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Dramatized Classic (Upper Grades)

Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's chilling tale of Frankenstein's hideous creation and the overwhelming loneliness for which the monster took its revenge. . .

Adapted for round-the-table reading by Joellen Bland

Characters

CAPTAIN ROBERT WALTON
LIEUTENANT
DR. VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN
A PROFESSOR
HENRY CLERVAL
FRANKENSTEIN'S FATHER
ELIZABETH
THE MONSTER
A MAN
A WOMAN
MR. KIRWIN

TIME: *Late 1700's.*

WALTON: I write this in the ship's log. One month has passed since my brave crew and I sailed from London on a journey to the North Pole, where a man has never set foot. This morning we awoke to find our ship enclosed by ice on all sides. We were trapped! As we paced about vainly considering what we might do, my lieutenant suddenly raised a shout.

LIEUTENANT: Captain Walton! Look over there! Something is moving!

TO THE DIRECTOR

Generations have seen Hollywood's version of Frankenstein, but the popular movies actually differ greatly from the original Victorian novel. In this adaptation, the original words have been used whenever possible and the events are faithful to the book. Through this adaptation, the audience will come to know the actual haunting story of Dr. Frankenstein and the lonely, vengeful Monster he created.

WALTON: Are you sure, Lieutenant? Ah, yes! I see it! It's a sled pulled by dogs!

LIEUTENANT: A man is driving it—a very tall man.

WALTON: A giant of a man, I'd say.

LIEUTENANT: He doesn't see us. He's going on past!

WALTON: Where can he be going? There's nothing but water and ice for hundreds of miles.

LIEUTENANT: He's gone! Captain, if you hadn't seen him, too, I'd swear I was dreaming.

WALTON: Scarcely two hours later, I was again called on deck by my lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT: Captain, come quickly, sir! Another dogsled has come alongside the ship.

WALTON: I'll come on deck at once.

LIEUTENANT: Look, sir. There's only one dog alive in the traces, and the driver is exhausted. He said he won't leave the sled, but you must persuade him to come on board, sir, or he'll die.

WALTON: You're right. (*Calling*) Come aboard, sir, and let us help you! Can you hear me? Who are you?

FRANKENSTEIN: My name is Frankenstein. Dr. Victor Frankenstein. Captain, I will not board your vessel until you tell me where you are bound.

WALTON: Why, we are on a voyage of discovery toward the North Pole.

FRANKENSTEIN: To the North? Then I will come aboard.

WALTON: Give me your hand. You are

nearly frozen, sir. What has brought you to this desolate place all alone?

FRANKENSTEIN: I seek one who flees from me.

LIEUTENANT: Does this person travel on a dogsled?

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes! Have you seen him?

WALTON: We saw him this morning.

FRANKENSTEIN (*Eagerly*): Tell me which way he went. I must not lose his trail!

WALTON: You are exhausted. You have only one dog alive. You must stay with us.

FRANKENSTEIN: No, no! Nothing must deter me! I must catch him! I . . . I . . .

WALTON: Hold him, Lieutenant! He's fainting.

LIEUTENANT: Here, sir, sit down.

FRANKENSTEIN (*Weakly*): I know you must think me mad. Let me tell you my horrible story. I have suffered great misfortunes and lost everything I ever loved. Now I wait for one event, and then I shall die in peace.

WALTON: Come, sir, you mustn't talk like that!

FRANKENSTEIN: Hear me, Captain, for I cannot die without telling my story. Write it down if you wish. I swear to you that what I say is true.

WALTON: I am ready to hear you.

FRANKENSTEIN: I was born in Geneva, Switzerland, into a distinguished family. I passed a happy childhood, but as I grew older I burned with an insatiable desire to learn the secrets of

heaven and earth, the inner spirit of nature, and the mysterious soul of man!

WALTON (*Good-naturedly*): So, you aspired to learn chemistry and philosophy.

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes, but if only I had embarked on some other study! When I was seventeen, I went to the university. There I heard the lecture that decided my fatal course in life. My professor of chemistry said:

PROFESSOR: The ancient teachers of chemistry promised impossibilities and performed nothing. Modern masters promised very little, but they penetrate into the hiding places of nature to show how it works. They know how the blood circulates and how we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers!

FRANKENSTEIN: Upon hearing those words, my mind was filled with one thought: I, Victor Frankenstein, would explore unknown powers and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation! I read voraciously! I attended numerous lectures, and I cultivated the acquaintance of men of science. I spent endless hours in the laboratory—all in my great search for the secret of life.

WALTON: The secret of life! A bold search, Dr. Frankenstein.

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes, Captain. Too bold. I went on to study physiology and anatomy. I examined the change from life to death, and from death to life, and after months and months of incredible labor, I discovered how to bestow animation upon lifeless matter!

WALTON: But that's impossible!

FRANKENSTEIN: No, Captain! What had been the study and desire of the

wisest men over the ages was within my grasp.

WALTON (*Excitedly*): If this is true, then you must share this wondrous knowledge with the world!

FRANKENSTEIN: No! Never! Never! Listen to me, Captain, and learn from my dreadful experience how dangerous certain knowledge may be. When I realized what power I held, I dared to put it to the test. I began the creation of a human being.

WALTON: What? A human being?

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes! A human being of gigantic stature—eight feet tall. I pursued my undertaking in secret. Can you conceive the horrors of my toil among graves and slaughter houses where I collected my materials? For nearly two years I worked in a laboratory at the top of my house. And then, one dreary November night, it was nearly finished. With the most painful anxiety I stood by the instruments that would infuse a spark of being into the lifeless human form I had made. And then—it happened.

WALTON: What happened?

FRANKENSTEIN: The dull yellow eye of my creature opened. He breathed! His arms and legs moved! He sat up—his gigantic form towering over me! I had intended that he be handsome, but how horrible he was! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath. His hair was a lustrous black, his teeth pearly white, but these were a horrid contrast to his watery eyes, his wrinkled face and straight black lips. I was filled with horror and disgust. A mummy brought to life could not have been as hideous.

WALTON: Doctor, you are upset. Rest a while before you make yourself ill again.

FRANKENSTEIN: I cannot rest, Captain. From the moment I gave life to that creature, I have known no rest! I saw his innocent eyes fixed on me and heard the inarticulate sounds he uttered, then I screamed and fled from the room. I would have left the town for good had I not met a dear friend in the street. He had come from Geneva to visit me.

CLERVAL: My dear Victor! How glad I am to see you!

FRANKENSTEIN (*Uneasily*): Henry! What a surprise. What brings you here?

CLERVAL: Your father and your brother are worried because they have not heard from you in nearly a year. Elizabeth is especially concerned.

FRANKENSTEIN: I . . .I've been very busy, Henry.

CLERVAL: You look ill, Victor. So thin and pale. You cannot have slept in several nights.

FRANKENSTEIN: I have been deeply engaged in an experiment, but now it is over. You could not have come at a better time.

CLERVAL: Then let us go to your house. We have so much to talk about.

FRANKENSTEIN: No, Henry, not my house. Not tonight (*Panicky*) He might be there. I can't look at him again. I can't! I can't!

CLERVAL (*Alarmed*): Victor! What's the matter? Are you ill?

FRANKENSTEIN: I fainted, and then I fell into a nervous fever that confined me to bed for several months. Henry was my constant companion. How good a friend he was! And yet all the while my body recovered, my mind retained

the horror of the Monster I had made. It had disappeared. I wondered what had happened to it and if I would ever see it again.

CLERVAL: Victor, you must come home with me now. Your family will welcome you, and I believe a change will do you good.

FRANKENSTEIN: Henry was right. I could no longer endure the sight of my instruments and books. He arranged for our journey home, but on the day we were to leave, I received a shocking letter from my father.

CLERVAL: My dear friend, what has happened?

FRANKENSTEIN (*Brokenly*): My little brother William. He's dead! Murdered!

CLERVAL (*Horried*): No! That cannot be!

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes. He was strangled. . .in a wood near our house.

CLERVAL: That dear child! Who could have done such a brutal thing? My poor friend, what consolation can I offer?

FRANKENSTEIN: No one could console me. I returned home to my grieving father and stepsister, Elizabeth. Then one day I went to the lonely wood where my dear little brother had died. I knelt down and wept, but suddenly, I felt I was not alone. I sprang up, and saw before me the hideous towering form of the demon I had made!

WALTON: What? He was there in Geneva?

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes, Captain, after all those months. I shrank back at the sight of him. And then a horrible thought struck me. Had he murdered my brother? I stood frozen with

anguish. No one else could have murdered that beautiful, innocent child! Suddenly the Monster moved closer, stretching out his great arms to me, and then, to my eternal amazement, he spoke to me.

MONSTER: Frankenstein! My creator!

FRANKENSTEIN: Devil! How dare you approach me!

MONSTER: So you also hate me, even as all men I have encountered hate and despise me.

FRANKENSTEIN: Yes. If only I could, by ending your miserable existence, restore my brother whom you have so diabolically murdered!

MONSTER: I meant to be his friend, but he cruelly rejected me! I acted out of the deepest anger!

FRANKENSTEIN: Fiend! Monster! How I wish that I had never given you life!

MONSTER: But you did! Why did you hate and reject me? I was good. My soul burned with love, yet you deserted me. For all these many months I have wandered alone. I have sought human

company, and observed men and women, learning to copy their ways, and to imitate their speech. Yet wherever I go, women and children scream in terror at the sight of me, and all men seek to destroy me.

FRANKENSTEIN: His words had a strange effect on me. What had I done in deserting him? He had been like a child, left alone to fend for himself in a world that could never accept him. What terrible loneliness and pain he must have suffered!

MONSTER: I have sworn eternal revenge upon you for my suffering! You can save your life, though, by granting my most urgent request.

FRANKENSTEIN: What do you dare ask of me?

MONSTER: You must make a companion for me. A female formed as I am, that I may never be lonely again.

FRANKENSTEIN (*Furiously*): What? Shall I create another like you to join you in your fiendish wickedness? Never!

MONSTER: Listen to me! Give me a

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