with the fever, and by the fourth day, she was close to death.

As she lay dying, my mother called the family together and placed Elizabeth's hand in mine. "Take care of your brothers," she said. "I shall die happy if I know that one day you two will marry each other."

Elizabeth and I made that promise.

I didn't want to leave the family after my mother's death, but after several weeks, my father decided it was time.

Henry came to say goodbye. We were distressed at being separated. He was eager for a university education too, but his father wouldn't allow it, since he had plans for Henry to go to work in his business one day.

As I waved goodbye and climbed into the carriage, I realized that for the first time in my life, I was facing the world alone.

CHAPTER 3

Discovering an Astonishing Secret

My boyhood dreams for studying science continued at the university. My aim was still to find ways to cure disease and prolong human life.

I was encouraged to study both modern and ancient scientists by Professor Waldman, my favorite teacher. "By combining knowledge from both," he told me, "you'll have unlimited powers. You'll be able to discover the secrets of the earth and the heavens, along with the secrets of man's body and how it works."

FRANKENSTEIN

“But, sir,” I protested, “I want to discover more than just the secrets of how the human body *works*.” And it was at that moment that I knew I had to discover the secrets of how the human body was *created*!

Seeing my eyes glowing with enthusiasm, but not imagining where my ambition was heading, Professor Waldman promised me, “My boy, I’m delighted with your attitude and proud of your desire to succeed. You can be sure I’ll give you all the help you need.”

Professor Waldman became my friend as well as my teacher during the next two years. I read every scientific paper I could find, attended every lecture possible, and talked with the great scientists at the university.

I set up a laboratory on the top floor of my apartment house and worked most nights straight through until dawn.

Professor Waldman called me into his laboratory one morning. “Victor, your progress has been amazing these past two years.”

FRANKENSTEIN

“Thank you, sir. I’m now devoting more time to the study of anatomy and physiology, so that one day I can discover how human life begins. But I know that to do that, I must first study how life ends—how the body dies and decays.”

“That is a most ambitious project, Victor. Scientists have been trying to unlock those secrets since the world began. You are a brilliant scientist, destined for greatness. If anyone can do it, you can. But you must not ignore the world around you and the people who love you. . . . By the way, do you realize it’s been two years since you went home to visit your family in Geneva?”

“My work is too important now for me to take time out for a visit,” I told him.

And the professor didn’t press me on it.

For the next months, I spent days and nights in charnel houses, the church buildings where corpses were kept until they were buried. I learned what happened to people’s

FRANKENSTEIN

bodies right after death, but I needed to know more—I needed to know how death changed the human body as weeks, months, and even years passed. To learn this, I secretly visited cemeteries on dark nights and dug up bodies to study them.

Months of studying and experimenting led to one memorable night when a wondrous light turned on in my brain. *In that one astonishing moment, I suddenly understood not only how life turned into death... but how death could be turned back into life!*

This realization made me so dizzy, all I could do was ask myself, “Why didn’t the great scientists who came before me discover this secret? Why have *I* been blessed with unlocking the mysteries of creation?”

What followed next were weeks and months of incredible work and fatigue. Not only had I discovered the origin of life, but I continued experimenting until I was actually able to *create* life from lifeless matter!

FRANKENSTEIN

The joy I felt made me forget the painful weeks and months I had spent on my work. All I knew was that I had discovered something that men of science had been trying to discover since the world began!

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At this point in Victor Frankenstein's story, Robert Walton interrupted. "Amazing!" he cried. "And are you about to share your secret with me, my friend?"

Victor shook his head sadly. "I can't, Robert. I know I owe you my life, and because of that, I ask you to please just listen to the rest of my story. Then you'll understand why I can't share my secret with you . . . or anyone else on earth. For if you were to learn that terrible secret, you would be destroyed just as I have been!"