

## CHAPTER 16

### **The Monster's Threat**

One evening as I sat in my laboratory, I thought again, as I often did, of the time when I was forming my first creature three years ago. I remembered that I had no idea at that time just what kind of evil fiend he would turn out to be.

Then, suddenly, a frightening thought occurred to me! "I have no way of knowing what this new creature will be like! What if she turns out to be ten thousand times more terrible than her husband? What if she delights in evil or even murder as he has done? What

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if she refuses to go away to South America with him as he promised? What if they hate each other, he because she is so ugly, and she because of his ugliness as well?"

But then an even more horrifying thought came to me. "Suppose they *do* get along together and go off to South America, what will happen if they have children? And what if these children are evil like their father and terrorize mankind"?

Suddenly, for the first time, the terrible consequences of my promise struck me with horror. And it was at that very moment that I looked up to discover the fiend's face at the window. An evil, ghastly smile spread across his lips as he gazed from me to his partly finished bride.

That ghastly smile and the maddening gaze made me realize that he was planning some new evil. How could I ever have been insane enough to promise to create this being!

My rage intensified until I was nearly out

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of control and out of my mind. I took hold of the partly finished creature and began tearing it to pieces! Arms, legs, body parts flew everywhere, scattering all over the floor of the laboratory.

I took one last look at the monster at the window, then rushed out the door, leaving the hated laboratory behind me.

The monster howled in despair and shook his fists at my fleeing back. Then he turned and disappeared into the night.

Once my rage subsided, I spent the next several hours sitting at my bedroom window, staring at the calm sea. A few fishing boats were gently rocking in the water, and the friendly voices of the fishermen reached my ears.

Suddenly, I spotted a boat paddling furiously towards the shore. The bright moon lit up a figure as it beached the boat close to my house and jumped out.

I began to tremble again, knowing without

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a doubt who it was. I wanted to flee, but I was frozen to my chair.

Moments later, my door was flung open and the monster stumbled in. "Why did you break your promise?" he demanded. "Why did you destroy your work and destroy my hopes for a wife after all this time?"

"Leave me!" I cried. "I broke my promise because I can never again create a being as ugly or as evil as you, one who delights in murdering innocent people!"

"Ugly, yes! Evil, yes... now!" he exploded. "But also powerful... more powerful than you, my creator."

"Yes, you are more powerful than I am, but your threats don't frighten me."

Gnashing his teeth in anger, he warned, "I'll never let you be happy while I'm alone and miserable. I'll have my revenge on you. From this day on, revenge against you will be my only reason for living!"

"Get out, you devil!" I screamed.

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“I’ll go,” he said quietly, with evil in his voice. “But remember, I’ll be with you always, ready for my revenge. And . . . I will be with you on your wedding night.”

I lunged at him furiously, but he was too fast for me as he ran from the house and jumped into his boat. Moments later, I saw him shooting across the water with the speed of an arrow.

I stood on the shore, burning with rage as his words rang in my ears. “*I will be with you on your wedding night.*”

So that was when he planned to kill me. I wasn’t afraid for myself, but I couldn’t bring such pain and sorrow to my dear Elizabeth. Tears filled my eyes. They were the first tears I had shed in many months.

At that moment, I made up my mind that I wouldn’t let my enemy kill me . . . not without a bitter struggle.

## CHAPTER 17

### **The Murderer Strikes Again!**

The following morning, I decided to leave the island and rejoin Henry. I knew from his letters that he was anxious to see me and continue our travels together.

But before I left, there was one disagreeable task I had to perform. I had to pack up my medical instruments and clean up the laboratory.

When I opened the door, the scene in that hateful room filled me with disgust. The remains of the partly finished creature lay scattered on the floor. I couldn't leave them

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there to be found by any island people who might come by. They would surely be horrified, and then suspicious of what I had been doing there.

So, after washing and packing away all my instruments, I gathered the body parts and tossed them into a large suitcase. I then took the suitcase down to the beach and added some heavy stones to weigh the whole thing down. I fastened the lid, then hid the suitcase in a thick clump of bushes.

I stayed in my hut until night fell, then I returned to the beach and loaded the suitcase into my little skiff. As I sailed out a few miles from shore, I saw several fishing boats heading in towards the island. The men recognized me and waved, but I steered away from them and from the island.

I waited until the bright moon was hidden by a thick cloud, and under the cover of a moment of darkness, I tossed the suitcase into the sea.

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As the suitcase gurgled and sank, I felt a new calm come over me. This calm, combined with the gentle rocking of the sea, made me so relaxed that I fell asleep.

I slept soundly all night. It wasn't until the following morning, when the sun was high in the sky, that I finally awakened.

A strong wind was blowing, and the waves were pounding hard against my little skiff. I realized that while I had been asleep, the wind had blown my boat far from the island where I lived. I was nowhere near any land and, I feared, probably somewhere out in the Atlantic Ocean.

The hours passed and by late afternoon, the sea became very rough. I was beginning to suffer from thirst and from the heat, and from the fear that I would die here in the middle of the ocean, either by drowning or from starvation.

Just when daylight was beginning to fade, I spied some land to the south. My one sail



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wasn't strong enough for me to maneuver the boat. So I made a second sail from my shirt and eagerly steered toward the small town that appeared to have a good harbor.

I was busy tying up the boat when several townspeople came up to me and crowded around me. I was surprised that no one offered to help me, since I was exhausted, ragged, and dried out from the sun. Instead, they began whispering to each other.

Puzzled at their behavior, I called out, "Good people, would you be so kind as to tell me where I am?"

A fisherman stepped forward. "You'll know soon enough," he said harshly. "You may not like this place, but no one here will really care if you do or not."

I was surprised at such rudeness from strangers, but I became more concerned when I saw angry frowns on every face in the crowd. "I hardly expected Englishmen to greet strangers in such an unfriendly way," I told

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them indignantly.

"I don't know much about the way the English greet strangers," said the man. "But you're in Ireland now, and we Irish hate villains."

"Villains?" I gasped. "What do you mean? I haven't done anything villainous."

"That's not for us to decide. You'd better come with us to Mr. Kirwin, our town magistrate. He'll want to question you about the murder of a gentleman here last night."

I was puzzled, but very certain that I could explain how I wasn't involved in any murder that took place here. So, although I was exhausted and hungry, I put my shirt back on and followed the crowd to Mr. Kirwin's house. Little did I know the horror that was about to overwhelm me!

The magistrate was a kindly old man who seemed fair as he questioned the crowd that led me to his house.

The fisherman spoke first. "I was out in my

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boat last night, sir, with my son. When the wind began to blow too strong, we pulled into shore. As we were beaching our boat, I struck my foot against something hard.

“By the light of my lantern I saw that it was a body, a handsome young man, I’d say about twenty-five years old. His body was still warm, so we weren’t sure if he was dead or just unconscious. We carried him to a nearby house and tried to revive him, but it was no use. He was dead.

“At first, I figured he had drowned and that his body had been washed up on shore. But then we realized that his clothes were dry. So he hadn’t been in the water.

“Then when we saw black fingermarks on his neck, we knew he’d been strangled!”

I hadn’t paid much attention to the man’s story at first, but when he told of the fingermarks on the man’s neck, I felt my blood run cold. My hands began to tremble and my legs collapsed under me. I had to clutch at a chair

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to keep from falling.

The magistrate looked at me strangely, but then turned his attention to a woman in the crowd and asked what she knew.

The woman explained, "You know, sir, I live near the beach. A while before I heard about the murder, I saw a man in a boat push off from that part of the shore where the body was found, but I didn't recognize him."

Turning to me, Mr. Kirwin said, "Since you were found on the shore with a boat, it will be necessary for you to come with me to see the body."

I figured he wanted to see how I would react to the body, since I had become so upset when the fisherman described the finger-marks on the man's throat. So, I followed the magistrate and a few of the men to the village inn. We made our way to a bare back room that was empty except for a plain wooden coffin in the center.

Then came the terrible moment... a

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moment almost too terrible to talk about even now without shuddering in agony. For as I was led up to the coffin to see the lifeless body inside, I cried out in horror!

That lifeless body stretched out before me was Henry Clerval!

I gasped for breath and threw myself on his cold body. Sobs tore from my chest as I cried, "Have my evil schemes killed you too, my dear friend? I have already been responsible for the deaths of two others. How many more victims will that demon claim as he claimed you, Henry, my lifelong friend—"

I couldn't continue. My body began to convulse in agony, and I slumped to the floor, unconscious.

## CHAPTER 18

### **Imprisoned for Murder!**

I spent the next two months in prison, delirious with fever and very near death. Mr. Kirwin later told me that my ranting and raving made no sense to the jailers who heard me and were convinced I was insane. I continually accused myself of murdering my brother, my friend Justine, and now Henry.

I kept begging everyone around me to help me destroy someone I called "the fiend." I often had nightmares, during which I would scream in terror that the fiend's fingers were on my neck, strangling me!

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When the fever left me and I regained my sanity, I found myself in a wretched cell with barred windows. An old woman was asleep in a chair beside my bed.

“Who are you?” I asked, waking her.

“I was hired to help you get well,” she snapped, “although I don’t know why you’d want to get well, not when they get done punishing you for the man they say you murdered.”

I turned away from this unfeeling woman, but then realized that no one would care much about a murderer, except perhaps the hangman who would get paid for hanging me.

I soon learned, however, that Mr. Kirwin had been very kind to me during my illness. He had sent a doctor to treat me and the nurse to care for me. He came to see me often, although it was difficult for him to listen to the ravings of someone he considered a murderer.

One day, when I was strong enough to sit up

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in a chair, Mr. Kirwin entered my cell. Pulling up a chair next to mine, he asked, "Is there anything you need to make you more comfortable?"

I looked into his kind, sympathetic eyes and replied, "I thank you, sir, but only death can make me comfortable. Only death can free me from my misery."

"Don't lose hope, my boy. From papers I found in your pocket, I learned who you are and who your family is in Geneva."

I began to tremble at the mention of my family. "Good God!" I gasped. "Has anything happened to them? Has there been another murder?"

"Your family is well," Mr. Kirwin assured me, then added with a smile, "and you have a visitor here to see you."

I feared the worst—the fiend was here to torture me with the story of Henry's murder! I covered my eyes and cried out, "No! Take him away! Don't let him come in!"



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Mr. Kirwin stood up and stared down at me in shock. "Perhaps you *are* guilty, after all, Victor. I should think that seeing your father would please you."

"My father!" I cried.

Mr. Kirwin then went to the door and led my father into my cell.

My joy at seeing him was surpassed only by his reassurances that Elizabeth and Ernest were also well. Because I was still so weak, he didn't stay too long during that first visit.

During the next month, Mr. Kirwin and my father gathered evidence from the peasants at Orkney Island proving that I was there, not in Ireland, the night that Henry was murdered. As a result, the charges against me were dismissed, and I was released from prison.

I knew I had to return to Geneva immediately to protect the people I loved and to destroy the monster I had created! My father

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was concerned about my making such a long trip so soon after my illness. I was still a shattered wreck. My strength was gone, my body was nothing more than a skeleton, and I still suffered from fits of fever. But I was so insistent on leaving Ireland and returning to Geneva that my father finally agreed.

He had heard my strange-sounding ravings many times during his month with me in Ireland. And even though he attributed them to my fever, he was puzzled why I continually accused myself of the murders of William, Justine, and Henry.

"My dear son," he told me, "I beg you not to ever make such accusations again. You are not responsible for these terrible deaths."

I remained silent, not wishing to burden my father with my tale of horror, although I wished more than anything in the world to be able to confide my secret to another human being.