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Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus*  
(Simplified Edition by ChatGPT)

## Part 1

### Letter 1

To Mrs. Saville, England.

St. Petersburg, Dec. 11th, 17—.

My dear sister, I know you were afraid for me. So I write at once to tell you I came here in safety. No bad thing has happened at the start of this hard trip. I feel strong, and I feel more sure each day that I can do what I planned to do.

I am now far to the north of London. When I walk in the streets here, I feel a cold wind on my face. It is sharp, and it makes my skin hurt a little, but it also makes me feel awake and full of life. I think of where this wind has been. It has come from the cold lands I am going to. It is like a sign from that far place, as if it is already touching me.

You may not feel what I feel, but I will try to say it. When that wind moves on my face, my mind fills with bright dreams. People say the far north is only cold and empty and dead. I try to force myself to think that way, but I cannot. In my mind, it is not only ice. It is also light, and wonder, and new life. I see the sun there, not going down like it does here, but staying low and still giving light. I see a wide, calm sea. I see a land that no one has walked on before.

I tell myself, “What if I am wrong?” But even then I have other hopes. I may

find a new way across those seas. I may learn the cause of the strange pull that makes the small point of the ship turn and point one way. I may learn things about the sky that men cannot see in the lands we know. It is not only for me. I tell myself it can help many people, for a very long time, if it is true.

When I think like this, my fear falls away. My mind becomes calm, as if it holds on to one clear thing. This plan has lived in me since I was a boy. I read old books of sea trips. You may remember that our good uncle had many of them. My school life was not well made, but I read those books day and night. They were my world. And when I learned that my father did not want me to go to sea, I felt a pain I could not speak out loud.

For a time, I turned to poems. I thought I could write like the great names I loved. For one year, I lived in that sweet dream. I will not hide it from you: I failed. I felt shame, and I felt a heavy weight in my heart. But then I got money that let me choose my path again. So my old wish came back, like a fire that had been under ash and now had air.

Six years have passed since I gave myself to this great plan. I can still see the hour when I said, "This is what I will do." I began to make my body fit for hard life. I went with men who hunt the great sea beasts in the north sea. I chose cold, and lack of food, and lack of water, and long nights with no sleep. I worked more than the men who did it for pay. When day was done, I studied. I learned the numbers and the ways of the sea. Twice I took work as a low man on a ship that went to cold seas, and I did well. I felt a small pride when the one in charge told me he wanted me to stay and rise.

And now, dear sister, I ask myself if I do not earn the right to try for one great thing. I could live in ease, but I chose this. My heart is firm, and my will is firm. Still, my hope moves up and down. At times I feel high, and at times I feel low. This trip will be long and hard. I must hold up the hearts of other men, and at times I must hold up my own.

Soon I will go from this town to Archangel. Men here move fast over snow in small sleds. It is not like the slow shake of a coach. Yet I do not want to die on the road from cold alone. I have got warm skins to wear. On a ship it will be worse,

when a man sits still for long hours, and his blood seems to turn to ice.

In two or three weeks I will leave for Archangel. There I will hire a ship, and I will hire men who know the whale life. I do not plan to sail until June. When will I come back? I cannot say. If I win, it may be many months, even years, before we meet. If I fail, I may see you soon, or I may never see you again.

Farewell, my dear Margaret. May good things fall on you. May I come back and tell you, again and again, how much I thank you for your love and care.

Your loving brother,

R. Walton

## Letter 2

To Mrs. Saville, England.

Archangel, 28th March, 17—.

My dear sister, time moves so slow in this place. Ice and snow seem to shut me in. Still, I have taken the next step. I have hired a ship. Now I spend my days in finding men to sail with me. The men I have got so far look strong and ready. They seem to have no fear.

But there is one thing I do not have, and I feel the hurt of it more each day. I have no friend here, Margaret. When my heart burns with hope, there is no one close to share my joy. When my heart drops, there is no one to lift me up. I can write to you, yes, and I do. But paper is a poor way to send the deep parts of a man. I want a friend who can see my face and answer with his own face. I want a man who can feel with me, and speak with me, and guide me when my mind runs too far.

You may smile and call me too full of dreams. But I feel this need in a hard way. I have no one near me who is gentle and brave at the same time. I have no one with a good mind, wide and trained, with tastes like mine, who can say, "This plan is good," or "This plan is wrong." I know my own fault. I move too fast. I do not wait well when a hard wall stands in my way. And there is more. I taught myself. For the first years of my life, I ran wild. I read only those sea books from our

uncle. Later I found the great poets, and I loved them. But only after that did I see what I lacked. I did not know other tongues. Now I am eight and twenty, and I feel more empty in this than many boys of fifteen.

I do not say this to excuse myself. I only say it to you, as to one who knows my heart. I wish for a friend who would not laugh at my dreams, but who would still shape them and keep them true.

These are sad words, and they help no one. I will not find such a friend in this town of trade men and sea men. And I may not find him on the wide sea. Still, even in rough men, there can be good feeling. My man who stands under me, for one, is full of brave life. He wants to rise, and he wants name and place. He is an English man. He has hard ways at times, but he also has a good heart, and I have seen it. I first met him on a whale ship, and now I have got him to help me in my plan.

The man who will guide the ship is also good in his way. He is kind, and he does not rule by fear. I like this more than I can say. I have lived with you in a quiet life, and I cannot bear the cruel ways some men use on ships. I do not think such cruel rule is needed. When I heard of a sea man who is known for a kind heart, and who is still strong and brave, I felt I was lucky to get him.

I first heard of him in a way that felt like a tale. A lady spoke of him, and she said he gave her the joy of her life. He once loved a young woman, a young Russian, with some money but not great money. He had earned a good sum at sea, and her father said yes to the match. He saw the young woman once before the day they were to be joined. She was in tears. She fell at his feet and begged him to set her free. She said she loved another man, a poor man, and her father would not let her have him.

My sea man did not grow hard or mad with shame. He calmed her. He asked the name of the man she loved. Then he gave up his own claim at once. He had bought land to live on, and he had thought to rest there for the rest of his life. But he gave that land, and the rest of his money, to the poor man. He went to the father and asked him to let the girl go to the man she loved. The father said no, for he felt bound by his word. So my sea man left his land and went away. He did not

come back until he heard the young woman was, at last, joined to the man of her choice. He is a good man. Yet he is not taught by school. He is quiet, and he has a rough, plain way that can hide how much is in him.

Do not think, because I speak of want, that I will turn back. My will is fixed. I only wait for the weather. This winter has been very hard, but men here say the spring will come early. I will do nothing wild. You know me. You know that when other lives are in my care, I will be calm and careful.

Still, I cannot hide my deep feeling as the time comes near. I am going to a place no man knows well. I feel fear, and I feel joy, mixed in one. I will not go on and on. I will end here. May the sky keep you safe. Write when you can. Your words may reach me when I need them most.

Your loving brother,  
Robert Walton

### Letter 3

To Mrs. Saville, England.

July 7th, 17—.

My dear sister, I write in haste. I am safe, and my ship has gone well on her way. This note will go back to you on a trade ship that is going home from Archangel. That ship is more lucky than I am, for I may not see my own land for many years.

Still, my heart is high. My men are bold, and they seem set on the work. Great sheets of ice pass by us each day. They show us the danger of the cold sea we go into. Yet my men do not fall into fear. We have reached a very high part of the world. It is summer, so it is not as cold as it could be. The south wind still brings a touch of warmth, more than I had thought I would feel so far north.

Not much has happened that is worth a long tale. We have had hard wind once or twice, and we had a leak, but such things are small in this life. I will be glad if we meet no worse than this.

Farewell for now, dear Margaret. For you, and for me, I will not run into danger

in a blind way. I will be cool. I will keep on. I will be wise.

R.W.

Letter 4

To Mrs. Saville, England.

August 5th, 17—.

My dear sister, a strange thing has happened, and I must write it down. It is likely I will see you before these pages reach you, but I still must set it here.

Last Monday, July 31st, ice came round us on all sides. It shut the ship in, and left us only a small space of sea. The place was not safe. A thick fog lay on us too, so we could not see far. We stayed still, and we hoped the air would change.

Near two in the day, the fog broke. Then we saw ice fields in every way we looked. They were great and rough, like wide white land with no end. Some men made low sounds of fear. My own mind grew tight and watchful. Then, all at once, we saw a thing that pulled our eyes away from our own danger.

A low sled went over the ice, far off, about half a mile away. Dogs drew it. A being sat on it. He had the shape of a man, but he looked far too large, like a man made on a greater scale. He drove the dogs fast, and he went north. We watched him through our glass until the ice hills hid him.

We could not know what it meant. We thought we were far from any land, many miles from any home of man. Yet that sight made us feel we did not know the truth of our place. Still, the ice shut us in, and we could not follow even if we wished.

About two hours later, we heard the sea move under the ice. Before night, the ice broke and set our ship free. Even then we did not sail at once, for we feared the great loose ice in the dark. I used that time to rest a little.

In the morning, as soon as there was light, I went up on deck. I saw the men all on one side, looking down and speaking to someone in the sea. It was a sled like the first one. It had drifted to us in the night on a large piece of ice. Only one dog was still alive. In the sled lay a man, and the men tried to get him to come on

board.

This man was not like the great one we saw before. He did not look like a wild man of some far land. He was a man of our part of the world. When I came near, the man spoke to me in English, though with a strange sound in his words. He said, before he would step on the ship, he wished to know where we were going.

I was shocked. He was near death, yet he asked as if he still had the power to choose. I told him we were on a trip to find new things, toward the north pole. When he heard this, he seemed calm. He agreed to come.

Oh, Margaret, if you had seen him then. His arms and legs were almost ice. His body was thin from hard work and pain. I have never seen a man in such a sad state. We tried to carry him down into the warm room, but as soon as he left the fresh air, he fell without sense. So we brought him back to the deck. We rubbed him with strong drink and made him take a little. When we saw a sign of life, we wrapped him in warm cloth and set him near the warm place in the ship. By slow steps he came back. He ate a little soup, and it helped him.

Two days went by before he could speak with ease. More than once I feared his mind was gone. When he grew a little stronger, I took him into my own room and cared for him as well as I could. I have never seen a man so hard to look away from. His eyes often look wild, almost mad. Yet, at times, if someone does him a kind act, even a small one, his whole face changes. It becomes soft and sweet, in a way I cannot match to any face I have known. Most of the time, though, he is sad and full of loss, and at times he sets his teeth as if he cannot bear the weight in his mind.

I had to work hard to keep my men from him. They wanted to ask him a thousand things. I would not let them trouble him. He needed full rest in body and mind. Still, once my man under me asked why he had come so far over the ice in such a strange way. At once the sick man's face fell into deep dark. He said only, "To find one who ran from me."

The man under me asked if the one he chased had gone the same way. The sick man said, "Yes." Then my man said we had seen such a sled the day before we found him, with dogs and a man on it, going over the ice. This woke the sick man

like a flame. He asked many things about the way that “the evil one,” as he called him, had gone.

Soon after, when we were alone, the sick man said I must have felt curious, but I was too kind to ask. I said yes, it would be wrong to press him. He said I had saved him, and that I had given him life back. Then he asked if I thought the ice breaking had killed the other sled. I said I could not know. The ice broke near night, and the one he chased might have reached a safe place before then. I could not judge.

From that hour, the sick man seemed to gain new life, though his body was still weak. He wished to go up on deck and watch for the other sled, but I made him stay in the warm room, for the air was too hard for him. I told him my men would watch and tell him at once if we saw anything.

This is the record up to this day. He grows better, but he is still very quiet. He does not like others to come in, but with me he is calm. His ways are so mild that the men all care for him, though they do not know him. As for me, I begin to love him like a brother. His grief fills me with care and pain. He must have been great in his better days, for even now, broken as he is, he is still good to look at and good to be near.

August 13th, 17—.

My care for my guest grows each day. I feel both wonder and sorrow when I see him. How can I watch so fine a man fall under such pain and not feel my heart break? He is gentle, yet he is wise. He has a trained mind. When he speaks, his words come fast, and they move the heart.

He is now much better and often goes on deck, still looking out for the sled that went before. Yet he is not so closed in his own pain that he cannot care for the plans of other men. He has spoken to me many times of my own great plan, and I have told him all, with no lie. He heard me with close care. He even spoke in favor of my hope, and he asked about each small step I had taken.

With his care and warm feeling, I was led to speak with the full fire of my heart. I said how glad I would be to give up my money, my life, all I had, for this work.

As I spoke, a dark shade fell over his face. He tried to hold it back. He put his hands over his eyes. Then I saw tears run down between his fingers. A low sound broke from his chest. I stopped. At last he spoke in broken words: “Unhappy man! Do you share my mad wish too? Have you also drunk that drink that makes the mind burn? Hear me. Let me tell you my tale, and you will throw the cup from your lips!”

These words pulled me with strong need to hear more. But his pain was too great, and it took many hours of rest and calm talk to bring him back to quiet.

After that, he seemed to hate himself for being ruled by such strong feeling. He asked me about my early life. I told it fast. Then I spoke of my wish for a true friend, and of my need to feel close to another mind. I said a man has little joy if he has no such bond.

He said he agreed. He said a man is only half made, unless a wiser and better friend helps him. Then he said, “I once had a friend, the best of men. So I can speak of this. You have hope, and the world is still open to you. You have no true cause for such dark loss. But I—I have lost all. I cannot start life again.”

His face then held a calm grief that went deep into me. He said no more, and soon he went back to his room.

Even now, broken as he is, he feels the great beauty of the sky and sea. The stars, the water, the wide ice, the strange light of these far lands—these things can still lift his soul up from the earth. He seems like a man with two lives: one life in pain, and one life that can still rise, far above pain, for a short time.

August 19th, 17—.

Yesterday my guest said to me, “You can see, Captain Walton, that I have had great and strange pain. At one time I meant that the mind of it would die with me. But you have made me change. You seek knowledge and wisdom, as I once did. I hope your wish will not turn on you and bite you, as mine did. I do not know if my sad tale will help you. Yet you walk the same road I walked, and you face the same danger. So you may take from my story a lesson that can guide you if you win, and give you some calm if you fail. Get ready to hear of things most men

would call past belief. In these wild lands, things can seem more possible than in safe places. Still, my tale has its own signs of truth.”

I was glad he would tell me, but I did not want him to cut his own heart open again by speaking of his pain. Still, I felt a great need to hear him, partly from my wish to know, and partly from a wish to help him, if I could. I said so.

He said, “I thank you for your care, but it is of no use. My end is near. I wait for one thing only. Then I will rest. I know you wish to stop me, but you are wrong if you think anything can change what will be. Hear my life, and you will see how fixed it is.”

He told me he would begin his story the next day, when I had time. I thanked him with all my heart. Each night, when my work lets me, I will write down what he says, as close as I can to his own words. If I am too busy, I will at least make short notes. I know you will read this with deep care one day. And for me, who see him and hear his voice, it will be even more full of life.

Even now, as I begin this task, I can hear his strong voice in my ears. I can see his bright eyes, full of sad light. I can see his thin hand lift as he speaks, and his face shine for a moment with the soul inside. His story must be strange and hard, and the storm that broke his life must have been very dark indeed.

## Part 2

I am the man whom you saved. My name is Victor Frankenstein. I was born in Geneva. My family was one of the most respected families in that small city. For many years my father had worked for the public good. He was known as a man of honor and care. Before I was born, he had a dear friend. That friend fell into deep trouble and lost all his money. Many who once called him friend left him when he became poor. My father did not leave him. He searched for him, found him living in shame and pain, and helped him again.

This friend had a daughter. Her name was Elizabeth. She was very young when her mother died. Her father could not care for her well because of his sadness. After he too died, my father took the child into our home. Later she became more

than a sister to me. From the first day I saw her, I felt she was different from other children. Her hair was bright, her eyes soft and clear, and her smile calm. While I was wild and full of strong feeling, she was quiet and kind.

My parents were loving and gentle. I was their first child, and for some years their only one. They did not rule me with fear. They guided me with care. I grew in a house full of warmth. We lived in peace. I had no cause for anger or shame in my early years. If I now speak of pain, you must understand that my life did not begin in darkness. It began in light.

When I was about seven years old, we went to live near Lake Geneva. The water was wide and blue. The mountains stood high around it. In the summer, the air was soft and sweet. In the winter, snow covered the hills and the lake became still and cold. I loved to walk by the water and look at the waves. I felt something strong inside me when I saw the great forms of nature. I did not yet know why.

Elizabeth and I grew up together. She was taught to see beauty in small things. She loved to watch the sky change color at sunset. She loved flowers and small birds. I loved other things. I wanted to know how things worked. I would look at a stone and ask how it came to be there. I would see lightning and ask what power made it move. Even as a child, I wanted not only to see but to understand.

When I was thirteen years old, a small event changed my mind in a deep way. I found a book by chance in a house we visited in the country. The book was by an old writer who spoke of strange knowledge. He wrote about secrets of nature, about ways to control hidden forces. I read the book with burning interest. The ideas filled my head like fire. I ran home and told my father what I had found.

He looked at the book and said, "Do not waste your time on this." That was all. He did not explain why. He did not show me what was wrong in the book. His short words had a strong effect. Because he did not guide me, I kept reading such books in secret. I found more writers like the first. They spoke of making gold from base metal. They spoke of finding the secret of life. I believed them. I thought they held deep truth that others had lost.

If my father had taken the time to explain the errors in those old books, my path might have changed. But he did not. So I gave myself to these dreams. I built

small plans in my mind. I thought I would one day discover something great and new.

Around this time, a strong storm passed over our home. I stood at a window and watched. The sky grew dark and heavy. The wind rose. Then lightning broke across the sky and struck a tall tree near our house. In one bright moment, the tree was full of fire. When we went outside later, we saw that it was not burned in the way I had thought. It was broken and torn apart by a force I could not see.

A man who knew about such things spoke with us. He explained that the power was called electricity. He showed us a small machine that made sparks. I was amazed. The old books I had read seemed weak compared to this clear power. Slowly I began to doubt the old writers. Still, I did not leave them at once. My mind was not steady. It moved between old dreams and new ideas.

When I was seventeen, my parents decided I should go to study at the university in Ingolstadt. I was glad at first. I wanted to learn more about the world. But before I left, a sad thing happened. Elizabeth became ill with a fever. My mother cared for her day and night. At last Elizabeth grew better, but my mother fell sick from the same illness. Her strength left her quickly.

On her last day, she called Elizabeth and me to her side. She joined our hands and said she hoped we would one day be husband and wife. She spoke of love and care. Then she died calmly. I cannot speak fully of that pain. It was the first great loss of my life. Until then I had known only joy and warm hope.

I left for Ingolstadt soon after. My father thought the change would help me. The road was long. When I arrived, I felt alone and unsure. I had lost my mother. I was far from home. Yet I also felt a strange excitement. I was entering a new world.

At the university, I met a professor who taught natural science. I showed him the books I had studied. He looked at them with a smile that hurt me. He said those writers were long out of date. He asked why I had wasted time on them. His tone made me feel small and foolish. Still, he advised me to begin again and study modern science.

Another teacher spoke to me in a different way. He did not laugh at my past.

He saw my strong wish to know. He said that the new science had done great things. It had shown the hidden laws of nature. It had explained many things that were once mystery. His words lit a new fire in me. I felt as if I stood at the edge of a great sea of knowledge.

From that day, I gave myself fully to study. I read day and night. I forgot my friends. I forgot even to write home at times. My mind burned with one deep question: how does life begin? What makes a body move and think? Why does death come? If life can start, can it also be given again?

These thoughts did not leave me. They grew stronger each month. I began to study the human body. I watched how it changed after death. I visited places where the dead were kept. At first I felt horror. But soon that feeling grew dull. I told myself I was seeking truth.

I learned how bones join. I learned how muscles move. I learned how blood flows. Still the main secret stood before me like a closed door. I felt I was near it. I felt that if I worked harder, I would break it open.

Captain Walton, you look at me with concern. I see it in your face. You think I speak of dangerous things. You are right to fear. At that time, I did not fear. I believed I was chosen for a great task. I thought that if I could give life to lifeless matter, I would bring light to the world.

My body grew thin from work. I did not sleep enough. I did not eat enough. But I did not care. The idea filled all my thoughts. I pushed away doubt. I shut out other feelings. Even when I thought of Elizabeth and my father, I felt only a faint pull, as if from far away.

At last, after long months of study and dark work, I believed I had found the key. I knew how to bring a body to life. The thought made my heart beat fast. I did not stop to ask if I should do this thing. I asked only how soon I could begin.

### Part 3

I had found what I believed was the secret of life. The thought did not bring me peace. It brought a kind of wild joy that pushed all other feelings away. I began at

once to plan how I would carry out my work. The human body is made of many small and fine parts. To work on such small parts is very hard. So I decided to make a body larger than that of a common man. In that way, I thought the work would be easier.

I gathered what I needed from places of death. I will not speak in detail of those places. It is enough to say that I spent many nights in rooms where the air was heavy and still. At first my hands shook. At first my heart beat fast with fear and shame. But as time passed, those feelings grew weak. I told myself that I was working for a great good. I said that pain and fear were small prices to pay for such knowledge.

All winter I worked. The snow lay deep outside. The wind cried through the streets. I did not notice it. I did not see the sun rise or set. I lived only for my task. My room became full of tools and parts. My body grew thin and pale. My eyes hurt from long hours without rest. Still I went on.

Sometimes I would stop and look at what I had made so far. The form lay before me, still and silent. I tried to imagine the moment when it would open its eyes. I thought of the praise that would follow. I thought that I would be like a father to a new kind of being. I dreamed that it would bless me and call me its maker.

Yet there were moments when doubt rose in me. In those moments, I would turn away from the work and walk in the cold air. The clear sky would calm me. I would see the stars and feel small again. But then the thought would return: I had gone too far to stop. I must finish what I had begun.

At last, on a night of dark rain, I completed the work. The time had come to test my skill. The sky was black. The rain beat against the window. It was near one in the morning. I placed the body before me. I used the means I had prepared. My heart shook, but my hand did not fail.

A dull light filled the room. For a moment, all was still. Then I saw the chest rise. I saw the yellow eye open. The being breathed. Its hand moved.

In that instant, the dream died. The beauty I had imagined was not there. The skin was pale and stretched tight. The eyes were watery and dull. The lips were dark. The black hair hung around a face that seemed wrong in every part. The size

that I had chosen now made the shape more terrible. I had worked with care on each feature. But when they came together, they formed something that filled me with horror.

I could not stay in the same room. I ran out. I walked up and down in my room next door. I tried to calm myself. I told myself that I was tired. I told myself that in the morning, the sight would not seem so bad. But fear had taken hold of me.

At last, I threw myself on my bed. I fell into a troubled sleep. In my dream, I saw Elizabeth walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. She looked well and happy. I ran to her and kissed her. At once her face changed. It became pale and cold. I held in my arms not Elizabeth but the body of my dead mother, wrapped in a cloth. I woke with a cry.

The moon shone into the room. By its light I saw the being standing near my bed. Its eyes were open and fixed on me. Its mouth moved as if it tried to speak. One hand was stretched toward me.

I felt a cold fear that I cannot put into simple words. I jumped from the bed and ran down the stairs. I could not bear to look at it. I spent the rest of the night walking in the street. The rain had stopped, but the air was wet and cold. I did not feel it. I felt only shame and dread.

When morning came, I did not return at once. I feared what I might find. At last, when the sun was high, I went back. The door of my room stood open. The being was gone.

I cannot describe the strange mix of relief and fear I felt. It was as if a weight had lifted, yet another had taken its place. Where had it gone? What would it do? I had given life to something I did not understand. I had turned away from it at the first sight of its face. I had left it alone in a world that would not welcome it.

My body could no longer bear the strain. I fell into a fever. For many weeks I lay in a weak state. A dear friend from my home, Henry Clerval, had come to Ingolstadt to study. He found me in my sick room and cared for me with great kindness. When I was at last able to see clearly, I felt deep shame when I looked at him. He spoke with joy of plans for study and travel. I could not share his joy. My mind returned again and again to the being I had made.

I asked Henry if anything strange had been seen in the town. He said no. No one had spoken of a giant man. No news had come. I tried to feel calm. I told myself that the being might have died. I told myself that it might have hidden in some forest far away. Still, the thought of it did not leave me.

Months passed. Spring came. The air grew warm. Henry led me outside. We walked in the fields. He spoke of beauty and hope. Slowly, my strength returned. Yet a shadow stayed in my heart.

Then a letter came from my father. The paper shook in my hand as I opened it. The words cut me like a knife. My young brother William had been killed.

He had gone out to play in the fields near our home and did not return. They found his body the next morning. There were marks on his neck. The sign of murder was clear.

I cannot tell you the pain that filled me. I saw at once the shape of the being in my mind. Could it be that my work had caused this? I tried to push the thought away. I told myself I had no proof. Yet deep inside, I felt a dark fear.

I set out at once for Geneva. As I drew near our home, a storm rose in the sky. Lightning broke across the mountains. I stood and watched as it lit up the peaks and the trees. In one bright flash, I saw a figure on the side of the mountain. It was large, moving with speed that no common man could match. My heart stopped. I knew then, in that moment, that it was the being I had made.

I felt sure of it, though it was dark and far away. I saw its shape against the sky. It moved away into the forest. The truth struck me like the lightning. I had made a creature, and that creature had taken the life of my brother.

When I reached home, I found my family in deep sorrow. Elizabeth wept and blamed herself, for she had let William wear a small picture that night. The picture had been found in the pocket of a servant girl named Justine. She was accused of the crime.

I knew she was innocent. The being must have placed the picture there. But how could I speak? If I said that a giant being, made by my own hand, had killed William, who would believe me? They would think me mad. And if they did believe me, what shame would fall on my father's name?

Justine was brought to trial. I watched her stand before the judges. She spoke softly and with tears. She said she did not kill William. Still, fear and false signs stood against her. She was found guilty.

I felt as if I myself held the rope that would take her life. I walked alone at night. I cursed my own work. I wished that I had died before that night in my room. I wished that the being had killed me instead of my brother.

Justine was put to death. Elizabeth's heart broke. My father grew old in sorrow. And I carried in silence the knowledge that I had begun this chain of pain.

Captain Walton, you see now why I speak to you as I do. You wish to reach a far place and to gain great knowledge. I too wished for knowledge. I too believed that I could cross a line that others had not crossed. I did not think of the cost.

But my tale is not yet done. You have heard of my crime. Now you must hear of the being itself. You must hear from the mouth of the one I made. For though I call it a monster, it spoke with words that cut me more deeply than any knife. And in those words, I heard not only anger, but also pain.

#### Part 4

Some months after the death of Justine, my sorrow grew too heavy to bear inside the walls of our home. I felt that every room held a memory of loss. My father tried to comfort me. Elizabeth spoke to me with gentle care. But their love only made my guilt more sharp. I knew that I alone carried the true cause of our pain.

I left Geneva and went into the mountains. I walked alone among the high rocks and the fields of ice. The cold air cleared my head for a short time. The great peaks stood silent and strong. The wide white snow seemed clean and free from the stain of blood. When I looked at the vast forms of nature, I felt small. For a moment, my grief seemed less.

One day I climbed high, toward a great sea of ice between the mountains. The air was thin and sharp. The wind cut my face. Still I went on. I needed to move. I needed to feel something other than the pain in my mind.

As I stood on a flat place of ice, I saw a figure moving toward me across the wide white field. At first it seemed small against the great land. But as it came closer, I saw its size and shape. My heart beat fast. I knew that form. I knew the long limbs and the strange walk.

The being came near. I felt both rage and fear rise in me. I called out, “You dare to come near me? Have you not done enough? You killed my brother. You caused the death of an innocent girl. Why do you stand before me?”

The being stopped a short distance away. Its face showed deep feeling. Its voice, when it spoke, was rough but clear.

“I expected this welcome,” it said. “All men hate me. Why should you not hate me, who made me what I am? Yet hear me. I am your work. I should be your Adam. But I am like a fallen one, cast away from joy. Everywhere I go, I am driven from human sight. I ask only that you listen.”

I felt anger burn in me. “Listen to you?” I cried. “You ask for mercy after you have shown none?”

The being did not step back. It raised its hand, not in threat, but as if to beg for calm.

“I do not ask for mercy,” it said. “I ask for justice. Hear my story. Then you may judge me. If I am evil, then I will accept your hate. But if I have suffered beyond what you can know, then you must see your part in it.”

There was something in its voice that held me. It did not speak like a wild animal. It spoke with thought and care. My rage did not vanish, but it paused. I told it to speak, and to speak quickly.

“Not here,” it said. “The wind is strong, and your anger is strong. Come to a place where we can sit and talk.”

Against my better sense, I followed. We went to a small hut high in the mountains, built by shepherds in summer. Inside, there was little light, but the walls kept out the wind. I stood near the door, ready to run or fight. The being sat on the floor. It looked at me with eyes that held pain.

Then it began to speak in the first person, telling me of its life.

“I remember the first moment of my being,” it said. “I opened my eyes. I saw

light. It hurt me. I closed my eyes again. I did not know what I was. I felt cold and hunger. I tried to move, and I fell. My limbs were weak. I did not understand the world around me.

“You were there. I saw you. I reached out my hand toward you. I did not know fear. I knew only that you were the first shape I saw. But you ran from me. I was alone.

“I left the room and went into the open air. The night was dark and wet. The rain fell on me. I felt pain from the cold, but I did not know why. I walked, though I did not know where I was going. The ground was hard. I fell many times. Each time I rose again.

“When the sun came up, I felt warmth for the first time. I liked it. I sat and watched the light move across the sky. Birds sang. I heard their sounds and tried to make the same sounds. But when I opened my mouth, only a rough noise came out. It frightened me.

“I found berries and ate them. I drank from a stream. Slowly, I learned what eased my pain and what caused it. Fire burned me when I touched it, yet it also gave me heat. I did not understand this at first. I cried out when it hurt me. I learned by suffering.

“After some time, I came near a small village. I saw houses and people. I felt hope. I thought I might find help. I walked into the street. The children screamed. The women fainted. The men threw stones at me and drove me away. I ran in fear and pain.

“From that day, I understood that I was different. I did not yet know why they hated me. I had done nothing to them. Still, they chased me as if I were a wild beast.

“I hid in a small shed near a cottage in the country. Through a crack in the wood, I could see the people who lived there. An old man, a young man, and a young woman. They were poor. I saw them work hard. I saw them share their little food. I watched them day after day.

“At first I stole some of their food at night. But when I saw that they had so little, I stopped. Instead, I gathered wood and left it near their door while they

slept. I cleared snow from their path. I wished to help them, though they did not know I was there.

“As I watched them, I began to understand their sounds. They spoke often to each other. I listened. I learned the meaning of words. Slowly, I learned to speak in my own mind. I learned that the young man was named Felix, the young woman Agatha, and the old man their father.

“They were sad. I could see it in their faces. Yet they loved each other. That love moved me deeply. I felt a strong wish to join them, to sit by their fire and be part of their small world.

“In time, another person came to live with them. A young woman from a far land. She did not know their language. Felix taught her each day. I listened and learned with her. In this way, I learned to speak more clearly. I learned to read. I found books left in the woods and read them slowly. From those books, I learned of men and cities, of love and war, of right and wrong.

“In those pages, I found my own mind grow. I asked myself who I was. Why was I alone? Why did I look as I did? When I saw my face in a pool of water, I understood at last why people ran from me. I saw the shape that caused fear.

“Still, I hoped. I told myself that if I could speak gently, if I could show my good heart, the family would accept me. I waited for a day when the young ones were away. I entered the cottage and spoke to the old man, who was blind. He could not see my form.

“I told him I was alone and unhappy. I asked for kindness. He answered me with calm words. He said that if I was honest and kind, I would find friends. My heart filled with joy.

“But then the others returned. They saw me. Their faces changed to horror. Felix struck me and drove me from the house. I tried to speak, but they did not listen. I ran away, my heart full of pain and anger.

“In that hour, I felt something break inside me. I had tried to be good. I had tried to help. I had asked only for love. And I was met with blows.

“I burned the cottage in my rage. I left the place and walked far away. I thought of you, my maker. I found papers in your coat that you had left in the room of my

birth. From them, I learned your name and your home. I decided to seek you.

“On my way, I met a child. I thought a child might not fear me. I thought I could teach him to love me. But when I took him in my arms, he struggled and cried out. He said his father was a great man, and his name was Frankenstein. At that name, anger rose in me. I saw that he belonged to you. In my fury and pain, I closed my hand around his throat. He stopped moving.

“I did not know at that moment that I had taken a life. When I saw what I had done, I felt both horror and dark pleasure. I had caused pain to you, as I felt you had caused pain to me.

“I found a small picture in his pocket. I placed it in the clothes of a sleeping girl near a house, so that she would be blamed. I wished to see you suffer. I wished the world to feel the pain I felt.”

The being stopped. Its chest rose and fell with deep breaths. I sat in silence, shaken by its words. I had heard from its own mouth the tale of its first days. I had heard how my fear and flight had left it alone in a world that struck it down.

Yet my heart was still torn between anger and pity.

## Part 5

The being looked at me with eyes that were no longer wild, but full of deep pain. Its voice grew softer, though it still held strength.

“I do not tell you this,” it said, “to ask you to say that I was right. I know what I have done. I know that I have brought death. But I was not born a killer. I was born with a heart that could feel joy. I loved the sun when it rose. I loved the sound of birds. I loved the small acts of kindness I could do for the poor family I watched. It was hate that changed me. It was rejection that turned my love into anger.”

I felt its words press against my mind. I remembered the night of its birth. I remembered how I had run from it. I had not spoken one word of guidance. I had not stayed to teach it even the simplest thing. I had left it alone, with strength greater than that of other men, but with the mind of a child.

Still, I said, “Your pain does not excuse your crime. My brother is dead. An

innocent girl died. No sorrow can undo that.”

The being lowered its head for a moment. Then it looked up again.

“I know,” it said. “Their blood is on my hands. But your hands are not clean. You gave me life. You gave me feeling. Then you left me. You gave me a form that all men hate. Then you left me to learn alone what love is and what it means to be shut out from it. I asked for bread and was given stones. I asked for a kind word and was struck. Tell me, what would you have done in my place?”

I had no answer ready. My mind turned in circles. I could not say that I would have done better. I had never stood alone in a world that feared my face at first sight.

The being went on.

“I am alone,” it said. “I am cut off from all that is warm and bright in the world. I see men walk together. I see them speak and laugh. I see a mother hold her child. I see friends stand side by side. I have none of this. I am strong, but I am lonely. And loneliness burns like fire.”

It stood then and moved a few steps away, as if the feeling inside it could not be held still.

“I do not ask you to love me,” it said. “I do not ask you to welcome me into your home. I ask for only one thing. Make me a being like myself. Make a woman for me. One who is as I am, who will not shrink from my face. One who will share my exile.”

I stared at it in shock.

“Never,” I said at once. “Shall I create another like you? Have you not shown what your kind can do?”

The being’s face twisted with pain, not rage.

“You judge me by my worst acts,” it said. “But those acts grew from misery. Give me a companion, and I will leave human lands forever. We will go to the wild places of the earth. We will live where no man walks. We will trouble no one. I swear it.”

I shook my head.

“You may swear now,” I said, “but how can I trust you? You have already

broken the peace of my life.”

The being stepped closer, but it did not raise its hand.

“I kept watch over the family for many months,” it said. “Did I harm them while I hoped for their love? No. I worked for them in secret. I would have given my life for one kind word from them. I was not born with hate. I learned it. If I have one being who will not turn away, I will have no cause to seek revenge on mankind.”

Its voice grew firmer.

“But if you refuse me,” it said, “I will make you curse the day you were born. I will work at your heart until it breaks. I will not rest while you know joy.”

I felt a chill run through me. This was no empty threat. I had seen what it could do.

Still, I tried to reason.

“Even if I agreed,” I said, “how can I be sure that this new being would share your promise? What if she hates you? What if she turns against you? What if you both decide to return and bring more sorrow? I might give life to a new race of beings who would destroy mankind.”

The being listened without anger.

“You think too far,” it said. “I think only of one thing: relief from endless solitude. I do not seek power. I seek peace. If she refuses me, we will part. But at least I will have tried to live as other beings live. You made me. You owe me some duty.”

The word “duty” struck me hard. It was true that I had brought this being into the world. I had acted as if I were greater than nature. I had taken upon myself the power to give life. Could I now deny all responsibility for the result?

I walked to the small window of the hut and looked out at the white fields of ice. The wind blew snow across the ground in long lines. The world seemed empty and cold, much like the being’s own life.

My mind moved between fear and pity. I feared what might happen if I agreed. I feared even more what might happen if I refused.

At last I turned back.

“If I do this,” I said slowly, “you must promise to leave Europe forever. You must promise never to harm another human being. You must promise that once you have your companion, you will disappear from our sight.”

The being’s face changed. For a moment, a look of deep hope shone there.

“I swear it,” it said. “By the sun that warms me and by the light of the moon that guides me at night, I swear that if you grant my request, I will leave mankind and trouble them no more.”

I studied its face. It seemed honest in that moment. Its eyes did not shift. Its voice did not tremble with hidden rage.

Yet I knew that I was stepping once more onto a dangerous path. I had already crossed one line and seen the cost. Now I stood before another.

“Very well,” I said at last, though my heart felt heavy. “I will try. But if I see any sign that you mean to break your word, I will destroy you.”

The being bowed its head.

“I understand,” it said. “I will watch your work from a distance. When you are done, I will come.”

Without another word, it left the hut and moved away across the snow. Soon its form grew small against the vast white land, and then it was gone.

I remained alone in the hut for a long time. The silence pressed on my ears. I had agreed to create life once more. I had agreed to bring into the world a second being like the first.

As I walked back down the mountain, my steps felt heavy. I had hoped that by coming into the wild air, I might find peace. Instead, I had bound myself to a new and fearful task.

Captain Walton, you see how my fate moves forward step by step. Each choice seems to grow from the last. I thought once that knowledge alone was my aim. Now I see that knowledge without care is a curse.

Yet at that time, I still believed that I could control what I had begun. I believed that by granting this one request, I could end the chain of pain.

I did not yet understand how wrong I was.

## Part 6

I returned to Geneva with a mind full of conflict. I told no one of the meeting in the mountains. My father saw that I was troubled, but he believed my sorrow still came from the loss of William and Justine. Elizabeth watched me with quiet concern. Her eyes searched my face, as if she hoped to find the old Victor there again.

I tried to act as before. I walked with my father. I spoke gently to Elizabeth. But inside, I felt a growing weight. I had promised the being that I would create a companion for it. I knew that to keep my word, I must leave home again. I told my father that I wished to travel to England to continue my studies. He agreed, thinking it would restore my health.

Elizabeth was sad at the thought of another parting, yet she did not stand in my way. She believed that time and work would heal my spirit. I could not meet her gaze for long. I carried a secret that stood between us.

Henry Clerval joined me on the journey. He was full of life and hope. He loved to see new places and meet new people. As we traveled through France and into England, he spoke of beauty, of art, of the great cities we passed. I tried to share his joy, but my mind often drifted to the promise I had made.

In England, I studied once more the methods I would need. I did not wish to repeat the careless rush of my first creation. I moved slowly, gathering knowledge and tools. Henry believed I worked only to improve my science. He did not know the true aim of my labor.

At times, when Henry and I walked together by the sea, I felt almost happy. The waves rolled in long lines toward the shore. The sky stretched wide and open. For a short hour, I could forget the being and its demand. But when night came, and I lay awake, the thought returned. I saw again the face of the creature in the hut. I heard its voice ask for justice.

After some months, I told Henry that I wished to travel alone to the north of Scotland. I said I needed quiet to finish certain studies. He did not press me with questions. He was kind and trusted me. We parted with warm words, and I sailed

to a small group of islands far from the busy towns.

The place I chose was lonely. A few poor fishermen lived there. The land was rough and bare. The wind never seemed to rest. The sea struck against the rocks day and night. I rented a small hut near the shore. It had little inside: a table, a bed, and space enough for my work.

In that wild place, I began again the dark task of creation. Each step felt heavier than before. I no longer believed I was bringing light into the world. I felt instead that I was digging deeper into shadow.

As I worked, doubts grew in my mind. What if the new being refused to go with the first? What if she saw in him the same horror that others saw? What if she turned away from him, and he returned to rage? Worse still, what if they joined together and chose not exile but power? Two such beings, strong and fast, could do great harm.

I tried to silence these fears, but they did not leave. The wind outside seemed to speak them back to me. The sound of the sea felt like a warning.

One night, as I sat alone at my table, I felt eyes on me. I turned toward the small window. There, beyond the glass, stood the being. It watched me with fixed attention. It had followed me across land and sea. It had found my hiding place.

My heart beat fast, but I did not call out. I knew it would not enter unless I failed in my promise. It wished only to see my progress. Its face held no smile. It waited.

That sight forced me to face the truth. I was not free. I was driven by fear of what it might do if I refused. I was not acting from kindness alone, but from dread.

As the form of the second being slowly took shape under my hands, my mind reached a breaking point. I imagined her waking to life. I imagined her eyes opening. Would she thank me? Would she curse me? Would she hate the first being for its looks and leave it in deeper despair? Or would they together form a bond that would turn against mankind?

I stood and looked at the unfinished body before me. It lay silent, without breath. In that moment, I felt the full weight of what I was about to do. I had once believed that I could control life. I had learned that I could not control even the result of

my own act.

The being outside still watched. I saw its face through the glass. It seemed full of expectation.

A sudden strength rose in me. I saw that I could not go on. I could not risk bringing another such creature into the world. I could not repeat my first mistake.

With one hard movement, I tore apart what I had made.

The sound of the act seemed loud in the small hut. I destroyed the work completely. I felt both fear and strange relief.

A cry broke from outside. I turned. The being had seen what I had done. Its face twisted with fury and pain. In a moment, it was at the door. It forced its way inside.

“You have broken your word!” it shouted. Its voice shook the room.

“I will never create another like you,” I answered. “I was blind once. I will not be blind again.”

The being stepped closer. Its eyes burned.

“You refuse me happiness,” it said. “You tear from me the last hope I had. Very well. I go. But remember this: I will be with you on your wedding night.”

The words struck me like a blow. Before I could speak, it left the hut and vanished into the dark.

I stood alone among the broken remains of my second creation. The wind beat against the walls. The sea roared beyond the rocks. I felt that I had set in motion a new storm, one that would soon break over all I loved.

Captain Walton, that was the hour when hope finally died in me. From that moment on, I lived not for joy, but in fear of what would come.

## Part 7

After the being left my hut, I stood for a long time without moving. Its last words rang in my ears: “I will be with you on your wedding night.” I did not know what form that threat would take, but I felt that it would fall on someone dear to me. I thought at once of Elizabeth. Fear for her filled my mind.

I knew I must leave the island. I gathered the broken remains of the work I had

destroyed and placed them in a basket. Before dawn, I carried the basket to a small boat. The sea was dark and heavy. I rowed far from the shore and let the remains sink into the deep water. I watched until the waves closed over them.

The wind grew stronger. Clouds covered the sky. I tried to row back, but the sea drove me away from the island. All day I struggled against the waves. At last, tired and weak, I gave myself up to the wind. The boat moved without my will.

When morning came, I saw land. I was carried to a strange shore. Soon men came toward me. They looked at me with suspicion. I was taken before a local officer. He told me that a man had been found dead on the beach the night before. There were marks of violence on his body. The people believed I might know something of the crime.

My heart sank. I feared at once that the being had struck again. The officer led me to see the body. When the cloth was lifted from the face, I gave a cry. It was Henry Clerval.

His face was pale. His eyes were closed. I fell to the ground in grief. I knew then that the being had taken from me my dearest friend. It had kept its word in the worst way.

I was accused of murder. I was placed in prison. In that dark cell, I fell again into fever. My mind burned with sorrow and guilt. I saw in dreams the faces of William, Justine, and Henry. I heard the voice of the being laugh in the wind.

After many weeks, I was brought to trial. Witnesses spoke of seeing me in the area. But no proof could tie me to the crime. At last, I was declared innocent. My father had come from Geneva when he heard of my arrest. He stood beside me with care and love. When I was freed, he took me back home.

Yet freedom did not bring peace. Henry was dead. I felt that I had led him to his end. My father watched me with deep worry. He feared that my mind had been broken by grief.

When we returned to Geneva, Elizabeth welcomed me with tears. She believed that now, after so much loss, we might at last find some calm. Our marriage had long been planned. My father urged that it take place soon. He hoped that joy might return to our home.

I remembered the being's threat. I did not tell Elizabeth. I believed that the danger would fall on me alone. I thought that on our wedding night, the creature would seek my life. I resolved to be ready.

The day of our wedding came. The sun shone on the lake. The air was still. Elizabeth looked gentle and bright. As we stood together, I felt both love and fear. I promised myself that I would protect her with my life.

That evening, we went to a house by the lake. It was quiet and far from the city. As night fell, I walked through the rooms with a pistol in my hand. I listened for any sound. Elizabeth asked why I seemed troubled. I told her I had matters to settle and asked her to rest.

The moon rose over the water. The house grew silent. I thought I heard a step outside. My heart beat fast. I rushed from room to room, searching. Then a scream broke the stillness.

It was Elizabeth's voice.

I ran to her chamber. The door stood open. She lay on the bed, lifeless. Her face was pale. Marks of violence were on her neck. The being had kept its word.

I cannot describe the depth of that moment. All light left my world. I fell beside her and cried out in despair. My father, who had come with us, heard the sound. When he saw Elizabeth's body, his strength left him. Within days, he too died of grief.

I was alone.

Rage replaced sorrow. I swore that I would hunt the being to the ends of the earth. I told the judges what I knew. I spoke of the creature I had made. They looked at me with doubt. Some believed my mind was lost. Still, they allowed me to go free.

I began my pursuit at once. I followed signs of its path across Europe. At times, it left marks for me to find, as if it wished to draw me on. It wrote words in snow and on trees, telling me to continue. It seemed to take dark pleasure in leading me farther and farther from home.

Through forests and over mountains I chased it. Winter came. Snow covered the ground. I did not stop. My body grew thin. My face grew hard. I lived only

for revenge.

At last, I reached the cold lands of the north. The being moved faster than I, yet it allowed me to follow. It left food at times so that I would not die. It wanted me to suffer the long chase.

We came to the wide fields of ice near the frozen sea. There, my strength began to fail. I saw the being far ahead, driving a sled across the snow. I followed until I could follow no more. My dogs fell. The cold cut through my clothes.

Then I saw a ship locked in ice. I moved toward it with my last strength. I was taken on board by the captain and his men. That captain is you, Robert Walton.

Now you know my story. You know how pride led me to break the natural order. You know how fear and neglect shaped the being I made. You know how revenge has driven me to this frozen end.

My body grows weak. I feel that my life will soon leave me. But before I die, I ask you one thing. If you see the being, if it comes near this ship, do not let it escape. End its life. Let no more blood fall because of my act.

I have told you all. My tale is finished. I wait now only for the final rest that has long moved toward me.

## Part 8

Victor Frankenstein's voice grew faint as he finished his tale. The light in his eyes, which had burned with pain and force, began to dim. I sat beside his bed and held his thin hand. The great ice fields lay silent around the ship. The air was still, as if the world itself listened.

In the days that followed, his strength left him slowly. At times he spoke with calm reason. At times he wandered in memory. He spoke the names of Elizabeth and Henry. He spoke of his father and of Geneva. Often he spoke of the being and urged me again not to turn back from my own aim.

"You seek knowledge," he said to me one night, when the pale northern light shone through the small window. "Do not let fear rule you. But do not let pride rule you either. Learn from me. Balance is the only safety."

I promised that I would remember his words. Yet I saw that his life was closing. His breath came short. His hand grew cold in mine.

Outside, the ice that had held our ship began at last to break. Loud cracks rang across the frozen sea. My men begged me to turn south. They feared being crushed between moving walls of ice. I struggled within myself. My old dream pulled me forward. But the faces of my crew, pale with fear, stood before me.

Victor heard their voices raised in the hall. He called me to him.

“You must choose,” he said. “If you give up now, you will not be less a man. Do not chase glory if it means the lives of those who trust you. I chased glory once. See where it brought me.”

His words struck deep. I went on deck and looked at the broken ice moving around us. I saw that to push forward would mean death for many. At last, I gave the order to turn back.

That night, Victor grew very quiet. Near dawn, as the first pale light touched the sky, he looked at me once more.

“Farewell,” he whispered. “I have sought happiness in pride and found only ruin. Seek peace, not power.”

His hand tightened once, then fell still. Victor Frankenstein was dead.

I closed his eyes and left the room. A deep sadness filled me. I had found the friend I once longed for, only to lose him. His story would remain with me as long as I lived.

Later that night, as the ship lay quiet, I heard a sound from the room where Victor’s body rested. It was not the step of any of my men. It was heavier, yet careful.

I entered softly.

There, bending over the body, stood a tall figure. Its back was toward me. The light from the lamp fell on its dark hair and pale skin. I knew at once who it was.

The being turned when it heard me. Its face showed deep sorrow. It did not raise its hand against me.

“So it is finished,” it said in a low voice. “He is dead.”

I stepped forward with anger.

“And you are the cause,” I said. “You have destroyed him. You have destroyed all he loved.”

The being did not deny it. It looked at the still face of its maker.

“I have done evil,” it said. “I have taken lives. I have filled the earth with sorrow. But do you think I did not suffer? Do you think I did not feel pain as sharp as any blade?”

I answered, “Pain does not excuse murder.”

The being lifted its eyes to me.

“I know,” it said. “I was born good. I loved what was bright and kind. But I was alone. I was shut out from all human warmth. My heart turned dark because it found no place to rest. I became what I was treated as. Yet I cannot undo what I have done.”

It touched Victor’s hand gently.

“He hated me,” it said. “Yet he was my father. From him I came. I wanted his love. I wanted a word of care. I received fear and rejection. That first blow shaped all that followed.”

I felt both anger and a strange pity. Before me stood not only a killer, but also a being full of regret.

“Why come here?” I asked. “Why not flee?”

“I came to see him one last time,” it said. “My path is near its end. I do not seek to harm you. I seek only to speak and then to go.”

Its voice broke for a moment.

“I once asked for a companion,” it said. “I thought that one being like myself could calm my rage. When that hope was torn away, I chose revenge. I see now that revenge has brought me nothing but deeper misery. My heart is empty.”

It straightened to its full height.

“He asked you to kill me,” it said. “But I will spare you the task. I will go north, farther than any man has walked. I will build a fire and end my own life. My body will burn and turn to ash. The wind will carry it away. No trace of me will remain.”

I could not tell if its words were true. Yet its face showed no lie.

“You will never see me again,” it said. “Remember this: I was not born a

monster. I was made one.”

With that, it moved toward the window. It opened it and climbed out onto the ice beyond the ship. For a moment, it stood against the wide white land, tall and alone. Then it walked away across the frozen sea.

I watched until the shape grew small and vanished into the mist.

The next day, the ice opened fully, and our ship turned south. As we sailed away from the cold north, I thought of Victor’s warning and of the being’s last words.

The wide sea lay before us. The past lay behind. Yet the memory of what pride and neglect can create would never leave my mind.