

“Yes.”

“Then I fancy we have seen him; for, the day before we picked you up, we saw some dogs drawing a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice.”

This aroused the stranger’s attention; and he asked a multitude of questions concerning the route which the daemon,<sup>14</sup> as he called him, had pursued. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said, “I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity, as well as that of these good people; but you are too considerate to make inquiries.”

“Certainly; it would indeed be very impertinent and inhuman in me to trouble you with any inquisitiveness of mine.”

“And yet you rescued me from a strange and perilous situation; you have benevolently restored me to life.”

Soon after this he inquired, if I thought that the breaking up of the ice had destroyed the other sledge? I replied, that I could not answer with any degree of certainty; for the ice had not broken until near midnight, and the traveller might have arrived at a place of safety before that time; but of this I could not judge.

From this time the stranger seemed very eager to be upon deck, to watch for the sledge which had before appeared; but I have persuaded him to remain in the cabin, for he is far too weak to sustain the rawness of the atmosphere. But I have promised that some one should watch for him, and give him instant notice if any new object should appear in sight.

Such is my journal of what relates to this strange occurrence up to the present day. The stranger has gradually improved in health, but is very silent, and appears uneasy when any one except myself enters his cabin. Yet his manners are so conciliating and gentle, that the sailors are all interested in him, although they have had very little communication with him. For my own part, I begin to love him as a brother; and his constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable.

I said in one of my letters, my dear Margaret, that I should find no friend on the wide ocean; yet I have found a man who, before his spirit had been broken by misery, I should have been happy to have possessed as the brother of my heart.

<sup>14</sup>In Greek mythology, daemons are supernatural, halfway between men and gods; the term also evokes “demon.”

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I shall continue my journal concerning the stranger at intervals, should I have any fresh incidents to record.

August 13th, 17—.

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My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites at once my admiration and my pity to an astonishing degree. How can I see so noble a creature destroyed by misery without feeling the most poignant grief? He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated; and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence.

He is now much recovered from his illness, and is continually on the deck, apparently watching for the sledge that preceded his own. Yet, although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery, but that he interests himself deeply in the employments of others. He has asked me many questions concerning my design;<sup>15</sup> and I have related my little history frankly to him. He appeared pleased with the confidence, and suggested several alterations in my plan, which I shall find exceedingly useful. There is no pedantry in his manner; but all he does appears to spring solely from the interest he instinctively takes in the welfare of those who surround him. He is often overcome by gloom, and then he sits by himself, and tries to overcome all that is sullen or unsocial in his humour. These paroxysms pass from him like a cloud from before the sun, though his dejection never leaves him. I have endeavoured to win his confidence; and I trust that I have succeeded. One day I mentioned to him the desire I had always felt of finding a friend who might sympathize with me, and direct me by his counsel. I said, I did not belong to that class of men who are offended by advice. “I am self-educated, and perhaps I hardly rely sufficiently upon my own powers. I wish therefore that my companion should be wiser and more experienced than myself, to confirm and support me; nor have I believed it impossible to find a true friend.”

“I agree with you,” replied the stranger, “in believing that friendship is not only a desirable, but a possible acquisition. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures, and am entitled, therefore, to judge respecting friendship. You have hope, and the world

<sup>15</sup>For Shelley’s rewriting of the rest of this paragraph in 1831, elaborating the alter-ego sympathy, see p. 192.

before you,<sup>16</sup> and have no cause for despair. But I—I have lost every thing, and cannot begin life anew.”

As he said this, his countenance became expressive of a calm settled grief, that touched me to the heart. But he was silent, and presently retired to his cabin.

Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.

Will you laugh at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine wanderer?<sup>17</sup> If you do, you must have certainly lost that simplicity which was once your characteristic charm. Yet, if you will, smile at the warmth of my expressions, while I find every day new causes for repeating them.

August 19th, 17—.

Yesterday the stranger said to me, “You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had determined, once, that the memory of these evils should die with me; but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been.<sup>18</sup> I do not know that the relation of my misfortunes will be useful to you, yet, if you are inclined, listen to my tale.<sup>19</sup> I believe that the strange incidents connected with it will afford a view of nature, which may enlarge your faculties and understanding. You will hear of powers and occurrences, such as you have been accustomed to believe impossible: but I do not doubt that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed.”

<sup>16</sup>An echo of the last lines of *Paradise Lost* (12.646).

<sup>17</sup>By cross-lingual pun (the Latin verb “wander” is *errare*), Shelley evokes the errant and erring Satan.

<sup>18</sup>In *Paradise Lost* 9, Eve’s desire for the knowledge and wisdom invested in Adam makes her vulnerable to Satan’s seduction in the guise of a rationally talking snake.

<sup>19</sup>For the 1831 elaboration, see p. 193.

You may easily conceive that I was much gratified by the offered communication; yet I could not endure that he should renew his grief by a recital of his misfortunes. I felt the greatest eagerness to hear the promised narrative, partly from curiosity, and partly from a strong desire to ameliorate his fate, if it were in my power. I expressed these feelings in my answer.

“I thank you,” he replied, “for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace. I understand your feeling,” continued he, perceiving that I wished to interrupt him; “but you are mistaken, my friend, if thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter my destiny: listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined.”

He then told me, that he would commence his narrative the next day when I should be at leisure. This promise drew from me the warmest thanks. I have resolved every night, when I am not engaged, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes. This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure: but to me, who know him, and who hear it from his own lips, with what interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day!<sup>20</sup>



Frankenstein;  
or,  
*The Modern Prometheus*

Chapter I

I am by birth a Genevese;<sup>1</sup> and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics;<sup>2</sup> and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation. He was respected by all who

<sup>20</sup>For additions in 1831, elaborating Victor’s appearance and affect, see p. 193.

<sup>1</sup>From Geneva; Switzerland was a rare republic in a continent of monarchies, and home of Rousseau, the philosophical father of the French Revolution, who referred to himself as “Citizen of Geneva.”

<sup>2</sup>Ruling elite.