



THE SCIENTIST AND HIS VERY SCARY MONSTER

Scientists the world over are reacting with shock at news that one of them secretly created a human clone — with horrifying results.

The revelations surfaced last winter, when explorers on an expedition to the North Pole came across a mysterious man travelling by dogsled.

A crew member said: "He was dying, so we took him on board our ship, where he shared his strange tale."

The man said he was Dr. Victor Frankenstein, a Swiss scientist who studied cloning — the science of creating copies of living things such as cells or animals.

Colleagues at the University of Ingolstadt in Switzerland say he was dedicated to his work, but soon became obsessed with a project he would not discuss.

That project, it turned out, was the creation of a human clone.

This has always been a controversial area of research, because of fears that the technology will be misused.

Many took comfort in thinking it would be impossible to make such a clone. But Dr. Frankenstein's dying confession suggests that he did just that.

By combining genes from several people, he managed to make a new person. But when his creation came to life, it was deformed and ugly. "It was nothing like I'd imagined. I was filled with horror and disgust," he said.

He fled from the laboratory because he could not face what he had done. When he returned, the monster had disappeared.

Shortly after that, Dr. Frankenstein learnt that his younger brother William had been killed in the woods near their home in Geneva.

When he went there, he spotted his monster hiding in the trees, and realized it was the murderer.

In the meantime, William's watch had been found in the possession of the family's maid. She was convicted of the killing and sentenced to death.

Wracked by guilt, the scientist retreated to the mountains to be alone, but instead ran into the monster.

It told him it had been befriended by a blind old man, who was not afraid of it because he could not see.

But when the old man's family returned, they drove the monster away.

The creature admitted to murdering Dr. Frankenstein's brother, but said it had done this because it was angry at being shunned by the world.

Pointing out that the scientist was responsible for its sad existence, it begged him to make it a companion — a girlfriend.

"I am alone and miserable; no one will be friends with me. But someone as deformed and horrible as myself will not deny herself to me. You must create such a creature for me," it said.

Reluctantly, the scientist agreed.

But halfway through, he changed his mind, worried that the two monsters would produce equally horrible babies. So he destroyed the monster's bride-to-be and dumped its body in a lake.

Furious, the monster vowed to get back at him. A month later in Geneva, it killed Dr. Frankenstein's childhood sweetheart, Ms. Elizabeth Lavenza, on their wedding night.

This was the last straw for the scientist.

Sick with grief and rage, he followed the creature all the way to the Arctic, but it got away when a break in the ice separated them.

That's when the explorers' ship picked up the scientist.

As he lay dying on board, he warned the crew about the perils of searching for knowledge.

"Learn from me," he said. "Knowledge can sometimes be a dangerous thing."

A search team, meanwhile, has been sent to the Arctic to look for the monster.

It was last seen sneaking onto the ship and standing over Dr. Frankenstein's body, crying, before disappearing over the icy horizon.

The scientist's work has been widely condemned.

The university issued a statement saying it had not given its permission for the research, and had not been aware of what was going on in Dr Frankenstein's lab.

The staff are now going through his notes, trying to figure out exactly how he did it.

BACKGROUND

Frankenstein is a classic horror novel written by Mary Shelley. She was born in London, England, and lived a life as colorful as her writing.

In 1816, she and her husband, poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, went on holiday to Lake Geneva in Switzerland.

However, freak climate changes turned the weather so foul that it went down in history as the "Year Without Summer".

Forced to stay indoors, the Shelleys, together with a group of their writer friends, held a contest to see who could pen the most frightening tale.

Mary got off to a slow start, but later dreamt up the story that would eventually become Frankenstein.

She was only 18 when she wrote the eerie tale of a scientist who made a monster out of human body parts. The book was published when she was 21.

Since then, it has inspired numerous plays, poems, stories, novels, spoofs and movies.

People often (and wrongly) refer to the book's monster as "Frankenstein", confusing it with the name of its creator.

In fact, the author herself never gave the monster a name.

FAB VOCAB

REVELATIONS

Surprising facts which were previously unknown

OBSESSED

Unable to stop thinking about

CONTROVERSIAL

A controversy is something that people disagree about or have strongly differing opinions on

TECHNOLOGY

The use of knowledge to make tools and machines to improve life

GENES

The material in your cells that decides how you look (your skin colour, height and such) and, how you will behave. Your parents passed this material on to you and you will pass it on to your children

DEFORMED

Something that has not developed or grown normally, or is so badly shaped that it is ugly

CONVICTED

Found guilty of a crime

SHUNNED

Avoided or ignored

THE LAST STRAW

After lots of other bad things this is the thing that finally pushes your patience over the edge, or makes you so angry you have to do something about it

PERILS

Dangers

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS, READ

Dracula's Bedtime Storybook: Tales To Keep You Awake At Night

By Victor G. Ambrus

The Picture Of Dorian Gray

By Oscar Wilde

The Hunchback Of Notre Dame

By Victor Hugo

The Little Big Story Book: Tall Tales That Made The News by Alison de Souza
Copyright Singapore Press Holding Ltd., Printed with Permission