

CHAPTER 11

Face to Face with the Monster

After Justine's death, I found it difficult to cope with my despair and depression at home in Geneva, so I went off by myself to the peaceful village of Chamounix.

After a month of calm, long walks along the glaciers in the beautiful Alpine valley and breathing in the fresh mountain air beneath Mont Blanc, I was able to relax during the day and sleep well at night.

One morning, though, I was awakened by a torrential rain that blocked out the beautiful view of the mountain I had from my room.

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Still, I refused to let the rain stop me from my daily climb to my favorite spot on the mountain. It was a place where I usually sat watching the glaciers as they slowly and silently traveled down the slopes.

As my mule carefully climbed the steep, winding path, the pouring rain continued pounding the valley below. I arrived at the top of the mountain at noon and decided to cross the glacier. Its three-mile width was covered with deep rifts, or cracks, in the ice, and it took me two hours to make my way across to the other side.

When the sun finally replaced the dismal rain, the icy mountain peaks began to glisten. The sparkling beauty around me changed my mood from gloom to joy.

Suddenly, from the other side of the glacier, I spotted the figure of a man—a huge figure of a man—approaching me at superhuman speed. Where I had trudged across the ice slowly and carefully, he ran and jumped over

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the icy, dangerous surface.

I shivered as the shape came nearer, then trembled with rage and horror—it was the fiendish monster I had created two years earlier! I knew at that moment that I had to stay there and wait, to come face to face with him and tell him how much I despised him . . . and, if possible, to fight him to the death!

“Devil!” I shouted. “How dare you approach me! How I wish I could kill you with one blow and bring back to life the two people you have cruelly murdered!”

“I’m not surprised at your greeting. I expected it,” he said calmly. “After all, everyone hates creatures as ugly as I am. But it’s your fault that I’m this ugly. You created me this way.”

I couldn’t control my rage any longer, and I sprang at him, clawing at his hideous, yellow face.

But he was too quick and too strong for me. Grasping my arm in his powerful hold,

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he quietly replied, "Calm yourself, my creator. I beg you to hear my story before you try again to kill me. Remember, you made me larger and stronger than you."

"I don't want to hear anything you have to say, you vile creature!"

"How can I appeal to you, Victor Frankenstein? How can I convince you that I, too, have suffered? I have been miserable and alone, hated and scorned by all humans, adults and children, all because of you."

"And I hate and scorn myself for having created you!"

"Then you have a duty to hear what I have to say. Then if you still want to kill me, and if you *can*, then do it. Just remember it was you who created me."

"I curse the day I did it! I curse these hands that did it! Go! I can't bear to look at you a moment longer!"

The monster placed his hands over my eyes, saying, "Now you don't have to look at me."

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I flung his hands from my face and turned my back to him.

The monster reached out his hands as if to plead with me. "Then don't look at me. Just listen to my story and hear my request. If you grant it, I will leave you in peace. If you don't . . . well, we'll talk of that later."

I don't know if it was curiosity or fear or even pity that made me agree to listen to him. But whatever the reason, I decided I would. I turned to him and nodded my head.

He pointed across the glacier and said, "My story is too long for us to sit out here in the cold and talk. Please come with me. I know of a hut on that mountain."

He turned and started across the ice. I followed, trying hard to keep up with his speedy pace.

By the time I reached the hut, he was already inside lighting a fire. I seated myself close to it and listened as he began his tale.

CHAPTER 12

The Monster's Story Begins

When you first brought me to life, I was as helpless as a newborn baby, except that I could see, smell, hear, feel, and taste.

These sensations frightened me, so I came to your room, as a child would come to a father. But you ran away and left me, and I didn't know what to do.

I felt cold, so I covered myself with your cloak and went out into the night, a helpless, miserable wretch. I remember weeping as I walked through the streets, and by the time I reached a forest outside Ingolstadt, I was

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very tired and lay down on the damp ground near a brook.

I slept for several hours and awoke hungry and thirsty. I drank some water from the brook and ate a few berries I had found on the ground.

I spent a month in that forest and watched the sun and moon changing in the sky. I got to know the pleasant sounds that birds made as they flew over my head. I tried making those sounds myself, but I couldn't. I tried making other sounds with my mouth, but the harsh noises that came out frightened me.

As I began to explore outside the forest, I discovered a fire that some beggars must have left. I enjoyed the feelings of warmth and light it gave me, so I thrust my hand into the glowing coals. I quickly pulled it back with a cry of pain, puzzled why something that felt good could also give pain.

I examined the materials that made the fire burn and soon learned that branches did it,

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with some help from the wind. I also discovered that nuts and roots tasted better if I cooked them in the fire before I ate them. But berries did not.

Soon, my supply of food was used up, and I had to leave the forest and my fire. I found myself in open country, where a great white blanket of something cold on the ground hurt and chilled my feet.

After three days of wandering without food or shelter, I came upon a small hut early one morning. I was hungry and tired when I dragged myself to the open door and went in. An old man was seated by a fire, cooking his breakfast. Seeing me in the room, he froze, then ran from the hut, screaming at the top of his lungs.

I ate the man's breakfast, then lay down on some straw and fell asleep.

I slept until noon, when the sun was high in the sky, then continued on my way, packing the leftover food from my breakfast in a pouch to

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take with me.

After several hours of walking, I came to a village. I was awed by the many neat cottages and big houses, with vegetables in the gardens and milk and cheese on the window ledges. I entered one of these houses, only to horrify everyone there. Children ran from me screaming and women fainted.

The screams alerted everyone in the village, and people began coming at me from all sides, throwing rocks, swinging tools, and shouting horrible threats. I fled from the village and ran across the open fields until I had lost my pursuers.

Many hours later, I came upon a wooden shed that was attached to a neat cottage. I didn't dare enter the cottage after what had happened in the village, but I did crawl into the shed. It wasn't tall enough for me to stand up in, and I was barely able to sit inside. But I didn't mind. I was grateful to have a place to sleep, one which would also give me protection

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from the snow and rain . . . and from attacks by people!

At daylight, I looked out to find myself surrounded by a pig sty and a pool of water. The side of the shed where I had crept in was the only open side. I covered this opening with wood and stones, which I could move aside to enter and leave. I also gathered some straw to make a bed.

Then I examined the planks of wood that formed the wall between the shed and the cottage. A large crack revealed an empty room on the cottage side.

I crept out of the shed and into the cottage, hoping to find something to eat. I found a loaf of bread and a cup with which I was able to drink the water from the pool.

I decided to make the shed my home until something or someone forced me to leave. It was a paradise compared to living out in open fields or in the forest.

As the days passed, I learned that three

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people named De Lacey lived in the cottage: a young woman called Agatha, her brother Felix, and their old, blind father.

The family was very poor, and the two young people worked hard to feed and care for their beloved father, often going without food themselves so that the old man could eat. They had only a few vegetables from their garden and a little milk from their cow.

The kindness and love these people showed each other moved me deeply, and rather than steal any more food from them, I went out at night in search of berries and nuts in the forest. I also borrowed the young man's tools at night and cut wood for them. I left it at their door as a surprise and enjoyed their pleasure at their good fortune when they found it there each morning.

I was amazed to discover that they could bring fire into their cottage to cook their food and light up the room. At night, the young

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man and woman used this fire on a candle to read to the old man. The words they read were like those they spoke, and they read them from things called books.

As the days, weeks, and months went by, I taught myself to speak those words. I hoped that one day I would be able to introduce myself to them, and I wanted more than anything to be able to speak to them in their words. Perhaps that way they would overlook my ugliness. . . . Oh, yes, I had learned just how ugly I was when I saw my reflection in the water in the pond.

One morning, a beautiful lady arrived at the cottage on horseback. Felix greeted her warmly and called her Safie. Safie was his fiancée, and was here to marry him. She had come from a faraway country called Turkey and didn't speak the same language as the family.

Felix and Agatha spent the weeks following Safie's arrival teaching her to speak and read

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their language. Through the cracks in the wood, I listened to them and learned to speak many of their words too.

On one of my trips into the forest, I had found a suitcase containing some clothing and several books. I used those books to teach myself to read, along with Safie.

I spent the winter and spring enjoying my simple life and taking pleasure in the happy family I felt so close to. I was proud of the progress I was making in speaking all the words the family spoke and in reading them as well.

But what good were words when I had no one to speak them to? Would I ever be able to face people and not have them run from my ugliness? Would I ever have someone look at me with expressions of love, as I saw with Felix and Safie? Would I ever have friends or a family? Even the man I considered my father, you—Victor Frankenstein, ran from my wretchedness!

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Another event strengthened my bitter feelings against you. When I first came to my shed, I found your notebook in the pocket of the cloak I had taken from your bedroom when I ran from there years ago. At first, it had no meaning for me, but once I could read, I learned of your work and your thoughts before you began creating me and while you were doing it. Yes, I learned of your horror at seeing my hideous body when you were finished.

Why did you make me so hideous that you turned away in disgust? How I curse the day you gave me life! How I curse you!

But my bitterness was softened when I thought of the kindly De Laceys, who, I was certain, would befriend me and overlook my ugliness when I told them my story and when they came to know me as a good person.

Still, even though I longed for kindness and sympathy from them, I put off introducing myself to them, for fear that they, too, would turn away from me in horror.

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By the time I had been in my shed for a year, I started planning how to introduce myself to the family. I decided to enter the cottage when the old man was alone, since his blindness would prevent him from seeing my ugliness. Then, I reasoned, when his children met me, they would see that their father liked me and they would too.

One morning, after the young people had gone to a fair in the village, I saw my chance. I left my shed, and with my knees shaking and my hands trembling, I went to the front door and knocked.

When De Lacey called, "Come in," I took a deep breath and opened the door. I introduced myself as a traveler in need of some rest, and the old man welcomed me. He even offered to share his bits of food with me.

We spent several hours talking about many things and agreed how important it is for a man to have friends. I truly believed that the old man had become my friend, and I was on

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my knees, grasping his hand in gratitude when the cottage door opened.

I can't begin to describe the horror of the young people at seeing me. Safie ran out the door and Agatha fainted. Felix lunged at me and, with superhuman strength, pulled me away from his father as I clung to the old man's knees.

I fell to the floor, and Felix began beating me with a stick. I could have torn him apart with my bare hands, but I didn't. I just ran from the cottage in despair and didn't stop until nightfall, when I reached a thick forest.

I was alone in the world again, with no friends, no human beings to talk to. My rage knew no limits! My brain wanted only revenge . . . revenge against the world . . . and revenge against you, my creator!