

FRANKENSTEIN

Mary Shelley

TIMELESS CLASSICS



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Frankenstein Begins His Story

My name is Victor Frankenstein. I grew up in Geneva, Switzerland. My family is well-known there. I was my parents' only child. That changed when I was five years old.

We were on vacation in Italy. My mother liked helping the poor. We visited a farm family with many children. My parents saw a young girl. She was

different from the other children. Her name was Elizabeth. Her mother had died. Her father had gone to war. He left Elizabeth with the farm family. But he never returned.

My mother always wanted a little girl. My parents liked Elizabeth. She was bright and beautiful. The farmer knew she would be happy with our family. So he let us adopt her.

Elizabeth Lavenza became more than my sister. I adored her. We called each other “cousin.” We shared a deep love.

When I was seven, my brother Ernest was born. We had a house in Geneva.

We also had a place in the country. My brother William was born there.

I had one close friend, Henry Clerval. He was the son of a businessman. Elizabeth, Henry, and I were a great team. We were like one person. Elizabeth was the soul. Henry was the heart. And I was the mind.

As I grew, I began to study science. When I was 13, my father saw the books I was reading. “You’re reading *this*?” he said. “Victor, don’t waste your time. This is trash.”

My father didn’t tell me no one believed those books anymore. I wish

he had. Everything might have been different. The ideas in these books were silly. But I didn't know this. I was angry. My father thought the books I liked were trash! I didn't take his advice. I found more like them.

I was foolish. I know that now. I tried to change lead into gold. I tried to raise ghosts. None of these spells worked. I should have known it was silly. I might have kept going like this. But something happened. It changed my life.

I was about 15 years old. We were at our country house. A violent storm came up. I saw lightning hit an old tree. The tree disappeared. I'd never seen anything like it.

The next day I saw small pieces of wood on the ground. They had once been that big tree. It was completely destroyed.

A friend of my father's was visiting. He was a scientist. He explained his theory about electricity. This was new to me. I was amazed. My studies seemed foolish. Science was a mystery. I gave it up. I began to study math.

Today, I look back at what happened. I believe a guardian angel was looking out for me. It was the angel's last effort to save my life.

It didn't work. Destiny was strong. My terrible fate was sealed.

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Frankenstein Learns the Secret of Life

I went to university at age 17. It was in Germany. But before I left, something terrible happened. It was a bad omen.

My mother was very sick. She was dying. She called Elizabeth and me to her side. “Children,” she said. “I’ve always wanted you to be married someday. I won’t live to see it. But it would make

your father happy. I hope we'll meet in another world.”

She died calmly. We were all very sad. I stayed home for a few more weeks. I spent time with Elizabeth and Henry. We were happy together. We would never be as happy again.

I arrived at the university in Germany. I met Dr. Krempe, one of my teachers. He was a rude man. But he knew a lot about science. I told him about the books I had been reading. He said, “Those books are no good. You'll have to start over.”

One day, I stopped by the lecture hall. I met Dr. Waldman. He was a kind man.

He was teaching chemistry. I listened to his lecture.

He talked about the history of chemistry. “Early science made many promises,” he said. “But most of it was wrong. Today, scientists don’t promise much. But they make amazing discoveries. And they are true.” His words made me want to learn more. I would show the world the mysteries of creation one day.

Chemistry became very important to me. I studied all night. Two years went by. I didn’t go home. I was too busy studying. Science is exciting. There is always more to discover.

I decided to study human biology. To study life, you must also study death. I wanted to know how death changes the body.

There was only one way to do this. I cut into dead animals and people. I saw how death gives way to life. Dead bodies give food to worms. It gives them life. Then the answer came to me. I knew the secret of life. It came like a flash of light.

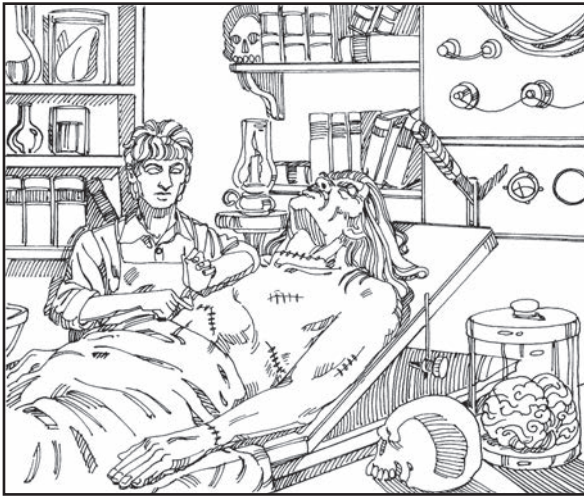
I know it sounds crazy. But you must understand. I'm not a madman. I learned how to make dead things live again! It is the truth.

I can tell you're interested. You want to know how I do it. I'm sorry, but I can't tell you my secret. It's too dangerous for anyone else to know.

I had to see if my idea worked. I had to think. I had to find a frame for the life I would make. A human frame.

It was too hard to work with small parts. So I decided to make it eight feet tall. I went to graveyards and funeral homes. I collected all my materials. I was ready to begin.

My work became my life. I didn't write my family. I never went out with friends. I began to feel ill. I was working



too hard. But I kept going. I knew I would soon be finished. I promised I would take care of myself when I was done.