

## Creating the Monster

Why do I say that I've been destroyed? I say it because the knowledge and power that the secret gave me was more than I, or any man for that matter, could handle.

At first, I spent a great deal of time wondering how to use that knowledge. I knew how to create life, but what should I put that life into? I would need some sort of form in which to put muscles, bones, organs, arteries, veins, and other body parts.

Should I try to create a simple animal creature or a person like myself?

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My wild imagination soared, and I truly believed I could do *anything* with this new knowledge. Yes, I would give life to a creature as complex and as wonderful as a human being!

Because of all the intricate parts that make up a human body, I decided that the creature couldn't be small or even of normal size. It would have to be gigantic, about eight feet tall, for me to be able to attach all the body parts, inside and outside.

I spent the next several months collecting all the materials I would need: bones from bodies in charnel houses, animal parts from slaughter houses where meat was prepared for market, live animals I trapped or bought, body parts and instruments from the dissecting room at the university, and, yes, whole bodies which I dug up from graveyards!

During these months—it was summer when I began—I refused to rest. Night after night, through fall, winter, spring, and into the next

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summer and fall, I worked in my laboratory. I forgot to eat. I barely slept. I gave no thought at all to my family, even though in every letter I received, my father told me how worried he was.

There were times that I hated what I was doing. Then at other times, I was eager and impatient to finish my creation.

It was almost winter when my work was nearing success. But what price was my body paying for that success? My brain was tortured with fever. I had become so nervous that the noise of a leaf falling off a tree startled me. I had been avoiding everyone at the university for many months because my wrecked body was too frightening even for me to look at in the mirror!

But I told myself, "This will all disappear once my work is done, and I'll be back to my old healthy self again soon."

How wrong I was!

## CHAPTER 5

### **The Spark of Life**

It was a dreary night in November when my work was finally finished. The rain beating at the windows drowned out the clanking of my instruments as I gathered all but a few and put them away.

I looked down at the lifeless creature that lay on the table before me and knew I was ready to give him life. The candle that lit my laboratory was nearly burned out, but it gave me enough light to touch the creature with my instruments. That touch created the spark that brought him to life!

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Slowly, the dull yellow eyes of the creature opened. A hard, raspy breath lifted his huge chest at the same time that his gigantic arms and legs began to jerk with convulsive movements.

I stared hard at this creature I had spent two years forming. Once, I had considered this a beautiful piece of work—the result of my life's dream, but now it filled me with horror and disgust!

His yellow skin was stretched over bones and muscles, barely covering them. His long, black hair flowed down over the shriveled skin on his grotesque face and thick neck, and his pearly white teeth contrasted with the straight, black lips surrounding them.

What had I done? . . . I couldn't bear looking at the horrible creature another minute, and I rushed out of the laboratory and down to my apartment.

Throwing myself on my bed, still with my clothes on, I hoped that sleep would erase from

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my brain the ugly picture of horror and disgust I had just seen.

Sleep finally came, but it brought wild dreams of death and Elizabeth and my mother. When I suddenly awoke in a panic, my teeth were chattering, and my arms and legs were convulsing.

The dim light of the moon shone through the window into my bedroom. As my eyes flew open, the moonlight revealed the huge figure of the monster as he lifted up the curtains around my bed. He stared down at me with a horrible grin that forced wrinkles in his cheeks and stretched his ugly, black lips.

His jaws moved and he muttered some sounds that had no meaning. As he reached out to touch me, I jumped from my bed and rushed out the door of my apartment.

I fled down the stairs and into the courtyard. I hid there, weak, horrified, and bitterly disillusioned, for the rest of that dismal, rainy night.

## CHAPTER 6

### **Madness!**

At six o'clock the next morning, I dragged my soaking wet body out of the courtyard. As I staggered through the streets of Ingolstadt, I had no idea where I was going or what I was doing.

I was terrified to return to my room and just as terrified to turn each corner, sick with fear that the monster might be there or anywhere, waiting for me.

After several hours of aimless wandering, I found myself in front of the inn that was the stopping-off place for coaches traveling in

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and out of the city. I don't know what made me stop at that very moment, but as I looked around, I saw the coach from Geneva approaching.

As the coach pulled to a stop, to my utter amazement, the passenger getting out was my dear friend, Henry Clerval.

"Victor!" he exclaimed. "What good luck to find you waiting here for me!"

I was delighted to see my closest friend. As we shook hands, I forgot for a moment the horror and misfortune I had lived through the previous night.

As we walked, arm in arm, towards my apartment, Henry explained why he was in Ingolstadt. "I finally persuaded my father that I needed to know more about the world than just how to be a bookkeeper in his business. So he agreed to let me attend the university."

"That's wonderful, Henry!" I told him. "I'm really happy to have you here with me. But do



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you have news of my family?"

"They are all well and happy, but also worried at not having heard from you in a long time." He stopped walking then and stared hard at me. "I must confess, now that I see you, Victor, I'm worried too. You're so pale and thin. Are you ill?"

"Not ill," I explained, "just working very hard on a project which is now finished. At last, I can finally rest."

As we approached my apartment, my joy at seeing Henry was quickly replaced by fear. I began to tremble. What if the monster were still in my bedroom? I dreaded seeing him, but I dreaded even more the possibility that Henry might see him too!

I ran up the stairs ahead of Henry. A cold shiver came over me as I turned the doorknob and slowly opened the door. I breathed a great sigh of relief at finding my apartment empty, and I joyously led Henry inside.

My joy was so great that I began to laugh, a

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loud, wild laugh that stunned Henry. Then, when I began jumping over chairs and clapping my hands, he became truly frightened.

Taking me by the shoulders, he began to shake me. "For heaven's sake, Victor, you really *are* ill! What is it?"

My eyes began to roll wildly, and I pictured the monster walking in the door. "*He* is the cause!" I cried, pointing to nothing at the door. "Henry, please save me!"

As Henry shook me, I imagined it was the monster and I struggled furiously. I beat at him with my fists until I fell to the floor in a fit of convulsions.

How worried Henry must have been to see me this way! But I never knew it, for I was out of my mind for many months that followed. Henry never told my family of my illness but, instead, took care of me himself, day and night, with kindness and devotion.

The picture of the monster was before my eyes every minute of all those months. Henry

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paid no attention to these wild ravings, convinced it was my madness that caused them.

It was spring, more than five months later, before I began to recover. My gloom was disappearing, and I was becoming the same cheerful friend Henry had always known.

I knew how much I owed him, and I tried to express my gratitude. "Dear Henry, you spent this entire winter taking care of me when you could have been attending the university, which has been your dream for so many years. How can I ever repay you?"

"Just by taking care of yourself and getting completely well."

When that day arrived, I took Henry to the university and introduced him to my professors and to the other students.

Professor Waldman welcomed us warmly and told Henry, "Victor's astonishing progress has made us all very proud of him. Why, he's the top student at the university!"

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While the professor's words were meant to praise me, they actually tortured me. For that "astonishing progress" was responsible for creating a terrible monster!

Henry had always been sensitive to my feelings, and he saw the agony in my eyes when Professor Waldman talked about me. Without questioning me about the cause of those feelings, Henry changed the subject, and the conversation was easier for me. Because I loved Henry as if he were my brother, I couldn't ever inflict on him the agony I was going through. And I'd be doing that by sharing my terrible secret with him.

When Henry visited my laboratory above my apartment, he saw how nervous I became when I spotted my instruments. He had no way of knowing the part they played in creating the monster. Again, without questioning me as to why I was so nervous, he quietly packed away the instruments and locked up the room.

By then, I had decided to give up my study

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of science because of the horror it had brought into my life. But it wasn't my nature to remain idle, so I decided to remain at the university and join Henry studying Oriental languages.

We spent a relaxed, pleasant year together learning new languages, reading the beautiful, comforting books of Persian writers, and taking wonderful walking trips—often for weeks at a time—into the beautiful countryside around Ingolstadt.

I soon became the same happy person who had come to the university a few years before, with no sorrow and no care. The horror of the monster and my madness following his creation had been erased from my memory!