



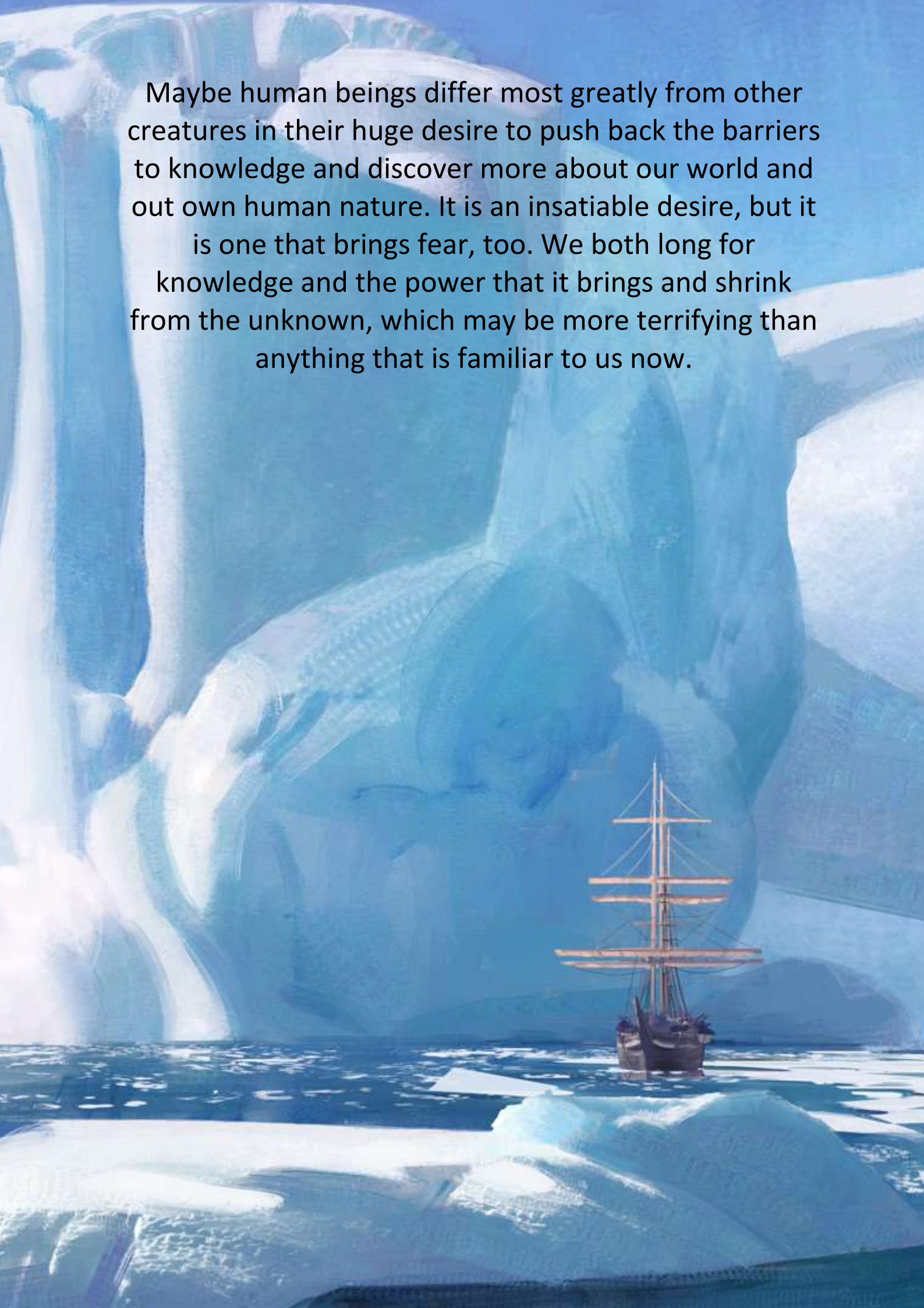
Terrifying  
Tales

A Monstrous  
Creation

Retold By Nicola Baxter



Maybe human beings differ most greatly from other creatures in their huge desire to push back the barriers to knowledge and discover more about our world and our own human nature. It is an insatiable desire, but it is one that brings fear, too. We both long for knowledge and the power that it brings and shrink from the unknown, which may be more terrifying than anything that is familiar to us now.



The story of Frankenstein opens with the letters of an English explorer on a voyage to the North Pole.

The date is sometime during the eighteenth century, when those icy realms had not yet been explored, but a spirit of exploration filled many hearts in those days, particularly in scientific matters.



Robert Walton, the leader of this expedition, wished not only to visit places that had never before been seen by human eyes, but also to investigate the source of the magnetism that caused his compass to point ever northwards.



It was while his ship, heading towards the Pole, was caught fast in pack ice that Walton first sighted, far off, an awesome figure.



It was riding on a sledge pulled by dogs, but what struck the Englishman most forcibly was the size of the driver. He seemed almost a giant.



The next morning, there was another surprise. Floating ice brought to the side of the ship another figure, lying close to death in his own snowbound sledge. Just one of his dogs remained alive, and it was only after considerable care and attention on board ship that the emaciated man became strong enough to speak.



When asked why he was journeying in so desolate a spot, the weak and half-crazed man replied, "To seek one who fled from." Walton rightly guessed that this was the huge figure he had seen the day before. It soon became clear that the stranger was suffering in spirit as well as in body. His despair was all too clear. In the days that followed, he came to trust the Englishman and agreed to tell him his disturbing story.





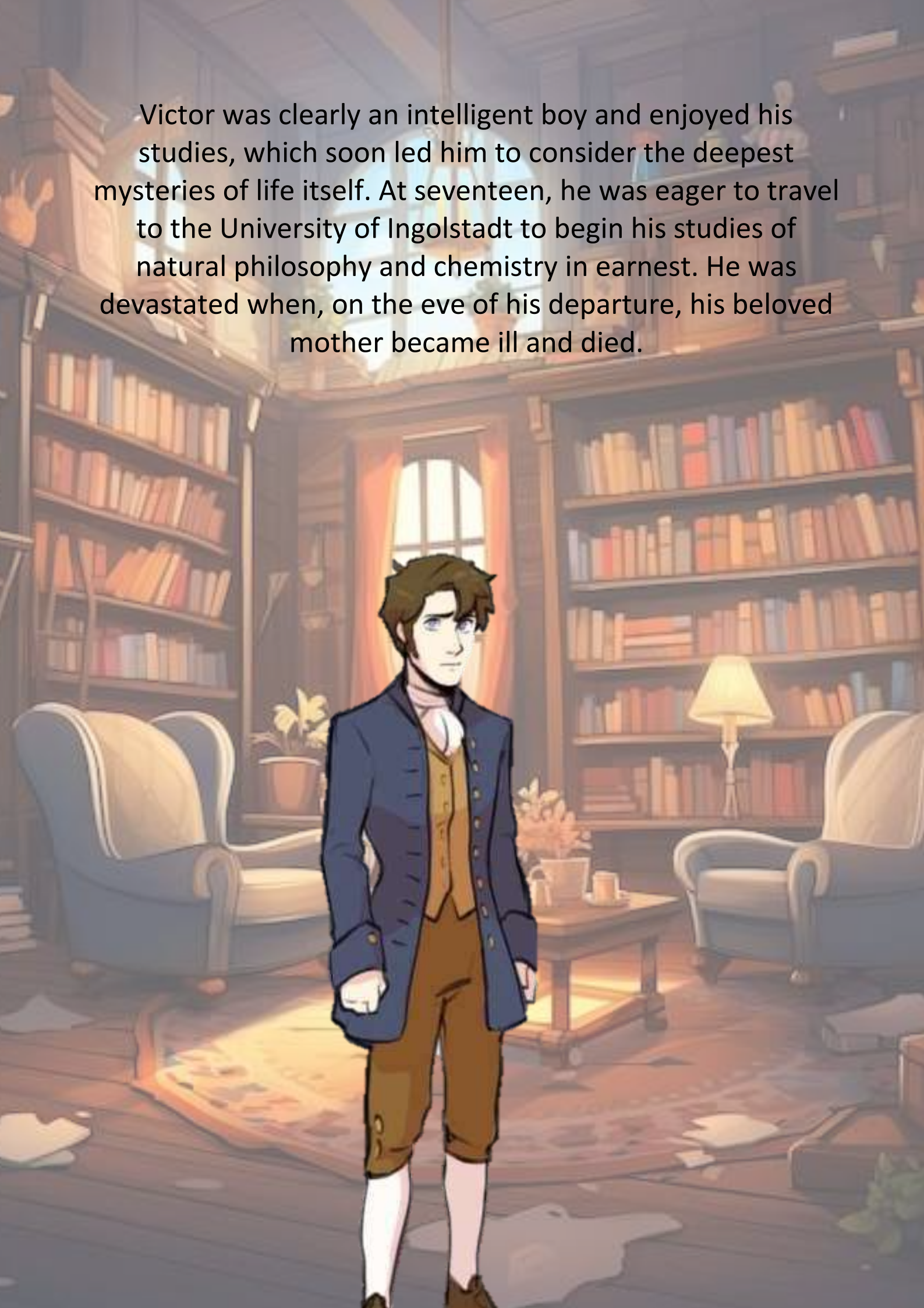
The stranger's name, it seemed, was Victor Frankenstein, born in Geneva to a prosperous and loving father and his much younger wife. Frankenstein's early life was filled with love and happiness. His two brothers were several years younger than Victor, but before their birth his parents had adopted the orphaned child of a nobleman, Elizabeth Lavenza.



Young Frankenstein adored this delightful girl and, in her company and that of his close friend Henry Clerval, passed an idyllic childhood.

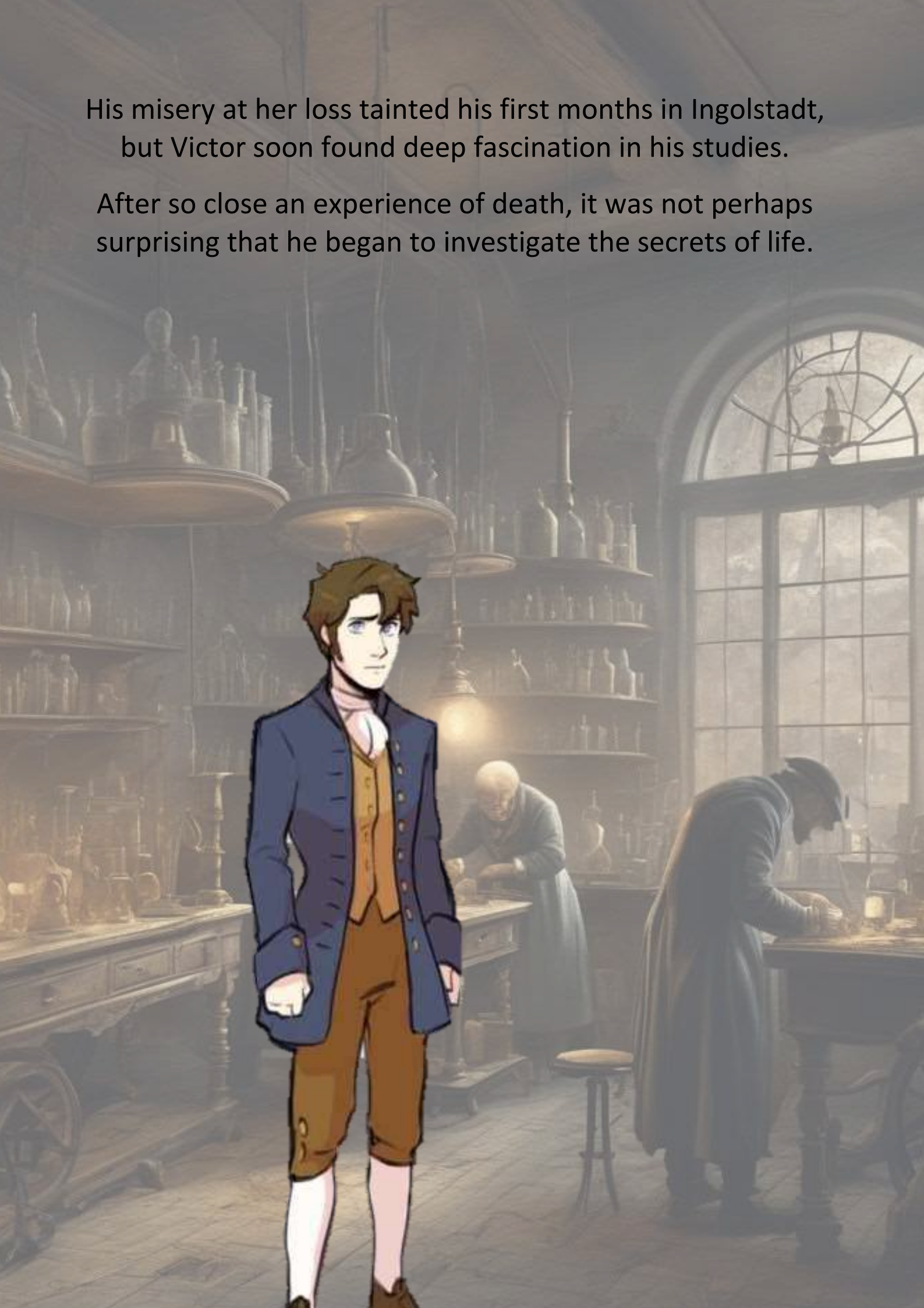


Victor was clearly an intelligent boy and enjoyed his studies, which soon led him to consider the deepest mysteries of life itself. At seventeen, he was eager to travel to the University of Ingolstadt to begin his studies of natural philosophy and chemistry in earnest. He was devastated when, on the eve of his departure, his beloved mother became ill and died.



His misery at her loss tainted his first months in Ingolstadt, but Victor soon found deep fascination in his studies.

After so close an experience of death, it was not perhaps surprising that he began to investigate the secrets of life.



Another man might have shuddered at Victor's obsession. To study the spark of life and what happens when it is extinguished, he observed in the greatest detail the decay of human corpses. After many years of research, he felt that he had found the secret he had been seeking.



So feverish was the young man's search that he barely made contact with his family and friends. He could think only of one thing, and without pausing to consider the consequences, he worked for months to construct a human being from body parts obtained from corpses.



On a rain-lashed night in November, well after midnight, Victor Frankenstein finally succeeded in his mission. Under his fascinated gaze, the eyes of the creature he had made flickered open, and his great limbs began to move. Frankenstein had taken infinite care to choose for his creation the mightiest features, the blackest hair, the whitest teeth and the brightest eyes, but he was not prepared for the horror of their appearance when combined and triggered into life.



Disgusted, disappointed and disturbed, the young scientist fled from the room and spent the rest of the night pacing desperately in the alleys and courtyards of the town.





Early the next morning, Frankenstein was delighted to meet up with his old friend, Henry Clerval, who had arrived to study at the university, but Clerval was shocked by the change in his friend.



Summoning up the courage to return to his apartment, Frankenstein found that the monster had gone, but he dared not confide in his friend.



Run down by moths of unceasing work, the scientist fell ill. For weeks, Clerval nursed him, until he was well enough to return home to Geneva.

But Frankenstein's horror was far from over. Just before leaving, he heard that his beloved younger brother, William, had been found strangled in woods near his home.



Frankenstein hurried to his family, but on the way could not resist visiting the scene of his brother's murder.



Night fell. As the young man walked through the woods, the surrounding mountains were suddenly lit by great flashes of lightning, and heavy rain began to lash the countryside.

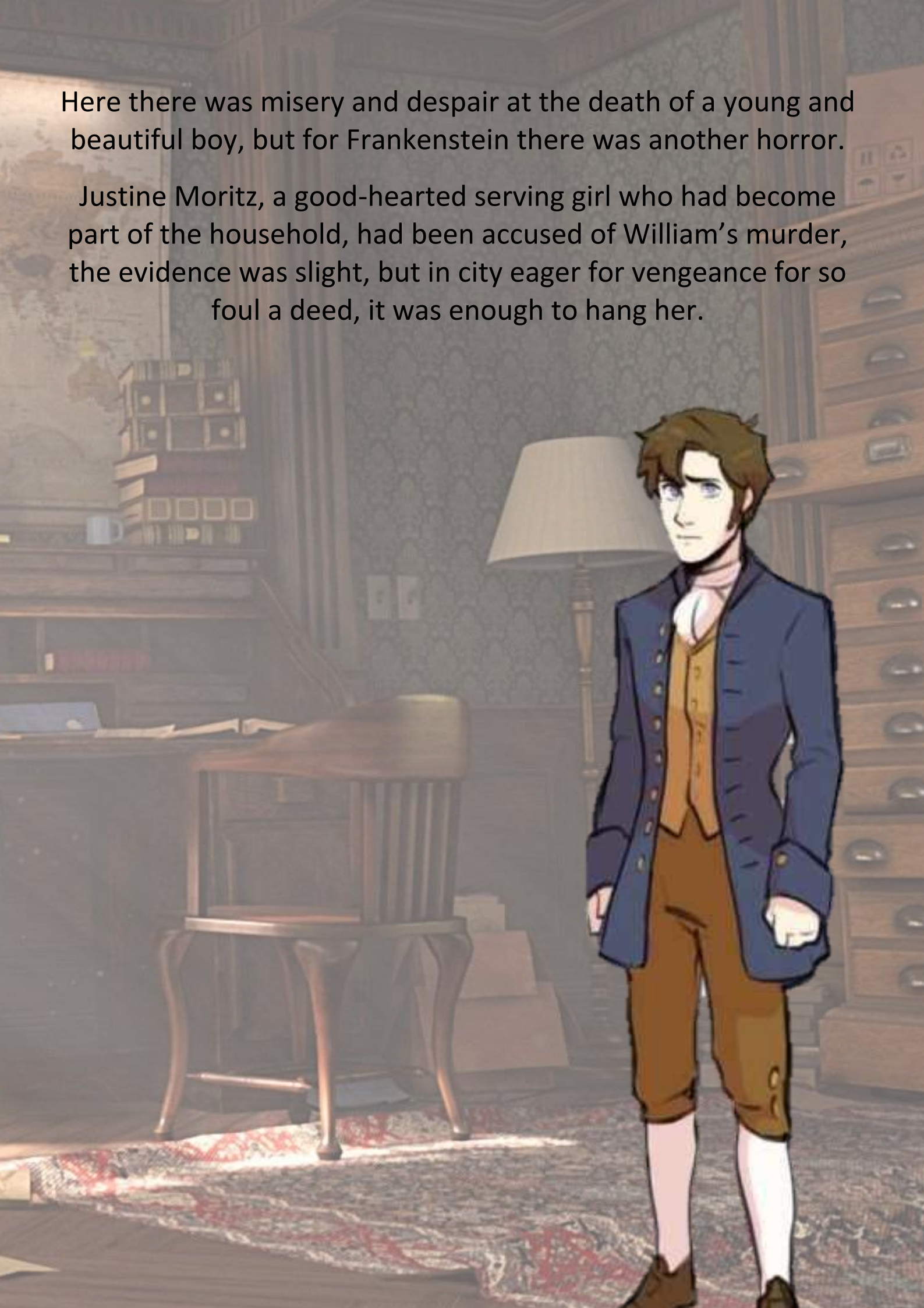


In the midst of the tremendous storm, Frankenstein suddenly saw the hideous figure of his creation ahead of him. at once he became convinced that the creature itself was William's killer. The monster disappeared on the mountain slopes, and Frankenstein headed for home.



Here there was misery and despair at the death of a young and beautiful boy, but for Frankenstein there was another horror.

Justine Moritz, a good-hearted serving girl who had become part of the household, had been accused of William's murder, the evidence was slight, but in city eager for vengeance for so foul a deed, it was enough to hang her.



For Frankenstein, convinced of the girl's innocence, the trial and execution were torture. Unable to cope with his guilt and sorrow, Frankenstein fled to the mountains, hoping in solitude and quiet to regain something of his peace of mind.





Out walking one day on a massive glacier, he was approached by the one being he most dreaded meeting. Frankenstein's feelings overcame him. "Devil!" cried the young man. "Begone, vile insect! Or rather, stay, that I may trample you to dust! And, oh! That I could, with extinction of your miserable existence, restore those victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!"



To Frankenstein's astonishment, the monster not only replied, but spoke piteously and powerfully about his condition. "All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! ... You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind.



If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends.

Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a friend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.”



A dreary rain began to fall, but the monster's words had touched Frankenstein. He felt his responsibility towards the creature he had made, and followed him to a nearby alpine hut to hear his story.



By light of a few candles, the monster told how he became more fully human, learning speech and the meanings of emotions, although deprived of normal human comfort and care. Watching the love between men and women, adults and children, he felt ever more keenly his own isolation.



At one point, the unhappy being saved a young girl from drowning in a stream, but a man with a gun, thinking he meant to harm her, fired at the gruesome creature.

Alone in the cold forest, the monster had to care for his wound himself, although the pain almost drove him mad. Every event seemed to make his life more intolerable. His hatred of the man who had given him such a life grew and grew.



Eventually, the miserable creature told how he came across William in the woods. The child screamed at the sight of him, although the monster tried to explain that he meant him no harm. Then, fatally, William told his name, meaning to impress his attacker, as he saw it, with the name of his powerful father. At the sound of the name Frankenstein, however, the creature's feelings overcame him.



His murder of the innocent boy was an attempt to injure Victor himself, the creator both of the horrifying being and all his miseries. Finally, the creature told Frankenstein of his demands. In a sense, they were simple and understandable. “You must create a female for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do, and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse to concede.”





At first, Frankenstein certainly did refuse. But the monster's words had touched him, and he felt a strange compassion for the creature he had created. Finally, he agreed that if the monster would promise to go far away, where no one would ever see him, he would do as he asked.

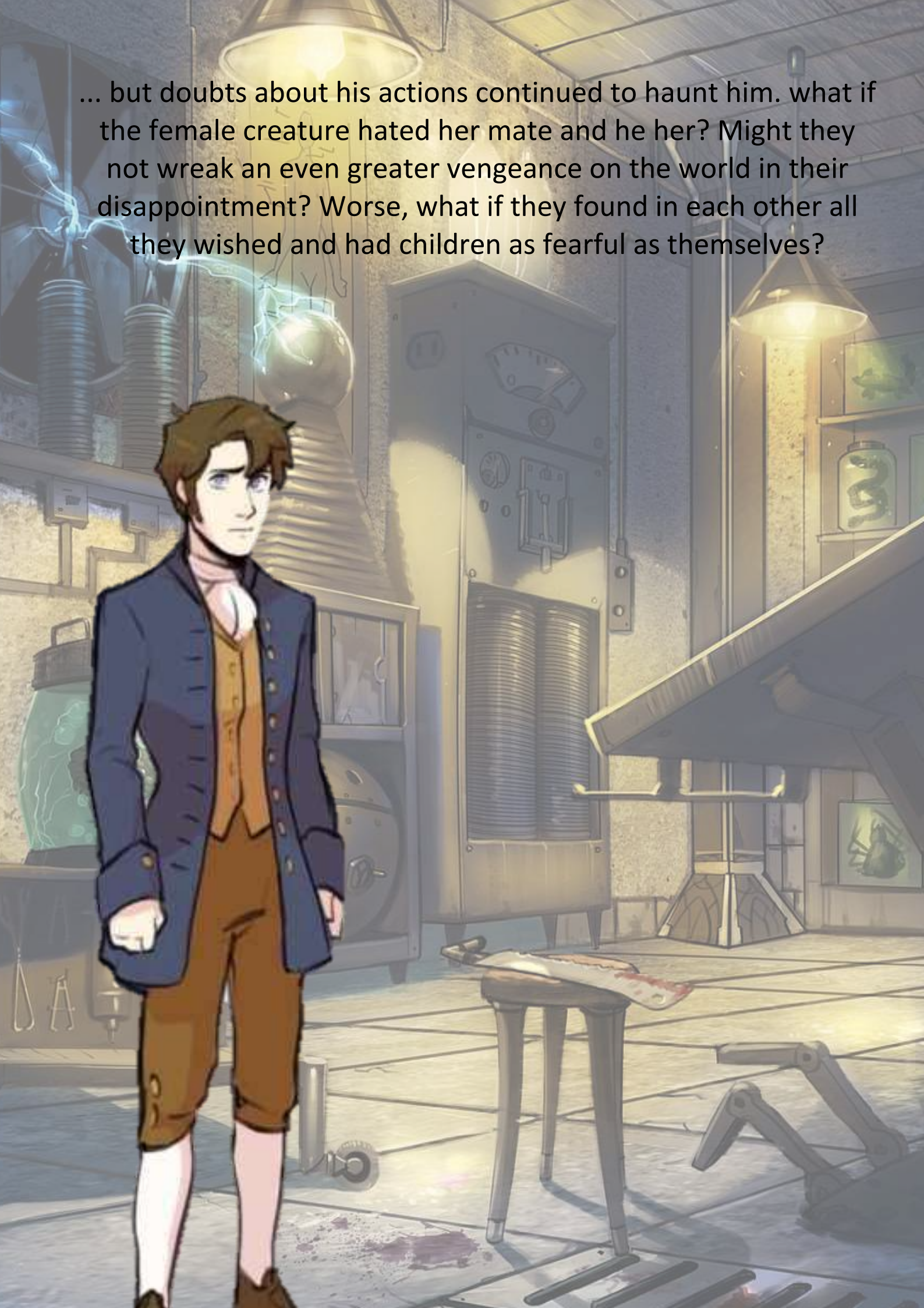
"I swear," the monster replied, "by the sun, and by the blue sky of heaven, and by the fire of love that burns my heart, that if you grant my prayer, while they exist you shall never behold me again. Fear not that when you are ready, I shall appear."



Accompanied by his good friend Henry Clerval,  
Frankenstein headed for a remote island in the Orkneys  
to work on his second creation ...



... but doubts about his actions continued to haunt him. what if the female creature hated her mate and he her? Might they not wreak an even greater vengeance on the world in their disappointment? Worse, what if they found in each other all they wished and had children as fearful as themselves?



Glancing up, Frankenstein saw his creature through the window, a look of greed and anticipation on his face. In fear and loathing of what he had done, Frankenstein destroyed his work.



Seeing that the scientist was resolute about his decision, the monster delivered a horrifying curse. “Man! You may hate, but beware! Your hours will pass in dread and misery, and soon the bolt will fall which must ravish from you your happiness forever.



I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery. Beware, for I am fearless and therefore powerful. I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. I shall be with you on your wedding night.”



The very next day, Frankenstein's horrors began anew, when the body of Henry Clerval was discovered with huge finger-marks around his neck. Although at first accused of the crime himself and imprisoned, Frankenstein was at last acquitted. He returned to Geneva, where his marriage to his beloved Elizabeth had long been anticipated.

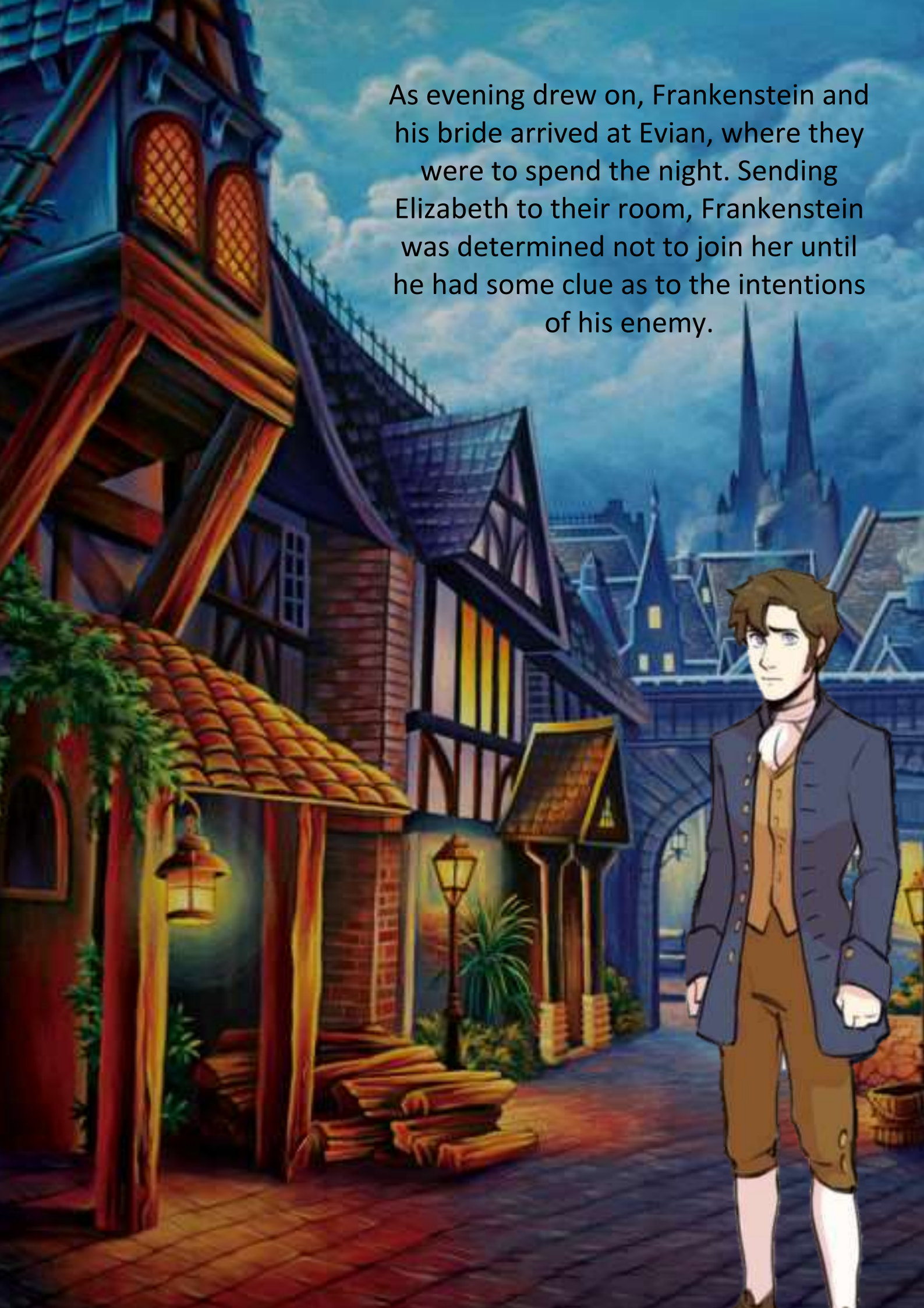


The marriage took place on a hot, sunny day with great rejoicing, but in Frankenstein's mind one great fear remained. He remembered the monster's curse and felt sure that on his wedding night the creature meant to kill him.





As evening drew on, Frankenstein and his bride arrived at Evian, where they were to spend the night. Sending Elizabeth to their room, Frankenstein was determined not to join her until he had some clue as to the intentions of his enemy.



In the flickering lamplight, he searched the rooms and corridors of the house, gradually gaining confidence as no sign of the creature was found. Suddenly, a scream ripped through the air. In an instant, Frankenstein knew his fate. It was Elizabeth, not himself, that the creature intended to harm.



He rushed into her room, but it was too late. The beautiful girl lay dead, the marks of the creature's great hands around her neck. Soon afterwards, Frankenstein's father, too, died, broken-hearted.



From that moment, Frankenstein had only one thought: to track the monster down and destroy him. He followed him ever northward, finally chasing him over the Arctic ice by sledge. It was when the ice broke up in a storm, almost killing them both, that Victor Frankenstein met the ship under the command of Robert Walton.



Later Walton was surprised to hear sound in the cabin where his body lay. Opening the door, he was shocked to see the figure of the monster weeping over his creator. The creature's last words were to Walton. "Soon I shall die. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell."



So saying, the monster leapt from the window on to an ice raft floating below. The waves carried him away into darkness and distance.



The story of Frankenstein was written by Mary Shelley, wife of the poet Percy Shelley, and published in 1818. She and her husband were staying with Lord Byron in Switzerland at the time and amused themselves in the evenings by telling frightening stories by the fire.



This tale has been popular ever since. In the misery of Frankenstein's creation, we can see something of the fears of any human life, and it has sometimes been said that of all the characters in the book, it is the monster who is truly human.







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