

The secretary was a beautiful Asiatic lady who smiled upon my arrival. “How can I be of assistance, sir?”

“I have an appointment with Herr Clerval.”

“What is your name?”

“Victor. Victor...Moritz.”

“A moment, sir.” She picked up the telephone. “Herr Clerval? There is a Herr Moritz here for you.”

I attended upon a chair, perusing a pile of ancient magazines to quell my impatience. Finally, the door to the inner office opened and Henry emerged.

“Victor!” exclaimed he, eyes wide with surprise. “Good God, what are you doing here?”

“Henry, my old friend, I beg an audience. I must speak with you.”

“You should not have come,” said he in anger, “especially under false pretence!”

“Would you have granted the appointment had you known it was I?”

“Shall I call security?” asked the secretary.

For a moment, Henry was in thought. “No,” said he at last, ushering me towards his door. “Come, Victor. You shall have your audience.”

We entered his office and sat. I faced him from across a luxuriant desk. Henry clasped his hands upon its polished ebony surface and regarded me sceptically. “What do you want?”

“Your help.” Having no desire for pleasantries, I immediately spoke the issue. “My doctoral candidature at the University has been terminated. I must quit the department within two weeks, and I require money to continue my research.”

“Ah yes, your *research*...” said he with the barest condescension. “Then you are still working on –”

“Postanthropic state enhancement, yes. It is my intention to –”

“Yes, yes.” Henry waved dismissively. “Am I to assume there is no other institution interested in your work?”

“Not a single one.” I trembled with excess agitation as I spoke. “You Henry, you are vice president of finance here at FizerPharm. It is within your power to help. Henry, my dear friend, do not desert me in my hour of trial!”

“Victor, I cannot help you.”

“You will not help me?”

“I *cannot* help you!” exclaimed Henry. “See reason, Victor. Why should this company fund your work? Where is the market for this...product? Will the net present value of estimated future revenues address shareholder needs for –”

“Man,” cried I with indignation, “how ignorant art thou become in thy pride! Can you hear thyself speak? Thou have become the very epitome of the avaricious One Percent! Where is the Henry I knew once?” In youth, he and I had sworn to reach the heights – I with my science, he with his art. Alas, he quitted his dreams to appease his father, a narrow-minded trader who saw no future but the miserable details of commerce.

“Do you have no heart to pioneer a new way, to explore unknown powers, to unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation?”

He appeared unmoved by my passion. “The questions I posed are very like those the board of directors would ask of me if I to propose allocating R&D funds for your utilisation. See reason, Victor. Things are not done as they once were. Science today is so very different from that of earlier ages.”

“Indeed.” I collapsed in the chair, singularly disconsolate. “You will not help.”

“Again I say, I *cannot* help.”

“Curse! And to think I still called you friend.”

Henry made no reply to my sharp remark. Instead, he opened a drawer and produced a glossy brochure.

“This is a SATW application form,” said Henry. “Perhaps you could obtain a research grant from them.”

“You think me a fool?” I threw back the brochure. “I have already submitted an application to the SATW!”

Henry stood slowly, indicating the meeting concluded. I did as he.

“Farewell, Victor. Truly sorry for you, I am.”

Henry offered his hand. I did not take it. Without further word, I turned my back to him and quitted the office. In a single sure motion, I slammed the massive door behind me.

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We Shall Be Monsters

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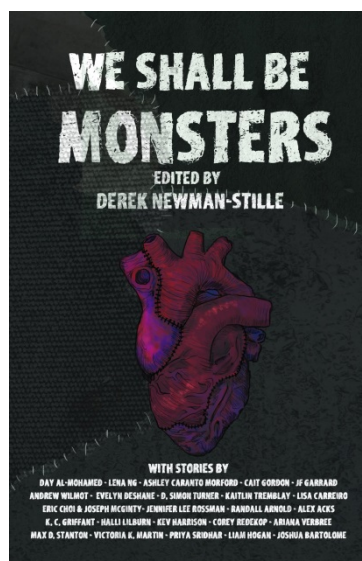
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Edited by multiple Prix Aurora Award winner [Derek Newman-Stille](#) and published by [Renaissance Press](#), *We Shall Be Monsters* commemorates the bicentennial and legacy of the ground-breaking and genre-changing novel *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. *We Shall Be Monsters* features twenty-four stories and poems by diverse authors from around the world, ranging from direct interpretations of Shelley's text to innovative explorations of stitched, assembled body, and narrative experiments in monstrous creations.

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