



F. — A POST-MODERN PROMETHEUS

ERIC CHOI AND JOSEPH MCGINTY

From: rwalton79@kilchbergnetz.ch
Sent: November 28, 20-- , 18:51
To: margaret.saville@sillywalks.gov.uk
Subject: Crazy Day at Work!

My dear Sister,

Pardon my curt missive, but I am at pause for only a brief time in the organizational haste at Kürzer & Boily due to the upcoming Christmas season. Ingolstadt is indeed pastorally beautiful under a comforting blanket of snow and good cheer, but alas, I am unable to join the townsfolk in their Yuletide spirit. It has been merely two weeks since I was (through sundry means) promoted to Under-Assistant Brand Manager, Eis Schokolade™ Division, and already I have witnessed calamity.

Last Monday, I was upon the factory floor to discuss cost-saving mixture ratios with the food engineers when we heard shouts from our colleagues. We ran to the source and discovered that one of the technicians had gained control of the caramel mixer and was attempting to operate the vat in a manner contrary to standards.

I joined with my colleagues in imploring the fellow to cease immediately. The demented wretch appeared oblivious to our pleas and continued to operate the equipment in flagrant disregard to procedures. In his confusion, he reached out in a simian manner and touched the scalding surface of the vat. He screamed, jumped backwards, and collided with the control mechanism. We stared in horror as the loading switch was tripped and the vat discharged its molten caramel upon the poor man.

A quick-witted operator swiftly moved to shut down the mechanism, and with the help of gaffs and poles we were able to extricate the miserable wretch from the wasted avalanche of hot caramel. I made a mental note of the financial impact this would have upon the Eis Schokolade™ Division.

We conveyed him to the plant foreman's office, there to attend the arrival of an ambulance. As I attempted to wipe off the caramel and administered what first aid I could, I surveyed the poor victim. It was Victor Frankenstein, one of the quality control technicians. I knew little of him save some bizarre tales related by his shift crew (one concerned a capacitor and a dead frog). Clearly he was suffering from shock, yet that did not appear to be all. His eyes had an expression of wildness, and even perhaps madness. He would periodically gnash his teeth, as if impatient with the woes that oppressed him.

"Everything is fine," said I. "An ambulance will be here shortly. You will be all right."

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"Thank you for your words of comfort, but they are useless; I will *not* be all right. I have lost much and can imagine for the future only new miseries befalling me."

"Why do you speak so?"

"You may perceive, Herr Walton, that I have suffered greatly. Today's incident is only the latest of many misfortunes. I know not if the relation of my disasters would be of interest –"

Recalling the value of keeping an injury victim talking, I replied quickly, "I am much gratified by your offered communications. Pray, continue."

It was then that he commenced his narrative. I have here endeavoured to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he related. Sad and pathetic was his story, cruel the winds that embraced the gallant vessel on its course and wrecked it – thus!



I am by birth a Genevese, and my family was one of the most distinguished of that republic. When I finally attained my undergraduate degree from the University of Ingolstadt at the age of twenty-seven, Father resolved that I should proceed with graduate studies. With transcripts in order, the grand institution conferred upon me a conditional offer to pursue doctoral research in biomedical engineering.

It was a dreary afternoon of March that I presented my proposal to the Research Assessment Committee, consisting of a triumvirate of professors. My supervisor Krempe, professor of natural philosophy, was chair of the Committee. Though deeply imbued in the secrets of his science, he was an uncouth man with whom I had experienced many interpersonal conflicts. The second member of the Committee was Waldman, a professor who lectured upon chemistry the alternate days omitted by Krempe. Completing

the trio was Böhm, who was probably an intelligent fellow though I knew not his precise field of research.

I wished the assembled professors a good afternoon as I opened the PowerPoint presentation on my laptop. The title slide appeared correctly upon my machine, however, for my audience the projector conveyed only the mortifying blue screen of death.

"Try pressing Function-F7," suggested Waldman, "or perhaps Function-F8, depending upon your machine."

I attempted both without success.

"Reboot your machine, Frankenstein," said Krempe in a gruff, impatient tone.

As my laptop recommenced, I glanced at my watch. All of the graduate students of the department were scheduled to present to the Committee this afternoon, and each of us had been allocated a mere thirty minutes.

At last, the title slide appeared. But something was still not correct.

"Good God, Frankenstein," snarled Krempe. "What manner of madness would compel thee to select such heinous colours?"

For the sake of convenience, I had employed a standard template from the auto-content wizard, one with a yellow font upon a green background. Alas, the university's cheap projector, undoubtedly manufactured within one of the low-wage Asiatic nations, made the yellow text appear a sickening shade of pale green, barely discernible from the background.

I struggled to devise a solution. "Perhaps, if you kind professors would permit, I may alter the formatting of the master slide to –"

Krempe interrupted with a dismissive wave. "Continue, Frankenstein. Time is short."

I commenced my narrative. The presentation was organized into several sections: Introduction, Assessment of Current Research, Key Objectives and Critical Success Factors, Proposed Research Methodology, Expected

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Outcome, Socioeconomic Benefits, and Conclusion. My literature review described the search for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, and summarized the work of Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus.

"Have you," said Krempe, "really spent your time in studying such nonsense?"

I replied in the affirmative.

"Every minute," continued he, "every instant that you have wasted on those papers is utterly and entirely lost. You have burdened your memory with exploded systems and useless names. Good God! How does this stuff get through peer review?"

Waldman turned to his colleague. "I pray thee, allow this young man to continue." So unlike my supervisor was this Waldman, his aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence, affability and kindness. Warm gratitude swelled within my bosom.

I presented a slide that summarized my three-phase research plan. Phase 1 – Collect raw materials. Included was a list of potential sources: charnel houses, graves, dissecting rooms, Chinese restaurants. Phase 3 – Demonstration of galvanic post-anthropic state enhancement. And what of Phase 2? For now, there was but a question mark.

Next, I presented a slide that described the expected outcome. Stature – Gigantic (about eight feet in height), proportionally large. Skin – yellow, covering the muscles and arteries beneath. Hair – lustrous black, flowing. Face – jaundiced complexion, teeth of pearly whiteness, straight black lips, "ruggedly handsome". But mere words in bulleted text could not convey the beauty of my ambition. So, upon the subsequent slide, I showed a set of thumbnail pictures of the constituent body parts which, after moments, wipe-transitioned into a rendered image of the assembled figure.

Upon witnessing the picture, Waldman appeared agitated, and Böhm's visage conveyed consternation, perhaps even a hint of horror.

Krempe spoke. Without emotion, he said simply, "Your time has expired."

"My time has expired?" I repeated with incredulity. "But that cannot be!"

"Thirty minutes have indeed elapsed," said Böhm.

I looked at my watch and groaned as the truth of their words was confirmed.

"Pray thee, learned professors, kind gentlemen," I implored, "allow me to continue for a few minutes more. I have but a few slides remaining, and they are of the greatest import. The socioeconomic benefits, the utility of the mobile deceased for the service industry, their other potential roles as –"

"We are sorry," said Böhm, "but maintain our schedule we must, for we have other students to attend."

"Victor Frankenstein," said Krempe, "you are finished." His harsh words were like a slap to my face. I was for the moment rendered mute as he continued. "And, as you will no longer be associated with the University, you will be required to vacate the Biomedical Laboratory. Please settle this matter with the Office of Research... and sir, upon your egress, shield the portal from striking your hindquarters."

My heart sank as I exited the building. Would my place in history and the gratitude of all humanity be ruined by instruments of mischief? What of my grand project? I resolved to remain unhindered, for I could not rank myself with the herd of common projectors!



We Shall Be Monsters

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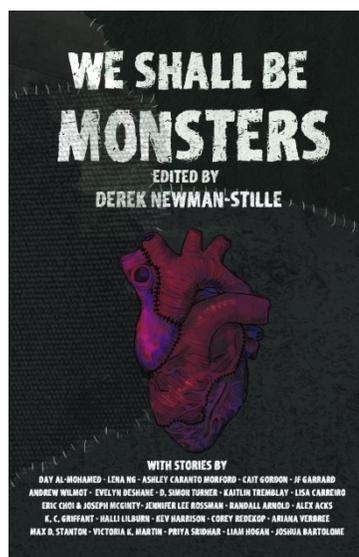
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Edited by multiple Prix Aurora Award winner [Derek Newman-Stille](#) and published by [Renaissance Press](#), *We Shall Be Monsters* commemorates the bicentennial and legacy of the ground-breaking and genre-changing novel *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern 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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