

CHAPTER 19

A Joyous Wedding

On the day of our departure from Ireland, I received a letter from Elizabeth. She reassured me of her love, but offered to release me from my promise to marry her if I no longer wanted to after so many years.

This certainly wasn't true. I loved her as much as ever and wanted nothing more in life than to marry her. But her letter reminded me of the threat I had put out of my mind . . . the monster's threat—*"I will be with you on your wedding night."*

I put the letter down and thought, "If that

FRANKENSTEIN

is the night the monster has chosen for my death, so be it. There will be a deadly struggle between us. If the fiend wins, I'll be dead, and so at peace. If I win, the fiend will be dead and I'll be a free man."

I also decided that on the day after our wedding, I would confess my terrible secret to Elizabeth, for I didn't want to have any secrets from her, no matter how terrible they were.

As soon as my father and I arrived back in Geneva, we began making plans for the wedding. At first, Elizabeth was overjoyed at the news, but she soon began to worry about my continuing fits of depression and grief.

I tried to explain to her that something *was* troubling me deeply, and I hoped she would be comforted when I added, "I don't want to burden you with those troubles now when we're so busy with our wedding plans. But I promise to tell you everything the day after you become my wife."

FRANKENSTEIN

During the week preceding our wedding, I began making plans to defend myself against the fiend. I carried a dagger and pistols with me at all times, and was always on my guard against any trickery.

As the wedding day neared, I became calmer and began to treat the threat as a delusion, not important enough for me to worry about.

The ceremony was performed at our family home, with a large party following it. Every moment of the wedding brought great happiness to Elizabeth and me, and to my father as well.

We planned to spend our honeymoon at a villa that Elizabeth had inherited from her family. It sat on the shores of beautiful Lake Como in northern Italy. We would be crossing Lake Geneva first and spending our wedding night at an inn in the town of Evian before starting our land journey down into Italy.

The beauty of that ride across the lake on a

FRANKENSTEIN

glorious summer day, with snowy Mont Blanc in the background, filled us both with joy. But then I noticed that joy was replaced by a look of fear in Elizabeth's eyes.

I took her hand in mine and smiled down at her, trying hard to reassure her that everything was fine, that I was happy and proud to have her as my wife. But in my heart, I wondered if she was dreading the confession of my terrible secret . . . the secret I had promised to reveal the following day.

That following day was actually only a few hours away, for the sun was setting as we landed on the shores of Evian. That sunset seemed to bring my own fears back to me, and I heard that horrible voice again. "*I shall be with you on your wedding night.*"

CHAPTER 20

A Wedding Night Victim!

As night fell, a heavy rain began to beat down on the little inn. From the window of our sitting room, we watched the wind and rain kick up the waves in the lake. The eerie gusts and the pounding storm filled me with a thousand fears once again. My only comfort was the pistol hidden inside my shirt.

Elizabeth silently watched the terror build up on my face until she finally asked, "What are you so terribly frightened of, my dear Victor?"

FRANKENSTEIN

"It's only this dreadful night, my love," I tried to reassure her. "Once it passes, everything will be fine."

Then I realized that if the fiend and I were to confront each other that night, I couldn't let Elizabeth witness it. So I begged her, "Please, my dear, go into our bedroom and lie down to rest. You've had a tiring day. I'll join you shortly."

Once Elizabeth had left the sitting room, I walked through every inch of every hallway of the inn, inspecting every corner where the fiend might hide. But there was no trace of him.

I was beginning to believe that some real stroke of luck had prevented his carrying out his threat . . . when I suddenly heard a dreadful scream coming from our bedroom!

In that instant, I realized the true meaning of the monster's threat! I rushed into the bedroom, only to be frozen at the doorway by the horrifying sight before me!

FRANKENSTEIN

There, thrown across the bed, was my dear, sweet Elizabeth, unmoving and lifeless. Her head was hanging down over the side of the bed, with her hair partly hiding a pale face now frozen into a twisted mask of terror.

I felt the blood leave my body, and I collapsed to the floor, unconscious!

When I came to, I was on a sofa in our sitting room, surrounded by the horror-stricken people from the inn. I jumped up and ran back to our bedroom, where Elizabeth's body had been placed in a more peaceful position on the bed. Her face and neck had been covered over with a cloth.

I tore the cloth away and took her in my arms. While she appeared to only be asleep, her cold, stiff body confirmed that she was dead . . . that and the murderous black finger-marks on her neck!

As I lifted my eyes in agony to appeal to the heavens, I discovered a hideous, grinning face at the open window. That evil grin seemed to

FRANKENSTEIN

be mocking me as a fiendish finger pointed at my dear Elizabeth's body.

"I have had my revenge, oh master," he cackled hoarsely. "I am here, as I swore I would be . . . on your wedding night. I have taken away from you all your hopes for happiness, just as you took away mine!"

I rushed toward the window, pulling the pistol from my shirt as I ran. I fired off several shots, but he was much too quick.

Leaping from window, he ran towards the lake and dove into the water.

The shots from my pistol had brought a crowd into the room. We rushed to the lake, and while some spread out in boats and with nets, others searched the woods nearby. Many hours later, we were forced to give up the search. The murderer had escaped!

Utterly exhausted, I returned to the inn. There was nothing more I could do for Elizabeth, but if the fiend were planning to harm my family, I had to return home immediately!

A Worldwide Search Begins

I returned to Geneva to find my father and brother alive and safe. But the sad news I brought proved to be the final blow to my father's poor health. He simply couldn't go on living with the grief of the horrible deaths of his loved ones. Only a few days after my return, he took his last breath and died in my arms.

This was the final blow for me as well. The deaths of William, Justine, Henry, Elizabeth, and now my father were too much for my weakened mind to cope with. I went

FRANKENSTEIN

completely mad and had to be locked up in a hospital for the insane for many months.

When I finally awoke in my right mind, I was filled with an even greater desire for revenge than ever before. And this time, I was determined to do something about it.

I tried asking for help from the police in Geneva. I told my whole story to a judge, not leaving out any detail. Although he seemed to believe me, he decided that the superhuman powers of the monster, plus the time that had passed since the murders, made it impossible for anyone to catch him.

That left me with only one choice—to go after the fiend myself, even if it meant spending the rest of my life doing it!

Gathering together all the money I had, I made plans to leave Geneva. But I asked myself, "Where should I go? The monster could be anywhere on the face of the earth."

I began wandering through the city, and as night fell, I found myself at the cemetery

FRANKENSTEIN

where William, Elizabeth, and my father were buried. I knelt at their graves and called out my vow to the heavens. "I swear I will pursue the fiend who took the lives of these loving, innocent people and make him pay for his crimes!"

The stillness of the night was broken by a loud, fiendish laugh that deafened me as it echoed from mountain to mountain. When the laughter died away, a hated, familiar voice whispered, "I have had my revenge on you, just as I said I would. I have made your life miserable, just as you did mine. And you will live to be even more miserable!"

I darted to the spot where the voice had come from, but the fiend had fled with a speed that no human could hope to match.

From that moment on, the pursuit had begun. With only a few clues to go on, I spent many months following the fiend throughout every country in Europe and Africa, and finally up into Russia.

FRANKENSTEIN

Sometimes, frightened peasants who had sighted him pointed out his route. Other times, he, himself, left clues to guide me. He seemed to want me to suffer the agony of getting close and not capturing him.

I found messages from him cut into the bark of trees or scratched into rocks. The more he taunted me, the more determined I was to continue on and have my revenge.

Heading north in Russia, I found his last message: "Wrap yourself in furs and prepare to suffer on a long journey. Your suffering will satisfy my eternal hatred of you."

I bought a sledge and dog team, and crossed the snows of Russia with amazing speed. I was only a day behind him when I reached a tiny village and learned that the night before, a huge monster had attacked the villagers. Threatening them with guns and pistols, he had stolen their entire supply of food for the winter, plus a sledge and dog team for crossing the ice.

FRANKENSTEIN

The villagers warned me, "Don't follow him! He headed out across the frozen sea. There's no land at all in that direction. You'll both be destroyed, if not by the ice breaking under you and drowning you, then by the cold freezing you to death!"

But I wouldn't take their warning. I had to have my revenge at any cost!

I don't know how many weeks or months I spent on the ice, suffering unbelievable cold, thirst, hunger, and exhaustion. Then one morning, I reached the top of an ice mountain and discovered a dark spot moving on the frozen sea below.

I lifted my telescope to my eye and cried out in triumph when I saw that the spot was a sledge. Seated on it was a hideous shape I knew so well. Tears filled my eyes and I wept for joy.

I followed the fiend for two days, but I wasn't able to get any closer than the mile that separated us.

FRANKENSTEIN

But my hopes were suddenly dashed when the water under the ice beneath my sledge began to roll and swell. The wind picked up, blowing hard and tossing me about as if I were in a tornado. Then, with a tremendous roar, the ice cracked apart, opening up deep, wide rifts like those in an earthquake.

Those rifts instantly filled with water, forming a turbulent sea. That sea now separated me, on a small piece of ice, from my evil enemy who floated away.

Soon, he had disappeared from sight, and I was left to die a hideous death. My sledge would be my coffin and a block of ice my burial place!

While I was on that ice—and I don't know how long it was—all my dogs, except one, died off. My food was gone, and I was about to sink when I saw your ship. I had no idea that any ships came this far north.

I broke apart my sledge to make oars, and managed to move the block of ice closer to your

FRANKENSTEIN

ship. And although I was weak and close to death, I had decided that if you were heading south, I wouldn't come aboard. I preferred taking my chances on surviving in the sea than let anything stop me from pursuing my enemy. But you were heading north, and so I let you rescue me.

You saved my life, you and your men, and although I'm still weak from my ordeal, I *do* plan to continue my pursuit. . . .

* * * * *

Robert, my friend, that ends my story. I pray that I live long enough to find this terrible fiend and destroy him. But if I don't . . . if I die before I find him, you must promise to find him and take my revenge for me. Just remember, though, if he should appear before you, don't listen to anything he says. That fiend can be very persuasive. Don't trust him. Just kill him!

CHAPTER 22

Peace at Last!

Victor Frankenstein's strange and terrifying story was at an end. Robert Walton sat back in awe. He felt great respect as well as great sympathy for this young scientific genius. Still, his curiosity was aroused.

"Victor," he asked, "now will you tell me how you formed this creature and how you brought him to life?"

"Are you mad, Robert? What do you want to do, create another fiend like this one? Do you have any idea what would happen if someone did that? If another monster were

FRANKENSTEIN

let loose to terrorize the world? . . . No, no one will ever know my horrible secret! It will die with me!”

Weeks went by with no change in the ice surrounding the ship. It still threatened to crush the small vessel to bits.

Victor grew weaker and weaker each day, and now couldn't even get out of bed to look for the sledge or to get some air on deck.

Then one day, a roar of thunder in the distance brought the entire crew out on deck. That roar signaled the cracking and splitting of the solid sea of ice. Two days after that, a path wide enough for the ship to sail through opened up. They were free!

When Captain Walton gave the order to lift anchor and set sail, a great shout went up from the crew. The overjoyed captain hurried down to the cabin to tell Victor that they were heading back to England at last.

“No, you can't go back,” gasped Victor. “You must help me find my enemy first.”

FRANKENSTEIN

The captain shook his head sadly. "I can't expose my men to any more danger. Please try to understand that, Victor. I can't put my ambition for exploration or your desire for revenge above the safety of all these men."

"Then go if you must, but I can't go with you. My mission isn't over yet. I know I'm weak, but I have to go on." With that, Victor tried to lift his frail body out of bed, but the effort was too great. He fell back on the pillow in a faint.

When he regained consciousness, Victor had difficulty breathing and couldn't speak at all. The ship's doctor was called and after examining the gravely ill man, he gave the captain the sad news.

"He only has a few hours to live, sir. I'm sorry."

Robert sat by Victor's bed and stared, unmoving, at this man he had befriended.

After a while, Victor's eyelids fluttered, and he whispered, "Come closer, my friend, for I

FRANKENSTEIN

don't have much strength left. I know I'm dying, and I want you to know that my desire for revenge is gone.

"I realize now that *I* am to blame for deserting my creature after I formed him. I should have seen to it that he had a better life, with happiness and love. But it's too late for that now. Now, I have a responsibility to all mankind to see that this creature is stopped before he murders again. I can't do it myself any longer, and I beg you once again to do it for me."

With that, Victor grasped the hand of his last friend on earth. His lips spread in a soft, gentle smile and his eyes closed forever...

That night, as Robert was standing on deck thinking about his friend, he heard a hoarse voice coming from the cabin where Victor's body lay in its coffin.

Hurrying below deck, Robert flung open the door and found a gigantic creature bent over the coffin, weeping as he pressed Victor's cold,

FRANKENSTEIN

stiff hand against the long, ragged hair hanging over his face. Unearthly groans seemed to come from his soul as he wept.

Seeing Robert at the doorway, the creature sprang towards the window.

“Wait! Stay!” called the captain.

The creature pointed down at Victor and said hoarsely, “He is my last victim. I only want him to pardon me now for destroying all the people he loved.”

Robert’s first impulse was to follow Victor’s last wishes and kill the creature, but something in the creature’s voice aroused the captain’s pity and curiosity. “If you had asked for forgiveness sooner . . . if you had stopped your murderous acts of revenge sooner, Victor would still be alive. Do you understand? This is all your doing!”

“I hated what I was doing,” replied the creature. “I was selfish and thought only of my own feelings, I admit it. But I wasn’t always that way. I began life as a loving,

FRANKENSTEIN

sympathetic being. All I wanted was to have people ignore my ugliness and love me for the goodness inside me. But nobody did. Nobody gave me a chance. All anybody showed me was hatred...and that was only because of my ugliness. Even the man who created me felt that way. Yes, that's what changed me.

"Yet there was a time when I pitied Victor Frankenstein, seeing the misery I had caused him. But when I learned that he was planning to marry and have a happy life for himself, after taking away any chance of one for me, my pity turned to a thirst for revenge!"

Robert listened to the monster, first with pity, then with suspicion as Victor's warning echoed: "*He can be very persuasive.*"

Then his suspicion turned to anger, and he shouted, "Evil wretch! First you drive him to his death, then you come here to ask his forgiveness. You don't know what it means to be sorry. The only thing you know is hate!"

"What do *you* know of hate? Why don't you

FRANKENSTEIN

hate Felix, who drove me from his cottage when I was just befriending his aged father? Why don't you hate the peasant who shot me after I saved his child from drowning? . . . I have been scorned and kicked and trampled. Isn't that reason enough to hate all mankind? You hate me too, Captain, . . . but not as much as I hate myself for murdering innocent and helpless people who never did me any harm.

"But don't be frightened. The only murder I plan to commit now is my own. I will leave your ship on the ice raft that brought me here and head north, to the coldest, most remote part of the globe.

"There, far away from the world, I will build a fire, my funeral pyre, and burn my miserable body to ashes. Then the wind will sweep those ashes into the sea, for I have no wish for any part of me to be found by a curious traveler who might attempt to create another being like me.

FRANKENSTEIN

“And now I say, ‘Farewell, world! . . . Farewell, Victor Frankenstein!’”

With those words, the creature leaped through the cabin window.

Robert sprang towards the window after him, but the creature was already on his ice raft, which lay close to the ship. As Robert watched, the raft was carried along by the waves.

In moments, the creature was far away, lost in the darkness . . .