

Victor

by

Mark Allen Holm

VICTOR

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Based on the novel

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus

By Mary Shelley

FADE IN:

EXT. BARENTS SEA, POLAR COAST — NIGHT

ICE CRACKS. The Vanquish, an ice-breaker, a black triangle, cuts through the aurora borealis, through the ice.

Super: "1902, Barents Sea, N. of Franz Joseph Land"

The ship stops and the man on the pulpit flips over, onto the ice ahead. The ship SHUDDERS and chunks of ice surge under the bow with the fallen sailor. Something heavy SHIFTS inside the vessel and then a CRASH.

INT. SHIP'S HOLD — NIGHT

A CREWMAN, caught beneath a fallen crate, SCREAMS. Four SAILORS try to wedge him free. The hull CREAKS and the walls bulge inward.

JOHN WALTON, fair-haired, fine-boned, slides down the ladder into the hold. Icy water leaks in from the walls. A board in the hull POPS out, launches splinters of wood.

A sailor stops pulling, pivots, glass-eyed... a long piece of wood juts from his face, falls as water jets in from the new hole.

WALTON

My ship.

The crewmen notice the hole, abandon the trapped man to plug the hull breach.

BLOND SAILOR

(Irish accent)

A timber! Quick, now!

Walton dashes to the abandoned man, pushes on the crate. It budes as the water rises higher. He jumps out of the way as a bigger crate SMASHES into the first, CRUSHES the trapped sailor. The bigger crate breaks apart, reveals... a harpoon gun, still loaded, barbed harpoon pointed at Walton's head.

The hole plugged, the men stand back, pat each other glad to be alive.

WALTON

Help me, one of you.

No one does. He shoves the harpoon, still buoyed up, out of his way, frees himself and...

CRACK, he's hit, falls into the freezing water, his nose bleeding. The BLOND SAILOR snatches him up, face-to-face, as the other sailors get between them...

BLOND SAILOR

(Irish accent)

That, that there, is the soul of this ship. Feeds us, feeds wives, babes. That's not something you'd understand, is it, Captain?

And the others pry him from Walton. Walton opens his mouth but the Sailor lunges at him, gets snatched back by the others.

EXT. DECK OF THE VANQUISH — NIGHT

Walton, still wet, staggers onto deck. YURI, first mate, a big, bearded Russian, spots Walton, approaches.

YURI

(points to horizon)

When storm goes, we go. You go home, see your father, yes?

WALTON

(shivering))

I can't. Not without something. The men, the Irishman--

(wipes blood from his nose)

The hold has to be pumped.

Yuri CALLS OUT in Russian and a CREWMAN comes over; they talk in Russian. The crewman glances sidelong at Walton, spits, says something to Yuri. Yuri laughs and the crewman leaves.

YURI

Is done. Go below.

(Walton hesitates)

Go before it is too late.

WALTON

Too late?

Yuri walks to the crowd of men.

INT. WALTON'S CABIN — NIGHT

Walton enters, removes his coat. He looks at the desk, covered in charts, papers. On the wall, a framed photograph of a younger Walton standing in front of a serious, well-dressed man; beside him stands a pretty young woman.

He snatches the picture off the wall, throws it into the corner. He sits on the bed, peels off his shirt, shivering.

CREAK, behind the stove.

He stands to look. A figure crouches behind the stove, looks up, leaps, knocks Walton back, onto the bed, falling onto him. He stares up into the face of a gaunt, blond STRANGER(30s).

STRANGER
(Swiss accent)
I am here to help you.

Walton rolls, flips the Stranger onto the floor, stands... Looks down at the unconscious man.

INT. WALTON'S CABIN — LATER

Walton, wearing new, dry clothes, sits in the chair, watches the man. The Stranger sits up. Walton holds up a locket, decorated with an ornate "F."

WALTON
Monsieur "f?"
(Stranger snatches it)
You spoke French in your sleep.

STRANGER
You're alone here.

WALTON
A stowaway. Why are you here?

STRANGER
Why are you here, John Walton? A woman.

WALTON
Perceptive, or a luck guess? I let her go, gave her everything.

STRANGER
You don't need that.
(Walton looks confused)
The pistol. I won't hurt you.

WALTON
(takes gun from jacket,
puts it on desk)
No? What is it you want? How did you get aboard? And what did you mean--

STRANGER
I have a story for you.

WALTON
I would hope so.

STRANGER
I am Victor Frankenstein. I was born from death.

INT. PARIS HOVEL — DAY

A girl in her late teens, blonde, sickly. She weeps quietly, her pale face streaked with red lines of her tears.

She sits on the floor, collapsed, beside BEAUFORT's death bed. Her clothes are coarse, torn. Her hair is tangled.

VICTOR (V.O.)
 Daughter of a life-long friend, my
 father rescued my mother from the
 hell of poverty.

ALPHONSE FRANKENSTEIN (forties, imposing) enters the hovel and CAROLINE BEAUFORT looks up at him and as she turns, shows a full, pregnant belly.

INT. FRANKENSTEIN MANOR — DAY

Two little boys, identical twins, five-years-old, run through the house, escaping the clutches of a haggard nanny. They split up.

NANNY
 Victor! William!

WILLIAM runs through the kitchen, LITTLE VICTOR up the stairs to the second floor. He bursts into a bedroom. A couple writhes on the bed. Alphonse Frankenstein looks up at the intruder.

Below him, though, is MARIA MORITZ, a servant. She grabs a sheet, covers herself. Naked, Alphonse gets up, flushed.

ALPHONSE
 (pulling up trousers)
 Boy!

LITTLE VICTOR
 I was looking for Mama.
 (calls out)
 Mama!

ALPHONSE
 Shut your mouth. Come to me.

Little Victor recognizes the tone, tears off, Alphonse following.

INT. SITTING ROOM - FRANKENSTEIN MANOR — MOMENTS LATER

Caroline, wispy, serene, sits, eyes closed on a plush sedan. Victor sits on her lap, nuzzling. Alphonse enters clothed, looks at her, at the boy.

She opens her eyes and Little Victor looks up from suckling her now exposed breast.

ALPHONSE
 I told you...

CAROLINE
 He's my baby. Don't hurt him,
 Alphonse.

ALPHONSE
 For his own good. And yours.

The boy tries to run but his father is ready, snatches him up.

DRAWING ROOM

Alphonse grabs a cane and the trailing Caroline turns away, WHIMPERS. He belts the crap out of poor little Victor, who screams, grabs hold of his father's hand.

And bites down hard. Alphonse stands up, throws little Victor across the room. His hand squirts blood and he sucks on the wound.

Victor tears off and Alphonse pursues, wrapping his hand with a handkerchief.

HALLWAY

VICTOR (V.O.)
I wanted nothing. And enjoyed the
devotion of my parents.

Victor hits a dead end and Alphonse has him pinned, but as he's about to grab hold, the boy dashes between his legs and is caught by the ear, SCREECHES as his father drags him down the hall to a doorway, opens it.

A dark stairwell leads down. Alphonse shoves the boy through the door, down the stairs, slams the door.

VICTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was the center of their universe.

LITTLE VICTOR
No! I hate you.

In the dark, little Victor, SCREAMS, gives up, slides slow downstairs... Into the dark.

LITTLE WILLIAM (O.S.)
Don't cry. It's alright. Come and
play, Victor. I've found a secret
place.
(The sound of STONE
MOVING ON STONE)
It will be our place.

EXT. GARDEN - FRANKENSTEIN MANOR — DAY

Lush, spring, the garden is a riot of new leaves and buds. The boys run wild through the stone benches, neoclassical statues of gods and goddesses.

Little Victor stands up on the pedestal beside a statue of Zeus.

LITTLE VICTOR
Behold! Heracles, son of Zeus and
mortal woman, strongest of men.

LITTLE WILLIAM
 Heracles isn't a man, he's a god,
 and it's not fair you always get to
 be strongest.

LITTLE VICTOR
 I'll be Jason. Heracles is stupid,
 anyway. He got angry and killed his
 family.

They both look up as the dark-haired JUSTINE MORITZ, five-years-old, enters the garden. Victor sticks his tongue out at her.

LITTLE WILLIAM
 Go away, Justine. We won't play with
 you. You're a servant.

She sticks her tongue out at the boys, turns and runs. They run after her. Despite the previous aggression, it quickly turns into a game, all three GIGGLING, SHOUTING.

But when the boys catch her, it turns antagonistic again. Victor pins her against a tree, holds a stick, like a sword, up to her chest.

LITTLE VICTOR
 We'll cut your head off, like Perseus
 cut off the Gorgon's head.

JUSTINE
 I hate you. You're evil and I'll
 tell.

William hears SHUFFLING and MUTED VOICES from the brush. He follows the sounds, leaves Victor and Justine behind.

He pushes thick branches out of the way as he climbs deeper into the undergrowth. He stops, just outside of a clearing, sees...

Alphonse and Maria, half-dressed, making love.

MARIA
 Tell me. Say it.

ALPHONSE
 Maria...

MARIA
 Say it.

ALPHONSE
 I love you.

JUSTINE (O.S.)
 (a tattling voice)
 Mama!

Alphonse and Maria look up, see William.

ON VICTOR AND JUSTINE

William CRIES OUT, and they turn, run to the sound, arrive as William falls, lifeless, at Alphonse' feet.

Maria hides behind a tree, watching, crying. Justine sees her, goes to her.

JUSTINE
Mama, why are you crying?

VICTOR (V.O.)
How to replace a brother?

INT. VENETIAN HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

An ornate drawing room. A DARK-HAIRED WOMAN sits with a FAIR-HAIRED MAN on top of her. They kiss as his hands explore beneath her dress.

VICTOR (V.O.)
A companion. One whom could share a privileged existence. A playmate. My aunt, an ill woman, died after a bout with pneumonia.

A little blonde girl about five-years-old hides behind a table on the far side of the room, too far from the exit to escape without notice. Her hands cover her ears as she looks away from their display.

A well dressed, dark-haired man storms into the room and pulls the other man from his embrace. All three shout in Italian while the little ELIZABETH crouches under the table.

VICTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Her distraught husband could no longer bear to look upon so perfect a reminder of their love.

The wife, light-skinned, brunette; she cries as she shouts at the...

Olive-skinned, dark-haired husband; he shouts, points to the...

Fair-haired lover holding the wife's hand.

VICTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Afraid their daughter would suffer from his neglect, he gave her to us, to a life of devotion he could not, despite his love, give to her.

A GUNSHOT, a WOMAN'S SCREAM, and Elizabeth scrambles from under the table, past her father as he strangles her mother.

INT. ITALIAN CATHEDRAL -- DAY

Vaulted ceilings glimmer with gold inlay. A slightly older Victor, about seven, looks up, astonished. A bored, young

priest leads the timid child Elizabeth to the waiting Frankenstein family.

VICTOR (V.O.)

The day our eyes met I knew we were meant to be together.

Elizabeth, shy, watches the floor. Victor's eyes remain on the face of his mother.

The children are led to one another, a forced meeting.

ALPHONSE

Victor, this is your cousin Elizabeth. Show her that she is welcome, show her the courtesy we give to a Frankenstein.

VICTOR (V.O.)

I fell in love the moment I saw her frail face.

Reaching out, he SLAPS Elizabeth. She erupts into tears.

CAROLINE

Victor! Such a terrible thing! You must never, never hurt the people you love.

ALPHONSE

Son, we must go to every extreme to show her our love. All of this is strange and frightening.

(beat)

You do love your cousin, don't you?

LITTLE VICTOR

(glares at Elizabeth)

I hate her!

He runs off into the church, and Caroline rushes to the frightened Elizabeth, takes hold of her.

CAROLINE

Oh, my poor dear. He is a boy and boys are careless with their feelings.

(in Italian)

He loves you, never doubt it.

She smiles down at Elizabeth, who smiles back.

INT. ITALIAN CATHEDRAL — MOMENTS LATER

Little Victor walks down a row of corniced saints in the midst of suffering, staring at each one. He backs into someone, looks up, startled.

A bone-thin OLD PRIEST smiles, toothless, down at him.

OLD PRIEST
(Italian accent)
You are the Swiss boy, come to take
the girl.

LITTLE VICTOR
Who are you?

OLD PRIEST
A servant.

LITTLE VICTOR
Will you get me something to eat?

OLD PRIEST
(laughing)
Not that type of servant. A servant
of God.

LITTLE VICTOR
(he considers this)
Can God make people alive again?

OLD PRIEST
He has, but it is not something we
ask of him.

LITTLE VICTOR
I want my brother back.

OLD PRIEST
Oh, no. If our lord has taken him,
it is for a very good reason.

LITTLE VICTOR
Taken him? Why would God want my
William?

OLD PRIEST
It is not our place to question the
wisdom of Our Lord.

LITTLE VICTOR
He can't do that! I'll make him stop.

OLD PRIEST
How will you do that?

LITTLE VICTOR
I will kill Him. And... I will be
God. And kill my father and my cousin
and all the mean people... and live
with Mama and we'll be happy forever!

Little Victor turns away, speeds off deeper into the church.

EXT. GARDEN, FRANKENSTEIN MANOR — DAY

Elizabeth, now in her early teens, walks down a garden path,
past a clump of bushes.

VICTOR (V.O.)

In a desire to bind as closely as possible the ties of domestic love, my mother determined to consider Elizabeth as my future wife.

She is utterly radiant, carefree. Behind her trails HENRY CLERVAL, watching her with obvious admiration.

She sits on a stone bench opposite the bushes. Henry pretends to examine a crumbling stone statue beside the bench. Elizabeth pretends to read a book. Both sneak glances at one another.

VICTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A design which she never found reason to repent. Henry Clerval, our only friend in our paradise outside Geneva, formed the final third of an unbreakable trio.

Behind the bushes...

Two young lovers, Victor and Justine, teenagers now, in midst of their carnal endeavors.

Victor hears Henry and Elizabeth moving, looks over, through the brush.

He sees the coy flirtation. Henry balances on a stone, mimics the cherub statue; Elizabeth giggles, pretending to read.

Victor's face hardens.

JUSTINE

(quiet)
My arm...

He squeezes her arm unconsciously. He looks down at her, covers her mouth, looks out on Henry and Elizabeth.

Henry hears something, looks to the bushes, sees something.

HENRY

Lets go to the... pond.

ELIZABETH

There's no place to sit there.

HENRY

We'll throw stones at the fish. Just come.

VICTOR (V.O.)

While I admired her mind and soul, I could not help but tend on her like a favorite pet.

INT. LIBRARY, FRANKENSTEIN MANOR -- DAY

A teen-aged Victor rushes in, checking over his shoulder for a pursuer. He looks around, heads to the window, peers out.

Victor runs to one of the dark aisles, hiding in a nook.
Justine enters, looks up and down the library. She spies him
between a gap in the books, just his eye.

JUSTINE

Vanity is a sin, you spoiled child.

She leaves and, as Victor leans against a shelf with a sigh,
a small avalanche of books tumbles down onto his head.

He picks a book up off the floor. It has only a title: De
Occulta Philosophia. He opens it, thumbs through the pages.

ALPHONSE

Victor! What is it you've said to
Justine? I saw her in tears just
now.

VICTOR

She's a girl; they cry for no reason.

ALPHONSE

She's one of us, you know. A servant,
perhaps, but all the more reason to
hold her in a regard you yourself
would prefer.

VICTOR

She's a child. She follows me, staring
with doe eyes. I'm afraid of upsetting
her. I hide instead.

ALPHONSE

Her affection will pass in time, but
you must be honest with her. No more
hiding, you hear?

VICTOR

Yes, father.

ALPHONSE

(grabs the book; frowns)
Cornelius Agrippa? Where did you
find this nonsense?

VICTOR

It fell.

ALPHONSE

Difficult to believe I've kept such
nonsense to infect future generations.
Leave it, it will do you no good.
Sad trash.

(finds another book)

Here, now. Paradise Lost. Milton
will serve you better. Now... No
more deceptions. Agreed?

VICTOR

Of course, Father.

Alphonse exits.

The occult book sits alone on the shelf, barely high enough for Victor to reach on tiptoes. A hand, Victor's, snatches the book and it's quickly replaced by Paradise Lost.

INT. CELLAR, FRANKENSTEIN MANOR — DAY

Victor stands in an intersection, holding a lit candle and a leather bag. Victor pushes a brick marked by a chalk skull. The wall tilts, creates an entrance.

INT. SECRET ROOM — CONTINUOUS

Just inside, the ceiling is low and Victor smacks his head on something. He looks up, spots a large counterweight stone used to open the secret door. He pushes the door and the counterweight slides back, closing the door all the way.

Two tables have been set up. The first is littered with books, opened, piled on top of each other. The second holds various occult paraphernalia: dagger, chalice, stone pentangle, mortar and pestle, candles, etc.

He lights the candles, removes a small figurine from the leather bag, then sits in a chalk circle, the figurine lying just outside the chalk line. Beside him are piles: rose petals, sulfur, grain and a vial of blood.

VICTOR

I believe in the one Earth, Malkuth,
Mother of us all, the One Womb, where
all men are begotten...

(he glances at an
open text)

Wherein they shall rest... the grave,
the timeless, deathless trance, as
the mind rests in the supreme moment
of orgasm, in her name Babylon
Binah...

(he sprinkles each of
the ingredients onto
the figurine)

And I believe in the serpent and the
lion, in his name Baphomet--

MOVEMENT OF STONE and he stands. A gust of dusty air floods into the room, blows out all but two candles.

He snatches up the figurine, steps forward as the wind RUSHES from the opposite direction, through the crack, sucks the door shut with a BOOM.

He grabs a nearby candle, approaches the wall, notices a loose, broken stone. He pulls and it breaks away, reveals a shaft. He could easily climb inside.

FOOTSTEPS fall behind him and he's standing and turns. Another gust blows out the remaining lights. He WALKS forward, stops as small feet SHUFFLE.

A CHILD'S GIGGLE...

LITTLE WILLIAM
 (soft, a memory)
 It's alright. Come and play, Victor.
 I've found a secret place.

He drops the figure and it SHATTERS.

EXT. HILLSIDE - FRANKENSTEIN MANOR -- DAY

A huge tree dominates the front of the house. The wind blows it and the other plant life about. The skies darken. Several yards away Victor, Elizabeth and Henry fly kites.

Victor's kite sails upward as he lets out more and more string. Henry and Elizabeth share a kite, which flies much lower, dipping and rising up again.

VICTOR
 (laughing)
 Mine's higher.

ELIZABETH
 (coy & defiant)
 It'll crash. You'll never find it if
 the string breaks.

HENRY
 Why the key?

VICTOR
 Elizabeth, grab hold of the string.
 (She looks at him
 quizzically)
 Come on!

ELIZABETH
 (grabs string)
 Oh!
 (Jerks her hand back)
 What is it?

VICTOR
 No. Put it back, you should really
 feel it.
 (She hesitates)
 Don't worry.

A short, sharp spark leaps between their fingertips. She gasps, but doesn't recoil, takes his hand. They hold hands a moment, then his free arm moves around her waist. Clerval sees it, lets his kite go.

CRASH of a thunderbolt and a flash of light. Above, Victor's kite races around amongst the clouds. The string snaps with a loud TWANG. The three rush to the house against the wind and hard rain.

Henry makes it to the house, turns, sees Victor standing still, watching the storm. Midway between them is Elizabeth, shouting for Victor to come with them.

Before Victor, about ten yards away, is the great tree.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
 (shouting)
 Can you feel it? The power!
 Electricity! I want that...

He holds his hands up, as if to touch the power in the air, as if to grasp it. KA-RACK! Light fills everything.

Elizabeth rushes to Victor, pauses as he is eclipsed by an explosion of light.

LIGHTNING HITS THE TREE,

At its foot is Victor, crumpled. Elizabeth shouts against the wind. Victor's eyes open, look up at the others. They glow green, as if he were charged by the lightening.

INT. VICTOR'S ROOM — NIGHT

As Victor bolts awake. Something's near the bed, between him and the window. It crouches, moves forward, he pulls back, grasping the covers. A glint of moonlight on straight, dark hair.

VICTOR
 Justine...
 (she gets in bed)
 What are you--

She kisses him on the mouth. He doesn't resist. The kiss becomes erotic and he pulls her close. The kiss breaks and he sees her face, the face of...

ELIZABETH
 I want you, Victor.

He kisses her again, more passionately. Her desire echoes his.

CAROLINE
 I love you, Victor.

He realizes something is wrong, pulls away, sees his mother's face. She grabs his face, pulls it to hers. They kiss and for a second he enjoys it. But he tears himself free, choking.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
 Victor... you love me...

VICTOR
 I love you...

CAROLINE
 Our child...?

Something writhes beside her.

Its arms and legs are wrong, joints in the wrong places, hands instead of feet, muscled, hairy. He sees the rest of its face, gross, ape-like, sunken eyes. It opens its mouth to speak, its teeth stained, crooked, tongue black and wet.

BLACK: WEEPING.

At the end of the room a cluster of black-clad women. The women WAIL theatrically, exaggerated, flailing their arms. He goes to them.

One of the women is Elizabeth. Another is Justine, the third Caroline. Their lips are smeared with blood, and they chew on tough red meat. It dribbles from their mouths in gory chunks. In their hands are the distorted limbs of the child.

Caroline holds out a twisted half-eaten limb to Victor. He backs away.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
(mouth full)
EAT!!

INT. VICTOR'S ROOM -- ALMOST DAWN

Victor in bed. He snaps awake with a SCREECH, spits, gagging, choking. He crawls to the chamber pot and vomits, then collapses, gasping to the floor. He groans, sits up, cautiously staring.

A woman SOBS loudly from beyond the room. He gets up.

INT. SITTING ROOM - FRANKENSTEIN MANOR — MOMENTS LATER

Victor enters and the SOBBING is closer, just beyond this room. Pale, catatonic, Justine slumps on a sedan.

INT. BEDROOM - FRANKENSTEIN MANOR — CONTINUOUS

Maria Moritz SOBS. She and Alphonse sit beside the body of Caroline.

ALPHONSE
(standing)
You are alive. We thought--

MARIA
Scarlet fever. Justine was first.
Caroline slaved over my her, and
when--

VICTOR
Mother?

Victor kneels, grasps Caroline's hand, kisses it lightly, holds it to his face.

MARIA
I'm so sorry--

VICTOR
Cold, cold... a physician!

MARIA
Her condition... worsened before he
could arrive.